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The Hypertextual Underworld:

Exploring the Underworld as an Intertextual Space in Ancient Greek Literature

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Classics

by

Suzanne Christine Lye

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Hypertextual Underworld:

Exploring the Underworld as an Intertextual Space in Ancient Greek Literature

by

Suzanne Christine Lye

Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Kathryn Anne Morgan, Chair

Representations of Hades, the Underworld, and the afterlife in ancient Greek literature have traditionally been studied from a religious or mythological perspective. Scholars have often tried to extrapolate historical practices and eschatological beliefs about life after death from accounts of rituals and myths surrounding funerary practices, cult beliefs, necromantic encounters, and descents by heroes to the Underworld. As a result of this focus, scholars have generally overlooked the narrative function of Underworld scenes. In this project, I examine ancient Underworld scenes from Homer to Plato as a type of literary device containing unique rhetorical features and functions. I argue that Underworld scenes are embedded authorial commentaries, which allow communication between author and audience in an exercise of narrative self-reflection.

Underworld scenes condense the actions and themes of the main story into an abbreviated space while also situating their parent narratives within a dynamic historical and literary tradition. Through these scenes, authors and artists create networks of texts by including

allusions and story patterns, which can activate similar tales of ghostly encounter (*nekuia*), underworld journeys (*katabaseis*), punishment for sinners, and rewards for the “blessed.” Underworld scenes “open up” dialogues between texts and characters across time and space so they could engage with each other and their tradition. Thus, Homer could imagine Odysseus talking to the ghosts of Achilles and Agamemnon in the *Odyssey* as a contemplation of heroism, and Plato could imagine Socrates anticipating afterlife conversations about justice with Homer, Ajax and Orpheus in the *Apology*.

Chapter 1 presents the parameters of Underworld scenes and the methodologies that will be used in analyzing these scenes. Chapter 2 examines the structure of Underworld scenes in early Archaic poetry as well as the distinct language and image set which allowed communication between authors and audiences. Chapter 3 shows how Greek epinician and lyric poets used Underworld scenes to assimilate their patrons to heroes who achieved a “blessed” afterlife. Chapter 4 focuses on the use of Underworld scenes on the dramatic stage and in funerary contexts in Classical Athens to portray and offer solutions to contemporary political and social issues. Finally, Chapter 5 explores famous Underworld episodes in Plato’s dialogues and examines how Socrates uses Underworld scenes to overwrite traditional sources and redefine the afterlife as a stage of life, like childhood and old age.

The dissertation of Suzanne Christine Lye is approved.

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2016

For Luke,
Anika and Max

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Chapter 1. *The Synoptic Underworld: Overview of a Narrative Construct*

What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from.

- T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*

I. Introduction

Encounters with the Underworld and its inhabitants usually mean coming to the end of something – the earth, a story, and existence itself. In ancient Greek literature, however, Underworld episodes are not an end but an entryway to an archive of competing and complementary narratives. By embedding an Underworld scene into a narrative, an author opens up a text, introducing extra-temporal and extra-spatial elements to the audience's view. Through such scenes, he has the ability to halt his story's linear progress and to introduce themes, characters, and references from a larger archive of information, which may include the mythical, the historical, the cultural, and the emotional. The new material gives depth and background to the events of the primary, or "parent," narrative and engages the reader in a dialogue about a text's interpretation by blurring the boundaries between the roles of author and audience. The former calls on the latter to "fill in" the stories invoked by the careful placement of references in the course of the scene. An Underworld scene, therefore, is not only the place where certain stories meet up against an end but also where new stories enter the narrative consciousness of the audience.

An Underworld scene acts as a conduit to different texts and contexts. They can thus be described as *intertexts* or "texts *between* other texts," in which both the author and the reader share the role "to make the intertext visible and communicable" (Plett 1991: 5). In such a scene,

the author steps out of his role as narrator and looks at his story as a reader, remarking on his own creation by connecting it to similar afterlife narratives. In turn, the readers interject their own experiences and knowledge to give meaning to the signs and references that the author uses. By allowing this exchange, the Underworld proves itself to be a site of embedded authorial commentary that engages in a conversation directly with the audience.

In creating encounters with the dead, ancient authors could choose from a set of narratives and images related to the Underworld, which were circulating from Archaic times. These include stories about *katabaseis* (heroic quests by mortals into the Underworld), ghostly visitations by souls to the living, necromantic invocations of the dead to gain information, and afterlife society with a distinct topography and sociopolitical structure. Within this set are certain persistent images and attributes that recur and give clues for interpretation. Although each scene may lead to different conclusions about the values presented in a specific text, they all recall each other and force the audience to weigh the aspects presented in the current Underworld portrayal against those known from other versions. In this way, a particular vision of the Underworld connects an individual work to a network of texts, which become *para-narratives* influencing the interpretation of the given account. When Socrates imagines himself conversing with Homer, Orpheus, and Ajax in the afterlife (Plato, *Ap.* 41a), he is invoking a rich tradition related to afterlife “blessedness,” judgment, and reward that can be traced to Homer’s *Odyssey*, Hesiod’s *Works & Days*, Pindar’s *Olympian 2*, and Aristophanes’ *Frogs*.

In this chapter, I first summarize approaches to Underworld scenes and define the terms and methodologies used in this project, particularly the concepts of *intertextuality* and *hypertextuality*. I then discuss issues and controversies related to the term “intertextuality” as well as the features of Underworld scenes that make them “texts between texts.” I offer basic

definitions of terms (such as text, intertext, hypertext, primary narrative, *para-narrative* and *chronotope*), which I borrow from studies in narratology, intertextuality, and structuralism, since these movements have developed a useful language in literary criticism to articulate the connections that Underworlds create with each other. I use these terms to demonstrate the function and purpose of Underworld scenes as a type of rhetorical device with generic properties. The idea of “intertextuality” is particularly useful for this discussion because it contains within its definition the idea of communication between texts across temporal and spatial discontinuities. Similarly, a sense of time-space dislocation, which is emblematic of the Underworld *chronotope*, is a key feature of Underworld scenes that allows them to bring in characters from different time periods without fracturing the timeline of the main plot.

II. Approaches to Underworld Scenes

Representations of Hades, the Underworld, and the afterlife in Greek and Roman literature have traditionally been studied from a religious or mythological perspective. Scholars have often tried to extrapolate historical practices and eschatological beliefs about life after death from accounts of rituals and myths surrounding funerary practices, cult beliefs, necromantic encounters, and descents by heroes to the Underworld. Jan Bremmer noted a growing interest over time in the fate and composition of the soul and its final abode, indicating diachronic changes in how Greeks viewed the dead and the afterlife (Bremmer 2002: 6). Bremmer particularly points to the addition of more specific details about the Underworld journey and environment to the *katabasis* myths of Heracles and Theseus, which had earlier focused primarily on bravery (Bremmer 2015). Maria Mirto reaffirms Bremmer’s conclusion, adding that a shift occurred between the Archaic and Classical periods in how Greeks viewed the afterlife

and the relationship between the living and the dead, and she argues that a more individualized approach to death arose in the 5th century B.C.E. (Mirto 2012: 8). Indeed, the prevalence of representations of the afterlife across genres and media as we move diachronically supports the conclusion that early Greeks continued to negotiate the boundaries between the societies of the living and the dead. As we shall see throughout this project, representations of the afterlife in Underworld scenes were a crucial part of that negotiation.

The missing piece in studies of the Greek Underworld has been an analysis of what comprises an Underworld scene, which includes the following questions: what is the Underworld image set? Is there a “standard” set of images? How many of the items from the image set are needed to make an Underworld scene? How does the inclusion or exclusion of expected elements change the ways in which the Underworld scene can be interpreted? This last question relates to how Underworld scenes function intertextually and intratextually to give meaning to an immediate narrative and a context to its primary text within the larger body of literature.

For the purposes of this study, the “Underworld” is defined as the place where the dead live and congregate as a society, whether under the ground or on islands at the edge of the world. Underworld scenes often appear in the form of a *katabasis* (descent to the Underworld) or *nekuia* (conversation with the dead). A good working definition of *katabasis* has been provided by Raymond Clark as a “Journey of the Dead made by a living person in the flesh who returns to our world to tell the tale” (Clark 1979: 32).¹ *Nekuia*, the ancient term referring to Odysseus’ visit

¹ Clark differentiates visions or dreams of the afterlife from *katabaseis*, saying that “such Journeys in the flesh are to be distinguished from mere ‘Visions of the Otherworld’” (Clark 1979: 32). In this study, *katabaseis* and visions of the afterlife are inexorably linked to each other.

to the Underworld in *Odyssey* Book 11, is often interchangeable with the term *katabasis* but emphasizes the consultation aspect of such a visit with souls or chthonic deities.²

As embedded narratives, Underworld scenes often appear to be a digression from the more important primary text. For this reason, their legitimacy and purpose have frequently been questioned. In the Homeric scholia, we find that the Hellenistic grammarian Aristarchus athetized large sections of Odysseus' *Nekuia*.³ Erwin Rohde argued that "the journey to the land of the dead was...unnecessary, and...originally it had no place in the poem" (Rohde 1925: 33). D. L. Page concludes that, "the Visit to the Underworld was originally independent of the *Odyssey*, and that it has been artificially inserted into its present surroundings" (Page 1955: 32).⁴ These scholars have identified one particular aspect of Underworld scenes that make them unusual and problematic, namely, that Underworld scenes are not necessary for the plot of their primary texts.

The persistence and similarity of Underworld scenes to each other, both across time and genres, have forced recent scholars to reassess the value and function of such scenes, as I will outline below. The trend has been to assume that Underworld episodes serve *some* purpose, although even those who try to find connections look at the scenes in piecemeal fashion, viewing

² The term *nekuia* and the *Nekuia* of the *Odyssey*, Book 11 is not to be confused with a *nekuomanteion*, which is a consultation with an oracle of the dead who calls forth a ghost to provide information that it brought with it to the grave. For more information about this topic, see Clark (1979: 61) and Daniel Ogden (2001).

³ See Tsagarakis (2000: 11)

⁴ See also Clark (1979: 42).

only isolated parts and then them as allusions, evidence of poetic competition, reflections of belief, or implicit claims to poetic authority.

In one approach to the literary genealogy of Underworld scenes, Glenn Most divides the *Odyssey's Nekuia* into symmetrical parts (Most 1989, 1992) and asserts that “We can interpret the *Nekyia* as a catalogue of the varieties of Archaic Greek epos” (Most 1992: 1019-1020).⁵

Looking specifically at the catalog of women in the *Odyssey's Nekuia*, Ian Rutherford connects the catalogue to a possible tradition of *Ehoie* poetry (Rutherford 2000: 93-94), and Lillian Doherty interprets it as further proof of Odysseus' cleverness in reading his Phaeacian audience, particularly Arete who would be amenable to a female catalog (Doherty 1995: 112).⁶ In viewing Pindaric Underworld myths, on the other hand, Bruno Currie connects the mythic world to the poet's historical context, interpreting references to the afterlife as a way to associate the poet's patron, or *laudandus*, with heroes who performed exceptional acts and thereby were worthy of hero cults (Currie 2005: 3).⁷ In this same vein, Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui refers to the Underworld journey as “the farthest and most dangerous voyage” for a hero (Herrero de Jáuregui 2011: 41-42). Therefore, conflating such a hero's *katabasis* with an earthly patron's

⁵ “Quindi si può interpretare la *Nekyia* come un catalogo delle varietà di epos Greco arcaico.”

⁶ Doherty also sees the Phaeacian interruption of the *Nekuia* as the epic narrator's attempt to exert control over how his poem should be received. She writes: “By dissolving and then re-establishing the distinction between the internal and implied audiences of Odysseus' recital, the narrator is able to model the reception of his own poem” (Doherty 1995: 113). Arete and Alcinous are proxies for the poet's audience.

⁷ Currie writes that Pindar's *Olympian 2* suggests the *laudandus* Theron will join the heroes Peleus, Kadmos, and Achilles on the Isle of the Blessed for eternity.

successful deeds was seen to elevate the latter's status. Frank Nisetich notes the triumphal feel of the afterlife depiction in Pindar's *Olympian 2* and how the *laudandus* Theron's victory at Akragas is paralleled to Herakles' great deeds (Nisetich 1988: 4). Although this study ends with Plato, the famous Underworld scenes in later authors such as Vergil and Lucian were seen as linking and elevating these poets' works to their Homeric predecessors in similar fashion.⁸

In another interpretive approach, Underworld scenes have been tied to a ritual (and often initiatory) framework. Because the action of these episodes follows certain patterns and exist outside of the plot, the overall scenes have been analogized to religious rituals, which also take place outside of the flow of everyday life, in a sacred space. In this schema, a hero undergoes a form of death and rebirth at a critical point in his life. The movement to the edges of the world, in the margins of civilization, offers him a chance to confront the people and events which led him to his present state so that he can transform his understanding of his motivations and desires in such a way as to empower him to re-integrate into the world of the living. This approach has been especially appealing to those who study the Orphic Gold Tablets, whose placement in the tombs of certain individuals suggests that their texts were paired with particular rituals, guaranteeing the initiate a "blessed" afterlife. Scholars such as Günter Zuntz (1971), Walter Burkert (1985), Radcliffe Edmonds (2004), Fritz Graf (2007), and Sarah Iles Johnston (2007) have linked the Orphic Gold Tablets to mystery cult, with Graf observing that the "Gold Tablets contain details that imply a ritualized, performative background" (Graf and Johnston 2007: 137).

⁸ Frances Norwood has written about Vergil's debt to Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and Plato in the eschatology of the sixth book of the *Aeneid* when Aeneas travels through the Underworld, saying that "Virgil richly deserves his epithet of *doctus*" (Norwood 1954: 16).

⁹ For these and New Historicist scholars, such as Leslie Kurke and Carol Dougherty (2003), the narratives and ritual backdrop that are suggested by these stories across media are opportunities for discovering the nuances in how different groups of people expressed culture.¹⁰ This approach privileges historical over literary context for these scenes and can show how an Underworld episode connects itself with the real-world interests and concerns of characters and the audience through symbolic gestures.

In a similar vein, the scholarship of many post-Homeric Underworld scenes has connected Underworld scenes to historical context, generally viewing them as allegories presenting an “alternate” reality for the exploration of issues existing in the “real world.” In this view, the Underworld acts as a mirror to society with utopian or dystopian aspects. Resting strongly on a historicist approach, this analysis has been done on a text-by-text basis, tying each to its immediate context rather than to each other. A.M. Bowie, for example, argues that the

⁹ Graf favors a funerary rather than initiatory ritual context for at least some of the tablets (Graf 1993: 249-250).

¹⁰ Applying myths of Underworld journeys to ritual, therefore, could be viewed as an assertion of group identity. The New Historicists look at text and ritual as equivalent events in the transmission of culture. So the reformulation of an Underworld to accommodate a mystery-cult initiate in a ritual would have equal weight to an Underworld story by a poet. Kurke and Dougherty have argued: “Myth can represent the hegemonic or institutional version, but stories tend to proliferate within culture, and their circulation can also be a means of contesting or revising the dominant account over time” (Dougherty and Kurke 2003: 7-8). Rituals associated with Underworld narratives, therefore, react to already existing narratives of *katabases*, which are invoked with each performance or re-telling.

Eleusinian initiates in the Underworld of Aristophanes' *Frogs* reflect "a way of thinking about participation in and ordering of the state" (Bowie 1993: 244). Along the same lines, David Sedley points out that the Underworld in Plato's *Gorgias* and its myth of judgment under Zeus' regime "symbolizes a method of examining and improving souls which we are being asked to recognize as superior to the current Athenian political system" (Sedley 2009: 58). Similarly, A. Georgiadou and D.H.J. Larmour argue that Lucian's account of the afterlife and fate of the soul in the *True History* is a philosophical parody of the journey for knowledge, which makes fun of the sophists and philosophical schools of his day (Georgiadou and Larmour 1998: 313).

In this approach, each Underworld borrows from a store of common myth but is locally applied. Radcliffe Edmonds, a proponent of this view, ties the meaning of each Underworld journey to the specific historical context of each work. For Edmonds, the Underworld journey myth is primarily a convenient tool for expressing ideology, which is tied more to immediate context than to a larger literary gesture.¹¹ He, therefore, reads Underworld texts through the lens of his interpretation of each author's message and relies heavily on the formulations of myth and mythic symbolism provided by Clifford Geertz (1973),¹² Charles Segal (1986)¹³ and Christiane

¹¹ Edmonds argues, for example, that the Orphic Gold Tablets "use the traditional pattern of the journey to the underworld to express a protest against the mainstream of polis society" (Edmonds 2004: 30), noting that those who were buried with the tablets were somehow trying to distinguish themselves and may even have been marginalized members of society (Edmonds 2004: 66-69).

¹² Geertz points to religion and myth as cultural systems creating symbols which are *models of* and *models for* reality (Geertz 1973: 93).

Sourvinou-Inwood (1991).¹⁴ He views the Underworld journey as consisting of a system of symbols, which is drawn from a collective knowledge of myth and, therefore, recognizable to an audience; as a result, it can provide a convenient, authoritative language for communication between author and audience (Edmonds 2004: 6). This is apparent in his analysis of Plato's *Phaedo*, in which he argues that Plato uses the authority of Underworld journey myths to create a new matrix of values based on philosophical pursuit: a positive afterlife, previously the domain of heroes, is now reserved for philosophers (Edmonds 2004: 218-220).

As seen in these approaches, interpreting the Underworld scene has rich and varied scholarship on ancient works across different genres. Until now, however, the treatments have not looked at Underworld scenes together as a distinct literary collective, a subgenre, as it were, which has its own attributes and rhythms that form their own tradition. These approaches also have not talked comprehensively about the interaction between author, narrative, and reader. The current study attempts to do so and to focus attention on the Underworld as an intertext that brings together not only narratives but also author and audience. This project will question and delineate the features of Underworld scenes that make them effective vehicles for an author's communication with his audience about themes in the primary narrative or in the historical

¹³ Segal argues that myth is "a system of symbols, verbal, visual, and religious. Each myth is built up of already existing symbols and forms and, like all narrative, reforms and reorganizes those symbols in its own structures" (Segal 1986: 49).

¹⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood argues that myths "are shaped by the parameters created by their social realities, collective representations, and beliefs of the society that generated them. They are articulated by, and thus express, those realities and idealities" (Sourvinou-Inwood 1991: 20).

milieu of the author. I argue that Underworld scenes act as a point of negotiation between authors and audience in the production of meaning.¹⁵

While I most closely follow the contextualists' and structuralists' approaches of seeing points of variation as essential markers for interpreting these scenes, my study seeks to expand beyond the perspective of single works to view *nekuiai* and *katabaseis* as part of an author's larger strategy of intertextual dialogue and intratextual analysis. The study also highlights the value of an Underworld "digression" both to the author's purpose and to the audience's interpretation. That is not to say that messages between author and audience cannot be found elsewhere in a work, but that an Underworld scene calls attention to certain larger themes and interpretations in a distinct, striking way. Moreover, these scenes are effective because of their inherent allowances for alternate narration, metatextual omniscience, reader participation, and time-space distortions.

III. Underworld Scenes as Text, Intertext, and Hypertext

In the Underworld scenes of ancient Greek and Roman literature, scholars have identified many levels of connection in individual works between texts and their contexts. These connections between texts were historically referred to as "parallels," "allusions," and, more recently, "intertexts," the latter term having been borrowed from semiotics and structuralism (Fowler 2000: 115-117). Intertextuality theory has pervaded studies of the ancient world to

¹⁵ Edmonds comes the closest to the current approach as does Odysseus Tsagarakis, who argues that the *Odyssey's Nekuia* is integral to the epic as well as informative because it gives insights into the hero's character and connects him to a glorious tradition.

varying degrees and has introduced new terminology. That is not to say that the ideas behind intertextuality were new to the field of Classics. Those who study ancient texts had already been reading them intertextually for millennia, and many features of “intertextuality” as a theory had been applied to ancient texts under different names. Structuralism, however, provided distinct terminology and a key insight to these long-observed connections by arguing that texts are created within a system, meaning that “to read a text thus involves a two-step process: a reconstruction of the matrix which gives it meaning, and the production of that meaning by the act of relating source- and target-texts” (Fowler 2000: 117).

The implications of the fundamental terms of the process that Fowler describes – “text,” “intertext,” and “allusion” – have varied widely over time. In this section, we begin by defining the most basic terms for analyzing a text and its relationships before demonstrating how Underworld scenes fit into these categories as a specialized type of intertext with a unique purpose and function.

Text and Intertext

In the case of ancient Greek literature, the word “text” must be carefully applied because many of the earliest sources were not written at all but from a rich oral tradition. For this study, “text” refers to a structured narrative, conveyed orally (through song) or visually (through writing or images). An “intertext” is a common point of reference between different narratives that highlights a relationship between two texts. Heinrich Plett provides our basic definition of “text” and its relation to “intertext.” He writes:

All intertexts are texts... A text may be regarded as an autonomous sign structure, delimited and coherent. Its boundaries are indicated by its beginning, middle and

end, its coherence by the deliberately interrelated conjunction of its constituents. An intertext, on the other hand, is characterized by attributes that exceed it. It is not delimited, but de-limited, for its constituents refer to constituents of one or several other texts. Therefore it has a twofold coherence: an intratextual one which guarantees the immanent integrity of the text, and an intertextual one which creates structural relations between itself and other texts. This twofold coherence makes for the richness and complexity of the intertext, but also for its problematical status. (Plett 1991: 5).

This twofold nature of intertexts is especially relevant to Underworld episodes, as we shall see below, since they connect intratextually, or vertically, with the primary text in which they are embedded, while at the same time activating links intertextually, or horizontally, to other texts from different time periods. For example, Vergil's Underworld in Book 6 of the *Aeneid* is seen as projecting the successful end to Aeneas' journey and glorious future for his descendants as well as recalling Homer's Underworld in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* (Clark 1979: 147-183). Thus past and future are displayed at the same time. One important thing to note in Plett's definition is that the meaning of "text" is expanded beyond written material. Pietro Pucci observes that oral poetry, which he calls the "spoken sign," has "the notion of and the potentiality for signification" which written poetry does and "may deliver a signification that is as complex, rich, and intricate as the written ones"; therefore, "at the basic signifying level the two modes of poetry are capable of virtually the same achievements" (Pucci 1987: 27). Thus, in the realm of intertextuality, the "text" may refer to an oral poem or material objects that contain

overlapping signs and structures, which form connections with those found in written or oral media.

Intertext and Allusion

Related to *intertextuality* is the term “allusion.” At its simplest level, an allusion is a link between two texts that is generated by the author, often by a direct quotation taken from one text and embedded within a later text. Ancient commentators have more narrowly defined it “as a homage, a borrowing, or a theft” (Hinds 1997: 120). More recently, scholars within the field of Classics have distinguished “allusion” from *intertextuality* by saying that the former is activated by the author while the latter is dependent on the reader’s interpretative abilities (Fowler 2000: 117; Morgan and Harrison 2008). Pucci, on the other hand, uses these terms interchangeably, only making the following distinction that *intertextuality* “imparts a less forceful idea of authorial intentionality and of referentiality than does ‘allusion’” (Pucci 1987: 29).

With these definitions as our starting point, we can now examine how Underworld scenes perform as intertexts. Fowler’s categories of allusion and *intertextuality* cannot be strictly applied to Underworld scenes, but neither is Pucci’s equivalency between these two terms completely satisfying to explain how Underworld scenes connect texts. Underworld episodes require continuous participation from both author and audience in ways that are not captured by a distinction between “allusion” as author-driven and *intertextuality* as reader-driven references. Instead, Underworld scenes require a partnership and exchange of roles between author and audience. While an author may place a reference to an afterlife judge like Minos, it is the reader who must conjure and apply the myth about that judge based on what he knows from many

sources. In this way, Underworld scenes can be thought of as an oasis for author-audience exchange.

Although scholars have tried to categorize epic Underworld scenes into two general categories (*katabasis* and *nekuia*), the reality is that none of the earliest Underworld scenes fit neatly into either. Underworld narratives tend to recall both types *as well as* other non-katabatic afterlife narratives, such as travelers' tales, bringing the reader in as a participant of composition through the placement of references to multiple afterlife and journey motifs that he can provide in more depth than is included by the author. In the case of *katabaseis*, brief catalogues of famous Underworld locations and figures (such as Tartarus, the River Styx, Hades, and Tantalus) are all that is needed for the audience to envision an Underworld ruled by a system of justice that punishes wrong-doers. The complicity between author and audience into the meaning of these seemingly unrelated items occurs because of the archival and referential nature of the Underworld space, which suggests a particular interpretative path to the audience. As each element in an Underworld scene is unveiled, the viewer is in a state of constant decision, comparing new details to an array of known Underworld narratives, which the author uses to lead to a local interpretation of his Underworld scene. Of course, this happens to a certain extent in all literature, but Underworld scenes bring an added sense of authority as eschatological myth and also require *sustained* links to multiple points of reference.

Underworld scenes have never been defined as a genre per se, but they have generic qualities that audiences recognize for purposes of comparison with different traditional tales of *katabasis*, necromancy, and the afterlife in general. Further, since they are such a specific formulation of narrative, they more readily create links across works than other types of scenes, giving a unique view of how the author himself situates his own work against his referents. The

presence of an Underworld scene, therefore, is a powerful, marked tool of communication between an author and his audience, since “generic perception is known to guide and determine to a considerable degree the readers’ expectations, and thus their reception of the work” (Genette 1997: 5).

This generic perception results in the audience’s active participation in the construction of Underworld scenes during the listening, reading, or viewing process, since they tend to be described only sketchily. Even when specific figures and landmarks are named (e.g. Sisyphus, Minos, the house of Hades, the White Rock), these elements are not usually accompanied by detailed descriptions, and the audience must “fill in the blanks” of the stories behind them by tapping into their collective memory and knowledge of similar, related myths to make sense of their relationships to each other and to the narrative at hand. The creation of these mental links in the minds of audience members adds to the interpretive experience by recalling additional narratives that are imagined in parallel with the one under consideration. In this way, the links in Underworld scenes do more than just build one-to-one connections that provide a round-trip mental diversion to the audience. Instead, these links build multiple, robust, and sustained connections that constantly nudge the audience’s perception of a scene in certain directions. In this way, the elements defined as allusion or *intertextuality* in Underworld scenes can more accurately be described as *hypertextual* links.¹⁶

¹⁶ See Christos Tsagalis’ edited volume on *hypertextuality* in Homeric epics. Tsagalis and others have written that *hypertextual* references such as catalogues allowed a bard to open up a web of narrative connections in the mental space of the listener, presenting a challenge to linear, plot-based storytelling (Tsagalis 2010).

Intertext, Hypertext, and the Roles of Author & Audience

Hypertextuality is a type of intertextuality, which can be used to describe how Underworld scenes operate in relation to each other. The term was first defined by Genette and suggests a connection beyond a text that is vertical and hierarchical rather than horizontal and chronological. While *intertextuality* implies two texts on a linear time line, *hypertextuality* suggests that there are two or more texts that exist under the surface of a given text outside of a linear, chronological relationship. In the following, I trace the application of the term *hypertextuality* in literary criticism and expand its meaning to incorporate concepts from the field of computer science and web design. Combining these structuralist and technological approaches elucidates the purpose, function, and use of Underworld scenes better than any single approach has done thus far.

As mentioned above, *intertextuality* is a large, diverse category that received much attention in the late 20th century, particularly from scholars who embraced structural analysis. The structuralists developed several definitions for *intertextuality* and explored it in relation to literature, art, and music. Gérard Genette defines it as “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another,” which is within a range of implicit (e.g. *allusion*) and explicit (e.g. *quoting*, *plagiarism*) reference (Genette 1997: 1).

Broader definitions are provided by Julia Kristeva and Michael Riffaterre. Kristeva, who coined the term *intertextuality*, argues that “every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe upon it” (Kristeva 1981: 105). She sees every text as operating on a horizontal axis, connecting author to reader, and on a vertical axis, connecting a text to other texts:

Confronted with this spatial conception of language's poetic operation, we must first define three dimensions of textual space where various semic sets and poetic sequences function. These three dimensions or coordinates of dialogue are writing subject, addressee, and exterior texts. The word's status is thus defined *horizontally* (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as *vertically* (the word in the text is oriented toward an anterior or synchronic literary corpus). (Kristeva 1980: 66).

Riffaterre, looking at smaller units which he calls "intertextual traces" and can be reduced to individual phrases or words within a text, writes: "*Intertextuality* is the perception, by the reader, of the relationship between a work and others which have either preceded or followed it." (Riffaterre 1980: 4).¹⁷ In explaining the issues surrounding literature, which he calls "the literary phenomena," Riffaterre privileges the reader in generating interpretations of a text, saying that formal analysis "can clearly show that phenomenon to lie in the relation between text and reader, and not between text and author, or text and reality" and that explication of a text should not occur from the outside but should be "modeled on the normal way a message is perceived by its receiver. It should go from the inside out" (Riffaterre 1983: 25). This is an important point because it emphasizes the role of the receiver or audience in the narrative construction of Underworld, on whose knowledge an author of an Underworld scene heavily relies to give meaning to his afterlife narrative.

¹⁷ "*L'intertextualité est la perception, par le lecteur, de rapports entre une oeuvre et d'autres, qui l'ont précédée ou suivie.*"

Because of how and where an Underworld scene is situated within a greater narrative, an analysis “from the inside out” is exactly what an Underworld scene demands, but at the discretion and, to a large extent, the direction of the author. Instead of relying solely on his reader to interpret his work, an author inserts an Underworld scene as a key to unlock his work’s meaning and then relies heavily on the reader to decipher the puzzle. Such a scene, therefore, gives an “insider” view of a narrative and a mode of direct communication from author to reader by breaking down the themes that are more subtly interwoven into the primary narrative in which Underworld scenes are embedded. (This process will be demonstrated in detail in later chapters).

Classicists have applied these same ideas to ancient texts, narrowing the field of reference to find both explicit and implicit intertextualities. Pucci describes *intertextuality* as an allusive echo, which resonates between texts. In identifying *intertextuality* between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, he says “the additional echoes we hear in both passages and the contextual, thematic connection between the two suggest that the texts read each other” (Pucci 1987: 34). For texts to “read each other,” the author must lay the groundwork for connection, but the reader must activate it through recognition. In all of these definitions, the burden of identifying intertextual references rests with the reader, and the author is often given only an ancillary role or removed completely from consideration. In his work on the ancient novel, John Morgan defines *intertextuality* in relation to this author-reader matrix of interaction as “a property of texts when actuated by their readers, and not necessarily consciously deployed by their authors; it may relate to a specific intertext, but equally to a more general literary praxis” (Morgan and Harrison 2008: 218).¹⁸ Fowler does not go as far as Morgan in obviating author intent, but does give priority to

¹⁸ Morgan gives the author more responsibility in the creation of *allusion*, which he sees as “included in but not coterminous with *intertextuality*” and defines as “something an author

what he calls “reading practice” over the matrices of a coherent textual system that the structuralists favor. He writes that “meaning is realized at the point of reception, and what one does with it depends on the reader” (Fowler 2000: 127). His particular point is that readers at various historical stages re-contextualize and reinterpret texts based on their own ideologies and cultural assumptions. The argument for the re-contextualization of Underworld motifs is supported by recent scholars, particularly Edmonds and Bowie, but primarily from the author perspective. Fowler calls into question this author-focused approach by showing that readers could hold equal if not more authority in interpreting a text. The question of who has responsibility for interpretation is particularly important to the use and deployment of Underworld narratives. While a reader must recognize the Underworld narrative type, the author has a great deal of power in directing the way his work is interpreted on Kristeva’s horizontal (author-reader) and vertical (text-other text) axes by how he chooses to present the information.

This connection between texts and the locus of creating intertextual links and meaning can further be understood through Genette’s concept of *hypertextuality*. For Genette, intertextuality is a subcategory of *transtextuality*, which he defines as “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” (Genette 1997: 1). He delineates

makes, deliberately, perhaps decoratively, perhaps with profound meaning” (Morgan and Harrison 2008: 218). As a point of comparison, Genette sees *allusion* as a form of less explicit intertextuality, “an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of the relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible” (Genette 1997: 2).

five types of textual relationships,¹⁹ but the most useful one for discussing the relationship between Underworld scenes is *hypertextuality* due to the ongoing relationship it describes between a text and other texts. Genette defines *hypertextuality* as “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (Genette 1997: 5). This text B is “unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it” (Genette 1997: 5). In this scheme, the relationship between a *hypertext* and its reference, the *hypotext*, works in one direction – chronologically – and the *hypotext* has to precede the *hypertext* because the former is the latter’s raw material, which has been transformed. From the author’s standpoint, this would be true because he creates the triggers that clue the reader into his connection with a previous text. Thus, the *Odyssey* acts as a *hypotext* for Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and both can be thought of as *hypotexts* for Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, connections many scholars have noted albeit not in these words nor in any language that can capture the depth of the relationship between the texts. *Hypertextuality* implies a more involved integration of two or more texts from different time periods and genres beyond inspiration or mimicry.

In a *hypertextual* narrative, the author takes primary responsibility for transforming his text at the point of composition into a new creation such that both this new text and its source are

¹⁹ Genette’s five types of *transtextuality* are: *intertextuality*, *paratextuality*, *metatextuality*, *hypertextuality*, and *architextuality*. Each one of these offers insight into how Underworld narratives interact, but the most relevant for elucidating the relationship between Underworld narratives are *intertextuality* and *hypertextuality*.

understood together. After publication, however, the interpretation of the text is a joint endeavor between author and audience because the latter must see the connection the author wants to elicit but may also see *more* than the author intends or imagines. The author can be thought of as creating an environment in which multiple, multi-layered connections between texts (as represented by quotations and allusions) can thrive. This is more akin to how computer scientists might describe *hypertexts*. In that field, *hypertexts* are not a single objects with one-to-one connections but “a computer environment which, among other things, allows fast non-sequential access to large amounts of loosely structured texts” (Mai 1991: 49). They can be considered to be a “textual database” that “embeds links within the original text to other physically unrelated texts,” allowing the user to immediately “jump from one text to another” (Mai 1991: 49). When envisioned in terms of a web page, the Underworld scene can be imagined as a central page with a series of links that act as an index ready to offer relevant information by activating other pages. Although the user clicks on these links to open new pages, his or her return to the original page does not close the newly opened window. The alternate page, containing its own narrative and information, continues to be “live” in the background along with pages opened by other links. This creates a cascade of windows that share a connection to each other through the original page, which may or may not also be connected to each other in their own right. The lines between these pages quickly become a tangled web or “network” of content. In the same way that these open windows become simultaneously suspended on a screen, so too do *hypertextually* linked narratives become simultaneously present in the reader’s mind. The present, and often competing, Underworld narratives operating in the background situate the original narrative against a vast array of data that influences audience reception.

Further, at the point of reader interpretation, the chronological relationship between the *hypertext* and its “hidden windows” of narrative destabilizes because the reader brings his or her own experiences and knowledge to the author’s *hypertext* and may identify *other* narratives than the author intends, which are both anterior and posterior to the given work. Arguing along those lines, but using the terms “source-text” and “target-text,” Fowler contends that a source-text can be posterior to its target-text such that the relationship can read in both directions. He writes:

If we locate intertextuality, however, not in any pre-existing textual system but in the reader, there is no reason to feel that it is in some way improper to acknowledge that for most professional classicists today there *are* now traces of Lucan in Vergil, just as our Homer can only ever now be Vergilian.

Fowler, therefore, would move away from the absolute textual system which structuralists favor, but supports Genette’s conclusion that multiple texts can come together in a single reading (as long as the temporal restrictions are relaxed). The active co-presence of multiple narratives in the background is precisely the effect that Underworld narratives have because they rely heavily on knowledge of other narratives that are referred to through their compositional elements, which become an index of *hypertextual* links leading the audience to other stories. The constraints and particular features of Underworld scenes allow us to see the underlying relationships between texts in a way that other types of narrative scenes might not.

Ancient Greek Underworld scenes are able to link between texts from different time periods and allow a high level of information to be embedded by the author within them, because they have inherent temporal-spatial flexibility. An Underworld scene can be viewed as a coherent packet of information that contains a commentary to the primary narrative in which it is

embedded. How an author directs the activation of background narratives through his particular configuration of an Underworld scene implies a level of authorial participation that reader-centric views of intertextuality would deny or assign into the category of allusion, limiting the scope of references authors seem to imply in their Underworld scenes. Whether in only a few lines or a fully elaborated description, Underworld scenes are situated in such a way that they perform many complementary and competing functions from the perspectives of the narrative, author, and audience.

Time, Space, and Shadows

Besides defining a relationship between texts, the term *hypertextuality* implies a temporal and spatial leap (rather than a linear progression) that is particularly suited to understanding how Underworld scenes operate as an embedded commentary. The Underworld scene is a *hypertext* in itself because it creates an environment for linking to other narratives. Its elements, therefore, can be thought of as an index of *hypertextual* links that activate narratives, which fill in the landscape of an Underworld scene using *para-narratives*, stories that exist *alongside* the text. These *para-narratives* act like shadows, not fully overwriting the author's Underworld scene but nevertheless influencing how it can be interpreted. For example, when a katabatic hero mentions seeing Minos in an Underworld scene without further description, the audience must provide his mythic history and role as a judge of the afterlife. The process of knowledge recall then primes the audience to envision an Underworld that is based on justice and the segregation of souls into separate areas determined by appointed judges. This colors how the Underworld scene is interpreted and its relationship to the larger narrative. In an Underworld that focuses on judgment

based on a person's character, it becomes less important that he is a demigod hero or aristocrat favored by the gods.

Underworld scenes allow the inclusion of multiple, simultaneous, loosely related storylines alongside the primary narrative because they are a form of self-contained narrative that exists in a more flexible time-space continuum, or *chronotope*.²⁰ In the Underworld *chronotope*, time and space can be made specific or universal by activating certain mythic paradigms. As Edmonds has argued in the case of the hero Theseus, "All tales that involve Theseus as a central character evoke in the audience a recollection of the other stories that have been told about the hero, and the associations connected with these other tales enhance the meaning of the individual tale" (Edmonds 2004: 10). In an Underworld scene, a reference to Theseus specifically calls to mind other heroic *katabaseis* as complementary and suggests a comparison between the heroes of those stories and the author's protagonist. Similarly, a reference to Tantalus brings to mind other eternally punished figures as well as the more general ideas of punishment after death and segregation of the dead in the Underworld.

The Underworld *chronotope* is both *synchronic* and *syntopic*, bringing characters from different places and time periods (both past and future) together so that they can be viewed all at once by the audience. As *hypertexts*, Underworld scenes allow multiple intertextual connections because they contain an archive of the entire past as well as imagined futures against which an author can reflect the issues and themes of his primary text. Because an Underworld scene follows certain, recognizable sequences, or what Kristeva would call "suprasegmental

²⁰ I use the definitions of chronotope developed by Bakhtin (1981), Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson (1989), and Andrea Nightingale (2002). Bakhtin coined the term to refer to the configurations of time and space that occur in various types of storytelling.

utterances,” it can be considered a “bounded text” and therefore open to intertextual analysis.²¹

Furthermore, the idea of progress, as would be assumed in historical and chronological reality, is notably left out. Even though the Underworld contains knowledge of the future, the information appears simultaneously with that of the past, and the visitor to the Underworld does not encounter it in a linear fashion.

In addition to a diachronic collapse, multiple types of time exist simultaneously: the linear time of the protagonist visiting the Underworld, the eternal time of the power structure and landmarks (e.g. the halls of Hades), the repetitive time of the sinners who must endlessly perform their allotted punishments, and, in some cases, the circular time of souls who experience metempsychosis. Further, this multitude of time frames become visible often without perturbing the flow of the main plot. After gaining the necessary information or wider historical perspective from the Underworld, the protagonist/narrator generally ends where he began. Thus, Odysseus’ returned from the *Nekuia* at his point of embarkation, Circle’s island, where he only then receives explicit instructions on how to proceed in his journey home, even though he was supposed to receive this information in the Underworld from Tiresias. Similarly, in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the generational struggles of the gods goes right back to where the narrative left off before the beginning of the *Tartarographia*, as if the Underworld episode never happened. These are just two examples of how Underworld scenes seem to exist in their own temporal bubble that do not stretch the plot’s time linearly. The point of entry is the point of exit, so almost no time seems to pass in the primary narrative’s plot during the course of the digression into an Underworld scene.

²¹ See Kristeva (Kristeva 1980: 38) for a full definition and discussion of a “bounded text.”

From a narrative perspective, an Underworld scene's time distortion provides an opportunity to juxtapose the present storyline against related or even competing narratives using a technique called "side-shadowing," which allows the "actual" and the "possible" to be simultaneously present (Morson 1994: 117-119). Therefore, not only does an Underworld scene like a *katabasis* call to mind multiple *para-narratives* with which to compare itself, but the characters within the Underworld also offer different potential realities against which to assess the protagonist. Seeing time and space all at once creates a constant tension between simultaneous, synchronic and diachronic narratives fighting for primacy. Through side-shadowing in the *Odyssey*, the stories of Odysseus' peers suggest several outcomes that were possible for Odysseus ranging from no return (Achilles, Ajax) to disastrous return (Agamemnon). According to Gary Morson, side-shadowing displays a "simultaneity not *in* time but *of* times: we do not see contradictory actualities, but one possibility that was actualized and, at the same moment, another that could have been but was not" (Morson 1994: 118). By including an Underworld journey in a narrative, a single text can activate a network of texts as *para-narrative* "sideshadows," which all look to each other for meaning and also tap into the audience's conceptions of the afterlife. In this way, the author can direct the reading of his own work, suggesting specific narrative connections for the audience to consider. Underworld scenes become his local tool for literary and social criticism because they are "synoptic" for the audience, giving a perfect vantage point for viewing the stories, issues, and traditions that are relevant for interpreting the author's message.

IV. The Purpose, Function, and Image Set of Underworld Scenes

The purpose of an Underworld scene is to provide a commentary to the primary text in which it is embedded, and it functions in this way by creating points of connection to other narratives. Through them, the author not only makes his case in the details of how he sets up his Underworld but also steps into the role of commentator, subtly directing his work's translation by partially re-inventing himself as a reader and critic of his own work. In aligning himself with his audience in this way, he becomes a partner in interpretation.

The idea of a journey far beyond the scope of every day life is key to the Underworld formulation. By transporting the protagonist and the audience to an alien place, the “givens” of every day life can be stripped away. The transition into an Underworld scene is usually mandated by external pressure: Circe advises Odysseus to talk to the seer Tiresias, who will give him instructions for his return home; Eurystheus orders Herakles to retrieve Cerberus from Hades as one of his labors; Theseus accompanied Pirithous on the mission to kidnap Persephone because the latter had helped him capture Helen; and Er was told to bring back information of the afterlife to the living. In other types of narrative digression, the descriptions, stories, and background appear organically, adding complication to the main plot but not impeding forward progress. Protagonists may stumble upon a piece of art that the narrator then describes (as in *ekphrasis*), a new obstacle may appear which causes a delay to achieving the protagonists' goals, or a character may tell a story at another's request. In these instances, action is put on hold for a brief time but there is still a sense of forward progress.²² By contrast, a journey to the Underworld is usually done at the direction of some external force (human or divine). While the plot is on hold, the protagonists continue to act in the alternate reality of the Underworld *chronotope*, which threatens to derail the plot completely because a “return” is not guaranteed.

²² For more on time in Greek narrative, see de Jong (de Jong and Nünlist 2007).

Theseus and Pirithous were trapped when they tried to kidnap Persephone, and Odysseus lingers beyond his mandate to talk to the ghosts of friends and family, only leaving when threatened by the Gorgon's appearance (Karanika 2011).

Despite the threat of getting trapped in the Underworld, the hero/narrator views the digression to the Underworld as a necessity to conclude the larger quest. Whatever hinders a person from moving towards a destined future can only be resolved through an incursion into the Underworld to seek out the dead and their hidden knowledge. Usually, the stated purpose is to get some knowledge about the immediate or distant future, but when opening the narrative to the Underworld *chronotope*, the protagonist must re-trace his actual and possible paths to the present moment – he cannot seek the future without also encountering the past. The Underworld scene, therefore, becomes an individual's chance for closure, to face the people and fears of the past, putting them to rest, so he can move forward to his future and the completion of the story. The hero who exits the Underworld is not the same person as when he entered. After his values, deeds, and relationships with the figures in the Underworld have been put on display for the audience, he is re-born into the plot, which then re-starts itself.

As many scholars have pointed out, Odysseus is a model for this pattern, and the *Nekuia* occurs at a pivotal place in the narrative, in the heart of symmetrical narrative rings (Most 1989, 1992; de Jong 2001). The people and objects encountered in the Underworld form the main content of Underworld scenes, and they are the reason for the visit. Within this set, there is a general pattern of appearance that the scenes dictate and audiences must have expected. These include: chthonic deities, guides, landscape features, examples of souls undergoing eternal punishment or reward, allusions to previous mortal visitors, and conversations with souls.

The deployment of these individual pieces depends on the author's goals, but the existence of an overarching, somewhat predictable framework is what makes Underworld scenes useful as a literary device and rhetorical tool. An author taps into audience expectation, activating a collective mythic consciousness, while also having the flexibility to expand or contract each part of the frame to suit narrative needs. In this way, Underworld narratives loosely fit de Jong's definition of a *type-scene* as "a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure and often in identical language, describing recurrent actions of everyday life" (de Jong 2001: xix). Activation of the Underworld framework includes the introduction of certain narrative patterns, such as entry rituals or the acquisition of special knowledge, reminders of the permeability between the worlds of the living and dead, and a shrinking of narrative perspective to a single, voyeuristic viewpoint (that of the hero/narrator) such that the reader and hero/narrator share a sense of disorientation. The difference between Underworld scenes and de Jong's *type-scene* lies in the complexity of their narrative sequences and their levels of intertextual and intratextual connectivity.

As narrative units, Underworld scenes are relatively complete, either containing or implying a beginning, middle, and end. To begin, most Underworld scenes include a formal journey or describe an alteration to geographical space. Indeed, the fact that there is a specific landscape where both souls and mortals are imagined to progress physically through space in parallel time with the primary narrative differentiates Underworld scenes from other types of narrative digressions. Because of this travel element, related attributes such as directions, landmarks, and guides become important signposts. The time it takes to complete the journey to the Underworld disconnects the hero from his reality, layer by layer, such that he loses his sense of the passage of time and exists in an eternal moment, which occurs in multiple time frames

(e.g. repetitive, circular, mythic, etc.). As Jonathan Burgess argues, the Underworld is “narratologically convenient as a stage for various types of shades to quickly appear and disappear” because “the parameters of time and space are relaxed, and full advantage is taken of the possibilities” leading to “narrative freedom” and “poetical brilliance” (Burgess 2009: 109). As a result, the Underworld scene functions as a literary meeting point for comparing protagonists to their mythic peers and authors to their predecessors in a long tradition extending past Homer.

V. Conclusions

The stability of the Greek literary Underworld (i.e., the consistency between descriptions and the pervasiveness of certain myth types within the Underworld image set) suggests that Underworld scenes are a unique genre of storytelling, whose purpose is to step outside of a work’s main plot and connect that work to other texts. It is not limited to a particular genre, such as epic, although later Underworld scenes are often traceable to early Archaic epic through similarities in their Underworld depictions.²³ Instead, Underworld scenes are a type of narrative whose function can be gleaned both from their locations within their primary narrative and from the *para-narratives* they activate.

Ancient Greek authors engaged with eschatological myths by including Underworld journeys and ghostly visitations in their narratives. This project examines afterlife scenes in Archaic and Classical Greek authors as moments of authorial commentary, connecting author to

²³ This has led to such statements as “a mortal visiting the Underworld is an epic theme” (de Jong 2001: 271), even though there are no actual *katabaseis* in the Homeric epics, only katabatic scenes.

audience in an exercise of narrative self-reflection. As embedded narratives, Underworld scenes condense the actions and themes of the main story into an abbreviated space while also situating their primary narratives within a dynamic historical and literary tradition. Authors and artists create a network of texts with such scenes by including “links,” in the form of allusions and story patterns, which activate similar stories of ghostly encounter (*nekuia*), underworld journey (*katabasis*), eternal punishment, and reward for the “blessed.” The narratives connected through these links influence the interpretation of the primary narrative by opening up a dialogue between texts across time and media through their common features.

Underworld episodes are critical in the negotiation between author and audience for the reception and interpretation of a work. Whereas stories and their plots are generally anchored in linear time and space, Underworld episodes diverge from this model by allowing the juxtaposition of characters who come from multiple locations and time periods (both past and future) into a single space. As a rhetorical device, Underworld scenes gave authors access to a wide range of historical figures and supernatural entities. Thus, Homer could imagine Odysseus talking to the ghosts of Achilles and Agamemnon in the *Odyssey*, and Plato could imagine Socrates anticipating afterlife conversations about justice with Homer, Ajax and Orpheus in the *Apology*.

Now that the theoretical background and methodology has been described, the next phase is to look at their application to specific texts. This project does so by examining Underworld scenes from Homer to Plato as modes of authorial commentary. Chapter 2 looks at the structure of the Underworld scenes in early Archaic poetry and the features which create a form of communication between author and audience. This analysis reveals multiple strands of Underworld networks throughout the epics of Homer and Hesiod. In Chapter 3, the focus is

primarily on Greek epinician and lyric poets, such as Pindar and Bacchylides, to show how they used Underworld scenes to assimilate their patrons to heroes who achieved a “blessed” afterlife. Chapter 4 centers on Classical Athens and the democratization of the Underworld in comedy, tragedy, and funerary practices – from “ghosts on stage” in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* to grave stelai for the war dead accompanied by public funeral orations. In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the living used Underworld scenes to make spaces for the dead within civic festivals and daily life, challenging ideas of mortality. Finally, Chapter 5 explores Plato’s Underworlds, demonstrating how he uses Underworld scenes as arguments to promote his philosophical program, overwriting the sources he invokes with his own vision of the afterlife.

Chapter 2. *Afterlife Poetics and Authorial Commentary in Early Underworld Scenes*

I. Introduction

In the earliest Archaic Greek texts of Homer and Hesiod, the Underworld was constructed as an alternate dimension of reality that signaled entrance into a different narrative frame, or *chronotope*.²⁴ Underworld scenes are a form of marked speech, a *muthos* that both conveys authority and delivers important details necessary to the interpretation of the primary narrative.²⁵ Their predominant feature is their ability to juxtapose ideas, people, and places from different time periods in a single space, collapsing diachronic and far-ranging locations into a “synchronic” and “syntopic” place, thereby allowing both the author and audience a synoptic view of the major themes and contexts of the main story as well as a gripping story of adventure and ultimate danger.

As embedded scenes, Underworld narratives are inherently disruptive and almost always create a sense of anxiety in the narrative by threatening to overtake the main story. A character might get lost in listening to the stories of the dead, as Odysseus does until he stops at the thought of the Gorgon, or he might get stuck and not return, as happens to Pirithoos. The narrative tension is rooted in a pattern of entry that often involves either physical or mental

²⁴ The word “*chronotope*” or “*literary artistic chronotope*” refers to the space-time continuum in which a story occurs. See Chapter 1 for more information on this term.

²⁵ I use Richard Martin’s definition of *muthos* as “a speech-act indicating authority, performed at length, usually in public, with a focus on full attention to every detail” (Martin 1989: 12). A “primary narrative” has a plot and is the “main” or “parent” narrative in which an Underworld scene is embedded. It generally adheres to the rules of chronological, historical time and human reality, unlike Underworld scenes.

disorientation for the protagonist and then his re-emergence into a different place where the regular laws of space and time do not seem to apply. In such a setting, the protagonist is slowly re-oriented to his purpose and his relationships through a set of landmarks and ghosts, which represent different aspects of his history and values. The encounter with entities that are supernatural or unexpected against a stark landscape that offers little context builds a sense of uncertainty and confusion. The process of following the protagonist through this disorientation creates openings for the author to re-establish connections between a protagonist and his purpose, reminding him and the audience at large why the journey in the primary narrative is important. In Underworld scenes, the author takes extra time and care in contextualizing his work against a larger backdrop of myth, literature, and human history.

As the narrator describes each interaction or section of the Underworld, the audience becomes aware of what the *author* values and wants to highlight for his audience. Without the limitations of plot, chronological time, and regular space, the narrative is able to turn back, or inflect, upon itself and more deeply explore issues and themes that have been simmering under the surface of the primary narrative. As a rhetorical strategy, an Underworld scene can be viewed as form of inflected language, whose morphology changes to suit its placement within a narrative. Although it may appear in one configuration in a given instance or text, it nevertheless is connected at its root to its other possible formulations. Because of this, an Underworld scene in one work recalls multiple other scenes and creates a network of texts that comes into dialogue with each other at a metatextual level. Thus, multiple Underworld scenes in a single work, as in the *Odyssey*, can be viewed as polyptonic on the scene level. The transformations between the scenes suggest their strong connections but also their differences based on placement within the primary narrative. These forms of intra- and intertextuality are generated by the author's reliance

on the audience's reception and recognition of certain cues that make up the common language of Underworld scenes and therefore act as conduits between them.

Underworld scenes contain certain standard features that constitute a recognizable poetics, which creates a space for metatextual contemplation. Capitalizing on this, Archaic authors used such scenes as conduits of communication to their audience by including them within their epics and by using them to link *hypertextually* to similar scenes in other works.²⁶ In the following, I explore the language of Underworld scenes in Archaic Greek sources and demonstrate how it works rhetorically to generate active links to *para-narratives*, which are stories that have similar characters or patterns and exist *alongside* the text.²⁷ These *para-narratives* act like shadows, not fully overwriting the author's Underworld scene but nevertheless marking it and influencing how it can be interpreted.

²⁶ *Hypertextuality* refers to a sustained connection between two texts that are linked together through allusions, intertexts, and similar patterns of narrative. Underworld scenes are *hypertexts* in that they create an environment whose elements act as an index to an array of disparate sources that become *para-narratives*.

²⁷ *Para-narratives* can also be described as “texts behind the text” and can be invoked through such devices as allusion or quotation. They rely on the audience to see the connections to related narratives. For the purposes of this study, the “Underworld” is defined as the place where the dead live and congregate as a society, whether under the ground or on islands at the edge of the world. It can also be considered more generally to be an “Other World,” which has supernatural elements with strong ties to the “real world,” which generally operates according to human chronology.

II. The Poetics of the Underworld

Scholars have often associated Underworld scenes, particularly those of a heroic *katabasis*, with epic poetry, calling them “the most distinctive of epic conventions” (Gregory, Newman, and Meyers 2012: 441(iv)). This association between epic and Underworld stories begins with Book 11 of Homer’s *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus visits the land of the dead (Gregory, Newman, and Meyers 2012: 441(iv)).²⁸

The ready acceptance of Underworld scenes as simply a part of epic convention obscures the reasons *why* they have this association and *how* they create the impression of being “epic” or authoritative. Ancient authors insert Underworld scenes at crucial points in their narratives to create a space for considering major issues related to the outcome of their stories. This function

²⁸ In that example, Odysseus’ visit is not technically a *katabasis* but a *nekuia* (conversation with the dead), even if the scene has almost always been associated or confused with *katabaseis*. Indeed, there are no true *katabaseis* in either of Homer’s epics, yet there are many scenes throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that not only are reminiscent of *katabaseis* (and *nekuiai*) but also seem to invoke those types of stories. Raymond Clark defines *katabasis* as a “Journey of the Dead made by a living person in the flesh who returns to our world to tell the tale” (Clark 1979: 32). He differentiates visions or dreams of the afterlife from *katabaseis*, saying that “such Journeys in the flesh are to be distinguished from mere ‘Visions of the Otherworld’” (Clark 1979: 32). This project argues that the inherent intertextuality between different types of afterlife visions does not allow them to be considered as completely separate. Individual features that are common to both become *hypertextual* links, inexorably connecting them together so that *nekuiai* will recall *katabaseis* and vice versa.

goes beyond the purpose of creating an “epic” atmosphere or checking off scenes from a list of elements that are required for a “true epic.” Neither are these scenes mistakes or un-Homeric interpolations, even though scholars dating back to the Hellenistic period have tried to athetize most of them on these grounds.²⁹ Instead, I argue for a reconsideration of Underworld scenes that would more easily explain their variety and ubiquity across authors and genres. In the following, I argue that Underworld scenes were the tools with which the authors of such poems could most efficiently interact with their audiences in a form that was integrated into the fabric of the narrative itself, although sometimes loosely. They are, therefore, an exercise in rhetoric that allows a self-contained commentary within an epic because they open up an achronological space in the middle of the primary narrative to contemplate the themes and “big questions” motivating the actions of the protagonists and the plot.

The categorization of Underworld scenes as inherently epic or Homeric is a by-product not only of their popularity but also of textual survival. Homer’s Underworld scenes are so fully developed and such a part of their protagonists’ characterizations that they became natural models for later Greek writers who wanted to achieve the same popularity or claim the authority of these revered epics. Two important points that scholars have mostly missed or disregarded, though, are that 1) the Homeric poems themselves seem to be copying an older rhetorical use of Underworld scenes and 2) other Archaic poems such as those by Hesiod are also using them in

²⁹ In the scholia on the *Odyssey*, Aristarchus assessed lines 568-627, a large portion of the Underworld scene in Book 11, to be an interpolation, and more recent scholars from Wilamowitz onward have agreed with him (Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990: 111). Aristarchus also athetized the Underworld scene in lines 1-204 of Book 24 in its entirety. For a discussion of this, see Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck (Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992: 356).

similar fashion. What emerges by analyzing a selection of the Underworld scenes in Homer and Hesiod is a set of common features that make up a “poetics” of Underworld scenes, which causes them to be recognizable and accessible for the kind of author-audience exchange that they promote. In the following, I will point out certain key patterns that seem common to almost all Underworld scenes in the Archaic period and, therefore, can be identified as a template against which to assess later authors.

Underworld Templates: Beginning, Middle, and End

Underworld scenes overtly signal their beginnings and ends, while their middle sections remain the biggest variable. Each of these sections has its own poetics that can be defined and compared.

Entry into the Underworld involves disorientation and the distortion of reality so that different expectations of time and space temporarily supersede those of everyday life, which is characterized by chronological time and linear space. The first thing that occurs in these embedded Underworld narratives is a journey or movement far *beyond* the scope of every day life. By transporting the protagonist and the reader to this alien, but not necessarily foreign place, the “givens” of every day life and reality can be stripped away and a new space-time continuum, or *chronotope*, gradually emerges.

Most Archaic Underworld scenes start with a journey through geographical space to a place that is conceived of as outside of or just beyond the border with normal space, barely accessible to the living and, even then, only under certain conditions.³⁰ The transition to and

³⁰ Some examples from Homer’s *Odyssey* include the *Nekuia* (Book 11) and “Little *nekuia*” (Book 24) as well as the description of Menelaus’ afterlife (Book 4). In Hesiod, both the

across the boundary involves disruptions to reality and disorientation to the protagonists. Part of the reason for this is that time and space operate differently in the Underworld, and many objects and people who existed in various places or in different time periods converge there.

The features that disorient and differentiate the Underworld from the real world signal a re-negotiation between the author and reader concerning basic assumptions about how the story will proceed. The confusion leads not only to heightened suspense but also a slowing down of the plot with the result that “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible, likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history” (Bakhtin and Holquist 1981: 84). This changed quality of time and space is apparent in the extant poems in the Homeric and Hesiodic corpus as well as in references to other Archaic poems and myths containing Underworld scenes. In the *Odyssey*, there are several episodes referring to the Underworld and afterlife journey using similar time and space markers to disorient the reader and establish the unique *chronotope* that seems an essential part of the poetics of the Underworld. The scenes that illustrate this most readily are Odysseus’ journey to Hades in Book 11 (referred to as the *Nekuia*) and the descent of the suitors into Hades in Book 24. To these famous examples, I would add Circe’s instructions to Odysseus at the end of Book 10 and the prediction of Menelaus’ transportation to the Elysian Field in Book 4. From Hesiod, I would add the description of Tartarus and Styx in the *Theogony* as the most illustrative examples. In these episodes, a similar pattern of temporal and spatial disorientation occurs to lead the reader into the Underworld *chronotope*, whether for a short or extended visit. Only after disorientation does an Underworld narrative begin the process of establishing and recalling

Theogony and *Works and Days* contain detailed descriptions of the Underworld. The *Iliad* also has a description of an Underworld journey by Patroclus’ ghost (Book 23).

personal relationships between characters and objects, which contextualize the primary narrative and reconnect the protagonist with his goals.

