Abstract
Homer's Odyssey should be seen as one of the very oldest subjects for historical maps, since Ortelius included this topic—besides a map of the journeys of St. Paul and Aeneas—in his Parergon, late in the 16th century. From then until now more than 30 attempts have been made to trace the journey of Ulysses on a map. Among the authors were translators of the Odyssey (Johann Heinrich Voss, Samuel Butler, Victor Bérard), other classical scholars (Germain, Moulinier, Pocock), archaeologists (Dörpfeld), historians of geography (Forbiger), geographers (Herrmann), cartographers (Spruner), historians (Wolf) and sailors (Bradford, Severin), as well as scientists (von Baer), jurists (Steuerwald), ethnologists (Pellech) and amateurs. Some of the maps can be discussed as serious attempts at reconstruction while others are merely odd, taking Ulysses to, for instance, Florida or China. Some of the maps used geographical maps of their own time, others drew more or less imaginary maps trying to reconstruct the world of Homer. The paper is based on a collection of such maps gathered over the last 40 years. Fundamental problems of tracing Homer’s Odyssey are raised. In the two books, which I have published on Homeric geography (Die wirkliche Reise des Odysseus. Zur Rekonstruktion des Homerischen Weltbildes, 3rd ed. 1990, Hatte Homer eine Karte?, 1997) I have developed a new method of reconstructing the Homeric world. This paper analyses the different types of other attempts to map Homer’s Odyssey.

Over the last forty years I have collected in all roughly 80 theories on the geography of Homer’s Odyssey. About 30 of them were illustrated by maps. Only these are the basis of my present article, but within this small space I can do no more than classify various types of these maps and present the most important ones in detail.¹

In antiquity there existed various identifications of the places of the adventures of Ulysses, but no original map has been
preserved. Nevertheless, the Geographia of Ptolemy mentions some of these names (*Lotophagitis, Circaeaum promontorium, Sirenusae insulae, Scylaeum promontorium*) and, like other places, it gives their longitude and latitude. And when, in the 15th and 16th century, Ptolemaean maps were drawn, these places were shown in Africa, near Terracina in Latium, off the coast of Campagna, and in the Straits of Messina.

![Map of Ulysses' Wanderings](image)

**fig. 1: Abraham Ortelius, “The Wanderings of Ulysses” (Antwerp, 1597).**

The oldest known map of the wanderings of Ulysses was the work of the cartographer and humanist Abraham Ortelius in 1597; it was included in his *Parergon,* a work that accompanied his atlas. It can be said that this map of the Odyssey was –along with the maps of the voyages of Aeneas and the voyages of St. Paul– one of the first maps, if not the very first, of a particular historical subject. Ortelius chose the places he showed as the sites of the adventures of Ulysses from the various identifications that he found in ancient authors. For instance, in identifying Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians, with Corcyra, the northermmost of the Ionian Islands, he followed a legend mentioned by Thucydides.
Ortelius's map also included *Ogygia, Calypsonis habitaculum*. According to Homer, the isle of Calypso was situated west of Scheria. There is a difficulty, however: no such island exists west of Corcyra. Hence Pseudo-Skylax (before 338 B.C.) and Pliny believed in a non-existent island of Calypso in the Ionian Sea off Cape Lakinion near Croton in Southern Italy. Not doubting the ancient identification of the home of the Phaeacians in Corcyra, Ortelius thus followed this ancient emergence of the island of Ogygia near Croton.

This imaginary island of Calypso off the coast of Calabria had a long life. It still appears in serious atlases of the 19th century like those of Kutscheit in 1844 and of Philips around 1860. Even in 1982, Lunetto Vercillo still tried to locate this non-existent island in a sand-bank 420 by 90 metres in size, 2 or 3 metres below sea level. One might well wonder, however, why Ulysses mourned for eight years on this shoal instead of crossing the 200 metres to the coast of mainland Italy.

