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# “One Has To Be So Terribly Religious To Be An Artist”: Divine Inspiration and *theophilia* in Aelius Aristides’ *Hieroi Logoi*

καί που σπάνιος καί παρὰ τὸν θεῖον

Ἀριστείδην ἴσταται.

‘Sometimes, albeit rarely, he (i. e. Himerius of Bithynia) is placed next to divine Aristides’

Eunapius, VS 494 Boissonade

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the close link between divine epiphany and artistic inspiration in the life and work of one of the most renowned rhetoricians of the second century AD, Aelius Aristides. The argument in a nutshell is that when Aristides lays emphasis on the divinely ordained character of the *Hieroi Logoi*, in particular, and his literary and rhetorical composition, in general, he taps into a rich battery of traditional theophilic ideas and narratives (oral and written alike). These narratives accounted for the interaction of divine literary patrons and matrons with privileged members of the intellectual elite to provide thematic or stylistic guidance to their artistic enterprises. Thus, Aristides makes wider claims about his own status of *theophilia* (lit. ‘the state of being dear to the gods’), a status that was much-praised and much-prized in the Graeco-Roman world, and one that functioned as a status-elevating mechanism in the eyes of both his contemporaries and posterity. Furthermore and on a different level, he also utilizes his theophilic aspirations to elevate his prose-hymns (a genre he invented) to the higher and already established level of encomiastic poetry, which Greeks regarded for centuries as fit for the ears of the gods.

“I always feel as though I stood naked for the fire of the almighty God to go through me. One has to be so terribly religious to be an artist”, wrote D. H. Lawrence in 1913 in a letter to his close friend, the poet and illustrator, Ernest Collings.<sup>1</sup> This study deals with precisely this kind of intimate relationship between religious experience and ar-

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1 *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, p. 109, letter, Feb. 24, 1913, to Ernest Collings, Heinemann (1932).

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tistic inspiration in the life and work of Aelius Aristides, one of the most renowned orators of the second century AD.

From a methodological point of view, the discussion here follows on from earlier studies of Aristides' *Hieroi Logoi* (henceforth *HL*), which have successfully treated these texts as cultural products that are inextricably intertwined with social structures and interrelated with non-verbal as well as verbal symbolic systems.<sup>2</sup> I suggest that when Aristides lays emphasis on the divinely ordained character of his literary and rhetorical composition, he taps into a rich arsenal of traditional theophilic narratives (oral and written alike). These narratives accounted for the interaction of divine literary patrons with privileged members of the intellectual elite to provide thematic or stylistic guidance to their artistic enterprises. Thus, I argue, Aristides makes wider claims about his own status of *theophilia* (lit. 'being dear to the gods'), a status that was much-praised and much-prized in the Graeco-Roman world, and one that functioned as a status elevating mechanism in the eyes of both his contemporaries and posterity. Aristides is deeply invested in becoming a member of the elite group of poets who are thought of as beloved by the gods, as the following extract from his *Hymn to Sarapis* shows:

ἀλλ' οἱ ποιηταὶ μόνοι θεοφιλεῖς εἰσι καὶ παρὰ τούτων οἱ θεοὶ ἥδιστα δέχονται τὰ δῶρα, τί οὖν οὐ καὶ ἱερέας τῶν θεῶν μόνοις τοὺς ποιητὰς ἐποιήσαμεν;

But are the poets alone *theophileis* ('dear to the gods') and do the gods receive their gifts with the greatest pleasure? Why else have we not also made the poets alone priests of the gods?<sup>3</sup>

Aristides' theophilic aspirations can also be identified by a quick lexicographical survey. The epithet *theophilēs* and its cognates appear sixteen times in the surviving Aristidean corpus.<sup>4</sup> More significantly, Aristides' fascination with establishing great

<sup>2</sup> I am thinking in particular of the following works: Swain (1998), Harris and Holmes eds. (2008), Pernot (2009); Petsalis-Diomidis (2010), Israelovitz (2012), Goeken (2012), Downie (2013), and Russell, Trapp and Nesselrath eds. (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Aristid. *Or.* 45, 6–7.

<sup>4</sup> That is if we are to include some of the works whose attributions are not certain: Ἀθηναῖ; Ἴσθμικός εἰς Ποσειδῶνα; Εἰς τὸν Σάραπιν; Εἰς βασιλέα [Sp.]; Ἀπελλᾶ γενεθλιακός; Παναθηναϊκός (twice); Σμυρναϊκός πολιτικός; Ῥοδιακός [Sp.]; Ῥοδίος περὶ ὁμονοίας (twice); Πρὸς Πλάτωνα περὶ ῥητορικῆς (twice); Περί τοῦ παραφθέγματος; Πρὸς Λεπτίνην ὑπὲρ ἀτελείας (twice). In a similar vein, one could also argue that Aristides utilizes his theophilic aspirations to elevate his prose-hymns (a genre he invented) to the higher and already established level of encomiastic poetry which Greeks regarded for centuries as fit for the ears of the gods. On Aristides' prose hymns, *Orations* 37–46 Keil, see Russell (1990), Goerken (2012), and, more recently, Russell, Trapp et. al eds. (2016). On the heated debate of prose versus poetry in Greek theories of style, see Graff (2005). Aristides must have been aware of this debate, which clearly resonated with many of his contemporaries. However, I do not claim here that prose-hymns were Aristides' answer to that debate. On Aristides' complex literary aims and objectives as far as the prose hymns were concerned, see the exhaustive discussion in the introduction of Goeken (2012). Parker (2016) offers an excellent discussion of the religious ideas and settings of Aristides' prose hymns.

intimacy and bonds of *philia* with the divine can be detected by examining carefully how he treats poets with widely attested theophilic status and how he embeds traditional theophilic narratives into his work.

