SETTING AS A POETIC DEVICE TO ENHANCE CHARACTER IN THE *APOLOGOS* OF HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*

by

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Abstract

This thesis will look at the use of the description of setting as a means to enhance and define character in the *apologos* of the *Odyssey*. The approach to this study will be two-fold. First, the descriptions of the various locales in the poem help establish a first impression of the characters that dwell within them. Second, and more importantly, the characters' reaction and response to that setting further defines their character-traits, revealing their inner self to the audience. While this phenomenon is most commonly found with characters in their own setting, it can also be quite informative for characters in a foreign setting.

The main type of description on which I will focus is that generally found at the beginning of each respective episode. These descriptions are marked by a break in the narrative and set the scene for the remainder of the episode. I consider only descriptions longer than the formulaic noun-adjective combinations or the epithets found throughout the poem. While the latter two types are important, I will mention them only in comparison with the former type.

In Chapter Three I will focus on this relationship between description and character with regard to the Cyclopes and Phaeacians, although other scenes will be mentioned. In Chapter Four I will focus on the Lotus-Eaters, Sirens, Calypso, Circe, the Nymphs on Ithaca, and the realm of the afterlife.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Homer has inspired a sense of wonder and amazement with his two epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in every audience, both ancient and modern, from the time he composed them in roughly the later eighth century or early seventh century B.C. up until the twenty-first century.[1] Both poems touch upon so many themes and emotions that are essential to the core of humanity: love, hate, war, struggles, revenge, pride, hubris, companionship, travel, hospitality, and lust, among many more. That he was able to touch upon so many of these ideas is surely one of the reasons his poems have received such praise and have stood the test of time.

It is with the greatest works in literature that scholars find the most to discuss. Homer certainly fits into this category. Scholars have debated all aspects of Homer's two great works almost since the time they were first composed. Certainly the Alexandrian scholars were eager to debate the various merits, traits, and weaknesses of Homer's work.[2] Furthermore, as far back as this time, scholars debated whether the text was original or if errors were present in some of the vocabulary and if certain passages were even composed by Homer or were later additions by lesser poets. Many of these same debates are still waged today among academics. With the advent of Milman Parry's

[1] I will discuss the nature of oral poetry, when the poems were likely composed, and whether Homer actually composed both epic poems attributed to him in Chapter 2: Literature Review.
[2] So much was written by the Alexandrian scholars, that Lucian parodied their work (*Vert.Hist.* 2).

groundbreaking field research in the early twentieth century into the nature of oral poetry as then still practiced in Croatia, focus has shifted toward analyzing this aspect of Homer. Of course, discussing the themes and content of Homer's work is still important today as studying the oral/formulaic technique. This will be the approach I take in this work.

The focus of this research will concentrate on analyzing the various descriptions of settings and the effect of these descriptions on developing character in the *Odyssey*. This thesis will focus on different aspects of this theme. The *Odyssey* provides a wonderful chance to examine such a relationship between setting and character, as on his journey returning home, Odysseus comes upon many different types of people: barbarians, witches, the souls of the dead, and the god-like Phaeacians, among others. More specifically, I will focus on the books in the narrative from the time when Odysseus leaves Troy until the time he returns to his home on Ithaca (*Od*. 5-13). While this will be the main area of focus, I will also make comparisons with other sections of the poem when it is useful to compare and contrast them to sections of the return journey.

Each of these groups of people occupies its own unique and specific setting. On the most basic level the unique features of each group's own setting help define them as individual characters among the vast array of peoples found in the poem. This kind of analysis is useful in providing a general first impression of the characters that Odysseus encounters. However, on a more advanced level, it is the reaction and response on the character's part to the setting that truly reveals the inner thoughts and emotions of each. For the most part the reaction and response to the setting come from the individual or

group of individuals who inhabit the land. However, there are times when the audience can learn and better understand characters by how they respond and react to a setting that is foreign to them.

I will now define exactly the types of descriptions on which I will focus during this work. Descriptions in the *Odyssey* tend to follow a particular format. They generally describe the landscape that makes up the particular environment in which the characters, usually Odysseus and the local inhabitants, find themselves. They are often scenes of nature including trees and other vegetation, springs, rocks, and animals. Also common are descriptions of habitations, whether houses, palaces, or caves, depending on the cultural level of the inhabitants. These descriptions tend to involve details such as building materials, decorations, gardens, and even the servants working within. Although the types of things described are often the same, it is the specific details unique to each locale that help define the characters within. Another common trait of the descriptions is their position in the narrative of each particular episode. In almost every instance, the description comes at the beginning of the episode before the audience has met the characters, or shortly afterwards. This technique has two uses: it provides the audience with a visual cue which they can store in their mind for the duration of the episode, and it sets the tone for the characters in each episode. By analyzing the first use, I will demonstrate the effectiveness of the second.

There are two types of description on which I will not focus for this work. They are the epithet and quick description such as a single adjective accompanying a noun.

There have been many studies of the Homeric epithet and there is no need to go into too much detail with them here.[3] The quick descriptions generally do not have much of a deep connection with the characters. They often appear mixed within the narration and not a part of a specific descriptive scene. Many of them can also be attributed to the oral poet's need for a particular word to fit the metre. Although these two types of descriptions will not be at the centre of my research, I will refer to them as necessary when a useful comparison can be made.

I divide the work as follows. <<Chapter Two: Literature Review>> will focus on the 'Homeric question' which has been at the forefront of Homeric scholarship over the past century. Essentially this encompasses who Homer was and what he did. This is not meant to be a historical biography of the poet – for such an idea is at the worst pure fantasy or at the very best in the realm of speculation – but rather an assessment of the nature of the Greek oral poetic tradition and the placement of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* within that tradition. In truth, the 'Homeric question' is really a group of questions that together lead to a better understanding of the two major epic poems attributed to Homer. To have a full appreciation of this question, we must understand the genre of oral poetry and its place within Greek society. Thus, how oral poetry was composed, when it was composed, and when the poems we have today took their final shape are all relevant. Furthermore, whether we have cause to attribute both poems to the same poet should be examined. Since the "Homeric question" is such a vast and complicated issue, I will only

[3] See A.A. Parry, *Blameless Aegisthus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973) with bibliography.

have the time and space to provide a general overview of these questions as well as various scholars' conclusions in regard to them. Finally, I will shift focus to look specifically at Homeric scholarship in regards to geography and setting and the descriptive technique called 'ecphrasis'. As this subject matter will be at the core of my work, it is important to provide an overview of this scholarship so as to place my own work within this body as a whole.

<<Chapter Three: The Extreme Limits of Civilization>> will focus specifically on the Phaeacians and Cyclopes. These two sections contain some of the longest descriptions found in the entire poem. There are two major sections of description found in the Cyclopes' episode: the Cyclopes' island itself, and also the nearby island, referred to as 'Goat Island'. There are many short descriptions found during the episode on Scheria as well as one major one. Odysseus gets a brief tour by Nausicaa as they walk to the palace. There are various details described, which help establish the nature of the Phaeacians. Once Odysseus arrives at the palace itself, there is a comparatively long description of the building, its orchards, and the people who inhabit the palace. These two different episodes are worth looking at side-by-side not only because they are among the longest in the poem, but also because they share many similarities, while at the same time being quite different. Furthermore, the reaction and response of the Cyclopes and Phaeacians differ drastically. Comparing and contrasting these two groups reveals much about their individual characters. By looking at the similarities and differences between

the two, it should become clear that the poet intended for them to be contrasted and compared as a way to bring out further the character that lies within each of them.

In <<Chapter Four: Witches, Drugs, and Ghosts>>, I will focus on other locales found in Odysseus' return home. For the most part they represent some of the shorter descriptions of setting found in this portion of the poem. Some of these episodes also provide us with elements from which we may infer further details about the setting itself and the inhabitants' reactions and responses to that setting. I will also compare and contrast these locales (and their relationship to the refinement of character) with others when necessary. I will begin with the Lotus-Eaters and how the eponymous fruit, a product of their land, essentially guides their course of life and thus defines their character. I will then look at the Sirens. Their setting helps underscore their own terrifying nature and also contrasts well with the Lotus-Eaters. Next, my focus will shift to Calypso. Her island provides many unique details in its description that help define her own character. Furthermore, her response to her own setting reveals more about her own character. She also contrasts quite well with Circe, who will then become my focus. Both women are immortal and live on islands otherwise uninhabited by people. They also live in a land surrounded by nature. Yet how they live within these settings can be quite different at times and as such, it is useful to contrast these features. Finally, I will look at the Underworld. There are a few descriptions that are useful here. First there are the directions provided by Circe on how to get there, and then Odysseus' own description when he finally arrives. There are also a few inferences that can be made about the nature

of the land from elements in the plot and speeches provided by the perished souls themselves. This is an important section in my work, for there are portions where Odysseus' reaction to Hades' coupled with the reactions of the souls residing there help advance our understanding of Homer's own conception of the afterlife. Thus, not only does Odysseus' quest into Hades' provide a description of a physical setting with people who exist there, but in doing so, it provides insight into Greek expectations about death.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Whenever we are to discuss Homeric scholarship, we are always faced with the question, who exactly was Homer? If life were easy, we would be happy with the response, <<Homer was the oral poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as we have them today>>. Life, however, is not always easy and neither is the answer to this question. In truth, to understand the nature of the Homeric question, we are forced to deal with numerous sub-categories of questions, which together constitute this question. My goal in this chapter is to illuminate for the reader the types of questions we need to ask when analyzing Homer and to provide a brief outline of the conclusions that scholars have reached to date. I will concentrate on three: the nature of oral poetry, the date when the poems attributed to Homer began to take shape, and when they reached their present form, and the identity of the poet(s) of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

W.J. Woodhouse accurately sums up these numerous questions, and so I will quote him in full.

> The Homeric question, then, is in part at least just this question: How far are strands and patterns the poet's own invention? How much, and what, was 'given' to him? How much,

> and what, was 'made' by him? By 'given' is meant that which came to him by tradition, whether tradition as existing in popular consciousness and memory, or tradition more or less systematized and controlled by a school or guild or family of bards. What are the elements, and what was the process through which those elements came to be combined in the form in which they lie before us, in the book that is the last visible embodiment of tradition?[4]

As should become immediately clear, these questions will be as difficult to define as they are to answer. Because of the narrow confines of this chapter, I will only try to give the reader an overview of the various conclusions drawn by modern scholars. There has simply been too much scholarship on the subject of oral poetry and its many offshoots to do more than draw a brief outline. To put the amount of scholarship in perspective, from the time that A.B. Lord wrote *The Singer of Tales* in 1960, J.M. Foley notes that, "in less than twenty-five years more than twelve hundred books, monographs, and articles have followed, testifying in their number and variety to the seminal importance of Lord's and Parry's discoveries."[5] Foley made this statement over twenty years ago, and the pace in this field of scholarship has not relented since. As well as reviewing the secondary literature, I will also include my own thoughts on the subject, so that when I refer to 'Homer' in the main body of my work, the reader will understand what I mean.

[4] W.J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's* Odyssey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 13.
[5] J.M. Foley, *Oral Tradition in Literature: Interpretation in Context* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), p. 5.

2.2 Oral Poetry

In order to understand who Homer was, it is important to understand the nature of oral poetry, trying to identify how and when it was composed. M.W. Edwards provides an excellent description on the nature of oral poetry. He notes,

> The essential characteristic of true oral poetry is that each performance is different, shaped to suit its particular circumstances, including the calibre of the singer. The time available, the reactions and nature of the audience shape the form of each presentation. The structure and plot of the story may remain the same, but the expansiveness and perhaps the emphasis will vary every time; the quality of the song too, will vary according to the singer's genius. In this sense, every passage is extemporaneous; but this does not mean that every line, every passage will be different. Each singer has individual expressions and scenes that are carefully polished and unique to him– until someone else admires them and takes them over.[6]

With this definition of oral poetry in mind, I will provide G.S. Kirk's definition of an oral poet:

> One who transmits and composes poetry without the aid of writing, who absorbs songs easily from others and elaborates them extempore without the help of trial versions jotted down in notebooks, and who reproduces them on demand with the aid of a fixed vocabulary and a powerful and highly trained memory.[7]

Kirk seems to be quite inflexible on the issue of whether Homer employed any sort of writing. The fact that this form of poetry is produced orally should be obvious from its description, but it is still worth emphasizing as it is a form of composition that is almost entirely absent from modern experience. Today writing is engrained into our daily lives; it is something we seem to do instinctively. As a consequence, we do not need to be nearly so reliant on memory as the oral poet, for we write things down out of convenience. Furthermore, with the advent of modern technology, we can absorb songs and poetry through electronic means, making the use of our memory even less important.

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[6] M.W. Edwards, *Homer – Poet of the* Iliad (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 22.
[7] G.S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 55.

This idea has been around for a long time, for Plato comments on how writing destroys one's memory (*Phdr*. 274c-275b). Thus, while the unwritten nature of Homeric verse is completely obvious in its definition as 'oral' poetry, it is certainly worthwhile taking a step back from our modern methods, and think about how difficult it would be to record and absorb poetry and song without them. It is with this frame of mind that we should analyze the poetry of Homer and consider the notion of oral poetry in general.

Scholars generally agree that the various formulas used by Homer reflect a long tradition which quite possibly dates back a number of centuries. D.L. Page notes,

> The creation of the vast number of formulas, adaptable to almost all possible emergencies, must have been the work of many generations of poets; and from the refinement, thrift, and economy of the Homeric stock of phrases we are obliged to infer that we are near the culmination of a very long process.[8]

The 'economy' to which Page refers is a technical term, sometimes also called 'simplicity', which Milman Parry describes:

> The *simplicity of the system* of epic language consists in the fact that corresponding dialectal or artificial elements are of unique metrical value; and the *extension of the system* lies in the great number of cases in which, to a given element of one dialect, one can oppose the corresponding element of another. It is evident that such a system can only be traditional.[9]

I have to agree that Homer's work reflects a tradition, which must have developed over a long period of time (approximately 1150-750 B.C.), as it does seem to be in an advanced form.

Furthermore, as the tradition seems to have gone into a decline with the advent of writing, it is safe to say that Homer's work reflects the pinnacle of Greek oral poetry.

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[8] D.L. Page, *The Homeric* Odyssey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), pp. 139-40.
[9] M. Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 7.

Certainly there were no major improvements on this style of poetry after Homer. Kirk expands upon this point by saying,

> One important lesson of the field experience of Parry and Lord is that literacy destroys the virtue of an oral singer: those who have learned to read in middle life invariably seem to lose their spontaneity. They become self-conscious about their oral repertoire and seek to garnish it in the manner of an indifferent pen and paper poet, making it in consequence pretentious and boring.[10]

This conclusion is drawn from comparing modern oral poetry in the former Yugoslavia to that of the Greeks, which can be dangerous and misleading if one trusts faithfully that the comparison is valid in all regards.

Adam Parry, Milman's son, presents an interesting counter-argument to Kirk. He finds in this particular example, that the comparison between Greek and Yugoslav oral poetry is weak. He notes,

> When a Yugoslav poet learns how to write, a whole literary culture, the culture of the cities of his own country and of what we call the civilized world, becomes accessible to him. It is a culture of books and newspapers. If he abandons the traditional formulae which have enabled him to improvise his heroic narratives, this is not necessarily, or even probably, because he is corrupted by a new technique. It is because he has become part of a different world, a world with new values and new habits of thought.[11]

This is certainly a tricky matter, and the more frustrating, because we will never be able to know with certainty what effect the advent of writing may have had on Homer's work. I am willing to concede that writing must have had some impact on the oral tradition, for it was an introduction of an entirely foreign form of communicating ideas to a society that had for centuries been dependant solely on oral communication. However, Adam Parry does bring up a very good point, namely that the impact writing would have had on

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[10] Kirk, *op. cit*, p. 87.
[11] A. Parry, *The Language of Achilles and Other Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 136.

the oral tradition, while it may have been significant, cannot be compared to the impact it had on the modern Yugoslav poets.

Lord also comments on the complexity of Homer's oral poetry and how it reflects an advanced form of this type of poetry:

> The literary technique takes several generations to mature. I cannot conceive of the author of the *Iliad* as semiliterate. The poem is too great, is done with far too much assurance, to be the first hesitating steps in a new technique. It seems to me rather that it is the product of a great oral poet in a rich oral tradition. The poems of a semiliterate oral poet are awkward in construction because they mix two techniques, one of which has not yet had time to develop, and the other of which the poet already disdains.[12]

Lord, like Kirk above, draws these conclusions from comparisons of modern oral poetry to that of the Greek. While the same caution should be heeded when making these comparisons, in this case, the modern comparison is the only example we have that fits the criteria of oral poetry being influenced by writing.

Gilbert Murray, who conducted his research before Milman Parry's famous field research, also draws similar conclusions. He describes,

> A raw material consisting of various disconnected religious songs and lays and prose stories in praise of particular tribal ancestors or gods; a process of weaving these materials into a connected framework by the bards of the Aeolian migration: these seem to be the conditions of what we may call the first birth of Homer, if we mean by Homer the author of the *Iliad*.[13]

Although Murray did not have access to Milman Parry's findings on the nature of the composition of oral poetry, he still rightly understands the poet's ability to stitch together various tales in order to create a much larger poem. It is this form of poetry that we have today and that is connected to the name of Homer. Thus, this general sense of how the

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[12] A.B. Lord, *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 43
[13] G. Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), p. 246.

poet was able to stitch together smaller tales into a much larger and more complex and detailed poem has long been a part of Homeric scholarship.

We have now established that all scholars accept that the poems attributed to Homer come at the end of a long tradition of oral poetry, which was developed over centuries. The numerous formulas used by Homer reflect the culmination of work of many oral poets over several generations. It is now worth looking at the arguments that attempt to date exactly when the stories of the Trojan War and its aftermath were incorporated into this style of poetry and when our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were crystallized in the monumental form in which we have them today.

2.3 Date

It is hotly debated how much historical truth the poems contain. It is not a matter of whether there is any historical truth lurking within the poems, for Heinrich Schliemann did discover the ruins of Troy by using evidence found in the *Iliad*. The bulk of the debate has focused on *how much* truth lies within. Woodhouse notes,

> There are such portions as might fairly be described as historical deposit, in the sense that they are the possible story of real individuals moving in a real world, more or less like our own… Have we any right, for example, any right grounded in logic and discovered facts, to say that a certain Odysseus, a considerable figure in the Greek national heroic tradition, never really lived on this earth, or that he did not make his return home, after the great War with Troy, under the general conditions pictured in the poem? Is there any reason to disbelieve this, other than fear of ridicule on the part of an ever-clever would-be omniscient age?[14]

[14] Woodhouse, *op.cit*., pp. 19-20.

While the negative answer invited by the second of the rhetorical questions may not be considered revolutionary, it still remains a valid point. As scholars working in the twenty-first century, we will never be able to answer with certainty that there was or there was not a man named Odysseus who struggled on his return home from fighting at Troy. If people wish to attempt this debate, they will likely find themselves facing as big a struggle as Odysseus did on his return home in the version of the *Odyssey* which we have today. I deem this debate to be futile, as any conclusions drawn from it will exist only in the realm of possibility and conjecture, and as such can never truly add to our understanding of Homer and his poetry. Thus, I firmly believe that Woodhouse's implied endorsement of at least some historical accuracy is certainly valid and should still be employed when discussing Greek oral poetry.

While it can be futile to draw conclusions concerning the historical certainty of many of the main plot developments in the poetry of Homer, with the advent of archaeological finds, we can place some certainty in specific details that he provides. The boar's tusk helmet (*Il*. 10.261-5), for example, has been proven without a doubt to have existed only in the centuries long before the time of Homer. Although it is true that such Mycenaean artefacts predate Homer, likely by several centuries, it does not necessarily follow that the society itself, described by Homer, is reflective of Mycenaean society. Ian Morris vigorously argues that the society depicted in Homer can only be the one contemporary to the poet. He notes,

> The oral tradition is very much part of the present, and in view of the internal evidence for the performance it seems that it is simply not possible that oral poetry of this type can have re-

> created the social structure of a world that had vanished many generations ago, or a composite reality put together from many different chronological periods.[15]

Morris spends a considerable amount of time developing his argument, taking special aim at the arguments of Kirk. He also puts his argument into the perspective of the society contemporary to Homer, noting "vanished social institutions with no present referent could mean nothing [to Homer and his audience]. The elements disappeared from the constantly evolving poetic tradition as fast as they disappeared from Greek life."[16] Morris presents an interesting argument, which I find more persuasive, although I will speculate that such institutions could very well have survived in poetic form for at least a short time after they fell out of use.

The nature of the curious amalgam of dialects of Homer's poetry also sheds light on the situation. There has been some discussion of whether this evidence confirms that an early version of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* began in the Mycenaean era or if such linguistic evidence post-dates the fall of the Mycenaean civilization. Page notes,

> The making of Greek Epic poetry on the subject of the Trojan War reaches back beyond the dark ages to Mycenaean Hellas. Our poems prove to us that their metre, phraseology, and subject-matter were long ago (to some indefinable extent) the property of poets composing in that dialect of Greek which was spoken by the Mycenaeans.[17]

Page leads the camp of those who claim the existence of a Mycenaean oral poetry that dealt with the subject-matter used by Homer centuries later. He certainly presents some compelling evidence, "The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* describe in accurate detail places and

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[15] I. A. Morris, "The Use and Abuse of Homer" *Classical Antiquity* Vol. 5 (1986) p. 89.
[16] *ibid.*, p. 90.
[17] Page, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

objects which never existed in the world after the Mycenaean era."[18] It is true that many of the Greek cities found in Homer were either abandoned or not nearly so influential after the Mycenaean era. Such proofs further enhance the view that the poetic formulas used by Homer were developed organically over a period of several centuries. With the few historical details described in full in Homer, it certainly makes it tempting to state that the Greek oral poetic tradition dates back into the Mycenaean period; however, not all scholars agree with this line of reasoning.

The ever-cautious Kirk takes aim at the arguments of Page. He is not convinced that Page's conclusions are correct,

> I accept that much of the formular language of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is undoubtedly very old, but on the question of whether or not it goes back to Mycenaean poetry itself I take a more agnostic view than Page, encouraged by the thought that his special arguments do not preclude the possibility of early post-Mycenaean composition based on a less formalized non-poetical tradition.[19]

Thus, Kirk provides a possible alternative to Page's view. In this case, the oral tradition would have had to have started at some point after the Mycenaean period. Since it is agreed upon that the tradition must have been developed over many centuries, this would force the hypothetical beginning of the oral tradition, at least that which continues in the poetry of Homer, to some point in the Dark Ages. I cannot point to any evidence that can conclusively refute Kirk's theory. However, I find myself struggling to point to any concrete evidence that elevates his theory beyond the realm of plausibility. If there were

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[18] D.L. Page, *History and the Homeric* Iliad (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 218. For more information on the theories of the Aeolian and Arcadian languages and their role in the development of Homeric poetry, see pp. 219-20.
[19] G.S. Kirk, *Homer and the Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 23.

some non-poetical historical tradition, it would be nice to have some traces of it to substantiate this theory. Furthermore, if this tradition had existed, one would expect it to have made its way into the form of literature long before the time of Hecataeus and Herodotus. It is for these reasons that I am more inclined to agree with Page's view of the matter, even though both scholars are arguing about a detail that will never truly be known and can only ever be guessed at.

