

The Sign of the Hero:  
A Prologue to the *Heroikos* of Philostratus  
by  
Gregory Nagy

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The traditional practice of worshipping heroes, commonly known as “hero cult,” is a basic historical fact of ancient Greek civilization, and the evidence for it goes back all the way to the “Geometric” period of the first millennium BCE.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, references to this practice are not obvious—at first sight—in the prime media of archaic and classical Greek literature that deal most directly with heroes. Current research on the traditions underlying the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides has demonstrated the pervasive influence of hero cults in shaping the media of epic and drama, but the fact remains that most references to the actual cults of heroes are only implicit in these forms of archaic and classical Greek literature.<sup>2</sup> It is the historians of the classical period who give us the earliest explicit references to hero cults, and the most prominent example is the narrative of Herodotus about the cult of Protesilaos at Elaious (*Histories* 7.33, 9.116–120).<sup>3</sup> And yet, even in the medium of classical Greek historiography, the actual meaning of such a hero cult remains something of a mystery. That mystery, as

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<sup>1</sup> On the history and archaeology of hero cults, see Anthony M. Snodgrass, *An Archaeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of a Discipline* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987) 159-165. Two pathfinding general works on hero cults are Angelo Brelich, *Gli eroi greci: Un problema storico-religioso* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1958) and Friedrich Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (2 vols.; Giessen: A. Topelmann, 1909-1912). Specialized works include Emily Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London: Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement 57, 1989), Uta Kron, *Die zehn attischen Phylenheroen: Geschichte, Mythos, Kult und Darstellungen* (Berlin: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung, Beiheft 5, 1976), and Corinne Pache, *Baby and Child Heroes in Ancient Greece* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1999). Snodgrass (p. 172) speaks of “the transformation in the whole attitude to the heroic past that came about with the westward spread of Ionian epic.” Prior to this spread, he argues (*ibid.*), “it seems that on the Greek mainland (and at least some offshore islands) the idea of the ‘hero’ was linked to ancestor worship, and was not tied to one specific past era; afterwards, these attitudes had to be merged with the notion of an eternally receding ‘Heroic Age,’ set already in the distant past, and a prime heritage of the whole Greek world.” For another line of argumentation, see Carla M. Antonaccio, *An Archaeology of Ancestors: Tomb Cult and Hero Cult in Early Greece* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> For epic, see Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979; 2nd ed., with new introduction, 1999) 9-11 (also p. vii in the new introduction). For drama, see Albert Henrichs, “The Tomb of Aias and the Prospect of Hero Cult in Sophokles,” *Classical Antiquity* 12 (1993) 165-180. In Homeric usage, a key word for implicitly referring to the cult of a hero is *sēma*, meaning, ‘sign, signal’ and ‘tomb [of a hero]’: see Nagy pp. 340-43; cf. Henrichs pp. 171-72.

<sup>3</sup> Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” in *MHTIC. Revue d’anthropologie du monde grec ancien* 2/2 (1987) 207–13. See also Deborah Boedeker, “Protesilaos and the End of Herodotus’ *Histories*,” *Classical Antiquity* 7/1 (1988) 30-48.

we shall see, is intentional. In fact, mysticism is a fundamental aspect of ancient Greek hero cults, and the mystery of cult heroes like Protesilaos can be considered a tradition in its own right.<sup>4</sup> The *Heroikos* of Philostratus, composed nearly a millennium after the beginnings of the “Geometric” age, continues that tradition.

In the narrative of Herodotus, the dead hero Protesilaos “gives a sign,” **sēmainei**, to the living (9.120.2). What this sign “means” (the same Greek word **sēmainei** can mean simply “he / she / it means”—whence the English borrowing “semantics”) is made explicit by the narrative. Through a “power” (**dunamis**) given to Protesilaos by the gods, the hero can uphold justice by punishing the unjust—just as surely as he can give a mystical sign, as narrated immediately beforehand: an Athenian is roasting **tarikhoi** ‘preserved fish’, and the dead fish suddenly come back to life (9.120.1). So also Protesilaos is now being called a **tarikhos**: even though he is dead, and thus a **tarikhos**, he still has the power to intervene in the world of the living (9.120.2). By implication, Protesilaos has mystically come back to life, just like the preserved fish.

Here is the context of the Herodotus’ narrative. Athenian forces have just captured the Chersonesus from the Persians, reclaiming for the native Greek population this region of the Hellespont—and taking as prisoner its Persian administrator. He is condemned to death for having violated the hero cult of Protesilaos at Elaious in the Chersonesus. As the Persian man is about to be executed, a **teras** ‘portent’ intervenes. The preserved fish that are being roasted by one of the Athenian captors for an everyday meal are suddenly resurrected, to the amazement of all. The non-Greek captive is now quoted as saying to the Athenian man:

**xeine Athēnaie, mēden phobeo to teras touto, ou gar soi pephēne, all’  
emoi sēmainei ho en Elaiousi Prōtesileōs hoti kai tethneōs kai tarikhos  
eōn dunamin pros theōn ekhei ton adikeonta timesthai**

‘Athenian stranger, do not be frightened of this portent [**teras**]. For it was manifested not for you. Rather, Protesilaos—the one who abides in Elaious—is making a sign [**sēmainei**] to me that, even though he is dead—and a **tarikhos**—he has the power [**dunamis**] from the gods to exact retribution from the one who commits wrongdoing.’

(Herodotus 9.120.2)

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<sup>4</sup> This point about the inherent mysticism of hero cults is relevant to the two articles cited in the previous note. Both these articles concern references to hero cults in Herodotus, but they differ in emphasis and in lines of interpretation. Whereas Boedeker (1988) studies Herodotus’ use of a traditional story about the cult hero Protesilaos as it relates to the narrative ending of the *Histories*, I concentrate on Herodotus’ use of the traditional language inherent in this story (as signaled by such words as **sēmainō**, **oikos**, etc.); this language, I argue, conveys not only the mystical agenda of hero cult but also the “subtext” of the entire narration of the *Histories*, ending and all. This argument is elaborated in Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 268–73.

