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# The Decline of Delphi

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## Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed..... Dated.....

Kristin M. Heineman

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## EDITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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Except where otherwise stated, translations of ancient authors in both Greek and Latin refer to Loeb editions. All citations of ancient text refer to editions in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (for Greek authors) and *The Packard Humanities Institute* (for Latin authors). The abbreviations of ancient sources cited follow those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* for both Greek and Latin authors. English translations are given first, followed by the ancient text.

In addition to the ancient sources cited, modern abbreviations correspond to those used in *L'Année Philologique*. The following titles and abbreviations will be used throughout the thesis, as they are not included in traditional references.

The oracular responses from Delphi correspond to the numbers of the 2004 edition of P&W (for example P&W R233 without page citation to distinguish from a non-oracular reference). Where necessary, Fontenrose's classification system will be used (for example H13).

<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Review</i>
<i>CCAG</i>	<i>Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum</i>
<i>Euseb.</i>	Eusebius. <i>Preparations for the Gospel</i> . Gifford, E.H. (1981) translation. Grand Rapids, MI.
<i>Fontenrose</i>	Fontenrose, J. (1978) <i>The Delphic Oracle</i> . Berkeley.
<i>Iambl.</i>	Iamblichus, <i>De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum</i> . Ronan, S. ed. (1989) Taylor, T. and Wilder, A. translations, Sussex.
<i>Lactant.</i>	Lactantius, <i>Divine Institutes</i> . Bowen, A. and Garnsey, P. (2003) translation. Liverpool.
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, H.G., Scott, H.S, Jones, R., McKenzie, A. (1996) <i>Greek-English Lexicon, with a revised Supplementum</i> 9 <sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford.
<i>P&amp;W</i>	Parke, H.W. and Wormell, D.E.W. (2004) <i>The Delphic Oracle</i> , 2 Vols. Chicago, (reprint of the Oxford 1956 ed.).
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

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# ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the final centuries of Delphic consultation, from the first to fourth centuries AD, particularly within a religious context. The investigation begins with an analysis of the rise of Delphi and the various stages of decline proposed by Delphic scholars, concluding that the decline begins in the Hellenistic Era, but is far more apparent by the first and second centuries AD.

Plutarch is a key source regarding Delphi during this period and, as such, his Delphic Dialogues are analysed in detail. From his writings, a contradictory picture of the state of Delphi in the second century emerges: on the one hand, a decline in oracular consultation, and on the other hand, a thriving sanctuary. To better understand this dichotomy, a conception of Delphi is suggested – the sanctuary operated on two connected, yet distinct levels – the oracle, and the remaining religious, political and social elements at the site.

This thesis compares and contrasts Delphi with Claros and Didyma to demonstrate Delphi's inability to assist in contemporary religious concerns. The responses from these Asia Minor oracles showcase their expertise on a variety of 'theological' issues which were novel oracular concerns. Issues such as these were not presented to Apollo at Delphi and this lack of expertise could help to explain why Delphi began to decline as Claros and Didyma continued to thrive in the second and third centuries AD.

Finally, this thesis proposes a relationship between the decline of Delphi and the rise of several occult practices. The second and third centuries AD witnessed the development, rise and spread of new ways of access to divine wisdom. Particularly widespread were the practices of astrology and the Neoplatonic divinatory system called theurgy. This thesis examines the correlation between the rise of such practices and the decline of oracular consultation at Delphi.

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# Map I: Greece and Asia Minor

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# INTRODUCTION

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Delphi's long and influential history has fascinated ancient and modern minds alike. Understandably, much of the interest has focused on the acme of the sanctuary and its oracle during the Archaic and Classical periods. This thesis aims to shed further light on a more neglected period in Delphic history, the decline of the oracle, beginning in the post-Alexandrian era, down to the final centuries of the oracle's operation in the first three centuries AD. The 'decline' of an institution such as Delphi is difficult to define, as the sanctuary witnessed various periods of prosperity and poverty. This thesis will consider the decline to be demonstrated by the decreased frequency of patrons who consulted the oracle as well as the shift from politically significant oracles on behalf of entire *poleis*, to personal consultations of individuals. This will be demonstrated by examining Plutarch's writings on Delphi as well as through a comparative analysis of the oracles of Asia Minor which were operating during Delphi's final stages of operation.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the decline in frequency and significance of the oracles given by the Pythia at Delphi, all extant oracles must be considered. In opposition to Fontenrose, who restricts the number of 'historical' oracles through rigorous parameters, this thesis shall employ the methodology of Johnston and Kindt, who utilize and examine all extant oracles in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how Greeks viewed the oracular stories and the function they served in society.<sup>1</sup> Although historiographical concerns will not be ignored, a clearer picture of

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<sup>1</sup> See Kindt, J. (2003) *The Delphic Oracles: A Poetic of Futures Past Between History, Literature, and Religion*, Doctoral Thesis: Cambridge; Johnston, S.I. (2005) 'Delphi and the Dead' in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*. Johnston, S.I and Struck, P.T. eds. Leiden: 283-306. See also Introduction (pp. 22-

Delphi can be gained through the examination of all oracles, because the Greeks themselves would have imagined them to be representative of actual oracles which have now been lost.

Several factors – political, psychological and religious – contributed to the decline of Delphi. Here, the aim is focused on the *why* of the decline, rather than the *what*, particularly in terms of religious functions, innovations and developments. In addition to establishing the nature and various stages of Delphic decline, this thesis examines the correlation between the decline of oracular consultation and the rise of a variety of occult practices. As Delphi declined in frequency of consultation and in the political significance of issues presented, other, new forms of divination developed. Astrology and theurgy offered a new dimension of divinatory access that better suited the needs of individuals in the second, third and fourth centuries AD, while Delphi was in its final days of operation.

The analysis of these issues begins during the Archaic and Classical periods, the era of Delphi's greatest prestige and impact. Chapter 1 examines the development of the oracle in psychological, political and geographical terms, factors which also have an impact on the deterioration. It is necessary to assess the peak before understanding a decline. The various stages of Delphi's decline will then be analysed. Despite the views of those who have variously nominated the Persian Wars or the Peloponnesian War as the beginning of the decline of Delphi, I argue that a true decline does not begin until c. 300 BC, and even then only marginally.<sup>2</sup> The decline of political oracles is

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25). Contra, see Fontenrose, J. (1978) *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalogue of Responses*. Berkeley.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, R. (1985) 'Greek States and Greek Oracles,' in *Crux: Essays in Greek History Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday*. Cartledge, P.A. & Harvey, F.D. eds. London, pp. 320-21. He has also noted the decline of political oracles by 300 BC; a detailed summary of the opinions of modern authors regarding the decline of Delphi are addressed below in the Literature Review and Chapter 1.

strikingly close to an earthquake at Delphi in 373 BC, which leads one to wonder how this geological event affected the supposed chasm at Delphi, and, in turn, the weakening of the oracle. I speculate further on this issue in Appendix 1. The true decline of Delphi begins in the last decades of the first century BC and becomes more apparent by the first, second and third centuries AD. The final, irrevocable deterioration occurred under the Severans.<sup>3</sup> Although the decline of Delphi was gradual, it became far more obvious by the first century AD. Chapter 1 examines the history of Delphi chronologically, and clearly demonstrates a decline by this time, based on literary sources and supplemented with archaeological evidence where available. Episodes are placed within their larger historic context to fully reveal Delphi's changing place within Greek society over the centuries. Finally, Chapter 1 addresses the ancient sources which mention the decline of Delphi, beginning in the first century BC and becoming more frequent in the first, second and third centuries AD, reinforcing the historical outline of the chapter.

Plutarch is our best source for the decline of Delphi, particularly in the second century AD. He wrote three essays directly concerning Delphi, one of which specifically addresses the decline. These will be analysed systematically to uncover the state of Delphi at this time as perceived by an insider through the proxy of contemporary visitors; this is the subject of Chapter 2. First, Plutarch's *De defectu oraculorum* is examined to demonstrate the ancient opinion on the decline of Delphi, including geological factors, population variance, and divine intervention. Second, evidence for the decline of Delphi from the essay *De Pythiae oraculis* is addressed. The analysis of this second essay reveals the contradictory state of the sanctuary at the time

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<sup>3</sup> That is between AD 193 and 235. See Athanassiadi, P. (1989) 'The Fate of Oracles in Late Antiquity,' *Deltion Christianikes Archaialogikes Etaireias* 15, pp. 271-278; Homolle, T. (1896) 'Le temple de Delphes son histoire a ruine,' *BCH* 20, pp. 702-732; Levin, S. (1989) 'The Old Greek Oracles in Decline,' *ANRW* 2.18.2, pp. 1599-1649.

when Plutarch was intimately involved with it: on the one hand, Plutarch writes extensively on the decline of the oracle, and on the other, hints at a thriving sanctuary and a revival in the form of new and restored buildings.<sup>4</sup>

This creates something of a conundrum. How can Plutarch be contemporaneous with both a decline and a revival at Delphi? This thesis proposes a fresh approach to the decline of Delphi as an *oracle* and the nature of the revival as a religious and cultural centre during the second century AD. Delphi functioned on a variety of social, political and religious levels; the oracle was an essential aspect of the religious activity of the sanctuary, but was not the sole attraction. A distinction between the oracle and other religious, political and social procedures existing at the sanctuary at this time better describes the ‘revival’ of Delphi, as a sanctuary, which, as our evidence indicates, happened largely independently of the oracle. This further indicates the role of politics and religion in the decline, as well as the historical, cultural and traditional significance maintained by the sanctuary, despite the decrease in frequency and importance of questions presented to the Pythia.

As the examination of Plutarch’s essays shows, many of the oracular centres throughout the Mediterranean were declining by the second century AD. However, as Delphi’s significance as an oracle was dwindling, Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor were experiencing a revival, not only in terms of the sanctuaries themselves but in the types of questions presented to Apollo. Political and state concerns were addressed to the god on the eastern side of the Aegean, as well as questions concerning magic, the nature of god, and theurgic concerns of the soul.<sup>5</sup> Chapter 3 examines the nature of the

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, modern scholars have postulated a revival during this time. See Chapter 2 (p. 111, n. 15) for examples.

<sup>5</sup> Nock, A.D. (1928) ‘Oracles Théologiques,’ *REA* 30, pp. 281-288 has described these latter oracular responses as ‘theological’ and I shall employ this term as well. I define the term as those questions

questions presented at Didyma and Claros which, I suggest, contributed to their success. The lack of this expertise at Delphi helps to explain why the oracle there slipped further into silence as the oracles of Asia Minor continued to thrive.

I will examine the decline of Delphi through the lens of these other oracles. By analysing the different practices at the various sanctuaries, a broader perspective as to why there was not a universal, uniform decline of traditional oracles is gained.<sup>6</sup> The extant responses from Claros and Didyma, examined in Chapter 3, demonstrate the capacity for these oracles to exercise unprecedented oracular authority in occult matters. This trend of consultation concerning issues such as theurgy, magic, and the nature of god – which were gaining more popularity within a civic context – is not seen at Delphi. After highlighting specific economic, social and political reasons for the disparity in success between the oracles of Asia Minor and Delphi, I then explore the unique nature of the questions presented to Apollo through several of the ‘theological’ oracles. It is therefore not only the movement from political to individual concerns which illustrates the decline, but also issues of occult practices about which we find little evidence from Delphi.

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presented to an oracular site which fall outside the established oracle-seeking queries, particularly focused on religious sentiments, which are not common to traditional Graeco-Roman religion.

<sup>6</sup> This is not a novel approach; Busine, A. (2005) *A. Paroles d’Apollon: Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l’Antiquité tardive*. Leiden and Oesterheld, C. (2008) *Göttliche Botschaften für zweifelnde Menschen: Pragmatik und Orientierungsleistung der Apollon-Orakel von Klaros und Didyma in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*. Göttingen, used this approach with his research concerning Claros and Didyma. Athanassiadi (1989) also used a comparative methodology concerning Delphi and Didyma and Morgan, C. (1989) ‘Divination and Society at Delphi and Didyma,’ *Hermathena* 147, pp.17-42 and Morgan, C. (1990) *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century BC*. Cambridge, did the same for Delphi and Didyma, and Delphi and Olympia respectively. I shall utilise evidence from all three sites, and briefly consider Olympia and Dodona.

The final two chapters of this thesis examine the impact which the rise of occult practices – astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy – had on the decline of Delphi.<sup>7</sup> First, the words of E.R. Dodds must be remembered before entering into this area of research:

A new belief-pattern very seldom effaces completely the pattern that was there before: either the old lives on as an element in the new – sometimes an unconfessed and half-unconscious element – or else the two persist side by side, logically incompatible, but contemporaneously accepted by different individuals or even by the same individual.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, astrology, Neoplatonic beliefs and theurgy operated alongside Delphi for several centuries and, in a certain sense, adapted aspects of each other to fit into a certain method or way of thinking. People increasingly sought rational and scientific answers to questions previously left to the gods. Astrology was seen as highly effective since the correlations with planetary movements and earthly phenomena could be seen by all; the predictions of celestial movement showcased the prophetic and scientific nature of the craft. In the case of religion, there was a growing preference for a personal relationship with the divine in the second and third centuries AD; Neoplatonism and theurgy provided this service. These chapters do not argue that these developments in astrology and theurgy instantly replaced oracular consultation; rather, these occult practices should be viewed as, in the nomenclature of Thomas Kuhn, paradigms.<sup>9</sup> To better understand the role of these techniques, I shall loosely apply Kuhn's theory in

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<sup>7</sup> I am not the first to suggest that these forms of worship and divination contributed to the decline of Delphi; P&W, p. 375 suggest an influence of astrology on Delphi, Cumont, F. (1956) *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*. New York, p. 163 also mentions a connection between astrology and the decline of traditional divination; Levin (1989), p. 1599 also suggests this; and Parke, H.W. (1967b) *Greek Oracles*. London, p. 141 suggests the rise of theurgy may have assisted in the decline of oracular divination. Here, I attempt to amplify these statements with evidence of preference, or at least potential preference, for the occult practices instead of Delphic consultation.

<sup>8</sup> Dodds, E.R. (1951) *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> Kuhn, T.S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago.

order to provide the semantics and the theoretical structure to explain the shift from oracles to astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy.

Kuhn's monumental work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, describes how new ways of thought come to dominate old methods of thinking. His theory concerns scientific thought, method and theory. However, with due caution, this theory can be applied to a broader range of human thinking and even belief. I shall first describe several aspects of Kuhn's theory as he intended it, and then describe how certain terms and concepts are applied to the final chapters of this thesis. First, he describes 'Normal Science', namely "research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements."<sup>10</sup> For the chapters on occult practices in this thesis, the term 'traditional religion' or 'Graeco-Roman cult' is applied to describe the religious practices of the Mediterranean which are based on centuries of convention. Traditional Greek religion, including the practice of oracular consultation is a 'religion', firmly based on tradition, ancient beliefs, rituals and practices. These were the foundation of acceptable beliefs and actions.<sup>11</sup> Greek religion operated for centuries in a 'Normal' way, adhering to age old observances.

'Paradigm' is a key term in relation to 'Normal Science' and for Kuhn this means, "some accepted examples of actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – that provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions for scientific research."<sup>12</sup> He cites the rubrics of 'Ptolemaic or Copernican astronomy' and 'Newtonian physics' as examples. In this

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<sup>10</sup> Kuhn (1970), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> The Greeks did not have a religion *per se*; indeed they did not even have a word that denotes our understanding of religion. Rather, in the words of Simon Price, "There are no sacred books, religious dogma or orthodoxy, but rather common practices, competing interpretations of events and actions, and the perception of sacrifice as a strategic device open to manipulation." See Price, S. (1999) *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*. Cambridge, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Kuhn (1970), p. 10.

thesis, there are two sets of paradigms, the first being oracular consultation situated within traditional Greek religion, and secondly, the grouping together of the occult practices of astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy into another paradigm.<sup>13</sup> These paradigms exist, for a time, side by side, but eventually one paradigm gains status “because,” as Kuhn explains, “they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognise as acute.”<sup>14</sup> This thesis aims to evaluate the degree to which astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy offered new ways to solve the problem of access to divine knowledge, thereby creating competition for Delphic consultation, ultimately contributing to the decline of the oracle.

