THE END OF THE *NEKYIA:* ODYSSEUS, HERACLES, AND THE GORGON IN THE UNDERWORLD[1]

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Already in antiquity, the end of the *Nekyia* presented many difficulties to readers.[2] In *Odyssey* 11, Odysseus goes to the Underworld and sees other heroines and heroes, some of whom belong to earlier mythic generations. The journey to the Underworld involves an expansion of not only the epic poem's geography but also its chronology.[3] This paper seeks to analyze Odysseus's relationship with Heracles as a pre-Trojan War hero and explain the presence of Heracles and the Gorgon as the closing images of Odysseus's journey to the Underworld. Heracles is the last of the heroes whom Odysseus meets before his puzzling departure from Hades, and the typology of their encounter differs significantly from Odysseus's other encounters. While the phantom of Heracles addresses Odysseus in a speech-act labeled

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2 See Petzl 1969. In particular, lines 602–04 were considered an interpolation; see Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990.114. Most scholarly discussions have focused on the presence of the εἴδωλον of Heracles as opposed to Heracles himself.

3 For epic poetry's temporal and spatial conflation in conjunction with the representation of the Underworld and references to the afterlife, see Burgess 2009.106–10. As he remarks (2009.109): "Hades is narratologically convenient as a stage for various types of shades to quickly appear and disappear. Here the parameters of time and space are relaxed, and full advantage is taken of the possibilities. Odysseus can interview deceased comrades and heroes from an earlier age, and shades can interact with each other. There are cameos, and a catalogic curtain call for mythological females. The narrative freedom provided by Hades results in poetical brilliance, even if it has unsettled critics who would like to remove this or that section on the grounds of logical or theological inconsistency."

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ἔπεα πτερόεντα (11.616), Odysseus does not respond to Heracles as he did to the other figures throughout Book 11, but leaves in a swift and sudden manner.[4] Based on the previously established patterns in the *Nekyia,* the audience would expect Odysseus to respond to anyone who talked to him in the Underworld, but this does not happen here.

It is the thought of a possible meeting with the Gorgon that makes Odysseus quickly disappear and leave the Underworld. As I argue, the absence of an answer to Heracles' "winged words," the subversion of any prior patterns of communication with other figures, and the construction of a sudden exit strategy from the Underworld form integral parts of the first-person narration of Odysseus. The encounter of Odysseus with Heracles and the reference to the fear caused by the Gorgon establish connections not only between heroes belonging to different mythic generations but, more importantly, with the traditions around Heracles and the figure of the Gorgon.

I. COMPETING ACROSS GENERATIONS OF HEROES: ODYSSEAN AND HERACLEAN *AETHLOI*

Odysseus's storytelling to the Phaeacians is constructed in a manner that skillfully provides confirmation of his heroic, and consequently, bardic, identity (Nagy 1979.41). Throughout the *Apologoi,* the figure of Odysseus emerges as a self-fashioning narrator who affirms his own heroism. In the details of the narrative about Heracles' appearance at the end of the *Nekyia*, Odysseus aligns himself with the greatest hero of the past (11.618). Heracles' εἴδωλον greets Odysseus in sympathy and refers to his own *catabasis* as the hardest of his labors (*Od*. 11.624), imposed by a worse man.[5] In an episode where Odysseus is the narrator of his deeds, Heracles, the great hero of the past, addresses Odysseus first and exhibits

4 As Martin points out: "Winged words are spoken by one person to one other (rarely to two), and the addressee is in close contact with the speaker, usually as a comrade-in-arms" (1989.31). In this episode, Heracles addresses Odysseus as a comrade who has undergone the same ἄεθλοι as he had.

5 See the views of Nagy 1979.208, that the regenerated body of Heracles is on Mount Olympus, and Burgess 2009.103, who suggests that the εἴδωλον of Heracles is a representation of the burned body, the mortal part of the hero, whereas the Olympic Heracles is the "ascended immortal part." Burgess 2009.102–03 refers further to the ancient sources that suggest that the tradition of the pyre of Heracles marks the distinction between the mortal and the immortal parts of the hero.

awareness of Odysseus's ἄεθλοι. Odysseus cleverly constructs an oblique self-compliment via the words of Heracles. Both Heracles and Odysseus survive the arduous journey to the Underworld. They are both performers of ἄεθλοι, and their heroic acts are intricately interwoven in Odysseus's self-narration to create a subtle alliance between the two.[6]

Odysseus first introduces a connection with Heracles in Book 8, before he begins his narration to the Phaeacians. Heracles is the quintessential Greek hero, and Odysseus makes sure to put his own heroism in perspective when compared to the great heroes of the past in his speech-acts to the Phaeacians, before the culmination of the *Nekyia,* when the space and time of the Underworld allow for a direct meeting with the legendary hero. Let us first consider how Heracles' presence is introduced.

Odysseus's competitiveness is a topos in the *Odyssey.* Demodocus's first song in Book 8 is about the quarrel (νεῖκος, 8.75) between Odysseus and Achilles, how they once strove at a feast (*Od*. 8.71–78).[7] In his own performance of his adventures, Odysseus will continue the competitive tone that Demodocus's performance emphasizes.[8] He weeps when the bard sings tales about the Trojan War and Odysseus's deeds.[9] Laodamas, Alcinous's son, then asks the stranger Odysseus whether he has experience of any contests (*Od*. 8.131–37). The word used to describe a contest is ἄεθλος (8.133). Odysseus accepts the challenge, seeking sympathy as he reiterates his sufferings, his endurance, and his experiences of war and travel. Throughout this episode, he carefully avoids any reference to his name, instead engaging in "epegexetic play" about his identity.[10] In other

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6 The word ἄεθλος is used twice to refer to all of Heracles' labors, including his *catabasis* to the Underworld (*Od*. 11.622 and 624).

7 The texts cited are from the *OCT*s (T. W. Allen's edition of the *Odyssey* and F. Solmsen's of the *Shield*). All translations of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, some slightly adapted, are from the revised A. T. Murray Loeb editions. All translations of passages from the *Shield* are by Glenn Most from the Loeb edition (2007).

8 Most 1989 argues that Odysseus's *Apologoi* function rhetorically as a diegesis that carries the message of the need for an immediate *nostos*. Odysseus is often impatient and wants to achieve his return home. Odysseus's reproach to Alcinous's son shows his impatience. However, he is keen on accepting the challenges. According to Scodel 1998.181, stories that come as answers to curiosity about the teller, such as the *Apologos* in Book 8, come closest to bardic narratives.

