Music and Immortality: The Afterlife of Achilles in Philostratus' *Heroicus*

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Of all the rewritings of epic tradition which Philostratus undertakes in the *Heroicus*,[1] one of the most striking is his depiction of Achilles. While Achilles still has his Homeric and Cyclic character as the great Achaean warrior, son of the sea-goddess Thetis, the musical aspect of the hero is dramatically increased.[2] After considering the aspects of Achilles as he appears in the *Iliad* which may have led Philostratus to develop him in this way, I shall consider the significance of the song which Philostratus' Achilles sings on Leuke. The song, I would argue, is important for an understanding of Philostratus' own ideas regarding literary creation within a traditional framework. Finally, I will examine the dialogue's broader presentation of Achilles' posthumous existence, and the curious, even unique, treatment of time and space which Philostratus' focus on this subject requires.

Achilles as musician and poet

There are, of course, traces of a musical Achilles already in the *Iliad*. It is well known that Achilles is the only character in the poem to play the lyre,[3] singing 'the glories of men', κλέα ἀνδρῶν.[4] Despite the uniqueness of Achil-

[1] I use throughout De Lannoy's edition of the *Heroicus* and the English translations of Maclean and Aitken (2001) except where departures are noted.

[2] See especially Philostr. *Her*. 45, 7; 55,1–55,6. For a discussion of Philostratus' depiction of Achilles in relation to Caracalla's known enthusiasm for the hero and his cult, see most recently Beschorner 1999, 235–240. I will not discuss here Achilles' other major appearance in Philostratus, at *VA* 4,16 but intend to do so in another paper.

[3] Hom. *Il*. 9,185–191.

[4] The phrase is echoed, along with other Homeric expressions, in Achilles'/Philostratus' Ode to Echo: ἄειδέ μοι, / κλέος ἀνέρων. (Philostr. *Her*. 55,3).

les' musical performance in the epic, this may seem a rather slender foundation on which to base the much more developed musical Achilles of the *Heroicus*. In fact, there does seem to be a further prompt to Philostratus' development of Achilles, not just in this scene of the embassy, but in the *Iliad* as a whole.

It has often been remarked that Achilles' language is more 'poetic' than that of the epic's other characters, a claim which has received more rigorous verification in the studies of Martin[5] and of Friedrich and Redfield.[6] While a brief summary of these studies does not do justice to their detail, a few remarks will have to suffice, given the different focus of this paper. Friedrich and Redfield, comparing the speeches of Achilles with those of other characters, describe his language as follows: 'The positive rhetorical qualities are richness of detail, cumulative imagery, hypothetical comparison, and poetic directness; on the other hand, Achilles does not restrict his point, concede points, anticipate objections, or provide alternative reasons for action.' They find in addition that his speeches are like those of a lyric poet in their preference for expression over persuasion, in their use of similes to a greater extent than the other characters of the *Iliad*, and in the allusiveness of his use of narrative. 'While other characters use narrative like the orators in Herodotus, Achilles' use resembles that of Pindar'.[7] Despite Martin's criticisms of the work of Friedrich and Redfield, he too comes to the conclusion that Achilles speaks more like a poet than the other characters in the *Iliad*, and in particular speaks more like Homer, or rather, the narrating voice of the poem, than any other character in the epic, 'foregrounding Homer's own aesthetic'.[8]

Though Philostratus did not have the benefit of statistical analyses of Homeric and Achillean language, he did of course have a native speaker's knowledge of ancient Greek, and seems to have come to a similar view of Achilles and his language. It is probable that the sophist is responding to the overall characterisation of Achilles, not simply to the few lines in which he

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[5] Martin 1989.

[6] Friedrich and Redfield 1978.

[7] Ibid. pp.271; 273; 278. Martin criticises these findings, not as inaccurate, but as 'text-linguistic' aspects rather than aspects of Achilles' language. 'All of these features', he adds, '…had been noticed even in antiquity'. These faults with Friedrich and Redfield's work are of no concern for my argument here, and the fact that these features of Achilles' language were evident to at least some readers in antiquity strongly suggests that they would have been evident to so dedicated a reader of Homer as Philostratus.