One paradigm eventually succeeds over another because it can better deal with, answer, explain and assimilate various ‘anomalies’. According to Kuhn, ‘anomalies’ can be considered “new and unsuspected phenomena” and are the catalyst for change in practice and theory.<sup>15</sup> In the case of oracles, certain ‘anomalies’ also built up within traditional religion which challenged the foundation of cult. Such anomalies include the scientific forms of prediction seen from astrological observations, the increasing concern for the role of Fate in the lives of men, the ways in which theurgy could

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<sup>13</sup> Although each could be viewed as a separate paradigm, additional ones such as Christianity are not included in this analysis, as much research has already been done in that area. Christianity is often cited as the replacement of traditional Greek religion. Certainly, the spread of this new religion contributed to the decline of the old religion. It was the Christian emperor, Theodosius, who closed Greek sanctuaries and prohibited traditional religious practices. However, there was no single practice which contributed to the decline of traditional religion; the focus will remain the less-studied areas of astrology and theurgy to demonstrate how Greek developments, too, contributed to a decline in Greek religion, particularly oracular consultation at Delphi. For Christian influences on the decline of Greek religion, see Lane Fox, R. (1987) *Pagans and Christians*. New York; Nock, A.D. (1961) *Conversion*. Oxford; Rokeah, D. (1982) *Jews, Pagans, and Christians in Conflict*. Leiden; Lee, A.D. (2000) *Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity: A Source Book*. London; Kahlos, M. (2007) *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures c. 360-430*. Aldershot; Kraemer, H. (1938) *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. New York; Lentakis, A. (2000) ‘Ἀνοδος και πτώση του Μαντείου των Δελφών. Τα κύρια αίτια’, In *Delphes cent ans après la grande fouille: Essai de bilan. Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École Française d'Athènes*. Jacquemin, A. ed. Paris, pp. 35-51.

<sup>14</sup> Kuhn (1970), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Kuhn (1979), p. 52.

influence, change and manipulate Fate, new philosophies such as Neoplatonism which postulated ideas of a personal connection with the divine, and the Chaldaean Oracles that facilitated this connection. These new paradigms created anomalies through the services they offered, which were better adapted to respond to the divinatory needs of the day than Delphi. As society was infiltrated with new ideas, the oracles found it increasingly difficult to accommodate these new concerns. Delphi operated within traditional religion and to a significant degree helped, over the centuries, to establish what that entailed, and so breaking from that tradition was not only unfavourable, but, to a certain extent, impossible.<sup>16</sup> Eventually, a sufficient amount of anomalies built up and Delphi, as an oracle, ceased to be viable in a society which had turned toward rational explanations and scientific understanding on the one hand, and a personal religion and salvation of the soul on the other. In this way, I shall examine the possibility that these occult practices assisted in the decline of Delphi. Kuhn's theory has inspired the direction of this thesis and, although not totally reliant upon him, he gives a valuable schema with which to approach the decline of Delphi. I employ his theory in a conceptual way, rather than a practical way, to better understand how occult practices influenced the decline of Delphi.

Chapter 4 examines the impact which astrology had on the Delphic Oracle in the first, second and third centuries AD, with Kuhn's theory utilised as a mental rubric.

The scientific basis of astrology contributed to its popularity, drawing an ever more rational crowd to its process and method to gain divine access: it had appeal to a learned

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<sup>16</sup> Many oracles from Delphi concerned the establishment and sanction of various aspects of traditional Greek religion, such as how to honour which gods appropriately, how best to conduct various religious observances, to which gods a temple should be erected, the best way to appease the gods in times of trouble and direct commands of cult and ritual practices. For examples of these see P&W responses 73; 85; 88; 90; 102; 104; 113; 114; 118; 124; 126; 125; 132; 138; 158; 164; 169; 179; 211; 226; 238; 239; 240; 241; 241; 242; 243; 246; 256; 265; 279; 280; 281; 282; 283; 284; 285; 328; 330; 340; 341; 342; 343; 344; 345; 346; 347; 348; 349; 353; 354; 356; 383; 426; 427; 432; 433; 457; 458; 459; 464; 466; 467; 471; 508; 509; 529; 530; 533; 538; 540; 541; 545; 546; 554; 560; 566; and 573.

audience. This chapter compares the various reasons for astrological consultations with those of Delphic consultation to demonstrate how the two forms of divination offered a similar function, thereby increasing the competition between the two; they became alternative means to the same ends. Furthermore, Chapter 4 demonstrates the familiarity of astrological notions for the Greeks, which created an easier transition into this particular form of access to divine knowledge. In this way I examine the ability of astrology to provide a function similar to Delphi's and, once it had gained sufficient authority, contributed to the decline of the oracle.

Chapter 5 focuses on occult issues, particularly the ways in which Neoplatonism and theurgy offered a new dimension of divinatory practice. First, a distinction between theurgy and magic helps to define what the practice is. Then, the associations between theurgy, Neoplatonism and the written revelation of the Chaldaean Oracles are analysed to demonstrate a new conception of divine interaction with humanity. The divine formation, proposed by the Neoplatonists and utilised by the theurgists, is not entirely novel and so a brief outline of the philosophical background better situates the concepts within their historical and philosophical contexts. Chapter 5 analyses the various beliefs of the Neoplatonists – focusing specifically on Porphyry and Iamblichus – and the effect these notions had on society. With the spread of ideas such as salvation of the soul and personal unification with the ultimate divinity, Delphi was declining in relevance. This chapter argues that the decline was assisted by the fact that the oracle did not specialise in these new religious features of society.

These occult practices represent the need for different levels of society to gain access to the divine. Although it is difficult to correlate such a relationship, based on the extant evidence, it may cautiously be suggested from the diverse material that is

available that oracular consultation declined as these forms of occult wisdom increased. The forms of divine access addressed here may not have *caused* Delphi to decline but, at the very least, demonstrate the types of sentiments, questions and concerns people had during the decline of Delphi, which had changed over the course of Delphic operations. They reveal the sorts of issues with which people were concerned, and provide examples of the types of practices to which people progressively turned, just as Delphi was consulted less often.

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# MODERN LITERATURE

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*nanos gigantium humeris insidentes...*

The place of this thesis within contemporary scholarly research is demonstrated by a review of the secondary material. I will show not only that the last centuries of Delphic operation have been relatively neglected, but the connection between Delphi's decline, occult practices, and the theological oracles of Asia Minor has not been subjected to extensive scholarly examination. My research on Delphi's decline and its correlation with the rise of various occult practices is set within the context of previous scholarship.

The arrangement of prior research is presented in several categories, corresponding to the main chapters of the thesis outlined in the introduction. First, a consideration of the religious context is highlighted to demonstrate the foundation upon which my inquiry began. Then, the groundwork of Delphic scholarship, represented by various scholars, will be addressed, material which has been vital for this study. There is no lack of scholarship regarding most aspects of Delphic procedure, history and influence but this is not to say there is a consensus. One major point of contention is the nature of the oracular responses, particularly their authenticity. This is a key aspect of all Delphic research and particular attention in the secondary scholarship falls upon this problem.

Secondly, I will treat works which deal with particular areas of Delphic research, particularly the decline. Other specifics such as the Amphictyony and the role of Delphi in Greek social and political history are presented; this scholarship pervades the entire thesis, but is particularly important for Chapter 1. Thirdly, scholarship focusing upon

Plutarch and spatial analysis, the subject of Chapter 2, is considered. Next, scholarship dealing with other oracular centres and divination in general is addressed. By understanding the similarities and differences in their operation, history and decline, a fuller picture of Delphi's own history and decline becomes clear. Again, much work has been done, but this analysis will show that an effective method for understanding oracles, and the nature of the known inquiries, is by way of comparison. This manner of examination demonstrates, for example, the various aspects which assisted in the survival, or decline, of an oracle. Finally, I examine literature regarding occult practices: research on astrology, theurgy and Neoplatonism, described in my last two chapters, is analysed.

## **Greek Religion and Divination**

Before examining Delphic scholarship, I begin with research regarding Greek religion in general and divination in particular, as they are essential to this study and provide a basis for Delphic research to be placed in context. Greek religion has attracted the interest of many scholars of Greek history, and several monographs give helpful insight into its various workings and manifestations.

Martin P. Nilsson's *History of Greek Religion* is an excellent starting point for the study of Greek religion.<sup>1</sup> His first volume treats the early periods until the death of Alexander. Aspects of Greek religion are highlighted, as well as features of Minoan religion. The personae of the gods, mythology, the conception of piety, various rituals and sacrifices, festivals, the role of heroes and lesser gods such as *daemones*, Mystery

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<sup>1</sup> Nilsson, M.P. (1925) *History of Greek Religion*. Fielden, F.J. trans. Oxford.

cults and Orphism, in addition to the perception of religion by writers, including Pindar and Herodotus, are all dealt with in detail. In addition to presenting these themes, he continuously examines them within an historical context, and describes certain laws which enable these practices to continue. The second volume focuses on the Hellenistic period down until the Christian era. This is particularly valuable for a study of Delphi, as it goes beyond the Archaic and Classical periods of Greek history in general and religion in particular. Nilsson highlights the cults of the Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors within a religious context. Finally, he addresses personal religions and philosophies which gained popularity during this time, the role of syncretism, astrology, oracles, Gnosticism, and Hermeticism; in this way his research is a development of Greek religion from its earliest times until the end of antiquity. Although he gives an excellent overview of numerous aspects of Greek religion, there is little insight as to how these aspects of cult were actually practised or the nature of the belief system. However, the foundation was laid for other scholars to do so, for example, Vernant, who attempted to demonstrate the underlying mental framework which lies behind myth and religion.<sup>2</sup>

Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion* is a monumental work on Greek religion.<sup>3</sup> He demonstrates the pervasiveness of religion in the social and political life of the ancient Greeks, with a particular focus on myth. Through his analysis of cult officials and their role within the community, Burkert offers insight into the ubiquitous nature of religion. He presents Delphi as a universal arbiter of morality, a centre which symbolises the essence of Greek religion and offers an examination of the role of Delphi in a social

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<sup>2</sup> Vernant, J.P. (1982) *The Origins of Greek Thought*. Ithaca.

<sup>3</sup> Burkert, W. (1985) *Greek Religion*. Raffan, J. trans. Oxford.

context. My research shows that the social impact of the oracle was sustained throughout the centuries, while the oracular function declined.

The most important recent work on Greek religion is that of Robert Parker. His book, *On Greek Religion*,<sup>4</sup> describes the scholarly debate within the study of Greek religion and gives examples of how problems within the field should be approached, in particular, that of space and location. The Greeks were accustomed to assigning a geographic location to specific gods and, additionally, within each geographic location the sanctuary itself influenced and shaped the experience of the worshipper. Both Panhellenic (major independent centres such as Zeus at Dodona and Olympus, Apollo at Delos and Delphi, Demeter at Eleusis) and localised cults (individual *poleis* which had their own locations for different gods) were important features of Greek religion as a whole. Parker reasserts the geographical and spatial significance of Greek religion within a broader religious and historical context through literary, artistic and archaeological evidence.

There is one area of Greek religion that is particularly helpful to understand the nuanced history of the site before approaching Delphi. Divination has been dealt with extensively by Sir J.G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*.<sup>5</sup> He laid the foundation for further research in supernatural belief and magical ritual through this survey of divination and the occult. Subsequent works have greatly contributed to knowledge of ancient Greek divination. S.I. Johnston's *Ancient Greek Divination* gives an overview of Greek divination.<sup>6</sup> She focuses on Delphi, along with the oracles at Dodona, Didyma and Claros, on their procedures, and how they are portrayed by authors including historians and poets. Her focus is on oracular sites, but she also stresses the importance of

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<sup>4</sup> Parker, R. (2011) *On Greek Religion*. Ithaca.

<sup>5</sup> Frazer, Sir J.G. (1890) *The Golden Bough*. London.

<sup>6</sup> Johnston, S.I. (2008) *Ancient Greek Divination*. London.

freelance divination, such as the *mantis*, magicians, dream interpreters and “belly-talking” as a form of primitive divination.

Alternatively, Michael Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece*, focuses on freelance divination and the role of the *mantis* in Greece.<sup>7</sup> He analyses the role of magic within Greek religion via the seer. Although he does not speculate on how these practices developed, he does compile much information on the relationship between the seer and the client. In terms of oracular understanding, Flower suggests that the anthropological approach (taken by Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937) and his study of oracles among the Azande in Africa) enhance our understanding through comparing different societies’ interpretation of the practice of oracles.<sup>8</sup> However, this approach is not entirely satisfactory, because it ignores the immense and inherent differences between cultures of different geographical locations throughout time. To understand Greek oracles, it is more beneficial to study them within the context of Greek social, political and religious history. Delphic scholarship has laid the foundation for precisely such an endeavour. However, Evans-Pritchard did offer a valuable notion of hierarchy of means: divination is a field of action, which includes and covers many different types of practice, practitioners and clients.<sup>9</sup> The Greeks arranged these notionally into a hierarchy of efficacy, value and prestige. This categorisation allowed for instances of failed prophecy and prediction to be explained by the various degrees of separation between the practitioner and the god, and did not tarnish the idea of divination itself; this is important when addressing occult issues in Chapter 4.

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<sup>7</sup> Flower, M.A. (2008) *The Seer in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley.

<sup>8</sup> Flower (2008), p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1937) *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. Oxford, pp. 96-113.

## Delphi

Several publications describe the excavation, topography and findings of early archaeologists. Of particular value are the *Fouilles* of the French scholars Homolle,<sup>10</sup> Collignon,<sup>11</sup> Courby,<sup>12</sup> Bousquet,<sup>13</sup> as well as monographs on additional finds from Bourguet,<sup>14</sup> Poulsen,<sup>15</sup> Pomtow<sup>16</sup> and Dyggve.<sup>17</sup> These compilations not only present the original finds at the site, but also offer interpretations of the evidence which shape the beginnings of the modern understanding of Delphi.

Recent finds on the archaeology of Delphi are particularly useful. Anne Jacquemin's *Offrandes monumentales à Delphes* is an invaluable compilation, as she has gathered the archaeological evidence concerning large-scale dedication at Delphi throughout the history of the site.<sup>18</sup> This work collects evidence regarding monuments, statues and buildings and places them within the historical and architectural context of Delphi. In this way, she provides access to evidence of activities at Delphi that were not necessarily tied to the oracle, broadening the perception of the site as a whole. Pétridis' focus is largely on the transition to Christian occupation at the site, which is of great value in understanding the final centuries of Delphic operation.<sup>19</sup> These studies

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<sup>10</sup> Homolle, T. (1894) 'Les fouilles de Delphes,' *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 38: 580-592; (1896) 'Le temple de Delphes son histoire à ruine,' *BCH* 20: 702-732; and (1897) 'Le trophée de Paul-Émile vainqueur de Persée,' *BCH*: 620-23.

<sup>11</sup> Collignon, M. (1894) 'Fouilles de Delphes,' *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 38: 301-313.

<sup>12</sup> Courby, F. (1915-1927) *Fouilles de Delphes: La terrasse du temple*. Paris.

<sup>13</sup> Bousquet, J. (1959) 'Inscriptions de Delphes,' *BCH* 83: 146-192; (1960) 'Inscriptions de Delphes,' *BCH* 84: 161-175; (1963) 'Inscriptions de Delphes,' *BCH* 87: 188-208; (1977) 'Inscriptions de Delphes,' *BCH* 101: 455-466.

<sup>14</sup> Bourguet, É. (1932) *Fouilles de Delphes III: Les comptes du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris.

<sup>15</sup> Poulsen, F. (1920) *Delphi*. Richards, G.C. trans. London.

<sup>16</sup> Pomtow, H. (1924) *Die Topographie von Delphi*, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplement-Band IV: 1189-1432.

