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The Homelessness of Odysseus

In the word: "home" (Polish: *dom*), belonging to the joint ancient Indo-European cultural substrate (hence the Greek: *domos* and *dôma*, the Latin: *domus*, the Sanskrit: *dam*, etc.), linguists discover source meanings associated with predominantly two activities – the technical "building" and the social or existential "dwelling". As Beata Spieralska wrote in "Konteksty": *The "home" appears as distinguished space constructed by man, in which he is "at home", and which guarantees a feeling of security for him and his family.*[1] Naturally, however, one can be "at home" (Latin adverb: *domi* or *domum*) only when this existential situation is contrasted with the dangerous alienness of that, which is "outside" (Latin: *locativus* – *foris*, behind the door), or in the "Cracovian" variant: *na polu* (in the field, *peregre* – outside the house or town, composed of: *per* and *ager* – field). I would be inclined to say, therefore, that "home" (*dom*), comprehended as a cultural category, is a linguistic tool that produces this dichotomous conceptual structure. Is the thus established relation between "home" and that, which the latter is not (*domi/foris*), to possess the form of a simple opposition comprising a lucid, symmetric, and polarised configuration? Or is the application of a more subtle delimitation required here?

Since at the conference we speak about the home as a "path of existence" and thus stress its dynamic aspect I propose to reflect, even if only briefly, on a text absolutely paradigmatic for this theme, namely, Homer's *The Odyssey*. I shall try to demonstrate (concisely, and thus intentionally resigning from, for example, evoking copious literature on the subject as well as the whole subsequent Ulysses tradition, which developed in European literature and art from Euripides to Wyspiański or Joyce) that in this narration it is possible to come across traces of paradoxical topography or, to use a term coined by Derrida, *la cartographie impossible* that renders the relation between "home" and "the distant" an interesting problem. I am not concerned merely with the fact that Odysseus reached magical lands and floating islands by navigating along courses that cannot be easily delineated on an ordinary map and that can be always contrasted with the familiar and spatially stable Ithaca. What I find the most interesting in this story is a component that renders problematic this durable and solid beginning and end of the journey, its *arche* and *telos*.

First, however, briefly about that, which appears to be obvious in Homer's *The Odyssey* – it is without doubt a treatise about the home. This is not, however, a home in which one resides but one for which one longs and to which one returns. In it we are dealing with a structure whose dynamic recalls an archer's bow: distance resembles the taut bowstring, while residing prior to the journey and after its end denotes stability and solace. This is why it can be said about Odysseus: His most genuine past is his origin, His fundamental emotion is nostalgia, adventure is magnificent, and risk is desired as the salt of life but only when there exists a return. [2] He is undoubtedly an archetype voyager but, at the same time, a person succumbing to the nostalgic force of home gravity; as *homo viator* or *peregrinator* Odysseus remains within the range of a stabilising force that comprises the source of his subjective identity.

According to this interpretation, therefore, the home "enroots" man although, let us note, this expression denotes as if a technical assumption of the plant metaphor. This seems to be said quite literally by the key moment in *The Odyssey*, namely, the "great sign" that confirms Odysseus' identity in the eyes of Penelope. Recall the scene: Odysseus returns home, but since twenty years had passed his faithfully waiting wife wishes to be sure that it is really he - subjecting him to a trial she asks to remove the marital bed from their bedroom. In response, Odysseus tells a story known only to the couple: *A great secret [mega sema, great sign] went into its making, and it was my work and mine alone. A long-leafed olive tree, strong and vigorous, and thick as a pillar, grew in the courtyard. I built my room of solid stone around it, finished it off with a fine roof, and added tight-fitting timber doors. I trimmed the trunk from the roots up, after cutting off all the long-leaved olive branches, smoothed it off skillfully and well, and trued it to the line: that was my bedpost. I drilled holes with the auger, and with this for its beginning fitted all the smooth timbers of my bed until it was complete. I inlaid it with ivory, silver and gold, and stretched shining purple straps of ox-hide across. That was its secret [sema]…* (XXIII, 188-202).