## 1 Epiphanies moulding *ars poetica* and Aristides' *theophilia*

Elsewhere, I have suggested that epiphanies function as status elevating mechanisms and that they provide authorization for certain individuals to organize the poetic, theological, intellectual, and finally juristic universe of their community.<sup>5</sup> Divine manifestations granted prestige and validity to their perceivers and their claims of truth and justice. Momentary, periodic, or prolonged proximity with divine authorities was considered a sign of *theophilia*. The perceiver of epiphanies was consequently characterized as *theophilēs* or *theios* and the members of his community often granted him or her cultic honors. In exceptional cases perceiving the divine may have even resulted in the post-mortem deification of the perceiver.<sup>6</sup>

Divine epiphanies which gave rise to literary activity can be further divided into two categories: a) 'epiphanies initiating poetry', and b) 'epiphanies moulding *ars poetica*'.<sup>7</sup> In the first category belong the epiphanies which dramatically transformed the lives of usually uneducated and/or extremely young individuals, by turning them into literary geniuses (such as the famous *Musenweißen* scenes experienced by Hesiod and Archilochus);<sup>8</sup> while the second category encompasses epiphanic nar-

5 Petridou (2015b, ch. 4).

6 The cultural topos was familiar enough to be employed by Plato in his *Phaedo* (4.60E-61B). Socrates, when explaining to Kebes why he composed a hymn to Apollo while in prison and why he used the fables of Aesop for his lyrics, replied that was frequently visited by the same dream-vision that urged him to write music: *πολλάκις μοι φοιτῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἐνύπνιον ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι βίῳ, ἄλλοτ' ἐν ἄλλῃ ὄψει φαινόμενον, τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ λέγων, "ὦ Σώκρατες," ἔφη, "μουσικὴν ποιεῖ καὶ ἐργάζου"*. There is little doubt that the whole conversation with Kebes is not without some ironic overtones and scornful remarks about poetic trends and fashionable poets. Nonetheless, the narrative draws from the same cultural pool of regarding artistic production in general and literature in particular as the product of a wondrous synergy of profound religiosity and divine inspiration, which, more often than not, was the offshoot of recurrent divine epiphanies.

7 Petridou (2015b, ch. 4).

8 Hesiod: *Theogony* 22–34. Hesiod was said to have encountered the Muses while pasturing his lambs below Helikon. The patron goddesses of poetry first addressed him in strongly pejorative terms, calling shepherds like him 'wretched things of shame' and 'mere bellies'; then they declared their programmatic *ρήσις* (26–28); and, finally, prompted him to pluck (*ἔδον ... δρέψασθαι*), or the Muses plucked themselves (*ἔδον ... δρέψασαι*), a branch of laurel and gave it to Hesiod to have it as a staff. The staff itself was said to be a wondrous thing (*θηρητόν*). Hesiod's personal encounter with the Muses became the archetype for narrating a poet's initiation into the world of poetic creativity. More on the topic in Petridou (2015, ch. 4). Images of well-established Archaic poets such as Archilochus and Anacreon confronting the Muses were very popular with artists of the Classical pe-

ratives that do not mark the beginning of their recipients' literary career, but shape the quantity and quality of their literary production. This was the case, for instance, with Apollo who famously manifested himself to Callimachus to advise the poet "to keep his Muse slender" and "to drive his poetry through untrodden paths";<sup>9</sup> and that of Artemis who dictated Oppian's subject matter: hunting and hunters, of course.<sup>10</sup> However, Callimachus and Oppian, along with a long line of Hellenistic and Roman poets who appropriated the model of Muse-sponsored poetry,<sup>11</sup> fall into the category of the 'pioneer poet' rather than that of the 'pilgrim poet', to put it in Commager's terms.<sup>12</sup> This is how Commager refers to the tendency of modelling their moments of divine inspiration on Hesiod's epiphanic encounter with the Muses while simultaneously leaving deliberately uncovered the process of their intertextual borrowing. In Commager's view, Hesiod, Archilochus, Pindar, Sophocles, among others fall into the pilgrim-poet category, while later poets like Callimachus, Quintus of Smyrna, Ennius, Virgil, Horace, and Propertius fall into the pioneer poet one. Fronto puts it even more eloquently, I think, when he declares: *magistra Homeri Calliopa, magister Enni Homerus et somnus*.<sup>13</sup>

Aristides was particularly interested in firmly establishing himself as a pilgrim artist but, simultaneously, could not, or perhaps did not want to, escape the category of the pioneer artist. This is precisely why in his works he combines traditional invocations to the Muses (e.g. in the beginning of his prose hymn to Zeus, *Or.* 43.6) with radical reconceptualization of famous poetic epiphanies that other pilgrim poets (mainly from the Archaic and Classical periods) were said to have enjoyed. The following three sections of this paper look briefly at Aristides' energetic involvement (which verges on enamored enmeshment) with four of the orator's most significant

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riod, as we can tell from a series of vase paintings that date back to the first half and the middle of the fifth century. The story of Archilochus' encountering the Muses in the guise of nine women who worked in the fields, comes down to us from a third-century BC inscription, also known as Mnesiepes' inscription. I discuss the text from Tarditi's edition (1968) in Petridou (2015, ch. 4). Cf. also *SEG* 15:517. <sup>9</sup> Callim. *Aet.* fr. 1, 21–28 Pf. Cf. also the edition and commentary of Giulio Massimilla (1996), *Aitia libri primo e secundo*, Pisa. In *A.P.* 7.41 Callimachus is called *synestios* (the one who feasts along with someone) of the Muses.

<sup>10</sup> Oppian *Cyn.* 1.16–23, 41–42 Mair.

<sup>11</sup> Propertius (3.3) dreamt that while he was resting in the soft shade of Helikon (*visus eram molli recubans Heliconis in umbra*) he decided to change his subject matter and turned to sing the wars of Rome. He was then rebuked by Phoebus and thus resorted to singing again about love in his former style. The encounter with Phoebus is followed by an epiphany of the Muses. Horace in his *Odes* (4.15) recounts yet another epiphanic encounter with Phoebus, which also aims at moderating the poet's artistic production: *Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui / victas et urbes increpuit lyra, / ne parva Tyrrenum per aequor / vela darem*. Finally, in Ennius' *Annales* (fr. i-x), an invocation to the Muses is followed by the Homer's oneiric epiphany to the poet. According to Persius, Ennius claimed to have been on the Helicon, and was not, like Callimachus, transferred there in his dream. More on this in Skutsch (1985, 149).