<sup>17</sup> Dyggve, E. (1948) 'Les traditions culturelles de Delphes et l'Église chrétienne,' *Cahiers Archeologiques* 3: 9-48.

<sup>18</sup> Jacquemin, A. (1999) *Offrandes monumentales à Delphes*. Paris.

<sup>19</sup> Pétridis, P. (1997) 'Delphes dans l'Antiquité tardive: Première approche topographique et céramologique,' *BCH* 121: 681-695.

have catalogued much of the archaeological findings at the site and are therefore critical. As I utilise many of them purely for their archaeological content to support my arguments, stemming as they do from a literary perspective, not each of them requires extensive review.

Several books on the history of Delphi are of the utmost value for Delphic research. Georges Daux's *Delphes au II<sup>e</sup> et I<sup>er</sup> siècle depuis l'abaissement de l'Étolie jusqu'à la paix romaine 191-31 av. J.-C* is useful in terms of Delphic history generally.<sup>20</sup> He focuses on the period between 191-31 BC. Since literary evidence for this period is scant, Daux relies on epigraphical evidence, mainly manumissions and Pythiad inscriptions. He divides the book into three sections: the chronology of Delphi, the role of the Amphictyony, set within a context of Greek history generally, and, finally, addresses the institutions at the sanctuary and how Delphi interacted with surrounding *poleis*. Daux compiles much of the inscriptional evidence found at Delphi corresponding to this time frame, and reconstructs a valuable history of Delphi from the Aetolian occupation until the beginning of the Roman Empire. Robert Flacelière's *Les Aitoliens à Delphes* focuses on the third century BC, not solely on Delphi but on an Aetolian history through the lens of Delphic inscriptions.<sup>21</sup> He compiles many relevant documents pertaining to the era and gives an excellent history of the interaction between Delphi, the Amphictyony, and the Aetolians, providing a comprehensive history of the era based on literary and inscriptional evidence.

The monumental corpus of Herbert Wilson Parke and Donald Ernest Wilson Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, has continued to shed light on Delphic history and

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<sup>20</sup> Daux, G. (1936) *Delphes au II<sup>e</sup> et I<sup>er</sup> siècle depuis l'abaissement de l'Étolie jusqu'à la paix romaine 191-31 av. J.-C.*: Thèse pour le doctorat présentée à la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Paris. Paris.

<sup>21</sup> Flacelière, R. (1937b) *Les Aitoliens à Delphes*. Paris.

operation, and is the cornerstone of scholarly work regarding the oracle of Delphi.<sup>22</sup> It is the first book in English which catalogues every response of the Pythia from literary and inscriptional sources. The first volume outlines the history of Delphi in a chronological fashion. The origins and procedures of the oracle comprise Book I, while Book II focuses on the main historical themes regarding Delphi, such as colonisation, the Sacred Wars and the activities of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The defining phases in Delphi's history are divided into nine sections, beginning with the earliest accounts of the region by Homer, Hesiod and the author of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* from the sixth century BC, through to Classical and Hellenistic times, then sections on both the Roman Republic and the Empire. The final section in Volume I corresponds to the time between 30 BC to the end of the oracle's operation. Clearly, the focus is on earlier periods, with eight of the nine sections devoted to pre-30 BC, while the final section deals with almost five centuries of Delphic operation. The reason for this disparity in treatment is largely due to the paucity of material concerning these later periods. Again, this has led to my method of viewing this later period of Delphi through the lens of other oracular centres.

The second volume is a compilation of all Delphic oracles extant from literature and inscriptions, totalling six-hundred and fifteen responses, those deemed *in toto* and those in fragments. They are ordered to coincide with Volume I. This method of arrangement is subjective and arbitrary, and leads to disagreements in the period placement of certain responses. However, a chronological compilation does allow for an historical picture of Delphi to be revealed: the progression of responses assessed alongside a timeline of events enhances the oracular chronology of Delphi. Compared

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<sup>22</sup> Parke, H.W. and Wormell, D.E.W. (2004) *The Delphic Oracle*, 2 Vols. Chicago. (reprint of 1956 Oxford ed.)

to the compilations of Hendess and Cougny, which were restricted to oracles in verse, Parke and Wormell have compiled all known oracles and provided a brief commentary.<sup>23</sup> The consultations and recorded responses are arranged first as historical accounts, that is, they are considered to have foundation in actual historical fact. Then the legendary or fictitious traditions are presented, namely those that are thought to be invented, or used as a literary tool. This separation of genuine and fictitious responses is helpful, as the oracles are not simply analysed without regard to the genre and author of the evidence. However, P&W do not, as a whole, indicate *how* they judge an oracle to be invented (whereas the legendary ones, of course, are those found in myth), and so their classification is potentially indiscriminate. The basis for rejecting or accepting any particular oracle remains a debate among scholars.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the evidence concerning Delphi is literary in nature, reflected in Parke and Wormell's heavy reliance on written sources for the oracular responses. This literary evidence begins with Homer and Hesiod, followed by the tragedians and comic playwrights, philosophers, classical historians, especially Herodotus, and, finally, Greek authors of the Roman period from Strabo to Plutarch and Dio Cassius, thus offering over a thousand years of literary coverage. Through these sources, *The Delphic Oracle* addresses many essential aspects of activity at Delphi.

One of the most contentious aspects of Delphi is the procedure of consultation. Parke and Wormell outline several of these, including lot-oracles, a vapour-emitting chasm as the source of the Pythia's inspiration, the Pythia's role in consultation and the

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<sup>23</sup> See Hendess, R. (1882) *Untersuchungen über die echtheit einiger Delphischer orakel*. Doctoral Thesis, Guben and Cougny, E. (1890) *Cum indicibus epigrammatum et poetarum*. Paris.

<sup>24</sup> See Fontenrose (1978) and Crahy (1956) for a more strict classification, whereas Kindt (2003 Doctoral thesis: Cambridge University) and Johnson (2005) have developed a way of viewing the oracles that is more inclusive; see below, pp. 23-24.

procedure in general, none of which has been agreed upon by scholars.<sup>25</sup> Parke and Wormell maintain that lot-oracles were in regular use, the chasm and vapours are an invented myth, and that the priests at Delphi did interpret the Pythia's response.<sup>26</sup>

Although other scholars have offered new interpretations on facets of Delphic history and operation since the publication of this seminal work, it still remains the foundation of Delphic research in English.

The inspiration of the Pythia and the operation of the oracle more generally have been extensively studied by Pierre Amandry *La mantique apollonienne à Delphes*.<sup>27</sup> He divides his work into three parts: Methods of Divination, the Consultation of the Oracle, and History and Legend. Indeed, his book remains one of the most comprehensive sources for the operations of the Delphic oracle. However, some of his points have since been disputed. He asserts that there is no chasm to inspire the Pythia and also discredits the idea of any ecstatic hysteria on behalf of the priestess; his findings regarding the mantic process at Delphi remain ultimately unresolved. Amandry maintains that it is the Pythia herself who issues the oracles, as no ancient author mentions a priest giving the response to the client, and, finally, he upholds the continued

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<sup>25</sup> For a summary of the evidence concerning the chasm, see Appendix 1; for the mantic procedures and the role of the Pythia, see Bouché-Leclercq, (1880) *A Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*. Paris, pp. 84-102; Flacelière, R. (1965) *Greek Oracles*. Garton, D. trans. London; Latte, K. (1940) 'The Coming of the Pythia,' *The Harvard Theological Review* 33, pp. 9-18; P&W, pp. 18-38; Nillson, M.P. (1986) *Cults, Myths, Oracles, and Politics in Ancient Greece*. Goteborg, pp. 170-174, and Amandry, P. (1950) *La mantique apollonienne à Delphes: Essai sur le fonctionnement de l'oracle*. Paris. For the role of drugs see Lehoux, D. (2007) 'Drugs and the Delphic Oracle,' *Classical World* 101, pp. 41-56 and Littleton, S. (1986) 'The Pneuma Enthusiastikon: On the Possibility of Hallucinogenic "Vapors" at Delphi and Dodona,' *Ethos* 14, pp. 76-91. Some scholars, such as P&W, believe that it was the priest who coached the Pythia, and was responsible for the hexameter oracles. Other scholars point out that the ancient evidence explicitly says it is the Pythia who is responsible for the oracles. See Maurizio, L. (1997) 'Delphic Oracles as Oral Performances: Authenticity and Historical Evidence,' *Classical Antiquity* 16, pp. 308-334; and (2001) 'The Voice at the Centre of the World: The Pythia's Ambiguity and Authority,' in *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society*. Lardinois, A. McClure, L. eds. Princeton, pp. 46-50.

<sup>26</sup> For lot-oracles see P&W, p. 10; for their stance on the chasm see p.21, for the priest's role in the responses, see p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Amandry (1950).

use of lot-oracles at Delphi.<sup>28</sup> In terms of the authenticity of the oracles, Amandry does not explicitly indicate his parameters for dismissing or including an oracle as genuine. He discounts the Croesus oracle, but includes several other responses which Fontenrose would consider fiction.<sup>29</sup>

Joseph Fontenrose's book, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalogue of Responses*, builds upon the work of P&W and is, in a certain sense, a response to the classification and categorisation of the responses.<sup>30</sup> Fontenrose restricts the parameters of oracular authenticity and dismisses several responses as not historically genuine, thus removing many of the responses from the historical picture of Delphi drawn by P&W. He arranges the oracles by category, not by chronology. The focus of the research centres on the process of consultation and the response of the Pythia, rather than a general history of Delphi. The distinction and division of the responses in Fontenrose's book are in direct contrast to the methods which P&W applied. Fontenrose divides the responses into four groups, Historical, Quasi-historical, Legendary and Fictional, and compiles the catalogue of Delphic responses at the end, translated into English. His criteria for objective classification are not always clear. He attempts to determine the veracity of the oracles in order to gain a perspective of what was actually said by the Pythia for a "more objective division of the responses."<sup>31</sup> The responses deemed Historical, are defined as "those which appear in contemporary records; that is, the accepted probable date of the response [which] fell within the lifetime of the writer who attests it, or of the earliest writer when several attest it, or not

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<sup>28</sup> Amandry (1950), pp. 33-34.

<sup>29</sup> Amandry (1950), pp. 215-30.

<sup>30</sup> Fontenrose, J. (1978) *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalogue of Responses*. Berkeley.

<sup>31</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. 7.

long before the date of the inscription which records it.”<sup>32</sup> The next category, Quasi-Historical, he defines as “those which were allegedly spoken within historical times, i.e. after the legendary period, but which are, to our knowledge, first attested by a writer whose lifetime was later than the accepted or supposed date of the response.”<sup>33</sup> Next, Legendary responses are “those which belong to admittedly legendary narratives, i.e., the traditional tales of events which were supposed to have taken place in the dim past, sometime before the eighth century B.C., and those which belong to timeless folktales and fables.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, Fictional responses are, “those invented by poets, dramatists, and romancers to serve their creative purpose.”<sup>35</sup> The characteristics of the recorded oracles are then analysed in terms of commands, warnings, conditional predictions and statements about the future. Commands are simply the Pythia telling the inquirer to act and the conditional commands are ‘if you act, then a result will ensue.’ This framework for dealing with the responses, in contrast to P&W, attempts to discredit several extant oracles and many of the traditional beliefs about Delphi. Fontenrose is aware this may cause criticism, and states so in the preface.<sup>36</sup> He casts additional suspicion on the veracity of an oracle through the mode of language; if an oracle is a sanction, he argues it is more likely authentic than a prediction or direct command, which he associates with Legendary responses.

Fontenrose rejects almost all of the responses said to have been spoken in the first three centuries of the oracle’s history, 750-450 BC. He also maintains that the priests did not aid in interpretation of the Pythia’s response and argues that no oracles

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<sup>32</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. 9. Scholars have long recognised the nature of Delphic responses which stem from a fictional genre; however they are still important for Delphic studies as they reflect the audience’s acceptance of these responses and therefore can be seen as representations of what an oracle *should* constitute.

<sup>36</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. xiv.

before 600 BC concerned the sanctioning of colonies.<sup>37</sup> Although Fontenrose and P&W have different approaches regarding the interpretation and classification of the oracles, they do agree on some points of fact, namely that the vaporous chasm is a myth and that lot-oracles were in use. He does not set out to give a general history of Delphi, but aims to challenge the established authenticity of individual oracles by restricting the interpretation parameters. His focus is on the *nature* of the responses rather than placing the responses in historical context. His radical view is not accepted by all, or even most, scholars in the field, further fuelling the debate about the mechanisms of Delphic consultation as well as the authenticity of responses.

The system developed by Fontenrose does not allow for complete assessment of the evidence. If one were to disregard a response's historical importance simply because it was recorded by an author of a late date, evidence that is crucial for the understanding of Delphi's decline would also be disregarded: an author of a later date does not imply inaccuracy. By adhering to such a strict form of classification, the responses fail to be understood in terms of Greek history, thought, religion and poetics. Oracular responses may or may not have been actually produced by a Pythian priestess, but they still represent what the Greeks *thought was acceptable* to attribute to the oracular function of Apollo, which is just as important as an actual utterance.

Scholars have challenged Fontenrose's categorisation of responses. Sarah Iles Johnston's article, 'Delphi and the Dead', prefers to examine *all* Delphic responses, and view them, rather, as fundamental evidence regarding the mode of thought of contemporary Greeks.<sup>38</sup> Even oracles stemming from fiction, she notes, give "no reason

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<sup>37</sup> For the Pythia's role in the responses see Fontenrose (1978), pp. 213-217; for the date of colonisation oracles see p. 142.

<sup>38</sup> Johnston, S.I. (2005) 'Delphi and the Dead' in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*. Johnston, S.I. and Struck, P.T. eds. Leiden: 283-306.

to assume that fiction presented a significantly different picture of what sorts of things Delphi was concerned with than did reality.”<sup>39</sup> Even if it cannot be proven whether an oracular response was given in the manner recorded, we can still learn a great deal from suspicious or fictitious oracles.

Likewise, Julia Kindt argues that the oracles should be seen as oracular stories, performing intentional roles within their narrative agenda.<sup>40</sup> She further develops this theme, using Herodotus as a case study.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, the *authenticity* is not questioned, but rather the context in which the oracles are placed within the larger circumstance of the account’s framework. Many oracles that would otherwise be excluded from examination, under the rubric of Fontenrose, constitute valuable evidence, and so for this thesis, I follow the lead of Johnston and Kindt, and include all relevant oracles in order to fully understand the perceived function of Delphi.

Another valuable method for approaching Delphi, as mentioned above, is through comparison with other oracular centres. Robert Flacelière’s *Greek Oracles* applies a broader context which provides a useful framework for viewing Delphi itself, setting oracles and divination within the background of Greek religion as a whole.<sup>42</sup> He mentions various forms of divination used by the Greeks before moving into the oracular sites. The chapter devoted to Delphi is not concerned with the responses, the truth value of what the Pythia was purported to have said, or a general history of the site. Instead, Flacelière is concerned with the various gods associated with Delphi and the nature of the consultation using, mainly, literary based evidence. A significant

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<sup>39</sup> Johnston (2005), p. 286.

<sup>40</sup> Kindt, J. (2003) *The Delphic Oracles: A Poetic of Futures Past Between History, Literature, and Religion*, Doctoral Thesis: Cambridge.

<sup>41</sup> Kindt, J. (2006) ‘Delphic Oracle Stories and the Beginning of Historiography: Herodotus’ *Croesus Logos*,’ *CPh* 101: 34-51.

<sup>42</sup> Flacelière, R. (1965) *Greek Oracles*. Gartman, D. trans. London.

contribution of his research is divination's influence on politics: he maintains the firm stance that oracles served as a medium to push a *polis*' political agenda. P&W, on the other hand, suggest that the reason for Delphi's prestige was that the site remained politically neutral, and did not get involved in the affairs of states, one of the main disagreements of the two works.<sup>43</sup> Since this book concerns Greek oracles in general, the space devoted to Delphi is not at all exhaustive, but does allow Delphi to be viewed through the lens of other Greek religious centres.

