

## II. DOSSIÊ

### FIELD NOTES FROM THE *ODYSSEY*: THE FABULOUS ETHNOGRAPHY OF AIOLIE, AIAIE, AND OGYGIE<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

Odysseus' ethnographic digressions in books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*—the so-called *Apologue*—have served as the premier paradigm for mythic and actual ethnography from Herodotus through Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus, and more particularly, for the 'I-witnessing approach' of ethnography. Among the peoples and lands and styles of thinking he encountered (*Odyssey* 1.3), the hero also became acquainted with several islands. As microcosms of larger societies, islands furnish 'master metaphors' and models with which to think about culture. In this article I discuss three islands from the *Apologue* in the chronological order of Odysseus' travels. They are inseparable from their geography and the personality and 'life style' of their inhabitants, as will be seen; these islands adumbrate the moral and gendered mythic cartography of Archaic Greece.

#### KEYWORDS

Ethnography, *Odyssey*, island imaginary, island as a metaphor, 'ethnographic savage'.

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## 1. Introduction

Written in New Guinea and the Trobriand Islands in the years 1914-15 and 1917-18, Bronislaw Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* has been described as an account of 'the paradigm journey to the paradigm elsewhere'.<sup>3</sup> In a slightly more fanciful sense, Odysseus' long ethnographic excursi in books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*—the so-called *Apologue*—served as the premier paradigm for mythic and actual ethnography from Herodotus through Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus,<sup>4</sup> and more particularly, for what C. Geertz has called the 'I-witnessing approach' of ethnography.<sup>5</sup> Among the peoples and lands and styles of thinking he encountered (*Odyssey* 1.3, πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω),<sup>6</sup> the hero, an islander, also became acquainted with islands that varied from the colonist's postcard Isle of the Goats to fabulous Scherie and the ultra-fabulous Isle of the Sirens, and Thrinakia. Strange things and beings are apt to be found in foreign parts, and the further the location, the stranger. Strangeness is arguably more concentrated when miniaturised in the compactness of an island. Likewise, real-life problems and traits that are writ large in a peninsula may gain universalising force on an island, even a make-believe one. As microcosms of larger societies, islands furnish 'master metaphors' and models with which to think about culture.<sup>7</sup> In what follows I discuss three islands from the *Apologue* in the chronological order of Odysseus' travels. They are inseparable from their geography and the personality and 'life style' of their inhabitants, as will be seen; these islands adumbrate the moral and gendered mythic cartography of Archaic Greece.

## 2. Aiolie, the shifting, shimmering island

ἔρρ' ἐκ νήσου θᾶσσον

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<sup>3</sup> Geertz (1988), 75.

<sup>4</sup> On ancient and subsequent ethnography see, e.g., Leach (1982), 62-5; Petropoulos (2019)b, esp. 158-63; Skinner (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Geertz op. cit., 78-9.

<sup>6</sup> 'Many were the people with whose customs and thinking [*noos*] he was acquainted.' Greek text and translations are taken from Perseus online unless specified otherwise.

<sup>7</sup> See Ronström (2013), esp. 158-60 for the island as metaphor or model.

‘Get the hell out of my island!’<sup>8</sup>

– *Odyssey* 10. 72 (Aiolos to Odysseus)

Aiolie (Αἰολίη), the domain of Aiolos, Controller of the Winds, was a ‘floating island’ (10.3, πλωτή νῆσος) that moved, it seems, with the gusts of wind and the sea currents.<sup>9</sup> The name Aiolie is related to the adjective αἰόλος, ‘rapid’, ‘quick-moving’ but more frequently ‘glittering, dazzling’, as of armour.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the metal armour (τεύχεα) of a Trojan tumbling out of his chariot is αἰόλα παμφανόωντα (*Iliad* 5.294-5): the weapons gleam all the more in motion. To an approaching mariner the elevation of an island can suddenly rise sheer out of the misty sea, resembling the bulging boss of a shield flat on the ground.<sup>11</sup> In clear weather the hump of an island might glisten or seem to move as the fog envelopes it. Aiolie is the ‘rapidly shifting island’<sup>12</sup> or ‘shimmering island’. The name may suggest either or indeed both of these typical features of islands; a shimmering surface, after all, constantly seems to shift in sunlight. Aiolie became still more iridescent when it was buffeted by the wind.<sup>13</sup>

