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Ulysses and His *peregrini amores* in the Latin Love Elegy

ABSTRACT: This article aims to trace the 'unfaithful Ulysses' motif in the Latin love elegy of the Augustan era. Roman elegists deconstruct Ulysses's epic profile by turning his resourcefulness, his most celebrated virtue in epic poetry, into a vice; as a result, the elegiac Ulysses is a cunning sailor who charms women at every port he stops at, always being at the ready to sail away. This image of the epic hero is assessed in two conflicting ways: he is either judged for his insolent erotic behaviour, or he is applauded as the ideal 'casual lover', enviable to lovers who are unable to resist their self-destructing, obsessive passions.

KEYWORDS: Ulysses, Odysseus, Latin love elegy, Propertius, Ovid, love, epic

Introduction

Penelope is probably the heroine most frequently mentioned in the Latin love elegy as an *exemplum* of conjugal fidelity; Ulysses, on the contrary, has a very different reputation. In his *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* Ovid uses Ulysses twice as an example of the man well-versed in amorous relationships, who can exploit his talents to pursue,

continue or disrupt a relationship of this kind at will.[1] At the same time, Ovid uses Penelope as an example of female virtue and conjugal devotion.[2] Propertius's treatment of the mythical couple is similar. He repeatedly refers to Penelope as the ideal wife,[3] but only mentions Ulysses for his fleeting erotic loyalty along with Jason and other 'ladiesmen' of the heroic world, when he wants to warn or threaten Cynthia and the other elegiac ladies. This article aims to follow the appearances of the 'unfaithful Ulysses' motif in elegiac texts of the Augustan era, exploring what symbolism and meaning it bears within the context of the Latin love elegy. Is the polyamorous Ulysses meant to be presented as a villain, an anti-paradigm of erotic behaviour for the ideal elegiac *amator*, or is he supposed to be an archetypical casual lover who is envied and revered by those unable to resist their self-destructing infatuation with one woman?

[1] On Ovid's treatment of Odysseus see Stanford 1985: 138–139, 143. This article will not examine texts that use Ulysses as an *exemplum* for the poetic persona's suffering. A notable example of such a poem is Tibullus's elegy 1.3, where the poetic subject is sick in Corfu (mentioned with the Homeric name Phaeacia), unable to follow Messalla to his military expedition to the East, but also feeling homesick as he finds himself away from Rome and his beloved Delia (whom he imagines weaving in her chamber, just like Penelope). Tibullus never mentions Ulysses by name, but the way he describes the lover's wanderings bears significant similarities to the *Odyssey*, a fact the made Brigh 1971 speak of a 'Tibullan *Odyssey*'. The poem will not be examined in the current article since it does not question the theme of Ulysses's (or the lover's) infidelity. The same is also true about some elegies from Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, where the poet compares himself and his exile to the Ithacan king's wanderings away from his homeland and wife. Again, Ovid focuses on the desired *nostos* and on the hero's separation from his wife and social circle (just like the one experienced by the *persona loquens*), not on the amorous adventures in which Ulysses was involved. A notable exception is *Ex Ponto* 4.10.13–14. On this poem see note 20 below.

[2] Larosa 2014: 370 notes that in *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* Ovid mentions Penelope even more often as an *exemplum* in descriptions of the exiled poet's faithful wife (e.g., *Tr.* 1.6, 5.5, 5.14, *Ex Ponto* 3.1, e.a.). A notable exception is *Amores* 1.8.43–48, where Ovid speaks of Penelope's wish to test her suitors using clear sexual undertones and implying that the queen might have been enjoying younger men living in her palace. See Mc Keown 1987: 226–227. The portrayal of the Ithacan queen in *Heroides* 1 will be examined in detail in section 2 of this article.

[3] E.g. Propertius 2.6.23–24, 2.9.3–8, 3.12.19–38, 3.13.9–10, 4.5.7, e.a.

