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LUMINA

Rivista di Linguistica storica e di Letteratura comparata



*... perché i re granchi
D'oppugnar l'abbici non fur mai stanchi.*

Giacomo Leopardi

La rivista si propone di concretizzare, in un numero annuale, ricerche che spaziano nell'ambito della Linguistica storica e della Letteratura comparata senza preclusioni geografiche e temporali, secondo una rigorosa impostazione di analisi testuale e semantica svolta su testi in lingua originale. Essa intende proseguire il magistero e l'attività di studio di Enrica Salvaneschi, classicista e titolare della cattedra di Letterature comparate dell'Università degli Studi di Genova. L'idea di unire linguistica e letteratura, classicità e modernità, va incontro sia a esigenze di tipo scientifico (interdisciplinarietà) sia alla necessità di ricucire uno strappo immotivato tra le varie materie.

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*Alla Biblioteca di Glottologia
dell'Università di Genova*

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Ut sacra faciamus. Inferenze e interferenze del sacro tra linguistica, filosofia, letteratura e arti

Nel libro decimo della *Città di Dio*, da cui è tratta la citazione presente nel titolo,¹ Agostino affronta l'importanza della nozione di sacro nello sviluppo del pensiero e delle azioni nel contesto storico e sociale. Il sacro, nelle sue variegate manifestazioni sotto forma di *religio*, di *pietas* o di *λατρεία*, e a prescindere dalla sua declinazione pagana o cristiana, viene considerato sia come un fondamentale bisogno umano sia quale modalità di pensiero astratto.

L'impostazione agostiniana è ancora valida. La sacralità in quanto tale definisce «ciò che è connesso all'esperienza di una realtà totalmente diversa, rispetto alla quale l'uomo si sente radicalmente inferiore, subendone l'azione e restandone atterrito e insieme affascinato».² Identifica quindi lo scarto tra ciò che si afferra razionalmente e ciò che si percepisce essere il fondo e il motore della ricerca, esperienziale o intellettuale che sia. Studiare il sacro significa, pertanto, andare alla radice di quell'impulso che Dante, con versi celeberrimi, fa descrivere a Ulisse nel XXVI dell'*Inferno* e che ha come obiettivo il *sequir virtute e canoscenza* (v. 120); significa superare l'ostacolo della limitata e limitante esistenza individuale per mettersi in relazione con una parte «totalmente diversa» perché sottratta alla *routine* della quotidianità, e per questo motivo potenzialmente più affascinante e più atterrente, che sta oltre — per citare un soggetto illustre che aveva certamente senso del sacro pur essendo del tutto secolarizzato — *le trappole, gli scorni di chi crede / che la realtà sia quella che si vede*.³

La ricerca del sacro è, insomma, una ricerca del sublime, che, lungi dal risolversi solo in senso tradizionalmente religioso o confessionale, si esplica nella riproposizione regolare o costante, nella letteratura e

¹ *De civitate Dei* X, 1.

² Così si esprime il *Vocabolario della lingua italiana Treccani*, s.v. «sacro».

³ Eugenio Montale, *Ho sceso, dandoti il braccio*, vv. 6-7.

nella arti, di aspetti che al sacro afferiscono direttamente (con temi e argomenti tratti da un contesto religioso o parareligioso) o indirettamente (mutuando del sacro un linguaggio e uno schema strutturale del pensiero). Il presente volume intende sviluppare lo studio delle varie declinazioni del sacro in senso olistico e comparatistico, tra più culture e più lingue, mettendo in evidenza come la semantica del sacro e del sacrificio sia uscita dall'ambito strettamente religioso e abbia influenzato le modalità di espressione della letteratura e della filosofia.

Come di consueto, la falcata cultural-temporale dei contributi ospitati è amplissima: si va dall'archeologia preistorica agli studi indoeuropei, dalla religione ebraica al romanzo ebraico statunitense degli anni Settanta del Novecento, passando per il mazdeismo, la filosofia platonica e la letteratura del Seicento. Ogni contributo aggiunge un tassello letterario e linguistico alla riflessione sul tema proposto, con "inferenze" e "interferenze" che, per la vastità e pregnanza delle prospettive indicate, sono state individuate e sviluppate con la dovuta ampiezza e varietà di strumenti critici.

