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CALYPSO'S EMOTIONS

It is well known that Homeric heroes cry often and copiously. Extreme manifestations of sorrow, pain and other feelings are considered shameful neither for men nor for women and indeed, Odysseus can cry as much as Penelope¹. Homer's readers, however, did not always remain indifferent to this absence of gender divide in the emotional behavior of Homeric characters: Zoilus of Amphipolis (4th century BC), for example, wrote that Achilles' unrestrained sorrow over Patroclus' death was unworthy of a hero and more fitting for a woman. According to him, it was even more shameful than that of a barbarian wet nurse².

¹ A thorough treatment of this subject and further references are provided by VAN WEES 1998, who is especially interested in the gender differentiations. As regards Odysseus in particular, MONSACRÉ 1984 connects his lack of emotional restraint to his passing through "mondes fableux" (186), in which heroic and virile ethics have no place. On the Stoic criticism of Odysseus' inclination to tears, see STANFORD 1968: 121 f. and 265 f. On other occasions, of course, Odysseus could also be a model of self-control: see e.g. MONTIGLIO 2011: 52-57, 130, and *passim*. For a lexical and semantic analysis of terms of "crying" in Homer, see SCARCELLA 1958. It goes without saying that the subject of shedding tears in Greek and Latin literature (whether those tears are displayed, or, conversely, suppressed) is closely connected to the broader study of emotions in ancient Greek and Roman culture, a topic that received ample attention in the last two decades. In the near future I hope to undertake a more comprehensive investigation of emotions in ancient narrative literature; for now, I can refer the reader to the work by SIHVOLA, ENGBERG-PEDERSEN 1998, as well as KONSTAN 2006.

² *FGrH* 71 F 11 (Schol. A *ad Il.* 18.22, vol. IV p. 440,49-56 Erbse): Ζῶϊλος δὲ φησὶν ἄτοπον νῦν εἰδέναι τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα προειδέναι τε γὰρ ἐχρῆν ὅτι κοινοὶ οἱ πολεμικοὶ κίνδυνοι, τὸν τε θάνατον οὐκ ἐχρῆν δεινὸν ὑπολαμβάνειν, τὸ τε οὕτως ὑπερπενθεῖν γυναικῶδες. οὕτως οὐτ' ἄλλοι τῆς ἐποικίσεως καὶ τοῦ ἑκάβης ἐπὶ τῷ συρμῷ ἕκτορος οὐδὲν τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν. On emotional reactions by characters and readers of epic poetry and prose narrative, see GRAVERINI 2013 and 2014; on the treatment of this subject by the scholiasts, see also NUNLIST 2009: 139-149.

Comments like this reflect a progressive redefinition of the social roles of men and women, which, in turn, affects the way in which each gender is supposed to express their feelings and emotions. This process apparently started in Greece between the 7th and 6th centuries BC, and its results are especially evident in the classical Greek tragedy, in Plato's works and in Stoic philosophy³.

In Homer, different emotive reactions are rarely due to a difference in sexual gender. Odysseus, for example, cries most disconsolately when he is forced by the beautiful Calypso to stay on the island of Ogygia, as she is in love with him. Despite the charm of the goddess, who is, in every aspect, preferable to his wife Penelope (*Od.* 5.210-218), Odysseus retains a fundamental trait of his heroic identity, continuously longing for his return home (*Od.* 5.151-153: "his eyes were never dry of tears, and his sweet life was ebbing away, as he longed mournfully for his return;" cf. also 5.215-220 and 1.13)⁴. As for Calypso, when she, on Zeus' orders, has to let Odysseus go, she does not cry at all for the forced separation⁵; instead, she willingly helps him prepare for his departure. Various explanations could be suggested for the different behaviors of the two characters, such as the narrative need to focus the readers' attention and emotions on the main character of the story, or the difference

