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# **Homer and the Poetics of Hades**

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A thesis submitted to the  
**Department of Classics and Ancient History**  
**Durham University**

In accordance with the requirements for the  
*Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

2015

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## Abstract

In this thesis I examine Homer's use of Hades as a poetic resource that allows a different approach to the epic past than the one provided through Muse-inspired narrative. By portraying Hades as a realm where vision is not possible (*A - ides*), I argue, Homer creates a unique poetic environment in which social constraints and divine prohibitions are not applicable. The result is a narrative that emulates that of the Muses but at the same time is markedly distinct from it, as in Hades experimentation with, and alteration of, important epic forms and values can be pursued, giving rise to a different kind of poetics. I have called this the 'Poetics of Hades.'

In the *Iliad*, Homer offers us a glimpse of how this alternative poetics works through the visit of Patroclus' shade in Achilles' dream. The recollection offered by the shade reveals an approach to its past in which regret, self-pity and a lingering memory of intimate and emotional moments displace an objective tone, and a traditional exposition of heroic values such as *kleos* and *timē*. I argue that the potential of Hades for providing alternative means of commemorating the past is more fully explored in the 'Nekyia' of *Odyssey* 11; there, Odysseus' extraordinary ability to see (*idein*) the dead in Hades allows him to meet and interview the shades of heroines and heroes of the epic past. The absolute confinement of Hades allows the shades to recount their stories from their own personal point of view. The poetic implications of this, I argue, are important since by visiting Hades and listening to the stories of the shades Odysseus, and Homer with him, gain access to a tradition in which epic values associated with gender roles and even divine law are suspended, in favour of a more immediate and personally inflected approach to the epic past.

*In loving memory of my  
father, Alexandros, and  
Contessa. Without them  
this would not have been  
possible.*

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## Introduction

### i. Homeric *enargeia*

Ζεῦ πάτερ ἀλλὰ σὺ ρῦσαι ὑπ' ἠέρος νῆας Ἀχαιῶν,  
ποίησον δ' αἴθρην, δὸς δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδέσθαι:  
ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ ὄλεσσον, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι εὖαδεν οὕτως.

Il. 17.645-7

Readers of Homer since antiquity have noticed that the poet narrates events as if they were enacted in front of their eyes; as one ancient scholiast comments, Homer's poetry is not only heard but also seen by its audience as some sort of spectacle.<sup>1</sup> In ancient scholarship, this effect is often referred to as *enargeia*,<sup>2</sup> a term derived from the epithet ἐναργής, which is used in Homer mainly to denote the brightness of a god's epiphany as perceived from a human perspective.<sup>3</sup> To be ἐναργής, however, also means to be vivid, and it is precisely the vividness of Homeric narrative that ancient readers attempt to describe with the term *enargeia*.

The vividness that transforms Homeric narrative into a visual spectacle has been considered one of the most characteristic and lasting achievements of the Homeric epics. Scholars fascinated with Homeric *enargeia* have tried to understand which elements of the narrative create this effect and more importantly what poetic function it has. The most famous modern attempt at a discussion is owed to Lessing in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In his *Laocoön*, written in an era when the visual arts attained paradigmatic status, Lessing rediscovered the power of Homeric vividness which he judged superior to the best works the brush of the painter could create. Even though he does not employ the term *enargeia*, Lessing focuses on the vividness of Homer's descriptions. Setting these descriptions against the artistic products of a painter, Lessing asks which one gives a fuller and more satisfying picture of what they intend to portray. In contrast with the painter who, argues Lessing, can only capture a single moment in time, Homer's narrative conjures before our eyes a moving image, which traces the action in

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<sup>1</sup> ΣβΤ *ad Il.* 6.467: ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ἔπη οὕτως ἐστὶν ἐναργείας μεστὰ, ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἀκούεται τὰ πράγματα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὀράται. λαβῶν δὲ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ βίου ὁ ποιητὴς ἄκρως περιεγένετο τῇ μιμήσει; for discussion see Graziosi and Haubold (2010), 23-4.

<sup>2</sup> The term occurs several times in the Homeric scholia to express the vividness of the poet's narrative, see Maneri (1998), 179-92. Thucydides' narrative was also thought of as being *enarges*, see Walker (1993) and the brief discussion in Bakker (2005), 160-7. For the use of the term in Greek rhetoric see Ernesto (1962), 106f. and Calame (1991). Zanker (1981) traces the use of the term in ancient literary criticism.

<sup>3</sup> See Ford (1992), 54 and n.112.

a way that painting cannot.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Lessing shows that Homer is superior even when it comes to representing one single image. He notes the Homeric habit of assigning just a few epithets to an object and argues that the rest is filled by the image created in the audience's mind.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Agamemnon's sceptre, for instance, Lessing argues that despite the very few details given by the narrator (*Il.* 2.46 πατρώϊον - ἄφθιτον) the vividness of the description is such that it evokes the item in front of our eyes.<sup>6</sup>

Many modern scholars have shared Lessing's admiration of Homer's descriptive power. Yet, his analysis, with its focus on the Homeric text as a continuous stream of visual images, also gave rise to some important questions. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Zielinski asked what the Homeric bard must jettison in order to achieve the vivid effect that Lessing so admired.<sup>7</sup> In what came to be known as 'Zielinski's Law', Zielinski argued that when Homer narrates two simultaneous events he does so in sequential order, thus giving the impression that they took place one after the other. This happens, according to Zielinski, because human beings cannot maintain a visual focus on two events simultaneously. Rather, our eyes focus first on one event and then move to the other. According to Zielinski, the Homeric bard faces the same difficulty when creating his visually vivid narrative: faced with simultaneous events he too is obliged to present them sequentially, as if contemplating them one by one, with his mind's eye as it were. Zielinski's observation modified Lessing's argument in important ways: not only was the Homeric bard unusually adept at creating visual effects but he could not do otherwise: such is the visual focus of his narrative that he cannot simultaneously narrate two events. He must *look* at them one after the other even if they are taking place contemporaneously.

Zielinski's Law has been very influential and is still debated to the present day. Many scholars argue that the law is found to be valid when applied to specific passages where the simultaneous actions are indeed presented as sequential.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, narratological research has proven that Homer succeeds in narrating simultaneous events by treating them

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<sup>4</sup> Lessing (1962), 80.

<sup>5</sup> Lessing (1962), 81-2.

<sup>6</sup> Lessing (1962), 83-4.

<sup>7</sup> Zielinski (1899-1901), 407-49.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Whitman – Scodel (1981), Scodel (1999), 42-45 and (2008), 108f.

as occurring in different spaces rather than by presenting them, as Zielinski argues, in a single forward-moving narrative.<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of these disagreements, the important point that underscores all of Zielinski's discussion can be found in the effect of Homer's *enargeia*. Clay in her recent critique of Zielinski moves away from the traditional approach that seeks to confirm or invalidate Zielinski's law and focuses precisely on the implications of Homeric vividness by arguing that: "[I]maginative visualization and its verbal representation in narrative do not require chronological sequence."<sup>10</sup> Clay's study, which is discussed in more detail below, reminds us that the importance of Zielinski's work rests above all on drawing attention to the effects and preconditions of Homeric vividness: it is because of the visual image the bard has in mind and projects to his audience that issues of temporality and simultaneity arise.<sup>11</sup>

About half a century after Zielinski's discussion another influential study again brought the concept of Homeric vividness to the forefront. Erich Auerbach, in the famous first chapter of his *Mimesis*, argued that the vividness of Homeric narrative is such that it leaves no space for anything to remain unspoken or unseen. In his reading of Eurykleia's recognition of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 19, and of the digression about the origin of the hero's scar, Auerbach attempted to show the extent to which Homer highlights every last detail of the narrative, leaving almost nothing in the background. A narrative which is so "[c]learly outlined, brightly and uniformly illuminated" and where "men and things stand out in a realm where everything is visible" 'shows' everything to the reader and leaves nothing to the imagination.<sup>12</sup>

Auerbach was no admirer of Homer. For him, he embodied the problematic aspects of German Philhellenism, as noted by Porter and Haubold.<sup>13</sup> What Lessing had described as an outstanding narrative virtue Auerbach regarded with thinly-veiled revulsion: Homer was all

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<sup>9</sup> For a criticism of Zielinski's arguments see Rengakos (1995) and Nünlist (1998). See also Olson (1995), 91-119, who argues for the simultaneity of the Telemachy and Odysseus' return in the *Odyssey*. Fränkel (1968), follows Zielinski and argues that the notion of time is absent in Homer. Scodel (2008) reviews the bibliography and argues that Zielinski's Law is valid but has also exceptions and thus she re-names it 'Zielinski's Rule.' Finally see Clay (2011), 29-37, for the most recent critique of Zielinski's arguments.

<sup>10</sup> Clay (2011), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Since the nature of oral poetry requires continuous action in order to keep the audience interested techniques such as freely returning to a previous thread of the narrative, which can be found in many modern novels, cannot be used effectively; cf. Clay (2011), 34ff. Homer instead conducts his narration in an episodic manner. For exceptions see Scodel (2008), 110f. For the 'cinematic' aspect of the Homeric epics see Minchin (2001a), 25-26 and Winkler (2007). See also De Jong – Nünlist (2004), for the Homeric device of 'zooming in'.

<sup>12</sup> Auerbach (1968), 3.

<sup>13</sup> See Porter (2008), 116, and (2010), as well as Haubold (2013), 33-4.

surface, no depth. He lacked the “silences” that ennobled the Biblical narrative of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, which for Auerbach constituted a positive model of what epic should be. Auerbach’s condemnation of Homer at the expense of the Hebrew Bible would find few supporters today, but his observations on the power of Homeric vividness still hold value.<sup>14</sup> Despite his hostility, he was keenly susceptible to the effect that Homeric narrative has upon its reader, and his work on ‘Odysseus’ Scar’ has rightly formed the starting point for subsequent scholars studying Homeric *enargeia*.

Recent scholarship has built on Auerbach’s observations regarding the vividness of Homeric description, with many studies attempting to pin down and re-evaluate its importance for Homeric poetics as a whole. Adopting a more systematic approach to the text, scholars have attempted to associate the notion of vividness in the Homeric epics with specific compositional and narrative techniques. Thornton, for instance, in her discussion of the presentation of the Trojan plain in the *Iliad*, has argued that the poet relies on a repository of mental representations which he uses in his description in a manner not unlike the well-known verbal formulas of early Greek epic.<sup>15</sup> As Thornton notes, the features of the plain that are repeatedly mentioned in the narrative do not represent any actual landscape but instead “... are specific visual representations or pictures or images serving the poet’s striving to arouse a vivid and strongly visual experience in his audience.”<sup>16</sup> Homer, argues Thornton, achieves his vividness not by describing a complex reality but by transferring to the audience the stock of images which he retains in his mind’s eye. As she observes, this process also has the important corollary of guiding the poet mnemonically through the battlefield – and hence through his own narrative. The well-known landmarks of the Trojan plain, such as the fig-tree or the oak-tree, have a dramatic function in the narrative but are also mnemonic aids for the bard’s spatial visualisation of the plain and his own text.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Auerbach (1968), 3-23. The first objections to Auerbach’s interpretation were raised by Köhnken (1976), 101-14, and more scholars followed. Cf. De Jong (1985), who argues, against both Auerbach and Köhnken, that the narrative focuses on Eurykleia’s perspective. Segal (1994), 6-9 re-reads the passage of Odysseus’ scar against Auerbach’s reading and reaches a very different conclusion. See also De Jong (1999) for yet another reading of Auerbach’s first chapter, and Bakker (2005), 65ff. Finally see Bremmer (1999), who attempts to interpret *Mimesis* in its contemporary context.

<sup>15</sup> Thornton (1984), 150-63. For attempts to locate the Homer’s Trojan plain in Western Anatolia see Cook (1973) with bibliography, and the recent work of Trachsel (2007). For an analysis of the topography of the *Odyssey* see Labrie (1983).

<sup>16</sup> Thornton (1984), 150.

<sup>17</sup> Thornton (1984), 367, argues that “[T]he poet ‘sees’ the vivid images of the oak-tree by the Scaean Gate, the fig-tree, the grave monument of Ilus and so on, as he moves with the persons of his story over the plain.”

The suggestion that visual imagery is used by Homer to recreate and unfold his narrative aroused the interest of oralist scholars and opened the way for a cognitive sciences approach to Homeric storytelling. The most influential study of the function of visual memory in oral traditions is arguably that of Rubin who surveys a wide range of oral traditions, ancient and modern, and identifies in them important links between the bard's performance and his ability to see the story in his mind's eye.<sup>18</sup> Rubin argues that the mental image of the story helps the bard retain, or recall, in his memory all the necessary elements of the narrative which would otherwise be forgotten.<sup>19</sup> On this reading, the vividness of Homeric narrative functions primarily as a mnemonic device.<sup>20</sup> As modern-day Scottish-Gaelic bards admit in interviews conducted by Macdonald, being able to visualise their story while narrating is for them not just a tool to achieve specific aesthetic effects but rather a necessity.<sup>21</sup>

Naturally, Homeric scholars too felt called upon to test the explanatory force of this approach, with the result that in the last 30 years many studies have been devoted to understanding the function of memory, and visual memory in particular, in Homer. These studies, building on the work of Parry on formulaic diction and combining it with developments in cognitive science,<sup>22</sup> culminate in the recent application of cognitive theory to the Homeric epics by Elizabeth Minchin, who has devoted a large part of her work to the function of memory in Homer.<sup>23</sup> Minchin starts from Rubin's observation that narrative memory has an important visual component and argues that Homer uses the description of specific objects to mark significant sections of his narrative, which then remain vivid in the memory of his audience, but also his own.<sup>24</sup> Put simply, significant objects function as a mnemonic aid for the bard and at the same time as a mnemonic signpost for the audience.<sup>25</sup> Minchin is perhaps most convincing when she applies Rubin's arguments on spatial imagery to a discussion of the

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<sup>18</sup> Rubin (1995).

<sup>19</sup> For the function of imagery in memory see Rubin (1995), 39-63 and specifically 46-48 for imagery as a mnemonic aid.

<sup>20</sup> Rubin (1995), 49-52 argues that imagery helps spatial memory more than sequential memory, which is more suitable for verbal processing.

<sup>21</sup> Macdonald (1978) and (1981). See also Labrie (1983), 230f. and Bruford – Todd (1996).

<sup>22</sup> For recent studies with discussion of previous bibliography see Calame (2006), Bonifazi (2008), Bakker (2008).

<sup>23</sup> Minchin (2001a), (2005) and (2007).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Minchin (2001a), 104-112. For a detailed review and discussion of the recent bibliography on the function of human memory in relation with the Homeric epics see Minchin (2001a), 1-31.

<sup>25</sup> Minchin (2001a), 132-160 assigns a similar visual/mnemonic function to the Homeric simile, see also Minchin (2001b). Clay (2011), 28, n40 argues that Minchin "underestimates ... spatial imagery particularly in the *Iliad*" and favours descriptive memory in her discussion. However, as Clay herself admits Minchin addresses spatial imagery both in her discussion of the 'Catalogue of Ships' and of the topographies of the *Odyssey*. Cf. Minchin (2001a), 84-7 and 117-9 respectively.

‘Catalogue of Ships’ in the *Iliad* (2.494-734).<sup>26</sup> As she rightly points out, the poet himself highlights this passage as particularly difficult,<sup>27</sup> thus suggesting that he regarded it as representative of his art of spatial visualisation as a mnemonic device.

Homeric vividness, then, proves to be equally important for the poet as it is for the audience, for as Minchin has demonstrated, the bard relies on a special form of visual memory that allows him to control an astonishing level of narrative complexity. Minchin’s examination of the way spatial memory works for the Homeric text has contributed much to our understanding of Homeric *enargeia*. However, the recent works of Bakker and Clay have shown that there is more to Homeric vividness than its mnemonic function alone.

Bakker discusses the term *enargeia* both in its ancient context and its modern receptions. He argues that Homeric vividness is a unique product of the poet’s masterful manipulation of language, and especially syntax.<sup>28</sup> An examination of the use of Homeric tenses reveals, according to Bakker, that the bard presents the past not by taking his audience there but essentially by transferring events from the heroic past into the world of his performance.<sup>29</sup> A case in point in Bakker’s argument is the use of the augmented aorist which does not appear to signify that an event has taken place in the past but rather, through the undefined temporality of the tense, that the event is being withdrawn from an infinite series of events and performed in front of one’s eyes.<sup>30</sup> This temporal deixis results in a narrative that can be seen as well as heard. Homer’s vividness should be thought of as arising from the use of a special diction with embedded markers of simultaneity between past events and the present of the audience, with the bard functioning as the link between the two. Bakker’s work has been significant for our understanding of Homer’s *Kunstsprache* as a fusion not just of linguistic elements from different periods but rather as a conduit to the world of gods and heroes which is not only to be heard about but also viewed in stunning detail.<sup>31</sup> Bakker thus shifts the focus back onto vividness as a poetic resource, though unlike Lessing he sees it not just as a matter

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<sup>26</sup> Minchin (2001a), 84-7.

<sup>27</sup> The famous invocation to the Muses (*Il.* 2.484-93) in which the poet admits that human memory is not sufficient for such a task, marks the narrative as highly demanding. In the end, Homer succeeds in reciting the whole catalogue with the help of detailed spatial imagery; cf. Minchin (2008), where she expands on her previous discussion of the importance of spatial imagery in the Catalogue of Ships and reworks Thornton’s model.

<sup>28</sup> Bakker (2005), 157-76. Bakker compares Homeric narrative with that of Thucydides, whose descriptions have also been praised for their *enargeia*, see Walker (1993), in order to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Homeric approach.

<sup>29</sup> Bakker (2005), 168ff. For the significance of the use of deictics in Homer as spatial but also temporal markers see Bakker who is leading the field with numerous publications: (1997a), (1997b), (1999a), (1999b), (2001).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bakker (2005), 173, “[I]n uttering an aorist, one does not refer to an event; one performs it.”

<sup>31</sup> Clay (2011), 15.

of the poet's descriptive powers but rather as resulting from the creative manipulation of an exceptionally rich traditional medium.

Perhaps the most influential study of Homeric vividness as a poetic resource is Clay's recent *Homer's Trojan Theater*, already cited several times in this Introduction.<sup>32</sup> After a comprehensive review of the bibliography on Homeric vividness, spatial imagery, oral composition and cognitive theory Clay argues that Homer organises space in relation with an internal visualisation of his story.<sup>33</sup> The poet uses this visualisation as a mental map in order to create a specific topography of the battlefield. Following Thornton, Clay argues that Homer places on this map certain mnemonic features, such as the fig tree next to the Scaean Gates for instance, that help him navigate the battlefield but also, and more importantly, allow him to recall accurately actions that take place simultaneously at different points around it. This spatially organised internal visualisation is particularly evident in the battle books of the *Iliad* (12-17), which Clay shows form a continuous narrative sequence. Homer's mnemonic recreation of topography through visualisation recalls the mnemonic system of *loci* visualisation, which in antiquity was closely associated with the poet Simonides.<sup>34</sup> Clay argues that the same technique is already fully exploited by Homer who uses his internal spatial vision to organise his narrative. In Homeric epic, then, "the verbal and the spatial dimensions of the poem collaborate and reinforce each other".<sup>35</sup> The result is the strikingly vivid effect which ancient scholars called *enargeia*. Clay shows that the mnemonic techniques which the bard uses, and which are based on internal visualisation, extend to, and can be applied throughout, the Homeric epics, thus explaining the accurate continuation of the narrative not in episodes but as a visually vivid and coherent moving picture.

Homer, we have seen, makes use of several poetic resources to assist him with the recollection and performance of his narrative. These techniques are closely associated with the viewing of the story in the mind's eye of the poet, as a continuous mental image whose verbalisation achieves the famous vividness of the Homeric narrative. If we now try to connect these insights with the poet's own understanding of his art we find that the processes and techniques referred to above can be summarised under one heading, namely the

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<sup>32</sup> Clay (2011).

<sup>33</sup> Clay (2011), 14-37. See also Bakker (2005), 63ff.

<sup>34</sup> Simonides in an anecdote reported both by Cicero (*De oratore* 2.352-4) and Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria* 11.2.11-16) was able to identify the bodies of the guests in the house of a rich patron which had collapsed by mentally visualising where everyone was sitting during his brief visit there.

<sup>35</sup> Clay (2011), 110.

inspiration of the Muses. This is shown most clearly in the famous invocation of the goddesses before the ‘Catalogue of Ships’ in *Iliad* 2:

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχουσαι:  
ὕμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,  
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν.  
(*Il.* 2.484-6)

Tell me now, Muses, who dwell on Olympus;  
for you are goddesses and ever present and know everything,  
whereas we only hear rumours and know nothing.

Since the Muses are ‘present’ and ‘know all things’, they possess a vivid mental image of past and present events. Their passing on this visual memory to the bard can be understood as analogous to the vividness effects discussed by Clay and others.<sup>36</sup> The poet in turn mediates the image passed on to him by the Muses to the audience. The Muses’ inspiration guarantees not only the accuracy of his account but also its vividness; in essence the bard *sees* everything he narrates and through his (borrowed) divine sight is able to re-enact the spectacle of the Trojan War in front of his audience’s eyes.<sup>37</sup>

It has often been pointed out that seeing is crucial to Homer’s own understanding of his art. Indeed, there is an important sense in which, in Homeric poetics, what cannot be seen, does not exist. As Clay argues, seeing signifies for the Homeric hero the main source of knowledge about the world and his surroundings;<sup>38</sup> put simply, in Homer to *see* is to *know*.<sup>39</sup> How important this is can be seen from the fact that even in the case of blindness, knowledge still derives from vision, albeit a different kind of vision. The Phaeacian bard Demodocus and the dead seer Teiresias provide us with examples of this: in the case of Demodocus his poetic vision, a gift of the Muses, makes him able to recite accurately the events of the past as well as the gods’ affairs on Olympus as if ‘he had been present or heard from someone who had

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<sup>36</sup> *Il.* 2.485: ὕμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα, cf. Clay (2011), 16. As Ford argues, the Muses “make the difference between poets and non-poets...” and it is their inspiration that separates the poet from a common storyteller, Ford (1992), 56. See also Clay (2011), 20, who argues that “[T]he heroic past cannot speak to us directly; it requires the mediation of the poet to be brought to life.”

<sup>37</sup> Slatkin observes that Homer gives his characters the ability to visualise future events with stunning vividness, thus providing us with an example of Homeric poetics in action. Slatkin highlights the importance of vividness in these accounts by arguing that they too succeed in “... the unfolding of the poem before the audience’s eyes, even as the events are realized in the experience of its characters.” Slatkin 2007, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Clay (1983), 9-24. See also Constantinidou (1994), who discusses the differences in vision between gods and mortals in Homer.

<sup>39</sup> As happens for instance with the Muses who are present and see the events they narrate, in contrast with the mortals who just hear rumours, cf. Clay (1983), 19-20 and Ford (1992), 60-1. For *idein* as having the meaning ‘to know’ Snell’s study (1924) is still one of the most important.



been'.<sup>40</sup> Teiresias, on the other hand, also has a special vision that allows him access to special knowledge, as well as seeing the future.<sup>41</sup> Thus in both cases the lack of physical vision is compensated by a special kind of internal vision that provides both men with unique knowledge, Demodocus of the past and Teiresias of the future.<sup>42</sup>

Even more importantly however, to be able to see in Homer is to exist. In the Homeric world of light and brightness where vision holds a prominent position, an inability to see is equated with non-existence, as reflected in the well-known image of death coming as a fog or dark cloud and covering the eyes of the fallen warrior.<sup>43</sup> Ajax's desperate plea to Zeus, cited at the beginning of this Introduction, to be allowed to perish under the light of the sun and not in darkness, captures heroic perceptions of the world in a nutshell. It is not the fear of death that causes Ajax distress; rather, his words reveal the epic hero's fundamental reliance on eyesight and daylight: heroes are alive as long as they 'see the light of the sun' (Homeric ὄρᾶν φάος ἠελίοιο),<sup>44</sup> and they win *kleos* by dying in full view of the gods and of each other.<sup>45</sup>

Despite this close association between fame and vision, Dué and Ebbott's recent study of *Iliad* 10 has shown that epic heroes, and Homeric narrative, for that matter, are not totally bound by the existence of light but can operate under the cover of darkness. *Iliad* 10 has traditionally been perceived as problematic and indeed 'un-Homeric' by scholars who based their criticism on such stylistic peculiarities as the killing of defenceless enemies and the use of unusual language compared with the rest of the *Iliad*.<sup>46</sup> More importantly for our purposes, some scholars have argued that Homeric heroes are not supposed to fight in darkness but only

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<sup>40</sup> *Od.* 8.487-91, see Graziosi (2002), 140.

<sup>41</sup> *Od.* 11.100-3.

<sup>42</sup> On the immortal plain vision is even more significant with the gods' eyesight far keener than that of mortals: Zeus can see from the top of Mount Ida the whole of the action on the Trojan plain (*Il.* 8.51-2) and the same applies to the other gods who often act as a divine audience of the events that take place on the earth. Thus, at *Il.* 7.58f. Athena and Apollo turn into vultures and sit on a tree branch in order to watch the action. See Griffin (1978), who discusses instances of the Gods as spectators in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

<sup>43</sup> [κατὰ] δ' ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἀχλύς in *Il.* 5.696, 16.344, 20.421, 22.88. Death is portrayed as a dark cloud that covers the dead (θανάτου[οιο] δὲ μέλαν νέφος ἀμφοεκάλυψεν) in *Il.* 16.350 and *Od.* 4.180. The epithet μέλας is also used to characterise death itself in *Il.* 2.834, 11.332, 16.687 ( ...μέλανος θανάτοιο). For a full list of the epithets for death see Vermeule (1979), 219 n.65 and also *LfgreE* 2.969-973.

<sup>44</sup> *Il.* 24.558, *Od.* 4.540, 10.498.

<sup>45</sup> See Slatkin (2007), 20, who argues that Ajax's exhortation is in essence "an appeal to ... see and be seen, an appeal on behalf of the opportunity to enact solidarity among the fighting men".

<sup>46</sup> Already in antiquity the book had been suspected of not being part of the original *Iliad*, though it was still thought to have been composed by Homer, see ΣΤ at the beginning of *Il.* 10. The modern controversy surrounding *Iliad* 10 goes back to the Analytic school of scholarship – some of the most important works include Leaf (1900), 423-4, Sheppard (1922), 83f., Whitman (1958), 283-4, Fenik (1964), 40, Danek (1988) and Hainsworth (1993), 151-5. For scholars who have tried to defend the book and its place in the *Iliad*, see Shewan (1911), Thornton (1984), 164-9, Stanley (1993), 119ff. and Dué – Ebbott (2010).

under the bright light of the sun and in full view of each other.<sup>47</sup> Sceptical attitudes towards *Iliad* 10 have culminated in West's bracketing of the whole book as a late interpolation in his recent edition of the *Iliad*.<sup>48</sup>

Du  and Ebbott demonstrate that Homer exploits the 'unusual' spy mission and subsequent night raid of *Iliad* 10 as a poetic resource. According to them, the stylistic differences of the book do not denote a late, less artistic, addition to the *Iliad* but instead signify the poet's engagement with a different theme of epic poetry, and a different poetics that is appropriate to it. Du  and Ebbott have called it the 'poetics of ambush', in view of the fact that *Iliad* 10 introduces, and explores, the traditional epic theme of the ambush (*lokhos*). What seems peculiar about this part of the narrative can thus be explained in the context of a poetic theme which requires a different approach by the poet, including the use of special language. One example of how this approach differs can be seen for instance in the description of the equipment that Odysseus and Diomedes choose for their night mission, with its emphasis on stealth and mobility rather than sturdiness, power and impressiveness. Special warfare requires special gear and in a genre where content is closely linked to mode of expression, that also means a special style of narrative; this is exactly what we see in *Iliad* 10.

Du  and Ebbott's approach to the *Doloneia* has opened the way for a re-evaluation of the book, inviting scholars to re-think the night raid in poetic terms. Thus, Hesk shows that despite the absence of light in *Iliad* 10, Homer employs the same 'cinematic' techniques of narration that we see throughout the *Iliad* and does so with particular success through the clever use of similes and an emphasis on the heroes' personal/privileged point of view when focussing in on the action.<sup>49</sup> Hesk's study is important for our understanding of Homeric *enargeia* and especially for its presence and function in a narrative marked by a distinct absence of light. Building on Du  and Ebbott, he shows beyond any doubt that Homer uses unusual settings as a poetic resource for broadening the remit, and exploring the nature, of traditional Muse narrative. In a 'poetics of ambush' stealth is more important than might, endurance is more crucial than rushing the enemy and darkness is no longer simply the absence of light but takes on a positive role in the narrative. Put simply, Du  – Ebbott and Hesk have shown that what may seem at first glance to be un-Iliadic and even un-Homeric

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Klingner (1940) and Nagler (1974), 136.

<sup>48</sup> West (1998-2000). See also West (2011), 233-5.

<sup>49</sup> Hesk (2013).

may provide the poet with unique opportunities for exploring the nature and limits of his own art.

In my thesis I investigate another such opportunity that has, I argue, largely eluded the attention of readers and scholars. My discussion focuses on the theme of Hades, the realm of darkness and invisibility *par excellence* and the way it is used by Homer as a poetic resource. At this point it is important to highlight that for the purposes of this thesis I use the name ‘Homer’ to signify the poetic tradition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with a special focus on the poetic interaction between them as opposed to the mainstream epic tradition from which the Homeric poems derive. At the same time it is this traditional Muse narrative I argue, that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* broadly challenge through the use of Hades’ narratives and thus intertextual readings prove to be necessary in order to understand and evaluate that interaction further. Hades, we shall see, presents us with a unique context that stands apart from the world of gods and men and hence the poetic conventions of traditional Muse narrative. Like the nocturnal adventure of *Iliad* 10, Homeric narrative set in Hades defies the most basic rule of epic storytelling, which is that in order to know the past we must see it clearly before our eyes. Yet, it does much more besides. Hades, I argue, provides an alternative poetic realm in a way in which *Iliad* 10 does not. Here, the mainstream epic tradition can be discussed, re-evaluated and recast as the shades of the dead reflect upon their story and relate to us their own very personal experience of the epic past.

## ii. *Hades as a poetic resource*

Hades in Homer is understood not only as the underworld realm but also, and more importantly to my argument, as the invisible realm. Ancient audiences heard the name of Hades as the *A – ides*, ‘the invisible one’, and throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* Homer insists on Hades’ absolute invisibility and the inability of mortals and even gods to see through its darkness. For instance, in a well-known passage in *Iliad* 5, Athena uses the cap of Hades (Ἄϊδος κυνέην) in order not to be seen (μή μιν ἴδοι) by Ares while helping Diomedes. Since immortals can recognise other immortals easily even through their disguise,<sup>50</sup> Athena needs to rely on the concealing power of Hades in order to be sure that Ares will not be able to spot her; the cap of Hades apparently carries the attributes of its owner and can transfer them to its wearer, making Athena invisible even to her fellow Olympians.<sup>51</sup>

In the *Odyssey* the idea of Hades’ invisibility is further developed. Even Helios, the embodiment of light and vision, is in no position to challenge the darkness of Hades. Helios allegedly sees and hears everything (ὄς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει),<sup>52</sup> as he does for instance when he sees the lovers Ares and Aphrodite through the walls of their bed chamber and reports them to Hephaestus in *Odyssey* 8.<sup>53</sup> Despite its power, however, the god’s sight is unable to penetrate even the outskirts of Hades where the wretched Cimmerians live covered by eternal darkness.<sup>54</sup>

The alleged invisibility of Hades creates a poetic paradox within the Homeric text since by definition the Underworld’s impenetrable darkness and Homer’s *enargeia* cannot easily be reconciled. This is evident in the fact that although Hades is referred to frequently throughout the poems, Homer generally treats it as taboo, an unapproachable and distant place outside

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<sup>50</sup> Athena’s comment in *Il.* 5.127-9 implies that without the mist that covers his eyes, Diomedes would be able to identify them as well. Cf. Clay (1983), 16. For divine disguises in the Homeric epics see Clay (1974), Dietrich (1983), Smith (1988) and Seward (1991).

<sup>51</sup> *Il.* 5.844-5, discussed in detail in section 1.1.4.

<sup>52</sup> *Od.* 11.109. The same formula for Helios appears in *Il.* 3.276 and *Od.* 14.393, cf. Pettazzoni (1956), 5-12.

<sup>53</sup> *Od.* 8.271-2.

<sup>54</sup> *Od.* 11.13-19.

the world of gods and men and beyond the reach of his art as a story-teller. In this sense the Underworld poses the greatest challenge for Homer's poetic gaze, forming a barrier that cannot be crossed by normal means. Yet Homer, I argue, overcomes this barrier in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in order to explore the poetic opportunities afforded by this remarkable realm. By taking us to the secluded space of the Underworld where vision is impossible even for the gods, Homer transcends not only the limitations of the Muses' power, but also that of the epic genre. Odysseus' journey to the Underworld in *Od.* 11 and to a lesser extent Patroclus' visit from the Underworld in *Il.* 23 give Homer an opportunity to explore how well-known epic characters reflect upon their own place in the epic tradition. The result, I argue, is remarkable. By accessing Hades, Homer enters a storehouse of epic tradition that is significantly different from that accessible to the Muses. Dark and murky as it might be, Hades is nevertheless full of stories waiting to be told. Those stories, however, are not like those that unfold under the Homeric sun. We might expect, of course, that narrative in Hades is fiercely personal, and tinged with loss. But the darkness and confinement of Hades also allows for an unprecedented freedom of speech that defies social and religious constraints. Indeed, the shades in Hades renounce even such defining elements of epic poetry as *kleos* and *timē* at the expense of their own very personal experience of loss. What emerges is a poetics akin to lyric forms, a poetics that within epic can only exist in the unique context provided by the Underworld.

My thesis is structured around this alternative poetics, which I call the "poetics of Hades." In the chapters that follow I attempt to define what exactly the poetics of Hades is and how it is explored and exploited by Homer in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. My dissertation is divided into two main parts which are each devoted to a discussion of one of the Homeric poems. Part 1 starts from the way Hades is presented in the *Iliad*. I argue that despite its overwhelming presence in the narrative, either as a threat to mortals or a destination for the heroes, the Underworld remains in the background. Although scores of warriors die and are specifically said to go down to Hades,<sup>55</sup> we never follow them there nor are we allowed a glimpse of the Underworld: Hades, I argue, remains markedly invisible throughout the *Iliad*, becoming literally the unseen realm.

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<sup>55</sup> See discussion in section 1.i.

The isolation and invisibility of Hades appear to be traditional epic motifs. In *Iliad* 15 the universe is divided into three spheres of power, sky – sea – underworld.<sup>56</sup> Heroic events take place on the earth with Poseidon and Zeus joining the action from their abodes in the sea and the sky.<sup>57</sup> The Underworld, however, stands apart from both: Hades does not intervene in the Trojan War, and in *Iliad* 20 the possibility of the earth cracking open and allowing glimpses of the Underworld is considered only as a shocking violation of cosmic boundaries.<sup>58</sup> Hades as the place of darkness and confinement does not belong to the heroic or Olympian world. In fact, its jurisdiction begins precisely when one leaves the world of gods and men.

And yet, Homer does allow us a glimpse of Hades with the visit of Patroclus' shade in *Iliad* 23. In Chapter 2 of part 1 I discuss the implications of this visit for the narrative of the *Iliad* and its poetics of vividness. Offering a close reading of the dream sequence of *Iliad* 23, I argue that Homer creates a hybrid dream/underworld environment in which the *absence* of important markers of Muse narrative – life, light, stable identities clearly perceived – becomes emblematic of a self-consciously alternative approach to the epic past. What is now important is no longer the heroic *kleos* that concerns the living but rather the experience of loss that informs the shadowy existence of the dead. In the very brief encounter Patroclus has with Achilles he does not choose to talk about their heroic exploits. Instead he recalls, for the first and only time in the *Iliad*, the beginning of their friendship as young boys.

Achilles' encounter with Patroclus' shade prepares us for the fuller exploration of the poetics of Hades in Odysseus' *katabasis* in *Od.* 11. There, what in the *Iliad* was a brief poetic experiment turns into a full-scale exploration of the stories that can be told only in the Underworld. In Part 2 of my thesis I offer a close reading of the 'Nekyia' in *Odyssey* 11, and of the meetings with the shades that Odysseus has there. My discussion focuses on two points in particular: first, the ability of Odysseus to see where seeing is by definition impossible, and the way in which this ability becomes the conduit that allows access to versions of the epic tradition that have not been heard before. My second point concerns precisely these alternative traditions that are mediated through Odysseus. I argue that the stories heard in Hades provide an alternative reading of the epic tradition, allowing us to see the epic past in an entirely new light. As in the case of Patroclus in *Il.* 23, little of what is said in *Odyssey* 11

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<sup>56</sup> *Il.* 15.185-99.

<sup>57</sup> See for instance the underwater scene with Iris and Thetis in *Il.* 24.77-96.

<sup>58</sup> *Il.* 20.61-5.

has to do with the heroic values of *timē* and *kleos*. Instead, the shades focus on their own sense of loss and personal bereavement.

In Chapter 1 of Part 2 I discuss the place of the ‘Nekyia’ in Odysseus’ ‘Apologoi’. I argue that besides the organic placement of the *katabasis* approximately in the middle of the hero’s narrative, the journey to Hades also has a significant place on the map of Odysseus’ adventures. Jörgensen has influentially argued that Odysseus’ narrative cannot ever be fully equated with that of the narrator.<sup>59</sup> My approach follows a reverse order: instead of asking what Odysseus sees and knows, I examine the limitation of the gods’ actual interventions in Odysseus’ ‘Apologoi’ as described by the poet. Generally, the Olympians act as spectators throughout the adventures of Odysseus: for instance they observe the hero on the island of Circe and later on that of the goddess Calypso, with Hermes intervening on both occasions. While Odysseus remains lost to his fellow human beings, the gods can follow him on his adventures; even the island of Calypso, whose name makes her the embodiment of concealment, cannot hide the hero from the immortal gaze.

The power of divine (in)sight, however, appears not to extend to the Underworld. From the moment Odysseus sets off on his journey to Hades until the time that he finally returns he is not only the narrator of his *katabasis* but also its only witness. In a way, Odysseus’ mortal sight proves to be superior to that of the gods and with the constant use of the verb *idein* throughout Odysseus’ account, Homer puts the emphasis specifically on the act of seeing in the Underworld: through Odysseus’ unflinching vision Hades and the stories that the shades relate become accessible to the bard and his audience. At the same time, the emphasis on seeing raises the poetic stakes in a genre where eye-sight in important ways defines what poetry is – and prepares the ground for the generic experiments of the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ and the ‘Catalogue of Heroes’.

In Chapter 2.2 I discuss the meetings Odysseus has with the shades of Elpenor, Teiresias and Antikleia. I argue that each of these meetings showcases one of the attributes of the poetics of Hades, starting from the meeting with Elpenor, which introduces the main themes that are going to be prominent throughout the rest of the *katabasis*: Odysseus’ ability to see in the dark, and thus to access alternative perspectives on the past. Elpenor, the first shade that Odysseus sees clearly, is also the first to relate his version of the past, retelling the story of

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<sup>59</sup> Jörgensen (1904).

his death that was relayed by the narrator only in book 10. The different interpretation of his fate that Elpenor offers in his account to Odysseus presents us, I argue, with a programmatic first example of an alternative tradition (and perspective) embedded in an Underworld narrative. Elpenor's own relatively unimportant story thus paves the way for the personalised accounts of the famous heroines and heroes of the epic tradition.

Odysseus' next meeting, with Teiresias, introduces another important theme, namely that of Hades' seclusion and the freedom of speech this affords its inhabitants. Since Hades is virtually inaccessible to gods and men alike, I argue that it neutralises the social and religious constraints that are so important to the world of the living, allowing the shades to speak without fear of social disgrace or even divine punishment. The meeting with Teiresias demonstrates well the implications of such freedom of speech. At the level of plot, it is only in Hades that Poseidon's grudge, and the way to appease him, can be revealed without risking enraging the god even further.<sup>60</sup> The importance of Hades as the context in which such information can be revealed, is reflected, I argue, in the fact that Odysseus' trip to Hades is presented as the only one that the hero must make.<sup>61</sup> More generally, the interview with Teiresias confirms that there are truths to be had in Hades that are not available to the living. This too will prove important preparation for the central catalogues.

The meeting with Antikleia, concludes the introductory meetings, and highlights the prominent position that emotions hold in the narratives of Hades. In the context of the intimate mother-son relationship, I argue, Homer introduces the element of emotional attachment – and emotional loss – that will prove decisive later on in the 'Nekyia'. Odysseus uses the meeting with his mother as an opportunity to reflect upon his past choices and their consequences, but above all, he comes face to face with the irreversibility of death and experiences. In this respect the hero foreshadows the meetings he will have in the second part of the 'Nekyia' with his ex-companions, where those feelings are allowed to displace heroic notions of *kleos* and *timē*. Furthermore, Antikleia's role as a mother, which is reflected in her expression of affection and caring for Odysseus, prepares the ground for the entrance of the heroines that follows, mothers of the great heroes of the past.

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<sup>60</sup> *Od.* 11.100-137.

<sup>61</sup> *Od.* 10.490: ἄλλ' ἄλλην γρῆ πρώτον ὁδὸν τελέσαι καὶ ἰκέσθαι.  
*But first you must undertake and complete another journey.*



Chapter 3 is devoted to the so-called ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ that has been seen by many scholars as problematic.<sup>62</sup> In this section I contribute to a recent surge of interest in the Catalogue by asking what it can tell us about Homeric poetics. First, I argue that through the constant use of the verb *idein* in the introduction of each heroine, Homer transforms a traditional poetic form into a sustained reflection on the preconditions and limitations of Muse narrative. Hades, the realm of darkness and invisibility, is evoked with a vividness that bears the hallmarks of traditional Muse narrative but, I argue, differs from it in fundamental ways: what we see in *Odyssey* 11 are the *eidola* of women, mere images of the heroines and as distant from their former selves as Hades is from the light of the sun. Yet, these *eidola* have stories of their own and my second point focuses precisely on the implications of those stories being heard in the epic tradition. A close reading of the heroines’ accounts shows that epic values associated with gender roles and even divine law are in important ways suspended in Hades, allowing for a more immediate and personally inflected approach to the epic past. Thus, the *Odyssey* can articulate Tyro’s own feelings (ἠράσατ(ο) at *Od.* 11.238) in a way in which the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* cannot (fr. 30-1 MW). More radically, Poseidon’s warning not to divulge their affair (*Od.* 11.251) makes Odysseus’ account of it appear as a self-conscious departure from the ‘official’ story of Tyro’s marriage with Cretheus (*Od.* 11.237).

Almost all heroines in Odysseus’ catalogue, I argue, adopt a very personal point of view when they retell their stories, and this has implications even for the very content of those stories. For example, Epicasta omits from her story the birth of Oedipus’ children, and Leda chooses to remember only her sons but not Helen or Clytemnestra. Perhaps the most extreme example of selective memory is that of Iphimedeia who lovingly describes her sons, the giants Otos and Ephialtes, as innocuous children despite the fact that they waged war against the Olympians. These women focus on what they consider important and their stories reach us through Odysseus with the information each of them chooses to highlight, disclose or omit. In this sense the Catalogue offers us an approach to the epic tradition that differs significantly from that of mainstream epic.

Chapter 4 discusses the famous ‘Intermezzo’ that follows the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’. My discussion here shows that Homer introduces a break in his hero’s narrative in order to provide the alternative traditions that have just been recited with a seal of approval before

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<sup>62</sup> See for instance Wilamowitz (1884), 147-51, Focke (1943), 217-22, Bowra (1962), 45-46, Page (1955), 35-39 and Kirk (1962), 237.

moving on to the more important Homeric meetings with Achilles, Agamemnon and Ajax. Through Arete's and Alcinous' praise of the hero's narrative as shapely and true, Homer tactfully suggests to his own audience that, despite their peculiarities, the Underworld stories that we have heard and are about to hear should be accepted as a genuine part of the epic tradition.

In Chapter 5 I discuss the 'Catalogue of Heroes' that follows, devoting one section to each meeting Odysseus has with the Trojan War heroes that feature in it. In the first meeting, with Agamemnon, Homer transforms a heroic battle narrative into a pathetic, regretful and personally inflected account of a man betrayed and murdered by his own wife. The glorious fighting of Proteus' narrative that left only Aegisthus standing in *Odyssey* 3 when seen through the eyes of the shade is transformed into a merciless and unjustified slaughter in a domestic setting. Yet, Agamemnon seems surprisingly unconcerned with the un-heroic nature of his demise. Instead of worrying about *kleos* or *timē* he reflects bitterly on the fact that it was Clytemnestra, his own wife, who betrayed him. Raw emotional disappointment supersedes the more abstract concern for a glorious death that might have determined his feelings and actions in the *Iliad*.

What Agamemnon's shade implies is expressed more directly in the next meeting Odysseus has with Achilles. In section 2.5.3 I argue that this meeting explores the divide between the worlds of the living and the dead by showing us Achilles as mindful of both: when the hero renounces his Iliadic honour and declares that he would rather be a serf than the honoured king of the dead, what we see is the revisionist poetics of Hades in full flow: like other *eidola* in Hades, and specifically like the shade of Agamemnon, that of Achilles replaces a concern with heroic values with lingering regret and self-pity. However, when Achilles' interest turns to his father and his son, *kleos* and *timē* come once more into focus: the hero wishes he could return to earth to punish those who deprive his father of his honour and on hearing about Neoptolemus' heroic prowess he strolls off happily to the asphodel meadow, the only shade not to fade away into Erebus. Agamemnon's and Achilles' accounts, I argue, showcase the effect that Hades has on heroic narrative and the heroes themselves by making explicit the change they undergo once they enter the Underworld. The change is most abrupt, and most explicit, in the case of Achilles, though he manages to hold on to some at least of his former values. In the final part of this chapter, section 2.5.4, I examine the danger of refusing to integrate with the Underworld. The meeting with Ajax, I argue, presents us with an example

of a hero who refuses to adapt to his surroundings: in the world of the living as well as in the Underworld.

Ajax never actually speaks in his encounter with Odysseus, but his story is nevertheless related – by Odysseus. Odysseus temporarily switches roles with the dead and presents us with his own subjective recollection of Ajax's past and the judgement of Achilles' arms that cost his life. In relating the story of the judgement Odysseus nullifies Ajax's choice of remaining silent by telling it in his place. In so doing, he makes sure the story which his audience, internal and external, hears is the one that projects his own point of view.

I end my discussion with an overview of Odysseus' final encounters with the *eidola* of great figures from the mythic past. The 'Catalogue of Sinners' focuses our attention once more on his visual prowess. The final meeting with Heracles offers closure to the Underworld episode. By recounting the difficulty of a trip to Hades, Heracles reminds us that Odysseus' feat should not be underestimated: the reference to Hermes and Athena as the helpers of the legendary hero in his *katabasis* (*Od.* 11.626) further adds to the importance of Odysseus' accomplishment. Finally the threat of seeing Gorgo drives the hero out of the Underworld and back into the light, thus concluding his journey to Hades in the same way it started, with awe and fear for the mysteries the Underworld holds.

What I aim to show with my discussion is that Homer exploits Hades in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a poetic resource that allows him to explore the epic past in ways that consciously diverge from the traditional narrative of the Muses. Homer's exploration of the Underworld brings to the fore an alternative perspective on the epic tradition that can be accessible only within the confines of Hades, where the normal rules and values of traditional epic narrative do not apply. The implication is that the shades enjoy a freedom of speech which is unimaginable for the living in epic and which in turn results in a fiercely personal account of their own past, with raw emotions replacing the traditional epic values of *kleos* and *timē*.

Finally, I would like to add some brief comments on the scope of this dissertation. As will have been noted, I have chosen to include the underworld scenes of *Odyssey* 11 in my discussion, but not the so-called 'second Nekyia' of *Odyssey* 24. The reasons are twofold. First, *Odyssey* 24 raises textual problems which, if taken seriously, would have taken up a substantial proportion of the thesis, becoming a distraction from the investigation of its main theme, which is Homer's use of Hades as a poetic resource. Secondly, the 'Nekyia' of *Odyssey* 24 does not, in my view, add anything substantially new to my discussion of

*Odyssey* 11: we find in it the same concern with re-imagining the epic tradition from the perspective of the dead, albeit on a much reduced scale, and without the poetic interest that is evident in *Odyssey* 11. In a discussion that is concerned, above all, with the *range* of poetic resources that are at the disposal of the Homeric bard, it seemed counterproductive to cover the same poetic ground twice, in pursuit of a completeness that would have been achieved at the expense of depth of engagement elsewhere. In the end, it seemed that the argument was best served by focussing on what is without a doubt the most significant and wide-ranging exploration of the poetics of Hades in the *Odyssey* – and indeed in the whole of Homeric epic.

## ***Part 1 - The 'Iliad'***

### ***Chapter 1: Hades in the 'Iliad'***

#### **1.1.i. Introduction**

A section dedicated to the discussion of Hades in the *Iliad* might at first strike one as paradoxical. After all the *Iliad* is the poem of light and the vividness of its descriptions as well as the brightness of its scenes have been renowned from antiquity till our modern days.<sup>1</sup> What place then, could there be in the *Iliad* for Hades, the realm of the dead and place of darkness *par excellence*?

In this section I attempt to answer that question by arguing that Hades not only has a place and role in the *Iliad* but also that this role is poetically charged as well. To demonstrate my point I look at Hades' attributes as these are presented in the *Iliad*, starting from Hades' first appearance in the poem. The opening lines of the *Iliad*, I argue, depict Hades as the destination for a whole generation of heroes. This is important since the shifting of the heroic race from life to death, that marks the end of the heroic age, is achieved through the storing of the souls in the Underworld. Hades therefore functions as the safe-keeper of the heroic world, a place where the tradition remains stored.

At the same time, however, and despite its important role, Hades is strikingly absent from the narrative of the *Iliad*: we can see its effect in the death of countless heroes throughout the poem but we can never actually *see* Hades itself. This is in agreement with the way the Underworld is depicted in the narrative: Homer consistently projects an image of the

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<sup>1</sup> For Homer's vividness and the *Iliad* as the poem of light see Introduction.

Underworld as *invisible, unknown, concealed* and also *concealing*. In so doing, the poet casts Hades as a realm apart, one that stands in opposition to the bright heroic world of gods and mortals. And this attribute of Hades as the invisible realm poses the ultimate challenge for Homer's poetic gaze: as the narrative of the *Iliad* unfolds the poet allows us to feel the presence of Hades ever more strongly, until we reach a point where even its invisibility can be challenged. In the end even Hades, the *A - ides*, might be seen.

### **1.1.ii. Hades as a destination: the beginning of the 'Iliad' and the end of the heroes**

The *Iliad* begins with a seven line proem which announces the theme of the poem, namely the wrath of Achilles. Hades makes his very first appearance in line 3 of the proem as the destination of 'the valiant souls of heroes'. The mention of the Underworld so early in the narrative hints at the important role it holds in the *Iliad*, as it is well known that the proem contains in a condensed form motifs that will be recurrent in the poem.<sup>2</sup> These motifs, the subject of the wrath, the sending of heroes to Hades etc., are going to be expanded on later in the narrative and in a sense are the 'backbone' of the whole poem. Thus, the wrath of Achilles is recurrent throughout the *Iliad* and is going to be the main focus in many instances. Death on the battlefield, and the descent to Hades, is no different and is depicted often once the battle commences in book 4. Even so, as Bassett and others have argued, the proem does not just provide a table of contents but more importantly a well-crafted frame to the narrative that follows.<sup>3</sup> In this respect the role assigned to Hades is that of the connecting link between the two main themes of the poem: it is through the sending of the souls to Hades that the will of Zeus, who caused the wrath of Achilles, is fulfilled.

Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, the proem presents us with an opportunity to listen to the narrator himself telling us about the story he is about to sing.<sup>4</sup> This is important because it suggests a human perspective on epic composition and inspiration, and thus offers us an insight into the poet's own view of his subject. As Redfield's examination of the *Iliad* proem

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<sup>2</sup> Edwards (1991) 341-2.

<sup>3</sup> Bassett (1923), 341, 347. Cf. also Kirk who states that: "Homer provides his audiences with just so much information as they need at this point" Kirk (1985), 52.

<sup>4</sup> As De Jong has pointed out: "The narrator reflects on his own activity ... only when addressing the Muses." De Jong (1987), 42.

has shown, Homer chooses his words carefully and in full cognisance of their programmatic force.<sup>5</sup> The mention of Hades so early in the text is a case in point:

μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος 1  
οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,  
πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν  
ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν  
οἰωνοῖσι τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή 5  
(*Il.* 1.1-5)

*Sing, goddess, of the accursed anger of Achilles,  
son of Peleus, that gave countless pains to the Achaeans,  
and many mighty souls of heroes hurled down to Hades  
while their bodies were left for the dogs and birds  
to feast upon, and the will of Zeus was fulfilled.*

After a brief invocation of the Muse,<sup>6</sup> the poet informs us that this is going to be a poem about the cursed wrath of Achilles (1.1) that caused much grief to the Achaeans (1.2) and sent many souls of heroes to Hades (1.3) whereas their bodies were left as prey for dogs and birds, while Zeus' will was fulfilled (1.4-5).

Scholars have analysed extensively these lines and have for the most part focused their attention on the vexed textual problems they pose. The image of corpses lying unburied on the battlefield gave rise to controversy already among ancient critics, leading some to suggest deletion of lines 4-5.<sup>7</sup> Modern scholarship has, mostly, followed upon the same tracks, attempting to resolve similar textual and interpretive issues.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, Hades' role in the proem has not been properly examined despite its very prominent position in it.

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<sup>5</sup> Redfield (1979).

<sup>6</sup> Redfield (1979) 98-9 argues that by calling the Muse θεά the poet stresses the special relationship he shares with the goddess. For a more recent discussion see Wheeler (2002), 33-9. For Homer's invocations of the Muses see Minton (1960), (1962), Falus (1974), who compares the invocations as well as the contents of the proems of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Furthermore see Ford (1992), 31-9 for a discussion of previous bibliography and Minchin (1995-6), who criticises Minton's interpretation of the invocation as a technique to draw the audience's attention in specific moments of crisis in the narrative. Finally see Heiden (2008a) and (2008b) for a discussion of the famous invocation of *Il.* 2.484.93 and Diop (2011), who argues for a different function of the invocation as well as for a different role of the Muses in the Homeric epics.

<sup>7</sup> For Zenodotus' athetesis of lines 4-5 on the grounds of impropriety see ΣΑ *ad Il.* 1.4 and Nickau (1977), 201. Also Kirk (1985), 51-3 with a general discussion of the scholia.

<sup>8</sup> Basset (1923), Minton (1960). In one of the most extensive studies of the *Iliad*'s proem, Redfield addresses the issue of the contrast between the souls going to Hades and the disturbing image of rotting corpses left on the battlefield by arguing in favour of δαῖτα in line 5, which according to Athenaeus was adopted by Zenodotus (*Deipn.* 1.21.30), as opposed to the vulgate's πᾶσι. Following Segal (1971), Redfield suggests that the proem creates anticipation of acts of mutilation later on, and points out that this does not really happen, Redfield (1979), 96ff.

A close reading of the *Iliad* proem shows that Hades' placement in it is far from accidental, and in fact holds the key to understanding the role of Hades in the poem more generally. I would like to begin my discussion with the stark contrast created by the descent of the souls to the Underworld in juxtaposition with the disturbing image of rotting corpses left to be devoured by dogs and birds. The contrast between the fate of the souls and that of the bodies is clear and was noticed also by ancient scholars.<sup>9</sup> The combined image is that of utter destruction: the bodies of the heroes decay whereas their souls are banished to Hades. The power of this description of total annihilation signals to the audience that this is not just about heroic fighting and *kleos*; on the contrary, what we are about to witness represents the end of a whole generation of heroes and for this Hades plays a key role, not only as a figure of speech, but more importantly as the destination of the heroic race.

Line 3 is of particular interest here, for it expresses the idea of the heroes' collective destiny and at the same time frames the name of Hades with the cryptic phrase *πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς ... προΐαψεν*. I call this phrase cryptic because of the ambiguity that characterises the words *ἰφθίμους* and *προΐαψεν*. The precise meaning of the adjective *ἰφθίμος* is not known to us and was also lost for ancient readers who apparently speculated on its meaning based on the Homeric usage of the word.<sup>10</sup> Their suggestion was to link it with bodily strength (cf. Homeric *ἰς*, *ἰφι*) and bravery, a translation which does not work very well with *ψυχὰς*.<sup>11</sup> The problems are compounded by the fact that this is the only time when the poet uses the adjective to characterise the souls of the heroes and I would argue that this fact is of great importance. Warden in his thorough study of the adjective points out that *ἰφθίμος* in the *Iliad* is used only of heroes whose progeny can be traced to the immortal gods (such as Achilles, Sarpedon etc.).<sup>12</sup> Its use suggests that, whatever *ἰφθίμος* meant originally, we have here an allusion to the divine origin of the heroes who fought and died in the Trojan War.

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<sup>9</sup> See Segal (1971), who traces the mutilation theme announced in the proem throughout the *Iliad* and concludes that the poem moves gradually towards a climax regarding the threat of mutilation of the dead. Apollonius of Rhodes preferred the reading *κεφαλὰς* to *ψυχὰς*, his choice probably being influenced by the occurrence of the exact same line in book 11.55 cf. ΣβT *ad Il.* 1.3, Kirk (1985), 53. Noting the intended distinction of body and soul ΣA on the same line disagrees with that view: ὅτι κακῶς τινες μεταγράφουσι 'πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους κεφαλὰς' ἵνα περιφραστικῶς τοὺς ἀνδρείους καὶ ἀγαθοὺς λέγῃ κεφαλὰς.

<sup>10</sup> Warden (1969), 156-8, *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>11</sup> Page (1963), 270 n.33, further objects that the application of the epithet to women 8 times in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* makes such a meaning rather unlikely.

<sup>12</sup> Warden (1969) 143-58 and more specifically 148-9. The adjective seems to have strong connections with the 'head'; cf. 11.55. It is also used to characterise women and this led Warden to think that one of its original meanings could have been 'rich' or 'fertile'. In the *Odyssey* *ἰφθίμος* is used twice of Hades in the formula *ἰφθίμω τ' Αἴδη καὶ ἐπαινῇ Περσεφονείῃ*. (10.534=11.47).

Thus the epithet functions as a signpost indicating semi-divine origin and its use in the proem serves to highlight precisely that attribute of the heroes whose souls were sent to Hades.

Let us now turn to the rare verb προιάπτειν which the poet uses to describe the heroes' death and descent to Hades. The verb ἰάπτειν, as is the case with ἴφθιμος, has uncertain etymology but most probably means 'hurl down'.<sup>13</sup> The scholiast also speculates that προιάπτω means something like 'send one to his death before his time' and I shall argue that this is an extremely perceptive comment.<sup>14</sup> However, as often in Homer, the meaning of the verb resides not so much in a fixed and stable semantic core, as in a range of associations that are guaranteed by context. A search for other occurrences of the verb in the *Iliad* proves revealing: προιάπτειν appears three more times in the poem and is always associated with the death of heroes and Hades as their destination. The translation proposed in the scholia can be applied to all of these instances and if we do so a pattern emerges, as I now want to show.

In book 5 Pandarus comments on his failed attempt to kill the raging Diomedes with an arrow shot by saying:

ἤδη γάρ οἱ ἐφῆκα βέλος, καί μιν βάλλον ὄμιον  
δεξιὸν ἀντικρὺ διὰ θώρηκος γυάλοιο·  
καί μιν ἔγωγ' ἐφάμην Αἰδωνῆϊ προιάψειν  
ἔμπης δ' οὐκ ἐδάμασσα· θεός νύ τίς ἐστι κοτήεις.

(*Il.* 5.188-91)

*I have already let fly an arrow at him and hit him  
on the right shoulder, right through the hollow part of the  
corslet. And I thought that I would send him to Hades before  
his time but still I did not tame him. He must be some dreadful god.*

Pandarus complains that although his shot found its target, he could not send Diomedes (προιάψειν) to Hades *before his due time*. Following the scholiast's suggestion it appears that we might have here an allusion to the limits that the tradition imposes upon the heroes of the epic. Diomedes traditionally survived the Trojan War and sailed back home. The poet of course knows that and we can assume that the audience does too. To be sure, Pandarus really believes that his shot should have done the job; this is understandable because, as Morrison has shown, the heroes in the *Iliad* are not in any way aware of the tradition they are actually

<sup>13</sup> *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>14</sup> The scholia cite *Il.* 6.488: μοῖραν δ' οὐ τίνα φημι πεφυγμένον ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν as contradicting the proem but then give the explanation that by προΐαψεν the poet refers to the fact that the heroes died young when the natural thing for man is to die at an old age, ΣbT *ad Il.* 1.3.



in the process of creating: Homer thus has the opportunity to present us with their hopes and fears while at the same time showing us alternative paths that the story could have taken, if only the tradition did not forbid it.<sup>15</sup> This explains why Pandarus thinks that Diomedes did not die because he was some dreadful god (or more generally because of divine intervention). But the bard and the audience know that this is not the case. Diomedes could not have died because that would violate the tradition or ‘fate’. It is not yet the time of the Achaean hero to travel to Hades. If that is the case, then the verb προιάπτω appears to have particular associations with the theme of fate and the poetic tradition: whereas προιάψειν for Pandarus stands for something that ought to have happened, the audience sees in it confirmation that fate (and tradition) cannot be violated.

