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Life and Death of the Greek Heroine in *Odyssey* 11 and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*

What distinguishes the autobiography of a ghost from the autobiography of a living person? Ghosts, unlike living persons, can describe the experience of dying. They can provide a first-person narrative of the circumstances and feelings of departing from life. Instead of an autobiography, they can recount a thanatography. Death, the common lot of all human beings, is a unique life experience that the living cannot describe from a personal perspective. When ghosts speak about their lives, we expect them to speak about their deaths.

At the same time, the act of speaking and the spectral presence of ghosts is a return to their living selves. As Edmonds discusses in this volume (see CHAPTER 1), the Odyssean 'Catalogue of Women' is an example of continuative afterlife, in which the dead persist in much the same condition as they were in life. A ghostly apparition is a return to life. The Greek word *nostos*, the very topic of the *Odyssey*, has two interrelated meanings: return and survival − rehabilitation to life following the escape from the hell of war. This return to life is a return to a hero's former identity. That is why the *Odyssey* is the epic of hauntology, to use Derrida's neologism. A combination of *ontology* and *haunting*, hauntology denotes a temporal and ontological disjunction in which the presence of existence is represented by the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive.[1] Odysseus is an example of a hauntological, living dead,

[1] See Derrida 1993.

hero. His prolonged sojourn on the island of Calypso and his stay on the island of the Phaeacians look a lot like the paradise reserved for dead heroes in un-Homeric traditions.[2] Odysseus resists this hauntological finality and does his best to return to his former life in flesh and blood.

Given the undertones of a blissful afterlife that surround the world of the Phaeacians, Odysseus' tales of the ghosts he met in the Underworld, with which he entertains his Phaeacian hosts, sharply contrast with the setting of the hero's performance. The dark, bleak, and gloomy Underworld of *Odyssey* 11 is a telling denial of the idyllic isles of the blest that resemble the island of Scherie or the lifeless immortality on the island of Calypso.

The ghosts of *Odyssey* 11 return to life to tell Odysseus that life is sweet. It is better to live as the hired farmer of a lowly man than be the king of the dead, as the dead Achilles famously tells Odysseus (11.487-91). The ghosts are in a unique position to compare life with afterlife.[3] They are also in the unique position to recount the personal experience of dying. Even formulaic lines about lives leaving the bodies of dying heroes that are commonly recycled by the primary narrator, have a different effect on the audience when told by the phantoms of heroes. The importance of the first-person narrative of dying is

[2] See Hesiod, *Works and Days* 155-73; Pindar, *Olympian* 2.51-85. In *Odyssey* 4.561-70, Proteus tells Menelaus that he will not die, but be taken to the Elysian Field. This does not seem to be the case for the other heroes. According to Proteus, Menelaus will have this privilege, because he is Zeus's son-in-law.

[3] This adds another layer to Edmonds' contribution (CHAPTER 1 in this volume). Edmonds argues convincingly that the dead in the *Odyssey* are imagined as continuing in more or less the same way as they are remembered to have existed in life and maintaining the same basic identity and traits. I suggest that this is peculiar since as ghosts they can recall something that their living selves could not.

emphasized in Odysseus' first encounter with the ghost of Elpenor. Odysseus' first question is "how did you die?":

> Ἐλπῆνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα;
> ἔφθης πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ.'
>
> (*Od.* 11.57-8)

> 'Elpenor, how did you come beneath the murky darkness? You coming on foot have outstripped me in my black ship.'

In reply, Elpenor describes how he fell off the roof, broke his neck from his spine, and how his life went down to Hades. Odysseus then meets the ghost of Teiresias, the main reason for his underworld adventure. Teiresias is exceptional in that he says nothing about himself. The focus of Odysseus' interview with Teiresias is the hero's future, not the seer's past. Teiresias talks about Odysseus' death instead of his. He is the only ghost not to look at the past.

Next Odysseus meets the ghost of his mother Anticleia. The first question he asks her is "how did you die?":

> ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον·
> τίς νύ σε κὴρ ἐδάμασσε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο;
> ἦ δολιχὴ νοῦσος, ἦ Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα
> οἷς ἀγανοῖς βελέεσσιν ἐποιχομένη κατέπεφνεν;
>
> (*Od.* 11.170-3)

> But come, tell me this, and declare it truly. What fate of pitiless death overcame you? Was it long disease, or did the archer, Artemis, assail you with her gentle shafts, and slay you?

Anticleia responds that none of the reasons suggested by Odysseus was responsible for her death. It was longing for her son that brought her to Hades (11.197-203). It seems that the main question for an encounter in the Underworld is "how did you come here?" This is the question Odysseus asks Elpenor and Anticleia, but it is also the question the ghosts ask Odysseus. Anticleia, for instance, wants to hear how Odysseus came to the Underworld, even though he is still alive (*Od.* 11.155-6).

This pattern of asking how people, dead or alive, found their way to Hades stops in the next section, in which Odysseus meets a number of famous Greek heroines. After the catalogue of heroines, Odysseus pauses to see whether his stories had a positive reception. When Alcinous encourages him to continue with underworld encounters from his Iliadic past, the issue of the death of a hero once more dominates the tales from Hades:

> Ἀτρεΐδη κύδιστε, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον,
> τίς νύ σε κὴρ ἐδάμασσε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο;
> ἠέ σέ γ᾽ ἐν νήεσσι Ποσειδάων ἐδάμασσεν
> ὄρσας ἀργαλέων ἀνέμων ἀμέγαρτον ἀυτμήν;
> ἦέ σ᾽ ἀνάρσιοι ἄνδρες ἐδηλήσαντ᾽ ἐπὶ χέρσου
> βοῦς περιταμνόμενον ἠδ᾽ οἰῶν πώεα καλά,
> ἠὲ περὶ πτόλιος μαχεούμενον ἠδὲ γυναικῶν;
>
> (*Od.* 11.397-403)

> Most glorious son of Atreus, king of men, Agamemnon, what fate of pitiless death overcame you? Did Poseidon overcome you on board your ships, when he had roused a furious blast of cruel winds? Or did hostile men do you harm on the land, while you were cutting off their cattle and fine flocks of sheep, or were fighting to win their city and their women?

