

Alternative Odysseys: The Case of Thoas and Odysseus

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SUMMARY: This paper explores the different ways in which the relationship between Odysseus and an Aitolian hero, Thoas, is realized in ancient Greek epic. Odysseus paints an unflattering picture of Thoas in the *Odyssey*, yet the two are allies in the *Iliad* and in non-Homeric accounts of Odysseus' "post-*Odyssey*" life, and both antagonism and sympathy between them can be discerned in the *Ilias parva* and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*. Here it is argued that epic geography offers a partial explanation for the association of Odysseus and Thoas generally, and that their antagonism in the *Odyssey* alludes to conflicts between canonical and non-canonical accounts of Odysseus' return.

IT IS CLEAR THAT THE *ILIAD* AND *ODYSSEY* TOOK SHAPE in the context of, derive material from, and provide material for other epics. But a definitive picture of these interactions has remained elusive, owing to the scarcity of non-Homeric evidence, and to uncertainties about the relative chronology of ancient Greek epic traditions. Moreover, the fact that the epic poems, both canonical and non-canonical, took shape within the context of an oral culture problematizes the very concepts of "source" and "recipient," since the traditions that gave rise to the canonical epics, as long as they continued to evolve, would have had the opportunity to interact with each other and with non-Homeric traditions. Thus it has proved difficult to define objective criteria for identifying the "origin" of any given theme with a particular narrative context.

This being the case, a number of scholars have found it useful to abandon a source-and-recipient model, and instead to view the relationship between Homeric and non-Homeric narrative from an "intertextual" perspective, the notion of "text" here being extended to include oral performances. In this spirit Pietro Pucci suggests that the *Odyssey* "acknowledges and limits its own literary territory by gestures of confrontation with the other poems and other heroic traditions from which it emerges, and by controversial acts of appro-

priation from these sources.”¹ Pucci’s conception of confrontation and appropriation is in sympathy with Gregory Nagy’s distinction between canonical and non-canonical epic in terms of relative degrees of “Panhellenicity.” By Nagy’s interpretation, the widespread authority of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in ancient Greece is a function of their engagement with a wide range of local, or “epichoric,” traditions: “the degree of Panhellenic synthesis in the content of a composition corresponds to the degree of diffusion in the performance of this composition.”² The canonical epics, then, became “canonical” by confronting and synthesizing a broad cross-section of the ancient Greek epic tradition as a whole.

Because the various epichoric traditions often present conflicting versions of stories associated with the same characters and events, the process of Panhellenic synthesis will have involved a series of choices among possible narrative paths. It therefore follows that some epichoric stories are rendered, from the Homeric perspective, “false.” The manner in which the canonical narratives represent their own authorization and deauthorization of various conflicting accounts will then have been a significant factor in their Panhellenic success, since some members of the Homeric audience will have had to suspend belief in their own native traditions in order to appreciate the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. Put another way, the canonical narratives have reason to justify or at least to explain their relationship to different versions of the stories they tell in order to enhance their appeal to diverse audiences.

It has long been suggested that the “lying tales” in the *Odyssey* allude to alternative versions of Odysseus’ return. Steve Reece has argued recently that these tales played on audiences’ familiarity with non-canonical stories in order to generate the dramatic irony that “what was told to be believed in one version was told to deceive in another.”³ Building on this insight, and on the methodologies developed by Pucci and Nagy, I hope to demonstrate in this paper that a related inset narrative in the *Odyssey*, one that has received less attention than the Cretan tales, polemicizes against stories about Odysseus that are thematically incompatible with the canonical epic.

This inset narrative is a story that Odysseus, having returned to Ithake in disguise, tells the swineherd Eumaios. The tale concerns a party of Greeks lying in ambush outside the walls of Troy (*Od.* 14.469–502), among them “Odysseus” (the disguised Odysseus’ third-person representation of his “true” self) and his Cretan persona (the disguised Odysseus’ first-person represen-

¹ See Pucci 38–43, 38–39 for the quotation.

² Nagy 1990: 70; cf. 1999: 8–9.

³ Reece 71.

tation of his “false” self). As night comes on, the Cretan persona finds himself unprepared for the cold, and seeks the aid of “Odysseus.” The latter, claiming falsely that a divinely-sent dream has informed him of the need for reinforcements, calls for a messenger to return to the Greek camp. A volunteer, Thoas son of Andraimon (499), heeds the call and dashes off on the pretend errand, leaving his cloak behind and available for the Cretan persona.

The volunteer’s given name seems motivated in part by the fact that it creates a pun: “Swiftly,” as in *θοός*, “swift, nimble, quick,” leaves on the pointless journey at a run (501 *θέειν*; cf. 500 *καρπαλίμως*).⁴ The motivation for the volunteer’s patronymic, on the other hand, which identifies him as a hero whose homeland is Aitolia, and whose relations include Meleagros and Diomedes (cf. *Il.* 2.639–42; Apollod. 1.8.1–2, 5), is less clear. For the pun alone a different, or even an unspecified Thoas would suffice.⁵ Thus the inclusion of this particular Thoas in the “cloak tale” appears to be motivated by factors beyond the pun and the formulaic language of ancient Greek epic.

