

# Colonization in Homer's *Odyssey*

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## Abstract

Homer's *Odyssey* provides a rich commentary on expansion, cultural norms, and Greek values during the archaic period. This paper examines the *Odyssey* through the lens of colonization, analyzing the ethnographic descriptions of the Cyclopes, Phaeacians, and Laestrygonians, which depict conflicts faced by Greek colonial settlers during the 8th to 6th centuries BCE. The Cyclopes represent a "savage" society, showcasing the dangers Greeks may face in unknown lands. The Phaeacians elucidate a belief in Golden Age wealth and utopia lying elsewhere, particularly in the Near East. The Laestrygonians present a synthesis of these two archetypes, illustrating the unpredictable outcomes of colonial efforts. Through these ethnographic descriptions and the use of these societies in the text, Homer questions the necessity of Greek establishments abroad, and portrays the challenges associated with exploration in his era.

*Keywords: Odyssey, colonization, Homer, archaic Greece, ethnography, cultural encounters, Greek mythology.*

## Introduction

Many scholars have considered Odysseus as a colonizing figure. The current state of secondary scholarship on Homer's *Odyssey* includes significant contributions from scholars. For example, Carol Dougherty explores the interplay between colonization and cultural identity through Odysseus's encounters with the foreign Phaeacians and the suitors who inhabit his home Ithaca. Dougherty's analysis emphasizes how these episodes reflect broader themes of Greek colonization and cultural reassertion (Dougherty 125). This paper aims to expand upon this existing work by integrating these analyses into a cohesive argument, underscoring how Odysseus's interactions with the Phaeacians, Laestrygonians, and Cyclopes collectively highlight how his journey may serve as a warning from Homer that maintaining loyalty to one's own home is more valuable than engaging in relentless and unjust conquest.

The archaic period in Ancient Greece was a time marked by the formation of city-states and the codification of epic poetry as a means of preserving both heroic narratives and societal ideals. Homer's iconic works, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* emerged out of the Dark Ages, and they have stood the test of time, helping scholars uncover the values and questions behind Ancient Greek life.

The *Odyssey* tells the story of Greek hero Odysseus' journey home to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Within this epic, Homer presents ethnographic descriptions of those from various mythical lands, each a different archetype, including the Near East, the Golden Age, and "savage" societies. He paints the *Odyssey* within a colonial context, elucidating the climate of which he was writing in. Between the eighth and sixth centuries BC, Greeks formed colonies as far as the Black Sea in the east to Spain's coast in the west. They created vast trade networks, extending to the Near East and Northern Africa. These colonies, successful and independent, often encountered and conflicted with indigenous peoples. Odysseus and his crew encountered the Laestrygonians and Cyclopes near the beginning of their journey, and the Phaeacians at the end. Homer utilizes the idea of colonization, specifically regarding the Phaeacians, Laestrygonians, and Cyclopes in the *Odyssey*, to present the possibilities and consequences Greek settlers encountered in foreign lands, showcasing the modern scholarly debates on colonization during his era.

## Odysseus and the Cyclops

### The Primitive Nature of the Cyclops

The Cyclops scene represents a pivotal moment in Odysseus' adjustment to post-war realities, highlighting the tension between heroic codes of behavior and the need for adaptation within ancient Greek society. Throughout his explorations, Odysseus faces resistance from native populations, such as the Cyclopes in Book 9. His aspiration for colonization is ultimately met with challenges and setbacks, forcing him to adapt Greek values. Upon arriving at Polyphemus' island, Odysseus states the unknown inhabitants will either be god-fearing and xenia-following, or they will be savage and unjust:

“My loyal friends!’ Stay here, the rest of you, while with my boat and crew I go to check who those men are, find out if they are wild, lawless aggressors. Or the type to welcome strangers, and fear the gods”

(*Odyssey* 9.171-175).

Odysseus finds the Cyclopes to be the latter, as they partake in cannibalism, a major taboo in both the archaic and modern worlds. Cannibalism is a mark of savagery; the human race's refusal to do this shows their departure from animalistic ways. By having the Cyclopes partake in this, Homer dehumanizes them and separates them from Odysseus and his crew, portraying Odysseus as the civilized hero overcoming a ferocious monster.

