ORPHIC TRADITION
and the
BIRTH OF THE GODS

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Contents

Preface

The topic of Orphism is a controversial one, and to many people it is enigmatic too. While some students and scholars might prefer to avoid Orphism and its controversies, there are a few others who bring outstanding expertise to the discussion. In fact, some of the biggest names in the fields of Greek literature and religion have written important works on this topic, such as the recently departed Walter Burkert and Martin West. And so, in order to research this bizarre ancient phenomenon we call Orphism, one must stand upon the shoulders of some of the biggest giants in Classical scholarship, and at the same time dive into the midst of one of the biggest debates on Greek religion. No wonder many shy away from it. However, as complicated and controversial as the topic of Orphism may appear, it is not incomprehensible. So with a humble recognition that there will be little certainty, I present a study of Orphic theogonies in the hopes that, whether or not I can contribute something valuable to the ongoing debates on Orphism, at least I can make this topic more accessible to those who have not dedicated years of their lives to researching it. "I will sing to those who know" (*OF* 1 B)—and hopefully in the process, this topic will catch the interest of those who do not know.

Having first become acquainted with scholarship on Orphism when I was doing research on the Dionysiac mysteries for my master's thesis, I quickly became fascinated with the ongoing debates about Orphism as I read modern scholars from one end of the spectrum to another. Reading at the same time early scholars who saw Orphism as a unified religious movement and more recent and skeptical scholars who see it as mainly a literary phenomenon, I was never entirely convinced by either side of the argument. As a newcomer to the

modern discourse on Orphism, in a sense I have the advantage of a new perspective, neither weighed down by outdated models nor deeply involved in the process of deconstruction, but I also have the disadvantage of having far less expertise than some of the scholars who are already engaged in Orphic discourse. Therefore, this book is not an attempt to propose an alternative definition of Orphism, or to critique the brilliant work that has already been done on the Orphic gold tablets or the Derveni Papyrus. Instead, I concentrate on a set of fragments that has received less attention in recent years, by attempting to reconstruct four Orphic theogonies, based on the recent collection of the *Orphic Fragments* by Alberto Bernabé. I hope this book will contribute to discourse on Orphism by applying new models and interpretations to these often-neglected fragments, while also making that discourse more accessible to students and scholars who are new to the topic by explaining the Orphic literary tradition in the simplest terms possible.

This book is an adaptation of my doctoral thesis, which really did two things: first, it was a reconstruction of the literary history of Orphic theogonies, and that is the subject of this book; and second, it sought to explain the metaphysical allegories of the Neoplatonists who often referred to the Orphic Rhapsodies. These complex allegorical interpretations are the reason why we have more than two hundred fragments of the Rhapsodies, but few modern scholars have paid significant attention to explaining these interpretations and determining how the Neoplatonists manipulated their presentation of the text of the Rhapsodies. My work on Neoplatonic allegories has been mostly reserved for a future project, but it does come into play in this book when dealing with fragments from Neoplatonic sources. In every case I have endeavoured to keep the discussion of allegory as brief and simple as possible, always limited to that which is necessary for the reconstruction of the Orphic poems.

A note on translations: All translations of ancient texts are mine unless otherwise noted in the footnotes. Many of my translations have been done in consultation with recent published editions, and these are noted in the footnotes as well. Some of the modern sources I consulted while doing this study are in foreign languages (e.g., Lobeck in Latin, Brisson in French), and where these authors are quoted, I have translated them into English for the sake of readability, with few exceptions. These translations are also my own.

In the development of this monograph, I have received guidance and direction from various scholars to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Since this project began as a doctoral thesis, the first person to acknowledge is Christopher G. Brown, my thesis supervisor whose philological expertise has directed me many times to texts and ideas that have profoundly shaped my arguments. A heartfelt thank you to Anne-France Morand, the only other Canadian scholar (as far as I know) who specializes in Orphism, for agreeing to be my external examiner and for always being willing to offer me valuable advice. Special thanks to Radcliffe Edmonds, for reviewing this book and

offering encouraging feedback. I am grateful for the thoughtful comments of the members of my thesis committees, including Bonnie MacLachlan, Charles Stocking, Bernd Steinbock, and Dan Smith; and the institutional support of the Department of Classics at the University of Western Ontario and Campion College at the University of Regina. During my doctoral degree, my research was supported by funding from the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Western Ontario, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and two scholarships awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Over the years, there have been many others who have contributed in some small way to the personal and professional development that have made this book possible. The first to be acknowledged is Ken Leyton-Brown, who acted as my advisor during my master's degree when I was studying the Dionysiac mysteries and since then has continued to be a valuable mentor and colleague. I appreciate the fact that my family and friends, and especially my wife, Amanda, have tolerated years of both geographical and personal isolation while I have spent large chunks of time on research. Somewhere within the cultural cluster of ideas and practices that included Orphic literature, Bacchic mysteries, and Platonic philosophy, the Greeks discovered something universal and inexpressable about human nature and about the universe. It is my hope that through this book some small fragment of that mystical discovery might become slightly more comprehensible to modern minds.

Abbreviations

Not all ancient authors and works are cited using abbreviations, but those that are abbreviated follow the format of citations used by Alberto Bernabé in his recent edition of *Poetae Epici Graeci: Testimonia et Fragmenta*, Pars II, Fasc. 1–3 (Leipzig: Teubner, 2004–2007). The abbreviations used most frequently are these:

OF # B = # K (e.g., *OF* 243 B = 168 K): *OF = Orphicorum Fragmenta* (in some cases, *OT = Orphicorum Testimonia*); B = Bernabé; K = Kern.

DP = Derveni Papyrus
HH = *Homeric Hymns*
OH = *Orphic Hymns*

Some scholarly journals, reference works, books with multiple authors, and collections of inscriptions and fragments are abbreviated as follows:

BNP *Brill's New Pauly* (eds. H. Cancik, C. Salazar et al., Leiden: Brill, 2005; accessed at http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-pauly)
CQ *Classical Quarterly*
D-K H. Diels and W. Kranz (*Die Fragment der Vorsokratiker*, Vols. 1–2, 10th ed., Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1961)
FGrH *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (ed. F. Jacoby et al., Leiden: Brill, 1923–1958)
GGM *Geographi Graeci Minores* (ed. K. Müller, Hildesheim: G. Olms, [1855–1861] 1965)

IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, Vols. 1–12 (ed. O. Kern et al., Berlin: De Gruyter, 1913–2012)
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
KPT	T. Kouremenos, G. Parássoglou, and K. Tsantsanoglou (*The Derveni Papyrus*, Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 2006)
KRS	G. S. Kirk, J. Raven, and M. Schofield (*The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
KTU	*Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit* (Ugaritic Baal Cycle; cited in Smith 1994; Smith and Pitard, 2009)
LfgrE	*Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (ed. B. Snell et al., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, [1982] 2004)
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (eds. H. Ackermann and J. R. Gisler, Zürich: Artemis, 1981–1997)
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
M-W	R. Merkelbach and M. L. West (*Fragmenta Hesiodea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)
PSI	Pernigotti, C. (*Papiri della Società Italiana*, Vol. 15, Florence: Firenze University Press, 2008)
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Vols. 1–60 (eds. A. Chaniotis et al., Leiden: Brill, 1923–2010)
SVF	*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Vols. 1–3 (ed. H. von Arnim, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1964 [1903–1905])
TrGF	*Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Vols. 1–5 (eds. B. Snell et al., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971–2004)
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

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Introducing Orphic Theogonies

The aim of this study is to sort out the history, structure, and contents of four Orphic theogonies, in the hope that some of their major themes and concerns might be clarified. According to most modern reconstructions of Orphic literature by scholars such as Otto Kern, Martin West, and Alberto Bernabé, there were at least four major Orphic theogonies: (1) the "Derveni Theogony," which is the poem underlying the commentary contained in the Derveni Papyrus (fourth century BC),[1] and three other Orphic theogonies known to the Neoplatonist Damascius (sixth century AD): (2) the "Eudemian Theogony" (fifth century BC), named after Eudemus, a student of Aristotle who made references to an Orphic theogony in his philosophical works;[2] (3) the "Hieronyman Theogony" (second century BC), a Hellenistic version known to two obscure authors named Hieronymus and Hellanicus;[3] and (4) the Rhapsodies, or "Rhapsodic Theogony" (first century BC/AD), which was the longest version and the only one that Damascius considered current.[4] The Derveni, Eudemian, Hieronyman, and Rhapsodic theogonies are preserved only in fragments by prose authors, mostly philosophers and apologists, and these fragments have been collected recently in Bernabé's *Poetae Epici Graeci* in a way that reflects modern assumptions about what a Greek theogony might have looked like.[5]

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1. Kouremenos, Parássoglou, and Tsantsanoglou 2006 (hereafter referred to as KPT); Bernabé 2007a. Other important editions are found in Janko 2002; Betegh 2004; and Tortorelli Ghidini 2006.

2. Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = 24 K).

3. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 69 I B = 54 K). These dates are disputable: Brisson (1995: 394–396) dates the Hieronyman theogony to the second century AD, but West (1983: 225–226) suggests that it was written shortly after the third century BC.

4. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 90 B = 60 K); *Suda*, s.v. "Ὀρφεύς" (3.564.30 Adler) (*OF* 91 B = 223d K).

5. For all Orphic fragments, I rely on Bernabé's collection of epic fragments in *Poetae Epici Graeci* (2004, 2006, 2007a), but I also consult the *Orphicorum Fragmenta* in Kern (1922) for textual comparison and history of scholarship. Fragments from Bernabé's collection are cited as *OF* # B, and fragments from Kern's collection as (*OF*) # K. For most fragments, I note first the original

Scholars have assumed that each of these theogonies was a lengthy, chronological narrative that stretched from the beginning of creation to the current state of the cosmos, similar to the format of Hesiod's *Theogony*. From this perspective, even though it seems clear that Orphic practitioners (whoever they might have been) used poetic texts in their rituals, it has been difficult to determine how a theogony of this type might have been used in ritual performance. If, on the other hand, Orphic theogonies were shorter narratives that functioned as hymns to particular gods, then instead we might call them theogonic hymns, similar to the *Homeric Hymns* in the sense that they describe the attributes of deities and narrate the way these deities stepped into their spheres of influence. If we view the texts in this way, then the particular performance contexts and varied purposes of these texts become far more complex than a lengthy theogony and the puzzle might become impossible to solve, but the basic function of these texts in ritual might become simpler to imagine in some cases. Many modern discussions about Orphic ritual have been driven by the controversy and confusion over what Orphism was. This confusion stems not only from our lack of knowledge about Orphic ritual, but also from our misunderstanding of the nature of the texts. Therefore, this study is about the texts. What were Orphic theogonies, and what role did they play in Orphism? And how does a reading of Orphic theogonies influence our definition of Orphism?

In this book, I attempt to reconstruct the history of Orphic theogonies based on Claude Lévi-Strauss' concept of bricolage.[6] As I argue in this chapter, rather than viewing these theogonies through the rigid model of a manuscript tradition, it would be preferable to interpret each individual text or fragment as the original creation of a bricoleur: an anonymous author who drew from the elements of myth that were available at the time, and reconfigured these elements in a way that was relevant to the pseudepigrapher's particular context. Beginning with the Derveni theogony, I point out that it combines well-known elements of Hesiod's *Theogony* with elements of earlier Near Eastern mythology to create a profound but enigmatic narrative, centered around Zeus and the act of swallowing. Moving on to the Eudemian theogony, I argue that the scattered references to Orphic poetry in the works of Plato, Aristotle, and others do not necessarily refer to the same theogony, and even if they did, this did not necessarily mean that they contained the earliest renditions of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus or the story of Dionysus Zagreus. In chapter 4, I review our only two sources for the Hieronyman theogony and suggest that in this case we might actually be dealing with two separate poems. The scattered fragments of the three earliest Orphic theogonies suggest a varied and fluid tradition, in which

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author, and then both Bernabé's and Kern's editions. For example: Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = 24 K).

6. Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16–36.

the format and content of the poems were subject to change, since each poem was the individual product of the creativity of a bricoleur.

The fifth and sixth chapters concentrate on the Orphic Rhapsodies, which constitute the largest body of fragments because the text was still current at the time of the Neoplatonists. Responding to a recent argument by Radcliffe Edmonds that the Rhapsodies could have been a collection of twenty-four poems, rather than one poem in twenty-four books,[7] I agree with Edmonds that this is possible, but I argue that one of these books must have contained a continuous narrative of six generations of divine rulers, with a particular emphasis on the character and actions of Phanes and Zeus, in addition to Dionysus. This emphasis on Phanes and Zeus forms the background of chapter 6, where I review both ancient and modern interpretations of the story of Dionysus Zagreus and his dismemberment by the Titans. Long thought to have been the central myth of the Orphic religion, this story has always been at the center of the modern debate on Orphism. One of the most controversial aspects of this story centers around its age: if the story was told in the Archaic Period, then it is more likely that it served as the central myth of Orphism; but more skeptical scholars have argued that certain elements of this myth were introduced later, by the Neoplatonist Olympiodorus (sixth century AD) or even by modern scholars. In chapter 6, I read the myth of Dionysus and the Titans in the one literary context where we are actually certain that it appeared: as one episode in the six-generation myth of the Orphic Rhapsodies. I conclude that in this context the myth reveals as much about Zeus as it does about Dionysus.

The Orphic Question

Whenever there is a discussion of Orphica, or whenever we label anything "Orphic," underlying this designation are three interrelated topics: (a) a legend, (b) a set of ritual practices, and (c) a literary tradition.

(a) First, the legend is about the singer and musician Orpheus who appears in mainstream Greek mythology. This is the Orpheus whose music enchanted the animals and trees, who joined Jason and the Argonauts on their adventure and was able to out-sing the Sirens, and who used music to make his way through the underworld in an attempt to bring back his wife, Eurydice. The Orpheus of legend was known for his music since at least the sixth century BC, when the lyric poet Ibycus referred to him as "famous-named Orpheus."[8] While

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7. Edmonds 2013: 148–159.
8. West (2011: 120–122) suggests that the Argonautic adventure appeared in the tenth or eleventh century BC, based on the -εύς ending found on Linear B tablets (cf. Atreus, Odysseus). But note the form Ὀρφῆς in Ibycus, fr. 306 Page (Priscian. *Inst.* 6.92). A fragment of Simonides (fr. 384 Page) refers to the enchanting effect of Orpheus' music on nature, and Orpheus' name appears

the legend of Orpheus the Argonaut had early roots, the earliest evidence of his katabasis does not appear until the fifth century, in a brief passage of Euripides' *Alcestis* (962–966). In this passage, Orpheus is successful in bringing his wife back from the dead, but in other early versions of his katabasis, such as the one mentioned in Plato's *Symposium*, he fails to do this for one reason or another.[9] Because of the mystical quality of his music and because of his experiences in the underworld, by the fifth century the legendary figure of Orpheus was considered an appropriate culture hero for the foundation of mystery cults.[10]

(b) The role of Orpheus as a culture hero in Greek legend is the focus of the second topic labeled "Orphic," which consists of the cult practices he was believed to have founded. Here he is the subject of a debate that has continued for nearly two centuries about the nature and existence of what earlier scholars called "Orphism"—that is, a group of religious communities who practised a reformed version of Greek religion that they believed to have been founded by Orpheus, and to have used Orphic texts as scriptures. Despite the opinions of earlier scholars,[11] it is now generally believed that this type of Orphism never existed as a definable institution or religious community. More skeptical scholars prefer to speak only of an Orphic literary tradition, but recently it has also become acceptable to speak of "Orphics" in the sense of ritual practitioners who used Orphic texts or adhered to Orphic doctrines. The Orphics were neither a distinct, coherent sect nor authors in a strictly literary tradition but, as the shifting debates have gradually been making clear, they were something in between. Whatever conclusions we may draw about the nature of "Orphism," one of its most important distinguishing features, if indeed it existed, might have been the use of texts in ritual.

(c) The third component of a discussion of Orphica is about those very texts. Certain literary works were ascribed to Orpheus as a way of attaching prophetic authority to the texts, and they featured certain mythical themes that differed somewhat from the mainstream tradition. While the idea of an Orphic religious community has long been debated, the existence of a tradition of Orphic texts is indisputable. Some of the texts are extant, such as the eighty-seven *Orphic Hymns* addressed to a wide variety of deities (possibly from the second century AD)[12] and the *Orphic Argonautica*, a 1,400-line hexameter poem in which Orpheus tells his own story (fourth century AD).[13] But most of

on a sixth-century relief sculpture depicting the Argonauts (Christopoulos 1991: 213n16; Robbins 1982: 5–7).

9. Orpheus fails either because of his lack of heroic manliness, as in Plato's *Symposium* 179d–e, or because he looks back at Eurydice, as in later versions (Vergil, *Georgics* 4.457–527; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.1–85).

10. E.g., in Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1032; see Linforth 1941: 35–38; Graf 1974: 22–39.

11. E.g., Creuzer 1822; Macchioro 1930.

12. Ricciardelli 2000: xxx–xxxi; Morand 2001: 35; Fayant 2014: xxix–xxx.

13. Vian 1987.

the Orphic literary tradition exists now only in fragments, including theogonic poetry ranging from the Derveni Papyrus (fourth century BC) to the Orphic Rhapsodies (first century BC/AD);[14] a series of gold tablets inscribed with eschatological material and found in graves (fourth century BC to second century AD);[15] other Orphic works known to us by little more than their titles, such as the *Krater, Net*, and *Robe*; and a katabasis of Orpheus that is believed to have been circulating by the fifth century BC.[16] Most of the theogonic fragments are contained in commentaries of Platonic texts, written by Neoplatonic philosophers (fourth to sixth centuries AD) who certainly did not identify themselves as "Orphic," nor were they members of a sect called "Orphism," but they made frequent references to hexametric poetry about the gods, and they said that the author of these poems was Orpheus, in the same way that they referred to Homeric poetry and said the author was Homer.[17] These authors applied allegorical interpretations to the texts in ways that supported their own philosophical views, so it is often difficult to disentangle one of their allegorical interpretations from the text that stood behind it, but it is because of the Neoplatonists that most of our fragments of Orphic literature have been preserved.

In this study, the word "Orphism" usually refers to a religious sect that, whether or not it actually existed, was misrepresented by earlier generations of modern scholars, and the word "Orphic" refers to either rituals or texts whose origin or authorship was for some reason ascribed to Orpheus. The word "Orphic" might also refer to an individual or group who used these texts and rituals, or to the anonymous author of an Orphic poem, but this does not necessarily imply membership in a sect called "Orphism." If there ever was such a thing as Orphism, its members would have practiced Orphic rituals in which they used Orphic texts, and they might have called themselves Orphic. But if there was never such a thing as Orphism, then there were still Greek individuals who practiced Orphic rituals with the use of Orphic texts, and these

14. West (1983: 75–79) and Betegh (2004: 61) date the Derveni Papyrus to the late fifth or early fourth century BC. The date of the *Rhapsodies* is disputed, with suggestions ranging from the sixth century BC to the second century AD (West 1983: 261; Bernabé 2004: 97).

15. For place, date, and text of each individual gold tablet, see Graf and Johnston 2013: 4–47; Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 241–272. Most of these were discovered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD, but more gold tablets continue to be discovered.

16. *OF* 409–412 B (*Krater*), *OF* 403–405 B (*Net*), *OF* 406–407 B (*Robe*); see also *Lyre* (*OF* 417–420 B) and *Katabasis* (*OF* 707–717 B); *Suda*, s.v. "Ὀρφεύς" (3.564–565 Adler); West 1983: 10–13.

17. E.g., Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26 Kroll (*OF* 159 B = 140 K): "the theologian Orpheus taught/handed down"; Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.207.23 Kroll (*OF* 176 B = 126 K): "Orpheus says"; Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 190 II B = 107, 220 K): "from Orpheus … [they] are taught/handed down." Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 146.28 Couvr. (*OF* 128 II B = 90 K) refers to both Homer and Orpheus as "inspired poets." Orpheus was associated with Homer and Hesiod as one of the great poets since the fifth and fourth centuries BC (Linforth 1941: 104). Brisson (1995: 53–54) counts 176 references to Orphic texts in Proclus, 139 appearing in his *Timaeus* commentary alone.

people could be reasonably referred to as Orphics. Although there must have been some common ground among the Orphics, the specific way in which these texts were used was probably different to some extent in each individual case, suited to the needs of each particular individual or group, with the result that a search for a coherently unified community is not likely to succeed. However, it is worthwhile considering the nature and content of Orphic texts and inquiring about how they were used in Orphic ritual, because whether or not there were Orphic communities, this seems to have been what people were doing with the texts.

Therefore, the "Orphic Question," so to speak, is whether, to what extent, and in what ways Orphic texts were used in Greek ritual. There were certain ritual contexts such as mystery initiations, funeral arrangements, and acts of personal devotion, in which Greeks at different times and places made use of texts ascribed to Orpheus, either as individuals or in groups. On this basic point most scholars would agree, but the question of what specific role these texts had to play in ritual has sparked one of the greatest debates in modern scholarship on ancient Greek religion. The debate began in the 1820s with Friedrich Creuzer and Christian August Lobeck. Creuzer viewed Orpheus as a major reformer from the east who revolutionized Greek religion, but Lobeck took a more cautious position with his monumental work *Aglaophamus*.[18] The basic points of their disagreement characterized the debate into the early twentieth century, as scholars became divided between maximalists and minimalists, or as they have been recently characterized, "PanOrphists" and "Orpheoskeptics."[19] Prominent representatives of the PanOrphists included Otto Kern, who saw Orpheus as the prophet of a religious movement, and Macchioro, according to whom Orphism was a religious community and a prototype of early Christian communities.[20] Two of the most important Orpheoskeptics were Wilamowitz, who questioned the connection between Orphism and the Bacchic mysteries, and Linforth, who in 1941 denied that there was ever a coherent sect known as Orphism. The Greek word Ὀρφικά, as Linforth understood it, referred strictly to materials belonging to a literary tradition.[21] He essentially disproved the existence of Orphism as a distinct, definable religious community, leading Dodds to admit a few years later that he had "lost a great deal of knowledge," because this "edifice reared by an ingenious scholarship" turned out to be a "house of dreams."[22]

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18. Creuzer 1822; Lobeck 1829; see Graf and Johnston 2013: 51.
19. Edmonds 2011c: 4–8.
20. Kern 1888: 52; Macchioro 1930: 100–135.
21. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1932) 1959: 2:190–205; Linforth 1941: ix–xiii, 169–173, 305–306.
22. Dodds 1951: 147–148.

Since then, scholars have been more cautious about attempting to define Orphism or claiming that it had any strong affinities with early Christianity. Recent studies by Herrero and Jourdan focus instead on the different ways Christian apologists talked about Orphic texts, ranging from the appropriation of ideas and images to the negative critique of Orphic myth.[23] But with regard to Orphism itself, the relationship between text and ritual remains an open question. There are still those who tend toward a minimalist position, such as Edmonds, who denies the existence of a religious community and expresses skepticism about labeling the gold tablets "Orphic," and those who tend toward a maximalist position, such as Bernabé, who argues that the gold tablets "can only be Orphic" because they belong to the same "religious movement," which therefore must have existed.[24] To the less skeptical scholar today, there was not so much a sect called Orphism as a collection of different scattered groups or individuals who practised certain types of rituals, people who in some way made use of Orphic texts. In general, most scholars aim for the middle road,[25] rejecting the existence of Orphic communities but accepting that in some way the texts ascribed to Orpheus were written for and used in a ritual context, closely related to some of the mystery cults.

Since the time of Linforth, scholarly discussions of Orphic materials have largely focused on the interpretation of new evidence that has come to light. The Derveni Papyrus, Olbia bone tablets, and Orphic gold tablets are some of the very few archaeological records of Orphic cult activity, but in each case the precise nature of their creation and use remains tantalizingly enigmatic. Of primary importance is the Derveni Papyrus, a partially burned papyrus scroll that was discovered in the remains of a funeral pyre in 1962. It is a remarkable text for many reasons: the earliest surviving papyrus from Greece (fourth century BC), it preserves the earliest extant fragments of Orphic poetry (sixth century BC). The Derveni author quotes an Orphic theogony that differs from Hesiod's account on a few important points, and he applies his own unique version of Presocratic philosophy to an allegorical interpretation of the text.[26] The Derveni Papyrus is the oldest surviving piece of Orphic literature, and it is a puzzling but important text, so naturally it has been in the spotlight of scholarly attention for the last few decades. Another fascinating discovery was a set of bone tablets found in an excavation at Olbia in 1978. The inscribed words "life death life" and "Dio(nysos) Orphic [or Orphics]" on one of the tablets confirm an association between Orpheus and Bacchic cult, and they reveal an interest

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23. Jourdan 2006, 2008; Herrero 2010.
24. Edmonds 1999: 35–73; 2011b: 257–270; Bernabé 2011: 68–101.
25. E.g., Burkert 1982; Graf and Johnston 2013.
26. West 1983: 75–79; Betegh 2004: 56–134; Bernabé 2007b: 99–133.

in eschatology.[27] The bone tablets supply important evidence on Orphic ritual, but we still have no idea about their original purpose.

Although some of the Orphic gold tablets were first discovered in the early nineteenth century, even now archaeologists continue to find gold tablets in graves.[28] Yet the reason why interest has been shown in them is not simply that they are new discoveries, but that the content of the tablets is at the center of the debate on Orphism. Since the first scholarly edition of the Petelia (*OF* 476 B) and Thurii (*OF* 487–490 B) tablets was published by Smith and Comparetti in 1882, the tablets have often been associated with Orphic and Bacchic cult, and scholars have considered them as evidence of an eschatological concern in Orphism.[29] This view has been challenged by various scholars, including Zuntz, who in 1971 argued that they were not Orphic but Pythagorean. Zuntz pointed out that none of the tablets that had yet been discovered made any reference to Dionysus, but Persephone appears in three of them (either by name or as the "chthonian queen"), so he associated the tablets with the cult of Persephone in southern Italy and Sicily.[30] However, very soon after the publication of Zuntz's *Persephone*, two tablets were discovered in Thessaly that clearly demonstrated an association between Dionysus and one of the cults that produced the tablets. The Hipponion tablet, discovered in 1973, promises the dead initiate that she "will go along the sacred road on which other glorious initiates and Bacchoi travel." The ivy-shaped Pelinna tablets, discovered in 1987, instruct the initiate to "tell Persephone that the Bacchic one himself has released you."[31] The discovery of these tablets raised again the possibility that they were artifacts produced in an Orphic cult. As a result, the connection between the gold tablets and Orpheus has been established as at least a strong possibility in the Classical Period. This has led to extensive discussion of the relevance of these texts to Orphic thought and practice.

Among the many reasons why the gold tablets have attracted so much attention is that they seem to refer to two topics that are central to what modern scholars have perceived as Orphism. First, there is eschatology: because Orpheus had gone to the underworld to rescue his wife, Eurydice, it was believed that he had obtained special knowledge of the afterlife, and that this

27. West 1982: 17–29; Betegh 2004: 344. According to Graf and Johnston (2013: 214–215), Tablet A reads βίος θάνατος βίος at the top and Διό(νυσος) Ὀρφικοί (or Ὀρφικόν—they note that "the edge is damaged"); cf. *OF* 463–465 B.

28. The Petelia tablet was discovered in 1836, but not published until 1882 (Smith and Comparetti 1882: 111). Most recently, eleven tablets from Roman Palestine (second century AD) have been published by Graf and Johnston 2013: 208–213.

29. Smith and Comparetti 1882: 111–118.

30. Zuntz 1971: 277–286, 381–393; *OF* 488–490 B (Zuntz A1–3). Linforth never mentions the tablets in his *Arts of Orpheus* (Linforth 1941), and West (1983: 26) and Edmonds (2004: 36–37; 2011b: 257–260) question their Orphic provenance.

31. *OF* 474.15–16, 485.2 B; cf. *OF* 486.2 B. For more on these tablets, see Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 9–94.

knowledge was preserved in his poetry. The Greeks associated Orpheus with mystery cults as their legendary founder, so because a concern with the after-life seemed important in mystery cults, scholars concluded that Orphism was also concerned with the afterlife. The gold tablets appear to confirm this con-clusion because they direct the initiate to take the proper route on his or her journey through the underworld and to say the proper words to the guardians by the spring of Memory when they arrive.[32] Second, there is anthropogony, for the statement "I am a child of Earth and starry Sky" on some of the gold tablets (*OF* 474–484 B) has been taken to refer to the origin of humanity out of the ashes of the Titans, if the gold tablets are interpreted according to the modern reconstruction of the myth of Dionysus Zagreus. This reconstruction is as follows: the Titans lure Dionysus toward them with toys; they kill, boil, roast, and eat him; but this angers Zeus, who strikes them with his lightning bolt. After this punishment, human beings are created out of their ashes, while Dionysus is brought back to life by the other gods. Thus we have a heavenly, Dionysiac nature and an earthly, Titanic nature, and the point of initiation is to overcome our Titanic nature. This is how Comparetti interpreted the statement "I am a child of Earth and starry Sky" in the gold tablets—"Earth" referring to the Titanic nature and "starry Sky" referring to the Dionysiac—and recent scholars have continued to suggest this interpretation.[33] But Edmonds has be-come convinced that this concept of "original sin," which seems inherent in the idea of a Titanic nature in humanity, is an invention of modern scholars. Edmonds argues that the myth of Dionysus Zagreus was not nearly as cen-tral to Orphic thought as modern scholars have assumed, and largely on this basis he rejects the notion that the gold tablets refer to the Zagreus myth. He expresses doubts about whether the tablets had anything to do with Orpheus, and he refers to them as "the so-called Orphic gold tablets," even placing "Orphic" in quotation marks in his book title.[34]

It is to these two subjects—eschatology and the connection with Dionysus—that most scholarly attention has been paid in the Orphic debate in recent years, even if (in some cases) only for the sake of deconstruction, and this is largely a consequence of the way Orphism was described a century ago. It was expected that Orphism, seen as a sort of proto-Christianity, would be concerned with such concepts as original sin and the afterlife, that mys-tery cults would offer salvation from an afterlife of punishment, and that these

32. On the katabasis of Orpheus, see Clark 1979: 95–124. On Orpheus as a poetic founder of mysteries, see Graf 1974: 1–39; Brisson 1995: 2870–2872. On the gold tablets providing instructions for the underworld journey, see Edmonds 2004: 29–109; Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008; Graf and Johnston 2013: 94–166.

33. Smith and Comparetti 1882: 116; Detienne 1979: 68–72; Christopoulos 1991: 217–218; Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 38–47; Bernabé 2011: 77; Graf and Johnston 2013: 58–61.

34. Edmonds 1999: 35–73; 2009: 511–532; 2013: 296–390. He is expanding on the same point made by Linforth (1941: 359–362).

ideas would revolve around the story of a god who is killed and brought back to life. More recent scholars have rejected this conception of Orphism, and they cautiously refer to the use of Orphic texts in rituals, but much of the discussion has remained focused on eschatology and Dionysus. This has perhaps led to an imbalance in the scholarship, since most Orphic evidence we have is actually of a different nature: theogonic poetry, hymns to various deities, the legends of the Argonauts, and a wide variety of other material.

Therefore, Edmonds has a valid point in arguing that the Zagreus myth was not as central to Orphic myth as scholars once thought, and that it did not contain an idea of original sin. It was not the central myth of a religious institution called Orphism, even though the fact remains that the most extensive set of Orphic theogonic poetry, referred to as the Rhapsodies, seems to have ended with the story of Dionysus and the Titans. Whether this episode has any anthropogonic or eschatological significance is open to discussion, but first and foremost, as I argue in chapter 6, the myth's significance is theogonic. Zeus sets up Dionysus as the last of a six-generation succession of kings, but before Dionysus can claim his rightful position, the Titans kill him and eat him. However, Athena preserves his heart, Apollo gathers and buries his remains, and Zeus brings him back to life. Dionysus takes his place of honour among the Olympians, but Zeus remains the king of the gods.[35] It appears that this myth draws the succession myth to a close, putting an end to a series of challenges to the royal power of Zeus. If this is the case, then the story might have little to do with anthropogony, at least in the context of the Rhapsodic narrative.

Whether or not it was central to Orphic doctrine (if indeed there was such a thing as Orphic doctrine), the myth of Dionysus Zagreus was just one of the episodes in the Rhapsodies—one of the most important and climactic episodes, to be sure—but it was just one episode. The Rhapsodies themselves were just one of a group of Orphic theogonic poems in which Dionysus may or may not have played some kind of role. And theogonies were just one of the genres represented in Orphic poetry. Likewise, although Dionysus is one of the most frequently mentioned deities who appear in the *Orphic Hymns*, he is still just one of many. He appears in typical Dionysiac roles in *OH* 45–54: the reveling wine god, raised at Nysa and returning from the east to establish his triennial festivals, leading his company of maenads as he brandishes his thyrsus. There are references to chthonic Dionysus as the son of Persephone in the *Orphic Hymns*, and some of the *Hymns* have clear resonances with the presentation of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies, but neither his dismemberment by the Titans

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35. *OF* 280–336 B. There seem to have been a few different versions of Dionysus' resurrection, which may or may not include the following elements: Athena takes his heart (*OF* 315, 325 B); Apollo gathers up Dionysus' remains (*OF* 305 B); Zeus entrusts Apollo to bury Dionysus (*OF* 322 B); Zeus puts Dionysus' heart into a statue (*OF* 325 B).

nor the name of Zagreus is explicitly mentioned.[36] Some of the *Orphic Hymns* are addressed to chthonic deities, and some fragments of the Rhapsodies deal with the fate of souls and the underworld, but there is not as much emphasis on eschatological matters in either the *Orphic Hymns* or the Rhapsodies as the modern reconstruction of Orphism would lead one to expect.[37] These topics occupy a small portion of the fragments, while the vast majority of our sources on Orphic literature concentrate on material that is quite different.

Nevertheless, scholars who lean toward more maximalist positions argue that the Zagreus myth, although it did not contain an idea of original sin, still existed from an early time and was one of the unifying themes of Orphic doctrine. Fritz Graf argues that early Orphic ritual, although it was "more diffuse" than in later periods, was "also reflected in a common myth [i.e., the Zagreus myth], the result of mythical *bricolage* in the late sixth century."[38] While acknowledging that there was no monolithic Orphic religion and that other myths, such as Zeus swallowing Phanes, were just as important to Orphic literary tradition as the Zagreus myth, Graf nevertheless argues that Dionysus was one of the common threads by which Orphic beliefs and practices "had clear contours and were much more than the weird and incoherent phenomena contemporary minimalists [i.e., Edmonds] claim them to be."[39] Likewise, Alberto Bernabé collects fragments that seem to him to contain *doctrinae* that agree with other *Orphica*, even if the ancient authors do not specifically attest that they have an Orphic source. He does not think that Orphism can be defined as a coherent set of doctrines, but he still argues that doctrines are central to defining Orphism. Bernabé acknowledges that because of the variety of Orphic texts and practitioners, "the doctrines found in different passages of the Orphic corpus will not be one and the same," but this is "counterweighed by the fact that the name of the mythical poet was associated with specific themes."[40] In other words, the specific doctrines of any two Orphic texts may not agree on every detail, but Orphism is defined by a set of doctrinal topics, such as cosmogony, eschatology, and anthropogony. More precisely, Bernabé and San Cristóbal see Orphism as the only explanation for combining elements that can also be found in the Eleusinian and Bacchic

36. *OH* 24.10–11, 29.8; cf. *OH* 30.6–7. Morand 2001: 209–217. Dionysus' death is implied in the epithet "thrice-born" in *OH* 30.2. The *Orphic Hymn* to the Titans refers to them as "ancestors of our fathers" (37.2), but this might refer to their typical position as the generation of deities that precedes the Olympians.

37. *OH* 1 (Hecate), *OH* 18 (Plouton), *OH* 29 (Persephone), *OH* 53 (chthonic Dionysus), *OH* 57 (chthonic Hermes; cf. *OH* 28), *OH* 87 (Death); *OF* 337–350 B. For more on eschatology and the *Orphic Hymns*, see Morand 2001: 209–230.

38. Graf and Johnston 2013: 191. The term "bricolage" is discussed in detail further below: Graf sees the Zagreus myth as a single act of bricolage in the sixth century BC, but I present Orphic theogonies as a series of different acts of bricolage over the course of a few centuries.

39. Graf and Johnston 2013: 192–193.

40. Bernabé 2010: 422; cf. Bernabé 2004: vii–x; Herrero 2010: 20–24.

mysteries and in Pythagoreanism.[41] Thus Orphism would consist of a cluster of loosely related mythical motifs and discussions of doctrinal topics.

On the minimalist side of the debate, Edmonds takes issue with scholars who define Orphism as a set of doctrines. Rejecting the idea of an "Orphic exception" to the general rule that ancient religion was not about beliefs, he argues that a definition of Orphism on the basis of doctrines still relies on an "implicit model of doctrinal Christianity." This implicit model contradicts the most basic principles of Greek myth and ritual, which were far more about "loose thematic associations" and "collective ritual performances" than about "systematic theology." Edmonds attempts to construct a more "polythetic" definition of Orphism that relies on "a loose collection of features, none of which are necessary or sufficient," rather than a static set of doctrines. Ancient authors labeled a text or practice as Orphic because it shared in one or more of certain features, not all of which were necessary, but all of which had different levels of "cue validity" at different times. This means that the particular features of Orphism that appear in ancient texts differ from one period to the next, with shifting contexts and motivations. For example, "extra-ordinary purity" was an important cue for practitioners in the early period, but the "extreme antiquity" of Orphic poetry was a more important cue to the later Neoplatonists.[42] Edmonds suggests the following definition, claiming that it renders a more accurate reflection of how things were labeled "Orphic" by ancient authors:

> A text, a myth, a ritual, may be considered Orphic because it is explicitly so labeled (by its author or by an ancient witness), but also because it is marked as extra-ordinary in the same ways as other things explicitly connected with the name of Orpheus and grouped together with them in the ancient evidence. The more marked something is by claims to extra-ordinary purity or sanctity, by claims to special divine connection or extreme antiquity, or by features of extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature, the more likely it is to be labeled Orphic in the ancient evidence.[43]

The features of "extra-ordinary purity or sanctity" refer mostly to the *orpheotelestai* and their clients in the Classical Period, who sought an enhanced state of purity with the gods. The "claims to special divine connection or extreme antiquity" have to do with the reasons why a text was attributed to Orpheus. From the perspectives of the Neoplatonists and Christian apologists of late antiquity, the divine connection and extreme antiquity of Orpheus were their justifications for using Orphic texts to represent the entire Greek tradition. The "features of

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41. Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 179–206.
42. Edmonds 2013: 68–69, 71, 82.
43. Edmonds 2013: 71.

extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature" are most relevant to the content of the texts in Orphic literary tradition. According to Edmonds' definition, Orphic texts, including theogonies, were labeled Orphic in part because of their strange, perverse, and alien contents.

This proposed definition of "Orphica" has potential, but it needs to be refined. It represents progress by moving beyond the doctrinal hypothesis, because it does not rely on modern reconstructions based on Christian models and because it takes into account the wide range of features that characterized Orphic texts and practices at different places and times. However, at least as far as it concerns Orphic literature, one could produce more precise terms than "features of extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature." In a forthcoming article, Edmonds begins to address this problem by observing that Orphic poets added certain types of material that was intended to make their poetry appear more authoritative than Hesiod. They reduplicated the most shocking Hesiodic motifs; for example, in the Rhapsodies Kronos castrates Ouranos but then is castrated by Zeus. They added additional primordial deities to the beginning of the cosmogony, included more extreme and perverse acts of sexuality and violence in certain episodes, and at the climax of the narratives assigned to Zeus a more absolute power than he has in Hesiod. In other words, Edmonds takes his original definition a step further, observing specific ways in which Orphic theogonies are strange, perverse, or extra-ordinary.[44] I do not disagree with Edmonds (and indeed, I draw similar conclusions), but here I add a few more points to the discussion by suggesting other features of Orphic literature that might have generated differences from Hesiod. The obvious blending of Greek with Near Eastern elements, the generic category of theogonic hymns, and the discourse between Orphic myth and philosophy might help to explain the prominence of Phanes and Night, the image of Zeus having the universe in his belly, and the well-known story of the death of Dionysus.

Compared to discussions of the gold tablets and the Derveni Papyrus, relatively little has been written about Orphic theogonies in recent years. The most recent edition of the Orphic fragments (Bernabé's *Poetae Epici Graeci*) includes the four major theogonies mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: Derveni, Eudemian, Hieronyman, and Rhapsodic. The most comprehensive discussion in English of Orphic theogonies continues to be Martin West's *The Orphic Poems*, but his analysis is problematic, partly because his list of theogonies is not the same as Bernabé's. West discusses most of the fragments in detail and attempts to reconstruct not only the individual theogonies, but also a stemma for the entire tradition of Orphic theogonies, suggesting that the author of the Rhapsodies simply copied and compiled the material of three

earlier Orphic theogonies, uniting them into one poem.[45] West attempts to demonstrate that there is a genealogical relationship between, for example, the Derveni theogony, the Eudemian theogony, and the Rhapsodies, by suggesting the existence of two more theogonies to fill in the gaps: the Protogonos and Cyclic theogonies. However, West's genealogical methodology relies upon a lot of conjecture and disallows a level of originality and variety in the texts. His approach has received criticism from other scholars, notably Luc Brisson, who points out that West's reconstruction assumes the existence of two theogonies for which there is no evidence (Protogonos and Cyclic).[46] Brisson prefers to see only three theogonies (ancient, Rhapsodic, Hieronyman), and he suggests that the best way to come to terms with the fragments is "to choose some sure points of reference."[47] He chooses primordial deities as his main point of reference. Night is the primordial deity in "la version ancienne," which to Brisson consists of both the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies: he sees these as identical precisely because Night is the primordial deity in both. He suggests that the figure of Chronos was introduced into the Rhapsodic and Hieronyman theogonies to replace the figure of Night in the ancient version, perhaps in an attempt to reconcile Orphic theogony with Stoic allegory and with Homer and Hesiod.[48] This suggests that the Rhapsodic and Hieronyman theogonies were no mere compilations of previous Orphic poetry, but adaptations in which changes were freely made to adjust the theogony to the author's historical and ideological context.

In a manner similar to West, Janko and Riedweg argue that the Orphic gold tablets were derived from an original Orphic text about eschatology, and they attempt to reconstruct this poem by assembling the individual items on the gold tablets into one complete narrative. Despite the coherence of their arguments, the results of their two investigations are not identical.[49] As with West's method, their conclusions require some conjecture, so some scholars

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45. West 1983: 69, 246–249; see especially the diagram on page 264.

46. Brisson 1995: 398–402. West (1983: 121–126) suggests the Cyclic theogony to account for certain points of divergence between Apollodorus and Orphic theogonies, but Brisson (1995: 405–406) argues that these points can be explained by reference to Hesiod. See also Calame (1991: 229), who criticizes West's attempts to reconstruct an "Urform."

47. Brisson 1995: 390–396, 413. Brisson's chronology is followed by Fayant (2014: xx–xxiii), but West and Bernabé place the Hieronyman theogony before the Rhapsodies.

48. Brisson 1995: 390, 410–412. He argues that the Hieronyman theogony attempts to reconcile Orphic theogony with Homer and Hesiod (Brisson 1995: 395), and that the inclusion of Chronos in the Rhapsodies (and thus later in the Hieronyman theogony) is due to the influence of Mithraism (Brisson 1995: 37–55, 2887). However, the appearance of Chronos in a theogony might go back to Pherecydes (sixth century BC), who equated Chronos with Kronos and depicted him as a primordial deity who initiates cosmogony (Pherecydes, fr. 14, 60 Schibli = 7 A1, A8 D-K; Schibli 1990: 135–139).

49. Janko 1984: 89–100; Riedweg 1998: 359–398; 2011: 219–256. The view that the gold tablets were taken from an Orphic poem is as old as Smith and Comparetti (1882: 117). Bernabé and San Cristóbal (2008: 180–181) find Riedweg's reconstruction "highly convincing."

have applied a different model of interpretation to the gold tablets. Graf and Johnston view the gold tablets as vital evidence of Orphic ritual, and Edmonds remains skeptical about whether they should even be considered Orphic, but all three agree that in each individual case, the gold tablets are products of bricolage, based on the theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss.[50] In its simplest terms, bricolage in this context means that the individual practitioner who produced any given tablet chose different elements of texts or rituals or both, out of the wider field of current possibilities offered by ritual and myth, and put them together in an imaginative and original way that was relevant to the specific time and place of the burial in question. In this sense, the production of gold tablets was no different from any other Greek myth or ritual, for indeed bricolage was the basic mode of production for all Greek religion, which was in no way uniform from one city or deity to the next. But this simply confirms the necessary result of such an action, which is that, despite the overarching thematic similarity of the gold tablets, each one is different in some way or another. Whether the texts of the gold tablets were composed on the basis of a written text, memories of ritual actions, the original imagination of the author, or a mixture of these (which is the most likely scenario), each one is the unique, creative product of the efforts of an individual bricoleur.

In the case of Orphic theogonies, rather than attempting to trace a stemma of successive generations of texts, a better method of analysis would be to approach each fragment of each theogony, or even each element or episode included in a theogony—anything that Brisson's method might consider a sure point of reference—as an individual product or element of bricolage. Lévi-Strauss used the concept of bricolage to explain "mythical thought" by means of an analogy with the bricoleur who creates art "on the technical plane." Unlike an artisan or engineer, the bricoleur's "universe of instruments is closed," so he or she must always "make do with 'whatever is at hand,' that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous."[51] The bricoleur is always limited by a set of "constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization," so the creations of bricolage "always really consist of a new arrangement of elements." These elements are "an already existent set" of "odds and ends," with which the bricoleur engages "in a sort of dialogue," by rearranging them in order to "find them a meaning" by the creation of new structures.[52] Lévi-Strauss concludes that "the significant images of myth, the materials of the bricoleur, are elements which can be defined by two criteria: they have had a use, as words in a piece of discourse which mythical thought 'detaches' in the same way as a bricoleur … detaches the cogwheels

50. Edmonds 2004: 4, 27, 238; Graf and Johnston 2013: 73–93, 184; Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16–36.
51. Lévi-Strauss 1966: 17.
52. Lévi-Strauss 1966: 18–22.

of an old alarm clock; and they can be used again either for the same purpose or for a different one if they are at all diverted from their previous function."[53]

By viewing the Orphic pseudepigraphers who wrote theogonic poetry as bricoleurs who rearranged the "odds and ends" of mythical events at their disposal into a new arrangement of structures, I approach Orphic theogonies as products of bricolage. This approach is in accord with how the concept of bricolage has been applied to the gold tablets, and it is beneficial to an interpretation of Orphic theogonies in three ways. First, since scholars have become more receptive to the idea that Orphism was never a coherent, definable religious community, a useful approach will be one that allows more possibilities for diversity. Brisson has taken the first step by rejecting West's stemma and suggesting points of reference, but one can go further by exploring how these points of reference were rearranged in their individual contexts as the "odds and ends" of bricolage. Second, a bricoleur takes elements from a "finite" but "heterogeneous" field of possibilities, which opens the door to a wide but limited range of sources and influences that could have contributed to the individual works in question. Not all of these are typically considered Orphic: among the possible sources for an Orphic mythical motif are Near Eastern myths, Hesiod and other mainstream literary texts (e.g., Pindar, Aeschylus, Aristophanes), and material from other overlapping categories and elements that are typically associated with Orphic myth and ritual, such as those derived from Eleusinian, Dionysiac, or Pythagorean contexts; in other words, they are derived from more sources than just earlier Orphic theogonies. Third, if we apply the concept of bricolage to the ancient sources themselves—that is, to the ancient authors who quoted the theogonies, such as the Derveni author, Plato, the Neoplatonists, and the Christian apologists—then it becomes clear that their own decisions about what material to include and how to interpret this material were also exercises in bricolage.

One result of my reading of Orphic theogonies as products of bricolage is that, in most cases, it appears that Orphic theogonies may not have been lengthy, comprehensive narratives like Hesiod's *Theogony*, as modern scholars such as West and Bernabé have assumed. Rather, they were shorter poems, analogous to the *Homeric Hymns*, which concentrate on one deity and how he or she came to a position of honour within the Greek pantheon. On this point, again I attempt to improve upon Edmonds' recent efforts to redefine ancient Orphism, since he has argued that the *Sacred Discourse in 24 Rhapsodies* consisted of a collection of shorter poems that was divided into twenty-four books, rather than "one complex theogonical poem that combines the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*," as Graf and Johnston have recently suggested.[54] Comparing the Rhapsodies to the *Sibylline Oracles*, Edmonds argues that "the

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53. Lévi-Strauss 1966: 35.
54. Graf and Johnston 2013: 188–189.

Rhapsodies were more likely a loose collection of Orphic poetry, containing a variety of poems [of varying lengths] that had been composed and reworked over the centuries by a number of different *bricoleurs*."[55] He views the existence of a collection of shorter narratives as the solution to many of the contradictions that have puzzled scholars as they attempt to reconstruct one coherent narrative. Edmonds suggests that "rather than trying to trace a stemma [as West has done] … we may imagine that, at least until it was collected in the Rhapsodies, different works of Orpheus circulated in widely varying versions, with new additions and transformations made freely by each generation of pseudepigraphers," in which case differing versions are simply reflections of different narratives within the collection, and not internally contradictory.[56] Edmonds presents an argument worthy of consideration, but he does not provide a detailed analysis of the Rhapsodies that reconstructs them as this collection of shorter poems. Therefore, part of the purpose of this book is to provide exactly that sort of analysis, not just of the Rhapsodies, but of the entire tradition of Orphic theogonies.

As we will see in chapter 2, the Derveni poem was a short theogonic poem that functioned as a hymn to Zeus. In chapter 3, I argue that the scattered references to Orphic poetry in authors from the Classical Period probably come from different Orphic texts in different collections, rather than from one poem called the Eudemian theogony. Although the Hieronyman theogony presents us with a detailed, coherent narrative, in chapter 4 I consider the possibility that this narrative might not have extended beyond Phanes, and that other events in our sources for the Hieronyman theogony might have come from other Orphic texts. In chapter 5, I study evidence that might confirm Edmonds' hypothesis that the Rhapsodies were a collection of shorter poems and not a continuous narrative, but nevertheless I conclude that it is quite possible that one of these twenty-four poems consisted of a six-generation succession myth, perhaps comparable in length to Hesiod. In chapter 6, I read the myth of Dionysus Zagreus in a way that sets aside modern assumptions about this story's supposed doctrinal significance and sees it in the context of the Rhapsodic narrative as a whole.

Reading the Orphic tradition of theogonic poetry as a loose collection of short theogonic hymns, rather than as a tight stemma of lengthy theogonic narratives, has two consequences for how we view the relationship between these texts and the Orphic rituals with which they were supposedly associated. On the one hand, as Edmonds suggests, "the relation of these texts to the rituals founded by Orpheus must be more complex than has been previously assumed,"[57] since a loose collection of short texts can be applied to a

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55. Edmonds 2013: 149.
56. Edmonds 2013: 159.
57. Edmonds 2013: 157.

wide variety of purposes and settings. But on the other hand, as I would argue, if Orphic theogonic material appeared mostly in the form of shorter poems, then, despite the fact that the specific performance context remains obscure, at least it is easier to imagine their performance as short hymns than as one continuous epic narrative. We may never know specifically what rituals involved the use of these texts, but if we accept that generally the texts consisted of brief hymns with theogonic content, then at least it is conceivable that, in general, the texts had a place in Orphic ritual performance. As their structure tends to differ from Hesiod's *Theogony*, so the context of their performance might have been quite different.

Ancient Theogonic Traditions

Despite these possible structural differences, many of the elements and themes of Orphic theogonies are similar to Hesiod—notably, the core succession myth—and where they are different, these differences are often regarded as alternatives, or deviations, from the more "mainstream" tradition of Hesiod.[58] However, taking into consideration the wider set of more ancient theogonic traditions from India, the Near East, and the Mediterranean region, it becomes apparent that Hesiod is also a bricoleur who weaves eastern motifs into his own unique narrative. Likewise, Orphic poets were bricoleurs who chose elements from outside Greek tradition to combine with traditionally Greek elements, in ways that were different from Hesiod. The narratives of Hesiod and the Orphic poets were products of Greek creativity, but the way the authors assimilated eastern elements into their narratives yielded different results.

When the Hurrian-Hittite *Song of Kumarbi* (sometimes referred to as the "Kingship in Heaven" myth) preserved on Hittite tablets was first published in 1946, scholars quickly recognized significant parallels between this myth and Hesiod.[59] More recently, Burkert and West have pointed out many other parallel elements between Greek and Near Eastern myths, which must have come to Greece during the Late Bronze Age and Early Archaic Period. Burkert argued that these parallels were not few and far between, but detectable in every level of Greek society from the eighth to sixth centuries BC, a period he called the "orientalizing revolution."[60] West supplied more details by pointing out parallels between Near Eastern literature and Greek literature from Homer to Aeschylus. He argued that "West Asiatic" literature influenced Greek literature, and that this was not "a marginal phenomenon," but "pervasive at many

58. West 1997a: 276; López-Ruiz 2010: 130–136.
59. Barnett 1945; Burkert 2004: 3 = 2009: 10–11.
60. Burkert 1992: 128–129.

levels and at most times."[61] Of particular importance here are the parallels between Hesiod's succession myth and the Hurrian-Hittite succession myth, as well as the Babylonian creation myth *Enûma Eliš*. Although West's method consists simply of "the selection and juxtaposition of parallels," he does not suggest that these earlier texts are "direct sources of the Greek text."[62] The most recent extant copies of the *Enûma Eliš* were written on cuneiform tablets centuries before Hesiod, and it is unlikely that Hesiod would have had a copy of the text or a working knowledge of cuneiform. Therefore, West leaves open the question of the mode of transmission.[63] Burkert initially answers this question by finding evidence for migrant craftsmen in technologies ranging from pottery to divination. From the ninth to sixth centuries BC, craftsmen from the Near East migrated to Greece in increasing numbers. Their prolonged stay at Greek cities allowed closer involvement than trade, which made it possible for Greek artisans to appropriate certain skills, an important example of which was alphabetic writing.[64]

López-Ruiz focuses the discussion specifically on the west Asian Semitic groups that were most closely connected to Archaic Greece in space and time. Much of the literature of the Phoenicians is lost because they used perishable writing materials, but some literary parallels can be found between Greek literature and Semitic texts, such as the Ugaritic deity lists, the cycle of Baal myths, and the Hebrew Bible. López-Ruiz draws on these to argue that Near Eastern influence can best be explained through more intimate contacts than trade and skilled artisans: "mainly oral and intimate transmission of stories and beliefs not *from* 'foreigners' *to* 'Greeks' … but between mothers and sons, nannies and children," and other domestic relationships.[65] To the son of a Greek father and a Phoenician mother, Phoenician myths would not be seen as foreign; and over the course of a few generations, these myths would become a part of the same tradition, along with Greek myths told within the same family or community. The modes of transmission or influence of mythological themes and motifs were multiple, many-layered, and multi-directional, from the most distant trade networks to the most intimate domestic relationships, and from the most advanced literary activity to the simplest stories told to children.

Lane Fox brings the discussion to a greater level of precision (but a more limited scope) by tracing the settlement patterns of Euboeans in the eighth century BC from Cilicia, Syria, and Cyprus in the east to Sicily and Ischia in the west. Lane Fox argues that these Euboeans already had a succession myth, but when they encountered neo-Hittite culture they recognized similarities and

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61. West 1997a: 59.
62. West 1997a: viii.
63. West 1997a: 586–629.
64. Burkert 1992: 21–25, 41.
65. López-Ruiz 2010: 5.

assimilated particular details, such as the sickle with which Kronos castrates Ouranos and the battle of Zeus against Typhon. They associated features of the landscapes they encountered with episodes in their myths, leading Lane Fox to reject the idea of transmission of parallels and to see these similarities as the products of "creative misunderstanding." Rather than simply adopting the myths of other cultures, they recognized a "fortuitous convergence" and "amplified their existing stories" by assimilating new features. Lane Fox suggests that the creative activity of these Euboeans, though unknown to Homer, functioned as Hesiod's source for these episodes of the *Theogony*.[66] The Euboeans of the eighth century were bricoleurs no less than Hesiod and the Orphics, so in the Orphic theogonies we see a different configuration of some of these same elements (e.g., the acts of castration and swallowing, serpentine deities). Where Orphic theogonies appear to be influenced by eastern myth, they assimilate particular details into the Greek succession myth in a manner similar to the Euboeans whom Lane Fox describes. In terms of the core succession myth, they never change the pattern of action but they amplify it with elements of eastern myth through the process of bricolage.

According to Burkert, the mode of transmission most relevant to the study of Orphic material was the influence of migrant craftsmen whose *technai* were divination and healing, both of which required expertise in purification techniques. Burkert demonstrated that specialists in divination, healing, and purification were quite mobile in the Near East, and many of them were migrating to Greece by the sixth century BC.[67] These specialists usually had an extensive knowledge of myth, accompanied by texts that they used in ritual. Conspicuous among them were the magi, Persian priests with whom the Greeks had extensive contact by the fifth century. When using the word μάγοι to refer to these Persian priests, Greek authors showed great respect for this ancient mystical practice; but sometimes when referring to fellow Greeks as μάγοι, they used the word pejoratively, characterizing them as itinerant magicians who profited shamefully from their art. For example, the Hippocratic text *On the Sacred Disease* puts μάγοι in the same category as "purifiers, beggars, and quacks."[68] Plato describes a similar class of priest in his *Republic*, the "begging priests and fortune-tellers" who perform ritual services for a fee, using "a bunch of books by Musaeus and Orpheus" (2.364b–365a). Burkert has labeled this class of priests *orpheotelestai*: they were independent agents who performed divination, purification, and initiation for a price, using texts ascribed to Orpheus. Most likely these were the ritual specialists who used Orphic theogonies, having been influenced by other practitioners from the east, not least of whom were

66. Lane Fox 2008: 83, 265, 317–349.
67. Burkert 1992: 41–87.
68. Hippocrates, *De Morbo Sacro* 1.23–24; cf. Burkert 2004: 107–108; Edmonds 2008: 16–39.

the magi.[69] Some connection between the *orpheotelestai* and the magi can per-
haps be seen in the Derveni author's statement that "initiates make a prelimi-
nary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the magi do" (DP 6.8–9). This
suggests two premises that are relevant to the study of Orphic theogonies: (1)
ritual specialists such as the magi and the *orpheotelestai* were at least partly re-
sponsible for the transmission of mythical motifs from the east to Greece; and
(2) the use of theogonic texts by ritual specialists was itself a practice that was
transmitted from the east.

By whatever means the themes and motifs of Near Eastern myth made their
way into Greek myth, the fact that similarities exist is well-established, particu-
larly in the case of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Scholars have pointed out many parallels
between Hesiod and earlier theogonies, but some of these have also been found
in Orphic theogonies. And in passages where Orphic theogonies diverge from
the narrative of Hesiod's *Theogony*, these differences tend to find parallels with
Near Eastern themes and motifs that do not appear in Hesiod. In other words,
Orphic bricoleurs assimilated elements of eastern myths into their narratives
in ways that were different from Hesiod. For example, in the Hurrian-Hittite
succession myth, the sky-god An is defeated when his son Kumarbi bites off
his genitals and swallows them, thus becoming pregnant with the next king
in the succession myth, the storm-god Tessub.[70] The parallels between this
and Hesiod are obvious: like Kumarbi, Kronos castrates his father, the sky-god
Ouranos, and he also swallows his children.[71] Depending on how we read the
Derveni poem, it follows the same basic three-generation succession myth, but
adds a detail that is absent from Hesiod: after the reign of Kronos, "who did
a great deed" (*OF* 10.1 B)—presumably castrating his father—Zeus swallows
either the whole body of Phanes or the phallus of Ouranos (*OF* 8, 12.1 B).[72]
This narrative includes an event that does not appear in Hesiod—Ouranos is
castrated in Hesiod but no one swallows his phallus—yet this episode in the
Derveni poem is comparable to the Hurrian-Hittite myth, in which Kumarbi
swallows An's genitals. Where a difference from Hesiod appears in the text,
closer inspection might reveal a connection with Hurrian-Hittite myth. This
suggests that it might not be a deviation from the mainstream, but a competing
version of the myth that assimilated eastern motifs in different ways. Other
parallels have been noticed between Orphic and Near Eastern theogonies,
and these will be discussed in detail as they become relevant in later chapters.
Therefore, in order to lay a foundation for the discussion of those parallels,
the next few pages contain a brief summary of earlier Near Eastern theogonies

69. Burkert 1982: 1–22; cf. Obbink 1997: 47; KPT 2006: 235; Parker 2011: 16–20.
70. *Song of Kumarbi* 4–10, trans. Hoffner and Beckman 1998: 42–43.
71. Hesiod, *Theogony* 178–182, 460–464; see West 1966: 20–23; 1997a: 278–280; Lane Fox
2008: 259–279.
72. See chapter 2 for more on this.

and cosmogonies, drawing attention to similarities that have been be-
tween these and Greek literature, particularly Homer, Hesiod, and the Orphic
theogonies.

The earliest written account of a cosmogony is the Mesopotamian *Epic
of Creation*, also known as *Enûma Eliš*. The most complete extant version of
this text was written in Akkadian cuneiform during the Middle Babylonian
Period (1500–1000 BC), and 1,092 lines have been preserved on seven tablets.[73]
The main theme of the story is the rise to power of Marduk, the patron deity
of Babylon, but the story extends from the beginning of time to the creation
of humans. It was recited annually at New Year celebrations in Babylon by a
priest in seclusion at the temple of Marduk, followed by public celebrations led
by the king of Babylon. The purpose of this annual recital and performance, as
Cornford understood it, was the renewal of "the ordered life of the social group
and of the world of nature." The king of Babylon was the "living embodiment"
of Marduk, so by performing certain actions that were symbolic of the story of
Marduk, the king secured and reinstated his royal power through the New Year
ritual. Cornford interpreted this "annual re-enactment of Creation" as a "mag-
ical" renewal of the natural world, or a re-creation of the cosmos, in line with
the "initial act of creation."[74]

Despite the Frazerian tendencies of Cornford's argument,[75] the idea that
cosmogonies were recited as a means to reinstall order in the cosmos has
found some acceptance by more recent scholars, notably Burkert. He argues
that the purpose of the recital of the *Enûma Eliš* was "to rebuild the just and sa-
cred order, including all the privileges of the god and his city." Burkert explains
that a "new and proper order" was thought to be "created or recreated from its
very foundations" by the performance of this myth. He compares this use of
cosmogony with a "magician" who attempts "getting to the root of a particular
sickness" by locating its place in the cosmos. For example, there is an Akkadian
cosmogonic text that was used as a spell to cure a toothache. While performing
magical actions, the priest chanted, "Sky made sky, sky made dirt, dirt made
flowers, flowers made canals, canal made swamp, swamp made worm," and in
doing so, the "worm" was put in its place within the cosmic order, at the top
of which was "sky."[76] The basic idea of this chant was similar to the New Year

73. West 1997a: 61–68. Most extant copies of Sumerian poetry were written between 1900 and
1600 BC, when Akkadian was the current language. Surviving Akkadian texts come mainly from
the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, which was burned in the seventh century BC, but these texts
preserve stories that are much older.

74. Cornford 1950: 108–111.

75. Cornford 1950: 105–107. An early twentieth-century ritualist, Cornford built his work on
the theories of James Frazer. There are some useful points in his interpretation of the Babylonian
festival, but this does not necessitate his conclusion that Hesiod's *Theogony* itself was based on an
earlier Greek New Year ritual.

76. Burkert 1992: 125; text cited in Lenowitz and Doria 1976: 135.

celebrations that glorified Marduk, and might be relevant to the question of the ritual use of Orphic theogonies. According to this interpretation, the purpose of reciting a cosmogony—that is, ritually invoking the means by which the present order of the cosmos was brought into being—was to impose cosmic order over a local situation. Singing a theogony brought the practitioners and a part of their world in line with the universal cosmos, whether the context was the political order of the Babylonian kingdom, the ritual purity of an initiate, or a toothache.

The narrative of the *Enûma Eliš* begins with Apsû and Tiâmat, two watery deities who represent salt water (Tiâmat) and fresh water (Apsû): "When skies above were not yet named, nor earth below pronounced by name, Apsû, the first one, their begetter and maker Tiâmat, who bore them all, had mixed their waters together. ... Then gods were born within them."[77] This contrasts with Hesiod's *Theogony* (116–117), where Chaos is the first deity, followed by Gaia; but it is remarkably similar to a passage in Homer (*Iliad* 14.201) that refers to "Ocean the origin of the gods and mother Tethys," and there is even a possible etymological connection between the names of Tethys and Tiâmat.[78] Early in the Babylonian myth, however, we are reminded of the Hesiodic passage (*Theogony* 156–159) where Ouranos keeps his children inside Gaia. Five generations of gods were born inside Tiâmat, and they "would meet together and disturb Tiâmat. ... They stirred up Tiâmat's belly,"[79] so Apsû resolved to kill them. Most of the gods cowered in fear when they became aware of Apsû's intentions, but Ea, the son of the sky-god Anu, lured Apsû to sleep. Ea killed him and "set up his dwelling on top of Apsû," and it was there that his son Marduk was born.[80] Soon after, Tiâmat began to plan her revenge and to assemble many of the gods on her side, but Ea and the other gods proclaimed Marduk to be their new king and urged him to defend them against Tiâmat.[81] Marduk's moment of victory came when Tiâmat attempted to swallow him. He created winds and blew them into her mouth, rendering her unable to close it. He fired an arrow down her throat, "which pierced her belly, split her down the middle and slit her heart."[82] When Marduk finally finished killing Tiâmat and defeating her allies, "he divided the monstrous shape and created marvels (from it). He sliced her in half like a fish for drying: half of her he put up to roof the sky. ... Her waters he arranged so that they could not escape."[83] In other

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77. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233.
78. Burkert 1992: 91–93; 2004: 30–32 = 2009: 36–38; López-Ruiz 2010: 90.
79. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233; see West 1997a: 288–292.
80. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 235. Ea is from the fifth generation of gods born inside Apsû and Tiâmat; the genealogy runs: Apsû and Tiâmat—Lahmu and Lahamu—Anshar and Kishar—Anu-Ea (López-Ruiz 2010: 90).
81. *Enûma Eliš* Tablets II–IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 239–252.
82. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 253.
83. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 255.

words, he cut her in half, creating the earth out of one half and the sky out of the other, sort of like the cosmic egg in Orphic myth. After this victory, Marduk was proclaimed king of the gods, and he proceeded with the act of creation, setting up stars, rivers, and mountains. Then Marduk suggested to his father Ea that they should work together to create humans, saying, "Let me create a primeval man. The work of the gods shall be imposed (on him), and so they shall be at leisure."[84]

This narrative of the rise of Marduk to power has been compared to the rise of Zeus to power in Hesiod: like Marduk, Zeus must defeat a great and terrible opponent, Typhoeus (*Theogony* 820–885), and after he does this, the gods proclaim him as their king.[85] But there are also many differences between the *Enûma Eliš* and Hesiod. To mention only a few: Apsû and Tiâmat as primordial deities have no parallel in Hesiod, despite the similarity with Homer; the sky-god Anu appears a few generations later in the Babylonian genealogy than Ouranos does in Hesiod (Anu is from the fourth generation, and Ouranos is from the second); and both Ea and Marduk defeat distant ancestors, not their fathers. Unlike Kronos, who attempts to swallow his children, Ea unreservedly shows support for Marduk as he goes to battle against Tiâmat and is then proclaimed king.[86] Finally, the mode of creation is not the same as Hesiod. To borrow Burkert's terms, Hesiod's *Theogony* narrates a "biomorphic" creation, in which the cosmos is simply the natural result of different generations of deities mating. Other creation myths, such as the Hebrew account in Genesis 1–3, narrate a "technomorphic" creation, in which a deity intelligently designs the cosmos.[87] The creation myth in *Enûma Eliš* appears to combine the two: the first five generations of deities are created biomorphically, but after the defeat of Tiâmat, Marduk acts as an intelligent, creative demiurge. He does not create ex nihilo, but uses the remaining materials from Tiâmat's body to put together creation. This is quite different from Hesiod, but in the Derveni theogony and the Rhapsodies, Zeus re-creates the cosmos out of preexisting materials in a remarkably similar way. Likewise, Phanes is born biomorphically but functions as a demiurge in the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies. Another possible parallel is the way Marduk splits Tiâmat's body in two, creating the earth out of one half and the sky out of the other; again, this is like the cosmic egg in the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies, which splits to become

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84. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet V–VI, trans. Dalley 1989: 255–261.

85. West 1997a: 282. As Marduk creates winds to defeat Tiâmat, so in Hesiod winds are created from Typhoeus (*Theogony* 869–880).

86. *Enûma Eliš* Tablets II, V, trans. Dalley 1989: 242–244, 258; López-Ruiz 2010: 90–91. There are some indications that in the Rhapsodies Kronos eventually consented to the rule of Zeus; see Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 27.21, 62.6 Pasquali; *in Plat. Tim.* 1.207.1 Diehl; *in Plat. Alcib.* 103a (60 Segonds); Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 270 (3.12.11 Westerink); Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Alcib.* 15.16 (13 Westerink) (*OF* 239 B = 129, 155 K).

87. Burkert 2004: 63 = 2009: 69–70.

earth and sky. As these examples illustrate, some of the contrasts between Orphic theogonies and Hesiod can be explained as parallels between Orphic theogonies and the *Enûma Eliš*.

Similar sets of parallels can be found with the Hurrian-Hittite myths of Kumarbi and Tessub (also spelled Teshub). The Hurrians lived in the hills north of Mesopotamia as early as the third millennium, but by 1330 BC they were made subject to Hittite rule. Hurrian culture, having itself derived largely from Mesopotamian culture (for example, the Mesopotamian deities Enlil and Ea appear in Hurrian texts), in turn influenced the Hittites, who readily incorporated Hurrian deities into their own pantheon. For this reason, the *Song of Kumarbi* and *Song of Ullikummi* (c. 1300 BC) preserve older Hurrian myths, but they are still representative of Hittite myth, a fact that itself demonstrates that mythical themes and motifs were mobile between cultures. Like the *Enûma Eliš*, there are indications that the *Song of Ullikummi* was performed at the Hittite New Year festival. The stories of Kumarbi and Tessub were still sung by neo-Hittites on Mount Hazzi in the ninth century BC, where Lane Fox locates their initial contact with Greek travelers.[88]

Only the first tablet of the *Song of Kumarbi* is extant, and it is riddled with lacunae. It begins with an invocation to a list of deities to "listen" to the narrative, which starts by saying that "in primeval years Alalu was king in heaven." He ruled for nine years until his son, the sky-god Anu, defeated him and "took his seat on his throne," while his son Kumarbi "was giving him drink" and "bowing down at his feet."[89] After another nine years, Anu did battle with Kumarbi:

> [Anu] set out for the sky. (But) Kumarbi rushed after him, seized Anu by the feet/legs, and dragged him down from the sky. (Kumarbi) bit his (Anu's) loins, and his "manhood" united with Kumarbi's insides. … When Kumarbi had swallowed the "manhood" of Anu, he rejoiced and laughed out loud.[90]

But Anu revealed to Kumarbi that by swallowing his father's phallus/genitals, he had become pregnant with three gods, including the storm-god Tessub. Kumarbi tried spitting them out, but he was unable to dislodge Tessub.[91] When the time came for Tessub to be born, Kumarbi tried to prevent him from coming out of his head or stomach (called simply "the good place"), so he swallowed something, most likely a stone, but this hurt his teeth. His plan

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88. West 1997a: 101–105; Noegel 2007: 25; Lane Fox 2008: 246–261; López-Ruiz 2010: 91–92.
89. *Song of Kumarbi* 1–4, trans. Hoffner and Beckman 1998.
90. *Song of Kumarbi* 4–5.
91. *Song of Kumarbi* 6–7. The other two gods are Tessub's attendant, Tasmisu, and either the river Tigris (West 1997a: 278) or Euphrates (Burkert 2004: 92).

to prevent the birth of Tessub by swallowing a stone did not succeed, so "the heroic Tessub came out through the [good] place." Tessub was born on Mount Kanzura, and he was a proud warrior, but his bull Seri warned him not to curse the other gods.[92] In the *Song of Ullikummi*, after Tessub has acquired royal power, he must defend it by defeating a monster named Ullikummi, whom Kumarbi has created as a challenge to Tessub's power. Like the myth of Marduk, this text has been compared to the battle between Zeus and Typhoeus in Hesiod's *Theogony*.[93]

As in the case of the Babylonian succession myth (Anu-Ea-Marduk), the basic generational pattern of Anu (sky-god), Kumarbi, and Tessub (storm-god) corresponds to Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus in Hesiodic and Orphic poetry. The first deity of the Hurrian-Hittite theogony, Alalu, does not correspond precisely to any Greek deity, despite López-Ruiz's suggestion that "if he is chthonic, as some think, he would be parallel to some extent to Gaia."[94] The castration of Anu corresponds to the castration of Ouranos in Hesiod,[95] but Kumarbi swallowing Anu's genitals might correspond to Zeus swallowing Ouranos' phallus in the Derveni poem (unless he instead swallows Phanes; see chapter 2). There is another parallel if indeed it is a stone that Kumarbi swallows: Kumarbi swallows the stone in an attempt to kill his son, who is already inside him, while Kronos attempts to swallow his son, but swallows a stone instead; in both cases, the aim is to prevent the birth of the storm-god.[96] These parallels will be discussed in detail in chapter 2, but for now we may note that, again, where an Orphic theogony is found to be different from Hesiod, a parallel can be found in an older, eastern theogony.

Despite the relative lack of comparable Semitic (particularly Phoenician) theogonies and cosmogonies, these are important because they were closer to the Greeks in time and space. There are certain sources that provide us with relevant material, and some of these come from Ugarit, a city that had important connections with all of the major Bronze Age civilizations. Cuneiform tablets dating from the fifteenth to twelfth centuries BC have been found at Ugarit in a variety of ancient languages, including the local Ugaritic script, which is the oldest extant Semitic language. A wide variety of genres is found in these tablets, from business records to mythical poetry.[97] Some fragments of poetry

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92. *Song of Kumarbi* 13–24.

93. Hesiod, *Theogony* 820–880; West 1997a: 300–302; López-Ruiz 2010: 93–94; Lane Fox 2008: 280–301.

94. López-Ruiz 2010: 92; cf. Barnett 1945: 101; West 1997a: 279–280.

95. According to Lane Fox (2008: 264), heaven and earth are separated in the Hittite myth by a "copper cutter" that the Greeks associated with Kronos' sickle.

96. Different generations are involved: Kronos/Kumarbi (second generation) castrate Ouranos/Anu (first generation), but Kumarbi (second) and Zeus (third) swallow a phallus/genitals. In both cases, the stone is set up as a cult object afterward (Hesiod, *Theogony* 498–500; West 1997a: 280, 294).

97. West 1997a: 84–85; López-Ruiz 2010: 61.

preserve stories about Baal, sometimes called the "Cloudrider,"[98] so scholars speak of a "Baal cycle," which could either consist of a series of episodes in one long narrative or a set of different narratives. Specifically, there are six Ugaritic tablets that narrate events in the life of Baal, attributed to an author named Ilimilku. In the first two tablets, "Bull El" (corresponding to Kronos) gives power to Yammu the sea-god and convinces him to overthrow the storm-god Baal, saying, "Drive him from [his royal] thr[one], / [from the resting place, the throne] of his domination."[99] Yammu and Baal join in battle, but Baal gains the upper hand when he is given two throwing-clubs from Kothar, the craftsman god. Upon victory, Baal is proclaimed king of the gods when Kothar proclaims, "Yamm[u] surely is dead! Baal rei[gns]."[100] The third and fourth tablets narrate the building of a palace for Baal.[101] In the last two tablets, Baal challenges Mot, the death-god, but Mot gains the upper hand and overcomes Baal. Baal's sister Anat goes to Mot to convince him to release Baal. Mot refuses Anat's request, so she kills him, and, as a result, Baal is brought back from the realm of the death-god. Somewhat later, Mot is also restored, but Baal defeats him in a final battle and his kingship is secured.[102] The parallels between the Baal cycle, the Marduk myth, and Hesiod are simple: like Marduk and Zeus, Baal is a storm-god who must defeat a formidable, watery opponent in order to secure his kingship. There might be some relation between this and the episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes, who is represented as a theriomorphic, serpentine being.

Two other relevant sources are the Ugaritic deity lists (fourteenth century BC), which are two sets of catalogues listing deities in what appears to be a hierarchical order of some type. Four deities appear in both versions in the same order—Ilu-ibi, Ilu (El), Dagan, and Baalu Zapuni (Baal Zaphon)—but in the second of the two lists, other deities are inserted between these four. It is unclear whether they are listed as successive generations of gods or according to some other type of hierarchy. Although they are not theogonic poetry, these lists appear to have some kind of ritual function, so López-Ruiz suggests that they "functioned as 'checklists' for the proper carrying out of the rituals" by the priests of Ugarit. She observes that some of the entries in the deity lists basically correspond to the first few generations of deities in Philo's *Phoenician History* (e.g., El, Dagan, Baal), which indicates that Philo was drawing from a coherent and continuous Semitic tradition.[103] A Hellenized Phoenician

98. E.g., *KTU* 1.3 IV 5–6, 25–27; trans. Smith and Pitard 2009: 72–73; and *KTU* 1.4 III 10–11; trans. Smith and Pitard 2009: 78.

99. *KTU* 1.1 IV 24–25; trans. M. Smith 1994: 133.

100. *KTU* 1.2 IV 32; trans. M. Smith 1994: 322–324.

101. This is initiated when Baal's sister Anat complains to El that "Baal has no house like the gods" (*KTU* 1.3 V 38–39; trans. Smith and Pitard 2009: 74).

102. West 1997a: 86–87. Unfortunately, Smith has not yet published a commentary of *KTU* 1.5–6.

103. López-Ruiz 2010: 103. The first deity list (*Ras Shamra* 1.017 and parallels) is Ilu-ibi, Ilu (El), Dagan, Baalu Zapuni (Baal Zaphon), Baalima. The second deity list (*Ras Shamra* 24.643 verso

from Tyre, Philo (first/second century AD)[104] wrote a Euhemeristic version of Phoenician theogony that betrays an obvious familiarity with Hesiod, for, in fact, his text was an attempt to prove that Hesiod's *Theogony* was based on Phoenician theogony. Since the discoveries of the Ugaritic deity lists in 1929 and the *Song of Kumarbi* in 1936, scholars have taken seriously Philo's claim to have transmitted authentic details from Phoenician theogony. Specifically, Philo claimed that his narrative was based on the work of an author named Sanchouniathon, who lived in the Late Bronze Age; but he wrote his narrative with constant reference to Hesiod, and he attempted to historicize mythical events from a Euhemeristic perspective.[105]

According to Eusebius, Philo's "translation of Sanchuniathon" began with "a blast of dark mist, and a turbid, watery chaos," similar to Chaos in Hesiod's *Theogony*, as "the source of all things."[106] This airy chaos was "limitless" for a long time until:

> When the wind loved its own primary elements and a mixture resulted, that plexus was called Pothos (Desire). This [plexus] is the source for the creation of all things … and from his connection [with the wind], Mot was born of the wind. Some say that [Mot] is slime, others the fermentation of a watery mixture.[107]

From this muddy beginning emerged the creation of all things, but the first deity mentioned by name in Philo's succession myth is "a certain Elioun, also called Most High." This deity gives birth to "Terrestrial Native, whom they later called Ouranos" and his sister Ge.[108] Ouranos succeeds to the throne, marries Ge, and they give birth to four children: Elos/Kronos, Baitylos, Dagon, and Atlas. But Ouranos also has other children with other women, and this angers Ge, so she separates from him. Kronos grows up and overthrows Ouranos, succeeding him as king. One result of the prolonged battle between Kronos and Ouranos is that "Ouranos' lovely concubine was captured in the battle, who was pregnant, and Kronos gave her to be the wife of Dagon. While with him she bore the child that Ouranos had sown and called him Demarous." [109] Somewhat later, Ouranos tries to defeat Kronos again, but Kronos "trapped

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and parallels) is Ilu-ibi, Arzu-wa-Shamuma, Ilu (El), Kotharatu, Dagan, Baalu Halbi, Baalu Zapuni, Tharrathiya.

104. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2: Jacoby estimates AD 54–142; A. Baumgarten (1981: 32–35) estimates that he lived in the late first century, until at least the time of Hadrian.

105. López-Ruiz 2010: 95.

106. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.9.30–1.10.1); reprinted in A. Baumgarten 1981: 12–19; trans. A. Baumgarten 1981: 96–98.

107. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1–2); trans. A. Baumgarten 1981: 96–97, with minor modifications.

108. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.14–15); trans. López-Ruiz 2010: 96.

109. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.18–19); trans. López-Ruiz 2010: 96.

his father Ouranos in an inland location." After all of this, the last king in the succession is Demarous/Zeus, who rules "with the consent of Kronos."[110] In summary, after the primordial wind, the "Most High" gives birth to Ouranos, who is succeeded by Elos/Kronos, and then by Demarous/Zeus. Once again, the mythographer adheres to the traditional three-generation succession myth.

Despite these similarities, López-Ruiz has noted important differences between Hesiod and Philo that are probably related to Philo's Phoenician sources. Although the motif of Ouranos' castration is there, in Philo this happens later in the narrative at the final moment of battle. Although sky and earth are separated, this happens before the act of castration, so castration does not have the same significance as it does in Hesiod. In this aspect, the narrative is closer to the Hurrian-Hittite myth, in which Kumarbi castrates Anu as the last act of a long struggle. Also, the storm-god who becomes king at the end of the succession myth—Tessub in the Hittite myth, Demarous/Zeus in Philo—is the offspring of the earlier sky-god—Anu in the Hittite myth, Ouranos in Philo—but he is the son of Kronos in Hesiod. Despite the apparent Hittite influence on Philo, the inclusion of certain deity names demonstrates the presence of Canaanite influence. Dagon (= Dagan in the Ugaritic deity lists) is a Semitic grain-god (*dagan* means "grain" in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Hebrew), and the names Elos (El) and Demarous are also attested in the Canaanite/Phoenician tradition.[111]

Therefore, despite the complications arising from Philo's Euhemeristic tendencies and his obvious reliance on Hesiod, there are still traces of early Phoenician theogonic myth that can be detected in his work. This notion is supported by the existence of details common to both Philo and early Semitic sources. Where Philo differs from Hesiod, he draws from Near Eastern myth, but there might be more comparisons that can be made between Philo and Orphic theogonies. For example, a primordial mud is formed when the wind gets mixed up with Desire, and presumably the first gods emerge from this mixture. This is similar to the beginning of the Hieronyman theogony, which begins with the primordial elements of water and mud (*OF* 75 B). López-Ruiz suggests that Chronos ("Time"), as he appears in the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic theogonies, can be explained with reference to Philo and Ugaritic sources as a consequence of the correspondence between Greek Chronos and Semitic El.[112] Chronos will be discussed in chapter 4 when we look at the Hieronyman theogony, the first Orphic text in which he appears as a primordial deity.

110. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.29–31); trans. López-Ruiz 2010: 96–97; cf. *OF* 239 B, where Kronos appears to consent to Zeus' rule when Zeus asks him to "raise up our race, glorious *daimon*."

111. López-Ruiz 2010: 97–104.

112. López-Ruiz 2006: 80–94.

There are also traces of Egyptian influence in Greek myth that are relevant to Orphic theogonies. Certain details of Hesiodic and Orphic myth find parallels with Egyptian myth, but despite the profound effect this might have on interpretations of the Greek texts, Egyptian influence does not extend as far into narrative structure as the influence of the succession myth in Hittite and Mesopotamian texts. Nevertheless, the importance of Egyptian influence is undeniable and has long been noted. In fact, this is found as early as Herodotus, whose discussion of a taboo against wearing woolen garments includes the much-debated statement that "they agree in this with things called Orphic and Bacchic, but they are Egyptian and Pythagorean" (2.81.2). This passage of Herodotus has raised many questions about the connections between Orphic and Bacchic (especially as they concern the gold tablets), Orphic and Pythagorean, Orphic and Egyptian; and certainly the similarities between Osiris and Dionysus Zagreus are striking, since both are dismembered.[113] The best explanation of the connection between these different "fields" is Burkert's use of Venn diagrams to visualize the independent but overlapping fields of Orphic, Bacchic, and Pythagorean ideas. Certain elements of the Orphic field overlap with Bacchic and Pythagorean, while other elements do not; and likewise, certain elements of Bacchic practice overlap with Orphic practice, particularly by means of Orphic texts.[114] And any one of these elements could have come from Egypt.

The element on which Herodotus comments is the wearing of woolen garments, but other points of comparison between Egyptian and Greek myth or practice have been noticed. For example, Burkert has observed a parallel that relates to the eschatology contained in the Orphic gold tablets, particularly the one from Hipponion (c. 400 BC). In this text, the deceased is instructed that upon entering the underworld, he or she will come upon the following scene (*OF* 474.2–4 B):

> there is a spring on the right side,
> and standing beside it a white cypress.
> Descending to it the souls of the dead refresh themselves.

The deceased is instructed to avoid this spring and to move forward to another spring, the spring of Memory, where guardians will ask for the correct

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113. Plutarch comments on this at *de Is. et Osir.* 35, p. 364d–e (*OF* 47 B). The edict of Ptolemy Philopater in 204 BC that instructs Bacchic initiators to turn in their *hieroi logoi* demonstrates that Bacchic mysteries were practiced in Egypt (*P. Berlin* 11774 verso = *OF* 44 B; see Henrichs 2003: 227–228). Some fragments suggest that Orpheus learned mystery rites from the Egyptians before bringing them to Greece (*OF* 48–53 B); for example, Diodorus Siculus 1.96.3–5 (*OF* 48 II B = *OT* 96 K) equates Dionysus with Orpheus and claims that Orpheus introduced Egyptian rites into the Bacchic mysteries.

114. Burkert 1977: 6–10.

password. Burkert likens this to the Egyptian Book of the Dead, where the texts are accompanied by a picture in which "we see a tree, a pond, and thirsty persons bowing to drink."[115]

Likewise, certain episodes in Orphic theogonies can perhaps be connected to Egyptian myths. As Faraone and Teeter have argued, the Hesiodic myth of Zeus swallowing Metis "probably derives ... from Egyptian royal ideology."[116] They compare Metis to the Egyptian goddess Maat, who appears in texts from 2500 BC to AD 200. Maat is often depicted being offered to male gods, including the Egyptian king who becomes "the possessor of Maat" because of the offering. Maat symbolized truth and order in every aspect of existence, so Egyptian rulers identified themselves with her, and Egyptian gods were said to "gulp down Maat." In one text, the goddess Nun advises the creator-god Atum to "eat of your daughter Maat."[117] Whether or not there is an etymological connection between the names of Metis and Maat, Faraone and Teeter suggest that the swallowing of Metis in Hesiod imparts royal authority and justice to Zeus in the same way that swallowing Maat imparts royalty to the Egyptian king.[118] In this way, Maat is one Egyptian deity who influences Greek myth as it appears in Hesiod, so this parallel is equally relevant to the appearance of Metis in Orphic theogonies. Whether or not it refers to the goddess Metis, the word μῆτις appears in the Derveni theogony (DP 15.13), as well as Zeus' epithet μητίετα (DP 15.6 = OF 10.3 B). In the Rhapsodies, Metis appears as one of the many names of Phanes (OF 139–141 B). Later she reappears as the daughter of Ocean (as in a fragment of Hesiod)[119] to help Zeus outwit Kronos (OF 215 B). When Zeus swallows Phanes in the Rhapsodies, Metis appears again to be equated with Phanes, thus drawing a link with the more familiar narrative of the swallowing of Metis in Hesiod (OF 240, 243 B).

Yet another link with Egyptian myth can perhaps be detected in the Derveni Papyrus, if we read OF 8 B (= DP 13.4) the way Burkert translates it, that Zeus "swallowed the phallus [of Ouranos], who first had ejaculated aither." The Derveni author interprets this phallus as the sun; and if Burkert's reading is correct, then Ouranos, by ejaculating aither, "created the brilliance of sky by a first ejaculation, before castration."[120] This might make sense of the Derveni author's statement that Kronos is the son of Helios (DP 14.2 = OF 9 B): simply put, the sun is the phallus of the sky. Burkert argues that the myth of Ouranos ejaculating aither comes from "the main line of Egyptian cosmogonies":

115. Burkert 2004: 87 = 2009: 94–95.
116. Faraone and Teeter 2004: 178.
117. Faraone and Teeter 2004: 179, 185–192.
118. Faraone and Teeter 2004: 178–181, 193–196.
119. Hesiod, fr. 343.4–15 (M-W) = Chrysippus, fr. 908.
120. Burkert 2004: 90–92 = 2009: 98–99.

These start with an island rising from Nun, the primeval ocean, and a first god taking his seat there, Atum. In his loneliness Atum starts masturbating, and he ejaculates Shu and Tefnut. Shu is Air, brilliant Air, Tefnut is his twin sister; their children will be Heaven and Earth.[121]

According to Burkert, Ouranos corresponds to Atum, who initiates creation by ejaculating; and Shu, being "brilliant Air," corresponds to the aither that Ouranos ejaculates.[122] If Burkert is correct in reading *OF* 8 B as Ouranos ejaculating aither, then this is one element of an Orphic theogony that has significant precedents in Egyptian myth. However, this is not the only way to read *OF* 8 B; as we will see in chapter 2, other scholars translate the fragment, "first jumped into the aither."

Finally, some fragments of Orphic theogonies have significant similarities with early Vedic texts. In chapters 3 and 4, I note that the narrative of Chronos and the cosmic egg finds parallels with the *Atharvaveda*, in which Kala is a primordial time deity who gives birth to Prajapati, a creator deity who corresponds to Phanes in the Orphic narratives. West notes that "in some accounts he too is born from an egg."[123] Like Chronos, Kala does not create the cosmos, but by means of a cosmic egg he produces the deity who will create the cosmos. Another Vedic parallel is seen in the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, which expands upon the moment after Zeus has swallowed Phanes. In thirty-two lines, the Rhapsodic version describes different parts of Zeus' body as identical to different parts of the cosmos. This has long been compared with Vedic texts that describe the cosmos as the body of a deity in similar ways.[124]

This review of ancient theogonic traditions and their parallels with Greek theogonies confirms Strauss Clay's suggestion that Hesiod did not write his theogony in isolation, but within the context of "a developed genre of theogonic poetry" that extended far beyond archaic Greek poets.[125] It was not the case that Hesiod was the first, and thus canonical by nature; rather, his text was one of many theogonies in the Archaic Period, and only later, perhaps as late as the Hellenistic Period, did it become canonized. Through a variety of means, ancient Near Eastern mythological motifs made their way into Greek lore during the age of oral bards, from which any number of different versions may have arisen. Each poet was a bricoleur who chose which elements to include in the narrative, constantly changing these elements to fit the individual context, and there were competing versions with both major and minor differences.

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121. Burkert 2004: 93 = 2009: 100–101.

122. Burkert 2004: 95 = 2009: 103.

123. West 1983: 103–104; cf. West 1971: 30–33; Lujan 2011: 85–91.

124. West 1983: 240; Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 47–48; Reitzenstein and Schaeder 1965: 81–94.

125. Strauss Clay 2003: 4.

Hesiod's *Theogony* just happens to be the most complete text that has survived, but there were others that did not survive, and some of these were Orphic theogonies.