Dati gli attuali tempi oscuri, resi ancor più bui dalla condizione penosa in cui ci si è venuti a trovare in questo *horribilis* 2020 che sta volgendo al termine, desideriamo dedicare il presente volume a un'istituzione, anziché a una persona. Si tratta della Biblioteca dell'ex Istituto (oggi Sezione) di Glottologia dell'Università di Genova, luogo di cultura e di vivacità umana e intellettuale, che tanto ha dato in termini di studiosi e ricercatori di valore, nonché repository di una rilevantissima collezione libraria (circa 40.000 volumi) e dunque centro di sapere e di istruzione. È anche il luogo ove, peraltro, ci siamo formati e in cui «Lumina» è nata e si è radicata. Il nostro è un auspicio che essa, insieme con istituzioni simili che sono tra le prime a soffrire in tempi di crisi, di tagli, di chiusure, di trasferimenti e di riduzioni, possa continuare a esistere così come è stato finora e a svolgere il suo ruolo di faro e di guida per molto tempo a venire.

Rosa RONZITTI
Simone TURCO

Genova, 1° dicembre MMXX

The Ditch: Death and the Sun within the Henge. Musing about the Archaeology of Stonehenge, the Sacred and the “Unanswered Question”

Alessandro MUSSINI*

*To Ester Salvaneschi in memoriam
To Patrizia Braggion, to Swanage’s Harrow House and to Mr. Lawrie Sandford*

ἦ μὴν ἔτ’ ἐμοῦ καίπερ κρατεραῖς
ἐν γυιοπέδαις αἰκίζομένου
χρεῖαν ἔξει μακάρων πρύτανις,
δεῖξαι τὸ νέον βούλευμ’, ὕφ’ ὄτου
σκῆπτρον τιμᾶς τ’ ἀποσυλᾶται.

«Although I am outraged and held in strong chains that oppress my body, the President of the Blessed Gods will need me still to reveal the new plan by which he will be deprived of his scepter and of his prerogatives». AESCH. *Prom.*, vss. 167-171 (trans. ours).

«“Justice” was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess. And the d’Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing»¹.

«Nun haben aber die Sirenen eine noch schrecklichere Waffe als den Gesang, nämlich ihr Schweigen»².

«Die Vergegenwärtigung des Problems des Werdens des Menschen in Vorge-

* Liceo Classico Andrea D’Oria – Genova.

Proofread by Prof. Roger Tilley (www.worldenglish.it). Italian editions of some reference works have been used whenever it was not possible to find the original or English-language version.

¹ Thomas HARDY, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 384.

² Franz KAFKA, *Das Schweigen der Sirenen*, in *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985, p. 305.

schichte und Geschichte bedeutet zugleich eine Vergegenwärtigung der Frage nach dem Wesen des Menschseins»³.

«Dingend verweilt das Ding die einigen Vier, Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen, in der Einfalt ihres aus sich her einigen Gevierts»⁴.

«Una piana in mezzo a colline, fatta di prati e alberi a quinte successive e attraversate da larghe radure, nella mattina di settembre, quando un po' di foschia le spicca da terra, t'interessa per l'evidente carattere di luogo sacro che dovette assumere in passato»⁵.

«Death is engraved on the landscape»⁶.

«The difficulty that each of us faces in seeking to comprehend death is neatly expressed by Wittgenstein [...]. This gives material presence to the enigma that humans have faced since the dawn of measured time and before 'the unanswered question' as the American composer Charles Ives expressed it in 1906. [...] It comes with the emergence of that self-awareness that is often taken as a defining quality of our own species, *Homo sapiens*»⁷.

