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The *Theophania* of Apollo: a New Approach to the Proem of Parmenides and the Topography of the Sanctuary of Delphi*

David Hernández Castro

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ABSTRACT – The advances that have taken place in recent decades in the investigation of the ritual and topographical structure of the Sanctuary of Delphi have brought to light strong correspondences with the narrative structure of the Proem of Parmenides. These correspondences, of a ritual, topographical and narrative nature, could be a sign that Parmenides' hymn was composed to be performed in a civic and religious festival of ancient Elea that followed the model of the *Theophania* of Delphi. In this paper I present the signs and evidence in favour of this thesis, which implies not only a revision of the traditional interpretations of the Proem, but also the possibility of using it as historical evidence to improve our knowledge of the religious festivals held at Delphi. According to this interpretation, the Proem would not describe a *katabasis* or an *anabasis*, but the *epidemia* or arrival of Apollo at Delphi from the land of the Hyperboreans. The narrator would be Apollo (and not Parmenides), and the itinerary of his journey, that of the places and stations of the *Theophania* procession. This reading also offers a consistent interpretation of the sculptures and inscriptions found in the *Insula* II of Velia. It is quite likely that the *pholarchoi* were priests of Apollo, whose ritual consecration took place at the festival for which Parmenides' hymn was composed.

KEYWORDS – Apollo; Athens; Delphi; Elea; Empedocles; heortology; Parmenides; ritual; *Septerion*; *Theophania* – Apollo; Atene; Delfi; Elea; Empedocle; eortologia; Parmenide; rituale; *Septerion*; *Teofania*.

1. INTRODUCTION

No interpretation of Parmenides' Proem has succeeded in settling the controversy between the proponents of the *anabasis* and the *katabasis*, leaving the direction of the narrator's journey (towards the light or

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towards the House of Night) as problematic an issue as in H. Diels' time¹. This inability to settle the debate is a powerful signal not only that we need to examine the context as much as the text, but also that the key to interpreting this context is the ritual. And there is a good reason for this. Studies of ritual and myth have discovered in recent decades that the simple idea of reflection or complementarity is not enough to describe the complex relationship between ritual and myth. Rather than reflecting or complementing each other, what they actually do is to constantly *interact* with each other and with the environment around them, in each case producing a meaning that they lack in other contexts or when they are apart². Not only do we need the ritual to understand the myth (and vice versa), but we need to see them acting together, a conclusion that fits perfectly with the problems of interpretation of Parmenides' Proem. When we are faced with a myth-ritual ensemble, trying to access the meaning of the text in isolation from its context is a task as impractical as trying to fit the pieces of a puzzle together in a room with the lights off.

The thesis I will defend here is that Parmenides' hymn was composed to be performed at a festival dedicated to the *Theophania* of Apollo. This festival was held in Elea, but it followed the model or schema of ritual and myth of the *Theophania* which was celebrated every year in the sanctuary of Delphi. This implies that the Proem of Parmenides describes neither an *anabasis* nor a *katabasis*, but an arrival or *epidemia* (ἐπιδημία), and more specifically, the arrival of Apollo at Delphi from the land of the Hyperboreans. This was the scene depicted on the east pediment of the Temple of Apollo rebuilt by the Alcmaeonids at the end of the 6th century BCE, and it was also the motif of Alcaeus' paean whose paraphrase we have preserved through Himerius. The information available on the festival of the *Theophania* may seem scanty, but the most important aspects of its ritual and narrative content can be reconstructed through the combined analysis of the fragments and testimonies of the Alcaeus' paean, the testimony of Herodotus, the motif of the east pediment of the Temple of Apollo, and recent research on the topography and itinerary of the processions at the Sanctuary of Delphi. The results of this analysis reveal that the *Theophania* must have been closely related to the *Septerion* festival (in both cases, the arrival of Apollo was celebrated, but not only that), and it is quite likely that these festivals and their relationship constituted the historical, cultural and religious context for the hymns of Parmenides and Empedocles, with whose ritual and narrative structure they are extremely consistent.

¹ Cf. Primavesi 2013, 37-81 and Tor 2017, 347-359 (with bibliography).

² Cf. Kowalzig 2007, 23.

There are many novel aspects in this interpretation. Among others, that the narrator of Parmenides' hymn is not Parmenides, not even a mortal, but Apollo; or that the *Heliades* maidens are not the famous sisters of Phaethon (who were not so famous in Parmenides' time), but the *Horai* or Seasons (*i.e.*, the «maidens of the Sun»); or that the Goddess who receives the narrator is the muse Calliope. But just as novel as this is its consistency with the historical and cultural context of Parmenides, and the use of Parmenides' text as a historical evidence capable of providing us with information about this context. In particular, it sheds light on the topography of the religious festivals celebrated at Delphi and the meaning and function of the *pholarchoi* of the Velian inscriptions.

The festival of the *Theophania* was closely related to the *Septerion* festival, which also celebrated the arrival of Apollo (in this case, from his search for a place in which to build his temple). It is quite probable that the relationship between these festivals was similar to that which existed between the festivals of the *Delia* and the *Apollonia* held at the Sanctuary of Delos (the *Delia*, every four years – eight, in the case of the *Septerion* –, and the *Apollonia* in the intervening years). There are great similarities and differences between the hymns of Parmenides and Empedocles, which correspond closely to those we can find between the *Theophania* and the *Septerion*. The most likely explanation for this is that they were composed to be performed at local festivals that reproduced the model of each of these great festivals held at the Sanctuary of Delphi (the *Theophania*, in the case of Parmenides; and the *Septerion*, in the case of Empedocles). Many cities instituted their festivals looking to Delphi, but at that historical moment the Sanctuary had become the great showcase of the political agenda of Athens, and it is unlikely that this agenda had no influence on the decision of Elea and Akragas to institute festivals that reduced their distance not only with the Sanctuary of Delphi, but also with the political and religious atmosphere of the Athenian empire.

2. THE FESTIVAL OF THE SEPTERION

Once every eight years the Delphians held a festival commemorating Apollo's combat with the Serpent and his search for redemption through exile, servitude, and purifications in the Valley of Tempe³. The reason for

³ On the *Septerion*, cf. Pfister 1923, 1553-1557; Halliday 1928, 65-73; Jeanmaire 1939, 387-411; Fontenrose 1980², 453-461; Cavalli 1994, 9-31; Calame 2001, 100-104; Rutherford 2001, 111-112, 200-205; Parker 2011, 191-199; Brelich 2013², 418-473; more bibliography and ancient sources in Hernández Castro 2019a, 174 n. 7.

the combat was the *aition* of both the Sanctuary and the Pythian Games, and was related to the rites of propitiation of harvests and abundance of livestock (another field of action of Apollo, which the Athenians celebrated in the *Thargelia* and the *Pyanopsia*)⁴. At first, the motif of purifications was not part of the festival's plot. It was introduced sometime between the late 6th and the first half of the 5th century BCE, probably as a consequence of the increasing Athenian influence on the Sanctuary⁵.

According to Plutarch's testimony, the *Septerion* was celebrated not long before the Pythian Games, and if we take into account that the *koros* that performed Apollo had to travel from Delphi to Tempe, and then return with the laurel of the crowns that were awarded to the victors, it is most likely that it began on a date close to the summer solstice. At this time of the year, the solar alignment could have been used as part of the staging, something that is particularly noticeable in the ritual episodes that were celebrated in the Threshing Floor (ἄλωζ)⁶. This place, which at the beginning of the *Grande Fouille* was erroneously associated with the circular space under the terrace of the Temple of Apollo («l'Aire»), has recently been located some five hundred meters further west (*Fig. 1*, «les aires»)⁷. Its conditions seem to indicate that the Delphians actually used it for threshing and winnowing grain, which reinforces the festival's connection with the rites of harvest propitiation and grain purification⁸. Here, a young man or *koros* representing Apollo arrived at dawn from a road that probably came from the Castalian spring, escorted by a group of torchbearers, just at the moment when the sun was rising behind him from the top of the hills of the Phaedriades. The road crossed the Sanctuary, the altar and the Temple of Apollo, went through the *SD 435* entrance, passed by the place where in the second half of the 4th century

⁴ *Aition* Sanctuary: *b.Ap.* 356-374; *aition* Pythian Games: *schol.* Pind. *hypoth. Pyth.* a, c Drachmann, *Ou. Met.* I 445, *Hyg. Fab.* 145, 5; rites of propitiation of the cycle of the seasons and relationship with the *Thargelia* and the *Pyanopsia*: Parker 2005, 203-205 and 2011, 196-199; Hernández Castro 2019a, 183-189.

⁵ Purifications: Jeanmaire 1939, 392; Hernández Castro 2019a, 227-229. Influence of Athens: La Coste-Messelière 1946, 271-287; Parke - Wormell 1956, 144-150; Bicknell 1970, 129-131; Bowden 2005, 95-100; Scott 2014, 98-111; Hernández Castro 2019a, 220-229.

⁶ Cf. *Plut. De defect. orac.* 410A, 418A. At the summer solstice: Fontenrose 1980², 460; Hernández Castro 2019a, 205-209; in the month of *Ilaios* (ca. June/July): Usener 1904, 325; *Apellaios* (July/August): Weniger 1876, 16; beginning in *Apellaios* and return in *Boukatios* (August/September): Pfister 1923, 1556; *Boukatios*: Mommsen 1878, 211; the Pythian Games began on the seventh day of the month *Boukatios*; solar alignment during the solstice: Hernández Castro 2019a, 205-209.

⁷ Jacquemin - Laroche 2014, 744-753.

⁸ Cf. Hernández Castro 2019a, 188-189.

BCE the West Portico was built, and finally led to the great terrace of the Threshing Floor (Fig. 1).

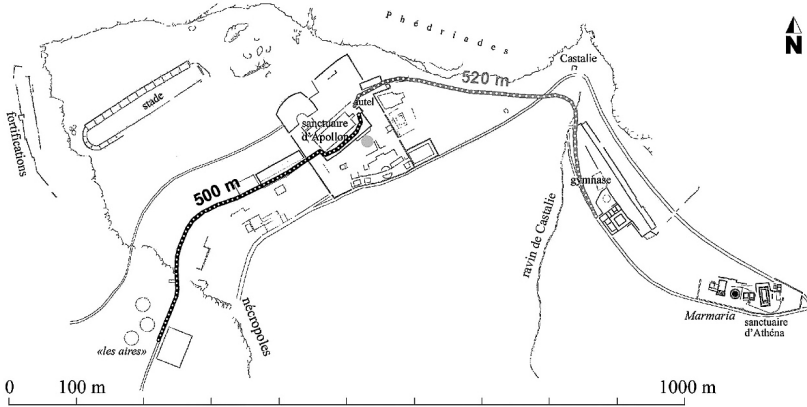


Figure 1. – Sanctuary of Delphi: Itineraries of the lampadedromia from the Gymnasium to the Altar of Apollo and of the processions from the Threshing Floor («les aires») to the Altar of Apollo. Jacquemin - Laroche 2014, 745, fig. 10
(© Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres - CRAI).

Our sources do not clarify what was the origin of this road (called the *Dolonia*), but there are many reasons to believe that it came from the Castalian Spring⁹, where the ritual would have begun with a staging of the combat of Apollo against the Serpent. Once on the Threshing Floor, the young man and his escort of torchbearers burned a hut, overturned a ritual table, and fled from the Sanctuary towards the Valley of Tempe. It was here that the young man, following in the footsteps of Apollo, cel-

⁹ The *Dolonia* alluded to by Plutarch (*De defect. orac.* 418A-B) was probably the road leading from the gymnasium and the Castalian Spring to the altar of the Temple of Apollo, along which ran the itinerary of the lampadedromia instituted by the Delphians in 160/159 BCE in honor of the Attalids of Pergamum (for this lampadedromia, cf. Jacquemin - Mulliez - Rougemont 2012, 301-302, n° 167 [= CGRN 204]) (cf. Fig. 1). This dynasty was famous in Antiquity for its victory against the Galatians (a Celtic tribe that had settled in the area of Thrace, cf. Paus. I 8, 1), which very likely led to the comparison with the famous night raid of Diomedes and Odysseus against the legendary king of the Thracians (Rhesus) described in the Book 10 of the *Iliad*, called precisely the *Doloneia*. The *Dolonia*, therefore, could be the name of the lampadedromia, and by extension, of the road along which it ran (or vice versa). The race was held on the 12th of the month of *Herakleios* (approximately May/June), that is, shortly before the *Septerion* festival, and its itinerary, before reaching the Altar of Apollo, crossed the terrace of Attalus I.

celebrated the rites of purification, crowned himself with laurel, and began his triumphal return to Delphi, carrying with him the laurel of the crowns that were given to the victors of the Pythian Games¹⁰.