The French geographer Pierre Duval, in 1677, has the credit for being the first to try to map not just the places of the various adventures of Ulysses, but his whole itinerary. This led, however, to various difficulties: in order to make Ulysses reach the non-existent isle of Calypso off the coast of Calabria, Duval changed not only the facts of geography, but also the text of Homer. Duval left out the second passage of Ulysses through the Straits of Scylla and Charybdis (Messina), although Homer explicitly says that Ulysses, after his shipwreck, was driven back through the terrible Charybdis from south to north,9 that is into the Tyrrhenian Sea and not into the Ionian Sea.

A third stage in mapping the Odyssey was achieved by Johann Heinrich Voss, the author of the most popular German translation of Homer. He added not only notes on the geography of the Odyssey, but also a map, published for the first time in his second edition of the epic in 1793 and revised in the edition of 1806. In contrast to Ortelius and Duval, Voss did not use a map of his own time, but drew the "Homeric World" in a circular form, distorting the actual coastlines, and even inventing non-existent new ones. While Greece and the eastern

fig. 3: Johann Heinrich Voss, “Homeric World Table” (Altona, 1793, revised version: Tübingen 1806, Greek translation: Athen, 1813).
Mediterranean are drawn fairly realistically, further west we can only say that Homer's Thrinakia more or less resembles Sicily, and that all the rest is imaginary geography. The itinerary itself is a chaotic wandering around, backwards and forwards. The island of Aeolus even occurs twice on the map, as Voss believed it had moved from one place to another after Ulysses had left it for Ithaca before being driven back there by a storm. Voss's circular map had great influence and was copied several times, as in Greek (1813). It underwent several variations throughout the 19th century, but also in the 20th.  

Among these maps the one produced by the historical geographer Albert Forbiger, in 1842, was the closest to the Homeric text, although he did not try to draw the path of the route between the various places of the itinerary.

One strange variant of Voss's method of mapping the Odyssey included a hypothetical seaway from the western Mediterranean through Italy and the Balkans (with Ogygia, the isle of Calypso) into the Black Sea (with Circe and the Cimmerians). The first author to draw a map of this kind was William E. Gladstone, the later British Prime Minister, who published it in 1858. Others drew maps on this model, among them the Baltic scientist Karl Ernst von Baer in 1873. Von Baer, however, omitted the Ocean surrounding the whole world and while Gladstone left southern Italy (Apulia and Calabria) undisturbed, for von Baer the whole of Italy and Sicily became a phantom, represented only by dotted coastlines. On the other hand, mindful that he was a subject of the Russian Empire he entered the real coastlines of the Black Sea and the Crimea. All the same, he still supposed that the ship of Ulysses crossed, without any problem, the whole of the Balkans in both directions. Von Baer was an outstanding embryologist, but was clearly not so good at cartography.

The English translator of the Odyssey Samuel Butler in 1897 had the precociously modern idea that Homer was a woman. In Homeric cartography he reverted to a realistic map. In contrast to those who believed that Homer had little or no knowledge of Sicily, Butler claimed that this was where almost
fig. 4: William E. Gladstone, “Map of the Outer Geography of the Odyssey” (Oxford, 1858).
all the adventures of Ulysses took place. Butler removed even Ithaca from the Ionian Islands, and placed the home of Ulysses at Trapani at the western point of Sicily. Butler’s theory was restated, though altered in some details, in 1957 by the New Zealand classicist Lewis G. Pocock.¹⁶

One year after Butler’s work, in 1898, an anonymous author—with the so far unsolved pseudonym Eumaeus—maintained that Ulysses had circumnavigated the whole of Africa and had even discovered America.¹⁷ The author was the first to use the ocean currents to trace the route of Ulysses. This little book is extremely rare and the only known copy is in the British Library. Although written as though it was to be taken seriously, it seems to be a satire on the successive weird attempts to map the Odyssey.

