

COMMENTATIONES

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WAS CALYPSO ABLE TO MAKE ODYSSEUS IMMORTAL?

ABSTRACT. Bartol Krystyna, Was Calypso Able to Make Odysseus Immortal? (Czy Kalipso mogła uczynić Odyszeusza nieśmiertelnym?)

The article, focusing primarily on the *Odyssey* 5. 135–6, offers a set of remarks designed to foreground the qualities that make the Calypso episode not only interesting as an example of how the epic poet exploits traditional themes and phrases, but exciting as a story of a man's desire.

Keywords: Greek epic poetry; the *Odyssey*; Calypso; Odysseus; immortality.

... You give the choice
To hold forever what forever passes,
To hide from what will pass, forever.

Archibald MacLeish, *Calypso's Island*, vv. 28–30
(*Collected Poems 1917–1952*, Boston 1952, p. 147)

The natural order of things is that death is common to all men. Homeric poetry knows this important share of men.¹ It is enough to recall some passages from both poems which echo the universal fate of death, the rule that should not be upset. In the *Iliad* (16. 440–3) Hera disbelievingly asks Zeus if he really wants to free Sarpedon from death, a mortal man, and warns him not to set a precedent. Also in the *Iliad* (22. 178–81) Athena is indignant at Zeus' intention

¹As Claude Brügger (2016, 204) points out in the recent volume of the *Basler Kommentar*: “Die Sterblichkeit ist eine Grundlage menschlichen Daseins, selbst wenn ein Held wie Sarpedon, Askalaphos oder Achilleus eine Gottheit als Elternteil hat (...): er wird früher oder später sterben müssen”. See also Redfield's (1994, 101) words referring to Homeric heroes' status: “The hero may appear godlike, but he is only mortal. (...) Man dies in any case, but he can choose to die well. (...) All men are born to die, but the warrior alone must confront this fact in his social life, since he fulfills his obligations only by meeting those who intend his death”.

to save Sarpedon and Hector from death: “What a thing have you said. A mortal man, doomed long since by fate, are you minded to free from dolorous death? Do it, but be sure we other gods do not all assent to it.”² The *Odyssey* (3. 236–8) has a strikingly similar passage about the gods’ protective attempts towards mortals: “But clearly death that is common to all not even the gods themselves can ward off even from a man they love, whenever the fell fate of pitiless death strikes him down.”³

The corpus of surviving Greek epics provides us, however, with remarkable cases of the gods making some exceptions for certain mortals.⁴ Moreover, the immortalization of a man by gods is not only associated with the stories about armed conflict – as it is in the case of Memnon who, after being killed, was abducted and translated from the battlefield,⁵ or that of Achilles who was snatched up from the funeral pyre and brought to the Isles of the Blessed⁶ (both were immortalized by the intervention of their divine mothers)⁷ – but gods also wanted to confer immortality on those mortals whom they fell in love with and whom they took as his/her own bedfellows (as it was in the case of Tithonus’ affair with Eos⁸ or Ganymede’s abduction by Zeus).⁹ Of course early poetic pieces bring also other stories or mentions dealing with a mortal getting a form of immortality from a god or with gods’ attempts to make a man immortal, in which the divine help with men’s transcending his/her mortality was motivated in various ways: from Proclus’ summary of the *Cypria* we know that Artemis snatches away Iphigenia, whom Agamemnon wanted to sacrifice in Aulis, and made her immortal.¹⁰ The Hesiodic fragment (19. 201ff. Most. = 23a. 21ff. M.-W.) gives more details about the act itself. We read: “and lovely ambrosia she [Artemis] dripped onto her [Iphigenia’s] head, so that her flesh would be

²Transl. Murray 2001, 465.

³Transl. Murray 1998, 97.

⁴See Griffin 1997, 42: “The cycle (...) admits miracles of a sort which Homer does not. In relation to the most basic conditions of human life”, Davies (1989, 59), who compares Homeric poems with the epic cycle: “In each case the contrast with the austerity of Homeric poems, where even the greatest heroes must die (...) is immense”. See also Finkelberg 2015, 133: “in both Hesiod and the Cycle the heroes’ immortalization seems to be the norm.”