In the end, such arguments add little to the overall understanding of Homer. What Page and Kirk agree upon is far more important to the understanding of the nature of early Greek oral poetry and its impact upon Homer's works, than are the points of contention between them. In truth, the difference presented by their two theories is merely a century or less either side of the fall of the Mycenaean palaces and the advent of the Dark Ages, circa 1200 B.C. In terms of the generally accepted view that the oral poetic tradition would have required several hundred years to develop into the highly stylized product found in the poetry of Homer, this difference is largely insignificant. We are simply too much in the dark about this period in time to place any specific date on the origins of these poems. As Lord puts it, "We shall never be able to determine who first sang these songs, nor when they were first sung, nor where, nor what form they had. We can only be sure that it was a long time before Homer's day."[20] Thus, we must be satisfied with the conclusion that the poems first started taking shape near the end of the Mycenaean era or shortly afterwards.

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[20] A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 151.

The final stage of the composition of the poetry we have today probably occurred by the end of the eighth century.[21] Martin West makes an attempt to push the date forward a little to the early seventh century.[22] Jonathan Burgess makes the point that, "the very desirability of assigning specific dates to individual poems is open to question. Assuming a moment in time for the fixation of early epic does not change the fact that a lengthy process of oral composition lay behind it."[23] This is valid, and we should be satisfied with a general outline. Thus we are dealing with a period of roughly four to five hundred years from when the oral tradition seems to have started to take shape until the time when the poems took the final form which we have today attributed to a man named Homer.

In discussing Homer we may tentatively describe him as an oral poet who, having inherited a highly specialized oral tradition dating back some four or five hundred years, composed his work shortly before the end of the eighth or the beginning of the seventh century B.C.

2.4 Authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

The next question I would like to address is whether or not Homer composed both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. From ancient times until this past century, it was generally

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[21] G.S. Kirk, *The* Iliad*: A Commentary Volume 1: Books1-4* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 5.
[22]M.L. West, "The Date of the *Iliad*" *Museum Helveticum* No. 52 (1995), pp. 203-219.
[23] J.S. Burgess, *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 53.

believed that only one man authored the two poems and that his name was Homer. However, some detailed analyses of the two poems might suggest otherwise.

Page makes a thorough analysis of the vocabulary of the two major poems and comes to the conclusion that they cannot have come from the same poet. He notes, "The Odyssean poet is not only later in time than the *Iliad*: he is also entirely isolated from the *Iliad*; he does not know things which he must have known if he was familiar with the *Iliad* in anything resembling its present form."[24] Although Page finds some interesting evidence for the dual poet theory, his conclusions can be misleading. Even if the Odyssean poet had never heard the large scale composition of the *Iliad* that we have today, he still would have been thoroughly familiar with the details of the *Iliad*. Thus, if such details were left out of the *Odyssey,* I would understand those omissions as intentional. However, in order for Page's argument to hold any weight, we must also completely ignore all of the evidence suggesting that the two poems do come from the same oral tradition, even if not from the same poet. In the end, there is much more evidence to assume one oral tradition than there is two. Thus, I am hesitant to claim that there were two distinct poets working from two entirely different oral traditions. The main question holding me back from fully accepting his conclusion is that, if the poems clearly come from two such distinct traditions, why did the ancient Greeks claim that not only did the two poems come from the same tradition, but from the mouth of the same man? In a culture that was so preoccupied with the idea of competition, it would seem

[24] Page, *The Homeric* Odyssey, p. 152.

that such an issue would be ripe for debate if two great poems each came from two different yet talented poets. The debate would not just be a matter of which poem was considered superior, but *which poet* was the best. However, this does not seem to have happened.[25]

Thus, it is for the above reasons that I cannot accept Page's conclusion outright. His analysis of the vocabulary is striking and important for Homeric scholarship, but it does not address my concerns. I concede that there are probable grounds for there being two separate poets, and in all likelihood there probably were. However, there simply remains too much uncertainty on the subject for me to say with full certainty that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed by two different poets. Just as was noted above regarding the beginning of the oral tradition, I feel that on the subject of its culmination there will always be a level of uncertainty. In any case, whether there was only one poet or there were two, it does not take away from the fact that we have today two of the greatest works in western literature. Thus, while the focus of my thesis is the content of the *Odyssey*, I will make comparisons with the *Iliad* when appropriate. If they cannot be compared as two works from the same poet, they can surely be compared in terms of two great poems that emerged from the same culture relatively close to each other in time.

[25] Longinus does in fact compare the merits of both poems (*De. Subl*. 9.13-15). He is also clearly operating under the assumption that both poems were composed by the same poet, and with this assumption, he makes his comparisons. Lucian pokes fun at the two-poet debate (*Vert.Hist.* 2).

2.5 Homeric Geography and Description

In his archaeological study, Walter Leaf compared the descriptions of the site of Troy found in Homer to the archaeological evidence discovered up until the early twentieth century when he was writing. He describes his main objective is "to show that if Homer anachronises, he does not anatopise[26], and that where he is dealing with fixed conditions he can still be tested and found to give a true report."[27] Thus, his study aims to evaluate the degree of historical accuracy found in the descriptions of Homer. This is an interesting study, and an updated version of it would be most useful; however, where Leaf compares Homeric descriptions to physical geography, I compare them to the psychological world of characters dwelling within the various landscapes. Thus my methodology is literary and his historical.

L. Kim examines the relationship between Strabo's ideal geographer and Homer. Since Strabo pays close attention to Homer and how he deduced that Homer understood the role of geography in Greek thought, Kim concludes that Strabo

> is making a conscious effort to renew the tradition by "returning" to the Homeric model of inquiry, not only in terms of content –both geographical and historical in equal measure– but in terms of the coherence bestowed upon that content by the character of the inquirer.[28]

Thus, Kim is mostly focused, as was Strabo, on the real-world geographical locations described in Homer. His conclusions certainly show that the importance of Homeric

[26] Anatopism: A Putting of a thing out of its proper place (OED).
[27] W. Leaf, *Troy: A Study in Homeric Geography* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1912).
[28] L. Kim, "The Portrait of Homer in Strabo's *Geography*" *Classical Philology* 102 (2007), p.385.

geography was recognized back in ancient times and that Strabo felt there was a loss of respect accorded to it in the intervening centuries which he was trying to restore.

In his work on the theme of scenery in early epic, T.M. Andersson addresses the issue in Homer. However, he is only concerned with the latent space found in Homer. Thus, he is not so interested in the physical descriptions found in the *Odyssey*. He notes, "the scant detail afforded by Odyssean interiors is related to the single-property principle characteristic of the *Iliad* and is just sufficient to provide a minimum backdrop."[29] While the description scenes found in Homer tend to be fairly brief, they do contain an impressive amount of vivid detail. They may be short, but they do a wonderful job of setting the scene. As I will demonstrate in this work, not only do they set up the scene that follows, but they also set up the character or characters whom we find in those scenes.

Adam Parry takes a look at landscape in Greek poetry while also comparing it to later uses in more modern poetry.[30] When discussing nature in Homer, he is largely interested in its role in metaphor and simile. In this work, I try to stay away from these types of descriptions. I am more interested in the descriptions I have defined in the Introduction. Parry does give some special emphasis to the Cyclopes' episode, although he aims more toward a generalizing description and largely does not attempt to make specific connections between the description and the various characters.

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[29]T.M. Andersson, *Early Epic Scenery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 48.
[30] A. Parry, *op.cit*, pp. 8-36.

Some important work has been done by A.T. Edwards in regards to setting and its relationship with those who inhabit or work that land.[31] He compares many passages in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and focuses on the nature of the city and the land outside the city walls. He develops a theory that he calls `ethical geography` whereby he notes a hierarchical division of the land into distinct units with the city being at the top and the plough-land at the bottom. He then compares that hierarchy of the land with the hierarchy of the people, where the king is at the top and the farmers and herdsmen are at the bottom. This is a very useful study and works quite well in conjunction with my work, for he is primarily interested in the relationship of city and field, which mainly characterizes the latter half of the *Odyssey*, while I primarily focus on the former half.

The idea of ecphrasis is also an important aspect of descriptive scenes. Gordon Williams defines the essential characteristics of ecphrasis as when

> the poet is again the narrator and the description is his. This is underlined by a special formal feature: the narrative comes to a halt and the description makes a fresh start with a phrase that marks its digression…then, in its turn, the digression comes to an end, there is a pause, and a return is made to the narrative.[32]

Williams' careful attention to the difference between when the narrator gives a description and when a character within the narrative does is important to note. I will draw upon such differences when I discuss the issue, but I will analyze all such descriptions, whether given by narrator or character. Paul Murgatroyd also discusses ecphrasis. He provides a thorough overview of the device used in poetry prior to

[31] A. T. Edwards, "Homer's Ethical Geography: Country and City in the *Odyssey*" *Transactions of the American Philological Association* Vol. 123 (1993), pp. 27-78.
[32] G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

Apuleius (the author who principally interests him) as well as states as the most important feature of ecphrasis that "it has a real point, purpose and relevance in various ways, and if it were removed the narrative would lose much in interest and impact."[33] While the majority of the descriptions I discuss in this work do not constitute formal ecphrases, I take the same stance as Murgatroyd in that they are important pieces, and the poem would be weaker without them.

G. Soutar did some work on the theme of nature in Greek poetry. He begins his work by looking at nature as represented by Homer. It is unfortunate that a work on this subject merely glances over the theme of nature in Homer. His chapter on Homer simply outlines the various descriptions. He often cites the same passages that I outline in this work, but generally does no more than that. He does not spend any time analyzing these passages in depth. Since he does not go into such detail, he is able to claim that Homer "does not invent pageantry and scenery to suggest and sustain character."[34] I hope that by the end of this work, the reader will agree with me that this claim is invalid.

[33] P. Murgatroyd, "Apuleian Ecphrasis: Cupid's Palace at *Met*. 5.1.2-5.2.2" *Hermes* Vol. 125 (1997), pp. 357-66.
[34] Soutar, G., *Nature in Greek Poetry* (London: Oxford University press, 1939), p. 15

Chapter 3
The Extreme Limits of Civilization

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will focus primarily on the Cyclopes and Phaeacians. Both episodes contain some of the longest descriptive scenes in the poem. These peoples are an interesting pair to compare closely, because they came from similar origins in regards to their setting but, as I will argue; their reactions and response to that setting led them down two entirely different paths. As I analyze their respective descriptions it will also be useful to compare and contrast them to other notable descriptions in the poem. Thus, I will draw upon Penelope's Suitors when analyzing the Cyclopes, for they are in many ways similar. Furthermore, I will also compare and contrast the societies depicted at Pylos and Sparta as well as the palace of Menelaus.

3.2 The Cyclopes (Part One)

Homer deliberately uses the description of the land of the Cyclopes to illustrate their character. This is a magical world that provides everything for them. οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν, / ἀλλὰ τά γ' ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται <<*Neither do they plant flora with their hands, nor do they plough, but everything grows unsown and untilled*>> (*Od.* 9.108-9). For most this would be considered a paradise provided by the gods. It is also stated that οἵ ῥα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες

ἀθανάτοισιν <<*They place their trust in the immortal gods*>> (*Od.* 9.107)[35]. This makes sense, for the gods provide them with all they need. Their sustenance is secured and has presumably been so for long enough that their race has thrived; thus they have no reason not to trust the gods. They are provided with the three essential crops; πυροὶ καὶ κριθαὶ ἠδ᾽ ἄμπελοι, αἵ τε φέρουσιν / οἶνον ἐριστάφυλον <<*Wheat, barley, and vines, which produce full-bodied wine*>> (*Od.* 9.110). Thus the crops that give them their food and drink grow without any work required, although the crops must still be physically prepared into the appropriate food. These inhabitants are truly among the favourites of the gods. Yet, Homer goes even further to illustrate this point. He mentions that σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει <<*The rain of Zeus increases their crops for them*>> (*Od.* 9.111). In this regard, the favour of the gods is not merely a passive provision of goods, but an active participation on their part to make the goods even better. With all of these elements combined, life should be easy and a pleasure for the Cyclopes.

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[35] W.B. Stanford , *The* Odyssey *of Homer Volume I* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961), p. 352, n.107, notes that they live "with no notion to devout faith (see 275-6), but simply `leaving it to the gods', fatalistically. The idea of Chance which we might expect here, as an arbitrary dispenser of good and bad, is later than Homer, and does not become prevalent till late in the 5th century. The noun τύχη does not occur till Archilochus." I am not convinced that Homer's phrase should be taken in this way. It is true that Polyphemus does not demonstrate any reverence towards the gods, but he does let them take care of him. It is this relationship with the gods that is the catalyst for his hubristic nature. He knows they actively take care of him whether he reciprocates or not. Euripides seems to have picked up on this aspect of Polyphemus' character, see note below regarding Euripides' *Cyclops*. Furthermore, although the noun τύχη does not appear until Archilochus, that does not necessarily make it so far removed in time from the poetry of Homer. Martin West argues for the *Iliad*, which is regarded as the earlier of Homer's two poems, to have been composed much closer in time to the poetry of Archilochus than has previously been thought. For more discussion on this, see M.L. West, *op.cit.*, pp. 203-219.

Hesiod echoes the theme of a crop-bountiful paradise.[36] The land of the Cyclopes is very similar to that of the Golden Race of men. They did not need to work, for food came to them νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ ὀιζύος <<*Free from toil and work*>> *(Op.* 113)[37], and the land produced food for them so that ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα / τοῖσιν ἔην· καρπὸν δ᾽ ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα / αὐτομάτη πολλόν τε καὶ ἄφθονον <<*Everything was good for them: the fruitful land bore fruit by itself, both abundant and bountiful*>> *(Op.* 116-8*)*. Life was an easy and joyful experience for the Golden Race[38]. Hesiod does not provide a reason why the Golden Race died off; he merely states τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖ᾽ ἐκάλυψε <<*The earth concealed this race underground*>> *(Op.* 121*)*. However, even in death the status of the Golden Race was upheld: τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι καλέονται / ἐσθλοί, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων <<*They are called holy spirits living upon the earth; they are good, ward off evil, and are the guardians of mortal men*>> *(Op.* 122-3*)*. The Golden Race had to die, for they were mortal men; θνητοί τ᾽ ἄνθρωποι *(Op*. 108*)*, yet they still retained some special status, which they had enjoyed on earth also. It seems logical that their noble afterlife is a reflection of their noble life. It would follow then, that the gods provided the golden race with everything they needed, and the Golden Race showed their thanks by living a noble life. The gods reciprocated by providing them with a noble existence in the afterlife. Although the Golden Race had a similar setting to

[36] For more detailed analysis on the relationship between the Golden Race and the Cyclopes, see: P. Vidal-Naquet, trans. by A. Szegedy-Maszak, *The Black Hunter* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp.15-38.
[37] On the curious and unHomeric phrase νόσφιν ἄτερ, see M.L. West, *Hesiod*: Works and Days (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p.168, n. 91.
[38] This is also a recurrent theme in Old Comedy. For more on this see, I.C. Storey and A. Allan. *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 186-7.

that of the Cyclopes, it is how they conducted their life and showed their appreciation to the gods that set them apart.

Although the Cyclopes live in a paradise, their individual homes are quite primitive. Homer states, ἀλλ᾽ οἵ γ᾽ ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρηνα / ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι <<*But they live on the peaks of wooded mountains in hollowed caverns* >> (*Od.* 9.113-4). These individual caverns point to a society that was fairly fragmented. Polyphemus lives by himself in his own cave. There are other Cyclopes who inhabit the island, but not in the immediate area. In fact, they do not seem to have any real sense of a common society; τοῖσιν δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἀγοραὶ βουληφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες <<*For them there are neither assemblies for counsel, nor laws* >> (*Od*. 9.112).[39] These are not social creatures. This individualism is further emphasized in that the idea of law only exists within the family unit, θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος / παίδων ἠδ᾽ ἀλόχων, οὐδ᾽ ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσιν <<*And each one rules over his children and wife, and they do not concern themselves with each other* >> (*Od. 9.114-5*).[40] This is explicit in saying that they may have a wife or children, but that does not need to be the case, for there is no indication that Polyphemus has

[39] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary of Homer's* Odyssey *Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) ,p. 21, n. 106-115, notes, "The sociological implications are clear: the poet has painted a picture of a people on the lowest cultural level, devoid of all that gives human life its distinctive quality. The Cyclopes know nothing of a life in a community ordered by laws and decrees, of piety and morality, or of nature made to serve man by 'ratio' and τέχνη (agriculture, building, and seafaring). They are a negation of human values, and a negation to the Phaeacians who enjoy all the benefits of human values; they are the embodiment of the non-human." I whole-heartedly agree with this statement. Indeed, Aristotle (*Pol*. 1253a3) defines humankind as the "political animal", i.e. the only animal that *does* live in social groups The focus of this chapter will be to discuss these aspects on their own and how they relate to each other. Furthermore, see C.G. Brown, "In the Cyclops' Cave: Revenge and Justice in *Odyssey* 9" *Mnemosyne* Vol. 49 (1996), pp. 1-29, and also, F.M. Schroeder "Cyclopean Superlatives" *Dionysius* Vol. 22 (2002), pp. 9-22.

[40] Plato quotes this passage when discussing the nature of patriarchal government, (*Lg.* 680B).

either.[41] This is important, for it is one indication that although they are not organized at the societal level, there can be some integration between the Cyclopes at the familial level. This point is further expanded upon later on in the book after Polyphemus has been blinded. He wails aloud from his own cave to the other Cyclopes. Some of the others *do* come to see what is happening (*Od*. 9.401-412). It is as if there are some communal responsibilities, but only on the most basic level. It is not likely that they would borrow a cup of sugar from each other!

3.3 Penelope's Suitors

The lack of assemblies on the part the Cyclopes may be compared and contrasted with various other races found in the opening books. Early on in the poem, the Ithacan elder Aegyptius notes that οὔτε ποθ᾽ ἡμετέρη ἀγορὴ γένετ᾽ οὔτε θόωκος / ἐξ οὗ Ὀδυσσεὺς δῖος ἔβη κοίλῃς ἐνὶ νηυσί <<*Never has our council or assembly taken place from the time when illustrious Odysseus departed in hollow ships*>> (*Od.* 2.26-7).[42] This statement certainly reveals how the Suitors have been idle in public life since the departure of Odysseus or at the very least, since their courting of Penelope. It must be remembered that at this time, Odysseus has been gone for twenty years, and so it is unlikely that the Suitors would have been active in public life at the outset of the Trojan

[41] Not until Philoxenus of Cythera (436/5 – 380/79 B.C.) will Greek poets cast Polyphemus as the wooer of Galatea, in which capacity he is usually thought to have failed (Theoc. 6), though Propertius (3.2.3-8) seems to have thought him successful.

[42]A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary of Homer's* Odyssey *Volume I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 131, n. 26-7, states, "the fact that no assembly has been held for nearly twenty years indicates that the poet regarded the institution as peripheral to the political organization of Ithaca."

War due to their young age. It is also unlikely that there was never any need for such assemblies during that twenty-year span. This reveals two aspects: one, that those left behind lacked the motivation for proper self-government, and two, that the leadership of Odysseus bound Ithaca together in a way that no other man left behind could replicate.

Although no official assemblies took place, there were certainly frequent meetings among the Suitors. There are numerous descriptions throughout the poem of their constant festivities and revelries. When Athena first arrives, she notices that οἱ μὲν ἔπειτα / πεσσοῖσι προπάροιθε θυράων θυμὸν ἔτερπον <<*They were then before the doors, delighting their hearts with draughts*>> (*Od.* 1.106-7). After Athena was seated, the Suitors came in to have their own feast and afterwards, αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο / μνηστῆρες, τοῖσιν μὲν ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἄλλα μεμήλει, / μολπή τ᾽ ὀρχηστύς τε: τὰ γὰρ τ᾽ ἀναθήματα δαιτός <<*However, when the Suitors put away their desire for drink and food, other matters were a concern for them in their hearts, song and dance: for these things accompany a meal*>> (*Od.* 1.150-2). Again the descriptions show the Suitors enjoying themselves. It is not until Athena has a fuller conversation with Telemachus that she finally asks why such revelry occurs: τίς δαίς, τίς δὲ ὅμιλος ὅδ᾽ ἔπλετο; τίπτε δέ σε χρεώ; / εἰλαπίνη ἠὲ γάμος; ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἔρανος τάδε γ᾽ ἐστίν: / ὥς τέ μοι ὑβρίζοντες ὑπερφιάλως δοκέουσι / δαίνυσθαι κατὰ δῶμα. νεμεσσήσαιτό κεν ἀνὴρ / αἴσχεα πόλλ᾽ ὁρόων, ὅς τις πινυτός γε μετέλθοι <<*What meal, what gathering was this? What is your part in all this? Is it a banquet or wedding? Surely this is not a communal feast: how reckless and hubristic they seem to me, to feast throughout the house. A man of good*

sense who walks among them, could be vexed, seeing many shameful activities>> (*Od.* 1.225-9).[43] Her tone is one of bewilderment and disgust. These are clearly not the activities that adult males should be engaging in without any purpose; simply because they can is not an appropriate reason and marks the excessive nature of the Suitors. The lack of formal assembly coupled with the constant drunken revelry without purpose or legitimate reason marks the Suitors as irresponsible and licentious. These are the men after all, who either chose not to accompany Odysseus to war or were too young at the time to do so. In Odysseus' absence they have been given *carte blanche* to act and do as their undisciplined and excessive hearts desire.

A stark contrast is made with the Suitors while Telemachus is abroad in both Pylos and Sparta. When Telemachus first arrives at Pylos he comes upon the Pylians making sacrifice, ἐννέα δ' ἕδραι ἔσαν, πεντακόσιοι δ' ἐν ἑκάστῃ / ἧατο καὶ προύχοντο ἑκάστοθι ἐννέα ταύρους. / εὖθ' οἱ σπλάγχνα πάσαντο, θεῷ δ' ἐπὶ μηρί' ἔκαιον <<*There were nine companies, and there were five-hundred people seated in each company, and from each one they provided nine bulls. When they tasted the entrails, they burned the thighbones for the god*>> (*Od.* 3.7-9). In this description it is important to note that this is a feast at which the entire city is present, and each area of the city is responsible for

[43] Stanford, *op.cit.*, p. 225, n. 226, notes "a γάμος, wedding feast, would be richly provided: but at an ἔρανος, a club dinner to which every guest contributed, all would eat with more restraint." This distinction will become more important when Telemachus travels to the mainland and visits Nestor and Menelaus. Also, in a perverse way, the activities of the Suitors can be seen as a wedding feast, however the feasting takes place *before* the actual ceremony, which we all know will never actually take place.

providing its share of bulls.[44] This description clearly contrasts with the Suitors, who only dine amongst themselves in a closed company without outside guests and do not provide any of the food themselves, but instead live off the goods of another in a clear violation of Homer's ideal of the δαίς ἐΐση <<*Duly shared feast*>>. The most important feature of this scene, however, is that the food is being sacrificed for the gods. In every scene where the Suitors are feasting, there is no mention that any of it is dedicated to the gods. They eat only for their own benefit. They have thought neither for the people of Ithaca and Odysseus' family, from whom they take their goods, nor for the gods. They are completely selfish. The Pylian sacrifice scene is deliberately placed at the beginning of this passage to show by contrast how good men act.

