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Dwayne A. Meisner, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Christopher G. Brown, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Classics

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“Zeus the Head, Zeus the Middle”:

Studies in the History and Interpretation of the Orphic Theogonies

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Dwayne A. Meisner

Graduate Program in Classical Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
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Abstract

This thesis contributes to debates about the definition of Orphism by observing three characteristics of Orphic myth: Near Eastern influence, discourse between myth and philosophy, and speculations about the natures of Phanes, Zeus, Dionysus and other deities. In chronological order I analyze the fragments of four theogonies that were attributed to Orpheus: the Derveni, Eudemian, Hieronyman, and Rhapsodic Theogonies. Most modern scholars have described these poems as if they were similar to Hesiod's *Theogony* – lengthy chronological accounts of the births of the gods from the beginning of time to the present – but I argue that the Orphic tradition was more fluid, likely characterised by a variety of shorter poems, scattered in different collections.

I suggest that a better model for understanding how these poems were composed is to see each of them as an individual product of *bricolage* (as explained by Claude Lévi-Strauss), rather than as items in the stemma of a static manuscript tradition (as reconstructed by Martin West). I study the ways in which modern scholars have reconstructed each of these theogonies and what ancient Greek philosophers had to say about them. I observe that the Orphic tradition was more fluid and fragmented than modern reconstructions would lead us to believe, but I argue that in the Orphic theogonies one can note certain features that are not exclusive to Orphism but characteristic of it. For example, where Orphic myth departs from Hesiodic myth it tends to do so in ways that are parallel to Near Eastern myth; Orphic poetry was always engaged in the discourse between myth and philosophy; and Orphic poets speculated on the nature of the gods in ways that generated unique deities and new narratives.

Key words: Orpheus, Orphic, Orphism, Phanes, Zeus, Dionysus, theogony, hymns, hexameter, poetry, allegory, mythology, ancient Greek ritual, Neoplatonists, Proclus, *bricolage*, swallowing, Derveni Papyrus, Eudemian, Hieronyman, Rhapsodies

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List of 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 I use most frequently are:

OF # B = *OF* # K (e.g., *OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K): *OF* = *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (in some cases, *OT* = *Orphicorum Testimonia*); B = Bernabé; K = Kern (see page 2 note 5).

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 2005; accessed at: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com>)

CQ *Classical Quarterly*

DGE *Diccionario Griego-Español* (eds. F. Adrados & R. Gangutia, Madrid 1980-2009; accessed at: logeion.uchicago.edu/index.html)

D-K H. Diels & W. Kranz (*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Vol. I-II, 10th edition, Berlin 1961)

FGrH *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (ed. F. Jacoby, Leiden 1923-1958)

GGM *Geographi Graeci Minores* (ed. K. Müller, Hildesheim 1965 [1855-1861])

IG *Inscriptiones Graecae* (ed. O. Kern *et al.*, Berlin 1913-2012)

JHS *Journal of Hellenic Studies*

K-G R. Kühner & B. Gerth (*Ausführliche Grammatik der Griechischen Sprache*, Vol. III-IV, München 1963 [1869])

KPT T. Kouremenos, G. Parássoglou, & K. Tsantsanoglou (*The Derveni Papyrus*, Florence 2006)

KRS G.S. Kirk, J. Raven, & M. Schofield (*The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edition, Cambridge 1983)

- KTU* *Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit* (Ugaritic Baal Cycle; cited in Smith 1994; Smith & Pitard 2009)
- LfgrE* *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (ed. B. Snell *et al.*, Göttingen 2004 [1982])
- LIMC* *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (eds. H. Ackermann & J-R Gisler, Zürich 1981-1997)
- LSJ* Liddell-Scott-Jones (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edition, Oxford University Press 1996)
- M-W* R. Merkelbach & M.L. West (*Fragmenta Hesiodica*, Oxford University Press 1967)
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Vol. I-LX (eds. A. Chaniotis *et al.*, Leiden & Boston 1923-2010)
- SVF* *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Vol. I-III (ed. H. von Arnim, Stuttgart 1964 [1903-1905])
- TrGF* *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Vol. I-V (eds. B. Snell *et al.*, Göttingen 1971-2004)
- ZPE* *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

Chapter One – Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to sort out the history, structure, and contents of the Orphic theogonies, in the hope that by doing so 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” (c. fifth century BC), named after the peripatetic Eudemus, who wrote about a fifth-century Orphic theogony;² (3) the “Hieronyman Theogony” (c. second century BC), a Hellenistic version known to two obscure authors named Hieronymus and Hellanicus;³ and (4) the Rhapsodies, or “Rhapsodic Theogony” (c. first century BC/AD), both the longest version and the only one 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 recently been collected in Bernabé’s *Poetae Epici Graeci* in a way that reflects modern assumptions about what a Greek theogony might have looked like.⁵ Scholars have assumed that each of these theogonies

¹ Because a formal *editio princeps* of the text of the Derveni Papyrus was many years in the making, a number of other editions have been published that are useful to varying degrees. I consult primarily the *editio princeps* (Kouremenos *et al.* 2006, hereafter referred to as KPT) and Bernabé 2007a. Other important editions are found in: Janko 2002, Betegh 2004 and Tortorelli Ghidini 2006. See Chapter Two for more on the Derveni Papyrus. The names of each of these theogonies are based on the chapter titles found in West 1983.

² Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = *OF* 24 K). Brisson (1995: 390) sees the Eudemian and Derveni Theogonies as identical, and calls them the “ancient version” (“la version ancienne”). See Chapter Three for more on the Eudemian Theogony.

³ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 69 I B = *OF* 54 K). The dates mentioned here are rough estimates, and serve to provide the reader with a sense of chronological orientation, but it should be noted that these dates are disputable: for example, Brisson (1995: 394-396) dates the Hieronyman Theogony to the second century AD, and argues that it was written after the Rhapsodic Theogony, but West (1983: 225-226) suggests that it was written shortly after the third century BC. See Chapter Four for more on the Hieronyman Theogony.

⁴ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 90 B = *OF* 60 K; see also: *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς (3.564.30 Adler) (*OF* 91 B = *OF* 223d K), which refers to this theogony as the “Sacred Discourses in 24 Rhapsodies” (Ἱεροῦς λόγους ἐν ῥαψωιδίαις κδ’). See Chapters Five and Six for more on the Rhapsodies.

⁵ For fragments of the four theogonies and all other Orphic fragments, I will be relying on Bernabé’s collection of epic fragments in *Poetae Epici Graeci* (2004, 2005, 2007a), but I will also consult the collection of *Orphicorum Fragmenta* in Kern 1922 for matters of textual comparison, sequence, 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 author from which the fragment was drawn, and then both Bernabé’s and Kern’s numbering. For example: Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = *OF* 24 K).

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 were, 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 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. Most modern discussion about Orphic ritual has 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 thesis 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?

(a) 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 cult practices, and (c) a literary tradition. (a)

First, the legend is about the singer and musician Orpheus as he appears in mainstream Greek myth: 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 Archaic Period,⁶ when the lyric poet Ibycus (sixth century BC) referred to him as “famous-named

⁶ West (2011a: 120-122) suggests that the Argonautic adventure appeared as early as the tenth or eleventh century BC, based on its similarities with certain folktale themes, and on Orpheus’ name, with its -εὐς ending, an old word ending found on Linear B tablets (*cf.* Atreus, Odysseus). But note Ibycus’ use of the form Ὀρφήης (see next note).

Orpheus” (ὄνομακλυτὸν Ὀρφεῖν).⁷ While the legend of Orpheus the Argonaut had early roots, the earliest evidence of his katabasis does not appear until the fifth century BC, in a brief passage of Euripides’ *Alcestis*.⁸ Orpheus is successful in bringing his wife back from the dead in the katabasis narrative known to Euripides, but in other early versions of the myth, 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 labelled “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 more than a century about the nature and existence of what earlier scholars called “Orphism” – that is, a group of religious communities who practiced a reformed version of Greek religion that they believed to have been founded by Orpheus, with the use of 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 sceptical 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 been gradually making clear, the Orphics were something in between. Whatever conclusions we may draw about

⁷ Ibycus fr. 306 Page (Priscian. *Inst.* 6.92); cf. Davies *ad loc.*; a fragment of Simonides (fr. 384 Page) refers to the enchanting effect of Orpheus’ music on nature, and the name of Orpheus appears inscribed on an early sixth century BC relief sculpture that depicts the Argonautic journey (see Christopoulos 1991: 213, n. 16; Robbins 1982: 5-7).

⁸ Euripides, *Alcestis* 962-966.

⁹ Orpheus fails either because of his lack of heroic manliness, as in Plato’s *Symposium* 179d-e where he “seemed to be softened ... and not to have dared to die like Alcestis for the sake of his lover” (μαλθακίζεσθαι ἐδόκει ... καὶ οὐ τολμᾶν ἔνεκα τοῦ ἔρωτος ἀποθνήσκειν ὥσπερ Ἄλκηστις), or because he fails to refrain from looking back at Eurydice, as is more commonly known in later versions, such as Vergil, *Georgics* 4.457-527 and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.1-85. See Linforth 1941: 16-21.

¹⁰ Linforth 1941: 35-38; Graf 1974: 22-39. From poetic inspiration, Brisson (1995: 2870) argues, one passes easily to mantic inspiration, and from there to telestic inspiration. For an example of a fifth-century text that sees Orpheus as the founder of rites, see Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1032, where “Orpheus taught us rites and to refrain from killing” (Ὀρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετὰς θ’ ἡμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ’ ἀπέχεσθαι).

¹¹ e.g., Creuzer 1822, Macchiolo 1930; see below for a more detailed discussion.

the nature of “Orphism,” its most important distinguishing feature, if it existed, would 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 1400-line hexameter poem in which Orpheus tells his own story (fourth century AD).¹³ But most of the Orphic literary tradition exists now only in fragments, including: theogonic poetry ranging from the Derveni Papyrus (fourth century BC)¹⁴ to the Orphic Rhapsodies (first century BC/AD);¹⁵ a series of gold tablets inscribed with eschatological material and placed with the bodies of the deceased in graves (from the fourth century BC to the second century AD);¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ Most of the theogonic fragments come from Plato commentaries written by Neoplatonic philosophers (fourth to sixth centuries AD)¹⁸ who certainly did not identify themselves as “Orphic,” nor were they members of a sect called “Orphism,” but they made use of 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

¹² Athanassakis (1977: vii-viii) allows a range between the first and fourth centuries AD, but estimates the latter third century. Graf & Johnston (2007: 141) place them in the second century AD, Ricciardelli (2000: xxx-xxxi) estimates the second or third century, and Quandt (1955: 44) suggests generally that they were written in the Imperial Period. See also: Morand 2001: 35; Fayant 2014: xxix-xxx.

¹³ West 1983: 37. The most recent edition is Vian 1987.

¹⁴ West (1983: 75-79) and Betegh (2004: 61) date the Derveni Papyrus to the late fifth or early fourth century.

¹⁵ West 1983: 261; Bernabé 2004: 97. The date of the *Rhapsodies* is disputed, with suggestions ranging from the sixth century BC to the second century AD; see Chapter Five, section (a).

¹⁶ For dates and times of each individual gold tablet, see Graf & Johnston 2013: 4-47. Most of these were discovered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD, but more gold tablets continue to be discovered.

¹⁷ *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 (3.564-5 Adler); West 1983: 10-13.

¹⁸ West 1983: 68-69, 256-257; Bernabé 2004: 97. The most prominent late Neoplatonists who quote the Rhapsodies (Damascius also refers to the Eudemian and Hieronyman theogonies) are Syrianus, Proclus, Hermias, Damascius, and Olympiodorus, but by far the largest percentage of Orphic fragments come from Proclus. Brisson (1995: 53-54) counts 176 references to Orphic texts in Proclus, 139 appearing in his *Timaeus* commentary alone. For more on the Neoplatonists, see section (d) of this chapter.

Homer.¹⁹ These authors applied allegorical interpretations to the texts in ways that supported their own philosophical views, so at times it is difficult to disentangle one of their allegorical interpretations from the text that stood behind it, but it is because of the Neoplatonists that most fragments of Orphic literature have been preserved.

For the sake of clarity, in this study the word “Orphism” usually refers to a religious sect that probably never existed but was conjured in the minds of earlier generations of scholars (see below), 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 poet of an Orphic text, 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 practised 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 people could be 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 to inquire 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.²⁰

Therefore, the “Orphic Question” as it will be asked here is whether, to what extent, and in what ways Orphic texts, particularly theogonic texts, were used in Greek ritual.

¹⁹ E.g., Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26 Kroll (*OF* 159 B = *OF* 140 K): “the theologian Orpheus taught/handed down” (ὁ μὲν θεολόγος Ὀρφεύς ... παραδέδωκεν), Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.207.23 Kroll (*OF* 176 B = *OF* 126 K): “Orpheus says” (Ὀρφεύς ... φησιν), Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaedon.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 190 II B = *OF* 107, 220 K): “from Orpheus ... [they] are taught/handed down” (παρὰ δὲ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ ... παραδίδονται). Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 146.28 Couvr. (*OF* 128 II B = *OF* 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); see Chapter Three, where I discuss Plato’s and Aristotle’s references to Orphic poetry.

²⁰ Cf. Herrero 2010: 31, who frames his use of the term “Orphic” in a slightly different way: “To focus the debate on whether the commentators of the Derveni Papyrus, the users of the tablets, [etc.] ... were or were not ... ‘Orphics’ prevents us from attending to a question of much greater interest: which elements of Orphism were integrated into each of these systems. This study, therefore, will discuss Orphism, the Orphic tradition, ... Orphic poets and theologians, and Orphic rites, but it will never speak of ‘Orphics’.”

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 role these texts had to play in ritual has sparked one of the greatest debates in modern scholarship on ancient Greek religion. The modern debate began in the early nineteenth century with Friedrich Creuzer and Christian August Lobeck. In 1822 Creuzer viewed Orpheus as a major reformer from the east who revolutionized Greek religion, but Lobeck took a more cautious position in his *Aglaophamus* in 1829.²¹ The basic points of their disagreement characterized the debate into the early twentieth century, as scholars became divided between maximalists and minimalists, or as Edmonds has recently characterized them, “PanOrphists” and “Orpheoskeptics.”²² Prominent representatives of the PanOrphists included Otto Kern, who saw Orpheus as the prophet of a religious movement,²³ and Macchioro, according to whom Orphism was a religious community and a prototype of early Christian communities.²⁴ Two of the most important Orpheoskeptics were Wilamowitz, who questioned the connection between Orphism and the mysteries of Dionysus,²⁵ and Linforth, who denied that there was ever a coherent sect known as Orphism. The Greek word Ὀρφικά, as Linforth saw it, referred strictly to materials belonging to a literary tradition.²⁶ 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” had turned out to be a “house of dreams.”²⁷ Since then, scholars have been more cautious about attempting to define Orphism or claiming that it had any strong affinities with early Christianity.²⁸ But the relationship between the texts and the rituals remains an open question. There are still those who tend toward a minimalist

²¹ Creuzer 1822; Lobeck 1829; see Graf & Johnston 2007: 51 for a useful summary.

²² Edmonds 2011a: 4-8.

²³ Kern (1888a: 52) thought that “the religion of the Orphics then especially had been made popular” (“Cum Orphicorum religio tum maxime popularis facta esset”) by the time of Heraclitus; for a recent assessment of Kern’s general approach, see Graf & Johnston 2007: 57.

²⁴ Macchioro 1930: 100-135.

²⁵ Wilamowitz 1959, vol. 2: 190-205.

²⁶ Linforth 1941: ix-xiii, 169-173, 305-306.

²⁷ Dodds 1951: 147-148.

²⁸ Not until 2010 did anyone attempt a monographic study of the relationship between Orphism and Christianity, and even here, Herrero mainly talks about how Christian apologists used Orphic texts to attack Paganism, which of course is a more accurate representation.

position, such as Edmonds, who denies the existence of a religious community and expresses scepticism about labelling the gold tablets “Orphic,”²⁹ and 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.³⁰ To the less sceptical 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 with the use of Orphic texts. In general, most scholars aim for the middle road,³¹ accepting that there was no Orphism (in the sense of Orphic communities) but also 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, the Olbia bone tablets, and the 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 tantalisingly 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 (possibly from the 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.³² The Derveni Papyrus is the oldest surviving piece of Orphic literature, and it is a puzzling but important text, so as a result it has been in the spotlight of scholarly attention for the last half century. 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 in

²⁹ Edmonds 1999: 35-73; 2011b: 257-270.

³⁰ Bernabé 2011: 68-101.

³¹ The best examples of this approach are: Burkert 1982: 3-12; 1985: 290-304; Graf & Johnston 2007, 2013.

³² West 1983: 75-79; Betegh 2004: 56-61, 92-94, 132-134; Bernabé 2007b: 99-133. West (1983: 18) believes the Derveni poem to have been written around 500 BC, but Bernabé (2004: 10) places it earlier in the sixth century BC, and considers it possible that the poem was originally an orally composed hymn.

eschatology.³³ Thus the bone tablets supply important evidence on Orphic ritual, but we still have no idea about their original purpose.

The Orphic gold tablets have also received a lot of attention because, although the first ones were discovered in the early nineteenth century,³⁴ gold tablets continue to be found in graves.³⁵ The reason why great interest has been shown in the gold tablets 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 by scholars who have considered them as evidence of an eschatological concern in Orphism.³⁶ This view has been challenged by various scholars,³⁷ 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 South Italy and Sicily.³⁸ 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” (καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πῶν ὁδὸν ἔρχεαι <ι> ἄν τε καὶ ἄλλοι / μύσται καὶ Βάκχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε<ε>ῖνοι).³⁹ The ivy-shaped Pelinna tablets,

³³ West 1982: 17-29; West 1983: 17-18; Betegh 2004: 344; Graf & Johnston 2007: 64. According to Graf & Johnston’s edition of the text, Tablet A reads βίος θάνατος βίος at the top and Διό(νυσος) Ὀρφικοί (or Ὀρφικόν – they note that “the edge is damaged” – see Graf & Johnston 2007: 185); cf. *OF* 463-465 B.

³⁴ The Petelia tablet was discovered in 1836, but not published until 1882 (Smith & Comparetti 1882: 111).

³⁵ Most recently, eleven tablets from Roman Palestine (second century AD) have been published by Graf & Johnston 2013: 208-213.

³⁶ Smith & Comparetti 1882: 111-118; Graf & Johnston (2007: 52-57) also mention Albrecht Dieterich, Gilbert Murray, Jane Ellen Harrison and Otto Kern (who included the gold tablets which were known at the time in his edition of the Orphic fragments) as earlier scholars who interpreted the gold tablets as Orphic.

³⁷ For example, by Linforth, who “pointedly omitted the tablets” (Edmonds 2011a: 8) from his *Arts of Orpheus* (Linforth 1941), and by Wilamowitz (1959, vol. 2: 192-207). Also after Zuntz, West (1983: 26) argues that “we have no warrant for calling gold tablets themselves Orphic,” and Edmonds (2004: 36-37, 2011b: 257-260) questions their Orphic provenance.

³⁸ Zuntz 1971: 277-286, 381-393. He also associated the gold tablets with Empedocles and Pythagoras, who themselves were closely tied (so he argued) to the cult of Persephone. The gold tablets that mention Persephone or the “chthonian queen” (i.e., those that were available to Zuntz) are *OF* 488-490 B (Zuntz A1-3).

³⁹ *OF* 474.15-16 B; for more about the discovery of the Hipponion and Pelinna tablets, see Graf & Johnston 2013: 62.

discovered in 1987, instruct the initiate to “tell Persephone that the Bacchic one himself has released you” (εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνοι σ’ ὅτι Β<άκ>χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε).⁴⁰ The discovery of these tablets raised again the possibility that they were artifacts produced in 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, scholars believed that he had obtained special knowledge of the afterlife, and that this knowledge was preserved in his poetry. The Greeks associated Orpheus with mystery cults as their legendary founder, so because a concern with the afterlife was important in mystery cults, scholars concluded that Orphic cult was also concerned with the afterlife. The gold tablets appear to confirm this conclusion 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.⁴¹

Second, there is anthropogony, for the statement “I am a child of Earth and starry Sky” (Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος) on some of the gold tablets⁴² 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ This is how

⁴⁰ *OF* 485.2 B; *OF* 486.2 B is identical, but a little more fragmentary.

⁴¹ On the katabasis of Orpheus, see Clark 1979: 95-124. On Orpheus as a poetic founder of mysteries, particularly Eleusinian, see Graf 1974: 1-39; Brisson 1995: 2870-2872. On the gold tablets providing instructions for the underworld journey, see Edmonds 2004: 29-109; Graf & Johnston 2007: 94-164.

⁴² *OF* 474-484 B (Zuntz’s B group).

⁴³ The use of the epithet “Zagreus” to identify this myth is based on the appearance of the epithet in fragments that recall certain details of the myth; see Chapter Six for details.

⁴⁴ The dismemberment myth appears in its fullest form in the fragments of the Rhapsodies; in Chapter Six, section (c), I interpret this myth in the context of the Rhapsodies as one of the episodes in the succession myth.

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 Dionysiac⁴⁵ – and such recent scholars as Bernabé, Graf and Johnston have continued to suggest this interpretation.⁴⁶ But Edmonds has become convinced that the concept of “original sin,” which seems inherent in this concept of a Titanic nature in humanity, is an invention of modern scholars. Edmonds deconstructs the myth of Dionysus Zagreus by arguing that it was not nearly as central 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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸

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 only for the sake of deconstruction, and this is largely a consequence of the way Orphism was described a century ago. Seen as a proto-Christianity, Orphism was expected would be concerned with such concepts as original sin and the afterlife, that mystery cults would offer salvation from an afterlife of punishment, and that these ideas would revolve around the story of a god who is killed and brought back to life. Now most 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. Dionysus Zagreus was not the central myth of an institution called Orphism,

⁴⁵ Smith & Comparetti 1882: 116; see also: Edmonds 2011a: 5.

⁴⁶ Graf & Johnston 2007: 58-61; Bernabé 2011: 77; *cf.* Detienne 1979: 68-72; Christopoulos 1991: 217-218.

⁴⁷ Edmonds 1999: 35-73; 2009a: 511-532; 2013: 296-390. Edmonds is simply expanding on the same point already made by Linforth (1941: 359-362). Brisson (1995: 481-499) does not reject the Zagreus myth as strongly, but agrees that the emergence of humans from the ashes of the Titans is merely an allegorical interpretation (more precisely, an alchemical one) imposed upon the text by Olympiodorus (sixth century AD), before whom there is no indication of anthropogony in any other source; see Chapter Six, section (a).

⁴⁸ Edmonds 2011b: 258-259.

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 Six, 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, (depending upon the version) 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.⁴⁹ 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; and if this is the case, then the story might have little to do with anthropogony, at least in the context of the Rhapsodic narrative.

The myth of Dionysus Zagreus, whether it was central to Orphic belief or not, 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*,⁵⁰ he is still just one of many. He appears in typical Dionysiac roles in *OH* 45-54: the revelling 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. Although there are references to Dionysus as the son of Persephone in the *Orphic Hymns*,⁵¹ neither his dismemberment by the Titans nor the name of Zagreus is mentioned.⁵² Some of

⁴⁹ All of the elements of this story in ancient literature are included in *OF* 280-336 B. There were 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).

⁵⁰ *OH* 30, 45-50, 52-54 are addressed to Dionysus, which has led some scholars to see the *Orphic Hymns* as relevant to Bacchic initiations; see Graf 2009: 169-182.

⁵¹ *OH* 24.10-11 claims that the "revered rite of sacred Bacchus and pure Persephone" (τελετήν ... σεμνήν / εὐιέρου Βάκχοιο καὶ ἀγνῆς Φερσεφονείης) was first revealed by the Nereids, and in *OH* 29.8, Persephone is called "mother of loud-roaring, many-shaped Eubouleus" (μητέρα ἐριβρεμέτου πολυμόρφου Εὐβουλῆος); cf. *OH* 30.6-7.

⁵² Yet his death by the Titans might be implied in the epithet "thrice-born" (τρίγονος in *OH* 30.2). The name of Zagreus is not mentioned by any of the Neoplatonists (West 1983: 153). Although there are more *Orphic Hymns* to Dionysus than to any other deity, Linforth (1941: 188) argued that "they do not form more than a

the *Orphic Hymns* are addressed to chthonic deities,⁵³ and some fragments of the Rhapsodies deal with the fate of souls and the underworld,⁵⁴ but there is not nearly 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. 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 doctrines. 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.”⁵⁵ While acknowledging that there was no religious sect and that other myths, such as Zeus swallowing Phanes, were just as important to Orphic 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.”⁵⁶ Likewise, Alberto Bernabé collects fragments that seem to him to contain *doctrinae* which agree with other *Orphica*, even if the ancient authors do not specifically attest that they have an Orphic source.⁵⁷ 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 doctrine found in different passages of the Orphic corpus will not be one and the same,” but this is “counterweighed

tenth of the whole, which is a very small fraction in view of the predominance of Dionysus in mystery cults.” There is an *Orphic Hymn* to the Titans, which refers to them as “ancestors of our fathers” (ἡμετέρων πρόγονοι πατέρων, 37.2), but this refers to them in their typical role as the generation of gods before the Olympians. Although *OH* 37 supports the idea of Titanic ancestry of humans from this perspective, there is no explicit mention of the murder of Dionysus, the Titans’ punishment by lightning, or humanity being born from their ashes as a result of this punishment.

⁵³ E.g., Hekate (*OH* 1), Plouton (*OH* 18), Persephone (*OH* 29), Chthonic Dionysus (*OH* 53), Chthonic Hermes (*OH* 57; cf. *OH* 28), and even Death (*OH* 87, after two *Hymns* to Sleep and to Dream).

⁵⁴ *OF* 337-350 B.

⁵⁵ Graf & 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.

⁵⁶ Graf & Johnston 2013: 192-193.

⁵⁷ Bernabé 2004: vii-x.

by the fact that the name of the mythical poet was associated with specific themes (eschatology, the origin and destiny of the soul, salvation).”⁵⁸ 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 eschatology and anthropogony.

Unsurprisingly, on the more minimalist side of the debate, Edmonds takes issue with Bernabé, Graf and Johnston, whom he criticises for defining Orphism as a set of doctrines. Rejecting the idea of an “Orphic exception” to the 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 religion, which were far more about “loose thematic associations” and “collective ritual performances” than about “systematic theology.”⁵⁹ In his most recent book, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 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.⁶⁰ 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, “extraordinary 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.⁶¹ Edmonds suggests the following definition, claiming that it renders a more accurate reflection of the ways in which 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.⁶²

⁵⁸ Bernabé 2010: 422; *cf.* Herrero 2010: 20-24.

⁵⁹ Edmonds 2013: 68-69.

⁶⁰ Edmonds 2013: 71.

⁶¹ Edmonds 2013: 82.

⁶² Edmonds 2013: 71.

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. To the Neoplatonists and Christian apologists of late antiquity, the divine connection and extreme antiquity of Orpheus were their justification for using Orphic texts to represent the entire Greek tradition. The “features of 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 needs to be refined. It represents progress by moving beyond the doctrinal hypothesis, not only because it does not rely on modern reconstructions that are based on Christian models, but also because it takes into account the wide range of features that characterised Orphic texts and practices at different places and times. However, at least as far as it concerns Orphic myth, this definition needs to be refined to produce more precise terms than “features of extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature.” In this dissertation, therefore, I will attempt to refine Edmonds’ definition, insofar as it relates to Orphic theogonies, by suggesting more specific criteria by which we might identify a theogonic myth as Orphic. There are certain features of Orphic theogony that are not exclusively Orphic but can be spoken of as characteristically Orphic.⁶³

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 (Alberto Bernabé’s *Poetae Epici Graeci*, 2004, 2005, 2007a) 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 West’s 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 theogonies, but also a stemma for the entire tradition of Orphic theogonies, suggesting that

⁶³ These will emerge gradually as we go through the texts, but some of the most important points are summarized in Chapter Five, section (a).

the author of the Rhapsodies simply copied and compiled the material of three earlier Orphic theogonies, uniting them in one poem.⁶⁴ West attempts to demonstrate that there is some 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 Theogony and the Cyclic Theogony. However, West’s genealogical methodology relies on a great deal 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 argues that West’s reconstruction assumes the existence of two theogonies (Protogonos and Cyclic) for which there is no evidence.⁶⁵ Brisson prefers to see only three theogonies (ancient, Rhapsodic, Hieronyman),⁶⁶ and suggests that the best way to come to terms with the fragments is “to choose some sure points of reference.”⁶⁷ He chooses primordial deities as his main point of reference. Night is the primordial deity in the “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.⁶⁸ This suggests that the Rhapsodic and Hieronyman Theogonies were no mere compilations

⁶⁴ West 1983: 69, 246-249; see especially the diagram on p. 264. West compares the process to the “Pisistratean [*sic*] recension of the Homeric poems” (1983: 249); for more, see Chapter Five, section (a).

⁶⁵ Brisson rejects the existence of either of these theogonies, and he argues that West reconstructed the Protogonos Theogony based on the Rhapsodies to take account of one major difference: in the Rhapsodies, the primordial deity is Chronos, but in the Derveni Theogony, it is Nyx. Brisson rejects this idea and seeks another reason for this difference (Brisson 1995: 398-402). The Cyclic Theogony is suggested by West to account for certain points of divergence between Apollodorus and Orphic theogonies (West 1983: 121-126), but Brisson argues that these points can be explained because they refer to episodes that appear in Hesiod (Brisson 1995: 405-406). See also: Calame 1991: 229, who criticizes West because of his synchronic treatment and his attempts to reconstruct an “Urform.”

⁶⁶ Brisson 1995: 390-396. He argues that the Hieronyman Theogony was written after the Rhapsodies. Brisson’s chronology is followed by Fayant 2014: xx-xxiii, but West and Bernabé place the Hieronyman Theogony before the Rhapsodies.

⁶⁷ Brisson 1995: 413 : “choisir quelques points de repère sûrs.”

⁶⁸ Brisson 1995: 410-412. Specifically, he believes that the Hieronyman Theogony attempts to reconcile Orphic theogony with Homer and Hesiod (Brisson 1995: 395). He argues 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 Schibli = 7 A1 D-K; fr. 60 Schibli = 7 A8 D-K; Schibli 1990: 135-139). Unlike Brisson, West (1983: 227-229) regards the Rhapsodies as the later theogony. For more on the Hieronyman Theogony, see Chapter Four.

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 identical⁶⁹ and, as with West’s method, their conclusions require some conjecture, so some scholars have applied a different model of interpretation to the gold tablets. Graf and Johnston see the gold tablets as vital evidence of Orphic ritual, and Edmonds remains sceptical 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.⁷⁰ 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 possibilities offered by ritual and myth current in their time, and put them together in an imaginative and original way that was relevant to the specific time and place of the burial in question.⁷¹ Whether the texts of the gold tablets were composed on the basis of a written text, memories of ritual actions, original thought, or a mixture of these (which is perhaps more likely), 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 is to approach each fragment of each theogony, or even each element or episode included in a theogony – anything that

⁶⁹ Janko 1984: 89-100; Riedweg 1998: 359-398 (revised and translated into English as Riedweg 2011: 219-256). Janko suggests that the archetype may have been an oral poem, or more than one. The view that the gold tablets were taken from an Orphic poem is as old as Comparetti (1882: 117).

⁷⁰ Edmonds 2004: 4, 27, 238; 2011b: 266; Graf & Johnston 2007: 73-94, 184; Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16-36.

⁷¹ In this sense, the production of gold tablets was no different from any other Greek myth or ritual; *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 action, which is that, despite the overarching thematic similarity of the gold tablets, each one is different in some way (with few exceptions). Some of the tablets from Crete, dated to the second or first century BC, are identical (*OF* 478-483 B; *OF* 484 B is very similar but not identical), but all of these are from the same time and place, which actually strengthens the argument that time and place were important influences in the production of gold tablets. The most recently found tablets from Roman Palestine (c. second century AD) also demonstrate the importance of context, since most of them say some variation of “take courage” (θάρασι), and some include the name “Eugene,” or “well-born lady” (Εὐγενή) (Graf & Johnston 2013: 208-213).

Brisson’s method might consider a sure point of reference – as an individual product of *bricolage*. Lévi-Strauss used the concept of *bricolage* to explain “mythical thought” by means of an analogy with the *bricoleur* who works “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.”⁷² The *bricoleur* “always remains within” 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.”⁷³ These elements are “an already existent set” of “odds and ends,” with which the *bricoleur* engages “in a sort of dialogue,” by “ordering and re-ordering” them in order to “find them a meaning” by the creation of new “structures.”⁷⁴ 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*, in the course of repairing them, detaches the cogwheels 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.”⁷⁵

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 the ways in which 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 central to 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

⁷² Lévi-Strauss 1966: 17. Lévi-Strauss notes that the word “‘*bricoleur*’ has no precise equivalent in English. He is a man who undertakes odd jobs and is a Jack of all trades.” In the usual sense of the word, a *bricoleur* is “someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16-17).

⁷³ Lévi-Strauss 1966: 19-21.

⁷⁴ Lévi-Strauss 1966: 18, 21-22. Lévi-Strauss contrasted the “mythical thought” of the *bricoleur*, who creates “structures by means of events,” with the methods of the scientist, who creates events “by means of structures.”

⁷⁵ Lévi-Strauss 1966: 35.

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, Plutarch, 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, more 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, for he has recently 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 has recently suggested.⁷⁶ Comparing the Rhapsodies to the *Sibylline Oracles*, Edmonds suggests that “the 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*.”⁷⁷ He sees 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

⁷⁶ Graf & Johnston 2013: 188-189.

⁷⁷ Edmonds 2013: 149.

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,”⁷⁸ in which case differing versions are simply reflections of different narratives within the collection, and not internally contradictory. 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 thesis 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 Two, the Derveni poem was a short theogonic poem that functioned as a hymn to Zeus. In Chapter Three, 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 coherent narrative, in Chapter Four I explore 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 Five, I study evidence that confirms 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 was a six-generation succession myth, comparable in length to Hesiod. In Chapter Six, I read the myth of Dionysus Zagreus in a way that sets aside modern assumptions about this story’s doctrinal significance and sees it in the context of the Rhapsodic narrative that emerges in Chapter Five.

Reading the Orphic tradition of theogonic poetry as a loose collection of short theogonic hymns, rather than a tight stemma of long 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,”⁷⁹ since a loose collection of short texts can be applied to a wider

⁷⁸ Edmonds 2013: 159.

⁷⁹ Edmonds 2013: 157.

variety of purposes and settings. But on the other hand, as I would argue, if Orphic theogonic material appeared mostly in the form of theogonic hymns,⁸⁰ then, despite the fact that the specific performance context remains obscure, at least it is easier to imagine their performance as 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 theogonic hymns, 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 must have been different.

(b) Ancient Traditions of Poetic Theogonies

Despite these possible structural differences, many of the elements and themes of Orphic theogonies (notably the core succession myth) are similar to Hesiod; but where they are different, these differences are often regarded as alternatives, or deviations, from the more “mainstream” tradition of Hesiod.⁸¹ 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 even Hesiod is a *bricoleur* who weaves eastern motifs into his own unique narrative. When the Hurrian-Hittite *Song of Kumarbi* (sometimes referred to as the “Kingship in Heaven” myth), preserved on Hittite tablets, was published in 1946, scholars quickly recognized significant parallels between this myth and Hesiod.⁸² Since then, scholars such as Burkert and West have pointed out many more parallels between Greek and Near Eastern myths, which must have come to Greece through communication channels during the Late Bronze Age and Early Archaic Period. Burkert made the point 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.”⁸³ West supplied more details in *The East Face of Helicon* 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 “was pervasive at many levels and at most times.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ On my use of the term “theogonic hymn,” see section (c) of this chapter.

⁸¹ West 1997: 276; Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 130-136.

⁸² E.g., Barnett 1945; see Burkert 1992: 5; Burkert 2004: 3 = 2009: 10-11.

⁸³ Burkert 1992: 128-129.

⁸⁴ West 1997a: 59.

Of particular importance here are the parallels between Hesiod’s succession myth and the Hurrian-Hittite 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.”⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ Burkert initially answered 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.⁸⁷

Lopez-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 other Semitic sources, such as the Ugaritic deity lists, the cycle of Baal myths, and the Hebrew Bible. Lopez-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.⁸⁸ 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,

⁸⁵ West 1997a: viii.

⁸⁶ Although he does discuss modes of transmission at length (West 1997a: 586-629) and suggests that the Phoenicians “played a leading (if not exclusive) role” (p. 588), West despairs that “there is no prospect of accounting for them at all in any decisive or final way” (p. 586). Nevertheless, he lists several possible modes, including trading settlements and migrant workers, Greek and Assyrian expansion, mercenaries, domestic relations, and immigration (pp. 609-623).

⁸⁷ Burkert 1992: 21-25, 41.

⁸⁸ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 5.

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.

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 migrated to Greece in the Archaic Period.⁸⁹ These specialists usually had an extensive knowledge of myth, accompanied by texts that they used along with their rituals. Conspicuous among them were the magi, Persian priests with whom the Greeks had extensive contact by the fifth century BC. When using the word μάγοι to refer to these Persian priests, Greek authors typically showed great respect for their ancient mystical practice; but when referring to fellow-Greeks as μάγοι, they used the word in a more pejorative sense, 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” (μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες).⁹⁰ Plato describes a similar class of priest in his *Republic* (2.364b-365a),⁹¹ the “begging priests and fortune-tellers” (ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντιες) who perform ritual services for a fee, using “a bunch of books by Musaeus and Orpheus” (βίβλων δὲ ὄμαδον ... Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως). Burkert has labeled this class of priests *orpheotelestai*:⁹² they were independent agents who performed purifications, divination, initiations and other ritual actions for a price, using texts ascribed to Orpheus. Most likely it was these ritual specialists who made use of Orphic theogonies, influenced by other practitioners from the east, not least of whom were the magi. Some connection between the *orpheotelestai* and the magi can perhaps be seen in the Derveni author’s statement (DP 6.8-9) that “initiates make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the magi do” (μύσται Εὐμεγίσσι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] ἀντὰ μάγοις).⁹³ This suggests two points that are relevant to the study of Orphic theogonies: (1) ritual specialists such as the magi and the *orpheotelestai*

⁸⁹ Burkert 1997: 41-87.

⁹⁰ *De Morbo Sacro* 1.23-24; see Burkert 2004: 107-108; Edmonds 2008: 16-39.

⁹¹ Obbink 1997: 47; KPT 2006: 235. Text: *OCT*; translation mine.

⁹² Burkert 1977: 7; 1982: 1-22; 1985: 297.

⁹³ As I will argue in Chapter Two, the Derveni author was probably an *orpheotelestes*.

were at least partly responsible 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 parallels exist is well-established, particularly in the case of Hesiod's *Theogony*. Scholars have pointed out many parallels between Hesiod and earlier theogonies, which only need to be summarized here, 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 be parallel with Near Eastern themes and motifs that do not appear in 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 Tesub.⁹⁴ The parallels between this and Hesiod are obvious: like Kumarbi, Kronos castrates his father, the sky-god Ouranos, and he also swallows his children.⁹⁵ The Derveni poem 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” (ὄς μέγ' ἔπεξεν, *OF* 10.1 B) – presumably castrating his father – Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos (*OF* 8, 12.1 B).⁹⁶ 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 clearly parallel to the Hurrian-Hittite myth, in which Kumarbi swallows An's genitals. Where a difference from Hesiod appears in the text, closer inspection reveals a connection with Hurrian-Hittite myth, which suggests that it might not be a deviation from the mainstream, but a competing version of the myth based on an older tradition. 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 and cosmogonies, drawing attention to parallels that have been found between these and Greek literature, particularly Homer, Hesiod, and the Orphic theogonies.

⁹⁴ *Song of Kumarbi* 4-10, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 42-43.

⁹⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony* 178-182, 460-464; see West 1966: 20-23; 1997a: 278-280.

⁹⁶ There are other ways of reading these fragments; for more, see Chapter Two, sections (c) and (d).

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 (c. 1500-1000 BC), and 1092 lines have been preserved on seven tablets.⁹⁷ The main theme of the story is the rise to power of Marduk, the patron deity of Babylon, but the text narrates the creation of the world from the beginning of time to the creation of humans. It was recited annually at New Year celebrations in Babylon (which fell on the spring equinox) by a priest in seclusion at the temple of Marduk, followed by public celebrations led by the king of Babylon.⁹⁸ 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 “symbolised the exploits 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 “magical” renewal of the natural world, or a re-creation of the cosmos, in line with the “initial act of creation.”⁹⁹

Despite the Frazerian tendencies of Cornford’s argument,¹⁰⁰ 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 sacred 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

⁹⁷ West 1997a: 61-68. The Sumerian scribal tradition began from at least 2600 BC, and continued to the first century BC. Most of the extant copies we have of Sumerian poetry were written between 1900 and 1600 BC, by which time Akkadian was the current language, but the Babylonian scribal tradition was remarkable for its uniformity across the centuries. Most of the surviving Akkadian texts come from the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, which was burned in the seventh century BC, but tablets found at this site preserve stories that are much older.

⁹⁸ Cornford 1950: 111.

⁹⁹ Cornford 1950: 108-109. Cornford built this interpretation on comparison with the Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles, which marked the beginning of the New Year. He argued that it was “a ceremony whose magical efficacy was to secure ... the due supply of rain and the consequent fertility of plants and animals.”

¹⁰⁰ Cornford 1950: 105-107. He was, after all, an early twentieth-century ritualist who built his work on the theories of James Frazer. Although there are some useful points in his interpretation of the Babylonian festival, this does not mean that we need to agree with his argument that Hesiod’s *Theogony* itself was based on an earlier Greek New Year ritual.

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 toothache.¹⁰¹ 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,”¹⁰² and in so doing, the “worm” was put in its place within the cosmic order, at the top of which was “sky.” The basic idea of this chant was similar to the New Year celebrations that glorified Marduk, and they might be relevant to the question of the ritual use of Orphic theogonies. According to this interpretation, the purpose of reciting a cosmogony/theogony – 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.¹⁰³

This contrasts with Hesiod (*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 generator of the gods and mother Tethys” (Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν), and there is even a possible etymological connection between the names of Tethys and Tiâmat.¹⁰⁴ Early in the Babylonian myth, however, we are reminded of the Hesiodic passage (*Theogony* 156-159) where Ouranos keeps his children inside Gaia.¹⁰⁵ Five generations of gods were born inside Tiâmat, and they “would meet together and disturb Tiâmat ... they stirred up Tiâmat’s belly,”¹⁰⁶ 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

¹⁰¹ Burkert 1992: 125.

¹⁰² *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum*, cited in: Lenowitz & Doria 1976: 135.

¹⁰³ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233.

¹⁰⁴ Burkert 1992: 91-93; 2004: 30-32 = 2009: 36-38; Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 90.

¹⁰⁵ West 1966: 213; 1997a: 288-292.

¹⁰⁶ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233.

sky-god Anu,¹⁰⁷ lured Apsû to sleep. Ea killed him and “set up his dwelling on top of Apsû,”¹⁰⁸ and it was there that his son Marduk was born. 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.¹⁰⁹ 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.”¹¹⁰ When Marduk had 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.¹¹¹

In other words, he cut her in half, creating the earth out of one half and the sky out of the other, which reminds one of the cosmic egg in Orphic myth.¹¹² After this victory, Marduk was proclaimed king of the gods, and he proceeded with the act of creation, setting up stars, rivers, and mountains.¹¹³ 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.”¹¹⁴

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.¹¹⁵ But there are also many differences between *Enûma Eliš* and Hesiod. To mention only a few: Apsû and Tiâmat as primordial deities have no parallel in Hesiod, despite their similarity to Homer; the sky-god Anu appears a few generations later in the Babylonian genealogy

¹⁰⁷ Ea is actually 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 (Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 90).

¹⁰⁸ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 235.

¹⁰⁹ *Enûma Eliš* Tablets II-IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 239-252.

¹¹⁰ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 253.

¹¹¹ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 255.

¹¹² This motif also appears in Semitic tradition, in *Genesis* 1.7: “God made the expanse, and divided the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse, and it was so” (καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ στερέωμα, καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ὕδατος, ὃ ἦν ὑποκάτω τοῦ στερώματος, καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ὕδατος τοῦ ἐπάνω τοῦ στερώματος).

¹¹³ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet V, trans. Dalley 1989: 255-257.

¹¹⁴ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet VI, trans. Dalley 1989: 260-261.

¹¹⁵ West 1997a: 282. Note also that, just as Marduk creates winds to defeat Tiâmat, so in Hesiod winds are created from Typhoeus (*Theogony* 869-880).

than Ouranos does in Hesiod,¹¹⁶ 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.¹¹⁷ Finally, the mode of creation is not the same as Hesiod; to borrow Burkert's terms,¹¹⁸ 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 ones in *Genesis* 1-3, narrate a "technomorphic" creation, in which a deity intelligently designs the cosmos. 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 as we will see in Chapters Two and Five, in the Derveni Theogony and the Rhapsodies Zeus re-creates the cosmos out of pre-existing 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 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 Teshub (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*

¹¹⁶ Anu is from the fourth generation, and Ouranos is from the second.

¹¹⁷ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 90-91; *Enûma Eliš* Tablets II, V, trans. Dalley 1989: 242-244, 258. There is some indication that in the Rhapsodies Kronos eventually consented to the rule of Zeus, for Zeus is quoted saying to Kronos, "raise up our race, glorious *daimon*" (ὄρθου δ' ἡμετέραν γενεήν, ἀριδείκετε δαίμον); 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 = *OF* 129, 155 K).

¹¹⁸ Burkert 2004: 63; cf. Burkert 2009: 69-70.

of *Kumarbi* and *Song of Ullikummi* (c. 1300 BC) preserve older Hurrian myths, but they are still representative of Hittite myth, a fact which itself demonstrates that mythical themes and motifs were mobile between cultures.¹¹⁹ Like the *Enûma Eliš*, there are indications that the *Song of Ullikummi* was performed at the Hittite New Year festival.¹²⁰

Only the first tablet of the Hurrian-Hittite *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.”¹²¹ 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.¹²²

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 (= Teshub). Kumarbi tried spitting them out, but he was unable to dislodge Tessub.¹²³ 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 to prevent the birth of Tessub by swallowing a stone did not succeed, so “the heroic Tessub came out through the [good] place.”¹²⁴ Tessub was born on Mount Kanzura, and he was a proud warrior, but his bull Seri warned him not to curse the other gods. At this point there is a lacuna of about fifty lines, after which the earth goddess gives birth to two children.¹²⁵ 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

¹¹⁹ West 1997a: 101-105; Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 91-92. Indeed, Akkadian literature influenced the Hittites both directly and through the mediation of the Hurrians.

¹²⁰ Noegel 2007: 25.

¹²¹ *Song of Kumarbi* 1-4, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 42.

¹²² *Song of Kumarbi* 4-5, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 42.

¹²³ *Song of Kumarbi* 6-7, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 43. The other two gods are Tessub’s attendant, Tasmisu, and either the river Tigris (West 1997a: 278) or Euphrates (Burkert 2004: 92).

¹²⁴ *Song of Kumarbi* 13-16, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 43-44.

¹²⁵ *Song of Kumarbi* 17-24, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 44-45.

a challenge to Tessub's power. Like the myth of Marduk, this text has also been compared to the battle between Zeus and Typhoeus in Hesiod's *Theogony*.¹²⁶

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-Zeus in both Hesiodic and Orphic poetry. The first deity of the Hurrian-Hittite theogony, Alalu, does not correspond precisely to any Greek deity. The closest connection that has been found is Lopez-Ruiz's suggestion that "if he is chthonic, as some think, he would be parallel to some extent to Gaia."¹²⁷ The castration of Anu corresponds to the castration of Ouranos in Hesiod,¹²⁸ but Kumarbi swallowing Anu's genitals corresponds to Zeus swallowing Ouranos' phallus in the Derveni Papyrus.¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ These parallels will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two, 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, some of which 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.¹³¹ Some fragments of poetry preserve

¹²⁶ West 1997a: 300-302; Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 93-94; Hesiod, *Theogony* 820-880. There were numerous Near Eastern narratives in which deities battled monsters: West mentions Ninurta's defeat of Azag in Sumerian poetry, and Marduk's defeat of Tiamat, for example. There are vestiges in the Hebrew bible, with Leviathan: Job 41, Psalm 74.14 (defeat followed by creation), 104.26, and Isaiah 27.1.

¹²⁷ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 92; see also: Barnett 1945: 101; West 1997a: 279-280.

¹²⁸ However, West (1997a: 290) points out that neither the castration of Anu by Kumarbi, nor the defeat of Apsû by Ea, involve the idea of earth and sky being separated, as in the castration of Ouranos.

¹²⁹ Note that different generations are involved: Kronos/Kumarbi (second generation) castrate Ouranos/Anu (first generation), but Kumarbi (second) and Zeus (third) swallow a phallus/genitals.

¹³⁰ Also in both cases the stone is set up as a cult object afterward (West 1997a: 280, 294; Hesiod, *Theogony* 498-500).

¹³¹ West 1997: 84-85; Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 61.

stories about Baal, sometimes called the “Cloudrider,”¹³² 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 tablets in Ugaritic 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.”¹³³ After certain preliminaries,¹³⁴ Yammu and Baal fight, but Baal gains the upper hand when he is given two throwing-clubs from Kothar, the craftsman god.¹³⁵ Upon victory, Baal is proclaimed king of the gods when Kothar proclaims, “Yamm[u] surely is dead! Baal rei[gns].”¹³⁶ The third and fourth tablets narrate the building of a palace for Baal.¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸ 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.¹³⁹

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 them. It is not clear whether these deities are listed as successive generations of gods, or according to some other type of hierarchy. Although they are not

¹³² E.g. *KTU (Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit)* 1.3 IV 5-6, 25-27; trans. Smith 2009: 72-73 & *KTU* 1.4 III 10-11; trans. Smith 2009: 78.

¹³³ *KTU* 1.1 IV 24-25; trans. Smith 1994: 133.

¹³⁴ Yammu sends messengers to Baal, who arrive during a feast and say “give up, o gods, the one you obey ... give up Baal that I may humble him” (*KTU* 1.2 I 35; trans. Smith 1994: 267).

¹³⁵ *KTU* 1.2 IV 8-27; trans. Smith 1994: 322-323.

¹³⁶ *KTU* 1.2 IV 32; trans. Smith 1994: 324.

¹³⁷ This is initiated when at one point Baal’s sister Anat complains to El that “Baal has no house like the gods” (*KTU* 1.3 V 38-39; trans. Smith 2009: 74).

¹³⁸ West 1997a: 86-87. Unfortunately, Smith has not yet published a commentary of *KTU* 1.5-6.

¹³⁹ As with content, there are similarities of form: one feature shared between Ugaritic and Greek poetry is the use of formulaic epithets to refer to gods, such as Baal “the rider of clouds” (Burkert 1992: 116).

theogonic poetry, these lists appear to have some kind of ritual function, so Lopez-Ruiz suggests that they “functioned as ‘checklists’ for the proper carrying out of the rituals” by the priests of Ugarit.¹⁴⁰ 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, Dagon, Baal), which indicates that Philo was drawing from a coherent and continuous Semitic tradition.¹⁴¹ A Hellenized Phoenician from Tyre, Philo (late first-second century AD)¹⁴² 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 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 Sanchuniathon, who lived in the Late Bronze Age; but he wrote his narrative with constant reference to Hesiod, and from a Euhemeristic perspective, attempting to historicize mythical events.¹⁴³

According to Eusebius, Philo’s “translation of Sanchuniathon” (τοῦ Σαγχουινιάθωνος ἐρμηνείας) began with “a blast of dark mist, and a turbid, watery chaos” (πνοὴν ἀέρος ζοφώδους, καὶ χάος θολερὸν), similar to Chaos in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, as “the source of all things” (τὴν τῶν ὄλων ἀρχὴν).¹⁴⁴ This airy chaos was “limitless” (αἰῶνα) for a long time until:

ἠράσθη τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν ἰδίων ἀρχῶν καὶ ἐγένετο σύγκρασις, ἢ πλοκὴ ἐκείνη ἐκλήθη πόθος. αὕτη δ’ ἀρχὴ κτίσεως ἀπάντων ... καὶ ἐκ τῆς αὐτοῦ συμπλοκῆς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐγένετο Μώτ. τοῦτό τινές φασιν ἰλύν, οἱ δὲ ὑδατώδους μίξεως σῆψιν.

