

Boarlikeness in the *Odyssey* and the *Thebaid*

Homer associates Odysseus with boars in a few different ways throughout his work. In the Doloneia, Odysseus wears a boar skin cap, and Jenny Strauss Clay (1983, 74-95) draws out the significance of this item and how it came to Odysseus from Autolycus. In the *Odyssey* Book XIX, Odysseus is more subtly likened to a boar. As he comes closer to his final trial to prove himself to Odysseus in a sort of rite of passage, Eurycleia notices a scar, revealing his true identity to her, which triggers a flashback to the story of how a boar gave him that scar in his traditional boar hunt rite of passage. Alex Purves (2014, 50-52) recognizes the significance of the formulaic repetition Homer employs when describing the boar in this scene (19.442-3) as he uses the same formula he used to describe Odysseus in Phaeacia (5.478-81). This implicit characterization of Odysseus as boarlike prepares the listener for the slaughter of the suitors, where Odysseus swapped places with the boar he killed: now he is the boar and all the suitors are hunting him with spears (as was traditional in this Greek rite of passage).

Statius has a similar scene in the *Thebaid* Book IV, where fifty men ambush Tydeus, and he defeats them all. Statius likens him in this passage to the Calydonian boar through echoes of Ovid's language regarding the Calydonian boar hunt in Book XII of the *Metamorphoses*, and also by the fact that Tydeus wears the actual hyde of the Calydonian boar, since Statius denotes him as the inheritor of these spoils from that boar hunt. Furthermore, Statius receives the Doloneia trope from Homer through Vergil. Kyle Gervais (2015, 57-58) explains how the story of Nisus and Euryalus in the *Aeneid* Book IX is based on and a response to the Doloneia, and this Tydeus episode is likewise a response to both of these past tellings which Statius signals through his echoes of Vergil's wording from the Nisus and Euryalus episode.

By Book VIII of the *Thebaid*, Statius ceases to compare Tydeus to a boar during, but actually compares Melanippus, one of the victims of Tydeus' *aristeia* to a boar. Thus, as Gervais argues, Tydeus' eating of Melanippus is not only cannibalistic, but in a sense autocannibalistic (76). This tragic heroic arc of Tydeus harmonizes with Statius' wider task of perverting many heroic ideas.

In this essay, I will build upon Gervais' argument, demonstrating how Statius designed Tydeus to be a heroic perversion specifically of Odysseus. Homer implicates the idea in Book XIX of the *Odyssey* that Odysseus transformed from a boy hunting a boar into a man with boarlike tendencies in the Doloneia into the boar being hunted by boys, heroically succeeding in each hunt. Statius, on the other hand, portrays Tydeus as a man who, having succeeded similarly in his boar hunt, goes on to become the boar in his defeat of the ambushers, but finally turns back into some perverted version of an ephebe hunting a boar in his *aristeia*.

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