

KALYPSO, the Divine Among the Goddesses: Allegorisation and Reception from Homer to Star Trek

Silvio Bär · University of Oslo (Norway)

III. ISOM 2022 · 19 October 2022

Kalypso in Homer's *Odyssey* (I)

- Καλυψώ (*Kalypsō*) = “The Concealer”
(< καλύπτειν [*kalýptein*]: “to conceal, to hide”):
 - Hides on a remote island (i.e. conceals herself).
 - Keeps Odysseus prisoner (i.e. hides Odysseus).
- *Odyssey* Book 5:
 - Divine council: the Olympian gods decide that Odysseus must finally return home (lines 1–42).
 - Hermes visits the isle of Ogygia to order Kalypso to release Odysseus (lines 43–148).

Kalypso in Homer's *Odyssey* (II)

- *Odyssey* Book 5 (cont.):
 - Kalypso offers Odysseus immortality, but he declines the offer (lines 149–227).
 - Odysseus makes preparations to leave Ogygia and builds a raft; Kalypso assists him and provides him with clothing/food/water (lines 228–268).
 - Odysseus leaves the isle of Ogygia and sails to the isle of Scheria; shipwreck and last encounter with Poseidon (lines 269–493).

Kalypso in Homer's *Odyssey* (III)

- *Odyssey* Book 7:
 - Odysseus tells the Phaeacians about his encounter with Kalypso (lines 244–266).
 - Odysseus refers to Kalypso with two negative adjectives:
 - δολόεσσα (*dolóessa*): “deceitful, untrustworthy, sly”.
 - δεινή (*deiné*): “dreadful, terrible, terrifying”.
 - Focalisation through Odysseus: his version of what happened.

Kalypso in Homer's *Odyssey* (IV)

- The roles of Kalypso in the *Odyssey*:
 - Saviour and helper (← the motif of the divine female helper, cf. e.g. Athena in the *Odyssey*).
 - Lover and potential partner (← the motif of a relation between a goddess and a male human, cf. e.g. Aphrodite and Anchises, Eos and Tithonos).
 - Goddess: powerful, superior (← has the potential to make Odysseus immortal and thus to turn their relation from an unequal to an equal relation).

Kalypso in Homer's *Odyssey* (V)

- Καλυψὼ δῖα θεάων (*Kalypsō dîa theáōn*):
“Kalypso the divine among the goddesses”:
 - Standard epithet applied to Kalypso 11x in *Odyssey* Book 5.
 - Tautology – hyperbolic superlative (hyperlative):
“the [most] divine among the goddesses”.
 - The hyperlative nature of the epithet contradicts Kalypso's standing as a lesser/minor goddess.

Visual Depictions of Kalypso



Lucanian red-figure vase (c. 450 B.C.)

Source: <https://blog.oup.com/2014/07/scenes-from-the-odyssey-in-ancient-art>

Allegorical Interpretations of Kalypso's Name

- Late Antiquity / Byzantium:
 - “the concealment and invisibility that dominated Odysseus in the deep caves” (Scholium on *Odyssey* 1.14d)
 - “the one who conceals her thought” (Suda κ 273)
 - “because of covering and dressing for people living in wet and cold regions” (Scholium on Hes. *Theog.* 359)
 - “they transform her allegorically into what we term body, for she conceals within her like a shell the soul's pearl” (Eustathios on *Odyssey* 1389.42)

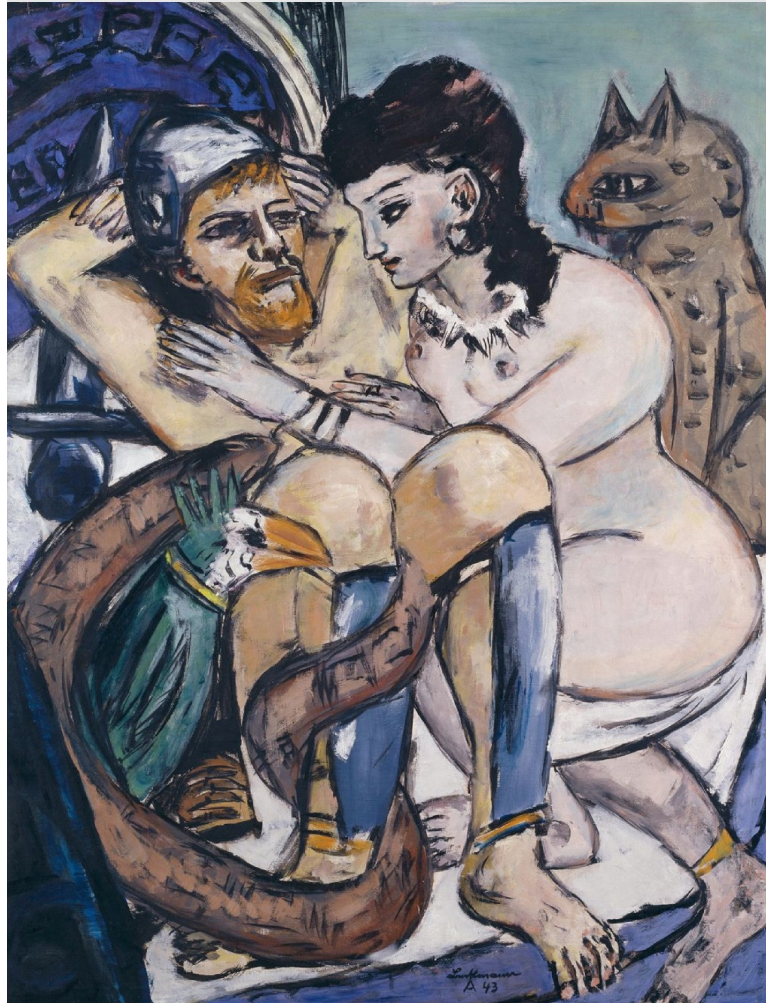
Kalypso in Modern Painting (I)



Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), “Odysseus und Kalypso” (1882)

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Arnold_B%C3%B6cklin_008.jpg

Kalypso in Modern Painting (II)



Max Beckmann (1884–1950), “Odysseus und Kalypso” (1943)

Source: <https://online-sammlung.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/de/objekt/HK-2887/odysseus-und-kalypso?term=Max%20Beckmann&context=default&position=6>

Kalypso in Modern Painting (III)



Kurt Regschek (1923–2005), “Kalypso”

Kalypso in Popular Literature

Calypso rose and took my hand. Her touch sent a warm current through my body. “You asked about my curse, Percy. I did not want to tell you. the truth is the gods send me companionship from time to time. Every thousand years or so, they allow a hero to wash up on my shores, someone who needs my help. I tend to him and befriend him, but it is never random. The Fates make sure that the sort of hero they send...”

Her voice trembled, and she had to stop.

I squeezed her hand tighter. “What? What have I done to make you sad?”

“They send a person who can never stay,” she whispered. “Who can never accept my offer of companionship for more than a little while. They send me a hero I can’t help...just the sort of person I can’t help falling in love with.”

The night was quiet except for the gurgle of the fountains and waves lapping on the shore. It took me a long time to realize what she was saying.

“Me?” I asked.

“If you could see your face.” She suppressed a smile, though her eyes were still teary. “Of course, you.”

“That’s why you’ve been pulling away all this time?”

“I tried very hard. But I can’t help it. The Fates are cruel. They sent you to me, my brave one, knowing that you would break my heart.”

“But...I’m just...I mean, I’m just me.”

“That is enough,” Calypso promised. “I told myself I would not even speak of this. I would let you go without even offering. But I can’t. I suppose the Fates knew that, too. You could stay with me, Percy. I’m afraid that is the only way you could help me.”

Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson: The Battle of the Labyrinth* (2008)

Kalypso in Film (I)



Ulysses (1954): Silvia Mangano as Kalypso and Penelope

Sources: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047630>

<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/silvana-mangano-as-penelope-in-ulysses-1954--550916966913088760/>

Kalypso in Film (II)



The Odyssey (1997): Vanessa Williams as Kalypso

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/562105597215838222>

Kalypso in Film (III)



Pirates of the Caribbean: Naomie Harris as Kalypso (Tia Dalma)

Kalypso in Film (IV)



Star Trek: Short Treks (2018) – Episode 2.1: “Calypso”

Source: <https://startrekaod.net/2018/11/20/a-swonderful-short-treks-moment>

Kalypso as a Brand Name



Source: https://www.candy24.ch/products/kalypso-lemonade-diverse-sorten-473ml?variant=37867649335464¤cy=CHF&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=google+shopping&gclid=Cj0KCCQjw4omaBhDqARIsADxULuXRpnB-rP2ppgJraWJyJOrrbn29VvX_v667N9DUg-6cGcs7NEqHXWkaAiHKEALw_wcB

Scholarly References

- Alden, Maureen J. 1985. "The Rôle of Calypso in the Odyssey." *Antike & Abendland* 31, 97–107.
- Baltes, Matthias. 1978. "Hermes bei Kalypso (Od. ε 43-138)." *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* 4, 7–26.
- Crane, Gregory. 1988. *Calypso: Backgrounds and Conventions of the Odyssey*. Frankfurt a.M.
- Dirlmeier, Franz. 1967. "Die 'schreckliche' Kalypso". In: Horst Meller & Hans-Joachim Zimmermann (eds.), *Lebende Antike: Symposium für Rudolf Sühnel*. Berlin, 20–26.
- Güntert, Hermann. 1919. *Kalypso: Bedeutungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiet der indogermanischen Sprachen*. Halle.
- Harder, Richard. 1960 [1952]. "Odysseus und Kalypso." In: Walter Marg (ed.), *Richard Harder: Kleine Schriften*. Munich, 148–163.
- Lohmann, Dieter. 1998. *Kalypso bei Homer und bei James Joyce: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung des 1. und 5. Buches der Odyssee und der 4. Episode im Ulysses von J. Joyce*. Tübingen.
- Meillet, Antoine. 1919. "Le nom de Calypso et la formation désidérative." *Revue des études grecques* 32(146/150): 384–387.
- Pontani, Filippomaria. 2013. "Speaking and concealing – Calypso in the eyes of some (ancient) interpreters." *Symbolae Osloenses* 87, 30–60.
- Rafn, Birgitte. 1990. "Kalypso." *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* V.1, 945–948.
- Zusanek, Harald. 1996. *Kalypso: Untersuchungen zum dios-Begriff 1*. Ed. by Sibylla Hoffmann. Frankfurt a.M.

You can access this presentation!

- <https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/people/aca/classics/tenured/silviofb/index.html>
- Scroll down to the bottom of the page!

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas

← People ← Academic staff ← Classics ← Tenured

Silvio Bär

Professor - Classics



| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Email | silvio.baer@ifikk.uio.no |
| Phone | +47-22855338 |
| Room | 545 GM |
| Username | Log in |

Postal address
IFIKK PO Box 1020 Blindern
0315 Oslo