³ Cf. PRIETO 1994: 14; VAN WEES 1998: 16-19; ARNOUD 2009, esp. 102-108. Of course, it would be all too easy to make overly simplistic schemata that describe the intersection of gender and crying in Homer; in fact, as MONSACRÉ 1984, 213 observes, "Dans l'épopée, une femme ne pleure pas comme un homme. Ses larmes d'impuissance attestent sa constante potentialité à être une esclave ... En un mot, les larmes des femmes n'ont pas, au sens strict, une valeur identique à celles des hommes." It is worth noting, however, that by the 5th century BC it is rare indeed to find literary depictions of weeping heroes: MONSACRÉ concludes her book by saying that "Si la rupture est si nette, dès l'époque classique, où les figures masculines ne pleurent plus, c'est peut-être que, lorsqu'ils ne pensèrent plus avec les catégories de l'héroïsme, les hommes firent au femmes le don des larmes" (264: a closure that, as Pierre VIDAL-NAQUET stated in his *Préface* to MONSACRÉ 1984, "mériterait de devenir classique").

⁴ In this case, the Homeric scholia do not preserve indignant reactions like Zoilus' at *Il.* 18.22, but the note at *Od.* 5.151 points out the *ὑπερβολὴ τῆς λύπης* of Odysseus. On the literary theme of the *nostos*, see FRAME 1978 and ALEXOPOULOU 2009, with further literature. All English translations of Greek and Latin texts are from the Loeb series.

⁵ Her only reaction to Zeus' message reported by Hermes is anger and indignation for its unfairness (*Od.* 5.116 ὡς φάτο, ῥίγησεν δὲ Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων), as she thinks it is due to the other gods' jealousy for her relationship to a mortal man.

in status between the hero and the goddess. In any case, the gender difference seems to play no part in their divergent emotional behavior.

The Hellenistic and Roman literary echoes of the Calypso episode are not particularly numerous, and all of them are deeply influenced by changing cultural demands on the “appropriateness” of one’s emotionality. As we move forward from Homer, unrestrained emotions are increasingly considered typical of women; men can cry on some occasions⁶, but they are usually expected to act rationally and not under the influence of passions and personal feelings. Homeric *epos* provides a model which is too stable and monumental to be easily molded by these changing cultural paradigms, and on some occasions the clash of different perspectives produces evident ironic or satirical distortions. So, as Odysseus sometimes becomes more cynical and calculating, and tries either to control his destiny or, at least, not to suffer its quirks as passively as he did in Homer’s account of his stay in Ogygia, his longing for home becomes remarkably less pressing. In Lucian’s *True Histories*, for example, we can even read a letter that the hero secretly writes to Calypso from the Island of the Blessed, in which he regrets having gone back home to his wife, leaving the beautiful goddess and her promise of immortality, and announces that he will return to Ogygia as soon as possible⁷. Indeed, this is a typical example of Lucian’s wit and playfulness; yet, the passage is important in that it shows us how deeply the myth of Calypso and Odysseus could be reworked and distorted, for various reasons.

Usually, both the hero and the goddess adapt to the revised standards for their respective genders: while Odysseus does not cry any more, Ca-

⁶ Great generals can cry, for example, be it for emotive or political reasons: so Scipio Aemilianus cried over the ruins of Carthage soon after he had destroyed it (Polybius 38.22; Appian, *Lib.* 132.628-630); Mummius over those of Corinth (Plutarch, *quaest. conv.* 9.2 737a); and Lucullus over those of Athens (Plutarch, *Luc.* 19.5). On this tradition, see GRAVERINI 2001: 137 and n. 86.

⁷ *VH* 2.35: Ὀδυσσεὺς Καλυψοῖ χαίρειν. ... νῦν εἰμ ἐν τῇ Μακάρων νήσῳ πάνυ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ τῷ καταλιπεῖν τὴν παρὰ σοὶ δίαιταν καὶ τὴν ὑπὸ σοῦ προτεινομένην ἀθανασίαν. ἦν οὖν καιροῦ λάβωμαι, ἀποδρᾶς ἀφίξομαι πρὸς σέ. This reworking of the myth draws on some elements that are already in Homer’s text, but carries them to their extremes: Calypso’s charms are far from unwelcome for Homer’s most faithful hero, who, after being informed that he is free to go, allows himself a last night of pleasure with the goddess (*Od.* 5.225-227). See also the comparison between Calypso and Penelope, clearly unflattering for Odysseus’ wife, at 5.210-218.

