Introduction – Ogygia and Emotion
The Island of Ogygia is a pivotal point of an emotional terrain. Through first Homer’s Odyssey and then Lucian’s True Story, the island’s isolation and heavy mantle of regret serve to plot the location as a dark zone. As a place of longing, abandonment, and betrayal, Ogygia is suffused with melancholy, with the beauty of sadness. The remoteness of the island is an index of its melancholy, a measure of its emotional freight. It was, according to Plutarch, five days’ sail west of Britain, placing it far out into the Atlantic, where only imaginary islands might be found. Hermes remarks in the Odyssey that he has been sent to Ogygia, a place he did not wish to visit, and had to travel across an “immense sea”, and Odysseus himself speaks of being “put to sea on a raft,” adding, “not even a well found ship with a fair wind could venture on such a distant voyage.”

The remoteness and emotional weight of Ogygia, its melancholy, is thrown into sharp relief by Lucian’s narrative of Odysseus on the Island of the Blessed. As the polar opposite, Blessed is everything that Ogygia is not: a large island filled with many species, seven rivers of milk and eight of wine, jewel-encrusted buildings, and constant springtime. Overflowing with fruitfulness, the Island of the Blessed is relentlessly happy. Odysseus’s presence on Blessed, and his dispatching of the note to Calypso, amplifies the geographical and emotional distance between the two islands.

The Humours
As manifestations of temperaments, Ogygia’s melancholy is matched by the balance of Blessed’s sanguinity. This temperamental polarity reflects the theory of the humours developed in Greek and Roman times, where the four humours were recognised as ruling the body’s characteristics. Phlegm, blood, yellow bile and black bile were believed to be the four governing elements, and each was ascribed to particular seasons, elements and temperaments. The organs, too, are associated with the points of the humoric tetrad, with the liver sanguine, the gall bladder choleric, the spleen melancholic, and the brain / lungs phlegmatic. This can be expressed via a tetrad, or four-cornered diagram, as in figure 1.
Figure 1. The Four Humours, adapted from Henry E Sigerist (1961) *A History of Medicine*, 2 vols New York: Oxford University Press, 2:232.³

The four-part divisions of temperament were echoed in a number of ways, such as in the work of Alkindus, the 10th century Arab philosopher, who aligned the times of the day with particular dispositions. The tetrad could therefore be further embellished, with the first quarter of the day sanguine, second choleric, third melancholic and finally phlegmatic. The Island of the Blessed is always bathed in the light of dawn, and is eternally spring, further underscoring its alignment with the sanguine. Astrological allegiances reinforce the idea of four quadrants, so that Jupiter is sanguine, Mars choleric, Saturn is melancholy, and the moon or Venus is phlegmatic. It seems no coincidence that the planet of Saturn is orbited by a satellite called Calypso, a solitary and isolated cosmic body.

Complementary humours and temperaments were hypothesised as balances, so that the opposite of one might be introduced as a remedy for an excess of another. For melancholy, the introduction of Sanguine elements – blood, air and warmth – could counter the darkness. This could also work at an astrological level, as in the appearance of the magic square of Jupiter on the wall behind Albrecht Dürer’s iconic engraving *Melencolia I*, (1514), figure 2 –
the sign of Jupiter to introduce a sanguine balance to the saturnine melancholy angel.

![Figure 2. Albrecht Dürer's iconic engraving Melencolia I, 1514. (Image in the Public Domain)](Image)

**Ogygia and Melancholy**
The Island of Ogygia manifests all that is melancholy, and in particular the species known as love melancholy. The seventeenth century theorist of melancholy, Robert Burton, devoted an entire section of his 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy* to ‘Love Melancholy.’ He offered that the ‘last and best’ cure for love melancholy is to let those afflicted have their desire. Yet, for a true melancholic, closure is not the point. And, of course, the impossibility of closure, of being allowed to prolong one’s desire, is the critical part of love melancholy. To have desire fulfilled is to lose that very thing, as the longing is no longer. Love melancholy keeps its wound open, dwells upon unrequitedness, feeds upon it. Love-sickness, insane love, and erotomania, are terms used to describe the various species of love melancholy – that condition of despair and desperation. As Avicenna put it in his 10th century *Canon of Medicine*, love is an illness which is “a form of mental distress.
similar to melancholia in which man’s mind is excitedly and continuously preoccupied with beauty itself and with the forms and signs thereof.