⁵See the *argumentum* of the *Aethiopsis* in Proclus’ *Chrestomathy* (3e). For the comments on this theme in the cyclic poem see West 2013, 148–9.

⁶See Proclus’ summary of the *Aethiopsis* (4b) and West’s (2013, 155–6) comment on it.

⁷For other well-recognized similarities between both immortalizations see Davies (1989, 55). See also Kullmann’s remarks on some parallels between the Memnon story in the *Achilleis* and the *Iliad* (Kullmann 2015, 113–119).

⁸The story is told by the author of the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (v. 218–38). For the useful survey of ancient testimonies referring to the story see Richardson 2010, 247–8.

⁹See *Il.* 20. 232–5, *Hymn.Ven.* 202–17 with Faulkner’s (2008, 263–9), and Richardson’s (2010, 246–7), commentaries.

¹⁰Arg. 8.

steadfast forever and she made her immortal and ageless all her days.”¹¹ In the cyclic *Thebaid* Athena, as we are informed by the scholiast on the *Iliad* (Schol. (D), *Il.* 5.126),¹² was bringing Tydeus, the son of Oineus, immortality, but when she saw his horrible behaviour in the Theban war (he split open the head of the killed Melanippus and gobbled the brain in a passion) she turned away from him, but did agree to bestow immortality on Diomedes, Tydeus’ son. There are of course other examples of mortals being immortalized in early Greek poetry, but I am not going to enumerate all of these numerous stories.¹³ Let us only say that all these instances of mortals’ immortality should be regarded, as Martin West rightly pointed out, as the poetic or honorary type “with no reality in cult.”¹⁴

Although the idea of crossing the fundamental opposition between gods and humans must have been attractive in itself to the first audiences of epic songs, the erotic implications of such stories seem to appeal in a particular way to the public with their absorbing narratives,¹⁵ exquisite emotional characterizations and the striking timelessness of the problem.¹⁶

As it is commonly known, the greater part of the fifth Book of the *Odyssey* is concerned with such a story.¹⁷ Its heroes, Calypso, the beautiful goddess, and Odysseus trapped with her for seven years¹⁸ on Ogygia, the island, a kind of idyllic Alcatraz, as Martin West imaginatively called the place,¹⁹ share a bed in

¹¹ Transl. Most 2007, 69–71.

¹² Fr. 9 Bernabé (= 9 West).

¹³ For more examples see Griffin 1977, 42–3.

¹⁴ West 2013, 149.

¹⁵ See West 2014, 127–9.

¹⁶ The attention paid by the scholiasts on the *Odyssey*, and other ancient interpreters of Calypso’s promise of immortality to Odysseus, testifies to the liveliness of this theme. For a study of this ancient material see Pontani (2013).

¹⁷ The message of the story was seen moving by many readers at all times. Let me only mention the words from Oscar Wilde’s earliest surviving prose work, *The Women of Homer* (an article surveying the chapter *The Women of Homer* from J.A. Symonds’ *Studies of the Greek Poets*), which capture readers’ interest in it: “I have dwelt thus long on Calypso, because there seems to me to be extreme pathos in the story. Her love is not that of Circe which turns men into brute beasts, nor yet is it a love which satisfies: rather is it a love which keeps men from the toil and struggle of life yet gives them happiness after all” (Wright, Mead 2011, 79).

