

Straipsniai

THRINACIA, THE ISLAND OF MALTA

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Introduction

We do not know for sure whether the Trojan War really took place or not. If it did not, then Homer, or whoever the author was (for even his name has been put in doubt), must be given the credit for being a master in inventing hundreds of names and incidents.¹ The later theory goes against the identification of Troy by Heinrich Schliemann and the acceptance of a long history of oral poetry ultimately going back, surely, not to an invented story, but to a real one. Oral tradition is, in fact, behind not only the Trojan War as described by Homer, but also countless other stories, such as the Argonauts' journey, the war at Thebes, and earlier stories such as the deluge and the creation of man. Oral tradition is behind the repetition of phrases,

lines, groups of lines, motifs, personages in Homer.² All these stories with different names seem to be moulded around one core of truthful accounts, which accounts we can never fathom. It is this long oral tradition based on true facts that tempts us to penetrate into the heart of the story and look not only for symbolism and allegory, but also real persons with their own characters and places with their own peculiar features. It is only by accepting this theory that I can approach this present study on Homer's Thrinacia.

Some years ago I have shown how the sister island of the Maltese Archipelago, today called by two names, Għawdex and Gozo, could not have been Ogygia, the island of Calypso, and that this island could not have been placed in the far West of the Mediterranean, either.³ The arguments I brought then will be summarized at the end of this paper.⁴ Today, however, I am

¹ See, for example, A. Ballabriga (1998). R. Henig (1934), L. Edmunds (1997), 434–435, P. Fabre (1994–1995), P. Fabre (1998), 81–93, and A. Ballabriga (2001), 59–67, discuss the two theories, the veracity of Homer's account and the doubt it has recently fallen into of whether it actually happened. Several other authors, however, have talked about the importance of Homer for our understanding of Greek adventure and colonization in Italy and Sicily, for which see, for example, O. Murray (1988–1989), 1–17.

² B. Fenik (1974), 172–231.

³ H.C.R. Vella (1995a), 19–22; H.C.R. Vella (1995b), 10–18; H.C.R. (2002), 148–156.

⁴ W.S. Anderson (1958), 6, refers also to Pliny and Dio Cassius. He says that Strabo located Ogygia in the Atlantic Ocean. Hence, this contradicts Strabo himself when elsewhere he identifies it with Gaudos.

proposing that Odysseus did come to Malta, but to the bigger island as Thrinacia.

This paper intends to first put Thrinacia in the perspective of the itinerary of Odysseus. To enable us understand the geography of the Mediterranean and the reason why certain routes were adopted and others avoided, Odysseus' itinerary is here compared to that of Aeneas as reported in Vergil's *Aeneid* and, to a much lesser extent, to that of Jason and the Argonauts as given in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*. Following the discussion on the Island of Thrinacia, this paper will also take the opportunity of discussing the location of Ogygia, the landmark after Thrinacia, and the confusion that Classical and modern authors created when they transposed Melite and Ogygia from the Adriatic Sea, as indicated by Apollonius of Rhodes, to our waters at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea.

The adventures of Odysseus

The adventures of Odysseus may be classified under three different worlds: the world of fantasy, which was a world of punishment for Odysseus' men for having committed *hybris* in the land of the Thracians after leaving Troy; the world of idealism, that is, Phaeacia, where Odysseus, the sole survivor from the world of fantasy, is treated like a god in ideal circumstances; and the world of realism which he has to face on reaching Ithaca and his palace beset by his wife's suitors.⁵ This statement is

⁵ H.C.R. Vella (1991), 148–162. E. Abrahamson (1956), 313–316, divided these adventures into two: Calypso and the Phaeacians, making a world of superhumans, reported by the poet himself, and the world of suffering, narrated by Odysseus himself, where the narrator's curiosity meets various challenges, such as

important to appreciate the fact that in his journeys from Thrace to Phaeacia, Odysseus was not travelling in a world of reality where he could decide where to go and what route to take, but in a world of fantasy where gods and monsters, and ghosts from the Underworld had control of his destiny for nine whole years. This last point, however, should not lead us to think that geography meant nothing for Homer as it did for Eratosthenes and Aristarchus.⁶ Other modern authors would postulate that the itinerary of Odysseus was real only in the mind of colonists from Greece to Italy, a theory supported by later Greek authors like Timaeus, Lycophron and Strabo.⁷ Phillips would say that Odysseus' journey from Circe's island to the end could be re-traced geographically, but not the incidents prior to that.⁸ The whole purpose of this paper is, in fact, to identify the places Odysseus visits, Thrinacia in particular, and to form the correct picture of his itinerary, which still is not clear to scholars.

The *Odyssey's* world of fantasy is basically a real world, geographically speak-

those of the Sirens, Polyphemus and Scylla and Charybdis. Further on, the adventures of Odysseus, see K. Reinhardt (1996), 63–132.

⁶ E. Lévy (2004), 273. For the absence of real geography in Odysseus' account, see G.K. Gresseth (1970), 208, and E. Pellizer (2004–2005), 59–71. On the contrary, the reality of these countries visited by Odysseus in the world of fantasy has been confirmed by similar travels in the footsteps of Odysseus, of which we may mention E. Bradford (1963), T. Severin (1987), J. Cuise-nier (2001), and S. Huler (2008). On the identification of places visited by Odysseus around Sicily and elsewhere, see V.D. Pantazis (1996) and L. Palermo (1997), 95–124. On a symbolic interpretation of Odysseus' travels, see A. Moreau (1994), 25–66. On a comparison of Odysseus' navigation with those of the Myceneans and Greeks in the 8th century, see F. Rodríguez Adrados (1999), 57–68.

⁷ See, for example, E.D. Phillips (1953), 53–67.

⁸ E.D. Phillips (1953), 61.

ing, but immersed in a mythological one. The expression that “a world is mythological” is often taken to mean “an unreal world”. But mythology is reality camouflaged by an outer dress we do not always understand. Homer imagined that for his epic’s hero there were three worlds, as mentioned above, which co-existed, and that there were boundaries among them. These worlds were not created by Homer, but adopted by him from other sources like those of Apollonius of Rhodes’ *Argonautica*. Only the punishable people found themselves thrown into this world of fantasy, and they could be saved from it depending on their willingness to purify themselves of their sins. The similarity of stories in the *Odyssey* and the *Argonautica* can be compared to other non-Greek tales,⁹ but these tales, often mixed with real ones, were the medium used to recall some real and important events, as that of the return of heroes after a long military enterprise overseas.

In the *Odyssey*, only Odysseus, out of a fleet of twelve ships, makes it back to the world of reality, and that after nine years of great suffering. Cape Malea in the South of the Peloponnesus set him off into this world of fantasy, while Scherie, after Ogygia, served as transitional return to the world of reality in Ithaca. This world of fantasy was a world of the past, where gods and goddesses were met, where men still lived primitively, and where the Earth produced its fruit generously and without toil from man.¹⁰ To be in this world was not a gift of the gods at all, but a torment. I. Malkin has

referred to this technique of representing two worlds in one and the same work as “tales in different dimensions”.¹¹

The ancient Greeks considered their centre of their world of reality to be based at the *omphalos* within the shrine of Delphi, despite the fact that they established, in due course, various *omphaloi* in various locations out of cultural pursuits. The periphery of their world of reality excluded, in primitive times, the areas of central and western Mediterranean,¹² froth with uncivilized and dangerous folk, immortal and possessive goddesses and great storms at sea.¹³ It is in this geographical scenario that we have to fit the geographical reality of Odysseus’ mythological encounters in his *Apologoi*, that is, his report to King Alcinous and the Phaeacians.

In all, Odysseus passed by or visited the following places from Troy to Ithaca:

Book IX: The land of Cicones (39–61: 23 ll.), the Island of Malea (80: 1 l.), the Island of Cythera (81: 1 l.), the land of the Lotus-Eaters (82–104: 23 ll.), and the Cyclopes (105–566: 462 ll.). Total: 5 places;

Book X: The Island of Aeolia (1–27: 27 ll.), the Island of Ithaca (28–52: 25 ll.), Aeolia again (53–79: 27 ll.), the land of the Laestrygonians (80–132: 53 ll.), and the Island of Aeaea (133–574: 442 ll.). Total: 5 places;

Book XI: The Underworld (13–640: 628 ll.). Total: 1 place;

Book XII: Aeaea again (1–141: 141 ll.), the Island of the Sirens (165–200: 36 ll.), Scylla and Charybdis being the Straits of Messina (201–259: 59 ll.), the Island of

⁹ W. Hansen (1997), 459–460, who finds equivalent stories to several in Homer’s. See further D.L. Page (1972), 49–69, and R. Velardi (1983).

¹⁰ See also P. Nieto Hernández (2000), 346 and 355.

¹¹ I. Malkin (1998), 63.

¹² R. Dion (1969), 9–10.

¹³ See A. Ballabriga (1986), 11, and Ch.G. Brown (1996), 19–20.

Thrinacia (260–402: 143 ll.), Scylla and Charybdis again (429–446: 18 ll.), and the Island of Ogygia (447–453: 7 ll.). Total: 6 places;

Book I: Ogygia (11–21: 11 ll.). Total: one place;

Book V: Ogygia (43–268: 226 ll.), and the Island of the Phaeacians (451–493: 43 ll.). Total: 2 places;

Books VI–VIII: Phaeacia (1264 ll.). Total: 1 place;

Book IX: Phaeacia (1–38: 38 ll.). Total: 1 place; and

Book XIII: Phaeacia (1–77: 77 ll.). Total: 1 place.

Total number of places sighted or visited: 18 places.¹⁴

The adventures of Aeneas

In his *Aeneid*, Vergil makes his hero Aeneas pass by or visit several more places from Troy to Caieta in Italy:

Book III: Aeneadae in Thrace (13–68: 56 ll.), Delus (73–124: 52 ll.), Naxus (125: 1 l.), Donysa (125: 1 l.), Olearus (126: 1 l.), Paros (126: 1 l.), the Cyclades (127: 1 l.), Crete (130–191: 62 ll.), Strophades (209–269: 61 ll.), Zacynthus (270: 1 l.), Dulichium (271: 1 l.), Same (271: 1 l.), Neritus (271: 1 l.), Ithaca (272–273: 2 ll.), Leucate (274–290: 17 ll.), Phaeacia (291: 1 l.), Epirus (292: 1 l.), Buthrotum (293–505: 213 ll.), Ceraunia (506–520: 15 ll.), Italy (521–529: 9 ll.), Castrum Minervae (530–550: 21 ll.), Tarentum (551: 1 l.), Lacinium (552: 1 l.), Caulon (553: 1 l.), Scylaceum (553: 1 l.), Aetna (554: 1 l.), Charybdis (555–567: 13 ll.), Cyclops (568–686: 119 ll.), Panta-

gia (689: 1 l.), Megara (689: 1 l.), Thapsus (689: 1 l.), Plemyrus=Ortygia (692–697: 6 ll.), Helorus (698: 1 l.), Pachynus (699: 1 l.), Camerina (700–701: 2 ll.), Gela (702: 1 l.), Acragas (703–704: 2 ll.), Selinus (705: 1 l.), Lilybaeum (706: 1 l.), Drepanum (707–715: 9 ll.). Total: 40 places;

Book I: Drepanum (34–35: 2 ll.), Libya (157–417: 261 ll.), Carthage (418–756: 339 ll.). Total: 3 places;

Book IV: Carthage (1–583: 583 ll.). Total: 1 place;

Book V: Eryx (32–778: 747 ll.), the Island of Sirens (864–866: 3 ll.). Total: 2 places;

Book VI: Cumae (1–261: 261 ll.), the Underworld (262–898: 637 ll.), and Cumae again (899: 1 l.). Total: 3 places.