Narrative Disorientation

I start with Odysseus' *Nekuia*, since its entry clearly displays the transition from the "real world" *chronotope* into that of the Underworld. Odysseus' (and the audience's) first introduction to the Underworld *chronotope* does not occur in Book 11 when Odysseus sets sail from Circe's island but in Book 10 when Circe forecasts Odysseus' journey to see the shades. Listening to Circe, Odysseus envisions what his journey will be like step by step, and we as the audience are simultaneously taken along for this "narrative within the narrative" as witness to their exchange. Although it seems a fairly straightforward telling of the story by a character in the primary narrative, it is important to remember that Circe's account is still *reported speech* told by the narrator Odysseus in the voice of Circe to an audience of Phaeacians (ἢ δ' αὐτίκ' ἀμείβετο δία θεάων, "and she shining among goddesses immediately answered," *Ody.* 10.503).³¹ The *Nekuia* (*Ody.* Book 11), describing the same Underworld journey that the audience heard in Book 10, is also told by the narrator Odysseus, but this time in his own voice, as his personal recollection of the journey based on first-hand experience (ἡμεῖς δ' ὄπλα ἕκαστα πονησάμενοι κατὰ νῆα ἤμεθα, "and we sat down in the ship, after arranging each piece of equipment," 11.9-10). Although the two accounts occur in different books, they are presented by the epic as the same story, i.e., Odysseus' journey to the Underworld. They are, however, really two different versions of the same story, meant to be considered together like variations on a theme in music. A closer reading and comparison shows how the differences between them add to a sense of

³¹ All translations are my own.

disorientation during the second scene's beginning because the landmarks in Odysseus' and Circe's versions do not line up exactly. Only when Odysseus speaks to Elpenor's ghost, a transitional character hovering between his former life and his afterlife, is a new baseline for reality established that includes the ability by the living to talk and interact with ghosts and the supernatural.

After Circe's initial directive to go to Hades in Book 10, the primary narrative turns the audience's attention to the concrete aspects of the journey – the ship, the informing details that will verify the crew's arrival at the prescribed destination, and the rituals needed to invoke the souls of the dead. Circe tells Odysseus to keep his attention on the handling of the ship and to trust the wind, a non-human force, to take him to the right place, so he only needs to take action when he sees certain landmarks.

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
μή τί τοι ἡγεμόνος γε ποθὴ παρὰ νηὶ μελέσθω·
ἰστὸν δὲ στήσας ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκὰ πετάσσας
ἦσθαι· τὴν δέ κέ τοι πνοιὴ βορέαιο φέροισιν. (*Od.* 10.504-507)

Godly son of Laertes, many-wiled Odysseus,
don't let the lack of a pilot for your ship concern you at all;
but after setting up your mast and unfurling your white sails, sit down,
and let the gust of the North Wind (Boreas) carry [the ship] along for you.

Circe essentially tells Odysseus to focus on the mundane aspects of sailing, which are in the human realm, and rely on forces outside his direct control to carry him where he needs to go. He only needs to make sure he positions himself and his ship correctly then wait to be taken to his

destination. The hidden forces directing the journey themselves create a feeling of uncertainty and removal from reality. Odysseus is then told vaguely that he would “pass through Ocean” (ἀλλ’ ὅπότε’ ἄν δὴ νηὶ δι’ Ὠκεανοῖο περῆσης, “but when indeed you should pass through Ocean with your ship,” 10.508)³² and that he must look out for a specific set of landmarks to gauge his position.

Circe does not tell him how long the journey will take him, either in time or distance, but she does introduce a series of geographical features with the word ἔνθα that will indicate he has arrived. This adverb would seem to be working to give clarity since it points the audience’s gaze in a certain direction. It can mean either “there” (in place) or “then” (in time). In Underworld scenes, it most often means *both* “there and then” but paradoxically disorients even as it specifies. The word is a signal of a different mode of storytelling from the traveler’s viewpoint, piling on lists of names or objects that are not set in a concrete relation to each other. In Underworld poetics, this “ἔνθα-mode” of storytelling is not meant to visualize a map of the space but to point attention to links leading to various narrative strains.³³ In the following passage, the word ἔνθα is scattered throughout and creates nodes in the description signaling a change in direction, either of the viewer’s perspective or of an agent’s activity.

ἀλλ’ ὅπότε’ ἄν δὴ νηὶ δι’ Ὠκεανοῖο περῆσης,

³² In this instance, Ocean not only signifies the body of water but also the very boundary of the world.

³³ Nancy Felson would classify the deictic use of ἔνθα in this passage as “*deixis am Phantasma*: fictional deixis” in which objects are imaginatively brought into existence by the act of pretending to designate them. Of course there are also elements of “*ocular deixis*” as well since Odysseus points out some objects that one might see in the real world (Felson 2004: 253-255).

ἔνθ' ἀκτὴ τε λάχεια καὶ ἄλσεα Περσεφονείης
μακροὶ τ' αἰγίροι καὶ ἰτέαι ὠλεσίκαρποι, (510)
νῆα μὲν αὐτοῦ κέλσαι ἐπ' Ὠκεανῶ βαθυδίνῃ,
αὐτὸς δ' εἰς Αἴδεω ἰέναι δόμον εὐρώεντα.
ἔνθα μὲν εἰς Ἀχέροντα Πυριφλεγέθων τε ῥέουσι
Κώκυτός θ', ὃς δὴ Στυγὸς ὕδατός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ,
πέτρῃ τε ξύνεσις τε δύο ποταμῶν ἐριδούπων· (515)
ἔνθα δ' ἔπειθ', ἥρως, χριμφθεὶς πέλας, ὡς σε κελεύω,
βόθρον ὀρύξαι ὅσον τε πυγούσιον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,
ἀμφ' αὐτῷ δὲ χοῆν χεῖσθαι πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι,
πρῶτα μελικρῆτῳ, μετέπειτα δὲ ἠδέϊ οἴνῳ,
τὸ τρίτον αὐθ' ὕδατι· ἐπὶ δ' ἄλφιστα λευκὰ παλύνειν. (520) (*Ody.* 10.508-520)

But when you should indeed pass through Ocean with your ship,
where there is an overgrown promontory and also the sacred groves of
Persephone as well as tall poplars and the willows that shed their fruit
early, (510)
on the one hand, beach your ship **at that spot there** upon [the shore of]
deep-eddying Ocean, **but** you yourself go to the dank house of Hades.
There Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, which is a branch of the River Styx,
flow into Acheron, and there is a rock and the meeting of two loudly
resounding rivers there; (515)

and there, hero, **when** you have approached nearby [this location], as I command you, dig a pit of about a cubit in each direction **there** and **there**, and around it pour a libation for all the dead, first with honey mixed with milk, and then after with sweet wine, and third, in turn, with water; and over all that, sprinkle white barley.

Circe here gives a distinct list of markers as well as spatial dimensions intended to orient Odysseus upon his arrival at Persephone's grove so he can visualize it and perform his ritual correctly.

The repetition of deictic markers builds an internal framework that cues the audience to consider different aspects about the Underworld space – the space, the chronology, the people, and the hero. The passage is held together additionally by the stacked μέν...δέ...μέν...δέ construction creating the sense of consecutive or antithetical, contrasting actions that follow a back and forth pattern alternating between describing the landscape as a whole and Odysseus' specific actions. The first μέν and first δέ provide the separation between the verification of the location and Odysseus' personal actions in finding the ritual site. The αὐτοῦ after the first μέν correlates with the first ἔνθα, bringing the description of the landscape into the μέν clause where he needs to beach his ship. The second μέν introduces general identifying features in Hades that not only mark for Odysseus the right location but also situate the scene in a familiar mythic setting such as exists in traditional stories of *katabasis* and necromancy predating or coexisting alongside the Homeric epics.³⁴ The second δέ again turns to the narrower view of the hero's

³⁴ It is clear then that the Homeric poems inherited certain features of an Underworld narrative type from a specific image set and that they are texts whose sources may include shamanistic literature (Bowra 1952: 78-79). Eduard Norden and Peter von der Mühl convincingly argue that

actions and his immediate vicinity, away from the larger vantage point of the scene presented by the μέν.

The inclusion of ἔπειθ' (516) seems redundant but in fact performs two functions. It reinforces ἔνθα in a connective rather than solely adverbial function, and, most importantly, emphasizes the spatial aspect of ἔνθα in this passage as separate from its temporal meaning. The word ἔνθα is almost synonymous with ἔπειτα. When placed together, the two adverbs bring the ideas of space and time to the forefront, again highlighting entrance into the Underworld *chronotope*. The last two instances of ἔνθα with the relative pronoun ὅσον (“as much as”),

an early epic on the subject of Heracles' *katabasis* to Hades existed and may have been known to several early poets, including Homer (Clark 1979: 53-54; Von der Mühl 1938). That is not to say that Homer's Underworld was purely derivative since the poet may indeed have been the first to use the Underworld narrative type in the way that we see in his successors, as an embedded scene and literary digression. Nevertheless, Homer's vision of the Underworld seems intended to activate multiple Underworld narratives for his audiences ranging from the necromantic to the katabatic. To the extent that authorial intention can be determined, the appearance of Heracles at the end of Odysseus' visit to the Underworld surely demonstrates that the author wanted the reader to connect the two heroes, thereby elevating Odysseus' heroic status to the audience, both Phaeacian and otherwise (Karanika 2011). The passing reference to Theseus and Pirithoos in *Odyssey* 11.631 gives further evidence to the grouping of Odysseus with katabatic heroes. For later audiences, the *Minyas*, an epic dated to the 6th century B.C.E. (Lloyd-Jones 1967: 216-229), would have informed their interpretation of the Odyssean sighting as katabatic.

indicating quantity, along with the unit πυγούσιον (“cubit”) delineate a measurable distance in distinctly human terms as opposed to the larger landscapes introduced by the previous ἔνθα’s. As a group, therefore, the ἔνθα’s have a funneling effect, taking the audience from the sight of the promontory at the edge of Ocean to a concrete piece of earth, which is where the central ritual of the episode will occur.

When ἔνθα appears again, its meaning shifts from spatial to temporal, correlating with the ἐπήν in 527, but still it introduces a directional message.

αὐτὰρ ἐπήν εὐχῆσι λίση κλυτὰ ἔθνεα νεκρῶν,
ἔνθ’ οἷν ἀρνειὸν ῥέζειν θῆλύν τε μέλαιναν
εἰς Ἔρεβος στρέψας, αὐτὸς δ’ ἀπονόσφι τραπέσθαι
ἰέμενος ποταμοῖο ῥοάων· (*Ody.* 10.526-529)

But when you have supplicated the glorious race of the dead with prayers,
Then sacrifice a full-grown ram and a black ewe, **turning**
them towards Erebus, but you yourself **turn away** from them,
making your way towards the streams of the river.

This high level of local detail related to direction and location is a crucial aspect of setting up the Underworld *chronotope* because it gives a sense of familiarity and tangibility to the space in what is otherwise a strange and unreal place, which is usually imagined to be intangible and distant from everyday reality. The specificity also proclaims that these small, somewhat obscure cues have important meanings.³⁵

³⁵ The *Odyssey* has several ἔνθα narrative sequences, which generally occur when a character is recounting an adventure in the past. Some examples in the *Odyssey* include Nestor’s description

Besides giving hidden signals to the audience, Circe's directions also generate a sense of anticipation so that the audience looks out for the particular landmarks and rituals she describes in the second account, Odysseus' "real" Underworld voyage, the *Nekuia*. Interestingly, Odysseus does not confirm the landmarks that Circe names but lists a new set of spatial and temporal markers. This leaves a gap between the author's actual narrative and the audience's expectations, a dissonant space breaking the contract of storytelling and therefore creating a pause in the proceedings that must be reckoned with.

Odysseus tells the journey to Hades as experienced from his perspective, although he often keeps the same words that Circe used, thereby linking the two passages intratextually so that they are "heard" together through the course of the narration.³⁶ "Circe's *nekuia*" becomes an active *para-narrative*, shadowing the *Nekuia* account. The shift of the verbs from infinitives with imperative force (κέλσαι, ιέναι, ὀρύξαι, χεῖσθαι) in Circe's *nekuia* to first or third person (ἐκέλσαμεν, ἤομεν, ὄρυξα, χεόμην) in the *Nekuia*, where actors in the ritual are named or indicated, personalizes the account while also creating a strong connection between the two

of the heroes dying in Troy (3.109-111) and the encounters with the Cicones (9.39-75), the Lotus-Eaters (9.82-104), and the Cyclops (9.105-236). The ἔνθα mode of description is sometimes used in *ekphrasis*, although it only appears once in the famous "Shield of Achilles" passage to point out a particular scene on the shield (*Il.* 18.497). No other scenes outside of the Underworld, however, have such densely packed usages of ἔνθα to describe an environment or temporal sequence of encountering objects.

³⁶ For more on repeated and intratextually referenced passages in Homer, see Tsagalis (Tsagalis 2010), particularly "The Hypertext of Astyanax" by Jonathon Burgess and "Context as Hypertext: Divine Rescue Scenes in the *Iliad*" by Jim Marks.

passages. The polyptotic relationship between these words anchors the scenes to each other, since each is a two-way link building a larger relationship between the scenes at the word level.

Book 11 of the *Odyssey* begins with Odysseus and his crew following Circe's instructions to the letter, actively setting up the mast and sail before taking their seats (έν δ' ιστόν τιθέμεσθα καὶ ιστία νηὶ μελαίνῃ, / έν δὲ τὰ μῆλα λαβόντες ἐβήσαμεν, "and we set up the mast and the sails in the black ship, and in it we embarked taking the sheep, *Ody.* 11.3-4). Odysseus and his crew follow divine command by fulfilling this part of the bargain, then he reiterates that his voyage is specially marked by the gods when he makes Circe an active agent, providing the wind in his sails (ήμῖν δ' αὖ κατόπισθε νεὸς κυανοπρόροιο / ἴκμενον οὖρον ἴει πλησίστιον, ἐσθλὸν ἐταῖρον, / Κίρκη εὐπλόκαμος, δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα, "Fair-tressed Circe, fierce goddess who speaks in a human voice, sent for us, in turn, a favorable sail-filling breeze, as a goodly companion, blowing behind the ship with the dark prow," *Ody.* 11.6-8). This interplay between what the gods provide and what humans do continues into the next line, in which Odysseus' crew looks after their rigging while the wind continues to drive them to their destination (ήμεῖς δ' ὄπλα ἕκαστα πονησάμενοι κατὰ νῆα / ἤμεθα· τὴν δ' ἄνεμός τε κυβερνήτης τ' ἴθυνε, "and after we took pains to arrange each piece of equipment, we sat down in the ship; and both the wind and pilot drove it on a straight course," *Ody.* 11.9-10). Already in this passage, however, Odysseus the narrator has begun to alter the story by the addition of a pilot (κυβερνήτης), which Circe had earlier said was unnecessary (*Ody.* 10.505). He then inserts further details, such as information about the environment and the Cimmerians' land, that expand on Circe's description of the journey to Hades while also re-focusing it through *chronotopic* markers and other figures that act as references to information and myths outside of the text. The result is a multi-layered, intertextual, and interactive narrative experience that prompts the

audience to recall other versions of Underworld scenes both within the *Odyssey* and from other collectively known myths.³⁷

Character Disorientation

In the *Nekuia*, there is a strong focus on how disoriented Odysseus feels, first through information given about light and location and then, during the middle of the narrative, in his discussion with the souls of people he knows. The focus of the description at the beginning of Book 11 is the removal of those features – light, the sun, sky, and stars – that signify location and the passage of time.³⁸ Further, Circe’s major landmarks are missing from Odysseus’ account – either he sees something different from what Circe described or he, as a storyteller, is building on her description by adding observations most relevant to him and his audience. Despite the

³⁷ Eduard Norden and Peter von der Mühl conjectured that an early epic of Heracles’ *katabasis* to Hades may have been known to several early poets, including Homer, and may have been a model for the *Nekuia* (Clark 1979: 53-54; Von der Mühl 1938).

³⁸ Plato notes in *Timaeus* 38c6 that these heavenly bodies are what define and preserve time (ἐξ οὖν λόγου καὶ διανοίας θεοῦ τοιαύτης πρὸς χρόνου γένεσιν, ἵνα γεννηθῆ χρόνος, ἥλιος καὶ σελήνη καὶ πέντε ἄλλα ἄστρα, ἐπίκλην ἔχοντα πλανητά, εἰς διορισμὸν καὶ φυλακὴν ἀριθμῶν χρόνου γέγονεν, “Out of god’s logic and thought of such regarding time’s origin, so that time would be born, the sun and moon and five other stars, having the name ‘wanderers,’ were born to define and preserve the counting of time.” Sorabji notes that ancient Greek thought generally defined time in terms of change and movement (Sorabji 1983: 67-83). Exceptions include philosophers such as Iamblichus, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras, who split time into higher/lower time or incorporated infinite periods of rest between periods of motion, in which human reality existed.

omissions and additions, “Circe’s *nekuia*” is constantly present in Odysseus’ as a shadow narrative, or *para-narrative* “text behind the text,” that helps inform and add layers to his account.

Whereas Circe was more focused on spatial landmarks, Odysseus starts by giving a time frame for his travels as an entire day, particularly noting the setting of the sun as the advent of a shadowy darkness that continues to be a topic of conversation throughout the *Nekuia* (τῆς δὲ πανημερίης τέταθ’ ἰστία ποντοπορούσης. δύσετό τ’ ἠέλιος σκιόωντό τε πᾶσαι ἀγυιαί, “and the sails of the ship were stretched full all day long; and the sun set, and all the paths fell dark,” *Ody.* 11.11-12). He follows this with a description of the Cimmerians, a group whose purpose is to flag his location as still being in the human realm near civilization while also undermining the familiar elements of Greek society. Again, this passage emphasizes temporal and spatial elements (marked in bold):

ἦ δ’ ἐς πείραθ’ ἴκανε βαθυρρόου Ὠκεανοῖο.
ἔνθα δὲ Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν δῆμός τε πόλις τε,
ἠέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμένοι· οὐδέ **ποτ’** αὐτοὺς (15)
Ἥλιος φαέθων καταδέσκειται ἀκτίνεσσιν,
οὔθ’ **όπότ’** ἄν στείχησι πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,
οὔθ’ **ότ’** ἄν ἄψ ἐπὶ γαίαν ἀπ’ οὐρανόθεν προτράπηται,
ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ **νύξ** ὀλοή τέταται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι. (*Ody.* 11.13-19)

And [the ship] reached the end of deep-flowing Ocean.

And **there** are the people and city of Cimmerian men,

who have been concealed in a misty cloud; nor **ever** does **Helios**,

when shining with his rays, look down upon them,
neither **when he** proceeds toward the starry sky,
nor **when** he turns to go back to the earth from the sky,
but night in its entirety is spread over wretched mortals.

Odysseus clearly defines the Cimmerians as mortal men (Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν, δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι), but they are presented as a borderlands people living between the norms of reality and that of the Underworld *chronotope*, in a transitional space.³⁹ This concern with elements of light and darkness as well as time sequencing recurs at several other points in the middle of the narrative as well,⁴⁰ highlighting Odysseus' separation from the living world and also signaling his presence in a familiar type-scene of Greek mythology – a visit to the Underworld.

After completing the first stage of his necromantic ritual, Odysseus meets the ghost of his shipmate Elpenor and again indicates the darkness of the region (Ἐλπήνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα; “Elpenor, how did you come under the dank gloom?” *Ody.* 11.57) before expressing his disorientation at having his shipmate arrive earlier than he did in his ship (ἔφθης

³⁹ Scholars from antiquity associated these people with the historical Cimmerians, who were thought to be located in the far north because of their long nights and were described by Herodotus as occupying the region north of the Black Sea and Caucasus during the 8th century B.C.E. (Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.11-12). Heubeck and Hoekstra argue that the Cimmerians' historical reality has little bearing on their presence in the *Odyssey*, since what is being described in the *Nekuia* is a mythical geography (Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990: 77-78).

⁴⁰ The topic of light and darkness recurs in Odysseus' conversations with the ghosts of Elpenor (11.57), Tiresias (11.93-94), and Anticlea (11.155-156) as well as in his encounter with the eidolon of Heracles (11.619).

πεζὸς ἰὼν ἢ ἐγὼ σὺν νηὶ μελαίνῃ, “going by foot, you arrived faster than I with my dark ship,” 11.58). The question not only represents Odysseus’ natural curiosity but also calls on the audience to make note of an important anomaly, as it is the first explicit acknowledgment of the spatial and temporal distortions that pervade the Underworld *chronotope*.

Elpenor’s ghost acts as a bridge between the two *chronotopes* and makes the audience feel comfortable with the discrepancies. Of course, Odysseus is still talking to a ghost in an imaginary landscape, but the figure of Elpenor somehow normalizes the interaction. When Elpenor’s ghost explains that he died the night before by falling from Circe’s roof, it seems to make sense that he, so recently dead, would be closest to the shore where Odysseus lands. Elpenor’s first job as a character is to highlight the differences between the Underworld and reality by shocking Odysseus into remarking on the strangeness of his comrade’s presence. Elpenor’s position in space and in the text also emphasizes the location and movement of Odysseus into the Underworld, suggesting that the linear time and space of the real world intersects the eternal time of the Underworld at specific points.⁴¹ Intertwining these strands of time leads to a character’s re-positioning in his own story and resolves the disorientation by allowing him to move between different strings of time, so he can eventually find his way back to his own place in the story but with new knowledge gained from encounter with the other strands of time. This happens because alternate, viable outcomes for the protagonist come to

⁴¹ Purves’ conclusions of “falling to one’s death” as a temporal marker in the *Iliad* can also be applied in the *Odyssey* (Purves 2006). She argues for two basic time frames, mortal and immortal, which are experienced by humans and gods, respectively. This project suggests a third time frame which occurs in the Underworld, which has elements of both of these other times and which produces multiple levels of narrative time operating simultaneously.

light as real possibilities for the narrative direction. The poet suggests the idea that Odysseus could end his journey in the Underworld (i.e., never return), or he could meet fates similar to those of various souls he encounters in the episode, such as Elpenor, Agamemnon, Achilles, Ajax, and Heracles.

Elpenor took the “quick” route to the Underworld by accident the day before, but ends up at the same entry point as Odysseus in the present moment. Since Elpenor is the last person to die in the main narrative, he is still hovering at the threshold of Hades and can act as a link between Odysseus’ diachronic world and the synchronic Underworld. The poet signals the importance of the Underworld *chronotope* through his placement of the Elpenor encounter first.⁴² The conversation about time of arrival in the Stygian space prepares the audience for the fact that characters existing from multiple time periods are about to appear.

This same strategy is employed elsewhere and can most clearly be seen in the shorter Underworld scene in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*, the “Little *nekuia*,” which also starts with *chronotopic* marking. While Odysseus’ transition into the Underworld *chronotope* emphasized disruptions in the temporal field, the suitors’ entry focuses more on spatial anomalies. The ghosts of the suitors traverse rough, dark terrain. The scene starts with the god Hermes in his role as Psychopomp with special emphasis on his influence over men’s consciousness and perception (Ἐρμῆς δὲ ψυχὰς Κυλλήνιος ἐξεκαλείτο ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων· ἔχε δὲ ῥάβδον μετὰ χειρὸς καλὴν χρυσεῖην, τῇ τ’ ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει, ὧν ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ’ αὖτε καὶ ὑπνώοντας ἐγείρει, “Cyllenian Hermes called forth the souls of the suitors; and he held a beautiful golden wand in his hands, with which he charms the eyes of any men he wants, and in turn also awakens

⁴² This has some logic because Elpenor is unburied and so recently dead, however, it cannot be assumed that his ghost would be the first Odysseus would talk to or see.

those that are sleeping,” *Ody.* 24.1-4). His presence, as a representative of the divine, and his control over slippery transitions such as those of sleep and wakefulness indicate that the narrative is entering an important, marked moment that is “between” the lines of the story, the *chronotope* where Underworld narratives generally exist. Again the poet takes the audience out of the narrative of Odysseus’ return to convey, by a third-person narrator, something important that cannot fit into the primary narrative’s linear timeline. This movement into an abstracted “in-between” place within the narrative is mimicked and made visible by the image of the souls walking in line to the netherworld. They do not appear suddenly in Hades as Elpenor seems to do above, taking a short route.⁴³ Instead, they float along behind their guide Hermes, a fact emphasized by the description and naming of milestones along the way and the use of verbs of motion in the scene.

τῆ ῥ’ ἄγε κινήσας, ταὶ δὲ τρίζουσαι ἔποντο. (5)

ὡς δ’ ὅτε νυκτερίδες μυχῶ ἄντρου θεσπεσίοιο

τρίζουσαι ποτέονται, ἐπεὶ κέ τις ἀποπέσησιν

ὄρμαθού ἐκ πέτρης, ἀνά τ’ ἀλλήλησιν ἔχονται,

ὡς αἰ τετριγυῖαι ἄμ’ ἦϊσαν ἦρχε δ’ ἄρα σφιν

Ἑρμείας ἀκάκητα κατ’ εὐρώεντα κέλευθα. (10)

πὰρ δ’ ἴσαν Ὠκεανού τε ῥοὰς καὶ Λευκάδα πέτρην,

⁴³ The soul of Elpenor is the first to greet Odysseus at Persephone’s grove and is very particular in describing his death and giving the details for his requested burial. Nowhere does the ghost mention Hermes or being “led” to Hades through along a rugged path. Instead, after Elpenor describes breaking his neck, he says, “my soul went down to Hades” (ψυχὴ δ’ Ἄϊδόσδε κατήλθε, *Ody.* 11.65)

ἦδὲ παρ' Ἡελίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον Ὀνειρώων
ἦῖσαν· αἴψα δ' ἴκοντο κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα,
ἔνθα τε ναίουσι ψυχαί, εἶδωλα καμόντων. (*Ody.* 24.5-14)

Having set [the suitors' souls] **in motion** with this [wand], he led them along and they **followed**, shrieking. Just as when bats flutter around shrieking in the recess of an awful cave, when one from his place in the chain in which they hold themselves together has fallen off of the rock, so too the shrieking souls **went**; And the kindly healer Hermes **led** them down **dank paths**, and they **went past the streams of Ocean** and **the White Rock (Leuke)**, and then passed **by the gates of Helios** and **the realm of Dreams**. And straightaway, they **reached** the **asphodel meadows**; and **there** the souls dwell, images of men who have died, worn by toils.

The physicality of their progression “thickens” space in the same way as the loss of light “thickens time” in the earlier Underworld passage.

Hermes' role is to take the suitors away from the land of the living, but at the same time, he takes the audience away from the plot of the *Odyssey* for a sight-seeing *katabasis*, in which the landmarks themselves make reference to alternate, well-known accounts of the afterlife both within the *Odyssey* and elsewhere. The phrase παρ' ἴσαν Ὠκεανοῦ τε ῥοᾶς has echoes with a phrase from Book 10 (ἀν δὲ νηὶ δι' Ὠκεανοῖο περήσῃς, “but when indeed you should pass through Ocean with your ship,” 10.508) and Book 11 (αὐτοὶ δ' αὐτε παρὰ ῥόον Ὠκεανοῖο

ἤομεν, “and we ourselves went past the stream of Ocean,” 11.21-22), which describe Odysseus’ journey towards Hades (Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992: 360).

Leuke, the White Rock, is not mentioned elsewhere in Homer (Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992: 360), but it is known from other sources (*Aithiopsis*/Proclus), to be the name of the final abode of Achilles, after his mother Thetis intervenes to remove him from Hades. The island of Leuke is a particularly important landmark because it introduces alternate afterlife stories about the characters who will soon be presented, and contextualizes Achilles’ afterlife in the *Odyssey* against that of other poems, since Leuke is only one, “individualized variation on his other traditional abodes in the afterlife – either the Isles of the Blessed (*Skolion* 894P, Pindar *Olympian* 2.68-80) or Elysium itself (Ibycus 291P, Simonides 558P)” (Nagy 1981: 167). The initial list of landmarks, therefore, is an index of afterlife accounts related to heroes of the Trojan War, which is later expanded through the conversations among the ghosts, particularly Achilles and Agamemnon. Thus, the poet invokes several *para-narratives* at the opening of the second Underworld scene by making the souls’ walk through terrain into a virtual walk through multiple mythic narratives, which become anchor points to orient the interpretation of the upcoming scene.

The Poetics of the Underworld Chronotope in Hesiod

The particular poetics involved in creating an Underworld *chronotope* are not limited to Homer nor to heroic *katabaseis*. By following the same lines of analysis, it becomes apparent that a similar poetics of the Underworld occurs in a much wider range of texts than has previously been observed. We can see this by looking at Hesiod’s *Theogony* and identifying a similar pattern in the description of its Underworld scene.

By introducing Tartarus, Hesiod first establishes an Underworld *chronotope* that differs from the one in his primary narrative. The narrator calls attention to the conflation of geographical and temporal features in the Underworld *chronotope* when describing the distance Tartarus and the Underworld are from the real world:

έννέα γὰρ νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέματα χάλκεος ἄκμων
οὐρανόθεν κατιών, δεκάτη κ' ἐς γαίαν ἵκοιτο·
έννέα δ' αὖ νύκτας τε καὶ ἡμέματα χάλκεος ἄκμων
ἐκ γαίης κατιών, δεκάτη κ' ἐς τάρταρον ἵκοι.
(*Theogony*, 722-725)

For a bronze anvil falling from heaven nine nights and days would reach earth on the tenth [day]; and in turn, a bronze anvil falling nine nights and days down from earth would arrive at Tartarus on the tenth.

The narrator resorts to time increments as a definition of distance just as Odysseus does when he describes the journey to get to the edge of Hades as having taken him an entire day in his ship with the urging of the wind (*Ody.* 11.11-12). The description of distance in this passage emphasizes that a victorious Zeus created a prison for the Titans at the furthest possible point from his kingdom (χώρῳ ἐν εὐρώεντι, πελώρης ἔσχατα γαίης, “in a dank place, [at] the very ends of the enormous earth,” 731; see also 717-725).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This line echoes the description of Hermes' path into Hades with the suitors in *Odyssey* 24 (κατ' εὐρώεντα κέλευθα, *Ody.* 24.10).

Hesiod's description also includes notable, specific details about access to the Underworld and its civilization. The catalog of the Underworld's terrain continues for a good portion of the poem, which would suggest a specific purpose and high value in the economy of a poem that is just over one thousand lines. In addition, Hesiod introduces human terms and human time frames, taking pains to point out the difficulty and distance that a traveler must go to reach Tartarus. The narrator locates the space of the Underworld using relatable time increments but makes a change in how he describes space so it is incongruent with the rest of the poem. Hesiod shifts the audience's attention to geographical relationships from the primary narrative's focus on familial relationships and personalized gods. As Friedrich Solmsen has observed, "the genealogical relationships while by no means forgotten have as it were been translated into a topographical scheme" (Solmsen 1982: 15), indicating that the landmarks and their relationship to each other are important. In the *Tartarographia*, as the Underworld scene in the *Theogony* is called, the narrator takes on the perspective of a man journeying through a foreign land, meeting obstacles in sequential order, moving from the edge of the Underworld to its center. Hesiod's language assumes that the Underworld is a three-dimensional space through which a person is moving and looking around. He introduces each element from that single perspective, giving a tour of both natural and constructed landmarks, just as the three Underworld scenes from the *Odyssey* do.⁴⁵

After describing the long journey to its entrance, the first point Hesiod emphasizes is that the Underworld has a distinctly unwelcome border (τὸν πέρι χάλκεον ἔρκος ἐλήλαται· ἀμφὶ δέ μιν νύξ τριστοιχὶ κέχυται περὶ δειρήν· αὐτὰρ ὑπερθε γῆς ῥίζαι πεφύασι καὶ

⁴⁵ In the *Odyssey*, the Underworlds are described from the single-viewer human perspective by Circe (Book 10), by Odysseus (Book 11), and by the narrator (Book 24).

ἀτρυγέτιο θαλάσσης, “Around it a bronze fence is extended, and on both sides of it, triple-layered night is poured around its neck; and above it grow the roots of the earth and of the barren sea,” *Th.* 726-728). After this hostile entry point with numerous physical obstacles, the traveler next encounters a vast chasm whose dimensions are again defined in terms of human time (χάσμα μέγ’, οὐδέ κε πάντα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν οὐδ’ ἀσπίδα ἴκοιτ’, εἰ πρότα πύλων ἔντοσθε γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ κεν ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα φέροι πρὸ θύελλα θυέλλης ἀργαλέη, “It is a great gulf, neither would a man reach the ground at the end of an entire year, once he was inside the gates, but cruel storm upon storm would carry him here and there,” *Th.* 740-743). The fence, chasm, and storms are challenges that would seem nearly impossible to a human,⁴⁶ which further indicates that the poet is giving the tour from a human perspective.

After passing these physical borders, most of which are natural, the audience comes upon a group of dwellings for the gods. This is the first time in the poem that we hear about specific, non-natural structures built for, assigned to, and inhabited by gods. Moreover, we see that they are arranged in a certain way, which the narrator unfolds by turning the gaze back and forth from one house to the next, building up to the most frightful structure of all – the prison of the Titans, a warning of Zeus’ wrath and power. After traversing the gulf, the first dwelling is the House of Night. This makes sense since the gods who dwell in it are those who must daily leave the Tartaran space.

καὶ Νυκτὸς ἐρεμνῆς οἰκία δεινὰ

⁴⁶ In the passage about the origins of the divine oath, Iris easily traverses the distance to fetch water from Styx on Zeus’ command (Ζεὺς δέ τε Ἴριν ἔπεμψε θεῶν μέγαν ὄρκον ἐνεῖκαι τηλόθεν ἐν χρυσῆι προχόφῳ πολυώνυμον ὕδωρ, “and Zeus sent Iris to bring the great oath of the gods in a golden jar, the famous water from far away,” *Th.* 784-785).

ἔστηκεν νεφέλης κεκαλυμμένα κυανέησι.
τῶν πρόσθ' Ἴαπετοῖο πάϊς ἔχει οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν
ἔστηὼς κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ἀκαμάτησι χέρεσσιν
ἀστεμφέως, ὅθι Νύξ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἄσσον ἰοῦσαι
ἀλλήλας προσέειπον ἀμειβόμεναι μέγαν οὐδὸν
χάλκεον· ἡ μὲν ἔσω καταβήσεται, ἡ δὲ θύραζε
ἔρχεται, οὐδέ ποτ' ἀμφοτέρας δόμος ἐντὸς ἐέργει
ἀλλ' αἰεὶ ἐτέρη γε δόμων ἔκτοσθεν ἐοῦσα
γαίαν ἐπιστρέφεται, ἡ δ' αὖ δόμου ἐντὸς ἐοῦσα
μίμνει τὴν αὐτῆς ὥρην ὁδοῦ, ἔστ' ἂν ἴκηται·
ἡ μὲν ἐπιχθονίοισι φάος πολυδερχὲς ἔχουσα,
ἡ δ' Ὕπνον μετὰ χερσὶ, κασίγνητον Θανάτοιο,
Νύξ ὀλοή, νεφέλη κεκαλυμμένη ἠεροειδεῖ. (*Th.* 743-757)

And the terrible houses of murky Night stand there, wrapped in dark clouds. In front of these, the son of Iapetos [Atlas], standing immovable, holds broad heaven with his head and untiring hands, where Night and Day, passing near, greet each other as they cross the great bronze threshold. And while the one is about to go into the house, the other goes out the door. And the house never holds both together inside. But always, the one goes around the earth, being outside of the house, while the other, in turn, remaining inside the house waits for the time of her departure, until it comes.

And the one holds far-illuminating light for the ones on the earth,
while the other, destructive Night, concealed in a misty cloud,
holds Sleep in her hands, the brother of Death.

Three fierce figures (Atlas, Night, and Day) create the space in and around this house, and a sense of its dimensions come from the fact that Atlas must be so large that his body spans the distance from the floor of the Underworld to the base of heaven. Presumably, this is the distance the anvil had to fall between heaven and earth then from earth to Tartarus, plus the distance from the bronze gate circled threefold by night across the gulf to where Atlas is standing.⁴⁷ The presence of Night and Day indicate that time does have a role in the make-up of the Underworld, even though here they seem to refer more to spatial rather than temporal dimension, just as the anvil did.

After initializing the Underworld *chronotope* through temporal and spatial cues, the narrator guides the reader's view by using the same *ἔνθα*-mode of storytelling seen in the *Odyssey* above and briefly catalogues the other houses both in and immediately adjacent to this Underworld kingdom:

ἔνθα δὲ Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἐρεμνῆς οἰκί' ἔχουσιν,
Ἕπνος καὶ Θάνατος, δεινοὶ θεοί (758-759)

And **there**, the children of dark Night, Sleep and Death – terrible gods –
have houses

⁴⁷ The House of Night itself only needs to house one god at a time, either Night or Day, whose scale is almost beyond human comprehension.

ἔνθα θεοῦ χθονίου πρόσθεν δόμοι ἠχήμεντες
ἰφθίμου τ' Αἴδεω καὶ ἐπαινῆς Περσεφονείης
ἔστᾶσιν, δεινὸς δὲ κύων προπάροιθε φυλάσσει (767-769)

And **there, in front**, stands the **echoing halls** of the chthonic god,
of powerful Hades, and of dread Persephone, and a terrible dog
[Cerberus] guards **in front**

Not only is space delineated, but it is also expanded into three dimensions through the directional synonyms πρόσθεν and προπάροιθε (“in front”) as well as through the idea of “echoing halls,” which suggests a certain magnitude of space and grandness to the dwelling. Moreover, the owners of this house are the *future* king and queen of the Underworld, at least from the perspective of the primary narrative, since Zeus has not yet assigned his brother to rule over the Tartaran space nor has Persephone yet been married to Hades. The Underworld *chronotope* temporarily synchronizes disparate time periods for the audience, giving a *telos* to the “present” chaos of the gods’ genealogical succession in the primary narrative with a glimpse of future stability in the figures of Hades and Persephone.

The next structures, Styx’s house and the Titans’ prison, further expand the Underworld spatially but also politically, since both represent Zeus’ power. Styx was given her dwelling and oath-keeper role as a reward from Zeus, whereas the Titans were imprisoned for opposing him.

ἔνθα δὲ ναιετάει στυγερὴ θεὸς ἀθανάτοισι,

δεινὴ Στύξ, θυγάτηρ ἀψορροῦ Ὠκεανοῖο
πρεσβυτάτη· νόσφιν δὲ θεῶν κλυτὰ δώματα ναίει
μακρῆσιν πέτρῃσι κατηρεφέ· ἀμφὶ δὲ πάντῃ
κίουσιν ἀργυρέοισι πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἐστήρικται. (775-779)

And **there**, a goddess who is loathsome for immortals dwells –
terrible Styx. She is the oldest daughter of back-flowing Ocean.
And she dwells in a famous house, separate from the gods, vaulted
over with great rocks, and around it on all sides it is propped up
towards the sky with silver pillars.

ἔνθα δὲ μαρμάρεαί τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός,
ἀστεμφὲς ῥίζῃσι διηνεκέεσσιν ἀρηρώς,
αὐτοφυής· πρόσθεν δὲ θεῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων
Τιτῆνες ναίουσι, πέρην χάεος ζοφεροῖο.
αὐτὰρ ἐρισμαράγοιο Διὸς κλειτοὶ ἐπίκουροι
δώματα ναιετάουσιν ἐπ' Ὠκεανοῖο θεμέθλοισι (811-816)

And **there** are marble gates and a bronze threshold, immovable,
fitted with continuous roots, self-generated; and in front of this the
Titans dwell, away from all the gods, beyond gloomy chaos. But
the famous allies of loud-thundering Zeus dwell in houses at the
very foundations of Ocean.

The reference at the end to the houses of Zeus' allies rounds out the *Tartarographia* and returns the poem back from geographical to genealogical discourse. The places indicated are more than location in space; they also refer to location in historical time and to political power. This act of *deixis* using ἔνθα brings objects into existence, such that "In the act of pointing to or creating such objects, deixis establishes orientation points between points which the characters of the textual universe move" (Felson 2004: 254). The audience must use these fictive landmarks introduced by ἔνθα in interpreting and understanding the larger context of the Underworld journey, since the deictic phenomena "invite interpreters to draw inferences" comparing their own realities to what is being presented in a narrative (Felson 2004: 254).

The beginning of the *Theogony's* Underworld, therefore, follows a similar pattern and function to the Underworld scenes in the *Odyssey*. Since there are no human characters in it, the *Tartarographia* demonstrates how temporal-spatial information early in the scene cue the reader to the author's digression into the Underworld *chronotope*. The *Tartarographia*, the journey of Elpenor's ghost, and the descent of the suitors' souls all support an Underworld that is contiguous with the real world, although misaligned chronotopically. Moreover, when branching out from these famous scenes, one can find other representations peppered throughout the extant poems that rely on this vision of the Underworld as a separate *chronotope*. A passing reference to Hades' realm in Book 20 of the *Iliad* can therefore also be viewed as an Underworld scene from a rhetorical perspective because, though short, it too invokes the idea of temporal-spatial disruption and generates *para-narratives* to fill in the details. In Book 20 of the *Iliad*, the strife between the gods is described as so severe that it would reverse the primordial separation of realms:

Ἦς τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους μάκαρες θεοὶ ὀτρύνοντες

σύμβalon, ἐν δ' αὐτοῖς ἔριδα ῥήγγυντο βαρείαν· (55)

δεινὸν δὲ βρόντησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε

ὑπόθεν· αὐτὰρ νέρθε Ποσειδάων ἐτίναξε

γαῖαν ἀπειρεσίην ὀρέων τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα.

πάντες δ' ἐσσεύοντο πόδες πολυπίδακος Ἴδης

καὶ κορυφαί, Τρώων τε πόλις καὶ νῆες Ἀχαιῶν. (60)

ἔδεισεν δ' ὑπένερθεν ἄναξ ἐνέρον Αἰδωνεύς,

δείσας δ' ἐκ θρόνου ἄλτο καὶ ἴαχε, μὴ οἱ ὑπερθε

γαῖαν ἀναρρήξειε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων,

οἰκία δὲ θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι φανείη

σμερδαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ· (65)

τόσσοσ ἄρα κτύπος ὦρτο θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνιόντων. (*Il.* 20.54-66)

Thus did the blessed gods, urging, pit one side against the other,

and let break loose among themselves grievous strife;

and from above, the father of men and gods thundered dreadfully;

but from below Poseidon shook the boundless earth and

the sheer peaks of mountains. And all the roots and peaks of many-

streamed Ida were shaken, and the city of the Trojans and ships of the

Achaean. And in the netherworld, Hades, the lord of those below, was

alarmed, and he jumped from his throne and cried out, fearing lest

Poseidon the Earth-shaker above him should split the earth, and the houses

of the dead lie open to mortals and immortals alike, dreadful and dank,

which even the gods loathe; so great did the din of the gods rise up, as
they clashed in strife.

This passage describes a common Archaic Greek vision of the location of the Underworld as just below the earth. The crack in the earth that Poseidon might create would be so forceful that it would disrupt the spatial field of reality. Hades' fear that mortals and immortals would mingle with his world of the dead and see what they should not can only be understood to an audience who knows that the cosmos was stabilized by a separation into three realms, as told also in Hesiod and elsewhere in the *Iliad* (15.187-195). This brief episode from the *Iliad*, therefore, must invoke several *para-narratives* to make sense and demonstrates the consistent poetics of Underworld scenes from an early date.

The New Abnormal

As shown in the previous section, Underworld scenes are fairly consistent in their beginnings. The greatest variety occurs in the middle, although there are certain patterns that recur even here, such as the appearance of supernatural entities (souls or chthonic gods), obstacles for a hero to overcome, conversations with the dead, and predictions about the future. A large part of the poetics of the Underworld is an emphasis on how unnatural it is for the dead and living to mingle together. After the initial shock of entry into an Underworld scene, the narrative continues: a "new normal" for reality is established that is, nevertheless, abnormal compared to that of the primary narrative and from the perspective of everyday reality. Even after the Underworld *chronotope* is established, the Underworld scene seems aware of itself as a narrative digression. Characters, living and dead, almost always remark on how unlikely their interactions are, and the narrator keeps the chronotopic markers visible.

This incongruity is broadcast to the audience and highlights how remarkable the heroes are who do cross this barrier. In the *Iliad* passage above, the dispute between the gods and Poseidon's anger threatens to unravel the cosmos and upturn the balance between the three brothers who divided it into equal realms. By portraying a panicked Hades and thereby showing that even the gods fear such border transgressions, the narrator appeals to the audience's sense of order to emphasize the chaos of battle and the thin line of earth separating life and death. The proximity of the Underworld to the real world underscores the close connection between the worlds of the living and the dead, which are tied together on both physical and emotional levels.

Although the poetics of the Underworld builds a pattern of familiarity that welcomes the visitor to treat its space and denizens as he would the real world, the environment is constantly offering reminders that it is a constructed space and not representative of the mortal world. This is particularly apparent in the *Nekuia*. As if worried that the initial entry and early conversation with Elpenor's ghost were not enough of a signal to the audience of the Underworld *chronotope*, two other characters bring up the lack of light in the Underworld. The opening of Anticlea's speech mimics the conversation with Elpenor's ghost through its references to the darkness and lack of sunlight. Odysseus' mother asks how he could cross into the gloom, where it is difficult for living eyes to see (πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα ζωὸς ἐών; χαλεπὸν δὲ τάδε ζωοῖσιν ὁρᾶσθαι, "how did you come under the dank gloom, while you are alive? But it is difficult for living men to see these things," *Ody.* 11.155-156); and she later asserts that he will soon be eager for the light (ἀλλὰ φώσδε τάχιστα λιλαίεο, "but struggle towards the light very swiftly," *Ody.* 11.223). Later, Tiresias also begins his conversation by creating two categories of people: those that live in light and those that live in darkness. He asks why Odysseus would leave the sun to visit the gloomy land of the dead (τίπτ' αὐτ', ὦ δύστηνε, λιπὼν φάος ἠελίοιο ἦλυθες, ὄφρα

ἴδη νέκυας καὶ ἀτεροπέα χῶρον, “why ever, unlucky one, did you leave the light and come here to see corpses and a joyless land?” *Ody.* 11.93-94).

Repeated mention of the sun and its light informs the audience that Odysseus has entered a dark, unknowable place. As a living man, he has an affinity for life as it exists outside the Underworld *chronotope*, a life that can be measured in chronological time and can be mapped through the coordinates of heavenly bodies. The focus on spatial and temporal disorientation throughout the *Nekuia* helps the audience recognize Odysseus’ success in entering the Underworld *chronotope* and in arriving at the correct location for the consultation with the dead to occur. It also reminds the audience that the scene is linking to and operating multiple narrative frames simultaneously. Each conversation represents a new beginning in which multiple sets of *para-narratives* are engaged and layered. Presenting the same conversation three times enhances the audience’s sense of *déjà-vu*, another subtle indicator of non-linear time.

In addition to these brief but consistent reminders of the Underworld *chronotope*, the central sections of Underworld scenes themselves have consistent patterns that make up the poetics of the Underworld. Although there is too much variety in Underworld scenes to create a full list of similarities, the audience can rely on certain common features within the framework of an afterlife encounter that act as intertextual links between almost all Underworld scenes. These include conversations with souls and visions of chthonic figures that would otherwise be inaccessible. These characters usually have a personal connection to the visiting hero or some defined interest in the primary narrative’s outcome, yet their main authority comes from being heard or seen by the audience. Besides containing souls of the friends or family members of the protagonist, Underworld scenes almost always have references to famous katabatic heroes, such as Heracles, Theseus, or Orpheus, as well as to famous sinners, such as Tantalus, Sisyphus, and

Ixion. Additionally, Cerberus is also frequently mentioned in Underworld scenes as are Persephone, Hermes, Hades, and (much later) Charon. More about the middle sections of Underworld scenes will be discussed later as I explore how the poetics of the Underworld translates into a language of commentary and communication between author and audience. Before proceeding, however, it is important to mention the main characteristic of the endings of Underworld scenes, namely, their lack of detail.

Underworld scenes usually end abruptly without much transition back to the real world. They lack the same care of detail as the entries, so the audience finds itself suddenly thrust back into the main story along with the protagonist. When the Underworld scene ends, the plot proceeds in both space and time from where it left off before the start of the scene, as if the journey never happened. The time spent in the Underworld does not seem to correspond to a similar passage of time in the primary narrative, and there is a feeling that events in the real world are put on pause while the hero (or narrator) describes his Underworld journey.

III. The Underworld Scene as Language and Commentary

The previous section looked at the poetics that form the framework and *chronotope* of Underworld scenes. In this section, I examine how these poetics create conduits to *para-narratives* that allow Underworld scenes to act as self-contained commentaries within their primary narratives. The author's reliance on the audience to read the connections necessitates various forms of subtle communication between author and audience that constitute a hidden language, whose meaning is determined by each individual in the audience. In these Underworld scenes, the audience is given a view "behind the scenes" of the narrative, as the author displays his influences and presents his own interpretation of his characters and his work within his

tradition. This can be seen in the Styx stories in Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which the Underworld described post-dates the action in the primary narrative, verifying for the audience that the cosmic upheaval and generational wars of the gods will in fact be resolved by the end of the poem into a stable universe through Zeus' justice, as stated at the beginning of the poem. In this episode, the *chronotopic* elements overlap with the author's commentary since the very nature of the universe as it is described in this scene gives evidence and reflects the theme of Zeus' proper rule, reinforcing the poet's stated purpose at the beginning of the poem.

Similar moments of authorial commentary can also be easily identified in parts of the *Nekuia* that are clearly extraneous to the plot of Odysseus' mission. The scenes, while fitting the poetics of the Underworld, have presented a puzzle for audiences because of their number and protracted nature. Many scholars, like Most and Tsagarakis, have identified patterns in the *Nekuia*'s placement at the virtual center of the *Odyssey* and in the style of its different internal episodes. These analyses generally treat such scenes as either formulaic or competitive with other forms of poetics (Most 1989, 1992; Tsagarakis 2000). While it is true that Underworld scenes have a common poetics and invite comparison with each other as *para-narratives*, I propose an additional function that helps explain these perplexing scenes: The "extra" episodes are the author's attempt at inserting an internal commentary that could only reliably survive by being embedded within the poem itself. The Underworld framework with its altered *chronotope*, therefore, sets the stage for an intimate communication between author and audience, which results in a collaborative contemplation of the primary narrative's themes through a web of links connecting to other parts of the *Odyssey* as well as to other stories. The repetition of the technique by different authors in different time periods and contexts indicates that there is

stability in the Underworld scene's language, which is not attributable to any single author or genre.

An Argument for Odyssean Values in the Nekuia's Extra Scenes

A key element of the poetics of the Underworld is a view into the afterlife through visions and conversations with ghosts or other supernatural beings. The *Nekuia* fulfills this requirement with Tiresias' ghost, whom Odysseus was explicitly sent to find, and secondarily with Elpenor's ghost, who helps establish and verify the Underworld *chronotope* to both Odysseus and the audience. The extended conversation with Elpenor's ghost and the other visitations and conversations Odysseus has in the Underworld with Elpenor, Anticlea, mythic female heroines, Heracles, and leaders from the Trojan War amount to "extra scenes" in the *Odyssey*, which do not have a clear narrative purpose. Odysseus' encounter with his mother and the souls of heroines during the *Nekuia* does not directly pertain to his mission of traveling to the Underworld nor does it seem to impress his Phaeacian audience overmuch, since Alcinous asks him to tell of his dead comrades from the Trojan War instead of continuing with the list of heroines (*Ody.* 11.362-376). However, the poet has Odysseus spend a significant portion of the *Nekuia* naming heroines and describing their stories. From the perspective of Odysseus' journey home, nothing tangible is gained by this catalog. These extra scenes, however, make up the greater part of the *Nekuia* and thus cannot be easily assigned or discarded, as some scholars have been inclined to do.⁴⁸ The problem of the "extra scenes" can be resolved by analyzing their

⁴⁸ Glenn Most has argued for the sub-division of the *Nekuia* into various parts, with each representing a different, competing branch of poetic expression. He divides the *Nekuia* into four distinct groups (figures related to Odysseus' personal history; a catalog of heroines; famous

function and what they add to the characterization of Odysseus and his journey. To do this, one must look at the *hypertextuality* of these mini-episodes as well as how the author sets up links and anchor points against which to launch *para-narratives* that communicate his vision for the hero and the poem. The following section looks at the links and *para-narratives* embedded in the “extra scenes” related to Odysseus’ character: the encounters with the ghosts of Elpenor, Anticlea, mythic heroines, and Heracles.

Despite his fear and initial dread, Odysseus lingers with the ghosts beyond his allotted purpose. The scene extends, and figures representing different historical points in time crowd the landscape. Persephone is said to have sent to Odysseus a host of women, who, from his perspective, represent historical figures and events. The poet presents them and their stories in the format of an epic catalog (11.234-327), as Odysseus forces each ghost to say her name and story in order (προμνηστῖναι, 11.233). As the catalog progresses, a subtle pattern emerges: each woman is not only famous in her own right but also famous for her son or sons. Placing them so closely after Odysseus’ encounter with his own mother, the author seems to suggest that Anticlea

heroes of the Trojan War; and a male catalog of mythic figures undergoing punishment and reward) and then shows how they correspond to particular types of *epos* known from the Archaic period (the *Odyssey* and its epic cycle; *Ehoiai* and Hesiodic catalog of women; the *Iliad* and its epic cycle; and moral/didactic *epos* such as Hesiod’s *Theogony*, respectively) (Most 1992: 1019). Ian Rutherford similarly argues for a connection between the catalog of heroines and other *Ehoie* poetry, particularly in Hesiod (Rutherford 2000, 2011). Benjamin Sammons discusses mythic figures at the end of the *Nekuia* as having paradigmatic significance to Odysseus (Sammons 2010: 100-102). For a discussion of scholars who argue that the *Nekuia*’s catalog of heroines is a late interpolation, see Heubeck (Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990: 90-91).

should be seen as part of this catalog of heroines, or at least a prelude to it, lending further glory to her son Odysseus. Moreover, the inclusion in the catalog of Alcmene and Leda, whose sons Heracles, Polydeuces and Castor found ways to defy death and escape the Underworld, strengthens an association between Odysseus and *katabatic* heroes. This catalog, in addition to the intertextual connections it makes to other types of poetry and myth, interacts with the Anticlea conversation as a *para-narrative*, predicting Anticlea's future place among the heroines because of her famous son Odysseus.

In addition to promoting a narrative tradition of women and their famous sons, inclusive of Odysseus, the extensive treatment of these “ghostly” women⁴⁹ represents the perils of becoming too lost in the past and in history, as well as losing one's place in the main narrative. The ghosts are distractions for Odysseus that endanger his *nostos* no less than the monsters, storms, and goddesses he has already encountered. As Benjamin Sammons argues, “What emerges from Odysseus' catalogue is rather the enormous variety of persons and events that the past encompasses. In the place of pattern, we discover ramifying narrative possibilities for which the ‘wives and daughters of champions’ serve as points of departure” (Sammons 2010: 91-92). I would argue that these women serve not only as points of departures to narrative but represent the narratives themselves, activated through the mere mention of their names and relationships. They trigger *para-narratives* that play concurrently with the story at hand, creating a feeling of

⁴⁹ Tsagarakis compares the *Odyssey's* catalog of women to Hesiod's *Ehoiai*; he also argues that Homer chooses to give a catalog of heroines instead of heroes because of Odysseus' close association with powerful women in the poem (Tsagarakis 2000: 71-89). Most also makes this connection but more broadly to a type of *epos* he calls a Hesiodic-style catalog of women, or *ehoiiai* (Most 1992: 1019).

continuous anxiety and competition between narrative strains, which add to the audience's sense of suspense and understanding of the poet's efforts. By tapping into the Underworld's archive, the poet has found enough material to begin a new epic within the structure of the *Odyssey's* primary narrative, which has essentially come to a standstill.

Against the backdrop of many such competing moments and alternative outcomes, Tiresias' summary of Odysseus' future in such a short space shows that the *Odyssey* itself is only a brief narrative moment. The *Nekuia* itself, as a secondary, concurrent *para-narrative* subtext to the *Odyssey*, threatens at this point to become the primary narrative, building tension that Odysseus may not leave the Underworld at all but will be stuck there, lost in hearing the endlessly interlocking stories of the dead. The narrator points out this anxiety in the text by interrupting the catalog of women and momentarily breaking the spell of the Underworld scene with a glimpse of narrative "real time." When he is about a hundred lines into his catalog of women, Odysseus breaks off and addresses his Phaeacian hosts, briefly removing his audience from the Underworld back into the chronological time of the real world. This break is signified by Odysseus' reference to the night's passing away before he could name all the women he saw (πάσας δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω, ὅσσας ἡρώων ἀλόχους ἴδον ἠδὲ θύγατρας· πρὶν γάρ κεν καὶ νύξ φθίτ' ἄμβροτος, "I could not recount nor could I name all the women I saw who were the wives and daughters of heroes; for, the divine night would perish before then," 11.328-330). The narrator suggests that all the audiences of the Underworld scene (Odysseus, the Phaeacians, and the reader/listener) have become lost in the *chronotope* of the dead, wrapped in a heavy silence (οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ, "then they all fell silent, speechless," 11.333).

This interruption within the Underworld scene subtly re-asserts the main narrative's primacy in the consciousness of the audience before returning to the Underworld narrative, where the poet continues his indirect commentary on the *Odyssey's* themes.⁵⁰ It also places the *Nekuia* back into its original storytelling context, reminding the audience that this part of the epic is in the voice of Odysseus (not an independent or reported narrator like Circe or a Muse-inspired bard).⁵¹ The interruption itself is a regular bardic strategy seen throughout the Homeric poems, like an invocation to the Muse, to recall the attention of a potentially flagging audience and remind them of the singer's performance (Minchin 1995: 27-28).

⁵⁰ Tsagarakis argues that the so-called "Intermezzo" is meant to assert the urgency of Odysseus' situation and to test the guest-host relationship (Tsagarakis 2000: 89-94). Gilbert Rose argues that this interlude is a turning point in the relationship between Odysseus and the generally hostile Phaeacians because Arete confirms the Phaeacians' support of the hero's *nostos* (Rose 1969: 404-405). Oliver Taplin argues that Alcinoos' speech occurs at a moment near the end of the *performance-time* of Part I of the *Odyssey* and, therefore, a convenient time "to reassure the audience and to revive their attention for the final stretch, which will bring Odysseus' story back to Scherie, and end by putting him – asleep – on the boat for Ithaka" (Taplin 1995: 31). Most notes that Alcinoos' interruption divides the *Nekuia* into symmetrical halves (Most 1992: 1016) with the *Nekuia* itself at the midway point between the two halves of Odysseus' *Apologoi* to the Phaeacians (Most 1989).

⁵¹ Sammons points out that the Catalog of Women in the *Nekuia* is unique because catalogs of such extent are generally not given in the voice of mortal characters but are reserved for gods or bards (Sammons 2010: 88).

In this way, the author demonstrates that he actively makes choices between competing histories: He knows his options and uses the Underworld to show some of the possible narrative alternatives to his audience while stressing his own epic narrative as the dominant one. He shows his awareness of the *para-narratives* and also cautions the audience not to become trapped in single narratives or timeframes. With so many *para-narratives* to consider, the audience is forced to contemplate the relationship between them and Odysseus' story on a micro-scale to make sense of why the hero has not yet continued his journey to Ithaca. Of course, there is entertainment value in the storytelling, but that alone cannot explain the survival of the "extra" sections within the *Nekuia*. Ancient audiences must have found additional value in these scenes and enough relevance to keep them intact.

In exploring the extra episodes within the *Nekuia*, we can begin to see how each of them interacts together like sentences in a paragraph to send a global message to the audience on how to interpret the Underworld scene. In the *Nekuia*, the order of the ghosts' appearance is not chronological or even genealogical, but rather thematic. The ghosts appear in groups that correspond to the themes interweaving the epic as a whole, questioning assumptions about social bonds, history, heroism, and *nostos*.⁵² I have already shown how the mythic heroines situate Odysseus within a pantheon of heroes, and I now turn to the conversations Odysseus has with individual ghosts who reinforce his identity. In the *Nekuia*, the first two ghosts who appear are Elpenor and Anticlea. In his speech, the ghost of Elpenor introduces two social structures – friendship and family – which are relevant to Odysseus (and his audience) as an underlying reason for his journey to Troy in the first place and his relentless drive to return home. As the

⁵² For a discussion on the relationship between the *Nekuia* and the rest of the poem, see Chapter 2 of Tsagarakis (Tsagarakis 2000).

scene unfolds, the narrator uses these encounters to develop Odysseus as a character, displaying his society's values and also reminding him of why he must complete his journey to Ithaca.

In the discussion above, the "extra" scene with the ghosts of Anticlea and the heroines placed Odysseus within a tradition of heroic men through analogy. The conversation with Elpenor's ghost, on the other hand, uses Odysseus' own actions to define the latter's character. Odysseus, the stalwart friend and leader, promises to fulfill a last request and give honor to a comrade who was in his care. The audience is reminded through this ghost that, despite his appearance at this point in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is not just a castaway adventurer discovered by Nausicaa or a vagrant reliant on the good will of the Phaeacians, but a brave ruler of men who are willing to follow him to their deaths.

Furthermore, this scene establishes a direct link to the *Iliad* by recalling as a *para-narrative* a similar scene of ghostly request for burial – by Patroclus' ghost in the *Iliad*. By juxtaposing these ghosts, the author subtly pits Odysseus and Achilles (and the epics that feature them) against each other in light of how they treat their dead companions, showing the heroes as leaders and comrades. This comparison between the two heroes is much more explicit later in the scene when Odysseus converses with the ghost of Achilles, but the audience who is familiar with the *Iliad* might have noticed similar narrative patterns, especially since the topic of burial occurs again in an other-worldly encounter in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*. This latter scene, which describes Achilles' burial, suggests to the *Odyssey*'s audience to use the *Iliad*'s funerary descriptions as a point of reference.