The casting of Thoas son of Andraimon with “Odysseus” in this “false” tale is at least consistent with the repeated pairing of the two in scenes presented as “true.” In the *Iliad*, they are associated in four of the six passages in which Thoas takes part or is mentioned, beginning with the Catalogue of Ships, which lists him as leader of the Aitolians directly after the Ithakans, or rather Kephallenians, under the leadership of Odysseus (the junction between the entries occurs at *Il.* 2.636–38). The geographical organization of the Catalogue creates the sequence Ithakans-then-Aitolians, so that the pairing of Odysseus and Thoas as the *Iliad* proceeds can in part be understood as an extension of this sequence. A comparable relationship exists between the Salaminian Aias and the Athenian Menestheus: the Catalogue lists the contingents they lead consecutively (cf. 2.552–57), and the major hero Aias appears in three of the five scenes in which the minor hero Menestheus takes part. However, if for no other reason than that they are more prominent characters in the *Iliad* than are Aias and Menestheus, this apparent tendency to extend epic geography to epic narrative is much more developed in the case of Odysseus and Thoas.⁶

⁴ Andersen 1982: 18 and Newton 148, who makes the interesting argument that Thoas’ casting off of his cloak types him as not only dupe, but also as a kind of *rhipaspis*.

⁵ There are in ancient Greek epic a number of characters named Thoas, including an otherwise unidentified Trojan killed by Menelaos at *Il.* 16.311.

⁶ On the geographical position of the Ithakan and Aitolian entries in the Iliadic catalogue see Visser 599 and Kirk 185. The association of Menestheus and Aias is observed by Kirk ad *Il.* 2.552; see also below n. 8 on Thoas and Idomeneus. The pairing of Iliadic heroes is not always prefigured by proximity in the Catalogue: for instance, although Odysseus and Diomedes appear together frequently, five contingents separate their Catalogue entries.

For in the action of the *Iliad*, Thoas is not simply associated with Odysseus; he is in a sense his double. In the first Iliadic battle, Thoas is the next Greek after Odysseus to slay a foe (4.494–504, 527–31). Later, the two are named in a single verse (7.168 Θόας Ἀνδραϊμονίδης καὶ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς) among the heroes who cast lots to face Hektor in single combat. Finally, Thoas and others help Odysseus gather up Agamemnon's "gifts" for Achilles (19.239). Moreover, Thoas appears apart from Odysseus only after a wound forces the latter to retire from battle in Book 11,⁷ and in the passages where he does so his role parallels that of Odysseus elsewhere: Thoas proposes a successful strategy when the Greek forces are driven back to their ships in Book 15 (286–99), and his association with Poseidon, who in person exhorts him (and others) to battle (13.92), and who assumes his form to exhort Idomeneus (13.215–18), can be compared to Odysseus' association with Athene in both Homeric epics.⁸

Nor is the pairing of Odysseus and Thoas a specifically Homeric theme. In the *Ilias parva*, Thoas helps Odysseus disguise himself for a spying mission into Troy by roughing him up,⁹ and Virgil's listing of Thoas among the Greek *duces* who accompany *dirus Vlixes* in the wooden horse (*A.* 2.261–62) perhaps derives from this or another "Cyclic" epic.¹⁰ In the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (198 Merkelbach-West), Odysseus and Thoas appear sequentially as suitors of Helen, and in a manner that seems to invite comparison.¹¹

⁷ Odysseus is wounded and departs at *Il.* 11.434–88, during the last Iliadic battle in which his active participation is narrated. At *Il.* 14.379–80, Odysseus, Diomedes, and Agamemnon are said to reenter battle though wounded (οὐτάμενοί περ; cf. 14.28–29); only Agamemnon, however, is shown in action (516).

⁸ No god, however, assumes Odysseus' form in the Homeric epics. There seems to be a connection between Thoas himself and Athene, at least in Lokrian epichoric tradition: Paus. 10.38.4–5 refers to Lokrian Amphissa as an Aitolian foundation, and describes a grave there of Thoas' parents and a bronze statue of Athene supposedly dedicated from out of Thoas' Trojan war plunder; cf. Roscher 5.818 line 50 s.v. Thoas (der Aitolier). Note also that, as Reinhardt 296 observes, the connection between Thoas and Idomeneus in *Iliad* 13 is an(other) example of the influence on the narrative of the geography of the Catalogue of Ships, which lists the Cretans directly after the Aitolians (*Il.* 2.638–45).

⁹ *Iliades parvae* fr. 7 Bernabé = ΣLyc. *Alexandra* 780 μὴ νοηθεὶς ἀποθάνην ἔπεισε [*sc.* Odysseus] Θόαντα τὸν υἱὸν Ἀνδραϊμόνοιο πληγῶσαι αὐτὸν πληγαῖς βιαίαις πρὸς τὸ γενέσθαι ἀγνώριστον. In some sources, the spy mission is conflated with Odysseus' and Diomedes' theft of the Palladion from Troy; cf. Apollod. *Epit.* 5.13.

¹⁰ Servius comments on the *Aeneid* 2 passage, *Thoas: Andraemonis*. Thoas and Odysseus are also together in the horse in Hyg. *Fab.* 108.5 and Q. S. 12.318. On the Cyclic epics and *Aeneid* 2 see Kopff 91–93.

¹¹ For the sequence of Helen's suitors see also Hyg. *Fab.* 81.8. Even if M. West is correct in his conclusion (115) that the list of Helen's suitors in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* is "influ-

First Odysseus demonstrates his characteristic guile (3 πολύκροτα μήδεα εἰδώς), or at least the ability to exploit his guest-friend network, for, having learned from Helen's brothers that Menelaos will prevail (5–8), he does not woo her with gifts (4 δῶρα μὲν οὐ ποτ' ἔπεμπε). Next, Thoas squanders "countless bride-gifts" (10 δὶ[δ]ου] δ' ἀπε[ρείσια ἔδ]να), apparently unaware that his efforts are in vain. Comparison can work to the advantage of either. Odysseus is more clever than Thoas in conserving his resources, and Thoas displays gullibility not unlike that of the character who dashes off into the night in the Odyssean cloak tale. Yet Thoas is more forthright in seeking Helen without appeal to inside information; indeed the denial of any deception on the part of Helen's brothers with which the fragment opens (1 ἄλλ' οὐκ ἦν ἀπάτης ἔργον παρὰ Τυνδαρίδῃσιν) suggests that Odysseus' consultation with them was liable to be interpreted as devious.

