

The Empirical Map of the Unknown as an Innovation Introduced by the Homeric Odyssey

ABSTRACT

Theoretical Framework

The present study investigates the ways of approach for the limits of the ‘known world’ in ancient times, focusing on the Homeric Odyssey, through the notion of *‘periplous’*. We attempt to combine the level of cosmological inquiry with the investigation of the Homeric landscape perception using an approach that relates landscape to Geography.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to elucidate the emergence of a new epistemological paradigm that takes place in the Homeric Odyssey, and to investigate its characteristic features.

Methodology

The comparison of the map of Hephaestus in the Iliad, and Odysseus’ empirical investigation map is attempted, in order to investigate the cartographical leap that takes place between the two Homeric epics.

Results

A prominent finding is that the epistemological paradigm concerning empirical investigation and mapping of previously unknown parts of the world, is introduced into the Homeric Odyssey.

Conclusions

Regardless of the debated positioning of the Homeric ‘Unknown world’ in relation to the *‘terra cognita’*, it is emphasized that Odysseus’ map introduces the vector of time as a parameter of experiential mapping. Furthermore, Odysseus’ navigation during his ‘Nostos’ –his trail of return to his homeland- can be perceived as a precursor of the historic ‘periplous’.

Implications

Odysseus’ narrative map implicates landscape descriptions, linking landscape perception to proto-geographical investigation. Odysseus’ approach of each inhabited unknown landscape as a result of the expression of cultural parameters has an affinity with the way the Geographer C.O. Sauer has studied landscape as the ‘unit concept of geography’.

Keywords: experiential mapping, cosmological scheme, ‘periplous’, vector of time, cultural landscape.

On ways of Taming Infinity and the Unknown [Theoretical Framework]

The concept of the ‘Edges of the Earth’, or ‘peirata’, appears as fundamental through mythology and the epics, as it consists of a cosmological matter. According to Romm *“The terrifying apeiron of primal chaos was banished to the outermost edge of the globe, where flowed the stream of Ocean, so as to permit a more formal ordering of its central spaces; and its outer region was decisively fenced off from the rest of the world, both by natural impediments and by a divine sanction.”* [Romm, 1992, 32]. The term *apeiron*, signifying

infinity, was repelled out of the ‘Known world’ by a circular boundary, the ‘borders of the Earth’ or ‘*peirata gaiēs*’, namely the river Oceanus.

I argue that in the Homeric *Odyssey*, the clear separation between the ‘formal ordering of central spaces’ and diverse *Terras Incognitas*, is challenged; the passage from the ‘formal ordering’ inside the cosmological circumference, to shores along the cosmological limit, the Ocean stream, is equally challenged. “*Odysseus penetrates into a mythical universe [...] after the ten day-long tempest he encountered right after Maleas cape, the last ‘real’ site of his journey before his return to Ithaca.*” [Vidal-Naquet , 1981,45]. The hazard provoked by a ten-day long tempest is the transitional element that conducts Odysseus’ fleet, from the ‘central spaces’ of the *Terra Cognita* to an *Unknown World*, precisely an unknown archipelago. The entrance to a cluster of the Unknown is not enunciated in any way, before the arrival to the Land of the Lotus-Eaters [book 9, verses 83-84]. The unfamiliar, to the audience of the *Odyssey*, social and cultural habits of the Lotus Eaters are the primal evidence that enunciate the fact that Odysseus and his comrades are lost into an Unknown World.

On one hand, while lost in the unknown archipelago, Odysseus gradually discovers equally unfamiliar culturally defined populations. In order to protect/prepare primarily himself but also his companions against potential unknown dangers, he reacts in the first place by observing the cultural traces inscribed into the shoreline landscapes from afar and he occasionally composes in situ maps. But he is also attracted by the cultural expressions of the Unknown, as he sometimes chooses to investigate -though his own experience- some of the cultures he encounters. On the other hand, while sailing at sea, Odysseus only occasionally measures the duration of his travelling, between some of the different stops and/or landmarks. The fact that he does not calculate these time intervals systematically reveals the fact that he does not aim to approach the unknown archipelago by the use of quantitative tools.