fig. 5: Eumaios, “Ulysses as circumnavigator of Africa and discoverer of America” (Leipzig, 1898).
Nevertheless, in 1925, even the distinguished archaeologist Wilhelm Dörpfeld, drew a map of Homer’s world in which Ulysses reached not only Tunisia (Lotos-Eaters, Cyclops) and Italy (Thrinakia), but also the southernmost point of Africa where he located the port Telepylus in the land of the Laestrygonians and -like Eumaios- “Aiaia,” the island of Circe.¹⁸

In 1926 Albert Herrmann, a professor of geography at Berlin, published two different maps, distinguishing between the original wanderings of Ulysses and the Homeric world of some centuries later. For the first he drew a realistic map of the Mediterranean between Tunisia (with the Lotos-Eaters, the Cyclops and the Phaeacians), Lampedusa (Thrinakia) and Greece. His second map, of the Homeric world, followed Voss in its circular form and Gladstone and von Baer in the hypothetical seaway from the west through the Balkans north of Greece to the isle of Circe and the Sirens in the Black Sea, and Scylla and Charybdis in the Bosphorus. The Cyclops, Laestrygonians, and Cimmerians lived at the fringe of a land on the inner side of the surrounding circular Ocean.¹⁹

On the other hand, in 1927-29 the distinguished French classicist, editor and translator of the Odyssey, Victor Bérard, published several serious books on the voyages of Ulysses which he located in the seas around Tunisia and Italy. His main innovation was an island near Gibraltar, in which he saw Ogygia, the island of Calypso. Bérard’s map, based on real geography, was widely disseminated, not only in French school-books, but also abroad. Bérard was the first of these scholars to have travelled himself to all these places and in 1933 he even published an album of photographs.²¹ However, despite all his erudition, there are several weaknesses in his theory. We need mention only two. Maintaining the identification of the isle of Aeolos with the volcano Stromboli, Bérard had to omit the fact that, according to Homer, Ulysses reached Ithaca directly from Aeolus with a westerly wind, and was driven back from Ithaca straight to Aeolus – which could not have been Stromboli, since Italy lies between Ithaca and the Lipari Islands. Again, Bérard placed the isle of the Sirens near Naples and asked himself how
far it would be from there to Messina with the Straits of Scylla and Charybdis; he expressed surprise, knowing that Homer described this distance as a matter of few hours. But instead of doubting his own identification of the isle of the Sirens, he blamed Homer for being “extremely inexact.”

In contrast to Bérard, but following in part the 19th century model of Gladstone and von Baer, the French scholar Gabriel Germain in 1954 devised a “scheme of the navigations of Ulysses,” distinguishing sharply between the “monde géographique” (restricted to Greece, Turkey, and Egypt) and the surrounding entirely non-geographic world where most of the voyages and adventures of Ulysses took place.

A sort of a compromise between Bérard and Germain was offered by the French scholar Louis Moulinier in 1958. He extended the real coastlines from Greece to eastern Sicily (Thrinakia, Charybdis, Cyclops), southern Italy (Sirens, Scylla), Corsica (Laestrygonians), and Cyrenaica (Phaeacians). The other coastlines, represented by dotted lines, belonged to an imagined world, which allowed, for instance, a seaway from the region of Marseilles across the Alps and the Balkans to the Black Sea. Like Herrmann, Moulinier saw in the Odyssey a “double géographie,” making a distinction between the pre-Homeric geography of the old legends of Ulysses, and the Homeric geography of the poet’s
own time. However, Moulinier maintained that “Homer really wanted to localize the episodes of the Odyssey.”