We are writing the present article during the summer of 2020 and, despite the global crisis, on 22 June Prof. Vincent Gaffney and his staff discovered another important new Neolithic circle around Durrington Walls and Woodhenge. It is a large circle passing through Larkhill Causewayed Enclosure (around 3750-3650 B.C.). At first, radiocarbon dating of wood and bones reveals a sacred area of the Late Neolithic. The circle has a 2 km diameter and corresponds to a 3.1 km² area. Gaffney has found large pits having a diameter of ten metres and a depth of five metres. They are dated around 4500 B.C. We do not know whether such pits were used to collect water or for other purposes. Besides, we are waiting for Mike Parker Pearson's new publications

³ Karl JASPERS, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, ed. by Kurt SALAMUN, in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. I/10, Basel: Schwabe, 2017, p. 45.

⁴ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Das Ding*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. VII: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. by Friedrich-Wilhelm VON HERMANN, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000, p. 179.

⁵ Cesare PAVESE, *Feria d'agosto. Del mito del simbolo e d'altro*, Milano: Mondadori, 1977 (1947¹), p.187.

⁶ Mike PARKER PEARSON, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*, The Mill, Brinscombe Port: The History Press, 2010, p. 193.

⁷ Colin RENFREW, 'The Unanswered Question': *Investigating Early Conceptualisation of Death*, in Colin RENFREW – Michael J. BOYD – Iain MORLEY, *Death Rituals, Social Order and the Archaeology of the Immortality in the Ancient World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 1.

about Durrington Walls and Stonehenge. They are announced for 2021 and for 2022 at Oxbow Books. Research is happily going on and it is good of England that the socio-political hysteria did not stop archaeologists so that we will enjoy a rich amount of new data in the next two years. They confirm that the site of Stonehenge is the tip of the iceberg of a very complex area of civilization. The charm of the subject is that any data acquired can always be denied by updates. We would investigate it joining concrete scientific and technical results with some archetypal patterns. Bernhard Maier makes a distinction between the mere scientific research and the reception, i.e. the making of the myth of Stonehenge in British literary and figurative tradition⁸. We will not speak about Druids or Merlin⁹, but we will examine short Greek texts which will perhaps seem not to be directly connected to Stonehenge, but which may help us, through anthropological clues, in understanding a prehistoric site ‘written’ in a silent language. The ‘pure’ architectural art of Stonehenge is a challenge for archaeological *hybris* and we dare insinuate that Achilles and Odysseus are the inventors of the archaeology before Herodotus and Thucydides. According to Ben Okri, archaeology is not a dead science: it is precisely a living science because it tries to extrapolate from the dark something of the rich humanity of the past. Ben Okri thinks that Yorick’s scene in *Hamlet* is a supreme manifestation of archaeology: for a moment we do not see the skull, but we see the jester and he comes alive in our minds, he is recollected in his true life by our resurrective remembrance¹⁰. Perhaps archaeology is both a desire for *anamnesis* and for *apokatastasis*. According to Giorgio Agamben, archaeology is the striving for going back to the possible in the past as a mirage of our present in order to ‘destroy’ layers of false tradition which keep origins away from us and from our present¹¹. Indeed, archaeology might be a kind of *nostos* as well. Shanks and

⁸ Bernhard MAIER, *Stonehenge. Archäologie. Geschichte. Mythos*, München: C.H. Beck, 2018, pp. 68-98.

⁹ This is not our task, though it is a fascinating part of the reception. About Druids, Merlin, Geoffrey of Monmouth and so on, see: Christopher CHIPPINDALE, *Stonehenge Complete*, London: Thames&Hudson, 2012.

¹⁰ Ben OKRI, *The Muse of Archeology*, in Colin RENFREW– Michel J. BOYD – Iain MORLEY, *Death Rituals, Social Order and the Archaeology of Immortality in the Ancient World*, cit., pp. 437-438.

¹¹ Giorgio AGAMBEN, *Signatura rerum. Sul metodo*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2019 (2008¹), pp. 82-95; 107-111. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qkvlp4hUpL4&t=3568s>.

