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THE CARTOGRAPHY OF POWER IN GREEK EPIC: HOMER'S ODYSSEY & THE  
RECEPTION OF HOMERIC GEOGRAPHIES IN THE HELLENISTIC AND IMPERIAL  
PERIODS

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## ABSTRACT

As modern scholarship has transitioned from analyzing literature in terms of its temporal components towards a focus on narrative spaces, scholars like Alex Purves and Donald Lateiner have applied this framework also to ancient Greek literature. Homer's *Odyssey* provides a critical recipient for such inquiry, and Purves has explored the construction of space in the poem with relation to its implications on Greek epic as a genre. This paper seeks to expand upon the spatial discourse on Homer's *Odyssey* by pinpointing the modern geographic concept of power, tracing a term inspired by Michael Foucault, or a "cartography of power," in the poem. In Chapter 2 I employ a narratological approach to examine power dynamics played out over specific spaces of Odysseus' wanderings, and then on Ithaca, analyzing the intersection of space, power, knowledge, and deception. The second half of this chapter discusses the threshold of Odysseus' palace and flows of power across spheres of gender and class. In Chapter 3, following the model put forth in the previous chapter, I address the question of Hellenistic reception of Homeric geographies through an analysis of Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Finally, in Chapter 4, I reflect on Dionysius of Alexandria's *Periegesis of the Known World* from the Imperial period as a response to Homer's and Apollonius' epic geographies. In this chapter I first address Homeric reception in the imperial period and within the Second Sophistic and then transition to an analysis of references to locations of the *Odyssey* in Dionysius's descriptive poem.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

“Epic poetry seeks to map the world, both as a physical and as an ideological construct. Just as Homer was the source of all literature, all philosophy, and all political science, so epic is the all-encompassing literary embodiment of all that is known.”

Richard Hunter, “The Divine and Human Map of the *Argonautica*”

### Space in Scholarly Thought and Literature

In what may be referred to as the “spatial turn” within the humanities and social sciences of the mid-twentieth century, scholars across disciplines shifted their gazes from their preoccupations with time to space (Tally 12). This trend was less a discovery of a newfound interest than a resurgence of attention to a way of viewing the world familiar even to ancient scholars (17).<sup>1</sup> The return to a spatial orientation, however, was concomitant with a change in the discourses surrounding it. Henri Lefebvre’s seminal *Production of Space* introduced an understanding of space as not merely the scenery before which events occur but a tangible result of societal actions. A decade later, in his letter “Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias and Utopias,” philosopher Michel Foucault also remarked of the spatial shift, which he declared as a key feature of the current historical era (1). In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault identified the inherent interaction between space and power, emphasizing the imperative need to confront space as something that is related to political control.

In the field of Classics, spatial thinking has also merited recent attention in the past few decades. Richard Hunter and Dag Oistein Endsjo have devoted considerable attention to

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<sup>1</sup> Tally uses the example of Herodotus as an early author juxtaposing narrative and space (48).

mapping out the journey of Jason and the Argonauts with reference to modern geography. In 2008, “expert mariner” Apostolos Kourtis and the Institute of Ancient Shipbuilding Research and Technology (NAFDOMOS) built a Bronze Age pentecore in which they attempted to sail the Argonautic journey through the Mediterranean (Kleisiaris et. al. 104-105). The inquiry into literary cartographies has also been furthered by Alex Purves’ book *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative*, a work investigating the spatial nature of the Homeric poems and a range of Greek literature including that of Herodotus and Xenophon. Purves’ book argues for the adoption of a perspective on ancient literature based on the ways in which the plot of a narrative interacts with and is shaped by, in her words, “the literary landscape that we might survey in our mind’s eye” (1). Purves’ discussion of Homer’s *Odyssey* analyzes the relationship between the epic genre and the spatial manifestations of plot. She offers the *Odyssey* as an example of a “counter-cartographic view of space” that rejects a closed, all-seeing depiction of space in favor of what she views as a shift in poetic spatial perspective (65).

A spatial discourse with reference to Homer and other ancient literature is also the focus of Irene de Jong’s book *Space in Ancient Greek Literature*. De Jong applies a narratological approach to discern how space is treated by ancient authors. While conceding that “the role of space in the Homeric epics – at first sight – is modest,” de Jong proceeds to supply a framework for rendering greater meaning from the spatial information the Homeric author does supply (21). Her discussion of symbolic spaces is particularly helpful for tracing flows of power over space (34-35). Finally, Donald Lateiner’s chapter “Homer’s Social-Psychological Spaces and Places” and “Heroic Proxemics: Social Space and Distance in the *Odyssey*” engage with the cognitive aspects of Homeric spaces and track how the maintenance of distance plays out in the *Odyssey*, respectively. Lateiner’s work again reinforces the intimate relationship between space and plot

with the integral assertion that “there are few neutral gestures, postures, positions, or social distances in everyday life and none in literature, least of all in Homer” (1992, 135).

It is from a combination of the social theory of Lefebvre and Foucault and the critical inroads into Homeric spaces through the work of Purves, de Jong, and Lateiner that this thesis takes its inspiration. While Purves focuses especially on the wanderings of Odysseus, and more pointedly on his “inland walk” (70-89), left relatively untouched are the spaces of Ithaca and a narratological tracing of power in the *Odyssey*. The intention of this thesis is to explore the intersection of space and power in the *Odyssey*. By focusing on specific locations within Odysseus’ wanderings and his palace in Ithaca, I seek to demonstrate the Homeric construction of a “cartography of power,” a term denoted by Richard Tally to encompass Foucault’s space-power nexus (Tally 112). Although the spatial dynamics of the *Odyssey* and their connection with the poem’s plot could constitute enough material for an entire book, equally enticing is the reception of Homeric geographies and manifestations of power relations in later epic spaces.

Apollonius of Rhodes’ *Argonautica* provides an example of a Hellenistic epic poem that responds to and appropriates geographic locations of Odysseus’ wanderings in a type of imagined prequel to the Homeric work. Set in the Bronze Age, the *Argonautica* features the generation of heroes prior to Odysseus and the Trojan War and situates classic Homeric places on a more developed Hellenistic map of the Mediterranean world. Written in an intellectual climate of contemporary debate over Homer’s geographic authenticity, Apollonius’ epic proves an interesting avenue through which to approach the reception of Homeric geographies. Finally, in an attempt to trace the places and spaces of the *Odyssey* into the Imperial Period, I look at an epic poem of Dionysius of Alexandria, or Dionysius Periegetes, the *Periegesis of the Known World*. Since the *Periegesis* and the *Argonautica* stem from written traditions and were not

products of oral composition, they are capable of greater detail and expansive literary cartographies perhaps untenable for recitation by a bard. However, Dionysius' more subtle treatment of Homer produces its own conception of the world with elements of the mythical and scientific, setting the stage for a different cartography of power in the didactic poetic form.

## **Methodology**

A discussion of the spatial distribution of power in epic first necessitates a definition of space, place, and the geographic approach being applied. William G. Thalmann's book *Apollonius of Rhodes and the Spaces of Hellenism* supplies a useful model for dealing with geographic concepts within the ancient epic genre. In this thesis, I employ Thalmann's explanation of space as "the physical world, as it is experienced, shaped, and imagined by human beings in their social and cultural interactions." In that Thalmann's definition of space views geography as a subset of space at large, it breaks from the more widely accepted definition employed by cultural geographers (9). However, this understanding of space complies with Lefebvre's tenet that space can both produce and be produced, given its inherent basis in human activity. Space is host to human activity, influences this activity, and is in turn shaped by the relations that occur over it.

In comparison to space, its sister concept of place refers to a more specific point within a given space. A place is a location imbued with a concentration of meaning tied to the human relations occurring there. As such, space comprises many places (Thalmann 16).<sup>2</sup> The work of

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<sup>2</sup> David Harvey comments on the concept of production of place and the role of meaning in this production (140).



Doreen Massey in *Space, Place and Gender* highlights how space, through its combinations of places and their associated meanings, is ultimately related to the formation of identities and narratives. One such identity is gender, which Massey argues is a feature present in and influencing all spaces (185-190). Thus, place is tied intrinsically to gender, power (as argued by Foucault), and other identity markers like class and status. With the above understanding of place as attached to meaning, and given its association with power, it is not a far leap to incorporate a final Foucauldian aspect to space: the spatial relationship of knowledge to power (1977). Foucault argues that the two are necessarily intertwined. Consequently, in this paper I follow the flows of knowledge transfer and concealment as a part of revealing the larger cartography of power within the epic poems.

A final term used within this paper reflects Irene de Jong's idea of space as symbolic. While places hold specific attributes of gender and class and are sites for the transfer of knowledge and power, they also have the ability to signify. Donald Lateiner (2014, 65), Alex Purves (83) and William Thalmann (80) all employ the word *sema*, or sign, to convey this important capability of places. A *sema* serves as a mark in a landscape, calling attention to that place and linking it with others sharing similar cultural meaning. In this paper, I occasionally invoke this term in discussing how characters and poets impart symbolic resonance upon their surroundings.

It is through these underlying conceptions of space, place, production of space, and *sema* that I form the geographic arguments of this paper.

## Overview of Paper

As stated above, this paper seeks to outline the spatial flows of power in Greek epic poetry. In Chapter 2, “A ‘Cartography of Power’ in Homer’s *Odyssey*,” I lay the foundation for the rest of the paper through an analysis of power, first in Odysseus’ wanderings and then in the interior spaces of Ithaca. I focus on Calypso’s island of Ogygia, the island of the Cyclopes, Circe’s island Aeaea, and the Sirens, noting the interplay of deception and knowledge in Odysseus’ initial encounters and eventual escapes from these places. In the first three sections I also take note of the use of alternative modes of narration and their effect on the conveyance of the narrative. I suggest a means of knowledge spread through the sharing of “spatial knowledge,” particularly with respect to Calypso and Circe and discuss the gendering of spaces in the Circe episode. In the section on Polyphemus, I note the colonial relationship between Odysseus and the Cyclops, formed around an unequal distribution of knowledge-power.

After the wanderings, I address spatial power dynamics back in Ithaca, arguing for the critical role of liminal spaces occupied by Odysseus, and in particular the place of the threshold upon his return to his palace. Through a narratological tracing of thresholds in the second half of the *Odyssey*, I maintain that thresholds supply a center point for the driving of plot through Odysseus’ reclaiming of his home. In the end of this chapter, I look more closely at the palace as host to spaces marked by gender and class distinctions, noting the patterns embodied by characters across these dimensions.

In Chapter 3, “Hellenistic Epic Reception: Apollonius of Rhodes’ *Argonautica*,” I apply the framework set forth in the previous chapter to assess the cartography of power in the Hellenistic poem, led by the work of Thalmann. I begin with a brief overview of geographic

advancements and key figures in the progression towards the formalization of the academic field with particular emphasis on Eratosthenes as an early and outspoken example of Homeric geographic criticism. The rest of the chapter is split into three sections mirroring the sequence of events of the poem's narrative. The first section tracks the trip to Colchis taken by the Argonauts, confronting interior spaces and their gender dynamic in Greece prior to the voyage; the island of Lemnos and gendered space; the role of liminal space and colonialism in the failed interactions with the Doliones and Earthborn Giants; and the spatial information conferred by the seer Phineus on Thynia. The second section addresses interior gendered spaces on Colchis and identifies flows of power across thresholds in the palace of Aetes. The final section of the chapter follows the return of the Argonauts to Greece and dwells on Apollonius' interpretations of Homeric geographies including Aeaea, the Sirens, Phaeacia, and Talus as a nod to Polyphemus and colonial discourse.

The fourth and final chapter, "Imperial Epic Reception: Dionysius' *Periegesis*," begins with an introduction to the variety of approaches held by Stoic philosophers towards Homeric geographies, focusing primarily on Strabo and his defense of Homer. I then proceed to discuss the Second Sophistic as an intellectual movement of the first three centuries C.E. and its role in producing new ways of interpreting Homer with relation to Greek identity in the early Roman Empire, including Dio Chrysostom's unique "Trojan Oration." After a brief introduction to Dionysius' *Periegesis*, I focus on allusions and linguistic references to Homer's wanderings in the imperial epic didactic poem, reflecting quickly on references to Calypso, the Lotus Eaters, Aeolus, and Circe, which the poet incorporates into his depiction of the known world, or *oikoumene*. Finally, I reflect on Dionysius' geographic reorientation in this last literary cartography of power by including Janet Downie's argument that the *Periegesis* reveals an

eastward focus in contrast to the Greece-centered viewpoints employed by the Homeric and Apollonian traditions.

## Chapter 2

### A “Cartography of Power” in Homer’s *Odyssey*

#### Spaces of Power in the Wanderings

Odysseus’ wanderings take the hero from the shores of Troy to lands and peoples vastly different from the known Greek world. Along the way, Odysseus is stalled, blocked, and propelled by figures divine, monstrous, and mortal—from the monstrous Polyphemus to the witch Circe. These characters exist in spaces that are remote from Ithaca and often initially presented as idyllic. Such idyllic qualities ultimately prove deceptive, and these deceptive spaces then become spaces of contested power in which Odysseus must, whether through divine intervention or his own wile, escape and/or subdue his surroundings. Thus, this chapter begins from several basic questions: what can Odysseus’ account of his wanderings reveal about the intersection of geography and power? And how does this “cartography of power,” to borrow a term from Foucault, change once Odysseus makes it home to Ithaca?<sup>3</sup>

To answer these questions, I will begin by looking at four examples from Odysseus’ wanderings, which illustrate what I will refer to as the *Odyssey*’s “cartography of power” through their varying narration and deceptive production of space: the third-person narrated scene of Odysseus’ “entrapment” by Calypso; his personally narrated violent interaction with the Cyclops Polyphemus; the hero’s self-described encounter with the sorceress-goddess Circe on Aeaea; and the dual description of the Sirens in Circe’s warning and Odysseus’ experience.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “cartography of power” is directly mentioned in Robert Tally’s book *Spatiality*, with reference to the work of Michel Foucault in tying power to its physical, spatial manifestations. See Foucault’s book *Discipline and Punish*.

These scenes, colored by either the voice of the Homeric narrator or Odysseus himself, embody the two-way production of space and human experience. Just as space provides the boundaries and landscapes of human reality, humans also shape their surroundings, both of which necessarily effect the flow of power. The power relationships present in each of these confrontations also rely on a differential knowledge distribution ultimately essential to navigating the spaces of the wanderings. In order for Odysseus to escape these spaces of confinement and danger, he must receive knowledge, often conveyed by a deity, to transform the hostile space around him.

In the second part of the chapter, I extend my inquiry from the spaces of the wanderings to interior spaces on Ithaca. Beginning from the edges of society, Odysseus' return to his palace, and ultimately Penelope, requires a second sort of spatial odyssey (Lateiner 1992, 78). A focal point of this reentry into Ithacan society is the threshold (οὐδός), the situation upon and crossing of which is essentially related to power dynamics and social status.<sup>4</sup> Like in the wanderings, knowledge is at the forefront of the formation of these power dynamics that affect and are affected by the movement across space. Finally, I detail two components of the interior spaces of Odysseus' palace: gender and class. Motivated by Doreen Massey's assertion that "space and place...are gendered through and through" (Massey 186), I assess the interaction between gender and class in the spaces in and around the Ithacan palace, following the movements of Odysseus. Transgressions from conventional male-female spheres or servant-nobility spaces initiate important plot progression.

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<sup>4</sup> Thresholds are pinpointed by both Donald Lateiner (1992) and Irene de Jong in their works on space and ancient Greek literature.

## *Ogygia*

The *Odyssey* opens with a hint of the cartography of power that the reader will soon enter. As the poet's invocation to a Muse to recite the story of Odysseus reveals, the hero is trapped by the goddess Calypso on her island, Ogygia, a distinct spatial position enabled by an uneven power relationship (1.14-15). As the poet describes it, Ogygia is an idyllic image of natural beauty with "luscious forest" (ὑλή δὲ σπέος ἀμφὶ πεφύκει τηλεθόωσα, 5.63), "ripe and verdant vine" (ἡμερὶς ἠβώωσα, 5.69), and springs of "sparkling water" (ὔδατι λευκῷ, 5.70).<sup>5</sup> Calypso, likewise, is unmatched in charm, far beyond the mortal imagination (5.218). Despite the perceived perfection of the island and Odysseus' host, the space of Ogygia is largely deceptive. Untainted beauty masks the painful isolation Odysseus will experience on the remote island. While the auspicious surroundings may have initially inspired hope in the hero, Odysseus' reality has become one of hopeless entrapment. Using varying language, on numerous occasions the Homeric author notes that Odysseus is "trapped" (ἐὼν ἐν δόμασι, 5.5) or "held" (τοῦ θυγάτηρ δύστηνον ὀδυρόμενον κατερύκει, 1.55) by Calypso in her cave contrary to his wishes.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the promising appearance of exteriors gives way to interior spaces of confinement: lush nature and a shining goddess are replaced by a prison-like island.

This characterization of Ogygia as a deceptive space illustrates an unequal power relationship between the human, the divine, and the island. Odysseus is tricked by his perception when arriving on Ogygia and he remains trapped on Calypso's island at the mercy of the goddess who wishes to keep him for herself (1.14-16). However benevolent Calypso may seem, her

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<sup>5</sup> All English translations of the *Odyssey* are taken from Emily Wilson's translation (2018. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.).

<sup>6</sup> The world play behind Calypso's name, stemming from the Greek καλύπτω ("to cover") is especially fitting here.

intentions are, at their basis, entirely self-serving, and Odysseus cannot escape these purposes. Whereas throughout the poem it is clear that Odysseus possesses the gift of wit and verbal machination, employing words to escape danger or navigate difficult interactions, this ability is rendered ineffective on Ogygia. In fact, Odysseus remains entirely silent in the poem until after the goddess reports that he may go home through the edict of Zeus, and even then, his response is one of disillusioned uncertainty (“Goddess, you have some other scheme in mind, / not my safe passage,” “ἄλλο τι δὴ σύ, θεά,” 5.172-179).

Ogygia, with its initial idyllic qualities, is thus recast into a space of alienation and unrequited longing. Despite the company of the goddess, Odysseus experiences physical and emotional confinement on the island. Often reduced to tears in his disheartened state, Odysseus spends his days “by the shore as usual,” the closest he can be to his home, to which he longs to return (ὄ γ’ ἐπ’ ἀκτῆς κλαῖε καθήμενος, 5.82). The hero looks out upon the “fruitless sea” (“πόντον ἐπ’ ἀπύργετον,” 5.84), once the passage home, whose expanse now offers little solace to the trapped protagonist and distances him from the life he used to know.

It is only through divine intervention that this deceptive space (and subsequently alienation and longing) can be breached, a fact that further informs the hierarchy of power on Ogygia. While it is clear that Odysseus is not able to master the space or his captor through his cleverness, the actions of the Olympian gods in freeing him demonstrate their superior authority over Calypso, a less powerful deity. Prompted by Athena, Zeus sends Hermes to Ogygia to demand Odysseus’ release (“Ἑρμεία· σὺ γὰρ αὖτε τά τ’ ἄλλα περ ἄγγελός ἐσσι, 5.7-50). Though initially upset by this request (“You cruel, jealous gods! You bear a grudge / whenever any goddess takes a man / to sleep with her as a lover in her bed,” “σχέτλιοί ἐστε, θεοί, ζηλήμονες ἔξοχον ἄλλων / οἳ τε θεαῖσ’ ἀγάσθε παρ’ ἀνδράσιν εὐνάζεσαι / ἀμφοδίην, ἣν τίς τε φίλον



ποιήσεται ἀκοίτην,” 5.118-120), Calypso ultimately obliges. Furthermore, although she lacks ships or many of the appropriate supplies to get Odysseus home, she willingly imparts the knowledge she possesses for his navigation home (5.140-144). Thus, whereas she must cede to the calls of the Olympian gods by virtue of her status as a lower deity, Calypso also relinquishes some of her power over Odysseus on her own accord through the knowledge she imparts upon him. By providing Odysseus with an axe (πέλεκυν μέγαν, 5.234), an adze (σκέπαρνον ἐϋξοον, 5.237), and other necessary materials (ἔνεικε τέρετρα Καλυψώ, 5.246-259), and showing him the location of the trees best fitted to his purposes (ὄθι δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκει, 5.238-240), the goddess helps him prepare his raft. Calypso’s practical knowledge is followed by spatial knowledge: on the waters, Odysseus recalls advice given to him by Calypso “to keep the Bear on his left side while sailing” (“ἐπ’ ἀριστερὰ χειρὸς ἔχοντα,” 5.276-277). In this way, Calypso’s knowledge pertains to both the means of departure (the raft) and navigation (spatial knowledge). With this new source of power and the approval of the gods (who entirely control Odysseus’ fate and mobility on Ogygia), Odysseus can now proceed towards his final destination.