Negative assessments of Odysseus's cunningness are to be found quite early on, in archaic lyric poetry and later in Attic tragic plays.[4] His interactions with Palamedes, Ajax and Philoctetes are those mostly evoked by poets who wish to showcase that Odysseus tends to use all the means available to achieve his own goals, resorting even to treachery and ignoring other people's feelings. The hero's portrayal in the Homeric epic justifies such an assessment – he is, after all, a 'man of many turns' (*polytropos*), 'of many plans' (*polymetis*) and 'many devices' (*polymychanos*), while Odysseus himself claims that he is known for his many schemes at the very beginning of his self-introduction to the Phaecians in *Odyssey* 9.19–20:

> εἴμ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
> ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει. (Hom. *Od.* 9.19–20)

In Latin epic Ulysses is portrayed in even darker tones: in Virgil's *Aeneid* 2 he is called *durus* (*Aen.* 2.7) and *dirus* (*Aen.* 2.262); Laocoon presents him as the one responsible for the Fall of Troy (*Aen.* 2.43–44)[5], while the Greek deserter Sinon pictures him as a fraud, a self-absorbed man who does not care for his comrades (*Aen.* 2.77–104).[6] In both the *Aeneid* (3.272–274) and the *Metamorphoses* (13.711–713) the Trojans are said to be repulsed when passing by the kingdom ruled by Ulysses, who is described as 'fierce' (*saevus*) and 'deceitful' (*fallax*). All these attitudes towards the Greek hero rise from his war ethics, tested during the Trojan campaign, and they are completely irrelevant to his numerous amorous relationships. Ulysses's 'polygamy' was never part of the conversation about the hero's morals in epic and tragic poetry, either because his relationships with Calypso, Circe and Nausicaa were

[4] See Stanford 1985: 91–117 on the subject. Stanford focuses on how the 5th century sophistic movement had an impact on Odysseus's portrayals in Attic drama. See also O'Connor 1975 on 'Odysseus the Liar' in the *Odyssey*.

[5] Even though, his part in the building of the Trojan horse is largely downplayed. On this strange omission see Ganiban 2009. Odysseus is presented as the one responsible for the sacking of Troy in *Odyssey* 8.492–495 as well, while one of the typical epithets used to describe him in the *Iliad* (e.g. 2.278, 10.363) is *ptoliporthos* (city-sacker).

[6] It turns out, though, that he is intentionally exaggerating, to convince the Trojans to trust him.

treated as part of the adventures he had to face during his ten years long *nostos*,[7] or because a wandering sailor engaging in extramarital relationships would seem natural to readers living in a male-dominated society.

The same rules are not in effect in the Latin love elegy, where lovers seldom leave the city since their love life is rendered as far more important than any military, political or mercantile mission overseas.[8] Within this context, Ulysses is not longer presented as a king, husband and father determined to return home, but he transforms into an adventurer who light-heartedly wanders from port to port and from girlfriend to girlfriend as he tours the Mediterranean Sea. This new image is evaluated in two conflicting ways. In most poems, Ulysses's 'island- and relationship-hopping' is condemned as a sign of treachery and infidelity. In Ovid's erotic 'handbooks', however, Ulysses is praised for his resourcefulness and flexibility which allows him to seduce any woman he wants and slip away from unpleasant situations. In that way, he becomes something like a role-model for Ovid's readers, an experienced and talented lover who has attended every lesson the *magister amoris* has to offer.

[7] On this matter, see Woodhouse 1930: 215–218, 230; Anderson 1958: 7 and passim; Hogan 1976; Griffin 1980: 56–58; Reinhardt 1996: 93–99; Skinner 2014: 46–50, e.a.; also, Wohl 1993: 23–24, 27 and Peradotto 1993: 176.

[8] Harrison 2013: 144–147. Any voyage is perceived as a danger to the relationship itself. See Boucher 1965: 95; Clarke 2004: 132; Keith 2022: 81–82. This is why sea travels are mostly thematised in *recusationes*, like Prop. 1.6, where the lover refuses to pursue a career in the military leaving his girlfriend behind, or in *propemptica*, like Prop. 1.8a, where the lover advises Cynthia against embarking on a voyage. Cf. Ovid, *Amores* 2.11, where Corinna is the one that sails away. When the lovers attempt to sail away from Rome (e.g. Tib. 1.3, Prop. 1.17) they are pictured as homesick, troubled and unable to disconnect emotionally from their loved ones. There are, of course, some notable exceptions. Propertius 2.26a and 2.26b, and Ovid's *Amores* 2.16 present voyages on which the lovers embark with their beloved women. In Propertius the voyages happen within a dream (2.26a) and a fantastic construction imagined by the poetic persona (2.26b). In Ovid's *Amores* 2.16 we read a similar imaginative scenario, which is constructed by the *persona loquens* as a means to entertain himself and fight the feeling of boredom the lover experiences, while he is alone in the countryside of Sulmo, longing for his mistress.