A similar case is found in book 6, in Hector’s famous statement to his wife Andromache that no one can send him to Hades before his fated time. Trying to ease his wife’s fears about his impending death on the battlefield Hector says:

δαμονίη μή μοί τι λίην ἀκαχίζεο θυμῶ·  
 οὐ γάρ τις μ’ ὑπὲρ αἴσαν ἀνήρ Ἄϊδι προιάψει·  
 μοῖραν δ’ οὐ τίνα φημι πεφυγμένον ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν,  
 οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ἐπὴν τὰ πρῶτα γένηται.  
 (Il. 6.486-9)

*Dear wife, do not distress your heart for me,  
 for no one will send me to Hades if it is not my fated time.  
 It is not possible for any man I believe to escape his fate,  
 be he good or bad, from the time he is born.*

Hector claims that no man can send him against his fate (ὑπὲρ αἴσαν) and before his time to Hades.<sup>16</sup> As in the previous passage here too προιάψει is used in a context that stresses the improbability of escaping one’s fate. Hector cannot be hurled down to Hades by anyone before his fated moment and if he dies that can only mean that his fated time has come. Taking a look at book 22 when that time actually arrives provides sufficient evidence of the correctness of that view. In the opening of book 22 all the Trojans, except for Hector, have taken cover behind the city walls. Hector did not go inside because as the poet informs us:

<sup>15</sup> Morrison (1992) and (1997). See also Basset (1938), 100-2, Kullmann (1965), 42-8, Reinhardt (1961), 107-10, Fenik (1968), 154, 175-7, 221, summarised and discussed by De Jong (1987), 61-91.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Graziosi – Haubold (2010), 221 on Il. 6.487.

Ἕκτορα δ' αὐτοῦ μείναι ὀλοῆ μοῖρα πέδησεν  
(*Il.* 22.5)

*Hector's deadly fate bound him and he stayed there.*

The beginning of the end comes because it is fated to come.<sup>17</sup> We notice that although it is actually Hector's choice to face Achilles (*Il.* 22.92-110), the poet makes it clear that there was no alternative; Hector's fate was to choose to remain outside the gates and face his death. The hero himself comes to realise this in his final moments on earth before he is slain by Achilles. In 22.303 Hector recognising the fact that he is going to die says to himself 'now my fate has reached me' (νῦν αὐτέ με μοῖρα κιχάνει). The Trojan prince finally understands what has been clear to the poet and the audience all along: he is to be killed by the hands of Achilles because that is his allotted fate.

From our discussion so far it should be clear that in both of the above passages the verb προιάπτειν is used to describe not untimely death in terms of age but death ὑπὲρ αἴσαν, a journey to Hades before one's due time. That could be interpreted as an 'untraditional' death because as Morrison and others have shown 'fate' in the epic acts as the guardian of tradition.<sup>18</sup> But here it is crucial to realise that so far it has been two heroes (Pandarus and Hector) who used the verb and in both cases the implication was that one cannot be sent to the realm of Hades before one's fated time comes.

In the fourth and last appearance of the verb however, προιάπτειν is used by the poet himself and in order to describe the will of Zeus, in the same manner as in the proem. In book 11 the fighting is ready to commence again and the poet tells us that Zeus sent down to earth drops of blood as a sign that he was going to send many brave heroes in Hades.<sup>19</sup> The text reads as follows:

ἔν δὲ κυδοιμὸν  
ᾧρσε κακὸν Κρονίδης, κατὰ δ' ὑπόθεν ἦκεν ἔερσας  
αἵματι μυδαλέας ἐξ αἰθέρος, οὔνεκ' ἔμελλε  
πολλὰς ἰφθίμους κεφαλὰς Ἄϊδι προιάψειν.  
(*Il.* 11.52-5)

*And the son of Cronus raised the din of the battle among them  
and high from the heavens he let rain down drops of blood*

<sup>17</sup> On the binding force of fate see Richardson (1974), 216-7 and (1993), 107.

<sup>18</sup> Duffy (1947), Dietrich (1962), Edwards (1987), 136 ff. Jones (1996), Lateiner (2002), Wong (2002).

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of traditional elements in the passage and its reception by ancient readers see Nagy (1983) and Lateiner (2002).

*because he was going to hurl down to Hades many mighty heads of heroes.*

Once the battle begins many heroes will die according to the will of Zeus. The similarities with line 3 of the proem are obvious.<sup>20</sup> Besides the fact that almost the same phrasing is used (1.3≈11.55) the cause behind the descent of heroes to Hades in both passages is the will of Zeus and in both cases we learn about it from the poet's voice. However, unlike Hector and Pandarus elsewhere in the text, the poet refers to many heroes collectively, so avoiding questions of the proper time and circumstance of their death: what matters now is that many heroes *will* be killed.

Let us now try to pin down exactly how Homer uses this verb, and what that means for our reading of Hades in the *Iliad* proem. Graziosi – Haubold have shown that the *Iliad* stands in the traditional “history” of epic near the end of the Heroic Age. It is the events of the Trojan War and above all the events described in the *Iliad* that brought the end of this age and the separation of the world of gods from that of mortals.<sup>21</sup> In the tradition the reason for the end of the Heroic Age is usually identified with the will of Zeus.<sup>22</sup> We saw that Homer twice uses the formula Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν to describe the effect the will of Zeus is going to have on the heroes. When Homer says that Zeus is about to send many valiant souls to Hades the narrative and the tradition confirm him. On the other hand, when heroes themselves attempt to send others to Hades it always turns out that this is before their time.

It would seem, then, that Hades is closely associated with the accomplishment of the will of Zeus which in turn is associated with the concept of fate in the *Iliad*. Fate is an important factor in the epic and it is no coincidence that the poet links it with Hades as the ultimate destination for all the heroes in the *Iliad*, and also the place to which the whole of the heroic tradition will be transferred after it comes to an end. This becomes clear in *Odyssey* 11 where Odysseus comes literally face to face with the tradition of the *Iliad* when he meets his old companions in Hades. We will return to that episode in the chapter devoted to *Od.11*. What concerns us now is how the poet uses the theme of Hades in the *Iliad*. There is, as we have seen, a strong connection between the will of Zeus, fate and Hades; the use of the verb προΐαπτειν, if my reading is correct, stresses that connection. Of equal importance is the use

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<sup>20</sup> See ΣΑ *ad Il.* 11.55, and Hainsworth (1993), 225.

<sup>21</sup> Graziosi – Haubold (2005), 122ff. The argument is based on the famous fragment of Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 204.96-103 M-W) on which see Koenen (1994) and Clay (2003), 169-72.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Cypria* fr.1 (Davies). For a detailed discussion see Nagy (2005), 81-85.

of ἰφθίμους for the souls of heroes in the *Iliad* proem, if indeed we take the adjective to imply a divine origin: the will of Zeus sent many divine heroes to Hades, thus bringing to an end the heroic era when gods mixed with men, confining it to the Underworld. I argue that it is crucial for the poetic role of Hades that it acts both as a place of confinement and acquires strong associations with fate. The two aspects are in fact related: it is precisely because Hades in the *Iliad* holds sealed fast the gates of his kingdom that he can also act as the guardian of fate. As such, he becomes both the guardian of tradition during the heroic age and its storehouse after it has come to an end.

Having identified these characteristics of Hades in the *Iliad*, it is time to examine another important quality which the poet and the tradition attach to it: as ‘the invisible one’ Hades becomes a major challenge to the poetic gaze.

### 1.1.iii. *Hades and kleos*

In the *Iliad* Hades is strongly associated with gaining *kleos* or εὖχος, as it is primarily by sending another hero to the Underworld that glory is gained for the victorious warrior. The Homeric heroes are the first to associate glory with death/killing: the formulaic line ‘εὖχος ἔμοι δώσειν, ψυχὴν δ’ Ἄϊδι κλυτοπόλωρ’<sup>23</sup> which is used three times in the *Iliad*, always before delivering a fatal blow, expresses precisely that idea.<sup>24</sup> Taking an opponent’s life is translated into glory for the victor, whereas the constant risk of being sent to Hades by an enemy and the willingness of a hero to take it has a similar effect: as Sarpedon reminds Glaucus in his famous speech the only way to justify their status as heroes is to constantly risk their lives in battle and win glory by killing an enemy or getting killed themselves (*Il.*

<sup>23</sup> The exact meaning of εὖχος presents several difficulties and can be adapted in regard with the context see Adkins (1969), especially 29-33. In the examples I cite εὖχος is most probably intended to mean *boast*: a hero’s boast over the defeat of an enemy is translated into *kleos*. A good example of the direct association of boasting with *kleos* can be found in *Il.* 5.171-3 where Pandarus’ boast of his mastery of the bow gives him *kleos* among his people, see Muellner (1976), 86 and Nagy (1979), 45. For the semantics of the stem *eukh-* see Muellner (1976) and also Lateiner (1997), 246-8 with further bibliography. For the notion of *kleos* in Homer and Archaic Greek poetry see Greindl (1938), 5-29, Nagy (1974), 244-52, (1979), 16, (1980) and (1981), Redfield (1975), 31-33, Murnaghan (1987), 149, Segal (1983), Ford (1992), 59-67, Bakker (2002) and finally Larran (2010), who offers a historical approach to *kleos* and hear-say throughout the Greek literature starting from Homer.

<sup>24</sup> The line is used by Sarpedon before he kills Tlepolemus in *Il.* 5.654, by Odysseus before the killing of Socus in *Il.* 11.445 and finally by Meriones before his failed attempt to kill Aeneas in *Il.* 16.625. It is of interest here to note that in the last example where Aeneas is not killed the poet uses the optative δοίης instead of the future infinite δώσειν that is used in the first two examples where the opponent is indeed killed. For other instances where εὖχος is presented as the direct payoff of killing an opponent see *Il.* 5.285, 7.81, 11.288, 16.725.

12.309-328).<sup>25</sup> A hero's 'relationship' with Hades, then, is in a sense what defines his status in society through the measurement of his share of *kleos*.<sup>26</sup>

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Hades' presence is always felt in the *Iliad* and that the poet often brings it into focus by introducing the possibility of a hero being sent there prematurely.<sup>27</sup> This mechanism of narrative misdirection, as analysed by Morrison,<sup>28</sup> creates suspense, but also acts as a reminder that Hades is always in the background of the action. At the same time, no explicit information about the Underworld is ever given by the poet: Homer consistently portrays Hades as a place beyond the limits of the mortal and divine worlds and hence of his own storytelling.

In the section that follows I show that Hades in the *Iliad* is portrayed as the invisible realm that cancels all vision, human or divine, a place of utter confinement and concealment. I argue that through this depiction of the Underworld, Homer suggests that Hades remains impenetrable even to the sight of the omnipresent Muses, making it all but impossible to access.

#### 1.1.iv. *Hades the unknown, Hades the invisible*

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<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that in the end of Sarpedon's speech εὖχος is again presented as a prize that can be won by killing an enemy or given away by getting killed by one:

*Il.* 12.328: ἴομεν ἢ ἐ τῷ εὖχος ὀρέξομεν ἢ ἐ τις ἡμῖν.

*Let us go and either give glory to someone, or he to us.*

Sarpedon's speech has been interpreted as the spell-out of the heroic code by scholars, see Adkins (1960), 34-6, Schein (1984), 69-71, Hainsworth (1993), 352 who sees a "social contract" in the speech, Vernant (2001), 318 and Wathelet (2001). Clay (2008-9) argues that Sarpedon's heroism differs from that of the other characters of the *Iliad* since the Lycian king is fighting away from his land with the sole purpose of defending his honour.

<sup>26</sup> There is no denying that Hades is the ultimate destination of every man, hero or not, as Achilles poignantly notes in his response to the embassy in *Il.* 9.318-20, but even so a heroic attitude towards death is what guarantees *kleos* for a man, cf. Arietti (1986a), 8f., Hainsworth (1993), 104 and Vernant (2001), 322-3. It is again Achilles who makes that point explicit when later in his response comments on the two different fates that Thetis has foretold him about: either die young in battle and get immortal *kleos* or live a long life and abolish *kleos* by dying at an old age, see *Il.* 9.412-6.

<sup>27</sup> A well-known example is Menealaus' injury in book 4 (*Il.* 4.127-82) and the temporary suspense created by the poet through Agamemnon's fear of an untimely death of his brother.

<sup>28</sup> Morrison (1992), 1-10.

Hades' name appears 47 times in the *Iliad* - more than some of the more prominent Olympians' like Hermes, Hephaestus, Demeter and even Aphrodite.<sup>29</sup> Scores of warriors die in the course of the narrative and are explicitly said to go down to Hades, but we never get to *see* the Underworld or even receive any explicit information about it from the poet. As omnipresent as he is in the *Iliad*, Hades remains largely out of sight.

There is good reason for that, as we shall see. For a start, Homer associates the very name of the Underworld with invisibility: the name Hades itself, even though etymologically unclear, was always connected with vision in the popular imagination. This is certainly how Homer and his ancient audiences understood it: they heard in it the verb ἰδεῖν thus interpreting the Underworld as being literally the invisible realm: *A-ides*.<sup>30</sup>

One of the most striking examples of this is when Hector wishes that he might see, ἰδεῖν, Paris go down to Hades in *Iliad* 6. The pun makes Hector's impossible wish seem all the more ironic since Paris of course will see him die first.<sup>31</sup> A similar pun can be found in Priam's wish to go to Hades, δόμον Ἄϊδος, before he sees Troy conquered with his eyes, ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδεῖν.<sup>32</sup> This time however the motif is reversed as it is the impossibility of

<sup>29</sup> Hermes is mentioned a total of 31 times in the *Iliad*, 17 as Ἑρμῆς and 14 as Ἀργειφόντης. Aphrodite 39, Hephaestus 41 and Demeter only 5.

<sup>30</sup> Graziosi – Haubold suggest that the noun Ἄϊδος (<\*Aĩs) might originally have meant the 'underworld' but in Homer is used mainly as a name of Hades the god (Graziosi – Haubold 2010), 157. The idea of Hades being just the Underworld and Persephone being the only deity of the dead is first found in Nilsson (1932) 455ff. Clarke (1999), 157 believes that in Homer Hades refers only to the god except for the dative Ἄϊδι in *Il.* 23.244, which probably indicates movement to a place (Richardson 1993, 340). Thieme (1968), 137-8 argues that Homer uses two different words, one for the place and another for the god. For the origin and etymology of Hades see also Beekes (1998) and Waechter (1964) who argues for a Semitic origin of the names of Hades and Persephone. For the etymology of Hades in classical times see *Lfgre* on Ἄϊδος. Finally see Wolhfarth (1990) who discusses Plato's interpretations in *Grg.* 493a and *Phd.* 80d, as well as Burkert (1985), 196.

<sup>31</sup> *Il.* 6.284-5: εἰ κείνόν γε ἴδοιμι κατελθόντ' Ἄϊδος εἶσω  
φαίην κε φρέν' ἀτέρπου οἴζυος ἐκλελαθέσθαι.

*If I could see him going down to Hades  
I could say that my heart has forgotten its joyless misery.*

On the pun see Graziosi and Haubold (2010), 157-8. Wordplay is frequent in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, see Louden (1995), 27-46 with bibliography, for a categorisation of the most frequent punning motifs and also Francis (1983), who discusses etymological wordplay but does not look into the Hades' puns. See also Eustathius (III, 661, 10-1) comment on *Il.* 22.482-3 regarding Hades' invisibility: διὸ καὶ Ἄϊδος λέγεται, ἥγουν ἀήρ ἀφανής, ὃν οὐκ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν.

<sup>32</sup> *Il.* 24.244-6: /αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε  
πρὶν ἀλαπαζομένην τε πόλιν κεραϊζομένην τε  
ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδεῖν βαίην δόμον Ἄϊδος εἶσω.

*As for me, may I go into the house of Hades,  
before I see with my eyes the city sacked and pillaged.*

seeing *from* Hades that the pun emphasises: being in the A-ides one loses the ability to see. In both of these examples the poet plays with the idea of the Underworld's invisibility and concealing power, by punning on the verb ἰδεῖν, *to see*, and Hades' very name, the *invisible one*. By doing so Homer creates an acute contrast with the bright setting of the *Iliad* where vision, vividness and light are crucial components to human and divine existence.

A good demonstration of that contrast can be found in a well-known passage of *Il.* 5 where Homer allows us to witness first-hand the power of Hades' invisibility in the midst of battle. We take up the action at the point where Diomedes' *aristeia* is about to reach its peak; at that specific moment Athena announces to the hero that she will lift the mist that covers his eyes and thus enable him to recognise (εὖ γινώσκης) the Olympians that are disguised among the Trojans.<sup>33</sup> The implication is easy to understand: Diomedes might be looking at the gods but due to the ἀχλύς that impedes his sight, he is not able to *see* them.<sup>34</sup> The gods on the other hand, as Athena demonstrates, can see through the disguise of other gods and apparently can transfer that ability to mortals. Thus Diomedes with his new sight recognises Ares who has entered the battle, and retreats.<sup>35</sup> Athena, however reassures the hero that she will be beside him and prompts him to attack Ares head on. The goddess knows that she cannot be seen to help a mortal against a god and since Ares shares the same divine vision with her, disguising herself would not work. Consequently, Athena relies on a different form of camouflage: she puts on the cap of Hades (Ἄϊδος κυνέην) which guarantees that Ares will not be able to see her.<sup>36</sup>

The first thing to notice about the cap is that it is not part of Athena's standard equipment as this is described in the goddess' arming scene (*Il.* 5.733-747). There we saw Athena put on a

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*Il.* 5.127-8:     ἀχλὺν δ' αὖ τοι ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν ἔλον ἢ πρὶν ἐπῆεν,  
                  ᾧφρ' εὖ γινώσκης ἡμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.

*I lifted the mist that covered your eyes before  
so that you will know well who is a god and who a man.*

Slatkin (2007), 21, argues for a connection between death and the fog that covers mortal sight and remarks: "That shadow that keeps the god beyond human sight is an extension of the final achlus that covers the eyes of the warrior once and for all."

<sup>34</sup> The motif of a mortal who cannot be sure if he is facing a mortal man or an immortal god in disguise is a common theme in the Homeric epics, cf. Patroclus' charges against Apollo in *Il.* 16.703-10 and also Priam's encounter with Hermes *Il.* 24 349-36. On the motif's handling in the *Homeric Hymns* see Garcia (2002).

<sup>35</sup> *Il.* 5.825:     γινώσκω γὰρ Ἄρηα μάχην ἀνὰ κοιρανέοντα.

*For I recognise Ares leading the battle.*

<sup>36</sup> *Il.* 5.844-5.

different kind of helmet (ἀμφίφαλον κυνέην) suitable for warfare and designed to inspire fear with its dreadful appearance.<sup>37</sup> This time however Athena is about to engage in non-conventional warfare and has to use stealth in order to ambush Ares: the change of helmet signals a change in the form of battle.<sup>38</sup> The implication is that by putting on the cap of Hades Athena becomes invisible even to the divine sight of gods and the double pun with ἰδεῖν in lines 845-6 highlights the idea of absolute invisibility in the manner of the previous examples.

δῶν' Ἄϊδος κυνέην, μή μιν ἴδοι ὄβριμος Ἄρης.  
ὥς δὲ ἶδε βροτολογιὸς Ἄρης Διομήδεα δῖον ...

(*Il.* 5.845-6)

*She put on the cap of Hades so that mighty Ares will not see her.  
When Ares, the bane of men, saw godly Diomedes ...*

The poet makes a point of what Ares can *see* (ἶδε), namely the mortal Diomedes, and what he cannot (μή μιν ἴδοι) due to the effect of the *Invisible One's* cap. The implication is of course that the cap of Hades carries with it the qualities of its owner<sup>39</sup> and the ancient scholia support this interpretation when they refer to the cap of Hades as a device suitable to conceal gods from the sight of other gods.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Hades' cap appears also in the Hesiodic *Shield*, as part of Perseus' arms where it carries the terrible darkness (ζόφος) of night,<sup>41</sup> an

<sup>37</sup> *Il.* 5.743-4: κρατὶ δ' ἐπ' ἀμφίφαλον κυνέην θέτο τετραφάληρον  
χρυσείην, ἑκατὸνπολίωνπρυλέεσσ' ἀραρυῖαν·

*On her head she placed the doubled horned helmet with the four bosses,  
made of gold and decorated with the armies of a hundred cities.*

<sup>38</sup> A similar change of equipment is found in *Il.* 10.254-71 with Odysseus and Diomedes, in view of the spy mission, exchanging their bronze armours, shields and helmets for arms that add to speed and provide cover in the dark. For the unusual arming scene see Hainsworth (1993), 178-82 and Dué-Ebbott (2010), 290-2 who argue for the traditionality of such scenes in ambush scenes. See further Dué-Ebbott (2010), 31-89 on the poetics of ambush.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Schultze (1892), 468 who was the first to detect an allusion to the invisibility of Hades in this passage and was followed by Roeger (1924) in his study of the cap of Hades. On the cap's powers of invisibility see further Clay (1983), 15-6, Kirk (1990), 147-8 and Albinus (2000), 32 n21.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. ΣβΤ *ad Il.* 5.845b where the cap of Hades is taken to be a cloud that makes gods invisible for one another: νέφος, δι' οὗ οἱ θεοὶ ἀλλήλοις ἀφανεῖς. According to a different scholion on the same line the phrase 'wear the cap of Hades' acquired later proverbial meaning, referring to someone being hidden, ΣΑ *ad Il.* 5.845: παροιμία· ἐνδὺς τὴν κυνέην τοῦ Ἄϊδου· ἐπὶ τῶν κεκρυμμένων. Finally ΣΔ *ad Il.* 5.845 interprets κυνέην as helmet, as elsewhere in Homer, but with powers of invisibility: Νέφος τι, καὶ ἀορασίαν. Ἦ, ἀντὶ τοῦ, τὸ πρόσωπον ἔκρυπεν ὑπὸ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν. *Κυνέην. Τὴν περικεφαλαίαν.* In the Hesiodic *Shield* the cap has similar attributes of invisibility being part of Perseus equipment:

*Shield* 226-7: δεινὴ δὲ περὶ κροτάφοισιν ἄνακτος  
κεῖτ' Ἄϊδος κυνέη νυκτὸς ζόφον αἰνὸν ἔχουσα.



allusion to the Hades' *gloomy* qualities (ζόφος ἠερόεις).<sup>42</sup> It would appear that when Homer has Athena don the cap of Hades, he employs a traditional motif which is not only based on the etymology of Hades as the A-ides but also on a general belief of the Underworld as the embodiment of absolute invisibility.

We have seen that in the *Iliad* Hades was understood to be the 'invisible one', A-ides, even though, as Sourvinou-Inwood observes, it is never explicitly said to be the invisible realm.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Homer's frequent use of the popular etymology of Hades' name as the unseen in conjunction with the attribute of invisibility demonstrated in the passage with the cap of Hades, adequately show that the Underworld is depicted and understood in the *Iliad* as the place where vision is not possible. To die in the *Iliad* is essentially understood as becoming part of the invisible realm and the contrast between the bright light of day and the absolute darkness of death is stressed throughout the narrative.<sup>44</sup> The dead warrior is said to leave behind the light of the sun, his companions and/or family while his soul flies away to the gloomy darkness of Hades.<sup>45</sup> In that sense life and death are equated with *seeing* and *being seen* or *not seeing* and *being invisible*:<sup>46</sup> a hero while alive can *see* his comrades and can also be *seen* by them; once he is dead, all that changes.

In the section that follows I discuss the remaining attributes of Hades as they are presented in the *Iliad* alongside the few direct references made to the Underworld in the text. By doing so

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*Around the king's temples is placed the terrible  
helmet of Hades, carrying the dreadful darkness of the night.*

Apollodorus too (2.39.1) mentions the cap of Hades as part of Perseus' gear and refers to the invisibility it bestowed on its bearer.

*Bibl.* 2.42.7-8: τὸν Περσέα ἐδίωκον, καὶ συνιδεῖν αὐτὸν οὐκ ἠδύναντο  
διὰ τὴν κυνῆν· ἀπεκρύπτετο γὰρ ὑπ' αὐτῆς.

*They were chasing Perseus but could not see him  
due to the helmet; for he was hidden by it.*

<sup>42</sup> The expression appears to be formulaic of Hades, see *Il.* 15.191, 21.56, 23.51 as well as *Od.* 11.57, 11.155, 20.356.

<sup>43</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1981), 21.

<sup>44</sup> As happens for instance in two formulas used to describe the death of a hero: τὸν δὲ σκότος ὅσσε κάλυπεν (*Il.* 4.461, 503, 526 – 6.11 – 13.575 – 14.519 – 15.578 – 16.316, 325 – 20.393, 471 – 21.181) and στρυγερὸς δ' ἄρα μιν σκότος εἴλε (*Il.* 5.47 – 13.672 – 16.607).

<sup>45</sup> Griffin (1980b), 90-1 with textual references (*Il.* 5.659 – 16.602 – 10.459 – 14.518 – 16.855), Sourvinou Inwood (1995), 58-9, Clarke (1999), 148-56. For the flying soul see *Il.* 16.856 and *Il.* 22.361 and for motif of loved ones left behind *Il.* 22.482-3.

<sup>46</sup> Schein (1984), 72, comments about death in the *Iliad*: "Darkness prevails where eyes had previously been bright." See also Griffin (1980b), 162 and Vermeule (1979), 29 for the contrast of light with death.

I aim to show that Homer subtly creates a consistent image of Hades as remote and mysterious, a realm that is almost within the grasp of his poetic inspiration but never quite so.

### 1.1.v. *The Underworld Realm*

The stock epithets reserved for the Underworld associate Hades mostly with negative traits: Hades is hated (στυγερός e.g. *Il.* 8.368), relentless and untamed (ἀμείλιχος / ἀδάμαστος e.g. *Il.* 9.158) and also known for his extravagant horses (κλυτόπωλος e.g. *Il.* 5.654) which probably refers to the horses and chariot that carried Persephone into the Underworld.<sup>47</sup> This negative representation is understandable since these epithets reflect the ways in which the living experience Hades: as the ultimate expression of mortality, the fated and non-negotiable end of all human life.<sup>48</sup> The most explicit reference to Hades in the *Iliad* is made by Poseidon in book 15 of the *Iliad*,<sup>49</sup> where the god tries to prove his equality with Zeus. In Poseidon's scheme of the world Zeus was given rights to rule over the sky, Poseidon over the sea and Hades over the misty darkness (Αἴδης δ' ἔλαχε ζόφον ἠερόεντα); on the earth the three brothers were given equal rights.<sup>50</sup> Despite Poseidon's claim, however, that the earth belongs equally to all of them, it is not clear how this applies to Hades, as he never makes an appearance on it or actively influences the course of events as Zeus and Poseidon often do.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Hades appears riding a horse-drawn chariot in the *Hymn to Demeter* (17-8), and the association between the epithet and the scene of Persephone's rape had been suggested already in antiquity, see Richardson (1974), 151 with bibliography. The only other attested appearance of Hades on earth in early Archaic Epic is Dione's reference to the injuring of Hades by Heracles at Pylos in *Iliad* 5.395-7. However this incident is unattested elsewhere and had created controversy in antiquity. Aristarchus interpreted ἐν Πύλῳ as the gate (πύλη) of Hades and suggested that the allusion here is to Heracles' *catabasis* for Cerberus, see ΣbT *ad Il.* 5.395. However, ΣD *ad Il.* 11.690 refers to a story in which Heracles conquered Pylos which was defended by Hera, Poseidon and Hades. For the different interpretations offered by the scholia see Kirk (1990), 101-2. The whole speech of Dione has been viewed with suspicion by scholars; see Burkert (1984), 96-100.

<sup>48</sup> For an overview of Hades' epithets see Sourvinou-Inwood (1981), 21f.

<sup>49</sup> *Il.* 15.185-99.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Clarke (1999), 177 with bibliography and Graziosi – Haubold (2005), 70-1. For evidence of the division story's origin from an earlier 'Titanomachy' see Janko (1991), 247. See also Burkert (1984), 87, who argues for a Babylonian origin of the myth.

<sup>51</sup> The only instance in the *Iliad* where Hades is depicted on the earth is in 5.395-7 where Dione refers to the wound Hades received by Heracles at the gates of Pylos among the dead. The reference is probably to a traditional story, the context of which had probably been lost already in antiquity. Aristarchus interpreted the passage as an allusion to the story of Heracles' abduction of Cerberus and his confrontation by Hades at the gates of the Underworld cf. ΣbT *ad Il.* 5.395. The scholia offer also an alternative version of the myth in which Heracles conquered Pylos which was defended by Hera, Poseidon and Hades (ΣD *ad Il.* 11.689), whereas Pindar, *Ol.* 9.29ff., lists Poseidon, Hades, and Apollo as Heracles' opponents, see Gerber (2002), 34-9. For a discussion of the *Iliad* passage see Nilsson (1932), 203-4 and Kirk (1990), 101-2 who discusses the possible sources of the myth. For the different opponents of Heracles in Pylos see Janko (1986), 49. Finally, the encounter of Heracles with Hades features in Panyassis, on which see Matthews (1974), 52-7.

Sourvinou-Inwood argues that Poseidon alludes to the actual presence of death as a natural process: after all mortals on earth will eventually die.<sup>52</sup> This seems of course to be the case but what is important for my argument here is that the passage also illustrates the way in which Hades is consistently presented in the *Iliad*: omnipresent yet distinctly remote. Hades has equal rights of rule with Zeus and Poseidon but as the king of those below (*Il.* 15.188: δ' Ἄϊδος ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσων), his area of jurisdiction lies far apart from his brothers', beneath the earth.

There is common consent among scholars on the location of the Underworld in this passage, though it is perhaps the only unambiguous information the *Iliad* provides us with regarding the land of the dead.<sup>53</sup> Hades is remote, isolated and confined beneath the earth. Other passages seem to confirm that picture: for instance the common wish to disappear rather than face dishonour that is expressed with the formula γαῖα χάνοι, provides an indirect but clear reference to the Underworld. Thus, when Agamemnon wishes for the earth to open and swallow him in fear of future scorn for the death of Menelaus (*Il.* 4.182: τότε μοι χάνοι εὐρέϊα χθών) he is evoking an idea of invisibility and confinement very similar to that of entering Hades. The same is also true for Diomedes who utters the same wish when faced with the possibility of retreating in front of Hector (*Il.* 8.150 = 4.182).<sup>54</sup> The implication is that by concealing oneself beneath the earth one can be sure to vanish; as Clarke argues this is not necessarily a death wish but rather a “pictorial wish for total disappearance.”<sup>55</sup> Yet, Hades, although not explicitly mentioned, is undoubtedly in the

<sup>52</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1983), 21f., takes Poseidon's words to mean that Hades is in fact part of the world of men. There is however a distinction to be made on the way Hades influences the world of the living and the active influence Zeus and Poseidon have on it. It is indeed true that Hades as the personification of death is always present on earth (and on the sea for that matter), however its only manifestation can be thought to be the presence of darkness over the dying (see above note 22). This is arguably nowhere near Poseidon's epiphanies on the battlefield or Zeus' deliberate earthly interventions regarding the course of the battle.

<sup>53</sup> For Hades isolation and its location beneath the earth see Rohde (1925), 159, Arrighetti (1966), 1-60, Vermeule (1979), 33 n.56 with bibliography, Griffin (1980b), 147, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 56-9 and Clarke (1999), 178-80. Zeus alludes again to Hades' underground placement when in *Il.* 8.13-16 he refers to Tartarus as being even more below from Hades as the earth is from the sky, cf. Kirk (1990), 297-8.

<sup>54</sup> The expression is also used by Hector who wishes for the earth to open and swallow Paris (*Il.* 6.281-3) and by a nameless Achaean who encourages his companions to fight over Patroclus' body (*Il.* 17.416-7: ἀλλ' αὐτοῦ γαῖα μέλαινα/ πᾶσι χάνοι). The etymology of the verb χανεῖν is uncertain whereas its meaning is most closely translated as *gape*, cf. *Lfgre* s.v. For possible etymologies see Frisk (1960) and Chantraine (1999) s.v. For more examples of the 'hide under the earth' type in the *Iliad* see Clarke (1999), 178ff.

<sup>55</sup> See Clarke (1999), 179 ff. This view appears to be correct, although it is easy to equate the earth opening up and swallow a hero with the final descent to Hades after which it is not possible to be seen again, cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 59-60. Albinus argues for an association of cremation with Hades invisibility on the grounds of a similar etymology of the adjective ἀϊδηλον, that accompanies fire three times in the *Iliad* (2.455 - 9.436 - 11.155), to the one of Hades ἄ + ἰδεῖν = \*ἄFἰδηλον. In that case the meaning of ἀϊδηλον would be 'that which makes something invisible', cf. Albinus (2000), 32f. Kirk (1985), 163. However it would appear that in

background here and the fact that a similar expression is directly associated with the lord of the dead in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* shows that ancient audiences were aware of the association.<sup>56</sup>

Hades, then, is remotely placed beneath the earth as a place of confinement and concealment. Death is understood as permanently concealing the deceased from the vision of the living and in this respect the *Iliad* often associates the Underworld with the language of concealment and separation.<sup>57</sup> A common example is the hero who descends to Hades at the time of his death never to be seen again, while leaving his beloved behind in bereavement.<sup>58</sup> There are many such passages to be found in the *Iliad*. Andromache's lament for the dead Hector well demonstrates the way in which death is understood as a form of concealment in such contexts:

νῦν δὲ σὸ μὲν Αἴδαο δόμους ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης  
ἔρχεαι, αὐτὰρ ἐμὲ στυγερῶ ἐνὶ πένθει λείπεις.

(*Il.* 22.482-3)

*Now you go to the house of Hades, to the hiding place  
below the earth and you leave me in hateful bereavement.*

Hector is on his way to Hades,<sup>59</sup> leaving Andromache in bereavement which she calls her 'hateful' (στυγερῶ) grief, recalling Hades from the previous line and extending the Underworld's effect into the world of the living.<sup>60</sup> Hector descends to *the hiding place below*

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any case the adjective's meaning is *destructive* as its use of Athena (*Il.* 5.880) and Ares (*Il.* 5.897) confirms. For the possible etymologies and the meaning of ἀΐδηλος see *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>56</sup> In the *Hymn* the reference is to the opening of the earth from which Hades emerges.

*Hym. Cer.* 16: /χάνε δὲ χθῶν εὐρύαγυια.

*/ the earth with the broad ways opened.*

<sup>57</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 56-7.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Griffin (1980b), 162. For the juxtaposition of *penthos* and *kleos* in the *Iliad* see the discussion in Nagy (1979), 94-117.

<sup>59</sup> Hector is on his way and not yet in Hades since he has not been buried and his body is still visible on the battlefield; Andromache's choice of words is thus very precise. The idea that the dead are not fully incorporated in Hades until the time of burial appears both in the *Iliad* (cf. Patroclus' plea for burial in 23.71-4) and the *Odyssey* (cf. Elpenor's plea for burial to Odysseus in *Od.* 11.71-8). For the belief that burial finalises death see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 82, Richardson (1993), 173, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 57 and Clarke (1999), 180-9.

<sup>60</sup> For the epithets of Hades see above n.48.

*the earth* (ὕπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης),<sup>61</sup> an allusion to the concealing nature of Hades, whereas for Andromache the effect of hated Hades (στρυγεροῦ Αἴδαο) is felt in her bereavement. Hades is absent and present at the same time: absent due to its concealed nature and present through the *penthos* of those left behind.<sup>62</sup>

There is a certain tendency in the *Iliad* to allude obliquely to these qualities of Hades and its presence in the world of the living, rather than openly referring to them. In book 9 of the *Iliad* Achilles has received the embassy and has heard the opening speech of Odysseus. He replies with the following lines:

ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Αἴδαο πύλησιν  
ὅς χ' ἔτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη.  
(*Il.* 9.312-3)

*I hate as the gates of Hades the man  
who has one thing in his mind but says another.*

Achilles states that he hates the man who hides his thoughts as much as the gates of Hades. The rhetorical force of the image derives from the fact that ultimate concealment begins once one passes through the gates of Hades. Achilles uses this image quite deliberately as can be seen from his words in book 23 where he uses again the same verb κεύθω, only this time with a clear reference to the Underworld: during his instructions to his companions on how to treat his remains when he will be finally *hidden* in Hades:

καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν χρυσῇ φιάλῃ καὶ δίπλακι δημῶ  
θείομεν, εἰς ὃ κεν αὐτὸς ἐγὼν Ἄϊδι κεύθωμαι.  
(*Il.* 23.243-4)

*Let us place the bones in a golden urn double-folded  
with fat, until the time that I too will hide in Hades as well.*

So far we have seen that Hades is depicted in the *Iliad* as located beneath the earth, remote and confined, a place of separation from where there can be no return.<sup>63</sup> Yet Hades also acts

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<sup>61</sup> The noun κεύθος, which appears only here in the *Iliad*, is best translated as *hiding place*. See *Lfgre* s.v. See also the noun κευθμός in *Il.* 13.28 which derives from the same root *keuth-* and refers to the dark lairs of the sea creatures.

<sup>62</sup> Eustathius interpreted Andromache's reference to Hades in line 482 as a statement on the Underworld's concealed nature making the connection with the pareymology of Hades' name as A-ides, the invisible one. Eustathius, III. 661.10-1: διὸ καὶ Αἴδης λέγεται, ἦγουν ἀήρ ἀφανής, ὃν οὐκ ἔστιν ἰδεῖν.

<sup>63</sup> It is again Achilles that makes a point of Hades' inescapability when scorns Lycaon's ability to return to the battlefield after he had been captured by sending him to Hades who holds all (*Il.* 21.54-63), cf. Clarke (1999), 180. In the *Iliad* there is absolutely no exception to that rule, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) who cites *Il.* 18.115-9 and *Od.* 3.236-8. Even Sarpedon, the beloved son of Zeus, has to die and the best he gets is some drops of

as a crucial part of the cosmic order and counterpart to the bright world of the Olympians. To illustrate better how this works in the *Iliad*, I would like to adduce one final passage in which Hades features. In book 20, the gods no longer restrained on Olympus, are fighting an all-out battle with the permission of Zeus. Poseidon in a demonstration of power shakes the earth so violently that Aidoneus/Hades fears that the earth might be torn asunder:

ἔδεισεν δ' ὑπένερθεν ἄναξ ἐνέρων Αἰδωνεύς,  
 δείσας δ' ἐκ θρόνου ἄλτο καὶ ἴαχε, μὴ οἱ ὕπερθε  
 γαῖαν ἀναρρήξειε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων,  
 οἰκία δὲ θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθάνατοισι φανεῖη  
 σμερδαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τὰ τε στυγέουσι θεοὶ περ 65  
 (Il. 20.61-65)

*And beneath the earth, Hades, the king of those below  
 was frightened, and jumped from his throne with a shout, in fear  
 that Poseidon, the shaker of earth, might break open the ground  
 above and his terrible and mouldy abode that the gods hate  
 would become visible to mortals and immortals alike.*

Clarke cites these lines in support of his argument that the *Iliad* promotes the belief of an Underworld proper, one that is situated underground.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the passage confirms the location of Hades beneath the earth (ὑπένερθεν), as well as that of the world of gods and mortals above it (ὕπερθε). However, one important point that escapes Clarke's attention is that Homer emphasises the threat the opening of the earth would pose for the actual *invisibility* of the realm of the dead. Hades' excessive reaction betrays as much, as he jumps up from his throne and shouts in terror (ἄλτο καὶ ἴαχε) in a vivid description as the exegetical scholia also observe.<sup>65</sup> The god's concern is not so much the physical destruction of his realm but the possibility of it being exposed to the sight of humans and gods alike (note the verb φανεῖη in line 64). Hades' reaction is consistent with the way the realm of the dead is portrayed throughout the *Iliad*: invisible and beyond the reach of human and divine sight. Take away the concealment from Hades and the cosmic order of the universe collapses.

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blood and a proper funeral in his homeland (Il. 16.459-61 and 16. 666-75), Schein (1984), 48. On the rain of blood see Janko (1991), 377 and Lateiner (2002).

<sup>64</sup> Clarke (1999), 179.

<sup>65</sup> ΣΤ *ad Il.* 20.62: ἐκ θρόνου ὄρτο: ἐκπληκτικὸν τοῦτο, μὴ μόνον δεῖσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀναθορεῖν ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου. ἴτα καὶ τὸ ἴαχε κινητικὸν τῆς διανοίας τοῦ δείσαντος.

### 1.1.vi. *Conclusions*

What I hope to have shown in this section is that Hades, omnipresent as he is in the *Iliad*, is at the same time remote, isolated, confined beneath the earth and, most importantly, far from the sight of gods and mortals.<sup>66</sup> This ambiguous state of the Underworld creates an intriguing paradox for the poet as well as the audience since we keep hearing about Hades and seeing the results of its existence in the eventual disappearance of the heroes, but we never actually *see* the realm of the dead – with one exception as the poem moves inexorably from life to death Homer allows us to come closer to Hades until he finally allows us a glimpse into the Underworld at a climactic point. When Achilles grieves for Patroclus, the shade of his comrade comes to visit him from Hades. Here, Homer finally gives us something like a first-hand account of the dreadful realm of Death, though he does so in a way that is characteristically oblique, as we shall see: instead of attempting to penetrate Hades itself, Homer allows one of its representatives to be briefly present in the world of the living, but only at night, and in the form of a dream.

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<sup>66</sup> Arrighetti (1966), 1-60, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), p.59, Griffin (1980b), 147.

## *Chapter 2: The dream of Achilles*

### *1.2.i. Dreaming of the dead*

The dream scene of book 23, where the shade of Patroclus visits Achilles, is certainly one of the most emotionally satisfying as well as interesting scenes of the *Iliad*. The ‘impossible’ meeting of the dead with the living offers us one final insight into the relationship between the two companions; a relationship that in the course of the *Iliad* is rarely ever presented in a way that would allow us to observe its beginnings, or its emotional basis.<sup>1</sup>

The dream scene of book 23 offers us a unique opportunity in this respect as it is entirely devoted to the two heroes and, what is more, allows us to observe them reflecting on their relationship. The fact that this only happens after the death of Patroclus adds to the pathos of the scene, which, partly because of the improbability of such a meeting, takes on a distinctive character of its own.

In other ways too the dream scene holds a special place within the *Iliad*. Scholars have often discussed the literary function of dreams in Homer and the ways in which they are used to promote the narrative, as happens for example with Agamemnon’s dream in book 2 or Nausica’s dream in book 6 of the *Odyssey*.<sup>2</sup> Achilles’ dream does not follow this norm as Patroclus’ intervention does not really force the narrative out of a stall or give it a new direction. On the contrary, Achilles has already decided to hold the funeral the next day and in this respect Patroclus’ plea to be buried as soon as possible has struck some scholars as being out of place.<sup>3</sup>

In the section that follows I argue that Achilles’ dream indeed serves a very important purpose both on a poetic and a meta-poetic level. I argue specifically that through the dream-scene Homer explores on a poetic level the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus in a way that has never been done before: across the divide of the living and the dead. Scholars have

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<sup>1</sup> As happens for instance in the *Il.* 16.1-100 with Patroclus’ plea to Achilles.

<sup>2</sup> *Il.* 2.1-37, *Od.* 6.15-47. For dreams and their function in Homer see Arend (1933), Bjorck (1946), 306-314, Amory (1956) and (1958), Kessels’ monograph (1978) with discussion and criticism of earlier bibliography and the recent studies of Noegel (2000), 143-157 and (2007), 191-221. For the further development and use of dreams in tragedy see Devereux (1976).

<sup>3</sup> See Mazon (1940) and Hundt (1935), 61, who thinks of the dream as preparing the audience for the funeral. Kessels (1978), 37-9 interprets the scene on the same lines as the view of the afterlife expressed in *Od.* 11. According to his argument, Patroclus, being a shade, has no knowledge of what has happened since the day he died - which he argues is why he pleads so desperately for his burial. See also Clarke (1999), 74-5, 187-8 for a discussion of the nature of the soul as it is presented in the scene and Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 58-9, 182-7 for burial rituals associated with it.



argued that in the course of the *Iliad* the relationship of the two heroes becomes increasingly important until it finally forms the only link Achilles has with the Greek camp.<sup>4</sup> When that link is severed with the death of Patroclus, Achilles sinks into so intense a sense of self-pity that he loses much of his humanity. The only way for the hero to reinstate his lost identity and humanity is by, as Van Nortwick comments, “contacting Patroclus again, by welcoming into himself the spirit of his second self.”<sup>5</sup> And this is precisely what Homer achieves through the meeting with Patroclus’ shade in book 23.

From a poetic perspective, then, it is the importance of the very strong bond that Achilles and Patroclus share and the difficulty of breaking it that Homer explores in book 23 of the *Iliad*. Acceptance of his companion’s death leads Achilles to accept his own mortality which in turn prepares the way for the closure of the *Iliad* in the next book with Priam’s successful supplication for the return of Hector’s body.

The meeting with Patroclus’ shade, however, has important implications for the *Iliad* also on a meta-poetic level. I argue that through the dream scene of *Iliad* 23 Homer successfully challenges the seclusion of Hades, which as we have seen is inaccessible even to the gods. Through the ‘reverse *katabasis*’ of Patroclus, contact is made with the realm of the dead, and the dream scene serves the important purpose of allowing the audience that brief moment of contact.

By presenting us with Patroclus’ shade Homer essentially introduces into the narrative an Underworld scene which paradoxically takes place *outside* Hades. Throughout the opening of book 23, and the dream-scene itself, Homer constantly shifts from the domain of the living to that of the dead, mixing traditional ‘catabatic’ language with that of a typical dream scene. This mixing of formulaic language, I argue, creates a liminal poetic space that replicates the conditions of confinement in Hades, and exploits its poetic resources. Thus, when Patroclus’ shade speaks, it offers us a rather different and much more personalised take on the epic past than that of traditional Muse narrative.

In the section that follows I argue that Achilles’ dream provides us with a first example of what I have called Homer’s poetics of Hades, that is to say, with an alternative recollection of the epic past related through the unmediated experience of the heroes themselves. Patroclus’

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<sup>4</sup> Van Nortwick (1992), 39-61. See also Haubold (2000), 87 for Patroclus’ role in replacing Achilles’ social bonds. For the notion of Achilles’ second self, see further Fantuzzi (2012), 202ff.

<sup>5</sup> Van Nortwick (1992), 39.

visit, I argue, provides an alternative viewpoint specifically in that it challenges traditional notions of *kleos* and instead emphasises direct emotional attachment.

### 1.2.ii. *Speaking to the dead among the living*

At the beginning of book 23 the action is transferred to the Achaean camp after the rampage of Achilles and his killing of Hector. The Achaeans return to their ships after the battle but Achilles keeps his contingent of Myrmidons in full armour and has them perform a small chariot parade in honour of dead Patroclus (23.6-14). Achilles leads the lamentation that follows by placing his hands on the chest of Patroclus and addressing him:

τοῖσι δὲ Πηλεΐδης ἄδινου ἑξήρχε γόοιο  
χεῖρας ἐπ' ἀνδροφόνους θέμενος στήθεσσιν ἑταίρου·  
'χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι·  
πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην 20  
Ἔκτορα δεῦρ' ἐρύσας δώσειν κυσὶν ὦμά δάσασθαι,  
δώδεκα δὲ προπάροιθε πυρῆς ἀποδειροτομήσειν  
Τρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα σέθεν κταμένοιο χολωθεῖς.'  
(*Il.* 23.17-23)

*Among them the son of Peleus started the loud lament  
placing his man-slaughtering hands on the chest of his companion.  
'Hail, Patroclus, even in the house of Hades.  
Everything I promised you I am now fulfilling,  
that I will drag Hector here and feed him to the dogs raw  
and cut the throats of twelve glorious Trojan children  
in front of your pyre, in my anger for your death.'*

Achilles repeats the same pattern of lamentation as when he was first confronted with the body of Patroclus in book 18, where he similarly began his lament by putting his 'man-slaughtering hands' on Patroclus' chest (23.17-8 = 18.316-7).<sup>6</sup> Achilles' gesture is rather peculiar and stands apart from behaviour towards the dead as seen elsewhere in Homer. For instance, a grieving person would hold the head of the dead in their arms,<sup>7</sup> and then start the lamentation as is illustrated by Andromache's lament for Hector (*Il.* 24.723-4). Achilles'

<sup>6</sup> Segal (1971), 49-50 notes that both here and in the other two passages (18.316-7 and 24.479) the adjective is used "in a context which reveals how sharply Achilles' intense soul swings between the outermost extremes of love and hate." For a discussion of the adjective ἀνδροφόνους see Edwards (1991), 184.

<sup>7</sup> Schein (1984), 131, Van Nortwick (1992), 67, who also notes that Thetis holds her son in the same way, as if he was already dead (*Il.* 18.71). For the motif see also Kakridis Th. (1949), 67-8, Nagy (1979), 113 and finally Alexiou (2002), 4-7 and 36-44 for the survival of patterns in modern Greek funerary rituals.

gesture, however, although similar in the sense that he too makes physical contact with the dead is nonetheless strikingly different.

Achilles' placing of his hands on the chest of his dead comrade, I would argue, underlines the confused state of the hero in his encounter with death. Achilles behaves towards Patroclus' body as if the latter was alive, by touching the centre of his vitality. That the chest in the *Iliad* is generally considered the seat of man's living functions is wellknown: it is here that the *thumos* resides as well as one's *menos*, *noos* and *boule*,<sup>8</sup> and it is also in the chest that many warriors receive the fatal blow.<sup>9</sup> Patroclus kills Sarpedon by first thrusting his spear into his chest and then pulling it out, dragging along Sarpedon's *phrenes* and with them his soul (16.503-4).<sup>10</sup> When Achilles places his hands on Patroclus' chest he expects to find life but what he actually finds is the absence of life: Patroclus might be present physically but he is no longer part of the world of the living.<sup>11</sup>

Achilles' gesture therefore highlights his struggle to cope with his companion's death and their ultimate separation. This separation cannot be fully comprehended, however, as long as Patroclus' body is still visible, still within Achilles' grasp.<sup>12</sup> The hero's struggle to come to terms with his companion's death mirrors his equally important internal struggle to come to terms with his own mortality: by facing the paradox of Patroclus being present, yet at the same time profoundly absent Achilles grasps in essence for the first time the effect that Hades has upon the heroic world. Presence and absence, that of Patroclus and of Hades, will be the central point of focus in Achilles' lamentation and throughout the dream scene that follows.

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance the formula: ὄφρ' εἶπω τά με θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κελεύει (*Il.* 7.68=7.349=7.369=8.6). For a study of *thumos* in Archaic Greek Epic see Caswell (1990) and also Miles' and Lynch's discussion of the term (1980) which extends until the *New Testament*. For *menos* see 5.125 and 5.513; for *boule* 20.20 and for *noos* 3.63 and 4.309.

<sup>9</sup> The passages in which warriors are killed instantly or are fatally wounded by a blow to the chest are: 4.480, 5.19, 5.41=11.448, 5.57=8.259, 5.317=5.346, 8.121, 8.303, 8.313, 11.108, 11.144, 13.186, 13.438, 13.586, 14.412, 15.250, 15.420, 15.523, 15.557, 15.650, 16.481/503, 16.597, 16.753, 17.606.

<sup>10</sup> Whatever the precise meaning of *phrenes* might be they are clearly located in the chest and associated with the living force of a man. As we shall see later on, Achilles' comment when he fails to embrace Patroclus' shade (23.103-4) underlines the fact that without *phrenes* man is not considered alive anymore. The use and meaning of the word *phrenes* was far from clear already in antiquity, as the comments of the scholiast on *Il.* 23.103-4 show (Van Der Valk, 1963-4, 540-2). For a detailed discussion of the term see my discussion of *Il.* 23.103-4 below.

<sup>11</sup> Some more passages need mentioning here: it is in Achilles' chest, not in his mouth as we might have expected, that Athena pours nectar and ambrosia to keep the hero on his feet for the oncoming battle (*Il.* 19.348). However, Thetis preserves Patroclus' body by pouring ambrosia and nectar down his nostrils and not in his chest (*Il.* 19.38-9). Achilles receives the divine food as nourishment in the centre of his living functions while Patroclus' corpse requires it only as preservative and, because no life is left in it, it is inserted into the orifices through which living people breathe.

<sup>12</sup> As Van Nortwick (1992), 41, observes this would not have happened if there was no divine intervention that stopped the body's decay. For the process of separation and alienation of Achilles in the *Iliad* see Arietti (1986) and Harvey (1990-1).

Turning to Achilles' actual lament we can see that already the first line<sup>13</sup> introduces the theme of Patroclus' lingering presence in the world of the living:<sup>14</sup> *hail Patroclus / even in the house of Hades*. This line deserves careful consideration as it expresses the paradoxical situation Achilles faces. Let us first examine the choice of the verb *χαίρω* in Achilles' greeting of Patroclus, which I argue is somewhat unexpected in this context.

*Χαίρω* is used as a greeting four more times in the *Iliad*<sup>15</sup> and in all these cases it functions as a formal address, not a casual one between friends or companions.<sup>16</sup> For instance in book 1 of the *Iliad* where we find the first occurrence of *χαίρω*, the context in which the verb is used is undeniably formal. The heralds whom Agamemnon has sent to retrieve Briseis approach Achilles' tent reluctantly (1.327 *ἄεκοντε βήτην*) and then hesitate, not daring to address him (1.331-2).<sup>17</sup> Their hesitation results in Achilles making contact first by saluting them formally (*χαίρετον*), and announcing that as heralds they are not to be blamed.

We find a similar use of the verb in the embassy scene of book 9 where the context is almost identical to that of *Iliad* 1. This time the embassy consists of Achilles' ex-companions, something that puts emphasis on their present separation and the need to approach him formally. Achilles greets the embassy with *χαίρω* (9.196 *χαίρετον*) thus establishing a route towards communication,<sup>18</sup> something not to be taken for granted after his quarrel with Agamemnon. A few lines later, after food and wine have been served, Odysseus begins his speech to Achilles by using *χαίρω* as well (9.225).<sup>19</sup> The formal greeting of Odysseus serves as a reminder of the diplomatic status of the meeting as well as of the separation of Achilles from the Greek camp. The comparison of the hospitality in Agamemnon's and Achilles' tents

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<sup>13</sup> The line is repeated in *Il.* 23.172; on the repetition see Richardson (1993), 168,190.

<sup>14</sup> The observation that the language Achilles uses throughout the *Iliad* is a special one, reserved only for him, has been the focus of many studies. In support of Achilles' unique discourse see Parry A. (1956), 1-7, Claus (1975), 13-28, Hogan (1976), 305-10, Friedrich and Redfield (1978), 263-88, Scully (1984), 11-27, Griffin (1986), 36-57 and Martin (1989), 146-204. For important qualifications see Reeve (1973), 193-5 and Messing (1981), 888-900.

<sup>15</sup> *Il.* 1.334, 9.197/225, 23.19=23.172. In 10.462 Odysseus uses *χαίρω* in his prayer to Athena (*χαῖρε θεὰ τοῖσδεσσι*), where it cannot be taken strictly as a greeting. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 182-7, discusses the use of the verb in epigraphic evidence from funerary contexts and concludes that Achilles' salutation differs from common practice mainly because it is fleeting.

<sup>16</sup> When someone addresses more than one friend/companion usually the verb *κλυτ(ε)* is used (*Il.* 2.56, 18.52, *Od.* 4.722, 6.239, 14.495, 15.172). On the occasion of someone addressing his friend or companion formalities do not exist at all and usually the characters engage in conversation straight away; *χαίρω* is never used in such contexts.

<sup>17</sup> On the subject of hesitation in Homer, see Willcock (1987).

<sup>18</sup> Hainsworth (1993), 89 comments that the greeting is part of a strict etiquette in welcoming scenes. However, the use of *χαίρω* is not common throughout those types of scenes. The verb, as we shall see, is used specifically when the intentions of the parties cannot be known with certainty or when a certain distance exists between them.

<sup>19</sup> See also Edwards (1975), 54-5 who examines the scene as part of the welcoming scenes in Homer.

made by Odysseus underlines this divide even more (9.225-7): ‘we do not miss our equal share of food either in Agamemnon’s tent (ἡμὲν ἐνὶ κλισίῃ) or here (ἠδὲ καὶ ἐνθάδε).’ The Greek camp and Achilles’ tent are at present alienated and therefore both Achilles and Odysseus choose to address each other formally.

We can thus conclude that in the *Iliad* χαίρω is used in specific contexts as a rather formal address. The same applies in the *Odyssey*. One of the most telling examples is *Od.* 1.123 where Telemachus welcomes Mentor/Athena in the palace by greeting her with χαῖρε. Telemachus is at this point attempting to make contact for the first time with an unidentified stranger.<sup>20</sup> That being the case, he is obliged to use formal language and the greeting χαῖρε fulfils precisely that need.<sup>21</sup>

Later on in the *Odyssey*, and in a rather different setting, Euryalus, prompted by Alcinoos, begins his formal apology to Odysseus with χαῖρε (*Od.* 8.408: χαῖρε πάτερ ὃ ξεῖνε) and Odysseus accepts his offer of reconciliation by also answering with χαῖρε (*Od.* 8.413: καὶ σὺ φίλος μάλα χαῖρε). In this case again the context is such that a formal address is called for, as in the embassy examples of the *Iliad* we examined above.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, χαίρω appears to have a similar use in other early hexameter poetry as well, especially when deities are addressed, as often happens in the *Homeric Hymns*.<sup>23</sup> Garcia examines in detail its use as a greeting in the *Hymns* and notes that “the greeting is always pronounced before any petition is addressed to the god”;<sup>24</sup> such usage signifies the poet’s acknowledgement of the distance that separates him from the god he addresses.<sup>25</sup> The sense

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<sup>20</sup> West S. (1988), 92 comments, following Latacz (1966), 50, that the meaning of χαῖρε here needs to be extended from ‘welcome’ to a wish for the other’s well-being. Although I agree with this interpretation, I would argue that again here the verb is used as a bridge, a sign that communication can be made.

<sup>21</sup> Besides the passages cited in the text χαίρω is used as a greeting also in the following passages in the *Odyssey*: 13.229, 13.358, 18.122=20.199, 24.402.

<sup>22</sup> Χαίρω is often used in the *Odyssey* as farewell; for instance in *Od.* 5.205 when Calypso bids farewell to Odysseus or in *Od.* 13.59 when Odysseus says his last goodbye to Arete. In both passages we can again observe a significant distance between the two parties. In Calypso’s case the goddess acknowledges the unbridgeable chasm that separates her immortal nature from Odysseus’ mortality. She lets him go, bids him farewell and at the same time recognises the growing distance between them (5.205): σὺ δὲ χαῖρε καὶ ἔμπηξ. In Arete’s case Odysseus is again allowed to leave and as with Calypso so with Scheria the distance between him and the world he is leaving behind is ultimately unbridgeable. By saying ‘farewell’ to Arete Odysseus essentially waves goodbye to the fairy world that has kept him captive for ten years and returns to reality. Χαίρω effectively signals this transition. Finally, χαίρω is used as farewell also in *Od.* 8.461, 13.39 and 15.151.

<sup>23</sup> The passages are too numerous to be listed here; for a full list of passages, including Hesiodic ones, see *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>24</sup> Garcia (2002), 31, citing Wachter (1998), 72.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the imperative χαῖρε used by the poet in the *Homeric Hymn* V to Aphrodite, 92, on which see Garcia (2002), 22. Garcia further notes that χαίρω carries the semantic meaning of the noun χάρις in it, in the sense that the addressed god/goddess rejoices in the song/hymn offered by the bard, cf. Garcia (2002), 27-34, Race (1982),

of distance is also present when the god is addressed by a character in the narrative, either when the deity is not visible, as happens with Odysseus' prayer to Athena in *Il.* 10.462, or even during a divine epiphany, as happens in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*.<sup>26</sup>

We can see from the above that *χαίρω* is consistently used as a formal greeting in early Greek epic, in order to bridge a certain distance between two parties. In this light, the first hemistich of *Il.* 23.19 gains new interest since Achilles' use of the greeting is at one level a recognition of the distance that separates him from Patroclus. The close relationship, however, that the two heroes shared makes this separation almost impossible for Achilles to grasp. Being able to see Patroclus and physically touch him evokes a sense of familiarity but in reality life is gone from the body in front of him; and that prompts Achilles to greet Patroclus as someone towards whom he is not quite sure how to behave. His gestures in connection with his speech betray that the hero is in a state of frustration, confusion and uncertainty and it is that state that the opening word *χαῖρε* effectively reflects.<sup>27</sup>

The awkwardness of Achilles' formal address is further highlighted by his acknowledgement later in the same line that Patroclus is not present in the world of the living. Achilles addresses his companion formally, in the way living men do, but at the same time he is fully aware of the paradox his address creates. Metre reinforces the point, as often in Homer,<sup>28</sup> with the feminine caesura further intensifying the contrast between Achilles' greeting and Patroclus' state:

χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Πάτροκλε καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι·  
(*Il.* 23.19)

- ~ ~ | - - | - - | - - | - ~ ~ | - ~

*Hail, Patroclus, even in the house of Hades.*

The ambivalence of the address lies in the fact that Patroclus is in Hades and even though Achilles is aware of that (note the emphasis added by *καί* right after the caesura) he greets

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5-14 and Wachter (1998), 65-75. Taking this idea a step further, MacLachlan argues that “Charis bridges the great divide between gods and mortals. It is a softening agent, offering relationship, the exchange of kindnesses,” MacLachlan (1993), 33, cited also by Parker (1998), 125. In that sense too *χαίρω* functions as a connective that bridges the gap between gods and men.