<sup>12</sup> Commager (1967, 9).

<sup>13</sup> Fronto, *De eloqu.* 2.15.

theophilic prototypes: Pindar, Simonides, Aeschylus and Sophocles. All four 'pilgrim poets' were said to have experienced divine epiphanies that moulded and dramatically influenced their literary production.<sup>14</sup>

## 2 Pindar as Aristides' theophilic prototype

Aristides' claims of divinely inspired poems, hymns, epigrams and, of course, rhetorical declamations fall largely into the second sub-group of 'epiphanies moulding *ars poetica*' rather than 'epiphanies initiating poetry'.<sup>15</sup> For instance, in the fourth book of his *Hieroi Logoi*, Aristides informs us about three successive dream-visions sent by Asclepius, Athena and Dionysus, who instructed him to compose hymns.<sup>16</sup> Not only did the deities give Aristides some general guidelines on his thematic choices, but they also dictated certain lines to be incorporated into the commissioned works.

But it is with Asclepius in particular that Aristides develops this relationship of literary patronage most intimately and extensively.<sup>17</sup> Asclepius revives Aristides' literary and rhetorical production, while the latter resides in the god's temple during his so-called *cathedra* years (145–147 AD). Not only was the god the commissioner of the *Hieroi Logoi*,<sup>18</sup> but, as is revealed in chapter 50 of the fourth Book, Asclepius is also envisaged as Aristides' divine co-author, or perhaps better, as his divine copy-

<sup>14</sup> On Pindar and Sophocles, see below and Petridou (2015b, ch. 4).

<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, given the fact that a concentration of these poetic epiphanies is found in the fourth and fifth book of the *HL*, the two books whose narrative focus is to make a strong case about the energetic involvement of Asclepius in the revival of Aristides' rhetorical career and his intellectual cachet, one may arguably think of these theophilic narratives as oscillating between these two categories. In his oration *Against Plato Concerning Rhetoric* (394) Aristides' replies to the obvious question of how rhetorical inspiration and performance relates to poetic inspiration and performance by alluding to Hesiod's *Theogony* (81–104): *rhētorikē* is the art of eloquent wisdom gifted to the chosen few by the Muses, or "the old ladies", as he calls them. In chapters 427 and 428 of the same oration Aristides expands on the kinship between poetry and rhetoric by claiming that the most distinguished and famed part of poetry is the one that resembles rhetoric most closely. The idea of a convergence between poetry and rhetoric may be as old as Hesiod, but it becomes properly theorized with Dionysius (cf. On Composition 11.25 and Demosthenes 22), where the prose of Demosthenes and Isocrates is compared to the poetry of Pindar and Simonides. More on this topic in Walker (1990, esp. at 110–112).

<sup>16</sup> *Or.* 50.39: ἦκε δὲ καὶ παρ' Ἀθηναῖς ὄναρ ὕμνον ἔχον τῆς θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴν τοιάνδε: "Ἴκεσθε Περγάμω νέοι", καὶ ἕτερον ἐκ Διονύσου, οὗ τὸ ἐπαδόμενον ἦν "Χαῖρ' ὦ ἄνα κισσεῦ [Διόνυσε]" ἄδομένου δ' αὐτοῦ καθ' ὕπνον περιέρρει τὰ ὤτα καὶ ἠχὴ θαυμαστή. On Aristides and epiphanies moulding his poetic production, see Platt (2011, 260–65); Downie (2009), (2013); and Petridou (2017).

<sup>17</sup> *Or.* 50. 38–39.

<sup>18</sup> *Or.* 48.9–10: τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν νυκτῶν φανείς ὁ θεὸς τῷ τροφεῖ μου ἐν τῷ Σαλβίου τοῦ νῦν ὑπάτου σχήματι—ὅστις δὲ ὁ Σάλβιος οὐπῶ τότε γε ἤδειμεν· ὁ δ' ἐτύγχανε προσεδρεύων τῷ θεῷ κατ' ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον—ἔφη δ' οὖν ὁ τροφεὺς ὡς ἐν τούτῳ δὴ τῷ σχήματι διαλεχθεῖη πρὸς αὐτὸν περὶ τῶν λόγων τῶν ἐμῶν ἄλλα τε δὴ, οἶμαι, καὶ ὅτι ἐπισημῆναιτο ὡδὶ λέγων, ἱεροὶ λόγοι. ταῦτα μὲν εἰς τοσοῦτον. More on this in Petsalis-Diomididis (2010, 122–132).

editor, invested with power to cut and paste within Aristides' text.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, as Janet Downie has convincingly shown, the entirety of the *Hieroi Logoi* can be conceived of as a prose hymn to Asclepius.<sup>20</sup>

Nowhere is Aristides more explicit about Asclepius' literary patronage than in the following extract from his *An Address to Asclepius* (*Or.* 42 in Keil's edition), the speech he composed in 177 in honor of the god while residing in Pergamum. In chapter 12, in particular, Aristides is happy to reduce his artistic agency to a bare minimum and himself to a mere mouthpiece of the god:

τὸ γὰρ τοῦ Πινδάρου μετέβαλες. ἐκείνου μὲν γὰρ ὁ Πᾶν τὸν παιᾶνα ὠρχήσατο, ὡς λόγος, ἐγὼ δὲ, εἰ θέμις εἶπείν, ὧν ὑποκριτὴς εἶναι. προὔτρεψάς τε γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ τῆς ἀσκήσεως κατέστης ἡγεμῶν.

You have changed what happened to Pindar. For Pan danced out his paeon, as the tradition has it. But if it is proper to express it, I say that I am the interpreter of your compositions. For you yourself have exhorted me to oratory and have guided my literary exercises.