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

¹⁴⁰ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 101-103. 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 and parallels) is: Ilu-ibi, Arzu-wa-Shamuma, Ilu (El), Kotharatu, Dagan, Baalu Halbi, Baalu Zapuni, Tharrathiya.

¹⁴¹ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 103-104. Also, neither Philo nor the Ugaritic lists correspond to known Hurrian deity lists, which demonstrates that Philo was influenced by Semitic, not Hittite, tradition.

¹⁴² Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2: Jacoby estimates c. 54-142; Baumgarten (1981: 32-35) discusses the problems of dating Philo and estimates that he lived in the late first century, until at least the time of Hadrian.

¹⁴³ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 95.

¹⁴⁴ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.9.30-1.10.1); reprinted in Baumgarten 1981: 12-19; trans. Baumgarten 1981: 96-98.

born of the wind. Some say that [Mot] is slime, others the fermentation of a watery mixture.¹⁴⁵

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” (τις Ἐλιοῦν, καλούμενος Ὑψιστος). This deity gives birth to “Terrestrial Native, whom they later called Ouranos” (Ἐπίγειος Αὐτόχθων, ὃν ὕστερον ἐκάλεσαν Οὐρανόν) and his sister Ge.¹⁴⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷ One result of the prolonged battle between Kronos and Ouranos is that:

ἑάλω δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ μάχῃ ἢ ἐπέραστος τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ σύγκοιτος ἐγκύμων οὖσα,
ἦν ἐκδίδωσιν ὁ Κρόνος Δαγῶνι πρὸς γάμον. τίκει δὲ παρὰ τούτῳ ὁ κατὰ
γαστρὸς ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ ἔφερεν, ὃ καὶ ἐκάλεσε Δημαροῦν.

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.¹⁴⁸

Somewhat later, Ouranos tries to defeat Kronos again, but Kronos “trapped his father Ouranos in an inland location” (Οὐρανὸν τὸν πατέρα λοχήσας ἐν τόπῳ τινὶ μεσογείῳ) and “cut off his genitals” (ἐκτέμνει αὐτοῦ τὰ αἰδοῖα).¹⁴⁹ After all of this, the last king in the succession is Demarous/Zeus, who rules “with the consent of Kronos” (Κρόνου γνώμῃ).¹⁵⁰ 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, Lopez-Ruiz has noted important differences between Hesiod and Philo that can be interpreted as parallels with Near Eastern sources. Although

¹⁴⁵ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1-2); trans. Baumgarten 1981: 96-97, with minor modifications.

¹⁴⁶ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.14-15); trans. Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 96.

¹⁴⁷ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.16-17).

¹⁴⁸ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.18-19); trans. Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 96.

¹⁴⁹ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.29); trans. Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 96-97.

¹⁵⁰ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.31); trans. Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 97; cf. *OF* 239 B, where Kronos appears to consent to Zeus’ rule when Zeus asks him to “raise up our race, glorious *daimon*” (ὄρθου δ’ ἡμετέραν γενεήν, ἀριδείκετε δαῖμον); and *OF* 5.2 B = DP 8.5, where the Derveni poet refers to a “glorious *daimon*” (δαίμον[α] κυδρόν).

the motif of Ouranos' castration is there, in Philo this happens later in the narrative at the final moment of battle, and the act of castration does not have the significance of separating sky and earth 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 – Tesub 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.¹⁵¹

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 might parallel 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; presumably the first gods emerge from this mixture; and this is similar to the beginning of the Hieronyman Theogony, which begins with the primordial elements of water and mud (*OF 75 B*). Also, Lopez-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.¹⁵² Chronos will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four when we look at the Hieronyman Theogony, the first Orphic text in which he appears as a primordial deity.

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, for example, the

¹⁵¹ Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 97-104.

¹⁵² Lopez-Ruiz 2006: 80-94. Chronos/Kronos also brings to mind the prose commentary of Pherecydes of Syros, which will be taken into account in Chapter Four with the discussion of the Hieronyman Theogony.

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 wool garments includes the much-debated statement (2.81.2):

ὁμολογέουσι δὲ ταῦτα τοῖσι Ὀρφικοῖσι καλεομένοισι καὶ Βακχικοῖσι, ἐοῦσι
δὲ Αἰγυπτίοισι καὶ Πυθαγορείοισι.

They agree in this with things called Orphic and Bacchic, but they are Egyptian and Pythagorean.

This passage of Herodotus has raised many questions about the connections between Orphic and Bacchic (especially as they concern the Orphic gold tablets), Orphic and Pythagorean, Orphic and Egyptian; and certainly the similarities between Osiris and Dionysus Zagreus are striking, since both are dismembered.¹⁵³ 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 the Bacchic and Pythagorean, while other elements do not; likewise, certain elements of Bacchic practice overlap with Orphic practice, particularly by means of Orphic texts.¹⁵⁴ And any one of these elements could reasonably have come from Egypt.

The element on which Herodotus comments is the wearing of wool garments, but other parallels 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):

... ἔστ’ ἐπὶ δ(ε)ξιά κρήνα,
πὰρ δ’ αὐτὰν ἑστακῶα λευκὰ κυπάρις(σ)ος·
ἔνθα κατερχόμενα ψυχὰι νεκῶων ψύχονται.

¹⁵³ 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 (cf. Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 10.8.3) (*OF* 48 II B = *OT* 96 K) equates Dionysus with Orpheus and claims that Orpheus brought Egyptian rites into the Bacchic mysteries.

¹⁵⁴ Burkert 1977: 6-10; see also Burkert 2004: 98; 2009: 105-106.

... 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, but to move forward to another spring, the spring of Memory, where guardians will ask for the correct 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.”¹⁵⁵

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.”¹⁵⁶ They compare Metis to the Egyptian goddess Maat, who appears in texts from as early as 2500 BC to as late as 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.¹⁵⁷ 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.” For example, in one text the goddess Nun advises the creator-god Atum to “kiss your daughter Maat” and to “eat of your daughter Maat.”¹⁵⁸ Whether or not there is an etymological connection between the names of Metis and Maat, Faraone and Teeter suggest that Hesiod was influenced by her depiction in royal iconography, so 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.¹⁵⁹ 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, which appear to have been a response to Hesiod. Whether or not it is a reference to the goddess Metis, the word μητις appears in the Derveni Theogony (DP 15.13), as well as Zeus’ epithet μητιετα (DP 15.6 = *OF* 10.3 B). In the Rhapsodies, Metis appears as one

¹⁵⁵ Burkert 2004: 87; *cf.* Burkert 2009: 94-95.

¹⁵⁶ Faraone & Teeter 2004: 178.

¹⁵⁷ Faraone & Teeter 2004: 179, 185-187.

¹⁵⁸ Faraone & Teeter 2004: 190-192. They compare Nun with Gaia, who advises Zeus to swallow Metis in Hesiod (*Theogony* 891), and they suggest that “the idea of eating or drinking Maat is ... implied over and over again” in Egyptian iconography that shows her being presented to various male deities. The idea is that by causing “Maat to rest in you,” the king or god “ensures that he always acts in a just manner and speaks truthfully.”

¹⁵⁹ Faraone & Teeter 2004: 178-181, 193-196.

of the many names of Phanes (*OF* 139-141 B).¹⁶⁰ Later she reappears as the daughter of Ocean (as in a fragment of Hesiod)¹⁶¹ to help Zeus outwit Kronos (*OF* 215 B). When Zeus swallows Phanes in the Rhapsodies, Metis appears again to have been 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 reads it, that Zeus “swallowed the phallus [of Ouranos], who first had ejaculated aither” (αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος).¹⁶² 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.”¹⁶³ This might help 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”:

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.¹⁶⁴

According to Burkert, Ouranos corresponds to Atum, who initiates creation by ejaculating; and Shu, being “brilliant Air,” corresponds to the aither that Ouranos ejaculates.¹⁶⁵ 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; other scholars translate the fragment, “first jumped into the aither.” This debate will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Finally, some fragments of Orphic theogonies have significant similarities with early Vedic texts. In Chapters Three and Four, I note that the narrative of Chronos and the

¹⁶⁰ In these fragments, Phanes is also called Protogonos, Erikepaios, Bromios, Zeus, Eros and other names.

¹⁶¹ Hesiod fr. 343.4-15 (M-W) = Chrysippus fr. 908.

¹⁶² Burkert 2004: 90-91; cf. Burkert 2009: 98: “der als erster den Himmelsglanz ejakuliert hatte.”

¹⁶³ Burkert 2004: 92; cf. Burkert 2009: 98-99.

¹⁶⁴ Burkert 2004: 93; cf. Burkert 2009: 100-101.

¹⁶⁵ Burkert notes a further Egyptian parallel with Zeus swallowing the phallus of Uranus in the Derveni Papyrus (cf. Zeus swallowing all of Phanes in the Rhapsodies), for Zeus then proceeds to recreate the universe by “thinking out” (μῆσατο, DP 23.3-4 = *OF* 16.1-2 B). This is similar to “the Monument of Memphitic Theology,” because “the text celebrates Ptah as the one who produces the gods ‘by heart and lips,’ that is, by thinking and speaking” (Burkert 2004: 95; cf. Burkert 2009: 103).

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.”¹⁶⁶ Like Chronos, Kala does not create the cosmos but, by means of a cosmic egg, produces the deity who will create the cosmos. Another Vedic parallel is seen in Chapter Five in my discussion of the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (see the text and translation in Appendix A), 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 recognized as parallel with different Vedic texts which describe the cosmos as the body of a deity in similar ways.¹⁶⁷

This review of ancient theogonic traditions and their parallels with Greek theogonies, particularly Hesiod, confirms Jenny 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. She adds to this the point that Hesiod’s work involves the “incorporation of previous theogonic traditions” into a more complete text that “synthesized various local traditions” and “thus became canonical,” causing “the disappearance of earlier or alternative versions.”¹⁶⁸ 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, and there were competing versions with both major and minor differences. 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.

¹⁶⁶ West 1983: 103-104; cf. West 1971: 30-33; see also: Lujan 2011: 85-91.

¹⁶⁷ West 1983: 240; Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 47-48; Reitzenstein & Schaeder (1965: 81-94) compare the hymn to a few Vedic texts; for example, *Atharvaveda* 5.32-34: “him whose pedestal is the earth, him whose body is the airspace, him who made heaven as home, to the highest Brahman <let there be> worship” (“Ihm, dessen Fußgestell die Erde, Ihm, dessen Rumpf der Luftraum ist, Ihm, der zum Haupt den Himmel machte, Dem höchsten Brahman <sei> Verehrung”).

¹⁶⁸ Clay 2003: 4; but see Fowler 2013: 3, who argues that the Derveni poem is a “response” to Hesiod, who “provides the basic framework” for Greek mythology.

The earliest Orphic theogonies were not later, alternative deviations from Hesiod, but contemporary, competing versions within this wider cluster of theogonic narratives. 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, which has left traces of an early stage of written composition in the fragments that we refer to as the Derveni and Eudemian Theogonies. These were not deviant, marginal versions that rebelled against Hesiod, but alternative versions that competed with Hesiod in the wider tradition of poetic theogony. One type of evidence that can be mustered to support this claim is the existence of parallels that exist between Orphic theogonies and older Near Eastern theogonies, but that do not appear in Hesiod. These parallels 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.

(c) Orphic Theogonies or Orphic Hymns? Theogonic Hymns

Somehow, out of this wider tradition of Near Eastern and Mediterranean theogonies, Hesiod's *Theogony* eventually 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 which, like Hesiod, tell the story of creation from the birth of the first gods to the present state of the cosmos. Their reconstructions of the Rhapsodies are impressive and convincing, since they have arranged large quantities of scattered fragments 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.¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰ Scholars have taken a reference to a “sixth generation” (ἕκτῃ ... γενεᾷ) in Plato to mean that the Eudemian Theogony continued through six generations, perhaps ending with Dionysus.¹⁷¹ 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 Three, I argue that all we know about the Eudemian Theogony was 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 all been referring to the same poem. In Chapter Four, 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 Five, 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.¹⁷² As my reading of each of these theogonies will demonstrate, 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. 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. Thus, it might seem reasonable to speak of Orphic theogonies as collections of hymns, even though they do not match precisely the typical format of Greek hymns. In the earliest periods, generic definitions were fluid, and the Greeks did not follow our modern

¹⁶⁹ 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.

¹⁷⁰ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 87 I, 89 I B = *OF* 58 K); see Chapter Four.

¹⁷¹ Plato, *Philebus* 66c (*OF* 25 B = *OF* 14 K); see Chapter Three.

¹⁷² Edmonds 2013: 148-159.

distinctions of genres, including the genres of theogonies and hymns.¹⁷³ Therefore, in this section I suggest that the best way to define generically these Orphic poems 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. 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 in ring composition 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. So 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 Two, 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.”¹⁷⁴ In the Prolegomena to 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.”¹⁷⁵ In other words, West defines a theogony as a poem that is like Hesiod’s

¹⁷³ Ford 2002: 10-12.

¹⁷⁴ West 1983: 68.

¹⁷⁵ West 1966: 1

Theogony. There are a few basic features of Hesiod's *Theogony* 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 primordial deity to the offspring of Zeus, and from the time when the universe was without form to the time when humans walked 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 the world 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 went 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 I shall call the Protogonos Theogony."¹⁷⁶ 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,"¹⁷⁷ and he assumes a formal arrangement similar to Hesiod. 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.¹⁷⁸ Chronos mates with Ananke to produce Aither and Chasm, and Chronos creates the cosmic egg (*OF* 109-119 B). Out of the egg the first king of the gods, Phanes, springs to life. He has many names, including Protogonos, because he is the "first-born" (*OF* 120-143 B). Phanes/Protogonos creates the gods, the universe, and the first race of people, and so becomes the first king of the universe.

¹⁷⁶ West 1983: 69.

¹⁷⁷ West 1983: 69.

¹⁷⁸ On the distinctions between primordial deities in the different Orphic theogonies, see Brisson 1995: 410-412.

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 king, 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 as a result, 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. Theogony* 492-506). At this point Zeus does something that he does not do in Hesiod:¹⁷⁹ he swallows Phanes and, along with him, all of the previous creation (*OF* 240-241 B). If we are to trust the order in which Bernabé arranges the Orphic fragments, then what came next in the Rhapsodies would have been a hymn to Zeus that appears in different forms at different times in the tradition, from the Derveni poem to the Rhapsodies. In the Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus he is glorified at the moment of re-creation (*OF* 243.1-2 B; *cf. OF* 14.1-2 B, *OF* 31 B):

Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυτος·
 Ζεὺς κεφαλῇ, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται.

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).

¹⁷⁹ It could be argued that the episode in Hesiod in which Zeus swallows Metis (*Theogony* 886-900) matches the swallowing of Phanes, since one of the many names for Phanes in the Rhapsodies is Metis (*OF* 139-141, 240 B). However, in Hesiod Metis is his first wife, but in the Rhapsodies Metis/Phanes is his great-grandfather: 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.”

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*,¹⁸⁰ 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 he 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 “first-born,” but it was Ouranos “who first ruled as king” (ὄς πρώτιστος βασιλεύσεν, 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 Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου (DP 16.4 = *OF* 12.1 B) as a direct reference to Protogonos, “[the body of] the Firstborn king, the reverend one.”¹⁸¹ As 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.”¹⁸²

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.¹⁸³ In the Rhapsodies, Rhea/Demeter gives birth to Persephone, with whom Zeus mates to produce Dionysus; and then follows 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

¹⁸⁰ West 1966: 18.

¹⁸¹ West 1983: 86-88. This is in contrast with Burkert’s reading of the Derveni Papyrus; see Chapter Two.

¹⁸² West 1983: 101.

¹⁸³ West 1983: 94.

poem represents one recension.”¹⁸⁴ 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/Protogonos-Night-Ouranos-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,¹⁸⁵ this does not justify using a later text as a source for an earlier one. For these reasons, other scholars have been more cautious. Brisson rejects West’s method of reconstructing the Protogonos Theogony based on the Rhapsodies, so he also 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; and he also views the Derveni and Eudemian Theogonies as identical, since both began with Night,¹⁸⁶ so he suggests five generations (Night-Protogonos-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus).¹⁸⁷ Bernabé has a different reading. Translating the phrase Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αιδοίου (DP 16.3 = *OF* 12.1 B) as “penis of the first-born king,”¹⁸⁸ he argues that this is the king Ouranos, the first-born son of Night, which leaves us with only four generations (Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus).¹⁸⁹ Although he admits that “it is possible that the poem stopped here,” Bernabé notes that there are topics he considers “fundamental” that are “equally absent,” such as eschatology and the story of Dionysus, so he allows the possibility that the story of Dionysus may have been included in the original Derveni poem. However, 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

¹⁸⁴ West 1983: 94-95.

¹⁸⁵ West 1983: 69.

¹⁸⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = *OF* 24 K).

¹⁸⁷ Brisson 1995: 399-400, 411-413.

¹⁸⁸ Bernabé 2007b: 114.

¹⁸⁹ Bernabé 2007b: 107-115.

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.¹⁹⁰

The third major weakness with West’s imagined Protogonos Theogony is a preconceived idea about what a theogony is. He assumed that the Protogonos Theogony was, like Hesiod’s *Theogony*, a lengthy narrative that continued from the beginning of the universe to the present creation, and that the Derveni poem was “an abridged version.”¹⁹¹ This would make the Protogonos Theogony, and by extension 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 interested 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.”¹⁹² 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 in a similar sense 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 perceived as being in power on Olympus (*Theogony* 1-115). So 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).¹⁹³ 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 is the process by which Zeus acquires and secures

¹⁹⁰ Bernabé 2007b: 122. All of this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

¹⁹¹ West 1983: 108.

¹⁹² Betegh 2004: 135-137.

¹⁹³ Neither is Hesiod always chronological in his genealogical sections, sometimes jumping forward in chronology in order to list the offspring of a particular deity. West points out that although “the order is basically chronological,” it departs from chronology if “the end of a branch is in sight,” so that “it is often followed to its end, instead of being deferred to the next generation” (West 1966: 37-38).

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,¹⁹⁴ and this is mirrored in both the Derveni poem and the Rhapsodies. As I argued above, this succession myth had predecessors in the Near East, and was passed on to the Greeks in an early period. According to West, the succession myth survived in a “continuous poetic tradition” that, despite its eastern origins, was a uniquely Greek tradition.¹⁹⁵ It was on the basis of his knowledge of this tradition that Hesiod composed his *Theogony*, so it is reasonable to conclude that the Derveni poem was written by someone who was familiar with the same general tradition.

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 the μάντιες (“experts at divination”) “may have recited [theogonic poetry in general] at certain sacrifices, like the Persian counterparts” whom Herodotus (1.132.3) claimed “[sang] a theogony” (ἐπαίδει θεογονίην) over a sacrifice; but he insists that Hesiod’s *Theogony* “is no incantation,” but “simply a poem.”¹⁹⁶ The Derveni poem, on the other hand, is a shorter poem which, as I argue in Chapter Two, 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,¹⁹⁷ 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 saying sound and lawful words” (ὕμνον [ὕ]γ[η] καὶ θεμ[ι]τὰ λέγο[ν]τα, 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” (ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ὑμνοῖς εἰρ[η]μένον, 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

¹⁹⁴ West 1966: 18.

¹⁹⁵ West 1966: 18-29.

¹⁹⁶ West 1966: 15-16. Based on “the eulogy of βασιλῆες” in *Theogony* 80-97, West also suggests that it might have been “recited at some special occasion, before a king or kings” (West 1966: 44).

¹⁹⁷ Most 1997: 118, 123, 126, 128, 130-131.

Orpheus.”¹⁹⁸ The words ἐν τοῖς Ὑμνοῖς do not specify that these are “other” (ἄλλοις) hymns; it simply says “in the hymns”; but the phrase does imply that there were more than one of these hymns, so it seems that the Derveni poem was part of a collection.

Therefore, there are indications in the text that the Derveni poem could be called a ὕμνος, but this raises the question of what ὕμνος means. Betegh is critical of this designation, calling it a “notoriously elusive category.”¹⁹⁹ 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,”²⁰⁰ though Furley and Bremer suggest that it might have had “connotations of praise or celebration.”²⁰¹ 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* 607a, Plato seems to make a distinction between “hymns to the gods and encomia to good men” (ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς), implying that hymns had this narrower sense of poems addressed to the gods. This distinction was solidified in the Hellenistic Period, when scholars began to classify hymns as specifically religious poetry.²⁰² 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.²⁰³ 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 that “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.²⁰⁴

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

¹⁹⁸ KPT 2006: 254, citing Plato, *Leg.* 829e1; Pausanias 9.27.2, 30.12.

¹⁹⁹ Betegh 2004: 137-138.

²⁰⁰ Betegh (2004: 137) cites *Odyssey* 8.429 and Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 709 as examples of this usage.

²⁰¹ Furley & Bremer 2001: 8-9.

²⁰² Furley 1995: 31-32; Furley & Bremer 2001: 9-12.

²⁰³ Betegh 2004: 137-138.

²⁰⁴ Betegh 2004: 138.

“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 at least the Classical Period.²⁰⁵ This rhetoric of prayer was most often expressed in a tripartite structure that can be seen in most typical Greek 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, attributes that sometimes are 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 seem to share in this tripartite structure, but concentrates only on narrative, it is not, strictly speaking, a hymn.²⁰⁶ However, despite Betegh’s objections, the “looser sense” of “exaltation of a certain god” describes the poem well. The poem summarizes a genealogy, but does not discuss a “whole race” of gods, for the focus of the poem is on one god, 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 the “dominant theme in hymnic celebration,”²⁰⁷ because 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. Likewise, as I argue in Chapter Six, the Orphic myth of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies enhances the Orphic myth of Zeus.

²⁰⁵ Furley & Bremer 2001: 50.

²⁰⁶ Furley & Bremer 2001: 52-61. Neither do the *Orphic Hymns* fit the tripartite structure well: Graf (2009: 173) points out that the *argumentum* is “somewhat deficient in the *Hymns*” – ironically deficient in the very section that is the focus of theogonies. For an example of a hymn that does follow the tripartite structure, see the Delphic hymn to Apollo discussed in Furley 1995: 33-35.

²⁰⁷ Furley & Bremer 2001: 18.

If the Derveni poem is a hymn, then it is less like the *Orphic Hymns* than the *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 hexameter rhythm, which was required for rhapsodic performance,²⁰⁸ but this does not cancel out their use as hymns, since they include, at least implicitly, a request for divine favour.²⁰⁹ 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 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 (perhaps 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.”²¹⁰ 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 adoration which ideally characterizes the worshipper” and “also denotes the god’s grace and favour gained by that adoration.”²¹¹

Therefore, I would suggest using the term “theogonic hymn” to describe the Derveni poem (and perhaps other Orphic theogonies) because, like a theogony, it narrates the basic succession myth that forms the nucleus of the theogonies contained in both Hesiod and (most modern reconstructions of) the Rhapsodies²¹² and, like a hymn, it is a poem that

²⁰⁸ For more on the meaning and importance of the word “rhapsodic,” see Chapter Five, section (a).

²⁰⁹ Furley & Bremer 2001: 43-44.

²¹⁰ Furley 1995: 40-43.

²¹¹ Furley & Bremer 2001: 61-62; see also: Furley 1995: 32.

²¹² West 1966: 18.

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 Two, 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 Chapters Three, Four, and Five, 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 the Rhapsodies quite possibly could have been 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, 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.

(d) 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 the same questions that exercised contemporary philosophers, so some fragments appear to reflect a worldview that was more current and more philosophical in its orientation than the mythical worldview of Hesiod. In this sense, Orphic poetry seems to exist somewhere in the middle of the spectrum between *μῦθος* and *λόγος*. It is a point of contact in 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 conversant 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 the Presocratic philosophers moved toward making more abstract arguments in philosophical prose, but Orphic poets continued to frame their discussions in the archaic form of mythical 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, although they did not depart from the traditional form of hexametric poetry.²¹³

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,²¹⁴ in order to reconstruct the basic narrative of the Rhapsodies. 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 Five – for example, Hermias' mention of three Nights has led to some confusion²¹⁵ – so it is crucial to take into

²¹³ See Chapter Three, section (c), and Chapter Five, section (g).

²¹⁴ 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.”

²¹⁵ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV, 147 II, 246 I, 248 II B = *OF* 99 K). Here we also see that Bernabé splits this passage into different fragments and scatters them across his chronological reconstruction of the Rhapsodies, in an attempt to account for three separate goddesses called Night.

account the metaphysical allegories applied by ancient authors. Therefore, much of Chapter Five will be occupied with clarifying the complex relationship between the Rhapsodic narrative and the Neoplatonic universe.

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,”²¹⁶ the line of distinction between μῦθος and λόγος might not have always been so clearly drawn. 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* (1-382) he spends the first few hundred lines talking about ethics and the human condition, topics that have always been of interest to philosophers. Presocratic philosophers were concerned with similar questions, but they 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.²¹⁷ 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,²¹⁸ Diogenes claimed that everything comes from air,²¹⁹ Heraclitus said it was fire,²²⁰ and Anaximander spoke of a “germ” (γόνιμον) that was separated “from the eternal” (ἐκ τοῦ αἰδίου).²²¹ 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 “climate of opinion” as Anaximander, another contender for the title of first prose author.²²² It was within this

²¹⁶ Vernant 1982 [1965]: 102.

²¹⁷ Guthrie 1967: 91-100; Finkelberg 1986: 321-331; Bernabé 2002c: 212.

²¹⁸ Thales fr. 11 A12, 14 D-K (Aristotle, *Met.* 983b6, *de caelo* 294a28); cf. Bernabé 2002c: 217-218.

²¹⁹ Diogenes fr. 64 A5 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 25.1).

²²⁰ Heraclitus fr. 22 B30-31 D-K (51, 53 Marcovich) (Clement, *Strom.* 5.104.1-3).

²²¹ 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 2002c: 215.

²²² Schibli 1990: 30-37; see Chapter Four, section (c); cf. Granger 2007: 135-163, who argues that it is rather a matter of Pherecydes influencing Anaximander.

climate of opinion that Theagenes of Rhegium began applying physical allegories to Homer, initiating an exegetical tradition that would eventually include the metaphysical allegories of philosophers like the Derveni author, the Stoics, and the later Neoplatonists.²²³

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 halfway point between mythical and philosophical thinking.²²⁴ But so is Empedocles, whose poetry contains both the mystical idea of reincarnation and the scientific idea of the four elements as “four roots” (στοιχεῖα τέτταρα);²²⁵ not to mention Pythagoras, whose followers were noted for their advancements in mathematics, though he himself was a mystic who talked about reincarnation.²²⁶ The line between mythical and philosophical thought was blurry, so authors like Empedocles and the Derveni author found value not in one or the other, but in the discourse between both. In Chapter Two, I discuss in detail the relationship between Presocratic philosophy and the Derveni author’s allegories, but for now what is important to note is that 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

²²³ Theagenes fr. 8 A2 D-K (Schol. B *Il.* 20.67); Richardson 1975: 65-81; West 1983: 78-80; Lambertson 1986: 12-22; Hawes 2014: 29-37.

²²⁴ See Burkert 1968: 93-104; Bernabé 2002c: 206; for more on this see Chapter Two.

²²⁵ 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, *Met.* A4, 985a31-33), 31 B6 D-K (Aetius 1.3.20), 31 B17 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 157.25). Zuntz (1971: 179-273) treated *Katharmoi* and *Physoi* as two separate poems, but argued that both were compatible and that Empedocles was influenced by the Pythagoreans. Wright (1981: 17-21, 57-76) believes that there were two works, *Katharmoi* and *Physoi*, but Inwood (2001: 6-20) argues that they were one poem, based on the recent discovery of a papyrus with verses that were thought to have come from both.

²²⁶ Burkert 1972: 83-93, 120-123, 158, 208. After Plato, Pythagoreanism seems to have split in two directions: the *acusmatici*, who had certain ideas about the soul and reincarnation; and the *mathematici*, who separated themselves from these mystical aspects and moved toward a more scientific system of philosophy.

in different ways.”²²⁷ 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 of 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 with myths 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 becoming uniquely Platonic. Plato himself was a *bricoleur*;²²⁸ and this was no less the case with his use of Orphic poetry. In the *Gorgias*, he attributes to “some Sicilian or Italian” (Σικελός τις ἢ Ἰταλικός, 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.²²⁹ 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, “but with the sixth generation cease the rhythmic song” (ἕκτη δ’ ἐν γενεᾷ ... καταπαύσατε κόσμον ἀοιδῆς),²³⁰ his point is not that there were six generations in the Eudemean 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 Eudemean Theogony but to present his own unique cosmogonic account through the words of Timaeus.²³¹ This Platonic account later became the foundation for Neoplatonic cosmology, which also made use of Orphic poetry but in a

²²⁷ Finkelberg 1986: 332-333.

²²⁸ See, for example, Edmonds’ discussion of Plato’s eschatological myth in *Phaedo* 107c-115a (Edmonds 2004: 221-237). Plato was critical of allegorical interpretation (Richardson 1975: 65-81).

²²⁹ 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; Long (1948: 49-55) argued that his source was Pythagorean.

²³⁰ Plato, *Philebus* 66c (*OF* 25 I B = *OF* 14 K).

²³¹ Plato, *Timaeus* 40e-41a (*OF* 21, 24 B = *OF* 16 K). On the other hand, he does explicitly refer to Orpheus as a source for Ocean and Tethys being the first to marry at: Plato, *Cratylus* 402b (*OF* 22 I B = *OF* 15 K).

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 also the composition of new Orphic poems, and 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 refers to the role of Apollo in bringing Dionysus back to life after his dismemberment by the Titans, and he equates Apollo with unification and Dionysus with multiplication in the great Stoic cosmogonic cycle of the creation and destruction of the universe.²³² 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” (Ζεὺς ἀρχὴ Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ’ ἐκ πάντα πέλονται), as equating Zeus with the primary, or superior, of “two causes” (δύο ... αἰτίας).²³³ In 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” (κατὰ τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς).²³⁴ However, as I argue in Chapter Three, section (c), 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 the Hieronyman Theogony as an attempt to make an Orphic theogony compatible with Stoic cosmology.²³⁵ The primordial substances of water and mud are similar to a fragment of

²³² Plutarch, *De E apud Delphos* 9.388e-389a (*OF* 613 II B); Pépin 1970: 307-308. As I note in Chapter Six, section (b), this allegory was passed on to the Neoplatonists, who also equated Dionysus with differentiation.

²³³ Plutarch, *de def. orac.* 48 p. 436d (*OF* 31 V B = *OF* 21 K); cf. Plutarch, *de def. orac.* 12 p. 415-416 (*OF* 258 II B = *OF* 200 K. See *OF* 31 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*; Plutarch’s use of πέλονται is a variant reading; most sources use τέτοκται; see Chapter Three, section (c) for more on this.

²³⁴ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.9.8 (*OF* 243 XIX B = *OF* 168 K); cf. West 1983: 218-220, who makes the same comparison.

²³⁵ West 1983: 182; Brisson 1995: 2912; see also: Herrero 2010: 33, 91.

Zeno that equates water and mud with Chaos in Hesiod.²³⁶ In Chapter Four I discuss the possibility that the Hieronyman Theogony was influenced by Stoicism, which raises the possibility of Stoic influence in the Rhapsodies if indeed the Rhapsodies were written later. West and Kingsley both argue that there are indications of Stoicism in the Rhapsodies²³⁷ and, 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.²³⁸ Although metaphysical speculation was were an important aspect of Plato's philosophy, it was not until the first century BC that the Middle Platonists began to revive metaphysical speculation as a key activity in the Academy. Plotinus (third century AD) is considered to be the first Neoplatonist because of his interest in metaphysics. His successors continued the practice of expanding and refining the Neoplatonic universe until it evolved into a vastly complex but coherent whole. After Plotinus came Iamblichus and Porphyry, both of them alive in the third century AD: Iamblichus brought out the ritual element of Neoplatonism by emphasizing the soul's quest to reunite with the One, while Porphyry developed the systemization of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system.²³⁹ Later Neoplatonists took their

²³⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = *OF* 54 K); Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3-4 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 75 II B = *OF* 57 K); Zeno fr. 1.29.17 *SVF* = Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 1.496-498a (44.4 Wendel); West 1983: 183; Bernabé *ad loc.*

²³⁷ West 1983: 225; Kingsley 1995: 124.

²³⁸ Brisson 1995: 43-103; Longo 2010: 616-629; Steel 2010: 630-653.

²³⁹ Chlup 2012: 9-21.

school in new directions by adding layers of complexity to this metaphysical system. An important departure was made away from Plotinus' idea that the philosopher could ascend from the human level to the divine: from Iamblichus onward, later Neoplatonists thought this was impossible because the boundaries between ontological levels were fixed.²⁴⁰ Immediately after Iamblichus and Porphyry there were not many Neoplatonic authors, but the school experienced a brief revival under the emperor Julian, until his death in AD 363. At that time the school floundered because of lack of funds and a Christian anti-Neoplatonic reaction, until the end of the fourth century, when the Platonic Academy was made secure by private funding and given a new impetus by Plutarch of Athens and his student Syrianus.²⁴¹

Syrianus is the first Neoplatonist who is particularly important to the study of Orphic literature. After the death of his predecessor Plutarch of Athens, Syrianus became head of the Platonic Academy in AD 432 and remained there until his death in about 437. He delivered lectures and wrote commentaries on Plato and Aristotle, but the only text of Syrianus that has survived (in an incomplete form) is his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. He is also known to have written a ten-book treatise called *The Agreement Between Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato and the Chaldean Oracles*, and this hypothesis of agreement was the basis for all allegorical readings of Orphic poetry by the later Neoplatonists.²⁴² Syrianus was an important and innovative thinker, but he is important not so much because of his extant work as because of his influence on Proclus, who preserves many of Syrianus' ideas in his own work, often acknowledging his teacher's contributions. One important example of this is the sub-dividing of the Neoplatonic universe into different ontological levels that can be identified with the deities who appear in the Orphic Rhapsodies (e.g., Intelligible, Intelligible-Intellective, Intellective): this was an idea that Syrianus introduced and Proclus developed.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Chlup 2012: 26-32. It was because of this perception that ritual played a large role in Neoplatonic practice, since it was through the intermediary of higher levels of the Neoplatonist metaphysical system that one could approach the One. These intermediaries were contacted through theurgy, which Chlup explains as "a ritual technique which combined procedures of magic and traditional religion with the aim of evoking the gods."

²⁴¹ Chlup 2012: 33-34.

²⁴² Longo 2010: 616-617; *BNP* s.v. Syrianus. The Greek title of his lost work is: Συμφωνία Ὀρφέως Πυθαγόρου Πλάτωνος πρὸς τὰ Λογία, βιβλία ι. For more on the *Chaldean Oracles*, see Lewy 1978 [1956]; Finamore & Johnston 2010: 161-173.

²⁴³ Longo 2010: 619-623.

Proclus (AD 412-485) was a close follower of Syrianus, having studied under him for fifteen years before his death in the late 430s. Proclus succeeded him as the head of the Platonic Academy and stayed in that position until his death. During his lengthy career, one in which the Academy flourished, Proclus developed his teacher's ideas and brought to the Neoplatonic metaphysical system a level of complexity and coherence that is truly mind-boggling. At the same time, he was deeply devout: he practised theurgical ritual diligently, wrote hymns, and regarded both Orpheus and Plato as divinely inspired.²⁴⁴ Proclus was a very prolific author, so more of his works are extant than any other Neoplatonist. In his *Elements of Theology* he explains the basic principles of the Neoplatonic system, and in his *Platonic Theology* he explains how this relates to Plato.²⁴⁵ But most of his extant work consists of commentaries to Platonic dialogues: his commentaries on the *Timaeus*, the *Cratylus*, the *Parmenides*, and the *Alcibiades* are especially important sources for the Orphic fragments, so they will be referred to frequently in this thesis. In these commentaries, Proclus expands upon Syrianus' idea that Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and the *Chaldean Oracles* are all in agreement with one another, and he extensively uses allegorical interpretations to demonstrate how they are in agreement. To this end, he frequently quotes Orphic poetry and the *Chaldean Oracles* and he is an important source for the fragments of both.

Hermias (also known as Hermeias), another student of Syrianus, was a contemporary of Proclus who taught in Alexandria. Damascius (*Vita Isodore 78*) leaves the impression that Hermias did not make any valuable contributions to Neoplatonic philosophy, but his teachings did not depart from Syrianus and his lectures on Plato's *Phaedrus* have been preserved. Some of the Orphic fragments come from this commentary, notably the mention of three Nights that I discuss in Chapter Five, section (d).²⁴⁶

Damascius, having lived from around AD 462 to sometime after 538, was the last head of the Platonic Academy in Athens from 515 to 529, when Justinian forced the school to shut down. After the death of Proclus in 485, his successors Marinus and Zenodotus oversaw an Academy in a state of decline, mostly because of internal disputes. But this

²⁴⁴ Steel 2010: 630-631; Chlup 2012: 35-37; *BNP* s.v. Proclus. For Proclus' hymns, see van der Berg 2001.

²⁴⁵ For *Elements of Theology*, see the edition of Dodds 1963, and for *Platonic Theology*, see the edition of Saffrey & Westerink (six volumes from 1968 to 1997).

²⁴⁶ *BNP* s.v. Hermeias.

changed in 515 when Damascius became head of the Academy and began to lead the school to prominence one last time as the philosophical centre of the empire.²⁴⁷ Although most of Damascius' works are lost, the four texts that are mostly extant are all important sources for the Orphic fragments. In *De Principiis*, Damascius discusses first-principles at length, and near the end of the text he summarizes the primordial deities of a long list of different traditions, including Near Eastern cosmogonic myths and three different Orphic theogonies (Eudemian, Hieronyman, Rhapsodic). His other three texts are commentaries on Platonic dialogues – the *Phaedo*, *Philebus*, and *Parmenides* – but as van Riel points out, these are not so much about Plato as “commentaries on the commentaries.”²⁴⁸ In subtle ways Damascius critiques the work of his predecessors, especially Proclus, and at times he finds inconsistencies in their metaphysical systems. The best example of this is the way he reads the Hieronyman Theogony, as we will see in Chapters Four and Five, where he suggests an interpretation that in his opinion is an improvement upon Proclus' reading of the Rhapsodies.²⁴⁹

The life of Olympiodorus constitutes evidence that, although the Platonic Academy was shut down in AD 529, Neoplatonism continued to operate in Alexandria, where Olympiodorus (born before 505) became head of the Platonic school in 541 and was still active in 565. Not much is known about his life, and none of his extant commentaries were actually written by him, but they consist of his students' lecture notes. There are five of these commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories* and *Meteorologica*, and on Plato's *Alcibiades*, *Gorgias*, and *Phaedo*.²⁵⁰ From these, a passage of Olympiodorus' *Phaedo* commentary will become crucial in Chapter Six, where I discuss his allegorical interpretation of the myth of Dionysus and the Titans in the Rhapsodies. Olympiodorus did not contribute as much as Proclus or Damascius did to the field of metaphysics, but his originality can be seen in his treatment of ethical questions.²⁵¹ For example, he brings the myth of Dionysus into a

²⁴⁷ Van Riel 2010: 667-669; Chlup 2012: 44; *BNP* s.v. Damascius.

²⁴⁸ Van Riel 2010: 671.

²⁴⁹ See Chapter Four, section (b), and Chapter Five, section (c). A fuller discussion of the ways in which Damascius critiques his predecessors (and a longer list of examples) can be found in van Riel 2010: 671-694.

²⁵⁰ Opsomer 2010: 697-698; *BNP* s.v. Olympiodorus.

²⁵¹ Opsomer 2010: 702.

discussion of suicide, suggesting that the reason why we should not commit suicide is because of our divine Dionysiac nature.²⁵²

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 everything (the Form that contains unity undifferentiated) and the Many things that exist as physical manifestations of the Forms.²⁵³ 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).²⁵⁴ What all of this means is explained in Chapter Five, where we see how comprehensively the Neoplatonists incorporated the Orphic gods into their metaphysical system: a wide variety of deities, episodes, and visual motifs were interpreted allegorically, each as some part 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: Kern remarks that “the Neoplatonics think everything is contained in triads,”²⁵⁵ Linforth calls their allegories “subtle and speculative fancies which pass beyond the bounds of reason,”²⁵⁶ and West dismisses Proclus’ interpretation of one fragment as “simply Neoplatonist construction.”²⁵⁷ Sometimes the Neoplatonists obscure the meaning of the poem, making it difficult to

²⁵² See Chapter Six, section (b).

²⁵³ Plato’s idea of Forms is well known and does not need to be explained in much detail here – of course, this is the idea that everything we perceive exists because it participates in a non-material Form (*idea*); for example, if the table is round, that is because it participates in roundness; see Plato’s *Meno*, *Phaedo*, etc. – but for the sake of clarity, whenever in this dissertation I refer to the precise concept of Platonic Forms, I capitalize the word “Form.”

²⁵⁴ A note on terminology: in both my writing and my translations I capitalize precise Neoplatonic terms like “Intellect” where it denotes a specific level of the metaphysical system: so, for example, where a Neoplatonist refers to νοητός νοῦς as a metaphysical term, I translate it “Intelligible Intellect,” but where a fragment of Orphic poetry mentions νοῦς, I simply translate it “mind.”

²⁵⁵ Kern 1888a: 5: “ut Neoplatonici omnia triadibus contineri putant...”

²⁵⁶ Linforth 1941: 320.

²⁵⁷ West 1983: 232.

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?²⁵⁸ 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.²⁵⁹

Sometimes it is unclear where the myth ends and the allegory begins, and this is because to the Neoplatonists there is no distinction: it is not that Zeus represents the Demiurge, but that Zeus *is* the Demiurge. In this way, the Neoplatonic worldview is quite different from that of modern scholars who tend to separate myth from interpretation, ritual from philosophy; but the fact that the ancients do not separate these is the very key to understanding the Neoplatonic universe. Perhaps a better example of this than Zeus swallowing Phanes would be the story of Dionysus being dismembered by the Titans. As I discuss in Chapter Six, section (b), the Neoplatonists interpret this myth with reference to the human soul. The Titans are forces of differentiation, which affects human souls by causing them to be separated from cosmic soul (i.e., all souls undifferentiated as one) and attached to physical bodies. As the Titans cause the cosmic soul to be differentiated, so Apollo causes it to be reunified; and Dionysus represents the cosmic soul itself, being dismembered (procession) and brought back together again (reversion). This is not merely *illustrated* by the anthropogony in which humans are born from the ashes of the Titans; rather, it *is* the anthropogony. By the dispersal of cosmic soul into the universe, individual human souls are attached to bodies. The ritual implication of this is that Dionysus is the deity to which a theurgist might turn in order to begin the process of reunifying the individual soul with the divine. The individual soul is incapable of reaching the One, but Dionysus as Encosmic Intellect is the first step on the ladder of metaphysical sub-levels that eventually leads to the One. This is why a devout theurgist like Proclus might perform rituals honouring Dionysus: in his worldview, Dionysus did not merely represent a

²⁵⁸ In Chapter Five, section (d), I discuss how modern scholars have attempted to reconcile these three Nights, but I argue that there is just one goddess called Night in the Rhapsodies.

²⁵⁹ For more on this, see Chapter Five, section (f).

metaphysical concept, but continued to exist as a deity, accessible through ritual because of, not despite, the metaphysical concept.²⁶⁰

With reference to this practice of allegorically interpreting an Orphic poem and then, based on that allegorical understanding, performing rituals in honour of the deity in the poem, we might speak of a type of Neoplatonic Orphism, or a Neoplatonic approach to Orphism. This is distinct from previous manifestations of Orphic thought and practice not only because it is later and is based on Neoplatonic allegory, but also because of the general attitude the Neoplatonists had toward Orpheus. In the opinions of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and other earlier Greek authors, Orpheus was the earliest of poets, and because of his antiquity he was considered one of the most important poets, authoritative in matters concerning the gods. To the Neoplatonists, however, the authority of Orpheus reached a new level, so that now he was not merely one of the most ancient poets, but the divinely inspired poet whose poetry represented the entire Greek tradition. This approach to Orpheus was in part a response to Christian apologists: if Orpheus was a divinely inspired prophet, then his poems must be inspired scripture, so indeed there were canonical texts with which the Pagans could defend themselves against the Christians.²⁶¹ After all, the historical context of Proclus, Damascius, and Olympiodorus was a changing world. Damascius was the last head of the Athenian Academy before it was closed in AD 529 and thus one of the last representatives of institutional Paganism in the Greek world.²⁶² In many ways, the Neoplatonists were the final defenders of the Pagan tradition.

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

²⁶⁰ For the history of theurgy, see Dodds 1951: 283-290. Theurgy was a form of ritual practice based on the *Chaldean Oracles*. The first θεουργός was Julianus (second century AD). See Chlup 2012: 30-32, 168-185 for more on theurgy and how it relates to Proclean metaphysics: “theurgy played a part in the ascent of the soul” (p. 173); according to Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.6.9, 6.7.34) “unification was the ultimate aim,” but to Proclus unification “takes place by degrees” (pp. 174-175). According to Iamblichus (*De myst.* 5.21.228.16-229.7; 5.22.230.15-17), “ascent to higher divinities is only possible through the lower ones” (p. 181); so to Proclus, “the study of poetry ... [is] a part of his larger theurgic project” (p. 185). This is a more refined view than Dodds 1951: 291, who describes theurgy as “magic applied to a religious purpose” with procedures “broadly similar to those of vulgar magic.” This way of seeing a deity in both allegorical and personal terms is similar to Cleanthes in his *Hymn to Zeus*; see Chapter Three, section (c).

²⁶¹ Edmonds 2013: 13-47 explains this well.

²⁶² Brisson 1995: 158-159. Chlup (2012: 184) calls Neoplatonist theurgy “the last stronghold of paganism amidst the increasingly Christian world of late antiquity.”

interpreted Orpheus and the Orphic Rhapsodies.²⁶³ By allegorically interpreting Orphic poems in their Plato commentaries, the Neoplatonists preserved the vast majority of the Orphic fragments: 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 an allegory 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 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.²⁶⁴

For this reason, I devote large portions of Chapters Five and Six to explaining, level by level and fragment by fragment, how the Neoplatonists used the Rhapsodies as allegories for particular metaphysical concepts. The result is the discovery of a rich set of connections between the Rhapsodic narrative and the Neoplatonic universe (the presentation of which itself is merely a survey). The Neoplatonists did not randomly map out these correspondences between Orphic myths and the different levels of their metaphysical system, but found episodes, themes, and motifs in the Orphic poems that provided them with vivid and memorable images by which they could understand and explain complex abstract concepts. So, for example, the best way of visualizing the idea of one entity containing all of the Forms in an undifferentiated state is the image of the cosmic egg; and the best way of understanding the relationship between the Paradigm (Intelligible Intellect) and the Demiurge (Intellective Intellect) is through the image of Zeus swallowing Phanes. Neoplatonic allegory is worthy of further consideration because, as strange as their

²⁶³ This is suggested by Edmonds 2013: 30-59.

²⁶⁴ Brisson 1995: 43-103. On the other hand, Chlup 2012 explains well the Proclean system of metaphysics, but simply presents a list of correspondences (pp. 125-127) largely based on Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485, without going into detail about how the metaphysics apply to the poetry.

ideas sound to modern minds, their system was remarkably coherent, and by far the most comprehensive ancient interpretation of the Orphic Rhapsodies.²⁶⁵

The allegorical interpretation of the Derveni author is much 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 milieu 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 hexametric poetry. 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 referred to the Eudemian Theogony briefly but used it to achieve his own ends; Plutarch applied Stoic allegory to certain episodes of Orphic myth at about the same time that Stoicism seems to have influenced the Hieronyman Theogony; and the Neoplatonists developed an extraordinarily 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 just as important to the study of Orphism as reconstructing the poems themselves.

²⁶⁵ In fact, Syrianus wrote a commentary on the Rhapsodies, now lost. Proclus always wanted to write a commentary on the Rhapsodies, but for some reason was never able to (Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 27; Brisson 1995: 49-51; Chlup 2012: 48-50).

Chapter Two – 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 to use the papyrus as a springboard for raising certain questions that apply not only to the Derveni Papyrus itself, but also to the other Orphic theogonies that are discussed in subsequent chapters. First, the Derveni Papyrus is particularly useful for studying the relationship between text and ritual since the first six columns appear to discuss a ritual, or certain ritual actions, that might be related to the poem on which the Derveni author comments in columns 7-26. In this chapter I suggest that the Derveni Theogony might have been performed as a component 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, including Bronze Age eastern myths and Hesiod's *Theogony*. Third, there is the issue of allegorical interpretation. The Derveni author presents his argument as a commentary on an Orphic poem, which he interprets through allegory, along the lines of Presocratic cosmology. This should lead us to approach the Derveni author's interpretations with caution but, depending upon whether we view the Derveni author as a critic of Orphic ritual specialists or as one of these specialists himself, his allegories might suggest that exegesis was an integral part of Orphic practice, at least for some people.

(a) The Papyrus on the Pyre

The Derveni Papyrus was discovered in January 1962, when a road construction project unearthed a group of six graves in a mountain pass called Derveni (after δερβένι, a

Modern Greek word meaning “defile” or “glen”),¹ twelve kilometers north-west 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 metal-ware. 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.²

It was in the remains of the funeral pyre at tomb A that Greek archaeologist Petris Themelis discovered the carbonized remains of a papyrus scroll.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ Immediately after the Derveni Papyrus was discovered in 1962 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 200 fragments using static electricity.⁶ The fragments were immediately encased in glass to protect them, some of them in random order, but they are

¹ KPT 2006: 1.

² Betegh 2004: 56-58; KPT 2006: 1-4.

³ Betegh 2004: 56-58; KPT 2006: 1-4.

⁴ According to Most (1997: 117), the scroll was preserved by a burning log. According to West (1983: 76), the scroll was preserved because “it lay away from the centre of the fire.”

⁵ Typically, the climate in Greece is not as conducive to preserving papyrus scrolls as the sands of Egypt, so the Derveni Papyrus was an extraordinary discovery: it is one of the oldest literary papyri ever found, but even more uniquely, it was actually found in Greece (Most 1997: 117). It is the oldest *literary* papyrus written in Greek but, technically, according to KPT (2006: 9), the oldest Greek papyrus is “the order of general Peukestas (331-323 BC).”

⁶ Betegh 2004: 59.

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.⁷ 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.⁸ This means that the Orphic poem discussed in the papyrus must have been older yet, so Bernabé suggests that it “must be prior to 500 BC.”⁹

Despite the immediate interest that such a rare text obviously 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.¹⁰ So in 1982 an anonymous, unofficial edition of the Derveni Papyrus, with twenty-two columns, was published in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (ZPE)*, and despite its inaccuracies this was what most scholars used for the next decade.¹¹ 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.¹² Since then, better editions of the Derveni Papyrus have appeared. Janko published an “interim text” in *ZPE* as a temporary solution,¹³ and Betegh published a text and translation in his book about the Derveni Papyrus.¹⁴ Bernabé included the

⁷ KPT 2006: 5-6.

⁸ KPT 2006: 8-10.

⁹ Bernabé 2007b: 99.

¹⁰ Betegh 2004: 62; KPT 2006: 6.

¹¹ Anonymous, 1982, “Der Orphische Papyrus Von Derveni,” *ZPE* 47: 1-12; see Betegh 2004: 62-63; Burkert (2014: 113-114) finally clarified that Reinhold Merkelbach, editor of *ZPE* at the time, published the text at the suggestion of Burkert himself, at a time when distribution of the text was “limited to private copying,” while he and a few others were still attempting to piece together the text one column at a time.