9 On that scene, see Nagy 1990.205–06 for a discussion of *noticing signs* and *recognition*.

10 As Peradotto 1990.115 argues: "Whereas the opening of the *Iliad* suggests a sense of destiny, of fatedness in the relationship it establishes between its hero's name and his life story, the *Odyssey* follows a stratagem of deferral, building a controlled identifying description prior to the name's disclosure."

words, Odysseus, the paradigmatic performer, imitates the very beginning of the *Odyssey* and, in talking about himself, does not disclose his name until the right moment. He has internalized the tradition of epic poetics.[11] As Richard Martin writes (1989.90), "Heroes are their own authors, performers in every sense." We see multilayered and internalized agonistic perspectives in the poem; in his self-representation, Odysseus emulates the way the poet of the *Odyssey* presents his hero. The unfolding of the main hero of the *Odyssey* comes after careful construction.

The agonistic aspect is emphasized by the repetitive use of the word ἄεθλοι in Odysseus's response to the Phaeacian prince.[12] The word ἄεθλος is used with the meaning of both "contest" and "labor" throughout the *Odyssey*.[13] As Margalit Finkelberg shows, of the fifteen epic usages of ἄεθλος and its cognates, six "relate to the life-experience of Odysseus, and five to that of Heracles."[14] Such semantic affinity brings the traditions of these two heroes and their deeds closer to each other, while also creating certain concepts of heroism in the world of the *Odyssey*: heroism that largely depends on Odysseus's self-representation as someone akin to Heracles.[15]

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11 Martin 1989.90. See also Segal 1994.85, who writes that "the *Odyssey* is remarkable for its consciousness about the social function of heroic poetry, the contexts in which such poetry is performed, and the rapport between the bard and his hearers."

12 ὥρινάς μοι θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
εἰπὼν οὐ κατὰ κόσμον· ἐγὼ δ' οὐ νῆϊς ἀέθλων,
ὡς σύ γε μυθεῖαι, ἀλλ' ἐν πρώτοισιν ὀΐω
ἔμμεναι, ὄφρ' ἥβῃ τε πεποίθεα χερσί τ' ἐμῇσι.
νῦν δ' ἔχομαι κακότητι καὶ ἄλγεσι· πολλὰ γὰρ ἔτλην,
ἀνδρῶν τε πτολέμους ἀλεγεινά τε κύματα πείρων.
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὣς, κακὰ πολλὰ παθών, πειρήσομ' ἀέθλων·

You have stirred the spirit in my breast by speaking without manners. I am not a novice in sports as you say; on the contrary, I think I was among the first so long as I trusted in my youth and in my hands. But now I am bound by suffering and pains; for much I endured in passing through wars of men and the grievous waves. But even so, though I have suffered much, I will make trial of the contests . . . (*Od.* 8.178–84).

13 For the semantic affinity between ἄεθλος as "contest" and ἄεθλος as "labor," see Nagy 1989.12.

14 Finkelberg 1995.4. See Finkelberg 1995.14, n. 18 for the use of the term ἄεθλος in early Greek epic.

15 As Finkelberg writes: "In view of Odysseus' specific experiences in the *Odyssey*, there is nothing extraordinary about the fact that the term 'labour,' *aethlos*, bearing as it does the connotations of toil and suffering, should be associated from time to time with the poem's hero. Yet, the range of the term's application to him demonstrates beyond doubt that Odysseus' association with *aethloi* was deliberate" (1995.7).

Odysseus participates in the contest among the Phaeacians and throws the discus in a spectacular manner. He then proclaims his dexterity in archery (*Od*. 8.214–19). Before revealing his identity, he declares that he was the best among his peers and gains credit by revealing whom he was competing against, and who excelled him, of the men in his own generation. Odysseus acknowledges that Philoctetes alone was better than himself in arrow shooting. This is the moment when he compares his heroic identity with that of his peers while tactfully avoiding comparison with previous generations. The word ἄεθλοι is repeated in *Odyssey* 8.214 (8.214–28):

> πάντα γὰρ οὐ κακός εἰμι, μετ' ἀνδράσιν ὅσσοι ἄεθλοι·
> εὖ μὲν τόξον οἶδα ἐΰξοον ἀμφαφάασθαι·
> πρῶτός κ'ἄνδρα βάλοιμι ὀϊστεύσας ἐν ὁμίλῳ
> ἀνδρῶν δυσμενέων, εἰ καὶ μάλα πολλοὶ ἑταῖροι
> ἄγχι παρασταῖεν καὶ τοξαζοίατο φωτῶν.
> οἷος δή με Φιλοκτήτης ἀπεκαίνυτο τόξῳ
> δήμῳ ἔνι Τρώων, ὅτε τοξαζοίμεθ' Ἀχαιοί·
> τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἐμέ φημι πολὺ προφερέστερον εἶναι,
> ὅσσοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σῖτον ἔδοντες.
> ἀνδράσι δὲ προτέροισιν ἐριζέμεν οὐκ ἐθελήσω,
> οὔθ' Ἡρακλῆϊ οὔτ' Εὐρύτῳ Οἰχαλιῆϊ,
> οἵ ῥα καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἐρίζεσκον περὶ τόξων.
> τῷ ῥα καὶ αἶψ' ἔθανεν μέγας Εὔρυτος οὐδ' ἐπὶ γῆρας
> ἵκετ' ἐνὶ μεγάροισι χολωσάμενος γὰρ Ἀπόλλων
> ἔκτανεν, οὕνεκά μιν προκαλίζετο τοξάζεσθαι.
>
> For in all things I am no weakling, not in any of the contests that are practiced among men. Well do I know how to handle the polished bow, and always would I be the first to shoot and hit any man in the throng of the foe, even though many comrades stood by me and were shooting at the men. Only Philoctetes excelled me with the bow in the land of the Trojans when we Achaeans shot. But of all the others, I declare that I am best by far, of all mortals that are now upon the earth and eat bread. Yet with men of former days I will not seek to compete, with Heracles or with Eurytus of Oechalia, who strove even with the immortals in archery. Therefore great Eurytus died soon,

> nor did old age come upon him in his halls, for Apollo became angry and killed him because he had challenged him to a contest with the bow.

Odysseus here aligns himself with the best of his generation and, avoiding hubris, forcefully states that he will not compete against the famous archers of previous generations, Heracles and Eurytus, who competed only with gods.[16] The hierarchy of the generations of heroes is laid out in this passage: gods, with Apollo as their representative, then the generation of Heracles and Eurytus, followed by that of the Trojan War heroes.[17] It is noteworthy that Eurytus is mentioned as a negative example of someone who exceeded his limits. Odysseus inserts in his narrative not only the immediate past of the Trojan War, but even more an implicit comparison with the pre-Trojan war heroes.

II. ODYSSEUS AND HERACLES IN THE *NEKYIA*: A PUZZLING ENCOUNTER

Heracles is mentioned again at the end of Book 11, and his words conclude the catalogue of heroes in the Odyssean *catabasis*.[18] The juxtaposition of Heracles and Odysseus has been regarded as an anachronism that demands further explanation (Galinsky 1972.12). Heracles is represented as a less civilized type of hero, with his ferociousness set in contrast with Odysseus.[19] In the *Iliad*, Heracles is the only mortal to whom Achilles is compared.[20] For Achilles such a comparison is pivotal, as Heracles is not a god but a mortal who dies (Schein 1984.134–36). In the world of the *Odyssey*, the tradition that presents Heracles as a hero who belongs to an

16 For the importance of this passage as a link between Odysseus and Heracles, see Crissy 1997.49–50. As Crissy 1997.50 points out, Odysseus in the killing of the suitors will "accomplish a feat suggesting a likeness between himself and these heroes after all. He will kill the suitors in a challenge using the very bow belonging to Eurytos." For rival genealogies of the bows from Heracles to Philoctetes and Eurytus to Odysseus, see Clay 1983.91–96.

17 See Ford 1992.98 and De Jong 2001.205.

18 This passage has been seen as a later interpolation. For an argument against this view, see Hooker 1980.

19 Galinsky 1972.12, Clay 1983.81–95. For a close reading of Odysseus's heroism and how it compares to Heracles', see Finkelberg 1995.4–5.

20 For the implicit comparison between Achilles and Heracles, see Martin 1989.229–32.

earlier world continues.[21] The encounter between Odysseus and Heracles marks a liminal point, as the Trojan War has already become a part of the legendary past in the *Nekyia*. Odysseus, a participant in the Trojan War, has to prove himself a worthy successor to Heracles' ἄεθλοι.[22] As Finkelberg notes (1995.4): "The encounter of Odysseus and Heracles in the Underworld shows that it is not mere chance that these two are the only individual heroes characterized in the epics through the word *aethlos*." Heracles, as a hero who undertook a *catabasis,* sets the immediate precedent for Odysseus. In this respect, Odysseus's encounter with Heracles is set in an agonistic frame.[23]

The linguistic typology of the encounter between the two heroes presents some significant differences when compared to that of the other figures of the *Nekyia*. In the catalogue of earlier heroes and heroines, Odysseus is the active viewer, with forms of the verb εἶδον dominant.[24] In the encounter with Heracles, though, once Heracles' εἴδωλον is perceived, it is the εἴδωλον of Heracles who becomes the active viewer, and the dynamics of viewing are inverted (*Od*. 11.615). Moreover, whereas Odysseus is either the first to address or respond to the heroes who talk to him, there is no dialogue in the case of the encounter with Heracles. When the two are together, the phantom of Heracles takes the role of the viewing subject and is the one who addresses words to a suddenly mute Odysseus. The text specifies that it is Heracles who recognized Odysseus, after he *saw* him (*Od*. 11.615–16).

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21 See Schein 1984.135–36, with an analysis of the formulaic phrase βίη Ἡρακληείη ("Heraclean violence") as in *Iliad* 11.690. This phrase marks Heracles' presence in the narrative as an example of alternate heroic behavior in the poetic tradition associated with the past. For Heracles as a heroic type, see Anderson 1928.8–11.

22 Crissy 1997.42 remarks that a comparison with heroes of the past deemed as stronger "recalls the decline from the age of heroes as an element in the *Odyssey*." Decline in epic is a theme most prominent in the *Theogony*; however, the *Odyssey* reveals a different dynamic, as I argue: the competitive aspect of the youngest generation that seeks to establish a new kind of heroic world.

23 Odysseus is also associated with Heracles in Book 21 of the *Odyssey*, see Crissy 1997.46–49.

24 In Book 11, the form εἶδον is used three times (11.281 for Chloris, 11. 298 for Leda, 11.576 for Tityus), the form ἴδον eleven times (11.235 for Tyro; 11.260 for Antiope; 11.266 for Alcmene; 11.271 for Epicaste; 11.321 for Phaedra, Procris, and Ariadne; 11.326 for Maera, Clymene, and Eriphyle; 11.329 for wives and daughters of heroes in a summary of the female figures he has seen; 11.522 and 528 for Eurypylus; 11.568 for Minos; 11.630 for earlier heroes), the verb εἴσιδον once (11.306), and the form εἰσεῖδον twice (11.582 for Tantalus and 11.593 for Sisyphus).

> ἔγνω δ' αἶψ' ἐμὲ κεῖνος, ἐπεὶ ἴδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι,
> καί μ' ὀλοφυρόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
>
> He in turn knew me when his eyes beheld me, and, weeping, spoke to me winged words.

After Heracles' brief speech to Odysseus (*Od.* 11.617–26), Odysseus does not respond but decides to leave.

The following diagram shows the typology of the encounters in the Underworld. One can categorize Odysseus's meetings into four groups based on the type of interaction with the main hero:

a) Heroes/heroines whom Odysseus encounters and engages in a dialogue.
b) Heroes Odysseus sees, but no conversation is narrated.
c) Heroes to whom Odysseus talks, but no response is given.
d) Heroes who talk to Odysseus, but he does not respond.

A form of the verb ἴδον is used for the encounters that are given in catalogue form when no reported conversation is narrated, thus marking Odysseus as the viewing subject, whereas for those who interact with Odysseus with dialogue, the verb ἔγνω is used in the third-person singular.

The meeting with Heracles stands out as unique among all the encounters in the Underworld. For heroines and heroes not contemporary with Odysseus (like Minos and Orion) and for the "sinners," the narrative uses the catalogue form introduced by a verb that makes Odysseus the active agent of viewing. With the exception of the ghost of Elpenor that Odysseus talks to first, the other heroes initiate the dialogue: Odysseus's mother, Teiresias, Agamemnon, Achilles, and Heracles; Odysseus responds to all except one, Heracles. Moreover, the diction marks with the verb ἔγνω (as opposed to ἴδον) the heroes who perceive the presence of Odysseus and talk to him (Teiresias, Agamemnon, Achilles, Heracles). While the first three figures in this group have played important roles in Odysseus's life, Heracles stands out. Heracles' speech-act is marked as "winged words." In the *Iliad*, this phrase becomes the formulaic template to describe a speech-act between two comrades (Martin 1989.29–31). Heracles' speech-act is one of camaraderie and sympathy with a hero who also succeeded in a *catabasis* at a moment when the epic poem cuts through space and time.

Heroes/heroines with whom Odysseus engages in a dialogue	Heroes/heroines Odysseus sees (no talking)	Heroes/heroines Odysseus talks to, but they don't respond	Heroes/heroines who talk to Odysseus, but he does not respond
ψυχὴ Ἐλπήνορος ἦλθεν (51)	Τυρὼ ἴδον (235)	οἵη δ' Αἴαντος ψυχὴ Τελαμωνιάδαο νόσφιν ἀφεστήκει (543–44)	εἰσενόησα βίην Ἡρακληείην, εἴδωλον (601–02); ἔγνω δ' αἶψ' ἐμὲ κεῖνος, ἐπεὶ ἴδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι (615)
ψυχὴ Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο (90); ἐμὲ δ' ἔγνω καὶ προσέειπε (91)	Ἀντιόπην ἴδον (260)		
μήτηρ ἦλυθε . . . ἔγνω (152–53)	Ἀλκμήνην ἴδον (266)		
ψυχὴ Ἀγαμέμνονος (387); ἔγνω δ' αἶψ' ἐμὲ κεῖνος (390)	καὶ Μεγάρην (269)		
ἔγνω δὲ ψυχή με ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο (471)	Μητέρα τ' Οἰδιπόδαο ἴδον . . . Ἐπικάστην (271)		
	Χλῶριν εἶδον (281)		
	Λήδην εἶδον (298)		
	Φαίδρην τε Πρόκριν τε ἴδον καλήν τ' Ἀριάδνην (321)		
	Μαῖράν τε Κλυμένην τε ἴδον στυγερήν τ' Ἐριφύλην (326)		
	Μίνωα ἴδον (568)		
	Ὠρίωνα . . . εἰσενόησα (572)		
	Τιτυὸν εἶδον (576)		
	Τάνταλον εἰσεῖδον (582)		
	Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον (593)		

Although there is a pattern of address and response with the other heroes who approach and recognize Odysseus, Heracles' address resembles a soliloquy and remains without a response, an anomaly in the pattern of discourse. Odysseus perceives the presence of Heracles (εἰσενόησα, 11.601) as Heracles glares, looking like someone ready to shoot. Why do we see all this tension between the two heroes in the epic poem? Why does Odysseus present himself as so resourceless in his reaction? Moreover, Odysseus ends the diegesis of his journey to the Underworld with the disclosure of a fear that complicates the narrative in significant ways. Right at the end of the *catabasis,* Odysseus appears to be at a loss. Although he expresses a desire to meet the heroes of earlier generations (11.630), he concludes his journey to the Underworld out of fear. The Gorgon is mentioned at the end of this episode (11.635), and it is the possibility of an encounter with her that makes Odysseus quickly disappear. Why does Odysseus the narrator insert the image of the Gorgon and construct such an exit strategy (*Od.* 11.633–35)?

> ἐμὲ δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ἥρει,
> μή μοι Γοργείην κεφαλὴν δεινοῖο πελώρου
> ἐξ Ἄϊδος πέμψειεν ἀγαυὴ Περσεφόνεια.
>
> And pale fear seized me that august Persephone might send upon me out of the house of Hades the head of the Gorgon, that terrible monster.

At this point we have a case of motif transference from one story to another. As Jonathan Burgess (2006.156) notes: "If specific elements regularly appear in a particular myth, then it should be noticeable when these specific elements appear in a different myth in which they do not belong." The Gorgon seems to be out of place at this moment in the narrative. However, by looking at the typology of the Gorgon in epic poetry, I shall argue that this particular reference intensifies the narrative in a way that is not just a minor divergence but connects to other well-known myths and cultural experiences of the intended audience.[25] There is an allusion to the tradition of the Gorgon at the end of the *Nekyia* when Odysseus feels terror, whereas elsewhere in this book, it is the pathos of being dead that is emphasized rather than the fearful aspects of Hades (Stanford 1964.404). Epic discourse around the appearance of Heracles has appropriated the

25 For Homer and the Perseus/Medusa story, see Napier 1986.90.

diction around the Gorgon. The construction of an exit out of fear and the appropriation of images of terror become important narrative twists.

Motif transference is a sophisticated way for the poet to communicate at a deeper level with the audience.[26] The final encounter of Odysseus in the Underworld is sui generis. By reading it in the context of the final reference to the Gorgon, I seek to gain an understanding of the epic poem that is attuned to the sensitivities of its ideological and sociocultural background. Odysseus avoids interaction with Heracles and remains consistent in not wanting to compete against earlier heroes (8.224–25). By avoiding Heracles, he avoids a difficult comparison. It is Heracles who addresses Odysseus and thus compliments Odysseus. At the same time, the reference to fear becomes a construction of prudent modesty, an important aspect of Odyssean self-fashioning.

Heracles is present only as an εἴδωλον.[27] Although Odysseus is not portrayed as the same active viewer he has been in the rest of the *Nekyia*, Heracles' appearance is carefully constructed. Heracles' expression is described as δεινὸν παπταίνων (*Od.* 11.608), a formula that typifies one's appearance before one shoots an arrow.[28] It promises lethal action. Odysseus's look is described in the same formulaic manner when he kills the worst of the suitors in Book 24.177–79:

> ῥηϊδίως δ' ἐτάνυσσε βιόν, διὰ δ' ἧκε σιδήρου·
> στῆ δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' οὐδὸν ἰών, ταχέας δ' ἐκχεύατ' ὀϊστοὺς
> δεινὸν παπταίνων, βάλε δ' Ἀντίνοον βασιλῆα.
>
> Then he took the bow in his hand, the much-enduring, noble Odysseus, and with ease he strung it and sent an

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26 As Burgess writes about motif transference: "It grew out of methods of comparison and 'reflection' that were inherent in oral traditions and everyday life itself. It did not come out of thin air; it is derived from observable phenomena in the poetic and known world" (2006.176).

27 The word εἴδωλον is attested in Homer twice in the *Iliad* and three times in the *Odyssey*: in *Iliad* 5.449, where Apollo made an εἴδωλον of Aeneas to protect him (as it was his image in the battle, not Aeneas himself), and in 23.104. In the *Odyssey*, it is attested at 4.796 and 4.824 when Athena took the image (εἴδωλον) of Penelope's sister to appear to Penelope in her sleep, and in 11.213, where Odysseus wonders whether he is looking at an εἴδωλον of his mother or it is actually his mother among the dwellers of the Underworld.

28 In accordance with the belief in antiquity that looks emit rays of light (Empedokles frag. 84 D-K), παπταίνω can be read as a specific type of looking. See Lonsdale 1989, with further bibliography, on the gaze as nonverbal communication.

> arrow through the iron. Then he went and stood on the threshold, and poured out the swift arrows, glaring about him terribly, and shot king Antinous.

The phrase δεινὸν παπταίνων provides a nonverbal sign that finds its way into the Homeric text.[29] In this connection, one can remark that Heracles' description in the *Nekyia* shares many linguistic similarities with the description of the archer Apollo who comes to his priest in Book 1 of the *Iliad* (1.43–49):

> Ὣς ἔφατ' εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
> βῆ δὲ κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων χωόμενος κῆρ,
> τόξ' ὤμοισιν ἔχων ἀμφηρεφέα τε φαρέτρην·
> ἔκλαγξαν δ' ἄρ' ὀϊστοὶ ἐπ' ὤμων χωομένοιο,
> αὐτοῦ κινηθέντος· ὁ δ' ἤϊε νυκτὶ ἐοικώς.
> ἕζετ' ἔπειτ' ἀπάνευθε νεῶν, μετὰ δ' ἰὸν ἕηκε·
> δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγὴ γένετ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο·
>
> So he spoke in prayer, and Phoebus Apollo heard him. Down from the peaks of Olympus he strode, with wrath at heart, bearing on his shoulders his bow and covered quiver. The arrows rattled on the shoulders of the angry god, as he moved; and his coming was like the night. Then he sat down away from the ships and let fly a shaft: terrible was the twang of the silver bow.

In the *Nekyia,* Heracles is presented in similar terms (*Od*. 11.605–08):

> ἀμφὶ δέ μιν κλαγγὴ νεκύων ἦν οἰωνῶν ὡς,
> πάντοσ' ἀτυζομένων· ὁ δ' ἐρεμνῇ νυκτὶ ἐοικώς,
> γυμνὸν τόξον ἔχων καὶ ἐπὶ νευρῆφιν ὀϊστόν,
> δεινὸν παπταίνων, αἰεὶ βαλέοντι ἐοικώς.
>
> About him rose a clamor from the dead, as of birds flying everywhere in terror; and he like dark night, with his

29 There is a tendency for this formula to appear in the context of divination next to shining objects; see Lonsdale 1989.331.

> bow uncased and with arrow on the string, glared about
> him terribly, like one about to shoot.

In both passages, in an impressionistic manner, sight and sound are carefully emphasized. We see references in both to an accompanying noise, expressed as κλαγγή.[30] Both of these figures are compared to the coming of night and darkness, and notions of destruction are evoked. Night, by contrast, underlines further the gaze that will follow.

The comparison of Heracles to night brings into focus his shining golden belt in an effective play of light and darkness (*Od*. 11.609–14). The brief *ekphrasis* of Heracles' belt will help us comprehend the connections with the Gorgon in this episode. Heracles' appearance at the end of Book 11 employs the diction used in connection with references to the Gorgon. On Heracles' golden belt (τελαμών), there were "bears, boars, lions with flashing eyes, conflicts, murders, and slayings of men." The object is portrayed as so terrifying that the wish is inserted by the narrator that whoever made this may never design something similar again (*Od*. 11.613–14). The belt is not to be viewed in a lighthearted manner. It is an intense sight, yet an object meant for a hero to wear. In this respect, the reaction to the object itself is transferred to its bearer. The fear that this object radiates is targeted toward its viewer.

The scenes on Heracles' belt are described as θέσκελα ἔργα (11.610*)*.[31] In the *Odyssey* (11.374), this is the phrase that Alcinous uses when he invites Odysseus's narration. Within the *Nekyia*, the term θέσκελα ἔργα characterizes both Odysseus's deeds (374) and the "wondrous things" crafted on Heracles' belt, namely various beasts, battles, and slayings—deeds that relate to the bearer of the belt himself, Heracles. Through this expression, Odysseus's heroism is connected to the nature of Heracles' labors. Epic diction brings the two heroes together through the similarities in the way they are evoked. Both perform ἄεθλοι, as shown earlier;

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30 Κλαγγή is the clamor that provokes terror. In the *Iliad*, it is typically the clamor of the Trojans when compared to birds, as in *Il.* 3.2–3, 10.523.

31 For θέσκελα ἔργα, see also *Shield* 33–36, where Zeus contemplates sex with Heracles's mother: "And from there the counselor Zeus went up lofty Mount Phicion. Sitting there, he devised wondrous deeds (θέσκελα ἔργα) in his spirit: for that very night he mingled with Electryon's long-ankled daughter in her loving bed, and he fulfilled his desire." These words are also found in Book 3 of the *Iliad* to describe the battles of the Trojans and the Achaeans, which form the pattern in Helen's weaving. Iris uses the same phrase when she invites Helen to view the battle from afar (*Il.* 3.130).

both heroes are associated with wondrous things.[32] In the entire *Odyssey*, θέσκελα ἔργα are mentioned only in Book 11, once to describe Odysseus's deeds and once for the artistic representations crafted on Heracles' belt.

The description of Heracles' belt becomes the link to descriptions of shields that represent the Gorgon. *Ekphrasis* in literature carries the aura of the object described (see Benjamin 1968.220–25). *Ekphrasis* in early epic Greek poetry does more than that, especially if the imagery evoked is as powerful as that of the Gorgon, which is popular in archaic art (Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990.116). If *ekphrasis* is a mirror in the text or, as Bartsch and Elsner put it, a "further voice that disrupts or extends the message of the narrative, a prefiguration of that narrative," ekphrastic power is most difficult to understand when the object should *not* be looked at and possibly defies the act of viewing.[33] The moment of viewing brings terror and devastation. Rather than a petrified object that is being viewed, the object itself is terrifying and has a petrifying effect on the viewer. *Ekphrasis* is deeply intertwined with the making of a hero in epic and concerns notions of domination and power.[34]

Throughout the *Nekyia*, Odysseus is the viewer, and his persistent viewing or lack of viewing is significant.[35] Odysseus is the viewing subject and the narrator of the scene creating his own image as a dominant hero.[36] This is part of the larger dynamic of aesthetic experience in the *Odyssey*. The way the hero controls and directs his senses has an immediate effect on the focus of his narration. Likewise, Odysseus is the sole listener in the episode with the Sirens. Like viewing, hearing poses dangers. Odysseus renders himself passive in order to experience the Sirens' song in *Odyssey* 12 in a scene where the competitive paradigm of the hero prevails, as it is not possible that both he and the Siren can coexist.

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32 Again, the phrase is used in the *Iliad* in 3.130 in Iris's speech to Helen. The battle had been referred to as ἀέθλους (3.126), presented as a concise *ekphrasis* of Helen's weaving.

33 Bartsch and Elsner 2007.i. For theoretical introductions to examining an *ekphrasis,* see Bartsch and Elsner 2007, Webb 1999.

34 See duBois 1982, where she discusses the role of the hero in epic poems, and 2007, where she makes observations about the relation of *ekphrasis* in a narrative with politics and discourses of power and domination. Although her 2007 article focuses on Hellenistic *ekphrasis*, she makes an important point about the quadrangulation in the positing of object, viewer, narrator, and implied reader, all of whom contribute to hierarchies of power (2007.46–47).

35 The episode of the Sirens has intriguing similarities with Odysseus's stance and self-positioning.

36 I use the term "viewing subject" as in Goldhill 1994.223 and duBois 2007.47.

As Piero Pucci notes, one of them must disappear (Pucci 1998.177). This is in accordance with his competitiveness, which was described earlier, and his careful ascension in heroic hierarchies as a figure combining both action and passivity.[37] At the same time, the dynamics of the gaze are transformed in the encounter with Heracles. When the two are together, the phantom of Heracles takes the role of the viewing subject (*Od*. 11.615) and is the one who addresses words to Odysseus. Odysseus will regain the "I" in his speech after the disappearance of the phantom of Heracles and only with the hope of seeing other heroes of the old days, until suddenly he has to leave out of fear that Persephone might send him the head of the Gorgon.

Both Heracles and the Gorgon are powerful images to bring into a narrative. This becomes even more the case when the two are so intricately linked at the end of the book that has focused primarily on the very act of viewing. The emphasis on the terrifying belt prefigures the presence of the Gorgon: fear is associated with the Gorgon. The description of Heracles' appearance in the *Nekyia* and the *ekphrasis* of his belt also recall the mention of Athena's peplos, which she herself made, in the *Iliad* (5.733ff.) and her aegis, which portrays the head of the Gorgon. Those similarities in epic diction establish the connections between the Gorgon and Heracles (*Il*. 5.733–42).

> Αὐτὰρ Ἀθηναίη κούρη Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο
> πέπλον μὲν κατέχευεν ἑανὸν πατρὸς ἐπ᾽ οὔδει,
> ποικίλον, ὅν ῥ᾽ αὐτὴ ποιήσατο καὶ κάμε χερσίν·
> ἢ δὲ χιτῶν᾽ ἐνδῦσα Διὸς νεφεληγερέταο
> τεύχεσιν ἐς πόλεμον θωρήσσετο δακρυόεντα.
> ἀμφὶ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ὤμοισιν βάλετ᾽ αἰγίδα θυσσανόεσσαν
> δεινήν, ἣν περὶ μὲν πάντῃ Φόβος ἐστεφάνωται,
> ἐν δ᾽ Ἔρις, ἐν δ᾽ Ἀλκή, ἐν δὲ κρυόεσσα Ἰωκή,
> ἐν δέ τε Γοργείη κεφαλὴ δεινοῖο πελώρου
> δεινή τε σμερδνή τε, Διὸς τέρας αἰγιόχοιο.

37 In the Sirens' episode, Odysseus is passive, as he becomes the listener of the *Iliad* by hearing the Sirens' song. As Cook 1999.162 remarks: "We are thus presented with an image of the hero reduced to a condition of complete physical passivity as he suffers acute mental anguish while yearning to relive his Iliadic past." Cook argues that Odysseus is someone who presents himself as a Man of Suffering in a way that reformulates the concept of heroism.

> But Athene, daughter of Zeus who bears the aegis, let fall on her father's floor her soft robe, richly embroidered, that she herself had made and her hands had fashioned, and put on the tunic of Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, and arrayed herself in armor for tearful war. Around her shoulders she flung the tasseled aegis, fraught with terror, all around which Rout is set as a crown, and on it is Strife, on it Valor, and on it Assault, that makes the blood run cold, and on it is the Gorgon head of the terrible monster, terrible and awful, a portent of Zeus who bears the aegis.

The Gorgon is δεινή and σμερδνή, causing fear in her viewers. The word σμερδνή underlines the perception from the perspective of the viewer. Odysseus himself is described as σμερδαλέος in a line (6.137) that shows how he was perceived by Nausicaa and her maidens when he was first found, lying naked on the shore. The word σμερδαλέον has to do with fear and causing fear, as other instances of the word in the *Iliad* attest.[38] The use of the word in the *Odyssey* tends to draw attention to the fear produced by what is characterized as σμερδαλέον, as in the Cyclops episode. When Polyphemus cried terribly, Odysseus and his companions were seized by terror (*Od*. 9.395–96):

> σμερδαλέον δὲ μέγ' ὤμωξεν, περὶ δ' ἴαχε πέτρη,
> ἡμεῖς δὲ δείσαντες ἀπεσσύμεθ'.
>
> Terribly then did he cry aloud, and the rock rang around;
> and we, seized with terror, shrank back.

The epithets that describe fear or the look in one's eye are put in a context that underlines the perspective of the viewer in the narrative. For the linguistic affinity of the word σμερδαλέον with overtones of monstrosity, one can also compare the Scylla episode in the *Odyssey*: Scylla is described as a σμερδαλέη κεφαλή, a creature that becomes a fearful sight and produces terrifying sounds. The narrative characterizes Scylla as a πέλωρ κακόν that no one, including the gods, would like to encounter (*Od*. 12.85–92):

> ἔνθα δ' ἐνὶ Σκύλλη ναίει δεινὸν λελακυῖα.
> τῆς ἦ τοι φωνὴ μὲν ὅση σκύλακος νεογιλῆς

38 *Iliad* 2.334, 8.92, 15.648, 16.277, 18.35.

> γίνεται, αὐτὴ δ' αὖτε πέλωρ κακόν· οὐδέ κέ τίς μιν
> γηθήσειεν ἰδών, οὐδ' εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε.
> τῆς ἦ τοι πόδες εἰσὶ δυώδεκα πάντες ἄωροι,
> ἓξ δέ τέ οἱ δειραὶ περιμήκεες, ἐν δὲ ἑκάστῃ
> σμερδαλέη κεφαλή, ἐν δὲ τρίστοιχοι ὀδόντες,
> πυκνοὶ καὶ θαμέες, πλεῖοι μέλανος θανάτοιο.
>
> In it dwells Scylla, yelping terribly. Her voice to be sure is only as loud as the voice of a newborn whelp, but she herself is an evil monster, nor would anyone be glad at the sight of her, not even though it should be a god that met her. She has, you must know, twelve legs, all flexible, and six necks, exceedingly long, and on each one a frightful head, and in it three rows of teeth, thick and close, full of black death.

The same kind of monstrous sight appears again at *Odyssey* 11.634 in the form of the Gorgon's head, described there as a δεινόν πέλωρον. The analogous concept of a head of the δεινοῖο πέλωρου Gorgon is found in the text of the *Shield* (223). An analysis of this passage of the *Shield* (216–37) will shed more light on the end of the *Nekyia* and the dynamics of the encounter between Heracles and Odysseus.[39]

III. CONSTRUCTED GENEALOGIES AND TERRIFYING LOOKS: HERACLES AND THE GORGON

Heracles' shield is described as "all-glancing" (παναίολον, *Shield* 139), an epithet glossed by the poet in the fuller description that follows (141–48) at the beginning of the *ekphrasis* that describes the central patterns on the shield. The description begins with a reference to the center of the shield, where Fear is depicted (*Shield* 144–45):

> ἐν μέσσῳ δ' ἀδάμαντος ἔην Φόβος οὔ τι φατειός,
> ἔμπαλιν ὄσσοισιν πυρὶ λαμπομένοισι δεδορκώς·
>
> In the middle was Fear, made of adamant, unspeakable, glaring backwards with eyes shining like fire.

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39 The Gorgon is also seen in relation with Heracles in the Hesiodic fragments 25.7 and 17, fragment 193.13 in P. Oxy. 2355 249A (ed. Lobel) and underscores the interplay between different generations of heroes.