Examples could, and presently will, be multiplied, but these passages seem sufficient to demonstrate, first, that the association of Odysseus and Thoas is a widespread theme in ancient Greek epic, and, second, that this theme is valorized differently in different contexts. Thus while the geographic proximity of Ithake and Aitolia may explain the emergence of an "Odysseus-and-Thoas theme" in the first place, this theme evolved what might be called antithetical multiforms. On the one hand, the two heroes can work in concert and complement one another, as throughout the *Iliad* and in the wooden horse episode. On the other hand, they can be associated as antagonists, as in the cloak tale and as suitors of Helen. From this perspective, the "friendly" beating that Thoas administers to Odysseus in the *Ilias parva* takes on a sinister, or ironic, undertone: their antagonism is, like Odysseus, disguised. Indeed, there could be polemical force in the *Odyssey's* attribution to Odysseus himself of the disguising blows in its version of the spy mission, for suppression of Thoas' role, like his victimization in the cloak tale, elevates Odysseus at his expense.¹²

enced by Homer," and (130–37) that much of the *Catalogue* generally is derivative of Homeric epic, the *Odyssey* could still be alluding to a contemporary "suitors of Helen" tradition that was also drawn on by the *Catalogue*; cf. Andersen 1982: 17.

¹² *Od.* 4.244 αὐτόν μιν πληγῇσιν ἀεικέλῃσι δαμάσας. For arguments that the *Ilias parva* does not depend on the *Odyssey* for this story see Burgess 149–57, Andersen 1977: 17 n. 8, Severyns 347–49. Andersen 1982: 18 allows for the possibility that Thoas' absence from the scene in the *Odyssey* reflects an impulse to emphasize Odysseus. It must be observed that the fragment of the *Ilias parva* that tells of Thoas' role conflicts with Proklos' summary of it, which like the *Odyssey* describes Odysseus' disguising blows as self-inflicted (αἰκισάμενος ἑαυτόν, p. 74.15 Bernabé); cf. Andersen 1982: 18, Severyns 347–49, Bethe 249–50.

In any case, their frequent pairing elsewhere offers a partial explanation for the casting of Thoas son of Andraimon alongside “Odysseus” in the Odyssean cloak tale: the *Odyssey* is composed of traditional themes, of which “Odysseus-and-Thoas” appears to be one. In the context of *Odyssey* 14, mention of Thoas in the company of “Odysseus” adds verisimilitude to the Cretan persona’s tale by referencing Iliadic or other traditions that could be known to the audiences for whom the *Odyssey* was composed and performed. However, it remains to be explained why the *Odyssey* deploys an antagonistic multiform of the Odysseus-and-Thoas theme, in that it presents the two heroes as trickster and victim. It could be argued that Thoas’ inclusion in the cloak tale is motivated in the first instance by the pun, after which it is a natural step to make the thematic connection between the two heroes and designate the victim of “Odysseus” with the noun-epithet formula, Θόας Ἀνδραϊμονίδης. However, the *Odyssey*’s casting of Thoas in this manner, when he is characterized positively in the most canonical of Greek epics, would then appear capricious, even clumsy.

The *Odyssey* does however provide a clue that suggests that Thoas’ Aitolian identity, not the pun, is the primary motivation behind his inclusion in the cloak tale. This clue appears some 120 lines before the cloak tale, when Eumaios complains to the disguised Odysseus about travelers who come to Ithake claiming to have news of his absent master. The swineherd admits that he was initially receptive to these reports, until one of the travelers, who happens to be the only Aitolian character in the *Odyssey* besides Thoas, falsely predicted Odysseus’ return (*Od.* 14.378–85¹³):

ἀλλ’ ἐμοὶ οὐ φίλον ἐστὶ μεταλλῆσαι καὶ ἔρεσθαι
 ἐξ οὗ δή μ’ Αἰτωλὸς ἀνὴρ ἐξήπαφε μύθῳ
 ὅς ῥ’ ἄνδρα κτείνας πολλὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀληθείς
 ἦλθεν ἐμὰ πρὸς δώματ’ ἐγὼ δέ μιν ἀμφαγάπαζον.
 φῆ δέ μιν ἐν Κρήτεσσι παρ’ Ἰδομενῆϊ ιδέσθαι
 νῆας ἀκείόμενον τάς οἱ ξυνέαξαν ἄελλαι·
 καὶ φάτ’ ἐλεύσεσθαι ἢ ἐς θέρος ἢ ἐς ὀπώρην
 πολλὰ χρήματ’ ἄγοντα σὺν ἀντιθέοις ἐτάροισι.

But mine has not been to ask and inquire [*sc.* of travelers]
 from the time when an Aitolian man deceived me with a story.
 He, having killed a man and wandered over much land,
 came to my house. I myself treated him kindly.
 And he said he had seen him [*sc.* Odysseus] among the Cretans
 with Idomeneus,
 repairing ships that storms had wrecked.

¹³ The text of the *Odyssey* is van Thiel’s. Translations are my own.

And he said that he would come in the summer or at the harvest bringing much wealth and with godly comrades in arms.