The earliest Orphic theogonies were not later, alternative deviations from Hesiod, but contemporary, competing versions within this wider pattern of theogonic narratives. They might have been even older than Hesiod, but there is no way of knowing this with certainty. Some scholars have suggested that the Orphic version of the story of Demeter might have been older than the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.[126] Whether or not this is the case, the earliest Orphic poetry seems to have been roughly contemporaneous with the *Homeric Hymns*, if indeed it emerged within archaic oral rhapsodic traditions. Out of the vast and changing field of oral poetry in the Archaic Period, only a few theogonic narratives evolved into written traditions. One of these was the manuscript tradition of Hesiod, whose theogony eventually became the standard version, but another was the pseudepigraphic tradition of Orphic theogonies. These have left traces of an early stage of written composition in the fragments that we refer to as the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies. They were not deviant, marginal versions that rebelled against Hesiod, but alternative versions that competed with Hesiod in the wider tradition of poetic theogonies. One type of evidence that can support this claim is the existence of parallel patterns of action between Orphic theogonies and older Near Eastern theogonies. These patterns suggest that there were multiple chains of transmission between Mesopotamian, Semitic, Egyptian, and Vedic cultures and the Greek authors who composed Orphic theogonies. Some of these intersected with Hesiod, but others did not. Sometimes, when an Orphic poem appears to diverge from Hesiod, it might be the case that the bricoleur has assimilated elements from Near Eastern myth into the narrative in ways that are different from Hesiod.

Theogonic Hymns

Somehow, out of this wider tradition of Near Eastern and Mediterranean theogonies, Hesiod's *Theogony* emerged as the standard, canonical version of Greek theogony, as every student of Classics is well aware. Hesiod contains a familiar poetic catalogue, which provides a framework for understanding other stories, so when modern readers first encounter the basic idea that there were Orphic theogonies, we expect these to look somewhat like Hesiod. Although we accept that the content differs in some ways, we assume that the format must have been the same. It is therefore not surprising that both West and Bernabé have reconstructed the Orphic theogonies as extensive chronological narratives

126. Richardson 1974: 84–85; Strauss Clay 1989: 224–225.

that, like Hesiod, tell the story of creation from the birth of the first gods to the present state of the cosmos. These reconstructions of the Rhapsodies are impressive and convincing, since they consist of large quantities of scattered fragments arranged into a coherent whole. The Rhapsodies are conceived as a lengthy epic narrative, from the first god Chronos through the traditional succession myth to Dionysus Zagreus, who is killed and eaten by the Titans.[127] Likewise, it has been assumed that the Hieronyman theogony continued from the primordial water and mud to the birth of Dionysus, because one of the two authors who preserves fragments of this theogony mentions the birth of Dionysus.[128] Scholars have taken a reference to a "sixth generation" in Plato to mean that the Eudemian theogony continued through six generations, perhaps ending with Dionysus.[129] In this way, modern reconstructions of Orphic theogonies tend to envision them as following the structural model of Hesiod.

This method of reconstructing the texts out of fragments into coherent narratives, as West and Bernabé have done, provides a useful frame of reference for studying Orphic theogonies, but it might not be the most accurate way of reading the texts. In chapter 3, I argue that all we know about the Eudemian theogony is that it began with Night, and although there were other Classical authors besides Eudemus (e.g., Plato and Aristotle) who made references to Orphic theogonic poetry, they might not have been all referring to the same poem. In chapter 4, I discuss Damascius and Athenagoras, both of whom refer to the narrative of Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman theogony, and I suggest that Athenagoras might not have been reading the myth of the birth of Dionysus from the same text. And in chapter 5, I analyze the Rhapsodies in light of Edmonds' recent argument that this was a collection of shorter poems about different gods, rather than an extensive, chronological narrative.[130] As my reading of each of these theogonies demonstrates, Orphic theogonies might not have been lengthy epic poems that catalogued the births of all of the gods, following the model of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Instead, Orphic theogonies could have circulated in the form of collections of shorter poems, each of which concentrated on a particular deity or cluster of deities. Pausanias seems to indicate this when he says that "whoever has devoted himself to the study of poetry knows that the hymns of Orpheus are all very short, and that the total number of them is not great."[131] In this sense, they were somewhat similar to the *Homeric Hymns*, which also consist of relatively brief hexametric poems about one or a few deities. It might seem reasonable to speak of Orphic theogonies as

127. See West's summary of the reconstructed Rhapsodies (West 1983: 70–75), Bernabé's chronological reconstruction (*OF* 90–378 B), and Brisson 1995: 54–69.

128. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 87 I, 89 I B = 58 K).

129. Plato, *Philebus* 66c (*OF* 25 B = 14 K).

130. Edmonds 2013: 148–159.

131. Pausanias 9.30.12; trans. Jones and Ormerod 1918.

collections of hymns, even though they might not precisely match the typical format of Greek hymns. In the earliest periods, generic definitions were not sharply distinguished, so the Greeks did not put the genres of theogonies and hymns into entirely separate categories.[132] Therefore, in this section I suggest that the best way to define these Orphic poems generically is as "theogonic hymns," since they seem to combine some features of theogonies with some features of hymns.

The Derveni Papyrus makes a particularly useful case study for this type of generic analysis, since here we have, in only one text, the fragments of a short poem with theogonic content, which seems to concentrate on the actions of one deity in particular: Zeus, who becomes king of the gods and then swallows something. Like the other Orphic theogonies, the Derveni poem is typically spoken of as a theogony, and for good reasons: the narrative shares certain events and features with both Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Orphic Rhapsodies, namely the birth of three generations of deities. But the Derveni poem also shares certain features with poems that we typically refer to as hymns: it seems to be a relatively short poem that focuses on the attributes and powers of one deity in particular, by narrating how Zeus came to be in his present position as ruler of the cosmos. The Derveni poem could be spoken of either as a theogony or as a hymn, or better yet, as both: the poem has characteristics of both genres and, again, there was not such a clear distinction between these genres in Greek literature as modern readers might expect. As I suggest in chapter 2, it is likely that the Derveni poem was recited by ritual specialists over a sacrifice performed by initiates, which suggests oral performance, so it is worthwhile considering the possibility that collections of written Orphic poetry emerged out of a tradition of oral poetry that was recited in ritual contexts. Having considered elements of the Derveni poem that either relate to other theogonies or are more similar to hymns, I would argue that the Derveni poem was indeed a hymn, but one that included theogonic material: it was a theogonic hymn.

In *The Orphic Poems*, Martin West, who considers the Derveni poem a theogony, defines "theogony" as "a poem of which the major part consists in an account of the gods from the beginning of the world to the present."[133] In his commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony*, he is somewhat more precise, defining "theogony" as a poem about "the origin of the world and the gods, and the events which led to the establishment of the present order."[134] In other words, West defines a theogony as a poem that is like Hesiod's *Theogony*. There are a few basic features of Hesiod that might have led West to expect the same features in other theogonies: over a thousand lines of narrative, chronologically and comprehensively covering the births of all of the gods, from the first

132. Ford 2002: 10–12.
133. West 1983: 68.
134. West 1966: 1.

primordial deity to the offspring of Zeus, and from the time when the universe was without form to the time when humans inhabit the earth. Both the Hesiodic and Rhapsodic theogonies do appear to have these similarities (that is, if we accept West's and Bernabé's reconstructions of the Rhapsodies), so according to West's definition they are both theogonies. But the extant fragments of the Derveni poem do not fit this model for two reasons: the poem's "account of the gods" is limited in comparison to Hesiod and the Rhapsodies, and its temporal scope does not cover from the beginning of time to the present, but concentrates on one particular moment—Zeus and the acts of swallowing and re-creation—with a very brief flashback to what happened before. West argues that there was more than the extant papyrus has given us, and he even ventures to suggest that the Derveni theogony is "an abridgement of an ampler poem," which he calls the Protogonos theogony. Although there is no evidence for this Protogonos theogony, West conjectures its existence based on places in the narrative where the contents of the Rhapsodies and the Derveni poem "ran parallel," and he assumes a formal arrangement similar to Hesiod.[135] He concludes that the Protogonos theogony must have included those episodes that occur in the Rhapsodies but not in the Derveni poem. The Protogonos theogony, therefore, was presumably a poem that matched the Rhapsodies in content and Hesiod's *Theogony* in structure.

In the Rhapsodies, as West and Bernabé have reconstructed them, there are six generations of divine kings. The first primordial deity is not Night (as in the Derveni poem) or Chaos (as in Hesiod, *Theogony* 116) but Chronos.[136] Chronos mates with Ananke to produce Aither and Chasm (also called Chaos), and then he creates the cosmic egg (*OF* 109–119 B). Out of this egg the first king of the gods springs to life. He has many names, including Phanes (based on the word φαίνω, which means "appear") and Protogonos, because he is the "firstborn" (*OF* 120–143 B). Phanes creates the gods, the universe, and the first race of people, so he becomes the first king of the universe. He gives birth to Night and mates with her (*OF* 144–171 B), and Night succeeds him as queen (the second ruler). She is followed by the third divine ruler, Ouranos, "who first ruled as king after Night the mother of the gods" (*OF* 174 B). Ouranos marries Ge and gives birth to the generation of gods that includes Kronos, as in Hesiod (*OF* 174–184 B; cf. *Theogony* 126–138); and Kronos castrates Ouranos, as in Hesiod (*OF* 185–189 B; cf. *Theogony* 159–182); so Kronos becomes the fourth king (*OF* 190–199 B). The next episode is also much like Hesiod: Kronos mates with Rhea, but swallows all of their offspring except Zeus, whom Rhea hides in Crete (*OF* 200–214 B; cf. *Theogony* 453–491). Zeus grows up, causes Kronos to vomit up his children, and then becomes the fifth king (*OF* 215–237 B; cf.

135. West 1983: 69.
136. On the distinctions between primordial deities in Orphic theogonies, see Brisson 1995: 410–412.

Theogony 492–506). At this point, Zeus does something that he does not do in Hesiod: he swallows Phanes and, along with him, all of the previous creation (*OF* 240–241 B).[137] If we are to trust the order in which Bernabé arranges the Orphic fragments, then what came next in the Rhapsodies was a hymn to Zeus that glorifies him at the moment when all of creation is inside his belly (*OF* 243.1–2 B; cf. *OF* 14.1–2 B, *OF* 31 B):

> Zeus was born first, Zeus last, god of the bright bolt;
> Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made.

After this hymn-like passage, the Rhapsodies presumably went on to narrate Zeus' act of re-creation in the birth of his offspring (*OF* 244–268 B). Zeus mates with his mother, Rhea/Demeter, who gives birth to Persephone (*OF* 269–276 B), and then he mates with Persephone, who gives birth to Dionysus (*OF* 280–283 B). Zeus sets up Dionysus to be the sixth king, but the Titans kill and eat Dionysus; so Zeus strikes them with lightning and brings Dionysus back to life (*OF* 296–331 B).

The first comparison we can make is that the basic three-generation succession myth (Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus), which West calls the "backbone" of Hesiod's *Theogony*,[138] occurs in all three accounts: Hesiod, the Derveni poem, and the Rhapsodies are identical in this regard. Where they differ most conspicuously is in what happens before and after the succession myth. In Hesiod, the first deities in existence are Chaos, followed by Gaia, who gives birth to Ouranos. In the Rhapsodies, it is Chronos who creates the cosmic egg out of which Phanes is born, and then Phanes mates with Night to give birth to Ouranos. In the Derveni poem, the earliest deity is Night, who gives birth to Ouranos. Because Night gives birth to Ouranos in both the Rhapsodies and the Derveni poem, West built upon this parallel by suggesting that Protogonos appeared in the Derveni poem as the "firstborn," but it was Ouranos "who first ruled as king" (DP 14.6 = *OF* 10.2 B). He thought it "virtually certain that the Firstborn god [i.e., Protogonos] sprang from an egg," and that, as in the Rhapsodies, "he was a radiant figure with golden wings" who "generated further gods by mating with himself." West translated the words Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου (DP 16.4 = *OF* 12.1 B) in the Derveni poem as a direct reference to Protogonos: "[the body of] the Firstborn king, the reverend one."[139] As

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137. It could be argued that the episode in Hesiod where Zeus swallows Metis (*Theogony* 886–900) matches the swallowing of Phanes, since one of the names of Phanes is Metis (*OF* 139–141, 240 B), but in Hesiod Metis is his first wife and in the Rhapsodies Metis/Phanes is his great-grandfather, so they are two different characters. But see West (1983: 87–88), who points out that in both Hesiod and Orpheus Zeus swallows because of prophetic advice, and both times, "it is one of the first acts of his reign."

138. West 1966: 18.

139. West 1983: 86–88. This is not the only way to read the Derveni Papyrus; see chapter 2.

mentioned above, West argued that "behind the Derveni poem there must lie a fuller one, the 'Protogonos Theogony,' which began at the beginning of things and set out the whole story of the creation of the cosmic egg, the hatching of Protogonos, and the gods who reigned before Zeus."[140]

At the other end of the narrative, where the Derveni Papyrus breaks off, the poem mentions that Zeus wanted to have sex with his mother (DP 25.14, 26 = OF 18 B), but the rest of the poem is lost. Since Zeus mates with Rhea/Demeter in the Rhapsodies, West argued that "there can be little doubt of a connection," and he conjectured that the poem went on to narrate the birth of Dionysus.[141] In the Rhapsodies, Rhea/Demeter gives birth to Persephone, with whom Zeus mates to produce Dionysus; and this is followed by the story of Dionysus and the Titans. West suggested that this series of events, if it did not appear in the Derveni poem, "at least" appeared in "the Protogonos Theogony of which the Derveni poem represents one recension."[142] Simply put, West expanded the genealogy in the Derveni poem from the four generations actually mentioned in the text (Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus) to the six generations found in the Rhapsodies (Phanes-Night-Ouranus-Kronos-Zeus-Dionysus), based entirely on his idea that there must have been a Protogonos theogony, of which the Derveni poem was an abridged copy.

There are a few problems with this view. First, there is no ancient evidence that supports the existence of the Protogonos theogony, and it becomes unnecessary for this theogony to exist if these texts are viewed as the work of individual bricoleurs. Second, although the Derveni poem makes West "certain" that some of the episodes in the Rhapsodies had a long history,[143] this does not justify using a later text as a source for an earlier one. Other scholars have been more cautious. Brisson rejects West's idea that the first deity in the Derveni poem was Chronos. Since there is no clear mention of Chronos in the Derveni Papyrus, Brisson prefers to see Night as the primordial deity, and Chronos as an addition to later Orphic theogonies. He also views the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies as identical, since both began with Night, so he suggests five generations (Night-Protogonos-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus).[144] Bernabé also has a different reading. Translating the phrase Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου (DP 16.3 = OF 12.1 B) as "penis of the firstborn king," he argues that this is the king Ouranos, the firstborn son of Night, which leaves us with only four generations (Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus).[145] Although he admits that "it is possible that the poem stopped here," Bernabé notes that there are topics he considers

140. West 1983: 101.
141. West 1983: 94.
142. West 1983: 94–95.
143. West 1983: 69.
144. Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = 24 K); Brisson 1995: 399–400, 411–413.
145. Bernabé 2007b: 107–115.

"fundamental" to Orphic doctrine that are "equally absent," such as escha-
tology and the story of Dionysus. Thus he allows the possibility that the story
of Dionysus could have been included in the original Derveni poem, but he
interprets Zeus' incest with his mother on its own terms, within the context of
the surviving portions of the Derveni poem. The point of this episode is not the
birth of Dionysus, but the breaking of "the cycle of succession," for by having
sex with his mother, Zeus "becomes his own son and succeeds himself," and
this helps him to stabilize his royal power.[146]

The third major weakness with West's imagined Protogonos theogony
is a preconceived notion about what a theogony is. West assumes that the
Protogonos theogony was, like Hesiod's *Theogony* (and his own reconstruc-
tion of the Rhapsodies), a lengthy narrative that continued from the beginning
of the universe to the present creation, and that the Derveni poem was "an
abridged version."[147] This would make the Protogonos theogony, and by exten-
sion the Derveni poem, conform to West's definition of theogonies; but the
problem is that the Derveni poem does not conform to this definition. Betegh
has pointed out some of the ways in which it differs: (1) "the Derveni poem
does not recount the events in a chronological order," (2) "it is not primarily in-
terested in the origin of the world and in the birth of the gods preceding Zeus,"
and (3) the focus of the poem is more narrowly "the story of Zeus," for it deals
with other topics "only insofar as they were significant for the understanding
of the deeds of Zeus."[148] Analyzed from this perspective, it appears that, strictly
speaking, the Derveni poem is not a theogony.

However, if we apply these points too strictly, then it could be argued that
not even Hesiod's *Theogony* is a theogony. In contradiction to the first point,
Hesiod begins with an invocation and hymn to the Muses that describes their
birth as children of Zeus, who is already assumed to be in power on Olympus
(*Theogony* 1–115). To a certain extent, Hesiod's *Theogony* shares with the Derveni
poem the structure of ring composition, returning again to the birth of the
Muses in the context of the chronological narrative hundreds of lines later
(*Theogony* 915–917). Clearly, however, the birth of the Muses is not as central
a point in Hesiod's narrative as Zeus solidifying his power is central in the
Derveni poem. But, in contradiction to Betegh's second and third points, what
is truly central in both poems is the same: the climax of the succession myth in
both Hesiod and the Derveni poem consists of Zeus acquiring and securing his
royal power. Although Hesiod spends a lot more time on the origin of the world
and the birth of the gods (both before and after Zeus), it is the three-generation
succession myth (Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus) that forms the nucleus of Hesiod's
narrative, and this is mirrored in the Derveni poem and the Rhapsodies. As we

146. Bernabé 2007b: 122.
147. West 1983: 108.
148. Betegh 2004: 135–137.

saw in the last section, this succession myth had predecessors in the Near East, and it evolved within the traditions of oral poetry in the early Archaic Period. It was on the basis of familiarity with this general tradition that both Hesiod and the Orphic poets wrote their theogonic narratives.

Nevertheless, the sheer length of Hesiod's *Theogony* suggests that it was composed for different reasons. According to West, "the tenor of the whole proem (1–115) suggests that [the poem's] purpose was entertainment or instruction." He allows that there could have been μάντεις ("experts at divination") who recited theogonic poetry at sacrifices, like the Persian magi who "sang a theogony" over a sacrifice, according to Herodotus (1.132.3); but he insists that Hesiod's *Theogony* "is no incantation" but "simply a poem."[149] The Derveni poem, on the other hand, is a shorter poem that was intended precisely as an incantation, to be sung by an *orpheotelestes* over a sacrifice that was made by a group of initiates. It was not written for entertainment or instruction, but for use in the performance of a mystery rite. Therefore, some scholars, such as Most,[150] have preferred to call the Derveni poem a hymn, and perhaps this designation is indicated in the Derveni Papyrus itself: first, when the Derveni author calls the poem "a hymn (ὕ]μνον)saying sound and lawful words" (DP 7.2), and second, when he quotes a line that appears to be from another poem, saying that "it is also said in the Hymns (ἐν τοῖς Ὕμνοις)" (DP 12.11). Kouremenos takes these hymns to be "in all probability other Orphic poems," and notes that Plato and Pausanias mention "hymns attributed to Orpheus."[151] The words ἐν τοῖς Ὕμνοις do not specify that these are "other" (ἄλλοις) hymns—it simply says "in the hymns"—but this phrase does imply that there were more than one of these hymns. Perhaps the Derveni poem was part of a collection.

These indications in the text that the Derveni poem could be called a ὕμνος leave open the question of what ὕμνος means. Betegh is critical of this designation, calling it a "notoriously elusive category."[152] The Derveni author calls the poem a ὕμνος (DP 7.2), but it is not clear what he means by that. In its earliest, most basic usage, ὕμνος simply meant "song," though Furley and Bremer suggest that it might have yet had "connotations of praise or celebration."[153] In this general sense of "song," the label of ὕμνος is obviously correct but it does not tell us much. The more specific meaning of ὕμνος as a "song of praise for a god"—that is, a song specifically designed for use in ritual—developed out of this basic meaning, but was not generally applied until after Plato. In *Republic* 10.607a, Plato makes a distinction between "hymns to the gods and *encomia* to

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149. West 1966: 15–16.
150. Most 1997: 118–131.
151. KPT 2006: 254, citing Plato, *Laws* 4.829e1; Pausanias 9.27.2, 30.12.
152. Betegh 2004: 137–138.
153. Furley and Bremer 2001: 8–9. Betegh (2004: 137) cites Homer, *Odyssey* 8.429 and Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 709 as examples of the simple meaning "song."

good men," implying that hymns had this narrower sense of poems addressed to the gods. This distinction became solidified when Hellenistic scholars began to classify hymns as specifically religious poetry.[154] Betegh argues that if we take ὕμνος in this more narrow sense to mean "a sung prayer" that includes an "invocation to the god" (as in the case of the later *Orphic Hymns*), then the Derveni poem does not fit the designation, because it gives no indication of any invocation. He adds that "in a looser sense a mere exaltation of a certain god is also traditionally called a hymn," but rejects this because he thinks "the Derveni poem does not readily fit even in this looser category." He gives two reasons for this: the Derveni poem "does not focus on one god, but on a whole race of them," and if it "culminated" in the story of Dionysus, then "it is not clear" how this fits with the praise of Zeus.[155]

Betegh is correct in the first two points: ὕμνος in the basic sense of "song" is too general to be of any use, but neither does the Derveni poem fit the more specific sense of "invocation." It does not follow the "rhetoric of prayer," which, as Furley and Bremer argue, "showed a remarkable stability and endurance" in Greek hymns from the Classical Period.[156] This rhetoric of prayer was most often expressed in a tripartite structure that can be seen in most typical Greek and Latin hymns: *invocatio, argumentum*, and *preces*. The *invocatio* initiates contact between the person singing the hymn and the deity addressed; the *argumentum* establishes the relationship between the deity and the person performing the hymn by drawing attention either to the human's past services to the deity or to the particular attributes of the deity, which are sometimes expressed through narratives of the deity's actions; and the *preces* at the end voices a request to the deity. Simply put, in the sense that the Derveni poem does not share in this tripartite structure, but concentrates only on narrative, it is not, strictly speaking, a hymn.[157] One might point out as a counter-example the structure of the *Orphic Hymns*, which seem to be missing an *argumentum*; thus Morand suggests an alternative structure, consisting of invocation, development, and request.[158] By contrast, the Derveni poem seems to consist entirely of *argumentum*.

Despite Betegh's objections, the "looser sense" of "exaltation of a certain god" describes the Derveni poem well. It summarizes a genealogy, but it does not catalogue the entire race of gods because the focus of the poem is on Zeus and the actions by which he secures his power. This fits with Furley and Bremer's point that "the re-creation of an original mythical moment" was often

154. Furley 1995: 31–32; Furley and Bremer 2001: 9–12.
155. Betegh 2004: 137–138.
156. Furley and Bremer 2001: 50.
157. Furley and Bremer 2001: 52–61. For an example of a hymn that does follow the tripartite structure, see the Delphic hymn to Apollo discussed in Furley 1995: 33–35.
158. Morand 2001: 40–76; cf. Fayant 2014: lxxx–xci.

the "dominant theme in hymnic celebration,"[159] since the mythical moment that is re-created in the Derveni poem is Zeus' rise to power. The reason why other gods are mentioned is to provide context and meaning to Zeus' actions. Also contrary to Betegh, there is no evidence that the poem culminated with the story of Dionysus. This is not merely an argument from silence, based on the fact that the Derveni Papyrus breaks off and we do not know how the poem ended. If the focus of the poem was the actions of Zeus, then the poem probably did not include material that was extraneous to this focus. Even if the dismemberment myth appeared in the Derveni poem in its full form, this would not necessarily diminish the importance of Zeus and the act of swallowing. As I argue in chapter 6, the Orphic myth of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies enhances the Orphic myth of Zeus. But this does not necessitate the story's appearance in the Derveni poem or in any other Orphic theogony.

If the Derveni poem is a hymn, then it is less like the *Orphic Hymns* than the longer *Homeric Hymns,* insofar as its theme is the means by which a particular deity—in this case, Zeus—steps into his cosmic role and begins to exercise his sphere of influence. As Furley and Bremer point out, the *Homeric Hymns* are often distinguished as "rhapsodic hymns," different from "cult hymns" in the sense that they sing *about* gods rather than *to* gods, and they describe the gods' attributes and actions, rather than make a request. However, Furley and Bremer argue that this distinction is problematic. Since cult hymns were a very diverse category, encompassing a variety of literary genres, the distinction between these and the *Homeric Hymns* is not so clear. The narrative form of the *Homeric Hymns* results from their participation in Homeric language and hexametric rhythm, which was required for rhapsodic performance, but this does not cancel out their use as hymns, since they include at least implicitly a request for divine favour.[160] In the same way, even though the Derveni poem does not have all of the same features that characterize Greek hymns generally, it can still be considered a hymn in the sense that, like the *Homeric Hymns*, it uses the epic form to narrate the attributes and actions of a particular deity, with whom divine favour is at least implicitly sought in the context of a ritual or rhapsodic performance. As Furley explains, mythical narratives in hymns are an "attempt to secure divine favour and guide it" in a way that extracts "similar favours now or in the future."[161] With or without an invocation or request, both the *Homeric Hymns* and the Orphic theogonic hymns participate in what Furley and Bremer consider the "central concept underlying all elements of the hymnodist's art": χάρις, which both "expresses the attitude of grateful

159. Furley and Bremer 2001: 18.

160. Furley and Bremer 2001: 43–44. For more on the meaning and importance of the word "rhapsodic," see chapter 5.

161. Furley 1995: 40–43.

adoration which ideally characterizes the worshipper" and "also denotes the god's grace and favour gained by that adoration."[162]

Therefore, I suggest using the term "theogonic hymn" to generically categorize the Derveni poem (and other Orphic theogonies) because, like a theogony, it narrates the basic succession myth that forms the nucleus of theogonies contained in Hesiod and the Rhapsodies, and, like a hymn, it is a poem that focuses on the attributes and actions of a particular deity. Like the *Homeric Hymns* in particular, the Derveni poem narrates how Zeus came to exercise power within his own sphere of influence. In chapter 2, I discuss the Derveni poem's function as a theogonic hymn by using theogonic content to put Zeus' rise to power in context. I extend this reading of Orphic theogonies as theogonic hymns in subsequent chapters to the Eudemian, Hieronyman, and Rhapsodic theogonies, because not all of the fragmented evidence for these theogonies fits neatly into the modern reconstructions of West and Bernabé. Like the Derveni poem, these Orphic theogonies might have consisted of relatively short poems that circulated in collections, along with other texts of different generic types. The evidence for the Eudemian theogony indicates the possibility that certain ancient authors alluded to collections of Orphic theogonic hymns, rather than one canonical text. Likewise, the fragments that we call the Hieronyman theogony might have actually been two different narratives from two different texts, though perhaps from the same collection. And it is not outside the realm of possibility that the Rhapsodies were a collection of theogonic hymns to a variety of deities in twenty-four books, rather than a lengthy, chronological epic narrative that was split into twenty-four books (even if one of these books was a six-generation succession myth). In other words, not just the Derveni poem, but the entire Orphic tradition of theogonic poetry, might have consisted of relatively short theogonic hymns that concentrated on a particular deity or cluster of deities, but these were not necessarily lengthy genealogical catalogues that followed the model of Hesiod.

Mythical Poetry and Philosophical Prose

Orphic theogonies departed from the model of Hesiod not only in their mythical motifs and generic structures, but also in their overall worldview. They were a means by which Orphic poets asked questions about their universe, often addressing the same concerns as contemporary philosophers. Thus, some fragments of later theogonies appear to reflect a worldview that was more current in its philosophical orientation than the mythical world of Hesiod. From this perspective, Orphic poetry appears to exist as a point of contact in

162. Furley and Bremer 2001: 61–62.

the discourse between myth and philosophy, which occurs in two directions: in one direction, it seems that philosophical ideas influence or underlie certain fragments of Orphic poems; and in the other direction, the vast majority of Orphic fragments are preserved by philosophers who interpret the poems in various ways. Whether or not they considered themselves philosophers or even Orphics, the Orphic poets were aware of and involved in discourse with current philosophical ideas, but they continued to express their ideas in traditional poetic forms.

In the first direction, it is an oversimplification to say, for example, that because a certain fragment of an Orphic poem appears to reflect a particular Stoic idea, then the poem must be a Stoic poem; this is like calling someone a psychoanalyst today simply because he or she mentions a Freudian slip. Nevertheless, as early as the composition of the Derveni poem, it seems that Orphic poets and Presocratic philosophers were living at about the same time and thinking about some of the same ideas, so it is not unreasonable to allow the possibility that an Orphic poem was influenced by Presocratic or (in later periods) Stoic philosophy. The major difference between them was that Presocratic philosophers moved toward making more abstract arguments in philosophical prose, but Orphic poets continued to frame their discussions in the archaic form of narrative poetry. The various manifestations of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus stand out as examples of how Orphic poets continued to think about the gods in different ways over the centuries, sometimes varying widely in the way they perceived divinity, despite the fact that they did not depart from the traditional form of hexametric poetry.

In the other direction, we are so dependent upon the Neoplatonists for our knowledge of the Rhapsodies that it is often difficult to disentangle the content of the poems from the allegorical interpretations that these philosophers constantly apply to the myths. The tendency of modern scholars has been to set aside, ignore, and even treat with disdain the Neoplatonic allegories, in order to reconstruct the basic narrative of the Rhapsodies.[163] However, not only is it anachronistic and prejudicial to dismiss Neoplatonic allegory, but also this approach can lead to misinterpretations, as I argue in chapter 5—for example, Hermias' mention of three Nights has led to some confusion[164]—so it is crucial to take into account the metaphysical allegories applied by ancient authors. There is much work to be done in clarifying the complex relationship between the Rhapsodic narrative and the Neoplatonic universe, but this would involve a separate study. The discussion here will be limited to places

163. E.g., Linforth 1941: 320: "subtle and speculative fancies which pass beyond the bounds of reason"; West 1983: 232: "that is simply Neoplatonist construction"; p. 244: "Proclus' interpretation for once hits the mark." At p. 79 he is dismissive of the Derveni author's allegories, noting his "consistent wrongness."

164. Hermias, in Plat. Phaedr. 154.14 Couvr. (OF 113 IV, 147 II, 246 I, 248 II B = 99 K).

where Neoplatonic allegory has obscured or misled our reconstructions of the Rhapsodies, or where it can shed new light on reconstruction. Most passages of the Rhapsodies to which we have access are those that the Neoplatonists chose to include, and we have no way of knowing if they misunderstood or misrepresented the texts, but in many cases they are the only sources we have, so it is crucial to inquire about why they include some passages of the Rhapsodies and not others.

Despite the claims of scholars who, like Vernant, believe that "the advent of philosophy in Greece marked the decline of mythological thought and the beginning of rational understanding,"[165] the line of distinction between μῦθος and λόγος was not always drawn so clearly. Mythological thought never really declined, as indicated by the mere existence of Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, and philosophical thought was never completely absent. Not even in the case of Hesiod can it be said that philosophical concerns were entirely foreign: like the Presocratics, he was concerned with the origin of the cosmos, and in *Works and Days* he spends the first few hundred lines talking about ethics and the human condition (1–382), topics that have always been of interest to philosophers. Though concerned with similar questions, Presocratic philosophers departed from Hesiod by approaching these questions in different ways. Of primary importance to them was the origin of the cosmos: departing from biomorphic models of creation, they reformulated the issue into a question of the relationship between the One and the Many.[166] Most of the Presocratics sought to explain the one ἀρχή from which the universe derived its being in terms of rational principles rather than mythical narratives. For example, Thales claimed that everything comes from water, Diogenes claimed that everything comes from air, and Anaximander spoke of a "germ" that was separated "from the eternal."[167] At about the same time, Pherecydes of Syros wrote a cosmogony that was similar to Hesiod's in the sense that it was a myth about gods, but he departed from Hesiod by changing the genealogy and by writing in prose; so Schibli suggests that Pherecydes shared the same intellectual context as Anaximander, another contender for the title of first prose author.[168] It was within this climate of opinion that Theagenes of Rhegium began applying physical allegories to Homer, initiating an exegetical tradition that would

165. Vernant (1965) 1982: 102.

166. Guthrie 1967: 91–100; A. Finkelberg 1986: 321–331; Bernabé 2002b: 212.

167. Thales fr. 11 A12, 14 D-K (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b6, *De Caelo* 294a28); cf. Bernabé 2002b: 217–218; Diogenes, fr. 64 A5 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 25.1); Heraclitus, fr. 22 B30–31 D-K (51, 53 Marcovich) (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 5.104.1–3); Anaximander, fr. 12 A10 D-K (Ps.-Plutarch, *Strom.* 2). This "germ" has often been compared to the Orphic cosmic egg; see Guthrie 1967: 90–91; KRS 1983: 131–132; Bernabé 2002b: 215.

168. Schibli 1990: 30–37; see chapter 4; cf. Granger (2007: 135–163), who argues that it is instead a matter of Pherecydes influencing Anaximander.

eventually include the metaphysical allegories of philosophers like the Derveni author, the Stoics, and the later Neoplatonists.[169]

Likewise, the earliest Orphic poets used theogonies as a means to think about the nature of the gods in ways that were different from Hesiod. They were interested in the origin of the universe, as references to Night as the first deity indicate, and they began to combine biomorphic with technomorphic models of creation. The clearest point of convergence between Orphic poetry and Presocratic philosophy is the Derveni Papyrus, written by an intellectual who claims to have ritual expertise and to be able to explain an Orphic poem by means of allegories that are clearly in line with Presocratic thinking. For this reason, since its discovery, the Derveni Papyrus has been seen as a meeting point between mythical and philosophical thinking.[170] But so is Empedocles, whose poetry contains both the mystical idea of reincarnation and the scientific idea of the four elements as "four roots," and Pythagoras, whose followers were noted for their advancements in mathematics, though he himself was a mystic who talked about reincarnation.[171] The line between mythical and philosophical thought had not yet been drawn, so authors like Empedocles and the Derveni author found value not in one or the other, but in the discourse between both. The earliest written Orphic poems emerged out of the same intellectual context as the Presocratic philosophers. As Finkelberg argues, their "points of difference … arose not from a difference in basic outlook, but from the fact that the shared outlook was molded in different ways."[172] Orphic poets were concerned with the same questions and issues as their contemporaries, but instead of turning to prose philosophy, they used mythical narratives in poetry as a means to think about these topics.

In the other direction, the Derveni author is only the first in a long list of philosophers who referred to Orphic poetry in order to illustrate philosophical ideas. The next philosopher to do this was Plato, whose exegetical techniques were quite different from the Derveni author's. Plato's general tendency was to draw imagery from a traditional myth but to reformulate the myth in a way that supported his dialogue, thus causing the myth to become uniquely Platonic. Plato himself was a bricoleur,[173] and this was no less the case with his use of Orphic poetry. In the *Gorgias*, he attributes to "some Sicilian or Italian"

169. Theagenes, fr. 8 A2 D-K (Schol. B *Il.* 20.67); Richardson 1975: 65–81; West 1983: 78–80; Lamberton 1986: 12–22; Hawes 2014: 29–37.

170. See Burkert 1968: 93–104; Bernabé 2002b: 206.

171. Reincarnation: Empedocles, fr. 31 B8–9, 11–12 D-K (Plutarch, *adv. Colotem* 1111f, 1113a–c; [Aristotle] *MXG* 2.975b1). Four elements: fr. 31 A37 D-K (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A4, 985a31–33), 31 B6 D-K (Aetius 1.3.20), 31 B17 D-K (Simplicius, *in Aristot. Phys.* 157.25). On Pythagoras, see Burkert 1972: 83–208.

172. A. Finkelberg 1986: 332–333.

173. See the discussion of Plato's eschatological myth in *Phaedo* 107c–115a in Edmonds 2004: 221–237. Plato was critical of allegorical interpretation (Richardson 1975: 65–81).

(493a) the eschatological image of souls in the underworld carrying water in a sieve and the idea that our "body" (σῶμα) is a "tomb" (σῆμα), so scholars have debated whether or not his source was Orphic, or perhaps Pythagorean.[174] No matter what his source was for these particular mythical images, Plato applies his own interpretation, connecting them with Socrates' argument about the futility of constantly fulfilling one's desires. In a similar manner, Plato does not quote Orphic poetry in order to explain Orphic theogonic myth, but in order to put forth one of his own ideas in an erudite way. When in the *Philebus* he attributes to Orpheus the verse, "with the sixth generation cease the rhythmic song,"[175] his point is not that there were six generations in the Eudemian theogony. Rather, he is simply making a trivial allusion to the number six, as a clever way of ending a list of virtues. Likewise, when in the *Timaeus* he refers to Ocean and Tethys as primordial deities, his point is not to explain the Eudemian theogony but to present his own unique cosmogonic account through the words of Timaeus.[176] This Platonic account later became the foundation for Neoplatonic cosmology, which also referred to Orphic poetry but used it in a different way. Unlike the Neoplatonists, Plato's method was not to allegorize Orphic poems, or even to quote Orpheus as an authority, but to incorporate elements of Orphic poetry whenever he thought they might add to the substance or literary quality of his dialogues.

The Hellenistic Period saw the emergence of new philosophical schools, including the Epicureans and Stoics, and it also saw the composition of new Orphic poems. Some fragments of these poems appear to reflect Stoic ideas, but the relationship between Orphic literature and Stoic philosophy is uncertain, and it moves in both directions. In one direction, Greek philosophers applied Stoic allegory to Orphic theogonies. Plutarch discusses the role of Apollo in bringing Dionysus back to life after his dismemberment by the Titans. He equates Apollo with unification and Dionysus with multiplication in the great Stoic cosmogonic cycle of the creation and destruction of the universe.[177] In another text, Plutarch uses one version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus in a discussion of the Stoic idea of primary and secondary causes of generation. He interprets the verse, "Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things exist," as equating Zeus with the primary, or superior, of "two causes."[178] In

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174. See also *Republic* 2.363d; *Cratylus* 400b–c; Guthrie (1952: 158–160, 216–217) and Keuls (1974: 26–33) argued that his source was Orphic; Linforth (1944: 309–311) and Dodds (1959: 297) argued that it was not.

175. Plato, *Philebus* 66c (*OF* 25 I B = 14 K).

176. Plato, *Timaeus* 40e–41a (*OF* 21, 24 B = 16 K). On the other hand, he does explicitly refer to Orpheus as a source for Ocean and Tethys being the first to marry, in *Cratylus* 402b (*OF* 22 I B = 15 K).

177. Plutarch, *De E ap. Delph.* 9.388e–389a (*OF* 613 II B); Pépin 1970: 307–308.

178. Plutarch, *de def. orac.* 48 p. 436d (*OF* 31 V B = 21 K); cf. 12 p. 415–416 (*OF* 258 II B = 200 K). See Bernabé ad loc. Plutarch's use of πέλονται is a variant reading; most sources use τέτυκται; see chapter 3 for more on this.

these instances, the Stoic idea is not coming from the poem but from Plutarch himself; but there are other fragments that seem to suggest the expression of Stoic ideas in the poems. Eusebius, discussing the later Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, compares this pantheistic conceptualization of Zeus with the supreme deity in Stoicism, saying that it is "in agreement with the Stoics."[179] However, as I argue in chapter 3, this does not mean that the hymn was a Stoic poem, at least not in the sense that Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* was consciously Stoic. On the other hand, scholars have argued that the Hieronyman theogony is indeed a Stoic poem: West calls it a "Stoicizing adaptation of the Protogonos Theogony," and Brisson interprets it as an attempt to make an Orphic theogony compatible with Stoic cosmology.[180] The primordial substances of water and mud are similar to a fragment of Zeno that equates water and mud with Chaos in Hesiod.[181] In chapter 4, I discuss the possibility that the Hieronyman theogony was influenced by Stoicism. This raises the possibility, as some have argued, of Stoic influence in the Rhapsodies if indeed the Rhapsodies were written later.[182] Since Orphic poets operated as bricoleurs within the same general historical and intellectual contexts as contemporary philosophers, it is likely that they were at least familiar with Stoic ideas. Some of these ideas might have influenced the Orphic poets, but this does not mean that they wrote Stoic poetry. Caution is necessary, since these indications of Stoicism are indeed no more than indirect indications, and in the case of Plutarch it is clear that he is using the Orphic poem to discuss a Stoic idea, not reading the poem as a Stoic text. But there are enough correlations between Orphic poetry and Stoic philosophy to support the general argument that Orphic poetry was a point of contact in the discourse between myth and philosophy.

When we come to the Neoplatonists, it is clearly the case that they manipulate the material to make it fit their allegorical interpretations. In particular, Syrianus and his student Proclus (fifth century AD) were determined to demonstrate that Plato, Orpheus, and the *Chaldean Oracles* were all in agreement, and one of the ways they did this was by mapping out correspondences between the Orphic Rhapsodies and their own metaphysical system.[183] Always concerned with the question of the One and the Many, the Neoplatonists from Syrianus to Olympiodorus took the Platonic idea of Forms to a new extreme by proposing multiple intermediary levels of existence between the One first principle of

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179. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 3.9.8 (*OF* 243 XIX B = 168 K); cf. West (1983: 218–220), who makes the same comparison.

180. West 1983: 182; Brisson 1995: 2912; see also Herrero 2010: 33, 91.

181. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = 54 K); Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3–4 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 75 II B = 57 K); Zeno, fr. 1.29.17 *SVF* = Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 1.496–498a (44.4 Wendel); West 1983: 183; Bernabé ad loc.

182. West 1983: 225; Kingsley 1995: 124.

183. Brisson 1995: 43–103; Longo 2010: 616–629; Steel 2010: 630–653.

everything (the Form that contains unity undifferentiated) and the Many things that exist as physical manifestations of the Forms. Each generation of deities in the Rhapsodies was then made to correspond to some level of this metaphysical system: the first god, Chronos, represents the ineffable One; Phanes represents the level of Intelligible Intellect (containing all Forms in an undifferentiated state); Zeus represents Intellective Intellect (containing all Forms in a differentiated state); and Dionysus represents Encosmic Intellect (through which the Forms are dispersed into the physical universe). The Neoplatonists comprehensively incorporated the Orphic gods into their metaphysical system, allegorically interpreting a wide variety of deities, episodes, and visual motifs, with each detail reflecting some aspect of the Neoplatonic universe.

Many of the allegorical interpretations of the Neoplatonists seem bizarre to modern minds, far removed from the basic mythical narrative underlying them, so modern scholars who study the Rhapsodies have often dismissed their interpretations: for example, Linforth calls their allegories "subtle and speculative fancies which pass beyond the bounds of reason," and West dismisses Proclus' interpretation of one fragment as "simply Neoplatonist construction."[184] Sometimes the Neoplatonists obscure the meaning of the poem, making it difficult to separate the contents of the poem from the allegory. For example, were there three separate goddesses called Night in the Rhapsodies, or was there just one, whom Hermias splits into a triad? At other times, however, an episode from the Rhapsodies illustrates well the metaphysical idea that the Neoplatonists discuss: for example, Zeus swallowing Phanes is a perfect illustration of the way the Demiurge (Zeus) contemplates the Forms that are contained in the Paradigm (Phanes) and is filled with them.

The proto-Christian model by which some modern scholars have interpreted Orphism is in part a consequence of the ways in which the Neoplatonists represented and interpreted the Orphic Rhapsodies. By allegorically interpreting Orphic poems in their Platonic commentaries, the Neoplatonists preserved the vast majority of Orphic fragments that we have today: there are more than two hundred in Proclus alone. But because of their allegorical practice, most of the content they preserve is entangled with philosophical concepts that may or may not have anything to do with the content of the poems. Therefore, the most crucial thing that must be done in order to reconstruct and understand the Rhapsodies is to attempt to understand how the Neoplatonists used the Rhapsodies as a source of allegories for their own metaphysical system. So far, not many modern scholars have been interested in doing this, but Luc Brisson has taken the most important step in this direction by showing how the six generations of the Rhapsodies correspond to the different levels of Proclus' metaphysics. Unfortunately, only in a summary

184. Linforth 1941: 320; West 1983: 232.

fashion does he explain the metaphysical system itself, or demonstrate specifically how particular fragments relate to particular metaphysical concepts, so there is much more that could be said about how the Neoplatonists interpreted the Rhapsodies.[185]

The allegorical interpretation of the Derveni author is more difficult to disentangle from the contents of the Orphic poem on which he comments, because he was writing at a time when early Orphic poetry, Presocratic philosophy, and even allegorical interpretation were still emerging for the first time in the history of Greek thought. The earliest Orphic theogonies evolved out of the same theogonic traditions as Hesiod and the same intellectual context as Presocratic philosophy, and they were concerned with similar questions about the nature of the universe, but they went about exploring these questions in different ways. Presocratic philosophers turned to prose arguments, but Orphic poets continued to use the traditional form of myth in hexameter. From the very beginning, the Orphic literary tradition had an intimate relationship with Greek philosophy, and it continued to be in constant discourse with philosophy throughout every period of its history. When prose philosophers referred to Orphic texts, they approached the texts in various ways: the Derveni author applied allegories that corresponded with Presocratic thought; Plato and Aristotle referred briefly to the Eudemian theogony; Plutarch applied Stoic allegory to certain episodes of Orphic myth; and the Neoplatonists developed a rich and complex apparatus by which they allegorically interpreted the Rhapsodies. Orphic theogonies functioned as a point of contact in the discourse between myth and philosophy, so understanding this discourse is crucial to the process of reconstructing the poems themselves.

185. Brisson 1995: 43–103. On the other hand, Chlup (2012: 125–127) explains well the Proclean system of metaphysics, but simply presents a list of correspondences largely based on Lewy ([1956] 1978: 481–485), without going into detail about how the metaphysics apply to the poetry.

2

The Derveni Papyrus

There has been a lot of discussion about the Derveni Papyrus since its discovery in 1962, but many mysteries remain because of the fragmentary nature and enigmatic contents of the papyrus. This chapter does not attempt to solve all of these mysteries, but instead to use the papyrus as a springboard for observing patterns and raising questions that also apply to the other Orphic theogonies. The Derveni Papyrus is particularly useful for studying the relationship between text and ritual, since the first six columns discuss a ritual, or certain ritual actions, that might be related to the poem on which the Derveni author comments in columns 7–26. It is possible that the Derveni theogony was performed as part of the ritual discussed in the first six columns and that, in the Derveni author's opinion, an understanding of the ritual depended upon an understanding of the poem. Second, there is the matter of reconstructing a theogonic poem out of fragments. Whereas the fragments of later theogonies are scattered throughout the writings of various authors, the Derveni theogony is preserved in only one author's commentary. The contents of this theogony can be reasonably reconstructed, and different scholars have attempted to do so, each with slightly different results. After a close look at these reconstructions, we may be able to draw some conclusions about the structure, content, and meaning of this early Orphic poem and its relationship with other early theogonies.

The Derveni Papyrus was discovered when a road construction project unearthed a group of six graves in a mountain pass called Derveni, twelve kilometers northwest of Thessaloniki. There were only four graves that had not been looted, but these contained a rich collection of funeral offerings, including clay and bronze vessels, jewels, and metalware. At tomb A, the cremated remains of a deceased male were deposited in a bronze krater inside the tomb, but the remaining contents of the funeral pyre were thrown over the slabs covering the tomb. In addition to animal sacrifices, a variety of prestige items were burned on the pyre with the deceased, including spearheads, greaves, a horse's harness, a gilded wreath, and other small objects, including

the Derveni Papyrus. The contents of tomb B were similar: a krater containing cremated remains, on which was depicted a Dionysiac scene; a large number of bronze and silver vessels surrounding the krater; spears, a sword, a knife, and a pair of greaves. The nature and quality of the funeral offerings, especially the weapons and harness, indicate that the people buried in these tombs were wealthy members of the elite military class in Macedonia during the fourth century BC.[1]

In the remains of the funeral pyre at tomb A, archaeologist Petris Themelis discovered the carbonized remains of a papyrus scroll. Apparently, either a burning log had fallen onto the scroll, or the scroll had been placed too far away from the center of the fire: something happened that prevented it from burning entirely.[2] As a result, the scroll was saved from being completely destroyed by the fire, and it was also carbonized, preventing it from decomposing in the moist climate of Greece. Immediately after the Derveni Papyrus was discovered, it was transferred to the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, where Anton Fackelmann unrolled the papyrus with great difficulty. First he soaked the scroll in papyrus juice to make it less fragile, and then he peeled apart each of the fragments using static electricity.[3] The fragments were immediately encased in glass to protect them, some of them in random order, but they are so fragile that they can never be removed from the glass, so the only way scholars have been able to figure out the order of the fragments is by rearranging photographs. Reasonable estimates have been made about how old the papyrus is. The archaeological context indicates a terminus ante quem of around 300 BC for the burning of the scroll with the deceased on the pyre. The script, in comparison with writing on pottery, indicates a date of 340–320 BC for this particular copy, but scholars generally agree that the text was originally composed near the end of the fifth century. This means that the Orphic poem discussed in the papyrus must have been older yet, so possibly the poem was written before 500 BC.[4]

Despite the immediate interest that such a rare text ignited, it took more than forty years for an "official" editio princeps of the text to be published, resulting in a few provisional versions of varying quality. Initially, the museum at Thessaloniki gave Stylianos Kapsomenos the rights to publish an authoritative edition, and he published six columns in 1964, but when he died in 1978 no complete version of the text had yet been published.[5] Thus, in 1982, Walter Burkert convinced the editor of *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (*ZPE*)

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1. Betegh 2004: 56–58; KPT 2006: 1–4.
2. Most (1997: 117): preserved by a burning log; West (1983: 76): preserved because "it lay away from the centre of the fire."
3. Betegh 2004: 59.
4. KPT 2006: 5–10; Bernabé 2007b: 99.
5. Betegh 2004: 62; KPT 2006: 6.

to publish an anonymous, unofficial edition with twenty-two columns, and this was what most scholars used for the next decade.[6] Progress was finally made in 1997, when Laks and Most presented the first English translation of the text, based on the anonymous *ZPE* edition, but corrected by Tsantsanoglou's extensive study of the papyrus. In the same volume, Tsantsanoglou presented a text and translation of the first six columns, complete with editorial notes, and he established the number of columns at twenty-six.[7] Since then, better editions of the Derveni Papyrus have appeared. Janko published an "interim text," and Betegh published a text and translation. Bernabé included the Derveni Papyrus with his edition of the *Orphic Fragments*, a year after the "official" editio princeps was finally published in 2006. Since then, more advancements have been made in the reconstruction of the first two columns.[8] The publication of these more recent editions does not mean that the text is without problems, for there are still many lacunae, some of which have been filled with uncertain and contestable conjectures. We are still quite far from determining exactly what the text says, and further yet from settling on a universally accepted interpretation.

Orphic Ritual and the Derveni Author

The identity of the Derveni author remains a mystery, and scholars are even divided over his dialect: whether it is Attic with Ionic features or Ionic with Attic features has been debated, and the issue is complicated by the inclusion of certain Doric features.[9] Different scholars have suggested over a dozen possibilities for the identity of the Derveni author, based on similarities of thought between him and, for example, Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia, or Euthyphro. But none of these suggestions has proven conclusive, so some scholars think there is no point in trying to identify the author by name—thus his designation as "the Derveni author."[10] Still, there is value in comparing different aspects of the Derveni author's cosmological views with those of other Presocratics, because these similarities help us place him within a specific intellectual context. It appears that the Derveni author was influenced by other philosophers, including Anaxagoras, Diogenes, and most conspicuously Heraclitus, who is cited and mentioned by name (DP 4.5–9). In the Derveni author's allegorical interpretation of the Orphic text, he proposes a cosmology that is not identical to any one Presocratic philosopher, but contains ideas found in a few different

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6. The text of this unauthorized version is at *ZPE* 47: 1–12; see Betegh 2004: 62–63; Burkert (2014: 113–114) clarified that Reinhold Merkelbach published the text at his suggestion, when there was no printed text and distribution was "limited to private copying."

7. Laks and Most 1997: 9–22; Tsantsanoglou 1997: 93–128.

8. Janko 2002: 1–62; Betegh 2004: 1–55; KPT 2006; Bernabé 2007a ad loc.; 2014: 19–52.

9. West 1983: 77; Janko 1997: 62–63; KPT 2006: 11.

10. Most 1997: 118; KPT 2006: 21.

philosophers. The Derveni author, when viewed within his historical context, appears to have been influenced by the Presocratic philosophers of the sixth and fifth centuries. While other philosophers during that time were applying allegorical and etymological methods to explain Homer, the Derveni author applied similar methods to explain an Orphic text.[11]

The Derveni author sees hidden meanings in every detail of the Orphic poem, as he indicates when he introduces the poem in the seventh column. Asserting that Orpheus wrote in riddles, he adds:

> The poem is strange and riddling to people, though [Orpheus] himself did not intend to say contentious riddles but rather great things in riddles. In fact, he is speaking mystically, and from the very first word all the way to the last.[12]

In the Derveni author's opinion, Orpheus wrote the poem intentionally as an allegory, intending only initiates to understand. The distinction between "contentious riddles" ([ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμα]τα) and "great things in riddles" ([ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[ι]ν δὲ [μεγ]άλα) reveals something of his attitude toward the text. Tsantsanoglou suggested the conjecture [ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμα]τα ("disputable, contestable riddles") because it refers to a particular type of philosophical activity, which in the fifth century encouraged "an empty art of disputation with no serious scientific intentions."[13] The Derveni author had no interest in this type of activity, so he argues that Orpheus' intention was to reveal great truths through his poetry to those who can interpret the enigmas properly. To interpret the poem properly is, in the view of the Derveni author, to interpret it allegorically. This becomes clear in columns 7–26, when he applies allegory in his commentary "from the very first word all the way to the last."

The question then becomes that of the Derveni author's position on Orphica: why did a Presocratic philosopher write about a ritual and an Orphic poem? Scholars have been divided over whether the Derveni author is a philosopher who is critical of ritual specialists, considering all of their practices useless; or a ritual specialist himself, who uses his philosophy to promote his own expertise as better than others in his field. The emerging consensus appears to favour the latter position: he is a ritual specialist who believes that an allegorical exegesis of the text is an essential component of understanding the Orphic poem and its corresponding use in ritual.[14] He is critical of anyone

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11. Janko 1997: 61–94; Betegh 2004: 278–323; KPT 2006: 28–44; see also Theagenes, fr. 8 A2 D-K (Schol. B *Il.* 20.67); West 1983: 79–82; Janko 2001: 2; Ford 2002: 67–71.

12. DP 7.4–8. All of my translations of the Derveni Papyrus are taken from the edition of KPT, except where otherwise noted.

13. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 121.

14. Betegh 2004: 81–82, 364–365; Edmonds 2008: 16–39; Graf 2014: 74–75.

who practices or observes the ritual or listens to the words of the poem without adequate knowledge of their meaning. He criticizes those who take the ritual and poem at face value without trying to understand their deeper meanings— meanings that he believes he can supply through his own allegorical interpretation. This is the mindset behind DP20.1–12:

> [As for those who believe that they learned] when they witnessed the sacred things [or rites] ([τὰ ἱ]ερὰ)[15] while performing them [together with other] people in the cities, I wonder less that they do not understand; for it is not possible to hear and at the same time comprehend what is being said. But those (who believe what they learned) from someone who makes a profession of the rites deserve to be wondered at and pitied: wondered at because, although they believe before they perform the rites that they will learn, they go away after performing them before having learned, without even asking further questions, as if they knew something of what they saw or heard or were taught; and pitied because it is not enough for them that they paid the fee in advance—they also go away devoid even of their belief. Before they perform the rites expecting to acquire knowledge, but after performing them they go away devoid even of [this] expectation.

In this passage, the Derveni author considers the fate of ritual participants in two situations: those who participate in public, city-wide rites, and those who pay for the services of professional priests. He pities and wonders at the second group.

Regarding the first group, the Derveni author finds it easier to accept that those who observe and participate in public rites do not understand the true meaning of the ritual, "for it is not possible to hear and simultaneously comprehend what is being said." Kouremenos takes [τὰ ἱ]ερὰ εἶδον in line 1, "they see the sacred rites," to mean the ritual actions of an initiation, following a narrower sense of the phrase (as suggested by Burkert), in which ὁρᾶν τὰ ἱερὰ means "to be initiated."[16] Mentioned along with τὰ λεγόμενα that are heard (ἀκοῦσαι) in line 3, this passage seems to refer to both the actions performed (δρώμενα) and the words spoken (λεγόμενα) in a ritual performed publicly, "[together with other] people in the cities."[17] The people referred to in the Derveni Papyrus are not merely passive observers, for they "see the sacred things while performing them." Kouremenos also thinks of the sacred items that were used

15. The words [τὰ ἱ]ερὰ ("sacred things") could refer to either rites performed or sacred objects used in the rites; KPT (ad loc.) prefer the latter.

16. Burkert 1982: 5; KPT 2006: 233–234.

17. KPT 2006: 234–235; cf. Pausanias 2.37.2, who describes "the things spoken over the things done" in the mystery rites at Phlya.

in initiation ritual, such as the items in the *cista mystica* of the Eleusinian mysteries, but he suggests that the phrase ὁρᾶν τὰ ἱερὰ can refer to all phases of a mystery rite in which the initiate participates in the ritual performance, including the revelation of these items. The Eleusinian mysteries are another example of a semi-public mystery cult: the sacred mysteries were kept silent, but there was also the public performance of the procession to Eleusis. The Derveni author reasonably accepts that some participants in this type of semi-public festival would not naturally have had as deep an understanding of the hidden meaning of the ritual and text as an expert such as himself.[18]

At the same time, he both wonders at and pities those who think they have learned "from someone who makes a profession of the rites" (20.3–4) because they did not bother to ask questions and learn more about what they saw and heard. Believing they would understand the rite after participating, they go away not only having paid the "fee" (20.9), but also "deprived even of their belief" (20.10). Whereas before the rites they were "expecting to acquire knowledge" (20.11), after they have participated in the rites without bothering to ask questions, they go away "devoid even of [this] expectation" (20.12). Having paid for the services of a ritual specialist who did not properly explain the meaning of the ritual and the text, these people have been cheated out of their money; but what is far worse is that now they think they have acquired knowledge, when really they have not. The Derveni author pities them because they go away without even the expectation of acquiring a deeper understanding in the future; they have stopped trying. The first group, having observed the rites performed in the cities, have not gone through this process, so there is still hope that they will seek knowledge; but there is no hope that the second group will even attempt to gain further knowledge.

Throughout these comments, there is a critique of those who consider τὰ ἱερά to be their τέχνη—that is, the ritual specialists who accept fees in exchange for initiations and purifications. The Derveni author seems to disassociate himself from this class of priest, asserting that their customers are cheated of the full benefit of understanding because they do not inquire further into the meaning of the ritual and text. In order to shed light on this passage, scholars often invoke Plato's description of this class of priest in *Republic* 2.364b–365a, which describes "begging priests and fortune-tellers going to the doors of rich men" to perform ritual services for a fee.[19] Burkert has labeled the class of priests whom Plato describes in this passage as *orpheotelestai*: they were independent agents who performed purifications, divination, initiations, and other ritual actions for a price, and Plato is the best evidence that certain Greek intellectuals treated them with

18. KPT 2006: 233; cf. Graf 2014: 68–71.

19. Linforth 1941: 77–85, 101–104; Parker 1983: 299–307; West 1983: 21; Obbink 1997: 47; KPT 2006: 235.

disdain.[20] Pejorative terms like ἀγύρται ("begging priests") suggest this stigma, along with accusations of dubious practices associated with magic: ἐπαγωγαί and καταδέσμοι (literally, "bringings in" and "bindings"). In the *Republic*, Socrates' interlocutor Adeimantus says that these *orpheotelestai* claim to have power over the gods, to persuade them to do things like cause harm to people. One of the means by which they claim expertise in these matters is their use of poetic texts. Plato famously mentions "a hubbub of books,"[21] or "a bunch of books by Musaeus and Orpheus" (βίβλων δὲ ὅμαδον … Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως), but he also says that they "bring in [other] poets as witnesses." Plato quotes a passage of Hesiod (*Works and Days* 287–289) and a passage of Homer (*Iliad* 9.497–498) to show how the *orpheotelestai* used these texts to justify their actions. But when he mentions the books of Orpheus and Musaeus, he does not specify the nature of their use, other than to say that "in accordance with [these] they perform sacrifices." Plato points out that they persuade "not only private citizens but also cities" to pay for their services.

Comparing column 20 of the Derveni Papyrus with this passage of Plato, it may appear that the targets of the Derveni author's criticisms are the *orpheotelestai*. Both authors refer to the city-wide rituals and the individuals who pay for professional expertise, arguing that these specialists lead people astray; and both mention the use of texts by Orpheus. This suggests that the Derveni author's attitude toward the *orpheotelestai* is similar to the attitude of Plato, so Kouremenos argues that the author "defends the subject of his expertise, [the allegorical interpretation of] the poetry of Orpheus, from being encroached upon by the art of the *orpheotelestai*, which he denigrates as a pseudo-discipline." If the *orpheotelestai* were asked to give a better explanation of their work, then they would "certainly fail" to do so, since "there is no such field" as expertise in ritual matters.[22] Janko seems to agree with this assessment, arguing that the Derveni author is not a μάγος but a φυσικός who tries to explain the poem scientifically, and is "from a traditional viewpoint, a blasphemer against the gods" like Diagoras.[23]

The Derveni author's attitude can be compared to Heraclitus, who appears critical toward people who "always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard [the *logos*] and when once they have heard it."[24] In one fragment, he criticizes people for praying to statues, "not understanding what

20. Burkert 1982: 1–22; 1985: 297; 1987: 33; Theophrastus, *Char.* 16.12 and Diggle ad loc.; Philodemus, *de Poet.* 181.1–2, p. 400 Janko and Janko ad loc. See also Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease* 1; Euripides, *Hippolytus* 948–957; Edmonds 2013: 111–123; Parker 2011: 16–20.

21. West 1983: 23.

22. KPT 2006: 237–242.

23. Janko 2008: 51.

24. Heraclitus, fr. 22 B1 D-K (1 Marcovich) (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. math.* 7.132); cf. fr. 22 B17 D-K (3 Marcovich) (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 2.8).

gods or heroes are," and in another he appears to be even more scathing when he says, "To whom does Heraclitus of Ephesus prophesy? To those roaming by night, μάγοι, Bacchoi, maenads, initiates … for the mysteries that are customarily performed among men are practiced in an unholy manner."[25] In this passage, it is not so clear that Heraclitus is criticizing anything. Graf recognizes only the words "roaming by night, μάγοι, Bacchoi, maenads, initiates" as being Heraclitus, and the rest of the fragment as Clement of Alexandria.[26] Thus, it could be argued that both Heraclitus and the Derveni author can be read as criticizing either mystery rites in and of themselves or people who participate in these rites without properly understanding them with the help of a ritual expert.[27] "The masses need interpreters," Pindar reminds the reader as he pulls out his "arrows that speak to the initiated." Applying similar reasoning to the interpretation of poetry, Pindar contrasts "the man who knows a great deal by nature" with "those who have only learned chatter with raucous and indiscriminate tongues in vain like crows against the divine bird of Zeus."[28] Likewise, the Derveni author is not critical of participants in the mysteries, but of people who do not seek the expertise of a ritual expert. Therefore, the view that the Derveni author himself was an *orpheotelestes* who wished to demonstrate his own superior expertise against others within his field has found relatively wide acceptance. The Derveni author has been compared to Empedocles, who discusses both mystical visions and physical cosmology in the same poem.[29] Another passage of Plato is often invoked to clarify the Derveni author's intentions: in *Meno* 81a–b, Socrates discusses reincarnation and refers to "those priests and priestesses who have studied so as to be able to give an account of what they practice." The Derveni author can be seen as this type of priest, since in his commentary he attempts to give an account of Orphic poetry and practices, so some scholars have agreed that one of the aims of the Derveni author is to promote his own expertise in his τέχνη as greater than his rivals.[30]

This view appears more probable in the light of columns 5–6. The Derveni author criticizes his rivals because of their inferior understanding of the poem, the λεγόμενα of the ritual, in the twentieth column; but in the fifth and sixth columns, he discusses different approaches to certain actions, the δρῶμενα of the ritual. The fifth column contains a critique of people who consult oracles but remain ignorant of their meaning:

25. Heraclitus, fr. 22 B5 D-K (86 Marcovich) (Aristocritus, *Theosophia* 68 [Buresch *Klaros* p. 118], Origen, *c. Cels.* 7.62); fr. 22 B14 D-K (87 Marcovich) (Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.22); see also Obbink 1997: 52–53; Janko 2001: 4; KPT 2006: 240.

26. Graf 2014: 78–81.

27. West 1983: 81; see also Janko (2001), though his views are different in Janko 2008.

28. Pindar, *Ol.* 2.86–88; trans. Svarlien 1990.

29. Betegh 2004: 370–372.

30. Obbink 1997: 53–54; West 1997b: 83; Betegh 2004: 351–358; Edmonds 2008: 33–35.

They consult an oracle. … For them we enter the oracle in order to ask, with regard to those seeking a divination, whether it is proper. … Why do they disbelieve in the terrible things of Hades? Without knowing (the meaning of) dreams or any of the other things, by what kind of evidence would they believe? For, overcome both by error and pleasure as well, they neither learn nor believe.[31]

The Derveni author refers to consultation on behalf of others in the first-person plural: "for them *we* enter (πάριμεν) the oracle." He associates himself with the ritual actions he is discussing by using a term that is typical when referring to people entering oracles.[32] In contrast with column 20, here he criticizes both a lack of understanding and a lack of belief caused by "error" and "pleasure." He associates not believing in the horrors of Hades with "not knowing (the meaning of) dreams," suggesting that the reason for their disbelief in divination is a lack of knowledge: "they neither learn nor believe." Considering columns 5 and 20, it appears that the Derveni author is promoting his expertise in explaining oracles, in the same way that he later promotes his expertise in explaining the Orphic poem. He explicitly associates himself with the consultation of oracles, which suggests that he is not criticizing this practice as an outsider, but commenting on it as an insider. It is on the basis of his expertise in his τέχνη that he expresses frustration with his clients on whose behalf he consults the oracle—for their lack of knowledge and belief, not for the fact that they consult an oracle.

In the sixth column, the Derveni author appears to be explaining an initiation rite by relating it to the ritual activities of another type of specialist, the μάγος (DP 6.1–9):

Prayers and sacrifices appease the souls, while the [incantation] of the μάγοι is able to drive away the δαίμονες who are hindering. … This is why the μάγοι perform the sacrifice, just as if they are paying a retribution. … Initiates make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the μάγοι do.

Opinions have differed about what is meant by μάγοι in this passage, with some scholars thinking that the Derveni author means Greek ritual specialists like himself,[33] and others thinking that he specifically means Persian priests,[34] but the most common interpretation is that μάγος refers to Greek ritual specialists. For example, Graf reads μάγος as referring to "religious specialists … who

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31. DP 5.3–10.
32. Johnston 2014: 89–92.
33. Betegh 2004: 78–83; KPT 2006: 167; Edmonds 2008: 24–26; Bernabé 2014: 35–38.
34. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 110–115; West 1997b: 90.

claimed the title of the Persian specialist for themselves."[35] The Derveni author favourably compares the μάγοι, whether Greek or Persian, with the μύσται, in a context where he is explaining certain ritual actions. He says that "μύσται make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the μάγοι do" (6.8–9), so most likely this is the ritual he is explaining: a preliminary sacrifice designed to avert "the hindering δαίμονες" (6.2–3). These δαίμονες could appear either on a soul's journey through the underworld or in the process of an initiation, so the μύσται could either be new initiates undergoing their initiations or the cult group practicing a funerary rite for one of their fellow-initiates.[36] The mention of the "horrors of Hades" (6.6) might indicate an eschatological concern, but Johnston suggests that the phrase "horrors of Hades" refers here to threats to the living that come from the spirits of the dead: the "horrors of Hades" are precisely the "hindering δαίμονες."[37] Whether the preliminary sacrifice was for an initiation, a funeral rite, or an apotropaic ritual to avert the spirits of the dead, a reasonable starting point for our analysis is that the μύσται who were performing the sacrifice were members (or were becoming members) of a mystery cult of some sort, and the ritual led by the μάγοι was designed to avert hindering spirits. At this point, it is not necessary to assume with West that they belonged to "an Orphic-Bacchic cult society" in particular,[38] but this seems to be the most likely context.

The recipients of this sacrifice, the Eumenides, bring us back to the first two columns, where the Derveni author appears to equate the Eumenides with the Erinyes. Although they are rarely identified with each other in cult, they are often equated in literature, and their names are used interchangeably in columns 2–6 of the Derveni Papyrus.[39] The Eumenides are mentioned alongside δαίμονες in the third column (3.4–7), when the Derveni author says that "Dike punishes pernicious men through each of the Erinyes. And the δαίμονες who are in the underworld never observe [something][40] and being

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35. Graf 2014: 78–84.

36. Betegh 2004: 88–89; Johnston 2014: 98–99; cf. Graf 2009: 176–182.

37. Johnston 2014: 91–94.

38. West 1997b: 84.

39. Fragments of the word "Erinyes" appear (DP 1.6, 2.3), but their context is unclear. KPT (2006: 143) suggest supplementing]νιδ[…]τιμῶσιν (2.4) to read Εὐμε]νιδ[…]τιμῶσιν, and that this could be "identification" of the Eumenides with the Erinyes. On the Erinyes and Eumenides equated in other literature, see Johnston 1999: 253–256; Betegh 2004: 86–88. In tragedy, the Erinyes are sometimes associated with maenads: Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 699; *Eumenides* 500; Euripides, *Orestes* 411, 835; cf. Henrichs 1984: 264n37.

40. KPT (ad loc.) suggest translating ο]ὐδέκοτ[ε … τ]ηροῦσι as meaning that they "never observe [sleep? rest?]" but they suggest no suitable parallels for this usage. The more common translation of τηρέω, "keep watch over," might make sense, but then what is it that they "never keep watch over"? LSJ, s.v. "τηρέω" suggests the translation "observe" or "keep [an engagement]," but the relevant passages (e.g., Lysias 31.31 ἀπόρρητα, Demosthenes 18.89 εἰρήνην) never use τηρέω to refer to sleep. Bernabé (2014: 25) suggests reading DP 3.6 as "never release [something]" (ο]ὐδέκοτ' [ἐλευθ]εροῦσι).

servants of gods, they . . ." In both of these passages, the Eumenides/Erinyes are mentioned next to the δαίμονες. They receive different cult honors in the second column, and fulfill slightly different roles in the third column, but in the sixth column they are both equated with "souls" (ψυχαί). Depending upon how one supplements DP 6.3–4, the Derveni author states either that these δαίμονες are "hostile to souls" (ψ[υχαῖς ἐχθ]ροί) or that they are "hostile souls" (ψ[υχαὶ ἐχθ]ροί); Tsantsanoglou suggests "avenging souls" (ψ[υχαὶ τιμω]ροί), which recent scholars have found acceptable.[41] A clear statement of equivalence appears in DP 6.9–10, when the author says that "the Eumenides are souls."

If the Eumenides are ψυχαί, then what is their relation to the δαίμονες? Is the Derveni author saying that the Eumenides are the same category as δαίμονες and both are ψυχαί, or are the δαίμονες a different category of ψυχαί? The δαίμονες share with the Erinyes their chthonic associations, since in the third column they are called "the δαίμονες who are in the underworld," where they function as "servants of gods" (3.6–7). Kouremenos reads these chthonic δαίμονες as equivalent to the Erinyes, and in support of this he mentions two passages from ancient literature that attest to the Erinyes living underground.[42] If the third column were in better condition, then we might be able to know what they did: were they agents of justice, like the Erinyes through whom "Dike punishes [or warns][43] pernicious men" (3.5)? In a similar manner, the Heraclitus quotation in DP 4.7–10 calls the Erinyes "assistants of Dike" in their role of keeping the sun within its proper limits.[44] If the Eumenides are equivalent to the δαίμονες, then it is better to read DP 6.3–4 as "hostile souls" or "avenging souls" than as "hostile to souls." Johnston accepts the reading "avenging souls" and sees these souls as representing "the angry souls of the dead." She argues that these restless beings are the "horrors of Hades" (5.6) and the purpose of the ritual is to pay a "penalty . . . on behalf of the initiates," thus changing them into the Eumenides.[45]

The fact that the Erinyes are the recipients of a ritual designed to avert the "horrors of Hades" indicates that it is a chthonic ritual. Another indication is the mention of "libations" that are "poured down in drops in every temple of Zeus" (2.5–6). In the sixth column, the Derveni author clarifies that these

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41. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 113; accepted as correct reading by Johnston 2014: 98; Bernabé 2014: 28–40. KPT (2006: 130) translate as "hindering daimons are vengeful souls (or: hostile to souls)."

42. KPT (2006: 147), citing Homer, *Iliad* 19.259–260; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 115; cf. *OH* 69.3–4, 8; Sophocles, *Oedipus Col.* 1568; Henrichs 1984: 264n38.

43. KPT (2006: 147) suggest that the passage could either mean that they punish souls after death or that they warn people of the horrors of Hades.

44. DP 4.7–9 = Heraclitus, fr. 22 B3 D-K (57 Marcovich) (Aetius 2.21.4) and fr. 22 B94 D-K (52 Marcovich) (Plutarch, *de exil.* 11.604a).

45. Johnston 2014: 98–102; cf. Bernabé 2014: 40–44.

libations are of "water and milk" (6.6). Commenting on χοαί ("libations"), Kouremenos mentions that these were usually offered to underworld deities or to the souls of the dead. But he suggests that Δ[ιὸς should be "construed with χ]οαί, not να[όν," to read "poured down in drops to Zeus in every temple," so that "the reference is perhaps to the well-known libation to Zeus Soter."[46] But if this were the case, then a dative would have been preferable to the genitive Δ[ιὸς, so perhaps the passage would be better translated as "in every temple of Zeus." If libations were poured "in every temple of Zeus," then this allows the possibility that there were chthonic recipients of a preliminary sacrifice, before the main sacrifice to Zeus.[47] If the χοαί here are a component of the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides offered by the μύσται, then the recipients must be the Eumenides, which is appropriate because they are chthonic deities. The context suggests this, since they are mentioned in the next line, and there is sufficient evidence of the offering of libations to the Eumenides in Greek cult to conclude that it was not an unlikely activity. The ritual to which the sacrifice is preliminary could be one that honours Zeus, and this might have an effect on how we interpret the Derveni theogony with its emphasis on Zeus. Kouremenos points out that in some places sacrifices were made to Zeus "alongside the Eumenides,"[48] so it is not unreasonable to assume that a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides would be offered in the context of a sacrifice to Zeus at one of his temples.

After the χοαί, the Derveni author says something about a bird, in a passage that is still quite fragmentary. The editio princeps at DP 2.6–8 reads, "One must offer exceptional honors to [the Eumenis] and burn a bird to each [of the δαίμονες]" (ἐξαιρέ]τους τιμὰς [χ]ρὴ / τ[ῇ Εὐμεν]ίδι νεῖμ[αι, δαίμοσι δ'] ἑκάστο[ι]ς ὀρνίθειόν τι / κα[ίειν). But Bernabé, based on a more recent reconstruction of the text, reads, "The dead ought [to be given] honors … [and] to each [of the participants (?) in the rite they give] a little bird in a cage" (ν]εκροὺς τιμὰς [χ]ρὴ / […]σι [δ'] ἑκάστοις ὀρνίθειόν τι / κλε[ισθέν).[49] This "little bird," ὀρνίθειόν τι, makes another appearance in the sixth column, when the Derveni author explains that "anyone who is going to sacrifice to the gods must first [sacrifice] a bird" (6.10–11).[50] One suggestion is that, as an alternative to an actual bird sacrifice, the "many-knobbed cakes" (6.7) mentioned in the sixth column

46. KPT 2006: 144; cf. Bernabé (2014: 30–31), who suggests that wineless libations for the Erinyes were common.

47. The conjecture Δ[ιὸς κατὰ π]άντα να[όν is new with KPT 2006 (and repeated by Bernabé 2007a). Earlier editions and translations of the text do not include this conjecture, and mention only "libations in droplets" (χοαὶ σταγόσιν) (Tsantsanoglou 1997: 10; Janko 2002: 6; Betegh 2004: 7), so the mention of Zeus depends upon Kouremenos' conjecture of Δ[ιὸς.

48. Tsantsanoglou (1997: 103) and KPT (2006: 144) refer to Henrichs (1984: 263), who in n. 33 cites SEG IX (1938) nos. 324–346, XX (1964) no. 723.

49. Bernabé 2014: 24.

50. KPT 2006 ad loc.

might have been bird-shaped; but the occurrence of ὀρνίθειόν (6.11), since it is not accompanied by τι, is a noun, not an adjective, so it must mean "bird," or even "a small bird."⁵¹ Tsantsanoglou takes ὀρνίθειόν τι (DP 2.7) literally to refer to a bird sacrifice, since birds, especially roosters, were associated with Persephone.⁵² However, Bernabé rejects the idea that this is a bird sacrifice, so instead he translates that the initiate "first [frees] a bird," based in part on the assumption that all Orphics were vegetarians, but more convincingly because of the reconstruction of κλε[ισθέν] in the second column. He suggests that "to each" of the initiates was given "a little bird in a cage," and during the ritual the bird was released, in an act of sympathetic magic that represented the freeing of the soul from the prison of the body.⁵³ But neither is this reconstruction by any means certain.

In addition to chthonic libations and rituals with birds, the Derveni author explains in the sixth column that the μάγοι and μύσται "sacrifice innumerable and many-knobbed cakes, because the souls too are innumerable" (6.7–8). Henrichs explains that these "knob-like protrusions which served as decorations" were typical of cakes used in rituals to Demeter, Dionysus, and other chthonic deities.⁵⁴ Tsantsanoglou points out, however, that πόπανα were "not exclusively offered" to chthonic deities, but were common to many gods in both Greece and Persia.⁵⁵ So, although they were not exclusively chthonic in nature, πόπανα were an appropriate component of a chthonic sacrifice, and another point at which the practices of the μάγοι and μύσται were similar. To summarize, the Derveni author explains a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides that averted the hindering δαίμονες. This sacrifice included chthonic libations of water and milk, something to do with a bird, and the offering of cakes.

Another important component of this preliminary sacrifice was music. In the second column, the Derveni author mentions "[hymns] adapted to the music" (2.8–9). The text breaks off at this point, but one possibility is that one of these "[hymns] adapted to the music" was a reference to the Derveni poem itself.⁵⁶ The seventh column introduces the Orphic poem as "a hymn saying sound and lawful words" (7.2), which adds weight to the conjecture of ὕμνος in the second column. As we saw in chapter 1, before Plato, ὕμνος simply meant "song," but still one might ask what role a theogonic hymn might play in the performance of a ritual. It is possible that the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides found an analogy with the practices of the Persian μάγοι, so perhaps some clarity can be found in a passage of Herodotus that describes

51. Betegh 2004: 78; Martínez 2011: 373.
52. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 104.
53. Bernabé 2014: 24–33.
54. Henrichs (1984: 260), citing Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.22.4; cf. Betegh 2004: 76–77.
55. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 114–115.
56. Bernabé 2014: 32. The occurrence of ὕμνους here is a conjecture that appears in KPT and Bernabé ad loc.

how the Persians practiced sacrifice. The Persian who was performing the sacrifice would cut up the victim, boil its flesh, and arrange the pieces on soft grass. After this, "when he has arranged it, a male μάγος comes near and sings over it a theogony, such as these people say a "singing over" is: for without a μάγος it is not lawful for them to make sacrifices."[57] According to Herodotus, one of the roles of the μάγος was to sing a "theogony" (θεογονίη) over a sacrifice. The words Herodotus uses to describe this act of "singing over" something (ἐπαείδω, ἐπαοιδή) remind us of the Derveni author's use of ἐπῳδή: "the singing-over of the μάγοι is able to drive away the δαίμονες who are hindering" (6.2–3). It is by the act of singing over the sacrifice that the μάγοι are able to exercise power over the δαίμονες. Since the "μύσται make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the μάγοι do" (6.8–9), it follows that a component of this preliminary sacrifice might have been the act of "singing over" the sacrifice. Taking Herodotus into account, we may conclude that the type of song "sung over" the preliminary sacrifice was a theogony: most likely, in this case, the Derveni poem itself. Perhaps it is with this practice in mind that the Derveni author says that "[a sacred rite was being performed] through the poem" (7.2–3).

By means of the Derveni author's comparison between the Persian μάγοι and the Greek μύσται, we might have some idea of the performative context of the Derveni theogony. The μύσται offered a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides as part of either an initiation or a funeral rite, to avert them from being an obstacle to an initiation or to someone's passage through the underworld. This sacrifice involved chthonic libations, either a bird sacrifice or the freeing of a bird, and the offering of cakes. At some point during the performance of these ritual actions, someone whose role was analogous to a μάγος would sing a theogony over the sacrifice. Since the μάγοι were a class of ritual specialists in Persian cult whose role was to sing a theogony, by analogy we can conjecture that in this Greek mystery rite, the μάγος was a ritual specialist—an *orpheotelestes*—whose role was to sing the theogony over the sacrifice.

We thus see the thread that ties the first six columns of the Derveni Papyrus to the rest of the text: columns 1–6 discuss the ritual context in which the Derveni poem was performed, and columns 7–26 comment on the contents of the poem itself. Most likely, the Derveni poem was "sung over" the preliminary sacrifice, so that the ritual actions of this sacrifice were accompanied by a hymn that was "adapted to the music" (2.8). The question that naturally emerges is, what does a theogonic narrative have to do with an apotropaic rite? Burkert has suggested a potential answer to this question, based on the practice of magic in Mesopotamia. As we saw in chapter 1, a "new and proper order" was thought to be "created or recreated" by the chanting of a theogony; simply put, the effect

57. Herodotus 1.132.3; cf. Betegh 2004: 78.

was to impose cosmic order over a local situation.[58] Obbink applies this theory to the Derveni Papyrus and argues that the "normal order" that is restored in the Derveni Papyrus refers to the emergence of humans out of the ashes of the Titans after they have killed Dionysus.[59] If this is the case, then the repetition of cosmogony might be an act of compensating Persephone for the "ancient grief" to which Pindar refers in one fragment.[60] From this perspective, the Derveni author might seem to refer to the death of Dionysus when he says that the sacrifice and theogony were performed by the μάγοι "as if paying a penalty" (6.5). But there are two problems with this interpretation: (1) the Zagreus myth may not have been as central to Orphic thought as earlier scholars believed; and (2) the Derveni theogony, as we have it, does not say anything about the story of Dionysus and the Titans or the origin of humans. We can probably find a better way to answer this question by referring to the actual contents of columns 7–26, and indeed, as the following analysis demonstrates, the order that is created in the Derveni poem is one in which Zeus becomes king of the gods.

The Reconstruction of the Derveni Poem

The Derveni author describes the Orphic poem as a "hymn saying sound and lawful words" (7.2), and he adds that Orpheus "speaks a sacred discourse, and from the very first word all the way to the last" (7.7–8). Kouremenos and Tsantsanoglou take "lawful" (θεμ[ι]τὰ) to mean that it is "allowed to be heard or read by non-initiated people," such as those who hear the λεγόμενα of the public ritual in column 20.[61] The poem is "spoken," or "not secret," but the Derveni author thinks it is impossible "to state the solution [or interpretation] of the words," because the poetry is "something strange" and "riddling to humans" (7.3–5). The Orphic poem is written as an enigma in such a way that noninitiates will be unable to interpret it without the help of a ritual specialist such as the Derveni author. This is how he interprets the first line of the poem, "the well-recognized verse" (7.8–9) that instructs noninitiates to close the door. He explains that, "having ordered them to "shut the doors" to their ears, he says that he is not legislating for the many [but addressing himself to those] who are pure in hearing."[62] Since the Derveni author takes this line to mean

58. Burkert 1992: 125.
59. Obbink 1997: 50–51.
60. Pindar, fr. 133 Sn.-Maehl. (*OF* 443 B).
61. KPT 2006: 171; Tsantsanoglou 1997: 118–126.
62. DP 7.9–11. KPT put quotation marks around ["ὠσὶ]ν" and translate θ]ύρας … ἐπιθέ[σθα ι … [ὠσὶ]ν as "put doors to their ears," but I have removed the quotation marks around [ὠσὶ]ν and translated the phrase as "'shut the doors' to their ears," in light of my interpretation of this passage. *OF* 1a–b B do not mention ears, but the Derveni author explains the reference to "doors" as meaning metaphorically that non-initiates are to shut their ears.

that non-initiates are unable to understand the enigmas of Orpheus' poetry, this must be the sense in which he understands the secrecy of the mysteries. If it is the enigmatic nature of the poetry rather than secrecy itself that is meant by "shut the doors," then it does not follow that he would keep the contents of that poem a secret; after all, he is attempting to explain the enigmas. The secrecy of the mysteries was not a matter of actual secrecy, but of hidden truths known only to initiates, mystical secrets that could not "really be betrayed," as Burkert suggested, "because told in public it would appear insignificant."[63]

The words θ]ύρας … ἐπιθέ[σθαι make it clear that the Derveni author is quoting a commonly used formula, or "seal" (σφραγίς),[64] which was the first line of more than one poem in both early and later Orphic tradition. This Orphic seal is referred to by a few ancient authors, and it is also the opening line for *Testaments*, the late Jewish poem that is attributed to Orpheus.[65] There are two different versions of the line, listed as *OF* 1a and b in Bernabé's edition of the Orphic fragments:

a   I will sing to those of understanding; non-initiates, shut the doors.
b   I will speak to those to whom it is permitted; non-initiates, shut the doors.

Although West prefers *OF* 1a as the opening line of his *exempli gratia* reconstruction of the Derveni poem, Betegh and Bernabé prefer *OF* 1b,[66] and perhaps the latter view can be supported by the occurrence of θεμ[ι]τὰ in DP 7.2. West finds a parallel to *OF* 1a in an Assyrian priestly text. He compares the noun that denotes "those of understanding" (ξυνετός) with the Akkadian word *mūdû* ("one who knows") in the formula: "Secret of the great gods. One who knows may show it to one who knows; one who does not know must not see it."[67] This parallel indicates a possible Near Eastern origin to the Orphic seal, which corresponds to the Derveni author's comparison between the μάγοι and μύσται. In both formulae, there is a revelation through the act of speaking or showing to insiders, and the exclusion of outsiders.

The Orphic formula seems to announce an oral performance, since the priest performing the poem begins by announcing that he will "sing to those who know" or "speak to those to whom it is permitted."[68] This fits the performance context that was suggested in the previous section, of a ritual specialist "singing over" the initiates' sacrifice. Both formulae announce the exclusion

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63. Burkert 1987: 9; cf. Calame 2014: 171–175.
64. Bernabé 2007b: 100; Calame 2014: 173.
65. *OF* 377–378 B; Tsantsanoglou 1997: 124–125. The two versions of *OF* 1 B are reconstructed from Plato, *Symposium* 218b; Dionysius Hal., *Comp.* 25.5; Aristides *Or.* 3.50; Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 636d; and the Derveni Papyrus; see also *OF* 1 B and Bernabé ad loc.
66. West 1983: 114; Betegh 2004: 109; Bernabé ad *OF* 3 B.
67. West 1997b: 89.
68. Calame 2011: 9.

of outsiders, the βέβηλοι, who correspond to the "one who does not know" in the Assyrian text. The means by which they are excluded is uncertain. According to Bremmer, "the reference to 'doors' presupposes a performance inside a building," implying that the formula referred literally to the shutting of doors in "the original place of performance," although both the Derveni author and Plato (*Symposium* 218b) allegorize the line "by interpreting it as closing the doors of the ears of the audience."[69] Although it is possible that the line emerged from an indoor ritual, the fact that it became a formulaic opening line for written Orphic poetry suggests that the meaning of "shut the doors" (θύρας ἐπίθεσθε) was taken metaphorically in either an oral or a literary context. The command for non-initiates to "shut the doors" refers simply to the fact that the oral performance of Orphic poetry was not meant for them. Even if the poem itself was θέμις, in the sense that it was "allowed to be heard or read by non-initiated people,"[70] the βέβηλοι are not meant to understand. Bernabé allows both possibilities: either "the poem was only recited in front of initiates," or "the text could circulate without restrictions," but the point is that only initiates were meant to understand it.[71]

If indeed this line comes from the original text of the Derveni poem, then it must have been the first line of the proem. The question then becomes whether the rest of the lines quoted and discussed in the Derveni Papyrus occurred in the same order as the original poem. Most scholars believe that they do. Betegh argues, on the basis of the Derveni author's claim that Orpheus wrote riddles "from the very first word all the way to the last" (7.7–8), that he comments on the poem in order, line by line.[72] A stronger indication that the poem was quoted in sequence is that the Derveni author uses phrases like "after this he says" (11.9), "and the next verse" (15.5; cf. 23.10), and "the next verse is as follows" (12.1), to introduce quotations from the poem. These phrases imply that he is commenting on each line in the order that it appeared in the original poem, so West concluded that the verses are quoted "in more or less the proper order," and "it is in the poet's thought, not the commentator's, that one sees a coherent development from column to column."[73] This leads us to a third indication that the poem is discussed in order: as we follow the fragments in order through each column, a coherent narrative emerges.

The seventh column begins by quoting a hexameter line that appears to be from the end of the proem (DP 7.2 = *OF* 4 B). It talks about those "who were born from Zeus the mighty king" ([o]ἳ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο [ὑπερμεν]έος βασιλῆος). Since the bottom part of the previous column is destroyed, and there is no

69. Bremmer 2011: 3–4.
70. KPT 2006: 171.
71. Bernabé 2007b: 100–101.
72. Betegh 2004: 106–107; see also Calame 2014: 175–176.
73. West 1983: 78.

antecedent for the relative pronoun οἵ, there must have been some line(s) preceding this one in which the antecedents were named. A reasonable guess is that οἵ refers to the generation of deities born from Zeus.[74] West supplements the proem with three *exempli gratia* lines that tell what the performer of the poem will sing about, and these provide a plausible picture of what the proem might have looked like: the poem emphasizes the rule of Zeus, which is accomplished by following the advice of Night, and the results of his deeds are the births of younger gods.[75] The narrative proper begins with the next two lines, which the Derveni author quotes in full (DP 8.4–5 = *OF* 5 B):

> Zeus then, when from his father the prophesied rule
> and power in his hands he had taken, and the glorious δαίμων.

The Derveni author insists that word order makes this passage confusing, so it should read, "Zeus, when he took the power from his father and the glorious δαίμων" (8.7–8). Bernabé takes "glorious δαίμων" to refer to Zeus' father, so that Zeus took the "glorious δαίμων" from Kronos.[76] But Sider takes it as a reference to Zeus himself, translating the following line: "Zeus, when from his father he took into his hands his divine rule and valor, (he)—the glorious δαίμων."[77] Despite this confusion, it is clear that the narrative begins in medias res, at the moment when Zeus takes power from his father Kronos.

After taking power from Kronos, Zeus receives prophecies from Night telling him how to solidify his rule on Olympus. Another full-verse quotation must have appeared at the bottom of the ninth column, because in the next few columns, the Derveni author comments on particular words that appeared in that line: "proclaiming all things" (10.9) and "nurse" (10.11), followed by "to prophesy … out of the innermost shrine" (11.1).[78] A full line that occurs "after this" (11.9) is quoted, followed by "the next verse" (12.1) on column 12. Putting these together, Bernabé reconstructs the fragments as follows (DP 10.9, 11; 11.1, 10; 12.2 = *OF* 6 B):

> And Zeus [… came to the cave, where]
> Night sat, immortal nurse of the gods, knowing all oracles
>   . . . to prophesy from the innermost shrine.
> She prophesied all that it was permitted him to achieve,
> how he would hold the lovely seat in snowy Olympus.[79]

74. KPT 2006: 175. See Bernabé ad loc.: [ο]ἵ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο is a formulaic expression with parallels in Homer, *Iliad* 5.637; *Homeric Hymn* 17.2; Hesiod, *Theogony* 106, 111, each of which is preceded by an antecedent for οἵ.