Once the foundation of Delphic history was established (by Daux, Flacelière, P&W, Amandry and Fontenrose), other areas of Delphic scholarship were opened for further investigation. Delphi's role in colonisation has been extensively examined, and most authors emphasise the significant role Delphi played within Greek history and settlement of the Mediterranean. William George Forrest's article, 'Colonisation and the Rise of Delphi,' focuses on the ways in which Delphi gained popularity early in the Archaic period through its role in colonisation, helping to spread the fame and prestige of the oracle.<sup>44</sup> Irad Malkin's *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* largely agrees. He devotes two chapters to the role of Delphi and divination in colonisation and settlement through a variety of ancient and modern literary sources.<sup>45</sup> He supplements the accounts with available archaeological evidence and concludes that Delphi's role in these endeavours was largely sanction: the sanctuary would approve the authority of the *oikists*. Alternatively, Carol Dougherty views the foundation oracles as a colonial narrative, a combination of myth and history through the use of metaphor and pun.<sup>46</sup> In her article, she views Delphi's role within these narratives as a connecting entity, tying

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<sup>43</sup> P&W, pp. 418-20.

<sup>44</sup> Forrest, W.G. (1957) 'Colonisation and the Rise of Delphi,' *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 6, pp. 160-175.

<sup>45</sup> Malkin, I. (1987) *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece*. New York.

<sup>46</sup> Dougherty, C. (1992) 'When Rain Falls from the Clear Blue Sky: Riddles and Colonization Oracles,' *Classical Antiquity* 11, pp. 28-44.

the colonies back to the centre of the Greek world.<sup>47</sup> Robin Osborne claims that the rise of Delphi is not necessarily attributed to colonisation, but rather as a product of political events.<sup>48</sup> For example, Delphi's sanction of the Spartan constitution is central to Delphi's prominence. He claims that stories of Delphic settlement "provided the ideal way of covering up the fact that a group had been thrown out..."<sup>49</sup> In this way, he lessens the significance of colonisation in Delphic history. The conclusion of these authors is, however, the prominence of Delphi's early history which has captured the attention of much of the scholarship.

Modern Scholars have treated other aspects of Delphic history. The administrations of the Delphic Amphictyony and general financial concerns at the sanctuary have been addressed by Daux, Habicht, Davies, and Hornblower through inscriptional records.<sup>50</sup> The so-called chasm at Delphi, which was said to emit toxic vapours, has received much attention by both ancient and modern writers.<sup>51</sup> The relationship between Athens and Delphi, particularly in terms of tragedy and politics is presented by Hugh Bowden's *Classical Athens and the Delphic Oracle*, with an emphasis on the procedure of the oracle, how Athens viewed the oracle and the way historians used the oracle in their writings.<sup>52</sup> Then, by examining the reasons Athenians consulted the oracle, he reveals the bond between Delphi and Athens in the Classical period. This link is particularly associated with the emergence of the *polis* as a power rival to Sparta. Bowden also addresses how Delphi was portrayed in public art, another

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<sup>47</sup> As is well known, Delphi was thought to reside at the centre of the world, and the *omphalos*, or navel, found at Delphi represents this position. See Strabo 9.3.6.

<sup>48</sup> Osborne, R. (1996) *Greece in the Making: 1200-479 BC*. New York.

<sup>49</sup> Osborne (1996), p. 194.

<sup>50</sup> Daux, G. (1957) 'Remarks on the Composition of the Amphictyonic Council,' *BCH* 81, pp. 95-120; Habicht, C. (1987) 'The Role of Athens in the Reorganization of the Delphic Amphiktyony after 189 B.C.' *Hesperia* 56, pp. 59-71; Davies, J. K. (1998) 'Finance, Administration, and *Realpolitik*: The Case of the Fourth-Century Delphi,' *BICS* 42, pp. 1-14; and Hornblower, S. (2007) 'Did the Delphic Amphiktyony Play a Political Role in the Classical Period?' *MHR* 22, pp. 39-56 respectively.

<sup>51</sup> This topic is the subject of Appendix 1.

<sup>52</sup> Bowden, H. (2005) *Classical Athens and the Delphic Oracle*. Cambridge.

way to understand how Greeks viewed the institution. He highlights how Apollo appeared more frequently on Attic pottery in the fifth century BC, suggesting that Delphi's popularity was increasing. He briefly assesses other uses of divination, such as augury, as well as how Persians and Romans viewed their relations with the gods, thus giving another context with which to view Delphi. Finally, he addresses the historiography of the sources, which is generally lacking in Fontenrose and P&W. What the historians and philosophers say about the oracles is a key factor in understanding Greek perception. Bowden provides an overview of Delphic operations, adding his view to the debate concerning the nature of consultation. He allows for the possibility that the Pythia was somehow 'intoxicated', and cites recent geological evidence maintaining there is a fault line, making the chasm and vapours a possibility.

Of crucial importance is Catherine Morgan's *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century BC*, a work on early Archaic Delphi and Olympia.<sup>53</sup> She adopts a marked methodological change from the preceding authors. Instead of focusing mainly on the literary evidence, she incorporates archaeological evidence to give a better understanding of early Delphic history. She also places the evidence into context by contrasting Delphi with another oracular institution, Olympia. Her archaeological evidence is largely the analysis of votive offerings, migration routes and archaeological remains, which establishes the chronology of permanent settlements. This evidence is contrary to much of the literary evidence, particularly in regard to myths. She found no evidence for sanctuary activity at Delphi before c.800 BC.<sup>54</sup> Since Morgan largely ignored the nature of the consultations, she side-stepped the scholarly debate which concerned P&W, Fontenrose

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<sup>53</sup> Morgan, C. (1990) *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century BC*. Cambridge.

<sup>54</sup> Morgan (1990), p. 134.

and to a lesser extent, Bowden. However, by challenging established conclusions drawn from the literature by archaeological finds, she subjects Delphi to new and innovative methods of research.

## The Decline of Delphi

Particularly helpful for this thesis, are those who directly address the decline of Delphi. Thomas Dempsey was the first modern scholar to formally examine the issue of the decline of Delphi in his work, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Early History, Influence and Fall*.<sup>55</sup> Although he mostly focuses on the rise of Delphi, and its influence on politics, morality and religion, the final chapter of Dempsey's work concerns the decline of Delphi. He discusses it in terms of the lessened influence Delphi exercised within Greek politics, and notes various transitional stages in which Delphi's impact and popularity ebbed and flowed. He notes a decline after the Persian Wars, a second stage during the Peloponnesian War, a third during the Second Sacred War and the supremacy of Macedon, a slight revival after the Gallic invasion in 279 BC as a result of the Aetolian occupation, another relative silence in the first century BC, a final revival in the Christian era, and the ultimate decline after the Antonines and the reign of Severus. Indeed, the final closure of Delphi by Christian Emperors is agreed upon by all.<sup>56</sup> Dempsey's focus— external political situations to which Delphi was prone – is significant, as he does not consider oracular consultation or religious factors, which are

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<sup>55</sup> Dempsey, Rev. T. (1918) *The Delphic Oracle: Its Early History, Influence and Fall*. Oxford.

<sup>56</sup> Fontenrose (1978), p. 5 refers to *Codex Theodosianus* 16.10.9, and dates the final closing to AD 391. However, that edict, which dates to AD 385, banned divination from animal entrails. Rather, he must be referring to 16.10.10, which dates to February 391. Several edicts were delivered in the final decades of the fifth century, to ban divination and sacrifices, but none of them specifically mentions oracles. See Chapter 1 (pp. 70-71, n. 5-7) for details. It is clear that there were attempts at a uniform policy regarding 'pagan' religion but the number of edicts passed demonstrates a continued difficulty in stamping out traditional religion.

the focus of this thesis. Although he addresses the decline, more evidence has come to light since then; a description of the decline was given, but an explanation still remains.

Polymnia Athanassiadi has extensively researched Delphi and other oracles in the Late Antique period.<sup>57</sup> Her works have helped to demonstrate Delphi's decline in status and frequency in the third and fourth centuries AD. In 'The Fate of Oracles in Late Antiquity', Athanassiadi uses a comparative method to examine the evidence – literary, archaeological and epigraphic – to examine the state of both Delphi and Didyma in the first, second and third centuries AD (Claros is omitted because there is not comparable material evidence). In this way, she reveals that, after a revival during Hadrian's reign, Delphi only minimally continued to operate as it had previously. Although much activity was happening, such as the Games, dedications and the general recognition of Delphi as a 'holy city', Delphi's place within Greece had declined by the Severan period. In this way, Athanassiadi paved the way to view the oracle as separate from the *polis* of Delphi, a crucial method which I shall employ in Chapter 2; she notes, "At Delphi, then, civic munificence seems to have followed a reverse course to the fate of the oracle..."<sup>58</sup> Her work is an essential foundation for how I will analyse this hypothesis in greater detail.

Saul Levin's 'The Old Greek Oracles in Decline' also focused on the fate of oracles in Late Antiquity, and applied the same approach as Athanassiadi: by assessing the status of various oracles one can gather a more comprehensive picture.<sup>59</sup> As well as Delphi and Didyma, Levin includes Claros and the oracle of Trophonius in his study.

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<sup>57</sup> Athanassiadi, P. (1989) 'The Fate of Oracles in Late Antiquity,' *Deltion Christianikes Archaialogikes Etaireias* 15, pp. 271-278 and (1992) 'Philosophers and Oracles: Shifts of Authority in Late Paganism,' *Byzantion* 65, pp. 45-62.

<sup>58</sup> Athanassiadi (1989), p. 277. Granted, this statement refers to Delphi in the late third, early fourth centuries AD. I argue that this same trend started as early as the second century AD.

<sup>59</sup> Levin, S. (1989) 'The Old Greek Oracles in Decline,' *ANRW* 2.18.2, pp. 1599-1649.

He examines Delphi during three different periods: the first is Delphi until the reign of Nero; then the state of Delphi around AD 100; and finally Delphi as viewed through later authors such as Porphyry and Christian authors such as Origen. In this way, he uses literary evidence from a variety of sources, biases and backgrounds. Rather than focusing on the oracular responses, he analyses how the authors perceived Delphi and treated the sanctuary within their work. This creates a difficulty in formulating a solid picture of the state of Delphi during these final centuries, as some evidence suggests the oracle was silent, yet we still have oracular responses emanating from the site. Levin does not utilise the various archaeological and epigraphical evidence available to make full conclusions about the status of Delphi, nor the other centres. He compiles many of the late literary sources which mention the state of the sanctuary and the oracle. Levin's work is beneficial for tracing a history of the decline and the status of several sites as they began to fade. However, without incorporating details of oracular responses and archaeological evidence, a comprehensive picture of the *oracle* is not formed.

Robert Parker focuses on the political dimension of oracles, the influence of oracles on politics, and the influence of politics on oracles in his article, 'Greek States and Greek Oracles'.<sup>60</sup> He discusses the role of several forms of divination regarding political decisions, particularly oracles throughout their operation from the Archaic and Classical periods through the Hellenistic era until Roman times. Their ambiguity was essential to maintaining good relations with *poleis* and their leaders, and addresses the attitude of the consultant toward divination. Colonisation is a focus as well as several Athenian consultations, alliances between *poleis*, legislation within a *polis*, and military consultations, such as those during the Persian Wars. He devotes five pages to the

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<sup>60</sup> Parker, R. (1985) 'Greek States and Greek Oracles,' in *Cruce: Essays in Greek History Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th birthday*. Cartledge, P.A. & Harvey, F.D. eds. London, pp. 298-326.

‘cessation of oracles’ in the third section of his article. Parker notes, as mentioned above, the decline of political oracles after the 380’s BC, and the rarity of cult reform after 300 BC.<sup>61</sup> He suggests that the pattern of decline is not uniform at Delphi or other oracular sites such as Dodona, and gives particular focus to the ebb of political questions in the fourth century BC, rather than the end of the operations of oracles in the first centuries AD. The reasoning for the decline, he suggests, is political change within Greece, which is of course a significant factor concerning a decrease in oracular consultation. However, he does not cite any sort of religious or psychological considerations for the decline, which, as this thesis argues, are also central issues.

These issues are taken up in an article by Andreas Lentakis.<sup>62</sup> He examines the rise of Delphi in terms of psychological, religious and political aspects, and the second half of his article is devoted to the decline of Delphi in political and religious terms. He argues that the prevalence of Macedon and the conquests of Alexander contributed to the decline of the *polis*, and in turn Delphi’s political function. In a religious sense, Lentakis briefly mentions the continued necessity of divination, as is seen with astrology and theurgy, but then focuses on the Jewish and Christian religions and their contribution to the decline of Delphi. Indeed, the new monotheistic religions, it can be argued, extinguished the final spark of Greek religion, but the transition to these religions is seen first within traditional beliefs and occult practices – astrology and theurgy – which he mentions and which I shall examine in detail.

Delphi has been extensively researched from a number of angles, and even the decline has been addressed. However much of the focus has been on earlier stages of

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<sup>61</sup> Parker (1985), p. 320.

<sup>62</sup> Lentakis, A. (2000) ‘Ανοδος και πτώση του Μαντείου των Δελφών. Τα κύρια αίτια’, in *Delphes cent ans après la grande fouille: Essai de bilan. Actes du colloque international organisé par l’École Française d’Athènes*. Jacquemin, A. ed. Paris, pp. 35-51.

decline, such as during the Persian Wars and the Hellenistic age, but work remains to be done on the final centuries of operation. Those works which address the final period of Delphic operation focus largely on the chronology and politics. This thesis aims to add to this picture through the religious dimension which changed the perception of oracular necessity and authority. Although the description has mostly been given, an explanation has only been briefly suggested, yet not analysed. Lentakis began the discussion to attempt to explain what influences, besides external politics, led to the decline of Delphi, and crucially cites Christianity. However, a more thorough analysis of the role astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy played in the decline of oracular consultation remains to be addressed.

## **Plutarch**

Now that scholarship regarding Greek religion, oracles, and, specific areas of Delphic history have been addressed, the remaining review will examine those works which correspond to the subsequent chapters of this thesis. Chapter 2 concerns Delphi in the second century AD, where research regarding Plutarch is a primary focus. Robert Flacélière's *Plutarque: Sur les Oracles de la Pythie. Texte et traduction avec une introduction et des notes* is of particular interest, as it focuses on one of Plutarch's essays that is essential for this study.<sup>63</sup> His French translation of the essay, *De Pythiae Oraculis*, provides additional insight into the theme and content, and gives a plan of the sanctuary in the introduction. The contributions of Plato to Plutarch's writings are assessed in detail and most valuable is Flacelière's commentary on the archaeological

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<sup>63</sup> Flacelière, R. (1937) *Plutarque: Sur les Oracles de la Pythie. Texte et traduction avec une introduction et des notes*. Paris.

connections between the text and the extant evidence. In *Plutarque: Sur La Disparition des Oracles*, Flacériere does much the same as in his earlier publication; however in this work he focuses on Plutarch's *De Defectu Oraculorum*.<sup>64</sup>

Reginald H. Barrow, in *Plutarch and his Times*, summarises the known facts about Plutarch's life within the milieu of the first and second centuries AD.<sup>65</sup> His *Lives* and other essays are examined and a brief section on his sources is included. The chapter on Delphi and the Pythian Dialogues was not covered extensively in terms of content or context, but the overview provides a foundation for further research. Robert Lamberton picks up where Barrow left off in his work, *Plutarch*, by addressing a number of Plutarch's works within an intellectual and historical context.<sup>66</sup> Significantly, Lamberton divides the various aspects of Plutarch's persona (a writer, a priest, a teacher, a philosopher, etc.) which allows a more comprehensive picture of Plutarch to be seen. The most valuable aspect of this work is Lamberton's analysis of Plutarch's use of dialogue. He argues that Plutarch employed this method so that he could present views on a variety of subjects while still maintaining a 'distance' from his own opinion, a method which I apply in Chapter 2. Finally, he places the modern reception of Plutarch, from antiquity until modern times, into context.