Homeric <i>Odyssey</i> Books/Verses	Time measurements, in ancient Greek	Translation in English [by A.T. Murray]
Book 9, verses 82-84 (ENTRANCE into Unknown world, arrival at the land of the Lotus-eaters)	ἔνθεν δ' ἐννῆμαρ φερόμην ὄλοοις ἀνέμοισιν πόντον ἐπ' ἰχθυόεντα· ἀτὰρ δεκάτη ἐπέβημεν γαίης Λωτοφάγων, ...	“Thence for nine days time I was borne by savage winds over the fish-filled sea; but on the tenth we set foot on the land of the Lotus-eaters”
Book 10, verses 81-82	ἕξῃμαρ μὲν ὁμῶς πλέομεν νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμαρ, ἑβδομάτη δ' ἰκόμεσθα Λάμου ἀπὺ πτολίεθρον, Τηλέπυλον Λαιστρυγονίην	“So for six days we sailed, night and day alike , and on the seventh we came to the lofty citadel of Lamus, to Telepylus of the Laestrygonians, ...”
Book 12, verses 448-449	ἔνθεν δ' ἐννῆμαρ φερόμην, δεκάτη δέ με νυκτὶ νῆσον ἐς Ὠγγυίην πέλασαν θεοί, ...	“From there for nine days was I borne, and on the tenth night the gods brought me to Ogygia, ...”

TABLE 1: Odysseus occasionally measures time intervals of seafaring journey between some of the encountered lands in the unknown archipelago

The systematic calculation of the duration of parts of a journey has been nevertheless a mapping technique which was used since the 6th c BC by historical navigators. Concerning the empirical investigation

and mapping of unknown parts of the world, we have taken into account the sea-routes tracked by the first historical navigators such as Hanno of Carthage [6th c BC], Scylax [5th c BC], and others that followed [Livieratos, 1998, 34]. These navigators throughout their investigating circuits, kept records measuring space by the time spent to cover a certain distance: each night and each day of the journey was converted into 700 or 600 stadia respectively. [Gisinger and Gomme via Kendrick Pritchett, 1982,239]. According to Porphyry the term 'innumerable' could also be among the significances of 'apeiron' [Porphyry via Detienne & Vernant, 1974, 269]. The sea-space which was measured ceased to be infinite, and became defined and finite, as distances became concrete by acquiring a quantitative value: which also permitted to locate landscape features in previously unknown parts of the world, and supported the design of schematic coastline maps.

We can thus assume that Odysseus does not aim to compose the design of a map that includes all the previously Unknown places he encountered, but certainly the mapping of his adventure bears significant evidence on certain ways by which landscape investigation can contribute to the mapping of culturally populated areas.

An Epistemological Leap in the Homeric Odyssey [Objectives]

It thus becomes clear that Odysseus reacts to the perils of the Unknown by adopting the attitude of an empirical cartographer, who does not observe landscape only from a secure distance, but gets entangled into it. I argue that Odysseus exposes a new tendency concerning the acknowledgement of unknown areas, and the expression of a new mapping attitude, as a process for approaching the Unknown. Is it thus arguable that the Homeric Odyssey introduces, as a new paradigm for acquiring pre-scientific proto-geographical knowledge, the practice of empirical –alias experiential- mapping? This paper precisely investigates the terms by which an epistemological leap concerning mapping and cosmology takes place between the two Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Hephaestus' Map VS Odysseus' Map: Circle VS Circuit [Methodology]

The river Oceanus was the circular limit of the 'Known World' in both the Iliad and the Odyssey: this is in general correct, but not completely. In the Iliad, this is exactly the case; whilst in the Odyssey a significant challenge is introduced by the description of a mortal, Odysseus. He dared to document as an eye-witness, the existence of an 'Unknown World', to which he travelled and he described. The location of this 'Unknown World' in relation to the 'Known World' is not stated by Odysseus.