After World War II several maps placed the Odyssey in the Atlantic and North Sea all the way up the British Isles to Iceland and Norway. The Swiss Wil, in 1950, opted for the North Sea and beyond to the Faeroe Islands and Iceland, the German editor Otto Zeller, in 1959, for the Straits of Gibraltar, the Azores, Norway and Heligoland. Zeller avoided drawing the actual route because this would show that the enormous distances he proposed cannot correspond to the relatively short distances in Homer. Gilbert Pillot, a Frenchman, in 1969, claimed to have discovered “a secret message in the Odyssey” seeing in it an itinerary over the Atlantic Ocean to Madeira, the Canary Islands, Iceland and the British Isles. Karl Bartholomäus, professor of archaeogeodesy, in 1977, tried to prove by astronomical calculations that the track from Calypso to the Phaeacians must lead from the Azores to Heligoland. The German high judge Hans Steuerwald, in 1978, sent Ulysses to Cornwall and Scotland. He explained that the wine produced on the isle of Circe— which according to him corresponds to one of the Hebrides— was Scotch whisky. The nuclear engineer Felice Vinci from Rome, in 1998, located the places of the Odyssey on the coasts between Denmark, Iceland and the White Sea. He argued that many Greek towns like Athens, Thebes and others were originally situated in Scandinavia and that the Greeks had brought these place-names—as well as the legends of Ulysses— from the North to the Mediterranean when they wandered to Greece in the 2nd millennium B.C.

Others confined themselves to the Mediterranean traditions. Ernie Bradford, in 1963, followed various traditional identifications of names in the Odyssey with places in the Mediterranean but enlivened them with his nautical experiences as a former officer of the British navy. Mauricio Obrégon, rector of the University of the Andes in Bogotà, Colombia, (1971) used an aeroplane to follow the routes in the Mediterranean, including Cyprus as the supposed Island of the Phaeacians.

A fascinating adventure was undertaken by Tim Severin, the
experienced Irish sailor, who had already followed the tracks of St. Brendan in a leather boat on the North Atlantic and the voyage of the Argonauts in a copy of a Bronze Age boat through the Black Sea. With the same galley for 20 oarsmen he started, in 1985, from Troy to find the track which a prudent sailor of the time of Ulysses would have taken to Ithaca.\textsuperscript{33} His “logical route” led from Cape Maléa to Cyrenaica, then to Crete and up the western coast of Greece. According to Severin, some hundred years after Ulysses, when Homer “was assembling the amalgamated version of the story” the Greeks sailed westwards, founded their colonies in Sicily and southern Italy, and located their folktales there. “Magna Grecia is precisely where they applied the tales to local features in their new homes.”\textsuperscript{34}

While Tim Severin’s travel with his boat around Greece resulted in the shortest reconstruction of the Odyssey, other authors developed fantastic routes across the world’s oceans. According to Henriette Mertz from Chicago, (1964) the currents of the Atlantic led Ulysses to the Sirens in Haiti and Cuba, then far to the north to Homer’s Island of the Sun between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in eastern Canada, over the Atlantic to Calypso’s cave on the Azores and back again to America to the country of the Phaeacians in Florida.35 The German sinologist Hubert Daunicht, in 1971, identified some of Ulysses’ adventures with Chinese fairy tales and then supposed that the events of the Odyssey took place in China, Korea and Japan.36 The climax of theories of this kind was reached in 1983, by the Viennese ethnologist Christine Pellech who argued that Ulysses had sailed right around the world. She saw no difficulty in Ulysses taking only 7 days to row from the Mediterranean to Norway, and then in a single day the whole way from Norway to Canada. She implied that Ulysses had discovered the Straits of Magellan and Australia!37

Because of the considerable differences between all these theories and their often bizarre identifications of places many scholars suppose that Homer did not refer to real geography at all, and that the places of the Odyssean adventures lie in the realm of poetry or the sea of fantasy. The famous Homeric scholar Moses I. Finley maintained that Homer had only incorrect and confused information on Italy or Sicily.38

Thus, in 1982, the National Geographic Magazine published a map of the “World of Homer” which was exact for Greece and the eastern Mediterranean, but which to the west of Greece scattered the locales of Ulysses’ adventures wholly at random in a sea of the imagination which omitted Italy as well as Sicily. The map does not even show an itinerary of Ulysses. If it did, one would wonder why he after all had to pass through the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis. On this map Ulysses could have easily circumnavigate either one. This is inconsistent, even for the map of a fairyland.
MAPPING HOMER'S ODYSSEY


To sum up, there are two parties or sides with little or no communication between them. One takes Homer's geographic reality for granted and discusses only the Where. The other party maintains that the Odyssey has nothing to do with real geography at all, and that the epic –west of Cape Maléa, Cythera and Ithaca– was played out in the realm of fancy. Neither case, however, has ever been proved.