The consideration of this hierarchy of power over the space of Ogygia is a process intimately connected to the use of third-person omniscient narration in this part of the poem. This third-person narration allows the author to supply a dimension of the divine to Odysseus’ plight on the remote island and enables the author to escape the protagonist’s (literally) confined space for other locations. In 5.7-148, we are made privy to conversations between the gods: first on Olympus between Athena and Zeus (5.7-27), then between Hermes and Calypso on Ogygia (5.97-159). The first dialogue, far from reach of Odysseus’ human ear, reveals the Olympians to be determining a fate that reinforces this hierarchical embodiment of power. In this interaction, Athena’s sympathy for Odysseus clearly supersedes any considerations for the happiness of the

lower goddess, Calypso. Furthermore, since he is her father, Zeus gladly agrees with Athena's wishes, dispatching Hermes to extend his imperative far away on Ogygia. Although the exact reasons behind Athena's sympathy for Odysseus are not revealed (though she does seem to be motivated by righting the injustice that has befallen him as a once just king, 5.7-20), her compassion alone is reason enough to override the intentions of lower deities and empower even a mortal to evade these purposes.<sup>7</sup>

While the second dialogue takes place on Ogygia, it reflects a crossing between differential spaces of power. To transmit Zeus' message, Hermes flies down from Olympus, to Pieria, and across the sea to the "distant island" of Calypso (τὴν νῆσον ἀφίκετο τηλόθ' ἐοῦσαν, 5.43-57). In tracing Hermes' trip, the narrator follows a movement through the spatial hierarchy of power from the Olympian home of the gods to the less divine Ogygia. The brief conversation between Hermes and Calypso, who, like all "deathless gods," can immediately identify each other (5.78-80), also illustrates the power dynamic between Hermes and his father. As the messenger god concedes, he made the journey unwillingly: "Zeus ordered me to come – I did not want to. Who would desire to cross such an expanse of endless salty sea?" ("ἄλμυρὸν ὕδωρ ἄσπετον," 5.100-101). Although Hermes' complaints are primarily rooted in the lack of human inhabitants and the resulting dearth of sacrifices to him on the island (5.101-102), his speech discloses an important truth: "none can sway or check the will of Zeus" (οὐ πῶς ἔστι Διὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο / οὔτε παρεξελθεῖν ἄλλον θεὸν οὔθ' ἀλιῶσαι, 5.103-104). This remains the case even on remote Ogygia. Zeus' authority extends far beyond Olympus, implying the boundless spatial extent of the god's reign.

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<sup>7</sup> Jenny Strauss Clay's *The Wrath of Athena: Gods and Men in the Odyssey* traces the impact of Athena's anger and favor towards Odysseus as an integral force shaping the form of the epic poem.

Thus, these two conversations demonstrate the role of third-person omniscient narration as providing access to the divine realm not inhabited by or accessible to the protagonist, and consequently informing the reader about the hierarchy of power between the gods. This power relationship is made clear as the divine command is carried from above to below, from Olympian to lower god, ultimately implicating the human sphere. These interactions on a divine level change Odysseus' spatial reality: freed from a helpless stasis, he can move forward, empowered and informed.

### *The Island of the Cyclopes*

One of the most illustrative scenes of the cartography of power inherent to this poem takes place on the Island of the Cyclopes, where Odysseus encounters Polyphemus. Unlike the events on Ogygia, Odysseus himself recounts this experience in the first person. Like Ogygia, the island of the Cyclopes is also deceptive in its appearance and its potential for economic productivity. The first-person perspective of Odysseus draws readers through the protagonist's experience as he chooses to recall it, reflecting the power dynamics of this spatial deception. Furthermore, Odysseus' account lends itself to a modern "post-colonial reading": the relationship between Odysseus and Polyphemus – Greek and Cyclops – portrays a powered colonizer-colonized relationship that produces spaces of confinement and escape.

As Odysseus docks on the island of the Cyclopes, he looks up and sees "a high cave overhung with laurel" (δάφνησι κατηρέφες, 9.183) and an island untouched by humans. In its lack of habitation or development, the land presents as peaceful and pastoral (9.120-123). This deceptively innocent appearance inspires confidence in Odysseus, who after exploring the

Cyclops' cave, insists on staying longer to meet its dweller in the hopes that he may treat the Greeks hospitably (9.227-229). However, when Polyphemus violently re-enters the cave, throwing down wood for his fire, Odysseus' false perceptions are shattered. As Odysseus tells the Phaeacians, he and his men were immediately frightened and he adds, "In fact, he brought no joy to my companions" (9.229-230), alluding to the danger and fatalities experienced in the presence of the Cyclops.<sup>8</sup>

That the encounter is told in the voice of Odysseus lends extreme fear and urgency to the situation of entrapment. When Odysseus is stuck in Calypso's cave, the space is constructed as one of longing and enduring sadness. In contrast, Polyphemus' cave and its space are violently construed by a man anticipating an ugly death should he not manage to escape. Here, Odysseus and his men are rendered physically powerless: the Cyclops kills and eats four of his men just as he would his meals, while the unfortunate victims are helpless, "like puppies" (9.290). Odysseus is disturbed by these events and tells the Phaeacians that although he immediately wished to stab the giant in his liver, he quickly changed his mind when he realized he and his men did not have the strength to move the stone blocking the doorway (λίθον ὄβριμον, 9.300-305). Thus, through Odysseus' point of view, the reader understands the severity of the hero's bodily entrapment and the ensuing despair.

Despite his physical constraints, Odysseus does not experience intellectual restraint.

Though later useless on Ogygia, Odysseus' wit here allows him to tip the scales of power in his

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<sup>8</sup> James S. Romm notes that in 9.284, Homer uses the phrase "*peirata gaias*," or "boundary of the earth" to designate the shoreline of the Island of the Cyclops (12). While he disagrees with Ann Bergren's assertion that this marks the space as in some way related to "the other side of the world" and the "other-worldly" (*Etymology and Uses* 27-28), I find a viable connection to liminal spaces that indicate the transition between the human-monstrous realms and interactions that will play out between Odysseus and Polyphemus.

favor (as there is no deity present to repress it). Understanding the heightened stakes of inevitable death as long as he and his men remain in the cave, Odysseus devises a plan to break from this space. While at a disadvantage to Polyphemus' incredible strength and effectively powerless physically, Odysseus exhibits power through knowledge to transcend the confined space of the cave.<sup>9</sup> When the Cyclops leaves his cave, Odysseus sets to work, cutting and sharpening a spear out of Polyphemus' walking stick (9.315-329) and later tricking Polyphemus in consuming wine to fall asleep (9.346-362). The relationship between knowledge and power as defined by Foucault is manifest in Odysseus' knowledge of wine, which gives the hero a distinct advantage and tangible power over Polyphemus, who, incapacitated by the alcohol, is subdued to sleep. This knowledge of wine is essential to Odysseus' ability to free himself and his men as it provides the opportunity for further disabling the man-eating giant. Ultimately, after successfully stabbing the eye of the giant (9.382-387), the Greeks make their escape from the cave, hidden under Polyphemus' sheep when the Cyclops moves the boulder from the cave's entrance (ὕπελυσσα δ' ἑταίρους, 9.429-463). Blinded, Polyphemus is no longer able to vigilantly guard his cave-prison, losing his former power over his territory.

It is worth observing here that the manner through which Odysseus outwits the Cyclops is reminiscent of Edward Said's post-colonial perspective of the colonizer-colonized relationship and is only possible through the narration of Odysseus himself, our "colonizer."<sup>10</sup> This framework captures the differential power dynamics between Odysseus and Polyphemus made manifest in the uneven levels of knowledge they possess. From the start of his account, Odysseus

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<sup>9</sup> An idea with its roots in Foucault, as mentioned earlier (Tally 121).

<sup>10</sup> See Said, *Orientalism*, and Jasen and Nayar, *Guides for the Perplexed: Postcolonialism*. There is, of course, no colonization of the traditional sense occurring here in the *Odyssey*, but this conceptual framework is helpful in its ability to illuminate value judgements and powered social dynamics.

characterizes the Cyclopes as “reckless” (9.107), “lacking in customs” (9.108), and distinct from the Greeks in terms of social, legal and economic organization. Instead of sharing communal legislation, each Cyclops rules over his own family as he sees fit (9.114). Despite the close proximity to another island inhabited by goats – a promising food source – none leave their homes to take advantage of it (9.116-119). Odysseus continues by remarking that with the island’s nearly perfect conditions for supporting abundant agriculture, “they could have turned this island into a fertile colony, with proper harvests” (οἳ κέ σφιν καὶ νῆσον ἐϋκτιμένην ἐκάμουντο, 9.130-131). Yet this is not the case. Though he never explicitly contrasts the practices of the Greeks to those of the Cyclopes, Odysseus’ description contains an implicit value judgement. The Cyclopes are clearly unlike the Greeks, a fact evident in their deficiency of agricultural knowledge, disinterest in the sea and commerce, and lack of familiarity with wine. This perspective is evoked by the first-person narrator. Odysseus’ judgment of these undefiled (deceptively beautiful) and untended (unknowledgeable) spaces on the island as underdeveloped insinuates a Greek standard of living which the lower Cyclopean way of life fails to reach.

In this way, this epistemological and colonial inequality is innately tied to power and gives rise to spatial consequences. While the difference in knowledge provides a deceptively innocent appearance to the island, Polyphemus’ lack of knowledge regarding wine and word play is a decisive factor in outmaneuvering the giant and escaping his cave. Ironically, though Odysseus reports that amongst barley and grain, “clustering wine-grapes... flourish there” (αἳ τε φέρουσιν /οἶνον ἐριστάφυλον, 9.110), and “vines would never fail” (μάλα κ’ ἄφθιτοι ἄμπελοι εἶεν, 9.133), Polyphemus is unversed in the production or consumption of good wine, and Odysseus capitalizes on this even before he sets foot on the island when he decides to bring the goatskin of Maron’s sweet wine with him (9.196-200). Odysseus explains that through a sense of

intuition, he brought it in case he “might meet a man of courage, wild, and lacking knowledge of the normal custom” (9.214-215). Although it may have been a moment of hindsight influencing his retelling of the story, Odysseus claims that he expected to encounter someone far different and uneducated in the Greek way of life. Odysseus thus approaches (or claims to have approached) the island of the Cyclopes with what we might call a “colonial predisposition,” aware that he may encounter different, and subsequently more primitive, beings.<sup>11</sup>

This assumption of difference ultimately empowers Odysseus to flee from a perilous situation in Polyphemus’ cave. Despite the clear power mismatch between Odysseus and Polyphemus, Polyphemus’ lack of knowledge of wine levels this battle. Odysseus as colonizer exploits what Polyphemus is not aware of – the sleep-inducing properties of alcohol – to flip the power dynamic in his favor. Having neutralized the monster’s ability to see and subsequently reducing his physical threat, Odysseus transforms the space of the cave from one of imprisonment to one of possibility: from bodily confinement to corporeal release.

The power of knowledge is also evident through Odysseus’ strategic deployment of words. Although Polyphemus and Odysseus can suitably converse, the former lacks an understanding of the nuances of language which Odysseus often proves to skillfully employ. This is most blatantly clear when Polyphemus demands to know the name of his visitor, to which inquiry Odysseus replies, “Noman” (Οὐτις, 9.366). The Cyclops does not recognize this simple play on words, enabling Odysseus to remain anonymous when a blinded Polyphemus cries out for help to the other Cyclopes. They respond that if no one is hurting Polyphemus, they cannot help him, and Polyphemus falls easily for Odysseus’ scheme (“εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τις σε βιάζεται οἶον

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<sup>11</sup> My own terminology.

ἔόντα,” 9.398-414). This instance further equalizes the match between colonizer and colonized. By eliminating the giant’s ability to call upon his allies, Odysseus secures even greater power over his opponent. Afterwards, once Odysseus and his remaining men manage to escape, Odysseus revels in Polyphemus’ inferior understanding of language, taunting the monster for his foolishness. Having successfully navigated away from captivity and danger into a space he perceives as safe, Odysseus hurls insults at Polyphemus, misjudging the level of authority he holds over the Cyclops (9.475-526). This overconfidence, however, nearly capsizes his ship and stirs the anger of Poseidon and Zeus, who in turn complicate his journey home (9.536-537). Thus, this rift in verbal intelligence also fits the postcolonial colonizer-colonized model and enables Odysseus to overcome and then abuse his power over the Cyclops. Despite Odysseus’ victory, the end of this book indicates that although Odysseus can extend his colonizing power over monsters, he has no authority over the Olympian gods, on account of whose wrath he must now suffer.

### *Aeaea*

After their encounter with Polyphemus and the Laestrygonians, Odysseus and his crew dock at Aeaea, the home of the goddess Circe. In contrast to the undeveloped landscapes of the Island of the Cyclopes, Odysseus now observes a land of civilization, not unlike that of the Laestrygonians.<sup>12</sup> In fact, seeing a plume of smoke in the distance, Odysseus’ crew fearfully

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<sup>12</sup> Initially deceived by the quiet harbor (10.92-93) and innocent appearance of the daughter of King Antiphates (10.108-109), a party of three of Odysseus’ men faced the threat of violent death when the giant-king ate one of the men, scattering the others back to the ship in terror (10.13-18). The initial interaction of Odysseus’ crew with the Laestrygonians was signaled with “some smoke that rose up from the earth” (10.99).



recalls the horrific loss of some of their fellow men to the giants (10.116-125), suggesting that they are aware of the danger of letting their eyes be deceived by pleasant sights. Still, Odysseus splits his crew in half, and the first group makes its way to the home of Circe (εὖρον δ' ἐν βήσσησι τετυγμένα δώματα Κίρκης, 10.204-210). The house itself is a sight to see with “high foundations” (ξεστοῖσιν λάεσσι, 10.211) and constructed with “polished stones” (περισκέπτῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ, 10.211). Employing her beauty (10.311), singing, and weaving as a disguise (10.220-222), Circe lures the men into her home, who are intrigued to discover who lies just within the walls of the house (οἱ δ' ἅμα πάντες αἰδρεΐησιν ἔποντο, 10.228-231). Except for Eurylochus who remains outside (10.232), the rest of the men accept Circe’s deceptive hospitality and fall victim to her trap. Circe drugs the food and drink she serves the men and enchants them with her magic, turning them into pigs and imprisoning them in a pigsty (κατὰ συφεοῖσιν, 10.235-240). Seeing his companions trapped and transformed into a sub-human form, Eurylochus runs to report the horrific sight to Odysseus who sets off to save his men (10.265-272).

Circe’s power, however, is far superior to that of Odysseus’ mortal capacities. The ease with which she enslaves Odysseus’ men suggests that divine intervention is necessary for the disruption of this initial cartography of power. As if on cue, Hermes appears to Odysseus just before he reaches Circe’s home and provides him with the knowledge to overcome the goddess’ power. Hermes gives Odysseus both a special herb and words of advice: Odysseus is to consume the plant and unsheathe his sword as Circe prepares to cast her spell on him. Then, forcing her to swear that she will not harm him, he must sleep with her to save his friends (τόδε φάρμακον ἐσθλόν, 10.275-301). Whereas Circe’s power relies on her ability to trap her victims within the walls of her home, Odysseus’ counterstrategy aims to overcome her prison-like use of space,

trapping the goddess both physically and by her word, and then subduing her through a sexual act.

Having received the proper knowledge, and thus power, to face Circe, Odysseus executes the plan and overcomes the goddess. The goddess is amazed at Odysseus' ability to resist her powerful spell, which she admits no mortal before has done ("οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδέ τις ἄλλος ἀνὴρ," 10.327-328). By forcing the goddess to swear an oath to him, sleeping with her, and then commanding that she release his men, Odysseus gets the upper hand over the previously dominant goddess. Odysseus no longer needs tricks or the gods to achieve his goals. Forced to heed his words, Circe reverses her spell over Odysseus' crew, and they reassume their human bodies (ἐγένοντο νεώτεροι ἢ πάρος ἦσαν, 10.393-395). As Odysseus' men are reunited in their original, albeit enhanced, form (10.395-396), the house which previously trapped and distanced these men from reality becomes host to feasting, rejoicing and hopefulness. In this way, Odysseus' exertion of power over Circe is responsible for this reproduction of space, which now safely houses the men for the next year (εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν, 10.467).

Just as Odysseus redefines the relationship between man and space, he also reshapes his relationship with Circe into a normative Greek male-female relationship. Whereas initially Circe uses weaving and singing to deceive (ἀειδούσης ὀπι καλῆ / ἰστὸν ἐποιχομένης, 10.220-222), after Odysseus overcomes the witch, she takes on the traditional female roles she previously pretended to play. Now recast as his subject, Circe bathes and cares for Odysseus' crew, her former captives (ἐνδυκέως λοῦσέν τε καὶ ἔχρισεν λίπ' ἐλαίῳ, 10.450). Circe's weaving also evokes an image of Odysseus' own wife, Penelope. While as queen she is not responsible for bathing Odysseus, she spends great lengths of time weaving a burial shroud for Laertes, a ruse to delay facing the licentious suitors seeking her hand ("εἰς ὃ κε φᾶρος / ἐκτελέσω," 2.85-114). This

typical Greek female activity of weaving holds power over men, whether as an illusion of innocence or a stalling tactic. Moreover, men foil the goals of both weaving tricks, despite the weavers' initial success. In Ithaca, Antinous and the suitors catch Penelope unravelling the sheet at night, and they force her to finish it (2.110-111). On Aeaea, with the guidance of Hermes, Odysseus sees through Circe's façade and forces her to perform duties expected of a Greek woman as a part of her surrender.

Like Calypso who provides Odysseus with the tools to create a raft and provisions for his voyage home (5.160-167), Circe supplies Odysseus with the necessary advice to enter the Underworld (10.506-535) and information about his subsequent journey. Whereas Calypso's spatial knowledge is only mentioned in brief, Circe's is extensive. As Odysseus prepares to leave Aeaea, she imparts knowledge by supplying Odysseus with the directions to the Underworld, where he must seek the Theban prophet Tiresias (“ψυχῆ χρησομένους Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο,” 10.491-493). This knowledge transfer is ultimately a transfer of power in that it enables Odysseus to enter a new spatial dimension and transcend the borders of normal mortal experience. Hades is a space previously inaccessible to mortals, let alone by sea (“οὐ πῶ τις ἀφίκετο νηϊ μελαίνῃ,” 10.502-3). Through his newly acquired spatial knowledge, Odysseus can defy these limits of human experience to receive his fated prophecy.

When Odysseus emerges from the Underworld and arrives again to Ogygia, Circe provides the hero with a second set of spatial advice. Circe's instructions are cartographic in effect: they detail the path past the Sirens, to the crossroad between the Wandering Rocks (Πλαγκτὰς, 12.59-73) and the opposing rocks of Scylla and Charybdis (ἔνθα δ' ἐνὶ Σκύλλῃ ναίει, τῶ δ' ὑπὸ δῖα Χάρυβδις ἀναρρυβδεῖ μέλαν ὕδωρ, 12.74-111), to Helios' island of Thrinacia (Θρινακίην δ' ἐς νῆσον ἀφίξεις, 12.127-128), and finally home to Ithaca (εἰς Ἰθάκην, 12.138). In

describing how Odysseus must navigate the monsters and waters, Circe forms a mental map of the Ocean. Odysseus' return to Ithaca relies on his ability to retain this map and align with the goddess' instructions. When his men break from course and eat Helios' cattle (12.352-265), as Circe predicts, the linear spatial progression conveyed by Circe is broken, bringing death and humiliation (12.143-144). Although Odysseus' crew falls short of upholding Circe's exhortation, the advice she imparts serves the dual functions of painting a cartographic image of and laying out the plot for the rest of the wanderings.