Precisely, in the Iliad [Book XXIII, 483 -608], Hephaestus, the divine master of the arts of metallurgy, creates on the shield of Achilles, a definitely round map. The river Oceanus is indeed depicted as the outmost border of the shield. Moreover, all of the cultural features presented at the scenes depicted on the shield are characteristics of the familiar 'Known world'. Hephaestus depicts rural, agricultural and pastoral scenes, cityscapes, and traditional scenes such as a marriage and other festivities including dances and acrobatics, but also complex situations such as a war to which -not surprisingly- two gods (Athena and Ares) participate [verses 516-517]. Hephaestus thus is depicting only scenes and events at his cosmological map that pertain exactly to the cultural expressions of the audience the epics are addressed to. Achilles' shield map demonstrates a cultural homogeneity and the static divine cosmological order, in a deterministic way which

does not provoke questions: functioning as an *à priori* notion which does not need investigation. [Kouzoupi, 2017] Instead of underlining the importance of Achilles' shield map's pictorial aspect, emphasizing the fact that it is described in the Iliad as a visual scheme depicted on a surface, I investigate the order displayed in this scheme. What I consider as a significant characteristic of this precise map, is that it establishes divine and human order through an austere visual shape distribution on the surface of the shield. Considering the shapes, it is clear that the circular border is predefined, and it functions simultaneously as the border of the shield as a war component/object, and as the edge of the world map depicted in the shield. This is, I suggest, a metaphorical way to underline through the shield's function, the importance of the circular cosmological border, as a limit which secures, a circumference that seals the hazard out of the *Terra Cognita*: in a battle the parts of the body covered by the shield-and thus by the cosmological map- are protected, but those exposed beyond the limit-border of the shield-where Oceanus is depicted- are in peril. The functional, logical, and symbolic inference is that the cosmologic circular map of the *Terra Cognita* fits perfectly on the circular shield. Within the given circular border, all the significant contents of the cosmological map are planned to fit. This creates a hierarchy, suggesting the predominance of Oceanus before all the other features of the cosmos. Not surprisingly, this resolution is supported by some verses of the Iliad: “Ὀκεανὸν τε θεῶν γένεσιν” (translation: “the origin of the gods”), and “καὶ ἄν ποταμοῖο ῥέεθρα /Ὀκεανοῦ, ὅς περ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται” (translation: “he who was framed begetter of all”). [Iliad book XIV, verses 201 and 245-246 translated by Romm, 1992,23].

In juxtaposition, Odysseus, a mortal man ‘of many devices’, assembles a map which has no specific shape, nor does it occupy a clear geometrical space, as Hephaestus map does. It is a narrative map; its structure is deployed in time. As Odysseus narrates, the empirical cartographic process emanates from his previous in situ investigations of Unknown places, which developed along the path of his ‘*Nostos*’ (the trail of his return to his homeland). Albeit the different sorts of information given in the Homeric Odyssey, the exact geographical position of the ‘Unknown world’ continued being unknown despite Odysseus’ narrative map: as the epic plot carefully detached the ‘Known’ from the ‘Unknown’ world. Thus, the emphasis in Odysseus map lies not upon the possible incorporation of newly discovered previously unknown areas, as new parts of the ‘*Terra Cognita*’ of that time. I suggest that in Odysseus’ map it is emphatically proclaimed *how different cultural variants can coexist into “the Unknown”*. This is evident, as Odysseus presents the different cultural expressions he encountered along the circuit of his ‘*Nostos*’, perturbing the deterministic image of a culturally –and ontologically- homogenous world displayed in Achilles’ shield. We can assert that Odysseus by his practice initiates the process of empirical mapping, during which the observer is entangled into the cultural landscape and the situation he describes. Being in situ, into the Unknown world, an eye-witness, who feels the presence of diverse cultural expressions through his own sensorial experience, Odysseus is in the position to challenge the deterministic austerity of the divine cosmological order Hephaestus modeled.