75. West 1983: 114.

76. Bernabé 2007b: 103–104.

77. Sider 2014: 230–238.

78. Betegh 2004: 110–111.

79. Translation: Bernabé 2007b: 104–105; cf. Sider 2014: 238–240.

The next line, quoted at the beginning of column 13, leads Bernabé to believe that Zeus receives another prophecy, this time from his father. If there are no missing lines between this and the second line quoted on column 13, then the first thing Zeus does after hearing these prophecies is to engage in the act of swallowing. The problem is that it is unclear what or whom he swallows (DP 13.1, 4 = *OF* 7–8 B):[80]

> When Zeus had heard the prophecies from his father,
> he swallowed the revered one [or phallus], who [or which] sprang forth[81]
> first into the aither [or who first ejaculated aither].[82]

West interprets this differently from Bernabé, and conjectures a line in which Zeus is "about to" take the "sceptre" in his hand, when first he goes to Night to hear her prophesy. West moves *OF* 5.2 down and places it between *OF* 7 and 8, to read, "When Zeus had heard the prophecies, from his father he took in his hands strength and the glorious δαίμων." In West's view, Zeus does not hear prophecy from his father, but takes strength from his father after, not before, hearing the prophecies of Night. In West's reconstruction, after hearing Night's prophecies, Zeus takes the power from his father and swallows the "revered one" Protogonos, and this is how he acquires royal power. According to Bernabé and Betegh, however, this act of swallowing is the means by which Zeus secures his rule after it has already been achieved.[83]

There has been a lot of debate about what the accusative αἰδοῖον means: whether it is the masculine adjective αἰδοῖος, which means the "revered one" Protogonos, or the neuter noun αἰδοῖον, which means the "phallus" of Ouranos. The issue has been confused by the Derveni author's interpretation of this word to mean that the phallus, being a procreative power, can be likened to the sun, from which all life springs (DP13.6–14), and by the words πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου (DP 16.3 = *OF* 12.1 B), which has been translated "of the first-born king, the revered one"[84] and, alternatively, "of the penis of the first-born king."[85] We will return to this difficult question in the next section, but for now it is enough to see the range of possibilities. The act of swallowing either all or part of his ancestor is the means by which Zeus either solidifies his rule after taking power from his father, or takes power from his father in

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80. Bernabé 2007b: 106.

81. Or "gushed"; see Calame 1997: 68; 2014: 177–178.

82. This translation is an attempt to reflect some of the different readings of this highly contested passage; see next section.

83. West 1983: 114; Bernabé 2007b: 105–106; Betegh 2004: 109–110.

84. KPT 2006: 134.

85. Bernabé 2007b: 114.

the first place. The one definite point in all of this is that the act of swallowing is connected to the securing of royal power.[86]

It is at this central, climactic moment that the narrative goes back to the beginning of the theogonic succession, to rapidly recall the generations of gods preceding Zeus. There is a reference to someone "who did a great deed" (DP 14.5 = *OF* 10.1 B), which is usually taken to mean Kronos castrating his father Ouranos, as he does in Hesiod (*Theogony* 178–181).[87] In "the verse following" (14.5) and "the next verse" (15.5) after that, the poem briefly runs through the reigns of Ouranos and Kronos (DP 14.6; 15.6 = *OF* 10.2–3 B):

> Ouranos, son of Night, who was the first to become king.
> Following him in turn was Kronos, and then clever Zeus.

Thus, we appear to have a four-generation genealogy: first Night, the "all-proclaiming ... nurse of the gods" (10.9–11); then Ouranos the "firstborn king" (16.3), "who was the first to become king" (14.6); then Kronos, "who did a great deed" (14.5); and finally "clever Zeus" (μητίετα Ζεύς, 15.6). This becomes complicated if we try to find a place for the "revered" Protogonos, but not if Zeus swallows the "phallus" of Ouranos.

After this brief genealogy, the next line of the poem probably continues with the description of Zeus, but it is so badly fragmented that only "cunning intelligence" or "wisdom" (μῆτιν) and "royal honor" (βασιληίδα τιμ[ήν]) survive. Scholars have reconstructed the line to read, "Holding wisdom and royal honor over the blessed gods."[88] The use of μῆτις reminds us of a similar act of swallowing in Hesiod's *Theogony* (886–900): the goddess Metis, whom Zeus swallows to prevent a son from overthrowing him. The results of this action are that Athena is born from his head and Zeus ingests cunning intelligence. As Detienne and Vernant put it, "The cunning of Metis constitutes a threat to any established order" because "her intelligence operates in the realm of what is shifting and unexpected." But because Zeus swallows Metis, "all the unexpected possibilities which cunning time conceals are now within Zeus." Sovereignty becomes "a stable and permanent state," because Zeus "acquires the resourceful cleverness which enables one to get out of inextricable situations."[89]

Since the word μῆτις appears in a fragmentary line of the Derveni Papyrus, most scholars interpret it as the common noun designating the cunning intelligence with which Zeus establishes his rule and re-creates the universe, but it

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86. Cf. Stocking (2013: 185) and the swallowing of Metis in Hesiod.
87. Bernabé 2007b: 110; Sider 2014: 243.
88. DP 15.13 = *OF* 11 B; conjectures accepted by Bernabé ad loc.; West 1983: 114; Betegh 2004: 124; less so by Sider 2014: 245.
89. Detienne and Vernant 1974: 108–112.

could also refer to the goddess herself.[90] This line was immediately followed by an even more fragmented line—only the word "sinews" survives, which might refer to the "sinews of Achelous" in DP 23.11[91]—and the rest of the column is destroyed. This is particularly problematic because of the controversy over the occurrence of αἰδοίου in the next column. The fire swallowed the vital part of the sentence that would clarify the genitive phrase Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου, which begins *OF* 12 B:

> . . . of the revered one (or phallus of) the firstborn king; and upon him all
> the immortals grew, blessed gods and goddesses
> and rivers and lovely springs and everything else
> that had then been born; and he himself became the only one.[92]

After a brief flashback to the earlier successions of deities, the narrative returns to the central moment of action in which Zeus swallows the "revered one" or "phallus" (αἰδοῖος/αἰδοῖον). Through this act of swallowing, Zeus ingests either all of the previous creation or the generative power by which the previous creation had been made.

Like the genitive form αἰδοίου in this passage, the word πρωτογόνος could be taken two ways, either as an adjective simply meaning "firstborn" or as a proper noun referring to the primordial deity Protogonos, who appears in later Orphic theogonies. In the Rhapsodies, Zeus swallows the entire body of Protogonos/Phanes, who appears two generations before Ouranos, so some scholars take this fragment as a reference to Phanes.[93] According to this interpretation, the swallowing of "the revered king, Protogonos" means the swallowing of the original creator of the universe, and by extension everything Protogonos had created. The other interpretation is that *OF* 12 B refers to the "phallus of the firstborn king," who is Ouranos son of Night. According to Bernabé, Zeus "returns to the origins and restarts the history of the universe," but there is a new "driving force of evolution" in this re-creation: his cunning intelligence (μῆτις).[94] This brings us back to *OF* 10 B, where Zeus is referred to as μητίετα Ζεύς, and points to a major difference between Hesiod and the Orphic theogony: in Hesiod, the cosmogony is the natural result of the procreation of

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90. KPT 2006: 213. The phrase βασιληίδα τιμήν also occurs in *Theogony* 892, but KPT do not think this justifies taking *OF* 11 B to refer to Zeus swallowing Metis.

91. Sider 2014: 248–250. The cutting out of "sinews" (ἶνας) appears in later versions of the myth of Zeus and Typhon (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.6.3; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 1.478–520), but this is not enough to demonstrate the story's presence in the Derveni poem.

92. DP 16.3–6 = *OF* 12 B.

93. KPT 2006: 23–25, 214–216; West 1983: 86–88; Santamaría 2016; cf. *OF* 58, 82, 85, 87, 129, 167, 168 B.

94. Betegh 2004: 125; Bernabé 2007b: 114–115.

successive generations of deities, but in Orpheus, Zeus swallows that universe and re-creates it by means of his cunning intelligence.[95]

However, before the Derveni poem describes this new creation, it diverts our attention toward Zeus himself, in the glory of his new sovereignty. By swallowing the universe, Zeus "became the only one" (DP 16.6 = *OF* 12.3 B) who existed. "In the following verse" (DP 16.12), the poem narrates the immediate consequence of this act of swallowing, which is that it solidifies the royal position of Zeus, so that "[now he is] king of all [and will be] in the future" (DP 16.14 = *OF* 13 B). What follows has been called a "mini-hymn" to Zeus,[96] consisting of four lines that focus on attributes of Zeus in his new royal position. West reconstructed the first line by finding parallels between the lines quoted in columns 17–19 and similar passages in other versions of the Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus.[97] Based on the occurrence of ὕστατον ("last") in DP 17.6, along with the Derveni author's attempt to explain allegorically the sense in which Zeus was born, West conjectured the first line based on its identical occurrence in these other fragments.[98] The second line is the verse quoted in DP 17.12, but the third line is based on one word: μοῖρα, which occurs seven times in column 18. West and Bernabé have each suggested different conjectures for the third line of the hymn, both of which equate Zeus with Moira.[99] Finally, the Derveni author quotes the fourth line in DP 19.10. Agreeing with West's *exempli gratia* reconstruction in all but the third line, Bernabé puts these four lines together in *OF* 14 B:

> Zeus was born first, Zeus last, god of the bright bolt;
> Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made;
> Zeus the breath of all, Zeus was the fate of all;
> Zeus the king, Zeus the ruler of all, god of the bright bolt.

By swallowing the previous creation, Zeus becomes the last deity to be born in the original creation, but the first one to exist in the new creation. It is from him that "all things are made," with the use of τεύχω ("made") implying that this was a skilled, intentional act.[100] It is by this re-creation that the sovereignty of Zeus is solidified, as promised by the prophecies of Night at the beginning

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95. Detienne and Vernant 1974: 137–139; West 1983: 92; Bernabé 2007b: 120.

96. Betegh 2004: 126.

97. West 1983: 89–90; cf. Betegh 2004: 125–126; Brisson and Chase 2009: 38–39. The Orphic fragments West used were a hymn to Zeus in *De Mundo* (*OF* 31 I B = 21a K) and a longer version in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 243 B = 168 K).

98. West 1983: 114, line 26.

99. West (1983: 114, line 28): [Ζεὺς πάντων τέλος αὐτὸς ἔχει, Ζεὺς] Μοῖρα [κραταιή]. Bernabé (*OF* 14.3 B): [Ζεὺς πνοιὴ πάντων, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο] μοῖρα; note the square brackets around every word except μοῖρα.

100. Cf. LSJ, s.v. "τεύχω": "produce by work or art"; cf. West 1983: 92; Bernabé 2007b: 120.

of the poem. The emphasis of this mini-hymn to Zeus in the Derveni poem is not the cosmogony itself, but the role cosmogony played in making Zeus the "ruler of all."[101]

From here, the Derveni poem went on to narrate Zeus' act of re-creation and the births of other deities. There appears to have been a reference to either "jumping" or "mating" (θόρ{ν}η),[102] and to the birth (or rebirth) of Aphrodite, in one or more lines cited in the lost portion of column 20, because in column 21 the Derveni author argues:

> In saying "by jumping" he makes it clear that [the "things that are," ἐόντα], divided into small particles, moved and jumped in the air. … Ouranian Aphrodite, Zeus, aphrodising, jumping, Peitho [i.e., Persuasion], Harmonia are established names for the same deity. A man having sex with a woman is said in everyday usage to be "aphrodising."[103]

There must have been one or more lines in the poem saying that Zeus gave birth to Ouranian Aphrodite, Peitho, Harmonia, and perhaps other deities. The Derveni author is reminded of a line "in the Hymns" (22.11)—whether he means another Orphic hymn circulating at the time, or this one—that lists six goddesses, all of whom he believes to be the same goddess: "Demeter, Rhea, Ge, Meter, Hestia, Deio" (22.12). Since he cites this line of "the Hymns" in order to draw a comparison with the Derveni poem, perhaps Aphrodite and her companions were introduced in the Derveni poem in a catalogue of this sort. One is reminded of Hesiod's *Theogony*, which includes catalogues of deities, some of whom are personifications like Peitho and Harmonia.[104] Hesiod also tells the story of the birth of Aphrodite from Ouranos' dismembered genitals, and similarly in the Rhapsodies Aphrodite is born twice: once from Ouranos as in Hesiod, and a second time from Zeus and Dione. Having failed to seduce Dione, Zeus ejaculates in the sea and the second Aphrodite is born from the foam.[105] The narrative of this in the Derveni poem need not have been as detailed as it was in the Rhapsodies, but likely there were a few lines describing how Zeus brought back to life some of the deities who had existed before him,

101. This is paralleled in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the succession myth is framed by the hymn to Zeus at the beginning of the poem, gradually leading to the point where Zeus is ruler of the universe; cf. Stocking 2013: 205.

102. See LSJ, s.v. "θρῴσκω": usually it means "leap, spring," though sometimes it means "leap upon, assault": e.g., ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι θόρον in Homer, *Iliad* 8.252, cf. 15.380; it is also attested with the sense of "mount, impregnate" in Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 660: "the one who mates/mounts is the parent"; and fr. 15 Radt = Hesychius θ 814 Latte "mating sweet wild creatures."

103. DP 21.1–9 = *OF* 15 B.

104. E.g., Hesiod, *Theogony* 337–361; Peitho is mentioned in line 349.

105. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 110.23 Pasquali (*OF* 260 B = 183 K); see Betegh 2004: 127–128.

while in the process of giving birth to others.[106] Bernabé argues that "it is without doubt Zeus who ejaculates the goddess," for Aphrodite's birth is "necessary" in a cosmic sense so that sexual reproduction can occur.[107] Whatever the case, the syncretism of Aphrodite with Peitho and Harmonia is most likely the Derveni author's interpretation.

More fragments of the episode of re-creation appear in columns 22–24. From the mention of Ocean in DP 23.3–7, and from the verb ἐμήσατο ("he designed"), together with the phrases "great strength" and "broadly flowing," West reconstructed a lost line that has found wide acceptance.[108] Combining this with the line quoted in DP 23.11 and a few other conjectures, Bernabé puts together four lines in *OF* 16 B:

> And he also designed both Gaia and wide Ouranos above,
> and he designed the great might of wide-flowing Ocean.
> And he placed therein the sinews of silver-eddying Achelous,
> from which the whole sea . . .

Zeus continues with the re-creation of the universe by re-creating Gaia, Ouranos, Ocean, and the "sinews" of Achelous, which are typically taken to mean rivers and streams.[109] Then he creates the Moon "of equal limbs" (DP 24.2 = *OF* 17.1 B)—probably a reference to the horns of the crescent moon, "who shines for many mortals on the boundless earth" (DP 24.3 = *OF* 17.2 B).[110]

The end of the episode of re-creation is marked by a formulaic phrase (αὐτὰρ ἐπεί) that is familiar from Homer and Hesiod in lines that mark the transition from one scene or set of actions to the next.[111] Combining this line in DP 25.14 with words quoted on column 26, scholars have reconstructed the final extant fragment of the Derveni poem (*OF* 18 B):

> But when the mind of Zeus designed all things,
> he wanted to mingle in love with his own mother.

Bernabé takes Zeus' mother in this passage to be Rhea, whom he identifies with Demeter in the Rhapsodies. Because Zeus had swallowed the entire previous creation, this included his own mother, but she maintains her own identity.

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106. Cf. *OF* 10 B; West (1983: 115, lines 33–34) conjectures two lines: one for Aphrodite, and the other for Peitho and Harmonia.

107. Bernabé 2007b: 119.

108. West 1983: 115, line 36; Betegh (2004: 129) credits Merkelbach with the reconstruction, but KPT (2006: 256–257) attribute it to West. KPT (2006: 137) include this line in their translation of the Derveni Papyrus. Most likely the line appeared at the bottom of column 22.

109. KPT 2006: 258–259.

110. Sider 2014: 250.

111. E.g., Homer, *Iliad* 7.207; *Odyssey* 5.76; *Homeric Hymns* 2.483, 6.14; Hesiod, *Theogony* 857.

Bernabé argues that "by committing incest with his mother, he becomes his own son and succeeds himself," thus stabilizing his power by breaking the "cycle of succession."[112] But according to West, the cycle of succession continued with the birth of Persephone and her incest with Zeus, leading to the birth of Dionysus as it occurs in the Rhapsodies. Based upon his reading of the Rhapsodies, West conjectured that the Derveni theogony ended with the birth of Dionysus and his death by the Titans.[113] However, despite the appealing possibility that the Derveni theogony continued with the story of Dionysus, other scholars prefer to be more cautious. Betegh admits that there is "no evidence in the papyrus" for this episode, and Bernabé likewise admits that "it is possible that the poem stopped here." Bernabé notes the absence of both the story of Dionysus and the themes of eschatology and soteriology, which he considers "fundamental to Orphic religion," but he does not assume that these topics were covered by the Derveni poem.[114]

Unfortunately, we have no idea how the poem continued, but from the fragments preserved in the Derveni Papyrus we can get a relatively clear idea about the contents and structure of the Derveni poem. It begins with the moment when Zeus has just taken power. Upon the advice of Night, he swallows either his "revered" ancestor Protogonos or the "phallus" of his ancestor Ouranos. At this point, the poem goes back in time through a brief ring composition that summarizes the genealogy of the gods before Zeus: Night, Ouranos, Kronos, and finally Zeus. Returning to the moment when Zeus engages in the act of swallowing, the poem narrates how Zeus takes into himself either the entire previous creation or the means by which creation was first enacted. This leads to a hymnic passage that extols Zeus, who has secured his sovereignty by the act of swallowing. From here, Zeus begins to re-create the universe, producing both pre-existing deities and entities that belong to the present creation. When he has finished, Zeus wants to have sex with his mother; and this is where the papyrus breaks off. The Derveni poem seems to have been a theogonic hymn that concentrated especially on the moment of the act of swallowing, bringing in other details as they led to or resulted from this narrative moment.

Zeus and the Act of Swallowing

The act of swallowing is a useful point of reference by which we can compare the Derveni poem with other theogonic narratives. Since the Orphic theogonies exist to us only in fragments, Brisson suggests that one of the ways we can navigate

112. Bernabé 2007b: 121–122.
113. West 1983: 94–96.
114. Betegh 2004: 130; Bernabé 2007b: 122.

through the material is by choosing "sure points of reference." The point of reference he chooses is one that emphasizes difference—primordial deities—so he concludes that Night is the primordial deity of "la version ancienne" (which to him is both the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies), while Chronos is the primordial deity in the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies.[115] But the act of swallowing is a point of reference that emphasizes similarity: in Hesiod, the Derveni poem, the Rhapsodies, and indeed Mesopotamian myth, one of the major patterns of action that occurs at central points in the narrative is a deity swallowing something. In the Derveni poem, this deity is Zeus, who swallows either his revered ancestor or his ancestor's phallus. In Hesiod, there are two episodes: Kronos swallowing his children and Zeus swallowing Metis. Whatever the differences in characters and contexts, each of these stories seems to point to a common theme. In every case, the divine king attempts to secure his royal power through the act of swallowing shortly after this power has been acquired.

As we saw in chapter 1, there are certain points of comparison that can be made between Near Eastern succession myths and the core narrative of Hesiod and the Orphic theogonies. The most similar of these is the Hittite-Hurrian succession myth (thirteenth century BC), which has a basic genealogy of An, Kumarbi, and Tessub. Like Ouranos, An is a sky-god who is castrated; like Kronos, Kumarbi castrates his father and swallows his son; and like Zeus, Tessub is the weather-god who in the end reigns as king.[116] Other important parallels are found in the Babylonian *Enûma Eliš* (second millennium BC). This poem mirrors the story of Kronos and Ouranos, in the action of Ea defeating his father Apsû. Apsû and his wife Tiâmat have children who are contained inside her, so Apsû decides to kill them, but he is defeated by Ea, son of the sky-god Anu. Soon after, Ea's son Marduk is set up as Apsû's royal successor, but first he must go to war against Tiâmat. His moment of victory comes when Tiâmat attempts to swallow him. Marduk creates winds that make Tiâmat unable to close her mouth, and he fires an arrow down her throat.[117] Based on the parallels between the Hittite myth, the Babylonian myth, and Hesiod, it seems possible that there was some chain of transmission of these narrative patterns. West observes that in the Rhapsodies, some of the foreign elements of myth "stand out undigested," such as the name of Erikepaios and the theriomorphic image of winged Chronos, but in Hesiod "the foreign elements had been completely absorbed" to the extent that the myth was entirely Greek.[118] Another way of reading these similarities is through Lane Fox's idea

115. Brisson 1995: 413.

116. West 1966: 21; 1997a: 290.

117. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 233–235, 253–255; see West 1966: 213; 1997a: 288–292.

118. West 1966: 28–29.

of "creative misunderstanding," in which these elements are used to amplify a pre-existing narrative.[119] The bricoleurs who wrote Orphic poems incorporated eastern elements in ways that were different from Hesiod, but in each case the essential framework consisted of a succession myth involving at least three divine kings. In both Near Eastern and Greek theogonies, there are two types of actions that can be used as sure points of reference: castration and swallowing.

In the *Enûma Eliš*, Apsû and Tiâmat represent waters, within which their children are born, but these children "stirred up Tiâmat's belly." Apsû decides to kill them, but Tiâmat objects.[120] Likewise, in Hesiod's *Theogony* the children of Ouranos and Gaia are trapped inside Gaia, but, unlike Apsû, Ouranos takes pleasure in this, refusing to be separated from Gaia. Hesiod says that, "As soon as each was born, he would hide them all in the depth of Gaia, and not allow them into the light, and Ouranos rejoiced in his evil deed."[121] Likewise, as Ea (son of the sky-god Anu) defeats Apsû, so Kronos defeats the sky-god Ouranos. This episode is comparable to Kumarbi's defeat of An in the Hittite myth, since both Kumarbi and Kronos defeat their fathers by castration (by contrast, Apsû is not Ea's father and is not castrated). The story is well known as it appears in Hesiod: "From his ambush he stretched forth his left hand, and in his right hand he took the great long sickle with jagged teeth, and swiftly he sliced off his own father's genitals and cast them away to fall behind him."[122] This set of events is narrated in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 174–189 B) and alluded to in the Derveni poem with a reference to someone "who did a great deed" (DP 14.5 = *OF* 10.1 B), presumably Kronos, whom the Derveni poem calls the successor of Ouranos (DP 14.6, 15.6 = *OF* 10.2–3 B). In both the Hittite and Greek myths, castration is the means by which Kumarbi or Kronos deposes his father and replaces him as king.

As castration is the central action in the first episode of the three-generation succession myth, so swallowing is the central action in the second episode, though the circumstances surrounding the act of swallowing are different in each case. In the *Enûma Eliš*, Marduk defeats Tiâmat at the moment when she is about to swallow him, which would have prevented him from overthrowing her. In the Hittite myth, Kumarbi swallows twice: first, after castrating An, he secures his power by swallowing An's genitals; and later, when he is threatened by Tessub inside him, he swallows a stone in an attempt to prevent himself from being overthrown.[123] In both cases, Kumarbi engages in the act of swallowing to secure his power. Likewise, in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Kronos swallows his

119. Lane Fox 2008: 83, 242–301.

120. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233; West 1966: 23.

121. Hesiod, *Theogony* 156–159.

122. Hesiod, *Theogony* 178–182; cf. *Song of Kumarbi* 4–5, trans. Hoffner and Beckman 1998: 42.

123. *Song of Kumarbi* 6–7, 13–16, trans. Hoffner and Beckman 1998: 43; West 1966: 20–21, 43–44; Burkert 2004: 92.

children in an attempt to prevent them from taking away his royal power, "so that none of the other noble heavenly ones might have royal honour among the immortals, for he learned from Gaia and starry Ouranos that he was destined to be overcome by his own son."[124] West observed that the main difference between this and the Hittite myth is that "Zeus is himself never inside Kronos, and the stone is swallowed for a different reason."[125] Kumarbi swallows the stone in an attempt to kill his unborn son inside him, and Kronos attempts to swallow his son immediately after he is born from Rhea. In both cases, the ultimate reason for the act of swallowing and the outcome are actually the same. Both Kumarbi and Kronos want to prevent themselves from being overthrown by a son, but both gods fail. In the Hittite myth, Tessub is somehow taken out of Kumarbi's body and he defeats his father, and in Hesiod, Rhea tricks Kronos by replacing Zeus with a stone. Zeus is then taken to Crete to be nursed until he is ready to return and overthrow Kronos (*Theogony* 468–491).

In Hesiod and the Orphic Rhapsodies, there is a third episode in the three-generation succession myth, in which Zeus succeeds in solidifying his rule through the act of swallowing, but the two versions are quite different. In Hesiod, after Zeus has defeated Kronos and the Titans, he makes Metis his first wife:

> When she was about to bring forth the bright-eyed goddess Athena, Zeus craftily deceived her with cunning words and put her in his own belly, by the shrewdness of Gaia and starry Ouranos. For thus they advised him, so that no one else might have royal honour over the eternal gods in place of Zeus. … But Zeus put her into his own belly first, so that the goddess might devise for him both good and evil.[126]

After this, Athena is born out of Zeus' head, so in a sense she is the daughter of Metis, whose name denotes wisdom, intelligence, and skill. Zeus' swallowing of Metis represents the internalization of these qualities, enabling him to rule with wisdom, and likewise Athena oversees activities that require practical intelligence and skill, such as weaving and military strategy.[127] But the stated purpose of this act of swallowing is that it prevents Metis from giving birth to someone who might overthrow Zeus. Unlike Kumarbi or Kronos, Zeus succeeds in breaking the cycle of succession, ensuring that he will not be overthrown. This "reduplication of the Kronos-motif," as West calls it, is accompanied by the "crude aition for the fact that μῆτις is a characteristic of

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124. Hesiod, *Theogony* 461–464. This also occurs in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 200, 205–215 B), but no specific mention is made in the Derveni poem.

125. West 1966: 290–291.

126. Hesiod, *Theogony* 888–893, 899–900.

127. Hesiod, *Theogony* 925–930; Detienne and Vernant 1974: 107–116.

Zeus."[128] Both by breaking the cycle of succession and by internalizing a quality that is vital to maintaining his rule, Zeus succeeds where his father failed. He solidifies his cosmic role as divine king through the act of swallowing.[129]

In the Rhapsodies, Zeus does not swallow his first wife, Metis, but his great-grandfather, Phanes (*OF* 240–241 B), who is also called Erikepaios and Protogonos, the "Firstborn" deity who sprang from the cosmic egg (indeed, one of his many names is Metis).[130] As in the Derveni poem, Zeus does this on the prophetic advice of Night. He asks her, "How must I put in place my stout-hearted rule over the immortals?" (*OF* 237.2 B), and she advises him to "take everything," including the sky, earth, sea, and all of the constellations "which the sky has surrounded" (*OF* 237.4–6 B). The means by which he takes everything is by swallowing Phanes:

> So then, by taking in the might of Erikepaios the Firstborn,
> he had the bodies of all things in his own hollow stomach,
> and he mixed into his own limbs the god's power and strength.
> Because of this, together with him, everything came into being again
>   inside Zeus,
> the broad air and the lofty splendour of heaven,
> rivers and immortal blessed gods and goddesses,
> all that had existed and all that was to exist afterwards
> became one and grew together in the stomach of Zeus.[131]

In the Rhapsodies, when Zeus swallows Phanes, he ingests the "power and strength" of his great-grandfather, and he also swallows the entire previous creation that had been put in place by Phanes. This allows him to secure his royal power by re-creating the universe, as Proclus explains when discussing this episode of the Rhapsodies in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*:

> If, therefore, it is Zeus who possesses the one power, who swallows
> Phanes, who produces all things according to the counsels of Night,
> and who gives authority both to the other gods and to the three sons of
> Kronos, [then] he is the one and whole Demiurge of all the universe,
> and has the fifth order among the kings, as it is divinely demonstrated
> by our guide [Syrianus] in his Orphic discussions, and correspondent
> to Ouranos and Phanes, and on this account he is both maker and
> father, and each of these totally.[132]

128. West 1966: 397–401.
129. Stocking (2013: 189–193) makes a similar argument about Kronos and Zeus in Hesiod's *Theogony*; see also Calame 2014: 170–171.
130. See *OF* 141 B = 83, 170 K and Detienne and Vernant 1974: 133–139.
131. *OF* 241 B = 167 K; translation by West 1983: 89, with minor changes.
132. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.314.22–315.4 Diehl (*OF* 240 VII B).

The reason why Zeus swallows Phanes in the Rhapsodies is to solidify his power. By the act of swallowing, he absorbs Phanes' power and consumes the entire previous creation, which "[grows] together in the stomach of Zeus" (*OF* 241.8 B). In Proclus' view, this allows him to start a new creation as the "Demiurge of all the universe." At this point in the narrative, just like in the Derveni poem, the poet exalts Zeus with a hymn-like passage that begins with the same two lines as the hymn to Zeus in the Derveni poem:

> Zeus was born first, Zeus last, god of the bright bolt;
> Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made.[133]

As in Hesiod's *Theogony*, when Zeus swallows Metis and gains the ability to manage the cosmos, so in the Rhapsodies Zeus swallows Phanes and gains the ability to re-create the cosmos, and he does this act of re-creation by design. For this reason, Proclus equates Phanes with Metis and relates this episode to Zeus' epithet μητιέτα: "From which, I think, also [Phanes] is called Metis, and [Zeus] is called Wise [μητιέτα], and [Phanes] is seen, but [Zeus] sees, and [Phanes] is swallowed, but [Zeus] fills himself with the power of [Phanes]."[134] Proclus is unclear in this passage whether Phanes is called Metis in the Rhapsodies specifically or in discourse more generally, but he does suggest an interpretation that might link the Rhapsodies with Hesiod. By swallowing Phanes, Zeus swallows Metis, in the sense that he internalizes the qualities that she personifies—qualities that are inherent in Phanes, as indicated by the fact that Metis is one of his names. In this way, Zeus acquires both the generative capacity needed to re-create the universe and the wisdom needed to re-create it by design.

As in the Rhapsodies, so in the Derveni poem the act of swallowing is the means by which Zeus is able to devise a new creation, but the fragments of the Derveni poem are unclear about who or what is swallowed. Zeus swallows either the phallus of Ouranos or the whole body of Protogonos. As in the Rhapsodies, Zeus follows the advice of Night, who "prophesied all that it was permitted him to achieve, how he would hold the lovely seat in snowy Olympus" (*OF* 6.4–5 B). After hearing these prophecies (*OF* 7 B), he "swallowed the revered one (or phallus [of someone]) who sprung forth first into (or ejaculated) the aither" (αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος, *OF* 8 B). There are two words in this fragment that have generated controversy: ἔκθορε and αἰδοῖον. Typically, ἔκθορε is read in the more common sense of θρώσκω as "leap" or "spring," resulting in the translation "sprung first into the aither." However, the attached prefix (ἐκ-) seems to imply that the subject of the sentence springs out, so from what does he spring? If it is a reference to Phanes, then it might refer

133. *OF* 243.1–2 B; cf. *OF* 14.1–2, 31 B.
134. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.312.9–12 (*OF* 240 III B = 97 K); cf. Detienne and Vernant 1974: 133–139.

to him springing forth out of the cosmic egg.[135] But Burkert suggests, based on the Egyptian parallel of Atum, that ἔκθορε can be read in a less common sense of ejaculating, and he interprets the line as meaning that Ouranos "first ejaculated aither."[136] According to Burkert's reading, Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos because this was the phallus that was used to first create the aither by means of ejaculation. Santamaría disputes this reading by pointing out that in other texts, ἔκθρῴσκω ("spring forth") is a verb commonly used of gods being born, and in the Rhapsodies it is used specifically of Phanes and Eros (e.g., *OF* 121.3–4 B).[137]

But it is αἰδοῖον that has generated more controversy. If αἰδοῖον is the masculine accusative adjective αἰδοῖος, then it is unclear whose name this adjective should modify; and if it is the neuter noun αἰδοῖον, then it is equally unclear whose phallus it refers to. Perhaps it should refer to Ouranos, as the Derveni poem seems to suggest by mentioning "Ouranos, son of Night, who was the first to become king" (*OF* 10.2 B). Or perhaps αἰδοῖος should modify Protogonos, if he is indeed mentioned in the elusive genitive phrase Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου (*OF* 12.1 B). The first word could be the epithet πρωτόγονος ("firstborn") describing Ouranos, since he is the son of Night and the first to become king. Or it could be the proper name Πρωτογόνος, referring to Phanes, since in the Rhapsodies the name of Protogonos typically refers to him. It is also unclear what this genitive phrase modifies, so West conjectures μένος ("might").[138] This reflects the phrasing in the swallowing episode in the Rhapsodies, where Zeus takes in "the might of Erikepaios the firstborn" (*OF* 241.1 B). Using this line to justify West's supplement, *OF* 12.1 B could be translated as either "[the might of] Protogonos the revered king" or "[the might of] the firstborn revered king [Ouranos]."

The crux of the debate is whether the accusative αἰδοῖον in *OF* 8 B and the genitive αἰδοίου in *OF* 12.1 B are the masculine adjective αἰδοῖος, meaning "revered," or the neuter noun αἰδοῖον, meaning "phallus." If it is the noun αἰδοῖον, then *OF* 12.1 B might be translated "[might] of the phallus of the firstborn king." This is how Bernabé reads these fragments, arguing that the "firstborn king" must be Ouranos because he is the son of Night, a primordial deity who is not born. Since *OF* 10.1 B refers to Kronos, "who did a great deed" by castrating Ouranos, Bernabé argues that what Zeus swallows is the dismembered phallus of Ouranos.[139] West takes it a different way, supplementing and translating *OF* 12.1 B to read: "[So Zeus swallowed the body of the god] of the Firstborn king, the reverend one." In West's opinion,

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135. Brisson 2003: 23–24.
136. Burkert 2004: 93.
137. Santamaría 2016: 150–152.
138. West 1983: 114, line 20.
139. Bernabé 2007b: 107–114.

Zeus swallows the entire body of Phanes as he does in the Rhapsodies, and in doing so he swallows the entire cosmos.[140] Following this interpretation, Brisson suggests that the statement that Protogonos "sprung forth first into the aither" (*OF* 8 B) could be taken to mean that he sprung out of the cosmic egg, as he does in the Rhapsodies.[141] Santamaría agrees that these fragments refer to the "revered" Phanes, based on the observation that αἰδοῖος meaning "revered" appears commonly in archaic Greek poetry, but the singular noun αἰδοῖον appears later, and almost exclusively in medical and scientific prose (although the plural noun αἰδοῖα ["genitals"] appears in poetry as early as *Iliad* 13.568).[142]

If the "revered" Protogonos appeared in the Derveni poem, then the similarity between this act of swallowing and the one in the Rhapsodies is striking, and it follows that it must have been all of Protogonos that Zeus swallows, because this is what happens in the Rhapsodies. But there is no mention of Protogonos in the Derveni poem other than this one elusive phrase, and even the use of the word πρωτογόνος in Orphic literature does not necessarily mean Phanes. Serving as a counter-example, one of the Orphic gold tablets seems to use this epithet to refer to Ge (though again in this context it could be read as a reference to Phanes).[143] Besides, it is difficult to see how Protogonos would fit in the genealogy of the Derveni poem if Ouranos is the first king. In the Rhapsodies, the "first king was famous Erikepaios [i.e., Protogonos]" (*OF* 167.2 B). Also known as Phanes, he is the father of Night. He hands his daughter "royal honour," and she becomes the second ruler (*OF* 168–169 B). But in the Derveni poem, the first king is Ouranos, the son of Night (*OF* 10.2 B). She is not referred to as a ruler, but functions in a more primordial role as the "immortal nurse of the gods, knowing all oracles" (*OF* 6.2 B). The name of Phanes occurs nowhere in the Derveni Papyrus, but Ouranos is unambiguously called the son of Night and the first king. So should we place Phanes before or after Night? Or should we conclude that Zeus swallowed all of the "revered firstborn king" Ouranos?

If, as other scholars believe,[144] Protogonos did not appear in the Derveni poem as he did in the Rhapsodies, then Ouranos must have been the firstborn god. In this case, Zeus would be swallowing either all or part of his grandfather Ouranos, who was castrated by Kronos. The parallels between this and the Hittite myth of Kumarbi might support the view that he swallows Ouranos' phallus. Kumarbi castrates his father and then swallows his genitals, becoming

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140. West 1983: 88.
141. Brisson 2003: 23–24.
142. Santamaría 2016: 149–150.
143. The epithet could refer to either Ge or a separate deity. The text reads, "To Protogonos [untranslatable letters] to Earth mother [untranslatable letters] to Cybele, girl" (*OF* 492.1 B = 47 K).
144. Betegh 2004: 121; Bernabé 2007b: 107–115.

pregnant with Tessub. In Hesiod, the swallowing of genitals is replaced by Kronos swallowing his children, but Betegh suggests that Orphic myth "preserved the motif of [Zeus] becoming pregnant" by the swallowing of Ouranos' phallus.[145] Despite the Hittite parallels, some scholars object that nowhere else in Greek literature does a deity swallow a phallus, but there are numerous parallels of deities swallowing other deities whole, particularly in the Rhapsodies.[146] The Hittite myth is an earlier source, but the Rhapsodies were written in a time and place that was less culturally distant from the world of the Derveni poem. This would seem to tip the scales in favour of Protogonos.

The arguments in favour of Protogonos read the adjective αἰδοῖος to mean that Zeus swallowed the "revered" Protogonos, and the arguments in favour of Ouranos (as the first god) read the noun αἰδοῖον to mean that Zeus swallowed the "phallus" of Ouranos. Based on his allegorical reading of the text, the Derveni author argues that what this word actually means is the sun, because both the sun and the phallus generate life (DP 16.1; cf.25.9–10). When Zeus swallows the αἰδοῖον, to the Derveni author this means that Zeus as an allegory of Air/Mind separates fire from the undifferentiated primordial mass of elements. Having separated fire, Air/Mind contains or engulfs fire within itself, and this contained fire becomes the sun. These acts of separation and containment are what allow the universe to be formed.[147] Although this argument seems to support a reading of the noun αἰδοῖον, Betegh finds it "surprising" that the Derveni author would introduce such an "outrageous element" into the story as the swallowing of a phallus, since allegorical interpretation was usually an attempt to explain away shocking or immoral elements, rather than to introduce them. But if the Derveni poem contained αἰδοῖον in the sense of "phallus," then it would make sense that the Derveni author "tries to get rid of a sexual oddity" by saying that it means the sun.[148] However, Santamaría argues that the Derveni author was not offering the meaning "phallus" as an allegory, but simply drawing a point of comparison based on etymology. The Derveni author, familiar with the use of αἰδοῖον ("phallus") in contemporary prose texts, explains that the sun, like a phallus, is generative. He reads the word "revered" in the poem, but uses wordplay to relate the swallowing of the revered Phanes to the allegorical separation of the sun, which can be compared to a "phallus" only in the sense that both generate life.[149]

Whatever it is that Zeus swallows, through this act he ingests the generative power by which the firstborn king of the gods was able to put in place the previous universal order of things. Swallowing his ancestor's phallus, or

145. Betegh 2004: 119–120.
146. Brisson 2003: 26; Santamaría 2016: 152–153.
147. KPT 2006: 26–31.
148. Betegh 2004: 121.
149. Santamaría 2016: 141–149.

swallowing his ancestor whole, gives Zeus the ability to re-create, and perhaps this is one aspect of the "power" (ἀλκή, *OF* 5.2 B) that he takes from his father's hands. This is what happens in the Rhapsodies: when Zeus swallows Phanes, he also absorbs his "power" (ἀλκή, *OF* 241.3 B). This act of swallowing gives Zeus the ability to secure his rule, in the same way that swallowing Metis allows him to secure his rule in Hesiod. The Derveni poem does at least hint at the concept that the name of Metis denotes. The word μῆτις appears in DP 15.13 (*OF* 11.1 B), but it is unclear whether it is a proper or common noun.[150] When the poem lists the three generations of divine kings, it attaches to Zeus the epithet μητίετα (*OF* 10.3 B), and during the narration of Zeus in the process of re-creation, the verb μήσατο appears three times (*OF* 16.1–2, 18.1 B). Whether or not these words refer directly to the swallowing of Metis, it is clear that the abstract quality μῆτις is required for Zeus to secure his "royal honour" in both Hesiod and the Derveni poem. The words βασιληὶς τιμή occur in the same fragmented line as μῆτις in the Derveni Papyrus (DP 15.13 = *OF* 11.1 B) and also in the context of Zeus swallowing Metis in Hesiod (*Theogony* 892). In both narratives, swallowing is the means by which this "royal honour" is secured. In Hesiod, Zeus swallows Metis to prevent her offspring from overthrowing him, and this allows him to internalize wisdom and skill. In the Derveni poem, Zeus swallows either the phallus or the whole body of his ancestor, and in so doing he internalizes the generative capacity that allows him to re-create the universe. The occurrences of μῆτις and its cognates in the Derveni poem indicate that Zeus re-creates this new universe by design, with wisdom and skill.

Whether Zeus swallows the αἰδοῖον or the entire body of either Protogonos or Ouranos, the one thing that is certain about this episode is the significance of the act of swallowing. The verb καταπίνω, which denotes Kronos' act of swallowing his children in Hesiod (*Theogony* 459), is also used of Zeus when he swallows the αἰδοῖον in the Derveni poem (*OF* 8 B). Betegh does not think this linguistic parallel is significant since καταπίνω can refer to "any act of swallowing,"[151] but in both cases the context is a deity who attempts to secure royal power through the act of swallowing. Despite the different phrasing in the Hesiodic episode of Zeus and Metis, when he "put her into his own belly" (*Theogony* 899), again the purpose is to secure royal power soon after it has been achieved. In the Rhapsodies, when Zeus swallows all of Phanes at the advice of Night, he has "the bodies of all things in his own hollow stomach," and this gives him the "power" of Phanes that he needs to re-create the universe (*OF* 241.2–3 B). In all four myths, the major difference is in *what* or *who* is swallowed, but the one thing that is identical is *why* the act of swallowing is committed: to secure βασιληὶς τιμή, either by preventing a son from overthrowing him or by

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150. West (1983: 114, line 19) takes it to be the proper name Metis, and Bernabé (*OF* 11.1 B) takes it to be the common noun "wisdom." KPT (2006: 213) prefer to "suspend judgment."

151. Betegh 2004: 114.

internalizing a vital ability. The act of swallowing in Greek succession myths appears as an attempt to break the cycle of overthrowing and succession and to establish permanence in the rule of the divine king, shortly after his power has been acquired. And this is the central episode of the Derveni poem.

In this sense, the question of who or what Zeus swallows is less important than the simple fact that he swallows something, but in another sense the question of who or what Zeus swallows has vast implications for the history of Orphic literature. If in the Derveni Papyrus Zeus swallows the "phallus" of Ouranos, then the history of Orphic theogonies is simple: in the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, Night appears first, and Phanes is a creation of later Hellenistic theogonies. But if Zeus swallows the "revered king Protogonos," then this means that Phanes was there from the beginning. Santamaría suggests that there is evidence that Phanes was known from the Classical Period: the name "Phanes" can be read on the Orphic gold tablet from Thurii (*OF* 492.3 B), and "Protogonos" appears in a fragment of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*.[152] Thus we might conclude that Phanes appeared in the Derveni poem. It would follow that this deity existed in Orphic literature from the Archaic Period, which suggests that Phanes was always an important deity in Orphism, as were Zeus and Dionysus. But if we conclude that Phanes did not appear in the Derveni poem, then we might talk about a shift of emphasis in Orphism, where in the earlier poems Night played an important primordial role, but in the Hellenistic Period she was displaced by Phanes. The complete narrative of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes does not appear in its entirety until the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies, which were Hellenistic texts, but the question of when Phanes first appeared in Orphic literature remains open. Our history of Orphic literature must allow the possibility that Phanes appeared in the Derveni poem, but even if he did, the surest point of reference that the Derveni poem shared with the Eudemian theogony was the primordial role of Night.

152. Santamaría 2016: 158, citing Euripides, fr. 758a.1103–1108 Kannicht (*OF* 65 B).

3

The Eudemian Theogony and Early Orphic Poetry

At about the same time as the Derveni poem was being written, there was at least one other Orphic poem in circulation, which modern scholars refer to as the Eudemian theogony. But the first thing to know about the so-called Eudemian theogony is that it was not written by Eudemus of Rhodes. This student of Aristotle (fourth century BC) wrote a Peripatetic work, now lost, in which he compared different cosmogonic accounts, including those of Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod, and numerous others. Nine centuries later, the Neoplatonists cited Eudemus often, and one of them, Damascius, refers to his discussion of a "theology of Orpheus." The text of this theology was no longer extant in Damascius' time, so all he knew about it was what he found in Eudemus. All the information Damascius gives us about this Orphic poem is that "from Night was made the beginning."[1] Modern scholars have found passages from Classical authors such as Plato and Aristotle that seem to correlate with Damascius' account. These scholars, among them Martin West, have attached the label of "Eudemian Theogony" to the resulting collection of fragments.[2] Different scholars have had different ideas about which fragments should be included or excluded, but every passage of Greek literature that might possibly refer to an Orphic theogony before the third century BC has entered the discussion. The intent of most scholars has been to reconstruct one coherent narrative that takes account of every fragment, but the result of this method is that not one reconstruction has been universally accepted. However, if instead of attempting to reconstruct one canonical, definitive Orphic theogony out of sources from before the third century, we interpret these scattered references as drawn from more than one Orphic poem within a wider tradition of theogonic poetry, then

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1. Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 B = 28 K).

2. West (1983: 68–69), who follows Zeller, Gruppe, and Mondolfo (see West 1983: 68,118n8; Bernabé 2004: 34); in Bernabé's collection, the Eudemian theogony is found at *OF* 19–27 B.

we can eliminate the need to try to explain away contradictions. We will not be able to reconstruct any one of these poems in its entirety, but approaching the texts from this perspective might reflect more accurately the rich and varied tradition of Orphic literature to which the Greeks had access and the variety of ways in which ancient authors responded to these poems.

The Cosmic Egg in Aristophanes' *Birds*

The cosmogony narrated in Aristophanes' *Birds* is a useful starting point for studying these early Orphic theogonies, not only because it is one of the earliest sources (performed in 414 BC), but also because it illustrates some of the problems involved in trying to reconstruct the texts. The passage seems to allude to an Orphic text, but this is doubtful. Obviously Aristophanes is writing a parody, and the ideas he collects serve his poetic purpose within the comedy; but in order for this parody to work, it must refer to something with which the audience was familiar. Whether or not this "something" was an Orphic poem remains uncertain. Scholars from Kern to Brisson have taken this passage as evidence of an Orphic theogony: Kern marked it as *OF* 1, and Brisson argued that it was based on the same theogony that is referred to by the Derveni author and Eudemus.[3] Other scholars, from Wilamowitz to Bernabé, have been more hesitant and have pointed out ways in which Aristophanes in this passage imitated Hesiod, Acusilaus, Epimenides, and other Presocratic philosophers, in addition to Orpheus.[4] The controversy is focused on three motifs: (a) Night, one of the earliest deities who appears in other theogonies, Orphic and otherwise; (b) the cosmic egg, which appears in older Near Eastern mythology and in later Orphic poetry, but rarely in mainstream Greek literature; and (c) winged Eros, who bears a striking resemblance to winged Phanes in the Rhapsodies.

In the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Birds*, the coryphaeus leads the celebration of the founding of Cloudcuckooland, and he presents a cosmogony in which the birds predate the gods:

> First there was Chaos and Night, black Erebus and wide Tartarus,
> but neither earth nor air nor sky existed. In Erebus' boundless bosom
> 695 first of all black-winged Night produced an egg, a wind-egg,
> from which, as the seasons came around, there grew the lovely Eros,
> whose back gleams bright with golden wings, whose flight is swift
>   as winds.

3. Brisson 1995: 2877–2878.
4. Bernabé ad loc *OF* 64 B; cf. Bernabé 1995: 195–211; West 1983: 111–112; KRS 1983: 26–29; Fowler 2013: 5–9; the relevant ancient texts are the following: Hesiod, *Theogony* 108–109; Acusilaus 9 B1 D-K (*FGrH* 2 F6b = fr. 6b Fowler) (Eudemus, fr. 150 Wehrli) (Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 = 3.163.19 Westerink-Combès); Epimenides, fr. 46 Bernabé = 3 B5 D-K = fr. 6a–b Fowler (Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 [3.164.9 Westerink-Combès] = Eudemus, fr. 150 Wehrli). See also Schol. ad Aristoph. *Birds* 693 (132 White = Holwerda 1991: 109–110).

> This [Eros], mingling by night with winged Chaos throughout wide
>   Tartarus,
> hatched our race, and first brought us into the light.
> 700 At first there was no race of immortals, until Eros mixed up everything,
> but once each one was intermixed with the other, then sky and
>   ocean formed
> and earth, and the immortal race of all the blessed gods.[5]

Because Night appears as one of the four primordial deities in this passage, Brisson finds this to be a reference point, connecting this passage to "la version ancienne."[6] And sure enough, Night appears as the first deity in both the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, but Aristophanes also mentions Chaos, Erebus, and Tartarus. Like most Greek poets, Aristophanes himself is a bricoleur: he combines this possibly Orphic Night with the primordial Chaos of Hesiod, or rather he condenses Hesiod, who places all four gods early in his genealogy, within ten lines of one another.[7] As we will see in the next section, there are other texts, some Orphic and others not, that put Night in this place, but Night's inclusion here is not proof that Aristophanes had read one of them. Even without the influence of Hesiod, Chaos, Erebus, and Tartarus all convey a sense of dark emptiness, a state of universal nothingness to which the concept of personified Night could be naturally attached.[8] As the next line of Aristophanes makes clear, the important point is that "neither earth nor air nor sky [i.e., nothing] existed" (694) when the birds were first born.

The inclusion of Night might not be sufficient to link Aristophanes' parody to a lost Orphic source, but the cosmic egg is a motif that merits attention because of its importance in later Orphic theogonies. The narrative begins when "black-winged Night produced an egg, a wind-egg" (695). The precise meaning of "wind-egg" (ὑπηνέμιον ᾠόν) is unclear, so scholars have suggested four possibilities: "born from the wind," "beaten by the winds," "made fertile by the winds," and "made fertile *sua sponte*."[9] Dunbar, following the *Suda*, notes that ὑπηνέμιον is "normally used of infertile eggs laid without preceding copulation" and suggests that the word is used because Night produces the egg by parthenogenesis.[10] The wind-egg might also be related to Semitic myth, since it is Eros who is born from it. West compares the windy aspect of the egg to "the divine wind that beats over the waters" in Genesis 1:2, and to the appearance

5. Aristophanes, *Birds* 693–702 (*OF* 64 B = 1 K).

6. Brisson 1995: 2877–2878.

7. Hesiod, *Theogony* 116–125.

8. Nilsson 1935: 199–200; West 1983: 201; Dunbar ad loc.; cf. the eastern cosmogonies discussed below, some of which begin with a primordial darkness.

9. Bernabé ad loc.; cf. Bernabé 1995: 205; Sorel 1995: 50; Dunbar ad loc.

10. Dunbar ad loc.; cf. Calame 1991: 229–230; 1992: 193–195; *Suda*, s.v. "ὑπηνέμια" (υ 425), which echoes the wording of Schol. ad Aristot. *Birds* 695 (Howerda 1991: 110).

of desire or wind in Phoenician cosmogonies, suggesting that ὑπηνέμιον is a reference to the idea that the winds are fertile.[11] From this unfertilized wind-egg comes fertility itself: "there grew lovely Eros" (696) who first "hatched our [i.e., the birds'] race" (699) and then produced the rest of the cosmos, including "sky and ocean / and earth, and the immortal race of all the blessed gods" (701–702). Following this theme of the birds preceding the gods, Aristophanes places an egg at the very beginning of creation, as the unfertilized source of fertility itself.

The wind-egg fits well into Aristophanes' bird theme, but it is a motif with ancient roots. As West has pointed out, there are similarities between the Orphic cosmic egg and other myths that talk about an egg being involved in the process of creation, including Semitic, Persian, and Vedic accounts.[12] There are Vedic texts in which the time-god Kala produces the creator-god Prajapati by means of a cosmic egg. The *Rigveda* speaks of a "golden embryo" that "fixed the earth and this sky" and is identified with Prajapati "lord of creatures."[13] Somewhat later, in two hymns of the *Atharvaveda*, the time-god Kala appears as a creator deity who produces Prajapati.[14] In the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*, the golden embryo is replaced by an egg: out of the primeval waters, "a golden egg was produced," and Prajapati grew inside the egg for a year until "he broke open the golden egg" and then "created the gods."[15] Around the sixth century BC in Persia, Zoroastrian cosmogonies also seem to have involved a time-god and a cosmic egg. Zurvan Akarana ("Infinite Time") has sex with himself and produces two sons, Ohrmazd and Ahriman. Ohrmazd creates heaven and earth and good things, but Ahriman creates demons and evil things. Part of the Zoroastrian myth is preserved in the medieval text *Bundahisn* ("Primeval Creation"), where the creation is said to have been at first "in a moist state like semen," but Ohrmazd creates the world from it: "first heaven appears, in the shape of an egg, made of shining metal … everything else is created inside it."[16]

Closer in time and space to the Greeks, there are three Phoenician cosmogonies that involve the motif of the egg. In the Sidonian cosmogony preserved in Damascius' *De Principiis*, Time exists "before anything else" along with Desire and Nebula. Desire and Nebula produce Aer and Aura, and "from these two an egg was produced."[17] In another Phoenician cosmogony, Damascius

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11. West 1983: 201–202, cf. Dunbar ad loc.

12. West 1983: 103–104; cf. West 1971: 30–33.

13. Lujan 2011: 86–88, citing *Rigveda* 10.121.1, 7; cf. *Atharvaveda* 4.2.8. A parallel to Eros can be seen in *Rigveda* 10.123.3a–4b.

14. Lujan 2011: 87–88, citing *Atharvaveda* 19.53.5–10.

15. Lujan 2011: 89, citing *Shatapathabrahmana* 11.1.6.1–7 and *Chandogya–upanishad* 3.19.1–2.

16. West 1971: 30–33, citing the ninth–century AD Pahlavi book *Greater Bundahisn* 2.12–4.1, 9.2–10.8, 11.2–4, 16.2–3, 18.3–9; *Menok-i-Xrat* 8.6–9.

17. West 1994: 290–291, citing Eudemus, fr. 150 Wehrli = Damascius, *De Principiis* 125 (3.166 Westerink-Combès).

attributes to Mochos a story in which Aither and Aer produce Oulomos, whose name is equivalent to Semitic words meaning "Time."[18] Oulomos has sex with himself and produces "Chousoros the opener" and an egg, and "when [the egg] broke in two, heaven and earth appeared from the halves."[19] The third Phoenician cosmogony is recorded by Philo of Byblos (*FGrH* 790), who says that in the beginning there is "dark, windy air," but:

> When, they say, the wind fell in love with its own beginnings and a blending took place, that entanglement was called Desire. … And from its self-entanglement—the wind's—came Mot. Some say this was mud, some say the ooze from a watery mixture. And from this came the whole seed of creation and the genesis of all things … and it was formed like the shape of an egg.[20]

In each of these cosmogonies, the primordial deity is a personification of Time, like Chronos in the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic theogonies. This Time deity does not create the world, but produces the deity who will create the world: in Phoenician cosmogony, Oulomos produces both the egg and the creator god Chousoros, who opens the egg; in Persian cosmogony, Zurvan produces Ohrmazd, who creates the sky in the form of an egg with the earth inside; and in Vedic cosmogony, Kala produces Prajapati, who in earlier accounts is equated with an embryo and in later accounts is born from an egg.

The similarities between these narratives and the later Orphic theogonies are striking, since they also begin with Time (Chronos), who produces the cosmic egg out of which the creator deity Phanes is born.[21] But the egg plays a slightly different role in each of these myths: in the Phoenician myth attributed to Mochos, both the egg and the demiurge (Chousoros) are produced by Time (Oulomos), and the demiurge opens the egg; in the Persian myth, the demiurge Ohrmazd creates the sky, which is in the form of an egg; and in the Vedic myth, the time-god Kala produces the demiurge Prajapati, who is born from an egg. In the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic theogonies, Chronos produces the egg out of which Phanes is born, so in this detail the Orphic myth comes closest to the Vedic myth. Both Oulomos in the Phoenician myth and Kala in the Vedic myth produce this egg by parthenogenesis, as does Chronos in

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18. West (1994: 291–292) points out that Oulomos is equivalent to *ulom* (Phoenician) and *olam* (Hebrew), which means "Time," and Chousoros in the form Χουσώρ appears in Philo, where he is identified with Hephaestus (*FGrH* 790 F2, p. 808.22).

19. Damascius, *De Principiis* 125 (3.166 Westerink-Combès), cited in West 1994: 291–292; other editors capitalize Ouranos and Ge.

20. From an anonymous pseudo-Thoth, this myth was allegedly transmitted to Sanchuniathon, then to Philo (*FGrH* 790 F2, p. 806.15–807.9), then to Eusebius (*Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1–5), who is cited and translated in West 1994: 295–296.

21. *OF* 78–81 B in the Hieronyman theogony; *OF* 114–119 B in the Rhapsodies.

the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic theogonies.[22] In Aristophanes, the names are different but the pattern of action is the same: Night instead of Chronos is the primordial deity who produces the cosmic egg, out of which Eros the creator is born. There seems to be a common thread in both the *Rigveda* and the Rhapsodies, with which Aristophanes' cosmogony was somehow intertwined. Based on these parallels, West argued that the Protogonos theogony must have begun with Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes; so, since the cosmic egg appears in Aristophanes and Eros is parallel to Phanes, Aristophanes had perhaps seen the Protogonos theogony, if indeed it ever existed.[23]

But Aristophanes might have had other Greek sources. One possibility is a myth in which the Dioscuri are born from an egg. A scholium on *Birds* remarks that Aristophanes got the word ὑπηνέμιον "from the story about the Dioscuri" since "they say that these were born from an egg."[24] This might just be the scholiast's conjecture, but the association of the Dioscuri with the egg motif appears to have been early, appearing in the *Cypria* when Zeus and Nemesis (not Leda) give birth to Helen from an egg, and in a fragment of Sappho in which Leda finds an egg.[25] So the use of ὑπηνέμιον might be an allusion to the *Cypria* instead of an Orphic poem. Another possibility is that Aristophanes had read Epimenides, an author with whom some members of his audience might have been familiar. Damascius, relying on Eudemus, mentions that according to Epimenides, Aer and Night gave birth to Tartarus, who produced "two Titans." These two Titans produced an egg, from which other divine offspring were born.[26] Damascius' discussion of Epimenides indicates that the egg motif made its way into Greek cosmogony before the time of Aristophanes, independently from Orphism. This raises the possibility that Aristophanes could have been inspired by Epimenides but not by an Orphic poem, even though Epimenides places the cosmic egg later in the genealogy than Aristophanes, the Orphic theogonies, and most of their eastern predecessors.

The role of Eros in Aristophanes' cosmogony might add weight to the argument that there was an Orphic source if there is a parallel between his "back gleaming bright with golden wings" (697) and the appearance of winged Phanes in the later Orphic theogonies. In the Hieronyman theogony, Phanes is both male and female, with numerous heads of animals, "having golden wings upon his shoulders," and in the Rhapsodies he is "carried on golden

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22. *OF* 79 B in the Hieronyman theogony; *OF* 114, 117 B in the Rhapsodies.

23. West 1983: 103–106, 201–202.

24. Schol. in Ar. *Aves* 695 (Holwerda 1991: 110).

25. *Cypria*, fr. 10 Bernabé = fr. 11 West (Philodemus, *De Pietate* B 7369 Obbink); Sappho, fr. 166 Voigt.

26. Epimenides, fr. 46 Bernabé = fr. 3 B5 D-K (Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 [3.164.9 Westerink] = Eudemus, fr. 150 Wehrli); cf. West 1983: 201–202; KRS 1983: 26–29; Dunbar ad loc.; Edmonds 2013: 166.

wings."[27] The similarities are undeniable, so Bernabé takes the golden wings of Eros, along with the cosmic egg, to be "clearly Orphic elements."[28] Calame sees Phanes in later Orphic theogonies as an appropriation of Eros in earlier theogonies. He argues that Eros and Phanes are the same because of less superficial features than their appearance, and indeed because of their cosmogonic role: like Phanes, "the unity of Eros born from an egg … and his bisexuality, which allowed him to engender life by parthenogenesis, opened up the possibility of a return to the primordial unity."[29] According to this view, Phanes was a later elaboration of Eros as he appeared in earlier Orphic theogonies; but others have been more hesitant to draw the conclusion that there is any relation between Eros in Aristophanes and Phanes in the Rhapsodies. Dunbar points out that in traditional Greek mythography, "Eros had no fixed genealogy," but "a wide variety of parents." The reason why Aristophanes gives wings to Eros is to make him "birdlike," so he "did not need an Orphic cosmogonic poem to prompt him to produce winged Eros from an egg."[30] Bernabé thinks that Dunbar is too cautious,[31] but there were indeed other sources from which Aristophanes could get the idea of Eros with wings. For example, there is a linguistic parallel that can be drawn between his description of Eros "gleaming with golden wings" (697) and Anacreon's Eros "gleaming with desire,"[32] and vase paintings indicate that Aristophanes and his contemporaries must have seen Eros with wings plenty of times, since wings had been a typical attribute of Eros in Greek iconography since the sixth century BC.[33]

Aristophanes' source for the image of Eros with wings need not have been Orphic, but from a wider-angle perspective his cosmogonic parody corresponds on the level of patterns of action with earlier eastern parallels and later Orphic theogonies. In all of the above (with a few variations in the eastern myths), a primordial deity forms an egg, out of which a creator deity is born, whether this deity is Prajapati, Eros, or Phanes. This suggests that these eastern motifs were assimilated into Greek poetry before the time of Aristophanes, as the evidence of Epimenides confirms. Whether Aristophanes' source was Orphic is another question. It is difficult to see how the cosmic egg could have fit into the modern reconstruction of the Eudemian theogony, even though it starts with Night, as does Aristophanes. West proposes the Protogonos theogony to compensate for the anomaly, but we need not assume with West that Aristophanes' source must have been Orphic, or that it was a lengthy epic narrative, as opposed

27. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.5 Westerink) (*OF* 80 B = 54 K); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 142.16 Couvr.; Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.430.1 Diehl (*OF* 136 I–II B = 78, 81 K).
28. Bernabé 1995: 210.
29. Calame 1992: 193–196.
30. Dunbar ad loc.; cf. Nilsson 1935: 199.
31. Bernabé ad loc.
32. Anacreon, fr. 125 Gentili (Plutarch, *Erot.* 751a).
33. Lissarrague 2001: 44–45; Calame 1992: 72–88, especially n. 15 and Plate 9.

to a shorter poem narrating the creation of the egg out of which the demiurge is born. It is possible that a Greek poem told this story, and Aristophanes was familiar with it. This poem may or may not have been Orphic. If it was Orphic, then it may or may not have appeared in a theogony, or in the same collection of poems as a theogony, such as the one known to Eudemus. It is even possible that this story came from an oral or subliterary tradition and had not yet been written. Therefore, Bernabé is correct to include the *Birds* passage as a *vestigium*, a mere "trace" of Orphic theogony, but not a *fragmentum* of the Eudemian theogony.[34] The narrative of the cosmic egg, if it was even a text, might have circulated among the *orpheotelestai* as one of the texts in their hubbub of books, or it might have circulated in more mainstream literary circles. But this conclusion does not require that we attach the cosmic egg to any particular theogony that was circulating in the fifth century, including the so-called Eudemian theogony.

The Primordial Deities of the Eudemian Theogony

Beginning with what we already know from Damascius about the Eudemian theogony, scholars have suggested that Aristotle the teacher and Eudemus the student must have been reading the same text that begins with Night.[35] Bernabé collects three passages from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that make passing allusions to Night as the first primordial being. Aristotle mentions "the theologians who generate everything from Night,"[36] and this correlates with the theogony known to Eudemus, so it is possible and even likely that they were reading the same poem. The other two passages of *Metaphysics* were not included in Kern's edition of the Orphic fragments, because they are less clear: one says that "Chaos and Night did not endure for an unlimited time," and the other mentions "Night and Ouranos or Chaos or Ocean" as deities who appeared as "the first" in "the ancient poets."[37] The fact that Aristotle makes indefinite references to these "theologians" or "those around Hesiod"[38] indicates his suspicion that Orphic poetry was not actually written by Orpheus. Aristotle thought that Onomacritus, one of the poets involved in the Peisistratid recension of Homer (sixth century BC), was responsible for writing Orphic songs, so Ricciardelli suggests that Aristotle was subtly attributing the Eudemian theogony to Onomacritus. This may or may not have been the case,

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34. Bernabé ad loc *OF* 64 B.
35. Ziegler 1942: 1347; Bernabé ad loc.
36. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1071b26 (*OF* 20 II B = 24 K).
37. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072a7, 1091b4 (*OF* 20 III–IV B). Although Kern did not include these two passages, Guthrie (1952: 12–13) suggests them as "examples of their [θεολόγοι]."
38. Aristotle, *De Caelo* 298b25.

but it does suggest that the poem could have been written at about the time Onomacritus was thought to have lived.[39] As Linforth argued, it might not have been a lengthy, comprehensive narrative like Hesiod's *Theogony*, but "merely a passing observation in the midst of a mythological narrative."[40] The fragments do not give us enough information one way or another, but we can say this much with certainty: according to the testimonies of Aristotle and Eudemus, there was an Orphic poem that mentioned Night as the first deity and origin of the cosmos.

There is also a passage of John Lydus (sixth century AD), a Roman official who wrote antiquarian texts, which Bernabé includes with Damascius and Aristotle. It says that "three first beginnings of generation sprouted out, according to Orpheus: Night, Ge, and Ouranos."[41] Since Lobeck's suggestion that this is "harmonious with what Eudemus selects," scholars have treated this reference as a fragment of the Eudemian theogony. West argues that because this does not agree with the Rhapsodies (which were the only extant Orphic theogony in late antiquity), Lydus must have "got it directly or indirectly from Eudemus." Bernabé takes this a step further by saying that "the passages of Eudemus and Lydus come from the same source."[42] But if this is the case, then why would Damascius, who lived before Lydus, not have had access to this text? More likely, Lydus did not have access to the ancient poem but was using a secondary source, such as Eudemus or even Damascius. Scholars have found this to be reasonable grounds to connect these passages, and when they are put together, they tell us that the Eudemian theogony started with Night, from whom Ouranos and Ge were born as the second generation.[43] So far, the genealogical information agrees with the Derveni Papyrus, but this does not necessarily mean that Eudemus or Lydus are talking about the Derveni poem. We have in these fragments a correlation of ideas, not a stemma, so the best we can say based on these fragments is that Lydus might be referring indirectly to the same poem as did Aristotle, Eudemus, Damascius, and perhaps the Derveni Papyrus.

More uncertainty sets in when we consider other passages of ancient literature that mention Night as the primordial deity. Do these texts also refer to the same poem that served as a source for Aristotle and Eudemus, or was there more than one poem that put Night in this role? There were other, non-Orphic cosmogonies that began with Night. Philodemus cites a passage of Chrysippus in which "he says that Night is the first goddess."[44] Kern included this in his

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39. Ricciardelli 1993: 35; cf. West 1983: 249–251; D'Agostino 2007: xviii–xxi; Onomacritus test. 5 D'Agostino = Aristotle, fr. 7 Rose.

40. Linforth 1941: 154–155.

41. John Lydus, *De Mensibus* 2.8 (*OF* 20 V B = 28a K); see *BNP*, s.v. "Lydus."

42. Lobeck 1829: 494 (translation mine); West 1983: 117–118; Bernabé ad loc.

43. Alderink 1981: 37–45; West 1983: 117–118; Ricciardelli 1993: 35; Martínez-Nieto 2000: 205.

44. Chrysippus, fr. 192 *SVF* 636 (2.192.20–27 von Arnim) (Philodemus, *de Pietate* [Herculaneum Papyrus 1428 VI 16–17], p. 81 Gomperz) (*OF* 28a K).

Orphic fragments because "Zeller thought Chrysippus followed the theogony of Eudemus,"[45] but there is no compelling reason why Chrysippus should have been following a particular Orphic theogony, as opposed to drawing this idea from the wider tradition as an independent bricoleur. Martínez-Nieto notes that in the cosmogonies attributed to Musaeus and Epimenides, Night has the same prominent place as the first deity, but she shares this position with Tartarus in Musaeus and with Aer in Epimenides.[46] None of these three authors was Orphic (notwithstanding Musaeus' traditional connection with Orpheus), so beyond the tradition of poetry attributed to Orpheus, there were at least three accounts in Greek literature that placed Night at the beginning of a cosmogony. This is not to mention Night's typically early position in mainstream theogonies, such as Hesiod (*Theogony* 116–123). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that there could have been more than one Orphic poem that started with Night.

Not all scholars have acknowledged this possibility: according to Brisson, because Night appears in the same cosmogonic role in both the Derveni poem and the parodic theogony in Aristophanes' *Birds*, they both constitute vital evidence of "la version ancienne," which is his name for the Eudemian theogony.[47] But the picture that emerges from a review of the evidence is not so unified if we allow the possibility that different poems were composed by different bricoleurs. As I argue above, Aristophanes' account is a parody, but it was a parody of something, so he and his audience must have been aware of a theogonic account that started with Night, whether or not it was Orphic. When the coryphaeus declares that "first there was Chaos and Night, black Erebus and wide Tartarus," Aristophanes expects that his audience will recognize these primordial deities from Hesiod, Orphic poetry, and the mythical tradition in general, both oral and literary.[48] This correlates with other evidence of Night in the Orphic tradition, but it does not necessarily mean that Aristophanes had read precisely the same poem as Aristotle and Eudemus. Night appears as the first deity in both the Derveni poem and the Eudemian theogony, but this does not necessarily mean that they are the same poem; and since the Derveni poem has (barely) survived as a unit within one papyrus, the most practical method might be to treat it separately, as various scholars have done.[49] To understand

45. Kern ad loc; Bernabé does not include this passage with his fragments of the Eudemian theogony, but he does cite it in his notes at *OF* 20 B.

46. Martínez–Nieto 2000: 204; cf. KRS 1983: 25–26; Epimenides, fr. 46 B = Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.164.9 Westerink = Eudemus, fr. 150 Wehrli); Musaeus, fr. 81 Bernabé = 2 B14 D-K (Philodemus, *De Pietate* 137.5 = p. 61 Gomperz).

47. Brisson 1995: 3, 38, 2876–2878; cf. Nilsson 1935: 199–200.

48. Aristophanes, *Birds* 693 (*OF* 64 B = 1 K); Ziegler 1942: 1348; Sorel 1995: 11; Martin 2001: 32; Bernabé 1995: 211.

49. West (1983: 68–115) on the Derveni Papyrus, 116–175 on the Eudemian theogony. Bernabé (ad loc) lists the fragments of these theogonies separately (*OF* 1–18 B and *OF* 19–27 B).

the Derveni Papyrus is a difficult task by itself, and there is little direct evidence that links it to the Eudemian theogony, other than the correlation that both theogonies begin with Night. It is even possible to view the Derveni Papyrus as evidence of the existence of more than one Orphic theogony that began with Night, but none of this is certain; neither is it possible to prove that the Derveni poem and Eudemian theogony are *not* identical.

One reason why scholars treat the Derveni Papyrus separately is that its genealogy does not match modern reconstructions of the Eudemian theogony. Depending on how we read the Derveni Papyrus, there only appear to be four, possibly five, generations (Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-children of Zeus), but most scholars assume there were six generations in the Eudemian theogony, based on a passage of Plato. In *Philebus*, after listing five components of "the good," Socrates stops and says, " 'But with the sixth generation,' says Orpheus, 'cease the rhythmic song.' It seems that our discussion, too, is likely to cease with the sixth critical point."[50] Although the context of this passing allusion has nothing to do with Orphic cosmogony, West suggests (not unreasonably) that this line "must have been addressed to the Muses in a proem in which they were told what to sing."[51] Linforth correctly noted that Plato "puts nothing in the sixth place" in his list, but contrary to Linforth, one could argue that this does not necessarily mean that the Orphic theogony ended with the fifth generation.[52] Plato is not commenting on the meaning of the Orphic poem, but simply making a trivial allusion to an out-of-context expression from an Orphic poem as a clever way of ending his list after the fifth item. He has given us only this line itself, with no indication of its context, but here we have solid evidence that at the time of Plato there was one Orphic poem that told of five or six generations.

What were these six generations? Not one source makes this clear, but scholars have suggested various schemes. Dieterich and Moulinier suggested that the sixth generation was humans, but this has not found much acceptance.[53] Nilsson found it "tempting" to add Chaos and Eros (from Hesiod) to the beginning of the traditional succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, and then Dionysus at the end.[54] Guthrie was more tempted to fill in the blanks from the Rhapsodies, so he guessed that they were Phanes, Night, Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, and Dionysus.[55] West, following Gruppe and Zeller, applied a six-generation scheme to his reconstruction of the Eudemian theogony, which makes Night the first deity, by attempting to reconcile this with the theogony

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50. Plato, *Philebus* 66c (*OF* 25 I B = 14 K).

51. West 1983: 118.

52. Linforth 1941: 149; cf. West 1983: 118n8; Bernabé ad loc.; Martínez–Nieto 2000: 182.

53. See Bernabé ad loc.; Martínez–Nieto 2000: 212–213.

54. Nilsson 1935: 200.

55. Guthrie 1952: 82.

summarized in Plato's *Timaeus*. Simply put, the result was Night-Ouranos-Ocean-Kronos-Zeus-others.[56] One improvement West makes over Nilsson and Guthrie is calling the sixth generation "others," but not specifying Dionysus, a point to which we will return to at the end of this chapter.

If indeed there is any connection between the Eudemian theogony and Plato's mention of a "sixth generation," then automatically one would expect Night to appear in the first generation. But this seems incompatible with the theogony that Socrates' interlocutor Timaeus (somewhat sarcastically)[57] attributes to "the children of the gods" in Plato's *Timaeus*. This theogony makes no mention of Night, but begins with Ouranos and Ge:

> From Ge and Ouranos were born the children Ocean and Tethys. And from these, Phorkys, Kronos, Rhea, and all that go with them; and from Kronos and Rhea were born Zeus and Hera and all those whom we know are called their brothers; and from these again, other descendants.[58]

Here we have a five-generation scheme: Ouranos and Ge, Ocean and Tethys, Kronos and Rhea (and others), Zeus and Hera (and others), and the children of Zeus and Hera. Although Plato does not explicitly attribute this theogony to Orpheus, in the *Cratylus* Socrates compares Homer to Orpheus by name. Socrates says, "As again Homer says, 'Ocean the origin of the gods and mother Tethys.' But I think also Hesiod. And perhaps also Orpheus says, 'Ocean with beautiful streams was the first to start a marriage, / and he married his sister from the same mother, Tethys.'"[59] In the *Timaeus*, Ocean and Tethys were the second generation, and in the *Cratylus* this is implied by the phrase "from the same mother." This is in contrast with Homer, where they are the first generation, but in either case they are the "first to start a marriage." Lobeck's interpretation was that Ocean and Tethys were Titans, as they appear in Hesiod and the Rhapsodies, but Ziegler argued that this idea contradicts the theogony in Plato's *Timaeus*, where they appear in the generation before the Titans.[60] Also, if we associate the *Cratylus* passage with the theogony in *Timaeus*, then we must explain how Ocean and Tethys are the first to marry, if both Ouranos and Ge are their parents. One suggestion is that because of the primordial position of Ouranos and Ge, Ocean and Tethys are "the first fully anthropomorphized couple," and thus the first to actually marry like humans; but contrary to this

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56. West 1983: 118.

57. Linforth 1941: 108; West 1983: 6; Sorel 1995: 11.

58. Plato, *Timaeus* 40e–41a (*OF* 21, 24 B = 16 K).

59. Plato, *Cratylus* 402b (*OF* 22 I B = 15 K), citing Homer, *Iliad* 14.201; Hesiod, *Theogony* 337.

60. Lobeck 1829: 508; Ziegler 1942: 1358; see also Holwerda 1894: 314. Ocean and Tethys appear as the children of Ouranos and Gaia in Hesiod's *Theogony* 337–370 and in the Rhapsodies at *OF* 179 B = 114, 129, 210 K; *OF* 183 B = 112, 121 K; *OF* 191 II B = 171 K; *OF* 195 III B = 117 K.

suggestion, Ocean and Tethys are also personifications no less than Ouranos and Ge. If these contradictions could be reconciled, then it could be argued that both *Cratylus* and *Timaeus* refer to the same Orphic theogony.[61]

West proposed a solution to the problem raised by these Platonic passages that seems to fit quite well. According to his argument, Homer (i.e., whoever wrote *Iliad* 14) was aware of a myth in which Ocean and Tethys were the primordial couple. Hesiod, in order to assimilate this myth into the grander scheme of his *Theogony*, inserted Ocean and Tethys as children of Ouranos and Ge (i.e., Titans). The Orphic poem, then, was a "compromise between the primacy of Oceanus and Tethys [in Homer] and the primacy of Uranus and Ge [in Hesiod]."[62] So in the Eudemian theogony, Ouranos and Ge are born first, but Ocean and Tethys marry first. West points out that sixty lines after Homer's reference to Ocean and Tethys, Zeus is depicted being afraid to make Night angry, so he suggests that Homer knew a myth in which Night preceded Ocean and Tethys. He continues, "In that case we would have a direct precedent for the Orphic genealogy; Uranus and Ge would simply have been inserted between Night and Oceanus."[63] West also includes the passage of John Lydus in which the Orphic theogony begins with Night, Ouranos, and Ge, which adds strength to his reconstruction of the six generations of the Eudemian theogony: Night, Ouranos and Ge, Ocean and Tethys, Kronos and Rhea, Zeus and Hera, and Zeus' children. Regarding the part about Ocean and Tethys being the first to marry, West argues that a poet had ineptly inserted the lines quoted in the *Cratylus* from a theogony in which Ocean and Tethys appeared immediately after Night. In other words, the insertion of Ouranos and Ge before Ocean and Tethys in the Eudemian theogony was the result of clumsy composition. West finds "no obstacle" in the fact that Plato does not mention Night in the *Timaeus*, because to Plato "night cannot be a god, being merely something produced by the earth's shadow (40c) and a unit of time." Since West finds it "inconceivable" that there were no gods in the poem before Ouranos and Ge, he argues that Plato must have omitted Night from his account of the poem to make the theogony reflect his philosophical interests.[64] There is a slight contradiction in West's assumption that Plato was capable of thinking of Ouranos and Ocean as personifications, but not Night.

According to this interpretation, in *Timaeus, Cratylus*, and *Philebus*, Plato is referring to the same Orphic poem: the Eudemian theogony. But some conjectures need to be supplied in order to make these passages fit

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61. KRS 1983: 16. Related to these passages are those collected in *OF* 23 B = p. 142 K: Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 353a34 (*OF* 23 I B); Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *in Arist. Meteor.* 66.12 Hayduck (*OF* 23 II B), 67.23 Hayduck (*OF* 23 III B).

62. West 1983: 120.

63. Homer, *Iliad* 14.201, 261; West 1983: 120.

64. West 1983: 117; cf. Brisson 1995: 403–404; Martínez–Nieto 2000: 213–214.

together: the inclusion of Night at the beginning of the *Timaeus* passage to make the generations reach six; the conjecture that the poet who wrote the two lines cited in *Cratylus* conflated two versions; and the assumption that this was the same theogony on which Eudemus commented. This interpretation also ignores the context of the quotation in *Cratylus*: as Linforth pointed out, these lines are quoted alongside Homer to show that both Homer and Orpheus said that Ocean and Tethys were the parents of the gods.[65] Ocean and Tethys were the primordial, undifferentiated waters, like Apsû and Tiâmat in Babylonian mythology. This mythical role of Apsû and Tiâmat is somehow related to the Ocean and Tethys of the Homeric passage,[66] so it is reasonable to interpret the *Cratylus* passage in the same way: there was one Orphic poem that featured Ocean and Tethys at or near the beginning of its genealogy. Even as children of Night, they would function as the primordial waters who give birth to the gods, which would logically make them the first to marry. The *Cratylus* might not, therefore, be referring to the same theogony as the *Timaeus*.

If we allow there to be more than one Orphic theogony—competing versions, each by a different bricoleur—then instead of stretching the meaning of the fragments to make them fit together into one coherent narrative, we can spread them out and get a sense of the full range of diversity in theogonic poetry from the Classical Period. The results might be (a) an Orphic theogony that began with Night, then Ouranos and Ge, which was known to Aristotle and Eudemus; (b) an Orphic theogony that had six generations, of which Plato was aware, and which may or may not have started with Night; (c) a theogony that might have been Orphic, in which the five generations Ouranos-Ocean-Kronos-Zeus-others appeared; and (d) an Orphic poem which, in a sense comparable to *Iliad* 14, said that Ocean and Tethys were the parents of the gods and the first to marry. This last one (d) could be reconciled with (c), if we assume that Ouranos and Ge did not marry, but there is no need to reconcile (a) and (b): the Eudemian theogony, which starts with Night, does not need to have narrated six generations, though it might have. And there is no need to reconcile (a) and (c): perhaps Plato knew about a five-generation theogony that began with Ouranos and Ge, in addition to the one that began with Night. Neither must we reconcile (b) and (c): perhaps Plato knew about two Orphic theogonies, one with five generations and another with six.

If we include Aristophanes and the Derveni Papyrus in this cluster of fragments, then we can perhaps conjecture a likely minimum of one or two, but a maximum of up to six different Orphic theogonies that existed in the fourth century: (1) the Derveni poem (five generations: Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-others), which correlates with the Eudemian theogony by starting with

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65. Linforth 1941: 149.

66. *Enûma Eliš* Tablet 1, trans. Dalley 1989: 233; West 1966: 213; 1997a: 288–292; Burkert 1992: 91–93; 2004: 30–32 = 2009: 36–38; López–Ruiz 2010: 90.

Night, (2) the *Timaeus* myth (five generations: Ouranos-Ocean-Kronos-Zeus-others), (3) the *Cratylus* myth, in which Ocean and Tethys were the parents of the gods as in Homer, (4) a six-generation Orphic theogony, the exact arrangement of which is unknown, though it might have begun with Night, (5) whatever Aristophanes' source for the cosmic egg might have been, and (6) the Eudemian theogony, which certainly began with Night. If each of these was a short poem like the Derveni poem (i.e., not a lengthy epic narrative), then we can perhaps conjecture that scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Eudemus, and the Derveni author had access to more than one Orphic poem, which may or may not have been part of the same collection. These poems, like the Derveni poem, could perhaps be described as theogonic hymns, similar to the longer *Homeric Hymns* in the sense that they would have narrated how a deity came to his or her position of honour, such as a hymn to Night, a hymn to Ocean and Tethys, or a hymn to Zeus.[67] A hymn to Night might emphasize her role as the first primordial being, which is exactly what the Orphic fragments indicate. A hymn to Ocean and Tethys might emphasize their roles as parents of many deities, as they are portrayed in Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus. A hymn to Zeus might emphasize his genealogical position in the succession of kings, the methods by which he secured his power, and the nature of that power once it had been secured; or a hymn to Zeus might simply praise his greatness, just before or after the moment of re-creation.

The Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus

Despite this potential diversity, it is still possible that all of these fragments come from the same poem, and if we could find a complete version, then perhaps we could put the pieces together in a way that would make sense. The Eudemian theogony, following the modern reconstruction of West and others, must therefore have continued with the traditional succession myth of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus (with Ocean rather oddly inserted into the chronology), and the *Timaeus* passage is usually cited as evidence of this. As we have already seen in the case of the Derveni Papyrus and the Rhapsodies, Orphic theogonies tended not to depart from this basic three-generation narrative pattern as it is seen in Hesiod and even reflected in Near Eastern mythology, so it is reasonable to conjecture that this pattern appeared in the Orphic theogonies that were known to all three generations of philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, and Eudemus. One passage of Plato's *Euthyphro* seems to indicate this, when Euthyphro mentions to Socrates that Kronos castrated his father and devoured his children, adding that there were "still more amazing things than these, Socrates, which many

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67. E.g., *HH* 2 to Demeter, 3 to Apollo, 4 to Hermes.

people don't know."[68] Isocrates makes a similar point when he criticizes the morally outrageous deeds committed by the gods, including "eating of children and castrations of fathers," clearly referring to Ouranos and Kronos, and he adds that Orpheus was torn apart because he "was especially attached to these stories."[69] Euthyphro and Isocrates make a polemic argument against Orphic poems on the grounds that they portray Greek deities doing scandalous things (cf. Edmonds' "strange" and "perverse" categories).[70] At the same time, these passages confirm that the usual myths of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus occurred in Orphic theogonies before the fourth century. It would not be surprising for these stories to be included in any narrative treatment of the genealogy of the gods, whether Orphic or not, so it is reasonable to conclude that they must have appeared in the six generations in Plato's *Philebus*, the five generations in the *Timaeus*, and the theogony known to Eudemus.

Such a suspicion is strengthened by the Derveni poem, where we have already seen brief allusions to the castration of Ouranos in a narrative that centers on the rise of Zeus to power over the universe. This narrative leads to a hymnic passage that extols Zeus immediately after he has secured his power by swallowing either Phanes or the phallus of Ouranos:

> Zeus was born first, Zeus last, god of the bright bolt;
> Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made;
> Zeus the breath of all, Zeus was the fate of all;
> Zeus the king, Zeus the ruler of all, god of the bright bolt.[71]

The Derveni Papyrus is the first of a series of texts that quote some version of the Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus. There were a few different versions of this hymn, the result of different pseudepigraphers revising and expanding these lines to fit their particular perspectives.

The second version appears in full or partial form in several ancient texts, and it was most likely known at around the time that the Eudemian theogony was in circulation. This version may or may not be the same as the one found in the Derveni poem, but the fragments have been compiled separately by Bernabé, who places them in his collection a few pages after the Eudemian theogony at *OF* 31 B:

> Zeus was born first, Zeus the last, god of the bright bolt,
> Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made,
> Zeus the foundation of earth and starry sky,

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68. Plato, *Euthyphro* 5e–6b (*OF* 26 I B = 17 K).
69. Isocrates, *Busiris* 10.38–39 (*OF* 26 II B = 17 K).
70. Edmonds 2013: 172.
71. DP 17.2–12, 18.1, 19.8–10 (*OF* 14 B).

Zeus was born male, Zeus has become the immortal bride,
Zeus the breath of all, Zeus the impulse of untiring fire,
Zeus the root of the sea, Zeus the sun and the moon,
Zeus the king, Zeus, god of the bright bolt, ruler of everything,
for he has brought everything hidden back up into the delightful light
out of his pure heart, doing baneful things.

The earliest reference to these Orphic verses other than the Derveni Papyrus might be in Plato's *Laws*, when Socrates' Athenian interlocutor says that "according to the ancient story, there is a god who holds the beginning and end and middle of all things."[72] The scholiast of this text explains that "he tells an ancient story that is Orphic" and quotes lines 2–3, using the word ἀρχή instead of κεφαλή in line 2.[73] Without the discovery of the Derveni Papyrus, there would be stronger grounds for doubting the scholiast's claim, and we might think that the poem was written later; but the Derveni poem proves that at least one version of the hymn to Zeus was known by the fourth century.

   After Plato, the next text to mention the hymn is *De Mundo*, a work attributed to Aristotle that was probably written in the first century BC/AD. The text seems to extol Zeus as "this god in the cosmos," the ruler of everything who "moves and directs all things as he wishes." Under this god "all the orderly arrangement of heaven and earth is administered." The text adds that "though he is one, he has many names, according to the many effects he himself produces."[74] The author calls Zeus "god of heaven and god of earth," and adds that "he himself is the cause of all," and as evidence of this description of the supreme deity, he quotes all nine lines of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, saying that "in the Orphic books it is written not badly."[75] There has been some debate about whether this pseudo-Aristotelian text is Stoic or Peripatetic. Brisson calls *De Mundo* an "apocryphal work of Stoic inspiration" and remarks that the Orphic Hymn to Zeus is interpreted "as part of Stoic doctrine," citing as an "example of this type of interpretation" a fragment of Chrysippus preserved in Philodemus' *De Pietate*.[76] Here Philodemus says that Chrysippus attributed to numerous poets, including Orpheus, the idea that "everything is aither, which itself is both father and son, so that even at the start it does not conflict that Rhea is both the mother of Zeus and his daughter."[77] Contrary to Brisson's

   72. Plato, *Laws* 4.715e (*OF* 31 III B = 21 K).
   73. Schol. Plat. *Leg.* 715e (p. 317 Greene) (*OF* 31 IV B = 21 K).
   74. Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 400b7–32; Forster and Furley 1955 ad loc.; cf. Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 20–21.
   75. Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 401a25–26 (*OF* 31 I B = 21a K).
   76. Brisson 1995: 2880–2881.
   77. Chrysippus, fr. 1078, 1081 *SVF* (2.316.16–22, 34–37 von Arnim) (Philodemus, *De Pietate* (Herculaneum Papyrus 1428 VI 16–17), p. 80–81 Gomperz) (*OF* 28 B = 30 K); see Bernabé ad loc., who relates this fragment to the Derveni poem.

claim that *De Mundo* is a Stoic text, Edmonds contends that it is a Peripatetic text "that has been thought to contain Stoic elements." He cites Forster and Furley, in whose opinion *De Mundo* is a Peripatetic work that was "influenced by Stoic religious thought," though "the author rejects an important part of the Stoic doctrine: his god is not immanent in the world ... [but] maintains the order of the cosmos by means of an undefined 'power.'"[78] Whatever the case, two centuries later, Plutarch brings the hymn into a discussion of Stoic ideas, namely the primary and secondary causes of generation. Plutarch says that, "While every form of generation has ... two causes, the very earliest theologians and poets chose to heed only the superior one, uttering over all things with this common generality: 'Zeus the beginning, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things exist.'"[79] Plutarch appeals to the authority of the ancient Orphic poem to support the Stoic idea that the primary cause of generation is this supreme deity (the secondary cause being the physical world). In pseudo-Aristotle, Zeus is either the Aristotelian unmoved mover or the Stoic primary cause of generation; but in Plutarch, Zeus is equated with the Stoic primary cause in a way that is reminiscent of Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*. To be clear, pseudo-Aristotle and Plutarch prove that a Stoic interpretation was later applied to the poem, not that it was a Stoic poem.

There are other, later sources who quote certain lines of the Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus, including Apuleius, a scholiast of Galen, and Clement of Alexandria.[80] Altogether, these texts demonstrate that the hymn had an enduring presence in Greek literature, from at least the time when the Derveni poem was written until late antiquity. Despite this persistence, the hymn was susceptible to adaptation into different variants, and indeed we find four different versions scattered across the centuries. The first version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus seems to be part of the Derveni poem, so for quick reference let us call this the Derveni version. Let us call the second poem the Classical version, but this might take some explaining. Pseudo-Aristotle and Plutarch quote these lines in the context of Stoic ideas, but Plato indicates that the poem existed before the Stoics, at around the same time as the Eudemian theogony; so it cannot be called the Stoic version.[81] Perhaps it was an expansion of the four lines in the Derveni poem. It could have circulated among the *orpheotelestai* as one of the

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78. Edmonds 2013: 20; Forster and Furley 1955: 335–336.