lypso conforms to the usual role of the weak, tearful, and abandoned female lover⁸. This is particularly evident in Propertius’ *Elegy* 1.15. The poet laments that Cynthia is indifferent and does not care for him despite his troubles, after which he mentions several famous mythical characters who were more affectionate than she was, with Calypso at the top of the list:

*at non sic Ithaci digressu mota Calypso
desertis olim fleuerat aequoribus:
multos illa dies incomptis maesta capillis
sederat, iniusto multa locuta salo,
et quamuis numquam post haec uisura, dolebat
illa tamen, longae conscia laetitiae.* (1.15.9-14)

But this wasn’t how Calypso acted. Moved by the departure for Ithaca, she wept to the deserted seas. For many days she sat, a wreck, her hair a mess, speaking constantly to the “unjust sea”. And though she was never to see him again, still she mourned, remembering their long happiness.

Propertius⁹ is clearly manipulating the Homeric model here, and the reversal could not be more complete as Calypso does exactly what Odysseus did in the *Odyssey*: he “would sit on the rocks and the sands, racking his soul with tears and groans and griefs, and he would look over the unresting sea, shedding tears”¹⁰. Homesickness and the memory of

⁸ This new role was, of course, dictated by the internal rules of literary genres (such as elegy) as well as by social conventions. On this, see e.g. FEDELI 1992: 253-257. NORDEN 1957⁴ (cf. also FEDELI 1980, 342), commenting on *Aen.* 6.475-476 *nec minus Aeneas, casu concussus iniquo / prosequitur lacrimis longe et miseratur euntem*, identifies a Hellenistic *topos* according to which the abandoned woman cries while she looks at her lover as he abandons her: see e.g. Catullus 64.249; Ovid, *Met.* 11.463 ff. (possibly modeled on Nicander) and *Epist.* 12.55 f.; Apul., *Met.* 5.25.1-2. The passage at *Aen.* 6 would be a reversal of this scheme (Aeneas cries while Dido walks away), as well as *Aen.* 2.790 ff. (Aeneas’ farewell to Creusa) and *Georg.* 4.499 ff. (Orpheus and Eurydice).

⁹ Or his source, see below, 86-88.

¹⁰ ἦματα δ’ ἄμ πέτρῃσι καὶ ἠτόνεσσι καθίζων / δάκρυσι καὶ στροναχῆσι καὶ ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ἐρέχθων / πόντον ἐπ’ ἀτρύγετον δερκέσκετο δάκρυα λείβων: *Od.* 5.156-158 (cf. 5.82-84). On this “transfer of features” from Odysseus to Calypso, see PERUTELLI 1994 and 2006: 52-56; GAZICH 1995: esp. 86-87. Calypso is recommended as a model of faithfulness to Cynthia; Propertius’ implicit identification with Odysseus, who abandoned Calypso, can indeed sound as a subtle warning to Cynthia. On this and other implications of the mythological example in Propertius’ elegy, see GAISSER 1977: 387 ff.

Penelope are replaced, in Propertius, by the nostalgic memory of the happy days Calypso has lived with Odysseus on her island.

This is not the only mention of Calypso in Propertius' *Elegies*. In 2.21, although she does not cry, she nonetheless plays the role of the seduced and abandoned woman, who has too easily put her faith in an untrustworthy man. Odysseus, traditionally the man who "longs for his return and for his wife" (*Od.* 1.13), is instead portrayed as the prototype of the man who cheats on his woman – in fact, on both his wife and his lover¹¹. The mythical episode is thus reduced to a simple love story and provides a negative model for Cynthia, who should not allow herself to be cheated on by her lover, Panthus, as Calypso was cheated on by Odysseus:

*sic a Dulichio iuuenest elusa Calypso:
uidit amatorem pandere uela suum.* (2.21.13-14)

So was Calypso tricked by the Dulichian youth:
she saw her lover spread his sails for flight.