The personification of Fear stands in the middle, described by the details of the way he looks. His gaze is captivating because of its glow, but also because he looks backward. Other images that convey fear are added to the ekphrastic list including personified images of Pursuit, Panic, Slaughter, and Strife, and images of battle. Among the heroic tales, it is noteworthy that Perseus and the story of the Gorgons are singled out in the description of Heracles' shield (*Shield* 216–31):

> Ἐν δ' ἦν ἠυκόμου Δανάης τέκος, ἱππότα Περσεύς,
> οὔτ' ἄρ' ἐπιψαύων σάκεος ποσὶν οὔθ' ἑκὰς αὐτοῦ,
> θαῦμα μέγα φράσσασθ', ἐπεὶ οὐδαμῇ ἐστήρικτο.
> τὼς γάρ μιν παλάμαις τεῦξεν κλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις,
> χρύσεον· ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶν ἔχεν πτερόεντα πέδιλα·
> ὤμοισιν δέ μιν ἀμφὶ μελάνδετον ἆορ ἔκειτο
> χαλκέου ἐκ τελαμῶνος· ὃ δ' ὥς τε νόημ' ἐποτᾶτο·
> πᾶν δὲ μετάφρενον εἶχε κάρη δεινοῖο πελώρου,
> Γοργοῦς· ἀμφὶ δέ μιν κίβισις θέε, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι,
> ἀργυρέη· θύσανοι δὲ κατῃωρεῦντο φαεινοὶ
> χρύσειοι· δεινὴ δὲ περὶ κροτάφοισι ἄνακτος
> κεῖτ' Ἄιδος κυνέη νυκτὸς ζόφον αἰνὸν ἔχουσα.
> αὐτὸς δὲ σπεύδοντι καὶ ἐρρίγοντι ἐοικὼς
> Περσεὺς Δαναΐδης ἐτιταίνετο· ταὶ δὲ μετ' αὐτὸν
> Γοργόνες ἄπλητοί τε καὶ οὐ φαταὶ ἐρρώοντο
> ἰέμεναι μαπέειν.
>
> Upon it was fine-haired Danae's son, the horseman Perseus, neither touching the shield with his feet nor far from it—a great wonder to observe, since nowhere was he attached to it. For that was how with his skilled hands the renowned Lame One had wrought him, made of gold. Around his feet he wore winged sandals; around his shoulders hung a black-bound sword from a bronze baldric. He flew like a thought. The head of a terrible monster, the Gorgon, covered his whole back; a pouch ran around it, a wonder to see, made of silver; shining tassels hung down from it, made of gold. The terrible helmet of Hades was set around the king's temples and held the dread darkness of night. Perseus himself, Danae's son, was outstretched, and he looked as though he were hastening and shuddering.

> The Gorgons, dreadful and unspeakable, were rushing after him, eager to catch him.

Perseus with his winged sandals is described here as not touching the ground and having the "head of the dreadful monster," the Gorgon, contained in a silver bag. The same formula for the Gorgon, the "head of a dreadful monster" (*Od.* 11.634) is what appears at the end of Odysseus's *catabasis*. Moreover, the reference to the "darkness of night" (*Shield* 227) is another link to Heracles' apparition at the end of the *Nekyia*. Epic diction intricately connects the heroes and their traditions. Heracles and Perseus are also related; according to all accounts, Heracles is descended from Perseus (Gantz 1993.299). Thus different layers of heroic generations are juxtaposed and interact in a sophisticated intertextual engagement.

For the Gorgon, perceived as an active viewer herself, early Greek epic narrative carefully constructs her gaze through the description of its representation on Agamemnon's shield (*Il.* 11.34–40):

> τῇ δ' ἐπὶ μὲν Γοργὼ βλοσυρῶπις ἐστεφάνωτο
> δεινὸν δερκομένη, περὶ δὲ Δεῖμός τε Φόβος τε.
> τῆς δ' ἐξ ἀργύρεος τελαμὼν ἦν· αὐτὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ
> κυάνεος ἐλέλικτο δράκων, κεφαλαὶ δέ οἱ ἦσαν
> τρεῖς ἀμφιστρεφέες ἑνὸς αὐχένος ἐκπεφυυῖαι.
>
> And on it was set as a crown the Gorgon, grim of aspect, glaring terribly, and about her were Terror and Rout. From the shield was hung a baldric of silver, and on it writhed a serpent of cyanus, which had three heads turned in different directions, growing from one neck.

This appropriation of the Gorgon and her eyes is used again in the *Iliad* for Hector (8.349), and to describe what was on Athena's shield. The presence of the Gorgon adds to the sound effect of such references.[40] Noisiness is implied in the etymology of the name "Gorgon," as the

40 The emphasis on the "vocal" is also seen in Pindar's *Pythian* 12 and his rendering of the Medusa story. Pindar replaces the actual decapitation of Medusa with the "shout" of Perseus. His shout of exultation is contrasted with the other Gorgons' wailing dirge; see Segal 1995.15–16.

Sanskrit and Greek cognates reveal.[41] However, the eyes become the most prominent feature, with their mythical petrifying power. As E. Phinney remarks, the Gorgon's eyes as molded in apotropaic masks like the Gorgoneion "may have served a function similar to that of the stylized eyes in modern Mediterranean fetish beads and distracted some other, alien Evil Eye from fastening its baleful look on persons or buildings that displayed (and therefore were protected by) the Gorgoneion."[42] In the earliest attestations in art of Perseus and the Gorgon, the proto-Attic Eleusis amphora and two Boeotian relief pithoi dating from the early seventh century, Perseus clearly avoids the Gorgon's face.[43]

Epic references to the Gorgon are also accompanied by references to the often-personified notions of Fear or Terror, put in visual terms as the companions of the Gorgon in descriptions like the one at *Iliad* 11.37.[44] There is a strong affinity between the effect of the Gorgon's appearance in epic diction and that of Heracles in the *Odyssey*.[45] Both Heracles and the Gorgon are portrayed as active gazers who cause fear and bring destruction. Their gaze is characterized as δεινόν.[46]

Let us now go back to the end of *Odyssey* 11 to conclude this examination of Odysseus's sudden departure. Odysseus, ever competitive as a warrior and bard, avoids direct competition with the heroes of his past.[47] Both Heracles and Odysseus share a *catabasis*, though the journeys are structurally very different. The Homeric mythic tradition certainly knew the story that Eurystheus had sent Heracles to the Underworld for the dog Cerberus (*Il.* 8.367–68 and *Od.* 11.623–26).[48] Heracles presents his *cataba-*

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41 Phinney 1971.447; see also Napier 1986.88.

42 Phinney 1971.448. For the popularity of the Gorgon's head as a prophylactic charm against the "evil eye" from an anthropological perspective, see Elworthy 1903.217.

43 Gantz 1993.304, with further bibliography.

44 As Napier 1986.88 argues, the appearance of the Gorgon on Athena's shield affirms the legitimacy of the Gorgon's head as an apotropaic device on warriors' shields.