¹⁸ Some scholars say that years of Odysseus’ sojourn with Calypso are of no importance for the characterization of the hero. They argue that they simply explain the absence of hero, as in other traditional stories of the Return of the Husband. See Alden (1985, 106), who says: “the returning hero has very often simply been delayed by unwanted hospitality or imprisonment”. See also Hainsworth (1998, 249), who argues that Calypso “contributes more to the structure than to the substance of *Odyssey*”, thereby treats Odysseus’ detention by Calypso necessary “till the twentieth year from his departure to Troy” (Hainsworth 1998, 249). But see Güntert 1919, 20: “unsere Odyssee ohne Kalypso undenkbar ist”, since “Kalypsoabenteuer” is “Höhepunkt der Prüfungen des Helden” (Güntert 1919, 16). See also Finley (1978, 77) who ingeniously notes: “The quiet of his seven years (...) conveys his half-entrance into timelessness.”

¹⁹ West 2014, 128.

her hollow caves, but do not share their deepest desires: she wishes him to be her husband, he is filled with longing for his return and for his wife. Calypso's expectations from Odysseus and Odysseus' displeasure at the goddess' love are mentioned for the first time by the narrator just after the proem in Book One (1. 13–15). So the situation on Ogygia is not new²⁰ to the narratees when they learn from Athena's speech at the beginning of Book 5 (13–15)²¹ that “he lies in an island suffering grievous pains, in the halls of the nymph Calypso, who keeps him perforce, and he cannot return to his own land.”²² A new important detail regarding the story does not appear until Calypso speaks. When she addresses Hermes who came to announce Zeus' will to her she says (*Od.* 5. 135–6):

τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ φίλεόν τε καὶ ἔτρεφον ἠδὲ ἔφασκον
θήσειν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἡμᾶτα πάντα.

(Him I welcomed kindly, and gave him food, and said that I would make him immortal and ageless²³ all his days.)²⁴

Later, in the scene of her encounter with Odysseus, she refers again to her offer of immortality saying the following to Odysseus (*Od.* 5. 206–9):

εἴ γε μὲν εἰδείης σῆσι φρεσίν ὅσσα τοι αἴσα
κῆδε' ἀναπλήσαι, πρὶν πατρίδα γαίαν ἰκέσθαι,
ἐνθάδε κ' αἰθι μένων σὺν ἐμοὶ τόδε δῶμα φυλάσσοις
ἀθάνατός τ' εἴης.

(If, however, in your heart you knew all the measure of woe it is your fate to fulfill before you come to your native land, you would remain here and keep this house with me, and would be immortal.)²⁵

The reference to her offer will be mentioned twice more by Odysseus himself²⁶ (*Od.* 7. 256–7 and 23. 335–6), but to both of these places I will return in a moment.

²⁰The recurrence of the motif of Calypso is of great importance for the structure of the *Odyssey*. Cf. Thornton 1970, 126: “The recurrent motif of Calypso, the ‘Concealer’ of Odysseus, permeates the first half of the *Odyssey*. She is also the last of his adventures before his arrival in Phaeacia, and in a way she is the culmination and epitome of *all* his adventures because in each one he is either threatened by death or tempted to stay.”

²¹ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν νήσῳ κεῖται κρατέρ' ἄλγεα πάσχων / νόμφης ἐν μεγάροισι Καλυψοῦς, ἢ μιν ἀνάγκη / ἴσχειρό δ' οὐ δύναται ἦν πατρίδα γαίαν ἰκέσθαι.

²²Transl. Murray 1998, 183.

²³On this epic formula against the background of the Indo-European tradition cf. West 2007, 128.

²⁴Transl. Murray 1998, 193.

²⁵Transl. Murray 1998, 197.

²⁶Both Odysseus' narratives are mirror-stories, i.e. they report events that have already been narrated. See de Jong 2001, 184.

Was Calypso able to make Odysseus immortal?²⁷ If so, why did she wait seven years of keeping him on her wildly serene island and letting him remain on the mortal side?²⁸ Why did not she feed him on nectar and ambrosia, which was a simple way – besides anointing a man with something divine²⁹ – of making a mortal immortal?³⁰ In the scene between Calypso and Odysseus (*Od.* 5. 194–9) the distinction between her divine and his human natures is carefully marked:

ἴξον δὲ σπειῖος γλαφυρὸν θεὸς ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνὴρ,
 (.....),
), νύμφη δ' ἐτίθει πάρα πᾶσαν ἐδωδήν,
 ἔσθαι καὶ πίνειν, οἷα βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ἔδουσιν·
 αὐτὴ δ' ἀντίον ἴξεν Ὀδυσσεύος θεῖοιο,
 τῇ δὲ παρ' ἀμβροσίην δμοφαὶ καὶ νέκταρ ἔθηκον.