Elsewhere, Herodotus uses the same word **tarikhos** to mean “mummy,” in explicit reference to mystic rituals of mummification in Egypt (2.85-2.89). In considering the most expensive and sacred form of these rituals, Herodotus says ostentatiously that he does not wish to reveal the name connected to this form (2.86.2). His opaque language here corresponds to other contexts where he expresses a reluctance to reveal the secrets of mysteries (as at 2.61, 2.86, 2.132, 2.170, 2.171).<sup>5</sup> In this context, it appears that the mystery centers on the figure of Osiris, whose resurrection from the dead depends on the secret rites of mummification.<sup>6</sup>

The mystification surrounding the Egyptian prototype of resurrection, Osiris, is extended to the Greek hero Protesilaos by the narrative of Herodotus. The mystery inherent in the hero’s own cult is signaled by the double meaning of the word **tarikhos**—either the everyday Greek sense of “preserved fish” or the hieratic Egyptian sense of “mummy”:

What the two meanings seem to have in common is the idea of “preservation.” In an everyday sense, rotting is negated by “preservation” through the drying or salting of fish; in a hieratic sense, rotting *and death itself* are negated by “preservation” through mummification, which is from the standpoint of Egyptian religion the ritual phase of the mystical process of immortalization.<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, when the dead Protesilaos “gives a sign,” **sēmainei**, to the living, the Greek hero’s “meaning” seems at first sight to depend on whether the word **tarikhos** is to be understood in the everyday Greek sense of “preserved fish” or in the hieratic non-Greek sense of “mummy” (Herodotus 9.120.2). But there is a third sense, both hieratic and Greek, and it depends on the meaning of the word **sēmainei**:

In the image of a dead fish that mystically comes back to life, we see a convergence of the everyday and the hieratic senses of “preservation.” This image [in the story of Herodotus], where Protesilaos **sēmainei** ‘indicates’ (9.120.2) the power that he has from the gods to exact retribution from the wrongdoer, amounts to a **sēma** or sign of the revenant, the spirit that returns from the dead. The hero Protesilaos himself is represented as giving the **sēma**, the ‘sign’ of his power as a revenant [from the heroic past].<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See again Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos”; also *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 270--71, with further references.

<sup>6</sup> Alan B. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book II* (vol. 2; Leiden: Brill, 1976) 18.

<sup>7</sup> Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” p. 210; = *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 270.

<sup>8</sup> Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” p. 210; = *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 271. For more on the concept of the cult hero as revenant, see Nagy, “Theognis and Megara: A Poet’s Vision of His City,” *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis* (ed. Thomas J. Figueira and Gregory Nagy; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) 22-81, especially pp. 76-81 (a subsection entitled “The Starving

The mystical sense of **sēma** ‘sign, signal; tomb [of a hero]’ is a tradition in its own right, well attested already in Homeric poetry,<sup>9</sup> and this traditional sense extends from the noun **sēma** to the verb **sēmainō** ‘give a sign, signal; indicate’ as used by Herodotus to indicate the meaning conveyed by his own medium, the *Histories* (especially 1.5.3).<sup>10</sup> Within the overall narrative framework of the “inquiry” or **historia** of Herodotus, the historian says what he “means” at the very beginning of his *Histories* when he speaks authoritatively about divine retribution, using the word **sēmainō** to signal his meaning (1.5.3), and this “meaning” is finally authorized at the very end of his *Histories* when the hero Protesilaos expresses his own meaning, signaled again by the word **sēmainō** (9.120.2).<sup>11</sup> Now it is the resurrected hero, not just the historian, who speaks authoritatively about divine retribution, and the semantics of **sēmainō** connect the heroic world of Protesilaos, the first warrior to die in the Trojan War (*Iliad* 2.695–710), with the historical world of Herodotus and beyond.

But the hero’s meaning is opaque. The non-Greek speaker can claim that the meaning of Protesilaos is intended for him, not for the Athenian, let alone the native Greeks of the Chersonesus who worship Protesilaos as their local hero. Who, then, is the intended receiver, the *destinataire*, of the meaning of Protesilaos? The historian does not say, and in this regard his meaning, too, is opaque:

When Herodotus “indicates,” **sēmainei**, he is indirectly narrating the actions of the gods by directly narrating the actions of men. And the most powerful “indication” is the **sēma** of the hero, whose message is also his medium, the tomb. The double meaning of **sēma** as both “tomb” and

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Revenant”). For another instance of a narrative featuring a **tarikhos** ‘preserved fish’ that comes back to life, see the Alexander Romance (ca. third century CE) 2.39.12: here the dead fish is washed in the Water of Life in the Land of the Blessed (Makares), and it **epsukhōthē** ‘recovered its psyche’; on the relevance of this theme to the official Ptolemaic propaganda about the mummy of Alexander the Great, see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* pp. 271-272.

<sup>9</sup> Nagy, “*Sēma* and *Noēsis*: Some Illustrations,” *Arethusa* 16 (1983) 35-55, rewritten as Ch.8 of Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 202-222 (“*Sēma* and *Noēsis*: The Hero’s Tomb and the ‘Reading’ of Symbols in Homer and Hesiod”). Note too the mysticism surrounding the funerals of heroes, as discussed in Nagy, “On the Death of Sarpedon,” *Approaches to Homer* (ed. Cynthia W. Shelmerdine and Carl A. Rubino; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983) 189-217, rewritten as part of Ch.5 of *Greek Mythology and Poetics* pp. 122-142 (“The Death of Sarpedon and the Question of Homeric Uniqueness”). For a most valuable survey of ancient testimony concerning the tombs of cult heroes, see the book of Brelich (n. 1 above), pp. 80-90. See also Jeffrey Rusten, “*Geitōn Hērōs*: Pindar’s Prayer to Heracles (N. 7.86-101) and Popular Religion,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 87 (1983) 289-297.

<sup>10</sup> Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* pp. 233-236.