Odysseus' experiences on Ogygia and Aeaea also supply two different stories of captivity, with different narrators. The former is told through the third-person omniscient narration of the poem, and the latter is formed by Odysseus' own retelling. In both situations, Odysseus must confront a goddess with the power to entrap, and he receives help from Hermes to shift the power dynamic in his favor and escape. On Aeaea, Odysseus' first-person narration emphasizes his own craft and bravery, while on Ogygia, the hero is construed as helplessly mourning on the beach, and largely uninvolved in the reversal of his luck (*ἐπ' ἀκτῆς εὖρε καθήμενον*, 5.151-153). For instance, when Odysseus docks on Aeaea, he is quick to indicate his own courage in spite of his crew's hesitation: he first climbs to higher ground to survey the land (10.193-197), and when his men express reluctance to explore, he dismisses their feelings as cowardly (10.201-204). Odysseus himself leads one of the groups on the island (10.204) and reports that all the men, whether with Eurylochus or him, were crying as they approached Circe's house (*ἐταῖροι / κλαίοντες*, 10.208-9). Odysseus, however, does not cry, and when Eurylochus returns in panic to report the witchcraft of Circe, he bravely goes alone to face the goddess (*κρατερὴ δέ μοι ἔπλετ' ἀνάγκη*, 10.273). Thus, the first-person narration employed by Odysseus emphasizes courage and action, aspects not present in the story of Calypso.

Furthermore, Odysseus' narration produces a gendering of spaces that is unique to his story of Circe. In addition to the feminine actions of weaving and singing that occur in Circe's home, her bathing and preparation of a feast for Odysseus and his men are also reminiscent of a Greek household managed by a proper Greek wife. Furthermore, although Circe's home initially only hosts women – men are sequestered to the pigsties outside while she and her servants occupy the human quarters – after Odysseus neutralizes her magic, it resembles the space of his own home in Ithaca. Like the suitors constantly feasting and celebrating, Odysseus and his men too “[feast] on meat and strong wine” (δαινύμενοι κρέα τ' ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἠδύ, 10.4476-477). In fact, the reinsertion of gendered spaces and their ensuing comfort may have been so familiar to Odysseus that he stayed a whole year (10.478). Moreover, while on Ogygia, Odysseus craves his old home, on Aeaea, he does not consider departing until confronted by his men, at which point he remembers Ithaca (10.472-474). In this way, Odysseus constructs the spaces of Circe's home as gendered, unique in comparison to his description of Polyphemus' island and the third-person account of Calypso's home.

### *The Sirens*

As mentioned above, in addition to previously sharing her spatial knowledge of how to reach the Dead, Circe imparts upon Odysseus the cartographic knowledge to navigate the seas and their dangers. Circe first cautions Odysseus about the Sirens, whose deceptively beautiful singing has the power to “bewitch all passerby” (“αἶ ῥά τε πάντας / ἀνθρώπους θέλγουσιν,” 12.39-40). Circe does not leave Odysseus to discover for himself the fatal threat these creatures pose. Rather, she explains that anyone who approaches “in ignorance” (“ὅς τις ἀϊδρεῖη πελάσῃ,”

12.41) and hears their song will remain in their meadow forever, enchanted until he rots away in death (12.41-46). That Circe uses the words “in ignorance” implies a prerequisite possession of knowledge for those wishing to survive the Sirens. One must be aware that their beautiful singing is a deception and that their “flowering meadow” (λειμῶν’ ἀνθεμόεντα, 12.159) only disguises the decaying corpses of unfortunate men below (περὶ δὲ ῥίνοι μινύθουσιν, 12.46). Thus, just as circumventing Circe’s magic requires the revelation of knowledge from Hermes, Odysseus’ avoidance of the fateful snare of the Sirens also relies on receiving some instructional wisdom from a deity.

Circe’s warning and Odysseus’ retelling of the Sirens emphasizes the deceptiveness of the monsters and the spaces they occupy. Unlike the previous characters, little detail is provided about the island of the Sirens. Beyond the mention of their meadow, Odysseus and Circe only minimally describe any tangible spaces within which the Sirens reside. However, both Odysseus and Circe capture the power these woman-like creatures possess over surrounding spaces. First, when Odysseus approaches the island of the Sirens, he notes a sudden calming of the winds and waves (κοίμησε δὲ κύματα δαίμων, 12.167-169). The deceptiveness of the Sirens seems to extend even into the appearance and feel of the waters, enticing seafarers with their perceived serenity. In addition, in travelling from Aea towards Ithaca, passing the Sirens is unavoidable. The mass of dead and decomposing bodies in their meadow illustrates their nearly insurmountable control over mortals. This control is physical in that it entraps men into an eternal stasis, and mental, in that when heard, it overcomes human ability to independently reason.<sup>13</sup> Despite his inclination towards logic and his abundance of wit, even Odysseus

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<sup>13</sup> The episode with the Sirens recalls the earlier encounter with the Lotus Eaters during which Odysseus’ crew also loses the ability to think for themselves when they consume the potent lotus fruit (9.82-104). However, the control

describes experiencing the lure of the Sirens like any other man, begging to be freed from his restraints (λῦσαί τ' ἐκέλευον ἑταίρους, 12.192-194). Though in other situations (i.e. Circe), Odysseus' rendering of the narrative glorifies his own courage, the helplessness with which he portrays himself when facing the Sirens indicates their exceptional power over their dominated spaces and the mortals who enter them.

### **Interior Spaces in Ithaca**

The cartography of power through knowledge traced across Odysseus' large-scale, Ocean-traversing wanderings can also be found within the smaller scale of his palace in Ithaca. In fact, once he finally arrives in Ithaca, one can follow Odysseus' journey to and into his home to reveal a new set of power and spatial relationships. In his discussion of this aspect of the poem, Donald Lateiner asserts that Odysseus' movements constitute “a mini-spatial, repeat odyssey” of their own, likening the hero's quest home from Troy to his eventual return to his own bedchamber and wife (Lateiner 1992, 78). When at home, the familiar interplay of deception and power are once again present: Odysseus returns to Ithaca disguised as a beggar (13.430-438), a pretense he uses to his advantage as he works himself back into his old home. This concealment and revelation of Odysseus' identity is accompanied by a concealing and revealing of knowledge and the power associated with this knowledge.

Furthermore, Odysseus' return home calls for a discussion of liminal spaces and their relationship with power. In the wanderings, Odysseus travels to the ends of the earth and beyond:

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exerted by the Lotus Eaters is less violent and the threat is quickly averted when Odysseus notices that his scouts do not return to the boat.

he was trapped on Ogygia, an island so far off that even the gods prefer not to visit, and he entered the Land of the Dead, a space excluded from the mortal realm. Liminal spaces facilitate their own power relationships, as do liminal positions occupied by Odysseus. A liminal space of interest is the threshold, or οὐδός, of Odysseus' palace. Irene de Jong identifies thresholds as points integral to plot progression (de Jong 23). The threshold, as I will argue in this section, assumes a symbolic function within the poem, reflecting both Odysseus' physical position and societal standing. In this context, movement across the threshold mirrors the progression of the poem's narrative and anticipates Odysseus' reunion with his home and family.

Finally, the relationship between space and power in Odysseus' home is manifest in expressions of gender and class. Queen Penelope occupies her upstairs bedroom, and men including Telemachus and the noble suitors occupy the downstairs megaron and courtyard. Female servants who move more freely between female and male spaces tend to Penelope and her household. Beggars, including the disguised Odysseus, sit at the threshold by virtue of their marginal social status. Thus, the dimensions of gender and class define the spaces into which characters can enter, and in doing so exert power over these individuals. Moreover, the transgression of these boundaries necessitates a shift in power and important progression in the plot.

### *The Threshold*

When he finally returns home to Ithaca, Odysseus is deceived one last time by his surroundings as he fails to recognize his homeland. After twenty years of estrangement from his home, first through the Trojan War, and then in his wanderings, he only realizes that he has truly



reached his destination when Athena tells him so (13.250-252). Once Odysseus perceives his situation in Ithaca correctly, a fundamental shift in power occurs: previously fooled by outward appearances, he now takes on the role of the deceiver. This alteration in power dynamics is instigated by a physical transformation: Athena places a spell on Odysseus, wrinkling his skin, tearing his clothing, and shaping the king into the guise of a beggar (13.430-440). With his new form, Odysseus is unrecognizable to his old community, and his identity remains concealed (“σ’ ἄγνωστον τεύξω πάντεσσι βροτοῖσι,” 13.397).

Odysseus’ disguise as a beggar enables his re-entry into Ithacan society from a marginal physical and social position. Appearing as an outcast, Odysseus makes his way to an individual of equally low station, his swineherd Eumaeus. Crossing “woodland” and “cliffs” (ἀν’ ὕληντα δι’ ἄκριας, 14.2), Odysseus takes up lodging with his old servant on the furthest part of the island (ἐσχατιῇ, 14.103). That Eumaeus is located on the borders of Ithaca reflects his lowly social status as a peasant and slave. At this point, the reader encounters the first threshold in Ithaca: the metaphorical οὐδός of time. Cryptically referring to himself, the hero asks his former slave about his parents. “But since you now / want me to stay and wait for your young master, / tell me about Odysseus’ parents. / His father, when he left, was on the threshold / of age. Are they alive still? Have they died?” (“ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῶ,” 15.345-350). The use of “threshold” here signals a subconscious awareness of a space that will quickly be a locus of utmost importance to Odysseus’ homecoming. Moreover, it may point to Odysseus’ own aging which has taken place in the intervening years. In contrast to twenty years prior, when he was in the prime of his strength and ruled over the island, the Odysseus who returns lacks the vigor and status he once held. While no physical threshold is traversed, the use of the word οὐδός functions as a verbal

*sema* symbolizing the change that Odysseus will soon bring to Ithaca.<sup>14</sup> In the isolation of Eumaeus' hut, Odysseus gains the trust of the swineherd and eventually reveals his identity to his son Telemachus (16.214-215). Having thus made the necessary preparations for his return, Odysseus embarks on his secret homecoming, leaving the limits of the island for the town (ὁ δ' ἐς πόλιν ἦγεν, 17.201).

Once back in Ithaca, Odysseus' outward, beggarly appearance prescribes specific spaces into which he is permitted: in particular, the threshold of the palace, as is consistent with Greek expectations of the proximity held between beggars and nobles. Odysseus and Eumaeus point to this when they decide that it is best for Odysseus to stay at the doorway and it is further indicated when the suitor Antinous rages at Eumaeus for presumably bringing another beggar, Odysseus, to the palace (“τίη δὲ σὺ τόνδε πόλινδε / ἦγαγεσ,” 17.375-379). In addition to the threshold, emphasis is also placed on entry into the palace megaron, as permitted by his son Telemachus, to beg for food (“κέλευε / αἰτίζειν μάλα πάντασ ἐποιχόμενον μνηστῆρασ,” 17.345-349). However, when Odysseus transgresses normative boundaries by engaging in prolonged conversation with the suitor Antinous, he is violently forced back into his place. Angered by the begging and wit of Odysseus, Antinous throws a stool at Odysseus (17.462-463), who slinks back to the threshold (ἐπ' οὐδὸν ἰὼν κατ' ἄρ' ἔξετο, 17.466), plotting his revenge (17.465). Sequestered to the doorway, Odysseus cannot yet embark on the spatial conquest of his home. He must build his own authority by some other means to rival the power exerted by the suitors colonizing his home. Odysseus' domination of the other beggar, Irus, reveals a different set of power relations,

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<sup>14</sup> Compare to Alex Purves (83) and Donald Lateiner's (2014, 65) ideas of *semata*.

that between individuals of equally low societal standing, and reframes the threshold as a place for change in the palatial power dynamics.

Soon after assuming his position on the threshold, Odysseus' claim to the space is contested by Irus, the palace's greedy resident beggar (18.1-4). After Odysseus' attempt to calm tensions with Irus fails, the poem describes how, "on the threshold at the palace doors / their furious aggression reached its peak" (οὐδοῦ ἔπι ξεστοῦ, 18.32-33). Accordingly, when the suitors notice the escalating verbal altercation between the two outcasts, Odysseus is offered an entry point into his home: Antinous proposes that whoever wins in a fight can dine with the suitors from then on, while the other will be excluded (18.46-49). Although he cannot yet oppose Antinous or the suitors, social convention allows Odysseus to fight someone of his adopted status. Through the intervention of Athena, who provides the hero with augmented strength (18.71-72), the king easily defeats the overweight Irus (καὶ δ' ἔπεσ' ἐν κονίησι μακῶν, 18.98-99). Prior to this, however, Odysseus is nearly betrayed by his own strength and body. When he removes his clothing and ties it around his waist, he reveals "massive thighs and mighty shoulders, / enormous chest and sturdy arms" unbecoming of a destitute beggar (18.67-70). Ironically, his mode of deception almost leads to his recognition. Nevertheless, beyond frightening Irus and surprising the suitors, little becomes of it and Odysseus overcomes the other beggar (18.72-77). Odysseus signals his symbolic victory of the threshold and his inward progression to the palace by dragging Irus away from the doorway, "through the gateway to the courtyard" (ὄφρ' ἵκετ' ἀλλήν αἰθούσης τε θύρας, 18.101-103). Moreover, after he defeats Irus, Odysseus places a stick in the man's hand, mockingly designating him as a lowly guard against dogs and pigs (σκῆπτρον δέ οἱ ἔμβαλε χειρὶ, 18.103-107). Irus' defeat effectively marginalizes him at the far end of the property and the reference to pigs invokes an image of the swineherd,

Eumaeus, who is also liminally situated and relatively powerless. Having earned the space and the recognition of the suitors, and marking his victory over Irus as a *sema*, Odysseus can now begin his second “Odyssey” into his own home (Lateiner 1992, 78).

Odysseus’ victory over Irus affords him greater access into his home. Following his defeat of Irus, the hero occupies the hall (ἐν μεγάρῳ ὑπελείπετο, 19.1), having gained an audience with the intrigued Penelope (19.100-101). Odysseus’ interaction with Penelope, however, does not transpire uncontested. Melanthe, a slave girl, attempts to shoo away the beggar and accuses him of “roaming round our house / at night and spying on us women” (“ἐνθάδ’ ἀνιήσεις διὰ νύκτα / δινεύων κατὰ οἶκον, ὀπιπέυσεις δὲ γυναῖκας;” 19.65-69). That the meeting occurs in the secrecy of night also attests to how carefully Odysseus must tread as he navigates the household and its power dynamics. After his conversation with Penelope, Odysseus reassumes his position at the doorway, from which place his great power and identity are revealed.

At the climax of the poem, Odysseus famously reclaims the palace as his own, flipping the power dynamics established by the suitors and revealing his identity. This turning point is centered on the pivotal space of the threshold. It is from this place that Odysseus launches his attack on the suitors:

Αὐτὰρ ὁ γυμνώθη ῥακέων πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς,  
 ἄλτο δ’ ἐπὶ μέγαν οὐδὸν ἔχων βιὸν ἠδὲ φαρέτρη  
 ἰῶν ἐμπλείην, ταχέας δ’ ἐκχεύατ’ ὄϊστοὺς  
 αὐτοῦ πρόσθε ποδῶν, μετὰ δὲ μνηστῆρσιν ἔειπεν·  
 “οὔτος μὲν δὴ ἄεθλος ἀάατος ἐκτετέλεσται·  
 νῦν αὖτε σκοπὸν ἄλλον, ὃν οὐ πῶ τις βάλεν ἀνήρ,  
 εἶσομαι, αἶ κε τύχωμι, πόρῃ δέ μοι εὖχος Ἀπόλλων.”  
 (22.1-7)

“Odysseus ripped off his rags. Now naked,  
he leapt upon the threshold with his bow  
and quiverfull of arrows, which he tipped  
out in a rush before his feet, and spoke.

‘Playtime is over. I will shoot again,  
towards another mark no man has hit.  
Apollo, may I manage it!’”

As Odysseus casts off his shabby clothing and beggarly charade (22.1), the suitors realize that they have been deceived (22.42-43) and that death is imminent (22.68). The speech of one of the suitors, Eurymachus, captures this dread anticipation reliant on the place of the threshold: “My friends, this man will not hold back his hands. / Seizing the bow and arrows, he will shoot us / right from that polished threshold, till he kills / each one of us” (“οὐδοῦ ἄπο ξεστοῦ τοξάσσειται,” 22.70-73). This moment of revelation subverts the power dynamics of the previously suitor-dominated megaron. Harnessing the advantage of his deception, Odysseus proceeds to cut down the suitors formerly restricting him to the threshold. Before a space of repression and derision, the threshold is now recast as the focal point of Odysseus’ assault and the king’s point of re-entry into his former life.

The threshold also marks distinct spatial dimensions of the slaughter. After shooting his first, deadly arrow, Odysseus’ strategy relies on his maintaining the threshold. The power of the threshold is clear in both Odysseus’ insistence on holding control of it and the suitors’ attempts to drive him off of it (22.106-108). The second half of Eurymachus’ exhortation to the suitors underscores the importance of the threshold in the battle: “All together, / rush at him, try to drive him off the threshold, / and out of doors, then run all through the town, / and quickly call for help” (“οὐδοῦ ἀπόσομεν ἠδὲ θυράων,” 22.75-77). Furthermore, the previously symbolic meanings tied to the threshold now have physical consequences. As the higher point in the palace

in comparison with the lowered level of the megaron (“I am alone fighting *up here*,” μούνον ἔόντα, 22.107-108), the threshold is likened to higher ground on a battlefield.<sup>15</sup> It is a militarily strategic space which Odysseus and his allies use to their advantage over the suitors. The elevated and powerful position of the threshold lies in contrast to the megaron – the space of slaughter. Once elegant and host to scenes of dining, entertainment, and affluence, the hall is now bespattered with the blood of the suitors (δάπεδον δ’ ἅπαν αἵματι θῦεν, 22.309). In contrast, the threshold, before a space for beggars and social exclusion, is occupied by individuals holding the greatest power. Thus, the slaughter redefines the place of the threshold and the order it formerly represented.

The final step in completing Odysseus’ homecoming, however, requires movement not by the hero himself, but by Penelope. Whereas Odysseus has arrived in Ithaca, crossed the threshold of his home, and then gained access to the hall through his elimination of the suitors, his progression into the most intimate space, his bedroom, relies on Penelope’s recognition and acceptance. This final symbolic step of Odysseus’ wanderings requires the crossing of another threshold: as she descends from her bedroom to question the beggar whom her nurse Eurycleia claims is her husband, Penelope passes over the threshold into the hall (ὑπέρβη λάϊνον οὐδόν, 23.88-90). Penelope’s spatial advance is crucial to bringing Odysseus fully back home. Moreover, in as much as the *oikos* is related to the female domain, Penelope can stand as a representative of the home itself.<sup>16</sup> It is not until his reunification with his wife that Odysseus is truly back in his *oikos*. Having vanquished those previously standing between him and his wife - the suitors occupying the megaron and the servant girls disrespecting his household (22.461-

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<sup>15</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> See Zeitlin, 72.

474) - Odysseus is faced with erasing the last proxemic distance between him and his wife. Initially, Penelope keeps her distance, unable to recognize her husband (23.85-95). Though Athena restores Odysseus' looks to those of twenty years prior (23.156-164), it is only when Odysseus appeals to her knowledge that Penelope is convinced of his identity (23.206-207). By describing how he built his and Penelope's olive-tree bed, knowledge shared only by the couple and a representation of the most intimate space of his home, Odysseus proves himself to Penelope ("ἐπεὶ μέγα σῆμα τέτυκται / ἐν λέχει ἀσκητῶ," 23.187-205). Thus, while earlier he can overturn power dynamics through his deceptive appearance, now he dispels this deception and breaches the separation between them through disclosing information that only she knows. This proof through knowledge ultimately breaks the proxemic barrier between Odysseus and Penelope, restoring the king's access to his bedroom, and ultimately, his home. Odysseus' return to Ithaca is complete.