When Odysseus and his ships reached the isle, it lay, as one critic puts it, ‘(for the time being, at least) out in the western ocean, ten days’ sail westward of Ithaca.’<sup>14</sup> It appeared to be a typical walled city atop shiny cliffs rather like the anonymous besieged island-city described in *Iliad* 18. 205-14. The coastline of Aiolie however was ringed with unbreakable, dazzling bronze walls, which together with its slippery cliffs made it impregnable. The isle was denizenized by Aiolos, son of Hippota (an aristocratic name—‘Horseman’—which recalls the rapid movement of a horse)<sup>15</sup> and his queen, and their six sons and six daughters. The siblings were married to one another. Sibling incest was not only an exotic touch<sup>16</sup>—it was most bizarre amongst mortals—but also evoked, from an ethnographic perspective, *the endemism and inward-facing ideology of an island*

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<sup>8</sup> My tr.

<sup>9</sup> See D scholia on *Odyssey* 12.3 (Ernst, p. 202).

<sup>10</sup> Chantraine and also Montanari, s.v. αἰόλος.

<sup>11</sup> See Odysseus’ description of Scherie at *Odyssey* 5.278 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the Planktai, the Wandering Rocks, *Odyssey* 12. 61 and Herodotus 4.85.1; also the isle of Khemmis afloat in a lake in Egypt: Herodotus 4.85.1 (following Hecataeus).

<sup>13</sup> Homeric ἄημι = ‘to blow’, of the wind, can mean figuratively ‘to fluctuate’ (of θυμός, *Iliad* 21.386); in the *Homeric hymn to Demeter* 276 the passive ἄητο is used of the beauty of the goddess that *shines* around her. See LSJ and Montanari, s.v. ἄημι.

<sup>14</sup> West (2014), 118.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Achilles’ swift horse, Xanthos, which was πόδας αἰόλος (*Iliad* 19.404).

<sup>16</sup> Heubeck (1989), 44 on *Odyssey* 10. 7.

*community*. In the palace the entire family feasted merrily on an abundant supply of meat, its aroma filling the rooms. They were a small society of hearty meat-eaters throughout the day. By night the couples enjoyed their lovemaking.

The inbred enclosure and fixity of Aiolie were contrasted by its fluidity and indeterminacy in space. The motile island was ruled, suitably enough, by a wind-sorcerer of international folktales: appointed by Zeus ‘controller of winds’ (10.21, ταμίην ἀνέμων), Aiolos manipulated the winds (which were co-extensive with his nature) by binding them.<sup>17</sup> His wizardry in managing their direction and intensity—in effect, their labile personality—suggests that he was in a serious sense *polutropos*, like Odysseus, the archetypal versatile islander. Aiolos and Odysseus were ‘one who turns into many different selves’ (in G. Nagy’s gloss of πολύτροπος as used of Odysseus).<sup>18</sup> If indeed islands are good to think with as metaphors of culture,<sup>19</sup> the shifting movement of Aiolia is a metaphor for the ‘polydextrous and multifaceted competence’ of islanders across history.<sup>20</sup> Aiolos’ polydexterity enabled him to bind the very motility of winds in order to help Odysseus to sail to Ithaca.

### 3. Kirke’s island menagerie

Kirke and her four female servants (who were water and wood nymphs, 10. 348-5) were the sole inhabitants of a low-lying wooded island (10.197), Αἰαίην... νῆσον (‘the island of Aiaie’, 10.135).<sup>21</sup> Aiaie may be related to the word for Dawn (cf. 12.1).<sup>22</sup> Kirke had solar associations worthy of a guardian of animals, especially game.<sup>23</sup> She was the daughter of the Sun (10. 138) and half-sister of the solar Phaethousa and Lampetie (12. 379-81). Her name may be a feminine form of *kirkos*, ‘hawk, falcon’, a greedy but beautiful predator; it points to her connection to the Egyptian falcon-god Ra, a symbol of the rising sun.<sup>24</sup> Kirke’s Egyptian roots strengthen the likelihood that Aiaie was the ‘Island of the Rising Sun’, in the extreme east. νῆσος (‘island’), obviously, signposts Aiaie’s geomorphology.

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<sup>17</sup> *Odyssey* 10.20, with Heubeck op. cit., 43 on 10. 1-79.

<sup>18</sup> Nagy (2018).

<sup>19</sup> Again, Ronström op. cit., 158-9.

<sup>20</sup> Conkling (2007), 192; cf. Putz (1984), 26.

<sup>21</sup> The word-order can be inverted: νῆσον... Αἰαίην (11. 70 and 12. 3).