The theme of good men acting properly is expanded upon, as Telemachus formally greets Nestor and his sons. Peisistratus, the son of Nestor, invites them in immediately, and quickly asks them to make a prayer; εὔχεο νῦν, ὦ ξεῖνε, Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι: / τοῦ γὰρ καὶ δαίτης ἠντήσατε δεῦρο μολόντες <<*Pray now, my guest, to lord Poseidon: having arrived here, you have come upon his festival*>> (*Od.* 3.43-4). The more specific mention of a festival to Poseidon further emphasizes the Pylians' respect for the gods. The contrast between the Pylians and the Suitors is efficiently summed up with the phrase spoken by Peisistratus, πάντες δὲ θεῶν χατέους' ἄνθρωποι <<*All men*

[44] The nine sections of Pylos: -Pylos, Arene, Thyron, Aepy, Cyparisseis, Amphigeneia, Pteleus, Helus, and Dorion- are all described in the Catalogue of the Ships (*Il.* 2.591-4). For more information on these nine settlements and their known geographical locations, see Kirk, *The* Iliad*: A Commentary Volume I*, pp. 214-6, n. 591-4. Stanford, *op.cit*. p. 249, n. 7 notes the eighty-one sacrificed animals represent the largest sacrifice in Homer. For more detailed information on these communities, see R. Hope Simpson and J.F. Lazenby, *The Catalogue of the Ships in Homer's* Iliad (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 82-90.

need the gods>> (*Od.* 3.48). This phrase also anticipates the Cyclopes' hubristic stance, claiming they have no care for the gods. It is only after everyone has feasted that Nestor finally asks his guests their personal information, νῦν δὴ κάλλίον ἐστι μεταλλῆσαι καὶ ἐρέσθαι / ξείνους, οἱ τινές εἰσιν, ἐπεὶ τάρπησαν ἐδωδῆς <<*Indeed, now it is a better time to ask our guests to tell us whoever they are, since they have been satisfied with eating*>> (*Od.* 3.69-70).[45] The well-mannered, pious Pylians contrast quite favourably with the crude, sacrilegious Suitors.

Telemachus encounters further examples of proper eating customs when he and his companions come to Sparta. As they arrive, they notice Menelaus, τὸν δ' εὗρον δαινύντα γάμον πολλοῖσιν ἔτῃσιν / υἱέος ἠδὲ θυγατρὸς ἀμύμονος ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ <<*They found him giving a feast to many clansmen for the wedding of his son and his illustrious daughter in his house*>> (*Od.* 4.3-4).[46] It is no chance happening that Telemachus first came upon a communal sacrifice at Pylos, and now at Sparta, a group wedding feast. The Spartan wedding scene was not a feast simply for extended family, for it included everyone, γείτονες ἠδὲ ἔται Μενελάου κυδαλίμοιο, / τερπόμενοι <<*The neighbours and clansmen of glorious Menelaus were enjoying themselves*>> (*Od.* 4.16-7).[47] It is

[45] The Pylians wait until their guests have been fed before they ask such questions (Heubeck, 1988, p. 164, n. 69).

[46] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit*., p. 193, n. 3ff, notes "as at Pylos, Telemachus arrives in the middle of festivities. Here a double wedding is being celebrated, surely an unusual event. The background is sketched with some care; yet once Telemachus and Pisistratus are inside the palace, the celebrations are forgotten, and Menelaus and Helen appear to have no other concern than entertaining the two young men."

[47] While LSJ s.v. I translates ἔται as "clansmen, ie. kinsmen and dependants of a great house", many have argued that the word is a synonym for ἑταῖροι, "comrades-in-arms", see P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), p. 382 with bibliography.

important to note, as with the Pylian sacrificial scene, that this was an all-inclusive feast for much of the town, not just a private event. The key difference between the Pylian and Spartan feasts is that, at Pylos, there was a communal gathering at which food was collected and then redistributed among the community, while at Sparta the feast seems to have been given at Menelaus' sole expense.

There are now two different examples provided where such feasts are appropriate for the poet's audience. The first, as noted at Pylos, is the communal sacrifice, the second, as noted at Sparta, is the communal wedding. In both cases, the community assembles for a feast in celebration of either a god, or the union of two pairs of people. It is no accident that these are precisely the two forms of public feasting to which Athena refers in expressing her disgust at the Suitors (*Od.* 1.225-9). That the Suitor's feasts are also private and exclude the public only seems to aggravate her further. Athena infers that had either of these two conditions been met in the feasting and revelry, all would be well, but since that is not the case, the Suitors are acting discourteously and impiously. Furthermore, the events at Pylos and Sparta were special one-time occasions, while the Suitors feasted in this manner every day. They come to represent everything that is wrong with ill-conceived feasting.

At Pylos, the food is brought together by the community and is redistributed to every member thereof. In this regard, it has socialist overtones where everyone puts

something in and everyone takes something back.[48] At Sparta, the food is provided by one man, albeit one who is wealthy enough to do so comfortably, especially in honour of the marriage of his daughter. In this case, although many people are receiving their share from the provisions of one man, the feast is still balanced, because that one man is affluent enough to provide such a feast and to do it gladly, as it is for his daughter. It is unlikely that the Spartan system could function effectively in everyday usage, but on special occasions, it is manageable. These types of feasts work well in contrasting the unethical feasting among the Suitors present in Odysseus' palace at Ithaca.

Everything the Suitors do in this regard is opposite to the two examples shown at Pylos and Sparta. The Suitors take their sustenance from one man; however, it is not freely provided by Odysseus, it is taken only at the desire of the Suitors without consulting him. This practice occurs on a daily basis, and has done so for three years (*Od*. 2.89-90). This is a testament to the vast wealth that exists within Odysseus' palace and lands; however, such voracious feasting cannot be sustained indefinitely. As these practices are a daily occurrence, they are never for any established ritual or festival; they are merely an extravagant form of the Suitor's daily food consumption. Furthermore, these feasts exclude the outside world. There is never any mention of the community at large being invited to take part in the feasting. This reflects even more poorly on the Suitors, when one takes into account the fact that they are not consuming their own goods, but rather those of another. Odysseus provides everything without his consent and

[48] This is the type of feast known as ἔρανος which was discussed above. The Greeks could conceive of communism as a utopian ideal, cf. "Ar. *Eccl*., Pl. *Resp*. passim.

the sole beneficiaries are the Suitors. None of the neighbours and kinsmen benefit and neither do the gods, for none of the animals are sacrificed to them.

3.4 The Cyclopes (Part Two)

Returning to the Cyclopes, although at the societal level there is very little organization among them, the details of Polyphemus' animal husbandry show that the thought of a systematic approach to life is not completely absent from the Cyclopes' mind. Upon entering Polyphemus' cave, Odysseus finds baskets filled with cheeses (*Od.* 9.219). One must presume that these baskets were manufactured by the Cyclopes themselves, as they do not give any indication of being traders or sea-farers at all. There are also pens filled with sheep and goats and their lambs and kids. These are sectioned off into groups of newborns, the firstlings, and those older still (*Od.* 9. 220-2). Had there been no mention of pens, one could assume that these animals divided themselves in such groupings, but the mention of the pens means that Polyphemus consciously and systematically organized the animals into groupings with a specific purpose in mind.

This display of organization with regards to animal husbandry is further expanded upon when Polyphemus returns home from his daily activities. His first order of business is to lead into the caves the flocks that he will milk, while outside he leaves the males in pens (*Od.* 9.237-9).[49] The detail of the pens here illustrates that the organization goes

[49] He does not leave any outside on the fateful night of his blinding (*Od*. 9.336-9), thereby providing Odysseus and his surviving men with an eventual means of escape from the cave.

beyond the interior of the cave into the courtyard. Polyphemus then milks all of the sheep and goats, πάντα κατὰ μοῖραν <<*Everyone in order*>> (*Od.* 9.245=309, 342). There is even a system in place for using the milk efficiently. He pours half of it into baskets to make cheese and thereby preserve it, while the other half he leaves in the pails so that he can consume it immediately (*Od.* 9.246-9).[50]

Thus, the Cyclopes do not depend entirely on the gods for their food. Although the gods provide them with sustenance, the Cyclopes do possess the desire and will to put some effort into providing certain luxuries for themselves. Furthermore, the use of baskets, pens, and the division of their flocks denotes a certain level of organization, which they employ in order to enjoy these luxuries. When they put their mind to it, they are able to develop and make use of rudimentary technologies to make their life easier.[51] However, they simply do not always have a desire to improve their life through such means.

While Homer gives a fairly detailed description of the island of the Cyclopes, he provides an even more thorough description of Goat Island. C.S. Byre notes that, "instead of giving concrete and vivid details about what sort of place the island *is*, much of the description consists of comments about what the island is not, and about what it might be

[50] Fig juice was added to the milk in order for it to curdle properly (*Il.* 5.902-3). Greeks normally used for this purpose curdled milk obtained from the stomachs of unweaned animals (Arist. *Hist. An*. 522b5). While this detail is not specifically mentioned in the *Odyssey*, if Polyphemus were to employ such a technique, it only adds to the sophistication of the process. It only further enhances the view that the Cyclopes were capable of using some forms of τέχνη when they put their mind to it.

[51] The Cyclopes are, after all, just cavemen. Compare them to the Troglodytes found in Herodotus (4.183).

or could have been."[52] The island is inhabited by goats and is completely empty of human life making the goats' life free of both hunters and farmers (*Od.* 9.119-22). A further emphasis is placed on the lack of human life by indicating that neither is the land worked. The description sets a scene of a land bountiful with resources just waiting to be plucked. The narrative immediately shifts to the Cyclopes, who have neither ships, nor shipbuilders. If they had they such things, αἵ κεν τελέοιεν ἕκαστα / ἄστε᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἱκνεύμεναι, οἷά τε πολλὰ / ἄνδρες ἐπ᾽ ἀλλήλους νηυσὶν περόωσι θάλασσαν: / οἵ κέ σφιν καὶ νῆσον ἐυκτιμένην ἐκάμοντο << *If they could make [ships], arriving at every city of humankind, which are many, as men traverse the sea towards each other in ships: they could have made the island well-developed for themselves*>> (*Od.* 9.127-30). These examples highlight how the will of the Cyclopes to leave their own island and explore is not existent.

Homer continues to develop this theme by describing all of the various rewards that could belong to the Cyclopes, if only they were willing to put a little work into it. He

[52]C.S. Byre, "The Rhetoric of Description in *Odyssey* 9.116-41: Odysseus and Goat Island" *The Classical Journal* Vol. 89, No. 4 (April-May, 1994), p. 358. There are a few passages in the *Odyssey* where this technique is employed. The gods are often described by what they are not. They are "immortal", "ageless" and "anemic"; they laugh "unquenchably" and "their matings are never without issue". Similarly privative is the description of the "strengthless heads" of the "senseless" dead. In regards to the gods, these descriptions seem to reflect a sense of mystery of the unknown about who and what they are. One may speculate how the gods are different from humans, and general statements can be made based on these speculations, but in the end they are still speculations about the unknown. Thus, as the precise nature of the gods remains unknown to humanity, there is a certain level of ignorance, and as such, adjectives describing what they are not become a more secure and accurate description about them. One can infer from this rationale in relation to the Cyclopes and Goat Island, that the thought of pursuing the land is entirely absent from the mind of the Cyclopes. They have no thoughts of expansion or any thoughts about developing technology that could facilitate that expansion. Thus, it is possible that Homer may have used such descriptions pertaining to Goat Island as a means to illustrate how these thoughts are completely unknown to the Cyclopes, or at the very least are unattainable and remain in the realm of the unknown.

notes of the land, φέροι δέ κεν ὥρια πάντα: / ἐν μὲν γὰρ λειμῶνες ἁλὸς πολιοῖο παρ᾽ ὄχθας / ὑδρηλοὶ μαλακοί: μάλα κ᾽ ἄφθιτοι ἄμπελοι εἶεν. / ἐν δ᾽ ἄροσις λείη: μάλα κεν βαθὺ λήιον αἰεὶ / εἰς ὥρας ἀμῷεν <<*It could bear in all seasons: for in that place there are meadows near the shores of the grey sea, well-watered and soft: there could especially be imperishable vines. There is also smooth arable land there: and they could reap especially thick crops always in season*>> (*Od.* 9.131-5).[53] This description hints that it is a shame that an island full of such promise should exist unharvested. If only the Cyclopes had the will or desire to leave behind their utopian setting, they could have obtained many other rewards; instead they actively chose to stay in a land where the gods provide their sustenance and all the work is done for them. G.E. Dimock takes the approach that, "Nature is good to the Kyklopes, not because they are virtuous. Rather, the kindness of nature has deprived them of the stimulus to develop human institutions."[54] The Cyclopes would rather exist as parasites on the land which the gods provide for them, rather than take their life into their own hands and actively better themselves through hard work.[55]

The lack of personal will and desire on part of the Cyclopes is further emphasized with the description of the harbour on Goat Island. Homer provides a detailed description of how easy it would be to use the harbour should anyone have the desire to do so. This is

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[53] Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 353, n. 133-5, notes, "the optatives are potential: if anyone were to try cultivation here, it would be bound to succeed."
[54] G.E. Dimock, *The Unity of the Odyssey*, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p. 114.
[55] This parasitic nature reaches its climax when Polyphemus consumes his 'guests'. Furthermore, this parasitic nature reminds the audience about the Suitors in the palace of Odysseus. They are not of the palace, and yet they help themselves to everything within including food, drink, and women.

a harbour that requires neither anchors nor cables, where the ship could be driven onto the land and removed at will without hindrance (*Od.* 9.136-9). This is the ideal location for a harbour and would be a natural marvel for the avid sailor. However, as the Cyclopes have no desire to leave their island and explore, neither do they have the desire to craft new tools to expand their horizons. Instead of exploring the world that exists beyond their own island, the Cyclopes would rather inhabit their caves. It is even more curious that Polyphemus, the son of the sea-god Poseidon, should have no desire to traverse the seas. To add to the overall mystique of the island with untapped resources, there is also a description of how the harbour area is not only ideal, but also beautiful. There is mention of a spring with running water and a grove of black poplars (*Od*. 9.140-1). This island is a hidden treasure for those willing to make it work.

Jenny Strauss Clay comes to the conclusion that Goat Island is indeed Hyperia, the island abandoned by the Phaeacians when they immigrated to Scheria, as we have learned at the beginning of Book Six. She notes the similarities in description between the island, its harbour, and even the natural beauty with its poplar groves and springs with those found on Scheria.[56] On the whole, her argument is quite compelling, yet there are a few logistical clues that may exclude this association. The reason for the Phaeacians' departure was the Cyclopes, for the Phaeacians tired of living ἀγχοῦ Κυκλώπων ἀνδρῶν ὑπερηνορεόντων, / οἵ σφεας σινέσκοντο, βίηφι δὲ φέρτεροι ἦσαν <<*Near the Cyclopes, men quite overbearing, who caused them harm, being greater in strength*>> (*Od.* 6.5-

[56] J.S. Clay, "Goat-Island: *Od*. 9.116-141" *The Classical Quarterly* New Series, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1980), p. 263.

6).[57] The verb used is σίνομαι. LSJ s.v. I specifically mentions this example as meaning "plundering", although it has a general sense of "doing harm" or "causing mischief".

Homer uses σίνομαι elsewhere with very specific meanings. This is also the verb used when Odysseus' crew butchers the cattle of Helios (*Od.* 11.112) and when Scylla attacks Odysseus' crew (*Od.* 12.114). In both of these cases, a direct hands-on violation takes place. The one causing harm is situated in the near vicinity of the one being harmed. If this same sense is applied in the case of the Cyclopes, then they were also in a close spatial proximity to the Phaeacians when they harmed them. This seems a fairly safe assumption, except that Homer specifically states that the Cyclopes have neither ships nor shipbuilders (*Od.* 9.125-30) and that Goat Island is neither near nor far from the cyclopean island (*Od*. 9.117). The Cyclopes simply had not the means to invade Goat Island. Yet, they did cause harm to the Phaeacians, so if Goat Island was Hyperia, they must have done so in some other way.

At the end of the Cyclops' narrative, Polyphemus demonstrates his capacity to cause harm from a distance. When Odysseus makes his escape in his ship and Odysseus was as far away as his voice could be carried, he made his boast to Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.473-9).[58] As this was on the open water, one must assume it was a considerable

[57] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit*., p. 293, n. 5, notes that "this is the only point where the Cyclopes are allowed to be human."
[58] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit*., p. 38, n. 474-9, notes "Odysseus' jeers are also to be understood by reference to the *Iliad*'s *aristeia*, in which the victor addresses his rival (whether still alive or already dead). Odysseus emphasizes his own strength and the moral justification of his actions."

distance.[59] Even with this amount of distance separating Odysseus and his crew from the cyclopean island, Polyphemus is still able to launch a mountain peak in front of the ship (*Od.* 9.480-6). When Odysseus makes his boast a second time, he is twice the distance from land as when he made his first boast (*Od.* 9.491). In response, Polyphemus throws an even larger stone at the ship, and this time it falls just short of the ship (*Od.* 9.537-40). It must be assumed that in his anger, Polyphemus was using all of his energy to try and kill Odysseus. One must conclude that this was the limit that Polyphemus could throw. Therefore, he was not able to throw an object so far as Goat Island, for the force of the rock in the water pushed Odysseus' ship forth onto that island (*Od.* 9.542).

In summation, Polyphemus had neither the technological prowess in shipbuilding nor any ship, which could have been abandoned on his island, nor did he possess the natural strength to launch any foreign missiles onto Goat Island.[60] The Cyclopes could not cause harm to any inhabitants of Goat Island, either in person, or with projectiles. If all this evidence is considered together, Goat Island simply cannot be Hyperia, the former

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[59] This particular phrase presents some logistical problems. How could Polyphemus hear Odysseus the second time when he was twice the distance that a voice could travel? Furthermore, before Odysseus first travels to the cyclopean island, he hears the bleating of goats and sheep when he is still on Goat Island (*Od.* 9.167). A possible explanation may be that the phrase ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε τόσσον ἀπῆν, ὅσσον τε γέγωνε βοήσας <<*When I was as far away as a shouting voice carries*>> (*Od.* 9.473) is simply a figure of speech. It may be similar to our modern saying "a stone's throw away". In this saying, the distance a stone can be thrown is never a definite measure, and the use of this phrase is never meant to describe a definitive distance. It is likely that in the same way, the distance one's voice carries is not meant to be a definitive measure or to describe a precise distance. It is merely a figure of speech and as such, the exact meaning of the words should not be taken at face value. Thus, this phrase is used by Homer as a means to show a general and indeterminate (but always considerable) distance. When Odysseus shouts the second time, he is roughly twice that distance away.

[60] The logistical problems of appointing Goat Island as Hyperia are briefly alluded to, but not fully explained in: J.N. Bremmer, "A Homeric Goat Island" *The Classical Quarterly* Vol. 36, No. 1 (1986), pp. 256-257.

home of the Phaeacians. It is a shame, for Clay is quite right in noticing the similarities between Scheria and Hyperia. Her final conclusion may not be correct, but the evidence leading her to that conclusion certainly is striking. It may be that, instead of there being a relationship of identity between Hyperia and Goat Island, there were numerous islands that all offer similar environments including groves of black poplars and springs. These islands all have utopian qualities, because they are meant for peoples who enjoy a special status with the gods.[61]

There is one final suggestion that could be made, which would validate Clay's argument: namely that Homer was simply a bit sloppy with his details.[62] It is entirely possible that in composing this poem, the poet either did not weigh all of this evidence together, or that he thought such matters were of little importance and would have been overlooked by individual audience members. In the end, such details become a matter of personal choice for the audience. It seems most likely that the inclusion of Goat Island had two main purposes; to provide a safe location for the bulk of Odysseus' crew who did not follow him into the cave[63], and to provide a glimpse of the marvels the Cyclopes could have had, if only they yearned to spread their sheets and sail.

Now that the nature of their utopian land and the Cyclopes' reaction to that land have been discussed, it is important to analyze their response to the gods who gave them this land. When Odysseus warns Polyphemus that he should respect the laws of ξενία lest

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[61] An alternate suggestion for the location of Hyperia will be made further below.
[62] Horace even alludes to this idea in the *Ars Poetica*, *quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus* (359).
[63] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit.*, p.21, n. 116-36.

Zeus avenge any wrongdoings, the Cyclops replies with a most impious statement; νήπιός εἰς, ὦ ξεῖν᾽, ἢ τηλόθεν εἰλήλουθας, / ὅς με θεοὺς κέλεαι ἢ δειδίμεν ἢ ἀλέασθαι: / οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν / οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰμεν <<*Stranger, you are a fool, or have come from far away, when you tell me to fear the gods or shrink away from them: for the Cyclopes do not concern themselves with Zeus the aegis-shaker, nor the other blessed gods, since we are much stronger than them*>> (*Od.* 9. 273-6). In this statement, Polyphemus speaks not only for himself but for all the Cyclopes on this island. This, then, represents the attitude among the race and is not representative of one particularly impious individual.

Not only does Polyphemus not fear any of the gods, he is actually hubristic enough to suggest that he is their better.[64] The poetry of Homer has many mythological references to people suggesting they are greater than the gods such as Thamyris (*Il.* 2.595-600*);* and Niobe (*Il.* 24.602-9). In both cases, the boaster is severely punished after the gods demonstrate their superiority. It would be one thing for an average mortal who holds no special status among the gods to be so impious, but the fact that the Cyclopes have been given a land so beautiful and bountiful by the gods surely underscores their

[64] Euripides makes full use of the hubris in his play the *Cyclops* (316-345). In the play, Polyphemus mentions how he does not care for his father's shrines, and how he does not fear Zeus, for he is stronger than him. He then gives a rather lengthy explanation of how when Zeus pours down his rain, Polyphemus waits in his cave and warms up by the fire eating away. He then states that the earth must provide food for him, not by desire, but by compulsion and necessity. Polyphemus does not offer any sacrifice to these gods, but rather only to his stomach. Thus, the source of Polyphemus' hubris comes from the fact that he knows the gods will work for him whether he offers them sacrifice or not. Since he gets what he wants without sacrificing to the gods, he explicitly chooses not to make those sacrifices. Therefore, since the gods do what he wants without receiving any favour in return, Polyphemus assumes he is greater than they are. In this scene, Euripides did a marvellous job of taking the scene found in Homer and expanding on it and fleshing out the hubristic character of Polyphemus.

ungrateful nature. Although Polyphemus is blinded at the hands of Odysseus and his men for his wrongdoings inside the cave, the race as a whole is not punished for their hubristic attitudes. Thus, the blinding is merely the punishment by Odysseus for Polyphemus eating his crew. The blinding is not a form of divine justice but a mortal one.

The impiety of Polyphemus reveals his poor character in light of all the benefits he receives from the gods. Moreover, it is pushed to an extreme level when, as soon as trouble comes his way, he turns to those very same gods for help. After the blinding and Odysseus' escape and boast, Polyphemus turns to his father, Poseidon, for help and vengeance. Polyphemus knows he will heal him, because he is his son, while no other god will do so (*Od.* 9.519-21).[65] This phrasing seems to suggest that while Poseidon will help him, he will only do so reluctantly: αὐτὸς δ', αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃς', ἰήσεται <<*He will cure me, if he wants*>> (*Od*. 9.520). The audience never discovers whether Poseidon does heal his son's eye, but it could be a fairly safe assumption, as he does grant his son's other

[65] Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 364, n.520, suggests "perhaps a touch of sympathy for the blinded monster induced Homer to mention this possibility of a cure. But Odysseus, still full of rage for his devoured companions, feels none, as his answer shows." I find the possibility of any sympathy for Polyphemus to be somewhat ludicrous. Homer has spent most of this book setting up Polyphemus as a character that everyone wants to suffer. He is completely spoiled by the gods and offers them no honours, and savagely attacks and consumes Odysseus' companions two at a time. He represents everything that is not to be desired in humanity. He certainly receives no sympathy from Odysseus, nor would he receive any from the gods. Although Poseidon will come to help him, there is certainly the sense that he will do so only out of fatherly commitment and not because of any level of sympathy. Furthermore, the audience only feels disgust towards Polyphemus, not sympathy. In fact, in light of the ferocity he displays towards Odysseus' companions, Polyphemus still gets off fairly lightly. Had it not been for the fact that Odysseus and his surviving men would have died in the sealed cave if they had killed him, he most certainly would have met a swift and entirely justified end at the hands of Odysseus. Rather, I think that the possibility of a cure was inserted to enhance Polyphemus' hubristic and spoiled character. Even after completely dismissing the power of the gods, he will rely on them again to heal his eye.

request, for vengeance.[66] Polyphemus prays that Poseidon ensure that Odysseus never reach home or at the very least that he return home alone with his crew and ships destroyed and his house is disarray (*Od.* 9.528-35). Although at this point in the narrative the audience does not know the eventual outcome at the end of the poem, they will soon find out that Polyphemus' prayer is heeded and his request comes to fruition.[67]

3.5 The Phaeacians (Part One)

The first physical description of Scheria[68], the land of the Phaeacians, is an eye-witness account by Odysseus. He first notes the mountains sticking out of the water using a simile of a shield lying on the water top (*Od.* 5.279-81).[69] The imagery works as a way

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[66] It should be noted that when Aeneas meets Polyphemus three months later, he is still blind (Verg. *Aen.* 3.658-9).