According to the epic plot, Odysseus narrates more or less the same map at first to the Phaeacians when he is in Scheria, their island, and secondly to his resourceful wife Penelope; ‘*Alkinoou Apologos*’, ‘*Phaecian Tales*’, [Romm, 1992] ‘*Great Apologue*’ [Maronitis & Polkas, 2007]: Homerists often refer to his narrative to the Phaeacians using different names. The *Great Apologue* occupies four Rhapsodies [ι,κ,λ,μ alias books 9, 10,11,12]: it could be arguably identified as the core of the Odyssey. Odysseus’ narrative map to Penelope is mediated by the Rhapsode, and takes part in the epic structure as an abbreviated version occupying only 33 verses (book 23, v. 310-343): some refer to it as the ‘*Minor Apologue*’ [Maronitis & Polkas, 2007]. The Rhapsode incarnates Odysseus during the *Great Apologue*, performing Odysseus’ narration in first person [Nagy, 1996], while the third person is used by the Rhapsode when referring to the *Minor Apologue*. Although abbreviated by the Rhapsode, the *Minor Apologue* is a map which is more complete in certain aspects: for instance it comprises Odysseus’ adventures on the island of Scheria, where Phaeacians dwell; an episode which of course is absent from the *Great Apologue*, when the Phaeacians were his audience. Despite

the unquestionable significance that the Great Apologue has into the Homeric plot, it consists of an incomplete circuit. In juxtaposition, the map that Odysseus assembles when he is back to his home, the Minor Apologue, completes his 'periplous'. Odysseus full circuit's starting point had been Ithaca -when had to leave for Troy-, and so its endpoint could not be any place but Ithaca: as the full circuit is achieved when the navigator arrives at the point of departure. He returns to his homeland and eventually offers to the culture of his origin the map he assembled, which contains cultural, topographical, and ontological information. Before returning to his homeland his 'periplous' map was 'in limbo': if he would not have returned, his map would have been condemned to oblivion, and his adventures in the Unknown would not have added fame to his *kleos* as a Trojan hero. The notion of 'periplous' [περίπλους] is thus implied into the Homeric Odyssey, although this term has acquired its geographical substance subsequently (it usually is associated to the first renowned historic navigators [5th to 3rd centuries BC], while referring to both their round-trips as well as the maps they produced of these trips).

I suggest that the outstanding significance of the completion of a full '*periplous*' by Odysseus' return to his familiar grounds is pinpointed into the Homeric Odyssey primarily by the plot and secondarily by a significant metaphor. The experiential investigator returns to his homeland, but on one hand has to establish the order he seeks for- by killing the suitors of his wife Penelope first-; on the other hand he has to feel the affection and continuous loyalty of Penelope, before starting the narration of his 'periplous' map. Odysseus chooses to narrate his full Nostos map only when it is asserted that his culture of origin is still familiar and pertinent to his point of view, despite his long absence. He is certain for this condition as he lies in his most personalized space, his own bed, the one he had crafted himself. It is remarkable that Odysseus' bed is not a simple piece of furniture, it is made by an olive tree trunk which remained fixed in earth by its roots [book 23, 184-204]: precisely the fact that he found his bed rooted as it was before departing for the War of Troy, functions for him as a significant evidence that reveals how he is still considered as an indispensable part of his culture of origin. This is when the wandering navigator feels that he has returned to the culture he belongs to, and therefore the journey's account, the map the navigator has assembled, is a knowledge he is willing to share with the culture he has been -and still is- part of. Odysseus thus becomes "*the very first explorer-narrator in the literary world*" [Romm, 1992, 183].

Different Modes of Circumscription: Innovations Introduced by Odysseus' Map [Results]