## **Sanctuaries, Sacred Space and Spatial Analysis**

The spatial analyses of Greek sanctuaries, in David Clark's *Spatial Archaeology* and *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*, edited by Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg, are of great interest. Clark's edition provides a language to approach the different uses

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<sup>64</sup> Flacelière, R. (1947) *Plutarque: Sur La Disparition des Oracles*. Paris.

<sup>65</sup> Barrow, R.H. (1967) *Plutarch and His Times*. London.

<sup>66</sup> Lamberton, R. (2001) *Plutarch*. New Haven.

of locations within Greek space, both sacred and profane.<sup>67</sup> The collection of essays, by Marinatos and Hägg, places Delphi within a larger context of Greek sanctuaries in general. These essays address the nature of sacred space and how Greeks viewed, used and marked it out in antiquity. The early sanctuaries of the eighth century are analysed, and the origins of Panhellenism, in particular, is addressed which is one of the key factors in Delphi's long, prestigious history.<sup>68</sup> For these essays, archaeological evidence is combined with literary sources to give a balanced interpretation of the evidence. Since the theme is sacred space and sanctuaries, a full assessment of the archaeological evidence is crucial. The significance of this book is the manner in which it illustrates the different functions and operations of sanctuaries, and how the role can vary significantly from place to place.

Additionally, *Graecia Capta: The Landscape of Roman Greece* by Susan Alcock is of the utmost value, particularly in creating a context for Roman rule in Greece.<sup>69</sup> This is valuable for this thesis, as it concerns the complicated period of Delphi's decline during the age of Plutarch. The various cultural and social implications of Roman occupation of Greece shaped the climate of Achaëa, as well as the perceptions of the writers from this period. Of additional significance is her emphasis on the cultural and geographical landscape of Roman Greece, which provides further methodologies for viewing the landscape of Delphi, the sanctuary itself, as well as its placement within Roman occupation.

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<sup>67</sup> Clark, D. (1977) *Spatial Archaeology*. London. His approach will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 2 (p. 148).

<sup>68</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood, C. (1993) 'Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space: Fragments of a Discourse,' in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Marinatos, N. and Hägg, R. eds. London, pp. 1-17 and Morgan, C. (1993) 'The Origins of Pan-Hellenism,' in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Marinatos, N. and Hägg, R. eds. London, pp.18-44.

<sup>69</sup> Alcock, S. (1993) *Graecia Capta: The Landscape of Roman Greece*. Cambridge.

Michael Scott also helped to distinguish the oracle from the sanctuary in the Archaic and Classical periods, a valuable approach to help explain the state of Delphi, which can be extended to the Hellenistic and Roman eras.<sup>70</sup> Scott takes a fresh approach to the evidence and conception of Delphi and Olympia. Rather than focusing on the oracle or the Games at each site, Scott presents Delphi in terms of a multidimensional sanctuary, and demonstrates the various ways different people and *poleis* interacted with the site through spatial analysis. His thoughtful book incorporates much of the archaeological evidence in a way that enhances the picture of Delphi as a whole: the oracle, the sanctuary and the town. His study ends in the Classical period, leaving room for the later periods of Delphi to be considered in this way. This thesis applies Scott's approach of distinguishing the various religious operations at Delphi from the oracle to better understand the state of Delphi in the second and third centuries AD.

## Other Oracular Centres

Chapter 3 focuses on oracles other than Delphi. Oracular centres have received much attention, and this chapter examines Olympia and Dodona briefly before Claros and Didyma are dealt with extensively. Herbert W. Parke has dedicated his academic life to the study of oracles.<sup>71</sup> In addition to his monumental work on Delphi, one of these monographs, *The Oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia and Ammon*, treats the major oracles of Zeus in varying degrees of detail. The first seven chapters treat Dodona, tracing its history from the Archaic period, the method of consultation, the origins of the

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<sup>70</sup> Scott, M. (2010) *Delphi and Olympia: The Spatial Politics of Panhellenism in the Archaic and Classical Periods*. Cambridge.

<sup>71</sup> P&W, Parke, H.W. (1967) *The Oracles of Zeus: Dodona, Olympia and Ammon*. Oxford; (1967b) *Greek Oracles*. London; and (1985) *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*. London.

site, through to the Classical and Roman periods. Another chapter is devoted to the material remains found at Dodona, lending support to the literary evidence used for the historical account. Olympia and Siwah receive far less attention here, reflecting the amount of evidence found in the ancient literature.

Dodona is analysed through the ancient authors' accounts, allowing for the historiography of the traditions as well. The lead tablets found at the site give solid archaeological evidence for an historical timeline. At Olympia and Siwah, only a few inscriptions are cited as archaeological evidence. Parke's analysis of the sacred sites places them largely in isolation, although he does briefly mention how other oracular sites were influenced by these oracles of Zeus. A substantial part of this book examines the famous individuals who visited, made dedications, or otherwise influenced the oracles. Through these people, the development of a site is presented in terms of its consultants. This is not a comparative study of Zeus' oracular sites (indeed, the role of Zeus is not addressed or analysed) but rather historically descriptive, and the interaction with these sites and Delphi is not examined. It remains to be seen to what extent these sites interacted with Delphi and the degree of competition or cooperation between them.

Parke treats the oracles of Apollo in *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*. He includes Delphi, Claros and Didyma, along with a few other oracles of less reputation, such as Hierapolis and Aeolis in The Troad, and analyses them in much the same format as his book on Zeus' oracles. Both of these books treat each oracular site chronologically, from their beginnings in the Archaic period, through the Classical and Hellenistic times. A brief examination of their activity in the Roman era is given, largely through literary accounts. His aim was explanation and description, rather than

interpretation, and, in many ways, provides a foundation for further study of the oracles of Zeus and Apollo.

Indeed, treatment of other oracular sites did continue after Parke forged the way. Dodona has also been treated extensively by Esther Eidinow in *Oracles, Curses and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*.<sup>72</sup> Of immeasurable value is the publication and translation of one-hundred and seventy of the lead tablets found at Dodona, as well as many curse tablets from elsewhere in Greece. The role of the tablets in consultation is not addressed, but a brief history of the site is included to give context to the archaeological findings. Treatments of oracles other than Delphi have also been made by Martin P. Nilsson in his work, *Cults, Myths, Oracles, and Politics in Ancient Greece*.<sup>73</sup> He suggests that Delphi only became involved in politics as the site began to wane in the fifth century BC, while most other scholars agree that Delphi's involvement in politics is what led to the Panhellenic status of the sanctuary.<sup>74</sup> Also, Trevor Curnow catalogues over three-hundred oracles throughout the Greek world in his compilation, *The Oracles of the Ancient World*, each differing in nature, gods worshipped, and procedure.<sup>75</sup> His main conclusion was that variety, rather than uniformity, featured in oracular practice in Greece. Although others are important, the famous sites of Claros and Didyma have been given the most attention in the past decades.

One of the most recent works on Greek oracles is that of Richard Stoneman in his book, *Ancient Oracles*.<sup>76</sup> His treatment of oracles focuses on their function, and in particular the way in which they were used to deal with societal problems. He examines why the Greeks and others consulted oracles in the first place, while considering the

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<sup>72</sup> Eidinow, E. (2007) *Oracles, Curses and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*. Oxford.

<sup>73</sup> Nilsson, M. (1986) *Cults, Myths, Oracles, and Politics in Ancient Greece*. Goteborg.

<sup>74</sup> For example, see Morgan (1990), Bowden (2005), and P&W.

<sup>75</sup> Curnow, T. (2004) *The Oracles of the Ancient World*. London.

<sup>76</sup> Stoneman, R. (2011) *Ancient Oracles: Making the Gods Speak*. New Haven.

procedure of the oracles of Delphi and Dodona. In addition to the larger, more famous oracular shrines, Stoneman's investigation also examines lot oracles, dream oracles and those of heroes, as well as a brief introduction to the theological oracles of Claros and Didyma. Finally, he concludes with the silencing of the oracles and their decline. His focus is on the Christian influence on Greek oracular shrines.

## Claros and Didyma

Chapter 3, after highlighting the sanctuaries at Olympia and Dodona, focuses on the oracles of Claros and Didyma in Asia Minor. Much of the research regarding Claros has been conducted in French, initially by Picard and subsequently by Robert.<sup>77</sup> Aude Busine details many of the responses from Claros as well as other Apolline oracles from Late Antiquity in *Paroles d'Apollon: Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive*.<sup>78</sup> This is one of the first studies to focus specifically on oracles in Late Antiquity, from the second to the sixth century AD. The omission of Delphi in her examination is justified by the fact that there is little evidence regarding the sanctuary at this time.<sup>79</sup> Instead, she focuses on Didyma and Claros through an analysis of literary and inscriptional evidence. Busine does not employ the methodology of Fontenrose, but claims that context is essential to understanding these oracles, rather than the text itself. In this way, she focuses on the *development* of oracular practice, which better places the oracles in their historic context, rather than viewing them in

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<sup>77</sup> Picard, C. (1922) *Éphèse et Claros, recherches sur les sanctuaires et les cultes de l'Ionie du Nord*. Paris ; and Robert, L. (1954) *Les fouilles de Claros: Conférence donnée à l'Université d'Ankara à la fin de quatre campagnes de fouilles*. Limoges; (1960) *Anatolian Studies*, 10: 21; (1967) 'L'oracle de Claros' in *La civilisation grecque de l'antiquité à nos jours*. Delvoye, C. and Roux, G. eds. Brussels, pp. 306-312; (1971) 'Un oracle gravé à Oinoanda,' *CRAI* 115, pp. 597-619.

<sup>78</sup> Busine, A. (2005) *Paroles d'Apollon: Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive*. Leiden.

<sup>79</sup> Busine (2005), p. 26.

isolation. Included is a collection of the oracles from both Claros and Didyma. She does not focus on divination in particular, nor the language or motive of the oracle; instead her research is a *reinterpretation* of the oracles and, thus demonstrates the development of Apollo from a god of the *polis*, assisting in communal matters of states, to a personal god giving ‘theological oracles.’

Arthur Darby Nock coined the term ‘theological’ oracles to describe sets of responses issued that deal with the question of faith and are largely different in nature from most of the other oracles from Apolline centres.<sup>80</sup> I employ the term offered by Nock, but define these oracles as responses to inquiries that deal with issues which fall outside traditional Graeco-Roman beliefs and practice. Nock gathered several of these oracles from literary sources, which facilitated further investigation into their nature, as seen in the work of Busine. Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber compiled many of the oracles from Claros in German, and in their article, ‘Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros,’ examine one oracle in detail.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, Salvatore Pricoco researched them in Italian, specifically focusing on their origin and *Quellenforschung*.<sup>82</sup>

Christian Oesterheld’s *Göttliche Botschaften für zweifelnde Menschen: Pragmatik und Orientierungsleistung der Apollon-Orakel von Klaros und Didyma in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* is an extensive work on the oracles of Claros and Didyma in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, cataloguing the responses, and giving detailed

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<sup>80</sup> Nock, A.D. (1928) ‘Oracles Théologiques,’ *REA* 30, pp. 281-288.

<sup>81</sup> Merkelbach, R. and Stauber, J. (1996) ‘Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros,’ *Epigraphica Anatolica* 27, pp. 1-54.

<sup>82</sup> Pricoco, S. (1987) ‘Un Oracolo di Apollo Su Dio,’ *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 23, pp. 3-36; (1988) ‘Un oracolo di Apollo sull’ anima (Lact. *Inst.* 7.13.6),’ in *Hestiasis. Studi di tarda antichità offerti a S. Caldroni*. V. Messina, pp. 173-201; (1989) ‘Per una storia dell’oracolo nella tarda antichità. Apollo Clario e Didimeo in Lattanzio,’ *Augustinianum* 29, pp. 351-37; and (1991) ‘Tre frammenti oracolari di Apollo (Lact. *Inst.* 1.7.9-10)’ in *Polyanthema. Studi di letteratura Cristiana antica offerti a S. Constanza*. Vol. II. Messina, pp. 337-353.

commentary on most.<sup>83</sup> He also focuses on the role of the priest and cult officials (as does Busine's article 'The Officials of Oracular Sanctuaries in Roman Asia Minor'),<sup>84</sup> the relationship of other cults such as Athena Satornila and Athena Polias and their context within the region of the oracles. He also analyses the architectural context of the sanctuary with an emphasis on dating and prosopographical considerations from various inscriptions recording names of priests and officials. Although an excellent study of oracles, he neglects Delphi for the same reasons as Busine, the comparative lack of evidence.

English contributions have been less extensive. However, the unpublished thesis, *Theological Oracles and the Sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma*, by Thomas L. Robinson is of the utmost value, as it compiles all of the oracles from both Claros and Didyma, along with an English translation and commentary.<sup>85</sup> His article, 'Oracles and Their Society: Social Realities as Reflected in the Oracles of Claros and Didyma,' also places the oracular responses within a social context, while citing historical evidence to understand the realities behind a number of responses from Claros and Didyma.<sup>86</sup> Zsuzsanna Várhelyi has examined one oracle from Claros, in particular, in her article, 'Magic, Religion and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros,' and enhanced the understanding of this response by giving a detailed case study.<sup>87</sup> She demonstrates that Claros presented the reply to correspond to the religious expectations of five *poleis* which consulted Apollo in the second century AD regarding a plague. Fritz Graf delved

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<sup>83</sup> Oesterheld, C. (2008) *Göttliche Botschaften für zweifelnde Menschen: Pragmatik und Orientierungsleistung der Apollon-Orakel von Klaros und Didyma in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*. Göttingen.

<sup>84</sup> Busine, A. (2006) 'The Officials of Oracular Sanctuaries in Roman Asia Minor,' *Archiv der Religionsgeschichte* 8, pp. 275–316.

<sup>85</sup> Robinson, T.L. (1981) *Theological Oracles and the Sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma*. Doctoral Thesis: Cambridge, MA.

<sup>86</sup> Robinson, T.L. (1991) 'Oracles and Their Society: Social Realities as Reflected in the Oracles of Claros and Didyma,' *Semeia* 56, pp. 59-77.

<sup>87</sup> Várhelyi, Z. (2001) 'Magic, Religion and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros,' in *Between Magic and Religion*. Asirvatham, S.R., Pache, C.O., Watrous, J. eds. Oxford, pp. 15-31.

deeper into the analysis of the same response from Claros in his article, 'An Oracle against Pestilence from a Western Anatolian Town,' by examining the ways in which the response deals with images and statues.<sup>88</sup>

In *Didyma: Apollo's Oracle, Cult and Companions*, Joseph Fontenrose compiled the extant responses for Didyma, much like he did with Delphi, using the same parameters for authentication.<sup>89</sup> Rather than focusing on historical interests, Fontenrose examines the sanctuary, its festivals and the myths of Didyma. He is sceptical of the 'theological' oracles found in Eusebius and others. Catherine Morgan's article, 'Divination and Society at Delphi and Didyma,' examines the political and social background of Didyma and Delphi.<sup>90</sup> She traces the political context of divinatory practices at Didyma from Archaic to Roman times. In this way, Didyma is presented in the context of its original Ionian setting and the control of the oracle by a single city, Miletus. It is this civic role which facilitated Didyma's revival in the Hellenistic period, compared to Delphi, whose decline began at that time.<sup>91</sup>

In summary of Delphic and oracular research, most of the scholars have focused on the procedure, history and responses of the oracles. Only a few have examined oracles in Late Antiquity, particularly Delphi, during this time. Little attention has been given to the nature of the theological responses from Asia Minor in relation to the relative disparity of these issues in the Delphic corpus. This connection can help to reveal the decline of Delphi in a religious and social sense. The scholars who have

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<sup>88</sup> Graf, F. (1992) 'An Oracle against Pestilence from a Western Anatolian Town,' *ZPE* 92, pp. 283-298.

<sup>89</sup> Fontenrose, J. (1988) *Didyma: Apollo's Oracle, Cult and Companions*. Berkeley.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan, C. (1989) 'Divination and Society at Delphi and Didyma,' *Hermathena* 147, pp. 17-42.