Total number of places sighted or visited: 48 places.¹⁵

Aeneas sailing by the coast

We ask the first question. If it is true that Odysseus' destination was Ithaca in the Ionian Sea,¹⁶ and that of Aeneas was western Italy, what need brought Aeneas into the Adriatic Sea? What need brought Odysseus to Aea (= Ustica) and to the Islands of the Sirens on the south-west coast of Italy? Indeed, what need of Charybdis to the two heroes? The second question: what is the basic difference of the journey of Aeneas from that of Odysseus?

The reason why Aeneas sailed into the Adriatic Sea instead of crossing from what is today Patras in Greece to Brindisi in Italy is that in the Bronze Age Period, that is, the heroic times he was writing about, the

¹⁴ More on the travels of Odysseus, see M. Christopoulos (1997), W. Gauer (1997), 27–76, M. Brémond (1998), 42–52 and J. Cuisenier (2003).

¹⁵ See also R.B. Lloyd (1957), 136–138.

¹⁶ Interpreted by some to be Leucas instead, for which see P. Janni (1984), 98.

ancient navigators generally sailed within the sight of land. Brundisium is not visible from Patrae, and the journey was northwards from the Strophades Islands off the coast of Messenia in the South, today called Strofahia, across the islands around Ithaca, being Zacynthus, Dulichium, south-east of Ithaca, Same, that is Cephallenia, south-west of Ithaca, and Neritus, up to the Ceraunian Mountains in Epirus bordering with Illyria.

From the coast of the Ceraunian Mountains, the Trojans indeed crossed to Italy, but before long Achates cried "Italia" (3.523). The part of Italy spotted by Achates, closest to Illyria, is Mount Garganus, today Monte Gargano, being a large and wide peninsula in Apulia. From here, the Trojans made a straight course to southern Calabria. The first place to visit was Castrum Minervae, south of Otranto, today called Castro.

From the Ionian Sea, the Trojans skirted the heel of Italy, sighting Tarentum, today Taranto, Lacinium Promontorium near Crotona, which we shall meet later in our discussion on Ogygia, today Capo delle Colonne, or Cape Nao, Caulon, today Castel Vetere, Scylaceum, today Squillace, and then to Rhegium to cross over to the coast of Sicily at its shortest course, namely, by (not into) Scylla and Charybdis, the Straits of Messina. From Rhegium, not only Sicily is near and visible, but also Aetna, and so the reference to it by Vergil before Aeneas comes close to Charybdis.

Following the escape from Charybdis, the Trojans halt briefly by the harbour of the land of the Cyclopes, where they met Achaemenides and from where they had to sail fast before the coming of the giants. This place was situated close to the Moun-

tain of Aetna, the effects of the eruptions of which Vergil describes both in physical terms and mythologically through the giant Enceladus underneath it.

From here, Vergil makes the Trojans visit no other place until they come to Drepanum, modern Trapani, after rounding the southern coast of Sicily. Still they sighted Pantagia, a small river in the eastern side of Sicily between Megara and Syracuse, now called Fiume di Porcari. Next, they sighted Thapsus, a peninsula and a city, today Magnisi, and Ortygia, the island off the coast of Syracuse.

Next, still on the eastern coast, came Helorus, a river, today called Atellaro, or Abisso, and by the angle of the south-eastern part of the island, they came to Pachynus, the promontory, not the town which today bears its name (Pachino), but further South, today called Capo Passaro. Rounding this part, close to the coast, the Trojans encountered no island, like Malta and Gozo, but continued to coast the southern coast, sighting Camerina which, Vergil says, was far off from Pachynus, and Gela and its river, Acragas, built on high and fortified, today called Agrigento or Girgenti, Selinus, with its palm trees, today called Selinunte, and, northwards by the western coast of Sicily, Lilybaeum with its shoals, today called Marsala, until they stopped at Drepanum, a town not far from Mount Eryx, quite close, in fact, to the Trojans' next imposed destination, that is Carthage.

Odysseys' Journey to Thrinacia

Unlike Aeneas, Odysseus was not sailing to fulfil his *fata* and was not helped to reach home; instead, he was compelled by uncontrollable forces imposed upon

his men having committed *hybris* against the Cicones. In Homer’s account, the first promontory to be sighted and rounded was that of Malea, at the south of Laconia. Following this, they came to Cythera, an island south-west of the promontory of Malea, and the course would be simply northwards into the Adriatic Sea, as in Aeneas’ account. Here, at the mouth of the Adriatic, an incident occurred which reminds us of that of St Paul when he left Crete to sail to Brundisium. On both occasions a north-easterly wind took hold of the travellers and shifted them off their course completely. Nine days were enough to send Odysseus and his fleet to the Lesser Syrtis, namely, to the *Lotophagi*, the Lotus-Eaters, thought to have lived on the Island of Meninx, today’s Jerba, fourteen days to bring St Paul to Malta. Herodotus (4.177–178) places the Lotus-Eaters on Meninx on the borders between Libya and Tunisia, among the Gindanes and the Machlyans. Strabo (17.3.17) refers to the altar of Odysseus on that island.¹⁷

From the Gulf of Gabes, Odysseus made a “straight” course to the eastern coast of Sicily. Homer mentions no islands in between, no Lampedusa, no Linosa, no Malta or Gozo, but the next port of call is simply the land of the Cyclopes.

Homer first describes the island by the harbour of the land of the Cyclopes as “neither close to it nor far off”. The location of this island could be either the island off Taormina or the island off Aci Trezza. Both are close to Aetna, and both come North of the next landfall, that is, Aeolia further South (see discussion below). Of the two

islands, the one by Taormina is wooded as described by Homer (*Od.* 9.116–118):

νῆσος ἔπειτα λάχεια παρέκ λιμένος
 τετάνυσται,
 γαίης Κυκλώπων οὔτε σχεδὸν οὔτ’
 ἀποτηλοῦ,
 ὑλήεσσ’ ...

This island, commonly referred to by scholars as Goat-Island, probably got closer to the mainland through silt which flowed into the harbour facing it. The island off Aci Trezza, supported as the site of the Cyclopes by Pliny (*Nat.* 3.89), is less possible, both for being unwooded and also for the fact that the opposite land did not offer so good a harbour. In any case, Euripides (*Cycl.* 18–22), Thucydides (6.2.1) and Vergil (*A.* 3.569–571, 677–679; 11.263) place the land of the Cyclopes near Etna.¹⁸

From the land of the Cyclopes, Odysseus sailed South to Aeolia near Syracuse, thought to be by some classical authors as today’s Lipari Islands,¹⁹ but not by Homer. If he did, how could Odysseus and his men have got there, unless they crossed Scylla and Charybdis?! Odysseus, indeed, crossed Scylla and Charybdis, but not at this time. Despite the location of Aeolia by Classical authors in the Tyrrhenian Sea, and by several modern authors,²⁰ one must still say it would be a mystery to understand how

¹⁸ See also L. Braccesi (1993), 11. V. Bérard (1929), places the Cyclopes in the vicinity of Puzzuoli, South of Naples; R. Carpenter (1946), 104, identifies Goat-Island with Jerba, and the Cyclopes, living in caves, with the troglodytes in Tunisia.

¹⁹ Thucydides 3.88.1, Ovid *M.* 14.223–232, Silius Italicus 14.233–234 and Pliny *Nat.* 3.8.92.

²⁰ See, for example, R. Dion (1972), 159, L. Braccesi (1993), 11, A. Ballabriga (2002), 153–154, and G. Cerri (2006), 25. R. Carpenter (1946), 105, instead, identifies Aeolia with Pantelleria.

¹⁷ R. Carpenter (1946), 103 places the Lotus-Eaters instead in the Gulf of Sidra, near Tripoli.

the Lipari island came here in the itinerary. One believes the solution is not that Homer made any mistake about the order of the places visited or sighted. On the contrary, this island could not have been other than Ortygia for reasons given below.

This island, although excluded by that name in Homer's account, is included by Vergil who, then, excluded Aeolia.

Verg. *A.* 3.692–694:

Sicanio praetenta sinu iacet **insula** contra
Plemyrium undosum; nomen dixere
prios

Ortygiam. ...

It should be remembered here that there were two Ortygias in the ancient past – the island of Delos near Syra and that off the coast of Syracuse, also called Syra or Syrie.²¹ Also, there were “two floating islands”, namely, the same island of Delos, and Aeolia. Hence, the common Ortygia is to be identified with the common “floating island”.

Hom. *Od.* 10.1-3: (referring to Aeolia)

Αἰολίην δ' ἐς νῆσον ἀφικόμεθ'
ἔνθα δ' ἔναιεν
Αἴολος Ἴπποτάδης, φίλος
ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν,
πλωτῆ ἐνὶ νήσῳ' ...

Call. *H.* 4.51–54: (referring to Delos)

ἦνίκα δ' Ἀπόλλωνι γενέθλιον οὐδας
ὑπέσχεες,
τοῦτό τοι ἀντημοιβὸν ἀλίπλοοι
οὔνομ' ἔθεντο,
οὔνεκεν οὐκέτ' ἄδηλος ἐπέπλεες,
ἀλλ' ἐνὶ πόντου
κύμασιν Αἰγαίοιο ποδῶν ἐνεθήκαο
ρίζας.

²¹ See also E.D. Phillips (1953), 54 who supports the view that Odysseus may have visited Syracusan Ortygia, supported by its mention by Hesiod.