My aim is not to develop theory number 81, but to settle the basic question whether Homer referred to real geography or not. I want to raise the question of the geography of the Homeric Odyssey to a serious level.

With this aim I developed a new method. First I conceived the route like a geometrical construction on a blank sheet of
paper, based solely on the nautical information (winds, stars, currents, time of travel) given by Homer himself, forgetting all ancient authorities, local traditions or former theories. Information technology experts call a scheme of this kind a planar graph.

The difficulty in identifying the places in the Odyssey, so far, was that Homer does not give both time and direction for all twelve of the distances. But in the geometrical construction of

![Diagram](image_url)

a triangle one does not need to know all three sides and all three angles: 50% of the information is sufficient to define the triangle. This makes it possible to reconstruct a theoretical voyage.

Secondly I projected this geometrical reconstruction onto the nautical map west of Greece. Now we could compare Homer's descriptions of the various places with reality. We did not look all over the world for the excellent harbour with a steep quay and a high castle, mentioned by Homer; we had to look only within a small area, defined by the planar graph.

This way we can get the answer. If there is no correspondence with geographic reality the fantasy-theory has been proved. If, however, there is significant correspondence with the real coastlines, currents, mountains, harbours, volcanoes, archaeological sites etc., Homer must have been referring to those places. In fact, the result of this procedure is a voyage from Troy and Cape Maléa to Tunisia, Malta, right round Sicily and across Italy. But I have to modify this conclusion. This can hardly have been the route of Ulysses, since Homer lived 400 years later. It is the route which Homer believed Ulysses had taken. Thus it was Homer in the 8th century B.C. who was the first we know who tried to locate the places in the Odyssey. Hence, whether or not they had really been visited by Ulysses, Homer's text contains the very first verbal sources for the coasts and lands he describes, several centuries before the next records that are preserved from Tunisia, Malta, Sicily and Italy.

In fact, Homer could well have known these coasts, as they are identical with the coasts in the west visited and settled by the Greek traders and colonists of his time. Homer describes all three routes between the western and the eastern Mediterranean: through the Straits of Tunis, through the Straits of Messina, and overland across Italy. These three routes correspond to the routes of the three Greek tribes who traded and settled in the west: the Dorians who tried to control the route southwards around Sicily, but who came into conflict with the Phoenicians who dominated both sides of the Straits of
Tunis, the Ionians who controlled the Straits of Messina, and the Achaeans who founded their colonies on both sides of the southern Italian peninsula and carried their wares overland.

The right-hand side of the map includes the so-called lying tales describing fictitious voyages of Ulysses to real places in the eastern Mediterranean. Together with the "real" voyage attributed to Ulysses in the west they represent the whole geographic world of Homer. It stretched not only eastward, but to the same extent also to the west.

It would take a longer work than this to explain all twelve staging-posts of the Odyssey, but I want to show briefly how the difficult problem of the Phaeacians has been solved. To find the country of the Phaeacians, authors have so far had to alter either Homer's text or the facts of geography. In fact it is not necessary to do either.

The problem of Scheria (Σχερίη), the country of the Phaeacians, lies in its relation to Scylla and Charybdis which have been placed since antiquity in the Straits of Messina. According to Homer, Ulysses had to cross the Straits twice, the first time from north to south, and then, after his shipwreck, from south to north: a "wind from the south" forced him "to run the gauntlet
of the dread Charybdis once more.” The land of the Phaeacians then was reached north of the Straits. The Phaeacians, however, conveyed Ulysses home without passing through the Straits a third time. Hence the land of the Phaeacians, from the viewpoint of Greece, was first situated beyond the Straits, but then on the nearer (the Greek) side. This problem seemed insoluble, because it was tacitly assumed that the shipwrecked Ulysses arrived in Scheria across the same sea as when he departed. This assumption is not necessary. There exists one country, which meets both conditions: what is now Calabria, situated between two seas, the Tyrrenian and the Ionian.