Many aspects of Empedocles' hymn correspond to the narrative structure of this festival, and it is quite likely that this is because it was composed to be performed at a festival that followed its pattern¹¹. A considerable number of religious festivals that were celebrated in the cities of Ancient Greece were modeled on the festivals that were celebrated in their cities of origin or in the great panhellenic sanctuaries of Greece (what I. Rutherford, following an idea of C. Sourvinou-Inwood, has called «general myth-ritual pattern or 'schema'»)¹². This was particularly the case with the *Septerion* festival, traces of which can be found in festivals that were held in southern Italy (Reggio), Athens, Troezen and Crete¹³. There are many elements in the ritual and narrative structure of this festival that correspond to the narrative structure of Empedocles' hymn (beginning with the name of Empedocles' hymn, the *Katharmoi*, and the most plausible hypothesis of the identity of its narrator, Apollo), and it is possible to consistently locate these correspondences within the topographical structure and the monumental and cultic landscape of ancient Akragas (in particular, the purification rites, in the *temenos* of Apollo; the rites of propitiation of harvests, in the *ekklesiasterion*; the offering of the firstfruits, in the altar of the Temple of Apollo, which G. Adornato identified with the Temple A)¹⁴.

3. THE FESTIVAL OF THE THEOPHANIA

The great similarity that exists between the hymns of Empedocles and Parmenides leads one to suspect that the festivals in which they were performed must have been equally related. There is no trace of the motif of purifications in Parmenides' hymn, but if the narrator of this hymn is also

¹⁰ Cf. Plut. *De defect. orac.* 417E-418D; *Quaest. Graec* 293B-F; Ael. *VH* III 1; *schol.* Pind. *hypoth. Pyth.* c Drachmann. Arrival at dawn: cf. Hernández Castro 2019a, 204-205. Origin of the road of the *Dolonia* in the Castalian Spring and ritual staging of the combat, cf. Hernández Castro 2019a, 208-211.

¹¹ Cf. Hernández Castro 2020, 135-203.

¹² Rutherford 2018, 25; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 247.

¹³ Cf. Rutherford 2018, 21-32.

¹⁴ On the Apollo-narrator thesis and the topography of the festival, cf. Hernández Castro 2020, 149-160. Temple A = Temple of Apollo, cf. Adornato 2011, 103-120.

Apollo, the most likely candidate for this relationship is the festival of the *Theophania* that was celebrated at the Sanctuary of Delphi. This festival is much less documented than the *Septerion* festival, but we do have a mention from Herodotus and a paraphrase of a paean by Alcaeus that was either composed for this occasion or at least inspired by it¹⁵. The motif of the festival was the ἐπιδημία of Apollo at Delphi after his stay in the land of the Hyperboreans¹⁶, a motif that is widely attested in the sources and that according to C. Marconi's hypothesis (see below) occupied one of the most visible places of the Sanctuary: the east pediment of the Temple of Apollo¹⁷. Many authors have tried to fit the moment of its celebration with the date on which the Delphians celebrated Apollo's birthday (the 7th of the month of *Bysios*, February/March), but what was being commemorated in the *Theophania* was not his birthday, nor even his annual return to Delphi, but his first arrival, which the paraphrase of Himerius clearly places at «mid-summer» (θέρους τὸ μέσον), *i.e.*, during the solstice or at that time of year¹⁸. The two festivals, therefore, were celebrated at the same date (probably, in the month of *Apellaios*, Pfister's hypothesis for the *Septerion*, cf. 1923, 1556), were related to the cycle of the seasons and the propitiation of harvests, and shared the motif for the arrival of Apollo, either out of the land of the Hyperboreans, or from his search for a suitable place on which to build his temple. And this strongly suggests that in reality we are dealing with two festivals that were part of the same cycle, in which once a year the arrival of Apollo from the land of the Hyperboreans was celebrated, and once every eight years, the combat against the Serpent, the other version of the arrival of Apollo. Something similar to what was done in the Sanctuary of Delos with the festivals of the *Delia* (every four years) and the *Apollonia* (in the intervening years)¹⁹.

¹⁵ Her. I 51, Himer. Or. XLVIII 10-11 (= Alc. fr. 307c Campbell), Alc. fr. 307a, b, d Campbell; inspired by the *Theophania*, but represented in the *Theoxenia*: Rutherford 2001, 27-28; in the *Pythia*: Bowie 2009, 120-121; in the *Theophania*: Petridou 2015, 275-276. Procopius of Gaza, a late author (6th century CE), mentions that the Delphians celebrated a festival to commemorate the arrival (*epidemia*) of the god from the land of the Hyperboreans (Procop. Gaz. Ep. 16, 65 GL).

¹⁶ Cf. Petridou 2015, 275-277; Gagné 2021, 104-116.

¹⁷ Marconi 1996-1997, 5-20.

¹⁸ Discussion and state of the question: Gagné 2021, 107 n. 110; summer solstice: Hannah 2009, 70 and Bilić 2012, 317; at that time of year, but not directly related to the solstice: Bilić 2021, 62. For criticism of the belief that Apollo left the Sanctuary during the winter months (probably a late invention), cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 2005, 162-168.

¹⁹ In favor of *Apellaios*, the name of the month (Apollo, in Dorian dialect) and the *Apellai*, a festival confirmed in the epigraphic record of the Delphic association of the *Labyadaí*, where sacrifices, called *apellaia*, were performed, which were probably related to the induction of young people into the association as full members

The content and narrative structure of Himerius' paraphrase contains very valuable information on the ritual structure that the *Theophania* must have had. Apollo, after spending a year among the Hyperboreans, decides to fulfill Zeus' command and go to Delphi to prophesy justice (δικη) and right (θέμις). At first, the god was reluctant, but the Delphians lured him by organizing choirs of young men who offered him paeans around the tripod. Finally, he arrived at Delphi in midsummer riding his swan chariot, and the nightingales, sparrows and cicadas celebrated this arrival with their songs, and the Castalian spring, gushing its waters.

It is quite likely that in the festival of the *Theophania* the Delphians staged the arrival of the god at Delphi with a procession in which a young man or *koros* played the role of Apollo, as was the case at the *Septerion* festival and the *daphnephoria* that brought the laurel from the Valley of Tempe. In the rites held at Delphi, the *koros* was accompanied by an escort of torch-bearers (Plut. *De defect. orac.* 418B), and in the *daphnephoria*, by young men of noble families (Ael. *VH* III 1), and the latter must have been the case at the *Theophania*, as can be seen from the mention of the young men choirs of the paean of Alcaeus. The procession had to follow the same itinerary (the reverse of the one followed at the *Septerion* festival before leaving for the Valley of Tempe): the Threshing Floor, the road that led to the entrance *SD* 435, the south corner of the Temple of Apollo, and the great altar of Apollo (*Figs. 1* and *2*). The archaeologists of the French School of Athens have been able to document this itinerary in three other processions that were held in the Sanctuary²⁰, and it is quite probable that these and other processions designed their routes fol-

(cf. *CAPInv.* 1964: Labyadai; Rhodes - Osborne 2003, 9). This ritual environment is very appropriate for both the *Theophania* and the *Septerion*, which could have been held on the seventh or eighth day of the month of *Apellaios* (on the seventh day the oracle was active, which would make the procession route very difficult), one month before the beginning of the Pythian Games (on the 7th of the month of *Boukatios*) and the arrival of the *daphnephoria* from the Valley of Tempe. For the relation of these festivals to the cycle of the seasons and the propitiation of harvests, cf. Parker 2011, 196-199 (*Septerion*); Petridou 2015, 277 (*Theophania*); Gagné 2021, 105-109. For the relationship between the *Theophania* and the *Septerion*: cf. Fontenrose 1980², 383; Gagné 2021, 111-112 (cf. Claudius Elianus' comparison between the procession of the *Septerion* and the procession that accompanied the offerings of the Hyperboreans, Ael. *VH* III 1). For the *Delia* and the *Apollonia*, cf. Arnold 1933, 453; Petridou 2015, 275-276. For the penteteric reorganization of the *Delia* (in 426 BCE), cf. *Tb.* III 104.

²⁰ Cf. Jacquemin - Laroche 2014, 742-744 and 745, fig. 10. Inscriptions: Jacquemin - Mulliez - Rougemont 2012, *Eumeneia* (n° 167), *Attaleia* (n° 168), *Alkesippeia* (n° 137). At least since the end of the 4th century BCE this was the main entrance to the Sanctuary, cf. Perrier - Malmay 2016, 725-726; Perrier 2018, 82-87. Cf. Huber - Jacquemin - Laroche 2014, 727-729 and 728, fig. 18.

lowing the original model of the arrival of Apollo. In the *Theophania*, the *koros* entered the Sanctuary riding a chariot (see below), but once at the Altar of Apollo the procession surely continued its route on foot to the Castalia spring (the last place mentioned in the Himerius' paraphrase), so that the *koros* and the young men who accompanied him could perform the ritual washing that some sources attribute to Apollo. It is most probable that they took this route along the road of the *Dolonia*, and then returned through the southeast entrance (SD 103), parading through the interior of the Sanctuary, crossing the agora («l'Aire») and ending at the Altar of Apollo, where the offerings and sacrifices were performed (cf. Figs. 1 and 2)²¹.

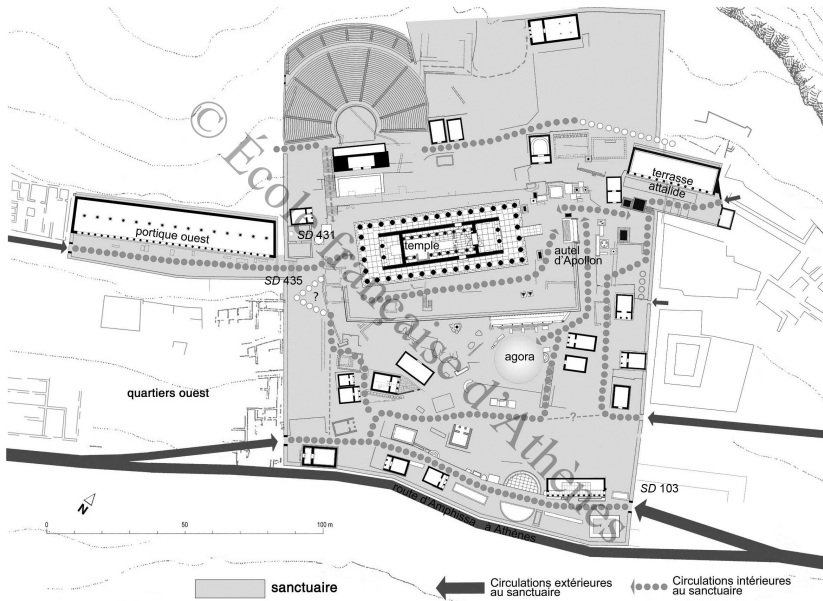


Figure 2. – Plan of the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi. Scale 1/1500.
Huber - Jacquemin - Laroche 2014, 728, with indication of the entrance SD 435,
the «maison de l'Antinoüs» SD 431 and the entrance SD 103
(© École française d'Athènes, D. Laroche).

²¹ Ritual washings in the Castalia spring: Eur. *Ion* 94-97, Eur. *Phoen.* 222-224, Heliod. *Aeth.* II 26; of Apollo: Aristonous, *CA* 162, 41-43 (= 2, 4, 41-43 Furley-Bremmer), Hor. *Car.* III 4, 61, cf. Corssen 1913, 505-506; Parke 1978, 202-205; Rutherford 1990, 198-199. Offerings of paeans next to the altar, but perhaps in the agora, next to the tripod of the exedra SD 210, cf. Hernández Castro 2019a, 177-179. For the tripod and the exedra, cf. Jacquemin - Laroche 2014, 731-739.