1. Propertius's Calypso as a damsel in distress

Ulysses is mentioned twice in Propertius's elegies as an exemplary unfaithful man. In elegy 1.15 Propertius pictures Calypso as a sensitive, abandoned woman, who cries after her lover's departure, while standing at the shore and gazing at the sea:

> 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. (Prop. 1.15.9–14)

Propertius's description of Calypso evokes Catullus's description of abandoned Ariadne at Naxos (see Cat. 64), whose lament on the beach became something like a model for every female complaint towards the absent lover that had a great impact on the Latin love elegy and especially on Ovid's *Heroides*.[9] The way Propertius treats Calypso's story also brings to mind an episode-type found repeatedly in the *Heroides*, where different women offer hospitality to travelling heroes and fall in love with them, only to ultimately find themselves abandoned. Calypso's story bears a remarkable resemblance to many stories found in Ovid's *Heroides*: the Nymph saved Ulysses from his shipwreck, fell in love with him and helped him continue his journey, like Phyllis did for Demophoon (*Her.* 2), Hypsipyle for Jason (*Her.* 6) and Dido for Aeneas (*Her.* 7). Propertius adaptation[10] of Calypso's story to this episode-type

[9] See de Saint-Denis 1935: 337–339 and Verducci 1985: 244, who refers to Ariadne as a 'figura communis'. See also Lipking 1988: 1–30 and Rosati 1989: 15–16, 207, who speaks of a typical 'drama della "donna abbandonata"'.

[10] On Propertius's reworkings of Greek myths, see Woodhouse 1930: 230; Griffin 1980: 58; Heslin 2018: 116–120.

is the one that shapes her reaction to Ulysses's departure,[11] which is presented as far more passionate and intense than the one described in the archaic epic.[12] There, Calypso is pictured as a person making one last attempt to persuade Ulysses to stay by offering him an immortal life at her idyllic island.[13] At the same time, she induces some compliments by making Ulysses admit that she is far more beautiful than his mortal wife (*Od.* 5.211–218). She does express anger against the gods who order her to let him go and even accuses them of being envious of her happy relationship (*Od.* 5.118–144). However, she never attempts to ignore their orders or hide them from Ulysses, and she is never pictured weeping or begging him to stay.

While in elegy 1.15 Propertius focuses on Calypso and the other abandoned women, in elegy 2.21 his main interest includes the morally disputable behaviour of epic heroes. The *persona loquens* advises Cynthia not to trust men's flattering words since they do not hesitate to abandon their companions, just as Jason betrayed Medea and Ulysses left Calypso. The two men are pictured as insolent ladies-men who travel around the Mediterranean Sea getting into relationships with

[11] Graverini 2014: 82–88 considers the possibility that Propertius's and Ovid's (see *Ars* 2.123–125) treatment of Calypso's story is based on a lost Hellenistic text. He even mentions two passages from Hyginus (*Fab*. 243.7) and Lucian (*Vera hist.* 2.35), which treat the story in a similar fashion. In the first one Calypso commits suicide, while in the latter Odysseus writes to her asking for forgiveness. Cf. Fedeli 1977: 90–93 and Papanghelis 2009: 118, who consider different possibilities regarding the nature of this lost text.

[12] Propertius's reworking of the myth is also dictated by the theme of the poem since the lover addresses the unfaithful Cynthia and warns her that he could leave her, just as the epic heroes do with their paramours. See Bennett 1972: 37–38; Gaisser 1977: 390–391; Davis 1973: 136 on the mythical heroines as *exempla* for the unfaithful Cynthia who is to be left alone. Indeed, the undefined *periculum* that the lover is about to face at 1.15.1 is sometimes interpreted as an imminent sea voyage, which can be paralleled to the voyages conducted by Jason and Ulysses. See Butler, Barber 1996: 174. For other interpretations of the word, see Camps 1961: 79; Bennett 1972; Davis 1973; Heyworth 2007: 66ff.; Heslin 2018: 120–121, on the contrary, suggests that the examples Propertius uses disclose more about the speaking subject's psychological state and less about the state in which he wishes to see his girlfriend.

[13] On the matter of Calypso's offering of immortality see Bartol 2017, and especially pp. 12–13, where Bartol examines Odysseus's denial and its meanings.

foreign women, but always having their fleets at the ready for a quick escape.