<sup>11</sup> Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* pp. p. 240-1, 261, 329-30. For a different interpretation of the ending of Herodotus’ *Histories*, see Carolyn Dewald, “Wanton Kings, Pickled Heroes, and Gnostic Founding Fathers: Strategies of Meaning at the End of Herodotus’ *Histories*,” in *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (ed. Deborah H. Roberts, Francis M. Dunn, and Don Fowler; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 62-82, especially p. 67 (where she refers to the article of Boedeker, “Protesilaos and the End of Herodotus’ *Histories*” [see n. 3 above]).

“indication, sign” is itself a monument to the ideology inherent in the ancient Greek institution of hero cults—an ideology that appropriated the very concept of meaning to the tomb of the hero.<sup>12</sup>

The opaqueness of cult heroes like Protesilaos is a tradition in its own right, grounded in the mysteries (**mustēria**) of local initiation rituals.<sup>13</sup> In general, opaque signification is a vital aspect of the traditional essence of hero cults. The *Heroikos* of Philostratus continues this tradition.

As Ellen Aitken and Jennifer Maclean show clearly in their detailed Translators’ Introduction to the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, the numerous references in this work to the hero cults of Protesilaos, Achilles, Ajax, and other heroes of the epic tradition reflect accurately the historical realities of hero cults as they persisted into the third century CE. They show, further, that the traditionalism of Philostratus’ *Heroikos* in its treatment of hero cults is not necessarily at odds with the literary and philosophical modernities that pervade this masterpiece of the Second Sophistic era of Hellenic civilization.

A telling feature of Philostratus’ traditionalism, I argue, is his consistent use of mystical language in referring to the cult hero Protesilaos. The traditional mysticism inherent in Herodotus’ references to the hero cult of Protesilaos, over six centuries earlier, continues to be the driving force of the *Heroikos*.

When Herodotus narrates the **teras** ‘portent’ about the **tarikhoi** ‘preserved fish’ that come back to life while they are being roasted for an everyday meal, the narrative is identified as a local tradition originating with the native Greeks of the Chersonesus, the site of Protesilaos’ hero cult: **kai teōi ... legetai hupo Khersonēsiteōn ... tarikhou optōnti teras genesthai toionde** ‘and it is said by the people of the Chersonesus that the following **teras** happened to a person who was roasting **tarikhoi**’ (Herodotus 9.120.1). Similarly in Philostratus, the narrative about the same portent is described as an ancestral tradition linked to the same site, specifically, the sacred space of Protesilaos at Elaious: **to de ge hieron en hōi, kata tous pateras ...** ‘the sacred space in which, in the time of the ancestors ...’ (*Heroikos* 9.5). In Philostratus, however, there is no direct application of the word **tarikhos** to Protesilaos himself: **to ... hieron ... eph’ hōi kai to tarikhos anabiōnai phasi** ‘the sacred space ... in which they say that even the **tarikhos** came back to life’ (*Heroikos* 9.5). I take it that **tarikhos** here applies to the preserved fish directly: even (**kai**) they came back to life from the dead. The word **tarikhos** applies to Protesilaos only indirectly: the idea that he too came back to life from the dead is merely implicit. In the narrative of Herodotus, by

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<sup>12</sup> Nagy, “The Sign of Protesilaos,” p. 213; = *Pindar’s Homer*, p. 273. On the **sēma** of Protesilaos in the sense of ‘tomb’, see Philostratus, *Heroikos* 9.3.

<sup>13</sup> On Protesilaos as a mystical cult hero, see Brelich p. 198; for other heroes, see pp. 118-123. The sense of mystery is neatly encoded in this observation of the worshipper, as portrayed by Philostratus: you cannot even see the cult hero Protesilaos in the act of actually consuming the offerings left for him, since it all happens **thattōn ē katamusai** ‘quicker than blinking’ (*Heroikos* 11.9). With reference to this expression, involving **katamuō** ‘blink’, I draw special attention to the semantic relationship of the basic word **muō** ‘have the eyes / mouth closed’ to derivative words like **mustērion** ‘mystery’; see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* (n. 4) 32.

contrast, the initial mention of the roasting of **tarikhoi** (9.120.1) is followed up at a later moment with a direct application of the word to Protesilaos himself, when the Persian captive is quoted as interpreting the portent:

**ho de Artauktēs hōs eide to teras, kalesas ton optōnta tous tarikhou  
ephē, xeine Athēnaie, mēden phobeo to teras touto, ou gar soi pephēne,  
all emoi sēmainei ho en Elaionti Prōtesileōs hoti kai tethneōs kai  
tarikhos eōn dunamin pros theōn ekhei ton adikeonta timesthai**

‘But when Artauktes saw the portent [**teras**], he called out to the one who was roasting the preserved fish [**tarikhoi**], saying: “Athenian stranger, do not be frightened of this portent [**teras**]. For it was manifested not for you. Rather, Protesilaos—the one who abides in Elaious—is making a sign [**sēmainei**] to me that, even though he is dead—and a **tarikhos**—he has the power [**dunamis**] from the gods to exact retribution from the one who commits wrongdoing.’”

(Herodotus 9.120.2)

Throughout the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, there is a sharp contrast being made between the special understanding of the initiated—in this case, he happens to be a local Greek **ampelourgōs** ‘vineyard-worker’ in the hero’s sacred space—and the everyday understanding of the uninitiated—in this case, he happens to be a non-local non-Greek, from Phoenicia. This special understanding is conveyed by words that have a special meaning for the initiated but an everyday meaning for the uninitiated. The process of initiation allows the new initiate—hereafter I will refer to him as the “*initiand*”—to transcend the everyday meaning of words like **tarikhos** and to achieve a special understanding of their sacral meaning.

The details of such an initiatory process are vividly illustrated by Pausanias (middle of the second century CE), who describes the experience of ‘consulting’ the cult hero Trophonios in Lebadeia (9.39.5-14); at the end of his description, Pausanias admits that he himself had personally experienced this initiation by having once ‘consulted’ the hero (**khresamenos**: 9.39.14). The actual ‘consultation’ involves a series of ordeals signaled by concepts that seem obviously everyday at first sight but turn out to convey special meanings that are sacred, linked with the mysteries of hero cult.

