

THE ANCIENT GREEK ORACLES OF THE DEAD

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ABSTRACT

The various Greek terms for 'oracles of the dead' were synonymous. In extant sources they are applied principally to four sites: the oracles at Heracleia Pontica on the Black Sea, Tainaron on Mani, the Acheron in Thesprotia and Avernus in Campania. The evidence for the precise locations and configurations of these oracles is reviewed, together with the traditions of consultations at them. The oracles at Heracleia and Tainaron were located in tooled caves, and their remains can be identified today. The oracles at the Acheron and Avernus, however, were probably based in mere lakeside precincts. Ghosts were experienced at the oracles by means of incubation and dreaming. The meagre evidence for the powers that presided at the oracles is also considered, as is that for their staffs. Finally, it is asked whether there were any further oracles of the dead in the Greek world.

There has been much confusion over the nature, distribution and mode of use of oracles of the dead in Greek antiquity. This paper seeks to clarify these issues.¹ The conceptual home of necromancy in the ancient Greek world was probably the tomb. The rites of evocation described in literary sources, from Homer's *Nekyia* onwards, are equivalent to those performed in banal historical visits to the tombs to pay the dead their due. Aeschylus' description of Atossa's evocation of the ghost of Darius at his tomb is well known; the Neopythagorean Apollonius of Tyana later called up the ghost of Achilles at his barrow on the Trojan plain, to put Homeric questions to it. But if one was not to call up a ghost at its tomb, or the place in which its

¹ I am immensely grateful to Marc Kleijwegt and Richard Evans for inviting me to present this paper at the Twenty-Fourth Biennial Conference of the Classical Association of South Africa, UNISA, 2001. The text published here is a slightly modified version of a piece that has appeared in German (Ogden 2001). Further discussion of all evidence and issues touched upon here will be found in Ogden (forthcoming a). For general discussions of Graeco-Roman necromancy, see Collard 1949 (a useful but virtually unobtainable short University of Liège thesis); Donnadiu & Vilatte 1996 (idiosyncratic); Hopfner 1921-24 and 1935 (important); Kalitsounakis 1953-54. There has recently been much good work on Near-Eastern necromancy, but I doubt the significance of this material for the elucidation of the Graeco-Roman phenomenon: see Finkel 1983-84; Tropper 1989; Schmidt 1995.

body lay, such as a battlefield, then one could turn to a place specifically dedicated to the performance of necromancy, an oracle of the dead.²

Terminology

The Greeks used several terms for oracles of the dead. *Nekyomanteion*, ‘prophecy-place of the dead’, is found first, in the 5th century BC. *Psychagôgion*, ‘drawing-place of ghosts’, was used in a derived sense in the 4th century BC. The end of the same century witnessed *psychomanteion*, ‘prophecy-place of ghosts’. Plutarch gives us *psychopompeion*, ‘sending-place of ghosts’, ca. 100 AD. The fifth-century AD lexicographer Hesychius glosses the presumably rather older Laconian term *nekyôr(i)on*, ‘seeing-place of the dead’, with the *r*-variant *nekromanteion*.³ These words were synonymous and used interchangeably of the same oracles.⁴ Latin’s dependence upon the Greek terminology suggests that the Greeks introduced the Romans to oracles of this kind.

Whenever these terms are applied to a specific oracle, it is always to one of the ‘big four’: Acheron in Thesprotia, Avernus in Campania,

² Hom. *Od.* 10.488-540 and 11; Aesch. *Pers.* 598-680; Philostr. *VA* 4.16.

³ νεκυομαντεῖον: Hdt. 5.92 (published in 420s) and Soph. *Fr.* 748, *TrGF* Pearson (published between 468 and 406). ψυχαγόγιον: Theophr. *Ign.* 24; *Etyim. Mag.* s.v., which preserves the original meaning; the source-term ψυχαγωγός, ‘evocator’, had been used in the 5th century by Aeschylus (*Psychagogoi*). ψυχομαντεῖον: used by Crantor of Soli in his tale of Elysium, as shown by comparison of Plut. *Mor.* 109bd (ψυχομαντεῖον); Cic. *Tusc.* 1.115 (*psychomantium*, citing Crantor); *Greek Anthology*, Appendix, Vol. 6, no. 235 (‘oracle from a *psychomanteion*’). ψυχοπομπεῖον: references below; the term is common after Plutarch, *pace* Bölte 1932:2046. νεκυώριον or νεκύωρον: Hesychius s.v. νεκρομαντεῖον, perhaps influenced by Latin usage, which preferred the *necro-* stem in its Greek borrowings; cf. Collard 1949:11-12.

⁴ Acheron: νεκυομαντεῖον at Hdt. 5.92 and Paus. 9.30.6; ψυχοπομπεῖον at Hesychius s.v. θεοεπίης; Phot. *Lex.* s.v. θεοὶ Μολοτικτοί; both of these at Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 10.514; note also schol. Hom. *Od.* hypothesis p. 5 Dindorf: λίμνη νεκυοπομπός. Heracleia: νεκυομαντεῖον at Plut. *Cim.* 6; ψυχοπομπεῖον at Plut. *Mor.* 555c (the same Cleonice story) and Amm. Marcell. 22.8.16-17. Tainaron: νεκυομαντεῖον and νεκυώριον/νεκύωρον implied by Hesychius s.v.; ψυχοπομπεῖον at Plut. *Mor.* 560ef. Avernus: νεκυομαντεῖον at Soph. *Fr.* 748, *TrGF* Pearson; Strabo 244 Casaubon; Diodorus 4.22; *Etyim. Mag.* s.v. Ἄορνος; Eustath. *loc. cit.*; ψυχομαντεῖον, if the tale of Elysium (see below) can be located there. Nitzsch 1826-40:152 on *Od.* 10. Bouché-Leclercq 1879-82:Vol. 1, 334 and 3, 363 attempted a differentiation: νεκυομαντεῖον was to be a place of prophecy, ψυχοπομπεῖον a place for laying ghosts; Collard 1949:13-14 rightly dismisses the notion. In any case, one often sought prophecies from ghosts specifically to lay them.

Heracleia Pontica on the south coast of the Black Sea, and Tainaron at the tip of the Peloponnese's Mani peninsula. Indeed, no ancient usage of any of these terms absolutely requires us to believe that they were applied to any other oracle. Any study of the *nekyomanteion* phenomenon must accordingly be founded primarily upon the cases of the four. Of these the Heracleia and Tainaron *nekyomanteia* were (uncontroversially) based in natural caves modified by tooling or walling, whereas the Acheron and Avernus *nekyomanteia* were probably based in mere precincts beside lakes. These two configurations are perhaps reflected in the derived usages of *psychagôgion*: an air-vent in a mine and a system for drawing water from underground and distributing it over infertile ground.⁵

Nekyomanteia beyond the 'big four' are hard to identify with certainty. This is not surprising, given that even the four were unglamorous shrines and low in profile. No ancient account of a consultation of a *nekyomanteion* retains the appearance of historicity after scrutiny. Not even the most miserable piece of epigraphy can be associated with a *nekyomanteion*. Even in the cases of the four, only Tainaron can be said with certainty to have been integrated into a state-sponsored sanctuary (that of Poseidon, controlled by Sparta); there is no indication that the Heracleia *nekyomanteion* was state-sponsored, even if the state had in a sense drawn its name from the oracle. The notion that the four were in some sense 'official' is therefore difficult to support. Who was to say whether any given cave or lakeside was or was not a *nekyomanteion*?⁶

The Heracleia Pontica *nekyomanteion*

The establishment of the Heracleian cave-oracle is unlikely to have preceded the foundation of the Megarian city to which it gave a name in ca. 560 BC. Heracles had, it was told, dragged Cerberus up through the hole, whereupon the poor beast, in terror at the unaccustomed daylight, had vomited upon a harmless plant and so created the 'deadly' aconite for which the region was famed. The few extant literary references to the oracle, that of Quintus

⁵ Theophr. *Ign.* 24 and *Etym. Mag.* s.v.; cf. Ganschinietz 1919:2377. As applied to the mine the term could also be construed as 'drawing-place of breath', and, as applied to the water system, 'drawing-place of life'.

⁶ Pace Hopfner 1921-24: Vol. 1, 552, 587; Eitrem 1928:5; cf. Bouché-Leclercq 1879-82: Vol. 1, 333; Potter 1994:70.

Smyrnaeus in particular, have allowed Hoepfner to identify it with a tooled cave above the Soonautes (or 'Acheron') river on the Heracleian Chersonnese, which is now known as Baba Burnu. The cave is entered by a passageway only one metre wide, initially open and flanked by ashlar walls, and so resembling a *dromos*. A large stone lintel straddles it as it enters the hillside. Thence one descends a twisting stairway. One penetrates the roughly rectangular central chamber, 45 metres wide by 20 deep, on its north side. Two polished stone pillars support the roof. The eastern face is 7 metres high and its walls are vertical and worked; on the western side the ceiling falls so low that one must crouch to proceed. Most of the chamber is flooded by a pool of crystal water, over a metre deep. Small gothic-arch-shaped niches are tooled into the three high walls. On the south side there is also a plastered alcove. Architectural fragments indicate that there may once have been structures within the chamber. A barely passable tunnel leads from the northwest end of the cave to a small, low, unworked chamber, in which there are some human bones. No dating is offered for any of the tooled features, though Hoepfner seems satisfied that there is nothing pre-Greek here. He further conjectures that the alcove housed a cult of Heracles, and that the architectural fragments may have derived from a temple or dormitory.⁷

The tale of Pausanias the Regent and Cleonice ('Fair Victory', appropriately) is our sole attestation – if it can be called that – of a consultation of this oracle. Pausanias, vanquisher of the Persian invasion force at Plataea, became tyrannical whilst taking the battle to the enemy from the allied base at Byzantium. In around 479-477 BC:

In Byzantium Pausanias, out of hubris, summoned a free maiden, Cleonice, to him so as to have her for the night. But then as she came near he killed her because of some confusion and suspicion. After that he saw her often in his dreams, saying:

Go to justice: hubris is a very bad thing for men.

Since the ghost of Cleonice did not leave off, as it seems, Pausanias sailed to the *psychopompeion* at Heracleia, and

⁷ Sources for the Heracleia νεκυομαντεῖον: see those for the Regent Pausanias and Cleonice, as below, and Amm. Marcell. 22.8.16-17; Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* 2.727-48; Diodorus 14.31.3; *Etym. Mag.* s.v. 'Ἀχερουσιάς'; Pliny, *HN* 6.4; Pompon. Mela 1.103; Quint. Smyrn. *Posthomerica* 6.469-91; Xen. *Anab.* 6.2.2 (including the account of the Heracles myth); Hoepfner 1966 and 1972. Foundation date of Heracleia: Burstein 1976:16.

called up the soul of the girl with propitiations and libations. It came before his vision and said that he would be delivered from his troubles whenever he was in Sparta. On arrival he immediately died.
(Plut. *Mor.* 555c)⁸

This tale, part of a larger myth-complex that also embraces the episode in which Pausanias' own ghost in turn harried the Spartans after their killing of him (cf. on Archilochus below), gives little indication as to the means by which ghosts were actually encountered at the oracle.⁹

The Tainaron *nekyomanteion*

Heracles also dragged Cerberus up through the underworld passage at Tainaron, now Cape Matapan, the isolated tip of the Mani peninsula. Literary descriptions of the *nekyomanteion* cave make it fairly easy to identify: Pomponius Mela explicitly compares it in both myth and appearance to Heracleia. It was close to the tip of the promontory, close to the temple of Poseidon in its grove and in a bay. Pausanias *Periegetes* associates it with the Achillean and Psamathous ('Sandy') harbours; Poseidon's statue stood before it; it was a 'temple made like a cave' ('cave made like a temple' would have been more logical). Pausanias was disappointed with what he saw: no path extended underground from the cave, and it was hard to be persuaded that the gods had some underground house (οἴκησις) there into which they gathered souls. The humble temple of Poseidon, latterly a Christian chapel, stands prominently on the eastern side of the cape, its identity confirmed by finds of seventy bronzes of the god's bulls and horses. Two Ionic capitals now in the apse indicate that the surviving structure was distyle-in-antis and of Hellenistic date. Fifty metres below the temple, above the beach of Sternis Bay, are the remains of a small cave, 15 metres deep and 10-12 wide, its roof now collapsed. A two-metre-thick ashlar wall, built on rock-cut foundations and fitted with a doorway, closed the entrance. No archaeological date has been attached to this. Before this entrance stood

⁸ Cf. Plut. *Cim.* 6 (longer version); Paus. 3.17 (where the consultation is transferred to the ψυχάγωγοί of Phigalia); Aristodem., *FGrH* 104 F8.

⁹ For the myth-complex, see Ogden (forthcoming b).

a rectangular precinct kerb; on the adjacent western side of this were cuttings for the erection of stelai and statues. The fit between this site and the literary descriptions is tight. Some have understandably thought that the *nekyomanteion* was located rather in the sea-cave now known as the ‘Cave of Hades’, higher up the peninsula on the western side. It has impressive halls, stalactites and stalagmites, but the ancient descriptions cannot licence this identification. It is a puzzle that this spectacular place should have been passed over and the underworld found instead in the unpromising nook in Sternis Bay. Presumably the *nekyomanteion* originated as an adjunct to the adjacent Poseidon temple, which custom dictated be placed on the promontory tip. Tainaron is the only one of the big four *nekyomanteia* with which no lake or pool is associated.¹⁰

As with Heracleia, tradition preserves one, unhistorical tale of a consultation of the *nekyomanteion*:

The man who killed Archilochus in battle was called Callondes, as it seems, but he had Corax (‘Crow’) as a nickname. At first he was thrown out by the Pythia as having killed a man who was sacred to the Muses, but he then had recourse to prayers and supplications, and attempted to justify himself with arguments, and he was bidden go to the house (οἴκησις) of Tettix (‘Cicada’) to propitiate the soul of Archilochus. This was Tainaron. For they say that Tettix the Cretan came there with a fleet and founded a city and settled the area around the *psychopompeion*. In the same way an oracle was given to the Spartans that they should propitiate the soul of Pausanias. So the evocators (*psychagōgoi*) were sent for from Italy. They made a sacrifice and drew his ghost away from the temple. (Plut. *Mor.* 560ef = Archil. Test. 141 Tarditi)¹¹