Calypso is also briefly mentioned in 3.12, wherein Penelope's fidelity during the long years Odysseus spent far from home is used as a parallel for Aelia Galla's fidelity to her husband Postumus, who has left for an extended military expedition. In the long list of adventures that kept Odysseus away from Ithaca and his always-faithful wife, the poet also mentions his stay in Ogygia with Calypso:

*non illi longae tot nocuere morae
...
et thalamum Aeaeae*¹² *fletis fugisse puellae* (3.12.24 and 31)

no hurt did Ulysses suffer from his long tarrying,
...
nor when he fled from the couch of Aeaea's weeping queen

These verses contain subtle but clear ironies. Propertius tells us that Odysseus fled from Calypso's *thalamus*, but inevitably this also works as

¹¹ Cf. FEDELI 2005: 619 *ad loc.*

¹² *Aeaea puella* is Calypso here, not Circe: cf. Hyginus, *Fab.* 125.16 *Ulixes ... enatauit in insulam Aeaeam, ubi Calypso ...*; FEDELI 1985: 409.

a reminder of the plain fact that he enjoyed its pleasures for a long time before leaving the goddess' island. The obvious ironic implication is the possibility that Postumus could himself enjoy some extramarital diversions during his military campaign¹³. However, in the context of this elegy, this could also sound as an implicit warning to Postumus: Penelope's fidelity is clearly more than Odysseus deserves, and the same might be true for Galla (cf. the apostrophe to Gallus at 3.12.16: *moribus his alia coniuge dignus eras*, "With a heart like thine thou wast worthy of a different spouse"). Be that as it may, what is really important for us is that Calypso cried (*fletis*) when Odysseus finally fled her island.

This topic is also repeatedly exploited by Ovid. In *The Art of Love*, the poet claims that Odysseus did not make the sea goddess fall in love with him because he was handsome, *formosus*, but because he was a good speaker, *facundus* (2.123-124). Calypso listens to the hero for a long time while he tells her his adventures, and even as he traces a sketch on the sand to show her how the opposing armies were lined up on the Trojan plain. Having fallen in love with him by the end of his account¹⁴, she tries to persuade him to avoid the danger of a sea travel and stay on her island (2.127-142). This long passage "corrects" the Homeric myth and adapts it to the normal rules of a male-female relationship: it is the man who makes the woman fall in love with him, not the other way around¹⁵. When the man leaves, the woman inevitably grieves:

a quotiens illum doluit properare Calypso! (*Ars* 2.125)

Ah, how often did Calypso grieve at his hastening to depart!

¹³ On irony in this mythological digression in general, see LA PENNA 1977: 81.

¹⁴ Calypso here reminds us of Vergil's Dido: Aeneas' autobiographical account of his adventures also plays an important role in the Carthaginian queen's falling in love with him (*Aen.* 4.13-14 *heu quibus ille / iactatus fatis! quae bella exhausta canebat!*). For a general interpretation of the Calypso episode in Ovid's *Ars* and a comparison with *Heroides* 1 and with Homer's *Odyssey*, see FRÉCAUT 1983; SHARROCK 1987; SALVADORI 1993; JANKA 1997; PERUTELLI 2006: 59-62.

¹⁵ In *Od.* 1.55-57, on the contrary, it is Calypso who *δύστηνον ὀδυρόμενον κατερύκει, / αἰεὶ δὲ μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισι / θέλγει, ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται*. In *Ov. Am.* 2.17.15-16 the relationship between Calypso and Odysseus is closer to Homer's description, although there seems to be a stronger emphasis on the emotional aspects of the goddess' attraction to the hero: *traditur et nympe mortalis amore Calypso / capta recusantem detinuisse uirum*.

In Ovid's poetic world, in fact, it would be unthinkable that a hero – or indeed any man – could regret being kept away from home in the bed of a beautiful goddess. The six years that the poet has been forced to spend in Pontus are a true exile, but the same certainly cannot be said of the equally-long stay of Odysseus in Ogygia:

*An graue sex annis pulchram fouisse Calypson
aequoreaeque fuit concubuisse deae? (Pont. 4.10.13-14)*¹⁶

Was it a hardship to fondle for six years the fair Calypso
and share the couch of a goddess of the sea?