Elpenor's request also has a predictive function, offering a way back into the primary narrative from the Underworld scene. After describing his accidental death, Elpenor's ghost orders the burial of his body, thereby predicting that in the near future Odysseus will end his

Underworld journey at the location where he started – Aeaea. This shows that, even before talking to Tiresias, Odysseus’ necromantic journey is beginning to reveal his future. The nature of the Elpenor ghost’s supplication is half-request and half-threat. It starts with the command to perform burial rights, but in a very specific way so as to create the type of tomb that might be the object of eventual hero cult by men in the future:

μή μ’ ἄκλαυτον ἄθαπτον ἰὼν ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν
νοσφισθεῖς, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι,
ἀλλά με κακκῆαι σὺν τεύχεσιν, ἅσσα μοί ἐστι,
σῆμά τέ μοι χεῦναι πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης, (75)
ἄνδρὸς δυστήνοιο, καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι·
ταῦτά τέ μοι τελέσαι πῆξαι τ’ ἐπὶ τύμβῳ ἐρετμόν,
τῷ καὶ ζωὸς ἔρρεσσον ἐὼν μετ’ ἐμοῖσ’ ἐτάροισιν.’ (*Ody.* 11.72-78)

Don’t forsake and leave me behind, unwept, unburied, when you go
lest I become some kind of scourge of the gods on you,
but burn me with my armor, whichever belongs to me,
and heap up a burial mound for me on the shore of the gray sea,
the marker of an ill-fated man, and one for men in the future to know;
complete these things for me and fix an oar on the tomb,
the one with which I rowed while alive with my companions;”

The focus on pain and supernatural punishment as well as the continued connection between the living and the dead are highlighted in this passage. Patroclus’ ghost makes a similar entreaty:

εὔδεις, αὐτὰρ ἐμεῖο λελασμένος ἔπλευ Ἀχιλλεῦ.
οὐ μὲν μευ ζῶοντος ἀκήδεις, ἀλλὰ θανόντος· (70)
θάπτε με ὅτι τάχιστα πύλας Αἴδαο περήσω.
τῆλέ με εἴργουσι ψυχὰι εἴδωλα καμόντων,
οὐδέ με πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐώσιν,
ἀλλ' αὐτως ἀλάλημαι ἀν' εὐρυπυλῆς Ἄϊδος δῶ. (Il. 23.69-74)

You sleep, and you have forgotten me, Achilles.
You were not uncaring when I was alive, but only now that I am dead;
bury me as swiftly as possible so that I may pass through the gates of
Hades. The souls, images of dead men, hold me at a distance,
and they do not allow me to mix with them at all beyond the river,
but I roam about just so throughout the broad-gated house of Hades.

The two passages use similar imagery and language – Elpenor fears being left behind and forgotten (ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν νοσφισθείς), and Patroclus accuses Achilles of doing just that (ἐμεῖο λελασμένος ἔπλευ).⁵³

Both ghosts appeal to their commanders' emotions, grief, and sense of loyalty, wanting to maintain their connection and, thereby, be memorialized. In the latter case, Patroclus has become

⁵³ Achilles had been so engrossed in his own grief that he had, to a large degree, forgotten about the needs of Patroclus' burial until receiving instructions from the latter's ghost. Just like Odysseus, Achilles was blinded by his own goals and did not "see" the dead man until visited by his ghost.

a “kind of scourge of the gods” (τι θεῶν μῆνιμα, *Ody.* 11.73), namely a ghost, that haunts Achilles – what Elpenor threatens to become to Odysseus. The verb νοσφισθείς has a sense of “turning” in its meaning, indicating a shift in position away from the dead comrade.⁵⁴ Additionally, both ghosts are essentially asking for burial rites that would lead to future hero cult worship.⁵⁵ Elpenor’s ghost is explicit in this through his use of the words σῆμα and τύμβῳ along with his statement that “future men would know it,” (ἔσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι). Patroclus’ ghost only asks that his ashes be held in the same urn as Achilles’, but there is the assumption that this highly elaborate vessel will be celebrated in hero cult (μὴ ἐμὰ σῶν ἀπάνευθε τιθήμεναι ὅστέ’ Ἀχιλλεῦ, ἀλλ’ ὁμοῦ ὡς ἐτράφημεν ἐν ὑμετέροισι δόμοισιν...ὅστέα νῶϊν ὁμῆ σοροῶς ἀμφικαλύπτοι χρύσεος ἀμφιφορεῦς, τόν τοι πόρε πότνια μήτηρ, “don’t let my bones be placed away from yours, Achilles, but just as we were raised together in your home...may the same urn enfold us, the golden amphora, which your mistress mother provided,” *Il.* 23.83-

⁵⁴ The idea of turning away from the ghosts is reminiscent of when Circe tells Odysseus to turn his face away from Hades and the dead during the initial sacrifice in the *Nekuia* (*Ody.* 10.526-529). The ghosts of Patroclus and Elpenor demand that their leaders neither turn away from them nor continue with their lives until they perform proper funerals for their comrades.

⁵⁵ Jan Bremmer argues that this passage only could have been privileged as indicating the religious rituals associated with hero cult much later than Homer, during the last decades of the 6th B.C.E. (Bremmer 2006: 17-18). Early audiences may still have seen attached some significance to these grave markers, around which hero-cult worship was only fully developed later. Christopher Jones also discusses the development of hero cult starting from references in Homer (Jones 2010).

84...91-92). The use of this urn in funerary rites culminating in a tomb worthy of cult is verified in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*:

...δῶκε δὲ μήτηρ

χρύσειον ἀμφιφορῆα· Διωνύσοιο δὲ δῶρον

φάσκ' ἔμεναι, ἔργον δὲ περικλυτοῦ Ἥφαιστοιο. (75)

ἐν τῷ τοι κεῖται λεύκ' ὄστέα, φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,

μίγδα δὲ Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδαο θανόντος,

χωρὶς δ' Ἀντιλόχοιο, τὸν ἔξοχα τίεις ἀπάντων

τῶν ἄλλων ἐτάρων μετὰ Πάτροκλόν γε θανόντα.

ἀμφ' αὐτοῖσι δ' ἔπειτα **μέγαν καὶ ἀμύμονα τύμβον** (80)

χεύαμεν Ἀργείων ἱερὸς στρατὸς αἰχμητῶν

ἀκτῆ ἔπι προύχουση, ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἑλλησπόντῳ,

ὥς κεν τηλεφανῆς ἐκ ποντόφιν ἀνδράσιν εἴη

τοῖσ', οἳ νῦν γεγάασι καὶ οἳ μετόπισθεν ἔσσονται. (*Ody.* 24.73-84)

And **your mother provided a golden amphora**; and she said

it was a gift from Dionysus and the work of the famous Hephaestus.

In it, your white bones are laid, brilliant Achilles, and mixed

with the bones of the dead Patroclus, son of Menoetius, and apart from

those of Antilochus, whom you valued beyond all other companions after

Patroclus died. And around them then **we, the sacred host**

of spear-wielding Argives, heaped a great and noble tomb upon a

projecting part of the shore by the broad Hellespont, **so that it can be**

seen from far out at sea by men alive now and by those born in the future.

The highlighted sections of this passage indicate imagery and language already seen in *Iliad* 23 and *Odyssey* 11. This passage shows the fulfillment of Achilles' orders for the internment of his and Patroclus' bones (*Il* 23.236-248), establishing another link that reinforces the connection between these passages.

Following Patroclus' ghost's commands, Achilles tells the Greek leaders to preserve Patroclus' bones in a golden vessel until he himself dies and not to build a tomb (τύμβον) until they both are dead and the Greeks are ready to sail away, implying that this tomb will be a significant marker for future (δεύτεροι) generations (καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν χρυσῆ φιάλῃ καὶ δίπλακι δημῷ θείομεν, εἰς ὃ κεν αὐτὸς ἐγὼν Ἄϊδι κεύθωμαι. τύμβον δ' οὐ μάλα πολλὸν ἐγὼ πονέεσθαι ἄνωγα, ἀλλ' ἐπεικέα τοῖον· ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀχαιοὶ εὐρύν θ' ὑψηλὸν τε τιθήμεναι, οἳ κεν ἐμεῖο δεύτεροι ἐν νήεσσι πολυκλήϊσι λίπησθε, "and let us place the bones in a golden urn and in fat applied in two layers, until I myself should be hidden in Hades. And not a very great tomb do I command to be built, but such as is seemly for now. But at a later time, set up [a tomb] broad and high, Achaeans, whoever of you, surviving me, might be left in the many-oared ships," *Il*. 23.243-248).

The repetition of the process of heaping a tomb (σῆμά τέ μοι χεύαι, *Ody*. 11.25; τύμβον χεύαμεν, *Ody*. 24.80-81), then honoring the dead with the collection and burial of bones after a funeral pyre, and creating a marker for future hero cult worship on a shore "for future men" who will see it from afar tie these passages together intertextually and give a deeper meaning to Elpenor's request than would be understood without knowledge of the Patroclus passage

working as a *para-narrative*.⁵⁶ Odysseus responds simply that he will fulfill the request of ghostly Elpenor (ταῦτά τοι, ὦ δύστηνε, τελευτήσω τε καὶ ἔρξω, “I will do these things for you, ill-fated one, and see them through to the end,” *Ody.* 11.80), just as Achilles answers Patroclus’ ghost (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τοι πάντα μάλ’ ἐκτελέω καὶ πείσομαι ὡς σὺ κελεύεις, “and surely, I am accomplishing all these things, and I shall do what you command,” *Il.* 23.95-96).

Despite Elpenor’s lack of proven heroic valor, the nature of his request to Odysseus inserts notions of loyalty and heroism closely connected to the *Iliad*, efficiently linking the two poems through their Underworld scenes. The ghosts of Elpenor and Patroclus are both mournful, regret-filled characters who are beseeching their leaders for somewhat large requests. This makes more sense in the *Iliad* episode because of the close relationship between Patroclus and Achilles. It is somewhat perplexing that Elpenor, a minor character whose only speaking part is as a ghost, could make such demands to his commander. Given this history, the Elpenor encounter seems to be a ruse for creating links to the scene of Patroclus’ ghost. The nature of the Underworld type scene allows the poet to introduce significant amounts of external information in this way through its *para-narrative* links, all of which contribute to the interpretation of the Odysseus’ current situation and character.

The conversation with Elpenor’s ghost and ensuing promise then become an ever-present *para-narrative* to Odysseus’ actions in Book 12 of the *Odyssey*, when he returns to Circe’s island and carries out the funerary ritual for his fallen comrade. This expands the reach of the

⁵⁶ The heaping up of a tomb can itself be seen as a Homeric type-scene. Pucci has argued that such formulaic repetition creates allusions connecting different sections of the Homeric poems together, although the meaning of each scene must be interpreted by its local context (Pucci 1987: 18-20).

Underworld scene into the primary narrative, allowing the audience to understand the motivations behind Odysseus' actions. Odysseus is dutiful in fulfilling Elpenor's request, although the latter is noteworthy only for falling off of a roof and not for any heroic action. The author must realize that Elpenor is hardly the equivalent of Patroclus in heroism or affection but nonetheless creates the analogy between the two. Elpenor's prominent placement in the *Nekuia*, therefore, might be read as an ironic "inside joke" between author and audience, yet it is this irony and sense of a mismatch that draws attention to the issues the author wants the audience to consider. Moreover, Elpenor's request creates a narrative bridge out of the Underworld *chronotope* back into the plot by making Odysseus return to Circe's island. Finally, the Elpenor scenes characterize Odysseus in a way that gives additional poignancy to the loss of the rest of his companions, which comes soon after (*Ody.* 12.417-419). The sequence suggests that, if Odysseus is willing to go to such lengths for a minor companion, his values extend beyond his own well-being and personal *kleos*.

The *Odyssey*'s Underworld scenes do not end, however, with presenting Odysseus as a leader and companion but they also bring up the importance of familial succession and spousal relations, both of which are pertinent to Odysseus' upcoming return to Ithaca. Odysseus' profound grief over his mother's presence in the Underworld and the information she gives about home and family remind the audience of Odysseus' motivation for return, despite the many obstacles along the way that would hold him back. Presented as a doting son, Odysseus tearfully mourns his dead mother, reaching out to her for news of home along with a physical embrace (11.84-87, 11.152-224), echoing Achilles' attempt to embrace Patroclus' ghost (ὦς ἄρα φωνήσας ὠρέξατο χερσὶ φίλησιν, οὐδ' ἔλαβε· ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἠΰτε καπνὸς ὄχετο

τετριγυῖα,⁵⁷ “Thus having spoken, he reached out with his own arms, but he could not grasp [him]; and the soul went below the earth, just as smoke, emitting a shrill sound,” *Il.* 23.99-101). Through Anticlea, Odysseus is thrust back into the concerns of chronological time, although at a historical point preceding his own: Anticlea’s report covers a time period preceding her meeting with her son in the *Nekuia*. It informs him of Ithaca’s turmoil so he will be able to arrive home with some knowledge of what happened during his absence. With the news he receives, he could have chosen to stay away from Ithaca for an easier life, but instead he steels his resolve to complete his journey and defend his home.

Odysseus’ interactions with both Elpenor and Anticlea bring the Underworld *chronotope* to the audience’s attention because time is shown to be stacked on itself. The two ghosts are stuck in the past, reliving the pain of their last moments of life, which happened at different points in historical time but simultaneously here in the Underworld. At the same time, the narrative also gives glimpses of upcoming episodes in the main narrative: Odysseus will give Elpenor’s body a proper burial immediately after leaving the Underworld and will also find his destitute father in Ithaca exactly as Anticlea describes. The two encounters drive the post-*Nekuia* plot since they force Odysseus to re-engage with his *nostos* by adding urgency to his journey. Book 11, in many ways, marks the beginning of the final phase of Odysseus’ return to Ithaca, since his story is so moving that the Phaeacians eventually ferry him home.

⁵⁷ This is the same sound and word used to describe the suitors’ ghosts in *Odyssey* 24 (ὥς αἱ τετριγυῖαι ἄμ’ ἦϊσαν, “just so, the ghosts [of the suitors] went, emitting a shrill sound, *Ody.* 24.9).

The final “extra” episode returns to the idea of Odysseus in the tradition of heroes by suggesting that Odysseus will gain the stature of Heracles. The Heracles character, in particular, (as reported by Odysseus) draws a comparison between them in the following:

διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεύ,
ἂ δεῖλ', ἦ τινὰ καὶ σὺ κακὸν μόρον ἠγηλάζεις,
ὅν περ ἐγὼν ὀχέεσκον ὑπ' αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο.
Ζηνὸς μὲν παῖς ἦα Κρονίου, αὐτὰρ οἴζυν (620)
εἶχον ἀπειρεσίην· μάλα γὰρ πολὺ χεῖροσι φωτὶ
δεδμήμην, ὃ δέ μοι χαλεποὺς ἐπετέλλετ' ἀέθλους.
καί ποτέ μ' ἐνθάδ' ἔπεμψε κύν' ἄξοντ'· οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' ἄλλον
φράζετο τοῦδέ γέ μοι κρατερώτερον εἶναι ἄεθλον. (*Ody.* 11.617-624)

Zeus-sprung son of Laertes, many-wiled Odysseus,
oh, wretched one, indeed you too endure some sort of evil fate,
which I also bore while [alive] under the rays of the sun.
On the one hand, I was the child of Zeus, son of Kronos, but I had
boundless woe; for I was subjugated to a man very much worse than I,
and he inflicted on me hard labors. He even sent me to this place here
to lead away the dog [Cerberus]; for he did not think there to be still
another more mighty task for me than this.

In this passage, Heracles and Odysseus are under similar orders, the latter by Fate (*κακὸν μόρον*) and the former by a man. Both are associated with Zeus – Heracles identifies himself as

the son of Zeus and also addresses Odysseus as *διογενὲς* (“Zeus-sprung”)⁵⁸ – and are sent to seek out something that only exists in the Underworld environs. Heracles’ assessment of his visit to Hades as being the mightiest labor that it was possible for his human master to contrive transfers the accolades of his succeeding at this endeavor to Odysseus, since they both, by this point, have completed their mandated Underworld tasks.

To further underscore the enormity of Odysseus’ task (and success), the final section of the *Nekuia* presents famous denizens of the Underworld, thereby following the familiar mythic model of heroic *katabasis* and preserving its traditions within Odysseus’ journey.⁵⁹ Each feature or figure locates Odysseus and reinforces the Underworld *chronotope*, by confirming what the audience “knows” about the space from collective myths. By saying that Odysseus saw Heracles (in the form of an *eidolon*, at least) and by having Odysseus assert that he would have seen Theseus and Pirithoos, the author situates his Underworld against a backdrop of *katabatic* poetry. Additionally, Odysseus also says he sees the figures of Minos, Tityos, Tantalus, and Sisyphus who all live in particular, “timeless” zones of the Underworld and are caught in unending cycles of action with no discernable links to the real world of the narrative (Johnson 1999: 12-13). Their

⁵⁸ This focus on a hero’s relationship to Zeus is reminiscent of the fact that Menelaus only gets his blessed afterlife because of his relationship to Zeus as son-in-law.

⁵⁹ Tsagarakis observes that Odysseus’ conversations in the *Nekuia* with friends, relatives and strangers “have primarily a place in the thematic motif of *catabasis* but they have been transferred to the *nekyomanteia*” (Tsagarakis 2000: 100). Possible traditions influencing this *Odyssey*’s incorporation of *katabasis* into necromancy include a pre-Homeric *Catabasis of Heracles*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and the descent of Theseus and Pirithoos, although the evidence of these are fragmentary (Tsagarakis 2000: 100-103).

presence in Odysseus' account underscores the Underworld as a "site of repetition" (Purves 2004: 163) and also legitimizes the hero's visit to Hades by reminding the audience that his Underworld corresponds to that of heroic *katabasis* stories and of ancient Greek legend. Benjamin Sammons notes that no details are provided for these figures, saying, "Odysseus does not, as in the case of the women [in the catalog of women] have to ask these souls their identities; he recognizes them on sight. Evidently, their emblems and activities identify them and call their stories to mind, stories that Odysseus must already know, because he did not learn them in Hades. Their fame is already established" (Sammons 2010: 96). As Odysseus visually surveys the Underworld topography, the audience follows along as "readers" of the mythic heroes, who become "signs that need only to be seen to be recognized, pointing at narratives that are fixed and eternal as are the punishments and privileges of the heroes themselves" (Sammons 2010: 96-98). Unlike the women in the earlier catalog who are tied temporally to the past, who threaten to trap Odysseus in their stories and who represent progress in storytelling but no real movement through the plot, the famous male heroes represent an "eternal" status, as they are forever present in the Underworld (not needing to be sent by Persephone) and celebrated simply by name without the need for their stories to be told. They are known.

In this section, as in the earlier catalog of women, the group of ghosts reinforce Odysseus' place in the pantheon of heroes. The poet keeps the audience guessing as to whether Odysseus will simply be the ephemerally famous son of a heroine or whether he will end up on the narrative path towards eternal fame through privilege or punishment as represented by the heroes.⁶⁰ Ending with Heracles' assertion that Odysseus is similar to him strongly suggests a

⁶⁰ Even as a hero, at this point in the narrative, Odysseus still could get "stuck" in the Underworld realm as Theseus did as a form of punishment for seeing the chthonic realm.

positive outcome for the latter after his death and also establishes Odysseus as belonging to the “eternal” group of heroes rather than the “temporal-ephemeral” group portrayed by the catalog of women.⁶¹ Heracles’ words to Odysseus are not really a conversation as much as a device that establishes Odysseus as a heroic peer, indicating to the reader that Odysseus’ necromancy is in the same class as Heracles’ *katabasis* and other paradigmatic *katabaseis*. This juxtaposition is the most forceful argument by the author for a particular interpretation of Odysseus as one of the great mythic heroes. The *Nekuia* ends abruptly without a full description of a return journey.⁶² Odysseus panics when he is confronted with too many narratives and temporalities. He realizes he has become stuck in the process of narrative exchange and has fallen into the danger of getting further lost in time and memory as “thousands of dead” (μυθία νεκρῶν, *Ody.* 11.632)

Although Odysseus’ *kleos* is already guaranteed to a certain extent by the very existence of the poem, the author is offering suggestions as to the nature of Odysseus’ *kleos* and how he compares to other famous heroes.

⁶¹ Odysseus had already been offered (and had rejected) immortality via marriage to Calypso (*Ody.* 5.203-220). If he had accepted, his life and afterlife would have been similar to Menelaus’, which came by virtue of marriage to Helen. Odysseus chose to be a hero in the model of Heracles, however, who dies first and does not gain a positive afterlife through marriage.

⁶² The abrupt return seems to be a feature of early Underworld poetics, and the assumption seems to be that the path of entry is also the path of exit. This is not the case, however, in later Underworlds such as in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas exits through an ivory gate (6.893-901).

approach him to tell their stories.⁶³ Although his Phaeacian audience is captivated and would probably have him continue, Odysseus and the poet cut off the never-ending streams of narratives to draw everybody back to the story at hand: the *Odyssey*.

Authorized Commentary

The previous section showed how some of the “extra” encounters in the Underworld deepen the audience’s understanding of characters’ motivations. Others, however, go further and influence the interpretation of the primary narrative as a whole. These include the conversations involving the ghosts of Achilles and Agamemnon in Books 11 and 24 of the *Odyssey*, which constitute an “authorized commentary” because they tell and show how the author wants his audience to “read” his work in relation to the other works that he links to as *para-narratives*. These low-action, narrative sequences are rich in such commentary, which can flourish within the Underworld’s poetics, because they allow space for such cross-narrative comparisons. In the following, I examine two related “extra” scenes in the Underworld that do not serve the plot but mirror each other. The first is Odysseus’ encounter with his comrades from the Trojan War; the second is the Underworld scene in Book 24 in its entirety.

During the course of his Underworld tale, Odysseus stops his account before the end, and must be prompted by King Alcinous to complete his tale. As the Phaeacians contemplate the first part of Odysseus tale in silence, it is left to Alcinous to re-start the story, which stands still during the silence. He does so, however, by denying the pressures of chronological time and coaxing Odysseus to return to his account, making an unnatural interval in the timeline so that

⁶³ Karanika connects the abrupt end to the *Nekuia* with the mythic traditions of Heracles and the Gorgon (Karanika 2011).

Odysseus can finish his tale.⁶⁴ Alcinous says that the night they are experiencing in Phaeacia is very long and that it is not yet time to sleep (νύξ δ' ἦδε μάλα μακρὴ, ἀθέσφατος, οὐδέ πω ὄρη εὔδειν ἐν μεγάρῳ, “and this night is very long, endless beyond expression, nor is it yet the time to sleep in the palace,” 11.373-374). This gives license to Odysseus to return to the endless night of the Underworld, but to jump to a future point in the story.

Instead of continuing where he left off, Odysseus begins a brief catalog of heroes from the Trojan War, complying with Alcinous' request. This activates selective stories from other epics and myths as *para-narratives* that offer the possible directions that Odysseus' journey could have gone. This section of the *Nekuia* contextualizes Odysseus' *nostos* against that of other heroes, while also creating narrative tension by threatening non-completion of the primary narrative. As S. Douglas Olson points out, “Tradition probably demanded that Odysseus return to Ithaca, take revenge on the suitors, and regain control of his household. The poet uses the tales of Agamemnon, however, to hint repeatedly to his audience that this Odyssey may end in a way they know it should not” (Olson 1990: 57).

Odysseus spends considerable time telling Alcinous about his Underworld conversation with his most famous former comrades: Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax (son of Telamon). These ghosts offer direct points of comparison to Odysseus as a hero, since they are his peers. Each represents alternate stories of return, which shadow the story told in the *Odyssey*, creating the tension that Olson notes via “poetic processes of manipulation of the expectations of an audience listening to an oral poem” (Olson 1990: 58). Furthermore, each conversation highlights different cultural issues that Odysseus and the audience must consider fully to appreciate

⁶⁴ This is reminiscent of Athena prolonging the night of Odysseus' reunion with Penelope so they can exchange their stories (*Ody.* 23.241-348).

Odysseus' *nostos* and his heroic status. The conversation on heroic outcomes by the ghosts of Greek leaders occurs twice in the *Odyssey* – in Book 11 and Book 24 – underlining the importance of these exchanges to the poem, since they help define Odysseus as a heroic character and suggest how the audience should interpret him in the larger scheme of epic poetry.⁶⁵ By presenting competing heroic narratives, including some whose heroes might have been featured in their own individual epics, the poet promotes different ways of interpreting Odysseus' tale (Dova 2012: 3).

First, after Agamemnon tells of his disastrous homecoming, the two heroes contemplate the fickleness of women and fate, which raises some men to beautiful deaths or great glory in foreign battle at one time but then later destroys them ignominiously through treachery in their own homes (Dova 2012: 8-15).⁶⁶ Agamemnon sees his *nostos* as a bitter failure, and encourages Odysseus to be cautious when he arrives in Ithaca despite the purported faithfulness of Penelope. Agamemnon clearly distinguishes between the improper behavior of his own family and what

⁶⁵ Olson argues that “Agamemnon’s death and the way it functions in the epic thus becomes a “paradigm not just of the saga of Odysseus and his family, but also of the complexities of the interrelated processes of telling and listening to stories” (Olson 1990: 57-58). Although I also argue that the two heroes’ stories are intrinsically tied, I would expand the number of tales that the epic uses as paradigms so that other characters’ tales are no less points of comparison to Agamemnon’s than, say, Menelaus’. I would further point out that the Underworld scenes are where the details and differences between stories are explored, separate but suggestive of the plot.

⁶⁶ For more on heroic death, see Vernant, particularly Chapter 2, titled “A ‘Beautiful Death’ and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic” (Vernant 1991).

will be the culturally sanctioned behavior of Odysseus' when he predicts that Telemachus will welcome and embrace his father, *as is just* (ἡ γὰρ τόν γε πατήρ φίλος ὄψεται ἐλθών, καὶ κείνος πατέρα προσπύξεται, ἢ θέμις ἐστίν, “for the beloved father will come back and see him, at any rate, and he [Telemachus] will embrace his father, as is right,” 11.450-451).⁶⁷

Agamemnon's ghost repeats his complaints about his unjust homecoming in Book 24, and the reactions of his interlocutors suggest he must be bringing it up for the first time, even though the audience already heard his story in Book 11. Again, in the Underworld *chronotope*, time seems to be bending in on itself, such that the death of the suitors, which happens near the end of the *Odyssey*, appears to occur around the same time that the ghosts of Agamemnon and Achilles have their first conversation in the Underworld (Russo, Fernández-Galiano, and Heubeck 1992: 361n315-322). Although these two heroes have been dead for some time and are already grouped with each other in Book 11, they and Odysseus (via the proxy of the suitors' ghosts who tell his story in Ithaca) are brought together here as the three leading heroes of the Trojan War, whose ultimate fates determine their heroic legacy. In this head-to-head comparison, Odysseus seems to emerge as *makaristatos*, or “most blessed” (Dova 2012: 13-14), which reinforces an elevation of status for him as a hero suggested during his conversation with Achilles in Book 11, when he rejects Odysseus' honorific address.

⁶⁷ This may be an implied reference to Orestes' absence when Agamemnon returns home from Troy as well as contrasting examples of the loyalty of Penelope and Telemachus compared to Clytemnestra and Orestes. At this point, it is not clear that Agamemnon knows of his son's avenging him, although the audience would have known. See Olson for a discussion on the recurrence and meaning of Agamemnon's story in the *Odyssey* (Olson 1990).

Odysseus' attitude in Book 11 aligns with a generally assumed principle of heroism – that it is best to achieve as much glory as possible in life through great deeds and through a good death.⁶⁸ He hails Achilles as the most blessed of the Achaeans, who takes his honors into Hades (11.482-486). Achilles, however, contradicts this assumption by suggesting his decision to stay and die at Troy was the wrong one and that he would have chosen an alternative non-heroic course, which would have allowed him a long life but unraveled his deeds at Troy (βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω, ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρω, ᾧ μὴ βίωτος πολὺς εἶη, ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν, “I would prefer to work as a hired day-laborer attached to the soil as a serf for another man, one with no land of his own and little livelihood, than be king over all the lifeless dead,” *Ody.* 11.488-491).⁶⁹

Through this speech, Achilles proposes an alternate reality for his life, a concurrent possibility, or side-shadowing *para-narrative*, that seems intentionally provocative, baldly challenging his audience's (and Odysseus') assessment of the situation and the Iliadic notion of heroism. His words suggest that not only would he “un-write” the great events of the latter half of the *Iliad*, but he would also replace his lot of a demi-god prince with that of a commoner, removing all the glorious deeds about which poets sing. Being honored among the dead is presented through this speech as meaningless for him, which places Odysseus in an awkward position at this point in the conversation, since his option of returning as a conquering hero from the Trojan War is still available. Through his statement, Achilles' ghost gives an opening for other types of heroism to prevail, particularly Odysseus' with its successful return. Moreover, the

⁶⁸ See Vernant (1996, 1991) and Griffin (1980).

⁶⁹ For a discussion of Achilles' choice as a larger exploration of the ideologies of heroism and *nostos*, see Buchan (2004) and Wofford (1992).

audience knows that, even when he is promised immortality,⁷⁰ Odysseus has already rejected the option of living the rest of his days in obscurity (a scenario that Achilles' ghost now seems to embrace). Odysseus is saved from responding when Achilles abruptly changes the subject. The audience, however, is left to consider the implications of Achilles' statements, which would erase the chronology of events that are the underpinning for the *Iliad's* narrative.

The *para-narratives* brought on by Achilles' ghost are where, I would argue, the poet takes the idea of multiple narrative possibilities to their furthest before reining them in and returning to the plot. Having Achilles, the star of the *Iliad*, make such remarks is the strongest indication that the poet sees the Underworld as a place of commentary where he can assert his view of the "correct" heroic path for his hero by contemplating and dismissing his other narrative possibilities.

During the conversation, Achilles' main concern is not for his own glory but news of his son, whose deeds Odysseus recounts in detail, thereby encapsulating other epics as *para-narratives* within the present story. This effectively brings the audience back to the Trojan War, and also highlights the importance of the father-son relationship just before Odysseus' reunion with Telemachus and the events in Ithaca. The bonds of family preoccupy the ghosts of the Greek leaders, implying that those supersede heroic values in the long run. Bowra refers to these necromantic interactions as Homer's way to "pass a comment on the terms on which heroic life is lead," pointing also to the fact that the ghosts of Odysseus' comrades at Troy are mainly concerned with their past lives and the hope of glory for their sons (Bowra 1952: 82). The relationship between fathers and sons, highlighted here, becomes a *para-narrative* for that of

⁷⁰ The option for Odysseus to stay with Calypso and become her immortal husband is repeated twice in Book 5 (5.135-136; 5.208-209) and then again in Book 7 (7.254-258).

Odysseus and Telemachus and gives context to the latter's deeds in the earlier books of the *Odyssey*.

Through the account of his son in Book 11, Achilles' ghost and the audience are transported briefly back to the world of the living, but at a different point in time, in a way that combines the themes of heroism and family. The success of his son is what causes the ghost of Achilles to rejoice; the *kleos* that the living Achilles demanded in the *Iliad* becomes secondary. For Achilles' ghost, the son's deeds are more important than the report and honors of his own. This celebration of Achilles' son foreshadows Telemachus' future heroic success against the suitors later in the poem, bringing another point of comparison between Odysseus and Achilles as heroic fathers of heroic sons.⁷¹

Finally, the devastating rejection of Odysseus by Ajax's ghost calls into question the meaning of heroism on the battlefield, by showing that an Iliadic preoccupation with *kleos* can lead to a bitter afterlife as well as narrative disruption, since this encounter ends Odysseus' necromantic conversations. From an intratextual perspective, the detailed treatments of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax activate three additional narratives, which become concurrent *para-narratives* that affect how the main narrative is perceived. By reaching back into time via Underworld episodes, the poet of the *Odyssey* is able to re-cast events and insert more directed commentary on themes that are woven through the epic as a whole. The importance of these particular ghosts to the epic is reinforced by their reappearance in Book 24, right before the conclusion of the *Odyssey*.

⁷¹ The celebration of the son could even extend into the Agamemnon subtext that Olsen discusses (Olson 1990), creating a triad of successful sons and proud fathers.

As both ancient and modern scholars have noted, the “Little *nekuia*” of Book 24 could easily have been left out of the poem.⁷² After Odysseus slaughters the suitors, he only has to consolidate his power, re-connect with his family, and regain his kingship. This timeline breaks, however, to follow the suitors into the Underworld, creating a micro-narrative through a sense of movement in space. The version of the *Odyssey* that has survived contains it and, therefore, points to a long-held belief in its value and appropriateness to its surrounding narrative. Indeed, it not only parallels the way that the *Nekuia* of Book 11 is structured and used in the poem, but also is consistent with the way that literary Underworld scenes are used in other poems, such as Hesiod’s, as expository digressions.

In the “Little *nekuia*,” the ghosts of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax again appear as a group, and they discuss almost the same topics that they did in Book 11: heroism, family, and homecoming. Ajax is present, but still unspeaking. Achilles starts the dialogue with Agamemnon as if they were meeting for the first time, expressing surprise that that latter met an early, ignoble death. An interesting thing to note, upon closer reading, is how several points of time overlap in this scene and seem to contradict assumptions about the Underworld *chronotope* that may have been established earlier. The ghosts that appear here are not witless or feeble (νεκύων ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, “the powerless heads of the dead,” 10.536). In fact, they remember and are preoccupied with their former lives (and deaths), contrary to what Circe said of such ghosts in Book 10 (τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνηα οἴω πεπνύσθαι· τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ αἴσσουσιν, “to [Tiresias] alone did Persephone provide that his mind maintain its full powers, even after he died; but the other ghosts flit about as shades,” 10.494-495).

⁷² See footnote 7.

The discrepancy indicates that the poet is tapping into several traditions and counter-narratives simultaneously and seamlessly, as the shift to a different Underworld framework barely requires or prompts local explanations within the text. Abbreviated, passing references are enough to fill in the space so the poet can get to the central action of the scene – the conversation between Achilles and Agamemnon. Achilles already knows the situation surrounding Agamemnon’s death, although it happened after his own at Troy. Achilles brings it up as a point of comparison, with Ajax’s presence subtly inserting a third type of death. The result of the ghostly Agamemnon’s speech is to reiterate the heroic code at Troy and the *kleos* attendant on that type of heroism, as understood in the *Iliad*. Among the three, Achilles comes out the winner, but only in the ghostly domain. Odysseus’ battle with the suitors for Penelope and Ithaca re-plays the mission of the Trojan War on a smaller scale. This fight for a married woman and the wealth of a kingdom by her husband and his allies is more resonant and effective when it is understood in the context of the values that are discussed among the ghosts in the “Little *nekuia*” of Book 24. The importance of the entire family – generations of men plus their wives – in supporting the Greek leader also becomes a part of the matrix of heroic character: Telemachus’ perseverance and Penelope’s loyalty are as much a part of Odysseus’ *kleos* as his own deeds. Penelope refers to herself as having *kleos* through her relationship with Odysseus (*Ody.* 18.255), and Agamemnon says her *kleos* for being a virtuous wife will never perish (τῶ οἱ κλέος οὔ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται / ἦς ἀρετῆς, 24.196-97).

Through the conversation with the ghost of Penelope’s suitor Amphimedon, Odysseus’ fate becomes part of the grid of comparison, and Agamemnon turns his speech of praise from Achilles to Odysseus. The scene then ends abruptly, but it frames the next section of the narrative by contextualizing the battle with the suitors against the Trojan War and by drawing

direct comparisons between Odysseus' homecoming against other *nostoi* stories. These afterlife scenes, therefore, become a major narrative tool in marking Odysseus as the premier hero among his peers, both for his deeds and his family, by allowing direct, side-by-side, simultaneous comparisons of divergent, anachronistic narrative threads.

In short, Book 24's "Little *nekuia*" is the author's commentary on the key themes and afterlife scenes presented elsewhere in the Homeric corpus. Within the "Little *nekuia*" lie references to several other Underworld scenes that are known from both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The triad of Agamemnon, Achilles, and Ajax with an Odysseus "proxy" (Amphimedon) mirrors the *Nekuia* (*Ody.* 11) as does the topics they discuss. The presence of Ajax's ghost in Book 24 is essentially unnecessary for this scene as he has no role or interaction with the suitors' ghosts,⁷³ but without him the scene would not link as strongly to the one in the earlier *Nekuia*. Additionally, the mention of Patroclus' ghost alongside Achilles' in the group (*Ody.* 24.15-16) and Agamemnon's description of the companions' joint funeral pyre directly recall the events of *Iliad* 23, in which Patroclus' ghost visits Achilles and makes specific funerary demands (*Il.* 23.83-92). This ghost also recalls Elpenor's ghost and its demands in *Odyssey* 11. Thus, the Underworld scene in Book 24 links to multiple *para-narratives* simultaneously to position Odysseus as the superior hero.

IV. Conclusions: Underworld Scenes as Inflected Language

Authors use Underworld scenes to invoke *para-narratives* that color the interpretation of their primary narratives. *Para-narratives* inform the audience about aspects of an Underworld

⁷³ In Book 11, his pointed silence in the face of Odysseus' direct appeal, on the other hand, was very important in characterizing Odysseus.

scene, the “active window” story at hand, but they also, at times, threaten to supersede it. The layering of *para-narratives* that occurs in Underworld scenes creates a meta-language, which allows an author to embed his own commentary about the primary narrative’s characters and events and deliver it directly to the audience. This is the case in the Underworld scenes of Homer and Hesiod, which recall important themes at key moments in the plot of the primary narrative. Underworld scenes also connect with each other across texts, and the author’s message can better be understood through a process of identifying the *para-narratives* and using them as points of comparison and information.

Underworld scenes help situate primary narratives not only in their immediate contexts but also against the backdrop of a broader network of stories and texts. Through necromancy in the *Nekuia* (*Ody.*, Book 11), Odysseus finds out information about his home, his family, and his friends, as well as about the nature of the afterlife. From the perspective of interpretation, this extra data is crucial, since the author’s choices of whom Odysseus encounters and converses with provide narrative connections that help the audience characterize both the protagonist and the work as a whole. This adds a depth of meaning by the author in the form of “privileged knowledge” that would otherwise be left solely to the audience. At the close of the *Nekuia*, we find that Odysseus did not need Tiresias’ directions at all for the success of his immediate journey, as Circe provides them willingly once he returns to her island (αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ δείξω ὁδὸν ἠδὲ ἕκαστα σημανέω, ἵνα μή τι κακορραφίη ἀλεγεινῆ ἢ ἀλὸς ἢ ἐπὶ γῆς ἀλγήσετε πῆμα παθόντες, “But I will show [you] the path and mark out each detail so that you will not suffer woes and experience hardships through some grievous mishap, either by sea or land,” *Ody.* 12.25-27). The *Nekuia*, therefore, serves little narrative purpose in pushing the plot of Odysseus’ *nostos* forward, but stands as a powerful embedded commentary to the *Odyssey*, since it recalls

and summarizes the major themes of the epic and motivations for the hero's *nostos* while also proposing a heroic identity for its protagonist Odysseus. The textual difficulties and potentially post-Homeric interpolations that have been pointed out by various scholars do not undermine the episode as much as they suggest that later audiences wanted to clarify the relationship between the story of Odysseus' *nostos* to Ithaca (the primary narrative) and the *Nekuia* as authorial commentary.⁷⁴

By using the Underworld *chronotope* as a tool to revisit different timeframes, the poet actively negotiates the interpretation of his own work by contextualizing narrative details. The purpose of reminding the audience of various relationships and roles that different characters play throughout the *Odyssey* is to recall the backdrop against which Odysseus' series of actions have taken place and then to give meaning to those actions in light of his relationships.

As we have seen, the Homeric epics are not unique in this use of Underworld scenes. Indeed, the same patterns of authorial commentary occur in the Underworld scenes of Hesiod. Despite being a very different type of poem with no human protagonist, Hesiod's *Theogony* contains Underworlds scenes that perform a similar function to the Homeric ones. Hesiod's description of the Underworld's landmarks in the *Theogony* gives a synoptic, spatial view of the genealogical efforts in his primary narrative. They summarize and crystalize the themes that occur in the rest of the poem and connect the audience's present reality to the events in the

⁷⁴ See Sourvinou-Inwood (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 86-87) for a discussion how post-Homeric insertions work to justify an audience's understanding of the text. Her discussion of the Heracles passage in the *Nekuia* shows how an audience may not only interpret a scene in a certain way based on a textual allusion but also move further to "correct" a narrative through addition or subtraction such that it more clearly displays a that interpretation.

poem's primordial past. The Underworld space is where these two time periods – the primordial and the historical – meet and where Hesiod clarifies the relevance of the mythic events by reminding the audience of the purpose and outcome of the main narrative: an ordered cosmos with Zeus as its leader.⁷⁵ Each god and structure of the Underworld is a link in an index of the important elements of Zeus' ultimate rule, particularly order and justice on the natural, cosmic, divine, and human levels.

The chthonic gods' houses are spatial representations of important concepts that intersect to form Zeus' administration of justice.⁷⁶ The Titans' prison, in one corner of Tartarus, is where the old regime of the cosmos is stored, evidence of Zeus' triumph and a reminder of a violent past, whose threat is contained but still remains. Next, the House of Night and Day with Atlas holding up the heavens on its threshold (*Th.* 744-757) provides an East-West axis to the Underworld and a basic temporal and physical structure to the natural world. The House of Hades and Persephone (*Th.* 767-774), which represents the laws that specifically form human justice, is anachronistic since it is there that mortals (not yet in existence) will at some future date be held and sorted by judges after death. Finally, Hesiod introduces the vaulted House of Styx (*Th.* 775-779), a goddess who represents the laws that bind the gods. Her house also stretches to heaven, emphasizing the extension of her power into three dimensions across the realms, creating a vertical axis perpendicular to the East-West axis. This complements the other locations in the Underworld that correspond to the laws enforcing punishment, dictating cosmic order, and

⁷⁵ See Clay for a discussion of the political strife leading to Zeus' ultimate reign in Olympus (Clay 1989).

⁷⁶ See Lye (2009: 12) for a more complete discussion of the geography of the Underworld and its correlation to Zeus' ultimate world order.

judging human conduct. By using ἐνθα, the author can capitalize on the “there and then” of the Underworld to bring the “here and now” of the narrative into sharper perspective, since the one cannot exist without the other.⁷⁷ In a surprising inversion, the Underworld’s makeup actually reflects that of the “now” of the audience, bringing in the audience’s contemporary values and understanding of reality as the standard for analyzing the events on display in the genealogical narrative. The *Tartarographia* is meant to reinforce a certain formulation of the world and Greek society by inserting ideas of justice familiar to the audience’s present with those represented in the primeval narrative, collapsing the diachronic into the synchronic. By mapping genealogical relationships directly onto the topography of the Underworld, Hesiod uses the same strategy as Homer of imbuing Underworld objects with layers of meanings that recall larger narratives.

In Archaic Underworld scenes, characters and places are located both within immediate familial structure and against a larger historical and literary backdrop. People or objects of personal significance to the protagonist or narrator appear in combinations that can only occur in the Underworld *chronotope*. Underworld scenes might recall the past, predict the future, or create a new marker representing the present. This is the case in the *Nekuia* where Odysseus’ past, future, and present converge: Odysseus’s conversation with Greek comrades commemorate his participation in the Trojan War and what brought him to the present moment; the predictions of Tiresias tell the hero what to expect when he continues his journey; and the interaction with Heracles establishes Odysseus as a member of a select group of Greek mythic heroes. The strange synchronicity (and syntopicity) of the Underworld *chronotope* is especially apparent in Odysseus’ conversation with the ghost of Tiresias. The seer not only predicts Odysseus’ future, but also encroaches on the narrative time of the primary narrative by condensing the remaining

⁷⁷ See Felson for a detailed discussion of the types and effects of *deixis* (Felson 2004, 2004).

plotline into a mere thirty-seven lines (11.100-137). Everything that has happened and will happen in the narrative and beyond thus becomes bracketed within the Underworld scene, offered up by the author to the audience in a carefully constructed way. Similarly, the structure and distribution of honors in the *Theogony*'s Underworld confirm the action in the poem's primary narrative. What emerges by comparison of these afterlife scenes across different works and authors is a pattern of usage that shows Underworld scenes acting as a sort of inflected language with an internal syntax that translates the meaning of the narrative to the audience.

By enduring an Underworld-type journey, a protagonist such as Odysseus proves his physical and spiritual mettle, not only by moving across nearly impossible physical obstacles but also by facing his past through a series of characters, which force him to assess and resolve issues that hinder the completion of his journey. The person he was (in the *Iliad*), is (now in the Underworld), and will become (in Books 12-24 of the *Odyssey*) all meet each other in the Underworld scene, and his evolution between these three states is visualized in his conversations with the various ghosts and his progress through the Underworld. The author chooses ghosts who display Odysseus' character and values, thereby communicating to the audience how to interpret the hero and his story.

Chapter 3. *Inventing “Blessed” Afterlives and Immortality through Underworld Scenes*

I. Introduction

The poets after Homer who composed Underworld scenes changed the nature of both the landscape and the agents who moved in it by borrowing and amplifying certain afterlife elements. Through the popularity, production, and reproduction of the Homeric epics in various performance and competitive contexts across Greek-speaking settlements and through the rise of new religious and philosophical practices, realm of the dead was put on public display in different social contexts that influenced how the afterlife was perceived. Post-Homeric poets found a variety of Underworlds in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as other sources, and they chose to emphasize different aspects of the dead and the relationship across the life-death barrier than the one found in the famous *Nekuia* of *Odyssey* 11. In the lyric and epinician poets, the dead and their imagined society became actively consulted resources for the living. The dead were also often thought to benefit by continuing to interact with the world of the living. As Emily Vermeule explains, the Greeks viewed death as a multi-stage process, and the poet’s work was to keep the dead alive “by quotation and interview” (Vermeule 1979: 2-4). The result of this outlook was that “figures of the past were still on call for mortals of the present” (Vermeule 1979: 23). With the emphasis on reciprocity and exchange in eschatological poetics, special individuals were portrayed as achieving a hero-like status in the afterlife, maintaining awareness of their identities and continuing their availability to their communities after their deaths.

To allow for this transition in afterlife expectations, poets in the 7th through early 5th century B.C.E. focused on specific ideas in their source material to “open up” the Underworld and make it appear more welcoming and accessible to a wider range of mortals. Epinician poets, in particular, presented themselves as facilitators of immortality who could use their knowledge

of myth to transform their subjects into “blessed” heroes – that is, heroes who maintained their identities after death, dwelling in an afterlife environment that was comparable to the domiciles of the gods. These poets borrowed three key concepts from epic poetry that came to dominate representations of the Underworld during this time period: 1) an explicit segregation and stratification of the society of the dead, 2) a direct connection between mortal deeds and afterlife outcome, and 3) the blurring of the existential boundaries between life and death and between mortals and immortals through the linguistic and spatial designations of individuals. The poetry of this period increasingly depicted an Underworld with a continuity of awareness, judgment after death, an eternally carefree existence, and the favor of both the gods above and the living community left behind. These newly highlighted features emphasized a greater permeability across the life-death boundary and the accessibility of the realm of the dead to the living, through correct actions or poetic celebration.

In the course of this discussion, I will show that a shift in representation of the Underworld was not the work of a few individual poets acting independently or in response to specific religious practices but was a Panhellenic phenomenon that occurred across media and contributed to the authority of the author’s work. Indeed, the poets and artists that dominate discussion used Underworld scenes to engage in active dialogue with each other and with a wide range of source material. In the following, I explore the Underworld features that became more prominent in Archaic Underworlds as well as the assimilation of individuals to heroes who achieved afterlife “blessedness.” I give a detailed analysis of terms referring to “blessedness,” exploring how they were defined and applied to allow greater access for certain individuals to Underworld benefits and how this in turn led to a segregated vision of the afterlife. Next, I discuss how these features reduced the perceived existential distance between the worlds of the

living and the dead by making the actions of the living predictors of Underworld reward (or punishment). Finally, I discuss how widely the phenomenon of “making mortals ‘blessed’” through poetry occurred, arguing that it was not solely a phenomenon of epinician poets for Sicilian patrons.

The idea of different afterlives with different landscapes for different people based on special markers was not new. The difference between the afterlife depictions of Homer and those of later poets, therefore, was primarily one of emphasis. Even Homeric epics present many afterlife options – they assign a mindless existence to most ghosts (*Ody.* Book 11), a special afterlife in the Elysian plain to Menelaus (*Ody.* 4.561-569), a companionable society to the Greek heroes of the Trojan War (*Ody.* 24.1-204), and an existence of isolated despair to the unburied (*Ody.* 11.57-78, Elpenor’s ghost; *Il.* 23.69-74, Patroclus’ ghost). While the scholarship about Underworld type-scenes and their use has focused on the Homeric sources, and particularly the Underworld depicted in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, other works were equally important in transforming the Underworld into a standardized vehicle for author-audience communication.

Both the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* and Hesiod’s *Works and Days* imagined stronger connections between the prosperity of a person in life (in the form of wealth and divine favor) to the potential for a good afterlife. Comparisons of human and divine states of “blessedness” were defined by the terms *olbios* and *makar*, which poets began to cross-apply, breaking down the separation between the realms of mortals and immortals. These terms, along with certain phrases and ideas such as “Isles of the Blessed” become links between Underworld representations, constituting a coded language between author and audience containing watchwords implying levels of “blessedness” and assumptions about divine judgment.

Epinician poets, in particular, skillfully juxtaposed ideas from different, recognizable Underworld scenes to promote their own authority as mythic storytellers engaged in a conversation with each other through common Underworld tropes. The poets borrowed aspects of Underworld scenes from Homeric epic (especially from the *nekuia* in *Odyssey* 24), which are also present in the poetry Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. These poets, including Pindar, Bacchylides, and Theognis, then took the additional step of linking these myths to the facts and realities of their patrons' lives. The "blessed" societies of heroes in the afterlife were presented as reflections of the rich, carefree lifestyle of the Greek elite. Pindar's *threnoi*, particularly Fragment 129-130, present a hopeful vision of the afterlife in which certain souls live in a state of flowering bliss (*olbos*), enjoying golden fruit and engaged in activities such as wrestling, riding horses, and playing dice. Poets suggested that their patrons could expect the perpetual enjoyment of divine favor (as evidenced on earth by material wealth or *olbos*) beyond the grave where they would continue to exist as sentient ghosts in an environment that was akin to the one where the gods lived.

The assimilation of rich patrons or special individuals to heroes changed perceptions about the distance of the Underworld from everyday life. Both Bacchylides and Pindar invested in making the Underworld a persistent, relevant presence in the real world. By engaging in select eschatological imagery from their predecessors' poems, they validated their own authority as inheritors of their tradition to immortalize men through song and construct afterlives reflective of anticipated hero cults for these special individuals.⁷⁸ Bacchylides displays the roots of Heracles' end and ultimate deification as based in an Underworld encounter and then analogizes the

⁷⁸ Currie argues that *Olympian* 2 projects a hero cult for Theron that was created posthumously (Currie 2005: 84).

Panhellenic hero to his patron Hieron. Pindar supports a new afterlife model by moving heroes found in Homer's dark, gloomy, impersonal Underworld into a space where consciousness of reward for one's deeds are a prerequisite for enjoying a "blessed" afterlife. He moves the bar for "blessedness" to a different level that puts it within reach of a person such as his patron Theron.

In these instances, accessibility to a positive Underworld space occurs by placing the poets' aristocratic patrons in the august company of heroes – an imagined heroization. This step breaks down the perceived separation between the divine and mortal, creating openings across the life-afterlife boundary, which did not exist so explicitly in earlier poets. A mortal could now follow the example of an epic hero in the afterlife as well as in life, using the poet's song to validate and advertise his status. By suggesting a continuum of experience and direct interaction between the living and the dead, poets were integral in creating a sense of permeability across the life-death barrier and in heroizing those who were able to translate their blessings across that boundary.

II. "Blessedness" and the Underworld

In Archaic poetry, life in the Underworld was imagined to be "lived" in parallel to that of Greek society, as a *para-narrative*⁷⁹ to real life where outcomes for individuals could be proposed and produced artistically.⁸⁰ The Underworlds in the earliest extant poetry were depicted

⁷⁹ In this study, *para-narratives* are "texts behind the text" that can be invoked through such devices as allusion or quotation. They rely on the audience to see the connections to related narratives.

⁸⁰ In Homer, the dead were not able to interact with the living nor were they generally sentient except through necromantic rituals, as shown in the *Nekuia* of *Odyssey* 11. Pindar's epicinian

as distant, separate, and frighteningly different. The dead were generally seen to be living only a partial, limited existence, often without full consciousness, sensations, or bodies. Poets in the Archaic period, however, increasingly portrayed the kingdom of the dead as continuous with that of the living as well as approachable under certain circumstances, through rituals, divine dispensation or the designation of “blessedness.”

Homer’s “Negative” Underworld

Scholars have classified three types of Underworlds: “negative,” “positive,” and “positive-plus.” The “negative” Underworld is associated with the *Nekuia* in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*. Based on the descriptions of the dead as “feeble heads of the dead” (νεκύων ἀμειννὰ κάρηνα, *Ody.* 11.29) and “witless” (ἀφραδέεζ, *Ody.* 11.476) in this episode, the *Odyssey*’s longest Underworld scene, many scholars have tended to describe the Underworld in Homer as “negative” and the more hopeful ones that came later as “positive.” In a “negative” Underworld, souls live a seemingly purposeless existence in a semi-conscious or completely witless state, surrounded by gloomy darkness. They are said to exist without consciousness (save Tiresias, *Ody.* 11.90-137) unless extraordinary means were applied, such as drinking the blood ritually offered by Odysseus. In this case, the Underworld is seen as an impersonal “holding pen” for souls, including notable heroes such as Achilles. In the “positive” Underworld, on the other hand, souls maintain their earthly identities and personalities to a certain degree and often dwell in supernaturally enhanced landscapes. Because of the authority of Homer, the “negative” afterlife was thought to be the dominant view of Greeks in the Archaic Period, a position that has

poems and *threnoi* depict the dead, especially heroes, enjoying blissful afterlives without direct interaction with the living.

been challenged in more recent scholarship (Page 1955; Sourvinou-Inwood 1981; Tsagarakis 2000; Edmonds 2011, 2004; Vernant 1991).

Within the discussion about the “negative” Underworld, scholars disagree about whether the *Nekuia* represented a more traditional belief or an innovation and to what extent elements of the “positive” Underworld could be found in Homer. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and Radcliffe Edmonds have observed that the Homeric Underworld already has elements that could be construed as positive (Sourvinou-Inwood 1981; Edmonds 2011). Indeed, when one considers all the Underworld representations in Homer and Hesiod as a whole, the exclusively “negative” afterlife of the *Nekuia* seems to be an anomaly. Further, as discussed in my previous chapter, the Homeric epics contain many, often competing visions of the afterlife that have been overshadowed by the focus on *Odyssey* 11’s *Nekuia*.

Although souls in the *Nekuia* were not automatically separated into “good” and “bad” based on their deeds in life, as was regularly the case in later Underworlds, there are already hints that some form of judgment existed in the afterlife, even in the mindless, “holding pen” model for all the dead. The identification of Minos⁸¹ suggests that even the “negative” afterlife

⁸¹ In Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus observes Minos, one of the famous Underworld judges (ἐνθ’ ἦ τοι Μίνωα ἴδον, Διὸς ἀγλαὸν υἱόν, χρύσειον σκῆπτρον ἔχοντα θεμιστεύοντα νέκυσσιν, ἦμενον, “and there I saw Minos seated, a splendid son of Zeus, holding a golden scepter and acting as judge for the dead,” 11.568-570). The succeeding reference to the “great sinners” Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus also suggests Underworld judgment (*Ody.* 11.576-600). As has been noted in the previous chapter and elsewhere (Edmonds 2011: 12-13), the Homeric epics seem to be aware of the “positive” afterlife and incorporate versions of it (e.g. in Book 4

was more complex than has been typically described by those primarily focusing on the gloominess of the space and the souls' lack of awareness.

Sourvinou-Inwood tries to address internal contradictions in the Homeric Underworlds by explaining that views of the afterlife in the Homeric poems are reflective of actual 8th century B.C.E. social and religious debates. She argues that a traditional belief in the collective destiny of souls was being challenged by an emerging belief in the individual destiny of souls. In her view, the contradictions were being played out in the Homeric texts and were evident to later generations because they were fossilized in the Homeric poems, whose written form coincided with this very debate (Sourvinou-Inwood 1981: 22-25). She argues that the traditional view was the “negative” one against which newer more “positive” beliefs were fighting. She further argues that the afterlife as a place of “witless” souls corresponded to a “Greek love of life” that “accompanies the traditional acceptance of familiar death” (Sourvinou-Inwood 1981: 24). Achilles' famous response to Odysseus on preferring to be a poor laborer alive than a king among the dead⁸² is reflective, therefore, of an early Greek belief that “any life is preferable to death, a wretched servant alive is better than the king of the dead” (Sourvinou-Inwood 1981: 24).

In contrast, Edmonds views the dark and mindless Underworld of Homer as the exceptional one, arguing that it only became so prominent because of Homer's vast influence.

when describing Menelaus' end in Elysium and in Book 24 where the souls are imagined to be living in eternal, amiable companionship).

⁸² The line from *Odyssey* 11.489-491 is: βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρορος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλῳ, ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρῳ, ᾧ μὴ βίωτος πολὺς εἶη, ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν, “I would prefer to work as a hired day-laborer attached to the soil as a serf for another man, one with no land of his own and little livelihood, than be king over all the lifeless dead.”

Edmonds describes the Homeric Underworld as intentionally impersonal, i.e. the poet's choice, since "the bleak vision of death and afterlife is fundamental to the Homeric idea of the hero's choice – only in life is there any meaningful existence, so the hero is one who, like Achilles, chooses to do glorious deeds" (Edmonds 2011: 13).⁸³ Other scholars similarly see the "negative" afterlife in Homer as the "newer" and more prevalent one in Homer's time, but look for an archaeological explanation rather than a literary one. They argue that the "negative" afterlife is rooted in the Dark Age burial practice of cremation, which the Homeric epics seem to favor. As Tsagarakis argues, a gloomy Underworld with nothing to look forward to would make sense if the body is destroyed by cremation because the senses would also be destroyed (Tsagarakis 2000: 112-113). What is seen – the body – ceases to exist, and the soul (*psychē*) does not contain enough of the person's identity and faculties to be fully human.⁸⁴ The lack of a body precludes the enjoyment of things related to the body, and the lack of rational or feeling mental faculties

⁸³ This description coincides to a large extent with Denys Page's view of a universally "Homeric conception of Hades" that sees "lively" ghosts as unhomeric (Page 1955: 48n.46). Page argues that any hint of "lively" ghosts in the Homeric poems were later additions (Page 1955: 21), and that the only original parts of the *Nekuia* were Odysseus' conversations with Tiresias, Anticlea, and the Greek heroes of the Trojan War (Page 1955: 39-40).

⁸⁴ Bruno Snell has argued that the Homeric epics view the terms "body" and "mind" of living humans as being comprised of different parts (Snell 1982: 5-22). After death, only the *psychē* part of a person travels to Hades and continues to exist. Among the *eidōla/psychai* in Hades, only the seer Tiresias is said to have his *phrēn* intact because Persephone granted him *noos* while other souls only flit around like shadows (*Od.* 10.490-495). The other shades lack this quality of "mind" and, therefore, are not the people they were before death.

removes the essence of an identity. Inhumation, on the other hand, which often included important items for a living body such as food and favorite items, might give hope that the person continued to exist in some form that would be able to enjoy such items (Tsagarakis 2000: 112-113).

Regardless of which came first, post-Homeric authors generally dismissed the “negative” afterlife’s “mindlessness,” as portrayed in *Odyssey* 11’s *Nekuia*, by responding to it directly and by selecting elements from it that could create exceptions to its dark view. The *Nekuia* suggests a generally egalitarian afterlife in which most souls are undifferentiated, a view that the other afterlife scenes in Homer and those of later writers almost universally rejected. Even with representations of different types of Underworlds, the Homeric poems tended away from segregating the dead based on their mortal deeds and preferred different realities for the living versus the dead. The post-Homeric sources, on the other hand, almost universally reject the complete separation of the dead from the living and take the further step of segregating the dead based on earthly deeds and status. These later authors formulated their Underworld scenes to underscore certain messages that they were trying to convey to their audiences in their narrative – they drew on Homer’s rhetorical method of employing Underworld scenes as embedded authorial commentary but used this device to support a range of different views.

Shifting to the Positive: Awareness and Identity

Post-Homeric Underworld scenes drew on many literary elements already existing in Homer to emphasize different messages, and they often did so with the assumption of the audience’s knowledge of the Homeric reference. Whereas a gloomy death made the acquisition of epic *kleos* in life paramount, other suggestions from the author (such as being a just ruler,

succeeding in athletic competition, gaining immortality in song, or becoming an initiate) created pressures on the Underworld type scene to adjust how it portrayed the afterlife. Poets after Homer focused on the nature of the “positive” afterlife and whether the self-awareness of souls was a blessing or a curse. Their Underworld scenes had certain common features that arose from the basic assumption of the soul’s self-awareness: a persistence of identity, the segregation of souls based on earthly status, and afterlife judgment leading to punishment or reward. These in turn led to the ideas of the increased importance of deeds during an individual’s life and the favor of the gods for certain individuals, as evidenced by their earthly wealth.