### *Spaces of Gender and Class*

As the innermost location of the palace, the bedchamber is an endpoint for Odysseus' spatial progression back home. It is also, however, at its core a gendered space. For instance, until Odysseus' arrival, the bedroom is almost solely inhabited by Penelope and her female slaves. Conversely, the megaron is largely a male space, host to the suitors. Most importantly, the movement of the opposite gender across these primarily male or female-dominated spaces reveals power relationships within the palace.<sup>17</sup> A consideration of the traversing of gendered

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<sup>17</sup> See Massey for gendered space.

spaces also necessitates the related consideration of spaces of class. The inhabitants of the house fall into roughly two distinct categories: royalty/nobility and slave/peasant. As with the presence of feminine and masculine spaces, certain spaces within and around the palace are connected to social status. Since the categories of gender and class cannot be easily separated, these concepts must be studied together. Moreover, the concurrence of these two productions of space fundamentally shapes the cartography of power in and around Odysseus' palace.

Prior to encountering the varied gendered and classed spaces of his palace, Odysseus' earliest experiences back on Ithaca are within the male and low-class realms. For example, upon his return, he first heads to the hut of his swineherd Eumaeus. As Odysseus can discern from far off, the servant's living quarters are poor. His property and pigsties are characterized by their use of natural materials including "twigs of thorny pear" (ἀχέρδω, 14.10) and "wood with bark stripped off" (τὸ μέλαν δρυὸς ἀμφικεάσσης, 14.12), indicating Eumaeus' poverty. In addition to the humble appearance of his hut and the property he tends to, Eumaeus' liminality and impoverishment are visible in the place where he sleeps. Rather than resting in the hut, the swineherd lies down amongst the pigs (ὄθι περ σύες ἀργιόδοντες, 14.531-533). His distance from society is so great as to confine him to a nearly sub-human situation: he inhabits the same spaces as the animals he watches over. Eumaeus' marginal social standing mirrors the fact that he rarely comes to town. Interestingly, however, he admits that he only goes to Ithaca when called by Penelope herself (εἰ μή πού τι περίφρων Πηνελόπεια / ἐλθέμεν ὀτρύνησιν, 14.372-374), indicating a spatial interaction between the noble and peasant realms and male and female spheres. Later, Eumaeus' mobility is expanded as he speaks directly with the queen in her palace



on two separate occasions (16.336-341, 17.507-552).<sup>18</sup> Despite his social estrangement and poverty, Eumaeus displays the ability to move between gendered and socially classed spaces.

After spending time in Eumaeus' hut, Odysseus proceeds to another male-dominated space, the town of Ithaca. He first interacts with Melanthius, the goatherd, who throws insults at both Odysseus and Eumaeus and criticizes Telemachus (17.217-256). Unlike the friendly interaction with someone of the same class (his experience with Eumaeus), Odysseus' encounter with Melanthius is purely hostile, despite his low status. Furthermore, the area outside of the palace juxtaposes spaces of poverty and affluence. Melanthius' presence represents the poor spaces outside the palace, including those occupied by Odysseus, Eumaeus, and the other peasants. Argos, Odysseus' dog, adds to this image of destitution. Found lying in squalor, Argos is a pitiful sight. Neglected by his owners and time, the dog wastes away just outside the palace doors (κεῖτ' ἀπόθεστος ἀποιχομένοιο ἄνακτος, 17.291-300). Argos' uncleanliness and weakness parallel Odysseus' liminal position and perceived lack of power when he returns to Ithaca. Like his owner, once healthy and vibrant, Argos is now a shell of his prior form – though Odysseus' transformation is in part the work of Athena and for the purpose of deception. The male and poor spaces outside of Odysseus' palace provide stark contrasts to the feminine and wealthy spaces they neighbor. Odysseus meets Melanthius by a fountain at an altar for the Nymphs (17.209-210). The fountain, “ornate” (ἐπὶ κρήνην ἀφίκοντο / τυκτὴν καλλίροον, 17.205-6) and a site for communal refreshment (ὄθεν ὕδρευόντο πολῖται, 17.206), invokes images of both prosperous

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<sup>18</sup> In the first of these occasions, Eumaeus and a messenger approach Penelope to inform her of Telemachus' return to Ithaca (16.336-341). In the second, Penelope calls upon Eumaeus, seeking information on Odysseus from the “stranger” in her halls (17.507-552).

and pedestrian lifestyles. While the figures present in the fountain scene are all reportedly male, the altar to the Nymphs introduces the first tangible female space in Odysseus' return home.

As Odysseus takes up his position on the palace threshold, he comes into closer contact with the feminine spaces of his home. In Odysseus' absence, the spatial layout of his home has seemingly separated into gendered spaces. For example, from the beginning of the poem, the upstairs is a predominantly feminine space. Following the spaces inhabited by Penelope illustrates the extent of these feminine and male spheres. Homer locates Penelope upstairs for much of the poem, drawing an important contrast when she departs from this space. Penelope's descents from the upstairs and her room disclose differential power relationships between her and the men of the home. The first time Penelope enters the male sphere of the home, she does so flanked by slave girls and with her face covered (ἄμα τῆ γε καὶ ἀμφίπολοι δὺ' ἔποντο, 1.330-335). Dismayed by the song of Phemius, she begs the singer to stop (1.337-344). Her pleas, however, are cut short by Telemachus, who reprimands her for her inappropriate transgression into the male space: "Go in and do your work. / Stick to the loom and distaff. Tell your slaves / to do their chores as well. It is for men / to talk, especially me. I am the master" ("τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ," 1.356-359). With these words, Telemachus reinforces the spatial-domestic hierarchy of power: the female place is upstairs and silent, while the male is below and suitable for talking.

Conversely, the bedroom as occupied by Penelope also holds power over the rest of the house and its inhabitants. In Book 2, Antinous reveals that Penelope has delayed the intentions of the suitors for nearly four years by means of a weaving trick. Weaving a burial cloth for Laertes by day and then unravelling it under the cover of night, Penelope manages to hold the misled

suitors at bay (2.101-110).<sup>19</sup> In this way, Penelope too employs deception to maintain a power dynamic. The power relationships at play during Penelope's weaving trick reemerge as Penelope descends to the megaron again in Books 18 and 21. In the former, inspired and perfected in beauty by Athena, Penelope resolves to level the power hierarchy of the palace and gain respect back from the suitors and her son by descending to the hall, unveiled (τιμήεσσα γένοιτο, 18.158-164). The result is as she intended: overcome by her beauty, the suitors cease speaking long enough for her voice to prevail where it was previously silenced ("ἦ με μάλ' αἰνοπαθῆ," 18.200-205). Winning the right to speech, Penelope exploits her opportunity. Whereas the suitors have been squandering the fortunes of Odysseus and laying waste to the palace, Penelope's power move is apparent when the men all rush to give her gifts, desiring her hand in marriage (18.291-301). Through reminding the suitors of the reason they camp out in Odysseus' home, Penelope restores some of her authority over the household.

This important power shift sets the foundation for the next time Penelope descends from her room in Book 21, when she proposes the archery contest for her hand. Empowered again by Athena (21.1), Penelope transcends the feminine upper spaces of the palace, staying in the male space of the hall as she announces the competition of the bow. This time, Penelope speaks authoritatively as she proclaims her intentions, commanding the attention of the suitors (κέκλυτέ μευ, μνηστῆρες ἀγήνορες, 21.65-76). Furthermore, in this instance, Penelope's word avoids male censorship of any kind: even Telemachus who before held control over his mother and her speech fails to deter her:

“ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα με Ζεὺς ἄφρονα θῆκε Κρονίων·  
μήτηρ μὲν μοί φησι φίλη, πινυτή περ ἐοῦσα,

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<sup>19</sup> See the parallel to Circe on pg. 25.

ἄλλω ἄμ' ἔψεσθαι νοσφισσαμένη τόδε δῶμα·  
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γελῶ καὶ τέρπομαι ἄφροني θυμῷ.  
 (21.102-105)

“Zeus must have made me stupid! My dear mother, despite her usual common sense, has said that she will marry someone else and leave his house. But I am laughing, and my heart feels foolish gladness.”

Penelope’s authority over the male sphere does not end with her institution of the contest. In fact, Penelope is present for a portion of the competition and even vouches in favor of giving Odysseus a chance with the bow (21.312-319). However, as a mere woman of the home, she quickly meets the limits of her authority as Telemachus sends her back upstairs, reserving the contest and its affairs to the men (“τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστ’ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,” 21.344-353).<sup>20</sup> Whereas other queens in the poem hold greater influence or even priority among the males in their palaces (cf. Helen 4.119-299 and Arete 7.142-342), Penelope’s voice amongst the suitors is more tenuous.

These somewhat rigid gender divisions with the palace give way when considering the movements of individuals of lower class. Despite their diminished or nonexistent power, slaves and peasants have the greatest access to spaces, both feminine and masculine. For instance, first seen outside the palace, the goatherd Melanthius can freely access the hall of the palace, where he dines among the suitors (17.258-262). The freedom of motion exhibited by Melanthius may suggest a reason as to why Odysseus enters Ithaca as a beggar. Beyond the intention of deceiving the suitors and concealing his return, embodying a low social status enables certain proxemic actions and movement into the palace. As Odysseus himself makes note, the best place for

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<sup>20</sup> The language used in this command mirrors that of Telemachus’ command to Penelope in 1.356-359.

beggars is in a state of motion, moving around the “town and country,” eating scraps from whomever offers them (“πτωχῶ βέλτερόν ἐστι κατὰ πτόλιν ἢ ἐ κατ’ ἀγροῦς,” 17.17-18). This unhindered movement of the poor between the outside and inside, from spaces of poverty to affluence, is also reflected in the access female slaves have between the male and female spaces of the palace.

Unrestricted by norms associated with nobility, which to an extent require Penelope’s sequestration to the upper quarters, the queen’s slaves cross through gendered spaces frequently. This is seen through the actions of the slave girl Melantho. No longer loyal to Penelope, Melantho sleeps with Eurymachus, one of the suitors (18.323-325). That some of the slave girls engage with the suitors in this way (αἱ μνηστῆρσιν ἐμισγέσκοντο, 20.7-9) demonstrates an ability to mingle between both female and male spaces. Odysseus’ disgust upon discovering that some of his slaves have turned their loyalties over to the suitors suggests the dissolution of the palace’s traditional power relationships (20.10-17). If Odysseus were still the king, these spatial transgressions would not have been so easily committed.

Standing out amongst the collective of servants, one particular slave, Eurycleia, exemplifies the intersection of spaces of gender and social class. Though most of the slave girls appear to serve Penelope alone, Eurycleia holds the unique role of having served Odysseus from his birth as his nursemaid (19:353-354). By virtue of the long time she has spent in the palace and her close proximity to the royal family, Eurycleia enjoys a somewhat elevated status among the house slaves. As Penelope’s valued servant, she washes Odysseus’ feet, becoming the first individual in the palace (besides Telemachus) to recognize Odysseus (19.356-357). It is Eurycleia’s preferred status as an older slave and her history with the family that enables her to directly engage with Odysseus and Telemachus, playing an important role in the plot and return

of Odysseus. Power relationships, however, are by no means subverted in Eurycleia's interactions with the king and prince. When the slave woman recognizes the boar's tusk scar on his leg (τὴν γρηῖς χεῖρεςσι καταπρηνέσσι λαβοῦσα / γνῶ ρ' ἐπιμασσαμένη, 19.467-468), Odysseus grabs her by the throat, threatening her against revealing his identity ("σίγα, μή τίς τ' ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισι πύθηται," 19.482-490). Thus, although enabled to cross through clearly gendered spaces and interact closely with the noble class, Eurycleia's motions throughout the palace are essentially restricted by her status as a slave.

The spatial dimensions of the slaughter also display organization with reference to gender and class. During the slaughter, in addition to killing the suitors in the megaron, the space they once luxuriously inhabited, Odysseus oversees the execution of the twelve female slaves who betrayed Penelope. While the suitors are killed inside, the slave girls are killed outside. In return for forgoing their obligations as slaves and departing from their prescribed spheres, these women perform their servile duties one final and symbolic time, thoroughly cleansing and scrubbing the hall of the remains of the gruesome slaughter (22.446-456). Though Eurycleia is allowed to enter the male spaces as a part of her authority, these women are punished for it. Telemachus corners the women "between the courtyard wall and the rotunda" (μεσσηγύς τε θόλου, 22.459), and the twelve are shamefully hung in the courtyard, banished from the honorable palace. Moreover, Melanthius, the traitorous goatherd, is also brought outside after the slaughter and mutilated (ἐκ δὲ Μελάνθιον ἦγον ἀνὰ πρόθυρόν τε καὶ αὐλήν, 22.474-479), despite being originally killed in the palace storeroom (ταθεῖς ὀλοῶ ἐνὶ δεσμῶ, 22.187-200). The necessity to bring him outside demonstrates the spatial dimensions of class in the slaughter. Hence, outdoor spaces correspond with the execution of slaves, and indoor spaces correspond with the slaughter of nobles.

Finally, that Penelope instigates the means of the slaughter (the contest of the bow) indicates the connection that the crossing of gendered spaces in Odysseus' palace holds with relation to the plot. When Penelope descends from her bedroom, the plot progresses, and Odysseus simultaneously moves closer to his wife and regaining his old life. The final penetration into gendered spaces takes place after Penelope recognizes Odysseus, leading him up to his old bed. Penelope's room, host to her "bed of mourning" (17.102) and representing loneliness, is reproduced into a space of joyful spousal reunification (ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἴκοντο, 23.294-296). Odysseus' return to his bedroom also reintroduces a male presence into an overwhelmingly female space. In his absence, the bedroom is primarily host to Penelope and her female servants. However, upon Odysseus' return, the room takes on male elements through Odysseus' description of his construction of the olive-tree bed. The feminine aspects of the loom and distaff (21.351) are complemented by masculine images of cutting and building the bed, concomitant with the entry of a male into the space.

## **Conclusion**

After Odysseus slays the suitors and reunites with his wife, the aftermath of the slaughter must be addressed. In Hades, the spirits of the dead suitors recount their violent deaths to Agamemnon and call for proper funeral rites (24.121-192), a demand made also by the angry families of the young men in Ithaca (24.425-437). When knowledge of the palatial bloodbath leaks into the rest of Ithaca, the need for responsibility and retribution arises. The events in Odysseus' home now concern the larger, Ithacan society. Nevertheless, before tensions can be resolved, Odysseus meets his father, Laertes. Fraught with old age and sorrow for his lost son,

Laertes confines himself to the countryside, separated from society (*ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθεν ἐπ' ἀγροῦ*, 1.189-193). In effect a liminal character, Laertes also mirrors Odysseus' previous beggarly appearance.<sup>21</sup> Odysseus finds his father bearing a worn-out tunic, patchy trousers, and a goatskin hat, far closer in resemblance to a peasant than a king (*ῥυπόωντα δὲ ἔστο χιτῶνα*, 24.227-231). In effect, the beggar-in-disguise is now Laertes, beaten down by a difficult life. Nonetheless, in contrast to his scraggly appearance, his orchards are pristinely cultivated (“*οὐκ ἀδαημονίη σ' ἔχει ἀμφιπολεύειν / ὄρχατον*,” 4.245-2482). The idyllic though untended landscapes presented in the wanderings (cf. Ogygia and Polyphemus) now meet their civilized and refined counterpart in Laertes' orchard.

Although the landscape itself is not deceptive – no monsters lie in wait behind the alluring fig, pear and olive trees – Odysseus' last play of trickery takes place upon meeting his father (24.247). Rather than immediately rushing to Laertes and revealing his homecoming, Odysseus decides to test the old man, seeing if he will recognize his own son (24.217-219). Perhaps reminded of his earlier life of wit and cleverness by the familiar spaces of the orchard, or still on guard from his wanderings and the guise he held prior to the slaughter, Odysseus chooses to tell a false story, one last time (24.303-315). When he realizes the great pain he inflicts upon his father, however, Odysseus drops his facade and admits the truth to Laertes (24.315-328). As with his reunification with Penelope, Odysseus must provide personal knowledge to cross spaces of strangeness to intimacy with his father. Odysseus accomplishes this through showing his scar from the boar hunt (24.332-334) (proof which convinced Eurycleia of his identity), and by

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<sup>21</sup> This term is employed by Lateiner (“Homer's Social-Psychological Spaces and Places,” 80) to designate characters like Tiresias and Calypso who exist on the edges of the earth or inhabited realms. I argue that Eumaeus, too, is a liminal character.



naming and numbering the trees of the orchard, as he did when he was a child (24.337-346). Just as he discloses the secret knowledge of his olive-tree bed to convince his wife, Odysseus' revelation of these specific pieces of information satisfy Laertes' doubt, renewing the long-estranged relationship between father and son. Received again by his father, Odysseus is now truly home, and his family line fully restored.

As family ties are rekindled and spaces of separation diminish, power dynamics in Ithaca remain as the final obstacle to peace. The enraged families of suitors prepare for war, and a second battle nearly unfolds after Laertes spears Eupheithes, the father of Antinous, in poetic fashion (24.522-525).<sup>22</sup> Odysseus nearly hurls himself into battle when the gods, the ultimate controllers of spatial dynamics, intervene. As suddenly as the fighting is about to begin, it stops when Zeus hurls a thunderbolt and Athena exhorts Odysseus for a ceasefire (24.540-545). As on Ogygia, Aea, and countless instances before, the Olympian gods exert authority over the human realm, restricting, diverting, and propelling bodies to achieve their intentions. The warring parties make peace under the supervision of Athena (24.546-548) and Ithaca's spatial dynamics are reestablished.

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<sup>22</sup> Eupheithes is the father of the suitor of Antinous, whom Odysseus kills first in the reconquering of his home. Thus, Homer presents two parallel killings across two lines of fathers and sons.

### Chapter 3

#### Hellenistic Epic Reception: Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*

The cartography of power that shaping the geographies of Homer's *Odyssey* was foundational for what was to come in Greek literature. Images of thresholds, the colonization of space, employing knowledge to drive movement, and the spatial dimensions of gender and class are unique to Homer, but are also visible in later epic. Apollonius' *Argonautica*, which features locations familiar from the *Odyssey* and is formed around the premise of the hero's (or rather heroes') journey, presents continuity with and departure from Homeric geographies and is thus an informative point of inquiry for tracing power in Greek epic poetic space.

In this chapter, I first explore the evolution of geography as an academic discourse in Hellenistic Greece and dwell briefly on Eratosthenes who responded directly to Homeric geographies in his work. I then trace the path of the Argonauts to Colchis and back, while also reflecting on gendered spaces and thresholds in Colchis' interior spaces. In the section titled *The Trip to Colchis*, I explore interior gendered spaces in Iolkos prior to the voyage, the *Argo* as a microcosm for greater Greek society, gendered spaces and power dynamics on Lemnos, knowledge and colonialism with respect to the Doliones and the Earthborn Giants, and the image of Phineus as an intersection of power, knowledge, and thresholds. In *Gendered Spaces and Thresholds in Colchis*, I focus on the thresholds of King Aetes' palace in Colchis, including that between Medea's room and the courtyard. Finally, in *The Way Back*, I follow the voyage of the Argonauts, comparing events and encounters that Apollonius draws from the *Odyssey* including Circe, the Sirens, Phaeacia, and Talus, who is reminiscent of the archaic epic's Polyphemus.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Thalmann, 38

*Geography in the Hellenistic Period*

When discussing the time of Homer, the word “geography” should not be invoked without some initial stipulations. In fact, the earliest geographic thought concerning the shape and structure of the earth began well after Homer with sixth-century philosopher-mathematicians including Thales and Anaximander (Roller ix), who were the first to offer scientific explanations for the earth’s form (5). Moreover, the word γεωγραφία (geography) was not coined until the third century B.C.E., although the verb γεωμετρέω (“to measure land”) was a concept familiar to Herodotus two centuries prior (1). The distant and fantastical world introduced in Homeric epic took on a more tangible form as colonial expansion of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. altered the scope and scale of the Greek world (2). By the mid sixth century, this new knowledge was made manifest in the advent of cartography, a tradition ascribed to Anaximander of Miletus (3-4).<sup>24</sup> Herodotus went on both to utilize and criticize the maps he encountered, integrating (along with others, including Skylax of Karyanda and Hekataios of Miletos, 3) a geographic dimension into Greek literature (4). The focus on the earth in the literary realm was reflected by innovation in the scientific and mathematical realm, lead in part by Archimedes, who asserted the spherical nature of the earth (5), and Aristotle who suggested the first quantity for its circumference (7). By the time of Ephoros of Kyme, a historian of the mid-fourth century, the body of knowledge comprising geography was close to fruition, though not yet recognized as a comprehensive subject (6). Finally, perhaps one of the most influential aspects contributing to the formation of the academic discipline was the data collected from Alexander the Great’s

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<sup>24</sup> James S. Romm notes that Anaximander’s earliest rendering of a map would have been seen as a “branch of *phusiologia* or natural sciences” rather than of the later-emerging geographic field that it helped found (10).

eastward expeditions. Surviving accounts of those travelling with Alexander supplied significant depth to the Hellenistic geographic understanding (6).