¹⁰ Cerberus: Soph. *Heracles at Tainaron*, Fr. 224-34, *TrGF* Pearson, etc. The Tainaron νεκυομαντεῖον: see the sources for Corax and Archilochus below, and Paus. 2.33, 3.25; Strabo 373-74; Pompon. Mela 2.51; Stat. *Theb.* 2.32-57; Hesychius s.v. νεκυόριον/νεκυόρον; *Suda* s.v. ἀνεΐλεν. Cummer 1978; see also the plans, photographs and discussions at Moschou 1975; Papachatzis 1976; Günther 1988; Musti *et al.* 1982- on Paus. 3.25; Müller 1987:858-61; Schumacher 1993:72-74. For the bronzes, see Frazer 1898 on Paus. 3.25 and Bölte 1932:2038. Cooper 1988:69-70 still champions the Cave of Hades.

¹¹ Cf. Plut. *Numa* 4, *Suda* s.v. Ἀρχίλοχος = Aelian, Fr. 83 Domingo-Forasté (Teubner) = Archil. Test. 170 Tarditi and Galen, *Protreptici* 9.1.

Corax comes to the *nekyomanteion* to beg off the anger of the person he had killed, just as the Regent Pausanias did at Heracleia. Again, no indication is given here of the means by which the ghost was experienced at the Tainaron *nekyomanteion*. Its designation as the 'House of (the) Cicada' remains curious. Archilochus himself famously identified himself with the creature, but it also carried connotations of ghostliness and death.¹²

The Acheron *nekyomanteion*

In the modern age, the fame of the Acheron and Avernus *nekyomanteia* outstrips that of Heracleia and Tainaron, but these oracles are paradoxically much harder to define. Two difficulties complicate their investigation. The first is that from the Classical period, if not before, the two sites were confounded with each other in Greek and Latin mythological literature. The second is the misapprehension that *nekyomanteia* were always based in caves, natural or man-made. This fallacy has led archaeologists to locate the two *nekyomanteia* wrongly in local man-made caves, and to develop erroneous reconstructions of their use based upon readings of Pausanias Periegetes' account of the consultation-procedure for the oracle of Trophonius and Lucian's account of the necromancy of Menippus.¹³ In both cases these reconstructions send the consulters on minutely choreographed ritual progressions through dark tunnels. These culminate in encounters with ghosts in the form of puppets manipulated by priests who scuttle through further concealed passageways. A precursor of the fun-fair ghost-train or the Disneyland haunted house is envisaged.

Literary sources, beginning with Homer's *Nekyia*, locate the general area in which the Acheron *nekyomanteion* was located with reasonable clarity, namely at the 'Acherusian lake', the marsh into which the Acheron temporarily broadened out at its confluence with the Cocytus in Thesprotia,

¹² Archilochus as cicada: Fr. 223 West; other poets, such as Callim., *Aetia* Fr. 1.29, took up the imagery. Cicada symbolism: Bodson 1975:16-20; Davies & Kathirithamby 1986:113-33; Brillante 1987 and 1991:112-43 (with a valuable discussion of the cicada's ability to mediate between the worlds above and below at 138-40); King 1989.

¹³ Paus. 9.39 and Lucian, *Menippus*. For the attempt to elucidate Acheron and Avernus with the Trophonius oracle, see Thomson 1914:26, 29, 92-93, 111-12; Papachatzis 1963-74 on Pausanias *loc. cit.*; Paget 1967b:149-52; Clark 1968:72; van Straten 1982:220; Dakaris 1993.

near Ephyra/Cichyrus.¹⁴ Following a suggestion of Frazer, Sotirios Dakaris identified the Acheron *nekyomanteion* with a Hellenistic complex beneath the monastery of St John Prodromos at Mesopotamo, which overlooks the confluence. This had been burned down in the Roman devastation of Epirus in 167 BC. His excavations of the site and his interpretations of it formed the subject of many publications between 1958 and 1993. Its most striking feature is an elaborate, subterranean, vaulted ‘crypt’ – the ‘underworld’ itself, supposedly. Above the underworld (why not in it?), in a square structure with walls over three metres thick, consultants encountered models of ghosts or underworld powers. These were swung out at them in a cauldron by priests who operated an elaborate crane from secret passageways within the hollow upper courses of the walls. The machine’s ratchets, cast-iron counterweights and six statuettes of Persephone were discovered in the structure. The consultants’ experience of the ghosts was enhanced by the consumption of supposedly hallucinogenic lupines and beans, the carbonized remains of which were found in jars in the corner store-rooms. The consultants had progressed to the theatre through the significantly right-winding corridors around it, making sacrifices and submitting to purifications along the way, and finally passing through a brief underworld-evoking labyrinth.¹⁵ But this cannot stand. The *nekyomanteion* hypothesis does not account for the copious quantities of other foodstuffs also found carbonized in the store-rooms, or the vast amounts of crockery and agricultural and domestic tools found on the site. In 1979 Baatz proved beyond doubt that the ratchets belonged rather to dart-firing torsion catapults, and derived from ten separate weapons. Twenty-seven iron darts for them to fire have also been identified from the site. It becomes clear that the square building, with its three-metre thick wall, was a defensive keep. The labyrinth that gave admission to it protected its entrance against assault, perhaps against Roman battering rams in particular. The ‘crypt’ was a mere cellar or cistern. The site is an elaborate

¹⁴ Hom. *Od.* 10.488-11.640; Hdt. 5.92; Paus. 1.17.4-5 and 9.30.6; schol. Hom. *Od.* hypothesis p. 5 Dindorf; Ampelius, *Libër memorialis* 83. ‘Molossian *psychopompeion*’: Hesychius s.v. θεοεπιῆς; Phot. *Lex.* s.v. θεοὶ Μολοσστικοί; Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 1.393 and 10.514.

¹⁵ Frazer 1931:386-87; cf. Janssens 1961:387-88. Dakaris 1993 summarises the scholar’s last thoughts; see also his many annual reports in the journals *Ergon*, *Praktika*, and *Archaiologikon Deltion* from 1958 on; 1963 offers a convenient summary of his views in German. Right-winding corridors: because at the underworld fork one turns right for Elysium (Paradise) and right for Tartarus (Hell).

example of the Hellenistic building-type known as a *Turmgehöft*.¹⁶ The story of its last days is easily written: as Roman troops approached, its farming occupants withdrew into the keep with their tools and as much produce as they could garner, and, making sure their cistern (if it was such) was full, prepared to withstand a siege. But their catapult defences were unable to prevent the Romans from burning their fort down. Only the Persephone statuettes, two of which wear her distinctive *polos* headdress, give pause for thought, but she was in any case the local goddess, and it is not to be denied that the real *nekyomanteion* was somewhere close. However, Dakaris' interpretation of the site has continued to be influential, and Papachatzis even reinterpreted the archaeological evidence for the Tainaron *nekyomanteion* cave on the basis of it.¹⁷