[67] It must be noted that even though the audience has not yet heard the end of the poem and all of the actions that unfolds, the outcome is hinted at in the proem (*Od.*1.1-10). The audience knows that his remaining companions all died on account of eating the cattle of the Sun. Furthermore, the audience is also likely aware of the general outline of the epic cycle, and so it should be no surprise to them that Odysseus does finally make it home without his companions. With all of this being said, even though they may know these basic details, at this point in the poem, they have not yet occurred, and so still remain in the sphere of possibility. We can compare this to today's modern film based on historical events. We may know the general outline of the plot, but how everything precisely unfolds is still unknown and is left up to the discretion of the filmmakers.

[68] W.W. Merry, Odyssey *Books I-XII* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1870), p. 65, n. 34, notes "Scheria only means 'coast-line' and has no 'local habitation.' The ships, gardens, and palace are the marvels of fairy-tale, and the people and their country are equally fabulous." I fully agree with Merry here. This entire episode and every descriptive detail contained within are not to be placed anywhere in the real-world as some have done, such as when Thucydides associates Scheria with Corcyra (1.25; 3.70).

[69] A similar view-from-afar description of an island is found in Archilochus (fr. 21 *IEG*^{2}). In this fragment, he compares Thasos to the spine of an ass. Clearly in this example, he derides the appearance of the island as uneven and base. It is not likely that Archilochus had this Homeric description in mind, but it may reflect a common pastime of sailors whereby they describe lands on the horizon using comparisons of common everyday objects. This idea could be similar to when people compare the shapes of clouds to everyday objects (Ar. *Nub*. 436-7, Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.2.380-85). However, in both of the Greek examples, although there certainly is a visual representation accurately describing the appearance of the island, both poets made their choice carefully in order to add an additional layer to the simile by making a comparison to an object which contains a symbolic nature in addition to the visual representation. Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 302, n.281, notes regarding Aristarchus' emendation of a ἐρινός << *Fig tree*>> rather than a ῥινός

to show the land is protective and isolated; an idea that becomes more apparent as Odysseus gets closer. Once he is closer to the shore, there is a very vivid and compelling scene as Odysseus fears for his life due to the dangerous approach. καὶ δὴ δοῦπον ἄκουσε ποτὶ σπιλάδεσσι θαλάσσης: / ῥόχθει γὰρ μέγα κῦμα ποτὶ ξερὸν ἠπείροιο / δεινὸν ἐρευγόμενον, εἴλυτο δὲ πάνθ᾽ ἁλὸς ἄχνη: / οὐ γὰρ ἔσαν λιμένες νηῶν ὄχοι, οὐδ᾽ ἐπιωγαί. / ἀλλ᾽ ἀκταὶ προβλῆτες ἔσαν σπιλάδες τε πάγοι τε <<*He heard the crashing of the sea against the rocks: for a great wave roared against the shore of the mainland, bellowing terribly, and everything was covered in the froth of the sea: for there were no harbours that protect ships, nor roadsteads, but there were promontories jutting out, rocks, and reefs*>> (*Od.* 5.401-5).[70] This particular shoreline is dangerous and certainly unwelcoming to travelers.[71]

The scene changes dramatically once Odysseus is on the island, when the audience is given the perspective of the Phaeacians. As Nausicaa, guided by Athena, enters upon her parents, they are situated in a tranquil environment, participating in activities typical of palace life. Her mother is sitting by the fireside, spinning wool (*Od.* 6.52-3). Her father is about to leave the palace and go to the assembly (*Od.* 6. 53-5).[72] In

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<<*Shield*>> "makes a weak comparison." He interprets the visual representation of a shield as "a flat coast with mountains rising like a boss; or else to a shield shaped promontory."

[70] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit*., p. 285, n. 403, notes "There are two verbs ἐρεύγομαι, (1) 'spew', of subjects with literal or metaphorical throats, and (2) 'roar'. The latter is preferable here, for what impressed Homer about the seas, after its colour, was its noise." In this passage, R.J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1924), p. 156, translates the word with the same sense.

[71] Just like Prospero's island in *The Tempest* and Moore's *Utopia*.

[72] A.F. Garvie, Odyssey *Books VI-VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 95, n.52-5, notes "when we first meet Arete and Alcinous they are fulfilling the traditional roles of woman and man in

both cases, the Phaeacian nobility are merely going about their day-to-day lives. It is again no coincidence that the first description of Alcinous is on his way to the assembly, just as both Nestor and Menelaus were engaging in civic activities earlier in the poem (*Od.* 3.7-9; 4.3-4). This scene is important, for it immediately provides a sharp contrast to the danger that Odysseus has suffered trying to get ashore, but it also leads the audience to believe that this is just another ordinary palace with ordinary people. Although there have been a few hints, to be discussed below, that there is more to the Phaeacians than meets the eye, it is not until Odysseus, a foreigner, is able to witness the many splendours of Scheria, that the audience is made aware of how marvellous a land it truly is.

Nausicaa provides Odysseus with a brief description of her land when instructing him on how to make his way to the palace. The bulk of this description involves the Phaeacians' wondrous harbours. This emphasis on ships certainly shows how seafaring is at the core of Phaeacian life. Even the names of the princess Nausicaa and her grand-father, the founder of their city, Nausithous reflect this point. The ship is such a necessity of life for them that, πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστιόν ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ <<*For there is a ship-shed for every man*>> (*Od.* 6.265). This thought is taken even further when she notes οὐ γὰρ Φαιήκεσσι μέλει βιὸς οὐδὲ φαρέτρη, / ἀλλ᾽ ἱστοὶ καὶ ἐρετμὰ νεῶν καὶ νῆες ἐΐσαι <<*For neither the bow nor the quiver are a concern to the Phaeacians, but the masts and oars of ships and well-balanced ships are*>> (*Od.* 6.270-1). And so, instruments of war or

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civilised Homeric society. Arete is inside the house, by the domestic hearth, the focus of female activity, performing, and supervising her servants in the traditional task of spinning; cf. 305. Her husband is on his way to the outside world of men to take part in a meeting of the βουλή."

hunting are not important to the Phaeacians, only the ship. Furthermore, she makes a brief mention of an area dedicated to Poseidon (*Od.* 6.267).[73] He is clearly the appropriate god to whom such a sea-loving race would make their offerings, and their pious nature is revealed before Odysseus has even set foot in their city. These hints provided by Nausicaa begin to reveal some of the distinctive features of Phaeacian culture, and yet it is important to note that so far the audience has learned these details only through report, and it is not until Odysseus sees everything with his own eyes, that the true nature of Phaeacian life and their land becomes apparent.

The beauty of the land is first touched upon by Nausicaa as she explains her plan for Odysseus. She describes an area containing a grove of poplars sacred to Athena, a spring, a meadow, and her father's estate with adjoining orchard (*Od.* 6.291-3).[74] To put it simply, this land is a delight to the senses. While this description is comprised of only three lines of poetry, providing a gorgeous description of the scenery, there is another mention of an area dedicated to a god, in this case Athena. At this point in the poem, Odysseus has had only one conversation with a Phaeacian, and yet he knows full well that they inhabit a beautiful land and they are a pious people.

The lavishness and the spectacular come out in full force as Odysseus is able to walk up to the palace of Alcinous by himself. This description is among the longest in the

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[73] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit.*, p. 310, n. 266, describes this as "an enclosure certainly (that is, a τέμενος in the classical sense), with an altar, cf. xiii. 187, and perhaps including one of the νηοί mentioned at 10. Poseidon, the obvious patron of a seafaring people, was the progenitor of the Phaeacian royal house." Garvie, *op.cit.*, p. 148, n. 266, seems to agree that it is probably not a temple but rather an altar.

[74] Thucydides mentions a τέμενος dedicated to Zeus and Alcinous on Corcyra; ἐκ τοῦ τε Διὸς τοῦ τεμένους καὶ τοῦ Ἀλκίνου (3.70.4).

entire poem with regards to visual aesthetics, being composed of forty-eight lines. The first aspects that Odysseus notices are the structures and decorations made of various precious metals (*Od.* 7.86-90). The rarest of the substances used, in the poetry of Homer, was cobalt.[75] It is the only occurrence of the metal in the *Odyssey*, and the only use of it as decoration as opposed to armour, as it was used in the *Iliad* (11.24, 35; 18.564). Although it may not have the grandeur of gold or silver, its rare use in the *Odyssey* certainly denotes that this palace is an exceptional one. There are also even more elaborate decorations. Bronze walls, silver pillars, and golden doors form the basic structure of the house. These descriptions are all used to illustrate the majestic and awe-inspiring nature of the Phaeacians and more specifically, Alcinous and his family.

3.6 The Palace of Menelaus

The palace of Menelaus is quite comparable to that of Alcinous in regards to its visual description. Telemachus notes the extravagance, χαλκοῦ τε στεροπὴν κὰδ δώματα ἠχήεντα / χρυσοῦ τ᾽ ἠλέκτρου τε καὶ ἀργύρου ἠδ᾽ ἐλέφαντος <<*Through the house, there was gleaming of bronze, gold, electrum, silver, and ivory*>> (*Od.* 4.72-3).[76] He even

[75] There is some scholarly debate as to what κύανος actually was. It has been identified as cobalt, lapis lazuli, or niello. For more information on its usage in Homer, see: E. Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert Ltd., 1974), pp. 79-84. Merry, *op.cit*., p. 84, n. 87, notes that, "κύανος is a doubtful word. In Il. 11.24, it seems to be spoken of as a metal, and so many render 'blue steel,' ie. tempered till blue, like a watch-spring. Others, more naturally, regard it as a native ore of copper of a bright blue like verditer. It may have been in the form of enamel." For further analysis of the term κύανος, see R.D. Griffith, "God's Blue Hair in Homer and in Eighteenth-Dynasty Egypt" *Classical Quarterly* Vol. 50, No. 2 (2005), pp. 329-34.

[76] The word ἤλεκτρον is only found here and in two other passages in Homer (*Od.* 15.460; 18.296). Cunliffe, *op.cit*, p. 180, translates it as "amber", or "beads of amber" in the plural. Merry, *op.cit*., p. 51, n.

makes a comparison to the palace of Zeus; Ζηνός που τοιήδε γ᾽ Ὀλυμπίου ἔνδοθεν αὐλή, / ὅσσα τάδ᾽ ἄσπετα πολλά <<*The courtyard of Olympian Zeus must be like this inside, such a great amount of everything*>> (*Od.* 4.74-5).[77] This is certainly a form of flattery directed at Menelaus, however, the palace so succinctly and colourfully described may seem truly other-worldly to Telemachus. The splendour of the court of Menelaus convincingly parallels the lifestyle and nature of Menelaus himself. However, it is not just that Menelaus owns such stately possessions that make him grand; it is how he acquired such goods.

Menelaus first responds by dismissing the flattery, τέκνα φίλ᾽, ἦ τοι Ζηνὶ βροτῶν οὐκ ἄν τις ἐρίζοι: / ἀθάνατοι γὰρ τοῦ γε δόμοι καὶ κτήματ᾽ ἔασιν <<*Dear child, there is not anyone of mortals who could compete with Zeus: for his houses and possessions are immortal*>> (*Od.* 4.78-9). He is able to be polite to Telemachus by accepting his flattery, yet pious and humble by noting that Zeus and his possessions are better than any man's. Menelaus then provides a brief account of the many exotic lands he encountered on his journey home, Κύπρον Φοινίκην τε καὶ Αἰγυπτίους ἐπαληθείς, / Αἰθίοπάς θ᾽ ἱκόμην καὶ Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβοὺς / καὶ Λιβύην <<*Having visited Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Egypt, I*

73, states, "it is impossible to decide whether this is amber – so called, as Buttman thinks, from its attractive properties (ἕλκω) – or a mixture of gold and silver in the proportion 5:1, which it certainly meant in later times." Stanford, *op.cit.*, p. 270, n. 73, notes, "the fact that it is mentioned with metals here suggests that it refers to the natural alloy of gold and silver found in Lydia." He does also note that as it should be translated in the two other uses as 'amber' suggests it could also be done here. I tend to agree with Stanford here. Amber would seem out of place in this particular description. As with the palace of Alcinous, the structure is built entirely of precious metals. It would seem fitting that the same is true with the palace of Menelaus.

[77] Thus, we are to imagine the palace of Zeus as a more aggrandized version of the palaces found in Sparta and Scheria.

reached the Ethiopians, Sidonians, and Erembians, and Lybia>> (*Od.* 4.83-5). It is important to note that he visited the Ethiopians, a land thus far mentioned as a place Poseidon is currently visiting on the fringes of the world (*Od*. 1.22, 26; 5.282). He also makes note of Libya where the birth cycle of sheep is radically sped up. It is there that sheep give birth thrice a year and consequently the inhabitants always have excess meat, cheese, and milk (*Od.* 4.85-9).[78] Menelaus follows up these fantastical descriptions by noting that it was there where he acquired many of his possessions (*Od.* 4.90-1). However, he also notes that while he was making these acquisitions, his brother was murdered in his own home, and thus ὣς οὔ τοι χαίρων τοῖσδε κτεάτεσσιν ἀνάσσω <<*So there is no pleasure that I rule over these possessions*>> (*Od.* 4.93). The implication is that he would gladly trade all of these other-worldly possessions to have his brother back among the living. It is this final statement that reveals how, although Menelaus is a splendid man with many extravagant possessions, he is also an honest and caring man.

3.7 The Phaeacians (Part Two)

Returning to the palace of Alcinous, the next detail of this elaborate description involves creatures manufactured by Hephaestus, χρύσειοι δ᾽ ἑκάτερθε καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες ἦσαν, / οὓς Ἥφαιστος ἔτευξεν ἰδυίῃσι πραπίδεσσι / δῶμα φυλασσέμεναι μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοιο, / ἀθανάτους ὄντας καὶ ἀγήρως ἤματα πάντα <<*One either side there were dogs of gold and silver, which Hephaestus fashioned with his cunning and ingenuity,*

[78] This also suggests closeness to the gods, who are able to manipulate time (*Od*. 23.241-6).

guarding the house of great-hearted Alcinous, and all the days they are immortal and ageless>> (*Od.* 7.91-4). These are among the most spectacular sights in the palace. They are what the modern audience could only describe as robots fashioned by the god of the forge. Their metal frames and immortal nature mark them as something truly extraordinary. It is possible that they acted as guard dogs, or perhaps were there merely for show.[79] They seem to be quite similar in nature to the attendants of Hephaestus in the *Iliad* who are χρύσειαι ζωῇσι νεήνισιν εἰοικυῖαι. / τῇς ἐν μὲν νόος ἐστὶ μετὰ φρεσίν, ἐν δὲ καὶ αὐδὴ / καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτων δὲ θεῶν ἄπο ἔργα ἴσασιν <<*Golden, and resemble living young women. There is intelligence in their hearts, and speech and strength in them, and they learnt from the immortal gods*>> (*Il.* 18.418-20). In this case the creatures are again fashioned by Hephaestus as a means to help in his day-to-day life. They give the audience a feeling of awe as they help differentiate between the technology of the average man and that of the gods. However, these creatures, when considered in the context of the Phaeacian palace, create an astounding atmosphere and make the Phaeacians seem above regular mortals.

The next section of the description is of the assembly room (*Od.* 7.95-102). The main details involve a series of decorated thrones that line the walls. This particular setting seems quite traditional. The important aspect of it is that ἔνθα δὲ Φαιήκων

[79] Garvie, *op.cit,* pp. 181-2, n. 91-4, prefers to see them as statues rather than robots. He notes, "94 suggests that the whole description is humorous. Artificial watchdogs, which would seem less effective than real ones, are actually more useful, in that they do not die or grow old." I simply cannot agree with Garvie here. I think these dogs are meant to impress, not to induce laughter. Their immortal nature is rendered irrelevant if they are mere statues. Furthermore, how could statues do anything remotely considered guarding? Their immortal nature makes them a gift from the gods like no other received by mortals, thus increasing the splendour of Alcinous' palace and his status among mortals.

ἡγήτορες ἑδριόωντο / πίνοντες καὶ ἔδοντες: ἐπηετανὸν γὰρ ἔχεσκον <<*The leaders of the Phaeacians sat there, drinking and eating: for they held [assemblies] for all the year*>> (*Od.* 7.98-9). This detail is explicit in setting the tone for a people who understand the sanctity of having appropriate assemblies where food and drink are served. This is certainly meant to underscore the evil nature of the Suitors, who have elaborate meals because they can and not because they should. Also included in this section is the fact that the Phaeacians regularly hold these meetings. This is perhaps an oblique reference to Ithacan life and the Suitors after the departure of Odysseus. As they no longer hold meetings, they ignore their civic duties. This contrasts sharply with the Phaeacians, who know their role in society and adhere to it.

The industrious nature of the Phaeacians is also highlighted during this scene. There are fifty servant women who spend their days grinding grain, weaving at the loom, and producing olive oil (*Od.* 7.103-11). This seems like a traditional scene of servant women in the palace. It is the comparison made between Phaeacian men and women that sets them apart from ordinary people. ὅσσον Φαίηκες περὶ πάντων ἴδριες ἀνδρῶν / νῆα θοὴν ἐνὶ πόντῳ ἐλαυνέμεν, ὣς δὲ γυναῖκες / ἱστῶν τεχνῆσσαι: πέρι γάρ σφισι δῶκεν Ἀθήνη / ἔργα τ᾽ ἐπίστασθαι περικαλλέα καὶ φρένας ἐσθλάς <<*As much as the Phaeacian men are skilful beyond all men at driving quick ships on the sea, so too are the women at working the loom: for Athena taught them to learn the lovely deeds and have good*

hearts>> (*Od.* 7.108-11).[80] Early on, the audience has been made aware that sailing is the essence of Phaeacian life. It is at the very core of what makes them 'Phaeacian' and is their greatest passion. It is important to note too, that ἱστός, meaning both <<*mast*>> and <<*loom*>>, is at the core of both the male and female life. If the women go about their weaving in the same manner as the men do with their sailing, one cannot help but get the impression that they go about their daily work in a fervent manner.

The description then leaves the contents of the palace and reveals details about the agriculture outside (*Od.* 7.112-31). It begins with the orchard and describes its limits, followed by a list of the various fruits that grow there. Pears, pomegranates, apples, figs, and olives all grow in abundance. This list, while detailed, is not surprising as it is the king's orchard and does not immediately strike the audience with a sense of awe. However, it is not what these various fruits are that is impressive, but how they grow. The audience is told, τάων οὔ ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ἀπολείπει / χείματος οὐδὲ θέρευς, ἐπετήσιος: ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰεὶ / Ζεφυρίη πνείουσα τὰ μὲν φύει, ἄλλα δὲ πέσσει <<*Never does their fruit perish, and it is lacking neither in winter nor summer, coming all through the year: but always the West Wind blowing, produces some, while ripening others*>> (*Od.* 7.117-9).[81] The fruit grows in a constant cycle, where there is always some fruit just at the ripening stage, while other ones are reaching maturity. This process is not

[80] Garvie, *op.cit*, p. 185, n. 108-10, notes "in this ideal society the Phaeacian women are as excellent in female ἀρετή as are the men in their own peculiar male ἀρετή."
[81] The West Wind also blows in the Elysian Plain (*Od.* 4.567). Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 325, n. 119, notes, "a westerly wind, is a pleasant ripening breeze in this fairyland… but elsewhere in Homer it is regarded as a disagreeable (δυσαής) storm-wind." He also notes that the disagreeable nature of the West Wind may originate from the coast of Asia Minor where such winds are harsh.

impeded by the cycles of the seasons, for they grow the same in winter as they do in summer.

It is important to note that this is not a system of crop rotation where different fruits are planted in the same area depending on the season. The description is explicit that the fruit seems to grow magically in place of one just picked; ὄγχνη ἐπ᾽ ὄγχνῃ γηράσκει, μῆλον δ᾽ ἐπὶ μήλῳ, / αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ σταφυλῇ σταφυλή, σῦκον δ᾽ ἐπὶ σύκῳ <<*Pear grows on pear, apple on apple, also grape-cluster on grape-cluster, fig on fig*>> (*Od.* 7.120-1).[82] This process is not due to mortal manual labour, but it is the result of divine intervention. As mentioned above, it is the West Wind personified that aids the Phaeacians in their agriculture.[83] This is quite similar to the Cyclopes, whose crops are aided by the rain of Zeus (*Od.* 9.111). The theme is expanded upon in that there is also a bed of herbs or greens, which again ἐπηετανὸν γανόωσαι <<*Are brightly green all through the year*>> (*Od.* 7.128). There is a constant supply through the seasons. It is reasonable to conclude that this never-ending supply of food was not distributed solely within the palace, but throughout the city as well. This idea gains further credibility when considering the springs located in the orchard. There are two springs there, and while one

[82] This point is conveyed in the use of polyptoton. This is a device also in battle narrative (*Il.* 13.131-33=16.215-17). These descriptions of all of the various fruits anticipate the garden at the home of Laertes (*Od.* 24.339-44). Garvie, *op.cit*., p. 186, n. 112-32, notes that, "it is hard to believe that this parallelism is accidental… on the other hand there is a contrast between the fantasy world of Scheria in which the trees bear never-failing fruit, summer and winter, and in which we hear little of human labour, and the 'real' world of Ithaca in which the garden requires the hard work of Laertes." I fully agree with Garvie in this regard. That relatively the same products can be produced both in fairyland and the real-world but by employing entirely different methods confirms the Phaeacians' status as ἀγχίθεοι. Like the gods who live a life free from toil, so do the Phaeacians in regards to their fruit production. This aspect then further emphasizes the contrasting nature between gods and mortals, while solidifying the Phaeacians status as being near to the gods.

[83] Homer treats the winds as anthropomorphic deities, cf. *Il.* 23.198-204.

runs through the orchard, presumably providing water for the inhabitants of the palace, the other runs outside the courtyard. It is there, ὅθεν ὑδρεύοντο πολῖται <<*Whence the citizens gather their water*>> (*Od.* 7.131). Thus, the palace and the royal family dwelling within are the benefactors for the entire city. It is from them that the citizens receive their water, and quite possibly their food as well. This may be evidence that the state or civic leader, here represented by the palace and royal family, was supposed to benefit the city, not necessarily with food and water, but with some good for the people whom they represent.