Tilley¹² consider ‘almost nostalgic’ Ian Hodder’s references to the value of ‘traditional archaeologies’; but we could not imagine ‘archaeologies’ – in so far as they are expressions of our present – deprived of tradition, deprived of an unsatisfied nostalgia of the past and of an urgent interest in the singing of the Muses or of the Sirens. Stonehenge, of course, is an inescapable Muse. The site is a thing of beauty and is a manifestation of the human spirit and perhaps of the figurative Sublime. But for Hardy’s Tess Stonehenge was the Siren of an ineluctable death. Kant thinks that the Sublime does not concern *Kunstprodukten* and he is interested only in the natural Sublime, because it has to be deprived of signs of human aim. Kant wants us not to be too close or too far from pyramids. If we are too far, we can get only a generic representation («die Steine derselben übereinander»). If we are too close, our comprehension is incomplete and we are overwhelmed by our subjective perception of the stones. Only if we are at the right distance, can we satisfy the conditions of an aesthetic judgement¹³. It is an arduous task, but worthy of endless research. Perhaps we need Kant to decipher Stonehenge.

Panofsky’s concept of *Kunstwollen* does not coincide with the single artist’s will. *Kunstwollen* is a ‘metaempiric’ idea which is immanent in the artistic phenomena. Panofsky determines universal Neokantian aesthetical categories which dwell in a complementary opposition. The *plenum* involves sensory perception and corresponds to the basic intuition of time. The *form*, on the contrary, relies on space. *Plenum* and *form* are two faces of the same aesthetical experience. *Plenum* corresponds to ‘optical’ values, while *form* to ‘aptical’ (from ἅπτομαι, ‘to touch’) values. Composition, compenetration and fusion are faced with the plastic and architectural values of contiguity¹⁴. We wonder whether Panofsky’s categories are fit to Stonehenge’s figurative structure or not. So far, we do not know about pictorial subjects. The builders built the henge merely relying on ‘aptical’ values and on a spatial experience of the volumes and of the form; but even the transitory day light is, in its alternations, a pictorial element. At first, we perceive only surface values,

¹² Michael SHANKS – Christopher TILLEY, *Social Theory and Archaeology*, Maldon–Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987, p. 193.

¹³ Immanuel KANT, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Werkausgabe*, Vol. X, ed. by Wilhelm WEISCHEDL, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1957, pp. 172-175.

¹⁴ Erwin PANOFSKY, *La prospettiva come “forma simbolica” e altri scritti*, a cura di Guido D. NERI e Marisa DALAI, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1983, pp. 170-180.

contiguity, abstraction, just as if we were in front of a modern art abstract masterpiece. Stonehenge is not anthropomorphic or zoomorphic as the standing stones of Göbekli Tepe¹⁵: at Göbekli Tepe stones want to turn into a human or into an animal form, yielding themselves to a kind of *mimesis* of natural beings. What kind of *mimesis* was conceived by the builders of Stonehenge? Is it a kind of abstract and symbolic art? Is it perhaps a language written in the landscape? Herodotus discovered *otherness* in cultures in order to save their memory. We are searching for Stonehenge's *Weltanschauung* or *Weltbild*. Cultures are *Bewegung* and «man selbst ist ein Ausschnitt aus der Möglichen und alle Änderung wird nur den Kreislauf schon gewesener Gestalten wiederholen»¹⁶.

Ian Hodder thinks that society and things are co-entangled and inter-dependent. We are supposed to investigate not only the object itself, but we need to learn what it is and what it is for. Things are not inert, things are energy. They are fluid, but can endure longer than our mortal experience. Hodder makes the clear example of the watch. About my watch, I can find many sorts of connections explaining its spatial horizon (where the leather strap was produced, whence the glass cover comes et cetera). But there are also many temporal connections. My watch reflects time technologically understood according to its conceptual development in our Western tradition. The yearly calendar was fixed by Julius Caesar and my watch 'connects' me with Julius Caesar – if we can say so... This is only a watch, of course, but contains unlimited information. What could we say about Stonehenge's sublime and primeval *horologium*? Hodder thinks that archaeology looks at the relationships between humans and things from the point of view of things¹⁷; and he cites Heidegger's essay about *das Ding*¹⁸, to explain that *a thing is a bundle of connections*. Our *thing* binds together time, space, the Sky, the Sun, the Moon, the Earth, the Mortals, the Immortals and Death encircled by a Ditch within a Henge.

