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## TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS

# Alea Semper Non Jacta Est: Sont-Ce les Derniers Soubresauts de la *Calypso*?<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

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Most second-half-of-the-twentieth-century oceanographic ships remain in a discreet anonymity, but a very few have grabbed the news headlines. The minisubmarine *Alvin* came into the public eye, but its image and fame never matched that of Jacques-Yves Cousteau's *Calypso*. The *Calypso* is surrounded by myths and stories about which her wily boss seldom commented. It remains gainsaid that the ship has had a scientific and adventurous career, numerous episodes of which unfolded on millions of television screens. That does not detract from the value of her expeditions and her scientific worth. The lives of the ship and Cousteau are intertwined. If ever an "oceanographic" ship was involved in controversies, the *Calypso* places among the ones on top of the list. This is the case for her scientific campaigns, for her cinematographic presentations, and now for her legal imbrolios. The authors have covered some of the *Calypso*'s odysseys in previous papers; the present one briefly unfolds more of the *Calypso*'s fascinating "life" and deplores her far from glorious end amidst tedious legal wrangles.

**ADDITIONAL INDEX WORDS:** *Carnival Lines, La Rochelle memorial, undersea diving center.*



*Heureux celui qui comme Ulysse  
a fait un beau voyage*

Joachim du Bellay (1522–1560)  
"Sonnets"

*As idle as a painted ship  
on a painted ocean*

S.T. Coleridge (1772–1834)  
"The ancient mariner," part II

*If I persist in gazing [at myself]  
Myself I shall adore*

G.F. Haendel (1685–1759) "Semele"

*Il était un petit navire*

French nursery rhyme

### CALYPSO'S ODYSSEY AND LIVES

No, this is not a replay of Julius Caesar's (101–86 BC) dilemma when standing in front of the Rubicon.<sup>2</sup> But it is a dilemma about an old movie and television "star," Jacques-Yves Cousteau's *Calypso*. Cats have nine lives. In some languages the number is down to seven. Likewise the *Calypso* of the late Cousteau (1910–1997) has had at least four and is fighting to have a fifth life rather than to go to the scrap heap. In fact she is sixth-bound because the fifth was a project that got scuttled. She was a minesweeper during World War II, a ferryboat in the Maltese Islands, a genuine research vessel, a movie star. In all instances she logged a distinguished record. Problems arose in 1996 when the legendary *Calypso* collided with a barge and sank in the harbor of Singapore, and even 10 years later, after being refloated and brought back first to Marseille and then La Rochelle in France, she rusts, rots, ruins, and pines away alongside a quay where she once was slated to become the centerpiece of

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<sup>1</sup> "Alea semper non jacta est": "The dice are still not yet cast." This paraphrases Julius Caesar when he decided to cross the Rubicon and march upon Rome.

"Sont-ce les derniers soubresauts de la *Calypso*?": Are these the last death throes of the *Calypso*?

<sup>2</sup> Small stream that separated Italy from Cisalpine Gaul. Contemporary name is Fiumicino.



Figure 1. The *Calypso*, in her present condition, docked alongside a quay at La Rochelle, France (2001).

a “monument” to divers and underwater explorers. Though the subject of many an ambitious project, none of which ever took off, she is now the object of legal battles and more plans.

### OLD SHIPS

An old-time U.S. military ballad holds that old soldiers never die, they just fade away; old ships that stay afloat never die, they also just fade away. But some just stay around, like *Calypso*. She has been dying a slow death for almost 10 years, yet still hoping for a savior.

Some ships end at the bottom of the sea, victims of warfare, collision, scuttling, storms, or encounters with shoals or reefs. Others get towed to a dismantling yard. Luckier ones may end up alongside a quay as a museum or curiosity, a fate that befell among others the *Queen Mary*, the Russian submarine that was stranded in Swedish waters and now moored in Stockholm, or the German *U-505*, today an exhibit at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. They can be displayed on a unused quay like the lighthouse ship *West Hinder* in Zeebrugge (Belgium) or the Russian *Vityaz*, star of the Museum of the World Ocean in Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg), or housed, like the *Fraam*, in a specially constructed building, or even lifted from the sea bottom like the ill-fated *Wasa*, which capsized and sank moments after starting her maiden voyage in sight of Stockholm.

But now the *Calypso*, sometimes destined for the local marine museum or as the pièce de résistance of the Centre de plongée, is rusting away instead, refusing to sink, moored to a quay in historic La Rochelle, France.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The ship's name is mythical, appropriately chosen. Indeed, Καλυπσω in Greek mythology,<sup>3</sup> a nymph and daughter of Atlas, lived on the isle of Ogygia—of which she was the queen—where the great wanderer Ulysses (to the Romans), Οδυσσεύς (to the Greeks), was shipwrecked; Calypso kept him on Ogy-

<sup>3</sup> Calypso is also a musical genre of the Caribbean Islands and the band that plays it. It furthermore has its place in astronomy.