<sup>22</sup> Dawe on *Odyssey* 10. 135, citing E. Schwyzler.

<sup>23</sup> Bakker op. cit., 58 ff., esp. 75 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Heubeck (1989), 52 on *Odyssey* 10.133-574. West (1997), 408 connects the name with the Egyptian sun-god (Ra), who is ‘represented as a falcon, or with a falcon’s head’.

Speaking to the Phaiakians, Odysseus quotes at 10. 194-5 the words with which he recounted to his crew how supposedly he came to realise, after reconnoitering in a state of utter disorientation (10. 190-3), that they were stranded on an island.<sup>25</sup> The dilatory syntax and climactic enjambment of his sentence (10. 194-5) show the hero to be re-enacting the gradual formation of his impressions and his inference:

εἶδον γὰρ σκοπιὴν ἐς παιπαλόεσσιν ἀνελθὼν  
νῆσον, τὴν πέρι πόντος ἀπείριτος ἐστεφάνωται.

‘For I climbed to a rugged point of outlook, and beheld  
the island, about which the boundless sea lies like a wreath.’<sup>26</sup>

– *Odyssey* 10. 194-5

In effect, ‘I saw—I then realised—that this was/ an *island*’ (10. 194-5). Odysseus’ observation that he was circled by the limitless sea could only mean that he was marooned on another inaccessible, faraway island. As some have suggested, Odysseus may here have deliberately been overdramatising his initial reaction to his discovery (10. 145-52) in order to motivate his crew to join him on a second survey. Even as theatrics, his desperate admission that he could devise no means of escape is revealing.<sup>27</sup> *Remoteness—being ‘out of the way’—is indeed a facet of the ‘island imaginary’ even today.* Kalypso’s island, as will be noted, is another ancient example.

Thickly forested (10.308), Aiaie had a welcoming natural harbour (10.141). Kirke’s palace was situated some distance from the shore (12. 343); caves, a chthonian detail, lay near the shoreline (10. 404, 424). The palace, built of polished stone (10. 210), and its

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<sup>25</sup> ὦ φίλοι, , οὐ γάρ τ’ ἴδμεν, ὅπῃ ζόφος οὐδ’ ὅπῃ ἡώς,  
οὐδ’ ὅπῃ ἥελιος φαεσίμβροτος εἶς ὑπὸ γαῖαν,  
οὐδ’ ὅπῃ ἀννεῖται: ἄλλα φραζόμεθα θᾶσσον  
εἴ τις ἔτ’ ἔσται μῆτις. ἐγὼ δ’ οὐκ οἶομαι εἶναι.

‘My friends, we know not where the darkness is or, where the dawn,  
neither where the sun, who gives light to mortals, goes beneath the earth,  
or where he rises; but let us at once take thought  
if any device is still left for us. As for me, I do not think there is.’

<sup>26</sup> Tr. slightly modified.

<sup>27</sup> See further below on the lack of *metis* (10. 193).

furniture (10. 233) and other conventional domestic trappings (10. 233)<sup>28</sup> including the smoke rising from the halls, stood in a clearing amidst ‘thick brush and a wood’ (10. 150). Out of the palace rose the divinely beautiful work song of Kirke as she worked at her loom (10. 221-3, 226-8).<sup>29</sup> To a casual visitor (assuming there would have been one!) the abode would at first have seemed unexceptionable until they would have noticed, as Odysseus’ scout Eurylochos did, that it was surrounded by huge mountain wolves and lions, monstrous-looking but abnormally tame (10. 211-19). Once human castaways on Aiaie,<sup>30</sup> they cowered, like timid guardians, before the halls of their mistress. We might also call Aiaie the Isle of the Beast Men.

Eurylochos’ report provided a foretaste of the topsy-turviness and paradox of an island inhabited by a congenitally evil witch drawn from folklore<sup>31</sup> who combined features of a Near Eastern Mistress of Animals and Ishtar-like love goddess (who also had traces of a Mistress of the Wild).<sup>32</sup> Homeric Kirke, then, was a witch and a Dominatrix of Animals and Men. She brought about successive reversals and strange happenings, even perverting social, especially dining etiquette.<sup>33</sup> With a wave of her wand and after administering a chthonian potion (10. 234-5),<sup>34</sup> the ‘awe-inspiring, fair-tressed goddess of human speech’ (Κίρκη ἐνπλόκαμος, δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα, 10. 136 = 12. 150) turned twenty-two of Odysseus’ men (10. 208) into grunting pigs that paradoxically retained their faculty of thought, and fed them acorns (10. 239, cf. 432-3).<sup>35</sup> She also attempted to animalise Odysseus (another reversal) but, forewarned and equipped by Hermes with an antidote to her ‘evil drugs’, the hero thwarted her (10. 310 ff.). Even then, she bluntly

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<sup>28</sup> The palace-style furniture and accoutrements are mentioned at 10. 314-15 and *in extenso* at 10. 352-70.