It is out of this growing tradition of thinking about the earth and lands beyond the Mediterranean that Eratosthenes' contribution to geography emerged. Born in the prominent Hellenistic city of Cyrene and educated in Athens, the philosopher was exposed to the expansive Greek world of the Ptolemaic empire (8). His position at the helm of a growing base of world knowledge was augmented by his appointment as the Librarian of Alexandria, succeeding Apollonius of Rhodes (11). With a seemingly endless source of information at his hands, Eratosthenes first turned his attention to the question of calculating the earth's circumference, an accomplishment he explained in his publication *On the Measurement of the Earth* (12). Eratosthenes' *Measurement* laid the groundwork for his seminal work, *Geographika*, which formalized the geographic discipline as a legitimate academic endeavor (13). The *Geographika* unfortunately only survives in piecemeal form today, with fragments of the text preserved and commented on by the first-century BCE geographer Strabo. Nevertheless, Eratosthenes' writing was extensively cited in the Hellenistic period (15). Particularly important was his departure from people-based ethnographic accounts in favor of a focus on places; a reorientation towards writing from east-to-west rather than following the circular itinerary from the Pillars of Hercules (24);<sup>25</sup> and a consideration of "the model of virtue" instituted by Alexander in relation to newly-conquered peoples over the tradition of Hellenic-barbarian binary thinking (29). Thus, Eratosthenes was both an innovator and a product of his time spent in Alexandria.

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<sup>25</sup> The location of the often-mentioned landmark is debated, though Eratosthenes does mention it in his *Geographika* and Apollonius in his *Argonautica*. Romm speaks of its common attribution to the Straights of Gibraltar, as a "gateway or barrier between inner and outer worlds" (17).

In addition to his formation of the geographic discipline, it is known, (through the writing of Strabo) that Eratosthenes also commented on geographies of the past. Of especial emphasis for him was Homer, whom he both revered as the “first who dared to begin to consider it [geography]” (ὅτι Ὅμηρος πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν γεωγραφῆσαι, Strab. *Geog.* 1.1.1) and discounted, following his belief that poets primarily serve to entertain, not teach (1.2.3). While deeming Homer the first geographer (Roller 2), Eratosthenes was skeptical of the factual basis of Homer’s world. Strabo later claims that “everyone believes that his poetry is a scholarly treatise,” but this claim was never echoed by Eratosthenes himself (τὴν γὰρ ἐκείνου ποιήσιν φιλοσόφημα πάντα νομίζειν, 1.2.17).<sup>26</sup> The questioning of Homeric geographies, which, according to Eratosthenes, were constructed with a creative license akin to that of an old woman weaving a mythology of her own (1.2.3), destabilized, for some time, the reliance on Homeric tradition.<sup>27</sup>

A poet himself, it is not unreasonable to imagine that Eratosthenes’ critiques were also heard by Apollonius of Rhodes, a contemporary and fellow protégé of Callimachus in Alexandria (Roller 11). Holding the post of Librarian immediately prior to Eratosthenes and exposed to the same intellectual climate as his successor, Apollonius took part in the emerging historical-geographic epic model that acknowledged the increasingly large body of knowledge concerning the surrounding world and the academic disciplines responding to this knowledge in Hellenistic times.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Eratosthenes’ critiques of Homeric geography also saw their parallel in the literary sphere; just as Eratosthenes’ *Geographika* opened the door to a new way of

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<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Kim characterizes Strabo’s view of Homer as “the ideal historian,” also the title of Kim’s third chapter (47).

<sup>27</sup> While Homer’s position as a geographic authority was questioned by Eratosthenes, the latter’s critiques by no means reflected a cultural aversion to Homer. In fact, inaugurated by the conquests of Alexander the Great, knowing Homer became an integral part of Greek identity and a pervasive social feature of the Hellenistic world (Kim 7). See the imperial period’s expansion of this legacy in chapter 4.

<sup>28</sup> Fantuzzi & Hunter, 21.

viewing the world, with an aim towards truth and accuracy, Hellenistic writers realized the need to transition away from archaic and classical models of literature towards a new set of styles, conventions, and linguistic choices, distinct from those of the past (Fantuzzi & Hunter 26).

In this context, Apollonius' *Argonautica* further complicated the Hellenistic reception of Homeric geographies. It is beyond a doubt that Homer was a distinct influence on the content and style of the *Argonautica* (98), making the Hellenistic poem a critical point for understanding how Homer was received in the changing and expanding Greek world. It is clear that the Hellenistic poet "rewrites, evokes, analogises and gestures towards Homeric language, specific scenes, themes and techniques" (95). For instance, Book 4 follows a route nearly identical to Odysseus' path home, encountering Circe, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and even the Phaeacians.<sup>29</sup> Just as Odysseus received spatial advice from Tiresias and Circe, the Argonauts also accept such cartographic itineraries from the seer Phineus, who maps out their journey home. Replete with geographic and thematic parallels to the *Odyssey*, the *Argonautica* depends largely on the Homeric tradition, and "meaning is regularly created by the interplay of similarity to and difference from the Homeric text" (95).

Beyond these alterations, I will argue in the remainder of this chapter that Apollonius' geography also reworks the cartography of power presented in the *Odyssey*. Following the lead of William G. Thalmann, who sets the foundation for analyzing the construction of space in the *Argonautica*, I will follow the path of the Argonauts, tracing the interactions of thresholds, knowledge, colonialism and civilization, and gendered spaces to dissect the spatial manifestations of power in the epic poem.

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<sup>29</sup> James S. Romm calls the content of Book 4 of the *Argonautica* a "geographic commentary on *Odyssey* 9-12" (195).

*The Trip to Colchis*

As Book 1 begins, the reader is introduced to not a single protagonist, but rather a catalogue of heroes who embark on the voyage of the *Argo* (Thalmann 55). King Pelias, fearing that Jason is the one-sandaled man destined to kill him, sends Jason off on what he intends to be a fruitless diversion to retrieve the Golden Fleece from Colchis. The team of men, with a range of semi-divine and mortal skills, accompany Jason out of Iolkos on this journey (1.5-22). Beginning with Orpheus, Apollonius proceeds to detail each of the heroes on the *Argo*, noting their places of origin, occupations, and any other relevant information (Πρῶτά νυν Ὀρφεὺς μνησώμεθα, 1.23-227). While the length of the catalogue entries varies in length, they each share a general form as can be seen in the entry for Periclymenus from Pylos:<sup>30</sup>

Σὺν δὲ Περικλύμενος Νηλήϊος ὄρτο νέεσθαι,  
 πρεσβύτατος παίδων ὅσσοι Πύλῳ ἐξεγένοντο  
 Νηλήϊος θείοιο· Ποσειδάων δὲ οἱ ἀλκὴν  
 δῶκεν ἀπειρεσίην, ἠδ' ὅττι κεν ἀρήσαιτο  
 μαρνάμενος, τὸ πέλεσθαι ἐνὶ ξυνοχῇ πολέμοιο.  
 (1.156-160)

Periclemus, Neleus' son,  
 joined up as well. He was the eldest born  
 of all the offspring Neleus had fathered  
 at Pylos, and Poseidon had bestowed  
 infinite strength upon him and the power  
 to change into whatever shaped he wished  
 so that he could survive the shock of battle.

Beyond introducing the heroes, the entries also describe the heroic qualities held by each, like Periclemus' shape-shifting ability, and divine parents distinguishing these heroes from simple mortals. Moreover, in anticipating the impending voyage, the catalogue of heroes provides an

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<sup>30</sup> All English translations of the *Argonautica* are from the Poochigian translation (2014. New York: Penguin Books).

inherently geographic feature. Each hero is associated with his own home, and each of these locations are on mainland Greece. As Thalmann notes, the order in which Apollonius mentions the heroes corresponds with its own “*periplous*” around Greece. Beginning with Orpheus in Thessaly, the catalogue follows a clockwise path of cities mentioned, taking a circular route reminiscent of the loop one might expect from such a “sailing around” (55).

This *periplous* pattern both identifies specific loci of Greek space tied to particular narratives and produces a unified image of the intersection of these loci through the merging of their associated narratives. Their stories all come together at Iolkos, the point for which they all leave their homes to board the *Argo* (Thalmann 56). Thus, from the start of the poem, Apollonius in effect presents a cartography of Greece, which will serve as the “spatial and cultural center” of the work (27).

Prior to the departure of the *Argo*, however, the reader encounters the first instance of interior space. After walking through town, Jason arrives at his home to bid his parents farewell (1.238-266). The space of the home, despite being Aeson’s, is primarily a feminized space. Both male and female servants attend to Jason, but the house is largely controlled by Jason’s mother, Alcimede, who laments her son’s quest (“Αἶθ’ ὄφελον κεῖν’ ἤμαρ...” 1.278-291). Aeson, encumbered by old age, lays “groaning among the women” (σὺν δέ σφι πατὴρ ὀλοῶ ὑπὸ γήραι / ἐντοπὰς ἐν λεχέεσσι καλυψάμενος γοάσκειν, 1.263-264). The patriarch’s decline and lack of power in the household is reflected by this sole description of him, with reference to the female members of the home. Alcimede, in contrast, seems to rule the home, and her mannerisms and emotions shape the spaces of its interior. Her laments are reflected by those of her female slaves (ταὶ δὲ γυναῖκες / ἀμφίπολοι γοάσκον ἐπισταδόν, 1.292-293), and contrary to the expressed wishes of males outside the home (“Ζεῦ ἄνα τίς Πελῖαιο νόος;” 1.242-246), those in the home are



largely opposed to the voyage (Thalman 60). Unlike the men of the town who contemplate details of the voyage and its outcome, the cries of the women in the home find a parallel in the town, in the women who tearfully sympathize for Alcimede and Aeson (1.251-259). Thus, the interior space of Aeson's home is largely a feminized space, representing the mournful female opposition to the expedition, in contrast with the external male spaces, where the journey is encouraged and an object of intrigue.

As the Minyans take off, another feature of the cartography of power emerges as they confront the question of who the leader of the expedition will be (1.463-464). While they initially expected Heracles to take charge, the hero suggests that Jason, the reason for the journey, must be the leader. The men assent and they make sacrifices for a safe voyage (1.336-362). In the primitive sort of deliberative action taken on the ship, the *Argo* serves as a microcosm for Greek society. The decision-making process of identifying and agreeing on a leader reflects the political life of democratic Athens, though the respect paid to Heracles in this process suggests a remembrance of a Homeric heroic past (Thalman 67).<sup>31</sup> The result is the production of the *Argo* as a "heterotopia," a Foucauldian term delimiting "countersites that all cultures create, special places set aside that bear a marked relation to a culture's dominant space" (34).<sup>32</sup> A remembrance of archaic and classical Greece and contemporary Hellenistic identity mix in the heterotopia of the *Argo*, and the ship is produced as an inherently Greek space and a representation of Greece itself (67). This enables a Greek cultural grounding that travels with the Argonauts as they, in fact, move away from Greece (57).

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<sup>31</sup> Thalman's comparison to a democracy here should not be taken too literally, but rather indicate a sense of equality between the Argonauts on the *Argo*.

<sup>32</sup> See Foucault's "Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias and Utopias" for the original definition.

Gendered space reemerges in the cartography of power when the Argonauts reach the island of Lemnos. Interestingly, although Lemnos is still within Greece (72), the heroes find there a reversal of gender roles and power dynamics (75). The scenes on Lemnos also recall an image of Odysseus' interaction with Circe in the *Odyssey*. Just like Aeaea, Lemnos is devoid of men, though rather than through sorcery, the Lemnian women have killed all of their husbands on the basis of their infidelity (1.609-614); having brought home foreign women from expeditions to Thrace, the men enraged their wives who slaughtered both them and their new brides (1.613-620). While the women have assumed the societal roles of their murdered husbands, the return of a male presence, the Argonauts, reminds the Lemnian women of their previous lives and the possibility that, unless they reaccept men onto the island, they will all perish (1.653-707). Concerned with self-preservation, the Lemnian women willingly relinquish their autonomy to the Argonauts, even offering the role of political leadership to Jason (“εἰ δέ κεν αὖθι / ναιετάειν ἐθέλοις καί τοι ἄδοι,” 1.827-828). Despite the previous masculinization of the female inhabitants of the island (δήϊα τεύχεα δῦσαι, 1.635-636), the reinsertion of males into society effectively evokes a change in lifestyle resembling traditional Greek gender roles (αὐτίκα δ' ἄστυ χοροῖσι καὶ εἰλαπίνησι γεγήθει / καπνῶ κνισήεντι περίπλεον· 1.853-864).<sup>33</sup> Just as Odysseus tames Circe, Jason and his men “tame” the women (Thalman 73). However, whereas Odysseus subdues Circe through divine intervention and divinely transmitted knowledge, pinning down the flow of power involved in the taming of the Lemnian women is more complicated. Here, the women willingly accept the men back into their society, seeking security against future attacks. Although they fall into normative gendered roles and spaces with the

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<sup>33</sup> cf. chapter 1, page 27-28 for banqueting and feasting and the image of the Greek *oikia*.

reintroduction of a male presence, it is less obvious that Jason in some way conquers Hypsipyle, as the men do exactly what the women want (74). By constructing their own story (with lies) (“ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν ὑπ’ ἀνδράσι ναίεται ἄστυ, / ἀλλὰ Θρηκίης ἐπινάστιοι ἠπείροιο / πυροφόρους ἀρόωσι γύαζ,” 1.792-833), and thus controlling the claim to full knowledge of the past, the women successfully manipulate the Minyans to stay with them. There is no evidence to suggest that Jason and his men ever discover the true history of events having transpired on Lemnos, nor that they were manipulated in part to comply with the otherwise motivated plan of the women. In this way, the women find a way to “elude men’s control” (74), despite their return to gendered norms and expectations. The Lemnian episode thus provides a nuanced view of power functioning in gendered spaces.

These Greek male-female power dynamics harken back a final time to the scene of Circe when the men depart from the island. Just as Odysseus and his men spend a whole year on the Aeaean, free of cares, and in some ways forgetful of their objective, time too seems to stand still while the Argonauts are on Lemnos. As Odysseus’ crew finally reminds him of the need to get home, in the *Argonautica*, Heracles too plays this role of recalling the mission when others seem to forget. Heracles’ speech criticizing the men and Jason for being distracted with their new “fiancées” (“ἦε γάμων ἐπιδευέες ἐνθάδ’ ἔβημεν / κεῖθεν,” 1.866) rouses the men to prepare for an immediate departure (1.875-878). When the men prepare to leave, Hypsipyle promises the kingship and land to Jason, suggesting that even in his absence (“σκῆπτρά τε πατρὸς ἐμεῖο παρέσσεται,” 1.890-892), the Lemnian women will continue living in the civilized and heteronormative society established by men. Moreover, Jason’s legacy will remain on the island, as it is revealed that Hypsipyle is pregnant with his son (“σὺ δ’ ἄρσενά παῖδα τέκῃαι,” 1.904-909). Thus, the Greek male order placed on the Lemnian women will leave an impression,

though as their generations will now continue through the contribution of the male seed, the women have also achieved their purpose. In this way, as both a Greek and non-Greek space, Lemnos proves a stage for both traditional and non-traditional gendered power dynamics influenced by the partial disclosure of knowledge and evocation of the interaction between Odysseus and Circe.

After leaving Lemnos, the heroes arrive at Black Bear Mountain, home of the cohabitating Doliones and Earthborn Giants (1.941-948). As Thalmann notes, the island has its own distinct spatial order, which is disrupted by the arrival of the Argonauts (100). The Earthborn inhabit the mountain (καὶ τὸ μὲν ὕβρισται τε καὶ ἄγριοι ναιετάουσιν / Γηγενέες, 1.942-943), and the Doliones live along the water's edge (ἰσθμὸν δ' αὖ πεδίον, 1.947-948). King Cyzicus receives the Argonauts warmly in a way that conforms to the Greek expectation of *xenia*, recalling the sense of being in Greek lands (Thalmann 92). The spatial order of the island changes, however, when the Argonauts, seeking to gather geographic information (which Cyzicus cannot provide, οὐ μὲν ἐπιπρό / ἠείδει καταλέξαι ἐελδομένοισι δαῖναι, 1.980-984), climb the mountain (1.985-986). Blocked by the Earthborn, the Argonauts proceed to massacre the giants, and their dead bodies lay on the shoreline, facing in both directions (κράατα μὲν ψαμάθοισι, πόδας δ' εἰς βένθος ἔρειδον, 1.989-1011). The image of the slaughtered giants suggests a spatial idea. The location of the corpses between land and sea symbolizes a separation between the two spheres, and the bodies therefore occupy a liminal position (Thalmann 96).

The arrangement of the dead Earthborn in this liminal place anticipates a major change in the way the Argonauts receive and produce the island's spaces. While Cyzicus previously welcomes the Argonauts in a friendly manner (φιλότητι, 1.960-967), the murder of the giants

introduces the shift to a largely colonial production of space. Similar to the colonial power dynamics between Odysseus and Polyphemus that hinge on the distribution of knowledge or lack thereof, the second scene on Cyzicus' island presents the potential for violence and colonization contingent on a dearth of knowledge.<sup>34</sup> In the second interaction with Cyzicus, the Argonauts mistakenly kill the king, an event devastating to both the locals and Argonauts alike (αἰνότατον δὴ κείνο Δολιονίησι γυναιξίν / ἀνδράσι τ' ἐκ Διὸς ἤμαρ ἐπήλυθεν· 1.1054-1077). This mistake is attributed to a lack of sufficient knowledge, and it is ultimately tied to a colonial violence imposed upon the land. The colonizers (Argonauts) ultimately make the land theirs, disrupting the original order of its inhabitants and establishing a new power dynamic on the island (Thalman 100). The result is horrific.

After their stay with the Lemnian women and a violent encounter with the Bebrycians, the Argonauts sail to Thynia, “on the opposing coast” (ἀντιπέριον, 2.177). Having entered the Bosphorus (2.168) and successfully navigated the threatening waves, which mark their departure from Greek seas (2.169-177), they come upon Phineus, a blind prophet. Phineus' presence nods to the Homeric figure of Tiresias, the seer whom Odysseus meets in the Underworld, and from whom he receives his next itinerary. Just as Tiresias describes the inland route Odysseus must take after reaching Ithaca (11.100-137), Phineus also provides the Argonauts with spatial information. Phineus' prophecy is twofold: it both establishes a cartographic image of the remainder of the voyage towards Colchis and transmits advice for its navigation. For instance, in addressing the foremost obstacle of the journey, the “Cobalt Clashing Rocks” (“Πιέτρας Κυανέας” 2.317-318), he first describes it with vivid imagery, noting that “two headlands / right

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<sup>34</sup> See Thalman, 91-100.

where the estuary narrows.../ Lacking deep bedrock to root them / into the ocean floor, they crash / together into one, and briny spume / boils above them, and the rugged shores / roar hoarsely,” (“δύω ἀλὸς ἐν ξυνοχῆσι...” 2.318-421). This is then followed with the advice that, “if you are endowed / with prudent thoughts and truly fear the gods, / if you are not mere adolescents / heading for a self-assured destruction, / heed my instructions now” (“εἰ ἐτέον πυκινῷ τε νόῳ μακάρων τ’ ἀλέγοντες / πείρετε, μηδ’ αὐτῶς ἀντάγρετον οἶτον ὀλέσθαι / ἀφραδέως ἰθύετ’ ἐπισπόμενοι νεότητι.” 2.325-327).

That Phineus gives the Argonauts instructions also seemingly recalls the figures of Calypso and Circe in the *Odyssey*. Interestingly, whereas Circe’s first set of advice intends to steer Odysseus towards the prophet in the Underworld (after which point information regarding a different journey is shared), in the *Argonautica*, the transmission of spatial directions comes only from the seer himself. Moreover, in the *Argonautica*, Phineus is the primary provider of such information, whereas this role is filled by two goddesses and a prophet in the *Odyssey*. For instance, when Jason and his men seek geographic knowledge from Cyzicus about the surrounding lands, he is unable to provide it (1.980-984). Substantial spatial advice comes exclusively from Phineus, and this is only mimicked (though less extensively) in Book 4, when Triton explains the way from Crete to the Peloponnese (“ὑπὲριον θείην Πελοπηίδα γαῖαν,” 4.1573-1585).