### Greek Belief Systems

The Cyclopes and their lack of agriculture is another way in which they are portrayed as primitive. Odysseus states that:

“With heavy hearts we sailed along and reached the country of the reckless Cyclopes, lacking in customs. They put trust in gods, and do not plant their food from seed, nor plow, and yet the barley, grain, and clustering wine-grapes all flourish there, increased by rain from Zeus”

(*Odyssey* 9.106-111).

The island of the Cyclopes is a paradise, depicted as a place of beauty and abundance that juxtaposes the Greek's natural landscape. Homer writes, "with boats they could have turned this island into / a fertile colony, with proper harvests" (*Odyssey* 9.130-131). While everything the Cyclopes has comes from the gods, the Greeks were forced to work hard to obtain wealth due to a lack of natural resources. This falls in line with the Greek golden age trope, as described by Hesiod in his *Works and Days*:

"First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods."

(*Works and Days* lines 109-120).

In Hesiod's "*Works and Days*," the golden age is depicted as a time when people lived in harmony, free from sorrow, toil, and hardship. They enjoyed abundant food from the earth without any effort and lived in a state of perpetual happiness and peace, much like gods. When they died, it was a peaceful, sleep-like transition. This idyllic period was characterized by ease, which is ever present in Odysseus' description of the Cyclopes land.

Human intrusion is seen as a violation on this island, and it would lead to the loss of paradise. Odysseus' positive attitude towards intrusion stems from his past experiences of appropriation during wartime. He views the island as a potential conquest, reflecting a heroic mindset. In his narrative he portrays the island as a possible colony, and the emphasis is on what the island could become rather than its current state. This ultimately elucidates Odysseus' subjective perspective.

Nevertheless, Odysseus comes to Polyphemus hoping for guest gifts, even though his men felt he should leave:

"My crew begged, 'Let's us grab some cheese and quickly drive the kids and lambs out of their pens and down to our swift ships, and sail away across the salty water!' That would have been the better choice. But I refused. I hoped to see him, and found out if he would give us gifts.

(*Odyssey* 9.220-230).

In this passage, Odysseus remains trusting that the creatures he meets on the island will hold the values he does. Despite the danger that looms in the air, and the possibilities that could occur when meeting new groups, Odysseus is naive to what will occur. Odysseus supplicates to Polyphemus, and he invokes the language of hospitality:

"We are Greeks, come here from Troy. The winds have septe us off in all directions across the vast expanse of sea., off course from our planned route back home. Zeus willed it so. We are proud to be the men of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, whose fame is greatest under the sky, for sacking that vast city and killing many people. Now we beg you, here at your knees, to grant a gift, as is the norm for hosts and guests. Please sir, my lord: respect the gods. We are your suppliants, and Zeus is on our side, since he takes care of visitors, guest-friends, and those in need.

(*Odyssey* 9.259-271).

Odysseus reminds Polyphemus, the cyclops whose cave they are invading, that Zeus is the protector of *xenia*, and encourages him to respect the Gods, by preparing Odysseus and his crew a meal and taking care of them. However, Polyphemus turns traditional societal norms on their head by eating the men instead of preparing them a meal. Here, Homer presents the dangers of overseas exploration in terms of a large, savage, monster who traps Odysseus in his cave, and partakes in grave taboos, with no regard to the Gods. Polyphemus eats the crew members raw, instead of cooking them. This is another way he shows

his divergence from human civilization, as humans differ from animals in how they prepare their food. He presents the possible consequences of colonization for colonizers, as Odysseus' attempts to establish dominance and friendship with this mysterious island's inhabitants lead to crises and conflicts. The failure of colonial endeavors in book 9 reflects the difficulty of reconciling past values with new realities in unknown lands.