4. THE EAST PEDIMENT OF THE TEMPLE OF APOLLO

The direction of the march of the procession corresponds exactly with the direction in which Apollo's chariot moves in the representation of the east pediment of the Temple of Apollo (Fig. 3). This means that when standing in front of the Temple one saw the members of the procession arriving from the same direction from which the figures represented on its facade were approaching, which constitutes a powerful argument in favor of C. Marconi's thesis that the motif of this representation was the arrival of Apollo from the land of the Hyperboreans. The most widespread interpretation of this relief continues to assume Plassart's hypothesis that Aeschylus described it at the beginning of the *Eumenides* (therefore, it would be Apollo arriving from Athens, escorted by the Athenians), but this hypothesis, as Marconi argued, lacks a real basis, and has not been able to provide a consistent identification of the group of figures accompanying Apollo²². It is, to his left, a group of three *koroi* (the closest, turned towards Apollo), and to his right, a group of three *korai*.

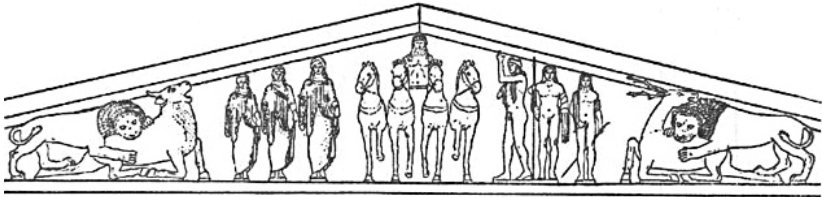


Figure 3. – Reconstruction of the east pediment of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (late 6th century BCE).
La Coste-Messelière 1931, fig. 8, modified by Lapalus 1947, fig. 22
(© École française d'Athènes).

²² Cf. Plassart 1940, 293-299. Basically, Marconi argues against Plassart the absence of references to sculptures or pediments in the Pythia's speech, and the incompatibility of this hypothesis with the new distribution of the scenic space of the *Eumenides* prologue proposed by Di Benedetto (inside the Temple of Apollo, and not outside, cf. Di Benedetto 1987, 121-139; 1995, 159-166; Marconi 1996-1997, 11-13). In favor of Apollo's arrival from the land of the Hyperboreans: the greater antiquity of the tradition of Apollo as founder of the Oracle (Alcaeus) than that of Apollo as heir (Aeschylus), and the close correspondence of this motif of the Alcaeus' paean with the scene depicted on the pediment, in which Apollo enters the Sanctuary in a triumphal and serene manner, escorted by a procession of *koroi* and *korai*, and with no room for the violent act of killing the dragon (or dragoness) (cf. Marconi 1996-1997, 16-17). For discussion and references, cf. Marconi 1996-1997, 9-17; Gagné 2021, 173-179.

The presence of these groups is explained by the fact that the pediment not only represented the arrival of Apollo from the land of the Hyperboreans, but also the organization of the procession in which the Delphians celebrated this arrival (as we find in the Parthenon frieze, where both the gods and the Athenians who participated in the procession of the Great *Panathenaia* were represented). Of the group of three *koroi*, the one closest to Apollo can be identified with the *koros* who performed him during the procession, and the other two with his escort of young Delphians (the young men who perform the choruses and songs of the Alcaeus' paean). For the identification of the three *korai*, the most convincing alternative are the Seasons (Ἔραι), whose association with Apollo can be supported through iconography, literary sources and epigraphic inscriptions. Apollo received at Tenos the cult title of «Lord of the Seasons» (ὄρουμέδων, Lycophron calls him Ὠρίτης), and was surely physically represented alongside them at the Theban festival for which Pindar composed the Paean I (girls characterized as the Seasons were in fact paraded in the Soteria of Ptolemy II). Very important is the procession that the Athenians celebrated in the *Thargelia* to offer the first fruits of the harvest to the Sun, the Seasons and Apollo, one more example of the close communication that was established between this festival and the *Septerion*, where the first fruits were also offered to Apollo (*schol.* Pind. *hypoth. Pyth. c*)²³. The festival of the *Theophania*, like the *Septerion*, also used the solar alignment at the solstice as a powerful staging element. On this date, the Sun rises above the crest of Hyampia, just in front of where the facade of the Temple was, and therefore, the march of the procession. Thus, at the climax of the festival, all members of the procession walked towards the Sun, as Apollo did when he arrived at Delphi from the land of the Hyperboreans (*Fig. 4*).

²³ Iconography: *LIMC* 5.1, 504, n° 7 *s.v.* Horai; literary sources: *b.Ap.* 194-202, *Pi. Pa.* I 1-10, *Call. Ap.* 81, *Lycophr. Alex.* 352, *Anth. Pal.* IX 525, 25; inscriptions: *PGM Adesp.* F 933 = *I.Erythrae* 205 (Erythrae), *SEG* LIII 1303 (Klaros), *IG* XII 5, 893 (Tenos); the personification of the Seasons in Paean I and the festivals of Thebes and the *Soteria*, cf. Rutherford 2001, 254-257; Callixeinus *FHG* III 58 (Athen. 198A); the Seasons and Apollo, cf. Bremmer 2013, 174; for the procession of the *Thargelia*, cf. Parker 2005, 203-204; *Arist. Ath. Pol.* 56, 5, *Porph. Abst.* II 7, 1, *SEG* XXXIII 115; for the relationship between the *Thargelia* and the *Septerion*, cf. Hernández Castro 2019a, 183-189.

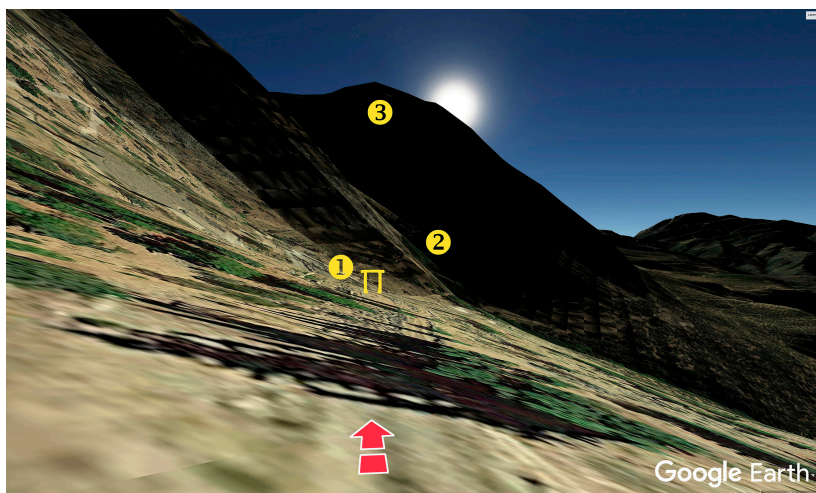


Figure 4. – Panoramic view of the itinerary of the Theophania procession at Delphi (Itinerary of Day) during the sunrise of the summer solstice. Π (πύλαι): location of the entrance SD 435 / Gate of the itineraries of Night and Day; 1: Temple of Apollo; 2: Castalian Spring; 3: Hyampia (image © Google Earth, signs and annotations D. Hernández Castro).

5. THE PROEM OF PARMENIDES

The thesis that Parmenides' Proem describes the story of Apollo's *Theophania* implies questioning two widely accepted ideas in Parmenidean studies: that the narrative voice of the Proem is the voice of a mortal (if not Parmenides himself); and that the «Heliadaí» maidens who accompany the narrator are the sisters of Phaethon, *i.e.*, the *Heliades* goddesses, «daughters of the Sun». In fact, as I will argue below, the identification of its narrative voice with Apollo, and that of the goddesses who accompany him, with the Seasons (the *Horai*), is much more consistent with the historical and cultural context of the Proem. Once this is clarified, I will explain how all the elements of the description of the Proem (narrative, topographical and ritual) correspond closely with the description of the procession of the *Theophania* of Apollo that was celebrated in the Sanctuary of Delphi.

5.1. *The frs. 28 B 1.3 and 1.26 DK: εἰδῶτα φῶτα and μοῖρα κακῆ*

The supposition that the narrator of the Proem is a mortal is fundamentally based on the interpretation of the expressions εἰδῶτα φῶτα («man who knows») and μοῖρα κακῆ («evil fate») in fr. 28 B 1.3 and 1.26 DK. But most likely there is in fact no «man who knows» and no «evil fate»²⁴. The former was suggested more than a century ago by R. Eisler when he posited that the word φῶτα should be read here as a plural accusative neuter and not as a singular accusative masculine²⁵. Those who know are the «lights», not the «man». And the latter can begin to be glimpsed when we take into account the rugged and inhospitable character that the Greeks attributed to the landscape of Delphi. The μοῖρα may be the fate, but also, a «part», and more specifically, a part of the night, as in the Book X of the *Iliad* (the *Doloneia*), which not by chance deals with a nocturnal incursion that takes place during the third «part» of the night, just at the moment when «the dawn approaches» (ἐγγύθι δ' ἠώς) (*Il.* X 251-253)²⁶. Thus, when the Goddess tells the narrator that it was not the «bad part» (μοῖρα κακῆ) that sent him to travel this road, «remote from the paths of men» (1.26-27)²⁷, she is speaking neither of Death nor of Hades, but of the «bad part» of the road (*i.e.*, the route or itinerary of Night), and of the fact that Delphi, before the arrival of Apollo, was an inhospitable, barren and difficult to access place, that is, «remote from the paths of men»²⁸.

The interpretation of verse 1.3 has been hampered by a lacuna that no attempt at reconstruction has managed to resolve satisfactorily. E. Hülsz and B. Berruecos were very close to achieving it with a painstaking reading in which they pointed out the existence of a double hyperbaton (πάντα with εἰδῶτα and κατὰ with φέρει, the second, with tmesis, *i.e.*, καταφέρειν, «bring down» or «carry back»), and the possibility of

²⁴ The fragments of Parmenides and Empedocles, according to the edition of Diels - Kranz 1960¹⁰. Hereafter, I will omit the chapter and section (28 B and 31 B), as long as they can be deduced from the context.

²⁵ Eisler 1910, 388-389 n. 8. *Contra*, Untersteiner 1958, LIII n. 4; in favor, Ferrari 2008, 44-45.

²⁶ «Of the night more / than two parts have passed, and only the third part remains to us» (παροίχων δὲ πλεον νύξ / τῶν δύο μοιράων, τριτάτη δ' ἔτι μοῖρα λέλειπται).

²⁷ χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ οὐτι σε μοῖρα κακῆ προὔπεμπε νέεσθαι / τήνδ' ὁδόν (ἧ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν).

²⁸ Cf. the reaction of the Cretan sailors in the Homeric hymn, *b.Ap.* 524-530, and Plutarch: «men record that for a long time it was made desolate and unapproachable [*sc.* the Oracle of Delphi, ἔρημον καὶ ἀπροσπέλαστον] by a fierce creature, a serpent» (*De defect. orac.* 414B, transl. F.C. Babbitt).

dividing into two words the conjecture αῦτῆ (that is, αῦ and τῆ, «again» and «there»)²⁹. The final result of their approach was as follows:

δαίμονος, ἥ κατὰ πάντ' αῦ τῆ φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα

<the road> of the goddess, which again carries the man who knows all things back there.³⁰

And with Eisler's correction:

<the road> of the goddess, which again carries the lights that know all things back there.

The only detail missing to recover the original sense of the verse is a letter: the first letter of the second adverb of Hülsz and Berruecos (τῆ), which is not a tau, but a gamma, a confusion in the manuscript tradition that we also find in the word ἐγὼν of fr. 2.1³¹. The goddess' many worded road (or that leads to the goddess)³² is the road of the Sun, and what characterizes this road is that every time the Sun dawns it carries back to Gaia (*i.e.*, Γῆ, not τῆ) the lights that see (or know) all things (evidently, the lights of the Sun):

δαίμονος, ἥ κατὰ πάντ' αῦ Γῆ φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα

<the road> of the goddess, which again carries the lights that know all things back to Gaia.