Agamemnon answers Odysseus' question by offering a personal and emotive narrative of his own death.[4] The issue of the value of life and death looms large in the subsequent encounters between Odysseus and Achilles and Odysseus and Ajax. The 'Catalogue of Heroines' in *Odyssey* 11 is framed with the story of Anticleia and Agamemnon. In both stories, a personal narrative of dying features prominently. The focus on a ghost's narrative of death highlights the absence of any mention of the deaths of most of the heroines Odysseus sees in the Underworld.

The Odyssean 'Catalogue of Women' is, of course, exceptional, even peculiar, for many reasons. One reason is that, while the ghosts speak in the first person as they interact with Odysseus, the stories of the women are reported in the third person by Odysseus. Gazis argues convincingly that Odysseus' narrative still preserves the personal perspective and emotive power of the women's tales.[5] Within the subjective and moving tales of the women, the absence of references to the end of their lives is striking. The heroines talk about their lives, but we rarely hear anything about their deaths. Most of them do not

[4] Agamemnon's emotive narrative of his death is full of self-pity as opposed to the heroic perspective of the story of Agamemnon's death in *Odyssey* 4.524-37 (narrated by Proteus to Menelaus and in turn by Menelaus to Telemachus); see Gazis 2018: 167-81.
[5] Gazis 2018: 125-56; cf. Sammons 2010: 85-9; Hirschberger 2001.

recount what Anticleia or Agamemnon related. They do not offer a personal thanatography, which is the prerogative of speaking ghosts.

One of the aims of this chapter is to examine why the ghosts of the heroines are not interested in talking about their deaths. A simple answer is that, unlike Elpenor, Anticleia and Agamemnon, Odysseus does not expect the Greek women of old lore to be alive. That is why he asks how Elpenor or his mother or Agamemnon died. Tyro or Iphimedia, or Antiope, by contrast, belong to the distant past, so the hero should not be surprised to see them among the dead. Another possibility is to assume that most heroines died of old age, thus a narrative of their deaths would be unremarkable, even inappropriate given that they all stood out for their youthful beauty.[6] These answers are reasonable, but not satisfactory. The heroines are clearly interested in talking about birth and genealogy, not death.[7] In my view, the narrative draws attention to the contrast between Odysseus' contemporaries, who give a personal account of their deaths, and the heroines from the past, who gain remembrance by focusing on their glorious lives.

The encounter with Anticleia is a prelude to the *Odyssey*'s 'Catalogue of Women.' Odysseus' mother is introduced as "the daughter of great-hearted Autolycus" (85), evoking the beginning of a tale of a woman from the tradition of female-oriented epics that is crystallized in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women.* Her speech includes a praise of Penelope– the praise of female virtue is another distinctive aspect of the tradition of the

[6] Cf. Lucian's brief, but memorable catalogue of "the beauties of old" (τὰ ἀρχαῖα κάλλη), such as Tyro, Helen, and Leda in *Dialogues of the Dead* 5.18. Menippus sees nothing but bones and skulls. The deceased spirits of the once beautiful do not retain the beauty of their youth, but display the ugliness of old age and death.

[7] See *Odyssey* 11.233-4 ἠδὲ ἑκάστη/ ὃν γόνον ἐξαγόρευεν· ἐγὼ δ' ἐρέεινον ἁπάσας "and each told of her birth and I asked them all."

Catalogue of Women. Yet, Anticleia is also the antithesis of the heroines that follow. As I have already mentioned, Odysseus' mother speaks of her death. What is more, she mentions her old age, something that is never brought up by the other heroines.

The heroines focus on beauty and childbirth, not on old age and death. The women are introduced as "those that had been the wives and the daughters of the best" (227). Odysseus wants to ask them questions, but, contrary to his questions to Elpenor and Anticleia, he does not ask how they died. We are told that each woman declared her birth and that Odysseus questioned them all (234). Childbirth, marriage, motherhood, and sexual affairs with gods constitute the core of the heroines' tales. These are actually the main motifs of the female-oriented epic tradition of the *Catalogue of Women.* As Larson argues, the Odyssean heroines appear in a genealogical sequence and are also arranged geographically, thus evoking the structure of the Hesiodic *Catalogue.*[8] We are now in the territory of female-oriented epic, and in this tradition, the death of heroines is very rarely mentioned.

The relationship between the Odyssean heroines and the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* is a hotly disputed topic.[9] Ormand argues that, unlike the Odyssean catalogue, the Hesiodic *Catalogue* is not designed to appeal to a female audience.[10] Likewise, Gazis argues that, in contrast with the Hesiodic tradition, the Odyssean catalogue gives voice to the heroines' subjective perspective.[11] There are certainly differences between the two works, but there are also important similarities. I already mentioned the genealogical structure and recurring

[8] See Larson 2014.
[9] See, for instance, Rutherford 2000.
[10] See Ormand 2014: 11. Contra Doherty 2006, who suggests that the target audience of the *Catalogue of Women* was often composed of women.
[11] Gazis 2018: 125-56.

motifs of childbirth, motherhood, marriage, and sexual affairs with gods. An aspect of the poetics of the Hesiodic *Catalogue* that acquires particular significance in the Odyssean Underworld is the rare mention of women's death.[12]

The first extended and programmatic entry in Odysseus' catalogue of heroines is Tyro, the daughter of Salmoneus and wife of Cretheus:

> ἔνθ᾽ ἦ τοι πρώτην Τυρὼ ἴδον εὐπατέρειαν,
> ἣ φάτο Σαλμωνῆος ἀμύμονος ἔκγονος εἶναι,
> φῆ δὲ Κρηθῆος γυνὴ ἔμμεναι Αἰολίδαο
>
> (*Odyssey* 11.235-7)

> The first that I saw was highborn Tyro, who said that she was the daughter of flawless Salmoneus, and declared herself to be the wife of Cretheus, son of Aeolus.

The introduction of the heroine evokes salient aspects of a Hesiodic *ehoie. Ehoie* ("or such as") is a formula that introduces the story of a heroine in Hesiod's *Catalogue* (aka *Ehoiai*). In the *Odyssey*, this formula is replaced with Odysseus' "I saw." The reference to her noble father and husband at the beginning of her story evokes the beginning of an *ehoie*. Yet, in Tyro's tale in the *Odyssey*, Salmoneus plays no role, and Cretheus just makes a cameo appearance at the end as the father of three sons. Tyro focuses on her extramarital love for the river Enipeus, instead, and Poseidon's passion for her. After she fell in love with the river Enipeus, Poseidon deceived her by taking the form of Enipeus, had sex with her, and

[12] Rutherford 2000: 86-7 notes that there is very little about female death in the *Catalogue of Women.*

fathered two sons (Pelias and Neleus) "who both became strong henchmen of great Zeus" (255 τὼ κρατερὼ θεράποντε Διὸς μεγάλοιο γενέσθην). The service of Tyro's sons to Zeus contrasts with Salmoneus' hubristic imitation of Zeus's power. The virtue of Tyro's offspring is highlighted, while her father's impiety is silenced.[13] Salmoneus is here introduced as "flawless," despite the fact the he had offended Zeus. The epithets the Hesiodic poet attributes to Salmoneus accentuate the incongruity of Homer's Σαλμωνῆος ἀμύμονος. In the *Catalogue*, Salmoneus is "wicked" and "arrogant" (fr. 27. 16-17 Most Σαλμ]ωνῆος ἀτ[ασ]θάλου… ὑβ̣[ρ]ι̣σ̣τὴν βασιλῆα).

Tyro's tale is extraordinary. It is not just that she says nothing about her death. It is perhaps more striking that nobody dies in her narrative. This is a tale of love, passion, defiance, and enviable fertility (Tyro gives birth to five sons within six lines). In other words, the story is a celebration of life and we are meant to notice the discrepancy between lovely Tyro, the giver of life, and the underworld setting of her narrative.

If we now turn to Tyro's story from Hesiod's *Catalogue* (fr. 27-31 Most), we can see that there is significant overlap with Odysseus' version. There are even a couple of lines that appear in both works.[14] But there are also telling differences. In Hesiod's version, Tyro appears as the only survivor in the midst of her family's destruction. Her father Salmoneus offends Zeus when he rather comically imitates the god's flame and thunder. For his hubristic pursuits, Salmoneus pays a heavy penalty. Zeus shows him what a real lightning bolt can do. He kills his people, his family, his wife, sons, and servants. He finally hurls

[13] On Tyro's silence about Salmoneus' hubris, see Hirschberger 2001: 133-4. She further notes that Tyro omits the tradition of the conflict between her sons (Hellanikos 4 fr. 124 *GFrHist*; Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 31.1-4 Most).
[14] Cf. *Odyssey* 11.248-52 with fr. 30 Most and see Tsagarakis 2000: 83-4.

Salmoneus to murky Tartatus. Tyro, Salmoneus' daughter emerges as the only survivor out of this genocide. Zeus spares her because she constantly disagreed with her father:

> Τυρὼ ἐυπ]λόκαμος ἰκέλη χ[ρ]υσῆι Ἀφρο[δ]ίτ[ηι,
> οὕνεκα νε]ικείεσκε καὶ ἤρ[ισε] Σαλμωνῆϊ
> συνεχές, οὐ]δ᾽ εἴασκε θεοῖς [βροτὸν ἰσ]οφαρίζειν·
> τούνεκά] μιν ἐσάωσε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.
> …….. ἐ]ς Κρηθῆος ἀμύμονος ἤ[γ]αγεν οἶκον
>
> (*Catalogue of Women* fr. 27.25-9 Most)

> Then his] daughter was left behind, dear to the blessed gods, beautiful]-haired [Tyro], similar to golden Aphrodite, because] she would rebuke and contend with Salmoneus continually and] would not permit [a mortal] to contend with gods; for this reason] the father of men and of gods saved her.] he led her off to the house of excellent Cretheus.[15]

Contrary to scholars who see the Hesiodic heroines as passive narrative devices, Tyro is active and rebellious. [16] She is the only one to disagree with her powerful father. This is an outspoken woman who does not hesitate to speak truth to power and is consequently rewarded for her resistance.

The Odyssean version of Tyro skips over the mass destruction of Salmoneus' family and people. In the *Odyssey*, we hear nothing about Salmoneus' transgression, nothing about

[15] Translations of Hesiod are from Most 2007, occasionally modified.
[16] West 1985: 2 considers the heroines and their affairs with gods simply the starting point for extensive heroic genealogies.

death and killing. All we hear about is the genealogical continuity of Salmoneus' bloodline. The absence of death in a ghost's story in the Underworld is something that we are supposed to notice. In fact, if we were expecting to see someone from Tyro's family in the Underworld, that would probably be her father Salmoneus. He would fit in the section of the criminals that are tortured for their hubris. In *Odyssey* 11, we see Tityos, Tantalus, and Sisyphus, but not Salmoneus. The absence of Salmoneus from the parade of criminals in the Nekyia is in harmony with Tyro's attempt to erase his hubris from memory.

