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Preferred panel: Greek Epic

Title of paper:

'I don't remember Tydeus': a test case for a resonant analysis of Thebes in the *Iliad*

Outline of content (291 words):

In book four of the *Iliad* Agamemnon surveys his troops, praising some for their preparedness while criticising others for skulking from battle, including Diomedes. Accusing him of not living up to his father's standards, Agamemnon recollects Tydeus' exploits at Thebes. This paper will test a methodology for appreciating the poetic implications of such 'extraneous' material to show how the Iliadic poet deploys traditional units of utterance to silence a potential epic rival.

Re-evaluating standard approaches that tend to either assume the priority of Homer over other traditions or reduce such moments to instances of allusions to fixed (lost) epics, this study will utilise the idea of 'traditional referentiality', or 'resonance', in which units of utterance (e.g. words, phrases, type-scenes) evoke contexts beyond the specific instance that, in turn, resonate through each individual case. Yet, an equally important consideration is the agonistic character of Greek poetry, through which one can explore how traditional units are 'spun' in such a way as to manipulate a rival tradition in the service of a particular narrative's ends.

Proof will take the form of a resonant analysis of Agamemnon's criticism of Diomedes and Sthenelos' response. Tracing units of utterance (e.g. 'alone among many', 'by their own recklessness', etc) through the Homeric corpus, this paper will show how Agamemnon's language evokes an Odyssean world of xenia, ambushes, games and feasting. Both Sthenelos, bluntly, and the narrative, more subtly, however, correct Agamemnon's reading: here the interplay with Thebes serves to introduce Diomedes as an Iliadic figure par excellence. Such an approach suggests that the Tydeus passage speaks to the themes and concerns of Homeric poetry rather than some lost Theban epic tradition, and illustrates the importance of recognising the competitive nature of Homeric epic vis-à-vis other narrative traditions.