It is clear from the extensive description that Alcinous' is no ordinary palace. With the two previous but brief claims that the Phaeacians are reverent toward the gods Poseidon and Athena, coupled with the fact that they have a divine garden aided by the West Wind, and even robot-like creatures fashioned by Hephaestus, it is clear that there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the mortal Phaeacians and the immortal Olympians. The Phaeacians worship the gods, who in turn honour them, providing many gifts vital to their sustenance. Nowhere is the benefit the Phaeacians receive from the gods more clear than with the following line, which concludes the description: τοῖ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐν Ἀλκινόοιο θεῶν ἔσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα <<*Such are the splendid gifts of the gods in the palace of Alcinous*>> (*Od.* 7.132).[84] The gods clearly hold the Phaeacians in high regard. Now that the beneficial and reciprocal relationship between the gods and Phaeacians has been

[84] Garvie, *op.cit*., p. 191, n. 132, notes, "this line sums up the description that began at 84. Not only the dogs made by Hephaestus (92) but the whole complex of palace and garden are gifts of the gods to Alcinous."

assessed, it is important to understand how close the Phaeacians are physically to the gods, as well as where their physical surroundings actually are within the geography of the *Odyssey*.

The first reference to the Phaeacians comes from no man, but rather from the king of the gods, Zeus himself. He states of the Phaeacians that οἳ ἀγχίθεοι γεγάασιν <<*They are near to the gods*>> (*Od.* 5.35). They are the only people in the works of Homer referred to in this way. In fact, the only other time Homer uses this adjective is another reference to the Phaeacians (*Od.* 19.279). From the context, it is difficult to tell whether they are near to them physically, spiritually, or genealogically.[85] A brief genealogy is provided for the family of Alcinous (*Od*. 7.56-77). It says that Poseidon lay with Periboea, who mothered Nausithous. He in turn was the father of Alcinous and the grandfather of Arete. Thus, Poseidon is the grandfather and great-grandfather of Alcinous and Arete respectively. They are close genealogically. From the description of the palace, the audience knows the Phaeacians are also close to the gods spiritually. It is now necessary to understand if they are close physically as well. And so, an examination of the clues of their whereabouts is in order.

Before the audience has a chance to meet the Phaeacians, a short account of their history is provided (*Od.* 6.4-12). The Phaeacians formerly lived near the Cyclopes in a land called Hyperia. The Cyclopes, on account of their greater strength, harrowed the

[85] R.B. Rutherford, *Homer:* Odyssey *Books XIX and XX* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 174 writes that the adjective "seems to signify their special status, as a people particularly favoured by the gods, with whom they deal directly and whom they have even entertained to dinner."

Phaeacians until they decided to lead a mass migration to found a new city. Nausithous led the migration to the island of Scheria. As has been previously discussed, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the Cyclopes to have harassed the Phaeacians, if they inhabited Goat Island. The difficulty remains in identifying exactly where the Phaeacians used to live, οἳ πρὶν μέν ποτ᾽ ἔναιον ἐν εὐρυχόρῳ Ὑπερείῃ, / ἀγχοῦ Κυκλώπων ἀνδρῶν ὑπερηνορεόντων, / οἵ σφεας σινέσκοντο, βίηφι δὲ φέρτεροι ἦσαν *<<Formerly they lived in spacious Hyperia, near to the Cyclopes, men quite overbearing, who caused them harm, being greater in strength>>* (*Od*. 6.4-6). On the surface, this statement seems quite ambivalent. The key word in these lines is ἀγχοῦ. How "closely" did the Phaeacians formerly live to the Cyclopes?

The word ἀγχοῦ, a spondee, and its more frequently used trochaic alternative, ἄγχι, are fairly common in the poetry of Homer. Both can be used as either an adverb or a preposition with the genitive and less frequently the dative case.[86] In their most general sense, they are translated as 'at a short distance' or 'nearby'.[87] A more detailed analysis shows that the words seem to be used in only a few particular instances; when two individuals are near to each in conversation, or in combat. The former usage is frequent in the context of two mortals coming close for conversation (*Od.* 4.70; 17.592), or an immortal standing close to a mortal (*Od.* 2.417; 4.370). The latter usage occurs more frequently in the *Iliad*, (16.114; 23.520). In either case the sense is clear; both individuals

[86] The need for either a spondee or trochee to fit a particular metrical pattern seems to be the only difference between the two.
[87] Cunliffe, *op.cit*., p.5.

are close enough to each other that they can either converse with each other or engage in hand-to-hand combat, very little physical space exists between the two.

If the general definition of ἀγχοῦ is applied in the context of the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes, as it has been in other lines of Homeric poetry, the two parties must have been very close to each other, if not side-by-side. It is likely that most scholars would agree on this inference, however, it is still not certain whether it is their islands that are near to each other, or their dwellings. Some scholars, such as Clay, certainly seem to imply that it is their islands that are near to each other. However, Clay's argument does not seem to take every detail into account. The entire narrative and physical descriptions in book nine all make perfect sense if the audience accepts that the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes lived side-by-side on the same island. There is nothing in the text that suggests otherwise. This would then mean that the island the Cyclopes now inhabit is in fact Hyperia. This argument allows for the Cyclopes to have previously pillaged the Phaeacians while never having ships or ship-builders. The usage of ἀγχοῦ would then fall into line with all of the other usages found in Homer; the Phaeacians and Cyclopes literally lived side-by-side.

It must be noted that there is one instance of the word ἄγχι that may not adhere to the standard usage of the word. It occurs when Odysseus converses with Calypso in book five: οὐδέ τις ἄγχι βροτῶν πόλις <<*And there is no city of men nearby*>> (*Od.* 5.101). In this case, it remains unclear whether Odysseus is referring to the lack of any cities on the island itself, which would be near to Calypso's palace, thus describing the remoteness of

Odysseus on the island, or whether he is describing the severity of the remoteness of the island itself in relation to other lands or peoples. It would actually work quite well if both meanings are applied to Odysseus' situation on Calypso's island. He is both isolated from humanity by being on the island where there are no other mortals, but is also isolated from humanity in that no other populated islands are even near to hers. This usage also seems to be unique in that it is used with a negative adverb to demonstrate a lack of closeness to others, while in its other usages; it is used in a positive context to illustrate the physical closeness between two individuals.

While the location of Hyperia has now been identified with some certainty, the location of Scheria still remains in doubt. In the confines of this research, it is not necessary or worthwhile to identify Scheria with any known geographical location. There are, however, some vague clues that at least identify where Scheria is not. In the passage describing the founding of the Phaeacian colony on Scheria, there is a reference that they settled in a place; ἑκὰς ἀνδρῶν ἀλφηστάων <<*Far away from men who labour for bread*>> (*Od.* 6.8). According to Dimock, it is the eating of bread which characterizes the men in the real world of Odysseus.[88] If this is valid, then the Phaeacians consciously chose to settle in a land far away from other mortal men. No known geographical location of Hyperia can be ascertained, or should even be attempted. The location seems to be equally distant from the world of men, for Odysseus was lost at sea for nine straight days

[88] Dimock, *op.cit*., p. 111.

(*Od.* 9.82).[89] On the tenth day he arrived at the land of the Lotus-Eaters, and from there he sailed on to Hyperia, a land whose name suggests being at an extreme end. Logically, one also has to assume that the Phaeacians were trying to distance themselves as far as possible from the Cyclopes. At no point temporally or geographically were the Phaeacians present in the world of men, to which Odysseus and Ithaca belong. Thus, the Phaeacians must have travelled to the opposite side of the circle of the earth where men do not eat bread. They have never been a part of the land of traditional mortals, yet found a land far away from the Cyclopes, who belong to that same realm.

The question now remains as to what exactly is the relationship between the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes. A short summary of the details of their similarities and differences is required. Both groups share very similar beginnings. They are both children of Poseidon and thus have immortal lineage (*Od.* 7.56-6; 9.518-9). As has been argued above, they both began on the same island, which denotes a higher status than other beings descended from the gods. Hyperia is a land where everything is provided for its inhabitants (*Od.* 9.105-15). Food grows magically for them. There is also a sense of sheer beauty on the island making it not only benevolent, but also a pleasure to the senses.

[89] I regard this nine day period at sea as the Homeric equivalent of Neverland's 'past the second star on your right and straight on until morning' or Wonderland's 'through the rabbit hole'. Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 351, n. 80-1, regards Cythera off the Cape of Maleia as "the last clearly identifiable places in Odysseus' wanderings. After this he leaves the sphere of *Geography* and enters Wonderland." This nine day period reflects a transition of which Odysseus is probably not aware until he meets the various fantastical peoples and lands. Furthermore, nine periods of x is epic's way of saying, 'a very long time': Hephaestus spent nine years with Thetis and Eurynome when Hera cast him out of heaven (*Il.* 18.394ff), and when a god perjures himself by Styx, he is banished for nine years (Hes. *Theog*. 793-805).

They seem to have been given the exact same start in life, yet it is how they responded to their advantageous start that truly separates the two groups.

The most obvious difference in how the Cyclopes and Phaeacians responded to their environment was how they reacted to each other's presence on the island. In the same few lines that the audience discovers that the two had a similar beginning, they are immediately told that the Phaeacians were forced to leave that island because of the barbarous nature of the Cyclopes. They were pillaged so often that they felt the need to leave their island behind and began their exodus to Scheria, led by Nausithous (*Od.* 6.4-10). There is no mention that the Phaeacians made any sort of counter-attack against the Cyclopes in response to the attacks, but it is said that the Cyclopean attacks happened due to their superiority in strength. This aspect illustrates that the Phaeacians and Cyclopes are at two different extremes in terms or morals and ethics. It is the classic example of good neighbours and bad neighbours.

The act of the Phaeacians' exodus further highlights the polarity that exists between the two groups. The Cyclopes have neither ships, nor shipbuilders (*Od.* 9.125-30), while the Phaeacians are so skilled that they are able to mass-migrate their entire civilization to an entirely different island. It is important to note that the Phaeacians did not simply migrate to Goat Island. It would have been a suitable habitat in which for them to thrive, as it provided them with sustenance and the beauty to which they were accustomed. It was also far enough away from the Cyclopean raids that they could have lived in a state of relative peace. It follows that the Phaeacians wanted more out of life

than the Cyclopes. They wanted to push themselves to their limits. In doing so, they sailed as far as the winds would take them in their pursuit of a new home. This contrasts sharply with the Cyclopes, who have no desire or ingenuity to travel to Goat Island, which lies just beyond their own island. Furthermore, the extreme physical distance between the two groups helps to highlight the moral and ethical polarity that exists between the two. The Phaeacians took their advantageous start in life and made the most of it, while the Cyclopes were content to stay at home and never venture out into the world.

The structural organization of both groups also reveals a further polarity. The Cyclopes, described as lawless, live in their own separate caves. They have little concern for each other, as each makes his own laws for his own family (*Od.* 9.106-15). They do come to the aid of each other, as has been noted, but only in certain circumstances. This contrasts sharply with the Phaeacian nobles, who share their supplies with the city (*Od.* 7.131). Dougherty notes that, "Alcinous' richly decorated palace is at the centre of a bustling city and regularly filled with feasting noblemen and attendant servants; Polyphemus' cave is so isolated on the outskirts of the island, high up, covered by laurel branches."[90] The concept of everyone working together for the greater good of the people separates the Phaeacians from the Cyclopes, who do not seem to have any sense of community. This is another example where Homer uses the two groups' reaction and response to their natural setting as a means to illustrate the polarity in their character.

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[90] C. Dougherty, *The Raft of Odysseus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 126.

Even Odysseus' first impressions from afar of the respective islands differ drastically from what he actually finds when he gets on the islands. As has been noted above, Odysseus views Scheria from afar as a shield lying on the surface of the water (*Od.* 5.279-81). When he approaches the land, he encounters various rocky crags which are truly uninviting to guests. However, once Odysseus is on the island and meets its inhabitants, he discovers that the Phaeacians are, for the most part, a people welcoming and hospitable to guests.

This realization contrasts sharply with his first impression and subsequent encounters with Polyphemus. When Odysseus and company were on Goat Island, they looked across and saw the smoke on the island and sheep and goats bleating (*Od.* 9.166-7). While this may not necessarily be perceived as a welcoming sight, at the very least, the signs of human life and a pastoral community do not give any impression of danger, and certainly offer a prospect of exploration. Furthermore, there is no indication that Odysseus had any trouble driving his ship onto the island. The sailors simply picked up the oars and drove on the ship. The arrival onto the island is more or less glossed over; ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ τὸν χῶρον ἀφικόμεθ᾽ ἐγγὺς ἐόντα <<*But then we arrived at the place that was nearby*>> (*Od.* 9.181). The appealing look of the island and the ease of access to it are quite misleading in face of the barbarous giants inhabiting the island and the various troubles Polyphemus deals out to his guests.

As has been demonstrated, Homer goes to great length to use effectively the descriptions of both Hyperia and Scheria as a means to enhance the various

characteristics of the Cyclopes and Phaeacians. Although these details are not critical to the plot development, they certainly enhance the audience's involvement in the narrative. The use of the characters' reaction and response to their own environment is an extremely powerful tool to achieve this effect. By providing both the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes with similar beginnings and such drastically divergent ends, the polarity provides the audience with a useful insight into the characters. As Charles Segal puts it,

> The fullest antithesis to the Phaeacians is the Cyclopes. The high civilization of the Phaeacians – their social development, shipbuilding and sailing, and entertainment of guests – stands in the greatest contrast to the rudimentary social organization of the Cyclopes, their lack of ships and primitive means of sustenance, and their scorn for the gods and divinely sanctioned rights.[91]

On the one hand, there are the Cyclopes, who are reminiscent of some teenagers, who have everything provided for them, and yet have no desire to use those advantages to better their own lives or their society; who spurn their parents, who gave them those advantages, and yet who come crying to their parents when matters do not go their way. On the other hand, there are the Phaeacians, who are reminiscent of mature people, who are grateful for what they receive, and in turn, wish to become fully productive members of society. These character-traits could not have been incorporated easily into the poem, had Homer not used their reaction and response to their natural setting.

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[91] C. Segal, *Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the* Odyssey (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 30-31.

Chapter 4
Witches, Drugs, and Ghosts

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will look at some of the various other locales found in the poem while Odysseus is returning home from Troy. I will begin with an analysis of the two shortest examples, the Lotus-Eaters and the Sirens. Admittedly, the Lotus-Eaters' episode does not contain a descriptive scene as I have defined the term in the Introduction, but I will argue that they are a product of their setting and as such should not be left out of this work. I will then look at the Sirens, for there are some useful comparisons that can be made between them and the Lotus-Eaters. I will then look at the setting of Calypso. Since the cave is an important aspect of her setting, it is useful to compare it to the Cave of the Nymphs on Ithaca. I will follow this up by looking at Circe's setting. In this case, I will argue that her setting creates an interesting balance between civilization and nature that is entirely unique in the poem. I will finish this chapter with a look at Hades'. This scene is important in the context of this work, for there are a couple of descriptions of its location as well as various informative comments made by the perished souls themselves that not only enhance the audience's understanding of the setting, but also inform us of some of the poet's and his audience's expectations about death.

4.2 The Lotus-Eaters

The land of the Lotus-Eaters presents one of the most unique locales in the poem, founded in the realm of folklore.[92] The exact geographical location is not clear, nor is there any physical description of the setting, save for one key detail; this land produces the lotus (*Od*. 9.84).[93] This entire passage consists of only twenty-two lines. Although it is quite brief, it contains an interesting narrative where the setting is actually the driving force of everything that happens. This passage is somewhat rare in that there is no explicit visual description of the lay of the land. Rather, the details of the setting and, more importantly, its effect on its inhabitants, must be inferred, not from a description, but from the narration.

The mysterious lotus stands at the core of this entire narrative, which it directs from beginning to end. Odysseus' men come upon the inhabitants, who are only ever described as Λωτοφάγοι <<*Lotus-Eaters*>. Likewise, no specific name is given to the land that they occupy other than γαίη Λωτοφάγων <<*The Land of the Lotus-Eaters*>> (*Od.* 9.84). The details are left vague; the only message conveyed is that the lotus is at the heart of their life. Odysseus' goal is to find out οἵ τινες ἀνέρες εἶεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῖτον

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[92] For possible explanations on how this folktale may have come to be, see: D.L. Page, *Folktales in Homer's* Odyssey (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 3-21. For an ethnographical account of this tale, see: Dougherty, *op.cit.*, pp. 95-6.

[93] The first situation of the Lotus-eaters along the North African coast is found in Herodotus (4.177). Merry, *op.cit*., p. 103, n. 84, is inclined to agree with Herodotus and states, "the *lotus* mentioned here is a prickly shrub with a yellow fruit like a plum, if it is to be identified with the jujube tree that still grows in that neighbourhood." Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 351, n.84, notes that such identifications of either the location or the nature of the lotus are "only guesses". A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit*., p. 18, chastise any scholar who attempts to make any real-world associations stating that they "showed no understanding of the nature and function of poetry." I firmly believe that the Land of the Lotus-Eaters is not to be identified with any real-world location. As such, there is no logical reason to identify the lotus with the jujube tree as Merry has tentatively done.

ἔδοντες <<*Whatsoever men, eating bread, might live on the land*>> (*Od.* 9.89).[94] Instead of finding men who eat bread, they find men who eat only the lotus. As Dimock notes, "Bread is obviously what Homer and his audience consider the normal diet of humans, including meat; the lotus is the flowery diet of herbivores, as Odysseus' description of his men 'champing' it (9.97) indicates."[95] Clearly these men go against the cultural norms that Odysseus is seeking.

Although these men do not eat the same food as typical Greeks, they still seem to practice traditional guest-host relations. οὐδ' ἄρα Λωτοφάγοι μήδονθ' ἑτάροισιν ὄλεθρον / ἡμετέροις, ἀλλά σφι δόσαν λωτοῖο πάσασθαι (*Od.* 9.92-3) <<*And the Lotus-Eaters did not plan to destroy my companions, but they gave them the lotus to taste*>>. These men bear no ill-will towards the strangers in their land; instead, they offer them food. Their sole preoccupation seems to be the lotus. They have no time for evil plots, for the lotus is the only important thing. It is important to note that, although the lotus is clearly at the core of their life, they do not attempt to conceal it or deprive foreigners of it, but rather, they share it with them. The lotus makes them happy, and in turn, they are quite willing to share that happiness with others.

This act of sharing a drug willingly is reminiscent of when Helen poured hers into the wine; αὐτίκ' ἄρ' εἰς οἶνον βάλε φάρμακον, ἔνθεν ἔπινον, / νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἁπάντων <<*Straightaway she cast the drug into the wine, which they*

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[94] Merry, *op.cit*., p. 103, n. 89, notes that the formulaic epithet σῖτον ἔδοντες "distinguishes mortals from Gods and brutes."

[95] G.E. Dimock, *op.cit.*, p. 111. Although Dimock's definition of bread is rather peculiar and too broad, his point is valid nonetheless.

were drinking, banishing grief and allaying wrath, causing them to forget all their troubles>> (*Od.* 4.220-1).[96] In this case, the host shares a drug with her guests that makes them forget their sorrows.[97] Again, the loss of memories, in this case only a temporary relief from sorrows, is the effect of taking the drug. While the lotus makes people want to forget things, the willingness to forget occurs in the act of drinking, not as an effect of the drug. Circe too provides a similar drug for Odysseus' companions (*Od.* 10.233-6). This drug causes the same effect; ἵνα πάγχυ λαθοίατο πατρίδος αἴης <<*Made them entirely forgetful of their fatherland*>> (*Od.* 10.236). In this case, it seems that the companions did not know they were drinking a drug, or that the drug caused them to lose their memory. They did not actively want to forget as is the case with those who eat the lotus. While Circe did willingly give the drug to Odysseus' companions, this cannot be seen as a kind act, as she was tricking the men in order to put them under a magic spell. Thus the drug causes the same effect, but the difference is that Helen gives it to her guests who drink the drug willingly, while Circe deceives her guests.[98]

It is only when Odysseus' crew taste the lotus that the audience becomes aware of just how powerful the fruit is. The initial taste caused a dramatic shift in their thought process. Suddenly, the lotus was their only concern in life. ἀλλ᾽ αὐτοῦ βούλοντο μετ᾽ ἀνδράσι Λωτοφάγοισι / λωτὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι μενέμεν νόστου τε λαθέσθαι <<*But they wanted to remain with the lotus-eating men, feeding on the lotus, and to forget their*

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[96] φάρμακα come in two types: ἐσθλοί and λυγροί (*Od*. 4.230); they can be a remedy or a poison.
[97] Forgetfulness is not normally a good thing in Greek thought (*Il*. 9.537, Pind. *Ol*. 7.45).
[98] These three examples of consuming something, either the lotus or a drug, to forget their memories contrast with the shades in the Underworld who consume blood to *remember*.

journey home>> (*Od.* 9.96-7). After ten years of fighting at Troy, and having already suffered more loss at the hands of the Ciccones, the group suddenly no longer cares for their return home, and only wants to stay with Lotus-Eaters. As Segal notes,

> The first threat to the hero's return is the destruction of memory: the Lotos-eaters, the first people to be encountered beyond the familiar limits of Troy and the heroic world, would keep Odysseus and his men stranded in never-never land through the amnesiac drug that would make them forget their return.[99]

This is quite true, but the effect of the lotus is even more dangerous and powerful than Segal's description implies. The choice of words is quite explicit that the men did not simply forget about the journey home, but they *wanted* to forget, as is stated with the verb βούλοντο. This was not simply a fruit that erased one's memories, but one so powerful, that those consuming it wanted to forget everything, so that they could occupy their time only eating the lotus.

There was only one way this power of the lotus could be broken: by sheer force. After not hearing back from his men, Odysseus himself had to force them back to the ships. As he took them back, they were weeping (*Od.* 9.98). This was the last thing they wanted to do. Once back at the ships, Odysseus had to tie them to the benches of the ship lest they escape and consume more of the lotus (*Od.* 9.99). Odysseus knew that he must depart from this land immediately for fear that he would lose more of his companions to the power of the lotus (*Od.* 9.100-4). Thus, the effect of the lotus was so strong that the

[99] Segal, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

only way its spell could be broken was for an outsider, who had never tasted the fruit, to remove those affected by it with brute force.

It must be noted that although in the eyes of Odysseus the fate of the Lotus-Eaters is counter to his goal and therefore an unacceptable fate, there is no indication that for the Lotus-Eaters themselves that existence is undesirable. In fact, there seems to be no indication that they are unhappy, and all evidence indicates that the only thing that would make them unhappy would be to be removed from the lotus, as we have seen with Odysseus' crew. In the eyes of the Lotus-Eaters, the land is actually good to them. It provides them with their sustenance. There is apparently an excess of the lotus, as the inhabitants were more than willing to share it with Odysseus' crew. The one thing that the Lotus-Eaters want is the lotus, and that is exactly what the land provides for them in excess. In their eyes, this land is a utopia. It would certainly not be viewed as such by an outsider, but for those within the grip of the lotus, it is. In this regard, they live in an idle-utopia where they have very little interest in partaking in the cultural norms of traditional Greeks, but wish to spend their days eating the lotus. The land fulfills their desire, albeit a simple one, and they live in a state of relative happiness.

Although this episode is brief, it provides an interesting account of the dangers that Odysseus and his crew face on their return home. Very little is known about the Lotus-Eaters, except that they are under the charm of the magical fruit. The audience never discovers whether these people have always inhabited the land, whether they were travellers who happened upon the land in the same manner as Odysseus, or perhaps if

they arose from a combination of various groups of people. The only thing for certain is that the effects are so strong, that once under its spell, no one wants to leave. The effect does not work on the passive senses, but rather only once the percipient has taken action, namely by eating the fruit.