Vergil notices the absence of any reference to Salmoneus' transgressive behavior and, as it is often the case, he gives us what is missing in Homer:

> **uidi** et crudelis dantem Salmonea poenas,
> dum flammas Iouis et sonitus imitatur Olympi.
> quattuor hic inuectus equis et lampada quassans
> per Graium populos mediaeque per Elidis urbem
> ibat ouans, diuumque sibi poscebat honorem,
> demens, qui nimbos et non imitabile fulmen
> aere et cornipedum pulsu simularet equorum.
> at pater omnipotens densa inter nubila telum
> contorsit, non ille faces nec fumea taedis
> lumina, praecipitemque immani turbine adegit
> Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.585-94
>
> I also saw Salmoneus paying a cruel penalty, incurred while he imitated the flame and thunder of Olympian Jupiter. Riding in a four-horse chariot and brandishing

> a torch through the nations of Greece, and through his city in mid-Elis, he rode in celebration and for himself claimed divine honors, a madman to counterfeit the inimitable storm-clouds and thunder with mere brass and the beat of horn-hooved horses. But the all-powerful father whirled his weapon through the thick clouds, no torch that he threw nor lighting smoky with pitch-brands, and drove him headlong in one great plunge.[17]

Vergil here fills the gaps that are left open in Homer. Note that *uidi* picks up ἴδον as the formula that introduces what Odysseus saw in the underworld. In fact, the story of Salmoneus' crime and punishment is told in the *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 26-7 Most)– Vergil here alludes to the Hesiodic tradition. Thus, the *Aeneid* tells the story that Homer's Tyro and Odysseus tried to silence.

I will come back to Homer and Vergil later. For now, let me reiterate the peculiarity of the heroines' presence in the Underworld. Greek epic poetry casts heroines as beautiful and desirable, while it often stops short of describing their old age and death. The heroines gain *kleos* by giving birth and by simply not dying within the narrative frame of their stories. From that perspective, their epic renown is a matter of survival, a matter of *nostos*, and thus it is closer to the world of the *Odyssey* rather than the *Iliad.*[18] The temporality of the heroines' *kleos* through survival is intriguing, if we consider that the world of Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* precedes the Trojan War. It is as if the poet of the *Odyssey* brought

[17] Translations of *Aeneid* 6 are from Horsfall 2013, occasionally modified.
[18] For tales of heroines as part of the tradition of *nostoi*, see Hirschberger 2001.

up the epic tradition of *ehoie*-poetry, in order to claim that an epic of *nostos* comes before, not after, the Iliadic tradition of wars and men.

The story of Tyro is extraordinary, but not exceptional. A heroine's renown is a tale of her survival, a survival that is often cast in terms of return or *nostos.* The story of Mestra is a case in point. Mestra has a lot in common with Tyro: they both have a father who offends the gods; both have children with Poseidon; and both survive their doomed fathers. The fragments of the Mestra-*ehoie* (fr. 69-71 Most) are not always easy to reconstruct, but what follows should be a fair summary.[19] Mestra is the daughter of Erysichthon, aka Aethon because of his burning hunger. Aethon is afflicted with hunger because he offended Demeter. In order to deal with his predicament, he marries or sells his daughter and then presumably uses the wedding gifts (mainly cows) to feed his hunger. Once sold or married, Mestra changes shape (she becomes an animal), escapes from her master or husband and returns to her father. This leads to a conflict between Aethon and Sisyphus, who wanted Mestra as a bride for his son Glaucus. At this point, Poseidon takes Mestra to Cos, has sex with her, and thus fathers Eurypulus, who in turn fathers Chalcon and Antagores. But suddenly, Hercules turns up and destroys their city. Mestra once more returns home to look after her doomed father. These are the last lines of her story:

> Μήστρη δὲ προ]λιποῦσα Κόων ποτὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν
> νηΐ θοῆι ἐπέρ]ησ᾽ ἱερέων ποτὶ γουνὸν Ἀθηνέων
> αὐτὰρ ἐ]πεὶ τέκε παῖδα Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι,
> αἰν]όμορον πατέρα ὃν πορσαίνεσκεν.

[19] On the Mestra-*ehoie*, see Ormand 2014: 85-119.

Catalogue of Women fr. 69.66-9 Most

> Mestra,] leaving Cos behind, crossed over to her fatherland on a swift ship] to the hill of holy Athens. Then after she bore a son to lord Poseidon,] she was providing for her doomed father.

The closure of Mestra's story takes us back to its beginning. Mestra lives with her father, who is doomed to die. We can actually read the story of Mestra as a tale of *nostos.* The young woman manages to escape from captivity several times (for captivity in the case of this maiden read marriage). She even manages to escape from Poseidon's tricks. By returning to her father's house, she refuses to change her social identity− she refuses the marital rite of passage. In fact, her animal transformations are ingeniously interwoven with her social changes (from maiden, to wife, to mother). Her *nostos* undoes all this and restores her maidenhood, her original identity. More to the point, her repeated returns are stories of survival. Mestra returns home, while almost all the men around her are doomed to die. Sisyphus will fail to have grandchildren and his son Glaucus will die childless. The cities of Poseidon's heroic offspring will be destroyed by Hercules. Mestra's father is doomed to die. In the midst of narratives of conflict and destruction, Mestra is the only survivor. Not only does she manage to survive, but does not even fundamentally change. Her metamorphic powers ultimately emphasize the immutability of her status as the wily daughter of Aethon.

Mestra is a female version of Odysseus. It should not be a coincidence that Aethon, the name of Mestra's father, is one of the false names Odysseus assumes in Ithaca. Levaniouk discussed the similarities between the burning hunger of Erysicthon/Aethon and

Odysseus/Aethon. She further notes that Odysseus performs at once the role of Aethon and the role of Mestra: he may complain about the "accursed belly," but through his craftiness he always finds a way to survive.[20] Not unlike Odysseus, Mestra is a trickster who wants to return home after numerous adventures, in which Poseidon plays key role as a blocker of *nostos.* Not unlike Mestra, Odysseus has to escape the potential finality of a new marriage (first with Calypso and later with Nausicaa), in order to fulfil his *nostos*. In the Mestra-*ehoie*, the sack of Troy by Hercules is mentioned in passing. The marginal role of the sack of Troy in this narrative contrasts with the focus on tales of Mestra's *nostos*. The Odyssean tradition of return and survival resembles the poetics of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*.