Calypso's desperation and tears are, as we have seen, a common motif in Latin elegy. Ovid could certainly have been inspired by Propertius for the general idea, but he also provides some details that are not found in the work of his predecessor¹⁷. It is all too natural, therefore, that since the end of the 19th century, scholars have been searching for traces of an unknown Hellenistic model that could have been the ultimate source of inspiration for both Propertius and Ovid¹⁸. Maas¹⁹ first suggested that this source could be Philetas' *Hermes*, or some other unknown work inspired by it; his idea is taken over in Rohde's monumental work on the Greek novel²⁰ and then rejected by Lamer in his *Realenzyklopädie* entry on Calypso²¹. Though it is certainly true, however, that Philetas' *Hermes*, of which only a few scanty fragments survive, does not offer a solid ground for any speculation about a Hellenistic text describing a

¹⁶ Ovid's rhetorical question might appear paradoxical, especially if we take into account the fact that Calypso's episode was often read (at least by later authors) as a philosophical allegory on the refusal of earthly pleasures. See e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6.8.16-21; Proclus, *In Eucl.* 55.16-23; STANFORD 1968²: 106-107 and 225. On the poet's exaggeration and lack of irony in the use of this mythological example, see PERUTELLI 2006: 69-71.

¹⁷ See e.g. FEDELI 1980: 341-342 on *Ars* 2.126: *remigioque aptas esse negavit aquas*.

¹⁸ With some notable exceptions: HEINZE 1915³: 117 n. 1 wrote that "Propertius takes this [i.e. Calypso's] behaviour for granted, and there is no need to postulate any specific Hellenistic model for him." More recently, Propertius' originality has been emphasized by PERUTELLI 1994: 171 n. 6 and FEDELI 1992: 253-254.

¹⁹ MAAS 1895: 279 n. 67. Cf. also ROTHSTEIN 1898: 90 *ad* Prop. 1.15.9.

²⁰ ROHDE 1914³: 111. This posthumous third edition includes the author's notes, handwritten on his personal copy of the volume.

²¹ LAMER 1919: 1796-1798.

crying Calypso, this does not necessarily mean that this hypothetical text could not possibly exist.

According to Fedeli²², its existence is suggested (although far from proved) by such passages as Prop. 1.15.12 (*sederat iniusto multa locuta salo*), which seems to refer to a "long and pathetic monologue" absent in Propertius, but possibly included in a lost model of his. Fedeli also points out that the description of a woman who cries while watching her lover leave her is a common motif in Hellenistic poetry²³, and that Propertius' description of Calypso sitting on the beach can be connected to an iconographical tradition also attested by a passage of Pliny (*Nat.* 35.132), wherein he describes a painting of *Calypso sedens* by the Hellenistic painter Nicias of Athens²⁴.

Further clues can be provided. We should also consider, for example, Hyginus, *Fab.* 243.7, in which account Calypso eventually kills herself due to her unrequited love for Odysseus. Here, Calypso's desperation goes well beyond what we read in Propertius and Ovid, neither of whom ever mentions her suicide. Either Hyginus (or his source) builds on the accounts of the myth provided by the Augustan poets, pushing the goddess' emotional reaction to the extremes, or all the three Latin authors are drawing independently upon a preexisting model²⁵. Most of all, it is

²² FEDELI 1977: 90-92 and 1980: 342; cf. PAPANGHELIS 1997: 118. In a later essay (cf. above, n. 18) FEDELI abandons the hypothesis of a Hellenistic model and instead attributes Propertius' reworking of the Calypso myth to "esigenze di adattamento del mito epico in un genere letterario diverso, qual è quello della poesia erotica". While this is certainly true, it must be said that there is no evidence that Propertius was the first poet to adapt Calypso to an erotic context.

²³ See above, n. 8. All the examples provided by NORDEN, however, are in Latin.

