

# Il-Mellieħa u l-għar ta' Kalypso



**Jeffrey Sammut**  
B.Ed (Hons) History & E.M.Y.

Hafna minna qraw jew raw fuq it-televiżjoni l-għarja ta' Ulisse u l-Gwerra ta' Trojja. Din l-istorja tinsab fl-Odissea, li nkitbet xi seba' mitt sena qabel Kristu minn Omeru. Għal għaxar snin shaħ, il-Griegi assedjaw il-belt ta' Trojja mingħajr suċċess, sakemm Ulisse ħareġ bl-idea ġenjali li jinbena żiemel tal-injam u fih jinbnew xi ġellieda Griegi. It-Trojjanji daħħlu dan iż-żiemel ġewwa l-belt tagħhom u mal-lejl, is-suldati Griegi ħarġu bil-mohbi minn goż-żiemel u fetħu l-bibien ta' Trojja fejn sabu lil shaħhom bil-lest biex jidhlu u jirbħu l-belt. B'hekk, fl-aħħar, il-Griegi bdew jaħsbu biex imorru lura lejn pajjiżhom.

Imma mhux hekk l-imsejken Ulisse. Dan kellu jdum għaxar snin oħra sakemm jasal fil-gżira ta' Ithaca, art twelidu. F'dawn l-għaxar snin għadda minn ħafna avventuri. F'waħda minnhom, waqt



L-Għar ta' Kalypso fuq ir-riħ ta' Ġnien Inġraw

maltempata, il-mirkeb li kien fuqu spiċċa biċċiet u dan il-gwerrier għamel disat ijiem shaħ jgħum fil-baħar sakemm il-mewġ tefgħu fuq il-gżira ta' Oġiġja. Fl-Odissea, Ulisse jirrakkonta li "l-baħrin shaħi kollha ntilfu u mietu; jien biss salvajt għax m'arblu sew tghannaqt. Għal disat ijiem u magħhom disat iljieli, thabatt mal-ħalel u ċ-ċafċif tal-mewġ; fil-għaxar lejl, l-allat wassluni, fl-aħħar, fejn is-saħħara tghammar f' għar fil-blat."

Din is-saħħara jew ninfa, Kalypso, żammet lil Ulisse magħha għal seba' snin shaħ ġewwa dan l-għar u wegħditu li ma kien se jonqsu xejn. Hafna jaħsbu li l-gżira ta' Oġiġja hija l-gżira ta' Malta jew Għawdex. Allura l-għar ta' Kalypso jinsab x'imkien ġewwa l-gzejjer Maltin.

Fl-Odissea hemm deskrizzjoni ta' dan l-għar: "Madwar il-għar kien hemm sigriet iwarrodu, riħan, sebbuq u żnuber milli jfuħ u għasafar kbar go fihom kienu jbejtu: kokk u isqra u ċawl sewdien li jgħix mill-ħut. Mgħarrsin ma' bieb il-għar kien hemm xi dwieli mgħobbija għenieqed tqal tal-għeneb iswed u kien hemm erba' għejjun igelglu l-ilma msewqa sew bis-swieqi ħdejn xulxin."

U hija din id-deskrizzjoni li wasslet lil ħafna jaħsbu li dan l-għar jinsab fil-Mellieħa, sewwa sew fuq ir-riħ ta' Ġnien Inġraw. Rev. Loreto Zammit jikteb li "if we look at this romantic cave, we notice it is situated in a cliff face overlooking four fountains (springs)... water courses (widien) namely Wied Santa Marija, Wied Ferfer, Wied ta' Ġnien Inġraw (and) Wied ta' San Niklaw." B'hekk Zammit qabbel l-erba' għejjun li semma' Omeru mal-erba' widien li jinsabu qrib l-għar u li kollha fihom nixxieġħat ta' ilma ġieri.

Kittieb ieħor li kien konvint li l-għar ta' Kalypso jinsab fil-Mellieħa huwa Ernle Bradford. Għalkemm fl-1963, huwa kiteb li "if I were to consider looking for Calypso's home on Malta, I would settle for somewhere on the western coast, perhaps in the region of Dingli or near the present site of Verdala

Palace.”, fl-1972, wara żjara fil-għar tal-Mellieħa, huwa qal li “I was completely converted at first glance. Here was everything described by Homer. The cave was sheltered by a verdant copse of alders, aspens and fragrant cypresses, which was the roosting place of feathered creatures ... trailing round the very mouth of the cavern, a garden vine ran riot, with great bunches of ripe grapes: while from four separate but neighbouring springs, four crystal rivulets were trained to run this way and that.” Bradford qabbel id-deskrizzjoni tal-għar fl-Odissea ma’ dak li ra meta żar l-għar fil-Mellieħa u b’hekk ikkonvinča ruħu li dak kien l-għar tan-ninfa Kalypso.