[8] Martin 1989, 231.

appears as a bard, when he develops his own Achilles into a full-blown lyric poet and singer. In the hero's posthumous existence the musical/poetic side of his character comes to rival even his famous military prowess.[9]

In addition to the general characterisation of Achilles as singer which Philostratus develops, the specific type of singer which he becomes also seems to be determined by Homeric tradition. For Friedrich and Redfield, the allusive use of narrative by Achilles compared to other Iliadic characters brings him close to the style of lyric poetry,[10] and Martin similarly comments that if 'Hector's memory-genre is praise, Achilles' is lament'.[11]

In this respect too, Philostratus seems to have made similar observations and developed them in his own portrayal of the hero. While it was quite possible to depict Achilles singing epic, Philostratus has opted instead for lyrical lament. In addition to the lyric form of the one song of Achilles quoted in the *Heroicus*, the other themes which he is said to have sung in his youth are also suitable for a lamenting, lyric treatment. When the hero first learns the lyre, he sings of 'those of his own age in ancient times, Hyacinthus and Narcissus and something about Adonis. And the lamentations for Hyllas and Abderos.'[12] The choice of songs is appropriate to Achilles for more reasons than simply similarity of age. The note of lament is typical of Achillean music throughout the *Heroicus*, and the subjects chosen, Hyacinthus, Narcissus, and Adonis, are all dear to the gods and doomed to early deaths like Achilles himself. Furthermore, by focusing on youths who die as a result of ἔρως, the songs foreshadow Achilles' own death for the love of Polyxena.[13]

The combination of lament, desire and death in the figure of Achilles is also of interest given the presence of these elements in the cult of heroes.

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[9] Achilles also appears playing the lyre in visual art. In particular, the hero is seen learning the lyre from Chiron. See Kossatz-Deissmann 1981, 48–50.

[10] Friedrich and Redfield 1978, 271; 278.

[11] Martin 1989, 131.

[12] Philostr. *Her*. 45,6. The phrase τοὺς ἀρχαίους ἥλικας is better translated 'those of his own age in ancient times' rather than 'the ancient comrades' *pace* Maclean and Aitken. Cf. Beschorner's translation, ‚Er besang seine Altergenossen aus früher Zeit'. The spelling Ὕλλᾳ here is odd. It appears to be a confusion between Hylas and Hyllus. According to De Lannoy's apparatus criticus, only V has the usual spelling with one λ in this passage. At 26,4, where the same pair of names (Hyllas and Abderos) appears, only A before correction gives the single-lambda spelling. Hylas the ἐρώμενος of Heracles is clearly meant here. It is possible that Philostratus used a spelling other than the usual one, but in any case the double-lambda spelling must have been present already in the archetype ω, on which see De Lannoy's introduction to his edition of the *Heroicus*, p. vii.

[13] *Her*. 51,1–7.

The cult of Achilles as it appears at the end of the *Heroicus* certainly contains the elements of lament and death, though desire for the hero is more evident in the descriptions of some of the *Heroicus*' other heroes than in the case of Achilles.[14] In her study of the function of singing laments in the hero cults represented in the *Heroicus*, Pache notes that in the cults of Achilles, Melicertes and Medea, Philostratus describes the rites in terms of singing. In the case of Palamedes too, a lament is a prelude to epiphany. 'Singing a θρῆνος', she observes, 'is clearly an effective means of communication with the hero'.[15]

It appears that the manner of worshipping Achilles as a hero is projected onto the hero himself, so that he becomes both the recipient of lament and a singer of laments himself. In his 'Prologue' to Maclean and Aitken's English translation of the *Heroicus*, Nagy discusses a model of poetic creation, in which the mind of the epic hero is directly responsible for the creation of epic narrative, providing 'a model of poetic inspiration that centers on the superhuman consciousness of the oracular hero, which has a totalizing control of epic narrative'.[16] In this light, the bardic Achilles appears as a composite figure, both epic singer and epic hero, an emblem of the process of composition which Nagy, drawing on Martin's work on Homeric epic describes as one in which 'the "voice" of the poet becomes traditionally identified with the "voices" of the heroes quoted by the poetic performance'.[17] As Nagy states, however, this is not to argue that the *Heroicus* gives a glimpse of a still living oral tradition. It does, however, show a living tradition 'of seeking communion with the consciousness of cult heroes'.[18] Whether the projection of these ritual qualities onto Achilles is relatively recent, even developed by Philostratus himself, or whether it has a more extensive history is probably impossible to say.

Achilles' Ode to Echo

Having sketched something of the character of Philostratus' Achilles as musician/singer, I would like to turn now to the only complete song which the

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[14] See for instance the meeting of an anonymous farmer with Palamedes, *Her.* 21,1–21,8.
[15] Pache 2004, 11. For the θρῆνος to Palamedes see *Her*. 21,2.
[16] Nagy 2001, 30.
[17] Ibid. 30.
[18] Ibid. 32.

hero is shown singing in the text, his 'Ode to Echo'. To date, the content of Achilles' lyrical performance has attracted little scholarly attention, earlier scholarship on the song being concerned with its authorship, its metrical qualities, and with establishing the text.[19]

The song of Achilles, which he and Helen sing on Leuke, is one of the most important passages of the *Heroicus*, both for an understanding of Philostratus' Achilles and of the dialogue as a whole. Its importance is implied not only by the illustrious singer/warrior to whom it is attributed, but also by the introduction which the Vinetender gives it. It is 'most graceful in thought and intentions' (᾽ᾄσμα ... χαριέστατα τῆς γνώμῆς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν ἔχον).[20]

Ἀχώ, περὶ μυρίον ὕδωρ
μεγάλου ναίοισα πέρα Πόντου,
ψάλλει σε λύρα διὰ χειρὸς ἐμᾶς·
σὺ δὲ θεῖον Ὅμηρον ἄειδέ μοι,
κλέος ἀνέρων,
κλέος ἀμετέρων πόνων,
δι᾽ ὃν οὐ θάνον,
δι᾽ ὃν ἔστι μοι
Πάτροκλος, δι᾽ ὃν ἀθανάτοις ἴσος
Αἴας ἐμός,
δι᾽ ὃν ἁ δορίληπτος ἀειδομένα σοφοῖς
κλέος ἤρατο κοὐ πέσε Τροία.

Echo, dwelling round about the vast waters
beyond great Pontus,
my lyre serenades you by my hand.
And you, sing to me divine Homer,
glory of men,
glory of our labours,
through whom I did not die,
through whom Patroklos is mine,

[19] For a discussion of the metre and text of Achilles' 'Ode to Echo' and the 'Hymn to Thetis', see De Lannoy 1981. On the question of authorship, he notes that there is general agreement on metrical grounds that the songs are Philostratus' own (1981, 166). I would add that the close integration of Achilles' song into the *Heroicus* as a whole would also support Philostratean authorship.

[20] *Her*. 55,2–3.

through whom my Ajax is
equal to the immortals,
through whom Troy, celebrated by the skilled as won
by the spear,
gained glory and did not fall.[21]

Achilles has earlier sung of Narcissus, and now he sings of Echo,[22] invoking her instead of the Muse, while himself echoing the famous opening lines of both the *Iliad* (μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, 'Sing, goddess, the wrath') and the *Odyssey* (Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα 'Tell me, Muse, of the man'.) In σὺ δὲ θεῖον Ὅμηρον ἄειδέ μοι ('Sing to me of divine Homer')[23] can be heard both the ἄειδε of the *Iliad* and the command to sing of an individual found in the opening of the *Odyssey*, along with the pronoun μοι from the latter evocation. Echo is an appropriate muse for Philostratus, aware as he is of the long Greek literary tradition behind him and the possibilities of creatively echoing and reworking material from it. The song itself exemplifies this practice.

She is an apt muse for Achilles' song too, given the reciprocal, echoing quality of the literary relationship which it describes. Just as Homer has earlier been prophesied as the poet who will immortalise Achilles' deeds,[24] so too Achilles sings of Homer. There is perhaps a hint here of circularity, a suggestion that the two of them immortalise each other. Given the centrality of Homer in the Hellenic canon, however, the suggestion that Homer is dependent on Achilles in this way can only be playful. The medium of immortality, as in the Homeric epics, is κλέος, fame or glory. The song's description of a reciprocal literary relationship, applies as well to Philostratus' own creative practice, in which the past and its literature influence the writing of the present, and the traditions of the past are also reshaped by later developments. This is the model of literary creation by which the *Heroicus* is shaped. The writing of the past (the Homeric and Cyclic epics) shapes that of

[21] *Her*. 55,3.
[22] In the *Imagines*, one of Philostratus' most extended meditations on representation is carried out through the description of Narcissus. Philostr. *Im*. 1,23. On this scene see Elsner 1995, 38 and Heffernan 1999, 21–23. Echoing and reflecting seem to be fundamental to Philostratus' thinking on representation. This is not the place for a discussion of the vexed questions of authorship in the *Corpus Philostrateum*, for discussion of which see De Lannoy 1997.
[23] *Her*. 55,3,4.
[24] *Her*. 45,7–8.

the present (the *Heroicus*), which is in turn concerned with remaking, even reanimating, that past. Philostratus' own aesthetics are projected onto the poetry of Achilles.[25] Both Achilles and Philostratus sing of Homer and of the events treated in the Homeric epics. Both of them also address the process of transmission and reception itself. Philostratus does this by representing a discussion of the omissions and distortions in the epics. Achilles addresses the same theme in mythological terms through his address to Echo.

In this reciprocal process of creation, the individual author can appear more as instrument than agent, as he does in Achilles' song, when he sings that 'my lyre serenades you [i.e. Echo] by my hand' (53.3.3) before asking her in turn to sing of Homer. The lyre, emblem of the poetry or song which is the medium of immortality, is the subject of the sentence. Achilles' hands are necessary for the song to manifest, but do not themselves bring it about.[26] Likewise Homer is equated with the fame which is the result of his song ('divine Homer / glory of men, / glory of our labours').[27] Both are made subordinate to the process of transmitting, receiving and preserving the past.[28]

As well as exemplifying this reciprocal relationship with the past, Achilles' song also captures the timelessness of the world which Philostratus' heroes inhabit. Achilles sings that because of Homer he has not died, Patroclus is still alive, Ajax is equal to the immortals and Troy has achieved glory and has not fallen.[29] In other words, because of Homer's poetry, Troy is always falling and never captured, perpetually besieged. The war itself is as much frozen in time as are its eternally youthful heroes in their posthumous

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[25] For an early twenty-first century reader, the literary model which the song of Achilles and the *Heroicus* as a whole embody seems strikingly Modernist. 'The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered…' (Eliot 1975, 38). For more on the linking of poet and hero, see Kofler 2003, especially pp. 28–36 for Achilles, and his 'Methodische Grundlagen' 13–43 generally.

[26] The emphasis placed on Achilles' hand by the form of the sentence also strikingly reworks Homer. The hand producing the music is one of the same hands which Priam kissed, δεινὰς ἀνδροφόνους, αἳ οἱ πολέας κτάνον υἷας (*Il*. 24.479).

[27] *Her*. 55,3,4–6.

[28] The reciprocity involved in immortality through poetry is answered by a different reciprocity in the depiction of cultic immortality. Protesilaus plants the vines for the Vinetender from which the libations to the hero are poured in turn. *Her*. 11,9.

[29] *Her*. 55,3,7–12.

existence as heroes of cult. Outside of Achilles' song, a similar, circular timelessness can be seen in the heroes' existence. Achilles' battle with the Amazons for instance, ends with the hero himself quite unchanged and his island washed clean by the sea (57.12ff.), and Protesilaus' actions are described on a day to day basis, without any indication that they bring any change to him.[30] This continued presence of figures of the past is found, in a literary if not a religious manner, in the world of Philostratus' letters as well as that of the *Imagines* and the *Life of Apollonius*, a world where the deceased Chariton can be recalled in order to be forgotten, Caracalla can be posthumously corrected and Julia Domna asked to convince the dead Plutarch of his errors.[31]

The timeless state of Achilles and the other dead heroes in the *Heroicus* has two aspects. They are both heroes of the past immortalised in epic and figures worshipped in the cults of the present day. As Nagy writes in 'The Sign of the Hero': 'The *Heroikos* bridges the chasm between the mythical world of epic heroes and the ritual world of cult heroes.'[32] This timelessness is itself one of the points of contact between these two types of immortality, harmonising in turn with Philostratus' own literary blending of the Hellenic past and the Roman present.

Achilles and the chronotopes of the *Heroicus*

The tendency to reciprocity which can be seen in Achilles' song is matched by the overall circularity in the structure and setting of the *Heroicus*. The dialogue as a whole moves in a circle from the Vinetender's and the Phoenician's present-day to the epic past and the timelessness of the heroic afterlife and back again, recalling the original idyllic frame as it draws to its conclusion.[33] The heroes, Achilles included, appear in all of the dialogue's chronotopes except for that of the everyday world. In each of them, the he-

[30] His hunting, for instance (11,7) or spending time with Laodamia (11,8–9).

[31] See Philostr. *Ep*. 66, 72, and 73. On letter 73 see Penella 1979. Whether the Chariton mentioned in Philostratus' letter is the novelist Chariton has been subject to debate. See Bowie 1994b, 444–445.

[32] Nagy 2001, 32. See also Nagy's discussion of the hero of epic and hero of cult in Nagy 1979, 174–210.

[33] The repetition of earlier motifs in the conclusion is noted by Beschorner 1999, 209. See also his discussion of the overall structure of the dialogue 210–215. On the pastoral setting of the dialogue see Martin 2002.

roes appear differently. Before examining the effect of these different chronotopes on the presentation of Achilles, it will be necessary to sketch briefly their main features.[34]

The transitions from one chronotope to another are eased by the compatibility of the chronotopes involved. The initial, idyllic chronotope is by its nature governed by the cycles of the days and seasons,[35] and is distinct from the less cycled time of the mercantile life from which the Phoenician trader has come.[36] His entry into the pastoral world brings about our own entry into it. Like his distant relative Phlebas the Phoenician, our merchant has to forget 'the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / And the profit and loss'[37] to enter, mentally at least, the world of the dead.

The further transition to the epic past and the heroic afterlife, or rather their inclusion within the overall idyllic frame, is eased by some inherent chronotopic similarities.

The transition to the heroic timelessness, whose circularity was discussed above, is made easier by its setting within another circular chronotope, that of the idyllic, pastoral world in which the Vinetender exists. These two varieties of timelessness meet in the seasonal growth and death of the trees sacred to Protesilaus,[38] and in Protesilaus' assistance of the Vinetender with

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[34] On the term chronotope see Bakhtin 1981, 84. 'We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. … We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature.' On the significance of the chronotope for the depiction of individual human beings, see Bakhtin 1981, 104ff, where this is discussed in relation to the Greek novel. My use of this concept in discussing the *Heroicus* does not imply complete acceptance of Bakhtin's characterisation of the chronotope of the Greek novel, simply a belief in the interpretive usefulness of the concept in general. For discussion of Bakhtin's thoughts on the novel see Konstan 1994, 11; 46–47. In Bakhtin's defence Bracht Branham 2002.

[35] For brief comments on this type of chronotope see Bakhtin 1981 ('Forms of Time and Chronotope'), 103. Bakhtin sees the pastoral chronotope as a 'cycled (but not, strictly speaking, cyclical) idyllic time … a blend of natural time (cyclic) and the everyday time of the more or less pastoral (at times even agricultural) life'.

[36] A mercantile, travelling life has its own cycles of departure from and return to port, and is dependent upon the seasons, as Ewen Bowie has pointed out to me. It is, however, more episodic than agricultural life, passing through events without necessary connections between them (on fragmentary, 'everyday time' in the novel, see Bakhtin 1981, 120ff). The cycles of seasons and of returns and departures, while unavoidable, are overwritten by a more fragmentary temporal experience.

[37] Eliot 1940, 'The Waste Land', 313–315.

[38] *Her*. 9,1–3.

his seasonal work,[39] and working on the land himself.[40] Nagy makes the related observation that the heroes are untimely during their lifetime and timely in death. 'The perfect moment or *hora*, in all its natural beauty, becomes the ultimate epiphany of the cult hero.'[41] This *hora* provides the frame within which the heroic timelessness can be presented, just as in the *Imagines* it is the Horae who provide the frame for the presentation of a succession of images from the mythic past.[42]

The presentation of Achilles' life is, with very few exceptions, straightforwardly linear. The biographical manner here is somewhat similar to that of the *Life of Apollonius*, though on a smaller scale. The account begins with the miraculous events surrounding Achilles' birth, namely the appearance of Thetis to Peleus,[43] corresponding to the appearance of Proteus to Apollonius' mother as a sign of the special character of the child to be born. Furthermore, two motifs from the *Life of Apollonius*' stories of dangerous or transgressive loves return here, though in more auspicious guises. Firstly, Peleus falls in love with a φάσμα … θαλαττίας δαίμονος, 'an apparition of a sea-goddess'[44] just as the unfortunate Menippus did with a different φάσμα, the Corinthian Lamia.[45] Secondly, the examples which Thetis uses to reassure Peleus about their affair when he realises her true nature, Eos and Tithonus, Aphrodite and Anchises, Selene and Endymion,[46] belong to the same group of stories from the poets which Apollonius claims have misled the youth in love with the Cnidian Aphrodite.[47] Both motifs are turned to a quite different purpose in telling of the origin of one 'greater than human'.[48] In this scene, as in the *Life of Apollonius*, the same narrative repertoire of sex between individuals of different natures is drawn upon, but without the negative view of ἔρως which pervades the life of the ascetic holy man.[49] The straightforwardly chronological narrative, however, is used for both characters.