79. Plutarch, *de def. orac.* 48 p. 436d (*OF* 31 V B = 21 K). He quotes the same line at: Plutarch, *De comm. not. adv. Stoicos* 31 p. 1074d (*OF* 31 VI B).

80. Apuleius, *De Mundo* 37 (=401a–b Bekker) (*OF* 31 II B = ad 21 K) quotes all nine lines; Schol. Galen 1.363 (ed. Moraux, *ZPE* 27, 1977, 22) (*OF* 31 VII B) quotes line 2; Achilles Tatius, *Comm. Arat.* 65.4 Di Maria (*OF* 31 VIII B = p. 206 K), line 2; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.14.122.2 (= Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 13.13.49) (*OF* 31 IX B), lines 8–9; and Schol. Theocr. 17, 1–4b (318.10 Wendel) (*OF* 31 X B).

81. Likewise, Plutarch (*de def. orac.* 48 p. 436d [*OF* 31 V B = 21 K]) refers to the "ancient theologians and poets," so he must not have had contemporary Stoics in mind.

poems in their collections, as a part of the "hubbub of books." Or it could be the same as the Derveni version, in which case the Derveni author is only quoting four of the nine lines. If this version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus was in circulation as early as Plato, then it might have been part of the Eudemian theogony, inserted at the climax of Zeus' rise to power in the narrative, as it appears in the Derveni poem (and perhaps in the Rhapsodies). Then we might be tempted to call it the Eudemian version. But there is also a possibility that the hymn was a separate poem, whether or not it was ever included in the same collection as an Orphic theogony. Therefore, it is safest to label this second version the Classical version instead of the Eudemian version, to allow for each of these possibilities.

In addition to the Derveni and Classical versions, there is a third version, expanded to thirty-two lines, which appears in thirty-nine different passages in the Christian apologists and Neoplatonic philosophers of late antiquity. This version appears to have been part of the Rhapsodic collection, so let us call this the Rhapsodic version.[82] Although it is unclear whether the Derveni and Classical versions were the same poem, the Rhapsodic version is definitely a later version that expands upon whatever earlier versions there might have been. None of lines 6–30 appear in either of the earlier versions, but for the present discussion it will be important to note the first five lines, and the last two:

> Zeus was born first, Zeus the last, god of the bright bolt,
> Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made,
> Zeus was born male, Zeus has become the imperishable bride,
> Zeus the foundation of earth and starry sky,
> Zeus the king, Zeus himself the first origin of everything. . . .
>
> And he was about to bring forth everything hidden again into the
>   delightful light,
> back again from his heart, doing wondrous things.[83]

The Derveni version consists of four lines inserted into a theogonic hymn, in the immediate context of Zeus' having just finished securing his power as the supreme god, and it appears that the Rhapsodic version appeared in the same narrative context. If indeed the Rhapsodies were a continuous narrative (as I discuss in chapter 5), then the Rhapsodic version of the hymn appears when Zeus has just finished establishing his supremacy by swallowing Phanes. It is also possible that this was a separate poem in a Rhapsodic collection of many

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82. *OF* 243 B = 168 K. All 32 lines are quoted in Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 3.8.2 (= Porphyry, *Peri agalm.* fr. 354F Smith) (*OF* 243 I B = 168 K) and Stob. *Flor.* 1.1.23 (1.29.9 Wachsm.) (*OF* 243 II B = 168 K); see Bernabé ad loc. for the other thirty-seven references.
83. *OF* 243.1–5, 31–32 B.

short poems, but the swallowing of Phanes is nevertheless the most likely narrative context.[84]

The first two lines of the Derveni version, the Classical version, and the Rhapsodic version are almost precisely identical, with a few exceptions worth noting. In the first line, ἀργικέραυνος in the Derveni version becomes ἀρχικέραυνος in the Classical version, but in the Rhapsodic version it reverts to ἀργικέραυνος. In the second line, κεφαλή ("head") appears in all three versions, but is changed to ἀρχή ("first principle" or "ruler") in Plato (and his scholiast) and Plutarch, reflecting a semantic overlap between the two words.[85] Also in the second line, different manuscripts of *De Mundo* replace τέτυκται ("are made") with τέτακται ("are arranged") or τέμηται ("are cut"), and there are even more variants in later texts: Plutarch uses πέλονται ("exist"), while the scholiast of Galen uses τελεῖται ("is accomplished") and Proclus uses πέφυκε ("he produces").[86] Bernabé prefers τέτυκται in all three versions, conjecturing τέτ[υκται to fill the lacuna at the end of the line in the Derveni version.[87] There is a major difference between the third line of the Derveni version and its corresponding line in the Classical version. In the Derveni Papyrus, Bernabé reconstructs this line from the appearance of the word μοῖρα by supplementing it from the seventh line of the Classical version. The Classical version says, "Zeus the breath of all, Zeus the impulse of untiring fire," so the Derveni poem is conjectured to say, "Zeus the breath of all, Zeus was the fate (μοῖρα) of all," with square brackets around every word except μοῖρα.

The third and fourth lines of the Classical version say, "Zeus the foundation of earth and starry sky / Zeus was born male, Zeus has become the immortal bride." In the Rhapsodic version, these lines are nearly identical, except for the fact that they are reversed, and ἄμβροτος ("immortal") is changed to ἄφθιτος ("imperishable"). The Rhapsodic version omits the fifth and sixth lines of the Classical version, but the fifth line of the Rhapsodic version nearly matches the seventh line of the Classical version (and the last line of the Derveni version). In the Rhapsodic verse, "Zeus the king, Zeus himself the first origin of everything," the emphasis has shifted to the demiurgic role of Zeus, from his role as ruler in the Derveni and Classical versions, which say that he is "Zeus with bright lightning the ruler of everything."

The next twenty-seven lines of the Rhapsodic version expand upon the splendour of Zeus by equating different parts of the cosmos with parts of his body, and these lines appear in neither of the earlier versions, but there is a

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84. See Edmonds (2013: 148–159) and chapter 5. Bernabé places the Rhapsodic version immediately after the act of swallowing in the Rhapsodies; see *OF* 241, 243 B.

85. Bernabé ad loc., who cites Casadesús, *Revisio* 370.

86. See Bernabé ad loc. Proclus quotes the Rhapsodic version many times, using πέφυκε at *Theol. Plat.* 6.8 (6.40.1 Saffrey-Westerink). See *OF* 243 B, where Bernabé (ad loc.) lists even more variant spellings of τέτυκται: τέτυκτο, τέτεκται, and τέτυκτω.

87. Betegh (2004: 36) and KPT (ad loc.) give the same reading in DP 17.12.

close resemblance between the last two lines of the Rhapsodic and Classical versions. The Classical version (*OF* 31.8–9 B) ends with "For he has brought everything hidden back up into the delightful light / Out of his pure heart, doing baneful things." But the Rhapsodic version (*OF* 243.31–32 B) ends with "And he was about to bring forth everything hidden again into the delightful light / Back again from his heart, doing wondrous things." Judging from the verb tenses, the Classical version describes the moment after Zeus re-creates the universe, and the Rhapsodic version describes the moment before. The Rhapsodic version also has a more positive twist with the use of θέσκελα ("wondrous") instead of μέρμερα ("baneful").

A fourth version of the hymn appears in an anthology of poems found in a papyrus from the second century AD. The collection was probably arranged topically, which leads scholars to suspect that these lines attributed to Orpheus appeared in a section about Zeus:[88]

> From Orpheus: / Zeus the beginning of everything, Zeus the middle, Zeus the end; / Zeus the highest, Zeus is both of the earth and of the sea, / Zeus male, Zeus female / again / and Zeus all things, / shining on all things in a circle, Zeus the beginning, middle, end; / and Zeus has power over everything, Zeus himself holds everything in himself.[89]

The first line of this poem closely resembles the second line of the Classical version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus—Ζεὺς κεφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται—especially when we remember that Plato and Plutarch use ἀρχή instead of κεφαλή. The scholiast of Galen uses τελεῖται ("is accomplished," "brought to an end") instead of τέτυκται ("are made"), which comes closer to the idea contained in the papyrus version's τελευτή ("end"). The words "Zeus male, Zeus female" emphasize the unusual hermaphroditic nature of Zeus that appears in the hymns, and this phrase bears a similar meaning to line 4 in the Classical version and line 3 in the Rhapsodic version: "Zeus was born male, Zeus has become the immortal/imperishable bride."[90] The next line after this—"Zeus the foundation of earth and starry sky"—presents Zeus as being everywhere in the cosmos, and line 6 of the Classical version says, "Zeus the root of the sea, Zeus the sun and the moon." This association of Zeus with earth and sea is repeated in the papyrus with the words "Zeus is both of the earth and of the sea." It seems that the author of this poem was

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88. Bernabé ad loc. (*OF* 688a B); *PSI* 15, 1476 in Bastianini 2005: 234–236; Edmonds 2013:21n41.

89. *PSI* 15, 1476 (*OF* 688a B).

90. Cf. Ricciardelli 2000: 267 ad *OH* 9.4, where Selene is described as "both female and male."

familiar with the tag line that appears in all of these versions ("Zeus the head, Zeus the middle"), but the words are modified in a way that makes this an original, shorter poem. The use of ἀρχή and τελευτή emphasizes the universality of Zeus in a more exaggerated way than the other three versions of the Hymn to Zeus. Like the Rhapsodic version, the papyrus describes Zeus as having everything inside himself, but in the papyrus this seems to be imagined as an ongoing reality, rather than a brief moment before he begins the process of re-creation.

These four Orphic hymns exalt Zeus above all other gods, and only the Rhapsodic version even mentions other gods.[91] In each case, the hymn describes the moment before, during, or after re-creation, when Zeus has all things inside himself. He is the head and the middle, both male and female, and in him are sky, earth, and sea. These sentiments might seem to point to a form of monotheism, or perhaps more accurately henotheism, but caution is warranted. Such hyperbolic language is a traditional characteristic of Greek hymns, including those written by authors who clearly do not depart from traditional Greek polytheism, such as Xenophanes and Aeschylus. In one fragment, Xenophanes refers to Zeus as "one god, greatest among gods and men,"[92] meaning that Zeus is the greatest among gods, but not the only god. Aeschylus basically views Zeus in the same way. Lloyd-Jones points out that, although earlier scholars thought Aeschylus tended "to exalt Zeus at the expense of [other gods]," or even expressed "tendencies to monotheism," it would be "rash" to think that Aeschylus goes any further than Homer in supposing Zeus "supreme above all other gods" in his position as king.[93] In *Agamemnon*, the chorus sings a strophe that seems to put Zeus on a pedestal, to the exclusion of all other gods. The chorus sings, "Zeus, whoever he is, if by this name it pleases him to be called, I call him this. I am not able to compare weighing all things in the balance, except Zeus, if truly it is necessary to cast this vain burden from my heart."[94] The strophe seems to say that nothing is comparable to Zeus, but Smith considers the meaning of προσεικάζειν ("to compare") in this passage and suggests that rather than conveying the meaning of "compare," it has more of a sense of not being able to explain the situation (of the sacrifice of Iphigenia and its consequences) with reference to anything but Zeus.[95] According to this reasoning, it is Zeus the king of the gods exercising justice as their chief whom

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91. *OF* 243.9 B mentions Metis and Eros being inside him, and *OF* 243.20 B calls Zeus the "son of Kronos," which is just a typical epithet.

92. Xenophanes, fr. 21 B23 D-K (fr. 26 Gentili–Pratco) (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 5.109); cf. Heraclitus, fr. 22 B64 D-K (100 Marcovich) (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 9.10.6) and KRS ad fr. 220; but also see Heraclitus, fr. 22 B32 D-K (59 Marcovich) (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 5.115.1) and KRS ad fr. 228; Thom 2005: 8–9.

93. Lloyd–Jones 1956: 55; 1971: 86.

94. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 160–166 (Denniston and Page 1957).

95. Smith 1980: 8–19.

the chorus envisions, rather than a supreme, unique being with whom no other god can be compared. On either reading, Zeus is imagined as operating in a unique position of power among the gods, but this does not imply that he is the only god.

Another passage of Aeschylus, from the fragments of *Heliades*, comes even closer to the hyperbolic sense of the Orphic verses:

> Zeus is the aither, and Zeus is earth, and Zeus is the sky,
> Zeus, I tell you, is all things and whatever is higher than these.[96]

As with the Orphic hymns, Zeus is equated with earth and sky in a way that has struck scholars as leaning toward pantheism. West sees in this passage "a sense of the world's indivisible oneness" that is "analogous" to the Orphic hymns, but he hesitates to see an allusion to any particular Orphic poem. Burkert sees here the beginning of "the philosophical speculation which culminated in the pantheism of the Stoics," but recognizes that the poem is too early to call it Stoic.[97] The parodos of *Agamemnon* can be interpreted within its context as a statement about the supremacy of Zeus when he exercises justice, but the fragment of *Heliades* lacks the context that would explain why Aeschylus equates Zeus with earth and sky. He says that Zeus is all things and beyond, which seems to push Zeus' uniqueness and supremacy further than his role as king of the gods and dispenser of justice. If we had more of the text, we might be able to determine why Aeschylus uses such hyperbolic language. But caution would advise us not to retroject later Stoic ideas about pantheism onto either this Classical tragedian or the earliest versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus. Although these poems use hyperbolic language to express the unique supremacy of Zeus, they are not early expressions of Stoic pantheism.

At any rate, the hymns to Zeus could be used to support Stoic ideas, and pseudo-Aristotle and Plutarch seem to have done exactly that, but we must not dismiss the possibility that, in the case of the later versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus (i.e., the Rhapsodies and perhaps the papyrus), the poet could have been adapting Orphic poetry to Stoic ideas. The glorification of Zeus as the supreme deity is in accord with the Stoic idea of reason as the active principle ordering the universe. Some Stoics, particularly Cleanthes (third century BC), used the idea of Zeus to personify this rational principle that permeates the cosmos and animates humans while maintaining a transcendence as a deity who can be addressed on human terms. Humans share in a rationality that is personified as Zeus, but Zeus extends beyond the rationality of

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96. Aeschylus, *Heliades*, fr. 70 Radt (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 5.14.114.4 = Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 13.13.41). In Bernabé's notes for *OF* 31 B, he lists this passage along with Pindar, fr. 140d Sn.–Maehl.; Archilochus, fr. 298.1–2 West; Semonides, fr. 1.1 West.

97. West 1983: 113n87; Burkert 1985: 131.

humans, so Thom suggests that Stoicism was "an amalgam of pantheism and theism," though "this theistic trend is more prominent in some Stoics [such as Cleanthes] than others." In either case, this takes us a step further from Aeschylus and the Derveni author, who use hyberbolic terms to glorify Zeus as ruler of the cosmos. To the Stoics, Zeus was not simply the ruler but the cosmos itself, or rather, the ordering principle of the cosmos; but he could still be addressed as Zeus.[98]

This can be supported by a reading of Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*, a short hexameter poem that mixes a hymnic address with Stoic ideas. He addresses Zeus as φύσεως ἀρχηγέ, to which Thom attaches two meanings as both "first cause and ruler of nature."[99] The word ἀρχηγέ resonates with the use of ἀρχή in certain versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, and ἀρχιγένεθλος in the Rhapsodic version. An even closer verbal similarity is found in line 32 of Cleanthes, where the epithet ἀρχικέραυνε appears at the end of the line, as it does in the first line of every version of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus (except the papyrus). Cleanthes comes close to the idea of Zeus as the foundation of earth and sky when, in lines 15–16, he writes that "not a single deed takes place on earth without you, *daimon*, nor in the divine celestial sphere nor in the sea." He takes his Stoic presentation further in lines 20–21, with "you have joined everything into one ... so that there comes to be one ever-existing rational order for everything." This hymn provides evidence that a poem could be written with the intention of teaching Stoic principles through the medium of mythical poetry. This adds weight to the possibility that the Orphic Hymns to Zeus in the Rhapsodies and the later papyrus, both of them later than Cleanthes, could have been written with Stoic ideas in mind, but it remains unclear whether this was the case. As we will see in the next chapter, Stoic ideas might have influenced the Hieronyman theogony, in which case it would not be unreasonable to conclude that there were Orphic poems with Stoic ideas, and that a hymn to Zeus was among them. But just because a prose philosopher uses a poem to support Stoic ideas does not mean that it was a Stoic poem. Even if the poem contained Stoic ideas, this does not mean that the poet was intentionally writing Stoic doctrine in the style of Cleanthes.

In one direction (poetry quoted to support philosophy) or the other (philosophy influencing poetry), there was a dialogue between poetry and philosophy that can be detected in Orphic poetry and the authors who refer to it. Like the Presocratic allegories that the Derveni author applied to his Orphic poem in the Classical Period, Stoic interpretations in the Hellenistic Period were applied to Orphic poems at the same time as Orphic poems were being written, possibly influenced by Stoic ideas. This strengthens the hypothesis that later Orphic poetry was written within the context of a discourse between

98. Thom 2005: 25–26.
99. Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 2; Thom ad loc.

myth and philosophy. The Derveni and Classical versions of the Hymn to Zeus were not written with philosophical intentions, but as passages exalting Zeus as the supreme king of the gods. In the case of the Rhapsodic version, there is a greater possibility that philosophy influenced the composition, simply because the text was written later.

The Jewish poem known as *Testaments* is worth observing in the context of these Orphic poems. Whereas the earlier versions of the hymn hyperbolically praised Zeus as the king of the universe, and the Rhapsodic version seemed to make Zeus synonymous with the universe, in the Jewish *Testaments*, the concept of divinity is pushed all the way to absolute monotheism. This poem is a product of the Hellenistic Period, and it is thought to be an imitation of an Orphic *hieros logos* in which a Jewish pseudepigrapher adapted the idea of the supremacy of Zeus to reconcile Jewish monotheism with Greek ideas.[100] It begins with a version of the so-called Orphic *sphragis*,[101] and it addresses itself to Musaeus, who becomes a Moses-figure. There are two versions of the poem (*OF* 377–378 B), neither of which mention Zeus by name, but the *Testaments* emphasize ideas about their one god that are similar to the Orphic Hymns to Zeus. The clearest parallel is *OF* 377.8 B, which says, "He is one, self-existent, from one all offspring are made (τέτυκται)." This is close in both wording and meaning to *OF* 378.10 B, which says, "He is one, complete in himself, and everything is brought to completion (τελεῖται) by him" The phrase "he is one" does not convey precisely the same concept as "Zeus the head, Zeus the middle," but both point to the supremacy of the deity being praised. The Jewish poem places greater emphasis on the uniqueness of the Hebrew god as the only one, which goes beyond the uniqueness of Zeus as the supreme god in the earlier poems (or the idea of Zeus being the only one in existence for a brief moment). The closest parallel between the *Testaments* and the Orphic Hymns to Zeus is found in the last word of these two lines: τέτυκται is the same word that appears at the end of the first line of the Derveni, Classical, and Rhapsodic Hymns to Zeus, and τελεῖται is one of the many variants listed above. This seems to indicate that the authors of both versions of the Jewish *Testaments* were familiar with some version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus. The Jewish authors found common ground in the emphasis on Zeus as the supreme deity and re-creator of the cosmos, and adapted these themes to their own purpose, promoting monotheism.

How are we to interpret these six different poems? The Derveni version is expanded into the Classical version, which is further expanded into the Rhapsodic version, and then retracted into a papyrus, while two versions of a Jewish poem might allude to one of these. If we create a stemma, then we might

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100. *OF* 368–378 B; more accurately, there are two later Jewish redactions of the same poem; see Bernabé ad loc. and Edmonds 2013: 21–22.

101. *OF* 377.1 B (= 245.1 K) = *OF* 1b B.

say that the Derveni version was the original version, and the other versions were later, perhaps corrupted, redactions. Lines 6–30 of the Rhapsodic version would then be taken to be an interpolation, not a part of the "authentic" hymn to Zeus. Scholars might argue over whether ἄμβροτος (*OF* 31.4 B) or ἄφθιτος (*OF* 243.3 B) is the "correct" reading, and each of the different readings of τέτυκται would be examined in the same way. This is essentially what Bernabé does with τέτυκται in each of these fragments. Although there are more than five options for the Classical version, and other words one could conjecture for the Derveni verion, Bernabé uses the same word for these and the Rhapsodic version, and he explains the existence of all of these variants by suggesting that the "correct" word "clearly slipped from memory."[102] In this case, Bernabé has a valid point, since most likely these prose authors were quoting the Orphic verse from memory. When Plutarch uses πέλονται instead of τέτυκται, he mistakes the original wording of the poem for another word that conveys a similar idea and scans properly, but he remains unaware of his error. By this reasoning, all of the other variants of τέτυκται are most likely corruptions.

However, in the case of ἄμβροτος (*OF* 31.4 B) and ἄφθιτος (*OF* 243.3 B), it seems to be more a matter of authorial choice. Perhaps the bricoleur who wrote the Rhapsodic version wanted to emphasize the "imperishable" nature of Zeus rather than his "immortal" nature, or he wanted to show his artistic skill and originality by using a different word (since both words scan perfectly). This was not a scribal error, but an artistic choice, but why would the poet want to use ἄφθιτος instead of ἄμβροτος? Typically, something or someone that is ἄμβροτος is closely connected to the gods: the adjective describes "immortal" or "divine" deities, setting them apart from humans who are βροτός ("mortal"),[103] or it is an epithet denoting an object that belongs to the gods or is divine.[104] But ἄφθιτος, referring to deathlessness more than divinity, has a wider range: famously associated with the Homeric formula κλέος ἄφθιτον, the adjective ἄφθιτος appears in epic to describe either material or immaterial objects, but in certain passages it can also refer to deities or humans.[105] So the poet of the Rhapsodic version preferred to emphasize that Zeus was deathless, rather than that he was divine. Perhaps a clue about his reason for this can be found in line 17 of the Rhapsodic version, which says that "his truthful, royal mind is imperishable aither." His use of ἄφθιτος in line 3 ties the

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102. Bernabé ad *OF* 31 B; the five variants are τελεῖται (Schol. Galen), τέτακται (Aristotle R 1603), τέμηται (Aristotle O), πέφυκε (Proclus), πέλονται (Plutarch).

103. E.g., Homer, *Iliad* 20.358; *Odyssey* 24.445; Pindar, *Nem.* 10.7; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 259.

104. See LSJ, s.v. "ἄμβροτος": Homer, *Iliad* 5.339 αἷμα, 16.381 ἵπποι, 17.194 τεύχεα, etc.

105. Material objects: e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 2.46, 14.238; *Odyssey* 9.133; Immaterial objects: e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 24.88; Hesiod, *Theogony* 545; Pindar, *Pyth.* 8.72; Plutarch 2.723e. See Volk 2002 and Finkelberg 2007 on this Homeric phrase at *Iliad* 9.413. Deities or humans: *HH* 4.325–326; Hesiod, *Theogony* 389, 397; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 723–724; Anacreon (*Simon.* 184) refers to an "imperishable poet."

introduction more closely to the expanded middle section: the mind of the im-
perishable bride is equated with the imperishable aither. If we continue to read
these different versions as original poems, rather than as redactions within a
stemma, then lines 6–30 of the Rhapsodic version appear not as an interpo-
lation, but as the original composition of another bricoleur who adapted the
poem to his ideas and audience. By the same reasoning, the last two lines of
this version are slightly different from the last two lines of the Classical version
because the author wanted to emphasize different things. The author of the
Rhapsodic version, having probably read the Classical version, described Zeus'
act of re-creation as "wondrous" (θέσκελα) rather than "baneful" (μέρμερα) in
the same way that he thought ἄφθιτος would express the meaning of the ex-
panded version better than ἄμβροτος.[106]

The argument that each of these hymns is a distinct poem by an original
author is given further support by indications of different purposes for each
version. From the earliest to the latest versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus,
there seems to be a trajectory from traditional mythic hyperbole that exalts
Zeus as the supreme deity to a possible injection of philosophical concepts.
While Greek authors were adapting and quoting Orphic poetry to suit their
philosophical needs, Hellenistic Jews adapted Orphic poetry to bring together
Greek philosophy with Hebrew monotheism. All of this illustrates how Orphic
poetry was a continuous exercise in bricolage, rather than a static manuscript
tradition. Modern scholars have tried to fit the Orphic Hymns to Zeus into the
narrative framework of Orphic theogonies, but there are indications that some
of these might have been separate poems. The near-identical first two lines of
the Derveni, Classical, and Rhapsodic versions can be interpreted as a sort of
sphragis, like the classic instruction for non-initiates to "shut the door" (*OF* 1
B). The phrase "Zeus the head, Zeus the middle" signals the beginning of an
Orphic Hymn to Zeus, which suggests that each version of the hymn can be
read as an independent poem. Alternatively, these lines can be interpreted as
a formula introducing a type scene, presumably a survival from the same oral
bardic traditions from which the Homeric poems evolved. If the Orphic Hymns
to Zeus were passages that followed directly after the rise of Zeus to power (as
West and Bernabé suggest in their reconstructions), then the transference of
this line acts as a marker of a digression that indicates a significant moment
in the narrative, a pause in narrative time that marks the transition from the
narrative of succession to the re-creation of the universe. On the other hand, if
Orphic theogonies consisted of collections of short hymnic narratives, rather
than long theogonic narratives, then it is reasonable to conclude that some
version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus might have been included in the same
type of collections as these theogonic narratives, even if it was not contained in

106. *OF* 31.9, 243.32 B.

the same poem. If this was the case, then it might be easier to envision their relevance to Orphic ritual, because as independent poems they could have been easily performed as ritual songs.

Demeter and Dionysus in Early Orphic Poetry

If the Eudemian theogony ended on the sixth generation as the quotation from Plato suggests, then it is clear that this sixth generation came after the time when Zeus acquires royal power. In other words, the last generation is exactly what Plato's *Timaeus* says it is: "and from these again [i.e., Zeus and his generation], other descendants."[107] It seems obvious that the next generation after Zeus should be his many children, as is the case in Hesiod and everywhere else in Greek mythology. However, based on the assumption that the myth of Dionysus Zagreus was central to Orphism, for the last century scholars have assumed that the sixth generation of the Eudemian theogony must have been all about Dionysus.[108] Even West, although he simply says "others" in his reconstruction of the Eudemian theogony, argues that the Zagreus myth was a part of the sixth generation in the Eudemian theogony.[109] While no one will dispute the fact that Dionysus is the son of Zeus, none of the fragments we have observed mentions Dionysus by name; rather, we have only one general reference to the descendants of Zeus.

Nevertheless, evidence suggests that not only Dionysus but also Demeter and Persephone were the focus of some Orphic poems in the Classical Period. Bernabé, who defends the Zagreus myth as doctrinally central to Orphism, collects certain early fragments that seem to pertain to the Zagreus myth into a section that appears shortly after his fragments of the Eudemian theogony: for example, the reference in Plato's *Laws* to the "ancient Titanic nature" of humans appears here.[110] As Edmonds has repeatedly argued, many of these supposed references to the Zagreus myth can be interpreted in other ways,[111] but there are still some reliable indications that there were early Orphic poems with Bacchic themes. The overlap between Orphica and Bacchica is a well-discussed topic,[112] to which we will return in chapter 6, so for now it will suffice to mention a few examples. The Hipponion tablet, with the promise that the initiate will travel on the same road that "other glorious initiates and Bacchoi travel," and the Pelinna tablet, which instructs the initiate to "tell Persephone

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107. Plato, *Timaeus* 40e–41a (*OF* 24 B = 16 K).
108. E.g., Nilsson 1935: 200; Guthrie 1952: 82; Martínez-Nieto 2000: 213.
109. West (1983: 94–96, 118, 137), with whom Bernabé (ad *OF* 24 B) agrees.
110. *OF* 34–39 B; Plato, *Laws* 3.701b (*OF* 37 B = 9 K), and Bernabé ad loc.
111. Edmonds 1999: 35–73; 2009: 511–532; 2013: 296–391.
112. E.g., Linforth 1941: 307–364; Burkert 1977: 1–10; Graf and Johnston 2013: 137–166.

that the Bacchic one himself has released you," can be used reasonably as ev-
idence that there was a connection between Bacchica and Orphica.[113] It was
commonly believed that Orpheus had brought certain ritual innovations from
Egypt to Greece and reformed Dionysiac cult. Diodorus Siculus states that
after returning from Egypt, Orpheus "wrote a myth about the things down
in Hades" and "brought back the majority of the mystic *teletai* … exchanging
only the names [of Osiris and Dionysus]." This seems to agree with Herodotus'
assertion that what people called Orphic and Bacchic were actually Egyptian
and Pythagorean.[114] The accumulation of these and other sources adds weight
to the possibility that there were Orphic poems about Dionysus. The Ptolemaic
decree that "those who perform initiation rites for Dionysus … turn in their sa-
cred book" gives the impression that these texts contained ritual instructions,
but what type of ritual instructions has never been clear.[115] Collections of Orphic
poems about Dionysus could have included hymns to Dionysus or narratives
that may or may not have occurred in a theogonic context, but the evidence for
these poems seems far removed from the Eudemian theogony.

Because so much of the scholarship on Orphism has overemphasized
the importance of Dionysus, there has been a false impression that he played
a significant role in the Eudemian theogony, even though the early sources
that connect Orphica to Bacchica seem to have more to do with telestic ritual
than with theogonic narrative. Likewise, as Edmonds has recently argued, this
emphasis on Dionysus has led to other evidence being ignored, particularly
Orphic texts about Demeter and Persephone.[116] These poems seem to have
concentrated on many of the same themes as the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*.
One of them begins by parodying the first line of the *Iliad* with the invoca-
tion, "Sing, goddess, of the anger of Demeter who brings beautiful fruit."[117]
It must have related the story of Persephone's abduction, as other fragments
indicate. The Orphic narrative basically followed the same plot as the *Homeric
Hymn* with some exceptions, most notably Baubo. Demeter, having searched
the world for her daughter, sits in misery at Eleusis, until someone cheers her
up. In the *Homeric Hymn* (2.202–204), Iambe cheers her up by telling jokes,
but in the Orphic poem, Baubo cheers her up by displaying her genitals: she
"showed all / of her body and not the appropriate place."[118] Bernabé has col-
lected fragments related to this Eleusinian (or Thesmophoric) literature and
placed them after the fragments of the Rhapsodies (*OF* 379–402 B), which in

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113. *OF* 474.16–17 B (B10 Riedweg = 1 Bernabé and San Cristóbal = 1 Graf and Johnston); *OF*
485.2 B (7a Bernabé and San Cristóbal = 26a Graf and Johnston).

114. Diodorus Siculus 1.92.2, 1.96.3–5 (*OF* 48 I–II B = 95–96 K); Herodotus 2.81.1–2 (*OF* 43,
45 B = 216 K).

115. *OF* 44 B; cf. Henrichs 2003: 227–228.

116. Edmonds 2013: 172–180.

117. Ps.-Iustin., *Coh. ad Gr.* 17.1 (47.1 Marc.) (*OF* 386 B = 48 K).

118. *OF* 395.1–2 B (Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.20.3 [29 Marc.] = *OF* 395 I B = 52 K.

itself lends weight to Edmonds' argument that this evidence has been pushed aside in favour of the Dionysiac material. Bernabé collects the Dionysiac material at *OF* 34–39 B, implying that he thinks it is earlier, more important, or more closely connected with theogonies. Although it is difficult to determine the date of Orphic poetry with any precision, it is reasonable, following Graf, to place these fragments in the context of fifth-century Athens, where we find evidence of the belief that Orpheus was the founder of the Eleusinian mysteries.[119] As with the case of Dionysus, Orphic poems about Demeter seem to have been the type of texts that the *orpheotelestai* might have in their collections, and perhaps in the same collection as a theogony, but these fragments were not a part of the Eudemian theogony.

Indeed, all of the poems we have been discussing are merely the tip of the iceberg as far as Orphic poetry is concerned, if we can trust the *Suda*. This encyclopedia provides us with a long list of texts that were ascribed to Orpheus, including the *Oracles, Rites, Descent into Hades, Robe*, and *Net*, to name only a few.[120] Orphic literature discussed a wide variety of themes, of which theogony was only one, so on this basis alone it is reasonable to suppose that there might have been more than one Orphic theogony in circulation in the Classical Period. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that, from the Archaic Period to the end of the fourth century, Orphic theogonic material was not compiled into one canonical narrative, but was contained in various ways in various texts, reflecting a rich and diverse tradition. There might have been a poem that narrated how the first of the gods produced an egg, from which Eros was born. There seems to have been more than one Orphic poem that portrayed Night as the first of the gods, whether these were theogonic narratives like Hesiod or simply hymns to Night. Likewise, at least one Orphic poem said that Ocean and Tethys were two of the first gods, appearing earlier in the genealogy than their Hesiodic role as Titans. Orphic genealogies probably followed the basic succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, although Ocean and Tethys might have been inserted after Ouranos in one version. There was at least one version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus that either existed as a separate poem or was included within a theogonic narrative. Whether an Orphic narrative had five or six generations, it seems clear that the last of these generations consisted of the children of Zeus. There were Orphic poems about Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysus, and these were probably related to mystery rites, but there is little reason to conclude on this basis that these particular deities were prominent in the last generation of the early Orphic theogonies.

119. Graf 1974: 1–39, 151–186.
120. *Suda*, s.v. "Ὀρφεύς" (ο 654, 3.564.27–565.11 Adler) (*OF* 91–92, 422, 605 I, 606, 608–609, 611–612, 685 I, 692, 709, 725, 782, 800 II, 805, 809, 811, 835, 838–840, 1018 IV, 1100 II, 1101 III, 1102, 1105, 1106 III, 1111, 1120, 1123, 1125 III B = *OT* 173–175, 178–179, 184, 186, 196, 199, 223, 223d K); cf. Edmonds 2013: 144.

In this way, an approach that views the fragments of the so-called Eudemian theogony as individual products of bricolage, rather than transmitted members of a stemma, is able to acknowledge the likely diversity of Orphic poetry that emerged out of archaic oral traditions. Contradictions are resolved by viewing variants as evidence for different texts, each telling a different piece of a story that modern scholars have tried to stitch together into one coherent narrative. But the different pieces do not need to be stitched together when they can be analyzed for what they really are: isolated allusions. Although the picture that emerges is more complex and more frustratingly incomplete, it presents a better reflection of the "hubbub of books" ascribed to Orpheus. There could have been several different Orphic poems containing theogonic material in the fifth and fourth centuries, any one of which could have appeared in the collections of the *orpheotelestai*. From what the evidence allows us to conclude, only one of these poems was known to Eudemus, so it makes little sense to attach the title "Eudemian theogony" to the entire collection of fragments from this period. It would be better to use the term "Eudemian theogony" to refer strictly to what we actually know about the Eudemian theogony: it started with Night. If we need a heuristic term to designate the collection of Orphic theogonic fragments up to the end of the fourth century, then maybe we should simply refer to all of them as "early Orphic theogonies," a category that can easily include the Derveni poem. With this approach, we might never be able to completely reconstruct the narratives of any one of these poems, and this is disappointing, but at least we can achieve a reconstruction of the literary history of Orphism that is more appropriate to the nature of the available evidence.

In the process of building this pluralized reconstruction, certain themes and characteristics have been highlighted that can perhaps refine and modify the view that these possess "features of extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature" as proposed by Edmonds.[121] First, as I observed in chapter 1, where Orphic poetry departs from the Hesiodic model, it tends to correspond with some eastern precedent. This is certainly the case with the cosmic egg, which appears in some form in eastern myths. The same thing could be said of Ocean and Tethys, who play a prominent, primordial role in at least one early Orphic poem and in Homer, both of which seem parallel to the Babylonian myth of Apsû and Tiâmat. Second, it appears that first-principles were of interest to the Orphic pseudepigraphers, even in the earliest period from which we have evidence, whether this is the result of Orphic poets emerging from the same context as Presocratic philosophers or being partly misrepresented by Neoplatonic commentators. The role of Night as the primordial deity in early Orphic fragments appears as a fairly consistent theme, uniting such diverse

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121. Edmonds 2013: 8.

sources as Aristophanes, the Derveni Papyrus, and the Eudemian theogony, which indicates either that these were based on the same poem or that Night played this primordial role in more than one Orphic poem. Third, the relationship between Orphic myths and the philosophers who refer to them is complex, suggesting that Orphic poetry was a point of contact between myth and philosophy. From the Orphic Hymn to Zeus in the Derveni poem, which glorifies Zeus as king, to its more hyperbolic version in the Rhapsodies, the Orphic Hymns to Zeus indicate that the pseudepigraphers who wrote them conceptualized the divinity of Zeus in different ways, each of them in touch with the philosophical currents of their time, but never departing from the traditional form of hexametric poetry. Finally, we have seen that although some Orphic texts were about/to deities connected with mystery rites, such as Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysus, in the early period this did not necessarily mean that they played a prominent role in Orphic theogonies, so the content of these should not be confused with the contents of the Eudemian theogony.

4

The Hieronyman Theogony

Like the Eudemian theogony, our title "Hieronyman theogony" comes from
Damascius' *De Principiis* (sixth century AD),[1] but there is less confusion over its
contents. Damascius provides more information about the Hieronyman the-
ogony than he does about the Eudemian theogony, but there are not many
other sources that refer to it. Apart from two sources that seem to corroborate
certain details, the only authors who discuss the Hieronyman theogony are
Damascius and the Christian apologist Athenagoras (second century AD).[2] The
first section of this chapter discusses these two authors and how they used
Orphic texts to support their arguments, because each author exemplifies one
of two opposing methods of interpretation that were generally used in late an-
tiquity. Athenagoras reads Orpheus literally to expose the immorality of the
gods in Greek myth, but Damascius uses allegorical interpretation to argue
that Orphic myth agrees with Neoplatonic philosophy.

In *De Principiis*, Damascius mentions the Hieronyman theogony, along
with the Eudemian and Rhapsodic theogonies and other traditions, in a dis-
cussion of the Neoplatonic question of how the Many emanate from the One,
in order to argue (anachronistically) that different poets allegorized the first
principles in different ways, and that all of them agreed with Plato.[3] Because
of this emphasis, most of what he tells us about this theogony focuses on
primordial entities: the pre-existing mass of water and mud, the appearance
of Chronos out of the water and mud, the cosmic egg made by Chronos, and
Phanes who is born from the egg. As far as our evidence is concerned, this
narrative appears in its full form for the first time in the Hieronyman theogony.[4]

1. *BNP*, s.v. "Damascius"; he wrote *De Principiis* as head of the Academy, c. AD 515–532.
2. Schol. Gregor. Naz. *Or.* 31.16 (*OF* 79 III, 80 IV B = 57 n. 3 K) says a little bit about Phanes,
and Tatian *Or. ad Graec.* 8.6 (21 Marc.), 10.1 (24 Marc.) (*OF* 89 III–IV B = 59 K) refers to Zeus
impregnating Persephone. For date of Athenagoras, see *BNP*, s.v. "Athenagoras."
3. Brisson 1995: 162.
4. Unless one agrees with Brisson (1995: 37–55) and KRS (1983: 24–26) that the Hieronyman
theogony was a revision of the Rhapsodies.

Athenagoras does not identify his source, but much of what he says about the theogony agrees with Damascius, so most likely they are referring to the same text. Bernabé has combined the two authors in his collection of the Orphic fragments and split the relevant passages into sixteen smaller fragments, which he places in chronological order. For example, *OF* 75 B contains only the reference to water and mud as it appears in both Damascius and Athenagoras, *OF* 76 B is about only the birth of Chronos in both authors, and so on. Therefore, the second section of this chapter discusses in more detail what these two authors have to say about these deities, considering both the context of the ancient texts and the way they have been split into fragments by Bernabé. Unlike the Eudemian theogony, we have a more solid basis for reconstructing the narrative of the Hieronyman theogony because Damascius gives us more information, which correlates well with Athenagoras even on unusual details.

Because Damascius' *De Principiis* is concerned with first principles, it gives the impression that Orphic theogonies were generally preoccupied with the topic of the first gods who came into existence. In the earliest Orphic theogonies, this tended to be Night, or perhaps Ocean and Tethys; but in the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic theogonies, there was a shift toward Chronos, who produces Phanes by means of the cosmic egg. In the Hieronyman theogony, Chronos emerges from the primordial water and mud, and in the Rhapsodies he emerges from an undifferentiated mass of elements, so in both, Night is removed from her former position as the first of the gods.[5] By the time these later theogonies were written, Hesiod had become the mainstream canonical narrative. Thus they represent a further departure from the Hesiodic narrative, which points in two directions. First, the Hieronyman theogony points backward in time toward Near Eastern parallels, both in myths about a time deity producing an egg, and in iconography that resembles the description of Chronos in the Hieronyman theogony; so once again, a departure from Hesiod tends to correlate with eastern precedents. Second, it points forward in time toward philosophical discourse by appearing to reflect philosophical ideas that were not current in Hesiod's time. But we must be cautious when assessing Damascius' philosophical argument: he refers to the Orphic text in order to support Neoplatonic ideas, and his source, Hieronymus, is likely to have been influenced by Stoic ideas, but it is not certain that the poem itself contained anything but mythical narrative. The third section of this chapter discusses these matters in an attempt to explain the meaning of the Orphic narrative of Chronos and Phanes.

5. *OF* 76 B = 54, 57 K; for Night in the Rhapsodies, see *OF* 103–110 B. More precisely, Night is not removed from the theogony, but the story of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes is attached to the genealogy in the generations prior to her.

Athenagoras takes the narrative further forward than Damascius in the genealogy of the gods. Since Damascius' concern is to discuss first principles in a variety of theogonies, he has no need to mention anything that happens later in any of those narratives. Athenagoras, on the other hand, is a Christian apologist who finds plenty of relevant scandalous material in the episodes of the later generations of gods. He provides us with more detailed genealogical information,[6] and also with evidence that the succession myth of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus could have appeared in this narrative, in accordance with most traditional theogonic narratives.[7] Athenagoras is also our first source who indicates that Dionysus appears in an Orphic theogony, and this is a crucial detail that distinguishes the Hieronyman theogony from early Orphic theogonies. In contrast to the Derveni poem's brief but enigmatic allusion to Zeus wanting to have sex with his mother, here we find an entire narrative structure: Zeus takes on the form of a snake to have sex with Rhea/Demeter, who gives birth to Persephone; and in turn Zeus has sex with Persephone, who gives birth to Dionysus.[8] Athenagoras makes no mention of the Titans killing Dionysus, so we cannot be certain that this episode appeared in the Hieronyman theogony. Neither does he recall these narratives in chronological order, so the last section of this chapter questions whether the births of Persephone and Dionysus even belonged to the same poem as the narrative of Chronos and Phanes. Since Damascius does not mention Persephone and Dionysus, and Athenagoras does not specify which text(s) he cites, we cannot know with certainty whether the Hieronyman theogony was a continuous narrative from Chronos to Dionysus, as most scholars have presumed, or whether Athenagoras knew one poem about Chronos and another about Dionysus.

By studying the Hieronyman theogony as it is represented by both Athenagoras and Damascius, I hope to demonstrate three of the basic points that I have been arguing throughout this study: Orphic bricoleurs incorporated elements of Near Eastern myth into their theogonies, the structure of the texts was not the same as Hesiod's *Theogony*, and Orphic myth operated as a point of contact in the discourse between myth and philosophy. In the narrative of Chronos and Phanes, there are significant Near Eastern parallels that help explain this shift away from Night; the Dionysus narrative might not have been from the same poem as the Phanes narrative; and, since the Hieronyman theogony was written later than the Derveni or Eudemian theogonies, it is possible that the poet was influenced by later philosophy.

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6. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ*. 18.6, 20.4 (130, 136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81, 82 I, 83 B = 57 K).
7. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ*. 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 84 B = 58 K).
8. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ*. 20.1, 3; 32.1 (134–138 Pouderon) (*OF* 87–89 B = 58–59 K).

The Evidence: Apologist versus Neoplatonist

After Damascius outlines the story of Chronos and Phanes in the Rhapsodies, he says that "the [theology of Orpheus] referred to by Hieronymus and Hellanicus, unless he is the same person, is like this."[9] As was the case with the Eudemian theogony, neither Hieronymus nor Hellanicus wrote an Orphic poem, but they wrote prose texts that talked about an Orphic poem, so again Damascius is using a secondary source for a poem that was no longer extant in his own time. We do not know who Hieronymus and Hellanicus were, and Damascius himself even suggests that they might have been the same person, so he was probably using one text, rather than two.[10] There is disagreement among scholars about whether Hieronymus should be identified with Hieronymus of Rhodes, a third-century Peripatetic philosopher (as Lobeck thought), or a Hellenistic Egyptian mentioned by Josephus (as West thought), and whether Hellanicus was a fifth-century historian from Lesbos, a third-century Alexandrian scholar, or the father of one Sandon who is mentioned in the *Suda* as having written "hypotheses about Orpheus book one."[11] Most recently, Edmonds suggests that Hieronymus of Rhodes made a compilation of mythical material, using Hellanicus of Lesbos as a source.[12] This would give the Orphic poem a terminus ante quem of somewhere in the fifth century BC, but most scholars think the poem was written later than this.

If the contents of the poem were, as West argues, "a Hellenistic, Stoicizing adaptation of the Protogonos Theogony," then the poem could not have been written before the third century. However, it is unclear whether the poem itself was influenced by Stoicism, or whether, as was the case with Plutarch's references to the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, Stoic ideas were applied to the poem by a prose philosopher: in this case Hieronymus, whose text West suggests "contained philosophical, that is, allegorical interpretation." Edmonds dismisses the latter point, questioning "whether such interpretations were exclusive to the Stoics."[13] Between these competing conjectures it remains unclear who Hieronymus and Hellanicus were. Whether Hieronymus was a Peripatetic or a Stoic, he probably applied allegory to an earlier mythological text, and these allegories could have been read as if they were actually contained in the text,

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9. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 69 B = 54 K). Bernabé adds to the text: (sc. Ὀρφέως Θεολογία).

10. Thus argues West 1983: 176.

11. Hellanicus father of Sandon: *Suda*, s.v. "Σάνδων" (4.320.20 Adler) (*OF* 70 B), or Scamon; cf. Fowler 2000: 366; 2013: 731; Hieronymus the Egyptian: Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 1.94, 107 (Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 9.11.3, 9.13.5) (*OF* 71–72 B); Hellanicus of Lesbos: Jacoby *ad FGrH* I A 130; Hieronymus of Rhodes: Lobeck 1829: 340; West 1983: 68, 176–180; *OF* 70–73 B and Bernabé ad loc.

12. Edmonds 2013: 18–20; cf. Fowler 2013: 682–689.

13. West 1983: 176, 182; Edmonds 2013: 20.

by both Damascius and modern scholars. On the other hand, if allegory was inherent in the text itself, then we might argue for a later date. Brisson has argued for a much later date—indeed, later than the Rhapsodies. Based upon these supposed Stoic overtones and the fact that our earliest evidence for the Hieronyman theogony (i.e., Athenagoras) is from the second century AD, he suggests that the poem was an attempt to make the Rhapsodies compatible with Stoic cosmology.[14] Thus the Hieronyman theogony is notoriously difficult to date, with guesses ranging from 500 BC to AD 200, but the most reasonable working hypothesis is that it was written sometime in the Hellenistic Period, between the third and first centuries BC.[15] Since the Rhapsodies were still extant in the time of Proclus and Damascius, it is reasonable to conclude that the Hieronyman theogony was earlier, perhaps having been replaced and eclipsed by the Rhapsodies when they were written. The newer, grander *Sacred Discourse in 24 Rhapsodies* rendered the Hieronyman theogony obsolete, leaving fragments of it to survive only in secondary references.

Although the precise date of the Hieronyman theogony—that is, the poem itself—may never be known, our sources for the poem certainly bring us a few centuries forward in time from the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies. Even in the earliest estimates, the commentary of Hieronymus dates to around 200 BC, so when we move from the Eudemian theogony to the Hieronyman, we move from the Classical Period to the Hellenistic. This makes ancient interpretations of the poem more susceptible to the influence of Hellenistic philosophies like Stoicism, and it also increases the probability that later Hellenistic versions of Orphic poems were influenced by philosophical concepts like Stoic pantheism. However, it also increases the probability that the meaning of the poem has been distorted by the allegorical interpretations of later authors. From the second to fifth centuries AD, the ancient category of Orphism crystallized around the Christian apologists and Neoplatonic philosophers as both groups appealed to Orphic poetry, which they thought represented Greek tradition as a whole. While the Christian apologists interpreted the texts literally and focused on the most shocking details, the Pagan philosophers interpreted the texts as allegories for philosophical concepts that the Christians would find more acceptable.[16] One consequence is that the fragments are presented in ways that are meant to support the views of the philosopher or apologist using the poem, which does not always accurately reflect the contents of the poem.

The Hieronyman theogony is an excellent example of how intellectuals in late antiquity used these texts to represent Greek tradition. Although we have only two sources, both of them represent important perspectives. Damascius

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14. Brisson 1995: 45–47, 2912.

15. This is the position of West (1983: 176–177), and Bernabé ad loc., based on their assumption of Stoic influence in the poem.

16. Edmonds 2013: 28.

applies Neoplatonic allegory to his reading of a prose commentary that might have applied Stoic allegory to a poem, though it is possible that the poet himself was influenced by Stoicism. It would make sense for a Stoic or Platonist to present ideas in the form of a pseudepigraphic Orphic poem, thus attaching the authority of Orpheus to their writings, in a manner similar to the authors of the Jewish *Testaments*.[17] But this is where we must be most cautious: what appears to be a Stoic element in the poem might be a distortion caused by the source used by Damascius who, unaware of this distortion, might have transmitted Stoic allegory as if it were the poetic material itself, in turn subjecting this material to his own Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation.

It is much simpler in the case of Athenagoras, a Christian apologist who cites Orphic poetry as evidence that the gods of Greek myth were guilty of scandalous deeds, more condemnable than the crimes that Christians were being accused of committing in Athenagoras' time.[18] More than earlier apologists, Athenagoras and his near-contemporary Clement of Alexandria focused their attacks on Orpheus because they viewed him as the earliest representative of Greek tradition, predating Homer and Hesiod. Athenagoras responded to accusations that Christians were committing deplorable crimes by recalling the most deplorable acts of the gods in Orphic myth, including the castration of Ouranos and the incest of Zeus. Thus, Edmonds argues that Athenagoras "picks up on and elaborates" two elements of the apologists' definition of Orphism: the extreme antiquity of Orpheus, which makes his poetry able to represent the whole tradition, and the extraordinary perversion of the actions of the gods in Orphic poetry, with its "grotesque and perverse imagery."[19] Athenagoras interprets Orphic myth literally because it aids his argument to do so. He aims to show that the immorality of the gods was rooted in the earliest Greek traditions by applying a literal reading to narratives of the most disgraceful acts of the gods in an Orphic theogony.

Damascius also treats Orphic poetry as the earliest, most representative source for Greek myth, but with a different intent: whereas Athenagoras tries to convince his reader to reject Greek tradition as false and immoral, Damascius embraces the tradition but reinterprets it. As Edmonds puts it, the Neoplatonists used Orphic poetry as a "focal point" by "highlighting the consistency" and "profundity" of Greek tradition, because they believed that the most current philosophical concepts were contained allegorically in the earliest myths.[20] Referring to the same immoral acts of the gods that the apologists

17. *OF* 377–378 B = 245, 247 K.
18. Herrero (2010: 232) argues that the apologists were "direct heirs" of earlier Greeks who criticized the gods for their immoral acts (e.g., Plato and Isocrates, see *OF* 26 B). The original emergence of allegorical interpretations was in response to criticisms of this type (Lamberton 1986: 10–21; Ford 2002: 68–70).
19. Edmonds 2013: 33, but see Herrero 2010: 232–242.
20. Edmonds 2013: 37; in pages 14–43, he gives a detailed account of this pattern.

criticized, the Neoplatonists explained these episodes as allegories that taught the very philosophical ideas in which they themselves were interested. Over the course of the careers of the last three heads of the Platonic Academy in Athens—Syrianus, Proclus, and Damascius—the gods in Orphic theogonies were systematically mapped onto Neoplatonic metaphysical speculations, and Orphic narratives were interpreted as allegories of these concepts, based upon their conviction that Plato's philosophy agreed with Orpheus, Pythagoras, and the *Chaldean Oracles*. Influenced by Iamblichus, Syrianus developed the myth that Orpheus first brought revelation to the Greeks through the legendary character Aglaophamus, who in turn taught Pythagoras. Proclus expanded upon this idea by systemizing the specific correspondences between the Rhapsodies and Neoplatonic philosophy.[21] In doing so, he preserved more fragments of the Rhapsodies than anyone else, but none of his extant works mention the Eudemian or Hieronyman theogonies.

The contribution of Damascius appears somewhat less significant by comparison, but he nevertheless builds substantially on Proclus' work at systemizing the correlations between Orphic poetry and Neoplatonic metaphysical speculation, by refining and critiquing his predecessor's ideas. Damascius develops the idea of the "ineffable" (ἀπόρρητον) One from which the Many emanate, in the form of a series of triads gradually descending from the One through the various levels of the Intelligible, Intellective, and Encosmic orders toward the Many physical manifestations of the Platonic Forms in the physical universe.[22] Basically, the Neoplatonic universe is structured like a ladder with different levels and sub-levels, each of which is a triad, leading down from the One to the lowest level of existence (i.e., physical matter). According to the Neoplatonists, the deities of the Orphic theogonies correspond to these different levels because they represent the same abstract concepts that each sub-level of the triadic scheme represents. Most of these correspondences are found with reference to the Rhapsodies, which were still in circulation in the Neoplatonists' time. But in Damascius' discussion of "first principles" (ἀρχαί), he refers to a long list of traditions, each of which in his view presents a different allegory of how the Many emanate from the One. As we have seen, this is the one place where Damascius mentions the Eudemian and Hieronyman theogonies by name, along with the Rhapsodies. But he also summarizes theogonic narratives from Homer, Hesiod, Acusilaus, Epimenides, Pherecydes of Syros, the Persian magi, the Sidonians, the Phoenicians, and the Egyptians. Briefly summarizing each of these, he argues that all of them represent the same process of the Many proceeding from the One.[23]

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21. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.5.25–26; Brisson 1995: 43–54; Edmonds 2013: 39–42.

22. See Brisson (1995: 164–165), who has worked out many of the details of this Neoplatonic system as presented by Proclus (1995: 43–103) and Damascius (1995: 157–209).

23. Damascius, *De Principiis* 122–125 (3.156–167 Westerink).

According to Neoplatonic allegory, the first three emanations of the Many from the One, or the top three levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system, consist of three triads of Intelligible deities.[24] When Damascius comes to the Hieronyman theogony, he asserts that the water and mud are two principles of the first triad, but his source "leaves unmentioned the One before the two" because the One is ineffable, unspeakable, and unknowable. From the One emanates the first multiplicity, the water and the mud. The first triad is formed when Chronos emerges from the water and mud, or, as Damascius puts it, "the third first principle (ἀρχή) after these two is generated from them, I mean from water and earth."[25] Chronos produces Aither, Chaos, and Erebus, the second triad. Then he produces the cosmic egg from which Phanes is born; the dual nature of the egg (containing both male and female) means that it takes up two places in the third triad, which is completed by Phanes.[26] This is a departure from the scheme that the Neoplatonists typically applied to the Rhapsodies, where Chronos corresponds to the One, from which the egg, Aither, and Chaos are produced as the first triad.[27] In both cases, the aim of the Neoplatonists is to make the Orphic theogony appear to agree with their own metaphysical scheme. Damascius departs from Proclus because he thinks his own interpretation of the Hieronyman theogony better represents the fact that the One is unspeakable and unknowable.[28] But his basic method is the same: although they use these texts in slightly different ways, both Proclus and Damascius interpret Orphic theogonies as allegories that represent abstract metaphysical concepts.

The only two sources that tell us anything substantial about the Hieronyman theogony—Athenagoras and Damascius—approach their material from two opposing perspectives, and this influences their choice of what details to include. Like the Orphic poets (and all other Greek poets), Athenagoras and Damascius (and indeed, Hieronymus) are bricoleurs who decide what to incorporate into their own representations of Orphic myth. For Athenagoras, whose aim is to discredit the Greek pantheon, this means an emphasis on the birth of monsters and narratives in which deities commit immoral acts. For Damascius, whose aim is to demonstrate that the gods are allegories of triadic emanations from the One, this means an emphasis on both narrative and genealogical details that correspond to the particular level of the metaphysical system with which these deities are supposed to correspond. Both authors agree on the essential structure of the narrative, and this is how we know they are referring

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24. Brisson 1995: 172–173.

25. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75, 76 I B = 54 K).

26. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161–162 Westerink) (*OF* 78, 79 I, 80 I B = 54 K); Brisson 1995: 195–201.

27. Brisson 1995: 70–71, 168–171.

28. Van Riel 2010: 671–680.

to the same text, but their presentation is quite different. Nevertheless, it will be worthwhile to bear in mind what the apologists and Neoplatonists had in common, since both approached Orphic texts in a way that was different from the earlier authors we saw in chapter 3. Rather than make passing allusions to a hubbub of books, both the apologists and the Neoplatonists provided detailed exegeses of specific texts. For Classical authors like Plato and Aristotle, Orpheus held a certain authority because of his antiquity, his descent from the Muses, and his association with mystery cult, but he was still just one of the ancient poets in the sense that he was not yet seen as representing the entire tradition of Greek myth. But for later authors, Neoplatonists and apologists alike, Orphic poetry was given a more elevated position, considered to be representative of all Greek tradition from its earliest roots.

Reconstruction: Athenagoras, Damascius, and Bernabé

Since Athenagoras and Damascius refer to the same theogony for different reasons, the details and order of their presentations are not the same. But Bernabé, in his collection of the Orphic fragments, has cut up the relevant passages and combined them into a single series of fragments that appear in a coherent chronological order. In a way, this is useful because it allows the reader to compare the two accounts detail by detail, but at the same time, it obscures the different contexts and presentations of the two authors. Bernabé represents a departure from Kern's practice, which was to count an entire passage as one fragment. For example, Damascius' account of the Hieronyman theogony is only one fragment in Kern, but it is split up into seven fragments in Bernabé.[29] This is why one must always read Bernabé with the original text (or at least Kern) nearby, which is what I do in this section. After taking a close look at the Hieronyman theogony as it is revealed first in Damascius, then in Athenagoras, I observe how Bernabé has cut up the texts. Not only has he split both authors into several fragments, but he has also rearranged the order of events as they appear in Athenagoras in order to make them conform to Damascius and the basic chronological order of events. This serves to support the reconstruction that Bernabé wishes to promote: a lengthy, chronological narrative from the beginning of creation to the present order of things, like in Hesiod. After reviewing Damascius, Athenagoras, and then what Bernabé does with them, we will be in a better position to interpret the individual elements of the Hieronyman theogony and to see if this reconstruction is an accurate reflection of what is actually revealed in the texts.

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29. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160–162 Westerink) (*OF* 69, 75 I, 76 I, 77–78, 79 I, 80 I B = 54 K).

Damascius brings the Hieronyman theogony into a wider discussion of first principles, beginning with the Rhapsodies. After recalling the narrative of Chronos and Phanes in "the common Orphic theology"[30]—that is, the Rhapsodies—he summarizes the contents of the theogony known to Hieronymus and Hellanicus. At each step, he draws correspondences between the deities in this Orphic theogony and the triads of Neoplatonic cosmogony. First he explains how the ineffable One, despite its not actually being mentioned in the poem, forms a triad with the water and mud:

> There was water, [Orpheus] says, from the beginning, and mud [or matter] from which the earth was made solid, and these he establishes as the first two principles, water and earth, the latter as capable of dispersion, and the former as providing coherence and connection for earth. He omits the single principle (before the two) [on the grounds that it is] ineffable; for to not speak about it demonstrates its unspeakable nature.[31]

This suggestion that creation began with two primordial elements (earth and water) sounds a little bit like Presocratic cosmogony, which would not be a surprising addition to a Hellenistic Orphic poem. From this fragment we can be sure that water and mud (or earth) appeared at the beginning of the Hieronyman theogony, but this ineffable One, from which the Many emanate, certainly did not appear in the original poem. Damascius explains this silence by appealing to the unspeakable nature of the One. By saying that the earth was "capable of dispersion," but the water was "providing coherence and connection," he interprets the primordial elements of the myth as an allegory of the processes of dispersal and mixing of matter that cause the Many to emanate from the One.

From Damascius we know that the next event in the Hieronyman theogony was the emergence of many-headed, winged Chronos, also called Herakles, from the water and mud:

> But as for the third first principle after the two, it arose from these, I mean from water and earth, and it is a serpent with the heads of a bull and lion grown upon it, and in the middle the face of a god, and it has wings upon its shoulders, and it is called Ageless Chronos and Herakles.[32]

30. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 90 B = 60 K).

31. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = 54 K); translations of *De Principiis* based on Ahbel-Rappe (2010), with some modifications.

32. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.7 Westerink) (*OF* 76 I B = 54 K).

Damascius calls Chronos "the third first principle," which contradicts the Neoplatonic interpretation of the Rhapsodies. Both Proclus and Damascius equate Chronos in the Rhapsodies with the One. In his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus explains that Chronos is in this position in the allegory because, in his view, time must logically precede generation.[33] In *De Principiis*, Damascius offers an explanation for this apparent contradiction:

> I suppose that the theology in the Rhapsodies, leaving aside the first two principles, together with the one before the two, which is transmitted through [their very] silence [about it], and begins from the third first principle after the two, since that first principle is the first one that is somewhat speakable and appropriate to the hearing of humans.[34]

Damascius does not explain what is unspeakable or inappropriate about the water and mud, but he does offer a reconciliation between Neoplatonic interpretations of the Rhapsodies and his own reading of the Hieronyman theogony. Simply put, he argues that Chronos appears as the first principle in the Rhapsodies because he is the first principle that is "speakable and appropriate" (ῥητόν . . . καὶ σύμμετρον) to humans. The One is unspeakable and unknowable, as Damascius sees it, so the water and mud thus form with Chronos the first Intelligible triad. Chronos is not the One, but he is still an ἀρχή.

In this way, Damascius says that Chronos is a deity "who was much-honoured in [the Rhapsodies]," and, following the narrative of the Hieronyman theogony, he interprets the "triple offspring" of Chronos as the second triad emanating from the first:

> Ageless Chronos the father of both Aither and Chaos: actually, according to this theology, too, this Chronos as a serpent produced a triple offspring: Aither, which he calls Intelligible, and boundless Chaos, and the third after these is misty Erebus. They transmit this second triad as analogous to the first, being of power [dynamic] as that first is of the father [paternal].[35]

The first triad, consisting of water, mud, and Chronos, is πατρική, the "paternal" triad, and the second triad, consisting of Aither, Chaos, and Erebus, is δυναμική, the "dynamic" triad, but now Damascius needs a third triad, in order to make a triad of triads emanating from the One. This he finds in the cosmic

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33. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.280.22–26 Diehl (*OF* 109 V B); Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 109 VIII B = 60 K); cf. Brisson 1995: 70, 168–169.

34. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161 Westerink) (*OF* 54 K).

35. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161 Westerink) (*OF* 78 B).

egg and Phanes, so he must explain how the third triad adds up to three when it consists of only two things. He does this by splitting the cosmic egg into a dyad:

> Chronos produced an egg, and this tradition makes [the egg] the offspring of Chronos, and as birthed among these gods, because the third Intelligible triad also proceeds from them. What, then, is this [triad]? The egg. The dyad consists of the two natures in the egg, male and female, and the multiplicity [corresponds to] the various seeds in the middle of the egg; and the third after these is the two-bodied god.[36]

The cosmic egg, therefore, takes up two points in the third triad, since it represents both male and female fertility, and the third point of the third triad is the firstborn Phanes, who is both male and female.

This is different from Proclus' and Damascius' interpretations of the cosmic egg in the Rhapsodies: with Chronos as the One, the first triad that emanates from him consists of the egg, Aither, and Chaos, the first of three triads of Intelligible deities. Damascius is basically arguing that the Intelligible gods are distributed into three triads: the triads of Intelligible Being, Life, and Intellect. When these triads are mapped onto the Rhapsodies, the first triad (Intelligible Being) includes Aither, Chaos, and the egg; the second triad (Intelligible Life) includes the egg conceived, the egg conceiving, and a white robe (which Brisson suggests was an image of a cloud); and the third triad (Intelligible Intellect) includes Phanes, Erikepaios, and Metis—three different names for the same god. Brisson acknowledges that the first two triads are "problematic," since the egg appears in both; and the second triad is indeed nebulous, consisting only of the cosmic egg at three different stages, or in three different aspects of its being. But the Hieronyman theogony, according to Brisson, presents Damascius with a more suitable "median term," for it fills out the first triad (Intelligible Being) with the water, the mud, and Chronos from whom being first became intelligible; the second triad (Intelligible Life) with Aither, Chaos, and Erebus, described as "nebulous," the power from which life sprung; and the third triad (Intelligible Intellect) with the egg as both male and female and the hermaphrodite Phanes, through whom life is dispersed into the lower levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system.[37] These are just the first three triads in the Neoplatonists' overall metaphysical scheme, which we do not need to discuss here in its entirety, but only enough to point out that Damascius includes and interprets the details of both the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies (not to mention the Eudemian theogony, etc.) in a way that suits his exposition of Neoplatonic philosophy. Every detail of each

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36. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162 Westerink) (*OF* 79, 80 I B = 54 K).
37. Brisson 1995: 71–72, 172–174.

of these theogonies is mapped onto the system of triads as an allegory that explains one aspect of the process by which the Many emanate from the One.

Athenagoras approaches the texts in a much simpler way by citing examples from Orphic myth in order to demonstrate that the Greek gods were inferior to the Christian god, and that they committed worse deeds than anything the Christians were accused of doing. As Herrero demonstrates, these were typical apologetic strategies. The way most apologists used Greek myth, in particular those found in Orphic texts, was to take myths literally and to reject "any allegorical interpretation that might make them more acceptable." A part of their basic strategy was to demonstrate that the gods are "unworthy of this divine rank," not in the sense that they are "entirely non-existent," but in the sense that they "do not deserve to be considered divine." Athenagoras refers to the Hieronyman theogony "to criticize the materiality of gods who, having originated in water and earth, cannot be eternal." The gods are presented in such a way as to incite a negative reaction like "indignation or laughter," which involves "monstrous images" like those Athenagoras finds in the Hieronyman theogony.[38] Another part of apologetic strategy is to refer to the immoral behaviour of the gods, and this ethical criticism goes back to Xenophanes, Plato, and Isocrates. Eventually this method of reading scandalous myths literally became a staple argument of most of the Christian apologists, including Athenagoras.[39]

When Athenagoras wants to make the point that "not from the beginning, as they say, did the gods exist, but each of them has come into existence like ourselves," he cites both Homer and Orpheus as evidence. First he quotes *Iliad* 14.201, where Ocean and Tethys are said to be the parents of the gods, and then he quotes a similar line of Orpheus, but as an interesting aside, he claims greater authority for Orpheus than for Homer, based on the belief in his greater antiquity:

> Of Orpheus, who also was the first to discover their names, and described their births in detail, and told what was done by each, and is believed by [the Greeks] to speak more truthfully about the gods, whom Homer in many things follows especially about the gods, and he has established their first origin to be from water: "Ocean, who has been made the origin of everything."[40]

38. Herrero 2010: 232–243.

39. Xenophanes 21 A1 D-K (Diogenes Laertius 9.18); for Plato and Isocrates, see *OF* 26 B; on the origins of allegorical interpretation, see Theagenes, fr. 8 A2 D-K (Schol. B *Il.* 20.67); Richardson 1975: 65–81; Lamberton 1986: 10–21; Ford 2002: 68–70; on the apologists taking up this tradition of criticism, see Herrero 2010: 232–243.

40. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 57 K).

Here Athenagoras seems to be responding to Herodotus' claim that the Greeks learned about the gods from Homer and Hesiod. He claims a greater antiquity and therefore authority for Orpheus.[41] The Orphic texts found their authority for telling tales about the gods from their perceived extreme antiquity, based on the belief that Orpheus was "the first to discover [the gods'] names." Thus Athenagoras imagines Orpheus to be one of Homer's sources, and he appeals to the greater antiquity of Orphic poetry to strengthen his argument, citing one line that calls Ocean "the origin of everything."

Athenagoras does not identify at any point which Orphic text is his source—he simply names Orpheus—so if this reference to Ocean were all we had, then we might think he is referring to one of the early Orphic theogonies. Although Damascius never mentions Ocean by name, what Athenagoras says next indicates that he might be relying on the Hieronyman theogony:

> For water was the beginning of all things, according to [Orpheus], and from the water mud was formed, and from both was produced a creature, a serpent having the head of a lion growing on it [and another of a bull], and through the middle of these the face of a god, named Herakles and Chronos.[42]

Athenagoras' use of the same words for water (ὕδωρ) and mud (ἰλύς), their role as the beginning of all things in an Orphic theogony, and the bizarre description of the many-headed Chronos who is also called Herakles, indicate that he was familiar with the same theogony as Damascius. Whether he had actually read the Orphic poem, or like Damascius was reading the work of Hieronymus and Hellanicus, is unclear. Certainly his approach to the text is different: Damascius cites genealogy to draw correspondences between the Orphic theogony and Neoplatonic metaphysics, but Athenagoras cites genealogy to argue that the Greek gods are not real gods simply because they are born. After summarizing the genealogy of the Hieronyman theogony, he asks, "In what are the gods superior to matter, having their composition from water?"[43] But, unlike Damascius, Athenagoras reads the Orphic theogony as literally as possible, attempting at all points to expose how ridiculous the myths of the Greeks seemed to him.

Whereas Damascius includes only the details that suit his allegorical interpretation, Athenagoras includes only the details that point literally to the monstrosity of the Greek gods, and one consequence of this is that he provides us with genealogical information that is different from Damascius:

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41. Herodotus 2.53.2–3.
42. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.4 (*OF* 75 II, 76 II B = 57 K).
43. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3 (*OF* 57 K).

This Herakles generated an extremely huge egg, which … broke into two. The part at the top of it was brought to completion to be Ouranos, and in the bottom part Ge was held. And a third, two-bodied god came forth. Ouranos had sex with Ge and produced daughters— Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos—and sons—the Hundred-handers Kottos, Gyges, Briareon—and the Cyclopes—Brontes and Steropes and Arges. And having bound them he sent them down to Tartarus, having learned that he himself would fall out of rule by his children. So, also enraged, Ge gave birth to the Titans:

> Revered Gaia gave birth to young Ouranian boys,
> whom indeed they also call Titans as a surname,
> because they took vengeance on great starry Ouranos.[44]

Athenagoras and Damascius are consistent with regard to Chronos/Herakles, the egg, and the "two-bodied god" Phanes, who emerged from the egg. However, Athenagoras omits the children of Chronos (Aither, Chaos, and Erebus) and adds details that Damascius leaves out. The idea that the top half of the egg is the sky and the bottom half is the earth is completely ignored by Damascius, who prefers to concentrate on the double sexes of the egg and Phanes because these characteristics best fit his allegorical scheme. Because Damascius is interested only in first principles, perhaps he omits the sky-and-earth aspect of the egg because he considers it irrelevant to his topic. The children of Ouranos and Ge appear too late in the narrative to have held any interest for Damascius, but Athenagoras continues with the genealogy because it suits his argument to show that these gods were born too. He concentrates on the offspring of Ouranos and Gaia, perhaps because of the more monstrous or frightening aspects of the Fates, the Hundred-handers, the Cyclopes, and finally the Titans. Every reference to the Hieronyman theogony in Athenagoras is intended to discredit the Greek gods, who "were born and have their composition from water," and thus are seen to be inferior to the creator god of the Christians.[45]

The next point in Athenagoras' argument is that because the gods are created, the Greeks depict them as having physical bodies, and these bodies are ugly. Beyond the fact that as a Christian he would generally reject the anthropomorphism of the gods, Athenagoras concentrates on those descriptions of gods that make them appear monstrous or terrifying. First he returns to the description of Chronos in the Hieronyman theogony, and then he jumps forward in the genealogy to another narrative, this time about the births of Persephone and Dionysus:

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44. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.5–6 (*OF* 79 II, 80 II, 82 I, 83 B = 57 K). This is the only mention of the Titans in the Hieronyman theogony, with the exception of Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 84, 87 I, 89 I B = 58 K).

45. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.1.

> In addition to this, their bodies were described, calling one Herakles, because he was as a god a winding serpent, and naming the others Hundred-handed, and the daughter of Zeus, whom he produced from his mother Rhea, and Demeter ... having two eyes by nature, and two in her forehead, and the face of an animal on the back part of her neck, and also having horns, so that Rhea, frightened at her monster of a child, fled from her, and did not give her the breast, whence mystically she is called Athela, but commonly Persephone and Kore.[46]

With both Chronos and Persephone (and indeed the Hundred-handers), it is not only their anthropomorphic nature, but also their monstrous forms that Athenagoras brings to the forefront of his argument. Although he gives fewer details of the description of Chronos than Damascius, he focuses especially on his serpentine nature perhaps because, obviously, snakes represent something bad in Christianity.[47]

He finds more ammunition of this sort from the story of Zeus having sex with Rhea/Demeter in the form of a snake. Here we find a rare version of the myth in which Kore has horns and six eyes, so she is such a frightening monster that her mother flees from her. Athenagoras is more than willing to mock these frightening aspects of Persephone, but generally the stories that seem to interest him most are those in which the gods take on the form of snakes. After briefly discussing the immoral actions of some of the gods, he returns once again to the theme of Greek gods in the form of snakes:

> [Zeus] pursued his mother Rhea when she refused to marry him, and she became a serpent, and he himself was changed into a serpent, and ... he had sex [with her] ... and again that he had sex with his daughter Persephone, having in the form of a serpent forced this girl also, from whom the child Dionysus [was born] to him.[48]

Chronos, Rhea, and Zeus are all envisioned as serpents, leading Athenagoras to ask rhetorically what is "sacred or useful in such a story."

In the opinions of the Greeks who told these stories, there was indeed something sacred and useful to be found. The multiform descriptions of Chronos and Phanes with their serpentine features probably have their origin in Near Eastern myths of deities with theriomorphic features. An important Greek precedent is the myth of Typhoeus/Typhon in Hesiod and Apollodorus, a monstrous sea serpent with whom Zeus engages in an epic battle. Lane Fox demonstrates that in the eighth century BC, the Greek succession myth was

46. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.2 (*OF* 82 II, 88 B = 58 K).
47. Cf. Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.12.3, 2.16.1; Jourdan 2006: 267.
48. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 87 I, 89 I B = 58 K).

amplified by creatively misunderstanding Hittite and Phoenician stories about a battle between the storm-god and a serpent.[49] This led to the proliferation of stories about Zeus and Typhon, but there also seems to have been a story about Kronos and a sea serpent. Pherecydes mentions a primordial serpent named Ophion/Ophioneus, to which Orpheus himself alludes when singing to the Argonauts in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. After defeating Ophion in battle, Kronos secures his rule over the Titans.[50] As for the appearance of Zeus in the form of a snake, there are plenty of stories in which Zeus shape-shifts to mate with a lover (e.g., Leda and the swan, Europa and the bull). The snake is a chthonic creature, so it makes sense for Zeus to change into a snake to mate with the earth goddess Rhea. There was also the precedent of the cult of Zeus Meilichios, the chthonic Zeus who was represented as a giant snake.[51] But in the opinion of Athenagoras, all of this meant that these were not gods but demons. Like Clement of Alexandria, who views the serpent as the incarnation of evil that causes lust,[52] Athenagoras interprets the serpentine forms of Chronos, Rhea, and Zeus as evidence that Pagan myths are full of wickedness.

Athenagoras asks if it is "the descriptions of their bodies" that are sacred or useful, and he questions what reasonable person "will believe that a viper was produced by a god." To drive his point further, he returns to an earlier moment in the theogonic narrative, the birth of the viper Echidna from the belly of Phanes:

> And Phanes yielded up another terrible being
> from his sacred belly, Echidna with frightening face to look upon,
> whose hair flowing from her head and whose face were beautiful
> to look upon, and the rest of the parts, limbs of a frightening serpent
> from the top of her neck.[53]

Fortunately, Athenagoras has preserved what appear to be five authentic lines of the Hieronyman theogony. These lines describe Phanes giving birth to Echidna, a beautiful but "terrible being" with "limbs of a frightening serpent."[54] The tantalizing ἄλλην ("another") in the first line implies that in the Hieronyman theogony Phanes gave birth to other cosmic beings, which is not surprising for a creator deity, but there is no fragment that tells us who else is born. Athenagoras neglects to mention them, concentrating only on the most monstrous examples he can find, especially when it is a description of a deity

49. Hesiod, *Theogony* 820–868; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.6.3; Lane Fox 2008: 280–301.

50. Pherecydes of Syros, fr. 78–80 Schibli (Origen, *c. Cels.* 6.42–43; Philo *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.50); Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 1.496–511.

51. Parker 2011: 67–69.

52. Jourdan 2006: 267.

53. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (*OF* 81 B = 58 K).

54. Echidna appears in Hesiod (*Theogony* 298–300) as the daughter of Callirrhoe.

with serpentine features. Narrative context and even chronological order are subordinated to Athenagoras' conclusion that "if they differ in no respect from the lowest beasts … [then] they are not gods."[55]

The other major argument that Athenagoras supports with Orphic poetry is the traditional Greek criticism that the gods of myth are immoral. In his opinion, their actions are more scandalous than anything the Christians of his time were accused of committing. Having described Persephone's monstrous form, Athenagoras goes on to discuss the monstrous actions of the gods:

> [The Greeks] have described [the gods'] deeds with precision, as they think, how Kronos cut off the genitals of his father, and hurled him down from his chariot, and how he murdered his children, swallowing the males, and that Zeus bound his father and cast him down to Tartarus … and fought with the Titans for the kingship, and that he pursued his mother Rhea … and again that he had sex with his daughter Persephone, having in the shape of a serpent forced this girl also.[56]

Unsurprisingly, Athenagoras finds plenty of examples of Greek gods doing violent or immoral things: Kronos emasculating his father and eating his children; Zeus overthrowing his father, battling the Titans, and committing incest with his mother and daughter. All of this serves the apologist's rhetorical purpose, but it also seems to preserve evidence that the basic succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, as well as the births of Persephone and Dionysus, might have been told in the Hieronyman theogony. Athenagoras could have easily drawn the basic succession myth from elsewhere in the Greek tradition, but twice he specifically identifies Orpheus as his source for these stories, framing the narrative details with the name of Orpheus both at the beginning and at the end of his discussion. The first time, as we have seen, is when he introduces the birth of Chronos and claims that Orpheus is a more ancient source than Homer. The second time occurs later in his argument, when again he returns to the theme of the gods committing immoral acts:

> But it was necessary for them, if they intended to judge shameless and promiscuous intercourse as terrible, either to hate Zeus, who produced children from his mother Rhea and his daughter Kore, and took his own sister as wife, or the poet of these things, Orpheus, who made Zeus unholy and polluted.[57]

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55. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.5.
56. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 84, 87 I, 89 I B = 58 K).
57. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 32.1 (*OF* 87 II, 89 II B = 59 K).

Therefore, Athenagoras explicitly attributes to Orpheus both the narrative of Chronos and Phanes and the narrative of Zeus having sex with Persephone. He does not specify that these narratives come from exactly the same Orphic text or that this text was a continuous chronological narrative like Hesiod, but he seems to indicate that this is so by referring to the succession myth that presumably appeared between Phanes and Persephone.

Like Damascius, Athenagoras refers to the Hieronyman theogony because he finds in it details that support his own argument, though his purposes are entirely different. He refers only to those details that support his claims that the Orphic gods are created, not creators; that as created beings, they are monstrous and beast-like, sometimes appearing in the form of snakes; and that their actions are more disreputable than the supposed crimes of the Christians. For his first argument, he summarizes the first few generations of the Hieronyman theogony and mocks the idea that the gods are made of water and mud. For his second argument, he focuses especially on gods in snake form and argues that if they are like beasts, then they are not real gods. And for his third argument, he briefly refers to the events of the succession myth to show that the gods are immoral. But his favourite point of reference is the birth of Dionysus from Persephone. Zeus in the form of a snake commits incest first with his mother Rhea and then with his daughter Persephone, who gives birth to Dionysus. This narrative serves all three of Athenagoras' arguments by demonstrating that the traditional gods of the Greeks are born, they are monstrous, and they are immoral.

Despite their different perspectives, there is enough in common between Damascius and Athenagoras to allow the conclusion that certain elements of the narrative come from the same Orphic text: the water and mud, from which Chronos/Herakles emerges in the form of a snake; and the cosmic egg, from which Phanes emerges. But each author adds details that are missing in the other. Damascius mentions Necessity and Nemesis existing with Chronos, and adds that Chronos gives birth to Aither, Chaos, and Erebus (*OF* 77–78 B). Athenagoras mentions none of this, but he does attach the name of Ocean to the primordial water from which Chronos is born. He adds that the egg splits into earth and sky, Ouranos and Ge, from whom the Fates, Hundred-handers, Cyclopes, and Titans are born; and Echidna is born from Phanes. Damascius, interested only in first principles, stops at Phanes, but Athenagoras continues by mentioning the basic events of the succession myth, Zeus' war with the Titans, his affairs with Rhea and Persephone, and the birth of Dionysus. When both sources are put together in a coherent fashion, they seem to yield a continuous narrative, from the water and mud to the god of wine, so various scholars have reconstructed the Hieronyman theogony as this type of continuous narrative.[58] Its basic genealogy, setting aside minor genealogical details

58. Ziegler 1942: 1349–1350; Alderink 1981: 38–42; West 1983: 180–181; Ricciardelli 1993: 39–42; Brisson 1995: 2897–2902; Sorel 1995: 41–45; *OF* 69–89 B and Bernabé ad loc.

and the primordial water and mud, is Chronos-Phanes-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-Dionysus. This is the genealogy that Bernabé reconstructs in his edition of the Orphic fragments, beginning with a passage of Tatian, which ironically refers to the end of the narrative. Tatian says that "Zeus also had sex with his daughter, and his daughter became pregnant from him. Eleusis now bears witness to me and the mystic snake and Orpheus saying 'shut the door' to the non-initiates."[59] Because this fragment alludes to the familiar Orphic seal, Bernabé conjectures that some form of *OF* 1 B appeared at the beginning of the proem, so he places at *OF* 74 B the familiar words, "non-initiates, shut the door." From there he begins his reconstruction of the narrative as it appears in Damascius and Athenagoras (*OF* 75–89 B). Following the basic chronological order as found in Damascius, he splits the passage into seven fragments and arranges Athenagoras around these, but he cuts up Athenagoras even more, rearranging the order of events to suit his own chronological scheme, which attempts to reconcile the two sources into one continuous, chronological narrative.

Bernabé begins at *OF* 75 with water and mud as the beginning of everything, followed by the birth of Chronos from the water and mud in *OF* 76, which puts Damascius together with two different passages of Athenagoras and corroborating evidence from the scholia of Gregory of Nazianzus. The next two fragments simply continue the passage of Damascius, splitting into *OF* 77 with the co-existence of Necessity and Nemesis with Chronos and *OF* 78 with the birth of Aither, Chaos, and Erebus from Chronos. In *OF* 79 and 80, Chronos produces the cosmic egg, and the egg produces Phanes, as it is told in Damascius, in two different passages of Athenagoras, and again in the scholia of Gregory. The next three fragments (*OF* 81–83) include genealogical information that is found in Athenagoras alone, but Bernabé reverses the order of their appearance: first the birth of Echidna from Phanes (*OF* 81) and then the offspring of Ouranos and Ge (*OF* 82), with the Titans being given a fragment of their own (*OF* 83). *OF* 84 simply takes us through Athenagoras' brief reference to the basic succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, and *OF* 85 seems to contain a brief allusion to Zeus' swallowing of Phanes. If indeed the Hieronyman theogony was a continuous narrative from Chronos to Dionysus, then perhaps it did contain the episode in which Zeus swallows Phanes and re-creates the cosmos, as he does in the Rhapsodies, for Athenagoras asks if Phanes "was swallowed by Zeus so that Zeus could become immovable."[60] At this point, Bernabé adds at *OF* 86 a statement of Damascius, which he takes to mean that the Hieronyman theogony "calls Zeus orderer of all things and

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59. Tatian. *Or. ad Graec.* 8.6 (21 Marc.) (*OF* 74, 89 III B = 59 K). Bernabé follows Kern, who associated Athenagoras with Tatian by including both in *OF* 59 K.

60. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon) (*OF* 85 B), cf. *OF* 240–243 B.

of the whole cosmos, thus he is also called Pan."[61] The last three fragments of the Hieronyman theogony cut and mix three different passages of Athenagoras that talk about Zeus having sex with Rhea and the birth of Persephone (*OF* 87), the monstrous form of Persephone (*OF* 88), and the birth of Dionysus from Persephone and Zeus (*OF* 89), adding to *OF* 89 the corroborating evidence of Tatian on Zeus having sex with Persephone.

With the way Bernabé has arranged these fragments, it appears that the Hieronyman theogony was one continuous narrative. Damascius and Athenagoras do not contradict each other on any of the major details, although each includes a different set of details, so presumably there was more genealogical information in the original poem. The greatest advantage of Bernabé's arrangement is simply practical: if one wishes to look up the specific fragment in which, for example, the cosmic egg is formed in the Hieronyman theogony, then it is easy to do so; and if one wishes to compare the way Chronos is described in both Athenagoras and Damascius, then again it is easy to do so. However, this approach also obscures the contexts in which the ancient authors discuss the text. By cutting the texts into smaller fragments, Bernabé leaves out statements by the two authors that indicate why they are talking about an Orphic theogony in the first place. This essentially hides the allegorical interpretations of Damascius and the apologetic arguments of Athenagoras, seeming to suggest that they transmit the contents of the poem without any ideological filter. This becomes particularly problematic when we consider whether Stoic ideas were contained in the Orphic narrative of the water and mud, as we will see in the next section. Also, as I argue at the end of this chapter, although the narrative of Zeus committing incest with Rhea and Persephone appears in the same text of Athenagoras as the details of the Hieronyman theogony, this does not necessarily mean that he found this narrative in the same text, despite the common assumption that he did. Overall, Bernabé's presentation of these fragments is useful since it seems clear that Athenagoras and Damascius are referring to the same text, but to read these fragments without the original context in mind increases the risk of misinterpreting the narrative of the Hieronyman theogony.

The Narrative Pattern of Chronos and Phanes

Out of the water and mud emerges the first god of the Hieronyman theogony: "ageless Chronos," a winged serpent with the heads of a bull, a lion, and a god, who is also called Herakles (*OF* 75–76 B). Chronos produces an egg, which forms Ouranos and Ge when it is cracked, and out of this egg springs

61. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B).

the "double-bodied" Phanes,[62] also called Zeus and Pan. Both male and fe-
male, he has golden wings on his shoulders, heads of bulls on his sides, and
a shape-shifting serpent on his head (*OF* 79–80, 86 B). In the Hieronyman
theogony, the primordial goddess Night is displaced by a personification of
Time, who emerges from the raw materials of creation to give birth to the dem-
iurge. Chronos retains this position in the Rhapsodies, so the Hieronyman
theogony represents a major shift in the structure and emphasis of Orphic
myth. Damascius attempts to make the Hieronyman theogony fit with his met-
aphysical scheme of triads, and Athenagoras attempts to make these deities
appear monstrous and false, but in this section I attempt to look beyond these
allegorical and apologetic interpretations in order to understand the meaning
of Chronos and Phanes in the Orphic text itself.

Regarding the water and mud, Damascius says that "there was
water … from the beginning and mud, from which the earth was made solid,"
while Athenagoras offers a simpler tale, merely saying that "from the water and
mud [Chronos] was made."[63] Scholars have suggested that this motif of water
and mud reveals the influence of Stoicism on the Hieronyman theogony, based
upon a fragment of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism. Zeno says that "Chaos in
Hesiod is water, from the settling of which mud is formed, [and] from mud's be-
coming fixed the earth becomes solid."[64] Zeno's use of the words ὕδωρ and ἰλύς
matches Athenagoras (whereas Damascius uses ὕλη for "mud," which could
also mean "matter"), and he places the water and mud at the beginning of cre-
ation by allegorically interpreting Hesiod's Chaos as water. This Chaos is the
process by which "the earth becomes solid," similar to Damascius' statement
that "the earth was made solid." Thus West concludes that this poem was a
"Hellenistic Stoicizing adaptation" of an Orphic theogony, and Brisson agrees
that the Orphic poet followed Zeno by interpreting Chaos as water. According
to Brisson, this was a late attempt to reconcile Orpheus with Stoicism and
with Homer and Hesiod: Ocean and Tethys in the form of water and mud
were placed at the beginning of the theogony, as in Homer, and they were
reinterpreted to also represent Chaos, as in Hesiod.[65] If indeed the water and
mud are a poetic representation of a Stoic concept, then the Hieronyman the-
ogony represents a Hellenistic attempt to reconcile Orphic myth with current
philosophy, or to explain Stoicism through Orphic narrative.

Alternatively, it might have been the case that Hieronymus applied a Stoic
allegorical interpretation to the original Orphic poem and Damascius falsely

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62. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.5 Westerink) (*OF* 80 I B = 54 K); but see Bernabé
ad loc.: δισώματον Westerink; ἀσώματον cod.
63. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = 54 K); Athenagoras, *Pro
Christ.* 18.3–4 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 75 II B = 57 K).
64. Zeno, fr. 104 *SVF* (1.29.17 von Arnim) (Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 1.496–498a = 44.4 Wendel);
see West 1983: 183; 1994: 297; Bernabé ad loc.
65. Brisson (1995: 2912), following West (1983: 182–183); Bernabé ad *OF* 75 B disagrees.

took this to be the actual contents of the poem. This hypothesis is strengthened by Athenagoras' identification of the water as Ocean, quoting an Orphic verse that refers to "Ocean, who is made the origin of everything."[66] Oddly, Bernabé has, without any explanation in his notes, left this passage out of his collection of the fragments of the Hieronyman theogony, but other scholars have speculated that Ocean was named in the original Orphic poem. Jaeger suggested that the water and mud were Ocean and Ge but West rejected this, noting that Ge appears later in the theogony as the bottom half of the cosmic egg; but West also notes that Ocean and Tethys were traditionally paired together. As we saw in chapter 3, Ocean and Tethys appeared as the parents of the gods in the *Iliad* and at least one early Orphic theogony, so it is not impossible that they might have somehow continued in this role in the Hieronyman theogony. Nevertheless, West finds it "very puzzling" that Damascius does not actually name Ocean or Tethys, since he does name Chronos, Phanes, and other deities.[67] Damascius mentions these gods by name even as he is applying allegories to them, so it seems inconsistent for him to not name these first two deities. But Damascius did not have access to the original poem: he was reading Hieronymus, whose commentary might have argued that Ocean and Tethys were allegories for the water and mud of which Zeno spoke. Damascius, transmitting a statement of Hieronymus that Chronos emerged from this water and mud, could have thus inadvertently created a false impression that this Stoic allegory was rooted in the poem, rather than in his secondary source.

If the water and mud are not the result of Stoic influence, then there are two other alternatives: either Near Eastern myths or Presocratic cosmogonies. First, there are indications in Philo's *Phoenician History* of primordial water and mud in Phoenician cosmogony. Philo often conflates Greek myth with eastern myth and distorts it with Euhemeristic interpretations, but one recognizably Semitic deity is Mot.[68] After a primordial time when the universe consisted of a "foul chaos, dark as Erebus," creation begins when "Mot is born of the wind." Philo notes that "some say [Mot] is mud," but "others say he is the fermentation of a watery mixture."[69] He continues:

> And from this [fermentation] was born every seed of creation and the origin of all things. And there were some living things that had

66. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3 (*OF* 57 K).