¹² The “provisional” English translation is in Laks and Most 1997: 9-22, and the first six columns are presented in Tsantsanoglou 1997: 93-128.

¹³ Janko 2002: 1-62.

¹⁴ Betegh 2004: 1-55.

Derveni Papyrus with his recent edition of the Orphic fragments,¹⁵ a year after the publication of the ‘official’ *editio princeps*, which was finally published in 2006 by Kouremenos, Parássoglou, and Tsantsanoglou.¹⁶ 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.

(b) 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 is debated, and the issue is complicated by the inclusion of certain Doric features.¹⁷ 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,¹⁸ Stesimbrotus of Thasos,¹⁹ or Euthyphro.²⁰ 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.”²¹ 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 and Diogenes of Apollonia, but most conspicuous is Heraclitus, whom the Derveni author cites and mentions by name (DP 4.5-9). The last section of this chapter, which examines the Derveni author’s cosmology, will discuss in more detail the influence

¹⁵ Bernabé 2007b: 171-269.

¹⁶ KPT 2006. Since then, more advancements have been made in the reconstruction of the first two columns; see Bernabé 2014.

¹⁷ West 1983: 77; Janko 1997: 62-63; KPT 2006: 11.

¹⁸ Janko (1997: 70-93) argues in favour of Diogenes of Apollonia, a student of Anaxagoras. The primary similarity between the Derveni author and Anaxagoras, as well as Diogenes, is the idea of Air/Mind as Zeus. Janko (2001: 1-15) later suggested Diagoras as a possible author.

¹⁹ Burkert 1986: 1-5.

²⁰ Euthyphro is suggested by Kahn (1997: 55-63), because of the apparent influence of Anaxagoras and Heraclitus on both, and because of his method of etymologizing names of gods, which is similar to the Derveni author’s practice.

²¹ Most (1997: 118) finds it “disheartening” to see scholars identify the author based on individual passages that do not take the whole papyrus into account, and KPT (2006:59) consider the attempt to identify the author “an exercise of rather low epistemic value.”

of Presocratic philosophers on the Derveni author's thinking. It is clear that he proposes a cosmology that is not identical to any one Presocratic philosopher, but contains ideas found in a few different philosophers. For now, it is enough to recognize the Derveni author within his historical context, as someone whose viewpoint was 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.²²

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:

ἔστι δὲ ξ[ένη τις ἠ] πόησις / [κ]αὶ ἀνθρώ[ποις] αἰνι[γμ]ατώδης, [κε]ἶ
[Ὀρφεὺ]ς αὐτ[ὸ]ς / [ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμ]ατα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[τι]ν
δὲ / [μεγ]άλα. ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀ[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου / [ἀ]εὶ μέχρι οὗ
[τελε]υταίου ῥήματος.

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.²³

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[ίγμ]ατα) and “great things in riddles” ([ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[τι]ν δὲ [μεγ]άλα) reveals something of his attitude toward the text. Tsantsanoglou suggested the conjecture [ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμ]ατα (“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.”²⁴ The Derveni author had no interest in this type of

²² Janko 1997: 61-94; Betegh 2004: 278-323; KPT 2006: 28-44. Allegorical interpretation of Homer began with Theagenes of Rhegium (c. 525 BC), who interpreted the gods as allegories of physical forces; see Theagenes fr. 8 A2 D-K (Schol. B *Il.* 20.67); West 1983: 79-82; Janko 2001: 2; Ford 2002: 67-71. Ford (2002: 72) says that the word ἀλληγορία was “first attested among rhetoricians of the late Hellenistic age” and was “used to designate a broad range of nonliteral expression.” Richardson (1975: 66-67) says that in Plato's time allegorical interpretation was called ὑπόνοια (“under-meaning”), which was “not allegory in the modern sense,” but could “include any interpretation which disregarded the obvious literal sense of a passage in favour of a more subtle way of taking the words.” The Derveni Papyrus represents a “dual tendency” because it “contains a mixture of allegorical interpretation with etymology and the explanation of glosses.” Referring to the Derveni Papyrus, Ford (2002: 73-74) says that αἶνος or αἶνιγμα were the “terms in which to discuss what was eventually called allegory,” and αἶνιγμα is the word used by the Derveni author.

²³ DP 7.4-8.

²⁴ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 121.

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. Although he does not explicitly say so in the first six columns, 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.²⁵ The emerging consensus appears to favour the latter: the Derveni author 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.²⁶ He is critical of anyone who practises or observes the ritual or listens to the words of the poem without adequate knowledge of their meaning. He criticises those who take the ritual and poem at face value, but do not understand their deeper meanings – meanings that he believes he can supply through his own allegorical interpretation. This is the mindset behind DP 20.1-12:²⁷

5 ἀνθρώπω[ν ἐν] πόλεσιν ἐπιτελέσαντες [τὰ ἱ]ερά εἶδον,
 ἔλασσόν σφας θαυμάζω μὴ γινώσκειν· οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε
 ἀκοῦσαι ὁμοῦ καὶ μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα· ὅσοι δὲ παρὰ τοῦ
 τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, οὗτοι ἄξιοι θαυμάζεσθαι
 καὶ οἰκτε[ί]ρεσθαι· θαυμάζεσθαι μὲν ὅτι δοκοῦντες
 10 πρῶτον ἢ ἐπιτελέσαι εἰδήσειν ἀπέρχονται ἐπι-
 τελέσαντες πρὶν εἰδέναι οὐδ’ ἐπανερόμενοι ὥσπερ
 ὡς εἰδότες τέων εἶδον ἢ ἤκουσαν ἢ ἔμαθον· [οἰ]κτε[ί]ρεσθαι δὲ
 ὅτι οὐκ ἀρκεῖ σφιν τὴν δαπάνην προαηλωῦσθαι, ἀλλὰ
 10 _____ καὶ τῆς γνώμης στερόμενοι πρὸς ἀπέρχονται,
 πρὶν μὲν τὰ [ἱ]ερά ἐπιτελέσαι ἐλπίζον[τε]ς εἰδήσειν,
 ἐπ[ιτελέσ]αντ[ε]ς δὲ στερηθέντες κα[ὶ τῆς] ἐλπ[ί]δος ἀπέρχονται.

²⁵ On one extreme is West (1983: 108-113), who suggests that the Derveni Papyrus was composed for an Ionian Bacchic group to explain one of its rites, and on the other extreme is Henrichs (1984a: 255), who views the Derveni author as “non-Orphic or even anti-Orphic.” Henrichs argues that the Derveni author’s primary interests are philosophical, and that he is critical of Greek cult: “He uses basic cultic institutions ... as examples to illustrate the difference between the scientist and the ritual expert, or between factual knowledge and religious belief.”

²⁶ For example, see Most 1997: 119-125; Janko 2001: 2; Betegh 2004: 81-82, 364-365; Edmonds 2008: 16-39; Graf 2014: 74-75.

²⁷ Text and translation: KPT 2006, with slight modifications.

[As for those who believe that they learned] when they witnessed the sacred things [or rites]²⁸ 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. It is the second group at which he wonders and which he pities.

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” (οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἀκοῦσαι ὁμοῦ καὶ μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα). This is comparable to a couple of fragments of Heraclitus, which also criticise those who participate in rituals without understanding them.²⁹ Kouremenos takes [τὰ ἱερὰ 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 ὀρᾶν τὰ ἱερὰ means “to be initiated.”³⁰ Mentioned along with τὰ λεγόμενα which are heard (ἀκοῦσαι) in line 3, this passage seems to refer to both the actions performed (δρῶμενα) and the words spoken (λεγόμενα) in a ritual performed publicly, “[together with other] people in the cities” (ἀνθρώπων ἐν πόλεσιν).³¹ The people referred to in the Derveni Papyrus are not merely passive observers, for they “see the sacred things

²⁸ It is unclear whether [τὰ ἱερὰ (“sacred things”) refers to rites performed or sacred objects used in the rites; KPT (*ad loc.*) suggest that [τὰ ἱερὰ might refer to sacred objects used in the rites.

²⁹ Heraclitus fr. 22 B1 D-K (1 Marcovich) (Sextus, *adv. math.* 7.132): “people always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it” (ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον); fr. 22 B17 D-K (3 Marcovich) (Clem. *Strom.* 2.8): “for neither do the many understand these things, whoever comes across them, nor having learned to they know, but they seem to themselves [to have learned]” (οὐ γὰρ φρονέουσι τοιαῦτα πολλοί, ὁκόσοι ἐγκυρεῦσιν, οὐδὲ μαθόντες γινώσκουσιν, ἑωυτοῖσι δὲ δοκέουσι).

³⁰ Burkert 1982: 5; KPT 2006: 233-234.

³¹ KPT 2006: 234-235. They make reference to Pausanias (2.37.2), who describes “the things spoken over the things done” (τὰ ... λεγόμενα ἐπὶ τοῖς δρωμένοις) in the mystery rites at Phlya.

while performing them” (ἐπιτελέσαντες [τὰ ἱερά] εἶδον). Kouremenos also thinks of the sacred items that were used in initiation ritual, such as the items in the *cista mystica* of the Eleusinian mysteries, but he suggests that the phrase ὄρᾶν τὰ ἱερά can refer to all phases of a mystery rite in which the initiate participates in the ritual performance, including the revelation of these items.³² The Eleusinian mysteries are an 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.

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” (παρὰ τοῦ τέχνην ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά, 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” (δαπάνην, 20.9), but also “deprived even of their belief” (καὶ τῆς γνώμης στερόμενοι, 20.10). Whereas before, they were “expecting to acquire knowledge” (ἐλπίζον[τε]ς εἰδήσειν, 20.11), after participating in the professional priests’ rites without bothering to ask questions, they go away “devoid even of [this] expectation” (στερηθέντες καὶ τῆς ἐλπί[δος], 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

³² KPT 2006: 233; Graf (2014: 68-71) makes a similar argument.

passage, scholars often invoke Plato’s description of this class of priest in the *Republic* (2.364b-365a), which describes “begging priests and fortune-tellers going to the doors of rich men” (ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντιες ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες) to perform ritual services for a fee.³³ Burkert has labelled 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 disdain.³⁴ 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”). Plato 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”³⁵ or “a bunch of books by Musaeus and Orpheus” (βίβλων δὲ ὄμαδον ... Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως), but they also “bring in [other] poets as witnesses” (μάρτυρας ποιητὰς ἐπάγονται). 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” (καθ’ ὧς θυηπολοῦσιν). Plato points out that they persuade “not only private citizens but also cities” (οὐ μόνον ἰδιώτας ἀλλὰ καὶ πόλεις) 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 individuals who pay for professional expertise, and argue that hiring these specialists leads people astray; most importantly, both mention

³³ Linforth 1941: 77-85, 101-104; Parker 1983: 299-307; West 1983: 21; Obbink 1997: 47; KPT 2006: 235. Text: OCT; translation mine.

³⁴ 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.* Also, for example, see the Hippocratic text *On the Sacred Disease* 1, and Euripides, *Hippolytus* 948-957. Edmonds (2013: 111-123) argues that in fifth-century Athens, Orphic literature was not the only form of writing that was treated with disdain, since writing was a new technology that was approached at first with both disdain and wonder, in whatever field it was used, including medicine, science, and indeed ritual.

³⁵ The translation “hubbub of books” (West 1983: 23) has become common parlance among Orphic scholars as a way of referring to the collections of mythical and/or ritual texts that were supposedly owned by *orpheotelestai*.

the use of texts by Orpheus. This suggests that the Derveni author’s attitude toward the *orpheotelestai* is similar to Plato’s. This is how Kouremenos reads the Derveni Papyrus, arguing 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.”³⁶ In Kouremenos’ view, if the *orpheotelestai* were asked to give a better explanation of their work, then they would “certainly fail” to do so, and their expertise would be “unmasked for the pure charlatanry it is.”³⁷ If their customers had asked questions, then “they would have gotten no convincing and coherent answers,” and they would have “realized” that “there is no such field” as expertise in ritual matters.³⁸

Kouremenos argues that the Derveni author’s attitude is similar to Heraclitus, who criticizes people for praying to statues, “not understanding what gods or heroes are” (οὐ τι γινώσκων θεοὺς οὐδ’ ἥρωας οἵτινές εἰσι).³⁹ Other scholars, such as Janko, mention this fragment of Heraclitus along with another, which appears to be even more scathing:⁴⁰

τίσι δὴ μαντεύεται Ἡ. ὁ Ἐφέσιος; νυκτιπόλοις, μάγοις, βάκχοις, λήναις, μύσταις· ... τὰ γὰρ νομιζόμενα κατ’ ἀνθρώπους μυστήρια ἀνιερωστὶ μνεῦνται.

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.

However, Janko reads both Heraclitus and the Derveni author as individuals who do not criticize mystery rites in and of themselves; rather, they criticize people who participate in these rites without properly understanding them.⁴¹ Janko argues that the Derveni author was a ritual expert himself, who “sought to reconcile” traditional beliefs about the gods with rational explanation, and he agrees with four “deductions” made by West: (1) “it was these religious interests that led to his acquaintance with the Orphic poem;” (2) “he was himself one of the initiates whose ritual acts he knows and interprets;” (3) “the Orphic poem

³⁶ KPT 2006: 237-238.

³⁷ KPT 2006: 240.

³⁸ KPT 2006: 241-242.

³⁹ KPT 2006: 240; Heraclitus fr. 22 B5 D-K (86 Marcovich) (Aristocritus, *Theosophia* 68 (Buresch *Klaros* p. 118), Origen, *c. Cels.* 7.62).

⁴⁰ Janko 2001: 4; Heraclitus fr. 22 B14 D-K (87 Marcovich) (Clement, *Protr.* 22); see also: Obbink 1997: 52-53; Marcovich *ad loc.*; it is uncertain how much of this is Heraclitus and how much is Clement.

⁴¹ Janko 2001: 4.

may have been a sacred text of theirs;” and (4) “perhaps he was writing for them, to introduce them to a Diogenean cosmology in which he had been instructed elsewhere.”⁴² The Derveni author does not seem to have been part of a group, as Janko and West imply, but these deductions suggest that he was an *orpheotelestes* who wished to demonstrate his own superior expertise against others within his field. He has been compared to Empedocles, who discusses both mystical visions and physical cosmology in the same poem.⁴³ Another passage of Plato is often invoked to clarify the Derveni author’s intentions:⁴⁴ 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” (τῶν ἱερέων τε καὶ τῶν ἱερείων ὅσοις μεμέληκε περὶ ὧν μεταχειρίζονται λόγον οἷοις τ’ εἶναι διδόναι). 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 argued that one of the aims of the Derveni Papyrus is to promote the author’s expertise in his τέχνη as greater than his rivals.⁴⁵

This view appears more probable in the light of columns 5-6. In column 20 the Derveni author criticises his rivals because of their inferior understanding of the poem, the λεγόμενα of the ritual; 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:

χρησ[τ]ηριάζον[ται] ...

5 αὐτοῖς πάριμεν [εἰς τὸ μα]ντεῖον ἐπερ[ω]τήσ[οντες,]
 τῶν μαντευομένων [ἐν]εκεν, εἰ θέμι[. . .] . . ἠδα[τὰ
 ἐν Ἄδου δεινὰ⁴⁶ τί ἀπιστοῦσι; οὐ γινώσ[κοντες ἐ]γύπνια
 οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων πραγμάτων ἕκαστ[ον], διὰ ποίων ἄν
 παραδειγμάτων π[ι]στεύουσιν; ὑπό [τε γὰρ] ἄμαρτ[ί]ης
 καὶ [τ]ῆς ἄλλης ἠδον[ῆ]ς νενικημέν[οι, οὐ] μανθ[άνο]υσιν
 10 [οὐδὲ] πιστεύουσι.

⁴² Janko 2001: 5, citing West 1983: 81.

⁴³ Betegh 2004: 370-372.

⁴⁴ Funghi 1997: 36-37; West 1997b: 83; Betegh 2004: 351; KPT (2006: 239-240) mention this passage too, but still argue that the Derveni author would find this account fraudulent. Betegh (2004: 353) calls the Derveni Papyrus “a polemic among representatives of the same craft.”

⁴⁵ Obbink 1997: 53-54; Betegh 2004: 351-358; Edmonds 2008: 33-35.

⁴⁶ Here I depart from the edition of KPT 2006, who suggest ἄρ’ Ἄδου δεινὰ. Betegh printed ἐν Ἄδου δεινὰ, which Bernabé supplemented: τὰ / ἐν Ἄδου δεινὰ. This seems to be the best reading, because the substantive adjective δεινὰ makes more sense with the article τὰ: “the terrible things.”

... 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.⁴⁷

The first thing to note in this passage is that the Derveni author refers to consultation on behalf of others in the first person plural: “for them *we* enter the oracle” (αὐτοῖς πάριμεν [εἰς τὸ μα]γτεῖον). In doing so, he associates himself with the ritual actions he is discussing, and with other people who enter oracles.⁴⁸ Also, in contrast with column 20, here it is not only a lack of understanding that he criticises, but also a lack of belief caused by both “error” (ἄμαρτ[ί]ης) and “pleasure” (ἡδον[ῆ]ς). He associates not believing in the horrors of Hades with “not knowing (the meaning of) dreams” (οὐ γινώσ[κοντες ἐ]γύπνια), suggesting that the reason for their disbelief in divination is a lack of knowledge: “they neither learn nor believe” (οὐ μάγθ[άνο]υσιν [οὐδὲ] πιστεύουσι), supposedly because belief is dependent upon knowledge. Considering this passage of column 5 along with column 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 criticising this practice as an outsider, but as an insider who claims to have a greater knowledge of his τέχνη than others. It is on the basis of this 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. Tsantsanoglou suggests that the reason for this frustration might be that his clients believe the oracles, but they do not believe the Derveni author when he speaks of the “terrible things of Hades” (τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου δεινὰ).⁴⁹ As a ritual specialist who profits from selling people release from these horrors, the Derveni author is “interested in advertising his own skills and convincing

⁴⁷ DP 5.3-10.

⁴⁸ Johnston 2014: 89-92 points out that this use of the first person plural πάριμεν is typical of people entering oracles, such as the Pythia, with regard to both institutional oracles and individual diviners. KPT (2006: 161 *ad loc.*) mentions Herodotus 5.72.17-18 and Euripides, *Ion* 226-229 as parallel usages of πάριμι, to which Johnston adds Plutarch’s use of κάτεσιν in *Oracles at Delphi* 397a and *Obsolescence of Oracles* 438b.

⁴⁹ Johnston 2014: 94 clarifies that the Derveni author refers not to horrible things that people can expect when they go to Hades, but “something horrible arising *out of* Hades” from those who are already dead: they are the avenging souls discussed below.

them” of the need for “purification and initiation.”⁵⁰ This adds weight to the argument that he is a ritual specialist who is promoting his own expertise in his τέχνη as greater than his rivals.

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):

... εὐ]χαὶ καὶ θυσ[ί]αι μ[ε]ιλ[ί]σσο[υ]σι τὰ[ς] ψυχάς,] ἐπ[ω]δὴ δ]ὲ μάγων
 δύν[α]ται δαίμονας ἐμ[πο]δών] γι[ν]ομένο]υς μεθιστάναι ... τὴν θυσ[ί]α]ν
 τούτου ἔνεκε[ν] π[ρ]οιούσ]ι[ν] οἱ μά[γο]ι, ὥσπερ εἰ ποινήν ἀποδιδόντες. ...
 μύσται Εὐμεγίσσι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] αὐτὰ μάγοις...

... 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. Betegh considers it to refer not to Persian practices, but to the Derveni author himself, so the μάγοι are Greek ritual specialists who perform initiations.⁵¹ But Tsantsanoglou takes it as a reference to the Persian priests, whom the Derveni author respects “as venerable paradigms of piety and wisdom.” In this case, the Derveni author compares the practices of the μύσται (“initiates”) favorably with those of the μάγοι, and “intends to lend antiquity and authority to the practices of the initiates.”⁵² Kouremenos, on the other hand, finds “no compelling reason” to see a reference to the Persians, but to Greek ritual specialists, whom the Derveni author may well “denounce ... as charlatans.”⁵³

Edmonds argues that in subtle ways the Derveni author differentiates himself from the μάγοι, but compares himself favourably with them, since the term μάγος could be taken either positively or negatively. The Persian μάγοι were renowned for their mystical expertise, but when Greeks referred to other Greeks as μάγοι, the intention was usually to point out in pejorative terms that their practices were abnormal.⁵⁴ However, when the term

⁵⁰ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 110.

⁵¹ Betegh 2004: 78-83; cf. Graf 2014: 78-84.

⁵² Tsantsanoglou 1997: 110-115; cf. West 1997b: 90.

⁵³ KPT 2006: 167.

⁵⁴ But see Graf 2014: 78-84, who argues that the use of μάγος was “rather more ambiguous.” The pejorative sense of μάγος did not emerge until the fourth century: “an average fifth-century Greek met a *magos* not in the Persian empire, but in a Greek town ... and projected this image on faraway Persia.” Thus, Graf reads

was applied self-referentially, it was meant in a positive sense, to point out that their practices were unusually effective.⁵⁵ Whether μάγοι in the Derveni Papyrus refers to the Persian μάγοι or to Greek ritual specialists, the sense is not necessarily pejorative, but could point to a superior level of power. The Derveni author’s claim to be explaining the practices of the μάγοι is equivalent to claiming that he has an extraordinary level of expertise in ritual matters. What is more, the Derveni author compares the practices of the μύσται to those of the μάγοι when he says that “the μύσται make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the μάγοι do” (μύσται Εὐμεγίστι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] αὐτὰ μάγοις). Thus he both claims to have expertise in the practices of the μύσται and differentiates himself and the μύσται from the μάγοι, in the sense that their practices are similar but they are not the same people.⁵⁶ Based on these premises, Edmonds concludes that the Derveni author’s aim is to establish his own “extra-ordinary religious authority” in matters of ritual expertise and interpretation of Orphic poetry.⁵⁷ On this matter, the views of Edmonds and Tsantsanoglou are nearly the same: the Derveni author compares the μάγοι, whether Greek or Persian, favourably with the μύσται, in order to make himself and his practices look better.

The context in which the Derveni author draws this comparison is the explanation of certain ritual actions. Again, in the sixth column he says that “initiates make a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides in the same way the μάγοι do” (μύσται Εὐμεγίστι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] αὐτὰ μάγοις, 6.8-9), so most likely this is the ritual he is explaining: a preliminary sacrifice designed to avert “the hindering δαίμονες” (δαίμονας ἐμποδόν, 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

μάγος as referring to “religious specialists who might have been first active in the Greek East and who claimed the title of the Persian specialist for themselves.”

⁵⁵ Edmonds 2008: 24-26. He mentions Empedocles and the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* as other examples of self-referential uses of the term.

⁵⁶ Edmonds attempts to clarify the difference by arguing that the goal of mystery rites was to obtain a “closer relation with a particular deity.” Whereas magic “used special rituals to achieve ends beyond the bounds of normal possibility,” initiation ritual was concerned with “practices that maintain or restore an abnormal level of purity.” So the difference is that the μάγοι seek “extra-ordinary magical power” and the μύσται seek “extra-ordinary ritual purity” (Edmonds 2008: 26-29). More recently, this concern for extra-ordinary purity has become one of the central “cues” for Edmonds’ proposed definition of Orphica, especially as they relate to earlier periods (Edmonds 2013: 71). See also: Betegh 2004: 78-83, who interprets this statement as the Derveni author claiming himself to be a μάγος; to which Bernabé 2014: 35-38 agrees. Whichever view is correct, it can still be argued that the Derveni author is claiming expertise in ritual matters by referring to the practices of the μάγοι.

⁵⁷ Edmonds 2008: 34.

initiations or the cult group practicing a funerary rite for one of their fellow-initiates.⁵⁸ The mention of the “horrors of Hades” (Ἄιδου δεινὰ, 6.6) indicates an eschatological concern, since one reason why new initiates joined mystery groups was to protect themselves against the horrors of Hades in the distant future. 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.”⁵⁹ 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. At this point, it is not necessary to assume with West that they belonged to “an Orphic-Bacchic cult society” in particular,⁶⁰ but this seems to be the most likely context.

The other important factor of the preliminary sacrifice is the recipients, the Eumenides, and this brings us back to the first two columns, where the Derveni author appears to equate the Eumenides with the Erinyes.⁶¹ Although they are rarely identified with each other in cult, they are often equated in literature,⁶² and their names are used interchangeably in columns 2-6 of the Derveni Papyrus. Along with the Eumenides, δαίμονες are mentioned in a couple of passages: in the second column, the Derveni author insists that “one must offer exceptional honors to [the Eumenis] and burn a bird to each [of the δαίμονες]” (ἐξαιρέτους τιμὰς [χ]ρη / τ[ῆ] Εὐμεν]ίδι νεῖμ[αι, δαίμοσι δ’] ἐκάστο[ι]ς ὀργιθιόν τι / κα[ί]εν, 2.6-7); and in the third column (3.4-7), he mentions both Erinyes and δαίμονες again:

⁵⁸ Betegh 2004: 88-89. Similarly, Graf (2009: 176-182) argues that the *Orphic Hymns* contain prayers for protection from hindering spirits and madness that threaten the initiates who are performing the hymns. Johnston (2014: 98-99) also sees the hindering *daimones* as threatening either the performance of an initiation ritual or a smooth transition into a good afterlife.

⁵⁹ Johnston 2014: 91-94.

⁶⁰ West 1997: 84.

⁶¹ Although fragments of the word “Erinyes” appear (DP 1.6, 2.3), their immediate context is quite fragmentary. KPT (2006: 143) suggest supplementing the fragmentary words]νιδ[...]τιμῶσιν (2.4) to read Εὐμε]νιδ[...]τιμῶσιν, and add that although the context “can only be guessed at,” it could be “identification” of the Eumenides with the Erinyes. Further conjectures are suggested in Bernabé 2014: 20.

⁶² Tsantsanoglou 1997: 99-101; Johnston 1999: 253-256; Betegh 2004: 86-88; KPT 2006: 143. In tragedy, the Erinyes are sometimes associated with maenads; e.g., Aeschylus, *Th.* 699; *Eum.* 500; Euripides, *Or.* 411, 835. Henrichs (1984a: 264 n. 37) cites Cornutus, *Natura Deorum* 10 and Pausanias 1.28.6, and he adds that “the cult of the Erinyes/Maniai/Eumenides in Magalopolis (Paus. 8.34) is an exceptional case.”

ἦ / [γὰρ Δί]κη ἐξώλεας [νουθ]ερεῖ δι' ἐκά[στης τῶν] Ἐρινύω[ν. οἱ] δὲ /
 [δ]αίμονες οἱ κατὰ [γῆς ο]ὐδέκοτ[ε τ]ηροῦσι, / θεῶν ὑπηρέται δ' [εἰσ]ὶ
 πάντας ...

For Dike punishes pernicious men through each of the Erinyes. And the δαίμονες who are in the underworld never observe [something]⁶³ and being servants of gods, they ... all ...

In both of these passages, the Eumenides/Erinyes are mentioned next to the δαίμονες, but it is unclear whether these are two separate categories or interchangeable terms. They receive different cult honors in the second column, and fulfill slightly different roles in the third column. Yet, in the sixth column, it appears that they are both equated with “souls” (ψυχαί). Depending upon how one supplements DP 6.3-4, the Derveni author states either that “hindering δαίμονες are hostile to souls” (δαίμονες ἐμπο[δών δ' εἰσὶ] / ψ[υχαῖς ἐχθ]ροί) or that they are “hostile souls” (ψ[υχαῖ ἐχθ]ροί);⁶⁴ Tsanstanoglou suggests “avenging souls” (ψ[υχαῖ τιμω]ροί) as a possibility, but adds that “the sense remains much the same.”⁶⁵ A clearer statement of equivalence appears in DP 6.9-10, when the author says that “the Eumenides are souls” (Εὐμενίδες γὰρ / ψυχαῖ εἰσιν).

Taken together, the nature of these equivalences is not clear. The Eumenides are identified with the Erinyes, and DP 6.9-10 seems to be saying that they are a sub-category of ψυχαί, but what is their relation to the δαίμονες? Is the Derveni author saying that Eumenides are the same sub-category as δαίμονες and both are ψυχαί, or that δαίμονες are a different sub-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” ([δ]αίμονες οἱ κατὰ [γῆς, 3.6), where they function as “servants of gods” (θεῶν

⁶³ KPT (*ad loc.*) suggest translating ο]ὐδέκοτ[ε τ]ηροῦσι as meaning that they “never observe [sleep? rest?],” but they do not suggest any 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 (Democritus 239 ὄρκους, Isocrates 1.22 παρακαταθήκας, Lysias 31.31 ἀπόρητα, Demosthenes 18.89 εἰρήνην, Philodemus, *in Po.* 5.35 τὸ πρέπον, 2 Tim. 4.7) never use τηρέω to refer to sleep. The closest parallels are Demosthenes (“peace”) and Lysias (“silence”). More recently, Bernabé 2014: 25 suggests reading DP 3.6 as “never release” (ο]ὐδέκοτ' [ἐλευθ]εροῦσι).

⁶⁴ KPT (2006: 130) translate: “hindering daimons are vengeful souls (or: hostile to souls),” but Tsanstanoglou (1997: 113) argues that “they must not be identified with these [Persian] *daēvas*.” Henrichs (1984a: 257) suggests that they “interfere with the rites of sacrifice ... unless they are kept at a safe distance ... by proper rites of appeasement.”

⁶⁵ Tsanstanoglou 1997: 113. Johnston (2014: 98) accepts this as the “correct reading” because of lines 7-8 of the same column, in which “innumerable” cakes are sacrificed because the souls are innumerable; Bernabé (2014: 28-29, 39-40) also accepts this reading.

ὕπνρηται, 3.7). 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.⁶⁶ If the third column was in better condition, we might be able to know what they did: were they agents of justice in the underworld, like the Erinyes through whom “Dike punishes [or warns]⁶⁷ pernicious men” (Δίκη ἐξώλεας [νουθ]ετῆ, 3.5)? In a similar manner, the Heraclitus quotation in DP 4.7-10 calls the Erinyes “assistants of Dike” (Δίκης ἐπίκουροι) in their role of keeping the sun within its proper limits.⁶⁸

Tsantsanoglou compares the Greek δαίμονες to Persian *daêvas*, “a numberless horde of demons personifying human ills” who could be averted by the Persian μάγοι. But he insists that the δαίμονες here are “the Persian equivalent of the Greek Erinyes – the female spirits who ... avenge and punish but act under the instructions of Dike.” He suggests that the *Fravashis* are a more appropriate parallel: these were Persian female spirits whose role was to “observe human behaviour and haunt sinful souls.”⁶⁹ This would seem to accord well with the reference in DP 6.3-4 to “hindering δαίμονες” (δαίμονες ἐμπο[δών]), but then the same column says that “the Eumenides are souls” (Εὐμενίδες γὰρ / ψυχαί εἰσιν). If the Eumenides are equivalent to the δαίμονες, then it is better to read DP 6.3-4 as “hostile souls” (ψ[υχαί ἐχθ]ροί) or “avenging souls” (ψ[υχαί τιμω]ροί) than as “hostile to souls” (ψ[υχᾶς ἐχθ]ροί). Johnston accepts the reading “avenging souls,” and she sees these souls as representing “the angry souls of the dead.” She argues that these restless beings are the “horrors of Hades” (Αἰδου δεινά, 5.6) and the purpose of the ritual is that “the experts paid a penalty ... on behalf of the initiates ... and they thereby changed the impeding *daimones* into something else,” the Eumenides.⁷⁰ The hindering δαίμονες are hostile, avenging souls who are averted by the μάγοι, and the practices of the Persian μάγοι

⁶⁶ KPT 2006: 147. The two ancient sources are: Homer, *Iliad* 19.259-260: “the Erinyes, who under the earth / avenge people, whoever has sworn a false oath” (Ἐρινύες, αἱ θ’ ὑπὸ γαῖαν / ἀνθρώπους τίνυνται, ὅτις κ’ ἐπίορκον ὀμόσση); and Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 115: “goddesses of the underworld” (ὦ κατὰ χθονὸς θεαί); cf. *OH* 69.3-4, 8; Sophocles, *OC* 1568; Henrichs 1984: 264 n. 38.

⁶⁷ KPT (2006: 147) suggests that the passage could either mean that they punish souls after death or that they “warn wrongdoers of the horrors awaiting them in Hades through dreams and other omens.”

⁶⁸ DP 4.7-9 = Heraclitus fr. 22 B3 D-K (57 Marcovich) (Aetius 2.21.4) & fr. 22 B94 D-K (52 Marcovich) (Plutarch, *de exil.* 11.604a).

⁶⁹ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 112-113.

⁷⁰ Johnston 2014: 98-102; although she admits that the only other ancient source that “equates either the Erinyes or the Eumenides with the souls of the dead” is Aeschylus, *Seven Against Thebes* 976-977. Johnston admits that if the Derveni author is equating the Eumenides with the souls of the dead, then he is “innovating”; see also: Bernabé 2014: 40-44.

in averting these δαίμονες are equivalent to the practices of Greek μύσται, who offer a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides. Thus it appears that the purpose of the preliminary sacrifice is to avert these hostile souls from hindering the initiates. By appeasing the Erinyes with sacrifices, justice is paid, and they cease to be hostile souls, becoming the Eumenides.

That these hindering souls have chthonic associations is also implied in the phrase “horrors of Hades.” Another indication that this is a chthonic ritual is the mention of “libations” that are “poured down in drops in every temple of Zeus” (χοαὶ σταγόσιν [χ]έου[ται] / Δ[ιὸς κατὰ π]άντα να[όν, 2.5-6). In the sixth column, the Derveni author clarifies that these libations are of “water and milk” (ὕ[δω]ρ καὶ γάλα, 6.6). Commenting on χοαὶ (“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, with which all offerings of libations ended.”⁷¹ However, the passage would be better translated as “in every temple of Zeus,” which makes better use of the genitive Δ[ιὸς; if the text was to be read as “to Zeus,” then a dative would have been preferable. If libations were poured “in every temple of Zeus,” then this allows the possibility that there were other chthonic recipients of a preliminary sacrifice, before the main sacrifice to Zeus.⁷² One view of this passage is that, since χοαὶ were offerings to underworld deities or to the souls of the dead and they were usually offered at graves, the souls of the dead might be the recipients.⁷³ But why would χοαὶ to the dead be offered at a temple of Zeus (or any temple, for that matter), and not at a grave? The answer might be that, if the χοαὶ here are a component of the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides offered by the μύσται, then the recipients are 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

⁷¹ KPT 2006: 144; cf. Bernabé 2014: 30-31, who suggests that wineless libations for the Erinyes were common.

⁷² At any rate, 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). Therefore, any involvement of Zeus in these libations depends upon whether we accept Kouremenos’ conjecture of Δ[ιὸς.

⁷³ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 102-103; Betegh 2004: 76; Betegh points out that it was Fritz Graf and Albert Henrichs who demonstrated the eschatological significance of χοαὶ; see Graf 1980: 209-221; Henrichs 1984a: 257-261.

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 in one of his temples, and this might have an effect on how we interpret the Derveni Theogony with its emphasis on Zeus. Kouremenos points out that “outside Attica Zeus was worshipped as Meilichios alongside the Eumenides and unnamed heroes, denizens of the underworld,”⁷⁴ 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.

Immediately after his first extant mention of *χοαί*, the Derveni author adds that “one must offer exceptional honors to [the Eumenis] and burn a bird to each [of the *δαίμονες*]” (*ἐξαιρέτους τιμὰς [χ]ρῆ / τῆ Ἐὐμενίδι νεῖμαί, δαίμοσι δ’ ἐκάστοις ὀρνίθειόν τι / καίειν, 2.6-8*).⁷⁵ The mention of “exceptional honors” to a Eumenis (the singular form, which is rare) is probably a reference to the preliminary sacrifice in DP 6.9. The theme of a bird sacrifice, *ὀρνίθειόν τι*, reappears in the sixth column, when the Derveni author explains that “on their [i.e., the Eumenides’] account anyone who is going to sacrifice to the gods must first [sacrifice] a bird” (*ὧν ἕνεκ[εν τὸν μέλλοντ]α θεοῖς θύειν / ὀ[ρ]νίθ[ε]ιον πρότερον, 6.10-11*). Some scholars have hesitated to take these references literally. Betegh, assuming that all manifestations of Orphic activity were the same, argues that “the prescription of animal sacrifice would be quite unwelcome in an Orphic [i.e., vegetarian] context,”⁷⁶ so he suggests that the “many-knobbed cakes” (*πολυόμοφαλα τὰ πόπανα, 6.7*) mentioned in the sixth column might have been bird-shaped. By this reasoning, *ὀρνίθειόν τι* in DP 2.7 should be translated as “something birdlike.” Alternatively, it could mean “belonging to a bird” (perhaps the sacrifice of a part of a bird, such as a feather), or the

⁷⁴ 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 and describes them as “inscribed altars and dedications from a cemetery near Cyrene, fifth and fourth centuries BC), and an “unpublished lead tablet from Selinus.” See Henrichs 1984a: 259 n. 14: “Sacrifices to Zeus Eumenes, the Eumenides and Zeus Meilichios in connection with *μελίκρητα* for kindred chthonian powers are mentioned in a *lex sacra* on a pre-Hellenistic lead tablet from Selinus in the J. Paul Getty Museum.”

⁷⁵ Since *δαίμονες* here is a conjecture (though a reasonable one), KPT (2006: 144) admit that “the context does not allow to decide whether they are the same” as the Eumenides or “a distinct class of beings.” However, here I treat them as most likely equivalent, at least in the sense that they appear to be recipients of the same preliminary sacrifice, even if they are recipients of different components of it.

⁷⁶ Betegh 2004: 78. Perhaps this is what motivates Bernabé to supplement DP 6.11 to read: *ὀ[ρ]νίθ[ε]ιον πρότερον [χ]ρῆ λύειν σὺν] οἷς ποτέ[ον]ται*, “must first release a bird with which they fly.” Martínez (2011: 373) is critical of this reading, which Bernabé supported by referring to a Buddhist ceremony of setting free creatures who represent souls because, as Martínez claims, there is a closer parallel to the apotropaic power of the rooster in Persian cult. Also, the supplement *λύειν* could be replaced with *καίειν*, as in DP 2.7-8.

reference could be to the Erinyes as winged souls.⁷⁷ But the occurrence of ὀρνίθειόν in DP 6.11, since it is not accompanied by τι, is a noun, not an adjective, and must mean “bird,” or even “a small bird.”⁷⁸ Tsantsanoglou takes ὀρνίθειόν τι (DP 2.7) more literally to refer to a sacrifice of “any kind of bird” to the souls of the dead, and points out that birds, especially roosters, were “an attribute of Persephone.” Remarking on the occurrence of ὀρνίθειόν twice in the context of identifying the Eumenides with souls, he also suggests that “the selection” of a bird sacrifice was related to “the winged appearance” of the Eumenides and souls.⁷⁹ Martínez mentions that “the apotropaic power of the rooster [was] a persistent idea since the importing of these bird[s] from Persia,”⁸⁰ which might help explain how a bird sacrifice could be seen as helpful against hindering δαίμονες. Perhaps this was why the bird sacrifice was initially established, but the Derveni author has a different explanation: the reason why there is a sacrifice of a bird or something bird-like as a component of the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides, is that the Eumenides, being airy souls, are bird-like.⁸¹

In addition to chthonic libations and bird-like sacrifices, the Derveni author explains in the sixth column that the μάγοι, and similarly the μύσται, “sacrifice innumerable and many-knobbed cakes, because the souls too are innumerable” (ἀνάριθμα [κα]ὶ πολυόμφαλα τὰ πόπανα / θύουσιν, ὅτι καὶ αἱ ψυχαὶ ἀνάριθμοί εἰσι, 6.7-8). Henrichs explains that these “knob-like protrusions which served as decorations” were typical of cakes “commonly used” in rituals to Demeter, Dionysus, and other chthonic deities.⁸² Tsantsanoglou points out, however, that πόπανα were “not exclusively offered to chthonian deities and souls,” but were a sacrifice common to many gods in both Greece and Persia.⁸³ So, although they were not exclusively chthonic in nature, πόπανα were an appropriate component to 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

⁷⁷ Betegh 2004: 77-78.

⁷⁸ Martínez 2011: 373.

⁷⁹ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 104.

⁸⁰ Martínez 2011: 373.

⁸¹ Bernabé (2014: 24) offers yet another explanation, based on very recent reconstructions of DP 2.7-8, which now tells us that “to each [of the participants (?) in the rite they give] a little bird in a cage” (ἐκάστοις ὀρνίθειόν τι / κλε[ισθὲν). He suggests that initiates were given a bird in a cage which was later released, representing the freeing of the soul from the prison of the body (Bernabé 2014: 32-33).

⁸² Henrichs 1984a: 260, citing Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.22.4; cf. Burkert 1983: 300; Betegh 2004: 76-77.

⁸³ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 114-115.

Eumenides by comparing it to a ritual by which the μάγοι averted the hindering δαίμονες. This sacrifice to the Eumenides included chthonic libations of water and milk, a bird sacrifice, and the offering of a large number of cakes.

Another important component of this preliminary sacrifice was music. In the second column, the Derveni author says that “he added [hymns] adapted to the music, and their meaning ...” (ἐπέθηκε[ν ὕμνους ἀρμ]οστο[ὺ]ς τῆ μουσικῆ. / [τούτων δὲ] τὰ σημα[ινόμ]ενα, 2.8-9).⁸⁴ The text breaks off at this point and the remaining lines of the column are too fragmentary to make sense of them, but presumably they must have said something about what the Derveni author thought was the meaning of these ὕμνοι. It is unclear who the subject of this sentence is, so Kouremenos considers two possibilities: one is that the subject is one of “the religious professionals” whom the Derveni author “might aim at denouncing as charlatans,” and the other is that the subject is Orpheus, “the founder of τελεταί, to which he added enigmatic hymns sung to music.”⁸⁵ Tsantsonoglou prefers the latter option, that a song attributed to Orpheus was, along with libations and a bird sacrifice, one “form of honours” given to the Eumenides in the preliminary sacrifice. Referring to the *Orphic Hymns*, which include a hymn to the Erinyes (*OH* 69) and another hymn to the Eumenides (*OH* 70), he also suggests that “hymns to the dead, i.e. *threnoi*, are meant.”⁸⁶ Another possibility is that one of these “[hymns] adapted to the music” was the Derveni poem itself.⁸⁷ The seventh column introduces the Orphic poem as “a hymn saying sound and lawful words” (ὕμνον [ὕγ]ιῃ καὶ θεμ[ι]τὰ λέγο[ν]τα, 7.2), so the reoccurrence of ὕμνος seems to point to the continuity of this theme (if we accept the modern emendations of DP 2.8-9). As I discussed in Chapter One, before Plato ὕμνος simply meant “song,” but still one might ask what role a theogonic hymn might play in the performance of a ritual. Since it is possible that the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides found an analogy with the practices of the Persian μάγοι,⁸⁸ some clarity might be found in a passage of Herodotus that describes the way Persians practiced sacrifice. The Persian who was performing the

⁸⁴ The occurrence of ὕμνος here is a conjecture that appears in KPT and Bernabé *ad loc.* Some support for this conjecture can be found in the occurrence of ὕμνον in DP 7.2.

⁸⁵ KPT 2006: 145-146.

⁸⁶ Tsantsonoglou 1997: 104-105.

⁸⁷ This is also suggested by Bernabé 2014: 32.

⁸⁸ As suggested by Betegh 2004: 78.

sacrifice would cut up the victim, boil its flesh, and arrange the pieces on soft grass. After this:

διαθέντος δὲ αὐτοῦ Μάγος ἀνὴρ παρεστῆος ἐπαείδει θεογονίην, οἷην δὴ ἐκεῖνοι λέγουσι εἶναι τὴν ἐπαιδίην: ἄνευ γὰρ δὴ Μάγου οὐ σφι νόμος ἐστὶ θυσίας ποιέεσθαι.

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.⁸⁹

According to Herodotus, one of the roles of the μάγοι was to sing a “theogony” (θεογονίη) over a sacrifice. The words Herodotus uses to describe this act of “singing over” something (ἐπαείδω, ἐπαιδίη) remind us of the Derveni author’s use of ἐπ[οδ]ή: “the singing-over of the μάγοι is able to drive away the δαίμονες who are hindering” (ἐπ[οδ]ὴ δ[ὲ] μάγων δύν[α]ται δαίμονας ἐμ[ποδ]ών / γι[νο]μένο[υ]ς μεθιστάγει, 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” (μύσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] ἀνὰ μάγοις, 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” (ἱερουργεῖτο γὰρ / [τῆ]ι ποιήσει, 7.2-3).

By means of an analogy drawn by the Derveni author between the practices of the μάγοι and the practices of the μύσται, we might have some idea of the performative context of the Derveni Theogony. Like the μάγοι who offered apotropaic sacrifices to the hindering δαίμονες, the μύσται offered a preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides, either as part of an initiation or as part of a funeral rite, to avert them from being an obstacle to either an initiation or someone’s passage through the underworld. This sacrifice involved chthonic libations, a bird sacrifice, and the offering of cakes. At some point during the performance of these ritual actions (either while they were being offered, or after they had been arranged, as with the μάγοι in Herodotus), someone whose role was analogous to the μάγοι would sing a theogony over the sacrifice. Since the μάγοι were a class of ritual specialists in

⁸⁹ Herodotus 1.132.3.

Persian cult, and it was their role to sing the theogony, by analogy we can conjecture that in this Greek mystery rite, it was the role of a ritual specialist – an *orpheotelestes* – 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 hymns that were “adapted to the music” (ἀρμ]οστο[ὺ]ς τῆ μουσικῆ, 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 One, a “new and proper order” was thought to be “created or recreated” by the chanting of a theogony; simply put, the effect was to impose cosmic order over a local situation.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ If this is the case, then the repetition of cosmogony might be an act of compensating Persephone for the “ancient grief” (παλαιὸς πένθος) to which Pindar refers in one fragment.⁹² 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” (ὥσπερὲι ποινήν ἀποδιδόντες, 6.5). But there are two problems with this interpretation: (1) the Zagreus myth was not nearly as central to Orphic thought as earlier scholars believed;⁹³ 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.

⁹⁰ Burkert 1992: 125.

⁹¹ Obbink 1997: 50-51.

⁹² Pindar, fr. 133 Sn.-Maehl. (*OF* 443 B).

⁹³ See Chapter One, section (a), and Chapter Six.

(c) The Reconstruction of the Derveni Poem

The Derveni author describes the Orphic poem as a “hymn saying sound and lawful words” (ῥῆμα ἄγιον καὶ θεμιτὰ λέγοντα, 7.2), and he adds that Orpheus “speaks a sacred discourse, and from the very first word all the way to the last” (ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου / [ἀεὶ] μέχρι οὗ [τελε]υταίου ῥήματος, 7.7-8). Tsantsanoglou and Kouremenos take θεμιτὰ to mean that it is “allowed to be heard or read by non-initiated people,”⁹⁴ such as those who hear the λεγόμενα of the public ritual in column 20. In their view, the poem is “spoken,” or “not secret” (ῥηθέντα, 7.4),⁹⁵ but the Derveni author thinks it is impossible “to state the solution [or interpretation] of the words” (εἰπεῖν ... [τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων / [λύ]σιν, 7.3-4).⁹⁶ This is because the poetry is “something strange” (ξένη τις, 7.4) and “riddling to humans” (ἀνθρώποις αἰνιγματοδής, 7.5). The Orphic poem is written as an enigma in such a way that non-initiates will be unable to interpret it without the help of a ritual specialist such as the Derveni author.⁹⁷ This is how the Derveni author interprets the first line of the poem, which he refers to as “the well-recognized verse” (τῷ / [εὐκ]ρινήτῳ ἔπει, 7.8-9) that instructs non-initiates to close the door:

“θ]ύρας” γὰρ “ἐπιθέ[σθαι]” κελ]εύσας τοῖ[ς]
 [ᾠσὶ]ν αὐτ[οὺς οὐτι νομο]θετεῖν φη[σιν τοῖς] πολλοῖς
 τὴ]ν ἀκοήν [ἀγνεύο]ντας

For, 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.⁹⁸

Tsantsanoglou thinks that the reference to this Orphic line is “obviously” from another poem,⁹⁹ the contents of which are to be kept secret, while the Derveni poem is not a secret text. However, since the Derveni author takes this line to mean that non-initiates are unable

⁹⁴ KPT 2006: 171; Tsantsanoglou 1997: 118-119, 126.

⁹⁵ KPT 2006: 130; Tsantsanoglou 1997: 119-120.

⁹⁶ KPT (2006: 172) relate the use of λύειν here to its use in ancient commentaries, and suggest that this usage “may have its origin in the language of ... allegoric interpreters” in the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

⁹⁷ Cf. Pindar, *Ol.* 2.83-86: “I have many swift arrows in the quiver under my arm, arrows that speak to the initiated; but the masses need interpreters” (πολλά μοι ὑπ’ ἀγκῶνος ᾠκέα βέλη / ἔνδον ἐντι φαρέτρας / φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν· ἐς δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἑρμηνέων / χατίζει).

⁹⁸ DP 7.9-11. KPT put quotation marks around [“ᾠσὶ]ν” and translate θ]ύρας ... ἐπιθέ[σθαι] ... [ᾠσὶ]ν as “put doors to their ears,” but I have removed the quotation marks around [ᾠσὶ]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; rather, the Derveni author explains the reference to “doors” as meaning metaphorically that non-initiates are to shut their ears.

⁹⁹ Tsantsanoglou 1997: 126-127.

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.¹⁰⁰ The words θύρας ... ἐπιθέ[σθαι] make it clear that the Derveni author is quoting a commonly used formula, or "seal" (σφραγίς),¹⁰¹ that 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 such as Plato,¹⁰² and it is the opening line for a late Jewish poem called *Testaments* (Διαθηκαι) that is attributed to Orpheus.¹⁰³ There are two different versions of the line, listed as *OF* 1a and b in Bernabé's edition of the Orphic fragments:

- a ἀείσω ξυνετοῖσι· θύρας ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι.
 b φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι.
 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,¹⁰⁴ and perhaps the latter view can be supported by the occurrence of θεμ[ι]τὰ in DP 7.2. However, West also finds a parallel to *OF* 1a in an Assyrian priestly text. The noun ξυνετός "corresponds to the Akkadian *mūdû*, the 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."¹⁰⁵ This parallel indicates a possible Near Eastern origin to the Orphic seal, which corresponds to the Derveni author's

¹⁰⁰ See Calame 2014: 171-175: the Derveni author's reference to the poem as an αἶνγμα treats the poem as similar to an oracular utterance such as that of the Pythia. Calame argues that as early allegorical interpreters viewed it, "enigmatic expression" was "a fundamental feature of all epic poetry," including Homer and Hesiod, Pindar and Bacchylides; so "the oracular nature of the voice assumed by the Orphic poem" reflects an expectation that only initiates will be able to understand the hidden meaning.

¹⁰¹ Bernabé 2007b: 100; Otero 2011: 23; Calame 2014: 173.

¹⁰² In Plato, *Symposium* 218b, Alcibiades says, "But the domestic servants, and anyone else who is uninitiated and rustic, altogether close the great doors upon your ears" (οἱ δὲ οἰκέται, καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος ἐστὶν βέβηλός τε καὶ ἄγροικος, πύλας πάνυ μεγάλας τοῖς ὤσιν ἐπίθεσθε).

¹⁰³ *OF* 377-378 B. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 124-125. The two versions of *OF* 1 B are reconstructed from references to either version, primarily in: Plato *Symp.* 218b; Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 25.5; Aristides *Or.* 3.50; Plutarch, *Quaest. conviv.* 636d; and of course, the Derveni Papyrus; see also: *OF* 1 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*

¹⁰⁴ West 1983: 114; Betegh 2004: 109; Bernabé *ad OF* 3 B.