It is not explained why the Aitolian's prediction sours Eumaios on all reports of Odysseus' return, while the "lying" of other travelers (14.125 *ψεύδοντ' οὐδ' ἐθέλουσιν ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι*) did not.¹⁴ In any event, Eumaios' encounter with the Aitolian alters completely his opinion of stories about Odysseus: though he continues to honor Penelope's requests to attend whenever a traveler brings tidings (14.372–74), he has himself given up questioning such travelers or putting any stock in what they say *from the time when* (14.379 *ἐξ οὗ δὴ*) the Aitolian's *μῦθος* proved false.¹⁵

Eumaios' determination that the Aitolian deceived him can only be based on Odysseus' failure to return at the appointed time, "in summer or at the harvest" (14.384), since only this aspect of the prediction is manifestly untrue at the dramatic moment of *Odyssey* 14. Even if the Aitolian's visit is imagined to have occurred earlier in the same year, the *Odyssey* indicates that Odysseus returns to Ithake well after harvest-time.¹⁶ The other details the Aitolian provides, by contrast, can be neither confirmed nor denied by Eumaios, and are in fact paralleled in the disguised Odysseus' own claim to have endured seastorms (14.305–13) and prediction that "Odysseus" will return "with comrades in arms" (14.332).¹⁷ At the time of the Aitolian's visit to Ithake, however, the temporal specificity of his prediction will presumably have made it more convincing, creating the irony that the same detail that at first increased the Aitolian's credibility in the end proves him false. The disguised Odysseus is even more specific in this respect, for he predicts that "Odysseus" will return within the month (14.161–62).

¹⁴ Noted by Eust. 1764.28–30 Stallbaum: ὅρα ὡς ἐνὸς πτωχοῦ ψευσαμένου καὶ λυπήσαντος τὸν Εὐμαιον ὑπόπτως ἐκεῖνος ἔχει καὶ πρὸς τοὺς λοιποὺς καὶ ὅτι καὶ ὁ τοιοῦτος Αἰτωλὸς κατὰ Κρήτην σκηνοβατεῖ τὰ κατ' αὐτὸν ψεύσματα.

¹⁵ For *ἐξ οὗ δὴ* marking a decisive moment cf. *Il.* 1.6. Usage of *μῦθος* at *Od.* 14.379 is consistent with its definition as "a speech-act indicating authority, performed at length, usually with a focus on full attention to every detail" by Martin 12; cf. 16–18, 37–38.

¹⁶ As the V scholion to *Od.* 14.384 (Dindorf 2: 595) comments, νῦν τὸ μετόπωρον. In the *Odyssey* itself, the first storm of the winter season catches Odysseus off Skherie (5.291–94); the festival of Apollo during which the bow contest takes place (21.258–68) was celebrated in the winter in many Greek communities; and references to swallows (e.g., 21.411) may symbolize the transition to the new year; see Cook 156–67 and Austin 244–53. The harvest referred to here is that of spring-sown, as opposed to winter-sown crops; on the distinction see Sallares 326–32.

¹⁷ On the similarities among Odysseus' "lying tales" see de Jong 356 ad *Od.* 14.378–85 and Olson 129.

The antagonistic relationship between “Odysseus” and Thoas in the cloak tale can thus be explained in terms of Eumaios’ experience with the Aitolian. This interpretation derives support from the fact that Eumaios himself describes, and praises, the cloak tale as an αἶνος (14.508), “spoken words with a hidden meaning.”¹⁸ The “hidden meaning” is, on one level, that Eumaios is to follow the lead of “Odysseus” and provide a cloak; and this he does (14.520–22). The swineherd’s praise of the cloak tale as “in no way contrary to what is suitable” (14.509 οὐδέ τί πω παρὰ μοῖραν), however, can hardly be based simply on its “decodability,” since the disguised Odysseus makes the connection between the tale and his present situation explicit (14.503–6). Rather, Eumaios’ positive assessment of the *ainos* seems based on the manner in which its encoding appeals to his own predispositions. He is naturally appreciative of a tale that celebrates his longed-for master’s shrewdness. But he can also appreciate the element of “poetic justice,” in that “Odysseus” in the cloak tale victimizes a hero identified with the homeland of the traveler whose “false” tale so embittered him.

Again, though, if an antagonistic multiform of the Odysseus-and-Thoas theme is deployed in the cloak tale in order to gratify the internal audience, Eumaios, it remains unclear why Aitolians are singled out for negative treatment in the first place. The pun on “Swiftly” hardly seems clever enough to warrant so elaborate a set-up. The *Odyssey* might be alluding to anti-Aitolian stereotypes current in ancient Greece, but if so these prejudices surface only here in extant epic.¹⁹ I suggest that poetics, rather than ethnicity, offers a better explanation for the *Odyssey*’s hostility to Aitolians. Specifically, I propose that the *Odyssey* targets epic traditions that featured Aitolian characters, and that were incompatible with its own account of Odysseus’ story. From this perspective, we may extend the reading of the cloak tale as an *ainos* to include a “hidden meaning” for the external audience of the *Odyssey*. This step is jus-

¹⁸ The definition of *ainos* is that of van Dijk 79–80, 125, with extensive bibliography; more recently Ford 38–42, and Newton 155–56 on the present passage. As these and other scholars have observed, an *ainos* in ancient Greek epic is often connected with a material reward (cf. *Od.* 14.509 οὐδέ τί πω ... νηκερδές).

¹⁹ According to Eust. 1764.20–35, the Aitolian’s ethnicity is selected to make his speech “blameworthy,” though he does not explain why this would be so (μή ποτε δὲ καὶ εὐφυῶς καὶ ἀστείως τὸ τοιοῦτον ἔθνικον ὁ Αἰτωλός, ἐπελέγη ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων ἔθνων τῷ ποιητῇ, ἵνα τὸν ἐπαίτην δηλώσῃ). In classical authors, Aitolians are stereotyped as primitive (e.g., *Th.* 1.5.3, 3.94.5). The connection between the lying Aitolian and Thoas’ depiction in the cloak tale is noted by Brennan 1–3, who concludes (3) that “the Thoas-story can be regarded as a sort of ‘ethnic joke’ which makes the swineherd drop his guard,” though his concise discussion does not include an explanation for the choice of the Aitolian *ethnos*.