<sup>26</sup> *Hymn III to Apollo* 464-6.

<sup>27</sup> Achilles' gestures and body language after hearing the news of Patroclus' death in *Il.* 18.22 are particularly expressive and this is true also of the lamentation and the dream scene of *Iliad* 23. For body language in Homer see Lateiner (1998), especially 139-290.

<sup>28</sup> See the discussion in Graziosi and Haubold (2010), 123, and their observations on the metric significance of Anteia's words in *Il.* 6.164.

him in an attempt to bridge the gap that separates them.<sup>29</sup> The rest of the speech (23.20-22) proceeds along similar lines: Achilles assures Patroclus that he remained true to his promises, defiling the corpse of Hector and slaughtering twelve Trojan captives on his grave; the reassurance of his excessive behaviour takes for granted that Patroclus can benefit from such actions. The silence from the bier that comes as a response almost dispels that illusion and focuses Achilles' actions on the funeral preparations.

Despite the hero's decision to hold the funeral, however, it is evident that he is not yet fully reconciled with Patroclus' death. For this reconciliation to be achieved Achilles needs to have a final meeting with his dead companion, a meeting that will allow him to witness the other side of what he sees in front of him: a glimpse of Patroclus' existence in Hades that will lead to the eventual acceptance of his companion's death as well as his own mortality.

### 1.2.iii. Raising the dead: Nekyomanteia in the 'Iliad'

Achilles follows up his address to Patroclus by dragging the corpse of Hector in front of the bier and then begins the preparation of a funeral feast for which he slaughters many oxen, swine, goats and boars (23.29-31). What begins as a typical Iliadic scene of feast preparation takes a different turn in line 34, where the blood of the slaughtered animals is said to run all around the corpse:<sup>30</sup>

πάντη δ' ἀμφὶ νέκυν κοτυλήρυτον ἔρρεεν αἷμα.

(*Il.* 23.34)

*The blood ran in cupfuls all around the dead.*

<sup>29</sup> Alexiou (2002), 139, argues that the formula "was traditional to the address to the dead". She bases her argument on the frequency with which it is found in inscriptions all around the Greek world. True as that may be, one must not forget that the epigraphic evidence is much later (3<sup>rd</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century BC) than the period during which the epics took their final form (9<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century BC) and due to the Panhellenic spread of the Homeric epics it is very likely that the inscriptions were influenced by them, as was certainly the case in a 2<sup>nd</sup> century stele from Lycia (Peek 1396) in which lines 23.19-20 are copied word by word except from the name of the deceased:

Peek 1396: χαῖρέ μοι ὦ Μητρόδωρα καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι  
πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην

*Hail, Metrodora, even in the house of Hades  
everything I promised you before I am now fulfilling.*

For funerary inscriptions in which χαίρω is used see Peek 1384-1406 (414-419).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the preparations in *Il.* 1.458-66, 2.421-9, 7.313-18, and finally 9.206-17 and 24.623-6 where it is again Achilles who prepares the meat. See also the sacrifice described by Phoenix at 9.464-9 for the closest parallel to the sacrifice at 23.29-31. The blood of the slaughtered animals is not mentioned in any of the above passages. For the type scene of sacrifice/feast preparation see Kirk (1990), 276.

The image of Patroclus' corpse being surrounded by the running blood is a very powerful one and appears to carry disturbing connotations. Above all, it strongly resembles necromantic practices such as we find in *Odyssey* 11.

Of course blood runs often in the *Iliad*,<sup>31</sup> and in some cases Homer's description of it is rather lurid, as for instance in the image of Hector's chariot and horses making their way through piles of dead bodies while the wheels get splattered with blood (*Il.* 11.534-6).<sup>32</sup> However, running blood in the *Iliad* always comes from wounded or killed warriors,<sup>33</sup> and the difference here is that the blood surrounding Patroclus is not the result of fighting and killing on the battlefield; rather, it comes from the slaughter of animals in what resembles a sacrifice, albeit not to the gods but to a dead man. The image we get is one of a blood offering to Patroclus, a kind of which we do not encounter elsewhere in the *Iliad*. A good example of post mortem treatment is the honours that Sarpedon receives which comprise of the cleaning and anointment of his body followed by burial in his homeland under a mound with a commemorative stele on top.<sup>34</sup> Sarpedon, being king of the Lycians and a son of Zeus, is of course not inferior to Patroclus but even so he does not receive any sacrifices before or during his burial. Scholars have interpreted the unusual way of honouring Patroclus as a reference to actual hero-cult practices of the Archaic and later ages;<sup>35</sup> in favour of such an interpretation is the use of the adjective κοτυλήρυτον, which appears to have some association with necromantic cults and the honouring of the dead. The exact meaning of the adjective was already lost at the time of Aristarchus who interpreted κοτυλήρυτον as indicating such quantity of blood with which one could fill up a cup (from κοτύλη and ἀρύω).<sup>36</sup> Leaf, following Aristarchus, argues that κοτυλήρυτον implies that the blood was actually drawn into cups and then poured as a libation for the deceased, in which case the scene would closely resemble the blood offerings of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, Richardson argues that the literal meaning of the adjective is "blood drawn off in cupfuls"

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<sup>31</sup> ἔρπει(v): *Il.* 13.359, 4.140, ἔρπει: 17.86, ῥέε: 4.451 = 8.65, 5.339, 13.655 = 21.119, 15.715, 20.494.

<sup>32</sup> For the image see Hainsworth (1993), 281 and also Kitts (2005), 198-200 who discusses Near Eastern parallels.

<sup>33</sup> For a semantic discussion of the word αἷμα in the Homeric epics see Koller (1967). For the ways the word is used in the wounding or death of warriors in the *Iliad* see Neal (2006), 15-33.

<sup>34</sup> *Il.* 16.667-83. This passage too has been interpreted as pointing to hero-cult practices, for a discussion see Nagy (1983) and Saraçoğlu (2005).

<sup>35</sup> Rohde (1925), 14-22, Nagy (1983), 190-4. For blood sacrifices in Archaic hero cult see Ekroth (2000), 263-80, and Ekroth (2002).

<sup>36</sup> ΣΑ *ad Il.* 23.34.

<sup>37</sup> Leaf (1900) on 23.34, Mazon (1940), 42.



and that a blood offering would require a more detailed description.<sup>38</sup> However, I would argue that Leaf's interpretation comes closer to the way κοτυλήρυτον functions in this context: it appears that Homer hints towards a blood offering without fully developing the motif. This is part of a narrative strategy that the poet follows from this point onwards and throughout the dream scene of *Iliad* 23, which aims to create what can be described as a hybrid narrative space. Whatever the exact meaning of κοτυλήρυτον might have been originally I would argue that here it functions as preparation for the encounter that is going to follow by provoking the audience's imagination to picture underworld imagery. In fact, if we compare carefully line 23.34 with the actual blood offering in *Odyssey* 11 we will find not just a resemblance, as Leaf suggests, but more importantly that Achilles' actions correspond closely with those of Odysseus' ritual which I quote below.

τοὺς δ' ἐπεὶ εὐχολῆσι λιτῆσί τε, ἔθνεα νεκρῶν,  
 ἔλλισάμην, τὰ δὲ μῆλα λαβὼν ἀπεδειροτόμησα  
 ἐς βόθρον, ῥέε δ' αἷμα κελαινεφές: αἱ δ' ἀγέροντο  
 ψυχαὶ ὑπὲξ Ἑρέβευς νεκρῶν κατατεθνηώτων.

(*Od.* 11.34-7)

*When I had supplicated the tribes of the dead  
 with prayers and vows, I took the sheep and cut their throats  
 in the pit, and the dark blood flowed in it. Then gathered  
 from Erebus the souls of the departed dead.*

The similarity between the scenes is striking: Odysseus has dug a pit in which the blood of the sacrificed animals flows, while the blood from the slaughtered animals flows similarly around Patroclus. The focus is of course on the blood-offering rather than on the carcasses.<sup>39</sup> once the blood flows into the pit contact between the world of the living and the world of the dead will be achieved.<sup>40</sup> Lines *Il.* 23.34 and *Od.* 11.36 have a direct correspondence which goes well beyond stylistic similarity:

ἀμφὶ νέκυν ≈ ἐς βόθρον  
 κοτυλήρυτον ... αἷμα ≈ δ' αἷμα κελαινεφές  
 ἔρρεεν ≈ ῥέε

<sup>38</sup> Richardson (1993), 169. For the use of the adjective and its possible connections to the cult of the dead see *Lfgre* s.v. with further references.

<sup>39</sup> Odysseus does not mention the carcasses again after the sacrifice. Instead, the focus is on the running blood; for the ritual see Heubeck (1988), 71, 76, Tsagarakis (2000), 37ff.

<sup>40</sup> See Heubeck (1988), 80, who takes ῥέε δ' αἷμα κελαινεφές as pointing towards the scene that follows.

Each part of *Il.* 23.34 appears to have its correspondence in *Od.* 11.36 as Achilles' actions mirror those of Odysseus in his *nekyomanteia*: Odysseus calls the dead with prayers and vows and then lets the blood flow into the pit which results in the souls coming forth from Erebus. In *Iliad* 23 Achilles follows the same pattern, albeit implicitly: he starts by calling the dead Patroclus and after reassuring him that he has kept his vows he lets the blood of the slaughtered animals run around the corpse. The motif of prayer to/evocation of the dead – sacrifice – flowing of blood – emergence of the soul(s) can be identified in both passages. The point of course is not that Achilles consciously performs a similar *nekyomanteia* to that of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11. Rather, I argue that the resemblance of the passages reveals that the language and imagery of underworld narratives has already been introduced at this early stage in *Iliad* 23, well before the appearance of Patroclus' shade. In this way the ground is prepared for the unexpected appearance of the shade in Achilles' dream that is to follow.

Resonances with necromantic ritual at the beginning of *Iliad* 23, then, provide a context for the appearance of the dead Patroclus later in the book. Achilles has effectively summoned Patroclus from the dead, and the use of underworld language has made the audience aware of that. Even so, Patroclus cannot answer the call in broad daylight. Homer needs to create a liminal space in which the shade can ascend into the world of the living, and that space is provided by the onset of darkness. The narrative is therefore stalled until night falls and a dream supplies the right context for an encounter between the living and the dead: Hades has been evoked and we now need to wait until it responds.

#### 1.2.iv. *Waiting for darkness*

After his lamentation Achilles is led into the tent of Agamemnon where he is invited to wash the blood off his skin (*Il.* 23.41). He however refuses and points out that it is not proper to do so until Patroclus has been buried:

οὐ θέμις ἐστὶ λοετρὰ καρήατος ἄσσον ἰκέσθαι  
 πρὶν γ' ἐνὶ Πάτροκλον θέμεναι πυρὶ σῆμά τε χεῦναι  
 κείρασθαί τε κόμην, ἐπεὶ οὐ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ὄδε  
 ἴξετ' ἄχος κραδίην ὄφρα ζωῶσι μετείω.

(*Il.* 23.44-7)

*It is not right for water to touch my head before I have  
 delivered Patroclus to the fire, heaped him a burial mount*

*and cut my hair, since a grief like this will not come  
a second time to my heart while I reside among the living.*

Taking a bath after returning from battle is common practice for heroes in the *Iliad*,<sup>41</sup> and, as Grethlein shows, not only for the ones that return alive but also for the body of a hero who has been killed. More specifically, Grethlein notes that the “reworking of formulaic language” in the preparation of the bath for Achilles would have reminded the audience of the bath scene of Patroclus’ body (18.344-5) and consequently of his death.<sup>42</sup> This is important because the echoes between the two scenes introduce further hints of underworld language. Achilles refuses to take the customary bath of the living hero, as he has already opted for the bath of the dead by killing Hector. Exploiting the bath scene’s dual meaning helps the poet to keep Hades present in the narrative without directly referring to it. This technique of indirect reference chimes with the general ambivalence of Achilles’ actions in book 23, as he treats Patroclus as a living man while at the same time re-enacting an underworld ritual in the midst of the Achaean camp. Achilles’ own refusal to clean himself after battle adds yet another element that helps prepare the way for the unique Underworld scene that is to follow.

On a social level, Achilles’ refusal to clean himself of the gore and blood of battle sets him apart from his companions. By denying to follow custom, Achilles attempts to express his intense grief for Patroclus’ death, before the time of grieving for Patroclus will come to an end with his burial. This is important because it implies that Achilles’ grief is attached to the visible remains of Patroclus: the hero grieves only for what he can still see. In this sense the physical existence of Patroclus’ body in the world of the living holds both heroes back: Achilles cannot be set free from his excessive grief and fully re-enter his society and Patroclus’ shade cannot, as we shall see, gain access to Hades where it belongs. The narrative tension rises with every line, anticipating, almost forcing the appearance of Patroclus’ shade.

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<sup>41</sup> Grethlein (2007), 28 cites all the instances and discusses bath scenes as a special kind of type-scenes.

<sup>42</sup> *Op. cit.* 33-4. Grethlein’s argument is rightly based on the use of almost identical formulaic language in the two scenes:

*Il.* 18.344-5:      ἀμφὶ πυρὶ στήσαι τρίποδα μέγαν, ὄφρα τάχιστα  
                         Πάτροκλον λούσειαν ἄπο βρότον αἱματόεντα.

*They placed a large tripod on the fire, so that in all haste  
They would bathe Patroclus clean from the dust and blood.*

*Il.* 23.40-1:      ἀμφὶ πυρὶ στήσαι τρίποδα μέγαν, εἰ πεπίθοιεν  
                         Πηλεΐδην λούσασθαι ἄπο βρότον αἱματόεντα.

*They placed a large tripod on the fire, if they could persuade  
the son of Peleus to bathe himself clean from the dust and blood.*

In the remainder of his speech Achilles gives Agamemnon instructions about the preparations for the funeral:

ἠῶθεν δ' ὄτρυνον ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον  
ῦλην τ' ἀξέμεναι παρά τε σχεῖν ὅσσ' ἐπεικῆς 50  
νεκρὸν ἔχοντα νέεσθαι ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα,  
ὄφρ' ἦτοι τοῦτον μὲν ἐπιφλέγη ἀκάματον πῦρ  
θᾶσσον ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν, λαοὶ δ' ἐπὶ ἔργα τράπωνται  
(*Il.* 23.49-53)

*At dawn Agamemnon, king of men, send your people to  
bring back wood and all these that befit a dead man  
to have with him when going under the gloomy darkness,  
so that untiring fire will consume him and hide him  
quickly from our eyes, and the men will attend to their duties.*

Achilles' grief, although always in the background, has given way to the more pressing matter of Patroclus' burial. Reference to Patroclus as *the body* (νεκρὸν) betrays the need of Achilles to distance himself emotionally in order to be able to arrange the burial. The orders given by Achilles reflect standard practise in dealing with the dead<sup>43</sup> and this is a considerable change in the hero's behaviour which has been rather eccentric so far: by being concerned with what the dead expects from him Achilles prepares himself to accept Patroclus' death and also to resume his own role within the Greek camp.

For that to happen, the physical body of the dead Patroclus must disappear, and un-wearing fire (ἀκάματον πῦρ) is the means through which Patroclus will vanish from the sight (ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν) of men and reach the darkness of the Underworld (νέεσθαι ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα). By making the body disappear, the attachment with the dead will be finally severed and the living will be able to attend to their everyday cares (λαοὶ δ' ἐπὶ ἔργα τράπωνται).

That point, however, has not yet been reached. As yet unburied, Patroclus is not yet fully integrated into Hades, and can therefore still be seen.<sup>44</sup> His uncertain status, as well as the intimation of necromantic rituals that we examined above, further prepares for the appearance of the shade. The chain of events seems to naturally point to the dream scene that follows; it is time for Patroclus to make one last appearance and everything so far has led to this: the

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<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of the Homeric funeral see Edwards (1986) and also Seaford (1989). Muriel (1999) sees a deeper symbolism behind the fact that it is men and not women that weep for Patroclus. Nagy (1980) compares Patroclus' funeral with Indo-European parallels.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Il.* 22.482-3, where Andromache addresses Hector who has just been killed and lies on the battlefield by saying that he is *going* to be hidden in the chambers of Hades.

ritual-like sacrifices, the invocation and finally Achilles' acceptance that Patroclus must be given a proper funeral.

### 1.2.v. *The dream scene*

Night falls, and the Greeks go to sleep in their tents except for Achilles who stays by the sea shore, grieving for Patroclus.

Πηλεΐδης δ' ἐπὶ θινὶ πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης  
κεῖτο βαρὺ στενάχων πολέσιν μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσιν 60  
ἐν καθαρῷ, ὅθι κύματ' ἐπ' ἠϊόνος κλύζεσκον:  
εὔτε τὸν ὕπνος ἔμαρπτε λύων μελεδήματα θυμοῦ  
νήδυμος ἀμφιχυθείς: μάλα γὰρ κάμε φαίδιμα γυῖα  
Ἔκτορ' ἐπαΐσσων προτὶ Ἴλιον ἠνεμόεσσαν

(*Il.* 23.59-64)

*The son of Peleus sat groaning heavily at the shore  
of the loud roaring sea among the Myrmidons,  
in a clear spot where the waves washed over the shore.  
Then sweet sleep seized him, pouring around him,  
loosening the cares of his heart. Because his shining limbs  
were very tired from chasing Hector at windy Ilium.*

The sea shore is perhaps the space most closely associated with Achilles in the *Iliad*; it is to the beach that he goes after his argument with Agamemnon (1.350), and the fact that Thetis resides in the sea makes it all the more appropriate that he should withdraw there in times of emotional need. Furthermore, the shore is often associated with solitude and sadness in Homer.<sup>45</sup> Achilles is surrounded by Myrmidons but occupies a clear space among them (23.61), which hints towards the hero's isolated position within the camp. Achilles sits ἐν καθαρῷ (23.61), in a well-defined space. The phrase is found two more times in the *Iliad* (8.491=10.199) in the formula ἐν καθαρῷ ὅθι δὴ νεκύων διεφαίνετο χῶρος,<sup>46</sup> and it refers to locations where Hector holds his night council after routing the Greeks, and where the Greeks simultaneously hold theirs outside their wall. Achilles too is about to have a meeting: he is

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Kirk (1985), 57 and 88-9, where all the relevant passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are cited. Segal (1971), 51 notes the similarities with *Il.* 1.327 and argues that in book 23 "the passage suggests an enlarged temporal as well as spatial perspective."

<sup>46</sup> See Elliger (1975), 68, who discusses the expression as a description of a landscape. Dué-Ebbott (2010), 275, note that the reference to the dead adds to the eeriness of these scenes.

put in an appropriate place among his companions, not alone but yet isolated. Furthermore, the use of ἐν καθαροῦ carries sinister connotations as it evokes the piles of bodies among which the meetings of the living take place. In *Il.* 23 Homer reverses this motif, as Achilles stands in a space cleared of the living, where he is about to meet the dead.

Even the way in which Achilles falls asleep evokes Underworld imagery: *sweet sleep seized him, pouring around him, loosening the cares of his heart*. The cares of Achilles are loosened in a very similar way the knees or the *menos* of a warrior are loosened by death. The formula λύων μελεδήματα θυμοῦ, found only here in the *Iliad*, is very close to the standardised formulas that describe death on the battlefield, such as λῦσε δὲ γυῖα and ὑπέλυσε μένος καὶ φαίδιμα γυῖα.<sup>47</sup> The reference to Achilles' *shining limbs* (φαίδιμα γυῖα) in the next line makes the pun even more effective: Homer has Achilles fall asleep in the same way warriors die on the battlefield, thus hinting towards the transition to the dream/Hades scene that follows. In this sense Achilles, by falling asleep, begins his own 'katabasis', entering the liminal space of the dream in which Patroclus will appear.

So far in the *Iliad* we have been kept at a safe distance from the realm of the dead but now we are about to look into Hades and the fate that awaits all heroes, mediated through the appearance of Patroclus' shade to Achilles. Patroclus' shade is introduced straight after Achilles has fallen asleep, followed by a description of its appearance:

ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο  
 πάντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθος τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' εἴκυῖα,  
 καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα ἔστο·

(*Il.* 23.65-67)

*There came the soul of wretched Patroclus,  
 resembling him in his stature and beautiful eyes  
 and voice, and wearing the same garments around his skin.*

The first hemistich of line 65 introduces the shade but it is not clear yet what type of scene this is going to be. The expression ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ appears to be formulaic in *catabatic* contexts as it is used repeatedly in *Od.* 11 to introduce the consecutive meetings that

<sup>47</sup> The formulas are used in the following variations in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: (ἐ)λύσε δὲ γυῖα: *Il.* 4.469, 11.240, 11.260, 16.312, 16.400, 16.465, 21. 406 – ὑπέλυσε δὲ γυῖα: *Il.* 15.581, 23.726 – (ὑπ)(ἐ)λυσε(ν) μένος: *Il.* 6.27, 16.400, *Od.* 3.450 (for oxen sacrifice) – (ὑπὸ) γούνατ(α) (ἐ)λύσε(ν): *Il.* 5.176, 11.579, 13.412, 15.291, 16.425, 17.349, *Od.* 14.69, 14.236.

Odysseus has with the shades there.<sup>48</sup> The use of the formula here signals the transition from the reality of the Achaean camp to the dream/underworld scene. The transition is not smooth: even if the shade's entrance has been carefully prepared and anticipated from the beginning of book 23, Patroclus literally invades the scene without warning.

Patroclus' ghost appears immediately after (66-7), and the poet focusses our attention on the visual character of the encounter: Patroclus is described as looking exactly as he did when alive, in terms of stature, eyes and voice; even his clothes are the same. The insistence on the shade's appearance is not accidental: the scene is vivid, seemingly evoking the unwavering clarity of the Muse's gaze.<sup>49</sup> Yet that clarity is immediately compromised: Patroclus merely *looks like* himself (23.66 ἔϊκυῖα), deceptively so, but he no longer *is* himself. The link between seeing and comprehending is broken here in a way that is unique in the *Iliad*: Patroclus might be present as far as Achilles' vision is concerned – but being dead, he is just an *eidolon* of his former self.

At this point we get our first hint that what we are witnessing is actually a dream as the shade of Patroclus stands above the head of his companion and rebukes him for being asleep:

στῆ δ' ἄρ' ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς καί μιν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν:  
 'εὔδεις, αὐτὰρ ἐμεῖο λελασμένος ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.  
 οὐ μὲν μευ ζώντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος· 70  
 θάπτε με ὅττι τάχιστα πύλας Αἴδαο περήσω.  
 τῆλέ με εἵργουσι ψυχὰι εἴδωλα καμόντων,  
 οὐδέ μέ πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐῶσιν,  
 ἀλλ' αὐτως ἀλάλημαι ἀν' εὐρυπυλῆς Ἄϊδος δῶ.'  
 (Il. 23.68-74)

*He stood over his head and said to him these words:  
 'you sleep, and have completely forgotten about me Achilles.  
 You did not neglect me when I was alive but you do now that  
 I am dead. Bury me so I can cross the gates of Hades as soon as possible.  
 For the other souls, images of dead men, keep me away,  
 and will not let me join them on the other side of the river, but  
 I wretchedly wander around Hades' abode with the broad gates.*

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Leaf's (1900) comment on *Il.* 23.65, Richardson (1993), 171. The same formula is used in *Od.* 11.84, 90, 387 and 467.

<sup>49</sup> See also the scholiast's comment on the effect of the description: ΣΤ *ad Il.* 23.67: ἄκρως ἐπεξεργάζεται τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ ὄνειρου· ἔναυλος γὰρ τῷ Ἀχιλλεῖ ὁ τοῦ φίλου τύπος.

Both actions, the standing over the head and the rebuke that follows, are characteristic of dream scenes in Homer,<sup>50</sup> and their inclusion signals the switching of the narrative from “Underworld” to “dream” mode, and thus back into the world of the living. We are seemingly back on safe territory, witnessing a dream scene very similar to that of Agamemnon in book 2,<sup>51</sup> but that impression does not last long. Already a couple of lines after the initial rebuke the *catabatic* motif reappears and again colours the scene. Lines 70-4 are filled with language associated with Hades: θανόντος in line 70, θάπτέ με/πύλας Ἄϊδαο in line 71, εἴργουσι ψυχαί in 72, ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο, apparently one of the rivers of Hades, in 73 and finally the reference to Hades itself, εὐρυπυλῆς Ἄϊδος δῶ in line 74.<sup>52</sup> At this point, the reality of the dream and that of Hades have been thoroughly merged, creating a peculiarly iridescent effect: we know that this is a dream, yet we have also been taken to the realm of the dead.

Patroclus’ speech follows a similar pattern of merging the realms of the living and of the dead: the shade has the same tone of voice as did Patroclus (23.67), yet already from its very beginning with the burial request we can be sure that this is not the speech of a living man. Furthermore, Patroclus’ words are distinctly coloured by intense self-pity and remorse and thus stand apart from the standard heroic speeches we have encountered so far in the *Iliad*. The impression that the Patroclus whom Achilles sees and hears is no longer the same grows with every line and the paradox of seeing and comprehending becomes even more prominent as the scene proceeds.

In the first part of his speech Patroclus blames Achilles for not caring about him in death and requests his immediate burial. This might come as a surprise since Achilles has been trying to honour Patroclus excessively and has also given instructions about his funeral on the following day.<sup>53</sup> In Achilles’ view he should be blamed for being careless while Patroclus was alive, since he holds himself responsible for his death (*Il.* 18.82 τὸν ἀπόλεσα) and for not being there to defend him (*Il.* 18.98-9 οὐκ ἄρ’ ἔμελλον ἐταίρω / κτεινομένῳ ἐπαμῦναι).

<sup>50</sup> *Il.* 23.68=24.682 and also *Od.* 2.20, 2.59, 10.496-7, 20.32, Richardson (1993), 172. For the dream-figure that stands over the head of the dreamer see Dodds (1951), 105-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Il.* 2.16-36. For a discussion of that dream see Kessels (1978) 26ff., Reid (1973) and Kirk (1985), 116f.

<sup>52</sup> Pocock (1965) is a good example of the attempts made by scholars to draw an Underworld topography based on Patroclus’ words.

<sup>53</sup> Richardson (1993), 172-3, comments that “it is typical Homeric psychology that Patroklos’ ghost gives an extra impulsion to what is already Akhilleus’ own wish.” The uniqueness of the scene makes such a generalisation seem of dubious value.



Patroclus however confronts him with a different perspective: it is after his death that he is not treated properly:<sup>54</sup> by insisting on keeping Patroclus in the world of the living Achilles has essentially doomed his companion's shade to wander helplessly between life and death. We can suppose that this accusation has a big impact on Achilles since in the heroic world a life without fixed abode is among the worst imaginable. Aimless and constant wandering is considered in Homer as the ultimate form of wretchedness and the wandering of Patroclus' shade is not the only example of this. We find the same motif more fully developed in the story of Bellerophon in book 6 of the *Iliad*. After a successful heroic career Bellerophon becomes hated by the gods and his downfall soon follows in the form of aimless wandering:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ κεῖνος ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν,  
ἦτοι ὁ κὰπ πεδίον τὸ Ἀλήϊον οἶος ἀλᾶτο  
ὄν θυμὸν κατέδων, πάτον ἀνθρώπων ἀλεείνων

(*Il.* 6.200-2)

*But when he became hated by all the gods  
then he wandered around the Aleian plain  
eating his own heart and avoiding the path of men.*

Homer puns on the wretchedness of Bellerophons' punishment by having him wander (ἀλᾶτο) in the Aleian plain (Ἀλήϊον), 'the place of wretched wanderings'.<sup>55</sup> The extensive pun presupposes that the audience understands the severity of such punishment.<sup>56</sup> Patroclus' case is very similar, and a sense of separation from normality can be identified in both passages: Bellerophon is isolated from the living, being himself alive, while Patroclus, who is dead, cannot be incorporated into Hades among the dead. As a result of their inability to join their respective communities by crossing the appropriate barriers (ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐῶσιν / πάτον ἀνθρώπων ἀλεείνων) both heroes end up in a state of wretched wandering (ἀλάλημαι / ἀλᾶτο). Patroclus' suffering reflects Achilles' inability to comprehend his death and the shade's complaint stresses that point by comparing Achilles' treatment towards him before and after death.

At this point the tone changes and becomes more personal with the shade directly addressing Achilles:

καί μοι δὸς τὴν χεῖρ' ὀλοφύρομαι, οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' αὖτις  
νίσομαι ἐξ Αἴδαο, ἐπὶν με πυρὸς λελάχητε.

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<sup>54</sup> Schein (1984), 155.

<sup>55</sup> Graziosi – Haubold (2010), 135, who further note that the adjective ἀλεείνων in line 202 puns once more with Ἀλήϊον οἶος ἀλᾶτο of the previous line.

<sup>56</sup> Graziosi – Haubold (2005), 141-2.

οὐ μὲν γὰρ ζωοὶ γε φίλων ἀπάνευθεν ἑταίρων  
βουλὰς ἐζόμενοι βουλευόμεν, ἀλλ' ἐμὲ μὲν κῆρ  
ἀμφέχανε στυγερῆ, ἣ περ λάχε γιγνόμενόν περ·  
καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ μοῖρα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, 80  
τείχει ὑπο Τρώων εὐηφενέων ἀπολέσθαι.

(Il. 23.75-81)

*And give me your hand, I beg you, for never again  
will I return from Hades, once you have given me my share  
of fire. No more alive will we sit apart from our dear companions  
make our plans together, but the hateful fate that was allotted to me  
on birth swallowed me. Your fate too, equal to the gods Achilles, is  
to die in front of the walls of the wealthy Trojans.*

Patroclus asks Achilles to give him his hand for the last time as he will not return again from Hades once his body is delivered to the pyre. Richardson notes that the request of Patroclus is “intended as an expression of both affection and farewell” and that the hero’s “ignorance about how useless his request is adds to the pathos of the scene.”<sup>57</sup> On closer examination of the lines however we can see that Patroclus’ request has not so much to do with his supposed ignorance about his own state as a shade, although it certainly adds to the pathos of the scene; rather, by asking Achilles to hold his hand for one last time Patroclus acts exactly as Achilles would want him to, in other words, as if he were alive. Whether or not Patroclus knows that his hand cannot be held any more by any living man is of little importance. What matters is that he gives Achilles what he has been desperately craving for: a last meeting of the two, alone and away from the rest of their companions.

Patroclus makes a point of the fact that this is the last time the two companions meet in a situation that is almost identical with how they spent much of the *Iliad* (23.83-4): again the two are found in the middle of their camp, yet separated from the rest of their companions, and again they sit alone taking about a future course of action (Patroclus’ and subsequently Achilles’ burial). The main difference, however, lies in the fact that now Patroclus is dead while Achilles alive and the word ζωοὶ reminds us again that this is not a normal meeting but rather one only possible in the liminal space of Achilles’ dream.<sup>58</sup>

Up till now, Homer has merged the registers of dream and catabatic narrative, and in so doing has succeeded in creating an in-between space in which the living can interact with the dead

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<sup>57</sup> Richardson (1993), 173. Mazon (1940), 42, believes that Patroclus’ gesture serves only to confirm that Achilles will finally bury him, an interpretation not accepted by Richardson.

<sup>58</sup> As Dodds remarks: “the dream world offers the chance of intercourse, however fugitive, with our distant friends, our dead and our gods.” Dodds (1951), 102.

and the audience is able to witness their interaction. This is a poetic tour de force in its own right: here, as elsewhere in Homer, seeing what cannot or should not be seen, becomes a criterion for the bard's expertise. Yet, I would argue that the passage does more than simply show off the bard's powers of insight. Through the unique opportunity of contact with Hades, Homer discreetly introduces his audience to a rather different perspective on the heroic world. As we shall see, a careful examination of what Patroclus' chooses to say, as well as not to say, during his brief meeting with Achilles, reveals that his speech departs significantly from the heroic standards of the *Iliad*.

### 1.2.vi. *Memories of the dead*

Patroclus recalls the moments which the two companions shared in Troy and puts the emphasis on their common decision making (23.78). Already in antiquity this emphasis must have struck scholars as peculiar since the scholiast rushes to defend it as appropriately heroic on the grounds that the shade chooses to recall the important decisions they took with Achilles rather than other, unheroic, intimate or sweet (τῶν ἡδέων) memories.<sup>59</sup> The scholiast's remark presupposes that Patroclus' recollection raised some doubts among ancient audiences/readers and thus the lines called for a defence. Indeed, the recollection seems to be lacking in terms of heroic values: when heroes recall the past in the *Iliad* the events they remember are usually related to success in combat, not to decision making behind closed doors.<sup>60</sup>

Along similar lines Fantuzzi perceives the recollection as not particularly heroic and observes that it is consistent with Patroclus' role in the *Iliad*, where he often features in non-heroic roles together with Achilles.<sup>61</sup> This however does not necessarily imply that the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus does not contain heroic elements: we need to remember that

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<sup>59</sup> ΣβΤ *ad Il.* 23.78: γενναίως οὐδενὸς τῶν ἡδέων ἐμνήσθη, ἀλλ' ἐν οἷς περὶ τῶν συμφερόντων ἐβουλεύοντο. Fantuzzi (2012), 213-4 favours this interpretation as well, on the grounds that Achilles and Patroclus are never presented doing anything heroic together in the *Iliad*.

<sup>60</sup> Heroes in the *Iliad* usually recall the exploits of heroes of the past as do Agamemnon (4.372-400) and Diomedes (14.113-25) who recall Tydeus' exploits or Glaucus who relates the exploits of Bellerephontes (6.177-90). Nestor, being the only Achaean that has the privilege of being alive having lived a heroic life himself, often recalls his own exploits (*Il.* 1.247-73, 7.124-60, 11.670-790, 23.629-43). For Nestor's digressions see Austin (1966) and Minchin (2005). For a study of Nestor in the *Iliad* see Dickson (1995).

<sup>61</sup> Fantuzzi (2012), 213-4.

Achilles too is only seen in ‘domestic’ scenes while Patroclus is alive and engages in battle only after the latter’s death. Furthermore, when Achilles wishes only the two of them survive and take Troy (16.97-100), despite the emotional nature of his wish, he clearly refers to the accomplishment of a great heroic feat for both himself and Patroclus.<sup>62</sup>

Put differently, the context of the *Iliad*, as well as the previous relationship of the two companions, do not fully justify, or in any way predict, Patroclus’ recollection in the dream scene. The moment Patroclus chooses to recall is indeed a rather intimate one and the reason for that should be sought in the fact that Patroclus is no longer part of the heroic world. Being dead and thus free of social constraints, heroic etiquette and expectations, Patroclus chooses to recall what *he* feels is important and this, as we shall see, becomes the main motivation of his speech.

The image of him and Achilles standing apart from the rest of the army (23.77) evokes a secluded space for the two companions, very similar to the one in which they meet in our passage, thus underlining their special bond. The stress is not so much on the decision making as such but rather on their separation from their comrades as the use of φίλων seems to indicate. Even if their comrades are dear to them (φίλοι), the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus is at a different level, above that of common companions as Sinos has shown.<sup>63</sup>

Patroclus’ recollection is intimate and emotional because the shade wants it to be so and in the remainder of his speech the emphasis on personal experience, remorse and even self-pity becomes even more evident. After prophesying Achilles’ impending death and asking for their bones to be put together, the shade looks back to the time when he was first accepted as a fugitive at the palace of Peleus:

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐφήσομαι αἶ κε πίθῃαι:  
μὴ ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὅστέ’ Ἀχιλλεῦ,  
ἄλλ’ ὁμοῦ ὡς ἐτράφημεν ἐν ὑμετέροισι δόμοισιν,

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<sup>62</sup> Achilles’ wish was viewed with suspicion in antiquity as scholars thought it contained homoerotic connotations cf. ΣΑ and T *ad ll.* 23.97-100. The lines were athetised by Aristarchus and Zenodotus. The bibliography for the character of Achilles’ relationship with Patroclus is of course immense; some of the more important works include Basset (1933), Whitman (1958), 198-203, Clarke W. (1978), Barrett (1981), Schein (1984), 34-5, 117-20, Van Nortwick (1992), 39-61, Mills (2000), Fantuzzi (2012), 187-235.

<sup>63</sup> Sinos (1980), 41-44 discusses the relationship of Achilles with the *dearest* (φίλτατοι) Achaeans and concludes that his relationship with Patroclus should be seen as more important than common φιλότης, as expressed within the Achaean camp. See also Nagy (1979), 102-3 and Hooker (1989), 32-3.

εὔτε με τυτθὸν ἔοντα Μενόϊτιος ἐξ Ὀπόεντος 85  
 ἤγαγεν ὑμέτερόνδ' ἀνδροκτασίης ὑπο λυγρῆς,  
 ἤματι τῷ ὅτε παῖδα κατέκτανον Ἀμφιδάμαντος  
 νήπιος οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι χολωθεῖς:  
 ἔνθά με δεξάμενος ἐν δώμασιν ἱππότα Πηλεὺς  
 ἔτραφέτ' ἐνδυκέως καὶ σὸν θεράποντ' ὀνόμηεν 90

(Il. 23.82-90)

*And another thing I will say to you and ask you, if you will  
 listen to me: do not let your bones be placed apart from mine,  
 Achilles, but together, as we grew up in your house  
 when Menoitius brought me from Opeis to your land when  
 I was a child, because of the dreadful killing of a man, the day  
 when I killed the son of Amphidamas, poor, silly me,  
 against my will, angered as I was over a dice game.*

The second recollection is on an even more personal and emotional level than the first one. The shade chooses to spend its limited time with Achilles talking about events which are apparently known to his companion but not to us: it is only in the dream scene of book 23 that we hear the story of how the two companions met, and that story is related by Patroclus not while he is alive but when he is dead. What is more, the way in which the shade relates it proves to be rather interesting. Indeed, Patroclus' words seem to go beyond what we would expect from heroic narrative in at least one important respect: although Patroclus says that the reason behind his exile was the killing of another man, an event which could easily and naturally be portrayed elsewhere in the *Iliad*, his account is tinged with personal regret in a way that seems to be characteristically unheroic (23.88): *poor silly me* (νήπιος), *I killed the son of Amphianax against my will* (οὐκ ἐθέλων).

This is not a killing in which the shade takes pride, in fact it is described as a dreadful accident (23.86 ἀνδροκτασίης ὑπο λυγρῆς). Patroclus' recollections of the event appear refracted through the mournful prism of his recent fate; what remains for him is not the *kleos* of great deeds (such as the killing of Sarpedon in book 16, for instance) but the personal experience of a childish mistake.

Once more Homer brings us, through Patroclus' recollection, in contact with a different perspective on the heroic world, a perspective in which personal experience appears to be

valued more than *kleos*. The shade's memory focuses on events that carry a special emotional significance for him, such as the secluded meetings with Achilles that underlined their bond, or the beginning of their relationship with their first meeting at the palace of Peleus. Even when Patroclus relates his first killing, he talks about accidentally killing another man and making that the defining moment in his – and Achilles' – life. The tone is regretful, intimate, and uncompromisingly personal, as if offering us a lyric alternative to the well-known epic story of Achilles and Patroclus. The final words of Patroclus in the dream scene, and also in the *Iliad*, follow the same pattern:

ὣς δὲ καὶ ὀστέα νῶϊν ὁμῆ σορὸς ἀμφικαλύπτει  
 χρύσεος ἀμφιφορέυς, τὸν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ.  
 (Il. 23.91-2)

*So let our bones be covered by the same urn,  
 the golden urn that your mother gave you.*

Patroclus changes his focus from the past to the future and requests that both his bones and those of Achilles be put together in the golden urn Thetis had provided her son with.<sup>64</sup> With his last words the theme of separation and reunion comes again to the forefront: Achilles' acceptance of Patroclus' death will lead to acceptance of his own death and the separation of the companions in life will eventually become reunion in death. Through Patroclus' final appearance Achilles' alienation from human life comes to an end: from the raging warrior who wreaked havoc among the Trojans and defiled Hector's body, to the grieving man that could not escape from his own guilt, the hero gradually comes to terms with the reality of his and Patroclus' fate. His response to the shade's request for burial partly shows that acceptance, as well as the hero's ongoing confusion about the nature of their encounter:

τίπτέ μοι ἠθεΐη κεφαλὴ δεῦρ' εἰλήλουθας  
 καὶ μοι ταῦτα ἕκαστ' ἐπιτέλλεαι; αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοι 95  
 πάντα μάλ' ἐκτελέω καὶ πείσομαι ὡς σὺ κελεύεις.  
 ἀλλὰ μοι ἄσσον στήθι: μίνυνθά περ ἀμφιβαλόντε  
 ἀλλήλους ὀλοοῖο τεταρπόμεσθα γόοιο.  
 (Il. 23.94-8)

*Why did you come here, beloved head,*

<sup>64</sup> The same urn is mentioned again in *Od.* 24.73-4 and its appearance here has created suspicion since antiquity that line 92 was inserted so that the passage would be consistent with the account of the *Odyssey*. On the suspected interpolation see Richardson (1993), 176-7 and Janko (1991), 28. For Aristarchus' athetesis of the line see ΣΤ *ad Il.* 23.92 and further West S. (1967), 171 for its omission in some manuscripts. For the golden urn in the MSS in general see Dué (2001).

*and gave me command for everything?  
All these I will grand you and do as you tell me.  
But come, stand close to me and let us embrace each  
other and have our fill of the terrible lament.*

Achilles is justifiably baffled since he has already made preparations for the funeral the next morning. But his reaction also shows that he does not interpret their meeting rationally but puts the emphasis on his guilt by asking Patroclus *why* he requests a burial rather than *how* he came back from the dead. Achilles' confusion becomes even more evident when he addresses Patroclus as if he were alive (23.94 ἠθεΐη κεφαλή) and treats him similarly by attempting to embrace him (23.97-9).<sup>65</sup> It is again with his hands that Achilles attempts to make contact with Patroclus and once more he fails, but this time the motif is reversed: while before he could physically touch Patroclus but no longer reach him, he now sees and hears him but is unable to touch him. Both in the case of the corpse and that of the shade Patroclus' presence is fleeting: he looks like himself but no longer is himself. Achilles' final vain attempt to embrace him leaves the hero and the audience without any doubts about it:

ὣς ἄρα φωνήσας ὠρέξατο χερσὶ φίλησιν  
οὐδ' ἔλαβε· ψυχή δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἦν τε καπνὸς 100  
ᾧ χετο τετριγυῖα· ταφῶν δ' ἀνόρουσεν Ἀχιλλεὺς  
χερσὶ τε συμπλατάγησεν, ἔπος δ' ὀλοφυδνὸν ἔειπεν·  
'ὦ πόποι ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστι καὶ εἰν Αἴδαο δόμοισι  
ψυχή καὶ εἶδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν·  
παννυχίη γάρ μοι Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο 105  
ψυχή ἐφεστήκει γοόωσά τε μυρομένη τε,  
καὶ μοι ἕκαστ' ἐπέτελλεν, ἔϊκτο δὲ θέσκελον αὐτῷ.'  
(*Il.* 23.99-107)

*So he said and reached out with his dear hands  
but did not grasp him. The soul disappeared into the earth  
with a shrill cry like smoke. Achilles surprised jumped up  
and clasped his hands and uttered words in lamentation:  
Oh my, there seems to be even in Hades some  
sort of soul and image, but no phrenes left in it at all.  
The whole night poor Patroclus' soul stood above me  
weeping and wailing, and instructed me on every thing I should do  
and looked wonderously like himself.*

<sup>65</sup> For the different reading ὦ θεΐη κεφαλή and criticism of it see ΣΑΤ *ad Il.* 23.94 and Richardson (1993), 177. One scholiast (Aristonicus) notes that ἠθεΐη κεφαλή was an address from a younger to a senior man, ΣΑ *ad Il.* 23.94, which fits well with the tradition of Patroclus being older than Achilles. Finally, for the possibility of an extra verse after line 94 in the Ptolemaic papyri see West S. (1967), 172 and Bird (2010) for a discussion of the evidence of the Ptolemaic papyri that support multitextuality in Homer.

Achilles is startled by Patroclus' immateriality and the enjambent of οὐδ' ἔλαβε in line 100 adds to the surprise of the failed attempt. The narrative again goes into underworld mode: Patroclus, who appeared in all his glory (23.65-7) and stood so lively next to Achilles (23.94) turns suddenly into nothingness and dissolves into thin air, leaving behind only a shrill cry. With Patroclus' disappearance the nature of the dead becomes palpable, for the first time in the *Iliad*, for both the audience and Achilles who wakes startled from his sleep (23.101 ταφῶν δ' ἀνόρουσεν).<sup>66</sup> The dream and with it the underworld encounter is over and Achilles once more expresses himself through a hand gesture, this time by smiting his palms together (23.102 χερσί τε συμπλατάγησεν). All that is left from the encounter is the confirmation of what was implied throughout the dreamscene: Achilles is finally forced to realise that his companion is not part of his world anymore; and this realisation is expressed through his well-known statement about the nature of the soul: an image of the dead exists in Hades but no *phrenes* are left in it.<sup>67</sup> *Phrenes* here most probably refer to the substance and not to the mental abilities of Patroclus,<sup>68</sup> as Achilles' observation is based on his failed attempt to grasp the shade.<sup>69</sup>

Patroclus' visit and the realisation of his nature after death finally lead Achilles out of the stalemate of grief and guilt in which he has been caught since his companion's death. Through his final meeting with Patroclus, the hero learns to accept his own mortal nature and to reinsert himself into heroic society. A telling parallel with the *Odyssey* can be drawn here, as Achilles finds his identity through his contact with Hades in the same way that Odysseus'

<sup>66</sup> The formula is used three times in the *Iliad* (9.193, 11.777, 23.101), always of Achilles and always in the second hemistich [ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ]. In the first two instances Achilles suddenly realises that he has visitors and jumps up from his seat. In the passage the motif is again reversed with Achilles jumping up due to the disappearance of his visitor.

<sup>67</sup> There are many studies on the exact meaning of *phrenes* in Homer however it is difficult to give an accurate definition of the term. See Mazon (1942), 223-4, Onians (1951), 44-75 criticised by Ireland and Steel (1975), Vivante (1956), 133-5, and also Cheyins (1980), Sullivan (1988a). For the relation of *phrenes* with *thumos* and their association with life see Redfield (1975), 174, Garland (1981) and Caswell (1990). Finally for the terms in the post-Homeric Greek literature see Sullivan (1982), (1988b), (1989a), (1989b) (1994), (2001a), (2001b).

<sup>68</sup> Aristonicus believed that the line had been influenced by the *Odyssey* and specifically the belief that the dead have no wits (cf. *Od.* 10.492-5). An alternative interpretation was offered by Aristophanes who argued that φρένες here refer to the body, as often happens in the *Iliad*, for instance in *Il.* 16.481 (ἀλλ' ἔβαλ' ἔνθ' ἄρα τε φρένες ἔρχεται ἀμφ' ἀδινὸν κῆρ) and 16.504 (ἐκ χροὸς ἔλκε δόρυ, προτὶ δὲ φρένες αὐτῷ ἔποντο) where clearly φρένες is used in a physical sense, see ΣΑ *ad Il.* 23.104 and Van Der Valk (1963-4), 540-42 and Richardson (1993), 178. For the reception of lines 103-4 in Plato and Propertius see Dué (2000-2001). Finally see Nagy (1990), 88-90 for a comparison of the Homeric notions of *psukhē*, *menos* and *thumos* with the corresponding ones from the Vedas and the possibility of common Indo-European beliefs underlying the two.

<sup>69</sup> Kessels (1978), 38-9, views Achilles' reaction as the logical result of contact with the supernatural. Odysseus has a similar reaction in *Od.* 11.204-22 when his attempt to embrace Antikleia's shade fails. The two passages are very similar, and a realisation of the nature of the dead comes from them for both heroes. A detailed discussion of the *Odyssey* passage follows in Part 2.



trip to Hades finally leads the hero to recover his lost identity and achieve the end of his wandering.<sup>70</sup> In the same way Achilles, by understanding mortality, by seeing and comprehending in the most unmediated way what awaits every hero in death regardless of his *kleos*, is able to reconcile himself with his fate. When Patroclus' ghost disappears, the circle of pride, hatred and grief closes for Achilles, leaving open the way for his own, imminent descent to the Underworld.

### 1.2.vii. *Conclusions*

In this section I have argued that a close reading of the dream scene of *Iliad* book 23 can reveal certain aspects of the text that have not been fully appreciated so far. More specifically, I showed how Homer exploits the only direct contact with the Underworld allowed in the *Iliad* in order to present us with a different perspective on the heroic world; a perspective that can alter even the viewpoint of Achilles himself, the seemingly unmovable man born from the sea,<sup>71</sup> leading to the emergence, or re-emergence, of his humane side for the first time after his feud with Agamemnon.

We saw how carefully the poet paved the way for an underworld scene through the constant allusion to the Underworld and even the unintentional re-enactment of a necromantic ritual by Achilles. From the beginning of *Iliad* 23, the narrative steadily led us to a hybrid dream/Underworld scene which is unparalleled in the *Iliad*. I argued that through the merging of the registers of dream and catabatic narratives, Homer succeeded in creating a liminal space, standing in-between the worlds of the living and the dead. In that space contact with Hades can be achieved, thus making it possible to present the shade of Patroclus in the world of the *Iliad* and to provide Achilles, and the audience, with one last, ever so important, meeting with the hero.

Nevertheless Patroclus, being now part of the Underworld, in a sense carries with him the attributes of Hades by being present and not present at the same time. We saw how Homer exploits this duality of the hero: Patroclus may appear as himself but he is not himself anymore; rather what remains is an *eidolon*, an image of the hero with a deeply personalised

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<sup>70</sup> Segal (1962), 45.

<sup>71</sup> *Il.* 16.34-35.

focus on its past. And the past that Patroclus relates is not, as one might expect, filtered through the lense of his heroic *kleos*, but instead is selected on the basis of his emotional memories and experiences. The dynamic of Patroclus' recollections can be better understood if we turn to the 'Nekyia' of *Od.* 11, which is examined extensively in the second part of this thesis. For our purposes here we should note that in the 'Nekyia' too the shades relate their stories, stories already known from the epic tradition, in a different light: the dead appear to be uninterested or unwilling to see their lives in terms of epic values such as *kleos* or *timē*, and instead emphasise their own personal loss. We need only to think of Achilles renouncing his Iliadic choice by stating that he would rather be a serf to a poor master than dead and glorified.<sup>72</sup> Or consider Odysseus' encounter with Agamemnon, whose story is hardly less poignantly personal in outlook.<sup>73</sup>

Pat Easterling has argued that the women's lament (*goos*) in the *Iliad* functions as an alternative register to the *kleos* of the men: unlike *kleos* it stresses the personal experience of the survivors, their grief and sense of loss.<sup>74</sup> The dream scene of *Iliad* 23, I have argued, does something similar from the point of view of the dead man himself: by allowing us a glimpse into the murky realm of Hades, it presents us with an alternative perspective on the epic past, one that emphasises personal loss and directness of feeling. The quest for *kleos* remains with the living in the song of the Muses. What descends to the land of the dead is a shadow of the hero's self – along with stories that have never been told before.

And that, I argue, is what Hades does to epic narrative and what Homer exploits in *Iliad* 23 and more fully in the 'Nekyia' of the *Odyssey* as we shall see in the following chapter: Hades gives a new voice to the heroes, enabling them to reflect on the past in ways that are not available to the living, and not even to the Muse.

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<sup>72</sup> *Od.* 11.487-90.

<sup>73</sup> *Od.* 11.387-465.

<sup>74</sup> Easterling (1991).

## ***Part 2 – The ‘Odyssey’***

### ***Chapter 1: The Odyssey and the Poetics of Hades***

#### ***2.1.i. Introduction***

According to its proem, the *Odyssey* is the poem of the wanderings and return of *the man of many turns*, soon to be identified as Odysseus,<sup>1</sup> who on his way back home came to know the cities and minds of many people (*Od.* 1.3) and suffered many hardships trying to save himself and his companions (*Od.* 1.4-5). Odysseus’ return journey, and especially the part narrated by the hero in his ‘Apologoi’, stands out for its unique setting: from the moment they set sail from Troy Odysseus and his companions enter a realm inhabited by monsters and fairy-tale creatures, which exists on the margins of the world of Homeric gods and men. It is in this realm that Odysseus sets sail for his most daring exploit, the journey to the Underworld.

Homeric scholars have devoted considerable attention to the ‘Apologoi’s’ structure as well as to the role they play in Odysseus’ return.<sup>2</sup> Most modern interpretations focus on the symbolic death and rebirth of the hero that allows him to return from the anonymity of his wanderings to his true identity as Odysseus of Ithaca.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of the Trojan War, it has been argued, Odysseus must rebuild his persona in a post-heroic world. The ‘Nekyia’ stands for the hero’s symbolic death which this entails – hence its central position in the ‘Apologoi’.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, this reading, while pervasive in broad outline, has not been without problems in the detail. It has long been noted for instance that it is not perfectly clear why Odysseus has to visit Hades,<sup>5</sup> and that we cannot be sure about what he actually does there. Does he stand

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<sup>1</sup> Odysseus’ name is withheld until line 21. Scholars have argued that the absence of his name in the proem is significant, see Bekker (1863), 99 ff. and Bassett (1923), 341 for some important early interventions. For more recent work see Groningen (1946), Clay (1976), Pucci (1982) who discusses in particular the absence of Odysseus’ name from the proem, and Tsagalis (2005).

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography on the ‘Apologoi’ is immense. Some of the most important studies on the structure and interpretation of *Odyssey* 9-12 include Reinhardt (1996), Niles (1978), Redfield (1983), Krischer (1985), 9-21, Scully (1987) and Most (1989) who reviews ancient as well as modern interpretations. See further Danek (1996), who examines Odysseus’ ‘Apologoi’ in comparison with similar narratives from the Serbo-Croatian tradition, and Kazazis (1999), who revisits the typical scenes of embarkation and departure and interprets them as the main transitional device in the ‘Apologoi’. Renger (2003) sees the ‘Apologoi’ as a device to help establish the individuality of Homer’s narrative; Loudon (2011) offers a comparative examination of the ‘Apologoi’ in within the context of Near Eastern narratives.

<sup>3</sup> For modern symbolic interpretations of the ‘Apologoi’ that see in them a cycle of death and rebirth see Segal (1962), (1967), (1983); also Austin (1975), 131-53, Hartog (1980), 3-39 and Bergren (1983).

<sup>4</sup> Scholars have noted that the ‘Apologoi’ follow a ring-compositional pattern in which the ‘Nekyia’ holds a central position, see Germain (1954), 333, Whitman (1958), 288, Niles (1978), 47ff.

<sup>5</sup> Page (1955), 28-47, Kirk (1962), 238, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 73-5.

next to the pit throughout his visit, as he claims at one point,<sup>6</sup> or does he venture deep into the Underworld as his viewing of Minos, Sisyphos and Tityos might suggest? Other issues too have seemed problematic: for example, we are told by Teiresias at *Od.* 11.146-9 that the dead are powerless shades needing blood in order to be able to recover their wits, but in some instances Odysseus describes them as fully functioning: thus, Orion pursues his hunting habit even after death, while Minos settles the disputes of the dead.<sup>7</sup> Does it matter that we find these seemingly incompatible views of the afterlife in one single episode of the *Odyssey*?

Many scholars thought it did matter, and sought to clarify the text. Already Aristarchus athetised *Od.* 11.566-640 as a later interpolation on the grounds that it was impossible for Odysseus to see the interior of Hades from where he was standing and that the description of the dead, whom the poet himself calls ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα (*Od.* 11.49), having their disputes settled by Minos was ridiculous.<sup>8</sup> Aristarchus' arguments appealed to analytic scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century who found in *Od.* 11 confirmation of their general approach to Homer. For instance, Wilamowitz argued that the whole book was a later interpolation, on the basis that Odysseus travels to Hades to ask Teiresias instructions for his journey back home but never receives such instructions. According to Wilamowitz, the episode intruded in the place where Circe's instructions in book 12 would have originally stood.<sup>9</sup>

After Parry's breakthrough study of Homer as an example of oral-traditional poetry, analyst readings have lost much of their appeal, and more recent scholarship has broadly defended *Odyssey* 11 as original.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Segal has drawn attention to the function and symbolism of the 'Nekyia' in the context of the *Odyssey* and De Jong has proven beyond any doubt its organic function at the center of the epic.<sup>11</sup> Even so, the book is still regarded as problematic due to the contradicting beliefs it represents about the afterlife and the Underworld in general. Several interpretations have been attempted in order to explain these inconsistencies. Heubeck-Hoekstra believe that Homer employs in the 'Nekyia' the motif of a catabasis, with Odysseus following in the footsteps of mythical predecessors such as Heracles.<sup>12</sup> By contrast,

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<sup>6</sup> *Od.* 11.628.

<sup>7</sup> *Od.* 11.568-75.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Σ ad Pindar Ol.* I, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Wilamowitz (1927), 79. See also Kirchoff (1879), Wilamowitz (1884) and Page (1955), 40.

<sup>10</sup> Stanford thinks that the book is authentic but has his doubts about vs. 565-627, Stanford (1947), 380-2. See also Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 75-7 and Northrup (1980), 150-9 for a response to Page (1955).

<sup>11</sup> Segal (1962), 17-64. De Jong (2001), 271-3. See also Reinhardt (1996) who first defended the integrity of the apologue as we have it.

<sup>12</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 88 and 111 with discussion on vs. 565-627. For the idea that Odysseus is actually venturing into Hades in vs.565-627 see also Petzl (1969), 9 and Dihle (1982), 16.

Sourvinou-Inwood argues that any inconsistencies in the text go back to different layers of historic cult practice, with the oldest elements dating to Mycenaean times.<sup>13</sup> Clarke on the other hand claims that the inconsistencies are merely apparent. He argues that *Od.* 11 does not function as a “theology” of the afterlife but instead as an initiation of Odysseus into the state of the soul after death.<sup>14</sup> After a long and detailed discussion of the soul’s nature as it appears in the Homeric epics Clarke examines Odysseus’ encounters with the shades in the ‘Nekyia’. He proposes that Antikleia’s attempt to assuage Odysseus’ fears of being deceived by Persephone (*Od.* 11.213-214 and 217-222) is not to be read as a statement of what happens to the soul after death but rather as an introduction to the ‘Underworld rules’ of communicating with the shades.<sup>15</sup> This is an interesting proposal, but it is not without problems. For example, Clarke’s suggestion that Antikleia refers to what happens when a living person tries to embrace a shade seems to presuppose that she has prior experience of meeting living men in Hades.<sup>16</sup> For all we know, the living did not descend to Hades, and although *catabatic* traditions existed, e.g. Heracles’ and Theseus’ catabaseis, they do not explain what interaction with the living means. Clarke’s intuitions seem sound in so far as he attempts to comprehend the text on its own terms, but his approach is overly technical. Ultimately, he underestimates the fact that the Homeric poems derive from a long tradition of oral poetry, in which technicalities such as the exact nature of the soul matter little to the poet and his audience.

The most recent study devoted to *Odyssey* 11, and one of the most ambitious in terms of scope, is Tsagarakis’ *Studies in ‘Odyssey’ 11*,<sup>17</sup> which addresses such matters as the sources that Homer might have used in his composition of the ‘Nekyia’, as well as analysing a range of distinctive motifs that occur in the book. More generally, Tsagarakis aims to clarify the nature of the ‘Nekyia’: is it best understood as a form of catabasis (i.e. a descent to the underworld) or an evocation of the dead (nekyomanteia)? Tsagarakis suggests that Homer divides Hades into two parts: Hades proper and the area defined as the gates of the underworld.<sup>18</sup> Regarding the nature of the soul he proposes that we can trace two different views of the dead, one stemming from the eighth century and the other going back to older traditions. According to Tsagarakis, Homer is deliberately vague in his description of Hades:

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<sup>13</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1981), 15-39.

<sup>14</sup> Clarke (1999), 215-25.

<sup>15</sup> Clarke (1999), 202-5.

<sup>16</sup> Clarke (1999), 205.

<sup>17</sup> Tsagarakis (2000).

<sup>18</sup> Tsagarakis (2000), 94-100.

taking advantage of a general vagueness in popular beliefs on death he can develop his poetic themes as it suits his needs.<sup>19</sup>

Although Tsagarakis' interpretation is consistent enough on its own terms, he too focuses his efforts on identifying and solving the technical difficulties of the book. By concerning himself with the exact topographical details of Hades, for example, he fails to ask the much more important question of the poetic function and significance of Hades. Tsagarakis spends much time investigating how the catabatic tradition influenced Homer but he does not ask why this tradition mattered, what purposes it served and how Homer exploits it in his poems. In this chapter, I wish to reopen the case.