²⁴ Another *Calypso sedens* might be portrayed on an Etruscan urn (1st century BC), but the identification is not sure and she might be Penelope instead. On this, see RAFN 1990: 947 with further literature, as well as DI STEFANO 1992-93: 30-33. As regards FEDELI's iconographic discussion, one should also take into account the remarks by GAZICH 1995: 86-87: Propertius' *Calypso sedens* might have nothing to do with Nicias' painting, and the fact that she sits on the beach could simply recall the similar position in which Homer describes Odysseus at *Od.* 5.81-84 (see also above, n. 10). Be that as it may, it is true that Propertius' description has some pictorial qualities, and GAZICH himself points out that "se Calipso, invece di restare in posa nel suo quadro, desse voce alle *querelae*, avremmo un'elegia, anzi una *Eroide*" (p. 85).

²⁵ According to HEINZE 1915³: 118 n. 1, Calypso's suicide in Hyginus would be due to the "stumpfsinnigem Schematismus" of a late author who made the goddess act like

important to note that we also have a hint of an “elegiac Calypso” in a Greek text of imperial times, again clearly independent of Propertius and Ovid. In the passage from Lucian’s *True Histories* I mentioned above, when Calypso receives the letter wherein Odysseus says he has changed his mind and is going to join her in Ogygia as soon as possible, she breaks down and cries²⁶. Lucian seems to playfully create a double reversal here: Odysseus is coming back to Calypso instead of leaving her, and the goddess cries with joy instead of sorrow. If this is true, this text might imply not one, but two models as the starting point for its ironic reworking: Homer’s *Odyssey* as well as an elegiac tradition in which Calypso had already evolved from the rather aloof Homeric character into one so deeply in love with Odysseus that she would cry for him²⁷.

Considering all this, it is very likely that a literary tradition existed before Lucian, Propertius, Ovid and Hyginus that had already transformed Calypso’s myth into a sentimental and emotional narrative, describing Odysseus as the stronger and dominant character, with Calypso playing the role of the abandoned lover who cries in distress²⁸.

Further support for this hypothesis can be found in the analysis of one additional testimony to Calypso’s myth, provided by Apuleius. A

Virgil’s Dido. In view of the context I am trying to reconstruct in this paper, I think that HEINZE’S assessment of the origins of Hyginus’ version of the myth cannot be considered solidly grounded. It certainly pushes Calypso’s “elegiac” characterization to the extremes, but it is not necessarily late and/or “stupidly schematic”.

²⁶ *VH* 2.36 ὡς δὲ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἔλαβεν καὶ ἐπελέξατο, πρῶτα μὲν ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐδάκρυν...

²⁷ GEORGIADOU, LARMOUR 1998: 222 state that “Calypso’s tears could be motivated by the revealing of her feelings in [Homer, *Od.* 5.] 190-1, where she says ‘my heart is not of iron, but I feel pity’”. Calypso, however, does not reveal her feelings to Odysseus in those verses, but instead simply reassures the hero that she is not plotting anything against him, and that he can actually, and safely, set sail towards home. Lucian’s *True History*, as well as all the other texts describing an “elegiac” Calypso, is clearly based on a reversal and not on an imitation of the Homeric characterization of the goddess.

²⁸ A precise identification of this model and a detailed reconstruction of its contents are impossible, to the current extent of our knowledge. One might add that Plutarch, in *Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat* 27A, also describes the relationship between Calypso and Odysseus in more sentimental terms than Homer, and calls it a πάθος (which he, of course, censures as being inappropriate). More post-Homeric elaborations of the myth are provided by Hesiod: in *Tb.* 1017-1018 he says that Calypso gave Odysseus two sons, Nausithous and Nausinous. *Calypso* is also the title of a comedy by Anaxilas (4th century BC; *CAF* 2, frg. 10-11).

significant part of Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses* is given to a story told by Aristomenes, a fellow traveler of the main character of the novel, who narrates how he tried to help his friend Socrates²⁹ to escape from a long and pernicious relationship with the witch Meroe. Unfortunately, it is not so easy to elude a powerful sorceress, and in the middle of the night, Meroe, accompanied by her sister Panthia, bursts into the room where the two friends lodge and gives vent to her anger with a monologue:

Infit illa cum gladio: “Hic est, soror Panthia, carus Endymion, hic Catamitus meus, qui diebus ac noctibus inludit aetatulam meam, hic qui meis amoribus subterhabitis non solum me diffamat probris uerum etiam fugam instruit. At ego scilicet Vlixī astu deserta uice Calypsonis aeternam solitudinem flebo.” (*Met.* 1.12.4)

Then that with the sword said: “Look, sister Panthia, this is my dear Endymion and my sweet Ganymede, who insulted my tender youth day and night. He is the one who spurned my affections, and not only dishonours me with insults, but is even engineering a flight. But I, of course, being deserted by Ulysses’ cunning, as a true Calypso I will bewail my eternal solitude.”