Odysseus' in situ investigations of Unknown areas have questioned the cosmological limits of the world, as he is presenting himself as someone who sailed in the current of Oceanus, and reached the threshold of Hades (the Underworld) [Odyssey book 11]. It is clearly mentioned by Circe, whose advice Odysseus has followed meticulously, that he should cross Oceanus: "*ἀλλ' ὅπῳτ' ἄν δῆ νηϊ δι' Ἰκεανοῖο περήσῃς*" ("*but when in your ship you have now crossed the stream of Oceanus.*" [book 10, verse 508]). What is therefore clearly enunciated in the Odyssey is that Odysseus has sailed to the seas that are adjunct to Oceanus, close to the circular limit itself, and arrived to the point of somehow crossing this ultimate border. It should be mentioned, on the verb '*περήσῃς*' used by Circe (translated by Murray using the verb 'cross'-), that it has the same root as '*πόρος*' -'poros'-, which according to Detienne and Vernant means passage, ford, or crossing bridge "*A path traced on an impassable sea, 'poros' signalizes as much the crossing of a river, the fording of a stream, or a bridge without which the river cannot be traversed; and thus would be qualified as 'apératos', insurmountable.*" [Detienne & Vernant, 1974, 274]. If we accept that Odysseus traversed the 'river Oceanus', breaking the permeability of the absolute circle which marked the limits of the world, that would render the ultimate limit passable: this is indeed the introduction of a significant rupture into the circular cosmological border. If Odysseus indeed introduced a rupture to the circular limit of the world, the same limit which was

presented as an unbreakable on the shield of Achilles, his achievement can only be considered as a revolutionary innovation. The inscription of the break of Oceanus as a new layer, superimposed on the divine cosmological scheme of Achilles' shield, reveals the potentiality of forthcoming mortal travelling investigators, who by their experiential maps can challenge the static cosmological schemes, and introduce changes to the way the world had been mapped so far.

Yet some Homerists suggest that the 'crossing of Oceanus' might not have been a rupture of the limit, a transversal passage to the other side of the border of the world: "but this probably means only that he should 'coast' along the shore from which he embarked, not that he should seek a new land beyond Ocean." [Romm, 1992, 15]. Thus, if we consider that Odysseus does not break the border, he indeed enters and sails into the very border itself, river Oceanus. In this case his track in the area of the cosmological borderline could be traced not as a rupture, but as a trail along the flow of Oceanus, an arc-shaped water path which is part of the circular border of the world. Travelling along a segment of the border of the world, Odysseus meets the inhabited land of the Kimmerians, and the shore where the entrance to the Underworld is situated. Thus, Odysseus' map attributes certain content to Oceanus, and simultaneously the function of separating the world of the living from that of the dead. This is a sort of information on Oceanus that the map of Hephaestus lacks. Oceanus, which is only a borderline zone of the shield of Achilles, according to Odysseus is a wider area that comprises shores and inhabitants [i.e. the Kimmerians]. Odysseus' map triggers thus the questioning of the nature of the cosmological border.

Through this additional information on Oceanus provided by Odysseus –who incorporates in his narration Circe's map of that specific area-, the shores defined as in direct relation to the area of cosmological border, are not completely undefined and vague, but in the contrary they bear landscape characteristics: "But when in your ship you have now crossed the stream of Oceanus, where it is a level shore and the groves of Persephone –tall poplars and willows that shed their fruit- there beach your ship by the deep eddying Oceanus, ..." [Book 10, verses 508-511, translation by Murray]

I alternatively tend to interpret the 'Unknown world' where Odysseus finds himself lost into, as a detached archipelago, which is situated within the 'Terra Cognita', thus within the inner side of Oceanus' circumference. Within the inner part of the world, from the 'known' side of the circular Oceanus, a detached hidden cluster of 'terras incognitas' exists, populated by 'unfamiliar' cultural expressions: the Land of the flower-gatherers Lotus-Eaters, the Land of the cave-dwelling Cyclopes, the mobile island Aeolia, the citadel Tepeylos of the Laestrygonians, the forested island of Circe, etc. The unknown archipelago, this cluster of unknown landscapes, if indeed placed somewhere among the 'Terra Cognita' by Odysseus' map, dismantles the deterministic scheme of Hephaestus' cosmological scheme according to which only familiar cultural expressions are present in the 'known world' bound by the circle of Oceanus. The circle of earth's border moves further, and the radius of the circumference expands, to the point as to enclose Odysseus' adventurous navigations in the unknown archipelago.