In what follows, I offer my own translation of this crucial passage from Pausanias, attempting to approximate the ritual language as closely as possible, including the numerous repetitions and periphrases, and I highlight with underlines those words that seem to convey a special sacred meaning for the initiated while all along maintaining an everyday meaning for the uninitiated:

[9.39.5] When a man decides to descend to the place of Trophonios, first of all he undergoes a régime for an set number of days in a building [**oikēma**], and the building [**oikēma**] is sacred to the Good **Daimōn** and to Good **Tukhē** [Fortune]. In undergoing the régime there, he goes through various procedures of purification, avoiding hot baths; the water for bathing is the river Hercyna. He has unlimited access to meat from the

sacrifices, for he who descends sacrifices to Trophonios himself and to the children of Trophonios; also to Apollo and to Kronos, to Zeus with the epithet King [**Basileus**], to Hera Charioteer [**Hēniokhos** = the one who holds the reins of the chariot], and to Demeter whom they name with the epithet Europa and say was the wetnurse of Trophonios.

[9.39.6] At each of the sacrifices a seer [**mantis**] is present, who inspects the entrails of the sacrificial victim, and after an inspection prophesies to him who descends, saying whether Trophonios will be kind [**eumenēs**] and welcoming when he receives [**verb dekhomai**] him. The entrails of the other victims do not make clear all that much the thinking [**gnōmē**] of Trophonios. But the night when each person descends, on that night they sacrifice a ram over a pit [**bothros**], invoking Agamedes.<sup>14</sup> Even if the previous sacrifices have appeared propitious, no account is taken of them unless the entrails of this ram mean the same thing. If all the sacrifices are in agreement with each other, then each person descends, having good hopes [**euelpis**]. And each person descends in this way:

[9.39.7] First of all, in the night, they take him to the river Hercyna. Having taken him, they anoint him with olive oil and wash him. Those who do this are two boys of the citizens, about thirteen years old, who are named Hermae.<sup>15</sup> These are the ones who are washing the one who descends and who attend to whatever is needed in their function as attendant boys. Afterwards he is led by the priests, not immediately to the oracle, but to fountains of water. These fountains are very near each other.

[9.39.8] Here it is necessary for him to drink water, called the water of Forgetting [**Lēthē**], so that there may be for him a forgetting [**lēthē**] of all thoughts that he was thinking up to this point. Right after this, it is necessary for him to drink another water, the water of Memory [**Mnēmosunē**]. From this he remembers [**mnēmoneuei**] the things seen by the one who descended. Having viewed the statue [**agalma**] which they say was made by Daedalus—it is not revealed by the priests except to those who are about to go to Trophonios—having seen this statue [**agalma**] and having worshipped it and having prayed, he proceeds to the oracle, wearing a linen chiton and girding the chiton with ribbons and wearing the boots of the native locale.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Agamedes was the brother of Trophonios. In the myth that corresponds to the ritual being described, Agamedes dies when the two brothers are buried alive, while Trophonios escapes with his life; later, Trophonios experiences the mystical process of engulfment by the earth: Pausanias 9.37.5-7.

<sup>15</sup> “Hermae” is the plural of “Hermes.”

<sup>16</sup> According to this mentality of sacred metonymy, the local earth of the cult hero can be trodden only by local footwear.

[9.39.9] The oracle is beyond the grove, on the mountain. There is a foundation, of white stone, in a circle. The perimeter of the foundation is in the proportion of a very small threshing floor. Its height is just short of two cubits. On the foundation stand rods. They are of bronze, like the bars holding them together. And through them has been made a double door. Inside the perimeter is a chasm [**khasma**] in the earth, not naturally formed, but artificially constructed as a work of masonry, according to the most exact specifications.

[9.39.10] The form [**skhēma**] of this built structure [**oikodomēma**] is like that of a bread-oven [**kribanos**]. Its breadth across the middle one might estimate to be about four cubits. And the depth of the built structure [**oikodomēma**] could be estimated to extend to not more than eight cubits. There has been made by them no constructed descent [**katabasis**] to the bottom level. But when a man comes to Trophonios, they bring him a ladder—a narrow and light one. For the one who has descended there is a hole between the bottom level and the built structure [**oikodomēma**]. Its breadth appeared to be two spans, and its height one span.

[9.39.11] So, then, the one who descends is lying down in the direction of the bottom level, holding barley-cakes [**mazai**] kneaded with honey, and he pushes forward with his feet, forward into the hole; he himself pushes forward, eager for his knees to get into the hole. Then, after the knees, the rest of his body is suddenly drawn in, rushing forward, just as the biggest and most rapid river will catch a man in its torrents and carry him under. After this, for those who are now in the inner sanctum [**aduton**], there is no single or same way [**tropos**] for them to learn the things of the future. One person will see them, another person will hear them. To return and go back for those who descended is through the same mouth, with feet first, pushing forward.

[9.39.12] They say that no one of those who descended has ever been killed, except for one of the bodyguards of Demetrius. They say that this person did not perform any of the customary rituals in the sacred space, and that he descended not in order to consult [**khresomenos**] the god<sup>17</sup> but in hopes of stealing gold and silver from the inner sanctum [**aduton**]. It is said that the corpse of this person appeared [**anaphēnai**] in another place, and was not expelled at the sacred mouth. With reference to this man many other things are said. What has been said by me is what is most worthy of being taken into account.

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<sup>17</sup> Note that Pausanias considers the hero in the afterlife to be a **theos** 'god'. There is a comparable reference to Protesilaos in Herodotus *Histories* 9.120.3: here the quoted words of the non-Greek express the idea that he has finally recognized the power of the cult hero, and in this context he now refers to Protesilaos as a **theos**. All this is not to say that the hero is some kind of "faded god"; rather, in terms of the hero cult, the hero becomes a **theos** when he is immortalized after death.

[9.39.13] The one who has ascended from Trophonios is received once again by the priests, who seat him upon what is called the Throne [**thronos**] of Memory [**Mnēmosunē**], which is situated not far from the inner sanctum [**aduton**]. Having seated him, they ask him all he has seen and found out. After learning the answers, they then turn him over to his relatives or friends. These take him to the building [oikēma] where he had earlier gone through his régime in the presence of **Tukhē** and **Daimōn**, the good ones. They take him back [verb **komizō**] to this place by lifting him and carrying him off, while he is still possessed [**katokhos**] by terror and unconscious both of himself and of those who are near him. Afterwards, his mind will again be working just as well as before in all respects, and even laughter will come back to him.

