

Apr 12th, 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM

## Sexuality & Perspective


Emma Tabei

Emily Ellison

Tyrell J. Osborn

Ileana Garnand

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/ccuisrc>

 Part of the [Biological Psychology Commons](#), [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), [Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Commons](#), [Multicultural Psychology Commons](#), [Personality and Social Contexts Commons](#), [Social Psychology Commons](#), and the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)

---

Tabei, Emma; Ellison, Emily; Osborn, Tyrell J.; and Garnand, Ileana, "Sexuality & Perspective" (2017). *Collin College Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Student Research Conference*. 62.

<https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/ccuisrc/2017/wednesday/62>

This Panel is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Collin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Collin College Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Student Research Conference by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Collin. For more information, please contact [mtomlin@collin.edu](mailto:mtomlin@collin.edu).

## Foreword

The Ithacans, residents of Odysseus's home, Ithaca, who's delayed return to the island is one of the elements in the Odyssey's plot ("Ithaca"), return to Aeaea; the home of sorceress Circe. Their return was unwise in light of that the previous time they were in Aeaea, Circe turned them into pigs. Noble in their purpose of recovering Elpenor's body, whom previously spoke with Odysseus in the underworld after falling off Circe's roof and falling to his death. While speaking with him, he pleads Odysseus for a proper burial, exclaiming, "I beg you, my lord, remember me. . . do not leave me behind, unwept, unburied, and turn away, lest I prove a source of divine anger against you. Burn me, with whatever armour I own, and heap up a mound for me on the grey sea's shore, in memory of a man of no fortune, that I may be known by those yet to be. Do this for me and on my mound raise the oar I rowed with alive and among my friends" (11.60-65, 69-78) ("BXI"). After the burial is performed, Circe is present and sends the men off with accommodations so she may see Odysseus in private. Ironically while seducing him, Circe tells Odysseus he is the only one who can stand to hear the Siren's song; and that he must plug his men's ears with bee's wax and tie himself to the mast so he may listen without jumping overboard. She tells him that he may either face two paths. The first, moving rocks that even birds cannot escape. The second, where Scylla and Charybdis reside. "Scylla lives there, whose yelp it is true is only that of a new-born whelp, yet she is a foul monster whom not even a god could gaze at with pleasure" (BXII:36:110) ("BXII"). Circe described Charybdis as, "swallowing the black waters" (BXII:36:110) ("BXII"). Although to Odysseus's dismay at her advice at sacrificing his men, Circe tells Odysseus to hug the cliff and not to fight Scylla; but instead speed past her, meanwhile losing six men. Odysseus is told while journeying on the island on Thrinacia he is to encounter, "...the nymphs Phaethusa and Lampetia, the daughters of Neaera and Helios Hyperion, are their shepherdesses. If you avoid harming the herds, and head straight for home you will suffer yet still see Ithaca. But if you harm them, I prophesy shipwreck for you and your friends, and even if you yourself escape, you will come unlooked-for to your home, in sore distress, losing all comrades" (BXII: 111-164) ("BXII"). After setting sail, Odysseus followed Circe's instructions. They pass the Sirens and approach Scylla promptly as Odysseus's men lose their oars in fear. "So we sailed on through the narrow straits, crying aloud for fear of Scylla on the one hand while divine Charybdis sucked the sea in terribly on the other. Whenever she spewed it out again, it bubbled and seethed in turmoil like a cauldron on a vast fire, and high overhead the spray rained down on the crags on either side." (BXII:201-259) ("BXII"). Odysseus loses six men as foretold by Circe. Against Odysseus's approval, they successfully sail to the land of Helios Hyperion's cattle, Thrinakia; where his narrative in Book Twelve does not end.