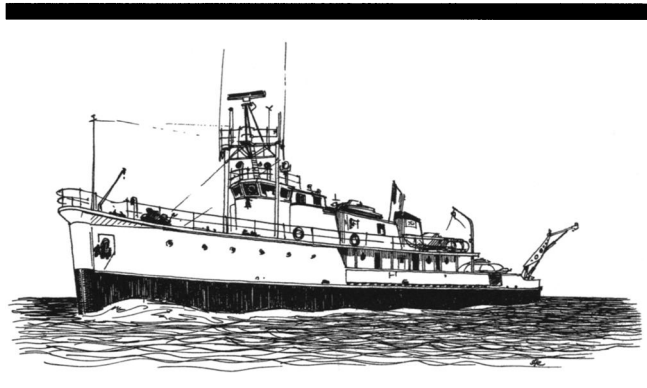


Figure 2. Artist's view of the *Calypso* (unsigned).

gia for seven years.<sup>4</sup> She spared no effort to convince him to stay with her, offering him even immortality, but he elected to travel on. The name of the ship implied that she would ply the world ocean forever.

### THE MANY CALYPSOS

The name *Calypso*, with Roman numerals, has also been given to launches from the mother ship to reach specific sites off-ship (e.g., *Calypso III*), and *Calypso II*—which is now embroiled in the controversy surrounding the restoration of the mother ship—has acquired a fair reputation.

The *Calypso's* profile does not differ much from that of other oceanographic vessels plying the seas at the time (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>5</sup> The *Calypso*, made of Oregon wood, is about 42.5 m long and equipped with two 500 HP engines. She underwent several modifications, and in one of her latest versions had a 3-ton hydraulic crane and a winch aft, where a space had also been made to accommodate Cousteau's “diving saucer” or instead two one-man minisubs capable of diving to depths just short of 500 m. A photographic laboratory was located at midship while fore were the scientists' laboratory and an underwater observation chamber.

### FROM MINESWEEPER TO RESEARCH VESSEL

Before becoming the “famed” *Calypso*, the ship that brought fame and notoriety to Jacques-Yves Cousteau performed with distinction as a British Navy minesweeper during World War II,<sup>6</sup> cleaning up an environment made hostile by man's destructive folly. She somehow ended up in Malta where she had taken on ferry duty. She had become the property of British brewery magnate Loel Guinness, who agreed to put her, on a no-cost lease basis, at the disposal of French

<sup>4</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the U.S. NOAA ship *Rude*; see S.N. Nelsen, *Oceanographic Ships, Fore and Aft*. (Washington, DC: Office of the Oceanographer of the Navy, 1971), p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> Though this is infrequently mentioned, the *Calypso* is by no means the only minesweeper that abandoned the wartime flag to serve with distinction as an oceanographic vessel. Indeed, the Danish minesweeper *Dana*, which protected neutral Denmark from drifting mines in World War I, was placed at the service of that country's marine sciences efforts.

frigate-captain Jacques-Yves Cousteau. Sir Guinness, besides being a brewer, was also a *mecenae*. Cousteau and *Calypso* were never separated after Guinness paid for her putting-in-shape. That was in 1950.

Cousteau, once he had become the *de facto* “boss” of the ship, baptized her with a name from Greek mythology, further refurbished her, and managed, with very limited funds, but reputedly very cunningly, to transform her into a research ship and put her at the service of science and preservation of the environment.

French firms were anxious to penetrate the budding oceanographic market and wanted to prove the quality and efficiency of the instruments they had devised. Cousteau convinced them to add their tithe to monies he had collected here and there and squeezed out of the French government. Even better, he suggested they test their equipment free of charge aboard the *Calypso* for, for instance, 6 months. Businessmen would accept the offer, and a trove of instruments was installed aboard. When the cruise was over and the 6 months or so elapsed, they might ask for the return of their instruments and equipment. Cousteau was ready to keep his word but pointed out that uninstallation was at industry’s expense, and all damages and modifications incurred during removal were also to be paid for by the industry. Thus the equipment was, perhaps not gleefully, “donated.” The *Calypso* became one of the best equipped oceanographic research vessels afloat.

### LIFE ON THE CALYPSO

In 1958, I,<sup>7</sup> already then a university professor who held a doctorate, was lured by Jacques Bourcart to take a 2-year leave of absence from my post and shift my field from geography and geology toward things marine. It was one of the best pieces of advice an academic ever gave to another academic.<sup>8</sup> Bourcart was an erudite with vision. The marine domain was opening up to other horizons such as navigation, and specialists were a mere handful. I agreed to return to the school benches—Charlemagne did, so why not I! My complete knowledge centered on land; I took training in the marine sciences and enrolled at the University of Paris, becoming one more of the 130,000 students it counted at the time. I got my “at sea” training on a memorable *Calypso* cruise where I enjoyed exceptional cuisine, respectable wines, vintage Fernandel movies,<sup>9</sup> and lived about as hard a work regime as the one I had known in the military. Needless to say, my knowledge was widely enriched.

The ship’s complement included a rather large crew and close to a dozen members of the scientific team. The cruise nearly capsized: The majority in France was clamoring for the return to power of Charles de Gaulle (1890–1965). Corsica had virtually revolted against the officials of the Fourth Republic and was swearing allegiance to de Gaulle. Cousteau was no fan of the General and would only let the *Calypso* sail

if she would not dock anywhere on Corsica, so we were deprived of a look at the *Isle de Beauté* and confined to the ship for two weeks.

A generally observed way of life on the *Calypso* consisted of having at all times no less than two persons on the bridge. Each of us had to take his or her turn at the helm or watching the sonar. I got my shift during a particularly rough sea episode. Even the cook, Jean Morgan, who seemed made of iron, hung overboard, rendering his last undigested meal to the creatures of the deep. I, all but proud, climbed to the bridge. The ship had been stopped for measurements and was bobbing like a cork in a saucepan agitated by a *maître-queux*. The mariner at the wheel was ashen. I was rather green. We did not even talk. Each of us made periodic trips to the outside part of the bridge to take in some air, alas hot, moist, and heavy, and to try to throw up food we no longer had. With a curt “I am going to the ‘head’ [bathroom in mariner’s parlance]. Will be right back,” the crew member left me alone on the bridge. I never saw him again beside me on that bridge. And then got the scare of my life. The engines had been started up again, and we were creeping forward, taking measurements as we advanced in the night, all lights on, and the oceanographic pavilion very visible on the mast. Suddenly surging out of nowhere a British tourist ship, ignoring all rules of the sea (which provide an absolute priority to oceanographic ships), cut across the *Calypso*’s prow, oblivious of our frantic siren whistle blows. Now my stomach, already in a knot, was joined by a pounding heart and a gigantic headache. That was just too much. I deserted sonar, wheel, and bridge, and plunged into my bunk. It was not my most glorious performance. I never knew how the ship had progressed with an empty bridge.

### FROM CAPTAIN NEMO TO COMMANDANT COUSTEAU

Before that cruise on the *Calypso*, I met Cousteau—and the *Calypso*—for the first time in Monaco, and I was introduced to him as an American; his eyes whirled like the symbols on a slot machine and went tilt. He immediately enquired which industry or major university I was connected with but dropped me like a dead fish once he heard that I was there to, as the French would have it, *affiner mes connaissances*. I did not rate the ride on the *Calypso* for the congress’s excursion off Monaco and was relegated to the *Wineretta Singer*,<sup>10</sup> which carried neither food nor beverages and bobbed desperately on a not-so-friendly Mediterranean, and on which I shared a lone lemon to survive seasickness.

### SEPARATING LEGEND AND FACT

There have been many myths about Cousteau, which he hardly ever commented on because they fed publicity, and a few about the *Calypso*. Spreading a veil of mystery on an object creates a keen interest. This understanding apparently did not escape Cousteau. If ever there were a ship, and a personage, surrounded by legends and myths, often difficult

<sup>7</sup> “I” refers to the lead author throughout this article.

<sup>8</sup> It led to the second earned doctorate for R. Charlier.

<sup>9</sup> Fernandel is Fernand Contandin (1903–1965), movie actor. The images of the film *François 1er* are to this day vivid in my mind!

<sup>10</sup> Named for the daughter of the Singer sewing machine inventor Isaac Merritt Singer (1811–1875).

to disentangle from fact and truth, the *Calypso* and Cousteau are among them, whether one thinks of the turtles in South America or the sea monster off the coast of Djibouti. The *on dit* certainly contributed to keeping both in the public eye.

### The Monster of the Deep

The superstitions of seamen are a well-recorded phenomenon, which is understandable because the waters that surrounded them were frightening at night and strewn with all kind of dangers. The perusers of old maps will certainly have observed illuminations showing terrible monsters surging from the deep, enlacing ships, and trying to draw them underneath. Stories about mythical animals from the sea abound.

Frightening sea tales have not vanished with the dawn of the age of technology. French military stationed in the tiny Republic of Djibouti reported seeing such a sea monster in the waters of the Goubet, a narrow passage connecting a gulf opening on the Red Sea off Djibouti. When the *Calypso* was in the Red Sea, the crew saw the monster and filmed it but carefully guarded the discovery and treated it as a secret. In this instance the Cousteau team issued a formal denial by communiqué (through the Fondation Cousteau)<sup>11</sup> and its book.<sup>12</sup> In fact the monster they filmed was a giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*) that indeed lives in the gulf.

### Truths

Cousteau met the *Calypso* in 1950 in La Valetta, where her paint was peeling under the Maltese sun after her wartime service. They never separated after Guinness paid to put her in shape and “loaned” or leased the *Calypso* to Cousteau. The former British minesweeper, the American-built *Calypso*, on ferry duty in Malta, was bought by Guinness and eventually leased for a symbolic French franc to Cousteau, a seaman who at the time had no ship. Guinness thus gave “use of the ship to J-Y. Cousteau,” and proprietary rights have devolved to Guinness’s grandson. As for Cousteau’s heirs, Francine Cousteau holds a rental lease<sup>13</sup> that will not expire until 2013! That lease should be mighty handy in the final rescue of the *Calypso* because the parties seemed locked in an inextricable knot in 2003 and beyond.

Nevertheless, myths and all, Cousteau and his collaborators, and the well-beloved *Calypso*, greatly contributed to the advancement of oceanographic technology and underwater photography that brought to the living rooms of millions a realistic idea of the fascinating world of the ocean. Cousteau himself codeveloped the SCUBA diving gear. He also codeveloped and improved *Con-Shelf*, with the *Calypso* acting as the support vessel. The jet-propelled *Diving Saucer (soucoupe sous-marine)* could travel up to 4 hours and dive to a depth of 330 meters. Cousteau had collaborated with Jean Mollard

on the design of that diving vehicle that often traveled with the *Calypso*. The last time we saw *Con-Shelf*, it was rusting not far from the Monaco Oceanographic Museum. Apparently this is not an uncommon fate: William Beebe’s bathysphere, displayed for some time at the New York Aquarium in Battery Park (New York City), moved with the Aquarium in 1957 to Coney Island, where it sat ungloriously in a scrapyard beneath the Cyclone, a Luna Park thriller ride. When rescued it was dolled-up and got a “new unveiling” inside the Aquarium in June 2005.<sup>14</sup>

Of the Cousteau “habitat,” Scripps Institution of Oceanography’s Francis P. Shephard, who spent some time in it, said that he had learned more in a single diving expedition than he would have in years of investigations and study. Other scientists of renown spent time on the *Calypso*: Eugenie Clark, for instance, in her studies on animal behavior, looked at schools of sharks and ran a school for sharks, managing to teach them in 1967.

The *Calypso* reached the status of celebrity because Cousteau had a keen sense of how to merchandise his achievements. While its director (1957–1988), he took the dust off the sleepy oceanographic museum of Monaco and got some dolphins in the aquarium and gave them catchy names (Romeo and Juliet). Visitors lined up outside the entrance of the museum to go get a view of ocean life. Putting to good use the magnificent perspective one could enjoy from the museum’s roof, he made it accessible to the public and opened a coffee bar.

The biography of the *Calypso* has been the subject of several publications, but perhaps it is a book in Italian,<sup>15</sup> aimed at the public at large, avid for excitement and for briefings, that provides both information and a feeling of being part of the *epopea* of the ship. Richly illustrated, it includes pieces by numerous leading scientific authors covering the straight scientific material, whether related to *Calypso* campaigns or not; it was published during the period of “glory” of the *Calypso*.

### A CALYPSO DYNASTY?

The *Calypso* crossed my path again in the 1990s. Her captain at that time had returned to his native Mexico and opened a diving equipment rental shop in the heart of the Acapulco fancy beach district. We fell into one another’s arms, and he offered me the hospitality of his guest room. When asked what had happened to the ship, the old salt shrugged his shoulders and quipped, “Rusting somewhere probably.” The man had it right, as we discovered in 2003.

The captain was affectionately and legendarily known around Acapulco, and beyond, as “Calypso Clemente.” Sadly, in an attempt to sharpen this retrospective, I made a journey to Acapulco to see him again and was told he passed away in January 2004, taking with him to wherever deserving old

<sup>11</sup> Y. Paccalet, “Le Monstre de Cousteau,” *Calypso Log*, vol. 63, November 16, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> J-Y. Cousteau and P. Diolé, *La Vie et la Mort des Coraux* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> In French judicial jargon, *un bail locatif* (literally, a rental lease).

<sup>14</sup> In a science fiction movie *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), whose title cashed in on Jules Verne’s *Vingt-Mille Lieues Sous les Mers*, bathysphere and scientist get gobbled up in the deep ocean by a Rip Van Winkle-type monster, which is awakened after a hundred-million year sleep by an atomic explosion.

<sup>15</sup> J-Y. Cousteau, “Jacques Cousteau, Pianeta Mare,” *Encyclopedia di Scienza e di Avventura* (Milano: Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, 1961).

seamen go after this life, a rich trove of priceless memories—nostalgic and perhaps painful reminiscences.

### THE JEALOUSLY GUARDED IMAGE

I got turned down for a free photograph of the ship for a not-for-profit book and had to rely on a French friend who once photographed the ship during a vacation. Figure 2 is an artist's rendering of the ship seen from the bow and showing the structure on the deck;<sup>16</sup> another artist's view is found in a book by Cousteau father and son.<sup>17</sup> The concern to keep the image rights property still haunts Francine Cousteau today.<sup>18</sup> She owns the rights to the image of the *Calypso*, perhaps with an eye to exploiting them.

To some the image of the boss of the *Calypso* and, a posteriori of the ship herself, got somewhat tarnished by excessive commercialism and haughtiness, yet Cousteau, who at one time nurtured ambitions to run for the presidency of France (1980), had his moments of modesty. For instance, at the International Colloquium on Great Depths (Nice-Villefranche-sur-Mer-Monaco, 1958),<sup>19</sup> he said that he was merely a technician addressing an audience of scientists; he later chose to be discreetly put to rest in the tiny cemetery of his native Saint-André-de-Cubzac across the Gironde River from Bordeaux.

However, Cousteau was never one to pass over an opportunity to make the news. He had a photograph published in the *National Geographic Magazine* of his silver wedding anniversary, sipping champagne with first wife Simone [Melchior]<sup>20</sup> in *Con-Shelf* on the bottom of the Red Sea.

### THE CALYPSO ON SCREEN

Cousteau captured U.S. Motion Picture Academy Awards with his films *The Silent World*<sup>21</sup> (1956), *The Golden Fish* (1960), and *World Without Sun* (1966). *The Silent World* also won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and the Grand Prix du Cinéma Français pour la Jeunesse (Grand Prize of the French Motion Pictures for Youth).

In 1966, Wolper Productions<sup>22</sup> gave a contract to Cousteau, a carte blanche for the making of a series of films on any topic of his choice.<sup>23</sup> The *Calypso* was then on her way to search for the elusive ganoid fish, the coelacanth, supposedly

<sup>16</sup> From R.H. Charlier, B.L. Gordon, and J. Gordon, *Marine Science and Technology: An Introduction to Oceanography*, 4th printing (1980), Washington, DC: University Press of America, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> J-Y. Cousteau and P. Cousteau, *The Shark: Splendid Savage of the Sea* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> Cousteau Sociey, press release of December 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Colloque International sur les Grandes Profondeurs, Nice, Monaco, and Villefranche-sur-Mer, 1956.

<sup>20</sup> To the *Calypso* crew, Simone Cousteau, who managed among other things the souvenir shop of the Monaco Oceanographic Museum and also looked after the logistics (quartermaster functions) of the ship, was well beloved and affectionately called shepherdess [la bergère].

<sup>21</sup> J-Y. Cousteau with F. Dumas, *The Silent World* (New York: Harper, 1953). A previous edition in English was put out in 1950 by Time International.

<sup>22</sup> Producers of films for the National Geographic Society (Washington, DC).

<sup>23</sup> Eventually 75 films would be made, though Erik Orsenna in his eulogy of Cousteau at the French Academy mentions 100.

extinct for over 70 million years<sup>24</sup> and the giant squid,<sup>25</sup> and to locate the galleons of Columbus, study the shark (1967 and on), elucidate the mystery of the lost continent of Atlantis, visit Clipperton and Clarion Islands,<sup>26</sup> go to bat—and rightfully so—for the protection of coral reefs, and so on. However, the new direction signaled the removal of scoops, winches, and other scientific equipment, including the laboratories. The ship had shed her scientific garb for one that would allow movie- and moneymaking. Scientists vacated their space for divers and cameramen.

The television program hosted by Cousteau and featuring the *Calypso* spanned the years 1968–1976. The *Calypso*'s team respected the adage that gaining access through television to millions of viewers and disseminating images and comments was a privilege that carried serious responsibilities; ocean “science” was no common television fare. Cousteau enrolled the help of one of France's most celebrated moviemakers, Louis Malle, mowed down by cancer at too early an age. Children and adults over the entire world were commonly glued to their television screens when the *Calypso* sailed in. Erik Orsenna gently mentioned the fault in the structure in his eulogy of Cousteau at the French Academy: “Comment assouvir l'appétit de l'ogre? La *Calypso* change de rythme. La promenade émerveillée se transforme en course . . . Mais cette exposition à marche ou plongées forcées ne va pas sans péril.”<sup>27</sup> But scientists, often irritated by the impression of self-aggrandizement that the captain projected, did not spare their opprobrium and, alas, too often criticism neared insult.

And yet . . . Cousteau put his ship at the total service of our endangered planet and booked some successes such as when he managed to block the plan to exploit the Antarctic mineral resources.

The eyes of the *Calypso*, the underwater camera fixed to the ship, brought the unique spectacle of a nearly undisturbed marine environment, though remaining in the prow observatory specially constructed for these ends proved sometimes a most perilous undertaking, even on a foam mattress, when the ship rolled and tossed during inclement seas. A closed-circuit television system was therefore installed under the front of the ship. Not only did these arrangements serve to record entertainment programs, but the system was also useful for following the activities of a submarine vehicle; inspecting the condition of pipelines; locating natural obstacles, wrecks, and sunken ships; and observing animal behavior (because the fixed camera does not incite animal curiosity as does a human or a moving vehicle). The eyes of the *Calypso* proved to be cumbersome and inefficient for observation at great depths, and other instrumental approaches such as arrays that could be let down to the bottom, were developed.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Sighted off the Comoro Islands (Indian Ocean) and South Africa. Such contemporary fishes as sturgeons (*Acipenser sturlo*), bowfins (*Amia calva*), and paddlefishes also belong to the subclass Ganoidei.

<sup>25</sup> Denizen of the Humboldt Current (North Pacific).

<sup>26</sup> Off Baja California Peninsula, Mexico.

<sup>27</sup> Translation: “How can the ogre's appetite be sated? The *Calypso* changes her rhythm. The enthralling walk mutates into a race. . . . But this exhibition on forced speed or dives does not proceed without perils.”

<sup>28</sup> *Calypso* and Cousteau contributed to the development of under-

No longer sweeping mines or trying to solve problems of the oceans' depths, *Calypso* was, in her later life, a tool catering to a public that wanted to be entertained rather than educated or informed. Sic transit *Calypso gloria scientifica et ergo incipit gloria cinematografica!*

### CALYPSO IN THE PUBLIC EYE

It is neither myth nor legend that Cousteau jumped on several bandwagons as public interest shifted or embraced new vistas. He became an ardent environmentalist and once said that because of pollution and overfishing he estimated that 40% of the ocean environment had already been destroyed,<sup>29</sup> based upon 35 years of observation he was led to the conclusion that the extension of coral reefs had been about halved, with some fish nearing extinction and benthic life endangered and greatly disturbed. The latter view does rather correspond to a currently unfolding scenario. The *Calypso* and her boss have made important contributions to environmental awareness because people were enthralled by the television programs they watched and got motivated perhaps more than by scientists and various movements. Cousteau also took the *Calypso* on his attempt to solve the Atlantis mystery, though by the time she joined the fray the conclusion had well nigh been reached that, of the scores of hypotheses voiced, Santorini was the "continent" that Plato reported was engulfed and the Minoan was the civilization that went down.<sup>30</sup>

The last time I saw Cousteau—by then a member of the prestigious French Academy—was when the Vrije Universiteit Brussel<sup>31</sup> bestowed upon him a doctorate *honoris causa* on the occasion of the founding of the Cousteau Chair, alas never funded. The ambitious plans that had been mirrored remained to this day *lettre morte*. The man was still in prime shape. If he wore the costume of an academician at meetings of the Institut de France, he declined to don an academic robe at the Brussels ceremony and got on the podium in a seaman's sweater, jeans, and sneakers. Jacques-Yves Cousteau, navy man, had mastered the American technique of image, publicity, and media command as few academics ever have.

Commandant Cousteau, though a Frenchman, had studied

water photography and cinematography, but it is incorrect to credit them with the invention and/or first use of the camera underwater. A prior pioneer of the undersea documentary film, Prince Francesco Alliata de Villafranca, who plied his submarine photographer trade during World War II, was a member of the team that filmed, in 1946, the depths of the Eolian Islands.

<sup>29</sup> The statement unleashed a minor furor among scientists who spoke of sensationalism because "how could he quantify the ocean environment to make such an assessment?" Cousteau became the subject of protests and reproaches, was accused of errors in several areas, of inaccurate shortcuts, intolerable approximations, abuse of animals in his films, and of showmanship at the price of scientific precision, but he remained silent and let the storm blow by. See Erik Orsenna, *Inaugural Address to Seating at the French Academy* (Discours prononcé dans la séance publique) (Paris: Palais de l'Institut, June 17, 1999), p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> See papers by R.H. Charlier in *Foreign Language Quarterly* (published by South Florida University, Tampa) and in *Sea Frontiers* (published by the International Oceanographic Foundation, University of Miami, Florida).

<sup>31</sup> Free University of Brussels (V.U.B.), Belgium.

in his youth at an American school and sent the children of his first marriage to schools in the United States. If he did not launch a generation of intrepid explorers, as did for instance Adrien de Gerlache de Gomery,<sup>32</sup> nevertheless his two sons by his first wife Simone followed in his footsteps. The younger one, Philippe Cousteau, diver, writer, and with a bright future in things marine and media, died in a plane crash in 1979. The older one, Jean-Michel, a less celebrated participant in *Calypso* campaigns, became a naval architect, was involved in the former liner *Queen Mary* floating hotel and exhibit moored in Long Beach, California, and is now active in the United States with marine biology educational ventures. His own children are already "young Cousteaus" with exploits shown on television. He surfaced, however, not so long ago, on the French scene, and specifically in connection with the future of the *Calypso*.

Some Cousteau university "chairs" have had better outcomes than at the V.U.B. On September 29, 2004, the most recent of such chairs (of ecotechnology) was created under UNESCO auspices at the University of Rhode Island, a long-time frontrunner in the field of oceanography. It aims to develop sustainable coastal ecosystems.<sup>33</sup> Another university project at Rutgers University (New Brunswick, New Jersey) established the (Jacques Cousteau) National Estuarine Research Reserve.<sup>34</sup>

### WHO OWNS WHAT?

Though the *Calypso* sank in Singapore (1996), her keel, still in good condition, was brought back to Marseille, then two years later to La Rochelle; she has waited there "as idle as a painted ship on a painted ocean"<sup>35</sup> for a decision on her ultimate fate, abandoned, alongside a quay. Her upper structure in shambles, streaks of rust running down her keel to beneath the waterline, her final fate is still undetermined. Lawyers are wrangling over it.

Money collected to put her back in shape was diverted to create a new ship *Calypso II*. Protests were raised and monies were returned to the original *Calypso* restoration account. The snafu putting the brakes on any serious action for the original *Calypso* lies squarely with Cousteau's heirs, particularly second wife Francine Cousteau and a grandchild, and in part with the actual ship owners, who, in a harrowing all-together have embroiled the partially demolished ship in a legal free-for-all.

Once considered a "prize" to moor in one's backyard—even La Rochelle in Connecticut had considered offering her a home, but the city fathers backed down when costs were laid out—*Calypso* is an unwanted guest in La Rochelle, France,

<sup>32</sup> See R.H. Charlier, "Thirteen Decades of Biological Oceanography in Belgium," in *Ocean Science Bridging the Millennium*, ed. S. Morcos, M. Zhu, R.H. Charlier, et al. (Paris: UNESCO; Qingdao, People's Republic of China, China Ocean Press, 2004), pp. 269–289.

<sup>33</sup> Other such chairs were created since 1993 in Argentina, Bahrain, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Moldavia, Romania, Sweden, and Vietnam.

<sup>34</sup> One of the American reserves of the National Estuarine Research Reserves system, it includes many hectares.

<sup>35</sup> With a tip of the hat to S.T. Coleridge.

at least for some. Indeed, there is indifference, even antagonism, on the part of the local Marine Museum, the eventual recipient of the ship, whose curator Patrick Schnepf is reported to have said: "I'd wish she'd sink."<sup>36</sup> The city administration had planned, at one time, to make her the centerpiece of a diving center, then dumped the idea and the *Calypso* with it. A proposal, purported to have been envisaged by Cousteau himself, wanted her towed to the Isle of Ré, near La Rochelle, scuttled, and have her become a pilgrimage site for scuba divers.

Family feuds are no strangers to the Cousteau clan. Father and oldest son were estranged.<sup>37</sup> The appointment of Peter Blake,<sup>38</sup> the New Zealand yacht skipper who once won the "America's Cup," thereafter as captain of the *Calypso* unleashed vehement arguments among wife, sons, and daughters. One more good publicity stunt, but one that split the family. The accidental death of Cousteau's son Philippe somewhat healed the rift. As for the *Calypso*, it did not become Blake's, nor for that matter Francine Cousteau's, main concern: They were more interested in the yacht *Alcyone*, another Cousteau Society ship.

Jean-Michel, the surviving son, seems to have distanced himself somewhat from the *Calypso* legend: his children Fabien and Céline are studying shark behavior; for that purpose they built a shark-shaped one-man submersible *Captain Jack* and plied the Guadalupe waters. Their film made it into English-language television and has been shown in Europe dubbed in French. Quite a reversal!

### A Bahamas' Haven?

In 2003 the parties seemed locked in an inextricable judicial and consanguine knot. Things suddenly appeared to brighten up, in 2004, when Carnival Lines entered the picture. Carnival had carved itself an enviable share of the cruise traffic between the southeastern United States, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean Sea. The company even created a successful airline in the area and acquired real estate in the Bahamas. Its public relations division announced, à grand renfort de communiqués de presse,<sup>39</sup> that the company had come to an agreement with the "rightful" heirs to the *Calypso* for the honorable disposal of the ship. "Disposal" is perhaps an inappropriate word; "renewed life" might be more accurate. The vessel would be transported to the Bahamas where it would be completely restored and then towed to one of the islands the company owned in that country. It would be then definitively moored and used as a memorial to its past glory (perhaps to that of Cousteau as well) and attract thousands of visitors, largely tourists spending a vacation on the Caribbean islands or passengers from cruise ships during a stopover.

Carnival Lines had earmarked several million U.S. dollars

for this purpose, which it considered historical, nautical, and scientific. Things seemed settled; the *Calypso* aficionados, admirers, backers, and so on, were pleased, others relieved, and financial returns from the undertaking certain, the shipping and airline assured. However, one would appropriately remark, if the French flag might still be fluttering on the ship, the project was American with, at best, a Bahamian participation.

### Coup de Théâtre

But France was not to be counted out. In May 2004 another, albeit slight, ray of hope glimmered that the judicial imbroglio might be untangled and legal skirmishes might come to a halt. This did not mean that all hurdles had been removed; indeed, owner and lessee still have to come to terms. Emotion had overcome some of the 150,000 "divers" who belong to the FFESSM;<sup>40</sup> the organization announced, at a public meeting<sup>41</sup> held in Marseille, that it had a last chance plan to save the *Calypso*. It stipulated that this was a final offer and a take-it-or-leave-it one. The price tag would run close to €2 million,<sup>42</sup> to put into prime condition what is currently a vandalized rusting wreck. The ship that sailed fifteen times around the world, plied over a million nautical miles, and may have starred in perhaps as many as a hundred films, could play the part of a goodwill *ambassadrix*.

### The Unsinkable *Calypso*

And there the issue stood, but like the phoenix, *Calypso* is rising out of her ashes. In the rather unlikely source of the *Hindustani Times*, on November 1, 2004, the news broke: "*Calypso* saved." The Cousteau Society had released a lengthy communiqué worthy of the best Texan publicity writer embodying stock exchange information and replete with arguable superlatives that could provoke irritation on the part of researchers. These statements are best passed over here.

Briefly, the Carnival Corporation came to the rescue and signed an agreement with the Cousteau Society to move the ship from La Rochelle to the Grand Bahamas and have it put back in shape there at an initial cost of \$1.3 million.<sup>43</sup> "The work," stated a 2004 company press release, "is to be completed by the end of 2005." (We are writing this article in 2006.) This should complete the seven-year long search for an "angel" that would foot the bill. It apparently also puts an end to the wrangle about the ownership, the leasing rights, and seemingly a family feud. Cousteau's widow is president of the Cousteau Society and lays claim to Cousteau's "rights." The owner of the ship, Loel Guinness, and Francine Cousteau created the not-for-profit foundation Arionis to save the ship.

*Calypso* is to be a museum anchored across a center for science and environment in a not-as-yet specified harbor. Nothing much new there; other ships have been used a mu-

<sup>36</sup> *Sud-Ouest*, August 20, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Jean-Michel, a naval architect, made his life in the United States, and got on the lecturing circuit because of the resonance of father Cousteau's name. He has resurfaced in France recently. He has done some good work in marine biology education.

<sup>38</sup> Blake died some time later while on a trip in Amazonia.

<sup>39</sup> Best translated as "amidst a loud heralding by press releases."

<sup>40</sup> Fédération Française d'Études et de Sports Sous-marins, which translates as the French Federation of Submarine Studies & Sports.

<sup>41</sup> Release of the news agency Agence France Presse, May 18, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Depending on the exchange rate, \$2.4 to 2.6 million.

<sup>43</sup> Roughly €1 million.

seums. Nevertheless the plan is laudable and explained by Carnival Lines's public relations spokesperson as a desire of the corporation to make the public aware of the need to ensure the health of the oceans and protect natural resources. As the French would appropriately have it: "Tout est bien qui finit bien."<sup>44</sup>

### FAMILY FEUD OVER A FAMOUS WRECK

The saga is not over. Barely had November 2004 passed that a new *rebondissement* took place. Not connected with the organizations of his father's second wife, not with even the Cousteau Society, Jean-Michel Cousteau, the captain's oldest son, heads the California-based Ocean Futures Society<sup>45</sup> and also sits on the board of directors of Campagnes Océanographiques Françaises (COF). Contradicting prior news releases, he announced in December 2004 that *Calypso* would make a far shorter last trip and would be restored in the south of France, then be exhibited as part of an educational center, thereby fulfilling, says Jean-Michel Cousteau, his father's and mother's wishes. He says he will gladly accept the donation from Carnival Lines, but that restoration of the vessel is not depending on any agreement with Carnival. Was thus the Carnival announcement indeed a bit too hasty?