The *Catalogue of Women* ends with the prediction about the demise of the demigods (fr. 155.99-100 Most). The catalogue of Helen's suitors is linked with Zeus's plan to annihilate the divine offspring of mortal women (fr. 154-5 Most). The *telos* of the age of heroes coincides with the end of the epic. At the same time, the death of heroic offspring is a recurring motif throughout the *Catalogue.* In this work, heroes often die as quickly as they are born. Their mothers, by contrast, more often than not outlive their sons. The death of heroes contrasts with the survival of women. Tyro's son, Neleus, for instance, has twelve sons. Hercules sacks Pylos and kills eleven of these heroes, and only Nestor survives (fr. 31-4 Most). Nestor, whose name is etymologically related to *nostos*, is the hero who always returns home alive. [21] His survival in the midst of a calamity that wipes out his family and destroys his city resonates with the survival of his grandmother Tyro in the midst of Zeus's genocidal revenge.

[20] Levaniouk 2000: 38-42.
[21] See Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 1997/98.

The *Catalogue* (fr. 31 Most) focuses on this massive destruction. If we now turn to the version of *Odyssey* 11, we see that the death of the sons of Neleus and the sack of Pylos are absent from the narrative:

> καὶ Χλῶριν εἶδον περικαλλέα, τήν ποτε Νηλεὺς
> γῆμεν ἑὸν διὰ κάλλος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἕδνα,
> ὁπλοτάτην κούρην Ἀμφίονος Ἰασίδαο,
> ὅς ποτ᾽ ἐν Ὀρχομενῷ Μινυείῳ ἶφι ἄνασσεν·
> ἡ δὲ Πύλου βασίλευε, τέκεν δέ οἱ ἀγλαὰ τέκνα,
> Νέστορά τε Χρομίον τε Περικλύμενόν τ᾽ ἀγέρωχον.
> τοῖσι δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἰφθίμην Πηρὼ τέκε, θαῦμα βροτοῖσι,
> τὴν πάντες μνώοντο περικτίται
>
> (*Od.* 11.281-8)

> And I saw lovely Chloris, whom once Neleus wedded because of her beauty, when he had brought countless gifts of wooing. Youngest daughter was she of Amphion, son of Iasus, who once ruled mightily in Orchomenus of the Minyae. And she was queen of Pylos, and bore to her husband glorious children, Nestor, and Chromius, and lordly Periclymenus, and besides these she bore noble Pero, a wonder to men. Her all who dwelt about sought in marriage.

While the version of the *Catalogue* focuses on the death of Periclymenus and the sack of Pylos, the Odyssean version says nothing about conflict, death, and destruction. In the *Odyssey*, Neleus' male offspring is mentioned in passing. The focus is on Pero, his outstandingly beautiful daughter. The Odyssean narrative preserves only the positive and

female-oriented motifs of the *Catalogue*: marriage, childbirth, beauty, and genealogical continuity. Death is edited out in the women's narratives from Hades. In the Nekyia, no Hercules turns up to kill Neleus' sons.

In the *Catalogue of Women*, Hercules is mostly a force of narrative and genealogical disruption. He turns up unexpectedly, sacks cites, carries off women, and kills heroes. In an influential chapter, Haubold focuses on the problematic actions of Hercules in the *Catalogue of Women.*[22] The hero seems to have a mid-life crisis− he looks a bit like James Bond after the end of the Cold War. After slaying monsters that plagued the earth, he now kills the heroic offspring of Olympian gods. Still, several of those heroes look an awful lot like the monsters from the *Theogony.* The sons of Poseidon and Iphimedia, for instance, Otus and Ephialtes, plan to launch an attack on the Olympians by piling up Ossa, Pelion, and Olympus. Apollo killed them both before they hit puberty. Hercules' killing of heroes may imply their potential to undermine the Olympian order. What is more, it further anticipates Zeus's plan to put an end to the heroic age, an end of an era that features prominently at the end of the *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 155.99-100 Most).

In *Odyssey* 11, the story of the Aloades (Otus and Ephialtes) is focalized through Iphimedia, their mother. Iphimedia sees beauty in her gigantic sons and focuses on their premature death instead of their hubristic pursuits.[23] What we have in the *Odyssey*'s Underworld is the narrative of a grieving mother, not an epic of Gigantomachy.[24] What is

[22] See Haubold 2005.
[23] See Gazis 2018: 150-3; Hirschberger 2001: 141-2.
[24] Vergil puts the Aloades in their proper place in the Underworld, that is not in the emotive narrative of a grieving mother, but in a catalogue of impious criminals (*Aeneid* 6.582-4) right before Salmoneus.

also missing from this story is how Iphimedia died. Odysseus meets her ghost, not the ghosts of her sons. Yet, the tale we hear is about a mother surviving her sons. Similarly, Leda talks about the shared death and immortality of the Dioscuri, but says nothing about her death (11.298-304). The *Catalogue* sometimes describes the death of heroes, but rarely that of their mothers. This recurring motif is thrown into sharper relief in the underworld setting of *Odyssey* 11.