Emma Tabei

April 6, 2016

### Siren's Song of Sapiosexuality

Within the, "Siren's Song," the *Odyssey* brings the female perspective of communication completing it with Homer's underlying bias towards his own characters in the *Odyssey* as the male perspective. The different perspectives of gender are pitted against each other resulting in an untraditional look at modern female and male communications far ahead of Homer's time, departing from the stereotypical gender looking glass. Odysseus set sail and the Sirens immediately began to size up his vessel, "[as they] began their clear singing: "Famous Odysseus, great glory of Achaea, draw near, and bring your ship to rest, and listen to our voices. No man rows past this isle in his dark ship without hearing the honeysweet sound from our lips. He delights in it and goes his way a wiser man. We know all the suffering the Argives and the Trojans endured, by the gods' will, on the wide plains of Troy. We know everything that comes to pass on the fertile Earth" (BXII:165-200) ("BXII"). The *Odyssey's* interpretation of the Siren's Song is summarized by the Sirens' promising of Odysseus immortal knowledge. However, this entire voyage is not portrayed as, "go out to sea, get treasure, return;" or, "go out to sea, get immortal knowledge, return." This voyage's purpose was only to hear the knowledge from the women, the sirens, not to retain it or obtain it, and return. Men would face either the Wandering Rocks whom, "Not even birds can pass between them unscathed," or Scylla, "[whom] has twelve flailing legs and six long thin necks, each ending in a savage head with a triple row of close-set teeth masking death's black void. She is sunk to her waist in the echoing cave, but extends her jaws from that

menacing chasm, and there she fishes, groping eagerly round the cliff for her catch, dolphins and seals or one of the greater creatures that Amphitrite breeds in countless numbers in the moaning depths,” (BXII:36-110) (“BXII”) and Charybdis, the hole in the ocean whom not even Poseidon can save you from. However, men would face these immortal evils with fail over and over again-not to obtain knowledge, but to hear it brush past their ear from a woman. So, are men sapiosexuals? Why was it the ultimate goal that lives were dedicated to be spent on voyages to hear a woman speak intellectually to seduce a man? Why did Homer portray it as a manipulative trait that once she would have him in such a stronghold as to dive overboard after her, she would eat him?! To home in on the root of these questions, first we must analyze speech in the Odyssey and see how it plays an important role in how the female and male perspectives view each other in the book.

Homer does not portray the female as weak and mute; in the contrary he gives the female perspective a voice in the Odyssey, specifically a powerful, booming, argumentative voice as Circe exclaims, “Resolute man is your heart set again on the toils of battle? Will you not even bow to the deathless gods?” (Book XII:111-164) (“BXII”) after Odysseus persists on finding a loophole in her plan. This gravely affects male and female communications in the light that Homer is giving the female perspective a mind. In a sense, he has chosen to give her a bold voice, a mind, and the choice whether to use it or not. Speculating, this does affect sapiosexuality in the light that the male perspective could not be sapiosexual without the female perspective having a mind. Homer created the perfect synthetic environment for sapiosexuality to form, but why were so many men drawn to it? This is uncommon in ANY time period, specifically Homer’s as females

were often all alike in their subtle, oppressed, and passive nature. This is not revolutionary in the nature that Homer was giving power and a mind to women in a day and age that it never occurred; but in the fact that he did it so long ago and in our current time the standard of the perfect female being subtle, oppressed, and passive—still exist. To understand why sapiosexuality was successful in this synthetic environment, we must look at how speech affected how the male perspective viewed the female.

Homer refers to Circe as, “Goddess,” “royal,” and, “divine,” but is that because that is what she is; a God (Goddess)? This is hard to read in to as her status being a Goddess we do not know if Homer placed these words specifically in his writing to emphasize the importance of the male perspective, Odysseus, viewing the female, Circe, being of value; being called, “divine,” or simply of respect of status of the Gods.