(As they came to the hollow cave, the goddess and the man, (...) the nymph set before him all kinds of food to eat and drink, of such sort as mortal men eat. (...) before her the handmaids set ambrosia and nectar.)³¹

What prevented her from serving Odysseus with the food that the gods consume? What did she need to fulfill her dream? Zeus' approval? Or perhaps Odysseus' consent? Both being unattainable.

Although scholars today dispute whether gods could make a mortal immortal only by imploring Zeus,³² or whether they could do it on their own initiative,³³ in the case of our poem it seems that Zeus' approval or Zeus' refusal is totally unimportant since “it is his [i.e. Odysseus'] fate to see his own people, and reach his high-roofed house and his native land”³⁴ (*Od.* 5. 41–2,³⁵ additional

²⁷The answer to the question which I put in the title of this article seems also – although indirectly – to give the answer to the question asked by Pontani (2013, 31): “My first question asks whether or not Calypso is actually in love with Odysseus”.

²⁸See Walcot's (1991, 151) answer to his questions: “Calypso informs Hermes that she has looked after Odysseus and told him that she would make him immortal and ageless (...), but she has certainly not fulfilled so generous a promise as yet; the ‘casualness’ with which we learn of the offer suggests that this is not a serious proposition but an extravagant statement made by a clearly infuriated female”.

²⁹As in Hes. fr. 19. 21ff. Most = fr. 23(a), 21ff. M.-W. See Hainsworth 1988, 268.

³⁰On the immortal nature of nectar and ambrosia see Pulleyn 2006, 61–74. See also Currie 2016, 65–6.

³¹Transl. Murray 1998, 197.

³²As assumed by Walcot 1991, 150–1.

³³As Currie argued (2016, 180, n. 189): “There is no reason to suppose that deities could not make mortals immortal on their own initiative. (...) Eos' appeal to Zeus for Memnon's immortality (...) does not have the status of a rule.”

³⁴Transl. Murray 1988, 185.

³⁵ὥς γάρ οἱ μοῖρ' ἐστὶ φίλους τ' ἰδέειν καὶ ἰκέσθαι / οἶκον ἐς ὑψόροφον καὶ ἐὴν ἐς πατρίδα γαίαν.

explanation at *Od.* 5.113³⁶: “for it is not his fate to perish here far from his friends.”³⁷ The power of *moira*, i.e. of what is allotted to one, especially the destiny of human death, seems in the case of some persons irreversible, even for Zeus. Moreover, Calypso knows that her possible appeal to Zeus for Odysseus’ immortality would encounter strong resistance, since, in her opinion, it was him – not Athena, as Hermes says (*Od.* 5. 108–9) – who caused the disaster of homecoming warriors after having sacked the city of Priam, and it is him who “had struck Odysseus’ swift ship with his bright thunderbolt and had shattered it in the midst of the wine-dark sea”³⁸ (*Od.* 5. 128–9).³⁹ One may think that Calypso by defining Zeus as the *Verursacher der Katastrophe* – as Danek cleverly points out⁴⁰ – suggests that now too he is planning to give Odysseus again hell on earth making him wander and suffer anew. To do so he must make him leave Calypso’s apparent paradise.⁴¹ Moreover, she interprets Zeus’ order to let Odysseus go his way as the cruel punishment of the jealous god, inflicted on her because of her having slept with a mortal.⁴²

It is not pointless to ask whether Calypso could make Odysseus immortal without his consent. Generally it seems that the gods did not care about the mortals’ permission: Zeus seized Ganymede because of his beauty making him “immortal and unaging just like gods”⁴³ (*Hym.Ven.* 214)⁴⁴ Eos seized Tithonus and asked Zeus to make him “immortal and living for ever”⁴⁵ (*Hym.Ven.* 221).⁴⁶ We know, however, nothing about their willingness or consent. From the text of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* one can suppose that it is a god’s, not a mortal’s wish which

³⁶ οὐ γὰρ οἱ τῆδ’ αἴσα φίλων ἀπονόσφιν ὀλέσθαι.

