

## For the Fear of the Gorgon: Addressing the “pale fear” formula in archaic epic and lyric

Fear is present abundantly in early Greek literature, both epic and lyric, in ways that portray it as an emotion both intense and complex. Different nuances are colored in ancient semantics through diverse verbal constructions that mark the presence of fear in our texts. This paper builds on recent work on emotions and trauma (Cairns 1993; Konstan 2006; Meineck 2012, Meineck and Konstan 2014; Karanika and Panoussi 2020, inter alia) and traces the ‘color’ of fear as it takes over different characters in early Greek poetry. Describing the emotion itself mirrors the kind of color that the human body takes when it is overcome by fear. While shame is supposed to make one red, fear renders one pale so the expression *χλωρόν δέος* transposes the imagined look on the emotion itself. This color epithet functions as a branding epithet that associates a certain kind of presentation with the characters involved, adding to the text’s capacity for visual references. It also implicitly begs the question: what kind of patterns does such a focus on the “pale fear” follow and how can one deflect a fearful presence? Fear as *χλωρόν δέος* is also what precipitates Odysseus’s exit from the Underworld just before again the many dead would gather with an astounding crying sound at the end of the *Nekyia*. The exact same line, repeated in *Od.* 11.45 and 11.633, creates a frame of fear for the entire Book 11 and the *Nekyia* scene. In both times, fear is caused by the sound of a collective movement. We will then compare this formula usage with another clearly gendered occurrence of *χλωρόν δέος* in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (l. 190) which denotes the fear that comes to Metaneira when she realizes who her son was with Demeter. Sappho presents a pale “terror” in her Fragment 31. Similarly, in *Odyssey* 6, Athena intervenes to remove the fear from Nausicaa when she first encounters Odysseus (where we have reference to fear but without the ‘pale’ aspect). What

caused fear to Nausicaa was the sight of Odysseus which is presented with one epithet: *σμερδαλέος*. This is an epithet that typically describes a certain sound, one that may be of a resounding quality or fear-inducing shout in the *Iliad* which might have a metallic effect or come from a metal, an epithet that echoes the presence of the Gorgon. Ultimately, this paper will consider the cognitive mapping behind such a presentation of fear for certain characters and seek to contribute to the gendered nuances in understanding ancient fear.

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