Love melancholy enlists both the god of love, Eros, and god of death, Thanatos. While Eros deals with desire, Thanatos maintains the sense of impending loss associated with the death of things, with the end of love. The two are constantly at play, Eros and Thanatos do-si-do, circling around and around. For Odysseus the clash of Eros and Thanatos is palpable. Calypso offers him immortality if he stays with her, but instead he chooses to leave after seven years on the island, thereby choosing death. The love melancholy of Calypso and Odysseus is expressed geographically. Calypso’s confinement to the margins, to the far away island of Ogygia, represents her place within the romance. More than that, there is a romantic trigonometry, where the love triangle that also includes Penelope, Odysseus’s wife to whom he was unfaithful, shapes the terrain.

**Melancholy and the Landscape of Allegory**
The landscape has agency as part of the love melancholy. It is an active participant through its symbolic, allegorical qualities. Arnold Bocklin’s allegorical painting of Odysseus and Calypso, figure 3, brings form to the love melancholy, shaped by the space between the two who are present, as well as the absent third side of the triangle, Penelope.

![Image](https://example.com/bocklin_odysseus_calypso.png)

Figure 3. Arnold Böcklin, *Odysseus and Calypso*, 1883. (Image in the Public Domain).
Toohey and Toohey identify Odysseus’s melancholy specifically as nostalgia, homesickness, suggesting he may have been the first sufferer of this condition.\textsuperscript{5} It is the ocean that is the cause of the nostalgia, since it separates him from home, and he stares at it, standing and shrouded to emphasise his grief. Staring at the vastness of the sky, at the expanse of ocean, or an endless road, elicits melancholy feelings associated with the conundrum of the limited nature of eternity. Liminal sites are magnets for melancholy, pulling these sensations of loneliness and longing towards them. These are sites of passage from one realm into another – the land to the sky, and the land to the sea, as in William Blake’s “melancholy shore.”\textsuperscript{6} The ocean is a haunt of melancholy, and is allied with the god Saturn. Despite the association with ‘earth’ to melancholy in the humoral tradition, Saturn presides over water. EM Cioran grappled with the loneliness of the place of melancholy, and he described how it was built upon the feeling of an interior and exterior feeling of infinity, and that the “interior infinitude and vagueness of melancholy, not to be confused with the fecund infinity of love, demands a space whose borders are ungraspable.... Melancholy detachment removes man from his natural surroundings. His outlook on infinity shows him to be lonely and foresaken. The sharper our consciousness of the world’s infinity, the more acute our awareness of our own finitude.”\textsuperscript{7}

Odysseus’s mental and physical space imagines a geography of melancholy, stranded between the promise of infinity, and the awareness of his own mortality. Odysseus is shown as separated from Calypso, who is naked and available, holding her spindle, which by no coincidence is a triangle. She is essentially the cause of his melancholy, and it is manifested in the island’s isolation and its form. The cave adds to this allegorical mise-en-scène suggestive of absence, a void, as much as a Freudian sexual symbol.

The melancholy of this landscape setting with its small troop of players is re-cast by Giorgio de Chirico in The Enigma of the Oracle, 1910, emphasising not only love melancholy, but religious melancholy. In De Chirico’s version, Odysseus is still present and shrouded, but this time looking out across the city from an elevated point. Calypso has become petrified and veiled, perhaps as a manifestation of her name, meaning to hide or conceal, but also metamorphosing into what De Chirico imagines as ‘the oracle’. The hidden figure takes the form of Apollo, and Toohey and Toohey ascribe to him a kind of metonymic quality, that he stands for all gods, and shows their sometimes aloof relationship with humanity – that they know “how to cure our nostalgia and melancholy and how to ‘get us home.’ But they will not provide us with the answer.”\textsuperscript{8} The relationship between this figure of Apollo, and the poignant figure of Odysseus nearby in the painting, engulfed in his nostalgia, manifests the predicament of humanity alienated from deities. This is Burton’s ‘religious
melancholy’ and the predicament of ‘deus absconditus,’ or ‘missing god’ - literally that god has absconded, and that we are abandoned and melancholy.