The main poet associated with the “positive,” sentient Underworld is Pindar because of his Underworld scenes in the *threnoi* and *Olympian 2*. The latter, an epinician celebrating the tyrant Theron of Acragas, presents a tri-partite Underworld⁸⁵ in which the poet suggests that his patron might achieve not only a sentient afterlife but also a state of “blessedness” among the dead equivalent to that of Homeric heroes who live in a carefree ghostly society. Scholars ascribe Pindar’s “positive” afterlife to an evolution in religious belief, to possible “extrinsic additions,” such as metempsychosis, from Pythagorean influences in Sicily,⁸⁶ and to a poetic strategy of appealing to an aristocratic audience who want to maintain their high-class status after death (Currie 2005: 40). Because of his prominence and his seeming rejection of the *Nekuia*’s picture of the afterlife, Pindar is often pitted against Homer as having a conflicting eschatological vision.

⁸⁵ Souls were judged and segregated. They could have a “negative” afterlife defined by punishment, a “positive” one with sentience and some rewards, and a “positive-plus” experience in the company of Homeric heroes who achieved a blissful afterlife.

⁸⁶ See Lloyd-Jones, Nisetich, Woodbury for further discussion on the influence of Acragas and the Pythagoreans (Lloyd-Jones 1990; Woodbury 1966; Nisetich 1988).

This juxtaposition of Pindar and Homer as conveyers of ancient myth and of conflicting eschatological beliefs is ubiquitous in the scholarly literature but has tended to lead to reductionist or teleological conceptions of afterlife accounts, primarily involving direct comparisons between only these two authors.⁸⁷ Deriving the eschatological passage in *Olympian* 2 primarily in relation to the Homeric poems overlooks the larger phenomenon in Greek literature (and culture) of using Underworld scenes to create stronger bilateral connections between earthly deeds and afterlife experience. The “positive” afterlife existed in many forms well before Pindar as did the idea of mortal agency in determining states of “blessedness.” Pindar’s Underworlds reflect continuity rather than a change in afterlife belief and representation, and they also point to multiple sources beyond Homer. Although the comparison between the Homeric and Pindaric Underworld scenes has been important for pointing out cross-

⁸⁷ Currie writes that “the view of mortality in Pindar’s odes is strikingly at odds with that of the *Iliad*” (Currie 2005: 44). Frank Nisetich refers to *Olympian* 2.56-80 as “Pindar’s *Nekyia*” (Nisetich 1989: 30), in order to emphasize the Pindar’s indebtedness to the *Odyssey* and claim to poetic authority. Gregory Nagy weighs in on this debate by arguing that “Pindar’s lyric poetry treats Cyclic heroes as equivalents of Homeric heroes,” which is why heroes from Homer and the epic cycle appear in *Olympian* 2’s Island of the Blessed (Nagy 1990: §2). The more inclusive treatment of Cyclic heroes extended into Pindar’s treatment of his patrons. E. Ehnmark views Pindar’s poetry as representing “a transitional stage in the belief” of immortality between Homer and later writers (Ehnmark 1948: 12-13). Finally, Friedrich Solmsen describes Pindar as adopting a Homeric motif – Thetis’ intercession with Zeus to increase Achilles’ glory – to remove Achilles to the Isles of the Blessed, countering Homer’s seeming abandonment of the hero in Hades to an unhappy fate in Hades (Solmsen 1982: 20-21).

genre connections and offering a picture of how the ancient Greeks used the Underworld scene, the narrow scope of the debate has missed links that Pindar surely expected his audiences to make. It has also caused scholars to overlook the more “positive” Underworlds suggested in the Homeric epics.

The direct, almost exclusive comparison between Homer and Pindar in the scholarship has promoted the perception of a simplistic dichotomy between a “negative” and “positive” afterlife, which does not cover the complexity of afterlife visions that exist in the literature.⁸⁸ While Pindar’s influence may have expanded a uniquely “positive” version of the afterlife, he did not invent the “positive” afterlife. He relied heavily on earlier sources, including Homer, using a network of Underworld scenes to validate his version.

As was seen above, the Homeric epics were already aware of the “positive” (i.e. sentient) afterlife and incorporated versions of it (e.g. in Book 4 when describing Menelaus’ future in Elysium and in Book 24 where the souls are imagined to be living in eternal, amiable companionship). Even the “negative” *Nekuia* of Book 11 portrays differences among certain figures in the Underworld, such as eternal punishment for famous sinners and the retention of

⁸⁸ The Homer vs. Pindar dichotomy has also led to a teleological model of afterlife belief, which is insufficient in capturing how authors use intertextual linking to both “negative” *and* “positive” examples in order to direct their audiences through a network of myths and texts, bringing authorial guidance and context to the audience. Missing such links has led to a failure in seeing how Underworld scenes respond to and support societal shifts, such as the rise of democracy and the *polis*. Edmonds attempts to mitigate this to some degree in his analyses of Underworld journeys, but looks at each author and work as separate phenomenon as opposed to the continuum of interlocking imagery for which I argue (Edmonds 2004).

self-identity for Tiresias. The earthly deeds of humans did not determine where they ended up in the afterlife nor was the designation of Underworlds as “negative” or “positive” based on the souls’ experiences whether consciousness would be retained by the dead. Thus, a “positive” afterlife, as it has been described in the scholarship, means simply that souls retain their sense of identity and awareness of their surroundings as if they were alive.

The main epic template for the “positive” vision of the Underworld, which we see later in Pindar and other post-Homeric poetry, appears to be the introductory Underworld episode in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*. In this scene, referred to as the “Little *nekuia*,” the ghosts of famous Greek heroes are envisioned in a scenario that is often repeated and invoked in later Underworld scenes. With fully realized and remembered identities, the souls of the Greek heroes Achilles and Agamemnon meet and converse with each other in leisurely fashion on a range of topics, particularly their deaths and heroic deeds, while their companions sit around them in attendance (*Ody.* 24.1-204). These souls of Greek leaders greet the newly arrived souls of the dead suitors, who are just being led to their new home in Hades, and they strike up a conversation with the newcomers, based on a personal relationship that persists across the life-death barrier:

ἔγνω δὲ ψυχὴ Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδαο
παῖδα φίλον Μελανῆος, ἀγακλυτὸν Ἀμφιμέδοντα:
ξείνος γὰρ οἱ ἔην Ἴθάκῃ ἐνὶ οἰκίᾳ ναίων. (*Ody.* 24.103-104)

And the soul of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, recognized
the dear son of Melaneus, glorious Amphimedon,
who, when dwelling in Ithaca, had been his host.

The soul of Agamemnon not only recognizes Amphimedon but uses their ξείνος relationship as justification for approaching the latter (*Ody.* 24.106-119). Once the relationship is reaffirmed, Amphimedon recounts the events in Ithaca, not only about his recent death but also information related to Penelope and the suitors during the time Odysseus was absent (*Ody.* 24.120-190). Although Agamemnon's ghost encountered Odysseus during some of the events described, the state of affairs in Ithaca were not part of their conversation because it was not yet known to the ghosts.

Homer's presentation of a "positive" Underworld is a closed system with new information moving in one direction – from the world of the living to the world of the dead.⁸⁹ The souls in this Underworld scene were imagined as remembering details from their personal experiences alone and then only learning updates about the world of the living from the souls of the newly deceased who arrived after them. Afterlife society here is imagined to be like the Greek society of the living: institutions and relationships like those of *xenia* continue to be important and honored. Moreover, the interactions between the souls of the Greek leaders mimic the conversations these leaders had had while fighting the Trojan War. Their conversations in the afterlife suggest continuity with the interactions they had while alive in the Greek camp of the

⁸⁹ The exception to this is Achilles' necromantic dream in Book 23 of the *Iliad* (*Il.* 23.69-101). In that scene, Patroclus' ghost gives Achilles details of the Underworld and how the experience there is affected by proper burial. The ghost also implies that souls in the afterlife remain conscious, since he retains his self-identity and experiences pain at being excluded from the company of souls outside the gates of Hades. This Underworld scene visualizes Achilles' grief and performs the same function of authorial commentary as the scenes from the *Odyssey* by projecting Achilles' particular concerns about death and the fate of his friend.

Iliad, and the rapprochement between Achilles and Agamemnon that started near the end of the *Iliad* is finalized in the afterlife, with the latter giving due honors to the former. In this “positive” Homeric Underworld, the ghosts of heroes remember their identities after death, exist as sentient beings who retain their earthly honors, and cultivate their relationships in the afterlife, even without their physical bodies.

Based on this consciousness of individual identity and continuity of relationships, a range of afterlife outcomes emerge in post-Homeric poetry. A “negative” afterlife no longer meant an egalitarian lack of awareness after death for most souls but evolved to mean an unfavorable outcome, such as eternal punishment, for specific souls who maintained awareness and the ability to suffer as if they were still alive. On the other hand, a “positive” afterlife came to refer to a larger range of afterlife existences, from simple awareness to having an eternal lifestyle similar to that of the gods (often called “positive-plus”). Divisions in wealth and status were translated across the life-death divide – material wealth in life became a carefree existence in the afterlife, but there was not necessarily an unbroken continuum. Reversals of fortune were possible: an aristocrat could face punishment for oath-breaking or other injustices. More likely for the elite featured in an epinician, however, was a further elevation of rank and status from life to afterlife in that they were imagined not only to maintain divine favor but also to join a company of select heroes living a “blessed” afterlife and to achieve immortality through song. Equating a *laudandus* in song to such heroes as Achilles and Peleus gave the *laudandus* a status that crossed from the mortal realm into the eternal ones. In this way, a *laudandus* was marked as “larger than life,” just like these special heroes.

Forms of “Blessedness”

Within “positive” Underworld scenes, a major categorizing principle for mythic Underworlds was the idea of “blessedness.” This idea permeated the physical landscape of the Underworld as well as the identities and experiences of individuals who lived there, whether ghosts or chthonic figures. The society of the dead was segregated by levels of “blessedness,” which was a concept that became associated with divine favor, earthly wealth, and certain lifestyles. Poets chose elements from all of Homer’s Underworld scenes to clarify what immortality meant, how being “blessed” fit into different visions of immortality, and who was able to attain the status of “blessed” in the afterlife.

Consciousness after death and possible connections between the living and the dead had firm roots in the epics of Homer – even in the *Nekuia*, souls appeared to congregate in groups. The Underworld space was generally conceived of in the *Nekuia* and Archaic poetry as an inhospitable and almost inaccessible realm that contained the most undesirable parts of the cosmos, making it hard to enter except by one’s death or by special heroes who were favored by the gods. Hesiod’s *Theogony* was similar to Homer’s in its distance from the living and its difficulty of access, as its borders were marked with many physical obstacles. Once inside, however, the space held an organized society, containing the eternal prison of the Titans in Tartarus, homes for chthonic gods, undesirable monsters or deities such as Styx (described as “loathsome to the gods), and, of course, ghosts with preternatural powers – each assigned to different area.

These perceptions of the inner parts of the Underworld from early Archaic poetry began to change, however, as later poets added more specific details to commonly known myths of the Underworld. The landscape of the Underworld gained new meaning, and the nature of afterlife society began to shift as poets emphasized the segregation of souls into different

“neighborhoods” of the Underworld representing differences in the status of those individuals during life – people who had wealth on earth could expect a better experience in the afterlife, since they would retain divine favor. In the new schema, mortals could prepare and predict their afterlife status through just deeds and a good relationship with the gods while alive – as documented in an epinician poet’s song – to ensure that the honors they accrued in life would translate into a better afterlife experience after death.

Poets aided this process by portraying their patrons in songs just as earlier poets did for heroes, making the honors afforded to the latter equally applicable to their own earthly patrons. For both the hero and *laudandus*, *kleos* in song was thought to be a compensation for death (Currie 2005: 72). This heroization was achieved by juxtaposing a *laudandus* with a famous hero such as Achilles who achieved a “blessed” afterlife, as happens in Pindar’s *Olympian 2*, or by writing mortals into known heroic or divine storylines that involved *katabasis* or a similar conquest of death. Thus, the *laudandus* and the hero could be equated in both poetic renown (*kleos*) and earthly honors (*timē*).⁹⁰ A second, more subtle strategy involved how a poet labeled his subject, using specialized terms for “blessedness” indicating the existential states of a person in this world and in the afterlife.

In relation to Underworld scenes, two particular words for “blessed” come to describe similar ideas: *olbios* and *makar*. They each refer to lifestyle, but, during this early time period, the former is primarily associated with mortals and the latter almost exclusively with gods.

⁹⁰ Currie argues that *timē* implies literal immortality through cult as opposed to *kleos*, which describes the metaphorical immortality of song. He observes that the latter was favored in the Homeric poems to the exclusion of the former, but that Pindar seems to interweave the two types of immortality (Currie 2005: 72-84).

Slippage between the two terms by poets trying to assimilate their mortal subjects to certain heroes was one way that the barriers of immortality were broken down.⁹¹ By honoring particular people with the title of *olbios* or *makar*, poets contributed to the idea of degrees of “blessedness.” These terms were marked, signaling the poet’s vision to the audience of his hero’s status as compared to famous heroes and gods.

The concept of “blessedness” and the lifestyle that is referenced by the terms have particular eschatological resonance. Both *olbios* and *makar* evoke a supernaturally pleasant existence and a sense of status conferred by a relationship with the gods. They also imply the intermingling of divine and mortal agents and a partial breakdown of strict cosmic divisions.

Makar and the “Blessedness” of the Gods

The term *makar* is simpler to define because it is more exclusively associated with the gods. As Cornelis de Heer observes, “to be μάκαρ is to be divine, to have a home secure against adversity, to be untroubled by wind and rain, to enjoy perpetual sunshine, to enjoy oneself all day long.” (de Heer 1969: 6). Semantically and emotively, therefore, the “μάκαρ-sense is inseparable from the θεοί-sense” and assumes that “the gods are deathless, lead an easy life, do not eat human food and so do not need to submit to toil and hardship” (de Heer 1969: 4-5). The word “*makar*” describes a lifestyle and state of being “beyond human hope” and almost always refers to a state of being that is characteristic of gods and their dwellings. As Calame asserts, “It is well known that *mákar* designates the status of eternal happiness enjoyed by the gods, set apart

⁹¹ The terms and their derivatives become more interchangeable by the 4th century B.C.E., although *makar* was always most closely associated with the unique “blessed” state of the gods (de Heer 1969: 56).

from any productive labor” (Calame 2009: 200). In Homer, *makar* is rarely applied to humans and, in such cases, is a marked term containing hidden information directed to the audience, such as when it describes a god disguised in human form (*Il.* 24.376-377).

Early Archaic poetry is clear in its distinction of *makar* as a title reserved for the gods and as a reference to their lifestyle when they are in their native realm. The gods are often referred to as “*makares theoi*” or simply “*makares*.” The terms imply that they have no worries related to food or environment and focus on pursuing their own enjoyment and personal pleasures. The gods might sit in council with each other and make requests of Zeus, but not many details are given except that their home is different from earth and does not need cultivation.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, the term *makar* is used three times and only as an epithet of the gods. Furthermore, each reference to the deities as “blessed” occurs in relation to their location or movement to or from their dwellings with other gods, clearly marking the term as having a sacred connotation. In the first instance, μακάρων is a substantive adjective used to refer to the gods living in a state of “blessedness,” which implies that they are in a carefree existence on Olympus.

...ἀτὰρ ξανθὴ Δημήτηρ
ἔνθα καθεζομένη μακάρων ἀπὸ νόσφιν ἀπάντων
μίμνε πόθῳ μνύθουσα βαθυζώνοιο θυγατρὸς (302-304)

But fair-haired Demeter remained there, sitting [in her temple at Eleusis] apart
from all the **blessed gods**, wasting away with longing
for her deep-girded daughter

Describing the gods as *makar* in this instance emphasizes that Demeter has shunned not only their company but also their state of “blessedness” as she languishes from grief.

The second reference to the gods as *makar* also has a spatial aspect. After Iris unsuccessfully pleads with Demeter to return to Olympus at Zeus’ behest, he orders all the other gods to try to persuade her, forcing them to leave the comforts of their home to go to Eleusis with the sole purpose of begging her to return with them to Olympus.

Ὡς φάτο λισσομένη· τῆς δ’ οὐκ ἐπεπείθετο θυμός.
αὐτίς ἔπειτα πατήρ **μάκαρας θεοὺς αἰὲν ἔόντας**
πάντας ἐπιπροΐαλλεν· ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ κίοντες
κίκλησκον καὶ πολλὰ δίδον περικαλλέα δῶρα,
τιμάς θ’ ἅς κ’ ἐθέλοιτο μετ’ ἀθανάτοισιν ἐλέσθαι· (324-328)

Thus [Iris] beseeched her, but [Demeter’s] heart was not persuaded.

Next, the father sent all the **blessed, eternal gods**,

one after the other. And going in succession,

they called upon her and gave many beautiful gifts and whatever honors

among the immortals she might want to take.

In this passage, almost all the epithets used to describe the gods in the *Hymn* are crowded into a few short lines: *μάκαρας* (πάντας), *θεοὺς*, *αἰὲν ἔόντας*, and *ἀθανάτοισιν*. Individually, each of these can be translated simply as “gods,” but in close proximity, they force the audience to consider different aspects of the beings called “gods.”

Although *αἰὲν ἔόντας* (“always existing”) and *ἀθανάτοισιν* (“undying”) mean essentially the same thing, the emphasis differs. The former focuses on time as having an eternal

quality and also life itself, while the latter draws attention to the lack of the milestone event, namely, “death,” which brings much pain and grief to humans but also is the chief identifier of mortals as a category. The word θεοὺς is the term specifically meaning “gods,” but the term μάκαρας (πάντας) more properly describes the gods’ culture and lifestyle as opposed to their natures. This suggestion of culture as opposed to nature seems to hold true as well in the third reference to the gods as *makar*. It appears in a section of text that is hopelessly corrupt but that can still give hints to the particular word’s usage. The received text includes it in the phrase θεῶν μακάρων (“of the blessed gods,” 345) in the section of the poem describing Persephone in the Underworld with Hades. As Foley notes, the line is untranslatable and may have been misplaced (Foley 1994: 54); the sense, however, of *makar* in the received text again seems to denote the gods living in a state of blessedness *as opposed to* the locations of Persephone or Demeter, which are “far away.” Foley translates the line ἡ δ’ ἀποτηλοῦ ἔργοις θεῶν μακάρων ~~ μητίσεται βουλή (344-345) as “Still she, Demeter, was brooding on revenge for the deeds of the blessed gods” (Foley 1994: 20). The word ἀποτηλοῦ, which Foley does not translate, can also be understood with θεῶν μακάρων to mean “far away from the blessed gods.” Although the exact translation is unclear, the sense seems to be that Demeter has excluded herself from the environment of the “blessed” gods while she broods.

In the *Odyssey*, *makar* is almost always accompanied by the noun θεός and appears only about thirty times in the whole epic.⁹² It is the special designation of the gods, particularly when

⁹² The rarity of *makar* or its derivatives to apply to mortals is brought to light by the fact that one of the only times in Homer that *makar* is used in the superlative and in the positive to refer to actual mortals (as opposed to gods disguised as mortals) is when Odysseus first addresses Nausicaa on Scheria (an otherworldly place similar to the Underworld), during a time when he is

they are conceived of as a group. The “positive” afterlife featured in *Odyssey* 24 (1-204) depicts the Underworld as a place inhabited by sentient beings who are concerned with the activities of the living. The *makares* gods on Olympus are similarly portrayed in their divine realm. Although the Underworld space is generally nondescript, a few landmarks are named, which gave an opening to add further details. Later authors, such as Hesiod, seized on this sketchy picture of the afterlife and merged elements of it with utopian qualities of an imagined divine realm to create a

unsure whether she is a god or mortal (*Ody.* 6.149-159). In these instances he calls her parents and siblings “thrice blessed” because of her (τρὶς μάκαρες μὲν σοί γε πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ, / τρὶς μάκαρες δὲ κασίγνητοι, “while thrice blessed indeed are your father and mistress mother, / thrice blessed too are your siblings, *Ody.* 6.154-155) and then later refers to her future husband as “the most blessed of all men by far” (κείνος δ’ αὖ περὶ κῆρι μακάρτατος ἔξοχον ἄλλων, / ὅς κέ σ’ ἐέδνοισι βρίσας οἰκόνδ’ ἀγάγηται, “but that man in turn is the most blessed in his heart above all others, who would prevail with his bride-gifts and lead you to his home in marriage,” *Ody.* 6.158-159). Odysseus’ uncertainty explains the use of *makar* here as does the fact that he has already encountered many goddesses living on islands such as Scheria during his wanderings. The use, however, should not be underestimated since it adds to the supernatural atmosphere to Scheria that invokes a divine existence by recalling the other instances that *makar* appears, both in this poem and elsewhere. In another instance, Telemachus uses the phrase μάκαρός ἀνέρος to refer to a hypothetical father for himself (*Ody.* 1.214-220). The phrase μάκαρός ἀνέρος is an oxymoron, since μάκαρός is the native state of the gods, but it adds to the fabulousness of the imagined situation.

“blessed” region of the Underworld reserved for special souls. The “blessed” souls of the Underworld were shown to attain the best afterlife possible for mortals, short of deification (as happened to Heracles). Further, that lifestyle is described in terms of the physical comforts this group of souls can expect, even though they do not technically have bodies. The Underworld scene configuration, therefore, is an indication to the audience by the poet of a soul’s ability during life to gain divine favor and then receive a beneficial judgment after death.

Hesiod’s many landscapes of the afterlife indicate different levels of “blessedness” and the closeness of different figures to the *makares* gods of Olympus. In the *Theogony*, the cosmic divisions between mortals and non-mortals are laid out spatially such that Zeus’ justice can be tracked by the landscape where different beings dwell. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Theogony* creates the Underworld as a distinct kingdom ruled by gods and located in physical space. Its sections are determined by Zeus’ unique brand of justice, which he unleashes upon attaining his kingship: Tartarus is the prison of Zeus’ enemies; Hades and Persephone rule as monarchs over a vast, dark kingdom; Styx, as a river, is a physical boundary of the Underworld and also the overseer of divine oaths; and time itself, as humans perceive it, is created cyclically through the exchange of residence between the gods Night and Day (*Theogony* 717-815). Hesiod focuses the *Theogony* on the gods and their politics,⁹³ and his vision seems to confirm the *Nekuia*’s conclusion of the afterlife as a place of dread and punishment, although it does not actually show any mortal souls having a bad experience. Based on this description of the landscape and chthonic deities, the idea of justice was established early on as a fundamental building block of the existing cosmic and Underworld structure. Punishment for those who

⁹³ See Jenny Strauss Clay for more on Hesiod’s poems as narratives about the political machinations of the gods (Clay 1989, 2003).

sinned against Zeus (the Titans) and reward for those who were his allies (Styx) as well as distinct locations for Hades and Persephone and Night and Day created a visual separation of Underworld space into neighborhoods. This idea, along with the judgment such segregation implies, would play a critical role in defining the landscapes and levels of “blessedness” for mortals.

The “Ages of Man” passage in Hesiod’s *Works & Days* (lines 109-201) goes further in its details of how one’s just actions directly relate to afterlife outcome for humans. Hesiod’s emphasis on the landscape of the Underworld, on consciousness after death, and the soul’s afterlife experience are especially important features that had widespread influence. The passage suggests a more compartmentalized afterlife for mortals and a richer experience for souls than indicated anywhere else in the other extant Archaic poems. Justice and the rewards that come from “just deeds” are implied by what earns a certain race its positive or negative afterlife. It is the information in this poem that seems to underpin the variety of afterlife narratives of later poetry, whose Underworld passages are variations on the central theme of “just deeds in life lead to a ‘blessed’ afterlife.”

Hesiod’s *Works & Days* highlights the afterlife existences of several generations of humanity, with varying levels of reward and punishment after death. Each afterlife is directly related to a race’s actions while living and is also tied to ideas of justice, reward, and punishment. The Silver and Bronze races, having committed *hubris* and dishonored the gods, lived in violent lawlessness and so were both sent into darkness below the earth (*W&D* 140-142 and 152-156, respectively). This Underworld landscape was described as gloomy, lightless, and dank, similar to the one Odysseus encountered as he approached Hades in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, but with the further suggestion that it was a place of punishment. The fourth race of

heroes were split into two locations, some simply died with the implication that they went to a place either neutral or dark. At the very least, their afterlives were substantially different from the select few who were allowed to go to the Isles of the Blessed. The fifth race of Iron, however, seems fated to end in the dark, gloomy Underworld. The word *hubris* reappears in line 191 (ὑβριν) of the Iron race section as an internal echo to line 134 (ὑβριν) describing the Silver race's offenses, both times in the accusative singular.

The Iron race's end is not explicitly described but there are hints that it may be split in a similar way to that of the heroic fourth race. There is no question that the fifth race is heading towards a bad end on a path of self-destruction like the Silver and Bronze races. The poet is careful to note, though, that there are glimmers of good (ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ τοῖσι μεμείξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν, "but, nevertheless, even for those men, good things will be mixed with evils," *W&D* 179). The mingling of good and evil suggests that there are choices in an individual's behavior that were not present for earlier races.⁹⁴

For the hubristic Silver race, however, there was hope of redemption, but only after death. Through the actions of living, mortal men, the Silver race seemed to undergo a change of state in that they were no longer associated exclusively with *hubris* (*W&D* 134) but with the type of "blessedness" associated with the gods. Although their lives were unjust, the spirits of the Silver race are treated as divinely "blessed" by the community of living men.

ὑβριν γὰρ ἀτάσθαλον οὐκ ἐδύναντο
ἀλλήλων ἀπέχειν, οὐδ' ἀθανάτους θεραπεύειν (135)
ἤθελον οὐδ' ἔρδειν **μακάρων** ἱεροῖς ἐπὶ βωμοῖς,

⁹⁴ The heroic race is the only other race that shows different treatment for different members, with Zeus granting special privileges to the certain members.

ἦ **θέμις** ἀνθρώποις κατὰ ἤθεα. τοὺς μὲν ἔπειτα
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ἔκρουψε χολούμενος, οὕνεκα τιμᾶς
οὐκ ἔδιδον **μακάρεσσι** θεοῖς οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψε, (140)
τοὶ μὲν **ὑποχθόνιοι μάκαρες θνητοὶ** καλέονται,
δεύτεροι, ἀλλ' ἔμπης τιμῆ καὶ τοῖσιν ὀπηδεῖ. (*W&D*, 134-142)

For they were not able to restrain themselves from wicked *hubris* against each other nor were they willing to worship the immortals nor offer sacrifice on the holy altars of the **blessed** ones, as is **just** for men, according to custom. In anger, Zeus, son of Cronus, then concealed them because they did not give honors to the **blessed** gods who hold Olympus. But since the earth covered up this race also, they are called the **blessed dead under the earth**; they are second in rank, but honor, nonetheless, attends even them.

The term *makar* features prominently in this passage to define both the gods and the Silver race after it has undergone some existential change due to their treatment by mortals. There are no details about whether the Silver race's actual experience in the afterlife changed based on being called called *makares*, but their conversion from being hubristic to “blessed” in the *makar* sense is definitely tied to the *timē* they receive from men who “call” them (and the gods) *makares*.⁹⁵

As Calame observes, “without being assimilated to the gods, these men of silver end up having a form of immortality,” attaining an afterlife that let them be called “blessed” in the divine sense (*μάκαρες*, *W&D* 141), even though they dwell underground (Calame 2009: 74).

⁹⁵ The term *timē* implies literal immortality through cult (Currie 2005: 72-84).

The juxtaposition here of μάκαρες with θνητοὶ and ὑποχθόνιοι is particularly remarkable (de Heer calls it “oxymoronic,” p. 21), since *makar* more commonly appears with *theoi* and, somewhat rarely, with *athanatoi* (e.g. ἀθανάτων μακάρων, *W&D* 706; μακάρεσσι ἀθανάτοισιν, *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 315). This picture gives hope to Hesiod’s audience because it has implications for them, as members of the Iron race. Although the Iron race’s prospects seem generally grim, the presence of any good to punctuate their evils during life gives an opening that the afterlife might yet have hope, whether through special selection as in the Heroic race or posthumous honors as were given to the Silver Race.

In contrast to the Silver Race, the afterlives of the Golden race and a select group from the race of heroes live “blessed,” god-like existences in life and death. The phrases and landscape features in these descriptions later become watchwords for activating links between Underworld texts. They tell of humans approaching the levels of gods in their eternal lifestyles.

Χρύσειον μὲν πρότιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ’ ἔχοντες. (110)
οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ’ οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν·
ὥστε θεοὶ δ’ ἔζων ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες
νόσφιν ἄτερ τε πόνων καὶ οἰζύος, οὐδέ τι δειλὸν
γῆρας ἐπῆν, αἰεὶ δὲ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὁμοῖοι
τέρποντ’ ἐν θαλίῃσι, κακῶν ἔκτοσθεν ἀπάντων· (115)
θνήσκον δ’ ὥσθ’ ὑπνῷ δεδμημένοι· ἐσθλὰ δὲ πάντα
τοῖσιν ἔην· καρπὸν δ’ ἔφερε ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα
αὐτομάτη πολλὸν τε καὶ ἄφθονον· οἱ δ’ ἐθέλημοι
ἦσυχαι ἔργ’ ἐνέμοντο σὺν ἐσθλοῖσιν πολέεσιν.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψε, (121)

τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι τελέθουσιν

ἔσθλοί, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,

οἳ ῥα φυλάσσουσιν τε δίκας καὶ σκέτλια ἔργα

ἡέρα ἐσσάμενοι πάντα φοιτῶντες ἐπ' αἴαν, (125)

πλουτοδοταὶ· καὶ τοῦτο γέρας βασιλήιον ἔσχον. (W&D, 109-126)

The deathless gods who have homes on Olympus made the very first race of mortal men golden. These were the ones who lived in the time of Cronus, when he ruled the sky. And **just like gods**, [the Golden Race of men] lived with a carefree heart, aloof and apart from toils and sorrow, and neither did wretched old age oppress them at all; but they, always the same as ever with respect to their hands and feet, delighted in feasts, far away from all evils. And they died as if subdued by sleep; and they had all good things: the grain-giving field bore plentiful fruit of its own accord, abundantly and ungrudgingly, and they willingly and peacefully distributed the [fruits of their] labors with many good things. But when at length [Zeus] hid this race under the earth, **they became in the end the holy *daimons* upon the earth** – noble, protectors from evil, guardians of mortal men – the ones who watch over judgments and cruel deeds, while they flit above the earth clothed in air and give wealth; and this kingly honor they received.

A supernatural setting, similar to the home of the gods, provided their material needs while they are alive. Then this race of men actually became gods, or *daimons*, after they died, and they have

the honors of overseeing justice and distributing wealth.⁹⁶ Their good life and honorable afterlife are connected to each other. Although the term *makar* is not used explicitly, the descriptions of space are meant to give details of the lifestyle for those designated as *makares*, such as a heart free from toils, sorrow, and illness and a home in a fertile land that needs no cultivation. Additionally, the presence of Cronus and ongoing camaraderie and joyful feasting were tropes constantly associated with this *makar* lifestyle.

The Race of Heroes borrows the distinctive markers of “blessedness” presented in the previous two races of men. Select heroes were imagined to have an afterlife experience similar to the gods’ *makar* lifestyle, marked by a lack of cares and the involvement of Cronus in a kingly role.

Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν,
αὐτίς ἔτ’ ἄλλο τέταρτον ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ποίησε, δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον,
ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἷ καλέονται
ἡμίθεοι, προτέρη γενεῇ κατ’ ἀπείρονα γαίαν. (160)
καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόλεμος τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνῆ
τοὺς μὲν ὑφ’ ἐπταπύλῳ Θήβῃ, Καδμηίδι γαίῃ,
ὤλεσε μαρναμένους μήλων ἔνεκ’ Οἰδιπόδαο,
τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐν νήεσσιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λαίτμα θαλάσσης
ἔς Τροίην ἀγαγὼν Ἑλένης ἔνεκ’ ἠυκόμοιο. (165)
ἔνθ’ ἦ τοι τοὺς μὲν θανάτου τέλος ἀμφεκάλυψε

⁹⁶ cf. Persephone and Demeter as givers of wealth to those described as *olbios* in *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 488-489.

τοῖς δὲ δίχ' ἀνθρώπων βίοτον καὶ ἦθε' ὀπάσσας
Ζεὺς Κρονίδης κατένασσε πατὴρ ἐς πείρατα γαίης.
τηλοῦ ἀπ' ἀθανάτων· τοῖσιν Κρόνος ἐμβασιλεύει.
καὶ τοὶ μὲν **ναίουσιν ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες (170)**
ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι παρ' Ὠκεανὸν βαθυδίνην,
ὄλβιοι ἦρωες, τοῖσιν μελιηδέα καρπὸν
τρὶς ἔτεος θάλλοντα φέρει ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα. (W&D, 156-173)

[156] But when the earth also covered up this race, Cronus' son Zeus again made still another race upon the all-nourishing earth, a fourth, more just and noble god-like race, who are called demi-gods, the race just before [ours] on the boundless earth. Evil war and the dread call to battle destroyed them, some when they struggled under seven-gated Thebes, Cadmus' land, for the flocks of Oedipus, and others brought in ships over the great expanse of the sea to Troy for the sake of lovely-haired Helen. And there, the finality of death enshrouded some, but for others, father Zeus, son of Cronus, granted a life and habitations apart from men and settled them at the ends of the earth. They are far from the deathless gods, [and] Cronus rules them as king. In fact, they dwell **with a carefree heart on Isles of the Blessed alongside deep-swirling Ocean. They are the "blessed" heroes, for whom the grain-giving field bears honey-sweet fruit, blooming three times a year.**

This passage not only mimics the idea of a fertile earth and carefree heart but also *names* the location the “Isles of the Blessed” (μακάρων νήσοισι), ensuring that the audience recognizes it as the *makar* lifestyle associated with the divine realm.

The idea that mortals might communicate and influence an afterlife experience seems to have been the key idea in Hesiod’s descriptions of the good and evil races of man. By emphasizing the idea that just deeds in life could lead to a better, even “blessed,” god-like existence in the afterlife and that unjust deeds could lead to more unsavory consequences in a different, usually dark location, Hesiod’s poems were particularly influential in providing a platform of Underworld imagery and associations based on an ideal of divinely monitored justice that allowed for a continuity of identity after death as well as the possibility of great rewards.

The heroes whose souls were selected to live a *makar*-type afterlife on the Isles of the Blessed were called *olbioi hēroēs* (ὄλβιοι ἥρωες). The title *olbioi* (“blessed”) is thus connected to the *makar*-type “blessed” space of the Isles of the Blessed. The close relationship between the words *olbios* and *makar* and their use when referring to an individual or space engaged the audience’s knowledge of their connotations. These terms became important for honoring individuals who were promoted in epinician poetry or through initiatory rituals as uniquely special in their “blessedness.”

Olbios and the “Blessedness” of Mortals

The term *olbios* is primarily associated with human beings who are favorites of the gods. This holds true throughout Archaic poetry (Foley 1994: 63n486-489). In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, the poet is described as *olbios* because he, along with kings, is a favorite of the Muses, who bestow the gifts of song and just speech, respectively (ὁ δ’ ὄλβιος, ὄντινα Μοῦσαι φίλωνται·

γλυκερή οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδὴ, “and he is **blessed**, whomever the Muses love; sweet speech flows from his mouth,” *Th.* 96-97).⁹⁷ In the *Works & Days*, calling the heroes of the fourth race *olbioi* (ὄλβιοι, *W&D* 172) emphasized the unique relationship that the gods had with these particular men. Through the intercession of Zeus (*W&D* 167-168), these *olbioi hēroēs* enjoy an afterlife that is described as “blessed” (μακάρων, *W&D* 171). These particular heroes get the gods’ notice, according to Calame, because they are from a hybrid race (ἡμίθεοι, “half-gods,” *W&D* 160) that is capable of performing glorious deeds. Calame argues that because heroes are between gods and men by nature, they “can attain the happiness experienced by immortals through the brilliance of *kléos*,” (Calame 2009: 191).

Second, the term *olbios* refers to the actual material goods and wealth a person has because of divine favor. Being *olbios* means having possessions (gold, land, sons, etc.) “in such a large quantity that they arouse the admiration of others” as, perhaps, a king or aristocrat may have (de Heer 1969: 8). In Hesiod’s *Works & Days*, *olbios* is specific to the blessedness of mortals and relates to what they receive or do while alive. When a man is described as *olbios*, it refers to an earthly state, usually with the trappings of wealth that marks someone as a personal favorite of the gods who have intervened directly on his behalf.

In Homer, the distinction between the two terms is also true, but the emphasis is on the designation of being the chosen ones of the gods rather than on the heroes’ wealth (although their earthly prosperity is assumed since they are leaders and warriors who gained the spoils of war). It was assumed that the gods (particularly Zeus) dispensed gifts that led to a person’s designation

⁹⁷ de Heer observes that there is no association at all in this passage between *olbios* and material wealth (de Heer 1969: 20), however, the skills of a poet would put him in good standing with patrons.

as *olbios* (de Heer 1969: 14). Being described as *olbios*, therefore, implied that an individual's "blessedness" or wealth came via supernatural forces and not only through his own mortal prowess.

Stamatia Dova observes that "*olbios* is attributed only to mortals in Homer" but also notes that Odysseus seems to prefer *makar* as a form of address in new situations (Dova 2012: 53n68). When he encounters Achilles' ghost, Odysseus places the dead hero in the category of the divine by referring to his status in the afterlife as μακάριτατος (σειο δ', Ἀχιλλεῦ, οὐ τις ἄνηρ προπάρουθε μακάριτατος οὔτ' ἄρ' ὀπίσσω, "but no other man before was more blessed than you, Achilles, nor shall there ever be in the future" *Ody.*11.482-483).⁹⁸ When such an unexpected substitution of terms occurs, the poet is underlining his verse with a subtle, yet important message for his audience. The effect of addressing Achilles with the *makar* epithet is to remove him to a plain of existence equivalent to the divine. It takes him out of the running for the earthly title of *olbios* so that Odysseus, still alive among mortals, can take on that mantle of being the most *olbios*.

Achilles' immediate rejection of the description μακάριτατος can be construed as the poet's way of telling his audience that it is not yet time to elevate Achilles to the *makar* level of existence that would remove him from the human sphere. Odysseus' greeting also emphasizes the temporal overlaying of the Underworld *chronotope* – past, present, and future converge for Achilles' ghost (Dova 2012: 24). Odysseus, in the guise of being respectful, attempts to freeze

⁹⁸ W.B. Stanford points out the superlative form used as comparative in this instance (Stanford 1947: 398n482-393). Dova confirms that manuscripts and editors waver between using the comparative or superlative, and the line is sometimes written with μακάριτερος instead of μακάριτατος (Dova 2012: 24-25).

Achilles as μακάριστος and put him in the same category of honors and level of existence as the gods. The outright rejection of the other-worldly title *makar* reminds the audience of the criteria against which to judge Odysseus as a hero at this point in the primary narrative: Achilles' heroism is still the standard by which other heroes should be defined at this stage in the *Odyssey*, and he should be classified using human categories of "blessedness," even though he's a ghost.

Achilles' strong reaction makes the honorific title into a central issue of the interaction, forcefully calling the question of degrees of "blessedness" to the audience's attention through the use of the superlative of *makar*. Additionally, the use of μακάριστος might foreshadow the eventual presentation of Achilles in a non-gloomy afterlife later in Book 24, where he no longer cares how he is addressed by his comrades and passes over Agamemnon's honorific greeting *olbie* without comment.

The term *olbios* is also used to describe both to the dead Achilles and the living Odysseus in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*, allowing them to be compared as peers and heroes of the mortal plain of existence. The Underworld scenes of Book 11 and 24 together show the replacement of Achilles with Odysseus as the quintessential hero by the end of the *Odyssey*'s primary narrative, which is signaled poetically by the transfer of the title *olbie*.⁹⁹ The earlier, gloomy Underworld fit a world where heroism is defined by deeds on the battlefield in life being immortalized in song. The later Underworld is more suitable to the end of the primary narrative, which shows Odysseus as the hero of a *nostos* whose successful return home is as important as his battlefield deeds.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Agamemnon's ghost first hails the soul of Achilles in the Underworld as *olbios* (ὄλβιε Πηλῆος υἱέ, θεοῖσ' ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ, ὃς θάνες ἐν Τροίῃ

⁹⁹ Dova argues that this elevation of Odysseus to the level of Achilles might have been a fundamental motivation for the two Underworld scenes (Dova 2012: 24).

ἐκάς Ἄργεος, “**blessed** son of Peleus, god-like Achilles, who died in Troy far from Argos,” *Ody.* 24.36-37). This is a particularly strange greeting since it relates to the latter’s material wealth and esteem on earth, suggesting physical possessions and a physical body that have no place in the afterlife. The title also assumes that such honors have travelled with the hero to the Underworld and presents the ghosts as interacting with each other as if they were still alive.

Achilles does not reject the honorific title here as he did in *Odyssey* 11 when Odysseus addressed him as ruling over the dead (*Ody.* 11.485). The audience can assume that Achilles accepts the *olbios* designation as the respect due to him. It seems natural here that the ghost of Agamemnon would address a former comrade in his persona from the Trojan War – as the best of the Achaeans. Later in the episode, however, Agamemnon’s more properly employs the title *olbios* for the living Odysseus after hearing the dead suitors’ tale of events at Ithaca (ὄλβιε Λαέρταο πάι’, πολυμήχαν’ Ὀδυσσεύ, “blessed son of Laertes, many-wiled Odysseus,” *Ody.* 24.191). This is the more appropriate Archaic usage of the term *olbios*, since Odysseus just regained his kingdom and wealth through divine assistance. His heroic deeds and successful *nostos* earned him the new designation, but because it was the term so recently used to designate Achilles. From the audience’s perspective, the honorific title *olbios*, repeated in such rapid succession, confers upon Odysseus a status equal to that of the famous hero Achilles. The poet of the *Odyssey* makes sure that his audience sees Odysseus as *olbios* due to divine favor and wealth, allowing him to be classified among the greatest Greek heroes.

The association of these qualities with the term *olbios* is reinforced in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, when the initiate is designated *olbios*.

ὄλβιος ὃς τάδ’ ὄπωπεν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων· (480)

ὃς δ’ ἀτελής ἱερῶν, ὃς τ’ ἄμμορος, οὐ ποθ’ ὁμοίων

αἶσαν ἔχει φθίμενός περ ὑπὸ ζόφῳ εὐρώεντι.
Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πάνθ' ὑπεθήκατο δία θεάων,
βάν ῥ' ἴμεν Οὐλυμπον δὲ θεῶν μεθ' ὀμήγουριν ἄλλων.
ἔνθα δὲ ναιετάουσι παρὰ Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ (485)
σεμναί τ' αἰδοῖαί τε· μέγ' ὄλβιος ὄν τιν' ἐκεῖναι
προφρονέως φίλωνται ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων·
αἶψα δέ οἱ πέμπουσιν ἐφέστιον ἐς μέγα δῶμα
Πλούτον, ὃς ἀνθρώποις ἄφενος θνητοῖσι δίδωσιν.

(Homeric Hymn to Demeter 480-489)

Blessed is he of earth-bound men who has seen these things; but he who is uninitiated in these holy rites, and who takes no part in them, never enjoys a similar fate even after he is dead, in the dank gloom. But indeed when the splendid goddess established all these [rites], she and Persephone went to Olympus to join with the host of other gods. And there they, revered and honored, dwell near Zeus, who delights in the thunderbolt. Greatly **blessed** is he of the men on earth whom those goddesses particularly love. Straightaway they send Pluto to him upon his hearth at his great palace, who gives wealth to mortal men.

The single, lead-off word ὄλβιος in this passage gives a promise to initiates of “better hope” for the afterlife by bifurcating the soul’s path to Hades. A sorting will occur upon death and that initiates will receive something in the afterlife from which non-initiates are excluded. The *olbioi*

initiates not only escape a gloomy afterlife but also get to enjoy their “blessed” state by being a favorite of Demeter and Persephone, who will send them material wealth. In this poem, the competing “negative” (mindless) and “positive” (conscious) views of the afterlife co-exist and a new “insider” group of special souls is identified, who have access to a different afterlife in a place once reserved for heroes.

The turn to eschatology occurs at a shift in the hymn, when the narrator concludes his story of the goddesses and turns to advertising the implications of Demeter’s new rites for the audience both on earth and in the afterlife. After she completes her instructions to the leaders of Eleusis on how to perform the rites of her cult, Demeter collects her daughter and ends her self-imposed exile, finally returning to Olympus. Her interaction with humans, however, gives mortals the ability to achieve a state in which they will be called ὄλβιος (“blessed”). In the context of the hymn, then, ὄλβιος implies “blessedness” of the visible material sort (Foley 1994: 63n486-489).

In its application as an honorific title to Achilles’ soul, to the living Odysseus, and to Eleusinian initiates, the term *olbios* can be seen to activate a complex of references that would include a form of heroic “blessedness” in the afterlife (a *makar* state of being) in addition to prosperity during life. Eventually, the term ὄλβιος came to cover a larger range of experiences than its original meaning and seems to have been applied to heroes in general, particularly those associated with hero-cult. Linking Odysseus to Achilles through the title ὄλβιος in Book 24 of the *Odyssey* also meant linking Odysseus to the narrative traditions surrounding the *Iliad*’s main hero, particularly those referring to Achilles’ “blessed” afterlife existence, especially given the

immediate context of ghosts in conversation.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the use of ὄλβιος to describe the Eleusinian initiates, a title applied to Homeric heroes, has implication for both their lives and afterlives. In this case, Pluto will give earthly wealth to them in life at the request of the goddesses. *Both* Persephone and Demeter send Pluto to initiated mortals and not just the latter goddess. Persephone's good will in this case and the decree that she is a goddess of life and afterlife translate her boon into a promise of reward after death equivalent to "wealth" during life, since Persephone has power in both realms.

III. Making Mortals "Blessed"

Calling someone "blessed" (*makarismos*), as Odysseus and Agamemnon's ghost do in *Odyssey* 11 and 24, "echoes a ritual pronouncement of eternal bliss bestowed upon the initiates in a religious ritual involving preparation for the afterlife" (Dova 2012: 54-55n78). The *makarismos*, one of the Eleusinian Mysteries' closing rituals (Richardson 1974: 313), recalls the final address to Odysseus and Achilles by the ghostly Agamemnon in the *Odyssey* as their ultimate titles in the timeless realm of the dead. Conferring such a title on an individual had a

¹⁰⁰ The ghost of Achilles in Book 24 accepts the title of "ὄλβιε" without issue, whereas the ghost of Achilles presented in Book 11 strongly objects to being described as "blessed" (μακάριστατος) by Odysseus (11.482-491). His later acceptance of the title "blessed" could be interpreted as an evolution in his acceptance of his fate or that he is being honored by a fellow ghost as opposed to a person still alive. I argue that the Underworld scene in Book 24 is activating a different set of *para-narratives* than the one in Book 11 so that the audience will interpret Odysseus' recent victories in the primary narrative as suitable for elevating him to the same heroic and "blessed" status as Achilles.

specific meaning with eschatological resonance. Although the actual words of the *makarismos* are unknown, it can be assumed from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*'s strict dichotomy between the gods' *makar* existence and humans' designation as "*olbios*" via the Eleusinian rites that any *makarismos* probably used the title *olbios*. Later and in other cults, however, particularly the ones related to the Orphic Gold Tablets, *makar* may have become the preferred term for "blessed" because it linguistically indicated the existential conversion.¹⁰¹ The use of *olbios* or *makar* to describe a mortal or initiate is, therefore, a projection for a soul's future in the afterlife and how he will be considered by the living.

The inclusive nature of the Eleusinian cult points to the widening of this space to accommodate non-heroes and also involved a re-definition of sections of the landscape. The Eleusinian Mysteries were open to a wide range of initiates – men, women, free, slave, Greek, and non-Greek – with the main limiting factor being economic constraints, since it was expensive in terms of time and money to complete each phase and pay the fees associated with the initiation process (Bremmer 2011: 376-377). Nevertheless, thousands of initiates made their

¹⁰¹ An Orphic Gold Tablet discovered in Thurii and dated to the 4th century B.C.E. (Graf and Johnston 2007: 12-13) greets the initiate as *olbie* and *makariste*: ὄλβιε καὶ μακαριστέ, θεὸς δ' ἔσῃ ἀντὶ βροτοῖο. Most scholars translate this as "happy and blessed, you will be a god instead of mortal" (Graf and Johnston 2007: 12-13; Dova 2012: 14; Torjussen 2014: 38). The oldest Orphic Gold Tablet dates to the 5th century B.C.E. (Graf and Johnston 2007: 4-5), but the sophistication of their poetics suggests they were modeled on much older sources than are extant. The double honorific of *olbie* and *makariste* could indicate an original use of the designation *makar* for initiates, but it is equally likely that it is due to slippage between the terms in the centuries previous to its composition.

way from Athens to Eleusis each year throughout the long history of this particular cult.¹⁰²

Walter Burkert notes the close, long-term connection between Athens and Eleusis, asserting that “Athenians were, as a rule, *mystai*,” suggesting that a great number of Athenians had been initiated into the cult at Eleusis (Burkert 1983: 249).¹⁰³ Michael Cosmopoulos ties the development of the *polis* and the emergence of individualism to the soteriological addition and expansion in the Eleusinian Mysteries. He argues that the “angst caused by the political instability in Athens, coupled with the increasing awareness of the uniqueness and separateness of the individual, was a major factor in a shift of attitudes toward death, as the Homeric idea of the soul as an unconscious and empty entity gave way to the view of the soul as an immortal being worthy of a better afterlife” (Cosmopoulos 2015: 165). Therefore, as Athens and the Eleusinian Mysteries rose in influence during the Archaic period, so too did the idea of a “blessed” afterlife as a result of individual deeds.

The potential for gaining the status of *olbios* on earth through deeds, as Odysseus and mystery cult initiates did through their actions and rituals while alive, gave mortals some level of control in determining their afterlife fates. The belief that a mortal who was not a hero could

¹⁰² Bremmer concludes that it lasted about a millennium and argues that its basic format remained intact, although specific details must have changed over such a long span of time (Bremmer 2011: 376).

¹⁰³ The connection between Athens and Eleusis is attested in the archaeological as well as literary record. Francis Walton points to an Athenian decree concerning the cult in the early 5th century B.C.E. as further archaeological proof of Athenian control over and association with the Eleusinian Mysteries and also to the discovery of a Mycenaean megaron as evidence that the sanctuary originated as far back as Mycenaean times (Walton 1952: 112-113).

influence his afterlife existence by becoming “hero-like,” whether through specific deeds or initiation in a cult, offered a sense of continuity between life and death. This belief also indicates a fundamental shift in how afterlife honors were meted out – from purely external factors, such as divine favor (whether arbitrary or familial), to internal factors, such as individuals’ choices and actions that would garner such favor.

Later poets such as Pindar and Bacchylides borrowed and expounded a segregated Underworld from their predecessors to reflect differences in status between mortals. Certain details in Underworld scenes became a quick shorthand for poets to communicate the meanings of their poems. They could project their patrons’ states of “blessedness” and, therefore, their immortality by describing the features that would mark them as “blessed” in the *olbios* and *makar* senses. A poet who described his subject with the characteristics contained in the lifestyles of the *olbioi* heroes and *makares* gods relied on the audience’s knowledge of many narratives to author that person’s immortality. The poet’s authority to do this would be affirmed by the performance of his song, by the reaction of his immediate audience, and by the expected actions of the community (e.g. in gifts, esteem, or hero cult).

Crafting “Blessedness” in Pindar’s Underworlds

Pindar’s afterlife mythology in *Olympian 2* creates a multi-part Underworld with several distinct outcomes for the soul that counterbalance each other logically by being based on the concept of punishment for the bad (56-60) and reward for the good (61-65). Pindar adds further complexity, however, with the third option of metempsychosis, or reincarnation (68-70) leading

to an even more idyllic afterlife location (“positive plus”).¹⁰⁴ This was an eschatological innovation attributed to Pythagoras that Pindar may have heard about from nearby Pythagorean communities. The presocratic philosopher Empedocles of Acragas, who was alive when the tyrant Theron commissioned this epinician (Willcock 1995: 134),¹⁰⁵ adopted a similar philosophy of rebirth in his poems. Since Empedocles also included the idea of rebirth in his philosophical poems, dated not long after Pindar’s *Olympian 2* and *threnoi*, Willcock argues that the setting itself was a catalyst for the exchange of this unusual idea, concluding that “it is reasonably assumed that the isolated assertion of such a doctrine in *O.2* has more to do with Theron than with Pindar; and the connection with Empedocles supports that. Such ideas being current in the west, perhaps we are hearing an echo of a local cult in Akragas,” (Willcock 1995: 139).¹⁰⁶ Willcock introduces the valuable point that Underworld scenes may link not only to other literary texts but also to narratives assumed in local practices and rituals. *Olympian 2*, therefore, may reference Pythagorean doctrines as well as the poems of Hesiod and Homer to support Pindar’s argument that his patron belongs with the “blessed” host of heroes in a *makar*-type afterlife.

¹⁰⁴ Sarah Iles Johnston describes the three categories of souls as “bad, good, and good-plus” corresponding to afterlives of punishment, reward, and extra rewards after metempsychosis (Graf and Johnston 2007: 100-108).

¹⁰⁵ *Olympian 2* was commissioned by Theron in 476 B.C.E. to celebrate his victory in the chariot race at Olympia (Willcock 1995: 134).

¹⁰⁶ Willcock also refers to Plato’s adoption of metempsychosis much later as having been influenced by his journeys through this region, using the events in the distant future to support his claims for Pindar’s times (Willcock 1995: 138-139).

In *Olympian 2*, souls are allowed to live in a place called the “Isle of the Blessed,” after spending three virtuous cycles¹⁰⁷ living on earth and in the Underworld:

ὅσοι δ' ἐτόλμασαν ἐστρίψ
ἐκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ πάμπαν ἀδίκων ἔχειν
ψυχάν, ἔτειλαν Διὸς ὁδὸν παρὰ Κρόνου τύρσιν· ἔνθα **μακάρων**
νόσον ὠκεανίδες αὐραὶ περιπνέουσιν (*Oly.* 2.68-71)

But those people, with the perseverance to hold their souls completely away from all injustices three times on either side, traveled the road of Zeus along the tower of Cronus; and there the Ocean winds blow around the **Isle of the Blessed**

Pindar takes the detail of “Islands of the Blessed” from Hesiod, but curiously makes it singular rather than plural. He also places it within the reach of regular mortals (Nisetich 1989: 63).¹⁰⁸

The depiction of souls living with enough consciousness in the Underworld¹⁰⁹ as well as in the world of the living to “stay away from all injustice on either side” (ἐκατέρωθι μείναντες ἀπὸ

¹⁰⁷ In this case, being one of “the good,” who have a chance to achieve the blessed afterlife, means keeping one’s oaths (εὐορκίαις, *Oly.* 2.66)

¹⁰⁸ Nisetich also says that besides the Island of the Blessed, the other details in Pindar’s afterlife account can all be found in Homer and therefore should be mostly attributed to Homer (Nisetich 1989: 62-63). I argue that both Homer and Hesiod are meant to be recalled simultaneously but not exclusively.

¹⁰⁹ Willcock offers a brief discussion and summary about the debate surrounding whether ἐκατέρωθι means that souls can live just or unjust lives in the Underworld (Willcock 1995: 158).

πάμπαν ἀδίκων) makes Pindar’s conception of the Underworld a “positive” one while also binding it more clearly to the concept of justice as determined by external judges.

The “road of Zeus” reminds the audience that proximity to Zeus is a key feature for entrance into a “blessed” state in the *makar* sense (as in the case of Menelaus’ Elysian fate, *Ody.* 4.561-569). The subsequent reference to Rhadamanthus a few lines later (*Oly.* 2.75) strengthens this Homeric connection (cf. *Ody.* 4.564). The “tower of Cronus”¹¹⁰ in turn recalls the Golden Age period in Hesiod over which Cronus ruled (*W&D* 111) as well as the “Isles of the Blessed” where Zeus made Cronus the king to oversee the blessed state of select heroes (*W&D* 169). The “Ocean winds” confirm that Pindar is talking about a similar location to Hesiod’s, near Ocean, as any island would be (cf. ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι παρ’ Ὠκεανὸν βαθυδίνην, *W&D* 171). The constructed features of a road and tower are rather puzzling, but they along with Pindar’s reference to “people ‘in the know’” (συνετοῖσιν, *Oly.* 2.85)¹¹¹ echo similar language seen on the Orphic Gold Tablets.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ The term for tower *τύρῳσιν* (*Oly.* 2.70) can refer to a single tower in a fortification wall or to an entire walled city. It implies a contained society that has a central organizing government. When paired with the name of a powerful ruler, “Cronus’ tower” suggests a kingdom administered by Cronus.

¹¹¹ For a discussion of this phrase and passage, see Most, who suggests a translation that would place the poet in the role of Muse-inspired oracular announcer whose messages were intended for a select audience, including Theron (Most 1986).

¹¹² The earliest date of an Orphic Gold Tablet is 50 years later, but its complexity suggests a much earlier provenance for its concepts and, potentially, an Orphic source poem for which the tablet itself may have been a mnemonic device (Graf and Johnston 2007: 103-104).

Johnston points out that Pindar's *Olympian 2* and Fragment 133 together reflect a tripartite Underworld structure similar to the one imagined in the Orphic Gold Tablets. Pindar's Fr. 133 specifies that Persephone sends certain souls back to the world of the living after nine years of atonement in the Underworld who become kings and warriors then eventually "holy heroes"¹¹³:

οἴσι δὲ Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
δέξεται, ἐς τὸν ὑπερθεν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτῳ ἔτει
ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν, ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαυοί
καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφία τε μέγιστοι
ἄνδρες αὔξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἦροες ἄ- (5)
γνοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλέονται (Pindar, Fr. 133)

And for those from whom mistress Persephone will accept recompense for an ancient woe, to the sun above she sends their souls back up in the ninth year, and from these will arise splendid kings and men swift with strength and with the greatest wisdom. And in the future, they are called holy heroes by men.

The wider application of the term "hero" to include the souls of certain individuals expands access to the type of glory previously reserved for the semi-divine heroes, who could trace their lineage directly to a god. The shift is particularly pertinent for rulers such as Theron, who have earthly prosperity (*olbos*) and want to translate their state of being from *olbios* in life to *makar* in

¹¹³ This recalls the phrase "δαίμονες ἄγνοι" (*W&D* 122), the title of members of the Golden Race after they die and reside in a "blessed" state.

the afterlife.¹¹⁴ Indeed, Pindar's patron Theron, who is the subject of *Olympian 2*, went on to receive posthumous hero-cult (Diodorus, 11.53.2), a form of literal immortality (Currie 2005: 74-84), affirming the honors predicted by the poet and his achievement of a *makar*-level lifestyle.

Introducing an Underworld scene containing an afterlife that allows for metempsychosis as a form of purification is a poetic shortcut for elevating a human ruler to the level of divinely favored hero. The poet's patron, or *laudandus*, is being praised with the ultimate compliment – assimilation to the heroic *kleos* that guarantees the eternal rewards of immortality through song and a “blessed” afterlife. As Nisetich has pointed out, this idea of striving to complete great deeds that then lead to poetic *kleos* and the ultimate life of ease in the afterlife fits Pindar's epinician program, since it allows Pindar to create parallels between recognized heroes, such as Achilles, and his patron's efforts on the race course (Nisetich 1989: 68-71). In a similar way, even the earliest Orphic Gold Tablet, from Hipponion, requires its owner to perform rites to achieve a state of “blessedness” that separates him or her from other mortals (Graf and Johnston 2007; Martin 2007). This Tablet, like Pindar's poems, supports a tripartite afterlife. These comparisons between *Olympian 2* and the Orphic Gold Tablets, which were both produced in the milieu of Sicily and Magna Graecia, have further illuminated the link between specific earthly actions, such as ritual initiation, and afterlife outcome.

This connection between the Underworld scene of *Olympian 2* and its Sicilian context may go even further than has previously been suggested. The singular “Isle of the Blessed” (as opposed to Hesiod's “*Isles of the Blessed*”) may reflect Sicily itself. The location near ocean

¹¹⁴ Although *makar* is not exclusively used of gods in Pindar's time as it is in much of Archaic poetry, Pindar is building links between his work and those that use *makar* in this sense. de Heer describes Pindaric usages of *makar* and *olbios* (de Heer 1969).

breezes, which has a royal palace (cf. tower of Cronus, 2.70-71) and operates under a centralized system of just, non-democratic rule (cf. Rhadamanthus, 2.75), can also be used to describe Acragas' location near the sea and Theron's court and government. These subtle changes to the Underworld would have been apparent to the aristocratic listeners who were familiar with Hesiod and Homer and would, therefore, understand Pindar's message. Pindar's Underworld is structured not only to be a mirror to their society but also maps directly onto their immediate world. More importantly, Pindar makes Theron's specialness and afterlife on the Isle of the Blessed accessible to others by tying his ascension to human actions. Of course, entrance to this idyllic, "positive plus" afterlife applies only to the best of the elite, or ἐσθλοί,¹¹⁵ but Pindar makes the opening to allow his patron, a historical figure, to determine his afterlife outcome through his deeds as proclaimed through the poet's song.