Odysseus' own behavior undermines his own claims of being a respected guest, and his actions contradict the norms of the Greek *xenia*. Without permission, Odysseus chooses to wait inside Polyphemus' cave, consuming the Cyclops' food. Moreover, Odysseus' confusion regarding his status as a warrior, supplicant, or one protected by Zeus reflects his uncertainty in the situation despite normally being such a "composed" leader. He has no idea what he is encountering when he meets the Cyclops. Therefore, the Cyclops' disregard for divine authority challenges Odysseus' assumptions about the consequences of his actions. Divine intervention is implied in Odysseus' narration, justifying their actions as ordained by the gods. However, his anticipation of civilized hospitality reflects his subjective perspective, presuming the presence of *xenia* despite being faced with a 'monstrous' Cyclops.

## Violence

Violence is also a major theme within colonization. The association between colonialism and violence is explicit as Odysseus imagines the olive tree as a potential weapon. Odysseus also inebriates the Cyclops with undiluted wine, leading to his eventual downfall. He provides a gruesome description of the Cyclops' drunken state, emphasizing his vulnerability. Cyclops recognizes and appreciates the quality of the wine offered by Odysseus, showing that the Cyclops demonstrates some level of sophistication. However, this is undermined by his consuming the wine neat rather than mixed with water as a civilized Greek would (leading to his inebriation). Nevertheless, Odysseus' use of deception and manipulation further complicates his portrayal as a civilized hero. He plans his revenge and escape by using the Cyclops' own club against him, foregoing normal values and behaviors. (*Odyssey* 9.375-390) Therefore, the text presents Odysseus as a civilized hero battling a primitive enemy, but his behavior remains equivocal.

Blinding the Cyclops represents a shift from heroic confrontation to strategic deception, and Odysseus' actions reflect a departure from traditional heroic behavior, indicating adaptation to new challenges.

## Odysseus and the Phaeacians

In stark contrast to the Cyclopes, the Phaeacians and their land are represented as a cross between the idealized potential wealth of the Near East and a Golden Age society. King Alcinous' glittering palace and the stunning beauty of Phaeacia are deliberately contrasted with the simplicity of the Cyclopes' land. Although both groups are descendants of Poseidon, they embody vastly different possibilities within related communities, showing the exceedingly varied peoples one can encounter during colonization.

Despite the Phaeacians being the last stop *Odyssey* makes before returning home, Homer puts their description cleverly alongside that of the Cyclopes and other foreign creatures. Before he comes to the Phaeacian land, Odysseus poses the question: "What is this country I have come to now? / Are all the people wild and violent, / or good, hospitable, and god-fearing" (*Odyssey* 6.119-121). Like in Book 9, Homer uses this chapter to showcase what Greeks may encounter when colonizing a new city.

## The Near East

Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer's *Odyssey* examines the connections Homer draws between Near East wealth and the Phaeacians. Earlier, in the text, Menelaus states that he attained wealth through his travels, which meant trading in prominent centers in the Near East. Daugherty suggests that Menelaus' wealth may foreshadow Alcinous, the Phaeacian king's wealth. She writes,

"If Menelaus' wealth comes from the trading centers of the Near East, and if his marvelous palace foreshadows that of Alcinous, what does this suggest about Alcinous' palace? Are we not meant to recognize, prompted by Telemachus' encounter at Sparta, the Near Eastern origins of Alcinous' wealth as well? In other words, the image of a fantastic, idealized Phaeacia draws on the real historical experience of Greeks visiting, living,

and trading in the Near East as well as on mythical Golden Age traditions of prosperity”

(Daughtery 106).

The architecture of Alcinous’ palace is also meant to embody Near Eastern societies. In their commentaries for this text, W.W. Merry and J. Riddle made connections between the Phoenicians city of Tyre and the topography of Phaeacia described in the *Odyssey* (Merry et al). H.L. Lorimer also suggested that the metal-plated walls, doors, doorways, and the dogs of Hephaestus may be inspired by the rams and sphinxes in Thebes at the Temple of Amenophis III. (Lorimer 108). Therefore, Phaeacia is meant to represent the possibility archaic Greeks saw of fending immense wealth, similar to the Near East, and a Golden Age in far off lands.