Behr translates *hypokritēs* as “actor” implying that the metaphor is drawn from the field of dramatic and choral performance.<sup>21</sup> Downie, on the other hand, translates more appropriately “performer”, but it is obvious that she also sees Aristides as “the dramatic interpreter of the god”.<sup>22</sup> To my mind, the term *hypokritēs* is best understood as referring to the mantic interpreter of the will of the god, very much in the same sense as it is used in Strabo's description of the priest of Ammon Zeus who interprets the nods and the signs of the divine statue.<sup>23</sup> In his description of Alexand-

19 E.g.: *Or.* 50.50: τὰ δ' ἐντεύθεν ἤδη, εἰ μὲν θέμις, εἰρήσθω καὶ γεγράφθω, εἰ δὲ μὴ, τοσοῦτον σοὶ μελήσειε, δέσποτα Ἀσκληπιε, ἐπὶ νοῦν ἀγαγεῖν μοι διαγράψαι παντὸς δυσκόλου χωρὶς. More on this idea of Asclepius as Aristides' divine editor in Downie (2009).

20 More on Asclepius divine editorial skills in Downie (2013, 127–53).

21 Behr (1981, 249).

22 Downie (2013, 127 and 145).

23 Strabo 17.1.43 = *FGtH* 124 F14a: μόνῳ γὰρ δὴ τῷ βασιλεῖ τὸν ἱερέα ἐπιτρέψαι παρελθεῖν εἰς τὸν νεῶ μετὰ τῆς συνήθους στολῆς, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους μετενδύναί τὴν ἐσθήτα, ἐξωθέν τε τῆς θεμιστείας ἀκροάσασθαι πάντας πλὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου, τοῦτον δ' ἔνδοθεν. εἶναι δ' οὐχ ὡς περ ἐν Δελφοῖς καὶ Βραγχίδαϊς τὰς ἀποθεσπίσεις διὰ λόγων, ἀλλὰ νεύμασι καὶ συμβόλοις τὸ πλέον, ὡς καὶ παρ' Ὀμήρῳ “ἦ καὶ κυανέησιν ἐπ' “ὄφρυσί νεῦσε Κρονίων,” τοῦ προφήτου τὸν Δία ὑποκριναμένου· τοῦτο μέντοι ῥητῶς εἶπεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ὅτι εἶη Διὸς υἱός. προστραγωδεῖ δὲ τούτοις ὁ Καλλισθένης, etc. Translation: “that the priest permitted the king alone to pass into the temple in his usual attire, whereas the others changed theirs; that all heard the oracles on the outside of the temple, except Alexander, who was in the interior of the building; that the answers were not given, as at Delphi and at Branchidae, in words, but chiefly by nods and signs, as in Homer; ‘the son of Cronus nodded with his dark brows,’ while the priest of the god interpreted the movements of the statue of Zeus. This, however, the man told the king, in explicit terms, that he was the son of Zeus. Callisthenes adds after the exaggerating style of tragedy, etc...” Notwithstanding the textual difficulties, the meaning of the passage is clear: the priestly personnel of the oracle went into pains to secure Alexander's favor by declaring him Zeus' son and treating him accordingly. Cf. Fredricksmeier (1991). On Strabo and his sources see Bowsworth (2003). Cf. Diod. Sic. 17.50.6–7; Curt. 4.7.23–24.



er's visit to the oracle of Ammon, Strabo either quotes or paraphrases Callisthenes and describes the process by which the Macedonian king was declared Ammon Zeus' son. In this particular oracle, unlike say Delphi or Didyma, "the priest of the god interpreted the movements of the statue of the god" (τοῦ προφήτου τὸν Δία ὑποκριναμένου), which conveyed the god's will with nods and signs (νεύμασι καὶ συμβόλοις).<sup>24</sup>

Returning to Aristides, Downie rightly interprets the aforementioned passage (*Or.* 42.12) as the crux of Aristidean poetics and representative of Aristides' efforts to break the demarcation line between divine inspiration and human authorship.<sup>25</sup> To my mind, this passage is not simply indicative of an author who is in search of a divinely inspired *logos*. In fact, it reveals Aristides' theophilic aspirations. What Aristides is after here is to join the ranks of Homer, Hesiod and Pindar, poets who were deemed, both by their contemporaries and their biographers, as *theophileis*, i. e. 'dear to the gods'.

The high frequency of Pindaric quotations in Aristides' work can also be interpreted along the same lines.<sup>26</sup> Indeed Aristides is one of our most important sources for Pindar, preserving for posterity much of the poets' work which would otherwise be lost. As Gkourogiannis has shown, Pindar was often referred to and quoted (verbatim or in paraphrasis) by Aristides.<sup>27</sup> From what has been said so far, it should be clear that Pindar and his poetry provided more than a model for encomiastic poetry for Aristides. Aristides aspired to emulate not only Pindar's poetry but also his widely recognized theophilic profile.<sup>28</sup>

To be fair, Pindar is not the only early poet whose stylistic and thematic features Aristides utilizes and quotes but he is undoubtedly the most frequently used.<sup>29</sup> To the

**24** The *xoanon* of the god was carried about in a "gilded ship" by eighty bearers and the movements of the *xoanon's* head were interpreted by the priests as the answers to the questions posed.

**25** Downie (2009, 269) and (2013, 127–8). *Oration 45*, Aristides' *Hymn to Sarapis* is perhaps the oldest attestation of Aristides' attempt to break the barriers between prose and poetry and establish the prose-hymn as the main platform of encomiastic declamation. On this see also Russell (1990); Vassilaraki (2005); and Bowie (2008, 16).

**26** The high frequency of Pindaric quotations in the extant Aristidean corpus has been noted before. See Behr (1968, 11 and n. 28); Gkourogiannis (1999) and Downie (2009).

**27** Gkourogiannis distinguishes between three types of quotations from Pindar: a) direct citation cited correctly and verbatim; b) paraphrase, proverbial phrases, allusion, and reminiscence; and c) passages incorrectly cited, but recognizable as quotations, or mere references to poets' names. As Gkourogiannis (1999) has convincingly shown, Aristides was not only working from an original copy of Pindar, but he is also drawing on ancient *hypomnemata*, biographies, and a variety of other sources.

**28** Although Aristides' *philotimia* has received much attention (e. g. Bowie 2012), Aristides' thirst for *theophilia* is, as far as I know, a topic that has remained largely unexplored to this day.