³⁷ Transl. Murray 1998, 191.

³⁸ Transl. Murray 1998, 191, 193.

³⁹ Ζεὺς, ὅς μιν κατέπεφνε βαλὼν ἀργῆτι κεραυνῶ. / ὧς δ’ αὖ νῦν μοι ἄγασθε, θεοί, βροτὸν ἄνδρα παρῆναι.

⁴⁰ Danek 1988, 127.

⁴¹ The similarities between Ogygia and Elysium have been explored by Anderson (1958, 7): “Like Elysium (...) Ogygia can confer upon Odysseus immortality, with all that the term connotes of security and sensuous ease,” and (Anderson 1958, 7): “In the case of Calypso’s Island, the immortality offered to Odysseus contains many suggestions not of eternal life, but of eternal death. (...) Odysseus begins his human life again by escaping from that oblivious ease offered him by Calypso, the one who buries.”

⁴² For the problem of interpretation of Calypso’s speech (5. 118–36) and the ambiguity of her choice of stories see Sammons 2010, 43–4. See also Scodel (2009, 146), who points out: “The examples are slightly “off”, since the mortals in them die because the gods want to separate them from their goddess-lovers, while Odysseus is “dead” on Calypso’s island and returns to life by leaving her.”

⁴³ Transl. West 2003, 175.

⁴⁴ ὧς ἔοι ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρωι ἴσα θεοῖσιν.

⁴⁵ Transl. West 2003, 177.

⁴⁶ ἀθάνατόν τ’ εἶναι καὶ ζῶειν ἥματα πάντα.

matters in such situations (*Hymn. Ven.* 239–40)⁴⁷: “I would not choose for you to be like that among the gods, to be immortal and live for ever,”⁴⁸ replies the goddess to Anchises (*Hymn. Ven.* 188–9)⁴⁹: “do not leave me to dwell among mankind,”⁵⁰ which some scholars understand as a request for immortality.⁵¹ Calypso’s case appears to be different. She seems to need his positive answer to her proposal of eternal life and youth because it will be understood by her as the declaration of his reciprocity.⁵² And this is what she was dreaming of in vain for the last seven years.⁵³ Without his positive answer her love for him remains unrequited. Perhaps Calypso’s promise to remove mortality from Odysseus must be treated only as a kind of her desperate call for his reciprocity.⁵⁴ Although she knows that she is not capable of granting such a gift, she is trying to delude him into believing that she is able to do it *hic et nunc*. When after Hermes’ departure, during the conversation with Odysseus on the shore she declares (calling Earth, Heaven and Styx) that she “will not plot against him any fresh mischief”⁵⁵ (*Od.* 5. 187)⁵⁶, she may have in mind her delusive offer repeated by her over and over again for seven years. It seems that also the verb ἔφασκον, carrying strongly iterative force here, which she herself uses to describe what she was doing towards Odysseus: τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ φίλεόν τε καὶ ἔτρεφον, ἦδε ἔφασκον θήσειν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἦματα πάντα (“Him I welcomed kindly, and gave him food, and said that I would make him immortal and ageless all his days”) may be best taken to suggest this hollowness of her words. She knew that she was unable to make him immortal. But did Odysseus know that her offer was unrealistic? Modern commentators want to believe that he did not. If so, his choice,⁵⁷ i.e. forgoing immortality, makes him even more heroic against Achilles’ heroism, that is, his rejection of a long

⁴⁷ οὐκ ἂν ἐγώγε σὲ τοῖον ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἐλοίμην / ἀθάνατόν τ’ εἶναι καὶ ζῶειν ἦματα πάντα.