I will argue that the 'Nekyia' plays an important *poetic* role in the *Odyssey*, which also dictates its position at the centre of the 'Apologoi'. By travelling to the Underworld, Odysseus reaches the outmost extremes of the epic universe and this journey can justifiably be seen as the turning point from which his actual return to Ithaca begins. However, besides marking a turning point in Odysseus' adventures at the level of plot, his journey to Hades also takes on a poetic significance that has not been sufficiently appreciated in previous scholarship. As was already the case in the *Iliad*, Hades in the *Odyssey* is presented as the realm of absolute invisibility, a place where vision is impossible even for the gods. Given the close association, in epic poetry, between divine vision, the contents of epic and the poetic resources of the epic bard, Odysseus' visit to a world where even the divine sight of the Muses is nullified cannot but have profound poetic implications. Homer, I argue, was fully alert to those implications. Indeed, he used his protagonist's journey into the darkness of Hades to access issues and air stories that were otherwise inaccessible to the epic narrator. More radically, he experiments with different forms of storytelling, as the protagonists of the epic tradition, already dead and secluded in the Underworld, look back at their lives without the social, poetic and religious constraints that affected them while still alive. Thus, the men and women whom Odysseus meets in Hades, can relate their stories in a more deliberately subjective manner than is normally the case in epic, a manner, in fact, that evokes the individualism and wilfull freedom of expression that characterises the lyric voice of Sappho or Stesichorus. As we shall see, even popular narratives, such as the biographies of famous heroines or the story of Agamemnon's death, can, and do, appear in a very different light in the Underworld.

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<sup>19</sup> Tsagarakis (2000), 110-119 on the nature of soul and on Cerberus 30-36.

It is this scope for poetic experimentation, an experimentation with voice and genre which is made possible by the Underworld setting of *Odyssey* 11, that ultimately interests me here. To be sure, the performance context of the Underworld also plays an important role at the level of plot since the ‘freedom of speech’ which it provides proves crucial for Odysseus’ final return to Ithaca. As we shall see, the only journey of the ‘Apologoi’ that the hero is told he has to undertake has the purpose of providing him with important information regarding his own immediate past (Antikleia) and future (Teiresias), thus securing his final return to Ithaca.<sup>20</sup> This kind of information is available only in Hades – but the point of my argument is that Homer goes well beyond treating Hades as a convenient plot device. The freedom of knowledge and sentiment that can be found in the Underworld becomes for him a poetic resource, holding out the unique opportunity to reflect on, and transcend, the limits of his own art.

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<sup>20</sup> *Od.* 10.490.

### 2.1.ii. *The limits of Olympian influence*

From the moment Odysseus rounds Cape Malea and enters the realm of his travels he steps outside of the heroic world. His wanderings there are characterised by seclusion and remoteness: the Cyclopes live isolated from men and gods (*Od.* 9.105ff.), whereas Aeolus dwells along with his six sons and six daughters on his floating island, surrounded by a bronze wall which ensures their seclusion (*Od.* 10.1-12).<sup>21</sup> Circe also dwells in a remote island, impossible to locate on a map (*Od.* 10.190-97),<sup>22</sup> and so does Calypso (*Od.* 5.50-72), whose very name signifies hiddenness and who successfully hides Odysseus on her island for seven years.<sup>23</sup> While Odysseus remains in this parallel universe he is effectively lost from the human record: the only hope of getting information about his fate, as Telemachus discovers when he visits Menelaus, is through the divine knowledge of a god, such as Proteus (*Il.* 4.555-60).

The gods can still see Odysseus during his wanderings. For instance, Athena can locate the hero even when he is stranded on the shores of Calypso's island (*Od.* 1.48-54), whereas Poseidon sees him sailing on the raft while returning from the Solymoi (*Od.* 5.283 ἴδεν). Ino (*Od.* 5.333 ἴδεν) comes to his aid a little later. Despite the fact that the otherworld in which Odysseus is trapped in *Odyssey* 9-12 is remote and conceals him from the world of mortals, the gods still have access to it and act as selective spectators of the hero's wanderings there.

However, even if the gods can see into the otherworld beyond Cape Malea they appear to be reluctant to venture into it, as they often do with the world of men.<sup>24</sup> To be sure, Zeus and Poseidon interfere with Odysseus' return, the former by striking his ship with a thunderbolt (*Od.* 12.387-8) and the latter by sending a storm (*Od.* 5.291-6) but both actions are orchestrated from afar, without close contact between gods and men. Even more striking perhaps is the absence of Athena from the action, as the goddess only goes to Odysseus' help when he has reached Scheria.

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<sup>21</sup> For recent work on the Cyclops episode see Burgess (2001), 94-114, and Bremmer (2002) who cite previous bibliography as well as Alwine (2009), who re-opens the discussion about the different traditions behind it. For Aeolus and his island see Strömberg (1950), Phillips (1956) and Clay (1985).

<sup>22</sup> For Circe in the *Odyssey* see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 50-2, Arans – Shea (1994) who trace the origins of the folktale and the deity in Caucasus; Brilliant (1995) examines the artistic representations of the meeting with Circe, and Marinatos (1995) offers a ritualistic interpretation of the episode. Finally see Segal (1968) for the reception of Homeric Circe in Latin poetry.

<sup>23</sup> For Calypso and her role in the *Odyssey* see Coulter (1925), who sums up previous bibliography, Woodhouse (1930), 215ff., Anderson (1958) who compares Calypso's island with Elysium, Hogan (1970), 190-4, Alden (1985), Crane (1988), Aguirre Castro (1994) and (1996), Bonelli (2000), Beetham (2001). For the association of Calypso's name with the verb *καλύπτειν* see Bouffartigue (2006).

<sup>24</sup> As happens for instance with Athena throughout books 1-4.



The only god who ventures into the world beyond Cape Malea is Hermes, who comes to the aid of Odysseus on the island of Circe (*Od.* 10.275ff.) and again on Calypso's island, following Zeus' orders (*Od.* 5.28ff). Finally, it is again Hermes who is said to have passed on a prophecy to Circe that she will be defeated at the hands of Odysseus (*Od.* 10.330-2). As far as Olympian presence in the world of Odysseus' wanderings is concerned, Hermes appears to be the only representative and this fits well with the god's traditional role as a transcender of boundaries.<sup>25</sup> However, as Calypso notes (*Od.* 5.87-91), even Hermes is not a frequent visitor to her abode.

It would appear, then, that although the gods can still access the parallel realm of Odysseus' adventures they do not on the whole interfere with its affairs: this relative divine inactivity seems to imply that Odysseus has reached places where Olympian power and influence is not as firm as it is in the heroic world. In fact, the Cyclops makes exactly that point when Odysseus, upon meeting him, invokes the name of Zeus xenios:

νήπιός εἰς, ὃ ξεῖν', ἢ τηλόθεν εἰλήλουθας,  
 ὅς με θεοῦς κέλευαι ἢ δειδίμεν ἢ ἀλέασθαι:  
 οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν  
 οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰμεν.

(*Od.* 9.273-7)

*You are either a fool, stranger, or you have come from afar  
 if you are telling me to fear the gods and avoid their anger;  
 for the Cyclopes do not take heed of Zeus who holds the aegis  
 nor of the blessed gods, for we are far better than them.*

The Cyclops' claim to superiority over the Olympians should perhaps be considered an arrogant boast: after all, he prays to Poseidon for revenge on Odysseus (*Od.* 9.528-35). However, the fact that he can boast in these terms does make the point that the rule of Olympus is not securely established in his realm.<sup>26</sup> As the hero moves away from known lands his connection with the realities of the mortal but also the immortal worlds becomes weaker. When he finally reaches the outmost point of his journey at the extreme end of the cosmic map where Hades lies, the presence of the gods is reduced to a minimum, if it is there at all.

<sup>25</sup> For Hermes and his multiple roles in Homer see Stanford (1947), 293, Davis (1953), Austin (1975), 78-9, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 58-60, Nelson (1996-7), Michel (2008), Davies (2008), with particular focus on the meeting in Circe's island and the role of Hermes as *psychopompos* and finally Burgess (2009), 59-71.

<sup>26</sup> See also Segal (1992), 494.

### 2.1.iii. *Darkness and seclusion: Hades' place in the 'Odyssey'.*

All this matters here because it has poetic implications. The world of Odysseus' travels is arguably not just one that happens to be secluded from gods and men but also one where Homeric narrative, wrenched from its normal setting and freed from generic strictures, can develop in hitherto unsuspected directions. Scholars have often emphasised Odysseus' special qualities as a storyteller, and rightly so.<sup>27</sup> But they have had less to say about the nexus between narrative setting and poetic texture that enables a level of poetic experimentation in *Odyssey* 9-12 which is unusual in epic poetry. Nowhere is this more evident than in Odysseus' journey to Hades. I turn to it now.

I have shown in Part 1 that by being perceived as the invisible one, Hades in the *Iliad* imposes the ultimate limit on divine vision. I would argue here that the same applies in the *Odyssey*, where the Underworld is not only perceived as the realm of darkness *par excellence* but also becomes the ultimate limit of Olympian influence. To begin with, Hades in the *Odyssey* is often referred to as the *gloomy darkness* (ζόφος ἠερόεις)<sup>28</sup> and is used as a polar opposite of the world of those who see the light of the sun.<sup>29</sup> Thus we have an understanding of the Underworld similar to the *Iliad's* as the realm of darkness which stands in sharp contrast with the world of the living. However, in the *Odyssey* the poet takes this cosmic distinction a step further by literally spelling out the absolute invisibility of Hades. At the start of *Odyssey* 11, as Odysseus approaches the entrance to Hades, he passes by the land of the Cimmerians, who dwell at the edge of the Ocean. Odysseus calls them *wretched mortals* since they live shrouded in constant darkness:

ἦ δ' ἐς πείραθ' ἴκανε βαθυρρόου Ὠκεανοῖο.  
ἔνθα δὲ Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν δῆμός τε πόλις τε,  
ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλη κεκαλυμμένοι: οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτοὺς  
ἠέλιος φαέθων καταδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν,  
οὔθ' ὅπότε ἄν στείχησι πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,  
οὔθ' ὅτ' ἄν ἄψ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν προτράπηται,  
ἀλλ' ἐπὶ νύξ ὀλοή τέταται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι.

(*Od.* 11.13-19)

<sup>27</sup> See Goldhill (1991), 36-56 and Olson (1995) with bibliography.

<sup>28</sup> *Od.* 11.57, 11.155, 13.241. See also 12.81 and 20.356 where ζόφος is equated with Ἑρεβος.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Od.* 4.833-4, 11.93-4, 20.207-8.

*The ship reached the end of the deep streamed Ocean.  
There lies the land and city of the Cimmerians  
covered in mist and cloud: never does the  
bright sun look down upon them with his rays  
not when he ascends into starry heaven  
neither when he returns back to earth from the sky  
but terrible night is always spread upon those wretched mortals.*

What is important to note here, is that the situation of the Cimmerians is due to the fact that the sun does not shine upon their land. The use of the verb καταδέρκεται, *look down upon*, draws attention to the function of light in enabling seeing: Helios, the sun god, never looks upon the Cimmerians. We may recall the blunting of vision that we observed when discussing Hades in the *Iliad*. The *Odyssey* is clearly building toward an even more extreme scenario: as Teiresias points out to Odysseus in their Underworld encounter, the sun is the one god that ought to see and hear everything:

βοσκομένας δ' εὔρητε βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα  
Ἥελίου, ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει.

(*Od.* 11.108-9)

*You will find there the cattle and the fat sheep  
of Helios who sees and hears everything.*

Helios is presented here as omniscient in the specific sense of seeing and hearing all. This appears to be a traditional feature of the god in the early Greek epic, since the same idea appears again in book 12 of the *Odyssey* and also in the *Iliad*.<sup>30</sup> Even so, Helios is excluded from the outskirts of Hades and *a fortiori* from the Underworld itself, as the god himself implies when he threatens to descend there after the slaughter of his cattle by Odysseus' men.<sup>31</sup> Zeus confirms the limits of his influence: he points out that Helios shines only for mortal men and immortal gods on the earth:

Ἥελι', ἧ̃ τοι μὲν σὺ μετ' ἀθανάτοισι φάεινε  
καὶ θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν ἐπὶ ζεῖδωρον ἄρουραν.

(*Od.* 12.385-6)

<sup>30</sup> *Od.* 12.323 and *Il.* 3.276-7 where Agamemnon prays to Zeus and Helios who sees and hears everything (Ἥελιός θ', ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις). For Helios' omniscience see Pettazzoni (1955), 7 and also Finkelberg (2011), 338. See also West (1997), 20 who finds parallels of Agamemnon's oath to the omniscient sun in similar oaths in Near Eastern sources; also Steele (2002), 586 who discusses the similarities between Helios and the Akkadian sun-god Shamash. The Homeric view of the sun as omniscient persisted in later tradition. For example, the Iliadic line (3.277) was quoted by Boethius as evidence for the god's omnipresence, see Fournier (2010), 193f.

<sup>31</sup> *Od.* 12.382-3.

*Helios, you keep shining among the immortals  
and for the mortal men on the life giving earth.*

As this passage makes clear, Helios' jurisdiction lies above the life-giving earth – the Underworld and its inhabitants are by definition excluded from that domain. The further implication is that Helios' omnipresence ends where Hades' jurisdiction begins and this is of particular interest for my argument here.

At this point, we are ready to come back to the issue of poetics. Helios' attributes in the Homeric epics are closely related to those of the Muses, to whose omniscience and omnipresence Homer appeals in the famous invocation of book 2 of the *Iliad*:

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι Μοῦσαι Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσαι·  
ὕμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα,  
ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν.

(*Il.* 2.484-6)

*Tell me now, Muses, who dwell on Olympus;  
for you are goddesses and ever present and know everything,  
whereas we only hear rumours and know nothing.*

The similarities with Helios are telling. The poet calls upon the Muses who are goddesses dwelling on Olympus and know everything because they are, or have been, 'present'. They are further called Olympians (2.491 Ὀλυμπιάδες) and daughters of Zeus who bears the Aegis (2.492 Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο θυγατέρες), a title found both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>32</sup> In the Catalogue of Ships the poet requests of the Muses to remind him of the names of those who sailed to Troy. They can indeed do so since, being omnipresent, they have actually *seen* the gathering of the Achaean forces at Aulis.<sup>33</sup> Their divine vision is clearly at the heart of Homeric poetry, and it is conceived as analogous to the gaze of Helios, as another famous passage also shows.

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<sup>32</sup> *Il.* 2.491, *Od.* 1.10, 8.488. The Muses in Homer are commonly thought of as expressing the idea of poetic inspiration. However the debate about what is actually meant by inspiration is on-going, see Sikes (1931), 20, Sperduti (1950), Robbins (1968), Russo – Simon (1968), 494, Harriott (1969), 10-33, Tigerstedt (1970), Murray (1981). Perret (1982) discusses ancient approaches to the subject; see also Chandler (2007), for an analysis of Democritus' views on Homer's divine inspiration. For the Muses see Calhoun (1938), and especially Ford (1992), 57-89 and Wheeler (2002) with full bibliography.

<sup>33</sup> For the knowledge of Muses as a result of seeing the events they narrate see Ford (1992), 49-56 and Goldhill (1991), 69-70.

In book 8 of the *Odyssey*, the blind bard Demodocus is introduced in what many have seen as an allusion to Homer himself.<sup>34</sup> Demodocus is blind but has been granted by the Muses the gift of sweet song (ἠδεῖαν ἀοιδίην).<sup>35</sup> What exactly is meant by that becomes clearer once the bard starts to sing for his Phaeacean audience: suddenly, the blind old man, who needs help even to find his own seat,<sup>36</sup> takes us to the bed chamber of Aphrodite and is able to display before our eyes the most carefully hidden secrets of the gods.<sup>37</sup> Demodocus is able to see every detail of what happens or has happened on Olympus, because of the gift of insight he has received from the Muses. Even so, there appears to be one more witness of the illegal affair of Ares and Aphrodite and that is none other than Helios:

αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀεῖδεν  
 ἀμφ’ Ἄρεος φιλότητος εὐστεφάνου τ’ Ἀφροδίτης,  
 ὡς τὰ πρῶτα μίγησαν ἐν Ἥφαιστοιο δόμοισι  
 λάθρη, πολλὰ δ’ ἔδωκε, λέχος δ’ ἤσχυνε καὶ εὐνήν  
 Ἥφαιστοιο ἄνακτος, ἄφαρ δέ οἱ ἄγγελος ἦλθεν  
 Ἥλιος, ὃ σφ’ ἐνόησε μιγαζομένους φιλότητι.  
 270  
 (Od. 8.266-71)

*He then struck the lyre and began singing a good song  
 about the love of Ares and well-girdled Aphrodite  
 how they first came together in Hephaestus house  
 in secret. A lot he gave her and dishonoured the wedding  
 bed and chamber of Lord Hephaestus. Then came to him  
 as a messenger, Helios, who had seen their love-making.*

The couple’s meeting point was Hephaestus’ quarters which provided adequate cover for them despite the fact that they are located on Olympus: apparently, the walls of the divine bedroom could stop the couple from being seen by the other gods. However, this is not true for the Muses, who can see and transmit the events to the bard, or indeed for Helios, who is able to see Ares and Aphrodite through the bedroom walls and report the affair to Hephaestus.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> On the blindness of Demodocus and his association with Homer see Graziosi (2002), 138-163, who sums up previous bibliography.

<sup>35</sup> *Od.* 8.63-4.

<sup>36</sup> *Od.* 8.65.

<sup>37</sup> *Od.* 8.266-365. For Demodocus’ songs and performance see Austin (1975), 159-61, 184-5, Nagy (1979), 15-25, Finkelberg (1987), Segal (1992), 7-12, Broeniman (1996-7), Biles (2003), 199-204, Beck (2005) and Graziosi – Haubold (2005), 80-4, who discuss the complex interlocking of poetry, eye-sight and insight in Demodocus’ second song in *Od.* 8.

<sup>38</sup> Helios’ ability to see through Olympian walls is noted again when he spies upon the couple and notifies Hephaestus of the moment when they are caught in his net:

It is clear from this example that Helios' knowledge is similar to that of the Muses in structural and poetic terms, as both divinities can see and know events that are hidden from others. This however raises an important question: if the all-seeing Helios cannot see through the darkness of Hades, does this apply to the Muses as well? Before we attempt to answer this question it is necessary to have a look at another group of female singers in the *Odyssey* that makes a similar claim to omniscience, thus indirectly contesting the Muses' ownership of heroic song: the Sirens in book 12 inform us, and Odysseus, about their all-knowingness in a song with which they try to lure the hero to their island:

δεῦρ' ἄγ' ἰών, πολύαιν' Ὀδυσσεῦ, μέγα κῦδος Ἀχαιῶν,  
 νῆα κατάρστησον, ἵνα νωιτέρην ὄπ' ἀκούσῃς. 185  
 οὐ γάρ πώ τις τῆδε παρήλασε νηὶ μελαίνῃ,  
 πρὶν γ' ἡμέων μελίγηρυν ἀπὸ στομάτων ὄπ' ἀκοῦσαι,  
 ἀλλ' ὃ γε τερψάμενος νεῖται καὶ πλείονα εἰδώς.  
 ἴδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ' ὅσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ  
 Ἀργεῖοι Τρῶές τε θεῶν ἰότητι μόγησαν, 190  
 ἴδμεν δ', ὅσσα γένηται ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ.  
 (*Od.* 12.184-91)

*Come here, much praised Odysseus, great glory  
 of the Achaeans, anchor your ship so that you hear our voice.  
 For no one has yet passed from here with his black ship  
 before first listening to the honey-sweet voice of our lips,  
 but only after he has been entertained he leaves knowing more.  
 For we know all that the Argives and the Trojans  
 suffered in broad Troy due to the will of the gods.  
 We know all that happens on the many-nurturing earth.*

In their self-description the Sirens present themselves as counterparts of the Muses:<sup>39</sup> they sing with a sweet voice that pleases and educates whoever listens to it. Furthermore, they know all the events that have taken place in Troy but also, and more importantly, everything that happens, and has happened elsewhere in the world. There is however an important limitation on the actual space over which their knowledge extends and that is encapsulated by the phrase ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ: the Sirens are aware of all events that have taken place on the surface of the earth. Again, as in the case of Helios, the Underworld is excluded from

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*Od.* 8.302: Ἥλιος γάρ οἱ σκοπιὴν ἔχεν εἰπέ τε μῦθον  
*For Helios was keeping watch and informed him.*

<sup>39</sup> For the Sirens as counterparts of the Muses see Pollard (1952). For an interpretation of their nature in Homer see Gresseth (1970) and Goldhill (1991), 64-5. For an anthropological interpretation of Siren mythology see Aasved (1995-6). Pucci (1979) offers an intertextual reading of the *Odyssey* passage in juxtaposition with the heroic language of the *Iliad*.

their claim to omniscience.<sup>40</sup> This is important because it shows that in the Homeric epics omnipresence and omniscience are thought of in spatial terms; and that in at least two cases (Helios, the Sirens) they apply only on or above the earth, never underneath it, where Hades allegedly lies.

Hades, therefore, forms a realm apart, secluded from the human as well as the divine world. Its location underneath the earth, and the thick darkness that surrounds it, make it the ultimate place of seclusion even within the secluded space of Odysseus' travels. Helios cannot access it, nor can the Sirens. Homer never says explicitly that the Muses cannot venture into Hades – we can hardly expect him to do so. But he builds up so many obstacles, both of a geographical and a poetic nature, that the question becomes effectively moot. To all intents and purposes, Hades in the *Odyssey* lies beyond the remit of the Muses *qua* 'dwellers on Olympus'. Odysseus alone can bring us intelligence from this realm.

What I have argued last has important implications for how we read *Odyssey* 11. Andrew Ford has argued that the bard's ability to conjure the events of the past before the audience's eyes, as if bringing the past to life, is credited in Homer to the powers of the Muses.<sup>41</sup> The Muses transmit their own vision to the poet, who with his mind's eye *sees* the events which they evoke and in turn relates them vividly to his audience. In the underworld scenes of *Odyssey* 11, by contrast, Homer mediates his narrative through the human gaze of the traveller Odysseus and that gaze brings with it a shift in poetic emphasis: through Odysseus' journey to Hades Homer is able to bring his human hero, face to face with the epic tradition *qua* tradition, that is to say, as an archive of quotable text; for what Odysseus does as we shall see in detail in *Odyssey* 11, is to quote with his eyes, *I saw Elpenor, I saw Antikleia, and then I saw Tyro*, etc. It is telling that in the context of Hades' impenetrable darkness, Odysseus uses the verb *idein* a total of 24 times to describe his meetings with the shades: although statistics are of little use to the critic, here the insistent recurrence of *idein* reminds us that

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<sup>40</sup> It should be noted here that the limitations of the Sirens' knowledge also mark the main difference from the Muses, who operate also above the earth since they can see and know the gods' actions on Olympus. Regarding the gods the Sirens keep silent; they only know that it was because of the gods' desire (θεῶν ἰότητι) that the Achaeans and the Trojans suffered so much. This is the exact same phrasing used by Odysseus (*Od.* 7.214) and Telemachus (*Od.* 17.119) in the *Odyssey* when they refer to the Trojan War: they do not speak of the 'will of Zeus' but only of the desire of the gods. As Jørgensen (1904) has shown, this is human conjecture: Odysseus and Telemachus are not aware of which god causes the events they experience. By using the same expression, the Sirens are shown to be at a loss regarding the exact actions or motives of the gods, a point that differentiates them from the Muses who have access both to the mortal and immortal realms.

<sup>41</sup> Ford (1992), 49-56.

Odysseus' journey is above all a poetic one:<sup>42</sup> it is through his special power of vision that Odysseus can access, and bring before us stories that have never been told in the epic tradition.

#### **2.1.iv. *Odysseus as mediator, Odysseus as storyteller***

It is well-known that human narrators in the *Odyssey* (e.g. Nestor, Menelaus, Eumaeus) tend only to tell stories about events they have either witnessed or heard about. In other words, they relate their personal experiences without being aware of any divine plans or actions taking place in the background.<sup>43</sup> Some, like Alcinous' lying travellers (*Od.* 11.363-4) or Eumaeus' wandering storytellers (*Od.* 14.124-5), chose to lie in their stories in order to further their personal ends. It is because of the possibility of lying in one's story that the *Odyssey* makes a point of distinguishing the Muse-inspired bard from the everyday storyteller: the bard sings the truth about past events not only of the world of men but also of the gods.<sup>44</sup>

If there was to be an exception to that rule we would have expected it to be in the most extensive inset narrative in the epic, Odysseus' 'Apologoi'. However, in the only instance where Odysseus seemingly breaks the rule of the eye-witness by reporting to his audience the conversation between Helios and Zeus (*Od.* 12.374-388) he rushes to inform us that he learnt about it later from Calypso, who in turn received the information from Hermes (*Od.* 10.389-90).<sup>45</sup> Odysseus too narrates only the events he has experienced and in that sense should be considered a typical Homeric storyteller/narrator rather than a bard, even though in the *Odyssey* he is compared to one three times (11.362-76, 17.518-21, 21.406-9).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Odysseus use of *idein* will be discussed in detail in the following section. The verb is used by the narrator in 11.55, 87, 141, 143, 235, 260, 266, 271, 281, 298, 306, 321, 326, 329, 395, 522, 528, 567, 568, 576, 582, 593, 615, 630. Teiresias uses it twice: 94, 109, Antikleia once: 156 and Alcinoos twice during the 'Intermezzo' in reference to Odysseus: 363, 371.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Jörgensen (1904), who was the first to note that the absence of gods in Odysseus' narrative is due to the fact that the hero lacks the omniscience of the poet.

<sup>44</sup> As Scodel states, "[the] divine source for bardic knowledge results in only one significant practical difference between bardic narratives and those of less authoritative characters: the bard's freedom to report the doings of the gods." Scodel (1998), 172. On the narrative privileges of Muse-inspired song see also Finkelberg (1985-8) and Broeniman (1996), 11-13, who shows how Demodocus rescues his divine knowledge when he is "fed" wrong information by Odysseus about the Trojan horse at *Od.* 8.492-98.

<sup>45</sup> Jörgensen (1904), Clay (1983), 24-5. For some minor Odyssean slips into omniscience, such as the rich ethnographic information about the Laistrygonians and the Cyclopes, see Scodel (1998), 177-8.

<sup>46</sup> See Scodel (1998), 171-3.



Scholars, following Alcinous' and Eumaeus' remarks, have been tempted to compare, or even equate, Odysseus to a bard.<sup>47</sup> However, Scodel and others argue for a clear distinction between storytelling characters and bards in the epic and rightly place Odysseus among the first group.<sup>48</sup> True as that may be in principle, it is also important to note that Odysseus' narrative stands apart from that of other characters in the epic, not only because of its considerable length but mainly due to its contents and their poetic significance for Homer and the *Odyssey* in general. To tease out some of that significance will be the task of this chapter.

Odysseus, who can only speculate about the actions and motivations of the gods, becomes our sole informant about what he *sees* in Hades, thus contesting the privilege of the Muses to act as a conduit of poetic inspiration. Strikingly, in Hades the roles are reversed: the mortal who knows only what he sees, gets access to an archive of poetic traditions into which the Muses themselves dare not venture. The poetic ramifications are clear and important: by sending Odysseus to Hades, Homer manages to cross the ultimate barrier that separates epic poetry as a genre from other modes of poetic memorialisation. For what Odysseus finds in Hades differs from the conventional song of the Muses in that it is not an epic re-enactment of the past but instead an evocation of the protagonists' own memories, as they relate them to the eyewitness Odysseus. The Odyssean Hades thus forms a poetic counterpart to Olympus as the seat of the Muses, and the ultimate source of the Homeric bard's special vision: whereas the Olympian Muses are immortal and forever 'present' (*Il.* 2.484-6), Hades as the storehouse of human reminiscences suggests a past that is illuminated not by divine insight but by human suffering and regret.

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<sup>47</sup> So Finley (1966), 12, (1978), 50, Thalmann (1984), 145-53, Murnaghan (1987), 148-54, Martin (1989), 233-4, Suzuki (1989), 70-2, Rose P. (1992), 114-6, Lowenstam (1993), 171, Segal (1994), 85-109, 157-184, De Jong (2001), 211.

<sup>48</sup> Mackie (1997), Scodel (1998), Beck (2005), all of them drawing a line differentiating poetry from storytelling. For the poetics of storytelling in the *Odyssey* see also Olson (1995).

## Chapter 2: The Nekyia

### 2.2.i. Before the journey: departure from Circe's island

In *Odyssey* 10 Circe tells Odysseus that the way to Ithaca passes through Hades where Teiresias will provide him with details concerning the rest of his journey.

ἀλλ' ἄλλην χρῆ πρῶτον ὁδὸν τελέσαι καὶ ἰκέσθαι 490  
εἰς Αἶδαο δόμους καὶ ἐπαινῆς Περσεφονείης,  
ψυχῇ χρησομένους Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο,  
μάντιος ἀλαοῦ, τοῦ τε φρένες ἔμπεδοί εἰσι·  
τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνοια,  
οἴῳ πεπνῦσθαι, τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ αἴσσουσιν. 495  
(*Od.* 10.490-5)

*But first you must undertake and complete another journey  
to the abode of Hades and dreaded Persephone  
in order to consult the soul of Theban Teiresias,  
the blind seer whose mind remains firm.  
For even though dead, Persephone gave him thought  
and he is full of spirit while the others dart around like shadows.*

Teiresias is the blind seer who has been privileged by Persephone with retaining his wits in Hades: he is still ‘full of spirit’ whereas the rest of the dead dart around like shadows.<sup>1</sup> The reference to Teiresias’ blindness at this point introduces the subject of vision in relation with the Underworld: Odysseus must meet Teiresias who could not see while alive, but in Hades, where no one can see, he is the only one who can through his mind’s eye. The description of Teiresias here is close to that of Demodocus in *Od.* 8.62-3: in both cases the loss of sight is contrasted with the acquisition of a different kind of vision, either poetic or prophetic.<sup>2</sup> From this point onward Odysseus’ narrative will focus on vision and visibility, and their

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<sup>1</sup> I translate πεπνῦσθαι as ‘full of spirit’ following Austin’s discussion of the meaning of the participle πεπνυμένος in Austin (1975), 74-9 and especially note 51. Austin shows that πεπνυμένος is used to characterise heralds, or their words, and young people, mostly Telemachus. He concludes that the meaning of the word is something close to “the one who speaks in a diplomatic/true way”, but that in the case of the Trojan seer Polydamas and Teiresias it is associated with their gift, hence “full of spirit” hinting at an etymological (or paronymological) connection with the verb πνέω. For more on πεπνυμένος/πεπνῦσθαι and its use in epic see *Lfgre* s.v. For an etymology from πινύσκω see Clarke (1997-8), 135-42.

<sup>2</sup> Graziosi has shown that blindness was thought of as necessary before one could acquire such vision, see Graziosi (2002), 138-46 and also Fränkel (1975) who examines the Greek habit of thinking in balancing opposites. According to the *Odyssey* scholia Hera blinded Teiresias because he claimed that females enjoy intercourse nine times more than males. Teiresias had been previously changed into a woman as a consequence of separating two snakes while having intercourse on the slopes of Cithaeron. In order to balance Hera’s unfair punishment Zeus granted him mantic powers (ἡ μὲν Ἥρα ὀργισθεῖσα ἐπήρωσεν, ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς τὴν μαντείαν δωρεῖται), see ΣΗ.Ω. *ad Od.* 10.494. For an analysis of the myth of the snakes and its Indian counterparts see Krappe (1928).

importance both to his own journey, and to evocations of the past. Already his reaction to Circe's instruction is expressed in visual terms:

ὡς ἔφατ', αὐτὰρ ἐμοί γε κατεκλάσθη φίλον ἦτορ·  
κλαῖον δ' ἐν λεχέεσσι καθήμενος, οὐδέ νύ μοι κῆρ  
ἦθελ' ἔτι ζῶειν καὶ ὄρᾶν φάος ἠελίοιο.

(*Od.* 10.496-8)

*Thus she spoke and my dear heart broke inside me  
I sat on the bed and cried and no longer did my heart  
wish to live and see the light of the sun.*

On hearing of the trip to Hades Odysseus replies with dismay claiming that he does not want to live and see the light of the sun anymore.<sup>3</sup> Living is once more equated with seeing,<sup>4</sup> though this time a certain irony can be detected in Odysseus' words since the journey to Hades he is about to undertake is interpreted as being worse than outright death and loss of vision. Even so, and this is what makes the remark all the more ironic, Odysseus will not only succeed in visiting Hades alive but more importantly he will be able to see in its darkness.

The special vision of Odysseus is beginning to show already before the hero leaves Circe's island. When everything is prepared for departure and the grieving companions embark on the ship Odysseus tell us that Circe brought the sacrificial animals on board and tied them there:

τόφρα δ' ἄρ' οἰχομένη Κίρκη παρὰ νηὶ μελαίνῃ  
ἀρνειὸν κατέδησεν ὄιν θῆλόν τε μέλαιναν,  
ῥεῖτα παρεξελθοῦσα: τίς ἄν θεὸν οὐκ ἐθέλοντα  
ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἴδοιτ' ἢ ἔνθ' ἢ ἔνθα κίοντα;

(*Od.* 10.571-4)

*Meanwhile Circe came to the black ship  
and tied a ram and a black ewe*

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<sup>3</sup> The passage has been seen as problematic by scholars due to the fact that the lines are almost identical with *Od.* 4.538-41. Analytical scholars tried to determine which of the two passages came first, see for instance Kirchhoff (1879), 222, Focke (1943), 201, Merkelbach (1969), 179. More recent scholars, however, have argued that there is no real problem, see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 69 with bibliography. They have focused on identifying possible links between the encounters of Proteus with Menelaus and Odysseus with Teiresias, so Merkelbach (1969), 180f. Lord discusses correspondences between the Proteus adventure and Circe's instructions to Odysseus and the latter's subsequent trip to Hades in terms of narrative and folk motifs, Lord (1960), 165-9. For further discussion of the two episodes see Plass (1969), 104-8 and Powell (1970), who expands on Lord's discussion by trying to establish a death and rebirth motif in Menelaus' *nostos*, similar to the one identified in that of Odysseus. For similarities of the Elysian field with the island of Ogygia see Anderson (1958).

<sup>4</sup> Benardete argues that Odysseus "speaks as if to go to Hades and not to see the light of the sun were not the same", Benardete (1997), 91. For death in Homer depicted as the loss of sight see Graziosi (2002), 143, and also n.51.

*easily going unnoticed; who could see a god  
with his eyes here and there if they do not wish to be seen.*

Odysseus comments that the goddess managed to go by unnoticed: *who can see with his/her eyes*, he asks, *a god if they do not wish to be seen?* The interesting thing in that statement is the fact that Odysseus describes Circe's movement while at the same time referring to the impossibility of the goddess being seen. It appears that we have here another Odyssean "slip into omniscience" as Scodel would call it, since the hero has access to information that should be available only to the poet.<sup>5</sup> The other possibilities are that either Circe deliberately allows Odysseus to see her, or that the hero deduces from the fact that the sheep are on board that the goddess must have put them there. All three interpretations are plausible but I would argue that Homer here uses Odysseus' comment as an introduction to his Underworld visit: the hero gives us a first taste of his ability to see things that should not be visible to mortals, right before he sets off for journey to the invisible Hades.

### **2.2.ii. Beginning of the journey: the outskirts of Hades**

The ship is prepared, the sacrificial animals are loaded and Odysseus and his crew embark while shedding plenty of tears for their fate. As soon as they are on board Circe sends a favourable wind so the only thing left for the sailors to do is take care of the tackles, then sit and wait while the wind guides the ship (*Od.* 11.1-10). The ship sails peacefully for one whole day until the sun sets and darkness falls; it is at this point that through divine guidance it reaches the shores of Oceanus where according to Circe's instructions lies the entrance to the Underworld:

δύσετό τ' ἠέλιος σκιάωντό τε πᾶσαι ἀγυαί.  
ἦ δ' ἐς πείραθ' ἴκανε βαθυρρόου Ὠκεανοῖο.

(*Od.* 11.11-12)

*The sun set and all the ways were covered in darkness.  
The ship reached the end of the deep streamed Ocean.*

Even though line 11 is formulaic and appears quite frequently in the *Odyssey* as a transitional phrase to signify the end of the action for the day by the coming of night,<sup>6</sup> here its function

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<sup>5</sup> Scodel (1998), 177-8.

<sup>6</sup> The line occurs only in the *Odyssey*, in the following passages: *Od.* 2.388, 3.487, 3.497, 15.185, 15.296, 15.471. The first hemistich appears on its own as well: *Od.* 6.321, 7.289, 8.417.

appears to be quite different. First of all the line in our context is not used only as a time signifier but also as a spatial one: the setting of the sun and the darkening of the ways bring us to the limits of the world of light, as we are soon to discover: as darkness falls, those limits are crossed. Moreover, on this occasion, the action does not stop at the onset of night; on the contrary, it is the falling darkness that actually energises the narrative. By leaving the world of light behind him Odysseus can now reach Hades and the ‘Nekyia’ can begin.

In the lines that follow further attention is drawn to the importance of darkness as Odysseus and his crew reach the land of the Cimmerians:

ἔνθα δὲ Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν δῆμός τε πόλις τε,  
 ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμένοι: οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτοῦς  
 ἠέλιος φαέθων καταδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν,  
 οὔθ' ὅπότε ἂν στείγησι πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,  
 οὔθ' ὅτ' ἂν ἄψ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν προτράπηται,  
 ἀλλ' ἐπὶ νύξ ὀλοή τέταται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι.

(*Od.* 11.14-9)

*There lies the land and city of the Cimmerians  
 covered in mist and cloud: never does the  
 bright sun look down upon them with his rays  
 nor when he ascends into starry heaven  
 neither when he returns back to earth from the sky  
 but terrible night is always spread upon those wretched mortals.*

The land of the Cimmerians is utterly gloomy: mist and thick clouds cover their city and, as we have seen already, the sun never looks at them with his rays.<sup>7</sup> This is the first time in the *Odyssey* that we are told about the limitations of the sun’s gaze (contrast Demodocus’ song in *Od.* 8 which emphasises precisely its unlimited powers). How important this is can be seen from the fact that Homer adds a three-line elaboration: the sun does not look upon the Cimmerians when he rises towards the sky nor when he sets. Instead, horrid night enshrouds them. The scope of this elaboration is ambitious – we recall that the Ethiopians of *Od.* 1.22-4, who are ‘the furthest of men’ (ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν), are yet still within the compass of sunrise and sunset. What we see in Odysseus’ visit with the Cimmerians is the emergence not just of another far-away country but of a new cosmic realm with its own narrative strictures and

<sup>7</sup> Problems around the Cimmerians’ identity and location continue to be discussed in the ever-growing scholarship on the subject. To cite just some of the more important works see Stanford (1947), 382, Heubeck (1963) and Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 77-9 who sum up previous work. See also Panchenko (1998), Clarke (1999), 167-8 and Scodel (2005). Lanfranchi (2000-1) argues for Assyrian influence.

possibilities. From now on, night and darkness, not sun and light, will be the determining elements in the telling of Odysseus' story.

Not long after passing by the land of the Cimmerians, Odysseus and his crew arrive at the place indicated by Circe. They disembark and begin preparations for the ritual. Odysseus follows Circe's instructions almost literally to the letter, as *Od.* 11.25-33 is near-identical with the goddess' words at *Od.* 10.517-525. The blood of the sacrificed animals flows into to the pit and the souls of the dead gather from Erebus:

/αἰ δ' ἀγέροντο  
ψυχαὶ ὑπὲξ Ἑρέβευς νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων.  
νύμφαι τ' ἠίθεοί τε πολύτλητοί τε γέροντες  
παρθενικαὶ τ' ἀταλαὶ νεοπενθέα θυμὸν ἔχουσαι,  
πολλοὶ δ' οὐτάμενοι χαλκίησιν ἐγγεῖησιν, 40  
ἄνδρες ἀρηίφατοι βεβρωτώμενα τεύχε' ἔχοντες·  
οἱ πολλοὶ περὶ βόθρον ἐφοίτων ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος  
θεσπεσίη ἰαχῆ· ἐμὲ δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ἦρει.

(*Od.* 11.36-43)

*Then the souls of the departed dead gathered together from Erebus.  
Young brides and unmarried youths and long-suffering old men,  
tender virgins with the mourning still fresh in their hearts,  
many wounded by bronze fitted spears, men killed in the fray  
carrying their bloodied armour; Scores of them surrounded  
the pit from all directions with a great cry and pale fear seized me.*

The tone and atmosphere of the narrative change rapidly at this point, as new protagonists crowd onto the scene: young women, married and unmarried, appear alongside old men and slain warriors who still bear their blood-stained armours and gather like flies, as the scholiast remarks.<sup>8</sup> In response, Odysseus turns pale from fear.<sup>9</sup> Clarke rightly points out that the dead are first described in general terms as “the wraiths of the dead corpses” (11.37) before coming into focus as the people they once were: girls, old men, warriors etc. (11.38-41).<sup>10</sup> What Clarke describes here, although he does not quite say it, is in narratological terms a

<sup>8</sup> ΣΒ.Ω. *ad Od.* 11.37: ὡς μυίας νομιστέον αὐτὰς ἦκειν ἐπὶ τὸ αἷμα.

<sup>9</sup> This parade of the dead was seen as suspicious in antiquity and most of it was athetised by ancient scholars. Zenodotus and Aristophanes for instance thought it inappropriate that the souls of married and unmarried women were standing together alongside those of old men (although the scholia give no explanation why they should not). One scholiast is concerned with the fact that dead warriors are depicted with their armour and their wounds, since if that was the case, there was no reason for Odysseus to ask Agamemnon later on about the cause of his death (11.397-403), as he could easily see that he was cut down by an axe. This argument focuses, as ancient objections often do, on technical details of the text, while completely disregarding the narrative point of such “inconsistencies”. See ΣΗ.Ω. and V. *ad Od.* 11.38.

<sup>10</sup> Clarke (1999), 191, see also Crane (1988), 93-4.

gradual process of ‘zooming in’, an adjusting and sharpening of the visual focus on Odysseus’ part as he responds to the emergence of the dead. That process starts with the hero as internal focaliser seeing first a mixed crowd of shades gathering.<sup>11</sup> After this moment when visual contact is first made Odysseus focuses his gaze on the newcomers and describes them in greater detail: he can now distinguish the married women (νόμφαι) from the unmarried ones (παρθενικάί τ’ ἀταλαί) perhaps by their dressing or by their age as is certainly the case with the men (ἠίθεοί τε πολύτλητοί τε γέροντες). As his description of the slain warriors proves, Odysseus can see clearly enough to make out even their bloodstained armours. In fact, the participle βεβροτωμένα that Odysseus uses to characterise their armour, betrays an even greater degree of detail since its exact meaning appears to be “covered in blood and dust.” To be able to see the blood and dust on the armour Odysseus would need to have a very clear view of it.<sup>12</sup>

All this is important because it confirms that visuality, and the poetic techniques associated with it (focalisation, ‘zooming in’), still matter in the Underworld. In fact, the first encounter with the dead is described in a manner that seems in many ways typical of Homeric Muse narrative:<sup>13</sup> Odysseus first spots the nameless dead, then describes the main groups of which the mass of the dead comprises, thus creating an expectation of even closer engagement that will soon be fulfilled. As we zoom in, sound is added to vision, with the dead giving off a great cry as they approach the pit (θεσπεσίη ἰαχῆ) – the intimacy of speech is the next logical step.<sup>14</sup> At one level, the effect of all this is undeniably familiar, with vividness, *enargeia*, providing the poetic co-ordinates of the narrative as it would do in, say, a standard Iliadic battle scene.<sup>15</sup> Yet, at the same time, there is a sense in which nothing in this opening encounter is quite like it would be on earth. For a start, the characters who have just entered the scene are souls of the dead (*Od.* 11.37), not living people, and we know from the *Iliad* that those are two very different things.<sup>16</sup> We also know, and Homer reminds us, that the dead have a different outlook on life from the living, which means that to zoom in on them means

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<sup>11</sup> For the narrative focalisation in Homer see De Jong’s fundamental study, De Jong (1987).

<sup>12</sup> SB *ad Od.* 11.41 takes the reference to be about arms that have rolled to the ground at the time of a warrior’s death and thus have been stained by blood and dust. The image of armour rolling in the dust is found often in the *Iliad*; see for instance the famous passage with Achilles’ helmet in *Il.* 16.794-6.

<sup>13</sup> On the typical vividness of Iliadic descriptions see Graziosi – Haubold (2010), 23-4 and Clay (2011), 14-37.

<sup>14</sup> For the interpretation of the ‘great cry’ see Heubeck – Hoekstra who believe that it refers to “the fluttering and whirling rather than the cries of the ghosts” (1990), 80. Clarke (1999), 193, n.73 on the other hand argues that the cry of the dead is a sign of their anguish. See also Heath (2005), 391-2 and n.10, who argues that the cry is to be taken as part of the language of the dead which is incomprehensible for the living.

<sup>15</sup> See Graziosi – Haubold (2010), 23-4.

<sup>16</sup> See the discussion about Patroclus’ shade in section 1.2.5.

something quite different than it would do to zoom in on a living person. Most obviously, perhaps, the dead's own perceptions of their past, as the only thing they still own, impose themselves on the onlooker in a way that would not be the case in the world of the living: νεοπενθέα θυμὸν ἔχουσαι in line 39 makes the point explicitly, but it is of course implied throughout the passage. There is a tension here, it seems to me, between the dead souls' appearance and their true being (as enshrined in their past story), which correlates with tensions between the poetics of vividness that would be appropriate to capture the world of the living, of sun and light, and what we might call a poetics of darkness, which favours inwardness and personal experience. These tensions come to the fore in Odysseus' first encounter with an individual soul.

### **2.2.iii. At close quarters with the dead: Elpenor**

Once the dead have gathered, Odysseus hands the sacrificed animals over to his companions and urges them to burn them and pray to Persephone and Hades. While they do so, he draws his sword and sits next to the pit, forbidding the dead to approach until he has consulted Teiresias (11.44-50). Instead of Teiresias' soul, however, the first to come forward is that of Elpenor, the young companion whose death was narrated by Odysseus in 10.552-560.

The meeting with Elpenor that follows has attracted much scholarly attention because of the many problems it is thought to pose. Predictably, perhaps, the analysts saw in it proof of the multiple authorship of the *Odyssey* using as an argument the fact that there is no need for the death of an insignificant companion, as Odysseus himself portrays him (10.552-3), to be narrated twice (10.552-60, 11.61-5). The repetition was interpreted as an attempt to stitch together two initially unconnected strands of narrative with the aim of incorporating a 'later' 'Nekyia' into the *Odyssey*.<sup>17</sup> As modern scholarship has shown this is hardly the case. However, even if the analytic school reached the wrong conclusion, they were right in one respect, namely the fact that the story of Elpenor creates a link between Odysseus' journey from Circe's island and his arrival in Hades. Elpenor, who was alive just the previous day, now appears dead in front of Odysseus, thus bridging the distance between life and death, just like Odysseus does by visiting Hades. This "immediate experience of death close at hand" serves, as Segal argues, to introduce the terrified Odysseus to his new surroundings and

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<sup>17</sup> Page (1955), 44-6, Kirk (1962), 239. See also Wilamowitz (1884), 144 and Focke (1943), 209-12, who object to the fact that Elpenor's soul is not the *first* to appear.



simultaneously awake feelings of pity in him that will only grow stronger as he ventures deeper into the Underworld.<sup>18</sup> In this respect the meeting with Elpenor functions as a link between books 10-11 but also between life and death. At the same time, it introduces Odysseus to a new form of narrative, and the emotional experience associated with it, that he is going to encounter throughout his visit to the underworld.

Elpenor's shade is introduced with the following lines:

πρώτη δὲ ψυχὴ Ἐλπήνορος ἦλθεν ἑταίρου:  
οὐ γάρ πω ἐτέθαπτο ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης:  
σῶμα γὰρ ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς  
ἄκλαυτον καὶ ἄθαπτον, ἐπεὶ πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγε.  
τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ δάκρυσα ἰδὼν ἐλέησά τε θυμῷ  
καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδων:  
‘Ἐλπήνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα;  
ἔφθης πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ.’

(*Od.* 11.51-8)

*First came the soul of Elpenor, my companion,  
since he had not yet been buried under the earth  
with the broad ways. We had left his body in Circe's palace  
unlamented and unburied for another task was urgent.  
I wept when I saw him and pitied him in my heart  
and I spoke and addressed him with winged words:  
'Elpenor how did you come beneath the murky darkness?  
You came faster on foot than I did on my black ship.'*

Elpenor's soul is the 'first' (πρώτη) to emerge from the crowd,<sup>19</sup> and Odysseus rushes to explain why this is so by providing us with a detail that he omitted from his account in book 10: Elpenor was left unburied on Circe's island because there were more pressing matters to attend to.<sup>20</sup> In narrative terms, this is an important detail because it explains how the shade, which is not fully incorporated into Hades, is able to recognise Odysseus and approach him without the need to drink from the sacrificial blood. But at least equally important is the fact that Elpenor shifts the emphasis in Odysseus' dealings with the dead: he has come to Hades to hear his own story (from Teiresias), but it transpires that the shades also need to tell him

<sup>18</sup> Segal (1962), 40-1. For more on Elpenor see Reinhardt (1996), 114-6, Rohdich (1985), Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 80-1. Also see Benardete (1997), 95, who notes that the episode stands for the immortalisation of a minor companion. For a discussion of the topography of the Elpenor episode see Tsagarakis (2000), 33-4. For the narrative traditions behind Elpenor's death see Arans and Shea (1994).

<sup>19</sup> De Jong (2001), 275, notes the important position of 'πρώτη' at the beginning of line 51 and argues that it "marks the unexpected nature of the meeting with Elpenor."

<sup>20</sup> *Od.* 11.54: ἐπεὶ πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγε. This statement has been much discussed since antiquity, with Callistratus deleting line 52 in an attempt to avoid the awkwardness of Odysseus admitting that Elpenor was either left deliberately unburied, or that his death was completely unnoticed; cf. ΣΗ.Ω. *ad Od.* 11.52.

theirs. This shift from Hades as a resource for Odysseus to Hades as a repository of personal experiences that need to be articulated has already been prepared in the opening sequence (*Od.* 11.39, *παρθενικάί ... νεοπενθέα θυμὸν ἔχουσαι*) and will be important for how the narrative unfolds.

As Elpenor is introduced, Odysseus draws attention to the poetically significant theme of seeing that has so far remained implicit in his encounter with the dead: he wept when he saw him (*ιδών*, at *Od.* 11.55). Reference to Hades as the place of ‘thick darkness’ (*ζόφον ἠερόεντα*, at *Od.* 11.57), stands as a reminder of the problematic nature of seeing in Hades, and prepares us for the unusual nature of the story we are about to hear:<sup>21</sup> Odysseus can and will challenge the darkness of Hades, but he will do so in ways that differ significantly from a story as the Muse narrator might tell it.

In his address to the shade Odysseus inquires how he came into Hades and remarks that he managed to get there faster on foot than he did with his ship.<sup>22</sup> The question betrays Odysseus’ surprise at Elpenor’s presence in Hades and underlines the paradoxical nature of the hero’s presence there: Elpenor arrived in the Underworld in the traditional way, that is by dying, which is here contrasted with Odysseus’ outrageous enterprise of reaching Hades by ship. Furthermore, as De Jong notes, Odysseus’ question reverses the so called “descent motif”: in the ‘Nekyia’ it is usually Odysseus who is asked how he got there, and this is understandable since he is the ‘intruder’ in Hades.<sup>23</sup> In his very first meeting with a shade, however, Odysseus is the one who asks that very question, essentially reversing roles and making room for the story of Elpenor’s death to be heard once more, this time told by the dead man himself:

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<sup>21</sup> This is the first time Odysseus uses the verb *ιδεῖν* in book 11. From now on the verb will be used to introduce every meeting the hero has with a shade.

<sup>22</sup> Lines 57-8 have caused much controversy among scholars, giving rise to all sorts of interpretations. To give just an overview of some of the more important works: Stanford (1947) on *Od.* 11.58, takes the line at face value and argues that Odysseus thought Elpenor was left behind alive “and had anticipated him by taking a shortcut.” Page (1955), 45-6 and Kirk (1962), 239 argue that line 58 was added later in a futile attempt to “stitch” books 10-11 together. Page specifically argues that since Odysseus knows how Elpenor died there is no point to his question and that this explains why the “ridiculous line” 58 is added. Kirk, arguing against the authenticity of the line as well, thinks that it was inserted to remedy the fact that Odysseus appears in book 11 *not to know* how Elpenor died. The interventions cited above are characteristic of the confusion which the passage has caused. In post-analysis times Heubeck – Hoekstra comment that lines 57-8 are: “not so much an expression of surprise ... [but rather] an attempt to elicit information” (1990), 81. Pache (1999) sees a humorous undertone in Odysseus’ question, but note that in the scholia this possibility is denied: ΣΗ.Ω. *ad Od.* 11.58: οὐκ ἔστι κερτομίας ὁ λόγος.

<sup>23</sup> De Jong (2001), 274.

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ, 60  
 ἄσέ με δαίμονος αἴσα κακὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος οἴνος.  
 Κίρκης δ' ἐν μεγάρῳ καταλέγμενος οὐκ ἐνόησα  
 ἄσπορον καταβῆναι ἰὼν ἐς κλίμακα μακρὴν,  
 ἀλλὰ καταντικρὺ τέγεος πέσον: ἐκ δέ μοι αὐχὴν  
 ἀστραγάλων ἐάγη, ψυχὴ δ' Ἄϊδόσδε κατῆλθε. 65

(Od. 11.60-5)

*Born of Zeus, son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles,  
 a wicked fate blinded me, some god's doing, along with the unspeakable  
 wine. While I was asleep at Circe's palace I did not think to get back  
 down through the long ladder, instead I fell straight down from the roof,  
 my neck broke and my soul descended to Hades.*

This is the first narrative of a shade that Odysseus hears in Hades and it introduces some of the main motifs that are going to be recurrent throughout the hero's stay in Hades. The first thing to note is that the shade's account differs from that of Odysseus in book 10. Specifically, they disagree on the reason that led to Elpenor's death. Odysseus implied that it was his simple-mindedness that cost him his life, since he *forgot in his mind* (Od. 10.557: ἐκλάθετο φρεσὶν) to descend from a roof top by a ladder and instead dived headlong into the ground. Elpenor's shade however has a different story to tell. According to him, a hostile god and the effect of 'unspeakable' wine are to blame. His version of events has been interpreted as a deliberate attempt on the part of Elpenor to save his reputation.<sup>24</sup> That may well be right, at one level, but there is another aspect that needs to be highlighted here. Being the first actual speech by an inhabitant of Hades, Elpenor's speech introduces a central theme of Underworld narratives as it is going to be developed throughout the 'Nekyia'. By that I mean the retelling of stories that are familiar from elsewhere in the epic tradition from an unfamiliar perspective, and in a self-consciously unfamiliar way. Elpenor's "mirror story" of his death,<sup>25</sup> demonstrates what that can mean in practice: we heard Odysseus' account of his companion's death at the end of book 10 but now, through his visit to Hades, we have the unique opportunity to re-consider the same story from the perspective of the character who experienced it. The result, not surprisingly, is significantly different.

The main difference, it is important to note, is not to be found at the level of actual events, as in both stories Elpenor falls off a roof and breaks his neck. What matters, rather, is how that event is interpreted: Odysseus describes it like a bard might have done, relating both the

<sup>24</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 81.

<sup>25</sup> De Jong (2001), 275.

event itself and the motives that set it into motion. Elpenor, however, cannot do the same since he knows only what he can experience and feel. His account is therefore more subjective: he understands that it was his drinking that killed him, but like mortals often do, refuses to take responsibility and instead blames his misfortune on some divine agent.<sup>26</sup> Elpenor's account gains in pathos through its immediacy: this is one of the benefits of getting access to Hades, as we shall see in greater detail later on. Elpenor's short account gives us a fore-taste of what the journey to Hades is going to yield: familiar figures from the past will give their own version of their stories, thus allowing us to explore the epic tradition in intensely emotional, fiercely partisan (we might say revisionist) ways that are not normally open to epic. The dead do not sing the *kleos* of their own deeds, vividly and dispassionately. Rather, they make confessions which sometimes, as we shall see more specifically in Tyro's case,<sup>27</sup> can only be made after death. It is plausible, I argue, to see in Elpenor's story a first step toward this sort of confession-story which is going to dominate the 'Nekyia'.

Once Elpenor has given us his version of the accident that led to his death he moves on to his request, which follows naturally:

νῦν δέ σε τῶν ὄπιθεν γουνάζομαι, οὐ παρεόντων,  
 πρὸς τ' ἀλόχου καὶ πατρός, ὃ σ' ἔτρεφε τυτθὸν ἐόντα,  
 Τηλεμάχου θ', ὃν μοῦνον ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἔλειπες:  
 οἶδα γὰρ ὡς ἐνθένδε κιῶν δόμου ἐξ Αἴδαο  
 νῆσον ἐς Αἰαίην σχήσεις εὐεργέα νῆα: 70  
 ἔνθα σ' ἔπειτα, ἄναξ, κέλομαι μνήσασθαι ἐμεῖο.  
 μή μ' ἄκλαντον ἄθαπτον ἰὼν ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν  
 νοσφισθεῖς, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι,  
 ἀλλά με κακκῆαι σὺν τεύχεσιν, ἄσσα μοι ἔστιν,  
 σῆμά τέ μοι χεῦται πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης, 75  
 ἀνδρὸς δυστήνοιο καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.  
 ταῦτά τέ μοι τελέσαι πῆξαι τ' ἐπὶ τύμβῳ ἔρετμόν,  
 τῷ καὶ ζῶδς ἔρεσσον ἐὼν μετ' ἐμοῖς ἐτάροισιν.

(*Od.* 11.66-78)

*Now I implore you in the name of those you left behind and are not present, your wife and your father who nurtured you when you were little, and Telemachus whom you left alone in the palace, for I know that when you leave from the house of Hades you will stop with your ship at the island of Aiaia. There, I beg you, my king, remember me.*

<sup>26</sup> Verifying in this sense Zeus' statement in book 1 (*Od.* 1.32-4).

<sup>27</sup> *Od.* 11.235ff.

*Do not depart and leave me behind unlamented and unburied,  
ignoring me, lest I become a cause of divine wrath for you.  
But burn me along with my arms, those that I have  
and heap me a mound close to the shore of the grey sea,  
in the memory of a hapless man for the future generations to know.  
Do this for me and fix on the tomb my oar,  
with which I rowed along with my companions when I was alive.*

Elpenor desperately requests a burial, and his tone indicates that he is not sure he is going to get it:<sup>28</sup> the use of the verb καταλείπειν recalls the time Odysseus left him unburied upon departure from the island of Circe (*Od.* 11.53 ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς), and Elpenor now expresses the fear of being abandoned for a second time. It is that possibility that causes him to switch from pleading to threatening Odysseus of becoming a source of ‘divine wrath’ (11.73). Elpenor gives instructions for his oar to be placed upon his burial mound and with his last words refers to how he believes men are going to remember him upon looking at his grave: as the man who rowed with his comrades (*Od.* 11.78, τῷ καὶ ζωὸς ἔρεσσον ἐὼν μετ’ ἑμοῖς ἐτάροισιν). The irony of the shade’s final words is revealed when we recall how very differently Odysseus himself, and with him the epic tradition, remembered Elpenor:<sup>29</sup> although Odysseus does carry out his instructions (*Od.* 11.74-7 ~ 12.11-15), the final line of Elpenor’s speech is not repeated: here as elsewhere in *Od.* 11 the voice from Hades derives much of its poignancy from the fact that it articulates a personal aspiration that must ultimately remain unfulfilled.

## **2.2.iv. At the crossroads of past and future: the meetings with Teiresias and Antikleia**

### **1. Teiresias’ prophecy: unrestrained truth**

Odysseus prepares the transition to the next scene by ‘muting’ Elpenor (who we are told keeps talking, πόλλ’ ἀγόρευεν at *Od.* 11.83). As he fades out, Odysseus’ mother enters the scene:

ἦλθε δ’ ἐπὶ ψυχὴ μητρὸς κατατεθνηυῖας,  
Αὐτολύκου θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος Ἀντίκλεια,  
τὴν ζωὴν κατέλειπον ἰὼν εἰς Ἴλιον ἱρήν.

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<sup>28</sup> See Breed (1999), 146-7, who argues that a burial is Elpenor’s only claim to *kleos*.

<sup>29</sup> Eustathius for instance perceived Elpenor’s request as ‘εὐτελής’ and thus fitting with his anti-heroic nature, see Eustathius’ comments at *Od.* 11.75-6. For Elpenor’s reception as an anti-hero in Modern Greek poetry see Ricks (2007), 238-42 and Tambakaki (2012).

τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ δάκρυσα ἰδὼν ἐλέησά τε θυμῷ:  
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς εἶων προτέρην, πυκινόν περ ἄχεύων,  
 αἵματος ἄσσον ἴμεν, πρὶν Τειρεσίαο πυθέσθαι.