[9.39.14] What I write is not hearsay; I myself have consulted [**khresamenos**] Trophonios and have seen others doing so. It is a necessity for those who have descended into the sacred space of Trophonios to dedicate writings on a tablet that record all the things that each person has heard or seen.

(Pausanias 9.39.5-14)

So also in the hero cult of Protesilaos at Elaious in the Chersonesus, the mystery of the hero is for the initiate to know and for the initiand to find out. In reading the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, even the reader can assume the role of the initiand.

At the beginning of the *Heroikos*, the reader learns that Protesilaos experienced not one but two resurrections in the heroic past. The first time, the hero came back to life at Phthia in Thessaly after his death at Troy, all because of his love for his bride Laodameia (**anabiōiē**, *Heroikos* 2.9). Then he died a second time—and again it was because he loved his bride—only to come back to life a second time thereafter (**anabiōnai**, 2.10). Just exactly how he came back for the second time, however, is not revealed even to the initiate, who says to the initiand that Protesilaos chooses not to tell that particular ‘sacred secret’, that particular **aporrhēton** (2.11).<sup>18</sup> That was then, in the heroic past. Now, however, in the everyday present, the living hero continues to come back again and again,

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<sup>18</sup> It is relevant to note the suggestive use of the word **pathos** ‘experience’ in an earlier context: “He himself [Protesilaos] does not speak about his own experiences [**pathē**]” (*Heroikos* 2.9). The speaker goes on to say that the **aporrhēton** ‘sacred secret’ belongs to the **Moirai** ‘Fates’ (2.11). In the formulaic language of epic diction, the name **Prōtesilāos** seems to be associated with the word **prōtos** ‘first’, in the sense that this hero was the first Achaean to die at Troy (*Iliad* 2.702: **prōtistos**). But the name seems also to be associated with the root of **pe-prō-tai** ‘it is fated’ (as in *Iliad* 18.329), in that Protesilaos is linked with traditional epic narratives about the fate of the Achaean **lāos** or ‘people’ (Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* [n. 2] 70). A turning point in the plot of the *Iliad* is the moment when the fire of Hektor reaches the ships of the Achaeans, and here the narrative focus centers on the ship of Protesilaos himself (*Iliad* 15.704-705; 716-718; cf. also 16.286). This same precise moment is figured as a turning point for the very destiny of all Hellenes as descendants of the epic Achaeans, in that the *Iliad* equates the threat of destruction for the Achaeans’ ships with the threat of extinction for the Hellenes that are yet to be (Nagy [n. 2] 335-337).

as a sacred epiphany or apparition, much like other heroes of the heroic past who likewise ‘appear in epiphanies’ or ‘show up’, **phainontai** (2.11). So speaks the initiate, and the initiand admits that he has a hard time believing all this: ‘I do not believe’, he says (**apistō**, 3.1). In other words, the initiand is not yet an initiate. Still, he wants to be a ‘believer’ (**pisteuōn**, 2.12). The initiate responds by proceeding to tell the initiand all about the epiphanies of Protesilaos, describing the cult hero’s interventions into the world of the everyday. Where is Protesilaos most likely to be sighted? The initiate reveals an array of places where the hero may ‘show up’, as it were: sometimes he is in the Chersonesus, sometimes in Phthia, sometimes in Troy—a most notable of locations for frequent sightings of heroes who died in the Trojan War—and sometimes he is back in Hades (11.7). It is in Hades that he continues to have sex with his beloved bride Laodameia (11.8).

As the narrative of the hero’s epiphanies proceeds, a gentle breeze carries the sweet aroma of flowers in bloom, and the initiand is feeling refreshed (3.2-5). He remarks that the plantlife literally ‘breathes out’, **anapnei**, a sweetness of its own (3.3). It is the right season, the exact time, the perfect moment: it is the **hōra** (3.2, 3.5). One can begin to sense the hero’s sacred presence. Through a sort of hieratic metonymy, the breath of the hero himself animates the atmosphere, and Protesilaos is now revealing, **apophainōn**, the scent of the blossoms at their sweetest (11.3).<sup>19</sup> The hero’s presence smells sweeter than myrtles in autumn

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<sup>19</sup> Such a traditional metonymy depends on a pre-existing traditional metaphor that pictures an interchangeability between breath and wind, on which see Nagy, “As the World Runs out of Breath: Metaphorical Perspectives on the Heavens and the Atmosphere in the Ancient World,” in Jill Ker Conway, Kenneth Keniston, and Leo Marx, eds., *Earth, Air, Fire, Water: Humanistic Studies of the Environment* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999) 37-50.

(10.2).<sup>20</sup> The perfect moment or **hōra**, in all its natural beauty, becomes the ultimate epiphany of the cult hero.<sup>21</sup>

The secrets of the cult hero Protesilaos are clearly visible to the initiate: since these are things that are **theia** ‘divine’ and **megala** ‘larger than life’, they will not escape the notice of those who are ‘cultivated’, **kharientes** (3.2). For the uninitiated, however, these same secrets are veiled in language that expresses what seems quite ordinary and everyday on the surface. About the cult hero Protesilaos, the initiate starts by saying to the uninitiated: ‘He lives [**zēi**] here, and we work the land [**geōrgoumen**] together’ (2.8). What image in life could be more straightforward, more everyday, than life itself? When the initiate follows up by asking whether Protesilaos ‘lives’ in the sense that he is ‘resurrected’ (**anabebiōkōs**), the initiate replies: ‘He himself does not speak about his own experiences [**pathos** plural]’ (2.9). This absolutizing declaration is then followed by a series of qualifications: contradicting what he has just said, the initiate now goes on to say that the hero Protesilaos does indeed speak about his own death at