The scene could be interpreted in numerous ways. Its contents resemble a fairy-tale puzzle, whose solution is decisive for the further fate or life of the protagonist (as is known, Odysseus is adept at solving all sorts of puzzles), or the literary trace of a ritual that by "rendering topical" this foundation event ultimately completes and sanctions Odysseus' "return" (*nostos*) – not only to Ithaca, comprehended spatially

as the designation of the journey, but also to the logical "beginning" of his (home) existence, his *arche*. *The olive tree proof* – wrote Stanisław Rosiek, referring to Jean Starobinski – *enabled Odysseus to combine the beginning and end of journey and existence. By repeating in the story a deed that once made it possible to create the marital bedroom he confirmed his t r u e i d e n t i t y.* [3]

In this interpretation, apparently, Odysseus becomes increasingly himself the closer he finds himself to Ithaca; his identity becomes the most stable, i.e. as if enrooted in the marital bed, that core of his home; it is here, in the embrace of Penelope, that he soothes the pain of excessive estrangement. If we recall that it is in this bed resembling a tree of life that Telemachus was conceived then the story told to Penelope will render Odysseus similar to that exemplary man who manages to plant a tree, build a home, and sire a son.

And yet … Homer's story contains something more or "different" than would follow from the model of "home gravity", some sort of a disturbing, decentralising force that cannot be disposed of with the words: "secret" or "symbol". Its symptom is probably the fact that this archetypical man, a model for each of us, does not actually plant a tree but cuts it down. The primary, "castration" gesture as if s u s p e n ds and questions the totalising force of its (quasi-ritual) repetition in a story that is supposed to complete the circle of the journey and bind its two ends; a repetition that with the assistance of the sign ("great sign") – resembling a signature or a seal – is to confirm or restore Odysseus' subjective identity formed by long-term absence. If one were to place one's trust in Plato then the spirit of Odysseus attained peace not after returning to Ithaca but after death, in the next embodiment: *from memory of its former toils having flung away ambition, went about for a long time in quest of the life of an ordinary citizen who minded his own business.* [4]

Two (at least) circumstances in particular incline us to doubt this open interpretation of *The Odyssey* or, more exactly, to enhance the text by including those doubts. True, they will not produce some sort of a different conclusion, but they weaken and "deconstruct" the first, envisaged as the only possible one.

Cyclicness

An intriguing commentary to Homer's epic is to be found in Jules Verne's *Voyage au centre de la Terre*.[5] Although it contains only a single mention of *The Odyssey*, the latter without doubt remains its key context. As we probably all well remember, the protagonists of this unusual "Ulysses-type" book set off on their journey from the home of Professor Lidenbrock in Hamburg, to which they return at the end – this "old home" is possibly a subtle allusion to the home of Odysseus: *it stood firm, thanks to an old elm which buttressed it in front*. A further route leads the narrator and remaining protagonists to Iceland, a land *not rich enough to possess clocks*, [6] where following the steps of the sixteenth-century alchemist Arne Saknussemm they enter the Sneffels crater to submerge in a subterranean abyss. This is a journey to the "sources of time": in the huge Cyclopean cave they encounter antediluvian monsters and at its very bottom – their ancestor: a hairy giant watching over a herd of mastodons. Then suddenly they make their way to the surface thanks to the eruption of another volcano.

"Dove noi siamo?" […]. "Come si chiama questa isola?" – one of the travellers asks a child they encountered.