> Colchida sic hospes quondam decepit Iason:
> eiecta est (tenuit namque Creusa) domo.
> sic a Dulichio iuvene est elusa Calypso:
> uidit amatorem pandere uela suum.
> a nimium faciles aurem praebere puellae,
> discite desertae non temere esse bonae! (Prop. 2.21.11–16)

More specifically, Ulysses is said to have 'deceived' the Nymph (*elusa est*). His resourcefulness is turned from an epic virtue that allows him to escape dangerous situations to an elegiac vice since in the elegiac world deception (*dolos*) is always perceived negatively, as a characteristic of unfaithful and unstable lovers. Ulysses's further disconnection from his epic background is achieved through the prominent absence of his name in the above passage, and through the absence of any of the numerous epithets that typically follow him in the epic tradition. Instead, he is introduced as a 'youth from Dulichium' (Dulichio iuuene) on verse 13, a characterisation that is not only degrading for an epic hero and king but is also paradoxical: after ten years on the front and three years of wanderings in the sea Ulysses can hardly be described as a 'youth'.[14] In the next verse Ulysses is also mentioned as the Nymph's 'lover' (*amatorem*). The word does not mean much on its own, as it could refer to the way Calypso perceives Ulysses. However, if we also take into account the absence of his name, the omission of any reference to his epic traits and achievements, the mention of his deceptive behaviour towards Calypso and the peculiar expression *Dulichio iuvene*, we are left with the impression of an infamous heartbreaker who is out and about, seducing women.

[14] See Richardson 2006: 272.

2. Penelope's complaint (Ovid's *Heroides* 1)

This is the exact image of Ulysses pictured in Ovid's *Heroides* 1, the letter written by Penelope to her absent husband. Ovid's Penelope is nothing like her Homeric predecessor: she is not portrayed as a dignified, strong-willed queen, who is ready to defend her house and her honour, determined to wait for her husband at all costs; instead, she is a sentimental, neglected wife who questions her husband's whereabouts and complains about how her appearance and youthful charms are affected by the time's passing. This Penelope does not fear that her husband is facing some kind of epic danger on the high seas, or at least this is not the only thing she fears. Instead, Ovid's Penelope imagines Ulysses being infatuated with an exotic beauty and unwilling to return to her.

> Tam longae causas suspicor esse morae.
> Haec ego dum stulte metuo, quae vestra libido est,
> Esse peregrino captus amore potes;
> Forsitan et narres, quam sit tibi rustica coniunx,
> Quae tantum lanas non sinat esse rudes. (Ovid, *Her.* 1.74–78)

The unfaithful Ulysses she imagines is not based on any valid information she has about her husband's doings,[15] nor on his previous behaviour. Her fears and suspicions are cultivated only by his long absence (v. 74) – a theme often found in the Latin love elegy, where women become suspicious and feel neglected when left alone long enough (e.g.,

[15] In the *Odyssey* Menelaus told Telemachus the news about his father's stay at Calypso's Island and Telemachus passed the information on to his mother (18.142–144). Ovid's Penelope, however, claims that her son's trip was unsuccessful and that she still does not know anything about Ulysses's whereabouts (*Her.* 1.65–66). Jacobson 1974: 467–468 believes that Penelope's claim that Sparta was *nescia ueri* can be read as an intended indifference towards a piece of information she refuses to accept as real. Kennedy 1984: 420–422, on the other hand, believes that Penelope cunningly withholds information.

Prop. 1.3.43–44).[16] This is pointed out by the using of the word *stulte* (v. 75), which makes Penelope's fear uncertain and based only on her insecurity and suspicion that her husband will turn out to be a typically unfaithful sailor, pursuing women at every port he stops. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the way Penelope imagines Ulysses, speaking to his new girlfriend about his 'uncultured' (*rustica*) wife, preoccupied with weaving, is not that very different from Homer's text. In *Odyssey* 5. 215–218, in particular, Ulysses does compare his wife to Calypso and admits that the nymph is far more beautiful, as it is expected of a goddess who cannot lose to any mortal woman.

> 'πότνα θεά, μή μοι τόδε χώεο: οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς
> πάντα μάλ', οὔνεκα σεῖο περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
> εἶδος ἀκιδνοτέρη μέγεθός τ' εἰσάντα ἰδέσθαι:
> ἡ μὲν γὰρ βροτός ἐστι, σὺ δ' ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως. (*Od.* 5.215–218)

In the epic text this speech is indicative of Ulysses's sensitivity and social skills, because it is part of the excuses he makes to Calypso when he is about to leave her island.[17] In Ovid's elegiac epistle, however, the same behaviour is assessed differently, and his possible 'nagging' about Penelope to another woman is treated as indicative of the middle-aged man's will to escape his wife –a wife who may be too devoted to household chores − in favor of a younger and prettier woman. Consequently, a reader who is well acquainted with the Homeric text can quickly discern that Penelope's 'foolish' fear is not that foolish after all.

3. Ovid's ideal 'casual lover' (*Ars Amatoria*)

The ladies-man Ulysses, who is always ready to depart from his partners' place, appears twice in Ovid's didactic poetry. In *Ars Amatoria*

[16] See Jacobson 1974: 258; Gardner 2008: 68–69, 73–74, 78–79 and passim. In the *Heroides*, delay (*mora)* is often connected to the typical unfaithfulness of wandering sailors (*Her*. 2.94, 103 and 7.74, 176, where Dido asks Aeneas for a short delay of his departure using the same word).

[17] See Kennedy 1984: 421.

2.123–124 Ovid describes him as a man who – although not handsome − was eloquent enough to charm two sea deities:

> Non formosus erat, sed erat facundus Ulixes,
> et tamen aequoreas torsit amore deas. (Ovid, *Ars* 2.123–124)

Ulysses's eloquence is one of his traits widely celebrated in the archaic epic and it is even mentioned as a 'compensation' for his poor looks in *Iliad* 3.204–224, when Antenor remembers meeting Menelaus and Ulysses at the Assembly of the Trojans and describes the strong effect the Ithacan hero's words had on the audience. Antenor makes this comparison between Ulysses's appearance and his majestic rhetoric ability while speaking of a political negotiation. Ovid, on the other hand, makes the same comparison in the context of Ulysses's erotic affairs in general, and his affair with Calypso in particular.

Ovid presents a relationship with a completely different dynamic compared to the one described in the fifth book of the *Odyssey*. Ovid's Calypso[18] is similar to the person found in Propertius's elegies, troubled and pained at the thought of the hero leaving her island. Furthermore, she desperately makes excuses to delay his departure by pointing out unsuitable weather conditions or by inducing him to recite again and again his adventures at Troy. Ovid's portrayal of Ulysses also reverses the epic text completely:[19] Ulysses first appearance at the fifth chapter of the *Odyssey* includes sitting on a rock at Ogygia, crying about his cruel fate that keeps him away from his dear home (5.151–158). On the contrary, in *Ars Amatoria* he is pictured as comfortably settled on an island and even eager to stay longer. Indeed, he is more than willing to

[18] On how this example works in the context of Ovid's argument, see Sharrock 1994: 78–83.

[19] The version of the story found in *Ars Amatoria* can be read as loosely based on the epic text, since Calypso does indeed try to dissuade Ulysses from leaving, even though she soon complies with his decision, helps him to craft his raft and sees him off. The mention of a stick which the hero uses to draw images on the sand is read by Sharrock 1987: 408–410 as an indication that the scene takes place while Ulysses is building his raft. This reading would subsequently mean that Ovid's Calypso is just trying to gain some extra time with the hero by stalling him, and that the 'happy' and energetic Ulysses is a result of his attitude of readiness to sail back home.

spend 'quality time' with Calypso on the beach,[20] reciting stories about the Trojan war, while using a stick to draw pictures on the sand, so that he can make his narratives more vivid; he even changes elements in each retelling of the story, giving his narratives the required *variatio*, like an experienced poet[21] or showman.

In *Rem.* 263–288, Ovid treats Ulysses's affair with Circe in a similar way. Instead of the powerful witch of the Homeric epic,[22] he pictures a typically submissive, abandoned woman, desperate and eager to use magic to keep her lover close. While in the *Odyssey* Circe does not seem to care much about the fact that Ulysses decided to leave her island, in *Remedia Amoris* she is intensely distressed and she delivers a heartful speech, as passionate as speeches delivered by Ariadne at Naxos (see Catullus 64, Ovid's *Heroides* 10, e.a.) and by other heroines who were abandoned by travelling epic heroes.[23] She tries to prove herself as a 'worthy wife' for the hero (vv. 275–276)[24] – she questions the whole purpose of his journey (v. 280)[25] and presents her island as an ideal place where he can settle as a king (vv. 283–284).[26] She makes all these efforts in order to achieve his erotic sympathy.

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[20] A similar take on the hero's stay at Ogygia is found in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.10.13–14, where the exiled poet jealously questions the suffering Ulysses had to go through while staying at Calypso's Island: *An grave sex annis pulchram fovisse Calypson/ aequoreaeque fuit concubuisse deae*? See Graverini 2014: 86.

[21] On Ulysses's 'Ovidian' technique of *referre idem aliter*, see Galinsky 1975: 4; Sharrock 1987: 407; Boyd 2016: 115.

[22] Even in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Circe is abandoned by two men, Glaucus (14.8–10) and Picus (14.320–322), she behaves much more aggressively, choosing to punish her rivals with magic.

[23] See note 9.

[24] Cf. Hypsipyle's speech in Ovid's *Her.* 6.113–116.

[25] Cf. Dido's arguments against Aeneas in Ovid's *Her*. 7.139–146 and 178–180. Circe ignores that a *noua Troia* will indeed be born when Aeneas reaches Italy. See Barchiesi 1986: 82–93; Casali 2009: 345–346.

[26] Cf. Hypsipyle's letter to Jason (Ovid, *Her.* 6.117f) and Dido's letter to Aeneas (Ovid, *Her*. 7.11–14, 148–156). The motif 'words and sails against the wind' that Ovid uses on v. 286 is also part of the typical female complaint (see Cat. 64.58–59, Ovid *Her*. 2.25, 7.8, 15.209, *Amores* 1.7.15f, *Met*. 8.134–135, e.a.). For parallels between Ovid's Circe and Dido, as they are portrayed in the *Aeneid* and the *Heroides*, see Boyd 2016: 115–117.

‘non ego, quod primo, memini, sperare solebam,
iam precor, ut coniunx tu meus esse uelis.
et tamen, ut coniunx essem tua, digna uidebar,
quod dea, quod magni filia Solis eram.
ne properes, oro: spatium pro munere posco;
quid minus optari per mea uota potest?
et freta mota uides, et debes illa timere:
utilior uelis postmodo uentus erit.
quae tibi causa fugae? non hic noua Troia resurgit,
non aliquis socios rursus ad arma uocat.
hic amor et pax est, in qua male uulneror una,
tutaque sub regno terra futura tuo est.’
illa loquebatur, nauem soluebat Ulixes;
irrita cum uelis uerba tulere noti. (Ovid, *Rem.* 273–286)

The episode functions as an exemplum on two different levels. On the one hand, Ovid uses Circe’s failed attempt to lure back Ulysses with magic as a proof that magic tricks are ineffective in manipulating an indifferent lover’s emotions:

Quid tibi profuerunt, Circe, Perseïdes herbae,
cum sua Neritias abstulit aura rates?
Omnia fecisti, ne callidus hospes abiret:
ille dedit certae lintea plena fugae. (Ovid, *Rem.* 263–266)

On the other hand, the cunning (*callidus*) Ulysses is celebrated as someone who knows that you can always escape an unpleasant relationship by travelling far away.[27] Indeed, Ovid points out that ‘tourism’ is a guaranteed method of removing a persistent feeling described just a few verses earlier (*Rem.* 213–248). And even though he immediately changes the theme to refer to the ineffectiveness of love magic, his Circe-Ulysses example cannot but function as a twofold paradigm of one ineffective and one effective technique: the one coming from an abandoned female and the other from a ladies-man who is sly and uninhibited in his love affairs.

[27] See Brunelle 2002 and Boyd 2016: 118.

4. Conclusion: Ulysses's *peregrini amores* in the context of the Latin love elegy

The impression created from the abovementioned passages is that the elegists have created a new, different image of Ulysses and his wanderings, transforming them from an epic journey to a cruise around the islands of the Mediterranean Sea, during which the hero is free to stop wherever he wants and get into romantic relationships with local women. This transformation leaves intact the basic traits of Ulysses's character as they are found already in epic and tragic poetry, because he is still presented as ideally resourceful and cunning (*callidus*), eloquent (*facundus*), deceitful at times (*elusa est*), and always ready to put his talents at use to get his own way. These traits are not tested on the battlefield, during an assembly or while he is on an epic adventure with his male companions, but during his interactions with the opposite sex; particularly during his interaction with non-mortal women, like the Nymph Calypso or the semi-divine witch Circe. It is noteworthy that the elegists utterly omit the hero's interaction with Nausicaa at Scheria. Although Nausicaa is often catalogued by researchers among Ulysses's 'conquests', [28] in fact she was never able to distract him from his goal to return home. Apart from that, she is actually presented as deeply distressed when Ulysses decides to leave her island in the *Odyssey* − and the Roman elegists do not wish to tell a story that has already been told. Besides, the sensitive maiden is nothing but an easy target for Ulysses's seductive technique, the power of which is further stressed by mentioning the deep effect it had on women of divine status.

The extent to which this erotic behaviour is negatively assessed is open to interpretation. Surely, both Propertius and Ovid take care to show the impact Ulysses's charm has on women who fall deeply in love with him, because they present Penelope, Calypso and Circe as victimised by the male hero's tendency of roaming the seas. Both, however, seem to approach this tendency in conflicting ways. Ovid, in the first of his *Heroides* 'speaks' in the voice of Ulysses's abandoned wife

[28] Beye 1982: 122 believes that Nausicaa, the virgin daughter of the king Alcinous who offers Ulysses both her hand and his kingdom, can be more tempting to the middle-aged Ulysses that Calypso or Circe.

and condemns the hero's possible extramarital relationship. Simultaneously, in his didactic poems the Ithacan king is presented as an ideal 'casual lover' who puts into practice all the lessons the *magister amoris* wishes to teach to his students.

Propertius's use of Ulysses as an *exemplum* raises analogous questions: does the *persona loquens* truly condemn Ulysses's casual relationships, when he evokes them to warn his mistress about unfaithful men, or is he envious of the hero's freedom to exchange lovers without being emotionally attached to them, a freedom which he can never enjoy? The lover in Propertius's elegies does indeed try repeatedly to evade his mistress's grip by sailing away.[29] The theme appears in the very first elegy of the *Monobiblos* (see 1.1.29–30: *ferte per extremas gentes et ferte per undas,/ qua non ulla meum femina norit iter*) and it is repeated in other poems, in which the lover seems either unable to achieve his goal (1.17)[30] or persuaded that travelling will not be able to cure him from his passion (2.30.1–2: *Quo fugis a demens? nulla est fuga: tu licet usque/ ad Tanain fugias, usque sequetur Amor*).[31] Propertius's take on Ulysses's extramarital love affairs could, therefore, be radically different than what it seems at first glance: the lover could very possibly consider Ulysses enviable for his ability to travel around, all the more because it is guaranteed that a faithful wife will be waiting for him at home: *nec frustra, quia casta domi persederat uxor* (3.12.37).

In this context, Ulysses's *peregrini amores* can be read as a motif that brings forward the conflicting ideals and values promoted in the Latin love elegy. The elegiac subjects seem to disapprove or even condemn the treachery and cunningness that Ulysses exhibits in his love

[29] See Clarke 2004: 132 and Richardson 2006: 400 for sea travel in Propertius's elegies.

[30] This is the attitude that Ovid's *magister amoris* criticises in *Rem.* 247–248, where he comments on Roman lovers' unhealthy dependence from their mistresses: *quidquid et afueris, auidus sitiensque redibis,/ et spatium damno cesserit omne tuo*.

[31] Only in elegy 3.21.33–34, at the end of the third book, he seems determined to achieve his goal or die in this attempt (*seu moriar, fato, non turpi fractus amore;/ atque erit illa mihi mortis honesta dies*). See Jacobson 1974: 167 and Putnam 1980: 107 on sea travel in Propertius's third book of elegies. On a metapoetic reading of the lover's determination to terminate his relationship with Cynthia, see Jacobson 1974; Clarke 2004: 143ff.

affairs. However, this attitude only seems to characterise women who have been in a relationship with the Ithacan king and find themselves victimised by his uncaring and unethical behaviour, like Penelope (*Heroides* 1) and Circe (in *Remedia Amoris*). When the hero's fleeting erotic loyalties are approached within the context of the constructed elegiac world and used as examples to describe the relationships developed in the urban environment of the Roman capital, the elegists try to respect Ulysses's ability to evade his epic and marital duties by getting into passionate relationships with women of divine status, without developing an unhealthy dependence on them. This also may be an ideal dynamic that desperate Roman lovers craved for their own relationships, yearning to be in control by manipulating their unfaithful and demanding mistresses, like Ulysses did with his erotic partners.

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