The fact that Apollonius concentrates the spatial-prophetic role in one character appears to break from Homer’s devolution of spatial advice among the goddesses and Tiresias. However, in both poems, the imparting of spatial knowledge is ultimately tied to the divine. Triton, like Calypso and Circe, is a deity, and Phineus, like Tiresias, is divinely inspired. As demonstrated with Cyzicus, ownership of this cartographic knowledge is outside the human purview, and in a

way, related to power. In Chapter 2, I argued that Odysseus must overcome and subvert existing power structures to progress through space or gain the support of the goddesses who in turn share critical knowledge. With Calypso, this involves Zeus' order to free Odysseus from her captivity, and with Circe, Apollo provides the information and physical tools to overpower her. In the *Argonautica*, the heroes must also conquer a space before gaining access to coveted knowledge. As if invoking a place central to change and power dynamics in the *Odyssey*, the heroes first encounter Phineus "crumbled on the courtyard threshold" (καθέζετο γούνα βαρυνθείς / οὔδοῦ ἐπ' ἀλλεῖοιο, 2.202-203). Stuck in a liminal space, Phineus is both between the inside of his home and the outside. His collapse and weakness are caused by the Harpies, who steal Phineus' food from on high (2.223-224) and contaminate the remains (2.228-231), torturing the decrepit seer. Thus, the dominant power dynamic requiring subversion is that constituted by the Harpies. Accordingly, when the Argonauts defeat them, there is an establishment of a new power balance: the monsters are closed off in cages on Crete (though not killed) (αἱ μὲν ἔδυσαν / κευθμῶνα Κρήτης Μινωίδος, 2.298-300), and Phineus is free to resume prophesizing (2.309-310).<sup>35</sup> The reorganization of power is complete when the sons of Boreas, Zetes and Calais, return to the threshold (οὐδῶ ἐπι κραιπνοῦς ἔβαλον πόδας, 2.426-428). The place previously symbolic of Phineus' repression, and accordingly a suppression of spatial knowledge, is inverted to a place of knowledge transfer and a point from which the Argonauts can now progress on their journey to Colchis.

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<sup>35</sup> The extent of his prophesizing is within reason, however, as he is now aware of the dangers of disclosing too much information to mortals ("ὄσσα δ' ὄρωρε θεοῖς φίλον, οὐκ ἐπικεύσω," 2.311-312), the reason for which he was initially punished by Zeus with blindness (2.181-186).

*Gendered Spaces and Thresholds in Colchis*

The arrival of the Argonauts to Colchis is concomitant with a return of gendered interior spaces, including the presence of thresholds and their accompanying spatial dynamics.

Paralleling Odysseus' entry to the palace of Alcinous and Arete on Phaeacia is the movement of the Argonauts into the palace of Aetes and Eidyia. In the *Odyssey*, the palace's splendor is described in elaborate detail from the focalized point of view of Odysseus as he stands on the threshold:<sup>36</sup>

ὥς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἠὲ σελήνης  
 δῶμα καθ' ὑπερεφές μεγαλήτορος Ἀλκινόοιο.  
 χάλκεοι μὲν γὰρ τοῖχοι ἐληλέδατ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,  
 ἐς μυχὸν ἐξ οὐδοῦ, περὶ δὲ θριγκὸς κυάνοιο·  
 χρύσειαι δὲ θύραι πυκινὸν δόμον ἐντὸς ἔεργον·  
 ἀργύρεοι δὲ σταθμοὶ ἐν χαλκῷ ἕστασαν οὐδῶ,  
 ἀργύρεον δ' ἐφ' ὑπερθύριον, χρυσή δὲ κορώνη.  
 (7.84-90)

The palace of the mighty king was high,  
 and shone like rays of sunlight or of moonlight.  
 The walls were bronze all over, from the entrance  
 back to the bedrooms, and along them ran  
 a frieze of blue. Gold doors held safe the house.  
 Pillars of silver rose up from the threshold,  
 the lintel silver, and the handle, gold.

The view of the Argonauts likewise reflects the splendor of the Colchian palace from this vantage point:

ἕσταν δ' ἐν προμολῆσι, τεθηπότες ἔρκε' ἄνακτος  
 εὐρείας τε πύλας καὶ κίονας οἱ περὶ τοίχους  
 ἐξείης ἀνεχον, θριγκὸς δ' ἐφύπερθε δόμοιο  
 λαῖνεος χαλκήσιν ἐπὶ γλυφίδεσσιν ἀρήρει.  
 (Arg. 3.215-218)

<sup>36</sup> For more on focalization within narrative, see de Jong, 8-10.



They stood there in the entry  
marveling at the royal court – the wide  
gateways, the columns standing, rank on rank,  
along the walls, and, higher up, the bronze  
capitals holding up a marble cornice.

In both poems, the threshold signifies a moment of pause and a gaze towards a new space and people. While Odysseus disguises himself as a stranger, the Argonauts are accompanied by the sons of Phrixus, who experience their own homecoming in returning to Colchis. Moreover, the scene in the *Argonautica* mimics Odysseus' arrival to the Phaeacian citadel with its tinge of deception: just as Odysseus is shrouded by Athena's mist (πολλὴν ἠέρ' ἔχων, 7.139-141), the movement of the Argonauts is obscured from the sight of the Colchians, which Hera clouds through her imposed haze (ἠέρα πουλὸν ἐφῆκε δι' ἄστεος, 3.210-212). Whereas Odysseus' cover evaporates when he reaches the feet of Queen Arete and King Alcinous (πάλιν χύτο θέσφατος ἀήρ, 7.141-143), the Argonauts are visible prior to crossing the threshold (ἐκ πεδίοιο πόλιν καὶ δώμαθ' ἴκοντο, 3.213-214).

Perhaps most critical to altering the power dynamics of the palace interior is the entry of Eros. With respect to deceptiveness, Eros is more similar to Odysseus in that he crosses the threshold unnoticed and with bow in hand (καρπαλίμοισι λαθὼν ποσὶν οὐδὸν ἄμειψεν / ὄξεα δενδίλλων, 3.278-281). The god's powers come into effect immediately ("sudden muteness gripped her spirit," τὴν δ' ἀμφασίη λάβε θυμόν·, 3.286), weakening Medea, though in turn initiating the scheme of the goddesses. Eros' power is also evident around another threshold, that of Medea's bedchamber. Infected with Eros' magic, Medea is at a crossroads, torn between assisting the heroes and the shame of betraying her father. She crosses and retreats across the threshold of the courtyard three times, her intentions oscillating between the forces of love and

shame (ἐκ δὲ πάλιν κίεν ἔνδοθεν, ἄψ τ' ἀλέεινεν / εἴσω, 3.645-655). This “impasse” is overcome when Chalciope enters Medea’s room, convincing her to aid the Argonauts with her magic (Thalman 138). Thalman links this instance of threshold-crossing with the impetus needed for Medea to surpass other limits: this moment is followed by Medea meeting Jason at the temple of Hecate, and later, her departure from Colchis altogether for Greece (139). Thus, in this sense, the threshold between Medea’s bedroom and the courtyard symbolizes Medea’s larger-scale movements out of the palace, away from her family, and into foreign lands.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, Thalman ventures to say that Chalciope and Medea’s involvement in the plot to help the Argonauts overcome Aeetes’ challenge subverts the “gender hierarchies of the patriarchal nuclear family,” a reality that has influence on the physical spatiality layout of the home (138).<sup>38</sup> While the division of gender is clear in the arrangement of rooms and the spheres inhabited by their male and female occupants, the women’s cooperation with the Argonauts breaks from these bounded relations (137-138). The blending of female and male spaces is signaled by Argus seeking his mother Chalciope in her own chamber, a rare male entry into what was (like Medea’s room), a largely female space (138). Despite the fact that Medea largely remains in her bedchamber when at the palace, her compliance in the scheme unites the two realms in pursuit of a common purpose, circumventing the power dynamics in place under the rule and roof of Aeetes. After this initial conceptual breaking of barriers, the physical

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<sup>37</sup> Chalciope reinforces the notion of Greece as a distant and foreign land in her speech to her returning sons: “So, you were not, in fact, about to leave me / so thoughtlessly and travel far away. / Fate has returned you... / Why risk a voyage to the place they call / Orchomenus, whatever that might be, / to claim some King Athamas’ estate?” (τί δέ κεν πόλιν Ὀρχομενοῖο, / ὅστις ἔδ’ Ὀρχομενός, 3.260-267).

<sup>38</sup> See Zeitlin for a discussion of the male and female spatial components of the Greek *oikos* (72-73).

intermingling of the male and female is made possible at the temple to Hecate, and then when Medea leaves on the Argo.

### *The Way Back*

Perhaps one of the most distinctive aspects of the *Argonautica* is its revisiting of Homeric geographies on the voyage back to Greece. Apollonius' interaction with the Homeric geographic tradition has undergone intensive study. Fantuzzi and Hunter demonstrate how Apollonius "puts Homer under the critical spotlight" (105), while Dag Oistein Endsjo ventures as far as to call the *Argonautica* a "radical reinterpretation of Homeric geography" (384). Thalmann argues that in reincorporating Homeric landmarks and geographies, Apollonius effectively (like others before him) "demystif[ies] and rationalize[s] a space felt as alien and pre-civilized in the *Odyssey*" (185). Whether a response, reinterpretation, or elucidation of the geographies established in the *Odyssey*, it is clear that Apollonius' Hellenistic epic consciously evokes Homeric destinations and figures (in their original order) as a part of its itinerary.

The first stop of Odysseus' wanderings featured in the return of the Argonauts is Aeaea, to which Apollonius ascribes a real location: somewhere "through the heaving / Ausonian Sea with the Tyrrhenian coast / in view" (διέξ ἄλὸς οἶδμα νέοντο / Αὐσονίης, ἀκτὰς Τυρσηνίδας εἰσορόωντες, 4.659-660). This reworked Aeaea, now placed in the mappable Greek world, presents a stark contrast to the deceptively serene island of the *Odyssey*. Described in the Homeric epic as an impressive structure "built out of polished stones, on high foundations" (ξεστοῖσιν λάεσσι, περισκέπτῳ ἐνὶ χώρῳ, 10.210-211), Circe's palace in the later poem is visibly

horrifying. Unlike the seemingly innocuous appearance of the earlier depiction, here the description by no means hides the goddess' capacity for malevolence:

αἵματί οἱ θάλαμοί τε καὶ ἔρκεα πάντα δόμοιο  
 μύρεσθαι δόκεον, φλόξ δ' ἄθρόα φάρμακ' ἔδαπτεν  
 οἷσι πάρος ξείνους θέλγ' ἀνέρας ὅστις ἴκοιτο·  
 τὴν δ' αὐτὴ φονίῳ σβέσεν αἵματι πορφύρουσαν,  
 χερσὶν ἀφυσσαμένη, λήξεν δ' ὄλοοιο φόβοιο.  
 (4.665-669)

During the night it seemed that all the walls  
 and chambers of her house were dripping blood,  
 and flames were eating up the cache of drugs  
 with which she had, up to that time, bewitched  
 whoever came to visit. She herself  
 had quenched the flames with sacrificial blood  
 and so recovered from her horrid fright.

Thus, rather than being deceptive, the space outwardly reflects the monstrous potential behind its doors. Moreover, the mountain wolves and lions roaming Homer's Aeaea (λύκοι ἦσαν ὀρέστεροι ἠδὲ λέοντες, 10.212) are replaced with grotesque mutant creatures (θῆρες δ', οὐ θήρεσσιν εἰκότες ὠμηστῆσιν, 4.672-681).

In a similar vein, the relationships between the goddess and her visitors are also altered in the *Argonautica*. While in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus stumbles upon the island and then receives spatial information from the goddess after she is subdued, Jason and Medea also seek something only the deity can give – absolution for the murder of Absyrtus (4.584-588). Whereas Odysseus encounters Circe by chance, the Argonauts intentionally seek her out. In addition, in the *Argonautica*, the outcome of the visit is different. By no means of cunning or supplication do Jason and Medea successfully persuade Circe (even given Medea's familial ties to the goddess through her father Aeetes, 4.684, 743) to assist them on their journey. In a manner more reflective of Odysseus than the archaic Circe, the goddess herself demonstrates intellectual

prowess and a unique access to knowledge. Before they can speak, Circe perceives the reason behind their visit (αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω, 4.698-699), and this knowledge compels her to send Medea away nearly as soon as she arrives (“ἔρχεο δ' ἐκ μεγάρων,” 4.743-748). Thus, the ritual they seek to smooth their journey is denied to them, commencing what the reader (informed by the Homeric tradition) may expect to be an odyssey of a trip home.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to the impasse Medea and Jason face with Circe, Homer's goddess does provide Odysseus with information he requires – twice – guiding his way home. The power dynamics characterizing the Homeric scene on Aea are, in a sense, missing from the Apollonian passage, as the protagonists are unable to coerce the deity into revealing spatial knowledge.

Moreover, Circe's association with rituals and rites in the Apollonian epic expands upon the Homeric production of Greek identity within the foreign space. In Chapter 2 I argued that Odysseus' subduing of Circe introduces a normative Greek male-female relationship and activity to Circe's distinctly non-Greek and fantastical home. In the *Argonautica*, however, Circe is identified as more or less a part of society. While the conditions of her home and property clearly indicate her status as a non-mortal, her preoccupation with performing sacred rituals lends itself to a sort of cultural identity. Upon arrival, Jason and Medea find Circe performing purification rites, which, given their reaction, are essentially not foreign to them: “They sprinted to the hearth there, without speaking, / and sat there, in accordance with the customs, / that rule the rueful rights of supplication” (τὼ δ' ἄνεφ καὶ ἄναυδοὶ ἐφ' ἐστίῃ αἰζάντε / ἴζανον, ἧ τε δίκη λυγροῖς ἰκέτησι τέτυκται, 4.693-694). This statement suggests that at the least, the rituals performed by the goddess mirror rituals one might expect as a member of Greek and Colchian society, and at

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<sup>39</sup> These expectations are somewhat subverted, however, as Hera, favorable to Jason, enlists the help of Thetis and Hephaestus to smooth the way, at least until the Argonauts arrive at Phaeacia (4.753-769).

the most, that these rituals are in fact Greek or Colchian in nature. If the latter is true, one can argue that Circe's home is already Greek or Colchian, or already civilized.<sup>40</sup> A discussion of the differences between Greek and Colchian societies merits attention and interest, though lies outside the scope of this present inquiry. For the current moment, Thalmann's designation of Colchis as a "mixture of the familiar and strange" as seen from the Greek perspective may suffice (195), and Apollonius' depiction of Circe with reference to the purgation ceremonies supports this assertion. Most importantly, Aeaëa is not in Greece or Colchis, but in the Adriatic. Perhaps the lack of power struggle in the *Argonautica*'s Circe episode is related to the degree of familiarity shared between the goddess and protagonists (through blood and ritual activity), ultimately stemming from its location within the Greek world. Now within the confines of the Greek imaginary, Circe (although terrifying) can be fathomed through the lens of Greek society, instead of wholly divine and distant.

The next Homeric landmark encountered by the Argonauts is Anthemousa, the island of the Sirens. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' conquest of this space is predicated on receiving advice from Circe, who warns him of what he is about to face. In the *Argonautica*, the heroes require little such warning. As if by instinct, Orpheus drowns Sirens' songs with his lyre, and the obstacle is quickly surpassed (4.903-909). When one of their companions falls captive to the "lilylike contraltos" (ὄπα λείριον, 4.903), Aphrodite instantly sweeps him off to safety (4.917-919). The brevity of this portion of the narrative may initially render these Sirens as less powerful or threatening. Orpheus and Aphrodite's instant defenses speed the episode through,

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<sup>40</sup> This should not be terribly surprising given the familial relation between Aeetes and Circe, mentioned earlier.

emphasizing the efficacy of hero and goddess over monster.<sup>41</sup> In addition, Orpheus' song is itself an expression of power. In that it is louder than that of the Sirens, it overcomes their enchanting voices by means of an aural expression of power. This exertion of power (while immaterial) yields the physical consequence of safe passage. However, upon a closer look at the language, the possibility of a reverse outcome from the situation is also apparent. The use of εἰ μὴ in the Greek indicates that the victorious result was conditional: if Orpheus had not intervened at the exact time, the encounter would have ended differently ("The heroes would already / have run aground *if* Orpheus of Thrace, / son of Oeagrus, *hadn't* taken up / his lyre..." οἱ δ' ἀπὸ νηός / ἤδη πείσματ' ἔμελλον ἐπ' ἠιόνεσσι βαλέσθαι, / εἰ μὴ ἄρ' Οἰάγροιο πάϊς Θρηϊκίος Ὀρφεύς, Βιστονίην ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἑαῖς φόρμιγγα τανύσσας, 4.903-906).<sup>42</sup> The English translation reflects a similar sense of potential for ruin when it describes Aphrodite's action ("*if* Cypris the Erycian Queen, *had not*, in pity, picked him up out of the eddies..." ἀλλά μιν οἰκτεῖρασα θεὰ Ἔρυκος μεδέουσα / Κύπρις ἔτ' ἐν δίναις ἀνερέψατο καὶ ῥ' ἐσάωσεν / πρόφρων ἀντομένη, 4.1174-1175).<sup>43</sup> The result of these statements is a reminder of two dreadful alternative events, recalling the hostile description of the Homeric Sirens that control their surrounding waters. Thus, whether by explicit exertion of power over the space or a lucky action at the right time, the Argonauts' meeting with the Sirens reinterprets this locus in the Homeric cartography of power.

Following Odysseus' itinerary, the Minyans too pass Scylla and Charybdis and then Thrinacia, though as casual onlookers rather than active participants (Thalman 187). The

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<sup>41</sup> Thalman succinctly writes: "If Orpheus drowns out the Sirens' singing for the Argonauts, he does so for the reader as well" (187).

<sup>42</sup> Emphasis here is mine.

<sup>43</sup> Emphasis mine. Note that Poochigian's translation supplies a conditional construction here, while the Greek does not.

Argonauts then reach Phaeacia, recreating and expanding upon the Phaeacian episode in the *Odyssey*, and particularly in terms of the unique gendered spatial dynamics of the palace.<sup>44</sup> Just as in the earlier epic, Alcinous and Arete are featured in the Hellenistic epic, and the same ritual of supplicating first to Arete remains unchanged (πολλὰ δὲ χερσίν / Ἀρήτης γούνων ἀλόχου θίγεν Ἀλκινόοιο; 4.1011-1013). However, now the first supplicant is Medea, becoming the subject of the Phaeacian queen and king's concerns, who are charged with mediating between the Argonauts and the Colchians pursuing them. Whereas in the *Odyssey*, the actions of and interactions between Alcinous and Arete are publicly set in the palace megaron and concerned primarily with *xenia* and banqueting, in the *Argonautica*, one is given a glimpse into the more private sphere of the palace as well. In the royal bedroom, an exchange between Arete and Alcinous transpires regarding how to proceed with Medea (4.1068-1109). In a unique conversation between husband and wife, Arete beseeches Alcinous to spare Medea from her kinsmen: “Darling, / please do something for me. Please preserve / this girl of many worries from the Colchians / and do, thereby, the Minyans a favor” (“Ναὶ φίλος, εἰ δ’ ἄγε μοι πολυκηδέα ῥύεο Κόλχων / παρθενικήν, Μινύησι φέρων χάριν; 4.1073-1074). It is in this private space that Alcinous is visibly persuaded by his wife (οὐ δὲ φρένες ἰαίνοντο / ἧς ἀλόχου μύθοισιν, 4.1096-1097), indicating, as implied in the *Odyssey*, that Arete holds power within the Phaeacian palace. Though shared by both male and female, the bedroom supplies a space for equal interaction across genders, and perhaps grants greater power to the female voice. In this way, the unique spatial dynamics of gender are taken beyond the megaron, ascribing Arete's power to the private realm and outside of public queenly duties.

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<sup>44</sup> For the Phaeacian episode (and the interactions between Odysseus, Alcinous, and Arete) in the *Odyssey*, see 7.142-347.