If we return to the literary sources for the Acheron *nekyomanteion*, we may be surprised to discover that there is no mention of a cave in them whatsoever. Insofar as they suggest any configuration at all for the *nekyomanteion*, they imply that it was a lakeside precinct. Homer's Odysseus merely performs his consultation beside the river, perhaps from the rock said to stand at the confluence, whilst his scholiast refers to the lake itself at that point under the name of *Nekyopompos*, 'Sending-the-dead'. In the beautiful illustration by the Lycaon painter of Odysseus' encounter with the ghost of Elpenor during this consultation, one can actually see the marsh reeds rising behind the ghost.¹⁸ Herodotus' Periander sends

¹⁶ Baatz 1979, 1981 and 1999; Wiseman 1998. Baatz's negative arguments against the identification of the site as a *nekyomanteion* (1999:153) are less compelling: the lack of cult statue, sacred sculpture, altars, offerings and inscriptions. At no *nekyomanteion* site do we find any of these things. Baatz (*ibid.*) prefers 'cellar' to 'cistern' for the want of detectable hydraulic cement. Haselberger 1978 and 1980 describes the phenomenon of Hellenistic tower-farms. Dakaris 1993:22 accepted that the ratchets derived from catapults, but then argued that they were *reused* for his crane!

¹⁷ Dakaris is followed by Vanderpool 1959:282 and 1961; Daux 1959, 1961 and 1962; Webster 1966:9; Hammond 1967:63-66, 667-68; Cabanes 1976:509; Papachatzis 1963-74 on Paus. 9.30.6 and 1976 (for reinterpretation of Tainaron); Clark 1979:60; Vermeule 1979:200-01; Van Straten 1982:215-30; Dalègre 1983; Tsouvara-Souli 1983; Burkert 1985:114-15; Garland 1985:3; Mouselimis 1987; Müller 1987:909-13; Jouan 1990:21-22; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995:75-76, 104, 306, 308, 314; Arnott 1996:244; Donnadiu & Vilatte 1996:87; Hall 1996:152; Ekschmitt 1988. Potter 1994:236 n. 21.

¹⁸ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 34-79 = *LIMC*, 'Odysseus' 149; see Caskey 1934a, b and c, Caskey & Beazley 1954:88-89; Touchefeu-Meynier 1968:135-56 and plate 21.1; Brommer 1983:81-82; Buitron & Cohen 1992:98.

for his divination ‘to the Acheron river, to the *nekyomanteion*’ (see below): hendiadys? Aeschylus’ *Psychagôgoi* or ‘Evocators’ restaged Odysseus’ consultation. In the following valuable fragment of the play, the Evocators advise Odysseus, taking on the role allotted to Circe in the *Odyssey*:

Come now, guest-friend, take your stand on the grassy sacred enclosure of the fearful lake. Slash the gullet of the neck, and let the blood of this sacrificial victim flow into the murky depths of the reeds, as a drink for the lifeless. Call upon primeval earth and chthonic Hermes, escort of the dead, and ask chthonic Zeus to send up the swarm of night-wanderers from the mouths of the river, from which this melancholy off-flow water, unfit for washing hands, is sent up by Stygian springs.
(Aesch. *Psych.*, Fr. 273a, *TrFG*)¹⁹

Here Odysseus actually stands in a lakeside precinct and pours the blood from the neck of his sacrificial sheep directly into the lake itself, from which the ghosts will arise directly. The traditional assumption that the location of this play was not Acheron but Avernus is all but groundless,²⁰ whilst Hermes, mentioned in the fragment, is found in association with the former but not the latter.²¹ In the *Frogs*, Aristophanes makes brief mention of three underworld rivers: ‘the black-hearted rock of the Styx and the crag (σκόπελος) of the Acheron, dripping with blood, and the dogs that run around the Cocytus ...’ The ‘crag of the Acheron’ is most easily read as denoting a rocky outcrop over the river on which or from which blood offerings are made into it.²²

As with Heracleia and Tainaron, a single supposedly historical report of a consultation attaches to the Acheron *nekyomanteion*, the well known tale of Periander and Melissa:

¹⁹ Kramer at Kramer *et al.* 1980:14-23 provides an excellent commentary upon this papyrus fragment; see also the discussion at Henrichs 1991:187-92.

²⁰ The assumption began with Fritzsche 1845 on Aristoph. *Ran.* 1266 and is perpetuated by Wilamowitz 1914:246 n. 1; Hardie 1977:284; Rusten 1982:34-35 (astoundingly denying that there was a lake at the Acheron *nekyomanteion*); Ameling 1986; Parke & McGing 1988:95 n. 5; Dunbar 1995 on Aristoph. *Av.* 1553-55.

²¹ Alexis, *Thesprotians* 93 K-A; cf. his role in the *Odyssey*’s ‘Second Nekyia’, 24.1-14.

²² Aristoph. *Ran.* 470-72.

On one day he stripped all the women of Corinth on account of his wife Melissa. For he sent messengers to her, to Thesprotia, to the Acheron river, to the *nekyomanteion*, on the question of the deposit of a guest-friend. Melissa appeared and said that she would neither indicate nor declare where the deposit lay, for she was cold and naked. The clothes that had been buried with her were of no use to her because they had not been burned. As witness to the truth of these assertions stood the fact that Periander had thrown his loaves into a cold oven. The token was proof: he had had sex with Melissa's corpse. When these utterances were reported back to Periander, he at once issued an edict that all the women of Corinth should go out to the Heraion. So they came out as to a festival in their finest adornments, but he posted his bodyguards in ambush and stripped them all alike, free and slave, piled their clothing up into a trench and burned it with a prayer to Melissa. After doing this he sent to Melissa a second time and she told him where she had put the guest-friend's deposit.

(Hdt. 5.92)

The traditional nature of this tale has been demonstrated by a number of comparative studies.²³ In view of Tainaron's Cicada, it is of particular interest that Melissa's name means 'bee', another insect with strong chthonic associations.²⁴ Once again the theme of ghost-placation features strongly here. No indication of the means by which the ghost was encountered is given.

The Avernus *nekyomanteion*

The Avernus *nekyomanteion*, too, found its own Dakaris. In 1962, R.F. Paget tentatively discovered the Avernus *nekyomanteion* a mile distant from the lake itself in a 350-metre complex of tufa tunnels in the hillside of Baiae. This came to be known as the 'Great Antrum'. Consultants progressed, he suggested, through the tunnels, which were supposedly constructed by the sixth-century BC tyrant Aristodemus of Cumae. They turned significantly

²³ See in particular Reinach 1907 and Stern 1989.