However, this argument is promptly silenced with the evidence of Odysseus and Calypso found shortly after in Book XII. After being tormented through the hell of Scylla and Charybdis the second time, Odysseus exclaims the gods wash him ashore on Ogyia, Calypso’s home, whom rescued him. Ironically, she kept him prisoner there for 7 years immediately after because she wanted her way with him and felt like he should be both her husband and immortal. However, although even a prisoner, Odysseus describes her as, “Only of the lovely tresses,” “that dread goddess with a human voice,” (BXII:374-453) (“BXII”) which are also direct quotes that he uses to describe Circe whom he is very fond of. This is evidence that the male perspective in *The Odyssey* is speaking fondly of females no matter what light he is in. This also directly correlates with the statement above as Calypso is nor God nor Goddess, as she is a sea nymph. This reveals that the male perspective spoke fond words of the female perspective out of personal thoughts

and not out of respect for status. This reflects upon Homer's revolutionary thinking as love and female and male communications in modern times today are often based upon status, ranks, and titles.

However, the *Odyssey* is not clear water as it is seen differently by all. A very contradictory perspective is provided by Margaret Atwood, a feminist writer, who claims that, "Homer's blithely satisfied and content tone towards men and his piteously disdainful tone towards women creates a degrading gender role towards women," ("Margaret Atwood's"). She claims that Homer describes the men as, "strong," and, "steadfast," while leaving the sirens to only amount to having a "high, thrilling song," with "honeyed voices," ("Margaret Atwood's"). Atwood says she attempts to go into the mind of a Siren for this article. She characterizes the Sirens as the victim rather than the predator of the passage of the ocean; rather than eating men, for one reason or another it is a cry for help. Her cynical tone towards men and uplifting tone towards women shows she is merely contorting the *Odyssey* in the means of supporting feminism as the validity of her argument crumbles. Atwood has no ground to stand on as she contorts the *Odyssey* into her beliefs; this is proven by using one of her own quotes against her about the "honeyed voices," where a reddit user draws perfect harmony to how the *Odyssey* is worded. "The Sirens also mention that never [had] a sailor [pass] the shores of the Island without hearing their, "honeyed voices pouring from [their] lips" (18). Homer's use of imagery not only embodies the beauty of the Sirens' voices, but signifies the situation Odysseus faces," ("Odysseus and the Siren Song Comparison"). This exemplifies how Homer purposefully places these words not to be sexist; but as an important part of the story as to the events Odysseus must face. Although Homer portrays the Sirens as

predators and seductive, Atwood portrays them as victims and desperate in order to draw attention to the self-absorption of Odysseus and his men.

Although the *Odyssey* is perceived differently by many, it agreeably revolutionary for any time period. From sapiosexuality to feminism, there are many different perspectives seen in just BXII of the *Odyssey*. Homer purposefully included in both the male and female perspective conscious thoughts, ideas, and speech that were before his time and are still unusual for our time today. There are still some questions that are left unanswered in Book XII of the *Odyssey*, such as why did Homer's experiment as to a perfectly created synthetic environment for sapiosexuality have such a high success rate? As to that, we can only speculate. Perhaps there was so much physical power among the Gods and Goddesses at the time the attraction between men and women was more focused on mental abilities rather than the ability to control one's physical surroundings. The *Odyssey* is revolutionary in the way that female and male perspectives are portrayed differently in the light that the female is given a voice and often views it, and in turn the male respects her for it and also admires her for it. Sapiosexuality is just one part of how the *Odyssey* is ahead of its time. Perhaps Homer's views on male and female communications are predictions for what the future has in store.

Citations

"Ithaca." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. Web. 05 Apr. 2016.

"Aeaea." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation. Web. 05 Apr. 2016.

"Bk XI:1-50 Odysseus Tells His Tale: Ghosts out of Erebus." Homer. Web. 05 Apr. 2016.

"Bk XII:1-35 Odysseus Tells His Tale: Return to Aeaea." Homer. Web. 05 Apr. 2016.

"Margaret Atwood's." Online Homework Help SchoolWorkHelper. Web. 18 Apr. 2016.

"Odysseus and Siren Song Comparison, Need Proofread ASAP • /r/Proofreading."  
Reddit. Web. 18 Apr. 2016.