tified at least to the extent that the *ainos* can play on the fact, known to the external audience but not to Eumaïos, that beneath the Cretan persona is Odysseus himself. By my interpretation, the Aitolian traveler and the Aitolian hero in *Odyssey* 14 were also intended to elicit from the external audience a critical response to certain other instantiations of the Odysseus-and-Thoas theme.²⁰

The passages discussed so far do not realize this theme in a manner likely to provoke the *Odyssey* to respond as I propose. Neither the Iliadic depiction of Thoas as Odysseus' doublet, nor the wooden horse episode, presents a clear challenge to Odyssean themes outside those of the cloak tale itself. A possible point of engagement with the spy mission in the *Ilias parva* has already been mentioned; but even if there is merit in my suggestion that the *Odyssey* suppresses Thoas' drubbing of Odysseus, it is again difficult to see the episode as markedly "anti-Odyssean." And the Hesiodic *Catalogue* fragment, however it is interpreted, seems to reinforce the *Odyssey's* conception of its hero as clever and concerned with maximizing his resources.

It is rather in the context of stories associated with the aftermath of Odysseus' return to power on Ithake that the kinds of traditions against which I see the *Odyssey* polemicizing can be found. Representative of such non-canonical accounts is Apollod. *Epit.* 7.40:

εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ λέγοντες ἐγκαλούμενον Ὀδυσσέα ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀπολωλότων δικαστὴν Νεοπτόλεμον λαβεῖν τὸν βασιλεύοντα τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἥπειρον νήσων τοῦτον δὲ νομίσαντα ἐκποδῶν Ὀδυσσέως γενομένου Κεφαλληνίαν καθέξειν κατακρῖναι φυγὴν αὐτοῦ Ὀδυσσέα δὲ εἰς Αἰτωλίαν πρὸς Θόαντα τὸν Ἀνδραΐμονος παραγενόμενον τὴν τούτου θυγατέρα γῆμαι καὶ καταλιπόντα παῖδα Λεοντοφόνον ἐκ ταύτης γηραιὸν τελευτήσῃαι.

But some say that Odysseus was prosecuted by the [sc. suitors'] kin on account of the dead, and that he took Neoptolemos, king of the islands around Epeiros, as judge, and that the latter, thinking that, with Odysseus out of the way, he would lay hold of Kephallenia, pronounced a judgment of exile, on account of which Odysseus came to Aitolia to Thoas, son of Andraimon, married his daughter, and died of old age, having left behind a child begotten of her, Leontophonos.²¹

²⁰ For the allusive power of details such as Thoas' patronymic cf. Bakker 13: "Mentioning a hero, especially one with one or more epithets added to his name, is a *re-instantiation* of the concept of this hero, a small-scale re-enactment within the encompassing framework of the epic re-enactment as a whole" (emphasis original). Patronymics are regularly treated as epithets in the analysis of Homeric formulas; see Parry 38–43.

²¹ Similar accounts in Apollod. *Epit.* 7.34–37, discussed below, and Aristotle (fr. 507 Rose = Plut. *Mor.* 294D), in which Neoptolemos' judgment causes Odysseus to cede Zakynthos as well, though he receives recompense (ποινή) from the suitors' families; he then departs into exile for Italy; cf. Malkin 101–2, 207–8, Hartmann 140–43. The nega-

In the *Odyssey*, of course, Odysseus' story ends very differently. The strife caused by the killing of the suitors is resolved by Zeus and Athene, who ensure future peace and prosperity for Ithake under the kingship of Odysseus through supernatural means, by erasing the suitors' families' memories of the killings (24.484–85 ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο / ἔκκλησιν θέωμεν). Consistent with this divinely-mediated settlement is the *Odyssey*'s version of subsequent, “post-*Odyssey*” events, as revealed by Teiresias in Book 11. After killing the suitors, Odysseus is to travel far away in order to atone for blinding Poseidon's son the Kyklops (*Od.* 11.121–34; cf. 23.248–51); he will then return to die in old age “at home” (11.132 οἴκαδ'), that is, on Ithake. As with the settlement in Book 24, the imperative behind Odysseus' actions after his return is divine, and again the outcome is closure of the hero's story in a “happily ever after” manner.

Thus, on the one hand, both the canonical *Odyssey* and Apollodoros' account of Odysseus' return follow what may have been irreducible “facts” in all traditions: the hero follows a long and difficult path from Troy to Ithake, kills the suitors and incurs the anger of their kin, and leaves again.²² Within the parameters of these “facts,” on the other hand, the canonical and non-canonical accounts can be distinguished in terms of the *Odyssey*'s divinely-sanctioned, fantastic, and permanent resolution, in contrast with the political, naturalistic, and temporary resolution described by Apollodoros. The issue of resolution or closure is of particular importance for an epic tradition that represents itself as the authoritative, Panhellenic account of a major hero. Odysseus' story by its very nature resists closure—consider Dante and Kazantzakis—so the *Odyssey* seeks to circumscribe themes that cannot be resolved within its own narrative confines by explaining them in terms of its own dramatic resolution. That is, just as the *Odyssey* constructs its main hero's relative past, his Trojan war experiences and subsequent wanderings, in “Odyssean” terms—the story of the wooden horse, for instance, prefigures Odysseus' experience in the Kyklops' cave and his infiltration of the suitors'

tive characterization of Neoptolemos is consistent with traditions in which he kills Priam at an altar (Proklos p. 88.13–14 Bernabé), and is himself killed by Orestes for taking and/or dishonoring Hermione (Eur. *Andr.* 966–81; Apollod. *Epit.* 6.14); his hostility to Odysseus can also be seen as an extension of themes attached to his father (e.g., *Od.* 8.74–78).