67. West 1983: 183–184.

68. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2. Jacoby ad loc. estimates c. 54–142; cf. A. Baumgarten 1981: 32–35. The presence of Mot in Phoenician myth is attested by the appearance of "Divine Mot" in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.4.7.45–47, trans. Smith and Pitard 2009: 84–86).

69. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1); translations based on A. Baumgarten (1981: 96–97), with some modifications. West (1994: 298) suggests that this watery mixture was not found in Philo but Eusebius "imported it from Porphyry"; but cf. "his town, the Watery Place" in the Ugaritic myth (*KTU* 1.4.10–12).

> no sense perception, from which living beings possessed of intellect were born, and they were called Zophasemin, that is observers of the heavens. And it was formed like the shape of an egg. And Mot blazed forth the sun and the moon, the stars and the great stars.[70]

Baumgarten takes this to mean that "Mot was egg-shaped and blazed forth the heavenly luminaries," but West asserts that it was "the whirling wind-driven cosmos that contained in it the seeds of all creation" that was egg-shaped.[71] Either way, these parallels with the Hieronyman theogony—not only the water and mud, but also the motif of the egg—indicate that the primordial mud of the Orphic poem could have been influenced or inspired by earlier Near Eastern myth. A Greek poet who was familiar with Mot in Phoenician cosmogony could have assimilated details of the story into an Orphic theogony and changed the name to Ocean or Tethys. This possibility is not sufficient to disprove the influence of Stoicism on the poem—it is basically a matter of weighing a fragment of Zeno against a fragment of Philo—but the hypothesis of eastern influence can be strengthened by considering how other elements of the Hieronyman theogony might relate to Near Eastern myths or iconography.

As we have already seen with the cosmic egg, there are significant parallels between the story of Chronos and Phanes in the Orphic theogonies and eastern myths from India, Persia, and the Levant, which also talk about a personified time-god creating a cosmic egg. Unlike Aristophanes' *Birds*, which merely makes a passing allusion to the egg, in the Hieronyman theogony the parallels are more comprehensive. As we saw in the previous chapter, there were three eastern myths that featured a personified time-god who gives birth to a demiurge, and in each version an egg is somehow involved. In the *Atharvaveda* and the *Upanishads*, the Vedic deity Kala, whose name, like Chronos', is also a common noun meaning "time," is associated with the creation of the universe in statements like "Time generated yonder sky, Time also these earths" and "the great sky in Time is set." The latter statement reveals the association of time with the rotation of the sun, the means by which time is measured.[72] In Persian myth, the time-god Zurvan Akarana, whose name means "Infinite Time" (virtually a translation of Χρόνος ἀγήραος, "Ageless Time"), produces Ahriman and Ohrmazd. For three thousand years, the physical universe consists of unformed matter "in a moist state like semen"—or, one might say, it was wet and sticky like water and mud—until Ohrmazd creates the world out

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70. Philo, *FGrH* 790 F2 (Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1); compare the translation of A. Baumgarten (1981: 97): "and they were formed like the shape of an egg" with West (1994: 295): "And it was formed like the shape of an egg." The singular ἀνεπλάσθη indicates that West's translation is probably correct.

71. A. Baumgarten 1981: 123; West 1994: 299.

72. West 1971: 33; 1983: 103–104; cf. Lujan 2011: 89.

of it. Similarly, in Sidonian myth, the demiurge is born when Oulomos, whose name means "time" (Phoenician *ulom*, Hebrew *olam*), has sex with himself to produce the demiurge Chousoros.[73]

In each of these stories, an egg plays a central role: Vedic Kala produces the demiurge, Prajapati, who in some versions is born from an egg; when Persian Ohrmazd creates the world, the sky appears in the form of an egg; and Phoenician Oulomos creates an egg along with Chousoros, who opens the egg to create the earth and sky.[74] In the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic theogonies, Chronos produces an egg, out of which Phanes is born, and Phanes plays a role parallel to that of Prajapati, Ohrmazd, and Chousoros as the creator who forms the present universe out of the raw materials of the water, the mud, and the egg. Each of these time-gods coexists with, creates, or is born from the raw materials of creation, but instead of creating the universe out of these raw materials, the time-god gives birth to the demiurge by parthenogenesis; and it is the demiurge who in turn creates the universe out of these pre-existing materials.

As West has made clear, the narrative of Chronos and Phanes follows patterns of action that are seen in these earlier stories, which became known to the Greeks sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, probably through sub-literary channels. West suggests that these three eastern myths come from a "common source," which he argues is the Egyptian sun-god, Re. In early Egyptian myth, Re is called "lord of eternity" and "traverser of eternity," linking his solar aspect with his identity as a time-god. Like Phanes, Re is born from an egg and called "firstborn of the gods," so West sees him as a parallel to Protogonos in the Orphic myth. Re also produces gods without the use of a partner, by means of (as West so tastefully puts it) "self-directed *fellatio*," followed by spitting out his semen.[75] Because of these similarities, West concludes that the three eastern myths of the time-god and demiurge "developed out of the figure of the Eternal Sun, whose worship was particularly ancient and important in Egypt." West clarifies that the source of this narrative to the Greeks was not "a literary source but a newly-evolved cosmogonic myth to the effect that Time was the first god, and that he generated out of his seed the materials for the world's creation."[76]

The elements of this basic cosmogonic myth eventually found their way into the Orphic theogonies, resulting in a narrative that appears in its full form

73. West 1971: 29–31; 1983: 103–104.

74. Cf. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ*. 18.5 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 80 II B = 57 K), where the bottom of the egg is Ge and the top half is Ouranos.

75. West 1971: 34–36; 1983: 103–105. One may also note the Egyptian myth of Atum, who created the world by masturbating, since in later versions the Egyptians made the myth more palatable by depicting him "spitting" instead (Burkert 2004: 94). See also Schibli (1990: 37–38), who relates the myth of Atum to Pherecydes of Syros.

76. West 1983: 104–105.

for the first time in the Hieronyman theogony. Once again, where Orphic myth departs from Hesiodic myth it tends to do so with myths that have eastern parallels, suggesting that Orphic bricoleurs assimilated the elements of eastern myths in different and creative ways. But the Hieronyman theogony was not the first Greek text in which Chronos appeared as a personification of time. In the sixth century BC, Pherecydes of Syros wrote a prose cosmogony that began with the primordial deities Chronos, Zas, and Chthonie. In this cosmogony, "Zas and Chronos always were and Chthonie; and Chthonie became named Ge when Zas gave her the earth as a gift of honour."[77] West suggests that the triad of Chronos, Zas, and Chthonie was parallel to the Sidonian cosmogonic triad of Chronos, Pothos ("primeval wind"), and Omichle ("liquid chaos") that Damascius found in the text of Eudemus. Whether or not there is any relation between these two triads, it is clear that Pherecydes portrayed Chronos as a creator god parallel to the eastern myths we have seen.[78] In Pherecydes' cosmogony, Chronos is the first principle who creates the elements of fire, air, and water "from his own seed," and from the mingling of these elements the gods are created.[79] Here personified Time creates by parthenogenesis the raw materials from which the physical universe will be formed.

Another parallel between Pherecydes and the Hieronyman theogony might be found in Pherecydes' idea of μυχοί ("nooks"), of which there are either five or seven. Schibli is careful to clarify that these μυχοί are not the elements that Chronos creates, but "the places in which the elements are distributed."[80] In the Hieronyman theogony as Damascius transmits it, in addition to the production of the egg by parthenogenesis, Chronos mates with Necessity, who gives birth to Aither, Chaos, and Erebus—upper air, gap, and darkness—and it is "in these" that he creates the egg.[81] Like the μυχοί in Pherecydes, the relationship between the children of Chronos and the creation of Chronos is that the upper air (Aither), the gap (Chaos), and the darkness (Erebus) are the spaces within which the physical universe will be formed. In Pherecydes, Chronos fills the μυχοί with air, water, and fire, but in the Hieronyman theogony, the primordial elements used to fill those spaces are water and earth (i.e., mud). Pherecydes seems to have been operating within the same milieu as the Presocratic philosophers, each of whom was suggesting a different element or set of elements as the ἀρχαί, or first principles from which the universe was formed. Like the Derveni author, Pherecydes found cosmogonic myth to be a

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77. Pherecydes of Syros 7 A1, B1 D-K (fr. 14 Schibli) (Diogenes Laertius 1.119); translation: Schibli 1990: 144.

78. Damascius, *De Principiis* 125 (3.166 Westerink); West 1971: 28–36.

79. Pherecydes of Syros 7 A8 D-K (fr. 60 Schibli) (Eudemus, fr. 150 Wehrli) (Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 bis = 3.164 Westerink); as is the case with the Sidonian myth, it is possible that Damascius is drawing on Eudemus, rather than Pherecydes directly.

80. Schibli 1990: 20.

81. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161.8–162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 77, 78, 79 I B = 54 K).

useful mode of expression for this metaphysical process. This reflects a lack of distinction between mythical and philosophical thought at the time when both Presocratic philosophy and Orphic poetry were first emerging. In his formulation of cosmogony, Pherecydes drew upon myths of a personified time-god who produces the raw materials of creation, and he identified these materials as three of the four elements with which the Presocratics were concerned.

Therefore, despite the fact that Pherecydes of Syros does not tell the entire narrative of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes, he does provide us with a missing link between early eastern cosmogonies and the later Orphic theogonies, and one that links these with Presocratic philosophy; so Schibli suggests that the Orphic poets "very likely came under [Pherecydes'] sway."[82] This is possible, but there were other Greek authors who personified Chronos. Scattered references to Chronos appear in Greek literature from the Archaic Period onward, but it is not always clear whether the author refers to a personified Time or to the basic concept of time. For example, Anaximander says that justice is rendered "according to the ordering of Chronos," and Pindar mentions "Chronos the father of all."[83] In later periods (and the Neoplatonists are partly to blame for this), Chronos was either confused or equated with Kronos: one of the extant *Orphic Hymns* addresses "Kronos all-father of time," and Macrobius refers to "Saturn who is himself the originator of time."[84] The Hieronyman theogony is a product of the time between these two periods, most likely the Hellenistic Period, and the inclusion of Chronos as a primordial god is the product of a wider pattern of eastern influence on Greek myths. From the Egyptian and Vedic myths of time-gods, through Pherecydes and other Greek authors to the Orphic theogonies and beyond, we do not see a direct line of literary transmission, but traces of the evolution of narrative patterns. The basic pattern of action in which a time-god gives birth to a demiurge was passed from eastern predecessors through early authors like Pherecydes to the Orphic poets of the Hellenistic Period.

This time-god myth was developed into a uniquely Greek form by Greek writers, achieving its fullest form in Orphic myth, yet significant eastern parallels have been detected in the Orphic descriptions of the appearance of Chronos and Phanes. Chronos emerges from the water and mud as a winged serpent with the heads of a bull and a lion on his sides, and the head of a god between them (*OF* 75–76 B). Firstborn Phanes, the two-bodied god, is both male and female, has golden wings on his shoulders, heads of bulls on his sides,

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82. Schibli 1990: 35.

83. Anaximander 12 B1 D-K; Pindar, *Ol.* 2.17; cf. Sorel (1995): 47–49 and Noussia-Fantuzzi (2010: 325), who discuss these and other references to Chronos as a god in Greek literature; e.g., Solon, fr. 14 Gentili-Pratico (Diogenes Laertius 1.49); Pindar, *Ol.* 10.53–55. Nemesis (offspring of Chronos in the Hieronyman theogony) was personified in the *Cypria*, fr. 10 Bernabé = 11 West (Philodemus, *de Piet.* B 7369 Obbink).

84. *OH* 13.5; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.22.8; cf. McCartney 1928: 187–188.

and on his head is a serpent that changes into the shapes of different beasts (*OF* 79–80 B). Like the narrative patterns that influenced the Orphic poems, eastern images of monstrous deities with wings and many heads influenced the descriptions of Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman theogony. Guthrie and Bernabé compare the descriptions of Chronos and Phanes with the four-headed, four-winged creatures who were described by the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel. The four faces of these supernatural beings were those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.[85] These descriptions might remind us of the monster Typhon/Typhoeus, defeated by Zeus in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Typhon, himself the creation of interactions between Greeks and Syrians, is described as having a hundred snake heads projecting from his shoulders, and fire flashing from his eyes; he roars like a bull or lion and he hisses like a snake; and in Apollodorus, he has wings.[86]

Chronos and Phanes have been compared to the winged, lion-headed Persian time-god, Zurvan Akarana, as he is portrayed in a (perhaps) Mithraic relief at Modena, dated to the second century AD (figure 4.1).[87] In this relief, a young nude male figure with wings on his shoulders stands with hooves instead of feet, in the bottom half of a broken eggshell, while the top half of the shell hovers over his head. The heads of a ram, a deer, and a lion in the center project out of his chest, and a serpent winds around his body, resting its head on the top half of the eggshell. In his hands he holds a lightning bolt and a sceptre, and rays of light are projected from his head, while the horns of a lunar crescent hover above his shoulders. The twelve signs of the Zodiac rotate around the deity in an oval, and the four winds fill out the corners. The winding serpent, multiple animal heads, and wings on his shoulders resemble the descriptions of both Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman theogony, but it is unclear to which deity he should be compared.

Since Zurvan Akarana ("Infinite Time") corresponds in the narrative pattern to Ageless Chronos in the Orphic theogonies, it might be preferable to compare the relief to Chronos, as does Brisson.[88] There are closer similarities in the imagery since, although both Chronos and Phanes have solar associations, wings, and winding serpents, it is Chronos who more clearly has the head of a lion. Both Damascius and Athenagoras say that Chronos has the heads of a lion, a bull, and a god (*OF* 75 I–II B). Phanes, on the other hand, "had

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85. Ezekiel 1:6–13; Guthrie 1952: 96–102; *OF* 76 B and Bernabé ad loc. Bernabé cites Revelation 4:6, which describes four winged creatures, resembling a lion, ox, man, and eagle. The Vedic god Kala is described as "thousand-eyed, unaging, possessing much seed" (West 1971: 33), and one might note theriomorphic images of the gods in Egyptian iconography.

86. Hesiod, *Theogony* 820–868; cf. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.6.3; cf. Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 1.478–520; Lane Fox 2008: 280–301.

87. Zurvan Akarana is compared to Chronos by van der Waerden (1953: 481–482) and Brisson (1995: 37–55), and to Phanes by West (1983: 253–255).

88. Brisson 1995: 50.

Figure 4.1 Mithraic relief carving of Zurvan Akarana (second century AD). Located at Museo Civico Archeologico in Modena, Italy. Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo—Archivio fotografico delle Gallerie Estensi.

heads of bulls attached on his sides," and "upon his head was a mighty serpent appearing in the shapes of all kinds of animals" (*OF* 80 I B).[89] Although

89. See also Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.427.20 Diehl (*OF* 130 B = 79 K), who quotes a Rhapsodic line that speaks of Phanes "sending forth the might of a bull and a fierce lion."

"all kinds of animals" could include lions, this is not made explicit, but there are other elements of the relief that more closely resemble Phanes, such as the eggshell from which he is born. West identifies the lightning bolt with Zeus and the hooves with Pan, which brings to mind the fragment of the Hieronyman theogony that equates Protogonos with Zeus and Pan (*OF* 86 B). He also connects the sceptre with Protogonos, since he is said to possess a royal sceptre in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 166, 168 B).[90] Of course, the relief depicts neither Chronos nor Phanes but a Mithraic representation of Zurvan Akarana, an ancient Persian deity who predates both the Hieronyman theogony and Mithraism; but there are enough similarities that we may accept the general hypothesis of eastern influence.

Because of the relief's association with Mithraism, Brisson concludes that the Hieronyman theogony was not written until the second century AD (i.e., later than the Rhapsodies), and that Chronos was a "transposition" or "adaptation" of the Mithraic version of Zurvan.[91] However, aside from the fact that Phanes is described in a similar way in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 109–137 B), which Brisson supposes to have been earlier, there is no reason to assume that the descriptions of Chronos and Phanes could not have been influenced by the same earlier precedents as the narratives themselves. The similarities between the relief and the Orphic text can be explained as an adaptation of Zurvan in ancient Persian myth, so rather than proposing Mithraism as a source for Orphic poetry, it might be more reasonable to propose ancient Zoroastrianism as a common source for both Orphic poetry and Mithraism. This argument might be strengthened by considering the astrological component. The signs of the Zodiac appear in an oval around the Zurvan figure, combining with the rays of light on his head and the horns of the moon above his shoulders to emphasize that this is a solar deity. Solar deities are ancient and common, but the signs of the Zodiac were a development that relied upon the background of Babylonian astrology. The Persian magi of the sixth century BC, whose myths spoke of Zurvan, were also interested in astrology,[92] and as we saw in chapter 2, early Orphic practices were in some ways analogous to and influenced by the Persian magi. Both the *orpheotelestai* and the magi were groups of ritual specialists who shared techniques and ideas, so it is not unreasonable to suspect that the magi taught the Orphics astrology.

Brisson may or may not be correct in using the Modena relief to argue that the Hieronyman theogony was influenced by Mithraism, but his analysis of the astrological signs surrounding the Zurvan figure presents an interesting explanation of why Chronos is also called Herakles in the Hieronyman theogony (*OF* 76 B). Based on a passage of Porphyry that equates the sun

90. West 1983: 253–254.
91. Brisson 1995: 37–55.
92. Van der Waerden 1953: 483.

with Herakles,[93] Brisson conjectures that the signs of the Zodiac could be assimilated to the twelve labours of Herakles—for example, the skin of the Nemean lion represents the sign of Leo, when the sun is at its highest point in the sky—so by this association, the sun could have become equated with Herakles. Regarding Chronos, although he is rarely (if ever) explicitly identified with the sun in Greek literature (indeed, Phanes is the better candidate for this, being the one who makes things appear), obviously the sun is a crucial means by which humans can measure time. According to Brisson, Chronos as a winding serpent may signify the course of the sun through the signs of the Zodiac, of which the bull and the lion are two.[94] Thus, the association between Chronos and Herakles could be the result of these solar aspects, as they are sometimes expressed in Zodiac symbols. Brisson offers an explanation that relies on a lot of conjecture and is ultimately unprovable, but neither is his hypothesis impossible. From the sixth century BC, the influence of the magi on ritual specialists contributed to the assimilation of eastern ideas in Greek myth and practice, and astrology was one of these fields.

Based on this analysis of earlier parallels to the Orphic myth of Chronos, it appears that the primordial water and mud, the myth of the time-god who gives birth to the demiurge, the strange descriptions of Chronos and Phanes, and even the association with Herakles can be explained as Greek adaptations of Near Eastern ideas, images, and patterns of action rather than as poetic expressions of philosophical allegory. The water and mud find a parallel in both the Persian myth in which the universe was "in a moist state like semen,"[95] and the Phoenician myth in which Mot represents the primordial mud. However, compared with Pherecydes' narrative in which Chronos produces the basic elements of air, water, and fire, it appears that the water and mud of the Hieronyman theogony could have come from Presocratic speculations about ἀρχαί as easily as they could have come from Stoic allegories. The narrative of Chronos and Phanes is based on earlier myths about time-gods who give birth to demiurges, but the Greek idea of Chronos evolved within the wider tradition of Greek literature, apart from these narratives. Chronos appears as a creator-god in Pherecydes, associated with justice in Anaximander, and as the father of all things in Pindar, long before he appears as a creator-god in Orphic myth. The Orphic narrative of Chronos and Phanes is an essentially Greek story, but the structure of the narrative pattern matches Vedic, Persian, and Phoenician myths. Likewise, the physical descriptions of these two gods combine a set of motifs that correlates with theriomorphic descriptions of Near Eastern deities and primordial Greek monsters, such as supernatural creatures in Semitic

93. Porphyry, *De imag.* 8.23–24.
94. Brisson 1995: 2913–2914.
95. West 1971: 30–31.

literature, Typhoeus in Hesiod, Persian-influenced Mithraic relief sculpture, and perhaps even the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

Therefore, based on the information Damascius and Athenagoras give us about the Hieronyman theogony, we may read the narrative of Chronos and Phanes, through the theoretical lens of bricolage, as a Greek adaptation of earlier Near Eastern myths about a time-god who gives birth to a demiurge by means of an egg, which might have been combined with ideas from Presocratic or Stoic philosophy. However, according to the modern reconstruction of the Hieronyman theogony by scholars such as West and Bernabé, the text did not stop there. As Athenagoras seems to imply, the Hieronyman theogony continued with the succession myth from Ouranos to Zeus and the births of Persephone and Dionysus. Yet the question remains whether Athenagoras was indeed reading from only one extended theogonic narrative that continued to the sixth generation, or from two different Orphic poems: one about Chronos and Phanes, and another about Persephone and Dionysus.

The Succession Myth and the Incest of Zeus

Damascius is only concerned with Orphic theogonies as they relate to his own discussion of first principles, so when he has finished discussing Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman theogony, he stops there and gives no indication if the text went any further. Athenagoras, on the other hand, is concerned with Orphic theogonies insofar as they provide him with material with which he might slander the Greek gods. To this end, he does not care where in the genealogy this material is found, as long as it gives him material to work with. In addition to the first gods, he mentions Ouranos' castration, Kronos swallowing his children, and Zeus committing incest, basically undermining the traditional succession myth in its entirety. From the evidence of Athenagoras, scholars have reconstructed the Hieronyman theogony to include these stories in one continuous theogonic narrative, analogous in its structure to Hesiod's *Theogony* and most modern reconstructions of the Orphic Rhapsodies. But there is another possibility, which is that Athenagoras could have used more than one Orphic text, and in certain cases he could have simply made allusions to the mainstream Greek tradition. Although he names Orpheus, he does not name the Hieronyman theogony; neither does he indicate whether he is reading one text or a few texts within a collection; he simply attributes it to Orpheus.

In order to argue that the gods are monstrous, Athenagoras mentions the birth of Persephone with six eyes and horns, but then he goes back in time to earlier events in the narrative. Alluding to the traditional succession myth, he

makes the common, general point that not only the appearance of the gods, but also their deeds, are monstrous:

> [The Greeks] have gone through with accuracy as they think, how Kronos cut off the genitals of his father and overthrew him from his chariot and how he murdered his children by swallowing the males. But that Zeus bound his father and cast him into Tartarus and fought with the Titans over his rule, just as also Ouranos with his sons.[96]

Athenagoras makes brief allusions to the traditional tales of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus, including Zeus' battle with the Titans. Each of these myths was well-known in mainstream Greek tradition, so all he needed to do was to mention them in passing without much detail in the context of other descriptions and narratives that paint the gods as monstrous and immoral.

Because this passage seems to fill in the chronological gaps between the narratives of Phanes and Persephone, Bernabé has placed it in the fragments after the story of Phanes, envisioning the Hieronyman theogony as a continuous, chronological narrative. Along with two other brief sentences of Athenagoras, this passage is, according to Bernabé's arrangement of the fragments, evidence that the succession myth appeared in this theogony. The next of these fragments is just one of a series of rhetorical questions Athenagoras asks:

> What is there that is holy or useful in such a story, that we will believe Kronos, Zeus, Kore, and the rest to be gods? Is it the descriptions of their bodies? And what man of judgment and reflection will believe that a viper was produced by a god? … Or who might accept that Phanes himself … has either the body or shape of a serpent, or was swallowed by Zeus, so that Zeus might become immovable?[97]

From this, Bernabé extracts only "or was [Phanes] swallowed by Zeus, so that Zeus might become immovable."[98] He takes the passing mention of Zeus swallowing Phanes as evidence that this happened in the Hieronyman theogony as it did in the Rhapsodies. Finally, Bernabé adds a phrase of Damascius, which (supposedly) states that the Hieronyman theogony "calls Zeus orderer of all things and of the whole cosmos, therefore he is also called Pan."[99] By Bernabé's reasoning, the Hieronyman theogony narrated the following: Kronos

96. Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 84 B = 58 K).

97. Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon).

98. Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon) (*OF* 85 B = 58 K); this comes immediately after 20.4 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81 B = 58 K), which concentrates on the monstrous aspects of Echidna.

99. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B = 54 K).

castrating his father and swallowing his children; Zeus defeating Kronos and the Titans and binding them in Tartarus; Zeus swallowing Phanes; and Zeus (also called Pan) re-creating the cosmos.

Although the presentation of these three fragments in Bernabé's collection seems to present a coherent narrative, all three are problematic. The third fragment, *OF* 86 B, seems to say that Zeus is called Pan, but Damascius' statement has been taken out of context. What Damascius actually says, in the context of fitting Phanes into his scheme of triads, is that "this theology celebrates Protogonos in song, and it calls him Zeus the orderer of all things and of the whole cosmos, therefore he is also called Pan."[100] Bernabé has placed the phrase "this theology celebrates Protogonos in song" in a fragment describing Phanes (*OF* 80 I B), and cut out the rest of the sentence, reserving it for a fragment about Zeus (*OF* 86 B). But the sentence is about Phanes: according to Damascius, the Hieronyman theogony "celebrates in song" Protogonos, who is also called Zeus and Pan. Because Phanes gives order to the cosmos, he is associated with Zeus, who preserves the order of the cosmos as the god of justice; and because Phanes is the orderer "of all things," he is also called Pan, whose name means "all." In this case, Bernabé's arrangement of the fragments is misleading because this fragment simply is not about Zeus.

The second fragment, *OF* 85 B, seems to rest on more solid ground, since Athenagoras clearly says that Phanes "was swallowed by Zeus," but again the context of the fragment is not Zeus but Phanes. Athenagoras questions a story in which "a viper was produced by a god" and quotes five lines of poetry that he explicitly attributes to Orpheus, in which Phanes gives birth to Echidna. He goes on to criticize Phanes for being the firstborn from an egg, having the body of a serpent, and being swallowed by Zeus. Conceivably, a theogonic hymn to Phanes that did not continue with the traditional succession myth might still mention that Phanes was swallowed by Zeus, because this episode is a part of the story of Phanes. This entire passage comes immediately after Athenagoras recalls the events of the succession myth, so Bernabé cuts out all mention of Rhea and Persephone and splits the mention of Phanes and Zeus into two separate fragments (*OF* 80 I, 86 B) in order to fit his chronological scheme. Bernabé cuts sections 20.3 and 20.4 of Athenagoras into six scattered fragments and changes the order drastically.[101] Athenagoras does say that Zeus swallowed Phanes, but he says this in the context of Phanes, not in the context of the traditional succession myth.

100. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 80 I, 86 B = 54 K).

101. The first part of 20.3 (the succession myth) becomes *OF* 84 B, and the second part of 20.3 (Rhea and Persephone) becomes *OF* 87 I and 89 I B. The first part of 20.4 is cut out except for the five lines about Phanes and Echidna, which become *OF* 81 B, but the second part is split between *OF* 80 III and 86 B (arranged so that they appear to be about first Phanes and then Zeus, although both are about Phanes).

Athenagoras does indeed mention the basic events of the succession myth, so Bernabé arranges *OF* 84 B in a way that indicates the inclusion of these events in the Hieronyman theogony. However, it may not have been the case that an Orphic poem was his source for these events, for these stories were widely known from Hesiod's *Theogony*. Athenagoras did not need an Orphic poem to be familiar with the succession myth, nor did he specifically attribute these events to Orpheus. Rather, he introduced them with plural verbs that seem to point to the general tradition, saying that "[the Greeks] have gone through [the following events] with accuracy as they think."[102] Unlike his detailed discussions and direct quotations of Chronos and Phanes and the incest of Zeus, Athenagoras merely mentions the events of the succession myth in passing, expecting his readers to be aware of this traditional narrative. He follows the same line of argument that was applied centuries earlier to the general tradition by Plato, when Euthyphro criticizes the morality of Zeus, who "put his father in bonds, because he devoured his children unjustly, and [Kronos] in turn had castrated his own father for similar reasons," and by Isocrates, who criticizes Greek poets for narrating "eating of children and castrations of fathers and fettering of mothers and many other crimes."[103] The invocation of the succession myth as proof that the gods do immoral things in poetry was a traditional tactic in arguments of this type. By alluding to the succession myth, Athenagoras could have even drawn from prose authors like Plato and Isocrates, rather than from poets like Orpheus and Hesiod.

Therefore, it is possible that what we call the Hieronyman theogony was instead a theogonic hymn to Chronos and Phanes, and the births of Persephone and Dionysus were drawn from a different Orphic theogonic hymn entirely; and these he does attribute explicitly to Orpheus.[104] He recalls the details of a strange myth in which Zeus in the form of a snake commits incest with his mother Rhea, who becomes his wife Demeter. She gives birth to Persephone, whose monstrous form frightens her, so Rhea flees from her daughter. Zeus commits incest with Persephone in turn, who gives birth to Dionysus. Supposedly this is where the Hieronyman theogony ends. Zeus has sex with his mother who becomes his wife, and then he has sex with his daughter who also becomes (in a sense) his wife. This mixing of female roles was not new to this text. As we have already seen in chapter 2, the last remaining fragment of the Derveni poem says that Zeus "wanted to mingle in love with his own mother."[105] Neither was the Hieronyman theogony the last Orphic text to tell

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102. It is unclear whether Athenagoras' plural verbs refer to the Stoics or to the Greeks in general (since at 19.3 he mentions the Stoics), but usually where there is no subject he simply means the Pagan Greeks; or he could be using a generalizing plural, similar to the use of φασί ("they say").

103. Plato, *Euthyphro* 5e–6b (*OF* 26 I B = 17 K); Isocrates, *Busiris* 10.38–39 (*OF* 26 II B).

104. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3, at the beginning of the Chronos and Phanes narrative, and 32.1, at the last mention of the Persephone narrative.

105. DP 16.14, 18 passim = *OF* 18 B.

this tale for, as we will see in chapter 6, the Rhapsodies expanded upon it significantly. Athenagoras may not have even learned the story of Persephone and Dionysus from the Hieronyman theogony. He discusses both this and the story of Chronos and Phanes, but he keeps the two stories distinct, moving from one to the other, not chronologically, but as it suits his argument.

In addition to the Derveni Papyrus, there are two passages by Philodemus (first century BC/AD) that also provide evidence of an alternative Orphic myth about Rhea/Demeter that was circulating before the Hieronyman theogony. In one passage of *De Pietate*, Philodemus claims that Orpheus and many other poets agree with the Stoic Cleanthes (third century BC), who says that "Rhea is both the mother of Zeus and his daughter."[106] In another passage, Philodemus cites the Athenian historian Kleidemos (fifth/fourth century BC), who says that "in the *hieroi logoi* some people have mentioned, Melanippides says that Demeter and [Rhea] the mother of the gods exist as one."[107] This might be a case of syncretism, for as Morand argues, references to intergenerational incest in Orphic poetry might be a consequence of the assimilation of deities; as Phanes is equated with Zeus and Pan, so Demeter is equated with Rhea and Kore.[108] Bernabé has a different explanation: he links Philodemus with the Derveni Papyrus to explain how Rhea, the mother of Zeus, can become his daughter: after swallowing the phallus of Ouranos, Zeus "generated all the gods anew, so that Kronos and Rhea, the parents of Zeus, are born anew."[109] By this reasoning, since Rhea is reborn as a part of Zeus' re-creation, she thus becomes his daughter. It is unclear if Philodemus is actually referring to the Derveni poem as Bernabé seems to suggest, but at least these passages present additional evidence that there were alternative versions to the more familiar myth of Demeter and Persephone, before the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies were written.

Athenagoras refers to this myth three times. First, while discussing the monstrous forms of snake-like deities, he says that, somewhat like Chronos and Phanes, Persephone was described "as having two eyes by nature, and two in her forehead, and the face of an animal on the back part of her neck, and as also having horns." Reacting to Persephone's monstrous form, Rhea was frightened, so she fled "and did not give her the breast."[110] From here Athenagoras makes his next point, the typical argument about the disgraceful deeds of the gods, by briefly alluding to the traditional succession myth before describing in more detail how Zeus commits incest with both Rhea and Persephone.[111]

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106. Philodemus, *de Piet*. (Herculaneum Papyrus 1428 VI 16–17, pp. 80–81 Gomperz) (*OF* 28 B = 30 K) = Cleanthes, fr. 1081 (*SVF* 2.316, 34 von Arnim).

107. Philodemus, *de Piet*. (Herculaneum Papyrus 248 II 7–8, p. 23 Gomperz) (*OF* 29 B = p. 143 K) = Kleidemos, *FGrH* 323 F 25.

108. Morand 2001: 155–156.

109. Bernabé ad *OF* 38 B; translation mine.

110. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ*. 20.2 (*OF* 88 B = 58 K).

111. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ*. 20.3 (*OF* 87 I, 89 I B = 58 K).

Third, a little further down in the text, Athenagoras argues again that the deeds of the gods are disgraceful, and he ridicules the fact that the Greeks "display as mysteries" these actions of the gods. He goes on to argue that if the Greeks wished to condemn incest, then they should have condemned Zeus, "who produced children from his mother Rhea and his daughter Kore, and took his own sister as wife."[112] Bernabé cuts up and rearranges these three passages to make them fit into a chronological order: in *OF* 87 B, Zeus has sex with Rhea; in *OF* 88 B, the monstrous Persephone is born and her mother flees; and in *OF* 89 B, Zeus has sex with Persephone so Dionysus is born.[113]

The story of Zeus having sex with Rhea, to which the Derveni Papyrus and Philodemus had already referred, was somehow transmitted to an Orphic poet who narrated this story more fully. Athenagoras found several features in this narrative that suited his argument, the most important of which was the theme of gods in serpentine forms. In the form of a snake, Zeus has sex with Rhea/Demeter, who is also in the form of a snake. Their daughter, Persephone, is given a monstrous form, with multiple eyes, an animal's head on her neck, and horns. Although her mother flees from her and refuses to nurse her, Zeus changes into the form of a serpent again to have sex with this strange manifestation of Persephone. Unlike the mating of Zeus and Rhea in the form of serpents, Persephone does not seem to have been in serpentine form, but her overall appearance is comparable to Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman theogony, who also have theriomorphic features.[114] Athenagoras eagerly recalls the details of their descriptions with wings, multiple heads, and serpentine form because these support his attempts to discredit the Greek gods. In this narrative of Zeus, Rhea, and Persephone, he finds similar features in the descriptions of these deities, and their descriptions lend further weight to his argument.

After discussing the serpentine and monstrous features of these Orphic gods, Athenagoras argues that their actions are disgraceful. He repeats the usual criticism of the traditional succession myth with Kronos castrating his father and swallowing his children, and then conveniently finds more examples in the narrative that he has just been reviewing. The serpentine Zeus commits incest with both his serpentine mother and his monstrous daughter, and, what is more, he does so by force, "having bound [Rhea] with the knot that is called Herakleian" (i.e., with two serpents in spiral form), and again with Persephone, "having forced this girl also."[115] The consequences of Zeus' committing forced

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112. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 32.1 (*OF* 87 II, 89 II B = 59 K).

113. Bernabé adds two brief statements of Tatian, which corroborate the detail that Zeus had sex with Persephone in the form of snake: Tatian. *Or. ad Graec.* 8.6, 10.1 (21, 24 Marc.) (*OF* 89 III, IV B).

114. Neither does Persephone appear in serpentine form in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 276–283 B); cf. West 1983: 97.

115. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 87 I, 89 I B = 58 K); cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.12 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 281 II B = 195 K) (referring to the Rhapsodies); Kerényi 1951: 8–9.

incest are the births of Persephone and Dionysus, but there is no mention in Athenagoras of the dismemberment of Dionysus by the Titans, so there is not sufficient evidence to assume that this story was included in the Hieronyman theogony.[116] It is reasonable to conclude that the incest narrative ended after the birth of Dionysus, but not necessarily with his death. The pattern of action seems to have been focused on the actions of Zeus in the form of a snake committing incest with his mother and then his daughter, resulting in the births of Persephone and Dionysus. It shares the pattern of action of well-known tales of Zeus changing form so that he can mate with a lover.

Clearly, however, it was not just the sin of incest in this myth that interested Athenagoras. If he had wanted simply to show that Zeus committed incest, then all he needed to do (and he did) was to mention that in traditional Greek myth Zeus is married to his sister Hera. But there was more: it is not just incest, but incest that is intergenerational, violent, and bestial. Zeus does not simply have sex with his mother and daughter, but he does so by force, and in the form of a serpent. Rhea too is in the form of a serpent, and Persephone, though not serpentine, is in a monstrous form, with multiple eyes and horns. Like the narrative of Chronos and Phanes, the narrative of Zeus committing incest features deities in serpentine and monstrous forms, which Athenagoras found useful in his attempts to demonize the Greek gods. The serpentine features of these gods, not the supposed appearance of their narratives in the same text, were the most important factors in his decision to recall these two narratives in detail. Both narratives were found in Orphic poems, but not necessarily the same poem. Athenagoras chose to discuss both of these poetic narratives in his text because they fit into his own argument, and the focus of discussion was this argument—not a systematic exposition of an epic-length Orphic poem. Therefore, rather than attempt to reconstruct the Hieronyman theogony as a continuous narrative, with the traditional succession myth serving as the (virtually) missing link between these two narratives, it might be better to acknowledge the possibility that Athenagoras was reading two different, shorter narratives and that he merely alluded to the succession myth, as any other author would have done, because he knew his audience was familiar with it. He chose these two narratives because they shared certain features that contributed to his argument, notably the depiction of deities in serpentine features, which to a Christian like Athenagoras would have suggested demons.

A detailed study of the so-called Hieronyman theogony, as it appears in both Damascius and Athenagoras, reveals the complexities of reconstructing Orphic theogonies from their fragmentary state in the texts of late antiquity,

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116. West 1983: 181–182; see also Bernabé ad loc. According to Herrero (2010: 249, 355–357), cannibalism is a topic that Christian apologists conspicuously avoided, even in Clement of Alexandria's discussion of the dismemberment myth in the Rhapsodies (*Protr.* 2.18.1), with the exception of Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 6.3.

and introduces the types of problems that will be relevant to our study of the Rhapsodies in the next two chapters. While apologists like Athenagoras and Clement of Alexandria read the myths literally in a polemic attack against Greek myth, Neoplatonists like Proclus and Damascius read the myths allegorically in an attempt to make traditional tales fit into the triadic schemes of their own metaphysical system. These contrary interpretative stances had consequences for the authors' choices about what material to present and how to present it, which in turn has had consequences on how modern scholars read (or mis-read) the Orphic fragments of the Hieronyman theogony, and, as we will see in the next two chapters, this applies to the Rhapsodies as well. Part of the purpose of this chapter's detailed analysis of Damascius and Athenagoras has been to lay the groundwork for interpreting the Rhapsodies as they appear in other authors, such as Proclus and Clement. In the case of the Rhapsodies, the extant material is spread more widely, appearing in more than just two sources; and because the Rhapsodies were still extant in the time of the Neoplatonists and apologists, the extant material is much more abundant, being mentioned more than two hundred times by Proclus alone. Therefore, there is not enough room in the next two chapters to discuss every author and every fragment in as much detail as I have done in this chapter—all the more reason to use an analysis of the Hieronyman theogony to lay the methodological groundwork for an overview of the fragments of the Rhapsodies. This type of overview is the subject of much of chapters 5 and 6, where I have attempted to limit the discussion of apologetic and allegorical interpretations to places where they are relevant to the project of reconstructing the text(s) of the Orphic Rhapsodies.

5

The Rhapsodies

In several ways, all of the previous chapters have laid the foundation for the discussion of the Orphic Rhapsodies that is to follow. The Rhapsodies were composed and compiled within the wider tradition of Orphic poetry, so naturally they follow some of the same patterns that characterized earlier texts. All of the major themes that have arisen from my analysis of early Orphic theogonies appear again in more detail and with greater clarity in the Rhapsodies.

(1) In each of the previous chapters, I have observed that where Orphic myth departs from Hesiodic myth, it tends to do so in a way that reflects Near Eastern myth. This was observed with the act of swallowing in the Derveni poem, the cosmic egg in Aristophanes' *Birds*, and theriomorphic deities in the Hieronyman theogony. All of these phenomena appear in the Rhapsodies against the same familiar background of both Near Eastern precedents and earlier Greek mythical tradition—in particular, the earlier Orphic tradition, which is important if indeed the composition of the Rhapsodies involved a compilation of older Orphic material. We might also observe that although Orphic poets add new motifs and episodes to the traditional succession myth that we find in Hesiod, they never seem to take anything major away from the basic structure of the narrative. This will be observed again in the Rhapsodies. Chronos appears before Chaos, and Phanes is added before Night, but Chaos and Night still appear in primordial roles. The basic succession myth of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus remains intact, and indeed it is amplified by the repetition of story patterns. Ouranos is still castrated by Kronos, and Kronos still swallows his children, but other episodes are added: for example, Zeus castrating Kronos and swallowing Phanes.

(2) In chapter 2, I viewed the Derveni poem as a theogonic hymn, and in chapters 3 and 4, I left open the question of whether the fragments of the Eudemian and Hieronyman theogonies came from the same poem or from different poems. This question is no less important when it comes to the Rhapsodies, but it must also remain an open question. In this chapter, I discuss the question of whether the Rhapsodies were a Rhapsodic theogony or a

Rhapsodic collection, expanding upon a question that has also been raised by Edmonds.[1] Although most modern scholars have envisioned the Rhapsodies as one continuous narrative, there is also a possibility that they were a loosely compiled collection of shorter poems, perhaps including both new compositions and copies of earlier Orphic poems. I have found Edmonds' argument to be useful when applied to the history of Orphic theogonies as a whole, but this does not negate the possibility that at least one of the twenty-four Rhapsodies was a six-generation succession myth, stretching from Chronos to Dionysus.

(3) Another theme that has arisen is the positioning of Orphic poetry as a point of contact in the discourse between myth and philosophy. In one direction, Orphic poets used myth as a way of thinking about some of the same questions that occupied philosophers, and some of them were influenced by philosophy. In the other direction, most of the Orphic fragments come from philosophers who quote Orphic poetry. This is a crucial issue when it comes to the Rhapsodies, because the vast majority of fragments come from Neoplatonic discussions of metaphysics, in which episodes and motifs of the Rhapsodies are presented as allegories and illustrations of complex abstract concepts. Reading the fragments of the Rhapsodies in context requires a basic understanding of Neoplatonic metaphysics, which is something that most modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodies have tended to ignore, notwithstanding recent efforts by Brisson.[2] West usually dismisses Neoplatonic allegories and at times even scoffs at them,[3] and Bernabé's presentation of the fragments often (but not always) cuts fragments out of context, leaving the reader with no indication of why the Neoplatonist is quoting the poem. This is reasonable to the extent that their goal is the reconstruction of the texts, but it has led to certain distortions. Thus, one of the most important ways in which the study of the Rhapsodies can be advanced is by explaining how the Neoplatonists used the Orphic texts and by pointing out how this has influenced our own interpretations of the Rhapsodies. Although a full discussion of Neoplatonic metaphysics and allegorical interpretations is beyond the scope of this study, there are many places where their allegories must be taken into account because of the subtle ways they have influenced modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodies.

(4) It has become increasingly clear that in Orphic theogonies there was a greater emphasis on Zeus and on primordial deities such as Night and Phanes than most modern interpretations of Orphic thought and practice, which tend to revolve around Dionysus, would lead us to expect. This is reflected in the importance of Night in the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, in the focus on Zeus and the act of swallowing in the Derveni poem, in the different versions

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1. Edmonds 2013: 148–159.
2. Brisson 1995: 43–103 (on Proclus), 157–209 (on Damascius).
3. West 1983: 164, 208–232.

of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, and in the narratives of Phanes and Zeus in the Hieronyman theogony. In the Rhapsodies, it becomes increasingly obvious that Zeus and these primordial deities played a central role in the Orphic succession myth. In fact, quantitatively there are more Orphic fragments about Phanes and Zeus in the Rhapsodies than there are about Dionysus.[4] This indicates that in Orphic myth Zeus and Phanes were no less important than Dionysus. The Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus in particular expresses a conceptualization of Zeus that is unique and that elevates him to a status above all other gods. This suggests that Zeus was more important to Orphic myth, literature, and thought than modern scholarship has acknowledged.

Introduction

Before discussing what the Rhapsodies meant and how they were used, let us consider what the Rhapsodies were and when they were written. Some earlier scholars thought the Rhapsodies were written as early as the sixth or fifth century BC,[5] and there are indications that they at least contained archaic material, such as Homeric formulae.[6] But today most scholars agree that the Rhapsodies were a product of the Hellenistic Period or later, written or compiled between the first century BC and the second century AD.[7] West argues that some fragments contain ideas that could not be considered current before the Hellenistic Period, such as the verse in which the moon is called "another boundless earth,"[8] and the depiction of Zeus with golden hair, horns, and wings in the Orphic Hymn to Zeus.[9] The earliest possible sources for the Rhapsodies date from the first to third centuries AD, which gives us a relatively late terminus ante quem.[10] Since the Rhapsodies were the only Orphic theogony that was current in Damascius' time (sixth century AD), it seems likely that they

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4. In Bernabé's edition, a rough estimate is that there are fifty-three fragments about Phanes (*OF* 120–173 B), fifty-one about Zeus (*OF* 205–256 B), and fifty-six about Dionysus (*OF* 280–336 B).

5. Kern 1888: 1–5; 1922: 140–141; Gruppe 1887: 612–675. See Guthrie (1952: 74–78) for a summary of early scholarly debates on the date of the Rhapsodies.

6. E.g., Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης (Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 181 I B = 131 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.75.8 Kroll (*OF* 181 II B = 140 K); Bernabé ad loc.; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 2.205; *Odyssey* 21.415; Hesiod, *Theogony* 18; Cook 1914: 2:548–549; referring to Zeus, πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε at *OF* 244 B (Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* [I] 1.318.22 Diehl; [II] *in Plat. Cratyl.* 48.7; [III] 49.14 Pasquali); cf. Homer, *Iliad* 1.544.

7. West 1983: 248–251; R. Baumgarten 1998: 113: first century BC; Brisson 1995: 169–172, 2886: first or second century AD; Colli 1977 ad 4 [B 73] pp. 423–424: second century AD.

8. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.48.15 (I), 2.282.11 (III), 3.142.12 (II) Diehl (*OF* 155 B = 91 K); West 1983: 210–211 and n. 114, 225; see also Burkert 1972: 305; Kingsley 1995: 124; Bernabé ad loc.

9. *OF* 243.12, 14, 25 B = 168 K; West 1983: 240.

10. Burkert 1968: 109n45; Colli 1977: 4 [B 28] p. 413, 4 [B 73] pp. 423–424; West 1983: 121–126; Brisson 1995: 2902–2911; Kotwick 2014.

were written after the Hieronyman theogony.[11] Nevertheless, the Rhapsodies contained earlier material, especially in the sense that they were a compilation of earlier Orphic poetry. On this matter, Guthrie makes the important point that the date of the Rhapsodies "is bound to be a date of compilation rather than composition, and surely this is something which reduces considerably the importance of the question."[12] Guthrie suggests that even if the Rhapsodies were compiled late in the Hellenistic Period, the compilation included much earlier material. Perhaps the best way to estimate the date of the Rhapsodies is one fragment at a time: while some fragments appear to be rooted in Archaic tradition, others clearly contain Hellenistic ideas. The Rhapsodies are a Hellenistic compilation of Orphic material, ranging from the earliest phases of the Archaic Period to the latest trends of the Hellenistic Period. Therefore, the best approach is to treat the Rhapsodies as Hellenistic texts, compiled around the first century BC, and to recognize Archaic features when they arise as possible indications of influence from earlier Orphic tradition.

Perhaps the most elaborate theory so far proposed about how the Rhapsodies were compiled and composed is that of West. His theory is full of conjectures, but these conjectures are based on his vast erudition. He suggests that the "compiler" of the Rhapsodies used the Eudemian, Cyclic, and Hieronyman theogonies as his main sources, along with earlier versions of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus and another Orphic poem called *Robe*. Although he speaks of a compiler, West allows for the possibility that he "introduced some material of his own, such as the dynastic sceptre and the golden chain."[13] Accepting the *Suda*'s claim that the author of the Rhapsodies was a Thessalian named Theognetus, West argues that this Theognetus "collected various Orphic poems that were current in his time and set himself the task of uniting them in a single poem." He arranged this poem in twenty-four "rhapsodies," modeled after the twenty-four books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[14] The reason for this, as West argues, was that the compilation of the Rhapsodies was "unmistakably connected with the Pergamene account of the Pisistratean [*sic*] recension of the Homeric poems." The Peisistratid recension, according to this theory, can be understood as the unification of the rhapsodies of Homer into coherent wholes, which were later divided into twenty-four books each. West suggests that "Orpheus … like Homer, bequeathed disconnected 'rhapsodies'; but it was left to Theognetus to complete their reunification." Probably working in Pergamum, Theognetus noticed that the Orphic poems had much in common

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11. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 91 B = 60 K). This is the view of most scholars, but two exceptions are Brisson (1995: 4–7, 2885–2914) and Fayant (2014: xix–xxiii).

12. Guthrie 1952: 78.

13. West 1983: 246–247; on the sceptre, see Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasqali (*OF* 98 IV B = 101 K); on the golden chain, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.313.31 Diehl (*OF* 237 IV B = 166 K).

14. *Suda*, s.v. "Ὀρφεύς" (3.565.8 Adler) (*OF* 91 B = *OT* 223d K); West 1983: 248–249; cf. Guthrie 1952: 77.

with one another, so according to West this "looked like an example of the sit-uation postulated for the Homeric poems before Pisistratus." West suggests that the Rhapsodies were "reconstructed with some approach to authenticity" as a product of Hellenistic literary criticism in Pergamum, "firmly dated to the first third of the first century BC."[15] In this way, he envisions the Rhapsodies as a lengthy chronological narrative with a structure similar to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and with content similar to Hesiod's *Theogony*. The Rhapsodies came to be compiled in a manner similar to the Homeric poems—or, more pre-cisely, in a manner similar to West's interpretation of how Hellenistic scholars thought the composition of the Homeric poems had been done. West's theoret-ical perspective on Homer differs vastly from the evolutionary model proposed by Nagy and others,[16] but even if we reject West's views on Homer, his recon-struction of the Rhapsodies is worthy of consideration.

West reconstructs a plausible scenario in which the Rhapsodies might have been compiled, and some have found his theory acceptable,[17] but this scenario is still the result of the general mistake in his approach in *The Orphic Poems*. As we have already seen with earlier theogonies, Orphic poems were not the static products of a manuscript tradition, but original creations by in-dividual poets operating in a dynamic and fluid literary tradition. As I argued in chapter 1, rather than seeing the Rhapsodies as a later product in a stemma, a preferable model is bricolage, as originally formulated by Lévi-Strauss and successfully applied by recent scholars to interpretations of various mythical and ritual contexts, such as the Orphic gold tablets. We can see the operation of bricolage in the way the author(s) of the Rhapsodies reworked old narratives, added new elements, and engaged with new ideas: for example, attaching the story of Phanes before Night, introducing the royal sceptre, and expanding the Orphic Hymn to Zeus in a way that seems to reflect philosophical ideas. If the Rhapsodies were a continuous poem of twenty-four books as West and Bernabé agree, then in addition to early Orphic poetry the bricoleur brought into potential use every other source of inspiration that he found appealing. The Rhapsodic narrative might have been an attempt to compile earlier Orphic poems into one coherent whole, but even West admits that the poet added some original material. On the other hand, if the Rhapsodies were a collection of twenty-four different poems, then each individual poem could have been the original creation of a different bricoleur. In this sense, West is ironically correct in designating the person who put together the Rhapsodies as the "com-piler," not the composer.[18] If the Rhapsodies were a compilation of twenty-four different poems, then their final form was the product of a compiler who put

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15. West 1983: 250–251.
16. Nagy 1990: 18–62; González 2013.
17. R. Baumgarten 1998: 113–115; Bernabé 2004: 98.
18. West 1983: 246–247.

the poems together into a collection. Within the collection, there might have been poems ranging from the sixth to first centuries BC, which would result in our fragments containing an odd mixture of Archaic and Hellenistic features. Whether the Rhapsodies consisted of twenty-four books of a single poem or twenty-four individual poems in a loose collection, they were the product of a dynamic literary tradition that was characterized by variety and originality.

What does it mean to call this poem (or these poems) Rhapsodies? Our designation of the Rhapsodies as such is based on two passages of ancient literature, both of which are very late: Damascius' phrase, "in those Orphic Rhapsodies that are in circulation," and the *Suda*'s attributing to Orpheus the "Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Rhapsodies."[19] The term "Rhapsodies" has heuristic value to modern scholars, helping us differentiate this particular Orphic theogony from the Derveni, Eudemian, and Hieronyman theogonies, but as a title the word "Rhapsodies" is absent from most of the Orphic fragments. Usually the Neoplatonists introduce paraphrases and quotations with phrases like "Orpheus says" or "in Orpheus," and often they simply say "the theologian" with no reference to a title.[20] Plutarch seems to call the Rhapsodies a ἱερὸς λόγος, but Bernabé points out that this is a general designation that is used to describe other older texts.[21] The Rhapsodies are variously designated by such general terms as μυστικοὶ λόγοι by Galen, θεογονία by various later authors, and sometimes θεομυθία or θεολογία by Proclus.[22] Therefore, "Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Rhapsodies" was not the universally accepted, official title of this poem or collection.

Still, Damascius' and the *Suda*'s use of the word ῥαψῳδία tells us something about what the Rhapsodies were: "stitched-together songs." The word ῥαψῳδία derives from the Homeric verb ῥάπτω ("stitch, sew") and the noun ἀοιδή ("song").[23] Early applications of ῥάπτω to music appear in a fragment of Hesiod, where he speaks of himself and Homer "stitching together poetry in new songs," and in Pindar's second *Nemean Ode*, where he calls the Homeridai "singers of stitched-together verses."[24] Some have seen a distinction between

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19. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 91 B = 60 K); *Suda*, s.v. "Ορφεύς" (3.565.8 Adler) (*OF* 91 B = *OT* 223d K). The *Suda* also attributes a "Theogony" (Θεογονίαν) to Orpheus (*OF* 92 B = *OT* 223d K).

20. E.g., Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 33.1 Pasquali (*OF* 140 II, III B = 82 K); *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450, 9 Diehl (*OF* 140 IX B = 85 K); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 154.16 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV = 99 K).

21. Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 2.3.2 p. 636d (*OF* 1 II, 101 I B = 334 K); Bernabé 2004: 97–98; cf. R. Baumgarten 1998: 144–147.

22. Galen, *De usu part.* 12.6 (*OF* 1 XXII B); *Suda*, s.v. "Ορφεύς" (3.565.8 Adler) (*OF* 92 B); John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (*OF* 102 I B); Schol. Lycophr. 399 (*OF* 214 I B); Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.4; *in Plat. Tim.* 3.223.7 Diehl (*OF* 288 II B); see West 1983: 68; Bernabé 2004: 97–98.

23. *BNP*, s.v. "Rhapsodes"; LSJ, s.v. "ῥαψῳδ-έω"; González 2013: 397. While ῥάπτω usually meant literally "sew together" (Homer, *Iliad* 12.296; Herodotus 9.17), in Homeric language it also had a metaphorical meaning of devising or plotting (Homer, *Iliad* 18.367; *Odyssey* 3.118, 16.379, 422).

24. Hesiod, fr. 357 M-W (Schol. Pind. *Nem.* 2.1); Pindar, *Nem.* 2.2.

a ῥαψῳδός who recited written poetry and an ἀοιδός who improvised poetry in the oral tradition, but González argues that both terms refer to performers of epic: ἀοιδός originally referred to "performers of all sung poetry," while ῥαψῳδός "referred specifically to the performer of traditional epic," who never completely abandoned composition in performance until the Hellenistic Period.[25] The shift from oral composition in performance to recitation of written texts was not sudden. Following the evolutionary model proposed by Nagy, González argues that rhapsodic performers only adopted the technology of writing gradually. Similar to oratory and tragic drama, rhapsodic performance was in every period first and foremost an oral practice, but one that was transformed by the "move from transcripts to scripts" in the fourth century BC.[26] A ῥαψῳδός was a "performer of epic poetry" in earlier centuries, or a "reciter of epic poetry" in later periods when performers relied increasingly on written texts.

One of the earliest occurrences of the noun ῥαψῳδός is in Herodotus, who describes contests at Sicyon where professional ῥαψῳδοί recited the Homeric poems. Such recitation contests became an official part of the Panathenaea by the sixth century BC, and they were practised at other Greek cities in conjunction with various festivals.[27] In Plato's *Ion*, Socrates calls Ion "the best rhapsode in Greece" (541b) after winning first prize in a contest by reciting Homer. Here and in other texts from around the same time, the verb ῥαψῳδεῖν denotes the performance of poetry in general,[28] and there are numerous ancient sources attesting that a ῥαψῳδός might perform poetry other than Homer.[29] In early usage, the noun ῥαψῳδία refers to the performance itself, as when Plato says that "our fathers set up contests of rhapsody" (*Timaeus* 21b), and elsewhere mentions "someone, like Homer, making a display of a rhapsody" (*Laws* 2.658b). Plato is still referring to oral performance, but in later usage, ῥαψῳδία might refer to a written text. For example, in Plutarch, Alcibiades asks his teacher for "a rhapsody of the *Iliad*," and in this case it seems like he is referring to a book of Homer.[30]

Given the nuances of meaning attached to the word ῥαψῳδία in Classical literature, it might refer to a performance or recitation of poetry, the poem that is recited, or more specifically a single book of poetry. What, then, are the implications of Damascius and the *Suda* referring to an Orphic poem (or collection) as ῥαψῳδίαι? If ῥαψῳδία means "recitation of poetry," then the *Suda*'s designation Ἱεροὺς λόγους ἐν ῥαψῳδίαις κδʹ might mean "Sacred Discourses

25. *BNP*, s.v. "Rhapsodes"; LSJ, s.v. "ῥαψῳδ-έω"; West 2010: 2; González 2013: 331–345.

26. González 2013: 641–645; cf. Nagy 1990: 38–42.

27. Herodotus 5.67.1; West 2010: 2–6; González 2013: 399.

28. Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 679–680; Plato, *Ion* 533b–c, 538b, 540a; *Republic* 10.600d; Isocrates 12.33; Aristotle, *Poetics* 1462a6.

29. Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 391; Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447b22; Athenaeus 14.620b–d; Clearchus 61–62; Lucian, *Jupiter confutatus* 1; Diogenes Laertius 9.18.

30. Plutarch, *Reg. et Imp. Ap.* 2.186e; cf. West 2010: 3.

in twenty-four Recitations." This raises the question of performance context, which is notoriously difficult to answer when it involves Orphic poetry. We might guess that the poems were recited in ritual contexts, but the only ritual context where ῥαψῳδία appears is the simple fact that rhapsodic contests were held at festivals like the Panathenaea. These were public civic festivals, not secret Orphic initiations, so were Orphic poems recited in public? There are a few sources that indicate that they might have been. In Plato's *Ion*, Socrates mentions Orpheus among other authors whose poetry might be performed and explained publicly by a skilled rhapsode.[31] Pausanias mentions the performance of Orphic hymns at a ritual by the Lycomidae at Phlya, and Philostratus relates how Apollonius of Tyana "criticized the way in which the Athenians kept the Dionysia," meeting in the theatre to enjoy Bacchic dancing "on the same stage with the poetry and mysticism of Orpheus."[32] Thus it is not unreasonable to imagine that Orphic poetry could have been performed at public festivals and competitions, being included with the rhapsodic performance of traditional Homeric poetry, the singing of hymns to accompany public rituals, and even on the theatrical stage. Orphic poetry probably emerged from within the same rhapsodic traditions as Homeric poetry, a tradition of performance that also brought into being the poems of Hesiod, the *Homeric Hymns*, and the epic cycle. If we apply to the Orphic literary tradition the concept of "notional fixity" that González applies to the Homeric poems, then we might be able to explain on the basis of the word "rhapsody" the original emergence of the Orphic tradition.[33]

Nevertheless, ῥαψῳδία as "recitation" is inconsistent with Damascius, who is clearly referring to written texts when he calls the Rhapsodies "those Orphic Rhapsodies that are in circulation." Rather than the act of recitation itself, ῥαψῳδία in this context seems to refer to the written text of the poem that is being recited, either as an individual poem or as a single book of a longer poem. If ῥαψῳδία refers simply to a "stitched-together song," the poem on which a recitation is based, then the *Suda* might mean "Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Poems." But if ῥαψῳδία means "book of poetry," then the *Suda* calls the Orphic poem "Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Books." West takes ῥαψῳδία to mean that there was one poem, divided into twenty-four books, and he suggests that the compiler "called the sections not 'books' but 'rhapsodies,' the same term that was used for the books of Homer."[34] So a word study of ῥαψῳδία takes us all the way back to the original question, but places on firmer ground the justification for asking this question: what were the ῥαψῳδίαι in the

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31. Plato, *Ion* 533b–c.
32. Pausanias 9.27.2; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 4.21 (trans. Eells 1967); Martin 2001: 23–33.
33. González 2013: 173–183.
34. West 1983: 248–249.

"Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Rhapsodies"? Were they twenty-four separate poems, or one poem in twenty-four books? How closely were these twenty-four songs stitched together?

Based on the fragments we have, it is difficult to imagine how the theogonic narrative of the Rhapsodies might have been stretched to fill twenty-four books.[35] Scholars have often drawn a connection between the *Suda*'s mention of "twenty-four Rhapsodies" and the length of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, because each of these epics consists of twenty-four "rhapsodies." Some have suggested that in a similar way the author of the Rhapsodies attempted to imitate the Homeric epics by making this Orphic theogony the length of twenty-four books.[36] But that is a lot of poetry. Even the shorter books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are roughly 400 to 600 lines each. Comparing the Orphic fragments to Hesiod's *Theogony*, which is a little more than 1,000 lines, one might estimate the theogonic narrative of the Rhapsodies as not much longer than 800 to 1,200 lines, which is not even enough to fill up two average books of Homer. Both Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* begin as theogonies but continue into multiple books with a wide variety of narratives from Greek legend. Perhaps we could conjecture a Rhapsodic narrative that likewise began with a theogony and continued with other stories from Greek legend in a way similar to Ovid, but in the fragments we find evidence for none of the other narratives that might have appeared.

In this chapter I discuss the possibility that, rather than twenty-four books, the Rhapsodies consisted of a collection of twenty-four separate poems, each of which independently would be a "stitched-together song." Although I ultimately leave the question open, I argue that even if the Rhapsodies were a collection of different poems, one of these poems could have been a theogony that told the six-generation succession myth in its entirety. So there is still a case to be made for a continuous narrative of six generations: even if this was just one of twenty-four poems, it was still a substantial poem that might have corresponded roughly to the length of Hesiod or a book of Homer. But this raises another question for which there is no clear answer: if the Rhapsodic theogony only took up one or two books, then what was in the other twenty-three books? Perhaps the rest of the books included either hymns or different versions of the theogony. There might be bits and pieces of evidence for these, but nothing substantial or certain.

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35. Only two sources specify to which Rhapsody they refer, and one of these is doubtful. The *Tübingen Theosophy* (61 [43 Erbse²], *OF* 138 B = 6a K) says that Orpheus addresses Musaeus "in the fourth Rhapsody." John Malalas (*Chronograph.* 4.8 [51 Thurn], *OF* 102 I B = 62 K) cites a proem in which Orpheus invokes Apollo, and he refers to "the twelfth voice." Kern (ad loc.) and Bernabé (2004: 98–99) take this to mean the twelfth book of the Rhapsodies, but West (1983: 227 and n. 2) rejects this.

36. Colli 1977 ad 4 [B 73] 423–424; West 1983: 248–249; Bernabé 2004: 97.

I suggest that the best approach is to focus on the six-generation succession myth as a generally coherent narrative, but to allow for the possibility that there were other poems in the Rhapsodic collection and some of the fragments might come from these. Whether the six-generation succession myth took up all twenty-four books of the Rhapsodies or just one of them, the best evidence we have for the text of the Rhapsodies consists of fragments of this narrative. For this reason, the succession myth of the Rhapsodies has been reconstructed by scholars as a coherent, chronological narrative, and although there are differences of opinion over certain details, there is substantial agreement on the basic structure of the narrative.[37] In this chapter, I question the literary structure of the text of the Rhapsodies, but in general I accept the basic structure of the Rhapsodic succession myth. Here I offer a brief summary of the reconstructed narrative for the sake of orienting the reader with a general overview, noting similarities to and differences from Hesiod and other texts along the way, before getting into the detailed discussion of individual fragments and their contexts.

The poem seems to have begun with the traditional injunction for non-initiates to shut the door, followed by an invocation of Apollo (*OF* 101–102 B). If the chronological narrative began immediately after this proem, then it probably included a description of the primordial mass of undifferentiated elements that existed before all deities, similar to the water and mud in the Hieronyman theogony (*OF* 103–108 B). Out of this primordial mass, Chronos emerges as the first of the gods in the same way he does in the Hieronyman theogony, and by himself he gives birth to Aither and Chasm, also called Chaos (*OF* 109–113 B). Chronos forms the cosmic egg out of the preexisting materials from which he himself had emerged, and the egg seems to have moved in a circular motion, perhaps spinning and rotating like a planet (*OF* 114–119 B).

Out of the cosmic egg emerges Phanes, the firstborn god who is also called Protogonos. As in the Hieronyman theogony, he is both male and female. He is described as having the heads of animals, multiple eyes and wings, and he is given many names, including Metis and Erikepaios (*OF* 120–143 B). Phanes creates the first gods, including Night, who becomes both his daughter and his wife (unlike the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, where Night is the first deity). He mates with Night, and out of her cave he creates the universe and populates the earth with the first race of humans, the golden race (*OF* 144–164 B). Phanes becomes the first king of the gods, and he creates a sceptre that is twenty-four measures long to symbolize his newly acquired royal power (*OF* 165–167 B). He willingly passes the sceptre on to Night, who becomes the second ruler of the gods (*OF* 168–171 B).

37. See the summaries found in West (1983: 70–75) and Brisson (1995: 54–69); Bernabé's arrangement of *OF* 98–367 B; Edmonds (2013: 155) is critical of this "theogonic frame."

As in the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, in the Rhapsodies Night gives birth to Ouranos and Gaia, who become the first to marry. Ouranos becomes the third ruler of the gods (unlike the Derveni theogony, in which he is the first). Ouranos and Gaia give birth to the Cyclopes and Hundred-handers, and then to fourteen Titans (cf. twelve in Hesiod, *Theogony* 132–136). As he does in Hesiod, Ouranos refuses to be separated from Gaia, so he traps the Titans inside her. Gaia forms a plan with her children, in which only Ocean refuses to participate (his refusal does not happen in Hesiod). Kronos cuts off his father's genitals and throws them into the sea. The blood from Ouranos' wound falls into the water, giving birth to the Erinyes; and it falls onto the ground, giving birth to the Giants; but his genitals fall into the sea, creating the foam from which Aphrodite is born, as in Hesiod (*OF* 174–189 B).

Having castrated his father, Kronos becomes the fourth king of the gods and he mates with Rhea, who gives birth to the first six Olympians. Kronos creates the second race of humans, the silver race, which is considered to be particularly long-lived (*OF* 216–218 B; cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109–120, where Kronos rules the golden age). As in Hesiod, Kronos fears that one of his children will overthrow him, so he swallows each of them as soon as they are born with the exception of Zeus, since Rhea tricks Kronos by replacing Zeus with a stone (*OF* 190–204 B). Rhea takes Zeus away to a cave in Crete, where he is protected in his infancy by the Curetes and a triad of nymphs (*OF* 205–215 B). When he has come of age, Zeus consults with Night about how he might overthrow his father. She advises him to prepare a honey-based drink, and to wait until he passes out drunk. Zeus follows her advice, and as soon as Kronos falls asleep, Zeus binds him and castrates him (*OF* 219–225 B).

Having castrated his father, Zeus becomes the fifth king of the gods and takes possession of the sceptre that Phanes had made (*OF* 226–233 B). As in Hesiod, he takes measures to ensure that his position as king is secure. There seems to have been a Titanomachy of some sort (*OF* 234 B), which happens in Hesiod (*Theogony* 617–735), but in the Rhapsodies the most important means by which Zeus secures his position as king of the gods is by swallowing Phanes, and this is a uniquely Orphic myth. Consulting with Night (as he does in the Derveni poem), Zeus asks how he should secure his rule, so Night advises him to stretch a golden chain down from the sky to the earth, surrounding everything (*OF* 237 B). Zeus takes this to mean that he should swallow Phanes, since in doing so he takes into his belly the entire previous creation (*OF* 240–241 B). At this point, the Orphic Hymn to Zeus appears as a digression (if it was not a separate poem) that visualizes Zeus in his unique position as the only one in existence, with everything and everyone else inside him. Different parts of his body are equated with different parts of the cosmos, and Zeus is pictured with golden hair, horns, and wings. For a brief moment, the cosmos is equated with Zeus, when he is about to re-create the universe (*OF* 243 B). As in the Derveni poem, Zeus then proceeds to re-create the universe and the

gods, so it was probably at this point that the narrative included a catalogue of the wives, lovers, and children of Zeus, similar to Hesiod in structure if not in the details: for example, Zeus marries Thetis and then Hera, Aphrodite is born when he ejaculates while pursuing Dione, and Athena is born from his head (*OF* 244–275 B).

In the midst of this catalogue, Zeus has sex with Demeter (who in some fragments is identified with Rhea), and Demeter gives birth to Persephone (*OF* 276–279 B). Zeus in turn has sex with Persephone, and Dionysus is born (*OF* 280–283 B). Unlike the Hieronyman theogony, there is no indication of Zeus, Demeter, or Persephone being in serpentine or monstrous form in the Rhapsodies. After the birth of Dionysus, Persephone is abducted by Hades, but, unlike the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, she is not picking flowers but weaving a robe when Hades appears (*OF* 286–290 B). The Curetes once again appear as guardians, this time protecting the infant Dionysus, whom Zeus sets up to be the sixth king of the gods (*OF* 296–300 B). But the Titans lure Dionysus toward them with toys. They dismember him, cook him, and eat him (note once again the motif of swallowing). Dionysus is destroyed, except for his heart, which is rescued by Athena (*OF* 301–317 B). Angry with the Titans, Zeus strikes them with lightning, and the third race of humans is born from their ashes. With the help of Apollo, Zeus brings Dionysus back to life, but he retains his position as king of the gods (*OF* 318–331 B). After the narrative of Dionysus and the Titans, the Rhapsodic narrative might have continued with a passage describing the underworld, which again is similar in structure to Hesiod, but different in the details, notably in the fragments that talk about reincarnation in ways that remind one of Empedocles (*OF* 337–344 B).[38]

Rhapsodic Theogony or Rhapsodic Collection?

On the nature and structure of the Rhapsodies, there are now two competing views that are both plausible: one that has been the prevailing view for the majority of modern scholars, and another that has been proposed quite recently and is worthy of further consideration. The prevailing view is best expressed by Martin West, who imagines a lengthy continuous poem along the lines of Hesiod's *Theogony*. According to West, the Rhapsodies were "a composite work, created in the late Hellenistic period by conflating earlier Orphic poems."[39] West envisions a Hellenistic compiler who brought together all of the previous Orphic theogonies and united them into one coherent narrative. On this basis, he reconstructs the "Rhapsodic Theogony" by putting together the fragments

38. Cf. Empedocles 31 B8–9, 11–12 D-K.
39. West 1983: 69.

in a way that seems to fit, despite certain apparent contradictions and the need for conjecture to fill in some of the gaps. By reading the fragments of the Rhapsodies as a continuous poem, West follows the same basic view as both Kern (1922) and Bernabé (2006) in their editions of the Orphic fragments. Both editors introduce the Rhapsodies as a continuous narrative that compiles material from all previous Orphic theogonies.[40] As a result, the majority of modern scholars who study the Rhapsodies have referred to them as one theogonic poem, the Rhapsodic theogony.[41]

Recently, however, Radcliffe Edmonds has suggested a different model by which the Rhapsodies could be understood. In Edmonds' view, the Rhapsodies "were more likely a loose collection of Orphic poetry, containing a variety of poems … by a number of different *bricoleurs*."[42] Edmonds suggests that the nature of the "Rhapsodic collection" was comparable to the *Sibylline Oracles*, an extant Jewish-Christian pseudepigraphic collection of hexametric poems that vary in length and subject matter. He argues that, in a similar way, the Rhapsodies were a collection of different poems, rather than one lengthy, continuous geneaological narrative. If this were the case, then most of the contradictions found in the fragments could be eliminated simply by interpreting them as fragments of different poems from within the collection.[43] Edmonds cites some of these contradictions as examples, but he does not conduct a detailed analysis of the Rhapsodic fragments to support his argument. The purpose of this section is to provide this sort of test to his theory: to question whether the Orphic Rhapsodies were a single "Rhapsodic theogony" or a "Rhapsodic collection" of various Orphic poems.

One type of evidence that can be gathered has been assembled in Bernabé's collection (*OF* 96–100 B) to support the idea of a single Rhapsodic theogony, and it consists of texts that might be used as *argumenta* of the Rhapsodies. It is one thing for a modern scholar to put together the fragments in a way that looks coherent, but it is another thing for an ancient author to describe within one passage the overall narrative structure of a single poem to which he had access; clearly the ancient source consists of weightier evidence. If the ancient sources summarize the Rhapsodies as a single narrative, then we have a stronger case for following West's view, but if they do not, then we might have a stronger case for Edmonds' view. Indeed, there are some ancient sources that appear to summarize the Rhapsodic narrative, but none of these sources are entirely clear about what type of text they are summarizing, and some of these

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40. Kern 1922: 140; Bernabé 2004: 97. Bernabé follows West closely in his edition, particularly those from (pseudo-)Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*; see Kotwick 2014: 77n15.

41. E.g., Ricciardelli 1993: 46–48; Parker 1995: 483–504; R. Baumgarten 1998: 113–147; Herrero 2010: 32–40. See Brisson (1995: 53–69) and West (1983: 70–77) for a summary of the contents of the Rhapsodic theogony.

42. Edmonds 2013: 149.

43. Edmonds 2013: 148–159; cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1932) 1959: 2:199.

fragments are more useful than others: while some are incomplete, others are not entirely trustworthy.

At *OF* 99–100 B, Bernabé includes as *argumenta* of the Rhapsodies two passages of the *Orphic Argonautica*, a hexametric poem in which Orpheus tells Musaeus about his adventures with the Argonauts. Written in the fourth or fifth century AD, this poem seems to demonstrate its author's familiarity with the Rhapsodies in two passages where Orpheus summarizes the subject matter of his poems.[44] In the first (12–23, 28), he summarizes a theogony that begins with both Chaos and Chronos. Chronos produces Aither and "glorious Eros, / the noble father of everlasting Night, whom younger / mortals call Phanes— for he was the first to appear" (14–16). The poet goes on to mention "the off- spring of very powerful Brimos [i.e., Dionysus, son of Persephone], and the destructive deeds / of the Giants" from whom came "the race of mortals who are always upon the boundless earth" (17–20). This is followed by the "nursing of Zeus" who "devised Persephone" (21–23). Bernabé puts line 28 after line 23; it refers to "unspeakable oracles of Night concerning lord Bacchus" (28). The second passage (421–430) differs somewhat from the first. Here, Orpheus begins with Chaos, after whom came Ouranos, Gaia, Pontos, and Eros; then Kronos, Zeus, and Brimos/Bacchus. After Bacchus, Orpheus mentions "the destructive deeds of the Giants [and] the many-peopled race of feeble humans" (429–430).

Certain details of this poetic catalogue correspond with the Rhapsodies significantly enough to indicate the author's familiarity with the Rhapsodies, such as the mention of Chronos producing Aither and Eros/Phanes; but the poetic catalogue is problematic for a few reasons. The author's mention of Chaos before Chronos in *OF* 99 B and Chaos alone in *OF* 100 B (along with the lack of a cosmic egg) suggests a mixing, or possibly confusion, of Hesiodic with Rhapsodic elements.[45] Scholars have been unsatisfied with the mention of Brimos, the Giants, and the creation of humans before the nursing of Zeus since, according to most modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodic narrative, these things happen after Zeus becomes king of the gods. For this reason, Vian suggested changing the order of the lines to the following: line 23 (about Zeus and Persephone), line 28 (oracles about Bacchus), lines 17–20 (offspring of Brimos, deeds of the Giants, creation of humans), which actually reconciles the chronology with lines 421–430.[46] It seems that the poet has confused the Giants with the Titans who kill Dionysus, leading to the creation of the first humans from their ashes.[47] Then, immediately after the lines of the *Argonautica* where

44. Most scholars think these passages were influenced by the Rhapsodies; see West 1983: 37; Vian 1987: 7–8; Calame 1991: 235–236; Ricciardelli 1993: 38–39; Sorel 1995: 62–63.

45. This does not deter Vian (1987: 7–8) from thinking the poet depended upon the Rhapsodies.

46. Vian 1987: 8–10.

47. Bernabé ad loc.; Vian 1952: 169–174.

we find *OF* 99 B, the poet mentions a variety of things that do not appear to be mentioned in the Rhapsodies, such as Lemnos and Samothrace, Egyptian Osiris, divination, and Orpheus' katabasis. For this reason, scholars have found value in this passage as an interesting glimpse into the variety of Orphic literature in late antiquity.[48] However, it must be remembered that the author of the *Argonautica* was not seeking to give a detailed *argumentum* of the Rhapsodies, but an entertaining poetic catalogue that paints a picture of Orphic literature in general. The final and most important problem with this poetic catalogue is precisely the fact that it is poetry, and the accuracy of its details was less important to the author than the pleasure of his audience.

Other sources give prose summaries for which accuracy is attempted, but some of these are limited in value. Damascius, in his discussion of first principles that we encountered in the last two chapters, relates how the first gods are narrated "in these Orphic Rhapsodies that are in circulation," and from this passage we know that in the age of the later Neoplatonists this was "the current Orphic theology."[49] But as he does with the other theogonies, he goes no further in his summary of the narrative than Phanes. There is no mention of Night (the first deity in earlier Orphic theogonies, and the second ruler of the gods in the Rhapsodies), but Aither and Chaos appear. There is no doubt that the Rhapsodies were available to the Neoplatonists, so Damascius' testimony is solid, but his account is incomplete. This passage of Damascius is reliable evidence that the Rhapsodies contained a narrative beginning with Chronos, who gives birth to Phanes by means of the cosmic egg, as in the Hieronyman theogony. It is an anchor by which we can be relatively certain that when Neoplatonic sources refer to Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes "in Orpheus" or in "the theologians," most likely they are referring to the Rhapsodies. But we cannot tell on the basis of this passage of Damascius whether the narrative continued beyond Phanes. It could have been either an entire narrative contained in one of the poems in the Rhapsodic collection, or just the first part of the longer narrative of the Rhapsodic theogony.

Another source from the sixth century AD, the chronographer John Malalas, seems to corroborate with Damascius' evidence for the first gods in the Rhapsodies. Malalas' *Chronographia* is an annalistic account of the history of the world from creation to the present, written from a Byzantine Christian perspective. Malalas treats Orpheus as a historical figure who lived at the same time as Gideon, and he claims that Orpheus was a poet who wrote about the genealogy of the gods and the creation of the world.[50] He says that "this is what Orpheus expounded": that in the beginning there was Chronos, along with Aither, Chaos, and Night; and that "the light broke the Aither." This light

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48. West 1983: 37–38; Edmonds 2011a: 74–75.
49. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 96 B = 60 K).
50. John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.8 (51 Thurn).

was called Metis, Phanes, and Erikepaios, and he was the god who created the earth.[51] This passage, which both Kern and Bernabé include in their collections,[52] again takes us no further than Phanes, so its usefulness is limited in the same way as Damascius. But the value of John Malalas is further diminished by the probability that he did not actually have a copy of the Rhapsodies at his disposal. Although Malalas provides a couple of extensive quotations from the Rhapsodies, including what appears to be an excerpt from the proem, he probably accessed this material through a secondary source or an anthology.[53] Perhaps the evidence of Malalas can be used to corroborate the information given to us by Damascius, but it certainly cannot be used independently for anything more than actual quotations of poetry. For the overall narrative structure, it would be better to look to Damascius.

Both Kern and Bernabé cite a passage by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where Erikepaios, the first king of the gods in "the poets," is said to have been followed by Night and then Ouranos. Alongside this passage, both Kern and Bernabé cite Syrianus' commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which basically provides the same details with some variations. According to Kern, Syrianus "especially follows" Alexander in relating the royal succession of the Rhapsodies, and Kern is followed by Colli and Bernabé, since they too consider Alexander to have been the earlier author.[54] The problem is that this passage was not actually written by Alexander. As Mirjam Kotwick has demonstrated, this passage comes from one of the later books of the commentary, which were not written by Alexander but by Michael of Ephesus in the twelfth century AD, so he is dependent on Syrianus, not the other way around. Since Michael does not seem to have had any direct familiarity with Orphic poetry, he copies Syrianus and in fact misunderstands Aristotle. Thus he presents two different successions of deities, one of which is misleading because it never actually existed in Orphic poetry.[55] So we can dismiss the fragments that come from pseudo-Alexander: since they were really composed by Michael of Ephesus, they do not even count as being an ancient source.[56]

The commentary of Syrianus, on the other hand, carries more weight as evidence for the Orphic Rhapsodies, since Syrianus and his successors in

51. John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.9 (52 Thurn) (*OF* 97 B = 65 K).

52. Kern 1922: 141–142; Bernabé 2004: 99; cf. Lobeck 1829: 479; Colli 1977 ad loc. (4 [B 75]); Festugière 1968: 5:25, n. ad loc.; Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.168.15 Diehl (*OF* 98 III = 107 K).

53. John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.8 (51 Thurn) (*OF* 102 B = 62 K); see Croke 1990: 14; Pòrtulas 2000: 403.

54. (Pseudo-)Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *in Arist. Met.* 821.16 Hayduck; Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 182.9 Kroll (*OF* 98 I–II B = 107 K); see Kern ad loc.; Colli ad 4 [B 39].

55. Kotwick 2014: 75–76, 84. Michael combines Syrianus with Aristotle, resulting in an Orphic theogony that never existed: Chaos, Ocean, Night, Ouranos, Zeus; see Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *in Arist. Met.* 821.3–21 Hayduck (*OF* 167 III, 170 I, 174 I, 367 B).

56. The relevant fragments are *OF* 98 I, 167 III, 170 I, 174 I B = 107 K.

the Neoplatonic school clearly had access to the text (or collection). Syrianus, when he was head of the Neoplatonic Academy (AD 432–437), attempted to demonstrate that Plato's ideas agreed with Orpheus. Neither his commentary *On the Theology of Orpheus* nor his work *On the Agreement between Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Chaldean Oracles* has survived, but it is clear that Syrianus had direct access to the Rhapsodies and extensive knowledge of their contents.[57] This interest was passed on to his successor, Proclus (AD 437–485), and although Proclus never wrote a commentary on Orpheus, the vast majority of Orphic fragments that we have are drawn from his texts.[58] The Rhapsodies were a continuous part of the Neoplatonic curriculum until at least the time of Damascius who, as we have seen, considered them to be "the current Orphic theology."[59] Since the Rhapsodies were a part of their curriculum, it is safe to assume that, whatever the Neoplatonists did with their interpretations of the text, at least they had direct access to it. Therefore, the fragments of Syrianus and Proclus that Bernabé counts as *argumenta* can be taken as reliable evidence of the contents of the Rhapsodies.

From Syrianus we find out that in the Rhapsodies "Night and Ouranos reign and, before them, their supremely great father" Erikepaios. So the first three kings (and queen) are Phanes, Night, and Ouranos, but the gods before Phanes are not kings, for "Chaos is above the relation of kingship; and as for Zeus, he is clearly called not the first but the fifth king, according to the oracles given to him by Night."[60] Syrianus does not mention that Kronos is the father of Zeus, since he does not need to: everyone in the Greek world knew that Kronos was the father of Zeus.[61] He makes clear that in the succession myth of the Rhapsodies, the first five kings (and queen) are Phanes, Night, Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus. This seems to be relatively reliable evidence, but the statement that "Chaos is above the relation of kingship" is puzzling. It suggests that the first primordial god in the Rhapsodies was Chaos, as in Hesiod, instead of Chronos. This brings to mind again the *Argonautica* passages that seem to place Chaos in this position. Already we have signs of possible contradictions in the fragments of the Rhapsodies: did the theogony begin with Chronos or Chaos? We will return to this question soon.

In his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, Proclus lists six generations "transmitted" by Orpheus. They are the same five deities listed by Syrianus, with the addition of the sixth king, Dionysus:

57. *Suda*, s.v. "Συριανός" 4.210.10 Adler; West 1983: 227–228; Brisson 1995: 48–51; Longo 2010: 616; Kotwick 2014: 83.

58. Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 27; Brisson (1995: 53–54) counts 248 references to Orphic poetry in Proclus, 139 of which are from his commentary on the *Timaeus* alone.

59. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 90, 96 B = 60 K).

60. Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 182.9 Kroll (*OF* 98 II = 107 K).

61. Thus argues Kotwick 2014: 82–83.

> Orpheus transmitted the kings of the gods … who preside over everything: Phanes, Night, Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, Dionysus. For Phanes is the first that builds a sceptre: "the first who rules is famous Erikepaios." But the second is Night, having received the sceptre from her father. The third is Ouranos, who receives it from Night. The fourth is Kronos, who, as they say, committed violence against his father. The fifth is Zeus, who overthrew his father. And after him, the sixth is Dionysus.[62]

Proclus mentions all six royal generations again in his commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*:

> While the royal succession of the gods originates from Phanes, but extends as far as our lord Dionysus … among all the other [divine kings] only Kronos, who has been allotted the fourth royal order, seems to all the others … as both receiving the sceptre from Ouranos and imparting it to Zeus in a hybristic way. For Night takes it from Phanes who gives it willingly … and Ouranos receives rule over the universe from Night who gives it willingly. Also, Dionysus, the last king of the gods, receives it from Zeus … but only Kronos both strips Ouranos of the kingdom completely and yields the hegemony to Zeus, "cutting and being cut," as the myth states.[63]

This passage yields the same six-generation sequence, with the added detail that each divine ruler passes on the sceptre willingly, with the exception of Kronos "cutting and being cut." This phrase is echoed in other Neoplatonic texts, from which Bernabé reconstructs a line of hexameter: "[both] cutting and being cut [Kronos crooked in counsel]."[64] It expresses the fact that in the Orphic version of the Greek succession myth, Kronos castrates his father (as in Hesiod), but then in turn he is castrated by Zeus (not in Hesiod) when he steps into power. This agrees with Proclus' other statement that Kronos "committed violence against his father" and Zeus "overthrew his father."

Along with the passage of Syrianus cited above, these two passages of Proclus have been taken by scholars from Lobeck to Bernabé as evidence that the Rhapsodies consisted of a six-generation royal succession myth, following this sequence: Phanes-Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-Dionysus.[65]

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62. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.168.15 Diehl (*OF* 98 III B = 107 K).

63. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali (*OF* 98 IV B = 101 K).

64. *OF* 225 B = 137, 154, 220 K. In addition to the above passage of the *Cratylus* commentary, Bernabé reconstructs this line from Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.5 (5.24.10 Saffrey-Westerink); *in Plat. Tim.* 2.208.30, 225.19 Diehl; Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.23 Simonini; Apion *apud* Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil.* 6.13.1 (111.9 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke); and Origen, *c. Cels.* 1.17.

65. Lobeck 1829: 576–577; Bernabé ad loc.

And it is relatively easy to reconcile many of the individual fragments with this scheme: for example, fragments that speak of the polymorphic features of Phanes, the children of Ouranos and Ge, Kronos being castrated, Zeus swallowing Phanes, and Zeus bringing Dionysus back to life, add details to the six-generation succession myth rather than contradict it. On this basis it would seem reasonable to read the Rhapsodies as a continuous genealogical narrative centering on six generations of royal kingship.

After reviewing the fragments that Bernabé lists as *argumenta* of the Rhapsodies, it becomes clear that the most reliable of these texts are provided by the Neoplatonists. John Malalas and Michael of Ephesus are late sources who probably did not have direct access to the Rhapsodies, and the *Orphic Argonautica* is a late poetic account that offers an entertaining narrative instead of an informative treatise. But Syrianus, Proclus, and Damascius were reading and teaching the Rhapsodies in detail as part of their curriculum of study at the Academy in Athens. From Damascius we know that the Rhapsodies contained a narrative of Chronos who produces the cosmic egg from which Phanes is born. From Syrianus and Proclus we know that there was a six-generation succession myth in which Kronos forcibly takes over royal rule of the universe and is subsequently overthrown by Zeus, but the rest of the gods pass on the sceptre willingly. If the Rhapsodies were one continuous poem, then the primordial gods beginning with Chronos and the six-generation succession myth seem to have been the focus of this narrative. The task of reconstruction, therefore, would seem to be to determine where all of the other fragments fit within this basic outline. Following this chronological structure, West's reconstruction and Bernabé's arrangement of the fragments are both masterful attempts at bringing together widely scattered fragments into a coherent whole. However, there are some fragments that still do not seem to fit, and these are the fragments to which Edmonds appeals when he argues that the Rhapsodies were a loose collection of poems. He complains that West subordinates "all other material" in his reconstruction of the Rhapsodies to a single "theogonic framework," yielding "complex and hypothetical explanations" but not a satisfiable solution. Alternatively, he suggests that "many of the puzzling questions that have troubled the scholarship on the Rhapsodies can be resolved if we abandon the assumption that the text was a single, coherent narrative."[66] Although he does not discuss these puzzling questions in any detail, he briefly mentions a few examples that are worthy of review.

The first set of puzzling questions appears at the start of the narrative. We have already seen some confusion over the matter of which god came first—Chronos or Chaos—and there are other fragments that confuse both this issue and the issue of the primordial mass of elements. As we have

66. Edmonds 2013: 150–156.

seen in chapters 2 and 4, in earlier Orphic theogonies, or at least in the way philosophers interpreted them, the creator gods did not create the universe ex nihilo but out of some sort of pre-existing mass of elements. Although it is unclear whether the Derveni poem itself began this way, the Derveni author had elaborate theories about Fire and Air as the primordial elements, which reflect various aspects of Presocratic thought. Likewise, Damascius reads the Hieronyman theogony as beginning with water and mud, out of which Chronos emerges as the first god, whether he found this water and mud in the text of the theogony or in the Stoic interpretations of Hieronymus and Hellanicus. In the Rhapsodies, unlike the Hieronyman theogony, there are no fragments that describe the physical appearance of Chronos, but the narrative of events involving Chronos seems to have remained basically unchanged: he emerges out of the primordial mass and forms the cosmic egg from which Phanes is born. This basic narrative pattern is clear, and it fits with earlier Greek and Near Eastern traditions, but it does not fit well with the Neoplatonic idea that matter is the lowest level of the universe. Rather than explain the pre-existence of matter, the Neoplatonists tend to ignore it, and the sources who are not Neoplatonic appear to contradict one another. Some of these leave the impression that certain deities existed before Chronos (e.g., Night and Chaos), but in other fragments the Neoplatonists make it perfectly clear that they read Chronos as the first god in the Rhapsodies.