<sup>29</sup> On ancient Greek weaving songs and other work songs: Petropoulos (1989), 163, to which add Sappho fr. 102 (LP), which has the tone of a loom-song.

<sup>30</sup> So also Dawe op. cit., 417 on 10. 433; *contra*, Heubeck op. cit., 56. To Dawe’s note I may add a supporting consideration: 10.327-8 sounds like a formulaic advertisement of a magical recipe that has been tried and tested on previous victims; note especially the gnomic aorist, ἀντέτλη, and see Petropoulos (2019)a, 180, 184, 186 on comparable standard advertisements.

<sup>31</sup> Her evil replicates that of her brother, as implied by αὐτοκασιγνήτη in 10.137, αὐτοκασιγνήτη ὀλοόφρονος Αἰήταο; cf. the name Αὐτόλυκος and especially αὐτομήτωρ, used by Semonides fr. 12 (W) of the bitch-woman: general discussion of the *topos* ‘like mother, like daughter’ in Petropoulos (2008), 125-6. Magical skills frequently are inherited from one’s mother; Aietes’ and Kirke’s mother, the Oceanid Perse, was a witch according to Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*, IV. Further on Kirke’s evil intent: φάρμακα λύγρ’ (10.236) and κακὰ φρονέουσ’ ἐνὶ θυμῷ (10. 317). For Kirke the witch, cf. esp. πολυφαρμάκου (10. 276) and another intensifying compound, καταθέλγειν, used of bewitchment (10. 213).

<sup>32</sup> On Kirke as Mistress of Animals: West (1997), especially 408; also Bakker op. cit, 75 ff. On Kirke as a Mistress of Animals and witch: Marinatos (2008), 10-13.

<sup>33</sup> Dawe on 10. 348; Heubeck (1989), 61 on 10. 325-35. Also see both on 10. 310 ff.

<sup>34</sup> See Petropoulos (2019), 182-3; 184n19 on this sequence; Marinatos op. cit., 12 on the potion as food for the dead.

<sup>35</sup> Dawe op. cit., 406 on 10.239: pigs are popularly connected with magic.

invited him to her bed (333-5), an outrageous violation of hospitality. After exacting an oath from her that she would not (executing still another reversal) *castrate* him (ἀνήνορα θήη, 10. 301), he ‘went up to her beautiful bed’ (10. 347).<sup>36</sup>

The nymph at length ‘released’ the captive men (10. 385, 387) from their lowly animalhood, through counter-magic (10. 391-7)—working yet another of her reversals.<sup>37</sup> By the end of the adventure she has switched over to a divine helper of the type found in myth, and behaves, in effect, as an amulet.<sup>38</sup> Odysseus’ porcine men resented their in-between condition: hungry hogs on the outside, intelligent human beings (but innocent of their memory of Ithaca) on the inside, they wept.<sup>39</sup> They were the complete converse of the Beast Folk in *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), H.G. Wells’ novel about a mad scientist who transforms the animals on an island into human beings. Wells’ erstwhile beasts, having ‘stumbled’, as he says, ‘in the shackles of humanity’, come to regret losing their instinctual lives.<sup>40</sup> The Kirke adventure similarly touches on the matter of man’s animality. Recounting his tearful reunion with the men who had stayed behind on Aiaie’s shore, Odysseus resorts to a bucolic simile that gains ironical point from the human-animal binary running through the episode: crew and captain alike are respectively animalised in the comparison to calves mooing and leaping gleefully out of their pens on seeing their mothers return (10. 410-15).

The lowing cows in the simile and the helpless, grunting pigs of Aiaie suggest that besides its concern in man’s animal side, the episode has an interest in the attributes of speech and thought, regarded by the Greeks as uniquely human and as prerequisites of civilisation.<sup>41</sup> Arrived at Scherie in book 6, Odysseus wondered aloud whether he had come to a land of wild—that is, uncivilised—men (ἄγριοι) or of men ‘of intelligible speech’ (αὐδηέντων).<sup>42</sup> In book 10 he reconnoitered Aiaie in hopes of sighting ‘the works of men’ and hearing ‘the voice of mortals’ (βροτῶν ἐνοπήν, 147). As remarked, he describes Kirke as a θεὰ αὐδήεσσα (10. 136), i.e. a goddess capable of humanly

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<sup>36</sup> Odysseus’ nakedness in bed (γυμνωθέντα, 10.341, cf. ἀπογυμνωθέντα, 10. 301) suggests that ἀνήνορα (‘unmanly’ or ‘non-manly’) here connotes desexualisation/ emasculation.

<sup>37</sup> λύεσθαι/ λύειν (‘to loose’, ‘release’) at 10. 385 and 387 suits the practice of reversing a binding spell.

<sup>38</sup> Marinatos op. cit., 13 on Kirke as an amulet.

<sup>39</sup> For their resentment cf. de Jong (2001), 259 on 10. 240; on their magically induced forgetting of Ithaca: 10. 235; its reversal: 10. 397 (after changing back into men, they recognise Odysseus).

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Carpi (2020), 228.

<sup>41</sup> Renehan (1981), 239-59 on this Greek attitude; Petropoulos (2013), 43-56 on the classical Greek definition of civilisation.

<sup>42</sup> 6. 120, 125.

intelligible speech. (Her native tongue would have been the distinctive speech of gods, but she also spoke the language of mortals *par excellence*, Homeric Greek.)<sup>43</sup> Hermes' role in the episode may be relevant to the matter of speech. As a herald of the gods, he relayed communication through speech; in *Works and Days* he implanted in Pandora a voice and the ability to tell deceitful tales and lies (79-80).<sup>44</sup>

Odysseus' confession, shortly after his arrival on the island, that he had lost his bearings and his problem-solving thinking (μητις, 10. 192-3), evokes more generally the typically human (as most ancients believed) ability to think.<sup>45</sup> Human thought and self-consciousness are cast in relief when Odysseus (supplementing Eurylochos' report with the help of hindsight) says that his comrades, though metamorphosed into swine, still fully retained their *nous* (νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος, 10. 240). Once restored to humanness, Kirke's prisoners immediately recognised Odysseus, again counterpointing human consciousness/ perception against subhuman life. The allegorist 'Heraclitus' (1<sup>st</sup> century AD?) tellingly associates Hermes in this episode with 'upright discourse' (*orthos logos*), or rational thought, and his winged sandals (on which he flew to Aiaie) with 'outer speech' (προφορικὸς λόγος), a Stoic category.<sup>46</sup> This Stoic reading is anachronistic; but already in Homer the squeals of Kirke's thoughtful pigs anticipate the formal mainstream Greek conceit—in the sense of concept and conceited view—that only *homo sapiens* was capable of thought and speech, that 'man alone of θνητὰ ζῷα was a λογικὸν ζῷον'.<sup>47</sup>

As it turned out, Odysseus surrendered to Kirke's sexual allure for a year (10. 467-8). Like primordial Ogygie, Aiaie, with its relaxation of sexual mores and other norms and more particularly, its animalising excesses, harks forward to the *notion of the island as a sensual paradise*. (Outside the Wanderings of Odysseus another such locus was Kranae island, which served as a love nest for Paris and Helen, *Iliad* 3. 445.) 'Heracleitos', at least, certainly read the Aiaian adventure as a lesson about the perils of unbridled ἡδονή ('sensual pleasure'), and in particular, gluttony (γαστριμαργία) that leads

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<sup>43</sup> Odysseus notes that the antidote, which Hermes described to him as a φάρμακον ἐσθλόν (10. 287), was called μῶλυ by the gods (10. 305). Gera (2003), 51-4 on language of the gods in Homer and Hesiod; on αὐδὴ, *ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> Further, Gera *op. cit.*, especially 115-18.

<sup>45</sup> For a different interpretation of this passage see Bakker *op. cit.*, 79-80.

<sup>46</sup> *Homeric Problems* 72. 5-7, 14-18 (Russell-Konstan).

<sup>47</sup> Renehan *op. cit.*, especially 245-6.



to a life ‘more wretched than that of pigs’.<sup>48</sup> *Extreme things are liable to happen on islands, and especially on islands at the edges of the mythic Admiralty chart.*<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Kalypso’s ‘primitive’ isle

Ὠγυγίη τις νῆσος ἀπόπροθεν εἰν ἀλλὶ κείται

‘There is an isle, Ogygie, which lies far off in the sea.’

– *Odyssey* 7. 244<sup>50</sup>

The first outright mention of Kalypso’s island occurs at *Odyssey* 1. 50-1 where Athena refers to it twice as a νῆσος (1. 50) and qualifies it as ἀμφιρύτη (50) and δεινδρήεσσα (51). ἀμφιρύτη, ‘with water all around’<sup>51</sup> or ‘sea-girt’ (a frequent poetic translation), points to an elementary physical trait of a generic island, namely its boundedness by water, its closure and self-containment.<sup>52</sup> Some thirty lines later Athena mentions the island by name, Ogygie (νῆσον... Ὠγυγίην, 1.85), apparently an adjective meaning ‘extremely ancient’, ‘primordial’.<sup>53</sup> The island was *remote* (5. 55),<sup>54</sup> situated as it was across an expanse of the sea that even Hermes found tedious to traverse, especially as the absence of human habitation ruled out the savour of sacrifices which he ordinarily might have relished on his aerial route (5.99-102). The unfathomable distance—literally, ‘water unsingable’ (cf. ὕδωρ/ ἄσπετον, 5. 100-1)—<sup>55</sup> between the isle and any other city made access prohibitive for speedy ships even in the best weather, as Odysseus noted before leaving the island (5. 174-6). Ordinarily, travel from the island was ruled out, for Kalypso had neither ships nor sailors (5. 141-2).

Δεινδρήεσσα, ‘full of trees’, ‘abundantly wooded’—the other adjective Athena uses of the isle—will soon be borne out by the poet-narrator’s description of its forests and

<sup>48</sup> *Homeric Problems* 72. 1 (Russell- Konstan). Socrates, in Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.3.6-7, proposed a similar reading of the episode.

<sup>49</sup> On fabulous geography see Romm (1992), esp. ch. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Tr. slightly modified.

<sup>51</sup> Dawe op. cit., 47.

<sup>52</sup> ἀμφιρύτη is used of Kalypso’s island again (1. 198); of the isle of Die (11. 325); and of Kirke’s island (12. 283).

<sup>53</sup> Also at 6. 172, 7.244, 254, and 12. 448. On the meaning of the adjective, see Heubeck-West-Hainsworth (1988), 85-6 on *Odyssey* 1. 85.

<sup>54</sup> Also cf. 7. 244, quoted above.

<sup>55</sup> On the especial stress laid on ἄσπετον, see Hainsworth (1988), 265 on *Odyssey* 5. 101.

luxuriant vegetation (5. 63-4). Even its shoreline was lined with trees (5. 238). The isle was located ‘on (or at) the navel of the sea’ (see below). The sole inhabitant (apart from her maids) was Kalypso, a nymph (so described by gods in conversation and by Homer in his third-person narration).<sup>56</sup> She accordingly is described as θεά, θεός, or δῖα θεάων throughout book 5 by other gods as well as Homer and Odysseus. In his *Apologue* the hero twice describes her as a ‘fair-tressed, awe-inspiring goddess’ (ἐνπλόκαμος, δεινὴ θεός, 7. 246, 255), which brings out her beauty, her immortality, and august divinity. After his touchdown on her island, Hermes found her in her cave, singing (like Kirke) a beautiful aria while she wove on her loom (5.61-2). An absolute loner—she had scarce dealings with the gods<sup>57</sup>—Kalypso was determined to share her empty loneliness with Odysseus. She dangled her deathlessness and her beauty in seeking to entice Odysseus into residing forever on her island, even promising to make him immortal. After seven years the unworldly charms of Ogygie (see below) and its nymph began to cloy (7. 259). During these years the hero was presumed dead by all but his family.

Athena’s comments at *Odyssey* 1. 50-4 furnish Kalypso’s genealogy and the sole ‘geographical’ coordinates of her island:

νήσω ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ, ὅθι τ’ ὀμφαλός ἐστι θαλάσσης.

νήσος δενδρήεσσα, θεὰ δ’ ἐν δώματα ναίει,

Ἄτλαντος θυγάτηρ ὀλοόφρονος, ὅς τε θαλάσσης

πάσης βένθεα οἶδεν, ἔχει δέ τε κίονας αὐτὸς

μακράς, αἱ γαῖαν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχουσιν.

‘...in a sea-girt isle, where is the navel of the sea.

’Tis a wooded isle, and therein dwells a goddess,

daughter of Atlas of baneful mind, who knows the depths of every sea, and

himself holds the tall pillars which keep earth and heaven apart.’

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<sup>56</sup> 4. 557; 5. 14, 30, 57, 149, 153, 186, 196, 230.

<sup>57</sup> 5. 77-80; 87-8 (the latter lines are an ironical understatement, in effect ‘You [Hermes] rarely come here’).

Evil intrigue ran in the nymph's genealogy, for her father was the son of one of the scheming Titan ogres of cosmic prehistory. Kalypso was the daughter of Atlas of baneful mind' (ὀλοόφρωνος, 1. 52). This trait aligned her to Kirke, another malign island-goddess whose brother (Aietes) was also ὀλοόφρων (10. 137).<sup>58</sup> According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, Atlas literally upholds the separation of sky and earth while standing forever in the extreme west (517-20), at the intersection of Night and Day (746-8).<sup>59</sup> Yet he is also a marine deity enjoying, like Proteus, knowledge of the depths of the sea.<sup>60</sup> Ogygie by the same account lies at a cosmic juncture, the ὀμφαλὸς θαλάσσης (*Odyssey* 1. 50), a phrase that antedates 'navel of the earth' used of Delphi<sup>61</sup> and similarly connotes creation and centrality and a demarcation of the world of immortals and mortals. Perhaps the submarine *omphalos* was situated in the sphere of Atlas in the west. This coordinate was, at any rate, the point on the surface of the map most distant from all land.<sup>62</sup> Ogygie was not merely hopelessly faraway, but also 'very ancient', 'primordial', as befitted a cosmic-era backwater. Such may be the import especially of the collocation Ὠκυγίη...νῆσος (7. 244).

The name 'Kalypso' (Καλυψώ), derived from the verb καλύπτω, 'cover', 'conceal' is a *nom parlant*. Veiling herself (καλύπτειν) like the Babylonian ale-maid Siduri<sup>63</sup> and living in a grotto, the nymph 'covered' Odysseus in her uterine, hollow haunts, imposing un-heroic obscurity upon him. The pleasance attached to Kalypso's cavern was a wondrous *locus amoenus* that proved to be a cozy Devil's Island.<sup>64</sup> The prodigal variety of trees, fragrances, exotic birds, its grape vine and the row of four springs running across the island in four directions (this quartet being an emblem of paradise)<sup>65</sup> filled even a god, Hermes, with stunned wonder (5. 63-73). M. L. West and others have remarked that

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<sup>58</sup> See n. 31 above.

<sup>59</sup> West (1997), 149: the Titan seems to be a cross especially between Yahweh and the Hurro-Hittite giant Ubelluri 'upon whom heaven and earth were built'. See also Dawe op. cit., 47-8 on *Odyssey* 1. 52.

<sup>60</sup> Proteus: *Odyssey* 4. 386.

<sup>61</sup> Pindar, *Pythian* 4. 74, Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 40, 166.

<sup>62</sup> West (2014), 128, who adds, 'In an earlier version of the story, before the importation of the Argonautic adventures, it marked the extreme limit of Odysseus' travels, the place at which his situation seemed most hopeless, furthest from any land and with no ship.'

<sup>63</sup> See especially West (1997), 410 on Kalypso and Siduri.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. West (2014), 128: 'a kind of idyllic Alcatraz' (which is less apposite since Alcatraz is easily visible from the mainland and has nothing lush about it).

<sup>65</sup> West (1997), 422: 'This arrangement has long been compared with the river that flowed out of Eden and divided into four streams.' Dawe op. cit., 221 on 5. 55-73 notes that the sheer beauty of the *locus amoenus* on her island (see below) puts paid to the theory of some critics that Kalypso is a Bride of Death.

lengthy descriptions of scenic beauty are uncommon in Archaic Greek poetry;<sup>66</sup> the departure from this rule in the Homeric passage just noted suggests that something quite extraordinary—indeed, otherworldly—is being depicted.