The circumstances of death in the case of many heroines in *Odyssey* 11 are unclear, but some are actually famous for the way they died. The silence about the end of their lives in the narrative of the Underworld is indeed striking. Megara is a case in point. All we hear about her (11.269-70) is that she was the daughter of 'high-spirited Creon' (Κρείοντος ὑπερθύμοιο θύγατρα) and the wife of 'the strong and indestructible son of Amphitryon' (τὴν ἔχεν Ἀμφιτρύωνος υἱὸς μένος αἰὲν ἀτειρής). Megara seems proud of her father and husband, but omits the tradition according to which Hercules killed her along with their children in a fit of madness.[25]

Do we ever find out how the heroines died in *Odyssey* 11? We do, but it is exceptional. One case is Epicaste, Oedipus' mother. Even though she says nothing about the fratricide of her sons (in fact, she says nothing at all about her offspring), she describes her suicide:

> ἡ δ᾽ ἔβη εἰς Ἀίδαο πυλάρταο κρατεροῖο,
> ἁψαμένη βρόχον αἰπὺν ἀφ᾽ ὑψηλοῖο μελάθρου
> ᾧ ἄχεϊ σχομένη

[25] The madness of Hercules is attested in the *Cypria* (see Proclus, *Chrestomachia* 20 Kullmann). Stesichorus also referred to Hercules' murder of his children. See Hirschberger 2001: 136.

(*Od.* 11.277-9)

> but she [i.e. Epicaste] went down to the house of Hades, the strong warder,
> making fast a deadly noose from the high ceiling, caught by her own grief

The story of Epicaste is exceptional in mentioning the way a heroine ended up in Hades. In the *Odyssey*, Oedipus, Epicaste's son and husband, keeps ruling in Thebes after the revelation of the incestuous marriage, while she commits suicide. There is no mention of any children from her marriage with Oedipus. The reference to her death may undermine my argument or it may function just as all exceptions function: they draw attention to the rule, namely that the tales of heroines are tales of survival.

There is another reference to a heroine's death in *Odyssey* 11. The death of Ariadne is mentioned at the very end of Odysseus' 'Catalogue of Women':

> **Φαίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἴδον** καλήν τ᾽ **Ἀριάδνην**,
> κούρην Μίνωος ὀλοόφρονος, ἥν ποτε Θησεὺς
> ἐκ Κρήτης ἐς γουνὸν Ἀθηνάων ἱεράων
> ἦγε μέν, οὐδ᾽ ἀπόνητο· πάρος δέ μιν **Ἄρτεμις ἔκτα**
> Δίῃ ἐν ἀμφιρύτῃ Διονύσου μαρτυρίῃσιν.
> Μαῖράν τε Κλυμένην τε **ἴδον στυγερήν τ᾽ Ἐριφύλην**,
> ἣ χρυσὸν φίλου ἀνδρὸς ἐδέξατο τιμήεντα.
>
> (*Od.* 11.321-7)

> **I saw Phaedra and Procris** and beautiful **Ariadne**, the daughter of baleful Minos, whom Theseus once was leading from Crete to the high hill of sacred

> Athens but did not enjoy her since first **Artemis killed her** on sea girted Dia because of the witness of Dionysus. **I saw** also Maira and Clymene and **hateful Eriphyle** who accepted gold in exchange for her dear husband.

Of all the dead heroines, Ariadne is the least likely to talk about her death. The version of the *Odyssey*, that Artemis killed her on the testimony of Dionysus, is not attested elsewhere (except for an explanation in the Homeric scholia).[26] In other versions (Hesiod, *Theogony* 947-9; ΣB.Q ad *Od.* 11.325), instead of being responsible for her death, Dionysus marries Ariadne and makes her ageless and immortal.

There are other heroines in this list, though, whose death is notorious, even though it is not mentioned. Phaedra fell in love with her stepson Hippolytus and killed herself. Procris was accidently killed by her husband Cephalus. Maira died young and unmarried (see *Nostoi*, fr. 5 Bernabé= Pausanias 10.30.5). Eriphyle, bribed by a necklace, convinced her husband Amphiaraus to go to war and was killed by her son Alcmaeon. There are several ways in which the coda to Odysseus' 'Catalogue of Women' differs from the previous entries. One is the increasing rapidity of the narrative pace. Odysseus speeds up, including more women and briefer tales. What is more, the stories of several of these women are not praiseworthy. Phaedra, Procris, and Eriphyle are not exactly paradigms of female virtue. Ariadne, if we trust the Homeric scholia, offended Dionysus by having sex with Theseus in his sacred grove. The reference to 'hateful' Eriphyle is exceptional in condemning the actions of a woman in a section which praises the heroines of the past. As Gazis suggests, with hateful

[26] See the comment in ΣB.Q ad *Od.* 11.325, according to which Ariadne is killed because she had sex with Theseus in the sacred grove of Dionysus in Dia.

Eriphyle we have left behind the world of female-focalized narrative.[27] The last section of Odysseus' catalogue of heroines foreshadows the second, misogynistic part of his narrative, in which the infidelity of Clytemnestra features prominently. The story of Eriphyle (a mother killed by her son for causing the death of her husband) is an anticipatory echo of the story of Clytemnestra.[28]

Lack of female virtue seems to go hand in hand with death. It is also not a coincidence that the death of a heroine is mentioned at the end of Odysseus' catalogue. Death and narrative closure are best friends. We can thus read Odysseus' 'Catalogue of Women' as a narrative that starts by referring to the noble birth of outstanding women (Odysseus says at the beginning that "each heroine declared her birth" 1.233-4) and ends with the death of female virtue. Odysseus' catalogue can be interpreted as a narrative of decline and degeneration.

If we turn to the *Aeneid*, we shall see that Vergil reworks only the last part of the Odyssean 'Catalogue of Heroines':

> nec procul hinc partem fusi monstrantur in omnem
> Lugentes campi; sic illos nomine dicunt.
> hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit
> secreti celant calles et myrtea circum
> silua tegit; curae non ipsa in morte relinquunt.
> his **Phaedram Procrinque locis maestamque Eriphylen**
> **crudelis nati monstrantem uulnera cernit,**

[27] Gazis 2018: 154; cf. Hirschberger 2001:145-6.
[28] On the links between Eriphyle and Clytemnestra, see Arft 2014: 406-9.