⁴⁸ Transl. West 2003, 177.

⁴⁹ μή με ζῶντ’ ἀμενηνὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἐάσης / ναίειν.

⁵⁰ Transl. West 2003, 173, 175.

⁵¹ On various interpretations of this passage see Faulkner 2008, 251.

⁵² It is perhaps worth mentioning in this place Calypso’s words addressed to Odysseus in Pascoli’s poem *Il ritorno*, a part of his *Monodia di Odisseo*, composed in 1896. At 142–3 we read: “Mi disse: Immortale / sarai, se rimani ...”. On the problem of the reception of the affair with Calypso in Pascoli see Mitro (2008, 6–14).

⁵³ Finley (1978, 79) stresses “the simplicity of her reliance on her love and beauty.”

⁵⁴ She feels, as Sammons (2010, 40) suggests, that her love endangers her dignity, but she tries to rescue it “by putting her case in parallel with the sufferings of other goddesses”.

⁵⁵ Transl. Murray 1998, 195.

⁵⁶ μή τί τοι αὐτῷ πῆμα κακὸν βουλευσέμεν ἄλλο.

⁵⁷ But see the ‘unromantic’ Buchnan’s reading of Odysseus’ choice, Buchnan (2004, 8), who says: “He may be less interested in the apparent absence of the supposed object of the journey, Penelope, and more afraid of losing the desire for a return,” and who sees Odysseus “as trapped between two women. They threaten him precisely because they offer to satisfy his desire.”

life, as Bruno Currie has recently pointed out.⁵⁸ If so, Odysseus' choice may be also treated as the early example of human liberation from god's will and a proof of a mortal's free will, as Dieter Lohmann argued in 1990s.⁵⁹ Or perhaps it is these scholars who see in the objective narrative of Odysseus' return to Ithaca (*Od.* 5–13) a repetition (with some modifications) of the plot from Gilgamesh's quest for immortality that are in the right. In the Akkadian epic the hero fails to attain eternal life and agelessness, in the *Odyssey* the hero declined both,⁶⁰ which means that he remained mortal and aging.⁶¹ One should also remember Vernant's diagnosis: "Sharing divine immortality in the nymph's arms would constitute for Odysseus a renunciation of his career as an epic hero."⁶²

One may ask at which moment of his seven-year stay on Ogygia Odysseus guesses (if ever) that Calypso's offer is an illusion. From his own story told on Scheria we learn that he was aware of Hermes' visit to Calypso (*Od.* 12.389–90), although she said nothing of his visit when she found Odysseus on the shore and announced that she was going to send him home.⁶³ Perhaps two phrases spoken by the narrator: ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι ἦνδανε νόμφη ("the nymph no longer pleased him,"⁶⁴ *Od.* 5.153) and – about Odysseus – παρ' οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελοῦσῃ ("unwilling beside the willing nymph,"⁶⁵ *Od.* 5.155) suggest that there must have been a moment

⁵⁸Currie 2016, 46, n. 46. For interesting remarks on Achilles' and Odysseus' choices see Rutherford (1991–3), 47 (reprinted in Cairns 2001, 133). On this subject see also Crane 1988, 15: "Ogygia was for Odysseus as much as island of the Blessed, as Leuke was for Achilles – or it would have been, had Odysseus chosen to stay. Ogygia is far more complex than any of its analogues, its charm not without cost and its promise ambiguous, but every shadow or equivocating detail turns upon a single principle. When Odysseus turns aside the offer of immortality, he also turns aside from the path that any other hero would have followed."

⁵⁹D. Lohmann 1998, 40: "dieses Hohelied menschlicher Willensfreiheit".

⁶⁰See Güntert 1919, 156, emotional remark: "Was Odysseus verschmäht, ist später des Mysten höchster Wunsch. So steht auf einer lamina aurea aus dem 4 vorchristl. Jahrh."