¹⁵ Klaus SCHMIDT, *Sie bauten die ersten Tempel. Das rätselhafte Heiligtum am Göbekli Tepe*, München: C.H. Beck, 2016, pp. 110, 118, 123, 134 et cetera. Many thanks to Prof. Patrizia Avanzini for reporting about this important book.

¹⁶ Karl JASPERS, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Berlin–Heidelberg–New York: Springer, 1990, p. 175.

¹⁷ Ian HODDER, *Entangled. An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*, Malden–Chichester–Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, pp.1-14.

¹⁸ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Das Ding*, cit., pp. 167-184.

To decipher Stonehenge we need not only space and time but also the Sacred as a transcendental category of religious experience¹⁹. In the religious dimension space is not geometric and homogeneous and shows level fractures. Stonehenge could be the *omphalos*, the turning point of the *kosmos*. Something which does not concern our profane space shows itself in an ‘apodictic’ way. Orientation and the same act of building are sacred activities placed in a ritual frame which dates back millennia (‘orientation’ is a splendid term for Stonehenge). The builders built what we call *kosmos* in order to separate it from Chaos and they wanted to repeat the cosmogony. There is relatively no surprise about Durrington Walls and about the people who took care of the monuments, since taking care is a regenerating process. The axis of Stonehenge is the *axis mundi* nourished by the light of the Sun. The north-east – south-west direction is the Hinge through which the *axis mundi* is established. «A l’image de l’Univers qui se développe à partir d’un Centre et s’étend vers les quatre points cardinaux, le village se constitue à partir d’un croisement»²⁰. Stonehenge’s Ditch is the boundary of the sacred space inwards. The sites of the Salisbury Plain, in their whole complex, are inter-related to each other and could be the link of the living with the dead who are enlivened with sunlight. The North, the South, the East and the West are the inner core and the magical landmarks of the whole sense of a religious experience:

Und es gibt vielleicht keine so “primitive” Kosmologie, in der nicht in irgendeiner Weise der Gegensatz der vier Hauptrichtungen des Himmels als der Kardinalpunkt der Weltauffassung und Welterklärung hervortritt.²¹

Cardo and *decumanus* are not only Latin religious concepts, but could be considered as universal coordinates of religious primeval thought. A *thing* which marks space implies a rite of passage and every orientation in space is orientation in time as well. According to Cassirer, *temenos*, *templum* and *tempus* are sacred coordinates related to the sky and to the cycle of light. For this kind of sacred time there is no chronol-

¹⁹ Rudolf OTTO, *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, München: C.H. Beck, 2014 (1936¹), pp. 137-142; 165-171.

²⁰ Mircea ELIADE, *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris: Gallimard, 1987, p. 45.

²¹ Ernst CASSIRER, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Zweiter Teil. Das mythische Denken*, in *Gesammelte Werke. Hamburger Ausgabe*, Vol. XII, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2002, p. 115.

ogy. The *temenos* suspends a magical ‘Now’ which is a turning point rich of the past and pregnant of the future in a circular concentric way settled in the cosmic order²².

According to Rudolf Otto and to Ernst Cassirer, Time, Space and the Sacred are categories *a priori* and developed over Western classical tradition. We need cardinal points as well. What else can we do? This is the *humus* from which we grew. We cannot translate the Japanese word-ideogram *Ran* into English, but that word-ideogram (barely translated: ‘surprise attack’) was used by Kurosawa Akira in the Japanese version of *King Lear*. Could Stonehenge be a kind of ideogram? Could we translate it? Jan Assmann recently proposed a double definition of time, but we are in front of a translation in German language of concepts deriving from ancient Egyptian language. Egyptian language does not distinguish between the becoming and the everlasting eternity or between the transient world and the dimension of the Divine, as we know them starting from Plato in our philosophical tradition. Besides, in Egyptian thought there is no fight of the *kosmos* against Chaos (except the battle of the Sun against Apophi) and the whole *kosmos* unfolds within a god who is not transcendent. Assmann translates *Neheh* and *Djet* with *Sternzeit* and *Steinzeit*: the time of the stars and the time of the stones²³. Could we use these concepts in a universal sense? Could Sarsens and Bluestones be intended as a sort of a dry, concrete and stable *Steinzeit* in contrast with the idea of the *Sternzeit* as a natural circle measuring the solstices? Did the builders believe in the everlasting return of the equal? It is a mystery, of course. Though, they were not always the same either; they were placed in their anthropological evolution, but the site of Stonehenge reveals also a main sense of unity through generations.

