

Statues and Divine Authority in Philostratos' *Heroikos*

Philostratos' dialogue *Heroikos*, in which a Phoenician trader converses with a Vinedresser tending the hero Protesilaos' sanctuary in the Thracian Chersonese, is teeming with statuary. There are sixteen episodes where the Vinedresser describes an ἄγαλμα, compares a hero from the Homeric past to an ἄγαλμα, or describes a hero as ἄγαλμα-like, often blending the boundaries between statue, person, living, and dead. This is after the Vinedresser makes a claim about statues in defense of his conversations with the hero Protesilaos, the first Greek who died upon embarking at Troy: Protesilaos comes back to life, helps him farm, and teaches him how to think philosophically about the Greek past. Although he desires to hear more stories about these Homeric heroes (Τρωικὰ), the Phoenician is skeptical. How can Protesilaos accurately describe Τρωικὰ if he died before the battle even began? This undermines any claim the Vinedresser might have to living a philosophic life by contemplating Greece's heroic past and educating others.

The Vinedresser asserts that Protesilaos' death actually makes him able to view the gods face-fo-face and converse with them openly, not by "worshiping statues" as mortals do (7.3). It is not immediately clear what it means that spirits like Protesilaos associate with gods *not* by worshiping ἀγάλματα, nor what the ἀγάλματα represent. 7.3 does imply that when people, and the Vinedresser specifically, worship ἀγάλματα they are not truly speaking with the divinity they represent. This might legitimate Protesilaos' authority, but poses problems for the Vinedresser, a mortal who would likely be putting himself at risk by associating with the dead, divinized hero and who at times seems to be merely worshiping and speaking with a statue in Protesilaos' sanctuary.

Statues in Greek texts from the Archaic and Classical periods often serve as rhetorical devices for authors to contemplate an object's outer appearance versus internal reality (Steiner 2001). They can also represent an author's τέχνη (Steiner 2001, Whitmarsh 2001). These conclusions can be applied to texts from the Second Sophistic as well, such as Philostratos' *Heroikos*. This paper addresses three main topics surrounding Philostratos' use of statuary in the *Heroikos*, using Steiner's argument that statues can represent dialogues on representation, reality, and liminality as a guide: the function of the ἀγάλματα of various Greek heroes, what it means that heroes like Hector and Ajax get statues, but heroes like Odysseus do not, and what statues have in common with the Vinedresser's descriptions of Greek heroes. Lastly, I will argue that the Vinedresser's use of statuary actually undermines his authority and *technē*.

Works Cited

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Whitmarsh, Tim. Ch. 10, Performing heroics: language, landscape, and identity in Philostratos' *Heroicus*. Ed. Elsner, Jaś, and Ewen Bowie. *Philostratus*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.