Creating a specific locality – Sicily as Isle of the Blessed – and portraying it as a land ruled by a "Golden Age"-like king give extra validation to Theron's rule and achievements. His competitive victories are the obstacles that he had to overcome, and they are made analogous to a katabatic journey by their juxtaposition with an Underworld scene. He succeeded at those challenges, and his success can translate into the prosperity of the elite at Acragas. The *makar* state for heroes in the poem becomes the *makar* state of Theron, whose membership in the literary host of heroes builds the foundation for the tyrant's future heroic cult by means of

¹¹⁵ As Solmsen observes, Pindar allows the ἐσθλοί who keep their oaths a positive afterlife by default, which is free from human suffering (*Oly.* 2.61-67), then gives them the extra bonus of the idyllic afterlife after 3 cycles of just living (Solmsen 1968: 503-504). This spoke directly to the aristocrats in Theron's court and the audience for Pindar's epinician, who would have viewed themselves as ἐσθλοί.

Pindar's epinician.¹¹⁶ Pindar used the Underworld options of his predecessors as the common language to argue for a vision of the Underworld as more of a "foreign land" that is an adjacent extension of one's current existence than as a distant and closed divine realm (although it retains supernatural elements and exists in a different *chronotope*).

The discovery of the connections between Pindar and the Orphic material added a new dimension to the context of *Olympian 2* by demonstrating that Pindar was relying on a wider range of intertextual resonances than originally thought.¹¹⁷ Pindar (and his contemporaries) presupposed a vast range of knowledge on the part of their audiences as inferred by their omission of extensive details from their mythic narratives (Currie 2005: 364). In *Olympian 2* and the *threnoi*, Pindar capitalized on a native feature of Underworld scenes to create a "positive" afterlife society through networks of association.

The ability of Underworld scenes to link across texts by generating layers of simultaneous *para-narratives* helped poets such as Pindar communicate large amounts of densely packed thematic information about their primary narratives within the constraints of their genres. The scholarship has privileged the past's influence on the present by focusing on linear and chronological connections. A more productive view, however, which has not been a part of previous scholarship, is to interpret Pindar's poems as tapping into networks of texts from the past *and* the present in simultaneous dialogue with each other.

¹¹⁶ Currie argues that Theron tried to establish himself as the object of heroic cult during his lifetime (Currie 2005).

¹¹⁷ Lowell Edmunds observes that "the iambic metra in which this ode is composed make it unique amongst Pindar's epinicians," and should therefore point readers towards its interpretation (Edmunds 2009: 664).

Pindar's incorporation of metempsychosis into his eschatological myth in *Olympian 2* and his advocacy for a "positive" afterlife both in that epinician and in his *threnoi* have given him a central spot in discussions of ancient Greek religion and eschatology. He is one of the earliest and most prolific poets that we have, and his influence is well-attested in the ancient sources. Pindar's importance in the discussion of Greek eschatology should be rooted not only on his "positive" afterlife vision but also in how he changed the agents within the Underworld scene. By suggesting that non-heroic mortals, who were known historical figures, could enjoy a similar afterlife to mythic heroes, Pindar promoted a vision that expanded access to a "blessed" afterlife.

Unlike previous Underworld scenes, which describe mythic heroes undergoing an Underworld quest, Pindar centers his Underworld on what mortals can do to determine their own afterlives by becoming *oblioi*. It is a strategy he also uses in three other epinicians: *Pythian 3* for Hieron of Syracuse and *Nemean 1* and *9* for Chromius of Aetna. These demonstrate that his engagement with Underworld motifs is part of a larger program for claiming poetic authority and assimilating his patrons to heroes.

Pindar's *Nemean 1* does not explicitly have an afterlife scene, but mythic and linguistic resonances in it recall the Underworld image set that make up the poetics of the Underworld. The reader is clued into an eschatological reading of this poem by several features, none of which might be evidence on their own, but together suggest that Underworld *para-narratives* are being activated. In line 9, the poet sings of "divine deeds of excellence" performed by a man (ἀρχαὶ δὲ βέβληνται θεῶν κείνου σὺν ἀνδρὸς δαίμονιάις ἀρεταῖς, "and the beginnings have been laid out by the gods with that man's divine deeds of excellence," *N.* 1.8-9).

The conflation of mortal and divine within the same thought is a bold beginning to the poem, and the proximity of certain terms weakens the distinction between man and the gods. Currie points out the oxymoronic juxtaposition of ἀνδρὸς δαιμονίαις and the latter word's meaning of "divine" (as opposed to the generic meaning of "marvelous") due to its proximity with θεῶν (Currie 2005: 1-2). This challenge is further underscored by its activation of a similar phrase describing the Silver race in *Works & Days*: μάκαρες θνητοὶ (141). In both instances, an adjective with a divine register is applied to a mortal being. Further, the reference to the Silver race, which lived in an unjust time but nonetheless gained "blessed" (*makar*) status after death because of community honors, is particularly applicable to the *laudandus*, a tyrant who lords over unjust times (that of the Iron race) and can assume similar treatment by his subjects after his death, in the form of grave offerings and, perhaps, hero-cult.

A second linguistic oxymoron in the poem, which also involves the uneasy juxtaposition of the divine and the mortal, is the phrase ὀλβίους ἐν δώμασι ("in the blessed houses," *Ne*. 1.71). This refers to the place where Tiresias predicts Heracles will live when he takes Hebe as his wife in the presence of Zeus. The dwellings can be none other than those of immortals based on the context and the expected phrase for houses of the gods would more properly be μακάρων ἐν δώμασι. The adjective ὀλβίους is peculiar because in this period it still has the sense of earthly riches and human prosperity. The transference of the honorific *olbios* from a person to his possessions must refer to the homes as being elaborate, rich, or large (de Heer 1969: 37). The use of the adjective *olbios* is marked as transgressional because it applies to the divine realm an epithet that is used almost exclusively for humans and their possessions. Even though there is some precedent (cf. *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 460), it is extremely rare at this stage and in

Pindar's sources for *olbios* to be used in such fashion and, therefore, creates a striking ending in the last section of the epinician.

Besides these two examples, a third example of Pindar playing with the boundary between life and death comes in the myth itself. The story of young Heracles' defeat of the snakes (*δράκονταξ*, *Ne.* 1.40) anticipates his labors,¹¹⁸ particularly his greatest feat, a successful katabasis to kidnap the "anguiform" Cerberus, who is often depicted on vases from c.510-480 B.C.E. accompanied by a snake (Ogden 2013: 248).¹¹⁹ Although Heracles' defeat of the snakes may have been a common myth, Pindar re-tells it using language associated with eschatological boundary crossing.¹²⁰

Additionally, the figure of the seer Tiresias, in conjunction with the praise of a hero, recalls the *Nekuia* (*Odyssey*, Book 11), a famous literary instance in which both Tiresias and

¹¹⁸ As one of the mythical founders of the Nemean Games, Heracles is not an unusual figure for the epinician's myth. It is convenient, however, that he is also a katabatic figure who has achieved immortality through his prowess.

¹¹⁹ Snakes are chthonic creatures associated from the earliest Greek literature with the Underworld and the dead. They appear on tombstones as a familiar along with heroes receiving offerings from the living in a Spartan relief from the 6th B.C.E. and are associated not only with Heracles but also the Dioscuri (Ogden 2013: 252-253).

¹²⁰ The figure of the snake is associated with movement across the life-death barrier and with reincarnation. There is evidence from that period of snake cults and the veneration of snakes, partly because of the belief that "heroes revisit the world of the living from under the earth in the form of a creature that divides its life between the earth and the surface, and which ever renews its own life by sloughing" (Ogden 2013: 247).

Heracles appear in the Underworld and are associated with Odysseus' Underworld encounter.¹²¹

Tiresias' prophecy in *Nemean 1* bypasses Heracles' death, instead focusing on the hero's great deeds and apotheosis, which allows him to enjoy an afterlife among the gods. Alone, the presence of these mythic figures and the snakes might not be read as having eschatological undertones, but the context is suggestive. Chromius goes beyond humans by performing divine deeds while the deified Heracles and his immortal wife live in houses described in mortal terms.

The assimilation of Chromius to heroes who enjoy a blessed afterlife by appeal to divine intervention is further supported by *Nemean 9*. In the opening verses, Chromius' house is described as ὄλβιον ἐς Χρομίου δῶμ' ("the blessed house of Chromius," *Ne.* 9.3) using the same phrase as used for the gods' houses at the end of *Nemean 1*. This is the more appropriate application of *olbios*, but its verbal echo with *Nemean 1.71* and the implication of the word itself indicating that Chromius is wealthy due to divine favor creates an intertextual link between two poems that feature heroes who overcame a dismal afterlife.

Similarly, Amphiaraus in *Nemean 9* also bypassed death. He did so, however, by being concealed in the earth with his horses and other possessions so he could not be ignominiously speared in the back.

ὁ δ' Ἀμφιαρεῖ σχίσσεν κεραινῶ παμβία (24)

Ζεὺς τὰν βαθύστερον χθόνα, κρύψεν δ' ἄμ' ἵπποις. (*Ne.* 9.24-25)

And for Amphiaraus' sake, Zeus split the deep-chested earth with his

¹²¹ Although Aristarchus and other scholars have argued that Herakles' appearance in the *Nekuia* was a later "post-Homeric" interpolation, it would have been understood to be part of the Homeric tradition and text by Pindar's time (Nagy 1996: 65-112).

all-powerful thunderbolt and buried [him] along with his horses.

He is essentially buried alive, but it is not described here as a negative outcome. Instead, Pindar goes out of his way to say that this is a good thing because Zeus himself made a special place for Amphiaraus and his possessions in the earth as a way to transport him from death on the battlefield. The verb κρύψεν is also important in the making of immortality because it is the same verb used by Hesiod for how Zeus dispatched the Silver race in the *Works & Days* (138), a race of unjust mortals who gained divine blessedness (*makar*-status) through community hero-cult worship, an outcome Amphiaraus also enjoys.

With this example, Pindar directly challenges the Homeric notion of *kleos* by making death by spear on the battlefield the less favorable option for Amphiaraus¹²² than being buried alive through the divine favor of Zeus. Moreover, a leader buried underground with his possessions suggests a hero-cult that allows the hero an existence between life and death. No afterlife is mentioned for Amphiaraus in the epinician, but his audience would have been aware of his afterlife, which was associated with a popular hero-cult at Oropos, said to be the site of his disappearance (Hubbard 1993: 201). Pindar mentions earlier in the poem that “a noble deed, once completed, should not be buried in silence under ground” (τετελεσμένον ἔσλόν μὴ χαμαὶ σιγῆ καλύψαι, *Ne.* 9.6-7). In fact, through song and the audience’s ability to associate the hero with honors (*timē*) and an actual hero-cult, Amphiaraus’ noble deeds and afterlife overcome the silence of death.

That Pindar sees himself as conveying immortality on his patron Chromius through mythic reference is borne out in his allusion to the *kleos* of Hector (Ἔκτορι μὲν κλέος, *Ne.*

¹²² This sort of death is made to sound even less favorable because he was about to be stabbed by that spear in the back, a shameful death (*Nem.* 9.26-27).

9.39) and in his celebration of Chromius for military deeds but not for death on the battlefield (like Amphiaraus). The divine source for Chromius' earthly "blessedness" is reiterated by the piling on of words that all contain some aspect of supernatural involvement: πρὸς δαιμόνων θαυμαστὸν ὄλβον ("wondrous happiness from the gods, *Ne.* 9.45). Both θαυμαστὸν and ὄλβον have a sense of divinely induced marvel and prosperity, and δαιμόνων means "gods." Pindar thus emphasizes that Chromius, like Amphiaraus, is a favorite of the gods, and his songs argue that both are made immortal by their being celebrated in song and thereby avoiding the silence of the grave.

Expanding Underworld "Blessedness": A Panhellenic Phenomenon

Pindar was not alone, however, in this use of Underworld scenes to "author" immortality for his patrons and promoting a "positive" vision of the afterlife. The belief that "deeds in life affect one's afterlife" was already suggested in Hesiod's *Works & Days*, and it was a theme explored by Pindar's contemporaries who were in direct dialogue with his poems. Pindar's innovation was to make the choice of a "blessed" afterlife rest explicitly with the individual, without the direct aid of divine intercession. Other poets were less explicit in afterlife promises, but nevertheless used their poetry to promote the idea that the living and the dead had direct influence on each other.

Like Pindar, Bacchylides used Underworld scenes to immortalize his patrons. *Odes* 3 and 5 clearly demonstrate a re-writing of epic material to reflect the expanded, "positive" vision of eschatological relationships that we see in Pindar's poems. *Ode* 3 represents the poet's direct assimilation of a patron onto a mythic figure, while *Ode* 5 demonstrates the wholesale re-

formulation of Heracles' Underworld myth to promote newly envisioned connections between the living and the dead.

In *Ode 3*, Bacchylides uses his patron's wealth to assimilate him to the mythic story of Croesus. The poet establishes his patron Hieron as a man of god-given wealth, describing him as a prosperous man with the marked term *olbion* (ὄλβιον, 3.8). The poet repeats this association between earthly wealth and divine grace at lines 22 (ὄλβων) and 92 (ὄλβου). To round out his earthly possessions, the poet defines his patron's *olbios* status in terms of how his Panhellenic audience cheers him on:¹²³

ὦ τρισευδαίμων ἀνήρ
ὅς παρὰ Ζηνὸς λαχὼν πλείστ-
αρχον Ἑλλάνων γέρας
οἶδε πυργωθέντα πλοῦτον μὴ μελαμ-
φαρεῖ κρύπτειν σκότῳ (*Ode 3.10-14*)

Oh, thrice-blessed man
who was allotted from Zeus the privilege of
ruling over the greatest number of Greeks
and who knows how not to conceal his
towered wealth in dark-shrouded gloom.

The phrase τρισευδαίμων ἀνήρ echoes Odysseus' address to Nausicaa when he first arrived at Scheria (τρὶς μάκαρες μὲν σοί γε πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ, / τρὶς μάκαρες δὲ κασίγνητοι, "while thrice blessed indeed are your father and mistress mother, / thrice blessed too are your

¹²³ Kathryn Morgan discusses the importance of Pindar's Panhellenic spectators (Morgan 2015).

siblings, 6.154-155). Although the sense of blessedness is slightly different,¹²⁴ the idea of being a particular favorite of the gods remains. The idea of towered wealth and concealment in darkness could refer specifically to the chthonic landscape. Wealth in the form πλοῦτον comes from the ground, and the adjective πυργωθέντα most likely means that the wealth has been applied to the building of a great city. The further meaning of these becomes clear with the start of the myth of Croesus, known for his great wealth and powerful kingdom Lydia: Bacchylides identifies Hieron as a living Croesus.

As a result, Croesus' fate will be Hieron's. In Bacchylides' version of the myth, Croesus was saved from the funeral pyre by Apollo through the will of Zeus. This activates a *para-narrative* of Sarpedon's death at Troy, after which Zeus ordered Apollo to remove his son's body from the battlefield and preserve it so that the gods Death (Thanatos) and Sleep (Hypnos) could transport to Lycia for proper burial and future hero cult (*Il.* 16.666-683). After activating this *para-narrative*, Bacchylides diverges from the expected outcome by making Apollo and Zeus intervene *before* Croesus dies on the funeral pyre. Croesus and his children were transported to the land of the Hyperboreans, in "the only case of living mortals being taken to the "Land of the Blessed" (Maehler 2004: 94n59). In short, Bacchylides uses the power of Apollo to immortalize Croesus. Since he already assimilated Hieron to Croesus at the beginning of the ode, the audience who is "in the know" (Φρονέοντι συνετὰ γαρούω, "I utter wise words for the wise" *Ode* 3.85) will understand that the poet has also created immortality for Hieron through song and has the power to do this for anyone whose deeds are similarly pious since that is the "greatest of

¹²⁴ *Eudaimon* is a term for human good fortune, and generally means that a god is looking out for the person's interests.

profits” (Ὅσια δρῶν εὐφραϊνε θυμόν· τοῦτο γὰρ κερδέων ὑπέρτατον, “gladden your spirit doing pious deeds; for this is the greatest of profits,” *Ode* 3.83-84).

In *Ode* 5, Bacchylides uses a more explicitly structured Underworld scene to laud the same patron Hieron, but this time the praise is less direct and more focused on the limitations of man.¹²⁵ In the proem and introductory praise sections, Bacchylides anticipates his eschatological myth by using a series of images that activate Underworld *para-narratives* in quick succession. He says his song comes from “the holy island” (ἀπὸ ζαθέας νήσου, *Ode* 5.10-11) to Syracuse, which may imply a connection to the “Isles of the Blessed” or a similar landscape. The mythic section recounts Heracles’ last labor, the descent into Hades to retrieve the hell-hound Cerberus, as well as the end of the *Nekuia*.¹²⁶ Instead of describing the actual labor, however, the poet focuses on an imagined dialogue that Heracles has with Meleager’s ghost and thereby combines the myths of two heroes into one story. Their meeting in the Underworld is first attested and described here. A dithyramb by Pindar on the same topic, titled *The Katabasis of Heracles* or

¹²⁵ The poem is dated to 476 B.C.E. and celebrates a victory in the single horse race at Olympia. This is the same victory and patron to which Pindar devotes his *Olympian* 1, and the two poets have often been compared on the basis of the survival of these two competing poems celebrating the same event and patron (Lefkowitz 1969). *Olympian* 1 contains the myth of Tantalus but focuses on the crimes that led to his later state of eternal punishment, not the punishment itself except via an oblique reference to punishment (πατήρ ὑπερκρέμασε καρτερὸν αὐτῷ λίθον, “the father [Zeus] hung over him a sturdy rock,” *Oly.* 1.57).

¹²⁶ Heracles’ *katabasis* was apparently a popular topic for lyric poets (Burnett 1985: 198n197). At least one other poet (Stesichoros) was known to have written a poem titled *Cerberus* (*PMG* 206).

Cerberus (70bS; 61B) is mentioned in the *Iliad* scholia and may have pre-dated the Bacchylides' version but has not survived.¹²⁷ What we know is that these two poems are the “first *certain* meeting of the two” and the “first *certain* mentions of Deianeira in this context” (Burnett 1985: 198n197).

The two poems' focus on Deianeira is somewhat perplexing, although they may be referring to competing versions of Heracles' famous myth. It is known that Pindar's version has Meleager ask Heracles to marry his sister, but Bacchylides reverses this so that Heracles is the one looking for a mate. The hero is so enthralled with Meleager that he wants to connect himself to the deceased hero by marrying his sister (Ἡρόα τις ἐν μεγάροισι Οἰνήοιο ἀρηϊφίλου ἔστιν ἀδμήτα θυγάτρων, σοὶ φῦαν ἀλιγκία; “Is there any daughter in the halls of battle-loving Oineus, unmarried and similar in form to you?” *Ode* 5, 165-168). H. Maehler suggests that the question and eventual outcome of Heracles' marriage to Deianeira, which would have been known to the audience but is only hinted at here, is meant to be an “illustration of [Bacchylides'] introductory statement that no mortal can have complete happiness”(Maehler 2004: 127n168).¹²⁸ In both versions, the suggestion is that information gleaned (or action taken) in the Underworld influences events in the real world. The intentions and will of shades extend across the life-death boundary to affect the living.

The mythical interlude in Bacchylides' *Ode* 5, therefore, has a similar effect to the Underworld story in Pindar's *Olympian* 2, in that it imagines cross-border incursions where some action on one side will have an affect on the outcome of the individual's existence on the other

¹²⁷ See scholia ABDGe on *Il.* 21.194 for a summary of Pindar's version of the story (Maehler 2004: 107).

¹²⁸ See *Ode* 5.50-55.

side. While the Underworld scene in Pindar's version promotes a sunny vision of great deeds leading to immortality, the Underworld intervention in Bacchylides' *Ode 5* leads to a tragedy unforeseen by Heracles and Meleager but known to the audience.

Bacchylides formulates his myth to mimic the *Nekuia*'s necromantic dialogue between a ghost and a living man, generally ignoring the journey aspect of Heracles' *katabasis*.

Bacchylides uses the *entha*-mode of description that is common to Underworld scenes of Archaic epic to point out a famous landmark (Cocytus) in Hades and to describe the ghosts as flitting about:

ἔνθα δυστάνων βροτῶν
ψυχὰς ἐδάη παρὰ Κωκυτοῦ ῥεέ-
θροις, οἶά τε φύλλ' ἄνεμος
Ἰδαῖαν ἀνὰ μηλοβότους
πρῶνας ἀργηστὰς δονεῖ. (*Ode 5.63-67*)

And there, [Heracles] perceived the souls of
wretched mortals by the streams of Cocytus,
and they are just like the leaves the wind drives about
on the bright, sheep-pasturing headlands of Ida.

The stories invoked here are definitely Homeric in that the shades, for the most part, seem senseless and non-interactive except for Meleager's ghost who seeks out Heracles.¹²⁹ Whereas

¹²⁹ The simile of wind blowing the leaves is also a poetic echo of a famous simile in the *Iliad* (6.146-149), further linking this passage to Homeric epic. Unlike Odysseus, Heracles does not need to do anything to call forth Meleager's shade.

Odysseus sought out the shades and had to call forth and activate his necromantic encounters via rituals and blood, Heracles sees the ghosts as a threat and tries to fend off Meleager with his bow (*Ode* 5.71-76). The details of afterlife existence that each poet specifies create an environment of direct poetic competition between the various narratives. Although Meleager and the other ghosts do not have any hope for a better afterlife, the effect they have on Heracles' immediate future and subsequent end gives significance to the encounter.

Both Pindar and Bacchylides breached the life-death barrier in their poems to create a continuum of interaction between the living and the dead, which would only become stronger as the fifth century B.C.E. progressed. Pindar asserts this intent in *Nemean* 4:

...ῦμνος δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν
ἐργμάτων βασιλεύσιν ἰσοδαίμονα τεύχει
φῶτα: κείνος ἀμφ' Ἀχέροντι ναιετάων ἐμὰν
γλῶσσαν εὐρέτω κελαδητίν, Ὀρσοτριαίνα
ἴν' ἐν ἀγῶνι βαρυκτύπου
θάλησε Κορινθίοις σελίνοις (*Nem.* 4.83-88)

...And a song praising good deeds
makes a man equal in fortune to kings:
Let him who dwells by Acheron
find my loud-resounding voice, where,
in the contest of the loud-roaring trident-wielder,
he bloomed with the [crown of] Corinthian
celery leaves.

Pindar proclaims here that his song, an epinician, makes men as prosperous as kings, conveying the type of “blessedness” (i.e. prosperity) that could be referred to as *olbios*. The verb *τεύχει* has the connotation of something being crafted through art and skill, which is what the poet does in such a song of praise. Further, Pindar asserts that a song containing such honors breaks across the barrier into the Underworld so it can be heard in the afterlife by a soul near Acheron. The repetition of words referring to “loudness” (*κελαδήτιν, βαρυκτύπου*) is reminiscent of the phrase “echoing walls of Hades.”

Pindar thus intends for his song to boom across his world and past its boundaries into the Underworld. Indeed, his poems and Bacchylides’ were circulated to a Panhellenic audience. The assimilation of their patrons to heroes by advertising their wealth (*olbia*) and conflating their stories with those of mythic heroes was an effective strategy for athletic victors because their honors were tied to a particular place and community whose actions would support the everlasting relevance of the hero to that locale (e.g. through hero-cult).

Outside of the Sicilian context, other poets similarly used Underworld scenes to make statements about their realities and the “blessedness” of their subjects. The following examples give evidence that the efforts of Pindar and Bacchylides to immortalize their patrons in song by re-imagining the Underworld was part of a larger movement by poets across the Greek-speaking world to close the distance between life and afterlife.

Theognis uses the Homeric imagery of Hades to boast that his songs gave his friend Cynus a level of immortality similar to that of heroes. Theognis starts his poem saying that Cynus will be on the lips of all symposiasts, who will sing his praises during their feasting (1.236-239). It then goes on to describe how this form of immortality will supersede death:

καὶ ὅταν δνοφεροῆς ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης

βῆις πολυκωκύτους εἰς Ἄϊδαο δόμους,
οὐδέποτ' οὐδὲ θανῶν ἀπολείς κλέος, ἀλλὰ μελήσεις
ἄφθιτον ἀνθρώποις' αἰὲν ἔχων ὄνομα, (245)
Κύρνε, καθ' Ἑλλάδα γῆν στρωφόμενος, ἠδ' ἀνὰ νήσους
ἰχθυόεντα περῶν πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρύγετον
οὐχ ἵππων νώτοισιν ἐφήμενος (1.242-248)

And whenever you go **in the depths of the murky earth**
to the halls of Hades, which is filled with much lamentation,
never even when you are dead will you lose your *kleos*,
but you will be an object of esteem for men, having an undying name,
Cyrnus, as you roam the Greek land and throughout the islands,
crossing the barren, fish-teeming sea, and not riding the backs of horses.

Although Theognis does not specifically mention heroes here, his portrayal of Cyrnus recalls Achilles' desire for *kleos aphthiton* ("undying glory") and the hero's choice of a short life in exchange for it. Cyrnus, like Achilles, will be sung everywhere throughout Greece and have an undying name after death. Being sung in this fashion was meant to be the consolation for death.

Jean-Pierre Vernant contextualizes Achilles' actions in the *Iliad*, observing:

Archaic Greek culture is one in which everyone lives in terms of others, under the eyes and esteem of others, where the basis of a personality is confirmed by the extent to which its reputation is known; in such a context, real death lies in amnesia, silence, demeaning obscurity, the absences of fame. By contrast, real

existence – for the living or the dead – comes from being recognized, valued, and honored. (Vernant 1991: 57)

The audience is meant to recognize Cynrus as an Achilles-like figure, and Theognis argues for this connection by poetically re-creating Hades in a way that assumes knowledge of the Homeric Underworld scenes in the *Odyssey* in addition to an *Iliadic* understanding of *kleos*.¹³⁰ The diction used to refer to Hades comes straight from the final lines of the “Little *nekuia*” in Book 24 of the *Odyssey* (24.1-204). Theognis creates a verbal echo in his references “to the halls of Hades” and “in the depths of the earth”:

ὥς οἱ μὲν τοιαῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον,
ἔσταότ' εἰν Ἄϊδαο δόμοισ', ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης· (*Ody.* 24.203-204)

Thus they spoke such things to each other, as they stood

in the halls of Hades, in the depths of the earth.

Theognis uses ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης at line end, just like the *Odyssey* passage does, even though he must create hyperbaton with the adjective δνοφερῆς (“murky”) to achieve an exact match. The phrasing of the Underworld references is almost exactly the same, subject to the needs of inflection and meter.

¹³⁰ The Homeric emphasis on battlefield deeds that would bring *kleos* meant that the individual's focus was action *during life*, and the afterlife was not something one anticipated gladly or as a consolation prize. This view was supported by the melancholic atmosphere of the dead in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* who were mostly sad, non-sentient shadows of their former selves with no hope of changing their afterlife.

The choice in mapping his Underworld linguistically to the one displayed in Book 24 while at the same time giving an image of the Underworld reflective of the one in Book 11 indicates a transition in representation that is based on the idea of a segregation of souls. Cyrnus will be remembered as Achilles has been – by being sung for his *kleos* – which will separate him from the masses. What makes this noteworthy is that the poet maps his subject onto a hero whose life and afterlife are celebrated as being “blessed” in the divine sense of the word. The expectation of the song is that Cynrus, like Achilles, will enjoy a pleasant afterlife with camaraderie, similar to what was envisioned in Book 24 of the *Odyssey* and the Hesiod’s Heroic Age. Although the permanent home of Cynrus’ soul is not stated, he is described as flying over the surface of the earth and sea as a supernatural being and having a name recognized by the living. The reference to his not riding on horses underscores his lack of corporeality, and his ability to roam everywhere is presented as celebratory rather than punitive, unlike the infelicitous outcome generally applied to the unburied dead. The status of Cynrus’ soul calls to mind the Golden race in Hesiod’s *Works & Days*, the only mortals that roam the earth after death, receiving praise from men while enjoying a “blessed” afterlife (φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων, / οἱ ῥα φυλάσσουσιν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα / **ἤερα ἑσάμενοι πάντη φοιτῶντες ἐπ’ αἶαν**, (125) / πλουτοδόται, “guardians of mortal men – the ones who watch over judgments and cruel deeds, while **they flit above the earth clothed in air** and give wealth,” *W&D* 123-126).

Through this passage, Theognis removes his friend from the expected fate of mortals and creates subtle connections to “blessed afterlives” and heroes like Achilles by linking to other Underworlds without ever mentioning the names or authors of these afterlife episodes explicitly. The passage also re-conceptualizes the consciousness of the individual after death by portraying

the soul's interest in being involved in the affairs of man.¹³¹ Theognis relies on abbreviated references to generate a vision of more detailed Underworld scenes, making links that would not be a huge leap for his audience, who would have been well-versed in the Underworld scenes of epic poetry.

The most explicit politicization and personalization of the Underworld trope, however, comes from an anonymous fragment dated to the late 6th century B.C.E., praising the tyrant-killer Harmodius.

(893) ἐν μύρτου κλαδί τὸ ξίφος φορήσω

ὥσπερ Ἄρμόδιος καὶ Ἀριστογείτων

ὅτε τὸν τύραννον κτανέτην

ισονόμους τ' Ἀθήνας ἐποίησάτην.

(894) φίλταθ' Ἄρμόδι', οὐ τί πω τέθνηκας,

νήσοις δ' ἐν μακάρων σέ φασιν εἶναι,

ἵνα περ ποδώκης Ἀχιλεὺς

Τυδεΐδην τέ †φασι τὸν ἐσθλὸν Διομήδεα. (PMG 893-894)

I will carry my sword in a myrtle branch,

just as Harmodius and Aristogeiton

when they killed the tyrant

and made Athens a place of equal laws

(894) Dearest Harmodius, surely you have not yet died,

¹³¹ At this time, the notion of the “soul” as a conscious entity was also undergoing a transformation (Snell 1982; Bremmer 1983; Rohde 1925).

but they say you are on the **Isles of the Blessed**,
where indeed swift-footed Achilles is
and [also] Diomedes, the noble son of Tydeus.

This anonymous poem connects actions that serve the cause of justice with the “blessed” afterlife of the hero, using familiar Underworld imagery to make its argument.

The insertion of an Underworld reference into a praise poem associated with justice and judging deeds establishes a strong link between one’s actions in life and fate in the afterlife. As Edmonds argues, “The assassination of Hipparchus ranked, at least for some, with the epic heroism of Diomedes and Achilles, and such heroic deeds sufficed for admission to a better place after the mortal life was over,” (Edmonds 2004: 199).¹³² The reference to Hesiod’s *Works & Days* in the phrase “Isles of the Blessed” (νήσοις δ’ ἐν μακάρων) is indisputable in this case. This author, however, also activates a second *para-narrative* by associating the “blessed” isles with the afterlife location of the specific heroes Achilles and Diomedes. When this author wanted to indicate the exemplary nature of individuals in short order, he did so most simply and effectively through an allusion to the “Isles of the Blessed” followed by a reference to the premier Homeric hero Achilles, thereby conflating two myths of “positive,” “blessed” afterlives.¹³³ The poem is tied to a specific predecessor, allowing two poems to be “read” together. As the audience follows the poet’s praise of Harmodius, they are doing so explicitly through the lens of Hesiod’s poetic Underworld account to heroize a mortal, bringing glory not only to a local hero but also to Athens itself.

¹³² Harmodius assassinated Hipparchus in 514 B.C.E.

¹³³ The latter is not specifically mentioned in Hesiod’s Underworld but was understood from other poems to have attained a blessed afterlife (Burgess 2009).

IV. Conclusions

Underworld scenes were particularly dynamic spaces for literary exchange and authorial commentary that epinician and lyric poets of the late Archaic and early 5th century B.C.E. used to reflect changing beliefs about the nature of the afterlife and the relationship between mortals and gods. The use of Underworld scenes to mediate this debate was more widespread across the Panhellenic world in texts of the late 7th-5th century B.C.E. time period than has previously been observed. The Homeric Underworld narratives already contained the fundamental ideas of separation and segregation that would later be the basis for envisioning new connections between the living and the dead. The epic Underworlds also provided a ready-made language for building such connections.

By enhancing borrowed landscapes of the dead but keeping the fundamental idea of the Underworld scene as a vehicle for communication between author and audience, post-Homeric poets made the dead relevant to the living in a way that shaped beliefs about immortality and the power of an author's song in producing that immortality. Poets created wide network of texts through Underworld *para-narratives* to eschatological myths and hero-cults, shaping the audience's interpretation of their poems by creating traceable links through phrases such as "Isles of the Blessed," technical terms for "blessedness" (e.g. *makar* or *olbios*), and through fully developed scenes of afterlife society embedded in a primary narrative.

Although Pindar has dominated the discussion of the development of the "positive" afterlife and the meaning of "blessedness" in the Underworld, examples from Bacchylides, Theognis, and the Harmodius poem demonstrate that Pindar was operating within a larger Greek movement of poets, all working to adjust conceptions of the afterlife so it corresponded to a

person's deeds in life. Pindar, therefore, was not *the* pivot point between “negative” and “positive” afterlife depictions as has previously been argued, but one of many poets in dialogue with each other and their earlier sources through Underworld discourse. Poets writing about the Underworld in the post-Homeric period operated in a rich and self-conscious framework that recalled, reiterated, and refuted their predecessors and contemporaries. They segregated the Underworld more distinctly and gave more perceived agency to living human beings in determining their access to different afterlife outcomes.

In the examples above, the promise of something different (or even better) in the afterlife demonstrates that neither a single location (like Sicily) nor specific religious practices (like hero-cult worship and initiation) was the only origin for the new Underworld model. Poets drew from a wide range of ancient and contemporary sources. Pindar, in particular, would not have limited his poem to one venue, since he aspired to be a Panhellenic poet, promoting himself as fit to compete with Homer (Nisetich 1989: 28). His poems needed to resonate outside of the Sicilian context. Of course, the poets of this period allowed only the elite members of society (the *olbioi*) into the august company of heroes who spent an eternity as *makares*, but this was still a fundamental shift in the portrayal of mortals' access to spaces that used to be exclusive to those of divine blood.

The major contribution of post-Homeric poets was to allow a specific mortal to achieve special heroic status in a newly detailed “blessed” afterlife and thus be named among the Homeric heroes. A central idea of this period was that several solutions existed besides heroic deeds or celebration in song for obtaining a favorable afterlife, including “refraining from injustice, and forming a special relation, by sacrifice, initiation, or other special connection, with certain gods who might intervene on behalf of the deceased” (Edmonds 2004: 198). After

examining the afterlife references in Pindar and his contemporaries more closely, it becomes clear that the “positive” Underworld scene in *Olympian 2* was not an anomaly but part of a larger movement by post-Homeric poets well into the Classical period, which used the poetics of the Underworld to engage in dialogue with the past and also with each other about the nature of the Underworld and the agency of man in influencing his afterlife. Because poets were able to combine deeply held myths and beliefs with contemporary thought in the construction of their Underworld scenes, they became a crucial medium for negotiating social and religious change well into the 5th century B.C.E.

Chapter 4. *Life After Life: The Politics of the Underworld in Athens and Beyond*

I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw how authors in the 7th to early 5th centuries B.C.E. suggested new access points between the worlds of the living and the dead. The connection between the living and the dead was represented as stronger and more direct – the living could influence their afterlives by their actions in life and poets became “authors” of immortality for their patrons. For this to happen, the subject of the poet’s praise (*laudandus*) was assimilated to a hero and then received the same benefits or honors that heroes were thought to receive after death, including a blessed afterlife with continued consciousness. As Emily Vermeule describes it, “It would not be difficult to call a hero of the *Iliad* a dead immortal” (Vermeule 1979: 118). By assimilating their patrons to “dead immortals” such as Achilles, poets predicted an afterlife status of “blessedness” for their patrons. Through the language of Underworld scenes, these poets argued that their patrons’ athletic prowess, earthly wealth, and status (which they described as “blessed” with the term *olbios*) were predictive of their patrons’ afterlife among the “blessed heroes,” whose lifestyle was akin to that of the gods, the *makares*. Epinician poets such as Pindar and Bacchylides thus paved the way for their patrons to be given hero cults after their deaths (like Achilles), thus perpetuating the idea of their patrons’ continued, influential presence in the life of their communities (Currie 2005).

During the 5th century B.C.E., authors and artists further elaborated on life after death, relating the eternal existence of the dead more and more to the concerns of the living while also giving them honors associated with “blessed heroes.” Underworld representations across media emphasized the weakening of the barrier between the societies of the living and the dead, and individuals were conceived of as having regular movement and contact between the two realms.

In Athens, public memorials to fallen soldiers occurred conspicuously as sites of remembrance and as centers for annual civic rituals to perpetuate the influence of the heroic war dead on the everyday life of the *polis*. Such productions transported the Underworld into the present for public consumption and application to political realities.

To this end, the Underworld scenes that emerge during the 5th century B.C.E. and into the early 4th century B.C.E. continue to fill in details of a sentient (“positive”) afterlife but also change the Underworld location from being a distant or strange place into a more familiar neighborhood, embedded within public spaces and civic narratives. The Underworld’s appearance in literature and art often alluded to the political realities of the *polis*, thereby allowing its imaginary space to be a locus of reflection and commentary on contemporary issues. Tragedians such as Aeschylus introduced ghosts on stage and comic writers set plays in the Underworld, and artists created objects for wide-scale public and private use that reflected a closer association between the living and the dead. Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, for example, uses a parody of heroic *katabasis* to analyze problems and suggest solutions to the citizens and leadership of Athens in their war with the Spartans.

Political leaders and mystery cults elevated the status of individuals to that of “blessed heroes,” through funeral orations or initiation into beliefs of personal salvation. During this period, the dead were thought to linger around their earthly tombs or periodically visit their families, with either good or ill intent. White-ground lekythoi dedicated to the dead were circulated in both private and public spaces during ceremonies commemorating the dead. Monumental art installations such as Polygnotus’ *Nekuia* in the Lesche of the Cnidians created life-sized spaces adjacent to an Underworld landscape filled with “blessed heroes.” This

extended the scene three-dimensionally into the space of the living, imagining living symposiasts within the Lesche as companions to the mythic heroes painted on the walls.

In the following, I demonstrate how the Underworld became a space for political dialogue and social commentary, in which authors could mirror the real world, propose alternatives to reality, or promote democratic propaganda. In the first section, I examine Underworld scenes in tragedy and comedy. Next, I look at how Athenian officials used Underworld imagery in funeral orations and commemorative stelai for the war dead to create “outposts” of Underworld society within the city. Finally, I look at Underworld scenes on paintings and funerary objects as physical incursions by the dead into everyday life, arguing that the scenes create proximity between the living and the dead. In Classical Athens, the boundary between the real world and the Underworld became more permeable and the two realms were envisioned as symbiotic and mutually influential on almost all levels of society.

II. World and Underworld: Negotiating the Boundaries of Life and Afterlife

The 5th century B.C.E. was an era of myth-making and drastic re-orientation for Greeks as they re-focused their stories to align with their reality after the shocks of the Persian War, including the sack of Athens and the Greeks’ eventual victory.¹³⁴ The people living during those times experienced “a philosophical and religious, as well as a political, revolution” (Herington

¹³⁴ Thus, during this period, we see the following: the rise of the Theseus myth to a status of central importance coinciding with the rise of Athens (Calame 1990; Walker 1995; Mills 1997); the emphasis on the Trojan War as a Panhellenic venture of Greek-speakers, paralleled to the Greek alliances against the Persian invasion (Mitchell 2007; Green 2010); and the “invention” of the non-Greek barbarian as a reliable, often feminized “other” (Hall 1989; Morris 1992).

1986: 20), which occurred against a backdrop of multiple wars as well as imperial expansion. Francis Dunn describes the Classical Athenian phenomenon as “present shock,” a change in focus in which “the locus of authority came to reside less in the heroic past and more in present human experience” (Dunn 2007: 3).¹³⁵ Poets, thinkers, and artists throughout the 5th century B.C.E. used Archaic literary language and mythic motifs, with which they were familiar, to describe and engage with their changing cultural and political realities. They put their myths, religious rituals, politicians, and gods under a microscope, so to speak, questioning them and challenging them to meet a new reality.

At the same time as Athens’ rise to prominence during this tumultuous time, a more standard vision of the afterlife in Underworld scenes appeared across media. After having their city sacked by the Persians and then having subsequently driven back those invaders, Athenians seemed to have become aggressively concerned with making connections to their mythic past as a way to give context to their democracy and to promote their newfound Panhellenic influence (Dunn 2007: 67-85). The importance of 5th century B.C.E. Athens cannot be understated in the codification and standardization of Underworld scenes as a rhetorical strategy, neither can its unique historical moment be ignored as a vital impetus for an increase in Underworld scenes across media. Athenian power and democracy, with its rhetoric of individuality and rule of the people, shifted the Underworld’s representation so that it was re-written as a space where individuals on all levels of society had some direct power over the supernatural realm, even though the inherited myths maintained the basic framework and language of Underworld scenes

¹³⁵ Dunn focuses mainly on the late 5th century B.C.E., but the changes in Athenian society that he describes begin much earlier, after the sack of Athens in 480 B.C.E., so his criteria for “present shock” would apply to the early 5th century B.C.E. as well.

established by Homer and his immediate successors.¹³⁶ As a result of Athenian assertiveness in appropriating its mythic past, Underworld motifs and images appeared as propaganda in a variety of public, civic venues meant for mass consumption. Further, ordinary men, mostly (but not exclusively) citizens, were “heroized” for their deeds in war through funeral orations and civic monuments, in a similar way to the *laudandus* of epinician poetry. References to Underworld motifs and specific scenes from earlier literature became more abbreviated and centered on specific aspects of the afterlife, allowing for the rapid activation of several *para-narratives* from single phrases or figures. The appearance and references to afterlife motifs across genres in more compact (but no less impactful) forms indicate that creating links between multiple Underworld scenes was viewed as a viable, accepted, and understood rhetorical strategy in which the audience was heavily invested. In this period, Underworld scenes were presented to audiences in small, upper-class gatherings, such as symposia, as well as during large-scale civic performances or festivals. They also appeared on monuments in public spaces, so that everyone who lived in or visited Athens or its sphere of influence could be considered a part of the potential audience who would have to decode the compressed language of Underworld scenes. Formal education was not required for understanding the intertexts between newly composed afterlife narratives and older sources, however, since the general public would have been aware of, at the very least, the Homeric and Hesiodic Underworld myths via rhapsodic performances, both in the competitions

¹³⁶ This basic framework includes the Underworld as a geographic space with physical landmarks, ruled by Hades and Persephone, segregated into neighborhoods of punishment and reward, and inhabited by souls.

hosted at the Panathenaia as well as in other non-competitive live performances around Greece.¹³⁷

Tragedy, in particular, held a significant place in the early formation of Athenian society. Underworld scenes in extant drama offer evidence for the ways that theatrical productions reinforced and invented connections between life and afterlife at various levels of society with the goal of making spaces for the dead in the world of the living and vice versa. This relatively new genre translated traditional literary material onto the stage to make sense of new political and social realities, particularly the rise of democracy and Athenian power after the Persian Wars. Ghosts and Underworld scenes created a bridge across space and time between a heroic past and the present, using the time-bending nature of the Underworld *chronotope* to make the stories of the past reflect the present and vice versa.

The Underworld in Drama

Underworld scenes appear rather frequently in surviving and reconstructed plays from the Classical period. Whether this is because of the nature of drama itself or because of the appetite of the audience for such scenes is unclear and, until now, has hardly been explored in a cohesive way. What becomes apparent in a look at the dramatic corpus of the 5th century B.C.E. – both the

¹³⁷ Derek Collins observes “widespread evidence for public interest in rhapsodic performance attested from the sixth century B.C.E. down to the third century C.E.,” arguing that such “evidence surely bespeaks the popularity of *rhapsôidia* as a mode of live performance” (Collins 2001: 159-160.). This implies that the stories of Homer and Hesiod, which the rhapsodes either recited or composed in performance would have been well-known to a large audience, not just aristocrats but any people who were present during public festivals.

plays that have survived antiquity in their entirety or that exist in fragments quoted by ancient commentators – is the regular appearance of ghostly characters and scenes drawn from well-known Underworld narratives. These scenes appear to be a unique, shared language between author and audience that was communicated not only in the moment of the performance but also instilled into the citizen-performers throughout the production process. Aeschylus seems particularly fond of using Underworld motifs, but other known tragedians also incorporated them into their productions, as if consultation with the society of the dead was a natural part of the tragic genre. Comic writers, such as Aristophanes and Eupolis, also include Underworld scenes (perhaps, partly in response to tragedy’s preoccupation with them) and assume an audience well-versed in the Underworld motifs of civic religion as well as mystery cults.

Aristotle’s *Poetics* refers to plays involving Hades as a regular type of stage production, which he categorizes as “spectacle.” “Tragedies set in Hades” appear as an oblique reference in his definition of the four types of tragedy:

τραγωδίας δὲ εἶδη εἰσὶ τέσσαρα (τοσαῦτα
γὰρ καὶ τὰ μέρη ἐλέχθη), ἡ μὲν πεπλεγμένη, ἥς τὸ ὅλον
ἐστὶν περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις, ἡ δὲ παθητική, οἷον οἱ τε
(1456a.) Αἴαντες καὶ οἱ Ἰξίονες, ἡ δὲ ἠθικὴ, οἷον αἱ Φθιώτιδες καὶ ὁ
Πηλεύς· τὸ δὲ τέταρτον †οἴσις†, οἷον αἱ Φορκίδες καὶ ὁ Προ-
μηθεὺς καὶ ὅσα ἐν ᾗδου. (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1455b-1456a)

There are four kinds of tragedy (for its divisions were also said [earlier] to be such a number): the complex, which is essentially reversal and recognition; the pathetic, such as the *Ajaxes* and *Ixions*; the character-based, such as the *The Women of Phthia* and the

Peleus; and the fourth is †spectacle†, such as the *The Daughters of Phorcys*, the *Prometheus*, and **the ones set in Hades**.¹³⁸

Although there has been much debate about the nature of the plays labeled “spectacle” in the *Poetics* and no specific titles are listed, there is almost no doubt that they were a viable and popular form of entertainment for Athenian audiences. Aristotle’s strong and continuous criticism of “spectacle” for focusing on optical effects at the expense of plot and for being less connected to epic than other parts of tragedy because they rely on visual effects speaks indirectly to their popularity. The importance of visual display on stage and a play’s ability to impress the audience through “spectacle” have largely been overlooked by scholars as crucial components for the success of a production and the political career of its *choregos*, according to Helene Foley, who argues that “dramatic victories might often have been awarded as much or more for the choral performance and dramatic spectacle as for the content/plot of the plays themselves,

¹³⁸ The reference to “spectacle” and “[plays] set in Hades” has come under attack by scholars because this area of the text has been labeled hopelessly corrupt. Nevertheless, it has been convincingly argued by Richard Janko, following Bywater’s reconstruction (Bywater 1909), that “spectacle” (ὄψις) is an appropriate restoration. Janko observes that an identical miscopying in the MSS occurs at 1458a5 and that “spectacle” is the logical choice to be mentioned here as the fourth type, since it is referred to as a class of plays (1453b1-11) but is not elsewhere categorized in the text (Janko 1987: 121n156a122). See also Gilbert’s discussion on how poetic rather than visual (e.g. spectacle) considerations influenced dramatic criticism in Aristotle and afterwards (Gilbert 1947).

especially given the larger context of the festival, where dithyrambic (and comic) choruses played such a central role” (Foley 2003: 3).

By making it of much lesser importance than plot or other parts of tragedy (1450b15-20), Aristotle mostly succeeded in his campaign to focus attention on the value of tragedy’s ethical lessons and to remove “spectacle” from the discussion of 5th century B.C.E. tragedy until fairly recently. At various points in the *Poetics*, he tries to distance the visual aspects of stage production that are the mainstay of creating “spectacle” from poetic composition (1450b15-20, 1453b1-14), saying that good poets can create the terrifying and pitiable without recourse to “spectacle” (1453b1-14). He rather grudgingly admits that “spectacle” is one of the main features of tragedy that not only differentiates it from epic but also makes the same stories more palpable and vivid (ἐναργέστατα, 1462a15-17) for the audience than epic could by bringing the figures and events to life. Recent studies have shown that Aristotle’s distaste for “spectacle” and his placement of it as secondary or ancillary to other aspects were not shared by original audiences. In fact, the evidence points to a strong desire and demand by Athenian theater-goers and judges for just such visual effects. Further, it appears that one common route to building intensity and horror was to “put Hades on stage,” either in the form of a ghost, a chthonic deity, or a katabatic journey.

Judging by the regularity and normality of references to the society of the dead in the dramatic corpus, it would seem that invoking the Underworld on stage was a regularly utilized form of “spectacle.” Underworld scenes might even have become a somewhat formulaic tool through which playwrights elicited a sense of horror and wonder in the audience through visual effects with the additional benefit of allowing the poet to address his audience outside the temporal frame of his play. The emphasis in the surviving Underworld scenes tends to be on the

distinctly gloomy atmosphere of the dead and the supernatural forces that the Underworld contains, which can be used to help or harm the living. Although the atmosphere of the dead might connect it to epic Underworld scenes, the interest that ghosts take in individual characters' actions and their ability to "haunt" or reprimand the living in their former milieu was a new development. Their persistent interest in the living and the threat of their continued presence on earth made the souls of the dead into a political entity with a "voice" in society, particularly after they were brought into the interactive, civic space of the theater. Further, the device of a "ghost on stage" would not have become such a regular trope if the audience were not already primed by elements in popular culture and on public display to accept and incorporate chthonic motifs into daily life.

Until a more recent focus on the "visual and performative dimensions" of tragedy, the staging of ghosts and the Underworld has largely been overlooked or ignored (Bardel 2005: 84).¹³⁹ Of the extant tragedies, Aeschylus' *Persians* and *Eumenides* as well as Euripides' *Hecuba* feature ghosts with speaking roles, and Euripides' *Alcestis* stages Death himself (Thanatos).¹⁴⁰ In comedy, Aristophanes' *Frogs* is set almost entirely in the Underworld, and his competitors were known to include Underworld scenes and ghostly consultations. The dead on stage, as a ghost or a body, acted as a "point of focus" and a "means of generating further dramatic action" because

¹³⁹ The last comprehensive study of ghosts on stage was Ruby Hickman's *Ghostly Etiquette on the Classical Stage* from 1938 (Hickman 1938).

¹⁴⁰ Although only 33 tragedies survive in full, five of them engage with Underworld entities directly (*Persians*, *Choephoroi*, and *Eumenides* by Aeschylus; *Hecuba* and *Alcestis* by Euripides). The ghosts of Darius, Clytemnestra, and Polydorus are speaking characters on stage as is Thanatos himself, the god of death.

of the shock value they could provide both to the audience and to the characters in a play (Whitehorne 1986: 60). Many more instances of Underworld motifs appear in textual and visual fragmentary evidence, which leads to the conclusion that Underworld scenes on stage were quite popular and even native to the dramatic genre.

Only in the past decade has the topic of “ghosts on stage” started to gain attention (Bardel 2005; Martin 2012). Based on extant plays and fragments, staged ghost scenes were popular, and ghosts themselves were “an integral part of theatrical performances from Aeschylus onwards” (Bardel 2005: 84). For ghostly motifs to be useful devices across such a wide range of plays, Underworld and necromantic scenes must have been familiar to Athenian society. The intermingling of the living with the dead did not occur solely on the stage, as will be seen later in this chapter, but drama is a good indicator of how deeply Underworld motifs infiltrated society because the plays were meant for large-scale popular consumption. Vernant describes dramatic performances as history made “live” and immediately relevant to their viewers:

As I have pointed out, neither the characters nor their destinies are fictitious to the Greek audience. They really have existed, but in other times, in an age now gone forever. They are men of the past belonging to a sphere of existence quite different from that of the audience. By being set on stage, they are made to seem present, characters truly there, although at the same time they are portrayed as figures who cannot possibly be there since they belong to somewhere else, to an invisible beyond. What the public sees before it in the theater is not a poet recounting the trials withstood in ancient times by men now gone whose absence is, so to speak, implied by the very narration. Instead, those trials take place before its very eyes, adopting the form of real existence in the immediacy of the performance (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1988: 243).

The problems being addressed on stage, therefore, were the problems being faced by the Athenian audiences, with enough abstraction to be palatable.¹⁴¹ The myths of the “other” (in this case, dead heroes or kings from familiar stories) were seen as models and analogues to present situations (Dunn 2007: 4). The gods and the dead (in the form of ghosts) were at times put on stage and justified their actions to mortals through the course of a dramatic performance, shifting the power of interpretation to the audience-judges. Although they might be used to escape a particularly difficult point in the plot through the device of *deus ex machina*, gods still had to explain their decisions and actions in the performance context in front of a human audience. Through divine and ghostly scenes, poets and populace negotiated their power and place in the cosmos. The regular occurrences of ghosts and Underworld motifs in tragedy – and their prominent role in the action of plays devoid of other supernatural intervention – reflect the relationship the Greeks felt they had, not only with their past but also with the dead and the gods, both chthonic and Olympian.

¹⁴¹ In a famous exception, Herodotus talks of how Phrynichus’ staged the tragedy *The Fall of Miletus*, based on a Persian attack. It so disturbed the audience for its literal depiction of historical events close to their own personal experiences that the poet was fined for upsetting his audience (Ἀθηναῖοι μὲν γὰρ δῆλον ἐποίησαν ὑπεραχθεσθέντες τῇ Μιλήτου ἀλώσει τῇ τε ἄλλῃ πολλαχῆ καὶ δὴ καὶ ποιήσαντι Φρυνίχῳ δρᾶμα Μιλήτου ἄλωσιν καὶ διδάξαντι ἐς δάκρυά τε ἔπεσε τὸ θέητρον καὶ ἐξημίωσάν μιν ὡς ἀναμνήσαντα οἰκῆια κακὰ χιλίησι δραχμήσι, καὶ ἐπέταξαν μηκέτι μηδένα χρᾶσθαι τούτῳ τῷ δρᾶματι Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.21). See also Vernant (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1988: 244).

In Attic drama, the mythology surrounding afterlife society was used to inform the reality of the protagonists and, by extension, Athens itself. Further, a recognizable pattern in the appearance of Underworld motifs linked them to well-known Archaic Underworld scenes. As in Homer, contact with the world of the dead in tragedy occurs at crucial points in the plot but direct engagement with the Underworld realm remains largely embedded in scenes that do not actually advance the action of the story. The plot is put on hold to allow internal space for consultations with chthonic powers on important themes, and the lasting effect is a re-orientation of the narrative in light of fresh information, which gives added meaning to the plot and a direction to proceed. This is similar to the function of the Underworld scene in the *Nekuia* of the *Odyssey* (Book 11), linking the two Underworld scenes together. Every time an Underworld reference is made, the scope of the text widens, and current actions and choices are pitted against a more expansive time frame, either past or future, as well as against a wider frame of authority, leading all the way back to Homer.

In the *Persians*, the earliest extant play with a ghostly visitation (472 B.C.E.), Aeschylus uses the language of the Underworld to present a conversation between the Persian Queen Atossa and Darius' ghost (681-842). Queen Atossa and the chorus perform a necromantic ritual combining libations, hymns, and dance (598-680). The climax is loud and frenzied.

βαλήν, ἀρχαίος βαλήν, ἴθι ἰκοῦ, [στρ. 3]

ἔλθ' ἐπ' ἄκρον κόρυμβον ὄ-

χθου κροκόβαπτον ποδὸς εὔ- (660)

μαριν ἀείρων βασιλείου τή-

ρας φάλαρον πιφάυσκων·

βάσκε πάτερ ἄκακε Δαριάν· οἶ·

ὅπως κοινὰ γὰι κλύηις νέα τ' ἄχη, [ἀντ. 3]

δέσποτα δεσποτᾶν φάνη- (666)

θι· Στυγία γὰρ τις ἐπ' ἄ-

χλὺς πεπόταται· νεολαία γὰρ ἦ-

δη κατὰ πᾶσ' ὄλωλεν· (670)

βάσκει πάτερ ἄκακε Δαριάν· οἶ-

αἰαἰ αἰαἰ· (*Per.* 658-672)

King, ancient king, come, draw near,

come to the topmost point of your tomb,

raising your feet in their saffron-colored slippers

[and] showing the tip of the royal crown.

Come, guileless father Darius – oh!

so that you may hear the new commonly shared suffering;

master of masters, appear.

For some Stygian fog hovers upon us; for all the youth

of the nation have recently perished

Come, kindly father Darius, oh!

Aiai! Aiai!

Edith Hall suggests that the invocation with its description of Darius' clothing (660-661) might refer to the entrance of Darius' ghost onto the stage. She observes that "Darius' first speech indicates the violent physical actions which had been performed by the chorus during their ghost-raising song: pounding and scratching the earth," and she (Hall 1996: 152-153)

The necromantic invocation of Darius' ghost is similar to the beginning of Book 11 of the *Odyssey* when Odysseus and his crew must also attract an individual ghost for privileged information about the future. In both cases, the rites are rewarded by the appearance of the requested ghost. Darius' ghost acknowledges the efforts of his wife and her court, saying that the "ground groans, having been beaten and scratched up with pounding" (στένει, κέκοπται, καὶ χαράσσεται πέδον, 683) and that, even though among the dead, he "gladly accepted the drink-offerings" (χοὰς δὲ πρηνεμένης ἔδεξάμην, 685). Besides linking to the necromantic scene in Homer, the opening speech of Darius' ghost also alludes to details from other Greek Underworld scenes and myths, which rely on the audience to supply multiple *para-narratives* to interpret Darius' words.

...ἔστι δ' οὐκ εὐέξοδον,
 ἄλλως τε πάντως, χοὶ κατὰ χθονὸς θεοὶ
 λαβεῖν ἀμείνους εἰσὶν ἢ μεθιέναι.
 ὅμως δ' ἐκείνοις ἐνδυναστεύσας ἐγὼ
 ἦκω. τάχυνε δ' ὡς ἄμεμπτος ὦ χρόνον. (Aes., *Per.* 688-692)

And there is no especially easy way out (of the Underworld),
 And besides, the gods below the earth are better at seizing than releasing.
 But, nevertheless, I have come, since I have authority among them.
 But hurry up so that I will not be blamed for spending too much time here.

This brief description of the afterlife recalls the Greek Underworld and configures it to be a place of internal hierarchies, in which souls are available for consultations and interested in the

affairs of the living. The emphasis on the power of the Underworld gods and their somewhat uncompromising nature fits into the idea of Hades as a god who cannot easily be appealed to and the Underworld as a place of punishment and reward. Further, the continuity of Darius' high status after death (ἐνδυναστεύσας ἐγὼ), which allows him to return to the land of the living for brief visits, implies an Underworld similar to those of Pindar in which a special mortal maintains his identity and status after death. Darius' ghost, despite being sentient and privileged among the dead, still must return to Hades' gloomy landscape, which recalls the dark Underworlds of Homer and Hesiod (ἐγὼ δ' ἄπειμι γῆς ὑπὸ ζόφον κάτω, "but I depart the earth down under the gloom below," 839).

After first establishing a hybrid Underworld space, the subsequent dialogue between the living and Darius' ghost contains further assumptions about ghosts and their society that are also rooted in Homer. Like most ghosts, the ghost of Darius has a blind spot for present events and must be informed by his wife about Xerxes' campaign against Greece. This conceit allows the playwright and/or *choregos* to give an update of the current state of affairs for the Athenians as well as the Persians – from *their* point of view. In turn, Darius' ghost recounts the past to her (and the audience), reminiscing about Persia's rise to power and his own failed campaign against the Greeks. He also gives a prophecy about the immediate future (the rout of Xerxes' army and his shameful arrival in tattered rags). The ghost episode uses the Underworld *chronotope* to display the past, present, and future before the audience's eyes in a synoptic scene.

Removing the necromantic scene with Darius' character would not significantly affect the plot. The chorus' song reacting to the messenger's news of Xerxes' defeat places the events in the Persian political context (as the Greeks conceived of it) and could easily have introduced the appearance of Xerxes himself as failed leader (907). The ghost's appearance, however,

besides offering the chance for a stunning visual effect,¹⁴² gives the playwright the additional opportunity of situating the plot in a larger historical and moral context while also taking a stance as to how that context should be interpreted by the audience. In short, Aeschylus uses Underworld motifs to create and reinforce Athenian and, more generally, Greek identity.

Through the necromantic scene, Xerxes' defeat is framed as a crushing blow that struck to the heart of the Persian Empire and threatened its dominance on the world stage. The unspoken implication is that an emerging power – Athens – is ripe to take on a leadership role. Further, the Persian defeat is seen as a righteous one due to Xerxes' *hubris*, which called down the wrath of the gods upon him. Aeschylus uses Darius' ghost, therefore, not only as a foil to Xerxes but also a mouthpiece for the gods – Darius is a reflective ghost who evaluates his son's deeds as hubristic (Papadimitropoulos 2008: 456-457). The speeches of Darius' ghost promote a certain view of Xerxes as having been ripe for divine retribution since he acted as an arrogant, hot-headed youth, who wielded power over an unstable, enslaved constituency without proper respect for the gods (Hall 1996: 15-16). This is exactly the message that Aeschylus wanted his democracy-practicing audience to take home, and the authority behind this assessment is rooted in the knowledge of the Underworld and its imagery.

¹⁴² The effusive chants, frenzied movements, and loud singing to which Darius' ghost refers must have created the type of spectacle that Aristotle thought was of lesser importance in tragedy (Hall 1996: 152-153). Also, the use of βαλῆν, the Persian word for king, would have further exoticized the scene. Incorporating foreign or foreign-sounding words, particularly when summoning chthonic powers, was common practice on curse tablets, which started to become popular in the 5th century B.C.E. (Gager 1999; Eidinow 2013).

Despite the attention the Darius ghost scene has received, it is not the only instance in which Aeschylus uses the rhetoric of the Underworld in the *Persians*. The first invocation of an Underworld scene comes much earlier in the play and is used to situate the Underworld and its power in relation to man. After Queen Atossa enters and recounts her first dream in the play, the chorus of elders and advisors to the royal court tells her to propitiate equally the gods above and below the earth. The blessings of the gods above are only asked for in a general way (215-219), however, while the ones below must be treated with greater care. The chorus gives specific instruction in how to approach Underworld deities, what should be requested, and to whom any requests should be addressed:

δεύτερον δὲ χορὴ χοῶς
γῆι τε καὶ φθιτοῖς χέασθαι. πρηνεμένως δ' αἰτοῦ τάδε, (220)
σὸν πόσιν Δαρεῖον, ὄνπερ φῆις ἰδεῖν κατ' εὐφρόνην,
ἔσθλά σοι πέμπειν τέκνῳι τε γῆς ἔνερθεν ἐς φάος,
τᾶμπαλιν δὲ τῶνδε γαίαι κάτοχα μαυροῦσθαι σκότῳι (*Per.* 219-225)

But, secondly, you should pour libations to the earth and to the dead. And graciously ask for these things: that your husband Darius, whom you say you saw during the night, send good things to you and your son from under the earth into the sunlight and that the reverse of these things [i.e., bad fortune] be held fast under the earth and made obscure by darkness.

In this passage, ἐσθλά, meaning good fortune and prosperity, is almost synonymous with ὄλβος. As a gift from powers under the earth, its connotation is *material* wealth, since that is where the

god Ploutos dwells. As discussed in the previous chapter, earthly prosperity that derives from direct intervention by supernatural powers implies afterlife blessedness for the recipient. Darius' continuation of wealth and status after death is reaffirmed in his ghost's opening speech (688-692). The ghost's appearance orients the play within its historical and political context in a way that plot and character do not while also offering the stamp of authority. The source of its authority originates in two attributes associated with the Underworld: religious ritual and literary precedence. By including Underworld scenes, Aeschylus calls on the supernatural power of the

divine in a controlled way via traditional necromantic rituals¹⁴³ and also connects his play intertextually to specific literary forbears, claiming their authority as his own.¹⁴⁴

This passage sets before the audience four basic assumptions: 1) the Underworld is a political kingdom directly under the earth with a somewhat thin barrier between the living and the dead that should be approached delicately; 2) a person can communicate with the dead through intermediaries and make special requests of individuals who have an interest or

¹⁴³ The importance of the *goēs*, a specialist in communicating with the dead with ritual actions and utterances, increased throughout the Archaic period so that by the 5th B.C.E., it was considered its own profession. The function of the *goēs* as translator between the living and the dead may have evolved from the early role of “chief mourner” in Archaic funeral procession, who was the “direct communicant with the dead” (Vermeule 1979: 17). Foreign elements may have been incorporated into the *goēs*’ rituals but must always have been balanced by “homegrown needs and incorporating native ideas” (Johnston 1999: 83). Necromantic sanctuaries and oracles of the dead, administered by specialists (*goēs* and *psychagogoi*), had already popped up around Greece during the Archaic period, and the terms referring to these places for communication with the dead (*nekuomanteion*, *psuchagogion*) are first found in the 5th century B.C.E. (Ogden 2001: 17). The necromantic ceremony in the *Persians*, therefore, would have been familiar to Aeschylus’ audience, either through direct experience or through collective knowledge (Jouan 1981: 419).

¹⁴⁴ Both Homer (*Odyssey* 11; *Iliad* 23) and Bacchylides (*Ode* 5) contain extended necromantic scenes, which were performed widely at public events. This necromantic scene points directly to those as opposed to stories of *katabasis*. Further, knowing Homer’s epics was part of an Athenian’s basic education.

connection to events in current time; 3) ghosts maintain their earthly ties and have influence over chthonic powers, allowing them to act as intercessors similar to certain gods (e.g. Hermes, Persephone); and 4) earthly prosperity or misfortune can be directly controlled by Underworld deities.

We see this pattern in the in *Choephoroi*, when Orestes and Electra, in conjunction with the chorus, attempt to invoke Agamemnon. They use both song and ritual acts to appeal first to the intermediary Hermes:

κῆρυξ μέγιστε τῶν ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω (124a)

Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε, κηρύξας ἐμοὶ (124b)

τοὺς γῆς ἔνερθε δαίμονας κλύειν ἐμᾶς (125)

εὐχᾶς, πατρῶιων δωμάτων ἐπισκόπους,

καὶ γαίαν αὐτήν, ἣ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται

θρέψασά τ' αὐθις τῶνδε κύμα λαμβάνει.

κάγῳ χέουσα τάσδε χέρνιβας νεκροῖς

λέγω καλοῦσα πατέρ' "ἐποίκιτρόν τ' ἐμέ (130)

φίλον τ' Ὀρέστην φῶς τ' ἀναψον ἐν δόμοις. (*Ch.* 124-131)

Ορ. ὦ γαί', ἄνες μοι πατέρ' ἐποπτεῦσαι μάχην.

Ηλ. ὦ Περσέφασσα, δὸς δέ γ' εὐμορφον κράτος. (*Ch.* 489-490)

Ορ. ἦτοι Δίκην ἴαλλε σύμμαχον φίλοις (497)

ἦ τὰς ὁμοίας ἀντίδος λαβὰς λαβεῖν,

εἶπερ κρατηθεῖς γ' ἀντινικῆσαι θέλεις. (*Ch.* 497-499)

Electra: Greatest messenger of the ones above and below, (124)

Chthonic Hermes, call for me the gods from inside the earth
to hear my prayers, the ones who watch over our patrimonial household,
and the earth itself, which bears all things and, in turn, after
nurturing takes back the flood of these [creatures].

And I, while pouring these libations to the dead, call my father
and say, “Pity me and my beloved Orestes and in these halls kindle light.

Orestes: Oh, earth, send up for me my father so he may look upon the battle (489)

Electra: Oh, Persephone, give him [to us] well-formed and mighty.

Orestes: Either send forth Justice as an ally to your loved ones (497)

or allow them instead to seize upon similar [devious] snares,
if, indeed, having been defeated in the past,
you want to conquer in return.

These ritual libations and invocations are not successful in bringing Agamemnon’s ghost up from the dead, so his children conclude that they themselves must be the instruments of their father’s vengeance (*Ch.* 500-513). As a compromise, they ask Agamemnon to send help to them from the netherworld, assuming that he can hear their pleas and can come to their aid. Although they failed to get Agamemnon’s ghost to appear and directly intervene, the characters frame their future actions as having been blessed and even conceived by chthonic powers.

The vision of the afterlife as having a direct and immediate correspondence to individual action is the underlying message of this failed necromantic attempt.¹⁴⁵ Agamemnon is seen in this play as reaching beyond the grave to affect the living, just as the living are seen to plead for such aid with the sure expectation of succor, whether visible or invisible, because they have performed certain rites. Their actions and expectations fall under the contract of reciprocity (“dō ut dēs”) that is fundamental to the idea of Greek religious ritual, particularly sacrifice. As Burkert, says, “The sacrifice, it is known, creates a relationship between the sacrificer and the god; poets recount how the god remembers the sacrifice with pleasure or how he rages dangerously if sacrifices fail to be performed” (Burkert 1985: 57). This same relationship seems to have been extended in the 5th B.C.E. to the dead, who make demands of piety similar to those previously reserved for the gods or deified individuals (Seaford 1994: 106-143).

Aeschylus uses Underworld scenes as a global strategy in his plays, as can be seen in several tragic fragments. The largest and most relevant fragment comes from the *Psychagogoi* (“Soul-drivers”), a re-creation of stories from Homer’s *Odyssey*. The *Psychagogoi* was thought to be the first of two plays dealing with the dead in a single tetralogy,¹⁴⁶ and it is known to be a dramatization of the *Nekuia* (*Odyssey*, Book 11), the episode in which Odysseus consults the souls of the dead at the edge of the Underworld. The title is a technical term in the 5th century B.C.E. referring to professional necromancers (*psychagogoi*), who raised the dead through

¹⁴⁵ Both Johnston and Sourvinou-Inwood comment on an increasing tendency during the classical period to view the living and the dead as individuals (Johnston 1999: 98; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 420-421, 1981: 38-39).

¹⁴⁶ The generally accepted order of this tetralogy is: *Psychagogoi*, *Penelope*, *Ostologoi*, and the satyr-play *Circe* (Gantz 1980: 151-153; Bardel 2005: 85).

wailing (Bardel 2005: 86-87), and the play's action is centered on Odysseus' ritual to raise the dead. The *Psychagogoi*'s chorus consisted of experts in calling the dead, mortals who live near the edge of the Underworld, like the Cimmerians from the *Nekuia*. Their role in the play is to instruct Odysseus in necromantic rituals:

ἄγε νῦν, ὦ ξεῖν', ἐπὶ ποιοφύτων
ἴστω σηκῶν φοβεράς λίμνας
ὑπὸ τ' αὐχένιον λαιμὸν ἀμήσας
τοῦδε σφαγίου ποτὸν ἀψύχοις
αἶμα μεθίει (5)
δονάκων εἰς βένθος ἀμαυρόν.
Χθόνα δ' ὠγυγίαν ἐπικεκλόμενος
χθόνιον θ' Ἑρμῆν πομπὸν φθιμένων.
[αἰ]τοῦ χθόνιον Δία νυκτιπόλων
ἔσμον ἀνεῖναι ποταμοῦ στομάτων, (10)
οὐ τόδ' ἀπορρῶξ ἀμέγαρτον ὕδωρ
κάχέρνιπτον
Στυγίοις να[σ]μοῖσιν ἀνεῖται. (Fr. 273a, Radt)¹⁴⁷

Come now, stranger, stand on the grassy precincts
of the terrifying lake and, when you have cut the
throat sinews of this sacrificial victim, let the blood fall

¹⁴⁷ The tragic fragments referred to in this chapter are cited from *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Radt 1977, 1985; Kannicht and Snell 1981).

to the shadowy depths of the reeds

as a drink for the lifeless ones.

After calling upon primeval Earth and chthonic Hermes,

the guide of the dead, ask chthonian Zeus to send up

a swarm of night-roamers from the mouths of the river,

from which this wretched water that washes no hand comes, a branch

rising up from Stygian streams.

The similarity between this scene and Homer's version are clear: both place Odysseus in a sacred space near a body of water to make a sacrifice of blood for the dead to drink and both imagine chthonic deities as driving up a crowd of dead from the Underworld depths. The differences, though, are perhaps more notable because they indicate Aeschylus' activation of details from *Odyssey* 24's *nekuia* (*Ody.* 24.1-204) as well, thus conflating Homer's two famous Underworld scenes into a new version of this myth. These details include the presence of Hermes as a guide and also the comparison of the dead to a "swarm" of nocturnal animals (cf. simile comparing the dead to bats, *Ody.* 24.5-14). Multiple *para-narratives* are at play in the Aeschylean version of Odysseus' consultation with the dead and connect the two texts together with interlocking references.

The playwright chooses to emphasize the supernatural powers – Hermes the soul guide and Zeus of the Underworld, the male ruler of the dead¹⁴⁸ – and portrays them as the instigators

¹⁴⁸ Persephone is the Underworld god more commonly invoked as intercessor, and it is she who sends up the dead in the *Odyssey* (11.226) after Odysseus enters her grove and performs the ritual sacrifice for the dead. A later fragment of the *Psychagogoi* (Fr. 277, Radt) does refer to Persephone (Δαίσα), who may have also been involved in sending up ghosts, but this is

for Odysseus' upcoming necromantic scene. The evidence suggests that this passage preceded the appearance of Tiresias' ghost (Fr. 275, Radt) and that the dead seer gives a prediction about Odysseus' death (although different from the one in the *Odyssey*). Since Fr. 273a refers to the gods sending up a "swarm" of dead and we know Aeschylus' scene cannot help but recall Homer's *nekuiai* as its most obvious intertext, it is not too great a leap to conclude that other ghosts besides Tiresias also appeared on stage to converse with Odysseus and that they were probably used to review his past deeds and set up the conditions and expectations of his return to Ithaca, as the ghosts of the *Odyssey* did.

The tetralogy's third play, the *Ostologoi* ("Bone-gatherers") seems to have been set after the suitors were slain.¹⁴⁹ The title very likely refers to the suitors' families coming to collect their slain sons' bodies from Odysseus' home or a funeral pyre (Grossardt 2003). There is not enough evidence to know whether the suitors' ghosts appeared on stage, however, the scene itself and its performance so closely following the *Psychagogoi* (in which at least one ghost and possibly more appeared on stage) suggest that the play had strong intertextual ties to the *katabasis* of the suitors' ghosts in *Odyssey* 24 (1-204) and probably included details from that scene, including ghosts. At the very least, the audience, well-versed in Homer from rhapsodic competitions and festivals, would have made the connection, and their knowledge of the epic's portrayal of the suitors' ghosts would have informed the viewing process. Homer's Underworld narrative,

speculative due to the fragmentary evidence. Chthonian Zeus is most likely Hades here, as the two are not distinctly differentiated in the earliest sources (Evans 1974: 116).

¹⁴⁹ The second play in the tetralogy, *Penelope*, is presumed to present the events in Ithaca after Odysseus' arrival when the hero reclaims his kingdom, perhaps even from Penelope's perspective (Gantz 1980: 152).

therefore, would have “shadowed” the events of the play as a persistent *para-narrative*, providing a means of sub-textual communication between playwright and audience. As the final tragedy in this set (before the satyr play), the *Ostologoi* would have had to give some closure to the events and issues raised in the *Psychagogoi*. The fact that there were bone-gatherers suggests the closure would involve funeral rites and other forms of lament giving the dead their due.

Of all the scenes from the *Odyssey*, it is hardly surprising that Aeschylus chose to dramatize the most titillating stories that would have the most visceral impact as “spectacles” for the audience. His invocation of the *Odyssey*’s Underworld narratives in these plays was not described by ancient commentators as unusual nor was the tetralogy produced at a particularly early, experimental stage in the history of tragedy.¹⁵⁰ Linking to Homeric Underworld scenes on stage does not seem to have been surprising or disturbing to ancient audiences, who may have valued the spectacle of visualizing the Underworld and the dead as well as the resonance created by allusions to a well-known epic scene. A fragment thought to be from *Psychagogoi* supports the notion that some aspect of the Underworld would be on stage and that it was meant to be

¹⁵⁰ The date of the first official performance of tragedy as chorus and a single actor at Athens is given as 534 B.C.E. and associated with Thespis (Storey and Allan 2005: 8). Moreno does note that the *Odyssey*’s *Nekuia* (Book 11) was not a popular topic for dramatization (or for vase painters) as compared to the *katabaseis* of Heracles and Theseus, which were widely portrayed (Moreno 2004: 20). I argue that it does not matter how often and in what forms the specific events of Homer’s *Nekuia* are explicitly presented, only that they are invoked as *para-narratives* to other Underworld scenes.

terrifying: Ἄϊδην δ' ἔχων βοηθὸν οὐ τρέμω σκιάς (“having Hades as my ally, I do not tremble at the shades/ghosts,” Fr. 370 K-.Sn.).¹⁵¹

In the fragments of Sophocles' *Polyxena*, the ghost of Achilles appears on stage and similarly describes the Underworld as a fearful place of darkness akin to the descriptions by Odysseus in the *Nekuia* but with the sentience and negative atmosphere implied by Patroclus' ghost (*Il.* 23.69-74). Although staging for this scene is unknown, the ghost was most likely on stage in front of Agamemnon's tent to make its demands for Polyxena's sacrifice (Bardel 2005: 93-94) and perhaps even made a second appearance later in the play to warn Agamemnon of his sordid death, as has been conjectured from some seemingly prophetic fragments (Calder III 1966: 42-43, 49). The ghost, who demands the sacrifice of Polyxena, brings with it a feeling of

¹⁵¹ This translation follows Moreno's excellent argument for construing Ἄϊδην as the actual “lord of the Underworld” (instead of “death”) and “σκιάς” as “ghosts/shades” (instead of “shadows/dark places/hell”), since these were the more common definitions of these terms in the classical tragic corpus (Moreno 2004: 7-17). The line is unassigned in Kannicht-Snell's *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Kannicht and Snell 1981), but Moreno makes a good case for its belonging to Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi*, probably from the prologue in which Odysseus announces his intention to go to Hades (Moreno 2004: 17-29). Of course, the fact that it was not specifically attributed to Aeschylus could mean that it occurred in a different, unknown tragedy, potentially even one centered on Hercules – although Moreno argues that this is unlikely (Moreno 2004: 18). This would further support my argument for the normality of Underworld scenes on stage. As a part of the *Psychagogoi*, the line further reinforces the notion of the “Underworld on stage” and, at the very least, must have come from a tragedy with either a *katabasis* or a necromantic scene.

the dark horrors of the afterlife and the wrath of the supernatural into the space of the living, but also the hope that human action can mitigate it.

ΨΥΧΗ ΑΧΙΛΛΕΩΣ

ἀκτὰς ἀπαίωνάς τε καὶ μελαμβαθεῖς

λιπούσα λίμνης ἦλθον, ἄρσενας χοὰς

Ἀχέρωντος ὄξυπλήγας ἠχούσας γόους (Fr. 523 Radt)

Achilles' Ghost:

I have come leaving the cheerless and darkly deep headlands

of the sea, the mighty streams of Acheron, which echo the

wails that accompany fierce blows

The purpose of the sacrifice is not only to appease Achilles' ghost with blood before the Greeks' departure from Troy, but also to influence the gods' favor for the return from Troy. Indeed, the ghost of Achilles does seem to give predictions for the future, including a cryptic reference to gloomy clouds (λυγαίου νέφους) and a new tunic for Agamemnon, "cloaked in evils" (χιτῶν σ' ἄπειρος, ἐνδυτήριον κακῶν, Fr. 525-526 Radt).¹⁵² The phrasing of this passage recalls Odysseus' journey to a headland (ἀκτῆ, *Ody.* 11.509) of Ocean near the dank house of Hades (εἰς Αἴδεω δόμον εὐρώεντα, 11.512) where the streams of Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus flow into Acheron (εἰς Ἀχέρωντα Πυριφλεγέθων τε ῥέουσι Κώκυτός θ', 11.513-514).

¹⁵² The reference to Agamemnon's garments wrapped around him foreshadows his death through ensnarement by his wife Clytemnestra. It also produces an intertextual link with the πέπλος of Agamemnon in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* as both a garment and funeral shroud (Lee 2004: 263-269).

Achilles' ghost in this play also seems to have been a direct model for Polydorus' ghost in the prologue of Euripides' *Hecuba*, produced a couple of decades later.¹⁵³ In the latter case, there is no doubt that Polydorus appeared on stage, and several scholars have proposed possible entry points, either from a particular *eisodos* or a subterranean space (Lane 2007). The repetition of the "ghost-on-stage" device with interlocking echoes across generations of Underworld scenes demonstrates the lasting appeal of Underworld scenes as a mode of communication between authors and audiences well into the 5th century B.C.E.¹⁵⁴

Parodying the Underworld in Comedy

In Old Comedy, a similar breakdown of the barrier between the mortal and the supernatural occurred. The most famous extant example of Underworld motifs on the comic stage is Aristophanes' *Frogs*, produced nearly 67 years after Aeschylus' *Persians*.¹⁵⁵ Comedies in the 5th century B.C.E. already take everyday situations to the absurd as a form of social commentary. Aristophanes' *Frogs*, in particular, amplifies this effect by using the conventions of Underworld scenes to mock Athens' political situation and leaders by presenting afterlife society as an alternate version of real life in which solutions to the problems of reality can be found. *Frogs* portrays the Underworld as a place teeming with life and commerce, mirroring

¹⁵³ Calder dates Sophocles' *Polyxena* to 450 B.C.E., and Euripides' *Hecuba* is dated at ca. 424 B.C.E. since it is parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds* at 1165-1166, dated to 423 B.C.E. (Calder III 1966: 55-56)

¹⁵⁴ The popularity and importance of these Underworld examples is partly supported through their very survival in manuscripts and testimonia.

¹⁵⁵ *Frogs* won 1st prize at the Lenaia, 405 B.C.E. (Dover 1997: 1)

contemporary Greek society. Dionysus is the protagonist and wants to perform a *katabasis* on behalf of Athens in order to resurrect a poet who can give good advice to the leaders of the city regarding the war with Sparta. The god is characterized as a buffoon who asks Heracles, the most famous katabatic hero from myth, for directions to Hades so he can bring back the soul of a dead poet to help guide Athens out of its war with Sparta.

The presence of Dionysus, a god, on stage is already jarring, although not unique. Gods had been brought onto the stage already in such plays as Aeschylus *Eumenides* and Euripides' *Alcestis*. Dionysus' appearance on stage seems to have been quite common or at least not exceptional, perhaps due to his role as the god of the theater. He was a featured character in numerous plays, although usually in the guise of a human – as Paris in the *Dionysalexandros* of Cratinus, as a soldier in the *Taxiarchs* of Eupolis, and an effeminate young man in the *Bacchae* of Euripides (Dover 1997: 23).¹⁵⁶ In *Frogs*, however, he appears as himself, an Olympian god and, more specifically, the god of the theater, albeit a buffoonish one. The effect of this is to signal to the audience that the god is looking out for Athenian interests and that the play will fracture the boundaries between the realms of gods and men to bring an imagined supernatural into the real space of the theater occupied by the human audience.¹⁵⁷ The presence of a god and the hero Heracles, also a boundary-crosser, reaffirms the breakdown of space as does the

¹⁵⁶ Dionysus is presumed to have appeared as a character on stage in several more plays, although his role in each is unclear. These plays include the *Babylonians* and the *Dionysus Shipwrecked* by Aristophanes, the *Dionysus* by Magnes, the *Dionysus* by Aristomenes, and the *Dionysoi* of Cratinus (Dover 1997: 22-23).

¹⁵⁷ The audience would have been familiar with boundary-crossing gods from other plays, thus making the buffoonish Dionysus and the opening jokes about paths into Hades more funny.

subsequent staging of the Underworld, which envisions afterlife society as a reflection of the Athenian city-state.

In his meeting with Heracles, Dionysus asks how to get to the Underworld. Heracles first suggests suicide as the quickest way, but Dionysus rebuffs him. The joke is that the latter is a god so it would be impossible for him to commit suicide, and the conversation highlights the different pathways into Hades. Dionysus finally decides to perform a *katabasis* like Heracles and specifically asks for the “harbors, bakeries, brothels, rest stops, detours, streams, roads, cities, lodgings, and hostesses” (λιμένας, ἀρτοποιία, πορνεί’, ἀναπαύλας, ἐκτροπάς, κρήνας, ὁδοῦς, πόλεις, διαίτας, πανδοκευτρίας, *Frogs* 112-114). This creates a vision of the Underworld that ties it closely to human society by representing the dead as having similar needs and appetites to the living. In response, Heracles tells Dionysus to enter Hades by crossing a large lake (137) and then describes the strange sights the god will see: great snakes and countless monsters, a sea of filth, and finally a mystic band of initiates who live near Pluto’s gate (142-163). Although Aristophanes may have exaggerated and distorted certain aspects of his Underworld for comedic effect, this exchange between Dionysus and Heracles invokes the Archaic poets’ vision of the Underworld as a geographical, segregated place that can be accessed from the real world, albeit only by unique individuals who could survive the obstacles of the journey.

After approaching the liminal figures of Heracles and the corpse of a recently dead man for advice on performing a *katabasis* to retrieve a famous dead poet, Dionysus chooses to take Charon’s ferry to Hades. The dialogue between Charon and Dionysus and the subsequent boat

ride is rich in references that generate *para-narratives*.¹⁵⁸ Charon's presence emphasizes the difficulty of crossing to the Underworld but also its accessibility, if the correct procedures are followed and he receives proper payment.¹⁵⁹ He reinforces class structures by refusing to ferry the slave Xanthias and further ties his treatment of the latter in the Underworld back to a controversial issue in contemporary Athenian politics. The ferryman compares Xanthias to the slaves who fought for Athens at sea, particularly at Arginusae in 406 B.C.E.,¹⁶⁰ to gain their freedom and even citizenship, saying "I won't take a slave, unless he had fought at sea to save his skin" (δοῦλον οὐκ ἄγω, / εἰ μὴ νεναυμάχηκε τὴν περὶ τῶν κρηῶν, *Fr.* 192-193). In this one line, Aristophanes immediately links his Underworld scene to a controversial political narrative in the city, making an "inside joke" with his audience. Charon is portrayed as being aware of and responsive to the current political situation in Athens. Since Xanthias cannot claim the citizenship status of the Arginusae dead, Charon directs him to walk around the lake on foot

¹⁵⁸ The figure of Charon is a "modern" addition to the Underworld landscape whose role overlaps with that of Hermes Psychagogus to a certain extent. The earliest literary reference to him as a ferryman of the dead may have been in the epic poem *Minyas* (6th century B.C.E.), and the earliest image dates to the late 6th century B.C.E. (Oakley 2004: 113). Most extant images of him are on white ground lekythoi from funerary contexts (Dover 1997: 113; Oakley 2004: 108-125).

¹⁵⁹ *Frogs* (137-142, 269-270) contains the first written reference to Charon's fee. An image of a youth paying this fee to Charon is also depicted on a white-ground lekythos from 420 B.C.E. (Oakley 2004: 123-124)

¹⁶⁰ See Hale for more on the events at Arginusae and the enfranchisement of slaves who fought in naval battles for Athens (Hale 2009: 224-234). Although brief, this reference touches on a sensitive issue in Athenian politics at that time.

and pass by the “Withered Rock” (τὸν Αὐαίνου λίθον, 194). In this reference, there is a faint but nonetheless present link to the “White Rock” (Λευκάδα πέτρην, *Ody.* 24.11), along which Hermes leads the suitors’ ghosts in the *Odyssey* before reaching the entrance to Hades. Aristophanes and his audience would be attuned to this connection between the two rocks as similar Underworld landmarks.¹⁶¹

On the stage, historical events become the primary narrative into which Underworld scenes are embedded as spaces for authorial commentary. The two choruses of Aristophanes’ *Frogs* also use the Underworld space and specific motifs from other Underworld narratives to make political and social statements. Dionysus performs a *katabasis* specifically to help Athens find a successful solution to the war and its hardships. With this premise, the playwright suggests to his audience that the Underworld is a place to display and analyze Athenian policies and practices, using experts from different time periods and stations in life (and death) as advisors and witnesses. Through Dionysus’ *katabasis*, Aristophanes indicates that everything (and everyone) the god encounters in the Underworld should be examined with this purpose in mind.

Besides being staged in the Underworld, another unique feature of the *Frogs* is that it has two seemingly unrelated choruses. Once the frog chorus exits, it is not heard from again and does not interact with the second chorus (Dover 1997: 28). Further, ancient and modern sources have argued that, unlike the second chorus of initiates, the frogs chorus was not seen by the audience

¹⁶¹ Stanford refers to the “White Rock” (*Ody.* 24.11) as “another of the mysterious crags of the infernal regions, like the Rock of Withering in *Frogs* 194” and notes several instances in addition to these that particular rocks appear as landmarks in the Underworld (Stanford 1948: 412n411).

but only heard from off-stage (Dover 1997: 29; Allison 1983: 8-9).¹⁶² Of course, the invisibility of the frogs could easily be explained by the fact that they are swimming below Charon's boat in the lake at the boundary of the Underworld, where darkness and gloom would be expected.¹⁶³ I would suggest, however, that Aristophanes draws on the idea of a cacophonous Underworld borrowed from Homer's *Odyssey* in which the sense of sound is fore-grounded (while sight becomes unreliable).¹⁶⁴ When Hermes leads the dead suitors to the Underworld, they make a lot of noise, squeaking like bats (*Ody.* 24.5-6). The idea of animal sounds echoing around the

¹⁶² Dover argues that a hidden frog chorus would fit with the economical nature of the productions during cash-strapped war times and may even have led to further jokes about the production being "economical" (Dover 1997: 29-32). Allison observes that there is no reference by Charon, Dionysus, or the frog chorus itself to any visual element of the frog chorus, a typical practice for comedies upon entrance of a chorus (Allison 1983: 9). Indeed, the second chorus describes themselves as wearing "flip-flops and rags" (τόδε τὸ σανδαλίσκον καὶ τὸ ῥάκος, *Frogs* 405-406), which would support the argument for an unseen frog chorus due to economic constraints. Allison also points to the repeated aural references in the text of the play as evidence for a focus on sound over sight (Allison 1983: 8-11). Sifakis and Courbel-Morana, on the other hand, argue for a visible frog chorus (Sifakis 1971: Ch.10; Corbel-Morana 2012: Ch.3).

¹⁶³ The initiates in the second chorus refer to carrying torches during their procession (λαμπάδας, λαμπάδι, *Frogs*, 340 and 351, respectively), indicating an environment, either dark or only dimly lit.

¹⁶⁴ The emphasis on the darkness and removal of sight in *Odyssey* 11 is discussed fully in Chapter 2.

entrance into the Underworld thus further links the Underworld scenes of Aristophanes and Homer.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, having a chorus of frogs is particularly marked because of the nature of frogs and how their amphibious qualities relate to Athenians' vision of themselves as powerful on land and sea. The Marsh Frog, which is the most likely species Aristophanes imitates in his chorus, is a type of green frog that is more closely associated with water than land (as opposed to brown frogs) and was known for being particularly loud (Allison 1983: 16; Dover 1997: 119). The amphibious and vociferous qualities of these frogs can be mapped directly onto Athenian self-identity and pride. Like the frogs, Athenians were known for their obstreperousness and adaptability to land and sea. The frogs' defeat in song by Dionysus could also be connected to the recent disappointment of the Athenians related to their sea battle at Arginusae (406 B.C.E.). Although they defeated the Spartans, the Athenian generals were unable to retrieve the survivors and the dead from the sea battle due to inclement weather, and most of these leaders were subsequently executed for this abandonment after a controversial group trial. The frogs whose voices are quelled and who disappear back into the water after their shining moment of full-throated song could be compared to the sailors who were lost at sea in their moment of greatest triumph.

The frogs are liminal figures, and it is this feature that connects them to the second chorus of initiates.¹⁶⁶ This only becomes clear, though, through the interconnections that are

¹⁶⁵ The audience might also associate the two scenes because it was already cued to thinking of the *Odyssey* during the appearance of Heracles earlier in the play. Moreover, both the *Odyssey* and the *Frogs* share the idea that a returning "hero," clever with words, can save their native city from disastrous ruin.

possible in an Underworld scene. If the frogs represent the Athenians, so too do the initiates who identify themselves with the Eleusinian mysteries through their cries of “Ἰακχ’ ὦ Ἰακχε” (*Frogs* 316-317) and their outfits of rags (Allison 1983: 15). Iacchus was the god carried from Athens to Eleusis during the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the mystery cult that was one of the most inclusive and also particularly associated with Athens (Dover 1997: 30-31).¹⁶⁷ In the play, the inclusiveness of the cult adds another dimension to the enfranchisement debate in Athenian politics that is directly addressed in following.¹⁶⁸

τὸν ἱερὸν χορὸν δίκαιόν ἐστι χρηστὰ τῇ πόλει
ξυμπαραίνειν καὶ διδάσκειν. πρῶτον οὖν ἡμῖν δοκεῖ
ἐξισῶσαι τοὺς πολίτας κάφελειν τὰ δείματα (*Frogs*, 686-688)

¹⁶⁶ Scholars have been at a loss to explain why there are two choruses and how they relate to each other. My analysis suggests solutions to both these questions.

¹⁶⁷ Burkert suggested that a great number of Athenians had been initiated into the cult at Eleusis, stating “Athenians were, as a rule, *mystai*” (Burkert 1983: 249). The Eleusinian Mysteries were open to a wide range of initiates – men, women, free, slave, Greek, and non-Greek. Judging by this inclusiveness, the main limiting factor was most likely economic constraints (Bremmer 2011: 376-377).

¹⁶⁸ Scholars have long debated about the identity, function and meaning of the chorus of initiates in the *Frogs*, particularly their associations with Dionysian and Eleusinian mystery cults (Segal 1961; Allison 1983; Moorton 1989; Brown 1991; Dover 1997; Lada-Richards 1999; Edmonds 2004).

It is fitting for the holy chorus to recommend and teach what is useful to the city.

First, then, we think it best to make citizens equal and remove their fears.

The chorus asserts its role as advisor to the city and gives as its first piece of advice the restoration of citizen rights to those who had been a part of the oligarchic revolution.

The trope of people beyond the grave giving advice to the living is strengthened by the *para-narratives* activated through their identities as Eleusinian initiates and as Athenians. The initiates connect to the *polis*, not only because of the ties between Athens and Eleusis but also because they are literally citizens in the civic setting of the theater proclaiming for enfranchisement.¹⁶⁹ As mystery cult initiates, they additionally bring the idea of a “blessed” afterlife into the civic space, promoting the belief that proper actions in life lead to eternal reward. Their success in initiation is analogized to the Athenians’ actions during the war and how proper actions and divine direction might bring a successful aftermath. In his staging of the Underworld and Eleusinian initiates, Aristophanes thus plays with the idea of living people inserted into the Underworld as a chorus of the dead and then “returning” from the dead (once their roles in the play end) to lead their lives as citizens. What happens in the Underworld reflects and comments on events in real life, justifying Dionysus’ *katabasis*. In the end, Dionysus successfully brings a poet back from the dead, showing the realm of the dead as a source for solutions to the present problems of Athens.

¹⁶⁹ Choruses consisted of Athenian citizens.

The comic playwright Eupolis likewise employs the “embassy to the Underworld” motif in his play *Demes*, produced several years before *Frogs*.¹⁷⁰ Through fragments and testimonia, we know the play was set either in or near the Underworld and that four dead leaders (Solon, Miltiades, Aristeides, and Pericles) were brought back to help Athens during a time of dire need to advise on which laws to pass or repeal (Rusten 2011: 81).¹⁷¹ The motif was popular enough for it to be repeated and welcomed by audiences later in the *Frogs*.

It is fairly certain that the *Demes* opens with an Underworld scene. Whether it was a *katabasis* or a necromancy by the title character Pyronides has been the topic of recent debate, but Ian Storey’s argument for the latter is convincing based on not only practicality and the precedent of Odysseus’ consultation of the dead in the *Nekuia*, which would have provided an acceptable conceit for such a venture, but also the fact that none of the ancient sources mention a scene in Hades for the play (Storey 2003: 121-124).¹⁷² Even if the *Demes* was partially set in Hades, Aristophanes would have had to take the “embassy to the Underworld” idea further than

¹⁷⁰ Eupolis’ *Demes* is thought to have been produced in the timeframe of 417-410 B.C.E. While most scholars like the date of 412 B.C.E., Storey argues for the earlier date of 417 B.C.E. (Storey 2003: 112-114), and Telò argues for a later date of 410 B.C.E. (Telò 2007: 16-24).

¹⁷¹ *Demes* may have borrowed the theme from Cratinus’ *Cheirons*, an earlier play that resurrected Solon (Rusten 2011: 25). Another play that may have shared an Underworld setting is Nicophon’s *Return from Hades*, which has not survived (Rusten 2011: 28).

¹⁷² Telò argues for a *katabasis* in the *Demes* (Telò 2007: 24-33). Because of the nature of *hypertextual* linking, my argument applies regardless of the staging for the scene, since both a necromancy and a *katabasis* could activate the same Underworld *para-narratives*.

Eupolis for comic effect by setting the majority of his play in Hades and using a god rather than a mortal as the protagonist.

Both playwrights adhere to the idea of the Underworld *chronotope* as a place at the borders of the known world, alien yet significant to human thought and activity in the present moment.¹⁷³ The *Frogs*, like epic, tracks time by recognizable landmarks, both mythological and mundane, while the various figures recall the socio-political hierarchy of 5th century B.C.E. Athens as well as famous characters of myth, making Aristophanes' Underworld meaningful to his audience through its connection both to past and present. Further, this account maintains the basic structure of the Underworld as established in both literary and dramatic sources, linking the play to previous heroic *katabaseis*.

From Stage to Life

Drama's presentation of the direct effects the dead and living had on each other's existences mirrored and reinforced a new trend in belief that arose in the Athenian *polis*, namely, an increased permeability across the life-death barrier for all levels of society. Sarah Iles Johnston concludes, particularly from tragedy, that the early Classical period saw the rise of two basic beliefs about the dead: that they themselves can be a threat and that "they can be called back into action by the living" through a variety of ways as "sources of help" or "means of harming others" (Johnston 1999: 31). She further argues that the rise of intermediaries, whether

¹⁷³ Other comic plays set in Hades, for which there is only fragmentary evidence, include:

Pherecrates' *Miners*, dated to the 420s B.C.E. (Aparisi 1998: 80-81) and Aristophanes' *Frying-Pan Men (Tagenistai)*. Both contain utopian Underworlds free from toil with an easy life (Constantakopoulou 2007: 164).

ghosts or gods such as Hermes and Charon, as well as changing funerary practices dating to the late Archaic period¹⁷⁴ were signs that the living distanced the dead (Johnston 1999: 95-100). I suggest, on the contrary, that these are indications of *narrowing* the gap between the worlds of the living and the dead by giving clear pathways of communication and interaction.

The physical location of tombs outside city walls and the notion of intermediaries who passed messages between the living and the dead do not, I would argue, necessarily indicate that contact with the dead became more limited for Athenians during the Classical period. Even if specific visible aspects of death (large tombstones, crowds of professional mourners) were regulated or disappeared (Morris 1992: 305-307), visualizations on stage and elsewhere seem to have been encouraged.

As I show in the following examples from vase painting and white-ground lekythoi, the most oblique allusion to an Underworld-related figure could recall whole myths, obviating the need for the full telling of those myths. Minor, relatively weak immortals (and even ghosts) were thought to be ubiquitous and to bridge the gap between mortals and immortals (Vermeule 1979: 126). A class of wandering expert in necromantic communication (*goēs*) seemed to have had a thriving business in Athens, even earning ridicule in comedy (Johnston 1999: 119). These intermediaries, rather than creating distance, allowed more touchpoints for people on all levels of society to invoke and apply chthonic narratives to their daily lives.¹⁷⁵ This development, in turn,

¹⁷⁴ The funerary laws from the late Archaic into the Classical period were mostly political and sumptuary (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995; Johnston 1999; Arrington 2015). They limited mourning and moved tombs outside of the city walls.

¹⁷⁵ Johnston points out that Greeks adopted new ways of communicating with the dead, including the art of *goeteia* (“invocation of the dead”), as funerary laws became more restrictive, but sees

localized the power of contacting and controlling chthonic forces onto professional, accessible individuals. Any person could go to a *goēs* (necromancer) or *psychagogos* and make contact with the dead or could appeal to Hermes, Charon, Theseus, or Heracles¹⁷⁶ as psychopomps, who were less intimidating perhaps than Hades and Persephone.

The creation of new professions in relation to the dead and the Underworld demonstrates that Athenians wanted to define more clearly the parameters with which the living would engage with the dead. This was similar to the *polis*' actions related to foreign policy. The idea that an ordinary mortal could negotiate with death and chthonic powers, either through force (physical/persuasive) or legislation (designating sites of contact), as one might with another city-state, is extremely important, since it marks a shift in the perceived power dynamics between mortals and immortals. Admetus' grief persuaded Heracles to battle Death himself (Thanatos), who was depicted in a speaking role on stage alongside Apollo, for the life of Alcestis in Euripides *Alcestis*. Thanatos argues for the strict rules of obligation that men must die in their

this professionalization of necromancy to be a further example of distancing the dead from the living (Johnston 1999: 102-104). I come to the different conclusion that the rise of the *goēs* and the additional power that he had to both call up souls and persuade the gods allowed for more specific, direct access to the realm of the dead for anyone who wanted it.

¹⁷⁶ Heracles, Theseus, and Pirithoos were popular characters in tragedy. Gantz names at least four plays by Aeschylus about Heracles (Gantz 1980: 162); there were several plays with the title *Theseus*, and another called *Pirithoos* is ascribed to Critias (Sutton 1978: 4). Charon was a later addition to this set, appearing in the later epic *Minyas* (Johnston 1999: 96) but only becoming established as a regular part of Underworld imagery in the 5th century B.C.E.

time, while Apollo and Heracles are portrayed as advocates for man in confronting death (Golden 1970-1971: 117).

The mythic figure Sisyphus also became emblematic to a certain degree of this newly conceived relationship. The Sisyphus story, first recorded in Homer, was portrayed on stage multiple times throughout the 5th century B.C.E., indicating a fascination with his ultimate demise and with the idea of a mortal duping the gods. Aeschylus was known to have staged at least one and perhaps even two plays about Sisyphus' escape from Hades and death via trickery (Gantz 1980: 162; Sutton 1980: 27-28; Goins 1989: 401). A fragment from Euripides' version (415 B.C.E.) asserts that man created the gods, a statement that overturns the power dynamic between humans and immortals (Kahn 1997).¹⁷⁷ The play is widely accepted to be a satyr play and often linked with the *Alexander-Palamedes-Troades* set of tragedies (Koniaris 1973). Its use as comic relief to the more serious preceding tragedies is interesting because it makes light of the cleverness of man in circumventing divine will, at least temporarily, but also portrays a deeper philosophical stance on the relationship between mortals and immortals.¹⁷⁸ Further, the choruses, made up of Athenian youths, would have had to act out these dramas that imagined them and the audience as not only sharing physical space with chthonic powers and deities but also challenging divine authority in that space.

¹⁷⁷ This fragment was originally attributed to Critias but was later widely accepted to be by Euripides (Kahn 1997: 249).

¹⁷⁸ Kahn sees a connection between the Sisyphus fragment and Ionian natural philosophy, including a new moral cynicism and strain of atheism that was beginning to take hold in the 5th B.C.E. (Kahn 1997: 249).

Envisioning the society of the dead in real-world terms and expecting the dead to act predictably in response to the actions of the living made the supernatural less abstract, less dangerous, and less distant from everyday reality. Being able to hire specialists to communicate with the dead made necromancy a less exclusive phenomenon and allowed more individuals from all classes to have equal and ready access to Underworld powers and knowledge. Setting up intermediaries, such as Charon, allowed the gap between immortal and mortal to be more readily crossed (Vermeule 1979: 126). This new conception of Underworld proximity and access did not appear only on the stage, however, or during the sacred times of festivals. The physical landscape through which Athenian citizens moved on a daily basis also used Underworld *para-narratives* to reinforce this re-conceived relationship between life and afterlife.

III. Objects Large and Small: Fraternizing with the Dead

Creating Space for the Dead

The relocation of the dead in a series of laws passed during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E. was one of the more dramatic pieces of legislation regarding funeral practices. Cicero (*Ad familiares*, 4:12:3) is our earliest literary source indicating this ban on burials within the city walls, and recent archaeological evidence supports his observation (Young 1951: 132-134). He also tells us of restrictions placed on the size of tombs and excessive mourning (*De Legibus* 2.64-66), although specific details are not given. Laws like this were not exclusive to Athens but also appear throughout Greece (Seaford 1994: 74-78). The evidence has led to the conclusion that the city-states, especially those with democratic rule, wanted to govern the relationship between the living and the dead in such a way as to make service to the state a higher good than loyalty to one's ancestral clan (Seaford 1994: 78-86). These changes coincided with major social

and political upheaval, such as the Cleisthenic reforms that broke up old tribes (*phylai*) and restructured alliances based on local groupings (*trittyes*) and demes (Arrington 2015: 49-54). The re-assignment of the dead and their place in society seems, therefore, to correspond to a re-assignment of the living. In short, every individual, living or dead, had his place and the boundaries were clearly defined between different groups, a state that was extended into the afterlife as well.

Setting up designated spaces for the dead outside the city walls for private burial¹⁷⁹ and honoring the war dead by tribe gave the dead a place directly adjacent to the living. The relationship between living individuals and their proximity to each other inside the walls was mirrored in the placement of their remains outside the walls. The visible, horizontal proximity mirrored the envisioned vertical proximity between the living in the real world and the dead in the Underworld. In the *Iliad*, Hades' kingdom was pictured as right below the earth, but only accessible directly via a supernatural earthquake that would shatter the barrier between the three realms, which were stacked on top of each other.

...αὐτὰρ νέρθε Ποσειδάων ἐτίναξε
γαίαν ἀπειρεσίην ὀρέων τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα.
πάντες δ' ἐσσεύοντο πόδες πολυπίδακος Ἴδης
καὶ κορυφαί, Τρώων τε πόλις καὶ νῆες Ἀχαιῶν. (60)
ἔδεισεν δ' ὑπένερθεν ἄναξ ἐνέρων Αἰδωνεύς,
δείσας δ' ἐκ θρόνου ἄλτο καὶ ἴαχε, μή οἱ ὑπερθε
γαίαν ἀναρρήξειε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων,

¹⁷⁹ See Humphreys and Closterman for more on the layout and placement of family tombs in Classical Athens (Humphreys 1980; Closterman 2007).

οἰκία δὲ θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι φανείη
σμερδαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοί περ· (*Il.* 20.57-65)

...and from below Poseidon shook the boundless earth and
the sheer peaks of mountains. And all the roots and peaks of many-
streamed Ida were shaken, and the city of the Trojans and ships of the Achaeans.
And in the netherworld, Hades, the lord of those living below, was alarmed,
and he jumped from his throne and cried out, fearing lest Poseidon the
Earth-shaker should split his earth from above, and expose his halls to mortals and
immortals alike – dreadful, dank places – which even the gods loathe;

Similarly, libations like the ones described in the *Choephoroi* were thought to seep down
through the earth directly to the dead, providing a form of communication and appeasement
(Burkert 1985: 194). Also, the description of the dead in general as “well-feasted” in the same
play (εὐδειπνος, *Ch.* 484), indicates that offerings of food and drink were provided to the dead
both during funeral rites and on special occasions afterwards as an important part of their
ongoing existence and relationship with the living. Vertically, therefore, the dead were
considered to be fairly close at hand.

In the *Odyssey*, the same chthonic space was thought to be at the end of Ocean – the very
edge of the known world – and required a long, horizontal journey by Odysseus and his crew
across the sea (*Odyssey* 10.504-520, 11.13-19). Even the dead had to make a rather treacherous
journey down an uncertain path, guided by Hermes so as not to get lost (*Ody.* 24.5-14). In
Athens, however, contact with the dead could occur directly and casually outside the city in the

cemetery, since the dead were thought to congregate around tombs (Johnston 1999: 27). The horizontal distance was shortened, and the living could see the tombs while walking along the main thoroughfare of Academy Road, either during a festival, during the procession to Eleusis, or while shopping for amphorae (Arrington 2015: 90).

From this evidence, it appears that both the vertical and horizontal distances between the living and the dead were shortened and the paths for communication and connection made clearer. Moreover, the physical presence of tombs in the city became less important because commemoration and invocation of the war dead could occur simply by naming them in a public memorial (Arrington 2015: 125-127), a practice that relies on the idea of *hypertextuality* – a simple name or image was meant to recall an entire narrative about the dead. This practice and expectation seemed to have occurred at Sparta, particularly after the battle of Thermopylae. In that case, the dead were buried far away from the city, but could be invoked simply by listing them on state-sponsored memorials in the city and by celebrating them at these sites through commemorative speeches, away from their actual remains (Low 2011: 4-6). This indicates that, even when their tombs were outside of the city wall or immediate visual field, the dead could still be considered actively present in the daily public spaces of the living across time and space.

The funerary laws, which focused on maximum limits for things like length of mourning and costs, do not appear to be excessively prescriptive or prohibitive (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 289; Johnston 1999: 40-41). Robert Garland argues that the corpse became a focal point to express “partisan sentiment and activity” and the legislation surrounding it “was thus one of the chief weapons by which democracy in its early days sought to establish itself as an effective means of government and to encourage the growth of democratic sentiments” (Garland 1989: 15). He concludes that newly empowered citizens may have wanted clarification on the treatment

of corpses during funerals and afterwards as part of a larger re-ordering of society. As public funerals for the war dead (as a collective) became more prominent in the mid-5th century B.C.E., the state created a narrative of sacrifice to the state and of “shared struggle” by the living and the dead (Arrington 2015: 122).

As we shall see in the next section, the state used the language and images of mythic Underworlds reminiscent of aristocratic praise poetry to invoke a network of heroic afterlife narratives that could be applied to individuals, such as soldiers, who served its interests. The war dead, regardless of aristocratic ties or citizenship, were given special treatment in death, and the state honors afforded them extended beyond the funeral to their living relatives: war orphans were supported by the state and treated as dignitaries (Loraux 2006: 55-57). The war dead came to represent ideal citizens – heroes of the state deserving of honors, or *timē* (τιμή) – and were praised in similar fashion to mythic heroes and the *laudandi* of epinician poetry in terms of their levels of reward and collective esteem. The honor for their sacrifice extended into conceptions of their afterlives so that any soldier from a battle such as Marathon or Thermopylae could be connected through *para-narratives* to “blessed” heroes such as Achilles or Heracles, worthy of heroic *timē*, and thus equated to the heroism of these venerated figures through the suggestion of a “long and ancient pedigree” (Arrington 2015: 276).

Funeral Orations and Funerary Stele: Outposts of the Afterlife

In Pericles’ funeral oration from Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the narrative of the heroic dead is displaced from actual tombs and from the physical remains of the dead to other venues – the earth, civic steles with lists of the dead, memorial speeches, and the memory of individuals.

ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐπιφανῶν πάσα γῆ τάφος, καὶ οὐ
στηλῶν μόνον ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ σημαίνει ἐπιγραφή, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν
τῇ μὴ προσηκούσῃ ἄγραφος μνήμη παρ' ἐκάστῳ τῆς γνώμης
(4.) μάλλον ἢ τοῦ ἔργου ἐνδιδαιτᾶται. (Thucydides 2.43.3)

For the entire earth is a tomb for extraordinary men, and not only
an inscription on stelai in their homeland commemorates them, but also abroad,
the memory of their resolve rather than their deed lives in
each person, unwritten.

In this passage, praise is no longer focalized around a specific site, such as a tomb. The physical structure of the tomb and the names on it become a “link,” like the phrase “Isles of the Blessed” or an item listed in a catalogue that refers the audience to a specific narrative. The “extraordinary men” live in the mental landscape of the audience, connected to the stories that are ingrained in memory. The physical landmark of the stele along with any image or inscription points, like a website hyperlink, to the hidden page of an “unwritten” story that is provided by the audience through *para-narratives*. This affects the viewing of the funerary monument by introducing the Underworld *chronotope* into the real space of the viewer.

The funerary oration is a type of epideictic speech that began in Athens around 465 B.C.E., shortly after the Persian War, and was performed annually by law during wartime (Frangeskou 1999: 315; Loraux 2006: 70; Arrington 2015: 35-36). It has been described as quintessentially “Athenian and only Athenian” (Loraux 2006: 25, 94-95). Although Thucydides calls the rituals surrounding the war dead “ancestral” (πατρῴῳ νόμῳ, 2.34.1) in his introduction to Pericles’ famous funeral oration, the ceremony incorporates elements of the Cleisthenic

democratic reforms, such as the display and procession of the coffins by tribe (Thucydides, 2.34.1-7). In the public cemetery (δημόσιον σῆμα, 2.34.5), lists of the dead by tribe on stelai would surround the mourners, and rituals that used to be performed in private became part of these public burials. The state, therefore, controlled the schedule and rituals of the dead, framing their narratives to link valor in defense of the city's interests as an entry ticket into civic immortality, which suggested afterlife repercussions. The state did not promise a "blessed" afterlife for the war dead but implied through *para-narrative* links and through their commemoration of the dead the type of post-death immortality associated with heroes such as Achilles who did achieve such post mortem status (Currie 2005: 89-119). The focus of such speeches was on heroic warriors from the past more than on the specific deeds of the immediate dead who were being commemorated (Arrington 2015: 110). Moreover, regular commemorations in public and private through the presence of the stelai and speeches created space for the war dead in the consciousness of daily life. The dead were given "double *timē*," both at their public funeral and through yearly cult celebrations (Loraux 2006: 71). Their deeds were juxtaposed against those of the audience, making the dead into direct competitors with the living, who had to live up to a new standard of self-sacrifice (Arrington 2015: 111).

The public funeral oration (*epitaphios logos*), as a genre, was increasingly important in creating an identity for the dead in relation to the living and in re-asserting civic values, especially in periods of transition and war, such as during and immediately after the wars with Persia. Funerary monuments from the Archaic period were, for the most part, destroyed en masse during the Persian sack of the city, "in effect wiping the landscape clean of visual testimony to the history of prominence that elite families previously had claimed in the community" (Calkins 2010: 263). As a result, when tombs were being re-built, people could re-write their lineages in

these “clean-slate” cemeteries to coincide more closely with the new democratic ideals of the city (Calkins 2010: 263), a move supported both on tombs and in funeral orations by the use of traditional afterlife motifs, newly applied.¹⁸⁰ Pericles’ speech offered both the rich and the poor the same opportunity for immortality through collective memory and suggested that this remembrance would impact the dead in their afterlife (Bosworth 2000: 6). What previously was reserved for aristocrats became more widely applied, as “it was the state funerals for war dead which first brought the honours of heroic burial within the range of every Athenian citizen” (Humphreys 1980: 123). Further, the *epitaphios logos* and its accompanying stelai offered inclusivity into the civic community in death, a membership that may not always have been acknowledged in life. The names on the stelai were not exclusively Athenian, and speech itself tied the most recent dead to “all those of earlier wars, mythical and historical” (Loraux 2006: 64-69, 99).

This invocation of the past into the present with its concomitant prediction for a glorious Athenian future relies on the Underworld *chronotope*, as established by authors dating back to Homer. The difference in this period, compared to Homer or even Pindar, is that the narrative into which this Underworld representation is embedded is the political narrative that the Athenian state formulated to promote its democracy and civic pride. This confusion between the worlds of the living and the dead is highlighted in Plato’s *Menexenus*, when he warns that

¹⁸⁰ Closterman discusses the re-framing of familial ties and lineage on family tombs as a response to changes in the relationship between individuals and the state (Closterman 2007). She argues that Classical Attic peribolos tombs, which held multiple members of a family, projected a message of “unity and survival” rather than ancient lineage in their images, which were oriented to face towards the road for passers-by to see (Closterman 2007: 649).

funeral orations and their accompanying ceremonies affect the mind of the living such that even Socrates says in the aftermath of such a speech, “I think that I all but live in the Islands of the Blessed: so eloquent do the orators seem to us” (οἶμαι μόνον οὐκ ἐν μακάρων νήσοις οἰκεῖν: οὕτως ἡμῖν οἱ ῥήτορες δεξιοί εἰσιν, Plato, *Menexenus*, 235c). This suggests that, like theater, the formalization of the funeral oration was perceived by the audience as bringing together the worlds of the living and the dead through the language of the Underworld, having “abolished the frontiers that separate reality from fantasy” (Loraux 2006: 336). Plato further says it turns the city into a spectacle by making it (and its residents) “more wondrous” (θαυμασιωτέραν, *Menexenus*, 235b). In both theater and funeral orations, therefore, Athens used recognizable Underworld imagery to envision a reality, which connects and confuses the worlds of the living and dead by celebrating them in one breath (cf. *Menexenus*, 235a).

Funeral orations and ceremonies honoring the war dead created regular, formal occasions for the dead and living to interact. Additionally, objects such as accompanying memorial stelai that contained the names of the dead and reminders of both their sacrifice and blessedness¹⁸¹ also acted as incursions by the Underworld, since they created dedicated spaces for encountering the dead. With the prominent placement of such physical access points in the landscape, the barest hint of an Underworld motif, such as a memorial stele with the list of warriors from a particular battle or an accompanying image of Theseus paired with Heracles on a vase, was enough to activate familiar afterlife *para-narratives* that tied into civic messages of heroic struggle and ultimate triumph in “blessed” existences beyond the grave, even if such victory only happened in

¹⁸¹ Frangeskou demonstrates that funeral orations by Lysias and Demosthenes assume the blessedness of the dead by contrasting their happy afterlives with the grief of the relatives mourning them and the “lamentable state of public affairs (Frangeskou 1999: 327-328).

the “unwritten” memory of the living. Moreover, the treatment of the war dead and their graves evoked the treatment of cult heroes, an association which Demosthenes acknowledges in his 4th century B.C.E. funeral oration when he describes the dead as having “the same position in the Isles of the Blessed as the good men who came before” (τὴν αὐτὴν τάξιν ἔχοντας τοῖς προτέροις ἀγαθοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν μακάρων νήσοις, Demosthenes, *Funeral Speech*, 60.34).¹⁸²

In these wide-scale civic events, Underworld *para-narratives* inserted themselves into public funerary practices and suggested the ways that the audience should categorize the dead and their immortality. The dead were not treated as separate from the living, and this served the

¹⁸² The institutionalization of funeral orations as a genre in both form and content allows some extrapolation back to the 5th century B.C.E. orations from later ones such as that of Demosthenes (Loraux 2006: 279). Currie compares the commemoration of the war dead to the creation of hero-cult rituals (Currie 2005: 89-119). Arrington comments on the uncertainty in extant orations as to the status of the war dead, noting that Lysias viewed their celebration in song as the chief avenue of immortality for these mortals (Arrington 2015: 115). Sourvinou-Inwood argues that the form of address *χαίρετε* on public grave monuments in the 5th century B.C.E. suggests a heroization of the dead, as this was the common mode of address for gods and heroes (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 191-195). Arrington finds Sourvinou-Inwood’s argument to be unconvincing, saying that the war dead at most were given the honorific address of aristocrats rather than heroes (Arrington 2015: 116-120). As argued in the last chapter and this one, the suggestion of afterlife privilege and the promise of immortality through song or speech were deliberately placed by the author to prompt the audience to consider the war dead to be heroes of the type who would have a “blessed” afterlife. Arrington does concede that such heroization through juxtaposition could have occurred among mourners (Arrington 2015: 120).

needs of the state. If the war dead were considered to have a continued presence among the living, then a violent death in war did not constitute an existential break separating citizens from their families and homeland. Space was made for the dead to continue their participation in society. This was not limited, however, to large venues and ceremonies. Private objects and spaces indicate a much deeper and more common use of Underworld scenes as a rhetorical strategy for commemorating and engaging with the dead. Images of Underworld motifs on funerary cups and white-ground lekythoi activated literary Underworlds as *para-narratives* to frame dead loved ones against a backdrop of a positive afterlife and against a long pedigree of those who fought for and even died to protect the state – from heroes such as Theseus to the Tyrannicides. When considered with the regular, public venues for incorporating the afterlife into daily life, it becomes clear that the language of the Underworld was used to make it and a “blessed” afterlife more accessible to the living, since it was perceived as a continuation of one’s life even in mundane details and objects.

Everyday Underworlds: Small Scale Representations

The famous calyx-krater by the Niobid painter (“Niobid Krater,” Louvre G341), dated to the mid-5th century B.C.E., contains a scene with Heracles and Theseus as central figures, surrounded by other great heroes, such as Achilles and Odysseus.¹⁸³ In a single glance, the scene

¹⁸³ There has been much debate over the scene, but recently scholars have interpreted the scene as being set in the Underworld, with various heroes surrounding the easily identified figure of Heracles (Simon 1963: 43-44; McNiven 1989: 192). Erika Simon argues convincingly that the recumbent figure is Theseus, using comparisons with the Nekyia calyx-krater in New York

gives a synopsis of multiple Underworld narratives that must be provided by the viewer in order to make sense of the figures. The object itself, a container for mixing wine, would have been stored nearby or placed on direct display in an intimate space of conviviality creating an intrusion of the mythic dead into the space of the living on a regular, if not daily, basis. In turn, the living who interact with the vessel would be caught up in its narratives as witness and participant, perhaps even as a proxy for the dead themselves that would have surrounded the figures in the Underworld. As this krater was found in a tomb, it might suggest that those who left it there imagined the krater being used by the dead in the afterlife as such a vessel would be used by the living.

The Niobid Krater (Figure 1) is particularly interesting because of its connection to early Classical monumental paintings. The krater itself is thought to be a replica of a monumental painting, put in miniature, since “all the known monumental paintings of the early Classical period which could possibly have been the model for the scene on the Niobid Krater have been recognized in it,” albeit with some problems (McNiven 1989: 192). If that is the case, then it implies that there was a desire to make the Underworld figures depicted on large-scale spectacular displays portable and personal, not just fixed in large spaces or viewed on special occasions like festivals, memorials, or funerals.