5.2. *The Ἥλιάδες κοῦραι (the «maidens of the Sun»)*

As far as we know, and to cut to the chase, Phaethon's sisters were not on any guest list for the festivals that the Greeks celebrated in honor of Apollo. Quite the opposite, as we have seen, of what happened with the Seasons, whose connection with the context of the cult of Apollo can be solidly supported in the sources, inscriptions, iconography and other religious festivals that were celebrated in Thebes and Athens. But in addition, this connection is also found in Parmenides' own Proem, because the Seasons are daughters of Themis (Hes. *Tb.* 901, cf. the mention of *themis*

²⁹ Hülsz - Berruecos 2018, 31-58.

³⁰ «<El camino> de la diosa, el cual otra vez lleva de vuelta allá al hombre que sabe todas las cosas».

³¹ In all manuscripts, ἐτών. According to N.-L. Cordero, this confusion of 2.1 may have originated at the time when the capitalized text was transliterated in lower case (2004, 37 n. 133). Cf. the lectio πάντα τῆ of manuscripts A and C (Cordero 1982, 166-171), and H. Diels' conjecture παντανγῆ (1901, 58).

³² Cf. Berruecos 2015, 56 n. 1.

in 28 B 1.28), and above all because the goddess who guards the keys to the Gate of the itineraries of Night and Day is precisely one of them: Dike (1.14). According to the traditional interpretation, the *Heliades* goddesses, daughters of the Sun, whisper in her ear to open the Gate. But there is no historical or cultic association between the *Heliades* and the Seasons (nor between Apollo and the *Heliades*), and what is really consistent with the ritual and narrative context of the goddess Dike is that her own sisters are the ones who whisper in her ear and not the sisters of Phaethon³³.

The most reasonable solution involves revising the traditional interpretation of the expression «Heliades maidens» (Ἡλιάδες κοῦραι) of fr. 1.9. It is unlikely that Parmenides gave the word Ἡλιάδες the narrative context of a story whose first known source is a lost tragedy of Aeschylus (*TrGF* 3 F 68-72), and much more likely that we should interpret it within the context of the epithets and formulas we find in Hesiod. The *Theogony* is the toolbox Parmenides constantly uses, and the expression Ἡλιάδες κοῦραι is clearly cut from the same pattern as the Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες and Ἐλικωνιάδες³⁴. In none of these cases should their name be translated as «Muses daughters of Olympus» or «of Helicon», since the Muses are daughters of Zeus, and these are the places they inhabit and even own or guard (ἔχω) with the irresistible charm of their choirs and dances³⁵. And in the same way, the noun from which the word *Heliades* (ἠλιάς) comes is not to be taken as the name of the father of the maidens but as the place they inhabit and the sphere they guard with their sacred attributes. These attributes are the keys to the Gate of the itineraries of Night and Day, the place is the aether, and that which they guard is the path of the Sun that the Seasons (the «maidens of the Sun») must follow every day³⁶. These divinities (the *Horai*), like the maids that

³³ As V. Machaira points out, the Seasons are usually represented side by side, covered with the same cloak (a detail that reinforces the affection that unites them) or participating in a procession or a dance (1990, 509). For the Seasons, guardians of the Gates of Heaven (πύλαι οὐρανοῦ), cf. *Il.* V 749, VIII 393.

³⁴ Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες (*Hes. Th.* 25, 52, 966, 1022; cf. *Il.* II 491), Μοῦσαι Ἐλικωνιάδες (*Hes. Th.* 1, *Op.* 658). Cf. the correspondence pointed out by G. Cerri (1999, 103) between fr. 1.9-10 and *Th.* 9-10. Parmenides took from Hesiod's Muses the image of the goddesses who cover themselves with a veil at night.

³⁵ *Hes. Th.* 2 and 75. The Gates of Heaven are also «guarded» (ἔχον) by the Seasons, cf. *Il.* V 749 and VIII 393.

³⁶ Cf. Heraclitus *apud* Plut. *Quaest. Plat.* 1007E (= 22 B 100 DK): «the Seasons which bring all things» (ᾧρας αἱ πάντα φέρουσι). From Plutarch's context we know that Heraclitus was speaking of the Sun, «which is the overseer and observer of these things» (ὧν ὁ ἥλιος ἐπιστάτης ὧν καὶ σκοπός, cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 1007D), probably in the same passage that Plutarch himself quotes without attribution in *De defectu oraculorum*: «all things which the Seasons and the Earth makes grow» (πάντων ὧν φέρουσιν ᾧραι

pull the chariot, «bring» or «conduct» (πέμπω) the Apollo-narrator, and not by chance, because what the word πέμπω conducts par excellence is the πομπή, that is, the procession, and were precisely the Seasons who conducted the procession of Apollo at the Theban festival in which Pindar's Paean I was performed³⁷.

5.3. *The mares and the chariot of Apollo*

It is quite logical that the horses that conduct Apollo's procession are «much-knowing mares» (πολύφραστοι ἵπποι) (1.4), because they are the «swift mares» (ποδώκεες ἵπποι) that Apollo bred for King Admetus of Pherae³⁸. But in addition, the axle of the chariot wheels that they drive produces the «whistle of a syrinx» (σύριγγος ἀϋτήν) (1.6), which surely obeys another important detail of the ritual. In epic literature, the syrinx is a type of aulos, and the aulos was one of the instruments that used to accompany the processions, as in fact happened during the *daphnephoria* that brought the laurel from the Valley of Tempe and the *Theophania*³⁹. In both cases, the triumphal entrance to the Sanctuary of the *koros* that represented Apollo must have been accompanied by the vibrant and martial music of this instrument⁴⁰. A specialty of the auletes who competed in Delphi was to perform impressive onomatopoeic effects with their instruments, of which the imitation of the agony of the serpent Python is particularly well known. The part of the composition in which they performed this effect was called σύριγγες or σύριγμα (also ὀδοντισμός, gnashing of teeth), and συριγμός was generally a type of effect much appreciated by auletes (for example, to represent negative emotions)⁴¹. It is quite likely that this was one of the most recognizable devices of the *harmateios* (chariot) nomos, whose players were able to imitate the

γῆ δὲ φύει) (416A). Accepting García Calvo's reconstruction (1999², 382-383), ὄρας αἱ πάντα φέρουσι / γῆ δὲ φύει: «[The Sun, overseer] of the Seasons which bring all things / and the Earth makes grow».

³⁷ Πέμπω, cf. 1.2 (mares), 1.8 (maidens); πομπήν π., cf. *LSJ s.v. πέμπω* A.III.2.

³⁸ Cf. *Il.* II 763-767, XXIII 376, *Call. Ap.* 47-49. For attempts at metaphorical interpretation of the genre of horses, cf. Cordero 2004, 25.

³⁹ A type of aulos, cf. Anderson 1994, 32-33; aulete in the *daphnephoria*, cf. *Ps.-Plut. De mus.* 1136A; in the *Theophania*, cf. *Alc. fr.* 307b Campbell.

⁴⁰ Use of the aulos in the marches, cf. Anderson 1994, 64.

⁴¹ Σύριγγες (Timosthenes fr. *apud Str. Cbr.* IX 3, 10), σύριγμα (*hypoth. Pyth.* a Drachmann), ὀδοντισμός (Poll. IV 84), συριγμός (Poll. IV 83), negative emotions (Xen. *Symp.* VI 5). Cf. Almazova 2014a, 68-69.

sound of chariots with their instruments⁴². The aulete accompanying the ritual chariot in the *Theophania* probably imitated with his instrument the effect of its wheels, that is, the «whistle of a syrinx». Also later, when the narrator describes how the bronze axes of the doors turned on their σύριγγιν (that is, on their hinges, by comparison with the hollow parts of the syringes), it is quite likely that another onomatopoeic effect of the aulete was being described, in this case, of the creaking of the gates as they opened (1.18-19).

5.4. *The Gate of the itineraries of Night and Day*

Although the narrator speaks of gates in the plural (πύλαι) there is no doubt that he refers to a single gate or entrance with two large doors closed by a bar⁴³. It is the gate of the κέλευθοι of Night and Day, a word that is usually translated as «paths», but whose meaning, as Mourelatos and other authors have pointed out, contains a nuance that distinguishes it from the simple path or road (ὁδός): it is rather the *course* of the path, that is, its route or itinerary⁴⁴. And given that in this case it is a single gate with two κέλευθοι, the most reasonable thing is to think that these itineraries are the directions of the path or road that passes through it⁴⁵. This is consistent not only with the narrator's words, but also with the orientation of the procession's march and the location of the entrance SD 435, an opening in the archaic peribolos that surrounded the sacred enclosure of the Sanctuary. The itineraries leading out of or into this enclosure must have been the itineraries of Night and Day, and it is quite likely that at the festival of the *Theophania* the place where the god crossed from one side to the other became an important station in the proces-

⁴² Cf. Almazova 2014b, 518-538.

⁴³ «That is where the gate of the itineraries of Night and Day is» (ἐνθα πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἥματός εἰσι κελεύθων) (1.11); doors (θύρετρα), cf. 1.13, 1.17; bar (ὄχεύς), cf. 1.16-17.

⁴⁴ Mourelatos 2008, 18.

⁴⁵ They could also be the stretches of the road that extend on each side of the Gate, but this is not the case, because the narrator is already traveling «towards the light» before reaching it (1.10), and the itinerary «towards the light» is obviously the itinerary of Day. In short, the itinerary of Night is the one that leads towards the darkness of the night (and therefore, towards sunset), and the itinerary of Day, the one that leads towards the light of the day (and therefore, towards sunrise). Cf. the greeting of the shepherds when they cross each other on the itineraries of the night and the day (*Od.* X 82-86), and the greeting of Night and Day when they cross each other at the entrance of the dwelling of Night (*Hes. Th.* 748-750).

sion. This corresponds to the scene described in fr. 1.11-21 of the Proem. The entrance of the *koros* to the sanctuary must have been preceded by a ritual staging of the dialogue of the Seasons, recreating the moment when the goddess Dike decided to make way for Apollo and open the gate of the sanctuary to him. It is not surprising that it was precisely in this place, next to the inner wall of the peribolos, and about ten metres to the north of the entrance, that the Delphians of Hadrian's time decided to erect a statue to Antinous, the emperor's favourite, with the epiclesis ἥρως προπύλαιος, *i.e.*, the «hero who stands before the Gate» (Fig. 2, SD 431)⁴⁶. The finding of this statue is one of the arguments used by A. Perrier and J.-J. Malmay to support the importance of this entrance, but it also helps to strengthen its association with the Gate (πύλαι) of the Parmenides' Proem, and to account for the importance and survival of the *Theophania* procession⁴⁷. The image of Antinous is a mirror both of the *koros* that represented Apollo in the procession that passed through this place every year and of Apollo himself (including the laurel wreath), and the devotion that the Delphians felt for it can be seen in the fact that for generations they polished it with subtle oils in such a way that it still retains the lustre of alabaster today⁴⁸.

5.5. *The muse Calliope*

The Goddess who receives the Apollo-narrator after crossing the Gate of the itineraries of Night and Day can only be the muse Calliope, the same one to whom Empedocles' hymn is dedicated, and whose relationship with Apollo and the Sanctuary of Delphi is widely supported in the sources⁴⁹. At Delphi there was a cult of the Muses, whose sacred

⁴⁶ Cf. Di Santi 2019, 117-120. The offering of the statue is usually attributed to T. Flavius Aristotimos, a well-known priest of Apollo, but there are doubts about it, cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Perrier - Malmay 2016, 725-726; Perrier 2018, 83-85. The epiclesis appears on a number of coins associated with the statue. Before the discovery of the importance of the SD 435 entrance, other alternatives were considered for its original location. For discussion, cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Cf. Lambert 1984, 186. For the bronze laurel wreath that covered the head of the statue, cf. Blum 1913, 328-329.