**29** Gkourogiannis (1999, 10 and 35 for an exhaustive catalogue of Aristides' quotations). More on this topic in Downie (2009). On other early Greek poets who feature in Aristides' work see the table provided by Bowie (2008) at 22–29. On Pindar's popularity in the literature of the Imperial period, see Gkourogiannis (1999, 30–32).

obvious question, “Why Pindar?”, Ewen Bowie replies that there is no certain answer and assumes that it was Pindar’s “outstanding natural capacities” and unquestioned poetic superiority which Aristides attempted to appropriate.<sup>30</sup> In a similar vein, Janet Downie explains the high frequency of Pindaric quotations and remodelling of Pindaric stylistic and thematic features in Aristides’ extant works as an attempt to appropriate Pindar’s epinician model and its heroic qualities.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, both approaches overlook the most significant aspect of Pindaric *Nachleben*: the poet’s unquestionable theophilic status. Aristides may have modelled his intimate relationship with Asclepius on Pindar’s epiphanic relationship to Pan, but it was the *theophilia* and the cultic honors the poet was said to have enjoyed post mortem that Aristides wanted to emulate. In other words, Aristides’ fascination with Pindar, although part of his usual self-aggrandizing agenda, goes well beyond that and into the realm of post mortem reception.

In order to substantiate this claim, we need to have a brief look at some examples of narratives that glorify Pindar’s relationship with the divine. As the author of *vita Ambrosiana* explicitly claims, “Pindar was not simply an ingenious poet, he was also a man dear to the gods (ἄνθρωπος θεοφιλής)”.<sup>32</sup> To illustrate his premise further, the author of this particular biography recounts Pindar’s epiphanic encounters with Pan and Demeter. Somewhere between Cithaeron and Helicon Pan was seen singing one of the poet’s paeans.<sup>33</sup> To reciprocate this sign of divine favor, Pindar composed a hymn to the god, which started with the famous first line: ὦ Πᾶν Πᾶν Ἀρκαδίας μεδέων καὶ σεμνῶν ἀδύτων φύλαξ (fr. 95).<sup>34</sup> Now according to *Vita Thomana* (4–11 Drachmann), Pan was not found singing Pindar’s paean (what is now fr. 95), but

**30** Bowie (2008, 17): “The big question, then, is ‘Why Pindar?’ It is a question to which there can be no certain answer... To me the most persuasive explanation is that Aristides responded to Pindar’s praise of the importance of outstanding natural capacities, which Aristides was convinced that he himself had, and of the importance of sustained effort in realizing these capacities, something Aristides was also more than ready to apply. Such praise could also be found in Bacchylides and, doubtless, already in epinicia of Simonides that we have lost: but no ancient critic questioned Pindar’s poetic superiority”.

**31** Downie (2009).

**32** *Vita Ambros. Pind.* 4–10 Drachmann.

**33** Cf. *Vita Thomana* 4–11 Drachmann. Pan is found singing Pindar’s first Olympian: ἐτμήθη δὲ σφόδρα ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος φιλεῖσθαι οὕτως, ὡς καὶ μερίδα λαμβάνειν ἀπὸ τῶν προσφερομένων τῷ θεῷ, καὶ τὸν ἱερέα βοᾶν ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις: Πίνδαρον ἐπὶ τὸ δειπνῶν τοῦ θεοῦ. λόγος καὶ τὸν Πᾶνα εὐρῆσαι ποτε ἄδοντα περὶ τοῦ Πέλοπος.

**34** Pan manifests himself in between two loci mirabiles, each with a different specialization: the first specializes in madness, reversals, and transgressions, the transformation of shepherds into poets according to Himerius. Cf. *Him. Or.* 66.45–65 Colonna. Esp. τί δὲ δὴ ὁ Ἑλικῶν πρὸς τὰς Νύμφας ἐν τῷ μύθῳ φθέγγεται; 50 “Ποῖ φέρεσθε, ὦ Νύμφαι; τίς οὗτος ὑμᾶς πονηρὸς οἶστρος ἐξέμνηνε; τί δὲ ἀφείσαι τὸν Ἑλικῶνα, τὸ τῶν Μουσῶν ἐργαστήριον, ἐπὶ τὸν Κιθαιρῶνα σπεύδετε; συμφοραὶ ἐκεῖ καὶ πάθη καὶ τραγῳδίας πηγὴ τὰ Κιθαιρῶνος ἐγκώμια. ἐγὼ ποιητὰς ἐκ ποιμένων, ὁ δὲ ἄφρονας ἐκ σωφρονούντων ἐργάζεται: 55 ἐκεῖ μήτηρ κατὰ παιδὸς μαίνεται, καὶ πολεμεῖ τὸ γένος τῷ γένει: ἐνταῦθα Μουσῶν γοναὶ καὶ Μνημοσύνης κῆποι καὶ αἱ τῶν γεννηθέντων τροφαί.



his first Olympian, where Pindar relates the chariot race of Pelops and his efforts to win Hippodameia's hand. Returning to *Vita Ambrosiana*, we also find out that Demeter visited Pindar in his sleep (ἡ Δημήτηρ ὄναρ ἐπιστάσα αὐτῷ) and reproached him for having neglected to compose a hymn in her honor. It was in accordance with that dream-vision that Pindar composed a hymn, which began: Πότνια θεομοφόρε χρυσάνιον (fr.37).

Pausanias offers a completely different account of the *aition* behind the composition of fr. 37: it was Persephone and not Demeter who visited the poet in his sleep and complained the same way Demeter had.<sup>35</sup> In an unfortunate twist of fate, Pindar died on the tenth day after the vision—the dream-vision of Persephone, the mistress of the underworld equals death—and therefore did not have enough time to respond to the goddess' request. However, the pious poet was so determined to do his duty, that he appeared in the sleep of an old relative (ταύτη Πίνδαρος ἐνύπνιον τῆ πρεσβύτιδι ἐπιστάς ὕμνον ἦσεν ἐς Περσεφόνην), who was well-trained in the art of singing and sung the hymn to Persephone from the underworld! The old woman woke up and wrote down the hymn as she had heard Pindar singing it in her dream. Thus the *theophilēs* poet succeeded in fulfilling his religious obligations, even from beyond the grave!