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<sup>20</sup> In contexts of beautiful natural settings, the cult hero is conventionally eroticized, as here in *Heroikos* 10.2-4 and elsewhere; see especially 11.2, describing the urge of the worshipper to embrace and kiss the hero. A sense of personal intimacy is conveyed by the worshipper of the hero when he says about Protesilaos (9.7): “I spend time with him [**autōi gar xuneimi**], and no cult statue [**agalma**] can be sweeter [**hēdion**] than he, that one [**ekeinos**].” The worshipper’s experience of the hero as a real person, not as a cult statue [**agalma**], is here conveyed by the deictic pronoun **ekeinos** ‘that one’, which is conventionally used to refer to a hero who appears in an epiphany (see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* [n. 4] 200-201, with special reference to Mimnermus F 14.1 W and Sappho 31.1 LP). The deixis of **ekeinos** conveys the remoteness (“that” not “this”) of the hero, even in the immediacy of his epiphany. The gap between the superhuman and the human is so great that it sets the superhuman apart from the human even in the process of attempting to bridge that gap in an epiphany. The human response is a sense of longing and yearning as experienced even during the immediacy of an epiphany. I refer again to *Heroikos* 11.2, describing the urge of the worshipper to embrace and kiss the cult hero. The convention of eroticizing this sense of longing and yearning is implicit, I further suggest, in the epic usage of **potheō** ‘long for, yearn for’, as at *Iliad* 2.703, 709. On one level of meaning, the warriors native to Phthia long for the epic hero Protesilaos as their leader. On a deeper level, however, the reference implies the emotional response of native worshippers who are ‘yearning’ for their local cult hero in all his immanent beauty; we may compare the application of **potheō** to Patroklos at his funeral, *Iliad* 23.16. For other Homeric examples of similar two-level references to heroes of epic / cult, see Nagy, “On the Death of Sarpedon” (n. 9), especially pp. 132-134 on the usage of the word **dēmos** (in the sense of ‘local district’) as an index of localized cult practices.

<sup>21</sup> On the religious mentality of equating ritual perfection with beauty itself, see in general the work of Pache (n. 1). The concept of **hōra** as the ‘right season’ conveys the context of ritual perfection and correctness; in that sense, **hōra** is conceived as the perfect moment of beauty, as in Philostratus, *Heroikos* 3.2, 3.5. The Modern Greek adjective derived from **hōra**, **oréos** (**hōraios**), means ‘beautiful’. On the formal and semantic connections of **hōra** and **Hēra** and **hērōs** (‘hero’), see Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996) 48 n. 79: heroes become “seasonal” after they die and achieve mystical immortalization, but they are “unseasonal” during their own lifetime in the heroic age (thus for example Achilles while he is alive in his own epic narrative is described as **pan-a-hōrios** ‘the most unseasonal of them all’ in *Iliad* 24.540). The formal connections between **hōra** and hero cult are evident in *Heroikos* 18.2-3, a passage that describes in explicit terms the ritually correct times (**hōrai**) for slaughtering herd animals as sacrifices to cult heroes; in this particular context, diseases afflicting herd animals are said to be caused by an angry Ajax, in his capacity as a cult hero. In this context, such a belief is linked to the myth about the ritually incorrect slaughter of herd animals by Ajax (as dramatized, for example, in Sophocles’ *Ajax*).

Troy, about his first resurrection, and about his second death—though he does not speak about his second resurrection (2.9-11).

A vital question remains: how can a cult hero like Protesilaos actually communicate with those who are initiated into his mysteries? According to the traditional mentality of hero cults, the answer is simple: whenever they come back to life, cult heroes are endowed with a superhuman consciousness. This consciousness of the hero, activated by hero cult, performs the basic function of ensuring the seasonality of nature, and it manifests itself in such specific functions as the healing of humans or animals or plants: in *Heroikos* 4.10, for example, Protesilaos is described as the **iatros** ‘healer’ of sheep, beehives, trees.<sup>22</sup>

For this superhuman consciousness to be activated, the cult hero must be *consulted*, as we saw in Pausanias’ description of his own consulting of Trophonios at the oracle of that hero. Similarly in the case of Philostratus’ *Heroikos*, we see that a cult hero like Protesilaos has to be actively consulted by his worshippers: from the very beginning, in fact, the intent of the chief character, the worker in the vineyard of Protesilaos, is to make this cult hero his own personal ‘advisor’, **xumboulos** (Ionic for **sumboulos**; 4.7).<sup>23</sup> Whenever the ritual of consultation would fail, the worshipper says that he could know for sure, since the cult hero would be silent, **esiōpa** (4.8).<sup>24</sup> By contrast, the success of the consultation is manifested whenever the cult hero speaks.

Such consulting of oracular cult heroes concerns not only the fundamentals of nature as defined metonymically by these heroes. It concerns also the fundamental nature of the heroes themselves. Their heroic essence has two aspects, one of which is defined by epic narrative traditions, while the other is defined by hero cult. In the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, these two aspects of the hero are treated holistically as integral parts of a single concept. Thus the process of consulting oracular heroes leads to the initiate’s knowledge about their epic aspects, not only their ritual aspects as oracles. As the initiate declares, cult heroes have their own knowledge of epic narrative because they are endowed with **mantikē sophia** ‘the skill of a seer [**mantis**]’, and there is an ‘oracular’ principle, **khṛēsōdes**, operating within them (7.3-4). That is why a hero like Protesilaos ‘sees all the way through’, **di-horāi**, the poems of Homer (7.5), knowing things that go beyond his own experiences when he, Protesilaos, had lived in the past of heroes (7.5-6); the hero even knows things about which Homer himself did not sing (7.5).

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<sup>22</sup> On the “iatic” function of cult heroes, see in general Brelich (n. 1) 113-118. Cult heroes, when they feel benign, will cure illnesses afflicting humans, animals, and plants—just as they will inflict these same illnesses when they feel malign (see the previous note). On the **phrikē** or sacred ‘frisson’ induced by a cult-hero’s presence, see *Heroikos* 6.4, 8.11, 18.4, etc.