In all of the above approaches of the 'Great Apologue', we have signaled significant innovative elements, introduced by Odysseus. All of the innovative elements pertain to the different possible ways by which Odysseus widens the horizons –or the known limits- of the world. His contribution as an experiential cartographer initiates indeed alterations to the cosmological model: what occurs during Odysseus' itinerary is the least an expansion –if not a rupture- of the ring of Oceanus. This expansion can be understood in a multitude of ways: either as a widening of the radius of the circumference in a way that it can encompass an archipelago with a multitude of different landscapes and respective cultural expressions; or as the widening of the zone of the ultimate border into a vaster area that comprises inhabited shores, landscapes, and therefore possibly places to investigate further.

The Vector of Time in Circumscription, prior to the ‘*Periodos Gēs*’: [Conclusions]

The understanding of Oceanus as an area, instead of as a space-less boundary, can be accentuated if we take under account the approach of the ‘Great Apologue’ -or Odysseus’ map as I would rather state- from the point of view of the Alexandrian geographer Eratosthenes (275-195 BC) who suggested that Odysseus’ narrative map is based on a fictive journey, which is in purpose placed beyond the limits of the ‘Terra Cognita’. Eratosthenes according to Strabo, suggested that Homer has chosen to “develop each incident in the direction of the more awe-inspiring and fantastic” [...]’ [Strabo via Kim, 2010, 58]. Eratosthenes view was subsequently supported by the Alexandrian Homeric Scholars Aristarchus and Apollodorus, during the 1st c. BC, concerning the non-geographical but fictional properties of Odysseus’ narrated adventures. Apollodorus used the term *exōkeanismos*’. In this instance, the term ‘*exōkeanismos*’ (a synthesis of the notion ‘*exo*’=out, and Oceanus), can be interpreted as the pulling of the epic plot out of the limits of the scientifically provable, beyond the border of the known, or deliberately into the Unknown itself, which can be fictional as it is unverifiable. [Romm, 1992, 185-189] Yet, these views are of course formulated when the scientific geographical knowledge was widening, and the mapping techniques headed to their refinement. Eratosthenes from Cyrene, one of the pioneers of scientific geography, “*had effectuated the first [documented] measurement of the Circumference of Earth (250BC), and in 240BC he traced the map on which Strabo’s description was based.*” [Livieratos, 1998, 53]. His map took evidence from the accounts-periploes of explorers and travelers such as Pytheas, Nearchos, Ophellas, and was included in his geographic oeuvre ‘*Γεωγραφικά*’. [Livieratos, 1998, 53]. We could argue that there is an anachronistic aspect in these critiques as formulated by the Alexandrians. As the itinerary of Odysseus, it seems, has been compared to the itineraries of proto-scientific travelling-explorers, instead of being understood as a primal, archetypical, pre-scientific, empirical attempt of investigation, focusing precisely at Unknown areas of the world in order to express the willingness to expand the cosmological borders.

If we attentively explore Odysseus’ map and the different elements it encompasses, we can find that not only Odysseus but also the Argonauts, in a previous mythical time, had almost reached –or, if differently understood, sailed into- the border of the Terra Cognita. According Circe’s map of the archipelago area that surrounded her island, the mythological Argonauts, and their renowned vessel Argo “*Ἄργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα*” [Book 12, 70] had passed from the *Plangtae* rocks, the ‘*beetling crags*’ [Book 12, 59], which are situated in an area close to the *πόρος-poros* (bridging passage) where the boat of Odysseus had reached the flow of Oceanus before arriving to the threshold of Hades.

The retrieval of this pre-geographical finding in the map of Odysseus, links his narration and his circuit with the vector of time: on one hand referring to the previous –mythical- nautical circuits, and on the other exhibiting the accumulation of cosmographical knowledge – though mythical - which occurs from navigation, especially involving areas which are adjacent to the ‘known’ cosmological border.