Pindar features as the main recipient of divine favor and inspiration in yet another poetic epiphany recorded by Aristodemos and preserved in the Scholia to his third Pythian.<sup>36</sup> The poet and his pupil Olympichus were holding their music class on a mountain, when the latter heard a terrible noise and saw a 'downward stroke of fire'; when Pindar himself became aware of his eerie surroundings, he saw the statue of the mother of the gods walking towards him by moving its feet: τὸν δὲ Πίνδαρον ἐπαισθόμενον συνιδεῖν Μητρὸς θεῶν ἄγαλμα λίθινον τοῖς ποσὶν ἐπερχόμενον. To reciprocate for the honor of witnessing this *effigies* epiphany of the Mother of the Gods, Pindar erected a monument jointly to the Mother of the Gods and to Pan near his house.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the poet was asked to perform or establish (the text is not clear) secret rites in honor of the goddess. Pindar took this oracle to heart and re-

**35** Paus. 9.23.3–4: Λέγεται δὲ καὶ ὄνειρατος ὄψιν αὐτῷ γενέσθαι προήκοντι ἐς γῆρας· ἐπιστάσα ἡ Περσεφόνη οἱ καθεύδοντι οὐκ ἔφασκεν ὑμνηθῆναι μόνη θεῶν ὑπὸ Πινδάρου, ποιήσιν μέντοι καὶ ἐς αὐτὴν ἄσμα Πίνδαρον ἐλθόντα ὡς αὐτήν. 4 τὸν μὲν αὐτίκα τὸ χρεῶν ἐπιλαμβάνει πρὶν ἐξήκειν ἡμέραν δεκάτην ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄνειρατος, ἣν δὲ ἐν Θήβαις γυνὴ πρεσβύτις γένους ἔνεκα προσήκουσα Πινδάρῳ καὶ τὰ πολλὰ μεμελετηκυῖα ἄδειν τῶν ἀσμάτων· ταύτη Πίνδαρος ἐνύπνιον τῆ πρεσβύτιδι ἐπιστάς ὕμνον ἦσεν ἐς Περσεφόνην, ἡ δὲ αὐτίκα ὡς ἀπέλιπεν αὐτὴν ὁ ὕπνος, ἔγραψε ταῦτα ὁπόσα τοῦ ὄνειρατος ἦκουσεν ἄδοντος, ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ἄσματι ἄλλα τε ἐς τὸν Ἄϊδην εἰσὶν ἐπικλήσεις καὶ ὁ χρυσήνιος, δῆλα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς Κόρης τῆ ἀρπαγῆ. Pausanias' account seems more like the local, Theban version of the narrative, that was rejected by the Alexandrian scholars. See Bowra (1964, 48ff.).

**36** Schol. ad Pind. P. 3. 137b, p. 80.16 Drachmann (see above n. 1072).

**37** *Effigies* epiphany: Petridou (2015, 49–63). For Pan as a devotee of the Mother of the Gods see Pind. fr. 95 Snell & Maehler and Schol. ad *Pyth.* 3.139a. A joint cult of Pan and the Mother of the Gods existed also in Lykosoura in Arcadia.

fused to visit Hieron at Syracuse in 473/4, because he had to conduct the prescribed secret rites, as he himself tells us in his third *Pythian* (77–79).

To provide further support for my argument, that Aristides seeks to emulate Pindar's theophilic status as well as his success as an epinician poet, I will now turn to Aristides' appropriation of yet another theophilic prototype, that of the poet Simonides and his relationship to the Dioscuri.

### 3 Simonides as Aristides' theophilic prototype

Occasionally the divine literary patrons manifest themselves in order to reciprocate the honor of having been praised in a hymn. An actual epiphany is thus conceptualized as reciprocating for the poetic representation. Remembering the gods in hymnic poetry is making them present.<sup>38</sup> This was at least the case with the epiphany of the Dioscuri to Simonides of Keos. Different versions of the narrative are to be found in many places, such as Callimachus's *Aitia*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, and Cicero's *De Oratore*, but the older version of the story is to be found in the 'Princeton Simonides' papyrus (*editio princeps* back in 2004).<sup>39</sup> In Cicero's version, the narrative runs as follows: Simonides was dining at the house of a wealthy nobleman named Scopas at Crannon in Thessaly. There he chanted a hymn which he had composed in honor of his host, in which he included an encomium to Castor and Pollux; whereupon Scopas with excessive meanness told him he would pay him half the fee agreed, and if he liked he might apply for the balance to the sons of Tyndareus, as they have had more than their fair share in the panegyric. A little later a message was brought to Simonides to go outside, as two young men were standing at the door (in Quintilian's version they are on horseback) who earnestly requested him to come out; so he rose from his seat and went out, and could not see anybody; but in his absence the roof of the hall where Scopas was giving the banquet fell in, crushing Scopas himself and his relations underneath the ruins and killing them.

In chapters 31 to 37 of his fourth *Hieros Logos*, Aristides models on this theophanic narrative his composition of a paean in honor of Apollo and his preservation

<sup>38</sup> On the close link between divine presence and hymnic poetry see Bakker (2002).