First argument. The shipwrecked Ulysses, who was beyond the Straits, could come ashore on the western coast of Calabria and he could embark from its eastern coast directly for Ithaca on the ship of the Phaeacians. If this interpretation is right, Homer must have included a walk across the isthmus. And this is exactly what the text says. Ulysses, who had lost his boat, walked for
three days from coast to coast. On the first day he went up (άναβας), and the third day he had to go down from the city to the boat and the sea (κατήλυθον). And the king of the Phaeacians knew that a shipwrecked sailor could have come either from the east or from the west (ή προς ήσπερίων ή έσπερίων ἀνθρώπων) of his country. This means that Homer’s Scheria lay between two seas, and that the land stretched from north to south.

Second argument. The land of the Phaeacians lay in the sea like a shield (γίγνεται). The coast-line of the isthmus of Calabria between the Gulf of Sant’Eufemia and the Gulf of Squillace is to be compared with the so-called dipylon-shield, a shield with two round indentations typical of the Homeric age. Obviously Homer was map-minded and in describing the country of the Phaeacians between the two gulfs compared it with such a shield with its two indentations. Here we understand why Homer said that Ulysses reached Scheria “where it was the narrowest (αγχιστον) for him”. This passage has generally been translated to mean that Ulysses came to the land of the Phaeacians where it was “nearest” to him. Because of this imprecise interpretation the passage has been considered a “superfluous, verse-filling supplement”. The Greek word αγχιστον, however, (etymologically related to Latin angustus = narrow) means “narrowest”, as well as “nearest”. And this is the translation that makes sense, referring to the shield-like shape of Calabria: The Homeric hero reached the land of the Phaeacians at the point where it was narrowest (i.e. the most convenient to cross it)!

Third argument. Although the country of the Phaeacians is in some translations called an island, the original Greek text never calls it “island“ (νῆσος), but Scheria (Σχερίη). And Scheria etymologically means “continent” – perfectly fitting Calabria. Even today, when people from Sicily go to Calabria they say they are going to the “continent.”

Final argument. According to Homer, when the shipwrecked Ulysses met Nausicaa washing at the river, she told him that there is a good harbour or bay (the Greek word λιμήν has both significations) on each side of the city, because the isthmus is
small (καλὸς δὲ λμὴν ἐκάτερθε πολὺς, λεπτὴ δ’ εὐσίθμη). It was however a long way from the city to the washing-pools (πολὺς γὰρ ἀπὸ πλυνοὶ εἰσὶ πολὺς), so far indeed that Nausicaa had to leave before sunrise and returned after sunset. From the washing-pools one could not yet see the second bay or gulf. However, after having left the river and come to two springs, i.e. to a watershed, Ulysses could see the two gulfs (λμέναις) at the same time; and he wondered at it (θαύμαζεν). Hence, the Phaeacians’ city (πολὶς) in Homer is situated not on the seashore, but at a watershed. There is only one place where Italy is so narrow that both seas can be seen from the same place. In the neighbourhood of Tiriolo and Marcellinara (Province of Catanzaro), situated on the watershed between the two gulfs, one can admire a fascinating panorama with the Tyrrhenian Sea on the left, and the Ionian Sea on the right. The two are only 30 km apart. Here, two rivers, the Amato (once: Lamato) and the Corace, the first flowing into the Tyrrhenian Sea, the second into the Ionian, and both navigable in antiquity, come within about 7 km of each other.