⁶¹For the comparison between Gilgamesh story and Odysseus' adventures see West 1997, 41–12, 422–8 and Kozłowski 2015.

⁶²Vernant 1996, 188. See also 189: "It is for those reasons, then, that Odysseus rejects his immortality granted by a woman's favor; by removing him from what constitutes his life, it leads him at last to find death desirable." On the other hand, Vernant and other scholars who see the *Odyssey* as the product of the multi-version heroic tradition, in which one finds the episodes placed within a framework of commonly known mythical epic stories, pay considerable attention also to the problem of the singer's or story-teller's reference to the listeners' familiarity with the plots of epic stories and the public's expectations. As a perfect illustration of this position G. Nagy's book (2010), and K. Zieliński's monograph (2014), can be used. I am grateful to the anonymous referee for pointing out the importance of the issue that this paper does not tackle. Yet I hope it may make a contribution to the question of how Calypso episode can be interpreted.

⁶³Aristarchus rejected the whole of 12. 374–90 as interpolation. On the lack of reference to Hermes' visit in the conversation between Calypso and Odysseus in Book 5 as the reason of the Alexandrian critics' decision see Heubeck 1989, 139.

⁶⁴Transl. Murray 1998, 193.

⁶⁵Transl. Murray 1998, 193.

when Odysseus changed his attitude towards his beautiful mistress living on the island at the Navel of the Earth. But it remains unclear if he believed in Calypso's offer when still being "willing" and when the nymph still pleased him. I doubt it.

Independently of whether Odysseus believed in Calypso's words on Ogygia or not, it is clear that his later accounts of his adventures on Calypso's island are constructed by him in such a way that he appears – in the eyes of his audience – to be a man who truly resisted the temptation to be immortal and forever young. Although his narratives addressed to Arete while staying with the Phaeacians (Book 7. 255–7) and to Penelope on Ithaca (Book 23. 335–6) include the partly verbatim repetitions of Calypso's words, they serve a particular purpose in relation to the self-presentation of Odysseus: they are intended to present him as a man who had immortality at his fingertips and resisted the temptation because there were other loves which mattered more to him than the deceptive happiness and eternal life with Calypso, such as his wife, Ithaca or the wanderings themselves.⁶⁶ Chris Pelling in his compelling essay on Homer⁶⁷ rightly stressed that Odysseus is very good at finding the right things to say to a woman. I agree that he is. It is not a pure coincidence, as it seems, that Odysseus, just before feeling that he may be tempted to stay on Scheria as Alcinouos' son-in-law, says (*Od.* 7. 256–9):

..... δεινὴ θεός, ἥ με λαβοῦσα
 ἐνδυκέως ἐφίλει τε καὶ ἔτρεφεν ἠδὲ ἔφασκε
 θῆσειν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἡμᾶτα πάντα·
 ἀλλ' ἐμὸν οὐ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.

(a dread goddess. She took me to her home with kindly welcome, and gave me food, and said she would make me immortal and ageless all my days, but she could never persuade the heart in my breast.)⁶⁸

He manipulates then the story⁶⁹ stressing his resistance in order to show he would not be interested in a royal (but mortal) daughter.⁷⁰ The same happens

⁶⁶ It is tempting to recall Cavafy's words from the beginning of his poem: "As you set out for Ithaca / hope your road is a long one, full of adventures, full of discovery" (transl. Keeley and Sherrard in Cavafy 1992, 36).

⁶⁷ Pelling 2014, 15.

⁶⁸ Transl. Murray 1998, 265.

⁶⁹ See de Jong 2001, 184–5: "While the information Odysseus provides is new to Arete and Alcinous it is not new to the narratees; for the latter, this passage is interesting above all for the correspondences and differences between the earlier version and Odysseus' account. The correspondences are partly verbatim (...); these verbatim repetitions indicate the points where Odysseus shares the focalization of Calypso and the narrator. The differences are due largely to three function: Odysseus' (I) subjective focalization (he is the one who underwent the events recounted), (II) restricted knowledge (as opposed to the omniscience of the narrator), and (III) rhetoric (his narrative is intended to dispel Arete's suspicions)."