4.3 The Sirens

The Sirens offer an appeal to a different sense, which lulls listeners to their eventual doom: the sound of their voice. The effect is so strong that the listener will come to them even though death is clearly inevitable. They are described as follows, ἥμεναι ἐν λειμῶνι, πολὺς δ᾽ ἀμφ᾽ ὀστεόφιν θὶς / ἀνδρῶν πυθομένων, περὶ δὲ ῥινοὶ μινύθουσι <<*Sitting in the meadow, and about there are many piles of bones of rotting men, and around them their skin decays*>> (*Od.* 12.45-6).[100] The description begins with a meadow, which could be reminiscent of some of the other beautiful locales found in Homer. However, it is immediately followed by grim and grotesque descriptions of the bones of men and their shrivelling skin. This is a stark contrast, which happens quite rapidly in the narrative. It also immediately informs the audience that this is a dangerous locale, with dangerous inhabitants.

[100] Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 407, n. 45, states, "they die presumably by simply wasting away, being unable to move from the spell of the song. The details are left to the hearer's imagination." This is quite an effective technique. The audience is allowed to interpret and visualise this scene as they see fit. No matter how varied a visualization occurs among the audience, the effect is the same: complete disgust and horror.

The use of voice, like the use of taste with the Lotus-Eaters, is an appeal to the senses, although this time, it is a direct appeal. The eventual fate of the person enchanted is quite different. While with the Lotus-Eaters, the people enchanted find themselves wishing never to return home and forget everything that came before, the fate at the hands of the Sirens is dramatically worse. Furthermore, with the Lotus-Eaters, the lotus does at least provide sustenance for the consumer, while with the Sirens, the song provides no sustenance but only enjoyment. As Segal puts it, "The Sirens' flowery meadow, however, is characterized by a literal death and decay that are only implicit in the Lotos-eaters' temptation to forget the return."[101] In both instances, the eventual fate lays before those enchanted: the tranquility and memory loss of the Lotus-Eaters on the one hand, while on the other, death and decay among the Sirens.

A further comparison can be made between the Sirens and the Lotus-Eaters in the manner in which Odysseus and his men resist their respective charms. Instructed by Circe, Odysseus plugs the ears of his crew with wax, while he orders them to tie him to the mast in order to hear the music yet escape the ruin that normally accompanies it. The act of tying one to the ship in order to prevent him from heading towards certain ruin is also echoed with Odysseus' crew who ate the lotus. In both cases, the enchantment causes the victims to lose all control of their bodies. The only sensible counter to this charm is for one's companions to take control of his body physically and steer him towards the appropriate destination.

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[101] Segal, *op.cit*., p. 102.

4.4 Calypso (Part One)

The island of Calypso, Ogygia, is mentioned in the opening fifteen lines of the poem, even though the narrative does not shift focus there until book five. The initial reference provides the audience a brief glimpse of the location of Odysseus, as well as an explanation as to why he is not present on Ithaca: τὸν δ᾽ οἶον νόστου κεχρημένον ἠδὲ γυναικὸς / νύμφη πότνι᾽ ἔρυκε Καλυψὼ δῖα θεάων / ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι. <<*Alone, longing for his journey home and his wife, the queenly nymph Calypso, splendid of goddesses, detained him in hollow caverns, desiring him to be her husband*>> (*Od.* 1.13-5). [102] The only reference to setting is that Odysseus is detained in hollow caverns. E.B. Holtsmark notes, "the cave represents a dwelling beneath the earth, where the abodes of chthonian deities, who as such are death deities, are commonly found."[103] This brief reference is so vague, that its sole purpose is to create a level of suspense for the audience. They only know that Odysseus wants to come back, but cannot, for a goddess wishes to make him her husband. The theme of a natural setting is

[102] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit*., p. 73, state that, "though we cannot be certain, it looks as if Calypso was invented at a late stage in the development of the story, when the poet, having decided to extend Odysseus' *nostos* to ten years, had to devise a means of detaining his hero for a long period without implying any weakening in his resolve to get home."

[103]E.B. Holtsmark, "Spiritual Rebirth of the Hero: *Odyssey* 5" *The Classical Journal* Vol. 61, No.5 (Feb. 1966), p. 206. It has also been noted that the two primary functions of *chthonioi* are to ensure the fertility of the land and have some connection with the dead, see W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1950), p. 218. It is not entirely accurate to describe all inhabitants of caves as chthonic deities who adopt the characteristics described by Guthrie, for the Cyclopes live in caves, and they are by no means Chthonic deities nor do they seem to share any of these qualities. Thus, the description holds more weight in regard to Circe, to be discussed below, than to Calypso. While Circe does not seem to have any connection with the fertility of the land, she certainly has connections with the dead and Hades', for she is the one who directs Odysseus there.

expanded upon later in the book. Physical descriptions mention Ogygia as being the navel (i.e. midpoint) of the sea, and a wooded isle: ὅθι τ᾽ ὀμφαλός ἐστι θαλάσσης, / νῆσος δενδρήεσσα (*Od.* 1.50-1). The descriptions of caves and woods give the initial impression of a land untouched by civilization.

It is not until book five that the narrative finally shifts focus toward Odysseus. Before the audience actually encounters him, there is a scene where Athena briefly describes his situation. ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κεῖται κρατέρ᾽ ἄλγεα πάσχων / νύμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἥ μιν ἀνάγκῃ / ἴσχει: ὁ δ᾽ οὐ δύναται ἣν πατρίδα γαῖαν ἱκέσθαι <<*But he lies on the island, suffering strong pains in the palace of the nymph Calypso, who detains him through compulsion, and he is not able to reach his fatherland*>> (*Od*. 5.13-5). It is interesting to note that the hollowed caverns mentioned in book one, have been replaced with a palace.[104] This contrasting ambiguity denotes the mysterious and obscure nature of both Calypso and her island. It must be noted that the former description is told by the narrator or Muse, while in the latter, it is Athena who provides the description. The initial detail of hollowed caverns anticipates those in book nine, which are inhabited by the Cyclopes. In fact, Homer uses the exact same phrase when describing the habitats of Calypso and the Cyclopes, ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι <<*In hollow caves*>> (*Od.* 1.15; 9.113). They represent a savage and uncivilized way of life. Conversely, the description in book five seems to foreshadow the habitat of the

[104] There is some evidence to suggest that the word μέγαρον may have come from the Hebrew word מערה meaning ‘cave’. Chantraine, *op.cit*., p. 674, notes “On a l’habitude de rapprocher ce mot de l’hébreu *mə‘ārā* <<grotte, caverne>>.”

Phaeacians. Although the Phaeacian palace is never described as such, the description itself surely denotes a structure only to be identified as a palace. The audience has yet to meet this goddess Calypso, and yet they are already mystified. She seems to live in a place that is simultaneously at one with nature, living in the recess of a naturally formed cave, while at the same time a place that is counter to nature. The palace represents the pinnacle of human culture and civilization. Calypso is somehow both of these things. She is everything and she is nothing.

Shortly after Athena's description, there is one much longer and more detailed.[105] It occurs when the god Hermes visits Calypso. Once he arrives on dry land, he heads for her cave. One must immediately notice that the 'palace' described some forty lines earlier has now reverted back to a cave, although this time, it is described as μέγα σπέος <<*A great cave*>> (*Od*. 5.57). Crane notes of the cave, "Caves isolate and conceal their occupants. Calypso lives on an island, but her name, which means the concealer, relates to the cave in which she keeps Odysseus."[106] It is the cave itself that is specifically described as her home; it is not just a place where Calypso passes her time.

A phenomenon similar to the contrasting ambiguity of Calypso's cave occurs in *Iliad* twenty-four. The tent of Achilles is a κλισίη in Greek. Colin MacLeod notes that, "the κλισίη is in effect a house with a πρόδομος (673) or αἴθουσα (644) and a μέγαρον

[105] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit*., p. 262, n. 63-74, notes the many similarities between this description and one found in Plato (*Phdr.* 230 b-c). He further notes, "the sociable Greek might discern a sinister overtone: there are no people in this paradise; Odysseus is both marooned and utterly alone."
[106] G. Crane, *Calypso: Backgrounds and Conventions in the* Odyssey (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), p. 17.

(647); it is called οἶκος (572) and δώματα (512). This lends dignity to Achilles through his environment; it is also functional in the following narrative."[107] In the case of Achilles, the description makes him larger than life, as something that is usually temporary and simple becomes something grander and permanent. In regards to Calypso, this double description creates a sense of ambiguity about her character and home.

4.5 The Nymphs of Ithaca

There is one other cave of significance found within the poem: the cave of the nymphs on Ithaca. There is a description of this cave which is similar to other descriptions of the lands Odysseus encounters on his return home (*Od.* 13.96-112). The description begins with a natural harbour composed of two promontories coming out from the island. It is such an efficient harbour that there is no need to tie up the ship. Thus, it provided the perfect area for the Phaeacians to drop off Odysseus. Near to this harbour are an olive tree and the cave of the nymphs.

There is a further description of the contents of the cave. Inside are various bowls and jars that are made out of stone. Bees store their honey in these vessels, ἐν δὲ κρητῆρές τε καὶ ἀμφιφορῆες ἔασιν / λάϊνοι: ἔνθα δ' ἔπειτα τιθαιβώσσουσι μέλισσαι <<*Inside there are both bowls and jars made of stone: it is in there that bees store their honey*>> (*Od.* 13.105-6). Cunliffe suggests that the use of λάϊνος means the vessels are

[107]C.W. MacLeod, Iliad *Book XXIV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 123, n. 448-56.

made from natural rock formations in the cave.[108] They have not been crafted in any specialized way, they are as they were found. It is important to note that the nymphs, deities of nature, live in a cave, a natural occurrence, and make use of naturally occurring shapes as their vessels. That bees, an animal found in nature, also use these vessels adds further weight to this idea.[109] Furthermore, there are also looms made of stone, with which the nymphs weave. Thus, the nymphs in this cave make use of objects from nature exactly as they found them. This is a perfect depiction of life without civilization.

Perhaps the most unusual detail about the cave is that it has two doors, one for mortals, and one for immortals (*Od.* 13.109-12). Each group must enter by the appropriate door, and so, there is a level of systematization and exclusivity with these doors. However, even though each group can only enter by one way, there is no separation once inside. Thus, this cave is a place where both mortals and immortals can meet. It is in essence a meeting point or buffer zone between the world of mortals and immortals. This is the most appropriate place for the Phaeacians to drop off Odysseus, for it is at the moment that he finally leaves the world of folk-tale and re-enters the real-world. This cave acts as a gate between these two worlds. In fact, the description of the cave very much resembles the various descriptions found throughout Odysseus' homecoming. It employs the same poetical format, a description of vegetation and other

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[108] Cunliffe, *op.cit*., p. 243.

[109] Porphyry, who wrote an allegorical interpretation entitled, *On the Cave of the Nymphs*, claims that the cave represents the earth and the nymphs and bees represent the soul. I find this interpretation forced and unconvincing. His reading did belong to a tradition of neoplatonic allegorical interpretations. For more information on this school of thought and some of its readings of Homer, see R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

naturally occurring phenomena at the beginning of the episode where the action takes place. It is not until Odysseus emerges from the cave and converses with Athena that he is once again in the real-world, even though he is already nominally on Ithaca. As Byre notes, "we may perhaps see a symbol of Odysseus' return to the familiar, everyday world of his fellow men, a world that is nevertheless interpenetrated by the powers of the divine world."[110] It is the two doors that signify this boundary zone.

4.6 Calypso (Part Two)

Returning to the cave of Calypso, the contents of the cave suggest a rather warming scene typical of palace life in other locales in the *Odyssey*. The first point of interest is a hearth blazing with fire: πῦρ μὲν ἐπ᾽ ἐσχαρόφιν μέγα καίετο, τηλόσε δ᾽ ὀδμὴ / κέδρου τ᾽ εὐκεάτοιο θύου τ᾽ ἀνὰ νῆσον ὀδώδει / δαιομένων: <<*A great fire burning at the hearth, and far and wide, as they blazed, the smell of both cedar and sweet-wood split into billets, spread upon the island*>> (*Od.* 5.59-61). The use of the various senses is prevalent in this description. The smell of the cedar and the 'sweet-wood' burning spreads over the island. The cedar, or possibly juniper,[111] coupled with the unknown sweet-wood creates a smell in the air which is unique in Homer.[112] Furthermore, Calypso herself is described as singing with a sweet voice; ἡ δ᾽ ἔνδον ἀοιδιάουσ᾽ ὀπὶ καλῇ / ἱστὸν ἐποιχομένη χρυσείῃ κερκίδ᾽ ὕφαινεν <<*Inside, she, singing with a beautiful voice and*

[110]C.S. Byre, "On the Description of the Harbour of Phorkys and the Cave of the Nymphs, *Odyssey* 13.96-112" *The American Journal of Philology* Vol. 115, No. 1 (Spring, 1994), p. 11.
[111] Cunliffe, *op.cit*., p. 221. Its scientific name is *Juniperis oxycedrus*, Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 295, n. 59-60.
[112] One possible identification of the sweet-wood is the *arbor vitae*, see Merry, *op.cit*., n.60.

working the loom, was weaving with a golden shuttle>> (*Od.* 5.61-2). Again attention is drawn to the senses as a way to describe this scene. While she is singing, she works the loom. This scene depicts images one would not immediately associate with the life of the immortals.[113] Calypso takes part in the daily work of traditional mortal women from the realm of Odysseus. Other notable women who spend their time weaving include Andromache (*Il.* 22.440), Penelope[114] (*Od.* 2.94, 17.97), Helen (*Od.* 4.130), Arete (*Od.* 6.306) and the other Phaeacian women (*Od.* 7.105). Circe, another goddess is also found working the loom (*Od.* 10.222). Heubeck notes that only Calypso and Circe are found singing while at the loom. He figures that it is only by chance that mortal women are not explicitly said to do so. I find this unlikely. There are too many examples of mortal women not explicitly singing at the loom. It is intentional on Homer's part to have only the two goddesses singing. In both cases, the sound adds a delight to the senses incorporated in the descriptions of their respective caves. That is not to say that women of the time did not sing while working the loom, but that Homer carefully selected only the goddesses in order to enhance the enchanting nature of their habitats.[115] In all cases, the women were going about their daily work, which included the loom. The fact that Calypso also takes part in this activity further adds to the ambiguity about her character and her role in the universe.

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[113] The gods are noted for their ease of life which should exclude working (*Il.* 6.138, *et al.*). Calypso, however, is a nymph, i.e. one of the lesser gods, who are known to weave; there are looms in the Cave of the Nymphs on Ithaca.

[114] The role of weaving is so prominent in her life, that it is even reflected in her name, πήνη denotes the thread of a bobbin of a weaver's shuttle. Thus, it is quite fitting that her plan to delay marriage to the suitors involves the loom.

[115] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit.*, p. 261, n.62.

The description then shifts focus from inside to the natural scenery outside of the cave. The first area of focus involves the various types of trees that are present. There is mention of alders, black poplars, and cypress trees: ὕλη δὲ σπέος ἀμφὶ πεφύκει τηλεθόωσα, / κλήθρη τ᾽ αἴγειρός τε καὶ εὐώδης κυπάρισσος <<*A flourishing forest grows around the cave, the alder, the black poplar, and the fragrant cypress*>> (*Od.* 5.63-4).[116] The alder along with the poplar are commonly found near sources of water.[117] It is fitting then, that both types of tree are located on this island next to the four springs.[118] The only other reference to the alder tree in Homer is found later on describing trees also on Ogygia (*Od.* 5.239). In this second reference to the alder tree, there is also mention of fir trees, ἐλάται, which were not present in the original list.[119] The presence of the fir tree is also rare in Homer. It does not occur again in the *Odyssey*, and only a few times in the *Iliad*. The uses of fir in the *Iliad* are noteworthy. In the first instance (*Il.* 5.560) the fir is used in a simile describing two men who fall at the hand of Aeneas. The firs are described as tall, and so this simile may be the ancient equivalent of 'the bigger they are, the harder they fall'. The second reference to a fir tree in the *Iliad* is much more mythical. It occurs in book fourteen when Hera is preparing to seduce Zeus in an attempt to distract him. The god Sleep climbs atop the tallest fir tree on Ida, all the way up to the heavens, lying in wait until the time is right (*Il.* 14.286-8). It seems in the world of Homer that the

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[116] Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 295, n. 64, gives the three scientific names as *Alnus glutinosa*, *Populus nigra*, and *Cupressus sempervirens*.
[117] R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 42.
[118] These springs will be discussed below.
[119] E.R. Dodds, *Euripides'* Bacchae (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 210, n. 1064-5, compares this passage in Homer to that in Euripides' *Bacchae* (1064).

fir tree is associated with loftiness, and occurs infrequently. The cypress is quite rare in Homer. The only other appearance is found when Odysseus leans against his own door, made of cypress, once back in his palace (*Od.* 17.340).[120] These trees, rare in Homer, denote Ogygia as a special and unique locale in the *Odyssey*.

This triplet of trees is followed by another triplet, this time of birds. There are owls, hawks, and crow-like seabirds: ἔνθα δέ τ᾽ ὄρνιθες τανυσίπτεροι εὐνάζοντο, / σκῶπές τ᾽ ἴρηκές τε τανύγλωσσοί τε κορῶναι / εἰνάλιαι <<*Birds spreading their wings were resting there; little owls, hawks, and sea-crows with long beaks*>> (*Od.* 5.65-7). Although the owl is commonly referenced in epithets associated with Athena, the word σκώψ is a Homeric hapax.[121] D'Arcy Thompson notes that "this bird is shyer and more nocturnal than Athene's owl."[122] J. Pollard notes that the σκώψ owl was a "capital mimic".[123] The hawk is more commonly found in Homer; however most of the instances are in similes and metaphors where the bird does not actually appear in the 'tenor' of the main narrative (*Il.* 13.62, 819, 16.582, 18.616, 21.494; *Od.* 13.86). There is only one other place where an actual hawk occurs. It is when Apollo comes down from the heavens in the form of a hawk (*Il.* 15.237). Even in this case, the appearance of the hawk

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[120] Although the cypress is rare in Homer, it is mentioned in the Linear B tablets. M. Ventris, and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 557. Its rarity in Homer should not in any way denote an unfamiliarity of the tree on the part of the audience, but rather its use denotes the uniqueness of Calypso's island.

[121] One of the most common epithets of Athena is γλαυκῶπις (*Od.* 1.44, 156, 2.433, 3.13, 135 *et al.*). The γλαύξ owl is a larger variety of owl, while the σκώψ owl is smaller. There is some evidence that Athena's epithet has no relation to the γλαύξ, but rather with the colour-term γλαυκός. For a summary of this evidence, see P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Studies in Greek Colour Terminology Volume 1* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp.169-70.

[122] D.W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 263.

[123] J. Pollard, *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* (Plymouth: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p. 180.

is not a natural one, but the epiphany as a hawk, making the appearance of the hawks on Ogygia a unique phenomenon. The crow-like seabirds, identified as the little or manx shearwater, *puffinus anglorum*, are also quite rare in Homer.[124] They only appear in two other instances, both again similes. In this case, sailors tossed about in the sea are compared to these birds (*Od.* 12.418=14.308). The only actual appearance of these birds takes place on Ogygia. Thus, all three of these birds mentioned as part of the physical description of Ogygia are quite rare in the poetry of Homer. While occasionally they appear in similes and metaphors, indicating that Homer's audience was likely familiar with the species, the birds themselves never appear naturally anywhere else in the poems. The use of these birds provides the island with an appearance that is familiar yet also unique.

This scene depicts a land virtually untouched by mankind. Calypso's cavern is set in the midst of nature, on an island lacking civilization. There are no buildings or monuments, but only trees and birds, as found at the palace of Alcinous. As Austin notes,

> The schematic similarities between the descriptions of Scheria and Ogygia are evident. In both there is the fascination with variety shaped into unity. Kalypso's grove of different kinds of trees finds its parallel in the Phaiakian orchard with its different fruits, in the Phaiakian vineyard squared off with separate areas for various stages of viniculture, and in the palace itself which is a composite of bronze, gold, silver, and lapis lazuli. The framing design around Kalypso' cave – trees, meadow, cave – is repeated in the Phaiakian tableau of orchard, vineyard, vegetable garden, and palace. There is in both scenes the contrast of the larger elements with each other, horizontal lines balanced against vertical, dark against light.[125]

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[124] Thompson, *op.cit.*, pp. 172-3.
[125] N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 154-5.

It is interesting to note that there are no special characteristics associated with the trees and birds on Ogygia. Unlike the orchards of Alcinous, where the West Wind aids the growth of the fruit and new fruit grows magically in place of one just picked, these appear to be normal everyday trees and animals. As of yet, there is no hint that Calypso's island contains any magical properties associated with other Homeric islands, such as those of the Phaeacians and Cyclopes.

There is also a mention of grape-clusters ripening on a vine (*Od.* 5.68-9). As Calypso is a goddess and therefore would drink nectar, there is not any mention that these grapes will be used for making wine. Regardless, the uncultivated grape contrasts with the cultivated grapes found at the palace of Alcinous, where there is a detailed description of the wine-making process (*Od.* 7.121-6). It includes the ripening, gathering, drying, and trampling of grapes. The end result is the production of wine. Even on the island of the Cyclopes, there is a specific mention that the grapes make a rather potent wine (*Od.* 9.110-1). However, on Ogygia, there is no mention that these grapes are meant for wine-making or that they will even be harvested. These grapes seem to grow just like any other natural growth on the island; they are wild and uncultivated. There is no mention that these grapes were planted by an immortal hand or that they receive any divine aid for their growth. They are simply a grape grown in the wild. This lack of cultivation and wine-making further emphasizes how this island seems to lack civilization. It is a rustic world filled with foliage and nature.

Also in this area, there are four springs which are near each other and run in different directions (*Od.* 5.70-1). Like the grapes mentioned above, there is no claim that these fountains are used for any specific purpose. They do not carry water to any particular place or people.[126] In contrast, the two springs found in the garden at the palace of Alcinous are given quite specific descriptions as to their purpose. One of the two provides water for the garden itself, while the other provides water for the townspeople (*Od.* 7.129-31). It is curious, that on Ogygia, there are four springs, twice as many as at the palace of Alcinous, and yet none seem to be put to any specific purpose. It again seems to be the case that natural resources are available but not used as they would be in a civilized society. Thus, the springs provide two useful qualities for the description of Ogygia: one, they further highlight the natural and rustic nature of the island, and two, they underscore the lack of civilization on the island.

The final detail included in this description is the meadow growing soft with violets and parsley or celery (*Od.* 5.72-3).[127] This is a fairly vague reference. It may have some connection with the herb gardens found at the palace of Alcinous (*Od.* 7.127-8). In that description, the greens are passed over fairly quickly. The only notable point is that they grow in all seasons. As there are other indirect contrasts between the gardens of Alcinous and Calypso, it is possible that such a contrast also exists with the green

[126] A. Heubeck, S. West and J.B. Hainsworth, *op.cit.*, p. 263, n. 70, speculate that they "presumably water every quarter of the island".
[127] Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 296, n. 72, names this the "*Avium graveolens*, a verdant green plant used for making chaplets (e.g. for the victors of the Nemean and Isthmian games)."

patches, although such a conclusion does not seem so solid as with the grapevines and springs.