"Stromboli", replied the rickety little shepherd […]. Stromboli! What effect on the imagination did these few words produce! We were in the centre of the Mediterranean, amidst the eastern archipelago of mythological memory, in the ancient Strongylos, where Aeolus kept the wind and the tempest chained up. [7]

The Jules Verne interpretation distinguishing a certain fragment of *The Odyssey* and perceiving in it a separate whole confirms an intuition that accompanied me from the first time I read *The Odyssey* and before I even associated it with the novel by the French author. Here is a model of the whole itinerary of Odysseus (*Apologos*, *The Odyssey*, Songs IX-XII):

The diagram features special symmetry: among the 15 locations reached by the traveller (including Ilion and Ithaca), the central, eighth one is the furthest stage of the journey, the dark land of the Kimmerians, where Odysseus performed the *nekyia* rite enabling him to meet souls leaving Erebos. This geometric construction (its symmetrical character is enhanced by

1. Troy (Ilion)
2. Cicones (Ismarus)
3. Lotus-eaters
4. Cyclops
5. Aeolus
6. Lajstrygoni (Telepyla)
7. Circe (Aia)
8. Kimmerians (Hades)
9. Circe (Aia)
10. Sirens
11. Scylla and Charybdis
12. Thrinacia
13. Calypso (Ogygia)
14. Phaeacians (Scherię)
15. Ithaca

two stays with Circe) delineates the intersection of life and death with the precision of a measuring rod.

Here is a sub-cycle that constitutes a summary of the whole, together with its central *katabasis*, i.e. descent into the cave of Polyphemus. This is a unique *via brevis*, a narratively cohesive miniature (which philological commentaries appear not to notice) of the adventures of Odysseus – preserving and even accentuating their initiation logic, so well recreated in the Verne novel.

(*proximity of Ithaca → storms, dangerous winds* *proximity of Ithaca → storms, dangerous winds*

1. Lotus-eaters 3. Aeolus

2. Cyclops

This fragment of *The Odyssey* ends with two sudden tempests. The first precedes arrival in the land of the Lotus-eaters: *But Zeus, the Cloud-Gatherer, stirred the north wind against our ships, in a blinding tempest, hiding the land and sea alike in cloud, while darkness swept from the sky. Headlong the ships were driven [...] Now I w o u l d h a v e r e a c h e d h o m e s a f e l y, but as I was rounding Cape Malea, the north wind and waves and the ocean currents beat me away, off course, past Cythera.* (IX, 67-81).

The mentioned Cape Malea, the most south-easterly of the Balkan Peninsula, resembling a finger pointing at nearby Crete and separated from Kytera by a mere strait, has been always regarded by the Greeks as exceptionally dangerous for sailors. In *The Odyssey* this is the spot where other commanders returning from Troy – Menelaus (III, 287) and Agamemnon (V, 514-17) – began their errant wanderings across unfamiliar regions; earlier (in the chronology of the world of the myths), this was also the fate of the Argonauts returning from Colchis. Researchers agree that, as Alfred Hauberk claims, *after the storm off Cape Malea (IX, 80-81) Odysseus has crossed a fundamental boundary, normally closed to mortals, which separates the real and the unreal worlds; [...] It is in these circumstances a quite pointless undertaking, and one based on completely false premises, to try to plot on a map the route taken by Odysseus.*[8] The same opinion was shared by, e.g. Kazimierz Kumaniecki (*Inasmuch as heretofore journeys by Odysseus took place in the real world /.../ from the moment of the storm we find ourselves in a world of fantasy*)[9] or J. V. Luce (On a map one can follow only the beginning of Odysseus' journey. (...) Leaving behind Cape Malea and Kytera he sailed on the wide open sea towards the south-west of Crete. From this point it is impossible to mark on a map the further course of his wandering. Kytera is the last location in his travels, which can identified to the final return to Ithaca).[10]

The place and circumstances in which Odysseus left the world of mortals do not give rise to doubts, but those of his return remain unclear. When did he manage to extricate himself from the netherworld? Naturally, with the assistance of the Phaeacians he "ultimately" landed on the shores of Ithaca. It is worth recalling, however, that earlier Odysseus almost reached his target. First, before he was caught in a tempest, and then when he left the Aeolian Island and sailed successfully thanks to conducive winds (the god of winds trapped the menacing ones in a sack): *We glimpsed our native land. We came in so close we could see the men who tend the beacon fires* (X, 29). Then, although this was an improbable circumstance, Odyseus fell asleep and his companions, as we know, *untied the bag. All the winds rushed out— storms seized them, swept them out to sea, in tears, away from their own native land.* This is the reason why (as Homer summed up Odysseus' subsequent recollections; XXIII, 315) *it was n o t y e t his destiny to reach his dear native land. Instead, storm winds once more caught him.* It is worth recalling, however, that at the very onset of *The Odyssey* the goddess Athena describes Odysseus' sad but sweet servitute under Calypso: *But Odysseus yearns to see even the s m o k e r i s i n g f r o m h i s n a t i v e l a n d and longs for death.*