²⁴ Cook 1895 *passim*; Bodson 1975:20-43; Davies & Kathirithamby 1986:51, 64-68, 72.

right at a fork, crossed cisterns of seething sulphurous spring-water – the Styx – in a boat, then doubled back into a square chamber in which they were confronted by images of ghosts projected by priests with lamps from wooden cut-outs. A number of scholars have taken the identification more seriously than Paget did himself.²⁵ But this cannot stand either. In the spa-town of Baiae, the Roman-period tunnels connecting the *tepidarium* of a bath-house (*le Piccole Terme*) at their entrance with hot-spring cisterns at their deepest point served the needs of bathers, not necromancers.²⁶

In contrast to the Acheron *nekyomanteion* case, the copious literary tradition for Avernus manifestly does contend that there was a cave-oracle there, and that this was actually within the lake's crater (which further discounts Baiae). Virgil's description of Aeneas' descent to the underworld through the cave is well known. But the essentially mythical nature of this cave is also clear, in that our earliest source for it, the fourth-century Ephorus, already relegates the cave's existence to the remote past and maintains that it had long disappeared by his own time; this theme is taken up by other sources. At the heart of the necromantic traditions relating to Avernus lies the lake itself, supposedly exhaling noxious, bird-killing fumes. If necromancy ever was practiced there (and, intriguingly, in the case of this oracle alone not even one quasi-historical account of a consultation survives), we can only assume that it was practiced at the water's edge, as at the Acheron that first inspired the association of Avernus with necromancy.²⁷

Incubation at *nekyomanteia*

The one ancient account to describe openly the means of experiencing a ghost in an oracle of the dead is Plutarch's version of the consolation-parable

²⁵ Paget 1967a-c; his account of the discovery, 1967b, remains a thrilling piece of literature. For the projection technique, cf. Plat. *R.* 514-15. Paget's case is taken seriously by Hardie 1969 and 1977 (arguing, however, for incubation); McKay 1972:141-59; Clark 1979:70; Frederiksen 1984:77.

²⁶ Tunnels as belonging to baths: Burkert 1972:155; 1985:393 n. 33; Castagnoli 1977:77-78; Giuliani 1977; Amalfitano *et al.* 1990:218-23; Nielsen 1990:Vol. 1, 21; Yegül 1992:101-02.

²⁷ Virg. *Aen.* 6.237-42 with Serv. *ad loc.* (and on 107 and 197); Ephorus, *FGRH* 70 F134a at Strabo 243-46. For the oracle and the lake, see also [Aristot.] *Mir.* 95, 838a5; Dio Cass. 48.50.4; Diodorus 4.22; *Etym. Mag.* s.v. "Αορνος; Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 10.514; Festus p. 43 M; Hesychius s.v. "Αορνος; Max. Tyr. 8.2 (μαντεῖον ἄντρον); [Lycophron] *Alexandra* 681-707 with scholia; *Orphic Argonautica* 1120-42; Plin. *HN* 3.61; [Scymnus.] *Periegesis* 236-44;

of Elysium ('Elysian') of Terina, a city in southern Italy:

They tell the following sort of tale about the Italian Euthynous. He was the son of Elysium of Terina, who was first among people there in virtue, wealth and reputation. He died suddenly from an uncertain cause. The thought that would have occurred to anyone else in the same circumstances occurred to Elysium: perhaps he had been killed by poisons. For he had been his only son, and he had a large estate and much money. He was at a loss as to how to test this possibility, so he arrived at some oracle of the dead (*psychomanteion*). He made the customary preliminary sacrifices, went to sleep, and saw the following vision. His own father seemed to stand by his side. Seeing him, he told him about his misfortune concerning his son, and he besought him and asked him to help in discovering the cause of his son's death. His father replied 'This is the reason I have come. Take from this one here what he brings you, and from this you will know everything you are grieving about.' The one he pointed out was a young man who was following him, and he resembled Elysium's son in age and generation. He asked the boy who he was. He replied 'I am the ghost of your son.' And thus he offered him a small written tablet. He unrolled it and saw these three lines written on it:

Indeed the minds of men wander in folly. Euthynous lies in his destined death. It was not good for him himself to live, nor was it good for his parents.

(Plut. *Mor.*: 109b-d)

In other words, destiny had done Elysium a favour: had the boy lived, he would have gone to the bad.²⁸ Cicero tells the same story more briefly, omitting the detail of sleep, but using the term *psychomantium* and ascribing the tale to the *Consolation of Crantor of Soli* (*floruit* ca. 300 BC). It seems that the tale had become a commonplace of consolation literature, which concerned itself with untimely death in particular.²⁹ If the oracle of the dead consulted was supposed to correspond to any known one, then the Italian

Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 12.113-57; Soph. Fr. 453-61 and Fr. 748, *TrGF* Pearson = Bekker, *Anecd. Gr.* 414.3; Zonaras s.v. 'Αορπος.

²⁸ Plutarch (*Mor.*: 108d) appropriately associates the tale with that of Cleobis and Biton.

²⁹ Cic. *Tusc.* 1.115; the prophecy is found also at *Greek Anthology*, Appendix. Vol. 6 (oracula) no. 235 Cougny, under the title 'oracle from a *psychomanteion*'. Consolation literature: see Vrugt-Lentz 1960:40-42; cf. also Bouché-Leclercq 1879-82:Vol. 3, 368; Rose 1950:274-75.

Avernus is the most obvious candidate. But insofar as it is a parable, the tale is valuable for indicating the means by which one might generally expect to experience a ghost in any oracle of the dead.³⁰

In general, the association between sleep, death, dreams and night was tight. Homer's Hermes escorts the souls of the dead suitors to the underworld by taking them past the 'People of Dreams', and he guides them there with the golden rod with which he also lulls the living to sleep or wakes them. Hesiod tells that 'Night gave birth to hateful Doom and black Fate and Death, and she gave birth to Sleep and to the tribe of Dreams.' She lives in dark Hades with Sleep and Death, holding the former in her arms. This scene was represented on the archaic 'Chest of Cypselus' seen by Pausanias *Periegetes* at Olympia: Sleep and Death are boys; white Sleep sleeps in his mother's arms, while Death is black; both of them have their feet turned backwards.³¹ Homer has the pair of Sleep and Death carrying off Sarpedon when he is killed in battle. Archaic vase illustrations of this scene can portray the brothers as a pair of beautiful bearded, winged warriors, with Sarpedon's departing soul as a miniature version of his body, also winged, and floating above it.³²

Deities presiding at the *nekyomanteia*

It seems that a wide range of powers presided over the *nekyomanteia*. Hades and Persephone were apparently the initial presiding deities at the Acheron. In the *Odyssey*, the site of the *nekyomanteion* can be referred to succinctly as 'the house of Hades', but it is Persephone's prerogative in particular to assemble and scatter the shades, and to send up Gorgon heads for consultants who tarried there too long. The Persephone statuettes from

³⁰ Cf. Bouché-Leclercq 1879-82:Vol. 1, 330-31, 338; Frazer 1898 on Paus. 3.17; Collison-Morley 1912:37; Hopfner 1921-4:Vol. 2, 562; Collard 1949:95; Cumont 1949:97. For a concise review of the evidence for incubation in Greece, see Deubner 1900:1-48.

³¹ Hom. *Od.* 24.1-4, 11; Hes. *Theog.* 211-12, 748-57; cf. Virg. *Aen.* 6.278. Chest of Cypselus: Paus. 5.18.1; see Highbarger 1940:6; Vermeule 1979:145-53; Mainoldi 1987:18-22; Brillante 1991:38; Faraone 1992:133-34 (apotropaic hobbling?).