Károlyi Kerényi thinks that mystery is essentially different from the search of an explanation. Mystery cannot be resolved in terms of *ratio*, but it dwells in the same reality which concerns what may be rationally explained. Mystery needs explanation so that we can understand the context and the source whence the enigma sprang up²⁴. Kerényi,

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 117.

²³ Jan ASSMANN, *Steinzeit und Sternzeit. Altägyptische Zeitkonzepte*, München: Wilhelm Fink, 2011, pp. 72-77.

²⁴ Károlyi KERÉNYI, *Nel labirinto*, a cura di Corrado BOLOGNA, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990, pp. 31-32.

wondering about the idea of the labyrinth, imagines a primeval dance in which people might have been imitating the Sun in the spiral of its movements. After summer solstice, the Sun describes always decreasing semicircles; on the contrary, after winter solstice, the Sun draws always wider semicircles. If we joined such semicircles with those which cannot be seen during the night, the result might be a double circular spiral²⁵. If Kerényi's theory about the heliolatric dance were true, we would say that Stonehenge may have been a concrete objectification of that dance and of those rites that were connected with solar cycles in the way of an archetypal maze.

Walter Friedrich Otto meditates about a mythical self-revelation of the Divine developing in three steps. The first step is the wonder of man before the sky, the sun and the stars as a primeval feeling. The second step corresponds to the rhythmus and to the harmony expressed by human artefacts, like a stone, a pillar, a temple or a painting. The third step concerns only the specific experience of the Greek man (*mythos* becoming *epos*), but we might suggest that Stonehenge could be placed in the second stage²⁶. Stonehenge's precinct is not only ῥυθμός and ἄρμονία, but might also be intended as a *chorus*, a sort of *concordia discors* in the unity of the Sun and Death encircled by a Ditch within a Henge.

There is no Muse without words and, perhaps, now we are listening to a Siren's enigma – as Kafka surmises. Stones and men are two different categories, but Stonehenge is a σῆμα, is a *signifiant* combined with an unknown *signifié*. Furio Jesi is convinced that the builders of the megaliths could have sought for an *intreccio* between the language of the stones and the language of men. We are in front of a mainly initiatory reality: megaliths preserve an unspeakable secret. This kind of initiatory wisdom might coincide with the archaeologist's condition: he wants results from his scientific research, but he is aware of the fact that his answers will always be wrong; he always wants to be corrected and he does not understand the reason why he can be appreciated²⁷. Perhaps Stonehenge's builders wanted us not to know the covered meaning. Perhaps the same builders did not know precisely the secret, because

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-70.

²⁶ Walter Friedrich OTTO, *Theophania. Der Geist der altgriechischen Religion*, Hamburg: Rohwolt, 1956, pp. 25-26.

²⁷ Furio JESI, *Il linguaggio delle pietre*, Milano: Rizzoli, 1978, pp. 15-20.

there was no veiled secret or because they could not afford to reveal it. So archaeologists are in a Kafkian condition: the door is open, the sense is for them, but the guardian is always on the verge of closing the gate they cannot trespass²⁸.

About cremation, religious mobility and the idea of the *temenos*, we will interrogate some texts which could help us to enter the *aura* of Stonehenge's monument passing through the path of anthropological analogies.

After burning Patroclos's pyre, after sacrificing and casting four horses, nine dogs and twelve Trojans on the fire of his companion, Achilles falls in a gentle sleep for a while. Then he suddenly wakes up, as soon as the Achaeans arrive. He urges the chief men and the army to gather Patroclos's burnt bones: they are white, clear and easy to find among the remains. So, the Achaeans go to the pyre and pick up the bones and place them wrapped in an urn.