⁷⁰ Cf. Garvie 1994, 217.

in Ithaka, where he tells Penelope his story about all his dangerous adventures, repeating Calypso's words concerning the promise to make him immortal. The narrator reports⁷¹ his words as follows (*Od.* 23. 333–7):

ὥς θ' ἴκετ' Ὀγυγίην νῆσον νόμφην τε Καλυψώ,
ἧ δὴ μιν κατέρυκε, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι,
ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι καὶ ἔτρεφεν ἠδὲ ἔφασκε
θήσειν ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήραον ἡματα πάντα·
ἀλλὰ τοῦ οὐ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.

(how he came to the Ogygia and to the nymph Calypso who kept him there in her hollow caves, yearning that he should be her husband, and tendered him and said that she would make him immortal and ageless all his days; yet she could never persuade the heart in his breast.⁷²)

Again he manipulates the story totally omitting his early delight in the liaison with the nymph in order not to harm the wife. In both cases⁷³ he tries to show that he was able to resist the temptation of being immortal, almost divine. He was all the time independent, heroic and persistent in striving to reach his aims.

Let us conclude with an ironic remark about Odysseus' immortality. Having spent seven years on Ogygia, night by night in Calypso's arms,⁷⁴ every night he could confess, as the lover of Doris from Dioscorides' epigram (*AP* 5.55⁷⁵), ἀθάνατος γέγονα ("I felt immortal"). One would say – he felt *almost* immortal, but not *quite*, to recall again Pelling's formulation.⁷⁶ And that almost-but-not-quite was important. Apparently for Odysseus the *almost* was enough, Calypso expected the *quite*.

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⁷¹ For the meaning of the indirect speech of Odysseus' report see de Jong 2001, 562.

⁷² Transl. Murray 2004, 409.

⁷³ Mackie (1995, 91) rightly points out that in the hero's autobiographical storytelling "Odysseus' ability to construct deceptive narratives that resemble his experience" is crucial.

⁷⁴ This aspect of Odysseus' *liaison* is of special importance, as Giannini (2014, 62) rightly points out: "Anche la sessualità fa parte delle qualità di Odisseo. È significativo il semplice fatto che essa venga esplicitamente rilevata sia in rapporto a Circe sia in rapporto a Calipso. Tale tratto non è presente tra le caratteristiche di altri eroi, tranne Eracle, nel quale assume aspetti eccezionali."

⁷⁵ Δωρίδα τὴν ῥοδόπυγον ὑπὲρ λεχέων διατείνας
ἄνθεσιν ἐν χλοεροῖς ἀθάνατος γέγονα.

⁷⁶ Pelling 2014, 17.

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CZY KALIPSO MOGŁA UCZYNIĆ ODYSEUSZA NIEŚMIERTELNYM?

Streszczenie

Pobyty Odyszeusza u Kalipso, stanowiący jeden z epizodów epickiej opowieści o powrocie bohatera do domu, przedstawiony został przez twórcę poematu jako rodzaj subtelnej psychologicznej gry bogini i śmiertelnika. Żłudna oferta obdarzenia Odyszeusza nieśmiertelnością, złożona mu przez Kalipso, jest jej desperackim wołaniem o wzajemność. Nieprzyjęcie oferty przez Odyszeusza staje się dla niego z jednej strony warunkiem wypełnienia przeznaczonego mu losu heroicznego bohatera, który z determinacją niezłomnie dąży do wyznaczonego sobie celu, z drugiej otwiera mu możliwość budowania własnego wizerunku w kontaktach z innymi: zręczna manipulacja szczegółami dotyczącymi pobytu na Ogygii i relacji z boginią przyczynia się do autokreacji Odyszeusza jako wiernego męża i człowieka, który jest w stanie oprzeć się niedostępnym innym ludziom pokusom.