45 Homer does not directly allude to the tale of the Gorgon and Perseus, except perhaps in *Iliad* 5.738–42, where Athena wears her aegis that depicts the Gorgon head; see Gantz 1993.20. It is possible that Homer also used the tale of Athena's slaying of a Gorgon at Phlegrae, told in Euripides *Ion* 989–96, for this reference in the *Iliad.* The Hesiodic tradition is replete with details regarding the story of the Gorgon. For the abundant artistic representations, see Gantz 1993.20–21, 304–07.

46 *Il.* 11.37 for Gorgo and *Od.* 11. 608 for Heracles.

47 For an analogy between Odysseus and the bard, see Kelly 2008. As Kelly 2008.198 remarks, Odysseus "is a portrait of the personalized poets with whom Homer himself was competing."

48 On the *Odyssey* and epic traditions of Heracles, see Danek 1998.245–50.

sis as an ἄεθλος that became known as his last labor, whereas Odysseus's *catabasis* is directed at acquiring knowledge about his own future.[49] The end of the Odyssean *catabasis* is problematic as it constructs a fearful and sudden exit from the Underworld, with the risk of appearing unheroic.[50] Odysseus carefully alludes to the Gorgon story with an attitude that systematically avoids a "gorgonized" Heracles in diction. Moreover, Heracles is given direct speech without any response from Odysseus. While one can argue that Heracles is an εἴδωλον, still the frame of the encounter between the two heroes stands as unique. As discussed earlier, Odysseus is very careful not to compete against the heroes of prior generations, remaining consistent in his desire to avoid challenging them. The absence of a response from Odysseus is not simply idiosyncratic, it is in accordance with the rules that he himself laid out earlier in the *Apologoi*. He wants to be the first, as he forcefully stated to the Phaeacians, but makes sure that no conflict will arise with those of earlier generations.

Recent scholarship on the importance of direct speech quoted by characters in epic poetry shows the complexities of character portrayal (Beck 2008a and b). Direct speech is invested with expressive power and, as Deborah Beck suggests (2008b.163), can "lend a particular flavor to the incident that the storyteller is narrating." Heracles' address to Odysseus is direct, but forms part of a larger storytelling by Odysseus. As such, the sympathy that Heracles offers to Odysseus and Odysseus's fearful exit from the Underworld need to be read in parallel.[51] The heroes come together on Heracles' initiative, yet Odysseus is consistently careful not to come across as an open competitor. The agonistic perspective is defined through collaboration, not clash.

IV. CONCLUSION

What further meaning can be understood from the reference to the Gorgon at the end of the *catabasis*? For Odysseus, the hero and protagonist of his own narrative, the encounter with Heracles is constructed as a compliment

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49 For the conflation of a necromancy scene with a visit to the Underworld, see Clark 1979.37–78.

50 The end of the *Nekyia* alludes to the Iliadic proverbial phrase that it is better to flee than to die (*Il.* 14.81).

51 The encounter between Heracles and Meleager in the Underworld in Bacchylides 5 is a parallel scene of the meeting of two heroes.

to Heracles and himself. As stated earlier, Heracles' address to Odysseus brings the two heroes close to each other (*Od.* 11.617–19):

> διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
> ἆ δείλ', ἦ τινὰ καὶ σὺ κακὸν μόρον ἡγηλάζεις,
> ὅν περ ἐγὼν ὀχέεσκον ὑπ' αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο.
>
> Son of Laertes, sprung of Zeus, Odysseus of many devices,
> ah, wretched man, do you, too, drag out an evil lot such
> as I once bore beneath the rays of the sun.

Odysseus makes clear the rules of such an encounter. Earlier generations should be dealt with carefully to avoid *hubris*. When he talks to the Phaeacians, he claims that he is the best of all mortals of his time, but will not compete with those of the past (*Od.* 8.221–22). By alluding actively to earlier genealogies, he gets credit for aligning his actions with those of previous heroes, while also knowing what to do in similar situations.[52]

For Odysseus the performer there is an added benefit: intertextual allusion—not to a nonexistent text but to other mythic narratives.[53] Odysseus is not simply a bard who wins over his audience with his performance. He also impresses them with his true knowledge of a repertoire of heroic deeds. He manipulates time and chronological gaps in his favor. He has managed to internalize the decoded messages of epic stories that form his past, and he does so by not simply carefully avoiding confrontation but also by refashioning other heroes' methods. The *Odyssey* portrays at its end an Odysseus who looks just like Heracles, δεινὸν παπταίνων, at the slaughter of the suitors (*Od.* 24.179), a hero who has adapted his lessons well and uses Eurytus's bow, the weapon of an earlier hero, to kill his opponents.

At the end of the *Nekyia,* not only does Odysseus affirm his bardic as well as his heroic identity, he seals his own performance. His fearful exit shows an Odysseus who has internalized a most important lesson, as he uses a rhetoric of modesty. His admission of fear is part of his strategy as an emerging performer. A glorious exit from the Underworld would have

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52 For oral tradition and genealogies, see Scodel 1998.176–78.

53 Burgess 2001. For a discussion of intertextuality in light of oral theory, see Burgess 2006.161–66.

been very dangerous for the hero.[54] He saw many heroes who approached him. By leaving the way he did, he gives his audience a simple anthropological and ontological truth.

The end of the *Nekyia* constructs careful allusions to other traditional epic narratives while also showing familiarity with the cultural world of its intended audience. Each oral performance has a wide spectrum of referential capacities (Bauman 2004.6). Performers and audience engage in a negotiation process in which the former must adapt to the knowledge, expectation, and background of the latter (Burgess 2006.173). In such a process, there is enormous potential for traditional referentiality, mythological intertextuality, and cross-referencing with living traditions (Burgess 2006.173–77). Such traditions can also allude to notional motifs and underlying ideologies.[55] Odysseus seals his performance of the *catabasis* and ensures the continuation of his identity as a hero by satisfying the audience's demand for a fearful moment, winning their sympathy, and reaching an agonizing crescendo with the image of the Gorgon. Most important, through a preoccupation with the construct of the "I," the dominant subject of the *Apologoi*, he avoids the evil eye.

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54 See Ford 1992. De Jong 2006 discusses how Homer's modesty is portrayed in the construction of poetic self-consciousness through a skillful appeal to the Muses; via the Muses, personal creation is exalted and achieves immortal *kleos*. In a similar vein, as I argue here, Odysseus, a paradigmatic Homeric narrator, encapsulates in the last episode of his *catabasis* the creator's modesty, a modesty that validates *kleos*. Odysseus here claims *kleos* for his works and his storytelling. The works alone are not enough; it is the storytelling that makes these works worthy.

55 As Tsagalis 2008.188 has remarked: "*Traditional referentiality* . . . makes notionally *present* what is dictionally *absent*, i.e., it makes the *text* yield to the *tradition*" (emphasis added).

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