Furthermore, the long fragment from the lost epic called *Catalogue of Women* appropriately includes Ortygia in the list of places in eastern Sicily, namely, Aetna, Ortygia and the Land of the Laestrygonians (*Fr. Hes.* 150.25–26). This citation shows that both the author of the *Catalogue of Women* and Homer had as a common source the knowledge of these three localities close to each other, that is, in eastern Sicily (and not elsewhere), and that Homer, at least, used them for his hero's locations within Odysseus' world of fantasy. Also, common to the three mentioned localities is the topic of death, death caused by the denial of guest-friendship otherwise expected in the world of reality. Furthermore, Aeolia, i. e. Syracusan Ortygia, not only denied the winds lost by Odysseus' men, which would take them to Ithaca, but even possessed Arethusa, the river which, like Eridanus, was associated with death because it was believed to have flown underground.²²

After the Island of Aeolia, they came to the land of the Laestrygonians, close to Leontini.²³ This land, contrary to remarks made by some Roman authors such as

²² A. Ballabriga (1986), 23.

²³ See also L. Braccisi (1993), 11. R. Carpenter (1946), 107, however, identifies the harbour of the Laestrygonians with Bonifacio in southern Corsica. See also S. Huler (2008), 141–154. Carpenter adds that beyond the land of the Laestrygonians one cannot identify the rest of the landfalls of Odysseus (108–109). R. Dion (1969), 59, sees a connection between the inhospitable Cyclopes and Laestrygonians and the Black Sea peoples. Formerly called “*Axine*”, “the inhospitable”, the Black Sea came to be called “*Euxine*”, its opposite, to delete connotations with barbarism. He thinks that the connection between the Sicilian cannibals and the Black Sea region came to Homer through the recitations of the Ionians of Mlet (Melite) who travelled thither from the Black Sea (cf. Jason and the Argonauts) through northern rivers.

Cicero (*Att.* 2.13.2) and Horace (*C.* 3.17.1–7), could not have been in Latium, in the region around Formiae, which Pliny also called Hormiae, today Mola di Gaeta, in Latium bordering with Campania (*Nat.* 3.5.59),²⁴ but in Sicily, since, once again, from the Island of Aeolia to here the Achaeans did not cross Scylla and Charybdis, but pursued on their journey round the southern coast of Sicily.

Thucydides, however, (6.2.1) places both Cyclopes and Laestrygonians in Sicily, while Silius Italicus even identifies their land with Leontini in Sicily (14.125–126). Elsewhere, the same Pliny mentions the Laestrygonians together with the Cyclopes as specimens of savage people in the central region of the world, i. e. Sicily, in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea (*Nat.* 7.1.9); still more clearly, in another passage, he says that inlands of the eastern coast of Sicily are the Laestrygonian Plains (*Nat.* 3.8.89). Homer refers to the long days which these Laestrygonians enjoyed (*Od.* 10. 86). This does not necessitate the localization of these people among Nordic peoples,²⁵ but has to be explained by the Saturnian aspect of luxurious life, a life still primitive and unspoilt by man, a life which knows of little darkness²⁶ and

²⁴ F. Mosimo (2002), 5 places the Laestrygonians in Calabria Mediana and describes them as urbanized cannibals, in contrast to the Cyclopes, primitive cannibals in Sicily, both, according to him, colonized by the Chalcidians. For this reason, Mosino calls the *Odyssey* “*Odissea Calcidese*” and Homer “*Pseudo-Omero*”.

²⁵ A. Thornton (1970), 21, and D. Frame (1978), 62. See also E. Vermeule (1979), 134 who refers to the Hyperboreans in the North, people who never grew old. Further on Homeric sites in the North, see F. Vinci (1998).

²⁶ And so not related to the next landfall, Aea, where Circe resided. But see A. Marinatos (2001), 396–397.

so is bountiful, and whose place is guarded by monsters here described as cannibals and savages. D. Frame relates the description of the Laestrygonian shepherds calling each other to the phrase Hesiod uses when he says “night and day passing near greet one another as they cross the great bronze threshold” (... ὄθι Νύξ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἄσσον ἰοῦσαι / ἀλλήλας προσέειπον ἀμειβόμεναι μέγαν οὐδὸν / χάλκεον’) (*Hes. Th.* 748–750).²⁷

Here occurred the greatest disaster for Odysseus, for he lost eleven of his fleet of twelve ships which were stoned by these giants. Following the land of the Laestrygonians came Aeaea, i. e. the island of Ustica. To reach this island without crossing Scylla and Charybdis, Odysseus’ boat had to round the southern coast of Sicily, as Aeneas did, and reach it from Lilybaeum.

Contrary to what some Classical authors tell us that Aeaea was at Circeium in Latium, today Monte Circello (*Hesiod Th.* 1011–1016, *Strabo* 5.3.6, *Cicero N.d.* 3.19.48, and *Pliny Nat.* 3.5.57),²⁸ Homer (*Od.* 10.195) tells us that the island was surrounded “by the boundless sea like a wreath” (... τὴν πέρι πόντος ἀπείριτος ἐστεφάνωται) and, therefore, unlike Circeium, distant from the mainland, while the geographer Mela says that Aeaea was in the Sicilian Channel, around Sicily.

Mela 2.7.171–174:

Circa Siciliam in Siculo freto est Aeae, quam Calypso habitasse dicitur; Africam versus Gaulos, Melita, Cossura.

Despite his mistake of Calypso for Circe as a resident of this island, Mela was probably the only correct Classical author

²⁷ D. Frame (1978), 62.

²⁸ See also L. Braccisi (1993), 11.

to place Aeaea in the vicinity of Sicily rather than of Latium. Ustica, in fact, is close to the Liparean Islands by the Sicilian Channel. The identification of Ustica with Aeaea fits very well in Odysseus' journey round Sicily. It comes in between the next two landfalls, the Underworld and the Islands of the Sirens on the south-west coast of Campania.

Circe was the daughter of Helios, commonly assumed to belong to the eastern world, both because of Aurora in the East, and because of the placement of Aetes, her brother, in Colchis by the river Phasis by Apollonius of Rhodes in his *Argonautica*. For this reason, her island, as opposed to that of Calypso, was also assumed to have existed in the extreme East.²⁹ Other authors said the Circe's island had an eastern and a western aspects, for which reason it has been located both in the East and the West.³⁰ Still, another author said that her island was situated in the North-East, presumably North because of the reference to light, and East because of the reference to Circe being daughter of Helios.³¹ But not only the Romans themselves placed Aeaea away from their western coast, as said above, but even Homer here and Hesiod (*Th.* 1011–1016) placed it North of the Underworld, i. e. in the Tyrrhenian Sea (see below). For this reason, one can be correct to say that Circe's island was situated at the edge of the world, near the entrance of the Underworld.³² From there, she ushered Odysseus and his men to the Underworld

and expected him back. This return journey may be present in the symbolism of Circe's name (Κίρκος), meaning "ring".³³

There is no reason whatsoever to assume that Circe lived in the East, if we accept the fact that Medea, her niece, lived at Iolcus and, later, at Corinth and Athens. The reference to the light all day on the island of Aeaea (*Od.* 10.190–192; 12.3–4), similar to the situation on the Land of the Laestrygonians, is not to be explained by some fabulous reminiscence of Circe's Aeaea from primitive Aea in the East,³⁴ nor on some mystical convergence of East and West,³⁵ or of North and South,³⁶ nor on latitudinal information, but again on the mythological expression of fertility and immortality in primitive times.³⁷

Odysseus never said to Circe he wished to seek counsel from the soul of Teiresias in the Underworld,³⁸ but only that he wished to get back home (*Od.* 10.488–492). Circe's reply was that he first had to make a voyage to the Underworld to meet Teiresias, and then continue on his journey back home. Circe's directions to him on his journey to the Underworld help us to locate the place not on the western coast of Italy by Lake Avernus in Cumae, as Vergil indicated (*A.* 6.2),³⁹ nor on the western coast of

²⁹ A. Ballabriga (1986), 91, and E. Lévy (2004), 273. For an opposite view, see G. Arrighetti (1975), 172–174.

³⁰ D. Frame (1978), 47.

³¹ A. Thornton (1970), 21.

³² N. Marinatos (1995), 133.

³³ D. Frame (1978), 50. Further on the stay of Odysseus with Circe, see C. Segal (1968), 419–442, G. Schoenbeck (1980), 40–53, and Y.T. Nishimura (1997), 40–49.

³⁴ G. Arrighetti (1975), 170, and A. Ballabriga (1986), 132.

³⁵ C. Cousin (2002), 30.

³⁶ N. Marinatos (2001), 399.

³⁷ This point of placing Circe's island in the East or West, or both, has puzzled D. Frame (1978), Ch.3, and A. Ballabriga (1986), 129 et passim.

³⁸ R. Brillaint (1995), 166.

³⁹ See also V. Bérard (1929), E.D. Phillips (1953), 60 (quoting Strabo 5.4.5), L. Braccesi (1993), 11, and (1993–1994), 193, and L. Antonelli (1995), 205–207,

Greece by the Island of Leucas in the Ambracian Gulf and the mouth of the river Acheron (Her. 8.47 and Thuc. 1.46.4),⁴⁰ nor by the British Isles,⁴¹ nor in the North,⁴² nor next to the Cimmerians in the Crimea (Her. 4.11–12), still nomadic in those times (to solve this anachronistic problem, the name of Cimmerians was interpreted by ancient authors as Cerberians, Cheimerians and Cemmerians),⁴³ but in the South on the North coast of Africa.⁴⁴ Circe said that a North wind was to blow the ship to the stream of Oceanus (Hom. *Od.* 10.507), and not the opposite, South to North.⁴⁵ This North wind, if blown from Monte Circeo in Latium, would not have brought Odysseus to Lake Avernus, an alternative site for the Underworld, South-East of Latium instead, as suggested by some,⁴⁶ but to northern Sicily! Also, a journey from Monte Circeo to Cumae would not have taken Odysseus one whole day, but much less than that. This confirms the identification of Aeaea with Ustica, being North of North Africa, whereas Circeium is North of Sicily. Homer, according to Pausanias

(1.17.5), was inspired by the locality in the Acheron valley of Thesprotia, where an oracle of the dead existed and where there was a city called Cheimerion and rivers called Pyriphlegeton and Cocytus, and the transposed locality and name of the city confused with the Cimmerians to the region of the Hesperides, South of Aeaea.⁴⁷ Since Odysseus was sailing North-North-East from the Underworld, the land of darkness, Homer represents Circe's island as the land of the "risings of the Sun" ... καὶ ἀντολαὶ Ἡελίοιο, (*Od.* 12.1–4), the place where the sun ushers its light from.⁴⁸ This statement should not locate the island in the East, for every place on earth, excluding the arctic parts in their seasons, face the East!

Odysseus was, therefore, to cross this stream of Oceanus and beach his ship by the coast where Pyriphlegeton and Cocytus flow into Acheron, precisely by the Straits of Gibraltar, on the African Coast, close to a place called Hesperides where mythology combines typical elements connected with death and, therefore, the Underworld, like the garden, the pomegranates, the river, the serpent, and night.