²² Thus Lord 1960: 182–83 observes that “everything in oral tradition points to the conclusion that ... there should be departure from Penelope and another visit to that strange world from which the hero had been rescued or released.” This theme of departure after return can perhaps be compared to a pattern in Central Asiatic and Balkan epic, in which “the hero returns to the place where he was held prisoner, rescues his companions who are still there, and destroys the city” (Lord 1991: 219).

stronghold in his own house—so the relative future is reduced to the dénouement of Odysseus' clash with Poseidon and his monstrous son.²³

These considerations bring us back to the Aitolian's prediction about Odysseus' return in *Odyssey* 14, for an analogous distinction between the fantastic and the political emerges from a comparison of this "false" prediction with the "true" story of the *Odyssey*. The accounts diverge at three main points, of which the seasonal difference has already been mentioned. A second important difference is that the Aitolian places Odysseus on Crete, while the *Odyssey* states specifically that Odysseus fails to make landfall on the island; instead, the strait past its Cape Maleia is his point of departure into the fantastic world of the *Apologoi* (9.80–83). The Aitolian thus seems to locate Odysseus' wanderings after Troy in the "real world," away from the Kyklops and Poseidon's anger, Kirke and Kalypso, and so on.²⁴ The distinction here is not simply between two interchangeable sets of adventures, for the *Odyssey's* *Apologoi* perform *inter alia* the crucial roles of explaining why Odysseus returns to Ithake alone, and of testing his capacity to endure suffering, to devise plans, and to form alliances, strategies that are crucial to his victory over the suitors as narrated in the latter half of the *Odyssey*.²⁵

Thematically related to this second difference between the Aitolian's prediction and the canonical *Odyssey* is a third, the Aitolian's assertion that Odysseus will return in the company of "comrades in arms" (14.385 ἐτάροισι).²⁶ Again, we may perhaps imagine a version of Odysseus' wanderings in which his men are not subject to the predations of monsters and witches. But more striking is that Odysseus' victory over the suitors seems to

²³ Cf. Andersen 1977, esp. 7–9. The tension between "centripetal" and "centrifugal" tendencies in Odysseus-myth has been analyzed by Peradotto; see 62–75 on the "ends of the *Odyssey*."

²⁴ As Reece 159–60 and Malkin 129–30, 150–54 observe, this "real-world" focus is characteristic of the disguised Odysseus' lying tales in general; cf. *Od.* 17.415–44. On Cape Maleia see S. West in Heubeck et. al. 1988: 15–16; this cape is also an inflection point in the wanderings of Menelaos (*Od.* 3.288), Agamemnon (*Od.* 4.514–17), the Argonauts (*Hdt.* 4.179.2), and perhaps Aeneas (*Virg. A.* 5.193).

²⁵ Cf. Doherty 60–61, Cook 49–64.

²⁶ The regular meaning of ἐτάροι in Homeric epic; see for example *Il.* 1.179 and 3.32. As has been mentioned, the prediction that Odysseus will return "with comrades in arms" recurs elsewhere in Odysseus' lying tales (*Od.* 14.332, 19.196), and is implied in Teiresias' prophecy that Odysseus might defeat the suitors "openly" rather than "by trickery" (11.120 κτείνῃς ἢ δόλῳ ἢ ἀμφαδόν), though the structure of the prophecy excludes implicitly such an "open" confrontation; see Peradotto 67–73.

be envisioned by the Aitolian as that of a military commander who will reclaim his position through force of arms. Such a course of events obviates or attenuates the need for endurance and careful planning, and for the aid Odysseus receives from the gods and from the suitors' opponents on Ithake, including, significantly, Eumaios. Moreover, return at the head of an invasion force is a recipe, not for closure, but for a protracted struggle for control of Ithake, on the analogy of, for instance, the Theban saga. In broad terms, then, the Aitolian's "false" story contrasts with the "true" story as narrated in the *Odyssey* in a manner analogous to the contrast between Apollodoros' and the *Odyssey*'s version of "post-*Odyssey*" events. Accordingly as the Aitolian's Odysseus returns as a leader of warriors, rather than as a lone agent of the gods, so do Odysseus and Ithake suffer in non-canonical accounts under an incomplete political resolution to the complications that attend military victory, rather than enjoy the fruits of a permanent, *deus ex machina* settlement.

I propose therefore that the Aitolian's prediction alludes to themes that were central to some versions of Odysseus' return, but were antithetical to the *Odyssey* itself. Eumaios is a fitting character to raise these issues, since he is valorized positively and is a seasoned audience for stories about Odysseus, and because his role is, as was mentioned above, rendered superfluous if Odysseus returns openly with a band of warriors. Approached this way, hostility toward Aitolians is one of the strategies the *Odyssey* employs in order to frame its own synthesis of conflicting traditions about Odysseus in a manner that favors fantastic over political themes. Thus the significance of the ethnic designation lies not, or not primarily, in any connection with historical Aitolians, but in its ability to invoke alternative and conflicting Odysseys.