¹⁰⁵ West 1997b: 89.

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.¹⁰⁶

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.”¹⁰⁷ This fits the performance context suggested in the previous section, of a ritual specialist “singing over” the initiates’ sacrifice. Both formulae announce the exclusion 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) allegorise the line “by interpreting it as closing the doors of the ears of the audience.”¹⁰⁸ 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,”¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰

If indeed this line comes from the original text of the Derveni poem, then it must have been the first line of the poem. The question then becomes whether the rest of the lines quoted and discussed in the Derveni Papyrus occurred in the same order in 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”

¹⁰⁶ Bremmer (2011: 3) draws a similar comparison between Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries: in the Eleusinian mysteries, “the importance of ‘seeing’ and ‘showing’” was “continuously stressed,” but in Orphic practice, “the focus is on ‘hearing’.”

¹⁰⁷ This is argued by Calame 2011: 9.

¹⁰⁸ Bremmer 2011: 3-4.

¹⁰⁹ KPT 2006: 171; cf. Tsantsanoglou 1997: 118-119, 126.

¹¹⁰ Bernabé 2007b: 100-101.

(ἀ[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου / [ἀεὶ] μέχρι οὗ [τελε]υταίου ῥήματος, 7.7-8), that “this remark ... speaks for a systematic commentary.”¹¹¹ A stronger indication that the poem was quoted in sequence is that the Derveni author uses phrases like “after this he says” (τὰ δ’ [ἐπὶ τούτῳ] λέγει, 11.9), “and the next verse” (ἐχόμενον δὲ ἔπος, 15.5; cf. τὸ δ’ ἐχόμενον, 23.10), and “the next verse is as follows” (τὸ δ’ ἐχόμε[νον] ἔπος ὧδ’ ἔχει, 12.1), to introduce quotations from the poem.¹¹² 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.”¹¹³ 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):

[ο]ἱ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο [ὑπερμεν]έος βασιλῆος.

... who were born from Zeus the mighty king.

Since the bottom part of the previous column is destroyed, and there is no antecedent for the relative pronoun οἱ, there must have been some line(s) preceding this one in which the antecedent was named. A reasonable guess is that οἱ refers to the generation of deities born from Zeus.¹¹⁴ 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 birth of other younger gods.¹¹⁵ The narrative proper begins with the next two lines, which the Derveni author quotes in full (DP 8.4-5 = OF 5 B):

Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ πα[τρὸς ἐο]ῦ πάρα θε[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν

¹¹¹ Betegh 2004: 106-107.

¹¹² See Calame 2014: 175-176, who claims that the Derveni author was “following the model that would become Alexandrian philological practice” by presenting the verses “as actual lemmata, marked by an obelus or a *paragraphos* ... followed by a formulation using *hoti* (“because”) that explains why the poetic expression should be understood ... to have a certain meaning.”

¹¹³ West 1983: 78.

¹¹⁴ KPT 2006: 175. See Bernabé *ad loc.*: [ο]ἱ Διὸς ἐξεγένοντο is a formulaic expression with parallels in: *Iliad* 5.637; *Homeric Hymn* 17.2; Hesiod, *Theogony* 106, 111, each of which is preceded by an antecedent for οἱ.

¹¹⁵ West 1983: 114. Bernabé (2007b: 102) points out that Hesiod, *Theogony* 106 (οἱ Γῆς τ’ ἐξεγένοντο καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος) uses similar phrasing in the context of invoking the Muses in the proem.

[ἀ]λκίην τ' ἐν χείρεσσι ἔ[λ]αβ[εν κ]α[ὶ] δαίμον[α] κυδρόν.

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” (Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ τῆ[ν ἀλ]κίην / [πα]ρὰ πατρὸς ἐοῦ ἔλαβεν καὶ δαίμονα [κυδρ]όν, 8.7-8). Bernabé takes δαίμον[α] κυδρόν to refer to Zeus’ father, so that Zeus took the “glorious δαίμων” from Kronos.¹¹⁶ 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 who tells him how he can 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” (πανομφεύουσαν, 10.9) and “nurse” (τροφόν, 10.11), followed by “to prophesy ... out of the innermost shrine” (ἐξ ἀ[δύτοι]ο ... χρῆσαι, 11.1).¹¹⁷ A full line that occurs “after this” ([ἐπὶ τούτ]ῳ, 11.9) is quoted in column 11, followed by “the next verse” (τὸ δ’ ἐχόμε[νον] ἔ]πος, 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*):

[Ζεὺς μὲν
ἦστο] πανομφεύουσα [θεῶν] τροφὸς ἀμβροσίη Νύξ·
... χρῆσαι ... ἐξ ἀ[δύτοι]ο
[ἡ δ’] ἔχρησεν ἅπαντα τά οἱ θέ[μις ἦν ἀ]νύσασ]θαι
ὡς ἂν ἔ[χοι κά]τα καλὸν ἔδος νιφόντος Ὀλύμπου.

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.¹¹⁸

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

¹¹⁶ Bernabé 2007b: 103-104. He suggests that ἀρχὴν can be taken to mean either “rule” or “beginning,” both in the hierarchical sense that Zeus is the first of the gods, and in a temporal sense since, later in the poem, his re-creation of the universe puts him at the beginning of creation.

¹¹⁷ See Betegh 2004: 110-111.

¹¹⁸ Translation Bernabé 2007b: 104-105.

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, although it is unclear what or who he swallows (DP 13.1, 4 = *OF* 7-8 B):¹¹⁹

Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ πατρὸς ἐοῦ πάρα [θ]έσφατ' ἀκούσα[ς]
αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος.

When Zeus had heard the prophecies from his father,
he swallowed the revered one [or phallus], who [or which] sprang forth¹²⁰
first into the aither [or who first ejaculated aither].¹²¹

West interprets this differently from Bernabé, and conjectures a line in which Zeus is “about to” (ἔμελλεν) take the “sceptre” (σκῆπτρον) in his hand, when first he goes to Night to hear her prophesy. West moves *OF* 5.2 B down and places it in between *OF* 7 and 8 B, 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 Zeus, after hearing Night’s prophecies, then takes the power from his father and swallows the “revered one” Protogonos, and this is how he acquires royal power.¹²² To Bernabé and Betegh, however, this act of swallowing is the means by which Zeus secures his rule after it has already been achieved.¹²³

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.¹²⁴ There is little clarity to be found from the Derveni author’s allegorical interpretation of this word to mean that genitals, being a procreative power, represent the sun, from which all life springs (DP 13.6-14). And the issue is confused further in DP 16.3 (*OF* 12.1 B) by the words πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου, which could either be translated “of the first-born king, the revered one”¹²⁵ or “of

¹¹⁹ Bernabé 2007b: 106.

¹²⁰ Or “gushed”; see Calame 1997: 68; 2014: 177-178.

¹²¹ This translation is my best attempt at reflecting the different translations that have been suggested of this highly contested passage; see section (d) for more details.

¹²² West 1983: 114.

¹²³ Bernabé 2007b: 105-106; Betegh 2004: 109-110.

¹²⁴ Brisson 2003: 19-29; Betegh 2004: 111-121; KPT 2006: 194-197; Bernabé 2007b: 107-109; see next section. In between these two positions, Calame (1997: 66-70) argues that “the poet was already playing upon the double sense” of the word, reading αἰδοῖος as a play on words, meaning both “venerable” and “phallus.”

¹²⁵ KPT 2006: 134.

the penis of the first-born king.”¹²⁶ 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 the first place. The one definite point in all of this is the way the act of swallowing is related to the securing of royal power.¹²⁷

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” (ὄς μέγ’ ἔρεξεν, 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).¹²⁸ In “the verse following” (τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ τούτῳ, 14.5) and “the next verse” (ἐχόμενον δὲ ἔπος, 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):

Οὐρανὸς Εὐφρονίδης, ὄς πρώτιστος βασιλευσεν.
ἐκ τοῦ δὴ Κρόνος αὐτίς, ἔπειτα δὲ μητίετα Ζεύς.

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

Thus, we have the four-generation genealogy that is contained in the Derveni poem: first Night, the “all-proclaiming” (πανομφεύουσα, 10.9) “nurse of the gods” ([θεῶν] τροφός, 10.11); then Ouranos the “first-born king” (πρωτογόνου βασιλέως, 16.3), “who was the first to become king” (ὄς πρώτιστος βασιλευσεν, 14.6); then Kronos, “who did a great deed” (ὄς μέγ’ ἔρεξεν, 14.5); and finally “clever Zeus” (μητίετα Ζεύς, 15.6).

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” (μητιν) and “royal honor” (βασιληίδα τιμ[ήν]) survive. Scholars have reconstructed the line to read:

μητιν καὶ [μακάρων κατέχ]ων βασιληίδα τιμ[ήν]

¹²⁶ Bernabé 2007b: 114.

¹²⁷ As Stocking (2013: 185) has recently demonstrated, the establishment of patriarchal power is also connected with consumption in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, in the episodes of Kronos swallowing his children, the Prometheus sacrifice, and the swallowing of Metis by Zeus.

¹²⁸ Bernabé 2007b: 110.

holding wisdom and royal honor over the blessed gods.¹²⁹

The use of μητις 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.¹³⁰

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.”¹³¹ But because Zeus swallows Metis, “all the unexpected possibilities which cunning time conceals are now within Zeus.” Sovereignty becomes “a stable and permanent state,”¹³² because Zeus “acquires the resourceful cleverness which enables one to get out of inextricable situations.”¹³³

Since the word μητις 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 could also refer to the goddess herself.¹³⁴ This line was immediately followed by an even more fragmented line – only the word “sinews” (ἰναξ) survives – 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 that begins *OF* 12 B:

Πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου· τῷ δ’ ἄρα πάντες
ἀθάνατοι προσέφυν μάκαρες θεοὶ ἠδὲ θεάιναι
καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ κρήναι ἐπήρατοι ἄλλα τε πάντα,
ἄσσα τότε ἦν γεγαῶτ’, αὐτὸς δ’ ἄρα μοῦνος ἔγεντο.

... of the revered one (or phallus of) the first-born king; and upon him all
the immortals grew, blessed gods and goddesses
and rivers and lovely springs and everything else

¹²⁹ DP 15.13 = *OF* 11 B; conjectures accepted by Bernabé *ad loc.*; West 1983: 114; Betegh 2004: 124.

¹³⁰ Bernabé (2007b: 111-112) relates the use of μητις here to the masculine Metis in later Orphic poetry, who “is identified with Eros-Phanes-Firstborn.” Because of this, some have argued that μητις is a reference to Phanes, but Bernabé insists that Phanes does not appear in the Derveni *Theogony*.

¹³¹ Detienne & Vernant 1974: 108.

¹³² Detienne & Vernant 1974: 109; *cf.* p. 112: “He encloses her forever within himself so that, being a part of his own substance, she will give him the constant knowledge of the chances that the future holds which will enable him to control the shifting and uncertain course of events.”

¹³³ Detienne & Vernant 1974: 112.

¹³⁴ 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 his first wife Metis. West (1983: 86-88), on the other hand, thinks the line is a reference to Metis, as in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, and points out the parallel: in each case, the act of swallowing was one of the first acts of Zeus as king.

that had then been born; and he himself became the only one.¹³⁵

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 all of the previous creation into himself, or at least 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 “first-born” 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 Kouremenos takes Πρωτογόνου to mean not simply “first-born,” but the deity Protogonos. He translates προσέφυν as “clinging on to,” and interprets this as “the absorption in Zeus of the Protogonos-made cosmos which was swallowed by Zeus along with its creator.”¹³⁶ West also interprets these lines as the swallowing of Protogonos, based on his conjecture that the Derveni Theogony contained the same number of generations as the Rhapsodies. He argues that although there is “no suggestion” that Protogonos was actually “identified with” the universe, the primordial deity Protogonos gave “life and light to the world” in such a way that when Zeus swallowed him, “everything else was drawn in with him” or “became one with him.”¹³⁷ In 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 first-born king,” who is Ouranos son of Night. Betegh takes αἰδοίου to mean “phallus,” and calls Zeus’ act of swallowing “that moment of the story when, due to the engulfment of the generative principle ... everything becomes interiorised in Zeus.”¹³⁸ Bernabé has a similar view: that “by absorbing the immense generating capacity of Sky’s penis,” Zeus undergoes a “cosmic pregnancy” in which he is “invested with regal sovereignty and pregnant with the world.” According to Bernabé, Zeus “returns to the origins and restarts the history of the universe,”

¹³⁵ DP 16.3-6 = *OF* 12 B.

¹³⁶ KPT 2006: 23-25, 214-216; cf. *OF* 58, 82, 85, 87, 129, 167, 168 B. West (1983: 86-88) also argues, on the basis of the Rhapsodic narrative and his own reconstruction of the “Protogonos Theogony,” that it is Protogonos the son of Night who precedes Ouranos, whom Zeus swallows.

¹³⁷ West 1983: 88.

¹³⁸ Betegh 2004: 125.

but there is a new “driving force of evolution” in this re-creation: his cunning intelligence (μητις).¹³⁹ This brings us back to *OF* 10 B, where Zeus is referred to as μητιετα 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 successive generations of deities, but in Orpheus, Zeus swallows that universe and re-creates it by intelligent design.¹⁴⁰

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” (αὐτὸς δ’ ἄρα μοῦνος ἔγεντο, DP 16.6 = *OF* 12.3 B) who existed. “In the following verse” (ἐν τῷ ἐχ]ομένῳ, DP 16.12), the poem narrates the immediate consequence of the 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” ([νῦν δ’ ἐστὶ]ν βασιλεὺς πάντ[ων καὶ τ’ ἔσσειτ’ ἐπ]εῖτα, DP 16.14 = *OF* 13 B). What follows has been called a “mini-hymn” to Zeus,¹⁴¹ 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.¹⁴² 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.¹⁴³ 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.¹⁴⁴ 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:

Ζεὺς πρῶτος [γένετο, Ζεὺς] ὕστατος [ἀργικέρανος].
 Ζεὺς κεφα[λή, Ζεὺς μέσ]σα, Διὸς δ’ ἐκ [π]άντα τέτ[υκται].
 [Ζεὺς πνοιή πάντων, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο] μοῖρα.

¹³⁹ Bernabé 2007b: 114-115.

¹⁴⁰ Detienne & Vernant 1974: 137-139; West 1983: 92; Bernabé 2007b: 120.

¹⁴¹ Betegh 2004: 126.

¹⁴² West 1983: 89-90; cf. Betegh 2004: 125-126; Brisson & Chase 2009: 38-39. Specifically the Orphic fragments West used were a hymn to Zeus in *De Mundo* (*OF* 31 I B = *OF* 21a K) and a longer version in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K). Both contain lines that are identical to *OF* 14 B, lines 1, 2 and 4. For more on these Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus, see Chapter Three, section (c) and Chapter Five, section (g).

¹⁴³ West 1983: 114, line 26.

¹⁴⁴ West (1983: 114, line 28): [Ζεὺς πάντων τέλος αὐτὸς ἔχει, Ζεὺς] Μοῖρα [κραταιή]. Bernabé (*OF* 14.3 B): [Ζεὺς πνοιή πάντων, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο] μοῖρα; note the square brackets around every word except μοῖρα.

Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεὺς δ' ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων ἀργικέραυτος.

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 (i.e., present) creation. It is from him that “all things are made,” with the use of τεύχω implying that this was a skilled, intentional act.¹⁴⁵ It is by this re-creation that the sovereignty of Zeus is solidified, as promised by the prophecies of Night at the beginning of the poem. The emphasis of the 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.”¹⁴⁶

From here, the Derveni poem went on to narrate Zeus’ act of re-creation and the birth of other deities. There appears to have been a reference to either “jumping” or “mating” (θόρ{v}η),¹⁴⁷ 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:

“θόρ{v}η” δὲ λέγ[ων] δηλοῖ / ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἀέρι κατὰ μικρὰ μεμερισμένα
ἐκινεῖτο / καὶ ἐθόρνυτο ... Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία / καὶ Ζεὺς καὶ ἀφροδισιάζειν
καὶ θόρνυσθαι καὶ Πειθῶ / καὶ Ἀρμονία τῷ αὐτῷ θεῷ ὄνομα κεῖται. ἀνήρ
γυναικὶ μισγόμενος ἀφροδισιάζειν λέγεται κατὰ φάτιν.

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.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Cf. LSJ, s.v. τεύχω: “produce by work or art.” See West 1983: 92: “the deliberate intelligence of the creation is conveyed;” Bernabé 2007b: 120: “Zeus appears as a demiurge who makes the world according to a rational plan.”

¹⁴⁶ This is paralleled in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, where the entire 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, who demonstrates that the formulaic phrase “father of gods and men” (θεῶν πατέρ’ ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν) “functions as a narrative marker” at *Theogony* 47, 457, 542-544, 643, and 838. So it could also be argued that the emphasis of Hesiod is not cosmogony but how cosmogony brought Zeus to his present position.

¹⁴⁷ See LSJ s.v. θρόσκω: usually it means “leap, spring,” though sometimes it means “leap upon, assault”: e.g., ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι θόρον *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” (τίκτει δ’ ὁ θρόσκων), and fr. 15 Radt = Hesychius θ 814 Latte “mating sweet wild creatures” (μύρα / θρόσκων κνώδαλα).

¹⁴⁸ DP 21.1-9 = OF 15 B.

There must have been one or more lines in the poem saying that Zeus gave birth to Ouranian Aphrodite, Peitho, Harmonia, and perhaps more deities. The Derveni author is reminded of a line “in the Hymns” (ἐν τοῖς Ὑμνοῖς, 22.11) – whether he means another Orphic hymn circulating at the time, or this one – that lists six goddesses, all of whom he believes are the same goddess: “Demeter, Rhea, Ge, Meter, Hestia, Deio” (Δημήτηρ [P]έα Γῆ Μητήρ Ἑστία Δηιώτι, 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.¹⁴⁹ 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. Having failed to seduce Dione, Zeus ejaculates in the sea and the second Aphrodite is born from the foam.¹⁵⁰ 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, while in the process of giving birth to others.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵²

More fragments of this episode appear in columns 22-24. From the mention of Ocean in DP 23.3-7, from the verb ἐμήσατο (“he designed”), together with the phrases “great strength” (σθένος μέγα) and “broadly flowing” (εὐρὸν ῥέοντα), West reconstructed a lost line that has found wide acceptance.¹⁵³ Combining this with the line quoted in DP 23.11 and a few other conjectures, Bernabé puts together four lines in *OF* 16 B:

[μήσατο δ’ αὖ] Γαῖάν [τε καὶ] Οὐρανὸν εὐρὸν [ὑπερθεῖν],
μήσατο δ’ Ὀκεανοῖο μέγα σθένος εὐρὸν ῥέοντος.
ἵνας δ’ ἐγκατέλεξ’ Ἀχελωίου ἀργυροδίνεω,
ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα θάλασ[σα]

¹⁴⁹ E.g., *Theogony* 337-361; Peitho is mentioned in line 349.

¹⁵⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 110.23 Pasquali (*OF* 260 B = *OF* 183 K); see Betegh 2004: 127-128.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *OF* 10 B, which runs through the first generations of gods in three lines. West (1983: 115, lines 33-34) conjectures two lines: one for Aphrodite, and the other for Peitho and Harmonia.

¹⁵² Bernabé 2007b: 119.

¹⁵³ 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 square brackets in their translation of the Derveni Papyrus. Most likely the line appeared at the bottom of column 22.

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” (ἵναι) of Achelous, which are typically taken to mean rivers and streams.¹⁵⁴ Then he creates the Moon “of equal limbs” (ἰσομελῆ, DP 24.2 = OF 17.1 B), “who shines for many mortals on the boundless earth” (ἦ πολλοῖς φαίνει μερόπεσσι ἐπ’ ἀπείρονα γαῖαν, DP 24.3 = OF 17.2 B).

The end of the episode of re-creation is marked by a formulaic phrase (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ) that is familiar from Homer and Hesiod in lines that mark the transition from one scene or set of actions to the next.¹⁵⁵ 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):

[αὐτ]ὰρ [ἐ]πεὶ δ[ὲ] π[άν]τα Διὸ[ς] φρήν μ[ή]σατ[ο] ἔ[ργα]
ἤθελε μητρὸς ἑᾶς μυχθήμεναι ἐν φιλότῃτι.

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. Bernabé argues that “by committing incest with his mother, he becomes his own son and succeeds himself as a last resort to stabilize power,” thus breaking the “cycle of succession.”¹⁵⁶ But according to West, the cycle of succession continued by narrating the birth of Persephone and her incest with Zeus, leading to the birth of Dionysus as it occurs in the Rhapsodies. Based on his reading of the Rhapsodies, West conjectured that the Derveni Theogony ended with the birth of Dionysus and his death by the Titans.¹⁵⁷ 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,¹⁵⁸ and Bernabé

¹⁵⁴ KPT 2006: 258-259.

¹⁵⁵ *Iliad* 7.207; *Odyssey* 5.76; *Homeric Hymns* 2.483, 6.14; Hesiod, *Theogony* 857; *Works and Days* 121; etc.

¹⁵⁶ Bernabé 2007b: 121-122. The theme of incest is common in Greek myth, since in Hesiod Zeus marries his sister Hera (Hesiod, *Theogony* 921).

¹⁵⁷ West 1983: 94-96.

¹⁵⁸ Betegh 2004: 130.

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.¹⁵⁹

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 at least the first part. The poem begins with the moment when Zeus has just taken power. Upon the advice of Night, he swallows either his “revered” (αἰδοῖος) ancestor Protogonos or the “phallus” (αἰδοῖον) 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 the entire previous creation, and in doing so becomes the only being in existence. This leads to a hymnic passage that extols the sovereignty of Zeus, who has secured this sovereignty by the act of swallowing. From here, Zeus begins to re-create the universe by intelligent design (μήσατο, *OF* 16.1 B), producing both deities who had existed before and all entities that exist in 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 only as they led to or resulted from this narrative moment.

(d) 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 through the material is by choosing “sure points of reference” (“points de repère sûrs”). 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

¹⁵⁹ Bernabé 2007b: 122.

Theogony and the Rhapsodies.¹⁶⁰ 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 that deity is Zeus, who swallows either his revered ancestor or that 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 king of the gods attempts to secure his royal power through the act of swallowing shortly after this power has been acquired.

As we saw in Chapter One, there is a variety of older, Near Eastern succession myths that are remarkably similar to the succession myth in Hesiod and the Orphic theogonies. The most similar myth is the Hittite-Hurrian succession myth (c. thirteenth century BC), which has a basic genealogy of the sky-god An, Kumarbi, and then Tessub. Like Ouranos, An 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.¹⁶¹ 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 she attempts to swallow him. Marduk creates winds that make her unable to close her mouth, and he fires an arrow down her throat.¹⁶² Based on the parallels between the Hittite myth, the Babylonian myth, and Hesiod, it seems clear 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 names of Phanes and Erikepaios, and the image of winged Chronos, but in Hesiod, "the foreign elements had been completely absorbed" to the extent that "all the gods concerned in the narrative are traditional [Greek] ones."¹⁶³ Still, the essential framework usually

¹⁶⁰ Brisson 1995: 410-413.

¹⁶¹ West 1966: 21; 1997a: 290.

¹⁶² *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, IV, trans. Dalley 1989: 233-235, 253-255; see West 1966: 213; 1997a: 288-292.

¹⁶³ West 1966: 28-29.

consists of a succession myth that involves at least three divine kings. In the way these successions are narrated, two kinds of actions occur in both Near Eastern and Greek theogonies 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,” so Apsû decides to kill them but Tiâmat objects.¹⁶⁴ 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:

καὶ τῶν μὲν ὅπως τις πρῶτα γένοιτο,
πάντας ἀποκρύπτασκε, καὶ ἐς φάος οὐκ ἀνέσκε,
Γαίης ἐν κευθμῶνι, κακῶ δ’ ἐπετέρπετο ἔργῳ
Οὐρανός.

And 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.¹⁶⁵

Likewise, as Ea the son of the sky-god Anu defeats Apsû, so Kronos defeats the sky-god Ouranos. This episode is also parallel with Kumarbi’s defeat of An in the Hittite myth, and also in the Babylonian 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:

ὃ δ’ ἐκ λοχέοιο πάϊς ὠρέξατο χειρὶ
σκαίῃ, δεξιτερῇ δὲ πελώριον ἔλλαβεν ἄρπην
μακρὴν καρχαρόδοντα, φίλου δ’ ἀπὸ μήδεα πατρὸς
ἐσσυμένως ἤμησε, πάλιν δ’ ἔρριψε φέρεσθαι
ἐξοπίσω.

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.¹⁶⁶

This set of events is also 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” (ὃς μέγ’ ἔρεξεν, DP 14.5 = *OF* 10.1 B), presumably Kronos, whom the Derveni poem refers to as 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.

¹⁶⁴ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233; West 1966: 23.

¹⁶⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony* 156-159.

¹⁶⁶ Hesiod, *Theogony* 178-182; cf. *Song of Kumarbi* 4-5, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 42.

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.¹⁶⁷ In both cases, Kumarbi engages in the act of swallowing to secure his power. Likewise, in Hesiod's *Theogony* Kronos swallows his children in an attempt to prevent them from taking away his royal power:¹⁶⁸

ἵνα μή τις ἀγαυῶν Οὐρανίωνων
 ἄλλος ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἔχοι βασιληίδα τιμήν.
 πεύθετο γὰρ Γαίης τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος,
 οὐνεκά οἱ πέπρωτο ἐφ' ὑπὸ παιδί δαμῆναι.

... so that none of the other noble heavenly ones might have royal honor among the immortals. For he learned from Gaia and starry Ouranos that he was destined to be overcome by his own son.¹⁶⁹

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.”¹⁷⁰ 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 taken to Crete to be nursed until he is ready to return and overthrow Kronos (*Theogony* 468-491).

¹⁶⁷ *Song of Kumarbi* 6-7, 13-16, trans. Hoffner & Beckman 1998: 43; West 1966: 20-21, 43-44; Burkert 2004: 92. After Kumarbi castrates his father, he swallows his father's genitals and spits out some of the pieces. From these pieces two gods are born, but a piece remains inside him, generating the storm-god Tessub. Kumarbi tries to prevent Tessub's birth by swallowing a stone, but eventually Tessub comes out of Kumarbi's body and defeats him.

¹⁶⁸ This also occurs in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 200, 205-215 B), but no specific mention is made in the Derveni poem, perhaps so as not to distract from Zeus swallowing the αἰδοῖος/αἰδοῖον.

¹⁶⁹ Hesiod, *Theogony* 461-464.

¹⁷⁰ West 1966: 290-291.

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:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἄρ' ἔμελλε θεὰν γλαυκῶπιν Ἀθήνην
 τέξεσθαι, τότε ἔπειτα δόλω φρένας ἐξαπατήσας
 αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἔην ἐσκάθθετο νηδὺν
 Γαίης φραδμοσύνησι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος.
 τὼς γάρ οἱ φρασάτην, ἵνα μὴ βασιληίδα τιμὴν
 ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντὶ θεῶν αἰειγενετάων ...
 ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν Ζεὺς πρόσθεν ἔην ἐσκάθθετο νηδύν,
 ὡς δὴ οἱ φράσσαιτο θεὰ ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε.

But 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 honor 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.¹⁷¹

After this Athena is born out of Zeus' head,¹⁷² 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,¹⁷³ and likewise Athena oversees activities that require practical intelligence and skill, such as weaving and military strategy. 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 μητις is a characteristic of Zeus.”¹⁷⁴ 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.¹⁷⁵ He solidifies his cosmic role as divine king through the act of swallowing.

¹⁷¹ Hesiod, *Theogony* 888-893, 899-900.

¹⁷² Hesiod, *Theogony* 925-930.

¹⁷³ Detienne & Vernant 1974: 107-116.

¹⁷⁴ West 1966: 397-401.

¹⁷⁵ Stocking 2013: 189-193 makes a similar argument about Kronos and Zeus in Hesiod's *Theogony*; see also: Calame 2014: 170-171.

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 “First-born” deity who sprang from the cosmic egg (indeed one of his many names is Metis).¹⁷⁶ As in the Derveni poem, Zeus does this on the prophetic advice of Night after asking her, “How must I put in place my stout-hearted rule over the immortals?” (πῶς χρή μ’ ἀθανάτων ἀρχὴν κρατερόφρονα θέσθαι; *OF* 237.2 B). She advises him to “take everything” (πάντα ... λαβέ), including the sky, earth, sea and constellations, “which the sky has surrounded” (τά τ’ οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται) (*OF* 237.4-6 B). The means by which he takes everything is the swallowing of Phanes:

ὥς τότε πρωτογόνοιο χαδῶν μένος Ἴρικεπαίου
 τῶν πάντων δέμας εἶχεν ἔη ἐνὶ γαστέρι κοίλῃ,
 μεῖξε δ’ εἰς μελέεσσι θεοῦ δυνάμιν τε καὶ ἀλκὴν,
 τοῦνεκα σὺν τῷ πάντα Διὸς πάλιν ἐντὸς ἐτύχθη,
 αἰθέρος εὐρείης ἠδ’ οὐρανοῦ ἀγλαὸν ὕψος,
 πόντου τ’ ἀθάνατοι μάκαρες θεοὶ ἠδὲ θείαιαι,
 ὅσσα τ’ ἔην γεγαῶτα καὶ ὕστερον ὀππὸς’ ἔμελλεν,
 ἐν γένετο, Ζηνὸς δ’ ἐνὶ γαστέρι σύρρα πεφύκει.

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.¹⁷⁷

In the Rhapsodies, when Zeus swallows Phanes, he not only ingests the “power and strength” (δυνάμιν τε καὶ ἀλκὴν) of his great-grandfather, but 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*:

εἰ τοίνυν ὁ Ζεὺς ἐστὶν ὁ τὸ ἐν κράτος ἔχων, ὁ τὸν Φάνητα καταπιών, ... ὁ
 πάντα παράγων κατὰ τὰς ὑποθήκας τῆς Νυκτός, ὁ τοῖς θεοῖς τὰς ἐξουσίας
 παραδιδούς τοῖς τε ἄλλοις καὶ τοῖς τρισὶ Κρονίδαις, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τοῦ
 κόσμου παντὸς εἷς καὶ ὅλος δημιουργός, πέμπτην ἔχων ἐν τοῖς βασιλεῦσι

¹⁷⁶ See *OF* 141 B = *OF* 83, 170 K and Detienne & Vernant 1974: 133-139, who see Phanes as a response to or appropriation of depictions of Metis in Hesiod.

¹⁷⁷ *OF* 241 B = *OF* 167 K; translation by West 1983: 89, with minor changes.

τάξιν, ὡς καὶ τοῦτο ἀποδέδεικται τῷ ἡμετέρῳ καθηγεμόνι δαιμονίως ἐν ταῖς Ὀρφικαῖς συνουσίαις, καὶ σύστοιχος ὢν Οὐρανῷ καὶ Φάνητι, διὸ καὶ ποιητής ἐστι καὶ πατήρ καὶ ὀλικῶς ἐκάτερον.

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.¹⁷⁸

The reason why Zeus swallows Phanes in the Rhapsodies is to solidify his power. By swallowing he absorbs Phanes' power and consumes the entire previous creation, which “[grows] together in the stomach of Zeus” (Ζηνὸς δ' ἐνὶ γαστέρι σύρρα πεφύκει, *OF* 241.8 B). In Proclus' view, this allows him to start a new creation as the “Demiurge of all the universe” (τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς εἷς καὶ ὅλος δημιουργός).¹⁷⁹ 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:

Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένητο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυτος·
Ζεὺς κεφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται·

Zeus was born first, Zeus last, god of the bright bolt;
Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made.¹⁸⁰

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:

ὄθεν, οἶμαι, καὶ ἐκεῖνος μὲν καλεῖται Μητις, οὗτος δὲ Μητιέτης, καὶ ὀράται μὲν ἐκεῖνος, ὀρᾷ δὲ οὗτος, καὶ καταπίνεται μὲν ἐκεῖνος, ἐμφορεῖται δὲ οὗτος τῆς ἐκείνου δυνάμεως.

¹⁷⁸ Procl. *in Tim.* 1.314.22-315.4 Diehl (*OF* 240 VII B).

¹⁷⁹ Procl. *in Tim.* 1.314.22-315.4 Diehl (*OF* 240 VII B). By δημιουργός, Proclus refers specifically to the function of Zeus as Demiurge on the level of Intellective Intellect in the Neoplatonist metaphysical system. See Chapter Five, section (f) for more details. Proclus understands Zeus as Demiurge in an allegorical sense, but this is a point at which the allegory is based securely on a detail in the narrative.

¹⁸⁰ *OF* 243.1-2 B; cf. *OF* 14.1-2 B; *OF* 31 B and Chapter Three, section (c); Chapter Five, section (g).

From which, I think, also [Phanes] is called Metis, and [Zeus] is called Wise, and [Phanes] is seen, but [Zeus] sees, and [Phanes] is swallowed, but [Zeus] fills himself with the power of [Phanes].¹⁸¹

Proclus is unclear in this passage whether Phanes “is called” (καλεῖται) 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 since they are inherent in Phanes, as indicated by the fact that Metis is one of the names of Phanes. 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 in the Derveni poem it is unclear who or what is swallowed. Zeus swallows either the phallus or the whole body of either Protogonos or Ouranos. 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” (ἔχρησεν ἅπαντα τά οἱ θε[μῖς ἦν ἀνύσασ]θαι / ὡς ἄν ἔ[χοι κά]τα καλὸν ἔδος νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου, *OF* 6.4-5 B). After hearing these prophecies (*OF* 7 B), he “swallowed the revered one (or phallus [of someone]) who sprung forth (or gushed) first into (or ejaculated) the aither” (αἰδοῖον κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος, *OF* 8 B). There are two words in this fragment that are particularly unclear: ἔκθορε and αἰδοῖον. Typically, the accusative αἰθέρα is read as reflecting motion toward, while ἔκθορε is read in the more common sense of θρόσκω 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? Burkert suggests, based on the Egyptian parallel of Atum, reading ἔκθορε in the less common sense of ejaculating, and he interprets the line as meaning that Ouranos “first ejaculated aither.”¹⁸² 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.

¹⁸¹ Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.312.9-12 (*OF* 240 III B = *OF* 97 K). Μητιέτης, which is how Proclus spells the epithet, is a later spelling (LSJ, s.v. Μητιέτα). See also Detienne & Vernant 1974: 133-139, who view Phanes as a development of Metis, having been transformed from Zeus’ first wife into a bisexual primordial being.

¹⁸² Burkert 2004: 93.

But it is αἰδοῖον that has generated more controversy. If αἰδοῖος 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” (Οὐρανὸς Εὐφρονίδης, ὃς πρότιστος βασιλεύσεν, *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) that appears on the first line of column 16. The first word could be the epithet πρωτογόνος (“first-born”) describing Ouranos, or it could be the proper name Πρωτογόνος, referring to Protogonos/Phanes as he appears in the Rhapsodies. Again, it is unclear what this genitive phrase modifies. West conjectures μένος,¹⁸³ which reflects the phrasing in the swallowing episode in the Rhapsodies. The relevant passage begins by saying, “so then, by taking in the might of Erikepaios the first-born” (ὥς τότε πρωτογόνοιο χαδῶν μένος Ἡρικεπαίου, *OF* 241.1 B). Using this line to justify West’s supplement, if αἰδοίου is translated as an adjective, then *OF* 12.1 B could be translated either “[the might of] Protogonos the revered king” or “[the might of] the first-born revered king [Ouranos].”

Whether Zeus swallows Protogonos or Ouranos, it remains uncertain 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.”¹⁸⁴ Calame argues that “the poet was already playing upon the double sense” of the word,¹⁸⁵ but most scholars have preferred to choose between either the adjective or the noun. If it is the noun αἰδοῖον, then *OF* 12.1 B might be translated “[might] of the phallus of the first-born king.”¹⁸⁶ This is how Bernabé reads these fragments, arguing that the “first-born king” must be Ouranos because he is the son of Night. In the Derveni poem, Night is a primordial divinity” who is not born, and Ouranos is her son, so Bernabé concludes that “logically, he is the first to be born.”¹⁸⁷ Since *OF* 10.1 B refers to Kronos, “who did a great deed” (ὃς μέγ’ ἔρεξεν) by castrating Ouranos, Bernabé argues that what Zeus swallows is the

¹⁸³ West 1983: 114, line 20.

¹⁸⁴ The singular noun αἰδοῖον simply means “phallus,” but the plural noun αἰδοῖα has the more general meaning of “genitals” (LSJ s.v. αἰδοῖον).

¹⁸⁵ Calame 1997: 67-68.

¹⁸⁶ Bernabé 2007b: 114.

¹⁸⁷ Bernabé 2007b: 107.

dismembered phallus of Ouranos, which Kronos had removed.¹⁸⁸ 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.” Since his idea of the Protogonos Theogony depends upon the closest possible parallel between the Derveni poem and the Rhapsodies, he reads this episode with the Rhapsodic version in mind. For West, Zeus swallows the entire body of Protogonos/Phanes as he does in the Rhapsodies, and by swallowing Phanes he swallows the entire cosmos.¹⁸⁹ Following this interpretation, Brisson suggests that the statement that Protogonos “sprung forth first into the aither” (αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος, *OF* 8 B) could be taken to mean that he sprung out of the cosmic egg created by the primordial deity Night (or Chronos as in the Rhapsodies).¹⁹⁰

If Protogonos appeared in the Derveni poem, as West and others believe,¹⁹¹ then the parallel between this act of swallowing and the one in the Rhapsodies is striking. If it is on the basis of the Rhapsodies that we accept that Zeus swallows Protogonos in the Derveni poem, then 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 the deity Protogonos as he appears in the Rhapsodies. Serving as a counter-example, one of the Orphic gold tablets seems to use this epithet to refer to Ge.¹⁹² Besides, it is difficult to see how Protogonos would fit in the genealogy of the Derveni poem if Ouranos is the first king.¹⁹³ In the Rhapsodies, the “first

¹⁸⁸ Bernabé 2007b: 108.

¹⁸⁹ West 1983: 88.

¹⁹⁰ Brisson 2003: 23-24.

¹⁹¹ West 1983: 88; Brisson 2003: 27-29; KPT 2006: 214; see also: Calame 1991: 236-237, in whose view the Derveni poem combines elements of both Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Aristophanes’ *Birds*. He finds there “the schema of the cosmogony of Aristophanes: an undifferentiated state (Night, Tartarus, Erebus, Abyss / Night), the gushing forth of distinction by light (egg / Sun) and sexuality (Eros / penis), the return to unity with Zeus” (“on retrouve le schéma de la cosmogonie d’Aristophane: un état indifférencié (Nuit, Tartare, Erèbe, Abîme/Nuit), le jaillissement de la distinction par la lumière (l’oeuf/Soleil) et la sexualité (Eros/le pénis), le retour à l’unité avec Zeus”).

¹⁹² Betegh (2004: 115) refers to one of the Thuri tablets (fourth century BC), but it is not clear whether the epithet actually refers to Ge, or the tablet mentions two separate deities. The text reads: “To Protogonos [untranslatable letters] to Earth mother [untranslatable letters] to Cybele, girl” (Πρωτογόνω<ι> ΘΗΜΑΙΤΙΕΘ Γᾱ ματρί ΕΠΙΑ Κυβελεία<ι> Κόρρα<ι>) (*OF* 492.1 B = *OF* 47 K).

¹⁹³ Betegh 2004: 117. Brisson (2003: 28) argues in favour of Protogonos, and suggests that “true sovereignty ... which implies a struggle for power, begins with Ouranos,” but this argument requires a particular view about sovereignty. Betegh (2004: 120) mentions Olympiodorus (*In Phaed.* 1.3), who refers to an Orphic tradition with four kings in its succession myth: Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-Dionysus. Though late and not

king was famous Erikepaios [i.e., Protogonos]” (πρῶτος βασίλευσε περικλυτὸς Ἑρικεπαῖος, *OF* 167.2 B). Also known as Phanes, he is the father of Night. He hands his daughter “royal honour” (βασιληίδα τιμήν), and she becomes the second ruler (*OF* 168-169 B). But in the Derveni poem, the first king is Ouranos, and he is the son of Night, not her father (*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” (πανομφεύουσα [θεῶν] τροφὸς ἀμβροσίη, *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.

If, as other scholars believe,¹⁹⁴ Protogonos did not appear in the Derveni poem as he did in the Rhapsodies, then Ouranos must have been the first-born 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 An and then swallows his genitals, so Betegh points out that he becomes “pregnant with three gods,” one of whom is the “equivalent of Zeus.” In Hesiod, the swallowing of genitals is “substituted with Kronos swallowing his children,” but it is possible that Orphic myth “preserved the motif of [Zeus] becoming pregnant” by swallowing Ouranos’ phallus, giving birth not only to the next generation of gods, but also to the previous generations of gods and a new creation.¹⁹⁵ Against this view, Brisson argues that “even if the theme of swallowing a phallus is found in Hittite sources, nothing guarantees that it occurs here, whereas the swallowing of [all of] Protogonos is definitely present in the Rhapsodies.”¹⁹⁶ The Rhapsodies are a later source, and the Hittite myth an earlier one, but the Rhapsodies were written in a time and place that was less culturally distant than the Hittites from the world of the Derveni poem. This would seem to tip the scales in favour of Protogonos.

Most of the arguments in favour of Protogonos read the adjective αἰδοῖος to mean that Zeus swallowed the “revered” Protogonos, and most of the arguments in favour of Ouranos (as the first god) read the noun αἰδοῖον to mean that Zeus swallowed the “phallus”

directly related to the Derveni Papyrus, Olympiodorus at least indicates that it was possible to have an Orphic theogony without Phanes.

¹⁹⁴ Betegh 2004: 121; Bernabé 2007b: 107-115.

¹⁹⁵ Betegh 2004: 119-120.

¹⁹⁶ Brisson 2003: 26.

of Ouranos. Based on his allegorical reading of the text, the Derveni author himself prefers the meaning “phallus.” He argues that what it 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. Having separated fire, Air/Mind contains or engulfs fire within itself. This contained fire becomes the sun and these acts of separation and containment are what allow life to be formed.¹⁹⁷ Although this argument might seem to support a reading of the noun αἰδοῖον, Betegh argues that this might not be so, because the Derveni author treats the Orphic poem as a riddle to be deciphered. If we attempt to look past his allegorical interpretation to discover what a literal, mythological reading of the original poem might have been, then we are looking for a view that the Derveni author “attributes to the ignorant.”¹⁹⁸ So, since the Derveni author thinks he is introducing a novel way of reading the text, this suggests that it might be preferable to do the opposite of what he does, and to read αἰδοῖος as an adjective, modifying either Protogonos or Ouranos. On the other hand, 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 usually was 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.¹⁹⁹

If Zeus swallows the phallus of either Protogonos or Ouranos, then he swallows the generative principle by which the first-born king of the gods was able to put in place the previous universal order of things. This is especially pertinent if we agree with Burkert’s reading of *OF* 8 B, that Zeus swallowed the phallus of Ouranos, who “first ejaculated aither,”²⁰⁰ since in this case Zeus would be swallowing the very substance and mechanism by which the universe was first created. Swallowing his ancestor’s phallus 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

¹⁹⁷ This is explained well by KPT 2006: 26-31; see section (e) for more on the Derveni author’s interpretation.

¹⁹⁸ Betegh 2004: 117.

¹⁹⁹ Betegh 2004: 121.

²⁰⁰ Burkert 2004: 93.

all of Phanes and ingests the whole creation, he also absorbs the “power” (ἄλκη, *OF* 241.3 B) of Phanes. Swallowing the αἰδοῖον in the Derveni poem gives Zeus the ability to secure his rule on Olympus, 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 her name denotes. The word μῆτιν appears in DP 15.13 (*OF* 11.1 B), but it is unclear whether it is a proper or common noun.²⁰¹ 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 (μήδομαι, meaning “plan and do cunningly, contrive,” or “invent, make skilfully”)²⁰² 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 βασιληῖς 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 of 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 αἰδοῖον 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 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). Although Betegh does not think this linguistic parallel is significant since καταπίνω can refer to “any act of swallowing,”²⁰³ the context of this verb in both cases is a deity who attempts to secure royal power through the act of swallowing. And despite the different phrasing in the Hesiodic episode of Zeus and Metis, when he “put her into his own belly”

²⁰¹ 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.”

²⁰² LSJ s.v. μήδομαι.

²⁰³ Betegh 2004: 114.

(ἐὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν, *Theogony* 899), again the purpose is to secure royal power soon after it has been achieved. Likewise 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” (τῶν πάντων δέμας εἶχεν ἐῆ ἐνὶ γαστέρι κοίλῃ, *OF* 241.2 B), and this gives him the “power” (ἀλκή, *OF* 241.3 B) of Phanes that he needs to re-create the universe.²⁰⁴ 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 βασιλῆς τιμή, either by preventing a son from overthrowing him or by 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 to the rule of the divine king, shortly after it has been achieved. And this is the central episode of the Derveni poem.

(e) The Presocratic Allegories of the Derveni Author

This interpretation of the Derveni poem – that it is a theogonic hymn centering on Zeus and the act of swallowing – is based on a critical analysis of the fragments that so far has disregarded the allegorical interpretation of the poem by the Derveni author, but there has been much debate about the connection between the Derveni author and other Presocratic philosophers. Opinions differ with regard to the quality of the Derveni author’s allegories. West asserts that the poem is forced into “a preconceived system” and given meanings “that it does not naturally bear,” resulting in an interpretation that is “uniformly false,”²⁰⁵ but Burkert argues that “the Derveni author appears to be less idiosyncratic or marginal than some have thought, and instead emerges as one of the intellectuals of his time.”²⁰⁶ There is no need here to discuss every detail of the Derveni author’s allegories, but a summary of his basic ideas in comparison with other Presocratic philosophers should suffice to demonstrate that the Derveni author is an example of a ritual specialist who

²⁰⁴ This use of γαστήρ seems unusual, since, as Stocking (2013: 191-196) points out (following Detienne & Vernant 1974: 188), typically in Hesiod νηδύς refers to the stomach or womb of an immortal, and γαστήρ refers to the stomach of a mortal. In other texts γαστήρ can refer to the womb of a mortal (*Iliad* 6.58; Herodotus 3.32; Plato, *Leg.* 792e). But *OF* 241 B contradicts Vernant’s observation by using γαστήρ to describe the immortal stomach/womb of Zeus. Another example of γαστήρ used of immortals is Plut. *De Is. et Osir.* 373b8, which refers to “the gods still being in the womb of Rhea” (ἔτι τῶν θεῶν ἐν γαστρὶ τῆς Ρέας ὄντων).

²⁰⁵ West 1983: 78-79.

²⁰⁶ Burkert 1997: 174.

subjected Orphic poetry to this sort of treatment. Based on this observation, I suggest that exegesis of Orphic poetry, whether allegorical or not, might have been one of the basic practices of an *orpheotelestes*; or more generally, that exegesis might be considered an activity that was of interest to some Orphics. As I argue above, the Derveni author considers himself a ritual specialist who performs purifications and interprets oracles, so he is the type of person we expect to make use of an Orphic text in ritual. But he also claims to have superior expertise in interpreting the text because he believes that Orpheus wrote in riddles. Thus it appears that ritual specialists who used Orphic texts also considered exegesis to be a part of their expertise, and at least one of these people used allegory. This raises the question of whether the authors of Orphic texts, in the Classical Period or later, also used allegory as a way of shaping the narrative. Either way, explaining the hidden meanings of the text was, for some Orphics at least, a part of their practice as ritual specialists.

Since Merkelbach and Burkert first demonstrated in the 1960s that the Derveni author was influenced by Presocratic philosophers,²⁰⁷ scholars have viewed the Derveni author's cosmogony as a combination of different ideas from different philosophers, especially Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, and Diogenes of Apollonia. The clearest evidence of Presocratic influence is the direct quotation of Heraclitus in the fourth column of the Derveni Papyrus. The Derveni author, discussing the cosmic justice exercised by the Erinyes, quotes Heraclitus by name, in a passage claiming that the Erinyes keep the sun within its proper limits:

ἤλι[ος . . .]ου κατὰ φύσιν ἀνθρω[πιῶν] εὖρος ποδός [ἐστι,
τὸ μ[έγεθος] οὐχ ὑπερβάλλων εἰκ[ότα] οὐ[ρο]ς ε[ύρου]ς
[ἐοῦ· εἰ δὲ μ]ή, Ἐρινύε[ς] νιν ἐξευρήσου[σι, Δίκης ἐπίκουροι.]

The sun according to its own nature is a human foot in width, not transgressing its boundaries; for if something transgresses its width, the Erinyes, the guardians of Justice, will find it out.²⁰⁸

This passage of Heraclitus is relevant to the themes of the Derveni Papyrus for two reasons: (1) because of the mention of the Erinyes, which fits with the Derveni author's discussion

²⁰⁷ Merkelbach 1967: 21-32; Burkert 1968: 93-114.

²⁰⁸ Orphic math, simple addition: DP 4.7-9 = Heraclitus fr. 22 B3 D-K (57 Marcovich) (Aetius 2.21.4) + fr. 22 B94 D-K (52 Marcovich) (Plutarch, *de exil.* 11.604a). Sider (1987: 226; *cf.* 1997: 130-148) thinks these two fragments were separate, as they appear in other sources, and that the Derveni author brought them together to support his interpretation of the Orphic poem, but most scholars now agree that these fragments were one continuous passage (Lebedev 1989: 42; Betegh 2004: 325-326; KTP 2006: 157-158).

of a ritual in columns 1-6; and (2) because of the idea that cosmic order is maintained by the sun staying within its limits, which supports the Derveni author's cosmogonic ideas in columns 7-26. Consequently, some scholars have seen Heraclitus as the link between the two sections of the papyrus.²⁰⁹ The idea that the sun must be kept within its limits was useful to the Derveni author's overall cosmogonic scheme, but he did not simply follow Heraclitus, who seems to have placed Fire as the primary ἀρχή in his cosmogonic system. This role was played in the Derveni Papyrus by Air, which is where the author's cosmogony reminds us more of Diogenes.²¹⁰

The Derveni author combined the Presocratic ideas of Anaxagoras, Diogenes, Heraclitus and others into a unique cosmogonic system upon which he based his interpretation of the Derveni poem as a riddle, but not simply as physical allegory. As I argue in Chapter One, section (d), the earliest philosophers did not make sharp distinctions between mythological and philosophical thinking. As evidence of this, I mentioned that the earliest stories about Pythagoras painted him as a mystic,²¹¹ and that Empedocles combined in one poem ideas about reincarnation with his physical cosmogony of the four elements.²¹² Likewise, the Derveni author appears to be in an ambiguous position between myth and philosophy. As Burkert argued, he stands at the middle point of a trajectory that seems to lead from purely traditional, mythological thinking toward scientific, philosophical thinking.²¹³ More recent scholarship has refined this view after further consideration of the Derveni author's ritual concerns. As Most suggests, "the Derveni author does not explain Presocratic physics in terms of Orpheus, but Orpheus in terms of Presocratic physics."²¹⁴ His allegorical method is precisely the opposite of Metrodorus, who allegorized the *Iliad* by interpreting heroes as parts of the universe and deities as parts of the human body. As

²⁰⁹ Betegh (2004: 327-329) argues that Heraclitus is the link that binds these two themes, namely the eschatological view of souls in the first six columns and the physical allegory that drives the Derveni author's interpretation of the Orphic poem; cf. Laks 1997: 127: "Heraclitus ... stands for a specific cosmogonical doctrine, which has ... eschatological implications."

²¹⁰ Heraclitus fr. 22 B30-31 D-K (51, 53 Marcovich) (Clement, *Strom.* 5.104.1-3); Diogenes fr. 64 A5 D-K (Simplicius, in *Phys.* 25.1); Betegh 2004: 345.

²¹¹ Burkert 1972: 83-93, 120-123, 158.

²¹² 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, *Met.* A4, 985a31-33), 31 B6 D-K (Aetius 1.3.20), 31 B17 D-K (Simplicius, in *Phys.* 157.25); cf. Zuntz 1971: 179-273; Wright 1981: 17-21, 57-76; Inwood 2001: 6-20.

²¹³ Burkert 1968: 93-114.

²¹⁴ Most 1997: 122.

Richardson explained, Metrodorus treated the *Iliad* “as an allegorical representation of [his] own scientific theories.”²¹⁵ The point of Metrodorus’ work was the presentation of scientific theories, with the poems used in support; he used myth to explain philosophy. For the Derveni author, the procedure was the opposite: as a ritual specialist, one of his areas of expertise was employing Presocratic allegories as a method of explaining the Orphic text, so he used philosophy to explain myth. But it is not clear whether he maintained any clear distinction in his mind between myth and philosophy or to him they were two sides of the same coin.

In the Derveni author’s cosmology, the universe begins with an undifferentiated primordial mass, a chaotic mixture of all of the elements. He is never clear about how many elements there are, but the two dominant ones are Fire and Air.²¹⁶ In the beginning, the elements remain in this chaotic mixture because the dominance of Fire keeps them in motion, unable to combine into stable, individual entities.²¹⁷ All of this changes with the creation of the sun, which initiates the formation of the cosmos out of the elements. Air, an intelligent entity that is also Mind (νοῦς), removes the fiery particles from the primordial mixture and encircles them, containing them as a sphere.²¹⁸ As the agitation of the fiery particles is removed from the mixture, other types of particles begin to be “struck” (κρούεσθαι, DP 14.4) against each other, allowing individual entities to be formed under the dominance of Air.²¹⁹ As the Derveni author describes this process:

γινώσκ[ω]ν οὖν τὸ πῦρ ἀγαμεμειγμένον τοῖς
 ἄλλοις ὅτι ταραύσσοι καὶ κ[ωλ]ύοι τὰ ὄντα συνίστασθαι
 διὰ τὴν θάλασιν ἐξάλλασ[σει ὅσ]ον τε ἰκανόν ἐστιν
 ἐξάλλαχθὲν μὴ κωλύ[ειν τὰ] ὄντα συμπαγῆναι.

So, knowing that Fire, inasmuch as it is mixed with the others, agitates the things that are and hinders them from getting set together because of fomenting, he [i.e., Air] removed it as much as was sufficient, so that once it is removed, it does not hinder the things that are from coagulating.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Richardson 1975: 69. As we will see in Chapters Four to Six, the Neoplatonists read Orphic theogonies allegorically in a way that contains features of both allegorical approaches. Always the focus of their work is their own metaphysical system, and they refer to Plato, Orpheus, the Chaldan Oracles and others to show that these texts agree. The Neoplatonists use philosophy to explain myth because it helps them explain philosophy.

²¹⁶ DP 19.2-4; Betegh 2004: 224-225, 259-267; KTP 2006: 34.

²¹⁷ DP 9.5-8; Betegh 2004: 228-230.

²¹⁸ DP 13-16; Betegh 2004: 230-243.

²¹⁹ DP 14; Betegh 2004: 252-256, 266-272; KTP 2006: 37.

²²⁰ DP 9.5-8.

In a nutshell, the creation of the universe begins when Air/Mind separates Fire from the undifferentiated mixture of primordial elements, allowing the “things that are to become such because of this” (τὰ δ’ ἔόντα ... γενέσθαι τριαῦτ[α] διὰ τοῦτον, DP 17.9-10). Viewing this cosmogony as a whole, it becomes clear how the quotation of Heraclitus is relevant: the reason why the sun must be contained within its limits is that, in the Derveni author’s opinion, this is what allows creation to occur.

In addition to the influence of Heraclitus, traces of the ideas of other Presocratic philosophers have been noted in the Derveni Papyrus. Like other Presocratics, the Derveni author seems to have been influenced by Parmenides’ idea that no matter can be created *ex nihilo* or completely destroyed; in other words, there cannot be a change from “what is not” (μὴ ὄν) to “what is” (ὄν) or vice versa.²²¹ This idea led certain Presocratic philosophers to propose the pre-existence of certain basic entities that were at the root of the formation of the present cosmos, but they all had different ideas about what these basic entities were.²²² For example, Empedocles proposed the four elements (fire, water, air, earth), while the atomists (Leucippus and Democritus) proposed an infinite number of different types of particles.²²³ Likewise, the Derveni author describes a cosmogony that begins with a pre-existing mixture of different elements, of which Fire is the dominant one at first. Creation begins when Air becomes dominant, separating Fire out of the mixture, and here the Derveni author is most similar to Diogenes, who calls Air the one basic element from which all other entities were formed. Both Diogenes and the Derveni author ascribe divine status and intelligence to Air (Diogenes uses νόησις but the Derveni author, like Anaxagoras, uses νοῦς), but the Derveni author is not a monist like Diogenes, who said that Air permeated everything in the cosmos. The Derveni author’s view is that Fire, Air, and other elements are separate entities. Air separates Fire from the other elements, but it does not permeate Fire or these other elements, as it might for Diogenes. Rather, it surrounds Fire, encircling

²²¹ Parmenides fr. 28 B8 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 78.5, 145.1).

²²² KTP 2006: 29-33.

²²³ KTP 2006: 29-33; Empedocles fr. 31 A37 D-K (Aristotle, *Met.* A4, 985a31-33), 31 B6 D-K (Aetius 1.3.20), 31 B17 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 157.25); Leucippus fr. 67 A6 D-K (Aristotle, *Met.* A4, 985b4); 67 A7 D-K (Aristotle, *de gen. et corr.* A8, 325a2); 67 A14 D-K (Simplicius, *de caelo* 242.18); Democritus fr. 68 A37 D-K (Simplicius, *de caelo* 295.1).

it and forming it into a sphere, and in doing so Air creates the sun.²²⁴ In this way Air allows the other elements to form into the things that exist now, but it is not the basic element from which all things are made.

Although both Diogenes and the Derveni author ascribe intelligence and divinity to the cosmic principle of Air, the Derveni author also has similarities with Anaxagoras' idea of Mind (νοῦς) as the cause of cosmic order. The Derveni author says that “it would not be possible ... for the things that are now to exist without the Mind” (οὐ γὰρ [οἷόν τε ...] εἶναι / [τὰ νῦν] ἔόντα ἄν[ε]ν τοῦ Νοῦ, DP 16.11-12), and this is in accordance with Anaxagoras' idea that Mind was the ultimate cause of order in the cosmos. Both Anaxagoras and the Derveni author also agree with Parmenides that the cosmos could not have been created out of nothing, but only with the use of pre-existing materials, which are basically the undifferentiated masses of particles that appear in these Presocratic cosmogonies. Anaxagoras differs from the Derveni author by not ascribing any kind of divine status to Mind, but describing it as an abstract force.²²⁵ The Derveni author, by contrast, equates Mind with Air and explicitly attributes divinity to it by applying his cosmogonic scheme allegorically to a reading of an Orphic poem.

One important difference between the Derveni author and other allegorists, in particular those who used physical allegory, is that rather than equate individual deities with individual phenomena, the Derveni author identifies every deity mentioned in the Derveni poem with Air/Mind in some way.²²⁶ He interprets each deity as one aspect of Air/Mind, or as one phase of the development of the cosmos by Air/Mind, but not as a distinct phenomenon in the universe. For example, he explains Aphrodite as the name for the “mating” (θόρ{ν}η, DP 21.1)²²⁷ that takes place as “the things that are now got mixed with one another” (τῶν γὰρ νῦν ἔόντων μιχθέντων ἀλλ[ή]λοις, DP 21.9). Night is set up as

²²⁴ Betegh 2004: 306-321; KTP 2006: 33. Diogenes fr. 64 A5 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 25.1). The Derveni author uses νοῦς four times at: DP 16.10-15. The interplay of Air and Fire has been compared to Empedocles' idea of the conflict between Love and Strife (KTP 2006: 37-42).

²²⁵ Betegh 2004: 278-294. Anaxagoras proposes an infinite number of different types of particles. As for the Derveni author, whether he “posits infinitely or indefinitely or finitely many basic entities ... is unclear” (KTP 2006: 34); cf. Parmenides fr. 28 B8 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 78.5, 145.1). On Mind, see Anaxagoras fr. 59 B12-14 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 164.24 & 156.13, 300.31, 157.7); on the infinite number of particles, see Anaxagoras fr. 59 B1 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 155.26).

²²⁶ Betegh (2004: 182-223) gives a detailed discussion of how this applies to each and every deity mentioned in the Derveni Papyrus.

²²⁷ See section (c) for a discussion of how θρόσκω could mean either “jumping” or “mating.”

the opposite of the sun, since “the sun dissolves [the pre-existent elemental particles] by heating” (ὁ ἥλιος θερμαίνων δι]αλύει), but Night is the “nurse” (τροφ[ὸν) who “unites [the elemental particles] by cooling” (ψύ[χουσα] / συ[νίστησι).²²⁸ Although the Derveni author does not explicitly allegorize Ouranos, it is easy to see how a personification of the sky might be read as an allegory for the Air encircling the sun, or the area to which the Fire is moved. Since columns 14-16 imply that Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus represent the dominance of Air at different stages, it follows that Ouranos represents Air.²²⁹

This is clearer in the case of Kronos, whom the Derveni author reads as representing the stage of cosmogony in which the pre-existing elemental particles come together to form individual entities, based on a false etymology that equates Kronos with the word κρούω:

τοῦτον οὖν τὸν Κρόνον
γενέσθαι φησὶν ἐκ τοῦ Ἥλιου τῆ Γῆ, ὅτι αἰτίαν ἔσχε
διὰ τὸν ἥλιον κρούεσθαι πρὸς ἄλληλα.
_____ διὰ τοῦτο λέγει “ὄς μέγ’ ἔρεξεν”.

So he says that this Kronos was born from Helios and Ge, because it was on account of the sun that the things that are were induced to be struck against (κρούεσθαι) each other ... For this reason he says: “(he) who did a great deed.”²³⁰

The castration of Ouranos by Kronos thus represents the separation of Fire from the primordial mixture, which allows the other elements to form into entities; but if the actions of Kronos create the sun, then how is Kronos the son of Helios? Although Bernabé includes this passage as a fragment of the Derveni Theogony, it is unclear whether Kronos was actually called the son of Helios in the Derveni poem or the Derveni author is making this connection based on allegory. The sun could be seen as the phallus of the sky, in which case Kronos, the son of Ouranos, is also by extension the son of his phallus, which is also named Helios. But to the Derveni author Ouranos and Kronos are the same because they are both Air. When Air separates Fire from the primordial mixture and creates the sun, it allows earth to be formed. This is the birth of Helios and Ge, so when they are formed Ouranos becomes Kronos. In other words, Air takes on the name of Kronos when the sun and earth are formed, and it is in this sense that Kronos is the son of Helios. The birth of

²²⁸ DP 10.11-13; see also Betegh 2004: 207-215. Note the Derveni author’s use of αἰν[ι]ζ[ε]ται in line 10, signifying that he wants the reader to be aware that he is reading the Orphic poem allegorically.

²²⁹ Betegh 2004: 206.

²³⁰ DP 14.2-5 = OF 9 B.

Kronos from Ouranos/Helios, therefore, allegorically represents the creation of the sun and the earth by means of the elemental particles that are struck together when Fire is removed to the sky.

Since both Kronos and Zeus represent Air/Mind but the Orphic poem also talks about Zeus being born, the Derveni author attempts to explain how it is that pre-existing Air, one of the dominant primordial elements that can never be created or destroyed, can be considered to have been born:

π[ρ]ότερον ἦν πρ[ιν ὄν]ομασθῆναι, ἔπ[ει]τα ὠνομάσθη·
 ἦν γὰρ καὶ πρόσθεν ὧν ἡ τὰ νῦν ἔόντα συσταθῆναι
 ἀἴρ καὶ ἔσται ἀεὶ [...] γενέσθαι δὲ
 ἐνομίσθη ἐπεὶτ' ὠνομάσθη Ζεύς, ὥσπερ εἰ πρότερον
 μὴ ἔών. καὶ “ὔστατον” ἔφησεν ἔσεσθαι τοῦτον, ἐπεὶτ'
 ὠνομάσθη Ζεὺς καὶ τοῦτο αὐτῷ διατελεῖ ὄνομα ὄν,
 μέχρι εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος τὰ νῦν ἔόντα συνεστάθη
 ἐν ᾧπερ πρόσθεν ἔόντα ἠωρεῖτο.

It existed before it was named, then it was named. For Air existed even before the things that are now were set together, and it will always exist ... But it was thought to have been born because it was named Zeus, just as if it did not exist previously. And he said that this would be the “last,” because it was named Zeus and this will continue to be his name, until the things that are now are set together into the same form in which they were floating as they were before.²³¹

Although Air has always existed, it took on the name of Zeus when it encircled Fire and allowed the present cosmos to take shape. In the same sense in which Kronos is born when the sun is removed to the sky, Zeus is born when the sun is encircled by Air. Simply put, Air changes from Ouranos to Kronos when the sun is removed from the primordial mixture, and Air changes from Kronos to Zeus when the sun is encircled by Air.

Zeus represents Air/Mind at a particular stage of the Derveni author's cosmogony and his act of swallowing Ouranos' phallus represents Air encircling Fire to create the sun. When Zeus swallows Ouranos' phallus, the Derveni author explains that the Orphic poet “called the sun a phallus” ([αἰδοῖ]ον τὸν ἥλιον ἔφ[η]σεν εἶναι, DP 16.1). The allegory of the sun as the phallus of the sky also represents the generative capacity of the sun, as the Derveni author suggests:

ἐν τοῖς α[ἰδοί]οις ὄρων τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου[ς]
 νομίζον[τας] εἶναι τούτῳ ἐχρήσατο, ἄνευ δὲ τῶν

²³¹ DP 17.1-9; see also: KTP 2006: 30-31.

αἰδοίων [οὐ γίν]εσθαι, αἰδοίω εἰκάσας τὸν ἥλιο[ν·]
 ἄνευ [γὰρ τοῦ ἡ]λ[ίο]υ τὰ ὄντα τοιαῦτα οὐχ οἷόν [τε]
 γίν[εσθαι] ...

Seeing that people consider generation to be dependent upon genitals, and that without genitals there is no becoming, he used this (word), likening the sun to a phallus. For without the sun the things that are could not have become such (as they are).²³²

So it is in two senses, both the necessity of separating Fire from the primordial mixture of elements and the generative capacity of the sun, that the formation of the sun is the central moment of the Derveni author's cosmogony, and this is attached to the central moment of the Orphic poem, in which Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos. The allegorical interpretation of the Derveni author is not an arbitrary imposition of a preconceived scheme on an essentially irrelevant text, but a coherent exegesis that focuses on the most important narrative moment of the text and finds correlations between this and the author's own cosmogonic system. The act of Zeus swallowing the phallus of Ouranos allegorically represents the encircling of Fire by Air to create the sun, because the sun is the phallus of the sky.

One of the most difficult mysteries about the Derveni Papyrus has been the relationship between the ritual in columns 1-6, the Orphic text in columns 7-26, and the allegorical interpretation by which the Derveni author attempts to explain the poem. Laks suggests that "allegory itself, as a form, can be considered as a religious practice," since, like Orphic texts and rituals, "one basic assumption that lies behind allegorical practice is that canonical texts were written for two kinds of public, those who know, and those who do not know," and this served as a way of separating initiates from non-initiates.²³³ Most argues that the allegorical interpretation of the Derveni author is connected with his eschatology: like Empedocles, the Derveni author "relates the questions of the survival of the soul ... to fundamental cosmological principles which organized the creation of the universe at its beginning."²³⁴ This suggestion may prove relevant to the question of the relationship between cosmogony and eschatology in Orphic thought in general, but Betegh suggests a more practical purpose for applying allegory to an Orphic text. The Derveni

²³² DP 13.7-11.

²³³ Laks 1997: 137-139.

²³⁴ Most 1997: 37.

author was a ritual specialist who wrote his commentary on both a ritual and a text to advertise his skill at his τέχνη. Allegorical interpretation was the means by which he demonstrated that he could explain the hidden meanings of the text.²³⁵ These suggestions are not mutually exclusive, but they all imply that, for an *orpheotelestes* living in the Classical Period, ritual expertise operated alongside exegetical expertise, and allegory was one accepted exegetical method.²³⁶

If, therefore, a ritual specialist in the fifth century BC who used Orphic texts in rituals also explained these texts by means of allegory, then this raises the question of whether Orphic pseudepigraphers from this period or later actually wrote Orphic poems with this type of allegory in mind. There is no way of knowing with certainty whether the Derveni poem itself actually called Kronos the son of Helios, or whether the act of Zeus swallowing the phallus of Ouranos was meant by the poet, not just the commentator, to represent the encircling of the sun by Air. If the Derveni poem was written before the time of Theagenes (i.e., before the sixth century BC), then on this historical basis we can dismiss the possibility of allegory being contained in such an early poem, but the question remains whether we will encounter intentional Orphic allegories in later poems. As we will see in Chapter Three, by the Hellenistic Period poets such as Cleanthes were writing poems that depicted gods in an intentionally allegorical way. Cleanthes was a Stoic who allegorized Zeus in a hymn, so it is not impossible that later versions of the Orphic Hymn(s) to Zeus could have contained intentional allegory. In Chapter Four, we will see the possibility of allegory in the primordial water and mud of the Hieronyman Theogony, which appears to be a similar type of primordial mass that we see in Presocratic and Stoic cosmogonies, so some scholars have suggested that the author of the Hieronyman Theogony was influenced by Stoicism. The vast majority of our sources for the Rhapsodies was composed by Neoplatonists who attached the deities of Orphic theogonies as allegories to their own metaphysical system. There was a long-lasting relationship between Orphic theogony and allegorical interpretation, of which there is evidence from the earliest to the latest sources, but it is unclear to what extent this is because of the pseudepigraphers who composed the poetry or the philosophers who discussed the poetry. In most cases, a suitably cautious

²³⁵ Betegh 2004: 349-370.

²³⁶ Etymology is another exegetical method of the Derveni author; see his explanation of the name of Kronos (DP 14), and his argument that ἐᾶς does not mean “his own mother,” but “the good mother” (DP 26).

approach is to assume that the allegory is applied by the philosopher to a poem that simply contains mythical narrative. The mere fact that most of our sources are philosophers should alert us to the danger of taking their interpretations at face value. But the Derveni Papyrus may yet serve as an indication that allegorical interpretation was indeed a vital aspect of Orphic practice for some people.

Chapter Three – The Eudemean Theogony and other Early Orphic Poems

The first thing to know about the so-called ‘Eudemean Theogony’ is that it was not written by Eudemus of Rhodes. This student of Aristotle who lived in the fourth century BC wrote a Peripatetic work that compared different cosmogonic accounts, including those of Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod, and a number of others, including Near Eastern sources like the Persian magi.¹ Nine centuries later, the Neoplatonists cited Eudemus often and one of them, Damascius, refers to his discussion of a “theology of Orpheus” (τοῦ Ὀρφέως ... θεολογία). 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” (ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Νυκτὸς ἐποιήσατο τὴν ἀρχήν).²

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 “Eudemean Theogony” to the resulting collection of fragments, so “*Eudemi Theogonia*” is the label Bernabé uses in his collection of the Orphic fragments.³ 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 the sources before the third century, we interpret these scattered references as possibly drawn from more than one Orphic poem within a wider tradition of theogonic poetry, then we can eliminate the need to try to explain away what seem like contradictions.⁴ 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

¹ Martínez-Nieto 2000: 181, 201; Edmonds 2013: 18.

² Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 B = *OF* 28 K).

³ Ziegler 1942: 1347; West 1983: 68-69, who follows Zeller, Gruppe, and Mondolfo (see West 1983: 68, 118 note 8; Bernabé 2004: 34); Bernabé’s version of the Eudemean Theogony is found at *OF* 19-27 B.

⁴ Edmonds (2013: 150-151) makes a similar argument about the Rhapsodies, which I discuss in Chapter Five.

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.

(a) The Cosmic Egg in Aristophanes' *Birds*

The cosmogony narrated in Aristophanes' *Birds* is a useful starting point for studying early Orphic theogonies, not only because it is one of the earliest sources (it was performed in 414 BC), but also because it illustrates some of the problems involved in trying to reconstruct the texts. This 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.⁵ 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 Presocratic philosophers, in addition to Orpheus.⁶ 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 predated the gods:

⁵ *OF* 1 K; Brisson 1995: 2877-2878.

⁶ Bernabé *ad OF* 64 B, following Wilamowitz (*Platon* I, 370); *cf.* Bernabé 1995: 195-211; West 1983: 111-112; KRS 1983: 26-29; Fowler 2013: 5-9; the relevant ancient texts are: Hesiod, *Theogony* 108-109; Acusilaus 9 B1 D-K (*FGrHist* 2 F6b = fr. 6b Fowler) (Eudemus fr. 150 Wehrli) (Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 = 3.163.19 Westerink-Combès). Acusilaus mentions Chaos, Night Erebus, and Tartarus, as well as Eros, who has no parents. 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): Epimenides has Night and Aether produce Tartarus who in turn produces two Titans, who produce a cosmic egg. See also: Schol. *ad Aristoph. Aves* 693 (132 White = Holwerda 1991: 109-110): even the scholiast recognized that "it is not necessary to correct this in accordance with that of Hesiod or that of any other genealogy" (ταῦτα οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον ἀπευθύνειν πρὸς τὰ Ἡσιόδου ἢ πρὸς τινα ἄλλου τινὸς γενεαλόγου). On the other hand, Fowler (2013: 7-9) suggests that Epimenides' source for Night and the egg was an Orphic theogony.

Χάος ἦν καὶ Νύξ Ἴρεβός τε μέλαν πρῶτον καὶ Τάρταρος εὐρύς·
 γῆ δ' οὐδ' ἀήρ οὐδ' οὐρανὸς ἦν· Ἴρεβους δ' ἐν ἀπείροσι κόλποις
 695 τίκτει πρότιστον ὑπηνέμιον Νύξ ἢ μελανόπτερος ῥόν,
 ἐξ οὗ περιτελλομέναις ὥραις ἔβλασταν Ἴερος ὁ ποθεινός,
 στίλβων νῶτον πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν, εἰκῶς ἀνεμώκεσι δῖναις.
 οὗτος δὲ Χάει πτερόεντι μιγείς νύχιος κατὰ Τάρταρον εὐρὺν
 ἐνεόττευσεν γένος ἡμέτερον, καὶ πρῶτον ἀνήγαγεν εἰς φῶς.
 700 Πρότερον δ' οὐκ ἦν γένος ἀθανάτων, πρὶν Ἴερος ζυνέμειξεν ἅπαντα·
 ζυμμειγνυμένων δ' ἐτέρων ἐτέροις γένητ' οὐρανὸς ὠκεανὸς τε
 καὶ γῆ πάντων τε θεῶν μακάρων γένος ἄφθιτον.

First there was Chaos and Night, black Erebus and wide Tartaros,
 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.
 This [Eros], mingling by night with winged Chaos throughout wide Tartaros,
 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.⁷

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.”⁸ And, sure enough, Night is the first deity in both the Derveni and Eudemean Theogonies, but Aristophanes also mentions Chaos, Erebus and Tartaros. Of course, 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 each other.⁹ As we will see in section (b), there are other texts, some Orphic and some 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 Tartaros, all convey a sense of dark emptiness, a state of universal nothingness to which the concept of personified Night can be naturally attached.¹⁰ As the next line of Aristophanes makes clear, the important point is that “neither earth nor

⁷ Aristophanes, *Birds* 693-702 (*OF* 64 B = *OF* 1 K).

⁸ Brisson 1995: 2877-2878.

⁹ In Hesiod's *Theogony* 116-125, Chaos is soon followed by Tartaros, Erebus and Night, so Aristophanes need not have drawn these four deities from anyone other than Hesiod.

¹⁰ Nilsson 1935: 199-200; West 1983: 201; Dunbar *ad loc.*; cf. the eastern cosmogonies discussed below, some of which begin with a primordial darkness.

air nor sky [i.e., nothing] existed” (γῆ δ’ οὐδ’ ἀήρ οὐδ’ οὐρανὸς ἦν, 694) when the birds were first born.

The inclusion of Night may 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” (τίκτει πρότιστον ὑπηνέμιον Νύξ ἢ μελανόπτερος ὄον, 695). The precise meaning of ὑπηνέμιον 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*.’¹¹ 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.¹² 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 of desire or wind in Phoenician cosmogonies, suggesting that ὑπηνέμιον is a reference to the idea that the winds are fertile.¹³ From this unfertilized wind-egg comes fertility itself: “there grew lovely Eros” (ἔβλασταν Ἔρωσ ὁ ποθεινός, 696) who first “hatched our [i.e., the birds’] race” (ἐνεόττευσεν γένος ἡμέτερον, 699) and then produced the rest of the cosmos, including “sky and ocean / and earth, and the immortal race of all the blessed gods” (οὐρανὸς ὠκεανὸς τε / καὶ γῆ πάντων τε θεῶν μακάρων γένος ἄφθιτον, 701-702). Following his 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. West points out similarities between the Orphic cosmic egg and other myths about the involvement of an egg in the process of creation, including Semitic, Persian and Vedic accounts.¹⁴ There are Vedic texts in which the time-god Kala produces the creator-god

¹¹ Bernabé *ad loc.*; cf. Bernabé 1995: 205; Sorel 1995: 50; Dunbar *ad loc.* The scholia on *Birds* 695 (p. 110 Holwerda) claimed that Aristophanes’ source for the word ὑπηνέμιον was a story about the Dioscuri being born from an egg; for more on this, see below.

¹² Dunbar *ad loc.*; cf. Calame 1991: 229-230; 1992: 193-195; *Suda* s.v. ὑπηνέμια (v 425): “sometimes many of the roosters by force give birth to wind-eggs” (ἐνίοτε πολλοὶ τῶν ἀλεκτρούων βία ὑπηνέμια τίκτουσιν ὄα) ... “those things apart from male seed” (τὰ δίχα σπέρματος ἄρρενος); *Suda* v 424 echoes the wording of Schol. Aristot. Av. 695 (p. 110 Howerda): “those things apart from intercourse” (τὰ δίχα συνουσίας καὶ μίξεως).

¹³ West 1983: 201-202, cf. Dunbar *ad loc.*; these Phoenician cosmogonies are discussed below.

¹⁴ West 1983: 103-104; cf. West 1971: 30-33.

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.”¹⁵ Somewhat later, in two hymns of the *Atharvaveda*, the time-god Kala appears as a creator deity who produces Prajapati.¹⁶ In the *Bhramanas* and *Upanishads*, the golden embryo is replaced by an “egg” (*anda*):¹⁷ 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.”¹⁸

Around the sixth century BC in Persia,¹⁹ 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

¹⁵ Lujan (2011: 86-88) cites and translates *Rigveda* 10.121.1, 7: “The golden embryo developed in the beginning. When born, he was the sole lord of what exists. He fixed the earth and this sky ... When the lofty waters came setting universal embryo, engendering the Fire (*Agni*), developed as the gods’ only breath”; cf. *Atharvaveda* 4.2.8: “The waters, generating offspring, set in motion an embryo in the beginning, whose membrane, once it was born, was of gold” (Lujan notes that in the Hieronyman Theogony Time forms the egg out of water). A parallel to Eros can be seen in *Rigveda* 10.123.3a-4b: “The One was born by the power of the heat (*tapas*). Desire (*kama*) developed further in the beginning, which was the first seed of conscience.”

¹⁶ Lujan (2011: 87-88) cites and translates *Atharvaveda* 19.53.5-6, 10: “Time engendered the sky there, Time also (engendered) this earth. In Time things past and future, set in motion, take their place ... Time produced the creatures, Time (produced) Prajapati in the beginning.” Lujan notes that in Aristophanes Chronos is not mentioned, but in the later Orphic theogonies he is; likewise, in the *Rigveda* Time (Kala) is never mentioned, but in the slightly later *Atharvaveda* Time is the creator deity.

¹⁷ Lujan (2011: 90) points out that “embryo” (*garbha*) is replaced by “egg” (*anda*) and remarks that this happens “in the Indian texts closer in time to the Greek one.” Lujan concludes that “the more recent Vedic versions of the cosmogony are thus more similar to some of the Orphic traditions ... than the older ones,” an “evolution” indicating that “such similarities are due to cultural contacts, probably through the intermediary of some of the peoples of the Near East.”

¹⁸ Lujan (2011: 89) cites and translates the *Shatapathabrahmana* 11.1.6.1-7: “in the beginning this (universe) was water, nothing but a sea of water. The waters desired, ‘How can we be reproduced?’ They toiled and performed fervid devotions, when they were becoming heated, a golden egg was produced. The year, indeed, was not then in existence: this golden egg floated about for as long as the space of a year. In a year’s time man, this Prajapati was produced therefrom ... He broke open the golden egg. There was then, indeed, no resting-place: only this golden egg, bearing him, floated about for as long as the space of a year ... He laid the power of reproduction into his own self. By (the breath of) his mouth he created the gods.” And in the *Chandogya-upanishad* 3.19.1-2: “In the beginning this (world) was non-being. Then it was being, then it sprang up, then an egg developed, then it lay for the duration of a year, then it broke. The two halves of the egg were silver and gold: the silver one, this was the earth; the golden one, the sky.”

¹⁹ West 1971: 30-33 finds the earliest textual evidence of the Zoroastrian cosmogony in the Armenian writers Elise Vardapet and Eznik of Kolb (fifth century AD), but guesses the myth is as old as the sixth to fourth centuries BC.

it: “first heaven appears, in the shape of an egg, made of shining metal ... everything else is created inside it.”²⁰

Closer in time and space to the Greeks, there are actually three Phoenician cosmogonies that involve the motif of the egg. In the Sidonian cosmogony preserved in Damascius’ *De Principiis*, Time exists “before anything else” (πρὸ πάντων) along with Desire and Nebula. Desire and Nebula produce Aer and Aura, and “from these two an egg was produced” (ἐκ τούτων ἀμφοῖν ᾧδὸν γεννηθῆναι).²¹ In another Phoenician cosmogony, Damascius attributes to Mochos a story in which Aither and Aer produce Oulomos, whose name is equivalent to Semitic words meaning “Time.”²² Oulomos has sex with himself and produces “Chousoros the opener” (Χουσωρόν ἀνοιγέα) and an egg, and “when [the egg] broke in two, heaven and earth appeared from the halves” (ἐξ αὐτοῦ ῥαγέντος εἰς δύο γενέσθαι οὐρανὸς καὶ γῆ, τῶν διχοτομημάτων ἐκάτερον).²³ The third Phoenician cosmogony is recorded by Philo of Byblos (*FGrHist* 790), who transmits Sanchouniathon of Beirut.²⁴ In the beginning there is “dark, windy air” (ἀέρα ζοφώδη καὶ πνευματώδη) but:

ὄτε δέ, φησίν, ἠράσθη τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν ἰδίων ἀρχῶν καὶ ἐγένετο σύγκρασις, ἢ πλοκῆ ἐκείνη ἐκλήθη πόθος ... καὶ ἐκ τῆς αὐτοῦ συμπλοκῆς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐγένετο Μώτ. τοῦτό τινές φασιν ἰλύν, οἱ δὲ ὑδατώδους μίξεως σῆψιν. καὶ ἐκ ταύτης ἐγένετο πᾶσα σπορὰ κτίσεως καὶ γένεσις τῶν ὅλων ... καὶ ἀνεπλάσθη ὁμοίως ᾧ οὗ σχήματι.

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

²⁰ West (1971: 30-33) cites and translates 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. Another Pahlavi book (*Menok-i-Xrat* 8.6-9) says Ohrmazd’s creation was made “with the blessing of the Infinite Zurvan, for the Infinite Zurvan is unaging and deathless; he knows neither pain nor decay nor corruption.”

²¹ West (1994: 290-291) cites and translates Damascius, who cites Eudemus. In turn Eudemus was discussing two Phoenician cosmogonies. West thinks these were “an oral source.” Eudemus fr. 150 Wehrli = Damascius, *De Principiis* 125 (3.166 Westerink-Combès): “The Sidonians, according to the same writer [Eudemus], posit Time as existing before anything else, and Desire, and Nebula. And from the union of Desire and Nebula ... came Aer and Aura ... and again from these two an egg was produced” (Σιδώνιοι δὲ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν συγγραφέα πρὸ πάντων Χρόνον ὑποτίθεντα καὶ Πόθον καὶ Ὀμίχλην· Πόθου δὲ καὶ Ὀμίχλης μγέντων ... Αἆρα γενέσθαι καὶ Αὔραν ... πάλιν δὲ ἐκ τούτων ἀμφοῖν ᾧδὸν γεννηθῆναι).

²² West (1994: 291-292) points out that Oulomos is equivalent to *ulom* (Phoenician) and *olam* (Hebrew) “Time,” and Chousoros in the form Χουσωρόρ appears in Sanchuniathon-Philo, where he is identified with Hephaestus (*FGrHist* 790 F2, p. 808.22).

²³ Damascius, *De Principiis* 125 (3.166 Westerink-Combès), cited and translated in West 1994: 291-292; other editors capitalize Ouranos and Ge.

²⁴ As noted in Chapter One, Philo applies Euhemerist interpretations to myth, but West (1994: 294) points out that “it is now generally accepted that there was a genuine Phoenician work behind Philo’s.”

creation and the genesis of all things ... and it was formed like the shape of an egg.²⁵

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 parallels 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.²⁶ 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 are produced by Time (Oulomos), and the demiurge (Chousoros) 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, and in like manner Chronos produces the egg in the Hieronyman and Rhapsodic Theogonies.²⁷ In Aristophanes the names are different but the pattern of action is essentially the same: Night instead of Chronos is the primordial deity 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

²⁵ From an anonymous pseudo-Thoth, this myth was transmitted to Sanchuniathon to Philo to Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 1.10.1-5 (*FGrHist* 790 F2, p. 806.15-807.9), who is cited and translated in West 1994: 295-296.

²⁶ See *OF* 78-81 B for Chronos and the egg in the Hieronyman Theogony, and *OF* 114-119 B in the Rhapsodies. West (1983: 105) adds that the solar aspect of Prajapati is "closer to Protogonos" than Chousoros or Ohrmazd because of his "solar associations."

²⁷ *OF* 79 B in the Hieronyman Theogony, and *OF* 114, 117 B in the Rhapsodies.

Aristophanes and Eros is parallel to Phanes, Aristophanes had perhaps seen the Protogonos Theogony, if indeed it ever existed.²⁸

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” (ἀπὸ ἱστορίας τῆς κατὰ τοὺς Διοσκούρους), since “they say that these were born from an egg” (φασὶ γὰρ ἐξ ᾧ οὗ αὐτοὺς γεγενέναι).²⁹ 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,³⁰ and in a fragment of Sappho in which Leda finds an egg.³¹ 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.³² Damascius, relying on Eudemus, mentions that according to Epimenides, Aer and Night gave birth to Tartarus, who produced “two Titans” (δύο Τι<τᾶ>νας). These two Titans produced an egg, from which other divine offspring were born.³³ Damascius’ discussion of Epimenides indicates that the motif of a cosmic egg made its way into Greek mythology before the time of Aristophanes, independently from Orphism. This raises the possibility that Aristophanes could have drawn from Epimenides instead of from 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.³⁴

²⁸ West 1983: 103-106, 201-202. He also mentions Egyptian Re, who “came from an egg, and was celebrated as ‘firstborn of the gods’,” and who shared other features with Protogonos, but we will come back to these in the next chapter, with the discussion of Chronos and Phanes/Protogonos in the Hieronyman Theogony.

²⁹ Schol. in Ar. *Aves* 695 (p. 110 Holwerda).

³⁰ *Cypria* fr. 10 Bernabé = fr. 11 West (Philodemus, *De Pietate* B 7369 Obbink): “And the author of the Cy[pria] says that Zeus pursued [Neme]sis after changing himself too into a goose, and when he had had union with her she laid an egg, from which Helen was born” (Νέμε]σίν τ’ ὁ τὰ Κύ[πρια γ]ράψας ὁμοιωθέ[ν]τα χηνί καὶ αὐτ[ὸν] διώκειν, καὶ μίγν[ε]ν[το]ς ᾧ οὖν τεκεῖν, [ἐξ] οὗ γενέσθαι τὴν [Ελ]ένην) (translation: West). This fragment of the *Cypria* does not clarify whether the Dioscuri are also born from Leda’s egg along with Helen.

³¹ Sappho fr. 166 Voigt: “For they say that Leda once found a hyacinth coloured egg, all covered” (φαῖσι δὴ ποτα Λήδαν ὑακίνθινον πεποκάδμενον / εὐρηγ ᾧον) (translation: Powell 2007).

³² Edmonds 2013: 166.

³³ 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.*

³⁴ An exception to this is the Sidonian cosmogony cited above, in which Time produces Desire and Nebula, who produce Aer and Aura, who produce the egg.

The role of Eros in Aristophanes' cosmogony might add weight to the argument that there was an Orphic source if, as Bernabé suggests,³⁵ there is a parallel between his “back gleaming bright with golden wings” (στίλβων νῶτον πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν, 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” (πτέρυγας ἐπὶ τῶν ὄμων ἔχοντα χρυσαῖς).³⁶ Likewise, in the Rhapsodies he is “carried on golden wings” (χρυσείαις πτερύγεσσι φορεύμενος).³⁷ The similarities are undeniable, so Bernabé takes the golden wings of Eros, along with the cosmic egg, to be “clearly Orphic elements.”³⁸ 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, 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.”³⁹ 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.”⁴⁰ Bernabé thinks that Dunbar is too cautious,⁴¹ 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” (στίλβων ... πτερύγοιν

³⁵ Bernabé *ad loc.*; 1995: 210.

³⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.5 Westerink) (*OF* 80 B = *OF* 54 K).

³⁷ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 142.16 Couvr. and Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.430.1 Diehl (*OF* 136 I-II B = *OF* 78, 81 K).

³⁸ Bernabé 1995: 210: “elementos claramente órficos.”

³⁹ Calame 1992: 193-196.

⁴⁰ Dunbar *ad loc.* He interprets the verbal similarities between Aristophanes and the later Orphic theogonies in the opposite direction, and concludes that the “language here may itself have influenced later Orphic cosmogonic literature rather than vice versa.” Nilsson (1935: 199) argues that it “is not demonstrable” that Eros was identified with Phanes.

⁴¹ Bernabé (*ad loc.*) argues that Dunbar's view is “too cautious ... which ... seems incredible and to have arisen from a prejudgment (that all Orphic poetry was from a late age)” (“nimis caute ... quod ... incredibile et e praeiudicio (ut tota Orphica poesis serae aetatis sit) ortum videtur”).

χρυσᾶν, 697) and Anacreon’s Eros “gleaming with desire” (πόθῳ στίλβων),⁴² and vase paintings indicate that Aristophanes and his contemporaries must have seen Eros with wings plenty of times, since wings were a typical attribute of Eros in Greek iconography from before the fifth century BC.⁴³

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 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 made their way 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,⁴⁴ 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 this Protogonos Theogony – that is, whatever Aristophanes’ source might have been – was Orphic, or that it was a lengthy epic narrative, as opposed to a shorter poem narrating the creation of the egg out of which the demiurge is born. The most likely scenario is that there was a Greek poem, whether Orphic or not, that told this story with which Aristophanes and his audience were familiar.⁴⁵ This poem may or may not have been Orphic and, 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 was known only from an oral or sub-literary tradition, and had never been written in a text. 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.⁴⁶ The narrative of the cosmic egg, if it was even a text, might

⁴² Anacreon fr. 125 Gentili (Plutarch, *Erot.* 751a).

⁴³ For example, see the Attic red-figure painting of winged Eros at the Archaeological Museum in Florence, pictured at Lissarrague 2001: 44-45, who describes Eros as “a beautiful adolescent with powerful wings.” See also: Calame 1992: 72-88, especially n. 15 and Plate IX.

⁴⁴ West (1983: 116-121), for example, does not attempt to make the cosmic egg fit into the Eudemian Theogony.

⁴⁵ Bernabé (1995: 211) suggests that if Aristophanes’ source was familiar to the audience (which is necessary for a parody to be effective), then this myth must not have been secret.

⁴⁶ Bernabé *ad OF* 64 B.

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 Eudemean Theogony.

(b) The Primordial Deities of the Eudemean Theogony

Beginning with what we already know from Damascius about the Eudemean Theogony, scholars have suggested that Aristotle the teacher and Eudemus the student must have been reading the same text that begins with Night.⁴⁷ 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” (οἱ θεολόγοι οἱ ἐκ Νυκτὸς γεννῶντες)⁴⁸ 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” (οὐκ ἦν ἄπειρον χρόνον χάος ἢ νύξ),⁴⁹ and the other mentions “Night and Ouranos or Chaos or Ocean” (Νύκτα καὶ Οὐρανὸν ἢ Χάος ἢ Ὠκεανόν) as deities who appeared as “the first” (τοὺς πρώτους) in “the ancient poets” (οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ οἱ ἀρχαῖοι).⁵⁰ The fact that Aristotle makes indefinite references to these “theologians” or “those around Hesiod” (οἱ περὶ Ἡσίοδου)⁵¹ indicates his suspicion that Orphic poetry was not actually written by Orpheus. Aristotle thought that Onomacritus (sixth century BC), one of the poets involved in the Peisistratid recension of Homer, was responsible for writing Orphic songs, so Ricciardelli Apicella suggests that Aristotle attributed the Eudemean Theogony to Onomacritus. This may not have been the case, but it does suggest that the poem could

⁴⁷ Ziegler 1942: 1347: “it would be too strange a coincidence if both master and student should not have the same book in view” (“es wäre ein allzu seltsamer Zufall, wenn da Meister und Schüler nicht dasselbe Gedicht im Auge haben sollten”); see Bernabé *ad loc.*

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1071b26 (OF 20 II B = OF 24 K).

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072a7 (OF 20 III B).

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1091b4 (OF 20 IV B). Although Kern did not include these two passages, Guthrie (1952: 12-13) suggests them as “examples of their [θεολόγοι],” suggesting that Aristotle had a collection of different authors in mind, which “must include Orpheus in their scope.”

⁵¹ Aristotle, *De Cael.* 298b25.

have been written at about the time Onomacritus was thought to have lived.⁵² 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.”⁵³ 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) that Bernabé includes with Damascius and Aristotle: “three first beginnings of generation sprouted out, according to Orpheus: Night, Ge, and Ouranos” (τρεις πρωται κατ’ Ὀρφέα ἐξεβλάστησαν ἀρχαὶ τῆς γενέσεως, Νύξ καὶ Γῆ καὶ Οὐρανός).⁵⁴ Since Lobeck’s suggestion that this is “more harmonious with what Eudemus selects,”⁵⁵ scholars have treated this reference as a fragment of the Eudemean 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.”⁵⁶ Bernabé takes this a step further by saying that “the passages of Eudemus and Lydus come from the same source.”⁵⁷ But if this is the case, then why would Damascius, who lived before Lydus, not have had access to the 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 Eudemean Theogony started with Night, from whom Ouranos and Ge were born as the second generation.⁵⁸ 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

⁵² Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 35; cf. West 1983: 249-251, who relates the emergence of the Rhapsodies with the Peisistratid recension; it appears that some early Orphic poetry was a product of this time; see D’Agostino 2007: xviii-xxi; Onomacritus test. 5 D’Agostino = Aristotle fr. 7 Rose.

⁵³ Linforth 1941: 154-155.

⁵⁴ John Lydus, *De Mensibus* 2.8 (*OF* 20 V B = *OF* 28a K); see *BNP* s.v. Lydus: John Lydus (c. AD 490-560) was a learned Roman official who wrote three antiquarian texts: among these, *De Mensibus* was a compilation of material about the Roman calendar.

⁵⁵ Lobeck 1829: 494: “quae Lydus refert ... magis illis consona, quae Eudemus excerpsit”; cf. Bernabé *ad loc.*

⁵⁶ West 1983: 117-118.

⁵⁷ Bernabé *ad loc.*: “[West] ex eodem fonte Eudemi et Lydi locos venire demonstravit”.

⁵⁸ Alderink 1981: 37-45; West 1983: 117-118; Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 35; Martínez-Nieto 2000: 205.

we can say based on these fragments is that it is likely that Lydus is 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” (τὴν Νύκτα θεάν φησιν εἶναι πρωτίστην).⁵⁹ Kern included this in his Orphic fragments because “Zeller thought Chrysippus followed the theogony of Eudemus,”⁶⁰ 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 Aer in Epimenides.⁶¹ 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. 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.⁶² 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

⁵⁹ 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); text: von Arnim.

⁶⁰ Kern *ad loc*: “Chrysippum Eudemi Theogoniam secutum esse censet Zeller.” 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.

⁶¹ 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).

⁶² Brisson 1995: 3, 38, 2876-2878; see also: Nilsson 1935: 199-200, who says that the Aristophanic passage is “generally believed to be Orphic.”

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 Tartaros” (Χάος ἦν καὶ Νύξ Ἐρεβός τε μέλαν πρῶτον καὶ Τάρταρος εὐρύς),⁶³ Aristophanes expects that his audience will recognize these primordial deities from Hesiod, Orphic poetry, and the mythical tradition in general, both oral and literary.⁶⁴ This correlates with other evidence of Night in the Orphic poetic tradition, but it does not necessarily mean that Aristophanes had read precisely the same poem as Aristotle and Eudemus. Likewise, as we have seen in Chapter Two, Night appears as the first deity in the Derveni poem (Night-Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus), just as she does in the Eudemian Theogony. But there are at least methodological reasons not to treat these as the same poem: since the Derveni poem has (barely) survived as a unit within one papyrus, the best approach is to treat it separately, as West, Bernabé and others have done.⁶⁵ To understand 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 that the Derveni Papyrus could be interpreted as evidence of the existence of more than one Orphic theogony that began with Night.

Another reason why scholars treat the Derveni Papyrus separately is that its genealogy is not identical to most modern reconstructions of the Eudemian Theogony. Specifically, in 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” (ἕκτη δ’ ἐν γενεᾷ, φησὶν Ὀρφεύς, καταπαύσατε κόσμον ἀοιδῆς· ἀτὰρ κινδυνεύει καὶ ὁ ἡμέτερος λόγος ἐν ἕκτη καταπεπαυμένος εἶναι κρίσει).⁶⁶ Although the context of this passing allusion has nothing to do with Orphic

⁶³ Aristophanes, *Birds* 693 (*OF* 64 B = *OF* 1 K). For more on this passage, see section (a).

⁶⁴ Ziegler 1942: 1348, “a single datum” (“ein einziges Datum”); Sorel 1995: 11; Martin 2001: 32; Bernabé 1995: 211.

⁶⁵ 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).

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

cosmogony, West suggests (not unreasonably) that this line “must have been addressed to the Muses in a poem in which they were told what to sing.”⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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 after the fifth item on his list. 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 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 with more recent scholars.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ Guthrie was more tempted to fill in the blanks from the Rhapsodies, so he guessed that they were: Phanes, Night, Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, Dionysus.⁷¹ 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 summarized in Plato’s *Timaeus*. Simply put, the result was: Night-Ouranos-Ocean-Kronos-Zeus-others.⁷² Another improvement West makes over Nilsson and Guthrie is calling the sixth generation “others,” but not specifying Dionysus, which is a point 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

⁶⁷ West 1983: 118.

⁶⁸ Linforth 1941: 149; *cf.* West 1983: 118 n. 8; Bernabé *ad loc.* Martínez-Nieto (2000: 182) insists that it “included six divine generations ... despite the contradictions that seem to be implicit in the fragments and testimonies that refer to it” (“incluía seis generaciones divinas ... pese a las contradicciones que parecen hallarse implícitas en los fragmentos y testimonios que hacen referencia a ello”).

⁶⁹ See Bernabé *ad loc.*, citing: Dieterich, Abraxas 1891, 128 note 2 and Moulinier 22; also Staudacher (cited in Martínez-Nieto 2000: 212-213).

⁷⁰ Nilsson 1935: 200.

⁷¹ Guthrie 1952: 82.

⁷² West 1983: 118. See Bernabé *ad loc.*, where he cites Gruppe, Zeller, and Mondolfo. West (1983: 118 note 8) only mentions Gruppe and Zeller.

the first generation.⁷³ But this seems incompatible with the theogony that Socrates' interlocutor Timaeus (somewhat sarcastically)⁷⁴ attributes to “the children of the gods” (ἐκγόνοις ... θεῶν) in Plato's *Timaeus*. This theogony makes no mention of Night, but begins with Ouranos and Ge:

Γῆς τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ παῖδες Ὠκεανός τε καὶ Τηθύς ἐγενέσθην. τούτων δὲ Φόρκυς Κρόνος τε καὶ Ῥέα καὶ ὅσοι μετὰ τούτων, ἐκ δὲ Κρόνου καὶ Ῥέας Ζεὺς Ἥρα τε καὶ πάντες ὅσους ἴσμεν ἀδελφοὺς λεγομένους αὐτῶν, ἔτι τε τούτων ἄλλους ἐκγόνους.

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.⁷⁵

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:

ὥσπερ αὖ Ὅμηρος “Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσίν” φησιν “καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν.” οἶμαι δὲ καὶ Ἡσίοδος. λέγει δέ που καὶ Ὀρφεὺς ὅτι Ὠκεανός πρῶτος καλλιρροὸς ἤρξε γάμοιο, / ὅς ῥα κασιγνήτην ὁμομήτορα Τηθύν ὄπιεν.

As again Homer says, “Ocean the generator 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.”⁷⁶

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*,

⁷³ That is, keeping in mind the counter-argument that in the Rhapsodies there are six royal generations, but these are preceded by Chronos, then Aither and Chasma/Chaos; see Chapter Five, section (c).

⁷⁴ Linforth 1941: 108, “somewhat playfully.” West 1983: 6, “has his tongue in his cheek.” Sorel 1995: 11, “ironique.”

⁷⁵ Plato, *Timaeus* 40e-41a (OF 21, 24 B = OF 16 K).

⁷⁶ Plato, *Cratylus* 402b (OF 22 I B = OF 15 K), referring to Homer, *Iliad* 14.201 and Hesiod, *Theogony* 337. Martínez-Nieto (2000: 181) claims that this text was written in c. 380 BC, which would make it the earliest reference to the Eudemean Theogony.

where they appear in the generation before the Titans.⁷⁷ 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 suggestion, Ocean and Tethys are also personifications no less than Ouranos and Ge.⁷⁸ If these contradictions could be reconciled, then it could be argued that both *Cratylus* and *Timaeus* refer to the same Orphic theogony.⁷⁹

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.⁸⁰ 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].”⁸¹ So in the Eudemian Theogony, Ouranos and Ge are born first, but Ocean and Tethys marry first. Referring to Otto Gruppe, West points out that sixty lines after Homer’s reference to Ocean and Tethys, Zeus is depicted being afraid to make Night angry,⁸² 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; Uranos and Ge would simply have been inserted between Night and

⁷⁷ 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 = *OF* 114, 129, 210 K; *OF* 183 B = *OF* 112, 121 K; *OF* 191 II B = *OF* 171 K; *OF* 195 III B = *OF* 117 K.

⁷⁸ KRS 1983: 16.

⁷⁹ Related to these passages are those collected in *OF* 23 B = *OF* p. 142 K. Aristotle says that the “old writers” (οἱ ... ἀρχαῖοι) said the sea has “springs” (πηγαί) (Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 353a34 = *OF* 23 I B). Commenting on this, Alexander Aphrodisiensis specifies that these “older poets” (ἀρχαιοτέροι) include Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus (Alexander Aphrodisiensis, in *Arist. Meteor.* 66.12 Hayduck = *OF* 23 II B), and also says that the sea has springs because it was “without birth” (ἀγένητος) (in *Arist. Meteor.* 67.23 Hayduck = *OF* 23 III B). It is difficult to see how Ocean can be without birth and at the same time the child of Ouranos and Ge, so perhaps he is thinking of the poem to which Homer makes reference, or an Orphic poem that places Ocean and Tethys in that primordial role.