Here in the Underworld, which in Odysseus' account was not quite "under" as in Aeneas' account, but by its entrance, Odysseus called out the spirits by pouring blood, and in so doing he could receive the prophet Teiresias' message of how to reach Ithaca. This message introduces us to the Island of Thrinacia, for Teiresias warned Odysseus to avoid it if he want-

supported by Lycophron, *Alexandra* 670ff. Antonelli (212–213), however, refers to the *Frogs* of Aristophanes (470–475), where Tartessus (Tarshish) on the southern coast of Spain is referred to in connection with the Underworld.

⁴⁰ G.L. Huxley (1958), 245–248, E. Janssens (1961), 381–394, A. Ballabriga (1986), 44, 54, and L. Braccisi and B. Rossignoli (1999), 176.

⁴¹ R. Hennig (1934).

⁴² A. Thornton (1970), 21.

⁴³ A. Ballabriga (1986), 132, says that the Cimmerians by the entrance of the Underworld were reminiscent of those of the same name at the Crimea in the same way as Aeaea was of Aea. Further on the Cimmerians at the entrance of the Underworld, see G.B. Lanfranchi (2001–2002), 75–112.

⁴⁴ L.G. Pocock (1959), who specifies the vicinity of Gibraltar.

⁴⁵ D. Frame (1978), 62.

⁴⁶ For example, E.D. Phillips (1953), 62.

⁴⁷ Huxley, G.L. (1958), 245–247, and O. Tsagarakis (1995), 126. G. Cerri (2006), 26, places them also at the Flagraean Fields near Cumae, where he also located the Underworld, quoting Strabo 5.4.5.

⁴⁸ See also D. Frame (1978), 48.

ed to reach Ithaca safely. In fact, one can say that there were two important things Teiresias prophesized to Odysseus: the danger Thrinacia imposed, and the cult of Poseidon he would introduce on his return home in a place where the sea is unknown. For that reason, his oar would be called “ἀθηρηλοῖγόν” (*Od.* 11.128), that is, a “winnowing-shovel”.⁴⁹ Thus, both prophecies are interrelated in the etymology of Thrinacia (see below).⁵⁰

The Way to Thrinacia

After returning to Aea, Odysseus then passed by the Islands of the Sirens which, as we said above, are situated by the south-west coast of Campania, on three small islands between Amalfi and Capri, now called Galli, still surrounded by sea-meadows⁵¹ on his journey South across the Straits of Messina, known to Thucydides also as Scylla and Charybdis (4.24.5).⁵² G. Pugliese Carratelli refers also to the Lucanian Poseidonion and to Terina as places where the Sirens were venerated in Classical times. According to this writer, this veneration came to Italy from the Syro-Anatolian world via Rhodes and Crete.⁵³ L.B. Puglia Doria and L. Braccesi place the Sirens near Pithecusa and Cuma in the Gulf of Naples or by Pelorus.⁵⁴

These Sirens, children of Phorcys (*Soph. Fr.* 777), were represented in art as similar to Sphinxes, Harpies, Gorgons,

Graeae, and Dreams. They were female and two in number,⁵⁵ situated on an island, in a flowery meadow. It has been observed that many of the landfalls of Odysseus occurred on islands, while meadows reappear on various incidents, such as Calypso's.⁵⁶

By Scylla and Charybdis, Odysseus encountered the near-destruction of his boat and the loss of some of his men through both Scylla and Charybdis. These straits, like the Symplegades at the western end of the Black Sea, were guarded by these monsters. Some monsters, generally feminine and wise creatures, like the dragon by the Hesperides and Colchis, and the Sphinx in Egypt and Thebes, served the purpose of guardians, here, of a passage into a prohibited territory, characterized by immortality (Calypso) and Saturnian Age (Land of the Cyclopes) or both (Thrinacia).⁵⁷

From Scylla and Charybdis onwards, the journey took Odysseus and his men straight to Thrinacia,⁵⁸ in the words of R. Friedrich, “a significant turning-point” in the travels of Odysseus, “hence its prominence in the poem”.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ According to Lycophron, *Alexandra*, 712–716, these were three, and they committed suicide (hence the three islands) when Odysseus passed unharmed. More on the Sirens, see Ch. Picard (1938), 144–145, and H. Gropengiesser (1977), 582–610.

⁵⁶ G.K. Gresseth (1970), 208–209 and 217. Gresseth believes there is no real geography for the Sirens, but only mythology.

⁵⁷ See also A. Ballabriga (1986), 95, L. Braccesi (1993), 11, and (1993–1994), 193, and N. Marinatos (2001), 406.

⁵⁸ For R. Carpenter (1946), 110, Thrinacia exists only in the imagination of Homer. L. Braccesi (1993–1994), 193–194, places it in between Zancle and Naxos on the eastern coast of Sicily; still, the same L. Braccesi and B. Rossignoli (1999), 177, quote Herodotus (9.93.1) in his reference to a shepherd of a flock dedicated to the Sun-God at Apollonia in Illyria.

⁵⁹ R. Friedrich (1987), 394.

⁴⁹ S.D. Olson (1997), 7–8.

⁵⁰ Further on *Odyssey* XI, see O Tsagarakis (2000).

⁵¹ J.R.T. Pollard (1952), 63, and E.D. Phillips (1953), 63.

⁵² E.D. Phillips (1953), 63.

⁵³ G. Pugliese Carratelli (1952), 420.

⁵⁴ L.B. Puglia Doria (1987), 88, and L. Braccesi (1993), 11, and (1993–1994), 193.

In his tale to King Alcinous, Odysseus said that, after Scylla and Charybdis, they soon came to the perfect island of the god; there were the fine cattle and sturdy flocks of Helius, son of Hyperion (*Od.* 12.260–263):⁶⁰

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πέτρας φύγομεν δεινὴν τε
 Χάρυβδιν
 Σκύλλην τ', αὐτίκ' ἔπειτα θεοῦ ἔς
 ἀμύμονα νῆσον
 ἰκόμεθ' ἔνθα δ' ἔσαν καλαὶ βόες
 εὐρυμέτωποι,
 πολλὰ δὲ ἴφια μῆλ' Ὑπερίονος
 Ἑλίου.

Later on, Eurylochus, one of Odysseus' comrades, was to call this place “a deserted island”, ἐν νήσῳ ἐρήμῃ (*Od.* 12.351), a land where nobody lives in. Now in the Underworld (*Od.* 11.107), Teiresias assimilated this island with the name of Thrinacia; so did Circe before Odysseus resumed his voyage from Aeaea to the Islands of the Sirens (*Od.* 12.127).

Death and Thrinacia

Circe told him that this island was the home of seven herds of cattle and many flocks of sheep, fifty in each. In Vedic Sanskrit, cattle were associated with the phenomenon of sunrise.⁶¹ These did not breed or die, and their shepherds were the nymphs Phaethusa and Lampetia, children of Helius and Neaera:

Hom. *Od.* 12.127–133:

Θρινακίην δ' ἔς νῆσον ἀφίξειαι ἔνθα
 δὲ πολλὰι
 βόσκοντ' Ἑλίου βόες καὶ ἴφια
 μῆλα,

⁶⁰ Further on this subject, see J. McInerney (2010).

⁶¹ D. Frame (1978), 44.

ἔπτα βοῶν ἀγέλαι, τόσα δ' οἴων πῶεα
 καλά,
 πεντήκοντα δ' ἕκαστα. γόνος δ' οὐ
 γίγνεται αὐτῶν,
 οὐδέ ποτε φθινύθουσι. θεαὶ δ'
 ἐπιποιμένες εἰσίν,
 νύμφαι ἐυπλόκαμοι, **Φαέθουσά τε**
Λαμπετίη τε,
 ἃς τέκεν Ἑλίῳ Ὑπερίονι δια
Νεαίρα.

Elsewhere we find that Phaethusa, Lampetia, Phoebe and Phaethon were children of Helius and Clymene, but in fact both Neaera and Clymene were one and the same nymph, a daughter of Oceanus:

Verg. *G.* 4.341–346:

Clioque et Beroe soror, **Oceanitides**
 ambae,
 ambae auro, pictis incinctae pellibus
 ambae,
 atque Ephyre atque Opis et Asia Deiopea
 et tandem positus velox Arethusa sagittis.
inter quas curam Clymene narrabat
 inanem
 Volcani Martisque dolos et dulcia furta.

The three sisters wept so bitterly for the death of their brother Phaethon by the banks of the river Eridanus that the gods showed compassion to them by changing them into poplar-trees and their tears into amber (*Ov. M.* 2.319–366). This river was thought to be the river Po because amber was found at its mouth. Part of this river flows underground for two miles, near its source. Both this fact of flowing underground and that of another river of the same name (Eridanus) flowing North of Athens gave rise to the belief that this river sprang from the Underworld. For this reason, Thrinacia also came to be connected with Eridanus.⁶² An anonymous poet of the 12th

⁶² A. Ballabriga (1986), 145–146.

century reported the myth of Helios taking oath by the river Styx just before Phaethon fell into this river Eridanus.⁶³

Tristia ex Melitogaudio ff.53.14, 53v.11–13:

τὴν **Στύγ'** ὀμνύων ᾧ δέ πῶς
 πεφυκέναι,
 ὀίπτουσιν ἵπποι δυστυχή
 κεκαυμένον,
 κλίνοντα ὄυμην ἡνίων πρὸς τὴν
 Δύσιν
 ὀείθοις ποταμοῦ **Ἡοιδανοῦ**
 βάρθεως.

Here, the connection of Styx with Eridanus confirms the connexion of the Island of Helios, Thrinacia, with Death. D. Frame compares the cattle of Helios with that of Geryon. Hesiod (*Th.* 294) refers to Geryon's "gloomy stable", σταθμῶ ἐν ἡερόεντι The Homeric *Hymn to Pythian Apollo* (409–413) refers this island to Cape Taenarus in the southern Peloponnesus, supposed to contain a cave that led to the Underworld.⁶⁴ There Heracles is thought to have found his way into the Underworld to carry off Cerberus.⁶⁵

In the words of N. Marinatos, "the island of Helios has a symmetrical spatial relationship to Hades".⁶⁶ Oceanus flowed close to the entrance of the Underworld. Hence, Oceanus, Neaera, his daughter, Styx in the Underworld and the underground Eridanus, the death of Phaethon, and the death of the three sisters, or their eternal transformation into poplar-trees

are here remembered through the island of Thrinacia, the cause of the death of all the comrades of Odysseus. Only he, the hero, survived from this island in the subsequent storm that engulfed the rest for disobeying the instructions of both Teiresias and Circe as reported to them by Odysseus.