These non-canonical, naturalistic scenarios would pose a special challenge to the *Odyssey*'s attempt to exert control over a hero whose wanderings made him a favorite heroic ancestor for regional genealogies and foundation myths.²⁷ The *Odyssey*'s responses to this challenge—its location of Odysseus' wanderings after Troy largely outside Greek geography, and its imposition of strict limits on his wanderings after his return to Ithake—militate against the political themes that inform Apollodoros' account. For Odysseus' exile creates not only political instability on Ithake for the time being, but also an

²⁷ Cf. Malkin 121–26, though I suspect that his dating of the *Odyssey* to the ninth century (45) is too early; at any rate, genealogical and foundation traditions probably remained fluid and need not be assigned to the archaeological horizon of colonization. For the idea that "to bring something to an end is a clear sign of power" see Barchiesi 207–8, in the context of Virgilian and Ovidian epic as being engaged with "the Augustan dimension of time," which seeks a "unifying and totalizing end."

opening for links to epichoric traditions, and these conditions in turn favor a disputed succession, since Odysseus' Aitolian son Leontophonos can challenge Telemachos for their father's prerogatives.²⁸

Naturalistic, political themes seem to have featured prominently in other non-canonical accounts. In the *Cyclic Telegony*, Odysseus leaves Ithake after killing the suitors, heading not for Aitolia, but for another west-Greek region, Thesprotia. There he marries the queen, Kallidike, and fathers a son, called Polypoites. After she dies, Odysseus returns to Ithake, leaving Thesprotia to this son (Proklos pp. 102.12–14 Bernabé).²⁹ Again, Odysseus' re-marriage creates a rival to Telemachos, though in the *Telegony* the encounter between father and son plays out in a manner that recalls Oidipous and Laios: Telegonos, Odysseus' son by Kirke, unwittingly attacks Ithake and kills his father.³⁰ Apollodoros preserves a similar account of Odysseus' exile in Thesprotia, his marriage to Kallidike, and their son Polypoites; to him Odysseus leaves Thesprotia, then returns to Ithake to find another son by Penelope, Poliorthes (*Epit.* 7.34–35; cf. Paus. 8.12.6). Again, such spurious offspring could serve as founder-figures in epichoric genealogical and mythical-historical traditions.

²⁸ A comparable scenario may have formed the basis of a lost Sophoclean play in which Telemachos kills a brother named Euryalos; see Eust. 1796.50 ad *Od.* 16.118 and discussion by Hartmann 188–203.

²⁹ Although the *Telegony* explains Odysseus' departure after killing the suitors as an inspection of his herds (Proklos p. 102.1 Bernabé), that he stays away and starts another family implies exile. On the significance of Thesprotia in these accounts see Danek 286, Merkelbach 142–55, and Schwartz 134–56; my view is closer to that in Kullmann 1980: 76–79, that both the *Telegony* and *Odyssey* draw on conflicting “alte Motive”; note also his suggestion (1960: 220 n. 3) that Odysseus' Aitolian exile references “alte Lokaltradition.” Eust. 1796.51 attributes to Lysimachos an account in which Leontophonos (a.k.a. Doryklos) is Odysseus' son by a different Thesprotian, Euippe; cf. Paus. 8.12.5–6, and the tabulation by Hartmann 206. Other putative sons of Odysseus include: Agrios and Latinos (by Kirke), Nausithoos and Nausinoos (by Kalypso), Hes. *Th.* 1011–18; Arkesilaos (by Penelope), Persepolis (by Nestor's daughter Polykaste), Eust. 1796.39 = Hes. fr. 221.3 Merkelbach-West. See Malkin 62–93 for a discussion of the relationships between traditions about Odysseus and Greek colonization, and 126–34 on Thesprotia.

³⁰ When the identities have been sorted out, Telegonos, Penelope, and Telemachos convey Odysseus' body to Kirke; Telegonos marries Penelope, while Telemachos marries Kirke. In Hes. *Th.* 1011–16 Odysseus' sons by Kirke leave Aiaie, not for Ithake, but for land of the Tyrsenoi (Italy); see Malkin 183–89. Yet another version (Eust. 1796.40–42, citing Aristotle and Hellanikos) tells of a marriage between Nausikaa and Telemachos, and may thus be connected with Apollodoros' Thesprotian version, since it can explain why Odysseus returns to Ithake to find Poliorthes, instead of Telemachos, in charge.

A disputed succession, however, is irreconcilable with Zeus' declaration at the end of the *Odyssey* that Odysseus will "rule always" (24.483 βασιλευέτω αἰεί). Of course, he cannot literally be king forever—even the deified Menelaos must cede Sparta and retire to Elysion (*Od.* 4.561–64)—so the implication is that Odysseus' family is to control Ithake in perpetuity. For this to happen, Telemachos must succeed his father, and therefore can neither abandon the practice of virilocal marriage, nor be driven from power by a half-brother. From this perspective, Telemachos' assertion in the *Odyssey* that his family line proceeds by strict unilineal descent (16.117–21) can be seen to reinforce the *Odyssey's* deauthorization of stories such as Odysseus' exile to Aitolia: with emphatic anaphora (μοῦνον ... μοῦνον ... μοῦνον), the "true" and only son of Odysseus denies the possibility of *epigonoí* such as Telegonos, Poliporthes, and Leontophonos, and, by extension, the complications they introduce into "post-*Odyssey*" events.³¹

In sum, the victimization of Thoas by "Odysseus" in the cloak tale may be motivated in part by an impulse to discredit stories that cast Odysseus at the end of his life in the role of suppliant at Thoas' court in Aitolia.³² Likewise, the Aitolian teller of lying tales can be interpreted as a mouthpiece for what the *Odyssey* wishes its audiences to view as plausible, but misinformed and untrustworthy, stories about its hero. Further, the polemical force of this apparent attack on Aitolians may have been intended to characterize a whole class of traditions, even those in which no Aitolians figured, such as the *Telegony*, according to which Odysseus' family seems to lose political control of Ithake. This strategy of deauthorization, then, may be detectable in a number of passages: in Thoas' exclusion from Odysseus' spying mission to Troy in *Odyssey* 4, as part of a general impulse to suppress any sympathetic relationship between Odysseus and Thoas; in Teiresias' prediction that Odysseus will die "at home" in Book 11, as a denial that Odysseus dies in exile; and in Telemachos' claim of unilineal family descent in Book 16, as a rejection of Odysseus' spurious offspring.³³

³¹ Telemachos' genealogical account serves also to deauthorize traditions that made Odysseus the son of Sisypheos (e.g., *Soph. Aj.* 189, *Eur. IA* 524); preference for unilineal descent is also consistent with "folk wisdom"; cf. *Hes. Op.* 376–77. "Unilineal descent" here refers to the male line; Odysseus does have a sister, Ktimene (*Od.* 15.363). For Telemachos' "canonical voice" in the *Odyssey* 16 passage, compare his prayer in Book 2 that the suitors die unavenged (145 νήπιονοι) and its confirmation by Zeus (146–54).