The situation is like a second town and isthmus of Corinth. The ancient town of Corinth was situated not on the seashore, but in the hinterland between two gulfs. Homer knew that “Corinth was rich because of its trade, since it is situated at the isthmus and dominates two gulfs, one of which is turned to Asia, the other to Italy.” (Ὅ δὲ Κόρινθος ἂρθευσ μὲν λέγεται διά τὸ ἐμπόριον, ἐπὶ τῷ Ἱστμῷ κείμενος καὶ δυεῖν λμένων κύριος, ὥσπερ ο μὲν τῆς Ἀσίας, ἵ ὅ τῆς Ἰταλίας ἐγγὺς ἐστι). The similar position of the isthmus dominated by the Phaeacians in Calabria will have been the basis of their trade and wealth. Even the Mount of Tiriolo resembles Acrocorinth. And the Greek settlers in Calabria came from the Gulf of Corinth. They knew how to make money out of the domination of an isthmus and commercial trade routes on two seas. Croton and Sybaris later became the richest colonies in Magna Graecia.

The eastern port of the Phaeacians must have been at the mouth of the river Corace, where Greek settlers later founded the colony of Skylleton (now Roccelletta). And according to Cassiodorus, who
was a native of Skylletion (Latin: Scyllaceum/ Scolacium), this city was said to have been founded by Ulysses. Skylletion is the only Greek colony in Magna Graecia to have made this claim. The present Italian town of Squillace is situated 8 km away from the coast because its inhabitants moved to the interior in the early Middle Ages. But the bay is still called the Gulf of Squillace. Even the thickly wooded mountains (άρεα σκιόεντα) and the shadowy wood (δάσκιον υλην), mentioned by Homer in the land of the Phaeacians, still exists as the Sila in Calabria. Its name known already in Roman times (Silva Sila) etymologically corresponds to Greek ὕλη. Being the largest forest in the whole Mediterranean region, it is “the wood wood” without a particular name.

There is, however, an objection. Does Homer not say, that the Phaeacians returned Ulysses home within one night? This is too short a time for a voyage of 200 nautical miles from Calabria to Ithaca. In fact, Homer says that the Phaeacians left at sunset and arrived in the morning; he does not say, however, that there was only one night between. But in a veiled way he hints at a journey lasting for two nights and the day between: “a deep sleep fell on the eyes of Ulysses, unwaking, delicious, the very counterfeit of death” (τω νήδυμος ύπνος ἐπὶ ἐλεφάντιν ἑπιπτε, νήγρετος, ἀρίστος, θαμάτω ἄγχιστα ἑοικώς). This unique phrase seems to allude to “the voyage through the realm of death.” In mythology this lasts for two nights with the day between. Alcestis, who went through the death for her husband, could not return to life before “the third morning” (τρίτον ... φάος). Christ, too, went through the realm of death from Good Friday evening to Easter Sunday morning. This corresponds to the prophecy of Hosea, a contemporary of Homer: “After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up.” While the ancients counted Sunday the third day after Friday, we count it the second. Hence, the death-like sleep of Ulysses seems to hint at a voyage lasting from evening to the second morning. Within this time of about 36 hours a boat really could reach Ithaca from Calabria.

Apart from this real mythology, not intelligible to everybody, Homer gives further information on the voyage of the
Phaeacians’ ship: “With unflatering speed she forged ahead, and
not even the wheeling falcon, the fastest thing that flies, could
have kept her company.”65 In a certain sense, Homer’s
information is exact; because with the speed of a falcon the
Phaeacians could have covered the distance to Ithaca even
within the single night as ordinarily understood! On the other
hand the unrealistic speed made this last journey of Ulysses
appear entirely imaginary. What might have been the reason for
Homer to conceal the exact distance? Probably the fact that the
knowledge of commercial trade routes was to be kept as a
valuable secret.

Our identification of Homer’s Odyssey has been adopted by
several German school books,66 and was the basis of two 45-
minute films on German Television.67 Scheria, the country of
the Phaeacians, this ideal land described by Homer, was no
fantasy, but nothing else but Greater Greece, Magna Graecia,
Ελλάς μεγάλη.

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2. ABRAHAM ORTELIUS, Parergon (Antverp, 1602). The map itself is included in a map of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, dated 1597.

3. THUCYDIDES I 25.

4. On his way from Calypso to Scheria, Ulysses had to keep the “the Great Bear, known also as the Wain, ... on his left hand, as he made across the sea” (Odyssey 5, 273, 277).