Conveniently, Bernabé has collected in one place (*OF* 103–108 B) fragments that refer to the primordial mass of undifferentiated elements in the Rhapsodies. Only two of these fragments come from a Neoplatonist: Proclus quotes a verse that describes "everything being undifferentiated beneath a shadowy mist," and in another place he mentions "continuous darkness" that "has been allotted a formless nature."[67] Bernabé associates these with fragments about the first of the three Nights, whom he thinks existed before Chronos as an abstract primordial entity. For example, John Malalas claims that it was "gloomy Night" who "came first" according to Orpheus.[68] Does this suggest that Night existed before Chronos in the Rhapsodic narrative, or is it merely a case of the poet using the word "night" to describe the continuous darkness that hovered over the mass of material? According to West, these could be references to Erebus, who is born along with Aither and Chaos in the Hieronyman theogony. But because Aither and Chaos represent Limit and Unlimited in Neoplatonic allegory, there is no place for Erebus in their meta-physical system, so he is "tacitly relegated to the status of an attendant circum-stance."[69] Indeed, the Neoplatonists do not mention Erebus as a deity in the

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67. Proclus, *in Plat. Parmen.* 1175.7 Cousin (*OF* 106 B = 67 K); *in Plat. Tim.* 1.386.2 Diehl (*OF* 105 B = 66 K). The phrase "shadowy mist" also appears in *OH* 6.6 (*OF* 143.6 B = 87 K).

68. John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (52 Thurn) (*OF* 107 B).

69. West 1983: 230–231; cf. Colli ad 4 [B 72]; Brisson 1995: 71.

Rhapsodies. Neither do they say that Necessity was with Chronos in the beginning, as she had been in the Hieronyman theogony, but because Proclus says that in Orpheus "hateful-looking Necessity came forth from those [first gods]," both West and Bernabé have suggested that Necessity was also with Chronos at the beginning in the Rhapsodies.[70] We have no way of knowing this with certainty, but if Night, Erebus, and Necessity appeared as primordial deities in the Rhapsodies as these scholars have suggested, then one way of explaining this is that the Neoplatonists paid little attention to them because they did not fit with the allegorical interpretation that they were applying to the narrative.

For Bernabé, the starting point for evidence of the primordial mass in the Rhapsodies is the phrase "from the boundless mud" in a statement by Apion in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.[71] Traditionally attributed to Clement of Rome (first century AD), the *Homilies* and *Recognitiones* were written in the fourth century AD by a Christian in Syria. These texts recall Clement's search for truth, and in that narrative context the *Homilies* are a dialogue between Clement and a first-century Greek philosopher named Apion, in which Apion recalls details from an Orphic theogony.[72] His reference to the "boundless mud" or "matter" refers to a beginning in which matter consisted of a boundless, undifferentiated mixture of elements and everything was covered in darkness. Some late sources suggest that these undifferentiated elements were fire, water, and earth.[73] Apion associates this mixture with Chaos, saying that "there was once a time when there was nothing except Chaos and an undifferentiated mixture of disordered, collected elements." He quotes the verse of Hesiod's *Theogony* in which "Chaos was the first to come into being" to support his argument that in order for Chaos to come into being he must have had a beginning, so he could not have pre-existed eternally.[74] Apion adds that "Orpheus says [Chaos] came into being as an egg, having been thrown forth from the boundless mud." This egg was born out of "the mud, composed of four elements, being animated and its depth entirely boundless, always flowing … but not able to be bound so as to generate a living creature."[75] Apion says that the cosmic egg was formed out of the boundless mud, and he associates the egg (not the mud) with Chaos in

70. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.207.27 Kroll (*OF* 110 B = 126 K); West 1983: 231; Bernabé ad *OF* 111 B.

71. Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil.* 6.3.4 (107.9 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 103 V B); see *OF* 104 B and Bernabé ad loc. Because of the use of ὕλη ("mud"), Kern (*OF* 55–56 K) attached this passage to the Hieronyman theogony.

72. *BNP*, s.v. "Pseudo-Clementine Literature."

73. Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhon.* 3.30 (141 Mutschmann), *Adv. math.* 9.361 (287 Mutschmann); Galen, *Histor. philos.* 18 (Doxogr. 610.15); Auson., *Gryph. tern. num.* 74 (157 Prete) (*OF* 108 I–III B = *OT* 191 K).

74. Hesiod, *Theogony* 116; Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil.* 6.3.1 (107.10 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke).

75. Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil.* 6.3.4–6.4.1 (107, 9–10 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 103 V, 104 I B).

Hesiod. In *Recognitiones*, Rufinus associates Chaos with the primordial mixture, not the egg, and he attributes to Orpheus the following story:

> At first there was Chaos, eternal, unbounded, unproduced, from which all things were made. He says that this Chaos was neither darkness nor light, neither moist nor dry, neither hot nor cold, but that it was all things mixed together, and was always one unformed mass.[76]

Whereas Apion associates the Chaos of Hesiod with the egg in the Rhapsodies, Rufinus asserts more clearly that Orpheus "says that at first there was Chaos," giving a stronger indication that Chaos appeared at the beginning of the narrative, either alongside Chronos or before him.[77] These fragments are difficult to reconcile, but the hypothesis of a Rhapsodic collection of multiple texts would eliminate the need to explain this diversity of accounts about the primordial mass of elements. If Chaos appeared first in one text, Night in another, and Chronos in yet another, then there is no need to reconcile the different accounts.

Next there is the question of where Phanes is and what he is doing. West comments that "the testimonia which represent Phanes as permanently settled in the cave with Night are hard to reconcile with others in which he is said to travel around the cosmos," so Edmonds suggests that if these fragments come from two separate poems, then there is simply no contradiction.[78] Specifically, there are four separate images of Phanes' activities to which this comment could be referred. First, there is the image of Phanes creating the universe "in a misty cave" in an Orphic verse quoted by Proclus.[79] Elsewhere Proclus mentions Phanes "seated eternally in the innermost shrine," and Hermias confirms that "inside the shrine of Night sits Phanes."[80] However, in the same commentaries, both Proclus and Hermias mention Phanes in different places doing different things. Hermias notes that "the theology presents to [Phanes] horses, because he goes out constantly at the start of his own rule," and he adds that Phanes has wings, citing a verse of the Rhapsodies in which Phanes is "carried here and there on golden wings."[81] Proclus quotes the Orphic poem saying that Phanes "was carried untiringly in a limitless circle,"[82] which is

76. Rufinus, *Recognit.* 10.30.3 (346, 24 Rehm) (*OF* 104 II B).

77. Cf. Aristophanes, *Birds* 693 (*OF* 64 B = 1 K), which begins with Chaos, Night, Erebus, and Tartarus; and *Orphic Argonautica* 12–13 (*OF* 99 B = *OT* 224 K), which begins with both Chaos and Chronos.

78. West 1983: 214, cited in Edmonds 2013: 151n39; cf. Kern 1888: 14.

79. Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = 97 K).

80. Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 3.169.15 Diehl (*OF* 164 I B = 104 K), Hermias *in Plat. Phaedr.* 162.6 Couvr. (*OF* 164 II B = 105 K).

81. Hermias *in Plat. Phaedr.* 142.13 Couvr. (*OF* 136 I, 172 I B = 78 K), cf. Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 1.430.1 Diehl (*OF* 136 II B = 81 K).

82. Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 2.70.3 Diehl (I); *in Plat. Cratyl.* 74.29 Pasquali (II); *in Plat. Parmen.* 1161.22 Cousin (III); *in Euclid. Elem.* 155.15 Friedlein (IV) (*OF* 118–119 B = 71a K). Lobeck (1829: 475)

comparable to Apion's comment that he "took his seat on the summit of the sky [or Ouranos]."[83] Phanes is envisioned doing different things: sitting in a cave with Night, riding around on a chariot, flying on golden wings "here and there," in perpetual circular motion, or seated at the summit of the sky.

Clearly a character in a narrative can be depicted doing different things at different times. Following West, we should not be misled by Proclus' statement that Phanes sits in Night's cave "eternally," not simply because "the Neoplatonists are wrong" as West puts it,[84] but because in Neoplatonic allegory all of the actions of the gods are taken to be eternal. The Neoplatonists interpreted narrative events in myth as allegorical images of eternal cosmological processes, so the word "eternally" can be read as Proclus' comment, not as the content of the poem.[85] In order to reconcile these conflicting images of Phanes, West suggests that they simply come from three different moments in the narrative.[86] This explanation, coherent though hypothetical, would perhaps be unnecessary if one could demonstrate that these images come from different poems, such as a hymn to Phanes that describes his creation from the cave, and another one that describes him traveling in the sky. Indeed, the *Orphic Hymn* to Protogonos describes him "delighting in his golden wings" (6.2) and "whirling with flapping of wings throughout the entire universe / bringing bright holy light" (6.7–8) with no mention of a chariot or a cave. It is not impossible to imagine a hymn like this one in the Rhapsodic collection and, in the same collection, another hymn that portrayed Phanes generating creation from inside the cave of Night. Whether these are separate poems in the Rhapsodic collection or separate narrative moments in the Rhapsodic theogony, together they paint a consistent picture of Phanes as the one who appears and who makes things appear, whether he flies around on wings, sits in a cave enacting creation, or rides a chariot across the outer edge of the sky.

After Phanes comes Night, who presumably belongs to the generation after Phanes, but the role of Night in Orphic myth is complex. We have already seen that Night, the "nurse of the gods," appears as the first primordial deity in the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies.[87] Neither Damascius nor Athenagoras indicate what sort of role Night might have played in the Hieronyman theogony, but in the Rhapsodies she seems to appear in three different roles. Hermias tells us that "three Nights have been transmitted in Orpheus,"[88]

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and Kern (ad loc.) thought this circular motion should be applied to the cosmic egg (see Colli ad 4 [B 44]), but West (1983: 214–215) and Bernabé (ad loc.) apply it to Phanes.

83. Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil.* 6.6.2 (109.1 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 171 B = 56 K).

84. West 1983: 215.

85. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 66, 28 Pasquali (*OF* 109 II B = 68 K); Brisson 1995: 70–71.

86. West 1983: 215.

87. DP 10.11 (*OF* 6.2 B); Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = 28 K).

88. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV, 147 II, 246 I, 248 II B = 99 K).

and we can see in different fragments that Night played different roles, so scholars have attempted to reconcile these in different ways. Bernabé arranges the fragments in a way that suggests that the first Night is a primordial, impersonal darkness that exists at the start of creation; the second Night is the consort of Phanes, who gives birth to Ouranos and Gaia; and the third Night is the offspring of Phanes, who rules as queen.[89] West and Brisson attempt explanations that interpret Night in more figurative terms, but although their explanations seem conceptually satisfying, they do not help to explain the individual fragments that mention Night.[90] From one fragment to the next, it is not always clear which of the three Nights the author is discussing. As an alternative to imaginative reconstructions that attempt to make the fragments fit into a coherent whole, this confusion could be explained as the result of different poems in the Rhapsodic collection depicting Night in different ways. Later in this chapter, I consider whether there were three different poems in the Rhapsodic collection that featured Night, but I argue that even if Night appears in three poems in the collection, this does not mean that there were three distinct goddesses called Night in the Orphic Rhapsodies. There was one goddess called Night, no matter how many poems in the collection mentioned her name, and the Neoplatonists split her allegorically into a triad to make her fit their metaphysical system. As I argue in the section "Three Nights or One?" below, the three Nights mentioned by Hermias are a statement about ontology, not chronology.

Perhaps Edmonds overstates his case when he refers to possible contradictions in the Orphic fragments as "puzzling questions that have troubled the scholarship" and adds that there are "many more."[91] There are a few contradictions, and these can be explained by other means, so by relying on these explanations scholars might not be as troubled over these questions as Edmonds suggests. There are fragments of the narrative that seem to contradict one another, and one of the explanations for this might be the existence of more than one poem, but there are other explanations that work. For example, regarding the birth of Dionysus from Zeus and Persephone, West points out "several indications that separate accounts have been conflated in this complicated saga": (1) "chthonic Zeus is often identified with Hades ... so the myth of the snake-mating cannot well coexist with that of the chariot-snatch"; (2) "there is the discrepancy between [Apollo] the prophesied and [Hades] the actual father of the Eumenides"; and (3) there is "a mixture of ingredients from different local mythologies" about the Curetes guarding the cave.[92] Edmonds claims that

89. First Night: *OF* 105, 107, 112–113 B; second Night: *OF* 147–148, 150, 163–164 B; third Night: *OF* 168–171 B.

90. West 1983: 209; Brisson 1995: 58.

91. Edmonds 2013: 150–151 and n. 39.

92. West 1983: 95; cf. *OH* 18.3.

"the hypothesis of a varied selection of texts provides a better explanation," and he cites these "conflated" accounts in West as examples of "puzzling questions that have troubled the scholarship."[93]

West's first point is more relevant to the Hieronyman theogony, from which Athenagoras emphasizes deities with serpentine features, as we saw in chapter 4.[94] But West is talking about the Protogonos theogony, and in doing so he is retrojecting material from both the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies onto a text that probably never existed. So it is West himself who is conflating different accounts: Zeus changes into a serpent in the Hieronyman theogony, in which there is no mention of the chariot-snatch; but in the Rhapsodies, Zeus mates with Persephone, and she gives birth to Dionysus before her abduction. West is correct to say that "chthonic Zeus is often identified with Hades," but none of the Orphic fragments about this story explicitly makes this identification. In fact, Proclus makes a clear distinction without any contradiction when he says that "Kore was raped by Zeus, and [then] was abducted by Pluto."[95]

On West's second point, there is indeed one fragment in which Persephone "is said … to be joined to Hades and with him to bear the Eumenides in the region of the underworld."[96] And there is another fragment in which Demeter prophesies to her daughter that she will sleep with Apollo and give birth to "glorious children blazing with fire on their faces."[97] Neither West nor Edmonds mentions the fact that both of these fragments appear within a few pages of each other in Proclus' commentary on the *Cratylus*. In one passage, Proclus discusses the etymologies of the names of Persephone and Kore (94.16–96.12), and in another he discusses the etymology of the name of Apollo (96.13–102.9). For Proclus, the thing that unites these two fragments is his own interpretation of Kore as the middle point of the Curetic triad, who "projects life-bearing powers" to the lower orders,[98] so it is on the level of allegory that he unites them to mean one thing. Demeter's prophecy about Apollo does not mention the Eumenides, so these fragments might not be contradictory at all: they might be referring to two different episodes, or they might be, as Edmonds suggests, from two different poems.

Against West's third point, Edmonds argues that "the complications created by the Cretan elements and place names that appear in some sources and the Phrygian ones that show up in others" can be resolved "by abandoning

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93. Edmonds 2013: 150–151 and n. 39.

94. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 89 B = 58 K). Among the fragments that Bernabé associates with the Rhapsodies, there is only one that alludes to Zeus changing into a serpent: Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.25 Rabe) (*OF* 280 B).

95. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 85.22 Pasquali (*OF* 289 I = 195 K).

96. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 95.10 Pasquali (*OF* 292 B = 197 K).

97. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 96.19 Pasquali (*OF* 284 B = 194 K).

98. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 96.15–16 Pasquali.

the hypothesis of a single, consistent storyline."[99] West notes a "mixture of ingredients from different local mythologies" from Crete, Asia Minor, and Delphi, and he correctly states that the Curetes guarding Zeus and Kore are a "distinctly Cretan element."[100] This element appears in fragments where Zeus is born in Crete "in a cave of Dicte," Kore is raised "in a cave with the nymphs," and Dionysus is born "in Crete."[101] As for Asia Minor, there are indications of influence coming from there. The fact that Ida is the name of one of the nymphs who takes care of Zeus in the cave of Night points to Zeus' traditional association with Mount Ida.[102] West argues that Hipta, who carries Dionysus from Zeus' thigh to Mount Ida, "belongs to Asia Minor, especially to Mount Tmolus in Lydia," so "her presence in the Orphic account is the result of identifying Sabazios with Dionysus."[103] There is a distinct possibility that the story of Hipta came from a different poem, since Proclus attributes the story to "Orpheus in his discourse on Hipta."[104] The only other place where Hipta appears in ancient literature is the *Orphic Hymn* to Hipta (*OH* 49), where she is the first nurse of Dionysus and associated with his mysteries. Inscriptions found in Asia Minor show that she was linked to the deity addressed in *OH* 48, Zeus-Sabazios.[105] Therefore, it is possible that one of the twenty-four poems in the Rhapsodic collection was a hymn to Hipta. But even if Hipta comes from the same Rhapsodic theogony that referred to the birth of Dionysus in Crete, there is no contradiction in her bringing Dionysus from Zeus' thigh to Lydia: Dionysus is raised in Crete when he is born from Persephone, and in Lydia when he is born from Semele. Finally, West notes that Callimachus and Euphorion knew the myth of Dionysus and the Titans "as a Delphic myth," which "need not mean a change of poem" because of "early links between the two places in religious myth."[106] These complications, for which Edmonds suggests the solution of "abandoning the hypothesis of a single, consistent storyline,"[107] can indeed be explained by the hypothesis of multiple poems, but they can also be explained in other ways. Edmonds' hypothesis of multiple texts raises interesting possibilities, but

99. Edmonds 2013: 151n39.

100. West 1983: 95.

101. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.1.6 (*OF* 205 B); Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 7 p. 46.17 Simonini (*OF* 279 III B); Diodorus Siculus 5.75.4 (*OF* 283 I B).

102. *OF* 208–212 B, especially *OF* 209 I, 211 B, which mention the cave of Night. On the association between Zeus and Ida, see Homer, *Iliad* 8.48; Pindar, *Ol.* 5.42; Diodorus Siculus 5.70.2; Strabo 10.4.8; Pausanias 5.7.6; Diogenes Laertius 8.13; and *BNP*, s.v. "Ida."

103. West 1983: 96; Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.407.22 Diehl (*OF* 329 I B = 199 K).

104. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.105.28 Diehl (*OF* 329 II B = 199 K).

105. Morand 2001: 174–181.

106. West 1983: 96; cf. Callimachus, *Aetia*, fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*OF* 34 B = 210 p. 230 K); Euphorion, fr. 14 Lightfoot (Tzetzes on Lycophron, *Alexandra* 207, p. 98.5 Scheer).

107. Edmonds 2013: 151n39.

scholarship on the Rhapsodies is not so troubled by as many contradictions as he suggests.

In some of the examples Edmonds cites of contradictions that can be explained through the hypothesis of multiple texts, the case for a Rhapsodic collection is much stronger. On the topic of anthropogony, he notes a difference between Proclus' account of the three races of humans (golden under Phanes, silver under Kronos, Titanic under Zeus)[108] and Lactantius' quotation of a verse of Orphic poetry in which "first of all Kronos ruled over earth-bound men."[109] As Edmonds notes, "To avoid this contradiction" Bernabé places this Lactantius passage in a section of fragments for which the origin is uncertain, disassociating it from the account of the three races. Edmonds reasonably argues that "the conflict ceases to be a problem … if two (or more) stories of anthropogony coexisted in the Rhapsodies."[110]

The strongest evidence for a diverse Rhapsodic collection is the fragment in which Olympiodorus mentions a succession myth with four generations of kings: Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, Dionysus. Edmonds argues that despite this evidence for a four-generation succession myth, "much needless scholarly effort has been expended in the attempt to get all the evidence for Orphic theogonies to conform to the six-generation mode."[111] As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, not all early Orphic theogonies consisted of six generations. The Derveni poem had only four generations: Night as the primordial deity, Ouranos as the first king, followed by Kronos and Zeus. Perhaps we could conjecture that Night was the primordial deity in the theogony mentioned by Olympiodorus, since this does not contradict the idea that Ouranos was the first king. Could Olympiodorus be referring to the survival of an early Orphic poem that was included in the Rhapsodic collection, alongside the six-generation myth that we call the Rhapsodic theogony? Applying Edmonds' comparison with the *Sibylline Oracles* to this question, one may note that the first two books of the *Sibylline Oracles* contain one creation myth and genealogy, while the third book contains another, shorter genealogy that differs in many of the details.[112] In a similar manner, it is plausible to deduce from Olympiodorus that there could have been at least two theogonies in the Rhapsodic collection: one with six generations, and another with four.

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108. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = 140 K); *in Hes. Op.* 127–128a Marzillo (55.15–55.3 Pertusi) (*OF* 216 II B = 141 K); cf. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B).

109. Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1.13.11 (146 Monat) (*OF* 363 B = 139 K); cf. Servius, *in Bucol.* 4.10 (3.46.3 Thilo-Hagen) (*OF* 364 B = 29a K).

110. Edmonds 2013: 153n47.

111. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (*OF* 174 VIII, 190 II, 227 IV, 299 VII, 304 I, 313 II, 318 III, 320 I B = 220 K); Edmonds 2013: 152 and n. 42.

112. *Sybilline Oracles*, books 1–3; see: Lightfoot 2007: 3–253; Edmonds 2013: 152–153. Books 1 and 2 are of Christian origin, while book 3 is of Jewish origin.

Finally, the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B = 168 K) stands out as the most significant example of what might have been a separate poem that was contained in the Rhapsodic collection. If the hymn appeared as a digression in a single, comprehensive Rhapsodic theogony, then it appeared just after Zeus swallows Phanes, slowing down narrative time to concentrate on Zeus being the only one in existence and containing the entire universe in his body, at the moment when he is about to re-create the universe. If, on the other hand, the poem stood in the Rhapsodic collection as a separate poem, then it is a theogonic hymn in its own right, and one that reflects a sort of pantheism that is not common in Greek poetry. As we saw in chapter 3, the Orphic Hymns to Zeus had a life of their own, appearing in different forms from the Derveni Papyrus to the Rhapsodies, centering on the key line, "Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made."[113] If the Rhapsodies consisted of a collection of twenty-four poems, then it is possible that one of these poems was this later version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus.

In the ancient evidence, there seems to be support for either a Rhapsodic theogony or a Rhapsodic collection, so the best approach is to allow constantly for both possibilities. On the side of a Rhapsodic theogony, there were ancient authors who had direct access to the Rhapsodies and who summarized the contents of a six-generation royal succession myth in a way that appears reliable and coherent. On the side of a Rhapsodic collection, there are certain fragments that reveal contradictions, such as the different images of Phanes, the mixture of Cretan with Phrygian elements in the birth of Zeus, and possibly a four-generation succession myth. Some of these contradictions, such as the different activities of Phanes, can be resolved in ways that do not require us to conjecture the existence of multiple texts, but other contradictions, such as Olympiodorus' mention of a four-generation succession myth, are best explained by the hypothesis of a Rhapsodic collection. Nevertheless, even if the Rhapsodies were a collection of twenty-four separate poems by different authors, it still seems clear, based on the evidence of Syrianus and Proclus, that one of these poems consisted of a chronologically structured six-generation royal succession myth from Phanes to Dionysus. Some of the fragments seem to contradict certain details of the succession myth, but most of the fragments do not contradict its basic narrative structure. Therefore, the best way to approach the Rhapsodies is to read the fragments as part of the main succession myth, while always keeping in mind that any particular fragment might have come from a different poem within the collection, especially when we encounter contradictions. In this chapter, my approach is to treat the narrative as a Rhapsodic theogony, but I recognize that this theogony

113. *OF* 243.2 B; cf. *OF* 14.2, 31.2 B.

might have been a part of a Rhapsodic collection, so in order to allow for both possibilities, I refer to this theogony as the Rhapsodic narrative.

Chronos, the Cosmic Egg, and Phanes

According to Damascius and most modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodies, the narrative begins when Chronos emerges as the first god out of an undifferentiated mass of primordial elements.[114] Chronos gives birth to Aither and Chaos, and then he creates the cosmic egg out of the pre-existing materials. From this egg springs Phanes, who creates the world and becomes the first king of the gods. Like the Hieronyman theogony and its Near Eastern predecessors, in the Rhapsodies the first god emerges out of a mass of pre-existing materials and does not create the world, but produces the creator deity who will create the world. Whether it was a Rhapsodic theogony with a single narrative or a Rhapsodic collection that included a succession myth, this was the basic outline of the first few episodes of the Rhapsodic narrative.

The Neoplatonists all agree that Chronos was the first god in the Rhapsodies, and that in their allegorical interpretation of the Rhapsodies Chronos represents the One first principle of everything. Syrianus states unambiguously that "Orpheus called Chronos the first," Proclus says that "Orpheus calls the first cause of everything Chronos" and Chronos is "the first of all," and Damascius agrees that the Orphic theologians "put Chronos in the place of the one first principle of the universe."[115] The Neoplatonists generally understood Chronos to be the first god who comes into being in the Rhapsodies, and as the first god he represented the ineffable One of Neoplatonic metaphysics, the first principle from which everything else (i.e., the Many) proceeds. In his commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, Proclus explains that:

> Orpheus ... has assigned names to all the entities prior to Ouranos all the way up to the first cause, and that which is ineffable itself and has proceeded forth from the Intelligible henads he calls Chronos, either because it is a pre-existing cause of all generation or [because] he is portraying the things that really exist as being generated, in order to show their organization and the primacy of the more universal entities in relation to the more particular, and so that temporal succession

114. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 109 VIII B = 60 K); West 1983: 70; Brisson 1995: 55.

115. Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 43.31 Kroll (*OF* 109 VII B); Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 59.17 Pasquali (*OF* 109 I B = 68 K); *in Plat. Parmen.* 1224.32 Cousin (*OF* 109 III B = 68 K); Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 109 VIII B = 60 K).

should be identified with causal succession, just as generation is identified with ordered procession.[116]

Proclus claims that all of the gods in the Rhapsodies before Ouranos represent different metaphysical entities "all the way up to the first cause." Chronos is this first cause, both as a "pre-existing cause of all generation" and in the sense that "temporal succession should be identified with causal succession." Here Proclus touches upon the idea that what appears as a "temporal succession" of events in a poetic narrative is actually a "causal succession" of metaphysical principles that is perpetually occurring. In the same sense, acts of "generation" in the narrative represent processes of "ordered procession" from the One to the Many, and from the higher levels of the Neoplatonic universe to the lower levels.[117] Chronos is the first cause from which everything flows, and this is seen as an eternal process, not a single event. Chronos as the One is the most universal entity from which the more particular entities are generated.

What Proclus says next sheds light on the relative positions of Chaos and Chronos in the Rhapsodies. He claims that Hesiod "does not name the first entirely," since *Theogony* 116 says that "Chaos was born" or "came into being," but the first principle must be "ungenerated."[118] This first principle that is not mentioned in Hesiod is the Chronos of the Orphic myth, so Chaos is not the first god but a lower-level principle that is generated by Chronos. The fragments of the Rhapsodies correlate with this reading, since Chronos gives birth to Aither and Chaos. From Proclus and Simplicius we have the lines:

> This ageless Chronos, of imperishable counsel, gave birth to Aither
> and the great monster Chasm here and there,
> and he was not under any limit, nor bottom, and not any seat.[119]

In this passage, Chasm is another name for Chaos, as the Neoplatonists indicate in other passages where they say that Aither and Chaos are the offspring of Chronos.[120] They associate Aither and Chaos with the concepts of Limit and Unlimited, as when Damascius says that "[the theologians] put Chronos in the place of the one first principle of the universe, and Aither and Chaos in

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116. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 66.28 Pasquali (*OF* 109 II B = 68 K).

117. Cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.28 (1.121.6 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 109 VI B = 68 K); Simplicius, *in Arist. Cael.* 560.19 Heiberg (*OF* 103 IV B); Brisson 1995: 70–71.

118. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 67.8 Pasquali; cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Parmen.* 1225.5 Cousin (*OF* 109 IV B); Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 133.22 Kroll (*OF* 109 XII B).

119. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.138.8 Kroll (*OF* 111 I B = 66 K); Simplicius, *in Arist. Phys.* 528.14 Diehl (*OF* 111 VII B). Bernabé places lines 1–2 from Proclus with line 3 from Simplicius to form one fragment.

120. Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 43.10 Kroll (*OF* 111 III B = 66 K).

the place of the two."[121] Proclus explains in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* that "just as Plato derived two causes, Limit and Unlimited, from the One, so also did the theologian bring Aither and Chaos into existence from Chronos, Aither as the cause of limit everywhere, and Chaos [as the cause] of unlimitedness; and from these two principles he generates both the divine and visible orders."[122] In his commentary on the *Parmenides*, Proclus further explains that "the infinite is Chaos, insofar as it is receptive of every power and every type of unlimitedness, and insofar as it encircles everything else. ... Aither is limit because this [visible] aither too limits and measures all things."[123] The beginning of the Rhapsodic narrative, therefore, described Chronos generating Aither and Chaos.

In its initial creation, the cosmic egg allegorically represents the Mixture that results from Limit (Aither) and Unlimited (Chaos).[124] Limit and Unlimited, occupying the next level of the Neoplatonic metaphysical scheme after the One, correspond to Chronos creating the cosmic egg after the birth of Aither and Chaos. This explains why the cosmic egg was of interest to the Neoplatonists. Damascius quotes Orpheus narrating that "great Chronos fashioned with the divine Aither / a silver-shining egg" in order to demonstrate that "everything that is unified is mixed." He adds that "the word 'fashioned' shows that the egg is an artifact and not naturally conceived," which means that it "is mixed from two things at least, matter [Unlimited] and form [Limited]."[125] Likewise, Proclus argues that "if the first thing [to issue] from Limit and the Unlimited is primal Being, Plato's Being and the Orphic egg will be the same thing."[126]

The cosmic egg was a particularly useful allegorical image of the One and the Many. An egg has a simple shape and one simple colour, so it is unified but it contains potential multiplicity within itself. Olympiodorus explains how the egg can be used as a metaphor for Intelligible Being: "for as in [the egg] every part is undifferentiated and not the head or the foot, so also in the Intelligible all Forms that are united are undiffentiated from one another."[127] This metaphor of the egg was not unique to the late Neoplatonists. In the *Homilies* of

121. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.19 Westerink) (*OF* 111 V B = 60 K); see Ahbel-Rappe ad loc.

122. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.385.17 Diehl (*OF* 111 VIII B); cf. Festugière ad loc.; Sorel 1995: 50; Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr* 138.14 Couvr. (*OF* 111 XV, 114 IX B = 76 K); Damascius, *De Principiis* 50 (2.24.6–8 Westerink) (preceding *OF* 111 IV B = ad 66 K) and Westerink ad loc.

123. Proclus, *in Plat. Parmen.* 1121.27 Cousin (after *OF* 111 XI B); cf. *in Plat. Tim.* 1.428.4 Diehl (*OF* 116 B = 79 K).

124. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.19 Westerink) (*OF* 111 V B = 60 K); Brisson 1995: 72.

125. Damascius, *De Principiis* 55 (2.40.14 Westerink) (*OF* 114 I B = 70 K); see Westerink ad loc. Simplicius quotes "silver-shining egg" at *in Arist. Phys.* 146.29 Diel (*OF* 114 II B = 70 K).

126. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.428.7 Diehl (*OF* 114 III B = 70 K); cf. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 114 VIII B = 60 K).

127. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 4.4 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 114 VI B).

Pseudo-Clement, Apion introduces a beautiful image of the peacock egg, one simple thing that hides a multitude of colours:

> For as in the begetting of a peacock it seems there is one colour of the egg, but potentially it has in itself many colours of the creature that will be born, so also this living egg conceived out of infinite matter [or mud], when set in motion by the underlying and ever-flowing matter, produces many different forms.[128]

This image of the egg was attractive to commentators as a simple object containing the potential diversity of the entire creation inside its shell. The image of multiplicity within unity was useful for illuminating the concept that the first level of Intelligible Being contains the (Platonic) Forms of all subsequent levels, but these Forms are not yet differentiated from one another.

This allegorical interpretation of the egg went beyond the initial level, so that the next level of the metaphysical system consisted of the cosmic egg split into an entire triad: the egg conceived, the egg conceiving, and Phanes being conceived inside the egg. Damascius argues that "to complete the second triad, they [i.e., Syrianus and Proclus] set as the last term the egg that is conceived and the egg conceiving the god, or the gleaming robe, or the cloud, because Phanes leaps forth from these." He adds that "perhaps the middle triad must also be thought of as the trimorph god still being conceived inside the egg."[129] The shell of the egg is compared to a cloud or a robe, so Bernabé reconstructs four lines of poetry from nine different fragments to show how this might have looked in the poem:

> And then Phanes broke the cloud, his bright robe,
> and from the split skull of the wide-yawning egg
> Protogonos leaped out first of all and ran up,
> both male and female, much-honoured.[130]

If we accept Bernabé's rconstruction here, then it appears that the Rhapsodies used the images of a cloud and a robe to illuminate the brightness of the egg, which is appropriate for Phanes, because when he springs forth he brings illumination to the universe.

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128. Apion, *ap*. Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil*. 6.5.1 (108.6 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 120 I B = 56 K); Turcan 1961: 20–21.

129. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17–160.8 Westerink) (*OF* 120 III, 121 B = 60 K).

130. *OF* 121 B, reconstructed from Proclus, *in Plat. Tim*. 1.428.15 Diehl; Damascius, *De Principiis* 98 (3.55.1, 57.9 Westerink), 111 (3.111.1 Westerink), 123 (3.159.17 Westerink); Apion *ap*. Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil*. 6.5.4 (108.14 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke); 6.12.1 (110.28 Rehm-Irmscher-Pascke); Rufinus, *Recognit*. 10.17.3 (336.18 Rehm); 10.30.4 (346.28 Rehm).

It was necessary for the Neoplatonists to make the egg fit into the triad above Phanes because of the way they allegorically interpreted Phanes in the Rhapsodies. Specifically, they wanted to place Phanes in the level that they called Intelligible Intellect, the third triad down from the One, because Phanes was in their view the "Living Thing" (ζῷα) mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus*. In this dialogue, Timaeus suggests to Socrates,

> Let us establish that the world resembles more closely than anything else that Living Thing of which all other living things are parts, both individually and by kinds. For that Living Thing comprehends within itself all Intelligible living things, just as our world is made up of us and all the other visible creatures.[131]

The Neoplatonists equated Phanes with this Living Thing, as Proclus explains in his commentary on the same passage of Plato's *Timaeus*:

> For if Phanes first and alone proceeds from the egg, which in [Orpheus] reveals the very first Intelligible Intellect, and [if] that which proceeds first and alone from an egg is of necessity nothing other than a living thing, it is clearly also the case that the very great Phanes is nothing other than the very first Living Thing, or as Plato would say, the Living-Thing-itself.[132]

As the "Living-Thing-itself" (αὐτοζῷον), Phanes "within himself contains in advance the causes of the secondary orders," for "just as the egg has contained in advance the seminal cause of the Living Thing … and just as the Living Thing at once contains in divided fashion everything that was in the egg seminally, so too does this god bring forth into the light the ineffable and elusive [nature] of the first causes."[133] Later in the same commentary, Proclus quotes the Rhapsodies to support this point when he says that "the theologian too produces Phanes alone as 'the bearer of the illustrious seed of the gods' from the god who is in a hidden manner all things, and [then] from him brings into existence all the secondary orders of gods."[134] Damascius reads Phanes the same way when he argues that "Orpheus too has celebrated this very august divinity who 'carried the seed of the gods, famous Erikepaios.' And from him he makes the entire family of the gods proceed."[135] The Orphic Phanes

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131. Plato, *Timaeus* 30c–d.

132. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.428.15 Diehl (*OF* 121 V B); Brisson 1995: 72–73. By translating αὐτοζῷον as "Living-Thing-itself," I am following the translations of Tarrant et al., but cf. LSJ, s.v. "αὐτοζῷον": "self-existent, having life in itself."

133. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.428.22, 430.5 Diehl (*OF* 119 I B = 71 K).

134. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.9 Diehl (*OF* 140 IX B = 85 K).

135. Damascius, *De Principiis* 98 (3.55.1 Westerink) (*OF* 140 V B = 85 K).

was thus a crucial point at which the Neoplatonists found agreement between Orpheus and Plato. As Plato's Living-Thing-itself, Phanes represented the level of Intelligible Intellect, a perfect blend of multiplicity within unity. Just as the egg contained in itself the multiplicity of Forms in an undifferentiated state, Phanes contained in himself the "seeds" of all of the lower orders of deities. The Neoplatonists found this to fit well with the idea of the Living Thing in Plato's *Timaeus*.

Since Phanes alone fills out this triad, the Neoplatonists split him into three as they had done with the egg. They found significant textual support in the Rhapsodies for this assertion, since in Orphic literature Phanes is given many names, including Phanes, Protogonos, Metis, Eros, Erikepaios, and in some cases Zeus and Dionysus. We have already seen this kind of syncretism applied to various goddesses in the Derveni Papyrus and to Phanes in the Hieronyman theogony, which equates him with Zeus and Pan. It can also be seen in the *Orphic Hymn* to Protogonos, which calls him Erikepaios, Phanes, Antauges, and even Priapus.[136] Syncretism was not uncommon in the Hellenistic Period, and Orphic poetry tended toward the assimilation of deities (e.g., DP 22.12), so in the Rhapsodies Phanes was given many names. For example, Proclus quotes a passage that equates "great Bromios and Zeus who is all-seeing" with "graceful Eros and wicked Metis."[137] It was simply a matter of deciding which three names fit best with their triadic scheme, so Damascius specifies "in the third triad, Metis as intellect, Erikepaios as power, and Phanes himself as father."[138] This makes sense, since Metis represents cunning intelligence and Phanes initiates procreative generation, so this passage might suggest that the name of Erikepaios had something to do with power. On more than one occasion, Proclus and Damascius quote a Rhapsodic passage that equates Metis with Phanes:

> First the revered deity
> Metis bearing the glorious seed of the gods, whom also the blessed ones
> in great Olympus call firstborn Phanes.[139]

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136. DP 22.12; Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B = 56 K); *OH* 6 (*OF* 143 B = 87 K); cf. Rudhardt 1991: 269–274.

137. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.336.6 Diehl (*OF* 141 I B = 170 K); cf. *in Plat. Tim.* 1.336.15 Diehl (*OF* 140 XI B = 85 K). Phanes seems to have been a syncretistic appropriation of the characteristics of earlier deities: see Calame (1992: 193–197) on Eros; Detienne and Vernant (1974: 133–157) on Phanes.

138. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.160.6 Westerink) (*OF* 139 I B = 60 K).

139. *OF* 140 B = 85 K. Although no ancient source quotes all three lines, this passage was reconstructed by Abel, fr. 61 and approved by Kern and Bernabé ad loc. In *OF* 85 K, Kern cites Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.451.6 Diehl (lines 1–2) and Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 32.29 Pasquali (lines 2–3), which Bernabé reproduces as *OF* 140 I–II B, along with ten other passages in Proclus and Damascius (*OF* 140 III–XII B).

Proclus refers to this passage to explain how "the Living-Thing-itself rejoices in solitude" and "conceives by itself," and how Phanes "holds the paternal prominence in relation to all the Intellective gods."[140] He uses Phanes as an example of names "by which the inferior gods [i.e., the Olympians] address those prior to them," which means that the lower orders of deities proceed from "Phanes himself as father" as Damascius puts it.[141] While Metis as intellect contemplates the higher orders of the metaphysical system, Phanes as father acts as the cause of the lower orders, which leaves Erikepaios as the middle point. However, in addition to the fact that no one knows the etymological origin and meaning of the name Erikepaios,[142] the Neoplatonists are unclear about how they envision Erikepaios functioning in their metaphysical system. We might deduce that Metis is Limit, Erikepaios is Unlimited, and Phanes is Mixture, but this would tell us more about the Neoplatonic universe than about Erikepaios himself.

Although the Neoplatonic triad of Phanes did not include the name of Eros, Proclus found value in Phanes being called Eros in the Rhapsodies, as a way of describing how the Platonic Form of Beauty is formed within the Living-Thing-itself. We have already seen in chapter 3 how Eros in the cosmogony of Aristophanes' *Birds* can be associated with Phanes because of his description as having golden wings, and because they both fit with the narrative pattern of the creator deity coming out of the cosmic egg.[143] This association between Eros and Phanes was perhaps drawn from Near Eastern parallels and Hellenistic syncretism, rather than from Neoplatonic metaphysical speculations. It seems to have appeared in the Rhapsodies, but the Neoplatonists applied the parallel in a more abstract way. Proclus interprets the equation of Eros with Phanes as an allegory for the Platonic Form of Beauty. This form is contained within the higher sub-levels of the metaphysical system, but Phanes is the first god to "participate" or "to have been filled with" Beauty.[144] Phanes, the god who appears and makes things appear, becomes the first god in whom Beauty appears, both in the Rhapsodic narrative and in the Neoplatonic allegory, and thus he is assimilated to Eros.

140. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.451.8 Diehl (*OF* 140 I B = 85 K); *in Plat. Cratyl.* 48.14 Pasquali; this phrase is left out of 140 VIII B = 85 K.

141. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 33.20 Pasquali (*OF* 140 III B = 85 K); Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.160.6 Westerink) (*OF* 139 I B = 60 K).

142. John Malalas associates the names Metis, Phanes, and Erikepaios with, respectively, "counsel, light, and life-giver" (John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 [53 Thurn] [*OF* 139 II B = 65 K]), but scholars have been hesitant to take Malalas' etymology of the name Erikepaios at face value (Cook 1914: 2:1024; Graf ad *BNP*, s.v. "Erikepaios"). Cook (1914: 2:1024) thought the name could have been Thraco-Phrygian, but West (1983: 205–206) suggests possible Semitic origins.

143. Calame (1992: 193–195) suggests that the creation of the Orphic Phanes involved an appropriation of Eros, which suggests that there is more than just syncretistic association here.

144. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.433.28–434.5 Diehl (*OF* 141 V B = 74 K).

In addition to the creative functions and names of Phanes, his physical descriptions provided the Neoplatonists with imagery that was appropriate to their allegorical reading of Phanes as the Living-Thing-itself, and thus they have preserved fragments that visibly describe Phanes. He had wings and multiple animal heads, and he was portrayed as a hermaphrodite, perhaps with the word ἀρσενόθηλυς ("masculo-feminine").[145] We saw in chapter 4 that in the Hieronyman theogony Phanes was "male and female" or "two-bodied." In a similar way, the Rhapsodies call him "female and ancestor, powerful god Erikepaios," and the author "introduces Phanes having his phallus behind around his anus."[146] According to Lactantius (who was not a Neoplatonist), the reason why Phanes is both male and female is that he "otherwise might not be able to generate, unless he had the power of both sexes, as if he could have sex with himself or could not procreate without sex."[147] Most modern scholars read Phanes' two sexes in a similar way: in a theogony that envisioned creation as the result of successive acts of procreation, it might be difficult to understand how a unique, primordial creator god could procreate without a partner, so it seems that the poets explained this by giving Phanes both sexes. He is able to procreate by himself because he is both male and female: this is how he is able to give birth to Echidna in the Hieronyman theogony, and how in the Rhapsodies he first gives birth to Night before he mates with her.[148] The Neoplatonists read this in a more abstract way, as Proclus indicates when he interprets the words "female and begetter" to mean that "both maleness and femaleness are first of all in him as being the first Living Thing." Elsewhere he says that "the third god was both father and mother; since even if in this he is the Living-Thing-itself, it is also necessary that first the cause of the masculine and of the feminine should be pre-existent there, for this is in living creatures."[149] According to the Neoplatonists, the hermaphroditic nature of Phanes was an allegory signifying that since the lower levels that proceed from the Living-Thing-itself are divided into two sexes, the Living-Thing-itself must contain within itself both sexes in both a differentiated and an undifferentiated state. Corresponding to the

145. *OF* 121.3 B; see Bernabé ad loc. The word ἀρσενόθηλυς appears in Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clem. (*OF* 121 VI B), and *masculofemina* appears in Rufinus (OF 121 VII–VIII B), but in none of the Neoplatonist sources cited at *OF* 121 B.

146. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 80 I B = 54 K); Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.5 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 80 II B = 57 K) (cf. *Orphic Argonautica* 14 [*OF* 99 B]; *OH* 6.1 = *OF* 143 B); Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.429.28 Diehl (*OF* 134 I B = 81 K); Pseudo-Nonnus, *ad Gregor. Orat. in Julian.* 4.78 (151 Nimmo Smith) (cf. *Suda*, s.v. "Φάνης" [4.696.17 Adler] [*OF* 135 I–II B = 80 K]; West 1983: 202n. 85).

147. Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 4.8.4 (1.296.2 Br.) (*OF* 134 IV B = 81 K).

148. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81 B = 58 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.22 Diehl (*OF* 147 I B = 99 K); Casadio 1999: 113–115. The specific phrase is that "he introduces the Nights" and "mates with the middle one." Brisson (2008: 81–92) sees Night as the feminine side of Phanes and describes Phanes/Night's procreation as "self-incest."

149. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.429.28 Diehl (*OF* 134 I B = 81 K); *Theol. Plat.* 4.28 (4.81.20 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 134 III B = 81 K).

Living Thing of Plato, Phanes contains the "seeds" (or Platonic Forms) of the division of the sexes, but is himself united—he contains multiplicity within unity—and the two sexes of Phanes are a poetic image that fits this concept perfectly.

Another aspect of the physical description of Phanes that fits well with the allegorical interpretations of the Neoplatonists is his polymorphic, theriomorphic appearance. Like certain Near Eastern deities and Greek monsters, Phanes had the heads of animals, golden wings, and four eyes in both the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies. According to Proclus, Phanes had "the heads of a ram, a bull, a lion, and a serpent." He quotes a line of the Rhapsodies in which Phanes is described "sending forth the might of a bull and a fierce lion." Hermias quotes another line in which Phanes is "carried on golden wings here and there."[150] Elsewhere the Neoplatonists describe him as having "four (pairs of) eyes and four heads," "with four eyes," and "four-eyed and with four faces."[151] None of the Rhapsodic fragments gives us as full a description of Phanes as we find in Damascius' account of the Hieronyman theogony, but it is clear that Phanes was a polymorphic creature in the Rhapsodies too. Unlike the Hieronyman theogony, none of the fragments mentions any serpentine features, but Phanes continues to have multiple heads and eyes, the heads of different animals, and wings.

Phanes, interpreted as the Neoplatonic triad of Intelligible Intellect, also reveals the higher Intelligible orders to the lower Intellective orders of gods. The concept Proclus refers to here is that the lowest levels of the hierarchy do not have direct access to the highest levels, except as they are revealed by the nearest intermediary level.[152] The characterization of Phanes as the god who makes things visible and manifest was useful for Neoplatonists who wished to illustrate this. Appearance and manifestation are ideas contained in his name, cognate with the verb φαίνω. The *Etymologicum Magnum* demonstrates this in its entry for the name Φάνης, where it quotes an Orphic verse in which "they call him Phanes / and Protogonos because he became the first one visible (φαντός) in Aither."[153] Phanes is the one who appears and makes things visible, and he is associated with bright light. When he first reveals this light in the Rhapsodies, the only one who can handle looking at him is, ironically, Night:

No one looked upon Protogonos with their eyes,
except for sacred Night alone; but all the others

150. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.427.20, 429.26 Diehl (*OF* 129 I, 130 B = 79, 81 K); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 142.16 Couvr. (*OF* 136 I B = 78 K).

151. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.169.28 Kroll (*OF* 131 B = 77 K); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 138.14 Couvr. (*OF* 132 B = 76 K); *in Plat. Phaedr.* 91.5 Couvr. (*OF* 133 B = 76 K).

152. Chlup 2012: 26–32, 168–185.

153. *Etymologicum Magnum* 287.29–32 (*OF* 126 B = 75 K). <Πρωτόγονόν θ'> supplemented by West 1983: 70n5.

were amazed looking down from the unexpected light in the aither
so bright was the skin of immortal Phanes.[154]

Since Lobeck's statement that "whoever can admire Phanes, when there
is still nothing, is not apparent from here,"[155] there has been some debate
about who "all the others" were. Kern suggested that the others were simply
Chronos and Aither, but he had trouble explaining how Night was there
to see Phanes when he first appeared, since he had not yet produced her
as his daughter. Kern's solution, with which Avanzini agrees, was that this
passage describes Phanes appearing from the cave of Night after mating
with her: Phanes mates inside the cave, then creates the sky, and then shines
light upon the sky.[156] Bernabé objects to this, arguing that Night here is
the primordial entity Night, the first of the three Nights, and not Phanes'
daughter (i.e., the second Night).[157] But as I argue in the next section, this
view is problematic.

    None of these chronological considerations mattered to the Neoplatonists,
in whose opinions every narrative event was an allegory of an eternal process.
Proclus interprets Phanes as "the brightest thing of the Intelligibles, the Intellect
that is Intelligible, and the brightly shining light that is Intelligible, who also
amazes the Intellective deities by appearing and makes the father wonder, as
Orpheus says." Elsewhere he says that "Phanes, according to Orpheus, sends
out the Intelligible light that fills all the Intellective deities with intelligence."[158]
The fact that Phanes is the god who makes the first creation appear is well-
rooted in the Orphic tradition, as we saw in the Hieronyman theogony, so
Bernabé has suggested that the name of Phanes was created by the Orphic
poets to accommodate Protogonos to this function.[159] The Neoplatonists found
this aspect of Phanes in the Orphic tradition useful for illustrating the sense
in which the Living-Thing-itself reveals the deities of the higher levels (the
Intelligible orders) to the deities of the lower levels (the Intelligible-Intellective
and Intellective orders).

    As for the narrative events involving Phanes, the Neoplatonists did not
have much to say about his role as creator of the world, because according
to their allegorical interpretations it was Zeus, not Phanes, who was the
Demiurge. For some of the creation account we rely on sources who were not
Neoplatonists, such as Servius' mention of Achelous, Malalas' summary of the
Orphic narrative, and Lactantius' citation of the line in which Phanes "built

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154. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.25 Couvr. (*OF* 123 I B = 86 K).
155. Lobeck 1829: 480.
156. Kern 1888: 14; Avanzini 1993: 93–99.
157. *OF* 123 B and Bernabé ad loc.
158. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 3.22 (3.80.24 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 123 IV B = 86 K); *in Plat. Tim.*
3.83.4 Diehl (*OF* 123 V B = 86 K).
159. Bernabé 1992: 45–46.

an indestructible home for the immortals."[160] One important exception to this rule is Hermias quoting from the narrative of Phanes and Night giving birth to Ouranos and Gaia:

> And again she gave birth to Gaia and wide Ouranos,
> and showed them visible out of invisibility and they were offspring.[161]

This was easy to incorporate within the Neoplatonic universe, as Hermias explains:

> For after the order of Nights there are three orders of the gods, Ouranos, the Cyclopes, and the Hundred-handers. ... For since, while those [deities] remained in the same Phanes, first Ouranos visibly was born from him—for the first to proceed outside from him were Ouranos and Ge.[162]

Simply put, the birth of Ouranos is interpreted allegorically as another level proceeding from the triad above it: the triad of Ouranos proceeding from the triad of Night, which in turn proceeds from the triad of Phanes. Proclus and Hermias are not referring literally to the physical sky, but to a personified deity called "Sky" in the poem, interpreted as an Intelligible-Intellective triad.

As another important exception, one might note the fragment in which Proclus refers to Phanes creating the golden race of humans:

> The theologian Orpheus transmitted three races of humans: first the golden race, which he says Phanes established; second the silver race, of which he says great Kronos was ruler; and third the Titanic race, which he says Zeus formed from the limbs of the Titans; having understood that in these three terms every Form of human life is included.[163]

This passage will be a major point of discussion in chapter 6, since the myth of the golden, silver, and Titanic races is crucial for understanding the narrative of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies, but for now it is important to observe that, even here, Proclus minimizes the demiurgic work of Phanes. He suggests that the three races represent the way the Forms (in the Platonic sense) of human life

160. Servius, *in Georg.* 1.8 (3.131.20, 132.18 Thilo-Hagen) (*OF* 154 I–II B = 344 K); John Malalas, *Chronographia* 4.9 (53 Thurn) (*OF* 153 B = 65 K); Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 1.5.6 (62 Monat) (*OF* 152 B = 89 K).

161. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 154.23 Couvr. (*OF* 149 I B = 109 K).

162. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.17 Couvr. (*OF* 149 II B = 109 K).

163. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26–30 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = 140 K).

are contained within and proceed from three separate levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system, for "in these three terms every Form of human life is included." From Proclus' reading of the birth of Ouranos and the golden race of humans, it appears that when the Neoplatonists clearly refer to Phanes' act of creation, they do so in contexts where, according to their own allegorical interpretation, it is not the physical universe that is created, but an abstract level of the metaphysical system that precedes the creation.

Where Proclus does refer to the physical creation, he does not say whether he is referring to Phanes or Zeus, and his topic of discussion is not actually creation. There are a few places where he mentions the creation of the sun and moon, but he does this in contexts that are clearly about astronomy, not demiurgy. Proclus discusses the rotation of the sun and the moon and the sun's relation to the Zodiac when he quotes the Orphic line that says "in a month it rotates as the sun in a year."[164] In other astronomical contexts, Proclus preserves these three lines:

> And he contrived another boundless earth, which the immortals
> call Selene, and those who live upon the earth call it Mene,
> which has many mountains, many cities, and many houses.[165]

Although West and Bernabé agree that this is a reference to Phanes creating the universe,[166] Proclus names neither Phanes nor Zeus, and he does not quote these lines in discussions of the creation of the universe but in discussions of astronomy. Even if these lines came from the narrative of Phanes creating, that is not why Proclus quoted them.

Elsewhere Proclus says that "the Demiurge set up [Helios] over the universe: 'and he made [Helios] guardian and ordered him to rule over everything,' as Orpheus says."[167] Although Bernabé includes this with the fragments about Phanes creating the universe, the Neoplatonists considered Zeus to be the Demiurge, so it is more likely that this fragment refers to Zeus, not Phanes. Either way, the Neoplatonists' reading of Helios is that he is equated with Apollo in a triad of Hypercosmic deities.[168] Add to this the obvious fact that Helios was a god in myth, and one could argue that this fragment might not be speaking directly about the physical creation of the sun. Another fragment that Bernabé associates with Phanes appears in a scientific discussion of the earth's climactic regions. Again, Proclus does not specify which creator god he means when he quotes these lines:

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164. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.56.4 Diehl (*OF* 156 I B = 92 K).
165. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.48.15, 2.282.11, 3.142.12 Diehl (*OF* 155 I–III B = 91 K).
166. West 1983: 49, 109, 210n111; Bernabé ad loc.
167. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.227.29 Diehl (*OF* 158 I B = 96 K).
168. Chlup 2012: 126.

> And he separated for humans
> a seat to dwell in apart from the immortals, in the middle of which the axis
> of the sun spinning is turned and not too much at all
> cold under its head nor burnt, but in between.[169]

As with the fragments about the moon, here Proclus cites an Orphic poem in a discussion of the earth's climactic regions, not in a discussion of the Demiurge, for he says that "not only the mathematicians speak about not every climactic region of the earth having humans, but also Orpheus, when he makes this distinction."[170] Generally speaking, therefore, Proclus mentions Phanes creating the universe only where it fits into his Neoplatonic scheme as lower triads proceeding from Intellective Intellect, which Phanes represents. Fragments that could arguably refer to either Phanes or Zeus appear in contexts that have nothing to do with the act of creation, such as discussions of the astronomical movements of the sun and moon and the climactic regions of the earth.

Proclus did, however, find value in that part of the narrative in which Phanes becomes the first king of the gods, particularly the fact that "Phanes was the first to equip the sceptre."[171] Here too he had more interest in Zeus obtaining the sceptre than in Phanes being the first to equip it because of the way he interpreted its length "of six parts, measuring twenty-four measures."[172] In his *Cratylus* commentary, Proclus says that Zeus "institutes a double order of existence—the celestial and the supercelestial, whence the theologian says that even his sceptre is 'of twenty-four measures,' because he rules over two sets of twelve."[173] In this passage, "celestial" and "supercelestial" represent the next two major levels of the Neoplatonic universe after the level of Intellect, which is where we first find Zeus. They consist of four triads each, so two sets of twelve, adding up to twenty-four. In other words, from Zeus as Demiurge proceed two dodecads, and Proclus sees these represented in the length of the sceptre.[174] Clearly this is not what the poet had in mind when he wrote the Rhapsodies, so West calls Proclus' dodecads a "Neoplatonist construction" and interprets the phrase "straight, of six parts, measuring twenty-four measures" as referring to the "six feet and twenty-four *morae*" of a hexameter line. He suggests that the poet "borrowed the whole verse" from an earlier poem attributed to Musaeus and "gave it a new application," so that the six parts refer to the six generations of divine kings and the twenty-four measures "correspond to the twenty-four [books of the] Rhapsodies themselves."[175] In addition to being quite speculative,

169. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (*OF* 160 B = 94 K).
170. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (*OF* 160 B = 94 K).
171. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.168.17 Diehl (*OF* 165 B = 107 K).
172. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.69.29 Diehl (*OF* 166 II B = 157 K).
173. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 52.26 Pasquali (*OF* 166 I B = 157 K).
174. For more on these dodecads, see Chlup 2012: 126–127.
175. West 1983: 231–234.

West's interpretation of the twenty-four measures assumes that the poet knew the Rhapsodies would be a set of twenty-four books, which is hardly more convincing than Proclus' interpretation. We may never know why the poet chose the number twenty-four to describe the length of the sceptre, but thanks to Proclus we know that there was a royal sceptre that played some role in the Rhapsodic narrative.

The fragments of the Rhapsodies that have survived are mostly the consequence of decisions made by the Neoplatonists about which fragments to include and which ones not to include, but these decisions were not arbitrary. They did not simply connect Chronos with the One because he was the first god in the narrative, but because of the idea that all generation happens in Time. Aither and Chaos represent Limit and Unlimited, not only because they were the first two children of Chronos in the Rhapsodies, but also because the upper air is a limited space and the primordial gap is an unlimited space. Whereas the simple image of the cosmic egg was a useful illustration of undifferentiated multiplicity within unity, the complex image of Phanes was a useful illustration of differentiated multiplicity within unity. His two sexes, four heads with four pairs of eyes, and golden wings were the perfect image of this center-point between the unity of the One and the multiplicity that becomes manifest in the Demiurge. However, it was the creation of the universe by Zeus, not by Phanes, that held their interest, since Zeus represented the Demiurge and Phanes represented the Living-Thing-itself according to their reading of Plato. As we will see later in this chapter, the relationship between Phanes as Paradigm and Zeus as Demiurge was a central concept of Neoplatonic allegory, for which the swallowing of Phanes by Zeus in the Rhapsodies was a profoundly appropriate image. Instead of a random mapping of correspondences, the Neoplatonists found rich imagery in the Rhapsodic narrative that allowed extremely complex and difficult abstract concepts to be grasped with vivid and memorable force. The natural result of these allegorical readings is the preservation of a large number of Rhapsodic fragments about these particular episodes.

Three Nights or One?

After Phanes creates the world and rules as the first king, he passes on the sceptre to Night, who rules as queen. This much is clear, but because of Hermias' statement that "three Nights have been transmitted in Orpheus,"[176] there has been considerable confusion over what the tripling of Night means and where each of the fragments about Night fit into the Rhapsodic narrative. Typically, scholars take this statement of Hermias literally to mean that there

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176. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 147 II B = 99 K).

were three separate goddesses called Night in the Rhapsodies. In Bernabé's collection, fragments referring to Night are scattered throughout his chronological scheme, and it is sometimes unclear which of the three Nights is intended in each fragment. Scholars have suggested different explanations about why Night is tripled and what this might mean. Ramnoux viewed the tripling of Night as "the link between the world outside and the interior of the cave," a "feminine trinity" in which the first Night, inside the cave, represents the unseen divine realm; the second Night, at the door of the cave, represents the generative power of creation; and the third Night, outside the cave, becomes the mother of all things. Comparing this tripling of Night with the roles of Rhea, Demeter, and Core with respect to Zeus, Ramnoux argued that the three Nights play the roles of mother, lover, and daughter with respect to Phanes.[177] In a similar way, West and Brisson accept Hermias' statement that there are three Nights in the Rhapsodies, and they attempt to explain the three Nights figuratively, as a poetic representation of the alternating of day and night: Night gives birth to day (i.e., Phanes), who in turn gives birth to Night. This way, Night is the mother, wife/sister, and daughter of Phanes. West points out that "the Greeks had riddles about night and day that involved the paradox of the mother becoming the daughter," and Brisson explains the episode of Phanes producing Night by reading Night as the feminine half of the hermaphrodite Phanes.[178] As interesting as these interpretations might be, they still sound more like allegorical interpretations than reconstructions of a poetic narrative, and this, I suggest, is the key to understanding what Hermias has to say about the three Nights.

Hermias does not explain who the three Nights are in terms of their narrative functions, but their ontological functions, when he says,

> Justice is introduced in the theologian under Law and Piety. But not in vain did she inherit these three names, justice, moderation, understanding. For three Nights have been transmitted in Orpheus, the first remaining in the same place, and the third coming forth outside, and the middle of these. He says the first [Night] prophesies, which is connected with understanding, and he calls the middle [Night] revered, which is connected with moderation, and he says the third [Night] gave birth to justice.[179]

Hermias explains the role of Night not in relation to events in the narrative, but in relation to the concepts of understanding, moderation, and justice as

177. Ramnoux 1959: 231–235.

178. West (1983: 209–210), citing *Palatine Anthology* 14.40 (= Theodectes 72 F4), 41; Brisson 1995: 58; 2008: 84–87.

179. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr*. 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV, 147 II, 246 I, 248 II B = 99 K).

they apply to Neoplatonic allegory. One narrative detail he does give us is that the first Night prophesies, so Bernabé has connected this passage with other fragments that refer to Night prophesying (*OF* 113 B) and placed these early in his collection, along with fragments about Chronos giving birth to Aither and Chaos (*OF* 111–112 B). This gives the impression that Night appears as a prophetess early in the Rhapsodic narrative, but it is unclear what prophetic role she might have played. When Night actually does prophesy in the Rhapsodies, it is not to Chronos or even to Phanes, but to Zeus, much later in the chronological order of events (*OF* 219–220, 237–238 B).

By referring to the three Nights, Hermias' concern is not with chronology but with ontology. He is not suggesting that three separate deities called Night appear in the Rhapsodic narrative, but that Night functions as a triad in the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. In terms of allegorical reading, this sort of multiplication was normal, for we have already seen that the Neoplatonists split the cosmic egg and Phanes into triads. With reference to Night, Proclus seems to indicate that there were more than just three:

> For there are many orders of night and day—Intelligible, Intellective, Hypercosmic, celestial and sub-lunary—as the Orphic theologians teach as well. Some of these are prior to the creation, some are included within creation, while others proceed from it.[180]

Proclus says that there are five Nights, not just three. Perhaps we could interpret the last two as representing the physical manifestation of Night in the visible universe, but however we read this fragment, generally speaking the first Night exists on the Intelligible-Intellective level of the Neoplatonic universe, functioning as a deity from whom lower levels proceed. More precisely, the three Nights constitute an Intelligible-Intellective triad of deities: the third level down in the Proclean hierarchy, after the One (represented by Chronos) and the Intelligible deities (represented by Aither, Chaos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes). So when Zeus, lower down in the hierarchy as an Intellective deity, turns to Night as a prophetess, the Neoplatonists read this as Zeus on a lower level proceeding from and reverting to Night on a higher level.[181] The first Night who prophesies is not the first of three Nights who appear in the narrative, but the first Night in the Neoplatonic system of metaphysics. She is the Night who is "prior to the creation," not in a chronological sense, but in the sense that she exists at a higher level of the ontological system.

Likewise, the second Night is not chronologically the second Night who appears in the narrative, but the manifestation of Night slightly lower in the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus

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180. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.88.18 Diehl (*OF* 113 V, 147 III, 246 II B = 99 K).
181. Lewy (1956) 1978: 481–485; Brisson 1995: 70–91; Chlup 2012: 125–127.

says that Phanes "brings forth the Nights and, as a father, has intercourse with the middle one."[182] So Bernabé includes this passage with others that describe Phanes mating with Night, in the section of fragments where Phanes creates the universe (*OF* 144–164 B), and he leads us to imagine that there is a second deity called Night who gives birth to yet a third Night. His explanation is that "Phanes generating another Night (the first is primordial Night) introduces 'more' Nights."[183] Brisson suggests that the second Night is the "feminine side" of Phanes, whose name is related to daylight. Since he has two sexes, his feminine side must be his dark side or counterpart—that is, Night.[184] Again, this sounds more like an allegorical interpretation than a reconstruction of a narrative, and this is precisely the point. When the Neoplatonists refer to a second Night mating with Phanes, what they mean is that the Intelligible-Intellective Night proceeds from the Intelligible Phanes. All this passage of Proclus tells us about the narrative is that Phanes, when creating the visible universe, mates with his daughter Night. It is from "inside the misty cave," from "inside the shrine of Night,"[185] that Phanes performs the act of creation in the Rhapsodies. Chronologically, this fits the part of the narrative where Phanes is in the act of creation with his consort but has not yet passed down the sceptre to her, but ontologically, the Neoplatonists read this as an Intelligible-Intellective triad that proceeds from the Intelligible triad of Phanes.[186]

It would then be the third Night who becomes queen, "having the famous sceptre of Erikepaios in her hands," and it is she who as "mother of the gods" passes on the sceptre to her son Ouranos.[187] Again, the Neoplatonists read this as the lowest of the three Nights in a triad, from whom Ouranos (who is also split into three to form a triad) proceeds at the subsequent sub-level of the Neoplatonic metaphysical scheme.[188] But Bernabé arranges the fragments chronologically in a way that suggests that every occurrence of Night in the later events of the narrative should be associated with this third Night. We are implicitly led to believe, therefore, that when Zeus approaches his "mother, highest of the gods, immortal Night,"[189] it is the third Night, formerly the queen of the gods, to whom he addresses this query, despite the fact that Hermias specifies that it is the first Night who prophesies. Conversely, Bernabé associates

182. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.22 Diehl (*OF* 147–148 B = 98 K).
183. *OF* 147 B and Bernabé ad loc.
184. Brisson 1993: 165.
185. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = 97 K); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 162.6 Couvr. (*OF* 164 II B = 105 K).
186. Chlup 2012: 125–126; Brisson 1995: 74–75.
187. Alexander Aphrodisiensis [i.e., Michael of Ephesus], *in Arist. Met.* 821.19 Hayduck (*OF* 170 II, 174 I B = 107, 111 K); Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 182.16 Kroll (*OF* 174 II B = 107 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 55.4 Pasquali (*OF* 174 III B = 107 K); *in Plat. Tim.* 3.168.22 Diehl (*OF* 174 V B = 107 K).
188. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.36 (4.107.13–23 Saffrey-Westerink); Brisson 1995: 75; Chlup 2012: 126.
189. *OF* 237.1 B = Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.206.28, 3.179.10 Diehl (*OF* 237 I–II B = 164 K).

Hermias' mention of the third Night giving birth to Justice (Dikaiosyne) with fragments that narrate Zeus giving birth to Law (Nomos) and Justice (Dike) "in accordance with the counsels of Night."[190] Does this mean that Zeus has dealings with both the first and third Night, receiving prophecies from the first and having an affair with the third?

A better explanation is that the three Nights are not three separate goddesses who appear at different times in the narrative, but one Night who has been split into three by the allegorical interpretations of the Neoplatonists. This is what they did with the cosmic egg and Phanes, and it is also what they did with Ouranos, splitting him into three members of an Intelligible-Intellective triad, each one corresponding to a part of the sky. Proclus explains the splitting of Ouranos in the following way:

> For the connective one [i.e., the connective deity that he is dividing into a triad] accords with the Back of the Sky that comprehends these (for the One and the Back are the same, comprehending according to one simplicity the whole circulation); but the whole is the same as the Depth of the Sky, and with as it were the bulk of it (for the Depth of the Sky is a whole extended from the back as far as to the Arch); and the end is the same with the Arch of the Sky.[191]

Following this splitting of Night and Ouranos into triads, the third triad that fills out the Intelligible-Intellective order actually consists of three separate beings: the Hundred-handers, whom Hermias describes as "applying themselves to all creative activity" and being "fit for guarding." Likewise, Proclus says that "among the gods above the Demiurge [i.e., Zeus] the Hundred-handers are celebrated in song as being fit for guarding the Intellective kings."[192] They did indeed find three Hundred-handers, whose names were Briareus, Gyges, and Cottos, not only in the Rhapsodies but also in Hesiod and Apollodorus.[193] The Neoplatonists explained the Hundred-handers as the triad that separates the Intellective orders from the Intelligible.

But they did not find three Nights in the Orphic narrative and then seek to explain them. Rather, they split Night into a triad in order to make the Orphic narrative support their metaphysical system. Perhaps the best way to understand how Night actually fits in the text of the Rhapsodies is to look at the different roles she plays in Orphic narratives: as primordial mother and nurse

190. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 154.17 Couvr. (*OF* 246 I B = 99 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.315.8 Diehl (*OF* 247 II = 160 K).

191. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.36 (4.107.14–23 Saffrey-Westerink); Chlup 2012: 126; Brisson 1995: 75.

192. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 150.2 Couvr. (*OF* 177 III B = 110 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.252.26 Kroll (*OF* 177 IV B).

193. Hesiod, *Theogony* 149; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.1.1 (*OF* 177 I B).

of the gods, as a prophetess, as queen of the gods, and as consort of Phanes. As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, both the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies began with Night as the first principle, though the sources do not specify that she was queen. Because of the conservative nature of Greek literature, it is not inconceivable that the author (or compiler) of the Rhapsodies would wish to avoid drastically breaking with tradition by removing or completely changing the Orphic portrayal of Night. From the Derveni Papyrus to the *Orphic Hymns* and the *Orphic Argonautica*, there are elements of both continuity and modification in the way Night is portrayed. It seems that the mythical personification of Night did not change entirely with the composition of the Rhapsodies, even though Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes were attached to the beginning of the narrative, before Night. As a result, Night loses her genealogical position as the first deity but she maintains some of the functions of a primordial deity in the narrative.

Some sources seem to indicate that Night maintained in some way her role as a primordial deity, even if the first god was Chronos. There are a couple of Byzantine Christian sources that mention Night as the first. John Malalas says that according to Orpheus, "At the beginning Aither was revealed to Chronos ... and there was Chaos on this side of Aither and on that, while dark Night held everything and covered what was under Aither, signifying that Night came first ... there was a certain being who was incomprehensible, supreme over all ... and creator of all things, including the Aither itself and Night."[194] This seems to correlate with other fragments that mention Aither and Chaos as the offspring of Chronos, adding the detail that Night was there with them, whether as one of the offspring of Chronos or as a pre-existing entity. Bernabé takes it to mean Night as a pre-existing entity, and he places this passage just before the birth of Chronos, extracting the words "dark Night" as a fragment of the poem. He connects this passage with another comment by a Christian author, Stephanus, who claims that "as the theologian Moses says, sky and earth were born along with the water and darkness from above the abyss; which Orpheus, I think, makes clear there that it is Night."[195] As I mentioned earlier, it is likely that these late Christian authors did not have direct access to the Orphic text. These fragments are not confirmed by any unambiguous statement from a Neoplatonist that Night was a pre-existing primordial entity in the Rhapsodies. They might even be used as evidence that there were multiple poems in the Rhapsodies, one of which started with Night.

The Neoplatonists mention Night doing things that fit her primordial role in earlier Orphic theogonies. The role of nurse had belonged to Night since the Derveni poem, where she is called "Night the immortal nurse of the gods." These exact words were repeated in the Rhapsodies, as Proclus attests.

194. John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (52 Thurn) (*OF* 107 I B = 65 K).
195. Stephanus, *in Arist. Rhet.* 319.1 Rabe (*OF* 107 III B).

Likewise, Damascius calls Night the "first being and nurse of all things," which could suggest that she creates along with Phanes.[196] But Bernabé reads this fragment as a suggestion that "Night as primordial material is born with Aither and Chasm, surrounds everything to this point and is the nurse of the gods."[197] Bernabé envisions this as the first of the three Nights, but he does not give us the full context. Proclus in his *Cratylus* commentary says that Night is the nurse of the gods "on the Intelligible level," and adds that according to the *Chaldean Oracles* she is "nourishment with respect to the Intelligible level." Damascius adds that Night is "the Intelligible object [known by] Intellect."[198] Thus, according to the Neoplatonists' reading, Night the nurse of the gods was not perceived as a primordial entity in the narrative, but as an Intelligible deity from whom the Intellective deities proceed. To support this reading, Proclus quotes a line of the Rhapsodies in which "from all things Night nursed and raised Kronos," and Damascius confirms that Orpheus "represents Night as having raised Kronos in particular."[199] So we are given this one solid fact about the narrative: it depicted Night nursing Kronos. Clearly this would happen after the time when Night was queen, when Ouranos and Gaia have given birth to Kronos, so it does not necessitate having Night as the primordial deity (since she is still the mother of Ouranos and Gaia). But by being the nurse of the gods, in particular Kronos, Night maintains a primordial function that she had in the Derveni poem. She further retains this function in the *Orphic Hymn* to Night, where she is called "mother of gods and men" and "birth of all things" (*OH* 3.1–2). Although Night is no longer the first god in the Rhapsodies, Orphic literary tradition always honoured her as a nurse and mother of the gods. Even if she is not the first deity to appear in the genealogy, the Rhapsodies portray her in ways that reflect her narrative functions in earlier Orphic theogonies.

Another function that Night continues to have in the Rhapsodies is that of prophetess. In the Derveni Papyrus, she is described as "knowing all oracles," and she is said "to prophesy from the innermost shrine" to Zeus about "all that it was permitted him to achieve." Likewise, in the Rhapsodies she is said "to have the art of divination without lies in everything."[200] Bernabé, again placing this fragment early in the collection to reflect his belief that it refers to the first of the three Nights, explains this in terms of her primordial nature: "since she is eternal, Night knows everything; Time, therefore, when he orders the universe,

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196. DP 10.9–11 (*OF* 6.2 B); Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 92.9 Pasquali (*OF* 112 I B = 106 K); Damascius, *De Principiis* 62 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 112 II B = 131 K).

197. Bernabé ad *OF* 112 B.

198. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 92.10–15 Pasquali; Damascius, *De Principiis* 62 (2.92.9 Westerink).

199. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 62.9 Pasquali (*OF* 182 I B = 129 K); Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 182 II B = 131 K).

200. DP 10.9, 11.1, 10 (*OF* 6.2–4 B); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 150.9; 154.17 Couvr. (*OF* 113 II–III B = 103 K).

assigns divination to her."²⁰¹ However, once again it is neither Chronos nor Phanes to whom Night prophesies but Zeus, just as she does in the Derveni poem. Syrianus remarks that Zeus "is clearly called not the first but the fifth king by the oracles given to him by Night," and according to Porphyry, it is Night who advises Zeus about how to overthrow Kronos, "suggesting the trick through honey" by which he lures Kronos to sleep.²⁰² As in the Derveni poem, Zeus approaches Night shortly after he has acquired royal power to ask her how he might secure this power, and there is some continuity with the *Orphic Argonautica*, which mentions "unspeakable oracular responses of Night concerning lord Bacchus."²⁰³ So again, as with her role as nurse, her role as prophetess extends from the Derveni poem through the Rhapsodies all the way to later Orphic literature. She maintains this role in the Rhapsodies, prophesying to Zeus as a primordial goddess even though she is no longer the first deity in the narrative. As both nurse and prophetess, Night maintains her roles and functions, despite the fact that her position in the genealogy has changed.

It is her role as queen of the gods that fixes Night's place in the genealogical account of the Rhapsodies. According to Proclus, Phanes as first king willingly gives royal rule to Night: "he put the famous sceptre into the hands / of the goddess Night, so she might have royal honour." In another fragment, she is described as "having in her hands the famous sceptre of Erikepaios."²⁰⁴ This appears to be new: neither Night as queen nor any mention of a sceptre appears in the Derveni poem, and there is no evidence of either motif in the Eudemian theogony. It seems that the author (or compiler) of the Rhapsodies introduced these motifs to account for Night's place in the genealogy. Night maintains her position relative to the generations after her, but she loses her position as the first deity in the genealogy. In other words, Night is followed by Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus, as in the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, but the author of the Rhapsodic narrative attached the story of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes to the narrative before Night. The sceptre of Phanes is a motif that ties in Night with the rest of the narrative, and it provides evidence for those who view the Rhapsodies as a continuous narrative.²⁰⁵ Her role as queen is new, but by making her the second ruler, the author finds a place for her that fits with earlier Orphic tradition, even while making room for Phanes as the first king of the gods.

201. *OF* 113 B and Bernabé ad loc.

202. Syrianus, *in Arist. Met.* 182.18 Kroll (*OF* 219 B = 107 K); Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.18 Simonini (*OF* 220 B = 189 K).

203. *OF* 237.1–3 B = 164–166 K; *Orphic Argonautica* 28 (*OF* 238 B = OT 224 K).

204. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 54.28 Pasquali (*OF* 168 I B = 101 K). Alexander Aphrodisiensis [i.e., Michael of Ephesus], *in Aristot. Metaph.* 821.19 Hayduck (*OF* 170 I B = 102 K); Syrianus, *in Aristot. Metaph.* 182.14 Kroll (*OF* 170 II B = 107 K). Bernabé compiles every reference to Night as queen in *OF* 168–171 B.

205. West 1983: 232.

The shrine or cave that is associated with Night is an element that continues from the Derveni poem but is modified or expanded in the Rhapsodies. In the Derveni poem, Night prophesies to Zeus "from the innermost shrine," and she does this again in the Rhapsodies, but none of the relevant fragments mentions a cave or shrine.[206] Instead, the shrine of Night appears elsewhere, in nonoracular circumstances. First, when Phanes creates the world, he does so from inside the cave of Night with her as his consort, and this is something that appears only in the Rhapsodies. Proclus quotes a verse in which Phanes "plucked the virginal flower of his own child," and according to Damascius, "Orpheus says that Night lives with the male Phanes."[207] In a verse that seems to have come from a description of the world that Phanes was creating, the Rhapsodies said that "these things are what the father made in the misty cave." Proclus calls Phanes and Night the "two rulers in the sky ... seated eternally in the innermost shrine," and Hermias says that "inside the shrine of Night sits Phanes."[208] With Night as his consort, Phanes performs the act of creation before he passes down the sceptre to her, and he does this from inside her shrine. This reconciles the earlier idea of Night as a primordial deity with her new position in the third generation of deities, and it finds a new function for her shrine.

There is another reference to the cave of Night, this time related to her function as nurse of the gods. According to Hermias, in the Rhapsodies Zeus is raised "in the cave of Night" and protected by Adrasteia, who makes noise with cymbals "in the front entrance of the cave of Night."[209] Night, the nurse of the gods and in particular Kronos, also takes on a protective role with Zeus, and her cave is an obviously appropriate location for this because in mainstream Greek myth Zeus is always raised as an infant in a cave.[210] The cave appears to be the traditional location for Night's activities in Orphic myth, whether she is creating the world with Phanes, nursing Kronos or Zeus, or prophesying to Zeus. Since Night prophesies to Zeus from a shrine in the Derveni poem and performs other actions from inside a cave or shrine in the Rhapsodies, it is reasonable to deduce that she prophesies to Zeus from inside her cave, even though the relevant fragments do not specify this. With the cave of Night, we see both continuity and modification between the Derveni poem and the Rhapsodies.

To summarize, scholars have been misled by Hermias' statement that there were three Nights in the Rhapsodies, since what Hermias had in mind

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206. DP 11.1 (*OF* 6.3 B); *OF* 219–220, 237–238 B.

207. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.22 Diehl (*OF* 148 I B = 98 K); Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 209 (2.42.21 Westerink) (*OF* 148 IV B = 98 K).

208. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = 97 K); 3.169.15 Diehl (*OF* 164 I B = 104 K); Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 162.6 Couvr. (*OF* 164 II B = 105 K).

209. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 161–162 Couvr. (*OF* 209, 211 B = 105 K).

210. E.g., Hesiod, *Theogony* 468–491; *OF* 205–215 B.

was his own metaphysical system, not a reconstruction of the narrative. There was one Night—not three—and she was the same Night who appeared in the Derveni and Eudemian theogonies, with a few modifications that helped her fit within the narrative of the Rhapsodies. Although Night is no longer the first of the gods, she maintains her roles as nurse of the gods, as prophetess, as ancestor of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus, and she keeps her cave, although it is put to new uses. In order to accommodate her traditional characterization in earlier poetry with the addition of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes, Night is made the daughter and consort of Phanes, who passes on his sceptre to her, making her the second ruler of the gods. Simply put, Night is removed from her primordial position in the genealogy, but in turn she is promoted to queen and continues to be the ancestor of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus.

This explanation is less confusing than reconstructions that attempt to account for the existence of three separate deities called Night in the Orphic Rhapsodies, but it might not resolve the apparent contradiction of certain fragments that still refer to Night as if she is the first primordial deity. The passages of Malalas and Stephanus cited above, as well as Damascius' statement that Night was the "first substance and nurse of all things,"[211] suggest that some passages of the Rhapsodies spoke of Night as if she were the first of the gods. Perhaps the composer of the Rhapsodic theogony conflated different versions without adequately dealing with all of the contradictions, or, alternatively, perhaps the compiler of the Rhapsodic collection included both a poem in which Night came after Phanes and a poem in which she was the first of the gods. This might help explain the passage of Olympiodorus that contradicts the Rhapsodies, in which he says that "in Orpheus four kingdoms are transmitted," namely Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-Dionysus, with no mention of Phanes. As Edmonds suggests, this fragment could be taken as evidence that there was more than one theogonic account in the Rhapsodic collection.[212] Perhaps we could conjecture at least a second poem that began with Night, not Chronos, continuing the tradition of the early Orphic theogonies. In this second poem, Night would be the first primordial deity, but Ouranos would be the first king of the gods, as he is in the Derveni poem. Maybe we could imagine a third poem in the Rhapsodic collection that addresses Night in some way, such as a hymn to Night. Then we would have three Nights in the Rhapsodies—that is, three separate poems in the collection that mention Night—and this might help to explain Hermias. But this would contradict neither the conclusion that it is the same goddess Night, not three separate goddesses called Night, nor

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211. John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (52 Thurn) (*OF* 107 I B = 65 K); Stephanus, *In Aristot. Rhet.* 319.1 Rabe (*OF* 107 III B); Damascius, *De Principiis* 62 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 112 II B = 131 K).
212. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 174 VII B = 107 K); Edmonds 2013: 152.

the observation that Hermias' statement about the three Nights is a statement about ontology, not chronology.

The Rhapsodic Succession Myth

The royal succession myth of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus is the narrative backbone of the Rhapsodies no less than it is the core structure of Hesiod's *Theogony*. As a traditional narrative in Greek theogonies, the succession myth remained remarkably stable in the Orphic tradition. It is central to the Derveni poem, and there appear to be references to the myth in our sources for the Eudemian and Hieronyman theogonies. This succession myth was fundamental to the way the Greeks understood their gods, so it is not surprising that in the Rhapsodies, the third, fourth, and fifth divine rulers are Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus.²¹³ Certain details of the narrative are different from Hesiod: Ocean chooses not to participate in the plan to castrate Ouranos, Night advises Zeus to drug Kronos with honey, and Zeus castrates Kronos. But the basic narrative structure is the same one we find in Hesiod. Ouranos and Gaia give birth to the Titans (of which there are twelve in Hesiod, fourteen in the Rhapsodies), but Ouranos forces the children to stay inside Gaia, so Kronos castrates his father. Kronos swallows his children to avoid being overthrown, but Rhea tricks him into swallowing a stone, and Zeus is raised in secret, guarded by the Curetes.²¹⁴

The Orphic poet seems to have built upon the traditional narrative without departing from the major pattern of action, but he added a few new details. One thing that stands out as a significant departure from Hesiod is the castration of Kronos. Here is an episode in which Zeus commits a scandalous disgrace against his father as part of the process by which he claims royal power for himself. This could be compared to the story of Zeus swallowing his grandfather's phallus in the Derveni poem, or to the Hittite myth of Kumarbi castrating his father and swallowing his son. The fragments indicate that the author of the Rhapsodic narrative did not just compile this material from previous Orphic tradition, but expanded and modified the tradition to create a unique version of the narrative.²¹⁵ Kronos castrates Ouranos and then Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos, but between these two events, where is the

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213. Syrianus, *in Aristot. Metaph.* 182.9–16 Kroll (*OF* 174 II B = 107, 111 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.168.15 Diehl; *in Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali (*OF* 98 II–IV B = 101, 107 K).

214. On Ocean, see *OF* 186 B = *OF* 135 K. This narrative also appears in Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.1.4. On Night advising Zeus, see *OF* 220–224 B. On Zeus castrating Kronos, see *OF* 225 B. Ouranos and Gaia giving birth to the Titans: *OF* 179 B and Hesiod, *Theogony* 133–137. The plot to castrate Ouranos: *OF* 185–193 B and *Theogony* 166–200. Kronos swallowing his children: *OF* 200–204 B and *Theogony* 453–467. Rhea tricking Kronos and Zeus being guarded by the Curetes: *OF* 205–215 B and *Theogony* 468–491.

215. Cf. West 1983: 121–136, 202–220, 266–267.

phallus? In the Rhapsodies, the narrative progresses a little more smoothly. Kronos castrates Ouranos, and the phallus falls into the sea, giving birth to Aphrodite as in Hesiod.[216] Then Zeus commits violence against the phallus of Kronos, except now instead of the act of swallowing it is the act of cutting that secures royal supremacy for Zeus (the act of swallowing happens afterward, when Zeus swallows Phanes). The story of Kronos in the Rhapsodies is thus best summarized by the phrase τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος ("cutting and being cut"), which appears to be a direct quotation of the poem.[217]

Unsurprisingly, this episode provided the Christian apologists with ammunition in their literary battles against the Pagans as an example of the scandalous deeds of the Greek gods,[218] while the Neoplatonists interpreted it as an allegory of their own metaphysical system. Accordingly, the key phrase for understanding the Neoplatonists' allegorical reading of Kronos in the Rhapsodies is also τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος. These two acts of castration—Kronos castrating Ouranos and being castrated by Zeus—were interpreted as the dividing point between the immaterial realm of ideas (i.e., Platonic Forms) and the material realm of physical objects. Or, as Brisson explains it, this is the monad that separates the transcendent gods from the inferior gods of the cosmos.[219] What better image for a dividing point could there be than the act of cutting? The monad that represents this dividing point is not seen as a deity, but as the combination of these two actions: the castration of Ouranos and the castration of Kronos.

As we saw in the last section, Ouranos was interpreted by the Neoplatonists as the middle triad in the Intelligible-Intellective level, with the individual members of the triad represented by the back, arch, and vault of the sky. In the myth, Ouranos and Gaia give birth to the Hundred-handers, who appear as the next triad in the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. However, the sources are not so neat and tidy. Hermias says that both the Hundred-handers and the Cyclopes are orders that proceed from Ouranos and Gaia, and elsewhere he notes that "there are many orders of Intellective gods from Ouranos to Zeus and many Forms."[220] In the Rhapsodies, Ouranos and Gaia give birth to fourteen Titans, which is different from the twelve Titans in Hesiod, but it is unclear how they fit into the Neoplatonic scheme at this level. The Neoplatonists instead connected the Titans with the lowest order of Encosmic gods; but we

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216. *OF* 189 B (=127 K) and Hesiod, *Theogony* 166–200.

217. *OF* 225 B (=137, 154, 220 K).

218. Origen, *c. Cels.* 4.48 (cf. *OF* 187 III, 200 VIII, 201 I, 214 IV B); Gregory Nanzianzus, *Or.* 31.16 (306 Gallay-Jourjon) (*OF* 200 VI, 201 III B = 171 K), 4.115 (276 Bernardi) (*OF* 200 VII, 201 II B); cf. Herrero 2010: 172–175; Bernabé ad *OF* 201 B.

219. Brisson 1995: 76.

220. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 143.13 Couvr. (*OF* 209 VII B); 148.19 Couvr. (*OF* 177 V B = 109 K); cf. Gregory Nanzianzus, *Or.* 31.16 (306 Gallay-Jourjon) (*OF* 191 II B = 171 K); Hesiod, *Theogony* 139–153 and West ad loc.; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.1.1 and Scarpi ad loc.

will return to this matter in chapter 6.[221] Finally, Gaia herself does not appear to play a role in the triadic structure, even though she is crucial to the narrative. Further down in this section, we will see how the Neoplatonists read the royal marriages of Ouranos and Gaia, Kronos and Rhea, and Zeus and Hera, but for now we can observe that, in the Neoplatonic interpretation of the Rhapsodies, these marriages do not seem to play as significant a role as the narrative of succession. The simple fact remains that there was more in the Rhapsodic narrative than just the elements with which the Neoplatonists were interested.

Brisson explains how Kronos fits into the Intellective level of the Neoplatonic system. The first Intellective triad consists of Kronos as "pure Intellect," the source of generative power, who is paired with Rhea as "Intellective life," the source of rest and movement. They give birth to Zeus, who completes the triad as "demiurgic Intellect," the "source of identity and alterity." Chlup calls Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus the "triad of paternal gods," and he calls the second triad—Athena, Kore, and the Curetes—the "triad of immaculate gods." Athena is associated with love and wisdom, Kore with purity, and the function of the Curetes who guard Rhea and Zeus is to protect the transcendence of both triads.[222] Below them, the monad of "cutting and being cut" (τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος) represents the separation of the gods in the Intellective sphere from the Encosmic levels below. This monad could also be understood as Zeus, not his actions, following Westerink, who identifies Kronos as "pure Intellect which is the first Intellective order," and Zeus as "the third order of the Intellectives."[223] The first triad represents the generative power by which the physical creation is made. It is the source of change and differentiation, but the transcendence of this triad is protected by the second triad through wisdom, purity, and protection. The actual dividing point between the creation that proceeds from Kronos and the generative power that produces the creation is represented by Kronos cutting and being cut, which is essentially equivalent to saying that it is represented by Zeus castrating Kronos.

Damascius explains how Kronos as Intellect relates to the levels above him in *De Principiis*, where he considers how the "unified" is an intermediate between the One and Intellect. He refers to "Orpheus, recognizing Kronos as Intellect ... [and] Night as first [monad in the level of] Being ... celebrating her in song as having reared Kronos in particular, as being the Intelligible object [known by] Intellect."[224] Night represents this intermediate, and it is

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221. The birth of the Titans was presumably narrated in the Rhapsodies. At *OF* 178 B, Ouranos throws them into Tartarus. *OF* 179 B lists the names of the fourteen Titans, a list identical to Hesiod's other than the addition of Phorkys and Dione (cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 133–137). Proclus relates the Titans to "separation and progression" at *in Plat. Tim.* 3.186.7 Diehl (*OF* 191 I B = 117, 135 K) and mentions "the Titanic division" at *in Plat. Tim.* 3.249.16 Diehl (*OF* 202 II B).

222. Brisson 1995: 76–81; Chlup 2012: 126.

223. Westerink ad Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 181 I B = 131 K).

224. Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 181 I, 182 II B = 131 K); see Westerink ad loc.

through contemplating her that Kronos as Intellect comprehends the One. In the other direction, Kronos is the generative power from which all of physical creation proceeds, but he is at rest and untouched by it. Therefore, Proclus argues that Kronos is "Intelligible in relation to all the Intellective gods." His transcendence is maintained by "his freedom from contact with matter, his undividedness and his unrelatedness."[225] On the basis of this allegory, Proclus explains how Kronos relates to the inferior members of the Intellective level:

> Such is the superiority of this god in relation to any coordination with inferior things, such his immaculate unity in relation to the Intelligible, that he does not need the protection of the Curetes, as do Rhea, Zeus, and Kore. For by reason of their processions into what is subsequent to them, all of these require the constant protection of the Curetes. But Kronos, being stably situated in himself and having removed himself from all things secondary to him, transcends any need for a guard from the Curetes, but uniformly contains even their cause. For this pure and untainted aspect of his provides subsistence to all the processions of the Curetes.[226]

The other, lower members of the Intellective level consist of a series of intermediary points, under the protection of the Curetes, between Kronos and the physical creation. The Curetes are understood as guardians, protecting Rhea, Zeus, and Kore from contact with physical matter, but Kronos transcends the need for their protection because he is nowhere near having contact with matter. This is the exact opposite of the actual purpose of the Curetes in the myth, which is to protect Rhea and Zeus from Kronos.