Thrinacia was a sacred island dedicated to Helios, son of the Titan god Hyperion, the latter son of Uranus and Ge, that is, Heaven and Mother-Earth. Hyperion was the husband of his sister Theia,⁶⁷ and apart from Helios, he also had as children Selene and Eos, i. e. Sun, Moon and Dawn. The veneration of Helios, a cousin of Zeus, went back to the earliest sources of Greek religion and mythology, and so the island was in its primitive state, uninhabited except by immortal animals and the two nymphs before Phaethon died. Only Odysseus penetrated into the heart of this island, as only Aeneas penetrated into the depths of the Underworld.

Originally, this group of Achaeans were told by both Teiresias and Circe not even to land on this island. But Odysseus' comrades were tired of rowing southwards from Scylla and Charybdis for a whole day. It was already night when they reached it, and Eurylochus challenged Odysseus in making an exception to what he was told, and allowed them to spend the night by the ship, make supper from their own provisions they got from Circe,⁶⁸ and sail on in the morning, without touching the cattle. This point explains that the word "soon" (αὐτίκ'), reported by Odysseus himself to

⁶³ J. Busuttill, S. Fiorini and H.C.R. Vella (2010), 104-105, 309. For the connexion of Styx with oath-taking, see Hesiod, *Th.* 400.

⁶⁴ D. Frame (1978), 46–47.

⁶⁵ O. Tsagarakis (1995), 126.

⁶⁶ N. Marinatos (2001), 401.

⁶⁷ The twelve Titan gods were: Hyperion, Theia, Oceanus, Tethys, Coeus, Phoebe, Crius, Iapetus, Cronus, Rhea, Themis, and Mnemosyne.

⁶⁸ And not to eat from the cattle on the island, as may be surmised in J.-P. Vernant (1979), 164.

Alcinous above (*Od.* 12.261), could not mean that they reached this island from the Straits of Messina in a few hours. It was instead a day's journey. No other island or land is mentioned on the way until they "soon" came to this island.

This island had a hollow harbour, inside which there was a spring of sweet water. By this island they first moored the ship, but later, when a storm arose in the night with a fierce South wind, they dragged the ship up the coast by dawn. This South wind blew for a whole month, and so they were entrapped on this island. They could not possibly sail on without falling into the danger of being carried back to Scylla and Charybdis. After a month there, when their provisions came to an end, Odysseus went alone through the island and, in a sheltered place, ritually washed his hands and prayed to the gods in Olympus to help them with an end of the storm and with a favourable wind to enable them sail on. Instead, Odysseus was given the gift of sleep! In a similar episode, Evenus was asleep, too, when the beasts of Helios were destroyed (*Her.* 9.93).⁶⁹ It was during this sleep that Odysseus' comrades were tempted to slay Helios' cattle, just as previously it was during another sleep of the same Odysseus when they opened Aeolus' bag of winds. Instead of barley, which had run out, with which they ritually sprinkled the victim before roasting it, they now plucked and used leaves from an oak-tree; similarly, their wine ran out, and so they made a libation of water instead. Then followed the forbidden slaughter of the cattle. Later on, Odysseus was to hear from Calypso in Ogygia, who had heard this

story then from Hermes (*Od.* 12.389–390), of the anger Helios raised in Olympus at Zeus and the immortals for allowing this blasphemous act.

Odysseus related that they could only sail on the seventh day after this event, i. e. after one month and seven days, when the fierce winds stopped blowing. Here follows the longest description of a departure sacrifice in Homer⁷⁰, which, like that after the escape from the Cyclops, was not accepted by Zeus. Soon after they left Thrinacia, Odysseus' ship entered into a storm caused by the West Wind and lost its mast, while Zeus sent his thunderbolt to punish all who had feasted on Helios' cattle, except for Odysseus who did not (*Od.* 12.397–398). The ship was destroyed except for the heel, to which Odysseus, sole survivor, tied up the mast with a rope, and floated on it. Following the West wind next came the South wind which drove Odysseus back northwards exactly to Scylla and Charybdis. This point is crucial for our appreciation of Homer's detailed references to geographical matters, for to go to Messina from Malta, one has first to sail East and then North! Having survived also from this place, Odysseus was driven for nine days and on the tenth came to the Island of Ogygia.

The name of Thrinacia

This name, spelt with the initial θ and without a ρ before the second ι , has been confused with Trinacria, spelt with the initial τ and with a ρ before the second ι , the Island

⁷⁰ See E.S. Greene (1995), 225 who considers this embarkation sacrifice as the last in a series of six events which form a typical embarkation scene in Homer. Ten embarkation scenes involve Odysseus, two Telemachus, one Penelope's suitors, one Nestor, and one Menelaus.

⁶⁹ D. Frame (1978), 44.

of Sicily called so from its three promontories at its three corners, a word made up of two Greek roots, τρεῖς and ἄκραι. Homer never mentions by name the Island of Sicily in the whole journey of Odysseus,⁷¹ and the only landfalls in Sicily were those of Hypereie, the land of the Cyclopes near Aetna, the land of the Laestrygonians near Leontini, and the “floating island” near Syracuse. If Thrinacia were Sicily, it would not have been referred to as a “deserted island” by Eurylochus. Also, Sicily was not dedicated to Helius, but only this “deserted island” was. Furthermore, the root of Thrinacia derived from θρίναξ, meaning “a trident or a three-pronged fork used to stir grain”,⁷² or simply “triple”, i. e. θρίνακ, is different from those which make up Trinacria, i. e. τρεῖς and ἄκραι. This confusion was made in ancient times, but after Homer. The name of Τρινακρία, when referred to Sicily, was older than Σικανία according to Thucydides (6.2), and older than Θρινακία according to Strabo (6.2.1). Here, it must be said that Strabo confused Τρινακρία with Θρινακία which, according to him, meant Sicily. This confusion subsists even in modern times.⁷³ The confusion arises from the fact that the two letters τ and θ in Greek are related. In fact, we come across both the form of θρίναξ and that of τρίναξ, meaning the same thing. Similarly are related the two letters κ and χ. Thus, we come across both the form of Τριναχία and that of Θρινακία, both

meaning “triple”, an epithet given to the Moon-goddess (*Papyrus Magica* 1.2525 and 2822).⁷⁴ This epithet is explained by the phenomenon of the three phases of the moon, which are the first quarter, full moon, and the last quarter.

This last reference from the *Papyrus Magica* becomes significant for our study for three important things.

Θρινακία is a name given to both the island and to the Moon-Goddess. Helius, Selene, the Moon-Goddess, and Eos are all children of gods Hyperion and Theia and grandchildren of Uranus and Ge. All three are illuminations in the sky. At the same time, all three pass through death: everyday they sink to their temporary death in the West. Death, too, was the worry of Odysseus for his comrades, as he heard from the land of the Dead itself.⁷⁵

Secondly, this island is characterized by the element of immortality. The Moon-Goddess was immortal, despite the daily or monthly aspects of her temporary death. The cattle and sheep on Thrinacia never died, and they did not have to breed to sustain their permanent existence.⁷⁶ They did not increase in number, nor did they decrease, and they were sacred. The death caused to any of them meant death to the intruder. Odysseus was the only one in his group who neither killed an animal on the island nor ate from the roasted ones. He was the hero who alone was deemed worthy to survive in the subsequent disaster at sea.

⁷¹ He could not have called it “Thrinacie” as suggested by P. Chantraine (1968), s.v. “Thrinax”.

⁷² S.D. Olson (1997), 8 comments on the importance Teiresias gives to the island of Thrinacia whose root, Thrinax, means much the same as ἀθηρηλογοῦν mentioned above.

⁷³ See, for example, A. Ballabriga (1986), 24 and 143.

⁷⁴ See Liddle & Scott s.v. Τρινακρία.

⁷⁵ On the notion of Death in Homer, also with reference to female figures, see O. Tsagarakis (1980), 232, and J.-P. Vernant (1986), 54–64.

⁷⁶ On Helius, the owner of sacred cattle and sheep, see also Herodotus 9.92–95.

Thirdly, Thrinacia's animals are shepherded by the nymphs Lampetia and Phaethusa. It is significant that Homer only mentions two of three sisters, leaving out Phoebe, another name for the Moon-Goddess. These nymphs were not strictly Oceanids, since they were not children of Oceanus, but his grandchildren through their mother Clymene.

Both the name of Thrinacia and the divinities found on it, being a sacred and deserted island, make one pause and reflect on the islands of Malta, Gozo, and Comino. Once upon a time, these three islands were sacred. At least two millennia before Odysseus' times, they were already the habitations of a supreme female divinity, a mother-goddess of fertility and with a deep association with death. The heavenly illuminations were part of the orientation of their huge temples found both in Malta and Gozo, and the burials attested both in the temples at the upper level and in the world-unique hypogeum confirm their connection with the Dead. Archaeologists also tell us that the population of the early stone-age period appears to have been one day wiped out. Nobody can tell exactly what happened, but it was something mysterious, as mysterious was the death of Odysseus' comrades. The elimination of man from the land of the sacred recalls the story of the first men on earth and the beginning of their sufferings as a result of their disobedience to the laws of God.

The fact that Helios had three daughters, equivalent to the three islands of Malta, Gozo, and Comino, is also significant. One would not hesitate to guess what their original names were, that is, Lampetia, Phaethusa and Phoebe. By time, these

names gave way to others, but not completely. The bigger island is still called after one of the nymphs, Μελίτη, one of the 50 daughters of Nereus and Doris. While Nereus was the son of Pontus and Gaea *alias* Ge, Doris herself, like Clymene, wife of Helios, was the daughter of Oceanus. So both Clymene and Doris were Oceanids, and Lampetia, Phaethusa, and Phoebe, children of Clymene and Helios, on the one side, and Melite, Thetis and 48 others, children of Doris and Nereus, on the other side, were grandchildren of the same Oceanus. So whether Malta was called Lampetia, Phaethusa, Phoebe or Melite, the name of a nymph signifies a granddaughter of Oceanus.

We also ponder on the figure of 50 making up the number both of the children of Nereus and Doris, called Nereides, and of the groups of 50 each making up the sheep on Thrinacia; 50 was a sacred number in ancient times. It was made up of $(7 \times 7) + 1$. 7 was the quarter of what the ancients considered to be the length of the month by their moon-goddess (28). 7×7 was the expression for a very long period of time counting by the sacred number. The additional number (+ 1) was a common expression in ancient times and in Homer. Often Homer tells us that something happened for nine days, and on the tenth came the arrival or the event. Thus, Odysseus, on leaving Thrinacia, flowed for nine such days, and on the tenth he arrived at Ogygia (*Od.* 12.447–448). Earlier on, the boat of Odysseus sailed for nine days from Aeolia to Ithaca, and on the tenth his comrades opened the bag of winds (*Od.* 10.28–29). This additional number can come after other total numbers of days or years when

the Achaeans sailed from Thrinacia on the seventh day after waiting for six days (*Od.* 12.397–399).⁷⁷

The text quoted above, referring to the island of Thrinacia, mentions two other numbers related to the moon, namely, 28, the traditional reckoning of the total number of days that make a lunar month, as just said, and 7, its quarter. For a full month, said Odysseus to Alcinous, the South wind blew and prevented them from sailing, and for that month Circe had provided them with all the provisions they needed to survive, intentionally to reach Ithaca (*Od.* 12.325). Odysseus said that the wind did not subside until the seventh day after the mentioned month, which means that for six days they feasted on the cattle of god Helius, and on the seventh the wind stopped and they sailed off to their final disaster (*Od.* 12.399).