<sup>91</sup> As Morgan (1989), p. 36 notes, "...the need for the kind of oracle that existed at Delphi began to decline with the changes in the nature of political power consequent upon the rise of Alexander (the loss of state independence, the grown of the concept of a personal right to rule, and the decline of the idea of debate as political consensus came to be focussed around a single ruler)."

focused on the *what* and *when* of the decline of Delphi, make only cursory suggestions as to *why*. This thesis aims to fill this gap.

## **Occult Practices**

Modern scholarship concerning astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy has considerably enhanced my understanding of the ancient sources. These occult practices are the focus of Chapters 4 and 5. Eric Robertson Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* is a monumental monograph which extended understanding of the Greek mindset beyond the philosophical and rational perception which had carried so much weight.<sup>92</sup> His rational view of the 'irrational' Greeks helps to explain oracles, theurgy and other varieties of divination. One of the important contributions is his analysis of the shift from shame-culture to guilt-culture, an idea adopted by subsequent classical scholars. The shift was not a smooth transition; it is largely through linguistic changes that the shift in ideas is signified, so he relies mainly on literary sources. Discussing epic and drama, he traces the increasing sophistication of the development of morality, from a conception of the world and moral order as arbitrary and subject to the will of the gods, through to a later understanding of the limits of moral responsibility. Shame-culture consists of ideas such as hereditary guilt, with morality signified by ideas of pollution and purification, whereas guilt-culture is dependent less on the actions of the gods and more on people interacting with one another. After examining aspects of Homeric religion and beliefs in the Archaic age, in which divine intervention is taken for granted by society, Dodds approaches divination, ecstasy and divine madness from the framework of Plato, who originally suggested a division of such faculties in his

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<sup>92</sup> Dodds, E.R. (1951) *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley.

*Phaedrus*.<sup>93</sup> He maintains that it was the influence of Dionysus who introduced the prophetic madness of the Pythia, which was unheard of in Greece until the god's presence there. Upon reaching the fifth and fourth centuries BC, Dodds emphasises a return to rationalism, as reflected in the works of the philosophers and a sense of the divine as the harbingers of justice, rather than the vengeful gods of the Homeric age. Dodds examines how the Greeks modified their beliefs of mantic madness in light of the tendency towards rationalism at this time. He provides anthropological evidence to show that Pythagorean philosophers assisted in the development of the ideas of transmigration of the soul and reincarnation through contact with Thrace and Scythia. Once these ideas were prevalent within Greece, the interaction between rational and irrational beliefs influenced Greek society. In the final chapter entitled, 'Fear of Freedom' Dodds suggests that, during the Hellenistic and Roman centuries, a tendency toward the new sciences of astrology, the occult and theurgy dominated the irrational landscape and, in a sense, prevailed over the beliefs of previous centuries. Thus, Dodds created a framework with which to study the development of Greek beliefs, particularly in terms of the occult and religion, which is the aim of this thesis in the context of Delphi. Of additional value are his appendices, particularly one concerning theurgy and its ties to Neoplatonism.

## **Astrology**

Frederick H. Cramer's *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics* outlines the various aspects of astrology in law, demonstrating the popularity of the art and placing

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<sup>93</sup> *Phdr.* 243C-D. See also Dodds, E.R. (1945) 'Plato and the Irrational,' *JHS* 65, pp. 16-25 and Chapter 5 (pp. 325-326).

astrology within its political framework.<sup>94</sup> *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* is a series of lectures regarding astrology of the Greeks and Romans given by Franz Cumont, stressing the Babylonian origin of many of these ideas.<sup>95</sup> He also summarises the Stoic influence on the propagation of astrology throughout the Mediterranean, the adaptation of astrology by Roman emperors, as well as sidereal cults in general, and particularly how Mithraism provided the masses access to astrological doctrine. Although, elsewhere, Cumont mentions the influence of astrology on Delphi, and its potential to assist in its decline, it is not examined in detail.<sup>96</sup>

Jack Lindsay traces the beginnings of astrology and the contributions of Babylon, Egypt and Greece in formulating the basis of astrology in his book, *Origins of Astrology*.<sup>97</sup> His work also examines horoscopes, tracing the earliest from Babylon, and then analyses many of the literary and non-literary examples. He places the rise of the personal horoscope in the context of the social conditions and the rise of individualism. As regards horoscopes, one of the most valuable works is another compilation, *Greek Horoscopes* by Otto Neugebauer and Henry Bartlett Van Hoesen.<sup>98</sup> After a brief introduction to the symbols and terminology used, they present extant horoscopes from papyri, inscriptions, graffiti and pottery. By supplementing the horoscopes with literary astrological treatises, they provide insight into the interpretation of the horoscopes with the additional help of a summary of the chronological and geographical distributions.

Astrology, ancient and modern, is by its nature difficult to understand without a background in astronomy. Tamsyn Barton gives a concise history of horoscopic

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<sup>94</sup> Cramer, F.H. (1954) *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics*. Philadelphia.

<sup>95</sup> Cumont, F. (1960) *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*. New York.

<sup>96</sup> Cumont, F. (1956) *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*. New York, p. 163. "Astrology did away with, and gradually relegated to oblivion, all the ancient methods that had been devised to solve the enigmas of the future." Although this connection has been made, this thesis will demonstrate the evidence for this claim in Chapter 4.

<sup>97</sup> Lindsay, J. (1971) *Origins of Astrology*. London.

<sup>98</sup> Neugebauer, O. and Van Hoesen, H. B. (1959) *Greek Horoscopes*. Philadelphia.

astrology from the fourth century BC to the end of antiquity in her book, *Ancient Astrology*.<sup>99</sup> First, she traces the origin, rise and various contributions to the craft from Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece. Then, she gives a detailed analysis of the principles used in astrology and how exactly horoscopes were cast. Finally, Barton places astrology within a broader religious and social context. This book provides a basis for examining the effect astrology had upon Delphic consultation.

Roger Beck's *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology* also establishes an historical outline of Greek and Roman astrology.<sup>100</sup> He follows the lead of Barton by demonstrating, practically, the way to construct a horoscope, and explains how one would interpret the stars. In this way, Beck not only gives a history of astrology, he shows how the practice actually worked, an essential element to assist in understanding how astrology influenced the ancient world. He gives detailed chapters corresponding to the main structures and issues in interpreting horoscopes, and then addresses their socio-political implications, which allows for context. Finally, Erica Reiner's work, 'The Uses of Astrology' has demonstrated the various reasons astrology was consulted in terms of divination, which have striking parallels at Delphi, and this relationship is examined in Chapter 4.<sup>101</sup> Anthony Long examines the various arguments for and against astrology in antiquity in his article, 'Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra', by addressing the various accounts of ancient authors.<sup>102</sup> He determines that astrology was ubiquitous in Greece and Rome from the second century BC until the time of Augustine.

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<sup>99</sup> Barton, T. (1994) *Ancient Astrology*. London.

<sup>100</sup> Beck, R. (2006) *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*. Oxford.

<sup>101</sup> Reiner, R. (1985) 'The Uses of Astrology,' *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105, pp. 589-595.

<sup>102</sup> Long, A.A. (1982) 'Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra,' in *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenistic Theory*. Barnes, J., Brunschwig, J., Burnyeat, M., Schofield, M. eds. Cambridge, pp. 165-192.

## Magic and Theurgy

The final chapter of this thesis examines development and practice of theurgy, which is closely connected to magic, and so a brief introduction to Greek magical scholarship is necessary. The study of Greek magic has become a recognised discipline within Classics since the work of Frazer and Malinowski.<sup>103</sup> Fritz Graf is a leading modern researcher in this area.<sup>104</sup> His book, *Magic in the Ancient World*, begins with an introduction to the historiography of the subject and a review of the sources. He then examines the terminology surrounding the craft, and its development as a concept through a semantic study based on anthropological, papyrological and historical evidence. Graf analyses how the magician functions within magic, its connection with the Mysteries in terms of initiation into the practice and, finally, the role of magic within literary fiction. However, by focusing on these specific areas of magic, there is no systematic historical analysis of the development of magic as an art.

Georg Luck's *Arcana Mundi* provides an excellent compilation of various ancient texts surrounding occult practices in the ancient world.<sup>105</sup> His work is as extensive as it is thorough, concentrating on magic, miracles, daemonology, divination, astrology and alchemy. He utilises mainly literary sources, supplementing them with inscriptions and papyri in some cases. This source book offers convenient access to a number of rare texts. Luck traces the development of occult sciences from the sages like Pythagoras to the *magoi* of latter eras. In this way, he introduces the topic of theurgy and its connection to magic. Luck relies most heavily on literary sources for his

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<sup>103</sup> Frazer (1880) and Malinowski, B. (1925) *Magic, Science, and Religion*. New York.

<sup>104</sup> Graf (1992), pp. 283-298; (1997) *Magic in the Ancient World*. Philip, F. trans. Cambridge, MA; and (1999) 'Magic and Divination,' in *The World of Ancient Magic*. Jordan, D.R., Montgomery, H. and Thomassen, E. eds. Bergen, pp. 283-298.

<sup>105</sup> Luck, G. (1985) *Arcana Mundi Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Baltimore.

analysis on the occult. However, papyri are essential to understand the practice of magic. Above all, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* by Hans Dieter Betz, et. al is extremely valuable, and gives access to a variety of magical spells, rituals, hymns and formulae, even a few newly added papyri not found in the editions of Preisendanz et. al.<sup>106</sup> The fragments date from the second century BC to the fifth century AD. Again, the usefulness of compilation works such as these have proven invaluable to my research.

Closely tied to magic is the practice of theurgy, which developed at the time of Delphi's final stage of decline. Modern scholars have variously categorised theurgy into several main types. André-Jean Festugière's article 'Contemplation philosophique et art théurgique chez Proclus,'<sup>107</sup> and Hans Lewy's *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*<sup>108</sup> distinguish between two types of ascent of the soul, which was the ultimate goal of a theurgist. The first way an individual reaches purification and salvation of the soul is through philosophical contemplation; in the other, the use of theurgic ritual facilitates ascension. Laurence Jay Rosán's *The Philosophy of Proclus* creates new distinctions of his own: he divides the practice into 'higher' and 'lower' theurgy.<sup>109</sup> Lower theurgy is defined as a method to stimulate the soul toward its *own* unity, by means of a pre-existing sympathy or connection between human souls and material objects. These symbols can include plants, stones, the names of gods and even numbers and words. Higher theurgy, as Rosán describes it, is employed to gain unification of an individual soul with God or the divine by means of faith and philosophical contemplation, through which an individual soul can, in a sense, reach self-awareness.

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<sup>106</sup> Betz, H.D. (1986) *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago. See also Preisendanz, K. et al. (1973) *Papyri Graecae Magicae: die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. Stuttgart.

<sup>107</sup> Festugière, A.J. (1971) 'Contemplation philosophique et art théurgique chez Proclus,' *Études de philosophie Grecque*. Paris, pp. 585-596.

<sup>108</sup> Lewy, H. (1978) *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*. Paris.

<sup>109</sup> Rosán, L. (1949) *The Philosophy of Proclus*. New York.

E.R. Dodds agrees with the distinction between two different types of theurgic operation, one dependent on the use of symbols, the other a mediumistic trance employed through contemplation.<sup>110</sup> Those practices that depend on the use of symbols (σύμβολα) have a primary goal to animate statues so as to obtain divine knowledge or oracles from them. The second type of theurgy, as defined by Dodds, operates as a sort of mediumistic trance and is similar to the first, but instead of an inanimate receptacle, the god becomes incarnated in a human being, with help from the lesser being discussed above.

This separation between higher and lower theurgy is not agreed upon by all scholars. Jean Trouillard in his book, *L'un et l'âme selon Proclus* contests this distinction.<sup>111</sup> Rather than distinguishing between two separate methods of theurgy, he maintains that the practice should be viewed as an integral process, beginning with moral purifications, followed by philosophical contemplation and reflection and, ultimately, the practice of theurgy and the unification with the divine. This view seems to be closer to the ancient understanding, as Iamblichus thought both contemplation *and* action were necessary for salvation.<sup>112</sup> The distinction suggested by modern scholars is not clearly made by any individual writer, but rather modern interpretations of inconsistencies in Neoplatonic writers. Andrew Smith agrees with this sentiment in *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition*, and suggests that differences in

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<sup>110</sup> Dodds (1951), p. 283.

<sup>111</sup> Trouillard, J. (1972) *L'un et l'âme selon Proclus*. Paris.

<sup>112</sup> Iamb. *Myst.* 2.11, notes that philosophical and logical arts are insufficient (countering Porphyry's assertion) and adds that "the perfect efficacy of ineffable works, which are divinely performed in a way surpassing all intelligence, and the power of inexplicable symbols, which are known only to the Gods, impart theurgic union," (ἀλλ' ἢ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἢ τε τῶν νοουμένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνον συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δύναμις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεουργικὴν ἔνωσιν.). So, in addition to intellectual perception, theurgic practices are also necessary.

theurgical practice were based on the individual philosopher who had different cultic needs.<sup>113</sup>

The differences between each philosopher's conception of theurgy, the soul and its ascension are essential to understanding the nuances of Neoplatonism and theurgy. John Finamore's book, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, contributes a great deal to this distinction by focusing on Iamblichus' philosophy in particular.<sup>114</sup> In this book, Finamore examines the Neoplatonic mechanism for the soul's reunion with the divine – the vehicle of the soul. He demonstrates that Iamblichus' theory is in direct reaction to Porphyry's theory as presented in *De Regressu Animae* which contrasts the different views of the philosophers. This examination gives a clear understanding to how Iamblichus viewed theurgy's role in his religious philosophy in relation to the soul, and in this way provides a case study on one of the more difficult philosophical conceptions found in Neoplatonism. It is an essential examination of Iamblichus' thoughts on theurgy, the soul and why the former was necessary to prepare the latter for union with the divine. Finamore, along with other Neoplatonic researchers, challenged the view put forth by Dodds in his article 'Theurgy and Its relationship to Neoplatonism.' He characterised much of the understanding of theurgy, regarding it as an irrational, magical endeavour.<sup>115</sup>

Additional recent scholarship has shown theurgy to be a sophisticated practice of philosophy and ritual. Polymnia Athanassiadi has contributed a great deal of understanding and research to this field, as well as oracular activity in Late Antiquity in

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<sup>113</sup> Smith, A. (1974) *Porphyry's Place in the Neoplatonic Tradition*. The Hague.

<sup>114</sup> Finamore, J.F. (1985) *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*. Chico, CA.

<sup>115</sup> Dodds, E.R. (1947) 'Theurgy and Its Relationship to Neoplatonism,' *JRS* 37, pp. 55-69.

general.<sup>116</sup> In ‘The Chaldaean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy’, she examines the sources for, and transmission of, the Oracles, while informing on the methodological concerns inherent in studying these fragments – which stem from an assortment of authors with various backgrounds and beliefs. She suggests that a valuable way to approach these Oracles is through the sources themselves and by examining the similarities and differences in each individual’s dogma. One of the more recent articles concerning the Chaldaean Oracles is by John Finamore and Sarah Iles Johnston.<sup>117</sup> In a very clear and engaging way, they offer insights into the philosophical system of the Oracles and attempt to reveal more about the actual practice of the theurgists. This is very helpful, as it provides a conceptual framework to view the practical ritual.

Lewy’s *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* is beneficial, as he compiled all of the Chaldaean Oracles but, since he died before it was published, hasty editing has prohibited smooth transitions and the references are complicated.<sup>118</sup> Although Edouard Des Places’ *Oracles chaldaïques. Avec un choix de commentaires anciens*, remains the standard corpus,<sup>119</sup> the more recent compilation of the Oracles, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* by Ruth Majercik is clearer and accompanied by a more detailed commentary.<sup>120</sup> In addition to the translations and commentaries, her introduction is concise and extensive. She details the diverse aspects of Chaldaean theology, the various divine beings, the role they play within the cosmos, and some of the key concepts of Neoplatonism as seen through the Oracles.