Greek vases were artifacts of everyday life, which had no less impact than the dramatic performances discussed above. Alexandre Mitchell compares Aristophanes’ *Frogs* to the vase paintings in which gods are mocked, arguing that the images on such objects give indications of the commonly held values of that society and that the comic representations on vases are an

featuring the group of Heracles-Theseus-Pirithoos in the Underworld dated to the same time period (Simon 1963: 44-45).

extension of what appears on the comic stage: “Greeks believed in upholding but also mocking their own values” (Mitchell 2009: 4). Although they might represent a literary scene from epic or drama, the appearance of Underworld scenes in the visual shorthand of images indicates that the message was moved out of sacred festival time into real time, since vessels on which they appear were used in everyday activities and were probably affordable to most people.

Additionally, white-ground lekythoi buried with the dead held supplies thought to be needed for the afterlife, mirroring the necessities and appetites of the living.¹⁸⁴ These objects were first displayed around the corpse in the home then transported and buried with it (Arrington 2015: 247). Even after burial, family members brought additional lekythoi on such occasions as the *Genesia* and *Anthesteria*, annual festivals related to contacting and appeasing the dead (Humphreys 1980: 100-101; Johnston 1999: 43-46 and 63-71). These offered additional regular occasions beyond the state funerals for the living and the dead to interact. A lekythos used on such occasions “evokes that which has been lost” (Arrington 2015: 267) and operates as a visible proxy for the absent body. Its imagery of the afterlife activates narratives in which the audience imagines the dead for purposes of both consolation and protection.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Lekythoi in general held oils and perfumes to care for the body, and sometimes condiments and olive oil. Although found in funerary and ritual contexts, white-ground lekythoi for the dead would have implied some of the same functions of the lekythoi used by the living.

¹⁸⁵ The dead who lingered in the world of the living often were thought to intend harm (Johnston 1999: 127-129). Creating spaces through analogy and afterlife narratives seems to have been a safer route of keeping the dead in their realm and in designated places where they could receive due honors. Humphreys observes that painted funerary vases give a central position to the dead

The popularity of white-ground lekythoi as grave goods throughout the 5th century B.C.E. and their specialized association with funerals and tombs are indicators of the narratives that ordinary people used to define the life-death relationship (Oakley 2004: 6-11).¹⁸⁶ Scenes relevant to the life-death transition, including images of Charon, Hermes, Thanatos and Hypnos, were common on these lekythoi (Arrington 2015: 246). Figure 2 contains one such image with the simple figure of Hermes leading a woman along while an *eidolon* (soul) flutters near his knees, identifying the god in his role of Psychopomp (Oakley 2004: 139). This image recalls Hermes in this role from Book 24 of the *Odyssey* and ties this woman's soul to an afterlife, like the one there, that is marked by consciousness. Similar vases showing Thanatos and Hypnos are visual intertexts to the narrative of Sarpedon's death in the *Iliad*, in which his body is rescued from the battlefield and taken back to his homeland to be esteemed in future hero cult (*Il.* 16.666-683). The juxtaposition of a regular mortal in the tomb with objects activating the Sarpedon story as a *para-narrative* for the dead sends a message that while the person is deceased, he or she can expect honors and special favors from the gods (and from the living) after death.

and “convey the sense of a personal relationship between the dead and the mourner” (Humphreys 1980: 113).

¹⁸⁶ White-ground lekythoi were both affordable, widely available, and, therefore, accessible to non-elites, which may explain their ubiquity (Arrington 2015: 179). Most have been found in or around graves. Although some were used in the actual funeral rites and buried with the dead, others were put on display at tombs during private and public occasions honoring the dead (Oakley 2004: 11). The vessels themselves, with their images of both domestic and afterlife motifs, seem to be addressed to the dead as consolation and as a reminder of the continued care and commemoration by the living (Humphreys 1980: 113).

In these representations, only a few figures or signs are required to activate multiple narratives as *para-narratives* that inform the viewing experience. A series of white ground cups attributed to the Sotades Painter (Figure 3) also shows scenes reminiscent of Underworld visits, including chthonic figures such as Elysian apple-pickers¹⁸⁷ and serpents (Hoffmann 1997, 1989).¹⁸⁸ Although there is some debate about the identity of the figures, except where they are actually named, scholars have reached a consensus that the imagery deals with life after death. Herbert Hoffmann has identified the primary figures as Glaucus and Polyeidios and sets the scene around the moment the latter resurrects the former.¹⁸⁹ A snake helped the latter find a special herb that allowed the resurrection of Glaucus, recalling the Underworld stories about a mortal's

¹⁸⁷ Apple-pickers and apple trees in funerary contexts may refer to an idyllic afterlife as well as the apples in the garden of the Hesperides and Heracles, all of which would point to Underworld narratives.

¹⁸⁸ The myth of Minos' son Glaucus, who was restored to life by the seer Polyeidios, is depicted in this set of cups along with this afterlife imagery (Griffiths 1986). A funerary base from Kallithea shows similar apple-picking imagery, and Angeliki Kosmopoulou sees evidence in this of an overall shift in attitude from negative to positive Underworld depictions over the course of the 5th century B.C.E. She argues that various factors, such as war and the plague, caused an increased concern over the transition and survival of one's memory (Kosmopoulou 1998).

¹⁸⁹ Snakes were widely associated with chthonic powers and special knowledge (Ogden 2013; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 177; Krappe 1928: 267).

escape from death (or capture, as in the case of Persephone, through consumption of food).¹⁹⁰

Hoffman argues that Glaucus was venerated as a paradigm for initiatory transformation (Hoffmann 1997: 120-121) and that the Sotades cups can be viewed as representative of a 5th century B.C.E. expansion of the concept of “hero” to include the Dionysian mystery initiate (Hoffmann 1997: 15). This assimilation of humans to heroes through a ritual initiatory process to determine their afterlife outcome further emphasizes the permeability of the Underworld, bringing the mythical and historical together in another point of contact within the Attic context.¹⁹¹

Similarly, the Orphic Gold Tablets, which were buried with the dead, suggest a belief that messages and knowledge can cross the borders of the Underworld.¹⁹² The Orphic Gold Tablets

¹⁹⁰ Vermeule argues that the myth of Glaucus as it appears in the Sotades cups is an example of a genre of myth in which humans test the boundaries between the mortal and immortal worlds (Vermeule 1979: 128-132).

¹⁹¹ The idea of assimilating mortals, usually aristocrats, to heroes through afterlife imagery is discussed in the previous chapter.

¹⁹² The Orphic Gold Tablets are thin sheets of gold inscribed with poetic instructions for the afterlife found in small amulet containers fastened around the necks of corpses, who were presumably cult initiates. The majority of the extant Orphic Gold Tablets are dated to the 4th century B.C.E. to 2nd century C.E., but a single tablet from a cist-grave for a woman from Hipponion in Magna Graecia has been dated to the late 5th B.C.E. (Figure 4). The sophistication of the text suggests that it is not the earliest of its kind, although it is the earliest one in the archaeological record. The religious nature of the Gold Tablet inscriptions seems to indicate that their texts were paired with particular rituals, guaranteeing initiates a blessed afterlife. Many

present themselves as a “passport” for the dead to a “blessed” afterlife. They give specific instructions for where to go in the Underworld as well as specific landmarks to note or avoid. The Hipponion Tablet from the 5th century B.C.E. (Figure 4) tells initiates to avoid a spring by a white cypress, then go beyond it to the lake of Memory where guards will require a specific phrase (Graf and Johnston 2007: 4-5).¹⁹³

Understanding their instructions via initiation and then executing them gave the promise to individuals that they could achieve a “blessed” afterlife, regardless of their earthly status. Contact with the Underworld and its denizens, through dialogue or objects, is intended to solve or affect real-world issues. Radcliffe Edmonds argues that the Orphic Gold Tablets “use the traditional pattern of the journey to the underworld to express a protest against the mainstream of polis society” (Edmonds 2004: 30), noting that those who were buried with the tablets were somehow trying to distinguish themselves and may even have been marginalized members of society (Edmonds 2004: 66-69).¹⁹⁴ He relies heavily on the formulations of myth and mythic

scholars have linked them to mystery cult, with Fritz Graf observing that the “Gold Tablets contain details that imply a ritualized, performative background” (Graf and Johnston 2007: 137). Graf favors a funerary rather than initiatory ritual context for at least some of the tablets (Graf 1993: 249-250). Other scholars who have analyzed the religious and ritual dimensions of these Tablets include Burkert (1985), Edmonds (2004), Graf (2007), Johnston (2007), and Zuntz (1971).

¹⁹³ These directions recall Dionysus’ request to Heracles to give specific landmarks and directions about where to go in the Underworld (*Frogs* 112-114).

¹⁹⁴ Edmonds ties the meaning of each Underworld journey to the historical context and purpose of an author, arguing that context primarily shapes and motivates each version of an Underworld

symbolism provided by Clifford Geertz (1973),¹⁹⁵ Charles Segal (1986)¹⁹⁶ and Sourvinou-Inwood (1991).¹⁹⁷ As Edmonds has argued, the Underworld journey represents a system of symbols, which is drawn from a collective knowledge of myth and, therefore, recognizable to an audience. This makes these mythic narratives a convenient, authoritative language for communication between author and audience (Edmonds 2004: 6). The Orphic Gold Tablets themselves are indeed a physical marker of the personal relationship between the individual and their social group, but they are not a unique document of intimacy between certain individuals and the afterlife nor are they a particularly subversive challenge to *polis* religion.¹⁹⁸

As shown in the discussion above, the phenomenon of personalizing the Underworld and making it more accessible was happening at all levels of society and across media. The Orphic

journey. For him, the Underworld journey myth is primarily a convenient tool for expressing ideology, which is tied more to its immediate context than to a larger literary gesture. He, therefore, reads Underworld texts through the lens of what each author is trying to accomplish.

¹⁹⁵ Geertz points to religion and myth as cultural systems creating symbols which are *models of* and *models for* reality (Geertz 1973: 93).

¹⁹⁶ Segal argues that myth is “a system of symbols, verbal, visual, and religious. Each myth is built up of already existing symbols and forms and, like all narrative, reforms and reorganizes those symbols in its own structures” (Segal 1986: 49).

¹⁹⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood argues that myths “are shaped by the parameters created by their social realities, collective representations, and beliefs of the society that generated them. They are articulated by, and thus express, those realities and idealities” (Sourvinou-Inwood 1991: 20).

¹⁹⁸ Edmonds argues otherwise, that the Orphic Gold Tablets are a “protest against the mainstream of polis society” (Edmonds 2004: 30).

Gold Tablets, like the Sotades cups or even dramatic performances, were methods of demonstrating a different relationship between the living and the dead on all levels of society and through many avenues. The use of traditional Underworld elements in new scenes and through new media is a further indication that Greeks in 5th century B.C.E. Athens (and beyond) were attempting to assert control over the narratives of their self-identity by re-defining the societies of the living and the dead.

Through the everyday objects and texts of this period, the Underworld became something more personal: an enhanced (or distorted) reflection of the everyday projected onto the backdrop of a heroic tale. Each representation, whether in text or image, continued to rely on an understanding of the basic mythic framework and image set of the Underworld *chronotope* as developed and used in Archaic poetry dating back to Homer. The visual codes on usable, everyday, commonly-held objects tied into larger narratives about the relationship between the living and the dead, which individuals found important enough to take into personal settings. Those related narratives were triggered by references to famous Underworld stories, either newly conceived or combined. For example, the famous Elpenor vase (Figure 5) appears to represent the *Nekuia* scene in *Odyssey* 11, in which Odysseus talks to the ghost of his dead companion while waiting for the soul of the seer Tiresias. The presence of Hermes in the image is incongruent with Homer's version of the story but helps identify the scene and also ties the scene to other Underworld stories, such as the one in Book 24 (and perhaps others), in which Hermes leads the suitors' souls to Hades. Thus, the Elpenor vase scaffolds its meaning on multiple *para-narratives*. The artist thus relies on the audience to supply the necessary context. Underworld scenes like this were particularly suited for capturing the changing conceptions of the individual's relationship to aspects of his world, both seen and unseen, because their easily

recognizable features allowed the rapid activation of narratives involving a specific set of images that could be applied across a variety of media and extended through both space and time. The reliance on this type of intertextual linking seems especially true in large-scale Underworld scenes, such as the Lesche of the Cnidians discussed in the next section.

The Underworld Large as Life

The previous sections discussed how the language of Underworld scenes and its unique *chronotope* were brought into the space of the living through large-scale, community-wide civic occasions, such as dramatic performances at festivals and funeral orations celebrating the war dead. Private usage of objects in homes and in funerary contexts incorporated Underworld imagery linking to the same traditional narratives. A third space in which Underworld imagery subtly invaded and commented on the space of the living was in semi-private gatherings, performances, and drinking parties.

The Lesche of the Cnidians, described by Pausanias in the 2nd century C.E., contained a visual representation of Homer's epics by the famous 5th century B.C.E. painter Polygnotus. The Lesche was built to be a local gathering spot or "club house" for the Cnidians at Delphi. Inside the building, the visitors were imagined to share space with the dead, drawn to life-size in this well-known example of monumental art. Although the Homeric Underworld is the most dominant source for the Polygnotus scene, several figures do not appear in the Homeric epics but can be traced to other narratives of the Underworld. Polygnotus' Underworld, therefore, is a visual index linking to a wide network of narratives whose details the audience was expected to provide through their knowledge of many Underworld stories. Recent reconstructions, such as

those by Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell (Figure 6), divide the Lesche symmetrically into Odysseus' *Nekuia* and the *Iliupersis* (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, 1999).

While viewing the paintings, time and space become confused and intermingled on both physical and cognitive levels. Although the *Iliupersis* section freezes the Fall of Troy in time, it still represents something that happened in the past, while the *Nekuia* section is meant to represent a future time frame, from the internal perspective of the *Iliupersis*. Upon entering, the viewer has a choice of starting points on the north wall. When turning to the right from the center point, starting at Menelaus' ship and walking east then south in clock-wise fashion, the viewer would have re-lived a compressed version of the Fall of Troy. Although this representation is not strictly chronological,¹⁹⁹ there is a sense of larger chronology split between the representations on the two halves of the Lesche. The groupings of individuals in the *Iliupersis* “create abundant references to earlier and later stages of the story and the moral implications of choice and action,” even though the entire scene is in a “fairly narrowly defined present” (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 183). This scene contains vibrant action and actors in a climactic moment of their lives. Opposite them, starting with Charon on the north wall and moving left in counter-clockwise fashion, the outcome of the battles in the *Iliupersis*, its near future, is in view across the room in the depiction of the afterlife. This Underworld scene introduces a much wider context in which to understand the events in the former by creating references and links to an even wider array of narratives about heroes and the afterlife, which all give meaning to the actions during the *Iliupersis*.

¹⁹⁹ Stansbury-O'Donnell describes the movement of the narrative as “paradigmatic” rather than chronological, arguing that Polygnotus set up associations between the actors in the scenes through “contrast and juxtaposition” (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 183).

Between these two extremes – life and death – stand the audience members, who fill the liminal space and interact through direct witness and presence with the worlds of the living and the dead equally. The viewer has a choice between starting in the realm of the living or the dead by where he looks, and in a single, sweeping glance, he has a synoptic view of both. As he walks from one side to the other in any direction, he cannot help but zigzag through time and space. The display of the *Iliupersis* opposite the *Nekuia* makes the latter into an Underworld which focuses on questions of heroism²⁰⁰ in the same way that Achilles' presence in the *Odyssey*'s *nekuiai* generates a reflection on the meaning of heroism and who is the most "blessed" of the heroes. When starting with Polygnotus' *Nekuia* in the Lesche, time flows, not backward, but in a more disjointed fashion, since the figures are not presented chronologically by when they died but in various relationships to each other. The spatial arrangement for the Lesche as a whole and within each set of panels plays with time by forcing the viewer to look at and participate with figures in various temporal and narrative frames. This has implications for how the narrative of the scenes can be interpreted. The Ajax among the dead heroes in the *Nekuia*'s southwest corner echoes the Ajax on the east wall in the *Iliupersis* scene, as do the figures of Agamemnon and

²⁰⁰ An Underworld representation that focuses on the idea of punishment or justice would highlight the figures of afterlife judges as well as those undergoing eternal punishment and reward. As it is, although the eternal sinner Sisyphus appears, he is an "intermediate element" linking upper and lower levels (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990: 215). Although his figure in the painting does imply punishment in the afterlife, I would argue that his presence has more to do with the necessity of establishing the Underworld structure through the presence of such a famous Underworld figure and with the artist's desire to activate *para-narratives* so that the audience recognizes the painter's view of the relationships between the various figures.

Odysseus who also appear in both panels. As Stansbury-O'Donnell argues, this repetition of figures “reinforces a temporal succession within the Lesche program” (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990: 216). Thus, like the ghosts in *Odyssey* 11, the ghosts in the *Nekuia* section of the Lesche recount their lives to the audience not only through *para-narrative* linking outside the space but also visual linking directly across the space to the *Iliupersis* side. The movement of the human viewers between the two sides physically acts out a perceived fluidity across the borders between the living and the dead on the paintings.

Whoever stopped to view Polygnotus' panels depicting Homer's *Nekuia* was drawn into that space and invited to convert Polygnotus' panoramic representation of *Odyssey* 11 into snippets of linear, narrative time, with each step bringing more figures (as well as their relationships and narratives) into focus at the expense of the larger view and of chronology. Stansbury-O'Donnell notes that “although an image may not be perceived in a linear and chronological fashion like a text, the constant effort to perceive, comprehend, and adjust to a narrative are [*sic*] the same” (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 9). The Lesche's Underworld panels were understood since ancient times to be in dialogue with literary Underworlds. At first glance, the Lesche's *Nekuia* seems to be a visual representation of *Odyssey* 11, since it features Odysseus in a privileged position, at the entrypoint to the Underworld scene (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 184). Pausanias, our sole source for the details of the Lesche, indicates that Polygnotus drew from perhaps three poems: Homer's *Odyssey*, the *Minyas*, and the *Returns* (10.28.7). The configuration of figures, however, is original to Polygnotus – he is not just borrowing from other works but creating his own narrative, which relies on knowledge of many other Underworld scenes. This is further evident by the inclusion of several figures, such as Charon and Orpheus, who were not in Homer's *Nekuia*. Charon did not emerge in Underworld

depictions until the very late 6th or early 5th century B.C.E. (Vermeule 1979: 4; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 303; Johnston 1999: 15).²⁰¹ Pausanias, quoting a verse referring to Theseus and Pirithoos embarking on their *katabasis* in a boat ferried by an old man named Charon, thinks Polygnotus may be alluding to the *Minyas* (10.28.2). This poem's details are not clearly known, but the reference to Theseus and Pirithoos, heroes of another heroic *katabasis*, demonstrates that Polygnotus wanted to activate Underworld narratives beyond the Homeric versions for his viewer to consider simultaneously with the one on the Lesche. From this evidence it would appear that Polygnotus uses the inherent *hypertextuality* of Underworld scenes to depict Odysseus' *Nekuia* in a language that was familiar to his audience: the painter inserted figures such as Charon into the scene, without any further explanation, and trusted that his audience would understand what was meant.

By including Charon, Polygnotus is reflecting real-world contemporary concerns about the passage to the afterlife.²⁰² Charon is the great equalizer who does not care about a person's status in the real world. This is further supported by the additional presence of unknown figures who may represent the anonymous "masses" of humanity through whom "Polygnotus makes clear the applicability of the themes of the painting to contemporary individuals and groups" (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990: 232). By following the path starting with the transitional figure of Charon, the audience turns away from the living in the *Iliupersis* and goes through a sequence of

²⁰¹ See Bruce Lincoln for a more comprehensive look at the figure of Charon and his origins in Indo-European mythology (Lincoln 1980).

²⁰² Lincoln describes the rise of Charon, ferryman of the dead, starting in the fifth century as an important component in the myth of the transition of souls into the Underworld (Lincoln 1980). He is mostly seen in Greek art on Attic white-ground lekythoi (Oakley 2004: 113).

representations borrowed from *Odyssey* 11 (an Odysseus group, Achilles group, and Heroes group). Because of spatial constraints, the narrative is abbreviated to essential components, which, nevertheless, recall the originals. The artist, like the writer, must compress the temporal landscape but also bring the viewer into the Underworld *chronotope* within seconds. By turning to the left of the entrance, the viewer begins his own *nekuia* and is analogized to Odysseus, who sees what is in the Underworld but who, nevertheless, will return to the land of living to tell the tale. Unlike Odysseus, however, Polygnotus' viewer is able to enter into Hades and look closely at figures who were denied to Odysseus since the latter only got as far as the grove of Persephone at Hades' border.

The figure of Orpheus on the West panel suggests Polygnotus' consciousness of his allusions and a desire for his Underworld to be considered alongside those of his poetic predecessors. Orpheus did not participate in the Trojan War, but lived in a previous generation, according to later sources, such as Apollonius of Rhodes. He is an epic hero in his own right for being a member of the quest for the Golden Fleece, so he is not out of place among heroes, particularly katabatic ones. Pelias' presence here with Orpheus is an additional cue that we are to think of Orpheus in his heroic aspect, as a member of the crew of the *Argo*, thereby linking him to the other heroes on the panel.²⁰³ Stansbury-O'Donnell interprets Orpheus' presence near

²⁰³ Pelias, king of Iolcus, sent Jason and the Argonauts on the quest for the Golden Fleece.

Orpheus also appears as a hero on a metope (Figure 7) at the nearby Treasury of the Sicyonians at Delphi, the first known portrait of the poet (Schefold 1966: 77). In this image, dated to 570 B.C.E. he stands in the *Argo* playing his lyre and is identified by name. This image is suggestive of how Polygnotus might have portrayed Orpheus and also may be one of the references to which the painter alludes in his figure of Orpheus, since it pre-dates the Lesche of the Cnidians.

Achilles, who is surrounded by a dejected and somewhat pitiful group, as a reference back to *Odyssey* 11.489-491 in which Achilles states his preference for being alive but of low status rather than king of the dead (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990: 226). Such a reading depends on the audience's knowledge first of Homer's Achilles, who considers ruling among the dead to be no great prize, and, second, the myths of Orpheus, including the latter's *katabasis*. Orpheus' posture in Polygnotus' *Nekuia* most closely resembles those vase paintings depicting Orpheus as a musician, scenes that perhaps even recall Achilles playing his lyre (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990: 233). It is not inconceivable in such an abbreviated space for one figure to represent more than one idea and point to multiple narratives. Katharine Derderian describes Orpheus as "a figure mediating between various functions (hunting and music, misogynist and uxorious husband of Eurydice)" and "the first poet whose performance transcends the boundaries of death" (Derderian 2001: 119). Besides being a hero and a musician, Orpheus was known for his unsuccessful *katabasis* to retrieve his dead wife Eurydice.²⁰⁴ Like Odysseus, Heracles, and Theseus, Orpheus was able to return from an Underworld journey alive, just as the viewer would be able to exit the Lesche after mingling with the doomed of the *Iliupersis* and the dead in the *Nekuia*. Thus, the Orpheus figure activates other Underworld *para-narratives* to run alongside the Lesche's predominantly Homeric one. The choice of Orpheus is also significant because it points specifically to the poetics of the Underworld: viewers are meant to interpret Polygnotus' *nekuia* in the context of what they have heard about the Underworld in song. The people in the Lesche must simultaneously be in the Underworld of Polygnotus (through physical presence) and the Underworlds that they know from literary tradition (through memory and *para-narrative* connections) in order to make sense of what they are viewing. Moreover, each person modulates

²⁰⁴ This story is alluded to in a Roman copy of a 5th century B.C.E. marble relief (Figure 8).

his own experience and the sequence of narrative.²⁰⁵ The Underworld scenes on the Lesche's walls, therefore, foster a sense of accessibility and permeability between the worlds of the living and the dead in a similar way to the performances and speeches at Athens. The Lesche paintings also show that such Underworld intertextuality at the narrative level was present during this time and valued beyond the Athenian context.

Through the objects and texts of this period, the Underworld became an enhanced as well as distorted reflection of everyday life, creating interactive representations of the Underworld and the dead in public and private spaces. The regular reference in various media to a vibrant life after life and the popularity of the new intermediaries, particularly Charon, Heracles, and Hermes indicates a shift in perception during the 5th century B.C.E. to a more permeable and accessible Underworld for all levels of society.

IV. Conclusions

In 5th century B.C.E. Athens, playwrights and artists promoted new ideas of accessibility and permeability between the realms of the living and the dead but had to do so within the constraints of traditional stories. They found a convenient language in Underworld scenes for such communication with their audiences. Based on the evidence from drama and art, generating

²⁰⁵ Stansbury-O'Donnell describes the viewing experience as follows: "in viewing a narrative, time may be interrupted, or the quality of the narrative experience may vary from one moment to the next depending on the attention of the viewer to the whole or to details of the image or on extraneous elements altogether, such as the obscurity or clarity of the image" (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999: 87).

Underworld imagery and myths that deal with the dead almost as equals, was highly valued as a civic, social, and political activity. A number of extant tragedies include extended scenes with Underworld themes or ghosts, but many more are alluded to and known from the tragic fragments, as the examples of Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* (Fr. 275 Radt) and Sophocles' *Polyxena* (Fr. 523 Radt) demonstrate. In comedy as well, the *Frogs* by Aristophanes takes place almost entirely in the Underworld and occurs in a tradition of comic Underworlds starting with Cratinus and Eupolis, who both wrote and produced comic plays with embassies to the Underworld to retrieve famous leaders. This was only possible if the audience understood Underworld encounters as a familiar motif on the stage that could be parodied. For *Frogs* to have been such a success (1st prize at the Lenaia, 405 B.C.E.), for the jokes to be understood, and, even more, for it to have been considered funny, audiences must have had a standard vision of how ghosts and the Underworld (as well as gods) should appear and interact on stage.

A familiarity with Underworld scenes, such as the idea of afterlife “blessedness” and the continuity of a sentient existence, was developed through regular interactions with and reminders of the relationship between the living and the dead in everyday objects large and small as well as through the educational process of dramatic production and visual storytelling. The public nature of civic funeral orations and grave stelai as well as the wide-spread availability of white-ground lekythoi meant a larger and more sophisticated audience with whom authors and artists negotiated to frame the relationship between the living and the dead.²⁰⁶ Authors and artists of this period used Underworld scenes to argue for an increasing closeness and accessibility between the two realms. Recalling and re-imagining Underworld narratives provided a framework for

²⁰⁶ Arrington argues that the inclusiveness of new commemorative practices around the war dead had “a rally-around-the-flag” effect (Arrington 2015: 277).

authority, intervention, and self-identity to Greeks throughout the 5th century B.C.E., particularly in Athens, during a time of tremendous social and political change.

V. Figures

Figure 1. Niobid Calyx-Krater and proposed figures, ca. 417 B.C.E. (McNiven 1989)

Source: Louvre G341, Paris



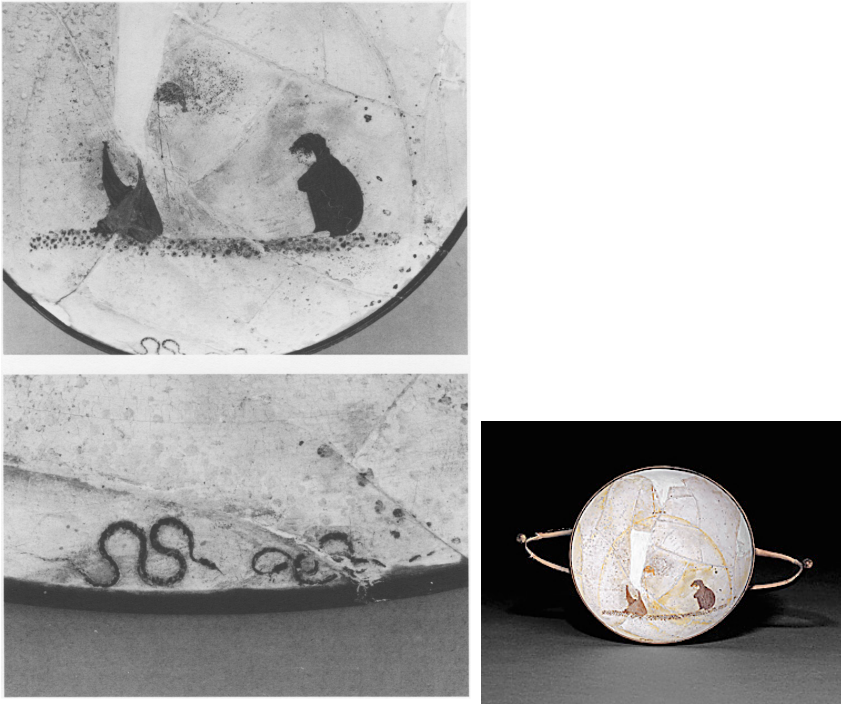
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Eurylochos (?)	Achilles	Patroklos		
Polydeukes	Athena	Herales	Odysseus	Kastor
Ajax		Peirithoos		
	Theseus			

Figure 2: Hermes Psychopompos leading a woman by the Painter of Athens, ca. 460 B.C.E.
(Oakley 2004: 139)
Source: Fondazione Banco di Sicilia 310, Palermo



Figure 3. Sotades White-Ground Cups, ca. 460-450 B.C.E. (Hoffmann 1989, 1997)
Source: British Museum, D5



Subject Description: Glaucus and Polyeidon in the tomb with snake



Subject Description: Elysian Apple-Picker
Source: British Museum, D6

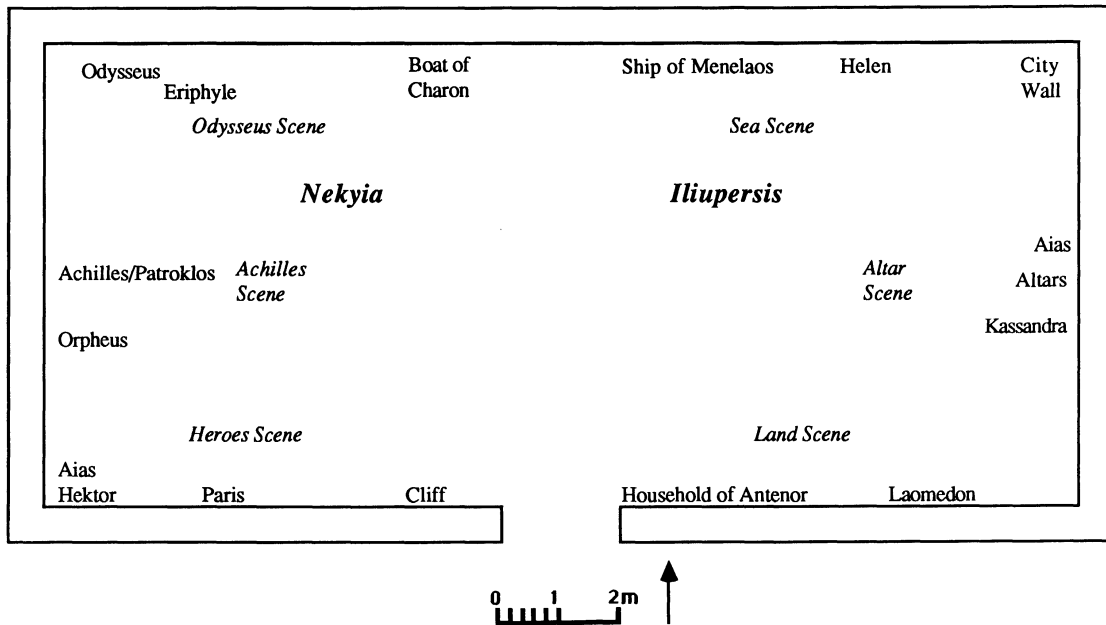
Figure 4. Hipponion Orphic Gold Tablet, ca. 400 B.C.E. (Graf and Johnston 2007)
Source: Museo Archeologico Statale di Vibo Valentia



Figure 5. Elpenor Pelike by Lykaon Painter, ca. 440 B.C.E.
Source: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 34.79



Figure 6. Lesche of the Cnicians, 5th century B.C.E. (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990)



Description: Layout of the Lesche of the Cnicians, reconstructed based on descriptions in Pausanias.

Figure 7. Metopes of the Sikyonian Treasury, ca. 570 B.C.E. (Szeliga 1986)
Source: Delphi Archaeological Museum. pl. 42



Description: The ship Argo with two musicians, including Orpheus on the right and the Dioskouroi on horseback on either side (Polydeukes on the left).

Figure 8: Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes, ca. 420 B.C.E.
Source: National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Inv. 6727



Description: Roman Copy of c. 420 B.C.E. original by Alcamenes, student of Phidias

Chapter 5. *Plato's Underworlds: Revising the Afterlife*

I. Introduction

Plato appropriates a variety of afterlife myths from traditional sources, re-writing them in great detail and from multiple angles to re-imagine the Underworld as a place that is ordered, hierarchical, and integrated into the world of the living. In Homer, the dead were organized by their status and whether they received proper burial. Thus, the ghosts of the Greek leaders of the Trojan War mingled with each other and not necessarily with others (*Odys.* 24.1-204), and the ghost of Patroclus was excluded from the company of souls until he was buried (*Il.* 23.69-74). In Hesiod and post-Homeric epic and lyric poets, different places were assigned to different dead based on an idea of “blessedness” that was loosely determined by deeds but mostly came from divine patronage and poetic praise (*Oly.* 2.68-71; Pindar, Fr. 133; Theognis 1.242-248). In Classical Athens, the Underworld became more permeable and interwoven into public discourse through its incorporation into various media, such as public funeral orations and private grave goods, which allowed the Underworld to mirror everyday life while also maintaining a certain amount of remoteness. The society of the dead existed in parallel to that of the living and was treated like a foreign country, which had diplomatic outposts (e.g. official *stelai* with lists naming the war dead) and translators (e.g. *goēs*) allowing continuous channels of communication between the two realms.

As an inheritor of the Underworld’s extension into public discourse, Plato expanded on this vision of the traditional Underworld, creating new limits and relationships between its structures. He situated the Underworld more firmly within the real world than his predecessors,

altering its *chronotope* by making the afterlife into a stage within the chronology of a person's soul rather than a separate, parallel (simultaneous), or future existence in relation to the living.²⁰⁷

In this chapter, I examine how Plato uses the image set of Archaic Greek Underworld scenes to contradict traditional beliefs in the afterlife. I focus on four dialogues that have Underworld scenes with clear references to afterlife depictions in Homer, Hesiod, or Pindar. They are: the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*. Following in the work of Kathryn Morgan (2000) and Radcliffe Edmonds (2004), I assume that these Underworld myths are meaningful and not superfluous. Examining these dialogues' Underworld myths and comparing them to earlier Underworld scenes will, therefore, give insights into how Socrates situates his eschatology and arguments about the fate of the soul within the Greek tradition.

In his Underworlds, Plato focuses on the soul's experience and how its afterlife location is affected by choices during its life. He thus continues the outlook favored in the post-Homeric poets of a "positive," sentient afterlife with strong connections across the life-death barrier. In some dialogues, such as the *Apology* and the *Gorgias*, Socrates gives a view into the Underworld

²⁰⁷ The word "*chronotope*" or "*literary artistic chronotope*" is a term coined by Mikhail Bakhtin to refer to the space-time continuum in which a story occurs. As discussed in previous chapters, the Underworld *chronotope* was a place in which time and space, as we know it in reality, collapsed on itself. Poets presented figures and elements from the past, present, and future as well as from different places congregating in a synchronic and syntopic Underworld. The Underworld was both a society for the dead that mirrored aspects of their lives and a source of knowledge and wisdom for katabatic visitors. For more general discussions on the definitions of *chronotopes* developed by Bakhtin (1981), see Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson (1989), and Andrea Nightingale (2002).

as a terminal location that is determined by the judgment of qualified, experienced judges and that has elements of Underworlds seen in earlier literature. Souls practicing philosophy while alive, like Socrates', can earn their place after death with great men and heroes of the past (*Ap.* 41a), sometimes even in the Isles of the Blessed (re. *Gor.* 526c). These scenes recall the Underworlds of *Odyssey* 24 and *Olympian* 2, in which the souls of dead heroes live in congenial companionship.

In the *Republic* and *Phaedo*, however, that vision is expanded over a longer time frame as Socrates incorporates and emphasizes metempsychosis as part of the soul's experience. As narrator, Socrates describes souls going through phases of life and afterlife to relate both the joys and horrors they encounter. The same familiar "neighborhoods" of a segregated Underworld are present – Tartarus for punishment, Isles of the Blessed for ultimate reward – but their configuration and relationship to each other as well as the administration of reward or punishment by chthonic powers changes.

Plato's Underworld myths are generally introduced through the voice of the character Socrates. The scenes are intermingled into his dialectic arguments at key moments, and like the Underworlds seen in previous chapters, they act as an embedded commentary that engages the audience to emphasize the significance of their surrounding narrative. In the case of the dialogues, the local narrative in which they are embedded are dialectic argumentation, usually about the nature of justice and the impact of philosophy on the soul.

Although they often seem contradictory, the Underworld scenes in Plato share a few key features. First, the society of the dead is regimented, with laws akin to the natural laws of the world. Second, topographical features in the Underworld act on the soul as extensions of Underworld judges' assessments of individuals. Thus, the morality of individual souls is

reflected in the very spaces that they inhabit: good souls go to pleasant, sunny climates, while evil ones live in regions that are dark, dangerous, and uncomfortable. Third, the soul has a physicality allowing it to perceive pain and pleasure. Any violence or bliss experienced in the different environments of the Underworld reminds the soul (and the audience) of the soul's character during life and why it finds itself there. Finally, in most of Plato's Underworld scenes, there is no escape from the environment, since the landscapes of the afterlife are contiguous with the world of the living, as in the *Phaedo*, or exist specifically for the purpose of rewarding or punishing souls, as in the *Republic*.²⁰⁸

Another shared feature of Plato's Underworld scenes is that they often allude directly to the famous Underworld scenes of Homer and Hesiod. The audience is regularly invited to use Homer's scenes and Hesiod's ideas of the afterlife as *para-narratives* against which to compare Socrates' Underworlds.²⁰⁹ Although conversations with souls are not featured in the Platonic corpus, Odysseus' necromantic account from *Odyssey* 11 is, nonetheless, specifically referenced

²⁰⁸ There is an upper realm for rewarding souls and lower realm for punishing them. If there were no souls in these categories, there would be no need for two such realms.

²⁰⁹ A *para-narrative* is a "hidden" narrative that runs concurrently with, or "side-shadows" the main narrative. Once they are activated through an allusion or other reference, *para-narratives* stay active in the background and continue to influence the interpretation of the main text. They are secondary narratives within a primary narrative that "repeat, sometimes with variations, the pattern of an episode of the main narrative" (Alden 2000: 15). I argue that Plato's Underworld scenes invoke specific *para-narratives*, which put his Underworld scenes in direct competition with those of his predecessors for the purpose of over-writing them with his own arguments about the primacy of philosophy.

in almost all of Plato's Underworld scenes. Hesiod's Underworld visions are revisited in Plato's dialogues as well, and the idea of a blissful afterlife is often described similarly to the life of the Golden race or located in a place called the Isles of the Blessed from the *Works & Days*.

Creating such overt connections to well-known Underworld scenes is both an acknowledgment to his predecessors and a challenge to their authority. Socrates makes "blessedness" reliant on an individual's choices, and philosophical training a crucial element for navigating both life *and* the afterlife. Although most of the preparation towards a "blessed" afterlife must occur during a person's lifespan to gain such an afterlife, souls are, for the most part, not released from responsibility in the afterlife, particularly when metempsychosis is a possibility. Souls must also make correct choices in the afterlife to improve or maintain their position, by following their divine guide correctly (*Phdr.* 250b-c) or by choosing the correct future life (*Rep.* 10.620c). The soul's agency in the afterlife and the repercussions of afterlife choices are particularly apparent in the examples when souls are described as choosing their next incarnation (*Laws* 903c-905b) and negotiating with their victims for forgiveness, which then leads to an escape from infernal punishment (*Phd.* 114a).

In Socrates' attack on his predecessors' beliefs, Underworld scenes become a key form, not only of commentary, but also of argument against practices that, he contends, injure the soul in its journey through life and afterlife. Through Underworld scenes, Plato brings the weight of eschatological myths into his argumentation and demonstrates that his philosophical program extends beyond the real world into different *chronotopes* and existential states. Employing this alternate register of communication bolsters his arguments beyond the immediate discussion into an eternal, cosmic time frame by relying on the rhetorical features of Underworld type scenes that already existed in authoritative sources and that were understood by his audiences.

The differing Underworld scenes in the Platonic dialogues highlight their rhetorical nature through their flexibility in supporting conflicting narratives. By creating a familiar backdrop against which to visualize the superiority of the philosopher in this life and the next, Socrates' Underworlds ultimately refute the idea that a "blessed" afterlife can be granted by poetic immortalization, community honors, or divine favor. In exchange, he offers philosophy to his audience as the ultimate consolation and strategy for overcoming the fear of death. As Halliwell observes, the reader of Plato leaves with the impression of "uncertainty about an afterlife – uncertainty tempered by hope" (Halliwell 2007: 460).

II. Plato's Underworlds as Argument

Plato continues the trend from 5th century B.C.E. poets to make attributes of a person's life, such as wealth and prosperity, reflect in the afterlife. In his dialogues, Socrates generally describes Underworld landscapes as full of sound and activity as souls traverse it undergoing various fates, whether being punished or interacting with their fellow souls. Socrates seems to prefer giving pictures of the afterlife through landscapes rather than necromantic conversations, as occurs in Homer, Aeschylus, and Aristophanes. This is significant because it points to a shift in the emphasis of Underworld agents from famous individuals to a more vibrant environment.

Many Underworld myths in Plato refer directly to Homer's view of the soul's one-way departure from a living body into Hades' realm, but some scenes additionally include the idea of metempsychosis, an idea perhaps inherited from the Pythagoreans and Pindar, particularly *Olympian 2*. (Bluck 1958).²¹⁰ To incorporate metempsychosis into afterlife mythology, the

²¹⁰ Plato presents metempsychosis in several dialogues as a motivation for the pursuit of philosophy. In this view, a person's identity, as represented by the soul, neither perishes nor

Underworld could no longer be a “dead end” to life or an outpost of Hades, but had to be re-conceived as a way-station between incarnations, whose hierarchy must reflect the different states of the souls it houses. By re-drawing the binary life-death distinction as a series of stages in which a soul is periodically embodied, he was able to argue that true afterlife “blessedness” could only fully exist for philosophers’ souls (Edmonds 2004). In his dialogues, Plato represented stages of positive and negative existences for the dead in the levels of the Underworld correlating to their mortal status.

In the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, Socrates employs a distinct pattern in challenging his sources. He first invokes an Underworld scene through direct reference, often with an additional assumption or declaration that he received it from a reliable source or tradition. He uses similar motifs and the same language found in traditional poets such as Homer and Hesiod so that it appears he is re-creating their Underworld visions. His conclusions about the Underworld, however, often end with a very different orientation and set of beliefs from the sources he invokes. Indeed, he uses the language of the Underworld to refute the claims of mystery cults and poets from previous generations that 1) individuals can be “heroized” through song to be one of the “blessed” heroes, 2) that divine favor and wealth in life can lead to “blessed” afterlife (i.e. the link between *olbios* life and *makar* lifestyle in the afterlife), and 3)

becomes trapped in Hades. Instead, the soul has the opportunity to be rehabilitated and move to higher levels of blessedness through several lives. These levels of punishment, rehabilitation, and blessedness required the creation of hierarchical levels of existence in the Underworld to compensate and illustrate the many states of the souls experiencing metempsychosis. Plato borrowed the idea of metempsychosis from the Pythagoreans, and introduced it into his dialogues after his first trip to Magna Graecia (Long 1948: 151).

that initiation through cult rituals mark an individual for a “blessed” afterlife. Instead, he makes the practice of philosophy the one path and initiation that can lead to true “blessedness” in the afterlife.

Thus, Socrates keeps the idea of deeds in life affecting the afterlife at the center of his Underworld scenes, but he ties “blessedness” inexorably to deeds in life, specifically, the practice of philosophy, which cultivates the soul so it can be prepared for what it finds in the afterlife. Below, I show how the pattern of Underworld presentation in the Platonic dialogues consistently asserts this conclusion by examining the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* in turn.

Final Judgment and the Underworld in the Apology and Gorgias

In the *Apology*, one of Plato’s earliest dialogues, the character Socrates describes death as a change in location for the soul (κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα μεταβολή τις τυγχάνει οὔσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῆ ψυχῆ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον, “as they say, [death] happens to be some sort of change and relocation for the soul from the place here to another place,” *Ap.* 40c). In this dialogue, the Underworld is a separate place in a different region, like a foreign country, where all the dead congregate and live in a parallel society, undergoing judgment by model judges and ultimately conversing with mythical and historical figures (*Ap.* 40c-41c). Like his predecessors, Plato borrows the basic premise of a geographical Underworld where the dead are sorted into groups.²¹¹

²¹¹ Even in Homer’s Underworld of mindless dead, the souls Odysseus encounters in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* come to him in groups. So the Greek leaders of the Trojan War do not intermingle

With only a few allusions, Socrates creates a fully realized Underworld scene that emphasizes his Underworld portrayal as something inherited through long tradition. When he repeats the phrase τὰ λεγόμενα (“the things being said,” *Ap.* 40e), he creates rapport with his audience as part of an “insider” group who would know the references. Moreover, the disclaimer of personal responsibility for the Underworld myth deflects attention from any eschatological originality by coloring his entire mythic account with the guise of ancient authority.²¹²

Indeed, no other known source configures the Underworld quite like Socrates does in the *Apology*, and it contains a patchwork of elements that can be traced to different authors. Socrates refers to a group of jurymen in the Underworld, who are demi-gods that have led upright lives with the famous heroines or with Minos. This is true also in Book 24 of the *Odyssey* where heroes congregate together as a group apart to discuss their lives.

²¹² Plato similarly shifts responsibility for any idiosyncrasies from himself and his character Socrates in two other Underworld scenes: 1) when he concludes the Underworld description in the *Phaedo* (τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα δυσχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὡς ἐγὼ διελήλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ, “It’s not fitting for the rational man to rely on the things I have described to be true,” *Phd.* 114d) and 2) when he is about to introduce of the myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus* (οἷον μὲν ἐστι, πάντα πάντως θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρᾶς διηγήσεως, ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος, “[to describe] what [the soul] is, would be a very long account and a task entirely for the gods, but [to describe] what [the soul] is like, is humanly possible and of shorter duration,” *Phdr.* 246a). These disclaimers give his stories authoritative status by making them impersonal, like “things that are said” or “handed down” by a tradition. The audience cannot blame or attack Socrates for inconsistencies between his stories of the afterlife and others because he denies being the author.

(ὄσοι τῶν ἡμιθέων δίκαιοι ἐγένοντο ἐν τῷ ἑαυτῶν βίῳ, *Ap.* 41a) and who offer judgments in a system that mimics the one Socrates faces in the real world. He goes further, however, and names specific judges on that panel: Minos, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus and Triptolemus (*Ap.* 41a3-4). The order is significant since Minos can be traced back to the *Odyssey* (11.568) as the golden-sceptered judge of the dead, whom Odysseus saw at a distance as he was about to leave the Underworld. Rhadamanthus, like Minos, has a prominent position among the dead as well and was originally associated with those who received favorable judgments and lived in a “blessed” state with famous heroes. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, he dwells in the Elysian plain where Menelaus will eventually go after death due to his familial ties to Zeus (*Ody.* 4.561-569), and in Pindar’s *Olympian 2*, he issues decrees in the Isle of the Blessed, where heroes such as Achilles dwell after death in a blissful afterlife (*Oly.* 2.75-84). The two other judges mentioned do not appear as early as Minos and Rhadamanthus, and their addition speaks to Socrates’ point that judgment in the Underworld occurs in a quasi-democratic style, with many opinions contributing to the outcome of judgment, although the judges themselves are pre-selected based on their exemplary lives and discernment (Μίνως τε καὶ Ῥαδάμανθους καὶ Αἰακὸς καὶ Τριπτόλεμος καὶ ἄλλοι ὄσοι τῶν ἡμιθέων δίκαιοι ἐγένοντο ἐν τῷ ἑαυτῶν βίῳ, *Ap.* 40a4-7).²¹³ All these judges, including the ones not explicitly named, were famous for being just kings when living

²¹³ Although Aeacus was a famous king and ancestor of Greek heroes as early as *Nemean* 8.6-12, he does not appear as a judge of the Underworld until the 4th century B.C.E. in Plato’s *Apology* and *Gorgias* and in Isocrates’ *Evagoras* 9.15. Triptolemus is one of the lords of Eleusis to whom Demeter shows the Eleusinian rites in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (473-479). He is said to give true judgments and administer justice but is not mentioned as doing so in the Underworld until Plato.

and seem to continue these roles in the afterlife. Through them, Socrates emphasizes a connection between just deeds in life as bringing rewards in the afterlife, since these judges had uninterrupted favor with the gods and prestige among men, a status they carried with them after death.

In this list of judges, Socrates projects the type of Underworld that his audience would know from their familiarity with the famous Underworlds in Archaic poetry, while also shifting the focus to “afterlife judgment and justice,” a popular theme in 5th century B.C.E. comedy. Socrates reclaims the “blessed” afterlife from the expectations of privilege and divine favor, focusing on the individual’s deeds in life and whether he adheres to just practices. He then pursues an Underworld model in which he, a private individual, would interact with famous men, including mythic heroes *because* of the decision of the judges. Through the network of Underworld scenes he invokes, Socrates allows the audience to envision him as having been favorably judged by the Underworld judges and enjoying a “blessed” eternity mingling with famous poets and heroes.

Cultivation of the soul during life is presented as particularly important in the *Apology* because judgment is treated as a capstone experience to life – a single chance for correct afterlife assignment. In the final sections of the *Apology*, Socrates describes an Underworld society that “corrects” the injustices of the real world through characters that were associated with the mythic afterlife:

ἀφικόμενος εἰς Ἅϊδου, ἀπαλλαγείς τουτωνὶ τῶν φασκόντων
δικαστῶν εἶναι, εὐρήσει τοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς δικαστάς, οἵπερ καὶ
λέγονται ἐκεῖ δικάζειν, Μίνως τε καὶ Ῥαδάμανθους καὶ Αἰακὸς καὶ

Τριπτόλεμος καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῶν ἡμιθέων δίκαιοι ἐγένοντο ἐν τῷ
ἐαυτῶν βίῳ... (*Apology*, 41a)

When anyone arrives in Hades, after having escaped from those calling themselves jurymen here, he will discover the true jurymen, who indeed are said even to pass judgment there – Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemos and the other demigods who were just during their own lives [on earth]...

Hesiodic and Homeric visions of the afterlife are invoked in the description and names of specific judges and when Socrates subsequently asserts that he would both “keep company further with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer” (αὐτὸν Ὀρφεὶ συγγενέσθαι καὶ Μουσαίῳ καὶ Ἡσιόδῳ καὶ Ὀμήρῳ, *Ap.* 41a)²¹⁴ and converse regularly with Palamedes and Ajax about their similar experiences of unjust conviction while alive (ὁπότε ἐντύχοιμι Παλαμήδει καὶ Αἴαντι τῷ Τελαμώνος καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος τῶν παλαιῶν διὰ κρίσιν ἄδικον τέθνηκεν, ἀντιπαράβαλλοντι τὰ ἑμαυτοῦ πάθη πρὸς τὰ ἐκείνων, *Ap.* 41b). The polysyndeton when listing these figures suggests that the names mentioned are only a sample of the many people with whom Socrates sees himself conversing with in the afterlife.

²¹⁴ No specific Underworld story involving Musaeus is known, but he is thought to have written a Hymn to Demeter, as had Orpheus, which would have involved the story of Persephone and the Eleusinian mystery (Currie 2011: 190). Besides being a poet pre-dating Homer, Orpheus was also famous for his *katabasis* to Hades. Socrates joins their ranks, equating himself with the poets, by generating an Underworld scene himself, in which he is both author and protagonist.

In this passage, Socrates invokes the idea of a segregated Underworld society, similar to the heroic race in Hesiod's *Ages of Man* (*Works & Days*, 156-174), in which some heroes are taken to the Isles of the Blessed, while others are not. There are also echoes here of the *nekuia* of *Odyssey* 24 (lines 1-204), in which the souls of famous figures congregate to discuss their lives. In this example, Underworld society is portrayed as superior to that of Athens because only there would true justice for Socrates' case be accomplished. This "blessed" Underworld, therefore, is not just Socrates' reward for leading a good life, it is also a correction to the injustice of his conviction (Annas 1982: 122-123).

Through the "positive" afterlife motif of newly arrived souls conversing with famous mythic figures in the afterlife and the naming of poets associated with famous Underworld scenes, Socrates links the *Apology* to the Underworlds of earlier poetry. In this dialogue, he starts from the premise that life and afterlife are inevitably connected so that actions in one affect outcomes in the other. Unlike Pindar's clients, however, Socrates does not require heroization with song or cult to be considered worthy of that *makar*-type afterlife where the lifestyle is akin to that of the gods. He expects a "blessed" afterlife because he anticipates that the judges of the afterlife will reward him for the way he lived his life, and he will thus enjoy an eternity with famous figures from myth and history, untroubled by the pressures of time or access.

Socrates expands on this vision further in the *Gorgias*, which similarly has a single point of judgment leading to the final resting place of the soul. Socrates starts by quoting lines from Euripides that create the equation "death = life and life = death" (*Gor.* 492e-493a). The impact of such a statement is that a person who crosses the boundary between the two states of existence

remains essentially intact, carrying all his psychic faculties, strengths, and foibles with him.²¹⁵ Furthermore, Socrates uses this equation to argue that one can predict afterlife experiences through examination of the living. To demonstrate this in the *Gorgias*, he introduces two very different Underworld scenes, whose common denominator is the fact that a person's afterlife depends on his actions in life. In the earlier one, Socrates describes a folktale that he says originated in Italy and Sicily and features water-bearers with leaky jars representing the soul:

καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν· ἤδη γάρ του ἔγωγε καὶ
ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν καὶ τὸ μὲν
σώμα ἐστὶν ἡμῖν σῆμα, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπι-
θυμίαι εἰσὶ τυγχάνει ὃν οἶον ἀναπεῖθεσθαι καὶ μεταπίπτειν
ἄνω κάτω, καὶ τοῦτο ἄρα τις μυθολογῶν κομψὸς ἀνὴρ, ἴσως (5)
Σικελὸς τις ἢ Ἴταλικός, παρὰ γων τῷ ὀνόματι διὰ τὸ πιθανόν
τε καὶ πειστικὸν ὠνόμασε πίθον... (*Gor.* 493a)

And we likewise are dead in reality; for I've even heard already one of the wise men [saying] that now we are dead and our body is a tomb, but that the part of the soul in which our appetitive desires happen to be is the type of thing which is persuadable and shifts to and fro; and therefore this

²¹⁵ This idea of the persistence of identity and self-awareness after death became popular during the 5th century B.C.E. at all levels of society as spaces were made for the dead in the daily life of the living (re. Ch. 4). Linforth argues that, in making death and life equivalent, Socrates creates an analogy between the uninitiated in the myth and the unintelligent among the living, whose souls are faulty (Linforth 1944: 7).

[part] some clever, mythologizing man, perhaps some Sicilian or Italian, named a *pithos* jar, misleading by means of the name, because of its plausible and persuasive character.²¹⁶

At face value, this passage does not seem connected to the famous Underworld scenes of Homer and Hesiod, yet there are strong hints of such a connection, especially when Socrates claims authority for his account by referring to “wise men” as well as a “clever” Sicilian or Italian man. While the phrase “wise men” indicates a group of people who are not only learned but in agreement, the latter reference may point to Pythagoreanism in light of Plato’s own recent journey to Italy (Linforth 1944: 305-311; Blank 1991: 28).

Plato seems to have invented this Underworld tale wholesale. Ivan Linforth argues that Plato sets it up as a secondhand report of an allegorical myth because Socrates elsewhere opposes such mythical allegories as the work of an “exceedingly clever” man (λίαν δὲ δεινοῦ, *Phaedrus* 229d) who also happens to be unfortunate in his creative storytelling abilities (Linforth 1944: 311-312). In this line of thinking, Socrates is, therefore, hedging instead of being caught in a contradiction with something he wrote elsewhere.

Another explanation for this roundabout introduction to an Underworld scene, however, is that Plato has no such qualms about presenting contradictory language but instead is using many elements to build a network of intertextual links to other Underworld accounts familiar to his audience. His choice of a “Sicilian or Italian” protagonist, for example, recalls the Pythagoreans and Orphics whose eschatological beliefs flourished in those regions. Since Socrates’ myth focuses on the fate of the soul, the audience could be expected to connect it to the most famous eschatological ideas of that region.

²¹⁶ I follow Blank’s interpretation of this difficult phrase (Blank 1991: 25-26).

Even though he deviates from the Homeric Underworld scene framework in this passage, Socrates still subtly invokes it through his characterization of the myth's source. His focus on the identity of the man in this passage – his cleverness (κομψός), story-telling ability (μυθολογῶν), his nationality, and his lack of a name – coupled with the eschatological theme creates an allusion to another clever storyteller, who often does not self-identify at first: the many-wiled (*polutropos*), cunning (*polumetis*) Odysseus whose heroic status is tied to his abilities at persuasive speech and at adapting his identity to his audience. David Blank's observation that the word for cleverness (κομψός) here has the negative connotation of "trickiness" (Blank 1991: 24-25) further supports this man's resemblance to Odysseus, who uses his wits to trick those he encounters.

Further, the word μυθολογῶν also brings Homer and his epics directly to mind, as it seems to be a technical term for Socrates when referring to poets. Elsewhere, Socrates castigates poets like Hesiod and Homer by name for being "myth-tellers," using a similar expression to describe what they do (e.g. μυθολογητέον, *Rep.* 2.378c4; μεμυθολογημένα, *Rep.* 2.378e3). By classifying this unknown Sicilian or Italian with the same word for "myth-teller," Socrates associates him with other myth-tellers, such as Homer and Odysseus, and his readers probably would have done the same.

Socrates has an ambivalent relationship with such myth-tellers across his dialogues, but here in the *Gorgias* he uses one to support his argumentation, counting on the reader to see the connection. Although the introduction of the water-carrier myth at this point may be "more a rhetorical gambit than a part of the argument" (Morgan 2000: 189), it does lay the groundwork

for the dialogue's subsequent Underworld passage by creating the intertextual links that later allow Socrates to interject new interpretations of traditional Underworld tales.²¹⁷

In the *Gorgias*' second Underworld scene, Socrates uses the more recognizable features of the mythic Greek Underworld, depicting it as a geographical and political place. He describes an afterlife that has elements from Homer and Hesiod but does not exactly match the original sources. He alters and embellishes the details, in a similar fashion to the "clever, mythologizing man" of the earlier Underworld myth, alluding to several traditional concepts such as the division of the cosmos, the Golden Age of man, the Isles of the Blessed, and judgment by Minos and Rhadamanthus. This index of familiar names invokes narratives from several epic sources in rapid, dizzying succession that obscures his alterations.

Socrates introduces his second afterlife myth with the phrase "just as Homer says" to describe the division of the three cosmic realms after the Titans' defeat (*Gor.* 523a), yet he does not pursue the Homeric representation of the afterlife.

²¹⁷ Morgan argues that the first Underworld myth in the *Gorgias* is introduced prematurely and is, therefore, ineffective because Socrates has not made his case fully in the dialectic argument preceding it (Morgan 2000: 189). She then argues that the second eschatological scene is more successful because Socrates establishes his argument through dialectic before introducing the myth and has, therefore, "earned the right to mythologise by the rigour of his arguments" (Morgan 2000: 191). My argument is that Underworld myths, in particular, work as embedded rhetorical strategies not only because they are supported by logical inference but also because they provide a separate register of discourse via a common language to communicate the values encoded in their parent texts.

ὥσπερ γὰρ Ὅμηρος λέγει, διενείμαντο τὴν ἀρχὴν ὁ Ζεὺς καὶ ὁ Ποσειδῶν
καὶ ὁ Πλούτων, ἐπειδὴ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς παρέλαβον (*Gor.* 523a3-5)

For just as Homer says, Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto divided the realm, when they
took it over from their father.

Socrates here invokes the generational struggle, familiar from Hesiod's *Theogony*, but then
recasts it by presenting the relationship between Cronus and Zeus as more collaborative than
antagonistic.

Without pause or closure between the Homeric quote and his own account, Socrates
describes the divine succession as a continuum between the two eras of Zeus and Cronus rather
than a strict division. This transition of power from the Titans to the Olympians is framed as a
matter of succession and inheritance (ἐπειδὴ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς παρέλαβον, “when they took it
over from their father,” *Gor.* 523a). The verb παρέλαβον means “take over or inherit” in the
context of succession and does not suggest the violence and cosmic upheaval with which such
succession occurred, as told in Hesiod's *Theogony*. By altering the relationships under the guise
of authority, Socrates sets up the reconciliation between the divine generations that allows an
afterlife dually governed, with different sections for the sinners and the “blessed.” He also
manages to extend the influence of his phrase “just as Homer says” and the authority the poet's
name convey over his whole narrative through his placement of the quote in the introduction of
his myth.