(*Od.* 11.84-9)

*There came the soul of my dead mother  
 Antikleia, daughter of the great hearted Autolykos  
 whom I left alive when leaving for sacred Ilium.  
 When I saw her I cried and pitied her in my heart  
 but, even though I suffered greatly, I would not let her  
 come close to the blood, before I had consulted Teiresias.*

Antikleia is introduced in the same way as Elpenor, with a focus on the visual aspect of the encounter: the hero weeps when he *sees* her just like he did when he saw his companion (*Od.* 11.87 = *Od.* 11.55). Odysseus comments on the fact that he had left his mother alive upon his departure for Troy and the use of κατέλειπον echoes once more the meeting with Elpenor (11.72 ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν): Odysseus' first two meetings in Hades involve people he left behind only to find them dead in Hades. The same motif is repeated, as we shall see, in the meeting with Agamemnon later on. Ironically, Hades as the place of invisibility and seclusion, provides Odysseus with an update of what he has missed since he left Troy, and it does so by literally showing to him the changes that occurred in the shades he meets.

Despite Antikleia's introduction the encounter of mother and son has to be postponed, since Antikleia cannot be allowed to approach the blood before Teiresias, according to Circe's instructions.<sup>30</sup> Odysseus keeps his mother's shade away from the pit and Teiresias' soul appears soon after:

ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο 90  
 χρύσειον σκῆπτρον ἔχων, ἐμὲ δ' ἔγνω καὶ προσέειπεν:  
 'διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,  
 τίπτ' αὖτ', ὦ δύστηνε, λιπῶν φάος ἠελίοιο  
 ἦλυθες, ὄφρα ἴδη νέκυας καὶ ἀτερπέα χῶρον;  
 ἀλλ' ἀποχάζεο βόθρου, ἄπισχε δὲ φάσγανον ὄξύ, 95  
 αἵματος ὄφρα πῖω καὶ τοι νημερτέα εἶπω.'

(*Od.* 11.90-6)

*Then came the soul of Theban Teiresias  
 holding a golden sceptre, and he recognised me and said:  
 'son of Laertes, born of Zeus, Odysseus of many turns*

<sup>30</sup> This is also a clever move in narrative terms. As Fenik notes, Odysseus employs here the technique of retardation by introducing his mother's shade and then interpolating the meeting with Teiresias, thus raising the audience's anticipation for the meeting with Antikleia. Fenik (1974), 89-90.

*why did you, wretch, left the light of the sun,  
and came to see the dead and the hapless plain?  
But move away from the pit, hold back your keen blade,  
for me to drink from the blood and tell you true things.'*

Again Odysseus introduces the shade with the formula 'ἤλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ', as he did with the two previous shades. The recurrent formulation hints that his narrative is beginning to take the form of a catalogue, a sub-genre of epic that is associated with poetic intensity and metapoetic reflection.<sup>31</sup> This is a significant point for my argument and I will return to it in a moment, but first let me note the emphasis that Odysseus again places on seeing. In contrast with his previous encounters with Elpenor and Antikleia, Odysseus does not state that he *sees* Teiresias' shade but he does provide visual details that strongly imply it.<sup>32</sup> In any case, Teiresias carries a sceptre as a prominent visual token of his authority.<sup>33</sup> The seer gives immediate proof of that authority by recognising Odysseus without having to drink from the blood.<sup>34</sup>

The meeting that follows is the one for which Odysseus travelled to Hades and as such ought arguably to have been unproblematic. In practice, however, it has occasioned much scholarly debate. The seer's prophecy in particular has been criticised as inconsistent with the narrative and irrelevant to the plot.<sup>35</sup> The main problem has been that what Teiresias reveals to Odysseus has little, if anything, to do with the information Odysseus seeks in the Underworld, namely the way back to Ithaca (*Od.* 10.539: ἐπῆρσιν ὁδὸν καὶ μέτρα).<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, once

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<sup>31</sup> For Homer's poetic use of catalogues see Sammons (2010) with further bibliography.

<sup>32</sup> Note especially the use of χρύσεον to describe the seer's sceptre. Gold is associated with brightness in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and is very often used by the gods, see for instance: *Il.* 13.21-6 for the description of Poseidon's golden palace and armour, and *Il.* 18.516-7 for the description of Athena's and Ares' golden figures, dressed in golden clothes as well, in the shield of Achilles. See also *Od.* 1.97 for Hermes' golden sandals. Finally, it should be noted that one of Aphrodite's epithets is 'the golden one' χρυσέη (*Il.* 3.64 - 19.282). For gold in association with the Sun and his brightness in the *Homeric Hymns* and in art see Parisinou (2005), 32 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Stanford (1947), 385, thinks that *skeptron* here refers to the staff of a prophet and not that of a king, thus distinguishing it from Agamemnon's sceptre which Odysseus yielded to bring order back to the routing Achaeans in book 2 of the *Iliad* (2.185-6). For the *skeptron* as a symbol of power in the *Iliad* see Easterling (1989), 104-21 and also Kirk (1985), 126-7, 134.

<sup>34</sup> The scholiast points out that Teiresias recognises Odysseus through his mental abilities, as he is traditionally blind and therefore cannot literally *see* him, cf. ΣQ and V *ad Od.* 11.91: τῷ νῶ, οὐ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς. ἐπεὶ τυφλὸς ἦν.

<sup>35</sup> For the most important criticisms of the meeting and the prophesy see Schwartz (1924), 138-45, Focke (1943), 199-207, Page (1955), 39-42, Kirk (1962), 237-40, Reinhardt (1996), 110-14, Fenik (1974), 120-4, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 71-6, and De Jong (2001), 276-9 defend the passage as integral to the 'Nekyia', as do Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 82-3 with further bibliography. For detailed discussion of the contents and function of the prophecy in the *Odyssey* see Peradotto (1990), 59-92, especially 62-75. For a comparison of the Odyssean narrative with the necromantic ritual that features in *Samuel* 28 see Carp (1979).

<sup>36</sup> Page (1955), 27-8, for instance notes the lack of "common sense" in the absence of any reference to the way back.

Odysseus returns to Aeaea, he gets detailed instructions about the journey ahead from Circe (*Od.* 12.36-141) Thus, Teiresias' prophecy not only appears to be out of context but the very necessity of a trip to Hades seems to be invalidated.<sup>37</sup> This has serious implications in terms of narrative coherence since, as Segal notes, the journey to Hades is the only one that is imposed upon Odysseus as necessary (*Od.* 10.490: ἄλλην χρῆ πρῶτον ὁδὸν τελέσαι).<sup>38</sup> With such an important endeavour proving pointless in the end, the plot of the *Odyssey* as a whole seems to be called into question.

Even with analytic approaches long having gone out of fashion, Homeric scholars still feel that the inconsistencies regarding Teiresias' prophecy and Odysseus' trip to Hades more generally need to be explained. Segal for instance argues that the journey to the Underworld helps Odysseus accept his mortality and eventually opens the way back home for him.<sup>39</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood on the other hand sees in the prophecy of the hero's death at an old age an attempt to impose closure on the story of Odysseus.<sup>40</sup> More recently, De Jong has noted that in narrative terms "there is a division of labour between the seer, who deals with the hero's fate ... while Circe ... gives exact nautical and geographical information...", but does not comment on why the trip to Hades is presented as a necessity.<sup>41</sup>

I would like to argue here that in order to understand the prophecy of Teiresias we need to examine not just its content (what it tells us), but more importantly its context (where it is uttered) in conjunction with its cause (why it is told where it is told). This approach is fruitful because it highlights several points in Teiresias' prophecy that have a bearing on the topic of this dissertation. In terms of context, the meeting of course takes place in Hades, which as we have seen means that Odysseus and the seer meet in absolute seclusion from both the mortal and immortal spheres. That in turn means that whatever is said between them cannot be overheard, not even by divine 'eavesdroppers'. And that, I would argue, has implications for what can be said, and how it is expressed.

The importance of seclusion as a characteristic of Hades can already be seen in the opening words of Teiresias' speech. Once the seer has recognised Odysseus, he addresses him by using a full line formula which gives the hero's patronymic, his name and two epithets.

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<sup>37</sup> Several interpretations of the prophecy as a folktale motif have been put forward by scholars; among the more important see: Woodhouse (1930), 148, Knight (1936), 41, Hansen (1977) and (1990), Segal (1962), 43 and (1993), and Olson (1997).

<sup>38</sup> Segal (1962), 40.

<sup>39</sup> Segal (1962), 41-3.

<sup>40</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 73-5.

<sup>41</sup> De Jong (2001), 277.



Elpenor too addressed Odysseus with the exact same line during their meeting (11.60 = 11.92) and as we shall see later on so do the other shades he meets.<sup>42</sup> This is remarkable in that the identity of the hero is treated as taboo throughout much of the *Odyssey*.<sup>43</sup> Not only is Odysseus himself reluctant to reveal his name, but, as Austin has argued, his name is held back by other characters in the *Odyssey* in an effort not to attract unwanted attention to the hero.<sup>44</sup> Even though Olson has convincingly shown that “name-magic” in the narrow sense (Austin’s term) does not apply in the *Odyssey* – indeed mortal characters refer to Odysseus by name quite a few times in the course of the poem – the hero’s full title is very rarely used.<sup>45</sup>

The full-line formula of Odysseus’ name as it appears in line 92 is used a total of 14 times in the *Odyssey*, 8 times by gods, 5 times by the shades he meets in the Underworld and just once by a human character on earth.<sup>46</sup> This comes close to Austin’s observation that Odysseus’ name is taboo in the *Odyssey*, as mortal characters do not normally use the full-line formula to refer to the hero. Importantly, the same is not true of the *Iliad*, where Odysseus is still part of the heroic world and the title διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεῦ is used without any restrictions by gods and men alike.<sup>47</sup> From the point, however, that Odysseus rounds Cape Malea and disappears from the world of gods and men he is referred to as *the man* or simply as ‘Odysseus’, but not as the hero-king of Ithaca, descendant of a divine lineage. That the shades in Hades feel free to refer to the hero by this title confirms, I argue, what we have observed about the poetic possibilities of this realm: in the confinement of the Underworld the usual rules and preconceptions of Homeric narrative do not apply; here, Odysseus’ full name can be heard without fear as it draws no negative attention, in fact no attention at all, to the hero.

Teiresias, then, freely uses Odysseus’ traditional title to address him, and in so doing highlights the paradox of the hero’s presence in Hades: Odysseus has become so dislocated that he can be himself again. Indeed, he has left the *light of the sun* in order to *see* the dead. Why has he done it? In posing the question in these terms, Teiresias not only sets up his own

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<sup>42</sup> *Od.* 11.405, 473, 617.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Austin (1972), Roisman (1990), 215-6.

<sup>44</sup> Austin (1972).

<sup>45</sup> Olson (1992).

<sup>46</sup> The formula is used by Calypso in *Od.* 5.203, Circe in 10.401, 456, 488, 504, Athena in 13.375, 16.167, 24.542. The only exception is Eumaeus in *Od.* 22.164, who only uses Odysseus’ name after the latter has revealed himself and is about to assume his royal status by slaughtering the suitors. See Austin (1975), 52-3 and 26-36, 40-53 for an analysis of all the epithet formulas for Odysseus. In the ‘Nekyia’ the full-line formula is used in *Od.* 11.60 by Elpenor, 11.92 by Teiresias, 11.405 by Agamemnon, 11.473 by Achilles and 11.617 by Heracles.

<sup>47</sup> The formula is used in *Il.* 2.173, 4.358, 8.93, 9.308, 9.624, 10.144, 23.723.

prophecy but also keeps Odysseus' extraordinary vision in focus, reminding the audience that what they are about to witness is not only forbidden to normal mortals but also inaccessible to the epic bard and his divine patron, the Muse.<sup>48</sup>

The seer answers his own question after drinking from the blood and delivers his famous prophecy:

νόστον δίζηαι μελιηδέα, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ:  
τὸν δέ τοι ἀργαλέον θήσει θεός: οὐ γὰρ ὀίω  
λήσειν ἐννοσίγαιον, ὃ τοι κότον ἔνθετο θυμῷ  
χωόμενος ὅτι οἱ υἷὸν φίλον ἐξαλάωσας.

(*Od.* 11.100-3)

*Sweet return you seek glorious Odysseus  
but the god will make this hard for you, for the shaker  
of the earth will not forget the grudge he holds against you  
in his mind, angry as he is because you blinded his dear son.*

The seer proves his abilities by recognising that the cause behind Odysseus' visit to Hades is his desire to return home, and by revealing Poseidon's wrath for the blinding of Polyphemus. We should note the significance of this point, as it is only here that the hero finally finds out who is responsible for his suffering.<sup>49</sup> Teiresias then warns Odysseus about the importance of leaving the cattle of Helios unharmed, and explains what will happen if he does not: his crew will be lost and he will reach Ithaca in a wretched state only to find his wife wooed by suitors who feast upon his fortune. With this crucial information regarding the state of affairs on Ithaca and the suitors' demise upon the hero's arrival,<sup>50</sup> Teiresias prophecy might arguably have found adequate closure. However it is at this point that its most important part follows, introducing the final, cryptic journey Odysseus will have to undertake:

καὶ τότε δὴ γαίη πῆξας ἐνῆρες ἐρετμόν,  
ῥέξας ἱερὰ καλὰ Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι,  
ἀρνεῖὸν ταῦρόν τε συῶν τ' ἐπιβήτορα κάπρον,  
οἴκαδ' ἀποστείχειν ἔρδειν θ' ἱερᾶς ἐκατόμβας  
ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι, τοῖ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσι,

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<sup>48</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra take the question to be rhetorical, as “the prophet knows full well the reason for Odysseus' coming.” Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 82. In her interpretation on the other hand, De Jong argues that Teiresias' question is genuine and this is proved by the fact that once his power is restored from drinking the blood, he answers it himself, De Jong (2001), 276.

<sup>49</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 83.

<sup>50</sup> De Jong argues that by mentioning that Odysseus will defeat the suitors either by might or trickery Homer “calls attention to the major themes of the *Odyssey*: cunning versus force.” De Jong (2001), 278. The reference to the theme of might versus mind anticipates the meeting with Achilles that will follow later in book 11 (*Od.* 11.466ff.).

πᾶσι μάλ' ἐξείης. θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἀλὸς αὐτῶ  
ἀβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος ἐλεύσεται, ὅς κέ σε πέφνη  
γῆραι ὑπο λιπαρῶ ἀρημένον: ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ  
ὄλβιοι ἔσσονται. τὰ δέ τοι νημερτέα εἴρω.

135

(*Od.* 11.129-137)

*Then plant the well-made oar to the ground  
and make rich sacrifices to King Poseidon  
of a ramp, a bull and a boar that mates with the swine.  
Then head back home and offer sacred hecatombs  
to the immortal gods who hold the broad heavens,  
to all of them in turn. Gentle death shall come to you  
away from the sea and will take you in happy old age.  
And around you the people will be prosperous.  
This is the truth I say to you.*

According to the final part of Teiresias's prophecy, Odysseus' will not have achieved his *nostos* until Poseidon's wrath is appeased. For that, a new journey is required, crowned by a gentle death either away from the sea or from the sea,<sup>51</sup> while surrounded by his blissful people.<sup>52</sup> Seen from this perspective Teiresias' prophecy acquires new importance as it can be argued that it indeed shows Odysseus the way back to Ithaca. The point is that the seer points the way for the hero's final return, and this is precisely what is needed since the other information can, and indeed will, be given by Circe. So, Teiresias and Circe cooperate in order for Odysseus to reach home but in a different sense than the one De Jong proposes: Circe, being the daughter of Helios,<sup>53</sup> provides information about Odysseus' journey and the dangers ahead, or put differently, about things that can be *seen*. Teiresias, by contrast, provides knowledge of matters unseen, a type of knowledge, we are invited to believe, that can only be given in the darkness of Hades.

I have argued that Teiresias' prophecy, being an Underworld narrative *par excellence*, cuts across the constraints of human and divine knowledge, and as a result provides Odysseus with information that is otherwise inaccessible. With the revelation of Poseidon's wrath and

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<sup>51</sup> There is a problem with the translation of ἐξ ἀλός as the Greek could mean both 'away from the sea' and 'out of the sea'. See Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 86 who sum up previous scholarship on the matter and also Kirk (1962), 238, Hansen (1977), 42-8.

<sup>52</sup> See Haubold (2000): 101-4.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 72-3, who notes that Circe dwells on an island that is strongly connected with light. See also *Od.* 12.3-4: νῆσόν τ' Αἰαίην, ὅθι τ' Ἡοῦς ἠριγενείης  
οἰκία καὶ χοροὶ εἰσι καὶ ἀντολαὶ Ἥελίοιο.

*And the island of Aiaia where the morning Dawn  
dwells and has her dancing floor and from where the Sun rises.*

more importantly how to appease it, the full potential of Hades as a prophetic resource is exploited and Odysseus' *nostos* becomes possible. At the level of plot, this justifies the trip to Hades as it is only in the confinement of Hades that such information can be revealed without any risk of divine retribution: as Circe told Odysseus, the way to Ithaca lies through Hades. This is where Odysseus might have left the Underworld and re-emerged into the world of the living. Yet, as we know from the encounter with Elpenor, and as the hovering shade of Antikleia in particular reminds us, Hades holds more than Teiresias revealed. In fact, Homer has arranged the story in such a way that Odysseus cannot leave at this crucial juncture. With Antikleia waiting in the wings we too must stay and turn from the future to the past.

Odysseus for one appears unaffected by the seer's revelations and, having fulfilled his mission, returns his attention back to his mother's shade.<sup>54</sup> The theme of vision is once again to the fore: paradoxically, Odysseus as a living man can *see* (11.141 ὀρόω) his mother's soul in the darkness of Hades whereas Antikleia, a dweller of the Underworld, cannot *see* (11.143 ἰδεῖν) her son who stands right in front of her. Teiresias explains that if allowed to drink from the blood the shades will talk to him and with this he returns to Hades paving the way for the meetings with the shades that ensue.

## **2. The meeting with Antikleia**

Once Odysseus has learned how to make his mother recognise him the much anticipated meeting with Antikleia finally begins. In narrative terms, this meeting complements the one with Teiresias that has just concluded: the seer shared with Odysseus information about the future whereas his mother will provide him with crucial information about his past. In fact, the two meetings are closely intertwined, for the consequences of Odysseus' absence from Ithaca, as expressed by his mother's death, throw an ominous light on the future in case Odysseus does not achieve his homecoming soon. In this sense, the meeting with Antikleia fleshes out what Odysseus learned from Teiresias, providing the hero with his first update since he left Troy and at the same time reinforcing the need for a swift return.

But as well as continuing the theme of *nostos*, the meeting with Antikleia is significant because it provides us with an exploration of the intimate relationship of mother and son, thus

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<sup>54</sup> Segal (1962), 41, finds Odysseus' reaction strikingly calm, whereas Reinhardt (1996), 112, sees the lack of answer from Odysseus as "above all *religious* both in form and content."

revealing a side of Odysseus that has not been seen so far. When meeting Antikleia, Odysseus is not a king or a hero, or even the wanderer he has become in the *Odyssey*; rather he assumes his role as a son who converses with his mother at a deeply emotional level. The intensity of feeling that was triggered by Odysseus' encounter with Elpenor reaches new heights as Odysseus comes face to face with what his absence has meant to his loved ones. Just as in *Iliad* 23 Hades becomes a resource for exploring emotions that remained hidden in the world of the living, so too Odysseus' trip to Hades in *Odyssey* 11 allows us to reflect on a side of his personality that remains inaccessible elsewhere in the epic.<sup>55</sup>

### 3. *Hearing from the dead about the living*

Antikleia in her second appearance is not introduced in any special way as she has already been described adequately when first spotted by Odysseus (11.84-6) and again in 11.141-5. Now she is allowed close to the blood, drinks from it and after recognising Odysseus (11.152-4) addresses him first:

τέκνον ἐμόν, πῶς ἤλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα	155
ζωὸς ἐόν; χαλεπὸν δὲ τάδε ζωοῖσιν ὀρᾶσθαι.	
μέσσω γὰρ μεγάλοι ποταμοὶ καὶ δεινὰ ρέεθρα,	
Ἰκεανὸς μὲν πρῶτα, τὸν οὐ πῶς ἔστι περῆσαι	
πεζῶν ἐόντ', ἦν μὴ τις ἔχη εὐεργέα νῆα.	
ἦ νῦν δὴ Τροίηθεν ἀλώμενος ἐνθάδ' ἰκάνεις	160
νηί τε καὶ ἐτάροισι πολὺν χρόνον; οὐδέ πω ἤλθες	
εἰς Ἰθάκην, οὐδ' εἶδες ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γυναῖκα;	
	( <i>Od.</i> 11.155-63)

*My child, how did you come into the murky darkness  
being alive? It is very difficult for the living to see those things  
since great rivers and terrible streams stand in the way,  
and first of all the Ocean, which is impossible to cross  
on foot, without having a well-made ship.  
Do you indeed arrive here from Troy after wandering  
with your ship and companions for a long time? Have you not  
yet reached Ithaca, or seen your wife in the palace?*

Antikleia's opening address to Odysseus, *my child*, sets the tone of the meeting and establishes a special kind of emotional speech that will be retained throughout the meeting.

<sup>55</sup> Note for instance that Antikleia is mentioned only in *Odyssey* 11.

The mother voices her concern for her son by asking Odysseus the same question he had asked Elpenor (11.57 ≈ 155). However, this time the roles are reversed: for Antikleia, who is fully incorporated into Hades, it is clear that Odysseus is the one that does not belong there and whose presence has to be explained.<sup>56</sup> This is further highlighted by the unnecessary enjambment of ζῶδες ἐόν in line 157 which betrays Antikleia's surprise and at the same time underscores the awkwardness of Odysseus' presence in the Underworld.<sup>57</sup> The central point is again that as a living man he should not be able to *see* (ὄρᾶσθαι) into Hades and yet the hero does: again the focus is on Odysseus' extraordinary vision. At every turn of Odysseus' journey through the Underworld we are reminded that what we hear is the result of the hero's unique ability to *see* where no one else can.

Antikleia provides a further reason for why we cannot expect to see into Hades and that is the obstacles a living man would face in order to reach the Underworld.<sup>58</sup> The shade develops a complex geographical scheme for getting to Hades by mortal means: great rivers separate the land of the dead from that of the living, with Oceanus being the greatest obstacle of all.<sup>59</sup> Mortal human beings would need a ship to get there: Antikleia once more echoes Odysseus' words to Elpenor about arriving 'on foot' in Hades faster than he did on his ship,<sup>60</sup> but that motif too is reversed with the shade stressing the superiority of ship travel over walking. The multiple reversals of motifs from the Elpenor scene suggest that the hero has now successfully crossed the boundaries of the Underworld.

Antikleia's speech to Odysseus betrays a state of heightened emotional involvement which can only be understood in light of their relationship as mother and son. This is true of the address that frames the speech ('my son'), but also of the long description of geographical

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<sup>56</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 87.

<sup>57</sup> The study of the enjambment in Homer begins with Parry (1929) followed by Lord (1948) and has been expanding ever since. See Bakker (1990), with a discussion of previous bibliography and also Higbie (1990) who examines enjambment particularly in the *Iliad*. For recent studies see Friedrich (2000), Steinrück (2008) and Gostoli (2008).

<sup>58</sup> Lines 157-162 were thought of as dubious in antiquity and as such were athetised, see ΣΗ and V *ad Od.* 11.157 as well as ΣΗ *ad Od.* 11.161-2.

<sup>59</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 87, argue that the rivers Antikleia mentions are not the Underworld rivers mentioned elsewhere (*Od.* 10.513-5); they do not however clarify what alternative scheme might be in operation. Tsagarakis (2000), 34 n.103, on the other hand, takes the reference to be to the rivers of Hades mentioned by Circe. I would argue in favour of his reading as the text seems to imply a transoceanic setting: Antikleia states that the first (πρῶτα) great obstacle (river) is Oceanus which would mean that the other rivers follow after that. Also Athena's statement in the *Iliad* that she saved Heracles from the high streams of Styx (*Il.* 8.369 Στυγὸς ὕδατος αἰπὰ ῥέεθρα) makes it very possible that the δεινὰ ῥέεθρα Antikleia mentions are the ones of the dreadful Underworld rivers.

<sup>60</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 60 argues that Odysseus' and Antikleia's remarks both betray an underlying belief that Hades could be reached by sailing through the Ocean towards the edge of the world.

detail that follows: as De Jong notes, Antikleia assumes her nurturing role as a mother by referring to the practical difficulty of reaching Hades even before turning her attention to Odysseus' wife Penelope and his return to Ithaca.<sup>61</sup>

Odysseus' reply is equally filled with pathos as he gradually moves from answering his mother's questions to inquiring about her death and the family he left behind. First he replies to her question by explaining not how, but why he had to go to Hades (*Od.* 11.164-5). Odysseus evidently feels the need to guard against any suspicion that he came as a tourist, as it were, in order to *see* the dead. It is important to remember here that Teiresias assigned this motivation to Odysseus upon meeting him a few lines earlier. And we should remember, too, that *seeing* the dead is precisely where we are headed, as we are about to embark on Odysseus' great 'Catalogue of Heroines'. Odysseus seems anxious to insure that his actions remain well motivated at the level of plot, and that he does not present himself to his hosts, the Phaeacians, merely as an explorer. At the same time, that very anxiety is indicative of just how attractive the resources of Hades really are: to Odysseus, to the reader and to the poet.

Once the motivation behind his trip to the Underworld has been explained it is Odysseus' turn to ask questions. The hero soon realises that, for the first time since he left Troy, he can get access to information about his home and his family and seizes the opportunity to do so:

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπὲ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον: 170  
 τίς νύ σε κῆρ ἐδάμασσε ταηλεγέος θανάτοιο;  
 ἧ δολιχῆ νοῦσος, ἧ Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα  
 οἷς ἀγανοῖς βελέεσσιν ἐποικομένη κατέπεφνεν;  
 εἰπὲ δέ μοι πατρός τε καὶ υἱέος, ὃν κατέλειπον,  
 ἧ ἔτι πᾶρ κείνοισιν ἐμὸν γέρας, ἧέ τις ἤδη 175  
 ἀνδρῶν ἄλλος ἔχει, ἐμὲ δ' οὐκέτι φασὶ νέεσθαι.  
 εἰπὲ δέ μοι μνηστῆς ἀλόχου βουλὴν τε νόον τε,  
 ἧέ μένει παρὰ παιδὶ καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσει  
 ἧ ἤδη μιν ἔγημεν Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος.

(*Od.* 11.170-9)

*But come now tell me this and answer me in detail:  
 what fate subdued you to death that brings long woe?  
 Was it a long disease or did the arrow-handed Artemis  
 kill you, coming with her gentle arrows?  
 Tell me also of my father and of my son whom I left behind,  
 do they still hold my royal honour or does another man have it*

<sup>61</sup> De Jong (2001), 280.

*and people say I won't be coming back anymore?  
Tell me also of my wife, whom I wed, does her  
will and mind stay with our child, keeping everything in order  
or did someone of the Achaeans marry her, whoever  
is the best among them?*

Odysseus asks Antikleia about the circumstances of her death and then inquires about his father and son and finally about Penelope:<sup>62</sup> his concern is both with the well-being of those he left behind (note the use of the verb κατέλειπον as in *Od.* 11.53, 72 and 86) but also with whether or not he retains his status at Ithaca.<sup>63</sup> Antikleia replies to the questions in reverse order, thus creating a dramatic climax: she starts from Penelope's faithfulness, moves to Telemachus and Laertes and concludes her speech by describing her own death, which, caused by her desire of Odysseus, has a great emotional impact on the hero.

Antikleia's account regarding the situation on Ithaca has been criticised by scholars mainly because it does not agree with what Teiresias reported in his prophecy: in her account Penelope is not wooed by any suitors and Telemachus is pictured as retaining all his royal prerogatives.<sup>64</sup> These inconsistencies, however, prove to be only superficial since, as the scholiasts note, Antikleia refers to the situation as it was at the time of her death where no suitors have yet appeared and Telemachus' rights to sovereignty were not challenged by anyone.<sup>65</sup> Antikleia uses the present tense throughout her speech: Penelope remains (*Od.*

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<sup>62</sup> Odysseus asks three questions, starting from his mother's death, then moving to his father's and son's wellbeing and finally to Penelope's faithfulness. A careful structure underlies these three questions, each of which occupies precisely three lines. In each case Odysseus asks the question ('how did you die?'), then offers two possible answers ('was it a long disease or did Artemis kill you?') and finally elaborates on the second possible answer ('coming with her gentle arrows'). By offering alternative answers to his questions Odysseus implies that he is aware things might not be ideal back home and that therefore Antikleia's knowledge regarding the situation at Ithaca is crucial to him. For the structure of Odysseus' questions see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 87.

<sup>63</sup> Zeitlin (1995), 125, observes that Odysseus' question reflects Penelope's expected role in the *Odyssey* of staying with Telemachus and keeping her husband's possessions in place.

<sup>64</sup> Telemachus' age in Antikleia's description has caused problems: if Antikleia describes the situation at Ithaca as it was when she died, thus before the suitors appear, then Telemachus must have been very young to hold the rule, as Page argues (1955), 40-1. Bassett (1938), 134 proposes that Homer has Antikleia describe Telemachus as the audience remembers him from the first four books of the *Odyssey* in order not to confuse matters more, a view shared by Stanford (1947), 388. Bowra too thinks that the reference is to the adult Telemachus because the poet does not want to "disturb us for a moment on a matter in which clarity is more important than precision", Bowra (1962), 70. Combella (1974), on the other hand, argues that a fourteen year old Telemachus would be more than adequate to function and be honoured as his father's heir as long as no suitors were around to challenge him. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 88, argue that Telemachus must be thought of "as a young adult who has already won men's respect". However, they do not offer a reason as to why this is so. De Jong (2001), 280, reaches the same conclusion as Combella and argues that Telemachus "is quietly enjoying his privileges as a prince" and that "even though he is only ten or thirteen, he participates in dinners."

<sup>65</sup> The scholiasts agree that the account refers to Antikleia's time of death, cf. ΣB.T. and V. *ad Od.* 11.182 and also Olson (1995), 67, n.9. Interestingly, the scholiasts are not concerned at all with the issue of Telemachus' age.



11.181 μένει) faithful to her marriage while Telemachus holds the rule with ease (*Od.* 11.184-5 ἔκηλος / νέμεται) and is invited (*Od.* 11.187 πάντες γὰρ καλέουσι) by all. The same is true of her report on Laertes as well (*Od.* 11.187 μίμνει, 188 κατέρχεται, 190 εὔδει, 191 εἶται). However, when Antikleia refers to her own death she switches to the past tense (*Od.* 11.197 ὀλόμην - ἐπέσπον, 199 κατέπεφνε, 200 ἐπήλυθεν, 203 ἀπηύρα). The shift in tense indicates how the shade understands time in Hades: everything is frozen at the moment of her death. And it is the memory of her own death that triggers the emotional climax towards which Antikleia's speech has been building from its very beginning, namely the revelation that it was the absence of Odysseus that caused her death.<sup>66</sup> There could be no better way of bringing home to Odysseus the consequences of his long absence. The hero reacts to the news by desperately attempting to embrace his mother in a scene that captures his emotions of grief and loss: despite his efforts, however, the soul flies away from his grasp like a shadow or a dream.<sup>67</sup>

τρὶς μὲν ἐφορμήθην, ἔλεειν τέ με θυμὸς ἀνώγει,  
 τρὶς δέ μοι ἐκ χειρῶν σκιῇ εἵκελον ἦ καὶ ὄνειρῳ  
 ἔπτατ'. ἐμοὶ δ' ἄχος ὄξυ γενέσκετο κηρόθι μᾶλλον

(*Od.* 11.206-8)

*Three times I rushed towards her, my heart urging me  
 to embrace her and three times she flew away from my arms  
 like a shadow or a dream. A great pain then rose within my heart.*

The image of Odysseus attempting in vain to embrace the soul of his mother comes very close to the description of Achilles embracing Patroclus' soul in *Iliad* 23 which we examined in the previous chapter. Indeed, the two scenes are very similar with the central motif in both being the attempt to embrace the soul which flies away upon contact. In the 'Nekyia', however, the scene is more elaborate. The first thing to notice is the insistence with which Odysseus tries to embrace Antikleia, as expressed with τρὶς μὲν ... τρὶς δέ. This construction has strong Iliadic resonances, as in the *Iliad* it is used of warriors who stubbornly attempt a triple attack which is always fated to fail.<sup>68</sup> However, when used in the context of the

<sup>66</sup> Stanford (1947), 388-9, Reinhardt (1996), 116, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 89.

<sup>67</sup> Stanford (1947), 389 interprets the scene as an amplification of the attempt of Achilles to embrace Patroclus' ghost in *Il.* 23. Likewise, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 89 suggest that the scene is modeled on *Il.* 23.97 ff. We have, however, examined the similarities of the two scenes in the previous chapter and seen that "modeled" is probably the wrong term. The two episodes seem rather to derive from a common catabatic tradition and to employ imagery that is common in such type scenes.

<sup>68</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 89 who cite *Il.* 5.436-7, 16.702-3, 784-5 but do not mention the negative outcome of all these attempts as a pattern that also informs the present passage. Reinhardt (1996), 116, notes the



*once the spirit of life leaves the white bones.  
The soul flies away like a dream.  
But seek the light as fast as you can and know all these  
so as to tell them to your wife later on.*

Antikleia explains that once the body is devoured by fire the soul flies away, immaterial as a dream. Odysseus will remember this throughout his visit in Hades as no more attempts to make physical contact with the shades will be made.<sup>70</sup> In the final two lines of her speech Antikleia suddenly switches to prompting Odysseus to leave the Underworld: it is as if the reference to the shade's nature triggers the realisation of the unnatural encounter she has with her son. Odysseus is still part of the living world and his place is by Penelope's side, who has replaced Antikleia in the hero's life.

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<sup>70</sup> Antikleia's words have been interpreted as a statement about the nature of the soul in connection with the cremation of the body; see for instance Stanford (1947), 381, Warden (1971), 96f., Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 88, Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 59. Clarke (1999), 7-9 and 203-4, argues for a different interpretation of the passage, which does not take Antikleia's words as referring to the role of cremation, since elsewhere in Homer the soul flies away at the time of death. Instead, argues Clarke, reference to the soul as ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται is made to explain what Odysseus has just experienced with his failed attempts to embrace his mother.

## ***Chapter 3: The Catalogue of Heroines: narrative unbound***

### **2.3.i. Introduction**

After the meeting with Antikleia is concluded Odysseus informs us that Persephone ‘sent forth the women’, signalling the beginning of the so-called ‘Catalogue of Heroines’. Over the next 97 lines (11.235-332) the hero meets a total of fourteen shades of famous women and hears their stories.

The ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ has had a long history of scholarly controversy. Wilamowitz and Focke saw it as a later addition, whereas Bowra characterised it as “out of place” in the context of the ‘Nekyia’.<sup>1</sup> Stanford detected a “Boeotian influence” due to the profound similarities with the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* with which he saw possible connections.<sup>2</sup> Page went even further, arguing that the Catalogue was indeed a “direct imitation” of the *Catalogue of Women* and asserting that not only was it a later addition but also one “loosely attached and carelessly adapted.”<sup>3</sup> Kirk, finally, argued more generally that the Catalogue was a later insertion from Boeotian catalogue poetry.<sup>4</sup>

More recent scholarship, however, has reclaimed the Catalogue as an integral part of *Odyssey* 11, recognizing its important function within the wider narrative of Odysseus’ homecoming.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most important contribution here is that of Doherty who has pointed out that the passage is crucial to Odysseus’ plan of pleasing Arete, the character that both Nausicaa and the disguised Athena (*Od.* 6.303-15 / 7.74-6) singled out as vital to his homecoming. Following Rose’s insightful discussion of the dangers that Scheria holds in store for Odysseus,<sup>6</sup> Doherty underlines the importance of a good reception of the hero on the part of Arete; the catalogue, she argues, can be seen as Odysseus’ tactful attempt to satisfy and simultaneously flatter the queen with an account of famous women of the past.<sup>7</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>1</sup> Wilamowitz (1884), 147-51, Focke (1943), 217-22 and Bowra (1962), 45-46.

<sup>2</sup> Stanford (1947), 389-90.

<sup>3</sup> Page (1955), 35-39.

<sup>4</sup> Kirk (1962), 237.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 90-1, who follow the reading of Reinhardt (1996), 117 and consider the catalogue to be an “essential part of ... the book.” See also Northrup (1980), who replies convincingly to Page’s arguments.

<sup>6</sup> Rose (1969), argues that the text offers many warning signs regarding the potential danger the Phaeacians pose for Odysseus.

<sup>7</sup> Doherty (1991) and (1995), 94ff.

Doherty's line of argument seems plausible and has been generally adopted by scholars since.<sup>8</sup>

In this section I will argue that besides the organic narrative function that Doherty recognises, the 'Catalogue of Heroines' has a vital role in enabling poetic experimentation and metapoetic reflection. This is acknowledged within the text itself, in the famous 'Intermezzo' that follows immediately after the 'Catalogue of Heroines' and that culminates in Alcinous' celebrated reflections on storytelling, catalogues (καταλέγω) and the art of the epic bard (*Od.* 11.362-68). I will come back to that passage in a moment. For now, I note that Alcinous' remarks need to be read in context and that once we take their context into account we realise that they are triggered, very precisely, by the 'Catalogue of Heroines' as a text that self-consciously experiments with the conventions and limitations of epic storytelling.

We can see that the poetic stakes are high in the 'Catalogue of Heroines' not just from the fact that it *is* a carefully constructed catalogue (in itself a marker of poetic ambition in Homer), and from the obvious intertextual resonances with Hesiodic epic, but also from the fact that it highlights the paradox of Odysseus' being able to *see* in the darkness of Hades. So far in the three encounters we have discussed (Elpenor, Antikleia, Teiresias), Odysseus' exceptional vision was emphasised through a frequent use of the verb ἰδεῖν. In the 'Catalogue of Heroines' Odysseus' ability to see the women, literally transforms the narrative into a spectacle with the verb ἰδεῖν (or εἰσιδεῖν) used a total of 10 times by the hero to introduce each heroine.<sup>9</sup>

The insistence of the text on the use of ἰδεῖν has been noticed by scholars, but the interpretations offered have been mainly of a stylistic nature. Rutherford for instance in one of the most recent discussions of the catalogue, notes the formulaic repetition of the introductory line and argues that "formulas amounting to - and I saw -" replace the "*ehoie-*

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<sup>8</sup> See for instance Pache (1999), who argues on the same lines as Doherty; and Larson (2000), who takes Doherty's argument a step further by trying to create a link between the internal audience of the catalogue and a Peisistratid audience of the epic's recital in Athens. Other interpretations include Houlihan's (1994), who emphasises Melampus' presence in the catalogue and Skempis and Ziogas' (2009), 235ff., who see Arete as a figure from *ehoie* poetry and discuss the way Odysseus exploits that link. De Jong (2001), 282, accepts that the catalogue has a poetic function, but sees its contents as having "no direct relevance to the plot of the *Odyssey*." For more recent discussion see Sammons (2010), 74-102, who observes the differences with Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* as well as other Homeric catalogues and argues for a unique function of the 'Catalogue of Heroines' in which the poet allows his narrative strategies to be reflected in the mortal narrative of Odysseus, highlighting at the same time its 'deficiencies' compared to the poet's Muse inspired view of the past.

<sup>9</sup> Tyro 11.235, Antiope 11.260, Alcmene 11.266, Epicaste 11.271, Chloris 11.281, Leda 11.298, Iphimedeia 11.306, Phaedra, Procris and Ariadne 11.321, Maira, Clymene, Eriphyle 11.326, of all the heroines collectively 11.329.

formula” that is found in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*. The result of such a replacement, Rutherford concludes, is that the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ is assimilated to a specific genre of female catalogue poetry.<sup>10</sup> Rutherford’s argument is plausible on its own terms, but I would argue that generic assimilation alone does not adequately explain what is at issue here.

To begin with, the use of the verb ἰδεῖν is not, as we have seen, limited only to the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ but appears throughout the ‘Nekyia’ when Odysseus introduces a shade.<sup>11</sup> It is sensible, then, to argue that the insistent use of the verb in the Catalogue serves to create a deliberate visual climax. In this connection we may note that Homer has a metrical alternative to εἶδον in ἤλθε(ν) (used at *Od.* 11.51, 84, 90, 387 and 467), which could have served to introduce some at least of the female shades. Moreover, forms of ἰδεῖν in the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ follow after the woman’s name and are placed either at the end of the first hemistich or immediately after.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to this the *ehoie* formula is always found at the beginning of the line, which makes the stylistic parallel between the two poems less striking than Rutherford suggests.<sup>13</sup>

The frequent use of ἰδεῖν in the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’, then, should not be considered just as a matter of formulaic convention or generic signposting. On the contrary, I would argue that its principal function is to highlight Odysseus’ ability to see in Hades and in so doing so to raise the poetic stakes: by descending to Hades and *seeing* the shades of the women the hero, and Homer for that matter, offers us a view of the epic tradition that is both legitimate on the genre’s own terms and decidedly novel. Its legitimacy rests on the nexus between poetic form, traditional content and directness of access (configured in visual terms) that we have seen as characteristic of Muse narrative throughout this thesis. The Underworld setting, by contrast, allows for new narrative perspectives, textures and even contents to emerge. This too is configured in visual terms (Odysseus’ ‘seeing’ has to be of a special kind in the context of his journey to ‘the invisible one’) but above all it hinges on the question of who gets to tell the story. This, I argue, is another defining feature of the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’, although it is less clearly marked than the emphasis on seeing and has therefore been missed in the past:

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<sup>10</sup> Rutherford (2000), 93-4.

<sup>11</sup> We have noted its use in Odysseus’ previous three meetings. After the Catalogue it recurs, for instance, at *Od.* 11.567, where it is used collectively of all the souls the hero wishes to see. Later on, it refers to Minos (*Od.* 11.568) and the great sinners of the past (*Od.* 11.576, 582, 593).

<sup>12</sup> For instance: Τυρῶ ἶδον (235), Ἀλκμήνην ἶδον (266), μητέρα τ’ Οἰδιπόδαο ἶδον (271).

<sup>13</sup> For the *ehoie* formula see *Catalogue of Women* fr. 43a.2, fr. 58.7, fr. 59.2, fr. 181.1, fr. 195.1, fr. 215.1 and fr. 253.1 M-W.

even though Odysseus recites the stories of the women he meets, it is actually the women themselves who tell them, in ways that reflect their own hopes and fears. In some cases this is made explicit: the first entry in the Catalogue, that of Tyro, contains several speech verbs that make the protagonist the narrator of her own story (*Od.* 11.236 φάτο, 237 φῆ). Tyro, I argue, sets the tone for the entries that follow: although only two of them contain actual speech verbs (*Od.* 11.261 εὔχετ', 306 φάσκε) they all, I argue, are to be understood as the women's own narratives – or at the very least as focalised through their eyes. This appears to be consistent with Odysseus' programmatic announcement before the beginning of the Catalogue where he informed us that each of the women *declared* her birth to him (*Od.* 11.233-4 ἠδὲ ἐκάστη / ὄν γόνον ἐξαγόρευεν). This is all the more significant since, as Rutherford notes, secondary focalisation is rare in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, with which these stories often overlap.<sup>14</sup> Hesiodic heroines in particular never have their words reported in any way: their stories are told by the Muse-inspired third person narrator, whose perspective, it has been shown, broadly resembles that of a (voyeuristic) male audience.<sup>15</sup> Drawing on the poetic resources of Hades, the 'Nekyia' thus develops a personally inflected view of the epic past that, I argue, suspends important epic values and conventions of storytelling in favour of an approach that comes close in texture and tone to that of lyric poetry.

### 2.3.ii. *The meeting with Tyro*

The meeting with Tyro is both the longest and, I would argue, the most important in the 'Catalogue of Heroines' in that it sets the tone for the other entries in the catalogue. I therefore propose to study it in some detail. As Antikleia is left to fade away from the foreground the heroines rush towards the blood making Odysseus use his sword to control the shades and only allow those to the pit to whom he wishes to speak (11.231).<sup>16</sup> The first heroine to approach is Tyro, daughter of King Salmoneus:

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<sup>14</sup> Rutherford (2000), 87, 94. See also Doherty (1995), 112, who notes the fact that in the 'Nekyia' women are given a voice but argues that this applies only to women who are friendly to men; women who oppose men are silenced.

<sup>15</sup> Osborne (2005), 11-4.

<sup>16</sup> It appears that there is a pattern in the way these meetings are said to conclude: when Odysseus is emotionally engaged, as happens with Elpenor, Antikleia and Agamemnon, the shades are left to fade away silently while the next shade or group of shades is announced. Where there is little or no emotional engagement we are told specifically of the shade's departure before the beginning of the next meeting (Teiresias, Achilles, Aias, Heracles). The reason for this might be to avoid interrupting an emotional meeting just to introduce the next one: by letting the first shade fade away, Odysseus/the poet eases us into the next meeting. Heubeck – Hoekstra

ἐνθ' ἣ τοι πρώτην Τυρῶ ἴδον εὐπατέρειαν, 235  
 ἣ φάτο Σαλμωνῆος ἀμύμονος ἕκγονος εἶναι,  
 φῆ δὲ Κρηθῆος γυνὴ ἔμμεναι Αἰολίδαο:  
 ἣ ποταμοῦ ἠράσσατ' Ἐνιπῆος θείοιο,  
 ὃς πολὺ κάλλιστος ποταμῶν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἴησι,  
 καὶ ῥ' ἐπ' Ἐνιπῆος πωλέσκετο καλὰ ῥέεθρα. 240  
 τῷ δ' ἄρα εἰσάμενος γαιήοχος ἐννοσίγαιος  
 ἐν προχοῆς ποταμοῦ παρελέξατο δινήεντος:  
 πορφύρεον δ' ἄρα κῦμα περιστάθη, οὔρει ἴσον,  
 κυρτωθέν, κρύψεν δὲ θεὸν θνητὴν τε γυναῖκα.  
 λῦσε δὲ παρθενίην ζώνην, κατὰ δ' ὕπνον ἔχευεν. 245

(*Od.* 11.235-245)

*Then the first I saw was Tyro, of noble father,  
 who said that she was the daughter of flawless Salmoneus,  
 and also said she was the wife of Cretheus, son of Aeolus.  
 She desired the divine river Enipeus,  
 who was the most beautiful of rivers on earth  
 and so she used to wander along its fair streams.  
 Taking his form the holder and shaker of earth,  
 lay with her at the mouth of the eddying river.  
 A dark wave, high as a mountain stood about them,  
 and with a curve covered the god and the mortal woman.  
 And he loosened her maiden girdle, and poured sleep over her.*

The first thing to note about this passage is that Odysseus allows Tyro to introduce herself in the first two lines: we read that Tyro *said* (11.236 φάτο) she is the daughter of Salmoneus and (11.237 φῆ) the wife of Kretheus.<sup>17</sup> The repetition of the verb *phēmi* suggests that what follows is indeed Tyro's own story. That expectation is borne out in the text: Doherty observes that in the narrative that follows the story of Tyro's love for the river Enipeus is told on her terms, with the verbs ἠράσσατ' – πωλέσκετο expressing actions that are in accordance with the heroine's will: it was Tyro that fell in love with Enipeus, and it was her own decision to wander along its shores.<sup>18</sup> This observation acquires further significance when we take into account Doherty's further point that in Tyro's closely parallel entry in the Hesiodic

(1990), 90, however, see the transition between scenes as a "little forced but keeping with normal epic technique".

<sup>17</sup> Doherty (1993), 5-6, Rutherford (2000), 94. There may be irony in the choice of the word εὐπατέρειαν since Salmoneus was one of the few mortals that dared defy Zeus and was punished for it: he can hardly be thought of as a 'good father'. On the other hand, the only other woman called εὐπατέρεια in Homeris Helen (*Il.* 6.292, *Od.* 22.227) whose father is Zeus and that could point towards an elaborate pun based on Salmoneus' attempt to emulate Zeus, see Graziosi – Haubold (2010), 161. For Salmoneus' arrogance towards Zeus and his downfall see Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* fr. 30, 1-25 M-W and Apollodorus *Bibl.* 1.89.

<sup>18</sup> Doherty (1993), 6f.



*Catalogue of Women* the heroine plays no active role. In this respect a comparison of the Odyssean passage regarding Tyro with that of the Hesiodic *Catalogue* proves fruitful as it allows us to observe how the tradition of the heroine is perceived and related differently in each catalogue. Such a comparison I argue is instructive for what it can teach us about the poetic of Hades.

Hesiod's version of the Tyro story is decidedly not presented coming from the heroine herself, nor does it reflect her hopes and aspirations. Here it is Poseidon who is said to desire and whose desire directs the action:

..... τῆ]ς γ' ἐράεσκε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων  
 ..... ..] φιλότῃτι θεὸς βροτῶι, οὔνεκ' ἄρ' εἶδος  
 πασάων προὔχεσκε γυναι]κῶν θηλυτεράων.

(*Cat.* fr. 30. 32-4 M-W)

..... . *Poseidon the shaker of earth desired her*  
 ..... .... *and slept with her, a god with a mortal, because*  
*she was the most beautiful of all women.*

Doherty is certainly right when she argues that in *Odyssey* 11, in contrast with the *Catalogue of Women*, Tyro is portrayed, if not as the master, then at least as the instigator of her own fate; and that even her deceit by Poseidon is carried out in a way that fulfils her fantasy: Poseidon after all does not just rape her, as he could have done, but instead assumes the form of Enipeus (*Od.* 11.241), the object of her desire. Moreover, his actions can be considered gentle: he hides himself and Tyro behind a towering wave, puts her to sleep and makes love to her (*Od.* 11.243-5). The heroine only finds out who her lover was after the act, when in the only direct speech reported in the 'Catalogue of Heroines' Poseidon introduces himself and warns Tyro not to reveal his identity to anyone:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἐτέλεσσε θεὸς φιλοτήσια ἔργα,  
 ἔν τ' ἄρα οἱ φῶ χειρὶ, ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε:  
 χαῖρε, γύναι, φιλότῃτι: περιπλομένου δ' ἐνιαυτοῦ  
 τέξεις ἀγλαὰ τέκνα, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀποφώλιοι εὖναι  
 ἀθανάτων: σὺ δὲ τοὺς κομέειν ἀτιταλλέμεναί τε. 250  
 νῦν δ' ἔρχεο πρὸς δῶμα, καὶ ἴσχεο μηδ' ὀνομήνης:  
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοῖ εἶμι Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων.  
 ὧς εἰπὼν ὑπὸ πόντον ἐδύσετο κυμαίνοντα.

(*Od.* 11.246-53)

*After the god had finished his work of love,  
 he held her hand, and spoke words and addressed her:  
 'Rejoice, woman, in our union, and as the year makes its turn  
 you will give birth to glorious children, for the embraces of the immortals  
 are not in vain. And you shall take care of them and rear them.  
 Go now to your house, and keep silent and do not name me;  
 I am Poseidon, the shaker of the earth.'  
 So he spoke and dived into the swelling sea.*

At this point it seems that Tyro's perspective no longer matters; yet, paradoxically this is where the narrative reflects it most directly. For what Odysseus does when he reports the words of Poseidon is to repeat Tyro's own account of what she heard, thus relating an actual part of her story. And there is more: by repeating Poseidon's words the heroine does of course reveal his identity, thus defying his command to keep it a secret. The implication is that Tyro has kept her secret throughout her life – but when she gets the chance to speak in Hades she breaks free of the constraints which Poseidon imposed on her.

The significance of this becomes more apparent once we note that Poseidon's warning not to divulge his name is absent from Tyro's story as reported in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*. It is well known that the two texts come very close at this point with *Od.* 11.249-50 being identical with lines 2-3 of fr.31 M-W of the *Catalogue of Women*:<sup>19</sup>

..... ..].[.]..Ποσειδάων λ[  
 τέξεις δ' ἀγλαὰ τέκ]να, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀποφώ[λιοι εὐναὶ  
 ἀθανάτων· σὺ δὲ τ]οὺς κομέειν ἀτιτα[λλέμεναί τε.  
 ..... ..]. ἴν' ἀγλαὰ τέκνα τ[εκ-  
 ..... ..].τανεμεσσητοὶ τε[ 5  
 ὧς εἰπὼν ὁ μὲν αὐτίς] ἀγαστόγῳ ἐμ[  
 ..... ..]η ἔβη οἴκόνδε [νέεσθαι  
 [ ..... ]..ου.

(*Cat.* fr. 31, 1-8 M-W)

..... .. Poseidon ...  
*you will give birth to glorious children, for the embraces of the immortals  
 are not in vain. And you shall take care of them and rear them.*

<sup>19</sup> See Page (1955), 37, West (1985), 32 n.7, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 92, Doherty (1991), 145.

..... ..... so that you(?) give birth to glorious children ...  
 .... ..... reproach(?) ...  
*Speaking thus he dived back into the roaring ...*  
 ..... ..... .. (but she?) returned home  
 ...

The two versions are of course very similar, but after an almost identical beginning the ‘Nekyia’ soon develops in a very different direction: in the *Catalogue of Women*, after announcing the birth of his sons in lines 2-3, Poseidon appears to be solely concerned with Tyro’s descendants: in line 4 we can still read the words ‘in order to / glorious children’, whereas the *τανεμεσσητοι* in line 5 most probably refers to the *ἀγλαὰ τέκνα* of the previous line.<sup>20</sup> Correspondence with the passage of *Od.* 11 is restored in the next two lines of fragment 31 M-W. The end of Poseidon’s speech will have come in line 6, with *ἀγαστόγῳ* referring in all probability to the sea.<sup>21</sup>

What does all this amount to? We can see that in the Hesiodic version of Tyro’s story Poseidon’s self-revelation and warning are omitted. The audience hears Poseidon’s words and is informed of his identity through the poet’s voice, whereas the heroine remains unaware of her divine lover’s name. This is an important observation because it reveals a difference between the two texts not just in content but also on a poetic level. The *Catalogue of Women* has been considered, already in antiquity, as a relative extreme example of pure narrative poetry, meaning that the poet’s voice is dominant and that the characters (heroes, heroines, gods etc.) do not on the whole assume the role of the narrator.<sup>22</sup> The fragments of the *Catalogue* that survive appear to confirm that view.<sup>23</sup> Tyro’s entry is no exception as it is also controlled by the external narrator (poet) including the direct speech of fr.31 lines 2-5 M-W.

<sup>20</sup> The gap in fr. 31 line 4 M-W is almost the same size (16 letters) as the first half of *Od.* 11.251 (17 letters): *νῦν δ’ ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς δῶμα*. Thus the first hemistich of *Od.* 11.251 could be seen as a possible candidate for supplementing Hes. fr. 31.4 M-W. Maas in fact proposes a solution along similar lines whereas West tries to fit in the motif of silence: *ἀλλ’ ἔχε σιγῆι μῦθο]ν, ἴν’ ἀγλαὰ τέκνα τ[εκοῦσα*. I find his suggestion improbable because it seems meaningless for Poseidon to ask for Tyro’s silence without having revealed himself, as he does in *Od.* 11. For the various suggestions see the critical apparatus in Merkelbach – West (1967), 21.

<sup>21</sup> For the usage and meaning of *ἀγαστόνος* see *Lfgre* s.v. The -εμ- that survives could belong to a verb of motion. See also Merkelbach – West (1967), 21 and the most recent edition by Hirschberger (2004), 103-4.

<sup>22</sup> For the terminology see De Jong (1987).

<sup>23</sup> See Rutherford (2000), 87-8 with further bibliography.

In the ‘Nekyia’ things are quite different: here the primary narrator is a character, Odysseus, and he reports what he has *heard* from Tyro. In *Od.* 11.248-52 the situation is even more complex since the lines are narrated by Odysseus, who gives the account of Tyro’s shade, who in turn repeats the exact words of Poseidon as she had heard them.<sup>24</sup> The direct speech of *Od.* 11.248-52 essentially echoes Tyro’s own voice, allowing us at the same time to witness her defying of Poseidon’s warning and the revelation of the secret he had bid her keep (ἴσχεο μηδ’ ὀνομήνησ Od. 11.251).<sup>25</sup> We can see then that in contrast with the *Catalogue of Women*, the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ in the ‘Nekyia’ allows for the voice of the women to be heard. And when Tyro finally gets her chance to speak she does so uncompromisingly, to the point of defying Poseidon.

Doherty notes Tyro’s defiance and reads in it an initiative that leads to the acquisition of *kleos* for the heroine, through the revelation of Poseidon’s name. She also argues that the heroine becomes a counterpart of Arete, since they both resist Poseidon’s power.<sup>26</sup> Skempis and Ziogas take that argument a step further suggesting that “By breaking her silence, Tyro guarantees her place in the *ehoie*-poetry ... Had she obeyed Poseidon’s order, she would remain unknown and unmentioned.”<sup>27</sup> Thus Skempis and Ziogas create a direct link between the *Catalogue of Women* and the Catalogue of *Odyssey* 11 and conclude by arguing that: “The hint is that Arete should not be afraid of Poseidon, and should speak for Odysseus’ cause.”<sup>28</sup>

I would argue that both of the above interpretations, plausible as they may seem, do not take into consideration two major elements of the Tyro story, namely its context and its source. Starting from the latter, we can be certain that in the *Catalogue of Women* fragment, the ultimate source that provides the poet-narrator with his story is none other than the Muse, as is expressly stated at the beginning of the poem.<sup>29</sup> In the ‘Nekyia’ however, the source of the

<sup>24</sup> See Doherty (1993), 8-9 for the narrative levels of Tyro’s story in *Odyssey* 11.

<sup>25</sup> Note also that when the narrative echoes Tyro’s voice, as it does in the ‘Nekyia’, it is the heroine that falls in love (*Od.* 11.238 ἠράσσατ[ο]) whereas in the poet’s narrative of the *Catalogue* it is Poseidon who does so (fr. 30.32 M-W ἐράεσκε).

<sup>26</sup> The reference is to Arete’s help to Odysseus despite Poseidon’s wrath against the hero, see Doherty (1993), 6 and (1995), 125.

<sup>27</sup> Skempis – Ziogas (2009), 236.

<sup>28</sup> Skempis – Ziogas (2009), 236. See also Doherty (2008), especially 69-71 for the similarities between Tyro and Nausica.

<sup>29</sup> See *Hes. Cat.* fr. 1.1-4 M-W: Νῦν δὲ γυναικῶν [φῶλον ἀείσατε, ἠδυέπειαι  
Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδε[ς, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,  
αἶ τότ’ ἄρισται ἔσαν [  
μίτρας τ’ ἀλλύσαντο

story appears to be the shade of Tyro herself, and that is what makes it unique: Poseidon in the *Catalogue* is revealed by the all-knowing Muses, whereas in *Odyssey* 11 this is done by the heroine herself. Bearing that in mind, Doherty's and Skempis - Ziogas' line of argument regarding the *kleos* which Tyro achieves with her defiance, seems to me to lose much of its force; Tyro's story could have been – and in effect was – recorded also by the ultimate guardians of epic tradition: the Muses.

The beginning of the *Catalogue* shows us that the Muses would have been perfectly capable of preserving the heroine's fame as defined by her divine union.<sup>30</sup> There must therefore be another reason for Tyro's actions in *Odyssey* 11, than merely the heroine's claim to glory, and that brings me to the first element I mentioned above, namely the context in which the story is told in the 'Nekyia'.

So far I have argued that Odysseus' encounters in Hades form part of a separate strand of the epic tradition, the poetics of Hades as I called it, which presents its heroes and their stories in a way quite different from a conventional epic understanding of the world. The heroes and heroines in Hades express their hopes and fears in strongly emotive terms, in fact they seem to be governed entirely by them, while having less concern for heroic etiquette. Moreover, the impenetrable darkness and the perfect isolation of Hades apparently enable the shades-as-storytellers to disclose matters they would not have dared to disclose while still alive. Hades thus becomes a sphere of poetic experimentation, as we can be seen with particular clarity when considering Tyro's story in *Odyssey* 11. Once confined to Hades, Tyro can at last break free from Poseidon's threat and speak her truth. She did not defy Poseidon while she was still alive but kept his secret even though revealing it would have brought her *kleos*. Tyro seeks no glory. Rather, she needs to tell her story, a story of personal feelings, hope and loss such as can be heard only in Hades.

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*Now sing of the race of women, sweet-singing  
Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis,  
those who were the best women of old [  
and they loosened their girdles*

<sup>30</sup> Note too that the heroines of both catalogues are remembered not only for their divine lovers but also for their husbands and sons, whom Tyro has as well and who would probably have saved her from oblivion even without the revelation of Poseidon's name.