⁴⁹ Emp. fr. 31 B 131 DK. For Delphi, as the place of worship of Apollo and the Muses, cf. Roux 1976, 187-189; Parke 1981, 99-112; Barrigón Fuentes 1996, 237-250. The muse Calliope is the most prevalent in literary sources (cf. Mojsik 2011, 63-65, references in 63 n. 18). In iconography, the names of the Muses were rarely recorded and were usually identified by context. Nevertheless, for Calliope and Apollo: cf. Cor. 28A

enclosure was probably in the Castalia spring, where the itinerary of the procession had to lead (the last place described in Himerius' paraphrase of the paean of Alcaeus)⁵⁰. There were other places of worship dedicated to them, the most famous, around Olympus and Helicon, but in none of them was devotion to the Muses so associated with Apollo as in the Sanctuary of Delphi. The Muses, according to the tradition referred to by Plutarch, were considered guardians of the divinatory art and inspirers of the oracular response in verse (*De Pyth. orac.* 402C-D). And this fits with the epithet *πολύφημον* with which the narrator describes the road that leads to the goddess (fr. 1.2): it is not only the road of «many words», but the road of many *prophetic* words⁵¹. It is the Muses, finally, who, before giving the narrator of the *Theogony* a staff made of a laurel branch, address him in the first person to tell him that they know how to speak both of lies that seem to be truths and of the truth (Hes. *Tb.* 27-28), a passage whose parallel with fr. 1.29-30 of the Proem has been amply noted by scholars⁵². This is not a simple influence, but a relationship of identity. The goddess who receives the narrator of Parmenides' Proem is Calliope, one of the Muses of Hesiod's Proem⁵³.

Rome (Wachter 2001, 57-58), and most probably, inv. Munich 2362 (215362 Beazley), inv. Boston 00.356 (209171 Beazley), and the two vessels of the painter Shuválov found in the Vasallagi necropolis (the Empedocles context), inv. Museo di Gela 9236, inv. Museo di Agrigento 1506 (cf. Martelli 1968, 16-18; Hernández Castro 2020, 154). In general, for the Muses and Apollo, cf. *LIMC* 2.1 269-272, n° 689-715, *LIMC* 7.1 1002-1003, n° 257-264.

⁵⁰ Attempts to locate this enclosure at the foot of the Temple of Apollo have been unsuccessful, despite the find of some archaic remains and a water channel (Bomme-laer - Laroche 1991, 228-230, n° 332). The search in this area is due to an indication by Plutarch in *De Pythiae oraculis*, in which the characters point to the sanctuary from the southern steps of the temple, placing it next to a fountain (whose name may have appeared in a corrupt part of the manuscripts) and another sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Gaia (402C-D). However, as early argued by P. Corssen, from the steps of the temple, the area where the Castalia spring is located is clearly visible (not the spring itself, but the Pappadia ravine and the gorge of the Phaedriades rocks), a place that fits much better with the tradition of the activity of the Muses, and very close to which the base of a statue dedicated precisely to Gaia was found (probably accompanied by another statue dedicated to the goddess Themis, both from the first half of the 5th century BCE). Cf. Corssen 1913, 506-511; for the statue of Gaia (found after Corssen's article), cf. Flacelière - La Coste-Messelière 1930, 283-295; for discussion, cf. Rutherford 1990, 196-199; Barrigón Fuentes 1996, 237-250.

⁵¹ *LSJ s.v.* *φήμη*, as an expression of the gods, or a prophetic word. In *Oedipus Rex*, the oracular word of Apollo (S. *OT.* 86); cf. Cordero 2004, 26. The goddess Calliope, *πολύμηθος* in *AP IX* 523, 1. The Helicon Muses, *πολύφραμον* in *Pi. I.* VIII 58.

⁵² Cf. Tor 2017, 312, references in n. 3.

⁵³ Kranz 1916, 1166: «seine Muse»; Fränkel 1975, 353: «the Muse of this poem»; Guthrie 1965, 10: «the Muse of the epic writers».

5.6. *The Proem and the topography of Delphi*

All these aspects reveal that the content and narrative structure of the Parmenides' Proem fit perfectly with the ritual, topographical and narrative structure of the festival of the *Theophania*. The narrator of the Proem is Apollo (the *koros* par excellence)⁵⁴ (1.24); the topography that he describes, that of the Sanctuary of Delphi («remote from the paths of men») (1.27); the itinerary of his journey, that of the procession celebrating his arrival, («towards the light») (1.10); and the divinities that accompany and receive him, those who did so in the procession and the myth (the Seasons, the muse Calliope, Themis, Dike) (1.5, 1.8-10, 1.14-16, 1.21-22, 1.28). Before reaching the dwelling of the Goddess (1.22-25), the narrator must pass through the Gate of the itineraries of Night and Day (1.11-13), just as the *koros* performing Apollo in the procession had to cross the entrance SD 435 to access the Sanctuary and reach the dwelling of the muse Calliope in the Castalian spring. At the summer solstice, the itinerary towards this entrance was oriented to the sunrise, like the gate the narrator encounters, the itinerary of the procession, and the direction of the march of Apollo's chariot that was represented on the main facade of the Temple that the Alcmaeonids rebuilt.

6. DELPHI, THE KITHARODIA AND THE BIRTH OF THE TRAGEDY

The Apollo-narrator thesis is completely consistent with the citharodic tradition of Delphi, in whose mythical origin we find Chrysothemis of Crete, the first man who, according to Proclus, not only sang a *nomos* by himself, but did so «wearing conspicuous raiment and taking up the kithara in reenactment (*mimesis*) of Apollo»⁵⁵. This competitive style of performance became in fact the calling card of all the citharodes, who

⁵⁴ In fact, Apollo is called παῖς in the only surviving fragment of the Paean of Alcaeus: ὦναξ Ἄπολλον, παῖ μεγάλη Δίος («Lord Apollo, son of great Zeus»), cf. Alc. fr. 307a Campbell.

⁵⁵ Χρυσόθεμις ὁ Κρήσις πρῶτος στολῆ χρησάμενος ἐκπρεπεῖ καὶ κιθάραν ἀναλαβὼν εἰς μίμησιν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος μόνος ἦσε νόμον, εὐδοκμήσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ διαμένει ὁ τρόπος τοῦ ἀγωνίσματος. Cf. Procl. *Chr. ap.*, Phot. *Bibl.* 239.320b.1-4. Cf. Power 2010, 2.3. Plutarch also characterizes the acts performed in the *Septerion* as an imitation or μίμημα, cf. *De defect. orac.* 418A, *Quaest. Graec.* 293C. For Rabel, the ἐγὼ of the *Iliad* is also a divinity: the Muse that the singer invokes at the beginning of the Book I (1997, 1-32; against, Morrison 2007, 73).

based much of their attractiveness and showmanship on a great apparatus of clothing, gestures and details of the performance with which they tried to imitate Apollo (Nero, desperately)⁵⁶. It is quite probable that this was the motif that inspired the descriptions from Antiquity in which Empedocles used to present himself showing a «tragic affectation» (τραγικὸν τῦφον) and «swearing solemn clothes» (σεμνήν ἀναλαβὼν ἐσθῆτα) (Diodorus *apud* D.L. VIII 70), or equipped with a «purple robe», a «golden girdle», «bronze sandals», and a «Delphic crown» (Favorinus *apud* D.L. VIII 73)⁵⁷. That is, like Apollo. Empedocles, despite Timaeus and Diogenes Laertius (D.L. VIII 66), did not speak of himself as if he were a god, but rather performed one of them, just as the citharodes did at the same period who interpreted in the first person the story of the *katabasis* of Orpheus⁵⁸. This style of performance must have had its origin in the Sanctuary of Delphi, and it is quite probable, as M. Cavalli suggested, that it was here, around these performances of Apollo that were made during the festivals of the *Theophania* and the *Septerion*, where we have to look for the ritual, scenic and narrative seeds of classical tragedy⁵⁹. A scholiast of Clement of Alexandria wrote: «At Cithaeron and Helicon, at the foot of which is Delphi, the serpent pierced by the arrows of Apollo became the father of tragedy»⁶⁰. All this has a further important implication: Parmenides and Empedocles did not compose their hymns to be recited (in the manner of the rhapsodes) but to be sung to the accompaniment of a kithara, as we find in Terpander of Lesbos and in many others singers who composed their pieces in dactylic hexameters. Parmenides and Empedocles were citharodes.

⁵⁶ For this *kitharoidia* culture as imitation of Apollo, cf. Power 2010, especially, 1.1-2 (Nero), 1.3 (costume, performing and imitation of Apollo); and Ercoles 2014, 95-110. Cf. also the case of Arion (Her. I 24, 4).

⁵⁷ «purple cloths» y «bronze sandals» (Ael. *VH* XII 32); «a ribbon of Deep purple around his hair» (Philostr. *VA* VIII 7); «a gold wreath on his head, bronze shoes on his feet and Delphic wreathes in his hands» (Suda *s.v.* Ἐμπεδοκλῆς E.1002). The motif of the bronze sandals, related to the tale of Empedocles and the volcano.

⁵⁸ For the circulation of these *katabasis* poems in hexameters narrated in the first person, cf. Graf - Johnston 2007, 173-174. Discussion of the point of view of Timaeus and Diogenes Laertius, in Hernández Castro 2019b, 123-138; 2020, 149-153.

⁵⁹ Cf. Cavalli 1994, 9-31.

⁶⁰ *Schol. Paris.* Clem. Alex. 92 (Klotz). Cf. Cavalli 1994, 9.

7. THE FESTIVAL OF THE THEOPHANIA AT ELEA

The topography described by the narrator of the Proem of Parmenides is that of the Sanctuary of Delphi, but it is a past recollection, and the parallelism with the hymn of Empedocles (composed to be performed in his hometown)⁶¹, the remains found in the complex of the *Insula II* of Velia, and the testimony of some literary sources, strongly suggest that the setting from which the narrator spoke was in the city of Elea. In what follows I will try to show how the schema of ritual and myth of the *Theophania* festival allows us to offer a consistent interpretation both of the sculptures and epigraphic inscriptions found in this complex and of the historical and cultural meaning of Parmenides' Proem.

7.1. *The festival of the Purifications at Akragas*

The festival in which Empedocles' hymn was performed was dedicated to the Purifications of Apollo, and one of its most important aims had to be the consecration as priest of the young man who played the role of the god during the procession and purification rites⁶². There is a strong parallel between this ritual consecration and that of the young man or *παῖς* whom the Thebans appointed priest of Apollo Ismenios during the festival of the *Daphnephoria*, which is explained by the fact that both festivals were inspired by the common model of the *Septerion* and the *Theophania*⁶³. This kind of consecration was surely accompanied by the power and authority to purify the fields and crops and to propitiate the cycle of the seasons and the abundance of livestock. It is quite probable that the Thebans conferred on this young man the religious titles of seer (*μάντις*) and priest (*ιεραπόλος*) which are mentioned in one of Pindar's *daphnephorika*⁶⁴. The word *ιεραπόλος* is a hapax in literature, but it is well attested in epigraphy as an eponymous and priestly office, and it is striking that one of the places where we can find these offices is the

⁶¹ Cf. fr. 31 B 112.1-2 DK; Hernández Castro 2020, 135-203.

⁶² For divine imitation, as a cult practice in which some priests and priestesses played the role of the deities themselves, cf. Connelly 2007, 104-115; Ercoles 2014, 99.

⁶³ On the Theban *Daphnephoria*, cf. Calame 2001, 59-76; Kowalzig 2007, 371-389; Paus. IX 10, 4, Procl. *Chr. ap. Phot. Bibl.* 239.321a30-321b32. Similarities between the *Septerion* and the *Daphnephoria*, cf. Calame 2001, 101-104; Kowalzig 2007, 380-382; Brelich 2013², 446-453.

⁶⁴ Fr. 94a Snell, cf. Hubbard 2011, 350. Young priests were not an anomaly in ancient Greece, and are often associated with initiation rites cf. Bremmer 1999, 189 and 198 n. 41 with references.

city of Phintias, whose inhabitants were in fact the displaced population of Gela (the metropolis of Akragas)⁶⁵. In the hymn of Empedocles, the main addressee of the narrator is Pausanias, a historical figure whom the sources treat as the best disciple of Empedocles, a doctor by profession (a family occupation, in the middle of the 5th century BCE), and originally from the city of Gela.