³² Hom. *Il.* 16.454; cf. 14.231. The iconography of Sleep and Death carrying Sarpedon off is catalogued and discussed in detail by Mainoldi 1987; see especially Paris, Louvre F388 (*LIMC*, 'Sarpedon' no. 7; cf. no. 6); and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972:11.10 (*LIMC*, 'Sarpedon' no. 4). See also Shapiro 1993:132-65 and Sourvinou-Inwood 1995:326-27.

the Prodromos-monastery site and its hill attest her importance in the immediate area. Persephone was, appropriately, a goddess defined by her own supreme ability to return from the underworld. Plutarch's rationalized version of 'Theseus' attempted abduction of Persephone is located at the court of king Aidoneus, that is Hades, king of the Molossians.³³ For Ampelius the Acheron *nekyomanteion* was associated with a temple of the underworld Zeus-Typhon.³⁴ Hermes perhaps became involved with the oracle between the composition of the first and second *Odyssey Nekyias*.³⁵ The fragments of Alexis' *Thesprotians* indicate that he had an, or even the major, role at the oracle by the 4th century BC, and Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* and the Elpenor vase suggest that this was true already in the 5th, if they have been interpreted correctly. The gods of the *nekyomanteion* eventually became known as 'Molossian gods', even though it was in Thesprotia.³⁶

Our sources for the identity of the patron deity at Avernus agree that she was female, but are otherwise vague and contradictory, perhaps indicating that there was no continuous cult there: Ps.-Lycophron and Diodorus offer Persephone, Virgil Hecate-Trivia. Dio Cassius (3rd century AD) tells that a statue of a female deity, who may or may not have been Calypso, overlooked the lake, and that she sweated during Agrippa's alterations there. An unconvincing case has been made for the presiding deity having been Hera.³⁷

Pomponius Mela calls the Tainaron *nekyomanteion* a 'cave of Neptune', that is 'of Poseidon', confirming the god's direct patronage of the oracle. Myth explained that he had been given Tainaron by the more oracular Apollo,³⁸ whose continuing good will to it is seen in the tale of

³³ Persephone marshals the shades: Hom. *Od.* 10.491, 512, 534, 564; 11.47, 69, 213, 226, 386, 635. Return of fertility goddesses from the underworld: see especially Bérard 1974. Aidoneus: Plut. *Thes.* 31 and 35; Persephone-Kore is differentiated into a wife *Phersephone* and a daughter *Kore*.

³⁴ Ampelius, *Liber memorialis* 8.3.

³⁵ Book 24 is often regarded as a later 'continuation' of the *Odyssey*: Heubeck *et al.* 1988-92: Vol. 3, 356-58; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995:14; Johnston 1999:14.

³⁶ Phot. *Lex.* s.v. θεοὶ Μολυττικοὶ and Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 10.514; cf. Plut. *Thes. loc. cit.* and Hesychius s.v. θεοεπιής.

³⁷ [Lycophron] *Alexandra* 698, 710; Diodorus 4.22; Virg. *Aen.* 6.118, 247, 564; Dio Cassius 48.50.4 (cf. Hardie 1969:32); Sil. Ital. *Pun.* 12.120-29 speaks more vaguely of Stygian powers. Hera: Renehan 1974.

³⁸ Pompon. Mela 2.51; Strabo 373-74; Paus. 2.33; *Suda* s.v. ἀνεΐλεν; cf. Bölte 1932:2042; Ginouvès 1962:342; Schumacher 1993:74

Corax. No evidence directly addresses the identity of any presiding deities at Heracleia.

***Psychagôgoi* and Sibyls: staff at the *nekyomanteia*?**

If there was a resident staff at the *nekyomanteia*, and if these went under a common title, this was likely to have been *psychagôgoi* or ‘evocators’; as we have seen, the derived form *psychagôgion* is likely to have been one of the earlier terms for an oracle of the dead. *Psychagôgoi* are explicitly located at Avernus by Maximus of Tyre, who gives them a role similar to that attributed to the race of Cimmerians there by Ephorus and to priests that ‘managed the place under contract’ by Strabo. Hence it may well have been from here that Plutarch’s *psychagôgoi* came ‘from Italy’ to lay the ghost of the Regent Pausanias. The parallelism between the accounts of this same Pausanias’ consultation of the ghost of Cleonice, which Plutarch (twice) sets at the Heracleia *nekyomanteion* and which Pausanias Periegetes sets among the *psychagôgoi* of Phigalia, may suggest that the Phigalian *psychagôgoi* had a *nekyomanteion* of their own (see below). *Psychagôgoi* first appear in Greek literature in Aeschylus’ fragmentary play of that name. The *psychagôgoi* of the title, who seem to have been a race, again akin to Homer’s Cimmerians, rather than a defined group of experts (‘we, the race [γένος] that dwells around the lake ...’), are based, as we have seen, at a lake-*nekyomanteion*, which is probably to be identified as the Acheron one. It is possible that the consulter of the Thesprotian oracle of Zeus at Dodona who asked whether the *psychagôgos* Dorios should be employed, had in mind a person based at that same, local, Acheron *nekyomanteion*.³⁹ An indication that there may have been no *psychagôgoi* at the Tainaron *nekyomanteion* is the curious fact that the Spartans called in *psychagôgoi* all the way from Italy when the ghost of the Regent Pausanias needed laying

³⁹ *Psychagôgoi* etc. at Avernus: Max. Tyr. 8.2; Ephorus, *FGrH* 70 F134a = Strabo 244; Plut. *Mor.* 560ef. Consultations by Pausanias: Plut. *Mor.* 555c; *Cim.* 6; Paus. 3.17.9; Aesch. *Psychagogoi*, especially Frr. 273 and 273a, *TrGF*, both quoted in full above; another play in the same trilogy, *Ostologoi*, ‘Bone-gatherers’ (Frr. 179-80, *TrGF*), also dealt with the manipulation of the dead; in this play the relatives of the suitors slain by Odysseus came to collect their remains. Dorios: Evangelidis 1935 no. 23 = Christidis *et al.* 1999 no. 5; he is attached to Acheron by Van Straten 1982:215; also, Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 10.495 uses the abstract term ψυχαγωγία in connection with Odysseus’s necromancy at the Acheron.

(see above).⁴⁰ We hear nothing of the staff of the Heracleia *nekyomanteion*.