The ‘crossroad’ between Odysseus’ and the Argonauts routes in the vicinity of Oceanus, consists of a pseudo-historic context where epic and myth are entangled; but it also forms an evidence, on which we can base an argument: indeed, it seems that both mythical and epic explorative journeys –more or less fictional, more or less ‘geographical’- are focusing in areas which pertain to the limits, or the borders of the ‘Known World’, expressing perhaps –as I have previously suggested- ‘*the willingness to expand the cosmological borders*’. At this point it should be emphasized that Argo was a vessel that achieved a full mythical periplous, and therefore that the Argonauts who returned to the places and cultures they originated from did provide the fundament –in a mythical way- for their adventurous travel to be renowned.

The challenging of the nature of Oceanus as a static cosmological boundary which in the Iliad sealed the Terra Cognita, is an innovative tendency that is introduced in the Odyssey. This innovation must have been fundamental for the forthcoming epistemological leap, which led from the epic 'periplous' of Odysseus to the historical 'periplous'. The proto-scientific exploring journeys and their respective accounts, by Hanno, Scylax, and the subsequent explorers, brought about the potential of an expansion of the border of the Terra Cognita: since it had to encompass additional data on newly investigated parts of the previously unknown. The first geographical treatise and map-based on numerous 'periploes' followed, under the name of "round-the-Earth-journey" or '*periodos gēs*', by Hecataeus. [Livieratos, 1998, 46] Hecataeus map preserved Oceanus as a circular boundary, as a residual of the obsolete scheme rooted in mythical cosmology. As Jacob has stated on the term '*periodos gēs*': "What is thus indicated is the object of representation, the earth's contour, with an intellectual and methodological connotation, the circular form of earth (and the map) being the expression of totality and order." [Jacob, 2006, 19]

Implications

Odysseus discovers in the Unknown archipelago many different ways of inhabiting the landscape. The geographer C.O. Sauer has suggested that from a Geographical point of observation, landscape reveals the ways the dwellers have been related to their area: "The choice of things to be observed must remain a matter of individual judgment as to the significant relationships between area and population." [Sauer, 1924, 31]. The ways Odysseus perceived the inhabited landscapes, appear having affinity with cultural landscape observation according to Sauer: "*The works of men express themselves in the cultural landscape*" [Sauer, 1969-1925-, 333] Odysseus' landscape descriptions are crucial, as he often tried to deduce conclusions on the kind of inhabitants of each area, based on what he sees from a secure distance. One of his primal criteria is the quest for signs of agriculture, precisely cultivated lands: "Then I climbed to a rugged height, a point of outlook, and there took my stand; from there no works of men or oxen appeared" [Book 10, 96-98]. Odysseus chooses this criterion as 'a man that lives by bread' [Book 9, 191] is generally belonging to a harmless society. Apart from the material cultural traces on the landscape's surface, Odysseus also describes some immaterial cultural structures and habits of the inhabitants: as the affection the Cyclops has for his flock, the taming of wild fauna by Circe, the welcoming social bonds of the Lotus-Eaters, etc. He thus discovers and describes a magnificent cultural multitude, and testifies that even in the area close to the flow of Oceanus the landscape is inhabited. According to a modern definition of '*Ecumene*', this word can be contemporarily used to designate areas and regions which are habited by sedentary populations, regardless of their cultural characteristics: "the permanently inhabited portion of the earth as distinguished from the uninhabited or temporarily inhabited area" (Merriam Webster online dictionary). Conforming to this interpretation of '*Ecumene*', Odysseus discovers in his experiential investigation that the Unknown archipelago equally could be part of the *Ecumene*: as the majority of the shoreline landscapes Odysseus encounters have sedentary dwellers, nevertheless exhibiting surprising cultural traces. The point of view of Romm is entirely different, he considers as *Ecumene*-or *Oikoumenē*- only the cultural expressions which are familiar to the audience of the Homeric epics: "*At the furthest remove from the Oikoumenē the poem is assumed to become utterly fabulous, so that it must be approached on entirely different terms than a factual or utilitarian treatise.*" [Romm, 1992, 187]. Instead of making a non-productive comparison between the culture he originates from, and the cultural expressions he encounters, Odysseus focuses on seeking traces in the landscape that provide evidence of the relationship between the dwellers and the land they inhabit.

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