**Allegorical Mapping**

Böcklin’s and De Chirico’s images crystallise an emotional terrain, and are suggestive of allegorical mapping. The notion of an emotional map is epitomised in Madeleine de Scudéry’s allegorical *Carte du Tendre*, figure 4, a map of human emotions, particularly the landscape of love, upon which she plotted the Lac d’Indifference, Mer d’Inimitié, and many villages including Grand Cœur, Probité, Générosité, Respect, Exactitude and Bonté.

![Figure 4, François Chauveau’s illustration of Madeleine de Scudéry’s, *Carte du Tendre*, 1654. (Image in the Public Domain).](image)

McDonough suggests that Scudery’s map is something like Debord’s situationist map of ‘The Naked City,’ as both maps “figure as narratives rather than as tools of ‘universal knowledge.’ The users of these maps were asked to choose a directionality and to overcome obstacles, although there was no ‘proper’ reading.” They are both psychogeographic maps. The Situationists appropriated Scudéry’s map as a model for the dérive, and Debord’s ‘Psychogeographic Guide to Paris’ is subtitled: ‘Discourse on the Passion of Love,’ resonating with the ‘Carte de Tendre’ translated as the map of tenderness or even of love. The map was juxtaposed directly by the Situationists with the image of Amsterdam to be used for a dérive, or drift,
through the city, and Sadler observes that this “emphasized the intimacy between environment and human geography that was central to psychogeography.”

Scudéry’s map was an illustration for her 1654 novel Clélie, written just a few decades after Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy. Burton’s anatomising of melancholy, and Mademoiselle de Scudery’s mapping of emotion, paralleled the time of global exploration and mapping. Mapping itself was seen to be something of a melancholy pursuit by Burton, with its detached view, and the infinite task of plotting the world. The image from Jan Barend Elwe’s Atlas from 1792, figure 5, echoes this perception of cartography’s melancholy, depicting a woman mapping the world with a pair of dividers, in turn resonating with Dürer’s angel, figure 2, who holds the dividers in a melancholy listless manner.

![Figure 5, Jan Barend Elwe, Atlas, 1792. (Image in the Public Domain)](image)

Not only is the act of mapping a melancholy one, but it depicts the world that is full of madness and melancholy in the eyes of Burton. In particular he writes about the ‘fool’s head’ or ‘foolscap’ map in his Anatomy, an anonymous map attributed to Epichthonius Cosmopolites. The map of the world is depicted in engimatically sinister manner, inside a jester’s cap. All around the
cap and map are quotations which amplify the melancholy undercurrent, for example on the second medallion which reads “O, Quantum Est in Rebus Inane”, or “O how much emptiness there is in the affairs of men” and elsewhere “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

The map as a face is an expression of Ptolemy’s idea of the macrocosm and microcosm, as described by Cunningham in 1559, “Geographie is the imitation, and description of, the face, and picture of th’earth.” Shakespeare also draws analogies between someone’s face and the idea of a map, “in thy face I see/ the map of honour, truth and loyalty.” So for Burton, mapping was also about the microcosm, believing “man is a map of the world, as much as the world is a map of man,” and his reference to the Foolscape map underscores his belief in the inherent madness of the world.

