

THE ISLE OF CALYPSO – GOZO?

By JOSEPH BUSUTTIL

ODYSSEUS, the king of Ithaka, was destined to spend some time on the 'tree-clad' island of Ogygia on which he had been washed in one of his many wanderings after the sack of Troy. The island was inhabited by the nymph Calypso, the daughter of Atlas, who kept Odysseus in her beautiful cave and allured him with her charms. At the instigation of the goddess Athene, Zeus, the father of the Gods, sent his messenger Hermes to the little island to urge Calypso to release Odysseus. The nymph obeyed but with the greatest reluctance. Odysseus was released and left the island for good.

A fragment of the poet Callimachus preserves the unfinished sentence 'the little islet of Calypso – Gaudos'.¹ Furthermore, Strabo asserts in two different passages² that Apollodorus took Callimachus to task for maintaining that Gaudos (Gozo) was the island of Calypso and Corcyra Schemria. The legend or tradition that Gozo is the island of Calypso goes back to at least Callimachus's days (310-325 B.C.).

Eratosthenes (born c. 284 B.C.), the geographer and astronomer, who was the pupil of Callimachus, had attacked those scholars who held the view that Odysseus's wanderings had been in the neighbourhood of Sicily.³ He seems to have been in favour of the opinion that they had taken place in the outer Ocean.⁴ This opinion was also shared by the disciples of Eratosthenes.⁵ On the other hand Callimachus and other writers like Polybius were of the view that the wanderings took place in or around Sicily.

Apollodorus (c. 180 B.C.), the grammarian, made a distinction between the journeys of Odysseus and the account given of them by Homer. Apollodorus maintains that Odysseus really wandered around Sicily; but, he states, Homer gives a fictitious account and transposes the real places visited by

¹ Cf. Appendix 1.

² Cf. Appendix 2 and 3.

³ Strabo 1, 21; H. Berger, *Die geographischen Fragmente des Eratosthenes*, Amsterdam 1964, p. 25 f.

⁴ Strabo, 1, 44.

⁵ Ibid.

Odysseus to the outer ocean. For this reason Apollodorus censures Callimachus for failing to see through Homer's plan. On the other hand he does not say where the wanderings had taken place.

Strabo, the geographer, criticises Apollodorus because the latter had not stated where exactly Odysseus went to and because the regions round Sicily commanded greater credibility.

In ancient times the island of Ogygia was identified with at least twelve different islands.⁶ Recently L.G. Pocock has tried to prove that Odysseus journeyed around Sicily;⁷ but following Bérard he identifies Ogygia with Perejel, an island near Tangier.⁸ It is interesting to note that the Greek word Calypso is connected with⁹ καλύπτω (I hide) and that *Ogygia* is 'the mysterious island'.

APPENDIX

I

Callimachus, Fragment 524:

ὀλίγην νησίδα Καλυψοῦς - Γαῦδον.
The little islet of Calypso, Gaudos.¹⁰

II

Strabo, 1, 44.

Ἀπολλόδωρος δὲ ἐπιτιμᾷ Καλλιμάχῳ συνηγορῶν τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἐρατοσθένη, διότι, καίπερ γραμματικῶς ὦν παρὰ τὴν Ὀμηρικὴν ὑπόθεσιν καὶ τὸν ἔξωκεανισμὸν τῶν τόπων, περὶ οὓς τὴν πλάνην φράζει, Γαῦδον καὶ Κόρκυραν ὀνομάζει. ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν μηδαμοῦ γέγονεν ἡ πλάνη, ἀλλ' ὅλον πλάσμα ἐστὶν Ὀμήρου τοῦτο, ὄρθη ἢ ἐπιτίμησις. ἢ, εἰ γέγονε μὲν, περὶ ἄλλους δὲ τόπους, δεῖ λέγειν εὐθὺς καὶ περὶ τίνας, ἐπανορθούμενον ἅμα τὴν ἀγνοῖαν. μῆτε δὲ ὄλου πλάσματος εἶναι πιθανῶς λεγόμενου, καθότι ἐπεδείκνυμεν, μῆτ' ἄλλων τόπων κατὰ πίστιν μείζω δεικνυμένων, ἀπολύοιτ' ἂν τῆς αἰτίας ὁ Καλλιμάχος.

Apollodorus, however, siding with Eratosthenes and his school, cri-

⁶ Cf. W.W. Hyde, *Ancient Greek Mariners*, O.U.P. 1947, p. 86.

⁷ Cf. *The Sicilian Origin of the Odyssey*, Wellington, 1957.

⁸ *Id.* pp. 62, 72.

⁹ Cf. E. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Heidelberg 1950.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Pfeifer, *Callimachus*, Oxford, 1949.

ticipates Callimachus, because, though a *grammaticus*, Callimachus names Gaudos and Corcyra (as the regions) round which he says the wanderings of Odysseus had taken place – contrary to Homer’s plan and the *exocceanismos* of the (Homeric) places. But if the wanderings did not take place anywhere, and the story has been completely invented by Homer, then the criticism is fair; or if they had taken place, but around different regions, then Apollodorus should also tell us straightaway where (they took place), thus correcting at the same time Callimachus’s mistake. But since Homer’s story cannot convincingly be said to be wholly fictitious, as we have shown above, and since no other regions are shown to command greater credibility, Callimachus might be absolved from censure.¹¹

III

Strabo VII, 299.

Ἐπιτιμᾶ δε (Ἀπολλόδωρος) καὶ τοῖς περὶ Σικελίαν τὴν πλάνην λέγουσι καθ’ Ὅμηρον τὴν Ὀδυσσεύως. εἰ γὰρ, αὖ χρῆναι τὴν μὲν πλάνην ἐκεῖ γεγονεναί φάσκειν, τὸν, δὲ ποιητὴν ἔξωκεανικένας μυθολογίας χάριν. καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις συγγνώμην εἶναι, Καλλιμάχῳ δὲ μὴ πάνυ, μεταποιουμένῳ γε γραμματικῆς, ὅς τὴν μὲν Γαῦδον Καλυπσοῦς νῆσόν ψησι, τὴν δὲ Κόρκυραν Σχερίαν.

(Apollodorus) criticises also those who maintain that the wanderings of Odysseus in Homer’s account took place around Sicily; for in that case, (he says) they should say that the wanderings did take place there, but that the poet (Homer) placed them in the ocean for the sake of mythology; the others can be excused, but certainly not Callimachus: he pretends to be a *grammaticus* and says that Gaudos is the island of Calypso and Corcyra Scheria.¹²

¹¹ H. Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹² *Ibid.*