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The Trip of a Lifetime

Journeying to the Afterlife in Ancient Greece

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ABSTRACT

Though there has been much scholarship on various aspects of death and the afterlife in ancient Greece, there has been little attempt to view the evidence in the context of the afterlife journey as a composite whole. This thesis aims to present a comprehensive study on different aspects of ancient Greek eschatology in the context of the afterlife journey, in order to reconstruct the process of the transition. This is achieved by investigating the eschatological themes and motifs which are reflected in ancient Greek literature, iconography, and archaeological remains. The text is loosely structured on a traveller's 'guide', which consists of three basic stages of the afterlife journey: preparation, transit, and arrival.

Chapter One outlines the actions undertaken in preparation for the soul's journey to the afterlife, primarily regarding the performance of proper burial rites, which were imagined in early times to directly affect the soul's incorporation into Hades, but by the Classical period were no longer necessary for entry into the afterlife. Still, certain practices, such as the provision of grave goods, did facilitate the soul's journey to a certain extent. Chapter Two examines how the soul's transit from the upper to the lower world was imagined, either through flight or by foot, along with the help of mythological guides. Evidence also shows that the soul was imagined to reach the underworld by travelling to the horizon in the west, after which it was required to cross a body of water. Chapter Three explores the different afterlife destinations for the dead and their criteria for admission. Sources suggest that places of reward and punishment for ordinary souls in the afterlife emerge during the late Archaic and early Classical periods, but became more clearly established during the Classical period. Also assessed are the challenges and hazards which the soul encounters after it has arrived in the underworld, which ultimately functioned to determine the final destiny of the soul.

Analysis of the primary sources shows that there was a development of afterlife beliefs during the Archaic period which led to a more complex and elaborate portrayal of the afterlife journey than what had previously been described by Homer.

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INTRODUCTION

*"I often weep in fear of Tartaros: for the recess of Haides is grim, and the road down to it grievous;
and it is certain that he who goes down does not come up again."*

(Anacreon, *frag.* 395, Campbell)

What happens to the soul after death is a topic that has intrigued humankind for thousands of years. The ancient Greeks believed that following death, the souls of the dead travelled to a place commonly known as Hades, which was located somewhere beneath the depths of the earth. The soul's journey was variously represented in the ancient sources, indicating that Greek eschatology was a complex system, made up of different beliefs that were constantly changing and evolving.

Death and the afterlife have both been topics of much discussion in the field of Classics. Beliefs and attitudes concerning death and the afterlife can be seen to have a direct impact on society, particularly in relation to ritual behaviour, which can dictate the way in which an individual leads their life, as well as how they treat their loved ones after death. For this reason, the analysis of afterlife beliefs can shed light on other social, cultural, and political issues within Greek society.

Existing scholarship examines how different conceptions of the afterlife were expressed in Greek literature, art, and archaeology throughout antiquity, and is primarily concerned with how these conceptions changed over time, as well as how they may have impacted society.

Influential research on aspects of death in early Greek art and literature has been conducted by Emily Vermeule, who, among many other things, has analysed how the disembodied soul was

visualised by the early Greeks. In her book *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*,¹ Vermeule has argued that conceptions and representations of the soul in Archaic and Classical sources can be traced back to the Mycenaean period, indicating a continuation of afterlife beliefs from the Bronze Age through to the Classical period.

Also hugely influential is Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood's *'Reading' Greek Death: To the End of the Classical Period*, which features an in-depth study concerning eschatological developments that occurred during the Archaic and Classical periods, particularly concerning when and how the soul was imagined to be integrated into the afterlife.² Sourvinou-Inwood shows that a shift in collective attitudes to death during the Archaic period led to a more individual and anxious approach to the afterlife transition, which in turn saw the emergence of more complex afterlife beliefs, in order to satisfy new 'needs'.³

Prominent research has also been conducted by Radcliffe Edmonds, who has provided new insights into the eschatology behind the 'Orphic' gold tablets. In *Myths of the Underworld journey: Plato, Aristophanes, and the 'Orphic' Gold Tablets*, Edmonds analyses myths of underworld descent presented in three texts: The 'Orphic' gold tablets, Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and Plato's *Phaedo*. Edmonds shows that each text presents a common pattern of action, being the journey to the underworld, and uses this as a framework to make comparisons between the texts. By doing so, he identifies common mythic elements in the texts, which he suggests are likely drawn from traditional mythic material, and examines the ways in which each author manipulates these in order to suit their own agenda. Edmonds argues that by uncovering the agendas of these authors we can gain a deeper understanding

¹ Vermeule (1979).

² Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), though her research spans from the Minoan and Mycenaean periods through to the end of the Classical Age.

³ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 299, 354.

of the individual texts, as well as how myth was used by the Greeks during the Classical period.

Though there has been much scholarship on specific aspects of the afterlife and the preceding journey in Greek belief, there has been little attempt to view the evidence in the context of the afterlife journey as a composite whole. For this reason, the aim of this thesis is to present a comprehensive study of the afterlife journey, in order to reconstruct the process of transition from this world to the next. This thesis explores different aspects of ancient Greek eschatology by analysing a wide range of sources from different disciplines, in order to better understand Greek conceptions about what happened to the soul following death. The research also analyses how the afterlife journey was variously represented by the Greeks and how these representations changed over time.

The research mostly focuses on evidence from the Greek mainland, dating from the Geometric period through to the Hellenistic period, though there is more attention paid to the Archaic and Classical periods, owing to the significant developments that occurred during that time. Some sources from outside of these parameters are also included to supplement the discussion and provide comparisons accordingly.

In reconstructing the afterlife beliefs of the Greeks we must analyse different types of evidence over different periods of time, in order to see which ideas about the afterlife remain constant, and what sort of developments take place. This can be achieved by investigating the eschatological themes and motifs that are reflected in Greek literature, iconography, and archaeological remains.

Relevant literary sources consist of poetry, historical accounts, and philosophic dialogues. Probably the most significant Greek texts are the Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which are generally believed to have been written down sometime between 750 and 650 BCE (with the *Iliad*

the earlier of the two). The eschatological notions presented in these poems provide a starting point for much of the discussion in this thesis, since they are central works of Greek literature, being the oldest and quite probably the most influential on later Greek afterlife beliefs. However, the interpretation of the Homeric poems is not straightforward, since they are a product of centuries' worth of oral poetry and, therefore, consist of a combination of elements derived from different societies over different periods of time.⁴ For this reason, the ideas presented in the Homeric poems must be viewed in their historical context.

Literary evidence concerning ideas about the soul's journey through the netherworld during the Classical period largely comes from the dialogues of Plato, who presents three different visions of the afterlife in the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic*. These works were written at different times during Plato's career, and vary in both details and complexity.⁵ The primary issue regarding the use of Plato as a source for Classical afterlife beliefs is that, though Plato is likely drawing from common mythical material, he is using it as a means of putting forth his own philosophical arguments, which will have to be taken into consideration when analysing the dominant themes and motifs.

The iconographic sources assessed here include primarily vase paintings, but also some relief sculptures, which depict funerary practices and eschatological themes. White-ground *lekythoi* are a particularly rich source for such information, as they developed their own iconography of death and mourning which became highly popular during the Classical period. *Lekythoi* were closely connected with funerary rites and were common grave gifts in Athens during the fifth century BCE. They depicted different aspects of the soul's transition, and are highly useful for investigating conceptions of the afterlife journey, as well as for understanding the perceived nature of the soul in Classical Greece. In his book *Picturing Death in Classical Athens: The Evidence of the White Lekythoi*, John Oakley provides

⁴ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 12-13.

⁵ Annas (1982), provides discussion on these three texts.

valuable analysis on the iconography of white-ground *lekythoi*, by assessing how compositions change over time and by highlighting particular iconographic themes.⁶

Archaeological sources consist of material remains from burial sites, such as grave goods, tombstones, and funerary offerings. General archaeological information is largely obtained from Kurtz and Boardman's *Greek Burial Customs*, which provides compiled research on the archaeology of Greek burial customs from the late Mycenaean period to the Hellenistic period.⁷ Archaeological evidence will also be supplemented by more recent scholarship.

One particular type of grave good which has had a great effect on the study of ancient Greek afterlife beliefs is undoubtedly the 'Orphic' tablets, small inscribed sheets of gold foil dating from the fifth century BCE to the second century CE, which have been found in burials throughout the Greek world. These are believed to have been connected with mystery cults, and are vital for our understanding of the experiences and beliefs of their followers. However, owing to the secretive nature of mystery cults, we do not know the exact ideological or ritual context into which the gold tablets fit. For this reason, the content of the tablets must be assessed in relation to the individual deceased person, rather than necessarily in the context of the larger mystic community.

In this thesis the tablets are interpreted with the help of analysis by Radcliffe Edmonds, as well as by Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston, who provide invaluable discussion on the topic.⁸ The texts and translations that I use in my discussion are those provided by Edmonds, since his list includes tablets that have been discovered more recently.

⁶ Oakley (2004).

⁷ Kurtz and Boardman (1971).

⁸ Edmonds (2011); Graf and Johnston (2013); Bernabé et al. (2008) also provide highly valuable scholarship on the topic.

This thesis is structured as a sort of ‘companion guide’ to the afterlife journey, which begins at the moment of death and ends with the incorporation of the soul into the world of the dead. Accordingly, the chapters have been laid out in three basic phases: preparation, transit, and arrival. The key questions this thesis specifically tries to address are: how the soul made its way to the afterlife; whether there was anything the living could do to assist the soul in its journey; and what happened to the soul once it arrived in the underworld.

The first chapter examines the ‘preparations’ that may be undertaken to both assist the deceased on their journey to the underworld and help them gain admission into the afterlife. This includes actions undertaken by the survivors of the deceased, including the performance of funerary rites, which may have helped to secure the soul’s transition, and the provision of grave goods, primarily items that may have been essential for the last journey. The chapter also assesses the actions taken by an individual during life in preparation for the afterlife, such as being initiated into a religious cult or maintaining a moral or pious lifestyle, in an effort to secure a better lot after death.

The second chapter focuses on the journey itself, beginning from the moment the soul leaves the body and finishing with the moment that it passes through the gates of Hades. It discusses the means by which the soul was imagined to make its way to the underworld, as well as the role of certain divine figures who were thought to help guide the deceased to the afterlife. The chapter also looks at the route the soul took during its journey to the underworld, such as where entrances to the underworld were believed to be located, as well as the geographical features that the soul might encounter during its voyage.

The third and final chapter concerns the arrival of the soul in the underworld and what it encounters after it has passed through the gates of Hades. The chapter explores the different afterlife

destinations within the world of the dead and their specific criteria for admission. It also looks at how the soul navigates the underworld, and the challenges and hazards which might prevent it from reaching its final destination, such as dangerous diversions and confrontations with underworld figures.

CHAPTER ONE: PREPARATION

Whether the living could do anything to assist the soul in its journey to the afterlife has long been a topic of scholarly speculation. The issue is particularly connected with the practice of funerary rites, which involved preparing the body for burial, the execution of the burial itself, and the associated graveside rituals. This chapter will investigate whether the preparation of the body for burial was thought to affect in some way the departure of the soul from the body, or its admission into the afterlife. It will also explore whether the deceased was believed to require provisions for the long road ahead, in the form of offerings or grave goods. Finally, the last section will consider whether anything could be done prior to death in order to prepare for the last journey.

Funerary Rites and the Afterlife Journey

In Homer we are presented with the notion that failure to perform proper funerary rites could negatively affect the soul's transition to the afterlife. This idea appears in Book 23 of the *Iliad*, where the ghost of Patroclus complains that he is unable to pass through the gates of Hades while his body remains unburied:⁹

θάπτε με ὅτι τάχιστα, πύλας Ἄϊδαο περήσω.
 τῆλέ με εἴργουσι ψυχαί, εἶδωλα καμόντων,
 οὐδέ μέ πω μίσεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐῷσιν,
 ἀλλ' αὐτως ἀλάλημαι ἀν' εὐρυπυλῆς Ἄϊδος δῶ.
 καί μοι δὸς τὴν χεῖρ', ὀλοφύρομαι· οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' αὖτις

⁹ Θάπτω, meaning 'to honour with funerary rites', as well as 'to bury'.

νίσομαι ἐξ Αἴδαο, ἐπήν με πυρὸς λελάχητε.

“Bury me with all speed, let me pass inside the gates of Hades. Far do the spirits keep me away, the phantoms of men that have done with toils, and they do not yet allow me to mingle with them beyond the river, but vainly I wander through the wide-gated house of Hades. And give me your hand, I beg you, for never more again will I return out of Hades, when once you have given me my share of fire.”

(Il. 23.71-76, Murray and Wyatt)

Prevented from joining the community of the dead, the spirit of Patroclus is forced to wander restlessly on the outskirts of Hades, trapped between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The idea that the soul would be excluded from entering Hades until the body is buried does not appear again in the Homeric poems so explicitly. However, a similar plea for burial is presented in the *Odyssey* by the spirit of Elpenor, who asks Odysseus not to leave his body behind unwept and unburied.

μή μ' ἄκλαυτον ἄθαπτον ἰὼν ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν
νοσφισθεῖς, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι,
ἀλλά με κακῆραι σὺν τεύχεσιν, ἄσσα μοι ἔστιν,
σῆμά τέ μοι χεῦται πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης,
ἄνδρὸς δυστήνοιο καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.

“Do not, when you depart, leave me behind unwept and unburied and turn away; I might become a cause of the gods’ wrath against you. No, burn me with my armor, such as it is, and heap up a mound for me on the shore of the gray sea, in memory of an unlucky man, that men yet to be may know of me.”

(*Od.* 11.72-76, Murray, rev. Dimock)

Though Elpenor does not say that he is excluded from Hades, some scholars believe that, like Patroclus, he is trapped at the outskirts of the underworld, and therefore not fully integrated into the community of the dead.¹⁰ One piece of evidence cited for this claim is that Elpenor is not said to drink the sacrificial blood before speaking to Odysseus, something the other spirits must do in order to regain consciousness.¹¹ The spirit of Tiresias explains to Odysseus that drinking the blood allows the spirits to converse with Odysseus, since (as we are told elsewhere) the shades of the dead are witless, and without intelligence.¹²

But the connection between the shades' consciousness and their drinking the blood does not remain consistent throughout the narrative of *Odyssey* 11, as not all of the shades with whom Odysseus converses are said to drink the blood, and many of the other spirits he observes in the underworld seem to function in a perfectly conscious manner without having even approached Odysseus and the sacrificial pit.¹³ This suggests that the notion of the 'witless' dead was combined by Homer with another belief of more 'lively' shades, the former perhaps having been inherited from older epic material, and the latter having been part of the eschatology of Homer's own society.¹⁴ For this reason, the fact that Elpenor does not drink the blood before speaking with Odysseus may not necessarily be of any great eschatological significance.

But further clues about Elpenor's status may lie in the surrounding textual context. Elpenor is

¹⁰ Bremmer (2002) 89-90; Johnston (1999) 9.

¹¹ Griffin (1980) 161; Johnston (1999) 9.

¹² *Od.* 11.147-8, 476; Circe tells Odysseus (*Od.* 10.493-5) that Persephone allowed Tiresias alone to keep his mind while the rest of the dead flit like shadows.

¹³ Odysseus observes Minos (11.568-71) and Orion (11.572-5) engaged in activities.

¹⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 82.

not the only shade Odysseus encounters at the entrance to Hades, as he is also approached by the ghosts of brides, unwed youths, and blood-stained warriors, among others. Johnston has suggested that these spirits represent other restless dead who, like Elpenor, have not yet been incorporated into Hades.¹⁵ The warriors still wearing their bloody armour may be in a similar situation to Elpenor, with their bodies lying unburied on some battlefield. On the other hand, the spirits of brides and unwed youths may pertain to a category of the 'restless dead', who have died 'before their time', that is, before they were able to marry and have children.¹⁶ Individuals who died prematurely were often imagined to be out of place, and not fully incorporated into the underworld, and for this reason existed in a restless state.¹⁷

The belief that the spirit can only enter or find rest in the afterlife once the body has received a proper burial is common throughout the world, and may have rested on the notion that while the corpse lies unburied, the spirit remains partially connected to the world of the living, and therefore is unable to fully enter the world of the dead.¹⁸ As a result, the spirit of the deceased might return to torment the living, until it is provided with satisfactory rites or offerings.¹⁹

Perhaps a better know-example of an unburied spirit returning to haunt the living is that of Sisyphus who instructed his wife not to perform the proper funerary rites, so that after his death he would be allowed by the underworld gods to return to the upper world to demand the burial of his body. Homer alludes to this myth in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, but otherwise we only have later accounts of the story, all of which vary to some degree.²⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood has argued that according to an

¹⁵ Johnston (1999) 10.

¹⁶ Johnston (2014) 29.

¹⁷ Johnston (1999) 148.

¹⁸ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 308; Johnston (1999) 9, 127. According to Mesopotamian texts, failure to bury the dead made it impossible for the spirit to enter the afterlife and find eternal rest (Heidel, 1949, 155).

¹⁹ Heidel (1949) 156-7.

²⁰ *Od.* 11.681-9; Theognis (*El.* 702-12) says that Sisyphus persuaded Persephone to let him return to the upper

older version of the myth, Sisyphus was not able to enter Hades, because his body had not been buried, and in this way, he was able to return to the upper world.²¹

As well as being a cause for the soul's anger, failure to provide burial may have been thought to invoke the wrath of the gods. In his conversation with Odysseus at the entrance to the underworld, Elpenor threatens that he might become a cause of the gods' wrath if Odysseus does not perform the proper funerary rites.²² A similar warning is also delivered by Hector in Book 22 of the *Iliad*, when Achilles threatens to deprive Hector's body of burial.²³ Which gods Homer refers to is not known, though it is possible that he may have been referring to Hades and Persephone, or even the Erinyes, who punished men for crimes that went against the natural order.²⁴ This indicates that the restless dead were thought to be able to inflict harm upon the living through the agency of divine beings, should the situation require it.²⁵

However, the events in Book 24 of the *Odyssey* presents a contrasting eschatology to the rest of the Homeric poems, as the souls of the slaughtered suitors are said to enter Hades while their bodies still lie unburied in Odysseus' palace.²⁶ This seems to blatantly contradict the requirement for burial seen with Patroclus in the *Iliad*, and arguably also in the case of Elpenor, where the shade was physically prevented from entering Hades proper.

This inconsistency is likely due to the fact that the final book of the *Odyssey* is generally

world; a fragment from Alcaeus (*frag* 38a) says that Sisyphus crossed the Acheron twice, meaning he entered Hades the first time.

²¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 311.

²² *Od.* 11.73.

²³ *Il.* 22.358.

²⁴ Johnston (1999) 140; for Erinyes role as punishers, see Chapter Three, 122.

²⁵ Johnston (1999) 140.

²⁶ *Od.* 24.186-7.

believed to have been composed at a much later date, likely sometime around the early sixth century; therefore, it may reflect a development in afterlife beliefs that took place during the Archaic period, where the shades of the dead were able to enter Hades prior to burial.²⁷ This would suggest that during the Archaic period the rules regarding entry into the afterlife had become much more flexible, allowing for different strands of beliefs to exist simultaneously in the Homeric poems without causing too much confusion.²⁸ It is possible, however, that even though the suitors were able to enter Hades before burial, they may not have been considered fully integrated into the 'community of the dead' until such time as their bodies were buried.²⁹

By the Classical period, any issues regarding the performance of funerary rites are generally more concerned with honour than with admission into the afterlife.³⁰ For example, in Sophocles' *Ajax*, discussion regarding whether or not the body of Ajax has a right to an honourable burial revolves around the laws of the gods, rather than the fate of Ajax' spirit.³¹ This is also seen in *Antigone*, though Sophocles' additionally introduces the threat of ritual pollution as an extreme consequence of leaving a body unburied.³² Despite this, the primary issue at hand throughout the play is clearly the deliberate denial of honour effected through the refusal to provide a proper burial.³³

The Customary Funerary Rites

²⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 104) places the likely date of composition of this book as either the late seventh or, more likely, the first half of the sixth century.

²⁸ Johnston (1999) 14-15.

²⁹ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 310.

³⁰ Parker (1983) 46; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 310. There is also little evidence for a fear that maltreatment of a corpse would inspire divine vengeance (Parker, 1983, 45).

³¹ E.g. *Soph. Aj.* 1333-45; Garland (1985) 102-3.

³² *Soph. Ant.* 999-1030; pollution takes place in the form of scraps of the corpse being dropped on the altars by birds (see Parker, 1983, 33, 44).

³³ Parker (1983) 47-8.

It is clear that the ancient Greeks placed great importance on the performance of funerary rites for the dead. The performance of proper funerary rites was considered to be a privilege of the dead and pertained to both divine and Panhellenic law.³⁴ Homer refers to funerary rites as a γέρας θανόντων, a *gift of honour, or privilege of the dead*. Sophocles describes funerary rites as *unwritten and unfailing ordinances of the gods*, which cannot be transcended by mortal law, while other authors similarly refer to them as the *laws of the gods*.³⁵

Funerary rites carried both social and ritual significance; they provided family and friends with the opportunity to make a proper farewell, while also serving to both formally separate the deceased from the community of the living and incorporate them into the community of the dead.³⁶ Generally, they were also a means by which one could bestow the deceased with honour and prestige, and celebrate their life within the community.³⁷

To deprive the dead of their privilege was considered a disgrace to the living.³⁸ On the other hand, the denial of a proper burial was a way for the living to deprive the deceased of honour, and for this reason was sometimes used as a punishment for traitors or those guilty of sacrilege.³⁹

³⁴ Divine law: *Il.* 16.457, 675; *Od.* 24.190, 296; *Soph. Aj.* 1130, 1335, 1343; *Eur. Supp.* 19, 563; *Paus.* 1.32.5. Panhellenic law: *Eur. Supp.* 311, 526.

³⁵ *Soph. Ant.* 454-455.

³⁶ Mee (2011) 223; see also Johnston (1999) 40, and fn. 9; this ritual structure pertains to the *rites of passage* described by van Gennep (1960).

³⁷ Clarke (1999) 184-5.

³⁸ See Clarke (1999) 185; *Isoc.* 14, 55.

³⁹ See Parker (1983) 45, and fn. 47; though most of the sources refer to Athenian traitors, e.g. *Diod.* 16.25.2, 16.35.6; *Paus.* 10.2.4; *Thuc.* 1.138.6; *Xen. Hell.* 1.7.22; *Plut. Mor.* 834a. Hame (2008, 8) argues that these sources stress refusal of burial in the homeland, rather than necessarily refusal of burial altogether. It was also a popular theme in tragedy for a corpse to be cast out unburied, eg: *Soph. Ant.* 26-30; *Aj.* 1047 ff; *Eur. Phoen.* 1630-35; *Aeschin.* 2.142.

However, failure to bury a body may have also resulted in the spread of death-pollution, caused by exposure of a corpse.⁴⁰ While all death polluted, it was usually confined to the house, affecting only those who had come into contact with a body (or a contaminated house), as well as those who were in a state of mourning.⁴¹ However, if a death occurred in a public place, the surrounding district could become contaminated, and the whole deme would have to be purified; either by the family of the deceased or, in Athens, by the Demarch, who was responsible for the administration of the demos.⁴²

In instances where the bodies could not be buried, symbolic acts of burial may have been considered adequate to escape the effects of pollution. This is suggested in Sophocles' *Antigone*, where just the sprinkling of dust over body and the pouring of libations are portrayed as equivalent to burial.⁴³ Symbolic acts of burial are known to have been performed in cases where bodies could not be found or recovered. An empty bier was sometimes substituted for the missing dead, or a cenotaph was erected for them, which received the same tendance as other graves.⁴⁴ However, in most of these cases, it seems that the primary concern was with providing the dead with an honourable burial, rather than with necessarily averting the spread of pollution.

⁴⁰ Parker (1983, 65) argues that ritual pollution would have originally have helped to define a period of physical peril, with the ceremony at the end marking the end of that period.

⁴¹ Retief and Cilliers (2010) 48; the house became polluted at the moment of death (Parker, 1983, 35); close family members may have automatically become polluted (see Parker, 1983, 39-40).

⁴² Dem. 43.57-8; Parker (1983) 38; if pollution was not dealt with properly, it may have resulted in disaster, such as plague, famine, infertility (Blok, 2006, 231, who cites Hes. *WD*. 240-45), though this was no doubt in extreme situations.

⁴³ Soph. *Ant.* 245-47, 255-56, 429-31; Hame (2008) 9. According to Parker (1983, 44), there was also a generally recognised obligation to perform at least a symbolic act of burial for anyone who encountered an untended corpse.

⁴⁴ E.g. Thuc. 2.34, 7.72.2, 75.3; Diod. 13.100-102; See Pritchett (1974) 236; cenotaphs and tendance: Xen. *Anab.* 6.4.9.; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 264f-265a; see Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 100; Telemachos promises to erect a cenotaph if he finds out Odysseus died away from home (*Od.* 1.289-92, 2.220-23).

Responsibility for the performance of funerary rites usually fell on the heir of the deceased, and neglect of this duty was not only considered impiety, but could result in disinheritance.⁴⁵ In cases where the heir was unwilling or unable to perform the rites, other male relatives, or even male non-relations, could take over the proceedings.⁴⁶ On occasions where an individual had no existing heir, a son may even have been adopted to ensure that the customary rites were performed after their death.⁴⁷

By the Archaic and Classical periods, there is evidence that funerary rites could be regulated by law.⁴⁸ Legislation implemented by several Greek city states prescribed how funerals were to be conducted, especially concerning the participation of women, the performance of lamentations, and the value of offerings and grave goods.⁴⁹ The necessity for such laws indicates that funerary practices were a common concern among Greeks, and were probably a reflection of the changing attitudes to death and burial in the sixth and fifth centuries.⁵⁰

Greek funerary rites consisted of four main stages: the *prothesis*, the *ekphora*, the burial, and the associated graveside rites. Though we find variations in the performance of individual rites, it is

⁴⁵ According to sixth-century Athenian legislation. See Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 143-4; Hame (2008) 4; Mee (2011) 248; obligations of children and heirs: Dem. 24.107, 25.54; disinheritance: Isae. 4.19-20; impious: Din. 2.18; during the time of Aeschines (*Tim.* 1.13-14) there was a legal requirement to perform rites for parents, even if they had been freed from all other obligations while alive; in some cases the *oikos* in which the *prothesis* took place was important, as it often signified a legal entitlement to inheritance (indicated by fifth-century laws in Gortyn, see Garland, 1985, 28; and Blok, 2006, 223).

⁴⁶ Hame (2008) 4; brother: Isae. 1.10; cousins: Isae. 7.30-32; other male relatives: Dem. 48.6-7; friends: Isae. 9.4-5; Lys. 12.18; Din. 2.18.

⁴⁷ Isae. 2.10, 7.30;

⁴⁸ Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 65 (Oikonomou).

⁴⁹ Athenian laws: Dem. 43.62; Plut. *Sol.* 21.4-7; Spartan laws: Plut. *Lyc.* 27; Delphi: *CGRN* 82.C-D; for discussion of funerary laws in ancient Greece, see Blok (2006) 197-243; see also Garland (1985, 21-22), for possible reasons behind funerary restrictions.

⁵⁰ Blok (2006) 229. The similarities between poleis' legislation is likely because they responded to similar attitudes towards death, as well as similar funerary practices (Blok, 2006, 199, 212).

remarkable that the overall ritual structure remained basically unchanged throughout antiquity, and has even persisted through to modern times in some rural Greek communities.⁵¹ Using literary and iconographic sources scholars have been able to reconstruct a series of rituals that were customarily performed after death in order to prepare the deceased for the afterlife journey.

Prothesis

From literary sources we can learn that, immediately following death, the eyes and mouth of the deceased were closed, a practice that was certainly cosmetic in function, but may also have possessed some eschatological significance.⁵² It has been suggested that the closing of the eyes and mouth after death may have marked the release of the soul from the body; this idea may have been related to the belief that the soul resided in the head, and was usually thought to exit from the mouth, eyes, or nostrils.⁵³ However, there is little evidence to suggest that this was a widely held notion in Greece. Instead, it is more likely that this practice was performed more so out of respect for the deceased loved one, as is implied by the ghost of Agamemnon in the *Odyssey*, who complains that Clytemnestra had shamelessly refused to close his eyes and mouth after his death.⁵⁴

The body of the deceased was then washed, anointed and dressed by women in preparation

⁵¹ Vlachou (2012) 364-5; see also Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 58; Robinson (1942) 207. The *prothesis* scene continues, in many variations, from the Geometric period, to the late fifth century, and indicates a continuity of preparatory rites (Shapiro, 1991, 629); Lucian describes these rites centuries later (Luc. *Luct.* 11-24); for funerary rites in rural Greek communities see Danforth (1982).

⁵² *Il.* 11.452-3; *Od.* 11.426, 24.296; Eur. *Hec.* 430; Pl. *Phd.* 118a.

⁵³ As is suggested on a third-century BCE inscription from Smyrna (*Epigr. Gr.* 314.24); see Garland (1985) 23; Stevens (1991) 221. The soul is mentioned to fly out of the mouth (*Il.* 22.467); that the soul was thought to exit through the mouth was likely connected to the etymological association of the soul with 'breath' (Mirto, 2012, 10; see Chapter Two, 60). There is a continued belief in some modern Greek communities that the soul leaves the body through the mouth as a breath of air (Danforth, 1982, 38).

⁵⁴ *Od.* 11.424-6.

for viewing.⁵⁵ The washing and anointing of the body with perfumed oils, while ceremonial in function, would have also helped to remove the signs and smells of illness and death, in order to make it presentable for viewing by family and friends.⁵⁶ A rare depiction of the rite appears on a black-figure *pyxis* from Boeotia, dated 470-460 BCE (**Plate 1**), which shows two women tending to the bloody corpse of Actaeon; one covers his body with a purple shroud while the other cleans his wounds.⁵⁷

The clothing worn by the deceased varied depending on their social status and identity, or even the local funerary restrictions. Pins and brooches found in Geometric graves show that the body was dressed for inhumation, and partially burnt brooches suggest that it was also dressed for cremation. Archaeological evidence also indicates that during the Geometric period the wealthy could be adorned with gold jewellery of the highest quality, though burials containing these items were uncommon, and certainly pertained to the elite.⁵⁸

In Archaic and Classical *prothesis* scenes the deceased is usually shown wrapped in a shroud, with women sometimes depicted wearing jewellery and a *stephane*.⁵⁹ Evidence from Classical burials further shows that diadems or gold wreaths may occasionally also have been placed on the head of

⁵⁵ Washing and dressing the corpse: *Il.* 16.667-75, 18.352, 24.582-90; *Od.* 24.44, 293; *Soph. El.* 1138-42; Women are generally depicted as tending to the corpse: *Pl. Phd.* 115a; *Soph. OC.* 1598-603; for the role of women in funerary rites, see Hame (2008).

⁵⁶ Vermeule (1979) 13. See Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 186; smell caused by dead bodies: *Diod.* 17.64.3; washing and anointing the dead: *Il.* 18.345, 351, 24.582-90 18.345; oil may have been used for purifying and healing purposes, as it was in Israel (*Isaiah* 1:6; *Mark* 6.13; *Luke* 10:34; *James* 5:14-5); water was considered a primary cathartic element by the Greeks, and was used for ritual purification (Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, 149); bathing was also associated with other rites of passage, primarily those of birth and marriage (Vermeule, 1979, 13).

⁵⁷ Black-figure *pyxis*, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 437 (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 67, no. 10, Vivliodetis).

⁵⁸ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 61-2.

⁵⁹ Attic, red-figure, *loutrophoros*, fifth century BCE, Athens National Archaeological Museum, 1170 (see Garland, 1985, 24-7, and fig. 7); Euripides refers to elaborate dress (*Eu. Med.* 980; *Alc.* 613, 631-2).

the deceased.⁶⁰ Crowns and wreaths were ceremonial in function, and likely served to denote the respect paid to the dead.⁶¹ Wreaths may also have been made from perishable materials, such as celery, though these would leave no archaeological trace.⁶² During the Classical period, the type of attire in which the dead were buried was regulated by several Greek states, with some laws even specifying the colour and cost of the shrouds in which the body was laid out, most likely in an effort to reduce ostentation.⁶³

After the body was prepared, it was laid out for viewing on a *kline*, or bier, for the ceremony known as the *prothesis* (literally the 'laying out'), similar to a modern funeral wake. Pillows were placed under the head of the deceased, supposedly in order to stop the jaw from gaping, though chin bands were also sometimes used for this purpose.⁶⁴ The deceased was usually laid out with their feet facing the door, a tradition mentioned by Homer, which is believed by some to have been a means of ensuring that the dead proceeded in the right direction.⁶⁵

It is possible that the nice presentation of the body may have been motivated, at least in part,

⁶⁰ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 101, 207, along with a few pieces of jewellery.

⁶¹ Garland (1985) 26; they may have also been placed on the heads of unmarried or recently married women (Shapiro, 1991, 637).

⁶² Celery was used in the time of Plutarch, owing to its associations with the underworld (Plut. *Tim.* 26).

⁶³ E.g. Funerary legislation of Iulis on Keos dictated that the shroud must be white (*CGRN* 35.A); for colour of shrouds see Blok (2006) 214; see also Garland (1985) 25, 139.

⁶⁴ Depicted in Geometric art as a checkered rectangular area hovering above the bier (Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, 58-9); pillows: Oakley (2004) 77, and pl. 2; chin bands: Attic, black-figure, *loutrophoros*, early fifth century BCE, New York, Metropolitan Museum, 27.228 (see Vermeule, 1979, 14, fig. 8A); Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 72, no. 15 (Zosi); Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 58-59, and pl. 33; one image shows a block placed under the front legs of the bier, presumably to help prevent the jaw from (Oakley, 2004, 85-6, and fig. 54).

⁶⁵ *Il.* 19.212; The feet of the deceased almost always point to the left, where visitors enter the scene, indicating the location of the door (Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, 144); Ferguson (1989, 127) points to the culturally widespread belief that this ensured the dead walked in the right direction, though it may have just been a symbol of departure, possibly in anticipation of their journey to the cemetery; the notion that the corpse would be oriented in the direction that the spirit had to travel is discussed by Ucko (1969, 272), who points out that while this practice is intentional in some societies, it "is by no means invariably true".

by the belief that the state of the corpse affected the state of the spirit in the afterlife.⁶⁶ Vermeule cites a fifth-century krater depicting a girl still wearing her chin band in the underworld as evidence for this belief.⁶⁷ The same notion may also be reflected in the description of soldiers in bloodstained armour whom Odysseus encounters in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, especially if we are to believe that their bodies still lay unburied and uncared for.⁶⁸ On the other hand, this may simply indicate that the spirit appeared as the body did at the moment of death, especially since the dead are occasionally represented as sporting wounds incurred immediately prior to death, such as the gashes displayed by the ghost of Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.⁶⁹

According to Athenian funerary legislation implemented by Solon during the sixth century, the *prothesis* ceremony lasted one day, and was held inside the house.⁷⁰ It is thought that prior to these regulations, the *prothesis* was a large scale and public event that lasted several days and took place out of doors, largely owing to the descriptions provided by Homer and the ostentatious displays in Geometric funerary art.⁷¹ Solon's funerary legislation also restricted the attendance of females at the *prothesis* to close relatives and to women over the age of sixty.⁷² Such restrictions may have been intended to limit the exposure of individuals to death pollution, of which women were particularly

⁶⁶ Vermeule (1979) 14.

⁶⁷ Attic red-figure *krater*, fifth century, New York, Metropolitan Museum, 08.258.21 (Vermeule, 1979, 15, fig. 8B); spirits are sometimes also shown with bandaged wounds (Bremmer, 1983, 84).

⁶⁸ *Od.* 11.41; see Bremmer (1983) 83.

⁶⁹ Aesch. *Eum.* 103, though this passage is definitely for dramatic effect.

⁷⁰ Dem. 43.62; there is some scholarly debate as to where exactly in the house it might have occurred. Boardman argues that the *prothesis* was held in the porch (Boardman, 1955, 55-6), while others have suggested that the *andron* is the most likely location (see Oakley, 2004, 82).

⁷¹ Alexiou (2002) 5; Blok (2006) 211-2. The laws were possibly intended to discourage large-scale ceremonies in view of the public (Boardman, 1955, 56). Humphreys (1983, 266) points out that temporal constraints on the early stages of death would have limited the length of the *prothesis*, owing to the increasing decay of the corpse; in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 19.30-39; 24.18-9, 414-21), the gods magically preserve the bodies of the heroes, so the funerals can be extended (Humphreys, 1983, 266).

⁷² Dem. 43.62.

susceptible.⁷³ As a result of the laws, there was a noticeable shift in the iconography of *prothesis* scenes, with the depiction of fewer individuals and less ostentatious display.⁷⁴

Formal lamentation began during the *prothesis*.⁷⁵ Lamentation was an intrinsic aspect of the funerary process from as early as the Mycenaean period, and was considered one of the privileges of the dead.⁷⁶ Literary and iconographic sources indicate that the funeral lament involved ritual movement, singing, and wailing, as well as extravagant displays of grief, primarily by women.⁷⁷

Several sources also indicate that the deceased was thought to hear and notice the funeral lament.⁷⁸ In Homer, the dead are often directly addressed, as though they were expected to still be receptive to the living.⁷⁹ That lamentation might have helped to appease the spirit of the deceased is suggested by the ghost of Elpenor in the *Odyssey*, who asks to be lamented, since it is one of the privileges of dead.⁸⁰ The depiction of small winged figures on white-ground lekythoi also implies the presence of the dead during the funeral lament, though whether the figures represent the spirit of the recently deceased or other spirits who have come to join the lamentation is not always clear.⁸¹

⁷³ Blok (2006) 229, 237, for discussion a on the exposure of women to death pollution, see 233-8.

⁷⁴ Shapiro (1991) 630-1; an Attic *pinax* names, in kinship terminology, each of the individuals featured in a *prothesis* scene, thereby confirming that each person depicted in the scene is a close relative of the deceased: Paris, Musée du Louvre, MNB905 (see Shapiro, 1991, 638-9, and fig. 1; and BAPD: 463); laws were not introduced in order to limit ostentation in all cases, though it may have been a result (see Blok, 2006, 213-4, 228-30).

⁷⁵ Alexiou (2002) 4-5, 6; Vlachou (2012) 365.

⁷⁶ *Il.* 23.9; see Alexiou (2002) 4; representations of lamentation from as early as the Mycenaean period traditionally depict women standing beside the deceased with hands raised to their head, which has been interpreted as either tearing their hair or beating their head in an expression of ritual grief (Finkenstaedt, 1973, 40-1); see also Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 66 (Oikonomou).

⁷⁷ Such as marking the cheeks and tearing or cutting the hair (Alexiou, 2002, 6); e.g. *Eur. Suppl.* 11.76-77; for different types of lament and the roles of men and women, see Blok (2006) 216; and Garland (1985) 29-30.

⁷⁸ Vermeule (1979) 14; Blok (2006) 234.

⁷⁹ Blok (2006) 234, fn. 141; e.g. when Andromache laments Hector: *Il.* 24.725-6.

⁸⁰ *Od.* 11.72.

⁸¹ See Chapter Two, 64; Rohde (1972, 164, 190, n. 48) also suggests that the displays of violence during lamentation were actually intended to be for the pleasure of the deceased, who was believed to still be invisibly

There is some speculation over the original purpose for the ceremonial laying out of the corpse. Plato suggests that the body needed only to be laid out for long enough to confirm death.⁸² But the emphasis on lamentation in early Greek funerary iconography suggests that the mourning of the deceased was the primary purpose of the ceremony, providing a chance for family and friends to pay their last respects to the dead and come to terms with their own loss.⁸³

Ekphora

Following the *prothesis*, the body was carried out to the place of burial, in a ritual procession called the *ekphora*, literally the ‘*carrying out*’ of the body. Iconography usually depicts the deceased being borne on a horse-drawn wagon, accompanied by a large procession of mourners, some possibly hired, which occasionally included armed men and chariots.⁸⁴ It seems that there may also have been music and dancing, as is indicated by two black-figure *kantharoi* (**Plates 2, 3**) depicting aulos players and dancers among the procession to the tomb.⁸⁵ Depictions of the *ekphora* were comparatively less

present; though according to Plato, violent displays of grief would more likely cause displeasure for to the dead (Plat. *Menex.* 248b-c); also Lucian (*Luct.* 24) later says that excessive displays of grief may disturb the dead.

⁸² Plat. *Laws* 12.959a.

⁸³ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 144; Mee (2011) 223; Rohde (1972, 164) argues that the real purpose for the ceremony was to provide the opportunity for funeral dirges to be sung, and that its function as confirmation of death was a later concern; lamentation also appears to have been the central event in Homeric funerals (Shapiro, 1991, 634).

⁸⁴ Clay model of a funeral wagon and accompanying mourners (**Plate 7**), see Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 81, no. 22 (Vivliodetis); two *kantharoi* from Vulci show armed warriors dancing (**Plates 2, 3**), see Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 82-3, no. 23, 24 (Colonna); for hired mourners, see Pl. *Laws.* 7.800e.

⁸⁵ Black-figure Attic *kantharos*, c. 510-500 BCE, Vulcii, Italy, former Canino Collection (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 82, no. 23, Colonna); black-figure Attic *kantharos*, c. 510-500 BCE, Vulcii, Italy, former Luynes Collection (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 83, no. 24, Colonna); The warriors on the first *kantharos* (**Plate 2**) appear to be performing a type of rhythmic dance, though Colonna (82) notes that this practice is probably more Etruscan than Greek.

popular than *prothesis* scenes, and were even rarer in Archaic and Classical art.⁸⁶ For this reason, less is known about the *ekphora*; however, funerary legislation from various Greek city states yields some further information.

According to Solon's funerary legislation, the *ekphora* was required to take place before sunrise, on the third day after death.⁸⁷ Extravagant displays of lamentation during the *ekphora* were also restricted by Athenian law, while similar regulations in other cities demanded that the *ekphora* be conducted in complete silence.⁸⁸ The reasons behind the implementation of such legal restrictions are not definitively known. Some scholars believe the restrictions may have functioned to reduce ostentatious displays by the aristocracy (as with restrictions placed on *prothesis*), to lessen the disruption to the community, and perhaps even to mitigate the spread of death pollution through the polis by limiting the involvement of the wider public.⁸⁹

Prior to the funerary restrictions, the *ekphora* was probably a means by which the wealth of the deceased and their family could be displayed to the wider community, thereby heightening the honour bestowed on the deceased. Impressive displays may also have been a means through which the family could uphold their own reputation, as well as demonstrate to the public that they had

⁸⁶ Scene depicting an *ekphora* on a Geometric *krater*, c. 750 BCE, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 990 (see Garland, 1985, 31, fig. 8); the *ekphora* may have held little iconographic appeal for artists (see Garland, 1985, 31); Shapiro (1991, 631) notes that the depiction of *ekphora* scenes declines after the implementation of Solon's funerary laws.

⁸⁷ Dem. 43.62.

⁸⁸ In Athens, Solon forbade laceration of the flesh by mourners, the use of set lamentations, and the bewailing of anyone at the funeral ceremonies of another (Pl. *Sol.* 21.4); the context suggests that the restrictions applied to public lamentation, rather than lamentation in the home (Shapiro, 1991, 631). Lycurgus forbade public lamentation and mourning in Sparta (Plut. *Inst. Lac.* 18; see Cartledge, 2012, 29).

⁸⁹ Blok (2006) 232-5; Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 79 (Oikonomou); Shapiro (1991) 630-1; Rohde (1972, 165, fn. 49) suggests that restrictions may also have been for religious or superstitious reasons, as extremely violent displays may have disturbed the rest of the dead, though this seems to go against his assertion that lamentation was for the enjoyment of the dead (see fn. 81).

fulfilled their obligations to the deceased.⁹⁰

From a ritualistic perspective, however, the *ekphora* functioned to symbolically distance the dead from the living, by ritually removing them from the place of the living and transferring them to the place of the dead.⁹¹

Burial

On arrival at the cemetery, the body was buried in the preferred manner, and ceremonial rites were performed beside the grave. Both inhumation and cremation were used throughout antiquity, but alternated in popularity due to the local customs and social status of the deceased.⁹² However, some scholars have attempted to identify a greater significance behind the different modes of burial.⁹³ This is partially motivated by a passage in Homer, which suggests that cremation helped to hasten the soul's transition to the afterlife. In Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, the ghost of Anticleia explains to Odysseus what happens to the spirit after the body is destroyed:

...ἀλλ' αὐτὴ δίκη ἐστὶ βροτῶν, ὅτε τίς κε θάνησιν·

οὐ γὰρ ἔτι σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα ἴνες ἔχουσιν,

⁹⁰ See Danforth (1982), 124-5, in the context of modern rural Greek communities.

⁹¹ Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 79 (Oikonomou); Johnston (1999) 96; the *ekphora* is consistent with the 'rites of separation' described by van Gennep (1960, 164), which function to separate the deceased from the community; for similar observations made about modern Greek funerary rites, see Danforth (1982), 43.

⁹² See Pritchett (1974, 251-257) on cremation vs. inhumation; Mee (2011) 224; Athenaeus (4.159B) says that cost would have been a factor in choice of burial method; the only known representation of inhumation appears on a *loutrophoros* by the Sappho Painter: Attic, black-figure, *loutrophoros*, c. 525-475 BCE, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 450 (see BAPD: 480). One cremation scene also survives, though the scene is centred more in folklore rather than in reality, since it depicts the death (or near-death) of Croesus: Attic, red-figure, *amphora*, c. 500-450 BCE, Myson Painter, Paris, Musée du Louvre, G197 (see BAPD: 202176).

⁹³ Mee (2011, 240) also says that fire was associated with purification and sacrifice.

ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν τε πυρὸς κρατερὸν μένος αἰθομένοιο
 δαμνᾷ, ἐπεὶ κε πρῶτα λίπη λεύκ' ὀστέα θυμός,
 ψυχὴ δ' ἡύτ' ὄνειρος ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται.

"...but this is the appointed way with mortals, when one dies. For the sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together, but the strong force of blazing fire destroys these, as soon as the spirit leaves the white bones, and the ghost, like a dream, flutters off and is gone".

(*Od.* 11.218-222, Murray, rev. Dimock)

This passage indicates that the soul is only properly separated from the body once the corpse (and its flesh and sinews) has been destroyed, which in this case is through cremation.⁹⁴

That the transition of the soul is tied to the destruction of the body is an idea that may have originated at a much earlier point in time. Mylonas argues that this belief is demonstrated in the funerary practices of the Mycenaeans, who often swept aside or removed older burials in order to make room for newly dead.⁹⁵ This apparent disregard for older remains, coupled with the care and respect shown to newer burials is suggestive of a belief that the soul continued to linger around the body, or at least remain connected to the body, until the flesh had decomposed.⁹⁶ After this period of time the soul reached a 'fully-dead' status, and was able to become a "fully fledged member of the

⁹⁴ Cremation was the usual form of burial in the Homeric poems (Mylonas, 1948, 62-3).

⁹⁵ Older remains were sometimes removed and placed in an ossuary. This practice is called 'secondary burial', and refers to the manipulation of the deceased's remains some time after the primary burial ceremony had been completed (see Mee, 2011, 225-7, 234, 238); they also took away or threw out the gifts and valuable objects that their ancestors were buried with (Mylonas, 1948, 70).

⁹⁶ Mylonas (1948) 70; it appears that the prehistoric Greeks believed that "the dead continued to be present among the living as long as they looked like the living" (Albinus, 2000, 28).

afterworld".⁹⁷

As I have briefly mentioned above, the belief that the transition of the soul into the next world is only achieved after the removal of the body from the world of the living is present among cultures around the world. Hertz explains that in many cases, death is fully consummated after the body has been destroyed, whether that is through cremation or gradual decomposition; after this time the deceased no longer belongs in the world of the living.⁹⁸

But Mylonas further argues that when cremation became popular during the Geometric period, the idea of a slow transition was practically eliminated, since fire destroyed the body almost immediately.⁹⁹ However, Mylonas' theory does not account for the variation in the burial practices seen during the Geometric period, as cremation, though being the dominant mode of burial throughout the mainland, was not exclusively practiced by all communities.¹⁰⁰ Alternatively, Mee suggests that a move to individual burials after the Mycenaean period may have altered ideas about the soul's transition, since tombs were no longer being re-opened, and therefore the burial was finalised upon the sealing of the grave.¹⁰¹

There is little or no indication that from the Archaic period onwards, the different methods of burial corresponded to different afterlife beliefs, or to how quickly the soul was integrated into Hades.¹⁰² Instead, the transition of the deceased to a 'fully-dead' status seems to have occurred once the remains were buried, or simply once the funerary rites were completed, which marked the final

⁹⁷ Morris (1987) 32; Mee (2011) 239.

⁹⁸ Hertz (1960) 46-7; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 56.

⁹⁹ See Mylonas (1948) 80.

¹⁰⁰ Mee (2011) 239-240; for methods of burial in Attica, see also Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 36-7, 51.

¹⁰¹ Mee (2011) 253.

¹⁰² Mirto (2012) 86; however, the Pythagoreans apparently forbade cremation, though the reason for this is unknown (see Pritchett, 1974, 253, fn. 448).

stage in the separation of the deceased from the world of the living.¹⁰³ This is certainly suggested in funerary iconography, where the spirit of the deceased is often shown being led away from their tomb by the mythological guides to the afterlife, Hermes Chthonius and Charon, the ferryman of the dead.¹⁰⁴

Graveside Rites

Following the cremation or inhumation of the body, rites were performed beside the grave. The third-day rites, known as τὰ τρίτα, initially assumed to have been conducted on the third day after burial, are now believed to have actually been performed at the time of burial, marking the third day after death.¹⁰⁵ These consisted of libations and burnt food offerings, which were variously deposited in, on top of, or beside the grave.¹⁰⁶

Little else is known about the ceremony that took place beside the grave, though Cicero tells us that in Athens, from the time of Cecrops, a simple ceremony was performed over the grave by the nearest relatives, following which the body was covered with earth, and the spot sown with grain, in order to purify the soil and restore it to the use of the living.¹⁰⁷

In Classical Athens, the burial ceremony was most likely followed by the funerary banquet, called the *perideipnon*, which is believed to have originally been held at the graveside, but by the Archaic period was usually held in the home of the deceased's next-of-kin.¹⁰⁸ Later sources suggest

¹⁰³ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 109; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 110) argues that the *sema* signifies the final separation.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter Two, 74-6, 78-9; Oakley (2004) 118.

¹⁰⁵ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 146.

¹⁰⁶ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 64-5; Sophocles (*Ant.* 431) refers to 'thrice-poured offerings'.

¹⁰⁷ Cic. *de leg.* 2.63.

¹⁰⁸ Dem. 18.288; Lucian (*Char.* 22) also describes it as a feast burnt at the grave.

that this meal ended a period of fasting, observed since the deceased's time of death.¹⁰⁹

Graveside rites are also thought to have been performed on the ninth and thirtieth days following death, at which food and drink offerings were brought to the tomb, and the tomb was decorated with ribbons, wreaths, and other ritually significant items.¹¹⁰ Visits to the tomb may also have included lamentations, as they do today in parts of modern Greece.¹¹¹ During the time of Plutarch it was also customary in Argos to make a burnt sacrifice to Apollo immediately following mourning, and thirty days later to Hermes, as he was thought to receive the souls of the dead.¹¹² However, it is unknown whether this was a standard practice during earlier periods.

Annual rites were also performed, and may have taken place on the anniversary of death, the anniversary of burial, or on the deceased's birthday.¹¹³ Family likely also visited the grave at irregular times of the year, sometimes on important occasions such as weddings.¹¹⁴ Public festivals dedicated to mourning and honouring the dead, such as the *Genesisia* and *Nemesia*, were also introduced in Athens, possibly as an effort by Solon to reduce and regulate the display of private grief.¹¹⁵

That the dead were able to notice the tendance paid to their graves is indicated by scenes on white-ground lekythoi, which show the spirits of the dead observing the visits to the tomb by the living.¹¹⁶ It has also been suggested that the complexity of graveside rites, as well as the necessity for

¹⁰⁹ Luc. *Luct.* 24.

¹¹⁰ Garland (1985) 40; Vlachou (2012) 366.

¹¹¹ Danforth (1982) 43.

¹¹² Plut. *Quaes. Gr.* 24; see Allan (2018) 115.

¹¹³ Garland (1985) 104-5.

¹¹⁴ E.g. Aesch. *Ch.* 486; see Garland (1985) 106.

¹¹⁵ See Garland (1985) 105, 166.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Attic white-ground *lekythos*, Woman Painter, c. 430-420 BCE, Athens, Kerameikos Inv. 4158 (see Oakley, 2004, 190, figs. 151-52).

their performance, indicates that the dead were thought to notice tendance.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, there is no literary evidence to corroborate this.

The period of mourning varied in duration between regions. In Athens, the end of the mourning period seems to have been thirty days, though it was probably not always observed in full by all family members.¹¹⁸ In Archaic or Classical Greece, at least, the end of the mourning period did not appear to have any association with the soul's final departure from the world of the living.¹¹⁹

Grave Goods

Objects deposited in the burial of the deceased, commonly referred to as grave goods, may have also been intended to benefit the soul after death. Generally speaking, there were two main categories of grave goods: property belonging to the deceased, and gifts from the survivors, which were intended either for the deceased or as offerings to the gods.¹²⁰ Grave goods often depended on the gender, age and status of the deceased, and included items such as pottery, food and drink, jewellery, weapons, animals, and figurines.¹²¹ Objects were sometimes made especially for the grave, as is suggested by the presence of miniature vessels and 'dummy' vases, the latter of which cannot

¹¹⁷ Garland (1985) 119, who also notes that the practice of tendance may have been a remnant of a belief in an afterlife existence confined to the grave.

¹¹⁸ Garland (1985) 40; Lysias (1.14) refers to a charge laid against a woman who applied makeup before the thirty days were up.

¹¹⁹ For an indication of this idea in later Greek belief, see Garland (1985) 41.

¹²⁰ Robinson (1942) 182.

¹²¹ Though this is not to say that goods were strictly dependant on the identity of the deceased; Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 93 (Oikonomou); Vlachou (2012) 367; feeders have been found in Classical child graves, and show signs of use (Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, 100); strigils have also been found in the graves of young men (Garland, 1985, 84); the skeletal remains of animals found in graves are believed to have been pets of the deceased, and not necessarily offerings (Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, 66).

have served any practical purpose in life.¹²² The inclusion of grave goods also ensured the continuation of the deceased's status following death, and were a means by which the living could honour the dead.¹²³

Like the changes in burial methods, excavations in Athens have found that both the contents and value of grave goods fluctuated over time. A gradual decline in the value of goods from the Dark Ages to the Archaic period saw the popularisation of symbolic gifts, such as miniature vases, and the sacrifice of fowl instead of horses or oxen.¹²⁴ These gifts functioned to represent the deceased's status, "without making heavy demands on the family's real property."¹²⁵ Some cities also placed legal restrictions on grave goods during the sixth century, by limiting textiles and sacrifices, as well as the overall value of goods, likely in an effort to reduce the wealth lost through the burial of expensive items.¹²⁶

During the Classical period, the offering of pottery became hugely popular in Attica, and included lekythoi, cups, bowls, and various other containers.¹²⁷ These mainly represented domestic types, though lekythoi developed a funerary iconography of their own, as we shall see in Chapter Two.¹²⁸ Of the other grave goods, most appear to have been possessions of the dead. Through the late

¹²² Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 66, 101.

¹²³ Blok (2006) 222-3, 235; Mylonas (1948) 64; weapons, jewellery and figurines in graves may not necessarily have been personal items, but may have simply denoted status (Mee, 2011, 225); expensive items may have also functioned to display the wealth of the family (Mee, 2011, 225).

¹²⁴ Blok (2006) 236; though rare examples of horse sacrifices have been found in Archaic and Classical graves (see Garland, 1985, 35).

¹²⁵ Blok (2006) 236.

¹²⁶ For limitations on the value of grave goods, see Blok (2006) 219; textiles were considered valuable gifts to the dead (Blok, 2006, 236); though Blok (2006, 236) also notes that changes in grave goods had been gradually happening since before the laws existed.

¹²⁷ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 100.

¹²⁸ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 101; Garland (1985) 108; though some stone vases appear to have been designed specifically for the grave (Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, 101).

Classical and Hellenistic periods, a further decline in the value and quality of grave goods in Athenian graves occurred, which saw more modest offerings to the dead, including burnt food and cheap pottery, though coins, as well as gold wreaths and thin sheets of gold foil occasionally appear.¹²⁹ This decline in the value of grave goods was not necessarily indicative of a disinterest in the dead, but was caused by an increasing expense incurred in the cost of the tomb, and in the preparations for and the performance of funerary rites.¹³⁰

Grave goods may also have included objects that the soul would need for its journey, such as provisions for the road, gifts or payments to gain admission to the afterlife, or instructions to help prevent them from getting lost.

Provisions for the Road

Some scholars have suggested that offerings of food and drink, as well as other personal possessions, were buried with the dead due to the belief that they would be wanted by the spirit after death, just as they were needed during life.¹³¹ The notion is certainly suggested in the Homer poems, and we do find occasional references in epigrams to the belongings the deceased might bring with them on their journey to the afterlife, such as a thick cloak, a flask, a staff and some money.¹³²

¹²⁹ For summary of Classical and Hellenistic grave offerings, see Kurtz and Boardman (1971), 100-5, 162-6; see also Garland (1985) 36-7; it is also worth noting though that a large percentage of the graves from which we derive our findings belonged to members of the social elite (Blok, 2006, 222).

¹³⁰ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 75, 145; Mee (2011) 242.

¹³¹ Boardman (1966) 2; Yona (2012) 59-60; Ferguson (1989) 124; Mylonas (1948) 73; Rohde also argues that the soul was thought to maintain some link with the body and the grave after death (Rohde, 1972, 165-6); for the offering of food and drink during the Archaic and Classical periods, see Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 66, 100; Mee (2011, 224-5) shows that the practice may have originated during the Neolithic period.

¹³² E.g. Anth. Pal. 7.67, 68; in the *Iliad* (23.151-2), Achilles places a lock of his hair in the hand of the deceased Patroclus, so that he may carry it with him to the afterlife.

Mylonas suggested that during the Mycenaean period, food and drink were placed in the grave as provisions for the soul during its long journey to the afterlife, which lasted as long as the body took to fully decay.¹³³ He further argued that the later custom of placing of food and drink on the funerary pyre, a practice described by Homer, was a continuation of the older Mycenaean tradition, even though the method of cremation meant that the body was destroyed much more quickly and supplies were no longer necessary.¹³⁴

It is also thought by some that the libations and the food burnt at the grave in later periods, was for the benefit of the soul, and was intended to accompany them to the afterlife.¹³⁵ Robinson goes as far as theorising that food and drink may have originally been placed in graves so that the deceased could participate in the *perideipnon*, which, as we saw, is believed to have originally taken place at the graveside.¹³⁶

The installation of 'libation tubes' above graves are also thought to have been a means of providing liquid refreshment to the dead, though these were more popular during the Roman period.¹³⁷ However, holes made in the bottom of Athenian Geometric vases are generally believed to have served this same purpose.¹³⁸

¹³³ Mylonas (1948) 74.

¹³⁴ Mylonas (1948) 60, though he concedes that supplies were not given to some of the Greek heroes, and the Trojans did not seem to follow this practice at all.

¹³⁵ Kurtz and Boardman (1971, 215) suggest that food was burnt, or 'killed', in order to accompany the soul into the afterlife; see also Garland (1985) 110.

¹³⁶ Robinson (1942) 191.

¹³⁷ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 205-6; see also Garland (1985) 114; The belief that libations poured on the grave would provide the dead with refreshment is present among some rural Greek communities today (Danforth, 1982, 107).

¹³⁸ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 206.

The notion that the dead were nourished by offerings is stated much later by Lucian, who says that the dead were sustained by the libations poured by the living and the food burnt at the tomb.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, the idea that the dead required nourishment in the afterlife does not appear so explicitly in earlier Greek literature, though Euripides does refer to libations as ‘something soothing for the dead’.¹⁴⁰

On the other hand, there is some evidence to indicate that the inclusion of clothing in graves also benefited the departing spirit, both during its journey to the underworld, and for its life in the beyond. One frequently cited anecdote in Herodotus suggests the belief that clothing burnt with the deceased would be of use to the spirit in the afterlife. According to Herodotus, the tyrant Periander had attempted to contact the ghost of his dead wife Melissa, in order to find out the location of some hidden treasure. Unfortunately, the ghost of Melissa refused to reveal the location, instead complaining that she was cold and naked, since the garments Periander had buried with her had never been burnt, and were of no use to her in the afterlife.¹⁴¹ To appease her, Periander stripped the clothes from all of the women of Corinth, and burned them while in prayer to Melissa.

A similar sentiment is also expressed much later by Lucian, who suggests that the dead were dressed in splendid garments so that they would not be cold and naked in front of Cerberus.¹⁴² However, there is little literary evidence to suggest the fear of being under dressed in the underworld was a widely held concern in earlier periods, as references to clothing or armour burnt or buried with the dead seem to be concerned with honour, rather than the needs of the departing spirit.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Luc. *Luct.* 9; see also Luc. *Cat.* 2.

¹⁴⁰ Eur. *IT.* 166; see Chapter Three, 136; the idea that the dead were sustained by food and drink offerings was common to Near Eastern and Egyptian afterlife beliefs (see Heidel, 1949, 157).

¹⁴¹ Hdt. 5.92G.2

¹⁴² Luc. *Luct.* 11.

¹⁴³ See Robinson (1942) 200; examples of armour burnt with the body in Homer: *Il.* 6.417-18; 22.510-514.

The archaeological record provides little evidence for the types of clothing included in the burial of the deceased. But there are a few traces, such as dress pins, jewellery, and the remains of shoes.¹⁴⁴ Several excavated graves in Thessaly contained more than one pair of shoes each, which has led some scholars to wonder whether they were intended to cater for the afterlife journey.¹⁴⁵

The inclusion of miniature clay shoes in some Geometric graves has also caused similar speculation.¹⁴⁶ The custom may have been borrowed from the Near East, where shoe-shaped vases were sometimes placed in graves as gifts for the gods of the underworld, in order to secure protection for the deceased on their afterlife journey.¹⁴⁷ However, Haentjens notes that since the model shoes have only been found in the burials of females, their inclusion in graves may actually be related to gender, rather than pertaining to any particular eschatological belief.¹⁴⁸

The variations and inconsistencies in the offering of food and drink, as well as items of clothing, make it likely that individuals had different reasons for the offering of different objects. The provision of items that were usually used in everyday life may have simply served to satisfy a sense of loss on the part of the living, or express their attachment to the deceased.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, this is suggested by Euripides in *The Trojan Women*, where it is said that the provision of gorgeous funerals is a vanity that satisfies the living, as it makes no difference to the dead.¹⁵⁰ Philosophical discourse also indicates

¹⁴⁴ For a summary of the evidence for clothing in graves, see Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 207, 211.

¹⁴⁵ Kravaritou and Stamatopoulou (2018) 149.

¹⁴⁶ Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 63, and pl. 8; Haentjens (2002) 179; Oikonomou (Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 93) suggests the clay shoes were evidently intended for the journey to the underworld; gold-plated silver sandals (fourth-century BCE) found in the tomb of the Lady of Aegae, see Galanakis and McCarthy (2011) 110, 250, no. 340.

¹⁴⁷ Haentjens (2002) 174, 179; a Mesopotamian prayer hints to a practice of providing the dead with sandals to assist the spirit on its journey to the underworld (Heidel, 1949, 157).

¹⁴⁸ Haentjens (2002) 180-83.

¹⁴⁹ Goods may have also been provided due to tradition (Retief and Cilliers, 2010, 58).

¹⁵⁰ Eur. *Tr. W.* 1248-1250.

that the dead were not universally believed to be able to take items with them into the afterlife, owing to the incorporeality of the spirit.¹⁵¹

On the other hand, there is more substantial evidence to suggest that the provision of certain ritually significant items may have had a more specific connection to the afterlife journey, as we shall see below.

The Ferryman's Fee

In Classical literature we come across the notion that the dead may have needed to pay for passage into the afterlife. 'Charon's fee' was a single, common, low-denomination coin, usually an obol or *danake*, which was used to pay for passage on Charon's barge across the river Acheron (as we will see in Chapter Two). According to Callimachus, it was customary for the fee to be placed in the mouth of the deceased before burial, a practice that may have been linked to a belief that the soul was thought to reside in the head, or to have been breathed out with the last breath.¹⁵² However, the placement of Charon's fee in the mouths of the dead may have been inspired by a Greek habit of carrying small change in the mouth in lieu of pockets.¹⁵³ In any case, the custom appears to have been of a later origin, since the earliest evidence for the practice dates to the Classical period.

The first written reference to the custom of the ferryman's fee appears in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (written in 405 BCE), where Dionysus descends to the underworld in order to bring Euripides back from the dead. Before he departs, Heracles tells him that he must pay Charon two obols for passage

¹⁵¹ Pl. *Phaed.* 107d-108c.

¹⁵² Callim. *frag.* 278, of his epic *Hecale*; Stevens (1991) 221.

¹⁵³ Grinsell (1957) 262; this practice is indicated by Aristophanes in the *Birds* (503), ὀβολὸν κατεβρόχθισα.

across the Acheron.¹⁵⁴ In this case, the cost of two obols is supposedly a comedic inflation of the usual payment of a single obol (as indicated by other sources), which is thought to allude to the rising costs in Athens, or perhaps correspond to the price of a theatre ticket.¹⁵⁵ What can be determined, though, is that the custom of Charon's fee, as well as the traditional cost of a single obol, must have been reasonably well known to Aristophanes' audience in order for the joke to work.¹⁵⁶

Other written sources confirm that the traditional fee for the ferryman was just one obol. An epigram by Leonidas of Tarentum about Diogenes the Cynic refers to the single obol carried by the deceased down to the underworld:¹⁵⁷

Αἶδεω λυπηρὲ διηκόνε, τοῦτ' Ἀχέροντος
 ὕδωρ ὃς πλώεις πορθμίδι κυανέη,
 δέξαι μ', εἰ καὶ σοι μέγα βρίθεται ὀκρυόεσσα
 βᾶρις ἀποφθιμένων, τὸν κύνα Διογένην.
 ὄλη μοι καὶ πῆρη ἐφόλκια, καὶ τὸ παλαιὸν
 ἔσθος, χὼ φθιμένους ναυστολέων ὀβολός.
 πάνθ' ὅσα κῆν ζωοῖς ἐπεπάμεθα, ταῦτα παρ' Ἄδαν
 ἔρχομ' ἔχων· λείπω δ' οὐδὲν ὑπ' ἡελίῳ.

“Mournful minister of Hades, who dost traverse in thy dark boat this water of Acheron, receive me, Diogenes the Dog, even though thy gruesome bark is overloaded with spirits of the dead. My luggage is but a flask, and a wallet, and my old cloak, and the

¹⁵⁴ Ar. *Frogs*, 139-40.

¹⁵⁵ See Stevens (1991) 216; it may also be a reference to the two-obol dole introduced by Cleophon (Arist. *Const. Ath.* 28.3).

¹⁵⁶ See Stevens (1991) 21.

¹⁵⁷ Other examples: Anth. Pal. 7.68; 11.171; 11.209.

obol that pays the passage of the departed. All that was mine in life I bring with me to Hades, and have left nothing beneath the sun."

(Anth. Pal. 7.67, Paton)

However, references to the ferryman's fee must not be simply taken at face value; Stevens points out that Charon's obol is often mentioned in a comedic or ironic way (as we have already seen in the *Frogs*), but is also frequently used to refer to the poverty of death, since death transforms even the wealthy into poor men.¹⁵⁸ This can certainly be seen in the above epigram by Leonidas of Tarentum, and it is more clearly articulated in another by Antiphanes:

τεθνήξῃ, πλουτοῦσαν ἀφείς μεγάλην διαθήκην,
ἐκ πολλῶν ὀβολὸν μοῦνον ἐνεγκάμενος.

"...thou shalt die, leaving a great and wealthy testament, and of all thy riches carrying away with thee but one obol."

(Anth. Pal. 11.168.5-6, Paton)

The only surviving representation of Charon's fee in Greek art appears on an unattributed Attic white-ground *lekythos* (**Plate 4**), dating 420 BCE, which shows a youth (likely the spirit of the deceased) sitting on a tomb holding a coin, while Charon approaches from the right-hand side in his boat.¹⁵⁹ Even though we cannot be sure that the coin was intended to represent the fee for passage on Charon's barge, the appearance of Charon in the scene suggests this is the case.

The archaeological record also provides some supporting evidence for the existence of the

¹⁵⁸ Stevens (1991) 219-21.

¹⁵⁹ Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 2967 (see Oakley, 2004, 123, 125).

ferryman's fee. Coins found in the skulls of skeletons in graves at Olynthus suggest that these were originally placed in or on the mouth of the deceased.¹⁶⁰ Coins are also placed in the mouths of skeletons in Athenian burials of the Hellenistic period.¹⁶¹ In one case, two obols were found adhered to the jawbone of a cremated individual, presumably having been intended for the ferryman.¹⁶²

Occasionally, 'ghost coins', pseudo-coin medallions or gold lamellae bearing the imprint of coins, were included in burials, and are believed to have served as symbolic representations of 'Charon's fee'.¹⁶³ Presumably, the substitution of a false coin in the burial was not believed to negatively affect the departing spirit, if indeed the items were intended as payment for the ferryman.

However, even though the appearance of the earliest coins in Greek graves coincides with the literary evidence, not all have been found to correspond to 'Charon's fee'. Excavations have shown that the placement of coins in burials was not confined to the mouth region, as they were sometimes also found in the hand of the skeleton, loose in the grave, or inside a vessel.¹⁶⁴ Some burials even contained multiple coins, suggesting that there may have been other funerary uses for coins than simply as payment for the ferryman.¹⁶⁵

Although the concept of 'Charon's fee' seems to have been well known by Aristophanes, and presumably also by his audience, the fact that coins do not typically appear in Athenian burials until the Hellenistic period suggests a much later date for the practice of the custom in Athens than is

¹⁶⁰ Burials at Olynthus with coins date from the last quarter of the fifth century to the middle of the fourth century (Robinson, 1942, 203); for overview of coins in Greek graves, see Stevens (1991) 224-5.

¹⁶¹ Stevens (1991) 225.

¹⁶² Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 163.

¹⁶³ Stevens (1991) 225; for example of gold foil serving as 'Charon's fee', see Boulter (1963) 126.

¹⁶⁴ Robinson (1942) 181; Stevens (1991) 224-225.

¹⁶⁵ Stevens (1991) 215, 224; Most burials with coins at Olynthus contained between 1-4 coins (Robinson, 1942, 203).

indicated by the sources.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, Stevens notes that the percentage of graves containing coins was relatively small, overall between four and ten per cent of burials on the Greek mainland, which suggests that the practice was only customary for a small proportion of the population.¹⁶⁷

Like other grave goods, the placement of coins in graves may have functioned more frequently as a demonstration of the wealth and social status of the deceased and their family or, as Rhode suggests, as a means of consigning the deceased's property to the grave with him.¹⁶⁸

Perhaps for this reason there seems to have been no explicit concern for failing to provide the fee in the Classical or Hellenistic sources. In all the descriptions of Charon and his ferry, nowhere is it stated that the deceased would be trapped in the living if they did not supply the ferryman with his fare, though it is certainly implied by the existence of the fee in the first place.¹⁶⁹ Instead, the custom seems to have been much more common in Roman times, during which it became better established as a rite of transition and incorporation into the world of the dead.¹⁷⁰

Orphic Tablets

¹⁶⁶ Stevens (1991) 223-5; also Kurtz and Boardman (1971) 166; it is also worth pointing out that even though Aristophanes alludes to the myth of the ferryman's fee, he does not actually say that coins were placed in graves for this purpose, or how frequently the custom was observed (see Tzifopoulos, 2010, 77; and Robinson, 1942, 205).

¹⁶⁷ See Stevens (1991) 223-4.

¹⁶⁸ Tzifopoulos (2010) 78; Rhode (1972) 245-6; the fact that the practice of placing coins in graves occurs outside of Greece in places where the myth of Charon's fee does not exist is further evidence for the various uses of coins in the funerary context (Tzifopoulos, 2010, 77).

¹⁶⁹ Though this may have been an issue much later, as is suggested by a sarcastic comment by Lucian (*Lucl.* 10), who says that it would be far better not to provide family members with the fare, since the ferryman would not take them, and they would have to be escorted back to life again.

¹⁷⁰ See Robinson (1942) 205; for payment as a rite of incorporation for the dead, see van Genneep (1960) 16; and Moorton (1989), 317.

Inscribed sheets of gold foil, commonly known as the 'Orphic gold tablets', have been found in burials throughout the Greek world, but mainly in Southern Italy, Thessaly, Macedonia, and Crete.¹⁷¹ The tablets were not intended for the general public, but were placed in the graves of mystery initiates as secret memoranda.¹⁷² They are generally thought to have been intended to accompany the soul into the afterlife, provide assistance during its journey through the underworld, and ultimately help it achieve entry to the special part of the afterlife reserved for the privileged few.

Twenty-two tablets have been discovered so far in the Greek mainland, with most dating from the late fourth to the early third century BCE.¹⁷³ Compared to other grave goods, the gold tablets are relatively rare, though their wide geographical distribution indicates that they reflected the beliefs of a mobile religious group that was far-reaching.¹⁷⁴ While there is no consensus as to which cult the tablets were ascribed, they are usually identified as Bacchic, or Orphic-Bacchic, owing to their association with Persephone and Dionysus.¹⁷⁵ It is not known whether the individuals buried with the tablets shared the exact same religious views, but it does seem that the texts related to a cult that placed extreme importance on the afterlife and the afterlife journey.¹⁷⁶

Some of the tablets are thought to contain passages derived from a larger sacred text, a *ἱερός λόγος*, which is thought to have described a heroic katabasis, probably written by Orpheus.¹⁷⁷ Several other tablets are believed to contain a ritual dialogue (likely based on the same sacred text) which

¹⁷¹ They have also been found in Achaia, Lesbos, Rome (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, 2011, 72).

¹⁷² Betz (2011) 103; It is clear that these texts were not intended for the general public, since no similar inscriptions have been found to exist on grave *stelai* (Tzifopoulos, 2014, 36).

¹⁷³ See Edmonds (2011) 16-48, for a compilation of texts.

¹⁷⁴ Dousa (2011) 121.

¹⁷⁵ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 91.

¹⁷⁶ Tzifopoulos (2010) 115, 120.

¹⁷⁷ Riedweg (2011) 230; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 71.

may have been spoken during initiation, as well as during the funerary ceremony of the deceased.¹⁷⁸ It has been suggested that the reading of the texts at the time of burial may have coincided with or signified the exact moment the soul was thought to enter the underworld, as is indicated by the use of the phrase ‘on this same day’ (ἄματι τῷιδε).¹⁷⁹

The contents of the tablets pertain to approximately seven different thematic groups, though not all fit into one single, clearly defined group, since there are many similarities between the texts.¹⁸⁰ The groups include topography texts, which include instructions for navigating the underworld, purity texts, which announce the status of the deceased as being ritually pure, and ‘*chaire*-formula’ texts, which include the word χαῖρε (‘hail’) and ‘passwords’ to be pronounced to the underworld gods on specific occasions.¹⁸¹ Many of these tablets (particularly the topographical and ‘*chaire*-formula’ texts) contain secret instructions about the afterlife journey that enabled the deceased to overcome the series of trials in the underworld, by reminding them what to do and say to not befall the same fate as non-initiates, whatever that may have been.

Variations between the texts may have been due to personal choice, where some individuals may have considered instructions for navigating the underworld to be of the greatest importance, while others may have considered the confrontation with chthonic powers to have been more significant.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Riedweg (2011) 230.

¹⁷⁹ *D1*, Pelinna, c. 275 BCE (Edmonds, 2011, 36); for discussion see, Calame (2011) 228; and Riedweg (2011) 228; cf. Graf (1993) 248-9.

¹⁸⁰ See Tzifopoulos (2014, 37) for description of these seven groups; for information on how the texts have been grouped by different scholars, see Tzifopoulos (2010), 98-101.

¹⁸¹ Tzifopoulos (2014), 37; see groups: *A, B, E* (Edmonds, 2011).

¹⁸² Riedweg (2011) 255; also, variations in engraving may have been due to the fact that engravers were working off memory rather than a written source, and may have only been semi-educated (Riedweg, 2011, 256).

A number of tablets inscribed with just the deceased's name, or the word 'initiate' (μύστης), or a combination of the two may have been intended to speak on behalf of the initiate, even functioning as a sort of 'passport' that declared the deceased's identity as an initiate to the underworld gods.¹⁸³ There are also some rare examples of coins inscribed with personal names, perhaps owing to an inaccessibility of gold foil, a lack of time, or some other unknown reason.¹⁸⁴ Tablets bearing no inscriptions at all may have either been inscribed with ink or other perishable materials, or been left intentionally blank, serving as tokens of the deceased's status as initiates, effectively operating as admission 'tickets' into the afterlife.¹⁸⁵

The tablets vary in shape, from rectangular to mouth-like, sometimes even taking the form of a myrtle, olive, or ivy leaf.¹⁸⁶ Myrtle and ivy leaves are known to have had religious significance for mystery initiates, owing to their connection with Dionysus.¹⁸⁷ Like 'Charon's fee', they were also variously placed in or on the mouth of the deceased, on the chest, or beside the hand.¹⁸⁸ In cases where the lamellae were found in the head of the deceased, it is likely that prior to burial the tablets were placed either in the mouth, or over the mouth, as *epistomia*.¹⁸⁹ In these instances, we may speculate that the tablets were intended to physically speak on behalf of the deceased, or that they symbolised the words that the initiate would have to pronounce in the afterlife.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Since being in possession of a tablet meant the soul had been initiated.

¹⁸⁴ Tzifopoulos (2010) 80.

¹⁸⁵ As Johnston puts it (in Graf and Johnston, 2013, 134-6), functioning like a theatre ticket, granting admission to those who possessed it; being the most minimal token that the deceased would need for the underworld, while still retaining secrecy (Tzifopoulos, 2010, 109, see also 37).

¹⁸⁶ Tzifopoulos (2014) 36.

¹⁸⁷ Some tablets were also shaped as laurel leaves (Dickie, 1995, 84-86).

¹⁸⁸ Tzifopoulos (2014) 36.

¹⁸⁹ See Tzifopoulos (2010) 95; Epistomia are usually ellipsoidal or rhomboidal, being roughly mouth-shaped, e.g. a gold *epistomion* from Thessaloniki, c. 560 BCE, see Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 100, no. 38 (Ignatiadou).

¹⁹⁰ Graf and Johnston (2013) 95 (Johnston).

In one particular female burial in Pelinna, Thessaly, two tablets had been placed on the chest of the deceased, while a coin had also been placed in her mouth, indicating that the use of gold tablets was compatible with the custom of the ferryman's fee.¹⁹¹ Similarities between the use of gold tablets and the ferryman's fee in burials suggest that the tablets may in some cases have taken over the function of the funerary coin, by becoming the essential item the deceased needed to bring with them in order to gain entry into the afterlife.¹⁹²

The use of gold as the chosen material may have been due to its immortal and incorruptible nature, since it never oxidises or corrodes.¹⁹³ Possibly for this same reason, gold was also historically used for wreaths, masks, and other *epistomia*.¹⁹⁴ It has also been suggested that gold was used as a symbolic reference to the golden race of men described by Hesiod, to whose status initiates hoped to be raised after death.¹⁹⁵ However, the use of *epistomia* and other gold coverings for the face date back to before the Mycenaean period, and may have been more related to the fact that the metal is expensive and aesthetically attractive, making it a desirable material, especially for the elite.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, it cannot be discounted that perishable materials were used more often for similar items in other burials, which would have left no trace of their existence.

It is not clear whether the tablets were prepared before or after death, which leaves room for speculation. Since many of the tablets seem to include ritual dialogue, it is possible that they were given to the deceased as a token of their initiation into the cult. Alternatively, they may have been

¹⁹¹ Calame (2011) 207; tablets *D1*, *D2* (Edmonds, 2011, 36-7).

¹⁹² For similarities between the custom of placing a coin in the mouth and the use of *epistomia*, see Tzifopoulos (2010), 78-80, who gives an overview of scholarship.

¹⁹³ Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 93 (Oikonomou).

¹⁹⁴ E.g. gold mask from a female burial in Thessaloniki, c. 520-510 BCE, see Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 99, no. 3 (Adam-Veleni); oak leaf gold wreath, c. 350-300 BCE (unknown provenance), see Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 95, no. 32 (Papageorgiou).

¹⁹⁵ Tzifopoulos (2014) 35-6.

¹⁹⁶ Tzifopoulos (2010) 81; For the use of gold *epistomia* and masks, see Tzifopoulos, (2011, 168).

prepared after or around the time of death, by the priest or by the family of the initiate, in preparation for burial.¹⁹⁷

The fact that most of the tablets are inscribed with minimal and selective information concerning the journey through the underworld raises questions about their function as instructions for the soul in the afterlife. Like the provision of coins in graves, the tablets may have had different functions for different individuals, whether accompanying the deceased into the afterlife, symbolically marking their special status as an initiate, or simply serving sentimental purposes.¹⁹⁸ Because we do not have any direct evidence about the funerary customs of initiates, the nature of the relationship between the tablets and the rituals of mystery cults cannot be definitively established.

Planning for the Beyond

Individuals could take steps during their lifetime in preparation for the afterlife journey, which could help to ensure a successful transition and even a better lot in the afterlife. These measures were usually founded on religious or philosophical doctrines that became prominent during the Classical period, following the elaboration of afterlife mythology and beliefs which occurred during the Archaic period.

Initiation

¹⁹⁷ See Tzifopoulos (2010) 80-81.

¹⁹⁸ Tzifopoulos (2010, 78) notes that the variation in the funerary uses of coins might also be applied to gold tablets.

Initiation into a mystery cult was one way in which a person could prepare for the afterlife journey before the event of their own death. ‘Mystery’ (μυστήριον) cults were exclusive religious movements whose doctrine was reserved only for those initiated into the cult and was not available for the general public. They provided an eschatology that was contrary to what had been presented by Homer, by offering the possibility of a blessed afterlife for every individual, in which they would be raised to the status of a hero or god and given eternal life in a paradisiacal meadow under the earth.¹⁹⁹ Initiation was typically open to all individuals, whatever their status or gender, barring only those who had committed murder.²⁰⁰

The most notable cults include the Eleusinian and Bacchic mysteries (sometimes called the Dionysian mysteries), as well as the associated religious movements of Orphism and Pythagoreanism.²⁰¹ There are clear similarities and links between the groups, known even to the ancients; Apollodorus credits the invention of the Bacchic mysteries to Orpheus, while Herodotus says that Bacchic and Orphic rites were actually Pythagorean and Egyptian in origin.²⁰²

The teachings of Bacchic or Orphic cults may have revolved around a sacred text, written by Orpheus, or possibly Musaeus, which is thought to have described a heroic descent to the underworld.²⁰³ This text, and possibly other related poems written by Orpheus, were apparently connected to the worship of Dionysus Bacchus, though the doctrine must have been similar in content to that of the Pythagoreans because of the perceived association between the cults.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ See Tzifopoulos (2014) 35.

²⁰⁰ Tzifopoulos (2014) 35.

²⁰¹ See Knight (1970) 74-79; see also: Graf and Johnston (2013) 137-166 (Graf); the Eleusinian Mysteries were the oldest and best known, dating back to at least 700 BCE (Knight, 1970, 75).

²⁰² Apollod. 1.3.2; Hdt. 2.81.

²⁰³ For the ‘sacred text’, see Graf (2011) 66; this poem, parts of which are preserved on the ‘Orphic’ tablets, presents information about the underworld which must have come from a katabasis (see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, 2011, 71); see Chapter One, 45, 53.

²⁰⁴ Graf (2011) 55-7.

Those initiated into the mysteries were promised entry into a blessed afterlife, while those who were uninitiated could expect an afterlife containing punishment and misery.²⁰⁵ Such a notion appears already in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (c. 650-550 BCE), which refers to the mystery rites established at Eleusis.²⁰⁶

ὄλβιος ὃς τάδ' ὄπωπεν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 ὃς δ' ἀτελής ἱερῶν ὃς τ' ἄμμορος, οὐ ποθ' ὁμοίων
 αἴσαν ἔχει φθίμενός περ ὑπὸ ζόφῳ εὐρώεντι.

“Blessed is he of men on earth who has beheld them, whereas he that is uninitiated in the rites, or he that has had no part in them, never enjoys a similar lot down in the musty dark when he is dead.”

(HH. *Dem.* 2.480-2, West)

The idea that initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries promised a better lot in the hereafter is similarly reflected in a fragment by Sophocles:

ὡς τρισόλβιοι
 κείνοι βροτῶν, οἳ ταῦτα δερχθέντες τέλη
 μόλωσ' ἐς Ἄιδου· τοῖσδε γὰρ μόνοις ἐκεῖ
 ζῆν ἔστι, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοισι πάντ' ἔχειν κακά

“Since thrice fortunate are those among mortals who have seen these rites before

²⁰⁵ Eg: Pl. *Phaed.* 69c.

²⁰⁶ For dating, see Parker (1991) 6.

going to Hades; for they alone have life there, while others have every kind of misery.”

(Soph. *Fr.* 837, Lloyd-Jones)

According to Plato, initiation into the mysteries provided release and purification from one's wrongdoings through 'rites of initiation' (τελεταί), which promised to protect the individual from punishments and other terrors in the afterlife.²⁰⁷ Plato does not specify a particular cult, though he does say that they use books of Musaeus and Orpheus, which leads us to believe he is talking about Orphic cults.²⁰⁸ The idea that initiation provided special protection in the afterlife is also indicated by the fact that Heracles had chosen to be initiated prior to his quest to fetch Cerberus from Hades, as he thought it would provide him with special favour in the underworld.²⁰⁹

In order to be allowed entry into a blessed afterlife initiates needed to be released, not only from the guilt of their own misdeeds, but also from their ancestral guilt, possibly incurred by the murder of Dionysus by the Titans.²¹⁰ Initiates were thought to have purified themselves from this guilt by undergoing rituals that, as Plutarch tell us, mirrored the experiences that the soul undergoes after death.²¹¹ These rituals also provided the initiate with secret knowledge about the underworld and the true nature of the soul, which would be able to assist them in their journey after death, and ultimately enable them to attain entry into the blessed afterlife.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 2.364b-65a.

²⁰⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 2.364e.

²⁰⁹ Eur. *Her.* 610-13; Apollod. 2.5.12; Diod. 4.25.1.

²¹⁰ According to Orphic tradition, the Titans were the ancestors of mankind (see Burkert, 1985, 302); this idea is suggested in a fragment by Pindar (*frag.* 133) in which it is said that Persephone accepts requital for 'ancient grief' (Dionysus being the son of Persephone in Orphic tradition); however, the idea of paying for crimes committed by an ancestor has a long history in Greek mythology and is by no means restricted to the Titans (Edmonds, 2004, 71).

²¹¹ Plut. *fr.* 178; also see Betz (2011) 115.

²¹² See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 74; Orphic-Bacchic cults aimed to remove the fear of death by providing them with knowledge about the afterlife which guaranteed the attainment of a better lot in the afterlife (Riedweg, 2011, 223); some epigrams also say that initiates could expect a favourable afterlife (for

It follows that those who were not initiated would not be able to gain admission into the favourable section of the afterlife. As we have seen, those who had not partaken in the rites could expect an afterlife of misery and punishment, the nature of which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Morality and Philosophy

With the changing eschatology of the Archaic and Classical periods, more complex ideas about the afterlife begin to emerge. Towards the end of the sixth century, the idea first arises that leading a just and virtuous life could enable an individual to gain admission into a favourable afterlife realm. This meant that the average person, and not just those initiated into a particular cult, could hold out hope for a pleasurable life after death.

The idea first appears in Pindar's *Second Olympian Ode*, which says that those who lead pious lives will enjoy a tearless existence alongside the gods in the afterlife, while those who live a life full of sin will pay for their crimes beneath the earth.²¹³ This idea is likely taken from Pythagorean teachings, which presented similar afterlife beliefs to the mystery cults mentioned above, promising salvation in the afterlife.²¹⁴

The notion of a favourable afterlife reserved only for the virtuous also appears several times throughout the dialogues of Plato, along with the idea of afterlife of punishment for the unjust, as determined by judges in the underworld (who will be discussed in Chapter Three). Like Pindar, Plato

example, see Parker and Stamatopoulou, 2004, 9).

²¹³ Pind. *Ol.* 2.57-67, cf. 2.68-71.

²¹⁴ See Willcock (1995) 138-9.

describes an afterlife of reward for the virtuous, and an afterlife of punishment for the unjust, as determined by judges in the underworld.²¹⁵ In the *Gorgias*, it is said that souls who are perceived to be unhealthy, scarred by the work of perjuries and injustice, shall be condemned to endure the appropriate punishments after death.²¹⁶

A passage in the Republic suggests that afterlife punishment for unjust deeds may have been a very real fear:

ὅτι, ἐπειδὴν τις ἐγγύς ἦ τοῦ οἴεσθαι τελευτήσῃν, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ δέος καὶ φροντίς περὶ ὧν ἔμπροσθεν οὐκ εἰσήει. οἳ τε γὰρ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου, ὡς τὸν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσαντα δεῖ ἐκεῖ διδόναι δίκην, καταγελώμενοι τέως, τότε δὴ στρέφουσιν αὐτοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν μὴ ἀληθεῖς ᾧσιν.

“...whenever someone gets close to thinking he will die, fear and worry come upon him about things which didn’t occur to him before. The stories told about what goes on in Hades, how the wrongdoer here must suffer punishment there, which he earlier laughed at, now torment his soul in case they are true.”

(Plat. *Rep.* 1.330d-e, Emlyn-Jones and Preddy)

On the other hand, individuals who know they have done no wrong are said to be filled with sweet hope, which cherishes and nourishes them in old age.²¹⁷

This idea, that good behaviour during life secures a better lot after death, also appears in

²¹⁵ Pl. *Gorg.* 526b-c; *Rep.* 10.614c-d; see Chapter Three, 149-54.

²¹⁶ Pl. *Gorg.* 524e-525a.

²¹⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 1.331a.

Plato's *Phaedo*, though there he manipulates the concept in order to argue the benefits of living a philosophical life. In the *Phaedo*, Plato emphasises the importance of philosophy as preparation for the afterlife transition, by arguing that the daily separation of the mind from the physical world allows the soul to be freed more easily from the body after death.²¹⁸ He continues to say that impure souls who are tied too heavily to the physical world may retain some degree of corporeality, and will be drawn into the visible realm, haunting graveyards as shadowy phantoms.²¹⁹

Plato further argues that those who have purified themselves through philosophy will be able to secure an even better afterlife than those who have simply led virtuous lives.²²⁰ In this case, Plato substitutes the practice of philosophy for the ritual purifications performed during funerary ceremonies, and perhaps also for the purifications performed by mystic initiates, as the means of facilitating the soul's journey to the afterlife.²²¹

Chapter Conclusion

There appears to have been an early Greek connection between the correct performance of funerary rites and the admission of the soul into the afterlife. However, eschatological developments during the Archaic period saw this connection become more flexible, though certainly the importance of burial was not diminished. Analysis of the customary funerary rites indicates possible eschatological significance behind their performance, though it has been shown that their dominant function was to bestow honour upon the deceased and provide an opportunity for the survivors to mourn them.

²¹⁸ Pl. *Phaed.* 64a, 67e, 81a, 108a.

²¹⁹ Pl. *Phaed.* 81c-d; Plato manipulates the motif of the 'restless dead' to describe the fate of the unphilosophic soul (Edmonds, 2004, 187-88, 191).

²²⁰ Pl. *Phaed.* 114b-c.

²²¹ Edmonds (2004) 181-4.

There is also little direct evidence to confirm that the provision of grave goods was intended to benefit the soul after death. Instead, grave goods appear to have had various other functions, such as demonstrating wealth or symbolising an emotional attachment to the deceased by the living. However, there is a suggestion that the provision of ritually significant items, such as Charon's obol and the Orphic tablets, were intended to assist the deceased on their journey to the beyond. Finally, some individuals may have taken preparatory steps during life to ensure a better afterlife for themselves, either through religious initiation or by upholding a moral standard.

CHAPTER TWO: JOURNEY

Analysis of literary and iconographic sources shows that general trends about the afterlife journey emerged at an early period and remained relatively consistent through to the early Classical period, when we see developments in the way the journey was represented. The way in which the journey to the underworld was **portrayed** by the Greeks was directly connected to the growing concerns about death and the afterlife, but also to the changing conceptions of the psyche.

This chapter aims to assess the nature of the afterlife journey in ancient Greece, by exploring the means by which the soul was imagined to make its way to the underworld, and whether it received any assistance along the way. The chapter will also examine the route that the soul takes during its journey to the afterlife, including where the entrances to the underworld were believed to be located, as well as the geographical features the soul encounters on its voyage to the beyond.

Transport

By Air

In the Homeric poems, the journey of the soul to the underworld is portrayed as a swift flight out of the body and down to Hades.²²² The transition is both instantaneous and effortless, and the *psyche* has no trouble finding its way, though as we have already seen, it may have only be able to join the community of the dead once burial had been completed.²²³

²²² Excluding *Odyssey* 24, which is probably a late interpolation (see Chapter One- **insert pg no at end**)

²²³ *Il.* 23.71-76; *Od.* 11.72-76; Vermeule (1979, 35) compares the *psyche* to a homing pigeon, who instinctively finds its way.

The use of flight in describing the departure of the *psyche* from the body was a convenient means of visualising the disembodied soul in a way that accounted for its swift passage through the air and down to the underworld.²²⁴ It is a notion that remains consistent throughout the Homeric epics, and may be indicative of a belief that remained practically unchanged throughout the period of the epics' formation.²²⁵ In the *Iliad*, the concept of flight is used to visualise the deaths of Patroclus and Hector, both of which are described with the same formulaic verse:²²⁶

ψυχὴ δ' ἐκ ῥεθέων παμμένη Ἄιδόσδε βεβήκει

"...and his soul fleeting from his limbs was gone to Hades."

(*Il.* 16.856, 22.362, Murray and Wyatt)

The notion also appears in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, when Anticleia describes the moment in which the *psyche* leaves the body:

ψυχὴ δ' ἡύτ' ὄνειρος ἀποπταμένη πεπότηται

"...and the ghost, like a dream, flutters off and is gone."

(*Od.* 11.222, Murray, rev. Dimock)

In this case, the concept of flight is doubly conveyed through the verbs ἀποπταμένη ('fly

²²⁴ Vermeule (1979) 6, 9; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 59; the *psyche* is said to speed out of a stricken wound in *Il.* 14.518-9; speed is implied in Odysseus' conversation with the *eidolon* of Elpenor (*Od.* 11.57-8).

²²⁵ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 59.

²²⁶ The pluperfect verb *bebekei* also emphasises the immediacy of the *psyche*'s transition.

away'), and πεπότηται ('flitter about'). The description of the *psyche* as an ὄνειρος ('dream') also references its insubstantial nature, which is consistent with other comparisons in Homer of the *psyche* to a shadow or to smoke.²²⁷ It is also consistent with the idea that the *psyche* was released into the air with the last breath, a perception probably related to the etymological connection between the word ψυχή and the verb ψύχω, meaning 'to blow' or 'breathe'.²²⁸

The imagery of flight reappears in the final book of the *Odyssey*, but this time in a slightly different manner, as the shades of the suitors are compared to a colony of bats, who are said to τρίζουσαι ποτέονται ('flitter about gibbering').²²⁹ The verb τρίζω, meaning 'to utter a shrill cry', was associated with the twittering of birds, seemingly as well as bats, which the Greeks apparently classified as a kind of bird.²³⁰ Interestingly, the ghost of Patroclus is similarly described as τετριγυῖα, 'gibbering', during his encounter with Achilles in the *Iliad*.²³¹

The apparent association of the *psyche* with winged creatures was not just confined to the Homeric poems, but occasionally also appeared in Classical literature, where the souls of the dead are likened to birds.²³² But the connection of the disembodied soul with flight and winged creatures was far more common in Greek iconography, where the *psyche* was frequently represented as winged.

Iconographic evidence suggests that the association of the *psyche* with flight existed well before the time of Homer, since winged figures feature on a number of Mycenaean larnakes. Significant is the solitary image of a winged woman on one end of a *larnax* from Tanagra (**Plate 5**),

²²⁷ *Od.* 10.495; *Il.* 23.100.

²²⁸ Mirto (2012) 10; Bardel (2000) 148.

²²⁹ *Od.* 24.7.

²³⁰ *Il.* 2.314; *Hdt.* 3.110, 4.183; *Arist. HA.* 4.536b.14; for classification of bats as birds, see Russo et al. (1992) 359 (24.6-8).

²³¹ *Il.* 23.101.

²³² E.g. *Soph. OT.* 175; *Eur. Hel.* 605-6; Plato (*Phaedr.* 248b-c) also refers to the soul as growing wings.

who has outstretched arms with ruffled skin growing from elbow to wrist, similar to the webbed wings of a bat.²³³ Besides these unusual appendages, the woman resembles the female mourners depicted on other parts of the larnax in both dress and appearance.²³⁴

This image has been interpreted by Vermeule as the earliest known artistic representation of the disembodied *psyche*, which takes the likeness of its previous self, but with the addition of wings.²³⁵ These characteristics are consistent with the Homeric description of the dead, who are said to appear as εἶδωλα ('images') of their former selves, while also being flighty and breath-like in substance.²³⁶ The bat-like imagery is also reminiscent of the description of the shades of the suitors in *Odyssey* 24 mentioned above.²³⁷ It seems that the physical addition of wings was a useful way of rendering the invisible, in a way that was consistent with the idea of the soul's swift flight to the underworld.²³⁸

Some scholars have also pointed to the appearance of birds and butterflies in early Greek funerary art as possible representations of the disembodied soul.²³⁹ Vermeule has also identified four bird-like figurines (**Plate 6**), which once adorned the lid of another larnax, as possible 'soul-birds' that may have similarly represented the departing *psyche*.²⁴⁰ 'Soul-birds' may have originally been inspired

²³³ Mycenaean Larnax, Tanagra, Private Collection: see Vermeule (1965) 146, pl. 26a, and (1979) 65; Immerwahr (1995) 117.

²³⁴ Vermeule (1965) 146.

²³⁵ Vermeule (1965) 129, 146, and (1979) 65; Vermeule also argues (1965, 146) that the figure is depicted mid-flight, though Immerwahr (1995, 117) points out that many other mourners appear to be hovering as well; Vermeule (1965, 128, 147, and fig. 2a) also points to a possible example from Milatos, Crete, which could be interpreted as a winged figure, based on the Tanagran *larnax*.

²³⁶ Vermeule (1965) 147.

²³⁷ *Od.* 24.5-9; *Il.* 23.101.

²³⁸ Vermeule (1979) 9, 65.

²³⁹ Vermeule (1979) 65; however, it is known that birds had been associated with the divine since the Bronze Age, often appearing in conjunction with goddesses, as well as shrines and 'horns of consecration' (Long, 1974, 31); some scholars have also noted an association of butterflies with the *psyche*, on the basis of '*psyche*' also being the common word for butterfly or moth (e.g. Arist. *HA.* 5.551a14, also 5.550b27), see: Maaskant-Kleibrink (1990) 23-24; Bremmer (1983) 82.

²⁴⁰ Mycenaean bird attachments, Tanagra, Thebes Archaeological Museum: see Vermeule (1965) 131 and

by the Egyptian 'Ba-bird', an image that functioned as a personification of the deceased's life-force, often taking the form of a bird with a human head.²⁴¹

'Soul-birds' continued to reappear occasionally in Greek funerary art from the Geometric to Classical periods, usually depicted sitting or hovering near the body, indicating some kind of special connection to the deceased.²⁴² A Geometric clay model of a funeral wagon (**Plate 7**) featuring a bird perched atop the shroud of the deceased could have represented the disembodied soul, still lingering in the presence of its body.²⁴³ However, Benson argues that, while birds in Geometric art are clearly associated with the world of the dead, they cannot be interpreted with certainty, and may have functioned as a conventional symbol to which individuals could attach their own symbolism.²⁴⁴

If these identifications of the above images are accurate, it would indicate that the notion of the soul's flight was established, or at least was beginning to form, prior to the Dark Ages. It is possible, then, that the eschatological concepts presented by Homer were drawn from a direct heritage of art and thought originating in the Mycenaean period.²⁴⁵

(1979) 65; Spyropoulos (1970) 188-90, fig. 8.

²⁴¹ Vermeule (1979) 65, 75; the 'Ba-bird' was not exactly a representation of what we call the 'soul': see Long (1974) 31; Zabkar (1968) 113; Janak (2011) 145.

²⁴² Vermeule (1979) 18; often depicted centrally in the scene, such as on top of or beneath the bier. E.g. a prothesis scene on a late Geometric amphora features a bird surrounded by a circle of dots, sitting under the bier of the deceased: Geometric Attic amphora, c. 760-700 BCE, Athens National Archaeological Museum 18062 (see Ross, 2006, 98, fig. 24b); Ross (2006, 65) argues that the placement of birds in funerary scenes is key to understanding the iconographic value, as not all birds represent the soul.

²⁴³ Model funeral wagon, Attic, c. 700-650 BCE, Athens National Archaeological Museum 26747 (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 81, no. 22, Vivliodetis); see also Vermeule (1979) 18; also Garland (1985) 33, fig. 9.

²⁴⁴ Benson (1970) 31; Benson (1970, 30) also argues that the connection of birds with horses in funerary art suggests that birds may have had aristocratic associations.

²⁴⁵ Vermeule (1965) 147, who also notes that the concept of flight likely increased in popularity over the generations.

It appears that the Mycenaean conception of the winged *psyche* also offered a visual prototype for the more familiar winged *psychai* that emerged later in the Archaic period.²⁴⁶ Archaic winged *psychai* (also referred to as winged *eidola*) first appeared in mid to late sixth century art, and remained in popular use until around the end of the fifth century.²⁴⁷ It is generally thought that winged *psychai* were intended to represent the souls of the dead, largely owing to the fact that they are often depicted hovering above dead bodies, or in places associated with death, such as above tombs; however, their individual identities are not always entirely clear.²⁴⁸

Winged *psychai* varied in size, though they were generally portrayed as diminutive, which helped to differentiate them from the living and from other winged mythological figures, while also conveying their incorporeal nature.²⁴⁹ They are sometimes depicted with arms outstretched in a display of self-mourning (presuming they represent the soul of the deceased), which is consistent with descriptions of the dead in Homer as mourning their own deaths.²⁵⁰

In some instances, the *psyche* appears to be represented in mid-flight, moving up and away from the body of the deceased, which may be an attempt by the artist to capture the exact moment

²⁴⁶ Martin (2016) 4; Benson (1970, 28, 61) argues that artists were likely guided by the art of their ancestors, often imitating and adapting traditional prototypes.

²⁴⁷ Martin (2016) 4, 18; like Martin, I will refer to these figures as winged *psychai*, in order to differentiate them from the later images of life-like *eidola*.

²⁴⁸ They may sometimes represent the anonymous dead, as well as the central deceased individual (Martin, 2016, 2); also, Martin (2016, 16) suggests that the identities of anonymous *psychai* were possibly determined by the owners of the vase.

²⁴⁹ Martin (2016) 4, who also notes that their size is often dependent on the composition of the scene; from the end of the sixth-century winged *psychai* became increasingly more diminutive, resembling simple stick-figures by the mid-fifth century (Martin, 2016, 16); their wings also range from large and feathered in Archaic art, to delicate and gossamer in Classical art (Martin, 2016, 12-13).

²⁵⁰ *Il.* 16.856-57; 22.362-63; *Od.* 11.404-34; 11.488-91; Martin (2016) 4-5, 7, 9; they are also sometimes shown in groups, mourning the deceased (see Oakley, 2004, 82, and fig. 50); *psychai* are also often depicted in the 'knee-run' stance, which portrays rapid movement through the air, further accentuating the concept of flight (Martin, 2016, 4-5, and fn. 18, 22).

that the soul flees the body. A black-figure Attic amphora by the Diosphos Painter (c. 525-475 BCE, **Plate 8**) shows a winged *psyche* fluttering above the corpse of Sarpedon.²⁵¹ The upward direction, coupled with the ‘knee-run’ stance of the winged figure, suggest a quick flight out of the body by the *psyche*.²⁵² However, this interpretation is tentative since another similar scene by the same painter depicts the *psyche* facing down towards the body, possibly mourning its own death.²⁵³

In another *prothesis* scene on an Attic white-ground *lekythos* (c. 400 BCE, **Plate 9**), a ghostly winged *psyche* can also be seen flying up and away from the body of the deceased. While this may not necessarily depict the release of the *psyche* from the body, it may have been an attempt to represent its final departure, an idea that certainly ties in well with the emotionally charged scene.²⁵⁴ Whatever the case, its presence demonstrates that there was an ongoing association of the soul with flight well into the Classical period.

By Foot

While the journey to Hades was presented in Homer as swift and effortless, a development of eschatological beliefs during the Archaic period led to a significant elaboration of the afterlife journey, with more attention paid to how the soul made its way to the underworld.²⁵⁵ By the fifth century, descriptions of the journey to Hades had become articulated in a much more physical manner. Literary sources provided more geographical information about the route down to the underworld, which

²⁵¹ New York, Met Museum 56.171.25 (BAPD: 305529).

²⁵² Martin (2016) 7.

²⁵³ Attic *amphora*, c. 500-450, Paris, Musee du Louvre F388 (BAPD: 7309); see Martin (2016) 7.

²⁵⁴ Attic *lekythos*, Berlin, Staatliche Museen F2684 (see Oakley, 2004, 85, and fig. 54, list 7, no. 27); the artist chooses to focus on the emotion of the event (Oakley, 2004, 85).

²⁵⁵ Sourvinou-Inwood (1983, 45) argues that there was a partial shift in social attitudes to death sometime during the eighth century, which led to a development in afterlife beliefs.

further emphasised the concept of the afterlife transition as a 'journey'.²⁵⁶

Heroic *katabaseis* also became a popular theme in epic poetry after Homer, which demonstrated a growing interest in the underworld in general. While Homer's *Odyssey* was clearly the most influential on the way in which the underworld was imagined in popular culture, lost epics describing the descent myths of other heroes, such as those of Heracles, Theseus, and Orpheus, were also particularly influential.²⁵⁷ These tales became a source of information on the nature of the underworld, detailing its topography, inhabitants, and divinities residing there.²⁵⁸

During the fifth century, there was also a notable popularisation of mystery cults, which were specifically concerned with the afterlife and the nature of the soul's journey after death. As we saw in Chapter One, Bacchic and Orphic cults aimed to facilitate the soul's afterlife journey through the use of special knowledge about the underworld, which was likely sourced from a sacred text detailing the *katabasis* of Orpheus.²⁵⁹ The original texts attributed to Orpheus are thought by some scholars to have been created during the Archaic and early Classical period, when there were crucial developments in art and literature.²⁶⁰

An increasing interest in the underworld is also indicative of a growing uncertainty about

²⁵⁶ Plato provides us with several accounts of the afterlife journey: e.g. *Gorg.* 524a-25a; *Phaed.* 107d-108c, 113d-14c; *Rep.* 10.614b-21b; Sophocles says that one must "travel" to the underworld: E.g. *Ajax* 690, *Antig.* 891-3; Euripides (*Alc.* 263) refers to the road travelled; Aristophanes' *Frogs* provides a comic take on the *katabasis* myth.

²⁵⁷ Such stories likely circulated in oral tradition prior to being written down, such as that of Heracles, mentioned in the *Odyssey* (11.623-6), though there is good reason to believe that Homer was one of the earlier influential sources on underworld imagery (Edmonds, 2015, 262-63); see also the lost epic *Minyad*, which described the descent of Theseus and Pirithous (mentioned in *Paus.* 10.28.2).

²⁵⁸ Georgiades (2017) 6.

²⁵⁹ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 71.

²⁶⁰ Themselves a result of social, political, and economic developments (Tzifopoulos, 2010, 121).

death and the afterlife, as well with the physical boundaries that separated them.²⁶¹ This saw the introduction of divine ‘guides’ who assisted in the afterlife journey and mediated the boundary between life and death, as will be discussed below.

The elaboration of the journey to Hades was also reflected in fifth-century art, with more pictorial depictions of the soul’s descent underground, as well as of the mythological figures associated with the afterlife. Undoubtedly, the most famous representation of the underworld was Polygnotus’ *Nekyia* painting in the Cnidian Lesche at Delphi, probably painted sometime during the second quarter of the fifth century. It depicted Odysseus’ visit to Hades, as well as a great many other figures associated with the netherworld. However, the work was not solely based on Homer’s description of Hades, but included subject matter taken from a variety of mythic traditions and popular beliefs concerning the afterlife.²⁶² Polygnotus’ painting is thought to have influenced the works of many later artists in the rendering of figures and landscapes, as well as in subject matter.²⁶³

During the fifth century, there was also a development in the way the dead were pictorially represented, with the popularisation of full-scale *eidola* on white-ground *lekythoi*. These *eidola* were depicted as wingless, lifelike apparitions of the dead (as the term, εἶδωλον, ‘image’, suggests), which portrayed them in a much more corporeal and individualised manner than the miniature winged *psychai*.²⁶⁴ *Eidola* were depicted in various stages of the afterlife journey, most frequently appearing

²⁶¹ Bremmer (2002) 6; Johnston (2014) 32.

²⁶² Manoledakis (2003) 252; Pausanias (10.28.2) believed that Polygnotus had taken some of his inspiration from the Minyad.

²⁶³ Manoledakis (2003) 251.

²⁶⁴ This results in a more personalised image, likely evoking the memory of the deceased (Martin, 2016, 20; Bardel, 2000, 146-7; Oakley, 2004, 116), though *eidola* were usually depicted in a generic and idealised fashion, similar to how they appear on grave monuments (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, 335; Oakley, 2004, 145-215, 219). The identification of *eidola* is not always straight forward, since their lifelike appearance can make them difficult to distinguish from the living (Oakley, 2004, 148); cf. a white-ground *lekythos* by the Thanatos Painter (c. 440 BCE) depicting a black, shadow-like image of a woman, which appears to have been an attempt to portray a ghost: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 1942 (see Oakley, 2004, 165-6, fig. 125).

beside their tomb, but also in the underworld itself.²⁶⁵

The dead were now pictorially portrayed as departing to Hades ‘by foot’, rather than ‘by air’, like their earlier winged counterparts. However, the concept of flight was not entirely removed, as diminutive winged *psychai* continued to occasionally appear alongside the full-scale *eidola*, perhaps representing spirits already incorporated into Hades.²⁶⁶

It is important to note, though, that the iconographic developments were not necessarily indicative of changing beliefs about the nature of shades (though this may indeed have been the case), but rather were a new means of representing the individual experience of death and the journey to the afterlife.²⁶⁷

Guides

The elaboration of the afterlife journey during the Archaic period meant that the dead were not necessarily able to find their way to the underworld on their own, but sometimes required the help of divine figures to guide them there safely. This led to the emergence of *psychopompoi* (leaders of souls), whose purpose was to escort the souls of the newly deceased down to the world of the

²⁶⁵ E.g. see **Plates 12, 15**. These are two out of the three most common themes on white-ground *lekythoi*, with the other type being domestic scenes (Oakley, 2004, 218-19).

²⁶⁶ E.g. see **Plate 13**. The depiction of miniature winged *psychai* alongside these full-scale *eidola* may have represented two categories of the dead: the starting dead and the established dead (Bardel, 2000, 149); or may have been a dual representation of the deceased: the memory image and the true physical state of the *psyche* (Martin, 2016, 23). They may also serve to mark the presence of death or indicate a place connected to the realm of the dead, such as the grave or the underworld (Oakley, 2004, 213). Winged *psychai* become increasingly more diminutive and anonymous when *eidola* become popular, possibly because of individualised focus (see Oakley, 2004, 116).

²⁶⁷ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 336-7.

dead.²⁶⁸ *Psychopompoi* were benevolent and protective figures, who would have provided comfort and reassurance about the journey into the unknown, especially for those who might have had concerns about what awaited them in the afterlife.²⁶⁹

Whereas the integration of shades into Hades had previously been controlled through the completion of burial rituals, *psychopompoi* also absorbed the function of controlling access to Hades, like a sort of 'border control' for the land of the dead.²⁷⁰ This meant that the rule of burial was no longer necessary for shades to enter Hades and complete their transition from life to death.²⁷¹ Instead, *psychopompoi* became the means by which the dead were able to cross over into the afterlife, and were sometimes even used as a symbol for the process of death.

The primary figures responsible for conducting souls to the underworld were Hermes, messenger to the gods, and Charon, the infernal ferryman of the dead. Both characters played a separate part in the soul's journey to the afterlife, where Hermes led the souls of the dead down from the upper world, while Charon served to transport them into Hades, thereby incorporating them into the world of the dead.

Hermes Psychopompos

The first *psychopompos* to appear in Greek sources was Hermes, the divine envoy to the

²⁶⁸ Literary evidence places their emergence during the Archaic period (see Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, 304, 314).

²⁶⁹ Bremmer (2002) 5; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 317.

²⁷⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 314.

²⁷¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 314.

gods.²⁷² Among his many other roles, Hermes served as the patron god of boundaries, roads and travellers, and was associated with both liminality and liminal places, such as gateways or entrances.²⁷³ He also earned himself a reputation as a protector and guide, having been tasked with assisting both gods and heroes on various occasions.²⁷⁴

Hermes' role as envoy also meant that he was one of the few gods who was able to cross the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead.²⁷⁵ This enabled him to conduct individuals safely to and from the house of Hades, such as he did for Persephone, after she was abducted by Hades, and for Heracles, during his quest to fetch Cerberus from the underworld.²⁷⁶

Considering his established persona as divine envoy, as well as protector of travellers and boundaries, it is hardly surprising that Hermes would also take on the role as 'leader of souls', serving to guide the spirits of the newly deceased down to the land of the dead.²⁷⁷ The earliest mention of Hermes in the role of *psychopompos* is in Book 24 of the *Odyssey*, where he leads the shades of the suitors down to Hades:

Ἑρμῆς δὲ ψυχὰς Κυλλήνιος ἐξεκαλεῖτο
 ἀνδρῶν μνηστήρων· ἔχε δὲ ράβδον μετὰ χερσὶν
 καλὴν χρυσεῖην, τῇ τ' ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει
 ὣν ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ' αὖτε καὶ ὑπνώοντας ἐγείρει·

²⁷² HH. *Herm.* 572. For discussion on Hermes' role as envoy, see Allan (2018) 39-44; Hermes is named διάκτορος ('messenger' or 'minister') by Hesiod (*WD.* 68); Aesch. *Ag.* 515; Apollod. 3.115.

²⁷³ Allan (2018) 56-65; for Hermes' role as 'crosser of boundaries', see Burkert (1985) 157-8.

²⁷⁴ For Hermes as a guide for the gods, see Allan (2018) 53-55; Hermes also guides Priam in the *Iliad* (24. 334-450); Apollo asks Hermes to guide Orestes in the *Eumenides* (Aesch. *Eum.* 89-93).

²⁷⁵ Burkert (1985) 157; see also Allan (2018) 41.

²⁷⁶ Persephone: HH. *Dem.* 2.335-85; Heracles: *Od.* 11.626.

²⁷⁷ For discussion see Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 312-21.

τῆ ῥ' ἄγε κινήσας, ταὶ δὲ τρίζουσαι ἔποντο...

... ἦρχε δ' ἄρα σφιν

Ἑρμείας ἀκάκητα κατ' εὐρώεντα κέλευθα.

“But Cyllenian Hermes was calling forth the ghosts of the suitors. He held in his hands his wand, a beautiful wand of gold, with which he lulls to sleep the eyes of whom he will, while others again he wakens out of slumber as well; with this wand he roused and led the ghosts, and they followed gibbering... and Hermes, the Helper, led them down the dank ways.”

(*Od.* 24. 1-10, Murray, rev. Dimock)

Since burial is apparently no longer a requirement for entry into Hades, Hermes is able to lead the shades of the suitors directly into the Asphodel Meadow, the dwelling place of the dead.²⁷⁸ This is the only occasion in which Hermes appears as a *psychopompos* in the Homeric poems, possibly because *Odyssey* 24 (or at least part of it) is a suspected late interpolation, composed some time during the late seventh or early sixth century BCE.²⁷⁹

In fact, the appearance of a *psychopompos* in itself indicates a later composition date, since the afterlife beliefs presented in *Odyssey* 24 seem to reflect an intermediate stage of eschatological development, between the afterlife beliefs found in the rest of the Homeric poems and the elaborate eschatology belonging to the Classical period.²⁸⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood argues that by the time the final book of the *Odyssey* had taken its final form, the mythology surrounding the afterlife had been

²⁷⁸ *Od.* 24.13-14.

²⁷⁹ For comprehensive discussion on the composition of *Odyssey* 24, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 94-103; however, the episode in the *Iliad* 24 when Hermes assists Priam in retrieving Hector's body can be seen to mirror a *katabasis* narrative (see de Jáuregui, 2011, 37-68); see also Allan (2018) 115.

²⁸⁰ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 103-7, 311.

elaborated significantly enough to include Hermes' new role as a leader of souls.²⁸¹

But by the fifth century, Hermes' role as *psychopompos* was more clearly established. In tragedy he is often referred to as πομπαῖος ('conductor') and χθόνιος ('of the underworld').²⁸² In Sophocles' *Ajax*, Hermes is even called upon to hasten the passage of death:

...καλῶ δ' ἄμα
 πομπαῖον Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον εὖ με κοιμίσει,
 ξὺν ἀσφαδάστῳ καὶ ταχεῖ πηδήματι
 πλευρὰν διαρρήξαντα τῷδε φασγάνῳ.

"...at the same time I call on Hermes who escorts men below the earth to lull me fast to sleep, without writhing, with one rapid bound, when I have pierced my side with this sword."

(Soph. *Aj.* 831-4, Lloyd-Jones)

Hermes was also responsible for controlling the access of the dead to the upper world, where he was occasionally charged with leading shades back out of Hades. In a fragment of Euripides' *Protesilaus* Hermes is tasked with escorting the shade of Protesilaus to and from the upper world, after the gods permitted that he return for one day to see his wife.²⁸³

²⁸¹ For Hermes' emergence as a leader of souls, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1985) 104-6.

²⁸² Hermes *Pompaios*: Soph. *Aj.* 832; Soph. *OC.* 1548; Aesch. *fr.* 273a.8; Hermes *Chthonios*: Eur. *Al.* 743; Aesch. *Ch.* 1, 124, 727; Ar. *Frogs*, 1144-46.

²⁸³ Eur. *fr.* 646a; also Apollod. *Epit.* E.3.30; he is also invoked in Aeschylus' *Persians* (628-30) to bring up the ghost of Darius during a necromantic rite; see also: Aesch. *fr.* 273a.8; Hermes is shown on a grave relief taking Eurydice by the hand at the moment Orpheus turns to look at her: Napoli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 6727 (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 147, no. 71, Grasso); Hermes is also depicted leading Persephone back out of Hades on a red-figure bell krater by the Persephone Painter (c. 440 BCE): New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund 1928, 28.57.23 (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2012, 144, no. 68, Karoglou).

Hermes' role as *psychopompos* also became a popular theme on Attic white-ground *lekythoi* of the fifth century, where he is depicted guiding the deceased at various stages of the afterlife journey. He often carries a *kerykeion* ('herald's staff') and wears a travelling hat and cloak, as in other scenes of Greek art.²⁸⁴ In his capacity as *psychopompos*, Hermes is usually pictured leading the *eidolon* of the deceased by the hand, wrist or arm, which emphasises the level of individualised care each person could hope to receive after death.²⁸⁵

Possibly the earliest iconographic depiction of Hermes as a 'leader of souls' appears on a white-ground outline lekythos attributed to the Tymbos Painter (c. 460 BCE, **Plate 10**), which shows the god directing several winged *psychai* with his wand, as they fly in and out of a half-buried *pithos*.²⁸⁶ Scholars have provided a number of interpretations for the function of the *pithos*, such as that it served as an entrance to the underworld, or even as a receptacle for libations to the dead. Whatever the case, it is clear that Hermes is exerting some level of control over the shades.²⁸⁷

One of the few surviving representations of Hermes *Psychopompos* on a grave monument appears on a marble *lekythos*, dating to the late fifth century BCE (**Plate 11**), and shows him leading a woman by the hand, while he turns back to look at her. According to the inscription, her name is Myrrhine, and she has subsequently been identified as the first priestess of Athena Nike.²⁸⁸ The image portrays the individualised care Myrrhine was no doubt imagined to receive after her death.

²⁸⁴ See Oakley (2004) 141.

²⁸⁵ E.g. **Plate 13**. For Hermes *Psychopompos* on white-ground *lekythoi*, see Oakley (2004) 137-41.

²⁸⁶ Jena, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität 338 (Oakley, 2004, 139, fig. 102; BAPD: 209420).

²⁸⁷ Oakley (2004) 137-8; Garland suggests Hermes may be releasing shades from their grave (Garland, 1985, 54); suggestions that this scene represents the Anthesteria festival are likely incorrect, as there is little evidence to indicate that the souls of the dead were really believed to wander the upper world during the festival (see Oakley, 2004, 137-8).

²⁸⁸ Athens, National Archaeological Museum 4485; Oakley (2004) 139.

Hermes is sometimes also pictured standing beside the tomb of the deceased, presumably waiting to escort them down to the underworld. On one memorable scene attributed to the Phiale Painter (c. 435-430 BCE, **Plate 12**), Hermes is depicted sitting on a rock near a tomb, while a young woman, likely the *eidolon* of the deceased, adjusts her headdress. He calmly gestures towards her in a reassuring manner, indicating that it is time to leave.²⁸⁹

Most frequently, Hermes is shown alongside Charon, the ferryman of the dead. Though in *Odyssey* 24 Hermes was described as leading the shades directly into Hades, it is clear that by the fifth century his role was to bring shades down from the world of the living and deliver them to Charon, so that he may ferry them across the infernal river and into Hades.²⁹⁰ On one white-ground *lekythos* by the Sabouroff Painter (c. 440 BCE, **Plate 13**), Hermes is depicted leading the *eidolon* of a woman by the hand towards Charon's boat. Tiny winged *psychai* flutter all around them, like a 'reception committee', perhaps serving to place their location within the underworld.²⁹¹

Hermes also sometimes appears in conjunction with Hypnos and Thanatos, watching on as they place the body of the deceased in their grave. The image is a conflation of Hermes in his capacity as *psychopompos* with the scene type of Hypnos and Thanatos carrying the body of Sarpedon, with the imagery adapted to fit the funerary context of the ordinary individual.²⁹²

Charon

²⁸⁹ Munich, Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek 6248 (see Oakley, 2004, 140, and fig. 104-5, list 13, no. 4).

²⁹⁰ Oakley (2004) 141.

²⁹¹ Athens, National Archaeological Museum: 1926 (BAPD: 212341); see Oakley (2004), 116.

²⁹² Waiting to escort the deceased to Hades (Oakley, 2004, 141); for Hypnos and Thanatos on white-ground *lekythoi*, see Oakley (2004) 125-137.

Likely inspired by Near Eastern or Egyptian models, Charon, the ferryman of the dead, is an underworld *daimon* who was responsible for transporting souls of the recently deceased across the river Acheron.²⁹³ Charon is not known by either Homer or Hesiod, and for this reason seems to have been of a later origin. His first attested appearance occurs in the lost epic poem known as the *Minyad*, a work of uncertain date that Pausanias attributes to Prodikos of Phocaea.²⁹⁴ A passage of the *Minyad*, preserved by Pausanias, describes Charon as the old ferryman who guides the ship carrying the dead:

ἔνθ' ἦτοι νέα μὲν νεκυάμβατον, ἦν ὁ γεραῖός
πορθμεὺς ἦγε Χάρων, οὐκ ἔλαβον ἔνδοθεν ὄρμου.

*"Then the boat on which embark the dead, that the old
Ferryman, Charon, used to steer, they found not
within its moorings."*

(Paus. 10.28.2, Jones)

Literary sources from the Classical period depict Charon as busy and impatient, anxious to transport the dead over to Hades.²⁹⁵ In the *Alcestis*, Euripides describes Charon as urging the dying Alcestis to come aboard his ship:

ὄρῳ δίκωπον ὄρῳ σκάφος ἐν

²⁹³ Like Urshanabi, the Sumerian ferryman of the dead (see Kirk, 1970, 100, 224); Grinsell (1957, 261) similarly suggests Egyptian influence for the ferryman.

²⁹⁴ Paus. 4.33.7. Scholars suggest different dates: Souvinou-Inwood (1995, 303) suggests the early sixth, or even late seventh century, while others suggest a date closer to the classical period (see Oakley, 113, and 224, n. 35). An early written reference to Charon also appears on a c. 500 BCE inscription from Phokis, where Charon is referred to as an agent of death (see Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, 362; and Garland, 1985, 55).

²⁹⁵ E.g. Arist. *Lys.* 605-7; see Sullivan (1950) 12.

λίμνα· νεκύων δὲ πορθμεύς
 ἔχων χέρ' ἐπὶ κοντῷ Χάρων
 μ' ἤδη καλεῖ· Τί μέλλεις;
 ἐπείγου· σὺ κατείργεις. τάδε τοί
 με σπερχόμενος ταχύνει.

"I see the two-oared boat in the lake. Charon, the ferryman of the dead, his hand on the boat pole, calls me now: "Why are you tarrying? Make haste, you hinder my going!" He speaks impatiently, urging me on with these words."

(Eur. *Alc.* 252-5, Kovacs)

Charon is also included in the underworld narrative of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, which would have drawn from popular mythology concerning the afterlife journey.²⁹⁶ Aristophanes depicts him as both impatient and bossy, even directing Dionysus to row the boat himself.

By the end of the sixth century, Charon begins to appear in Greek art, which demonstrates that his character was reasonably well established by this time. The earliest confirmed depiction of Charon in Greek art appears on an Attic black-figure stand fragment (c. 525-475 BCE, **Plate 14**); he is shown in his boat, surrounded by a swarm of winged *psychai*, some of which are seated on board.²⁹⁷ The seemingly unnecessary act of ferrying winged *psychai* suggests that, from an early date, Charon's role was not simply to provide transport for the souls of the dead, but also to finally integrate shades into Hades and effect the symbolic transition from life to death.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Ar. *Frogs*, 139-41, 268-70; see Sullivan (1950) 12; Moorton (1989) 312.

²⁹⁷ Frankfurt, Liebieghaus 560 (BAPD: 4966); Sourviou-Inwood (1995) 303.

²⁹⁸ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 315; for other examples of Charon with winged *psychai*, see Beazley Archive nos. 209341 and 209342.

The image of Charon ferrying the souls of the dead became a particularly popular theme on white-ground *lekythoi* of the fifth century.²⁹⁹ Scenes typically depict Charon as a bearded man, standing in his boat and holding a barge pole. He is usually shown wearing a short chiton, and a cap characteristic of fishermen and outdoorsmen.³⁰⁰ Occasionally he is represented with white hair, which is consistent with his description in the *Minyad* as being old, but more often he is portrayed as middle-aged.³⁰¹

In his role as a ferryman for the dead, Charon is usually depicted waiting to receive shades aboard his ship. He is sometimes shown reaching out towards the *eidolon* of the deceased, beckoning them forward, perhaps in a consoling manner, or perhaps also with some impatience.³⁰² He is also frequently pictured in conjunction with Hermes, who delivers the shades to Charon at the banks of the underworld river, presumably having just led them down from the upper world.³⁰³

The actual journey on board Charon's ship is rarely depicted in Greek art. A few images do survive, such as on the above-mentioned black-figure stand fragment, as well as on a white-ground *lekythos* by the Munich 2335 Painter (c. 450-400 BCE, **Plate 15**), which depicts Hermes delivering a shade of a woman to Charon, while the shade of another woman sits in the ferryman's boat, patiently waiting for departure.³⁰⁴ Charon also occasionally appears beside the tomb in a conflation with scenes

²⁹⁹ For a list of images of Charon on white-ground *lekythoi*, see Oakley (2004) 108-13.

³⁰⁰ Oakley (2004) 113, 116.

³⁰¹ See Oakley (2004) 113, 116; he is represented as old in Polygnotus' painting at Delphi (Paus. 10.28.2); Charon is also represented on a grave stele as an old man (see Garland, 1985, 56).

³⁰² See Oakley (2004) 125.

³⁰³ See Chapter Two, 75.

³⁰⁴ Cracow, Czartoryski Museum 1251 (BAPD: 215479); see also Oakley (2004) 124, fig. 86.

that show the visit to the grave.³⁰⁵ This presents an abbreviated narrative of the afterlife journey, which itself indicates that passage in Charon's ship across the Acheron was symbolic of the transition from life to death as a whole.

Plato's Daimon Guides

Plato incorporates the concept of *psychopompoi* into his philosophical interpretation of the afterlife journey. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates tells us that during life each person is allotted a guardian spirit (δαίμων), who after death leads them down to their appointed destination in the netherworld.³⁰⁶ Such figures may have been related to the golden race of men described by Hesiod, who are said to dwell upon the earth as spirits, serving as guardians of mortals, and who invisibly watch over all of humankind.³⁰⁷

Socrates continues to explain that souls who are wise and orderly will follow their guides to the afterlife without issue, but souls who still desire to be attached to their bodies will remain in the visible world for a long time, until they are forcibly dragged down to the underworld by their appointed spirit.³⁰⁸

ἡ μὲν οὖν κοσμία τε καὶ φρόνιμος ψυχὴ ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ τὰ παρόντα· ἡ δ' ἐπιθυμητικῶς τοῦ σώματος ἔχουσα, ὅπερ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν εἶπον, περὶ ἐκεῖνο πολὺν

³⁰⁵ E.g. **Plates 4, 16**. Another *lekythos* (c. 430-420 BCE) appears to show a conflation of the tomb with Hypnos and Thanatos, Hermes, and Charon, who also happens to have a youth sitting in his boat: Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 1830 (see Oakley, 2004, 134, fig. 95).

³⁰⁶ Pl. *Phaed.* 107d-108c.

³⁰⁷ Hes. *WD.* 122-6; see also Edmonds (2004) 190-91.

³⁰⁸ See also Chapter One, 56.

χρόνον ἐπτοημένη καὶ περὶ τὸν ὄρατὸν τόπον, πολλὰ ἀντιτεῖνασα καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα, βία καὶ μόγις ὑπὸ τοῦ προστεταγμένου δαίμονος οἴχεται ἀγομένη.

“Now the well disciplined and prudent soul follows and doesn’t fail to recognize its situation. But the one that lusts after the needs of the body, such as I talked about earlier, having fluttered around it and the visible region for a long time, and having resisted and suffered a great deal, is led away by force and with difficulty by his appointed spirit.”

(Pl. *Phaed.* 108a-b, Emlyn-Jones and Preddy)

Socrates also points out that the need for guides suggests that the route to Hades must be complicated and disorientating, so much that the soul would lose its way if it did not receive assistance:

ἔστι δὲ ἄρα ἡ πορεία οὐχ ὡς ὁ Αἰσχύλου Τήλεφος λέγει· ἐκεῖνος μὲν γὰρ ἀπλὴν οἴμὸν φησιν εἰς Ἄιδου φέρειν, ἡ δ’ οὔτε ἀπλῆ οὔτε μία φαίνεται μοι εἶναι. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν ἡγεμόνων ἔδει· οὐ γὰρ πού τις ἂν διαμάρτοι οὐδαμόσε μιᾶς ὁδοῦ οὔσης. νῦν δὲ ἔοικε σχίσαις τε καὶ τριόδους πολλὰς ἔχειν· | ἀπὸ τῶν θυσιῶν τε καὶ νομίμων τῶν ἐνθάδε τεκμαιρόμενος λέγω.

“But the journey in fact is not as Aeschylus’ Telephus describes it. For he says a simple path leads to Hades, but to me it seems to be neither simple nor single. It wouldn’t have required guides in that case. You see I don’t think anyone would go astray anywhere if it were a single path; as it is it seems to have many branches and crossroads. I say this judging from the evidence of sacrifices and rituals here.”

(Pl. *Phaedo*, 107e-108a, Emlyn-Jones and Preddy)

Thus, in order to successfully complete the afterlife journey, and avoid getting lost along the way, the soul must follow its appointed guide. Elsewhere in the *Phaedo*, Plato uses this same language of guidance and multiple paths to describe the philosophical life, in which the mind must guide the body using reason, so as to not become distracted by false paths of the sensual world.³⁰⁹ In this way, Plato manipulates ideas about the afterlife journey in order to demonstrate the benefits of leading a philosophical life.

His aims aside, it is clear that Plato is familiar with conceptions of a complex and difficult journey after death, though unfortunately he does not elaborate on the nature of this journey. However, other literary sources, discussed below, are more forthcoming with information about the journey to the underworld.

The Route to the Underworld

Location of Hades

Early Greek literature indicates that the land of the dead was believed to lie directly below the earth. Homer typically describes the souls of the dead as ‘descending’ (κατέρχομαι) to the House of Hades, which lies ‘beneath the depths of the earth’ (ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης).³¹⁰ In Hesiod, Hades is

³⁰⁹ Pl. *Phaed.* 66a-e, 94e; see Edmonds (2004) 191.

³¹⁰ ‘Descent’: *Il.* 6. 284, 7. 330; *Od.* 10. 560, 11.65; also Patroclus’ shade disappears ‘beneath the earth’ (*Il.* 23. 100); Hades located ‘beneath the depths of the earth’: *Il.* 22.482; other mentions of Hades under the earth: *Il.* 9.565ff, 22. 425; *Od.* 10. 174, 12. 21, 23. 252; Homer also refers to Hades as the king ‘below’ (*Il.* 20.61).

described as the god 'beneath the earth' (χθονίου), who rules over 'those below who have perished' (ἐνέροισι καταφθιμένοισιν).³¹¹ The notion that the realm of the dead was located beneath the earth remained practically unchanged throughout antiquity. Classical sources similarly refer to an underground location of Hades, as do later writers such as Lucian.³¹²

However, while the kingdom of the dead was located directly beneath the earth's crust, early literature also indicates that its entrance was thought to lie at the horizon in the far west.³¹³ Several passages in Homer suggest that the souls of the dead journeyed west after death. In the *Odyssey*, the ghosts of the suitors are envisioned as descending to Ἔρεβος (literally, 'place of nether-darkness') beneath ζόφος ('the dark quarter'), a word that generally means *darkness* or *gloom*, but in Homer is also used to describe the west or the place where the sun sets.³¹⁴

In his description of the cosmos, Hesiod also places the 'threshold' (οὐδός) to the underworld at the western edge of the earth, where Atlas holds up the sky.³¹⁵ Hesiod tells us elsewhere that the place where Atlas holds up the sky is located in front of the daughters of Night, Hesperides

³¹¹ Hes. *Th.* 767, 850; Hesiod mostly talks about Tartarus, so it is unclear whether Tartarus is the name of the entire underworld, or just the abyss confining the Titans; for discussion on the exact position of Hades' House, see Johnson (1999) 23, and fn. 45.

³¹² Pl. *Rep.* 10.614c; *Phaed.* 111e- 112a; two gold tablets from Pelinna specify Hades as being beneath the earth: e.g. E3, F10 (Edmonds, 2011, 39, 47); Luc. *Lucl.* 2; Near Eastern mythologies similarly locate the dwelling place of the dead within or below the earth, which in some cases may have resulted in a conflation with the grave (Heidel, 1946, 170, 173).

³¹³ The location of Hades both beneath the earth and in the west was possibly a conflation of two different concepts of the world of the dead, perhaps owing to the influence of Near Eastern and Egyptian traditions, which placed the underworld at the place where the sun sets (Bremmer, 2002, 4); Nakassis (2004) 228; West (1997) 153; Horowitz (1998) 352. For Babylonian tradition, see Heidel (1949) 157, 171; for Indian tradition, see Wagenvoort (1971) 116.

³¹⁴ *Od.* 20.356; *zophos* used in opposition to *eos* (dawn), or to reference the place where the sun sets (*Od.* 3.335, 9.26, 10.190, 13.241). West (1997, 153) notes that the name for the West Wind (*Zephus*) is thought to be related to *zophos*, though further suggests (154) that *erebos* is possibly related to a Semitic word signifying the setting of the sun; for *zophos* in connection to *erebos*, see also *Od.* 12.81.

³¹⁵ Hes. *Th.* 746-47; Hesiod's description of the underworld indicates that it connects with the upper world at the horizon, meaning that it is located both in the west and below the earth (Johnson, 1999, 16).

(Ἑσπερίδες), whose name refers to the ‘evening’ or the ‘west’.³¹⁶ The far west is also where Day and Night are said to pass through bronze gates.³¹⁷ Interestingly, in the final book of the *Odyssey*, Hermes is said to lead the ghosts of the slain suitors past the Gates of the Sun, but whether these gates are the same as those mentioned by Hesiod is unclear.³¹⁸

The notion that the entrance to the underworld was located at the horizon in the west is further suggested in the description of Odysseus’ journey to the netherworld to consult the spirit of Tiresias in *Odyssey* 11 (often referred to as the *Nekyia*). Homer places the entrance to the underworld near the city of the Cimmerians, which is located beyond the stream of Oceanus, the great river thought to flow around the very edges of the inhabited world.³¹⁹ Homer describes the land of the Cimmerians as shrouded in perpetual darkness, since it lies beyond the path of the sun, and therefore beyond the place where the sun sets.³²⁰

The notion that the land of the dead was located in the far west was also occasionally presented in later literature. Sophocles refers to the souls of the dead as travelling west after death:

ἄλλον δ’ ἂν ἄλλα προσίδοις ἅπερ εὐπτερον ὄρνιν
 κρεῖσσον ἀμαϊμακέτου πυρὸς ὄρμενον
 ἀκτὰν πρὸς ἑσπέρου θεοῦ.

³¹⁶ Hes. *Th.* 215, 519-22.

³¹⁷ Hes. *Th.* 748-50, and 811.

³¹⁸ Russo et al (1992) 360 (24.11-14); also see Nakassis (2004) 227; cf. Marinatos (2010, 196) argues that the ‘gates of the sun’ are two sets of gates, existing in both the east and the west; However Hermes also leads the suitors past the ‘land of dreams’ (δῆμον ὄνειρων: 24.12), being the home of the Oneiroi, the children of Night (Hes. *Th.* 211-12), who may have lived at the western edge of the world with the other children of Night (Hes. *Th.* 758).

³¹⁹ *Od.* 11.13-21; Oceanus: *Il.* 18.607; Aesch. *PB.* 139 ff; Hdt. 4.36.

³²⁰ *Od.* 11.15-19; Helios was believed to set into Oceanus every evening in the west (*Il.* 7.421-22, 8.485; *Od.* 19.433-34; HH. *Hel.* 31.16); the darkness of the land of the Cimmerians could have been a characteristic transferred from the darkness of the underworld (see Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, 72).

“You can see one here and one there, swifter than destroying fire, speed like a winged bird to the shore of the god whose home is in the West.”

(Soph. *OT*, 175-8, Lloyd-Jones)

However, the idea that souls journey to the west is comparatively rare in Greek literature; instead, the concept of a simple descent was by far the dominant means of expressing the soul's departure to the afterlife, as we shall see below.

Shortcuts

There were also believed to be other entrances to Hades, or ‘shortcuts’, situated throughout the inhabited world. These entrances were typically located in openings in the earth, like caves and chasms, as well as near certain bodies of water, such as marshes or volcanic lakes.³²¹ Myths of Heroic *katabaseis* were frequently attached to these places, with locals often claiming that heroes such as Heracles and Orpheus had descended (or ascended) there.³²² Owing to their supposed connection to the underworld, many of these entrances were also associated with *nekuomanteia*, oracles of the dead.³²³ *Nekuomanteia* were places where the living could go to communicate with the spirits of the dead, and were usually situated in places where there were thought to exist passages to the underworld.³²⁴

³²¹ Caskey and Dakaris (1962) 85; Ogden (2001a) 25; Friese (2010) 31. Water may have played an important role in nekromantic rites (Friese, 2010, 34). Ustinova (2009, 272) suggests that caves invited images of the underworld.

³²² See Ogden (2001b) 185.

³²³ Ogden (2001a) 17; Friese (2010) 31; for *nekuomanteia* located in caves, see Ustinova (2009) 272-3.

³²⁴ Ustinova (2009) 272; Friese (2010, 37-8) also suggests that oracles might also have utilised the landscape to mimic the topography of the underworld.

Probably most important of these was the Acheron *nekuomanteion* in Thesprotia, in northwestern Greece, which was thought to be the site of several mythical *katabaseis*, for example, of Orpheus, Theseus (and Pirithous), and Heracles, who may have done so on two separate occasions.³²⁵ The area is home to two rivers called the Acheron and the Cocytus, which originally flowed into a marshy lake known as the Acherousian Lake (sometimes attributed the name Aornos).³²⁶

The *nekuomanteion* is thought to have been situated somewhere on the lakeside, near the convergence of these waters, though its exact location is still uncertain.³²⁷ Dakaris famously identified a hilltop site near the confluence of the rivers Cocytus and Acheron as the remains of the *nekuomanteion*, situated beneath a modern day monastery.³²⁸ However, some scholars have argued that the remains are actually that of a fortified farmhouse from the Hellenistic period, which is supported by the large amounts of crockery and agricultural tools found at the site.³²⁹

Alternatively, a fragment from Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* describes the necromantic rites as taking place on the water's edge, indicating that the oracle may have been located somewhere closer to the banks of Acheron.³³⁰ In this text the water forms the entry point into the underworld, with souls of the dead described as swarming up out of the river mouth.³³¹

Similarities in the landscape of the surrounding valley with the topography of the Homeric

³²⁵ Orpheus: Paus. 9.30.6; Herakles was thought to have descended there when he went to fetch Cerberus, and when he rescued Theseus and Pirithous (for sources, see Ogden, 2001a, 43, and fn. 1).

³²⁶ Acheron and Acherousian Lake mentioned by Thucydides (1.46.4); the Acherousian Lake was drained in the early twentieth century (see Ogden, 2001a, 45-6).

³²⁷ See Ogden (2001b) 175-6; by river: Hdt. 5.92G; by lake: Paus. 9.30.6.

³²⁸ Caskey and Dakaris (1962) 87-93.

³²⁹ Ogden (2001a) 21; Wiseman (1998) 15-18.

³³⁰ Aesch. *fr.* 273a.

³³¹ Ogden (2001a) 48.

netherworld have led some scholars to argue that this place actually served as the inspiration for Homer's description of Hades.³³² Dakaris himself favoured the hilltop site owing to its similarity to the description provided by Homer.³³³ Pausanias, after having seen this place himself, tells us that the infernal rivers mentioned by Homer were actually named after the two in Thesprotia.³³⁴ Black poplars and willows are also known to grow throughout the valley, features that are included in Homer's description of the entrance to the underworld.³³⁵ Sourvinou-Inwood argues that this site in Thesprotia was the original location of Odysseus' consultation with Tiresias, which existed in an earlier version of the epic, but was later transferred to the mythical ends of the earth by Homer to better suit the narrative of the mythological adventure.³³⁶

Another supposed entrance to the underworld was situated in a cave at Cape Taenarum, in Laconia.³³⁷ Sometimes referred to as the 'mouth' (στόμα) of Hades, the cave was also frequently identified as the passage through which Heracles brought Cerberus up out of the underworld, and where Theseus and Pirithous descended to kidnap Persephone.³³⁸ Orpheus was apparently thought to have descended here too, but this may have been a later attribution.³³⁹

A *nekuomanteion* was also established in the cave, though its date is uncertain.³⁴⁰ During his

³³² Ogden (2001a) 43, and fn. 3; Friese (2010) 32-33.

³³³ Caskey and Dakaris (1962) 92.

³³⁴ Paus. 1.17.5.

³³⁵ Ogden (2001) 44; *Od.* 10.510.

³³⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 75-6.

³³⁷ Ogden (2001) 34.

³³⁸ *Ar. Frogs*, 187; 'Mouth of Hades': *Eu. Herc.* 23 ff; *Apollold.* 2.5.12; *Pind. Pyth.* 4.44; cf. Paus. 3.25.5; for more sources, see Ogden (2001a) 34, fn. 17; Theseus and Pirithous mentioned by Apollonius of Rhodes: *Arg.* 1.101-2.

³³⁹ see Ogden (2001a) 34, fn. 17. A rationalised telling of Heracles's visit to Taenarum said that a poisonous snake once resided there, which locals referred to as the 'hound of Hades', owing to its fatal bite. Supposedly, it was this creature that Heracles brought to Eurystheus for his final labour (Paus. 3.25.5; *Soph. fr.* 226).

³⁴⁰ Ogden (2001a) 36-7; Some have pointed to another sea cave, known as the 'Cave of Hades' in modern times, as the actual location of the oracle, but it does not match the description of the *nekuomanteion* in ancient sources (Ogden, 2001a, 35, see fn. 21).

visit, Pausanias was not able to find any evidence of an entrance to the netherworld, though it appears that he may have actually mistaken the nearby temple of Poseidon (which he says is “made like a cave”) for the ancient *nekuomanteion*.³⁴¹

Another well-known entrance to Hades was located in the Argolid town of Hermione, where it was believed that Heracles had brought up the mythological hound Cerberus through a chasm in the earth.³⁴² This was also said to be the place where Hades had carried off Persephone, but it is not clear whether this myth was a later attribution.³⁴³ According to Callimachus, the underworld entrance in Hermione was thought to be so direct that locals supposedly did not need to pay Charon a fee for passage into Hades.³⁴⁴ Pausanias tells us that the chasm was situated behind a complex of chthonic sanctuaries dedicated to Demeter and Clymenus, the latter of which Pausanias argues was probably named after the god of the underworld rather than the son of Phoroneus.³⁴⁵ Also located behind the sanctuary was apparently a small lake called the Acherousian Lake, though unfortunately Pausanias does not provide any other information about its connection with the underworld.

There were several other prominent entrances to Hades located elsewhere in the Greek world.³⁴⁶ One particular cave at the Acherousian Chersonese, near Heracleia Pontica on the Black Sea, was also thought by locals to contain a path leading down to the underworld.³⁴⁷ The inhabitants of Heracleia Pontica believed this to be the actual site where Heracles brought Cerberus up out of Hades,

³⁴¹ Paus. 3.25.4-5, who says the cave had a statue of Poseidon standing before it; for the location of the cave, see Odgen (2001a) 34-35, and fn. 19.

³⁴² Eur. *Her.* 615; Paus. 2.35.10.

³⁴³ Apollod. 1.5.1.

³⁴⁴ Callim. *fr.* 278; Strab. 8.6.12; Ogden (2001a) 25.

³⁴⁵ Paus. 2.35.10; Clymenus was sometimes used as an epithet for Hades; however there was another sacred place dedicated to Pluto nearby, so Pausanias may have been incorrect.

³⁴⁶ Another well-known entrance was supposedly located at Lake Avernus at Cumae, Campania (Ogden, 2001, 61-74).

³⁴⁷ Apollon. *Arg.* 2.356.

and for this reason they had named their city after him.³⁴⁸ According to Xenophon, Heracles had left visible marks of his descent in the form of a cave, which reached a depth of more than two stadia.³⁴⁹

Apollonius of Rhodes refers to this place as the ‘cavern of Hades’ (σπέος Ἰδαίου), which is covered over by trees and rocks, and from which an ice-cold vapour blows continuously, coating everything in sparkling frost.³⁵⁰ Such a description certainly agrees with the depiction of Hades in literary sources as being cold, mouldering and dingy.³⁵¹ A *nekuomanteion* was also apparently built in the cave, which at some point acquired the name Acherousian, along with the peninsula on which the cave was situated. The river flowing beneath the cave was similarly identified as the mouth of the river Acheron, which gushed out from the mountainside by way of a deep ravine.³⁵²

Entrance Topography

Many of the topographical details about the entrance to the land of the dead are described by Homer in the *Odyssey*, firstly in Odysseus’ consultation with Tiresias in Book 11, and then again in the descent of the suitors in Book 24. It is suspected that some of these details may have pre-dated the *Odyssey*, instead having originated in other stories of heroic descents that would have circulated during the Dark Ages.³⁵³

³⁴⁸ Xenophon (*Ana.* 6.2.2) actually says that Heracles descended here, while Diodorus (14.31.4) says that he only ascended there; for more sources on the area see Ogden (2001a) 29, fn. 1.

³⁴⁹ Xen. *Ana.* 6.2.2;

³⁵⁰ Apollon. *Arg.* 2.736-39.

³⁵¹ E.g. *Od.* 10.512; Hes. *WD* 153.

³⁵² For sources see Ogden (2001a) 29-30, fn. 2; for peninsula and river: Apollon. *Arg.* 2. 352056, 726-730.

³⁵³ Johnston (2014) 33; This is suggested in the reference to Heracles’ descent in the *Odyssey* (11.714-5) as well as to that of Theseus and Pirithous (11.721).

In *Odyssey* 11, Circe explains the route Odysseus must take to reach the underworld:

ἀλλ' ὀπότη' ἄν δὴ νηὶ δι' Ὀκεανοῖο περήσης,
 ἔνθ' ἀκτὴ τε λάχεια καὶ ἄλσεα Περσεφονείης,
 μακραί τ' αἴγειροι καὶ ἰτέαι ὠλεσίκαρποι,
 νῆα μὲν αὐτοῦ κέλσαι ἐπ' Ὀκεανῶ βαθυδίνῃ,
 αὐτὸς δ' εἰς Αἴδεω ἰέναι δόμον εὐρώοντα.
 ἔνθα μὲν εἰς Ἀχέροντα Πυριφλεγέθων τε ῥέουσιν
 Κώκυτός θ', ὃς δὴ Στυγὸς ὕδατός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ,
 πέτρῃ τε ξύνεσὶς τε δὺω ποταμῶν ἐριδούπων·

“But when in your ship you have now crossed the stream of Oceanus, where is a level shore and the groves of Persephone—tall poplars, and willows that shed their fruit—there beach your ship by the deep eddying Oceanus, but go yourself to the dank house of Hades. There into Acheron flow Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, which is a branch of the water of the Styx; and there is a rock, and the meeting place of the two roaring rivers...”

(*Od.* 10. 508ff, Murray, rev. Dimock)

The account of the suitor’s descent in *Odyssey* 24 provides alternate details about the route to the underworld:

πὰρ δ' ἴσαν Ὀκεανοῦ τε ῥοὰς καὶ Λευκάδα πέτρην,
 ἠδὲ παρ' Ἡελίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον ὄνειρων
 ἦσαν· αἶψα δ' ἴκοντο κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα,
 ἔνθα τε ναίουσι ψυχαί...

“Past the streams of Oceanus they went, past the rock Leucas, past the gates of the Sun and the land of dreams, and quickly came to the meadow of asphodel, where the ghosts dwell...”

(*Od.* 24.11-14, Murray, rev. Dimock)

The features described by Homer will be explored below in the context of other literature.

Groves of Persephone

As we saw above, Circe says that before the entrance to Hades lie the Groves of Persephone, which consist of tall black poplars and willows that ‘shed their fruit before ripening’. This is the only occasion in which the groves appear in Homer, as they are not included in the description of the suitors’ descent to the underworld.³⁵⁴ So why does Homer include them as a specific feature of the entrance to the underworld? It is possible that the Groves of Persephone were a feature of other *katabasis* tales, like that of Heracles or Orpheus, which Homer may have incorporated into his own description of the netherworld.³⁵⁵

Interestingly, there is some indication in later sources that the Groves of Persephone were in some way connected to the Orphic *katabasis*. Polygnotus apparently depicted Orpheus sitting in the

³⁵⁴ Hesiod makes no mention of them in his description of the underworld, but since he was more concerned with the beings inhabiting the underworld, this does not necessarily mean he had no knowledge of them. He does, however, refer to the garden of the Hesperides, which was located at the western edge of the earth, near the entrance to the underworld (*Th.* 215, 519-22), though this does not seem to bear any relation to Persephone.

³⁵⁵ Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 70 (10.509-12).

groves in his *Nekyia* painting at Delphi:

Ἀποβλέψαντι δὲ αὖθις ἐς τὰ κάτω τῆς γραφῆς, ἔστιν ἐφεξῆς μετὰ τὸν Πάτροκλον οἷα ἐπὶ λόφου τινὸς Ὀρφεὺς καθεζόμενος, ἐφάπτεται δὲ καὶ τῇ ἀριστερᾷ κιθάρας, τῇ δὲ ἑτέρᾳ χειρὶ ἰτέας ψαύει· κλώνές εἰσιν ὧν ψαύει, προσανακέκλιται δὲ τῷ δένδρῳ. τὸ δὲ ἄλλος ἔοικεν εἶναι τῆς Περσεφόνης, ἔνθα αἴγειροι καὶ ἰτέαι δόξη τῇ Ὀμήρου πεφύκασιν.

“Turning our gaze again to the lower part of the picture we see, next after Patroclus, Orpheus sitting on what seems to be a sort of hill; he grasps with his left hand a harp, and with his right he touches a willow. It is the branches that he touches, and he is leaning against the tree. The grove seems to be that of Persephone, where grow, as Homer thought, black poplars and willows.”

(Paus. 10.30.6, Jones)

The Groves of Persephone are also mentioned in one ‘Orphic’ gold tablet from Thurii, which refers to “the holy meadows and the groves of Persephone”.³⁵⁶ In this case, the groves are associated with the blessed afterlife that awaits the initiates, or at least those initiates who are successful in navigating the underworld. However, the incorporation of the groves into the Orphic Elysium is at odds with Homer’s depiction, not only because he locates them outside of Hades, but also because he describes the willows as shedding their fruit prematurely (ὠλεσίκαρποι), which may indicate disease or sterility. For this reason, it is quite likely that the Orphic poets copied the motif of the groves from *Odyssey* 11 and then re-appropriated it to suit their own purposes.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ A4, Thurii, c. 400-300 BCE (Edmonds, 2011, 20).

³⁵⁷ See Bernabé et al. (2008) 176.

Another explanation for the origin of the groves may actually lie in the place from which Pausanias believed Homer took his inspiration for his description of the underworld. The Acheron valley, located in Thesprotia, is apparently covered with poplars and willows, which adds more fuel to the belief that Homer may have based his *Nekyia* on the topography of the *nekuomanteion* in Ephyra.³⁵⁸ However, this is far from certain since trees and groves are a common topographical feature, not only of the Greek afterlife, but also of the afterlife myths of other cultures.³⁵⁹

Leukas Rock

In *Odyssey 24* the shades of the suitors are said to pass by ‘a white rock’ (Λευκάδα πέτρην) on their journey to the underworld.³⁶⁰ While its exact location is not directly stated, the text does indicate that the rock is situated somewhere near the stream of Oceanus and the Gates of the Sun, which lie at the mythical ends of the earth.³⁶¹ The *Leukas* rock does not appear elsewhere in the Homeric poems, though there is a possible connection with the rock mentioned by Circe in Book 10 of the *Odyssey*, which is located at the confluence of the two underworld rivers, near the boundary to Hades. However, it is unclear whether these two landmarks were intended to be one and the same; rocks are, after all, an expected topographical feature of any landscape, especially of a subterranean realm.

The specific reference to the *Leukas* rock in Book 24 of the *Odyssey* prompts speculation about the inspiration behind the landmark. Several locations in the Greek world, both real and mythical, may ‘correspond’ with the white rock that appears in the description of the suitors’ descent to the

³⁵⁸ See Chapter Two, 87-8.

³⁵⁹ See Graf and Johnston (2013) 108.

³⁶⁰ *Od.* 24.11.

³⁶¹ See Russo et al. (1992) 360 (24.11-14).

underworld.

For example, the *Leukas* rock may have been a reference to the mythical isle of *Leuke*, otherwise known as the White Island and thought to be the place where Thetis transported the body of Achilles after his death.³⁶² An island near the mouth of the Danube River in the Black Sea was identified by the Greeks as the real isle of *Leuke*, and a temple dedicated to Achilles was subsequently founded there.³⁶³ There appears to have been a tradition that the spirit of Achilles resided on the island, as indicated by Euripides:

...τὸν φίλτατόν σοι παῖδ' ἔμοί τ' Ἀχιλλέα
 ὄψη δόμους ναίοντα νησιωτικούς
 Λευκὴν κατ' ἀκτὴν ἐντὸς ἀξένου πόρου.

"...you will see your beloved son and mine, Achilles, dwelling in his island home on the strand of Leuke in the Sea Inhospitable."

(Eur. *Andr.* 1260-2, Kovacs)

By the time of Pausanias, the spirits of several Greek heroes were also said to haunt the island.³⁶⁴ However, the White Island was located in the far north, rather than the far west, which does not accord with Homer's placement of the *Leukas* rock.³⁶⁵

³⁶² Aethiopsis in Proclus, Chrestomathy (Suda a 3960); the remains of Achilles buried on the Island: Apollod. *Epit.* E5. 5; the island has often been compared to the Elysian Fields and the Isles of the Blessed (Hedreen, 1991, 320, and fn. 44).

³⁶³ Paus. 3.19.11-13; it was certainly associated with the mythical island by the time of Pindar (Pind. *Nem.* 4.7); for temple, see Hedreen (1991) 320-21.

³⁶⁴ Paus. 3.19.13.

³⁶⁵ The Greeks located the White Island in Scythia, the northernmost country (Hedreen, 1991, 325).

Other mentions of the ‘white rock’ in Greek literature are more often concerned with Cape Leucatas, on the island of Leucas on the western coast of Greece.³⁶⁶ Cape Leucatas was primarily known for its prominent white cliffs, which were known as a true ‘lovers’ leap’, having supposedly been the site where Sappho committed suicide.³⁶⁷ Euripides and Anacreon simply refer to the island as the ‘white rock’ (λευκάς πέτρα), while a fragment from Menander’s play *Leukadia* describes it as ‘the rock seen from afar’ (πέτρας ἀπὸ τηλεφανοῦς).³⁶⁸

What makes this location the more likely candidate for Homer’s Λευκάδα πέτρην is that the island of Leucas is located near Epirus, and is actually situated partway between the island of Ithaca and the mouth of the river Acheron on the western coast of Epirus. This would associate it with the topography of the Acheron valley in Thesprotia, where there was supposed to be an entrance to the underworld, while also placing it on the suitors’ ‘route’ to the underworld.³⁶⁹

Even with this explanation in mind we are still left to wonder what role the *Leukas* rock played in the mythological landscape of the underworld. Those responsible for composing the final book of the *Odyssey* may have included the white cliffs as a landmark referencing the location of the Acheron valley on the western coast of Greece, providing they believed that an entrance to the underworld was located in Thesprotia.

However, the purpose for the landmark may not necessarily have been that complicated.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ Strabo (10.2.8) describes Cape Leucatas as a prominent white rock jutting out from Leucas into the ocean; apparently the island of Leucas was originally connected to the mainland, but was made into an island when the Corinthians dug a trench through the narrow isthmus sometime during the seventh century BCE (Strab. 10.2.8).

³⁶⁷ Strab. 10.2.9; Russo et al (1992, 360, 24.11-14) suggest it may have been used proverbially for the threshold of death in early times.

³⁶⁸ Eur. *Cyc.* 163-7; Anac. *fr.* 376.

³⁶⁹ For see Acheron *nekuomanteion* see Chapter Two, 86-8.

³⁷⁰ Russo et al (1992, 360, 24.11-14) say that it’s probably not Cape Leucatas, or any other place in the real

Edmonds argues that since λευκός can mean 'bright' and 'shining', as well as 'white', it is possible that the rock simply functioned as a location marker for the entrance to the underworld, and a visible beacon in the darkness.³⁷¹

Water Barriers

Water barriers blocking the entrance into the underworld is an especially popular topographical motif of many underworld myths, likely as they provide a definite division between two worlds, and because their crossing is easily controlled.³⁷² The idea that the dead must cross a body of water before they can enter Hades is present in Greek literature from as early as Homer.³⁷³ As we saw in Chapter One, the ghost of Patroclus complains that he is unable to cross the 'river' (ποταμοῖο) that bars his entry into Hades while his body remains unburied.³⁷⁴ Patroclus unfortunately does not name this river; in fact, the only underworld river mentioned in the *Iliad* is the Styx, which is referenced once in relation to Heracles' *katabasis*.³⁷⁵ Styx is also the only river named by Hesiod in his description of the underworld, where it is specified as a branch of Oceanus flowing beneath the earth.³⁷⁶

In the *Odyssey* we are provided with a much more detailed picture of the entrance to the underworld, primarily in the description of Odysseus' quest to consult the ghost of Tiresias. For Odysseus, the main body of water blocking his entry into the underworld is that of Oceanus, which he

world.

³⁷¹ See Edmonds (2010) 226.

³⁷² Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 62-3.

³⁷³ The concept of the river barrier is common to Babylonian and Egyptian traditions also, with the former imagining the dead ferried by a boatman of the netherworld (see Heidel, 1949, 172; and Nasassis, 2004, 230).

³⁷⁴ *Il.* 23.73.

³⁷⁵ *Il.* 8.369.

³⁷⁶ Hes. *Th.* 778-80.

is able to cross with the help of Circe.³⁷⁷ Though the Acheron (and the Acherousian Lake into which the waters of the Acheron, the Pyriphlegethon and the Cocytus flow) is also mentioned, it does not appear to block the entry into the realm of the dead in a manner consistent with Patroclus' experience. Indeed, the shades of the dead are able to approach Odysseus easily, with no mention of them crossing the river; though this may not have been an issue for the established dead, owing to their insubstantial nature.

River barriers are also mentioned in *Odyssey* Book 11 by the spirit of Anticleia, who says that several great rivers block entry into Hades, the first being Oceanus, which can only be crossed (by the living) with a 'well-built ship'.³⁷⁸ However, these lines were apparently rejected by Aristarchus as late interpolations.³⁷⁹ Scholars have similarly questioned the authenticity of the description of underworld rivers in *Odyssey* 10, since they do not appear elsewhere in the Homeric poems or in Hesiod's description of the underworld.³⁸⁰ However, as we have already seen, such topographical features may have been drawn from other epic *katabaseis* that were prevalent at the time of Homer.³⁸¹

Oceanus is mentioned once again in the final book of the *Odyssey*, in which Hermes leads the shades of the suitors past the Ocean stream on their descent to the underworld.³⁸² Unlike in the case of Patroclus, there is no underworld river barring their access to Hades, even though their bodies

³⁷⁷ Who sends a following wind (*Od.* 11.7-8); cf. Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989, 78, 11.14-19), who say that Odysseus does not cross Oceanus, but simply travels along it, following the rim of the earth until he reaches the land of the Cimmerians in the west, where the entrance to the underworld is located. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 61) suggests that Oceanus was inserted by Homer after he transferred the *Nekyia* to the western edge of the earth.

³⁷⁸ *Od.* 11.156-60.

³⁷⁹ See Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 87 (11.156-9).

³⁸⁰ Vermeule (1979, 211, n. 6) questions whether the mention of the Cocytus and Pyriphlegethon were retrojected into Book 10 during the late sixth or early fifth century; Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 70 (11.513-15); Mackie (1999) 486.

³⁸¹ Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) 70 (10.509-12).

³⁸² *Od.* 24.11-12.

remain unburied. In fact, there are no infernal rivers mentioned at all, which seems unusual, owing to their prominence in the underworld topography of Books 10 and 11.³⁸³ It is possible, though, that the author simply decided to select different details from the wealth of mythic material that would have been available to him at the time of composition.³⁸⁴

It is clear that at some point during the sixth century, the river Acheron, or the Acherousian Lake, became firmly established as the body of water souls needed to cross in order to enter the land of the dead.³⁸⁵ The name Ἀχέρων was associated in antiquity with the Greek word ἄχος ('pain' or 'distress'), just as the other underworld rivers were named in connection with death and mourning: Κωκυτός ('wailing'), Στύξ ('hatred'), and Πυριφλεγέθων ('blazing-fire').³⁸⁶ However, West also points to a possible connection with the Hebrew word 'aharon', meaning 'western' (among other things), which would indicate a connection between the infernal river and the supposed location of the underworld in the west.³⁸⁷

The earliest mentions of the Acheron as a netherworld river appear in fragments of Sappho and Alcaeus, the latter of which refers to it in relation to the myth of Sisyphus, who was said to have crossed it twice.³⁸⁸ But the first reference to the Acheron in relation to the ship that transported the dead across the waters of the netherworld appears in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*:

³⁸³ Vermeule (1979) 158.

³⁸⁴ Russo et al. (1992) 360 (24.11-14).

³⁸⁵ Acheron was the name given to the river, while Acherousian referred to the lake into which the rivers Acheron, Pyriphlegethon, and Cocytus flowed (*Od.* 10.513-15; *Pl. Phaed.* 112e-113e); both terms appear to have been used to refer to the body of water blocking the entrance to Hades, eg: Euripides refers to Acheron as λίμναν Ἀχεροντίαν (*Eur. Alc.* 443); cf. Ἀχέρων in Aeschylus (*Seven.* 854-860), see Chapter Two, 101.

³⁸⁶ Connection of Acheron to 'pain': e.g. *Melan. fr.* 759; Pyriphlegethon, 'blazing-fire', is thought by some to be associated with cremation (see Mackie, 1999, 487). Mackie (1999, 487) also notes that Cocytus is specifically associated with the high-pitched wail of female mourners.

³⁸⁷ West (1997) 156.

³⁸⁸ *Sapph. fr.* 95; *Alcae. fr.* 38A.

ἀλλὰ γόνων, ὦ φίλαι, κατ' οὔρον
 ἐρέσσετ' ἀμφὶ κρατὶ πόμπιμον χεροῖν
 πίτυλον, ὃς αἰὲν δι' Ἀχέροντ' ἀμείβεται,
 ἄνοστον μελάγκροκον
 ναυστολῶν θεωρίδα
 τὰν ἀστιβῆ Παιῶνι, τὰν ἀνάλιον,
 πάνδοκον εἰς ἀφανῆ τε χέρσον.

*“Friends, with the wind of lamentation in your sails
 ply in accompaniment the regular beating of hands on head,
 which is for ever crossing the Acheron,
 propelling on a sacred mission from which there is no Return
 the black-sailed ship,
 on which Apollo Paeon never treads and the sun never shines,
 to the invisible shores that welcome all.”*
 (Aesch. Seven. 854-860, Sommerstein)

This indicates that the association of the Acheron with the ferryman of the dead was established by at least the beginning of the fifth century. As we have already seen, the act of crossing the Acheron in Charon’s ship marked the final integration of the soul into Hades and the completion of the transition from life to death.

Representations of the Acheron in Greek art are denoted not only by the presence of Charon and his ship but also occasionally by reeds growing from the banks of the river, as well as by rare attempts to depict rippling water. One scene on a white-ground *lekythos* by the Triglyph Painter (c. 410 BCE, **Plate 16**) shows circular, watermelon-like patterns, which Oakley identifies as the artist’s

attempt to depict the various shades of moving water.³⁸⁹ Reeds are also pictured growing in the background, further denoting the presence of water. The Acheron was also included in Polygnotus' painting of the underworld at Delphi, depicted as a river with reeds growing from it and with fish painted as shadows.³⁹⁰

Plato incorporates the Acheron into his vision of the underworld as the place where most souls are sent to dwell between lifetimes, remaining there for an appointed length of time before being reborn into new bodies.³⁹¹ In this case, the waters were imagined to purify the dead, presumably from any wrongdoings they had committed during life.³⁹²

The concept of the afterlife voyage is occasionally also referenced in grave goods. A gold *epistomion* (c. 560 BCE, **Plate 17**) from Macedonia is engraved with the outline of a ship, suggesting the afterlife journey upon Charon's barge.³⁹³ It has also been suggested that the placement of model boats in graves as early as the Bronze Age was supposed to symbolise the transportation of the soul to the afterlife; however, there is no evidence to confirm that this was their intended function.³⁹⁴

Gates of Hades

Having crossed the underworld waters, the shades of the dead then pass through the gates

³⁸⁹ Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung F2680 (see Oakley, 2004, 123, fig. 85; BAPD: 217827); see also BAPD: 217828; for another example depicting reeds, see BAPD: 217661.

³⁹⁰ Paus. 10.28.1.

³⁹¹ Pl. *Phaed.* 113d.

³⁹² Plato (*Phaed.* 113d) says that those who have committed injustices will pay for the crimes in this same place, while those who have done good deeds will receive rewards there.

³⁹³ Stampolidis and Oikonomou (2014) 100, no. 36 (Ignatiadou).

³⁹⁴ Johnston (1985) 12, and n. 59, 62; though the custom is attested in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Neo-Sumerian funerary practice (Johnston, 1985, 12, and n. 60, 61).

marking the entrance to the land of the dead. Gates of the underworld are a common motif also in Near Eastern and Egyptian afterlife myths, often playing an important role in the soul's journey to (or through) the underworld.³⁹⁵ Like the underworld river, they also function to control access to the land of the dead, while also preventing inhabitants from leaving.³⁹⁶

Gates appear as a feature of the underworld in both Homer and Hesiod. Homer describes the House of Hades as εὐρυπυλῆς ('broad-gated'), and refers to the underworld god himself as the πύλαρτης ('gate-fastener'), suggesting that those who passed through the gates would be locked in.³⁹⁷ The ghost of Patroclus also refers to the gates of Hades, when he complains that he is unable to pass through them while his body remains unburied.³⁹⁸

Elsewhere, the gates of Hades are referred to as νεπτέρων πύλας ('gates of the netherworld', or 'of the infernal ones'), and σκότου πύλας ('the gates of darkness').³⁹⁹ Theognis describes the gates of the netherworld as "the black gates which hold back the souls of the dead, for all their protestations".⁴⁰⁰

To pass through the gates of Hades also came to be used as a figure of speech for death itself. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Aphrodite describes the fate in store for Hippolytus:

οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' ἀνεωγμένας πύλας

³⁹⁵ See West (1997) 157; in the Old Testament the gates of *Sheol* were imagined to lie in the west (Heidel, 1949, 178).

³⁹⁶ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 64.

³⁹⁷ Wide-gated: *Il.* 23.74; *Od.* 11.571; Hades the 'Gate-Fastener': *Il.* 8.367; 13.415; *Od.* 11.277; see West (1997) 156-7, fn. 235; and Mirto (2012) 16.

³⁹⁸ *Il.* 23.74. See Chapter One, 9.

³⁹⁹ Eur. *Hipp.* 1447; Eur. *Hec.* 1.

⁴⁰⁰ κυανέας τε πύλας παραμείψεται, αἶ τε θανόντων, ψυχὰς εἴργουσιν καίπερ ἀναινομένας' (Theogn. 709-10).

“Αἶδου, φάος δὲ λοίσθιον βλέπων τόδε.

“Clearly he does not know that the gates of the Underworld stand open for him and that today’s light is the last he shall ever look upon”.⁴⁰¹

(Eur. *Hipp.* 56-7, Kovacs)

Guarding the gates of Hades was the ferocious hound Cerberus, who prevented shades from leaving the world of the dead. Homer mentions the ‘hound of Hades’ only in reference to Heracles’ final labour, when he was tasked to bring the infernal hound back to the upper world.⁴⁰² For this reason, it is possible that Cerberus originated in the story of Herakles’ *katabasis*.⁴⁰³ The name Cerberus was first attributed to the hound by Hesiod, who describes him as a savage, fifty-headed dog, who fauns over souls who enter but devours those who are caught going back through the gates.⁴⁰⁴ In later literary sources, Cerberus usually had three heads, as he did in art, except in Athens where, for some unknown reason, he was depicted with two.⁴⁰⁵

After Hesiod, most references to Cerberus are concerned with Heracles’ labour rather than with his role as guard dog of Hades.⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, iconographic representations of Cerberus in Greek art usually show him in conjunction with Heracles, in scenes depicting Heracles’ descent to the underworld.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰¹ See also Theogn. 425–28.

⁴⁰² *Il.* 8.368; *Od.* 11.623-26; see also: Bacch. *fr.* 5; Ar. *Frogs*, 468.

⁴⁰³ Burkert (1985) 197.

⁴⁰⁴ Hes. *Th.* 310-12, 769-75.

⁴⁰⁵ E.g. Apollod. 2.5.12; Paus. 3.25.6; three heads: Etruscan amphora, c. 525-475 BCE, Berlin, Antikensammlung F1880 (BAPD: 6083); two heads: Attic amphora, c. 550-500 BCE, Texas, McCoy (BAPD: 2587); Attic Cup B, c. 525-475, Berlin, Antikensammlung 3232 (BAPD: 200980).

⁴⁰⁶ Though Cerberus features more in Roman sources, e.g. Prop. 3.5; Virg. *A.* 6.417-18.

⁴⁰⁷ E.g. Attic amphora, c. 525-475 BCE, Diosphos Painter, New York, Metropolitan Museum 41.162.178 (Beazley Archive, no. 305534). Vase depicts Heracles holding Cerberus by a leash, while Hades is seated in a building holding a sceptre.

As Hesiod tells us, Cerberus posed no threat for souls entering the world of the dead, so was probably of little concern to those individuals who may have been worried about the afterlife journey.⁴⁰⁸ The souls of the dead were able to pass unhindered through the gates of the netherworld, crossing the threshold into the world of the dead, from which there was no return. The soul would then continue along the next stages of its journey through the netherworld, until it reached its final destination.

Chapter Conclusion

Early Greek representations of the psyche indicate that the soul's journey to the afterlife was visualised as a quick flight through the air. This idea was reflected in both Greek art and literature from as early as the Mycenaean period through to the Classical period, as evidenced by the depiction of winged *psychai*. Eschatological developments during the Archaic and early Classical periods meant that the afterlife journey became more elaborate and complex, with greater attention paid to how the soul made its way to the underworld. This saw a shift towards a more individualised representation of the dead, with the popularisation of *eidola*; the result was that the journey was less often visually portrayed as taking place through flight, and more so 'by foot'. The eschatological developments also resulted in the emergence of *psychopompoi*, who took over control of the passage from life to death, and provided a level of reassurance for those who were anxious about the journey into the unknown.

Literary sources indicate that the afterlife journey was imagined as a 'descent', though the souls of the dead may have had to travel west in order to reach the underworld. However, there were

⁴⁰⁸ But in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (1568-75), the chorus asks that Oedipus be able to pass into the land of the dead unhindered by Cerberus.

several places located throughout the Greek world believed to contain 'short cuts', which enabled access to the underworld without having to travel to the ends of the earth. The earliest surviving geographical details about the entrance to the underworld are provided by Homer, who may have drawn inspiration from other heroic *katabasis* myths circulating at the time. One of the most notable topographical features was the Acheron, or the Acherousian Lake, the water barrier separating Hades from the world of the living. With the help of Charon, the act of crossing the Acheron served to finally integrate the soul into the world of the dead.

CHAPTER THREE: ARRIVAL

Upon arrival in the realm of Hades, the soul must find its way to its final resting place. Like the journey from the upper to the lower world, the journey of the soul *through* the underworld was a changing concept. Literary sources display differing ideas about the destination of the soul, which emerge following the eschatological developments of the Archaic and Early Classical periods.

This chapter will explore the different afterlife destinations for the dead, conditions for entry, and how these changed over time. It will also discuss the soul's journey through the underworld to its final destination, including the route it travels, as well as any hazards that may impede its progress. Finally, it will examine the 'checkpoints' through which the soul has to pass on its journey, which entail confrontations with important underworld figures, ultimately determining the fate of the deceased.

Final Destination

There was no one single view of the afterlife characterising 'ordinary' Greek belief. Instead, ancient sources describe several different afterlife destinations for the dead, each of which had different functions and different criteria for entry. The emergence of different afterlife destinations seems to have occurred during the eschatological developments of the Archaic and early Classical periods, when we see a shift towards a more individualised afterlife experience. The primary abodes for the dead described by Greek authors include the Asphodel Meadow, the Elysian realms, and Tartarus, the destination for the damned, each of which will be discussed in turn below.

The Asphodel Meadow

According to Homer, once souls have passed through the gates of Hades they all enter the 'Asphodel Meadow' (ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα), the permanent abode of the dead, which is located just beyond the entrance to Hades, near the river Acheron.⁴⁰⁹ The first reference to the Asphodel Meadow appears in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus descends to the underworld to consult the ghost of Tiresias.⁴¹⁰ The meadow is described as a dark and murky place, where the souls of the dead continue a shadowy version of their earthly lives, except without pleasure or rewards.⁴¹¹ This was a collective fate shared by all souls of the dead, with no differentiation in status or in the extent of one's virtue.

In the meadow, Odysseus observes Orion chasing beasts that he once hunted in life across the Asphodel Meadow, and Minos, with sceptre in hand, giving judgement to the dead.⁴¹² But precisely what sort of existence an individual could expect to lead in the afterlife is still somewhat unclear. Homer presents conflicting views on the nature of life in the Asphodel Meadow, as it is also said that the dead exist as witless phantoms that possess no intelligence or memory.⁴¹³ As we saw in Chapter One, the inconsistency may have been due to a conflation of an older belief in 'witless' shades with a later belief in more 'lively' shades.⁴¹⁴ The idea of more 'lively' shades indicates a shift away from the belief in a collective, shadow-like existence after death, towards a more individualised destiny, in

⁴⁰⁹ *Od.* 24.13-14; the meadow was visible to Odysseus from his position beside the river, but he did not actually enter it (*Od.* 10.513-15).

⁴¹⁰ *Od.* 11.539, 573.

⁴¹¹ Murky darkness: *Od.* 11.155. Tiresias describes the land where the dead dwell as joyless (*Od.* 11.94); this is also expressed by the spirit of Achilles, who says that even a life as a poor servant on earth would be better than being lord over all the dead in the underworld (*Od.* 11.487-91); this image of the afterlife is similar to Babylonian and Hebrew conceptions of the underworld, which describe it as dark and dingy (see Chapter Two, 90; see also West, 1997, 159-60; Heidel, 1949, 180).

⁴¹² Orion: *Od.* 11.572-5; Minos: 11.568-71.

⁴¹³ See Chapter One, 10.

⁴¹⁴ See Chapter One, 10-11; rather than being a late interpolation (see Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, 84).

which the dead are imagined to live some sort of 'life' beneath the earth.⁴¹⁵

In the description of the abode of the dead, Homer provides little detail. However, we can discern some information from its name, ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα. The word for 'meadow', λειμῶν, generally denotes any 'moist, grassy place', and is closely related to the word λίμνη, which refers to a 'pool of standing water' or a 'marshy lake'.⁴¹⁶ Whether or not this etymological association was in any way reflected in the association of the underworld meadow with a marshy lake, such as the Acherousian Lake at the entrance to Hades, cannot be said with certainty.

That aside, the defining feature of the meadow was the asphodel flowers that covered it, as indicated by the adjective ἀσφοδελὸν. Asphodel is a flowering plant native to Mediterranean countries that produces white or yellow flowers depending on the variety.⁴¹⁷ Ancient writers describe the stalks of asphodel as luscious and good for eating, though it was quite clearly considered a frugal food that was probably more often eaten by the poor.⁴¹⁸ Some evidence also suggests that the roots of the plant were used for medical purposes, specifically in treating jaundice and diseases of the spleen.⁴¹⁹

However, the significance behind the specific presence of asphodel in the underworld has been a cause for some speculation. Some scholars have suggested that its association with the afterlife may be due to the dull, ghostly colour of its leaves and flowers, which corresponds to the sadness and

⁴¹⁵ Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 79; Johnston (1999) 98.

⁴¹⁶ see Puhvel (1969b) 64.

⁴¹⁷ Asphodelus and Asphodeline, see Baumann (1993) 63, 65, 68, figs. 106, 107, 108; see Graves (1970, 327-9) for description of asphodel.

⁴¹⁸ Hes. *WD.* 41; Plut. *Septem.* 14; also see Graves (1970) 328; Lucian (*Luct.* 19) says that asphodel was a food of the dead, but this may be due to its already established presence in the underworld. Any connection of asphodel with the underworld in later Greek texts may have been a result of the descriptions in Homer.

⁴¹⁹ Hippoc. *Diseas.* 2.38.

emptiness of the underworld landscape, while its unpleasant scent also evokes death.⁴²⁰ Other scholars have argued that the word *asphodel* was actually a replacement of the phonetically similar word *σποδός*, meaning ‘ashes’; the original phrase would have been *σποδελὸν λιμῶνα*, an ‘ash-filled meadow’, which is more consistent with the Homeric description of the underworld as being gloomy and barren.⁴²¹ Reece argues that the substitution was further encouraged by a pre-existing association in wider Greek culture of *asphodel* with death and the afterlife, as well as with the goddess *Persephone*.⁴²² However, the presence of *asphodel* in the land of the dead may have simply been due to its ability to grow in barren, rocky soil, making it a suitable choice for underworld vegetation.

On the other hand, this seemingly conflicted image of a ‘flowery’ meadow in the gloomy Greek underworld may have been a result of earlier Egyptian and Near Eastern influences, specifically conceptions of the afterlife as a fertile paradise, like the Egyptian ‘Field of Reeds’ or the Hittite and Vedic pasture-lands.⁴²³ This would suggest that Homer’s description of the *Asphodel Meadow* was a conflation between two contrasting views of the afterlife: paradisiacal fields and a murky underworld, the latter of which was more appropriate for Homer’s portrayal of death being inferior to life.⁴²⁴

With the eschatological developments that occurred during the Archaic and Classical periods, the concept of Homer’s underworld meadow was adapted to fit a variety of afterlife narratives. In Plato’s numerous descriptions of the afterlife, the meadow becomes a central meeting place, like a hotel lobby or airport terminal, where spirits gather to be judged before continuing their journey through the underworld to their appointed destinations.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁰ Baumann (1993) 65.

⁴²¹ Reece (2007, 394-95) argues the phrase ‘ash-filled meadow’ was pre-Homeric; see also Graves (1970) 328.

⁴²² Reece (2007) 395-7.

⁴²³ For paradisiacal afterlife meadows, see Reece (2007) 397; and Puhvel (1969a) 60, and (1969b) 64-5.

⁴²⁴ Poetic glory is the only good part of death (Edmonds, 2014, 26).

⁴²⁵ At the meeting place of the paths to Elysium and Tartarus (Pl. *Rep.* 10.614e; *Gorg.* 524a).

The later Greek writer Lucian describes the Asphodel Meadow as the place where souls who have neither lived virtuous lives nor committed any great crimes go to dwell after death; they are left to wander about the meadow as disembodied shadows, which is consistent (no doubt intentionally) with the Homeric depiction of the dead.⁴²⁶

The underworld meadow also became a feature of the afterlife beliefs of mystery cults, as evidenced by references to the 'sacred meadow' on the 'Orphic' gold tablets, which was the afterlife destination reserved for the souls of initiates.⁴²⁷ The exact nature of this afterlife destination will be explored in the next section.

Elysium

Elysium was a paradisiacal afterlife destination, which in Homer and Hesiod was reserved for heroes and the divine, but later became known as the place where the souls of the blessed and virtuous were sent to live after death. Though there is some variation in the descriptions, there appear to have been two main realms which corresponded to what will henceforth be call Elysium: 'Ἠλύσιον πεδῖον, the 'Elysian Plain', and the (more often referred to) μακάρων νήσοι, 'Isles of the Blessed'.⁴²⁸ Both were paradisiacal lands distinct from Hades, which were initially located at the western edge of the earth, beside the stream of Oceanus.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Luc. *Luct.* 9.

⁴²⁷ See Chapter Three, 116.

⁴²⁸ Cf. Pindar (*Ol.* 2.72) refers to a singular island of the Blessed.

⁴²⁹ *Od.* 4.561-68; Hes. *WD.* 166-71.

As has been briefly mentioned already, the Greek conception of a paradisiacal afterlife may have been influenced by Egyptian or Near Eastern eschatologies, which depicted the afterlife as a fertile meadow or river delta.⁴³⁰ Indeed, Diodorus tells us that Orpheus introduced the concept of the paradisiacal afterlife meadow, having supposedly borrowed it from the Egyptians.⁴³¹ Some scholars have also pointed to a Minoan origin of a paradisiacal afterlife, with the most common cited evidence some iconographic details on the Ring of Nestor, which Evans believed represented an early depiction of Elysium.⁴³² However, this interpretation is highly speculative, and there is little other evidence supporting the claim.⁴³³

The earliest mention of Elysium in Greek texts appears in the *Odyssey*, where Menelaus is told he will be conveyed to the Elysian Plain at the end of his life, since he is the husband of Helen, the daughter of Zeus.⁴³⁴ Homer describes Elysium as a place where “*life is easiest for men*”, where there is no rain nor heavy storms, but only cool westerly breezes sent up by Oceanus.⁴³⁵ Since ‘to die’ meant to go to the House of Hades, Menelaus’ translation to the Elysian Plain is presented by Homer as an alternative to death, where Menelaus will presumably be able to live as an immortal.

Hesiod describes a strikingly similar paradise, which he calls the Isles of the Blessed, where the godlike race of Heroes were sent to live after death.⁴³⁶ On these islands, the fertile earth produced fruits three times a year, and men lived lives free from care. The Titan Cronus is also mentioned as

⁴³⁰ Knight (1970) 34.

⁴³¹ Diod. 1.96.5.

⁴³² See Evans (1925) 48-52; and Knight (1970) 43.

⁴³³ See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995, 32-56) for discussion.

⁴³⁴ *Od.* 4.561-70.

⁴³⁵ τῆ περ ῥήϊστη βιοτῆ πέλει ἀνθρώποισιν (*Od.* 4.565); This is also said to be the home of fair-haired Rhadamanthys, the son of Zeus and Europa and brother of king Minos. A Near Eastern parallel can be seen in the story of Utnapishtim, who was given an immortal life away from humankind, beyond the sunrise and the Waters of Death (see West, 1997, 167).

⁴³⁶ Hes. *WD*, 167-73.

king there, having been released from the bonds inflicted by Zeus.

Like Homer and Hesiod, Classical authors also presented conveyance to Elysium as an alternative to death, as those who lived there were said to have been granted immortality by the gods.⁴³⁷ They depict Elysium as a paradise, featuring sunny meadows filled with flowers and fragrant trees laden with fruits.⁴³⁸ Souls who reside there are imagined to live lives of leisure, entertaining themselves with music, exercise, games, and drink.⁴³⁹ One fragment from Pindar, preserved by Plutarch, describes these paradisiacal conditions:

τοῖσι λάμπει μὲν μένος ἀελίου
 τὰν ἐνθάδε νύκτα κάτω,
 φοινικорόδοις <δ'> ἐνὶ λειμώνεσσι προάστιον αὐτῶν
 καὶ λιβάνων σκιαρᾶν < | >
 καὶ χρυσοκάρποισιν βέβριθε <δενδρέοις>
 καὶ τοὶ μὲν ἵπποις γυμνασίοισι <τε -->
 τοὶ δὲ πεσσοῖς
 τοὶ δὲ φορμίγγεσσι τέρπονται, παρὰ δέ σφισιν
 εὐανθῆς ἄπας τέθαλεν ὄλβος·

“For them shines the might of the sun”⁴⁴⁰

below during nighttime up here,

⁴³⁷ Euripides (*Ba.* 1338-39) says that Cadmus and Harmonia are granted an immortal life in the Isles of the Blessed; Aeschylus describes Rhadamanthys (who lives on the Island of the Blessed) as the immortal one (*Aesch. fr.* 99).

⁴³⁸ Pind. *Ol.* 2.72. Aristophanes (*Fr.* 449) also mentions the Elysian meadows, which are full of posies and roses.

⁴³⁹ Pind. *fr.* 129 (*Thren.* 7); Ar. *Frogs*, 154-57; Pl. *Rep.* 2.363c-d.

⁴⁴⁰ For the Greeks, light was the symbol of life, happiness, and well-being, and the idea of an afterlife realm as being filled with sunlight denoted an existence that was free from death (see Lloyd, 1962, 58).

*and in meadows of red roses their country abode
 is laden with . . . shady frankincense trees
 and trees with golden fruit,
 and some take delight in horses and exercises,
 others in draughts,
 and others in lyres; and among them
 complete happiness blooms and flourishes..”*
 (Pindar, *Frag.* 129.1-7, Race)

The ‘Orphic’ gold tablets present a similar image of the Elysium reserved for initiates. They describe the ‘Sacred Meadow’ (ἱερὸν λειμῶνα) as the destination of initiates (μύσται) after death. Unlike the mainstream depictions of Elysium, the gold tablets locate the Sacred Meadow beneath the earth (ὑπὸ γῆν), which may have been a modification of Homer’s Asphodel Meadow.⁴⁴¹

According to the tablets, the souls of initiates could expect to receive wine as their fortunate honour, which may be a reference to the afterlife symposium, a notion mocked by Plato in the *Republic*.⁴⁴² In the *Frogs*, Aristophanes also mentions brilliant sunlight, myrtle groves, and happy bands of men and women enjoying music as characteristics of the mystic afterlife.⁴⁴³ That the tablets promised a new life for initiates after death is indicated on a tablet from Pharsalos: the phrase “*now you have died and now you have come into being*” accords with the popular view of Elysium as an alternative to death.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ See the last line of tablet *D1*, Edmonds (2011) 36; Aristophanes (*Fr.* 162-3) places the home of the initiates beside the road that leads to Hades’ palace door.

⁴⁴² Tablet *D1*, Edmonds (2011) 36; *Pl. Rep.* 2.363c-d.

⁴⁴³ *Ar. Frogs*, 154-7.

⁴⁴⁴ Tablet *D1*, Edmonds (2011) 36.

Iconographic depictions of Elysium were rare in Greek art, since more attention was generally paid to mythological figures associated with the afterlife, such as Charon, Hermes, and even occasionally Hades himself. However, some allusions to a paradisiacal afterlife can be identified. We already know that Polygnotus included groves of willows in his painting of the underworld, which may have been a reference to the Elysium of mystery initiates, as indicated by the presence of Orpheus.⁴⁴⁵

A relief on the base of a late-fifth century funerary vase from Kallithea (**Plate 18**), showing a young man and women picking apples from a tree, has also been identified as a possible representation of the paradisiacal afterlife gardens.⁴⁴⁶ The scene is thought to serve as an abbreviated symbol of the gardens of Elysium, where the blessed dead enjoy idyllic afterlife conditions.⁴⁴⁷ In Greek mythology, apples were often associated with eternal life, mostly due to their connection with the Hesperides, whose garden was located at the far western edge of the world.⁴⁴⁸ Trees and fruit were a common feature in Greek descriptions of Elysium, as we have already seen above in the descriptions by Pindar.

Several later Greek authors attempted to rationalise the myths of the Elysian realms by associating them with places in the real world. Strabo places both the Elysian Plain and the Isles of the Blessed on the southern coast of Spain, at the western edge of the earth.⁴⁴⁹ Diodorus, on the other hand, identifies them as the idyllic Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Cos, and Rhodes, which he claims were colonised by an early king called Macareus, whose name was supposedly given to the

⁴⁴⁵ Paus. 10.30.6.

⁴⁴⁶ Base of a funerary vase, c. 410-400 BCE, Athens National Archaeological Museum 4502 (see Stampolidis and Oikonomou, 2014, 166, no. 83, Salta).

⁴⁴⁷ Kosmopoulou (1998) 538.

⁴⁴⁸ Garden of the Hesperides: Hes. *Th.* 215; Kosmopoulou (1998) 538; The myth of the Hesperides was occasionally conflated with the concept of Elysium during the Classical period (Kosmopoulou, 1998, 539).

⁴⁴⁹ Strab. 3.2.13. With the islands located “not very far from the headlands of Maurousia that lie opposite to Gades.”

mythical islands.⁴⁵⁰

While Homer and Hesiod restrict entry into Elysium to the heroes of myth, by the Classical period this realm had become increasingly popular as an alternative afterlife destination for the average person; this was likely due to the increasing individualisation of the afterlife experience, which began during the Archaic period. This popularised version of Elysium featured new conditions for entry, which ensured it still remained exclusive to a certain extent.

Members of mystery cults could only achieve access to Elysium through initiation and ritual purification. Two Thessalian gold tablets refer to the rites (τελεταὶ) that would enable the deceased to join the other initiates under the earth.⁴⁵¹ Classical authors similarly allude to the happy afterlife exclusively reserved for those who had partaken in the mystic rites, as can be seen in the fragment by Sophocles mentioned in Chapter One.⁴⁵² Other authors believed that entry into Elysium would be granted only to those who had lived a morally just and virtuous life. As we also saw in Chapter one, this idea was certainly established by the time of Pindar, who tells us that individuals who lead righteous lives will be granted a tearless existence after death.⁴⁵³

However, Pindar continues to explain that those who have lived three life cycles, while keeping their souls free from unjust deeds, will be allowed to travel the road of Zeus to the Isle of the Blessed, where Cronus rules with Rhadamanthys at his side.⁴⁵⁴ It seems that Pindar presents a 'tiered' afterlife system, in which the souls of the virtuous are rewarded after each lifetime with a limited existence in an Elysian realm beneath the earth, and then again with eternal life in the Isles of the

⁴⁵⁰ Diod. 5.81.3-82.4.

⁴⁵¹ Tablets *D1, D5*, Edmonds (2011) 36, 38; cf. translations by Bernabé et al. (2008) 62, 151.

⁴⁵² See Chapter One, 52; see also Pl. *Rep.* 2.364e; *Phd.* 69c.

⁴⁵³ See Chapter One, 54.

⁴⁵⁴ Pind. *Ol.* 68-72.

Blessed, providing they are able to keep their souls pure throughout three life cycles. This ‘tiered’ afterlife system differs from other descriptions of the paradisiacal afterlife since Pindar appears to be describing two separate Elysian realms: the latter is the Isle of the Blessed (μακάρων νῆσος), in this case a singular island, while the former is unnamed, though it does appear to be located underground like the Sacred Meadow of the gold tablets.⁴⁵⁵

Pindar’s Second *Olympian Ode* presents ideas about the afterlife that are not only consistent with the Elysium of popular belief, but also with mystic and Pythagorean ideas about the afterlife.⁴⁵⁶ The mention of multiple life cycles indicates a belief in reincarnation, which was a well-known feature of Pythagorean doctrine.⁴⁵⁷ However, the reference to reincarnation may have been for the benefit of Pindar’s client, Theron of Akragas, who happened to be from a region in which Pythagoreanism was especially influential.⁴⁵⁸

As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, the belief that Elysium was reserved for the souls of the virtuous was also further developed by Plato in the *Phaedo*, in which he states that a better lot in the afterlife could not only be achieved by those who had purified themselves through philosophy.⁴⁵⁹ In this case, Plato attempts to combine the concepts of afterlife reward with that of reincarnation, to suggest that those who have purified themselves through philosophy will be allowed to live without bodies and transcend to higher, even more beautiful dwellings.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ As is implied by κατὰ γᾶς (2.59); see Willcock (1995) 137.

⁴⁵⁶ A fragment preserved by Clement of Alexandria (Pind. *fr.* 137) points to a possible association of Pindar with the Eleusinian mysteries.

⁴⁵⁷ Willcock (1995) 138.

⁴⁵⁸ Willcock (1995) 138-139; interestingly, Akragas was also the city of origin of Empedocles, a pre-Socratic philosopher who developed his own philosophic doctrine of reincarnation, no doubt inspired by Pythagoras (Willcock, 1995, 138).

⁴⁵⁹ See Chapter One, 56.

⁴⁶⁰ Pl. *Phaed.* 113d-114c; the combination is quite clearly unsuccessful since it results in conflicting ideas about the afterlife (Annas, 1982, 127); this distinction is not made in the *Gorgias* (523b), as all virtuous souls are said to go to the Isles of the Blessed.

The idea of the soul travelling to Elysian dwellings in the sky also suggests that the soul returns to the *aether* after death. This was a pre-Socratic notion likely related to the image of the life-breath returning to the air, and seems to have found some level of popularity in mainstream belief.⁴⁶¹ This may also have been the reasoning behind the depiction of Elysium in the *Republic* as accessible through openings in the ‘heavens’ (οὐρανοῦ).⁴⁶² The concept of a celestial place of reward would have also provided a satisfying contrast to the notion of a subterranean place of punishment, such as we will see in the next section.

Tartarus

With the concept of a paradisiacal afterlife reserved for the virtuous also comes the idea of an afterlife destination reserved for the unjust and impious, where souls would pay the penalty for their offenses.⁴⁶³ In Greek popular culture this place was frequently identified as Tartarus, an immense chasm located deep beneath the earth.⁴⁶⁴

Homer and Hesiod knew Tartarus as the prison for the Titans and gods who had committed serious crimes.⁴⁶⁵ In his *Theogony*, Hesiod describes Tartarus as a great gulf, which extends as far

⁴⁶¹ Edmonds (2004) 211; Euripides: Eur. *Hel.* 1013-6; Eur. *Orest.* 1086-7; the concept also appears on a fifth-century epigram at Potidaea (see Bremmer, 1983, 7).

⁴⁶² Pl. *Rep.* 10.614c.

⁴⁶³ The belief in a place of punishment in the afterlife was common to several other ancient cultures. The *Old Testament* refers to Sheol as a ‘place of torment’ for the souls of the wicked (Heidel, 1949, 185), while Egyptian and Zoroastrian texts detail the various punishments sinners would receive after death (Burkert, 2009, 146-7).

⁴⁶⁴ Hes. *Th.* 740; also Pl. *Phaed.* 111d.

⁴⁶⁵ Prison of the Titans: *Il.* 8.479-81, 14.279; Hes. *Th.* 715-20.

beneath the earth as the earth lies beneath the heavens.⁴⁶⁶ Tartarus was also said to be enclosed by bronze walls and shining gates, guarded by the Hundred-Handed giants, Gyes, Cottus, and great-souled Obriareus.⁴⁶⁷

Neither poet mentions a place of afterlife punishment for ordinary mortals, though Homer does reference the torture of Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Tityus during Odysseus' visit to the underworld.⁴⁶⁸ These individuals were known for having committed great offences against the gods, and for this reason were given eternal punishments after death. However, since Odysseus could observe them from his position at the entrance to Hades, they seem to have been situated in the Asphodel Meadow, with the rest of the dead, not in a separate area.

An early belief in afterlife punishment for those who had committed grievous crimes is also indicated by the reference to the Erinyes in the *Iliad* as those "*who in the world below take vengeance on men who are done with life, whoever has sworn a false oath.*"⁴⁶⁹ The Erinyes, otherwise known as the Furies, were the divine embodiment of curses, who served to punish individuals who had committed crimes that went against the natural order.⁴⁷⁰ However, the Erinyes were not solely associated with the afterlife, but also delivered punishment to the living on earth.⁴⁷¹

The earliest explicit reference in Greek literature to a system of punishment in the afterlife for the ordinary dead appears in Pindar's second *Olympian Ode*, which, as well as describing a paradisiacal afterlife for the virtuous, also states that those who have committed sins on earth will pay for their

⁴⁶⁶ Hes. *Th.* 720; Homer similarly says it lay as far below Hades as the earth lay below the heavens (*Il.* 8.13-16).

⁴⁶⁷ Hes. *Th.* 726-27, 'shining' (μαρμάρειαι), 811; cf. Homer says Tartarus was surrounded by gates of iron and a threshold of bronze (*Il.* 8.15).

⁴⁶⁸ Tityus (*Od.* 11.576), Tantalus (582), and Sisyphus (593).

⁴⁶⁹ οἱ ὑπένερθε καμόντας ἀνθρώπους τίνυσσον ὅτις κ' ἐπίορκον ὁμόσση (*Il.* 3.278-79).

⁴⁷⁰ See Burkert (2009) 151-152.

⁴⁷¹ E.g. *Il.* 9. 454; *Od.* 15.234, 17.475; Aesch. *Eum.* 339-40.

crimes after death:⁴⁷²

ὄτι θανόντων μὲν ἐν-
 θάδ' αὐτίκ' ἀπάλαμνοι φρένες
 ποινὰς ἔτεισαν—τὰ δ' ἐν τᾷδε Διὸς ἀρχᾷ
 ἀλιτρά κατὰ γᾶς δικάζει τις ἐχθρᾷ
 λόγον φράσαις ἀνάγκη·

“That the helpless spirits of those who have died on earth immediately pay the penalty--and upon sins committed here in Zeus’ realm, a judge beneath the earth pronounces sentence with hateful necessity.”

(Pind. *Ol.* 2.57-60, Race)

Pindar goes on to say that those punished for their crimes “*will endure pain too terrible to behold*” without, though, specifying what sort of tortures the souls will experience.⁴⁷³ It is also worth noting that Pindar does not name Tartarus as the destination for the damned, which may indicate that a system of afterlife punishment developed prior to the association of Tartarus with the underworld prison.

However, by the Classical period, Tartarus had become clearly established as the place where wicked souls were sent to be punished after death.⁴⁷⁴ It is possible that its emergence may have been due to a conflation of the earlier concept of Tartarus as a prison for gods who had committed serious crimes with the system of afterlife retribution that was beginning to emerge during the Archaic period.

⁴⁷² See Chapter One, 54; HH. 2.480-2.

⁴⁷³ Pind. *Ol.* 2.67.

⁴⁷⁴ Arist. *Post. An.* 2.94b.33; Anacr. *fr.* 395; Soph. *fr.* 442.8.

Its development may also have been fuelled by a growing belief in Elysium, to which Tartarus provided a natural contrast.⁴⁷⁵

Plato describes Tartarus as the “*dungeon of requital and penance*” (τῆς τίσεώς τε καὶ δίκης δεσμωτήριον), a place where wicked souls were sent for punishment after death to serve time for their offenses.⁴⁷⁶ Sentences were determined according to the wrongdoings committed on earth, and may have only required the deceased to receive punishments for a certain period, either until they had completed their sentence or, alternatively, until they had been forgiven for their crimes.⁴⁷⁷ Following this, they are allowed to return to the meadow, either to await further judgement or to re-enter the cycle of rebirths.⁴⁷⁸

Souls who were deemed ‘incurable’, however, such as those who had committed many great deeds of sacrilege or abominable murders, would be imprisoned in Tartarus permanently, never to emerge.⁴⁷⁹ In these cases, they may be hung up as a demonstration and warning for the other unjust souls who are sent to serve time there.⁴⁸⁰ The *Republic* also says that those who try to escape their prison before they have served their time will be bound, stripped of their skin, and dragged along the road back to Tartarus, being made an example of for souls passing by.⁴⁸¹

As for the general methods of afterlife punishment, Plato provides us with little detail, aside

⁴⁷⁵ Johnston (Graf and Johnston, 2013, 106), also notes that after the Archaic period there was an increasing concern with the individual and personal responsibility.

⁴⁷⁶ Pl. *Gorg.* 523b.

⁴⁷⁷ In the *Republic* (615a), the process of punishment in Tartarus takes one thousand years; Pl. *Phaed.* 107d5-e4; it is also said in the *Republic* (615b) that souls are made to pay tenfold for their crimes.

⁴⁷⁸ Pl. *Rep.* 10.614e.

⁴⁷⁹ Pl. *Phaed.* 113e; *Rep.* 10.615e.

⁴⁸⁰ Pl. *Gorg.* 525c.

⁴⁸¹ Pl. *Rep.* 10.616a; Burkert (2009, 149) suggests this punishment of being dragged along the road was taken from real executions).

from the point that the impious and the unjust will be buried in mire and compelled to fetch water in a sieve.⁴⁸² Elsewhere, Plato attributes these punishments to the souls of the uninitiated, and even identifies the punishment of carrying water as an allegory used by mystic storytellers to describe the endless toil of an uninitiated soul.⁴⁸³

Similar punishments appear in several other sources. In the *Frogs*, Heracles says that anyone who has ever wronged a stranger, beaten his mother or father, or sworn a false oath, among other things, will be made to lie in mud and ever-flowing dung (βόρβορον πολὺν καὶ σκῶρ ἀείνων).⁴⁸⁴ The punishment of carrying water in leaky vessels was also depicted by Polygnotus in his painting of the underworld, which Pausanias says represented the fate of the uninitiated.⁴⁸⁵ Scenes depicting small winged *psychai* carrying water in Hades also appear on several Greek vases, and are similarly thought to represent the punishments bestowed upon non-initiates in the afterlife.⁴⁸⁶ It is likely that these punishments were derived from myths known to the general public, as well as to mystery cults, who utilised them in their own afterlife mythology.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸² Pl. *Rep.* 2.363d.

⁴⁸³ Uninitiated lying in mud: Pl. *Phaed.* 69c; water carriers in mystic symbolism: Pl. *Gorg.* 493a-d. Socrates also uses the metaphor for his own argument, being to refute amoral desires (see Burkert, 2009, 157).

⁴⁸⁴ εἴ που ξένος τις ἠδίκησε πώποτε, ἢ παῖδα κινῶν τάργυριον ὑφείλετο, ἢ μητέρ' ἠλόησεν, ἢ πατρός γνάθον, ἐπάταξεν, ἢ πίορκον ὄρκον, ὤμοσεν, ἢ Μορσίμου τις ῥῆσιν ἐξεγράψατο (Ar. *Frogs*, 147-151). Aristophanes evidently regarded Morsimus as a particularly bad poet; a parallel to this punishment exists in the epic of Gilgamesh, in which the unprivileged dead are described as "lying in mud" in the netherworld (see Burkert, 2009, 145).

⁴⁸⁵ Paus. 10.31.9, 11. Elsewhere in the painting, Polygnotus shows a man guilty of sacrilege being punished by a woman skilled with drugs and poisons (Paus. 10.28.5). Also depicted is a man plaiting a rope, known as the 'rope of Oknos', because it was being eaten by a donkey (10.29.1). Pausanias adds that this punishment was proverbial in Ionia; see Burkert (2009) 155-56.

⁴⁸⁶ Attic black-figure *lekythos*, Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale 2141 (BAPD: 5771); Attic black-figure amphora, c. 550-500 BCE, Etruria, Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1493 (BAPD: 301639); see Thompson (2006) 8; cf. Keuls (1974, 38) who argues that the water-carriers may have alternatively been a reference to a cathartic rite performed by initiates, and therefore the vase scenes represent the blessed.

⁴⁸⁷ In particular, the punishment of carrying water in leaky containers is considered a reference to the myth of the Danaides, the fifty sisters who killed their husbands on their wedding night and were condemned in Hades to fill a bath using sieves or leaky containers (see Thompson, 2006, 6).