Death and the Moon-Goddess

Earlier on, we have said that the name of Thrinacia is also an epithet used for the Moon-goddess. Now the Moon-goddess received various names in Greek, such as Selene and Phoebe. Selene was the sister of Helius and, therefore, aunt of Phoebe. Later on, even Artemis was to receive that

name as an epithet, as her twin-brother was to receive that of Phoebus. Artemis was the daughter of Zeus and Leto, the daughter of Coeus and Phoebe, brother and sister, husband and wife, two of the twelve Titan gods, children of Uranus and Ge. This means that Artemis was a second cousin of Phaethon, Phaethusa, Lampetia and Phoebe. This last Phoebe, the nymph Homer does not mention, was Thrinacia herself, the Moon-Goddess venerated in this archipelago. Her brother and sisters, too, had names related to the heavenly luminaries. Phaethon means “light-bearing”; Phaethusa is the female version of Phaethon, therefore, referring to the Moon-Goddess, while Lampetia means “the shining one”, which name was also used as an epithet for Selene. Thus, we surmise that all three nymphs bore names which were epithets of the Moon-goddess, as Thrinacia was.⁷⁸

The tradition that these islands were a site of veneration of a supreme or important female deity survived into the historical period. The “triple” Moon-goddess of pre-Homeric times, herself a goddess of fertility, reappears on Maltese coins minted locally both in Carthaginian and Greco-Roman times. The Romans found on these islands a people that spoke both Punic and Greek, and a culture fused from two immigrant peoples. The presence of a tripod on most of the coins minted in Malta during the Roman period is very significant indeed. It is a mistake to refer to “sacrificial

⁷⁷ A. Ballabriga (1986), 92 compares the additional day to the ninth with the additional year also to the ninth in which a god reached heaven from the river Styx after passing from the waters around Ogygia and spending nine years in exile as a mortal (*Hes. Th.* 801–804). N. Marinatos (2001), 409, adds that it took Odysseus nine days to reach Ithaca from Aeolia, six days to reach the Land of the Laestrygonians from Aeolia, and nine days to reach Ogygia from Scylla and Charybdis, to make up a total of 24 days, a notion he says was derived from Egyptian calculation of the day’s length in 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of night. More on the use of the number “nine” in Homer, see E. Passaloglou (1994), 17–44.

⁷⁸ Their brightness, therefore, is not that of Helius, their father, as interpreted in D. Frame (1978), 42. According to this author, the name of Neaera, their mother, refers to the returning light of the day “in the context of salvation”.

tripods” in these coins. The tripod was a three-legged stool, with a hole, or holes, in the seat that was placed over a hole in the earth commonly believed to be the *omphalos* of the world. Through this hole in the Mother-Earth, generally imagined to be a “primeval hill” representing the pregnant earth, came the inspiration which passed through the hole or holes of this tripod into the skirt of the priestess sitting on it. She, in turn, interpreted the inspiration she received from the earth in enigmatic poetry. Apollo, the twin-brother of the moon-goddess, came to be connected with this tripod and the Pythia, the priestess at the Temple of Delphi, because he had usurped that supremacy of the locality from Python, the “primeval serpent” or dragon (it is the same in Greek), who protects Mother-Earth and all entrances into the Underworld. This serpent is the ideal creature for this purpose, because he shares life with both the living and the dead since he lives on both levels, and is therefore cognizant of things above the ground and of other mysterious things hidden from man, as in the account of *Genesis* 3. In his role of tempter to the taste of knowledge, he can be compared to the role of the Sirens.⁷⁹

We have seen above how the Moon-Goddess is also connected with Death. Both her waning phases and its short absence from the sky within the lunar month, as well as her almost daily sinking into the western horizon where Oceanus was imagined to flow out, helped to associate her with death. But death was then also associated with fertility. If it is true to say that the dead go down into the Underworld, it

is also true to say that it is from the Underworld that Mother-Earth receives its fertility. This throws light on the places where entrances into the Underworld were imagined to be. The garden of the Hesperides guarded by the serpent or the dragon, for example, had very fertile fruit trees, fruit with seeds, like apples and pomegranates, “trees of life”, fruit that possessed the knowledge got from deep below and which surpassed all other knowledge (*Gen.* 3.5).

Apart from the serpent or dragon and the Moon-Goddess, both connected with the dead, we also know of Persephone, daughter of Demeter, goddess of fertility, who came to be associated with death. As a compromise with her mother, Hades, god of the Underworld, contented himself to keep his wife he stole from Earth for only six months per year. This myth explains why Earth is fertile generally for half a year, and for half a year it generally experiences the absence of fertility. It is this Persephone that the Romans minted on the Maltese coins as “a veiled female head”, not Ashtarte, therefore. And if it was a Persephone on the obverse and a tripod on the reverse that were represented on the Maltese coins, then the users must have been Greek people who understood or appreciated such legends on their coins, even if they could not comprehend thoroughly how death and fertility were intrinsically connected with their country from prehistoric times and from the times the island was called Thrinacia.

On the subject matter of Roman coins minted in Malta, one observes that on one of them a figure holding a trident is shown. Such an instrument was called in Greek precisely θρίναξ, and it was used in connexion with the threshing of corn.

⁷⁹ G. Germain (1962).

This trident is associated with Demeter, goddess of fertility, mother of Persephone, and here we are reminded of the element of immortality as a result of absolute fertility referred to the immortal animals on Thrinacia by Circe above.⁸⁰

Thrinacia in the itinerary of Odysseus

When Odysseus and his men escaped from the clutches of Scylla and Charybdis, they “soon” came to Thrinacia. Here we mention three points.

First, no other location in eastern Sicily or any one of its adjacent islands is mentioned on the way. Following the near-death they experienced at the Straits, they sailed on as far as day permitted, any direction, but away from the Straits; and when at Thrinacia the fierce South wind blew, they would not sail away from the prohibited island, exactly for fear of falling back upon the dreaded monsters in the North. If then they dreaded sailing northwards again from Thrinacia, then Thrinacia was directly in the South.⁸¹ This also means that Thrinacia could not have been in the north-eastern part of Sicily, close to the Straits of Messina.⁸²

Secondly, this island is referred to as a “deserted island” (*Od.* 12.351). The term

“deserted” does not mean here “infertile”, but “on its own”. Had this island been an adjacent island off the eastern coast of Sicily, the comrades of Odysseus would not have been so worried. They would easily have risked crossing to mainland Sicily and found provisions there. But this island was a lonely island, far out from hope of reaching the mainland. Also, when they sailed off from Thrinacia, no land was visible, only the sky and the sea.

Hom. *Od.* 12.403-404:

ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ τὴν νῆσον ἐλείπομεν, οὐδέ τις
ἄλλη
φαίνεται γαίῳ, ἀλλ’ οὐρανὸς ἦδὲ
θάλασσα.

Now, around the eastern and southern coasts of Sicily, there is no such island so cut off from it, except for the Maltese islands, which are just further down southwards beyond Pachynus. Pantelleria, Linosa, and Lampedusa are not possible alternatives for Thrinacia, because a South Wind, which they feared most that it would bring them back to Scylla and Charybdis, would have led them from these islands to the direction of Lilybaeum instead.

Thirdly, why did Odysseus not round the toe of Italy to turn eastwards by the Herculean Promontory after leaving Scylla and Charybdis the first time? There are two reasons for this. First, to arrive at Thrinacia in one day meant a favourable wind cleaning them off from further danger at the Straits, irrespective what direction that course took them; secondly, the will of the gods destined them to come to Thrinacia to test their obedience to their commands as reported by Teiresias and Circe. This they did not heed to, preferring to rest on the

⁸⁰ On the subject of Roman coins minted in Malta, see J.C. Sammut (2001), 16–19.

⁸¹ A. Ballabriga (1986), 142 could not decide better than placing Thrinacia at the coincidence of East and West, and since the wind from East and South prevented Odysseus’ ship from returning, then it must have been situated in the North-East part of the world!

⁸² For which opinion, see E.D. Phillips (1953), 63, and L. Braccisi (1993), 11. In all these placements, Braccisi was motivated by a study of the Euboean settlements in southern Italy and eastern Sicily which, it is thought, could have helped to spread the story of the *Odyssey*.

island and eat from its cattle, and so their punishment.

Following the final disaster that hit the ship of Odysseus and all his men except himself, there took place exactly what they had feared would happen when still on Thrinacia. The South wind brought Odysseus, clutching to his ship's keel and mast, back to Scylla and Charybdis. One presumes that the ship had sailed away from Thrinacia early in the morning when the storm had come to an end. Then we allow some time for the disaster to take place, and Odysseus was then ferried for the rest of that day and for the whole night until; at the rising of the sun, he was again by Scylla and Charybdis (*Od.* 12.429–430). Hence, a full day brought Odysseus to Thrinacia from Scylla and Charybdis, and a bit more than a full day returned him to the same place. This time, these Straits were not crossed, for Ogygia, the next landfall, was East of Sicily and South of Italy (see below). For this reason, one rejects the theory that Scylla and Charybdis was or had to be crossed twice, just as Aeaëa had to be visited twice.⁸³ Having escaped from this danger, Odysseus concluded his story to Alcinoüs by the end of Book XII of the *Odyssey* by saying that for nine days he had been ferried on the same keel and mast from Scylla and Charybdis, and on the tenth day he reached Ogygia.