The scene with the sack is one of the most disturbing images in *The Odyssey*. I cannot think about it without recalling a scene from my childhood when as a young boy I watched a popular Italian TV series: *L'Odissea* (director: Franco Rossi), which in a highly intriguing fashion showed the moment when Odysseus' companions untied the sack full of wind offered by Aeolus. The authors suggested that Odysseus was only pretending to be asleep but actually was aware of what his crew was doing; nonetheless, he tried not to create an obstacle, pretending that this was his intention. (Just as interestingly, it was this particular scene in the several parts-long series that made the greatest impression on me – so intense that even today I can recollect it vividly). True, Erich Auerbach claimed: *This "real" world into which we are lured, exists for itself, contains nothing but itself; the Homeric poems conceal nothing* [11], but there appears the moment when in a uniform and brightly lit narration, ostensibly limited exclusively to the foreground (as Auerbach envisaged it), there emerges a dark surprising fissure – an understatement,so unexpected in the case of Homer.

The astonishing fiasco of the attempt at returning to Ithaca forced the protagonist to make a new effort – once again he must allow himself to be *captured by the storm*. This is not the end, however, and even the successful return to Ithaca will not be u l t i m a t e , in accordance with the prediction made by Tiresias (XI, 120 sqq.) Odysseus once again departs. In this manner, his story as a whole takes on a c y c l i c a l character, making it possible to propose a different interpretation of the status of the place that is the beginning and end of the journey, i.a. Ithaca, the birthplace. The activity

pursued by Odysseus and conceived as an archetype of a person returning home gains automatism typical for the cyclical quality, but also futility in the meaning mentioned by Aristotle, who, recall, claimed that *automatikos* is etymologically affiliated with *maten*, "to no avail".[12]

Identity

Now, return to the "olive tree proof". What does this "great sign" denote if it is to be really treated as such, i.e. in semiotic categories. In other words, who should be regarded as its *signifié*? Obviously, the answer must be sought in traditional symbolic, in mythological imagery known from the works of Eliade and Jung or even the "poetics of reverie" by Bachelard (tree, root, fount, home, centre, cosmogony, etc.). At the same time, the "great sign" fulfils certain narration functions and is supposed to render credible the declaration made by Odysseus – it is a gesture with whose help he casts off his numerous costumes (including the fictitious identity of a Cretan, who in an earlier conversation with Penelope he pretended to be). Apparently, this is the place of transition from the order of seductive and deceitful fiction, and persuasive rhetoric (an order of soft and mellifluous words)[13] to an order of finally regained truth (this is, as we learn, "an infallible sign"). The story about the marital bed, however, also inclines the married couple to immediately lie down on it so as to satisfy their urge for love: the "subjective centre" is thus inevitably connected with desire.

First and foremost, however, I would like to draw attention to the fact that this centre of the home sphere (Greek: *kentron* – sting, blade, from: *kentein*, to prick; Latin: *punctum)* is connected directly with that, which is most distant. In the same way as during the *nekyia* rite in the distant land of the Kimmerians (*via longa*) where Odysseus met the person closest to him, i.e. his deceased mother, so the cut down olive tree – that root of his identity – brings to mind the wooden stake, which he used to blind Polyphemus (*via brevis*): *There lay beside a sheep-pen a great club of the Cyclops, a staff of green olive-wood, which he had cut to carry with him when dry; and as we looked at it we thought it as large as is the mast of a black ship of twenty oars [...] I bade my comrades cast lots among them, which of them should have the hardihood with me to lift the stake and grind it into his eye when sweet sleep should come upon him* (IX, 319-333).