The first intermediary between Kronos and physical matter is Rhea, whom Proclus places in this triad because "both Plato and Orpheus say that she is the mother of the Demiurge of the universe, but the second deity of Kronos."[227] Perhaps the best way to understand her role is by observing the way the Neoplatonists read divine marriages in general. In his commentary on the *Parmenides*, Proclus discusses the unification and separation of Platonic Forms and suggests that the intermingling of Forms has a generative capacity that we understand as cause and effect:

> These are not distinctions that we have invented. But the theologians have expressed them symbolically through the sacred marriages. In general they call a "marriage," in their mystical language, a

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225. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 57.26–58.3 Pasquali.
226. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1–10 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I B = 150 K); see Duvick ad loc.
227. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.11 (5.35.22 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 206 IV B = 134 K). See also Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1–10 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I B = 150 K) and Duvick ad loc.

homogeneous union and community between two divine causes. Such a union they sometimes find between beings of the same rank, and so speak of the marriages of Zeus and Hera, of Ouranos and Ge, of Kronos and Rhea.[228]

The marriage of two deities is allegorized as the combining of two divine causes, which results in some aspect of creation. In his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus contrasts Hera with Rhea in terms of their functions as divine causes. Linking Hera with Zeus as Demiurge, he says that Hera is "the source of all Titanic division," while Rhea is the one "who comprehends in herself all the life-giving powers, and who at last brings forth Nature itself."[229] In other words, Rhea contains within herself the generative power she receives from Kronos, and she projects this generative power from herself, while Hera receives the differentiation of the Forms from Zeus the Demiurge and projects them down toward the division of physical matter.

This metaphysical explanation of marriages as an allegory for the combining of divine causes overlaps to a large extent with the literal meaning of sexual procreation. The female deity is envisioned as the receptacle of the male deity's generative capacity, as Proclus explains in his *Timaeus* commentary:

> Everything that proceeds from the male is also brought to birth by the female, preserving its subordinate role. So Hera proceeds in company with Zeus, giving birth to all things together with the father; for this reason she is also called "his equal accomplisher." And Rhea proceeds in company with Kronos, for this goddess is the recess that harbours all the power of Kronos. And Ge proceeds in company with Ouranos, as Ge is mother of all that Ouranos has fathered.[230]

Kronos, possessing the generative power from which creation proceeds, fills Rhea with this power, and she acts as a receptacle, the "recess that harbors all [his] power." She does not give birth to creation as such, but to Zeus the Demiurge, as Proclus explains in *Platonic Theology*: "Plato following the theologians copiously unfolds them to us, celebrating in song after the Kronian monad the kingdom of Rhea, constituting from these the Demiurge of the universe, and all the multitude of gods that is woven together with him."[231] This metaphysical explanation does not ultimately escape the concept of sexual generation. Filled

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228. Proclus, *in Plat. Parmen.* 775.20–27 Cousin (*OF* 175 II, 194 I, 255 VI B); cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 83.1 Pasquali (*OF* 183 II B = 112 K); see also Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.49.12 Diehl (*OF* 255 III B = 163 K) and Festugière ad loc.; Bidez and Cumont 1938: 91–97.

229. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.249.16 Diehl (*OF* 202 II B = 56, 161 K); see Festugière ad loc.

230. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.46.25–47.3 (*OF* 175 II, 196 III, 256 II B).

231. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.11 (5.37.26 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 196 III B).

with generative power, Kronos inseminates Rhea, and she gives birth to Zeus, whom Proclus calls "the Demiurge of the universe." Thus we have the first Intellective triad, consisting of Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus. Kronos contemplates the Intelligible Forms and passes his generative power through the intermediary of Rhea to Zeus, who initiates creation through the lower orders. In this way, Kronos is the source of the Demiurge's creative power, but he remains transcendent from creation by channeling his creative energy through Rhea.

The second Intellective triad consists of Athena, Kore, and the Curetes. As in Hesiod and Greek tradition generally, so in the Rhapsodies Zeus gives birth to Athena out of his head,[232] so even in a strictly narratological sense Athena literally proceeds from Zeus. Proclus reads this allegorically as Athena being the leader of the Curetic order that proceeds from the Demiurge, in the metaphysical sense of a lower level proceeding from a higher one. Traditionally associated with wisdom and war strategy, Athena is seen as a sort of executive manager of the creative work of her father or, to put it in more metaphysical terms, she represents the top intermediary level between the demiurgic Intellect and the inferior orders that proceed from him. According to Proclus, Athena "reveals rhythmic dance by the motion that she also shares first of all with the Curetic order, but secondly with the other gods as well; for by this power Athena is leader of the Curetes, as Orpheus says."[233] Putting in motion, so to speak, the creation of the Demiurge, Athena becomes the leader of the Curetes, who are known first and foremost for their rhythmic motion. Characterized by their dancing and by the crashing of drums and cymbals, the Curetes are often associated with mystery rites in which the ῥόπτρον ("tambourine") and τύμπανον ("drum") are used.[234] They are associated with both Zeus and Dionysus, since they also protect Dionysus in his infancy, and their association with Zeus appears to be based upon ancient practices of the use of drums in cave rituals in archaic Crete.[235] In the Rhapsodies, the Curetes protect Zeus by standing outside the cave of Night and playing musical instruments loudly

232. OF 266–268 B and *Theogony* 886–900, 929a–t; cf. Lobeck 1829: 539–541; West 1983: 242–243; Brisson 1995: 65.

233. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 112.14 Pasquali (*OF* 267 I B = 185 K). Proclus mentions Athena as leader of the Curetes more than once; see *Theol. Plat.* 5.35 (5.128.5–25 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 267 II, 268 II B = 151 K); *in Plat. Remp.* 1.138.12 Kroll (*OF* 268 B = 186 K); *in Plat. Tim.* 3.310.25 Diehl (*OF* 268 III = 186 K); cf. Strabo 10.3.19; Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.168.27–169.3 Diehl (*OF* 264 B = 176 K); West 1983: 137–138.

234. See Callimachus, fr. 761 Pfeiffer; Agathon, *Anth. Gr.* 6.74.6–7; Cornutus, *de nat. deor.* 30 (59.21 Lang); and Lucianus, *Podagra* 36–38, all of whom associate ῥόπτρα with the frenzied dancing of initiates; cf. Bushala 1969: 171–172; Bernabé ad *OF* 212 B; *OF* 655 B; fr. 181 at Janko 2000: 401. The τύμπανα are associated with Phrygian rites in Euripides, *Bacchae* 58–59; Diogenes, *TrGF* 88 F1, 2–4 Snell; and with Orpheus at Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1139 (*OF* 526 B).

235. See *OF* 205 B and Bernabé ad loc.; Tiverios, "Zeus," *LIMC* VIII (1997)316n11; Huxley 1967: 85–87; West ad Hesiod, *Theogony* 453–506).

in order to drown out the cries of the infant and protect him from Kronos.[236] In Apollodorus' account, Rhea gives birth to Zeus "in a cave of Dicte" on Crete and hands him over "to the Curetes and to the nymphs Adrasteia and Ida, daughters of Milesseus, to nurse."[237] Hermias says that Adrasteia and Amaltheia raise Zeus "in the cave of Night," and Proclus tells us that Adrasteia takes up "copper tambourines" and a "clear-sounding drum" and begins "to guard the Demiurge of the universe … thus to produce a sound so loud that it made all the gods turn to her."[238] By making noise outside the cave of Night, the Curetes guard the infant Zeus and his mother Rhea until Zeus is ready to overthrow his father Kronos. In the same way, the Curetes guard Persephone and Dionysus (presumably from the wrath of Hera), which explains in part how Kore fits into the Curetic triad; but we will return to this in chapter 6.[239]

This point is obvious, but worth repeating: in the myth, the reason why the Curetes gather around Zeus is to protect him from Kronos. The Neoplatonists read it the opposite way. Proclus argues that Kronos "does not need the protection of the Curetes, as do Rhea, Zeus, and Kore; for by reason of their processions into what is subsequent to them, all of these require the constant protection of the Curetes."[240] In other words, since the lower levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system proceed from Rhea, Zeus, and Kore, these deities require the protection of the Curetes in order to maintain their transcendence in the realm of immaterial Forms on the level of Intellect. They do not need protection from Kronos, but from having direct contact with the physical matter of creation, while Kronos maintains his transcendence at the highest point of the Intellective order, filtering his contact with material creation through Rhea. On this point, the Neoplatonists wander so far astray from the traditional meaning of the story that they argue its opposite, but at least it is based on one substantial fact about the Curetes in traditional Greek myth, namely their function as guardians.

Finally, what appears at the bottom of the Intellective order is not a deity, but an action: Zeus overthrowing Kronos by means of castration, at the climax of a non-Hesiodic episode encapsulated by the phrase "cutting and being cut." In the Rhapsodies, before Zeus castrates his father, he first puts him to sleep with a honey-based drink. Night advises him, "As soon as you see him under

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236. *OF* 208–213 B. See also Hesiod, *Theogony* 468–491; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.1.6–7 (*OF* 208 II, 209 III, 213 VI B) and Scarpi ad loc.

237. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.1.6 (*OF* 205, 208 II B).

238. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 161.15 Couvr. (*OF* 209 I B = 105 K) and Bernabé ad loc.; Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.17 (4.52.16 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 212 B = 152 K); cf. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 162.2 Couvr. (*OF* 211 B = 105b K). Amaltheia is variously depicted as the daughter of Ocean (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.7.5), a nymph (Pindar, fr. 70 [249a] Sn.-Maehl; Musaeus, fr. 84 B), or a goat (Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 46–51).

239. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.35 (5.127.21 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 278 II B = 151 K); *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1–10 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I, 278 I B = 150 K) and Duvick ad loc.; Brisson 1995: 66.

240. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I, 213 I, 278 B = 151 K).

trees with high foliage / drunk with the works of loud-buzzing bees, / bind him."[241] Zeus follows Night's advice, according to Porphyry's paraphrase where "in Orpheus, Kronos was ambushed by Zeus by means of honey; for filled with honey he was drunk and he was blinded as if from wine and he slept."[242] Kronos "steps aside from his rule to the advantage of Zeus, 'cutting and being cut,' as the myth states." Elsewhere, Proclus refers more explicitly to Kronos "being castrated by the mighty Zeus."[243] Here the Rhapsodic poet follows the same pattern of action as Odysseus and Polyphemus in *Odyssey* 9: first Zeus gets Kronos drunk, and then he attacks him in his sleep, mutilating not his eye but his phallus.

Probably the original meaning of the poem was that this is the means by which Zeus overthrows his father to become the king of the gods. Like Hesiod, early Orphic theogonies, and some Near Eastern myths, this is a common narrative pattern in which the storm god claims his position as king of the gods by overthrowing his father, often with an act of mutilation. In the Rhapsodies, the added details of the honey-potion and castration expand the traditional narrative, more widely known from Hesiod, into something new and unique, even scandalous. The Orphic version opened up the narrative to new interpretations, such as that of Proclus, who suggests that this narrative is about the "divisions and bonds" enacted by the Demiurge:

> But the paradigmatic [causes] are the divisions and bonds of the father,
> for he cuts these things first and binds them with unbreakable bonds.
> The theologians present these matters enigmatically when they speak
> about the cuts and bonds of Kronos with which the maker of the
> universe is said to surround himself.[244]

This is somewhat different from the interpretation of Apion in Pseudo-Clement's *Homilies*, who says that "the bonds of Kronos are the binding together of sky and earth … and his mutilation is the separation and parting of the elements."[245] Apion applies a physical allegory in which the events of the myth represent scientific processes, but Proclus is still talking about an ontological level at which the physical universe does not yet exist.

When we first see Zeus in the Rhapsodies and, correspondingly, in the triadic scheme of Neoplatonic metaphysics, he appears as an infant, the son

241. Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.18 Simonini (*OF* 220 B = 189 K); cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 92.14 Pasquali (*OF* 221 B = 189 K); West 1983: 133–136.

242. Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.15 Simonini (*OF* 222 B = 154 K); cf. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.2.26.2 (*OF* 223 B = 149 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 1.138.23 Kroll (*OF* 224 B = 148 K).

243. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 55.12 (*OF* 225 I B = 137 K); *Theol. Plat.* 5.5 (5.24.10 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 225 II B) and Saffrey and Westerink ad loc.

244. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.208.30 Diehl (*OF* 225 III B = 154 K).

245. Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clem. Rom. *Homil.* 6.13.1 (111.9 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 225 VI B).

of Rhea being protected by the Curetes from his father, Kronos, on the top triad of the level of Intellect. At the bottom of this level, Zeus reappears as the Demiurge. His act of binding the drunken, sleeping Kronos represents how the Demiurge is bound to the creation below him, but his act of castrating Kronos represents the way he cuts off the physical creation from Kronos (and from deities further up the ladder). These actions represent the dividing point between the immaterial realm of Forms and the material world below it, and this is the sense in which Brisson and Chlup read these actions as a monad.[246] Perhaps one can also see this monad as Zeus, not just his actions, at the moment when he seizes royal power and becomes the king of the gods, allegorized as the fully functioning Demiurgic Intellect. Proclus, in his *Timaeus* commentary, makes it clear that when he speaks of the Dermiurgic Intellect, he means Zeus in the Orphic Rhapsodies:

> Just as the theologian establishes the rank of the Curetes around [Zeus], so Plato too says that there are "frightening guards" around him. … Let these words be sufficient to indicate who the Demiurge is and that he is a divine Intellect who is the cause of the entire work of creation, and let it be remembered from the present account that it is the same Demiurge who is celebrated as Zeus by both Orpheus and Plato.[247]

Proclus attributes to Syrianus this allegorization of Zeus as Demiurge when he says that "there is a single Demiurge who marks off the limit of the Intellective gods."[248] At the lowest point in the level of Intellect, Zeus marks the boundary between the immaterial upper levels and the material lower levels. All of the Forms from above are contained within him as he reverts toward the higher-level Intelligible deities, who in turn revert to the One. Downward from him, the Forms proceed toward the lowest levels of physical matter, through the agency of lower demiurgic deities. Therefore, Zeus as Demiurge on the level of Intellect is the very center-point of the Neoplatonic universe, at the absolute middle between the One first principle of the universe and the Many manifestations of physical matter.

The level of Intellect in the Neoplatonic universe is located at the bottom of those levels that exist solely in the sphere of Platonic Forms. Within this level, the top triad is represented by the transcendent Kronos, who has the generative capacity of creation but is untouched by creation; Rhea, who receives this generative capacity and channels it downward; and Zeus, who becomes

246. Brisson 1995: 76–81; Chlup 2012: 126.
247. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.317.14 Diehl (*OF* 229 I B = 151 K), citing Plato, *Prot.* 321d6–7.
248. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.310.7 Diehl (*OF* 229 II, 243 XXXV B = 157 K) and Runia and Share ad loc.

the Demiurgic Intellect. The middle triad is the Curetic order: the Curetes, led by Athena, protecting Kore (as well as Rhea and Zeus). At the bottom is Zeus as Demiurge, at the moment when he overthrows Kronos, "cutting and being cut." The Neoplatonists read episodes of the Rhapsodies as allegories for these concepts, but it is unlikely that the Orphic poet had any of these metaphysics in mind. In the Rhapsodies, Kronos and Rhea give birth to Zeus, who is not only protected as an infant by the Curetes, but also nursed by a triad of nymphs: Ida, Adrasteia, and Amaltheia.[249] When Zeus has grown up, on the advice of his great-grandmother, the prophetess Night, he gives Kronos a honey-based drink that gets him drunk and puts him to sleep. While Kronos sleeps, Zeus ties him up and castrates him, and this is how he acquires his royal power as king of the gods. In the poetic narrative found in the Rhapsodies, this is a reiteration of the traditional succession myth, into which the bricoleur has injected certain actions and motifs that are not found in Hesiod but still reflect familiar narrative elements from earlier theogonic traditions. Another episode that is not found in Hesiod is Zeus swallowing Phanes, which is one of the means by which he secures his royal power shortly after it has been acquired. The Neoplatonists read this as another allegory concerning the Demiurgic Intellect—Zeus as Demiurge swallows Phanes as Paradigm, and thus he becomes filled with the Forms—and this is the topic of the next section.

Zeus the Demiurge Swallows Phanes the Paradigm

In traditional Greek myth, after Zeus acquires power as king of the gods, he faces and overcomes certain types of challenges to his rule. There are many stories about Zeus defending his rule through various means. In some cases, he secures his royal power by defeating a powerful enemy, such as in the battles against the Titans and Typhoeus, which constitute two major episodes in Hesiod's *Theogony*.[250] In other cases, Zeus secures his royal power by preventing a successor from overthrowing him: he swallows Metis, so Athena is born from his head; and he makes Thetis marry Peleus to ensure that Achilles is born as a mortal.[251] Zeus, like his father, Kronos, and the Hittite god Kumarbi before him, uses the act of swallowing as one of the means by which he hopes to prevent a successor from taking away his royal power. As we saw in chapter 2, this is an ancient narrative type that is central but controversial to

249. See *OF* 208–213 B and Bernabé ad loc.
250. Titans: Hesiod, *Theogony* 674–720; Typhoeus: Hesiod, *Theogony* 820–868. There also seems to be evidence of a Titanomachy in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 178 B = 121 K; *OF* 192 B = 136 K; *OF* 232 B = 120 K; *OF* 234 B = 122 K; *OF* 235 B).
251. Metis: Hesiod, *Theogony* 885–900, 929e–t; Yasumura 2011: 86–96; Thetis: Homer, *Iliad* 1.399–406, 493–530; 18.79–93; 24.59–60, 534–537; *Cypria*, fr. 2 Bernabé; Hesiod, fr. 210 M-W; Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1036–1079; Yasumura 2011: 13–38.

any reading of the Derveni poem. There Zeus swallows either all of Protogonos or the phallus of Ouranos, both to secure his rule once he has acquired it and to absorb the generative capacity and cunning intelligence needed to re-create the universe.[252] Although there is no easy solution to the debate over the Derveni Papyrus, there is no question that in the Rhapsodies Zeus swallows the entire body of Phanes, and thus he absorbs the entire creation into his own body.[253] This allows Zeus to re-create the universe, which elevates him to the position of being the first and greatest ruling deity, and for a brief moment he is the only one in existence. The Rhapsodic episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes is best understood as another one of the means by which Zeus attempts to secure his royal power soon after he has acquired it, similar to the act of swallowing Metis in Hesiod and the phallus of Ouranos (or the body of Phanes) in the Derveni poem.

As we have come to expect of the Neoplatonists, they do not read this narrative literally as a succession myth, but allegorically as an image of the Demiurge (δημιουργός) being filled with the Forms by contemplating the Paradigm (παράδειγμα). This Paradigm is Phanes, who represents the lowest Intelligible triad and contains the Forms of creation within himself, but in a relatively undifferentiated manner that completely transcends physical matter. Zeus is Intellective Intellect (νοερὸς νοῦς), who differentiates the Forms through the agency of deities in the lower levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. He is the Demiurge who initiates creation, understood as the manifestation of universal, singular Forms through multiple particular entities. But before the Demiurge can initiate creation, first he must be filled with the Forms through contemplation of the Intelligible Intellect (νοητὸς νοῦς) that is above him. The Demiurge as Intellective subject looks to the Living-Thing-itself (αὐτοζῷον) as Intelligible object, which acts as a model or Paradigm. Based upon Syrianus' and Proclus' interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*,[254] the relationship between Paradigm and Demiurge is central to the structure of the Neoplatonic universe. As the Demiurge is the center-point between the One first principle of everything and the Many that exist in physical matter, so the Paradigm is the center-point between the One and the Demiurge. While discussing these concepts, the Neoplatonists found a narrative in the Rhapsodies that clearly illustrates the relationship between the Demiurge and the Paradigm: Zeus swallowing Phanes.

In this section, I explain how the Neoplatonists use this episode of the Rhapsodies as a metaphysical allegory, which leads to an important way

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252. DP 13.1, 4 (*OF* 7–8 B); DP 16.3 (*OF* 12.1 B).
253. *OF* 237–243 B; West 1983: 72–73; Brisson 1995: 62.
254. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.310.12 Diehl (*OF* 229 II B), where Proclus attributes this interpretation to Syrianus; cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.314.22 Diehl (*OF* 240 VII B); 1.324.14 Diehl (*OF* 240 I B = 129 K) and Runia and Share ad loc.

in which their interpretation can inform our own reading of the Orphic Rhapsodies. The story of Zeus swallowing Phanes was absolutely central to Neoplatonic interpretations of the Rhapsodies, and this explains why we have so many fragments of this narrative and the related Orphic Hymn to Zeus. In fact, because this story was so important to the Neoplatonists, they have preserved more fragments about Zeus than about Dionysus. This large quantity of fragments, although it is the direct result of Neoplatonic interpretation, must have been based on something substantial within the text, for as we shall see, the allegorical concepts of Paradigm and Demiurge fit the narrative very well, which is not to suggest that the Orphic poem meant precisely the same thing as the allegory that was applied to it. What it suggests is that behind the Neoplatonic allegories, in the text of the Rhapsodies, Zeus was a central figure to the narrative: if not more important than Dionysus, then he was at least more important than has been previously acknowledged.

Thanks to the emphasis that the Neoplatonists placed on Zeus swallowing Phanes, we have several significant passages of poetry from this episode. First, Zeus consults with the prophetess Night, in order to find out how he might secure his royal power over the gods:

> Mother, highest of the gods, immortal Night, how, tell me this,
> how must I establish the stout-hearted rule of the immortals?
> Tell me, how can it be that all things are one and yet each is separate?[255]

Night replies,

> Surround all things with unspeakable aither, and in the middle
> place the sky, and therein the boundless earth, and the sea,
> and therein all the constellations, which the sky has surrounded.
> But when you have stretched a firm bond over everything,
> suspend a golden chain from the aither.[256]

Scholars are unsure whether Night gives Zeus this advice at the same time as she advises him to feed Kronos honey, or whether this is from a second consultation in which Zeus, apparently reconciled with Kronos, consults with him as well, asking him to "direct our generation, glorious *daimon*."[257] West was inclined to think that they come from the same conversation, but Bernabé and Brisson think this occurs after Zeus has taken the sceptre and defeated the Titans.[258] West argues that "this is certainly a Hellenistic contribution to the

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255. *OF* 237.1–3 B (= 164–166 K).
256. *OF* 237.4–8 B (= 164–166 K).
257. *OF* 239 B; see *OF* 220, 240, 247 II, 251 B and Bernabé ad loc.
258. West 1983: 72–73 (cf. Lobeck 1829: 515–519; A. Holwerda 1894: 318–319); Brisson 1995: 61–62. Bernabé's chronological arrangement has Night's advice to Zeus about the honey-drink at *OF*

story," where the golden chain is the means by which Zeus is able to "unify the contents of the cosmos" to contain them within a finite area.[259] The chain is perceived here in physical terms as a bond that extends through the different layers of the universe: the sky, the earth, the sea, and the constellations. Zeus asks Night how he might establish his rule, and Night tells him to contain the physical creation within a finite space delimited by the aither, represented as a golden chain.

After Zeus listens to the prophetic advice of Night, his own stomach becomes the golden chain in which he contains the universe, when he "both swallows his ancestor Phanes and embraces all of his powers."[260] By swallowing Phanes, Zeus swallows all of the previous creation, as described in a fragment reconstructed from five quotations by Proclus:

> So when he had taken in the might of firstborn Erikepaios,
> he held the form of all things in his hollow stomach,
> and he mixed in his limbs the power and strength of the god,
> and for this reason everything in turn was gathered inside Zeus,
> 5   the wide aither and the glorious height of the sky,
> the seat of both the barren sea and the glorious earth,
> and great Ocean and Tartarus the lowest part of the earth
> and the rivers and the boundless sea and everything else
> and the blessed immortal gods and goddesses,
> 10   and as many as were in existence and as many as would be after,
> became one, and in the stomach of Zeus he engendered it about to be
>   scattered.[261]

If this is a fragment of a continuous Rhapsodic theogony (and not a Rhapsodic collection), then this is approximately the point at which the poet pauses to reflect on Zeus' newfound power in the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B = 168 K). This hymn elaborates upon the royal splendour of Zeus and describes in detail how different parts of his body become different parts of the cosmos. Zeus becomes equated with the universe, and he becomes the only god in existence, but only for a brief moment of time, for "having concealed everything in turn, he intended to bring it forth / back again into the delightful light from his heart, doing wondrous things."[262] Zeus re-creates

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220 B, the sceptre at *OF* 226 B, the Titanomachy at *OF* 232 B, and Night's advice about the golden chain at *OF* 237 B.

    259. West 1983: 237–239; cf. Yasumura 2011: 39–57.

    260. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 62.3 Pasquali (*OF* 240 I B = 129 K).

    261. *OF* 241 B = 167 K: Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.307.28 Diehl [v. 11]; 1.313.2 Diehl [vv. 4–11]; 1.324.14 Diehl [vv. 1–4]; *in Plat. Parmen.* 799.27 Cousin [v. 11]; 959.18 Cousin [v. 10]; cf. Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.10 Couvr. (*OF* 241 VI B).

    262. *OF* 243.31–32 B = 168 K.

the cosmos by bringing it back out of his own body. At some point, the Orphic poet seems to have used the Homeric phrase "father of both men and gods," which might refer in this context to his generative capacity as a creator deity.[263] After this, the narrative seems to have followed the Hesiodic model, with the acquisition of royal power followed by a catalogue of the different wives, lovers, and children of Zeus. In the Rhapsodies, this seems to have led to the story of Dionysus and the Titans.[264]

As we have seen, the prophetess Night performs here a role that she has played since the Derveni poem, as a prophetess with whom Zeus consults. Zeus has just finished obtaining royal power, and he asks Night how he might secure this power. In the Rhapsodies, Night advises him to pull the entire universe together with a golden chain, which means that he must contain the universe within a finite space surrounded by aither. Zeus takes this advice to mean that he must swallow his ancestor Phanes, for in doing so he takes the entire creation into his own stomach. Having become momentarily equated with the entire universe, Zeus brings it back again out of his stomach and re-creates the universe, and in doing so he becomes the first, greatest, and most powerful of the gods. This episode is best understood as one of the means by which Zeus secures his power as king. It is a supporting narrative that the Orphic poet has added to the basic structure of the traditional succession myth that is known from Hesiod. In its simplest terms, the poet considers how it is that Zeus can be the king of the gods when he is not the first of the gods, and the answer is that Zeus swallows Phanes and re-creates the gods.

The Neoplatonists found much of value in this episode of Zeus securing his power, but their allegorical interpretations have more to do with the aspect of Zeus as a creator deity. They interpreted the episode as an allegory for the means by which Zeus as Demiurge initiates the creation of the universe. The Demiurge is the dividing point between the realm of immaterial Forms and the realm of material objects. Proclus says that he "marks off the limit of the Intellective gods" and elaborates that

being filled with the Intelligible monads and the sources of life, he projects from himself the entire work of creation and, after placing the more partial fathers in charge of the universe, he establishes himself unmoved on the peak of Olympus. He rules eternally over two worlds, the supercelestial and the celestial, embracing the beginning, the middle, and the ends of the universe.[265]

263. *OF* 244 B and Bernabé ad loc.; see Homer, *Iliad* 1.544 and Kirk ad loc.

264. *OF* 244–331 B; cf. the affairs of Zeus in Hesiod, *Theogony* 885–962.

265. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.310.7 Diehl (*OF* 229 II, 243 XXXV B = 157 K); cf. 1.317.14 Diehl (*OF* 229 I B = 151 K).

The Intelligible monads to which Proclus refers consist of the top levels of the metaphysical system, including Phanes, Night, and Kronos, while the "more partial fathers" consist of the groups of deities who proceed from Zeus (mainly the Olympians). These deities make up the next two levels of the Neoplatonic universe.[266] Zeus is interpreted as the monad who exists on the level of Intellect. As such, he proceeds from the levels above him and is "filled" by them, and he "projects from himself" the lower levels.

By contemplating the Forms as they exist in the Paradigm, the Demiurge becomes filled with the Forms. The Forms then proceed from him to the lower levels, resulting in the creation of the physical universe. The Demiurge ultimately looks to the Paradigm, or as Proclus puts it, he "becomes all things Intellectively that Phanes was Intelligibly." Elsewhere he says that "Phanes is seen, and Zeus sees, and Phanes is swallowed, but Zeus fills himself with Phanes' power."[267] But Zeus as Demiurgic Intellect cannot directly approach Phanes as Intelligible Paradigm, since the level of Intellect is separated from the Intelligible by the triads of Intelligible-Intellective deities that are placed between them. This is how the Neoplatonists explain the mediation of the prophetess Night, as Proclus indicates in his *Timaeus* commentary:

> Now while Plato says that [the Demiurge] looks to the Living-Thing-itself, Orpheus says that [the Demiurge] leaped upon and swallowed [the Intelligible]—that is, after Night showed [him how to], for since Night is simultaneously Intelligible and Intellective, the Intellective Intellect is connected to the Intelligible.[268]

Because Phanes and Zeus are two levels away from each other in the Neoplatonic scheme, Zeus as Intellect must go through the intermediary of Night to make contact with the Intelligible Phanes. This is in line with the belief that formed the basis of Proclus' theurgical practices: the idea that humans cannot approach the One directly, but must do so through the mediation of lower-order deities. In the same manner, lower-order deities can only approach higher-order deities through mediators, so Zeus looks to Phanes through the mediation of Night.[269]

Reading the narrative through the lens of Neoplatonic allegory, the presence of Kronos in the prophecy scene is coherent with the idea of Night as intermediary, for Kronos at the top level of Intellect is an even closer intermediary than Night. Proclus refers to the prophecies of Night and Kronos

266. Brisson 1995: 77–84; Chlup 2012: 126–127.

267. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 62.3 Pasquali (*OF* 240 I B = 129 K); *in Plat. Tim.* 1.312.9 Diehl (*OF* 240 III B = 97 K). See also *in Plat. Tim.* 2.93.18 Diehl (*OF* 240 VIII B) and Festugière ad loc.

268. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.102.1 Diehl (*OF* 240 VI B = 82 K); cf. Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.13 Westerink) (*OF* 240 IV B) and Westerink ad loc.

269. Chlup 2012: 30–32, 168–185. On deities lower than Zeus, see Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.10 Couvr. (*OF* 241 VI B = 167 K).

in the same passage in his commentary on the *Cratylus*, which adds weight to the possibility that *OF* 237 and 239 B come from the same passage of the Rhapsodies. He argues that "the supreme Kronos too instills from above the principles of the Intellective thoughts in the Demiurge and governs the whole creative process." Proclus continues by relating Zeus' swallowing of Phanes with Kronos' swallowing of his children:

> Through his acts of swallowing, [Kronos] leads his offspring back together, unifies them with himself, and restores them to the uniform and indivisible cause of himself. Indeed, the Demiurge Zeus proximately receives from him the truth of what is real and primarily contemplates what is in him. For Night too prophesies to him, but his father does so proximately and instills in him all the measures of the universal creation.[270]

According to this allegory, Kronos swallowing his children and Zeus swallowing Phanes both represent these deities containing within themselves the levels of creation that proceed from them. Zeus has contact with Kronos because of their proximity, both ontologically in the metaphysical scheme and genetically in the myth. Phanes mating with Night, Night nursing Kronos, and now Kronos advising Zeus are taken as allegories explaining how the monads on each level of the metaphysical system can approach the higher levels only through intermediaries. In the top Intellective position, Kronos contains the generative capacity for creation but remains aloof from it. He is the closer monad to Zeus: "in contiguous relation," as Duvick puts it, Zeus "reverts back to" Kronos and Night. Through them, he reverts to Phanes, who is inaccessible as an Intelligible monad but contiguous with Night, the top monad on the Intelligible-Intellective level. In this way, Night functions as "Zeus' link to the Intelligible."[271]

The golden chain then becomes an image for the link that binds the various levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. As Chlup explains, although the bottom levels cannot approach the top levels, nevertheless everything ultimately proceeds from and reverts to the One, with the result that each level is indirectly connected to every other level.[272] When Night advises Zeus to "stretch a firm bond over everything" (*OF* 237.7 B), Proclus takes this to mean that "this is certainly the powerful and indissoluble bond that proceeds from nature and soul and Intellect."[273] In his *Timaeus* commentary, he argues that

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270. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 27.21 Pasquali (*OF* 239 I B = 155 K); cf. *in Plat. Tim.* 3.99.17 Diehl (*OF* 240 IX B).

271. Duvick ad Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 27.21 Pasquali (*OF* 239 I B = 155 K).

272. Chlup 2012: 101–104.

273. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.313.31 Diehl (*OF* 237 IV B = 166 K).

divine friendship and bountiful provision of the good hold together the whole cosmos ... for though the bond that derives from Intellect and soul is strong, as Orpheus also says, nonetheless the unity of the golden chain is greater and is a cause of greater good for all things.[274]

It would appear that whether the golden chain is seen literally as the aither, metaphorically as the stomach of Zeus, or allegorically as the metaphysical bonds that hold the universe together, each of these interpretations agrees that the golden chain is the means by which Zeus keeps the cosmos in one piece. The golden chain is the answer to Zeus' question, "how can it be that all things are one and yet each is separate" (*OF* 237.3 B). It can be this way because all things are held together by the chain. Damascius refers to this in his *Phaedo* commentary when he argues that "in the same way as the universe is simultaneously coming-to-be and passing away, so it is also being joined together and dissolved; for integration and decomposition exist side by side in it."[275] The Neoplatonists refer to the golden chain on numerous other occasions, but what we have seen here is sufficient to understand how it fits into this particular allegory. The link between Zeus and Phanes, connected through the intermediaries of Night and Kronos, is extended downward from the Demiurge to the world of physical matter.[276] The golden chain of Zeus is allegorized as the ontological link between Phanes and the lowest levels of the Neoplatonic universe.

Whereas the prophecy of Night allegorically represents the mediation of the Intelligible-Intellective deity between the Paradigm and the Demiurge, the swallowing of Phanes represents the way "the Demiurge looks toward the Paradigm."[277] Proclus quotes the first four lines of *OF* 241 B where Zeus swallows Phanes, and he equates the Living-Thing-itself in Plato's *Timaeus* with Phanes, arguing,

The theologian supposed that [the Demiuge] leaped, as it were, upon the Intelligible and swallowed it, as the myth stated. In fact, if I am to be explicit about the views of my teacher [Syrianus], the god called Protogonos in Orpheus, who is established at the limit of the Intelligibles, is the Living-Thing-itself in Plato. ... He is in the Intelligible realm what Zeus is in the Intellective realm, for each is the limit of his respective orders, the one as the very first of the Paradigmatic causes, the other as the most monadic of the Demiurgic

274. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.112.3 Diehl (*OF* 237 XI B = 166 K).
275. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 1.331 (182 Westerink) (*OF* 237 III B = 165 K).
276. *OF* 237 B = 164–166 K, which is a compilation of thirteen passages; e.g., Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.24.23 (*OF* 237 VII B); 2.53.21 Diehl (*OF* 237 IX B); *in Plat. Cratyl.* 50.24 Pasquali (*OF* 237 VIII B = 166 K) and Duvick ad loc.; Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 205 (2.32.25 Westerink) (*OF* 237 X B); Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Gorg.* 244.5 Westerink (*OF* 237 XII B).
277. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.324.16–17 Diehl.

causes. For this reason too Zeus is united with him through the mediation of Night, and when he has been filled from that source he becomes the Intelligible cosmos inasmuch as is possible in the Intellectives.[278]

Proclus attributes to Syrianus the interpretation that Phanes is the Intelligible αὐτοζῷον, "the very first of the Paradigmatic causes," and that Zeus is the Intellective Demiurge, "the most monadic of the Demiurgic causes." When Zeus looks to Phanes and is "filled from that source," he becomes equated with the cosmos. Proclus in his *Parmenides* commentary cites the Orphic verse in which all things are mixed "in the stomach of Zeus" (*OF* 241.11 B) and explains this interpretation more concisely: "Orpheus tells us that all things came to be in Zeus after the swallowing of Phanes, because although the cause of all things in the cosmos appeared primarily and in a unified form in [Phanes], they appear secondarily and in a distinct form in the Demiurge."[279] To put it simply, the narrative of Zeus swallowing Phanes was interpreted as an allegory for the Demiurge, who looks to the Paradigm and is filled with the Forms that he sees in the Paradigm. The Forms are "unified" in the Paradigm but "distinct" in the Demiurge. There is thus a distinction between how the Paradigm and the Demiurge are thought to contain the Forms, based on differing degrees of differentiation.

By swallowing Phanes, Zeus as Demiurge contains within himself all of the Forms from which creation proceeds, but in a more differentiated manner than the way they are contained within Phanes as Paradigm. This has consequences for the differentiation that proceeds from them: the greater unity proceeding from Phanes creates fewer deities, but the greater multiplicity proceeding from Zeus creates a greater number of deities. Phanes produces Night and Ouranos, each one split into a triad, but Zeus produces eight triads, or rather, two dodecads, as Proclus explains in his *Timaeus* commentary:

> [Phanes as Living-Thing-itself] fills both the nocturnal and the heavenly orders with his own allness; and in imitation of him, Zeus too produces two orders [of gods], the supercelestial [i.e., Hypercosmic] and the Encosmic. But while Phanes produces two triads, Zeus [produces] two dodecads. … So while the Demiurgic cause always bears a likeness to the Paradigmatic cause, it proceeds from Intelligible unity into multiplicity.[280]

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278. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.324.18–28 Diehl (*OF* 241 I B = 167 K).
279. Proclus, *in Plat. Parmen.* 799.27 Cousin (*OF* 241 IV B = 167 K).
280. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.27–451.7 Diehl (surrounding *OF* 230 II B = 157 K).

This passage, coming after a statement about how Phanes "brings forth the Nights,"[281] equates the births of Night and Ouranos with "the nocturnal and the heavenly orders" that are filled by the Paradigm, while the lower levels (the Hypercosmic and Encosmic orders) are produced by the Demiurge. Phanes produces two triads (Night and Ouranos), but Zeus produces "two dodecads," which roughly correspond to his Olympian brothers, sisters, and children in myth. Proclus relates the two dodecads to the length of the royal sceptre in the Rhapsodies, of twenty-four measures, both here and in his *Cratylus* commentary, where he argues that the double etymology of the name of Zeus (Ζεύς in the nominative and Δία in the accusative) is an indication of the double dodecads he produces:

> The fact then that the name [of Zeus] is determined in two forms shows that … this name exhibits a kinship to him who has pre-established the Intellective dyad in himself; for he institutes a double order of existence, the celestial and the supercelestial.[282]

The unity of the Paradigm becomes divided as the Forms are filtered through the Demiurge, and Proclus imagines this division to be reflected in the double etymology of the name of Zeus. This splitting of the "unitary causes" leads to a "double order of existence," understood as the two dodecads that proceed from Zeus. These deities are equated with "the more partial fathers" to which Proclus refers in his *Timaeus* commentary when he says that the Demiurge "projects from himself the entire work of creation." They are "the intermediate ranks" through which the Demiurge enacts the creative process.[283]

Since Zeus as Demiurge represents the center-point between the One and the Many, and Phanes as Paradigm represents the center-point between the One and the Demiurge, the story of Zeus swallowing Phanes was central to the Neoplatonists' allegorical interpretation of the Orphic Rhapsodies. But how does this affect our own interpretation of the Rhapsodies? There is no reason to accept the Neoplatonic interpretation at face value, but neither should we dismiss it altogether. Although our exegetical methods are different, we should never forget that, unlike us, the Neoplatonists had the entire text of the Rhapsodies at their disposal. Neoplatonic allegory was not simply a matter of randomly mapping correspondences between genealogical and metaphysical charts, but a matter of finding substantial correlations between poetic texts that they considered sacred and metaphysical concepts that they found to be reflected in particular episodes. Neither did they separate myth from philosophy

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281. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.25 Diehl (*OF* 134 II B = 81 K).
282. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 52.23–27 Pasquali (before *OF* 230 I B = 157 K).
283. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.310.11–12 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXV B = 168 K); cf. *in Plat. Tim.* 1.317.14 Diehl (*OF* 229 I B = 151 K).

in their own way of thinking to the degree that modern scholars do: the statement that Zeus swallows Phanes and the statement that the Demiurge contains the Paradigm were, according to the Neoplatonists, exactly the same statement. This might be confusing when viewed through the lens of our own modern systems of categorization, but what it actually means is that the poetic episode is the clearest and most vivid way to understand the philosophical concept. It is the perfect illustration of the relationship between these two center-points of the Neoplatonic universe, and consequently it is the best preserved episode in the Orphic Rhapsodies, especially if we consider the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to be a part of it.

Caution must lead us to acknowledge that the reason why this episode is well-preserved is that the Neoplatonists found it useful for their allegories. After all, these fragments are a direct consequence of their decisions about which passages to discuss and which ones to ignore. Yet there might be value in viewing the situation from the opposite perspective: the reason why the Neoplatonists found this episode useful for their allegories might have been that it actually was a substantial episode in the Rhapsodies. This argument is supported by the importance of Zeus and the act of swallowing in other theogonic contexts, such as the Derveni poem, the swallowing of Metis in Hesiod, and relevant Near Eastern parallels like Hittite Kumarbi. The Rhapsodic episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes both depends upon the narrative of Phanes (since the reader needs to know who Phanes is) and sets the stage for the narrative of Zeus procreating (which is the context for the narrative of Dionysus). Therefore, it is a centrally important episode in the Rhapsodic narrative as a whole. It explains in mythological terms how Zeus can be the greatest and highest of the gods, the "father of both men and gods,"[284] even though he is the fifth king of the gods. Was this narrative more important to the structure of the Rhapsodies than the story of Dionysus and the Titans? The fragmentary nature of the evidence prevents us from being able to answer that question with certainty, but the episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes certainly was more important to Orphic myth than modern scholarship on Orphism might lead us to believe. Orphic myth focused on more than just one narrative (namely, the myth of Dionysus Zagreus), and the swallowing of Phanes is the best evidence of this. This episode is an important point of contact in the discourse between Orphic myth and Neoplatonic philosophy, and the result of this discourse is the preservation of some of the most important fragments of the Rhapsodies.

The best-preserved fragment by far is the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, which expands upon the swallowing of Phanes by describing Zeus at the moment when the universe is contained inside his belly. If the

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284. *OF* 244 B.

Rhapsodies were indeed a Rhapsodic collection and not a continuous Rhapsodic theogony, then the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B = 168 K) is an example of what might have been a separate poem. With a length of thirty-two lines, it is the longest extant fragment of any Orphic theogony, and although it has a definite narrative context, it can be understood as a self-contained poem.[285] As I suggested in chapters 2 and 3, the tag line "Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made" appears as a tag line in a series of different hymns to Zeus, to which ancient authors from Plato to Proclus make reference.[286] The Orphic Hymns to Zeus seem to have had a life of their own, apart from any particular theogony, so it should come as no surprise if one version of the hymn appeared in the Rhapsodic collection. If, on the other hand, this hymn stood in the text of a continuous Rhapsodic narrative, then it must have appeared immediately after Zeus swallows Phanes.[287] In this case, the hymn would represent a slowing down of narrative time to concentrate on the moment immediately before Zeus begins the creation of the present universe, when "he held the form of all things in his hollow stomach" (*OF* 241.2 B).

In the Rhapsodic version of the hymn, the hyperbolic glory and power of Zeus is expanded into a pantheistic vision that has been compared to Vedic texts in which different parts of the deity represent different parts of the cosmos.[288] His head is the sky (11–12), his stomach is the earth (26–27), and his feet are "the roots inside the earth" (29). Taking into account the additional descriptive elements of "golden hairs" (12), "two golden horns of bulls" (14) and "wings" (25), it becomes clear that this is not a typical portrayal of Zeus. Perhaps the golden hair, horns, and wings were derived from the syncretism of Zeus with Phanes in certain passages of Orphic theogonies.[289] These features might point to the same Near Eastern parallels that we saw in chapter 4, of primordial and creator deities with theriomorphic features. The Orphic poet seems to have used the hymn as a means to re-conceptualize Zeus as synonymous with the universe itself. We might point to the influence of Vedic or Stoic ideas as sources for this pantheistic vision and argue that these ideas were current in Greece at the time the Rhapsodies were written.[290] Whatever the

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285. Lobeck (1829: 527) suggested that it appeared "more similar to a hymnody than to a cosmogony."

286. DP 17.12 (*OF* 14.2 B); *OF* 31 B = *OF* 21, 21a K and Bernabé ad loc.

287. This is how most modern scholars have reconstructed the Rhapsodic; e.g., Lobeck 1829: 523–529; Kern 1888: 35–36; West 1983: 218–241; Brisson 1995: 61–66; 2008: 88–90. Bernabé places *OF* 243 B after the fragments in which Zeus swallows Phanes (*OF* 237, 240–241 B).

288. Reitzenstein and Schaeder 1965: 69–103; West 1983: 240; Ricciardelli 1993: 47–48; Lujan 2011: 85–91.

289. The Hieronyman theogony in Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B = 54 K). The Rhapsodies in Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.336.6 Diehl (*OF* 141 I B = 170 K); *in Plat. Alcib.* 109d (283 Segonds) (*OF* 141 II B = 170 K); cf. West 1983: 240.

290. West compares earlier versions of the hymn to Stoicism and the Rhapsodic version to eastern parallels (1983: 218, 239–241).

source of these ideas, the poet's means of expressing them was the traditional form of mythical poetry.

Based on the idea that the episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes was an allegory for Phanes as Paradigm and Zeus as Demiurge, the Neoplatonists interpreted the Orphic Hymn to Zeus as an allegory that illustrates the Demiurge containing the Forms that proceed from the Paradigm. The Demiurge contemplates the Forms that he sees in the Paradigm, and, having been filled with these Forms, he initiates the manifestation of the Forms into the multiplicity of individual objects in the physical universe. No one explains this better than Proclus himself. Commenting on Plato's *Timaeus* 28c, where Timaeus discusses the "maker and father of this universe," Proclus says that this "maker and father" is Zeus. In support of this point, he quotes the Orphic Hymn to Zeus:

> Plato in this present passage too says that he creates while looking toward the Paradigm, so that by thinking its contents he becomes all things and gives existence to the sense-perceptible cosmos. [The Paradigm] was everything in the Intelligible mode, he himself was everything in the Intellective mode, and the cosmos is everything in the sense-perceptible mode. For this reason the theologian also says, "Having concealed everything in turn, he intended to bring it forth / back again into the delightful light from his heart, doing wondrous things."[291]

Zeus represents the center-point between the Forms as they exist only in the realm of the Intelligibles and the particular instances of the Forms as they appear in the sense-perceptible universe. "By thinking" about the contents of the Paradigm, the Demiurge "becomes all things," thus absorbing the Forms, and he "gives existence to the sense-perceptible cosmos." It is from Zeus on the level of Intellect that the lower levels of the metaphysical system flow, and it is from these lower levels that the physical universe comes into being. Elsewhere Proclus asks,

> How else would [the Demiurge] be in a position to fill all things with gods and make the sense-perceptible realm resemble the Living-Thing-itself unless he stretches out toward the invisible causes of the universe and, himself filled with these, is in a position to "bring forth back again from his heart wondrous deeds"?[292]

291. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.325.4 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXI B = 168 K).
292. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.207.16 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXII B).

In these two passages of Proclus, he quotes the last two lines of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, attributing to Orpheus the idea that Zeus is the Demiurge. He reads the line in which Zeus has "concealed everything" (31) to mean that the Demiurge contains within himself the Forms, and that he gathers the Forms when he "stretches out toward the invisible causes of the universe." When the physical creation is "brought forth again" (32) from "inside the great body of Zeus" (10), this is interpreted as an allegory of the Demiurge who is able "to make the sense-perceptible realm resemble the Living-Thing-itself."

According to the Neoplatonists, the tag line "Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things were made" expresses how the Demiurge contains all of the Forms and projects them into the world of sense-perceptible objects. In one passage of his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus attributes this interpretation to Syrianus:

> [According to Syrianus], therefore, there is a single Demiurge, the god who marks off the limit of the Intellective gods. On the one hand he is filled with the Intelligible monads and the sources of life, while on the other he projects from himself the entire work of creation, and, after placing the more partial fathers in charge of the universe, he establishes himself unmoved on the peak of Olympus, eternally ruling over two worlds, the supercelestial and the celestial, embracing the beginning and middle and end of the universe.[293]

The verbal similarities between Proclus' phrase "beginning and middle and end of the universe" and the tag line indicate that he is referring to the hymn. Similarly, Damascius says that "the beginning and middle and end are the father's portion."[294] The parallels can be strengthened by considering those versions of the line in which κεφαλή is exchanged for ἀρχή, and by the use of τελεῖται (cognate with τέλη) instead of τέτυκται in the scholiast of Galen.[295] In another passage of his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus quotes lines 1–2 and 4–8 of the hymn to argue that "because he was filled with the Forms, it was by means of them that he embraced the universe within himself, as the theologian went on to reveal as well." And in *Platonic Theology*, Proclus quotes line 2 of the hymn again, in order to support his assertion that the Demiurge "surrounds the beginnings and end of the universe."[296]

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293. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.310.7 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXV B = 168 K); cf. Runia and Share ad loc.
294. Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 245 (2.83.3 Westerink) (*OF* 243 IV B = 168 K).
295. Plutarch, *de def. orac.* 48 p. 436d (*OF* 31 V = p. 206 K); Plutarch, *de comm. not. adv. Stoicos* 31 p. 1074d (*OF* 31 VI); Schol. Plat. *Leg.* 715e (p. 317 Greene) (*OF* 31 IV B = 24 K); Schol. Galen. 1.363 (ed. Moraux, *ZPE* 27, 1977, 22) (*OF* 31 VII B).
296. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.313.17 Diehl (*OF* 243 III B = 97 K); *Theol. Plat.* 6.8 (6.40.1 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 243 VI B = 168 K).

The Christian apologists also made use of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to support their arguments, but for completely different reasons. While the Neoplatonists read the hymn as an allegory for all Forms being contained in the Demiurge, the Christians read the hymn literally, mainly as an example of what they perceived to be ridiculous about the beliefs of the Pagan Greeks. The notion that the god could have a body or that the cosmos was that body was one of the "errors" that some apologists were quick to criticize, and they used the Orphic Hymn to Zeus as an example. Ironically, it is for the sake of criticism, not preservation, that Eusebius is one of our sources for the fullest version of the hymn. He introduces it by saying that the authors of the Orphic hymns "supposed Zeus to be the mind of the world, and that he created all things therein, containing the world in himself."[297] Eusebius compares this conceptualization of Zeus with Stoic pantheism, arguing that the poem is "in agreement with the Stoics, who assert that the element of fire and heat is the ruling principle of the world, and that the god is a body, and the creator himself nothing else than the force of fire."[298] Clearly Eusebius disagrees with this pantheistic vision, and he also rejects the Neoplatonists' interpretation:

> For neither does the creative mind of the universe consist of many parts, nor can his head become the sky [vv. 11–12], nor can his body become fire and water and earth [v. 8], nor yet his eyes the sun and moon [v. 16]. And how can "the wide expanse of air, and earth, and lofty hills" be the shoulders [vv. 24–25], breast, back, and belly of the Demiurge of the universe [v. 27]? Or how can the aither ever be thought of as the mind of the maker of the universe, or of the demiurgic Intellect [v. 17]?[299]

Eusebius mocks the idea that Zeus' mind is aither and his body is the air, and in support of this argument he cites the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to show that "aither is plainly declared to be the mind of Zeus." According to Brisson, there are two critiques in Eusebius' treatment of this hymn: one that denounces anthropomorphism and another that denounces pantheism.[300]

A few centuries earlier, Clement of Alexandria referred to the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to support a different type of apologetic argument. As Herrero puts it, Eusebius used the hymn "to criticize the immanence and materiality of the pagan god," but Clement used it "as support for monotheism." In

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297. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 3.9.2 (*OF* 243 I B = 168 K). The other source is Stobaeus Flor. 1.1.23 (1.19.9 Wachsm.) (*OF* 243 II B = 168 K), who is not quoting the Rhapsodies directly, but an extended passage of Porphyry's *On Statues* (fr. 354 F Smith); see Herrero 2010: 190.

298. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 3.9.8 (*OF* 243 XIX B = 168 K).

299. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 3.10.2 (*OF* 243 XX B = 168 K); see Bernabé ad loc.

300. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 3.11.4 (*OF* 243 XXV B = 168 K); Brisson 1995: 2892; cf. John Philoponus, *de aetern. mun.* 332.19, 631.25 Rabe (*OF* 243 XXXIX, XL B = 69 K).

Stromata, Clement argues that the wisdom of the Greeks was stolen from the Hebrews, and he cites a wide variety of Greek texts to show "the Greek theft from Barbarian [i.e., Hebrew] philosophy." Herrero suggests that Clement's source for these authors, including the Orphic poem, is an "anthology for apologetic use" but not the complete texts.[301] In one section, Clement quotes the hymn along with other authors, including Sophocles, Pindar, and Hesiod, as evidence that the Greeks stole the idea of omnipotence from the Hebrews. He refers to the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to argue that the Greeks had also borrowed the idea of one all-powerful god from Hebrew monotheism, adding the hymn's mention of "one power, one deity … and one royal bodily frame" (*OF* 243.6–7 B) to the collection of other sources that he cited as evidence.

The Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus is a point of convergence for multiple discourses, both coming into and going out from the poem. Coming into the poem are elements of very ancient myths alongside current philosophical ideas. The portrayal of Zeus with wings and horns points back to Near Eastern portrayals of deities that mixed theriomorphic with anthropomorphic features. In the Hieronyman theogony, the influence of these elements became firmly rooted in Orphic tradition with the portrayal of Chronos, Phanes, and Zeus in theriomorphic form. Here and in the Rhapsodies, these theriomorphic elements meet with Hellenistic patterns of syncretism where Zeus is equated with Phanes, Metis, and Eros. In the hymn to Zeus, theriomorphic elements and Hellenistic syncretism converge with another element that may seem strange in a mythical context, namely the four elements, which are mentioned explicitly in the hymn. This points to a philosophical influence on the poem, at least to the extent that the ideas of Empedocles had become current parlance by the time the Orphic poet wrote the hymn.[302] Likewise, the pantheistic vision of Zeus as the cosmos indicates contacts with Vedic and/or Stoic philosophy. The bricoleur mixed elements of strange, foreign myths with elements of current philosophy in his presentation of Zeus, from the perspective of a narrative about Zeus as the king of the gods, which is the role Zeus regularly plays in traditional Greek myth.

The discourses that come out of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B) revolve around philosophical or apologetic questions, but the question the poet asks is essentially a mythical question. In the narrative, the poet explores how it is that Zeus is the king of the gods if he is not the first of the gods. The answer is that he swallows Phanes and re-creates the cosmos. In the hymn, the poet imagines what happens to the original creation when Zeus swallows Phanes before re-creating the cosmos. Zeus absorbs the old creation, and then "brings forth" (32) the new creation from "inside his mighty body" (10). Whether the

301. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 5.14.1.1; Herrero 2010: 188–190 and n. 105.

302. Empedocles, fr. 31 A37 D-K (Arist. *Met.* A4, 985a31–33), 31 B6 D-K (Aetius 1.3.20), 31 B17 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 157.25). Plato mentions the four elements in *Timaeus* 32b–d.

hymn is a separate poem in the Rhapsodic collection or a digression in the Rhapsodic narrative, it does not present a pantheistic vision in which Zeus is eternally equated with the cosmos, but one in which the cosmos is inside the belly of Zeus for a brief moment in time. Neither does the hymn present a monotheistic vision in which Zeus is consistently the only god, as Clement reads it, but again a brief moment in which Zeus is the only god in existence. This moment does not last, because the last two lines make clear that "he intended" or "he was about to" (μέλλεν, 32) re-create the cosmos and the other gods.[303]

The Neoplatonic interpretation is a discourse that proceeds out from the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, and it is not an arbitrary mapping of correspondences but a substantial point of connection between their ideas and the text of the poem. Again, this does not mean that the poet wrote the hymn with Neoplatonic ideas in mind, but that the Neoplatonists found useful material in the hymn to illustrate their own metaphysical speculations. The narrative of Zeus absorbing the original creation and then bringing forth the new creation from inside himself was a useful illustration for the Neoplatonic idea of the Demiurge. By reverting to the Paradigm (i.e., by swallowing Phanes), the Demiurge absorbs the Forms, with the result that the Forms exist inside the Demiurge as the creation exists in the stomach of Zeus in a proto-typical manner or, as Proclus puts it, "demiurgically."[304] The Forms then proceed from the Demiurge as the creation is brought forth from the body of Zeus. By interpreting the hymn as a process instead of a static reality (such as pantheism and monotheism), the Neoplatonic interpretation actually comes closer to the original meaning of the text than the Christian apologists. Despite Eusebius, the poet is not saying that Zeus is consistently synonymous with the cosmos, but that he absorbed the cosmos for a brief moment in time.

The Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus is one of the most important fragments of the Orphic theogonic tradition, not only because it is the longest continuous passage of poetry that we have from this tradition, but also because it is representative of some of the major characteristics that made a text Orphic. There are strange, foreign elements that point back to ancient eastern myths, in the context of a narrative that does not appear in Hesiod. There is speculation about the cosmos by means of mythical narrative in the traditional form of hexametric poetry, rather than abstract philosophical reasoning in the form of prose. There is a fluid tradition from which a series of different versions of this hymn emerged, and it is not certain whether it is a passage from the Rhapsodic narrative or a separate poem altogether. One can find traces of influence or at least familiarity with current philosophical ideas

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303. Contra West (1983: 240–241), according to whom the use of μέλλεν denotes "a continuous process," rather than the state of being about to do something.

304. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.307.27 Diehl (*OF* 243 XVIII B = 168 K).

in the poem, such as the mention of the four elements. But at the heart of the matter, it is a mythical question, not a philosophical question, that drives the poet. The hymn also indicates how ancient authors used Orphic texts. The Neoplatonists refer to it as an allegory for their own metaphysical speculations, while the Christian apologists read it literally as a point of contention against the Greek gods. A study of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus thus provides us with a microcosmic view of the Orphic tradition in general.

One thing this chapter makes clear is that in the Orphic Rhapsodies, the narratives involving Phanes, Night, Kronos, and Zeus were central to the core structure of the six-generation succession myth. In particular, Phanes and Zeus were at least as important to the Rhapsodic narrative as Dionysus and the Titans. But the story of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies requires a chapter of its own, not least because of the important role the Zagreus myth has played in modern discussions of Orphism. Therefore, the last chapter of this book discusses the Rhapsodic myth of Dionysus and the Titans in three sections: a discussion of modern scholarship on the Zagreus myth and its complicated relation to Orphism; an explanation of the various ancient interpretations of the story of Dionysus and the Titans, including the Neoplatonists and Christian apologists; and my own interpretation of the story of Dionysus in its proper context as one of the episodes in the Rhapsodic narrative.

6

Dionysus in the Rhapsodies

Having secured royal power for himself, Zeus begins procreating, according to Greek tradition as it is found in Hesiod, the Rhapsodies, and elsewhere. The Rhapsodies narrated, for example, the births of Apollo and Artemis (*OF* 257–259 B), Athena (*OF* 263–268 B), and a second Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione (*OF* 260–262 B), but special attention is usually paid to Persephone and Dionysus. The way Bernabé arranges the fragments, the stories of Persephone and Dionysus appear to have been the climax of the Rhapsodic narrative, the last divine births in the last generation of the series. In the form of a snake, Zeus has sex with his mother, Rhea, who gives birth to Persephone (*OF* 267–269 B), and then with his daughter Persephone, who gives birth to Dionysus in Crete. There, the infant Dionysus is protected by the Curetes, as his father had been (*OF* 280–283 B). Sometime later, Persephone is not picking flowers but weaving a robe when she is abducted by Hades (*OF* 286–290 B). While Dionysus is still a child, Zeus sets him up to be the next king in the sixth generation of the succession myth, "although he is young," as the poem probably said (*OF* 299.3 B).[1] But the Titans smear gypsum on their faces and use toys to lure Dionysus into a trap. One of these items is a mirror. As the young Dionysus gazes at himself in this mirror, the Titans pounce on him. They dismember him, cook him, and eat him, leaving only his heart, which Athena saves and brings back to Zeus (*OF* 301–317 B). In his anger, Zeus strikes the Titans with lightning, but then he brings Dionysus back to life (*OF* 318–331 B). When the Titans are struck by lightning, Zeus creates from the ashes the third race of humans, the Titanic race (*OF* 320 B). Dionysus is born a second time from Semele (*OF* 327–329 B) and he rules with Zeus, but Zeus ultimately retains his power, as the Orphic verse seems to imply: "Zeus ruled/accomplished (κραῖνε) all things, but Bacchus ruled in addition (ἐπέκραινε)."[2]

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1. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.310.29 Diehl (*OF* 299 III B = 207 K). Line 3 of this fragment is Bernabé's restoration based on Proclus' prose summary; see Bernabé ad loc.

2. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.316.5 Diehl (*OF* 300 I B = 218 K).

Over the last two centuries, many scholars have considered this narrative of Dionysus and the Titans to have been *the* central, defining myth of Orphism. The "Orphic myth of Dionysus," as some have called it, or the "Zagreus myth,"[3] remains one of the central points in the debate over the nature and meaning of Orphism. There is no question that most elements of this myth appeared in the Rhapsodies,[4] but controversy continues over when these elements first emerged in Orphic literature and how important the myth was to Orphic thought in general. At one end of the spectrum, the Orphic gold tablets and certain passages of Pindar and Plato are commonly interpreted in connection with the Zagreus myth, which would give it an origin in the fifth or sixth century BC.[5] At the other end, some argue that certain elements of the Zagreus myth are the inventions of nineteenth-century scholars. Specifically, it has been argued that the double nature of humans, both Titanic and Dionysiac, as a form of "original sin" is a modern fabrication based on Christian ideas.[6] The individual elements of the Zagreus myth vary in terms of their antiquity: while some elements of the story seem to have existed as early as Pindar, others are never mentioned before the Neoplatonists.[7] There is likewise a spectrum of opinion about the relative importance of this myth to Orphism. Between the extremes of Macchioro and Edmonds, most scholars today do not view the Zagreus myth as the central salvation myth of an Orphic religious community, but they still think the myth is important for understanding Orphic doctrine, with the result that the myth is usually applied to new evidence like the gold tablets.[8]

In the first section of this chapter, I review the major points of debate over the antiquity and importance of the Zagreus myth. For example, Pindar's mention of the "ancient grief" of Persephone could refer either to her grief over the death of her son, Dionysus, at the hands of the Titans or to her grief over her own abduction at the hands of Hades.[9] This is a matter of weighing possibilities, since both interpretations are reasonable, but neither can be

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3. Detienne 1979: 69; Brisson 1995: 494–495; Bernabé 1996: 75; Edmonds 1999: 37; 2013: 297.

4. Two important exceptions: none of the Neoplatonists or apologists mentions the name of Zagreus (Linforth 1941: 311), and some elements of the anthropogony were introduced by Olympiodorus (*OF* 320 I B; Brisson 1995: 481–499; Edmonds 2009: 511–532).

5. Lloyd-Jones 1990: 90–101; Bernabé 2002b: 416–420; Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 105–109; Graf and Johnston 2013: 66–93.

6. Linforth 1941: 359–360; Ellinger 1978: 7–35; Edmonds 1999: 44–47; 2013: 298.

7. Pindar, fr. 133 Snell-Maehler (Plato, *Meno* 81b–c) (*OF* 443 B); Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = 220 K).

8. Bernabé 2010: 435–438; Herrero 2010: 23 and n. 49; Graf and Johnston 2013: 193.

9. Pindar, fr. 133 Snell-Maehler (Plato, *Meno*81b–c) (OF 443 B). Most scholars, following Rose (1943: 247–250), relate this fragment to the Zagreus myth; e.g., Pollard 1965: 100; Lloyd-Jones 1990: 80–109; Bernabé 2002a: 416–418; Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 105–109; Graf and Johnston 2013: 69. Edmonds (2013: 304–322) argues that Persephone grieves over her own abduction.

proven, so the purpose of this chapter is not to try to prove one side or the other about how the Zagreus myth might relate to Pindar, the gold tablets, or larger questions about the meaning of Orphism, but simply to explain how the myth of Dionysus functions in the narrative of the Orphic Rhapsodies. To put it another way, if the Zagreus myth was not the central myth of Orphism, then what was its meaning? To answer that question requires setting aside the myth's supposed ritual context—the discussion of the gold tablets, Orphic eschatology, and initiation ritual—and reading it in its narrative context as one of the episodes in the Rhapsodies. After discussing modern opinions about how the Zagreus myth fits within the overall scheme of Orphism, in this chapter I attempt to explain how the myth fits into the Rhapsodic narrative. From this perspective, the story of Dionysus being killed by the Titans is indeed one of the most important episodes of the Rhapsodic narrative, but it might not be the central point. Rather, it could be read as the last of a series of episodes that culminate in Zeus securing his royal power. The story of Dionysus and the Titans in the Rhapsodies is as much about Zeus as it is about Dionysus.

Modern Interpretations of the Zagreus Myth

Despite Edmonds' protests that modern interpretations of the Zagreus myth still bear the stamp of "the proto-Protestant Orphic church imagined by Kern and Macchioro," Graf and Johnston insist that "no scholar we know would side with this position nowadays."[10] They are referring to the century-old idea that this myth was, as Macchioro put it, "the cornerstone of the Orphic mystery" because it was about salvation from "a sort of original sin."[11] In the complete modern reconstruction of the Zagreus myth, humans are created from the vapours that rise from the Titans when Zeus strikes them with lightning. Therefore, according to "Orphic doctrine," as Rohde put it, humans have a double nature, both Titanic and Dionysiac, so one must "free himself from the Titanic element" by participation in the Orphic-Bacchic mysteries.[12] Observed through the proto-Christian model, this anthropogony, combined with the myth of a dying god who is resurrected, seemed to earlier scholars to be the sort of thing that would be relevant to the eschatological hopes of Bacchic initiates. So, when the Petelia tablet was discovered, instructing the deceased initiate to say to the "guardians" in the Underworld that "I am a child of Earth and starry Sky," Comparetti immediately understood this as reflecting Orphic ideas about the "Titanic origin of the soul."[13] This led to the present scholarly tradition of

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10. Edmonds 2013: 296; Graf and Johnston 2013: 193.
11. Macchioro 1930: 76, 101; cf. Nilsson 1935: 202; Rose 1943: 248; Christopoulos 1991: 217.
12. Rohde (1925) 1950: 2:341–342; cf. Macchioro 1930: 101; Nilsson 1935: 224–225.
13. *OF* 477 B; Smith and Comparetti 1882: 116–117.

understanding the gold tablets as the material remains of Orphic-Bacchic initiation ritual, and interpreting them as references to the Zagreus myth.[14]

Despite the apparent coherence of this reconstruction of Orphism, both Wilamowitz and Linforth attempted to minimize the Zagreus myth's importance. Referring to the Bacchic mysteries and the Zagreus myth, Wilamowitz claimed that "Orpheus has nothing to do with them."[15] Linforth acknowledged that the myth was featured in the Rhapsodies, but he remarked that "the name Zagreus does not appear in any Orphic poem or fragment." The double Dionysiac and Titanic nature of humans, Linforth argued, was an "audacious conjecture" on the part of Olympiodorus, the only ancient source who mentions this element of the story. This line of thinking was followed by Zuntz, who denied that there was any relationship between the gold tablets and anything Orphic or Bacchic.[16] As scholars began to awaken from this Orphic "house of dreams" (as Dodds expressed it),[17] the Zagreus myth was questioned on the basis of its antiquity, its meaning, and its applicability to the interpretation of the gold tablets.

Because of this skeptical reaction, more balanced accounts of Orphism emerged as scholars began to reframe it, not as the religious movement of the Orphic church, but instead as a cluster of ideas that might be referred to as Orphic doctrine. Proponents of Orphic doctrine in the ancient world were not members of a revolutionary religious community but people who were interested in certain ideas that they found in Orphic poetry. In this conceptualization of Orphism, the Zagreus myth is still interpreted as the central defining myth of Orphic doctrine, since it brings together all of the threads of thought that are considered to have been of interest to Orphics, including theogony, anthropogony, and eschatology. Nilsson acknowledged Wilamowitz's "vigorous protest," but he still argued that the Zagreus myth was "the cardinal myth of Orphism." Combined with ideas about the afterlife and cultic connections with a chthonic Dionysus, the Zagreus myth was at "the centre of their religious thinking."[18] Guthrie called the Zagreus myth "the central point of Orphic story" and argued that the Orphics created it to provide a "mythical framework" for their "new religion," one that "enshrines the peculiarly Orphic thought of our own mixed earthly and heavenly nature."[19] Despite the disappearance of the idea of an Orphic church, the Zagreus myth remained the lens through which one might understand the "religious thinking" (Nilsson) of "peculiarly Orphic

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14. E.g., Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 195; Calame 2009: 210–223; Graf and Johnston 2013: 66–93.

15. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1932) 1959: 2:190.

16. Linforth 1941: 330; Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = 220 K); Zuntz 1971: 277–286, 381–393.

17. Dodds 1951: 147–148.

18. Nilsson 1935: 184–203, 230; cf. Nilsson 1955: 1:679–680.

19. Guthrie 1952: 107–120.

thought" (Guthrie). Despite ongoing redefinitions of Orphism, the modern reconstruction of the Zagreus myth and its eschatological implications remained basically undisturbed.

Meanwhile, the focus of the Orphic discussion shifted with the discovery of new artifacts. The Derveni Papyrus, the Olbia bone tablets, and new gold tablets from Hipponion and Pelinna again raised the question of the antiquity of Orphic myth, and particularly the relationship between Orphic and Bacchic. Zuntz's argument that the gold tablets were not related to Dionysus was immediately refuted by the discovery of the Hipponion tablet, when its publication in 1974 revealed that the tablet mentions μύσται καὶ βάκχοι.[20] Burkert illustrated the problem with Venn diagrams, arguing that "there are no clearcut borders between 'Orphism' and any comparable phenomena of the age, notably Bacchic initiations," but he added that "all these terms may thus overlap, without ever coinciding."[21] The discovery of the Pelinna tablets in 1987 confirmed again the Bacchic association of the gold leaves by containing instructions to the initiate to "tell Persephone that the Bacchic one himself has released you."[22] Following Comparetti, recent scholars have consistently referred these tablets to the Zagreus myth, since the Pelinna tablet makes clear that whether or not the people buried with these tablets called themselves Orphics, in their eschatology they associated Persephone with Dionysus.[23]

The gold tablets are both fragments of literary tradition and artifacts of ritual practice, so they are relevant to recent discussions of the Zagreus myth that have set aside the question of "Orphic doctrine" to see how the myth is a reflection of ritual. According to Detienne, Orphism was "a movement of religious protest" that "radically questions the official religion of the city-state" by being a "book religion, or rather, a religion of texts." The Zagreus myth supported the "highly subversive" Orphic idea that initiates "must utterly refuse to engage in the blood sacrifice." Dionysus' dismemberment is an inversion of sacrificial procedures, since "to go from boiling to roasting or to roast boiled meat is to invert the sacrifice."[24] Although there are not many scholars who follow Detienne's general view of Orphism, his interpretation of the Zagreus myth as an inverted sacrifice seems to have been generally accepted. West attempted to explain the myth "in terms of two models: initiation ritual and animal sacrifice." In terms of initiation ritual, it "seems to show elements ... of initiatory death," since Dionysus' dismemberment "corresponds to the typical shaman's ordeal," and the gypsum and toys "played a significant role in some mystery

20. *OF* 474.16 B (1 Bernabé and San Cristóbal = 1 Graf and Johnston); Zuntz 1971: 275–393.
21. Burkert 1977: 6.
22. *OF* 485.2 B (7a Bernabé and San Cristóbal = 26a Graf and Johnston).
23. Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 61–94; Calame 2009: 210–223; Graf and Johnston 2013: 66–93.
24. Detienne 1979: 70–72, 83; cf. Ps.-Aristotle, *Problemata* 3.43 Bussemaker; Athenaeus 14.656b (*OF* 312 II B); Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 2.18.1 (27 Marc.) (*OF* 312 I B = 35 K).

rites." According to West, the Zagreus myth suggests "a ritual of initiation into a society—presumably a Bacchic society."[25] As for animal sacrifice, West agreed with Detienne that the Titans perform an inverted sacrifice. He added that the boiling of Dionysus derives "from the shaman's initiation, and points forward to regeneration," but "the roasting corresponds to sacrificial practice" because it underlines "the association between the initiand and the victim."[26] All of this suggests that the Zagreus myth might be a vital point of connection between Orphic text and ritual, but it leaves many questions unanswered: did the myth emerge out of an ancient ritual that was no longer performed, did it form the basis of a contemporary Orphic-Bacchic ritual, or (as Detienne suggests) did it oppose sacrificial ritual altogether?

In the midst of these re-evaluations of the Zagreus myth and its relation to Orphic thought, the gold tablets, and ritual, Edmonds has revived Linforth's more skeptical analysis, protesting that the Zagreus myth is an invention of nineteenth-century scholars based on a misreading of Olympiodorus.[27] The modern reconstruction of the Zagreus myth does not appear in its complete form in any one ancient source, but scholars have used the complete modern reconstruction of the story to explain each individual fragment. Edmonds breaks the story down into "four strands"—the dismemberment of Dionysus, the punishment of the Titans, the creation of humans, and the "original sin" of Titanic nature—and he protests that the complete version is not "the only possible way to explain" each individual fragment, because they are not "a single, tightly woven myth" but "an assortment of shreds and patches." He contends that "no one until the nineteenth century ever combined the elements into a single story," and that

> the apparent coherence of the Zagreus myth can only be achieved by taking the pieces of evidence out of their proper contexts ... much of the evidence Bernabé and his predecessors cite is brought into consideration only because it attests to one of the four mythic strands of the Zagreus myth. Whereas Linforth simply refused to consider such evidence, I suggest that it is more useful to try, however tentatively, to recycle the material.[28]

Before the publication of *Redefining Ancient Orphism* in 2013, one could criticize Edmonds' deconstructive efforts on the basis that he had not yet presented

25. West 1983: 140–145; cf. Lada-Richards 1999: 192–193.

26. West 1983: 161; cf. Parker 1995: 502–503.

27. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 299 VII, 304 I, 313 II, 318 III, 320 I B = 220 K); Edmonds 1999: 35–73; 2004: 37–40; 2009: 511–532; 2013: 296–390; Linforth 1941: 330. Bernabé (2002a: 410) defends his view of the Zagreus myth in response to Brisson (1995: 481–499) and Edmonds.

28. Edmonds 2013: 297–303.

a satisfactory alternative to the interpretation he was "tearing apart."[29] Now he has remedied this gap by "recycling" the fragments that he does not believe to be references to the Zagreus myth: so, according to his argument, Pindar's ancient grief of Persephone is because of her abduction by Hades, the gold tablets say that "the Bacchic one himself has released you" simply because Dionysus Lyseus releases people, and so on.

Despite Edmonds' confidence that he has unraveled this modern fabrication of the Zagreus myth, some scholars remain unconvinced. Bernabé, calling Edmonds' views "radical," reviews every text that makes allusions to the Zagreus myth, and concedes that each author draws upon "different elements of the paradigm," but he insists that this paradigm "is so consistent that we can reconstruct it in a very plausible way." He calls it "a grave error" for Edmonds to view the Zagreus myth as purely "a literary phenomenon," because of "the presence of this myth in *teletai*."[30] In agreement with Bernabé, Herrero argues that "in spite of skeptical doubts, it seems clear that the anthropological implications derived from [the Zagreus myth] date back to the Classical period." Regarding the idea of original sin, he argues that "the fault inherited from the Titans' crime seems to be [not an anachronistic proto-Christian interpretation but] a theological elaboration arising from the traditional notion of the familial inheritance of ancestral fault."[31] Gagné concludes his study of ancestral fault by refining this view. Distinguishing the Greek idea of ancestral fault from the Christian idea of inherited guilt, he argues that ancestral fault was too fluid a concept to be reasonably applied to every piece of evidence. Even though the Zagreus myth might appear as "an expansion of the idea of ancestral fault to the whole of humanity," the concept of ancestral fault was "not a determined value … but a resonant idea with many possible shapes."[32] While accepting the possibility of an early origin of the Zagreus myth, Bernabé, Herrero, and Gagné recognize that not all Orphic myths and practices revolved around just one central myth. Graf and Johnston maintain a similar middle ground, rejecting Edmonds' "radical but isolated scepticism towards the early existence of this mythology" because of his "tendency to discredit or disregard early evidence" and for two other reasons. First, the "Christianocentric projection of original sin" that Edmonds criticizes is an "anachronistic" critique because no one "nowadays" actually sees it that way. Their second reason involves the "deeper methodological question" of whether it is preferable to analyze data like the gold tablets from "reconstructed contexts."[33] So the debate over the

29. Edmonds 1999: 35.
30. Bernabé 2002a: 402–404, 422–423.
31. Herrero 2010:19, 23–24, 336.
32. Gagné 2013: 457–460.
33. Graf and Johnston 2013: 193.

Zagreus myth could essentially be characterized as a battle between a single "reconstructed" context and a number of different "recycled" contexts.

In what follows, I attempt to present a neutral summary of the most important fragments of the Zagreus myth and their competing interpretations. The first and perhaps earliest relevant fragment is Pindar fr. 133, which I have already been using as an example. This is found in Plato's *Meno* (81b–c), where Socrates is discussing the immortality of the soul. In support of his argument that the soul is born many times in different bodies, Socrates quotes a passage of poetry that he attributes to Pindar:

> For those from whom Persephone receives compensation for
> her ancient grief, in the ninth year she sends back their souls
> to the sun above, and from them glorious kings grow
> and men swift with strength and great in wisdom;
> and for the rest of time they are called sacred heroes among men.[34]

Bernabé relates this fragment of Pindar to the Zagreus myth, along with the gold tablets and the Gurôb Papyrus, as a reference to Persephone receiving compensation for the death of her son, Dionysus. He compares it to Demeter demanding compensation for her intercepted attempt to turn Demophoön into an immortal: likewise, Persephone demands compensation "for the loss of her divine child."[35] This is a good example of how scholars typically interpret this passage of Pindar, a view that was initially suggested by Rose.[36] Linforth accepted that Rose's interpretation "may be accepted as at least plausible evidence that the story of the dismemberment was known to Pindar," but he observed that "nowhere else [not even in Olympiodorus] … is it said or even expressly implied that guilt descended to men in consequence of the outrage committed upon Dionysus."[37] Edmonds takes Linforth's skepticism further by arguing that Persephone's "ancient grief" is not related in any way to Dionysus. He argues that "the ποινή Persephone accepts is not a blood-price, but rather ritual honors in recompense for her traumatic abduction to the Underworld by Hades."[38] Receiving compensation for her ancient grief fits with a common "pattern of disrupted maiden's transition," in which young girls are killed before they reach the age of transition into womanhood, and then paid cult honours as compensation.[39] If Bernabé is correct, then this fragment of Pindar

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34. Pindar, fr. 133 Snell-Maehler (Plato, *Meno* 81b–c) (*OF* 443 B).

35. Bernabé 2010: 437–438; cf. Bernabé 2002b: 416–418.

36. Rose 1943: 247–250; cf. Pollard 1965: 101; Lloyd-Jones 1990: 90; Graf and Johnston 2013: 69.

37. Linforth 1941: 348–350.

38. Edmonds 2013: 304–305; but see Johnston 2011: 123–124.

39. Edmonds (2013: 313), referring to Johnston (1999: 161–249), who discusses myths about maidens who die prematurely and receive cult honours as compensation: e.g., Erigone (219–224), Carya (224–228), Iphigenia (238–249).

is the earliest evidence of the Zagreus myth, which can be dated to the fifth century BC. But if Edmonds is correct, then it is evidence of something else.

Another passage that is frequently cited as early evidence of the Zagreus myth is in Plato's *Laws*, where the Athenian interlocutor describes to Socrates immoral people who "altogether disregard oaths and pledges and gods, displaying and imitating the so-called ancient Titanic nature."[40] Many scholars have understood this mention of an "ancient Titanic nature" to be a reference to the Zagreus myth. It is taken as evidence that by the time of Plato the Orphics believed that humans had a mixed Titanic-Dionysiac nature.[41] But Linforth objected that "there is nothing to suggest" the Zagreus myth in Plato's *Laws* "except the wickedness of the Titans," which is better illustrated by the Titanomachy in common mythology. He argued that "Plato says nothing of the Titanic nature in man, but does say explicitly that men in their defiance of the gods imitate the Titanic nature." Alderink followed Linforth by suggesting that instead of having a Titanic nature, humans "are capable of acting in a manner or after the pattern of the Titans." Edmonds, also agreeing with Linforth, argues that "the allusion to the Titanomachy illustrates Plato's point better than an allusion to the Zagreus story could." If Edmonds is correct, then this passage of Plato is irrelevant to Orphism and "easily explicable in terms of myths well-known in the Greek mythological tradition," but if Bernabé is correct, then Plato provides us with another piece of early evidence of the Zagreus myth.[42]

Along with the Hipponion and Petelia tablets, Pindar and Plato are the earliest possible texts that seem to refer to some aspect of the Zagreus myth, but it is also possible that these allusions to the "ancient grief" of Persephone and the "ancient Titanic nature" of humans refer to other things. If these texts are not evidence that the Zagreus myth existed in the Classical Period, then the myth seems to have emerged during the Hellenistic Period. The name of Zagreus first appears in connection with Dionysus when Callimachus says that Dionysus Zagreus is the son of Persephone, and the dismemberment myth is mentioned more than once by Euphorion.[43] The Gurôb Papyrus, dated to the

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40. Plato, *Leges* 3.701b (*OF* 37 I B = 9 K); cf. Plato, *Leges* 9.854b (*OF* 37 II B) and Bernabé ad loc.

41. Kern 1888: 44; Nilsson 1935: 202; Guthrie 1952: 156; Sorel 1995: 82–83; Bernabé ad *OF* 37 B;2002a: 418–420.

42. Linforth 1941: 343–344; Alderink 1981: 70; Bernabé ad *OF* 37 B; 2002a: 418–420; Edmonds 2013: 329, 333; cf. Brisson 1995: 497.

43. Callimachus, fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*Etymologicum Magnum* 406.46, s.v. "Ζαγρεύς") (*OF* 34 B = 210 p. 230 K); Euphorion, fr. 14 Lightfoot (Tzetzes on Lycophron, *Alexandra* 207, p. 98.5 Scheer); fr. 40 Lightfoot (fr. 33 De Cuenca = 41c van Groningen) (Philodemus, *de Piet.* 192–193 [vv. 4956–4969] Obbink); fr. 130 Lightfoot (Herodian, *On unique word-formation, GG* III.2, p. 951.20 Lentz) (*OF* 35 B); cf. Bernabé ad *OF* 34–35 B; Linforth 1941: 310–311; Pépin 1970: 304; Henrichs 1972: 56–57; West 1983: 152–154; Burkert 1985: 298; Brisson 1995: 494–495; Robertson 2003: 224–225; Edmonds 2013: 352.

third century BC, contains certain details that line up with the Zagreus myth.[44] By the first century BC, the story of the dismemberment of Dionysus was definitely known, whether or not it existed as the complete version that modern scholars have reconstructed. For example, Diodorus Siculus and Hyginus, both alive at that time, made clear references to the myth but said nothing about anthropogony.[45] In the second century AD, Pausanias attributed the story to Onomacritus, who "made the Titans for Dionysus to be the authors of his sufferings."[46] In Nilsson's view, "the question is settled" by Pausanias: since Onomacritus was alive in sixth-century Athens, this constitutes evidence that the myth existed in the Classical Period.[47] But Linforth objected that "it is quite possible that … [Pausanias] bluntly attributed what he found in an Orphic poem to Onomacritus and tacitly ignored the name of Orpheus entirely," so this passage is "valueless as proof" that the story goes back to the sixth century.[48] At least Pausanias gives us proof that the myth appeared in Orphic poetry by his own time, a late enough date that the Rhapsodies might have been already in circulation.

Around the same time as Pausanias, Plutarch used the myth of Dionysus' dismemberment to argue against the eating of meat:

> [Empedocles] speaks allegorically of souls, that they are imprisoned in mortal bodies as a punishment for murder, the eating of animal flesh, and cannibalism. But this idea seems to be older, for the story told about the sufferings and dismemberment of Dionysus and the assaults of the Titans upon him, and their punishment and blasting by lightning after they had tasted of murder, speaking in riddles, is a myth about regeneration. For to that faculty in us which is irrational, disordered, and violent, not divine but daimonic, the ancients gave the name Titans, that is, those who are punished and receive justice.[49]

Presumably, then, the Dionysiac nature would be the rational part of humans. Plutarch seems to have quoted Empedocles in a part of the text that is lost, which must have said that our souls are imprisoned in bodies; and it is reasonable to think that such a passage existed, since there is other early evidence of a soma-sema doctrine, notably in Plato.[50] The question is whether the

44. Gurôb Papyrus (*OF* 578 B = 31 K); Pépin 1970: 304; Henrichs 1972: 59; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356; Bernabé 2002b: 415–416.

45. Diodorus Siculus 1.23.2 (*OF* 327 IV B), 3.62.5 (*OF* 327 V B), 5.75.4 (*OF* 283, 311 XII B); Hyginus, *Fabulae* 167 (139 Marshall) (*OF* 327 III B); cf. Cornutus, *Nat. deor.* 30 (62.10–16).

46. Pausanias 8.37.5 (*OF* 39 B = *OT* 194 K) (Onomacritus, fr. 4 D'Agostino).

47. Nilsson 1935: 202; cf. Guthrie 1952: 107–108; Pollard 1965: 99; Di Marco 1993: 101–102.

48. Linforth 1941: 352–353; cf. Lobeck 1829: 335, 384.

49. Plutarch, *de esu carn.* 1.7 p. 996b–c (*OF* 318 II B = 210 K); cf. Linforth 1941: 338; Westerink ad Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.2 p. 28 n. 2; Brisson 1995: 496–497.

50. Plato, *Gorgias* 493a; cf. Casadio 1991: 133.

soma-sema doctrine was originally based on the Zagreus myth or people later applied the Zagreus myth to the soma-sema doctrine. Plutarch argues in favor of the former, but perhaps he actually does the latter: he claims that the soma-sema doctrine is older than Empedocles because he views it as being based on the Titans eating Dionysus, so he applies the myth to the soma-sema doctrine found in Empedocles. He interprets the story as being about "regeneration" and applies an allegory in which the Titans represent that part of us that is "irrational, disordered, and violent." This passage has been commonly taken as evidence that in Orphic poetry humans have a Titanic nature that is irrational and violent, resulting from our descent from the Titans, but Linforth objects that this idea is "clearly avoided" by Plutarch.[51] Edmonds agrees that this is not a reference to Orphic anthropogony, but instead "the punishment of the Titans represents allegorically the punishment of the soul that falls back into a body because of its [own] bloodlust and gluttony." It was "an allegory of the general human condition, not a tale of the preceding cause of it."[52] Certainly Plutarch knew of a narrative in which the Titans eat Dionysus, but he makes no indication that there was a literal anthropogony contained in this narrative. Like Plato, he uses the Titans as a point of comparison with the immoral behaviour of humans, but, unlike Plato, he clearly does refer to the dismemberment of Dionysus. Plutarch's argument is that because the Titans consumed Dionysus, humans should not consume meat, since that would be in accordance with the nature of the Titans.

Bernabé, in his defense of the complete version of the Zagreus myth, collects fragments about rituals that might be in some way related to the dismemberment of Dionysus. Herodotus associates Dionysus with Orisris in a discussion of sacred mysteries; the Gurôb Papyrus "significantly helps our understanding"; Pausanias discusses the origin of certain rituals in which a text was read; and the gold tablets also indicate "a paradigm where all the facts are linked."[53] Diodorus Siculus says that the dismemberment story was told by "Orpheus in the initiations," Clement of Alexandria reveals that the toys used to lure Dionysus are used in "the mysteries of Dionysus," and Firmicus Maternus claims that the Cretans "tear a living bull with their teeth, simulating the cruel banquet."[54] These sources attest to a significant connection between the dismemberment story and rituals that commemorated it, but Edmonds objects that this does not need to imply the complete Zagreus myth in every

51. Linforth 1941: 338–339; cf. Brisson 1995: 496–497. For examples of the typical interpretation, see Guthrie 1952: 108; Detienne 1979: 83; Casadio 1991: 132–134; Bernabé 1996: 75–76; 2002a: 408–409; ad *OF* 318 B.

52. Edmonds 2013: 341–344.

53. Bernabé (2002a: 412–414), citing Pausanias 8.37.5; Herodotus 2.61, 132, 170, 4.79.

54. Diodorus Siculus 5.75.4 (*OF* 283 I, 311 XII B); cf. 1.23.2 (*OF* 327 IV B = *OT* 95 K); Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.17.2 (26 Marc.) (*OF* 306 I B = 34 K); Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 6.4–5 (89 Turcan) (*OF* 332 B = 214 K).

case. He argues that "assuming that the motif of dismemberment can only imply the full story of anthropogony and original sin oversimplifies the step from ritual to doctrine."[55]

In his attack against Bernabé's version of the Zagreus myth, Edmonds also objects to Bernabé's use of the *Orphic Argonautica*. In this poem, when Orpheus summarizes his theogony he mentions "the destructive deeds / of the Giants, who let fall from the sky mournful / seed of offspring."[56] Along with this passage of the *Argonautica*, Bernabé mentions other authors who refer to humans being born from the blood of the Giants or the Titans, including Dio Chrysostom, Oppian, Julian, and an inscription from Perinthos.[57] Edmonds argues that "this collection of texts that refer to an anthropogony from the blood of the Titans never connects that anthropogony with the dismemberment story, but rather with the tale of the Titanomachy." Bernabé dismisses this idea, since the Titans' punishment after the Titanomachy is imprisonment in Tartarus, not being struck by lightning; but "lightning would be the only outcome of the Titanic action against Dionysus."[58] In this context, one should recall that in Hesiod the Titans are not punished by lightning, but lightning is one of the most crucial weapons Zeus has against them in the Titanomachy (*Theogony* 687–706).

Finally, Edmonds calls into question an important passage of Olympiodorus that "has served for over a century as the linchpin of the reconstructions of the supposed Orphic doctrine of original sin."[59] In the sixth century AD, Olympiodorus wrote a commentary on Plato's *Phaedo* that begins by discussing different reasons why people should not commit suicide. One of the reasons Olympiodorus proposes is that human bodies have a Dionysiac nature, because they were created from the bodies of the Titans after they had eaten Dionysus:

> Zeus, having become angry, struck [the Titans] with lightning, and from the soot from the vapours that arose from them matter came into being from which humans were created. Therefore, suicide is forbidden ... because our bodies are Dionysiac; for we are a part of him, being made from the soot from the Titans who ate his flesh.[60]

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55. Edmonds 2013: 345–346.

56. *Orphic Argonautica* 17–19 (*OF* 99, 320 V B = *OT* 224 K).

57. Bernabé (2002a: 409–412), citing Dio Chrysostom 30.10 (*OF* 320 VII B); cf. 30.26, 33.1; Oppian, *Hal.* 5.9–10 (*OF* 320 XIV B); Julian, *Epist.* 89b 292 (159.19 Bidez); Kaibel, *Epigr. Gr. Suppl.* 1036a (*OF* 320 XI B).

58. Edmonds 2013: 372; Bernabé 2002a: 411.

59. Edmonds 2013: 374–375.

60. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = 220 K).