The division of the three realms to which Socrates refers, however, is verifiable and can
be traced to Homer.

τρεις γὰρ τ' ἐκ Κρόνου εἰμὲν ἀδελφεοὶ οὓς τέκετο Ἴρεα

Ζεὺς καὶ ἐγὼ, τρίτατος δ' Αἴδης ἐνέροισιν ἀνάσσω.
τριχθὰ δὲ πάντα δέδασται, ἕκαστος δ' ἔμμορε τιμῆς·
ἦτοι ἐγὼν ἔλαχον πολιὴν ἄλα ναιέμεν αἰεὶ (190)
παλλομένων, Αἴδης δ' ἔλαχε ζόφον ἠερόεντα,
Ζεὺς δ' ἔλαχ' οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέλῃσι· (Il. 15.187-192)

For we are three brothers, sons of Cronus, whom Rhea bore – Zeus and I, and the third is Hades, who rules the ones below.

And everything was divided into three parts, and each received his share of honor; and I indeed, when the lots were shaken, obtained the grey sea to dwell in always, but Hades obtained by lot the murky gloom, and Zeus won the broad heaven in the air and clouds.

By looking at this passage, it becomes apparent that Socrates misquotes the *Iliad* in addition to altering Hesiod's narrative of divine succession. In Homer, the three gods who divide the realm are Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades.

As he starts his myth, Socrates makes one small, but significant alteration, replacing Hades with Pluto as the lord of the third realm.²¹⁸ Through this subtle verbal trick, Socrates re-

²¹⁸ The idea of Pluto as “wealth” comes up later in the myth during the era of improper judgments. From Cronus' through the beginning of Zeus' reign, living men donned the visible trappings of wealth right before they died, distracting the afterlife judges from their sinful lives to the point that they were not able to categorize men correctly for punishment and reward (*Gor.* 543b-544a). Beautiful bodies with visible signs of riches were deemed to be the problem because judges could not see past these superficial adornments, so Zeus changed the system to post-

writes Homer's divisions of the cosmos, introduces the idea of allotment which creates separate outcomes for different individuals, and highlights that the proper place for Pluto is in the Underworld, where true wealth is a reward given to the souls of the pious in the form of a "blessed" afterlife.²¹⁹

Although the two are associated, Hades and Pluto are not interchangeable in the Archaic myths to which Socrates alludes. Homer never refers to Pluto the god, and the first mention of this divine embodiment of "wealth" comes in Hesiod. In the *Theogony* (969-975), Hesiod describes him as a son of Demeter who bestows much wealth on any man he encounters (τὸν δὴ ἀφνειὸν ἔθηκε, πολὺν δέ οἱ ὄπασεν ὄλβον, *Th.* 975). The substitution cannot be careless on Socrates' part, a close reader and critic of his sources.²²⁰ A more likely explanation is that he is linking his narrative to this second passage from Hesiod and reading it in conjunction with the one from Homer. The word *olbon* in the latter, while simply meaning "wealth" in its Archaic context, had a different connotation for Plato's audience. It not only meant "wealth" in the

mortem judgment of souls *without* bodies, removing material wealth from the equation of judgment. "Wealth" as related to bodies was cosmically problematic because it obscured the truth about the soul's piety during life.

²¹⁹ Afterlife judgment is only inferred in Homer when Odysseus mentions glimpsing Minos and eternally punished sinners at the end of Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, but no vision of a positive afterlife is offered to regular men. Only Menelaus in Book 4 of the *Odyssey* escapes the gloomy Underworld, and only then because he is related by marriage to Zeus.

²²⁰ See Boys-Stones & Haubold for an exploration of Plato's deep, often overlooked connections to Hesiod, particularly as practitioners of didactic myth (Boys-Stones and Haubold 2010).

earthly sense but also the afterlife “blessedness” implied by that wealth, which comes with divine favor.²²¹

This allusion to the Pluto passage of Hesiod is further supported by the next sentence in which Socrates makes direct references to Isles of the Blessed and the “Ages of Man” passage from Hesiod’s *Works & Days*.

ἦν οὖν νόμος ὅδε περὶ ἀνθρώπων ἐπὶ Κρόνου, καὶ ἀεὶ καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἔστιν ἐν
θεοῖς, τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν μὲν δικαίως τὸν βίον διελθόντα καὶ ὀσίως,
ἐπειδὴν τελευτήσῃ, εἰς **μακάρων νήσους** ἀπιόντα οἰκεῖν ἐν πάσῃ
εὐδαιμονίᾳ ἐκτὸς κακῶν... (*Gor.* 523a-b)

This was the law then concerning men during the reign of Cronus, and even still now among the gods it is ever [the law], that when a man who has lived his life justly and devoutly dies, he goes to the **Isles of the Blessed** to live in complete happiness apart from ills...

In this passage, Socrates conflates Hesiod’s Golden Race, which occurred under Cronus’ rule, with the Race of Heroes. In the latter period, some heroes were sent by Cronus’ successor Zeus to the Isles of the Blessed where existence was similar in lifestyle to what Golden Age men experienced (*W&D*, 168-173).

The further connection between these two ages of men in Hesiod is that Cronus was established by Zeus to be the sovereign over the Isles of the Blessed, a fact which Socrates glosses over later by referring only vaguely to the rulers of this place as “the minders from the Isles of the Blessed” (οἱ ἐπιμεληταὶ οἱ ἐκ μακάρων νήσων, *Gor.* 523b7-8), who act as

²²¹ See the discussion of *olbios* vs. *makar* in Chapter 3.

counterpoint to Pluto, the ruler of the section of the Underworld where sinners are sent. By not naming Cronus the ruler of the Isles of the Blessed as in the Hesiodic source, Socrates weakens Cronus' prominence and emphasizes a strong difference (although a more peaceful transition) between the times of Cronus and Zeus, presenting the latter as overseeing a more just system of afterlife judgment. In short, Plato gives a "parable of progress" (Sedley 2009: 56-58). Moreover, by involving the Race of Heroes and Isles of the Blessed, Socrates gains access to the combined ideas of afterlife judgment and continued existence for a chosen few, which only occurs during this epoch. In the other ages, death did not lead to sorting or individual judgment, and all the dead of a certain race, save that of heroes, shared the same fate.

With these revisions to the Homeric and Hesiodic afterlife myths, Socrates then creates an original myth of judgment that has just enough direct and indirect references to keep it tied to authoritative sources. He not only names Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus as judges²²² but also includes references to the Isles of the Blessed and to Tartarus (*Gor.* 523a-524a). With such clear allusions to Homer, Hesiod, and other sources, it is easy for his reader to forget that Socrates' myth has almost no ideological basis in them, since these sources do not give the same solution to favorable judgment that he does, i.e. the practice of philosophy.

²²² Although Aeacus was a famous king and ancestor of Greek heroes as early as *Nemean* 8.6-12, he does not appear as a judge of the Underworld until the 4th century B.C.E. in Plato's *Apology* and *Gorgias* and in Isocrates' *Evagoras* 9.15. Triptolemus is one of the lords of Eleusis to whom Demeter shows the Eleusinian rites in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (473-479). He is said to give true judgments and administer justice but is not mentioned as doing so in the Underworld until Plato.

At various points, Socrates even seems to find it necessary to reiterate a claim of authority for his new Underworld account, using the repetition as a form of argumentation. He says “Homer too bears witness to these things” (μαρτυρεῖ δὲ τούτοις καὶ Ὅμηρος, *Gor.* 525d) and later cites a line from the *Nekuia* of Homer directly (*Ody.* 11.569) at the close of the myth, after repeating the names of the places and Underworld judges one more time (*Gor.* 526b-d). His insertion of these citations, however, is again a rhetorical trick because they imply that Homer supports the new, broader vision of afterlife judgment that Socrates has just invented, even though the Archaic epics do not approach the same level of detail concerning the Underworld or fate of the soul.

Finally, although he has just done the type of mythologizing through “slight changes of meaning” that the “clever” Italian or Sicilian man does in the first Underworld scene, Socrates denies his story as an act of mythologizing. He re-categorizes what he creates from *muthos* to *logos*, introducing his second Underworld myth by saying it is specifically a *logos* and not a *muthos* (“Listen, indeed, as they say, to a very fine account, which you will think a myth, but I think is an account,” Ἄκουε δὴ, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἠγήση μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον, *Gor.* 523a).²²³ Midway through, Socrates gives additional force to his Underworld account by saying that he trusts his portrayal of the afterlife to be true because it is what he himself has “heard” (“This is, Callicles, what I have heard and trust to be true,” Ταῦτ’ ἔστιν, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ἃ ἐγὼ ἀκηκοὼς πιστεύω ἀληθῆ εἶναι, *Gor.* 524b). The unnamed source

²²³ This designation echoes Hesiod’s introduction to the Ages of Man passage, which is also introduced as a *logos* (“And if you want, I will summarize for you another account well and skillfully, “Εἰ δ’ ἐθέλεις, ἕτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως, *W&D* 106-107)

and the inclusion above of an unnamed “they” can be interpreted as a reference to traditional Athenian education or, at the very least, Socrates’ reliance on inherited wisdom that acts as an unquestionable authority.

To drive home the point, Socrates concludes the scene by again calling it a *logos* that has convinced him, even though he himself invented it (“Callicles, I indeed have been persuaded by these accounts,” ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ὑπὸ τε τούτων τῶν λόγων πέπεισμαι (*Gor.* 526d). The use of the passive without a named agent allows Socrates’ authorship to disappear. He thus sets up Callicles, his interlocutors, and his readers in such a way that any objection to the Underworld myth of judgment he just proposed would sound like a direct attack on the authority of Homer and Hesiod as well as on the official sources from whom he has heard such accounts. Because he has linked these authoritative narratives to his own, dismissing his would create a chain reaction that would dismiss the others operating in the background as well. Socrates’ message is that while Homer and Hesiod write *muthoi*, he presents *logoi*, the more rational, accurate account. Knowing the *muthoi* is essential to understanding the power of his *logos*, and he covers his bases by suggesting that anyone who challenges his reasoning would also have to contend with tradition itself.

In both the *Apology* and the *Gorgias*, the Underworld acts as a place where true justice is meted out. The Underworld configurations in these two dialogues, particularly the *Gorgias*, may be due to the concern with Socrates’ trial and its unjust verdict (Annas 1982: 122). Socrates presents himself as unafraid of afterlife judgment because he knows he has cultivated his soul properly and will acquit himself well before the judges (*Gor.* 524d). He connects his pure life to a “blessed” afterlife since his soul is unblemished. This is unlike the souls that are whip-scarred by their acts of perjury and injustice, whose marks stay on their soul into the afterlife (*Gor.* 524c-

525a). In the Underworld scene he has created, Socrates has written himself (and true philosophers) into the narrative of a hero enjoying a carefree afterlife on the Isles of the Blessed.

Mapping Morality into the Underworld Chronotope

Although Socrates challenges some aspects of the underlying ideologies of the Homeric and Hesiodic Underworld scenes, he still maintains the basic configuration he received from his predecessors: a “positive” Underworld containing a stratified society in a different *chronotope* that exists in parallel to the real world. In the *Apology and Gorgias*, he highlights actions in life as important factors in afterlife outcome as Pindar does, but he seems to move away from the Classical Athenian model of continuous, regular interaction between the living and the dead. In these dialogues, Socrates makes philosophers the new “heroes,” replacing the demi-gods of myth, the divinely favored wealthy, the poetically immortalized *laudandus*, and the cult initiate. The demarcation between life and death, however, remains binary, and individuals can expect only a single life and afterlife, two states separated by a single judgment.

In the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, however, Socrates moves further away from his literary sources, particularly when he introduces the idea of metempsychosis. He, nevertheless, still invokes them throughout his narratives to lay claim to their authority and sanction his own eschatological accounts. With metempsychosis, the soul’s lifecycle extends beyond a single life and afterlife. Socrates may have borrowed this idea from the Pythagoreans, but he, like Pindar, places his souls in a setting that resembles the Underworlds described by Homer and Hesiod.

To synthesize these traditional Underworld images, Socrates makes adjustments to the Underworld *chronotope* to compensate for the fact that each soul will repeat its journey to the afterlife many times and can adjust its location there by how it chooses to act during its cycles of

life on earth. Although rewards in a “blessed” afterlife and severe punishment in Tartarus still remain, as in his earlier sources, Socrates adds new levels to represent a range between these extremes and also makes a soul’s residence in any of these levels less permanent – even for those who achieve the afterlife of the “blessed.” In the course of these dialogues, it emerges that only the philosopher’s soul can mitigate the negative aspects of the cycle.

In tinkering with the traditional Underworld, Plato calibrates its topography and temporality to the human scale so that the *chronotopes* of the real world and the Underworld are experienced in a chronological cycle, which can be tracked through the movement of souls through space. Socrates anchors the Underworld firmly to real time so that decisions in each phase of existence have results across the life-death boundary.²²⁴

In earlier authors, the literary Underworld offered entry into a different *chronotope*, and souls were generally depicted as having a parallel but non-overlapping existence with the living. Of course, circular and repetitive time still exists in Socrates’ accounts as incurable sinners undergo an endless loop of suffering and as souls continue to cycle through the Underworld (via punishment or reward) to experience eventual rebirth. These processes, however, are subject to deadlines that are calculated in chronological time in those dialogues featuring metempsychosis, such as the *Phaedo* and *Republic*.

Hierarchies of Time and Space in the Phaedo

²²⁴ I disagree with Shilo’s statement that “history becomes the ephemeral as opposed to the eternal fate of the soul” (Shilo 2013: Section 53). Instead, I argue that Plato’s main goal in the *Phaedo*’s Underworld myth is to align the soul’s fate to its history in the world, even when that history occurs over eons.

In the *Phaedo*, souls are subject to certain aspects of time and challenges of space that are familiar to the living. Despite each person's potential to ensure his soul a good afterlife, once he arrives in the Underworld, the processes applied to souls – time, judgments, punishments, and rewards – move like clockwork: they are carried out impersonally with almost no loopholes or chances for appeal. Moments of opportunity are built into the system but only appear at designated intervals and allow escape only on rare occasions or under pre-determined conditions. For example, souls whose sins are curable undergo punishment in Tartarus for exactly one year before the current carries them out to appeal their cases (ἐμπεσόντας δὲ αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτὸν ἐκεῖ γενομένου ἐκβάλλει τὸ κῦμα, *Phd.* 114a).

Any “special treatment” for souls is based more on their actions, therefore, than their pedigree or divine favor. Socrates asserts that following one's guardian spirit without vacillation gives souls a chance to avoid unpleasantness on the initial journey to judgment (*Phd.* 108a-c). Those souls, in turn, have the most likelihood of escaping the darker regions of the world to dwell on the pure surface of the earth, although they may still be subject to rebirth since they have bodies (*Phd.* 114b-c). The only souls who completely escape the cycle are those purified by philosophy (*Phd.* 114c).

In the *Phaedo*'s Underworld scene, Plato also references Archaic sources (as he did in the *Apology* and *Gorgias*), but adds elements that make them vastly different. He borrows just enough detail to link his myth of a “blessed,” misty race of mortals to that of Hesiod's Golden race indicating to his audience that the two myths should be read together. Then, through his character Socrates, he recalibrates a timeline borrowed from Hesiod's “Ages of Man” in the *Works & Days* by presenting members of different races as existing simultaneously rather than chronologically. A Golden Age in which humans interact with gods thus exists during the *same*

timeframe as that of regular mortals living now (*Phd.* 111), who would most likely have been assigned to the Iron Age in Hesiod's work. Instead of successive ages of man, there is just one epoch. After saying that he and his audience "live in a certain hollow of the earth while imagining [they] live on the surface of it" (οικοῦντας γὰρ ἔν τινι κοίλῳ τῆς γῆς οἶεσθαι ἐπάνω αὐτῆς οἰκεῖν, *Phd.* 109d), Socrates goes on to describe the actual surface, where a different group of men live in a purer, more beautiful environment (*Phd.* 111a-c). The marker that such a place is "blessed" is that immortals also dwell there, using the temples as a second home (*Phd.* 111b).

In addition, some of these lucky mortals live in the upper realm surrounded by air (τοὺς δ' ἐν νήσοις ἄς περιορρεῖν τὸν ἀέρα πρὸς τῇ ἠπείρῳ οὕσας, *Phd.* 111a). This passage seems to be a direct reference to the Golden Race of man, which Hesiod describes as living "just as gods without a care in their hearts" (ὥστε θεοὶ δ' ἔζωον ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἔχοντες, *W&D* 112) and as being, after their deaths, the guardians of men who are "clothed in air going everywhere on the earth" (ἠέροα ἐσσάμενοι πάντα φοιτῶντες ἐπ' αἶαν, *W&D* 125). Socrates downplays the change in state of the Golden Race between their "blessed" lives and misty afterlives, but preserves the recognizable attributes of this god-like society of mortals who dwell in the medium of air (ἀήρ).

Thus, in his description of the earth's many layers, he borrows Hesiod's idea of the succession of races as a hierarchy of mortals who are defined by the places where they live and their relationships to the gods. After creating a sense of *déjà vu* and authority through descriptions linking to a famous source, he completely changes the narrative by stacking the races in a simultaneous, interconnected space so that all are subject to the same chronology and tied to the same cosmic locality. The purer or more "blessed" men are not from the past but are

simply the ones residing “above,” in the upper realms with the gods, while lesser creatures, such as regular men, animals, and the dead, are assigned to hollows and lower regions.

The descriptions of each location of men and their lifestyles resonate with the traditional sources enough to lull the audience into complacency through the common language of the Underworld scene. Socrates’ versions end, however, with a fundamental re-arrangement of the narrative *chronotope* that changes the meaning of each detail. The audience is tricked into going along with an Underworld vision that is different from the one they think they are entering. This “ecological eschatology” (Nightingale 2002) rearranges the relationship between man and his world by embedding ethical meaning into the landscapes through which the souls move. In this environment, significant non-human beings and inanimate entities, such as those found in the natural world, “have histories of their own, most of which predate human history” (Nightingale 2002: 241-242).

Further, this movement through space is marked by temporal intervals. Socrates formulates the *Phaedo* with the basic assumption that the immortal soul is an entity subject to chronological time. This seems like a small detail but has large repercussions. Because the soul is the protagonist of his Underworld scenes, its chronological experiences are tied to its movement through the physical world during its life and afterlife. It takes time for a soul to improve its standing, just as the improvement of the soul through philosophy takes time in life. The soul’s awareness of time and space anchors and connects the Underworld *chronotope* to human time, giving extra weight to how men spend their time on earth.

On entering his Underworld discussion in the *Phaedo*, Socrates first makes the experience of the soul relatable and personal to his listeners by showing that their souls are an

extension of their living identities and that people have control over which path they take in the Underworld by cultivating their souls.

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ἔχουσα εἰς Ἄιδου ἢ ψυχὴ ἔρχεται πλὴν τῆς παιδείας τε καὶ τροφῆς, ἃ δὴ καὶ μέγιστα λέγεται ὠφελεῖν ἢ βλάπτειν τὸν τελευτήσαντα εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ἐκείσε πορείας. (*Phd.* 107d)

For the soul goes to Hades having nothing else except its education and upbringing, which indeed are said to benefit or harm the one who died greatly, right at the beginning of his journey there.

In this passage, Socrates envisions the soul, fortified only with its training, as having the same reactions, emotions, and sensations as if it were still in a body. The soul even feels the passage of time because it must go through stages of punishment and reward on its way to rebirth. He claims through the passive λέγεται to have received this fact about the soul through a universally known (although not named) agent, who nevertheless represents an authoritative source. This passage additionally suggests that the soul's whole experience is based on where it starts its journey, since it is sorted into a specific neighborhood after judgment. Afterlife location thus corresponds to the state of a person's soul when he was alive during his most recent incarnation.

The regions between the locations of the living and the dead are contiguous. Instead of the traditional portrayal of three equidistant realms as separate, stacked layers that are generally inaccessible to each other (except for gods and special heroes), Socrates envisions vertical incursions between the layers in the form of "hollows," which create an interwoven landscape connecting different layers of topography as well as different states of being, regardless of whether a level houses the living or the dead (*Phd.* 111c-d). By presenting these conduits as a

fact of nature and reality, Socrates can refute the binary category of life vs. death and argue that the soul's immortality allows continuous movement through these natural environments and states of being.

Socrates presents the earth as a sphere pock-marked with hollows that are interconnected to each other and correspond to different states of existence for mortals (*Phd.* 109a-111c). When he comes to the nature of the hollows in the Underworld, Socrates inserts a quote from Homer's *Iliad* to tie his description of the cosmos to an authoritative source. The purpose of this is to link the two geographies so that Homer's myth of the Underworld acts as a *para-narrative*, shadowing the forthcoming one.

μέγιστον τυγχάνει ὄν καὶ διαμπερὲς τετραήμερον δι' ὅλης τῆς γῆς, τοῦτο ὅπερ Ὅμηρος εἶπε, λέγων αὐτό “**τῆλε μάλ', ἤχι βάθιστον ὑπὸ χθονός ἐστι βέρεθρον**: ὃ καὶ ἄλλοθι καὶ ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν Τάρταρον κεκλήκασιν. εἰς γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ χάσμα συρρέουσί τε πάντες οἱ ποταμοὶ καὶ ἐκ τούτου πάλιν ἐκρέουσιν: γίνονται δὲ ἕκαστοι τοιοῦτοι δι' οἴας ἂν καὶ τῆς γῆς ῥέωσιν. (*Phaedo* 112a)

One of the hollows, which is also the biggest, is bored right through the entire earth. This is the one of which Homer spoke, when he said the following: “**very far away, where the deepest pit under the earth is**”; and which elsewhere he and many other poets have called Tartarus. For all the rivers flow together into this void and out of it they flow back again; and they each have the nature of the land through which they flow.”

Besides Homer, Socrates refers here to “many other poets” whom he enlists as authorities in naming this Underworld region “Tartarus.” Socrates asserts a connection between the space called Tartarus by an unnamed multitude of famous poets and the great hollow he just described, which the audience is invited to think of as the *same* Tartarus. The audience is then introduced to a topography that has other names familiar from Archaic descriptions of the Underworld, such as the rivers Acheron, Styx, Pyriphlegethon, and Cocytus (*Phd.* 113a-c). In reference to Cocytus, Socrates reiterates that the river he is describing is the *same* one “as the poets say” (ὥς οἱ ποιηταὶ λέγουσιν, *Phd.* 113c), again reiterating the coincidence of his Underworld geography with that of Underworld scenes from traditional myth. This affirms that Socrates’ description is within his audience’s knowledge base and suggests he is only *reminding* his interlocutors of things they already know rather than introducing something new.

The details surrounding Socrates’ corresponding landmarks, however, differ greatly from its referenced source. Socrates presents the Homeric quote as concordant with the one he is describing, by removing the larger context of the allusion. The full quote refers to a vast expanse between the sky, earth, and Tartarus.

ἢ μιν ἐλὼν ῥίψω ἐς Τάρταρον ἠερόεντα
τῆλε μάλ’, ἤχι βάθιστον ὑπὸ χθονός ἐστι βέρεθρον,
ἐνθα σιδήρειαί τε πύλαι καὶ χάλκεος οὐδός,
τόσσον ἔνερθ’ Αἶδεω ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ’ ἀπὸ γαίης (*Il.* 8.13-16)

Or I will seize and hurl him to murky Tartarus

Very far away, where the deepest pit under the earth is,

[And] there the gates are iron and the threshold bronze,

as far below Hades as the sky is from the earth

In this passage, Zeus threatens to punish any gods who insert themselves into the Trojan War against his plans by bodily removing them from the divine realm to the furthest point in space from the company of gods – the pit of Tartarus, deep under the boundary of Hades, which itself is a great distance from the heavens. The earth is placed equidistant between the Underworld and Zeus' domain, which only emphasizes the breadth of space separating the cosmic landmarks of sky (realm of the gods), earth (home of mortals), and Hades (kingdom of the dead). The Homeric layout for the cosmos seems to reflect the one described in the *Apology*, in which the living are in one location and the dead are somewhere else (*Ap.* 40c). In this scheme, the world for mortals, therefore, is binary – alive, dead; here, there.

The *Phaedo*, however, envisions interlocking tunnels between these cosmic landmarks, through which water oscillates, flowing down from different regions of earth to converge in the Underworld before returning to the surface (*Phd.* 111d-e). The contiguousness of these hollows where mortals of different status live in a terraced geography emphasizes the continuity between the states of the living and the dead. The souls of the dead differ from the living through their location in lower regions of the earth but are able to aspire to (and eventually achieve) a dwelling near or on the surface of the earth through piety, even escaping from their bodies altogether if they happen to have practiced philosophy sufficiently (*Phd.* 114c). The integrated geography of the real world and the Underworld reflects the integration between life and death that happens for a soul undergoing reincarnation (a concept foreign to the Homeric epics). Souls move back and forth between life and death through the very same regions that the oscillating water regularly flows back and forth. Although calling on the authority of poetic predecessors, Plato

sharply diverges from traditional myth to superimpose his own myth of the Underworld by redefining its geography.

By describing the nature of the Underworld environment as a spatial map of morality, Socrates allows the reader to categorize souls he presents along a spectrum of “blessedness.” Moreover, by making the topographical features prominent, Socrates also indicates that the experience of the soul after death is physically similar to its existence when living in a body, even though it is a non-physical entity. He describes the landscapes of the Underworld hollows in sensual terms, imagining how different features would affect a human body moving through space, with extra attention to the sounds, sights, and feel of the physical environment. The streams that flow into Tartarus, the lowest level, are not only wet but also hot and cold, muddy and turbulent (“an extraordinary magnitude of everflowing rivers of both hot and cold water flow eternally under the earth, and much fire and great rivers of fire, and many [rivers] of wet mud, both purer and muddier,” καὶ ἀενάων ποταμῶν ἀμήχανα μεγέθη ὑπὸ τὴν γῆν καὶ **θερμῶν** ὑδάτων καὶ **ψυχρῶν**, πολὺ δὲ **πῦρ** καὶ **πυρὸς** μεγάλους ποταμούς, πολλοὺς δὲ **ὑγροῦ** **πηλοῦ** καὶ καθαρωτέρου καὶ βορβορωδεστέρου, *Phd.* 111d-e). Souls witness various sights and colors as they are swept along various waterways to judgment, reward, or punishment. Styx is noted for being “dark blue” in color (χρῶμα δ’ ἔχοντα ὄλον οἶον ὁ **κυανός**, ὃν δὴ ἐπονομάζουσι Στύγιον, *Phd.* 113 b-c). This dark, harsh climate is also accompanied by a great clamor of sound. At the Acherusian lake, souls waiting in a crowded throng for rebirth hear the shouts and cries of other souls swept in a continuous swirling agitation of water and begging for forgiveness (κατὰ τὴν λίμνην τὴν Ἀχερουσιάδα, ἐνταῦθα **βοῶσίν τε καὶ καλοῦσιν**, *Phd.* 114a). Those caught in such a riptide feel the dizzy disorientation of its pull and are desperate to escape.

This description corresponds to the sensual experiences of the world in the upper levels of the earth. A bright array of multiple colors (ποικίλη, χρώμασιν διελημμένη), which include purple (άλουργή), golden yellow (χρυσοειδή), and pure white (λευκή), can be seen on the surface of the earth in contrast to the darker hues of the hollows (*Phd.* 110b7-c6). The men who live in this realm have superior senses, particularly their eyesight and hearing, and they mingle with each other and the gods in a happy (εὐδαιμονίαν) existence (*Phd.* 111b3-c3). Their reality and the societies of the living and the dead in the hollows are synchronic and syntopic, existing on the same earth in the same time frame. Moreover, the landscapes are also experienced in the same way, with or without a body.

The *Phaedo*'s landscape organizes competing ideas about "blessedness" into a hierarchy of value by visualizing them from various angles in the fates of souls as they move through space and time. Souls can improve their lot and live in regions closer to the surface of the earth, depending on their level of sinfulness. Only philosophers, however, actually attain life on the upper surfaces and may be ultimately rewarded by an escape from bodily form (*Phd.* 113d-114c). The *Phaedo* treats different groups of souls not as individuals, therefore, but as examples that play out his hierarchy of "blessedness" and punishment. Each soul that his character Socrates mentions, particularly the famous examples, is meant to call upon a range of narratives that give depth to his argument by triggering a familiar tale for his audience. The Underworld scene, therefore, acts as a common language that can bridge understanding between people on different sides of an argument. Its details are a dynamic index of narratives that complement the message and purpose of his argument.

Further, the arrangement of this index builds the experience of the reader to re-write his assumptions using new information and more comprehensive details whose concrete expression

erases the more vague, existing codes. It is one thing, for example, to imagine parricides as generally being held to account as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*:

ὄψι δὲ καί τις ἄλλος ἤλιτεν βροτῶν
ἢ θεὸν ἢ ξένον τιν' ἀσεβῶν
ἢ τοκέας φίλους,
ἔχονθ' ἕκαστον τῆς δίκης ἐπάξια.
μέγας γὰρ Ἄιδης ἐστὶν εὐθυνοσ βροτῶν
ἔνερθε χθονός,
δελτογράφωι δὲ πάντ' ἐπωπᾶι φρενί. (Aeschylus, *Eum.* 269-275)

And you will see also, some other mortals as have sinned, dishonoring either a god or some guest or his dear parents, each one receiving deserved punishment; for Hades is a great judge of mortals, below the earth, and he observes all things keeping a record in his mind.

It creates a different understanding, however, when the exact experience of those sinners is given in minute detail, as Socrates does. Instead of referring to a vague dread and fear of afterlife punishment like Aeschylus, Socrates describes precisely what punishments sinners might expect, in very real and relatable terms. Those who have done violence against their parents or committed murder but repent are thrown into Tartarus for a year, after which they get caught up in a current that separates them based on their crimes – murderers go to Cocytus and parricides to Pyriphlegethon (ἐνιαυτὸν ἐκεῖ γενομένους ἐκβάλλει τὸ κῦμα, τοὺς μὲν ἀνδροφόνους κατὰ τὸν Κωκυτὸν, τοὺς δὲ πατραλοίας καὶ μητραλοίας κατὰ τὸν Πυριφλεγέθοντα, *Phd.* 114a). Regardless of their path, they all end up at the Acherusian lake where they have an

opportunity to persuade their victims to forgive them. If they fail, they must cycle through Tartarus and back to the Acherusian lake at regular intervals until they succeed. When they do convince their victims to forgive them, they are allowed to wait with all the other souls for rebirth (*Phd.* 114a-b).

By giving sinners a path for expiating their sins, Socrates removes the totalitarian power of capricious gods and the finality of Underworld judgment. He transfers agency and choice to man – both to victims who then become judges themselves and also to sinners who must use their wits and eloquence to escape further punishment. Socrates uses his interlocuter’s (and the poets’) basic belief that sinners are punished in the afterlife but builds on that by making the punishment both surmountable and real in human terms and timeframes. He re-writes the narrative of Underworld punishment by giving mercy to the damned that the traditional accounts do not seem to offer, underscoring his argument that punishment be educational (cf. *Gor.* 525b).²²⁵ He also frames the exchange between sinners and victims as an exercise in persuasion (πείσασθαι, 114b), similar to what can be seen in the courts before judges or in his argumentation.

The myth, therefore, argues that the development of one’s persuasive abilities is important because it can give reprieve from extended punishment to a wrong-doer, should he find himself on the wrong side of judgment in the afterlife, even if he commits a serious crime. In this way, Plato converts the common language of “punishment in Hades” into an argument for the development of one’s philosophical abilities, by making punishment for most sinners only

²²⁵ As Shilo puts it, “he is addressing his contemporaries in the prevalent vocabulary of myth, simultaneously warping mythic situations into ideas that radically question Greek cultural assumptions” (Shilo 2013: Section 46).

one stage of the afterlife experience. In the *Phaedo*'s Underworld, punishment is rehabilitative for sinners, who could have avoided painful afterlife punishments with more attention to their souls' philosophical development during their lives. Metempsychosis, as described here (as well as in other dialogues, such as the *Republic*'s "Myth of Er," and the *Laws* (903c-905b)) gives multiple opportunities for mortals to "get it right" but it also forces the living, i.e. Plato's audience, to take the long view of their existences, since the afterlife phases of the soul are much longer than the incarnate ones.²²⁶

By altering the meanings and functions of temporal and spatial elements he borrows from predecessors' Underworld scenes, Socrates changes the relationship between the *chronotopes* of the real world and of the Underworld. As a result, he also changes the nature of the relationship between life and afterlife on a fundamental level. No longer is the afterlife a mirror to life that can be manipulated and negotiated through ritual or patronage. Instead, the afterlife becomes another phase of the human lifecycle, like childhood or old age.

This extension of the human lifecycle is even more fully described in the *Republic*, a dialogue in which the challenge to traditional sources is even more pointed.

Re-writing the Afterlife in the Republic

²²⁶ In the "Myth of Er," the period that a soul spends in either punishment or reward is one thousand years, ten times the lifespan of a man, which is described as only a century (*Rep.* 10.615a-b). Before this, Socrates says that the time from childhood to old age is short, and argues that an immortal thing like the soul should not be as concerned with it in relation to the whole of time (πᾶς γὰρ οὐτός γε ὁ ἐκ παιδὸς μέχρι πρεσβύτου χρόνος πρὸς πάντα ὀλίγος πού τις ἂν εἴη, *Rep.* 608c-d).

The *Republic* begins and ends with a *katabasis*, one historical and one mythical. The first word of the dialogue is κατέβην,²²⁷ spoken by Socrates in the first person about his descent to the Piraeus the day before. Socrates says he met friends and went to the house of Cephalus, the father of his companion Polemarchus and an old man, who describes wealth across the generations of his family as being in an equilibrium and defines a concept of justice that is tied into having enough personal wealth banked to pay back gods and men for favors given (*Rep.* 330a-331c). Cephalus' earthly wealth is a result of his character, which allowed him to maintain and grow his wealth, and he shows ethical concern for how his actions affect others – he does not want to cheat, deceive, or short-change others (*Rep.* 331b). He attributes his peaceful old age to the fact that he has managed his wealth and his life in a orderly, decent fashion so he does not have the same fear of Hades that other old people have from stories of how the unjust are punished in the afterlife (*Rep.* 330d-331b).

In parallel to his opening, Plato closes the *Republic* with a mythic *katabasis* that picks up these very themes, but presents them against the backdrop of eschatology in an Underworld scene. Cephalus' description of the variability of wealth in his family – his grandfather made a fortune, his father lost it, and then he re-acquired it again, for the most part (*Rep.* 330b) – is similar to the fate of the soul which Er describes as going back and forth between cycles of punishment and blessedness in the afterlife between successive incarnations. The success of the soul in the *Republic*'s Underworld is grounded in the soul's character and a sense of justice

²²⁷ Burnyeat argues that first words of Plato's dialogues are programmatic and "usually [do] reflect in some way the substantive philosophical content to follow" (Burnyeat 2012: 316).

nurtured through its philosophical education (cf. *Phd.* 107d).²²⁸ In this eschatology, “we choose to be good, or not, against the background of a cosmos that is indifferent to individuals’ concerns and does not necessarily guarantee rewards for our being just” (Annas 1982: 138). The *Republic*’s Underworld scene closes the dialogue by recreating and expanding on the dialogue of the opening scene in an afterlife myth, bringing the argument full circle to highlight the importance of justice and the practice of philosophy on a man’s soul across its many lives.

In the introduction to the “Myth of Er,” the final episode of the *Republic*, Plato uses the same trick of invoking and “overwriting” a Homeric Underworld scene as in the *Phaedo*. In the “Myth of Er,” Socrates starts by saying he is not creating “a tale of Alcinous” (Ἄλλ’ οὐ μέντοι σοι, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, Ἀλκίνου γε ἀπόλογον ἐρῶ, *Rep.* 614b), yet he seems to be doing just that, presenting a “reinvented myth” (Halliwell 2007: 447).²²⁹ In the passage immediately preceding this phrase, there is no mention of Odysseus, but the hero’s figure looms over the final myth with this introductory reference to Alcinous and the presence of Odysseus himself at the end of the Underworld scene as the final soul Er encounters, recognizes, and names.

Socrates’ initial denial of Homer as a model invokes the epic poet intentionally. Additionally, the subject matter of an Underworld journey can only make this citation of “a tale of Alcinous” refer to the *Odyssey*’s *Nekuia* in Book 11 out of the range of tales that Odysseus

²²⁸ The soul (and Cephalus’ family) could in theory avoid the shift between bad and good generations of lives but only with proper care of the soul, which requires strict attention.

²²⁹ Halliwell argues that story patterns in the “Myth of Er” contain elements not only from the myths of *Odyssey*, *Orpheus*, and *Heracles*, but also the myths in the *Phaedrus*, particularly the combination of *katabasis* and *anabasis* (Halliwell 2007: 447).

tells to the Phaeacians in Books 9-13 of the *Odyssey*.²³⁰ Through rhetorical sleight of hand, therefore, Socrates creates proximity between the two myths via the allusion to Alcinous, even while repudiating the connection. Moreover, this denial of a Homeric connection is used to emphasize the relative truthfulness of his own subsequent tale about Er, since he has already referred to poets' tales as generally false earlier in the *Republic* (377a) and has also said he would expunge large parts of the *Nekuia* for being neither true nor beneficial for men intending to be warriors (ὡς οὔτε ἀληθῆ ἄν λέγοντας οὔτε ὠφέλιμα τοῖς μέλλουσιν μαχίμοις ἔσεσθαι, *Rep.* 386c).

It would not make sense, therefore, for him to engage in the type of Homeric mythmaking about the afterlife that he earlier denigrates. Nevertheless, by “name-dropping” Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians, Socrates understands his audience will read the upcoming story of Er as a myth *like* Odysseus' but one that has more claim to truth than Homer's. It could, therefore, act as a replacement for the parts he wants to eliminate (*Rep.* 386a-387c). The distancing that Socrates requests is an intentional failure since the allusion thrusts the Homeric Underworld story into the reader's consciousness at the very moment of his denial. It tricks the audience into achieving what must be Socrates' ultimate goal of forcing his audience to read and interpret the myth of Er and the *Nekuia* in parallel by creating an incontrovertible link between the two Underworld scenes.

²³⁰ By Plato's time, a “tale of Alcinous” had the meaning of a lengthy and possibly false story (Montiglio 2005: 95-97, 154n159). Socrates here uses this proverbial meaning to emphasize his own truthfulness, while also invoking Homer's *Nekuia*. This is the very episode that, earlier in the *Republic*, he says he would excise because its representation of the Underworld instills an unhelpful fear of death in the young (*Rep.* 386c) .

Before beginning the “Myth of Er,” therefore, Socrates suggests that Glaucon and other listeners should view it as the type of story the many-wiled Odysseus would tell. The effect of this is to draw the authority of the Homeric poet into the story even while promoting distance. Centering the allusion on the figure of Alcinous in the “Myth of Er” draws out the aspect of judgment contained in the *Nekuia*. Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, is the main figure that Odysseus needs to convince through his fantastic storytelling in order to get support for his return home, and the heart of the latter’s tales to his Phaeacian judge is his visit to the shades in Hades (Most 1989). Glaucon, therefore, is analogous to Alcinous, since Socrates already established himself as the storyteller, the role of Odysseus. This pattern of Socrates styling himself as Odysseus occurs at various moments throughout the *Republic* (O’Connor 2007: 60-61), so it is not too surprising here.²³¹ What is worth pointing out is that Socrates does seem to be extending the roles from the myth into reality by referring to his myth as didactic.

Both the *Nekuia* and the “Myth of Er” are first person accounts by a narrator who can describe the society of the dead and bring back wisdom when they return to the living. Er says that the judges ordered him to be a messenger to humanity who could tell the tale of his katabatic journey there after seeing and hearing everything in that place (ὅτι δέοι αὐτὸν ἄγγελον ἀνθρώποις γενέσθαι τῶν ἐκεῖ καὶ διακελεύοιτό οἱ ἀκούειν τε καὶ θεᾶσθαι πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ, *Rep.* 10.614d2-4). This command echoes Anticlea’s final exhortation to her son Odysseus in the *Nekuia* before her soul fades from view: ἀλλὰ φώωσδε τάχιστα λιλαίεο:

²³¹ The connection between Socrates and Odysseus as narrators of multiple tales is further reinforced by the opening of the *Republic*, in which Socrates presents himself as a first-person narrator to the audience and describes a series of conversations and events culminating in an Underworld scene.

ταῦτα δὲ πάντα / ἴσθ', ἵνα καὶ μετόπισθε τεῆ εἴπησθα γυναικί (“but struggle as fast as you can to the light of day and behold all these things so that sometime later you may tell your wife,” *Ody.* 11.223-224).

With the encouragement to “tell what he has witnessed,” the katabatic hero can instruct the living. By referring to Odysseus’ storytelling as “a tale of Alcinous,” Socrates re-focuses the account of Er away from Odysseus the storyteller onto Alcinous as the judge assessing the tales of hero’s wanderings. The peculiar reference to the *Nekuia* as the story told to Alcinous, who holds power over the storyteller, foreshadows the importance of judges, judgment, and justice in the upcoming myth of Er, which relates back to the discussion on the nature of a just man in the opening scene of the *Republic*. Through a simple phrase that links the two texts, Socrates primes his audience to see the myth from the perspective of assessment and argument by activating the *Nekuia* narrative in the background as a source of simultaneous comparison. Through its rhetorical framework and intertextual references, both the internal and external audience become invested in the eschatology Er describes, thereby extending the myth beyond the immediate dialogue.

Additionally, the term ἀπόλογον itself in the phrase Ἀλκίνου ἀπόλογον (*Rep.* 314b) feeds into this re-casting of the tale as one of judgment and justice in the afterlife by framing it with a technical term from Athenian courts. The simple definition of ἀπόλογον here is “story” because we know, in this case, that it refers to the stories told by Odysseus. For Plato’s audience, however, the word has other connotations besides a simple tale, particularly as related to the idea of judgment, since ἀπολογία is also the technical term for a defendant’s speech in court.²³² In light of the succeeding myth, the word ἀπόλογον cannot simply mean “a story” but has a

²³² Socrates refers to his defense as an ἀπολογία in *Apology* 28a2-3.

somewhat legal flavor. The term reminds us that Odysseus is being judged when he tells the *Nekuia* to Alcinous and cues the reader to the story of judgment ahead.

This association seems further supported by the fact that Socrates could have used a different term to refer to his Underworld myth. He elsewhere refers to Underworld scenes as *muthoi*, but not again as *apologoi*. In the *Phaedo*, when Socrates describes the true nature of the earth and sky, he calls it “telling a *muthos*” (μῦθον λέγειν, *Phd.* 110b) and then follows this statement with details about the regions of the sky and the Underworld. Similarly, in the *Gorgias* (493a, 523a), Socrates introduces the two Underworld passages as productions of people who create *muthoi*.²³³

Introducing the “Myth of Er” as an *apologos* rather than a *muthos* (or even a *logos*, as in the *Gorgias*), despite its similarity to the eschatological content that he calls *muthoi* in other dialogues, marks it off as different even though, at face value, he seems to be equating the two terms. Perhaps he did not want to undermine his myth by using the latter term before telling it, since he had already cast the term *muthoi* in a negative light earlier in the dialogue. He must have

²³³ In the latter example, Socrates says he would rather call the upcoming Underworld account a λόγος to designate its truthfulness, demonstrating the particular care he takes with applying terminology. He acknowledges, however, its categorization as a *muthos* by 1) saying that Callicles (and therefore other listeners) would interpret it as such and 2) introducing the account itself with “As Homer says...” (Ἄκουε δὴ, φασί, μάλα καλοῦ λόγου, ὃν σὺ μὲν ἠγήση μῦθον, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι, ἐγὼ δὲ λόγον· ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω λέγειν. ὥσπερ γὰρ Ὅμηρος λέγει..., 523a). Socrates here calls a *muthos* a *logos* to promote its veracity, but he doesn’t deny that he is essentially mythmaking.

realized that the subject matter would bring his other afterlife accounts into an intertextual dialogue with the current one, however, and he acknowledges this by referring retrospectively to the Er myth as a *muthos*, so it is categorized with his other tales:

Καὶ οὕτως, ὦ Γλαύκων, μῦθος ἐσώθη καὶ οὐκ ἀπόλετο,
(c.) καὶ ἡμᾶς ἂν σώσειεν, ἂν πειθώμεθα αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸν τῆς Λήθης
ποταμὸν εὖ διαβησόμεθα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὐ μανθησόμεθα. (621b-c)

And thus, Glaucon, the *muthos* was preserved and not destroyed,
and it would save us, if we were persuaded by it; and we shall
pass through the river of Lethe well and not pollute our souls.

This re-categorization of his tale as *muthos* is somewhat surprising, since it contradicts his insistence before the account that he was not telling a tale like the ones found in the *Odyssey*.

Socrates explains his aversion to such tales earlier in the *Republic* when he calls *muthoi* the stories first told to children, which he describes as generally false but also containing some elements of truth (ὅτι πρῶτον τοῖς παιδίοις μύθους λέγομεν; τοῦτο δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον εἰπεῖν ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ, *Rep.* 377a). By now calling the Er story a μῦθος and making it the final word in support of his argument of the ideal city, Socrates highlights another level of communication that is occurring between him and his audience, one that uses the language of *muthos* to add enough authority to a new story making it have the force of argument. The source of this power is the network of texts that are automatically activated by linking across the Underworld myths and using their common language to redefine traditional myths.

In addition to the phrase “tale of Alcinous,” Plato reinforces the connection to other Underworld myths by having Er describe the fates of Orpheus, Ajax, and Odysseus, who each

appear in famous Underworld narratives, as well as the outcomes of Thamyris, Epeius, and Thersites, whose stories are marked by natures judged deficient, which manifests itself in less desirable incarnations in their next lives (*Rep.* 10.620a-d).²³⁴ Atalanta too appears before Er, a problematic heroine, not unlike the ones Odysseus met in the *Nekuia*.²³⁵

Although connecting to these traditional myths, Socrates also makes his Underworld conform to the vision he presented in the *Phaedo* of an ecological eschatology that is connected to the real world's *chronotope*. In the "Myth of Er," human timeframes intrude more frequently and at more regular stages than seen in the *Phaedo*. After souls complete their cycles of reward in the heavens or punishment under the earth, they gather in a meadow for exactly seven days, then leave by foot on the eighth day for a journey lasting four days to reach a spot where they see a bright light (ἐπειδὴ δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῷ λειμῶνι ἐκάστοις **ἑπτὰ ἡμέραι** γένοιντο, ἀναστάντας ἐντεῦθεν δεῖν τῇ **ὀγδόῃ** πορεύεσθαι, καὶ ἀφικνεῖσθαι **τεταρταίους**..., *Rep.* 10.616b). At that point, they walk for an additional day to reach the source of the light (προελθόντες **ἡμερησίαν** ὁδόν, *Rep.* 10.616b).

By including such specificity in measurable time, Socrates makes this Underworld scene spill beyond the structures of its own narrative so that it appears to occur in the real world. With such a distinct timeframe, it is clear that this Underworld scene is being constructed for the

²³⁴ Thamyras was punished by the Muses for hubris and became a nightingale; Epeius built the Trojan horse and became a craftswoman; and Thersites was beaten by Odysseus for speaking against his leaders and became a monkey.

²³⁵ Atalanta's connection via the Calydonian Boar Hunt to Meleager, who made a famous ghostly appearance in Bacchylides (*Ode 5*), would also have been an additional layer of connection between her and Underworld scenes.

benefit of the reader at large and not solely to convince Socrates' immediate interlocutors. The proof of this comes from the fact that the *Republic* ends with this Underworld myth, not waiting for a response. Like the *Gorgias*, the *Republic* never returns from its final Underworld scene to the original conversation for reactions from Callicles and Glaucon, respectively, to see whether Socrates' myths and his conclusions about their meanings have convinced them of his argument. The audience is left hanging on that score (O'Connor 2007: 72) and has no recourse but to take on the role of Socrates' interlocutors.

Instead of simply following the argument as an eavesdropper to the conversation, the reader is invited to become actively engaged in the dialogue, formulating imagined responses to Socrates that Plato does not provide through his characters. This essentially expands the dialogue outside the boundaries of the text and extends the mythic Underworld *chronotope* into the reality of the audience. The reader must compare the Underworld story just presented to the ones he already knows from poetry, art, and ritual. A set of competing narratives appears in the mental landscape, shadowing each element that is introduced in Socrates' afterlife portrayals. Each reader might have a slightly different set of afterlife stories corresponding to the mythic allusions, but Socrates solves this problem by making his text the anchor against which the other recalled versions must be compared. He does this by specific reference to other versions, such as the Underworld scenes found in Homer and Hesiod, showing his own knowledge and mastery of the well-known accounts, which he models, subsumes, and refutes in his own version. In the *Republic*'s "Myth of Er," for example, he puts Er into the role of a storytelling Odysseus giving witness to an Underworld journey ("he told the things which he saw there," ἔλεγεν ἃ ἐκεῖ

ἴδοι,²³⁶ *Rep.* 10.614b7-8). Socrates then specifically names Odysseus as a character in Er's afterlife narrative, who must follow the same cosmic laws as other souls (*Rep.* 620c).

In the “Myth of Er,” souls that are well-versed in philosophy can achieve a more positive experience while they undergo the timed stages of the afterlife (*Rep.* 619d-e). Socrates makes the point in this myth, however, that no one is exempt from the cycle of rebirth, not even a hero such as Odysseus, with a glorious past or divine favor (*Rep.* 620c). Socrates, therefore, brings up the famous Greek hero to dilute the relationship between afterlife “blessedness” and material wealth or honors that previous poets had emphasized in their Underworld depictions.

Thus, *kleos* from battle and a successful *nostos* are no longer possible sources of immortal glory and “blessedness.” In Socrates' Underworld, the best recourse against a bad afterlife is a philosophical education. When describing the allotment of lives, he interrupts his Underworld tale in the middle to address Glaucon and his larger audience directly.

ἔνθα δὴ, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὃ φίλε Γλαύκων, ὁ πάς κίνδυνος ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα
μάλιστα (c.) ἐπιμελητέον ὅπως ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῶν ἄλλων μαθημάτων
ἀμελήσας τούτου τοῦ μαθήματος καὶ ζητητῆς καὶ μαθητῆς
ἔσται, ἐάν ποθεν οἴος τ' ἦ μαθεῖν καὶ ἐξευρεῖν τίς αὐτὸν
ποιήσει δυνατὸν καὶ ἐπιστήμονα, βίον καὶ χρηστὸν καὶ πονη-
ρὸν διαγιγνώσκοντα, τὸν βελτίω ἐκ τῶν δυνατῶν ἀεὶ πανταχοῦ αἰρεῖσθαι. (*Rep.*
618b-c)

²³⁶ The use of the optative in this past general conditional relative clause (Smyth 1920: 579n2568) adds an expansive, universalizing sense to the narrative and generalizes the details of Er's upcoming story, uncoupling them from finite time.

There, indeed, dear Glaucon, it seems that this is the greatest danger for man, and for this reason especially, we must pay attention to how each of us, neglecting other subjects, will be both a seeker and learner of this subject, if perhaps it is somehow possible to learn and to seek someone who will make him able and knowledgeable at distinguishing the good life and the worthless one and make him always choose the very best out of the possibilities.

The deictic ἐνθα is characteristic of descriptions in Underworld scenes (re. Ch. 2). This interlude also recalls Odysseus' interruption to address his Phaeacian hosts in the *Nekuia*, a link that Socrates further establishes by describing the afterlives of famous mythic figures and heroes, including Thamyris, Agamemnon, Ajax, Atalanta, Thersites, and finally Odysseus. The emphasis on famous Greek warriors from Homer plus a female heroine, even in this abbreviated list, recalls Odysseus' Underworld account in the *Nekuia*, which also features women and Greek heroes from the Trojan War. In both, Homer and Plato activate a set of narratives that give further depth to the viewer's general observations about Underworld society. Having Odysseus himself as the final soul Er encounters strengthens the connection between the two versions.

Socrates concludes the "Myth of Er" with a second reminder: the soul's uninterrupted existence across the life-death barrier signifies that "practicing justice with reason in every way" (δικαιοσύνην μετὰ φρονήσεως παντὶ τρόπῳ ἐπιτηδεύσομεν, *Rep.* 621c) while alive means that its good experience on earth will be mirrored after death on the thousand-year journey, leading to a positive afterlife (καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν τῇ χιλιέτει πορείᾳ, ἣν διεληλύθαμεν, εὖ πρᾶττωμεν, *Rep.* 10.621d). In this instance, although he subjects the Underworld to chronological time, Socrates makes its time frame almost impossibly long considering that he counts the human life span at about one hundred years (*Rep.* 10.615a-b). This serves to

emphasize the burden and urgency of preparing the soul during the short period of life when man has the greatest agency over his soul's cultivation.

In being so particular about time frames, Socrates is trying to convince his audience that time in the Underworld and real world are implicated in each other. When Er leaves the Underworld, time in the real world has passed and he reappears at a later time and at a different place from which he entered. His *katabasis* does not occur as a node in the plot outside of time that could be removed without affecting his story. By including the Underworld in chronological time, Socrates makes the myth into another piece of evidence for his argument that corresponds to his other arguments about the soul. He portrays extreme permeability across the life-death barrier by applying human time constraints to the denizens of the afterlife, giving further proof to the equation in the *Gorgias* that “life is death and death is life.”

III. Conclusions

In Underworld scenes, Plato found an effective tool with which to challenge and re-write traditional representations of reality. He centers his scenes on the immortal soul's journey through phases of life and afterlife, undermining tradition by showing how malleable the Underworld scenes are to different contexts and how easily they can be used to create authority even while they contradict the very accounts they invoke. By using Underworld scenes in this manner, he calls into question their status as being “true” in an absolute sense while at the same time arguing that they are a vehicle to transmit truths about human choices and the human condition.

Across the dialogues, Plato, through his character Socrates, uses descriptive features that make his Underworlds recognizable (e.g. the placement of Tartarus) and sets up these familiar

features against his audience's collective knowledge of ancient Greek eschatological myth. Then he uses the common language of Underworld scenes to both explore and re-imagine the nature of "blessedness,"²³⁷ creating new models for assigning souls and making a case for why they deserve these assignments. To do this, he centralizes the afterlife narrative around the soul's experience, even as he uses language from his predecessors' mythic Underworld frameworks, invoking the point of view of a katabatic hero or mystery initiate.²³⁸

Plato incorporates traceable references throughout his stories, urging his reader to make the connections and engage with his argument. This is the case in the *Phaedo* when Socrates casually refers to one of the hollows of his larger geography as *the* Tartarus from Homer and "other poets" (*Phd.* 112a). Plato thus makes his own myth the central reference point that explicates the more cryptic traditional one, suggesting that his is the more reliable because it clearly gives the relationships between things. This implies that his surrounding details are accurate, even though they contradict accounts by the very poets he says he is citing.

Plato's Underworld scenes are not bent to fit a single afterlife vision that would lay claim to religious truth. Rather, his eschatological scenes are configured to serve his arguments. In the *Gorgias*, Plato uses two unrelated afterlife myths to describe the sorry state of a bad soul, first as a leaky jar and then as a corrupt, disfigured person. The latter scene is more akin to Homeric

²³⁷ Edmonds describes Plato's re-use of traditional Underworld motifs in the *Phaedo* (Edmonds 2004: 207-219).

²³⁸ The Orphic Gold Tablets offer a glimpse of how mystery cult initiates viewed the soul's journey in the afterlife from the individual soul's experience. They also show how initiation and individuals' choices lead to a "blessed" afterlife (Edmonds 2004; Graf and Johnston 2007; Bernabé Pajares and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008).

Underworld scenes, but the former is no less traditional, using known Underworld stories (such as the myth of the Danaïdes) that may have originated in Italian or Pythagorean sources.²³⁹ The two myths are not historically related to each other. The audience, however, must consider them together along with their differing traditions because Plato juxtaposes them within the same dialogue and they are incorporated within his argumentation. The *Phaedrus*, on the other hand, shows that Plato had multiple options for describing the soul's plight through time and space and could invent an afterlife myth without borrowing from a traditional source. In this dialogue, Plato creates a new myth of the afterlife, that of the charioteer, to describe the afterlife as a struggle by the soul to move up towards the heavens with no reference to the Tartaran Underworld of Hades.²⁴⁰

In his many Underworld representations, Plato deftly demonstrates that afterlife myths are moldable to suit any given situation and that they are, therefore, an exercise in rhetoric, a tool

²³⁹ Linforth points out that the idea of water carriers in Hades precedes Plato and may be connected to the myth of the Danaides as well as to Pythagorean or Orphic doctrines (Linforth 1944: 297-306). Linforth also argues that the representation of the soul as leaky jars is original to Plato (Linforth 1944: 311).

²⁴⁰ Ferrari argues that the myth, as a creation by Socrates, is crucial to the self-scrutiny he advocates, saying "Plato invents his cosmic myth in order to illuminate – make us recognize – what happens when philosophers cope with contingency by attempting to gain the cosmic or impersonal perspective while maintaining their personal sense of who they are and why they are making the attempt – an example of which is furnished by the myth itself" (Ferrari 1987: 122-129).

like dialectic to support rather than represent truth.²⁴¹ Morgan has argued that “myth” in Plato is a technique that gives a “short-cut” for an analytic process and that it reflects a mode of discourse that has validity primarily when proper argumentation has already taken place, although it might also replace it (Morgan 2000: 185-186). Myths in Plato are an intuitive leap that works best, according to Morgan, when they are firmly grounded in rational, philosophical analysis because they do not have the one flaw that causes similar myths by poets to be rejected, namely that they were “Muse-inspired.” Instead, because they are grounded in argument and the recollection of the soul’s nature, the Underworld myths that Socrates builds have an inherent capability to introduce the unknowable aspects of the soul’s journey after death into each dialogue’s argument, using a language that compensates for a failure in some part of the dialectic process, whether a shortness of time, some failure in the characters of the interlocutors, or the lack of verifiability in a line of argument (Morgan 2000: 180-184). In this reasoning, the Underworld myths can be interpreted as “a metaphorical expression of the content of the dialectic path” (Morgan 2000: 180).²⁴²

²⁴¹ In *Republic* 588c-d, Socrates calls the creation of mythic beasts the work of a “clever sculptor” (Δεινοῦ πλάστου, ἔφη, τὸ ἔργον, *Rep.* 588d) and says that accounts of such myths are more malleable than wax (εὐπλαστότερον κηροῦ καὶ τῶν τοιούτων λόγος, *Rep.* 588d).

²⁴² Morgan argues that beliefs portrayed by myths about the soul are also represented in the dialectic sections and that Socrates does not rely on these myths alone to make his argument. She writes: “When myth is deployed in connection with the transcendent and incorporeal world of the Forms, it expresses a belief about them and about the incorporeal soul which is either justified (although not verified) by dialectical argument or which must be so justified on a subsequent occasion” (Morgan 2000: 180).

Socrates uses myth, therefore, for the sake of argument, as a rhetorical strategy that finds its origin and its purpose in how it advances dialectic. This strategy, however, is not unique. Socrates borrows it from the very poets that he denigrates and excludes from his ideal state. He appropriates their rhetoric to subvert their power, demonstrating how easy it is to create *muthos* as a representation of one's argument.

The inconsistencies in his Underworld depictions underscore the fact that Plato saw an Underworld episode as a literary device, intended to convey a meaning that could not be found in the parent text. Plato identifies his eschatological material in the *Phaedo* as a *muthos* (not *logos*), which “places it in dialogic relation to the other genres of discourse in the dialogue” (Nightingale 2002: 235).²⁴³ Using the Underworld image set, Plato activates the narratives that he needs by highlighting certain myths of the soul's journey in the afterlife. In the *Apology*, he discusses the survival of memory beyond the grave, in which the soul can have dialogue with famous people, as seen in Homer and Pindar; in the *Gorgias*, he describes multiple myths of judgment; and in the *Phaedo*, the *Laws*, and the *Republic*, he details the segregation of souls in the afterlife and metempsychosis.

By moving a narrative to the Underworld, an author was able to offer a view of time and space removed from the pressures of plot. Plato's innovation was to extend chronological time and the plot of a human life into the Underworld space. For Plato, therefore, the move to the Underworld is not a “grasp backwards” to recover events that are decisive for understanding and unfolding the present action (Bettini 1991: 136-137). Instead, Underworld scenes create a

²⁴³ See also McCabe, who argues that Plato's eschatological myths complement, but do not necessarily reiterate the claims of their parent dialogues by suggesting new directions for interpretation (McCabe 1992).

backdrop for arguing why cultivation of the soul in the present life through a philosophical lifestyle is so important. In this sense, Plato does not advocate the “replacement of the poetic and mythic tradition with philosophy as the primary form of authoritative discourse” (Edmonds 2004: 168) because he knows how to wield it as an effective rhetorical tool to dovetail with his other types of argumentation. By making Underworld space and time tangible through the movement of souls and bringing landscape elements “alive” to the reader in showing how they affect souls, Plato’s dialogues stress continuity between life and afterlife in a continuing cycle. Through the variety of Underworlds he presents in his works, Plato shows his fluency in afterlife motifs and his ability to use the intertextuality of Underworld scenes to claim authority for his reconstruction of reality.

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