### 2.3.iii. *Women with a voice: the other heroines*

#### 1. *Female perspectives on the heroic past*

Tyro's is not an isolated case; almost all heroines in Odysseus' catalogue retell their stories from a very personal point of view. Antiope, the next shade to appear, is a good example, even though her entry occupies considerably less space than Tyro's:

τὴν δὲ μετ' Ἀντιόπην ἴδον, Ἄσωποιο θυγάτρα, 260  
ἢ δὴ καὶ Διὸς εὖχετ' ἐν ἀγκοίνῃσιν ἰαῦσαι,  
καὶ ῥ' ἔτεκεν δύο παῖδ', Ἀμφιονά τε Ζῆθόν τε,  
οἱ πρῶτοι Θήβης ἔδος ἔκτισαν ἑπταπύλοιο,  
πύργωσάν τ', ἐπεὶ οὐ μὲν ἀπύργωτόν γ' ἐδύνατο  
βαιέμεν εὐρύχορον Θήβην, κρατερῶ περ ἔόντε. 265  
(*Od.* 11.260-5)

*Then I saw Antiope, the daughter of Asopus  
who boasted to have lain in the arms of Zeus,  
and she gave birth to two children, Amphion and Zethus,  
who were the first to build the city of Thebes with the seven gates,  
and to fortify it with walls for they could not live in broad Thebes  
without walls even though they were strong.*

After catching sight of Antiope (ἴδον) Odysseus introduces her with reference to her father, divine lover and offspring (261-3). That is standard procedure in epic catalogues. However, the use of εὖχετ', which recalls Tyro's φάτο and φῆ, introduces again a personal element into the heroine's story: it is Antiope who boasts about her affair with Zeus and their offspring.<sup>31</sup> The heroine gets the chance to speak and does so by relating the achievements of her two sons, Amphion and Zethus, who, we are told, built and fortified Thebes (11.264-5). This reference to the foundation of Thebes has given rise to controversy since it deviates from the well-known tradition of Cadmus founding the city. The Homeric scholia employ a chronological scheme according to which the twins built Thebes before it was destroyed and rebuilt by Cadmus.<sup>32</sup> Apollodorus offers a similar solution but with reverse chronological

<sup>31</sup> Osborne (2005), 16-7, notes that the speech verbs differentiate the 'Nekyia' catalogue from the *Catalogue of Women* but argues that this is done in order to "flag up" the quality of the divine father.

<sup>32</sup> See ΣQ *ad Od.* 11.262 and ΣΗ *ad Od.* 11.263. The scholiasts attribute this version to Pherekydes, see ΣV *ad Od.* 11.264, with Gomme (1913), 66f. and 71 who argues in favour of the logograph and against the mythological tradition.

order: according to him, Cadmus founded Thebes and some generations later Amphion and Zethus built its walls.<sup>33</sup> Pausanias, partially following Apollodorus, attempts to reconcile the two versions by suggesting that Cadmus built the acropolis (the Cadmeia) but then departed to Illyria, leaving Amphion and Zethus to build and fortify the lower city of Thebes, named after Zethus' wife.<sup>34</sup> Modern scholars have had similar difficulties with reconciling the two versions. Stanford for instance notes in his commentary *ad Od.* 11.261-2 that "later accounts ascribed the foundation of at least the upper city of Thebes to Cadmus", presumably with reference to Apollodorus' or Pausanias' version.<sup>35</sup> Gantz also follows Apollodorus, although he argues that the two traditions had probably been independent from each other.<sup>36</sup> In the most recent attempt to clarify the matter, Berman argues that Homer either does not know of the myth of Cadmus as a founder of Thebes, or if he does chooses not to mention it in his narrative. Berman's suggestion is based mainly on the fact that Cadmus appears only once in Homer and only as Ino's father with no reference to Thebes.<sup>37</sup> A closer examination of the Homeric text however rules out the possibility that the myth was unknown to the poet and his earliest audiences since the frequent use of the collective name 'Cadmeians' to refer to Theban warriors suggests knowledge of the tradition about Cadmus.<sup>38</sup> It would thus appear that the reference to Zethus and Amphion was made deliberately and I would argue that there is good reason for that. Since this is Antiope's story we listen to, the heroine gives priority to the tradition that has her sons as founders of Thebes. Cadmus' presence, which is ignored in Antiope's account, is nevertheless implied by the heroine through the use of *πρῶτοι* which at least hints at a competing tradition. Antiope however remembers, or chooses to remember, only the version that elevates her children whereas the rivalling tradition is silenced.

The next three heroines that Odysseus sees are also closely associated with Thebes: Alcmena, Megara and Epicaste. This time there are no speech verbs to indicate that these are their own personal stories. Nonetheless, I shall argue that a strong personal outlook is still implied in the way the narrative unfolds. Alcmena and Megara are treated in only 5 lines (*Od.* 11.266-

<sup>33</sup> Apollodorus *Bibl.* 3.21-25 and 41-5. For the wall-building of Thebes see Hurst (2000).

<sup>34</sup> *Paus.* 9. 5. 6. See Rocchi (1986) for a discussion of Pausanias' reference to the tomb of Zethos and Amphion in Thebes. See also Diodorus of Sicily who gives the same version at 19.3.4-5.

<sup>35</sup> Stanford (1947), 291.

<sup>36</sup> Gantz (1993), 467f.

<sup>37</sup> Berman (2004), 3-4. Cadmus is mentioned in *Od.* 5.33 as the father of Ino/Leukothea.

<sup>38</sup> In the *Iliad* the adjective 'Cadmeians' occurs 7 times (4.385/388/391, 5.804/807, 10.288, 23.680), in contrast with the ethnic 'Theban' (Θηβαῖος) which occurs only once of a warrior (8.120). In the *Odyssey*, 'Theban' is consistently used of Teiresias (*Od.* 10.492/565, 11.90/165, 12.267, 23.323) but only 'Cadmeians' (in the genitive Καδμείων) is used of the subjects of Oedipous (*Od.* 11.276).

70), as one entry with the verb ἴδον is used for both of them.<sup>39</sup> The main focus of the entry is on their relationship, as mother and wife, to Heracles. As Sammons notes, each heroine views the hero differently: for Alcmene he is the semi-divine son of Zeus (*Od.* 11.268), whereas Megara sees him as the mortal son of Amphitryon (*Od.* 11.270).<sup>40</sup> These different takes on the hero may, as Sammons suggests, foreshadow the end of the ‘Nekyia’ where reference is made to the dual nature of Heracles. However, they can also be seen as reflecting the personal views of the two heroines, even to the point of splitting the traditional story in two: Alcmene, we understand, boasts about her offspring from Zeus, whereas Megara remembers the mortal man she married and silences any references to the tragic nature of their marriage.<sup>41</sup>

There follows the story of Epicaste, which again offers a very personal take on her own tradition:

μητέρα τ' Οἰδιπόδαο ἴδον, καλὴν Ἐπικάστην, 270  
 ἢ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεξεν ἀδρεΐησι νόοιο  
 γημαμένη ᾧ υἱῷ: ὁ δ' ὄν πατέρ' ἐξεναρίζας  
 γῆμεν: ἄφαρ δ' ἀνάπυστα θεοὶ θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν.  
 ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν Θήβῃ πολυηράτῳ ἄλγεα πάσχων 275  
 Καδμείων ἦνασσε θεῶν ὀλοὰς διὰ βουλὰς:  
 ἢ δ' ἔβη εἰς Αἴδαο πυλάρταο κρατεροῖο,  
 ἀψαμένη βρόχον αἰπὺν ἀφ' ὑψηλοῖο μελάθρου,  
 ᾧ ἄχεϊ σχομένη: τῷ δ' ἄλγεα κάλλιπ' ὀπίσσω  
 πολλὰ μάλ', ὅσσα τε μητρὸς Ἐρινύες ἐκτελέουσιν. 280  
 (*Od.* 11.271-80)

*I saw Oedipus' mother, beautiful Epicaste,  
 who committed a great deed without knowing it  
 by marrying her own son; he, after killing his own father  
 married her but straight away the gods revealed all to men.  
 And he ruled the Cadmeians in much loved Thebes  
 suffering great pains due to the gods' disastrous will.  
 She went to strong Hades who fastens the gates  
 hanging a noose from a high beam of the roof,  
 overcome by her own grief. And to her son she left many pains,  
 all these that the mother's Furies bring with them.*

<sup>39</sup> Steinrück (1994), 88.

<sup>40</sup> Sammons (2010), 80.

<sup>41</sup> Sammons (2010), 80, argues that the hero's double parentage allows for “an ironic play on the double nature of Heracles mentioned later in book 11”. On the same lines the reference to Heracles' unyielding *menos* (*Od.* 11.270 μένος αἰὲν ἀπειρής) could be playing with the same idea since, as Redfield argues (1975), 151ff., *menos* is generally understood as an expression of vitality in the Homeric epics, suggesting perhaps that the hero is still alive. Heracles' appearance among the shades at the end of the ‘Nekyia’ resolves the issue. On *menos* see further *Lfgre s.v.*



Epicaste, as Houlihan notes, is introduced “by the biological relationship that she violated”, being both the mother and wife of Oedipous.<sup>42</sup> This violation is spelled out in the following lines which describe the heroine’s actions actively (note the use of ἔρεξεν), as in the case of Tyro: she committed a μέγα ἔργον without however being aware of it. Line 271 summarises efficiently Epicaste’s story and at the same time suggests a line of defence against the dreadful reputation which she has acquired: the heroine had no knowledge of the crime she was committing, rather like Deianeira as described in the *Catalogue of Women*.<sup>43</sup>

The crime is explained further in the next line (273), but once the revelation has been made the focus shifts from Epicaste to her son. It is now Oedipus’ actions that are described in active terms (note the verbs ἐξεναρίζας and γῆμεν), and he is thus portrayed as the one responsible for the incest. Oedipus’ ignorance regarding the parricide and incest he committed is completely overlooked, to the point that one ancient scholiast felt the need to defend the hero by underlining his lack of knowledge as well as intention.<sup>44</sup> Again, there is more than a suggestion that this is how Epicaste reads the story: from her viewpoint she was a victim of Oedipus’ crime, which finds no justification.

What follows confirms, I argue, that the story of Epicaste reflects her own view of the tradition. The version of *Odyssey* 11 differs considerably from that of Athenian drama, as well as from the various earlier attestations of the myth. Even though the myth of Oedipus is notoriously complex, combining many different strands of diverse traditional material, I would argue that the version of *Odyssey* 11 is deliberately crafted to fit with the heroine’s attempt to mitigate her role in the incest.<sup>45</sup>

Let me begin by noting some points of divergence from the myth as it is known from the later Theban plays. In *Od.* 11.274 we read that as soon as (ἄφαρ) Epicaste married Oedipus, the gods revealed the terrible truth to everyone, leading to the heroine’s suicide.<sup>46</sup> The problem

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<sup>42</sup> Houlihan (1994), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Fr. 25.20 M-W (δειν’ ἔρξ’). Barker – Christensen (2008), 19-21, note the change in the meaning of μέγα ἔργον from the great deed of the *Iliad* to terrible/unimaginable deed in the context of the *Odyssey*, and see it as evidence for a general shift from the heroic values of the *Iliad*.

<sup>44</sup> See ΣV *ad Od.* 11.271: ... ἀποκτείνας δὲ ἀκουσίως τὸν πατέρα λαμβάνει πρὸς γάμον οὐκ εἰδὼς τὴν μητέρα ἐπιλυσάμενος τὸ τῆς Σφιγγὸς αἶνιγμα ...

<sup>45</sup> For the myth and its different versions as well as attempts to identify an ‘original’ version see Schneidewin (1852), Cornparetti (1867), Bréal (1878), Deubner (1942) and Fromon (1949). For attempts to place the myth of Oedipus in Egypt see Paulson (1896), as well as Velikovskiy (1960). For more recent discussion see Burkert (2009), who focuses on the Sophoclean version of the myth from an anthropological perspective.

<sup>46</sup> Barker – Christensen (2008), 23-4, argue that the use of ἀνθρώποισιν in line 274 suggests that Oedipus’ saga was a well-known tradition.

with this story-line however, is that it does not allow enough time for the couple's children to be born and therefore ignores the rest of the Theban saga, including the strife between Polyneikes and Eteocles and the subsequent siege of Thebes.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the suggestion that Oedipus remained king in Thebes after the revelation of the incest does not allow for his self-blinding or for the story of his exile from the city.

Scholars have tried different approaches to explain the discrepancies between our passage and later Theban myth. Some have argued that Homer draws from a tradition in which the exile and blinding of Oedipus did not take place.<sup>48</sup> Other scholars assign a different meaning to ἄφαρ following the scholiast's suggestion to translate it not as a temporal adverb (*straightaway*) but as expressing manner (*suddenly*).<sup>49</sup> In this way the text would allow enough time for the children to be born, but at the expense of stretching the meaning of ἄφαρ to its limits.<sup>50</sup> The most recent interpretation by Barker and Christensen moves away from attempts to disentangle the knot of different traditions and proposes that the passage should be seen in its context in order to be understood. Barker – Christensen argue that in the general context of the *Odyssey* Oedipus' story is retold in such manner that Odysseus, and his tradition, is portrayed as more successful.<sup>51</sup> Barker – Christensen are indeed right to argue that context is important and that attention should be paid to *why* and *where* a story is told. However, they fail to appreciate the importance of Hades as the immediate context in which the story of Epicaste is set.

Underworld narratives, we have seen, tend to be personal and subjective, expressing a character's reading of the tradition of which they are a part. Unlike the stories of Tyro and Antiope, that of Epicaste is not expressly presented as her own. However, I argue that it can

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<sup>47</sup> Oedipus' sons were known to Homer: Polyneices is mentioned at *Il.* 4.377 and Eteocles a few lines later, at 4.386.

<sup>48</sup> See Wyatt (1996-7), who, following Eustathius, argues that the story of the blinding and the exile was not known to Homer. His argument is based mainly on the fact that in the *Iliad* (23.678) Oedipus' tomb is placed in Thebes suggesting a pre-Sophoclean tradition that had the hero remaining and dying there. See also Cingano (1992), who discusses the different versions of Homer, Hesiod and Pherekydes and argues that the mythographer might be referring to the earliest tradition since he mentions events (such as Oedipus' triple marriage) that do not appear at all in the other sources.

<sup>49</sup> ΣΒ *ad Od.* 11.274: οὐκ εὐθέως· ἐπεὶ πῶς ἔσχε παῖδας; ἀλλ' ἐξάφνης. The scholiast's interpretation has been influential and was followed by Stanford (1947), 391, who translates ἄφαρ as 'after that' and compares *Il.* 11.418. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 94, following Deubner (1942), 34-7, propose the similar translation 'after a while, after a year or so, after the birth of their sons.'

<sup>50</sup> Pausanias 9.4.2 argues in favour of the temporal meaning by relating a tradition according to which Oedipus had children with his second wife, Euryganeia, and not with Epicaste who indeed died very soon after their marriage. Tsitsibakou-Vasalos (1989), 62-66, following a similar tradition that appears in Pherekydes 3F95 argues for a connection of the 'Nekyia' passage with the tradition of the *Oedipodia*, where allegedly the couple did not have any children.

<sup>51</sup> Barker – Christensen (2008).

nonetheless be understood as the version of her story that she wants to remember. I have already noted that the *Odyssey* stresses her ignorance with regard to the incest while saying nothing of the sort about Oedipus. Later on Odysseus again makes a point of contrasting her actions with those of Oedipus: she (ἡ δ' 277) chose death whereas he (ὁ μὲν 275) chose a wretched life as the ruler of Thebes. The punning epithets πολυηράτω (275) and πυλάρταο (277) draw attention to the two characters' very different destinations.<sup>52</sup> Epicaste's story ends on the note of resentment that I have argued can be sensed throughout the passage: she has left her Erinyes behind for Oedipus, the true agent of the "great deed". The phrasing suggests the retribution that is due when mothers suffer an injustice (ὄσσα τε μητρὸς Ἐρινύες ἐκτελέουσιν): we have in ring composition come back to Epicaste's role as mother, this time glossed entirely on her terms. The many ἄλγεα that Oedipus suffers remain untold, as the shade is not concerned with them – her story has been heard.

So far, the 'Catalogue of Heroines' has been consistent in presenting us with a subjective take on the heroines' past, either explicitly presenting it as their own account, as in the cases of Tyro and Epicaste, or by subtly implying as much, as in the cases of Antiope, Alcmene and Megara. The next entry makes use of both techniques in order to give us yet another alternative version of the epic tradition. Odysseus now sees Chloris, whose story also includes that of her daughter Pero.

καὶ Χλωῶριν εἶδον περικαλλέα, τὴν ποτε Νηλεὺς  
 γῆμεν ἐὼν διὰ κάλλος, ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἔδνα,  
 ὀπλοτάτην κούρην Ἀμφίωνος Ἰασίδαο,  
 ὅς ποτ' ἐν Ὀρχομενῷ Μινυεῖῳ ἴφι ἄνασσεν:  
 ἡ δὲ Πύλου βασιλεὺς, τέκεν δὲ οἱ ἀγλαὰ τέκνα, 285  
 Νέστορά τε Χρόνιον τε Περικλύμενόν τ' ἀγέρωχον.

(*Od.* 11.281-6)

*And I saw the much beautiful Chloris, whom once Neleus  
 married for her beauty, after giving countless gifts.  
 She was the youngest daughter of Amphion, son of Iasus,  
 who once ruled with might over the Minyan Orchomenus.  
 She ruled over Pylos and gave birth to glorious children*

<sup>52</sup> The use of πολυηράτω has created confusion as its meaning 'much loved / loved by many', does not seem to fit the context of Oedipus' grim fate. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 94, note that it is only here used of a city and that elsewhere in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 15.126/366, 23.354) its use seems unproblematic, see also *Lfgre* s.v. In fact, there is nothing problematic about πολυηράτω = 'much-loved' in the present passage if we bear in mind that this is how Epicaste sees it. The scholiast detects a pun of a different kind and translates the epithet as 'much-cursed', see ΣΒ *ad Od.* 11.275: πολλὰς ἄρας καὶ βλάβας ὑπομεινάσῃ παρὰ θεῶν. The scholiast is here clearly influenced by what he perceives to be what context requires: in *Od.* 15.366 he assigns the 'normal' meaning to the epithet (πολυήρατον), see ΣΗ *ad Od.* 15.366: ἦν καταλαβεῖν πολλοὶ εὐχονται, τὴν πολύευκτον.

*Nestor and Chronius and high minded Periclymenus.*

Chloris is characterised by her extraordinary beauty (281-2) which led Neleus to offer countless gifts in order to marry her. This introduction seems to portray her as an object of male sexual desire, and in this respect it comes close to the *Catalogue of Women*, where women are almost exclusively presented as obedient sexual partners.<sup>53</sup> However, this is where the similarities end as in the ‘Nekyia’ the heroine appears to have a very active role indeed since she is said to have ruled over Pylos (285). Ancient readers were divided over this claim, either accepting it as an alternate tradition or emending the text in order to remedy the inconsistency.<sup>54</sup> Even though the verb βασίλευε is also used of Andromache’s mother at *Il.* 6.425, Chloris’ case remains unique, for in the case of Andromache’s mother the verb in all probability refers to her status as queen rather than her own rule.<sup>55</sup> That is of course unproblematic, and it may be telling that the scholiasts report no disagreements regarding the meaning of the Iliadic passage.

In Chloris’ case, however, things are different since her sphere of power (285 Pylos) is clearly distinguished from that of Neleus (284 Orchomenus). Furthermore, the structure of *Od.* 11.284-5 with the antithetical use of ὅς ποτ’ ἐν / ἡ δέ appears to deliberately contrast the two spheres. The implication then is that Chloris established her own rule at Pylos. That this is a unique approach to the heroine’s tradition can be established by looking at her entry in the *Catalogue of Women*. The differences are striking:

Νηλεύς,] καί ῥα θύγατρ’ Ἀμφίονος Ἰασίδα[ο  
Χλωῶριν ἐ]ύζωνον θαλερῆν ποιήσατ’ ἄκ[οιτιν.  
ἡ δέ οἱ ἐν μ]εγάροισιν ἐγένεατο φαίδιμα τέκ[να,  
Εὐαγόρην τ]ε καὶ Ἄντιμένην καὶ Ἀλάστορα [δῖον  
Ταῦρόν τ’ Ἄσ]τέριον τε Πυλάονά τε μεγάθυμ[ον  
Δηΐμαχόν τε] καὶ Εὐρύβιον κλειτόν τ’ Ἐπίλαον  
ΝέστοράτεΧ]ρομίον τε Περικλύμενόντ’ ἀγέρω[χον  
(*Cat.* fr. 33.a, 6-12 M-W)

<sup>53</sup> Osborne (2005), 17.

<sup>54</sup> Aristarchus, among others, proposed the reading ἡδέ instead of ἡ δέ, thus assigning Pylos to Amphion’s rule, with ἄνασσαν from the previous line. Herodianus on the other hand, interprets ἡ δέ as intentionally contrasting the male and female rulers, see ΣΗ *ad Od.* 11.285. Houlihan (1994), 6, argues that we have here a reference to the “tradition of Neleus as a weak leader”, since Neleus receives no epithet when both Chloris and her son, Periclymenus do, the latter called ἀγέρωχος, a ἄπαξ in the *Odyssey*, with possible reference to his bravery. For the adjective’s exact meaning and possible etymology see Stanford (1947), 392 and Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 95, also *Lfgre s.v.*

<sup>55</sup> Kirk (1990), 216 and Graziosi – Haubold (2010), 200.

*Neleus made well girdled Chloris,  
daughter of Amphion, son of Iasus, his sturdy wife.  
And she gave birth in the palace to glorious children  
Euagorus and Antimeneus and godly Alastor  
Taurus and Asterion and great hearted Pylaon  
Diemachus and Eurybius and far known Epilaus  
Nestor and Chromius and high minded Periclymenus.*

The first thing to note is that in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* the reference to Chloris' beauty on which the 'Nekyia' entry insists is absent: as Osborne notes, what is beautiful here is her girdle, not the heroine (7).<sup>56</sup> Similarly, no reference is made to the 'countless gifts' mentioned in the 'Nekyia'; in the *Catalogue*, Neleus simply 'made her his wife' (7). Furthermore, whereas in the 'Nekyia' Chloris is said to have ruled over Pylos, as we have seen (11.285 ἡ δὲ Πύλου βασίλευε), in the *Catalogue* she only gives birth to children (8 ἦ δέ ... ἐγένετο φαίδιμα τέκ[να]); both lines are introduced with ἦ δέ but develop very different ideas: whereas the 'Nekyia' passage gives a place to Chloris in the epic tradition of Pylos, the *Catalogue* leaves her in the shadow of her twelve sons (9-12).<sup>57</sup> This brings us to the last and most noticeable difference between the two accounts, regarding the number of male children mentioned. At *Od.* 11.286-7 only four children of Chloris and Neleus are mentioned: Nestor, Chronius and Periclymenus, followed by their sister Pero, in contrast with the twelve sons of the *Catalogue* who are also followed by Pero in a later fragment (fr. 37 M-W). Interestingly, the *Iliad* agrees with the *Catalogue* and mentions the same number of children for Neleus and Chloris, although it does not name them (*Il.* 11.692).

The scholiasts suggest that either the sons mentioned in the *Odyssey* are the most important ones, and that they are therefore called ἀγλαὰ τέκνα (285), or that they are the only ones Neleus had with Chloris, the rest being born of other women.<sup>58</sup> As far as the first suggestion is concerned, there is no need to assume that ἀγλαά in the 'Nekyia' signifies some kind of distinction for the three sons mentioned. The scholia's other suggestion, however, is of greater interest. We have seen so far how Chloris' personalised view of her tradition may be imprinted in her Underworld story with its reference to her beauty and Neleus' wooing, reaching a climax with the claim that she ruled Pylos separately from her husband. In this

<sup>56</sup> Osborne (2005), 17.

<sup>57</sup> Apollodorus' version seems to presuppose the same tradition as the *Catalogue of Women*, with no reference to Chloris' rule over Pylos; see Apollodorus *Bibl.* 1.93.

<sup>58</sup> See ΣΗ.V. and Q.T. *ad Od.* 11.286.

context for the text to claim that Chloris bore only three sons to Neleus, should come as no surprise. The shade could be taking advantage of her Underworld seclusion to reveal the true parentage of her children in the same way that Tyro did. More likely, perhaps, she cuts short the catalogue of her sons (note that 11.286 = fr. 33.12 M-W, which is the last entry in Hesiod's catalogue of children), in favour of her daughter's story that follows immediately after. The sons are the focus of attention in Hesiod (and in the *Iliad*), so in the alternative realm of Odysseus' Underworld journey, the hitherto neglected story of the daughter comes to the fore. Like the heroines that precede her, Chloris appears to relate her story freely, highlighting the parts that she sees as important and omitting those that she does not.

Having dispatched her three sons almost in passing Odysseus continues his vignette of Chloris' life with the only daughter the heroine had, Pero. Odysseus does not meet Pero's shade, but spends more lines on telling her story than Chloris had to herself (281-7 Chloris, 288-97 Pero).<sup>59</sup> The special place of Pero in Chloris' story is justified if we assume that the heroine perceives her daughter as her greatest achievement: Pero is beautiful like her mother (*Od.* 11.287 ἰφθίμην Πηρῶ τέκε θαῦμα βροτοῖσι) and her courtship was even more extravagant as she was wooed by all who dwelled around Pylos (*Od.* 11.288).<sup>60</sup> Again, there are no speech verbs indicating that Odysseus learnt all this from Chloris herself, but that is surely implied: Chloris looks at Pero in the same manner as the heroes look at their sons as successors of their *kleos* and heroic valour, only in the heroine's case beauty is what links her to her mother and matters the most. Pero lives up to expectation as her beauty allows Neleus to demand Iphiclus' cattle in exchange for her hand, thus leading to the story of Melampus' attempt to get the cattle. The fact that Melampus is not mentioned by name but is merely described as 'the blameless seer' (*Od.* 11.291 μάντις ἀμόμων), not only implies that the story was well known but also suggests a lack of interest regarding the details of his story.<sup>61</sup> Melampus is introduced primarily as proof of Pero's beauty, and as a means of marrying her off 'according to the will of Zeus' (Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή *Od.* 11.297). The latter formula, a

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Steinrück (1994), 88, Tsagarakis (2000), 88 and Heath (2005), 393. Sammons (2010), 81-2, argues on the other hand that the story of Pero could be a deliberate elaboration on the part of Odysseus.

<sup>60</sup> Even though the exact meaning and etymology of ἰφθίμος is unknown, it is generally taken as signifying strength and prominence when used of the living; for its use of the dead see above pp. 22-3. Here the epithet could be taken as an indication that this is still Chloris' perspective which pervades her daughter's story, explaining why this is not a meeting with Pero's shade. Chloris refers to her daughter as ἰφθίμη because this is how she remembers her. For the meanings and etymology of ἰφθίμος see Warden (1969) and also *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>61</sup> The story of Melampus is retold in *Od.* 15.230 ff. De Jong (2001), 283, finds the two versions capable of forming a complete narrative. By contrast, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 95 and 246-8, argue that even if both versions are put together "the story cannot be entirely reconstructed." For a reading of Melampus' story as an alternative *Odyssey* see Houlihan (1994), 8-11. For the use of the Melampus myth in the Homeric epics more generally see Harrauer (1999).

generic marker *par excellence* of epic story-telling (cf. *Il.* 1.5), confirms that more is at stake here than merely a somewhat elliptical evocation of a familiar story. Chloris' story offers a self-consciously alternative perspective on heroic epic, which omits heroic action as incidental detail and plays up female prowess. Chloris, who ruled over Pylos, cuts short the catalogue of her twelve sons only to elaborate on the commotion which Pero's extraordinary beauty caused in the heroic world. The heroic narrative of what happened during her daughter's courtship, which is extensively covered in the tradition, is reduced in the same way as the list of her sons and Neleus. Chloris looks at her own life and that of her female offspring with pride while ignoring almost completely the dominant male traditions of her lineage. Hers is an extreme example of the female perspective which we also saw in Tyro's defiance of Poseidon and the other heroines' selective recollection of their past.

The next entry of the Catalogue, that of Leda, presents us with a narrative experiment of a different kind. Leda's account showcases how a heroine can choose to forget anything that relates to the female members of her family and instead present herself as defined exclusively by her male relatives and their heroic traditions.

## **2. The perspective of the mother: to forget or to remember**

καὶ Λήδην εἶδον, τὴν Τυνδαρέου παράκοιτιν,  
 ἢ ῥ' ὑπὸ Τυνδαρέῳ κρατερόφρονε γείνατο παῖδε,  
 Κάστορά θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα,                300  
 τοὺς ἄμφω ζωοὺς κατέχει φυσίζοος αἶα:  
 οἱ καὶ νέρθεν γῆς τιμὴν πρὸς Ζηνὸς ἔχοντες  
 ἄλλοτε μὲν ζώουσ' ἑτερήμεροι, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε  
 τεθνᾶσιν: τιμὴν δὲ λελόγχασιν ἴσα θεοῖσι.

(*Od.* 11.298-304)

*And Leda I saw, the wife of Tyndareus.  
 She gave birth to two stout-hearted children to Tyndareus,  
 Castor, tamer of horses, and flawless boxer Polydeuces,  
 who are both held fast alive by the life giving earth.  
 But even below the earth they are honoured by Zeus  
 alternating between life and death, alive for one day and  
 dead for the other. They are honoured equally to the gods.*

Leda's entry occupies 7 lines of which only the first two refer to her while the remaining five are concerned with her offspring. The heroine is given no epithets and in contrast with the previous heroines appears to be completely defined by her relations to males. She is introduced as the wife of Tyndareus (*Od.* 11.298) to whose children she gave birth (*Od.* 11.299). The repetition of her husband's name draws attention to the parentage of her children. In conjunction with the dual that follows (*Od.* 11.299 κρατερόφρονε ... παῖδε) it appears designed to reassure the audience that Leda had only two sons, Castor and Polydeuces, and both by Tyndareus. The implication of this statement is of course that it presents us with only part of Leda's tradition, and arguably the less important one: we hear nothing about the birth of Leda's daughters, Helen and Clytemnestra, or her erotic encounter with Zeus, responsible at least for the birth of Helen. Both traditions are well attested elsewhere. In Hesiod's *Catalogue* Leda is said to have borne Tyndareus three daughters, including Clytemnestra,<sup>62</sup> Castor and Polydeuces are mentioned as Helen's brothers in the context of her courtship.<sup>63</sup> Apollodorus, who has been shown to follow Hesiod's *Catalogue* in his genealogies, names Helen and Polydeuces as the children of Zeus and Leda whereas Pindar also refers to Polydeuces as having divine parentage.<sup>64</sup> It appears that Homer was aware of this tradition though he refers to it only in passing. For instance Helen herself mentions her brothers Castor and Polydeuces in *Iliad* 3, stressing the fact that they had the same mother:

Κάστορα θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα  
αὐτοκασιγνήτω, τῷ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ.  
(*Il.* 3.237-8)  
*Castor the tamer of horses and flawless boxer Polydeuces,*  
*my brothers, born with me from the same mother.*

Although Leda is not mentioned here, Homer must have known her as the mother of Helen and the twins. He certainly knew Zeus as the father of Helen, as we can deduce from the formula Ἑλένη Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα, which is used both in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*,<sup>65</sup> as well as Menelaus' statement that he is Zeus' son in law (*Od.* 4.561). Thus we can safely argue that the

<sup>62</sup> Helen is not named among the three daughters; see *Cat.* fr. 23-4 M-W. For the connection of Helen's genealogy with those of Leda's and Tyndareus' see Cingano (2005), 120-1.

<sup>63</sup> *Cat.* fr. 197 M-W, for Castor's and Polydeuces' role in the *Catalogue of Women* see Cingano (2005), 133-5.

<sup>64</sup> See Pindar *N.* 10.49-88 and Apollodorus *Bibl.* 3.126 and 134-137 for the Dioscuri. See also Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 85 who list the ancient sources of the genealogy. Castor and Polydeuces are not said to be the descendants of Zeus in Homer; Nevertheless, the divine parentage of Helen in conjunction with the honours the twins receive from Zeus after their death, point towards an existing but silenced relation between the ruler of Olympus and Leda's sons.

<sup>65</sup> *Il.* 3.19, *Od.* 4.184.



omission of Leda's daughters and her encounter with Zeus from the heroine's story cannot be attributed to the poet's lack of knowledge of these traditions. Rather, it would appear that he intentionally glosses over them, reflecting once again how the heroine herself would like to be remembered. The image she projects is that of the faithful wife of Tyndareus and mother of sons of whom she can clearly be proud. Note in particular the emphasis on their strength of mind (κρατερόφρονε, *Od.* 11.299) and honour τιμή, *Od.* 11.302, 304), which contrasts strikingly with the traditional view of their 'shameful' sisters as summarised for example in Hes. fr. 176 M-W, and by Helen herself in *Il.* 3.236-42.<sup>66</sup> Leda, it would seem, follows the example of Epicaste and conceals those things in her past that are painful to remember. She tries to erase the memory of her shameful daughters, passing over even her own affair.

Zeus does however appear obliquely in her selective memory, as the loving father of Castor and Polydeuces. Why else would he confer honour upon them after death (*Od.* 11.301-2)? The pattern is familiar from his relationship with other children such as Heracles (Hes. *Th.* 532, 954-5) and Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.458-61). Moreover, the only other case in the *Odyssey* of mortals receiving immortality, or something close to it, is that of the twins' sister Helen and her husband Menelaus, suggesting yet another connection of Zeus with Leda's children.<sup>67</sup> It would seem, then, that despite attempting to conceal her affair with Zeus, Leda cannot resist highlighting her sons' privileged afterlife. And in doing so she does not only imply their divine parentage but dismisses the alternative view, found in the *Iliad*, that they died a normal death:

ὥς φάτο, τοὺς δ' ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἴα  
ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.

(*Il.* 4.243-4)

*So she said, but they were already held fast by life giving earth  
back in Lacedaemon, their beloved homeland.*

We can see that line 243 is almost identical with *Od.* 11.301, the only substantive difference being the use of ζωούς instead of ἤδη. In the *Iliad* Castor and Polydeuces are *already held fast* by life-giving earth,<sup>68</sup> whereas for Leda they are *held fast alive*. The strangeness of this formulation, it seems to me, adds grist to the mill of those who argue that the *Odyssey* does

<sup>66</sup> How difficult it would be for a family member to deal with that kind of shame is shown by Helen herself when she comments in the *Iliad* that her brothers did not sail to Troy out of shame for her actions (*Il.* 3.236-42).

<sup>67</sup> *Od.* 4.561-5: Helen and Menelaus are to be transferred to the Elysian fields due to their relation to Zeus.

<sup>68</sup> For the formula φυσίζοος αἴα and its connection with death in Homer see Coughanowr (1997).

sometimes respond directly to the *Iliad* as we know it.<sup>69</sup> In any case, it appears that in the heroine's account fate has been kinder to her family than it was elsewhere in the epic tradition.

Leda's, then, is another typical Underworld story, in that it is personally inflected and fiercely biased. Odysseus does not tell us that this was what she said, but that is precisely how I argue we should read it: it is Leda who plays up the good things in her life and chooses to forget those things that are too painful to remember, going so far as to ignore even her affair with Zeus. We may recall Tyro's story here, and her insistence on divulging her own love affair with Poseidon. Such matters are shrouded in mystery and hence particularly open to the vagaries of selective memory. Leda wants nothing to do with her daughters and therefore suppresses her affair with Zeus; but she is happy to acknowledge his role in granting immortality to her sons. In only seven lines Leda's account successfully presents the audience with a past that neglects well-known epic narratives in favour of the heroine's subjective and selective recollection.

Odysseus, we have seen, encounters women who are proud of their children, or forgetful, or proud of some but forgetful of others. The next heroine he meets belongs to those who remember, despite the fact that her children's exploits give her no reason to boast. Nevertheless, Iphimedeia, the mother of the giants Otos and Ephialtes not only remembers her sons but also looks back at their crimes in the way a loving mother looks with sympathy at her children's mischief.

τὴν δὲ μετ' Ἴφιμέδειαν, Ἀλωῆος παράκοιτιν	305
εἴσιδον, ἣ δὴ φάσκε Ποσειδάωνι μιγῆναι,	
καί ῥ' ἔτεκεν δύο παῖδε, μινυθαδίω δ' ἐγενέσθην,	
ᾧ τόν τ' ἀντίθεον τηλεκλειτόν τ' Ἐφιάλτην,	
οὓς δὴ μηκίστους θρέψε ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα	
καὶ πολὺ καλλίστους μετὰ γε κλυτὸν Ὠρίωνα:	310
ἐννέωροι γὰρ τοί γε καὶ ἐννεαπήχεες ἦσαν	
εὗρος, ἀτὰρ μῆκος γε γενέσθην ἐννεόργυιοι.	
οἳ ῥα καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀπειλήτην ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ	
φυλόπιδα στήσειν πολυάικος πολέμοιο.	
ᾧ σσαν ἐπ' Οὐλύμπῳ μέμασαν θέμεν, ἀτὰρ ἐπ' ᾧ σση	315
Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἔν' οὐρανὸς ἀμβατὸς εἶη.	
καὶ νῦ κεν ἐξετέλεσσαν, εἰ ἥβης μέτρον ἴκοντο:	
ἀλλ' ὄλεσεν Διὸς υἱός, ὃν ἠύκομος τέκε Λητώ,	

<sup>69</sup> See Rutherford (1991-3).

ἀμφοτέρω, πρὶν σφωιν ὑπὸ κροτάφοισιν ἰούλους  
ἀνθῆσαι πυκάσαι τε γένυς ἔυανθεί λάχνη.

320

(*Od.* 11.305-20)

*Next I saw Iphimedeia, the wife of Aloeus,  
who claimed to have slept with Poseidon  
and gave birth to two short lived children  
godly Otos and far famed Ephialtes,  
who life giving earth nurtured to become the tallest  
and most beautiful by far after the famed Orion.  
For they were nine years old and had a width of nine cubits  
and had reached nine fathoms in height.  
And they threatened to bring the cries of furious war  
to the immortals on Olympus.  
They yearned to place Ossa on Olympus and on top of Ossa  
Pelion with the thick forests so as to reach the heavens.  
And they would have achieved it if they had reached adolescence.  
But the son of Zeus, who lovely haired Leto bore him, killed them both,  
before the down could sprout below their temples  
and the first hair bloom cover their cheeks.*

Iphimedeia's story brings back to the forefront the motif of the divine affair that was silenced in the previous encounter. The heroine is initially introduced as the wife of Aloeus (line 305). However, that relationship is overshadowed by her own claim (note φάσκει at line 306) that she slept with Poseidon and gave birth to two children from him.<sup>70</sup> The use of the speech verb φάσκει reminds us that it is the heroine's own story that we are about to hear. What that means becomes evident once we turn to her children, whose fate occupies the remaining lines of the entry.<sup>71</sup> In broad outline the story follows well-known traditions about the twins' enormous size (*Od.* 11.311-2), their outrageous attempt to attack Olympus (*Od.* 11.313-6) and finally their killing by Apollo (*Od.* 11.318). Minor omissions, such as the binding of Ares, which is reported in *Il.* 5.385-91, do not perhaps carry any real significance. But in other respects the story does differ fundamentally from any other known account – and it differs in ways that I would argue are fundamental to Homer's 'poetics of Hades'.

<sup>70</sup> The verb φάσκει was used also in the account of Tyro, another famous lover of Poseidon (*Od.* 11.236-7). For Iphimedeia see Vermeule (1964), 294, who notes the presence of the heroine's name in Linear B tablets from Mycenae and argues that she was a Mycenaean chthonic deity, demoted in later mythic tradition to the role of mother of the Giants.

<sup>71</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 96, note that the poet presupposes general knowledge of the legend on the part of the audience. It is also mentioned in the *Iliad* (5.385-91), Hesiod *Cat. fr.* 19-21 M-W, Pindar, *Pyth.* IV, 88ff. and Apollodorus *Bibl.* 1.7.4. See Krappé (1936) and Hardie (2006), for discussion of the myth's transmission and meaning. For the representation of the twins in art see Simon (1962), and for a semiotic interpretation of the myth see Deal – Felson-Rubin (1980).

Iphimedeia's story, I argue, is told from the perspective of the loving mother, who cannot help but see her children in a favourable light even when it comes to hubristic exploits such as their assault on Mount Olympus. The tone is compassionate throughout: even before Otos and Ephialtes are named we hear that they were short-lived (*Od.* 11.307). With this reference to the early death of the twins, Iphimedeia looks ahead to the event in her life that affected her the most. The Greek conveys her loving regret: *μινυνθάδιος* carries a strong emotive charge in Homer, capturing the regret of loving parents at the premature death of a child.<sup>72</sup> Here, the word suggests a *captatio benevolentiae* in circumstances where sympathy for the children is particularly hard to come by.

Otos and Ephialtes themselves are affectionately described in a total of 5 lines (*Od.* 11.309-13). *Bona fide* heroic epithets (*ἀντίθεον* and *τηλεκλειτόν* at *Od.* 11.308) belie the blasphemous act these men are about to commit.<sup>73</sup> In fact the entire account of their lives is interspersed with words and expressions of affection. For instance, after we have been told that Otos and Ephialtes grew to gigantic proportions, we hear that they were not only the largest but also the most beautiful of all men, second only to Orion (*Od.* 11.310). This reference to the Aloades' beauty stands in sharp contrast with the common view of the twins as monstrous creatures.<sup>74</sup> Needless to say, this is how Iphimedeia imagines Otos and Ephialtes, not Odysseus or the poet: despite their monstrous size, which she also admits, their loving mother remembers them as the most beautiful creatures of all.

What follows seriously challenges Iphimedeia's recollection of her children as paragons of beauty and virtue. But she remains unshaken: when the two wage war on Olympus, she only recalls that they would have succeeded if they had reached adolescence (*Od.* 11.317). The tone comes close here to that of Iliadic battle narrative, with its mournful epitaphs on warriors killed before their prime.<sup>75</sup> Iphimedeia regrets not the hubris of Otos and Ephialtes but rather the fact that they were killed before reaching their prime and succeeding in their endeavour.

In the final two lines of the story the tone becomes even more intimate, with the heroine remembering her gigantic sons as flowers that were cut before they could blossom (*ἀνθήσαι*,

<sup>72</sup> *Il.* 1.352 (mother), 4.478 (parents), 17.302 (parents), 21.84 (mother); cf. *Il.* 15.612, of Zeus' father-like concern for Hector.

<sup>73</sup> Hence the scholiast's attempt to attach a negative meaning to at least one of the two epithets: ΣΗ *ad Od.* 11.308: *τηλεκλειτόν τ' Ἐφιάλτην: περιβόητον ἐπ' ἀνδρεία ἢ ἐπὶ βλασφημίᾳ.*

<sup>74</sup> The scholiast perceptively comments on the studied precision of these lines and adds that the bodies are well proportioned, ΣV *ad Od.* 11.312: *δαμόνιος ἢ ἀκριβεία. ἀνάλογον γὰρ σῶμα οὗ τὸ πλάτος τρίτον ἐστὶ τοῦ μήκους.*

<sup>75</sup> See for instance *Il.* 8.155-6 and 22.421-3.

εὐανθεί *Od.* 11.320). Two Homeric hapaxes close to each other (319 ἰούλους, 320 εὐανθεί) add colour and emotional intensity to the text. Much of this recalls Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*, with its use of a mother's perspective to make room for emotional and linguistic experimentation.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, more perhaps than any other entry in the 'Catalogue of Heroines', that of Iphimedeia illustrates my claim that the Underworld narrative of *Odyssey* 11 enables Homer to explore narrative themes and registers that are self-consciously alternative to those of epic. Iphimedeia's story challenges tradition not by omitting or highlighting events but instead by revaluating them through one's character's subjective take on the past. Only in Hades, or in the lyric poetry of a Stesichorus, can monsters like the Aloades be presented in an affectionate way.

With Iphimedeia the 'Catalogue of Heroines' has reached its poetic and emotional climax. What follows amounts to not much more than an efficient denouement. Odysseus now speeds up his account, presenting the final six women in only seven lines:<sup>77</sup>

Φαίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἴδον καλήν τ' Ἀριάδνην,  
 κούρην Μίνωος ὀλοόφρονος, ἦν ποτε Θησεὺς  
 ἐκ Κρήτης ἐς γουνὸν Ἀθηνάων ἱεράων  
 ἦγε μὲν, οὐδ' ἀπόνητο: πάρος δέ μιν Ἄρτεμις ἔκτα  
 Δίῃ ἐν ἀμφιρῦτῃ Διονύσου μαρτυρήσιν. 325  
 Μαΐραν τε Κλυμένην τε ἴδον στυγερὴν τ' Ἐριφύλην,  
 ἣ χρυσὸν φίλου ἀνδρὸς ἐδέξατο τιμήεντα.  
 (*Od.* 11.321-7)

*I saw Phaidra and Procris and beautiful Ariadne  
 the daughter of baleful Minos, who Theseus once  
 led from Crete to the high hill of sacred Athens  
 but did not enjoy her since first Artemis killed her  
 on sea girted Dia on the account of Dionysus.  
 I saw also Maira and Clymene and hateful Eriphyle  
 who accepted gold in exchange for her dear husband.*

In the first group only Ariadne's story is briefly given, whereas Phaidra and Procris are only mentioned by name. Ariadne is called beautiful (*Od.* 11.321) and as usual in the Catalogue is characterised by her relations to men: she is the daughter of Minos (*Od.* 11.322) and the lover

<sup>76</sup> See *Ger.* fr. 6 (Curtis). For the *Geryoneis* see Page (1973), Brize (1980), Davies (1988), Tsitsibakou-Vasalos (1993), Rozokoki (2008), Franzen (2009) and the recent edition with commentary by Curtis (2011).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Eisenberger (1973), 178 and Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 97. Minchin (2001a), 92 argues that catalogues in the *Odyssey* have a "mounting intensity" rather than gaining in pace before an interruption.

of Theseus.<sup>78</sup> However, Ariadne was killed, before reaching Athens, by Artemis at Dia on the testimony of Dionysus (11.324-5). There appears to be a slight divergence here from later tradition, according to which Theseus abandoned Ariadne at Dia and Dionysus married her instead, but the account is too brief to allow for any conclusions to be drawn.<sup>79</sup> With the next group of heroines Odysseus' narrative is even more rushed, presenting the final three women in a flash. Maira, Clymene and Eriphyle pass before our eyes, but only latter receives an epithet and a line that sums up her story. The reference to 'hated' Eriphyle who betrayed her husband (*Od.* 11.326-7) suggests that we have left behind the world of female-focalised narrative. As the shades fade away the women's voices are replaced by the familiar voice of Odysseus, bringing us back to the reality of Scheria and the issues at hand.

### 2.3.iv. *Conclusions*

The 'Nekyia', I have argued, showcases Odysseus' extraordinary ability to penetrate the darkness of Hades and thus to meet and converse with the shades of the dead. In the 'Catalogue of Heroines' that follows the first three meetings Odysseus has in Hades, the theme of seeing in the dark becomes, if anything, even more prominent: Odysseus uses the verb ἰδεῖν or εἰσιδεῖν a total of 10 times. With the theme of 'seeing' comes an emphasis on poetic representation: Odysseus gains access to the past in an analogous manner to Homer when he narrates events in the traditional 'vivid' song of the Muses, to which we have no access.

Yet, Odysseus is no bard and cannot rely on the Muses for inspiration. Elsewhere in Homer, this is a hindrance but in Hades, where even the gods' vision fails, Odysseus' reliance on first-hand experience becomes a source of strength. In *Odyssey* 11, the divine knowledge of the Muses is mediated by the human gaze of the traveller Odysseus and that gaze brings with it a shift in poetic emphasis. When Odysseus encounters the heroines in his catalogue, all the

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<sup>78</sup> Minos appears later in the 'Nekyia' (*Od.* 11.567-70) where Odysseus calls him Διὸς ἀγλαὸν υἱόν (*Od.* 11.567), thus creating an apparent discrepancy with ὀλοόφρωνος in the account of Ariadne. Ancient scholars noticed the problem and proposed either that Minos is baleful towards the ones he judges in Hades or that the judge Minos and the father of Ariadne are two different persons, see ΣQ and T *ad Od.* 11.322. Webster (1966), 23, on the other hand, argues that the epithet is appropriate as it refers to the stance Minos had against Theseus, the main character in Ariadne's life. For the meaning of ὀλοόφρων see Matthews (1978), Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 52 and also *LfgreE* s.v.

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of the myth throughout antiquity see Webster (1966). For the story of Ariadne's abandonment see Plutarch *Thes.* 20. Finally see ΣB.Q. *ad Od.* 11.325, where it is stated that Ariadne was killed because she had intercourse with Theseus in the sacred grove of Dionysus at Dia, hence leading to the god's anger.

traditional elements of Hesiodic *ehoiai* poetry are there: the catalogue form, the focus on women, the brief introduction of the heroines and their relationships with the male figures in their lives. Yet, an important difference can also be seen: although Odysseus informs us only intermittently that he relates the stories of the women as they told them I argue that that is precisely what he does throughout the catalogue. So, instead of just telling the story of Tyro or Epicaste or Iphimedeia as a bard might have done, he (re)produces their own very partial narratives full of personal longing and regret. At a fairly basic level, there is good reason why that should be so: in order to access the past without the aid of the Muses, Odysseus literally needs to visit its representatives in Hades, to see them, hear their stories and then relate them to his audience. But the exercise, it would appear, takes on a poetic significance of its own, allowing Odysseus (and Homer) to tell stories that seem more akin to the lyric experimentations of a Stesichorus than the voice of the epic bard.

In line with the experimental nature of *Odyssey* 11, each heroine approaches her past in a different way. Tyro for instance seizes the opportunity to break her silence and name Poseidon as the father of her children, neglecting the god's warning not to reveal him. Antiope too boasts a divine lover, but focuses on a revisionist story of her sons: she insists that they built and fortified Thebes, thus silencing competing traditions about Cadmus. Two more heroines choose to gloss over uncomfortable aspects of their past, though not in order to elevate their offspring but rather in an attempt to erase the memory of their deeds. Thus Epicaste does not mention any children from her marriage to Oedipus, and Leda suppresses her affair with Zeus as well as the birth of her daughters, Helen and Clytemnestra. Chloris shifts the emphasis from her sons to her daughter, and Iphimedeia, finally, presents in a positive light even her sons' attempt to conquer the Olympians.

One thing, however, remains stable in all this variety: the Catalogue showcases how well-known traditions of epic can be recast in Underworld narrative. Odysseus' visit to Hades allows new voices to be heard and old stories to be told differently. There is a revisionist potential to the 'poetics of Hades' which will become important in the second half of the 'Nekyia'. For the positive reaction which Odysseus receives from his Phaeacian audience clears the path for the recasting of the hero's own tradition through the interviews with the shades of his Trojan War companions in the second part of the 'Nekyia'.

## Chapter 4: The Intermezzo

### 2.4.i. Introduction

πάσας δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,  
ὄσσας ἠρώων ἀλόχους ἴδον ἠδὲ θύγατρας:  
πρὶν γάρ κεν καὶ νύξ φθῖτ' ἄμβροτος. ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄρη 330  
εὔδειν, ἢ ἐπὶ νῆα θοὴν ἐλθόντ' ἐς ἐταίρους  
ἢ αὐτοῦ: πομπὴ δὲ θεοῖς ὑμῖν τε μελήσει.

(*Od.* 11.328-32)

*But I could not speak of all of them or even name them,  
all the wives and daughters of heroes that I saw  
before the immortal night comes to an end. But now is time  
to sleep either on the fast ship along with the crew or here.  
As for my return, you and the gods will take care of it.*

With these words Odysseus ends the 'Catalogue of Heroines' and interrupts his underworld narrative, claiming that it is late and that he and his hosts should go to sleep. In the so-called 'Intermezzo' that follows the Phaeacians express their amazement at Odysseus' adventures as well as his exceptional story-telling skills which they liken to those of a bard (*Od.* 11.367). Even though the 'Intermezzo' is not set in Hades and therefore cannot be considered part of Odysseus' underworld narrative it is nevertheless important for my argument, for two main reasons. First, it demonstrates the unique effect that Odysseus' underworld narrative has on his audience (*Od.* 11.333-4).<sup>1</sup> Arete and Alcinous in particular are impressed: although scholars have usually taken their response to refer to the whole of books 9-11, its placement in the text suggests at the very least that it is triggered by the underworld narrative, and the 'Catalogue of Heroines' in particular. That brings me to my second point, which is that Odysseus' underworld narration is validated as a 'true' account in the 'Intermezzo'. That validation is achieved, I argue, not only because the Phaeacian audience accepts it as true but more importantly because they accept that it is a *well-shaped* (*Od.* 11.366 μορφὴ ἐπέων) narrative, and as such *has* to be true. The fact that Arete and Alcinous use visual criteria in

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<sup>1</sup> For comparison, Phemius' performance at *Od.* 1.153-5 and 1.325-359 occasions grief on the part of Penelope and tensions with her son Telemachus. Although the suitors sit and listen to the bard in silence (1.325-6 σιωπῆ / ἦατ' ἀκούοντες) no more is said about the effect of the song on them. Demodocus' performances in Scheria are better received (*Od.* 8.477-81, 487-8; cf. *Od.* 8.472 λαοῖσι τετιμένον) but cannot compare with the praise lavished on Odysseus.



their responses to Odysseus, the former reflecting on how the hero himself looks (*Od.* 11.336-7) and the latter on the shape of his words/tale, creates a link with the visual *tour de force* that Odysseus presented in the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’ and suggests that the desired effect of *visualising* the story in the manner of an epic bard has indeed been achieved.

#### **2.4.ii. *Breaking the spell***

The ‘Intermezzo’ divides the underworld narration into two parts and, just like the catalogue that precedes it, has been the focus of much scholarly controversy.<sup>2</sup> The analytic school regarded it with much suspicion, and argued that such an interruption is unnecessary in narrative terms and that its sole purpose is to connect the ‘late’ ‘Nekyia’ with the *Odyssey*.<sup>3</sup> Odysseus’ sudden decision to interrupt his story without apparent cause was enough for the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century analysts to condemn the passage as a later addition.<sup>4</sup> More recent scholars, however, have treated the ‘Intermezzo’ as genuine, arguing for its importance in the narrative and especially Odysseus’ return.<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that became the majority view, with scholars seeking to determine the narrative function of the passage and to identify the poetic motives behind its inclusion.<sup>6</sup> This new approach has shifted the focus from the question of why it should be there to the question of why *is* there, with an emphasis on the purpose it serves in Odyssean narrative and more generally for Homer’s poetics.

In one of the most comprehensive studies of the ‘Intermezzo’, Wyatt argues that the interruption serves to remind both the Phaeacians and the external audience of the fact that Odysseus still tries to achieve his homecoming (*Od.* 11.331/2 ... ἦ ἐπὶ νῆα θοῆν ἐλθόντ’ ἐς

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Webster (1958), 67, who observes that since *Od.* 11 stands at the centre of Odysseus’ narration the ‘Intermezzo’ divides not only the ‘Nekyia’ but the whole of the ‘Apologoi’ in two parts.

<sup>3</sup> Wilamowitz (1884), 143 thinks of the ‘Intermezzo’ as unsatisfactory in terms of narrative necessity and the same is true of Focke (1943), 140-4, Page (1955) and Merkelbach (1969), 190, who treat the passage as a later insertion designed to connect the ‘Nekyia’ with the original *Odyssey*.

<sup>4</sup> Fenik (1974) and Rabel (2002) discuss interruptions in the *Odyssey* that were as a rule excised by the analysts.

<sup>5</sup> For early arguments in defence of the ‘Intermezzo’s’ importance in the *Odyssey* see Stanford (1947), 381, Mattes (1958), 80-92, Besslich (1966), 131-5 and Eisenberg (1973), 178.

<sup>6</sup> Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 97, Wyatt (1989), Doherty (1991) and (1995), 65-9, De Jong (2001), 283-4 and Rabel (2002).

ἑταίρους / ... πομπὴ δὲ θεοῖς ὑμῖν τε μελήσει).<sup>7</sup> How important Arete's reception in particular is for the hero's return has repeatedly been stressed in the narrative (*Od.* 6.303-15 / 7.74-6), so it stands to reason that by interrupting himself after the 'Catalogue of Heroines' Odysseus tries to determine whether he has succeeded in pleasing her and the rest of his audience.<sup>8</sup> If Doherty is right and the 'Catalogue of Heroines' is indeed to be interpreted as the hero's gift to the queen Odysseus now needs to know if it has been accepted, which in turn would mean that his supplication has been successful.<sup>9</sup>

A different interpretation of the 'Intermezzo' is offered by Rabel who sees in it a reflection of the bardic technique of narrative interruption. Rabel builds on previous research by Parry and Fenik on interruption techniques in the *Odyssey*, and argues that although the 'Intermezzo' is a characteristic example of it, at the same time it is also unique since it works simultaneously on two levels: it interrupts Odysseus' narration of his adventures but at the same time interrupts the poet himself, who has lent his voice to the hero.<sup>10</sup> The employment of this double interruption allows us to observe from a detached point of view a technique the poet has been using throughout the *Odyssey*. We are thus given the opportunity to observe our own reaction to the poet's interruptions.<sup>11</sup> As Rabel puts it, by having Odysseus interrupt his own story, Homer "holds up a mirror within the text, making visible ... his own use of the interruption technique."<sup>12</sup>

These interventions, and others besides, have contributed much to our understanding of the 'Intermezzo', not only establishing beyond doubt its place at the centre of the 'Nekyia' and the 'Apologoi' but also underlining some of its more subtle poetic functions. In this section, I would like to look at the 'Intermezzo' from a slightly different point of view, asking not what it achieves in absolute terms but how it informs our reading specifically of the Underworld

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<sup>7</sup> Wyatt (1989), 237. By proposing to sleep either on the ship or in the palace the hero tactfully leaves his hosts' options open, while at the same time testing the Phaeacians' intentions towards him.

<sup>8</sup> Pache (1999), 28. At the same time, De Jong argues that the hero along with the choice of sending him home or keeping him there a while longer, provides also his hosts with the option of increasing his gifts, which indeed happens in the text (11.339-41), De Jong (2001), 283. Wyatt (1989), 239 further argues that the scenes that follow the 'Intermezzo' are "... the real reason for Odysseus' journey to the underworld, for they are the scenes in which the average Greek audience would have been most interested", thus interpreting the break as a device to increase the suspense.

<sup>9</sup> Doherty (1991), 147-9, who also argues that the 'Intermezzo' divides book 11 along gender lines with the first part dedicated to women and targeting Arete as its audience and the second dominated by men and. See also Doherty (1992), 167-70, (1995), 129-30.

<sup>10</sup> Rabel (2002).

<sup>11</sup> For examples of interruption in the *Odyssey* see Fenik (1974), 61-104. See also Rabel (2002), 78-85.

<sup>12</sup> Rabel (2002), 87.

narrative that precedes and follows it. As we have seen, the ‘Intermezzo’ allows Odysseus to assess the degree of his story’s success which in essence will determine his return to Ithaca. However, by stopping in the middle of his Underworld narration, the hero also ensures that the audience’s attention is fixed upon this particular part of his story when he interrupts himself. Indeed, I would argue that the reaction of the Phaeacians, and the ‘feedback’ of Arete and Alcinous in particular, can be seen as an evaluation of that narrative.

The first reaction is indeed a positive one as the Phaeacians are held under the spell of Odysseus’ tale:

ὣς ἔφαθ’, οἱ δ’ ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῆ,  
κηληθμῶ δ’ ἔσχοντο κατὰ μέγαρον σκιόεντα.

(*Od.* 11.333-34)

*So he spoke and everyone fell in deep silence  
spellbound by his words in the shadowy palace.*

This is the second time in the text that Odysseus causes the Phaeacians to fall silent, the first being in book 7 when he appeared suddenly amongst their midst (*Od.* 7.143). In both cases the silence is occasioned by a spectacle: in book 7 it was *seeing* Odysseus unexpectedly (*Od.* 7.143-4 δόμον κάτα φῶτα ἰδόντες / θαύμαζον δ’ ὀρόωντες) that caused the Phaeacians to be amazed; now it is *seeing* Odysseus tale unfold that leaves them spellbound.<sup>13</sup> Arete is the first to speak and her words further confirm the success of Odysseus’ narrative.<sup>14</sup>

Φαίηκες, πῶς ὕμιν ἀνὴρ ὄδε φαίνεται εἶναι  
εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε ἰδὲ φρένας ἔνδον εἶσας;  
ξεῖνος δ’ αὐτ’ ἐμός ἐστιν, ἕκαστος δ’ ἔμμορε τιμῆς;  
τῷ μὴ ἐπειγόμενοι ἀποπέμπετε, μηδὲ τὰ δῶρα  
οὔτω χρηρίζοντι κολούετε: πολλὰ γὰρ ὑμῖν  
κτήματ’ ἐνὶ μεγάροισι θεῶν ἰότητι κέονται.

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(*Od.* 11.336-41)

*Phaeacians, how do you see this man  
in form, stature and mind within?  
He is my guest but everyone shares the honour.  
For that do not rush to send him away, nor cut short*

<sup>13</sup> For *κηληθμός* (a hapax in Homer) see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 98, Rabel (2002), 81, n17 and *Lfgre* s.v. with further bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> The scene that follows with the consecutive speeches of Arete, Echeueus and Alcinous reverses the elements of the scene in book 7 in which Odysseus’ appearance interrupted the Phaeacian feast (7.154 ff). For a discussion see Rabel (2002), 88-9.