Although Virgil's association of the Cumaean Sibyl with the Avernus *nekyomanteion* may initially appear contrived, the association of some kind of Sibyl with the *nekyomanteion* was an old one. Already in the late 3rd century BC, Naevius had taken Aeneas to visit a 'Cimmerian' Sibyl. The epithet salutes the mythical neighbours of the underworld, doomed to live dismally in perpetual darkness. Varro's differentiation between the Cumaean Sibyl and the Cimmerian one was doubtless a mere pedantry. Propertius refers to a 'trembling Sibyl of Avernus'. In the wake of Virgil, Silius Italicus has a pair of Sibyls, one dead and one alive, guide Scipio through his consultation at the lake.⁴¹

A series of thirty vases painted by the 'Cumaean painter' (*floruit* ca. 350-320 BC) probably depict a Sibyl-like woman in the performance of necromancy, as Kerrigan has shown.⁴² A woman, seated on a rock or a chair with a bowl and various other accessories, faces various standing figures. These have whitened faces, are wrapped tightly in *himation*-shrouds, and may reflect a burial-posture in the unnatural crook of their legs. They often have a *thyrsus* tucked into their shrouds, expressing a Dionysiac affiliation. Between woman and standing figure there is often an altar, sometimes garlanded, and a fillet hangs on the wall behind. The obvious conclusion is that the standing figures are ghosts, that the subject of the scenes is necromancy, and that they reflect local traditions or practices. While the ghosts vary in form, the seated female figures conservatively resemble each other, and are broadly comparable to the Delphic Pythia on the Aegeus vase: they are surely Sibyls. Sometimes the woman holds a branch: some antecedent of the golden bough of Virgil's Sibyl?⁴³

⁴⁰ Late Spartan inscriptions, *IG* 5.210 and 211, record a prophet (μάντις) of Posedion of Tainaron, but he cannot have run the *nekyomanteion* because he was based in the city.

⁴¹ Naevius: *Punic War*, Fr. 12 Strzlecki (Teubner); cf. Corssen 1913; Waszink 1948:54-58; Castagnoli 1977:76-77; Clark 1979:207; Parke & McGing 1988:72-74 (and *passim* for Sibyls in general). Varro: as quoted at Lact. *Inst.* 1.6.7; *pace* Corssen 1913; Waszink 1948:55; Clark 1979:205-07, 211. The Cimmerian Sibyl was also mentioned by Piso (Lact. *Inst.* 1.6.9, source of the Varro fragment also) and [Aur. Vict.] *Orig.* 10. Propertius: 4.1.49; cf. Eitrem 1945:108. Silius Italicus: *Pun.* 13.400-895.

⁴² E.g. Portland Art Museum inv. 26.282 and 26.288, Cleveland Museum of Art inv. 67.234 and Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva inv. 11588 (mirror: figure 10). Kerrigan 1980.

⁴³ Cf. Delatte 1932:185-86 for the Aegeus vase. Like the Pythia, Virgil's Sibyl is ecstatic: *Aen.* 6.77-82.

Further *nekyomanteia*?

Candidates for further *nekyomanteia* fall into three categories: sites at which literary sources may indirectly imply the existence of a *nekyomanteion*, oracles of named dead heroes and known underworld entrances. In the first category a good case can be made only for Phigalia (see above). The actual site of a Phigalian *nekyomanteion* can only be speculated upon.⁴⁴ Byzantine scholarship offers three further candidate sites for *nekyomanteia*, all unlikely: Thessaly, lake Stymphalus in Arcadia, and Etruria. Modern scholarship produces a fifth candidate, more unlikely still: Will makes the arbitrary suggestion that Herodotus' tale of Periander and Melissa, including as it does a procession to a Heraion, had been transferred to the Acheron *nekyomanteion* from an otherwise unattested Corinthian *nekyomanteion* in Hera's sanctuaries at Perachora.⁴⁵

The second category is made up of oracles of dead heroes, such as those of Trophonius at Lebadeia and Amphiaraus at Oropus, the former of whom was probably, and the latter of whom was certainly consulted by means of incubation. The ancients associated these closely with *nekyomanteia*, often mentioning them in the same breath. But, significantly, hero oracles are never alluded to directly under the term *nekyomanteion* or its synonyms, this despite copious literary and epigraphic evidence in the

⁴⁴ Site of Phigalian *nekyomanteion*: Pausanias would have told us if it was in the cave of Black Demeter on Mt. Elaion (8.42.1-10; cf. Bruit 1986; Borgeaud 1988:57-58), or in the sanctuary of Demeter the Fury at Thelpousa (8.25.4-11; cf. Johnston 1999:258-65); Levi 1971:61 locates it at a deep hole into which the river Neda disappears. Pausanias's Phigalian visit may have been contextualised against his helotic intrigues in neighbouring Messenia: Thuc. 1.132. One of two erroneous emendations of Plut. *Mor.* 560ef transforms *ex Italia*s into *ex Phigalias* (ITALIAS, FIGALIAS) to have the same Phigalian *psychagôgoi* brought in to lay Pausanias's own ghost in due course: Mittelhaus at Meyer 1938:2084.

⁴⁵ *Psychagôgoi* from Thessaly: schol. Eur. *Alc.* 1128, including Plut. *Homerikai Meletai*, F1 Bernadakis. The scholiast is evidently speculating: it refers to Thessaly only because this is the context of the play. Stymphalus: Triclinius on Aristoph. *Ran.* 1266, followed by Dover 1993 *ad loc.*; Radt at Aesch. *Psychagogoi*, Fr. 273 *TrGF*; Lloyd-Jones 1981:22. The *Psychagogoi* was almost certainly set at the Acheron (see above). Etruria: Bekker, *Anecd. Gr.* 414.3 = Soph. Fr. 748, *TrGF* Pearson with *Etym. Mag.* s.v. Ἰταλῶν; and Eustath. on Hom. *Od.* 10.514; see Radt & Pearson on Soph. *ad loc.*; Erbse 1950:a 127; Clark 1979:65-68. The 'Tyrsenian' oracle was none other than the ('Italian') Avernus. Perachora: Will 1953 and 1955:83, 242, followed by Donnadiou & Vilatte 1996:55, 86-90 and rejected by Germain 1954:372; Salmon 1972:165-66. See Johnston 1997 for Hera at Perachora.

cases of Trophonius and Amphiaraus.⁴⁶ This suggests that there remained a conceptual difference between the two phenomena. The obvious hypothesis is that at *nekyomanteia* one consulted any ghost of one's choosing, whereas at hero oracles one consulted the hero himself. However, it may be that in both types a privileged dead being presided over lesser ghosts. There are slight indications that Tettix and Melissa had special roles at the Tainaron and Acheron *nekyomanteia*. So, if we have correctly identified the significant distinction, it was perhaps one of emphasis rather than quality.

The third category, that of known underworld entrances, provides the potentially most prolific source of further *nekyomanteia*. These entrances could manifest themselves as caves, sometimes mephitic ones, or as 'birdless' lakes. Perhaps every small town had one of its own. To the caves attached myths of the descent of Persephone or the ascent of Cerberus, the latter of which is associated with the Heracleia and Tainaron *nekyomanteia*. Both of these myths attached, for example, to Hermione, which had an elaborate complex of chthonic sanctuaries sacred to Demeter and Clymenus (Hades). These incorporated a chasm leading to the underworld and an 'Acherusian' lake. Access to the underworld was so direct this way that the local dead were dispensed from paying the ferryman. In Sicily Hades had driven his chariot up through a cavern below the Henna plateau, snatched Persephone as she picked flowers on it, and taken her down again at the pool of Cyane near Syracuse.⁴⁷ Mephitic sanctuaries were known as *ploutônia*, and their

⁴⁶ Ancient sources associating *nekyomanteia* with hero oracles: Plut. *Mor.* 109; Max. Tyr. 8.2; Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 10.3.11; Lucian retrieves Menippus from his necromancy through Trophonius's hole. Scholarship's tendency to refer to Trophonius's oracle as a *nekyomanteion* is regrettable: for example Eitrem 1928:5; Johnston 1999:29, and cf. Cumont 1949:86. For Trophonius in general, see especially Paus. 9.39; cf. Bonnechère(s) 1989, 1990; Clark 1968; Hani 1975; Papachatzis 1963-74 on Pausanias *ad loc.* (with diagram of oracle, but the inner hole is surely drawn too big); Schachter 1967 and 1981-94: Vol. 3, 66-89 (listing full sources), Vallas & Pharaklas 1969; Waszink 1968. For Amphiaraus in general, see especially Paus. 1.34; cf. Coulton 1968; Petrakos 1968 and 1974; Schachter 1981-94:1, 19-26 (listing full sources).