The use of analogies between faces and maps links to the symbolic expression of narratives as geography in allegorical maps. These invented landscapes were used to manifest emotions and embody narratives. John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress (1678) was an allegory of Christian beliefs, accompanied by a map depicting Christian’s journey from his home town (the City of Destruction) to the Celestial City, or heaven. There are numerous examples of allegorical or satirical maps depicting the ways countries might be personified, different versions of the journey through life and so on. But most valuable to an allegorical mapping of Ogygia are imagined landscapes of melancholy, the most intense of which is the recent film by Lars von Trier, Melancholia. As a cosmography rather than a geography, von Trier’s film imagines a planet called Melancholia which has been hiding behind the sun, and is suddenly on course for earth. The planet Melancholia is menacing and not entirely understood. Even its trajectory is not certain, and there are varied opinions amongst the characters as to whether or not it will collide with earth.

An allegorical cosmography was also depicted in Stanislaw Lem’s science fiction novel Solaris, where the sentient ocean is brooding and enigmatic. The oceanic planet senses and responds to those studying it, reflecting and amplifying the emotions involved – yet yielding little information about its own nature. As at Ogygia, Solaris encapsulates the dance of Eros and Thanatos, where loss is engulfed in love and death. The suicide of Kris’s love, Rheya, along with his guilt and complex associated emotions, become his own
personal allegorical mapping of Solaris, just as each of the space station’s occupants overlay their own emotional geographies on the planet.

**The Map and the Compass**
The map of the island of Ogygia and the Temperamental Compass seek to imagine the landscape of melancholy that Lucian described. Using the graphic language of *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places*, the map of the island (figure 6) is sculpted by emotion, it is, like Madeleine de Scudéry’s map, a psychogeographic map, to quote Debord, of “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.”

![The Island of Ogygia](image)

**Figure 6, The Island of Ogygia** (by the author)

In the centre of the island is *Le Lac Una*, a void, a lacuna, it is that hole at the heart of longing. Carson wrote of Eros, that he is defined by boundaries, and that he is found

“between glance and counterglance, between ‘I love you’ and ‘I love you too,’ the absent presence of desire comes alive. [...] Pleasure and pain at once register upon the lover, inasmuch as the desirability of the love object derives, in part, from its lack.”

And Carson spatialised this lack, saying “If we follow the trajectory of eros we consistently find it tracing out the same route: it moves out from the lover toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before. Who is the real subject of most love poems? Not the beloved. It is that hole.”

![The Island of Ogygia](image)
While Lac Una represents the hole in the island’s centre, the Cave is also about absence, one that is attended by Calypso, where she sits spinning. But the Cave is also suffused with a sexualisation of space, manifesting betrayal and regret. Calypso’s yearning is manifested in the pathway around the island’s perimeter, worn into the landscape as she scans the horizon, awaiting Odysseus’s return. The Lodestone creates a false pole. Just as the magnetism of the poles will pull a compass point to north, the lodestone, a large magnetic rock, will pull the needle of the temperamental compass, figure 7, always towards the island of Ogygia. Its polar opposite, Sanguine, is found in the Island of the Blessed, which is located towards the S of the points of orientation. Navigation becomes sabotaged by emotion, the objectivity of trigonometry is instead about the subjectivity of love, abandonment, longing, and melancholy.

![Figure 7, The Temperamental Compass, by the author.](image)

Ogygia and the Island of the Blessed forever anchor the poles of melancholy and sanguinity. Odysseus yearns to go back to Calypso, but cannot, and she longs for his return. The yearning and longing are eternal, like a perpetual engine for melancholy, echoing the Freudian conception of melancholy as pathological mourning for the lost object, as opposed to normal, healthy grieving. Ogygia is the wound kept open, a geographical imaging of love.
melancholy, a place one can navigate to by means of a temperamental compass. Ogygia is psychogeographical, a place sculpted by love and desire. A liminal place, at the edge of the map, in our peripheral vision, the manifestation of melancholy.

Notes


12 In Chapple, Burton’s Geography, p. 112

13 From Henry IV, quoted Chapple, Burton’s Geography, p. 112

14 Chapple, Burton’s Geography, p. 119.


16 Known as Hari in Andrei Tarkovsky’s film of Solaris, 1972.


18 Guy Debord. 1955. Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography