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Form and Function of Some Theban Resonances in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

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The aim of this paper is to explore the different ways in which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* incorporate material from the Theban traditions into their own narrative fabric.[1] First, I examine the references to Tydeus in the *Iliad*, addressing the function these references acquire each time they appear in a character's speech. In a second step I turn my attention to the allusions to Theban stories in the *Odyssey*, and in the *Nekyia* in particular. In this case too I will be zeroing in on the function of the Theban reminiscences. It will be shown that whereas the Theban reflections in the *Iliad* occur in a linear manner, the *Odyssey* incorporates the Theban material in a more intricate way. Finally, I will offer an explanation for the two poems' difference in their interaction with the corpus of Theban stories: the *Iliad* in general chooses material that conforms to the poem's preoccupation with the heroes' relative worth compared to earlier generations. In the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, the Theban material is combined with allusions to other local sagas, all of which it incorporates in order to supersede them and present itself as the "newest song."

Tydeus in the Iliad

The first reference to Tydeus comes in *Il.* 4.370–410. Agamemnon inspects the Achaean troops, encouraging those who are rushing to battle and reprimanding those lagging behind. Among the troops he inspects are also those of Diomedes, whom Agamemnon scolds by reminding him of his father Tydeus: Diomedes is evidently not as brave as his father who never cowered for fear but always fought

1 For reflexes of the Theban epic tradition in Homer and Hesiod, see Cingano (2003); and for Thebes in early epic and lyric poetry, Cingano (2000).

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against the enemy, even when he was outnumbered (*Il*. 4.372–373).[2] Interestingly, Agamemnon does not know this through personal experience, for he had never witnessed Tydeus in action. Rather, he learned of Tydeus' exploits through other men who saw him fight (*Il*. 4.374–375). From their eyewitness accounts Agamemnon learned that Tydeus had come to Mycenae with Polyneices to raise an army against Thebes. Even though Tydeus did not receive any allies from Mycenae because of negative omens, he marched against Thebes nevertheless. One against many, Tydeus fearlessly challenged the Thebans in athletic contests in which he easily defeated them. Then the angered Thebans laid an ambush on him, which was also doomed: all but one were killed. Diomedes, however, is not like his father: he is worse in fighting but better in speaking, says Agamemnon.[3]

Several points are worthy of comment here. The first extensive reference to the Theban war in the *Iliad* is introduced by a general reference to the source of the narrative: Agamemnon's account is based on eyewitness reports. This has been taken to imply the existence of a poetic tradition regarding Tydeus and his participation in the campaign against Thebes (cf. φασί at 375).[4] While lines 374–375 clearly suggest the existence of storytelling regarding Tydeus and while there certainly existed a poetic tradition regarding the expedition of the Seven, an offshoot of which is the cyclic *Thebaid*,[5] we may nevertheless doubt whether Agamemnon's words here imply that his sources were *aoidoi*. We need to draw a distinction between the *aoidos* on the one hand, who, if we follow the poet's words at *Il*. 2.485–486, receives knowledge from the Muses who *are* eywitnesses to the accounts they inspire him to sing,[6] and Agamemnon's source on the other hand, probably men of an older generation who saw Tydeus fight. This is also the point of Odysseus' praise of Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8: he sings the woes of the Achaeans λίην κατὰ κόσμον, as if he had witnessed them himself or heard from someone who had been at Troy (*Od*. 8.488–491). While Agamemnon's words imply the existence of storytelling regarding Tydeus' exploits, to which the poet

2 For the general presentation of Diomedes in the *Iliad*, see Andersen (1978); Classen (2008) 39–42. On the first exchange between Agamemnon and Diomedes, see Alden (2000) 112–120. For the *Iliad*'s treatment of the story of Tydeus, see Barker and Christensen (2011) with abundant bibliography on the subject.

3 See Beck (2005) 160–164 who points out that Agamemnon's use of the patronymic Τυδεΐδη at *Il*. 4.161 is to be understood as adding to the abuse of Diomedes rather than being a sign of respect.

4 See Torres-Guerra (1995) 33. Note that Agamemnon does not mention authoritative witnesses for his account.

5 It is important to note in this context that Homer refers to Theban stories in a way that presupposes the audience's knowledge of their details, which implies the existence of a storytelling tradition on Theban matters; see Torres-Guerra (1995) 75.

6 See Minton (1960); Lenz (1980) 27–37; Murray (1981), esp. 89–90.

is hinting here, Agamemnon's eyewitnesses need not be *aoidoi* who, as Odysseus' words in *Od.* 8 imply, were not as a rule expected to reproduce the events as faithful as an eyewitness would (Demodocus, in other words, is exceptional, and his excellent song is attributed by Odysseus to the Muses' or Apollo's teaching at *Od.* 8.488).

While this fact does not in and of itself make the truth content of Agamemnon's account necessarily inferior to that of an *aoidos*, it is nevertheless important that there is no divine, transcendental source of inspiration in Agamemnon's narrative nor does he claim such an authority. The Theban story does not belong to the remotest past, but is located in the horizon of experience of some members of the *Iliad*'s internal audience (some of whom had indeed participated in the expedition of the *Epigonoi*) and thus does not emanate from some supernatural source of inspiration but rather from other men's accounts. What was an independent epic tradition centered on a cycle of stories concerning Thebes which, to judge by its textualized form known to us, began with an invocation to the 'goddess'

> Ἄργος ἄειδε, θεά, πολυδίψιον, ἔνθα ἄνακτες (fr. 1 *PEG* 1)
>
> Sing, goddess, of Argos the much-thirsty, from where the lords

and was consequently thought of as inspired by the Muse as any other epic poem, becomes now that it is introduced into the temporal fabric of the *Iliad* a story that depends on other men's telling, is not divinely inspired, does not belong to a mythical past but to the characters' recent "historical" past, and is thus secondary to the poem that we are just listening.[7] Indirectly, then, the poet may be distancing himself from such an important tradition from which he himself had been influenced, and Agamemnon's mention of his source of information here may thus have also a metapoetic significance.[8]

Then, there is the emphasis on divine help for the hero and respect for the divine. We hear twice of divine signs (once these are said to be Zeus' signs), which Tydeus and the Mycenaeans obey (*Il.* 4.381, 398). We also hear of Athena's assistance to Tydeus (390), a point which we may interpret as foreshadowing the

7 Homer knew and interacted with oral poetic traditions and not necessarily the texts that we know as the Cycle: see Burgess (2001), (2012), and Davies (1989/2001) 4–5.

8 Differently in Mimnermus *fr.* 14 W (on a Colophonian warrior) that alludes to this passage, as well as to Diomedes' performance in *Il.* 5.93–96 and Athena's reproach of him at 5.800–824, and also mentions eyewitnesses who saw the warrior fight at the field beside the river Hermus. For the implications of these allusions, see Grethlein (2010) 64–68 who adopts Meineke's emendation in l. 2 ὅς μιν ἴδον (referring to the poem's speaker) instead of the transmitted οἵ μιν ἴδον (i.e. the πρότεροι whom the speaker has heard speak of the warrior).

goddess' help to Diomedes in the following Book. But this respect for the divine is perhaps another way in which the poet distances himself from his Theban intertext. For *Thebaid* fr. 9 *PEG* 1 (*apud* Σ [D] *Il.* 5.16) presents us with a different view of Tydeus' personality: there he is not the god-respecting champion of the *Iliad* but a brutish cannibal whose actions disgust even his protecting goddess, Athena:

> Τυδεὺς ὁ Οἰνέως ἐν τῷ Θηβαϊκῷ πολέμῳ ὑπὸ Μελανίππου τοῦ Ἀστακοῦ ἐτρώθη· Ἀμφιάρεως δὲ κτείνας τὸν Μελάνιππον τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐκόμισε <Τυδεῖ> καὶ ἀνοίξας αὐτὴν ὁ Τυδεὺς τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ἐρρόφει ἀπὸ θυμοῦ. Ἀθηνᾶ δὲ κομίζουσα Τυδεῖ ἀθανασίαν ἰδοῦσα τὸ μίασμα ἀπεστράφη αὐτόν. Τυδεὺς δὲ γνοὺς ἐδεήθη τῆς θεοῦ ἵνα κἂν τῷ παιδὶ αὐτοῦ παράσχῃ τὴν ἀθανασίαν.
>
> Tydeus the son of Oeneus in the Theban war was wounded by Melanippus the son of Astacus. Amphiaraus killed Melanippus and brought back his head, which Tydeus split open and gobbled the brain in a passion. When Athena, who was bringing Tydeus immortality, saw the horror, she turned away from him. Tydeus on realizing this begged the goddess at least to bestow the immortality on his son.[9]

Scholars have pointed out that the Homeric epics avoid supernatural or blasphemous elements, and Griffin has made special reference to this story of the *Thebaid* as an illustration of this tendency.[10] While this is of course true, I believe this is not the only explanation for the absence of this detail of Tydeus' career in the *Iliad*. Assuming that this detail of Tydeus' biography was part of the Theban tradition known to the *Iliad* poet, we may witness here the poet's attempt to cast Tydeus into a positive mould so that he can function as a model that Diomedes unfortunately cannot reach (at least as far as Agamemnon is concerned).

Third, Tydeus' story reminds of another hero whose biography is introduced paradigmatically in the *Iliad* and is directed, incidentally, at Diomedes: this is the account regarding Bellerophon in *Iliad* 6, a hero who suffers because of his virtuous character.[11] Both Tydeus and Bellerophon follow divine signs: characteristically, the phrase θεῶν τεράεσσι πιθήσας is used only of these two characters in the poem (*Il.* 4.398, 6.183). Both, furthermore, defeat a set of enemies (Tydeus in athletic contests, Bellerophon in battle) and are subsequently ambushed, only to prove victorious again. Bellerophon kills all his ambushers, while Tydeus allows one of them to live (Maeon), precisely because he is obeying a sign from the gods. In addition, both heroes' stories are stripped of their supernatural elements: the bringing of immortality to Tydeus by Athena, and the riding of Pegasus in Bel-

9 Translation by West (2003) 51–53.
10 See Griffin (1977) esp. 46–47.
11 See Andersen (1978) 38.

lerophon's case. Both, finally, are said to have been abandoned by the gods: for Bellerophon this is simply stated without any explanation (*Il.* 6.200), for which we need to turn to other tellings of his story where we find out that he had attempted to ride Pegasus to Olympus.[12] Both his insolence and Pegasus are omitted from the *Iliad*. Likewise, Athena abandons Tydeus on account of his treatment of his opponents corpse, something that is also absent from the Iliadic account.

The first appearance of the story of Tydeus, borrowed from the Theban tradition, is then used as a way to hurt Diomedes' pride by making him feel inferior to his father so that he throws himself into battle in order to prove that he is equal to, if not better than Tydeus. This resonates with the epic's preoccupation with the relative worth of the current generation of heroes, a concern that is manifested on several occasions. For instance, the poet might sometimes point at the gulf that separates the men of his own generation from the heroes of the Trojan war, as at *Il.* 5.304, 12.383, 20.287, where the strength of men who belong to the poet's generation (οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν) is contrasted to that of the Trojan heroes. The same point is expressed also with reference to the heroic society, when the son (Diomedes) is said to be inferior to his father or when Nestor recounts how he fought against enemies in his youth who were far superior to the heroes of today (e.g. *Il.* 1.262–273).

But the fact that this story does not have a higher source of poetic authority is troubling and allows Sthenelus, who replies to Agamemnon instead of Diomedes, to claim that this is not true. *Il.* 4.404–410 are especially important in this respect, because it presents Agamemnon's account of Tydeus' career as a lie, a fiction invented by Agamemnon who knows what the truth was:

> Ἀτρεΐδη, μὴ ψεύδε' ἐπιστάμενος σάφα εἰπεῖν·
> ἡμεῖς τοι πατέρων μέγ' ἀμείνονες εὐχόμεθ' εἶναι·
> ἡμεῖς καὶ Θήβης ἕδος εἵλομεν ἑπταπύλοιο,
> παυρότερον λαὸν ἀγαγόνθ' ὑπὸ τεῖχος ἄρειον,
> πειθόμενοι τεράεσσι θεῶν καὶ Ζηνὸς ἀρωγῇ·
> κεῖνοι δὲ σφετέρῃσι ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο
> τῶ μή μοι πατέρας ποθ' ὁμοίῃ ἔνθεο τιμῇ.
>
> "Son of Atreus, do not utter lies, when you know how to speak truly. We declare ourselves to be better men by far than our fathers: we took the seat of Thebes of the seven gates, when we two had gathered a lesser army against a stronger wall, putting our trust in the portents of the gods and in the aid of Zeus; but they perished through their own blind folly. So do not ever place our fathers in the same honour with us". (A. T. Murray, revised by W. F. Wyatt).

12 See Pind. *Isthm.* 7.44–47. Although Pindar knows the details of this story, he refrains from telling it in *Ol.* 13.

Characteristically, Sthenelus repeats some of Agamemnon's wording (πειθόμενοι τεράεσσι θεῶν, cf. *Il.* 4.398) which he strengthens by adding Ζηνὸς ἀρωγῇ. The generation of Tydeus, furthermore, appears in Sthenelus' words to be not only weaker but also morally inferior (σφετέρῃσι ἀτασθαλίῃσιν). On the basis of Sthenelus' reply and considering the question of the authority of Agamemnon's source it appears that the first mention of Tydeus' exploits in the *Iliad* is nothing more than an *ad hoc* invention of one of the poet's characters.[13]

Agamemnon's account of Tydeus in *Il.* 4 seems to gain support by Athena's words at *Il.* 5.800–808. The goddess' speech echoes some of Agamemnon's words: she repeats that he was alone out of the Achaeans (νόσφιν Ἀχαιῶν… πολέας μετὰ Καδμείωνας) when he came to Thebes as a messenger; nonetheless he challenged them to battle and easily defeated them since he had a great ally in Athena. In fact, this same phrase τοίη τοι ἐγὼν ἐπιτάρροθός εἰμι will be later repeated by Athena (828) in a speech in which the negative comparison of Diomedes to his father aims at inducing Diomedes to fight harder. Athena, in other words, employs the same strategy that Agamemnon had used a little earlier,[14] as is suggested also by the verses that frame Athena's account of Tydeus' career (*Il.* 5.800–1, 811–3). One suspects, thus, that Athena's account might also be the "invention" rather than the reflection of a genuine tradition on Tydeus.

Tydeus' exploits are next recalled in the *Doloneia* (*Il.* 10.284–91). Here the Theban material is recast in the form of a prayer, and in typical fashion the hero reminds Athena of her support to his father in the past by recalling his going to Thebes as a messenger and by allusively pointing to the mischief, which he had worked there (μέρμερα ἔργα). This prayer of Diomedes comes as an answer to Odysseus' prayer that was uttered a few moments earlier (NB *Il.* 1.2284: κέκλυθι νῦν *καὶ* ἐμεῖο). A comparison between the two prayers highlights the peculiarities of Diomedes' words. Odysseus asks for the goddess' help at *Il.* 10.278–282.[15] After the typical opening, addressing the goddess and asking her to lend a kind ear to his request (κλῦθί μευ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος), Odysseus immediately reminds Athena of her continuous assistance to him (ἥ τε μοι αἰεὶ | ἐν πάντεσσι πόνοισι παρίστασαι), which he never forgets (οὐδέ σε λήθω | κινύμενος). On the basis of this past assistance he asks that her support be repeated on the present occasion

13 Andersen (1978) 35–36 maintains that the Tydeus story told by Agamemnon is the poet's invention; see Dentice di Accadia Ammone (2012) 147–148. Interestingly, Diomedes, who had not proven his martial valor yet in the poem, does not reply to Agamemnon's words but remains silent out of a sense of *aoidos*; see Montiglio (2000) 57–59.

14 Alden (2001) 121–122.

15 See Pulleyn (1997) on prayers.

(νῦν αὖτε μάλιστά με φῖλαι) so that he and Diomedes might return to the Achaeans' ships with glory (εὐκλεΐας).

On the contrary, Diomedes does not mention in his prayer the support he has received from Athena thus far, despite the fact that this led to his *aristeia* in which he was able even to wound gods. Interestingly, even though in *Iliad* 6 he claimed that he does not remember his father (6.222–223), he asks Athena to support him as she had supported Tydeus, and it is he who reminds her of his father's actions at Thebes. An audience familiar with Agamemnon's earlier recounting of Tydeus' exploits and Athena's allusive reference to these events in *Il.* 5, will be in position to fill in the missing details.[16] Does this mean that the earlier accounts of Tydeus' career that we heard from Agamemnon and Athena are truthful? Or is Diomedes simply repeating what he has heard other authority figures narrate?

Besides evoking the goddess (perhaps a bit more emphatically than Odysseus, as he uses an additional epithet, Ἀτρυτώνη, rather than simply Διὸς τέκος), Diomedes' prayer is executed in a manner corresponding to the expectations created by the genre, as he, unlike Odysseus, concludes with a promise for a sacrifice that he will offer Athena if they are victorious. By evoking Athena's aid to Tydeus, Diomedes implicitly asks to be made equal to his father (NB *Il.* 10.290–291 παρέστης ~ παρίσταο), but he also displays his piety and implicitly contrasts himself to his father of whom the Theban tradition had it that he was abandoned by the goddess on account of his reprehensible behavior. Is the poet implying that the son is also morally superior to his father, just as Sthenelus had emphatically stated in *Il.* 4.404–410 that the generation of Diomedes conquered Thebes rather than that if his father when answering Agamemnon's accusation of cowardice?

Be that as it may, the Theban material regarding Tydeus' exploits undergoes another transformation in *Iliad* 14.[17] There it is recounted during a debate among the wounded Achaean leaders. Odysseus strongly objects to Agamemnon's renewed suggestion to abandon the war and sail from Troy secretly at night, whereupon Agamemnon asks for anyone, whether younger or older, to propose a preferable solution if they have one. Diomedes intervenes and offers a simple proposition: they should all join battle, even the wounded ones if need be, who should however remain out of shot and encourage the others to fight (*Il.* 14.110–132).[18] This short and direct proposition that consists of only five verses is introduced by eighteen lines containing again references to Tydeus which are now better contextualized as we hear more about Diomedes' *genos* (thus the gaps that

16 See Andersen (1978) 130.

17 See Andersen (1978) 140–141.

18 On this speech, see Alden (2001) 164–167.

the previous accounts had left are filled). In this case Diomedes aims at obtaining his audience's *benevolentia* given that it is a younger hero who addresses the older ones. Interestingly, however, Diomedes seems to feel the need to justify his right to speak even though Agamemnon had just explicitly said that he would welcome any proposal that is better than his, whether by a young or by an old fighter.[19] He backs up his right to address the elders through the fact that he too descends from a noble family (πατρὸς δ' ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ *καὶ ἐγὼ* γένος εὔχομαι εἶναι), and goes on to present Tydeus' line (Portheus and Oeneus) and how Tydeus went to Argos and married one of Adrastus' daughters and was extremely wealthy. He also surpassed everyone in the art of the spear. But he does not elaborate upon Tydeus' skill in spear-fighting since it is likely that his audience have heard this (τὰ δὲ μέλλετ' ἀκουέμεν, εἰ ἐτεόν περ). This resonates with Diomedes' earlier evocation of the will of Zeus and the gods (*Il.* 14.120) as the reason for Tydeus' wandering and establishment in Argos, and thus points back to Diomedes' prayer in the *Doloneia* where a pronounced religious feeling can also be detected. Tydeus' martial exploits are presumed to be already known, an intra-textual hint at *Iliad* 4 where Agamemnon himself recalled Tydeus' martial valor as well as a hint at the epic's audience who know the Theban material. At the same time, with this re-telling of Tydeus' story we gain a new insight on him: he is now not the valiant fighter of whom we have been hearing but also the wealthy king (in other words, he too is an ἀγαθός aristocrat). Thus these lines which ostensibly serve to present Diomedes' credentials in addressing the assembly of the elders also provide the audience with another facet of Tydeus' personality and show Diomedes as someone who is now in position to incorporate his family history into his speeches, whereas until now he was only reminded of it by the others. Now he uses Tydeus' story, and especially a part that may not have been known to everybody (is it perhaps his own invention?) in order to prove to the kings that he is one of them. Tydeus, then, becomes the argument that grants Diomedes the right to make a contribution to the debate worthy to be heeded by the other leaders (cf. *Il.* 14.133: ὣς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα τοῦ μάλα μὲν κλύον ἠδ' ἐπίθοντο).

19 This need might stem from Nestor's reaction to Diomedes' speech in *Iliad* 9, where the old king mentioned that Diomedes' words had not reached their τέλος (9.56). See Beck (2005) 196–197, Dentice di Accadia Ammone (2012) 168–174.

Theban Material in the *Nekyia*

Turning now our attention to the *Odyssey,* we notice a different kind of interaction with the Theban lore. For unlike the linear presentation of the references to the events involving Tydeus in the *Iliad*, in the *Odyssey* the Theban material is for the most part concentrated in Book 11, the *Nekyia*,[20] and is combined with reminiscences from other cyclic or local traditions within Odysseus' *Apologoi* and thus it holds no privileged position at all.

In the course of narrating to the Phaeacians his own *nostos*, Odysseus mentions the characters he encountered in the Underworld. After his interview with Elpenor, Teiresias and Anticleia, Odysseus recounts a "Catalogue of Women". Several heroines appear to him, sent by Persephone, who were the wives and daughters of kings (*Od*. 11.225–227). These are:

- Tyro, the daughter of Salmoneus and wife of Kretheus (*Od*. 11.235–259);
- Antiope, daughter of Asopos, who bore Amphion and Zethus to Zeus (*Od*. 11.260–265);
- Alcmene, wife of Amphitryon, and mother of Heracles from Zeus (*Od*. 11.266–268);
- Megare, daughter of Kreon, wife of Heracles (*Od*. 11.269–270);
- Epicaste, mother of Oedipus (*Od*. 11.271–280);
- Chloris, daughter of Amphion and wife of Neleus, mother of Nestor, Chromius, Periclymenus and Pero who is linked to the Melampus narrative (*Od*. 11.281–297);
- Leda, wife of Tyndareus, mother of Castor and Pollux (*Od*. 11.298–304);
- Iphimedeia, mother of Otus and Ephialtes, the two Aloades (*Od*. 11.305–319);
- Phaedra and Procris (*Od*. 11.320);
- Ariadne, daughter of Minus (*Od*. 11.320–325);
- Maera and Clymene (*Od*. 11.326);[21]
- Eriphyle, the wife of Amphiaraus for whose death she was responsible (*Od*. 11.326–327).

Not all of these heroines have the same degree of importance. Some, such as Tyro, are graced with a narrative, others like Maera or Clymene are mentioned only by name. From this enumeration of the heroines included in Odysseus' "Catalogue

20 The other Odyssean passage where Theban material is alluded to is 15.243–248.

21 These two women appeared also in the *Nostoi*; the same may be true also of Eriphyle. See frr. 1, 5, 8 *PEG* 1 and West (2013) 274–275.

of Women" emerges clearly at first sight that the material traditionally identified as Theban[22] is in fact prominent,[23] but is by no means self-standing. While a good number of these female characters are directly associated with Thebes and thus give the catalogue a Theban (or Boeotian) flavor (Antiope, Alcmene, Megare, Epicaste, Eriphyle), not to mention Teiresias, whose presence as a seer earlier in the *Nekyia* clearly presupposes his Theban career, the catalogue incorporates material from the Thessalian, Pylian,[24] Spartan, Cretan, and Athenian traditions.[25] Sometimes a heroine is the link that establishes a connection to more than one tradition. Thus Tyro, who was mentioned in the *Nostoi*, is connected to Thessaly both through Salmoneus and Cretheus and through her giving birth to Pelias; she is also linked to the Pylian tradition through her giving birth to Neleus who ruled in Pylos. Chloris is related to the Theban traditions as daughter of Amphion, son of Iasus, but also to Pylos through her marriage to Neleus. Pero, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in the Pylian tradition. With Leda we enter the Spartan tradition, while through Phaedra and Ariadne we are introduced to the Cretan and Athenian traditions. Athenian is also Procris and Clymene, and both constitute yet another reminiscence of the *Nostoi*.[26] The same may be true of Maera as well.[27] Finally with Eriphyle, we are again reminded of the Theban traditions and Argos, in particular the *Epigonoi*, though she may also have featured in the *katabasis* of the *Nostoi*.[28]

What is the point in including this material in Odysseus' narration? One line of interpretation holds that the hero is trying to please his audience. The Phaeacians descend from Poseidon (see *Od.* 7.56–67), and given that some of these heroines are linked to Poseidon,[29] the hero is essentially narrating stories that remind the Phaeacians of their divine ancestor, hence stories that are relevant to the internal audience.[30] On the other hand, Odysseus' inclusion of so many hero-

22 See Torres-Guerra (1995) 65.

23 The prominence of the Theban material in the *Nekyia* is pointed out already by van der Valk (1935) 102–103 and 111–113.

24 See van der Valk (1935) 104–108 who observes that the emphasis on Nestor in the "Catalogue of Heroines" corresponds to the old hero's treatment in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

25 For the links of these women to various traditions, see Larson (2000) 197–204.

26 See fr. 5 *PEG* 1. See Σ^{HQV} *Od.* 11.326.

27 See *Nostoi*, fr. 6 *PEG* 1. However, Pherecydes (fr. 170a-b *EGM*) reports that she was the mother of Locrus (through Zeus) who founded Thebes with Amphion and Zethus, and thus she was subsequently linked to Theban traditions as well. In the *Nostoi* she died a virgin. See Severyns (1928) 390.

28 See fr. 8 *PEG* 1.

29 See Larson (2000) 195 n. 11.

30 Larson (2000) 195–196.

ines has been seen as a way by which the hero can win the sympathy and ultimately the help of Arete,[31] the only female member of his audience who seems to hold considerable power in the Phaeacian society. Yet another approach has been to consider this material as pointing to the particular milieu in which the epic was crystalized: it has been argued that this happened in Athens, through the agency of the Peisistratids, who claimed descent from the Neleids and would also have been responsible for the shape and contents of the *Nekyia*'s "Catalogue of Heroines". In other words, the internal narrator, Odysseus, attempts to please his audience (the Phaeacians, Arete), while the external narrator attempts to achieve a similar goal with respect to the external audience.[32]

I wish to ask here a different question: what is the effect of the poet's mixing this material? If his goal is that Odysseus win the support of the Phaeacians, then why not include only stories that involve Poseidon and not Zeus or Thebes? If he wishes to win Arete's favor, why conclude with Eriphyle, who was responsible for the death of her husband, Amphiaraus, a story which is reported in *Od.* 15.247: she accepted the necklace of Harmonia as a bribe to convince Amphiaraus to participate in the campaign of the *Epigonoi* against Thebes. Amphiaraus' participation meant certain death, something which he knew too well as a seer, and therefore charged his son (Alcmaon) to avenge his death by killing Eriphyle. Granted that when Odysseus recounts his encounter with Leda, he leaves Helen and Clytemnestra out of the list of her progeny, the audience would nevertheless have supplied what the poet left unsaid, since these were famous and important characters for the poem. Such stories are not appropriate if one wishes to achieve the female audience's *benevolentia*.

A more satisfactory answer might be found if we take into consideration the entire narrative frame in which this catalogue material is embedded. None of the traditions evoked here is privileged in any way. Rather, the heroines are included in order to evoke various traditions from a great part of the Greek world, some of which are of course connected to each other. But this is not something that the poet attempts only here. This narrative strategy can be detected through-

31 See, for instance, de Jong (2001) *ad loc.* Doherty (1995) 66–68 proposes that Odysseus has removed from his tale any possible misogynistic interpretations. However, if we grant that the audience was familiar with the traditions surrounding these heroines, it would be reasonable to assume that they would have been able to add what Odysseus has omitted from his account.

32 Larson (2000) esp. 220–222. But see the cautious remarks in Radke (2007) esp. 38–41 regarding the difficulties involved in the argument that draws an analogy between the internal and external narrator and holds that just as the internal narrator shapes his story in such a way as to persuade the poem's internal audience, the poet is shaping the traditional stories in order to please his (external) audience.

out the *Apologoi*. In fact, Odysseus' first-person account combines material that derives from various strands. The mirror image of the "Catalogue of Heroines" in the *Nekyia*, is a "Catalogue of Heroes" whom Odysseus met in the Underworld. These are his companions from the Trojan War, and by introducing them the poet gives his hero the opportunity to narrate events from the Cycle. It is especially important that, in contrast to the "Catalogue of Heroines", the heroes are given now the opportunity to speak for themselves and tell their own story in considerable detail.[33] Incidentally, this militates against the thesis that Odysseus tries to please Arete; if this had been his purpose, then it would have been more sensible to endow the heroines with their own voice, rather than mediating their experiences through himself, as is the case in Odysseus' catalogue, where their only significance seems to be their being mothers, daughters, wives, and mistresses. This is of course at home in catalogue/genealogical poetry, where what matters is to draw clear lines of filiation by which the *male* audience can assert its traditions, heritage, and even territorial claims.[34] In that way women function as vehicles or means that help assert these rights but do not possess any power of their own.[35] The "Catalogue of Heroines" might be seen as a specimen of *Ehoie* poetry, not in the sense that it derives from it, as earlier scholars had thought,[36] but because it shares certain generic characteristics with it. In it, Thebes has a prominent position but it is not the only protagonist. What emerges from this catalogue is mainly the interconnectedness of this network of stories.

As mentioned above, after this specimen of *Ehoie* – type of poetry follows the account of Odysseus' comrades-in-arms. Agamemnon recounts his own death, the end of what was his *nostos*, and a story told to Menelaus by the Old Man of the sea (*Od*. 4.512–537). Odysseus' comment in 436–439 recalls the entire fate of

33 This is of course implied in some of the narratives of the heroines which are reported as indirect speech (see *Od*. 11.236 φάτο, 11.237 φῆ, 11.261 εὔχετ(ο), 11.306 φάσκε). But this is not the case with the heroes who are given the opportunity to utter character speech.

34 See Larson (2000) 193–194.

35 Doherty (1995) 94–104 detects a certain segregation of genders in the two halves of the *Nekyia*, in that the first half would appeal to Arete whereas the second (that contains explicit misogynistic statements, albeit uttered by Agamemnon) would be of interest to Alcinoos who after all asks to hear about the Greek heroes Odysseus encountered in the Underworld. We should not forget, however, that the poem's external audience was familiar with these traditions of the heroines and that, in terms of internal audience, Arete is present also during the second half of the *Nekyia*, meaning that she does hear the negative comments included therein.

36 For instance Page (1955) 35–38. West (2013) 277 discusses the similarities of the *Nekyia*'s (and *Nostoi*) "Catalogue of Women" to the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and concludes that both the *Odyssey* and the *Nostoi* poets drew on genealogical poetry that had affinities with but was older than the *Catalogue*.

the Atreidae (Ἀτρέος γόνον) and calls to mind Orestes' killing of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (see Agamemnon's question at *Od*. 11.456–461). It is especially important since the story of Orestes has been mentioned several times throughout the *Odyssey* and thus establishes a link between this portion of the *Nekyia* and the remainder of the poem.[37] It also shows once more that the catalogue's purpose cannot have been to win Arete on Odysseus' side (notice γυναικείας διὰ βουλάς at *Od*. 11.437). Likewise, Achilles' appearance gives Odysseus the opportunity to recount the bravery of Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, by essentially drawing material from the Epic Cycle (*Od*. 11.508–537): Odysseus' fetching Neoptolemus from Scyros and Neoptolemus' inclusion in the group of heroes who were in the Trojan horse, a story told in the *Ilias parva*.[38] Ajax too provides an opportunity for Odysseus to remind the audience of another event narrated in the Cycle, the ὅπλων κρίσις, which led to Ajax's madness and suicide. This story belongs to the tradition of the *Aethiopis*[39] or the *Ilias parva*.[40] The same is true also of the other characters Odysseus encounters in the Underworld: they represent allusions to stories known in the epic tradition and deriving from various parts of the Greek world: Crete (Minus), Boeotia (Orion), Corinth (Sisyphus),[41] and Thebes / Argos (Heracles),[42] while some of these appeared also in the *Nostoi* (Tantalus, Tityus)[43]. The encounter with Heracles besides returning us to the Theban world, is also an acknowledgment of one of the *Odyssey* poet's predecessors, an epic tradition regarding Heracles in which Heracles' *katabasis* was narrated. The same can be said about Theseus and Peirithoos whose names should be sufficient to call to the informed audience's mind these heroes' *katabaseis*.

In addition to what has been observed thus far, even the general frame of Odysseus' narrative creatively reworks stories that were associated with other heroes and traditions: certain of Odysseus' adventures in his narrative derive from an Argonautic narrative which, though perhaps not textually fixed before our

37 See Marks (2008) ch. 1.

38 See Procl. *Chrest*. 206.10–11. See Severyns (1928) 337–338.

39 See Procl. *Chrest*. 172.23–4 Seve. and *Aethiopis* fr. 5 *PEG* 1, *Ilias parva* fr. 2, 3 *PEG* 1. See also Severyns (1928) 329–331.

40 See Procl. *Chrest*. 206.3–5.

41 See Severyns (1928) 392 who considers *Od*. 11.593–600 "a fragment of the *Nekyia* of the *Nostoi*".

42 See Danek (1998) esp. 23–28; Clay (1983) 93–96 for a parallelism and contrast between Odysseus and Heracles in the *Nekyia*.

43 Tantalus seems to have appeared also in the *Nostoi* (see fr. 4 *PEG* 1), where however his punishment was different. Assuming that this tradition was known to the *Odyssey* poet, his treatment of Tantalus may be another way in which he distances himself from one of his traditional models.

Odyssey, must have been known as an oral tradition. Thus the meeting with Circe on Aeaea, Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens, the mention of the Πλαγκταί, the encounter with the Laestrygonians are all thought to derive from this cycle. And in case the audience has not noticed this, the poet gives it away by means of his metapoetic comment Ἀργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα (*Od*. 12.70).[44] Are we to think of this Argonautic song in positive terms, as a tradition popular with the audiences of the time? Or is it meant in a negative manner, implying that the Argonautic story is old and common, not a modern one as the story we are now hearing. There are, moreover, folktale elements, such as the story of the Cyclops or even riddles such as the one we find in the encounter of Odysseus with Aeolus and his progeny.[45] The Theban reflections in the *Nekyia* are thus part of an intricate web of various traditions combined with each other in Odysseus' narrative *tour de force*.

Concluding Remarks

Clearly, then, the *Odyssey* interacts with the Theban material in a different way than the *Iliad*. In the *Iliad* the references to the story of Tydeus were intricately linked to the immediate context: Agamemnon and Athena used it as a way to chide Diomedes; Diomedes himself reminisced of his father in a prayer to Athena and used Tydeus' past as an argument to win her support; and Diomedes evoked Tydeus once more when arguing that he too can give good advice in the assembly. In the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, the Theban tales are one tradition among the many that make up Odysseus' *Apologoi*. In other words, the Theban material does not hold a special position in the broad spectrum of traditions that have been embedded in this epic. Unlike Tydeus' story in the *Iliad* it is neither repeated nor does it have the same (explicit) rhetorical, paradigmatic function. By weaving this colorful tapestry of epic stories Odysseus shows to his audience that he is in command of the entire poetic tradition. His knowledge is not limited to one kind of story but spans over various genres and geographic provenance.

The reason for the *Odyssey*'s different handling of the Theban material may be sought in Telemachus' programmatic words in 1.351–352, reacting to Penelope's urging Phemius to sing some other song rather than Ἀχαιῶν νόστον… λυγρόν (1.326–327):

44 See West (2005) with abundant references to earlier treatments of this question.
45 Page (1973) for folktales in the *Odyssey*, and (1955) 1–20 on the Cyclops.

> τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ᾽ ἄνθρωποι
> ἥ τις ἀκουόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται.
>
> "For men praise that song the most that comes the newest to their ears". (A. T. Murray, revised by G. E. Dimock).

The newest song attracts more praise from the audience. But these words also contain an implicit suggestion, an argument by analogy: Just as Penelope's suitors sit still and listen to Phemius' newest song, should the *Odyssey's* audience not do the same? The *Odyssey* is after all the song that narrates the *nostos* of the last of the Achaeans to return home, and is the νεωτάτη ἀοιδή of its kind. This newest song is also superior to the previous ones not only because it is the more recent one, but especially because it is the most inclusive one, containing elements of several types of possible plots and genres, from fairytale to other *nostoi*, catalogue or *Ehoie* poetry and heroic tales that derive from different poetic cycles. This characterizes the *Odyssey* as a whole[46], but it is executed especially masterfully in the *Apologoi* where the hero takes over the role of the bard and shows himself knowledgeable in many kinds of stories.[47] The different handling of the Theban material in the *Odyssey* is the result of that poem's claim of a special place among ἀοιδαί, and through its inclusiveness it renders all other song traditions obsolete.

46 One may think in this context of the references to the Agamemnon *nostos* throughout the poem or Nestor's and Menelaus' recounting their own *nostos* in Books 3 and 4, respectively.

47 See the pertinent remark in Danek (1998) 231: "Odysseus zeigt sich damit als Held, der potentiell mit jeder dem Hörer bekannten Heldensgeschichte in Verbindung gebracht werden könnte, und unsere Odyssee präsentiert sich als Epos, das potentiell den Stoff aller bekannten Epen aufnehmen und somit letzlich alle anderen Epen ersetzen könnte".