Unfortunately, further details about a place of punishment in mystic belief are unknown, since Tartarus, or an equivalent location, is not mentioned in the ‘Orphic’ gold tablets. However, as we saw in Chapter One, there is some evidence in other sources to suggest that those who were uninitiated would experience a miserable afterlife filled with ‘terrors’.⁴⁸⁸ Additionally, references on several gold tablets to initiates being ‘without penalty’ (ἄποινος) indicate some type of penance that must be paid after death by the rest of the uninitiated dead.⁴⁸⁹

In several of Plato’s dialogues, we come across the idea that reincarnation may have also served as a system of punishment and reward in the afterlife.⁴⁹⁰ In the *Phaedo*, it is said that unhealthy souls will be compelled to re-enter a life of violence and injustice, whereas just and philosophical souls will be more likely to choose a life of happiness.⁴⁹¹ However, in the *Republic*, the system of reincarnation seems to function slightly differently, since souls who have received rewards in the afterlife are more likely to be greedy and choose a ‘bad’ life, while souls who have endured punishments are more likely to make a wiser choice, and opt for a ‘good’ life.⁴⁹² Of course, this dilemma does not apply to the philosophical souls, since they will always make the correct choice.⁴⁹³

Navigating the netherworld

⁴⁸⁸ See Chapter One, 52; this is inferred in the fragment by Sophocles as well as in the Homeric Hymn for Demeter (see Chapter One, 51-2); *Derveni Papyrus*, col. 5 (for text and translation see Janko, 2001, 20).

⁴⁸⁹ E.g. Tablet D3, Pherae, (Edmonds).

⁴⁹⁰ See also Pl. *Phaedr.* 248c-249b.

⁴⁹¹ Pl. *Phaed.* 81d-82c; A similar idea is also expressed in the *Phaedrus* (248e). Plato’s solution for breaking this cycle is to become purified by philosophy, so that the soul is freed from the body and able to transcend to a higher dwelling (Pl. *Phaed.* 114c; see Chapter Three, 120); Since the topic of reincarnation is beyond the scope of my research I will not go into further detail here.

⁴⁹² Pl. *Rep.* 10.619b-e.

⁴⁹³ Pl. *Rep.* 10.618d-619b.

Exactly what the soul was thought to encounter first once it passed through the gates of Hades is complicated. Textual accounts tend to vary significantly in topographical details, and most do not provide a complete picture of how the soul reached its final destination. Iconographic evidence is also lacking in this regard, since pictorial representations of the underworld itself were relatively uncommon in Greece.⁴⁹⁴

For Homer, entry into the afterlife was relatively straightforward. Losing one's way in the underworld was of no issue for the souls of the dead, since the afterlife journey was complete upon entry into Hades. But with the development of alternate afterlife destinations for the ordinary dead, navigating the underworld became a growing concern.

This was especially true for Bacchic initiates, who relied on special knowledge to find their way to the Sacred Meadow. Such knowledge, likely gained upon initiation, enabled them to overcome a series of obstacles that they would encounter at various stages of their journey through the netherworld; it provided instructions concerning the topography of Hades, as well as certain passwords and phrases that needed to be pronounced to underworld divinities.

Entry into Elysium relied on the initiate's ability to remember what to do and say when facing these obstacles, and failure to overcome them would presumably result in the initiate sharing in the same fate as the uninitiated. The very act of inscribing instructions for the underworld on the golden tablets, if indeed they were intended to remind the deceased on what to do in the afterlife, indicates a fear that the initiate might forget what to do upon arrival in Hades.

⁴⁹⁴ The underworld is more frequently represented in Apulian pottery (see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, 2011, 94-5).

In the afterlife mythology of ‘popular’ belief, souls of the dead appear to have had little control over their journey through the underworld.⁴⁹⁵ Instead, their fate was determined by underworld judges, who allocated each individual an afterlife destination based on the nature of their soul, as we will see later in this chapter.

However, similar themes and motifs concerning the journey through the underworld appear in both ‘Orphic’ and ‘popular’ eschatologies, indicating that they both drew from common mythic elements in the development of their afterlife narratives. These include underworld paths, topographical diversions and hazards, as well as ‘checkpoints’, all of which ultimately determined the final destination of the soul.

The primary sources of information for the soul’s journey through the underworld are the ‘Orphic’ gold tablets and the dialogues of Plato, which contain several different accounts about the soul’s experience in the underworld.

Pathways

The idea of roads or pathways inside the underworld is a motif common to many ancient cultures.⁴⁹⁶ The earliest mention of an underworld road in Greek texts is made by Pindar, who refers to the ‘road of Zeus’ (Διὸς ὁδὸν), which leads to the Isle of the Blessed.⁴⁹⁷ Why it is called the ‘road of

⁴⁹⁵ I use the term ‘popular’ to describe afterlife beliefs held by the general public and which did not discriminate on status.

⁴⁹⁶ The concept appears in Egyptian, Hittite and Vedic texts, all of which describe roads leading to the various afterlife destinations (Bernabé et al., 2008, 210).

⁴⁹⁷ Pindar (*OI.* 2.68-9); there is a reference to a ‘sacred road’ in a gold tablet from Hipponion (tablet *B10*, Hipponion, c. 400 BCE, Edmonds, 2011, 30); see Cole (1993, 293, fn. 108) for reference to a ‘divine road’ in a Roman epigram.

Zeus' is unclear, as the name does not appear anywhere else in Greek literature. However, we do find clear similarities in other written sources. Plato describes roads in the underworld that lead not only to Elysium but also to Tartarus:

ἐν τῷ λειμῶνι, ἐν τῇ τριόδῳ ἐξ ἧς φέρετον τῷ ὁδῷ, ἡ μὲν εἰς μακάρων νήσους, ἡ δ' εἰς Τάρταρον.

"...in the meadow at the dividing of the road, whence are the two ways leading, one to the Isles of the Blest, and the other to Tartarus."

(Pl. *Gorg.* 524a, Lamb)

This idea is further elaborated in the so-called Myth of Er in Plato's *Republic*, this time with the addition of roads that guide the soul back from Elysium and Tartarus:

... καὶ ἀφικνεῖσθαι σφᾶς εἰς τόπον τινὰ δαιμόνιον, ἐν ᾧ τῆς τε γῆς δὺ' εἶναι χάσματα ἔχομένῳ ἀλλήλοιν καὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ αὖ ἐν τῷ ἄνω ἄλλα καταντικρῦ. δικαστὰς δὲ μεταξύ τούτων καθῆσθαι, οὓς, ἐπειδὴ διαδικάσειαν, τοὺς μὲν δικαίους κελεύειν πορεύεσθαι τὴν εἰς δεξιάν τε καὶ ἄνω διὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ... τοὺς δὲ ἀδίκους τὴν εἰς ἀριστεράν τε καὶ κάτω... κατὰ δὲ τῷ ἐτέρῳ ἐκ μὲν τοῦ ἀνιέναι ἐκ τῆς γῆς μεστὰς αὐχμοῦ τε καὶ κόνεως, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἐτέρου καταβαίνειν ἐτέρας ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καθαρὰς.

"...they came to a mysterious region where there were two openings side by side in the earth, and above and over against them in the heaven two others, and that judges were sitting between these, and that after every judgement they bade the righteous journey to the right and upwards through the heaven... and the unjust to take the road

to the left and downward... while, by the other pair of openings, there came up from the one in the earth souls full of squalor and dust, and from the second there came down from heaven a second procession of souls clean and pure..."

(Plat. *Rep.* 10.614c-e, Emlyn-Jones and Preddy)

As we saw in Chapter Two, in the *Phaedo*, Plato presents the route down to Hades, as well as through the underworld itself, as disorientating, with many 'branches' and 'crossroads'.⁴⁹⁸ For this reason, each soul needs the help of a personal guide to conduct them both to and from their appointed destination, lest they end up wandering forever in the desolate darkness of the underworld.

According to both Pindar and Plato, which path the soul takes depends entirely on the appointed destination of the deceased. There seems to be little or no ability to choose one's path, and, aside from the concerns raised in the *Phaedo*, no fear of getting lost once the soul's destination has been determined.

However, the same is not true for the afterlife narrative presented by the 'Orphic' gold tablets, as the deceased seems to have possessed the ability to control which path they take, by using knowledge about the afterlife journey learned through initiation. Several of the tablets are thought to have operated like a sort of 'road map', advising on the specific direction the deceased should travel after entering Hades, as well as how to negotiate certain obstacles they would encounter. One tablet from a burial (c. 350-300 BCE) at Pharsalos, Thessaly reads:

Εὐρήσεις Αἴδαο δόμοις ἐνδέξια κρήνην,
παρ δ' αὐτῆι λευκὴν ἔστηκυῖαν κυπάρισσον.

⁴⁹⁸ See Chapter Two, 81.

ταύτης τῆς κρήνης μηδὲ σχεδόθεν πελάσηισθα.
 πρόσω δ' εὐρήσεις τὸ Μνημοσύνης ἀπὸ λίμνης
 ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ προ(ρέον). φύλακες δ' ἐπύπερθεν ἕασιν.
 οἷ δε σ(ε) εἰρήσονται ὅ τι χρέος εἰσαφικάνεις.
 τοῖς δὲ σὺ εὔ μάλα πᾶσαν ἀληθείην καταλέξαι.
 εἰπεῖν· Ἕης παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστ(ερόεντος).
 Ἀστέριος ὄνομα, δίψηι δ' εἰμ' αὔρος· ἀλλὰ δότε μοι
 πιέν' ἀπὸ τῆς κρήνης'.

*You will find in the halls of Hades a spring on the right,
 and standing by it, a glowing white cypress tree;
 Do not approach this spring at all.
 Further along you will find, from a lake of Memory,
 the refreshing water flowing forth. But guardians are nearby.
 And they will ask you for what need have you come;
 to them you should relate very well the whole truth;
 Say: "I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven.
 Starry is my name. I am parched with thirst; but give me to drink from the spring."*

(B2, Pharsalos, c. 350-300 BCE, Edmonds, 2011, 24)

According to this tablet then, after entering the House of Hades, the soul will find a spring 'on the right' (ἐνδέξια), which it must avoid, and is instead instructed to proceed onwards until it reaches a second spring, that of Memory (Μνημοσύνης). Similar instructions to these appear on sever other gold tablets found throughout the Greek world, and in almost every case the deceased is directed to

travel along the right-hand path.⁴⁹⁹ As we have already seen, Plato's description of the underworld in the Republic similarly locates the road to Elysium on the right, though it is not certain whether Plato drew his inspiration from popular mythic traditions or borrowed the idea from mystic belief.⁵⁰⁰

This repetitive emphasis on the 'right' as the direction that the deceased must travel in order to reach Elysium may have had some underlying significance. It has been suggested that the preference for the right-hand road was linked to the Pythagorean Table of Opposites, which associated 'right' with 'good' and 'left' with 'evil'.⁵⁰¹ The association of 'right' with what is 'sacred' and 'pure', and 'left' with what is 'profane' and 'impure' is not unusual, but has been shown to exist in societies around the world.⁵⁰² Indeed, some evidence suggests that similar associations existed in Greek society as early as Homer, indicating that the Pythagorean Table of Opposites was in fact an expression of a very early Greek belief.⁵⁰³

But these concepts may not be entirely applicable to the topography of the gold tablets, since in the case of the Pharsalos tablet both springs appear to be located to the right of the House of Hades. It seems that in the case of the tablets there is more importance placed on choosing the 'correct' path, rather than necessarily the 'right' path.⁵⁰⁴ Only the initiate possesses the knowledge required to choose the correct path in the underworld: the one that will ultimately lead them to Elysium.

⁴⁹⁹ See also tablet *B9*, Thessaly, c. 400-300 BCE, Edmonds (2011) 29; cf. one tablet from Hipponion that places the 'bad' fountain on the left: *B1*, Edmonds (2011) 22; another tablet from Crete says to drink from the spring to the left of the cypress: *B12*, Edmonds (2011) 34; variations may arise from mistakes in transmission or from 'innovations' (Graf and Johnston, 2013, 111, Johnston).

⁵⁰⁰ The motif of right and left paths in the afterlife similarly appears in Egyptian funerary texts, as well as in several Near Eastern sources (Bernabé et al., 2008, 207, 212, 217).

⁵⁰¹ See Lloyd (1962) 59; Bernabé et al. (2008) 23; Graf and Johnston (2013) 99 (Johnston).

⁵⁰² Lloyd (1962) 57.

⁵⁰³ See Lloyd (1962) 58-9; Aristotle himself also clearly believed 'right' to be naturally superior to 'left' (see Lloyd, 1962, 64-5).

⁵⁰⁴ Though this is not to deny any role of the Greek preference of 'right' vs 'left' in the gold tablets.

Since the Pharsalos tablet instructs the initiate to travel to the right side of the House of Hades, it leaves us to wonder what was imagined to lie on the left. Johnston has suggested that there was thought to be another road, on the left of Hades' house, which led to a place of punishment.⁵⁰⁵ As we have seen above in the Myth of Er, Plato locates the road to Tartarus on the left, though this may well have been inspired by the 'Orphic' vision of the underworld.⁵⁰⁶ However, confirmation of Johnston's hypothesis may be found in another fragment from Pindar, which mentions a 'third path' (τρίτη ὁδός), taken by those who have lived a life of impiety and crime.⁵⁰⁷

ἡ δὲ τρίτη τῶν ἀνοσίως βεβιωκότων καὶ παρανόμως ὁδός ἐστιν, εἰς ἔρεβός τι καὶ
βάραθρον ὠθοῦσα τὰς ψυχάς.

*"The third way is for those who have lived unholy and criminal lives; it plunges their
souls into a pit of darkness."*

(Pind. Frag. 130, Race)

Using Pindar's Second *Olympian Ode* as a point of reference, we might assume that the three paths include the road to the first Elysian realm, the road to the Isle of the Blessed, and the road to the place of punishment.⁵⁰⁸

Johnston further suggests that in the Orphic-Bacchic picture of the underworld there may have been two roads on the right: perhaps the first leading to reincarnation, followed by souls who drink from the first spring; and the second ultimately leading to Elysium, taken by those who choose

⁵⁰⁵ Graf and Johnston (2013) 100 (Johnston).

⁵⁰⁶ Pl. *Rep.* 10.614c; see Chapter Three, 130.

⁵⁰⁷ Plut. *De Latenter.* 1130c.

⁵⁰⁸ Pind. *Ol.* 2.58-69.

to continue further along the path.⁵⁰⁹

Diversions and Hazards

During its journey through the underworld, the soul may encounter a series of diversions that might prevent it from reaching its final destination. This seems to have been a problem mainly for Orphic-Bacchic initiates, since they had to navigate the underworld by relying on their knowledge alone. The 'Orphic' gold tablets provide us with information about the topographical features of the underworld that function to divert the 'ordinary' soul from its path. Only the initiate possesses the knowledge required to overcome these diversions, enabling it to continue along the path to Elysium.

i. The Waters of Forgetfulness

According to the gold tablets, the soul arrives in the underworld parched with thirst, desperately seeking to refresh itself.⁵¹⁰ The first thing it encounters is a spring beside a white cypress tree, which, as the Pharsalos tablet (*B2*) says, must not be approached. Instead, the soul of the initiate is directed to continue further along the path until it comes to a second spring flowing out of the lake of *Mnemosyne*, from which the initiate may request to drink.⁵¹¹

The motif of 'the thirst of the dead' is apparently common to many cultures, and may have

⁵⁰⁹ Graf and Johnston (2013) 101 (Johnston).

⁵¹⁰ See tablets *B2*, *B9* (Edmonds, 2011, 24, 29).

⁵¹¹ Tablet *B2*. See Chapter Three, 131-2.

stemmed from the observation that those who are dying often demand water.⁵¹² Though the motif of the ‘thirsty dead’ does not explicitly appear elsewhere in Greek literature, there is some indication of the belief dating as early as the Mycenaean period.⁵¹³

The tablets do not provide a name for the first spring, nor declare what the danger is in drinking from it; however, most scholars generally believe it to be the spring of λήθη (‘forgetfulness’).⁵¹⁴ Forgetfulness was believed to be a condition of the dead as early as Homer, so the presence of underworld waters, which cause those who drink from it to forget, certainly makes sense in the context of Greek eschatology.⁵¹⁵ Furthermore, *Lethe* provides a natural contrast to *Mnemosyne*, the name given to the second source of water.

However, a problem arises in the fact that the waters of *Lethe* are not mentioned prior to the Hellenistic period.⁵¹⁶ The closest reference we have to *Lethe* in the context of the journey through the underworld appears in Book 10 of the *Republic*, in which Plato refers to the ‘Plain of *Lethe*’, as the place where souls go before they are reincarnated.⁵¹⁷

...πορεύεσθαι ἅπαντας εἰς τὸ τῆς Λήθης πεδῖον διὰ καύματός τε καὶ πνίγους δεινοῦ·

⁵¹² Zuntz (1971) 374; Edmonds (2004) 42; see also Graf and Johnston (2013) 98 (Johnston); Zuntz (1971, 372-4) suggests that the motif of the dead seeking water in the netherworld was borrowed from the Egyptians.

⁵¹³ A mention of the ‘thirsty ones’ on a Linear B tablet may have been a reference to the souls of the dead. If interpreted correctly, it indicates that the idea of the thirsty dead dates back to the Mycenaean period (see Guthrie, 1959, 45-6). The motif does appear in Plato’s *Republic* (10.621a-b); it may also be seen in the *Odyssey* (11.42-50), where the dead are eager to drink the sacrificial blood; the pouring of libations on graves may also be interpreted in this way (Edmonds, 2004, 47).

⁵¹⁴ Zuntz (1971) 378; Bernabé et al. (2008) 30, and fn. 93; others have suggested that the spring holds the ‘waters of life’, which enable to soul to live another life on earth. For discussion, see Bernabé et al. (2008) 31.

⁵¹⁵ For the condition of the dead in Homer, see Chapter One, 10-11, and Chapter Three, 110; Theogn. 704-5.

⁵¹⁶ First century BCE epigram in Bernabé et al. (2008) 30; Dionysus of Halicarnassus (8.52.4) mentions the lake of forgetfulness; Pausanias (9.39.7) refers to the waters of *Lethe* and *Mnemosyne* during a visit to a death oracle.

⁵¹⁷ The plain of *Lethe* is also mentioned by Aristophanes in the *Frogs* (186).

καὶ γὰρ εἶναι αὐτὸ κενὸν δένδρων τε καὶ ὅσα γῆ φύει. | σκηναῖσθαι οὖν σφᾶς ἤδη ἐσπέρας γιγνομένης παρὰ τὸν Ἀμέλητα ποταμὸν, οὗ τὸ ὕδωρ ἀγγεῖον οὐδὲν στέγειν. μέτρον μὲν οὖν τι τοῦ ὕδατος πᾶσιν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πιεῖν, τοὺς δὲ φρονήσει μὴ σωζομένους πλέον πίνειν τοῦ μέτρου· τὸν δὲ ἀεὶ πιόντα πάντων ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι.

“...they all made their way to the plain of Lethe through terrifying choking fire: for the place was empty of trees and anything else that grows in the earth. So as evening was already approaching they encamped beside the river of Forgetfulness, whose water no vessel can hold. Now they all had to drink a measure of this water, but those who did not have enough sense to be moderate drank more than their measure, while each one, as he drank, forgot everything.”

(Plat. *Rep.* 10.621a-b, Emlyn-Jones and Preddy)

Though the waters from which the souls drink is that of Ἀμέλητα (literally ‘one who neglects’), rather than *Lethe*, the effect it has on the souls is essentially the same: drinking from the waters causes spirits to lose the memories of their past lives. In this case, Plato uses the opportunity to demonstrate once more the importance of philosophy, by exemplifying the practice of restraint in drinking the underworld waters.⁵¹⁸

Since Plato is likely drawing inspiration from popular mythic material, his description of the underworld in the *Republic* may also give us some indication about the function of the first spring in the tablets. It may also suggest why initiates are told to avoid drinking from its water, whether because it would cause the souls of the dead to forget themselves and become witless phantoms, or because it would cause the souls to re-enter the cycle of reincarnation. Only the fortitude and knowledge

⁵¹⁸ See Edmonds (2004) 51.

gained through initiation would enable the deceased to continue onwards through the underworld, that is, until they reach the second spring.⁵¹⁹

Since the name of the second spring, *Mnemosyne*, is provided, we can assume its function was in some way related to retaining the memories of their past life, and perhaps even of earlier lives; this creates a stark contrast to the fate of the uninitiated.⁵²⁰ Having drunk from the spring of *Mnemosyne*, initiates preserve their identities, which was no doubt considered vital during a period when there was great importance placed on the individual afterlife experience.⁵²¹

ii. The White Cypress

To help the initiate identify which spring to drink from, the tablets tell us that one of the springs will be marked with a white cypress. In the Pharsalos tablet (B2), the cypress marks the spring the initiate must avoid, or the ‘bad’ spring. But another shorter tablet from Thessaly seems to place the cypress beside the ‘good’ spring:

Δίψαι αὔρος ἐγὼ κ(αὶ) ἀπόλλυμαι· ἀλλὰ πῖε μου
κράνας αἰειρῶ. | ἐπὶ δεξιὰ λευκὴ κυπάρισσος.

*“I am parched with thirst and I perish. But give me to drink
from the ever-flowing spring. On the right is a white cypress...”*

⁵¹⁹ For extended discussion, see Edmonds (2004) 51.

⁵²⁰ However, the role of *Mnemosyne* in the tablets is by no means clear. Johnston (Graf and Johnston, 2013, 117) argues that since the waters of *Mnemosyne* are not mentioned anywhere else in Classical sources, they may have been modelled off *Lethe*.

⁵²¹ For the role of *Mnemosyne* in the tablets, see Edmonds (2004) 53-4.

(B9, Thessaly, c. 450 BCE, Edmonds, 2011, 29)

The difference between texts may be explained by the fact that the second inscription is much shorter, with the omission of the ‘bad’ spring resulting from a scribal abbreviation.⁵²² But even in the shorter tablet, the function of the white cypress tree is essentially the same: to mark the location of a spring in the underworld.

Since the white cypress appears to be such an important feature of the topographical tablets, many scholars have tried to analyse its underlying symbolism. Some associations of the cypress with mourning do exist in ancient times, though this may only have been a later notion.⁵²³ However, it is the colour of the cypress that seems to be of particular importance, especially because cypress trees are not typically white, but dark in colour. Numerous scholars have suggested that the cypress represents life, light, and hope, owing to its description as λευκή, which, as we have seen in Chapter Two, means ‘bright’ as well as ‘white’.⁵²⁴

In his discussion of the tablets, Zuntz notes the similarities between the motif of the ‘bright’ cypress of the gold tablets and the Mesopotamian Tree of Life, which was said to grow beside the Spring of the Water of Life.⁵²⁵ He argues that Pythagoras (whom Zuntz credited as the original author of the ‘Orphic’ tablets) utilised the motif of the quest for the Waters of Life in his description of the netherworld journey, instead naming the spring that flowed by the mysterious tree as that of

⁵²² Graf and Johnston (2013) 110 (Johnston).

⁵²³ Stat. *Theb.* 4.460; V. FL. *Arg.* 1.774; the cypress is also nowadays often planted in cemeteries in both Greece and the Near East (Zuntz, 1971, 373).

⁵²⁴ For the Greeks light was a symbol of life and well-being (Lloyd, 1962, 58; see Chapter Three, 115, fn. 440); for previous scholarship and discussion on the life symbolism of the cypress in the tablets, see Edmonds (2010) 223-30.

⁵²⁵ Zuntz (1971) 386; Zuntz (1971, 372-3) also points to similarities in Egyptian texts, which mention a spring marked by a sycamore tree in the netherworld.

Mnemosyne.⁵²⁶ However, the inconsistencies in the location of the cypress makes this symbolism less likely, since the tree marks both the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ springs in the two aforementioned tablets from Thessaly.⁵²⁷

More likely, similarly to the white rock *Leuke* in Homer, the characteristic of the cypress as ‘white’ or ‘shining’ probably functioned to make it stand out in the gloom of the underworld, enabling the initiate to identify the correct path.⁵²⁸ In the cases where the white cypress marked the ‘bad’ spring, it may also have served to lure the souls of the ‘ordinary dead’ towards it, like moths to a flame, so that they may drink from the waters of Forgetfulness.⁵²⁹

‘Checkpoints’

During the course of its journey through the underworld, the deceased may encounter various roadblocks, or ‘checkpoints’, where it will have to pass some sort of test in order to continue onwards. In the ‘Orphic’ gold tablets, this entails the confrontation with chthonic divinities or other mythological underworld figures, who ultimately function to determine the soul’s final destination. In these cases, the deceased must pronounce secret ‘passwords’, or declare its special identity as an initiate, in order to be granted admission into Elysium.⁵³⁰ Such ‘passwords’ provided to authority figures in the netherworld, as well as the declaration of identity, demonstrated that the deceased was of special status and therefore deserving of special consideration in the afterlife.

⁵²⁶ Zuntz (1971) 383.

⁵²⁷ The meaning of the white cypress is determined by the context in which it is used in each text (Edmonds, 2010, 229).

⁵²⁸ See Edmonds (2010) 222, 226.

⁵²⁹ Graf and Johnston (2013) 109 (Johnston).

⁵³⁰ Graf and Johnston (2013) 134 (Johnston).

The tablets detail two main ‘checkpoints’: confrontation with guards who block access to the spring of *Mnemosyne*; and an encounter with the gods of the underworld, specifically Persephone, whose favour must be won in order to gain entry into the Sacred Meadow. In each scenario, the deceased is provided with different solutions, which all vary considerably in language, though all can be seen to communicate the special status of the initiate.⁵³¹

i. Guardians of the Spring

Guardians who block entry into a favourable part of the afterlife is a common motif in ancient afterlife myths.⁵³² In most cases they must be by-passed by stating certain ‘pass-phrases’ or by declaring certain mystical knowledge.⁵³³ The topographical texts of the ‘Orphic’ gold tablets say that, having continued further along the path, the initiate will encounter unnamed guards standing in front of the spring of *Mnemosyne*. Before allowing the deceased to drink, they will ask specific questions which the initiate must answer correctly.

The tablet from Pharsalos (*B2*) says that the guards will simply ask “*for what need have you come?*”, to which the initiate is instructed to reply, “*I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven. Starry is my name... but give me to drink from the spring.*”⁵³⁴ This basic question-answer formula appears on all of the topographical tablets, though with slight variations. In the shorter tablet from Thessaly (*B9*),

⁵³¹ Edmonds (2004, 81) argues that the composers of the gold tablets drew upon a variety of mythic elements from familiar tradition to communicate the deceased’s special identity in the afterlife.

⁵³² See Graf and Johnston (2013) 112 (Johnston).

⁵³³ In the Egyptian Book of the Dead, we find guardians who interrogate the deceased at a gate in the underworld (Zuntz, 1971, 374-5); in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa, a guardian questions the soul’s identity before granting it entry into the divine realm (Bernabé et al., 2008, 219-20).

⁵³⁴ Tablet *B2*, see Chapter Three, 131-2.

the initiate responds, “*I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven. But my race is heavenly*”.⁵³⁵

While the questions vary between tablets, the answer remains fairly consistent. In each case, the initiates must inform the guards of their identity, through the pronouncement of a certain formulaic phrase.⁵³⁶ This same phrase, “*I am the child/son of Earth and starry Heaven*”, seems to be the means by which the deceased is able to gain access to the spring of *Mnemosyne*.⁵³⁷ However, the exact meaning of the phrase is not immediately apparent, and has been a subject of much speculation.

It is generally thought that elements of the phrase are derived from a verse in the *Theogony*, in which Hesiod describes the race of immortals as “*born from Earth and starry Heaven*”.⁵³⁸ It appears, therefore, that the initiate is proclaiming divine descent or membership of the lineage of the immortals. Some scholars have suggested that this claim may have been connected to the myth that traced the origin of man to the death of the Titans.⁵³⁹ However, there appear to have been other well-known traditions that told how man and the gods came from the same origin, making the myth of the Titans a less likely source for this claim of descent.⁵⁴⁰

The pass-phrase itself is symbolic of the deceased’s status as initiates with special knowledge, as they not only show that they have a special connection with the gods, but also that they know to drink from the spring of *Mnemosyne*.⁵⁴¹ The demonstration of their status as initiates also serves to

⁵³⁵ τίς δ'εσί; πῶ δ' ἐσί; Γᾶς υἱός εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος· αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γένος οὐράνιον (*B9*, Edmonds, 2011, 29; see Chapter Three, 139).

⁵³⁶ Zuntz (1971, 364) identifies the phrase as a ‘formula of self-presentation’.

⁵³⁷ For compilation of ‘topographical’ texts, see Edmonds (2011) 22-34.

⁵³⁸ οἱ Γῆς τ' ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος (*Hes. Th.* 106).

⁵³⁹ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 77; also Graf and Johnston (2013) 66 (Johnston).

⁵⁴⁰ Hesiod. *WD.* 108; and is alluded to by Pindar (*Nem.* 6.1-2); see Edmonds (2004) 72, 76-77. Edmonds (2004, 77-8) also notes a possible connection of the phrase with a fragment naming Triptolemos, first to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, as a son of Earth and starry Sky; the addition “my name is Starry” may have been linked to the belief that the gods dwelled in the heavens (Edmonds, 2004, 79).

⁵⁴¹ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 77-8.

differentiate them from the other souls of the dead, who drink from the spring of *Lethe* knowing nothing of its dangers.⁵⁴²

It is this claim of membership to the lineage of the gods, effected through the pronouncement of a specific phrase, which allows the initiate access to the spring. There does not appear to be any form of judgement imposed upon the deceased in this scenario, since the solution to the obstacle is simply the provision of a pass-phrase. Whether or not the soul passed this checkpoint also depended on their memory of the formula, which may be indicative of the tablet's function as a sort of 'flashcard' for the deceased to carry with them on their journey; if this was the case, though, we would expect to see the formula on more of the gold tablets.⁵⁴³

Unfortunately, the two Thessalian tablets do not inform us what occurs after the deceased has proven their identity to the guardians of the spring. We must assume that the initiate is allowed to drink from the spring, and continue along the path to the next checkpoint.⁵⁴⁴

ii. Chthonic Gods

After having drunk from the spring of *Mnemosyne*, the initiate will encounter its second checkpoint on its path to Elysium, the confrontation with the gods of the underworld.⁵⁴⁵ In the tablets that allude to an encounter between the initiate and the gods of the underworld, we see the motif of

⁵⁴² The claim of status may also signify a wish to return to the golden age when there was no separation between man and gods (Edmonds, 2004, 76).

⁵⁴³ See Chapter One, 49.

⁵⁴⁴ A tablet from Hipponion (*B10*, Edmonds, 2011, 30) says that the guards will speak to the underworld ruler, and that the initiate will then be allowed to drink (πιεῖν) from the spring.

⁵⁴⁵ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 78.

‘passwords’, symbolic words which must be pronounced, as well as the declaration of special status, similar to what we have already seen above. In both cases, the deceased must say the correct things in order to win the favour of the gods and be granted admission into Elysium.

The deity most often identified in this confrontation is Persephone, Queen of the netherworld. Persephone appears a number of times throughout the gold tablets, though there are substantial variations between the texts. In the ‘*chaire*-formula’ tablets, the deceased simply greet her, as on a tablet from Aegae, Macedonia, which reads, Φιλίστη Φερσεφόνηι χάρειν, “*Philiste to Persephone, hail!*”⁵⁴⁶ The prominence of Persephone in the gold tablets indicates her power to determine the fate of each soul of the dead, by controlling access to the Sacred Meadow.

In a tablet from a female burial in Pelinna, the deceased is instructed on what to say during the confrontation with Persephone:⁵⁴⁷

εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνοι σ' ὅτι Β<άκ>χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.

“Say to Persephone that Bacchios himself has freed you.”

(D1, Pelinna, c. 275 BCE, Edmonds, 2011, 36)

The deceased must declare herself as having been freed by Dionysus himself, indicating that she has paid the penalty and her soul has been purified from wrongdoings committed either during her lifetime or during the lives of her ancestors.⁵⁴⁸ This tablet is similar in nature to the well-known

⁵⁴⁶ Tablet E3, Aegae, Macedonia, third to first century BCE, Edmonds (2011) 39; see also E2 (Edmonds, 2011, 39), in which both Pluton and Persephone are greeted; and E4 (Edmonds, 2011, 39), which additionally declares the deceased’s status as an initiate.

⁵⁴⁷ See also tablet D2 (Edmonds, 2011, 37) from the same grave in Pelinna.

⁵⁴⁸ Bernabé et al. (2008) 71-72.

‘purity’ tablets from Magna Graecia, which similarly declare the deceased as pure, usually to the goddess of the underworld herself.⁵⁴⁹

Several scholars have argued that the specific liberation by Dionysus mentioned in the text from Pelinna is a reference to the release from the blood-guilt incurred by the Titans from the murder of Dionysus, who according to myth was reborn from their ashes, along with the race of mankind.⁵⁵⁰ However, Edmonds argues that the liberation by Dionysus may not necessarily have been a specific reference to the Titanic sin, since Dionysus’ role as a liberator is a clear extension of his previously established character as the ‘loosener’ (Λύσιος).⁵⁵¹

Since Dionysus has played an active role in the liberation of the initiate, his role in the Pelinna tablet would be that of a mediator, through whom the deceased is able to attain a favourable judgement from Persephone, the deity who ultimately serves to determine the soul’s fate by granting passage into Elysium.⁵⁵² Through this liberation, the deceased is able to declare her special status, which qualifies her for entry into the Sacred Meadow.

While in the Pelinna tablet the deceased is able to gain entry into the afterlife through the declaration of status, in another gold tablet from Pherae we see the appearance of ‘passwords,’ which similarly must be spoken to the ruler of the underworld in order to be allowed admission into the Sacred Meadow. The tablet reads:

σύμβολα· Ἀν<δ>ρικεπαιδόθυσον· Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυσον·

⁵⁴⁹ Tablets A1-A5 (Edmonds, 2011, 16-21); for discussion of the ‘purity’ tablets, see Bernabé et al. (2008) 99-117.

⁵⁵⁰ See Bernabé et al. (2008) 71-72; see Chapter One, 53.

⁵⁵¹ Edmonds (2004) 72-73.

⁵⁵² Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011) 91; Edmonds (2004) 61.

Βριμῶ. Βριμῶ. εἴσιθ<ι> ἱερὸν λειμῶνα·

ἄποινος γὰρ ὁ μύστης.

“Passwords: Man-boy-thyrsos. Man-boy-thyrsos. Brimo, Brimo. Enter the sacred meadow. For the initiate is without penalty.”