5. PSEUDO-SKYLAX, Peripl. 13 (Geographi Graeci Minores, ed. Carolus Müllerus, Parisiis 1861, vol. I p. 22). PLINIUS, Nat. Hist. III 96. Some years before Ortelius this non-existant island Calipus vel Ogygia near Croton appeared on Pirro Ligorio’s map Regni Neapolitani verissima secundum antiquorum et recentiorum traditionem descriptio 1574 (reproduced in: Immagini del Sud, a cura di ANTONIO VENTURA (Lecce: Capone, 1997), fig. 29, here with the date of 1558) and of the Map of Apulia, Calabria and Basilicata, published in 1589 by GERHARD MERCATOR.


7. LUNETTO VERCILLO, Omero, Gli itinerari marittimi dal Circeo a Troia nell’Odissea e nell’Iliade e il manuale omerico della navigazione a vela attraverso i Tirreno, lo Jonio e l’Egeo (Rende: L. Vercillo, 1982), 324-5.


9. ODYSSEY 12, 427f.


Mapping Homer's Odyssey


15. “The Voyages of Ulysses” by Samuel Butler, The Authoress of the Odyssey, where and when she wrote, who she was, the use she made of the Iliad, and how the poem grew under her hands (London: Longmans & Co., 1897). Map see Wolf 1990, 166.


17. Eumaios, Odysseus als Afrikaumsegler und Amerikaentdecker (Leipzig 1898).


24. Louis Moulinier, Quelques hypothèses relatives à la géographie d’Homère dans L’Odyssée (Aix-en-Provence: Centre d’études et de


39. This procedure is fully described in Wolf 1990 (see note 1).

41. Odyssey 12, 427 f.
42. Odyssey 5, 470.
43. Odyssey 13, 70.
44. Odyssey 8, 29.
45. Odyssey, 5, 281.
46. For a more detailed discussion of this question see Armin Wolf, Hatte Homer eine Karte? Beobachtungen über die Anfänge der europäischen Kartographie (Karlsruhe: Fachhechschule Karlsruhe, 1997), esp. pp. 27-44.
47. Odyssey, 5, 280.
49. Eduard Bornemann, Auswahl aus Homers Odyssee, (Frankfurt/Main, 1966), 56.
50. According to H. Frisk, Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (Heidelberg: Winter, 1960), Art. ἐπισχέω, Scheria means “uninterrupted coast, continent.” This signification is also a strong argument against the traditional identification of the land of the Phaeacians with the isle of Cercyra (cfr. above note 3).
51. Odyssey 6, 263-264. The hapaxlegomenon ἐσιθήμι often is translated as “entrance”; but for the small entrance of a harbour Homer says: ἀραιή ο’ εἰσοδος ἔστων (Od. 10, 90). The word ἐσιθήμι, also εἰσίθημι (Harleianus 5674) is etymologically related with ἰθμός/ἰσθμός, lat. isthmus. Cfr. Wolf 1997 (above note 46), 36-7.
52. Odyssey 6, 40.
53. Odyssey 6, 36 and 321. The washing did not take too much time. They wanted to finish quickly (τάχιστα), and washed speedily (θοώς). Odyssey 6, 32 and 92.
54. Odyssey 7, 129.
55. Odyssey 7, 43.
56. At the time of Aristotle (Polit. 1329b) the journey from coast to coast took half a day. Today the distance as the crow flies is 30 km.
57. Plinius, Nat. Hist. 3, 10: Amnes ibi navigabiles, Carcinus ... Cfr. Hülsem, Carcinus, Realencyclopädie III 2 (1899) col. 1586. This refers to the actual Corace. The Lamato (Amato) is about the same size.
58. Strabon VIII, 378.

60. Odyssey 5, 470 = 7, 268. 5, 279.


62. Euripides, Alcestis 1146.

63. Hosea 6, 2.

64. In the same way, the tides change for Homer three times within 24 hours, not twice. Odyssey 12, 105. Cfr. Wolf 1990, 61-2 (see note 1).