Ogygia

But where was Ogygia? How did Odysseus get to that island in the Ionian Sea

from Thrinacia, South of Sicily, having coasted by Scylla and Charybdis again? This Homer never tells! Trusting on what Scylax and Pliny say (see below) that Ogygia was situated about ten miles South of the Lacinian Promontory at the mouth of the Gulf of Taranto, Odysseus should have taken less time to reach South Italy from the Straits of Messina than it took him from Malta. The probability is, and Homer narrates this neither at the end of Book XII which is the end of Odysseus' account, nor at the beginning of Book V where we already find Odysseus on Ogygia, that Odysseus was lost in the sea for nine days and arrived at Ogygia on the tenth. The time taken for the journey of the Achaeans from Cythera to the Lesser Syrtis also took ten days (*Od.* 9.82–83), and so did their journey from Aeolia, that is Ortygia, to Ithaca (*Od.* 10.28–29). However, we have some clue of Odysseus' journey from Ogygia to Scherie, identified as Cercyra, i. e. Corfù, by Classical authors such as Thucydides (3.70.4) and Apollonius of Rhodes (4.982–992), modern authors,⁸⁴ but not all.⁸⁵

Homer *Od.* 5.268–281:

οὐρον δὲ ποροῆικεν ἀπήμονά τε
Λιαρόν τε.
 γηθόσυνος δ' οὐρα πέτασ' ἰστιά διος
 Ὀδυσσεύς.
 αὐτὰρ ὁ πηδάλιῳ ἰθύνετο τεχνηέντως
 ἦμενος, οὐδέ οἱ ὕπνος ἐπὶ βλεφάροισιν
 ἔπιπτεν
 Πηλιάδας τ' ἔσορῶντι καὶ ὄψε δύνοντα
 Βωώτην

⁸⁴ F. Robert (1945), 5–17.

⁸⁵ For example, L. Braccesi and B. Rossignoli (1999), 177–178, and J.-M. Ropars (2002), 10. E. Pelli-zer (2006), 93–108, consider Scherie as only imaginary, like other places mentioned in the account of Odysseus.

⁸³ S. Scully (1987), 408, and N. Marinatos (2001), 406.

Ἄρκτον θ', ἦν καὶ ἄμαξαν ἐπὶ κλησιν
καλέουσιν,
ἦ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καὶ τ' Ὠρίωνα
δοκεύει,
οἷη δ' ἄμμορός ἐστι λοετρῶν
Ὠκεανοῖο·
τὴν γὰρ δὴ μιν ἄνωγε Καλυψώ, δῖα
θεάων,
ποντοπορευέμεναι ἐπ' ἄριστερά
χειρὸς ἔχοντα.
ἐπτὰ δὲ καὶ δέκα μὲν πλέεν ἡματα
ποντοπορεύων,
ὀκτώδαικεκάτη δ' ἐφάνη ὄρεα
σκιόεντα
γαίης Φαιήκων, ὅθι τ' ἄγχιστον πέλεν
αὐτῶ·
εἶσατο δ' ὡς ὅτε ῥινὸν ἐν ἠεροειδέι
πόντω.

The reference both to the wind and the stars is important here. Homer says that the wind was propitious (ἀπήμονά) and warm (or soft) (λαρόν). Homer also says that Odysseus kept the Bear (Ἄρκτον), i. e. Ursa Major, on his left-hand side (ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ χειρὸς). This means that he was travelling East, that is, from Ogygia in southern Italy to Cercyra, or Scherie, the land of the Phaeacians.⁸⁶ This means also that, according to the localization of Homer, Ogygia could not have been for Odysseus in the waters of North-West Africa,⁸⁷ but on a West-East direction, with no Italy or Sicily in between. The journey, despite

⁸⁶ R. Hannah (1997), 15–33, considers the bearings available to Odysseus as of little use for his navigation, unless he was able to coordinate constellations in such a way that he formed a chain of them throughout his navigation. Certainly, according to *Phaenomena* of Aratus (581–585), Odysseus could only have been travelling in late October. For the months covered by the constellations mentioned on Achilles' Shield in *Iliad* 18.485–489, see R. Hannah (1994–1995) (no pagination). More on the constellations used by Odysseus, see J. Cuillandre (1943), 166–169.

⁸⁷ As in J. Cuillandre (1943), 166.

the presence of a propitious wind, was quite long. It took Odysseus eighteen days to come in sight of this land, travelling, however, on a simple raft before Poseidon destroyed it in his final act of vengeance. The lengthy journey from Scylla and Charbydis to Ogygia (10 days) and twice the amount of days it took him to reach Scherie from Ogygia (18 days) have been interpreted as Homer's mechanism of symbolic interpretation of Odysseus' voyage from the world of fantasy to the world of reality, with Scherie serving as a transition.⁸⁸

Cercyra was, therefore, north-east of Ogygia, and the southern wind, described here as “warm”, blowing from the Sahara Desert, helped Odysseus to shift an eastward to a north-eastward course and arrive at Scherie in the vicinity of Ithaca. Also, Scherie could not have been on the extremity of the world in the physical sense since it was close to Ithaca, but only in the mythical sense in the way its people were different from the ordinary.⁸⁹

We are informed by the Scholiast on Homer's *Odyssey* 1.85 that Ogygia was in the West, that is, West of mainland Greece. The myth of Calypso, resident-goddess on Ogygia, confirms this location in the West. Calypso was the daughter of Atlas who dwelt in the regions of north-west Africa. His children, the Hesperides, as their name indicated, were also located in the West, and one imagines that this island of Ogygia could also be located in the vicinity of north-west Africa for aetiological reasons.⁹⁰ The assimilation of North-West Africa with both western Italy (Cumae) and

⁸⁸ Ch.P. Segal (1962), 21.

⁸⁹ See also G. Germain (1954), 289.

⁹⁰ See also, for example, R. Dion (1972), 159, and L. Braccisi (1993–1994), 197.

Acheron's River in western Greece as confines of the then known world involved not only the Underworld, but also Atlas and his daughter, Calypso, who had connotations with the Dead. Both Atlas and Calypso were originally located near Oceanus, the river of Death and, therefore, at the world's extremity.⁹¹ For this reason, Hermes, sent to Calypso to ask her to release Odysseus, is described as having completed a journey to a distant island (*Od.* 5.55). Her island was situated in the midst of the sea (τ' ὀμφαλός ἐστι θαλάσσης) (*Od.* 1.50). Just as Delphi was at the centre of the world of reality, her island was at the centre of the sea which was at the far end of the world of fantasy. Despite this assimilation, Ogygia in the *Odyssey* is placed after Thrinacia on the eastward journey of Odysseus to it, still in the waters of the world of fantasy West of Ithaca.⁹²

Scylax placed the island of Ogygia off the Lacinian Promontory, where once the Temple of Hera stood, in between Caulon and Thurii, travelling from south-west to north-east by the southern coast of Italy.

SCYL. 13:

ἐπάνειμι δὲ πάλιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἠπειρον,
 ὅθεν ἐξετραπόμην. ἀπὸ γὰρ Ῥηγίου
 πόλεις εἰσὶν αἶδε Λοκροί, Καυλωνία,
 Κρότων, Λακίνιον ἱερὸν Ἥρας καὶ
νησος Καλυψούς, ἐν ἣ Ὀδυσσεὺς ὤκει
 παρὰ Καλυψοῦ, καὶ ποταμὸς Κροῶθις καὶ
 Σύβαρις καὶ Θουρία πόλις. Οὗτοι ἐν τῇ
 Λευκανίᾳ Ἑλληνες.

⁹¹ See also A. Ballabriga (1986), 90, and J.-M. Ropars (2003), 83–85.

⁹² A. Ballabriga (1986), 126 and passim relies all his conclusions upon one misconception that Calypso was in the extreme West and Circe in the extreme East. He does not explain why he places Thrinacia, the Island of the Sun, in the West and not in the East.

We saw above how Vergil gave us an itinerary for Aeneas the opposite of that of Scylax, and placed Lacinium in *A.* 3.552 in between Tarentum (551) and Caulon (553), but there he does not refer to the island of Ogygia, far off from the mainland.

Pliny seems to follow the itinerary of Scylax and places Ogygia ten miles off the coast of the Lacinian Promontory; he placed it between Scylletium, which he says is one end of the narrowest land passage in the whole of Italy, and Croton, again travelling north-eastwards from the Promontory of Heracles. Instead of one island off the Lacinian Promontory, Pliny mentions five in the same area, being Dioscoron, Ogygia, Tyris, Eranusa, and Melioessa. It must be said that none of these five islands are to be seen by the coast of the Lacinian Promontory today. Only one of these survived, but as the name of a promontory, that of Dioscurias, a few miles south-west of the Lacinian Promontory. The probability is that these islands were indeed ten miles away from the mainland, and that now they lie submerged, possibly due to volcanic action which can bring up islands from the sea or lower them below the sea level.

PLIN. *Nat.* 3.10–11.95–97:

A Locris Italiae frons incipit Magna Graecia appellata, in tris sinus recedens Ausonii maris, quoniam Ausones tenuere primi. patet LXXXVI, ut auctor est Varro; plerique LXXV fecere. In ea ora flumina innumera, sed memoratu digna a Locris Sagra et vestigia oppidi Caulonis, Mustiae, Consilinum castrum, Cocynthus quod esse longissimum Italiae promunturium aliqui existunt, dein sinus et urbs Scolagium, Scylletium Atheniensibus cum conderent dictum; quem locum occurrens Terinaeus sinus peninsulam efficit, et in ea portus qui vocatur Cas-

tra Hannibalis, nusquam angustiore Italia: XX p. latitudo est. itaque Dionysius maior intercisam eo loco adicere Siciliae voluit. amnes ibi navigabiles Carcinus, Crotalus, Semirus, Arogas, Thagines, oppidum intus Petilia, mons Clibanus, promunturium Lacinium, cuius ante oram insula X a terra Dioscoron, altera Calypsus quam Ogygiam appellasse Homerus existimatur, praeterea Tyrus, Eranusa, Meli-oessa. ipsum a Caulone abesse LXX prodit Agrippa. A Lacinio promunturio secundus Europae sinus incipit magno ambitu flexus et Acrocerauio Epiri finitus promunturio, a quo abest LXXV. Oppidum Croto, amnis Neaethus, oppidum Thurii inter duos amnes Crathim et Sybarim, ubi fuit urbs eodem nomine. ...

If we accept that Ogygia was indeed situated by the coast of southern Italy at c. 39°, then Odysseus' course turned eastwards towards Cercyra for c. 120 mi. This distance he covered on a raft, and therefore with a small sail, in eighteen days and nights. This means that Odysseus sailed 7 mi. every day for seventeen days, when on the 18th he saw Cercyra at a distance.

Apollonius of Rhodes, giving us the itinerary of Jason, makes the Argonauts avoid the Straits of the Bosphorus on their return journey, as Odysseus and his men wanted to avoid the Straits of Messina the second time. Instead, the Argonauts entered the Danube River from the Black Sea and then, in some mysterious way, got out into the Adriatic Sea from Illyria close to the island of Melite (today Mljet). Apollonius first mentions Issa (today Vis), then Dysceladus, Pityeia, Cercyra Melaena (today Korcula) and Melite. The order Apollonius gives to these islands does not indicate the strict itinerary of the Argonauts, for Issa is north-west of Cercyra Melaena, the latter

being again north-west of Melite. Finally, he mentions Nymphaean Cerossus, the name he gives to Ogygia. From Cerossus, the Argonauts penetrated into the River Po, mysteriously into the River Rhone and finally into the Tyrrhenian Sea. They then stopped at the Island of Aethalia (Elba) and eventually at Aeaea (Ustica).