*the gifts which he so needs, since you have a lot  
lying in your abodes thanks to the gods' will.*

The queen's reaction brings the long-awaited acceptance of the hero's supplication which initially met with silence.<sup>15</sup> Arete proclaims that he is her ξείνος (*Od.* 11.338) and with that the uncertainty regarding the hero's fate is resolved.<sup>16</sup> Although Arete has been influenced in her decision by Odysseus' story, she expresses her admiration for the hero in terms of his appearance, moving from outward appearance to the quality of his *phrenes*. It would seem that the image of Odysseus can change with his narrative: the Phaeacians are now in a position to connect the hero's appearance with his mind, that is his story. The interplay between outward appearance and mental substance recalls the visual *tour de force* of Odysseus' narrative: by sharing his extra-ordinary vision with his hosts Odysseus has made it possible for them to see his true self. The close association between Odysseus' own (in)sight and the Phaeacians' view of the hero becomes more evident when we consider Alcinous' response which follows shortly after.<sup>17</sup>

Alcinous agrees with Arete and asks Odysseus to prolong his departure for one more day in order for gifts to be prepared (*Od.* 11.347-53). Odysseus accepts (*Od.* 11.354-61) and at this point Alcinous finally expresses his opinion about the hero and his story so far:

ὦ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὐ τί σ' εἴσκομεν εἰσορόωντες,  
ἠπεροπῆά τ' ἔμεν καὶ ἐπὶ κλοπῶν, οἷά τε πολλοὺς  
βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους,  
ψευδέα τ' ἀρτύνοντας ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο: 365  
σοὶ δ' ἔπι μὲν μορφῇ ἐπέων, ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί.  
μῦθον δ' ὡς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας,  
πάντων τ' Ἀργείων σέο τ' αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά.  
(*Od.* 11.362-68)

<sup>15</sup> Doherty (1991), 148. Arete's role in Odysseus' return and her status in Phaeacian society have been much debated, see Rose (1969) especially 404-5, Arthur (1973), 18ff. who looks at Helen and Arete as women who have an extraordinary stature in their society, Vries (1977) who contradicts Rose's argument that the Phaeacians and Arete pose a danger for Odysseus, Pedrick (1988), 86-93, Webber (1989), 9-10, Olson (1991), Doherty (1991) and (1992), Garvie (1994), 22-3, and finally Skempis – Ziogas (2009) whose approach is based mainly on etymological (and paretymological) interpretation of the name Arete.

<sup>16</sup> Rabel (2002), 88.

<sup>17</sup> For Echeneus' role here see De Jong (2001), 285, who notes that he acts in similar fashion at *Od.* 7.155-66. See also Rabel (2002), 88-9, who notes the reversal of roles between the two scenes (*Od.* 7.155-66: Echeneus breaks the silence – Alcinous speaks – Arete speaks / *Od.* 11.336-41: Arete breaks the silence – Echeneus speaks – Alcinous speaks) and argues that (88): "The interruption sequence of the intermezzo ... provides a rather neat chiasmic reversal of the interruption sequence of book 7."

*Odysseus looking upon you we do not consider you  
to be an impostor and a thieving man, such as those that  
the dark earth nourishes in plenty far and wide, and who  
put together lies from sources that no one can see.  
Your words are shapely and your mind has good sense.  
You told your story of the pains you endured and those  
of the Argives knowingly, like a bard would.*

Alcinous, following Arete, bases his judgement of Odysseus on what he sees (*Od.* 11.362), which leads him to conclude that Odysseus does not *look* like a thieving braggart. It is important to stress here that this assessment is not based on Odysseus' physical appearance, but rather on the 'appearance' of his story and the way that it is narrated. It is the shapeliness of his words (*Od.* 11.366 μορφή ἐπέων) that proves the hero is of a good mind and tells his story as a bard would (*Od.* 11.367).<sup>18</sup> The comparison to a bard suggests that Odysseus' narrative is true: Alcinous seems to imply that in this sense too outward appearance (μορφή) corresponds to inner worth.<sup>19</sup> However, the king's opinion seems to derive not so much from the similarities of Odysseus with a bard but rather from a principal difference which is the source of their knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Whereas the bard is inspired by the Muse and, as Odysseus himself observes, can narrate events as if he were present, the hero relies on his own personal experience and relates what he has seen and heard. That, however, is particularly true of the trip to Hades during which Odysseus insists that he has seen everything he relates through the continuous use of *idein*. Alcinous takes up that theme when framing his praise of Odysseus

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<sup>18</sup> Odysseus is compared to a bard three times in the *Odyssey*, in *Od.* 11.363-8, 17.514-21 and 21.404-9. For discussion see Finley (1966), 12, (1978), 50, Moulton (1977), 145-53, Segal (1983), Walsh (1984), 19-21, Goldhill (1991), 47, 65-6.

<sup>19</sup> Scholars have debated whether Alcinous' statement should be taken literally or with a pinch of salt. Walsh (1984), 6-14, for instance, argues that generally in Homer a story that follows the formalities of epic is to be regarded as true, thus Alcinous' remark is indeed genuine. Thalmann (1984), 172-3, agrees with the honesty of the king's reply but sees Alcinous' naivety as the reason for his willingness to believe Odysseus' story just because it is narrated well. Griffin (1980a), 49 sees Alcinous' reply as intentionally ambiguous whereas Peradotto (1990), 92-3 argues that Alcinous is aware of the possibility of deception but chooses to "politely dismiss it" in Odysseus' case. On similar lines Emlyn-Jones (1986), 2, argues that even the setting of Odysseus' stories cannot be confirmed by the far-travelled Phaeacians, and that this charges Alcinous' comment with "unintended irony."

<sup>20</sup> On the perception of a well-told story as a true one see Goldhill (1991), 47-8, who notes that, based only on the μορφή of his words, it is difficult to see why Odysseus' narrative differs from that of wandering lying men. See also Pratt (1993), 69, who further argues that Odysseus' "ability to speak well and knowledgeably like a poet, makes him equally capable of truth ... or of credible and persuasive lies." Regarding Odysseus' lies in the *Odyssey* the bibliography is immense; some of the most important works include Trahman (1952), Walcott (1977), Cole (1983), Haft (1984), Emlyn-Jones (1986), Lloyd (1987), Goldhill (1991), 36-56, Alden (1992), Parry H. (1994), Reece (1994), Segal (1995), Richardson (1996), Carlisle (1999), 75-91, who also offers an alternative translation and interpretation of Alcinous' reply at *Od.* 11.363-8, and most recently Zerba (2009).

specifically in terms of the verb *idein*: he does not *see* in Odysseus a liar who makes up stories from where no one can *see* (11.365 ὄθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο).<sup>21</sup> This last remark is of particular interest here because it specifically links Alcinous' reply with Odysseus' descent to the *A-ides*, the place where indeed no one can see. And it is that part of the narrative that validates Odysseus' account throughout books 9-11 of the *Odyssey* since his exceptional ability to *see* in the Underworld, demonstrated by his report of the unique stories he heard there, distinguishes him both from a bard and a lying wanderer.

So far, then, I have argued that Alcinous' response picks up specifically on the use of visual language during Odysseus' visit to Hades, the 'invisible one'. I now suggest that his comment on the truthfulness of Odysseus' narrative as opposed to that of lying men picks up on yet another characteristic of the 'Nekyia' – the idea that the shades speak the truth. Looking back at the meeting with Teiresias, we recall that the seer in his instructions to the hero made a point about the fact that the dead once they have drunk from the blood will speak the truth (*Od.* 11.148 ... ὁ δέ τοι νημερτὲς ἐνίψει). Previously he had reassured Odysseus that he will also tell him the truth after drinking from the blood (*Od.* 11.96 αἵματος ὄφρα πίω καὶ τοι νημερτέα εἶπω), and at the end of his prophecy he confirms that he has done so (*Od.* 11.137 ... τὰ δέ τοι νημερτέα εἶρω). In the 'Catalogue of Heroines' that follows Odysseus states explicitly that all the women drank from the blood (*Od.* 11.230-4) and thus would be expected to speak the truth according to Teiresias. Thus Alcinous' comment about the truthfulness of Odysseus' account appears to derive directly from the latter's underworld narrative, and his praise of the hero from the two most prominent characteristics of that narrative, the aspect of seeing and the theme of truth.

The 'Intermezzo', then, very directly responds to the first half of the 'Nekyia' and in so doing provides much-needed reflection on what is perhaps the most controversial part of Odysseus' narrative. Through the praise that the hero receives from both Arete and Alcinous and especially through the latter's explicit reference to the truthfulness of his story, the alternative traditions that Odysseus presented in his 'Catalogue of Heroines' are authenticated and integrated within the wider epic tradition. At the same time, it is now possible for Odysseus to take on an even more daring poetic challenge: the ground is prepared for his revisionist

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Graziosi – Haubold (2005), 47-8, who argue that since Alcinous' only criterion to judge a wanderer's tale is the arrangement of his story, and since Odysseus does not appear to be "cobbling together a random lie", the best option is to assume that his narrative is true.

encounter with his own past and a re-telling of the Trojan War story in the second half of the 'Nekyia'.

## Chapter 5: The Catalogue of Heroes

### 2.5.i. Introduction

With newfound confidence, Odysseus accepts the king's requests to continue his narrative:

τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς:  
Ἀλκίνοε κρεῖον, πάντων ἀριδείκετε λαῶν,  
ᾧρη μὲν πολέων μύθων, ᾧρη δὲ καὶ ὕπνου:  
εἰ δ' ἔτ' ἀκουέμεναί γε λιλαίαια, οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ γε  
τούτων σοι φθονέοιμι καὶ οἰκτρότερ' ἄλλ' ἀγορεύειν,  
κῆδε' ἐμῶν ἐτάρων, οἳ δὴ μετόπισθεν ὄλοντο,  
οἳ Τρώων μὲν ὑπεξέφυγον στονόεσσαν αὐτήν,  
ἐν νόστῳ δ' ἀπόλοντο κακῆς ἰότητι γυναικός.

(*Od.* 11.377-84)

*Then Odysseus of many wiles answered him and said:  
Lord Alcinous, renowned among all men,  
there is a time for stories and also a time for sleep.  
If however you still wish to hear more I will not begrudge you,  
but I will tell you of things even more pitiable than these,  
the woes of my companions, who were lost later,  
after they escaped the groan-filled fighting with the Trojans  
and perished on their way home because of a woman's evil will.*

The effect of the 'Intermezzo' and the success of his supplication are already visible in Odysseus' reply: the use of the active verb φθονέοιμι suggests that he is now in control of his audience and makes a deliberate decision to continue his narrative. The difference between his previous remarks (*Od.* 11.330-2) and his reply here demonstrate well how much Odysseus has gained from the 'Intermezzo'. Besides the gifts and the renewed promise of a return to Ithaca, the hero is now further equipped with the confidence that he faces an audience that is firmly under his influence.

As requested by Alcinous, Odysseus announces as the subject of his next story his encounters with his comrades from Troy.<sup>1</sup> Now that Arete has been won over the hero signals a change in the target audience and tone of his narrative:<sup>2</sup> the 'evil will of a woman' (*Od.* 11.384 κακῆς ἰότητι γυναικός) could be a reference to Helen, the cause of the war that led to countless deaths of heroes, or it could be anticipating Clytemnestra's crime, which will soon be

<sup>1</sup> De Jong (2001), 286, Ford (1992), 114.

<sup>2</sup> Doherty (1992), 165.



described in detail.<sup>3</sup> In any case, Odysseus prepares us for the fact that his second catalogue will adopt a very different, and ostensibly more traditional, outlook from the first.

The series of meetings that follow is known as the ‘Catalogue of Heroes’, by analogy to the preceding ‘Catalogue of Heroines’. This second catalogue is of crucial importance to my argument since it provides us with what I argue is the most comprehensive example of the poetics of Hades at work. We have already had a fore-taste of how that poetics functions in the ‘Catalogue of Heroines’, where well-known epic tradition was challenged by the very personal take on the past provided by the heroines. But the challenge of the first catalogue was directed towards *Ehoiai* traditions that went under the name of Hesiod: important as they were, they did not centrally affect the *Odyssey*’s place in, and relationship with, the heroic epic of Homer. In the ‘Catalogue of Heroes’ that follows, Odysseus takes on some of the central tenets of Homeric epic, by retelling the story of its most prominent representatives. The poetic stakes could not be higher.

As we would expect by now, each of the three meetings included in the ‘Catalogue of Heroes’ is profoundly revisionist, though each also reveals a different aspect of the poetics of Hades depending on the point of view each hero adopts in the afterlife. Agamemnon’s story demonstrates how a heroic narrative may be domesticated when told in the Underworld: whereas Proteus in *Odyssey* 3 relates a well prepared ambush and a hard fight to last man, the shade of Agamemnon recalls an unjustifiable slaughter of innocent men with no heroic payoff whatsoever. Achilles’ case is similar but seems if anything even more radical, with the hero appearing to renounce the heroic ideal as a whole, giving preference to a quiet life even as a poor serf. Finally, Ajax’s silence demonstrates the danger inherent in holding on to one’s heroic ideals even after death: Ajax misses his chance to let his story be heard. What remains is Odysseus’ own retelling, one that as we shall see projects his own perspective and not that of the shade.

The ‘Catalogue of Heroes’, then, provides us with a unique opportunity of observing how epic tradition reflects upon itself when its protagonists are long gone and relegated to Hades. In this respect the second part of the ‘Nekyia’ epitomises Homer’s poetics of Hades by

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<sup>3</sup> Ford (1992), 114, assumes that *ióτητι* refers to Helen, whereas, however Clytemnestra fits the context as well since she soon be under the spotlight in Agamemnon’s account that follows. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 100 take the mention of the will of a wicked woman to be a preparation for the scene with Agamemnon that follows. Both interpretations are equally plausible and need not exclude each other. See also De Jong (2001), 286.

having the heroes themselves confront their own heroic tradition and remoulding it with their own personal experience in mind, thus presenting us with a subjective perspective of the past that pulls away from the traditional epic ideals of *kleos* and *timē*.

## 2.5.ii. Remembering Troy - The meeting with Agamemnon

### 1. The Death of Agamemnon: a view from below

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ψυχὰς μὲν ἀπεσκέδασ' ἄλλυδις ἄλλη  
 ἀγνή Περσεφόνηια γυναικῶν θηλυτεράων, 385  
 ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἄτρεΐδαο  
 ἀχνυμένη: περὶ δ' ἄλλαι ἀγηγέραθ', ὅσσοι ἅμ' αὐτῷ  
 οἴκῳ ἐν Αἰγίσθιοιο θάνον καὶ πότμον ἐπέσπον.  
 ἔγνω δ' αἴψ' ἔμ' ἐκεῖνος, ἐπεὶ πῖεν αἷμα κελαιόν:  
 κλαῖε δ' ὃ γε λιγέως, θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβων, 390  
 πῖτνὰς εἰς ἐμὲ χεῖρας, ὀρέξασθαι μενεαίνων:  
 ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ οἱ ἔτ' ἦν ἴς ἔμπεδος οὐδέ τι κῆρυς,  
 οἷη περ πάρος ἔσκεν ἐνὶ γναμπτοῖσι μέλεσσι.

(*Od.* 11.384-93)

*Right after holy Persephone scattered around the  
 souls of all the women, there came forth the soul  
 of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, grieving  
 and around him other shades were gathered, of those  
 that with him met their fate and death in Aegisthus' house.  
 He knew me straight after he drank the dark blood  
 and he wept loudly, shedding big tears  
 and stretching his arms towards me, desiring to hold me.  
 But, alas, no sinews or power was left in them,  
 that in life moved the flexible limbs.*

Once he has accepted Alcinous' proposal to continue Odysseus resumes his narrative from where he has left it at the end of the 'Catalogue of Heroines'. The hero dismisses the women with the help of Persephone who functions here as the stage manager of his underworld narrative, introducing and dismissing the women as needed.<sup>4</sup> Having cleared the stage

<sup>4</sup> Persephone was used to introduce the women as well in *Od.* 11.225-7, cf. Pache (1999), 29.

Odysseus introduces Agamemnon's shade along with his companions who were killed with him in the house of Aegisthus (*Od.* 11.387-9).<sup>5</sup>

Agamemnon's shade drinks from the blood and immediately recognises Odysseus (*Od.* 11.390).<sup>6</sup> The reference to blood-drinking creates a link with the first part of the 'Nekyia' and the 'Catalogue of Heroines' in particular where it was used collectively of all the heroines. It appears to function collectively for the 'Catalogue of Heroes' too since it is not repeated for the shades of Achilles and Ajax that follow. Besides creating consistency with the first part of the 'Nekyia', and with the instructions of Teiresias, the reference to blood-drinking further implies the truthfulness of the accounts that follow.

Agamemnon's first reaction upon seeing Odysseus is to attempt to embrace him, which recalls the hero's own earlier attempt to embrace the shade of his mother.<sup>7</sup> This time, however, the roles are reversed with Odysseus being the one to point out, in Antikleia's words, that embracing the dead would be impossible: no sinews remain and the power that moved the limbs is no more (*Od.* 11.393-4).<sup>8</sup>

The meeting with Antikleia continues to loom in the background as Odysseus asks Agamemnon how he died and lists plausible causes of death, as he had done with his mother.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Agamemnon, Odysseus adapts them to fit the heroic nature of his interlocutor, replacing the arrows of Artemis (*Od.* 11.172-3) with the winds of Poseidon (*Od.* 11.399-400) and a long drawn-out disease (*Od.* 11.172) with death at the hands of hostile men (*Od.* 11.401). The similarities suggest an emotional intensity similar to that which characterised the meeting with Antikleia. And here, as already in his meeting with his mother, Odysseus'

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<sup>5</sup> De Jong (2001), 287, notes that Odysseus uses "hindsight knowledge" when he refers to those who died with Agamemnon, as he has not heard yet about the murder at Aegisthus' house.

<sup>6</sup> There is a textual problem with the second half of line 390 that has led many editors to emend it. Although found in most MSS ἐπεὶ πίνειν αἷμα κελαινόν is often taken as an attempt by ancient scholars to correct the text in order for the drinking of blood pattern to be retained. See Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 100 with bibliography, who support the reading ἐπεὶ ἴδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν. Heath (2005), 394, prefers the more common reading of the MSS. I agree with him, but my discussion of the passage is not greatly affected either way.

<sup>7</sup> De Jong (2001), 287, notes that we have here "the same pathetic gesture as in 204-8" (i.e. in the scene with Antikleia) whereas Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 101, argue that the "scenes with Antikleia and Agamemnon are consciously contrasted". The present encounter is also very close to that of the 'Dream of Achilles' in the *Iliad* (23.65-101), where Achilles tries to embrace the shade of Patroclus but fails (97-101). On that scene see the discussion in Chapter one of Part 1.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Od.* 11.394: ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἔτ' ἦν ἴς ἔμπεδος ... / 11.219 οὐ γὰρ ἔτι σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα ἴνες ἔχουσιν.

<sup>9</sup> These "erroneous questions", as De Jong (2001), 287, calls them, correspond closely with the ones that Odysseus addresses to Antikleia. They are introduced with the same general question: τίς νύ σε κῆρ ἐδάμασσε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο; (*Od.* 11.171 = 11.398).

questions heighten the impact of the actual cause of death that is about to be narrated by the shade.

After dismissing Odysseus' guesses in linear progression, Agamemnon begins to tell his story.

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ, 405  
οὔτ' ἐμέ γ' ἐν νήεσσι Ποσειδάων ἐδάμασσεν  
ὄρσας ἀργαλέων ἀνέμων ἀμέγαρτον αὐτμήν,  
οὔτε μ' ἀνάρσιοι ἄνδρες ἐδηλήσαντ' ἐπὶ χέρσου,  
ἀλλὰ μοι Αἴγισθος τεύξας θάνατόν τε μόρον τε  
ἔκτα σὺν οὐλομένη ἄλόχῳ, οἰκόνδε καλέσσας, 410  
δειπνίσσας, ὡς τίς τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ.  
ὥς θάνον οἰκτίστῳ θανάτῳ: περὶ δ' ἄλλοι ἑταῖροι  
νωλεμέως κτείνοντο σύες ὡς ἀργιόδοντες,  
οἳ ῥά τ' ἐν ἀφνειοῦ ἀνδρὸς μέγα δυναμένοιο  
ἦ γάμῳ ἦ ἐράνῳ ἦ εἰλαπίνῃ τεθαλυίη. 415  
ἦδη μὲν πολέων φόνῳ ἀνδρῶν ἀντεβόλησας,  
μουνᾶξ κτεινομένων καὶ ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὕσμίνῃ:  
ἀλλὰ κε κεῖνα μάλιστα ἰδὼν ὀλοφύραο θυμῷ,  
ὡς ἀμφὶ κρητῆρα τραπέζας τε πληθούσας  
κεῖμεθ' ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ, δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θῦεν. 420  
οἰκτροτάτην δ' ἤκουσα ὅπα Πριάμοιο θυγατρὸς,  
Κασσάνδρης, τὴν κτεῖνε Κλυταιμνήστρη δολόμητις  
ἀμφ' ἐμοί, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ ποτὶ γαίῃ χεῖρας ἀείρων  
βάλλον ἀποθνήσκων περὶ φασγάνῳ: ἡ δὲ κυνῶπις  
νοσφίσσατ', οὐδέ μοι ἔτλη ἰόντι περ εἰς Αἶδαο 425  
χερσὶ κατ' ὀφθαλμοῦς ἐλέειν σὺν τε στόμ' ἐρεῖσαι.

(Od. 11.405-26)

*Born of Zeus, son of Laertes, Odysseus of the many wiles,  
it was not Poseidon who subdued me on board of the ships  
giving rise to the dreadful blow of insurmountable winds  
neither was I killed by hostile men on land  
But Aegisthus crafted my death and demise  
and killed me along with my accursed wife, after inviting me home  
and offering me a meal, as someone kills an ox at the manger.  
That is how I died a most pitiful death; and around my companions  
were slaughtered mercilessly like white-tusked swine  
that are killed at the wedding or banquet or sumptuous feast of a very  
powerful man. You have seen the death of many men,  
killed either in single combat or in the midst of the strong battle*

*but if you had seen this sight you would have pitied it most of all in your heart as we were lying around the crater and the loaded table in the palace and the whole floor was steaming with blood. That is when I heard the most pitiable cry of the daughter of Priam, Cassandra, who was being killed by evil minded Clytemnestra on top of me, and I raised my hands and hit the ground while I was dying around the sword that ran me through. And she, the shameless bitch, turned her back away and did not even deign to close my mouth and eyes while I was going to Hades.*

This is the second time in the *Odyssey* that we have the chance to hear the story of a hero's death narrated both by an external narrator and by the dead himself. In the first case, that of Elpenor,<sup>10</sup> we observed that several differences could be found between the two accounts. Agamemnon's case follows the same pattern. We should note, however, that Agamemnon's account carries much more significance than Elpenor's, a fact that is also reflected in the length and detail of the narrative: Agamemnon's death as told by the shade occupies a total of 34 lines in contrast with only 6 for that of Elpenor. 'Not-so-clever' Elpenor was utterly insignificant both within the *Odyssey* and in the epic tradition as a whole. Agamemnon, by contrast, is one of the most important characters in the *Odyssey*, where he has a prominent paradigmatic role and in the wider epic tradition (most notably the *Iliad*).<sup>11</sup> Hearing his story presents us with the unique opportunity to witness the final moments of one of Homer's most important heroes as experienced and seen through his own eyes. In practice, that means witnessing the epic song reflect on itself on a much larger scale, and in much greater depth, than Elpenor's narrative did. There was nothing surprising or poetically significant about Elpenor's account of his own, thoroughly unheroic death. But an Agamemnon revealing that there is another side to the glorious fighting and killing of epic song, a side that a hero can admit and relate only in the absolute seclusion of Hades, is startling indeed.

The first thing Agamemnon does is to identify his murderers as Aegisthus and his wife. The latter remains unnamed for the time being (*Od.* 11.409-10). In the next five lines the actual murder is described in a graphic manner: Agamemnon was invited to dinner and was killed

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<sup>10</sup> See section 2.2 for discussion.

<sup>11</sup> On the role of Agamemnon in the *Iliad* see for instance Reid (1973), Russo – Knox (1989), Taplin (1990), Rabel (1991), Clay (1995) and Cook (2003).

there like an ox at its manger (*Od.* 11.410-11).<sup>12</sup> His companions were slaughtered around him like swine (*Od.* 11.413).<sup>13</sup> Agamemnon compares their killing to pigs butchered at the feast or marriage celebrations of a powerful man; the simile is particularly ironic since it reverses the desired homecoming scene (an εἰλαπίνητεθαλυίη) by presenting in its place the horrifying spectacle of Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus' δόλος. The peaceful image of the feast is almost literally spoiled by the grotesque imagery of the slaughtered men lying dead around the table while the floor is steaming with their blood (*Od.* 11.419-20).

It has been noted that any reference to resistance and fighting, as reported in Proteus' version of the murder which is discussed below, is absent from the shade's account.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Agamemnon focuses exclusively on the perverted homecoming scene where the expected celebrations are turned into a slaughter of the innocent. In the shade's recollection, fighting and heroic resistance hold no relevance: what matters to him is only his pitiful death.<sup>15</sup> Throughout his speech, Agamemnon stresses the pathetic impact of the scene: even Odysseus, a seasoned warrior who has witnessed the death of many men (*Od.* 11.416-7), would have felt horror at the site of such a slaughter (*Od.* 11.418). Comparison with the fighting experience of Odysseus makes the shade's fate appear even more pathetic by recalling the lost glory of Troy.

Feelings of self-pity remain dominant throughout Agamemnon's account and further increase in intensity as we move from a general overview of the murder to a description of the dying Agamemnon himself. The relevant lines, *Od.* 11.421-6, are focalised strictly through Agamemnon's experience: we see and hear everything that he sees and hears in his last moments as an epic hero. Most memorably, perhaps, Agamemnon relates how he heard, but

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<sup>12</sup> See Duke (1953-4) and Seaford (1984) for discussion of Aeschylus' different version of the bath as the murder scene and its possible connections to the Homeric text.

<sup>13</sup> The introduction of the companions and their death in the same line in which Agamemnon comments on his own death (*Od.* 11.412) presents them as victims of the same δόλος that cost his life. Odysseus earlier informed us that Agamemnon was surrounded by his companions who were killed with him in the ambush (*Od.* 11.389-90).

<sup>14</sup> West S. (1985), 225, sees an inconsistency here between the two accounts as Proteus reports that "... Agamemnon's comrades put up a determined resistance ... [whereas] ... Agamemnon's ghost says that they were butchered like swine." Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 102, on the other hand, rightly argue that the presentation of events is strongly influenced by the perspective of each narrator.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Reinhardt (1996), 118, who argues that all three heroes whom Odysseus meets (Agamemnon, Achilles and Ajax) are still struggling to come to terms with the fact they have died.

did not see, the murder of Cassandra while lying mortally wounded (*Od.* 11.421-2).<sup>16</sup> At this point he finally does describe some resistance on his part but his attempt results only in one last pathetic gesture as he finally succumbs to his wounds (*Od.* 11.423-4).<sup>17</sup>

It is in the context of Cassandra's killing, that Clytemnestra is named for the first time. Her naming signals a shift in Agamemnon's focus, from Aegisthus to his wife as the main perpetrator of the crime.<sup>18</sup> Henceforth, Clytemnestra no longer acts as a mere accomplice in Aegisthus' δόλος but takes an active and prominent role of her own. The epithet δολόμητις that accompanies her name underlines the change and initiates, as we shall see, a gradual shift of the blame for Agamemnon's death from Aegisthus to Clytemnestra.<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that the only other character called δολόμητις in the *Odyssey* is Aegisthus and always when he is identified as Agamemnon's murderer.<sup>20</sup> By giving the epithet to Clytemnestra, Agamemnon hints whom he regards as truly responsible for his death. Indeed, the remainder of his account confirms that in the shade's eyes Clytemnestra alone is to blame.

Using increasingly harsh language (*Od.* 11.425-6 ἢ δὲ κυνῶπις / νοσφίσατ[ο]), Agamemnon now describes his wife's negligence of his body. As in the description of his final moments he only recalls what he could have experienced himself – no reference is made to the absence of a proper burial. Recalling Clytemnestra's final atrocity Agamemnon exclaims:

ὦς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός,  
ἢ τις δὴ τοιαῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶν ἔργα βάλῃται:  
οἶον δὴ καὶ κείνη ἐμήσατο ἔργον ἀεικές,  
κουριδίῳ τεύξασα πόσει φόνον. ἦ τοι ἔφην γε 430  
ἀσπάσιος παιδεσσιν ἰδὲ δμῶεσσιν ἐμοῖσιν  
οἴκαδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι: ἢ δ' ἔξοχα λυγρὰ ἰδυῖα

<sup>16</sup> The problematic ἀμφ' ἐμοί in line 423 can be explained by the fact that Agamemnon describes what he felt with his limited scope of vision at that particular moment. Since this is the shade's personal experience there is no panoramic view of the hall nor are we given an accurate descriptions of what went on in different parts of it. For possible interpretations of *Od.* 11.423-4 see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 102.

<sup>17</sup> The meaning of ποτὶ γαίῃ χειρᾶς ἀείρων / βάλλον ἀποθνήσκων περι φασγάνῳ, although disputed, is probably 'I raised my hands and beat them against the ground while I died around the sword.' Agamemnon may be suggesting some sort of supplication for vengeance to the Underworld deities. Cf. Stanford (1947), 396 and Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 102-3.

<sup>18</sup> For discussion of the name Clytemnestra (Κλυταιμνήστρη or Κλυταιμήστρη?) see West S. (1988), 176 and Marquardt (1992).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Katz (1991), 48-53 and Felson-Rubin (1994), 99-103. See also De Jong (2001) 288, who follows them and argues that the shift is "due to the fact that the story is now told to Odysseus and that its 'argument' function is to warn him."

<sup>20</sup> Aegisthus is called δολόμητις five times in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 1.300, 3.198 / 250 / 308, 4.525) in what looks like a personalised formula at the beginning of the first hemistich.

οἷ τε κατ' αἴσχος ἔχευε καὶ ἐσσομένησιν ὀπίσσω  
θηλυτέρησι γυναιξί, καὶ ἦ κ' ἔυεργὸς ἔησιν.

(*Od.* 11.427-34)

*There is nothing more dreadful and shameless than a woman who puts such deeds in her mind, like the unseemly deed she committed bringing forth the murder of her husband. Surely I thought I would come home welcome to my children and servants but she, having most sinister thoughts in her mind, brought shame upon all women to come, even if one is worthy of respect.*

Agamemnon has been piling abuse on Clytemnestra ever since line 410. (οὐλομένη; cf. 422 δολόμητις, 425 κυνῶπις). His rant reaches a first climax in line 427 (αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον), which initially seems directed at all women. Line 428 specifies that only women like Clytemnestra are meant, but the impression remains that crime is gendered: Clytemnestra is no longer just Aegisthus' accomplice or even just Cassandra's murderer but rather becomes a representative of the kind of women who murder their husbands (430 τεύξασα πόσει φόνον). The gradual shift of blame, from Aegisthus to Clytemnestra, has resulted in a re-reading of Agamemnon's story: what began as a contest between two men over one woman (a good epic story-line) has turned into a wife's betrayal of her husband. It is a story so dreadful that it can hardly be voiced at all. Only in Hades, where personal experience defies even the most powerful of taboos, can it be given a hearing.

Interestingly, Agamemnon does not, as one might expect, bemoan his loss of glory or recognition as the king who conquered Troy. Instead, he stresses that he never had the chance to be welcomed home and see his children and servants (*Od.* 11.431-2). A hero's concern with *kleos* and glory gives way to intimate relationships as something that I have argued is more important for the dead. In this respect, Agamemnon's narrative further demonstrates how the story of even the best-known heroes of the epic past can be re-written in Hades: not only does Agamemnon relate the story of his death in a pitifully unheroic manner, but he also ignores his own heroic past, focusing instead on his unfulfilled desire to return home. How unique a perspective this is on Agamemnon's life can be verified by examining how the same story of Agamemnon's return and death is given elsewhere in the *Odyssey*.



## 2. The Death of Agamemnon: a heroic perspective

Before we hear it from the shade itself, the story of Agamemnon's death has been related by five different narrators in the course of the *Odyssey*.<sup>21</sup> Three of them are gods (Zeus, Athena, Proteus), the other two are humans (Nestor, Menelaus). The five accounts differ in terms of the amount of detail provided but one fact on which all five agree is that Agamemnon was killed by Aegisthus.<sup>22</sup> Clytemnestra is also mentioned but only as an accomplice in the less detailed accounts of Athena (*Od.* 3.235 ὄλεθ' ὑπ' Αἰγίσθοιο δόλω καὶ ἤς ἀλόχοιο) and Menelaus (*Od.* 4.92 ... δόλω οὐλομένης ἀλόχοιο) and in Nestor's account which implies her guilt in the context of describing her own death (*Od.* 3.310 μητρός τε στυγερῆς ...). Clytemnestra does not play a very active role in any of these accounts and the only extensive narrative concerning her, by Nestor, refers to her seduction by Aegisthus and not to the role she might have played in the murder.<sup>23</sup> The only account that completely ignores Clytemnestra is the fullest one of them all, that of Proteus.<sup>24</sup> It is worth looking at it in some more detail, as it can help us appreciate the unique features of Agamemnon's own story as told in *Odyssey* 11.

In *Odyssey* book 4 Menelaus recounts to Telemachus the encounter he had with Proteus, during which he learned about his brother's tragic end. Although it is Menelaus who speaks, the account is focalised through Proteus:

τὸν δ' ἄρ' ἀπὸ σκοπιῆς εἶδε σκοπός, ὃν ῥα καθεῖσεν  
Αἴγισθος δολόμητις ἄγων, ὑπὸ δ' ἔσχετο μισθὸν 525  
χρυσοῦ δοιὰ τάλαντα: φύλασσε δ' ὃ γ' εἰς ἐνιαυτόν,  
μὴ ἐλάθοι παριών, μνήσαιτο δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς.  
βῆ δ' ἴμεν ἀγγελέων πρὸς δῶματα ποιμένι λαῶν.  
αὐτίκα δ' Αἴγισθος δολίην ἐφράσσατο τέχνην:  
κρινάμενος κατὰ δῆμον ἐείκοσι φῶτας ἀρίστους 530  
εἶσε λόχον, ἐτέρωθι δ' ἀνώγει δαῖτα πένεσθαι.  
αὐτὰρ ὁ βῆ καλέων Ἀγαμέμνονα, ποιμένα λαῶν

<sup>21</sup> By Zeus in *Od.* 1.35-43, by Athena in *Od.* 1.298-300 and 3.234-5, by Nestor in *Od.* 3.193-8 and 3.261-310, by Menelaus in 4.90-2 and by Proteus, through Menelaus' account, in *Od.* 4.525-547. For the stories of Agamemnon and the Oresteia in the *Odyssey* see D' Arms – Hulley (1946) and Olson (1990), Goldhill (1991), 99-101.

<sup>22</sup> *Od.* 1.35-6, 1.300, 3.198, 3.305/308, 4.91, 4.534-5.

<sup>23</sup> *Od.* 3.264-72, see West S. (1988), 176-7, who notes that Clytemnestra's resistance to the advances of Aegisthus and the removal of the bard who was assigned to guard her are not mentioned elsewhere. For the bard/guardian of Clytemnestra see also Page (1972), Scully (1981) and Andersen (1992).

<sup>24</sup> West S. (1988), 225.

ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν, ἀεικέα μερμηρίζων.  
 τὸν δ' οὐκ εἰδὸτ' ὄλεθρον ἀνήγαγε καὶ κατέπεφνε  
 δειπνίσσας, ὥς τις τε κατέκτανε βοῦν ἐπὶ φάτνῃ. 535  
 οὐδέ τις Ἀτρεΐδew ἐτάρων λίπεθ' οἳ οἱ ἔποντο,  
 οὐδέ τις Αἰγίσθου, ἀλλ' ἔκταθεν ἐν μεγάροισιν.  
 (Od. 4.524-37)

*The guard saw him from his lookout  
 Aegisthus with cunning mind had put him there, after promising to pay  
 him two gold talents, and he was watching for a year,  
 lest Agamemnon escape his attention while passing, and remembered his  
 mighty strength.  
 So he went to the palace to bring the news to the shepherd of people  
 and straightaway Aegisthus devised a cunning trap:  
 he chose twenty outstanding men from the area  
 and set an ambush, while ordering his men to prepare a feast.  
 Then he went and invited Agamemnon, shepherd of people,  
 with horses and chariots, harbouring dreadful plans.  
 And he led him to his doom unawares and slaughtered him  
 while dining, as someone kills an ox at the manger.  
 And none of the companions that followed the son of Atreus survived  
 nor did any of Aegisthus' own, but they were all killed in the palace.*

The first thing to note is that Proteus does not just inform Menelaus of the death of Agamemnon but instead engages in a very detailed narrative that treats the incident as an autonomous epic episode, beginning with Aegisthus' preparations long before Agamemnon's return, and moving step by step through the events that lead to the murder. Structurally, and in terms of narrative technique, Proteus' narrative is very similar to that of the Muses as he presents the events in linear progression and, due to his divine nature, is able to 'look' panoramically at the past as if he were there.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of content, Proteus' narrative focuses entirely on Aegisthus as it traces his actions from when he initially set the guard to look out for Agamemnon's approaching fleet to the moment when he kills the king.<sup>26</sup> Agamemnon's death is here framed in terms of Aegisthus'

<sup>25</sup> Even the fact that Menelaus asks Proteus about his homecoming and that of his companions because 'gods know everything' (Od. 11.379 / 468 ... θεοὶ δὲ τε πάντα ἴσασιν), reminds us of the Muses and Homer's famous invocation in the second book of the *Iliad* (Il. 2.485 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἔστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα).

<sup>26</sup> De Jong (2001), 287. No less than 12 verbs and participles have Aegisthus as their subject in Proteus' account, literally mapping every move he made while planning and executing the murder (4.524 καθεῖσεν, 525 ἄγων / ἔσχετο 529 ἐφράσσατο, 530 κρινάμενος, 531 εἶσε / ἀνώγει, 532 βῆ / καλέων, 533 μερμηρίζων, 534 ἀνήγαγε / κατέπεφνε).

successful ambush, which in turn carries a heroic resonance that points back to the tradition of the *Iliad* and the practice of ambush referred to there.<sup>27</sup> In fact the whole of Proteus' narrative appears to have an Iliadic resonance as the use of expressions such as μνήσαιτο δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς (527) indicates.<sup>28</sup> Reading Proteus' account closely we can see that it indeed abounds in heroic undertones and military references: not only does the herald have to remember his bravery but Aegisthus chooses twenty of the best men (529 φῶταξ ἀρίστους) in what effectively amounts to a heroic *aristeia*, receives Agamemnon in military fashion with horse-drawn chariots (532 ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν)<sup>29</sup> and then engages in a battle in which he is the sole survivor (536-7).

The heroic perspective of Proteus however omits Clytemnestra and the role she played in the murder plot: the heroine is not even mentioned and her part is altogether ignored; instead it is Aegisthus who conceives the plan (*Od.* 4.529 ... δολίην ἐφράσσατο τέχνην) and sets the ambush (*Od.* 4.530). We know from Agamemnon's account about Clytemnestra's role in the δόλος (*Od.* 11.409-10) and the other narrators in the *Odyssey* mention her as well: even Menelaus whose source is Proteus, names her at *Od.* 4.92 as Aegisthus' accomplice. It is striking, therefore, that in the most detailed account of the murder she is completely ignored.

The omission, I argue, can be explained if we take into account the nature of Proteus' narrative: the god presents us with a heroic report of the events, one that is concerned with the setting of the ambush, its execution and the bloody fight to which it led. From the perspective of the epic narrator, which is the one that Proteus adopts, the summary of events need not include any reference to Clytemnestra, her part in deceiving Agamemnon or her killing of Cassandra, as the focus is on the fight to the death among heroes.

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<sup>27</sup> The ambush (λόχος), an important skill for the Iliadic hero, is referred to several times in the *Iliad* (e.g. *Il.* 1.227, 4.392, 6.189, 8.522, 13.277, 13.285, 18.513, 24.779). The word λόχος is found in the *Odyssey* as well, but in most of its occurrences refers to events that have taken place either in the *Iliad* or during the late stages of the siege of Troy (e.g. *Od.* 4.277, 8.515, 11.525 where the word is used to describe the ambush of the Trojan Horse and *Od.* 14.227/464 where Odysseus uses it in his lying tale to Eumaeus, referring to his past ambushes as a hero). The use of the word, and more specifically the expression εἶσε λόχον, in the description of Aegisthus' ambush can be taken as carrying Iliadic connotations. For the importance of the ambush as a measure of the hero's bravery and competence see Due – Ebbott (2010).

<sup>28</sup> West S. (1988), 225, who notes the formula's similarity with Iliadic μνήσασθε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς.

<sup>29</sup> The fact that this is the only instance in the *Odyssey* where a chariot is mentioned further indicates the Iliadic associations of the passage: in the *Iliad* the noun ὄχος is found 18 times (*Il.* 5.107/219/745/794, 8.290/389/565, 9.384, 11.160/699, 12.91/114, 15.3/453, 18.224/237, 22.22, 23.130).



σοὶ δὲ Κλυταιμνήστρη δόλον ἤρτυε τηλόθ' ἐόντι.'

(*Od.* 11.435-9)

*So he spoke and then I answered him and said:*

*What a shame, wide eyed Zeus greatly hated the sprout  
of Atreus from the beginning, through the wicked plans of women.  
Since for Helen's sake many of us died and Clytemnestra  
weaved her trap against you while you were away.*

Odysseus in his reply takes his cue from Agamemnon, focusing on the treachery of women and ignoring that of Aegisthus. However, he tactfully redirects Agamemnon's blame only to those women responsible for the downfall of the Atreides: Clytemnestra who is responsible for Agamemnon's demise and Helen who caused the death of many Achaeans. Importantly, he also adds the further qualification that they were instruments of Zeus' will (*Od.* 11.436-7 Ζεὺς / ἐκπάγλως ἤχθηρε),<sup>33</sup> shielding Arete from Agamemnon's views and containing them within a blandly traditional framework where a (reassuringly patriarchal) Zeus determines what happen on earth.<sup>34</sup> Agamemnon, however, remains trapped in his personal bitterness, and when he starts talking again his attention turns to Penelope and the danger she presents for Odysseus.

τῷ νῦν μὴ ποτε καὶ σὺ γυναικί περ ἤπιος εἶναι:

μὴ οἱ μῦθον ἅπαντα πιφασκέμεν, ὄν κ' ἐν εἰδῆς,

ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν φάσθαι, τὸ δὲ καὶ κεκρυμμένον εἶναι.

ἀλλ' οὐ σοί γ', Ὀδυσσεῦ, φόνος ἔσσεται ἔκ γε γυναικός:

λίην γὰρ πιτυτή τε καὶ εὖ φρεσὶ μῆδεα οἶδε

445

κούρη Ἴκαρίοιο, περίφρων Πηνελόπεια.

(*Od.* 11.441-6)

*So you should never be mild with your wife,*

*and do not tell her all you know well in your mind*

*but reveal one thing and keep the rest hidden.*

*But your death Odysseus will not come from your wife,*

*for she is prudent and has great sense,*

*the daughter of Icarus, thoughtful Penelope.*

Agamemnon initially advises Odysseus to exercise caution towards his wife, but the recollection of Penelope (*Od.* 11.446) causes him to change his warning into reassurance:

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 103. De Jong (2001), 288 makes the same point. See also Goldhill (1988), 62.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Felson-Rubin (1994), 102.

Odysseus has nothing to fear from such a woman.<sup>35</sup> At a grander scale, Agamemnon here performs the same self-correction that we already saw in the corrective runover of lines 427-8. Agamemnon's wavering between bitter personal disappointment and wild generalisation illustrates well his conflicting emotions, as does, at the level of language, his repeated use of ἀλλά at the beginning of lines 443 and 444 (but keep things to yourself / but there is no need in your case to do so). Above all, Agamemnon appears to regret his own lack of caution during his return. The inward-looking thrust of his words becomes even more apparent with Agamemnon's reference to Telemachus and his future reunion with Odysseus that stands in such a stark contrast with his own lost homecoming: Odysseus will *see* Telemachus upon his return (*Od.* 11.450 πατήρ φίλος ὄψεται ἐλθών) and Telemachus will hold and embrace his father (*Od.* 11.451 καὶ κεῖνος πατέρα προσπύξεται). Interestingly, the shade highlights precisely those actions that are no longer possible for him since in Hades one cannot *see* and, as I have pointed out, there is nothing left of the dead to be held. Thus, a true reunion of son and father cannot ever take place in the Underworld and that is essentially what Clytemnestra has denied Agamemnon: the chance to *see* his son (*Od.* 11.452-3 υἱὸς ἐνιπλησθῆναι / ὀφθαλμοῖσιν).

After further warnings to Odysseus to return home in secret (*Od.* 11.454-6),<sup>36</sup> Agamemnon finally turns to the fate of his own son who is still among the living (*Od.* 11.457-61). This is the emotional climax of his speech, and it provides final confirmation that Agamemnon's story in *Odyssey* 11 derives its unique texture from the powerful sense of emotional loss that pervades it at every level. After all else is stripped away, the longing for his son is all that is left to this fiercely ambitious and self-centred man. Here is an Agamemnon as we have never seen him in epic, and as I argue we could never hope to see him outside Hades. There is no better illustration of the poetics of Hades in action.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 104, for the contrast between Penelope of the good mind (445 εὖ φρεσὶ μῆδεα οἶδε) and Clytemnestra of the evil mind (432 ἔξοχα λυγρὰ ἰδυῖα). Penelope and Clytemnestra are contrasted both here and in the second 'Nekyia' of book 24 (1-204, especially 192-202). For the comparison of the two women see among others Hölscher (1999), 422-4, Murnaghan (1987), 124-7, Katz (1991), 48-53, Felson-Rubin (1994), 99-107, Segal (1994), 92-3, Foley (1995), 96-7 and De Jong (2001), 288-9.

<sup>36</sup> Odysseus will heed Agamemnon's advice when he finally lands on Ithaca (*Od.* 13.383-4), cf. Hölscher (1999), 424, Murnaghan (1987), 126 and De Jong (2001), 289. Lines 454-6 have been considered spurious already in antiquity because as the scholiast notes (ΣΗ *ad Od.* 11.452) they directly contradict lines 444-6. However, as Heubeck – Hoekstra argue, the lines "are indispensable" and indeed the contradiction proves to be rather telling of Agamemnon's turbulent emotional state. See Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 104 with bibliography, Hölscher (1999), 423-4 and Katz (1991), 52.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The meeting with Agamemnon is important not just in its own right but also because it sets the tone for the other two Iliadic meetings that are about to follow. Our examination of it showed that encountering a hero of the epic tradition in Hades enables Odysseus to confront the 'official' narrative of the Muses with an equally legitimate alternative account based on a character's own unmediated experience. Agamemnon's recollections of his death help us understand what that means in practice. From the perspective of the Muses (and of Proteus), his murder forms another part of the heroic past, a successful ambush and a bloody battle from which the new king of Mycenae, Aegisthus, is the only one to emerge alive. From dark and murky Hades things look rather different. Here, nothing seems heroic about the murder. Instead we witness only a merciless slaughter from which emerges the horrifying spectacle of Clytemnestra, the mother-murderess and living indictment of all women.

The meeting with Agamemnon thus demonstrates that it is not only the heroic tradition that gets altered in Hades but also the character and values of the heroes themselves. When they reflect upon their lives in the Underworld the things they consider important are very different from what we might have expected. Agamemnon's silence about anything to do with his heroic past, and his regret at not having the chance to see his son, amply demonstrate that point. When Achilles expresses his preference for an uneventful life over a glorious death he will take the same idea to its logical extremes.

### 2.5.iii. *After Heroism: the Meeting with Achilles*

#### 1. *Introduction*

Odysseus' underworld meeting with Agamemnon has given us a first taste of how the heroic tradition can be re-interpreted and retold in a more personal key. The next meeting that Odysseus has brings us again face to face with another shade from his heroic past, though this time the deceased hero has lived up to the expectations of the heroic code and has crowned his achievements by choosing a heroic death. Achilles is known as 'the best of the Achaeans' in the *Iliad* and his decision to stay and die in Troy when he could have returned to a quiet life in Phthia guarantees that he became in many ways the embodiment of the heroic spirit.<sup>37</sup> And yet, in the *Odyssey* the hero appears to renounce his choice of *kleos* in favour of a long and uneventful life.

Scholars have attempted to interpret Achilles' words in several different ways. Some have read in the passage an expression of Greek pessimism regarding death,<sup>38</sup> which results in Achilles being different from the heroic persona known from the *Iliad*.<sup>39</sup> Other scholars have argued that his response is not in any way dismissive of his choice to fight and die at Troy but instead states the obvious superiority of life over death.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the most influential reading of the passage was proposed by Clay, who sees the meeting of Achilles with Odysseus in Hades as confronting the *Iliad* with the *Odyssey*. Clay starts from Nagy's discussion of the antagonism between Achilles and Odysseus in the song of Demodocus in *Od.* 8. and interprets the meeting of the two heroes in Hades as the high point of their rivalry, designed to portray Odysseus as superior to Achilles.<sup>41</sup> Many scholars have followed, and elaborated

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<sup>37</sup> For Achilles as the 'best of the Achaeans' see Nagy 1979. Achilles' choice of a heroic existence and a subsequent posthumous fate is made explicit in the *Iliad* where the hero weighs up a long and uneventful life against a short but glorious one, choosing the second without regrets (*Il.* 9.410-6 - 18.97 ff.).

<sup>38</sup> Stanford (1947) *ad Od.* 11.488-91, Powell (2009), 294.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Merkelbach (1969), 236. Of the same view are also Beye (1968), 190, Rueter (1969), 252-3, Stewart (1976), 60, Wender (1978), 43, Nagy (1979), 35, Clay (1983), 109, Dimock (1989), 157, and Schein (1996), 12.

<sup>40</sup> Schmiel (1987), who follows Finley (1978), 123 and Griffin (1980b), 100, argues that Achilles does not renounce his *kleos*, but instead underlines how high a price he had to pay for his heroic commitment. Similarly, Muellner (1976), 32 n.1, argues that Achilles "positively characterizes death as an extreme loss of social prestige." For further readings of Achilles' statement see also Vernant (1981), 288-91, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990) *ad loc.*, Sourvinou - Inwood (1995), 80 and Johnston (1999), 149.

<sup>41</sup> Clay (1983), 96-112; cf. Nagy (1979).



upon, Clay's argument with the most recent contribution being that of Dova who reads in Odysseus' words to Achilles a well-aimed attempt to overshadow his fame.<sup>42</sup>

In the section that follows, I wish to depart from the above interpretations and focus instead on a reading of the meeting that is grounded in the poetics of Hades I have developed throughout this thesis. I argue that Odysseus' meeting with Achilles essentially asks the question of what the epic tradition means to its protagonists in Hades, and especially to Achilles as the most representative of them all. The depiction of Achilles in Hades, I argue, merely presents us with an extreme case of transforming heroic narrative in an underworld setting. When Achilles reflects on his own situation after death and finds it wanting compared to the humble life of a serf, he does the same thing we have seen Agamemnon and the heroines do, which is to look back at his own epic past with regret. In the case of the heroines this regret was expressed by omitting and/or rewriting specific parts of their stories. For Agamemnon, regret manifested itself in ignoring the trappings of a heroic life, and in viewing his story entirely through the filter of his own sense of loss and self-pity. Achilles takes yet another approach. True to his uncompromising character, he renounces his heroic persona outright. We have seen that the 'non-canonical' accounts of the shades often imply a certain neglect of standard social and religious norms in pursuit of emotional bonds. Thus, Iphimedeia glosses over the scandal of her sons challenging the Olympian order while Agamemnon largely ignores *kleos* and *timē*, which shaped his life as a hero. Achilles, the very symbol of heroic tradition, openly expresses his disdain for those very values. This, I argue, goes beyond any antagonism between Achilles and Odysseus, or the traditions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Rather, what we see here is an extreme form of a phenomenon to which the poet has been alerting us all along: epic looks different in Hades, so different in fact that even the most fundamental of social and religious values can be suspended in pursuit of the uniquely personal story.

Achilles' story in Hades, then, departs from his own character as portrayed elsewhere in the epic tradition in ways that are only possible in the poetically charged setting of Homeric Hades. Yet, he does not invalidate the heroic way of life *per se*. As his interest in his son's

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<sup>42</sup> Dova (2012), 18-23. For interpretations of the passage as a confrontation of the two traditions see also Clarke (1967), 63, Beye (1968), Steward (1976), 60, Finley (1978), 124, Edwards A. (1985a), Ahl – Roisman (1996), 143. Gainsford (2008), although he takes it into account, moves away from this reading, and instead interprets the passage as stressing the continuity of life through one's successor.

prohess shows, the shade understands well the divide between the world of the living and that of the dead. Achilles' cheerful reaction to the news about Neoptolemus demonstrates, I argue, that the meeting is designed precisely to highlight the differences between those two worlds. Whereas for the dead *kleos* matters not and the divine laws can bent or even ignored, for the living they still form the axis of their very existence. In the end, if given a second chance to live and die, Achilles, despite regretting his death while in Hades, would act in the exact same way as he does in the *Iliad*. The point of underworld narrative is not to dismiss the epic experience but to enrich it.

## 2. *Survival versus kleos: the 'Odyssey' meets the 'Iliad'*

Odysseus' interview with Agamemnon has reached its end and the two companions stand lamenting in the typical pattern that ends Odysseus' meetings with the shades. At this point Achilles' shade enters the scene accompanied by three more shades, also known from the Trojan saga:

νῶϊ μὲν ὧς ἐπέεσσιν ἀμειβομένῳ στυγεροῖσιν 465  
 ἔσταμεν ἀχνύμενοι θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ χέοντες:  
 ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος  
 καὶ Πατροκλῆος καὶ ἀμύμονος Ἀντιλόχοιο  
 Αἴαντός θ', ὃς ἄριστος ἦν εἶδός τε δέμας τε  
 τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα. 470  
 ἔγνω δὲ ψυχὴ με ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο  
 καὶ ῥ' ὀλοφυρομένη ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα:  
 (Od. 11.465-72)

*Such sad words we were exchanging  
 sitting in sorrow and shedding many tears.  
 Then came the soul of Achilles, son of Peleus,  
 and the souls of Patroclus and flawless Antilochus  
 and Ajax, who was the best in form and stature  
 of all the Danaans after the flawless son of Peleus.  
 And the soul of the swift footed grandson of Aeacus  
 recognised me and lamenting spoke to me winged words:*

The shades next to Achilles' are those of Patroclus, Antilochus and Ajax, who are also named together elsewhere in the *Odyssey* as great heroes of the Trojan expedition.<sup>43</sup> Their appearance in Hades underlines their connection with Achilles, as their death is linked in one way or another with the hero:<sup>44</sup> Patroclus died while acting as the surrogate of Achilles whereas according to a strand of tradition Antilochus' death followed a similar pattern and led to the loss of Achilles' own life.<sup>45</sup> The third shade and the only one that plays a role later in the narrative is that of Ajax, who is described as the best of the Achaeans in appearance and build after Achilles (469-70). Since it was the judgement of Achilles' arms that led to Ajax's suicide, his death is also linked, even if indirectly, with Achilles. Furthermore, Odysseus' wording implies a more direct connection between the two heroes: Ajax is the successor of Achilles in terms of comeliness and shape (*Od.* 11.469 εἶδος τε δέμας τε), characteristics that also suggest he is second best to Achilles in terms of his prowess, a point which was made explicitly also in the *Iliad*.<sup>46</sup> Achilles, then, is surrounded by his traditionally closest friends, Patroclus and Antilochus, with the addition of Ajax as the second best of the Achaeans. All this is reminiscent of the Trojan War, but at the same time reminds us of the consequences of being part of that heroic past: all four heroes died young for the sake of honour and *kleos*.

This visual presentation of Achilles surrounded by his closest companions, then, carries with it a significant amount of irony since it transforms what would normally be a heroic ensemble into the pathetic underworld image of lamenting shades (*Od.* 11.472). The irony is further heightened by the language that Odysseus uses to introduce Achilles. Referring to the hero three times in six lines he employs several well-known formulas from the *Iliad* (*Od.* 11.467 Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος / 470-1 ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα / ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο). However, in two out of three instances Odysseus uses these formulas in conjunction with the word ψυχή, a collocation that gives a peculiarly dissonant effect. The same is true of Achilles' companions as well: the use of epithets for Antilochus (*Od.* 11.468 ἀμύμονος) and Ajax (11.469 ἄριστος)

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Od.* 3.109-12, 24.15-18. See also Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990) *ad loc.* and De Jong (2001), 76, 289.

<sup>44</sup> Edwards A. (1985a), 47-8 argues that the presence of Patroclus and Antilochus “brings in mind the disastrous result” of Achilles' withdrawal from battle “as well as his grief for the loss of a companion.”

<sup>45</sup> For Memnon and Antilochus see Kullmann (1960), 27-8, West (2003), Kelly (2006) and Janda (2006).

<sup>46</sup> See *Il.* 2.768-9. Other passages flesh out the picture. Thus, Ajax's contingent holds one of the two flanks of the Greek camp, a position reserved for the bravest warriors (the other being held by Achilles' Myrmidons, cf. *Il.* 8.224-5, 11.7-8).

further underlines the contrast between the past of the heroes and their present state as shades in the Underworld.

In his response to Odysseus, Achilles recognises the distance that separates him from his heroic past by describing the abode of the dead:

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,  
σχέτλιε, τίπτ' ἔτι μείζον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μήσεαι ἔργον;  
πῶς ἔτλης Ἄϊδόσδε κατελθέμεν, ἔνθα τε νεκροὶ  
ἀφραδέες ναίουσι, βροτῶν εἶδωλα καμόντων;

(*Od.* 11.473-6)

*Born of Zeus, son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles*

*what greater deed than this, you stubborn man, will you conceive  
in your mind?*

*How did you endure coming down to Hades where the mindless  
dead live, mere eidola of departed mortals?*

Odysseus' full title (*Od.* 11.473), although it is used by the other shades as well,<sup>47</sup> is significant here since coming after the many titles used by Odysseus, it introduces another contrast, this time between the shades and the living hero: even though the formulas used for Achilles and his companions refer to the past, Achilles' address still applies to Odysseus.<sup>48</sup> With the enjambment of *σχέτλιε* however (*Od.* 11.473) Achilles moves away from the formalities and addresses Odysseus in a more familiar tone, freely expressing his personal opinion about the hero's journey to Hades.<sup>49</sup> The questions that follow emphasise Achilles' sense of wonder, or as Edwards argues impatience,<sup>50</sup> at Odysseus' daring and at the same time summarise the main characteristics of the hero by referring to his mind and endurance (*Od.* 11.473/4 ἐνὶ φρεσὶ /πῶς ἔτλης).<sup>51</sup> The fact that Achilles points out these qualities is

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<sup>47</sup> Elpenor in *Od.* 11.60, Teiresias in *Od.* 11.92 and Agamemnon in *Od.* 11.405.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Dova (2000), 54, especially n.4 and (2012), 16.

<sup>49</sup> Dova (2012), 16. The use of *σχέτλιος* at the first position of the line in order to draw attention on what follows is typical in the Homeric epics, on this "runover" adjective see Edwards (1968), 263-4. Edwards A. (1985a), 48 argues that *σχέτλιος* betrays the frustration and impatience of Achilles with the fact that Odysseus chases him even after death. I find his view however to be too over stressed, instead I take here *σχέτλιος* to mean 'stubborn' following Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990) *ad loc.* because it fits the context best in combination with *πῶς ἔτλης* of the following line. See also discussion below. For the adjective and its possible meanings and etymologies see further Horowitz (1975) and Vanséveren (1998).

<sup>50</sup> Edwards A. (1985), 48.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Pucci (1998), 169 n.89, who argues that *ἔτλης* "echoes with the typical epithets of Odysseus *πολύτλας*, *τλήμων*" and that its meaning can range from "dare" to "withstand" and "endure." For an analysis of the epithets *πολύτλας* and *τλήμων* see Pucci (1987), 44-49. Dova (2000), 53-4 argues that the epithets Achilles uses for Odysseus in combination with the questions he asks him show a certain familiarity with the hero's ways,

important, since he appears to highlight the fundamental differences between himself and his interlocutor: Odysseus' skills helped him to survive and even transgress the boundaries of life and death whereas Achilles' offered him a prominent place in the heroic tradition, albeit at the cost of an early death and an existence among the 'mindless' dead (ἀφραδέες at *Od.* 11.476).

Facing the cunning survivor in Hades as one of the mindless *eidola*, the payoff of his heroic endeavour does not appear as evident as we might have expected. Odysseus seems to be aware of that and in his reply attempts to remind the audience, and Achilles, of the benefits of his heroic existence by praising the hero's status both when alive and dead:

ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ Πηληϊός υἱέ, μέγα φέρτατ' Ἀχαιῶν,  
 ἦλθον Τειρεσίαο κατὰ χρέος, εἴ τινα βουλήν  
 εἴποι, ὅπως Ἰθάκην ἐς παιπαλόεσσαν ἰκοίμην: 480  
 οὐ γάρ πω σχεδὸν ἦλθον Ἀχαιΐδος, οὐδέ πω ἀμῆς  
 γῆς ἐπέβην, ἀλλ' αἰὲν ἔχω κακά. σεῖο δ', Ἀχιλλεῦ,  
 οὐ τις ἀνὴρ προπάροιθε μακάρτατος οὔτ' ἄρ' ὀπίσσω.  
 Πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν  
 Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν 485  
 ἐνθάδ' ἐόν: τῷ μὴ τι θανῶν ἀκαχίζεω, Ἀχιλλεῦ.