Euadnenque et Pasiphaen; his **Laodamia**
it comes et iuuenis quondam, nunc femina,
Caeneus rursus et in ueterem fato reuoluta figuram.
inter quas Phoenissa **recens a uulnere Dido** 450
errabat silua in magna
Aeneid 6.440-51

Nearby, spread out in all directions, the Fields of Mourning are displayed; that is what they call them. Here are those whom savage love devours with a cruel wasting-away. The hidden paths conceal them, as the thicket of myrtle gives them sanctuary. The cares of their love do not leave them even in death. In this region, Aeneas sees **Phaedra, Procris and sad Eriphyle, displaying the wounds inflicted by her cruel son**, with **Evadne** and Pasiphae. **Laodamia** goes with them as companion, and **Caeneus,** once a boy and now a woman and then turned again by fate into her former form. Among them, Phoenician **Dido, freshly wounded**, roamed in the great wood.

At the beginning of his 'Catalogue of Women,' Vergil clearly draws attention to the last part of Odysseus' catalogue: *his Phaedram Procrinque locis maestamque Eriphylen* alludes to Φαίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἴδον… στυγερήν τ᾽ Ἐριφύλην and *cernit* corresponds to ἴδον. Vergil picks up the thread of Homer's 'Catalogue of Women,' an example of the many ways in which the *Aeneid* is a sequel to the *Odyssey*. The Homeric intertext of Eriphyle is significant. The negative adjective 'hateful' (στυγερήν τ᾽ Ἐριφύλην) has been replaced with 'sad' (*maestamque Eriphylen*). What Vergil does here is simultaneously Homeric and un-Homeric. He focalizes the story of Eriphyle through the eyes of Eriphyle.

The ‘cruel son’ is a typical case of embedded focalization. The mother shows her wounds as proof of the son’s cruelty. By contrast, the story of Eriphyle in the *Odyssey* is the only case of a tale in the ‘Catalogue of Women’ that is not focalized through the women. Thus, Vergil differs from Homer in sympathizing with Eriphyle, but follows Homer’s practice of giving us the personal spin of the heroines in his Underworld—in all cases except for Eriphyle.

Vergil focuses on Eriphyle’s death, while Homer implies her betrayal. Vergil’s ‘Catalogue of Women’ differs from Homer’s, because Vergil focuses on death, while Homer’s narrative is about life, procreation, and survival. The last part of the Odyssean catalogue is the closest we get to the death of heroines and that is why Vergil directs our attention to this passage. Phaedra, Procis, and Eriphyle, as I mentioned, are known for their deaths. Evadne killed herself on the pyre of her husband Capaneus. Likewise, Laodamia accompanied her husband Protesilaus to the Underworld. The transsexual Caeneus, who was killed in the Centauromachy, has a speaking name: Caeneus derives from καίνω (‘I kill’) or καινός (‘new’). The etymologies of his name are echoed in Dido’s entry− the queen is freshly wounded (*recens a uulnere*).[29] In sum, violent and premature death dominates Vergil’s ‘Catalogue of Women.’ This sharply contrasts with the Odyssean catalogue that has very little to say about the death of heroines and celebrates beauty and procreation instead. Vergil’s is a catalogue of death, Homer’s a catalogue of life.

It is also worth commenting on Vergil’s *curae non ipsa in morte relinquunt.* This is clearly an anti-Lucretian view of death as the end of all pain (*De rerum natura* 3.304-5) and a

[29] See Paschalis 1997: 230-1.

denial of Dido's desire to put an end to her cares by killing herself (*Aeneid* 4.639).[30] Love as the cause of death further adds a distinctly elegiac color to Vergil's epic 'Catalogue of Women.' The dead women in the Mourning Fields of *Aeneid* 6 are a darker version of Tibullus' Elysium of dead lovers (1.3.57-66). Behind all these Roman intertexts lies Homer's view of the afterlife in *Odyssey* 11, namely the continuative visions of afterlife that characterize the Odyssean 'Catalogue of Women.'[31] In a typically Vergilian manner, the Roman poet both follows and departs from Homer. While the continuative aspect of Homer's heroines revolves around their glorious lives, what defines the women's identity in Vergil's Underworld is death and suffering that continues beyond the grave.

I discussed the references to heroines' deaths in *Odyssey* 11 and argued that they are the exceptions that highlight that the stories of women in Greek epic are stories of survival. The epic commemoration of female virtue is about female immortality− it has no room for telling stories of death.[32] But what about the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*? Do women die in this work? The work is fragmentary and thus conclusions should be tentative. But, as far as we can tell, deaths of women are very rare. Metamorphosis and immortality, by contrast, are recurring motifs.[33] Iphimede (aka Iphigenia), for instance, is sacrificed, but then we are told that the Achaeans sacrificed a phantom. Artemis saved the real Iphimede and made her immortal and ageless (fr. 19 Most). Death is thus replaced with immortality. Her mother Clytemnestra, by contrast, will be killed by her son Orestes:

λοῖσθον δ᾽ ἐν μεγά[ροισι Κλυτ]αιμήστρη κυα[νῶπις

[30] See Horsfall 2013: 334.
[31] See Edmonds in this volume. For eds. – cross ref needed
[32] On gender and immortality in Greek myth and cult, see Lyons 1997.
[33] See Rutherford 200: 86-7; Hirschberger 2008.

γείναθ᾽ ὑποδμηθ[εῖσ᾽ Ἀγαμέμν]ον[ι δῖ]ον Ὀρέ[στην,

ὅς ῥα καὶ ἡβήσας ἀπε[τείσατο π]ατροφο[ν]ῆα,

κτεῖνε δὲ μητέρα [ἣν ὀλεσήν]ορα νηλέι [χαλκῶι.