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<sup>116</sup> Athanassiadi, P. (1993) ‘Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus,’ *JRS* 83, pp. 115-130 and (1999) ‘The Chaldaean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy,’ in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Athanassiadi, P. and Frede, M. eds. Oxford, pp. 149-183.

<sup>117</sup> Finamore, J.F. and Johnston, S.I. (2010) ‘The Chaldaean Oracles,’ in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*. Gerson, L.P. ed. Cambridge, pp. 161-173.

<sup>118</sup> Lewy (1978).

<sup>119</sup> Des Places, E. (1971) *Oracles chaldaïques. Avec un choix de commentaires anciens*. Paris.

<sup>120</sup> Majercik, R.D. (1989) *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary*. Leiden.

## Neoplatonism

Anthony C. Lloyd's *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*, offers insight into the main concepts of Neoplatonism, such as hypostases, the concept of the One, the ascent and salvation of the soul.<sup>121</sup> He also places Neoplatonism within the context of its Platonic and Aristotelian predecessors. Sara Rappe focuses on the ancient philosophers themselves and, by proxy, their philosophical ideas in her book, *Reading Neoplatonism*.<sup>122</sup> In this way, the ideas of Plotinus and Damascius are analysed, particularly how they were able to teach their own ideas and impart their knowledge to the reader. Finally, by addressing two later Neoplatonists, she places them within the context of a minority religion that was declining in the face of Christianity. Finally, Pauliina Remes' *Neoplatonism* offers a general outline of many key Neoplatonists and the topics with which they engage.<sup>123</sup> She focuses on the philosophical ideas of Neoplatonism, particularly the views on human nature and the soul, ethics and politics and epistemology and is thus a valuable, recent introduction to the topic.

Andrew Smith, mentioned above, focuses on Porphyry and his attitude toward the soul and theurgy. In doing so, he also incorporates the ideas of Proclus and contrasts the various concepts of both philosophers. Smith, along with David Wasserstein, subsequently published all of the fragments of Porphyry in one volume.<sup>124</sup> The text remains in Greek with no translations. Iamblichus has received the attention of Gregory Shaw in his book, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*.<sup>125</sup> He places Iamblichus within a context of rational, Platonic philosophy rather than a

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<sup>121</sup> Lloyd, A.C. (1990) *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism*. Oxford.

<sup>122</sup> Rappe, S. (2000) *Reading Neoplatonism*. Cambridge.

<sup>123</sup> Remes, P. (2008) *Neoplatonism*. Durham.

<sup>124</sup> Smith, A and Wasserstein, D. (1993) *Porphyrii philosophi fragmenta*. Stuttgart.

<sup>125</sup> Shaw, G. (1995) *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*. University Park, PA.

philosopher obsessed with magic. Shaw's work is almost a response to that of Smith, using much of the same methods of analysis for Iamblichus that Smith used for Porphyry, thereby contrasting the ideas and concepts within each philosopher's view.<sup>126</sup>

Finally, the work of Crystal Addey has investigated the relationship between the different Neoplatonic philosophers and their view of theurgy and divination.<sup>127</sup> She examines the use of divination in Iamblichus' philosophy in her articles, 'Consulting the Oracle: The Mantic Art and Its Causation in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*,' and 'Divine Possession and Divination in the Graeco-Roman World: The Evidence from Iamblichus's *On the Mysteries*.' Her work is particularly valuable as it aims to reveal the role of divination within a theurgic framework. It is through this sort of analysis that theurgy's influence on Delphi's decline can be seen. Each of these authors has extensively informed my opinions and understanding of the topics covered in this thesis.

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<sup>126</sup> For example, Smith distinguishes between 'locative' and 'utopian' views of the universe. Iamblichus employs the locative view as a counterargument to the utopian view of Porphyry and his predecessors, who viewed the world as a cage, which imprisoned the soul, and the goal of life is to escape it. By contrast, Iamblichus saw the physical world as a universal necessity, which provides a learning mechanism and should be cherished.

<sup>127</sup> Addey, C. (2007) 'Oracles, Dreams and Astrology in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*' in *Seeing with Different Eyes: Essays in Astrology and Divination*. Curry, P. and Voss, A. eds. Cambridge, pp. 97- 110; (2007b) 'Consulting the Oracle: The Mantic Art and Its Causation in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*,' in *Metaphysical Patterns in Platonism: Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Modern Times*. Finamore, J.F. and Berchman, R.M. eds. New Orleans, pp. 73-87; (2010) 'Divine Possession and Divination in the Graeco-Roman World: The Evidence from Iamblichus's *On the Mysteries*,' in *Spirit Possession and Trance: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Schmidt, B.E. and Huskinson, L. eds. London, pp. 171-185; (2011) 'Assuming the Mantle of the Gods: 'Unknowable Names' and Invocations in Late Antique Theurgic Ritual,' in *Sacred Words: Orality, Literacy and Religion*. Lardinois, A.P.M.H. ed. Leiden, pp. 279-294; and (2012) 'The Role of Divine Providence, Will and Love in Iamblichus' Theory of Theurgic Prayer and Religious Invocation,' in *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism*. Afonasin, E.V., Dillon, J.M., and Finamore, J.F. eds., pp. 133-150.

## Conclusion

This has not been an exhaustive review of the works used in this thesis, but rather highlights the essential foundations of prior research. The bibliography contains all the work I have consulted well as those referred to during the course of my research, which shaped my understanding of Greek history, religion and culture. It is clear that Delphi has been represented extensively in the research of the last century; however, evidence continues to be uncovered. Understandably, the focus of much of the research has concerned the Archaic and Classical periods of its operation, as the oracle was then in its heyday and its influence on Greek culture and history immense. Besides the few beneficial articles and chapters dealing directly with the decline, the final centuries of its operation, particularly during the Roman era, have been relatively neglected thus far by scholars. Robert Weir's *Roman Delphi and its Pythian Games* is the only book which is dedicated to this time period, but does not specifically examine the oracle.<sup>128</sup> His work is essential, as it is archaeologically focused, and supplemented by literary evidence. He analyses the administration of the Games during the Roman era, the role of the emperors during this time, and extensively examines the various athletic winners. There is very little examination of the oracle.

The decline of Delphi, then, is still under-represented in the research. The articles and chapters mentioned above concerning the decline are crucial, but not complete. The decline has not been explained in terms of other oracular sites within the Mediterranean, all of which eventually declined but by no means in a universal or uniform manner. This thesis aims to compare the expertise of the oracles of Asia Minor in occult and theological issues with Delphi's relative lack of specialisation in these

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<sup>128</sup> Weir, R. (2004) *Roman Delphi and its Pythian Games*. BAR International Series 1306. Oxford.

matters. Finally, although mention has been made of the impact astrology, Neoplatonism and theurgy had on oracular consultation before, this thesis gives examples of how the correlation of the rise of these occult practices influenced, or at the very least had the potential to influence, oracular consultation at Delphi.

Now that this thesis has been oriented within the previous classical scholarship, a brief introduction to the ancient authors is necessary. The following review of primary sources will examine how these authors used Delphi in their works and viewed the sanctuary in general.

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## PRIMARY SOURCES

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Although Delphi featured in ancient Greek literature since Homer and the *Hymns*, it was Herodotus who first brought Delphi into Greek history proper. He had a fascination with oracles, and Delphi in particular, in his *Histories*, published between 430-425BC.<sup>1</sup> Of the sixty-four prophetic incidents referred to by Herodotus, forty-six come from recognised oracular centres; of these, thirty-four are from Delphi, no more than two from any other single source.<sup>2</sup> Several famous stories of Delphi come from Herodotus, such as the Wooden Wall and the Test of Croesus, and attest the wide fame possessed by the sanctuary during his time.<sup>3</sup> Herodotus does not record the oracles blindly; he is aware of the possibility that oracles might be ‘recycled’ or invented *post-eventum*.<sup>4</sup> He is careful to avoid saying anything against the oracles, nor does he make a judgement about whether or not they are true – he merely reports what he hears.<sup>5</sup> Herodotus also describes the many votive offerings dedicated at Delphi by various *poleis*, demonstrating the wealth and communal appreciation held for the sanctuary.<sup>6</sup> Herodotus clearly had a fascination with, and respect for, Delphi. His writings would have increased the popularity of the oracle. Indeed his account covering the Persian Wars correlates with a high point in Delphic history.

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<sup>1</sup> Sansone, D. (1985) ‘The Date of Herodotus’ Publication,’ *Illinois Classical Studies* 10, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Fred Bendeich, of the University of Melbourne, who provided me with these counts concerning Greek prophetic terminology from his thesis, ‘A Comparison of the Approaches of Herodotus and Thucydides to Religion and Superstition,’ submitted for the degree of Master of Arts, March 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Hdt. 7.140.2-3 and Hdt. 1.46 respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Harrison, T. (2002) *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus*. Oxford, pp. 144-145.

<sup>5</sup> Hdt. 8.77, for example.

<sup>6</sup> See Hdt. 1.52; 2.135; 3.57; 8.27; 8.121-122; 9.81.

Thucydides' historical narrative is in many ways a response to Herodotus, particularly in the sense that he avoids a significant role for the gods.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of Thucydides' stance on religion, for our purposes he does mention oracles and divinatory practices several times throughout his history. However, as Marinatos has noted, many of the instances are often "neutral in tone, and it is evident that Thucydides reports these oracles without any intention of making a special point..."<sup>8</sup> Marinatos has argued convincingly that Thucydides' approach to oracles was much the same as Herodotus', that his attention is focused on their interpretation and ambiguous nature rather than their content.<sup>9</sup> Thucydides uses responses from oracles far less frequently than Herodotus, but despite the claims of scholars from last century, he did hold a fascination with oracles.<sup>10</sup> He references prophecies in his work a number of times, and all are from Delphi.<sup>11</sup> Even in his attempts to de-emphasise the role of the divine in his history, Thucydides cannot help but reference Delphi because of the immense impact the sanctuary had on the decisions of the Greek world. When he does mention oracles, he does it in a straightforward manner and so did not reject divination altogether.

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<sup>7</sup> Bowden (2005), p. 73. There has been much debate surrounding Thucydides' sentiments toward religion, divination and oracles. Dover, K.J. (1973) *Thucydides*. Oxford, p. 42 argues that he is an atheist, and Powell, A. (1979) 'Thucydides and Divination,' *BICS* 26, pp. 45-50 attempts to support Dover's thesis; Jordan, B. (1986) 'Religion in Thucydides,' *TAPhA* 116, pp. 119-147 claims there is insufficient internal evidence to determine Thucydides' personal beliefs; and Oost, S.I. (1975), 'Thucydides and the Irrational,' *CP* 70, p. 195 suggests he had a general belief in religion.

<sup>8</sup> Marinatos, N. (1981) 'Thucydides and Oracles,' *JHS* 101, p. 138. He cites the examples in 1.25.1-2; 1.28.2; 1.102.2; 1.118.3; 3.104.1; 3.92.5; 5.16.2; 5.32.1. Often, when he records an oracle, he does so with caution concerning the veracity of those he reports, see Thuc. 1.118.3.

<sup>9</sup> Marinatos (1981), p. 139. When Thucydides does cite an oracle, he does not dispute it, as seen in Thuc. 2.21.3; he does criticise *chresmologoi*, but he does not say anything about his attitude toward oracles, nor can it be inferred based on these sentiments. Even in one instance, he seems to believe oracles can come true, see Thuc. 5.26.3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Marinatos (1981), p. 138. Contra, see Bury, J.B. (1909) *The Ancient Greek Historians*. New York, p. 129; Gomperz, T. (1909) *Greek Thinkers*. Magnus, L. trans. London, p. 510.

<sup>11</sup> See Thuc. 1.125; 1.103.2; 1.118.3; 1.123.1; 1.126.4; 1.128.1; 1.134.4; 2.17.1; 2.54.4.

Thucydides' history picks up where Herodotus left off, and so too, Xenophon's *Hellenika* takes up the narrative where Thucydides' ends.<sup>12</sup> He mentions Delphi several times, but less than Thucydides. Xenophon is clearly concerned with the gods, as seen in his frequent mention of them, and he is concerned with traditional adherence to cult. He consulted Apollo at Delphi himself.<sup>13</sup> The historians of the Classical period could hardly write their histories without mentioning Apollo and the Pythia at Delphi.

Delphi also played a significant part in Athenian theatre. The dramatic poets mention Delphi frequently, as Bowden counted, "taking the plays together, we find thirty-four consultations of the oracle", twenty-one times the oracle is mentioned independently, but some of the stories overlap.<sup>14</sup> Both Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* describe the foundation of the oracle and relate the violent account of Apollo slaying the Python, thereby inheriting the oracle.<sup>15</sup> The role of Delphi in myth and theatre should not be taken as a historic reality, but rather as *topoi* that fit within the larger intended narrative of the author.<sup>16</sup> Still, Delphi featured largely in Attic pottery and plays throughout the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and the information regarding Delphi, which stems from the plays, is crucial for understanding the oracle. Euripides' *Ion* and *Andromache* give essential clues to the operation of the oracle and so cannot be simply disregarded as fiction, but must be examined within their literary context.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> His narrative starts c.411-362 BC; see Bowden (2005), p. 77.

<sup>13</sup> P&W R172.

<sup>14</sup> Bowden (2005), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Aesch. *Eum.* 1; Eur. *IT* 1234-1255.

<sup>16</sup> As mentioned above (p. 27), Morgan (1990) has demonstrated that archaeological evidence does not support the mythological tradition; she found no evidence of sanctuary activity before c. 800 BC.

<sup>17</sup> Eur. *Ion* 401; Eur. *Andr.* 1047; see also Johnson, J.A. (1982) *The Function of Delphic Responses in Greek Tragedy*. Doctoral Thesis: Ohio State University.

The philosophers of the Classical period were also heavily influenced by Delphi and held the oracle in high esteem. Plato's utopian *polis* supports the necessity of traditional religion: he declares that the laws prescribed by Delphi and other oracles should be honoured and maintained.<sup>18</sup> That Delphi should prescribe the religious role in society suggests that Plato placed a high value on the traditional role of the sanctuary. Since not everyone in society is equipped with the philosophical insights to understand the nature of reality, this lack of knowledge extends to the realm of theology.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, Plato deemed the oracle worthy of guiding the bulk of society in religious decisions.

Polybius, in the second century BC, is the first significant writer after the Classical period to mention Delphi. His *Histories* provide details concerning Greek history from 220 BC until Rome conquered Greece in 146 BC. Polybius' methodology is largely concerned with accuracy, citing many of his sources and applying techniques that are as close to modern methods as we get from the ancient world. In this way, his use of Delphi is different from Herodotus and Thucydides. Polybius avoids the use of "pathetic over-dramatizations," and even criticises Phylarchus for those very reasons.<sup>20</sup> It must be remembered that Polybius was writing a universal history, and so his limited space may not have allowed him to address Delphi in a significant way. Most of his references to Delphi are for relative dating purposes and brief mentions in passing. He does not use oracular stories of the sanctuary in a literary fashion or in a way that highlights the splendour that was Delphi in previous centuries. In fact, some of his mentions concern the sacking of

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<sup>18</sup> Pl. *Leg.* 5.738c-d and again in *Rep.* 4.427b.

<sup>19</sup> Morgan, M.L. (1992) 'Plato and Greek Religion,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Kraut, R. ed. Cambridge, p. 243.