The similarity of the toppled olive tree designating the centre of Odysseus' homestead and the cut down olive tree twisted in the manner of a screw and burning out the round, central eye of Cyclops (*kyklops* = *kyklos*, wheel + *ops*, sight), is the reason why the scene in the Cyclopean cave introduces a b s e n c e (or rather the p r e s e n c e of absence) in the very centre, in the foundation of domestic space. It also becomes a model for Odysseus' problematic subjectivity or, more exactly, it defines it as such. The anonymity that he announces to Polyphemus is more than a transitory state characteristic for certain initiation rite situations. Is it really anonymity? Perhaps Alkinoos, the king of the Phaecians, was right when he said to Odysseus: *For there is no one of all mankind who is nameless* (VIII, 552). Odysseus encountering Polyphemos is not simply anonymous, because anonymity is his name:

Cyclops, thou askest me of my glorious name, and I will tell it thee; and do thou give me a stranger's gift, even as thou didst promise. Noman [Outis] is my name, Noman do they call me-my mother and my father, and all my comrades as well.

He is, therefore, not *anonymous* but *cryptonymous*, or *pseudonymos*. This is, however, a false name, more of a pseudonym that only ostensibly conceals (actually betrays) his true identity based, after all, on "falsehood", the principle of pseudonymy. This is also what the contents of the assumed name tell us. True, Jerzy Andrzejewski wrote about Odysseus: *No man, and thus just like all others,* [14] but this does not have to be the case of being average and ordinary, and even more so "without character", "without qualities" (*ohne Eigenschaften*). The Greek *Outis* is composed of a negative particle (*out*) and the pronoun**:** "someone" (*tis*). The same pronoun – both in such expressions as: "this is someone", "to be someone" – means both in Polish and Greek admiration and recognition, and is a social distinction, emphasis on subjective distinctiveness. Its negation, as a consequence, defines the "villain", a man without value, without m e a n i n g, who, we tend to say, does not r e p r e s e n t anything and is a "zero" both in the ethical sense (as in the insult: "you're a zero") and semiotically, enabling a paraphrase of the lofty formula: **"**And his name shall be. .."; in this case – "it shall be zero". Man-nobody, the Odyssean *outis*, fulfils a logical function similar to the "zero" in arithmetic, which as such does not express value and is a condition for changing the value of all other numbers (cf. the English: *cypher* – number, code, zero; not by accident one of the protagonists in the film *Matrix* is called Cypher). [15] *Outis* thus means the absence of defined, stabilised subjectivity (cf. the Latin: *nemo*, "no one", a word created by merging *non* and *homo*; we all remember that this is the "true pseudonym" one of Verne's protagonists), which suffers from the lack of a source and calls for incessant supplementation, an ever provisory *suture* (to use the commendable Lacanian term) of barely possible and at all times transitory meaning, ever dependent upon a certain "system of difference". But there is something more: it comprises that possibility, the potential of meanings, i.e. a condition for all "representation", representation as such, in other words, still not stabilised by some sort of "refer-

ence" (Barthes called this conceit: *signifiance*, English: significance). [16]

It is not a coincidence that already in the first hexameter of *The Odyssey* Homer described Odysseus as *polutropos*, which could be translated as: worldly, cunning, highly enterprising, but also as: endowed with an unusual ability for changing costumes, for impersonating assorted, usually fictitious figures. Hence the anagnorisis, so frequent in *The Odyssey*, i. e. narration situations in which the protagonist becomes unexpectedly recognised (Aristarchus described *anagnôrismos* as the *telos* of *The Odyssey* [scholia to XXIII, 296]), because, after all, he may be "recognised" only when he first seems to be someone else. In this situation it is difficult to avoid asking: becomes recognised as whom? Is it not precisely as *polutropos*? Is talent for "disguise" and devising fictional stories not his true fate?