At the end of this description, Homer provides the note that should a god come to this place, he would marvel at the lay of the land. In true Homeric fashion, it immediately follows in the text that Hermes stood there admiring the land (*Od.* 5.73-6). The inclusion of this detail seems to signify that this land is aesthetically pleasing as well. One has to assume that if the land is so beautiful that even an immortal feels the need to stop and admire the scenery, then it is truly a sight worth seeing. Thus, sight is the third sense which is referenced, albeit indirectly, in this description after the smell of cedar and the voice of Calypso. Although this land seems to lack any trace of civilization, it is a delight to the senses.[128]

4.7 Circe

Aiaia, the island of Circe, is similarly embedded in nature, yet it also contains some elements of civilization. Odysseus first notes of the harbour that ἔνθα δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἀκτῆς νηὶ κατηγαγόμεσθα σιωπῇ / ναύλοχον ἐς λιμένα <<*There we brought our ship down upon the shore in silence, into the well-sheltered harbour*>> (*Od.* 10.140-1). It is unclear whether the harbour was natural or manmade, but nonetheless, the result is the same. This harbour easily facilitates the coming onto this island. While this may seem like an

[128] For a comparison of Ogygia and the Elysian Plain, see W.S. Anderson, "Calypso and Elysium" *The Classical Journal* Vol. 54, No. 1. (Oct. 1958), pp. 2-11.

obvious statement in light of the fact that this is a harbour, Odysseus has certainly had much more difficulty driving his ships ashore on other islands. Scheria, the pinnacle of civilization in the *Odyssey,* had a rather difficult entrance. The island of Aeolus is also particularly uninviting. It features a bronze wall and cliffs encircling the entire island, which is also described as floating, πλωτῇ ἐνὶ νήσῳ: πᾶσαν δέ τέ μιν πέρι τεῖχος / χάλκεον ἄρρηκτον, λισσὴ δ᾽ ἀναδέδρομε πέτρη <<*On a floating island, and around the whole island a bronze wall, not to be broken, and a smooth rock runs upward*>> (*Od.* 10.3-4).[129] It must also be noted that considering what Circe likes to do to guests on her island, she may have purposely made access to her island easy for sailors.

After a few days on the island, Odysseus searches for a lookout so he can discover more about the island. ἔστην δὲ σκοπιὴν ἐς παιπαλόεσσαν ἀνελθών, / καί μοι ἐείσατο καπνὸς ἀπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης, / Κίρκης ἐν μεγάροισι, διὰ δρυμὰ πυκνὰ καὶ ὕλην <<*Having climbed up, I stood upon a rocky lookout point, and smoke came to me from the wide-stretching earth, in the palace of Circe, through the oak-coppices and thick forest*>> (*Od.* 10.148-50). The lookout point is most likely some rocky hill or small mountain. It is from there that Odysseus can see the smoke rising up.[130] He describes the

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[129] Delos was another island that was said to float (Callim. 4.35-54*;* Ov. *Met.* 6.333). In regards to the island of Aeolus, Thucydides placed it at the Lipari Islands (3.88). Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 366, n. 3, notes "the factual origin (if any) of this floating island is uncertain: possibly an iceberg, or mirage, or the floating pumice stone of the Lipari Islands." The bronze wall and cliffs make landing a ship quite difficult, if not impossible. Homer makes no mention of how Odysseus was able to land his ship there.

[130] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit*., pp. 52-3, n. 145-50, note the similarities between this episode and that of the Laestrygonians, including the scouting from a high vantage point and the use of smoke as the first sign of habitation. Vergil imitated this passage (*Aen*. 1.180-207). R.G. Austin, *Aeneidos Liber Primus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 79, n. 180-207, notes, "Odysseus tells how he climbed to a high point on Circe's island and killed a stag and brought it in triumph to this men. He lays great stress on the huge

smoke as coming from the palace of Circe. Thus, although Odysseus is in the midst of nature, he is able to look forth and see signs of civilization, the smoke and the palace. Furthermore, Circe's palace is in the midst of wooded growth. Her palace is completely surrounded by nature. On this island, it seems as though civilization and nature live side-by-side harmoniously. This is different from Ogygia, where there was an ambiguous relationship between civilization and nature, which at times seem to contradict each other. On Aiaia, the relationship seems to be more harmonious as Circe's palace is found within nature, even though the palace itself is a mark of civilization. This harmonious relationship is also explicit on Aiaia, whereas it was quite ambiguous on Ogygia. Thus, it is this balance and harmony that characterizes this island and in turn, Circe too.

On his way back from observing the island, Odysseus comes upon a stag, which he slays and brings back to his companions for food (*Od.* 10.156-173).[131] The deer is an animal that appears quite frequently in metaphor and simile in Homer, but the animal rarely appears in the narrative itself. It is mentioned a few times in conjunction with Artemis and her pastimes (*Il.* 21.486; *Od.* 6.104). The only other time when a deer itself appears in Homer is during a scene of divination in the *Iliad*. The Greeks pray to Zeus to grant them safety (*Il.* 8.242-4). Zeus sends an eagle with a fawn in its talons (*Il*. 8.245-52). This portent provides them with the answer they seek. On Aiaia, the presence of the

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bulk of the stag, and on his own strength and resource in getting it down; and his speech to his men is rough rather than compassionate ('You aren't dead yet', in effect). Homer is more dramatic, and the scene has greater visual power; but Virgil brings out qualities in Aeneas that are foreign to Odysseus."

[131] Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 370, n.171-2, notes "Odysseus seems to have been unusually proud of this kill. He emphasizes its hugeness here and in 158, 168, 180." A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit*., p. 53, n.162-5, notes "the stag's death is described in the terms used in the *Iliad* for the death of heroes."

deer is quite fitting given the context in which it is found. Odysseus finds it in the woods which cover the island. It is appropriate that he finds a deer, a wild animal, in this setting and not a tame animal such as goats or sheep, which he comes upon elsewhere in his journey.[132] Nature, as represented by the deer, is a predominant feature of this island.

The harmonious relationship between nature and civilization becomes more apparent once Odysseus' crew arrives at the palace of Circe. The men find lions and wolves around her palace. These beasts are enchanted by one of Circe's drugs and behave like domesticated animals. Their behaviour is even compared to that of a dog: ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἀμφὶ ἄνακτα κύνες δαίτηθεν ἰόντα / σαίνως', αἰεὶ γάρ τε φέρει μειλίγματα θυμοῦ <<*Just like dogs leaving their meal behind, fawn around their master, for he always brings tidbits delighting their hearts*>> (*Od.* 10.216-7).[133] Thus the line between nature, represented by wild animals, and civilization, represented by domesticated animals, is blurred. What were once wild beats of the mountains have now become tame animals of the household. These animals further highlight the harmony between nature and

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[132] The relationship between tame and wild animals is certainly important in Homer. The goats on Goat Island are referred to as wild goats, αἶγες ἄγριαι (*Od.* 9.118-9). They are on an island which is completely void of human contact and civilization. The entire island is described in terms of it being a waste that such resources are not being tapped. The goats, an animal that is normally tamed, are wild. Meanwhile, in book fifteen a portent occurs in the form of an eagle carrying a goose in is talons. The goose is described as being tame from the courtyard, ἥμερον ἐξ αὐλῆς (*Od.* 15.162). This is a domesticated animal found on the estate. The relationship between tame and wild animals and its connection with civilization and nature was best summed up by Plato in the Myth of Er found in the *Republic*. When the souls of the dead chose their new lots in life, τὰ μὲν ἄδικα εἰς τὰ ἄγρια, τὰ δὲ δίκαια εἰς τὰ ἥμερα μεταβάλλοντα (10.620d). Although these terms are never explicitly used to describe these animals on Circe's island, it is clear by their actions that this is the case. Lions and wolves are clearly wild animals. They have never been domesticated in any widespread manner. However, the actions of the lions and wolves on Circe's islands are mimicking those of tame animals. The etymology of English "deer" shows that it is the archetypal animal, cf. German *Tier*; the same cannot be said for Greek ἔλαφος.

[133] Dogs wag their tails, expressed by the verb σαίνω (*Od*. 10.217; 16.6).

civilization on the island, even though it was Circe herself who drugged the animals, thereby creating this harmony. As this was an active decision on her part, she clearly wanted to create this sense of harmony on the island and blur the lines between nature and civilization.

Circe's palace also seems to blend these two opposing ideas. As has been previously discussed, Odysseus first sighted it gazing through the forest atop some sort of peak. When his men first arrive there, a description of the building itself as well as its immediate surroundings is noted; εὗρον δ' ἐν βήσσῃσι τετυγμένα δώματα Κίρκης / ξεστοῖσιν λάεσσι, περισκέπτῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ <<*In the glen, they found the house of Circe, made from polished stones, in a clearing*>> (*Od.* 10.210-1). The first detail is that it is in a glen. For the most part, this just re-confirms the forest setting. It is the inclusion of the building materials that adds to the theme of harmony between nature and civilization. The house is built from polished or hewn stones.[134] This is significant for a few reasons. The use of stones keeps the structure in harmony with the natural setting that surrounds it. However, these stones have been polished, which suggests some level of civilization. These objects are found in nature, but have been modified so they could be used for construction purposes. These stones contrast well with the various gold, silver, and bronze metals used to build the palace of Alcinous. The use of polished or hewn stones helps create the sense of balance between nature and civilization.

[134] The LSJ s.v. I prefers the translation as "hewn". However, Cunliffe, op.cit., p. 284, prefers either "smoothed" or "polished". Regardless of how one translates this phrase, it is clear that the stones have been modified in such a way that denotes a mark of civilization.

The use of stones also makes it similar to a cave. This calls to mind the cave of Calypso; however, Circe's palace is a civilized version of that cave. It is made of rock, but unlike the home of Calypso, the rock has been modified using an advanced technique. Thus, not only is Circe's palace, a mark of civilization, located within a forest glen, a mark of nature, but it was also built using natural objects crafted into proper building materials. It is the perfect balance between the palace of Alcinous and the cave of Calypso. Before the audience encounters Circe, they are made aware that the harmony, represented by the house of polished stone in a forest glen, characterizes the island itself and also Circe.

It must also be noted in this description that while the building was originally referred to as a palace, μέγαρον (*Od.* 10.150), it is now referred to as a house, δῶμα (*Od.* 10.210). This calls to mind the changing description of Calypso's abode (p. 77 above). In this case, the difference in vocabulary is much less significant, unlike a cave it *is* a kind of home. To alleviate any concern that this palace is not so big as may have originally been suggested, one can point to the fact that Elpenor fell to his death while drinking on the rooftop (*Od.* 10.552-60). Had this building only been a one-storey, his death would not have occurred. Since Elpenor fell to his death, one can logically assume that this building is many stories tall. Thus, in terms of size, this building is a palace in the traditional sense and not just a house.

The maidservants of Circe further emphasize the relationship between nature and civilization. They are daughters born from various locales from nature: γίγνονται δ' ἄρα

ταί γ᾽ ἔκ τε κρηνέων ἀπό τ᾽ ἀλσέων / ἔκ θ᾽ ἱερῶν ποταμῶν, οἵ τ᾽ εἰς ἅλαδε προρέουσι <<*They are born from the springs and from groves and from holy rivers, which flow seaward*>> (*Od.* 10.350-1). These are creatures at one with nature. However, their roles in the palace of Circe point to signs of civilization. On the most basic level, any sort of hierarchy of people, who have different roles in order to improve their society, is a mark of civilization. Maidservants certainly fall into this category. Beyond that, these particular maidservants make use of many items from civilization. There are seat-covers dyed with purple colouring, silver tables and goblets, golden baskets, wine, and heated baths among other things (*Od.* 10.352-74). All of these are signs of a civilized society, reminiscent of the society found at the palace of Alcinous.[135] It is quite telling that it is the daughters of springs and forests who perform these tasks. This entire scenario is just one other technique that Homer employs to convey this harmonious relationship between nature and civilization on Aiaia.

Northrop Frye's distinction between Arcadia and utopia is worth considering here. He states,

> The Arcadia has two ideal characteristics that the utopia hardly if ever has. In the first place, it puts an emphasis on the integration of man with his physical environment. The utopia is a city, and it expresses rather the human ascendency over nature, the domination of nature by abstract and conceptual patterns… In the second place, the pastoral, by simplifying human

[135] It is suggested in the scholia that the nymphs represent the four seasons. Stanford, *op.cit.*, p. 375, n. 351, believes "this is not in Homer's manner, and is hardly his intention." Although the scholia suggest an interesting theory, I am not persuaded by it. I am more inclined to see this as an integration of nature and civilization where nymphs, beings from nature, are performing tasks that only occur in civilization. This would be entirely consistent with the rest of the description of Circe's palace.

> desires, throws more stress on the satisfaction of such desires as remain, especially, of course, sexual desire.[136]

The island of Circe and her palace in particular seem to be made up of a bizarre mix of these two ideas. Her palace is fully integrated with nature. It is situated in the middle of a forest. It is made from stone and the maidservants are nymphs. The animals surrounding the palace are typical wild animals. However, in all of these cases, the integration of nature was brought about by dominating it. The stones were polished or hewn in order to build her palace; it was more than just a cave. Although the maidservants were nymphs, they performed the duties of maidservants found strictly in a civilized society. The animals that were normally considered wild beasts became tame and were compared to dogs being affectionate to their masters. In every case, Circe was only ever able to achieve this integration with nature by first dominating it. This also provides a contrast to the Lotus-Eaters, who are themselves dominated by nature. Furthermore, the sexual nature of Circe is certainly emphasized repeatedly, reminiscent of the concerns of the pastoral man found in Arcadia (*Od.* 10.333-5, 480).[137] Thus, Circe's integration with nature and her harmony between nature and civilization create a unique atmosphere in the *Odyssey*. It is one that could never be created by men or found in the real world, and as such, it is fitting that it is a goddess who creates this world found in the realm of folk-tale that Odysseus enters on his journey returning home.

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[136]N. Frye, ed. By Frank E. Manuel, "Varieties of Literary Utopias", *Utopias and Utopian Thought*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 41.

[137] The entire time that Odysseus and his men stay with Circe their actions seem limited to the idea of "eat, drink, and be merry" (*Od.* 10.467-71).

4.8 Hades'

It is while Odysseus spends time with Circe that he learns he must travel to Hades' in order to get directions on how to return home. The underworld is one of the more mysterious and ambiguous locales in the entire poem. When he learns of the mission, he asks, ὦ Κίρκη, τίς γὰρ ταύτην ὁδὸν ἡγεμονεύσει; / εἰς Ἄϊδος δ' οὔ πώ τις ἀφίκετο νηὶ μελαίνῃ… <<*O Circe, for who will show the way for this journey? No one has ever reached the house of Hades in a black ship…*>> (*Od.* 10.501-2). Thus, the audience first understands that it is reachable in a ship, even though this feat has never been accomplished.[138] This is only the first clue about the location of Hades'.

Circe provides Odysseus with quite specific directions on how to get to Hades'. She confirms that he must travel there in his ship: τὴν δέ κέ τοι πνοιὴ Βορέαο φέρῃσιν. / ἀλλ' ὁπότ' ἂν δὴ νηὶ δι' Ὠκεανοῖο περήσῃς <<*Let the breath of the North Wind carry your ship, but indeed when you have passed with your ship through Ocean*>> (*Od.* 10.507-8). The act of passing through Ocean seems to indicate travelling to the end of the world, or even beyond. There are similar references to locales situated at the extreme ends of the world. In the proem, the gods are discussing Odysseus' situation. The audience learns that Poseidon is absent, for he is visiting the Ethiopians. They are described as Αἰθίοπας τοὶ διχθὰ δεδαίαται, ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν, / οἱ μὲν δυσομένου Ὑπερίονος οἱ δ' ἀνιόντος <<*Ethiopians, furthest of men, live divided in two parts; some*

[138] The speed at which Odysseus traverses the physical distance is eclipsed by the speed at which Elpenor travels when he died and descended to Hades' proper. Elpenor is already there before Odysseus (*Od.* 11.58).

at the setting of Hyperion, some at his rising>> (*Od.* 1.23-4). These people represent the limit of human spatial realization.[139] This passage is ambiguous about Homer's perception of the shape of the earth.[140] When Poseidon visits them, there is no distinction between which people he is visiting; those in the extreme east, or those in the extreme west. Thus, the audience is unsure exactly where Poseidon is. For the most part, it is not important to know Poseidon's exact location, but rather that he is as far away from the action in the main narrative as possible. When Poseidon visits the Ethiopians, it is essentially a poetical way of stating that he is far, far away. Similarly, the location to where Odysseus is sailing in order to reach the Underworld is on the periphery of the world.

The next portion of the direction to Hades' describes various vegetation and natural phenomena: ἔνθ' ἀκτή τε λάχεια καὶ ἄλσεα Περσεφονείης, / μακραί τ' αἴγειροι καὶ ἰτέαι ὠλεσίκαρποι <<*There is an overgrown shore and the grove of Persephone, and large black poplars and fruit-perishing willows*>> (*Od.* 10.509-10). This description is fairly vague. The presence of black poplars is found throughout the lands in Odysseus' adventures. There seems to be no special reason why they appear here as well. The grove of Persephone is fitting, for she is the Queen of the Underworld. There is no place more fitting for her grove than this. The willows also seem fitting for such a location. The only other occurrence of the willow in Homer is in the *Iliad* (21.350). The adjective

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[139] For analysis on the Ethiopians, see J. Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1975), p.12.

[140] Presumably, however, some sort of flat disc. We must wait for Aristarchus of Samos (3rd cent. B.C.) for the idea of a spherical earth (Plut. *De fac. In orbe lunae* 6)

ὠλεσίκαρπος, only here in Homer, is certainly fitting in this passage. It is used to describe the willow tree which sheds its fruit before ripening.[141] It is an interesting choice for this specific passage, because it is in essence an oxymoron. A fruit is something that grows and ripens, but this particular fruit dies before it reaches that point.[142] It is counter to nature, yet it occurs naturally. This may be a symbol of the unnatural event that is about to take place: Odysseus, a living mortal, is about to descend into the house of the dead. This is a process that goes against nature, and yet in the world of the *Odyssey*, is a legitimate occurrence.

Also at this location is the joining of various rivers (*Od.* 10.513-4). The rivers Cocytus, meaning "shrieking" or "wailing", and Pyriphlegethon, meaning "blazing fire", are found here. The names alone conjure up horrible images and set the audience up for the gloomy and dark existence found in Hades'. Furthermore, these rivers flow into the Acheron, the river of pain or mourning. Lastly, the audience is told that all of these rivers are connected to the Styx, which is the river of hate. All of these rivers combine to paint a rather frightening scene.[143] They also create a peculiar ambiguity about exactly where this location is. These rivers, which run in Hades', also flow to the point above ground

[141] LSJ s.v. I.
[142] Theophrastus briefly expands on this idea. He states that Homer used this adjective because the willow shed its fruit before the end of the ripening and maturation process (*HP*. 3.1.3). Pliny the Elder reiterates this point and also adds that the seeds from the fruit are known to cause barrenness in women (*HN*. 16.110).
[143] These rivers seem to have become embedded in the tradition of the geographical make-up of Hades'. Virgil cites all four of these rivers in the *Aeneid*; Cocytus (6.132); Styx (6.134); Phlegethon (6.265); Acheron (6.295). These names are also found in Dante's *Inferno* in the ninth, fifth, and seventh circles, and at the gate of Hell respectively. All four rivers are also found in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2.575-81).

where Odysseus finds himself.[144] When a hero faces such terrifying trials, he is held in more esteem. However, for the dead who dwell in Hades' for eternity, these rivers forebode a bleak and miserable existence.

Once Odysseus is at this location, he is instructed to dig a pit and make various dedications to the spirits and gods from below (*Od.* 10.517-34). It is with these details that this scene starts to become murky. Once all the sacrifices have been made, Odysseus must make his way towards the river; αὐτὸς δ' ἀπονόσφι τραπέσθαι / ἰέμενος ποταμοῖο ῥοάων: ἔνθα δὲ πολλαὶ / ψυχαὶ ἐλεύσονται νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων. <<*And you yourself turn away,*[145] *rushing towards the streams of the river: there, many souls of the perished dead will come forth*>> (*Od.* 10.528-30). It is not explicit towards which river Odysseus must go, but is clearly one of the ones previously discussed. Thus, Odysseus heads for a river which has a direct connection to the Underworld. He does not actually enter Hades', for the souls of the dead come to him, but he is at least in an area connected to Hades'.[146] It is as though this area is a buffer zone between the world of the living and the land of the dead. It is an area common to both living and the dead and yet not entirely a part of either realm.[147]

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[144] This point is important to note and will be recalled below in order to understand the nature of the *Nekuia*.

[145] As he must turn away before throwing back Ino/Leucothea's veil (*Od*. 5.350).

[146] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit*., p. 71, n. 516-40, note, "The intention is partly to signal that Odysseus' descent will be very different from the journeys of Heracles and Theseus, which inspire this episode."

[147] This is a similar concept to the Cave of the Nymphs on Ithaca, cited above, where both gods and mortals may enter, but from separate entrances.

So far all of the descriptions discussed have come from the voice of Circe as she directed Odysseus to the Underworld. Further details are incorporated once Odysseus arrives at this location himself. The first point of interest is that this land is occupied by the Cimmerians (*Od.* 11.14). These people have come under much scrutiny as to their historical reality and location.[148] Heubeck rightly argues that, "both the people and their country do, of course, belong to the realm of folk-tale: they are part of the irrational world which lies beyond the confines of the real-world and surrounds it, itself being bordered by the circumambient Oceanus."[149] Heubeck is quite right in his assessment. It would not make any sense poetically or thematically to have a real tribe of people inserted at this point in the narrative. Odysseus has already encountered numerous people of myth and folk-tale prior to his journey to Hades', and will face more afterwards. Furthermore, this section of the narrative is the farthest away from any real people, as the main people encountered are the dead. As such, all associations between the Cimmerians of this episode and any historical people should be completely disregarded. Odysseus is still in the realm of folk-tale and will be so until he comes to Ithaca via the Phaeacians.

The remainder of this description focuses on the complete darkness of the land. ἔνθα δὲ Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν δῆμός τε πόλις τε, / ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμένοι: οὐδέ ποτ᾽ αὐτοὺς / ἠέλιος φαέθων καταδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν, / οὔθ᾽ ὁπότ᾽ ἂν στείχῃσι πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα, / οὔθ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἂν ἂψ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ᾽ οὐρανόθεν προτράπηται, / ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ νὺξ ὀλοὴ

[148] Herodotus describes them as the people who formerly occupied Scythia before they were pushed out by the Scythians *(*4.11). The scholia place them as living in the far west. Even in ancient times, the location of these people is murky at best.
[149] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit.*, p. 78, n.14-19.

τέταται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι <<*There is the people and city of the Cimmerians, enveloped in fog and cloud: nor does Helius, shining, look down upon them with his rays, never when he goes toward the starry heaven, nor when he goes forth from heaven upon the land, but baneful night is stretched upon the wretched mortals*>> (*Od.* 11.14-9). The use of cloud and fog to illustrate this point is certainly effective. However, the fact that Helios cannot penetrate through the fog and clouds further emphasizes this point. It is quite fitting that a land so close to Hades' should be completely encircled with darkness. This darkness is also a symbol of both the perceived darkness of death itself and the uncertainty of what awaits humanity after life.[150] It must also be noted that there is a series of negative descriptions, which I have also noted in the description of Goat Island. Thus, the gloomy nature of this description sets up the audience for the dark and depressing nature of the various dead characters whom Odysseus meets in Hades'.

While Odysseus converses with the various spirits of his friends and relatives, a few references are made as to how his descent to Hades' while still alive is remarkable. Odysseus' mother, Anticleia, first notes, χαλεπὸν δὲ τάδε ζωοῖσιν ὁρᾶσθαι <<*It is a difficult thing for the living to see this*>> (*Od.* 11.156). This phrase should be interpreted on multiple levels: first, in the physical sense, that as it is so dark, it is hard to focus, second, in the emotional sense, that seeing one's deceased friends and relatives is

[150] The association between death and darkness is also evident in Hesiod. In the *Theogony*, Night is the mother of Death, Destruction, Death, Sleep and Dreams (211-2).

difficult.[151] As this is a difficult sight for a living mortal man, by enduring it, Odysseus is shown all the more to be a brave warrior who fears nothing. Achilles also makes mention of this brave deed, σχέτλιε, τίπτ᾽ ἔτι μεῖζον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μήσεαι ἔργον; / πῶς ἔτλης Ἄϊδόσδε κατελθέμεν, ἔνθα τε νεκροὶ / ἀφραδέες ναίουσι, βροτῶν εἴδωλα καμόντων <<*Foolhardy man, what made you think in your mind of a yet greater deed? How did you endure to come down to the house of Hades? There the senseless dead men dwell, images of perished mortals*>> (*Od.* 11.474-6). The mightiest and bravest warrior from the Greek camp asks in wonder how Odysseus can withstand such a feat. He even alludes to it by means of a rhetorical question as a yet greater deed. It is not clear if Achilles has any specific point of reference to which he compares this deed, but considering he spent the previous ten years fighting at Troy, it is reasonable to assume that he considers Odysseus' descent to the Underworld to be a greater challenge and a more heroic accomplishment than enduring ten years of war. Thus, it is clear that Odysseus' journey into Hades', a place described as dark and gloomy, is an astonishing feat, even to the spirits of the dead.

It is not until the final one hundred lines of the book that a visual description of any length is given by Odysseus. For the most part, the descriptions thus far have been short references to the darkness of Hades'. However, Odysseus finally gives a first-person account of some of the sights he sees in Hades' (*Od.* 11.568-614). The first shade he describes is that of Minos; ἔνθ᾽ ἦ τοι Μίνωα ἴδον, Διὸς ἀγλαὸν υἱόν, / χρύσεον σκῆπτρον ἔχοντα, θεμιστεύοντα νέκυσσιν, / ἥμενον, οἱ δέ μιν ἀμφὶ δίκας εἴροντο

[151] So Moly is (physically) χαλεπός to dig up (*Od.* 10.305), while Odysseus is dispirited by his (psychologically) χαλεπός wanderings (*Od*. 10.464).

ἄνακτα,/ ἥμενοι ἑσταότες τε κατ᾽ εὐρυπυλὲς Ἄϊδος δῶ <<*There I saw Minos, the splendid son of Zeus, holding a golden sceptre, seated issuing laws to the dead, who around their lord inquire about their cases, some sitting, some standing at the wide-gated house of Hades*>> (*Od.* 11.568-71). He is a law-maker and a notable figure in Greek mythology and so it is fitting that he be described. Also, he is found issuing laws, which means there is still law among the dead. Furthermore, it reveals that the Greek dead continue to go about their 'lives' in Hades' just as they would on Earth. Minos issues law in Hades' just as he did at Knossos. Likewise, one can infer that the spirits lined up awaiting their judgement for the crimes committed either on Earth or in Hades', emphasizing the idea that the shades exist in much the same way as when they were living.[152] Thus, it is only in death that they pay for their crimes. Minos is but the first example of how the Greek dead continue their existence as they did when living.

Odysseus also sees Orion in Hades'; τὸν δὲ μετ᾽ Ὠρίωνα πελώριον εἰσενόησα / θῆρας ὁμοῦ εἰλεῦντα κατ᾽ ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, / τοὺς αὐτὸς κατέπεφνεν ἐν οἰοπόλοισιν ὄρεσσι / χερσὶν ἔχων ῥόπαλον παγχάλκεον, αἰὲν ἀαγές <<*And then I noticed wondrous Orion, rounding up the same beasts in the asphodel meadow, which he himself had killed in lonely mountains, holding in his hands a club all of bronze, always unbreakable*>> (*Od.* 11.572-5). Just like Minos, Orion is found doing exactly the same sorts of activities

[152] Homer remains silent on the exact nature of the crimes, so all we can do is speculate. I belive I have outlined the two most likely scenarios. This adds a nice twist to the power of Minos' decrees in Hades'. If true, this may be the precursor for other examples in Greek literature of paying for one's sins in the afterlife such as the myth of Er found at the end of Plato's *Republic* (10.614b-621-b) cf. Pind. *Ol.* 2.57-60. This hypothesis may gain credibility when compared to the three famous sinners: Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus who will be discussed below.

that he did while alive on Earth. The most interesting point about Orion is that he rounds up the same animals that he had already killed. Orion is so entrenched in existing just as he did while he was living that he is still connected with those same animals. This also means that not only do animals go to Hades' and to the same section of Hades' as men, but that they also go about their lives as they did on Earth, even down to the specific detail that they are rounded up by the same people who hunted them when they were alive.[153] There is also a field of asphodel, which is a flower associated with death.[154] Thus, the first two examples of people described truly illustrate how in the Greek mind, the dead continue to exist in much the same fashion as when they were living.

The next three examples described all convey a different message, that of eternal punishment. The first example is Tityus (*Od.* 11.576-81). He is found sprawled over nine measures of land while at either side of him, two vultures tear at his liver. This is nearly the same punishment that Prometheus receives on Earth (Hes. *Theog.* 521-5).[155] This is

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[153] Aristophanes also had his ghost-frogs carry on in the same way (*Ra*. 217). See note in K. Dover, *Aristophanes* Frogs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 223, n. 217.

[154] Heubeck, *op.cit*., p. 109, n. 539, notes "The fields of asphodel belong to an ancient tradition; asphodel featured in the cult of Persephone. Stanford, *op.cit*., p. 400, n. 539-40, notes, "the *Asphodelus ramosus* is a lean, spiky plant with small, pale flowers, and is most commonly found in desolate ground." It is only found thrice in Homer, and all three occasions are in descriptions of Hades' (*Od.* 11.539, 573; 24.13). It is thus fitting that a plant which only grows in desolate areas be found in Hades'.

[155] R.S. Caldwell, *Hesiod's* Theogony (Newburyport MA: Focus Information Group Inc., 1987), p.58, notes regarding the punishment of Prometheus that, "The focus of the eagle's attention is Prometheus' liver, because the liver was associated with passion and erotic striving at least as early as Aeschylus; the punishment is a kind of castration, since the offence of Prometheus is an oedipal crime." He further notes that "the similarity of the punishments inflicted on Tityos and Prometheus would suggest that the meanings of their crimes are also similar." R.B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 85-6 connects the liver and deep emotions and thus states "instead of trying to make the punishment exactly fit the crime it may perhaps be explained for Tityos in the light of the above that the vultures eating into the liver were a magnification of the concrete image under which were originally conceived the painful thoughts (calling up bile, assailing and using the liver) which his defeat in love brought."

the only one of the three sinners whose crime is listed along with the punishment. Tityus violated Leto on her way to Pytho. There is then a description of Tantalus, who stands in a lake with water and fruit above, always just out of reach to quench his thirst and hunger (*Od.* 11.582-92). There is no crime provided for this punishment which means Homer likely assumed that this tale was well known to his audience.[156] It is no coincidence that the five varieties of fruit listed here are the very same that grow from the trees in the garden of Alcinous (*Od.* 7.115-6). In fact, both couplets describing the fruit are identical.[157] There is no better way to tease someone suffering from hunger than with the same splendid fruits that grow in the magical garden of Alcinous. The final great sinner listed is Sisyphus, who is doomed eternally to roll a boulder up a hill, only for it to roll back when it reaches the peak (*Od*. 11.593-600). As with Tantalus, there is no description of a crime, only the punishment, although it is likely again to be hubris.[158] Thus, all three examples of the sinners provide the darkest description of Hades' found in the poem. Furthermore, they are a reminder to the audience about proper etiquette and morality.

The last character whom Odysseus meets in Hades' is an εἴδωλον of the mighty Heracles (*Od.* 11.601-26). As he is one of the most famous characters in Greek mythology, the audience would immediately recall his many labours. Heracles even makes mention of these labours in general and specifically recalls the one most relevant

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[156] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit*., p. 112-3, n. 582-92, note that "the poet takes for granted his audience's knowledge of the cause of these sufferings; later authors (beginning with Pi. O. i) give very different accounts, but common to all is an offence against the gods."
[157] For more information on the identical lines, see F.M. Combellack, "Some Formulary Illogicalities in Homer" *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* Vol. 96 (1965), p. 53.
[158] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit*., p. 113, n. 593-600.

to this scene: his descent to the Underworld and his capture of Cerberus (*Od.* 11.620-6). This reference casts Odysseus in the same light as the mighty Heracles. There were only a few characters in mythology who undertook this most difficult task and now Odysseus is firmly entrenched among them.[159] Heubeck notes that this act casts them as "successfully venturing to transcend the normal limits of human endeavour."[160] Odysseus' heroic splendour is heightened by this deed, and the inclusion of Heracles at the end of the episode affirms his status.

The narrative briefly returns to the Underworld in the final book, as Hermes leads the souls of the dead suitors (*Od.* 24.1-14).[161] There is a short physical description of the land; πὰρ δ᾽ ἴσαν Ὠκεανοῦ τε ῥοὰς καὶ Λευκάδα πέτρην, / ἠδὲ παρ᾽ Ἠελίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον ὀνείρων / ἤϊσαν: αἶψα δ᾽ ἵκοντο κατ᾽ ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, / ἔνθα τε ναίουσι ψυχαί, εἴδωλα καμόντων <<*They went by the Streams of Ocean and the White Rock, and they went by the gates of Helius and the community of dreams, and suddenly came down to the meadow of asphodel, it is there that the souls dwell, the images of the dead*>> (*Od*.

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[159] Other figures that descended to the Underworld include Orpheus, Theseus, and Perithous.

[160] A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *op.cit.*, p. 114, n. 601-27.

[161] This entire episode has probably received as much scholarly debate as any in Homeric scholarship. In the scholia, Aristarchus completely dismissed this episode as a later interpolation. Merry (p. 367-8) is inclined to agree with Aristarchus. He notes, "there is a strong impression left of its inappropriateness; it is in the wrong place for an episode". A. Heubeck, J. Russo and M. Fernandez-Galiano, *A Commentary of Homer's* Odyssey *Volume III* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 356-8, n. 1-204, discuss this episode at length. They note "the poet was concerned from the very beginning to set the fate of Odysseus and his family against the background of the vicissitudes of Agamemnon's house. This contrast in the fates of the two heroes pervades the entire work. It is particularly emphasized in the opening books (I, iii, iv) and at the centre of the poem (xi). Now, after Odysseus' return home, reunion with his wife, and revenge of the suitors, the poet obviously wishes to remind us of this contrast." I tend to agree with Heubeck as this passage does close up quite nicely the contrast found throughout the entire narrative between Odysseus and Agamemnon. Regardless of its authenticity, it now comes down to us in its present form included within the narrative, and as such, I will include its analysis along with the poem as a whole.

24.11-4). For the most part this description mirrors the one found in books ten and eleven.[162] These souls traveled through the streams of Ocean just as before (*Od.* 10.508; 11.13). There is mention of a white rock here. This could be the same rock mentioned previously without a reference to its colour (*Od.* 10.515).[163] The rock is followed by the gates of Helios. It is quite possible that this is a reference to the lack of sunlight in this area. In essence, it is a poetic way of stating that the sun does not shine there as was indicated in the initial description of Hades' (*Od.* 11.15-9).[164] After the gates comes the land of dreams. The association between dreams and death has been noted above. It seems fitting that the land of dreams and the land of the dead would be situated side-by-side. The final physical reference is the meadow of asphodel. There was a previous reference that Orion was in a meadow of asphodel (*Od.* 11.573). The audience is told that

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[162] The souls also squeak like bats (*Od*. 24.6-7) which could suggest this area is like a cave.

[163] W.W. Merry, Odyssey *Books XIII-XXIV* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1870), n. 11, makes mention of this. He speculates that "its name may refer to its rising up in the midst of the white froth and spray of the cataract: unless we are to take it as the last object in the land of the living, with the sunlight still bright upon is sides." Both of these seem fairly reasonable, although I am hesitant to endorse the latter as the souls have already passed the stream of Ocean, which earlier was a place without light. A. Heubeck, J. Russo and M. Fernandez-Galiano, *op.cit*., p. 360, n. 11-14, reject any association with this rock and the real-world Cape Leukatas for they state, "like the underworld itself, and its surroundings, it lies in the mythical west, by the Stream of Oceanus." I have to agree with this statement. This is a quick interlude to the realm of folk-tale which took place in books nine to twelve. W.B. Stanford, *The* Odyssey *of Homer Volume II* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 412, n.11, offers much discussion on this rock. His opinion, p. 410, on the colour of the rock is that, "its pallor was no doubt supernatural and ghostly." This interpretation seems to make the most sense in context with the Underworld theme. Nagy also discusses the white rock; G. Nagy, "Phaethon, Sappho's Phaon, and the White Rock of Leukas" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* Vol. 77 (1973), pp. 137-177.

[164] Stanford, *The* Odyssey *of Homer Volume II*, p. 412, n.12, states that it "denotes the extreme West, where the sun was thought to descend into a subterranean passage leading back to the East." However, this view seems closer in association with Pindar's (fr. 135, Turyn). Elsewhere is the *Odyssey,* Helios threatens to go down to the Hades' (*Od.* 12.383). This threat surely denotes that his presence in the Underworld likely has not occurred before and would be devastating to the order and balance of the universe. Mimnermus has Helios travel in a cup through the stream of the Ocean (fr. 12 *IEG*).

it is here where the souls of the dead dwell. As it was also in this meadow where the souls were found, this reference is consistent with that in book eleven.

4.9 The Elysian Plain

As a counter-point to life in Hades', there is a brief mention of the Elysian Plain (*Od.* 4.561-9). The Old Man of the Sea tells Menelaus that at the end of his earthly life he will go there and not to Hades'.[165] He then describes what will await him there. The description is as follows, ὅθι ξανθὸς Ῥαδάμανθυς, / τῇ περ ῥηίστη βιοτὴ πέλει ἀνθρώποισιν: / οὐ νιφετός, οὔτ᾽ ἄρ χειμὼν πολὺς οὔτε ποτ᾽ ὄμβρος, / ἀλλ᾽ αἰεὶ Ζεφύροιο λιγὺ πνείοντος ἀήτας / Ὠκεανὸς ἀνίησιν ἀναψύχειν ἀνθρώπους <<*Fair-haired Rhadamanthys is there, and the easiest life for mortals is there, and there is no snow, nor great winter, nor ever rain, but always Oceanus sends up breezes of the shrill blowing Zephyr to refresh men*>> (*Od.* 4.564-8). The inclusion of Rhadamanthys is interesting, for he is the brother of Minos who is found issuing judgements in Hades' (*Od.* 11.568-71). It is not clear what Rhadamanthys is doing, it just merely states that he is there.[166] He

[165] For more on this including a possible connection between the Elysian Plains and Egyptian mythology, see R.D. Griffith, "Sailing to Elysium: Menelaus' Afterlife (*Odyssey* 4.561-569) and Egyptian Religion" *Phoenix* Vol. 55 (2001), pp. 213-43.

[166] Rhadamanthys continues to play a role in various afterlife scenes. In Pindar he is seated as the right hand man to Cronus, issuing judgements on the Isle of the Blessed (*Ol.* 2.74-5). Plato also uses him as a figure in the Underworld *(Gorg.* 524a). In this instance, he judges only Asians and decides whether they go to the Underworld or the Isle of the Blessed. In Vergil, he is found issuing judgements, but this time he is in the Underworld (*Aen.*566-9). In Lucian, Rhadamanthys lives in the Isle of the Blessed and settles disputes between the inhabitants (*Ver. Hist.* 2.6-10). In this instance, his role seems more closely associated with the role of Minos in Homer's Underworld. Thus, it seems that there is a strong tradition of linking Rhadamanthys to scenes in the afterlife. However, there seems to be some relative freedom with regards to what specific section of the afterlife he inhabits and exactly what his role is. Since Homer does not

is the only person mentioned in this passage. Menelaus is told that he will go there, because he is married to Helen who is the daughter of Zeus.[167] His state in the afterlife is not dependant on any moral condition but is a right attained through marriage. This idea contrasts sharply with the three great sinners in the Underworld who are doomed to an eternity of punishment for the crimes they committed in life. Thus, Menelaus receives his reward through his marriage to Helen, the sinners all receive their punishments for their crimes.

The physical description reveals some interesting points. This area is located at the limits of the earth. Thus, it seems to be a counterpart to Hades', which is also found at an extreme end. It is there that life is the easiest for mortals. There is then a list of things absent and present, qualifying why life is easiest. There is no snow, nor winter, nor rain.[168] There is, however, the West Wind, sent by Oceanus, which blows upon them, to refresh them. This description certainly provides a scene filled with extreme relaxation.

Hesiod also gives a brief account of the Isles of the Blessed (*Op.* 166-72). These islands are near Oceanus, which makes the description consistent with Homer's (171). The inhabitants lead a care-free existence which also makes it consistent with Homer (170). However, there are some differences, mainly the appearance of fruit, which is

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specifically state that Rhadamanthys issues any judgments, it is probably safest not to make any speculations based on later accounts.

[167] Although the text does not specifically state that Helen will go there, we should assume that she does.

[168] This description is reminiscent of the description of Olympus (*Od.* 6.41-6). There is neither rain nor winter at Olympus. However, unlike the Elysian Plain, there is not any wind at Olympus either. It is a peculiarity that two such similar descriptions, both concerning utopian like paradises, differ on this one key issue.

provided for the inhabitants (173-4). These fruits are made distinct by the fact that they come three times a year.[169] There is no mention of this in Homer. In fact, the exclusion of rain from the Homeric Elysian Plan seems to rule out natural vegetation, although there is always the possibility of super-natural vegetation.[170] This fruit seems to be closer in association with the fruit at the palace of Alcinous, which is in a constant state of bearing fruit. Furthermore, the inhabitants themselves appear to be all those from the race of heroes who did not die in battle and not only those who share in the genealogy of Zeus. Robert Garland notes that, "the blessed heroes who achieved translation are awarded this destiny seemingly not in recognition of personal merit, but rather of having evaded death on the field." [171] Thus, although there are some similarities between the Homeric Elysian Plain and Hesiod's Isles of the Blessed, there seems to be poetic freedom about specific details rather than an inflexible tradition.

The two scenes that take place in Hades' reveal much about the Homeric view of the afterlife. They reveal how they envisaged life after death, and how it was a great distance to travel there. Homer is fairly specific in the mythical details of how to reach the land of the dead. However, the details become rather murky once Odysseus is finally there. As Emily Vermeule notes,

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[169] Lucian took this idea to an extreme in his view of the Isle of the Blessed. There, fruits of every sort bloom thirteen times a year while the vines bloom twelve times a year. The blowing of the West Wind is also present in Lucian's version (*Ver. Hist.* 2.12-13).
[170] In Pindar's Isle of the Blessed, there are streams that water certain flowers (*Ol.* 2.74).
[171] R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1985), p. 61.

> The strange world in which the psyche finds itself after death is not really clearly imagined by early Greek poets. As usual, figure and character dominate the landscape, and there is more color and tone than sharp definition of the forms of the underworld.[172]

There are no real descriptions of the land, only the reactions of the various shades when they see Odysseus. Their reaction reveals astonishment that Odysseus has come to such a place. Yet they remain vague about details of what kind of place the Underworld actually is. The uncertainty surrounding Hades' denotes a real-life uncertainty about what awaits human beings after life. As Moore notes, "the great majority of shades had no ethical recompense; nothing awaited them but a dull, cheerless existence which, compared with the joy and brightness of life on earth, was almost less than nothing."[173] Evidence of this can be provided by all the various gloomy descriptions found throughout the scenes in the Underworld. However, although their existence is bleaker, there is at least some comfort knowing that they will continue to exist in Hades'. Thus, people prefer to think that life will continue as usual if at a lower intensity, but just in a different place. What that place is: only the dead may know.

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[172]E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 33.
[173] C.H. Moore, *Ancient Beliefs in the Immortality of the Soul* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931), p. 4.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

By now, I hope it can be agreed that there is a direct relationship between any of Homer's settings and the characters who dwell there. Although the descriptions are often fairly short, appearing at the beginning of each episode, they enable the poet to set up the scene with a visual cue that lasts for the entire narrative, and also to give his characters greater depth than they would otherwise have. The relationship is so effective that I cannot conceive of it as mere chance that certain characters have such distinctive settings. Homer deliberately chose these unique and specific settings for his characters, intending to strengthen his portrait of their overall character-traits. That these descriptions generally happen at the beginning of each episode testifies that he wanted to create this effect early on, so that the audience has a first impression of the characters before they have been formally introduced. Once the audience finally does meet the characters dwelling within that setting they can either feel justified in their first impression, or perhaps even horrified that the characters live in a setting that on the surface does not seem fitting for them.

The relationship between the Cyclopes and Phaeacians certainly fits this model. The fact that they both came from such similar beginnings, or perhaps even the exact same beginning, as I have attempted to demonstrate, and yet live out their lives in entirely different ways, speaks volumes about their innate character. The Phaeacians got a great start in life, overcame some trials and tribulations along the way, and founded a city that

is to be regarded as the pinnacle of civilization. The Cyclopes, having the same beginning as the Phaeacians, went in the complete opposite direction, causing trials and tribulations for the Phaeacians and establishing a community without laws, customs, respect for the gods, or any other trait that is associated with civilization. This relationship was no accident on the part of Homer. The details are too specific to be left to chance. We may never be entirely sure when these two episodes entered the oral tradition. The relationship between the Phaeacians and Cyclopes may have been established before Homer's time, although they may have existed as two separate and distinct stories, and it was Homer who blended the two stories together to develop their characters. Regardless of who it was who developed this theme, Homer retained it, and so we can be sure that he recognized the usefulness of such a poetic tool for his monumental poem.

The remaining scenes I have discussed show some different results to the same methodology. The Lotus-Eaters are unique, in that they have no formal descriptive scene. The only descriptions in their episode are the sort of quick descriptions that I outlined in the introduction. However, their character hinges entirely upon their setting. If these few quick descriptions alone were included in the text, we would know virtually nothing about them as a distinct society in the poem. They are a product of their own environment. The Sirens offer a more traditional descriptive scene, although it is briefer than others in the poem. This brevity in the descriptive scene directly links to the brevity of the episode as a whole. In this scene, the landscape is equally as gruesome as the Sirens who inhabit it. Circe and Calypso each have their own descriptive scenes that are

similar to each other in some regards and yet quite different in others. The fact that both inhabit private islands and dwell within caves surrounded by nature indicates that Homer wanted there to be a correlation between them. However, the similarities end with their respective settings. It is how each one reacts and responds to her setting that creates her unique and individual character. Furthermore, the fact that Homer describes similar items within those landscapes with completely different and unique details suggests that it was a deliberate action on the part of the poet to help define their characters respectively. The Land of the Dead also provides a completely unique landscape in the *Odyssey*. What is most interesting is that by using the setting to help define the Greek souls, Homer also presents us with some ideas about how the Greek mind perceived death and its consequences. It is an important scene within the poem as a whole.

I would like to add one final point to this work; that is where I can see this research leading. I believe I have demonstrated that the lands in the make-believe worlds in the *Odyssey* constitute a poetic device. However, I think it will be most useful to expand the scope of this research in the future. There are many directions in which this research can be taken. First of all, it would be useful to expand the scope towards all of epic poetry. There are many other instances where this poetic tool is used, and it would be useful to have them together in one body of work. I would also find it most useful to expand beyond the epic and into the poems of the lyric, tragic, and comic poets where

landscape plays a major role.[174] As many of these poetic works employ the same mythological tales found in Homer, it would be valuable to scholar and student alike to understand how this theme translates to those works. Furthermore, it would be helpful to look at the works that do not have any basis in the poetry of Homer and see how the same methodology can be applied to them. We can be sure that the relationship between setting and character is a poetic device that dates back at least until the first works in western literature and it is still used today. If we can acquire all of this research together, we can come to understand how this relationship was applied to all works of literature, as well as the development of this device throughout the ages.

[174] To name but a few examples, Sappho (2 Lobel-Page) and Ibycus (286 PMG), Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, and Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

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