## Greek Settlements

Although the Phaeacians evoke images of how Greeks imagine Near East cities, they also recall Greek colonial settlements. Like the Greeks, the Phaeacians abide by the policy of xenia, and treat foreigners like Odysseus well. They treat him like a “son of Zeus,” meaning a man they recognize to be of a wealthy and ruling class background:

Then white-armed Nausicaa replied, ‘Well, stranger, you seem a brave and clever man; you know that Zeus apportions happiness to people, to good and bad, each one as he decides. Your troubles come from him, and you must bear them.

But since you have arrived here in our land, you will not lack for clothes or anything a person needs in times of desperation. I will show you the town. The people here are called Phaeacians, and I am the daughter of the great King Alcinous, on whom depends the strength and power of our people.

(*Odyssey*, 6.186-197).

Princess Nausicaa conveys fundamental aspects of Phaeacian society that align with the Greek value of xenia, the sacred law of hospitality. Nausicaa makes a reference to Zeus’s distribution of happiness regardless of a person’s virtues, stating, “to good and bad,

each one as he decides” (*Odyssey* 6.168-169). This statement reflects the Phaeacians’ belief in the gods and suggests a belief in a worldview where divine will is supreme and often beyond human understanding; Nausicaa illustrates that this belief in the gods influences the Phaeacians in their acceptance of not only foreign visitors but also one’s own misfortunes. This acknowledgment of divine interference in one’s own life underscores the Phaeacians’ shared values with the broader Greek world.

Moreover, Nausicaa’s response to Odysseus also embodies the principles of xenia. Unlike Polyphemus, Nausicaa provides her guest food, shelter, and protection. By assuring Odysseus that he “will not lack for clothes or anything a person needs in times of desperation,” (*Odyssey*, 6.189) she confirms her society’s commitment to these sacred obligations. Furthermore, her introduction of her people and her father, the king, also emphasizes her lineage. It showcases Phaeacian society’s centralized authority, akin to that found in many Greek city-states. Her mention of her father “on whom depends the strength and power of our people” (*Odyssey*, 6.197) speaks to a socio-political system where leadership plays a crucial role, mirroring that of the Greeks.

Phaeacia mirrors a Greek settlement in a multitude of ways. Nausithous, father of the current King Alcinous, ruled over the Phaeacians in the generation before Odysseus visited their island. His actions are indicative of a colonial founder: he surrounds the city with a wall, a major part of building one’s city. He builds houses and creates temples. Nausithous distributes plots of land to settlers, and in totality, Phaeacia has all characteristics of a classic new Greek land. Archaic Greek cities generally had walls built to protect them. They were strategically placed near water, as maritime resources and ships are vital to the Greek way of life. This is similar to the Phaeacians, with their shipbuilding skill. The archaic Greek colonizers were both traders and also farmers who set out to cultivate new lands. They valued temples and hellenistic beliefs, and they also brought with them their religion as they moved abroad. All of this mirrors the tactics Nausithous uses in Phaeacia (Pomeroy et al. 75).

## Marriage

The portrayal of marriage in Book 7 also helps showcase an idealized version of colonization as peaceful and productive. Alcinous is prepared to make Odysseus his son in law, thus making him heir to the Phaeacian kingdom:

And the king  
replied “My heart is not the type to feel  
anger for no good reason. Moderation  
is always best. Athena, Zeus, Apollo,  
what a congenial man you are! I wish  
you would stay here, and marry own daughter,  
and be my son. I would give you a home  
and wealth if you would like to stay. If not,  
we will not keep you here against your will. [...]”

(*Odyssey*, 7.308-326).