⁴⁷ Hermione: Paus. 2.35.4-10 (site; cf. Wyatt 1975); Strabo 373 (ferryman; cf. *Orphic Argonautica* 1136-38 on the mythical Hermioneia); Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.1; Callim. *Hec.* Fr. 99-100 Hollis (Persephone); Eur. *Her.* 615 (Cerberus). Sicily: Diodorus 5.1-4; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.107-13; Ovid, *Met.* 5.285-429; Solinus 5.14. Hades also snatched Persephone down caverns at the following places. Lerna: Paus. 2.46.7. Pheneos: Conon, *Narrationes* 15 at Phot. *Bibl.* 3, 8-39 Henry. Erineos near Eleusis: Paus. 1.38.5 and *Orphic Hymns* 18.12-15 Quandt. Crete: Bacchyl. Fr. 46 S-M. Cyzicus: Prop. 3.22.1-4 and *Priapea* 75.11-12. Sicyon (?): Callim. Fr. 99. Colonus: Soph. *OC* 1590-94 with scholia and Phanodemus, *FGrH* 325 F27 (also site of Theseus's

vaporous caves themselves as *charônia*, places of Plouton or Charon. The Maeander valley was particularly rich in such mephitic caves, with well documented examples at Hierapolis and Acharaca.⁴⁸ In addition to the famous ‘birdless’ (ἄορνος) lakes of Avernus and the Thesprotian Acherusia, we hear of a number of others, including one in remote Tartessos in Spain.⁴⁹ The notion and name of birdlessness could also be applied to *charônia*. In the Maeander valley again the *charônion* at Carian Thymbria was known as *Aornos*.⁵⁰ The Greeks could not decide whether the supposed ἄορνος at Babylon was a lake or a cave.⁵¹ Worthy of mention also is Nonacris in Arcadia. Here the Styx, no less, issued in the form of a tiny stream from the side of Mt. Chelmos and fell 200 metres down a sheer rock-face into a small pool, which was ringed by a stone wall. The falls are now known as Mavroneri (‘Black Water’). The place would seem to have been ideal for the performance of necromancy, though we hear nothing of it there.⁵²

descent). In addition to Heracleia and Tainaron, Cerberus was brought up at the following places: Mt. Laphystios near Coroneia (Paus. 9.34.5), Troezen (Paus. 2.31.2 – Semele too), Pylos (Paus. 6.25.2-3, where Hades’s hatred of Heracles is presumably a response to the theft of Cerberus). See the lists of such places at Bouché-Leclercq 1897-82: Vol. 3, 366; Ganschietz 1919:2383-87 (some sites given separate entries under variant names); Hopfner 1921-4: Vol. 2, 552-53, 1935; Collard 1949:92; Germain 1954:373-73; Clark 1979:89.

⁴⁸ *Charônia* are listed by Antigonus of Carystus 123. Bouché-Leclercq 1879:82: Vol. 3, 333 believes *ploutônia* functioned as *nekyomanteia*. Hierapolis: Damascius at Phot. *Bibl.* 344b-345a Henry; for the nature of the site, see Strabo 629-30 and Dio Cassius 68.27; cf. Brice 1978 and Bean 1971:235-58 with plate 75 and 1975:391. Acharaca: Strabo 549-50; cf. Bean 1971:219-20 with plate 63.

⁴⁹ Tartessos: schol. Aristoph. *Ran.* 475. Sauromatai/Sarmatians: Heracl. Pont. Fr. 128a-b Wehrli. There was also a ‘bottomless’ lake at Argos Hippoboton: Hesychius s.v. ἄβυσσος. Lake Titaresios in Thessaly was connected with the rivers of Hades: Lucan 6.375-77.

⁵⁰ Thymbria: Strabo 636. Hierapolis, too, killed birds (references above); there was yet another *charônion* on the Maeander at Myous in Caria, according to Antigonus of Carystus 123 and Strabo 579. The hole at Potniai near Thebes, where, by one account, Amphiarus had descended, was birdless and so also probably mephitic (Paus. 9.8.3). Stat. *Theb.* 2.32-57 has the Tainaron cave killing birds, although it does not appear to have been mephitic.

⁵¹ Lake: Python, *TrGF* 91, Fr. 1, *Agen*, with Snell 1976:99-117; Mithrobarzanes: Lucian, *Men.* 9. Hole: Dio Cass. 68.27; cf. Lucr. 6.740-68.

⁵² Hdt. 6.74 (where Cleomenes contemplates exacting an oath by the river; cf. How and Wells 1912 *ad loc.*) and Paus. 8.17.6 (with Papachatzis 1963-74 *ad loc.*, including illustration). Hermes of Nonacris appears adjacently to, albeit not in direct association with, the ‘necromancer’ Tiresias at [Lycophron] *Alexandra* 680-82. The water was supposedly a quick poison, killing Alexander among others, but the only vessel in which it could be contained was a mule hoof (or horn); see Plut. *Alex.* 77.2; Vitruv. 8.3.16; Ael. *NA* 10.40 and the other sources cited at Meyer 1936.

In literary necromancies the action is sometimes given a setting which is not presented as an established *nekyomanteion*, but which nonetheless exhibits or is made to exhibit the topographical features associated with them, namely caves, marshes or lakes and (after Acheron and particularly Avernus) dark woods. Thus Lucan's Erictho performs her necromancy in Thessaly in a cave hidden by a lightless canopy of trees that is cave-like in itself. The battlefield on which Statius' Tiresias performs his necromancy is beside a wood so thick that there is only a 'ghost' of light beneath its canopy. Seneca's Tiresias performs his necromancy in Thebes beside marshes in dark woods, and uses magic to open up fissures of his own. His wood is dark underneath, even when there is daylight above. Lucian's Chaldaean Babylonian, Mithrobarzanes, performed a necromancy for Menippus in dark woods beside a marshy lake, but used his magic to open up a hole in the ground there. Ovid's Circe goes a stage further and sprinkles magic potions to create the requisite dark woods as well as a fissure, when she evocates ghosts to help her turn Picus' companions into animals.⁵³

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⁵³ For the general characteristics of such sites, cf. Liedloff 1884:17-19; Headlam 1902:54. Lucan, *Phars.* 6.639-53; Stat. *Theb.* 4.419-72; Sen. *Oed.* 530-47, 583; Lucian, *Men.* 9; Ovid, *Met.* 14.403-11; the woods created are so dark that they turn the surrounding woods pale from terror and by contrast.

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