As the Argonauts approach home, they encounter a final obstacle to their passage: Talus, a bronze giant remaining from the age of demigods (4.1638-1642). As Thalmann astutely ascribes, the image of Talus hoisting boulders on the shore to repel the Argonauts recalls the image of Polyphemus, who also throws rocks at Odysseus and his men as they escape (38). Talus is in a sense anachronistic, a remaining relic of a past age, though formidable by his near impenetrability. A guardian of Crete, he resembles Polyphemus who too is the sole guardian of his flocks and cave. Just as the Cyclops lacks knowledge of wine and verbal witticisms, Talus is also in a sense primitive: he neither speaks nor show signs of intelligence. Furthermore, like Polyphemus' single eye, he has a major design flaw, if one will: his exposed ankle (σύριγξ αἱματόεσσα κατὰ σφυρόν, 4.1646-1647). Thus, while Talus rules over Crete's borders, he experiences a sort of colonial subjugation when Medea easily overpowers him. Singing enchantments invoking the "heart-devouring Fates of Death" (ᾠοιδῆσιν μειλίσσετο θέλγε τε Κῆρας / θυμοβόρους, 4.1665-1666) Medea utilizes magic to destabilize and subdue the giant. In the face of her incantations, Talus quickly topples to his demise (ἕσπερον αὐτ' ἀμενηνός ἀπείρονι κάππεσε δούπω, 4.1677-1688). Although Medea's tactic is beyond purely human ability, it is indicative of the power dynamics of conquering a space and displacing that space's previous inhabitants. Moreover, the model put forth in the *Odyssey* of the protagonist subduing a monster to disrupt the power dynamics governing a space holds true here. Medea utilizes her magic (and the divine) to conquer Talus (a giant) and clear the path for the *Argo's* navigation home. Again, this colonial exertion of power ultimately enables movement across space. In the case of the *Argonautica*, Talus is the final obstacle between the heroes and an achievement of their nostos.

### *Conclusion*

Written in the Hellenistic context of Alexander the Great's conquests and developments in scientific and geographic inquiry, the *Argonautica* provides a response to the fantastical geographies of the heroic age through its own exploration of the world now known. Nodding to Homer through an inclusion of some of the *Odyssey's* central locations and characters, Apollonius both reminisces on an inherited Greek literary tradition and contributes his contemporary knowledge of geography and creative license to create a new heroic adventure story. The result is a reinterpretation of the Homeric epic and, as I argue, an expansion of the earlier cartography of power. Shaping his narrative around and within some of the same types of spaces as his Homeric predecessor, Apollonius' epic falls somewhere between Eratosthenes' outright disregard for Homeric geographies and Strabo's full acceptance of Homer as the "ideal historian" in the incoming imperial period.

## Chapter 4

### Imperial Epic Reception: Dionysius' *Periegesis*

#### *Geography in the Imperial Period and the Second Sophistic*

As the Hellenistic world and its geographic knowledge came under Roman leadership, discourse on Homeric geography increased in complexity. Eratosthenes's earlier refutation of the reality of locations in the *Odyssey* was soon supported and contradicted by a larger body of voices all concerned with the same question. In general, some issues of qualification remained untouched, as authors as early as Herodotus cited the remoteness of reported geographic elements or phenomena as reason that those reports "cannot be refuted" (οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον, Hdt. 2.23; Romm 172). The stance that the "distant is difficult to disprove" was employed on both sides of the debate regarding Homeric geographies (τὸ δὲ πόρρω δυσέλεγκτον, Strab. 11.6.4); Strabo utilized it in his defense of accounts of archaic India, while Eratosthenes mobilized this idea in criticism of the *Odyssey's* setting in the Ocean, far off, and thus, avoiding the issue of truth (Romm 173). Apollodorus, a follower of Eratosthenes in the second century B.C.E., built upon the geographer and his own mentor, Aristarchus, when he used the term *exokeanismos* to describe Homer's model of "mythologizing" the story of Odysseus. Homer's "removal into Ocean" of the Phaeacian encounter qualified the epic as primarily a source of entertainment rather than geographic fact (187-188).<sup>45</sup>

On the opposing side of the debate, Stoic philosophers sought to analyze and uphold the Homeric epics to the extent that they could derive moral readings from the archaic works (179).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> A similar point to that argued by Eratosthenes, mentioned in Chapter 3.

<sup>46</sup> See Heraclitus' *Homeric Allegories* (Romm 179).

The second century B.C.E. philosopher Crates famously opted for the most literal reading of Odysseus' voyages, maintaining that Books 9-12 should be accepted as a viable account of these travels (188).<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Polybius pinpointed exact locations to the wanderings, positing that they occurred in the Mediterranean and responding to the argument of *exokeanismos* proliferated by the Alexandrian scholars (190).

Perhaps the most intense and concerted effort to unite Homer's two debated identities and purposes – as a poet seeking to entertain or as a historian imparting factual geographic information – can be attributed to Strabo of Amasia of the first century C.E. In his *Geography*, Strabo sets forth an account of the known world, filled with references to Homeric geographical features (Kim 47).<sup>48</sup> This inclusion of Homeric landmarks and places is one of the strongest cases in defense of the archaic poet's conception of geography (48). Strabo's work is distinct from that of his contemporaries in part because it aims to address the geographic "loopholes" in the *Odyssey* left untouched by previous critics (Romm 190). Responding to Eratosthenes' claims that the primary goal of Homer's poetry was *psychagogia*, that is, a means of attaining aesthetic pursuits, Strabo accepted this intention but qualified that it was only a partial motivation of Homer's. Rather, Strabo emphasized the pedagogical value of Homer. According to James S. Romm, "In these four books [9-12] of the *Odyssey* lay the primary attack against the utilitarian basis of poetry and of all mythic narratives, a line which Strabo, as a devoted Stoic, was determined to defend at all costs" (192). At times, this meant allowing for what Strabo referred to as "*pseudos*," a strategy supposedly employed by Homer to "win popularity and marshal the

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<sup>47</sup> Crates mobilized the concept of *exokeanismos* to describe the itinerary of Odysseus' voyages beyond the Mediterranean, rather than as an attack on Homer's attempts to make his story more fantastical, and thus avoidant of geographical reality (188).

<sup>48</sup> This is the source from which modern scholarship has access to all remnants of Eratosthenes's *Geographika*.

masses while still giving sanction to [the facts]” (τὸ μὲν ἀποδεχόμενος τῷ δὲ δημαγωγῶν καὶ στρατηγῶν τὰ πλήθη, 1.2.9). This nuanced argument enabled Strabo to account for otherwise unexplainable geographic inconsistencies whilst preserving Homer’s prestige (Romm 192). Thus, Strabo’s vehement defense of Homer as a “historian-geographer” and even purportedly the “founder of geography” (“Ὅμηρος πρῶτος, 1.1.2; Kim 51), exposes the greater context of the swelling debate surrounding Homer’s geographic knowledge or lack thereof. In a time of growing interest in identifying the line between *mythos* and *historia* (Romm 174), the discourse concerned with truth and fiction extended its scope to poetry at large.

Moreover, though he realistically differed quite little from Eratosthenes in terms of his stance (Kim 60), the distinctions made by Strabo about Homer’s geographic intentions were profound in their impact on ideas of cultural and social identity (83). To understand this phenomenon, it is first necessary to explore the state of Greek education in the first three centuries of the common era. While Homer was taught and maintained throughout the Classical period, his work took on even greater importance in the Roman Empire. Fixed as a staple of Greek culture after the conquests of Alexander the Great, Homer became associated with the highest levels of education by imperial times (8). As Greek *paideia* grew in prestige among the elites, knowledge of the great works of fifth- and fourth-century Greek literature as well as Homer moved to the forefront of high culture (9).<sup>49</sup> The Second Sophistic as an intellectual movement was also indicative of the shift towards Homeric values and the rise of certain ideals in imperial Greece. Whereas the title of sophist has historically been accompanied with a debate

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<sup>49</sup> Kim makes an interesting point emphasizing the importance of such an ascendancy: Homer neither spoke in the Attic dialect nor did his content reflect classical innovations, yet he remained a cornerstone of Greek education for centuries (9).

over the moral fortitude of its holder,<sup>50</sup> the Second Sophistic gave rise to an epideictic or “display” oratorical practice that hearkened back to its supposed origins in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E (Whitmarsh 5).<sup>51</sup> Just as the first century C.E. brought with it a return to the long-lasting debate surrounding earlier sophistry (16), it also promoted a form of education with important claims to Greek cultural superiority (13). As Greece underwent political changes under the rule of the Roman Empire, so too did its identity, which became increasingly associated with *paideia*. Whitmarsh notes that Rome now lay claim to power (*imperium*), but Greece was seen as having the rights to culture. Thus, what it meant to be a Greek was ultimately tied to the sources of Greek culture, education, and the ideas that this *paideia* put forth: in Whitmarsh’s words, “manliness, elitism, and Greekness” were the primary elements of identity (14). These mainstays of Greek identity were nowhere better reflected than in the literature of old, enabling Homer’s poetry to be held in high esteem. As a result, scholars of the Second Sophistic found an opportunity for “self-examination” in the face of an archaizing and idealizing Greek culture (22). In this way, reciting the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and a healthy reverence for their supposed author was an integral part of Imperial Greek identity, especially amongst the educated elite (*pepaideumenoι*). Strabo’s concerns, thus, along with those of other Second Sophistic authors, reflected the ever-relevant role of Homeric texts in Imperial Greek cultural formation (Kim 3).<sup>52</sup>

However, Strabo’s position with respect to Homeric geographies was not all encompassing of imperial Greek thought. Taking a stance quite opposite to Strabo’s support for

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<sup>50</sup> Whitmarsh, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> Whitmarsh attributes the term “second sophistic” to the orator Aeschines in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E. (of whom the sophist Flavius Philostratus speaks of) who denotes it as a unique feature of imperial Greek scholarship (4-5).

<sup>52</sup> Kim also includes discussions of Lucian and Philostratus, who, in his view, changed the discourse on Homeric geographies in this period.

Homer as the “ideal historian,” Dio Chrysostom expressed the above-mentioned self-examination of Greek culture through an overt (and ironic) opposition to Homer’s historicity. In his *Trojan Oration*, a speech addressed to the inhabitants of his contemporary Ilium, the imperial orator sought to disprove events of the *Iliad* (and less so of the *Odyssey*). In turn, he offered an alternate history with new conclusions, among which were that Helen and Paris were properly wed (δὴ λαβεῖν Ἀλέξανδρον τὴν Ἑλένην ἐκ τοῦ δικαίου, 11.53); that Hector in fact slew Achilles (μῆτε τὸν Ἔκτορα ἀποκτείναντος, 11.91); and that Troy was the victor of the Trojan War (μαρτύριον ὡς ἠττημένων, 11.111-123; Kim 85). Given the stark contrast between the arguments expressed in this speech and the existing tradition, it is debated to what degree Dio was entirely serious. Moreover, given his general approval and reverence of Homer, the speech’s break from this pattern may suggest its role more as an exercise in sophistic rhetoric than an expression of his true beliefs (86). However, by describing Homer’s history as “the most grievous misstatements” (τὰ χαλεπώτατα ψευδάμενον, 4.2), Dio launches a significant critique on Homer’s credibility, calling into question a formative aspect of Greek identity. Challenging the authenticity of Homer meant a challenge also on the cherishing of a heroic past which was central to claiming “Greekness,” especially in the face of falling under Roman occupation (Kim 138). Thus, while scholars upheld Homeric traditions, perhaps as a means of retaining a sense of cultural and historical identity, others spoke out against them, revealing the multiplicity of voices within the Second Sophistic.

*The Periegesis of the Known World*

Emerging from the context of the Second Sophistic, earlier literary tradition, and a mainstream scholarship invested in placing Homeric geographies in the real world, Dionysius of Alexandria's *Periegesis of the Known World* offers a lens to Homeric reception in epic during the early Roman Empire (Lightfoot 8). In just 1200 hexametric lines, the *Periegesis* is an attempt to describe the inhabited world from the beginning of the second century C.E., with respect to both its spaces and peoples. The result is an itinerary beginning with the Ocean and major bodies of water (Ὠκεανοῖο βαθυρρόου, 26-168), proceeding next to the three continents: Libya (Λιβύη, 174-269), Europe (Εὐρώπη, 270-446), and Asia (Ἀσίη, 620-1165).<sup>53</sup> Dionysius also makes note of boundaries (οὐρανόν, 10; σῆμα, 18) dividing the landscapes and waters he discusses: Libya and Europe are divided “slantwise” (λοξὸν ἐπὶ γραμμῆσι, 11) at the tip of Egypt (ἔνθα βορειότατος πέλεται μυχὸς Αἰγύπτιοιο, 12); the city of Tanais stands as the center point between Europe and Egypt (Ἀσίης Τανάϊς διὰ μέσσον ὀρίζει, 14); and Europe and Asia are split by an isthmus between the Caspian and Black Seas (Κασπίης τε μεσηγὸν καὶ Εὐξεινοῖο θαλάσσης, 20-25). Moreover, he mentions the locations of islands between Europe and Asia (447-619). Finally, the epic poem ends with the concession that there lies more to be known beyond these “principal nations” (ὑπέρτατοι ἄνδρες ἔασιν, 1166); however, these geographies remain beyond the human scope and are known only to the gods (μοῦνοι δὲ θεοὶ, 1167-1169).

Within his geographic description, it is clear that Dionysius is by no means disinterested in Homer: he employs the catalogue style seen most notably in Homer's Catalogue of Ships (*Il.*

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<sup>53</sup> The idea of these three continents is also found in Strabo's *Geog.* 2.5.26-33. All English translations of the *Periegesis* are from Lightfoot's translation (2014. Oxford: Oxford University Press).



2.484-875), he demonstrates a knowledge of the locations of “mythological travelers,” and he exhibits a reverence for Homer’s geography (Lightfoot 10). While his cartography is in some ways influenced by the work of Eratosthenes, Dionysius aligns with Strabo with respect to his treatment of Homeric geographies (11). Aware of existing scholia and prominent issues surrounding Homer’s reception, Dionysius in some instances responds to or modifies pre-existing notions (12).<sup>54</sup> J. L. Lightfoot argues that of primary influence on Dionysius was Strabo’s *hypotyposis*, or a “sketch” of the world as conceived of by the geographer (15). As a result, Dionysius’ *Periegesis* represents both a conceptual parallel with his predecessor in terms of his opinion on the validity of Homeric spaces and a technical parallel in terms of his physical cartographic decisions.<sup>55</sup>

Although Dionysius’ *Periegesis* takes on a didactic tone, it is largely reliant on a variety of works across poetry and prose, including those of Homer, Hesiod, Callimachus, and Apollonius (35). The result is a poem combining aspects of poetry and geographic knowledge well known to scholars of his time. According to Lightfoot, “Dionysius has opted for a genre, style, and diction that enables a virtuoso blending of the Homeric and Alexandrian, with no sense of tension” (189). Though not of a narrative form, the *Periegesis* presents a unique turn on a cartography of power in epic. Dionysius nods to and rearranges the itineraries put forth by his Homeric and Apollonian predecessors, and thus participates in establishing this cartography of power from a top-down direction. This tracing of power over epic spaces now escapes the confines of a narrative structure and becomes more directly tied to the poet himself. The

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<sup>54</sup> See Lightfoot, 12.

<sup>55</sup> These decisions include “the four gulfs of the ocean, the review of the seas and islands within the Mediterranean, and the tribal review of Libya” (19).

decisions made by Dionysius ranging from the inclusion or exclusion of Homeric locations, to the preservation of specific wordings, marks a new cartography of power in the imperial geographic epic poem. Ultimately, by invoking Homer explicitly or implicitly, Dionysius imposes Homeric contexts and their distinct power markings upon his geographic report.

While his reliance on Homer, Apollonius, and numerous other sources has been observed, Dionysius' use of these sources is highly sophisticated and takes on a variety of forms (36). In this section I will identify specific allusions in the *Periegesis* to geographies taken from the *Odyssey*, match their origins to their corresponding moments in the *Odyssey*, and elucidate the implied power relationships that in turn color the reading of the *Periegesis* from this additional context. For the sake of comparison, I will assume the order of these references as they appear in the *Odyssey*, though this does not reflect the order of their appearance in Dionysius' epic. Of particular interest are the imperial poem's allusions to and mentions of Calypso, Circe and Aeaëa, Aeolus, and the Lotus Eaters. Although such trans-textual interactions may escape the common reader, they maintain and appropriate the *Odyssey's* cartography of power, adding complexity to the geographic rendering of the *Periegesis*.

### *Calypso*

In lines 927-961 of the *Periegesis*, Dionysius describes Arabia, a land of fortune and renown. He supplies an aetiological story for why the people are so prosperous: when Zeus removed Dionysius from his thigh, the young god brought forth pleasant aromas and spices upon the inhabitants and their lands (Ζεὺς αὐτὸς Διόνυσον ἐϋρραφέος μηροῖο, 940-951). The author proceeds to list the components of the "gorgeous aromatic scent" (κηώεσσα θύοις ὕπο λαρόν,

936) gracing the wealthy and beautiful Arabian lands. He notes the presence of “citron, myrrh, and sweetly-scented reed” (ἡ θύου ἢ σμύρνης ἢ εὐόδμου καλάμοιο, 937). The use of the word θύου hearkens back to the word’s specific use in the *Odyssey* (κέδρου τ’ εὐκέατοιο θύου, 5.60), at which point Apollo, sent by Zeus, first glimpses Calypso on Ogygia (Lightfoot 464):

τῷ ἔνι νύμφῃ  
 ναῖεν εὐπλόκαμος· τὴν δ’ ἔνδοθι τέτμεν εὐοῦσαν.  
 πῦρ μὲν ἐπ’ ἐσχαρόφιν μέγα καίετο, τηλόσε δ’ ὀδμὴ  
 κέδρου τ’ εὐκέατοιο θύου τ’ ἀνὰ νῆσον ὀδώδει  
 δαιομένων· (5.57-61)

There sat Calypso with her braided curls,  
 Beside the hearth a mighty fire was burning,  
 The scent of citrus and of brittle pine,  
 suffused the island.

The image of fragrant citrus evoked by Dionysius alludes to a specific scene in the *Odyssey*. Upon seeing Calypso, Hermes himself is impressed by her beauty, and the sweep of his gaze provides a view to the idyllic landscape of the island (5.63-78). The perfume-like scent of the fire stands for the perceived perfection of Ogygia, a sight which deceives Odysseus, alienating him and rendering him hopeless in his inability to escape.<sup>56</sup> In this way, Dionysius’ reference is not merely of aesthetic value, but carries with it the power relations characterizing Odysseus’ entrapment on Calypso’s island.

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<sup>56</sup> See chapter 2.

*Lotus-Eaters*

In lines 204-207 of the *Periegesis*, Dionysius includes his only explicit reference to Odysseus when he says the following:

τάων ἀμφοτέρων μεσάτη πόλις ἐστήρικται,  
 ἦν ῥά τε κικλήσκουσι Νέαν πόλιν· ἥς ὑπὲρ αἴαν  
 Λωτοφάγοι ναίουσι, φιλόξεينوι γεγαῶτες·  
 ἔνθα ποτ' αἰολόμητις ἀλώμενος ἦλθεν Ὀδυσσεύς.

A city in between the two is sited,  
 Neapolis by name, beyond whose lands  
 The hospitable Lotus-Eaters dwell,  
 Where wily Odysseus once came wandering.

Unlike the implicit allusion to Calypso's hearth, here Dionysius mentions a Homeric geographic stop by name. Odysseus' encounter with the Lotus-Eaters, despite their seemingly harmless approach (Dionysius uses the word φιλόξεينوι, 206), also reveals certain power relations.<sup>57</sup> When they consume the lotus flowers, Odysseus' crew yearns to stay on the island forever, their movement restricted by the silent control of the fruit (ἤθελε νοῦδὲ νέεσθαι, 9.91-99). Here, again, a cartography of power is evoked. Fooled by another apparently innocuous interaction, Odysseus and his men find themselves trapped in a place, and only through Odysseus' ability to reason (he was not in the search party, 5.87-89) do they escape the threat to their voyage home. When the reader, thus, comes across this passage, it may be hard to not reminisce on the peril narrowly avoided by Odysseus' crew. The potential for danger is further reflected in the preceding and following descriptions of nearby water and land. The Tyrrhenian Sea has "extensive tides" (εὐρυτέρησι βαρυνομένη προχοῆσιν, 200) and "issues in force" (κορυσσομένης

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<sup>57</sup> Lightfoot traces the use of this word also to Aeolus in the *Periegesis* and to the Phaeacians in the *Odyssey* (307).