Scholars are divided over whether Olympiodorus found this idea in an Orphic poem or it was his own invention.[61] He is not the only Neoplatonist who says that humans were born from the Titans: Proclus says that the third race of humans in the Rhapsodies was "constituted out of the Titanic limbs," and Damascius says that humans were created "from the fragments of the Titans," so the Neoplatonists together confirm that this particular element of the story appeared in the Rhapsodies.[62] Because other sources say that humans were created from the blood of the Titans, Bernabé considers it "uncertain whether in the Rhapsodies humans are born from the ashes of the Titans … or from their blood … probably from both."[63] Therefore, despite the uncertainty about whether the creation of humans from the Titans is applicable to the earliest evidence of the Zagreus myth, or whether anthropogony was a part of the myth since its origin, we can be reasonably certain that the creation of humans from the blood and/or ashes of the Titans was narrated in the Rhapsodies that were in circulation during the time of the Neoplatonists. Proclus, Damascius, and Olympiodorus each make reference to this anthropogony, but Olympiodorus is the only one who adds that humans have a double nature: "our bodies are Dionysiac; for we are a part of him, being made of the soot from the Titans who ate his flesh."[64] The Titanic nature of humans appears in ancient texts as early as Plato, whether this Titanic nature arises from the Zagreus myth or simply from humans imitating the Titans' behaviour. What is new in Olympiodorus is the divine Dionysiac nature, which is actually the opposite of original sin and even ancestral fault.

Because Olympiodorus is the only ancient source who mentions this Dionysiac nature, scholars have questioned whether he preserves an authentic element of the Orphic narrative or adds his own innovation. As Linforth puts it, this passage of Olympiodorus "has been used as one of the foundation stones in the reconstruction of Orphism" because he is the only source who mentions the creation of humans from the soot. Olympiodorus is the only one who says there is "a portion of Dionysus in the human body," so Linforth argues that he "drew this inference himself in order to contrive an argument against suicide on the basis of the myth." Olympiodorus "does not say that he found the idea … in an Orphic poem" but "offers this implication as a conjecture of his own." Linforth calls it "an audacious conjecture" for Olympiodorus to claim

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61. In the Orphic poem: Dodds 1951: 177n135; Guthrie 1952: 120; Christopoulos 1991: 215–221; Bernabé 2002a: 404–408; Herrero 2010: 23 and n. 49. Olympiodorus: Linforth 1941: 327–330; West 1983: 164–165; Brisson 1995: 481–495; Mancini 1999: 158–159; Edmonds 1999; 2009; 2013: 374–390.

62. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26 Kroll (*OF* 320 II B = 140 K); Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B); cf. Eustathius, *in Il.* 332.23 (*OF* 320 XII B).

63. Dio Chrysostum 30.10 (*OF* 320 VII B); Oppian, *Hal.* 5.9–10 (OF 320 XIV B); Julian, *Epist.* 89b 292 (159.19 Bidez); Titulus, *a Cyriac. Ancon. Perinthi* (*OF* 320 XI B); Bernabé ad loc.

64. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = 220 K).

that a part of the body is divine, since no other Platonist would "locate the divine element ... anywhere but in the soul."[65]

Likewise, Brisson finds "undeniable originality" in Olympiodorus' claim that humans come "from the sublimate (*sublimé*) of the humid vapours arising from the Titans." He argues that translating αἰθάλη with its usual meaning as "soot" lacks precision because Olympiodorus is describing an "alchemical operation" in which Zeus creates humans from the "vapours, which themselves gave a *sublimé*." In other words, the αἰθάλη consists of particles of Titanic material contained in the vapours that arise when Zeus burns them with lightning; and when they are burned, these particles are transformed through alchemy into human beings. According to Brisson, this is an innovation of Olympiodorus: the *sublimé* that results in human bodies having a Dionysiac nature was not found in an Orphic theogony, but was "a mystical interpretation of an alchemical operation." He concludes that "this anthropogony ... is not truly Orphic."[66] But Brisson's argument has not found universal acceptance: as Graf and Johnston argue, Brisson's alchemical explanation does not "unravel the entire myth," but "only impacts one detail," and not all scholars agree that this one detail is even impacted.[67]

Edmonds pushes the skeptical view a step further by arguing two points about this passage of Olympiodorus: "his telling of the myth, making the anthropogony the sequel to the dismemberment of Dionysus, is an innovation," and this anthropogony "does not include any element of inherited guilt, either in his narration of the myth or in his interpretation." Edmonds criticizes Bernabé for using Olympiodorus as evidence that inherited guilt descends from the Titans to humans, even though Olympiodorus never even mentions the idea of original sin. On the contrary, Olympiodorus is our first source to suggest that there is something divine in our bodies. The Dionysiac and Titanic nature to which Olympiodorus refers is his own construct, based upon the Neoplatonic idea that humans participate in both Titanic division and Dionysiac unification. The application of this element of the Zagreus myth (that humans are stained by Titanic nature but divine because of Dionysiac nature) to every other fragment of the dismemberment narrative is what Edmonds calls a "modern fabrication."[68]

On this last point, Edmonds is probably right. Not only is Olympiodorus the only ancient source to mention a Dionysiac nature, but also he is talking about the opposite of original sin: because we have a Dionysiac nature, our bodies are partly divine. The implications are not that we must cleanse our souls from their Titanic nature, but that we must preserve our bodies with

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65. Linforth 1941: 327–330.
66. Brisson 1995: 490–491, 493–494.
67. Graf and Johnston 2013: 193; cf. Bernabé 2002a: 405–406.
68. Edmonds 2013: 297, 375–390; cf. Yates 2004: 192–193; Jourdan 2005: 171–173.

their Dionysiac nature. No other ancient author ever mentions Dionysiac nature in this sense, so Edmonds is correct to warn against the fallacy of using later data found in Olympiodorus to explain earlier source material. Plato's reference to the "ancient Titanic nature" does not necessarily mean the inherited guilt or even the ancestral fault of the Zagreus myth. But Graf and Johnston are also correct to point out the fallacy of thinking that this will "unravel the entire myth." Both Gagné and Herrero find "ancestral fault" to be a more accurate designation of this concept than "original sin" or "inherited guilt," but they also acknowledge that this concept was too fluid to be applicable to every piece of Orphic evidence.[69] Ancient references to the Zagreus myth do not necessarily imply ancestral fault. At the same time, Plato's lack of reference to the Zagreus myth in connection to the Titanic nature is not proof that the Zagreus myth did not exist in his time. It is even possible that he knew the Zagreus myth well, but he still might not have been referring to it when he used the phrase "ancient Titanic nature."

It is reasonable to allow the possibility that as early as the sixth century BC there was a myth in which Dionysus was dismembered by the Titans, without assuming that this myth included an anthropogony and a concept of either original sin or ancestral fault. The views of Bernabé, Graf and Johnston, and others about the Hipponion and Petelia tablets, Pindar fr. 133, and the "Titanic nature" mentioned in Plato's *Laws* remain plausible despite Edmonds' protests. Pausanias attributes the Zagreus myth to Onomacritus, and Plutarch thinks the myth predates Empedocles, so both of these authors point to the sixth century BC. There are indications that the myth was older than that, and one of these might be the motif of Zeus in the form of a snake. In Bernabé's edition of the Rhapsodies, only one fragment, a scholium to Lucian, mentions that Zeus "changed into a serpent and had sex with his daughter." This is a late source, but Clement of Alexandria mentions this element too.[70] So it is reasonable to think that the motif of Zeus mating with Persephone in the form of a snake, which we have already seen in the Hieronyman theogony, also appeared in the Rhapsodies. The serpentine form of Zeus might relate to the cult of Zeus Meilichios, as I observed in chapter 4, while the Curetes and the cave in Crete seem to point back to Cretan rituals of chthonic Zeus in the Archaic Period.[71] The motif of inverted sacrifice might point to an early

69. Graf and Johnston 2013: 193; Herrero 2010: 336; Gagné 2013: 457–460.

70. Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.25 Rabe) (*OF* 280 B); Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.16.1 (*OF* 589 I B); cf. West 1983: 95–98; Bernabé ad *OF* 89 B.

71. For the snake form of Zeus in the Hieronyman theogony, see Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.2–3, 32.1 (134–136, 192–194 Pouderon) (*OF* 87–88, 89 I–II B = 58–59 K); cf. Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 5.565–566; Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 26.1 (139 Turcan) (*OF* 589 VI B). For the association of chthonic Zeus with Crete, see Kerényi 1951: 1–13; Huxley 1967: 85–87; Verbruggen 1981: 91–99; West ad Hesiod, *Theogony* 453–506; Bernabé ad *OF* 205 B; *LIMC* VIII, s.v. "Zeus," 316n11. Callimachus, *Aetia*, fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*OF* 34 B = 210 p. 230 K) associates Dionysus Zagreus with Cretan rituals.

origin as well: comparing the story of Dionysus and the Titans with the story of Prometheus in Hesiod's *Theogony*, both myths seem to provide aetiologies of sacrificial procedure. If, as Detienne argued, the Zagreus myth is a reflection of sacrificial ritual with primal roots, then the motif of primordial sacrifice is shared with the Prometheus myth, and the motifs of dismemberment and cannibalism are comparable with the deaths of legendary characters like Pelops and Thyestes, both of whom were known since the Archaic Period.[72]

Most importantly, these motifs of violent dismemberment and the eating of raw flesh are inherent in the nature of Dionysus himself. There is no need here to go through in detail all of the stories in which someone is killed, dismembered, or eaten because of the madness of Dionysus; a simple mention of Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae* should suffice.[73] Walter Otto, with his brilliant but outdated intuition, hardly even mentioned the idea that the Zagreus myth might be about anthropogony, because in his view it was obvious that Dionysus dies and comes back to life simply because it is in his nature to do so. Pointing out that the name of Zagreus means "great hunter," he remarked that "the 'wild hunter' is himself hunted, the 'render' is himself rent. … Just as the maenads, following his example, tear apart young animals and devour them, so, he himself, as a child, is overcome by the Titans, torn apart, and consumed." Otto concluded that "Dionysus presents himself to us in two forms: as the god who vanishes and reappears, and as the god who dies and is born again."[74] Nor is this the only myth that sends Dionysus to the Underworld, as Aristophanes' *Frogs* and other sources attest.[75] These violent motifs are connected to the character of Dionysus from the earliest mention of his name in Greek literature, when in the *Iliad* Diomedes tells the story of "Dionysus raging in madness" (6.132) who flees to the sea from "man-slaying Lycurgus" (6.134). On this point, Otto hit the nail on the head: Dionysus is dismembered because dismemberment is in his nature. He is the god who leaves and returns, he suffers his own madness, and indeed he suffers his own violence.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that some elements of the myth of Dionysus and the Titans could have existed from the earliest moments of the Archaic Period, but Edmonds is absolutely right about one thing: at no point did this myth necessarily imply an idea of original sin or ancestral fault, not even when in the last moments of late antiquity Olympiodorus reinterpreted the myth to refer to an original divine nature that comes from Dionysus. On

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72. Prometheus in Hesiod, *Theogony* 507–616; Pelops in Pindar, *Ol.* 1; Thyestes in Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1215–1245; Detienne and Vernant 1986: 23–29; cf. Stocking 2013: 183–210.

73. See also Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.5.1; Plutarch, *Quaest. Gr.* 38,299e–300a; Pausanias 9.30.5.

74. Otto (1933) 1965: 191–192, 200–201.

75. See Aristophanes, *Frogs*; Plutarch, *de Is. et Osir.* 35, 364f–365a; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 6.130–140; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.5.1.

the question of the importance of the myth to Orphism, some other explanation is required. The myth of Dionysus and the Titans was neither the central myth of Orphism nor a modern fabrication, so what was it? The best way to answer this question is to read the myth in a literary context where we know that it was found: that is, in the Rhapsodies. Because of the numerous references to this narrative in Neoplatonists and Christian apologists, we can have a relatively clear idea of its contents in the Rhapsodies and how it was used for either apologetic or allegorical purposes. The myth of Dionysus and the Titans was interpreted in a variety of different ways by ancient authors, none of which centered around notions of original sin or ancestral fault. Neoplatonic allegories were merely the last in a succession of interpretations, so the next section reviews six different types of ancient interpretations.

Ancient Interpretations of Dionysus and the Titans

The ancient authors who refer to the myth of Dionysus and the Titans apply a variety of interpretations, none of which is identical to the typical modern interpretation of the Zagreus myth. From Hecataeus (sixth century BC) to Damascius (sixth century AD), Greek prose authors attempted through various methods, such as etymologies, Euhemerist interpretations, and allegories, to rationalize traditional tales.[76] These rationalizations took on numerous forms that did not necessarily conflict with each other or even with traditional myth. As Hawes argues, rationalization was itself a form of storytelling, a "revisionist mode" that operated alongside Greek mythological tradition because it was actually a part of it. Indeed, "rationalizing critique engages in '*bricolage*,' creating new narrative by tinkering with familiar motifs and patterns."[77] Interpretation of myth was as fluid and diverse as myth itself, so the story of Dionysus and the Titans was one myth that was the subject of widely varying forms of exegesis. In this section, I review six different ways in which the dismemberment myth was interpreted by ancient authors: (1) physical allegory, (2) Euhemerism, (3) apologetic interpretations, (4) Stoic cosmology, (5) Neoplatonic metaphysical interpretation, and (6) Neoplatonic spiritual interpretation.[78] A discussion of the different interpretations that were applied to the myth of Dionysus and the Titans also reveals what these ancient sources can tell us about the contents of the myth at different points in time. After taking note of the different

76. Hawes 2014: 6–13; Hecataeus, fr. 1 Fowler; Herodotus, fr. 31 Fowler.
77. Hawes 2014: 19, 225.
78. Pépin (1970: 306–312) summarizes four types of ancient exegesis of this myth: naturalist exegesis, cosmological exegesis, metaphysical exegesis, and spiritual exegesis. I have added the apologetic and Euhemerist types to take Christian authors into account.

approaches of ancient authors, it will be possible to clarify what this myth might have looked like in the Orphic Rhapsodies.

(1) *Physical allegory.* One of the earliest forms of allegory was an interpretation in which the gods represented some aspect of the physical universe, so naturally some authors subjected the dismemberment myth to a physical allegory in which Dionysus represented grapes.[79] Diodorus Siculus (first century BC) relates what "the mythographers transmitted" about Dionysus being torn apart "by the earthborn." In this account, Dionysus is the son of Zeus and Demeter, which means that the vine grows "from the earth and rain." Note the wordplay: his dismemberment "by the earthborn" (ὑπὸ τῶν γηγενῶν) represents the grapes being harvested "by the farmers" (ὑπὸ τῶν γεωργῶν). The boiling of his body parts is the boiling of the grapes to make wine, and his resurrection is the restoration of fruitfulness to the vine in the next growing season. Diodorus concludes that "what is revealed in the Orphic poems and what is introduced in their rites agree with these things."[80] Likewise, Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (first century AD) mentions a story in which Dionysus "was put together again by Rhea." He adds that "those who transmit the myth say allegorically that the farmers, being creatures of the earth, mix up the grapes." The putting together of Dionysus' limbs represents the "flowing together of new wine."[81] Neither Diodorus nor Cornutus personally subscribes to this allegorical interpretation, but they attest that it had been applied by earlier mythographers. Diodorus is the earliest author to explicitly attribute to Orpheus a literary version of the myth of Dionysus and the Titans, and thus he may serve as a terminus ante quem not only for the composition (or compilation) of the Rhapsodies, but also for a tradition of interpreting this story allegorically.

(2) *Euhemerist interpretation.* Euhemerism was a mode of interpretation named after Euhemerus of Messene (c. 300 BC). He thought the gods were humans who lived in the distant past and were deified in later cult practice, long after it was forgotten that they had been humans. The passage of Diodorus cited above gives us an example of Euhemerism when he continues by talking about "those mythographers who represent the god as having a human form"[82] and discusses at length (3.63–74) the debate about whether there was one Dionysus or three. He says nothing further in this passage about the dismemberment story, but he is a useful source for the Euhemerists' interpretations of other

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79. See Lobeck 1829: 710; Linforth 1941: 315; Pépin 1970: 306–307; West 1983: 141–142, 245–246; Sorel 1995: 75; Brisson 1995: 67; Bernabé 2004: 65. Dionysus is called Wine at Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 108.13 Pasquali (*OF* 303, 321 I, 331 I B = 216 c K); 109.9–19 Pasquali (*OF* 314 III, 331 II B = 210 K). On allegory in general, see Theagenes, fr. 8 A2 D-K (Schol. B *Il.* 20.67); Richardson 1975: 65–81; Lamberton 1986: 12–22; Ford 2002: 10–12; Russel and Konstan 2005: xiii–xxix; Hawes 2014: 29–37.

80. Diodorus Siculus 3.62.6–8 (*OF* 58, 59 III, 399 III B = 301 K).

81. Cornutus, *Nat. deor.* 30 (62.10–16).

82. Diodorus Siculus 3.63.1.

stories about Dionysus. Somewhat later, Firmicus Maternus (fourth century AD) offers a detailed Euhemerist account in which the dismemberment myth is interpreted as a series of human events in Crete.[83] Jupiter was the king of Crete, and Liber was his illegitimate son. Jealous Juno "stationed her minions who are called Titans in the inner parts of the palace," and "with rattles and a mirror" she lured the boy into a trap where "he was intercepted and killed and, to ensure that no trace of the murder might be found, the gang of minions chopped his limbs up into pieces and divided them among themselves." In order to discard the evidence, they "cooked the boy's limbs in various ways and devoured them," but Liber's sister Minerva saved the heart and "unfolded the tale of the crime" to her father. The angry king "put the Titans to various sorts of torture and killed them," and "he had a statue of the boy molded in plaster" with the heart placed in the chest of the statue.[84]

Maternus reinterprets the dismemberment myth as a series of human events that supposedly happened long ago in Crete: the illegitimate son of the king was dismembered and eaten by the "minions" (*satellites*) of the king's wife. This is what Maternus claims to reveal as "superstitions, of which the secrets must be revealed," because the point of his Euhemerist interpretation is to explain the origin of Dionysiac rites and to argue that "in these profane cults ... the deaths of humans have been made sacred."[85] Maternus goes on to narrate how, after all of these violent events had occurred,

> the Cretans, in order to mitigate the savagery of their furious tyrant, established the anniversary of the death as a festival, and arranged recurring sacred rites celebrated every two years, doing in order everything that the dying boy did or suffered. They tear apart a living bull with their teeth, representing the cruel feast with annual commemorations. ... In front of them is carried the basket in which the sister had secretly concealed the heart, and by the song of flutes and the clash of cymbals they counterfeit the rattle with which the boy was deceived. So, in honour of a tyrant, by the subservient common people someone who was unable to have a burial was made a god.[86]

This Euhemerist interpretation was used both to rationalize the myth and to explain the origin of certain rites that apparently were practised in Crete. With the mention of gypsum, rattles, and a mirror, this fragment has commonly

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83. Herrero 2010: 136; see Bernabé ad *OF* 304 B, following Decharme 1904: 385.

84. Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 6.3–4 (88–89 Turcan) (*OF* 304 III, 309 VII, 313 III, 314 IV, 318 V, 325 B = 214 K).

85. Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 6.1 (88 Turcan) (*OF* 304 III B = 214 K). See Bernabé ad *OF* 304 B; Le Bonniec 1958: 333–340; Turcan ad loc.

86. Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 6.5 (89–90 Turcan) (*OF* 315 IV, 332 B = 214 K).

been mentioned in modern discussions of the relationship between the dismemberment myth and initiation ritual.[87] With regard to the tearing apart of a live bull with their teeth, it is probably not the case that Cretan practitioners were literally practicing a *sparagmos* or *omophagia*: as Henrichs has argued about maenadic violence in general, "Greek ritual tends to mitigate where myth is cruel."[88] Rather, it seems that Maternus has mixed up Bacchic motifs, and caution is due for another reason: his "historical" details, based on literary sources, are a Euhemerist fabrication. This applies to the ritual details as much as it applies to his account of Cretan history. The reason why he uses a Euhemerist interpretation is to argue that the Greek gods are not gods but humans, and in doing so to discredit both the myth and the corresponding rituals. Maternus employs an apologetic strategy that seeks to prove that the gods are not divine by lowering their status to natural principles, demonic forces, or divinized humans, so in this sense his Euhemerist interpretation is subordinate to his apologetic agenda.[89] This was just one of the strategies used by apologists.

(3) *Apologetic interpretations.* There were several different strategies that the Christian apologists used to discredit their Pagan opponents, but one stands out as being the most relevant to the Orphic myth of Dionysus: derisive opposition to the scandalous and immoral elements of Greek mythology. Jourdan points out how Clement of Alexandria (second century AD), in his influential *Protrepticus*, attempts to rewrite Pagan tradition in three different ways: "opposition" to Greek myth, "transposition" of elements that are useful to Christian expression, and "appropriation" of elements that are "charged with entirely new resonances." For example, Clement appropriates the image of Orpheus to paint Christ as a "new Orpheus," but he opposes the "scandalous nature" of Dionysus.[90] In a similar manner, Herrero outlines the approaches of early Christian apologists toward Orphic literature, ranging from outright "rejection" to "appropriation" or "omission" of certain elements. Behind this diverse range of approaches was a singular purpose: "presenting Christianity and confronting its rivals." Their sources were "above all literary," and in fact most later apologists were not working with original Orphic poetry, but with anthologies and the works of earlier apologists, most notably Clement of Alexandria. Herrero conjectures that their most likely audience consisted not of Pagan Greeks but of other Christians whom they "sought to instruct ... in tools for confronting paganism." Typically, the apologists' approach was to read a myth literally and to discredit the validity of their rivals' allegorical interpretations, as we saw with Athenagoras in chapter 4. In many of their

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87. Pépin 1970: 312–313; Henrichs 1972: 56–74; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356–360; West 1983: 154–159; Herrero 2010: 156; Villarrubia 2011: 111–117.
88. Henrichs 1978: 148; cf. Burkert 1983: 1–82; Herrero 2010: 158.
89. Herrero 2010: 158, 239.
90. Jourdan 2008: 319–321.

accounts of Orphic myth, the response they attempt to invoke with their tone of "scandal or mockery" is "indignation and laughter."[91]

Clement of Alexandria is one of the earliest and most influential authors within the apologetic tradition, and perhaps the most important apologetic source for the dismemberment myth. In *Protrepticus* 2.12–22, he attempts to refute the mysteries of Dionysus and Demeter, traditionally thought to have been founded by Orpheus. It is less likely that he had personal knowledge of these mysteries than that he was working from a literary source. Some of his claims about Bacchic ritual do not seem reliable, but he probably had access to an Orphic poem, most likely the Rhapsodies.[92] Clement's discussion of the dismemberment myth is exemplary of the typical apologetic approach of rejecting myths because of the scandalous deeds of the gods.[93] He criticizes the way "Zeus is both the father and the seducer of Kore, and he has sex with her in the form of a snake" (2.16.1). This aligns him with the philosophical tradition of criticizing myths because of their immoral content, as we have seen with Plato and Isocrates, and with the apologetic tendency to highlight deities with serpentine features, as we have seen with Athenagoras.

Clement introduces the dismemberment myth with the value judgment that "the mysteries of Dionysus are wholly inhuman" (2.17.2). To make the myth seem even more inhuman, he emphasizes Dionysus' youth: "while he was still a child," the Titans "deceived him with childish toys," and "they dismembered (διέσπασαν) him when he was still a child."[94] Herrero points out that by using the verb διασπάω, "Clement uses verbs characteristic of maenadism," so that it seems like "a *diasparagmos* in which the flesh is devoured raw." This is similar to Firmicus Maternus, who claims that the Cretans tear apart a live bull with their teeth in commemoration of the Titans' deeds.[95] Herrero argues that apologists exploited "sensations of terror and gory suspense" when they recounted this myth, so Clement digresses by "highlighting details like the toys … causing his reader to shudder with horror" at the mental image of these things.[96] Clement attributes to Orpheus two hexameter lines describing the toys with which the Titans lure Dionysus into their trap:

Cone and spinning-top and limb-moving playthings,
and beautiful golden apples from the clear-toned Hesperides.[97]

91. Herrero 2010: 127, 217–250.
92. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 2.2.64; Herrero 2010: 55, 188–189, 218.
93. Clement Alex, *Protr.* 2.17–18 (*OF* 306 I, 312 I, 315 I, 318 I, 322 I B = 34–35 K).
94. Clement Alex, *Protr.* 2.17.2 (26 Marc.) (*OF* 306 I B = 34 K).
95. Herrero 2010: 267. It is not so clear that the Titans use their teeth: Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 301 I B = 210 K) uses σπαράττειν: the Titans "tear to pieces," and Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 6.169–173 (*OF* 308 I B = ad 209 K) says that they killed him "with a sacrificial knife."
96. Herrero 2010: 228; cf. Henrichs 1972: 56–73.
97. Clement Alex, *Protr.* 2.17.2 (26 Marc.) (*OF* 306.1–2 B = 34 K).

There seems to be a connection between this poetic list of toys and the items used in Bacchic ritual, so there has been much scholarly discussion about whether these are indeed ritual objects or simply toys; most likely, they are ritual objects.[98] One indication that they are ritual objects is that after Clement quotes these lines, he takes the opportunity "to exhibit for condemnation" what he believes to be "the useless symbols of this mystic rite." These include "knuckle-bones, ball, hoop, apples, spinning-top, mirror, tuft of wool."[99] Continuing the narrative, Clement recounts how Athena rescues the heart, "but the Titans who had dismembered him, setting a cauldron on a tripod, and throwing into it the limbs of Dionysus, first boiled them down, and then 'fixing them on spits, held them over Hephaestus.'" Zeus strikes the Titans with lightning and gives Dionysus' body parts to Apollo, who "bore the dismembered corpse to Parnassus, and there deposited it."[100]

Clement is a good example of how the apologists treated this myth. Indeed, according to Herrero, most later apologists "add no new information … [but] are inspired by this section of the *Protrepticus*."[101] Arnobius relates that Liber "was occupied with childish games and dismembered by the Titans," and he lists many of the same items as Clement, calling it a "secret and unspeakable matter."[102] Origen rejects the scandalous elements of the myth, saying that "in [Moses' writings] no one ever dared to commit such things as," for example, Zeus having sex with his daughter. He suggests that Biblical narratives "appear more worthy of respect" than the story of Dionysus' dismemberment.[103] Clement is also an example of what the apologists did not say. He never mentions the Titans eating the flesh of Dionysus, thus avoiding any association between this episode and the Eucharist or any suggestion that Dionysus was a prefiguration of Christ. Neither Clement nor Arnobius calls Dionysus the son of Zeus or mentions that the Titans eat him, probably avoiding this theme because Christians were accused of cannibalism (unlike Firmicus Maternus, who describes it in detail). Neither do the apologists mention the resurrection of Dionysus, probably because of its similarities with the resurrection of Christ (with the exception of Origen, who compares both resurrections but rejects Dionysus' as false).[104]

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98. Gow 1934: 5–7; Guthrie 1952: 120–123; Henrichs 1972: 61–62; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356–360; West 1983: 157–159; Bernabé ad loc.

99. Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.1 (*OF* 588 I B = 34 K).

100. Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.1–2 (27 Marc.) (*OF* 312 I, 315 I, 318 I, 322 I B = 35 K).

101. Herrero 2010: 149.

102. Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 5.19 (273.7 Marchesi) (*OF* 306 II, 312 III, 318 VII B = 34 K).

103. Origen, *c. Cels.* 1.17 (*OF* 282 B); 4.17 (*OF* 326 IV B).

104. Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.1; Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 5.19; Firmicus Maternus, *de err.* 6.3; Origen, *c. Cels.* 3.22–43; Jourdan 2006: 278–279; Herrero 2010: 214–216, 248–249, 328–357.

Apologetic interpretations of the myth of Dionysus and the Titans are at least indirectly based on the Rhapsodies, since Clement seems to have had access to the Rhapsodies and most later apologists relied on Clement. They read the narrative literally in order to uncover the most scandalous aspects of the story. The incest of Zeus and Persephone and the violent murder of a child were typical examples of the immoral deeds with which apologists attempted to discredit the gods of Greek myths. In a tone of mockery, Clement lists the "useless" (1.18.1) items used by the Titans to lure Dionysus. This includes a tripod and spits in a mock sacrifice, which he hopes will fill his readers with horror at the thought of participation in Bacchic rites. At the same time, apologists avoid uncomfortable topics, such as cannibalism and resurrection. Simply put, the apologetic approach to the story of Dionysus and the Titans is to use literally whatever can be used as ammunition and to disregard the rest.

(4) *Stoic cosmology*. This category fits with other fragments we have seen in which there appears to be an affinity between an Orphic poem and Stoic philosophy, particularly since its main source is again Plutarch. In a discussion about the connection between Apollo and Dionysus, "whose share in Delphi is no less than Apollo's," Plutarch refers to "the theologians" writing in both verse and prose about Dionysus "undergoing transformations of himself." Dionysus is equated with Apollo because of his "solitary state," but "as for his turning into winds and water, earth and stars, and into the generations of plants and animals, and his adoption of such guises, they speak allegorically of what he undergoes in his transformation as a kind of tearing apart and a dismemberment." Plutarch even mentions the name of Zagreus, so he is one of the earliest ancient authors to refer explicitly to that name in the context of the dismemberment myth.[105]

Pépin explains Plutarch's interpretation of the dismemberment myth as an allegory for the "alternation of ἐκπυρώσεις and διακοσμήσεις"—that is, "conflagration" at the end and "setting in order" at the beginning of the cosmic cycle, the alternation of which is one of the basic concepts of Stoic cosmology. According to Pépin, Plutarch sees an "equivalence" between the dismemberment of Dionysus and "the differentiation of the universe," and between Apollo and "the unifying conflagration." He notes that Apollo by assisting Zeus in the myth is indeed involved in the resurrection of Dionysus.[106] As the next section demonstrates, this association of Dionysus with differentiation and Apollo with unification was repeated in Neoplatonic interpretations, and one consequence of this Dionysiac differentiation is the dispersal of souls into human bodies. In Plutarch's treatise on the eating of meat, he allegorically associates the Titans eating Dionysus with reincarnation. Our souls are imprisoned in bodies in the same way that the Titans are imprisoned in Tartarus, but this

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105. Plutarch, *de E ap. Delph.* 9.388e–389a (*OF* 613 II B).
106. Pépin 1970: 307–308.

does not mean that our bodies are actually the prisons of the Titans. Plutarch draws an allegory from the dismemberment narrative to explain reincarnation, but he does not say that we have a Titanic nature.[107]

(5) *Neoplatonic metaphysical interpretation.* This is the way the story of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies fits into the Neoplatonic allegorical scheme. If Zeus is the center-point between the One and the Many, and Phanes is the center-point between Zeus and the One, then Dionysus is the center-point between Zeus and the Many. Dionysus is the Demiurge's agent of differentiation, or, to put it more precisely, the Titans are the agents of differentiation as the lower levels of the Neoplatonic universe proceed from Zeus as Demiurge; Apollo is the agent of reunification as these lower levels revert back to the Demiurge; and Dionysus is the combination of these, the point at which these two opposing forces meet. As Brisson explains it, Dionysus is the deity whom Proclus equates with the world soul in Plato's *Timaeus*.[108] Because Dionysus plays this important role in Neoplatonic allegory, once again the majority of the fragments of the dismemberment myth in the Rhapsodies come from the Neoplatonists.

The first events of the Dionysiac story have to do with Persephone: her birth from Zeus and Rhea/Demeter, and then Zeus in the form of a snake having sex with her to give birth to Dionysus.[109] We saw in chapter 5 how Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus form the top triad of Intellect in the Neoplatonic universe; in the second triad, Kore appears with Athena and the Curetes; and at the bottom we find Zeus as Intellect, otherwise expressed as Kronos "cutting and being cut." Proclus explains the allegorical relationships between these deities in his *Platonic Theology*. Equating Rhea with Demeter, he says that Rhea is "conjoined with Kronos by her perfection," but "together with Zeus unfolding the whole and partial orders of the gods, she is called Demeter." As Demeter, she "together with Zeus generates Kore."[110] Rhea, Zeus, and Kore require the protection of the Curetes, not from Kronos or Hera but from contamination by contact with the lower, physical orders, from which Kronos is transcendent.[111]

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107. Plutarch, *de esu carn.* 996c; Jourdan 2005: 154–160.

108. Brisson 1995: 84, citing Plato, *Timaeus* 34b. The earliest appearance of this interpretation is Alexander of Lycopolis (c. AD 280), *Cont. Manich.* 5.74 Brinkmann (*OF* 311 XI B), who claims that the myth represents how "the divine power is divided into matter." See Lobeck 1829: 710; Linforth 1941: 320–321; Bernabé ad loc.

109. For Zeus in serpent form, see Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.25 Rabe) (*OF* 280 B); Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.16.1. The Neoplatonists never mention this detail.

110. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.11 (5.39.8–24 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 206 III, 276 II B = 153 K); Saffrey and Westerink ad loc.

111. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1 Pasquali; *Theol. Plat.* 5.35 (5.127.21 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 278 I–II B = 151 K); 6.13 (6.66.4 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 279 I B = 191 K). Kore being raised by nymphs in a cave is attested earlier by Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 7 p. 46.17 Simonini (*OF* 279 III B). See Duvick ad Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1.

So far, Zeus as Demiurge has appeared in three levels of the Neoplatonic system: when he mates with Rhea, he does so from the top triad of the level of Intellect; when he swallows Phanes, he is at the bottom of the level of Intellect; but when he procreates with Kore, this occurs below the level of Intellect, at the top triad in the level of Soul, which consists of four triads of Hypercosmic deities. The top triad, "paternal/demiurgical," consists of Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto.[112] According to Brisson, these three gods "correspond to the aids of the demiurge" in Plato's *Timaeus* (41a, 42d–e). Zeus rules the upper realms, Pluto the lower realms, and Poseidon the middle, while a second Kore "constitutes the medium term of the immediately inferior triad": the generative triad of Artemis-Hecate, Kore, and Athena.[113] In his commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, Proclus elaborates on the way Kore relates to "the demiurgic triad that divides up all the cosmos":

> Father is Zeus, Power is Poseidon, and Intellect is Pluto. … They are all causes of the life of all creatures, but [Zeus] is so in Being, [Poseidon] by Life itself, and [Pluto] Intellectively. From this the theologian says that it is with Kore that the gods at either extreme [of the triad] demiurgically create the first and last creatures, but the middle god creates without her, since he coordinates the generative cause from his own lot. This is why they say that Kore is raped by Zeus, and abducted by Pluto.[114]

Kore being raped by Zeus and abducted by Pluto are allegorically interpreted as the procession of power from the paternal triad through the generative triad toward the lower orders; it is through Kore that Zeus and Pluto "create the first and last creatures." According to Saffrey and Westerink, on the Hypercosmic level, Kore plays "the same role that Rhea played in the triad of Intellective gods,"[115] so the paternal power of Zeus and Pluto is channeled through the generative power of Kore to produce living beings. With Zeus she gives birth to Dionysus, and with Pluto she gives birth to "nine gray-eyed daughters," the Eumenides.[116] Therefore, "the Koric order is twofold": "coarranged with Zeus," she "constitutes with him the one Demiurge of partible natures [i.e., Dionysus]," but with Pluto she is said "to animate the extremities (ἔσχατα)

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112. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.6–9; Chlup 2012: 126.

113. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.10–11; Plato, *Timaeus* 42d–e; Brisson 1995: 82. See also Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 106.5 Pasquali (text following *OF* 293 B = 197 K).

114. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 85.5–23 Pasquali (*OF* 281 I, 289 I B = 195 K); cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.12 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 281 II B = 195 K).

115. Saffrey and Westerink ad Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.149.

116. Diodorus Siculus 5.75.4; Pseudo-Nonnus, *ad Gregor. Orat. in Iulian.* 5.30 (207 Nimmo Smith) Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.22 Rabe) (*OF* 283 I–III B); Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 106.5 Pasquali (*OF* 293 B = 197 K).

of the universe."[117] Simply put, Persephone is the channel through which the lower orders of the Neoplatonic universe proceed from Zeus and Hades.

In the Rhapsodies, unlike the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone is not picking flowers but weaving a "heavenly robe like a garment of the heavenly gods" when she is abducted by Hades.[118] Some fragments indicate that there might have been an *ekphrasis* in the Rhapsodies, describing a complex tapestry of images in the robe: it was bordered by Ocean, there was a scorpion, and it might have depicted a Gigantomachy.[119] The robe helps explain Persephone's connection with Athena in the Neoplatonic triad, since the art of weaving, "originating" from Athena, "proceeds to the life-bearing series of Kore." Proclus uses this image of the robe as an allegory of how Kore is said to "weave the order of life."[120] Damascius says that "the Hypercosmic robe-making of Kore" produces the orderly arrangement of the universe, and he characterizes this process as "resemblance/copying," because "the imitation of Intelligible images is woven in as a pattern."[121] Because she is abducted, her work remains unfinished, so Proclus explains that "the 'unfinished' state of her webs indicates … that the universe is unfinished as far as to eternal living things."[122]

According to Neoplatonic allegory, the pattern Kore weaves in the robe represents the proceeding of the Hypercosmic deities, and then the Hypercosmic-Encosmic deities, followed by Dionysus at the summit of the Encosmic deities. Brisson explains that the Hypercosmic deities exist on the level of the transcendent "soul of the world," while the Hypercosmic-Encosmic deities rule over nature but still remain "detached from the world." The level of Encosmic deities is "the sensible world," and we find Dionysus at the top of the Encosmic order, at the sub-level of Encosmic Intellect. Dionysus is "the intellect of the world," so when Proclus says that Zeus "makes him king of all the Encosmic gods together," Brisson takes this to mean that "he becomes the agent of the partial demiurge."[123] Dionysus is at the head of the Encosmic

117. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.4 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 295 B = 198 K); cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.457.14 Diehl (*OF* 294 B = 190 K); *in Plat. Cratyl.* 95.10 Pasquali (*OF* 292 B = 197 K).

118. Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 14 p. 56.10 Simonini (*OF* 286 I B = 192 K); cf. Pherecydes of Syros (fr. 68–69 Schibli = 7 B2 D-K); Lobeck 1829: 549–550; Kern 1888: 97; West 1983: 244–245; Bernabé 2004: 237.

119. For Ocean, see Schol. Dionys. *Perieg.* 1 (*GGM* II 430.23 Müller); Eustathius, *in Dionys. Perieg.* 1 (*GGM* II 217.17 Müller) (*OF* 287 I–II B = 115 K); Lobeck 1829: 607; West 1983: 157n68. For the scorpion, see Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.62.9 Kroll (*OF* 290 B = 196 K) and for its connection with the Zodiac, see Festugière ad loc.; West 1983: 244–245; Brisson 1995: 66n27. For the Gigantomachy, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.85.14–16 Diehl and Tarrant ad loc.

120. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 22.1 Pasquali (*OF* 271 I, 286 III B = 192 K).

121. Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 339 (3.123.14 Westerink) (*OF* 286 VI B = 192 K).

122. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.223.7 Diehl (*OF* 288 II B = 192 K).

123. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 55.5 Pasquali (*OF* 299 I B = 208 K); Brisson 1995: 82–84, 186; cf. Chlup 2012: 126–127; Festugière ad Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.310.29 Diehl (*OF* 299 III B = 207 K). The Hypercosmic triads (Soul) consist of (1) the paternal triad of Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto, (2) the generative triad of Artemis, Kore, and Athena, (3) the perfective triad of Apollo-Helios in three modes

deities who correspond to Nature: while every level above him only exists in the non-material realm of Platonic Forms, the Encosmic level of Nature is the level at which the physical cosmos is actually brought into being. Within the top sub-level of Encosmic Nature, Dionysus is the head of a triad: he is cosmic Intellect, with Hipta as cosmic Soul, while the third member of the triad corresponds to Nature, consisting of the four elements that constitute the divine body.[124]

With reference to this cosmic role of Dionysus, Proclus explains the Rhapsodic verse in which "the sweet offspring of Zeus was called forth" as referring to "the cosmic Intellect being a child of Zeus," because "it is impossible for Intellect without Soul to be present in anything."[125] Since Intellective Intellect (Zeus) transcends Encosmic Nature (Dionysus), it needs Hypercosmic Soul (Kore) as an intermediary. Likewise, Dionysus at the top sub-level of Encosmic Nature functions as the intermediary between the Hypercosmic levels of the Neoplatonic system and the lower sub-levels of Encosmic Nature. In his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus explains the relationship between Zeus, Dionysus, and the Hypercosmic deities:

> The Demiurge therefore inserted in the junior [i.e., Hypercosmic] gods the fabrication of mortal natures from the beginning, and the cause of regeneration; just as he inserted the fabrication of all Encosmic natures in the monad of the junior gods, whom also Orpheus calls the young god.[126]

The triads of Hypercosmic and Hypercosmic-Encosmic deities are the "junior gods," and the "young god" is the Encosmic Dionysus. This position as the monad at the top of Encosmic Nature is allegorically represented by Zeus appointing Dionysus to be the sixth king of the gods, when in the Rhapsodies he says to the gods:

> Listen, gods; I place this king for you
> the immortals and I distribute to him the first honours
> although he is young and an infant feaster.[127]

(i.e., split into a triad), and (4) the protective triad of the Curetes. Below this appear four triads of Hypercosmic-Encosmic deities (Soul-Nature), who correspond to the twelve Olympians mentioned in Plato, *Phaedrus* 246e–247a: (1) Paternal: Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaestus; (2) Generative: Demeter, Hera, Artemis; (3) Perfective: Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo; and (4) Protective: Hestia, Athena, Ares.

124. Brisson 1995: 67; Chlup 2012: 127: Hipta is a nymph who takes Dionysus to Mt. Ida when he is born from Zeus and Semele.

125. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.408.7 Diehl (*OF* 296 B = 199 K).

126. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.241.14 Diehl (*OF* 299 V B = 205 K).

127. *OF* 299.1–3 B. Not one source cites all three of these lines together. Line one is cited in Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 55.5 Pasquali (*OF* 299 I B = 208 K) and Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.4 (31 Westerink) (*OF* 299 II B = 208 K). Line three is cited in Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.310.29 Diehl (*OF* 299 III B = 207 K) and *in Plat. Parmen.* 686.36 Cousin (*OF* 299 IV B = 207 K). These citations

Dionysus' position as sixth king of the gods is interpreted by the Neoplatonists as representing his role as the final deity in the demiurgic series proceeding from Zeus. In this position, he completes the demiurgic task of differentiating the Forms. This is what Proclus has in mind when, calling Dionysus "the monad of the junior gods," he quotes a line of the Rhapsodies in which "Zeus ruled/accomplished all things, but Bacchus ruled in addition [to Zeus]" (κραῖνε μὲν οὖν Ζεὺς πάντα πατήρ, Βάκχος δ' ἐπέκραινε). Likewise, Damascius says that "Dionysus completes the work of Zeus … who is the producer of all."[128] Damascius calls the activity of Zeus "demiurgic union": Phanes the Paradigm contains the Forms undifferentiated as a whole, but Zeus the Demiurge is "the whole manifesting the parts," and "Dionysus is the unlimited plurality already divided."[129] Dionysus' ruling together with Zeus is an allegory for the way in which Encosmic Intellect completes the Demiurge's creative task: he is the means by which "the divine power is divided into matter."[130]

Damascius points out that "as long as Dionysus sits on the throne of Zeus, he is undivided,"[131] but Dionysus does not stay on the throne for long, since he becomes divided when the Titans dismember him. The Neoplatonic idea here goes back to a passage of Plato's *Timaeus* (35a–b), which says that between indivisible and divisible Being, there is a middle point that is both Same and Different. According to Neoplatonic allegory, Dionysus representing the universal soul is the undivided Same while he sits on the throne of Zeus, but when the Titans dismember him, he becomes Different (i.e., plurality). His dismemberment represents the fragmentation of Soul into seven portions, which correspond to seven numerical ratios.[132] With reference to this passage of Plato's *Timaeus*, Proclus says,

> The remainder of the god's body is the whole psychic composite, since this is also divided in seven: "they divided up all seven parts of the boy," says the theologian about the Titans, just as Timaeus divides the soul into seven portions [36d]. Perhaps the fact that Soul is stretched through all the cosmos is meant to remind the Orphics of the Titanic

have been recognized as having come from the Rhapsodies since Lobeck (1829: 552–553), but Bernabé (ad loc.) more recently restored the second line "from a paraphrase of Proclus."

128. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.316.3 Diehl (*OF* 300 I B = 218 K); Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 245 (2.83.1 Westerink) (*OF* 300 II B = 218 K); see Westerink ad loc., who views this passage as a commentary on Proclus in *OF* 300 I = 218 K.

129. Damascius, *in Plat. Parmen.* 160 (1.68.11 Westerink) (*OF* 300 III B = 218 K); see Westerink ad loc.; cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali (*OF* 98 IV, 299 X B = 101 K).

130. Alexander of Lycopolis, *Cont. Manich.* 5.74 Brinkmann (*OF* 311 XI B).

131. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.4 (31 Westerink) (*OF* 299 II B = 208 K).

132. See Pépin 1970: 309–310; Festugière 1967: 245n11; Brisson 1995: 186–188.

division because, not only does Soul envelop the universe, but it is also stretched through all of it [34b].[133]

Dionysus' dismemberment represents the fragmentation of the universal Soul into its many parts, extending throughout the universe. This is what the Neoplatonists mean when they refer to "Titanic division."

Unlike the apologists, the Neoplatonists do not make a point of listing all of the toys with which the Titans lure Dionysus into their trap, but they do apply allegorical interpretations to two of these items. The first item is a fennel-stalk, which reminds us both of the thyrsus carried by the maenads and of the fennel-stalk with which Prometheus (the son of a Titan) steals fire in Hesiod's *Theogony* (565–567) and *Works and Days* (50–52). Proclus draws this connection between the thyrsus and the Titans' fennel-stalk in his commentary on *Works and Days*. He remarks that "those performing rites to Dionysus appear carrying fennel-stalks" and that "it is brought forth by the Titans to Dionysus," and then he adds that "another Titanic god is Prometheus."[134] Westerink argues that the Titans hand Dionysus the fennel-stalk instead of the sceptre, "apparently to take away his royal power."[135] Since the sceptre is an important motif in the Rhapsodies, representing the continuation of divine royal power, the fennel-stalk makes sense as a sort of inverted sceptre, representing the negation of royal power. But according to Damascius, the two items represent the opposing forces of division and unification:

> The fennel-stalk symbolizes matter-bound and divided creation ... because of its utterly broken continuity, which has made the plant Titanic: for they offer it to Dionysus instead of his paternal sceptre, and thus they entice him into divided existence; further, the Titans are represented as bearing the fennel-stalk; and Prometheus steals fire in a fennel-stalk.[136]

The other item that the Neoplatonists allegorize, the mirror that mesmerizes Dionysus when the Titans attack him, is interpreted as "a symbol of the receptivity of the universe to Intellective fulfillment." Proclus says that when Dionysus looked into the mirror, "he proceeded into the universal divisible creation," and Damascius says that "when Dionysus had projected his reflection

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133. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.146.9 Diehl (*OF* 311 I B = 210 K); cf. *in Plat. Tim.* 2.197.24–198.5 Diehl (*OF* 311 II, VI B = 210 K); *in Plat. Parmen.* 808.27 Cousin (*OF* 311 III B = 210 K); Linforth 1941: 324.

134. Proclus, *in Hes. Op.* 52a Marzillo (33.17–24 Pertusi) (*OF* 307 I B); cf. Lobeck 1829: 703; Bernabé ad loc.

135. Westerink ad Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II B).

136. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II B); see West 1983: 156.

into the mirror, he followed it and was thus scattered into the universe."[137] The mirror represents the reflection of the Intellective Forms into Encosmic Nature and the dispersal of these reflections into matter.

Athena brings the heart of Dionysus back to Zeus, so in his anger he strikes the Titans with lightning. According to Damascius, this is just one of three methods of punishment:

> Tradition knows three kinds of punishments inflicted on the Titans: lightning bolts, shackles, descents into various lower regions. This last kind is in the nature of a retribution, as it aggravates their leaning toward division and uses their shattered remains for the constitution of individuals, human and otherwise; the second is coercive, checking their powers of division; the first is purificatory and makes them whole, though only by participation. All three should be regarded as imposed upon each, though the myth distributes them, for each possesses higher, intermediate, and lower powers.[138]

It is not at all clear whether all three of these punishments were narrated in the Rhapsodies, since Damascius could have been referring to the general mythological tradition. The Titans' imprisonment in Tartarus is well known from Hesiod's *Theogony* (713–735), and the tragedy *Prometheus Bound* stands out as an example of at least the son of a Titan in shackles.[139] All three punishments, wherever they were narrated, are here allegorically interpreted as having to do with the Neoplatonic idea of Titanic division. Oddly, Damascius does not associate "the constitution of individuals, human and otherwise" with the Titans being struck with lightning by Zeus after dismembering Dionysus, but with their "descents into various lower regions," which in Hesiod occurs after the Titanomachy. Nevertheless, Proclus associates Titanic division with the dismemberment myth in his *Timaeus* commentary when, referring to Atlas, he says that the dismemberment of Dionysus "shows the divisible procession into the universe from the indivisible creation, [while] the other Titans were given a different allotment [i.e., different from Atlas] by Zeus."[140] Presumably this "different allotment" was being struck by lightning, if Proclus is reading

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137. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.80.19 Diehl (*OF* 309 IV B = 209 K); Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.129 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 309 II B = 209 K); cf. *in Plat. Tim.* 1.142.24 Diehl (*OF* 309 III B = 209 K); 1.336.29 Diehl (*OF* 309 V = 209 K) (see Festugière ad loc.); *in Plat. Remp.* 1.94.5 Kroll (*OF* 309 VI B = 209 K); Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.3.12 (*OF* 309 I B = 209 K); Lobeck 1829: 555; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356–360; Brisson 1995: 2895.

138. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.7 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 318 IV B).

139. Cf. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.130 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 289 III, 311 VIII, 352 II B. Prometheus is also mentioned at Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II, 352 III B = 143 K).

140. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.173.1 Diehl (*OF* 319 B = 215 K); cf. Simplicius, *in Aristot. Cael.* 375.12 Heiberg (*OF* 319 II B = 215 K).

the Rhapsodies here. The anthropogonic element of the story is part of the Neoplatonic spiritual interpretation, which ultimately is a consequence of the metaphysical interpretation, but at this point it is already clear that the creation of humans is seen as the result of the Titanic division of the universal Soul into the divisible universe of matter.

Having punished the Titans, Zeus orders Apollo to collect the remains of Dionysus "to be buried," according to Clement of Alexandria, but Damascius says that Apollo "gathers him together and brings him back up," and Proclus says that Apollo "collects and reunites the dismembered limbs of the boy Dionysus in accordance with the will of his father."[141] Apollo is important to the Neoplatonic interpretation of the dismemberment myth because he represents the reverting of Encosmic Soul back toward unification. This process is the opposite of Titanic division. In his *Cratylus* commentary, Proclus says that the name of Apollo signifies "the cause of unity and that which reassembles the Many into the One."[142] In his commentary on Plato's *Alcibiades*, Proclus might refer to a scene in which Apollo attempts to dissuade Dionysus from leaving the throne of Zeus. He says that "Orpheus sets the Apollonian monad over king Dionysus, deterring him from proceeding toward the multitude of the Titans and from rising up from his royal throne, and guarding him undefiled in a state of unity."[143] The Neoplatonists equate Apollo with Helios: in *Platonic Theology*, Proclus claims that Orpheus and Plato consider Helios to be "the same as Apollo."[144] Damascius in his *Phaedo* commentary says of Helios that "while in his quality of Dionysus he is divided over the world, but as Apollo he holds an intermediate position, gathering the dividedness of Dionysus and standing by the side of Zeus."[145] Therefore, Apollo-Helios represents the power of unification by which the lower levels of the Neoplatonic universe revert back to the One.

Having punished the Titans and gathered the remains of Dionysus, Zeus brings him back to life through Semele, and this is how the authors of Orphic poems brought their narrative in line with the general tradition (OF 327–328 B). As Diodorus Siculus claims, Dionysus is given the name διμήτωρ because he has two mothers, Persephone and Semele.[146] Hyginus uses the word

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141. Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.2 (27 Marc.) (*OF* 322 I B = 35 K); Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.129 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 322 II B = 209 K) and Westerink ad loc.; Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.198.10 Diehl (*OF* 322 IV B = 211 K).

142. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 96.27–28 Pasquali.

143. Proclus, *in Plat. Alcib.* 103a (68 Segonds) (*OF* 305 I = 211 K); cf. Westerink ad Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.14 (*OF* 305 II B = 212 K).

144. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.12 (6.58.1 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 323 B = *OF* 172 K); cf. Lobeck 1829: 614; Kern 1889: 501; Brisson 1995: 82–83; Chlup 2012: 126.

145. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.14 (37 Westerink) (*OF* 305 II, 322 V = 212 K); see Brisson 1995: 186–188; and Westerink ad loc.

146. Diodorus Siculus 3.62.5 (*OF* 327 V B). At 1.23.2 (*OF* 327 IV B = *OT* 95 K), he presents an elaborate Euhemerist account of the myth of Cadmus and Semele; and at 4.4.1 (*OF* 328 I B; see

bimater to refer to the second birth of Liber, "whose destroyed heart Jove gave to Semele in a drink, from which she was made pregnant."[147] Appropriately, the god of wine is brought to life by means of a drink, which again brings us to the motif of swallowing. The Neoplatonists do not seem to have much to say about Dionysus' birth through Semele (i.e., from the thigh of Zeus), though they were certainly aware of it, but the one thing Proclus chooses to allegorize is the role of Hipta.[148] In his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus refers to "Orpheus in his discourse on Hipta," which could refer to a particular passage of the Rhapsodic narrative, a separate poem within the Rhapsodic collection, or another poem altogether.[149] As Proclus recalls, after Dionysus is born from the thigh of Zeus, Hipta, "having placed a winnowing basket on her head and wound it round with a snake, takes into her care Dionysus of the heart." Then she "hastens to Ida, to the mother of the gods. ... Hence Hipta is said to assist Zeus in giving birth." Proclus interprets Hipta as an allegory for "the Soul of the universe" and explains that "it is with the most divine [part] of her that she ... receives Encosmic Intellect. And [Dionysus] proceeds toward her out of the thigh of Zeus ... and once he has [so] proceeded ... he leads her back up to the Intelligible and her own source."[150] Hipta's allegorical role as Encosmic Soul is analogous to the roles of Rhea and Kore in the Intellective sphere: she is the channel through which Dionysus as Encosmic Intellect is distributed throughout the universe.

Although Linforth finds Neoplatonic allegories to be "subtle and speculative fancies which pass beyond the bounds of reason," he offers what he admits is "an extremely simplified account" of this complex allegory. His account might suffice as a concluding summary of the metaphysical interpretation:

> Dionysus ... is the Soul of the universe, which is divided and yet retains its indestructible unity. The Titans represent the evil principle of division, which is hostile to the abiding aspiration of the universe toward unity. ... The heart of Dionysus, which is saved by Athena, is the undivided Mind, which is approximate, but superior, to Soul.[151]

Bernabé 2007a: 449) he talks about Dionysus being born from Persephone; cf. *TrGF* F21; the Doric form of διμάτωρ appears at *OH* 50.1, 52.9.

147. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 167 (p. 139 Marshall) (*OF* 327 III B).

148. Proclus refers to Semele or the thigh of Zeus at *Hymn* 7.15 (275 van den Berg) (*OF* 327 II B); *in Plat. Tim.* 1.408.2 Diehl (*OF* 328 IV B = 199 K); 3.99.17 Diehl (*OF* 328 III B). Lobeck (1829: 581–583) suggested that Hipta was associated with Semele; A. Holwerda (1894: 364–365) preferred Persephone; most scholars agree with Lobeck: Nilsson 1957: 42–43; West 1983: 96; Brisson 1995: 67; Morand 1997: 174; Bernabé ad loc.

149. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.105.28 Diehl (*OF* 329 II B = 199 K); cf. *OH* 49.

150. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.407.22–408.7 Diehl (*OF* 329 I B = 199 K); see Festugière ad loc.

151. Linforth 1941: 320.

More precisely, the Titans represent the division that occurs as the Forms proceed from Soul into matter, and Apollo represents the unification that occurs as Nature reverts back toward Soul. Having been dismembered and brought back to life, Dionysus represents the center-point between these two, where the processes of proceeding and reversion intersect. While Dionysus himself represents indivisible Encosmic Intellect, Hipta represents divisible Encosmic Soul. In this way, Dionysus is the center-point between Zeus and the Many.

(6) *Neoplatonic spiritual interpretation.* The spiritual interpretation is basically a consequence of the metaphysical interpretation since, as Encosmic Soul is distributed throughout the universe into physical matter, one of the natural results of this "Titanic division" is the insertion of human souls into bodies. This is the anthropogonic aspect of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. As we saw earlier in this chapter, this interpretation might go back to a Stoic interpretation applied by Plutarch. Another early indication is Plotinus, who mentions "the souls of humans seeing images of themselves such as those of Dionysus in the mirror."[152] Aside from these early fragments, there are a few hints by Proclus in passages where he mentions the dispersal of the world Soul throughout the universe,[153] but the spiritual interpretation takes on its fullest form in Damascius and Olympiodorus.

Contrary to most modern accounts of the Zagreus myth, the most important fragment for reconstructing the anthropogony contained in the Orphic Rhapsodies is not Olympiodorus' argument against suicide, but Proclus' account of the three races of humans in his commentary on Plato's *Republic*:

> The theologian Orpheus transmitted three races of humans: first the golden race, which he says Phanes established; second the silver race, of which he says great Kronos was ruler; and third the Titanic race, which he says Zeus formed from the limbs of the Titans; having understood that in these three terms every Form of human life is included. … Since human life is threefold, the first is from Phanes, who attaches all thinking to the Intelligibles, and the second, the myth says, is from the first Kronos "of crooked counsel" making everything revert toward itself, and the third is from Zeus learning to provide for and to put in order the inferior beings of secondary rank; for this is what is proper of Demiurgic activity.[154]

152. Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.3.12 (*OF* 309 I B = 209 K); see Linforth 1941: 335–339; Pépin 1970: 310–311; Casadio 1991: 132–134; Brisson 1995: 2895; Jourdan 2005: 154–164.

153. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.12 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 289 II B = 195 K); *in Plat. Tim.* 2.146.9 Diehl (*OF* 311 I B = 210 K); 2.198.10 Diehl (*OF* 322 IV B = 211 K); *in Plat. Parmen.* 808.27 Cousin (*OF* 311 III B = 210 K); *in Plat. Alcib.* 103a (35 Segonds) (*OF* 316 I B = 210 K).

154. Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26–2.75.12 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = 140 K); cf. Festugière ad loc.; West 1983: 75, 98–100, 107.

This passage of Proclus seems to be reliable evidence that there was a myth of three ages of humans in the Rhapsodies: the golden race created by Phanes, the silver race created by Kronos, and the Titanic race created by Zeus. Clearly this account must have been influenced by Hesiod's myth of the five ages in *Works and Days* (106–201), and perhaps by relevant eastern parallels.

Hesiod's myth of the ages is well known: it describes five ages of humans (golden, silver, bronze, heroic, iron). On the surface it seems that each of these ages is progressively inferior to the last (with the obvious exception of the heroic age), though the picture might be more nuanced if we accept Vernant's argument that instead there is an alternation between *dike* and *hybris*.[155] There is a clear contrast between the distant golden age and the present, and this is a feature that is shared with both earlier Near Eastern myths of the ages and later receptions of Hesiod's myth.[156] Evidence for earlier myths of the ages has been found in Persian, Hebrew, and Vedic sources. West describes how in the Persian *Avesta*, Zoroaster had a vision of "a tree with four branches of gold, silver, steel, and iron ore … and Ahura Mazdah explained to him that they were the ages of the world."[157] The Hebrew book of Daniel (2:31–45) describes Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a statue with body parts corresponding to gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay. West also points out that in certain Vedic texts, there are four world ages (*yugas*) that are not symbolized by different types of metal but "named after the [four] throws of the die."[158] Hesiod thus operated within a wider context of myths of the ages and reinterpreted them to fit his own objectives. Later Greek and Latin authors responded to Hesiod by reinterpreting the myth in different ways. A significant example is Aratus, who refers to the golden, silver, and bronze ages in a brief narrative that follows a simple pattern of decline. In the golden age, Dike provides the people with everything they need, but in the silver age she becomes frustrated with humans, so in the bronze age she returns to Olympus.[159] As van Noorden demonstrates, other ancient authors from Plato to Juvenal engaged with the Hesiodic myth of the ages, reworking the myth in their own ways that reflected their own interests, all the while making "implicit evaluations and creative interpretations" of Hesiod.[160]

Within this context, the Orphic poem can be read as another example of appropriation and adaptation of this Hesiodic myth. West argues that the poet of the Rhapsodies adjusted the story "by equating the original human race created by Protogonos with the golden race of Hesiod." He suggests

155. Vernant (1965) 1983: 1–9.

156. Van Noorden 2014: 23–39.

157. West 1997a: 313 and n. 103, citing *Balunan Yast* 1.2–5, 2.14–22, *Denkart* 9.8 (E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, i. 191–201, iv. 180–181); cf. Reitzenstein and Schaeder 1965: 45–68.

158. West 1997a: 313 and n. 104, citing the *Mahabharata* (3.148, 186, 188) and *Laws of Manu* (1.68–74, 79–86).

159. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 96–136 (Budé edition of Martin 1998); cf. van Noorden 2014: 168–174.

160. Van Noorden 2014: 306.

that, although "now Kronos had to be content with the silver race," this was reconciled with the fact that in Hesiod the golden race under Kronos is "proverbially paradisiac" when the Rhapsodic poet added the detail that the lives of humans in the silver race under Kronos were unusually long: "they lived like branches of a leafy palm."[161] In Proclus' commentary on Hesiod's *Works and Days*, he says that in Orpheus, "Kronos ruled the races of silver, calling them silver because they lived according to pure reason, just like those living according to Intellect only were golden."[162] Like the general pattern of other myths of the ages, there is a general trajectory of decline through the three ages of the Rhapsodic myth. Each one is inferior to the last, from the golden race living "according to intellect only" to a reasonable silver race that lived long, and finally to the Titanic race. Rather than take these mythical ages literally, Proclus associates them with the inferior levels of the Neoplatonic universe. Human beings participate in multiple levels: as thinking beings, we participate in the Intelligible and Intellective orders, but as material beings, we participate in the lower, Titanic orders.

Note that in this fragment humans are not created from the ashes of the Titans, but "from the Titanic limbs." Commenting on Plato's *Phaedo*, Damascius says that humans are created "from the fragments of the Titans," and Olympiodorus says that they are created "from the soot from the vapours that rise from them."[163] This does not make it easy to reconstruct the literal Rhapsodic narrative, but the Neoplatonists seem to have agreed that the myth is allegorically applicable to the plight of the human soul. In his *Phaedo* commentary, Damascius explains that humans are created "from the fragments, because their life is reduced to the utmost limit of differentiation; and from the Titans, because they are the lowest of creators and in immediate contact with their creation." Later he says that "like Kore, the soul descends into generation, like Dionysus it is scattered by generation, and like Prometheus and the Titans it is chained to the body." Therefore, "the object of the initiatory rites is to take souls back to a final destination … in the whole Zeusian life."[164]

Damascius mentions "the Titanic mode of life," which is "irrational" because by it "rational life is torn apart." He adds that through the Titanic mode of life "we tear apart the Dionysus in ourselves" because "while in this condition, we are Titans; but when we recover that lost unity, we become Dionysus

161. Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 8.4.2 p. 723 e (*OF* 218 B = 225 K); West 1983: 107.

162. Proclus, *in Hes. Op.* 127–128a Marzillo (54.15–55.3 Pertusi) (*OF* 216 II B = 141 K).

163. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B); Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = 220 K).

164. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B); 1.130 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 289 III, 311 VIII, 352 II B); 1.168 (101 Westerink) (*OF* 299 VI B); see Westerink ad loc. Damascius refers to Prometheus stealing fire at *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II, 352 III B = 143 K).

and we attain what truly can be called completeness."[165] This idea of "Dionysus in ourselves" is similar to Olympiodorus' interpretation of the dismemberment myth. Bernabé splits the most crucial passage of Olympiodorus' *Phaedo* commentary into five fragments, the last of which contains his controversial innovation:

> Zeus, having become angry, strikes them with his lightning bolts, and the soot from the vapours that rise from them becomes the matter from which humans are created. Therefore suicide is forbidden, not because, as the text appears to say, we wear the body as a kind of shackle ... but suicide is forbidden because our bodies belong to Dionysus; we are, in fact, a part of him, being made of the soot from the Titans who ate his flesh.[166]

Note once again that Olympiodorus emphasizes the opposite of what modern scholars emphasize: not that our body is a prison, but that our body is partly divine. Later in the same commentary, he returns to the "body as a kind of shackle" interpretation when he says that "we are clothed in matter [or mud] as the Titans through much division." Referring to the unifying power of Apollo, he explains that " 'to be gathered together' and 'to be collected,' this is from the Titanic life to the unified form."[167]

Olympiodorus' idea that our bodies are Dionysiac is thus built upon the Neoplatonic idea that the soul becomes attached to the body through Titanic division (i.e., through downward procession). The Titans allegorically represent the point at which human souls are attached to bodies, so they are "the lowest of creators"—that is to say, they are situated above only matter itself, so they represent the lowest level of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. But the human soul looks to Encosmic Intellect through Apollonian unification (i.e., through upward reversion). As the world Soul descends through Kore, it is dispersed throughout the cosmos by the Titanic powers of division, and individual souls become attached to bodies; so the point of performing τελεταί is for the individual soul to reverse the direction back up toward reunification with the divine. In this sense, the significance of Dionysus is not that he is a saviour deity, but that he is the lowest step on the ladder that leads the human soul back to the One. As Encosmic Intellect, he is a combination of indivisible Intellect and divisible Soul, and this makes him accessible to human souls because of their participation in Encosmic Soul. If in the direction of proceeding

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165. Damascius, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.9 (33 Westerink); see Bernabé ad *OF* 320 B.

166. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 299 VII, 304 I, 313 II, 318 III, 320 I B = 220 K).

167. Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 8.7 (123 Westerink) (*OF* 320 III B), 7.10 (113 Westerink) (*OF* 322 III B = 211 K).

the Titans represent the lowest level of the Neoplatonic universe, then in the direction of reversion Dionysus represents the lowest level through which humans can approach the Hypercosmic deities. This may not explain the role of Dionysus in early telestic Orphism, but it does clarify his role in Neoplatonic theurgy.

The Story of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies

The myth of Dionysus and the Titans has been interpreted in many different ways, both ancient and modern, mainly with reference to things outside the Rhapsodic narrative. In the last section I demonstrated that ancient interpretations saw this myth through particular lenses, as an allegory for either grapes or the process of division, or as evidence for the depravity of Bacchic cult. At the beginning of this chapter, I reviewed some of the ways in which modern interpreters have related the myth to Christian concepts, analogous ritual practices of sacrifice and shamanic initiation, the Orphic gold tablets, and eschatological concepts. One thing all of these interpretations have in common is that none of them, except the Neoplatonic interpretation, is based on an analysis of how the dismemberment myth fits into the Rhapsodic narrative as a whole. Therefore, I conclude this chapter by attempting to separate the dismemberment myth from this long succession of interpretations and to reassemble it within the Rhapsodic theogony, reading it simply as an episode of the succession myth. The purpose of such a reading is not to invalidate any of the above interpretations, but to reveal aspects of the story that have remained out of view, covered over by the baggage of a long and controversial history of exegesis. The most important of these aspects is how the dismemberment affects Zeus. At the end of the succession of kings, Zeus sets up Dionysus to be the next king, but then ironically Zeus maintains his rule, not despite but because of Dionysus' dismemberment. In this sense, the dismemberment myth can be understood as another one of those theogonic episodes in which Zeus secures his royal power by some means or another.

When reading the fragments of the Rhapsodies concerning Chronos, the cosmic egg, Phanes, and Night, it is easy to see their relation with Hesiod, Pherecydes, and earlier Orphic theogonies, as another text within a wider tradition that envisioned cosmogony in different ways, usually following a model of biomorphic creation. And when reading the fragments of the Rhapsodies concerning Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus, it is easier still to see these episodes as the core succession myth of the Rhapsodic theogony, in the same way that the stories of these gods formed the backbone of the Hesiodic narrative and earlier Orphic theogonies. But when modern scholars discuss the fragments about Dionysus and the Titans, the previous episodes of the theogony are rarely

mentioned. This is a mistake the Neoplatonists never made: even though they treated every episode as an allegory, they maintained a coherence in which every episode was connected to the grander narrative structure and to their overall exegetical system. But there is a long tradition in modern scholarship of interpreting every Bacchic fragment, Orphic or otherwise, as evidence of mystery cult, regardless of its literary or archaeological context. Granted, it is true that every Bacchic fragment is relevant in some way or another to Bacchic mystery cult, but this does not change the fact that if the Rhapsodies contained a continuous six-generation succession myth (as most modern reconstructions would have us believe), then the story of Dionysus and the Titans was just one episode of this larger narrative.

As I have already noted, whether or not the dismemberment myth was known in the Archaic Period, some elements of the myth have very ancient roots. The chthonic Zeus in the form of a snake, the cave in Crete, and the Curetes all point back to archaic roots in the Near East and Crete. The role of the Titans as antagonists of the gods is well known from Hesiod, from Plato's reference to the "ancient Titanic nature" (*OF* 37 I B) and from many other sources. The motif of dismemberment can be seen in the obvious similarities between Dionysus and Osiris, already noticed by ancient authors,[168] and it is also comparable with the castration of Ouranos and this motif's Near Eastern precedents that we saw in chapter 2. The motif of dismemberment points back to some of the earliest Dionysiac myths as well: in Homer, Dionysus flees from Lycurgus; in Euripides, he drives the maenads to dismember Pentheus; so in the Rhapsodies, when Dionysus himself is dismembered, this is in alignment with the oldest and most famous Dionysiac myths and with other myths of dismemberment, such as Pelops and Thyestes.

Certain elements of the myth also seem to point back to the earliest Orphic theogonies and their relevant Near Eastern precedents. For example, we may never know if the Derveni poem went on to talk about Dionysus, but one thing it definitely shares with the dismemberment myth is the act of swallowing. In the Derveni poem, Zeus swallows either all of Phanes or the phallus of Ouranos, and in doing so he secures his rule. As we saw in chapter 2, the meaning of this action is similar to Kronos swallowing his children, Zeus swallowing Metis, and certain Near Eastern myths such as the Hittite god Kumarbi. In the Rhapsodies, Zeus swallows Phanes for basically the same reason: it is the means by which he secures his rule over the gods and gains the ability to re-create the universe. So when the Titans swallow Dionysus, this can be seen as an inversion of Zeus swallowing Phanes in the sense that this is their attempt to threaten the royal power of the king of the gods. This contrast is analogous to the contrast between the sceptre that Phanes gives to Zeus and

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168. Diodorus Siculus 1.96.3–5 (*OF* 48 II B = 96 K); Plutarch, *de Is. et Osir.* 35, p. 364d–e (*OF* 47 B); cf. Herodotus 2.81.1–2 (*OF* 43, 45 B = *OT* 216 K).

the fennel-stalk that the Titans give to Dionysus: one symbolizes royal power, the other negation of royal power. Zeus secures his rule by swallowing Phanes, but by swallowing Dionysus the Titans try to destabilize his rule.

Zeus swallowing Phanes is not only the means by which he secures his power, but also the means by which he re-creates the universe. As he re-creates the universe, he procreates, and the Rhapsodic fragments mention a few of the younger gods who are born, such as Apollo and Athena, both of whom have a role to play in the dismemberment myth. One of the younger gods is Dionysus, whom Zeus decides to set up as his heir. This is distinct from the general pattern of behaviour of Zeus that we see in other myths, where he goes to great lengths to prevent the emergence of an heir. For example, he marries Thetis to a mortal to ensure that Achilles is a mortal, and he swallows Metis to prevent her from giving birth to a successor. But this narrative is different: instead of trying to prevent Dionysus from ascending to the throne, he deliberately sets him up to be his successor. Why does he do this? Despite the apparent contradiction between Zeus' decision in the Rhapsodic narrative and his usual intentions in other myths, the overall pattern of action lines up with his usual intentions perfectly. Although Dionysus is set up to be the next king, the Titans kill him, and Zeus no longer has a successor.

Zeus brings Dionysus back to life, but things are not the same as they were before. The enigmatic line "Zeus accomplished/ruled all things, but Bacchus ruled in addition [to Zeus]" (κραῖνε μὲν οὖν Ζεὺς πάντα πατήρ, Βάκχος δ' ἐπέκραινε)[169] seems to indicate that Dionysus is restored to a unique relationship with Zeus, but the exact nature of this relationship is unclear. As Beneviste points out, κραίνω means "reign" in tragedy but "accomplish" in Homer, where there is a narrower sense referring to the gods in particular when they approve the accomplishment of something or nod their heads to give divine sanction to the fulfilling of a wish.[170] In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, while showing Apollo the lyre, Hermes sings about the gods—he essentially performs a theogony—and the verb that is used to express his singing is the participle κραίνων. Nagy translates this as "authorizing," since by singing a theogony Hermes authorizes the bringing into existence of the gods, but Benveniste translates it as "bringing into existence."[171] In the Orphic verse, Zeus accomplishes or authorizes all things, or brings all things into existence, but Bacchus "accomplishes in addition" (ἐπέκραινε) as indicated by the prefix

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169. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.316.3 Diehl (*OF* 300 I B = 218 K). Usually κραίνω + accusative means "accomplish" (e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 1.41); when used absolutely, it means "hold sway, reign" (e.g., Homer, *Odyssey* 8.391); but κραίνω + genitive (post-Homeric) means "rule over" (e.g., Sophocles, *Ajax* 1050). Yet there are exceptions to the rule, in which κραίνω + accusative means "rule over" (Sophocles, *Oedipus Col.* 448–449; *Trachiniae* 126); see LSJ, s.v. "κραίνω."

170. Beneviste 1969: 327–333; cf. Homer, *Iliad* 1.41 = 504, 2.419.

171. *HH* 4.427 (cf. vv. 531–532, 559); Nagy 1990: 59–60; Benveniste (1969) 1973: 331; cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 5.169.

(ἐπι-), which in other contexts tends to reflect a sense of complementarity or the fulfilling of a wish on more than one occasion.[172] Dionysus accomplishes all things in addition to Zeus, which suggests the sense of complementarity, but the precise nature of their relationship remains puzzling. In the sense that Benveniste suggests, this means that Zeus brings all things into existence and Dionysus helps bring this creative act to completion. In the sense that Nagy suggests, as king it is Zeus who authorizes all things, while Dionysus operates with him in a complementary or perhaps subordinate role, supplementing and confirming the divine sanction of Zeus.

The result of the dismemberment of Dionysus, as far as it concerns Zeus, is that it ultimately helps to secure the rule of Zeus over the gods and the universe, despite the fact that he has named Dionysus as his successor. In this sense, the dismemberment myth fits into the Rhapsodic narrative as one of those episodes in which Zeus does something to secure his rule. As one of the last episodes of a six-generation theogony, the dismemberment myth is as much about Zeus as it is about Dionysus. Or, to put it more precisely, it is about the relationship between Zeus and Dionysus, the connection between them that is established by Dionysus' resurrection in which he now rules, accomplishes, or authorizes all things in addition to Zeus. But why would an Orphic poet want to use a Dionysiac myth in this way? If Dionysus played a major role in the ritual lives of Orphic practitioners (as the gold tablets and many modern scholars suggest), then perhaps the poet was trying to explain why Dionysus was important to Orphic tradition even though in the wider world of Greek myth and cult Zeus continued to reign supreme. In other words, if the dismemberment myth indeed explains the importance of Dionysus to Orphic ritual, then this does not contradict the supremacy of Zeus as king of the gods, not even within Orphism. By situating the dismemberment myth at the end of the six-generation succession myth, the poet explains both the elevated position of Dionysus within Orphism and how this position operates in connection with Zeus. None of this diminishes the value of Dionysus as a saviour deity who helps Orphic practitioners in their eschatological hopes. In fact, it helps to demarginalize the Orphics, whoever they were, by showing how Dionysus Zagreus is connected to the mainstream Greek polytheistic system. Placing the dismemberment myth within the context of the six-generation Rhapsodic theogony reconciled the Orphic myth of Dionysus with the wider world of traditional Greek myth. It explained why Dionysus was important to the Orphics without diminishing the importance of any of the other gods and without threatening the sovereignty of Zeus.

In the same way that the dismemberment of Dionysus should not be read without considering the six-generation succession myth as a whole, the

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172. The prefix refers to complementarity at *HH* 4.531, and to repeated action at Homer, *Iliad* 1.453–455; cf. *Iliad* 2.419, 8.242, 16.599.

creation of humans from the ashes of the Titans should not be interpreted without considering the context of this episode within the Rhapsodic myth of the ages and its parallels in other myths of ages, found in Hesiod, various Near Eastern myths, and later literary responses to Hesiod. The Titanic race is only the last of three races of humans that were created by the gods in the Rhapsodic narrative. All Proclus tells us about the golden race under Phanes is that they were intelligent; the silver race under Kronos used reason and lived long; so, naturally in line with every other myth of the ages that was produced by ancient cultures, the last and present race of humans is also the most degenerate. Even if we completely set aside the idea of a double, Titanic-Dionysiac nature of humans, we may reasonably expect that the Titanic race is the most inferior simply on the basis of its being the last one, furthest away from the golden age like the iron age in Hesiod's *Works and Days* and the bronze age in Aratus. Therefore, in order to interpret the creation of humans from the ashes of the Titans, there is no need to apply the concept of a double nature, original sin, or ancestral fault. The Titanic race is evil with or without any of these things, in the same way that the present age of humans in Hesiod and Near Eastern myth tends to be defined by a negative contrast with the golden age of the distant past. This does not take away from the notion of an ancient Titanic nature but recognizes that the bricoleur has added a level of depth to the story in response to Hesiod.

Was the Zagreus myth the central myth of Orphism? No one knows, but there has been a spectrum of educated guesses since the time of Lobeck. Certainly it had some place of importance in Orphic myth and ritual. The gold tablets attest to a connection between Dionysus and eschatology; not to mention dozens of red-figure vase paintings of Dionysus in the Underworld, the Olbia bone tablets, and other evidence, both texts and artifacts, that associate Dionysus with chthonic themes.[173] Some of the earliest references to the Rhapsodies refer to this episode (e.g., Diodorus, Hyginus, Plutarch, Clement). Whether or not the dismemberment myth appeared in the earliest theogonies of the Classical Period, there were other Orphic poems about Dionysus in which this narrative might have appeared (see chapter 3). Clearly there are motifs in the myth that reflect certain elements of Bacchic ritual: the toys/ritual items used to lure Dionysus, the inverted sacrifice, and of course the motif of dismemberment itself, which invokes the image of *sparagmos* and *omophagia* along with all of their associated maenadic themes. There may not have been Orphic communities or a definable system of Orphic doctrines, but the dismemberment myth brings together the major strands of thought that were of interest to Orphic authors, such as theogony, anthropogony, and eschatology.

173. For more on this, see Cole 1993: 276–296.

This may not have been the central myth of Orphism, but it truly was the Orphic myth of Dionysus.

Was the Orphic myth of Dionysus the central myth of the Orphic Rhapsodies? Probably not: it was one of the most important episodes in the six-generation narrative, but there were other episodes that seem to have been equally important. Phanes emerging out of the cosmic egg, Kronos "cutting and being cut," and Zeus swallowing Phanes were episodes that occupied the attention of the apologists and Neoplatonists no less than this one story about Dionysus. In fact, one could argue that Zeus swallowing Phanes was more central to the overall plot of the Rhapsodic narrative than the story of the Titans swallowing Dionysus. Everything seems to either point to it or result from it, directly or indirectly: Phanes emerges out of the egg and is later swallowed by Zeus; Kronos "cutting and being cut" is the means by which Zeus gains his power, which he secures by swallowing Phanes; Zeus creates the next generation by swallowing Phanes and sets up Dionysus as his successor. Through the Titans' act of swallowing, Dionysus is denied the royal power of Zeus, so the rule of Zeus remains secure. Yet it is under the reign of Zeus that an important role for Dionysus is established: he is the successor who accomplishes, authorizes, or rules in addition to Zeus. The Rhapsodic myth of Dionysus served both to confirm the rule of Zeus that was established by the myth of Zeus swallowing Phanes and to establish an important role for Dionysus in Orphic myth and thought. For a long time, scholars have recognized the importance to Orphic ritual of the Orphic myth of Dionysus, but not enough attention has been paid to the Orphic myth of Zeus. This has led to an imbalance of emphasis in the way Orphic myth is presented: the dismemberment myth may not have been the central myth of Orphism, but it was one of the most important myths in Orphic literature; and the Orphic myth of Zeus was another. Reading the dismemberment myth as an episode of the Rhapsodies therefore reveals that the Orphics were not as henotheistic as they were previously assumed to have been.

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Conclusion

From the enigmatic fragments of the Derveni poem to the rich and scattered fragments of the Rhapsodies, Orphic literature was produced within a dynamic and fluid tradition, one that is best characterized not as a static manuscript tradition but as a continuous exercise in bricolage. Every Orphic poet was a bricoleur who used diverse elements of myth and thought to produce an original literary creation, and the result was that Orphic literature took traditional Greek myth in new directions. Contrary to Edmonds' claim that there was "no such thing as Orphic mythology,"[1] there were a number of myths and motifs that do not show up anywhere else in Greek literature but find themselves in Orphic literature combined with obviously traditional elements. There are retellings of old myths with new twists: for example, Zeus overthrows Kronos in the Rhapsodies as he does in Hesiod, but added to the story is the element of a honey-based drink with which he drugs Kronos to sleep.[2] The myth of Dionysus and the Titans evolved within the Orphic literary tradition, and Orphic poets developed the myth of many-headed Phanes who emerges out of the cosmic egg and is later swallowed by Zeus. Phanes is a particularly good example of the operation of bricolage in the composition of Orphic poetry, since the bricoleur combined traditional elements of Metis and Eros with an etymological play on words (i.e., the name Phanes, which means "the one who appears") and with uniquely Orphic elements that seem to have been appropriated from Near Eastern myth (e.g., theriomorphic descriptions and perhaps the name Erikepaios). Each of these stories involved the use of elements that indeed can be found elsewhere in Greek literature, but they were combined into a particular configuration that existed uniquely in Orphic myth. Therefore, one can speak of an Orphic myth of Phanes and an Orphic myth of Zeus in addition to the Orphic myth of Dionysus, and this is a more accurate description of the

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1. Edmonds 2011c: 73.

2. Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.15 Simonini (*OF* 222 B = 154 K); cf. Clement Alex., *Strom.* 6.2.26.2 (*OF* 223 B = 149 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 1.138.23 Kroll (*OF* 224 B = 148 K).

content of Orphic myth than saying that the Zagreus myth was the one and only central myth of Orphism.

Perhaps a solution to the problem of the definition of Orphism would be to shift the discussion away from attempts at overarching definitions and toward a discussion of different types of Orphic activities. A study of Orphic literature reveals three types of activities associated with Orphic texts: telestic, literary, and interpretive. The telestic type seems to have emerged in the sixth to fourth centuries BC from the same general cultural context as the Homeric rhapsodes, the Presocratic philosophers, and some of the older mystery cults. In this phase of its development, Orphic literature was characterized by short poems, including the Derveni poem, the Eudemian theogony, the earliest versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, and other hymns with theogonic material concentrating on deities like Dionysus and Demeter. These poems were a part of the "hubbub of books"[3] from which the *orpheotelestai* claimed to draw their ritual expertise, and the Derveni author is our best example of this, so perhaps we can conclude that one of the likely performance contexts of these early theogonic hymns was telestic ritual. Yet there is also a possibility that early Orphic poems were rhapsodies, and that they functioned like the *Homeric Hymns* and were recited in the same types of rhapsodic performances in which the Homeric epics were recited. Whatever the case, it seems reasonable to conclude that the early period was characterized by more fluidity than the later periods. With both rhapsodes and pseudepigraphers composing and performing freely, most likely there were no two *orpheotelestai* who had the same collection. Orphic literature in the early period is more fragmented but more closely connected to the telestic rituals with which Orphism is commonly associated, such as the use of the gold tablets. Thus we can speak of a telestic Orphism, referring to the type of ritual activities that were associated with early Orphic literature.

The literary type of Orphic activity, or literary Orphism, describes a new phase that began in the Hellenistic Period, when Orphic literature began to move away from its close association with telestic ritual toward taking on some of the ideas and characteristics of Hellenistic thought and literature. This was the period in which the Hieronyman theogony and the Rhapsodies were produced, and in the fragments of these texts we see Orphic myth become more of a self-consciously literary phenomenon, further removed from the telestic ritual context in which the Orphic tradition seems to have originally emerged. From the Hellenistic Period to the end of antiquity, literary Orphism was an activity in which different bricoleurs began to incorporate new elements that raised the literary quality of the texts and adapted certain myths to the contemporary contexts of their audiences. In the Hieronyman

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3. To borrow a phrase from West (1983: 23) translating Plato's βίβλων δὲ ὅμαδον (*Republic* 2.364b–365a).

theogony and the Rhapsodies, we see evidence of the most recent scientific ideas, such as the ideas that the moon is another earth and the earth is divided into zones.[4] In these poems we also find possible indications of Stoic influence, such as the water and mud with which the Hieronyman theogony begins and the pantheistic vision of the Rhapsodic Hymn to Zeus.[5] There are multiple syncretistic descriptions of deities: although syncretism appears as early as the Derveni Papyrus, the equation of Phanes with Zeus and Dionysus in the Rhapsodies and the strange description of Zeus in the Rhapsodic version of the Hymn to Zeus indicate that Orphic poets had a taste for assimilations, and they were keeping up with Hellenistic trends of erudite syncretism.[6] Orphic literature evolved from loose collections of poems into polished texts that exhibited Hellenistic learning and taste, as new generations of bricoleurs tried new things. Although this phase of development began in the Hellenistic Period, it continued until the end of antiquity, so literary Orphism also produced such extant texts as the *Orphic Hymns, Argonautica*, and *Lithica*.

The third type of activity associated with Orphic literature is interpretive, so obviously this is not about Orphic poems being produced, but about the various ways in which they were used, most commonly in allegorical interpretations. It begins with the Derveni author, continues with Plato and Plutarch, and culminates in the works of the Neoplatonists. The practice of philosophers interpreting Orphic poetry is as old as philosophy, allegory, and Orphic literature itself, but it reaches a new phase in late antiquity with the Neoplatonists and the Christian apologists. The fact that the Neoplatonists interpreted the texts allegorically was nothing new, but the way they elevated the status of these poems was new. Orpheus and his poetry had always been revered because of his perceived antiquity and his authority as the son of a Muse, but the Neoplatonists and Christian apologists of late antiquity elevated him to a new level. Although they differed widely in the way they treated Orphic poetry, both the apologists and the Neoplatonists shared a view that Orpheus was the canonical, original source of inspiration for the Greeks and that Orphic poetry was representative of the entire Greek mythological tradition.[7] With this view of Orphic literature, the Neoplatonists' use of allegories indicates not only participation in an exegetical tradition, but also an attitude of sacredness toward the texts and their supposed author, and in battle with the apologists, their allegories served as one of the final defenses of ancient Paganism against a changing world. What distinguished the Neoplatonists'

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4. On the moon, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.48.15 (I), 2.282.11 (III), 3.142.12 (II) Diehl (*OF* 155 B = 91 K); on the zones of the earth, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (*OF* 160 B = 94 K); cf. West 1983: 210–211.

5. Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = 54 K); *OF* 243 B = 168 K.

6. DP 22.12; Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.336.6–15 Diehl (*OF* 140 XI, 141 I B = 85, 170 K); *OF* 243 B = 168 K.

7. See Edmonds (2013: 13–47) for a fuller discussion of this.

approach was therefore not so much the use of allegory in and of itself as the reasons why they used these allegories in the way they did. In a sense, this can be regarded as a new form of Orphic activity, since it involved a particular attitude toward Orpheus and a new way of viewing the texts that were attributed to him. The Neoplatonists themselves were bricoleurs who found new ways of using Orphic poems by connecting them with current philosophical ideas and debates, and as a result they preserved most of the fragments of Orphic literature that are now extant. It is this particular way of perceiving the texts and engaging with them that can be referred to as interpretive Orphism.

Because Orphic theogonies were the subject of three types of activity—telestic, literary, and interpretive—this study contributes to continuing debates about the definition of Orphism by confirming that Orphism was a fluid phenomenon that changed over time. If we want to find a suitable definition of Orphism, then we must first ask which type of Orphism we are talking about, because what the *orpheotelestai* did with Orphic texts was quite different from what was done by the bricoleur who compiled the Rhapsodies, and yet further removed from the Neoplatonists who interpreted them. The telestic practice of Orphic ritual that is reflected in the gold tablets is not the same thing as the literary practice of later Orphic poets, so they should not be regarded as the same thing. We limit what we can perceive in Orphic poetry if we attempt a monolithic definition, especially if it is viewed through a Dionysiac lens, because there was more than one Orphic myth, and Orphic poetry was about more than initiation and eschatology.

This study has identified certain themes and characteristics that appear in Orphic myth from the Derveni poem to the Rhapsodies. First, there is always in Orphic myth a presence of Near Eastern elements, which admittedly is also true of Homer and Hesiod, but, as West puts it, in Orphic tradition these elements "stand out undigested."[8] One of the ways Orphic bricoleurs distinguished their theogonies from the Hesiodic account was by assimilating details from Near Eastern myths. Second, although Orphic myth appears to be concerned with theogonic content, it was a loose and varied tradition, most likely consisting of brief theogonic hymns, not lengthy accounts like Hesiod's *Theogony*. Third, the Orphic fragments demonstrate a constant dialogue between myth and philosophy, both in the sense that philosophers quoted and interpreted Orphic texts and in the sense that Orphic poets seem to have engaged with Presocratic and Stoic philosophy. Finally, Orphic poets were no less interested in stories about Phanes and Zeus than they were in Dionysus. Greek literature viewed Zeus in a supreme role as the king of the gods, but Orphic poets played with this idea and took it in new directions, creating narratives

8. West 1966: 28–29.

about Zeus swallowing Phanes, having wings and horns, and creating the third race of humans.

All of these characteristics help us understand what Orphic literature was, but admittedly there are similar characteristics that can be found elsewhere in Greek literature. Much of the content of Greek myth was influenced by Near Eastern myth, and all Greek myth was an exercise in bricolage. All philosophers engaged with poetry and myth, while many poets engaged with philosophy; and the Orphics were not the only ones who speculated about the nature of Zeus. These elements were not exclusively Orphic, but they were characteristically Orphic, or, in other words, there is something in their particular combination that can be defined as Orphic literature. Because of the fragmentary nature of the texts and the preliminary nature of these observations, caution prevents me from attempting to propose an exact definition of Orphism, Orphic literature, or even Orphic theogonies. Yet this study contributes to debates about Orphism by observing these four basic characteristics of Orphic myth: the assimilation of Near Eastern elements, the fluidity and diversity of the Orphic literary tradition, the discourse between myth and philosophy, and the relative importance of Phanes, Zeus, and Dionysus. In order to define Orphism or to characterize Orphic myth precisely, it is necessary to abandon the idea that the Zagreus myth was the one and only central myth of Orphism and to see this narrative in a balanced way, because the story of the Titans swallowing Dionysus was no more important to Orphic myth than the story of Zeus swallowing Phanes.

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