Il-veduta mill-għar ta’ Kalypso

Fl-1804, fil-ktieb ‘Ancient and Modern Malta’, ta’ Boisgelin, naqraw li “The western division of the island (Malta) extends not further than Mellieħa port, near which there is a cave called The Grotto of Calypso.” Għalhekk l-idea li f’dan l-għar kienet tgħix Kalypso ilha teżisti mill-anqas aktar minn mitejn sena.

Kitba interessanti tal-1839, minn Thomas MacGill, tgħidilna li “Near the chapel of the Madonna of Mileha is a very fine grotto and near to it, a spring of icy cold water. Some insist that this is the famed grotto of Calypso, while others assert that the fabled grotto is at Gozo. The only way to reconcile this discrepancy is to suppose that her nymphship had what might be called, a town and a country residence: and that the miserable hole called her grotto in Gozo was where she retired to during summer months.” B’hekk MacGill ikkonkluda li, filwaqt li fix-xitwa Kalypso kienet toqgħod fl-għar tal-Mellieħa, fis-sajf kienet toqgħod Għawdex għall-frisk!

Rev. G. N. Godwin, il-kappillan tal-armata Ingliza, fl-1880, ukoll ittieħed jara dan l-għar u halla din id-deskrizzjoni tiegħu: “Calypso, the fair goddess with whom we were all so well acquainted in the days when we used to study our ‘Adventures of

Telemaque’ is popularly supposed to have resided at Mellieħa. Homer, in the fifth book of the Odyssey, gives a glowing description of her grotto which is in truth a miserable cave. There is however a fine view from the hillside and from the grotto wells forth abundance of clear spring water which fertilises a large garden below.”



It-taraġ li jagħti għall-għar li jissemma minn Evans fl-1900

Fatt interessanti u li jgħidilna ħafna għaliex dawn il-postijiet marbuta mal-passat kienu bil-wisq aktar popolari u magħrufa fis-seklu 19 jinsab f’din il-kitba ta’ Evans: “The people (of Mellieħa) are most obliging and only too ready to show you around, a small fee being generally looked for... Calypso’s caves are situated behind the village of Mellieħa and can be reached by ascending one of the streets running off the main road to the left. You can join the path crossing the valley and follow it till it bends round the high rock above the caves. The rocks have broken away and blocked up and destroyed several of the chambers. But the entrance stairways still remain and two or three compartments are intact. Below in the gorge are some pretty gardens and a clump of fruit trees.” Mid-dehra, xi Mellieħin kienu jieħdu xi ħaġa tal-flus biex idawru l-barranin u turisti li xtaqu jaraw dawn il-postijiet u f’dak iż-żmien ta’ faqar, kull qatra kienet tgħodd!

Bradford ħareġ b’idea differenti għaliex dawn il-postijiet kienu popolari f’Malta u f’pajjiżi oħra tal-Mediterran. Huwa kiteb li “Throughout the Mediterranean, most of these local aspirations date from no later than the 19th century, when

the first waves of foreign visitors with classical educations began to descend on these shores. Your Mediterranean-dweller, be he Italian, Sicilian, Maltese, Greek or what you will, is only too happy to oblige inquiring visitors with tales appropriate to their demands. Very rarely can any of these stories be traced back earlier than the 19th century. This Mediterranean habit of producing the right answer is not... entirely due to a natural duplicity. It is as much due to a genuine love of the native birth-place, a desire that it shall shine in foreign eyes and a kindly wish not to send the visitor away disappointed.” Jiġifieri ħafna minn dawn il-postijiet kienu jiġu vvintati min-nies tal-lokal biex joġġbu l-barranin, xi kultant anke tort tal-imħabba li kellhom lejn il-lokalità tagħhom, peress li xtaquha tidher aktar sinjura u sabiħa f’għajnejn il-barrani. Ma ninsewx ukoll dik il-munita jew tnejn li min kien jieħu t-turisti f’dawn il-postijiet kien jirċievi.

Hu x’inhu l-każ, l-għar ta’ Kalypso huwa parti mill-istorja tal-Mellieħa u għalhekk huwa importanti li ma jintesiex. Missirijietna kienu kburin ħafna aktar minna b’dan il-għar tant li kienu juruh lil kull min kien iżur il-Mellieħa. Għalhekk aħna għandna wkoll illum nagħtu s-sehem tagħna biex dan il-post jiġi mfakkar u mħares bħala parti mit-tradizzjoni u kultura tagħna l-Mellieħin.

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