³² This intertextual, programmatic interpretation is thus distinct from Andersen's (1982 18) view of the cloak tale as simply "eine Innovation des Odyssee-Dichters," and Newton's explanation of it (155) as a "comic conflation of stock themes and type-scenes in the oral tradition."

³³ Interestingly, Teiresias' prophecy that Odysseus will die ἐξ ἁλός (*Od.* 11.134), which can mean either "far from the sea" or "out of the sea," can be reconciled both with

Of course, it can always be argued that the Cyclic, Hesiodic, and mythographical evidence I have been citing is derivative of the *Odyssey*;³⁴ nor is there an overt connection between accounts such as Apollodoros' and the Aitolian's deceptive tale. Nevertheless, my reconstruction of an "Aitolian *Odyssey*" can be of value in assessing at least the kind of narrative traditions with which the *Odyssey* may have been in competition in the course of its development, and that could have complicated its Panhellenic program. To return to the methodological perspective outlined at the beginning of this paper, I am proposing a model of intertextual engagement between the *Odyssey*-tradition and epichoric traditions, according to which each influenced and was influenced by the others. Over time, the *Odyssey*'s Panhellenic impulse helped to motivate its rejection of naturalistic accounts of Odysseus' return in favor of a tidier, divinely-mediated "happy ending." This is not necessarily to say that the ending of the *Odyssey* favors "later" over "earlier" themes: though epichoric traditions logically precede Panhellenic ones, the *Odyssey* may simply have exploited a less naturalistic, but still very ancient, strand of epichoric tradition in pursuit of its own Panhellenic agenda. In any case, I propose that, even if the non-canonical evidence discussed here is "post-Homeric," it still offers our best approximation of the kinds of stories that would have been known to poets who tried to tell the story of Odysseus' return from a Panhellenic perspective, and to their audiences. Further, I propose that references to Aitolians could have prompted audiences to reflect on these alternative epichoric accounts.

At the same time, the *Odyssey*'s deployment of Aitolians cannot be reduced to a mere struggle to define the Panhellenic Odysseus. The complex and layered interactions between the disguised Odysseus and the swineherd in Book 14 are exemplary of the qualities that secured and have maintained the *Odyssey*'s place in the canon of ancient Greek epic. What I am suggesting is that the *Odyssey*'s Aitolians can be understood as a kind of *ainos*, and that one way the *ainos* may have been decoded is as a message that "Aitolian" stories can impress even an experienced audience like Eumaïos, but that this

Apollodoros, since Thoas' court could be conceived of as "far from the sea" at the inland Aitolian city of Kalydon, and with the *Telegony*, since Telegonos attacks Ithake by ship "out of the sea." See Bernabé 104–5 for a survey with bibliography of parallel traditions about Odysseus' death.

³⁴ S. West 130–34 for example has revived Merkelbach's 145–49 argument that the ending of the *Odyssey* was grafted on by a continuator in response to considerations raised by Books 1–23 about the consequences of the suitors' deaths; similarly Kullmann 1960: 220 n. 3, though he also (102) entertains the possibility that Thoas' role in non-Homeric contexts may be "pre-Homeric." I concur generally with the arguments of Burgess 132–43 against the dependence of the Cyclic epics on the canonical epics.

audience, again like Eumaios, is to recognize these stories as “false.” Indeed there is a light touch to the *Odyssey*’s strategy as I have described it, for, although traditions about Thoas and Odysseus *post Odysseam* are incompatible with Odyssean thematics, the *Odyssey* responds, not by condemning to oblivion these “Aitolian” traditions, but instead by providing a lens through which they could be seen in Odyssean, and therefore Panhellenic, terms. “Some of you may have heard stories about Odysseus and the Aitolians,” this message might run, “but these stories are deceptive.” Thus any partisans of “Aitolian” traditions who may have figured in the *Odyssey*’s audiences are afforded the consolation that their epichoric traditions are not so much “false” as in need of the larger contextualization afforded by *Odyssey*’s Panhellenic perspective.³⁵ For reasons that could include the subtlety and humor of its engagements with competing traditions, then, at least by the classical period the *Odyssey* was recognized as authoritative throughout Greece, and became the only early Greek epic devoted to Odysseus to be transmitted intact through the ancient manuscript tradition.³⁶

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³⁵ In assessing who such “partisans” might be, I note that, while Aitolia itself was something of a backwater in archaic and classical Greece (see Antonetti 214–69 for a survey of cult sites and related traditions), Aitolian characters were associated with the important site of Elis in Olympia (e.g., Hdt. 8.73.2; Str. 10.3.2–3, 8.3.33; Paus. 5.1.3–4, 5.4.5, 5.8.2, 5.8.5, and 5.19.7, 22.2 for iconographic representation of Odysseus at Olympia). Thus Elean tradition, associated as it was with the Panhellenic Olympic festival, may have included an alternative, “proto-Panhellenic” account of Odysseus’ return with which the *Odyssey* competed for Panhellenic authority over Odysseus’ story.

³⁶ I thank Deborah Boedeker, Derek Collins, Erwin Cook, Thomas Hubbard, Andrew Riggsby, Cynthia Shelmerdine, Steve Reece, and an anonymous reviewer for *TAPA* for valuable comments. A version of this paper was presented at the 2002 meeting of the APA in Philadelphia.

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