Stanisław Rosiek wrote: *Odysseus lived in a world that he had split into two parts: "illusory life" and "real life", as Pascal would have put it. He was a master of split existence.* [17] At the same time, things are different – this "delusion" is not so much a second, separate extreme of the opposition (*foris versus domi*) as the split, the fissure between extremities. It is that fissure, which is "erotic" and not one of the two "shores" (as Barthes would put it). [18] If this is the case, then Odysseus is himself the more the longer he stays away from Ithaca, even if he yearns for it so much, or rather the more he longs for it. The "distant" (*this yearning for the distant*, as Thomas Mann described the feeling experienced by Gustav Aschenbach) does not leave him even while at home (*domi*) and makes it impossible to get rid of the status of a "stranger", a "guest" and a "beseecher" (*hiketes*). As I have mentioned, the "distant" or the "split" of Odysseus' world no longer separates Ithaca from the unreal rest of the world but actually is that unreality, "fictionality" that permeates the whole of existence, including the "genuine" home life of Odysseus on Ithaca.

Instead of a stable "'centre" we discover a "void" (*outis*), which, as Derrida wrote in his reflections about the philosophical concept of the structure, is the "movement of supplementarity" initiating an endless "play of substitutions" (the same, let me recall, as the one mentioned in the epithet: *polutropos*). This *substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it* . We thus arrive at the conclusion (I quote Derrida while keeping in mind the text by Homer): *That there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse-provided - we can agree on this word - that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely*"[19]

Replacing the stable "centre" by a *sui generis* "nonplace", a process of undermining the presence of the source of *signifié*, making possible an endless substitution of signs, rendered Odysseus a "poet," and his journey – a nostalgic "art" of returning home (in Greek: *nostos* means "return", *algos* – "suffering", although it is worth keeping in mind that "nostalgia" is a modern lexical idea). David Lachterman wrote: *Odysseus achieves his nostos [...] by means of poetry, by telling and crafting tales [...]. What Odysseus tells, is his odyssey proper, his nostos and noos in words.* [20] Hence, Odysseus does not travel in reality and sometimes, especially upon returning, he goes back to his peregrinations in his tales, the latter being a journey conducted in the sphere of "language", "fiction", and thus the irremovable "distant", in a fascinating space opened by the Song of the Sirens (according to Blanchot). [21] Nothing, therefore, can end it, no port, no final conclusion, and even no "great sign", since it is "nothing" - a mere s t o r y about what is lost for ever and the object of infinite longing.

It is often maintained that the feature that best characterises Odysseus is his "curiosity", which was supposed to incite him to leave Ithaca (this was the view of, e.g. Dante [*Inferno* 26]). In this way, however, Ithaca too remains untouched – and as a home it still constitutes a stable centre of existence. The reading of *The Odyssey*, which I proposed, naturally questions the obviousness of this interpretation: I tried to demonstrate that this text contains another concealed mechanism. At the end, in order to provide at least a temporary tag line, let me cite Gabriel Marcel, whose words I noted down years ago; quoting them I am not overly concerned whether I am faithful to the context, i.e. the entire reflection of this philosopher:

To be curious – to leave a certain immobile centre, to attempt to capture an object about which one had only an unclear or schematic concept. With this meaning all curiosity is directed towards the peripheries. On the other hand, to be restless is to be uncertain of one's centre, to seek one's equilibrium. [...] Curiosity will turn into unrest the more its object will constitute a part of me, the more thoroughly it will be included into my inner structure. On the other hand, anxiety will become metaphysical the more it pertains to that, which cannot be separated from my "Ego" without, at the same time, causing the annihilation of that "Ego". [22]

Endnotes

1 Beata Spieralska, *Dach nad głową. Pojęcie „domu" w językach indoeuropejskich*, "Konteksty" 2004, fasc. 1-2, p. 34.

2 Vincenzo Vitiello, *Pustynia, Ethos, Opuszczenie. Przyczynek do topologii religijności*, transl. Ewa Łukaszyk, in: *Religia. Seminarium na Capri prowadzone przez Jacquesa Derridę i Gianniego Vattimo*, KR: Warszawa 1999, p. 177.