The verb *infit*, with which Meroe’s speech begins, pertains to a high and dignified register³⁰, one which is also reinforced by the mythological examples. The colloquial expression *illa cum gladio*³¹, however, clearly shows that the style of the passage is rather heterogeneous. In this context, it is not at all surprising that typically elegiac language and subjects are also exploited. In fact, this passage might even be considered as a good narrative representation of the almost inevitable tendency to mix epic and elegy when Calypso is mentioned.

²⁹ On the name of this character and his connections (both obvious and subtle) to the Athenian philosopher, see GRAVERINI 2007: 151-158 (= 2012: 134-141), with further literature. On some parallels between the Apuleian Socrates and Odysseus, see MÜNSTERMANN 1995: 8-13.

³⁰ Apuleius is fond of this verb and uses it as many as 12 times in his novel. With the sole exception of Livy, it is otherwise unattested in Latin prose, but it is especially frequent in epic poetry (most often in Ennius, followed by Vergil, Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus and Statius). Its occurrence in Plautus (6 times) confirms its archaizing character and its accessibility for comic usages.

³¹ Cf. KEULEN 2007: 255 *ad loc.* The ablative of duration in *diebus et noctibus* is also probably colloquial: cf. CALLEBAT 1968: 193.

In the previous chapters, Meroe had already been characterized by Socrates and Aristomenes as a sort of reincarnation of Circe: she is a frightful witch, endowed with metamorphic powers, who keeps the hero of the tale bound to her with her hospitality and her sexual allure, thus preventing him from returning home³². Here, her reference to Endymion and Ganymede further defines her relationship with Socrates and suggests that “she is the goddess and senior partner, he the young mortal chosen for her favors”³³.

At first glance, the same can be said for the mention of Calypso, which is undoubtedly appropriate in connection to a character who, like Socrates, “forgets his return” as a consequence of his sexual relationship with a supernatural being³⁴. There is indeed a parallelism between the coupling of Odysseus and Calypso and that of Socrates and Meroe, although Socrates is certainly a lesser Odysseus, far more prone to failure than his epic model³⁵. Meroe’s counterpart Calypso, however, turns out not to be in control of her relationship: she is deserted by Odysseus, and in Meroe’s words she “bewails her eternal solitude”. There is a clear contrast here

³² Cf. HARRISON 1990: 194; KEULEN 2007: 258.

³³ HARRISON 1990: 194; cf. KEULEN 2007: 256.

³⁴ On Socrates’ “homecoming” (*Met.* 1.7.7: *eique causas et peregrinationis diuturnae et domitionis anxiae... refero*) and its Odyssean undertones, see GRAVERINI 2007: 170 and n. 43 (= 2012: 151 and n. 43); MONTIGLIO 2007: 95 n. 2. I would add that Aristomene’s words at 1.6.2: *at uero domi tuae iam defletus et conclamatus es*, also contribute to this kind of characterization. Like Odysseus, Socrates is presumed dead by relatives and fellow citizens after he has been away from home for a long time. In Philostratus, *VA* 7.10, furthermore, Odysseus “is said to have forgotten in the company of Calypso the smoke of his Ithacan home” (for the “smoke of Ithaca” cf. *Od.* 1.58).