The seven-year dalliance of the hero and his divine hostess produced no children (at least in the *Odyssey*). The paradisiacal ambiance of Ogygie and its continuous access to a private sea and sex prefigure the island imaginary of Gauguin, R.L. Stevenson, and *South Pacific*, summarised by one expert as ‘*sea, sand, sun, and sex*’.<sup>67</sup> At *Odyssey* 1. 198 ff., incidentally, when Athena tells Telemachos that his father is being held captive on an island ‘by savage men’ she is being tactful by mixing truth with falsehood;<sup>68</sup> her delicate lie is based on what must already in the Archaic period have been another cliché: *distant islands are inhabited by ‘savages’*.<sup>69</sup>

In sum, Kalypso’s and Kirke’s islands stood at opposite latitudes, and were sensuous, static, feminised locations. Ogygia, unreachably far, lay plumb on the ‘navel of the sea’ in the occident. The island was striking for its botanical beauty and forests and bird species—and the sterile voluptuous company of its native. Kalypso’s prison paradise was centred on a grotto, a chthonian feature. In the far east, Aiaie’s enclosed space was filled with rampant thickets and surrounding glens and docile beasts. It was the domain of a witch (among other titles). The underground, and hence chthonian, penfolds<sup>70</sup> on the island contained swine, chthonian creatures. Both Aiaie and Ogygia offered continuity and fixity in their strange wildness. Solitary inhabitants both (especially Kalypso, whose haunts overlay the navel of the sea), the goddesses occupied a lone, self-centred universe, a kind of planet given over to metaphorical navel-gazing: an ‘I-land’.<sup>71</sup> Neither Kalypso nor Kirke seems to have ventured beyond her shores; as remarked, Kalypso’s island had no ships despite its abundant forests, although the nymph did conveniently have a bronze axe, with which Odysseus constructed his raft (5. 162).

Aiolie, on the other hand, was a small island in motion; swept along by gales and sea currents, it resisted location. Like Kirke’s isle it too was home to magic. The isle of

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<sup>66</sup> West (1997), 411.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Lowenthal (2007), 217.

<sup>68</sup> Dawe in conjunction with Heubeck-West-Hainsworth on *Odyssey* 1. 198 ff. On this exchange see Petropoulos (2011), ch.1.

<sup>69</sup> Compare Malinowski’s *The sexual lives of savages in North-Western Melanesia* (1929) for an instance of the modern (if now discredited) cliché. Lestringant (2006) traces the invention of the ethnographic ‘savage’ to Jean de Léry and his voyage to Brazil in 1556.

<sup>70</sup> Dawe on 10. 283.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Lowenthal op. cit., 218 (the island as metaphor of identity).

Aiolos enclosed a tiny inbred community that travelled across the ocean. All three islands were remote pockets of fantasy where cultural primitiveness prevailed and extreme things happened. The close encounters of Odysseus and his men on Aiaie and of Odysseus on Ogygie also bring out the degree and the dangers of ‘going native’, a transformation that always happens at the cost of the newcomer’s original identity. Kalypso’s and Kirke’s islands invite us to think about immobility, retardation, animal instincts, and regression, while Aiolie prompts thoughts in particular about the paradox of mental insularity and *kinesis*. In the global world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where physical insularity is now impossible, this paradox is quickly dissolving.

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## Figures



**Figure 1:** Herbert James Draper, 'Calypso's Isle' (c. 1897 Manchester Art Gallery, oil on canvas, 84 x 147.3 cm.).



**Figure 2:** John William Waterhouse, 'Circe invidiosa' (1892, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, oil on canvas, 87.4 x 180.7 cm.).

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## **NOTAS DE CAMPO DA *ODISSEIA*: A ETNOGRAFIA FABULOSA DE EÓLIA, AIAIE E OGÍGIA**

*Ioannis Petropoulos*

### **RESUMO**

As digressões etnográficas de Odisseu nos livros 9 a 12 da *Odisseia* – o chamado Apólogo – serviram como o principal paradigma para a etnografia mítica e atual, desde Heródoto passando por Marco Polo e Cristóvão Colombo, e mais particularmente, para a "abordagem testemunhal" da etnografia. Entre os povos e terras e estilos de pensamento que ele encontrou (*Odisseia* 1.3) o herói também se familiarizou com várias ilhas. Como microcosmos de sociedades maiores, as ilhas fornecem 'metáforas mestras' e modelos com os quais se pode pensar sobre a cultura. Neste artigo, discuto três ilhas do Apólogo na ordem cronológica das viagens de Odisseu. Elas são inseparáveis de sua geografia e da personalidade e "estilo de vida" de seus habitantes, como será visto; estas ilhas adumbram a cartografia mítica moral e de gênero da Grécia arcaica.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Etnografia, *Odisseia*, imaginário sobre as ilhas, ilhas como metáfora, "selvagem etnográfico".