(D3, Pherai, Macedonia, fourth century BCE, Edmonds)

The text opens with the word σύμβολα, literally meaning ‘signs’ or ‘tokens’, but in this case meaning ‘passwords’, since they are words with special significance that must be spoken in the underworld.⁵⁵³ The passwords themselves consist of two repeated words, Ἀνδρικεπαιδόθυρσον and Βριμῶ, which are presumably spoken by the initiate. The first is a composite word thought to allude to Dionysus, formed from ἀνήρ (‘man’) and παῖς (‘child’ or ‘boy’), with the word θύρσος, which was the term for the staff used in Bacchic ritual and the emblem of the followers of Dionysus.⁵⁵⁴ The second password, Βριμῶ, is believed to have been the name of a local goddess of the dead, who was equated with Persephone.⁵⁵⁵ Unfortunately, no further meaning behind these passwords is known, though they no doubt served to demonstrate the possession of special knowledge by the initiate. Following the uttering of these words, the initiate is declared as ἄποινος (‘without penalty’) and is allowed to enter the Sacred Meadow.⁵⁵⁶

The examples above show that either the knowledge and pronouncement of special words, or the declaration of special status as a mystic initiate, demonstrated to the underworld powers that

⁵⁵³ It is also thought that these passwords may have been spoken in the funerary ritual itself (see Calame, 2011, 213).

⁵⁵⁴ Bernabé et al. (2008) 155; Graf and Johnston (2013) 133 (Johnston).

⁵⁵⁵ Bernabé et al. (2008) 156.

⁵⁵⁶ Their status as ἄποινος indicates that either the initiate has already paid for their crimes, or they are exempt from punishment in the afterlife (Bernabé et al., 2008, 157).

the deceased qualified for special consideration in the afterlife, and therefore for entry into Elysium.

Judgement

In the afterlife mythology of ‘popular’ belief, we come across the motif of the ‘afterlife judgement’, which detailed the judgement of the soul immediately upon its arrival in the underworld. The post-mortem judgement of the soul is another motif common to afterlife myths from around the world, and like the concept of Elysium, it may have been inspired by Egyptian and Near Eastern traditions.⁵⁵⁷

The essential purpose of the afterlife judgement was to assess the extent of the soul’s ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ in order to determine whether they will receive rewards or punishments after death. It ensured that the good would not go unrewarded for their efforts of living a virtuous life, and that those who had profited from their wickedness during their lifetime would not escape justice in the end. The concept of afterlife judgement also no doubt served to encourage moral and righteous behaviour during life, through the threat of eternal punishment.⁵⁵⁸

Unlike the judgement performed by Persephone in the ‘Orphic’ tablets, this ‘popular’ myth of judgement seems to have concerned all souls of the dead, no matter their status or religious orientation. Unfortunately, it is not known exactly how widespread this idea was, since most sources do not explain the process by which the souls of the virtuous and unjust were separated after death.

⁵⁵⁷ In Babylonian beliefs, the soul was judged before being granted entry into the city of the dead (see Heidel, 1949, 191).

⁵⁵⁸ See Chapter One, 55.

However, a few sources refer to a process of judgement, performed by one or more judges beneath the earth. The earliest reference to this process of judgement appears in Pindar's *Second Olympian Ode*, in which he refers to a single judge who "*pronounces sentence with hateful necessity*", based on crimes committed on earth.⁵⁵⁹ Pindar does not name the judge who decides the fate of the dead, though he is likely referring to the underworld god Hades, since elsewhere Hades is said to pronounce final judgement upon the dead, as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*:⁵⁶⁰

μέγας γὰρ Ἄιδης ἐστὶν εὖθυνοσ βροτῶν
 ἔνερθε χθονός,
 δελτογράφῳ δὲ πάντ' ἐπωπᾶ φρενί.

"For Hades is the great assessor of mortals beneath the earth; he watches all their acts, and the tablets of his mind record them."

(Aesch. *Eum.* 273-75, Sommerstein)

Judgement also appears as a predominant theme in the afterlife descriptions of Plato, who manipulates the motif to demonstrate the importance of living a just and philosophical life.⁵⁶¹ As we will see, in his two most detailed accounts of the afterlife judgement, the eschatological importance of the motif varies significantly, indicating that his views on the afterlife were constantly changing. Despite this, it is likely that Plato utilised mythic material well known to the general public, which makes his dialogues no less valuable for investigating the myth of the afterlife judgement.

⁵⁵⁹ Pin. *Ol.* 2.58-60; see Chapter One, 54.

⁵⁶⁰ In the *Suppliants* (228-231), Aeschylus refers to another Zeus in the underworld who "*pronounces final judgement on the dead for their sins*".

⁵⁶¹ Since both Pindar and Plato were likely heavily influenced by Pythagoreanism, it is possible that the concept of afterlife judgement was related to the teaching of Pythagoras, though there is no direct evidence to confirm this. For Pythagorean influence on Pindar and Plato, see Willcock (1995) 138-39.

According to Plato, once the souls of the dead had arrived in the underworld, they were judged in the meadow, at the dividing of the roads leading to Elysium and Tartarus.⁵⁶² Souls were judged based on their righteousness and purity, taking into consideration the deeds committed during life, and were allocated rewards or punishments accordingly.⁵⁶³ In the *Republic*, Plato describes the place where judgement takes place as a busy centre of activity, in which a constant stream of souls come and go from their appointed afterlife destinations.⁵⁶⁴ Each soul is also said to bear tokens (σημεῖα), which signified the individual judgements passed upon them.⁵⁶⁵

As to the identities of the underworld judges, the *Gorgias* informs us of three: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Aeacus.⁵⁶⁶ Souls from Asia are tried by Rhadamanthys, those from Europe by Aeacus, while Minos was given the role of supervisor and the final decision in cases where there was any doubt.⁵⁶⁷ All three men were sons of Zeus, known for having established law and order on earth.⁵⁶⁸

The earliest reference to Minos as a judge in the underworld appears in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus observes Minos in the underworld making judgements over the dead (θεμιστεύοντα νέκυσσιν).⁵⁶⁹ As the dead are said to dwell collectively in the Asphodel Meadow, Minos' role here cannot be to determine the final destiny of souls, but rather it appears to be a continuation of his earthly life, where he served as a ruler and law-maker. Other than this passage in Homer, Minos does not appear as an underworld judge in any other sources prior to Plato, indicating that Plato

⁵⁶² Pl. *Gorg.* 524a.

⁵⁶³ Pl. *Rep.* 10.615a-616a.

⁵⁶⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 10.614d.

⁵⁶⁵ Pl. *Rep.* 10.614c-d.

⁵⁶⁶ Plato additionally mentions Triptolemus as a judge in the *Apology* (41a).

⁵⁶⁷ Pl. *Gorg.* 523e-524a.

⁵⁶⁸ Pl. *Gorg.* 523e-24a; Pl. *Minos*, 318d.

⁵⁶⁹ *Od.* 11.568-9.

himself may have assigned Minos the role based on the description in the *Odyssey*.⁵⁷⁰

The connection of Rhadamanthys to the position of afterlife judge is found in the Second *Olympian Ode*, where Pindar describes Rhadamanthys as providing ‘just counsels’ (βουλαῖς ὀρθαῖσι) to those who dwell in the Isle of the Blessed.⁵⁷¹ The specific placement of Rhadamanthys in the mythology of Elysium can be traced back to Homer, who mentions him as one of the privileged individuals allowed to dwell on the Elysian Plain.⁵⁷² The history behind Aeacus’ appointment as a judge of the underworld is less clear, though it was likely related to his role as king of Aegina and his apparent reputation for settling disputes.⁵⁷³

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates recounts a story about the origin and purpose of the afterlife judgement. He explains that prior to the institution of underworld judges, it was found that some souls of the dead were passing over undeserving to either abode, since they were being tried while alive, and the true natures of their souls were being concealed by their clothing, wealth, and ancestry. For this reason, Zeus appointed judges in the underworld to ensure that souls would be judged fairly. He also instituted the policy that every individual must appear naked before the judges of the underworld, stripped of all their fine belongings, so that the true nature of the soul could be perceived more accurately.⁵⁷⁴

In this case, Plato uses the motif of the afterlife judgement to emphasise that judgements made during life are not the end, but instead all souls will receive a final and all-encompassing

⁵⁷⁰ Edmonds (2014) 9.

⁵⁷¹ Pind. *Ol.* 2.75.

⁵⁷² See Chapter Three, 114, fn. 435.

⁵⁷³ Paus. 1.39.6; as well as to his relationship with Zeus; Lucian (*Luct.* 7) only knows of two judges, Minos and Rhadamanthys.

⁵⁷⁴ Pl. *Gorg.* 523c-e.

judgement after death, from which they cannot get off 'scot-free'.⁵⁷⁵ The use of judgement in the *Gorgias* also draws attention to the limitations of judgements made on earth, which are often influenced by factors such as wealth and not by the nature of one's soul. These things aside, the eschatological purpose of the afterlife judgement is still explained in a straightforward manner: those judged to be 'good' will go to a place of reward after death, while those deemed to be 'bad' will receive punishments.

However, in the Myth of Er of the *Republic*, the role of the afterlife judgement is comparatively much less important, owing to the addition of reincarnation to the afterlife narrative. This meant that the judgements delivered in the afterlife no longer determined the soul's ultimate fate, but simply the deliverance of punishments or rewards according to the life lived on earth. Though afterlife retribution may still be feared to some extent, the same finality is not attached to the decisions of the judges, as it was in the *Gorgias*.⁵⁷⁶ The afterlife judgement now takes on a level of arbitrariness, since Plato indicates that crimes committed during life are predestined, a result of the particular life chosen by the soul between each reincarnation.⁵⁷⁷ This would lead one to assume that the reward or punishment after death was also predetermined, an allotted addition to the life chosen rather than something that had been earned.⁵⁷⁸

While the *Gorgias* emphasises that living a just life will bring rewards after death, in the *Republic* Plato argues that it is better to live a just and philosophical life simply for the purposes of it being better, as the life each individual leads ultimately has no lasting consequences. Therefore, although the motif of the afterlife judgement is a prominent feature of the afterlife descriptions in

⁵⁷⁵ Annas (1982) 125.

⁵⁷⁶ Annas (1982) 131.

⁵⁷⁷ Pl. *Rep.* 10.618b-19d; see Chapter Three, 126-27.

⁵⁷⁸ Annas (1982) 134.

both dialogues, its eschatological importance varies significantly, indicating that Plato's views of the afterlife were constantly changing and developing.⁵⁷⁹

Chapter Conclusion

In early Greece, it seems that the souls of the ordinary dead were believed to go to the same place after death, the Asphodel Meadow, which was envisioned as a gloomy and joyless place. By the beginning of the Classical period, alternative afterlife destinations had begun to emerge, owing to an increasing individualisation of the afterlife, which saw the introduction of paradisiacal afterlife realms, as well as a place of punishment. The paradisiacal realms functioned as places of reward for the virtuous and pure, and offered a pleasant life after death for those granted admission. Alternatively, the place of afterlife punishment served as the location to which the unjust or impious were sent after death to pay the penalty for their crimes.

What the soul experiences when it first enters the underworld is a topic less often referred to in the sources. The dialogues of Plato and the 'Orphic' gold tablets provide distinct descriptions about how the soul reaches its final destination. The tablets include information for the initiate concerning the topography of the netherworld, and provide instructions on how to overcome certain obstacles and challenges in order to obtain favour with underworld divinities and be granted entry into Elysium.

Some literary sources also present the motif of the afterlife judgement, in which the souls of the dead were imagined to be judged upon entering Hades. The afterlife judgement functioned to determine whether an individual was entitled to rewards or punishments after death, according to

⁵⁷⁹ See Annas (1982) 138-9.

the acts committed on earth and the character of their soul. Plato includes several accounts of the afterlife judgement in his descriptions of the afterlife, which vary significantly in eschatological importance, indicating that his ideas were constantly developing.

CONCLUSION

While there has been much scholarship on certain aspects of death and the afterlife transition in ancient Greece, there has been little attempt to view the evidence in the context of the journey as a whole. This thesis explored the different aspects of the afterlife journey, in order to reconstruct the process of transition, from how the soul made its way to the underworld to what happened to it upon arrival.

Funerary rites in Greece served to bestow the dead with honour and prestige and allowed family and friends the opportunity to make a proper farewell. They also possessed ritual significance, functioning to formally separate the deceased from the community of the living, and incorporate them into the community of the dead. Whether the funerary rituals that prepared the body for burial also assisted in the soul's passage to the afterlife has long been a topic of scholarly debate.

There is a contrasting eschatology in early Greek belief regarding the necessity of funerary rituals for the soul's passage to the afterlife. In the *Iliad* it is stated that, while the body remains unburied, the soul is physically prevented from entering the world of the dead. The idea may have been linked to the notion that until the corpse is removed from the world of the living, whether through burial or cremation, the soul remains trapped between two worlds, unable to be fully incorporated into the community of the dead.

Contrary to this, in the final book of the *Odyssey*, the souls of the dead are imagined as entering Hades prior to burial. This indicates that before the composition of Book 24, there was a development of afterlife beliefs which saw the connection between funerary rites and admission into the afterlife become more flexible. By the Classical period, there is little evidence to suggest that funerary rites were thought to directly facilitate the soul's journey after death. However, the

significance of funerary rites was in no way diminished.

Analysis of the customary rites indicates that they may have had some eschatological significance. It seems that the dead were generally thought to hear and notice the funeral lament, as well as benefit from the graveside offerings and tendance paid to the grave. On some occasions, the provision of particular grave goods was intended to assist the soul on its journey to the underworld, as well as in its admission into the afterlife. Items used in life, such as food, drink and clothing, have been interpreted as intended for the benefit of the soul. However, while there is some literary evidence to support the idea that these items may have benefitted the deceased in the afterlife, there is little suggestion that they were thought to assist in the journey itself.

On the other hand, there is more direct evidence that the inclusion of ritually specific items in the grave were intended for the soul's journey to the underworld. Coins have often been linked to 'Charon's fee', which was required for passage into the afterlife. This custom first appears in literary sources of the Classical period, which suggests that the idea was of later origin. The placement of low denomination coins in the grave, or more specifically in the mouth of the deceased, generally seems to agree with the practice described by literary sources. However, the number of burials containing coins is relatively low, and of those that contain coins, only a few correspond exactly to the practice of 'Charon's fee'. This suggests that only a very small percentage of the population practiced this custom.

The 'Orphic' gold tablets found in graves of mystery initiates were also very likely intended for use during the journey to the afterlife, by assisting the soul in gaining entrance to Elysium. This is largely suggested by the contents of the tablets, some of which include instructions for how to safely navigate the netherworld, as well as how to successfully overcome challenges that block entry into Elysium. The wording of the text, which appears to speak directly to the deceased, suggests that the

tablets accompanied the deceased in his journey to the afterlife. However, the exact function of the tablets cannot be confirmed since we do not possess any supporting literary evidence for their purpose, nor any information about mystic funerary practices, which could shed light on the tablets' ritual context.

The selective information recorded on the gold tablets also raises questions about their function as instructions for the soul in the afterlife, as we would expect to see such seemingly important information featured on more of the tablets, if it was indeed considered necessary for the journey. Furthermore, the relative rarity of gold tablets suggests that they were not considered necessary by a large percentage of individuals, though similar items may well have been produced in perishable materials.

Overall, there is limited evidence to suggest that grave goods were intended to assist the deceased during their journey to the afterlife. For this reason, there does not appear to have been a widespread concern, at least during the Archaic and Classical periods, for providing the dead with items they might require for the journey itself.⁵⁸⁰

However, there is strong evidence to suggest that individuals could take steps during their lifetime in preparation for their last journey, in order to ensure a successful transition and a better lot in the afterlife. One way was through initiation into a mystery cult, which promised salvation and entry into a blessed afterlife. This was apparently achieved through ritual purification from the guilt incurred by one's own misdeeds, or by the misdeeds of their ancestors. Another way to facilitate the soul's admission into a favourable afterlife was through living a virtuous and just life; on the contrary, unjust behaviour could procure afterlife punishments.

⁵⁸⁰ This conclusion, though, applies to overall trends and does not discount the small percentage of the population who may have possessed these beliefs.

From an early period, the soul's journey to the underworld was conceived of as a swift and effortless flight through the air and down to Hades. This is clearly demonstrated in the Homeric poems, in which the notion of flight is consistently used to describe the departure of the *psyche* from the body. The association of the soul with flight was also reflected in Greek art from as early as the Mycenaean period, with the portrayal of the *psyche* as winged. Winged representations of the *psyche* also became popular during the Archaic and early Classical periods, indicating that there was an ongoing association of the soul with flight.

During the Classical period we also see the introduction and popularisation of life-like representations of the dead (*eidola*) on white-ground *lekythoi*, indicating that souls were more often imagined as travelling to Hades 'by foot', rather than 'by air'. The shift to a more individualised representation of the dead may have been a result of eschatological developments that occurred during the Archaic and early Classical periods, which saw a growing interest in the individual experience of death and the afterlife journey. However, it appears that the concept of flight did not disappear entirely, since winged *psychai* continued to appear occasionally in art alongside *eidola*.

The eschatological developments that occurred during the Archaic and early Classical periods also had an effect on the representation of the journey itself. While in early Greece the journey had simply been presented as a swift and effortless flight, by the Classical period it had become articulated in a much more elaborate and physical manner, with more attention paid to how the soul found its way down to the underworld.

This led to the introduction of *psychopompoi*, whose task was to physically conduct the souls of the dead down from the upper world and into the land of the dead. Where burial had previously controlled the soul's incorporation into the afterlife, *psychopompoi* absorbed the function of

controlling access to Hades and effecting the symbolic transition from life to death. The emergence of such figures indicates that the route down to the underworld was imagined to be more difficult and challenging than it had been previously, and that the soul required assistance during its descent underground. For this reason, *psychopompoi* likely also served to provide comfort and reassurance for those who were anxious about the journey ahead.

During the Archaic and early Classical periods we also saw a growing interest in the physical boundaries between the world of the living and the world of the dead. This is apparent in the descriptions concerning the geography of the entrance to the underworld. The body of water (Acheron) which blocked the entrance to Hades became a dominant feature of the underworld topography. It provided a definite separation between the upper and lower worlds, and its crossing marked the final integration of shades into the afterlife. The Acheron also served to control access to the land of the dead, effected by the infernal *psychopompos* Charon.

The Gates of Hades are also an important feature of the underworld topography, as they similarly functioned to control the access of shades to the land of the dead, though, more importantly, they served to keep the spirits of the dead within the underworld. For this reason, they can be seen as the final point of no return.

Like many ideas about death and the afterlife, what happened to the soul upon entry into Hades was also a developing concept. In the Homeric poems, the souls of the dead were said to go to the same collective dwelling place beneath the earth, the Asphodel Meadow. This was described as a gloomy and joyless place, where the souls lived ghostly versions of the earthly lives. Following the eschatological developments of the Archaic and early Classical periods, we see the emergence of different afterlife destinations, which included paradisiacal places of reward (which I have included under the umbrella term 'Elysium') but also places of punishment.

Though Elysium was initially reserved for the heroes of myth, by the Classical period they had become increasingly popular as an alternative afterlife destination for the average person. Its popularisation was likely a result of the increasing individualisation of death and the afterlife that began during the Archaic period, which saw a shift away from the idea of a collective afterlife. This new popularised Elysium featured new conditions for entry, ensuring that it remained exclusive to a certain extent.

The concept of Elysium was a feature of both mainstream and mystic afterlife belief. It offered a type of life after death, and functioned as an ultimate reward for those souls who had been allowed admission, whether they had successfully maintained a virtuous life or had undergone initiation and purification rites. The concept of Elysium was also adapted to fit the different conceptions of the afterlife, including the belief in reincarnation, in which a higher tier of Elysium may have been promised to those who kept their souls pure over several lifecycles.

After the emergence of Elysium we also see the introduction of a place of punishment for ordinary mortals, which provided a natural contrast to the afterlife paradise. This place of punishment (Tartarus) was reserved for souls who had committed injustices during life. Like Elysium, the concept of afterlife punishment was common to both 'popular' and mystic afterlife traditions. In 'popular' belief, Tartarus served to ensure that unjust souls paid for their crimes after death, most especially if they had escaped retribution during life. Afterlife punishment in mystic belief was less clearly defined, though sources do suggest that a miserable afterlife awaited those who were uninitiated.

Along with the development of different afterlife destinations, there appears to have been a growing concern, or at least a growing interest, in navigating the underworld. This was especially true for 'Orphic' or Bacchic initiates, who relied on special knowledge to successfully navigate the

netherworld and gain entry into Elysium. The 'Orphic' gold tablets preserve information about the underworld journey in mystic belief, including the challenges that the soul was expected to face in the afterlife, as well as solutions for how to overcome them. The nature of these challenges meant that only those who possessed the knowledge gained by initiation and those who had successfully been purified could overcome them.

The necessity for such knowledge and status in the underworld journey is particularly evident in the confrontation with Persephone, during which the deceased proves their identity as an initiate, in order to be granted entry into Elysium. Identity may be proven through the declaration of status or the pronunciation of passwords known only to initiates, all of which function to demonstrate that the deceased is entitled to special treatment. The confrontation also serves as a means of determining the ultimate fate of the soul, since Persephone decides whether the soul qualifies for admission. Presumably, if the initiate did not do and say the correct things in the afterlife, they would fail to gain entry and would share in the same fate as non-initiates, whatever that may have been.

It is not known exactly how widespread belief of the afterlife judgement was, however the notion does appear in several mainstream sources. Similar to the confrontation of Persephone, the afterlife judgement functioned to determine the ultimate fate of the deceased, though this was achieved by assessing the nature of their soul and the deeds committed during life. From this assessment, the deceased was allotted rewards or punishments accordingly, though for how long the soul was subject to these varied.

The afterlife judgement appears as a dominant motif in the afterlife descriptions of Plato, though its function varies. In the *Gorgias*, judgement served to determine the final destiny of souls and ensure that acts committed during life did not go unrewarded or unpunished. However, in the *Republic*, the role of judgement was to provide the appropriate punishments or rewards at the end of

each life cycle, determined by the life the soul had previously chosen.

In general, ancient Greek conceptions about the afterlife journey fluctuated over time. These changes were a result of eschatological developments that occurred during the Archaic and early Classical periods, which saw the afterlife journey imagined in a more elaborate and physical manner. Beliefs concerning the afterlife journey frequently also reflected beliefs about the nature of the soul and the afterlife itself. Thus, the study of the last journey helps us uncover aspects of Greek eschatology that may not be immediately apparent, including the concerns and fears regarding the experience of death, a common destiny for all mortals.

FIGURES



Fig. 1. Women Washing the Body of Actaeon.
Black-Figure Type A Lidless Pyxis, Boeotia, c. 470-460 BCE
Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 437.

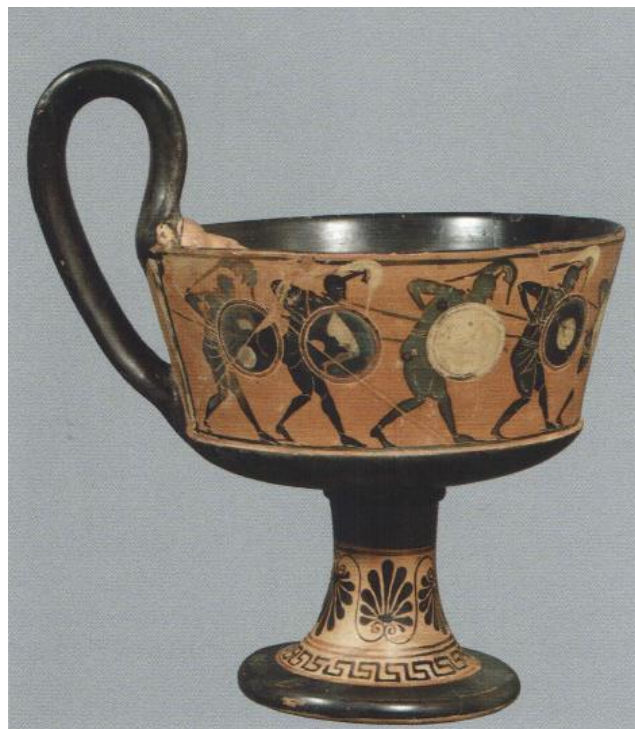


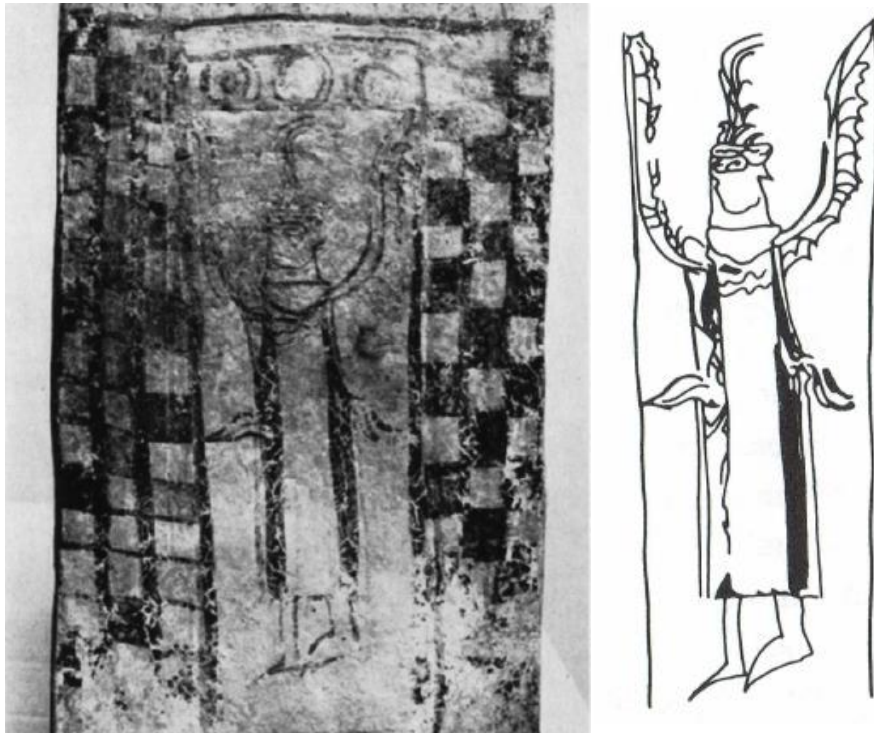
Fig. 2. Ekphora Scene, Armed Warriors Dancing.
Black-Figure One Handled Kantharos, Attica, c. 510-500 BCE
One-Handled Kantharos Type. Vulcii, former Canino
Collection.



Fig. 3. Ekphora Scene, Aulos Player.
 Black-Figure One Handled Kantharos. Attica, c. 510-500 BCE
 Perizoma Group. Vulcii, former Luynes Collection.



Fig. 4. Youth with Coin at Tomb, Charon.
 White-Ground Lekythos. Attica, c. 420 BCE.
 Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 2967.



Figs. 5a and 5b. Winged Woman.
 Mycenaean Larnax. Tanagra, Thirteenth Cen. BCE.
 Private Collection.



Fig. 6. Bird-Figure Attachments.
 From a Mycenaean Larnax, Tanagra, Thirteenth Cen. BCE.
 Thebes, Archaeological Museum.



Fig. 7. Model of a Funeral Wagon.
Attica. Ekphora Group, c. 700-650 BCE.
Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 26747.



Fig. 8. Death of Sarpedon, Winged Psyche.
Black-Figure Neck Amphora. Attica. Diosphos Painter, c. 525-475 BCE
New York, Metropolitan Museum, 56.171.25.



Fig. 9. Prothesis Scene, Winged Psyche.
White-Ground Lekythos. Attica. Group of Huge Lekythoi, c. 400 BCE.
Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2684.



Fig. 10. Hermes Conducting Winged Psychai.
White-Ground Lekythos. Attica. Tymbos Painter, c. 460 BCE.
Jena, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, 338.



Fig. 11. Hermes Guiding Myrrhine.
 Marble Lekythos, c. 420-410 BCE.
 Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 4485.



Figs. 12a and 12b. Hermes and Eidolon.
 White-Ground Lekythos. Attica. Phiale Painter, c. 435-430 BCE.
 Munich, Antikensammlungen, 6248.

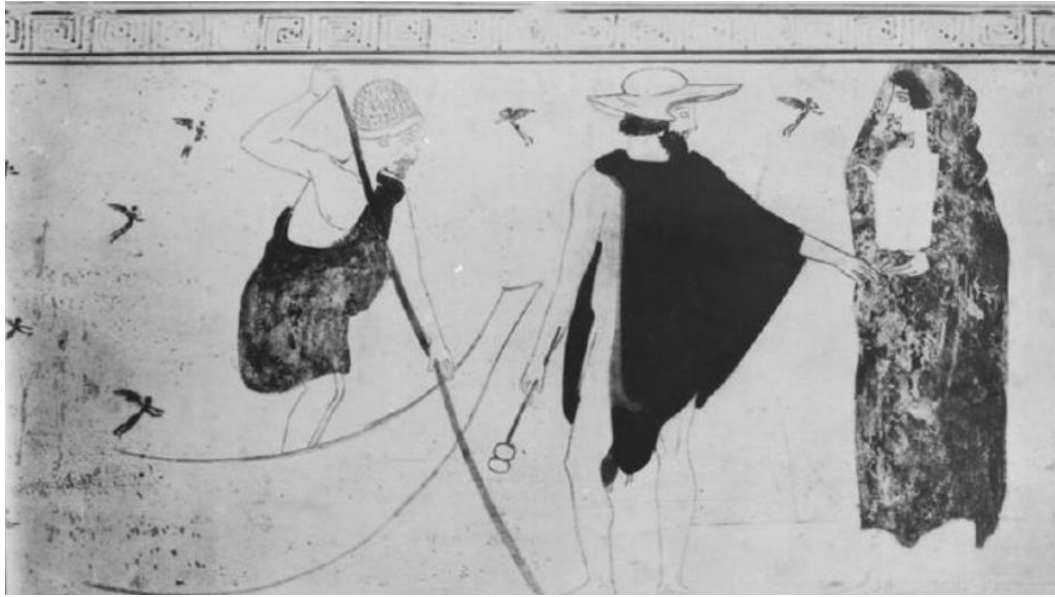


Fig. 13. Charon, Hermes, Eidolon, and Winged Psychai.
White-Ground Lekythos. Attic. Sabouroff Painter, c. 440 BCE.
Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 1926.



Fig. 14. Charon and Winged Psychai.
Black-Figure Stand Fragment. Attic, c. 525-475 BCE.
Frankfurt, Liebieghaus, 560.

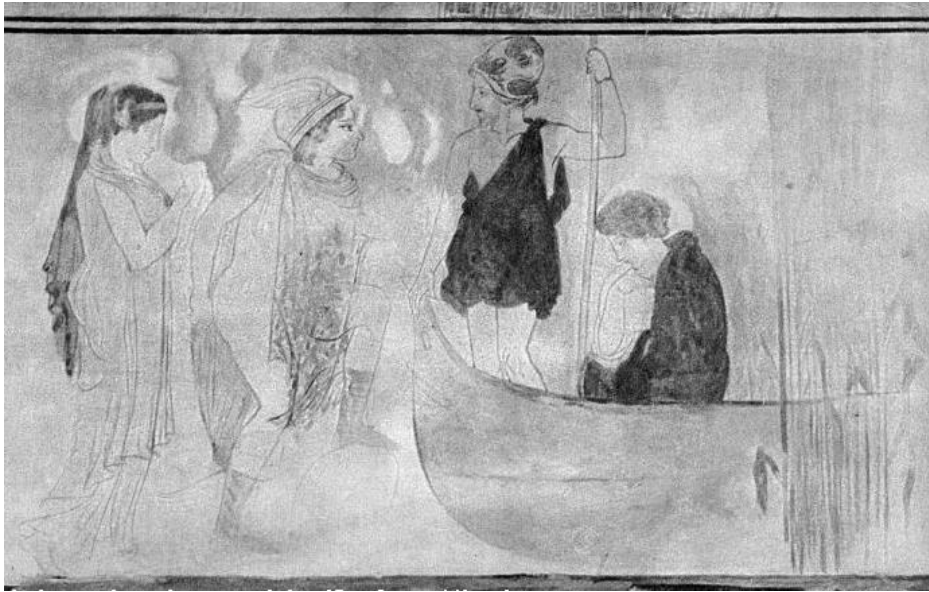


Fig. 15. Hermes, Charon, and Eidola.
White-Ground Lekythos. Attic. Munich 2335 Painter, c. 430 BCE.
Cracow, Czartoryski Museum, 1251.

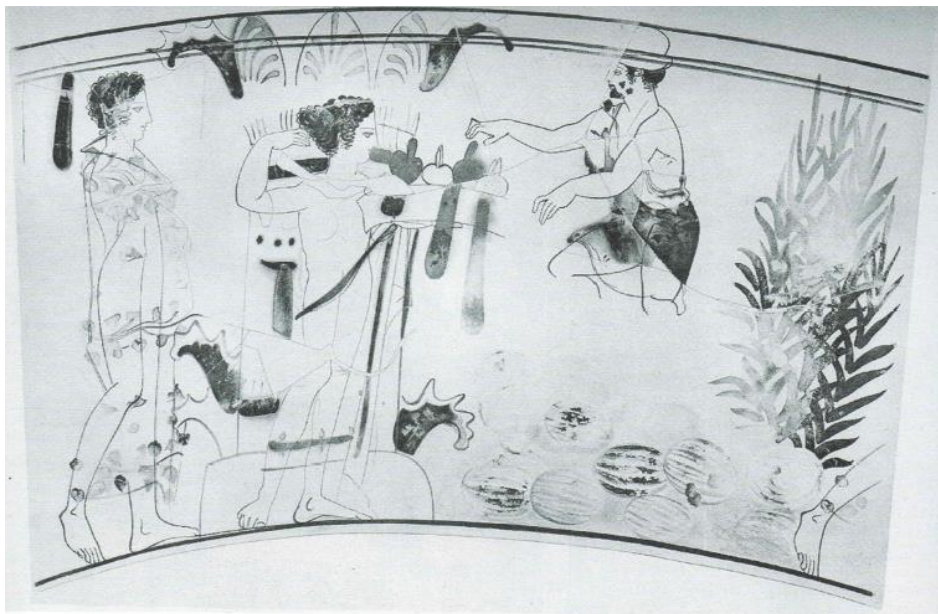


Fig. 16. Charon at Tomb, Acheron.
White-Ground Lekythos. Attic, c. 410 BCE.
Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, F2680.



Fig. 17. Gold Mouthpiece Engraved with Ship
c. 560 BCE.
Thessaloniki, Archaeological museum, M0 8093.



Fig. 18. Woman and Man Picking Apples
Marble Base of a Funerary Vase. Attic, c. 410-400.
Athens National Archaeological Museum, 4502.

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