

Blurring the Boundaries of Nature and Culture: Natureculture of the Cyclopes in *Odyssey* 9

Through natureculture, we can observe the indistinct boundaries of human and non-human, culture and nature in the gaps between Odysseus's voice and the epic narrator's details in descriptions of the Cyclopes. Natureculture, a term used by Donna Haraway (2003), offers a paradigm of symbiosis between nature and culture with which we can read the Cyclopes and Odysseus's encounter with Polyphemus in book nine of the *Odyssey*. By exemplifying the interconnectedness of prescribed dualisms, the the boundaries that define the Other in relation to ourselves dissolve, showing that nature and culture are not separate, but "co-constitutive" (Haraway 14). By blurring the boundaries, we begin to view the Other not as the Other but as relational entities.

Much of the scholarship on Polyphemus and the Cyclopes has centered around the hospitality type-scene (Schein [1970] and Newton [2008]); the narrative structure (de Jong [2001] and Alden [2017]); and the heroic (Redfield [1994] focuses on *The Iliad*, while Segal [1994] focuses on *The Odyssey*). Additionally, Hernández (2000) reads book nine against Hesiod, arguing that Polyphemus and Odysseus's encounter is a reenactment of Zeus's overthrow of Cronus; the comparisons to the Golden Age reveal a different relationship with nature for the Cyclopes. Schultz (2009) addresses Homer's construction of nature in *The Odyssey* through the lens of ecocriticism, while Holmes (2015) argues that Scamander's role in *The Iliad* is that of a companion species, representative of a specific relationship within Haraway's conception of natureculture. This paper seeks to explore the representations of nature and culture in book 9 of *The Odyssey*, and how the lines separating them are blurred into natureculture.

In his narrative, itself an example of culture, Odysseus sets nature (the island, Polyphemus) opposite to culture (city, the heroic), and uses his own paradigm to affect how his audience understands the Cyclopes. However, the narrative descriptions reveal that the Cyclopes can be considered an example of natureculture: Odysseus describes the Cyclopes as lawless (*ὑπερφιάλων ἀθεμίτων*, 107), without agricultural practices (*οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρόωσιν*, 109) and without assemblies (*οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουληφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες*, 113), and their islands as abundant and life-sustaining (9.116-118), Odysseus's description (9.107-115) relies on negative qualities that reveal Odysseus's assessment is relational to his own understanding of society; at the same time, Polyphemus's cave is described as overflowing with the products of agriculture (9.183-186, 219-223). These contradictions of lack and fulfillment blur the boundaries between nature and culture. Furthermore, the type-scene of hospitality too represents natureculture as Polyphemus blurs the line between host and bestial monster. Thus, the absence of culture as defined by Odysseus does not reflect a total absence of culture but that the Cyclopes enact a different relationship with nature.

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