Marriage is a common theme in archaic Greek myth and literature, as it integrates two separate peoples into one. This mirrors how a society goes from a local one to a Greek one during colonization. As Greek settlers introduced their language, customs, and social structures, they gradually integrated with or imposed upon local cultures, blending or replacing indigenous practices. This cultural assimilation altered identities, social norms, and even local governance, reshaping the colonized societies into new, hybrid communities with Greek identities. Marriage also can be a progression from the wild to the civilized, and it can express the presence of sexual violence, just like the assaults and violence which are associated with colonization. This is seen all throughout Greek myth, such as the rape of Persephone by Hades, the god of the underworld, which led to her becoming his wife. In the *Iliad*, Helen’s abduction demonstrates how marriage and sexual violence can be intertwined with themes of conflict. Helen’s abduction triggers the Trojan War, showing how such acts can lead to significant upheaval across cities and vast groups of people. In the *Odyssey*, the suitor’s attempt to marry Penelope can be seen as an attempt at colonization. By courting her, the suitors are hoping to usurp Odysseus’ throne and claim his wealth and kingdom for themselves. Therefore, marriage reflects the broader theme of the complex interactions between different peoples and cultures, similar to during colonization, where integrating groups can lead to both transformational and destructive outcomes.

## Heroes as Colonial Founders

Greeks established colonies as far east as the Black Sea and as far west as the coast of Spain from the eighth to the sixth centuries BC. They had extensive trade networks, including all the way to the Near East. Historians argue over the reason for these colonies: are they due to the need for land, trade outposts, or a combination of both? (Dougherty 127) Nonetheless, Greek colonies were very successful, and they functioned as independent cities. These colonies brought colonists into contact and conflict with indigenous populations. Myths and literature often show these conflicts, as Greek heroes returning from Troy are represented as colonial founders. According to Carol Dougherty, epic poems helped Greek audiences “accommodate the challenges of a new world of exploration and settlement within an age-old story of travel and discovery” (Dougherty 128). There are elements of Phaeacia that echo possible dangers that can occur with colonization:

With twinkling eyes  
the goddess answered, “Mr. Foreigner,  
I will take you to where you want to go.  
The king lives near my father’s home. But you  
must walk in silence. Do not look at people,  
and ask no questions. People here are not  
too keen on strangers coming from abroad,  
although they like to cross the sea themselves.  
They know their ships go very fast. Poseidon  
gave them this gift. Their boats can fly like wings,  
or quick as thoughts.”

(*Odyssey* 7.27-36)

Nausicaa and Athena both warn Odysseus of hostility he may face from the Phaeacian common people. Athena’s advice to avoid engaging with the locals elucidates the tensions that often arise when outsiders enter a new territory. This distrust mirrors the real-world resistance that may have occurred during colonization, where local populations might have felt fear of the disruption of their territorial integrity. Additionally, the Phaeacians’ advanced sea-faring abilities, a gift from Poseidon, highlight a sense of superiority. This paradox—valuing their own ability to travel and explore while distrusting foreigners—echoes the complexities often faced by colonizing societies. The Phaeacians, like the Cyclopes, are also characterized as reckless (*Odyssey* 6.274). This

characterization suggests a potential for conflict and exploitation, themes commonly associated with colonial enterprises. Homer, through the Phaeacians, shows the challenges and positives of entering a foreign society.

## Odysseus and the Laestrygonians

### Subversion of Traditional Norms

The Laestrygonians, also descended from Poesidon, represent a cross between both the “savage” “near east” and “idealized” societies. Through vivid ethnographic descriptions, Homer highlights their divergence from Greek norms. He illustrates a society where the lines between day and night blur, and relentless labor challenges natural human rhythms. This depiction foreshadows the danger and unpredictability awaiting Odysseus and his crew, contrasting sharply with both the civilized Phaeacians and the barbaric Cyclopes, thus showing the many possibilities Greeks encounter when exploring new lands. Homer begins by highlighting the Laestrygonians complexities and differences:

“A herdsman there, returning to his home,  
Can greet another herdsman going out.  
A sleepless man could earn a double wage  
by herding cows, then pasturing white sheep—  
The paths of day and night are close together.

(*Odyssey* 10.105-109).

Within the first words of his description, Odysseus describes ways the Laestrygonians are dissimilar to the Greeks, and other typical human societies of the era. Laestrygonian society has an unusual overlap between day and night. In the archaic Greek world, day and night were clearly defined periods with distinct activities associated with each. The overlapping paths of the Laestrygonian herdsmen symbolize an environment where the conventional order of time is disrupted. The phrase “a sleepless man could earn a double wage by herding cows, then pasturing white sheep” elucidates the relentless nature of time in this land. Unlike the Greeks, who have periods of rest and labor aligned with the natural cycles of day and night, the Laestrygonians inhabit a place where labor can be perpetually sustained. This aspect of their land challenges the natural human

need for rest. It portrays the Laestrygonians as existing in a realm beyond normal human limitations, foreshadowing the danger and unpredictability that Odysseus and his crew will face in their encounter with them.

### Comparisons with the Past

Homer utilizes echoes of Odysseus’ past encounters with both the Cyclopes and the Phaeacians to set the Laestrygonians as a society in between those two extremes:

“They met a girl in front of town, out fetching  
some water. She was heading for the fountain  
of Araku, the whole town’s water source  
She was the strapping child of Antiphates,  
king of the Laestrygonians”

(*Odyssey* 10.105-109).

Odysseus and his crew initially met a young girl who is the daughter of a king, which is similar to his Phaeacian encounter. By describing her as “strapping,” Homer also draws a further comparison between the daughter of Anticipates and Nausicaa, the beautiful daughter of the Phaeacian king Alcinous who is described earlier in the text. However, this scene ultimately offers a negative synthesis of the Phaeacian and Cyclopean opposition. The Laestrygonians are meant to represent a society on the spectrum between the two societies Homer presented. According to Odysseus, the Cyclopes have no set laws or social structure, with each man solely caring for his own family, emphasizing their isolation and lack of communal order. In contrast, as evidenced by this quote, the Laestrygonians have a king and queen, suggesting a more structured society like the Phaeacians. Therefore, the theme of deception runs throughout these depictions, underscoring that everything is not what it seems at first glance.

This idea of deception and the foreshadowing of possible danger comes to fruition:

“Hearing, the mighty Laestrygonians  
thronged from all sides, not humanlike, but giants.  
With boulders bigger than a man could lift  
they pelted at us from the cliffs. We heard  
The dreadful uproar of ships being broken  
and dying men. They speared them there like fish.

A gruesome meal!”

(*Odyssey* 119-125).

After meeting the king’s daughter, Odysseus and his crew saw the possibility of a positive encounter. Instead of a friendly interaction, however, their meeting turns into a similar experience to that with Polyphemus. They find giants who participate in cannibalism like the Cyclopes. The Laestrygonians, despite their social stratification resembling a civilized one, are actually more closely related to the Cyclopes’ “savage” society. Like the Cyclopes, they are presented as having no use for ships. By stating that the Laestrygonians were “not humanlike” and “giants” Odysseus directly alienates them from what is known. He makes it clear that they are animalistic and savage, as they eat humans, which distances them from being a part of or resembling human civilization.

Moreover, the use of ships and water in this scene help to paint a comparison with both the Phaeacians and Cyclopes. The Laestrygonians are described as breaking ships, and spearing Odysseus’ men “like fish” (*Odyssey* 124). Due to their calm waters, it is clear they have no use for human ships, something Greeks highly value. This contrast allows Homer to give a nuanced portrayal that encourages readers to question appearances and consider deeper values than just societal structures.

Unlike Polyphemus, who is tricked and defeated, or the amenable king of the Phaeacians who offers his daughter’s hand in marriage to Odysseus, the Laestrygonians present an interesting dichotomy in the colonial debate. Unlike the other societies, they could not be reasoned with or conquered. The Laestrygonians are represented as giants, more powerful than the Greeks. They have the ability to cause great destruction and death. Through this ethnographic example, Homer presents another negative aspect to colonial efforts and Greek exploration.