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[39] *Her*. 4,10.
[40] *Her*. 2,8.
[41] Nagy 2001, 27–28.
[42] See Elsner 2001 on some other aspects of the framing function of the Horae in the *Imagines*.
[43] *Her*. 45,2–4.
[44] *Her*. 45,2.
[45] *VA* 4,25.
[46] *Her*. 45,3.
[47] *VA* 6,40. Apollonius names the stories of Anchises and of Peleus himself.
[48] *Her* 45,3–4.
[49] On the negative view of *eros* in the Life of Apollonius, see Bowie 1994a, 190–193.

This linear narrative of growth, maturity and death contrasts sharply with the description of Achilles' posthumous existence.[50] Here there is no further possibility of development. The hero is defined and complete. What there is by way of plot, such as the battle against the Amazons, does not affect Achilles, or even test him, but simply demonstrates his power, with all trace of the incident being literally washed away.[51] Bakhtin claimed that the Greek novel took place in a vast, abstract space, but with the temporal axis reduced almost to zero. That is, the characters did not develop within the adventure-time of the novel, but lived through it as an 'extratemporal hiatus'.[52] Whether or not this is true of the novel is not my concern here,[53] but such a reduction of the temporal axis is certainly characteristic of the posthumous existence portrayed in the *Heroicus.* This is clearest in the case of Achilles. The resurgences of the violence which characterised him during his life leave him completely unchanged. The absence of biological time and of consequences in the heroic afterlife is not, however, a hiatus like that which Bakhtin claimed was typical of the Greek novel, but an eternal suspended animation, a somewhat less brutal Valhalla.

Conclusion

Strange as his Achilles may seem, Philostratus developed him from hints already present in the epic tradition. There may, of course, have been more in the Epic Cycle which influenced his depiction of the hero, but even without these sources we can see how a sensitive reading of Achilles' language in the *Iliad* could prompt a creative author to develop him into the singer who appears in the *Heroicus*. This Achilles, at once warrior and poet, allows Philostratus to develop a reciprocal model of song which recalls his own authorial practice, drawing upon and rewriting earlier works.

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[50] The emphasis here on Achilles' posthumous existence may have been suggested by Odysseus' encounter with the hero's soul at *Od*. 11,471–540, as well as the traditions regarding the Island of Leuke.

[51] *Her*. 57,2–17.

[52] Bakhtin 1981, 89–90.

[53] See note 34 above. I do not mean to suggest, either, that the *Heroicus* should be considered a Greek novel. Rather, it is a work which shares some characteristics with the novels and is best placed on their 'fringe'. On the relationship between the *Corpus Philostrateum* and the novel see Bowie 1994a.

The sharply compressed chronotope through which the presentation of the dead Achilles takes place, and the consequent compression of Achilles and the other heroes, may be considered partly a literary experiment, partly a logical consequence of Philostratus' choice of subject matter: dead heroes. As so often in Philostratus, the literary and the religious are intertwined. Both factors are responsible for his focus on the themes of timelessness, circularity and reciprocity.

This raises the difficult question of the seriousness of Philostratus' religion. I would agree with Whitmarsh that the question of whether the *Heroicus* is 'a pious homage or a sophistic joke' is unanswerable, and meaningfully so.[54] It is up to individual readers to situate themselves as believers or disbelievers. However we identify the *Heroicus*' tone towards its religious topics, the nature of the material concerning heroes which is imported into the text can be considered one of the factors responsible for the ways in which time is handled. It is the combination of the potential in the material with Philostratus' interest in the continuation of the past in the present which leads to the unique temporal construction of the *Heroicus*, just as it is a similar combination of Homeric prompts and Philostratus' self-conscious reflection on the processes of literary creation which shapes his musical Achilles.[55]

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[54] Whitmarsh 2004, 249.

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