<sup>23</sup> See also *Heroikos* 14.4: Protesilaos is an “advisor” **sumboulos** ‘advisor’ to athletes who cultivate him (cf. 15.5). Protesilaos is said to give oracular advice, **khṛēsai**, to an athlete who consults him on how to win). Already in Homeric poetry, we see implicit references to consultations of cult heroes: in *Iliad* 10.415, for example, Hektor **boulas bouleuei** ‘plans his plans’ at the **sēma** ‘tomb’ of Ilos, a stylized cult hero of Ilion.

<sup>24</sup> Signals of initiation, such as ritual silence and ritual whispering, can be formalized as mystical names of cult heroes, as in the case of **Sigēlos** and **Psithuros** respectively; see Brelich (n. 1) 157.

In sum, the *Heroikos* of Philostratus provides a model of poetic inspiration that centers on the superhuman consciousness of the oracular hero, which has a totalizing control of epic narrative. As we shall now see, this model is not an innovation but an archaism, stemming from oral poetic traditions that predate even the Homeric traditions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Confronted with the idea that an oracular cult hero possesses total mastery of epic narrative, our first impression is that this idea cannot be reconciled with what we find in Homeric poetry. According to the poetics of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it is of course the Muses who “inspire” epic narrative. At first glance, then, these goddesses of memory seem to be the sole source for the superhuman consciousness that informs the content of Homeric poetry and gives it the authority to tell about the gods and heroes of heroic times. This authority, however, is actually shared with the heroes who are “quoted” by Homeric performance, as a closer look at the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reveals clearly.

In his book about the “quotations” of heroes in Homeric poetry, Richard Martin has demonstrated that the “voice” of the poet becomes traditionally identified with the “voices” of the heroes quoted by the poetic performance:

My central conclusion is that the *Iliad* takes shape as a poetic composition in precisely the same “speaking culture” that we see foregrounded in the stylized words of the poem’s heroic speakers, especially those speeches designated as *muthos*, a word I redefine as “authoritative speech act.” The poet and the hero are both “performers” in a traditional medium. The genre of *muthos* composing requires that its practitioners improve on previous performances and surpass them, by artfully manipulating traditional material in new combinations. In other words, within the speeches of the poem, we see that it is traditional to be spontaneous: no hero ever merely repeats; each recomposes the traditional text he performs, be it a boast, threat, command, or story, in order to project his individual personality in the most convincing manner. I suggest that the “voice” of the poet is the product of the same traditional performance technique.<sup>25</sup>

Recent ethnographic work on oral poetic performance traditions has provided typological parallels in support of Martin’s demonstration. In the *Sîrat Banî Hilâl* epic singing tradition of the poets of al-Bakâtûsh in contemporary Egypt, for example, Dwight Reynolds has sought—and found—an analogy for Martin’s model of the interchangeable “voice” of poet and hero in epic performance:

[T]he social reality of the al-Bakâtûsh poets involves a distinctly negative position for the epic singer within the greater social hierarchy; in marked contrast to the poet’s marginalized status in village society, however, are the moments of centrality, power, and “voice” he achieves in epic performance. This disjunctive persona has produced not only a fascinating

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<sup>25</sup> Richard P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) xiv.

process of deep self-identification with the epic tradition on the part of the poets, but has clearly, over generations, shaped and indeed constituted many aspects of the content of the epic itself—an epic tradition, as I have termed it, of heroic poets and poetic heroes.<sup>26</sup>

There is also a plethora of ethnographic work that documents the widespread mentality of heroic “possession,” where the consciousness of the poet is “possessed” by the consciousness of the hero as soon as the poet, in performance, starts “quoting” the hero.<sup>27</sup> As one ethnographer puts it, there can be “a transition from a story *about* a spirit, to one told *to* a spirit, to one told *by* a spirit.”<sup>28</sup>

All this is not to say that the *Heroikos* of Philostratus has preserved for us a direct continuation of living oral epic traditions where heroes are being “quoted” through the supernatural consciousness of the heroes themselves. I have little doubt that the oral traditions of composition-in-performance, as still reflected in the hexameter poetry of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and of the “Epic Cycle” in general, had been dead for well over half a millennium by the time Philostratus composed his *Heroikos*. Still, it is essential to stress that the traditions of hero cults were evidently still alive in the era of Philostratus. Moreover, the archaic mentality of seeking communion with the consciousness of cult heroes was likewise still alive. Even though the Homeric poems and the “Epic Cycle” were now literary rather than oral traditions, they still preserved, as traditions per se, a vital link with the rituals of hero cult. The *Heroikos* bridges the chasm between the mythical world of epic heroes and the ritual world of cult heroes. In this masterpiece of the Second Sophistic, a continuum is still felt to exist between these two diverging worlds. The spirit of this age is captured by this formulation

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<sup>26</sup> Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 208; at p. 207, Reynolds quotes the formulation of Martin, cited here in the previous note, as a heuristic paradigm for his own ethnographic fieldwork.

<sup>27</sup> For a particularly valuable collection of examples, see Stuart H. Blackburn, Peter J. Claus, Joyce B. Flueckiger, and Susan S. Wadley, eds., *Oral Epics in India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); see especially Peter J. Claus, “Behind the Text: Performance and Ideology in a Tulu Oral Tradition,” pp. 55-74. At p. 60, Claus notes: “In his performance the possessed priest must not only recite Kordabbu’s story, but also assume his character and dramatically portray his exploits for several hours on end.”

<sup>28</sup> Claus (see the previous note) 74, who adds: “Accompanying these transitions are shifts in verbal style: from the third person pronominal referent, to the second, to the first. There are also changes in the behavior of the performers and the audience.” In this comparative context, it is relevant to reconsider Philostratus, *Heroikos* 12.3, where Protesilaos **epainei** ‘confirms’ the words spoken by Homer ‘to’ (**es**) himself, not ‘about’ himself. The implication of **epainei** is that Protesilaos ‘confirms’ *Iliad* 2.695-709, the short narrative about his epic deeds at Troy, by way of *re-performing* these Homeric verses. On the poetics of authentication-by-reperformance, as implied by the verb **epaineō**, see the comments on the use of this word by Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 102, at p. 129 n. 16 of Nagy, “Homer and Plato at the Panathenaia: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives,” *Contextualizing Classics: Ideology, Performance, Dialogue. Essays in Honor of John J. Peradotto* (eds. Thomas M. Falkner, Nancy Felson, David Konstan; Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) 123-150.

of the would-be initiate Phoenician in the *Heroikos* (6.3): ‘I dreamed I was reading aloud (**anaginōskein**) the epic verses (**epos** plural) of Homer.’