Τυρσηνίδος ἀμφιτρίτης, 201), painting a menacing image of the surrounding waters. Moreover, near Neapolis, Dionysius tells of houses abandoned by people killed by the Romans (οὐς Διὸς οὐκ ἀλέγοντας ἀπώλεσεν Ἀῦσονις αἰχμή, 208-210). The effect is ominous, and the inclusion of the Lotus-Eaters augments the eerie sense of place as mythic and real-world geographies converge.

That Dionysius uses the present tense is also of interest: the present “dwell” (ναίουσι, 206) ascribes a degree of reality to the Lotus-Eaters, implying that they are a people in the time of the author. Dionysius’ decision to include these Homeric characters in his geographic record in itself helps forge a cartography of power. By choosing to include a specific space, he lends it validity, while places unmentioned are not afforded such attention. Dionysius’ cartography thus exhibits a top-down dimension with respect to decisions made on the part of the author, the ultimate cartographer.

### *Aeolus*

Just as he mentions the Lotus-Eaters as a legitimate people within the scope of the known world, Dionysius also assigns a degree of truth to Aeolus when mentioning “Aeolus’ isles” (Αἰόλου...νησοί, 461). Although he speaks of Aeolus in the past tense, invoking the sense of a mythical past, Lightfoot maintains that Dionysius’ “Homerising” designation is part of a larger tradition connecting the Lipari islands with their Odyssean counterpart. Moreover, Lightfoot notes that Diodorus, as well as Pliny the Elder, take Aeolus’ kingship in this place as a matter of historical fact, and that Dionysius furthers the connection between geography and myth through his inclusion of the following text (369):

τὴν δὲ μετ' Αἰόλου εἰσὶ περιδρομοὶ εἰν ἅλι νῆσοι,  
 Αἰόλου Ἴπποτάδαο, φιλοξείνου βασιλῆος,  
 Αἰόλου, ὃς θηητὰ μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἔλλαχε δῶρα,  
 κοιρανίην ἀνέμων κλονεόντων ἵσταμένων τε.  
 (461-464)

Then Aeolus' isles make the running in the sea;  
 Aeolus, Hippotas' son, welcoming king,  
 Aeolus, who possessed astounding gifts,  
 The lordship of winds roused and falling still.

Just as with the previous sections, this anecdote hearkens back to the episode of Aeolus in the *Odyssey*. This brief story, like those of Calypso and the Lotus-Eaters, takes a turn for the worse after an initially positive interaction. While first welcomed to Aeolus' island as a guest (“χαριζόμενος φιλότιτι,” 10.35-45), Odysseus quickly betrays the trust of the king when his men open the sack of winds and are banished from the island in a fury (“ἔρρ' ἐκ νήσου θᾶσσον, ἐλέγχιστε ζώντων” 10.64-76). Thus, whether intended or not, this passage in the geography of Dionysius echoes another stop on Odysseus' wanderings, embedding the ideas of broken guest friendships and betrayal into the physical landscape.

### *Circe*

A final character and location of the *Odyssey* conjured by Dionysius is Circe and her island of Aeaea. References to Circe are indirect, but in some ways tied to power. The two allusions of interest to the goddess are identified by Lightfoot, the first of which occurs in lines 144-145 when Dionysius describes what may be identified as the Clashing Rocks in the *Argonautica* (2.317-29), or the Planktai featured in the *Odyssey* 12.59-72 (292). Whereas in the imperial poem these rocks are not explicitly named, the poet connects them, presumably, to these

older epics by use of the words “where legend says” (ὅθι μῦθος, 44). The inclusion of μῦθος here ties these rocks to an earlier, perhaps mythical tradition, for which reason an allusion to Circe may be reasonable. In *Odyssey* 12.59-72, Circe describes to Odysseus the route by which he should navigate the surrounding waters. In the discussion of Aeaea in Chapter 2, I suggest that in sharing spatial information with Odysseus, Circe is imparting knowledge, and thus power, upon the hero. The interaction to which this allusion brings us, then, reminds us of the powered exchange between mortal and goddess in the face of terrifying and dangerous geographical obstacles. In his description, Dionysius does not explicitly mention these traditions surrounding the Clashing or Wandering Rocks, but he too exerts power over this landscape by taming it to fit his poetic purpose.<sup>58</sup> With minimal description of its destructive power, it seems that Dionysius has, in a sense, conquered this geography, much like Odysseus, and later Jason.<sup>59</sup>

The other allusion to Circe is also likely an allusion to Calypso (Lightfoot 444):

οὐ μὰν οὐδὲ γυναῖκας ὀνόσσειαι, αἱ περὶ κείνο  
θεῖον ἔδος, χρυσοῖο κατ’ ἰζύος ἄμμα βαλοῦσαι,  
ὄρχεῦνται, θηητὸν ἐλίσσόμεναι περὶ κύκλον,  
(839-841)

Nor might you fault the women who around  
That holy spot, gold girdling their flanks,  
Dance in a round that captivates the eye,

<sup>58</sup> The translation of Planktai, or in the Greek, Πλαγκταί, in the *Odyssey* (12.61).

<sup>59</sup> If one is following the historical timelines put forth by the authors, then the statement should read: “and Jason before him.” Nevertheless, this instance is omitted in the *Odyssey*, and the reader is left to assume that Odysseus passes safely through the Wandering Rocks since he proceeds straight to Scylla and Charybdis after the Sirens. Perhaps Homer conflates the two features (rocks and beasts) into one.

In the *Argonautica*, Apollonius creates a larger scene out of this encounter, with Athena ultimately pushing the *Argo* safely through the rocks (Ἀθηναίη στιβαρῆ ἀντέσπασε πέτρης / σκαιῆ, 2.595-606).

In this passage, Dionysius describes the people of “Asia” (ἐν Ἀσίδι, 834), and in particular, Maeonia. The women referred to in this spell-binding dance are worshippers of the god Dionysus participating in sacred rites (842). Here, as Lightfoot argues, the “gold girdling their flanks” can be understood as golden belts, and linguistically bears parallels to those worn by Circe and Calypso in the *Odyssey* (444). Calypso is seen wearing this golden belt prior to sending off Odysseus from Ogygia, her plans subverted by the will of the gods. This moment occurs at the transition point where Calypso begins to act on behalf of Odysseus and not herself:

περὶ δὲ ζώνην βάλετ' ἰξυῖ  
καλὴν χρυσεῖην, κεφαλῆ δ' ἐφύπερθε καλύπτρην.  
καὶ τότε Ὀδυσσεῖ μεγαλήτορι μήδετο πομπήν·  
(5.231-233)

Round her waist  
She wrapped a golden belt, and veiled her head.  
Then she prepared the journey for the man.

Similarly, the mention of the belt appears at another transition point in spatial power dynamics with the goddess Circe. With language directly mirroring that of the description of Calypso above, Circe dons her golden belt after subdued by Odysseus and sharing her advice for navigation (10.544-5).<sup>60</sup> It is at this moment that Odysseus rouses his crew to depart from Aea. Thus, these two uses of the golden belt in the *Odyssey* evoke two parallel images of preparation for departure from the two goddesses, at moments after which power dynamics and their spatial realities are overturned.<sup>61</sup> In implying these two well-known goddesses into his ethnography,

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 2. The language here is also περὶ δὲ ζώνην βάλετ' ἰξυῖ / καλὴν χρυσεῖην, κεφαλῆ δ' ἐφύπερθε καλύπτρην.

<sup>61</sup> In Dionysius, the actual word for belt, ζώνη, is implied.



perhaps Dionysius is assigning an aesthetic of beauty and, more importantly, an image of the literary tradition before him to the women of Lydia.

### *A Step Eastward*

Just as a reading of power dynamics can be rendered through a consideration of references and allusions to the *Odyssey*, so can a cartography of power be discerned through the placements of Dionysius' acrostics, as expounded upon by Janet Downie. This second spatial manifestation of power stems out of the literary space of Dionysius' poem but reflects ideas about the Roman Empire beyond the scope of the poem. Along this vein, Downie argues that the poem is by no means apolitical, but rather reveals an intentional cultural focus on places more east than mainland Greece or Rome (169).<sup>62</sup> I suggest that a discussion of the cartography of power need not be confined to the structure of the poem but may also occur before the backdrop of society from which the piece of literature has emerged.

A crucial element, then, within this reshaped cartography lies in Downie's argument for a perspective shifted eastwards in the *Periegesis*. This argument is supported primarily by the placement of three acrostics within the poem: one with the author's name, locating him in Alexandria; a second, recalling a Homeric play on words and "Achilles' racecourse" (Ἀχιλλῆος δρόμον, 306); and a third naming the Roman emperor Hadrian within a description of the Aegean Sea.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Lightfoot, 176.

<sup>63</sup> For an in-depth exploration of these acrostics and their effect on centering the poem westward, see Downie 2017.

The first acrostic bears the name of the author and occurs at the intersection of two geographic axes falling upon the Nile Delta as described by Dionysius. The acrostic spells the words “ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΕΝΤΟΣ ΦΑΡΟΥ” (“of Dionysius, one of those this side of Pharos,” 112–134) locating the author in Alexandria, establishing both his own position and perspective, and also a *sema* within the poem.<sup>64</sup> As Downie suggests, this *sema*, which also has the effect of the word γραμμή, or “line,” ultimately points to Dionysius (Downie 168). His inclusion of the word “ΕΝΤΟΣ” (“this side of”) effectively situates Dionysius within the city of the Pharos, Alexandria, rather than presuming a position from Greece or Rome (169). It is from this point outward that he builds his cartography: a place situated on Dionysius’ “north-south meridian,” and an important Hellenistic city in terms of commerce and culture (171-172).

The second acrostic invokes Homeric imagery and language while providing a point of geographic division (172). In a play on words that invokes a likely incidental Homeric acrostic in the *Iliad*, lines 307-311 of the *Periegesis* form the word “ΣΤΕΝΗ,” or “narrow” (173). As Downie notes, this choice is “deeply intertextual” in that it invokes the specific context of Aratus’ *Phaenomena*,<sup>65</sup> and also the acrostic “ΛΕΥΚΗ” found in *Iliad* 24 (174).<sup>66</sup> In the line before this acrostic begins, Dionysius mentions “Achilles’ racecourse” (306), a location along the Black Sea often mistakenly associated with the island of Leuke, where later tradition denoted as the final resting place of Achilles. In addition to bringing Homeric heroic contexts to his geographic depiction, Dionysius associates it specifically with the island of Leuke (Downie 174). While perhaps only noticeable to an erudite readership, this acrostic effectively lends importance

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<sup>64</sup> Recall discussion of *semata* in Purves and Lateiner (2014).

<sup>65</sup> A poem related to the *Periegesis* in multiple respects (Lightfoot 6).

<sup>66</sup> The jump from ΣΤΕΝΗ to ΛΕΥΚΗ requires one cognitive step to the word ΛΕΙΠΗ, which has a similar meaning to ΣΤΕΝΗ (Downie 174).

to the Black Sea region, placing it within contemporary geographic discourse, and “establishes in the real, physical world the coordinates of a cultural connection between the epic tradition and later Alexandrian poetry” (176).

The third acrostic seals the eastward shifted cartography of power. As demonstrated by Estelle Oudot, Dionysius largely avoids a discussion of Rome and Roman imperial space. Unlike his predecessor Strabo who places Rome in the middle of his worldview, Dionysius shows little interest in Rome (Downie 177-178). This trend, however, is complicated by the inclusion of the third acrostic which reads “ΘΕΟΣ ΕΡΜΗΣ ΕΠΙ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥ” (“the god Hermes in the time of Hadrian,” 513-532). This acrostic appears in the poem during Dionysius’ description of the Aegean Sea and its islands, in effect contributing to a “decentering of Rome” (182). Athens too, remains unmentioned, despite the emperor Hadrian’s affinity for Greece (183). The result is the placement of a final linguistic *sema*, the name of Hadrian, amidst the Aegean islands. Downie describes the effect of this as lending distinction to the Aegean as a place within the *oikoumene* (183), while also making it a representative of “diasporic Hellenism” (184). Thus, the cartography of power put forth in the *Periegesis* is not centered on Greece or Rome, but towards the east, which since Hellenistic times, was adopting a Greek cultural persona. Dionysius’ implementation of this final acrostic marries the idea of the Roman Empire with Greek space, avoiding, as one might expect, a perspective looking outward from Rome.<sup>67</sup>

This decision by Dionysius provides a break from the previous two epic poems considered in this paper: in forming the *Odyssey* around the protagonist’s quest for *nostos*, the Homeric tradition centers the poem in Greece, in Ithaca; in the *Argonautica*, Apollonius also sets

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<sup>67</sup> Oudot says that Dionysius gives a “geography of Greek culture, but not a geography of Roman power” (180).

Greece (though the mainland) as the center point.<sup>68</sup> However, Dionysius is not entirely unprecedented in the orientation of his poem. The second-century writer Aelius Aristides situated the Aegean and particularly the island of Delos as the middle of his *oikoumene* (Downie 183).<sup>69</sup> Most importantly, as suggested by Lightfoot, Dionysius directly participates in the formation of his cartography of power in the imperial Mediterranean world by virtue of his goal: “Dionysius sets out to inform and instruct his reader about a world in which no place is without significance” (133). His shift to the east and away from Athens and Rome signifies a devolution of power from traditional sites of prestige, giving credence and relevance to the geographies that Homer and Apollonius explored before him.

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<sup>68</sup> See Thalmann, 27.

<sup>69</sup> Aristides situates Delos in the center of the Aegean, which he believes to be “in the middle of the whole inhabited world and of the sea,” (μέσῳ τῆς πάσης οἰκουμένης τε καὶ θαλάττης, 44.11) and “in the midst of all Greece,” Ἑλλάδος, 17.44.4). Moreover, given its attribution as the birthplace of Apollo, Delos holds a special cultural significance to the imperial scholar (Downie 183).

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

A spatial reading of the *Odyssey* driven by a modern geographic lens provides a twofold opportunity: that of tracing the transformation and assimilation of mythical landscapes into real-world cartographies, and that of deriving deeper meaning from the literary spaces that yields a narrative unlike previous renderings.<sup>70</sup> Most obviously, the *Argonautica* accomplishes the first, plotting both the itineraries of Jason and Odysseus on a Hellenistic map of the Mediterranean extending to the Black Sea. Dionysius' *Periegesis of the Known World* also addresses the former, emerging from an era of scholarship focused on Greek identity in the face of expanding Roman authority and advances in objective geographic knowledge. Through this thesis, I follow the juxtaposition of literary and "real world" geographies but also suggest an inquiry into the second option. By following the movement of power through knowledge and its manifestations in physical landscapes and spaces, one can gain access into a new dimension of the poetic narrative.

William G. Thalmann points to the implications of assuming such a geographic trajectory in the fourth chapter of his book when he connects specific loci of the Argonautic journey to Greek colonial settlements. The sort of colonial relationships between the Argonauts and natives and evoked across the non-Greek spaces function as aetiological stories, laying the foundation for Greek expansion in the Mediterranean (Thalmann 77). The movements of the Argonauts, thus, and their interactions with these places, reframe the world with reference to Greek political or cultural influence. As noted in Chapter 4, Dionysius' epic also is informed by the lens of empire, despite minimal explicit mention of Rome itself.

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<sup>70</sup> The role of spatial dynamics in forming new narratives is an idea found in Massey (1994). Thalmann relates this idea in his chapter on colonial spaces (77).

Can the *Odyssey* propose a similar view? Though the process of oral composition was by all means complex and necessitates avoiding the assumption of a straightforward formulation, is it possible that Greek colonial acquisitions influenced the resulting Homeric cartography? This question is multifaceted and requires complicated answers beyond the scope of this paper. However, a look at the Greek world of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E. may provide a glimpse, albeit incomplete, to understanding the power structures of the *Odyssey*, especially with reference to the far off, the monstrous, and even the homeland.<sup>71</sup> While the Homeric poet may not have consciously imbued his literary cartography with specific reference to language of power, entrapment, and escape, to what degree may the tradition have been shaped by conceptions of Greek and non-Greek? Of colony and homeland? Of ally and foe? Does the process of poetic composition seen in the *Odyssey* truly forgo the political and cultural structures of its time or is it to some degree influenced by a Greek world and its spatialized power structures?<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, while gender, thresholds, and liminal spaces are by no means new implements in the Classicist's toolbox, viewing Greek epic in terms of power and its spatial distribution lends a new flavor to the *Odyssey* in line with an evolving approach to literature. Through adopting Dionysius' method as asserted by Downie that "no place is without significance," discerning a cartography of power can transform epic itineraries into the

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<sup>71</sup> Osbourne's "Homer's Society" may provide the backdrop behind the question of political structures and their manifestation in the Homeric epics.

<sup>72</sup> The answer to what time, exactly, we are pinpointing is the subject of continuous and extensive debate. The former argument (that Homer avoided the real world in favor of the fantastical) is one of Eratosthenes' major refutations against the Homeric geographic tradition (see chapter 3).

centerpieces of more meaningful stories, enhancing the traditional readings of Homer, Apollonius, and other authors.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See pg. 88 for Downie's quote.

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## ACADEMIC VITA

### Charissa M. Skoutelas

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#### EDUCATION

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**Schreyer Honors College: The Pennsylvania State University** August 2016 - May 2020  
Bachelor of Arts in **Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies**  
Bachelor of Science in **Global and International Studies**  
Minor in **Greek**  
Minor in **Geography**  
Minor in **Religious Studies**  
**Paterno Fellow Program**, The College of the Liberal Arts

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

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**Department of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies** **University Park, PA**  
*Teaching Assistant*, Penn State August 2019 – December 2019

- Prepared and lead review sessions for 75 students prior to exams
- Held office hours and answered student questions
- Delivered a guest lecture to class on personal research

**Walter and Leonore Annenberg Research Center** **Chadds Ford, PA**  
*Intern*, Brandywine River Museum of Art June 2019 – August 2019

- Re-housed and organized institutional archives and library collections
- Developed finding aids for three collections
- Completed inventory of library periodicals using The Museum System database

**Museum Collections** **West Chester, PA**  
*Intern*, Brandywine River Museum of Art June 2019 – August 2019

- Handled, re-housed, photographed and catalogued historical objects
- Researched objects and local historical figures in library genealogical records

**Department of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies** **University Park, PA**  
*Archaeology Archives Assistant*, Penn State September 2017 – December 2018

- Enhanced computer skills through digitizing slides
- Increased organizational skills through sorting and arranging slide files

#### GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

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**Education Abroad Office** **University Park, PA**  
*Peer Adviser*, Penn State August 2019 – May 2020

- Consult and advise students on selecting study abroad programs
- Present “Study Abroad 101” lectures in classroom settings

**Center for Asia Minor Studies****Athens, Greece**

*Fellow of the New York Life Center for the Study of Hellenism in Asia Minor and Pontos, Hellenic College*

June 2018

- Researched Greek oral archives to analyze refugee populations of 1922 population exchange
- Traveled to Northern Greece to experience modern refugee settlements from the exchange

**Ecumenical Patriarchate****Saronic Islands, Greece**

*Steward, Toward a Greener Attica Symposium*

June 2018

- Facilitated the events of a four-day ecological conference
- Managed 200 participants as part of a team of 12 students
- Translated in Greek and English for participants unable to communicate in both languages

**RELEVANT LANGUAGES**

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**Ancient Greek:** 6 semesters; **Latin:** 4 semesters; **Greek:** 8 years of modern language courses; B1 proficiency, *The Center for the Greek Language*

**AWARDS & HONORS**

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Birmingham Award for Greek, 2018, 2019

Borza Award (studying abroad in Athens), 2019

Classics & Ancient Mediterranean Studies Student Marshal, 2020

Evan Pugh Senior Scholar Award, 2019

Goldstein Jewish Studies Award, 2018

President's Freshman Award, 2017

Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, 2017 induction

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

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**University of Tennessee Undergraduate Classics Conference**

February 2020