⁸⁰ Although West’s ideas about the authorship of the Homeric poems are controversial (despite the common opinion that Homeric poetry emerged from oral tradition, in West 2011b he argues that the *Iliad* was written by an individual author), his overall argument can be accepted on the basis that the bards of the oral tradition of Homeric poetry were aware of a myth about Ocean and Tethys.

⁸¹ West 1983: 120.

⁸² Homer, *Iliad* 14.201; cf. 14.261: “for he was afraid that he might do something unpleasant to swift Night” (ἄζετο γὰρ μὴ Νυκτὶ θοῇ ἀποθύμια ἔρδοι).

Oceanus.”⁸³ 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 Eudemean Theogony – Night, Ouranos and Ge, Ocean and Tethys, Kronos and Rhea, Zeus and Hera, 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 Eudemean 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.⁸⁴ 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 Eudemean Theogony. But some conjectures need to be supplied in order to make these passages fit 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 in order to show that both Homer and Orpheus said that Ocean and Tethys were the parents of the gods.⁸⁵ Ocean and Tethys were the primordial, undifferentiated waters, like Apsû and Tiâmat in Babylonian mythology. This mythical role of Apsû and Tiâmat was somehow transmitted to the Ocean and Tethys of the Homeric

⁸³ West 1983: 120.

⁸⁴ West 1983: 117; cf. Brisson 1995: 403-404; Martínez-Nieto 2000: 213-214: “If the Orphic cosmogony began with Oceanus and Tethys, these deities should be understood as the ‘primordial waters’ joined at the beginning and then separated as with Heaven and Earth ... Tethys and Ocean in this case would correspond with Apsû and Tiâmat in the Babylonian cosmology” (Si la cosmogonía órfica comenzaba con Océano y Tetis, estas divinidades deberían ser entendidas después como ocurre con el Cielo y la Tierra ... Océano y Tetis se corresponderían en este caso con Apsu y Tiamat en la cosmología babilonia”).

⁸⁵ Linforth 1941: 149.

passage,⁸⁶ 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 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 two Orphic theogonies, one with five generations and the other with six.

If we include Aristophanes and the Derveni Papyrus in this cluster of fragments, we can perhaps conjecture a likely minimum of one or two, but a possible maximum of 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 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'

⁸⁶ *Enûma Eliš* Tablet I, trans. Dalley 1989: 233; West 1966: 213; 1997a: 288-292; Burkert 1992: 91-93; 2004: 30-32 = 2009: 36-38; Lopez-Ruiz 2010: 90.

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 short 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 *Homeric Hymns* (though admittedly this involves the imposition of a generic term),⁸⁷ 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. 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 (though in different ways). 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.

(c) 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 (i.e., Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus) as it is seen in Hesiod and even reflected in Near Eastern mythology, so it is reasonable to conjecture that the Orphic theogonies known to all three generations of

⁸⁷ E.g., the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (*HH* 2) narrates how Persephone begins her role as an Underworld deity and Demeter establishes her mysteries; the hymn to Apollo (*HH* 3) narrates how he came into possession of Delphi; the hymn to Hermes (*HH* 4) narrates how Hermes came into his own spheres of influence as a trickster; etc.

philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, and Eudemos followed this pattern. 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 people don’t know” (ἔτι γε τούτων θαυμασιώτερα, ὧ̃ Σώκρατες, ἃ οἱ πολλοὶ οὐκ ἴσασιν).⁸⁸ Isocrates makes a similar point when he lists morally outrageous deeds committed by the gods, including “eating of children and castrations of fathers” (παίδων βρώσεις καὶ πατέρων ἐκτομὰς), clearly referring to Ouranos and Kronos, and he adds that Orpheus was torn apart because he “was especially attached to these stories” (Ὀρφεὺς δ’ ὁ μάλιστα τούτων τῶν λόγων ἀψάμενος).⁸⁹ Euthyphro and Isocrates make a polemic argument against Orphic poetry on the grounds that they portray Greek deities doing scandalous things (Edmonds’ “strange” and “perverse” categories).⁹⁰ 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 not unreasonable 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 Eudemos.

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 the phallus of Ouranos:

Zeὺς πρῶτος [γένετο, Zeὺς] ὕστατος [ἀργικέραυτος].
 Zeὺς κεφα[λή, Zeὺς μέσ]σα, Διὸς δ’ ἐκ [π]άντα τέτ[υκται].
 [Zeὺς πνοιή πάντων, Zeὺς πάντων ἔπλετο] μοῖρα.
 Zeὺς βασιλεύς, Zeὺς δ’ ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων ἀργικέραυτος.

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.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Plato, *Euthyphro* 5e-6b (OF 26 I B = OF 17 K).

⁸⁹ Isocrates, *Busiris* 10.38-39 Mathieu Brémond = 38-39 Mandrilaras (OF 26 II B = OF 17 K).

⁹⁰ Edmonds 2013: 172.

⁹¹ DP 17.2-12, 18.1, 19.8-10 (OF 14 B).

The Derveni Papyrus is just 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.

Another version appears in full or partial form in several ancient texts, and it was most likely known around the time that the Eudemian Theogony was in circulation, or at least shortly thereafter. 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 just a few pages after the Eudemian Theogony at *OF* 31 B:

Zeús prōtos gēneto, Zeús ūstatos árkhikéranos·
 Zeús kefalḗ, Zeús méssa, Diós d' ék pánta tétykai·
 Zeús puthmḗn gaíḗs te kai ou̐ranou̐ ásteróentos·
 Zeús árshn gēneto, Zeús ámbrotos épleto nýmphi·
 Zeús pnoiḗ pántwn, Zeús ákamátou pyrós órmi·
 Zeús póntou ríza, Zeús ḥlios ḥdè selḗni·
 Zeús basiléus, Zeús árchos ápántwn árkhikéranos·
 pántas gár krýpas aŷthis fásos éς πολυγηθḗς
 ék katharḗs kraδίḗs ánenéγκατο, mérmera rḗzwn.

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,
 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 in 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" (ὁ μὲν δὴ θεός, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος, ἀρχὴν τε καὶ τελευτὴν καὶ μέσα τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων ἔχων).⁹² The scholiast of this text explains that "he tells an ancient story that is Orphic" (παλαιὸν δὲ λόγον λέγει τὸν Ὀρφικόν) and quotes lines 2-3, using the word ἀρχή instead of κεφαλή in line 2.⁹³ Without the discovery of the Derveni Papyrus, there would be

⁹² Plato, *Laws* 4.715e (*OF* 31 III B = *OF* 21 K).

⁹³ Schol. Plat. *Leg.* 715e (p. 317 Greene) (*OF* 31 IV B = *OF* 21 K).

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* (Περὶ Κοσμοῦ), 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” (τοῦτο θεὸς ἐν κόσμῳ), the ruler of everything who “moves and directs all things as he wishes” (πάντα κινεῖ καὶ περιάγει, ὅπου βούλεται).⁹⁴ Under this god “all the orderly arrangement of heaven and earth is administered” (ὁ σύμπας οἰκονομεῖται διάκοσμος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς).⁹⁵ The text adds that “though he is one, he has many names, according to the many effects he himself produces” (εἷς δὲ ὢν πολυώνυμός ἐστι, κατονομαζόμενος τοῖς πάθεσι πᾶσιν ἅπερ αὐτὸς νεοχμοῖ).⁹⁶ The author calls Zeus “god of heaven and god of earth” (οὐράνιος τε καὶ χθόνιος), and adds that “he himself is the cause of all” (πάντων αὐτὸς αἴτιος ὢν).⁹⁷ Finally, the author quotes all nine lines of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to support this description of the supreme deity of the cosmos, saying that “in the Orphic books it is written not badly” (ἐν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς οὐ κακῶς λέγεται).⁹⁸

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 “a good example of this type of interpretation” a fragment of Chrysippus preserved in Philodemus’ *De Pietate*.⁹⁹ 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” (ἅπαντά τ’ ἐστὶν αἰθήρ, ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν καὶ πατὴρ καὶ υἱός, ὡς κὰν τῷ πρώτῳ μὴ μάχεσθαι τὸ

⁹⁴ Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 400b7-16; text and translation: Forster & Furley 1955, with minor modifications.

⁹⁵ Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 400b31-32; cf. Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 20-21: “you have joined everything into one ... so that there comes to be one ever-existing rational order for everything” (εἷς ἐν πάντα συνήρμοκας ... / ὅσθ’ ἕνα γίνεσθαι πάντων λόγον αἰὲν ἔόντα).

⁹⁶ Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 401a12-13; at 401b8-23, he equates Zeus with Necessity, Destiny, Nemesis,Adrasteia, and the Fates.

⁹⁷ Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 401a25-26.

⁹⁸ Ps.-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 401a25 (*OF* 31 I B = *OF* 21a K).

⁹⁹ Brisson 1995: 2880-2881: “ouvrage apocryphe d’inspiration stoïcienne ... dans le cadre de la doctrine stoïcienne ... un bon exemple de ce type d’interprétation.”

τὴν Ῥέαν καὶ μητέρα τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι καὶ θυγατέρα).¹⁰⁰ Contrary to Brisson’s claim that this is a Stoic text, Edmonds contends that it is Peripatetic text but one “that has been thought to contain Stoic elements.”¹⁰¹ He cites Forster and Furley, in whose opinion *De Mundo* is “in general, Peripatetic, but ... 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’.”¹⁰² Whatever the case, two centuries later, Plutarch brings the hymn clearly into a discussion of Stoic ideas, specifically the primary and secondary causes of generation:

καθόλου γάρ ... δύο πάσης γενέσεως αἰτίας ἐχούσης οἱ μὲν σφόδρα παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι καὶ ποιηταὶ τῇ κρείττονι μόνῃ τὸν νοῦν προσεῖχον τοῦτο δὴ τὸ κοινὸν ἐπιφθεγγόμενοι πᾶσι πράγμασι ‘Ζεὺς ἀρχὴ Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ’ ἐκ πάντα πέλονται.’

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.’¹⁰³

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* (see below). To be clear, pseudo-Aristotle and Plutarch prove that a Stoic interpretation was applied to the poem, but if Plato and the Derveni author knew of the poem then it is historically impossible for the poem itself to have been a Stoic text.

Besides these possibly Stoic interpretations of the hymn, there are other later sources who quote certain lines, including Apuleius, a scholiast of Galen, and Clement of

¹⁰⁰ 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 = *OF* 30 K); text: von Arnim; see Bernabé *ad loc.*, who relates this fragment to the Derveni poem: after Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos, he generates all the gods anew, so that Kronos and Rhea, the parents of Zeus are born anew as if they are his children.

¹⁰¹ Edmonds 2013: 20.

¹⁰² Forster & Furley 1955: 335-336.

¹⁰³ Plutarch, *de defectu oraculorum* 48 p. 436d (*OF* 31 V B = *OF* 21 K). He quotes the same line at: Plutarch, *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* 31 p. 1074d (*OF* 31 VI B).

Alexandria.¹⁰⁴ Altogether, these citations of the Hymn to Zeus demonstrate that these verses 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 poem 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, and let us call the second poem the Classical version, but this takes some explaining. Pseudo-Aristotle and Plutarch quote these lines in the context of Stoic ideas, but this does not mean that it was a Stoic poem. Plato indicates that the poem existed before the Stoics, at around the same time as the Eudemian Theogony.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps it was an expansion of the four lines in the Derveni poem. It could have circulated among the *orpheotelestai* as one of the 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.¹⁰⁶ Or, 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 an equal possibility that the hymn was a separate poem, whether or not it was either 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 these possibilities.

A third version, expanded to 32 lines, appears in 39 different passages in the Christian apologists and Neoplatonic philosophers of late antiquity, and it appears to have been part of the Rhapsodic collection, so let us call this the Rhapsodic version.¹⁰⁷ Although it is unclear whether the Derveni and Classical versions were the same poem, the Rhapsodic

¹⁰⁴ Apuleius, *De Mundo* 37 (= 401a-b Bekker) (*OF* 31 II B = *OF 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 = *OF* p. 206 K), line 2; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.14.122.2 (= Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 13.13.49) (*OF* 31 IX B), lines 8-9; and Schol. Theocr. 17, 1-4b (318.10 Wendel) (*OF* 31 X B).

¹⁰⁵ Likewise, Plutarch refers to the “ancient theologians and poets” (*παλαιοὶ θεολόγοι καὶ ποιηταὶ*) so he must not have had contemporary Stoics in mind as the supposed authors of the poem.

¹⁰⁶ This possibility might be weakened by the fact that the Derveni author does not seem in general to be leaving anything out of his commentary. If he is attempting to comment on the entire theogony, then it would make sense for him to comment on all nine lines of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus; but he only refers to four.

¹⁰⁷ *OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K. All 32 lines are quoted in: Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 3.8.2 (= Porphyry, *Peri agalm.* fr. 354F Smith) (*OF* 243 I B = *OF* 168 K) and Stob. Flor. 1.1.23 (1.29.9 Wachsm.) (*OF* 243 II B = *OF* 168 K); see Bernabé *ad loc.* and Chapter Five, section (g) for the other 37 specific references to the ancient authors.

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 (a text and translation of all 32 lines are provided in Appendix A):

Zeûs prōtos gēneto, Zeûs ũstatos ārgikēraunos·
 Zeûs kefalī, Zeûs mēssa, Diōs d' ēk pānta tētuktai·
 Zeûs ārsēn gēneto, Zeûs āphitos ēpleto nŭmphi·
 Zeûs puthmēn gaīhs te kai ōrauoŭ āsterōentos·
 Zeûs basilēus, Zeûs autos āpāntōn ārchigēneθlos ...

pānta d' āpokrŭpas aŭthis fāos ēs polughthēs·
 mēllēn āpo krađīs prophērein pāli, thēskeala rēzōn.

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.¹⁰⁸

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 (a question to which we will return in Chapter Five), then the Rhapsodic version of the hymn appears when Zeus has just finished establishing his supremacy by swallowing Phanes; but it is also possible that this was a separate poem in a Rhapsodic collection of many short poems.¹⁰⁹

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, ārgikēraunos in the Derveni version becomes ārchikēraunos in the Classical version, but in the Rhapsodic version it reverts to ārgikēraunos. In the second line, kefalī (“head”) appears in all three versions, but is changed to ārchī (“first principle” or “ruler”) in Plato

¹⁰⁸ *OF* 243.1-5, 31-32 B.

¹⁰⁹ See Edmonds 2013: 148-159 and Chapter Five, sections (b) and (g). Bernabé places the Rhapsodic version immediately after the act of swallowing in the Rhapsodies: in *OF* 241 B, Zeus has everything mixed up in his belly, and it is the moment before he re-creates the universe, as he did in the Derveni poem. Bernabé presumes that the Rhapsodic version of the Hymn to Zeus must have stood in the narrative after this event, so he places the Hymn to Zeus at *OF* 243 B.

(and his scholiast) and Plutarch, reflecting a semantic overlap between the two words.¹¹⁰ 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”).¹¹¹ Bernabé prefers τέτυκται in all three versions, conjecturing τέτ[υκται to fill the lacuna at the end of the line in the Derveni version.¹¹² 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” (Ζεὺς πνοιὴ πάντων, Ζεὺς ἀκαμάτου πυρὸς ὀρμῆ), so the Derveni poem is conjectured to say, “Zeus the breath of all, Zeus was the fate of all” ([Ζεὺς πνοιὴ πάντων, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο] μοῖρα); note the 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” (Ζεὺς πυθμὴν γαίης τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος / Ζεὺς ἄρσην γένετο, Ζεὺς ἄμβροτος ἔπλετο νόμφη). 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” (Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεὺς αὐτός ἀπάντων ἀρχιγένεθλος), the emphasis is 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” (Ζεὺς ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων ἀρχικέραυνος).

¹¹⁰ Bernabé *ad loc.*, who cites Casadesus, *Revisio* 370.

¹¹¹ 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. It is unclear why these variations occur, but see below.

¹¹² Betegh (2004: 36) and KPT (*ad loc.*) give the same reading of τέτ[υκται in DP 17.12.

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 close resemblance between the last two lines of the Rhapsodic and Classical versions. The Classical version (*OF* 31.8-9) ends with: “For he has brought everything hidden back up into the delightful light / Out of his pure heart, doing baneful things” (πάντας γὰρ κρύψας αὐθις φάος ἐς πολυγηθῆς / ἐκ καθαρῆς κραδίης ἀνενέγκατο, μέρμερα ῥέζων). But the Rhapsodic version (*OF* 243.31-32) ends with: “And he was about to bring forth everything hidden again into the delightful light / Back again from his heart, doing wondrous things” (πάντα δ’ ἀποκρύψας αὐθις φάος ἐς πολυγηθῆς / μέλλεν ἀπο κραδίης προφέρειν πάλι, θέσκελα ῥέζων). Judging from the verb tenses, the Classical version describes the moment after re-creation, and the Rhapsodic version describes the moment before. The Rhapsodic version has a more positive twist with the use of θέσκελα (“wondrous”) instead of μέρμερα (“baneful”).

A fourth version of the hymn to Zeus appears in an anthology of poems 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:¹¹³

[ἐξ Ὀρφέως·] / [Ζεὺς] πάντων ἀρχή, Ζεὺς [μέσσα, Ζεὺς δὲ τε]λευτή· / Ζεὺς ὕπατος, [Ζεὺς καὶ χθόνι]ος καὶ πόντιός ἐστιν, / [Ζεὺς ἄρσην,] Ζεὺς θῆλυς / πάλιν / Ζεὺς δὲ [τὰ πάντα,] / π[ά]ντα κύκλω φαίνων, [Ζεὺς ἀρχή, μέσσα,] τ[ε]λευτή· / καὶ δύναται [Ζεὺς πᾶν, Ζεὺς π]ᾶ[ν] ἔχ<ε>ι αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ.

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.¹¹⁴

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 τελευτή (“end”). The words “Zeus

¹¹³ Bernabé *ad loc.* (*OF* 688a B); *PSI* 15, 1476 in Bastianini 2005: 234-236; Edmonds 2013: 21 n. 41.

¹¹⁴ *PSI* 15, 1476 (*OF* 688a B).

male, Zeus female” ([Ζεὺς ἄρσιν,] Ζεὺς θῆλυς) emphasize this unusual hermaphroditic nature of Zeus that appears in the hymns, and this phrase bears a similar meaning to line four in the Classical version and line three in the Rhapsodic version: “Zeus was born male, Zeus has become the immortal/imperishable bride” (Ζεὺς ἄρσιν γένετο, Ζεὺς ἄμβροτος/ἄφθιτος ἔπλετο νόμῳ).¹¹⁵ The next line after this – “Zeus the foundation of earth and starry sky” (Ζεὺς πυθμὴν γαίης τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος) – presents Zeus as being everywhere in the cosmos, and line six of the Classical version says, “Zeus the root of the sea, Zeus the sun and the moon” (Ζεὺς πόντου ρίζα, Ζεὺς ἥλιος ἠδὲ σελήνη). The 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” ([Ζεὺς καὶ χθόνιος καὶ πόντιός ἐστιν). It seems that the author of this poem was 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.¹¹⁶ In each case, the hymn describes a 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 such hyperbolic language is a traditional characteristic of Greek hymns.¹¹⁷ Hyperbolic expressions are used by other authors who clearly do not depart from traditional Greek polytheism, notably Xenophanes and Aeschylus. In one fragment, Xenophanes refers to Zeus as “one god, greatest among gods and men” (εἷς θεός, ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος).¹¹⁸ Zeus is the greatest among gods, but not the one and only great god. Aeschylus

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ricciardelli p. 267 *ad OH* 9.4.

¹¹⁶ *OF* 243.9 B mentions Metis and Eros being inside him, which suggests syncretism, personification or allegory, and *OF* 243.20 B calls Zeus the “son of Kronos” (Κρονίωνος), which is just a typical epithet.

¹¹⁷ Thom 2005: 8-9.

¹¹⁸ Xenophanes, fr. 21 B23 D-K (fr. 26 Gentili-Pratco) (Clement, *Strom.* 5.109); cf. Heraclitus, fr. 22 B64 D-K (100 Marcovich) (Hippolytus, *Ref.* 9.10.6), who seems to have equated Zeus with cosmic Fire when he

basically views Zeus in the same way as Xenophanes. 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,”¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ For example, in *Agamemnon*, the chorus sings to Zeus a strophe that seems to put him on a pedestal, to the exclusion of all other gods:

Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ' ἀν' τῷ φίλον κεκλημένω, / τοῦτό νιν
προσεννέπω. / οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι / πάντ' ἐπισταθμώμενος / πλὴν Διός,
εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος / χρῆ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμως.

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.¹²¹

The strophe seems to say that nothing is comparable to Zeus, but Smith considers the meaning of προσεικάζειν 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) with reference to anything but Zeus.¹²² According to this reasoning, it is Zeus the king of the gods exercising justice as their chief whom 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:

Ζεύς ἐστιν αἰθήρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ' οὐρανός,
Ζεὺς τοι τὰ πάντα χῶ τι τῶνδ' ὑπέρτερον.

Zeus is the aither, and Zeus is earth, and Zeus is the sky,

says that “thunderbolt steers all things” (τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός); KRS *ad loc.* (fr. 220 KRS) comment that “Heraclitus’ fire – the purest and brightest sort, that is, as of the aitherial and divine thunderbolt – has a directive capacity.” But also see Heraclitus fr. 22 B32 D-K (59 Marcovich) (Clement, *Strom.* 5.115.1): “one thing, the only truly wise, does not and does consent to be called by the name of Zeus” (ἐν τὸ σοφὸν μόνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα). It seems like Heraclitus is treating Zeus as an allegory, but KRS *ad loc.* (fr. 228 KRS) suggest that Zeus in this fragment “resembles the Zeus of the conventional religion.”

¹¹⁹ Lloyd-Jones 1956: 55.

¹²⁰ Lloyd-Jones 1971: 86.

¹²¹ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 160-166 (Denniston & Page 1957).

¹²² Smith 1980: 8-19.

Zeus, I tell you, is all things and whatever is higher than these.¹²³

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 hesitates to see an allusion to any particular Orphic poem.¹²⁴ Burkert sees here the beginning of “the philosophical speculation which culminated in the pantheism of the Stoics,” but recognizes that it is still too early to actually be a Stoic poem.¹²⁵ 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 from *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 just 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 humans, so Thom suggests that Stoicism was “an amalgam of

¹²³ Aeschylus, *Heliades* fr. 70 Radt (Clement Alex., *Strom.* 5.14.114.4 = Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 13.13.41). In Bernabé’s notes for *OF* 31 B, he lists this passage along with others that seem to point to similar themes: Pindar fr. 140d Sn.-Maehl. τί θεός; τὸ πᾶν, Archilochus fr. 298.1-2 West Ζεὺς ἐν θεοῖσι μάντις ἀψευδέστατος, / καὶ τέλος αὐτὸς ἔχει, Semonides fr. 1.1 West τέλος ... Ζεὺς ἔχει, Iulian. C. Galil. fr. 21 Masaracchia οἱ γὰρ ἡμέτεροι τὸν δημιουργόν φασιν ἀπάντων μὲν εἶναι πατέρα καὶ βασιλέα.

¹²⁴ West 1983: 113, note 87.

¹²⁵ Burkert 1985: 131.

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 hyperbolic 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.¹²⁶

This can be supported by a reading of Cleanthes’ hymn to Zeus, a short hexameter poem that mixes a hymnic address with Stoic ideas. Cleanthes was regarded as uniquely pious among the early Stoics, and he was interested in the power of poetry to convey truth about the gods.¹²⁷ His hymn addresses Zeus as φύσεως ἀρχηγέ, to which Thom attaches two meanings as both “first cause and ruler of nature.”¹²⁸ The word ἀρχηγέ resonates with the use of ἀρχή in certain versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, and ἀρχιγένεθλος in line five of 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 of the fourth century AD). 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” (οὐδέ τι γίγνεται ἔργον ἐπὶ χθονὶ σοῦ δίχα, δαῖμον, / οὔτε κατ’ αἰθέριον θεῖον πόλον οὔτ’ ἐνὶ πόντῳ).¹²⁹ 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” (εἰς ἓν πάντα συνήρμοκας ... / ὥσθ’ ἓνα γίγνεσθαι πάντων λόγον αἰὲν ἔόντα). 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,

¹²⁶ Thom 2005: 25-26.

¹²⁷ Thom (2005: 9-13) thinks that “a religious setting seems more likely than merely a literary one.” It is unclear whether his hymn to Zeus was a poem for a philosophical work or a ritual song to be performed by Stoics in his school, but in either case Thom suggests that the primary purpose of the song was to instruct.

¹²⁸ Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 2 and Thom *ad loc.*

¹²⁹ Also worthy of note are lines 7-8 he writes that “this whole universe, spinning around the earth, truly obeys you wherever you lead” (σοὶ δὴ πᾶς ὅδε κόσμος ἐλίσσόμενος περὶ γαῖαν / πείθεται ἧ̄ κεν ἄγης).

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: there is a difference between a poem influenced by Stoic ideas and a Stoic poem.

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 might have been influenced by Stoic ideas. This strengthens the hypothesis that later Orphic poetry was written within the context of a discourse between myth and philosophy. The Derveni and Classical versions of the Hymn to Zeus were written with no philosophical intention, 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* (Διαθήκαι), although earlier than some versions of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus,¹³⁰ is worth observing in the context of these Orphic poems. Whereas the earlier versions 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 deity 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.¹³¹ It begins with a version of the so-called Orphic *sphragis*,¹³² and it addresses itself to Musaeus, who becomes a Moses-figure.

¹³⁰ The *terminus ante quem* of this version is the first century BC, when *De Mundo* was written, unless indeed it is the same poem that Plato refers to in *Laws*, which would certainly make the Classical version earlier than the *Testament*.

¹³¹ *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.

¹³² *OF* 377.1 B (= *OF* 245.1 K) = *OF* 1b B: “I will speak to those for whom it is right; non-initiates, shut the door” (φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί· θύρας δ’ ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι).

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” (εἷς ἔστ’, αὐτογενής, ἐνὸς ἔκγονα πάντα 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 by him” (εἷς ἔστ’ αὐτοτελής, αὐτοῦ δ’ ὑπο πάντα τελεῖται). 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 *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 Hymns 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 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 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 Papyrus, 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.”¹³³ 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. The *bricoleur* who wrote the Rhapsodic version wanted to emphasize the “imperishable” nature of Zeus rather than his “immortal” nature (not that there is much difference between these concepts), 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”),¹³⁴ or it is an epithet denoting an object that belongs to the gods or is divine.¹³⁵ But *ἄφθιτος*, referring to deathlessness more than divinity, has a wider range: famously associated with the Homeric formula *κλέος ἄφθιτον*,¹³⁶ the adjective *ἄφθιτος* appears in epic to describe either material or immaterial objects,¹³⁷ but in certain passages it can also refer to deities or humans.¹³⁸ So the poet of the Rhapsodic version preferred to emphasize that Zeus was deathless, rather than that he was divine. Perhaps a

¹³³ Bernabé *ad OF* 31 B: “plane memoriae lapsu.” Again, the five variants are: *τελείται* (Schol. Galen), *τέτακται* (Aristotle R 1603), *τέμηται* (Aristotle O), *πέφυκε* (Proclus), *πέλονται* (Plutarch). Bernabé is unclear whether he means that the original word had slipped from the memory of *all* of these authors, or whether *τέτυκται* slipped specifically from Plutarch’s memory, sometime between his writing of *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* (31 p. 1074d = *OF* 31 VI B) and *De defectu oraculorum* (48 p. 436d = *OF* 31 V B). He refers to Magnelli (*Atene e Roma* 39, 1994, 85-87), who defends *τέτυκται* on the basis of its appearance in Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* 11: *πάντ’ ἔργα <τέτυκται>*.

¹³⁴ E.g., *Iliad* 20.358, *Odyssey* 24.445, Pindar, *Nem.* 10.7, Aeschylus, *Eum.* 259.

¹³⁵ See LSJ s.v. *ἄμβροτος*: *Iliad* 5.339 *αἶμα*, 16.381 *ἵπποι*, 17.194 *τεύχεα*, etc.

¹³⁶ See Volk 2002 and Finkelberg 2007 on the debate about the appearance of this Homeric phrase at *Iliad* 9.413.

¹³⁷ Material objects: e.g., *Iliad* 2.46 *σκῆπτρον*, 14.238 *θρόνον*, *Odyssey* 9.133 *ἄντρον*; Immaterial objects: e.g., *Iliad* 24.88, Hes. *Th.* 545 *μήδεα*, Pind. *Pyth.* 8.72 *ὄπις*, Plutarch 2.723e *δόξα*.

¹³⁸ E.g., *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 325-326 *ἄθάνατοι ... ἄφθιτοι*, Hesiod, *Theogony* 389, 397 *Στῶξ ἄφθιτος*. Anacreon (*Simon.* 184) refers to an “imperishable poet” (*ἄφθιτος ὑμνοπóλος*). Pindar *Ol.* 59-64 refers to Tantalus taking nectar and ambrosia from the gods, “with which they had made him imperishable” (*οἷσιν ἄφθιτον / θῆκαν*). In Aeschylus *Eum.* 723-724, the chorus, referring to Admetus, remind Apollo of the time when “you persuaded the Fates to make mortals imperishable” (*Μοίρας ἔπεισας ἀφθίτους θεῖναι βροτούς*).

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” (νοῦς δέ οἱ ἀψευδῆς βασιλήϊος ἄφθιτος αἰθήρ). His use of ἄφθιτος in line 3 ties the introduction more closely to the expanded middle section: the mind of the imperishable bride is 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 interpolation, 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 had probably read the Classical version, and he decided to describe Zeus’ act of re-creation as “wondrous” (θέσκελα) rather than “baneful” (μέρμερα) in the same way that he thought ἄφθιτος would better express the meaning of the expanded version than ἄμβροτος.¹³⁹

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, like all other Greek 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

¹³⁹ *OF* 31.9 & 243.32 B.

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, or a sort of type scene, which indicates a significant moment in the narrative, a pause in narrative time. But if Orphic theogonies consisted of collections of brief partial narratives, rather than lengthy comprehensive 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 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 easily been performed as ritual songs.

(d) 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” (ἔτι τε τούτων ἄλλους ἐκγόνους).¹⁴⁰ 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.¹⁴¹ 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.¹⁴² 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, there is evidence that suggests that not only Dionysus, but also Demeter and Persephone, were the focus of some Orphic poetry in the Classical Period. Bernabé, who defends the Zagreus myth as doctrinally central to Orphism, collects certain

¹⁴⁰ Plato, *Timaeus* 40e-41a (*OF* 24 B = *OF* 16 K).

¹⁴¹ For example, Ziegler (1942: 1359) thought that the Zagreus myth was narrated in the Eudemian Theogony exactly like it is in the Rhapsodies. Nilsson (1935: 200) and Guthrie (1952: 82) mention Dionysus by name in their reconstructions, and Martínez-Nieto (2000: 213) places Dionysus in parentheses for the sixth generation.

¹⁴² West 1983: 94-96, 118, 137, with whom Bernabé *ad loc.* agrees, but he uses more specific language than West's general term “others”: “Iovis Iunonis progenies Bacchus et alii (fr. 24).”

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, Plato’s reference to the “ancient Titanic nature” (παλαιὰν Τιτανικὴν φύσιν) of humans in *Laws* appears here.¹⁴³ Although, as Edmonds has repeatedly argued, many of these supposed references to the Zagreus myth can be interpreted in other ways,¹⁴⁴ there are still some reliable indications that there were Orphic poems with Bacchic themes. The overlap between Orphica and Bacchica is a well-discussed topic,¹⁴⁵ to which we will return in Chapter Six, 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” (ἄλλοι / μύσται καὶ Βάκχοι ἱερὰν στειχούσι κλε<ε>ινοί),¹⁴⁶ and the Pelinna tablet, which instructs the initiate to “tell Persephone that the Bacchic one himself has released you” (εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνοι σ’ ὅτι Β<άκ>χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε),¹⁴⁷ can be reasonably used as evidence that there was a connection between Bacchica and Orphica. It was commonly believed that Orpheus had brought certain ritual innovations from Egypt to Greece and reformed Dionysiac cult accordingly. Diodorus Siculus states that after returning from Egypt, Orpheus “wrote a myth about the things down in Hades” (μυθοποιῆσαι τὰ καθ’ Ἄδου) and “brought back the majority of the mystic *teletai* ... exchanging only the names [of Osiris and Dionysus]” (τῶν μυστικῶν τελετῶν τὰ πλεῖστα ... ἀπενέγκασθαι ... τῶν ὀνομάτων μόνων ἐνηλλαγμένων).¹⁴⁸ This seems to agree with Herodotus’ assertion that what people called Orphic and Bacchic were actually Egyptian and Pythagorean.¹⁴⁹ 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 sacred book” (τοὺς κατὰ τὴν χώραν τελοῦντα[ς] τῷ Διονύσῳ ... διδόναι τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον) gives the impression that these texts contained ritual instructions, but what

¹⁴³ *OF* 34-39 B; Plato, *Laws* 3.701b (*OF* 37 B = *OF* 9 K), and Bernabé *ad loc.* For more on this particular fragment, see Chapter Six, section (a).

¹⁴⁴ Edmonds 1999: 35-73; 2009a: 511-532; 2013: 296-391; see Chapter Six, section (a).

¹⁴⁵ For example, Linforth 1941: 307-364, Burkert 1977: 1-10, Graf & Johnston 2007: 137-165.

¹⁴⁶ *OF* 474.16-17 B (= B10 Riedweg = 1 Graf & Johnston).

¹⁴⁷ *OF* 485.2 B (= 26a Graf & Johnston).

¹⁴⁸ *OF* 40-63 B, especially: Diodorus Siculus 1.92.2, 1.96.3-5 (*OF* 48 I-II B = *OF* 95-96 K).

¹⁴⁹ Herodotus 2.81.1-2 (*OF* 43, 45 B = *OF* 216 K).

type of ritual instructions has never been clear.¹⁵⁰ 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 Eudemean Theogony.

Because so much of the scholarship on Orphism has over-emphasized the importance of Dionysus, there has been a false impression that he played a significant role in the Eudemean 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 that were related to the rites of Demeter and Persephone.¹⁵¹ These poems seem to have concentrated on many of the same themes as the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. One of them seems to be parodying the first line of the *Iliad* with the invocation, “Sing, goddess, of the anger of Demeter who brings beautiful fruit” (μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Δημήτερος ἀγλαοκάρπου).¹⁵² 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*, Iambe cheers her up by telling jokes (*HH* 2.202-204), but in the Orphic poem, Baubo cheers her up by displaying her genitals: she “showed all / of her body and not the appropriate place” (δείξε δὲ πάντα / σώματος οὐδὲ πρέποντα τόπον).¹⁵³ Bernabé has collected fragments related to this Eleusinian (or Thesmophoric) literature and placed them after the fragments of the Rhapsodies (*OF* 379-402 B), which in 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

¹⁵⁰ *OF* 44 B (=BGU 5[6], 1211 (ed. Schubart [1916/17.189-196]; cf. Bilabel, *Sammelbuch* 3, 7266; Hunt-Edgar, *Select Papyri* II, London-Cambridge Mass 1934, n. 208; *P. Ord. Ptol.* 29 Lenger (1964.71 no.29) Thebais 215/204 BC [P. Berlin 11774 verso; cf. Henrichs 2003: 227-228]).

¹⁵¹ Edmonds 2013: 172-180, who also mentions the Mother of the gods, Hekate, the Idaian Dactyls, in addition to Dionysus and “similar Bacchic figures.” He argues that Demeter and similar goddess figures appeared in Orphic poetry on the theme of the “aggrieved goddess.”

¹⁵² Ps.-Justin., *Coh. ad Gr.* 17.1 (47.1 Marc.) (*OF* 386 B = *OF* 48 K).

¹⁵³ *OF* 395.1-2 B (Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.20.3 (29 Marc.) = *OF* 395 I B = *OF* 52 K).

about Dionysus or Demeter with any precision, it is reasonable, following Graf, to place it in the context of fifth century Athens, where we find evidence of the belief that Orpheus was the founder of the Eleusinian mysteries.¹⁵⁴ 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 Rhapsodies, *Oracles* (Χρησμούς), *Rites* (Τελετάς), *Descent into Hades* (Εἰς ᾄδου κατάβασιν), *Robe* (Πέπλον) and *Net* (Δίκτυον), to name only a few.¹⁵⁵ These texts 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 in the style of Hesiod or were 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 appear to have been inserted after Ouranos in one version. There was at least one version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus that could have either existed as a separate poem or been 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 was Orphic poetry about Demeter,

¹⁵⁴ Graf 1974: 1-39, 151-186.

¹⁵⁵ *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.

Persephone and Dionysus that was related to mystery rites, but there is little reason to conclude on the basis of this fact that these particular deities were prominent in the last generation of the early Orphic theogonies.

In this way, we see how an approach that sees 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. 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, for they can be analyzed for what they really are: isolated allusions. Although the picture that emerges is more complex, 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 any 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 modify the view that these possess “features of extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature” as proposed by Edmonds.¹⁵⁶ First, as I observed in Chapter One, 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

¹⁵⁶ Edmonds 2013: 8.

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 Apsû and Tiâmat. Second, it appears that first-principles were of interest to the Orphic pseudepigraphers, even from 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 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. In the next chapter, we will return to the topic of first-principles as it relates to Chronos in the Hieronyman Theogony, where the narrative of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes appears in its full form for the first time, seemingly displacing Night. Third, the relationship between Orphic myths and the philosophers who refer to them is complex, suggesting that Orphic poetry is a point of contact between myth and philosophy. From the Orphic Hymn to Zeus in the Derveni poem, which glorifies Zeus as king, to a more hyperbolic exaltation in the Rhapsodies that appears as henotheism or pantheism, 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.

Chapter Four – The Hieronyman Theogony

Like the Eudemian Theogony, the label by which we refer to the Hieronyman Theogony was taken from Damascius' *De Principiis* (sixth century AD),¹ but there is somewhat less confusion over the contents of this theogony. Not only does Damascius provide more information about the Hieronyman Theogony than he does about the Eudemian Theogony, but also there are very few other sources that refer to it. Apart from a couple of sources that seem to corroborate certain details, the only other author who discusses the Hieronyman Theogony is the Christian apologist Athenagoras (second century AD).² The first section of this chapter discusses these two authors and the way they used Orphic texts to support their arguments, because each author exemplifies one of two opposing methods of interpretation that were generally used from the second to sixth centuries AD. Athenagoras reads Orpheus literally to expose the immorality of 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 discussion 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 the contents of this theogony focuses on primordial deities: the 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 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 in his collection of the Orphic

¹ *BNP* s.v. Damascius: *De Principiis* was written when he was head of the Academy, c. AD 515-532.

² Schol. Gregor. Naz. *Or.* 31.16 (ed. Norden, *Hermes* 27, 614-615) (*OF* 79 III, 80 IV B = *OF* 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 = *OF* 59 K) refers to Zeus impregnating Persephone. In both cases, these are brief mentions of mythical events that Bernabé collects with Damascius and Athenagoras as corroborating evidence. For date of Athenagoras, see *BNP* s.v. Athenagoras.

³ Thus explains 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. Later in this chapter, I argue that this might not have been the case.

fragments has combined the two authors 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 rare details.

Because Damascius is primarily concerned with first-principles, he gives the impression that Orphic theogonies were preoccupied with the topic of the first gods by whom everything was made. 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 Rhapsodic Theogony, 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 Written at a time when Hesiod had already become the mainstream canonical narrative, this represents 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;⁶ 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

⁵ Hieronyman Theogony: *OF* 76 B (= *OF* 54, 57 K). For Night in the Rhapsodies, see *OF* 103-110 B and Chapter Five, section (d). 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.

⁶ See section (c) of this chapter for a photo and description of Zurvan Akarana.

discusses these matters in an attempt to understand the meaning of the Orphic narrative of Chronos and Phanes.

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,⁷ 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.⁸ Athenagoras is also our first source who clearly states 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.⁹ Athenagoras makes no mention of the Titans killing Dionysus, so we cannot be certain that this episode appeared in the Hieronyman Theogony. Nor does he recall these narratives in chronological order, so we cannot be certain that every episode he refers to actually comes from one long poem that we call the Hieronyman Theogony. The last section of this chapter questions whether the births of Persephone and Dionysus 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 poem about Dionysus.

⁷ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.6, 20.4 (130, 136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81, 82 I, 83 B = *OF* 57 K). Especially in the case of Phanes giving birth to Echidna, Athenagoras preserves details that fit well with his apologetic argument but might not have suited Neoplatonic metaphysics.

⁸ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 84 B = *OF* 58 K).

⁹ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.1, 3; 32.1 (134-138 Pouderon) (*OF* 87-89 B = *OF* 58-59 K).

By studying the Hieronyman Theogony as it is represented by both Athenagoras and Damascius, I hope to demonstrate further two of the basic points I have been arguing throughout this thesis: that Orphic theogonies have parallels with Near Eastern myth, and that Orphic myth operates 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 in the literary history of Orphic theogony 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, namely Stoicism. Another objective of this chapter is to take a closer, microcosmic look at the approaches of the Neoplatonists and apologists than is possible with the fragments of the Rhapsodies. By discussing how Damascius and Athenagoras use the Hieronyman Theogony, this chapter will lay the groundwork necessary for understanding how the Neoplatonists and apologists generally used the Rhapsodies, and this will be crucial in Chapter Five.

(a) The Evidence: Apologist vs. 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” (ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὸν Ἱερώνυμον φερομένη καὶ Ἑλλάνικον, εἴπερ μὴ καὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν, οὕτως ἔχει).¹⁰ As was the case with the Eudemian Theogony, neither Hieronymus nor Hellanicus wrote an Orphic poem. Instead 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.¹¹ 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

¹⁰ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 69 B = *OF* 54 K). Bernabé adds to the text: (sc. Ὀρφέως Θεολογία).

¹¹ Thus argues West 1983: 176.

Lesbos, a third-century Alexandrian scholar, or the father of one Sandon¹² who is mentioned in the *Suda* as having written “hypotheses about Orpheus book one” (ὑποθέσεις εἰς Ὀρφέα βιβλίον α’).¹³

Most recently, Edmonds suggests that Hieronymus of Rhodes made a compilation of mythical material, using Hellanicus of Lesbos as a source.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ Edmonds dismisses the latter point, concluding that “it remains an open question ... whether such interpretations were exclusive to the Stoics.”¹⁷ Between these competing conjectures it remains unclear who Hieronymus and Hellanicus were. Whether Hieronymus was a Peripatetic or a Stoic, he probably attached allegorical concepts to an earlier mythological text, and these allegories could have been read as actually being contained in the text 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.¹⁸ Thus the Hieronyman Theogony

¹² Or Scamon; cf. Fowler 2000 I: 366; 2013: 731.

¹³ Hellanicus father of Sandon: *Suda* s.v. Σάνδων (4.320.20 Adler) (*OF* 70 B); Hieronymus the Egyptian: Josephus, *Antiquitates Iudaicae* 1.94, 107 (Eusebebius, *Praep. Ev.* 9.11.3, 9.13.5) (*OF* 71-72 B); Hellanicus of Lesbos: Jacoby *ad FGrHist* I A 130; Hieronymus of Rhodes: Lobeck 1829: 340; West 1983: 68, 176-180; *OF* 70-73 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*

¹⁴ Edmonds 2013: 18-20; cf. Fowler 2013 II: 682-689, who points out that Hellanicus of Lesbos tried to resolve the mythical tradition into a chronological framework, and that he used etymologies.

¹⁵ West 1983: 182.

¹⁶ West 1983: 176.

¹⁷ Edmonds 2013: 20.

¹⁸ Brisson 1995: 2912: “La théogonie de Hiéronymos et d’Hellanikos se borne à modifier la théogonie des ‘Rhapsodies’ de façon à la rendre compatible avec les théogonies qu’on trouve chez Homère et chez Hésiode, et même avec la cosmologie stoïcienne.” He also argues that the image of Chronos in the Hieronyman

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, perhaps between the third and first centuries BC.¹⁹ Since the Rhapsodies were still extant in the time of Proclus and Damascius, it makes more sense 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 date of 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 actually 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, as Edmonds argues, the ancient category of Orphism crystallized around the Christian apologists and Neoplatonic philosophers as both groups appealed to Orphic poetry, which they thought was “representative of the entire tradition” of Greek myth. While the Christian apologists pointed out “the literal details of the horrific tales of incest and mutilation,” the Pagan philosophers “could explain the theological profundity of these apparently awful stories through ... allegorization.”²⁰ One consequence is that the fragments are presented in ways that are meant to support the views of the

Theogony was inspired by Mithraism (Brisson 1995: 45-47) but, as I argue later in this chapter, the role played by Chronos also has parallels with earlier Persian myth and iconography, which renders it unnecessary to refer to Mithraism as an influence.

¹⁹ This is the position of West 1983: 176-177, and Bernabé *ad loc.*, based on their assumption of Stoic influence in the poem. If the poem was indeed influenced by Stoic ideas, then it could not have been written earlier than the emergence of Stoicism. If, on the other hand, the poem was not influenced by Stoicism but later subjected to Stoic interpretations, then it could have been written earlier than the Hellenistic Period. Still, there is no evidence of the Hieronyman Theogony in earlier sources for Orphic theogonies (e.g., Plato or the Derveni author), which suggests that the poem was later than the Eudemian Theogony.

²⁰ Edmonds 2013: 28.

philosopher or apologist using the poem, which may not always accurately reflect the contents of the poem.

The Hieronyman Theogony is an excellent example of the way these texts were used to represent Greek tradition. Although we have only two sources, both of them are multi-layered and representative of important perspectives. Damascius applies Neoplatonic allegory to his reading of a prose commentary that might have applied Stoic allegory to a poem, and there is even a possibility that the poet himself was influenced by Stoicism. And 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 was 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.²¹ More than earlier apologists, Athenagoras and his near-contemporary Clement of Alexandria focused their attacks on Orpheus as the earliest representative of Greek tradition, even 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.”²² Athenagoras interprets Orphic myth literally because it aids his argument to do so. He aims to show that

²¹ See Herrero 2010: 232, who argues that by using this approach, Athenagoras and other apologists were “direct heirs” of earlier Greeks who criticized the gods of myth for their immoral acts (e.g., Plato and Isocrates, see *OF* 26 B), and also of the “Peripatetic criticism of the material conception of the gods to which Stoic pantheistic theology led” – as we see below, Athenagoras uses the Hieronyman Theogony “to criticize the materiality of the gods.” The emergence of allegorical interpretations in the first place seems to have been in response to criticisms of this type (see Lambertson 1986: 10-21; Ford 2002: 68-70).

²² Edmonds 2013: 33. *Contra* Edmonds, their criticisms are not so extra-ordinary when one takes into consideration that these criticisms were, as Herrero (2010: 232) argues, “direct heirs of the Presocratic and Platonic criticism of myth,” which from the late Archaic Period was critical of all myths, not just Orphic. Herrero (2010: 242) explains that the reason why Orpheus is “the apologists' preferred enemy” is that “he is a figure of recognized prestige, but at the same time highly vulnerable to attack because he is the one who presents the most scandalous myths.”

the immorality of the gods was rooted in the earliest Greek traditions by applying a literal reading 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.²³ Referring to the same immoral acts of the gods that the apologists criticized, the Neoplatonists explained these episodes as allegories that taught the same philosophical ideas as those 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 the idea 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 Aglaophamus, who in turn taught Pythagoras. Proclus expanded upon this idea by systemizing the specific correspondences between the Rhapsodies and Neoplatonic philosophy.²⁴ In doing so, Proclus preserved more fragments of the Rhapsodies than anyone else, but he did not 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.²⁵ Damascius develops the idea of the “ineffable” (ἀπόρητον), the 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 manifestations of the

²³ Edmonds 2013: 37.

²⁴ Brisson 1995: 43-54; Edmonds 2013: 39-42; Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.5.25-26.

²⁵ In fact, he refines and critiques Proclus by suggesting that the Hieronyman Theogony is a better reflection than the Rhapsodies of the idea of the One; for more on this, see below.

Platonic Forms in the physical universe.²⁶ Basically, there is a ladder of 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) and, 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 mentions 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.²⁷

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.²⁸ 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" (τὴν δὲ μίαν πρὸ τῶν δυεῖν ἄρρητον ἀφίησιν) 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 after these two is generated from them, I mean from water and earth" (τὴν δὲ τρίτην ἀρχὴν μετὰ τὰς δύο γεννηθῆναι μὲν ἐκ τούτων, ὕδατός φημι καὶ γῆς).²⁹ Chronos produces Aither, Chaos and

²⁶ Brisson 1995: 164-165. Brisson has worked out many of the mind-boggling details of this Neoplatonic system and some of the ways in which Proclus (Brisson 1995: 43-103) and Damascius (Brisson 1995: 157-209) allegorically applied the gods in the Rhapsodies to their series of metaphysical triads. This is an advancement that Edmonds (2013: 40) calls "one of the greatest steps forward in the study of Orphism," because Brisson has been able to "pull out the significant patterns." We will return to the system of correspondences that Proclus constructed between Orpheus, Plato and Neoplatonism in more detail in Chapters Five and Six, where Proclus is our most important source for the Rhapsodies.

²⁷ Damascius, *De Principiis* 122-125 (3.156-167 Westerink).

²⁸ Brisson 1995: 172-173. What this means is explained in more detail in Chapter Five.

²⁹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75, 76 I B = *OF* 54 K). As I point out in Chapter Five, section (c), the "first two" represent the concepts of Limit and Unlimited.

Erebos, 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.³⁰ This is a departure from the scheme that was applied to the Rhapsodies by both Damascius and his predecessor, Proclus. In the Rhapsodies, Chronos corresponds to the One, from which the egg, Aither, and Chaos are produced as the first triad.³¹ In both cases, the aim of the Neoplatonists is to make the Orphic theogony appear to agree in all of its details 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.³² But his method is the same: both Proclus and Damascius interpret Orphic theogonies as allegories that represent abstract metaphysical concepts, but they use these texts in slightly different ways.

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 to which the Neoplatonists supposed these deities to correspond. Both Damascius and Athenagoras agree on the essential structure of the narrative, and this is how we know that they are referring 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

³⁰ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161-162 Westerink) (*OF* 78, 79 I, 80 I B = *OF* 54 K); Brisson 1995: 195-201.

³¹ Brisson 1995: 70-71, 168-171. The next two sub-levels consist of the cosmic egg and Phanes, both split into triads; see Chapter Five, section (c).

³² See van Riel 2010: 671-672, 675-680, who points out that Damascius presented his arguments as “a thorough innovation” of his predecessors but not a departure from them because, for the sake of presenting a unified front against the Christians, he did not want to seem like he was disagreeing with them too strongly, although he disagreed on certain issues such as first-principles and the nature of the soul.

Orphic texts in a way that was different from the earlier authors we saw in Chapter Three. 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 representative of the entire tradition of Greek myth. There were collections of short poems in circulation, to which these authors made passing allusions, along with allusions to other poets, including Homer and Hesiod. For later authors, Neoplatonist and apologist alike, Orphic poetry was given a more elevated position, considered representative of all Greek tradition from its earliest roots.³³

(b) Reconstruction: Athenagoras, Damascius, and Bernabé

Since Athenagoras and Damascius referred 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 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.³⁴ 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.³⁵ Not only has he split both authors into several fragments, but also he has 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 he describes. This serves to support the reconstruction

³³ See Edmonds 2013: 14-43 for a more detailed account of this pattern.