<sup>39</sup> Different versions of the Dioskouroi epiphany to Simonides can be found in Page's edition under Simonides 510 *PMG*. Out of those, we can single out the versions of Callimachus (fr. 64.1–14 Pf.), Quintilian (11.2.11ff.) and Cicero (*De Orat.* 2.86, 352–53). For 'The Princeton Simonides', see Kraut (2004, 1–5) with Tafeln I, II. The papyrus is dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. BC. In verso l.9 we read ἐπιφαν[. Rowels agrees with Kraut that the narrative must revolve around Simonides of Keos and the epiphany of the Dioscuri in the guise of two young man who save the poets' life. The other strong connection between the two stories is in line 6, where we read ἐπιτικ[. Quintilian (11.2.1 ff.) tells us that Scopas got angry because Simonides devoted half of an *epinician* ode for a victor in boxing to the Dioskouroi. For a digital reproduction and detailed discussion of the manuscript see Rawles (2005, esp. 62–63). This article is an edition of P. Princeton inv. AM87–59 A with comment. I am grateful to Richard Rowles, who brought the papyrus to my attention.

from an aggressive sea storm while residing at Delos.<sup>40</sup> Having been instructed in a dream to compose a paean that clearly recalls the opening of Pindar's 2<sup>nd</sup> *Olympian*, Aristides feigns ignorance about the technical conventions of epinician poetry but proceeds with the composition nonetheless. Apollo was obviously pleased with Aristides' efforts because he reciprocated by saving both Aristides and his companions from certain death while they resided at the harbor of Delos, Apollo's sacred island: "So great was the gain and profit of my song (τὸ μὲν κέρδος τοσοῦτον καὶ ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ ἔσματος), just as they say it befell Simonides to be saved alone by the Dioskouroi for the hymns he has written to them, except that then not only we, but also our friends were saved with us". Once again, via the medium of the god's providence (τῆς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν προνοίας), Aristides' appropriates the salvific role and qualities of Apollo and Asclepius and is saluted as a 'Benefactor and Savior' (εὐεργέτην, σωτῆρα ὀνομάζοντες).<sup>41</sup>

Downie and several other commentators on the passage may well be right in pointing out the intentionally close intertextual matching between Aristides' paean and Pindar's second *Olympian*.<sup>42</sup> After all, Aristides' poem was written at the time the Romans were celebrating the Apollinaria, a festival that included horse racing, while the second *Olympian* was written by Pindar to celebrate the victory of Theron of Acragas, the winner of the four-horse chariot race). At the same time, nonetheless, Aristides is showing off his knowledge of the ancient literary tradition by alluding to Simonides' traditional accusations of *avaritia* (*philochrēmatia*) and even Pindar's famous distaste for monetary payments in exchange for poetic talent (as he famously expressed them in his second *Isthmian*, where he talks about his *Moisa philokerdis*).<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless the main *tertium comparationis* between himself and Simonides is Simonides' theophilic status: Aristides aspires to a relationship of reciprocal *charis* with Apollo, but begrudges Simonides for betraying the primarily aristocratic model of literary patronage that precluded monetary compensation.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Or.* 50.31–37.

<sup>41</sup> In *Or.* 47.74, Aristides heals his trusty foster-father Zosimos via the *pronoia* of Asclepius: τῷ τε θεῷ χάριν ἔχων τῆς προνοίας καὶ τῆς διακονίας ἐμοί. Furthermore, in a lengthy narrative from the third book of the *HL* (*Or.* 49.38–43), Aristides takes the notion of 'healing' to an entirely new level, and presents himself as saving the entire city of Smyrna and its citizens from an earthquake. The terminology used to describe the healing event is almost a word-for-word repetition of the description of the way Zosimos was healed by the gods' providence and power and Aristides' essential intermediary service: προνοία μὲν καὶ δυνάμει τῶν θεῶν, διακονία δ' ἡμῶν ἀναγκαία. More on these two texts in Petridou (2016).

<sup>42</sup> Downie (2013, 134–5).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Nagy (1989), Klooster (2009, 54–7) and Lefkowitz (2012<sup>2</sup>, 55–60) with further primary and secondary bibliography.

<sup>44</sup> Ford (2006).

## 4 Other theophilic prototypes and Aristides' divine hereafter

Other theophilic idols that populated Aristides's dreams include Sophocles and Aeschylus,<sup>45</sup> who were both thought of as *theophileis* poets.<sup>46</sup> Sophocles deserves a special mention here, since Aristides reconceptualizes the tragedian's *theophilia* with Asclepius in an ingenious way. As the legend had it, Sophocles acquired the cultic title of *dexiōn*, i.e. 'the one who ritually receives a deity and offers hospitality to them'.<sup>47</sup> Aristides dreams of welcoming Sophocles at his house. By offering hospitality to Sophocles, Aristides becomes the *dexiōn* of the *par excellence dexiōn*, who also happened to have offered hospitality to Aristides' favored deity: Asclepius himself.

The main premise of this paper, that Aristides paid close attention to the theophilic traditions that surrounded some of the most famous classical authors, and even modelled his narrative scenes on them can be further supported by looking briefly at the rest of Aristides literary heroes and their intimate relationships with the divine. I leave *theophilēs* Odysseus aside, as much has already been made of Aristides' modelling himself as a narrator and *dramatis persona* on Odysseus.<sup>48</sup> Chapter 41 from the second *Hieros Logos*, however, showcases nicely one out of the many ingenious ways in which Aristides chooses to rework famous epiphanic episodes to appropriate the theophilic status of other Homeric heroes that attract his attention:<sup>49</sup>

ἔπειτα οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον ἢ Ἀθηνᾶ φαίνεται τὴν τε αἰγίδα ἔχουσα καὶ τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὸ μέγεθος καὶ σύμπαν δὴ σχῆμα οἷα περὶ ἢ Ἀθήνησιν ἢ Φειδίου. ἀπῶξε δὲ καὶ τῆς αἰγίδος ὅτι ἥδιστον, καὶ ἦν κηρῷ τινι προσφερῆς, θαυμαστὴ καὶ αὕτη τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὸ μέγεθος. ἐφαίνετο μὲν δὴ μόνω στάσα κατανακτρῶ καὶ ὄθεν αὐτὴν ὡς κάλλιστα ἐμελλεν ὄψεσθαι. ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπεδείκνυν καὶ τοῖς παροῦσι, δύο δ' ἦσθη τῶν φίλων καὶ τροφῶς, βοῶν καὶ ὀνομάζων τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν ὅτι ἐστίκοι τε αὕτη ἀπανακτρῶ καὶ διαλέγοιτο καὶ τὴν αἰγίδα ἀπεδείκνυν· οἱ δ' οὐκ εἶχον ὅ τι χρῆσοιτο, ἀλλ' ἠπόρ-