As in the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, we can see in other literatures as well the stylized efforts of literati to maintain a continuum between myths and rituals associated with heroes. A notable example comes from an anecdote, dated to the ninth century CE,<sup>29</sup> concerning the rediscovery of a supposedly lost book, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (“The Cattle Raid of Cooley”), which is a collection of “epic” narratives about Ireland’s greatest heroes.<sup>30</sup> This anecdote is in effect a “charter myth,”<sup>31</sup> explaining the *raison d’être* of the *Táin*.<sup>32</sup> In terms of the myth, this book of narratives, the *Táin*, is equivalent to an integral epic performance. The myth narrates how this book was once lost and how the assembled poets of Ireland ‘could not recall it in its entirety,’ since they knew only ‘fragments’ [*bloga*].<sup>33</sup> In a quest to find the lost integral book, the poet Muirgen happens to travel past the tomb of Fergus mac Roich, one of the chief heroes featured in the narrative of the *Táin*. It is nighttime. Muirgen sits down at the gravestone of the tomb, and he sings an incantation to this gravestone ‘as though it were Fergus himself.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The anecdote is entitled *Dofallsigud Tána Bó Cuailnge* and was published at pp. 433-434 of Heinrich Zimmer, “Keltische Studien,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 28 (1887) 417-689. It is taken from the *Book of Leinster* (twelfth century), on which see the next note.

<sup>30</sup> There are two main surviving recensions of the *Táin*, as attested in two manuscript families: (1) the *Book of the Dun Cow* (*Lebor na hUidre*, twelfth century CE) and the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (fourteenth century) and (2) the *Book of Leinster* (twelfth century). For a translation, see Thomas Kinsella *The Táin: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>31</sup> On the concept of “charter myth,” see especially p. 5 of Edmund R. Leach, “Critical Introduction” to M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij, *Myth* (translated by Mary P. Coote; Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1982) 1-20.

<sup>32</sup> There is a translation provided by Kinsella, pp. 1-2.

<sup>33</sup> Kinsella p. 1. The concept of a *blog* ‘fragment’ of a corpus that has disintegrated is a traditional theme found in the charter myths of many cultures; for a brief survey, see Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (n. 21) 70-74.

<sup>34</sup> Kinsella p. 1. We may compare the use of the word **kolōnos** at *Heroikos* 9.1, which I propose to translate as ‘landmark’; in this context, it marks the mound, surrounded by elm-trees, that ‘extends over’ (**epékhei**) the body of the cult hero Protesilaos at Elaious in the Chersonesus. (The expression **kolōnos lithōn**, as in Herodotus 4.92, suggests the *ad hoc* translation ‘mound of stones’.) At *Heroikos* 51.12, **kolōnos** designates the mound that the Achaeans built (the verb here, **ageirō**, suggests a piling of stones) over the bodies of Achilles and Patroklos, situated on a headland overlooking the Hellespont (thus facing the mound of Protesilaos on the other side of the strait); at 53.10-11, **kolōnos** refers, again, to the tomb of Achilles, and here the word is used synonymously with **sēma** (53.11). In Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, the place-name **Kolōnos** refers to a sacred grove (690, 889) where Oedipus’ body is destined to receive an **oikos**, that is, an ‘abode’ befitting a cult hero (627; on this context of **oikos**, see Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer* [n. 4] 269). There is a metonymy implicit in the name: **kolōnos** as a landmark becomes, by extension, the name of the whole sacred grove—and, by further extension, the name of the whole deme of Attica in which the grove is situated. Moreover, the landmark is associated with a stone called the **Thorikios petros** (1595), sacred to Poseidon, which marks the last place where Oedipus is to be seen before he is mystically engulfed into the earth. As I argue elsewhere, the metonymy extends even further: the inherited imagery of the **Thorikios petros** as a mystical “white rock” becomes

Responding to the incantation, Fergus himself appears in all his heroic glory, and he 'recited him [= to Muirgen] the whole *Táin*, how everything had happened, from start to finish.'<sup>35</sup> As in the *Heroikos* of Philostratus, we see that the superhuman consciousness of the hero can take over or even possess the narration of epic.

In sum, the *Heroikos* of Philostratus makes it clear that heroes cannot be defined exclusively in terms of their epic dimensions, though this aspect becomes vitally important in the history of ideas about heroism, especially in view of the ultimate cultural prestige surrounding the prime medium that conveys these ideas, Homeric poetry. For Philostratus, the prestige of Homer and the Homeric hero is a given. In his *Heroikos*, however, he goes further, far further, by reconnecting that epic prestige with the sacred charisma possessed by the cult hero.

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coextensive with the description of Colonus itself as a white rock shining from afar (690: **argēs**); see Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1990) 231. Finally, we come to the ultimate metonymy, perhaps: in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Colonus is personified as a cult-hero, the mysterious **Kolōnos** (59; he is described as **hippotēs** 'horseman'). We may compare the metonymy of incantation in the *Táin*: Muirgen sings to the gravestone 'as though it were Fergus himself,' and then the hero Fergus materializes from the dead.

<sup>35</sup> Kinsella pp. 1-2. The point of this charter myth, then, is that the corpus of the *Táin* is reintegrated in performance, and thus the "lost book" is finally recovered, even resurrected. See Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (n. 21) 70, following especially pp. 284 and 289 of the discussion in Joseph F. Nagy, "Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative," *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986) 272-301. On traditional metaphors about a book (or a library of books) as a corpus destined for resurrection, see pp. 196-198 of Nagy, "The Library of Pergamon as a Classical Model," *Pergamon: Citadel of the Gods* (ed. Helmut Koester), *Harvard Theological Studies* 46 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1998) 185-232.