(*Catalogue of Women* fr. 19.27-30 Most)

As the last one in the [halls, dark-eyed Clytemestra, overpowered by [Agamemnon], bore godly Orestes, who when he reached puberty [took vengeance] on his father's murderer, and he killed his [own man-destroying] mother with the pitiless [bronze.

The case of Clytmnestra is exceptional in the fragments of the *Catalogue.* Instead of women giving birth to heroes who die prematurely, here the son kills his mother. The death of a heroine is the closure of her tale in the case of Clytemnestra. As far as we can tell, this does not happen in the other *ehoiai.* It may also be significant that Orestes kills his mother after the Trojan War, that is in a time period that falls outside the temporal compass of the broader narrative of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, a work that comes to an end with the wooing of Helen.

But there were probably stories of dying heroines in the fragments that do not survive. The tales of Coronis or Semele, for instance, may have included the violent deaths of the heroines. Yet, the fragments and testimonies about Semele in the *Catalogue* say nothing about her death (fr. 161a, 162 Most). The story of Coronis (fr. 53a, 239 Most) is also fragmentary and we do not know whether her death was part of it (in the case of Coronis we are also not sure whether her story was part of the *Catalogue of Women*). The only substantial fragment is attested in the Pindaric scholia (*Schol. Pind. Pyth.* 3.52b). If

Pindar's *Pythian* 3 is based on the *Catalogue*, then the story included Coronis' death. In Pindar, Apollo impregnates Coronis and then the heroine has sex with Ischys. The god is enraged and dispatches his sister Artemis to kills her. He then takes pity on his unborn child and delivers it from the corpse of his mother.

It is hard to tell if any of this was part of a Coronis-*ehoie*, but it is possible. The *ehoie* would thus end with the heroine's post-mortem childbirth. Of course, this belongs to the realm of mythology. Dead women do not give birth to living children. Still, I think the myth of Coronis can be subjected to rationalization. The myth is about the dangers of childbirth that can pose a serious threat to a woman's life. Sometimes, the child will survive, but the mother will die.

With my rationalizing reading of the myth of Coronis, I realize that I enter the realm of speculation. What is less speculative and, I hope, more interesting, is that in the *Catalogue of Women* none of the heroines has the slightest complications in childbirth. Women give birth to numerous children within a couple of lines. Birth happens as easily as the recitation of standard epic formulas. The epic conventions of the *Catalogue* contrast with the realities of archaic Greece, where childbirth was one of the most common reasons of female mortality. Medea's famous lines about the dangers of women's lives refer to the high risk of dying in childbirth.

> λέγουσι δ᾽ ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀκίνδυνον βίον
> ζῶμεν κατ᾽ οἴκους, οἱ δὲ μάρνανται δορί,
> κακῶς φρονοῦντες· ὡς τρὶς ἂν παρ᾽ ἀσπίδα
> στῆναι θέλοιμ᾽ ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ.

(Euripides, *Medea* 248-51)

> Men say that we live a life free from danger at home while they fight with the spear. How wrong they are! I would rather stand three times with a shield in battle than give birth once. (translation Kovacs 1994).

But in the *Catalogue of Women*, we have nothing like that. Medea's comparison of childbirth with warfare is part of a broader juxtaposition between Medea and Homeric heroes. Besides Euripides, the life of a hero on the battlefield is often compared with the life of a heroine. To be more precise, the death of a hero corresponds to the marriage of a heroine. The word *telos* is used in Greek epic to describe both the end of life and the consummation of marriage.[34] The verb δαμάζω ('to tame') commonly refers to the death of a hero on the battlefield or the 'taming' of a woman by her husband or divine lover. The word δάμαρ ('wife') is etymologically related to δαμάζω ('to tame'). Marriage in Greek literature is the death of the maiden. But the serious risk that childbirth poses to a woman's life is never compared to the dangers of the battlefield in Homer and Hesiod. We need to wait until Euripides' *Medea* for a comparison between death on the battlefield and in childbirth. With λέγουσι ('they say'), Medea may be actually attacking epic traditions (Homeric and Hesiodic) that routinely present childbirth as unproblematic, while they focus on men's deaths on the battlefield. After Euripides, Ovid will draw a parallel between the labors of Hercules and the labor of his mother Alcumena, who had a very hard time

[34] See, e.g., *Odyssey* 20.74 τέλος γάμοιο; 24.124 τέλος θανάτοιο; cf. 17.476.

giving birth to the greatest Greek hero.[35] But in the Hesiodic *Shield*, which preserves the Alcumena-*ehoie*, the heroine gives birth to twins without any problems.[36]

In sum, the Greek heroines of the Hesiodic tradition neither age nor die. They are never affected by the high mortality rates of childbirth. The poetics of female immortality contrasts with the death of men in the *Catalogue of Women.* Even within the *Odyssey*, the epic of survival, we hear about the death of Odysseus, but what is the tradition that talks about the death of Penelope? A similar mystery covers the lives of most of the heroines Odysseus meets in the Underworld. When it comes to the 'Catalogue of Women,' the Odyssean Underworld is full of life. We see the ghosts of the women, but wonder how or actually whether they died.

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[35] See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9, where Alcumena in labor replaces Hercules' labors (see McAuley 2016: 124-6).

[36] *Shield* 48-9 ἡ δὲ θεῷ δμηθεῖσα καὶ ἀνέρι πολλὸν ἀρίστῳ/ Θήβῃ ἐν ἑπταπύλῳ διδυμάονε γείνατο παῖδε "And since she had been overpowered both by a god and by much the best man in seven-gated Thebes, she gave birth to twin boys." The beginning of Hesiod's *Shield* overlaps with the Alcumena-*ehoie*. In the argument to the *Shield*, we read that the first 56 lines of the *Shield* are transmitted in Book 4 of the *Catalogue* (see fr. 138-9 Most).

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