Francine Cousteau, the captain's second wife, on the other hand, is president of the Cousteau Society, though not the ship's owner; that is Loel Guinness, grandson of the fellow who leased the ship to the captain half a century ago; while occasionally at odds with the widow, he is more inclined to espouse her views. Finally, to complicate things slightly more, it is the COF that is the registered owner, and as such has been sued by a company called Compagnie Anglo-Française, which claims it is the legal owner of the *Calypso*.

Myths and realities keep intertwining. . . . It is not excluded that this family row and the legal wrangles may ultimately sink the famed ship!

<sup>44</sup> "All is well that ends well."

<sup>45</sup> Which has a Paris office.

### MAY WE PROPOSE A TEMPORARY FAREWELL?

#### Départ pour nulle part

Elle attend l'appareillage, sagement  
Pour un site plus clément.  
Après ses jours de gloire,  
Caressons avec ferveur l'espoir  
Que de l'immortelle *Calypso*  
Ce ne soit l'ultime soubresaut  
Mais bien plutôt  
Seulement un bref au-revoir  
Précurseur d'un dernier voyage  
Qui soit tout, sauf un mirage,  
Et que, sur terre ou sous les flots,  
Persiste un mémorial à la *Calypso*.

#### Departure for nowhere

She awaits her sailing, calmly  
For a gentler site.  
Let us fervently nurture the hope,  
After her days of glory,  
That of immortal *Calypso*  
This is not to be the ultimate gasp  
But rather only a brief see-you-soon  
Heralding a last voyage  
That be all, but a mirage,  
And that, on land or underwater,  
Persist a memorial to *Calypso*

A Saga to be continued. . . ?

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The paper is dedicated in memoriam to Sorbonne Professor Jacques Bourcart and the members of the scientific team with whom Roger Charlier sailed on the *Calypso* in 1958 and to gentle *Calypso* Clemente. Nothing but fond memories assist! Appreciation is expressed to Dr J.R. Senten for help with the foreign languages abstracts.

#### □ RÉSUMÉ □

Rares sont les navires océanographiques qui ont recueilli l'attention de tant de personnes, scientifiques et autres. La *Calypso* en est un. A pratiquement l'abandon elle a pourtant eu plusieurs vies, fort brillantes d'ailleurs. Mais depuis le naufrage de Singapour et l'amarrage de la Rochelle, rien ne va plus. Sont-ce de la *Calypso* les derniers soubresauts? Certains voudraient la voir sombrer et ne plus être une épine dans le pied. D'autres la voient en centre sous-marin de plongée ou encore en mémorial ou musée sur terre. D'autres encore veulent l'emmener aux Bahamas, mais si elle n'est point sabordée ou envoyée à la ferraille, les champions de la "réparation" la garderont en France. En attendant on se dispute ferme, chacun maintenant son bon droit.

#### □ ZUSAMMENFASSUNG □

Die *Calypso* hat scheinbar, wie eine Katze, nicht ein aber mehrere Leben. Sie war einmal ein Kino- und Fernsehstar, aber auch ein Kriegsmarineschiff, eine Fähre, und ein wissenschaftliches Forschungsschiff. Ihr Name bleibt immer verbunden mit Kapitän Jacques-Yves Cousteau. Nach dem Unfall in Singapur ist sie leider nie wieder in ihrem ursprünglichen Glanz restauriert worden. Heute schläft die *Calypso*, verlassen an einem Kai in La Rochelle und rostet. Verschiedene Vorschläge liegen schon seit langem auf den Tisch, aber die Rechtsanwälte "vergnügen" sich noch mit den Eigentumsansprüchen von Cousteaus Erben und Verwandten. Hoffentlich sind die Diskussionen schnell beendet, sodass die *Calypso* noch einmal gerettet wird.

#### □ SAMENVATTING □

In de tweede helft van de 20<sup>e</sup> eeuw haalden schepen voor oceanografisch onderzoek slechts zelden de titels van het nieuws. De miniduijboot *Alvin* vormde hierop een uitzondering, maar kon nooit de faam en roem van de *Calypso*—het vaartuig van Jacques-Yves Cousteau—evenaren. De *Calypso* was een drijvende legende. Cousteau gaf zelden commentaar op de echte of verzonden verhalen die de ronde deden over zijn schip. De expedities en de wetenschappelijke onderzoeken van de *Calypso* niet zijn weg te denken en ze werden wereldwijd op TV getoond zonder dat de wetenschappelijke waarde van die tochten werd in vraag gesteld. Cousteau's leven en de lotgevallen van de *Calypso* waren tot één geheel verweven. Indien er ooit controverse zaken werden gezegd over schepen voor oceanografisch onderzoek, dan prijkt de *Calypso* bovenaan die lijst. Dit heeft zowel betrekking op de wetenschappelijke campagnes als op het cinematografisch materiaal en recent ook op de wettelijke *imbroglios*. De auteurs hebben reeds een deel van de expedities van de *Calypso* beschreven in een andere publicatie; dit artikel geeft een dieper inzicht in het fascinerende "leven" en het betreurenswaardige einde van de *Calypso* temidden van juridisch gearrewar.