³⁴ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160-162 Westerink) (*OF* 69, 75 I, 76 I, 77-78, 79 I, 80 I B = *OF* 54 K).

³⁵ Although Damascius is the later source, I discuss him first because he is the one who specifically identifies the Hieronyman Theogony, and because he presents the narrative only once and in chronological order, which gives us a useful reference point when reading Athenagoras, who pays less attention to chronological order.

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.

Damascius, as we have seen, brings the Hieronyman Theogony into a discussion of first-principles, but this discussion begins with the Rhapsodies. After recalling the narrative of Chronos and Phanes in “the common Orphic theology” (ἡ συνήθης Ὀρφικὴ θεολογία)³⁶ – 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:

ὔδωρ ἦν, φησίν, ἐξ ἀρχῆς, καὶ ὕλη, ἐξ ἧς ἐπάγη ἡ γῆ, δύο ταύτας ἀρχὰς ὑποτιθέμενος πρῶτον, ὔδωρ καὶ γῆν, ταύτην μὲν ὡς φύσει σκεδαστήν, ἐκεῖνο δὲ ὡς ταύτης κολλητικόν τε καὶ συνεκτικόν, τὴν δὲ μίαν πρὸ τῶν δυεῖν ἄρρητον ἀφήσιν· αὐτὸ γὰρ τὸ μηδὲ φάναι περὶ αὐτῆς ἐνδείκνυται αὐτῆς τὴν ἀπόρρητον φύσιν·

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.³⁷

The 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” (σκεδαστήν), but the water was “providing coherence and

³⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 90 B = *OF* 60 K).

³⁷ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = *OF* 54 K). All of my translations of Damascius’ *De Principiis* are based on Ahbel-Rappe 2010, with certain modifications.

connection” (κολλητικόν τε καὶ συνεκτικόν), 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:

τὴν δὲ τρίτην ἀρχὴν μετὰ τὰς δύο γεννηθῆναι μὲν ἐκ τούτων, ὕδατος φημι καὶ γῆς, δράκοντα δὲ εἶναι κεφαλὰς ἔχοντα προσπεφυκυίας ταύρου καὶ λέοντος, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ θεοῦ πρόσωπον, ἔχειν δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων πτερὰ, ὠνομάσθαι δὲ Χρόνον ἀγήραον καὶ Ἡρακλῆα τὸν αὐτόν.

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.³⁸

Damascius calls Chronos “the third first-principle” (τὴν ... τρίτην ἀρχὴν), which contradicts his predecessor, Proclus. With regard to the Rhapsodies, both Proclus and Damascius equate Chronos with the One, the first first-principle. Proclus explains that Chronos is in this position in the allegory because, in his view, time logically must precede generation.³⁹ Damascius offers an explanation for this apparent contradiction between the allegorical interpretations of the Hieronyman Theogony and the Rhapsodies:

καὶ ὑπολαμβάνω τὴν ἐν ταῖς ῥαψωδίαις θεολογίαν ἀφεῖσαν τὰς δύο πρώτας ἀρχὰς μετὰ τῆς μιᾶς πρὸ τῶν δεῖν τῆ σιγῆ παραδοθείσης ἀπὸ τῆς τρίτης μετὰ τὰς δύο ταύτης ἐνστήσασθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν, ὡς πρώτης ῥητόν τι ἐχούσης καὶ σύμμετρον πρὸς ἀνθρώπων ἀκοάς.

And 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.⁴⁰

Damascius does not explain what is unspeakable or inappropriate about the water and mud, but he does offer a reconciliation between his predecessor’s Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation of the Rhapsodies and his own reading of the Hieronyman Theogony. Simply

³⁸ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.7 Westerink) (*OF* 76 I B = *OF* 54 K).

³⁹ Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.280.22-26 Diehl (*OF* 109 V B); Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 109 VIII B = *OF* 60 K); cf. Brisson 1995: 70, 168-169.

⁴⁰ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161 Westerink) (*OF* 54 K).

put, he argues that Chronos appears as the first-principle in the Rhapsodies because he is the first first-principle that is “speakable and appropriate” (ρήτόν ... 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]” (ὁ πολυτίμητος ἐν ἐκείνῃ) and, following the narrative of the Hieronyman Theogony, he interprets the “triple offspring” (τριπλήγονον) of Chronos as the second triad emanating from the first:

Χρόνος ἀγήραος καὶ Αἰθέρος καὶ Χάους πατήρ· ἀμέλει καὶ κατὰ ταύτην ὁ Χρόνος οὗτος ὁ δράκων γεννᾶται, τριπλήγονον Αἰθέρα φησὶ νοερόν καὶ Χάος ἄπειρον, καὶ τρίτον ἐπὶ τούτοις Ἔρεβος ὀμιγλῶδες, τὴν δευτέραν ταύτην τριάδα ἀνάλογον τῇ πρώτῃ παραδίδωσι δυναμικὴν οὔσαν ὡς ἐκείνην πατρικὴν.

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].⁴¹

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 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 triad:

ὁ Χρόνος ὠὸν ἐγέννησεν, τοῦ Χρόνου ποιοῦσα γέννημα καὶ αὕτη ἢ παράδοσις, καὶ ἐν τούτοις τικτόμενον, ὅτι καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων ἢ τρίτη πρόεισι νοητὴ τριάς. τίς οὖν αὕτη ἐστί; τὸ ὠόν, ἢ δυὰς τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ φύσεων, ἄρρενος καὶ θηλείας, καὶ τῶν ἐν μέσῳ παντοίων σπερμάτων τὸ πλῆθος· καὶ τρίτον ἐπὶ τούτοις θεὸν δισώματον.

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

⁴¹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161 Westerink) (*OF* 78 B).

[corresponds to] the various seeds in the middle of the egg; and the third after these is the two-bodied god.⁴²

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 first-born Phanes.

This is different from both Proclus' and Damascius' interpretations of the 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 “terme médian,” 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 Erebos, described as “nébuleux” (ὀμιγλῶδες), the power from which life sprung; and the third triad (Intelligible Intellect) with the egg both as male and as female and with the hermaphrodite Phanes, through whom life is dispersed into the lower levels of the system.⁴³ These are just the first three triads in the Neoplatonists' overall metaphysical scheme, which we do not need to discuss here in its entirety, 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 of the 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.

⁴² Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162 Westerink) (*OF* 79, 80 I B = *OF* 54 K).

⁴³ Brisson 1995: 71-72, 172-174. For more on the “problématiques” triads of Intelligible deities in the Rhapsodies, and on the importance of the “terme médian,” see Chapter Five, section (c).

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.”⁴⁴ 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.”⁴⁵ Athenagoras refers to the Hieronyman Theogony “to criticize the materiality of gods who, having originated in water and earth, cannot be eternal.”⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ Another part of the apologists’ strategy is to refer to the immoral behaviour of the gods, an ethical criticism that goes back at least to Xenophanes, Plato, and Isocrates, in response to which the earliest allegorical interpretations emerged. This method of reading scandalous myths literally eventually became a staple argument of most of the Christian apologists, including Athenagoras.⁴⁸

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” (οὐκ ἐξ ἀρχῆς, ὡς φασιν, ἦσαν οἱ θεοί, ἀλλ’ οὕτως γέγονεν αὐτῶν ἕκαστος ὡς γιγνόμεθα ἡμεῖς), 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:

⁴⁴ Herrero 2010: 232-243.

⁴⁵ Herrero 2010: 238-239.

⁴⁶ Herrero 2010: 232. He argues that “the Christians also join in the originally Platonic and Peripatetic criticism of the material conception of the gods to which Stoic pantheistic theology led,” but “the Christians are much more inclined to Platonic transcendent theology than to Stoic immanentism.”

⁴⁷ Herrero 2010: 242; for more examples of this approach to myth, see Clement of Alexandria’s treatment of the Orphic myth of Dionysus in Chapter Six, section (b).

⁴⁸ Xenophanes 21 A1 D-K (Diogenes Laertius 9.18): “he wrote ... against Hesiod and Homer, reproving them for what they said about the gods” (γέγραφε ... καθ’ Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ὀμήρου, ἐπικόπτων αὐτῶν τὰ περὶ θεῶν εἰρημένα); 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; West 1983: 78-80; Lamberton 1986: 10-21; Ford 2002: 68-70; on the apologists taking up this tradition of criticism, see Herrero 2010: 232-243.

Ὀρφέως δέ, ὃς καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα αὐτῶν πρῶτος ἐξηῦρεν καὶ τὰς γενέσεις διεξῆλθεν καὶ ὅσα ἐκάστοις πέπρακται εἶπεν καὶ πεπίστευται παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἀληθέστερον θεολογεῖν, ᾧ καὶ Ὅμηρος τὰ πολλὰ καὶ περὶ θεῶν μάλιστα ἔπεται, καὶ αὐτοῦ τὴν πρώτην γένεσιν αὐτῶν ἐξ ὕδατος συνιστάντος Ὠκεανός, ὅσπερ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται.

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.”⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰ 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” (τὰ ὀνόματα αὐτῶν πρῶτος ἐξηῦρεν). 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 mentions “Ocean, who has been made the origin of everything” (Ὠκεανός, ὅσπερ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται).

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 that 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:

ἦν γὰρ ὕδωρ ἀρχὴ κατ’ αὐτὸν τοῖς ὅλοις, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ὕδατος ἰλὺς κατέστη, ἐκ δὲ ἐκατέρων ἐγεννήθη ζῶον δράκων προσπεφυκυῖαν ἔχων κεφαλὴν λέοντος <καὶ ἄλλην ταύρου>, διὰ μέσου δὲ αὐτῶν θεοῦ πρόσωπον, ὄνομα Ἡρακλῆς καὶ Χρόνος.

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

⁴⁹ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3 (128 Pouderon) (OF 57 K).

⁵⁰ Cf. Herodotus 2.53.2-3: “I suppose Hesiod and Homer flourished not more than four hundred years earlier than me; and these are the ones who taught the Greeks the descent of the gods, and gave the gods their names, and determined their spheres and functions, and described their outward forms. But the poets who are said to have been earlier than these men were, in my opinion, later.” (Ἡσίοδον γὰρ καὶ Ὅμηρον ἡλικίην τετρακοσίοισι ἔτεσι δοκέω μευ πρεσβυτέρους γενέσθαι καὶ οὐ πλέοσι: οὗτοι δὲ εἰσὶ οἱ ποιήσαντες θεογονίην Ἑλλήσι καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας δόντες καὶ τιμὰς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες καὶ εἶδα αὐτῶν σημήναντες, οἱ δὲ πρότερον ποιηταὶ λεγόμενοι τούτων τῶν ἀνδρῶν γενέσθαι ὕστερον, ἔμοιγε δοκέειν, ἐγένοντο.)

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.⁵¹

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 also 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?” (τί δὲ τῆς ὕλης κρείττους οἱ θεοὶ τὴν σύστασιν ἐξ ὕδατος ἔχοντες;) ⁵² 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:

οὗτος ὁ Ἡρακλῆς ἐγέννησεν ὑπερμέγεθες ᾠόν, ὃ ... εἰς δύο ἐρράγη. τὸ μὲν οὖν κατὰ κορυφὴν αὐτοῦ Οὐρανὸς εἶναι ἐτελέσθη, τὸ δὲ κάτω ἐνεχθὲν Γῆ· προῆλθε δὲ καὶ θεὸς τρίτος δισώματος. Οὐρανὸς δὲ Γῆ μιχθεὶς γεννᾷ θηλείας μὲν Κλωθῶ, Λάχεσιν, Ἄτροπον, ἄνδρας δὲ Ἑκατόγχειρας Κόττον, Γύγην, Βριάρεων καὶ Κύκλωπας, Βρόντην καὶ Στερόπην καὶ Ἄργην· οὓς καὶ δῆσας κατεταρτάρωσεν, ἐκπεσεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν παιδῶν τῆς ἀρχῆς μαθῶν. διὸ καὶ ὀργισθεῖσα ἡ Γῆ τοὺς Τιτᾶνας ἐγέννησεν·

κούρους δ' Οὐρανίωνας ἐγείνατο πότνια Γαῖα,
οὓς δὴ καὶ Τιτῆνας ἐπὶ κλησιν καλέουσιν,
οὕνεκα τισάσθη μὲγαν Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα.

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 –

⁵¹ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.4 (OF 75 II, 76 II B = OF 57 K).

⁵² Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3 (OF 57 K).

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.⁵³

Athenagoras and Damascius are consistent with regard to Chronos/Herakles, the egg, and the “two-bodied god” (θεὸς ... δισώματος) 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-sexed nature of both 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 are 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. The children of Chronos, who better fit Damascius’ allegories, are ignored by Athenagoras, but instead 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” (γεγονέναι τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ ἐξ ὕδατος τὴν σύστασιν ἔχειν), and thus are inferior to the creator god of the Christians.⁵⁴

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. Athenagoras, beyond the fact that as a Christian he would generally reject the anthropomorphism of the gods, concentrates on those descriptions of gods that make them appear monstrous or terrifying.⁵⁵ First he returns to the description of Chronos in the Hieronyman Theogony,

⁵³ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.5-6 (*OF* 79 II, 80 II, 82 I, 83 B = *OF* 57 K). This is the only mention of the Titans in the Hieronyman Theogony besides Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 84, 87 I, 89 I B = *OF* 58 K).

⁵⁴ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.1.

⁵⁵ Again, this was a typical apologist strategy; see Herrero 2010: 238-242.

and then he jumps forward in the genealogy to another narrative, this time about the births of Persephone and Dionysus:

ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦτο μὲν διατεθείκασιν αὐτῶν τὰ σώματα, τὸν μὲν Ἡρακλέα, ὅτι θεὸς δράκων ἐλικτός, τοὺς δὲ Ἑκατόγχειρας εἰπόντες, καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα τοῦ Διός, ἣν ἐκ τῆς μητρὸς Ῥέας καὶ Δήμητρος ... ἐπαιδοποίησατο, δύο μὲν κατὰ φύσιν [εἶπον] ἔχειν ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ μετώπῳ δύο καὶ προτομήν κατὰ τὸ ὀπισθεν τοῦ τραχήλου μέρος, ἔχειν δὲ καὶ κέρατα, διὸ καὶ τὴν Ῥεάν φοβηθεῖσαν τὸ τῆς παιδὸς τέρας φυγεῖν οὐκ ἐφεῖσαν αὐτῇ τὴν θηλήν, ἔνθεν μυστικῶς μὲν Ἀθηλᾶ κοινῶς δὲ Φερσεφόνη καὶ Κόρη κέκληται.

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.⁵⁶

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. 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 of Demeter in which her daughter Kore is such a frightening monster, having horns and six eyes, that her mother flees from her.

Athenagoras is more than willing to mock these frightening aspects of Persephone, but it seems that generally the stories that interest him most are those in which gods take on the form of snakes. After briefly discussing the immoral actions of some of the gods, he returns to the theme of Greek gods in the form of snakes:

τὴν μητέρα Ῥεάν ἀπαγορεύουσιν αὐτοῦ τὸν γάμον ἐδίωκε, δρακαίνης δ' αὐτῆς γενομένης καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς δράκοντα μεταβαλὼν ... ἐμίγη ... εἶθ' ὅτι Φερσεφόνη τῇ θυγατρὶ ἐμίγη βιασάμενος καὶ ταύτην ἐν δράκοντος σχήματι, ἐξ ἧς παῖς Διόνυσος αὐτῷ·

[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,

⁵⁶ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.2 (OF 82 II, 88 B = OF 58 K).

having in the form of a serpent forced this girl also, from whom the child Dionysus [was born] to him.⁵⁷

Chronos, Zeus, Rhea and Kore are all envisioned as serpents, leading Athenagoras to ask rhetorically what is “sacred or useful in such a story” (τὸ σεμνὸν ἢ χρηστὸν τῆς τοιαύτης ἱστορίας). He asks if it is “the descriptions of their bodies” (αἱ διαθέσεις τῶν σωμάτων) that are sacred or useful, and he questions what reasonable person “will believe that a viper was produced by a god” (ὕπὸ θεοῦ γεννηθῆναι πιστεύσαι ἔχιδναν). 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:

ἄν δὲ Φάνης ἄλλην γενεὴν τεκνώσατο δεινὴν
νηδύος ἐξ ἱερῆς, προσιδεῖν φοβερῶπὸν Ἐχιδναν,
ἧς χαῖται μὲν ἀπὸ κρατὸς καλὸν τε πρόσωπον
ἦν ἐσιδεῖν, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ μέρη φοβεροῖο δράκοντος
αὐχένος ἐξ ἄκρου.

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.⁵⁸

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” (γενεὴν ... δεινὴν) with “limbs of a frightening serpent” (μέρη φοβεροῖο δράκοντος).⁵⁹ 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 says which ones. Athenagoras neglects to mention these, concentrating only on the most monstrous examples he can find, especially when it is a description of a deity with serpentine features. Narrative context and

⁵⁷ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (OF 87 I, 89 I B = OF 58 K).

⁵⁸ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (OF 81 B = OF 58 K). [ἄν ... τεκνώσατο]: either ἄν is a modal particle, introducing the subjunctive (“if he gave birth to?”), or it is split by tmesis with τεκνώσατο: thus “bore up/yielded up.”

⁵⁹ Echidna appears in Hesiod (*Theogony* 298-300) as the daughter of Callirrhoe, daughter of Ocean, and she is described as being “half a nymph with glancing eyes and fair cheeks, and half again a huge snake, great and awful, with speckled skin, eating raw flesh beneath the secret parts of the holy earth” (ἥμισυ μὲν νύμφην ἑλικώπιδα καλλιπάρηον, / ἥμισυ δ’ αὐτε πέλωρον ὄφιν δεινὸν τε μέγαν τε, αἰόλον ὠμηστὴν ζαθέης ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης). Although snakes often represent fertility, here Echidna’s serpentine features associate her with chthonic horrors. Likewise, the Hieronyman Theogony mixes aspects of beauty with terror, but Athenagoras focuses on the terrible aspects.

even chronological order are subordinated to Athenagoras' conclusion that "if they differ in no respect from the lowest beasts ... [then] they are not gods" (εἰ γὰρ μηδὲν διενενηνόχασιν τῶν φαυλοτάτων θηρίων... οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοί).⁶⁰

The other major argument that Athenagoras supports with Orphic poetry is the traditional Greek criticism that the gods of myth are immoral, that their actions are more scandalous than anything the Christians were being accused of having committed. In his discussion of Persephone's monstrous form, Athenagoras discusses the monstrous actions of the gods:

τοῦτο δὲ τὰ πραχθέντα αὐτοῖς ἐπ' ἀκριβὲς ὡς οἴονται διεξελήλυθασιν, Κρόνος μὲν ὡς ἐξέτεμεν τὰ αἰδοῖα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κατέρριψεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄρματος καὶ ὡς ἐτεκνοκτόνει καταπίνων τῶν παιδῶν τοὺς ἄρσενας, Ζεὺς δὲ ὅτι τὸν μὲν πατέρα δήσας κατεταρτάρωσεν ... καὶ πρὸς Τιτᾶνας περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐπολέμησεν καὶ ὅτι τὴν μητέρα Ῥέα ... ἐδίωκε ... εἶθ' ὅτι Φερσεφόνη τῇ θυγατρὶ ἐμίγη βιασάμενος καὶ ταύτην ἐν δράκοντος σχήματι.

And [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.⁶¹

Athenagoras, not surprisingly, finds plenty of examples of Greek gods doing bad things: Kronos emasculating his father and eating his children; Zeus overthrowing his father and battling the Titans,⁶² and Zeus' sexual pursuit of both his mother and his 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, framing the narrative details with the name of Orpheus both at the beginning and at the end of his discussion of the texts. The first time, as we have already seen, is when he introduces the birth of Chronos and claims that Orpheus

⁶⁰ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.5.

⁶¹ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (OF 84, 87 I, 89 I B = OF 58 K).

⁶² It may not be particularly immoral for the king of the gods to defend his position as such, but the general idea of discord among the gods certainly would not take anything away from Athenagoras' argument.

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:

χρῆν δ' αὐτούς, εἰ δεινὸν τὸ ἐπ' ἀδείας καὶ ἀδιαφόρως μίγνυσθαι κρίνειν ἔμελλον, ἢ τὸν Δία μεμισηκέναι, ἐκ μητρὸς μὲν Ῥέας θυγατρὸς δὲ Κόρης πεπαιδοποιημένον, γυναικὶ δὲ τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἀδελφῇ χρώμενον, ἢ τὸν τούτων ποιητὴν Ὀρφέα, ὅτι καὶ ἀνόσιον ὑπὲρ τὸν Θυέστην καὶ μιαρὸν ἐποίησεν τὸν Δία.

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, beyond Thyestes.⁶³

Therefore, Athenagoras explicitly attributes to Orpheus both the narrative of Chronos and Phanes and the narrative of Zeus having sex with Persephone to produce Dionysus. 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, although 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 anything the Christians were accused of doing. 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

⁶³ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 32.1 (*OF* 87 II, 89 II B = *OF* 59 K). See *BNP* s.v. Thyestes: in Greek legend Thyestes, exiled from Mycenae, commits incest with his daughter Pelopeia (Hyginus, *Fabulae* 88). When he returns to Mycenae, Atreus kills Thyestes' children and feeds them to him (this is narrated in various tragedies: e.g., Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1096-1097, 1220-1223, 1242-1244, 1501-1504, 1591-1593; Sophocles, *Ajax* 1291-1294; Euripides, *Orestes* 11-14, 812-818, 995-1012). So Thyestes flees and curses Atreus (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1601-1602). Perhaps the connection Athenagoras draws between Zeus and Thyestes is the element of incest with his daughter: intergenerational incest that does not take place with any of the gods in Hesiod.

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 serpentine, and they are immoral.

Despite their different perspectives, there is enough in common between Damascius and Athenagoras that we may conclude that they seem to be drawing 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 the two-bodied 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 were 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.⁶⁴ Its basic genealogy, leaving aside the primordial water and mud and minor genealogical details, is: Chronos, Phanes, Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus, Dionysus. This is the genealogy that Bernabé reconstructs in his edition of the Orphic fragments, although actually he begins from a passage of Tatian, which ironically refers to the end of the narrative:

Ζεὺς καὶ <τῆ> θυγατρὶ συγγίνεται, καὶ ἡ θυγάτηρ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ κυεῖ.
μαρτυρήσει μοι νῦν Ἐλευσίς καὶ δράκων ὁ μυστικὸς καὶ Ὀρφεὺς ὁ θύρας δ'
ἐπίθεσθε, βεβήλοις λέγων.

⁶⁴ Ziegler 1942: 1349-1350; Alderink 1981: 38, 40-42; West 1983: 180-181; Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 39-42; Brisson 1995: 2897-2902; Sorel 1995: 41-45; *OF* 69-89 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*

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.⁶⁵

Based on the correlation between Athenagoras and Tatian, Bernabé includes this passage in the last fragment of the Hieronyman Theogony (*OF* 89 B), but because it alludes to the familiar injunction that begins other Orphic poems, Bernabé conjectures that some form of *OF* 1 B appeared at the beginning of the proem and he places it at *OF* 74 B: “non-initiates, shut the door” (θύραζ δ’ ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι). From there he begins his reconstruction of the narrative as it appears in both authors (*OF* 75-89 B). Following the basic chronological order as found in Damascius, he dismembers 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,⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ The next three fragments, *OF* 81-83, include the genealogical information found in

⁶⁵ Tatian. *Or. Ad Graec.* 8.6 (21 Marc.) (*OF* 74, 89 III B = *OF* 59 K). Bernabé follows Kern, who associated these fragments of Athenagoras and Tatian by including both of them in *OF* 59 K.

⁶⁶ Damascius, *De principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B) & Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3-4 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 75 II B).

⁶⁷ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 76 I B), Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.4 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 76 II B), Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.1 (134 Pouderon) (*OF* 76 III B), & Schol. Gregor. Naz. *Or.* 31.16 (ed. Norden, *Hermes* 27, 1892, 614-615) (*OF* 76 IV B).

⁶⁸ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161.8 Westerink) (*OF* 77 B) & Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161.19 Westerink) (*OF* 78 B).

⁶⁹ Chronos produces the egg: Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 79 I B), Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.5 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 79 II B), & Schol. Gregor. Naz. *Or.* 31.16 (ed. Norden, *Hermes* 27, 1892, 614-615) (*OF* 79 III B). The egg produces Phanes: Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 80 I B), Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 18.5 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 80 II B), Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon) (*OF* 80 III B), & Schol. Gregor. Naz. *Or.* 31.16 (ed. Norden, *Hermes* 27, 1892, 614-615) (*OF* 80 IV B).

Athenagoras alone, but Bernabé reverses the order of their appearance: first the birth of Echidna from Phanes in *OF* 81 and then the offspring of Ouranos and Ge (*OF* 82), with the Titans being given a fragment of their own (*OF* 83).⁷⁰ *OF* 84 simply takes us through Athenagoras’ brief reference to the basic succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus,⁷¹ and *OF* 85 seems to contain a brief allusion to Zeus’ swallowing 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” (καταποθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ Διός, ὅπως ὁ Ζεὺς ἀχώρητος γένοιτο).⁷² At this point, Bernabé adds at *OF* 86 a statement of Damascius, which he (problematically) takes to mean that the Hieronyman Theogony “calls Zeus orderer of all things and of the whole cosmos, thus he is also called Pan” (Δία καλεῖ πάντων διατάκτορα καὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, διὸ καὶ Πᾶνα καλεῖσθαι).⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

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; 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

⁷⁰ From Echidna in: Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81 B), to the offspring of Ouranos and Gaia, both in: Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.6 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 82 I B), and in: Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.2 (134 Pouderon) (*OF* 82 II B), and back to the Titans in: Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 18.6 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 83 B).

⁷¹ Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 84 B).

⁷² Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon) (*OF* 85 B), cf. *OF* 240-243 B.

⁷³ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B). What is problematic about this reading is that the text actually says that the Hieronyman Theogony calls Protogonos Zeus, not that it calls Zeus Pan; see below. There is a play on words in the ruler of the “whole” (ὅλος) universe being called Πᾶν; also see below.

⁷⁴ Zeus having sex with Rhea and the birth of Kore: Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 87 I B), 32.1 (192 Pouderon) (*OF* 87 II B). Persephone’s monstrous form: Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.2 (134 Pouderon) (*OF* 88 B). Zeus having sex with Persephone and the birth of Dionysus: Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 89 I B), 32.1 (194 Pouderon) (*OF* 89 II B), Tatian. *Or. Ad Graec.* 8.6 (21 Marc.) (*OF* 89 III B), & Tatian. *Or. Ad Graec.* 10.1 (24 Marc.) (*OF* 89 IV B).

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 of this chapter. 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; but Bernabé presents the fragments with the assumption that they 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 patterns of the Hieronyman Theogony.

(c) The Narrative Pattern of Chronos and Phanes (OF 75-83 B)

Out of the “water” (ὕδωρ) and “mud” (ῥύλη) emerges the first god of the Hieronyman Theogony: “ageless Chronos” (Χρόνον ἀγήραον), 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 the “double-bodied” (δισώματος)⁷⁵ Phanes, also called Zeus and Pan. Both male and female, 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 replaced by a personification of Time, who emerges from the raw materials of creation to give birth to the demiurge. In the Rhapsodies Chronos retains this position, so the

⁷⁵ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.5 Westerink) (OF 80 I B = OF 54 K): καὶ τρίτον ἐπὶ τούτοις θεὸν δισώματον; but see Bernabé *ad loc.*: δισώματων Westerink; ἀσώματων cod.

Hieronyman Theogony represents a major shift in the emphasis of Orphic myth.⁷⁶ Although Damascius attempts to make the Hieronyman Theogony fit with his metaphysical scheme of triads, and Athenagoras attempts to make these deities appear monstrous and false, 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” (ὕδωρ ἦν ... ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ ὕλη, ἐξ ἧς ἐπάγη ἡ γῆ),⁷⁷ while Athenagoras offers a simpler tale, merely saying that “from the water mud [Chronos] was made” (ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ὕδατος ἰλύς κατέστη).⁷⁸ 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 becoming fixed the earth becomes solid” (Ζήνων δὲ τὸ παρ’ Ἡσιόδω χάος ὕδωρ εἶναι φησιν, οὗ συνιζάνοντος ἰλὸν γίνεσθαι, ἧς πηγνυμένης ἡ γῆ στερεμνιοῦται).⁷⁹ 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 creation by allegorically interpreting Hesiod’s Chaos as water. This Chaos is the process by which “the earth becomes solid” (ἡ γῆ στερεμνιοῦται), similar to Damascius’ statement that “the earth was made solid” (ἐπάγη ἡ γῆ). 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 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.⁸⁰ If indeed the water and mud are a poetic representation of a Stoic concept, then the Hieronyman Theogony represents a Hellenistic attempt to reconcile Orphic myth with current philosophy.

⁷⁶ Although the water and mud disappear from the narrative in the Rhapsodies, there are fragments that indicate some sort of primordial material; see Chapter Five, section (b).

⁷⁷ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = *OF* 54 K).

⁷⁸ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3-4 (128 Pouderon) (*OF* 75 II B = *OF* 57 K).

⁷⁹ Zeno fr. 104 *SVF* (1.29.17 von Arnim) (Schol. Apoll. Rhod. 1.496-498a = 44.4 Wendel); see West 1983: 183; 1994: 297; and Bernabé *ad loc.*

⁸⁰ Brisson 1995: 2912, following West 1983: 182-183; but Bernabé *ad OF* 75 B disagrees.

However, as I suggest above, it might have been the case that Hieronymus had applied a Stoic allegorical interpretation to the original Orphic poem and that Damascius falsely 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" (Ὠκεανός, ὅσπερ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται).⁸¹ 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 egg); but West also notes that Ocean and Tethys were traditionally paired together.⁸² As we saw in Chapter Three, Ocean and Tethys appeared as the parents of the gods in at least one early Orphic theogony, as they did in the *Iliad*, 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.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴

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.⁸⁵ First, there are

⁸¹ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.3 (OF 57 K).

⁸² West 1983: 184: although Tethys is not typically portrayed as an earth goddess, West notes that "she was at least sometimes explained [by allegorists] as representing earth."

⁸³ West 1983: 183.

⁸⁴ This argument would be strengthened if we knew whether Athenagoras had the actual text or Hieronymus' commentary, but this is unknowable.

⁸⁵ The water and mud are similar to the ἀρχαί that were always at the centre of Presocratic cosmogonies which, as we have seen in previous chapters, were composed at about the same time as the earliest Orphic poems. West (1971: 28-36; 1994: 289) argues that these Presocratic cosmogonies were influenced by Near Eastern myths that begin with primordial masses of elements. So the water and mud of the Hieronyman Theogony are likely to have been influenced by Presocratic cosmogony, which in turn indicates the influence of Phoenician cosmogony.

indications of the influence of Phoenician cosmogony in Philo of Byblos (late first century AD),⁸⁶ the author of *Phoenician History* who claims to preserve the cosmogony of Sanchouniathon, a Phoenician from Tyre who supposedly lived before the Trojan War. Although Philo’s text often conflates Greek myth with eastern myth and distorts it with Hellenistic Euhemeristic interpretations, one recognizably Semitic deity is Mot.⁸⁷ The universe having begun from a “foul chaos, dark as Erebus” (χάος θολερόν, ἐρεβῶδες), creation begins when “Mot is born of the wind” (τοῦ πνεύματος ἐγένετο Μώτ). Philo notes that “some say [Mot] is mud” (τινές φασιν ἰλύν), but “others say he is the fermentation of a watery mixture” (οἱ δὲ ὕδατώδους μίξεως σῆψιν).⁸⁸ Philo continues:

καὶ ἐκ ταύτης ἐγένετο πᾶσα σπορὰ κτίσεως καὶ γένεσις τῶν ὄλων. ἦν δὲ τινα ζῶα οὐκ ἔχοντα αἴσθησιν, ἐξ ὧν ἐγένετο ζῶα νοερά, καὶ ἐκλήθη Ζοφασημίν, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν οὐρανοῦ κατοπταί. καὶ ἀνεπλάσθη ὁμοίως ὠοῦ σχήματι, καὶ ἐξέλαμψε Μώτ ἥλιός τε καὶ σελήνη ἀστέρες τε καὶ ἄστρα μεγάλα.

And from this [fermentation] was born every seed of creation and the origin of all things. And there were some living things that had 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.⁸⁹

Baumgarten takes this to mean that “Mot was egg-shaped and blazed forth the heavenly luminaries,”⁹⁰ but West asserts that it was “the whirling wind-driven cosmos that contained

⁸⁶ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2: Jacoby estimates c. 54-142; Baumgarten (1981: 32-35) discusses the problems of dating Philo and estimates that he lived in the late first century AD, until at least the time of Hadrian.

⁸⁷ The presence of Mot in Phoenician myth is attested by the appearance of “Divine Mot” in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. See the translation at Smith & Pitard 2009: 84-86: in *KTU* 1.4.7.45-47, Baal says, “An envoy I will indeed send to Divine Mot / An envoy to El’s Beloved, the Hero.” Baal instructs the envoy to “Be counted among those who descend to the Netherworld. / Then you shall head / to his town, the Watery Place” (1.4.8.7-12). But he warns his “divine servants”: “Do not get too close to Divine Mot” (1.4.8.14-17), for “The heavens are weak in the hands of the Beloved, Di[vi]ne Mot ... At the feet of Mot bow down and fall, / You shall prostrate yourselves and honour him. / And say to Divine Mot, / Repeat to El’s Beloved, the Hero [Baal’s message]” (1.4.8.21-32).

⁸⁸ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1); my translations of Philo are based on Baumgarten 1981: 96-97, with minor adjustments. 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).

⁸⁹ Philo, *FGrHist* 790 F2 (Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 1.10.1); compare the translation of 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.” Baumgarten’s translation suggests that the Zophasemin were egg-shaped, but West’s translation suggests it was the universe itself that was shaped like an egg. The singular ἀνεπλάσθη indicates that West’s translation is probably correct. West (1994: 299) argues that “it was not the living creatures that were moulded in the form of an egg, but the whirling wind-driven cosmos that contained in it the seeds of all creation.”

⁹⁰ Baumgarten 1981: 123.

in it the seeds of all creation” that was egg-shaped.⁹¹ 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 by earlier Near Eastern myth rather than by Stoic philosophy. A Greek poet who was familiar with Mot in Phoenician cosmogony could have transmitted him 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 parallels, with eastern and Greek myths and with iconography, exist in the Hieronyman Theogony.

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 makes merely 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.⁹² 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 of it.⁹³ Similarly, in Sidonian

⁹¹ West 1994: 299.

⁹² West 1971: 33; 1983: 103-104. Lujan (2011: 89) compares the descriptions of Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman Theogony with descriptions of the *Purussasukta*, a “cosmic giant that grows until he occupies the whole universe and has then to be sacrificed in order to produce the various elements that integrate the world.” In *Rigveda* 10.90, “The man (*purusa*) with a thousand heads, with a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, covering the earth by every part, exceeded it by ten fingers.”

⁹³ West 1971: 30-31; 1983: 103-104.

myth, the demiurge is born when Oulomos, whose name (Phoenician *ulom*, Hebrew *olam*) means “time,” has sex with himself to produce the demiurge Chousoros.⁹⁴

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.⁹⁵ 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 co-exists 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.⁹⁶ As West has made clear, the narrative of Chronos and Phanes is a direct parallel to 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.⁹⁷ 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

⁹⁴ West 1971: 29; 1983: 103-104.

⁹⁵ Cf. Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.5 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 80 II B = *OF* 57 K), where the bottom of the egg is Ge and the top half is Ouranos.

⁹⁶ West 1971: 34; 1983: 103-104.

⁹⁷ West 1971: 35-36; 1983: 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). Burkert draws on this parallel to explain the Derveni Papyrus, but the acts of swallowing and spitting also indicate similarities between these creation myths and the time-god myths. This might have some relevance to the Derveni Papyrus, since at one point in either the Derveni poem or the Derveni author’s allegory (it is unclear which), Ouranos is identified with Helios as the father of Kronos (DP 14.2 = *OF* 9 B). See also: Schibli 1990: 37-38, who suggests the myth of Atum as a parallel to that found in Pherecydes of Syros.

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.”⁹⁸

This basic cosmogonic myth eventually found its way into the Orphic theogonies, and it appears in its full form for the first time in the Hieronyman Theogony, so once again where Orphic myth departs from Hesiodic myth it tends to do so with myths that have eastern parallels. 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:

Ζᾶς μὲν καὶ Χρόνος ἦσαν ἀεὶ καὶ Χθονίη· Χθονίη δὲ ὄνομα ἐγένετο Γῆ,
ἐπειδὴ αὐτῇ Ζᾶς γῆν γέρας διδοῖ.

Zas and Chronos always were and Chthonie; and Chthonie became named Ge when Zas gave her the earth as a gift of honour.⁹⁹

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.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ In Pherecydes’ cosmogony, Chronos is the first-principle who creates the elements of fire, air, and water “from his own seed” (ἐκ τοῦ γόνου ἑαυτοῦ), and from the mingling of these elements the gods are created.¹⁰² 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

⁹⁸ West 1983: 104-105.

⁹⁹ Pherecydes 7 A1, B1 D-K (fr. 14 Schibli) (Diogenes Laertius 1.119); translation: Schibli 1990: 144.

¹⁰⁰ Damascius, *De Principiis* 125 (3.166 Westerink); West 1971: 28; see also: Schibli 1990: 37-38.

¹⁰¹ Thus argues West 1971: 28-36.

¹⁰² Pherecydes 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.

“the places in which the elements are distributed.”¹⁰³ 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” (ἐν τούτοις) that he creates the egg.¹⁰⁴ 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 useful expression of this metaphysical process, which reflects the lack of a distinction between mythical and philosophical thought at the time when both Greek philosophy and Orphic poetry were first emerging. In his formulation of cosmogonic myth, Pherecydes drew upon eastern 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 with 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.”¹⁰⁵ This is possible, but Pherecydes was not the only Greek author 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 concept of time. For example, Anaximander says that justice is rendered “according to the ordering of Chronos” (κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Χρόνου τάξιν),¹⁰⁶ and

¹⁰³ Schibli 1990: 20.

¹⁰⁴ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.161.8-162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 77, 78, 79 I B = *OF* 54 K).

¹⁰⁵ Schibli 1990: 35.

¹⁰⁶ Anaximander 12 B1 D-K; it is unclear whether Anaximander’s use of Χρόνος should be capitalized as a personification or simply read as “time.”

Pindar mentions “Chronos the father of all” (Χρόνος ὁ πάντων πατήρ).¹⁰⁷ 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” (αἰῶνος Κρόνε παγγενέτωρ), and Macrobius refers to “Saturn who is himself the originator of time” (*Saturnus ipse qui auctor est temporum*).¹⁰⁸ 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). The first-born Phanes, the two-bodied god, is both male and female, has golden wings on his shoulders, heads of bulls on his sides, 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. For example, 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

¹⁰⁷ Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 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): δεῖξει δὴ μανίην μὲν ἐμὴν βαιὸς χρόνος ἄστοις; Pindar, *Ol.* 10.53-55: ὁ τ' ἐξελέγχων μόνος / ἀλάθειαν ἐτήτυμον / χρόνος; Euripides, *Suppliants* 787: Χρόνος παλαιὸς πατήρ. Likewise, Nemesis (who in the Hieronyman Theogony is the offspring of Chronos) seems to have been personified in the *Cypria*, fr. 10 Bernabé = 11 West (Philodemus, *De pietate* B 7369 Obbink): “And the author of the *Cypria*] says that Zeus pursued [Neme]sis after changing himself too into a goose, and when he had had union with her she laid an egg, from which Helen was born” (Νέμε]σίν τ' ὁ τὰ Κύ[πρια γ]ράψας ὁμοιωθέ[ν]τα χηνὶ καὶ αὐτ[ὸν] διώκειν, καὶ μιγέν[το]ς ὄν τεκεῖν, [ἐξ] οὗ γενέσθαι τὴν [Ἐλ]λένην) (translation: West *ad loc.*).

¹⁰⁸ *OH* 13.5; Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.22.8; cf. McCartney 1928: 187-188.

those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.¹⁰⁹ More famously, both 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 (Fig. 1).¹¹⁰ 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 egg-shell, 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 egg-shell. 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.

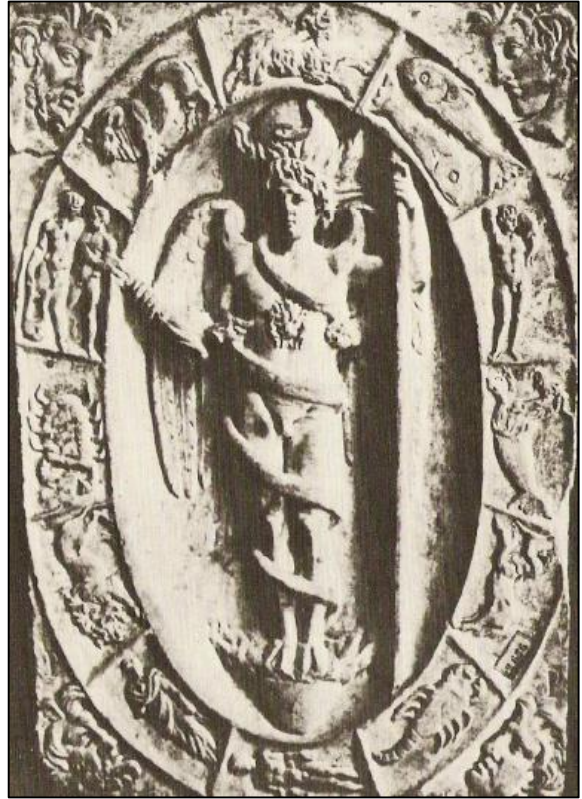


Figure 1: Modena relief, second century AD (West 1983: plate 6).

Since Zurvan Akarana (“Infinite Time”) corresponds in the narrative pattern to Chronos Ageraos in the Orphic theogonies, it might be preferable to compare the relief to Chronos, as does Brisson.¹¹¹ There are also closer similarities in the imagery since, although both Chronos and Phanes have solar associations, wings, and winding serpents, it

¹⁰⁹ Ezekiel 1.6-13; Guthrie 1952: 96-102; *OF* 76 B and Bernabé *ad loc.* Bernabé also cites Revelation 4.6, which describes four winged creatures, one of each resembling a lion, ox, man, and eagle. Another example worth mentioning is the Vedic god Kala, who is described as “thousand-eyed, unaging, possessing much seed” (see West 1971: 33), and one should note the general prevalence of theriomorphic representations of the gods in Egyptian iconography.

¹¹⁰ 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 (my description of the relief mostly relies on West’s description).

¹¹¹ Brisson 1995: 50.

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 heads of bulls attached on his sides” (ἐν ... ταῖς λαγόσι προσπεφυκυίας εἶχε τάρων κεφαλᾶς), and “upon his head was a mighty serpent appearing in the shapes of all kinds of animals” (ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς δράκοντα πελώριον παντοδαπαῖς μορφαῖς θηρίων ἰνδαλλόμενον) (*OF* 80 I B).¹¹² Although “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 egg-shell 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).¹¹³ Of course, the relief depicts neither Chronos nor Phanes but a Mithraic representation of Zurvan Akarana, an ancient Persian deity who predates both the Orphic narratives 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.¹¹⁴ 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,

¹¹² See also: Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.427.20 Diehl (*OF* 130 B = *OF* 79 K), who quotes a Rhapsodic line that speaks of Phanes “sending forth the might of a bull and a fierce lion” (βρίμας ταυρείου ἀφει<ς> χαροποῦ τε λέοντος).

¹¹³ West 1983: 253-254.

¹¹⁴ Brisson 1995: 37-55.

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,¹¹⁵ and as we saw in Chapter Two, early Orphic practice was 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 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 results in 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 with Herakles,¹¹⁶ 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.¹¹⁷ 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 is ultimately unprovable and relies on a lot of conjecture, 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 an 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

¹¹⁵ van der Waerden 1953: 483.

¹¹⁶ Porphyry, *De imag.* (περί ἀγαλμάτων) 8.23-24: “the sun, they call it Herakles from its crying to the air” (ὁ ἥλιος, Ἡρακλέα αὐτὸν προσεῖπον ἐκ τοῦ κλαῖσθαι πρὸς τὸν ἀέρα).

¹¹⁷ Brisson 1995: 2913-2914.

demiurge, the strange descriptions of Chronos and Phanes, and even the association with Herakles can be explained as the adaptation of Near Eastern ideas, images, and patterns of narrative action rather than as an expression of philosophical allegory. The water and mud find a parallel in both the Persian myth in which the universe was, to use West's words, "in a moist state like semen,"¹¹⁸ 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. Likewise, the narrative of Chronos and Phanes is undeniably based on these earlier myths about time-gods who give birth to demiurges, but in general 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 called the father of all things in Pindar, long before he appears as a creator-god in the Orphic myths. The Orphic narrative of Chronos and Phanes is entirely Greek, 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, such as supernatural creatures in Semitic literature, 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 as a Greek adaptation of earlier Near Eastern myths about a time-god who gives birth to a demiurge by means of an egg. 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. If this is the case, then a more difficult question is raised about why an Orphic poet might wish to incorporate an adapted eastern myth into the traditional succession myth of Greek theogonies. An answer to this question requires an analysis of these narratives as they appear in Athenagoras. Yet the question remains whether Athenagoras was indeed reading from only

¹¹⁸ West 1971: 30-31.

one extended theogonic narrative that continued to the sixth generation. Alternatively, he might have been reading two or more different poems from an Orphic collection, including one about Chronos and Phanes, and another about Persephone and Dionysus. If this was the case, then it may suffice to conclude that the narrative of Chronos and Phanes was written simply as a Greek adaptation of an eastern myth.

(d) The Succession Myth and the Incest of Zeus (OF 84-89 B)

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 as far 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. However, in this section I suggest another possibility, which is that Athenagoras could have used more than one Orphic text that he found in a collection, and in certain cases (i.e., the succession myth itself) 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.

In order to make the point that the gods are monstrous, Athenagoras mentions the birth of Persephone and describes her as having 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:

ἐπ' ἀκριβὲς ὡς οἴονται διεξελγύθασιν, Κρόνος μὲν ὡς ἐξέτεμεν τὰ αἰδοῖα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κατέρριπεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄρματος καὶ ὡς ἐτεκνοκτόνει καταπίνων τῶν παίδων τοὺς ἄρσενας, Ζεὺς δὲ ὅτι τὸν μὲν πατέρα δήσας

κατεταρτάρωσεν, καθὰ καὶ τοὺς υἱεῖς ὁ Οὐρανός, καὶ πρὸς Τιτᾶνας περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐπολέμησεν.

They [i.e., 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.¹¹⁹

Athenagoras makes brief allusions to the traditional tales of Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus, including Zeus' battle with the Titans. Each of these 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 from Athenagoras, this passage is to Bernabé evidence that the succession myth appeared in the theogony. The next of these fragments is just one of a series of rhetorical questions Athenagoras asks:

τί τὸ σεμνὸν ἢ χρηστὸν τῆς τοιαύτης ἱστορίας, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν θεοὺς εἶναι τὸν Κρόνον, τὸν Δία, τὴν Κόρην, τοὺς λοιπούς; αἱ διαθέσεις τῶν σωμάτων; καὶ τίς ἂν ἄνθρωπος κεκριμένος καὶ ἐν θεωρίᾳ γεγονώς ὑπὸ θεοῦ γεννηθῆναι πιστεύσαι ἔχιδναν; ... ἢ αὐτὸν τὸν Φάνητα δέξαιτο ... ἢ σῶμα ἢ σχῆμα ἔχειν δράκοντος ἢ καταποθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ Διός, ὅπως ὁ Ζεὺς ἀχώρητος γένοιτο;

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?¹²⁰

From this Bernabé extracts only: “Or was [Phanes] swallowed by Zeus, so that Zeus might become immovable” (ἢ καταποθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ Διός (sc. Φάνητα), ὅπως ὁ Ζεὺς ἀχώρητος

¹¹⁹ Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (OF 84 B = OF 58 K). The lack of a subject in this sentence is typical of Athenagoras' composition: although in some passages (e.g., 19.2-3) he may specify Plato or the Stoics to refer to a particular concept, usually when he speaks in the plural, he means generally the Pagan Greeks.

¹²⁰ Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon). LSJ s.v. ἀχώρητος simply repeats Hesychius α 8901 Latte: “one not moving” (ὁ μὴ χωρούμενος).

γένοιτο).¹²¹ 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” (Δία καλεῖ πάντων διατάκτορα καὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, διὸ καὶ Πᾶνα καλεῖσθαι).¹²² So according to Bernabé the Hieronyman Theogony narrated the following: Kronos 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.

However, although these three fragments of Bernabé’s collection seem to present a coherent narrative, each of them is 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” (ἡ θεολογία Πρωτόγονον ἀνυμνεῖ καὶ Δία καλεῖ πάντων διατάκτορα καὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου, διὸ καὶ Πᾶνα καλεῖσθαι).¹²³ 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 functions as a hymn in the sense that it “celebrates in song” (ἀνυμνεῖ) Protogonos. He adds that in this theogonic hymn, Protogonos 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” (πάντων), 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” (καταποθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ

¹²¹ Athenagoras *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (138 Pouderon) (*OF* 85 B = *OF* 58 K); this comes immediately after 20.4 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81 B = *OF* 58 K), which concentrates on the monstrous aspects of Echidna, who was born “from the sacred belly” (νηδύος ἐξ ἱερῆς) of Phanes.

¹²² Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B = *OF* 54 K).

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

Διός), but the context of the fragment is not Zeus, but Phanes. Athenagoras questions a story in which “a viper was produced by a god” (ὑπὸ θεοῦ γεννηθῆναι ... ἔχιδναν) 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 first-born from an egg, having the body of a serpent, and finally 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.¹²⁴ Athenagoras does say that Zeus swallowed Phanes, but he says this in the context of Phanes, not in the context of the succession myth.

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 in traditional Greek culture.¹²⁵ Athenagoras did not need an Orphic poem to be familiar with the succession myth, nor did he attribute these events to Orpheus. Rather, he introduced them with plural verbs that seem to point to the general tradition, saying that “they [i.e., the Greeks] have gone through [the following events] with accuracy as they think” (ἐπ’ ἀκριβῆς ὡς οἴονται διεξελήλυθασιν).¹²⁶ Unlike his detailed discussion, including direct quotations, of the narratives of Chronos and Phanes and of the incest of Zeus, Athenagoras merely mentions

¹²⁴ 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).

¹²⁵ In his notes at *OF* 84 B, Bernabé lists twelve other places in Greek literature that refer to Kronos castrating Ouranos, from Hesiod (*Theogony* 178-182) to Origen (*c. Cels.* 1.17, 4.48), and ten that refer to Kronos swallowing his children, which in itself underscores how commonly known these narratives were to the Greeks.

¹²⁶ The plural verbs without subject might be a reference to the Stoics, since a little earlier in the passage (19.3) Athenagoras mentions the Stoics. It is unclear whether he is referring to the Stoics or to the Greeks in general, but usually where there is no subject he simply means the Pagan Greeks. It seems that he is using a generalizing plural, similar to the use of φασί (“they say”).

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, who has Euthyphro say that Zeus “put his father in bonds, because he devoured his children unjustly, and [Kronos] in turn had castrated his own father for similar reasons” (τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα δῆσαι, ὅτι τοὺς υἱεῖς κατέπινεν οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ, κάκεινόν γε αὖ τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα ἐκτεμεῖν δι’ ἕτερα τοιαῦτα),¹²⁷ and by Isocrates, who criticizes Greek poets for narrating “eating of children and castrations of fathers and fettering of mothers and many other crimes” (παίδων βρώσεις καὶ πατέρων ἐκτομὰς καὶ μητέρων δεσμούς καὶ πολλὰς ἄλλας ἀνομίας).¹²⁸ The invocation of the succession myth as proof that the gods do immoral things in poetry was a traditional trope in arguments of this type, so by alluding to the succession myth, Athenagoras might have been drawing from prose authors like Plato and Isocrates, rather than from poets like Orpheus and Hesiod.