³⁵ It should be pointed out that Socrates’ failure to go back home is the result not only of his own shortcomings, but also of his “epic” misfortune. At the end of the story, thanks to Aristomenes’ intervention, Socrates actually tries to evade Meroe’s influence, and in this regard resembles Odysseus. Unlike Odysseus, however, who outwitted Circe also thanks to Hermes’ intervention, Socrates here is overpowered by witchcraft. He does not enjoy the same divine protection as Odysseus did, and one might rightly doubt whether even a greater quantity of Odyssean cunning and valor could have protected him from Meroe’s supernatural powers. His failed *nostos* is not simply the result of an unproblematic opposition between epic and the novel. In fact, the relationship between Apuleius’ narrative and its literary models is often more nuanced and complicated than simple subversion and/or parody: see e.g. GRAVERINI 2007, 156-158 (= GRAVERINI 2012: 139-140) on Apuleius’ Socrates and his Platonic namesake; and more generally GRAVERINI 2014, on the transformation of epic heroes into novelistic characters.

with the first two mythological examples (Endymion-Selene and Ganymede-Zeus), in which the deity is in full command and there is no threat of a rebellion from the human *eromenos*. This contrast is also highlighted by the ironic adverb *scilicet*: Meroe does not *actually* intend, even for a minute, to behave like a deserted, crying and hopeless Calypso.

Apuleian interpreters have not noticed that this unresolved tension between different mythological examples is the result of an extremely sophisticated and ironic treatment of the elegiac version of the Calypso myth and possibly, more precisely, of Propertius’ model³⁶. Meroe refuses to be like the elegiac Calypso – weak and tearful – and in doing so, she frees the Homeric Calypso from the norms of conduct that the Hellenistic and Roman tradition had imposed on her. Apuleius uses the witch to disclose the artificial and affected nature of the elegiac revision of the Homeric myth. In fact, Meroe introduces herself as a character who is the opposite of the Calypso described by Propertius and Ovid, and instead conforms to the original, Homeric model: she is powerful, self-confident, and able to assert her dominant role.

The poetics of the novel often privileges stark contrasts over delicate nuances, and loves exaggeration, for which reasons it is no surprise that Meroe’s ruinous influence on Socrates surpasses even that of Calypso on Odysseus. Unlike his Homeric model, the Apuleian character cannot escape the pernicious power of his *femina diuina* (*Met.* 1.8.2) and dies before he is able to go back home. With his death, he actually fulfills Odysseus’ wishes:

ἀὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἰέμενος καὶ καπνὸν ἀποθρόσκοντα νοῆσαι
ἦς γαίης, θανέειν ἰμείρεται. (*Od.* 1.57-59)

³⁶ There are some (admittedly weak) textual hints that can connect Apuleius’ text to Propertius 1.15: cf. *deserta* ~ v. 10 *desertis*; *aeternam solitudinem* ~ v. 13 *numquam post haec uisura*. The link with Propertius is emphasized by MATHIS 2008: 204, but she does not seem to catch the irony contained in the witch’s words: “Meroe ... has become, instead of a cruel mistress, an attentive yet abandoned lover, as her self-comparison to Calypso illustrates” (although MATHIS does note “a degree of tension” between Meroe’s behavior and the mythological example). On Apuleius’ knowledge of Propertius, see *Apol.* 10, a well-known passage on the use of pseudonyms in love poetry. Cf. MATTIACCI 1998 on other possible echoes of Propertius, among other elegists, with further literature.

But Odysseus, in his longing to see were it but the smoke leaping up from his own land, yearns to die.

Altogether, it is paramount to recognize that, in all of the Latin texts analyzed above, the “elegiac” treatment of the Calypso myth implies some degree of irony or negativity. Propertius appears to construct the “new” Calypso as an ambiguous model for the elegiac woman: in 1.15 Cynthia is not like her, in 2.21 she should not be like her, and in 3.12 the beautiful goddess prefigures a possible threat to Aelia Galla’s marriage. Ovid, on the other hand, seems to be primarily focused on renewing the role of the elegiac man, and in so doing he makes Calypso easy prey for Odysseus’ rhetorical skills. There is clear irony in his statement that being detained by a beautiful goddess cannot be considered a misfortune, which subverts the common view on Odysseus’ epic “diversions.” Apuleius’ Meroe decidedly discards the option of taking the elegiac Calypso as her model, and instead styles herself as a more traditional Homeric goddess. This deconstructionist usage of the *topos* can provide further support for the hypothesis of the existence of a previous literary tradition, one in which Calypso was already transformed into a more emotional and sentimental character.

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