The hymns of Parmenides and Empedocles were composed at a time when the book market was not yet developed, and it is legitimate to ask how they managed to survive and achieve such a wide circulation in the Greek world. The most plausible answer is the same that Hubbard offered for Pindar's *daphnephorika*: the family of the young man who played the role of Apollo was probably the one that sponsored the festival, and the one who took care of financing copies of these compositions that mentioned their members in glowing terms to distribute among their international network of friends and that of the poet⁶⁶.

In short, and putting all these facts together, it is most likely that at the festival in which Empedocles' hymn was performed a procession was held linking the cities of Gela and Akragas, that this procession was led by a young man who performed to Apollo (Pausanias), and that the family of this young man was the one to sponsor the festival. It is equally likely that they were a prominent family of physicians from Gela, and that the young man who was consecrated at the festival became the *hierapolos* or eponymous priest reported in inscriptions of his city⁶⁷.

7.2. *The Insula II complex*

The building complex of the *Insula II* of Velia was built in the last quarter of the 1st century BCE, and the works were carried out in two periods (the second of them, in the last decade)⁶⁸. Since the beginning

⁶⁵ *Hierapoloï* at the Sanctuary of Apollo Aktion, Epidaurus, Telos, Phintias-Gela and other places, cf. Baldassarra 2010, 365-366. *Hierapoloï* at Phintias, cf. *IG XIV 256* (= Dubois 1989, 161), 257, 258; *SEG XII 380* (= Dubois 1989, 160). Not only associated with the Apollo cult (for example, the *hierapoloï* of Zeus *Karaos* at Astakos). In the case of Phintias-Gela, the inscriptions do not report the divinity to which they were associated, although we know that they were entrusted with sacrifices in honor of Asclepius (cf. *SEG XII 380.34-35*).

⁶⁶ Hubbard 2011, 347-348, 363.

⁶⁷ Cf. Hernández Castro 2020, 165-167.

⁶⁸ State of the question and bibliography: Fabbri - Trotta 1989; Schneider 1998, 305-317; Vecchio 2006, 388-395; Cappelletti 2011, 20-21; Greco 2012, 159-185; Galli 2014, 155-187; Hochstöger 2017; Krinzing 2017, 919-933.

of the excavations, the discussion about its function and meaning has been conditioned by the finding inside of about thirty marble stelae and fragmentary sculptures, which had to be deposited there throughout the first century and the beginning of the second century CE. Many scholars agree that some of these pieces were part of a commemorative gallery commissioned by a family or association of physicians who traced their origin back to Parmenides and ancient Elea. It is a collection of epigraphic inscriptions and sculptures that pay tribute to a series of people called Οὔλις, of whom the name of the father is indicated, two activities they had to carry out (ιατρὸς and φώλαρχος) and a date⁶⁹. There is also a sculpture and an inscription dedicated to Parmenides, which since they are not dated are considered the origin of the historical series. This inscription includes the name Parmenides, the patronymic (son of Pyres), the word Οὐλιάδης (usually an anthroponym), and an activity (φυσικός)⁷⁰. There is still a discussion about the meaning of the word Οὐλιάδης, although it is clear that Οὔλις and Οὐλιάδης were two very widespread anthroponyms among the Phocaeans and the Aegean area and ancient Anatolia. They were theophoric names that could be related to the cult of Apollo *Oulios* strongly implanted in these regions⁷¹, although its broad adoption must have been favored because of its similarity with a Karian name known from Greek texts as Ολιατος/Υλιατος⁷². This cult paid tribute to Apollo in his role as healer, and this could have favored the spread of these names especially among families dedicated to the practice of medicine, as may have been the case among the *iatroi* of Elea. For L. Vecchio, the Οὐλιάδης in the Parmenides' inscription could be a way of relating him to the practice of medicine, something that in this historical context can also be attributed to the word φυσικός⁷³. Another aspect that is debated is whether the dates of the inscriptions refer to *ab Urbe condita* (the foundation of Rome), *Velia Condita* (that of Velia) or *Conlegio condito* (that of the association). And above all, what was the nature of the second activity carried out by these *iatroi*, the *φώλαρχία. On the latter, no satisfactory answer has been given so far, although it has been suggested that it could be an annual magistracy or the eponymous office of the city⁷⁴. We know from three other inscriptions that there was

⁶⁹ *I.Velia* 22-24, cf. *CAPInv.* 1112 L. Cappelletti.

⁷⁰ Πα[ρ]μενίδης Πύρητος Οὐλιάδης φυσικός (*I.Velia* 21).

⁷¹ Cf. Vecchio 2006, 388-391.

⁷² Cf. Blümel 1992, 26 and n. 103; Adiego 2007, 338-339; Piras 2010, 225 n. 44.

⁷³ Cf. Vecchio 2003, 251-253.

⁷⁴ Cf. Cappelletti 2011, 20-21; *CAPInv.* 1112.

at least one *pholarchos* who was not a physician⁷⁵, that this activity was connected with the cult of Apollo⁷⁶, and that the city paid tribute to a *ιατρόμαντις* named Οἰλῆς⁷⁷. The relationship with Apollo is reinforced by another sculpture of a head that appeared in another part of the complex and that undoubtedly represents the model of Apollo *Kitharoidos* (Fig. 5.2)⁷⁸.



Figure 5. – (1) Head of Ephebos (*pholarchos*?); (2) Head of Apollo *Kitharoidos*; (3) Head of a female divinity with a turreted crown (*Calliope*?); found in the *Insula II* complex of *Velia* (© Parco Archeologico di Paestum e Velia - Ministero della Cultura).

Also found were a statue of Asclepius; a head of an *ephebos* (probably a copy of an original from the classical period inspired by the school of Phidias, cf. Fig. 5.1); a head of Menander (the author of comedies); and two heads that have been mostly identified with the goddess Tyche and the philosopher Zeno of Elea. That of the goddess Tyche (Fig. 5.3), for her great formal correspondence with the famous Tyche of Antioch (in particular, the turreted crown); and that of Zeno, because his features fit the model of Zeno of Citium, which in this context stands to reason that they were used to represent Zeno of Elea⁷⁹. Finally, a series of sculp-

⁷⁵ Ebner 1966, 337, n° 18.

⁷⁶ Ebner 1970, 262, n° 2 and 264, n° 9.

⁷⁷ Ebner 1970, 262, n° 2.

⁷⁸ Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 115-117, n° 19; Schneider 1998, 313-317; Greco 2012, 176-177; Galli 2014, 166.

⁷⁹ Asclepius: De Franciscis 1970, 272, 280; Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 108-110, n° 21; Greco 2012, 167-168; *ephebos*: Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 105-106, n° 17; Greco 2012, 177 (Eros); Galli 2014, 163 (an *ephebe* or Eros); Menander: Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 101-102,

tures identified with members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty have also appeared, which has led to the hypothesis that the complex was related to a *Caesareum* or *collegium Augustalium*⁸⁰.

Taking all these facts into account, it is most likely that the initiative for the construction of the complex was led by a prominent family of physicians from Velia⁸¹, although it was an initiative with important political implications for the city, and was undoubtedly backed by a public decision⁸². This is the context in which it is possible to clarify the controversial meaning of the prominent presence of the anthroponyms Οὔλις and Οὐλιάδης, whose true political value (whatever their religious value) lay in their onomastic relationship with the powerful *nomen* of the imperial family: the *gens Iulia*. Indeed, we have signs that Cato the Elder already related the origin of this *nomen* to the Greek word ἰουλος (a derivative of the same root as οὔλος), according to the anecdote that the first member of the family to adopt this name was Ascanius, the son of Aeneas, to commemorate that he was still a young man with *down* on his face (*i.e.*, ἰουλος) when he slew Mezentius, the king of the Etruscans⁸³. In any case, it is certain that the anecdote was recorded in a work by Lucius Iulius Caesar (probably from the first half of the 1st century BCE), a little-known historian but very relevant to this question, because his belonging to the *Iulia gens* constitutes a evidence that the linkage between this *nomen* and the Greek term was already in circulation within the imperial family itself when the Velia complex was built⁸⁴. Ἰούλις and Ἰούλιος became the Greek equivalents of *Iulius*, and this gave to the conventional name of

n° 14; Greco 2012, 173-174; Tyche: Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 106-108, n° 18; Greco 2012, 174-175; Zeno: Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 101-102, n° 16; Greco 2012, 179. In addition, a headless female statue (Galli 2014, 161, fig. 9) and a fragment of a bearded head (Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 117-118, n° 20), the identification of which is problematic (for the difficulties of the goddess Hygieia, cf. De Franciscis 1970, 283-284 and Galli 2014, 160-161; for a proposal of archaic Dionysus, cf. Greco 2006, 356).

⁸⁰ Greco 2012, 164. For the sculptures of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, cf. Krinzinger 2017, 919-933.

⁸¹ Better than a medical association, cf. Greco 2012, 185.

⁸² Krinzinger 2017, 928.

⁸³ Cato *apud* Serv. (and Dan.) *Aen.* 1267, cf. Farney 2013, 49 and n. 3 with references. The testimonies of Servius and Servius Danielis are not conclusive for Cato (cf. Casali 2009, 304 n. 13), nevertheless, cf. Barchiesi 2006, 6. The estimated date of Cato's work (*Origines*), 170 BCE (cf. Farney 2013, 49 n. 3). For ἰουλος, as the down or the first growth of the beard, and οὔλος, as the curly hair on the head, cf. *LSJ s.v.*

⁸⁴ Serv. (and Dan.) *Aen.* 1267, cf. Weinstock 1971, 9 and n. 6, 17 and n. 6; Farney 2013, 50; Barchiesi 2016, 4-6. For the dating of Lucius Iulius Caesar, cf. Smith 2010, 253. Traces of this anecdote in the *Aeneid*, VII 496-502, IX 590-637 (cf. Barchiesi 2016, 5) and IX 641 (cf. Casali 2009, 309 n. 25).

Οὐλίς that the Eleans inherited from the Phocaeans a political potential that it had undoubtedly lacked in the past⁸⁵. The most probable hypothesis is that the promoters of the complex tried to take advantage of this potential in an opportunistic way, highlighting in the memorial gallery those physicians of their lineage (or who they tried to attribute to their lineage) who by name would allow them to be related to the emperor's family, a link which they also tried to show off with the series of sculptures of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (in this sense, Menander's sculpture is not accidental either: he was probably one of the favorite authors of Julius Caesar and his heir Octavius)⁸⁶. This prominent Velian family also felt particularly linked to the institution of *φωλαρχία exercised by the three individuals listed in the inscriptions, and they strove to record not only the role Parmenides played in the origin of this institution (which is consistent with the testimonies, as I will explain in the next section), but the link he had with this family, and therefore, with the emperor's family. And they did this by adding to his name the term Οὐλιάδης, which should be read neither as an anthroponym, nor as a patronymic, nor as the supposed title of belonging to an association, but simply as the Greek translation of the term Iulianus, which in some contexts could mean: «supporter of Iulius or the *gens Iulia*». Thus, the correct translation of Parmenides' inscription would be: «Parmenides, son of Pyres, supporter of the *Iulia*, natural philosopher»⁸⁷.

⁸⁵ For the dissemination of these names from the 1st century CE, cf. *LGPN s.v.* Ἰούλις, Ἰούλιος.

⁸⁶ Caesar, in one of the only two fragments of his poetry that we have preserved, praised Menander and disdained Terence (*apud* Suet. *Ter.* 7), and the famous phrase attributed to him when he crossed the Rubicon (ἄνεριπρωθὸ κύβος, «the die is cast», in Greek, and not in Latin, cf. Plut. *Pomp.* 60, 2) is probably a quotation from a lost comedy of Menander, cf. Casali 2018, 208-209 and n. 13. For Augustus' interest in Greek literature and ancient comedy (*vetus comoedia*), cf. Suet. *Aug.* 89 and Fantham 1984, 303-304. It is quite likely that the appearance of the *Insula II* complex was related to the special involvement of Caesar and Augustus in medical health policy, fundamentally through the creation of a *beneficia* system that brought great benefits to the doctors who settled in Rome (cf. Agudo Ruiz 1999-2000, 224-231). In fact, in 23 BCE, Augustus was successfully treated for a serious illness by a physician (Antonio Musa) who used techniques very similar to those used by the doctors of Velia (especially hydrotherapy, cf. Suet. *Aug.* 59, 81; Dio Cass. *Epit.* LXI 30; for medicine in Velia, cf. Vecchio 2003, 253-255; Plu. *Aem.* 39, 1-2; Hor. *Ep.* I 15, 1-3, 14-15, 22-23; Cic. *Ad fam.* VII 20).