## Conclusion

A major theme in the *Odyssey* is overseas trade and settlement. The Phaeacian and Cyclopes opposition, as well as the Laestrygonians, address questions about overseas exploration and settlement

that characterized archaic Greece. The Cyclopes and Laestrygonian interactions are part of the beginning of Odysseus’ journey, while the Phaeacians are his last stop before returning home. While they are being described alongside each other, this set up allows contrast between the three groups. Homer utilizes ethnographic descriptions and key details to elucidate similarities and differences between the two societies. For example, the Phaeacians are famous for their ships and maritime experience, while the Cyclopes have no experience with sea travel. Moreover, the technology of shipbuilding overcomes Polyphemus. His walking stick, which is as big as the mast of a twenty-oared cargo ship, is what Odysseus uses to blind him. Homer could be suggesting that maritime expertise, something Greeks highly valued, was the response to the threats posed by “savage” societies like the Cyclopes. The Laestrygonians, unlike the other two groups, have no need for ships. Their ethnographic descriptions depict a vastly different way of life, and their treatment of Odysseus’ crew as “fish” and their destruction of the crew’s ships shows them as being above human methods of sea travel. Their calm ocean, with few waves, depicts a radically different landscape.

Moreover, Phaeacians have “elaborate rows” of vineyards and fruit trees. Their agricultural skill is indicative of their civilized social structure. In juxtaposition, the Cyclopes have an absence of cultivation necessary for their land to flourish. Their crops are successful naturally, and therefore the Cyclopes do not have agricultural skills. This portrayal paints the Phaeacians as hardworking and civilized, contrasting sharply with the Cyclopes, who are depicted as spoiled and primitive, locked in eternal Golden Age without giving thanks to the Gods.

As previously mentioned, the Phaeacians, Laestrygonians, and the Cyclopes are also descended from the God Poseidon. The Cyclopes and the Phaeacians also used to be neighbors before the violence and hostility of the Cyclopes caused Nausithous to move the Phaeacians to Scheria. All of the groups are characterized as somewhat reckless. In spite of their hospitality, the Phaeacians have the potential to treat guests badly, as evidenced by Nausicaa and Athena both warning Odysseus that he may encounter hostility from locals. Arete advises Odysseus to lock up his treasure as he sails home in Phaeacian ships. These similarities reinforce strong differences in xenia, social structure, savagery, and

ship building ability. The poem ultimately suggests that these differences show a range of Greek experiences in between two extremes.

As demonstrated above, there is a clear colonial context within this work. Just as Nausithous' actions are indicative of a colonial founder, the Cyclopes' land would be a perfect colonial settlement. It is unpasteurized and untilled, and bears fruit in all seasons. It has well-watered meadows, lots of grapes, and easy plowing. Its fertile soil, good natural harbor, and freshwater spring would make it a profitable and arable colony. This almost utopian productivity of the land corresponds to the Greek dream of finding the Golden Age somewhere else overseas.

These experiences set Odysseus up for his journey home, highlighting themes of colonization and authority. When Odysseus encounters the Phaeacians, their generous *xenia* serves as a momentary refuge. Despite their offer to marry Nausicaa, Odysseus remains steadfast in his mission to return to Ithaca. This act showcases the importance of reclaiming and preserving a Greek cultural identity rather than integrating into another society, which is the opposite of what occurs to other societies during Greek colonization. Upon his return to Ithaca, Odysseus's actions become indicative of colonial reassertion. The suitors who have taken over his household represent an invasion that threatens the social and political order of his kingdom. By decisively killing these "monstrous" intruders, Odysseus reclaims his territory and reestablishes his sovereignty. Odysseus's return home symbolizes a "colonial foundation" in a literal and metaphorical sense (Dougherty 125). He not only reinstates his control over Ithaca but also reaffirms the cultural and familial structures that define his identity and leadership. Through these actions, Odysseus's story reflects the broader themes of colonization: the struggle to reclaim and control one's territory, the enforcement of societal norms, and the enduring significance of cultural identity in the face of external challenges. Despite the colonial undertones throughout the *Odyssey*—evident in episodes involving the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes—the only successful colonization is Odysseus's restoration of his homeland, Ithaca. By killing the suitors and returning to his role as king, Odysseus reclaims his original territory. Homer may be suggesting that loyalty to one's own home and identity is superior to the endless pursuit of unnecessary violence and unjust conquest.

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