Τορνῶσαντο δὲ σῆμα θεμειλιά τε προβάλλοντο
ἀμφὶ πυρήν· εἶθαρ δὲ χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχευαν,
χεύαντες δὲ τὸ σῆμα πάλιν κίον [...]

«Then they traced the compass of the mound and set out foundations round about the pyre, and immediately they poured over it the piled-up earth. And when they had piled the mound, they went back again»²⁹.

This description raises a problem of dating. Chantraine and Goube observe that incineration in the Mycenaean world is not well attested and that it could be an anachronism introduced by the Poet from his time in the Mycenaean context³⁰, but, as Neolithic *magulae* show, incineration was known since prehistoric times. But our concern is about three words. The verb *τορνῶσαντο* implies a reference to the *τόρνος*, which is the carpenter's compass. It is a circular movement (**terə-*)³¹ and we can compare it to the Latin verb *tero*. Frisk reminds us also the adjective

²⁸ Franz KAFKA, *Vor dem Gesetz*, cit., p. 132.

²⁹ HOM. *Il.* vv. 255-257 – HOMER, *Iliad*, ed. by Andrew T. MURRAY – William F. WYATT, Vol. II, Cambridge (Massachusetts)–London: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1999, p. 511.

³⁰ HOMÈRE, *Iliade. Chant XXIII*, ed. by Pierre CHANTRAINE – Henri GOUBE, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972, p. 3.

³¹ Calvert Ward WATKINS, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, p. 93.

compound κυκλοτερής³². Θεμείλια derives from **dhē-* (τίθημι, *facio, to do*)³³. Σῆμα is more obscure³⁴ and has no clear etymology. The same word of the sign, which encompasses the idea of the tomb, is unknown. Death is engraved on a circular σῆμα.

In Herodotus³⁵, the Hyperboreans are connected with Delos. According to Charrière and Roos, Athens, Delos and the Hyperboreans were always in good reciprocal relations and used to send each other sacred delegations. Charrière and Roos draw a mystic-esoteric diagonal between Stonehenge and Delos³⁶. They accept Diodorus's version about Apollo's Hyperborean temple at Stonehenge. They also allude to Meton. He was an Athenian astronomer who introduced in 453 B.C. a system of regular intercalation over a period of nineteen years to adapt the lunar month to the calendar year in order to assess a cycle containing 235 lunar months and 6940 days. Meton's cycle marks the lunisolar conjunction every 19 years. The Stonehenge Sarsens are adapted to a lunisolar way of calculating time which could be the result of centuries of observations. Perhaps Meton's cycle is of prehistoric origin as well and involves a myth about the circularity of time, a sort of *magnus annus*³⁷.

Nowadays archaeologists are not like Auguste Mariette and distrust, rightly or wrongly, sources as Diodorus, Strabo or Plinius the Elder. Diodorus describes a magnificent Apollo's temple in the great Island of the Hyperboreans. There is located a wonderful *temenos*: it is an Apollo's precinct adorned by many offerings and its structure is spheroidal. *There is also a town which is consecrated to the god* and most of the people are kithara-players. In the temple, for the sake of the god, they are used to singing continuously hymns with loud voice accompanied with kithara and to celebrating his deeds³⁸. The allusion to a

³² Hjalmar FRISK, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. II, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991, pp. 913-914.

³³ Calvert Ward WATKINS, *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, cit., p. 18.

³⁴ Pierre CHANTRAINE, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris: Klincksieck, 2009, pp. 963-964.

³⁵ HER. IV, 32-36.

³⁶ Georges CHARRIÈRE – André ROOS, *Stonehenge, temple votif et monument calendaire*, in «Bulletin de la Société préhistorique française. Études et travaux», 61, 1, 1964, p. 181.

³⁷ Marius CLEYET-MICHAUD, *Le nombre d'or*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978, pp. 7-8.

³⁸ DIOD. SIC. *Bibl. Hist.* II, 47 – DIODORO SICULO, *Biblioteca storica*, ed. by Giuseppe CORDIANO – Marta ZORAT, Vol. I, Milano: Rizzoli, 2004, pp. 552-557.