⁸⁷ *Iuliani*: supporters of Julius Caesar, Suet. *Iul.* 75, 2; the members of the third group of the Lupercalia headed by Marcus Antonius (cf. King 2006 119, 261 n. 44 with references); the gladiators of the school founded by Julio Cesar, Cic. *Att.* VII 14 (cf. Bomgardner 2000, 55). Later, those of the school founded by Nero were called *neroniani* (*ibid.*), and the clique of his supporters who accompanied him to the theaters, *Augustiani*, Tac. *Ann.* XIV 15, 4, Dio Cass. *Epit.* LXI 20, 3-4 (cf. Power 2010, 1.11.3).

7.3. *The testimonies*

We have three brief testimonies that associate Parmenides with legislative activity⁸⁸. The first, quite concise, limits itself to saying that he gave laws to his fellow citizens (Speusippus *apud* D.L. IX 23). The second, that Parmenides and Zeno contributed to the good governance of his city (Str. *Chr.* VI 1, 1). And the third, that Parmenides gave his country such extraordinary laws that every year the citizens made their magistrates (ἀρχαί) swear to remain faithful to the laws of Parmenides (Plut. *Adv. Colot.* 1126A-B). What we can take from all this is that there was a well-established tradition in antiquity that Parmenides was involved in the institution of some of the laws of his city, and that these laws might be related to some kind of annual magistracies. Since the series of sculptures and inscriptions in the *Insula* II complex clearly relate Parmenides to the φώλαρχοι, and the evidence seems to support that the *φώλαρχία was an annual magistracy or office (perhaps, the eponymous office of the city), it seems quite reasonable to suppose that this whole tradition of the Parmenides lawgiver had its origin in Parmenides' participation in the institution of these annual offices.

7.4. *Apollo Kitharoidos and the statue of Asclepius*

The appearance in this context of the head of Apollo *Kitharoidos* (Fig. 5.2) is extraordinarily significant, and the only way to relate this cult image to the institution of φώλαρχοι, medicine, and the legacy of Parmenides is through the interpretive framework of a festival dedicated to the *Theophania* of Apollo, in which Parmenides, following the Delphic tradition of Chrysothemis of Crete, performed as a citharode and ritually played the role of Apollo. This festival was surely sponsored by a prominent family of physicians in the city, whose members used it to project their prestige and as a first step in their medical careers. Not all *pholarchoi* became physicians, but for any future physician it was desirable to have been a *pholarchos*. There is a strong correspondence between the attributes that were associated with these offices (probably

For the *pompeiani*, supporters of Pompeius, cf. Cic. *Phil.* XIII 32, 38, 45 (further references in Welch 2002, 1-30). The use of a double patronymic is possible (that is, that the inscription mentioned the grandfather of Parmenides, the father of Pyres), but in this case the genitive should have been used (Οὐλιάδου), cf. Benedum 1974, 925, n° 51. There is also record of the name Ἰουλιάδης, cf. *LGPN s.v.* (in several cities, including Phocaea).

⁸⁸ Cf. Cappelletti 2011, 7-9.

the *ιατρόμαντις* of inscription n° 2 of Ebner 1970) and those that we can relate to the *hierapoloí* of Gela and the priests of Apollo Ismenios of Thebes (*μάντις, ιεραπόλος*), which reinforces the connection with Delphi and the common model of the *Theophania* and the *Septerion*. It is quite probable that the family of physicians from Elea who were involved in the institution of the festival of *Theophania* maintained relations with the family of physicians from Gela who were involved in the festival of Purifications of Akragas. In this context, the appearance of the statue of Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing, is fully justified.

7.5. *The head of a divinity: Calliope?*

The third cult image (Fig. 5.3) found in the complex of the *Insula II* could also be an important piece of this interpretation. I have already mentioned its great formal correspondence with the model of the Tyche of Antioch. However, there is a fact that draws our attention: the most plausible dating of Apollo *Kitharoidos* is the final period of Trajan and the beginning of Hadrian, and it so happens that on those dates (115 CE) Trajan ordered the erection of a sumptuous statue of Calliope in the theater of Antioch which was characterized precisely in the guise of the famous local Tyche⁸⁹. It is not unlikely that this association began to spread from the monument of Trajan or that the monument itself was an expression of an association that was already circulating in Antioch and other territories. All this may have influenced the sculptor or the persons who traded or acquired this sculpture, which may have been incorporated into the complex of Velia as a cult image of the muse Calliope intended to accompany the image of Apollo *Kitharoidos*. Although it is not possible to establish it with certainty, this association is much more justified in this context than the presence of the goddess Tyche.

7.6. *Φώλαρχος: «Lord of the (Serpent's) Den» (the head of Ephebos?)*

One of the most important ritual episodes of the *Septerion* was the burning of the hut which represented the Serpent's den (Plut. *De defect. orac.* 418A-B, Str. *Chr.* IX 3, 12) The Delphians erected it every eight years

⁸⁹ Apolo *Kitharoidos*, cf. Schneider 1998, 309; Calliope/Tyche of Antioch, cf. Downey 1960, 216-217. It is disputed whether the sculpture of Antioch was crowned or about to be crowned, but not about the depiction of Calliope in the guise of Tyche, according to Malalas' testimony (XI 9; 275-276), cf. Stansbury-O'Donnell 1994, 50-63.

in the sacred space of the Threshing Floor, and the *koros* and his escort of torches made it burn the same morning in which the flight of Apollo to the Valley of Tempe was performed. Plutarch was not pleased with any aspect of this ritual, and one of the things he criticized about it was that this hut was much more like the dwelling of a tyrant or king than a «hole in the shape of serpent's den» (φωλεώδης τοῦ δράκοντος χειῶ) (418A). This means that for the Delphians the φωλεός was the den of the Serpent, and that one of the sacred functions of the *koros* and his retinue of torchbearers was the ritual burning of this den. It is quite unlikely that to the Eleans it meant anything else. The φώλαρχοι, or «lords of the den» were those who ruled over the Serpent's den. No doubt the physicians of Elea had reason to associate this serpent with the one that climbed through the staff of Asclepius, but it is much more probable that these physicians and the Asclepiads in general were influenced by the rites that were celebrated in the *Septerion* than vice versa, which should be taken into account when it comes to clarifying the origin and functions of the *pholarchoi* of Elea⁹⁰. While the *iatroi* took care of the health of specific individuals, using the wide repertoire of practices that we find in the Hippocratic treatises, the *pholarchoi* had to take care of the health of the city, which they tried to keep free of plagues and diseases through the kind of sacrifices and purification rites that the priests of Apollo used to practice. In this sense, it should be taken into account that the *tainia* or ribbon that holds the hair of the head of the *ephebos* found in the complex of *Insula II* (cf. *Fig. 5.1*) is a detail that is not only possible to attribute to the gods (especially, to Apollo), but also to the young people who participated in the festivals. It is probable, therefore, that this sculpture was used as a representation of the *pholarchos*, completing together with the Apollo *Kitbaroidos* and the head of Calliope the sculptural ensemble that recreated the culminating moment of his initiation during the *Theopha-nia*, when a citharode, dressed in the raiment of the god, and under the careful eye of the muse Calliope, instructed him with his song to become the next priest of Apollo (*Fig. 5*)⁹¹.

⁹⁰ For the φωλεόν as «abitaculo di serpenti» in relation to the cult of Asclepius, cf. Pugliese Carratelli 1970, 245-246.

⁹¹ The *tainia*, attribute of Apollo: *b.Ap.* 122, 128; Paus. I 8, 4; of festivals: Plat. *Symp.* 212d-e, 213d; Xen. *Symp.* V 9. It is possible that the three heads were found in the same place of the complex. It is certain that the one of Apollo was found in the northern corner of the cryptoporticus (Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 68, 115), although it is not clear where the other two were found (in the cryptoporticus or in the *giardino*, cf. Fabbri - Trotta 1989, 97). The three heads were surely acquired in the same atelier (cf. Greco 2012, 177).

7.7. *The political context: Elea, 473 BCE*

In the context of the complex of the *Insula II*, as already pointed out by L. Vecchio, the most probable and understandable alternative for the dating of the *pholarchoi* inscriptions is that of the Roman era (*ab Urbe Condita*)⁹². This allows us to date the first inscription of the series to 473 BCE (*I.Velia* 23, Oulis, son of Ariston). It is a historical moment in which the coinage of Elea begins to record a strong imprint of Athenian iconography, which has been interpreted «non per una vaga influenza culturale, ma come un preciso segno del collegamento tra la colonia focea e gli interessi ateniesi di natura politico-economica nel Tirreno»⁹³. These interests had to do with the fertile fields of the region and the Athenian empire's search for grain, spurred by the birth of the Delian League and the road map of Cimon, the man of the moment in Athens. R. Capodicasa rightly pointed out how Cimon's propaganda apparatus used playwrights, historians, and poets to increase his political and religious prestige, fueling the story of his family's connection to Theseus, and inserting into this story the cult of Apollo Oulios⁹⁴. Several of the most notorious triumphs of Cimon's naval strategy took place in the area of influence of this cult, and it is quite significant that the first navarch of Samos who lent his support to Aristides and Cimon against the Spartans was called precisely Οὐλιάδης (Plut. *Arist.* 23, 5), a name still borne three centuries later by some physicians in the city of Samos⁹⁵. Cimon had Pherecydes of Athens insert an ancestor named Οὐλιος into his family tree (*FGrHist* 3 F 2), and gave this name to one of his own sons⁹⁶. His leadership began five years before the first date of the Elea inscriptions, and reached its apotheosis just as this first inscription appeared, thanks to the extraordinary dramatic effect he achieved in Athens when he returned the bones of Theseus to the city, thus fulfilling a command

⁹² Cf. Vecchio 2003, 250-251 and 2006, 303.

⁹³ Cantilena 2006, 436. In particular, the owl with closed wings, cf. Vecchio 2005, 254 (with bibliography).

⁹⁴ Capodicasa 1997, 177-189.

⁹⁵ Cf. Benedum 1974, 926, n° 54.

⁹⁶ Cf. Davies 1971, 306-307; Capodicasa 1997, 179-182. R. Capodicasa argues that the insertion of Οὐλιος (the manuscripts have Ολιος) in Cimon's genealogy responds to an attempt by the Athenian strategos to make kinship with Theseus. In this sense, the Ajax who heads the genealogy would not be the son of Telamon, but the son of Theseus and Periboëa, of whom Plutarch gives an account in *Thebes*. 29, 1. In addition, Pherecydes was aware of the cult of Apollo Oulios and related it to Theseus *FGrHist* 3 F 149 (= Macr. *Sat.* I 17, 21).

from the Oracle of Delphi⁹⁷. This entire image campaign was aimed at presenting Cimon and his role as head of the Delian League as a direct agent of the god Apollo⁹⁸. And this was particularly noticeable in the Sanctuary of Delphi, where the name of Cimon can be associated with all the offerings that the Athenians made between the years 479 and 460 CE⁹⁹. At that time, the Athenians took control of the Sanctuary¹⁰⁰, and at the head of the Athenians was Cimon.

7.8. *Zeno, the παῖς of Parmenides' hymn*

Our sources allude to the young man who played the role of Apollo in the festivals of the *Septerion* and the *Daphnephoria* with the words κόρος and παῖς. The age indicated by these terms is quite variable (from a child to an adolescent), but the protagonists of these festivals had to travel great distances and assume serious responsibilities, so they were most likely of the age and appearance of the Apollo of the Homeric hymn («a vigorous and strong man, / in the prime of his youth, with broad shoulders covered by his hair») (*h.Ap.* 449-450), that is, between 16 and 18 years old¹⁰¹.