It must be said that in their voyage north-westwards, the Argonauts too, like Odysseus in the *Odyssey* from Ogygia to Cercyra, but the latter in a north-eastward direction, were aided by the same warm wind (λαρῶ), i. e. a southern wind. Indeed, Cercyra Melaena is c. 12 miles north-westwards of Melite, quite inside the Adriatic Sea, no longer by the Grecian coast, but by the Illyrian coast. From there they passed on to Nymphaean Cerossus, presumably further on in a north-west direction again. In the case of the latter, however, Apollonius of Rhodes says this island was much distant away (ὑπερθε δὲ πολλὸν ἐοῦσαν), that is, from Melite. We know that the Argonauts were heading towards the exit-place of the River Po, not far South from Chioggia. This island of Ogygia is here called Cerossus and is given the adjective of Nymphaea, here the feminine gender because, as an island, Cerossus is feminine (αἰπεινήν τε Κερωσσόν ...). It is called Nymphaean Cerossus because Calypso, resident on that island, was a nymph. This island is here described as hilly or lofty (αἰπεινήν):

A.R. 4. 561-575:

τὸ μὲν οὖν τις ἀριστήων ἐνόησεν·
 ἀλλ' ἔθειον γαίης Ὑλληίδος
 ἔξανιόντες
 τηλόθι, τὰς δ' ἀπέλειπον ὄσαι
 Κόλχοισι πάροισιν

ἐξεΐης πλήθοντο Λιβυρνίδες εἰν ἀλί
 νήσοι,
Ἴσση τε Δυσκέλαδος τε καὶ ἰμερτή
Πιτύεια
 αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ τῆσι παρὰ
 Κέρκυραν ἴκοντο,
 ἔνθα Ποσειδάων Ἀσωπίδα νάσσατο
 κούρην,
 ἠύκομον Κέρκυραν, ἐκάς
 Φλειουντίδος αἴης,
 ἀρπάξας ὑπ' ἔρωτι μelaiνομένην δέ
 μιν ἄνδρες
 ναυτίλοι ἐκ πόντοιο καλαίνῃ
 πάντοθεν ὕλη
 δερκόμενοι, Κέρκυραν ἐπικλείουσι
Μέλαιναν
 τῆ δ' ἐπὶ καὶ Μελίτην, Λιαρῶ
 περιγηθῆες οὐρῶ,
αἰπεινήν τε Κερωσσόν, ὕπερθε δέ
 πολλὸν εὐῶσαν
Νυμφαίνην παρὰ μείβον, ἵνα
 κρείουσα Καλυψῶ
 Ἀτλαντὶς ναίεσκε. ...

But the location of Ogygia as interpreted by Apollonius of Rhodes does not quite fit the description Homer gives to the journey of Odysseus from it to Cercyra. Cercyra Melaena and Melite are deep inside the Adriatic Sea, whereas we know from Homer that Odysseus was sailing in a north-easterly direction, despite the help he got from the southerly wind. Also, we must not confuse Cercyra, close to Ithaca, with Cercyra Melaena, the latter being 270 mi. north-west of the former.

Our problem of identifying Ogygia by the coast of Italy was also met by Procopius in Byzantine times. In fact, he says plainly: “I have often wondered where could the Island of Ogygia be”. He says that in the stretch of sea from Italy to Cercyra there are only three islands, close to each other, to which he gave the general name of “Othonoi”, “only 300 stades from Cercyra”.

In fact, Othonoi is not more than half that distance from Cercyra, i. e. 150 stades, or c. 18 mi. We know that the names of the three islands are today Othoni, Ereikussa and Mathraki, and only one has retained its name from the ancient past. Procopius imagined that Calypso lived on one of them. But these islands are too close to Cercyra, knowing from Homer that Odysseus took eighteen days to reach it from Ogygia.

PROCOP. 8.22.18–21:

οὗτος δὲ ὁ στόλος ἄχρι ἐς τὴν Φαιάκων
 χώραν, ἢ νῦν Κέρκυρα ἐπικαλεῖται,
 οὐδὲν ἄχαρι ἐργάζεσθαι ἔσχε. νῆσον
 γὰρ οὐδεμίαν ἐν τῷδε τῷ διάπλῳ
 οἰκουμένην ξυμβαίνει εἶναι ἐκ τοῦ
 κατὰ τὴν Χάρυβδιν πορθμοῦ μέχρι
 ἐς τὴν Κέρκυραν, ὥστε πολλακίς ἐγὼ
 ἐνταῦθα γενόμενος διηπορούμην ὅτι
 ποτὲ ἄρα τῆς Καλυψῶς ἡ νῆσος εἴη.
 ταύτης γὰρ τῆς θαλάσσης οὐδαμῇ
 νῆσον τεθέσθαι, ὅτι μὴ τρεῖς, οὐ πολλῶ
 ἄποθεν τῆς Φαιακίδος, ἀλλ' ὅσον
 ἀπὸ σταδίων τριακοσίων, ἀγχιστά πη
 ἀλλήλων οὔσας, βραχείας κομιδῆ καὶ
 οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων οἰκία ἐχούσας οὔτε
 ζώων οὔτε ἄλλων τὸ παράπαν οὐδέν.
Ἄθονοι δὲ καλοῦνται τανῦν αἱ νῆσοι
 αὗται. καὶ φαίη ἂν τις τὴν Καλυψῶ
 ἐνταῦθα γενέσθαι, καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
 τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα γῆς Φαιακίδος ὄντα οὐ
 πολλῶ ἄποθεν ἢ σχεδιά, ὥς φησιν
 Ὅμηρος, ἢ ἄλλῳ τῷ τρόπῳ νεῶς τινας
 χωρὶς ἐνθένδε διαπορθμεύσασθαι.

The confusion of Melite and Apollonius' Ogygia with Malta and Gozo

The island of Ogygia in the Ionic Sea, South of Italy, was once confused by Antimachus (quoted by Scholiast on Hom. *Od.* 1.85) for Ogygia, off Crete, today bearing the name of Gavdhos. This mistake was repeated by

Callimachus as reported by Strabo (Call. *Fr.* 470). Strabo then further complicated the matter when he transferred Melite from the Adriatic Sea and Gaudos from Crete to our archipelago, “near Pachynus” (*Geog.* 6.2.11). What led Strabo to come to this confusion can be summarized as follows.

Strabo knew from Apollonius of Rhodes (4.561–575) that Nymphaean Cerossus, his identification of the island of Calypso, was close to Melite and Cercyra Melaena in the Adriatic Sea; he knew also that in this island of Melite were bred small dogs referred to by several Classical authors; he also knew that Callimachus identified an island called Gaudos with the island of Calypso; he, furthermore, knew from Lycophron that South of Pachynus was an island called Melite (*Alex.* 1027–1033), close to yet another island which we know was called in Classical times Gaulos, and so he mistook Gaulos for Gaudos, the alleged island of Calypso, and transferred Melite and the island of Calypso from the Adriatic according to Apollonius of Rhodes to the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. This resulted in the island of Gaulos receiving two other names, namely, Gaudos, today pronounced as “Ghawdex”, and Gozo, since, as a sixteenth-century map⁹³ and Jean Quintin in 1536⁹⁴ confirms that both our Gozo and this Cretan island were then called also Claudus (= Gaudos) and Gozo.⁹⁵

Jean Quintin, *Insulae Melitae descriptio* 20: Paulus (inquiunt) Cretam deserens e Claudae (Ptolemaeo Claudus est, Plinio Gaudos, vulgo nunc **Gozo**) medio inter Occidentem et Meridiem portu, ...

⁹³ H.C.R. Vella (2002), 150.

⁹⁴ H.C.R. Vella ed. (1980), 42.

⁹⁵ Further on the subject of Gaudos, see H.C.R. Vella (2010), 9–16.

It is important to note here that Mela (2.7.171–4) distinguished between Gaulos and Calypso’s island which he then mistakes with Aeaea being the island inhabited by Circe instead. The same mistake had been made by Propertius earlier; who although distinguishing the episode of Circe from that of Calypso, finally calls the latter’s island as Aeaea (3.12.27–31).⁹⁶

Mela 2.7.171–174:

Circa Siciliam in Siculo freto est **Aeaeae**, **quam Calypso habitasse dicitur**; Africam versus **Gaulos**, Melita, Cossura.

Ithaca

Even the home town and country of Odysseus, known as Ithaca, has been disputed. Doerpfeld was so sure that Odysseus’ Ithaca is the modern Leucas that he even chose to be buried there! R. Bittlestone et al. (2005) think that the modern Ithaca could not be the Homeric Ithaca, partly because of the itinerary of the Phaeacian boat from Scherie, partly because the present island’s landscape does not fit with Odysseus’ island’s, and partly because no excavations have yet revealed the foundations of Odysseus’ palace and city. Instead, they suggested that former Ithaca was originally the north-western part of Cephallenia, formerly cut off from the rest of the island by the sea from North to South, calling this corner of Cephallenia as former Ithaca, and modern Ithaca as former Dulichia. In addition, the authors quote a 3rd-century itinerary from the Roman world, saying: “*Insu-*

⁹⁶ On the contrary, Aeaea was referred to as Circe’s island by Homer (*Od.* 10.135–137), Apollonius of Rhodes (4.661–663) and Vergil (*A.* 3.384–387). Pliny, however, as we have already seen, interprets Homer’s island of Circe as being situated by the coast of Latium, no longer an island by his times (*Nat.* 3.5.57).

lae Cephalenia Zacynthos et Dulichia: his est mons Ithacus, ubi est patria Ulixis".⁹⁷

Conclusion

Although Gozo of the Maltese Archipelago was referred to as the site of Ca-

lyпсо's island only by being confused with Gaudos by Crete, formerly Ogylia, and the latter being further confused with Ogygia, this paper has at least proved that this archipelago was indeed in the itinerary of Odysseus, but before he went to Ogygia. Indeed, the only place Odysseus landed on before reaching that island of Calypso after nine days at sea was this island of Thrinacia, South of Scylla and Charybdis, a deserted island, remote from Trinacria, the Island of Sicily.

⁹⁷ R. Bittlestone et al. (2005), 34 and 515, quoting O. Cunt zed., *Itineraria Romana, volume prius, Itineraria Antonini Augusti et Burdigalense* (Leipzig, 1929). More on the identification of Ithaca, see S. Symeonoglou (1984), 91–109.

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TRINAKIJA – DABARTINĖ MALTOS SALA

H. C. R. Vella

S a n t r a u k a

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