<sup>45</sup> *Or.* 50.60–61

<sup>46</sup> Aeschylus: *Vita Aeschyli* 2.26. cf. also Paus. 1.21.2 (Dionysus' oneiric to Aeschylus' sleep in which he bade him to write tragedy). Sophocles: Hieronymus fr. 31 Wehrli ~ *Vita Sophocli* 12: Γέγονε δὲ καὶ θεοφιλῆς ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ὡς οὐκ ἄλλος, καθά φησιν Ἰερώνυμος \*\*\* περὶ τῆς χρυσοῦς στεφάνης, ταύτης γὰρ ἐξ ἀκροπόλεως κλαπίσεις κατ' ὄναρ Ἡρακλῆς ἐδήλωσε Σοφοκλεῖ, λέγων τὴν τμῆ οἰκοῦσαν οικίαν ἐν δεξιᾷ εἰσιόντι ἐρευνησαι, ἔνθα ἐκέκρυπτο. ἐμήνυσε δὲ αὐτὴν τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τάλαντον ἐδέξατο· τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν προκηρυχθέν. λαβῶν οὖν τὸ τάλαντον ἱερὸν ἰδρύσατο Μηνητοῦ Ἡρακλέους.

<sup>47</sup> *Et.Gen.AB* ~ *Et.Sym.V* ~ *Et.M.*256, 6 *Dexiōn*, and *Plut. Mor.* 14.22 (1103b). Compare here Marinus' *Vita Procli* 29, where the *dexiosis* of the god is called an *epiphaneia*. *Plut. Non posse* 22, 1103 also marks clearly the *theoxenia* as an *epiphaneia* by including the event into a group of other epiphanic revelations. Cf. also Wickisser (2008, 66–7), follows Connolly who thinks of the tradition as a Hellenistic fabrication, which, in all likelihood, draws from the paeon Sophocles wrote, whose title is attested on a third century inscription IG II2 4510=SEG 28.225. cf. also Melfi (2010, 332–4). More on offering *xenia* to the divine in Petridou (2015, chap. 8).

<sup>48</sup> See for instance, Schröder (1987); Holmes (2008) and Petsalis-Diomides (2010) with further bibliography.

<sup>49</sup> *Aristid. Or.* 48.41.

ουν τε καὶ ἐδεδοίκεσαν μὴ παραληρῶν ἄρα τυγχάνω, πρὶν γε δὴ τὴν τε δύναμιν συνεώρων ἀναφερομένην καὶ τῶν λόγων ἤκουσαν ὧν ἤκουσα παρὰ τῆς θεοῦ.

Then not much later, Athena appeared carrying her aegis and in beauty, magnitude and whole form she looked like her statue in Athens, the one made by Pheidias. There was also a fragrance coming from the aegis most pleasant and very similar to the smell of wax, and she was marvelous in beauty and magnitude. She appeared to me alone, standing right in front of me, and in such a way that she was most visible. I also pointed her out to those present—two of my friends and my nurse stood there—and I shouted, calling her out by her name Athena, saying that she stood before me and spoke to me, and I pointed towards her *aegis*. They did not know what they should do, but they were at a loss, and were afraid that I had become delirious, until they saw that my strength had been restored and heard the words I had heard from the goddess.

This passage is essentially a reworking of the well-known epiphanic scene in which Athena appears to Achilles alone in the first book of the *Iliad* to deter him from killing Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.197–222). Aristides is the sole perceiver of Athena's epiphanic activity and thus resembles Achilles in his unique visual intimacy with the goddess.<sup>50</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

This level of intricate literary allusion and Muse-sponsored self-aggrandisement is, to an extent, expected from a prominent representative of the second century intellectual elite. Yet Aristides takes the process of appropriation of earlier theophilic prototypes to a whole new level. With his eyes firmly fixed on the prize, namely the positive future reception of his work, he proceeds to recast older theophilic idols and firmly embeds them in his poetics.<sup>51</sup> The gods did not abandon those dear to them

**50** See esp. lines 197–200: στῆ δ' ὄπιθεν, ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἔλε Πηλεΐωνα / οἶψ φαινομένη· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐ τις ὄρατο·/θάμβησεν δ' Ἀχιλεὺς, μετὰ δ' ἐτρέπετ', αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω / Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην.

**51** Aristides may even be thinking of the cultic honors some of these authors were said to have enjoyed post-mortem. Pindar and Sophocles acquired heroic status after their death, just like Hesiod and Archilochus had before them. Pindar: Schol. ad Nem. 7.68a; Archilochus: Plut. *Num.* 4.6; Hesiod: Paus. 9.38.3–4 (Hesiod's bones are brought back to Orchomenos; the community is saved from the pestilence). Pindar was thought to dine along with Apollo in his temple in Delphi. This is at least what the priest of the god used to proclaim each day, when he was closing the doors of the temple according to *Vita Ambros.* 15–20 Drachmann. On the hero-cult of Archilochus in Paros see Clay (2004, 9–62). On the cults of other poets (including those of Homer and Hesiod in the Greek polis see Clay (2004, 63–97) and the Appendix on pages 127ff. On Pindar's hero-cult see Currie (2005, 147 and 303). There is no consensus as to whether the Heroxenia at Delphi attested in the scholia of Nemean 7 is the same with the Delphic Theoxenia festival. More on this in Currie (2005, 303, n. 42). The heroic status that Sophocles acquired *post mortem* is confirmed by two inscriptions that record celebrations and offerings to *Dexion* on behalf of the city: *IG II/III<sup>2</sup> 1252= Syll.<sup>3</sup>1069; IG II/III<sup>2</sup> 1253*. Connolly (1998, 20) argues that it is unlikely that the poet received heroic honors before the 330s and dismisses the story of Asclepius' *xenia* as “Hellenistic fabrication”. As for the inscriptions, he thinks that they honor a separate local hero.

even after their death, but continued to strive to establish their kudos and propagate the fame of their poetry. Undoubtedly, this is what Aristides envisaged for himself too. If we are to judge by Eunapius' characterization of Aristides as *theios* (in the epigraph), Aristides may have achieved his wish in the end.

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