These παῖδες played Apollo during most of the festival, but the content of the hymns of Parmenides and Empedocles reveals that on some occasions the citharodes could assume this role when the time came for their performance. Empedocles' hymn clearly shows this distribution of roles, in which the performer is Apollo, and his interlocutor (Pausanias), the young man who is being consecrated as a priest. There is another revealing detail in the Favorinus information in which Empedocles is described in the guise of Apollo. In addition to the purple robe, golden girdle, bronze sandals, and Delphic crown, Favorinus says that Empedocles had long hair (another attribute of Apollo) and an escort of «young men who followed him» (παῖδες ἀκόλουθοι) (*apud* D.L. VIII 73). The origin of this anecdote can only be in the παῖς or the παῖδες that Empe-

⁹⁷ Cf. Podlecki 1971, 141-143.

⁹⁸ Cf. Kebric 1983, 7, 15.

⁹⁹ Cf. Forrest 1960, 227.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Scott 2014, 128-130.

¹⁰¹ Difficulties of the term παῖς, cf. Dean-Jones 2013, 110-112; for κοῦρος, cf. *LSJ s.v.* κόρος. The word ἦβη was the equivalent of modern adolescence, and the expression πρωθήβης from the Homeric hymn (the «prime of youth») must allude to the beginning of this stage, surely, as Bremmer maintains, around the age of sixteen (1999, 184 and 196 n. 6). Bacchylides uses it to refer to the young Theseus (παῖδα δ' ἔμμεν πρώθηβον) (cf. 18.56-57).

docles consecrated as priests of Apollo (and in the retinue of young men who accompanied him), and it is quite probable that something similar was what gave rise to the anecdote that was already circulating in Plato's times that Zeno had been the «beloved» (παιδικός) of Parmenides (Plat. *Prm.* 127b, D.L. IX 25, Ath. *Epit.* XI 505F).

The dates of birth of Zeno and Parmenides that emerge from this testimony of Plato¹⁰² are extraordinarily consistent with the dating that we are considering for the institution of the *Theophania* of Elea. In 474 BCE, a year before the *φωλαρχία of Oulis, son of Ariston, Parmenides, according to Plato, must have been about 41 years old, and Zeno, 16. It is entirely plausible that it was at this date that the Eleans brought from Delphi the festival of the *Theophania* of Apollo, and that the first young man to be consecrated as *pholarchos* at this festival was Zeno, which would also explain the presence of his sculpture in the Velia complex.

If Zeno was the παῖς of the festival at which Parmenides' hymn was performed, it is most likely that at the time of the performance he was also the main addressee of the Apollo-narrator's discourse, as we find in the case of Pausanias and Empedocles' hymn. That we have no fragment of Parmenides in which the name of Zeno is mentioned is not a problem, because we only have one fragment of Empedocles (cited by a single source) in which the name of Pausanias is mentioned (fr. 31 B 1 DK = D.L. VIII 60). The biggest problem is the narrative structure of Parmenides' hymn that Parmenidean studies have assumed from the beginning, in which not only is the narrator of the Proem a mortal (almost always Parmenides himself), but the narrative voice of the rest of the hymn is that of the Goddess who receives him on the other side of the Gate of the Itineraries of Night and Day. This assumption is based on a premise that has no support in the sources: that there is no gap between the fragments 1 and 2. This is unlikely, because it corresponds neither to the narrative structure of Empedocles' hymn, nor to that of Hesiod's *Theogony* Proem that served as a model for Parmenides. In the *Theogony*, the intervention of the Muses concludes in the following lines, and this is what had to happen with the intervention of the Goddess (*i.e.*, the muse Calliope) in the lines that filled the gap between fragments 28 B 1 and 2. When the narrative voice of fr. 2.1 says: «Well then, as for me, I shall say, and as for you, care for this discourse after you have heard it», which best corresponds both with Empedocles' hymn and with the ritual function that these hymns had to perform it is that the narrator's ἐγώ was Apollo, and that the σὺ he addresses is the young man who is about to be

¹⁰² Cf. Cordero 2004, 6-7; Vecchio 2005, 250 and n. 83.

consecrated as a priest of Apollo¹⁰³. It is most probable that this young man was Zenon, and that this scene of his consecration took place in the city of Elea around the year 474 BCE¹⁰⁴.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The cites or fragments that we have preserved from Parmenides' hymn are part of the text of a performance that was held at Elea to institute a civic and religious festival dedicated to the *Theophania* of Apollo. This celebration took place around the year 474 BCE, was modeled on the festival of the *Theophania* of the Sanctuary of Delphi, and had to be propitiated by the increasing interest of Athens led by Cimon in the fertile fields of the region. The festival of the *Theophania* celebrated the *epidemia* of Apollo from the land of the Hyperboreans, which was the motif that was represented on the east pediment of the Temple of Apollo. This festival was held every year around the summer solstice (probably the seventh or eighth day of the month *Apellaios*), except when it was the turn of the *Septerion* festival (once every eight years), with which it had strong topographical, ritual and narrative correspondences. The relationship between the *Theophania* and the *Septerion* may have been similar to the one that existed between the *Apollonia* and the *Delia* that were held in the Sanctuary of Delos.

¹⁰³ Cf. 31 B 2.8, 1.1, 17.21, 17.26, 100.6 DK (among others).

¹⁰⁴ Also the relationship between Gorgias and Empedocles (Gorgias, called «disciple» of Empedocles in Satyrus *apud* D.L. VIII 58, Quint. *Inst.* III 1, 8 and Suda *s.v.* Ἐμπεδοκλῆς E.1002, Γοργίας Γ.388) is much better explained within this ritual context than by the substance of their doctrines (*pace* Diels 1884, 343-368). The family of Gorgias, like that of Pausanias (the *pais* of Empedocles), worked in medicine (cf. Plat. *Grg.* 448B, 456B; Suda *s.v.* Γοργίας Γ.388), and it is possible that they used an institution similar to that of the *hierapolois* of Gela to promote the young Gorgias. In fact, the close historical connection between Leontini and Gela (Her. VII 154, 2, Diod. XI 49, 2) favors the possibility that there was a relationship between both families. It is quite probable that in Leontinos there was a cult of Apollo (for the coinage with the laureate head of Apollo and the Delphic tripod, cf. Boehringer 1998, 47-50, pl. 11.33-12.58, 13.56-74), and there must have been other cities besides Gela that sent their *paidai* or priests of Apollo to the consecration rites that were held in Akragas. Gorgias had a close relationship with Delphi, where he delivered an important speech next to the Altar of Apollo (Philostr. *VS* I 9, 4), and offered (Hermippus *apud* Ath. XI 505D-E; Dio Chrys. *Or.* XXXVII 28; Plin. *HN* XXXIII 83; Paus. X 18, 7; Kaibel, *Epigr. Gr.* 875b), or was offered in his honor (Philostr. *VS* I 9, 4, Cir. *Orat.* III 32, 129, Val. Max. VIII 15), a gold or golden bronze statue with his own image.

The festivals of the *Septerion* and the *Theophania* served as a model or schema of myth and ritual for other festivals that were instituted in the Greek world. Their ritual and narrative structure corresponds to that of the hymns of Empedocles and Parmenides, and the most consistent explanation for these correspondences is that these hymns were composed to be performed at these kinds of festivals. This cultural-historical interpretation has a high explanatory power, whether it is applied to the content of these hymns, as well as to the topographical structure, the monumental landscape, and the civic and religious activity of the cities in which they were performed.

The narrator of Parmenides' hymn is Apollo, and the journey he describes in the Proem is the account of his arrival at Delphi from the land of the Hyperboreans. This account is an exceptional document for our knowledge of the religious topography of the Sanctuary, because it contains a description of the itinerary of the *Theophania* procession, and enough narrative elements to identify this itinerary with that of other processions that took place in the western area of the Sanctuary. The hymn of Parmenides, therefore, is a historical evidence that allows us to document this processional itinerary in the first quarter of the 5th century BCE (Threshing Floor, entrance *SD* 435, south corner of the Temple of Apollo, Altar).

The possibility that the *Heliades* goddesses mentioned in the Proem are the sisters of Phaethon is not very viable from the point of view of the context of the cult and festivals dedicated to Apollo. Much more consistent is that it is an epiclesis of the Seasons (the «maidens of the Sun»), which Parmenides constructed following the model of Hesiod in the *Theogony* (*Olimpiades* and *Helikoniades* Muses). This offers a plausible identification for the group of three *korai* that flanked Apollo in the relief of the east pediment of the Temple. The other three *koroi* probably correspond to the *koros* or *pais* that performed Apollo in the procession and the group of Delphian young men accompanying him.

The institution of the *Theophania* festival also offers a consistent explanation for the collection of epigraphic inscriptions and sculptures found in the *Insula* II complex of Velia. This complex was built by a prominent family of physicians who considered themselves particularly involved in the institution of the festival and the *pholarchoi*, that is, of the eponymous priests of the city. Their role must have been similar to that of the priests of Apollo Ismenios from Thebes, the *hierapoloï* from Gela, and surely, to that of the *koroi* or *paides* of the *Septerion* and *Theophania* festivals. Through ritual, these *pholarchoi* were consecrated as priests of Apollo, and their main occupation had to be the propitiation of harvests,

livestock and the cycle of the seasons, through sacrifices and purification rites, with which they also maintained the city free of plagues and diseases. The prominent presence of the name *Oulis* among the *pholarchoi* in the gallery of the complex, as well as the term *Ouliades* in the inscription of Parmenides, should not be interpreted as evidence of the cult of Apollo *Oulios* in the city of Elea, but rather as an attempt by the promoters of the complex to strengthen their ties with the powerful *Iulia* family. On the contrary, the cult of Apollo *Kitharoidos* is fully accredited by the finding of the sculpture n° 19 Fabbri - Trotta (and perhaps, that of Calliope, cf. n° 18 Fabbri - Trotta), which reinforces the context of the ritual interpretation. It is likely that the first of these *pholarchoi* was Zeno, which would make him the main addressee of Parmenides' hymn. There are good reasons to believe that this hymn was not recited, but sung to the accompaniment of a kithara. And this implies that the festival not only served to put Elea in the international network of festivals that connected Delphi with the Greek world, but also to place a gifted citharode devotee of Apollo at the origin of the history of philosophy.

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APPENDIX

The Proem 19 D 4 LM (= 28 B 1 DK)*

- The mares that carry me as far as ardor might go
Were bringing me onward, after having led me and set me down on the
divinity's many-worded
Road, which again carries the lights that know all things back to Gaia.
It was on this road that I was being carried: for on it the much-knowing
horses were carrying me,
- 5 Straining at the chariot, and maidens were leading the way.
The axle in the naves emitted the whistle of a syrinx
As it was heated (for it was pressed hard by two whirling
Wheels, one on each side), while the maidens of the Sun
Hastened to bring me, after they had left behind the palace of Night
- 10 Towards the light and had pushed back the veils from their heads with
their hands.
That is where the gate of the itineraries of Night and Day is,
And a lintel and a stone threshold hold it on both sides.
Itself ethereal, it is occupied by great doors,
And much-punishing Justice holds its alternating keys.
- 15 The maidens, cajoling her with gentle words,
Wisely persuaded her to thrust quickly back for them
The bolted bar from the gate. And when it flew open
It made a gaping absence of the doors, after rotating in turn
In their sockets the two bronze pivots
- 20 Fastened with pegs and rivets. There, through them,
The maidens guided the chariot and horses straight along the way.
And the goddess welcomed me graciously, took my right hand
In her own hand, and spoke these words, addressing me:
Young man, companion of deathless charioteers, you who
- 25 Have come to our home by the mares that carry you,
I greet you: for it is not the bad part [*sc.* of the road: the Itineray of Night]
that has sent you to travel
This road (for indeed it is remote from the paths of men),
But Right and Justice. It is necessary that you learn everything,
Both the unshakeable heart of well-convincing truth
- 30 And the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true belief.
But nonetheless you will learn this too: how opinions
Would have to be acceptable, forever penetrating all things (?).

* Translation A. Laks and G.W. Most, modified in 3 (cf. 5.1), 6 (cf. 5.3), 11 (cf. 5.4), 26 (cf. 5.1).

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