3 *Maski*, vol. II, Maria Janion and Stanisław Rosiek (ed.), Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdańsk 1986, p. 184 (my emphasis – W. M.).

4 Plato, *Republic*, 620c (Myth of Er).

5 Jules Verne, *Voyage au centre de la Terre*, ed. J. Hetzel, Paris 1864.

6 [...] *and the clock of which would then have struck twelve, if any Icelandic church had been rich enough to possess so valuable and useful an article. These sacred edifices are, however, very much like these people, who do without watches—and never miss them.* (ibid.).

7 Ibid., Polish edition, p. 304. On this book and the images and mytholgoical structures therein see: Simone Vierne, *Jules Verne et le roman initiatique. Contribution z l'étude de l'imaginaire*, Lille 1972; see also: Maria Janion, *Gorączka romantyczna*, Warszawa 1975, pp. 275-277. The Aeolian Islands were associated with the Lipari Islands and Stromboli already in antiquity (see, e.g. Tucicides III, 88; Virgil, *The Aeneid* VIII, 417).

8 Alfred Heubeck, *Introduction*, in: *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. II, ed. A. Heubeck, Arie Hoekstra, Oxford 1989, p. 4.

9 Kazimierz Kumaniecki, in: *Homer*, ed. K. Kumaniecki and J. Mańkowski, Warszawa 1974, p. 165.

10 J. V. Luce, *Homer i epoka heroiczna*, transl. E. Skrzypczak, Warszawa 1987, p. 267.

11 Erich Auerbach, *Blizna Odyseusza*, in: idem, *Mimesis, Rzeczywistość przedstawiona w literaturze Zachodu*, vol. I, transl. Zbigniew Żabicki, Warszawa 1968, p. 62.

12 Aristotle, *Physics* 197b.

13 See: W. Michera, *'Lathesthai'. O pokusie zapomnienia*, "Konteksty" 2-3/2003, pp. 217-222.

14 Jerzy Andrzejewski, *Nikt*, Warszawa 1987, p. 11.

15 See: W. Michera, *Ekranizacja pamięci. O filmie Memento Christophera Nolana*, in: *Iluzje pamięci*, ed. S. Wróbel, Wydawnictwo WPA UAM, Kalisz 2007, pp. 81-97.

16 16 See: Roland Barthes, The Third Meaning, [in:] Image, Music, Text, transl. Stephen Heath, Fontana Press , p. 54: *Signifiance, a word which has the advantage of referring to the field of signifier (and not signification)*. See also: R. Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte*, Seuil, Paris 1973, p. 82. The term: *signifiance* comes from: Julia Kristeva, *Semiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Seuil, Paris 1969.

17 Stanisław Rosiek, op. cit.

18 Cf. R. Barthes, *Le plaisir...*, pp. 13-14.

19 J. Derrida, Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, transl. Alan Bass, The University of Chicago 1978, pp. 353-354, 365.

20 David R. Lachterman, *'Noos' and 'nostos': The Odyssey and the Origins of Greek Philosophy*, [in:] J.-F. Mattéi (ed.) *La naissance de la raison en Grèce, Actes du Congrès de Nice* 1987, Paris 1990, p. 37 (Polish edition: *'Noos' i 'nostos': 'Odyseja' i źródła filozofii greckiej*, transl. W. Michera, "Konteksty" 2-3/2003).

21 Maurice Blanchot, *Le chant de Sirènes*, in: *Le livre à venir*, Gallimard: Paris 2005 (1959), p. 9 sqq. It must be stressed, however, that Blanchot judged Odysseus primarily within the context of the battle with the Sirens, i.a. by stressing the technical effort of maintaining a boundary between the real and the imagined (see: p. 16). One could say, therefore, that the purpose of this essay is to show the simultaneous presence in the *Odyssey* of a competing model, i.e. the ideological proximity of Odysseus and the Sirens.

22 Gabriel Marcel, *Homo viator*, transl. P. Lubicz, IW Pax: Warszawa 1984, p. 142.