<sup>20</sup> Momigliano, A. (1978) 'Greek Historiography,' *History and Theory* 17, p. 8.

the temple by the Gauls in 279 BC rather than stories of the Pythia's responses and their influence on the whole of Greece.<sup>21</sup>

Diodorus also wrote a universal history. As such, his work inevitably draws on a number of different sources and also gives cause to mention Delphi in a number of instances. Many occur in the context of his description of Greek myths, such as Heracles' journey to the sanctuary.<sup>22</sup> At other times Diodorus simply mentions that an oracle was received from Apollo, apparently taking for granted that it was from Delphi.<sup>23</sup> Most importantly, Diodorus is our best source concerning the Third Sacred War. Indeed, his account of this war takes up a considerable amount of his narrative, reflecting the significance of the episode. In this way, Delphi has a central focus within the theme of Greek and Macedonian relations. He is also one of the sources for a chasm at Delphi.<sup>24</sup>

Cicero mentions the state of Delphi in the first century BC and his treatise, *De Divinatione*, reveals significant details and contrasting opinions of divination during this time. His use of dialogue makes solid conclusions from his work speculative, but he remains an essential source, particularly for the decline of Delphi. His account will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 1.

Strabo's *Geography* was written under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius.<sup>25</sup> He laboured over a seventeen Book geographical encyclopaedia of

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<sup>21</sup> Polyb. 2.20; 2.35; 9.35. The invasion of the Gauls at Delphi is treated in Chapter 1 (pp. 92-94).

<sup>22</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.10.6. Also, Telephus' journey to Delphi is recorded (4.33.5) and the role of Delphi in the legend of the *Seven Against Thebes* (4.66.5).

<sup>23</sup> Diod. Sic. 4.42.3.

<sup>24</sup> Both the Sacred Wars and the Chasm are addressed in the appendices.

<sup>25</sup> Pretzler, M. (2005) 'Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in Context vs. Greece in Depth,' in *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of a Kolossourgia*. Dueck, D., Lindsay, H. and Pothecaray, S. eds. Cambridge, p. 144; Dueck, D. (1999) 'The Date and Method of Composition of Strabo's *Geography*,' *Hermes* 127, p. 478. She reckons it was written between AD 18-24. Lindsay, H. (1997) 'Syme's *Anatolica* and the Date of Strabo's *Geography*,' *Klio* 79: 484-507 summarises many of the modern debates regarding the date of Strabo's composition; he concludes that there are many layers of Strabo's work, the bulk written around 2 BC, revised around AD 18-19 and a final redaction around AD 23.

Greece, and devotes a relatively long section to Delphi.<sup>26</sup> It has been argued that Strabo never visited the site, and from some of the passages it does seem that his knowledge is second-hand.<sup>27</sup> As a Greek born in Asia Minor under Roman rule, Strabo is writing with certain biases which would have influenced his work. During his time, writers often portrayed the heyday of Greece *before* conquerors such as Alexander the Great or Rome.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, Strabo often seems to be comparing his present day Greece with that of Homer, particularly in Books VIII and IX, where much of Delphi is described.<sup>29</sup> While he is a valuable source, being one of the few authors to focus on Delphi in the first century AD, Strabo's narrative must be used, but approached with caution as he did not necessarily give a first-hand account.

Pliny the Elder published the *Historia Naturalis* in c. 77-79 AD. Delphi is mentioned several times throughout the work. He notes the prophetic chasm and that vapours emitted from Delphi, as well as several oracles issued by Apollo, some declaring certain men to be the most happy.<sup>30</sup> He also describes some of the dedications at the sanctuary, and the Pythia's role in creating verse.<sup>31</sup> Although Delphi features throughout his work, it is by no means a focus. Rather, he mentions the site or the oracle in connection with a larger picture of Roman history and only minimally addresses Delphi's role in it. Pliny has cause to mention Delphi only when it coincides with specific sections of his work, such as attributes of inventions

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<sup>26</sup> Strabo 9.3 and following.

<sup>27</sup> Weller, C.H. (1901) 'The Extent of Strabo's Travel in Greece,' *CPh* 1, pp. 345-346. More recently, Pretzler (2005), p. 147 notes that Strabo does not seem to have travelled extensively in the region, and only Corinth gives any hint of autopsy.

<sup>28</sup> Alcock, S. (1993) *Graecia Capta: The Landscape of Roman Greece*. Cambridge, pp. 24-32 argues that writers of this period were influenced by the dichotomy of reality and expectation, leading one to focus on the past and memory rather than the current state of affairs.

<sup>29</sup> Pretzler (2005), p. 150.

<sup>30</sup> For the chasm see Plin. *HN*. 2.95; for oracles declaring happiness see Plin. *HN*. 7.47.

<sup>31</sup> For dedications see Plin. *HN*. 3.20; for Pythia and verse see Plin. *HN*. 7.57.

or chasms in the earth. Pliny is, however, a key source for magical spells and the perception of the craft in general.

Our best evidence for Delphi, and the decline of the sanctuary in particular, comes from Plutarch. Not only was he a priest at Delphi, allowing him continued first-hand information, but he was also a philosopher, biographer and prolific writer who wrote several essays, three of which concern Delphi. These are dubbed the ‘Pythian Dialogues’.<sup>32</sup> As the only ancient author to devote an entire work to the decline of Delphi specifically, and as a first-hand source for the state of the oracle during the late first and early second centuries AD, I shall treat Plutarch’s writings at considerable length in Chapter 2.

Pausanias is also a major source regarding Delphi, as he visited the sanctuary during the second century AD while writing his *Periegesis*. Along with several stories regarding Delphi, he also gives the reader a mental map of Delphi, by taking them on a tour through the Sacred Way, and pointing out many dedications and offerings. However, some of Pausanias’ details do not fit in with the historical and archaeological account, casting suspicion on a ‘revival’ of the oracle during this time.<sup>33</sup> Through his first-hand account, he seems to reveal a *lack* of decline at this time. However, Pausanias’ account does seem to fit in with the general climate in Greece in his time, and demonstrates how the Romans were viewed by the author. This issue will be dealt with at length in Chapter 2.

The second century AD witnessed several literary attacks on Delphi.

Oenomaus was a cynic philosopher who wrote an attack on oracles, called *Detectio*

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<sup>32</sup> *De defectu oraculorum, De E apud Delphos, De Pythiae oraculis*. (On the Obsolescence of Oracles, The ‘E’ at Delphi and The Oracles at Delphi no longer given In Verse).

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 1 (p. 111, n. 15) for modern assertions of a second century Delphic revival.

*Praestigiatorum*, as quoted by Eusebius.<sup>34</sup> Although the dates of his writings are debated, it is likely that he wrote during the reign of Hadrian.<sup>35</sup> He maintains that oracles are not run by the gods or demons, but are rather deceits and tricks made by human frauds.<sup>36</sup> His motivation for the work seems to be that he himself was deceived by the oracle at Claros.<sup>37</sup> He criticises the ambiguity of the oracles, and claims that the vague nature of the responses are not to cloud the oracle in mystery, but rather because the oracle did not know the future; he cites the Test of Croesus as an example.<sup>38</sup> The ambiguity of the oracle, he claims, stems from the fact that the prophets knew nothing. His criticism also lies in the debility, lack of clarity and the evil nature of oracles.<sup>39</sup> His writings survive as fragments in Eusebius, who held the same sentiments against the oracles and divination in general. Although it is uncertain if Oenomaus mentioned Delphi specifically, his criticism of Claros, *Detectio Praestigiatorum*, can be viewed as an attack on oracles generally, which would include Delphi. These attacks demonstrate that many oracles were still in operation, but did not hold the same universal reverence as they once did.

A more positive view of Delphi, and oracles in general, is found in Porphyry (AD 234–c. 305), a late second-century Neoplatonist philosopher. The *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda* was his compilation of many oracles which seemed to be circulated in his own day.<sup>40</sup> Porphyry does not always explicitly mention from which oracular shrine the oracle emanated, nor can we decipher how he interpreted his material from the fragments of his work which remain. The text as

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<sup>34</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.18-19.

<sup>35</sup> Dudley, D.R. (1937) *History of Cynicism*. London, p. 162.

<sup>36</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.22.

<sup>37</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.22.

<sup>38</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.20.

<sup>39</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.19.4; 5.21.6; 5.22.7; 5.26.4.

<sup>40</sup> Busine (2005), p. 328.

a whole is lost, surviving not only in the extant works of St. Augustine and Eusebius, but also playing a key part in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, by way of his *Epistola ad Anebonem*. Iamblichus' treatise seems to be an attempt to rationalise, or at least justify, inspired oracles of the gods.<sup>41</sup> Porphyry, however, was more concerned with the philosophical aspect than the oracular, and his subject was dealt with in a philosophic nature, rather than a critique of the practice. Not only did Porphyry inform us about many oracles, he also gives valuable information regarding theurgic ideas, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Iamblichus (c. 245–c. 325) was a contemporary of Porphyry and the first Neoplatonic philosopher to give definite details regarding theurgy. His book *De Mysteriis* has been variously regarded by modern scholars, many viewing Iamblichus negatively.<sup>42</sup> More recently, however, Iamblichus' treatise has been shown to be an insightful explanation of Neoplatonism, its relationship to divine revelation and an explanation of rites, rituals and principles of theurgy.<sup>43</sup> Iamblichus' work gives essential evidence regarding the practice of theurgy and demonstrates the different ideas held by various philosophers of the time. Details of his beliefs will be discussed in Chapter 5.

## Christian Sources

Christian sources certainly cite the decline of oracles and, indeed, much of our information about Delphi in the second, third and fourth centuries AD comes

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<sup>41</sup> Athanassiadi, P. (1993) 'Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus,' *JRS* 83, p. 117; Busine (2005), p. 316.

<sup>42</sup> Dodds (1951), p. 287 called it 'a manifesto of irrationalism' while Des Places (1996), p. 12 considered it a demonstration of 'paganism' in decline.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Clark, E.C. (2001) *Iamblichus' De Mysteriis: A Manifesto of the Miraculous*. Burlington, VT; Addey (2007), (2007b), (2010), (2012); and Finamore, J.F. (1985) *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*. Chico, CA.

from these authors. They must to be treated with caution, as their motive is to denounce Greek religion while upholding Christianity, but they are still vital to an assessment of Delphi during this time. Clement of Alexandria, around 200 AD, notes the silence of the Castalian Spring, the extinction of the oracle of Ammon at Siwah, Claros and other oracles.<sup>44</sup> Chapter 2 of his *Protrepticus* is directly aimed at refuting Greek religion, particularly Mystery cults and oracles. His assertion of the silence of oracles seems to be in direct contrast to the song and voice of God highlighted in Chapter 1.<sup>45</sup> It is clear that Clement's motive is to showcase oracles as an extinct aspect of a false religion, lending weight to his larger argument of the superiority of Christianity.

This can be seen by Clement's student, Origen, who seems to suggest that the Pythia is still prophesying. In all references to the Pythia, he describes her actions in the present tense.<sup>46</sup> He goes on to assert that these prophecies do not come from certain gods, but from evil demons, which appears to be the standard Christian view. It is important to note that Christian writers, and others, testify to the oracle's existence as well as its extinction. It was not simply Christian doctrine that confirms the decline of oracles, as can be seen from Plutarch, and indeed some of them give evidence for its continued use through the Roman period.

The most valuable Christian sources concerning Delphi are Lactantius (c. AD 250-325) and Eusebius (c. AD 263-339). They record several oracles within

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<sup>44</sup> Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus*, 2.11.1.

<sup>45</sup> Herrero de Jauregui, M. (2008) 'The *Protrepticus* of Clement of Alexandria: A Commentary,' Bologna, p. 128.

<sup>46</sup> Origen *Contra Celsum*, 7.3. Chadwick, H. trans. (Cambridge: 1965), p. 396. For example, "Indeed, of the Pythian priestess - the oracle that seems to be more distinguished than the others - it is related that while the prophetess of Apollo is sitting at the mouth of the Castalian cave, she receives a spirit through her womb," (Ἰστόρηται τοίνυν περὶ τῆς Πυθίας ὅπερ δοκεῖ τῶν ἄλλων μαντείων λαμπρότερον τυγχάνειν, ὅτι περικαθεζομένη τὸ τῆς Κασταλίας στόμιον ἢ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος προφήτις δέχεται πνεῦμα διὰ τῶν γυναικείων κόλπων).

their work, citing entire passages of Greek authors, some of which only exist through these fragments. Lactantius records many of our extant ‘theological’ oracles in his work *Divinae Institutiones*.<sup>47</sup> This Latin work is considered one of the great early Christian texts, and seems to have been written as a response to other writers, perhaps even Porphyry (Lactantius composed it shortly after his death). The historical veracity of his accounts will be addressed in detail in Chapter 3.

Eusebius of Caesarea was a Christian Bishop and historian. He wrote several works and particularly valuable for a study of Delphi is the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, which upheld Christianity and attacked traditional religion in the aftermath of the Christian persecutions. By the time Eusebius wrote his treatise, sometime during AD 312-324, the decline of oracles is quite apparent while traditional cult remains the state-sanctioned religion.<sup>48</sup> The purpose of his writings is to popularise Christianity and prove its superiority by educating Christians in the supremacy of their faith and the error of polytheism. To do this, he quotes Christian and non-Christian sources and focuses particularly on sacrifice and divination from oracles. This suggests either it is Eusebius’ easiest target or perhaps his biggest opponent.

Following Oenomaus’ logic, he claims that even the oracles which are free from ambiguity “have been uttered not according to foreknowledge of the future but by mere conjecture, and thousands of these, or rather almost all, were often convicted of having failed in their prediction.”<sup>49</sup> Additionally, he equates the prophecies with evil demons, quoting from Plutarch and describing the evil ways in which pleas for help against

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<sup>47</sup> For an analysis of Lactantius’ use of these oracles within his literary agenda see Chadwick, H. (1984) ‘Oracles of the End in the Conflict of Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century,’ in *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière: Antiquité païenne et Chrétienne*. Lucchesi, E. and Saffrey, H.D. eds. Geneva, pp. 125-129.

<sup>48</sup> Busine (2005), p. 322.

<sup>49</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.2, “οὐ κατὰ πρόγνωσιν τοῦ μέλλοντος, κατὰ δέ τινα στοχασμὸν ἐξενηγεμένα, τούτων μυρία, μᾶλλον δὲ τὰ πάντα σχεδόν, ἤλω πολλάκις τῆς προρρήσεως ἀποπεπτωκότα.”

plague and famine were dealt.<sup>50</sup> A large portion of his attack is aimed at oracular support of, and influence on, the persecution of Christians.<sup>51</sup> It is strange that Eusebius contradicts himself in his work on oracles: at one point he claims that by his day the oracles were completely silenced, declaring that Delphi and Claros are dead, yet later in his work that those two very oracles, along with Didyma, are the only ones which have survived.<sup>52</sup> This inconsistency, perhaps, can be explained through reference to a metaphorical death. As Athanassiadi has noted, despite these inconsistencies, “the overwhelming impression left by this text [*Praeparatio Evangelica*] is that divination, cunningly identified with the great oracular sites, was a godless discipline on the way to extinction.”<sup>53</sup>

The use of these Christian authors must be approached with caution. It is well-recognised that writers of this period were heavily influenced by their religious alignments. Bias permeated their works, perhaps to such a degree that certain arguments were created to defeat their enemy, in word rather than deed. However, with Lactantius and Eusebius we are on relatively firm ground to use them as sources for oracular divination. They record entire sections of traditional Greek works to demonstrate their (false) opinions to their Christian readers; those that are extant, such as Plutarch, are proven to be recorded faithfully, and so their value as a source is reinforced by their method of accurately including entire sections of works. The inclusion of this material is often evidence of an intellectual debate, rather than a reality.

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<sup>50</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.1. Plutarch’s essay which includes an examination of the role of *daemones* is analysed in Chapter 2, (pp. 117-129).

<sup>51</sup> Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.2.11. This can be seen in a particular oracle from Didyma, see Fontenrose (1988), response 33.

<sup>52</sup> For silent oracles see Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.17.6-9; 4.2.3; 5.1.2-3; for Claros and Didyma as extinct see Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.28; and for the contradiction see Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 5.16, quoting Porphyry, (below, p. 202).

<sup>53</sup> Athanassiadi (1993), p. 118.

The authors mentioned here help to reveal the nature of Delphi's 'decline', both in regards to the sanctuary itself as well as the declining trend of traditional Greek religion in general. This thesis will use these sources, supplemented by archaeological evidence, to situate Delphi's decline within political, religious, and psychological movements of the time.