(*Od.* 11.478-86)

*Achilles, son of Peleus, far greatest of the Achaeans  
 I came out of the need to consult Teiresias, if he could offer me  
 advice on how to reach rugged Ithaca.  
 For I have not yet come close to the land of the Achaeans, nor  
 have I stepped upon my land but I am always troubled by pains.  
 But from you Achilles no man before or after is more blessed,  
 since when you were alive all the Argives we honoured you equally  
 to a god, and now you rule with great strength among the dead,  
 being in Hades. Therefore Achilles do not lament over your death.*

Odysseus' opening address (*Od.* 11.478) is used twice in the *Iliad*,<sup>52</sup> where both times the speaker attempts to placate Achilles in some way.<sup>53</sup> Patroclus uses it (*Il.* 16.21) when he asks for Achilles' permission to join the battle and it is employed again (*Il.* 19.216), when

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whereas De Jong (2001) *ad loc.* detects in the questions of Achilles "a mixture of admiration ... incredulity ... and resentment."

<sup>52</sup> Compare the formula used by Agamemnon in *Od.* 24.36 θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, which is used 5 times in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 9.485/494, 22.279, 23.80, 24.486) by a variety of speakers.

<sup>53</sup> Edwards A. (1985a), 48 argues that Odysseus' speech in *Od.* 11.478-86 is also an attempt to placate Achilles, but he offers no further discussion as to why that might be in the hero's interest.

Odysseus asks for the army to be allowed to eat before entering into battle.<sup>54</sup> Twice out of three times the formula, which contains an explicit reference to the superiority of Achilles' might over the rest of the Achaeans, is used by Odysseus and in both cases there appears to be a comparison between the two, which in the *Iliad* is rather straightforward:

ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ Πηληϊῆος υἱὲ μέγα φέρτατ' Ἀχαιῶν,  
κρείσσων εἰς ἐμέθεν καὶ φέρτερος οὐκ ὀλίγον περ  
ἔγχει, ἐγὼ δέ κε σεῖο νοήματι γε προβαλοίμην  
πολλόν, ἐπεὶ πρότερος γενόμην καὶ πλείονα οἶδα.

(*Il.* 19.216-219)

*Achilles, son of Peleus, far greatest of the Achaeans  
you are better than me and far stronger with the spear  
but I surpass you by far in judgement  
because I was born before you and know more things.*

Odysseus admits Achilles' superiority in fighting (*Od.* 11.217-8) but insists on his own in counsel (*Od.* 11.218-9). He is careful to attribute his own prowess to his older age (219), a factor that in the *Iliad* is used as a clear sign of superiority.<sup>55</sup> When he addresses Achilles with the same words in Hades the Iliadic passage echoes in the background and creates a stunning oxymoron: the most *powerful* of the Achaeans is now a *powerless* shade. The two heroes are again compared, though this time from a different perspective: in Hades it is the outcome of their heroic careers that is under scrutiny, and this has further implications for how we view the ideals that each of them represents.

Scholars have generally read in Odysseus' consolation of Achilles a veiled note of irony, aimed specifically against the latter's heroic status.<sup>56</sup> Regardless of whether such irony is present or not, it is interesting to note that Odysseus' praise indeed appears to miss the mark. For instance, when he refers to Achilles' former standing among the Achaeans (*Od.* 11.484), we cannot help but recall that the premise of the *Iliad* is precisely that Achilles was not

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Edwards A. (1985a), 50 who argues that the formula signifies Odysseus' attempts to approach Achilles only to be rejected by him. Dova (2000), 55 and (2012), 17 especially n.80, by contrast, argues that the formula suggests a favourable outcome for Odysseus, since he succeeds in getting Achilles' consent in the *Iliad* and in *Od.* 11: "Odysseus embarks on the conversation with Achilles from a position of power" due to the fact that he is alive among the dead.

<sup>55</sup> Pucci (1979), 122-3. For Odysseus' speech, its effect and the pointed differences between the two heroes that it articulates see Pucci (1987), 165-72 and Crotty (1994), 59-60.

<sup>56</sup> Pucci (1998), 169-71.

honoured nearly enough by his fellow warriors.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the use of the verb κρατέεις + dative, which gives the meaning *rule among*, seems to be again off the mark since it denotes physical power,<sup>58</sup> thus implying that Achilles rules with might among the powerless dead, while being one of them himself.<sup>59</sup> Even the *parechesis* μή ... ἀκαχίζεω, Ἀχιλλεῦ, with which Odysseus closes his speech, reminds us of Achilles' connection with grief.<sup>60</sup> All in all, Odysseus' praise of Achilles as most blessed due to his status among the dead,<sup>61</sup> even if not intentionally ironic, appears to be very wide off the mark.<sup>62</sup>

Achilles reacts to the compliment with his famous reply about the value of life and death:

μή δῆ μοι θάνατόν γε παραύδα, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ.  
 βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω,  
 ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρω, ᾧ μὴ βίωτος πολὺς εἶη,  
 ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.

(*Od.* 11.488-91)

*Do not try to console me about death, shining Odysseus.  
 I would rather prefer to be a serf to another man,  
 who does not won land and has little to live on,  
 than ruling over all the departed dead.*

Achilles dismisses Odysseus' praise by arguing that even the life of a lowly serf is far preferable to ruling over the dead. The epithet φαίδιμος that Achilles uses in his address (*Od.* 11.488) has been interpreted as an admission of Odysseus' superiority, since in the *Iliad* the epithet is given to Achilles but not Odysseus. According to Pucci, "the *Odyssey* forces

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Il.* 1.244 where Achilles states that Agamemnon will regret not honouring him (ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας). Schmiel (1987), 36 sees Odysseus consolation as a "well-meaning attempt", though he does note that there are no grounds for thinking of Achilles as the king of the dead, especially after Antikleia's "bleak description of death" earlier on (*Od.* 11.219-22).

<sup>58</sup> For κράτος as physical and royal power see O'Sullivan (1990), 14-16. See also Nagy 1979, 81-90 for a semantic analysis of the noun and *Lfgre* s.v.

<sup>59</sup> Stanford's suggested translation (1947), *ad. loc.* "But now, being here, you have great power among the dead" makes the irony particularly obvious.

<sup>60</sup> Stanford (1947), *ad. loc.* and also Nagy (1979), 69-82 for the connection of ἄχος (grief) with the name Ἀχιλλεῦς.

<sup>61</sup> For the different reading of μακάρατος in line 483 see Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990) *ad loc.* and Pucci (1998), 169 n.90.

<sup>62</sup> As Dova (2000), 56 and (2012), 17 notes, the fact that Odysseus talks about his as yet unfulfilled *nostos* to the shade of a man whose existence was defined by his decision to forego his *nostos* is at least misguided, if not intentionally ironic. And since Achilles is preoccupied with his early death and the loss of his return, Odysseus' comment becomes even more striking: after all he can still achieve his homecoming. Achilles finds himself in the Underworld, deprived of his homecoming and suffering constantly for it. If we add that this is the result of his choice to pursue *kleos* in the plain of Troy, then the reading of the passage as subtly ironic seems plausible.

[Achilles] to pay Odysseus a compliment that the *Iliad* always refuses to grant.”<sup>63</sup> However, although the use of φαίδιμος by Achilles is significant here, there is no need to see it as another sign of antagonism either between Achilles and Odysseus or the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as Pucci suggests. Instead, I would argue that we need to look at the general context in which Achilles delivers his speech and evaluate the use of the epithet according to that context. For instance, searching for the occurrences of φαίδιμος in the *Odyssey*, we find that it is used of Odysseus only in the vocative and always in a context where the hero’s ‘brightness’ contrasts with the darkness that surrounds him: out of the five times the formula is employed, three occur in underworld narrative and one in Circe’s instructions in book 12 (82),<sup>64</sup> where *shining* Odysseus is contrasted with his destination, the darkness of Erebus (12.81 πρὸς ζόφον εἰς Ἑρεβος). Yet again, it would appear that in the context of underworld narrative traditional language is reinterpreted and reused with a new meaning: whereas in the *Iliad* the hero has to win *kleos* on the battlefield in order to be *shining*, in the darkness of Hades, where *kleos* is just a distant memory, seeing the light of the sun is essentially what makes one *shining*. When Achilles transfers to Odysseus the epithet that in the *Iliad* belonged to him, he offers us a sign not of antagonism but of how heroic values are reinterpreted in Hades.

Some scholars have interpreted Achilles’ reply as evidence that he is not the same hero as in the *Iliad*. They find it hard to reconcile his outlook in the ‘Nekyia’ with his heroic persona in the *Iliad*.<sup>65</sup> However, there is no need for such radical measures. Achilles in *Odyssey* 11 is indeed different, but not because he is a different character. Rather, being part of the Underworld he shares the perspective of its inhabitants. The shade is aware of the importance of the divide between the two worlds and his reply does not invalidate the value of heroic ideals for living men. On the contrary, Achilles’ concern for his loved ones that are still alive shows that the hero still understands *kleos* and *timē* as the most important assets for the living. This is evident already from the way he phrases his questions to Odysseus regarding his father Peleus and his son Neoptolemus. Achilles, like Agamemnon, inquires about his son once he has finished lamenting his own fate, but in contrast with Agamemnon, whose

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<sup>63</sup> Pucci (1998), 169 n.92.

<sup>64</sup> In the ‘Nekyia’ the formula is used by Teiresias at *Od.* 11.100, Antikleia at 11.202 and Achilles at 11.486. It is also used once by Eurylochus at 10.251.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Reinhardt (1996), 119, who argues that the dead Achilles is the reverse of the living one and that that is why he shuns his past glory. See also n. 3 for further bibliography.



concern was the well-being of Orestes (*Od.* 11.458-61), Achilles has only one specific question to ask about Neoptolemus:

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τοῦ παιδὸς ἀγαθοῦ μῦθον ἐνίσπες,  
ἢ ἔπειτ' ἐς πόλεμον πρόμος ἔμμεναι, ἦε καὶ οὐκί.  
(*Od.* 11.492-3)

*But come, tell me news about my noble son,  
if he followed me in war, being among the first, or not.*

At this unique moment, when he has the opportunity to learn news about his son, Achilles is not concerned with Neoptolemus' well-being but rather with his prowess as a warrior. The shade only asks whether his son is the 'first among men' and even the way he phrases his question echoes Iliadic battlefield narrative. For instance, the epithet ἀγαθός is used in the genitive 13 times in the *Iliad* and only twice in the *Odyssey*.<sup>66</sup> In all 15 appearances the epithet occupies the same metrical position at the end of the fourth foot, giving a spondaic fourth foot.<sup>67</sup> The consistent position of the epithet within the line shows that it has a formulaic function of the type: hero's name + epithet, which can be also found as epithet + hero's name, a structure which the *Iliad* employs frequently. Thus it would appear that Achilles employs heroic diction when referring to the world of the living, as the use of πρόμος, another word frequently used in the *Iliad* but only here in the *Odyssey*, also suggests.<sup>68</sup> With the heroic language come heroic values: when Achilles remembers his son, who still belongs to the world of the living, he becomes once again the honour-obsessed hero we know from the *Iliad*. So too with his father: when Achilles asks Odysseus about news of Peleus, he retains the same heroic tone.<sup>69</sup> Again the question concerns not so much Peleus' well-being but rather his honour. Or rather we might say that in Achilles' understanding of the heroic world his father's well-being depends on him retaining his honour: the shade twice refers to it in the compass of only two lines (*Od.* 11.495-6 ἢ ἔτ' ἔχει τιμὴν πολέσιν ... / ἦ μιν ἀτιμάζουσιν ...). Achilles' concern that Peleus might have lost his honour proves beyond doubt that he still values heroic ideals above anything else when the world of the living is

<sup>66</sup> The other appearance of the epithet in the genitive is in *Od.* 5.1, in a formula also found in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 11.1 Ἦώς δ' ἐκ λεχέων παρ' ἀγαθοῦ Τιθωνοῖο).

<sup>67</sup> For instance in *Od.* 11.492: - - - | - - | - - - | - - | - - - | - -

<sup>68</sup> The epithet πρόμος is used 7 times in the *Iliad* to describe the best fighters and usually ones that have an *aristeia*. It is used only here in the *Odyssey*; cf. Edwards A. (1984), 63 n.7.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Edwards A. (1985a), 55-8, who points out that Achilles' questions about Peleus are strongly reminiscent of the *Iliad*.

concerned: Achilles even exclaims that given the chance he would return to the upper world (*Od.* 11.498 ὑπ’ αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο) to defend his father against those who deprive him of his honour (503 ἐέργουσιν τ’ ἀπὸ τιμῆς). These are his final words.

Neoptolemus and Peleus form Achilles’ links with the world of the living and by remembering them the shade’s mind is able to return temporarily to that world.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, when Achilles remembers his son he can recall the brightness of the heroic world and more importantly relive, through Neoptolemus’ exploits, his own heroic past. Thus, good news about the honour of either his father or his son will allow Achilles, however fleetingly, to experience the heroic *present* and through it remember and value his own heroic past. It is, I argue, no coincidence that the very last word Achilles utters is precisely the word honour. Once the memory of the upper world wears off however, so will the shade’s memory of honour and *kleos*.

In his answer, Odysseus assures Achilles that he will speak the truth (*Od.* 11.507 πᾶσαν ἀληθείην μυθήσομαι), an important aspect of storytelling in Hades, as we have seen.<sup>71</sup> Odysseus knows nothing about Peleus (*Od.* 11.505), but has a lot of good things to say about Neoptolemus. At this point Odysseus swaps roles with the dead: so far it has been their role to inform the hero about a past that was inaccessible to him. Now it is Odysseus who provides information to the dead about the recent heroic past, not yet available in Hades as its protagonists are still alive. Essentially, Odysseus acts as a source of information for both realms at the same time: his first person underworld narrative transcends the limits of the Muses’ power, while his account of Neoptolemus breaks the seclusion of those who dwell in Hades.

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<sup>70</sup> Even his concern about his father appears to be the same as in the *Iliad*, though with one interesting difference. In the *Iliad*, Achilles is concerned for the life of Peleus, whereas in the ‘Nekyia’, being dead himself, he only worries about his father’s honour, as this is what matters for the living. For Achilles’ fear in the *Iliad* that Peleus might die see *Il.* 16.15-16, 19.334-7, 24.534-2.

<sup>71</sup> See discussion above, p.142. It should also be noted here that Odysseus is aware of Achilles’ dislike of liars as expressed in the *Iliad*. It is not unlikely that the hero tries to gain the shade’s confidence by explicitly referring to the fact that he will tell the truth:

*Il.* 9.312-3:       ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἄϊδαο πύλησιν  
ὅς χ’ ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη

*I hate like the gates Hades the man who  
hides on thing in his mind and says another.*

Odysseus, however, reminds us that he is not a bard. He admits that he could not name all the warriors whom Neoptolemus killed in Troy (*Od.* 11.517), something possible only with divine inspiration.<sup>72</sup> Still, his report on Neoptolemus covers all his major achievements and leaves Achilles satisfied (*Od.* 11.539-40). Odysseus reports that Neoptolemus excels in counsel (*Od.* 11.511 αἰεὶ πρῶτος ἔβαζε καὶ οὐχ ἡμάρτανε μύθων), is extremely brave (*Od.* 11.515 τὸ ὄν μένος οὐδενὶ εἴκων) and of extraordinary beauty (*Od.* 11.522 κεῖνον δὴ κάλλιστον ἴδον). His bravery during the ambush of the wooden horse and the fact that he left Troy unscathed and with rich spoils (*Od.* 11.523-37) completes the picture in a way which fits Achilles' expectations. It has been noted however that Odysseus' account seems designed to subtly overshadow Neoptolemus' achievements by projecting his own role in the events described.<sup>73</sup> For instance, he suggests that all the feats of Neoptolemus are due to the fact that *he* brought him to Troy (*Od.* 11.508-9),<sup>74</sup> whereas when he compliments his skill in counsel he is quick to add that he and Nestor bested the young hero. Furthermore, although he praises Neoptolemus' bravery in the wooden horse, he also underlines that he was in charge of the whole stratagem (*Od.* 11.524-5 ... ἐμοὶ δ' ἐπὶ πάντα τέταλτο / ἡμὲν ἀνακλιῖναι πυκινὸν λόχον ἢ δ' ἐπιθεῖναι). It would appear that when Odysseus speaks he tries to present himself as superior not only to Achilles, but also to Neoptolemus, who followed in his father's footsteps. This is a tactic that the hero adopts here for the first time in the 'Nekyia' but, as we shall see, he will employ it again and to greater effect in the meeting with Ajax that follows.

Achilles remains unaware of, or simply unaffected by, Odysseus' competitive stance. At the end of his report he strolls off contentedly into the asphodel meadow (*Od.* 11.539 κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα).<sup>75</sup> Achilles' shade is the only one that does not fade away or return to Erebus at the end of the interview. Indeed, the encounter has transformed him. Having entered the scene wailing he leaves it content, the apathy of the dead Achilles towards heroic ideals having given way to a joyous acknowledgment of the importance these very ideals still hold for the world of the living, and for the memory of the shades as well.

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Od.* 11.328-9 where Odysseus used the same line to express his inability to name all the heroines he met. Homer shows us how a bard would handle a similar situation in the *Iliad* (2.488), where the poet uses the exact same words to stress his limitations only to add that with the help of the Muses he will be able to do it (2.491-2).

<sup>73</sup> Dova (2012), 24 and n.116.

<sup>74</sup> Note how Odysseus insists on his personal role through the use of αὐτός: αὐτὸς γάρ μιν ἐγὼ / ἤγαγον ἐκ Σκύρου (11.508-9).

<sup>75</sup> For the positive connotations of the 'asphodel meadow' in later Greek literature see Reece (2007), who further argues for a negative meaning of the expression in the *Odyssey*.

### 3. Conclusions

The encounter with Achilles is perhaps the most compelling that Odysseus has in the Underworld. It also illustrates, yet again, the rich poetic resources that are available to Homer in Hades. Throughout Odysseus' encounters with the shades of the dead, we have witnessed how tradition can be re-interpreted and traditional values be reassessed. The meeting with Achilles is exemplary in this regard. On the one hand, it presents us with a complete re-evaluation of those heroic ideals by which Achilles led his life: he would prefer to be a dishonoured serf on earth to ruling over the dead in Hades. On the other hand, Achilles does not suggest that *kleos* and *timē* no longer have value for the living. To be sure, the subtle irony with which Odysseus approaches the meeting with his former rival and the latter's surprising reaction suggest that the dead have no interest at all in mortal honours. And yet the conclusion is not that *kleos* and *timē* are irreversibly devalued. On the contrary, what the meeting with Achilles does is to explore the divide between the world of the living and that of the dead. In the end even Achilles, who would choose the life of a serf, would act in the same heroic manner again if given the chance to return under the light of the sun. His story thus confirms that the values of Hades complement those of life on earth, without superseding them. Likewise, the poetics of Hades extends the range of Muse narrative without finally undermining it.

#### 2.5.iv. The meeting with Ajax

##### 1. When the dead remain silent

*ὄψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα. ὅθεν καὶ φωνῆς δίχα θαυμάζεται ποτε  
ψιλῆ καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἢ ἔννοια δι' αὐτὸ τὸ μεγαλόφρον, ὡς ἢ τοῦ Αἴαντος ἐν  
Νεκυία σιωπῇ μέγα καὶ παντὸς ὑψηλότερον λόγου.*

Longinus *De Sub.* 9.2

The meeting with Ajax has received significantly less scholarly attention in comparison to other parts of the 'Nekyia' due to the fact that the episode contains no dramatic action in terms of verbal exchange between the two heroes. Scholars have generally focused on

Odysseus' reconciliatory speech to Ajax and his recounting of the judgement of arms, in an attempt to determine its relation with the various versions attested in the Epic Cycle and elsewhere.<sup>76</sup> Despite its lack of verbal exchange the meeting proves to be very significant for my argument as it demonstrates several characteristics of the poetics of Hades that have so far remained implicit. In this section I am going to examine the danger that comes with remaining silent in Hades when one is given the chance to speak.

Odysseus' meeting with Ajax has been anticipated ever since the hero was mentioned among the shades that accompanied Achilles (*Od.* 11.469). The quarrel over Achilles' arms which resulted in Ajax's suicide adds particular interest to it since it offers the opportunity for a rerun of their confrontation; with Odysseus in Hades, Ajax can at last do what he could not do while living: confront the hero over the contest that cost him his life and finally bring closure to one of the best-known episodes in Greek epic poetry. And yet, Ajax refuses to speak. As Longinus rightly comments in the passage cited above, his silence has a powerful effect – though it is perhaps less easy to pinpoint what exactly that effect is.

At a basic level, Ajax's silence highlights the grudge he holds against Odysseus. The hero is portrayed as consumed by his own resentment, and this portrayal is consistent with what we have seen elsewhere in Hades, with the shades' memory being fixed upon those events that they consider important to them. Agamemnon was overwhelmed by the bitterness of his own death. Achilles, we recall, found solace in celebrating the aspirations of the living after renouncing hope for himself. There is no *kratos* in the Underworld. Ajax, I argue, demonstrates how dangerous it can be to retain one's heroic ideals in the afterlife. By remaining fixated on his lost *timē* and not allowing his voice to be heard, Ajax involuntarily grants Odysseus the right to fill in the blank. In so doing, he effectively cancels the shade's last opportunity to make himself heard.

In retelling the story of his rival, Odysseus adopts his own personal perspective, thus emulating and superseding the narrative of the shades he has interviewed so far. Odysseus' account, being personally inflected and in some ways different from mainstream tradition, puts the hero in a position where he can harness the poetic resources of Hades for his own purposes: even though he relates the story of Ajax's suicide, the perspective of the shade is

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Wilamowitz (1884), 153-4, Severyns (1928), Bethe (1928), 249, Davies (1989), 60-4 and the recent discussion of Sbardella (1998).

strikingly absent from it. Consequently, when the meeting is concluded Odysseus emerges as just and conciliatory whereas Ajax is left consumed by a resentment that cannot be blamed on anyone but himself.

## 2. *The story of the judgement: an Odyssean perspective*

Right from the start, the meeting with Ajax develops a slightly different dynamic from the ones we have seen so far. Odysseus, standing among the many souls that surround him (*Od.* 11.541-2), has to single out the shade of Ajax and approach him deliberately. Ajax's shade, in contrast with the ones of Agamemnon and Achilles who approach Odysseus first (ἤλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ at *Od.* 11.386 and 467 respectively), stands away from the hero, still resentful (*Od.* 11.544 κεχολωμένη) for the outcome of the judgement of Achilles' arms. Odysseus is thus forced to initiate the meeting by locating the shade and addressing it first. The selection process is deliberate and marked: Odysseus ignores the others souls that flock around him inquiring about their loved ones (*Od.* 11.542 κήδε[α]), and puts Ajax under the spotlight, allowing for his story to be heard.

Instead of addressing the hero immediately upon seeing him, however, as has been his practice so far, Odysseus does something unexpected: because Ajax stands away, visibly full of bitterness, Odysseus takes the opportunity to explain the reason behind his resentment. This results in Odysseus – rather than Ajax himself – relating the story of the judgement of Achilles' arms.

οἷη δ' Αἴαντος ψυχῇ Τελαμωνιάδαο  
νόσφιν ἀφεστήκει, κεχολωμένη εἵνεκα νίκης,  
τήν μιν ἐγὼ νίκησα δικαζόμενος παρὰ νηυσὶ 545  
τεύχεσιν ἀμφ' Ἀχιλῆος: ἔθηκε δὲ πότνια μήτηρ.  
παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.  
ὡς δὴ μὴ ὄφελον νικᾶν τοιῶδ' ἐπ' ἀέθλω:  
τοίην γὰρ κεφαλὴν ἔνεκ' αὐτῶν γαῖα κατέσχευ,  
Αἴανθ', ὃς πέρι μὲν εἶδος, πέρι δ' ἔργα τέτυκτο 550  
τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα.

(*Od.* 11.543-51)

*The soul of Ajax, son of Telamon, alone  
stood away holding a grudge for the victory*

*I won and which was judged by the ships  
for the arms of Achilles. His mother had set the prize  
and the contest was judged by the sons of Trojans and Pallas  
Athena. I wish I had not won such a prize,  
for which the earth covered such a man,  
Ajax, who in form and deeds was the best  
among the Danaans after the flawless son of Peleus.*

It matters that roles have been swapped, and not at the end of the encounter, as with Achilles and Agamemnon, but at its beginning. This becomes evident once we realise that Odysseus tells the story from his own personal perspective, giving emphasis to details that are important to him and marginalising Ajax's role. Odysseus begins by mentioning his victory as the cause of Ajax's resentment and insists on it with the unnecessary enjambment of line 555 (εἴνεκα νίκης / τήν μιν ἐγὼ νίκησα): the use of ἐγὼ makes us aware that even though this is formally the story of Ajax's suicide, the protagonist is going to be Odysseus.<sup>77</sup> The victory of course concerns the judgement of Achilles' arms after the rescue of his body from the Trojans by Ajax and Odysseus, a story well attested both in the literary tradition and in the iconographic evidence where we find general agreement on the outlines of the story.<sup>78</sup>

Odysseus, however, relates a unique version of events, in what looks like an underworld narrative but, being told by a living man, does not follow the same logic. Crucially, Odysseus' motivation in telling his (and Ajax's) story is different from that of the shades: his starting point is not the loss of his life and a need to tell his story as a way of coping. Odysseus rather clears his reputation from the stain of unfairness. That is an eminently social impulse, and as such belongs in the world of the living. Still, like a dead man, Odysseus portrays himself in a favourable light, whereas any hint of unfairness or possible blame against him is discreetly silenced.

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<sup>77</sup> Dova (2012), 32. See also Rutherford (1996), 93-5 who interprets Odysseus' introduction as positive towards the shade.

<sup>78</sup> For iconographic representations of the rescue of Achilles' body by Ajax, an event crucial to the judgement, as we shall see, see *LIMC* 860-5, Fittschen (1969), 179-81, Williams (1980), London – Woodford (1980), Ahlberg-Cornell (1992), 35-8 and the recent discussion by West (2013), 151-3. A motif showing two figures attempting to attack one another (possibly Odysseus and Ajax over Achilles' arms) while being restrained can be found on several red figure vases, cf. Gantz (1993), 633. Ajax's suicide was a favoured motif as its multiple attestations show, cf. *LIMC* 110ff., Fittschen, (1969), 181f., and Ahlberg-Cornell (1992), 74f., 322-4. For representations of the recovery of Achilles' body and the subsequent suicide of Ajax in the *Tabulae Iliacae* see Valenzuela-Montenegro (2004), 106 and West (2013), 131-2.

In order to better identify and evaluate Odysseus' innovations in his underworld narrative it seems useful to remind ourselves of how the story of the 'judgement of the arms' and the subsequent suicide of Ajax were related in the tradition.

The story was well attested in the Epic Cycle, with *Aethiopsis* and *Little Iliad* dealing with the subject in some detail.<sup>79</sup> From its possible reconstruction we know that in the *Aethiopsis* Ajax carries Achilles' body away from the battle while Odysseus fights off the Trojans.<sup>80</sup> When the body is set on the pyre Thetis snatches it and transfers it to the island of Leuke where allegedly Achilles is granted immortality. Right after the funeral, follows the dispute between Odysseus and Ajax over the arms of Achilles, but the means by which the dispute is resolved in the *Aethiopsis* are not reported. A scholion to Pindar's *Isthmian* 4 mentions that Ajax was defeated due to some trickery by Odysseus but the scholiast does not report its exact nature.<sup>81</sup> Scholars have argued that the method of the judgement was probably similar to that described in the *Little Iliad*,<sup>82</sup> on which see below, whereas West proposes that the "adjudication was perhaps entrusted to Trojan prisoners of war", possibly influenced by the 'Nekyia' passage.<sup>83</sup>

We have a better sense of how the story of the judgement was presented in the *Little Iliad* where again Ajax transfers Achilles' body away from the battlefield while Odysseus defends him.<sup>84</sup> The dispute over the arms that follows is resolved by Athena, who rules in favour of Odysseus. A scholion to Aristophanes' *Knights* informs us of how the supposed ruling was made: Nestor advised the Achaeans to send spies under the walls of Troy to overhear whom the Trojans considered more valiant. The spies overheard two girls talking and Athena inspired one of them to comment on Odysseus' supremacy which led to the Achaeans awarding him the armour.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> In his summary Proclus places the dispute over the arms in the *Little Iliad* and omits it from the *Aethiopsis*, presumably to avoid overlap between the two poems, cf. West (2013), 159. For Proclus' division of the poems of the Cycle in the *Chrestomathy* see Severyns (1928), Burgess (2001), 12-27 and West (2013), 4-11.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Burgess (2001), 12-40, West (2013), 129-62.

<sup>81</sup> Sch. Pind. *Isth.* 4.58c: ἀπορήσειε δ' ἄν τις, πρὸς τί βλέπων τὸν Αἴαντα προσήκται· εἰ μὴ ἔστιν ὅτι βραχὺς ὦν ὁ Μέλισσος τῶν ἀλκιμωτέρων καὶ τὸ σῶμα μειζόνων τέχνη περιτῆν, ὅπερ καὶ ὁ Αἴας ὑπὸ Ὀδυσσεῶς ἔπαθεν ἐν τῇ κρίσει τῶν ἄθλων καὶ ὀπλῶν, ἀφαιρεθεὶς τούτων καὶ νικηθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ δολίου.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Severyns (1928), 331, followed by Davies (1989), 60-4.

<sup>83</sup> West (2013), 159. See also 175ff.

<sup>84</sup> For a reconstruction of the *Little Iliad* see West (2013), 163-222.

<sup>85</sup> Sch. *ad* Aristophanes *Eq.* 1056a: ὅτι διεφέροντο περὶ τῶν ἀριστείων ὃ τε Αἴας καὶ ὁ Ὀδυσσεύς, ὡς φησὶν ὁ τὴν μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα πεποιηκώς· τὸν Νέστορα δὲ συμβουλεῦσαι τοῖς Ἑλλησι πέμψαι τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τὰ τεῖχη τῶν Τρώων, ὡτακουστήσοντα περὶ τῆς ἀνδρείας τῶν προειρημένων ἡρώων. τοὺς δὲ πεμφθέντας ἀκοῦσαι παρθένων διαφερομένων πρὸς ἀλλήλας. ὧν τὴν μὲν λέγειν ὡς ὁ Αἴας πολὺ κρείττων ἐστὶ τοῦ Ὀδυσσεῶς,



Returning to Odysseus' recollection in the 'Nekyia' we can now observe that it omits events attested in the Cycle, while adding others that are absent from the other versions. Odysseus' account agrees with the Cycle only on the fact that he won a contest for the armour of Achilles which caused Ajax to commit suicide. Sbardella for instance notes that the motif of Thetis setting the arms of her son as a prize (*Od.* 11.546) only appears in the 'Nekyia'.<sup>86</sup> In the *Aethiopis* and *Little Iliad*, by contrast, the contest appears to be the result of Odysseus laying (unfair) claim to the arms. Apollodorus agrees, mentioning that Ajax had given the arms to his companions to carry to the ships, an action which would give him the right to own them, as is well attested in the *Iliad*.<sup>87</sup> It would appear that in the epic tradition, as the multitude of iconographic evidence also suggests, this claim led to a quarrel between the two heroes which in turn required adjudication.<sup>88</sup>

In Odysseus' version in the 'Nekyia', however, nothing hints at such a quarrel. On the contrary, the mention of Thetis as the one who set the prize legitimises the whole contest, eliminating any suspicion of an unjust claim to the arms on behalf of Odysseus. The notion of a fair contest becomes even stronger with the use of *δικαζόμενος* (*Od.* 11.545) which points to an official, and a trial, which Odysseus insists took place by claiming in line 548 that he was judged by the sons of the Trojans and Athena, again using the verb *δικάζειν* (*δίκασαν*).<sup>89</sup> Interestingly, the judges whom Odysseus names do not appear anywhere else in the tradition where the Achaeans are unanimously depicted as the judges, even if only by evaluating the responses they get either from the Trojan prisoners (possibly *Aethiopis*) or from the spies (*Little Iliad*). Odysseus, however, omits altogether the Achaeans from his account and instead makes Athena, whose authority cannot be questioned, the judge along with a cryptic

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διερχομένην οὕτως, "Αἴας μὲν γὰρ ἄειρε καὶ ἔκφερε δηϊοτήτος ἦρω Πηλεΐδην, οὐδ' ἤθελε δίος Ὀδυσσεύς." τὴν δ' ἐτέραν ἀντειπεῖν Ἀθηνᾶς προνοία, "πῶς ἐπεφωνήσω; πῶς οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἔειπες; [ψευδός] καὶ κε γυνὴ φέροι ἄχθος, ἐπεὶ κεν ἀνὴρ ἀναθείη, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν μαχέσαιτο."

<sup>86</sup> Sbardella (1998), 13. Aristarchus athetised the line.

<sup>87</sup> Apollodorus *Epit.* 5.4, cf. Sbardella (1998), 10-11.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Gantz (1993), 633.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 110 and also Dickie (1978). The verb *δικάζειν* is used to denote an official trial in the famous description of Achilles' shield where a professional judge is depicted:

*Il.* 18.505-6: σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἠεροφώνων·  
τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἦισσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δικάζον.

*They held in their hand the staves of the loud-voiced heralds  
and they would then move forward and pass judgement each in turn.*

reference to the sons of the Trojans,<sup>90</sup> who the scholiast tried to fit into the Cyclic tradition by interpreting them as prisoners from the battle over Achilles' body.<sup>91</sup>

Odysseus, I argue, aims not only to legitimise the contest (and hence his own victory), but also to minimise his responsibility, and possibly that of the Achaeans, for Ajax's death. Odysseus exploits his rival's silence to establish that Ajax's suicide cannot be blamed on either Odysseus or the Achaeans. In his address to the shade that follows, the hero singles out Zeus as the one responsible for Ajax's death (*Od.* 11.556-60), thus completely removing the blame from himself.<sup>92</sup>

### 3. *Odysseus' non-apology*

Scholars have generally seen in Odysseus' address to Ajax a somewhat delayed but certainly honest attempt at reconciliation.<sup>93</sup> Odysseus, it would seem, is willing to set aside his pride and apologise to Ajax for his past deeds. I would argue, however, that if we look carefully at what Odysseus says, both in the story of the judgement and in his plea to Ajax, we will find that there is not much evidence to support any sort of honest apology.<sup>94</sup> On the contrary, we have seen that Odysseus narrates a story that deviates from the tradition of the judgement in such a way as to suggest that there never was a quarrel, thereby cancelling the very need for an apology. Moreover, since, as the hero reports, no one was responsible for Ajax's death but the will of Zeus (*Od.* 11.558-9 ... οὐδέ τις ἄλλος / αἴτιος) it is hard to imagine why he would

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<sup>90</sup> Sbardella (1998), 2, argues that the παῖδες δὲ Τρώων cannot be a reference to the Trojan girls from the version of the *Little Iliad* but most likely to Trojan prisoners, as probably was the version of the *Aethiopsis*.

<sup>91</sup> Aristarchus thought of the line as unacceptable and athetised it. ΣΗ *ad Od.* 11.547 states that the story comes from the Cycle, however this is probably due to the similarities it has with the prisoners version of the *Aethiopsis*. This interpretation of παῖδες δὲ Τρώων is offered in ΣΗ.Κ.Ν.: φυλαττόμενος ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων τὸ δόξαί θάτερον χάρισασθαι τῶν περὶ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως ὀπλων ἀμφισβητούντων, αἰχμαλώτους τῶν Τρώων ἀγαγὼν ἠρώτησεν ὑπὸ ὀποτέρου τῶν ἡρώων μᾶλλον λυπήθησαν. εἰπόντων δὲ τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα τῶν αἰχμαλώτων, δηλαδὴ ἐκεῖνον εἶναι τὸν ἄριστον κρίναντες τὸν πλεῖστα λυπήσαντα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς, ἔδωκεν εὐθὺς τῷ Ὀδυσσεῖ τὰ ὄπλα. However in this version of the judgement Athena is not present either as a judge or behind the scenes, thus we are probably looking at another attempt to reconcile Odysseus' version with that of the *Aethiopsis*.

<sup>92</sup> His words remind us of Agamemnon's reconciliation speech in *Il.* 19.86-9. Agamemnon's honesty has been rightly questioned by scholars, cf. Edwards (1991), 245-7 and Clay (1995). Dodds (1951), 1-18, reviews previous bibliography and defends Agamemnon's apology as genuine on the grounds that he is ready to provide compensation for his actions. Even so, Agamemnon, as Clay shows, salvages his pride by blaming divine agents for his actions.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 110 and Sbardella (1998), 16-7, who goes as far as to argue that Ajax's silence forms a discreet acceptance of that apology.

<sup>94</sup> Dova 2012, (36) also argues that "Odysseus is not there to apologize". However, her argument is directed towards an 'antagonistic' interpretation of the passage, along the lines of the equally 'antagonistic' meeting with Achilles.

apologise about anything at all. And indeed, there is not even the slightest hint of an apology in his words; for what Odysseus essentially does is to ask from Ajax to leave his resentment behind (*Od.* 11.562 δάμασον δὲ μένος καὶ ἀγήνορα θυμόν), a resentment which under the circumstances is wholly unjustified.

#### **4. Return to darkness: Ajax's perspective**

In what would appear to be a lost chance to relate his story, Ajax remains silent to the plea of Odysseus and returns back into Erebus (*Od.* 11.562-3). His refusal to reconcile himself with Odysseus comes at the cost of leaving Odysseus' narrative unchallenged. Ajax, to be sure, was always unique, in that he is the only hero from the tradition of the Trojan War to end his life deliberately. In this respect alone he stands apart from the other heroes, and it is this ultimate act of separation, I argue, that we see dramatised in Hades: Ajax, the hero who chose death rather than reconciliation, makes the same choice all over again. It is relevant, in this connection, that Ajax's death, being a deliberate choice unlike Achilles' and Agamemnon's, did not leave anything unsaid: betrayed by the heroic world which he served valiantly, he has no questions to ask about anyone, his memory fixed on the choice he made for the darkness of Hades. Even if Odysseus speaks the truth about the *timē* that Ajax received from the Achaeans after his death (*Od.* 11.556-8),<sup>95</sup> his praise misfires. Ajax is not interested in *timē*. But more than anything else, he is not interested in reconciliation or talking. Choosing confinement in Hades is Ajax's story, and insisting on it with his silence is essentially his own way of retelling.

However Odysseus, it would appear, is not willing to allow Ajax even this choice. His last comment is that he could make Ajax talk but chose to leave him because he desired to continue his visual tour of Hades by seeing more shades (*Od.* 11.564-6). In the end it is the narrator/visitor Odysseus who pulls the strings and decides which story we will hear. In Ajax's case he is only willing to provide us with his own version. When the meeting is finished we wonder whether the shade of the hero had any choice at all since even his most telling silence we are made to believe was only allowed by Odysseus.

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<sup>95</sup> According to the *Little Iliad* Agamemnon did not allow Ajax's body to be cremated because he was angry with him, cf. Holt (1992), West (2013), 178-9. The story was also known to Apollodorus (*Ep.* 5.7) and if it was indeed the main tradition about Ajax's funeral then Odysseus' reference to the mourning of the Achaeans may well be another alteration of the traditional narrative.

## 5. Conclusions

The meeting with Ajax presents us with the unique opportunity to observe the consequences of silence in Hades. We saw that the choice of the hero not to relate his story presents Odysseus with the opportunity of (mis)framing his own story as underworld narrative. The result is that Odysseus fills in the silence of Ajax by relating a version of the judgement of Achilles' arms that is not only unique in the tradition, but highly favourable to himself. The absence of any response from Ajax leaves the Odyssean version unchallenged, thus lodging it in the counter-tradition tradition of Hades, the invisible realm of stories.

I have argued that the version Odysseus presents can only be heard in the Underworld, or the underworld narrative context, since it is the confinement of Hades and its effect upon the stories heard there, that makes such a story plausible. However, even if Odysseus' narrative appears to have the same characteristics as the narratives of the shades, the fact that a living man relates it makes for a very different dynamic. For the living Odysseus *kleos* is still important and his recollection of past events is still based upon his on-going struggle for heroic achievement. In order to assert himself, Odysseus needs to assert absolute control even over the narrative resources of Hades. When he has finished his story he makes certain we know that even Ajax's choice to remain silent, that peculiarly powerful choice to tell his story without words, was orchestrated by him.

## *Epilogue*

With the claim that he could have made Ajax talk had he insisted, Odysseus ends the meeting with his former rival and with it the ‘Catalogue of Heroes’. His desire to see more souls makes him move forward but from this moment onwards Odysseus’ narrative strategy changes: the hero holds no more interviews with the shades but instead switches to a purely visual description as he delves deeper into the mythical past.<sup>1</sup> The first shades he sees are those of Minos and Orion who are both described as a spectacle without any reference to their stories or place in tradition. Minos is seen passing judgement on the shades that surround him while holding a golden sceptre, like the one Teiresias held in his meeting with the hero (*Od.* 11.91 – 11.568: χρύσειον σκῆπτρον). This visual detail, besides underlining the special status of Minos in the Underworld, reminds us that Odysseus’ vision is still as strong as ever. His description of Orion follows along the same lines with the hero seen holding a bronze club rather than a sceptre (*Od.* 11.574: ῥόπαλον παγγάλκεον) and being surrounded by the game he used to hunt instead of the shades that flocked around Minos.

The next three shades Odysseus sees are the great sinners Tityus, Tantalus and Sisyphus, all of whom have committed crimes against the Olympian order, which justifies their state of constant punishment in Hades.<sup>2</sup> Odysseus again does not interview any of them but instead presents a richly detailed description of the punishment each of them suffers, along with some genealogical information and, in the case of Tityus, a brief description of the actual crime he committed (*Od.* 11.580: Λητὼ γὰρ ἔλκησε). After the experiments of voice and perspective that we saw in the preceding catalogues, there is a sense that Odysseus has retreated onto safer ground here. The vignettes of Tityus *et al.* are in a self-consciously familiar narrative key: there is no suggestion that we should rethink their stories or indeed that they *can* be rethought. Instead, the emphasis is on the vividness of the encounter: so, for instance, we can see the vultures devouring Tityus’ liver (*Od.* 11.578-9), the varieties of fruit and olives that Tantalus attempts to reach in vain (*Od.* 11.588-90), and even Sisyphus’ sweat-drenched limbs from his excessive but doomed effort to carry the rock up the hill (*Od.* 11.599-600). If Odysseus’ encounters with Agamemnon, Achilles and Ajax challenged

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<sup>1</sup> Lines 568-627 were athetised in antiquity on the grounds that Odysseus could not have seen the shades in Hades from where he was standing; see ΣΤ and H.T. *ad Od.* 11.568 and Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 111.

<sup>2</sup> See Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 112-3 and especially Sourvinou – Inwood (1986) who makes the argument that all three sinners are punished for overstepping human limits and attempting to bridge the gap between human beings and the gods.

established tradition in profound and sometimes unsettling ways, those with Tityus, Tantalus and Sisyphus reinstate tradition, and the poetics of vividness that comes with it.

That, however, is not the end of it. The final shade Odysseus meets is that of Heracles, who in many ways combines the familiar with the unknown. Odysseus straightaway emphasises his dual nature: what he sees in Hades is just the *eidolon* of the great hero, while the actual Heracles dwells among the immortal gods, with Hebe as his wife (*Od.* 11.601-4). Scholars since antiquity have been troubled by this qualification,<sup>3</sup> but I would argue that it is consistent with what we have so far encountered in Hades. Indeed, the doubling of Heracles in *Odyssey* 11 confirms the point, established earlier in book 11, that Hades does not so much confront us with the unknown *per se* (a new landscape, an unfamiliar cast of characters) but rather allows alternative glimpses of what we already know. Heracles thus becomes emblematic of the poetics that I have described throughout this thesis: there is no doubt that he dwells among the gods, as do the Muses who preside over the epic tradition. But we can also see him in Hades, which means that we can see sides of him that are not easily assimilated into the epic mainstream.

Odysseus' encounter with Heracles initially follows the same pattern as those with the sinners that precede it. The hero describes in detail what he sees: Heracles looks terrifying, with his hand on the bow-string he is ready to shoot any moment. This evocation of Heracles *as a spectacle* culminates when Odysseus describes his belt with a vividness that reminds us of Homer's famous description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*.<sup>4</sup> Like Achilles' shield, Heracles' belt is one of a kind: Odysseus wishes that whoever made it will not create anything else (*Od.* 11.613-4). And like the shield, the belt of Heracles caps a stunning display of vividness in action.

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<sup>3</sup> The dual nature of Heracles caused suspicion already in antiquity, with lines 602-4 being thought an interpolation; see Petzl (1964), 28-41, Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 114 and also ΣH.Q.T. *ad Od.* 11.601, for an objection to Heracles' marriage with Hebe who was perceived as a virgin. For modern interpretations of the hero's role in the 'Nekyia' see Nagy (1979), 208, who argues that Heracles dwells with the gods because his body was regenerated after his death, and also Burgess (2009), 103, who suggests that Heracles' *eidolon* in Hades represents only the mortal part of the hero while the immortal one has ascended to Olympus.

<sup>4</sup> *Il.* 18.478-608. See Heubeck – Hoekstra (1990), 115, who also note a similarity with the description of Athena's aegis in *Il.* 5.738-42. For similarities with the Hesiodic *Shield*, see the discussion in Karanika (2011), 17-21.

With the belt of Heracles, then, the theme of seeing in Hades reaches a visually stunning climax. But then the tone changes, as Odysseus relates Heracles' words in direct speech, creating a link with the interviews he had with Elpenor, Antikleia, the women of old and his ex-companions. Heracles' speech revolves around the subject of *katabasis* and the difficulty that it entails. To have defeated death and made it out of Hades was one of Heracles' most stunning traditional achievements – but here it is hedged with irony. On the one hand, Heracles tells us, he did bring 'the dog' up from Hades. But the fact that his shade is still 'here' (ἐνθάδε at 623), and will head back into the house of Hades at the end of the interview (627), suggests that, yet again, epic tradition has been re-interpreted from the perspective of those who must suffer it.

There is an invitation here to compare Odysseus and Heracles (618-19), and in so doing to celebrate Odysseus' success in making it back out of Hades alive. As we prepare for his departure, the motif of fear that was introduced in connection with Heracles' belt, is further developed: Persephone, Odysseus worries, might send up the head of Gorgo (*Od.* 11.634-5).<sup>5</sup> In keeping with the tenor of the Underworld visit, the threat is directed specifically against Odysseus' vision, which so far has allowed him unfettered access to Hades and its sights. Immediately after the final and most striking demonstration of his visual prowess in the description of Heracles' belt, and after expressing the wish to see even more heroes of old (*Od.* 11.630-1 ... κ' ἔτι προτέρους ἴδον ἀνέρας ... / Θησέα Πειρίθοόν τε ...) Odysseus realises that there might be a price to pay for his viewing. It is not clear exactly what that price might be. Later tradition would suggest that Odysseus might be petrified at the sight of the Gorgo, thus getting trapped in the alternative world that he was so eager to explore. If that is what is meant, the *Odyssey* does not say so. What it does say, is that there are limitations to the viewing that Hades affords which even Odysseus must respect. And so, Homer withdraws his hero from Hades. What counts, ultimately, is not the poetic archive of the dead but the living art of the Muses: Odysseus must return home to Ithaca, and Homer, even though he is able to look into Hades, must resume his song.

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<sup>5</sup> Karanika (2011), 22-3. For the theme of Gorgo in Homer see Napier (1986), 90f.

## *Conclusions*

In my thesis I have studied Homer's portrayal of Hades as a poetic resource in relation to the celebrated vividness (*enargeia*) of Homeric Muse narrative. I started from the question of how the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* cope with, and exploit, the theme of absolute darkness that attaches to Hades as 'the invisible' realm *par excellence* of epic. My argument has been that Homer takes advantage of this characteristic to create a poetic space which allows for a self-consciously alternative encounter with the heroic past, one that has affinities with the lyric art of Stesichorus and others.

In the *Iliad*, Homer introduces Hades as the ultimate destination of the heroes. At the level of plot, Hades functions as the means through which the will of Zeus is accomplished: it is by hurling the souls of the heroes into Hades that Zeus brings about the end of the heroic age. The brilliance of the epic world, therefore, and of the narrative of the Muses, is set up in direct contrast with the final destination of the heroes. Beyond its importance for the plot, Hades also takes on an important poetic function: as a storehouse of the heroic tradition it absorbs not only the heroes' souls themselves but also their stories, a point which is fully exploited in *Odyssey* 11.

In the *Iliad* Hades remains mostly in the background. While ever-present as a threat to the heroes and mentioned in passing at the death of countless warriors, it is on the whole kept at a safe distance from the world of the living, and of the audience. We do hear about the Underworld but we never actually see it. Indeed the *Iliad* consistently portrays Hades as invisible and inaccessible, confined beneath the earth. By making repeated use of the popular etymology of Hades as the *A-ides*, the place where there can be no vision, Homer presents the Underworld as the invisible realm that stands in stark contrast with the bright world of the *Iliad*. Furthermore, the poet establishes that Hades' invisibility cannot be challenged even by the gods. The invisibility which the cap of Hades grants Athena in *Iliad* 5, serves of course the narrative need of not allowing Ares to see the goddess support a mortal against him. However, it also establishes the important point that Hades remains essentially inaccessible to the Homeric narrator.<sup>1</sup> Being invisible to both mortal and divine sight, Hades becomes a poetic taboo, in an art form that claims to derive from a form of divine vision. Or rather, we

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<sup>1</sup> *Il.* 5.844-5.



might say that Hades becomes a poetic resource even beyond the narrator's totalising claim to have access to the past through the Muses who know 'all things'.

That resource becomes important in the *Iliad* when the narrative reaches its climax after the death of Patroclus, Achilles' second self. As I have shown in Chapter 2, Homer uses the medium of the dream in *Iliad* 23 to create a hybrid Underworld scene that allows for the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus to be explored in a self-consciously alternative way. In his meeting with Achilles, the dead Patroclus may look like himself but is not himself anymore, and this is important because it demonstrates the basic principle that underlies all existence in Hades; what remains is a mere *eidolon*, an image of the hero with a deeply personalised focus on its own past. This enables Homer to tell the story of Patroclus (and Achilles) in a way that is not otherwise accessible to him. The past that Patroclus relates is not, as one would expect, filtered through his heroic *kleos*, but instead is selected on the basis of his personal memories and experiences. Thus, the shade recalls the intimate relationship he shared with Achilles, leaving out any references to their heroic exploits at Troy. The only bloodshed that the shade remembers demonstrates excellently how recollection and perception of the past are shaped in the Underworld: Patroclus looks back to the death of Amphidamas' son with regret and states that he caused it unwillingly, being a νήπιος.<sup>2</sup> The killing of an adversary, an act that elsewhere in the *Iliad* would provide an opportunity for heroic boasting, seen through the prism of Hades is transformed into a dreadful accident that brings nothing but regret. Achilles' meeting with Patroclus, and the shade's reflection upon its own past, thus gives us a first taste of how, what I have called the poetics of Hades, functions in the Homeric narrative.

The full potential of this alternative poetic space is explored in the *Odyssey*, as I have argued in Part 2 of my thesis. Hades in the *Odyssey* is again portrayed as the invisible realm that lies beyond the boundaries of the mortal and divine worlds. Indeed, it is presented as the ultimate frontier of the epic universe. From the moment Odysseus leaves Troy he gradually drifts off into a world of adventure that stands apart from human experience. The gods can still see the hero's movements, but their lack of interference, as well as the lack of respect they enjoy in lands such as that of the Cyclopes,<sup>3</sup> suggest that their influence is greatly diminished. Even

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<sup>2</sup> *Il.* 23.88.

<sup>3</sup> *Od.* 9.273-80.

the last residue of divine presence disappears as Odysseus travels to Hades, which is hidden even from the Sun who ‘sees and hears everything.’<sup>4</sup> The reference to the Sun’s inability to penetrate the darkness that surrounds the Underworld suggests, I have argued, that Hades remains inaccessible even to the Muses. There is an understanding, throughout the epic tradition, that the Muses, like the Sun, derive their special knowledge from a special kind of vision. That this vision does not extend to Hades is further implied when the poet introduces their earthly alternatives, the Sirens, whose power of knowledge extends to all things that have happened on earth but not beneath it, where Hades lies.<sup>5</sup> Homer is careful not to challenge the Muses’ powers directly (the example of Thamyris provides one with good reason not to),<sup>6</sup> but he does suggest that Hades in the *Odyssey* acts as a place of absolute confinement, where even the Olympian gods (including the Muses) do not venture. This understanding plays a crucial role for the poetics of Odysseus’ visit in Hades, as it creates a unique performance context, free of mortal or divine constraints, that allows for the shades’ stories to be heard in a way they have never been heard before.

This, I have argued, has implications at the level of plot, but more importantly allows the poet to embark on a poetic experiment which is unparalleled in early Greek epic: what begins as an attempt to elicit information about Odysseus’ return is soon transformed into a sustained exploration of the epic tradition, as Odysseus interviews the shades in a series of consecutive meetings.

Already the first meeting with Elpenor displays a personally inflected view of the past that is presented as different from the kind of narrative we might normally expect in epic: Elpenor recounts the story of his death which has just been narrated by Odysseus, but does so by relating his own version of what happened: whereas Odysseus saw stupidity and drunkenness as the causes of Elpenor’s death, Elpenor himself blames the gods and wine. Blaming the gods is not an unusual strategy of self-defence in Homer (we might compare Agamemnon in *Il.* 19.100-6), but Elpenor’s personalised account of the past introduces us to what I have argued is the essence of the ‘poetics of Hades’: an alternative presentation of the epic tradition seen through a dead man or woman’s own personal experience and understanding of his/her own past, inflected by regret, hopes and fears.

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<sup>4</sup> *Od.* 11.109.

<sup>5</sup> *Od.* 12.184-91.

<sup>6</sup> *Il.* 2.594-60.

The two following meetings, with Teiresias and Antikleia, flesh out the initial picture. In the meeting with Teiresias, Homer introduces two important attributes of Hades that have a significant bearing on the narratives that Odysseus will hear there. First, through Teiresias' prophecy, which is uttered in defiance of Poseidon's anger, we see the lack of Olympian influence in the Underworld, a precondition for establishing Hades as an environment of unrestrained expression. Second, Teiresias' insistence on the fact that the shades speak the truth validates the stories that will be heard later on in terms that are poetically significant: truth, after all, is a crucial characteristic of Homeric Muse narrative. Both these attributes, the absolute freedom of speech available in Hades and the reassurance that Underworld speech, however personally inflected, is nonetheless true, acquire paramount importance when Odysseus interviews the shades of the great women of the past as well as those of his former companions.

Odysseus' meeting with Antikleia, finally, brings into play the powerful emotional element that we have seen when discussing *Iliad* 23. This too will be important in setting the tone for the Underworld narratives that follow: while meeting his mother's shade Odysseus experiences and expresses strong emotions, opening the way for the deep feelings of self-pity and remorse that will form the central axis around which the shades' own view of their past revolves.

The first three meetings that Odysseus has in the Underworld, then, introduce us gradually to the 'poetics of Hades'. Each does so by evoking some of the elements that make epic narrative in the Underworld unique. Homer does not, however, explore them systematically, and in combination, until the famous 'Catalogue of Heroines' that follows.

Odysseus' 'Catalogue of Heroines' has a markedly traditional poetic form, with powerful resonances in Hesiodic tradition (and the *Catalogue of Women* in particular). In that sense alone, it challenges the reader to reflect on the art of the epic bard. But more specifically, I have argued that Homer, through the constant use of the verb *idein* in the introduction of each heroine, successfully transforms a traditional poetic form into a sustained reflection on the possibilities, and limitations, of epic narrative. Hades, the realm of darkness and invisibility is evoked in the catalogue with a vividness which has all the characteristics of traditional Muse narrative but differs from it in fundamental ways. Starting with Tyro, the first and most detailed entry in the catalogue, I have argued that epic values associated with gender roles

and even divine law are in important ways suspended in Hades, allowing for a more immediate and personally inflected approach to the epic past. Thus, the *Odyssey* can articulate Tyro's own feelings in a way in which the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* cannot. Likewise, Poseidon's warning not to divulge the affair makes Odysseus' account of it appear as a deliberate departure from the story of Tyro's marriage with Cretheus.<sup>7</sup> Such layering, I have suggested, is typical of the *Odyssey*'s poetics of Hades and can also be seen in Odysseus' encounters with the remaining heroines.

For instance, we have seen that Epicasta omits from her story that she gave birth to Oedipous' children, while Leda remembers only her sons and has nothing to say about either Helen or Clytemnestra. Iphimedeia describes her sons as a loving mother would: the fact that they were the giants Otos and Ephialtes who waged war against the Olympians matters not from the perspective of the mother. What we see here is an approach to the epic past which in its emphasis on personal experience recalls the self-consciously alternative art of Stesichorus and other lyric poets. And as in lyric poetry, with its many allusions to epic, there is a strong element of intertextuality to Odysseus' account: for what he does, in the 'Catalogue of Heroines', is to quote with his eyes, as it were, a traditional (Hesiodic) catalogue: 'and then I saw Tyro ...', 'and then I saw Antiope...', 'and then I saw Alceme...'.

The 'Catalogue of Heroines', I have argued, evokes an epic past in which the personal experience of the heroines holds a prominent position. This, we have seen, often leads to alternative versions of well-known epic stories which, in the Underworld setting, are inflected by the wishes, fears and regrets of the shades that relate them. It is at this point Odysseus' narrative is interrupted and the action is taken back to Scheria. This narrative break, known as the 'Intermezzo', creates suspense at the level of plot but more importantly provides room for poetic reflection on the recasting of tradition that we witnessed in the 'Catalogue of Heroines'.

Scholars have observed that the positive feedback that Odysseus receives from the Phaeacians can be interpreted as a sign that his strategy is working, thus easing the tension regarding the hero's return, which appears to be secure at this point. On a different level, however, the response of the 'Nekyia's' internal audience, combined with Alcinous' request

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<sup>7</sup> *Od.* 11.251.

to hear about the meetings with Odysseus' dead companions, further raises the poetic stakes of Odysseus' narrative, and grants permission to Odysseus, and indeed the poet, to proceed with an even more daring recasting of the epic tradition, this time tackling not Hesiodic catalogue (which, to a Homeric audience might have seemed like a 'soft' target) but the core Homeric repertoire of heroic epic about Troy. By projecting the internal audience's acceptance of Odysseus' recasting of the former, Homer invites the external audience to do the same, and prepares it for the second and arguably more important part of the 'Nekyia'. Arete and Alcinous in their praise pick up notions of truth, visibility and presence that have been prominent not only in Odysseus' narrative so far but also in Homeric poetics more generally. When Alcinous requests of Odysseus to tell of any meetings with his former comrades at Troy, we are ready for the radical recasting of Homeric narrative that follows.

Indeed, in the 'Catalogue of Heroes' that follows, we witness a gradual transformation of the heroic past, as we re-examine Homeric epic through the filter of Odysseus' former companions' personal feelings of remorse and self-pity. Each meeting offers a perspective on three prominent Homeric heroes, in the process reinterpreting and revaluating not only their stories but also the heroic ideals that underpin and drive Homeric narrative in the *Iliad*. Starting with Agamemnon as the most topically Odyssean of the three, we see the same technique that we have already encountered with Elpenor, whereby a story that has already been told in the world of the living is recast from the perspective of the dead. Proteus in *Odyssey* 4 had related Agamemnon's death in good Homeric fashion as the result of a well-prepared ambush followed by a hard fight to the last man. The shade of Agamemnon, by contrast, recalls an unjustifiable slaughter of innocent men with no heroic pay-off whatsoever. Achilles' case is similar but seems if anything even more radical, with the hero appearing to renounce the very ideals that helped establish his epic *kleos*, giving preference instead to the quiet life of a poor serf. Finally, Ajax's silence demonstrates the dangers of holding on to one's heroic ideals even after death: the hero misses his chance to let his story be heard. What remains is Odysseus' own retelling, which projects his own perspective and not that of the shade.

It is in the 'Catalogue of Heroes', I have argued, that Homer takes fullest advantage of the poetic resources of Hades. Throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* he treats the Underworld as a realm apart, which can give rise to alternative perspectives on the epic past. Yet it is in the

‘Catalogue of Heroes’ that we find that potential most fully realised. Here we see what looks like a sustained attempt to inflect Trojan-War epic away from traditional epic values and poetic textures toward a much more subjective and emotionally charged recollection of the past. By presenting us with vivid images of Agamemnon, Achilles and Ajax in the Underworld, Homer allows their stories to be told like they have never been told before: unmediated, fiercely personal, and without the objectivity of traditional Muse narrative. This is true even of the ‘Nekyia’ of the suitors in *Odyssey* 24: even though, for an analysis of poetics, the episode is of limited interest (the suitors do not trigger an expansive poetic tradition), there too what we hear – for the first and only time – is an articulation of the suitors’ own perspective. Homer’s ‘poetics of Hades’, thus provides an alternative angle on the epic tradition: from the perspective of the dead, what matters in retrospect is emotional attachment and its loss, rather than the concerns of the living, which have to do with *kleos* in action and its celebration in poetry. This perspective bears crucial affinities with the voice and outlook of Greek lyric poets such as Stesichorus but also looks ahead to the subjective, emotionally intense and self-consciously alternative poetics of Greek tragedy.

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