Although Athenagoras mentions the events of the succession myth and even the act of Zeus swallowing Phanes, there is not enough evidence in his discussion of Orphic myth to prove that the Hieronyman Theogony consisted of a continuous narrative from Chronos to Dionysus with the succession myth in between. Athenagoras discusses both the narrative of Chronos and Phanes and the narrative of Persephone and Dionysus in detail, but he mentions the succession myth only in passing. He does not attempt to follow a chronological order, but alludes to different myths as each suits the purpose of his argument. His allusions to the succession myth could have been drawn from traditional mainstream Greek myth, or even from Greek prose philosophers, just as easily as they could have been drawn from Orphic poetry; and indeed, he does not explicitly attribute the succession myth to Orpheus. Therefore, it is possible that what we call the Hieronyman Theogony was instead a theogonic hymn to Chronos and Phanes and that the narrative of the births of Persephone and Dionysus was drawn from a different Orphic theogonic hymn entirely; and these he does attribute explicitly to Orpheus.¹²⁹

Athenagoras 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

¹²⁷ Plato, *Euthyphro* 5e-6b (OF 26 I B = OF 17 K).

¹²⁸ Isocrates, *Busiris* 10.38-39 (OF 26 II B).

¹²⁹ 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.

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 Two, the last remaining fragment of the Derveni poem says that Zeus “wanted to mingle in love with his own mother” (ἤθελε μητρὸς ἕως μιχθήμεναι ἐν φιλότῃτι).¹³⁰ Neither was the Hieronyman Theogony the last Orphic text to tell this tale for, as we will see in Chapter Six, the Rhapsodies expanded on 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 that an alternative Orphic myth about Rhea/Demeter 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” (τὸ τὴν Ῥέ[α]ν καὶ μητέρα τ[οῦ] Διὸς εἶναι καὶ θυγ[α]τέρα).¹³¹ 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” (κάν τοῖς ἱεροῖς λό[γ]οις τινὲς ἐξεν[η]νό[χ]ασιν, Μελανι[π]πίδης δὲ Δήμητρ[α καὶ] Μητέρα θεῶν φ[η]σιν μίαν ὑπάρχ[ειν]).¹³² Bernabé links these passages of 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.”¹³³ Although it is unclear if Philodemus is actually referring to the

¹³⁰ DP 16.14, 18 *passim* = OF 18 B.

¹³¹ Philodemus, *De Pietate* (Herculaneum Papyrus 1428 VI 16-17, pp. 80-81 Gomperz) (OF 28 B = OF 30 K) = Cleanthes fr. 1081 (SVF 2.316, 34 von Arnim).

¹³² Philodemus, *De Pietate* (Herculaneum Papyrus 248 II 7-8, p. 23 Gomperz) (OF 29 B = OF p. 143 K) = Kleidemos, *FGrHist* 323 F 25.

¹³³ Bernabé *ad OF* 38 B: “omnes deos denuo generavisse ... ita ut Saturnus et Rhea, Iovis parentes, denuo nascentur quasi liberi eius.” On the other hand, this might just be a case of syncretism: Rhea being equated with Kore.

Derveni poem as Bernabé seems to suggest, 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” (δύο μὲν κατὰ φύσιν [εἶπον] ἔχειν ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ μετώπῳ δύο καὶ προτομήν κατὰ τὸ ὀπισθεν τοῦ τραχήλου μέρος, ἔχειν δὲ καὶ κέρατα). Reacting to Persephone’s monstrous form, Rhea was frightened, so she fled, “and did not give her the breast” (οὐκ ἐφεῖσαν αὐτῇ τὴν θηλήν).¹³⁴ 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:

τὴν μητέρα Ῥέαν ... ἐδίωκε, δρακαίνης δ’ αὐτῆς γενομένης καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς δράκοντα μεταβαλὼν ... ἐμίγη ... εἶθ’ ὅτι Φερσεφόνη τῇ θυγατρὶ ἐμίγη βιασάμενος καὶ ταύτην ἐν δράκοντος σχήματι, ἐξ ἧς παῖς Διόνυσος αὐτῷ.

[Zeus] pursued his mother Rhea ... and she became a serpent, and he himself was changed into a serpent, and ... he had sex with her ... and again he had sex with his daughter Persephone, in the shape of a serpent having forced this girl also, from whom the child Dionysus [was born] to him.¹³⁵

Third, a little further down in the text, Athenagoras again argues that the deeds of the gods are more disgraceful than the deeds of which Christians were accused, and he ridicules the fact that the Greeks “display as mysteries” (δεικνύουσι μυστήρια) 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” (ἐκ μητρὸς μὲν Ῥέας θυγατρὸς δὲ Κόρης πεπαιδοποιημένον, γυναικὶ δὲ τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἀδελφῇ χρώμενον).¹³⁶ Bernabé cuts up and rearranges these three passages to make them fit into a chronological order: in *OF* 87 B, Zeus has sex

¹³⁴ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.2 (*OF* 88 B = *OF* 58 K).

¹³⁵ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 87 I, 89 I B = *OF* 58 K).

¹³⁶ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 32.1 (*OF* 87 II, 89 II B = *OF* 59 K). Note that he does not mention Zeus marrying his sister Hera, which was well known; it seems that it is not just incest, but intergenerational incest, that is criticised.

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.¹³⁷

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,¹³⁸ but her overall appearance is comparable to Chronos and Phanes in the Hieronyman Theogony, who also have certain theriomorphic characteristics. Athenagoras eagerly recalls the details of their descriptions with wings, multiple heads, and serpentine features 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 also 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” (συνδήσας αὐτήν τῷ καλουμένῳ Ἡρακλειωτικῷ ἄμματι),¹³⁹ and again with Persephone, “having forced this girl also” (βιασάμενος καὶ ταύτην).¹⁴⁰ The

¹³⁷ Bernabé adds two brief statements of Tatian, which corroborate the myth that Zeus had sex with Persephone in the form of snake, to *OF* 89: Tatian. *Or. Ad Graec.* 8.6, 10.1 (21, 24 Marc.) (*OF* 89 III, IV B).

¹³⁸ Neither does she have a serpentine form in the Rhapsodies (*OF* 276-283 B). West (1983: 97) compares the Hieronyman Theogony with Nonnus (*Dionysiaca* 6.155ff.), who describes Zeus in the form of a snake having sex with Persephone; here, she stays in human form while he slides all over her body.

¹³⁹ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 87 I B = *OF* 58 K). The Herakleian knot refers to the winding of two serpents in spiral form, as seen in the staff of Hermes (Kerényi 1951: 8-9).

¹⁴⁰ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (*OF* 89 I B = *OF* 58 K); cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.12 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 281 II B = *OF* 195 K) τῷ μὲν ... βιασάμενῳ (referring to the Rhapsodies).

consequences of Zeus' committing forced incest are the births of first Persephone and then 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.¹⁴¹ It is reasonable to conclude that the incest narrative ended with 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.

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 he could have easily alluded to the fact that in traditional Greek myth Zeus is married to his sister Hera.¹⁴² But there was more: 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. In other words, it is possible that Athenagoras found these narratives in two different, shorter Orphic poems, not in a single Hieronyman Theogony that covered six generations from Chronos to Dionysus. 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. First, Athenagoras uses Chronos and Phanes to demonstrate that the Greek gods are born and are made of matter. Second, not only Chronos and Phanes, but

¹⁴¹ West 1983: 181-182; see also Bernabé *ad loc.* One could argue that if the text Athenagoras was reading had narrated the Titans eating Dionysus, then perhaps he would have mentioned this instance of cannibalism, in defence against accusations that Christians were cannibals; but 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 6.3; see Chapter Six, section (b).

¹⁴² Perhaps there was a taboo against intergenerational incest that did not apply to incest between deities of the same generations; intergenerational incest does not occur in Hesiod, but Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus all marry their sisters; *cf.* Oedipus, whose tragic fall came when he realized he had committed incest with his mother.

also Zeus, Rhea and Demeter appear in serpentine and monstrous forms, features by which Athenagoras can portray the gods of the Greeks as ugly, frightening beasts.¹⁴³ And third, the narrative of Zeus committing incest adds to the traditional list of immoral actions of which the gods are guilty. 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, and this will be relevant to our study of the Rhapsodies in the next chapter. 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 these authors' choices about what material to present and how to present it, which in turn has had consequences on how modern scholars read (or misread) the Orphic fragments of the Hieronyman Theogony, and as we will see in the next chapter, 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 (or four) 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

¹⁴³ This is really a later re-interpretation of a motif that would have suggested different connotations to a traditional Greek audience, for whom snakes were symbols of fertility, not evil.

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 Chapter Five, which discusses apologetic and allegorical interpretations as they become relevant.

Chapter Five – The Rhapsodies

(a) Introduction

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 parallels. This was observed with the act of swallowing in the Derveni poem, the cosmic egg in the Eudemian Theogony, and theriomorphic descriptions of 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, particularly the earlier Orphic tradition – especially since the composition of the Rhapsodies seems to have involved a compilation of older Orphic material.

(2) I have also observed 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-Zeus remains intact, and indeed 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.

(3) 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 (the fragments of which do not mention Dionysus), in the different versions of the Orphic Hymns to Zeus (which are not about Dionysus), and in the narratives of Phanes and Zeus

in serpentine form in the Hieronyman Theogony (although the latter becomes the father of Dionysus). 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 at least as many fragments about Phanes and Zeus in the Rhapsodies as there are about Dionysus.¹ This indicates that in Orphic myth Zeus and Phanes were equally important as Dionysus, if not more important. 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.² This suggests that Zeus was more important to Orphic myth, literature, and thought than modern scholarship has acknowledged.

(4) In Chapters Three and Four, I left open the question of whether the fragments of the Eudemian and Hieronyman Theogonies came from the same poem or from different poems in a collection. This question is no less important when it comes to the Rhapsodies, but it must also remain an open question. In section (b) of this chapter, I discuss the question of whether the Rhapsodies were a Rhapsodic Theogony or a Rhapsodic collection, a question that has also been raised by Edmonds.³ 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.

(5) Another theme that has arisen throughout this thesis is positioning 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 they may have even been influenced by philosophy; and 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 the 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

¹ Notwithstanding the qualification that Bernabé cuts up the texts, a rough estimate is that there are 53 fragments about Phanes (*OF* 120-173 B), 51 about Zeus (*OF* 205-256 B), and 56 about Dionysus (*OF* 280-336 B).

² See section (g) for more on this, and the text and translation in Appendix A.

³ Edmonds 2013: 148-159.

understanding of Neoplatonic metaphysics, which is something that most modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodies have tended to ignore, notwithstanding recent efforts by Brisson.⁴ Most modern scholars who have studied Orphic literature have been more interested in reconstructing the text than in understanding Neoplatonic metaphysics, so West usually dismisses Neoplatonic allegories and at times even scoffs at them,⁵ 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.⁶ This is reasonable to the extent that their goal is reconstruction of the texts, but it has led to certain distortions. The best example of this is a passage of Hermias that mentions three Nights. This passage has misled scholars into thinking that there were three distinct goddesses called Night in the Rhapsodies; but what is actually happening is that Hermias is splitting Night into a triad to make her fit into the Neoplatonic metaphysical system.⁷ One of the most important ways in which the study of the Rhapsodies can be advanced is by simply explaining how the Neoplatonists used the Orphic texts and by pointing out how this has influenced our own interpretations of the Rhapsodies, so this will be the focus of sections (c) to (g). In these sections, I demonstrate that the allegorical interpretations of the Neoplatonists were not a matter of arbitrarily assigning correspondences between Orphic deities and different levels of their metaphysical system, but of finding substantial points

⁴ Brisson 1995: 43-103 (on Proclus), 157-209 (on Damascius).

⁵ In *The Orphic Poems* (1983), when West discusses the apparent contradiction between Phanes seated eternally in the cave of Night in some fragments but riding a chariot in others (see section (b) for more on this), he refutes “the not very difficult assumption that the Neoplatonists are wrong” (p. 215). He dismisses Proclus’ interpretation of the twenty-four measures in Phanes’ sceptre by saying, “that is simply Neoplatonist construction” (p. 232). Although he is correct to argue that Olympiodorus’ interpretation of the story of Dionysus and the Titans is “merely Neoplatonist interpretation” (p. 164), his use of the word “merely” betrays his dismissive attitude toward them. He is not so correct when he dismisses the idea that “the three Nights are an invention of the Neoplatonists” (p. 208) and argues that “the Neoplatonist interpreters flounder” on this issue (p. 209): as I argue in section (d), modern scholars (including West) are the ones who have floundered on the question of the three Nights.

⁶ This will be seen throughout this chapter and the next. Often Neoplatonists say something like “this is why Orpheus says (one thing or another),” and Bernabé does not include the part of the text that precedes this statement and explains why Orpheus says whatever he is saying. Therefore, there will be many places where I cite the context of an Orphic fragment that does not appear in Bernabé. In each case, this will be specifically noted in the footnotes, both as a critique of Bernabé’s presentation (he should have included more context) and for the sake of clarity and precision. Edmonds (2013: 65) is also critical of Bernabé for “the dislocation of the fragments from the context in which they appear and the breaking up of the fragments into even smaller pieces.”

⁷ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 147 II B = *OF* 99 K): “three Nights have been transmitted in Orpheus” (τῶν γὰρ παραδεδομένων Νυκτῶν παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ); see Bernabé *ad loc.*; West 1983: 209; and section (d) of this chapter.

of correspondence between their own ideas and the contents of the Rhapsodic narrative. In other words, the poem itself may not have been written with the intent of the allegorical meaning that was later applied to it, but in each case the myth is capable of operating as a fitting illustration of an abstract concept.

Before discussing what the Rhapsodies meant and how they were used, it is necessary to consider what the Rhapsodies were and when they were written. Some earlier scholars such as Gruppe and Kern thought the Rhapsodies were written as early as the sixth or fifth century BC,⁸ and there are indications that they at least contained archaic material such as Homeric formulae.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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” (ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀπείριτον),¹¹ and the depiction of Zeus with

⁸ Kern (1888a: 1-5) summarizes the debate as it began between Lobeck and Schuster: Lobeck argued that the Rhapsodies were a composition of the Christian era, but Schuster insisted that they were written near the end of the sixth century BC. Kern agreed with Schuster in his earlier work, but when later he collected the fragments, he seemed to have changed his mind. In his introduction to the fragments of the Rhapsodies, Kern (1922: 140-141) did not think they were composed long before the Neoplatonists, but still admitted that there were traces of old poetry. Gruppe (1887 I: 612-675) also believed the Rhapsodies were composed in the sixth century BC.

⁹ e.g., Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης (Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (OF 181 I B = OF 131 K) and Westerink *ad loc.*; Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.75.8 Kroll (OF 181 II B = OF 140 K) and Festugière *ad loc.*; Bernabé *ad loc.*; cf. *Iliad* 2.205, *Odyssey* 21.415; Hesiod, *Theogony* 18 and West *ad loc.*; Cook 1914 II: 548-549); referring to Zeus, πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε (OF 244 B (Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.318.22 Diehl (I); *in Plat. Cratyl.* 48.7 (II), 49.14 (III) Pasquali); cf. *Iliad* 1.544 and Kirk *ad loc.*); but the mere appearance of Homeric epithets was something that continued in later epic tradition, so it is not sufficient evidence of an early date. Certain elements of the Derveni poem, such as the possible appearance of the word πρωτογόνοσ (OF 12.1 B = DP 16.3) and the earliest version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (OF 14 B = DP 17.6, 12; 19.10), reappear in the Rhapsodies, confirming that their content was based on a tradition that went back to the sixth or fifth century BC. Naturally, Gruppe and Kern could not have been aware of what was contained in the Derveni Papyrus, since it had not yet been discovered. Although their conclusions about the date of the composition of the Rhapsodies were wrong, their instincts were correct in the sense that the Rhapsodies were based on a literary tradition that went back to the sixth century. See Guthrie 1952: 74-78 for a summary of early scholarly debates on the date of the Rhapsodies: Guthrie does not venture to suggest a date, but accepts that Hellenistic Orphic texts maintained many of the features of the earlier tradition.

¹⁰ West 1983: 248-251; Baumgarten 1998: 113: first century BC; Brisson 1995: 169-172, 2886: first or second century AD; Colli 1977 *ad* 4 [B 73] p. 423-424: second century AD.

¹¹ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.48.15 (I), 2.282.11 (III), 3.142.12 (II) Diehl (OF 155 B = OF 91 K). Although the occurrence of μήσατο reminds him of the Derveni Papyrus (DP 23.3-11 = OF 16 B), West (1983: 49 & n. 45, 92, 109) argues that the idea of the moon as another earth comes from the fifth century BC, when Parmenides (28 B14-15 D-K), Anaxagoras (59 A1, 8, 77 D-K), and Democritus (68 A90 D-K) were among the earliest Greek authors to have known that the moon reflects light from the sun. West also argues that the description of different zones in the earth (Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (OF 160 B = OF 94 K); West 1983: 210-211 & n. 114; see also: Burkert 1972: 305 and Bernabé *ad loc.*) and Phanes creating from inside the cave of

golden hair, horns, and wings in the Orphic Hymn to Zeus.¹² The earliest possible sources for the Rhapsodies date from the first to third centuries AD, which gives us a relatively late *terminus ante quem*.¹³ Since the Rhapsodies were the only Orphic theogony that was current in Damascius' time (sixth century AD), it seems likely that they were written after the Hieronyman Theogony.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Rhapsodies contained earlier material, especially in the sense that they were a compilation of earlier Orphic poetry. On this matter, Guthrie makes an important point: 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."¹⁵ 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, my approach is to treat the Rhapsodies as Hellenistic texts, compiled around the first century BC, and to recognize Archaic features when they arise as indications of influence from earlier Orphic tradition.

Night (Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = *OF* 97 K); West 1983: 213) could not have been pre-Hellenistic. West (1983: 225) and Kingsley (1995: 124) argue that indications of Stoic ideas point to a Hellenistic date.

¹² *OF* 243.12, 14, 25 B = *OF* 168 K; West (1983: 240) comments that "this is not the Zeus of the theogonies, but the Zeus of some Hellenistic syncretism."

¹³ Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*, dated to the first or second century AD, agrees in many of its details with the Rhapsodies, so although Kern did not include Apollodorus in his edition of the fragments, Bernabé does (*OF* 174 IX, 177 I B, etc.), cutting the text into many fragments as is his custom. West (1983: 121-126), on the other hand, argues that Apollodorus' source was not the Rhapsodies but the Cyclic Theogony. Colli (1977: 4 [B 28] p. 413) dates Pseudo-Clement's *Homilies* to the first century AD and thinks he is a source for the Hieronyman Theogony, but Burkert (1968: 109 & n. 45) argues that he is a source for the Rhapsodies because of greater similarity. However, Brisson (1995: 2902-2911) argues that this pseudepigraphic text dates to the fourth century AD (*cf.* *BNP* s.v. Pseudo-Clementine Literature); *cf.* Kotwick 2014, who argues that the fragments from Alexander Aphrodisiensis (first century AD) were actually written by Michael of Ephesus (twelfth century AD). While these sources remain uncertain, a firm *terminus ante quem* can be found in Porphyry (third century AD); see Colli 1977: 4 [B 73] p. 423-424.

¹⁴ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 91 B = *OF* 60 K). This is the view of most of the scholars I have been citing here, with the exception of Brisson (1995: 4-7, 2885-2914) (recently followed by Fayant 2014: xix-xxiii), who argues on the basis of similarities with Mithraism that the Hieronyman Theogony was the later text. He suggests that the Rhapsodies were written in the first or second century BC, and the Hieronyman Theogony at the end of the second century AD; see Chapter Four.

¹⁵ Guthrie 1952: 78; this makes even more sense if they are a collection of poems and not a single theogony.

Perhaps the most elaborate theory about how the Rhapsodies were compiled and composed is that proposed by 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 the Orphic poem *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.”¹⁶ Accepting the *Suda*’s claim that the author of the Rhapsodies was a Thessalian named Theognetus,¹⁷ 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,” modelled after the twenty-four books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.¹⁸ 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.” As he explains it, literary critics in the Hellenistic Period claimed that the Homeric poems originally consisted of diverse ῥαψωδία (West translates this as “recitations”) that consisted of “episodes which Homer had recited” and left behind at various towns.¹⁹ More accurately, different episodes and type scenes had evolved out of an oral tradition and were eventually written down. The Peisistratid recension was the unification of these “rhapsodies” into coherent wholes, which were later divided into twenty-four books each. While this was happening poets such as Orpheus of Croton, Zopyrus of Heraclea, and

¹⁶ West 1983: 246-247; on the sceptre, see Proclus, *in Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasqali (*OF* 98 IV B = *OF* 101 K); on the golden chain, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.313.31 Diehl (*OF* 237 IV B = *OF* 166 K).

¹⁷ *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς (3.565.8 Adler) (*OF* 91 B = *OT* 223d K); West 1983: 248. He rejects the alternative claim that Cecrops the Pythagorean was the author, arguing that Cecrops “rests on a confusion with the early *Hieros Logos* mentioned by Epigenes and attributed to Cercops by him.” This leaves Theognetus “as the sole contender,” so West accepts Theognetus’ authorship “for the sake of convenience,” concluding that “it cannot be confirmed that he was our compiler, but we have no grounds for questioning the *Suda*’s statement to this effect.”

¹⁸ West 1983: 248-249; cf. Guthrie 1952: 77 (following Gruppe 1887): “nothing more than an attempt to put together all earlier strata of Orphic tradition, reconciled as far as possible.”

¹⁹ West 1983: 249. West’s model of the Peisistratid recension is not universally accepted: contrast Nagy, who argues for more of an evolutionary model. In a recent summary of his views, Nagy (2009: 2-5) suggests five periods: (1) fluid oral tradition in the Bronze Age; (2) oral tradition becoming more formative in the Archaic Period; (3) the use of Homer centralized in Athens with the use of written transcripts in the Classical Period; (4) standardization of Homeric scripts in the early Hellenistic Period; (5) Homeric texts become rigid from the second century BC, after being edited by Aristarchus of Samothrace. One could apply either West’s or Nagy’s model of the emergence of written Homeric poetry to the emergence of Orphic poetry, and in either case the result would be that Orphic poetry evolved a little bit later than Homer but out of similar oral traditions, and the Rhapsodies became standardized sometime after the second century BC.

Onomacritus of Athens were active, and some of their poems eventually became mixed into collections of Orphic poetry. Hellenistic scholars found these pseudepigraphic collections and attempted to unify them into one text. As West argues, “Orpheus ... like Homer, bequeathed disconnected ‘rhapsodies’; but it was left to Theognetus to complete their reunification.”²⁰ Probably working in Pergamum, Theognetus noticed that the Orphic poems had much in common with one another, so according to West this “looked like an example of the situation postulated for the Homeric poems before Pisistratus.”²¹ 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.”²² In this way, he envisions the Rhapsodies as a lengthy chronological narrative with a structure similar to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (and content similar to Hesiod’s *Theogony*), which came to be compiled in a manner similar to the Homeric poems – or, more precisely, in a manner similar to how Hellenistic scholars thought the composition of the Homeric poems had been done.

West reconstructs a plausible scenario in which the Rhapsodies might have been compiled, and some have found his theory acceptable,²³ but he is still mistaken by his general 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 individual poets operating in a dynamic and fluid literary tradition. As I argued in Chapter One, rather than seeing the Rhapsodies as a later product in a stemma, a preferable model is *bricolage*, as originally formulated by Lévi-Strauss and applied to the gold tablets by Graf, Johnston, and Edmonds. We can see the operation of *bricolage* in the way the author(s) of the Rhapsodies re-worked 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

²⁰ West 1983: 250.

²¹ West 1983: 250. He points out that there were various Orphic poems attributed to these authors, and emphasizes Onomacritus’ reputation for forgery. It is not difficult to imagine how a poem by Orpheus of Croton might be confused with a poem by the legendary Orpheus.

²² West 1983: 250-251.

²³ E.g., Baumgarten 1998: 113-115. Bernabé (2004: 98), in his introduction to the Rhapsodic fragments, seems to agree with West but admits that his theory “seems very uncertain” (“valde incertum videtur”).

West and Bernabé agree, then the *bricoleur* brought together not only earlier Orphic poems, but also every other source of inspiration that he could bring to the text. 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 material of his own.”²⁴ On the other hand, if the Rhapsodies were a collection of twenty-four different poems, as I discuss in section (b), 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 “compiler,” not the composer.²⁵ The final form of the twenty-four Rhapsodies, if they were individual poems, was the product of a compiler who put the poems together into a collection. Within the collection, there might be poems ranging from the sixth to first centuries BC, which would result in our fragments containing an odd mixture of Archaic and Hellenistic features.²⁶ Whether the Rhapsodies consisted of twenty-four books of a single poem or twenty-four individual poems in a loose collection,²⁷ 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” (ἐν ... ταῖς φερομέναις ταύταις ῥαψωδίαις Ὀρφικαῖς),²⁸ and the *Suda*’s attributing to Orpheus the “Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Rhapsodies” (Ἱεροὺς λόγους ἐν ῥαψωδίαις κδ’).²⁹ 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”

²⁴ West 1983: 246-247.

²⁵ West 1983: 246-247.

²⁶ This mixing of Archaic with Hellenistic features is also compatible with West’s model: the difference I am suggesting is that we might find more Archaic features in one poem, and more Hellenistic features in another.

²⁷ The nature of the Peisistratid recension might make these two scenarios appear equivalent, but perhaps there is a major difference: if the *Iliad* originally consisted of separate poems, they were eventually stitched into one (and then split into twenty-four books), but the Rhapsodies are a case in which either different poems were stitched into one or twenty-four separate poems were put into a collection and not stitched into one.

²⁸ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (OF 91 B = OF 60 K).

²⁹ *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς (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).

(Ὀρφεύς φησιν) or “in Orpheus” (παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ), and often they simply say “the theologian” (ὁ θεολόγος) with no reference to a title.³⁰ Plutarch seems to call the Rhapsodies a ἱερὸς λόγος, but Bernabé points out that this is a general designation that is also used to describe other older texts.³¹ 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.³² 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 ῥαψωδία tells us something about what the Rhapsodies were: “stitched-together songs.”³³ The word ῥαψωδία derives from the Homeric verb ῥάπτω (“stitch, sew”) and the noun αἰοδή (“song”).³⁴ An early application of ῥάπτω to music appears in a fragment of Hesiod, where he speaks of himself and Homer “stitching together poetry in new songs” (ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες αἰοδήν),³⁵ and in Pindar’s second *Nemean Ode*, where he calls the Homeridai “singers of stitched-together verses” (ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων ... αἰοδοί).³⁶ In the fifth century BC, the noun ῥαψωδός came to mean someone who recites poetry, particularly Homer, in competitions. From that time, there seems to have been a distinction between a ῥαψωδός who recited poetry that was

³⁰ Ὀρφεύς φησιν: e.g., Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 33.1 Pasquali (*OF* 140 II, III B = *OF* 82 K); παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ: e.g., Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.16 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV = *OF* 99 K); ὁ θεολόγος: e.g., Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.450, 9 Diehl (*OF* 140 IX B = *OF* 85 K). Similar attributions appear *passim* throughout the fragments preserved in the Neoplatonists.

³¹ Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 2.3.2 p. 636d (*OF* 1 II, 101 I B = *OF* 334 K); Bernabé (2004: 97-98) cites several passages that refer to other Orphic poems as ἱεροὶ λόγοι: Herodotus 2.81 (*OF* 650 B), Plato, *Epistle* 7, 335a (*OF* 433 I B), Clidemus *FGrHist* 323 F25 (*OF* 29 B), Epigenes *ap. Clem. Alex. Strom.* 1.21.131.5 (*OF* 406 B), Orph. *Arg.* 43 (*OF* 40 B). There also appear to have been Pythagorean ἱεροὶ λόγοι; see Baumgarten 1998: 144-147.

³² μυστικοὶ λόγοι: Galen, *De usu part.* 12.6 (*OF* 1 XXII B); θεογονία: *Suda* s.v. Ὀρφεύς (3.565.8 Adler) (*OF* 92 B); Fulgentius, *Mytholog.* 3.9 & *Mythogr. Vatic.* 3.10.7 (*OF* 353 I-II B); John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (*OF* 102 I B); *Martyr. Sanct. Aecaterin.* 3.11 p. 52 Viteau (*OF* 337 II B); Schol. Lycophr. 399 (*OF* 214 I B); θεομυθία: Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.4; in *Plat. Tim.* 3.223.7 Diehl (*OF* 288 II B). Both West (1983: 68) and Bernabé (2004: 97-98) emphasize that these are not formal titles, but general designations. Other possible titles for specific poems within the collection might include τὸ περὶ Διὸς καὶ Κόρης (Schol. Dionys. *Perieg.* 1 = *OF* 287 I B) and οἱ περὶ τῆς Ἰπτασ λόγοι (Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.105.28 Diehl = *OF* 329 II B).

³³ See *BNP* s.v. Rhapsodes, which suggests that it means someone “who sews a song/songs (from pieces of material which already exist).”

³⁴ *BNP* s.v. Rhapsodes; *LSJ* s.v. ῥαψωδ-έω. While ῥάπτω usually meant literally “sew together” (*Iliad* 12.296; Herodotus 9.17), in Homeric language it also had a metaphorical meaning of devising or plotting (*Iliad* 18.367; *Odyssey* 3.118, 16.379, 422).

³⁵ Hesiod, fr. 357 M-W (Schol. Pind. *Nem.* 2.1); cf. Plato, *Resp.* 600d, where Homer and Hesiod are said “to rhapsodize” (ῥαψωδεῖν).

³⁶ Pindar, *Nem.* 2.2.

already written and an αἰοδός who improvised poetry in the oral tradition.³⁷ The first occurrence of the noun ῥαψοδός is in Herodotus, who describes contests at Sicyon where professional ῥαψοδοί recited Homer. Such recitation contests became an official part of the Panathenaea by the sixth century BC, but they were also practised at other Greek cities in conjunction with various festivals.³⁸ A significant example of a typical ῥαψοδός appears in Plato’s *Ion*, where Socrates calls Ion “the best rhapsode in Greece” (ἄριστος ... τῶν Ἑλλήνων ... ῥαψοδός, 541b) after Ion had won first prize in a contest by reciting Homer.³⁹ A ῥαψοδός was a “reciter of poetry,” typically someone who participated in these recitation contests, although a ῥαψοδός might recite poetry other than Homer.⁴⁰ In Plato’s *Ion* and other texts from around the same time, the verb ῥαψοδεῖν denotes the action of reciting poetry in general.⁴¹ Socrates asks whether Ion “rhapsodizes well” (εὖ ῥαψοδεῖ, 533b-c) and says to him, “you go around rhapsodizing to the Greeks” (ῥαψοδεῖς μὲν περὶ τῶν τοῖς Ἑλλήσι, 541b). Naturally, the noun ῥαψοδία could refer to the recitations that took place at these contests, as when Plato (*Timaeus* 21b) says that “our fathers set up contests of

³⁷ *BNP* s.v. Rhapsodes; *LSJ* s.v. ῥαψοδ-έω. One exception might be the scholia to Pindar’s *Nemean Ode 2.2*, which refers to Hesiod as a bard reciting his own poem, but this is a late usage. In Plato’s *Phaedrus* 277e, Socrates contemptuously refers to “those rhapsodizing” (οἱ ῥαψοδοῦμενοι), that is, reciting poetry without being able to teach, because teaching is something that Ion claims he can do (*Ion* 533b-c). West (2010: 2) argues that despite the difference between the two words, “we should not draw any sharp distinction between the creative αἰοδός and the non-creative ῥαψοδός.”

³⁸ Herodotus 5.67.1; see also West 2010: 2-6; *BNP* s.v. Rhapsodes; *LSJ* s.v. ῥαψοδ-έω. The *BNP* suggests that these contests went back as early as the seventh century BC. Plato mentions “a contest of rhapsodes” (ῥαψοδῶν ἀγῶνα) at *Ion* 530a, in which Ion won first prize. The orator Lycurgus (102) says that a law was passed in which only the poems of Homer were allowed “to be rhapsodized” (ῥαψοδεῖσθαι) at the Panathenaea. The history of Homeric rhapsodes is a much-discussed topic, and more can be found in: Nagy 2002; Nagy 2010; Gonzalez 2013.

³⁹ Plato, *Ion* 541b.

⁴⁰ For example, Sophocles (*OT* 391) depicts the Sphinx as a ῥαψοδός of her own riddles; Aristotle (*Poetics* 1447b22) mentions a “rhapsody” (ῥαψοδίαν) by Chaeremon called *Centaur*; in Clearchus 61-62, ῥαψοδία is used in reference to poems of Archilochus; Lucian (*Jupiter confutatus* 1) refers to “the poetry of Homer and Hesiod” (τὰ Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου ποιήματα) and asks if it is true what “these rhapsodized” (ἐκκεῖνοι ἐρραψοδήκασιν); Diogenes Laertius (9.18) says that Xenophanes wrote poems in hexameter, elegaic and iambic metre criticizing Homer and Hesiod, and “he used to recite his own poems” (ἐρραψώδει τὰ ἑαυτοῦ). Rhapsodic contests at the Panathenaea seem to have died out after the fifth century, but West (2010: 7-10) demonstrates from inscriptions that rhapsodic contests were performed in different cities throughout the Hellenistic Period, although after the fifth century BC the performers began to recite poems other than Homer’s. This might have been a suitable venue for the introduction of new Orphic poems.

⁴¹ Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 600d. Likewise, Isocrates mentions “those rhapsodizing in the Lyceum” (τοὺς ἐν τῷ Λυκείῳ ῥαψοδοῦντας, 12.33). In *Poetics* 1462a6, Aristotle says that “even in rhapsodizing an actor can overdo his gestures” (ἐπεὶ ἔστι περιεργάζεσθαι τοῖς σημείοις καὶ ῥαψοδοῦντα). In Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae* 679-680, ῥαψοδεῖν means to celebrate someone in song: “it will be to the young children to rhapsodize the brave men in war” (ῥαψοδεῖν ἔσται τοῖς παιδαρίοισιν / τοῖς ἀνδρείοις ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ). Returning to Plato’s *Ion*, Socrates refers to the “rhapsodic skill” (τὴν ῥαψοδικὴν τέχνην, 538b, 540a).

rhapsody” (ἄθλα γὰρ ἡμῖν οἱ πατέρες ἔθεσαν ῥαψωδίας). But in other contexts, ῥαψωδία might refer to the poem itself, as when Plato (*Laws* 658b) mentions “someone, like Homer, making a display of a rhapsody” (τινα ἐπιδεικνύναι, καθάπερ Ὅμηρος, ῥαψωδίαν).⁴² In later texts, a ῥαψωδία might refer to a book of Homer, equated to the length of epic poetry that could be recited at one time: for example, Plutarch narrates that Alcibiades asked his teacher for “a rhapsody of the *Iliad*” (ῥαψωδίαν Ἰλιάδος).⁴³ This fits with the theory that at the Panathenaea the Homeric epics were split into (up to) twenty-four pieces, each one assigned to a different rhapsode.⁴⁴

Given the nuances of meaning attached to the word ῥαψωδία in Classical literature, it might refer to a recitation of poetry (most likely Homer), a contest in which recitations take place, the poem that is recited, or more specifically to a single book of poetry. What, then, are the implications of Damascius and the *Suda* referring to an Orphic poem (or collection) as ῥαψωδία? If ῥαψωδία means “recitation of poetry,” then the *Suda*’s designation Ἱεροῦς λόγους ἐν ῥαψωδίαῖς κδ’ might mean “Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Recitations.” This raises the question of performance context, which is notoriously difficult to answer when it involves Orphic poetry. Were Orphic poems recited in public competitions? There are no sources that indicate this, but they might have been performed at public recitations. Based on modern preconceived notions of what Orphism was, we might guess that the poems were recited in ritual contexts, but there is no occurrence of the word ῥαψωδία that indicates any kind of ritual context, other than the simple fact that rhapsodic contests were held at festivals like the Panathenaea; but these were public civic festivals, not secret Orphic initiations. Besides this, ῥαψωδία 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” (ταῖς φερομέναις ταύταις ῥαψωδίαῖς Ὀρφικαῖς).

Rather than the act of recitation itself, ῥαψωδία seems to refer to the poem that is being recited, either as an individual poem or as a single book of a longer poem. Sometimes

⁴² The LSJ suggests that this passage refers to an “epic composition,” but it might refer to the recitation.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* 2.186e; LSJ s.v. ῥαψωδ-έω; cf. Lucian, *Dialogi mortuorum* 20.2, where Menippus asks Homer about the people “of [your] rhapsodies” (τῶν ῥαψωδιῶν) being destroyed; and Lucian, *Contemplantes* 7, where Charon says that Homer, while on Charon’s boat, “vomited up many of his rhapsodies” (ἀπήμεσε τῶν ῥαψωδιῶν τὰς πολλὰς).

⁴⁴ West 2010: 3.

ῥαψωδία might refer simply to a “stitched-together song,” the written poem on which a recitation is based. This might imply that the poem is of a short enough length that it can be recited in the space of one performance. In this case, the *Suda* might mean “Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Poems,” none of which would be very long. On the other hand, if ῥαψωδία means “book of poetry,” then the *Suda* calls the Orphic poem “Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Books.” West takes ῥαψωδία to mean that there was one poem in twenty-four books and suggests that the compiler “called the sections not ‘books’ but ‘rhapsodies’, the same term that was used for the books of Homer.”⁴⁵ So a word study of ῥαψωδία takes us all the way back to the original question, but places on firmer ground the justification for asking this question: what were the ῥαψωδία in the “Sacred Discourses in twenty-four Rhapsodies”? Were they twenty-four separate poems, or twenty-four books of one poem? 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 filled twenty-four books.⁴⁶ 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 has consisted of twenty-four “rhapsodies” since the Hellenistic Period. Some have suggested that, in a similar way, the author of the Rhapsodies attempted to imitate the Homeric epics by stretching the Orphic theogony to fill out twenty-four books.⁴⁷ 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 1000 lines long, one might estimate the theogonic narrative of the Rhapsodies as not much longer than 800 to 1200 lines, which is

⁴⁵ West 1983: 248-249.

⁴⁶ Only two sources specify to which Rhapsody they refer, and one of these is doubtful. The Tübingen Theosophy (61 (43 Erbse²), *OF* 138 B = *OF* 6a K) says that Orpheus addresses Musaeus “in the fourth Rhapsody” (ἐν τῇ τετάρτῃ ῥαψωδίᾳ) about “everything spoken long ago about Phanes” (πάντα παλαιόφρατα τὰπὸ Φάνητος) – note that the Theosophy does not say “fourth book of the Rhapsodies.” John Malalas (*Chronograph.* 4.8 (51 Thurn), *OF* 102 I B = *OF* 62 K) cites verses from a proem in which Orpheus invokes Apollo, and he refers to “the twelfth voice” (δωδεκάτην ... ὁμῶν). Kern (*ad loc.*) took this to mean the twelfth book of the Rhapsodies, but West (1983: 227 & n. 2) rejected this, since Malalas places the invocation of Apollo “at the beginning of [Orpheus’] composition” (ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ τοῦ συντάγματος αὐτοῦ). West argues that the poet means that he wishes his poem “to take its place in a canon of Orphic poems,” and Bernabé (2004: 98-99) basically agrees that it means the proem was “from the twelfth poem in the catalogue of Orphic poems” (“de duodecimo carmine in Orphicorum poematum catalogo”).

⁴⁷ Colli 1977 *ad* 4 [B 73] p. 423-424; West 1983: 248-249; Bernabé’s introduction to the Rhapsodies (2004: 97). Also worthy of mention here is Nonnus, whose 48 books of *Dionysiaca* reveal a conscious decision to emanate and outdo the length and structure of the Homeric epics.

not even enough to fill up two average books of Homer. On the other hand, both Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* begin as theogonies, but these texts 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 this. In section (b) of this chapter, I discuss the possibility that rather than twenty-four books the Rhapsodies could have 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 very well have been a theogony that told a six-generation succession myth. 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 certain.

I suggest that the best approach is to focus on the six-generation succession myth as if it comes from one poem, but to allow for the possibility that there were other poems in the Rhapsodic collection, and that 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.⁴⁸ In this chapter, I question the literary structure of

⁴⁸ Excellent summaries of the reconstructed narrative of the Rhapsodies can be found in West 1983: 70-75 and Brisson 1995: 54-69. In Bernabé's arrangement of the fragments (*OF* 98-367 B), he attempts to fit all of the fragments into a chronological order that follows the basic structure of these modern reconstructions of the narrative. Edmonds (2013: 155) is critical of this "theogonic frame" into which these scholars have forced the fragments to fit.

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 pre-existed 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 pre-existing 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 first-born god 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).⁴⁹ 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).

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

⁴⁹ Although there is evidence that the physical descriptions and multiple names of Phanes were similar to the Hieronyman Theogony, fewer of these descriptions are extant in the fragments of the Rhapsodies. One reason for this might be that Damascius in *De Principiis* considers the Rhapsodies to be the current version of Orphic theogony. Unlike the Hieronyman Theogony, he expects his readers to have some familiarity with the content of the Rhapsodies. For more on this, see West 1983: 231 and section (c).

the gods (unlike the Derveni and Eudemian Theogonies, in which he is the first). Ouranos and Gaia give birth to the Cyclopes and the 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 (Ocean's refusal is not in Hesiod). Kronos cuts off the genitals of his father 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 foam from which Aphrodite is born, as she is in Hesiod and elsewhere in Greek myth (*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).⁵⁰ As in Hesiod, Kronos fears that one of his children will overthrow him, so he swallows each one 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).⁵¹ 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).⁵²

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

⁵⁰ *Cf.* Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109-120, where Kronos rules the golden age.

⁵¹ This episode has certain similarities with and differences from Hesiod, which I note in section (e).

⁵² None of this episode is in Hesiod, but the act of Zeus giving a drink to Kronos corresponds with other narratives that feature deceptive gift-giving. As Joseph Nagy (1981: 191-204) points out, there is a "pattern of outright taking followed by crafty giving" in various stories from Greek myth in which gift-giving is a strategy that acquires something for the giver. This idea appears in the myths of Typhon (Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.6.3), Hermes and Apollo (*Homeric Hymn to Hermes*), Demeter and Persephone (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*), Prometheus and Pandora (Hesiod, *Theogony* 535-612, *Works and Days* 47-105), and indeed this episode of the Orphic Rhapsodies (*OF* 219-225 B).

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).⁵³ 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 synonymous with Zeus, when he is about to re-create the universe (*OF* 243 B).⁵⁴ 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).⁵⁵ 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 the child 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-

⁵³ Cf. the Derveni poem, where Zeus swallows either the phallus of Ouranos or all of Protogonos: this pattern of action continues in the Orphic tradition and appears with greater clarity in the Rhapsodies; see Chapter Two, section (d).

⁵⁴ For more on the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, see Chapter Three, section (c), and Chapter Five, section (g).

⁵⁵ Unlike the Hieronyman Theogony (see Chapter Four), there is no indication of Zeus, Demeter, or Persephone being in serpentine or monstrous form in the Rhapsodies.

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 the fragments that talk about reincarnation in ways that remind one of Empedocles (*OF* 337-344 B).⁵⁶

Regarding the five observations made at the beginning of this chapter, in the Rhapsodic narrative one can observe the same patterns. (1) Where the Orphic narrative departs from Hesiodic narrative, it tends to do so in a way that relates to Near Eastern parallels, which I have noted in previous chapters with regards to the cosmic egg, theriomorphic descriptions of Phanes, and the motifs of castration and swallowing. In this chapter I note these in passing, having already laid the foundation for this in previous chapters. (2) Although the Orphic narrative departs from Hesiod by adding certain episodes (e.g., Zeus swallowing Phanes), it does not fundamentally alter the core succession myth of the Hesiodic narrative. Ouranos still traps his children inside Gaia, Kronos still castrates his father and swallows his children, and Zeus is still replaced by a stone and whisked off to Crete. The composition (or compilation) of the Rhapsodies was not a radical departure from the Hesiodic narrative, but a creative reformulation of it that adds certain episodes. (3) As modern scholarship would lead us to expect, the most significant Orphic theogony does include the story of Dionysus and the Titans, but a comprehensive reading of the fragments would not lead us to place any more importance on this narrative than on the stories of the cosmic egg and of Zeus swallowing Phanes. In this chapter I attempt to look at the narratives of Phanes and Zeus from a different perspective, one that does not see everything through a Dionysiac lens; and in the next chapter I look at the story of Dionysus in the context of Phanes and Zeus. (4) The Rhapsodic narrative works as a chronological account, which seems to indicate that the Rhapsodies were one long poem. But this narrative could have been contained in a single book, as just one of twenty-four poems in a collection. In the next section, I analyse fragments that may indicate either that the Rhapsodies were a single theogony or that they were a diverse collection, but I argue that at least one of the twenty-four poems could have contained a chronological narrative of a six-generation succession myth. (5) Although a simple summary of the narrative does not demonstrate this, in the fragments it is clear that the episodes of the Rhapsodic narrative

⁵⁶ Cf. Empedocles 31 B8-9, 11-12 D-K (Plutarch, *adv. Colotem* 1111f, 1111a-c, Ps.-Aristotle, *MXG* 2.975b1).

were put to use by philosophers in late antiquity, both by Neoplatonists who interpreted deities and episodes in the Rhapsodies as allegories, and by Christian apologists who used these myths as ammunition in their battle against Paganism.

Most of my analysis of the Rhapsodies in this chapter focuses on the fifth point because this is the issue that modern scholarship has largely ignored. Most of the fragments we have of the Rhapsodies are the result of decisions made by the Neoplatonists, yet very little research has been done to explain why the Neoplatonists chose to concentrate on these particular episodes and what they did with them. In sections (c) to (g) I analyse how the Neoplatonists used the Orphic texts as allegories to help explain their own metaphysical system, and I argue that there are substantial correspondences between these allegories and the original text. For example, the hermaphroditic form of Phanes illustrates the containing of the Forms (in the Platonic sense) of male and female in an undifferentiated manner at the ontological level represented by Phanes, the Intelligible.⁵⁷ The episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes illustrates the Intellective Demiurge, looking to the Intelligible Paradigm and being filled with the Forms prior to the creation of the physical universe.⁵⁸ The benefits of this analysis are twofold: in one direction, studying the context of the fragments will help to clarify the contents of the text by correcting certain distortions, such as the idea that there were three Nights in the Rhapsodies;⁵⁹ and in the other direction, the Orphic narrative truly is the best way to understand the Neoplatonic universe, because the narratives provided these philosophers with vivid and fitting illustrations of abstract concepts.⁶⁰

The Neoplatonic metaphysical system was extremely complex, so for the sake of clarity I only introduce some of the basic concepts as they become relevant to my reading of the Rhapsodic narrative. With both translations and explanations, I attempt to maintain clarity and precision by capitalizing technical terms and translating them consistently. For example, νοητὸς νοῦς is always translated “Intelligible Intellect,” except where νοῦς

⁵⁷ See section (c).

⁵⁸ See section (f) and (g).

⁵⁹ See section (d).

⁶⁰ See especially sections (c) and (f).

appears in poetry and simply means “mind.”⁶¹ Each and every fragment that is preserved by the Neoplatonists appears in a literary context that assumes previous knowledge of the entire metaphysical system. This makes their commentaries very difficult to understand even in translation, so at times brief explanatory digressions will be necessary. For these I depend largely on two scholars who have already discussed the relationship between Neoplatonic allegory and Orphic theogony, but with equal and opposite weaknesses. Brisson explains well how the Rhapsodic narrative fits with the Neoplatonic metaphysical system, but he does not explain well how the Neoplatonic universe works.⁶² Chlup offers the clearest explanation of the Neoplatonic universe of Proclus, but only includes a brief list in summary fashion of how this relates to the Rhapsodic narrative.⁶³ In this chapter, I attempt to combine both of these approaches: while presenting and interpreting the fragments, I pay close attention to their context and try to explain both the metaphysical concept and how each fragment is used as an allegory. But in order to present and interpret the fragments, first it is necessary to determine what these fragments represent, or in other words what the Rhapsodies were: a single Rhapsodic Theogony in twenty-four books, or a Rhapsodic collection of twenty-four separate poems. In the next section, I discuss fragments that point one way or the other, but I argue that there was nevertheless a six-generation succession myth that was presented as a chronological narrative. Most of the fragments of the Rhapsodies to which the Neoplatonists make reference seem to have come from this succession myth.

(b) 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 the other that has been proposed quite recently but is worthy of further consideration. The prevailing view is best expressed by Martin West, who imagines a

⁶¹ Note too that until now I have not capitalized “demiurge” when I used the term to describe a creator deity in general, but in this chapter and the next I capitalize “Demiurge” when it refers specifically to the Neoplatonic idea of Zeus as Demiurge.

⁶² Brisson 1995: 43-103 (on Proclus and the Rhapsodies), 157-209 (on Damascius and Orphic theogonies).

⁶³ Chlup 2012: 47-136. Overall, Chlup’s explanation of Proclean metaphysics is the best introduction to the topic, superseding Dodds 1963. Yet his explanation of how this relates to Orphic poetry is quite summary: he lists the correspondences between Orphic deities and different levels of the Neoplatonist metaphysical system at pp. 125-127, himself relying on Brisson 1995: 43-103 and on Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485.

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."⁶⁴ 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 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 that informs both Kern (a century ago) and Bernabé (a decade ago) in their editions of the Rhapsodic fragments. Both editors introduce the Rhapsodies as a continuous narrative that compiles material from all previous Orphic theogonies.⁶⁵ As a result, the majority of modern scholars who study the Rhapsodies have referred to them as one theogonic poem, the Rhapsodic Theogony.⁶⁶

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*."⁶⁷ Edmonds suggests that the nature of the "Rhapsodic collection" was comparable to the *Sibylline Oracles*, an extant Jewish-Christian pseudepigraphic collection of hexameter poems varying 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 genealogical narrative. If this was the case, most of the contradictions found in the fragments can be eliminated simply by interpreting them as fragments of different poems from within the collection.⁶⁸ Edmonds cites some of these contradictions as examples (these are discussed below), but he does not conduct a detailed analysis of the Rhapsodic fragments to support his argument. The purpose of this section is to provide just this sort

⁶⁴ West 1983: 69.

⁶⁵ Kern 1922: 140; Bernabé 2004: 97. Bernabé follows West closely in his edition, both in the order of his presentation and in the inclusion of certain fragments that were not included in Kern, particularly those from (pseudo-)Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*; see Kotwick 2014: 77 n. 15.

⁶⁶ See Brisson 1995: 53-69 and West 1983: 70-77 for a summary of the contents of the "Rhapsodic Theogony." See also: Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 46-48; Parker 1995: 483-504; Baumgarten 1998: 113-147; Herrero 2010: 32-40.

⁶⁷ Edmonds 2013: 149.

⁶⁸ Edmonds 2013: 148-159. Wilamowitz (1959: II 199) also compared Orphic literature to the *Sibylline Oracles*.

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 more weighty evidence than the modern reconstruction. 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 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.⁶⁹ In the first (vv. 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” (κυδρὸν Ἐρωτα, / Νυκτὸς ἀειγνήτης πατέρα κλυτόν, ὃν ῥα Φάνητα / ὀπλότεροι καλέουσι βροτοί – πρῶτος γὰρ ἐφάνθη, 14-16). The poet goes on to mention “the offspring of very powerful Brimos [i.e., Dionysus, son of Persephone], and the destructive deeds / of the Giants” (Βριμοῦς τ’ εὐδυνάτοιου γονάς, ἡδ’ ἔργ’ αἰδηλα / Γιγάντων, 17-18) from whom came “the race of mortals who are always upon the boundless earth” (γένος ... θνητῶν οἱ κατὰ γαῖαν ἀπείριτον αἰὲν ἔασι, 19-20). This is followed by the “nursing of Zeus” (τιτθείαν τε Ζηνὸς, 21) who “devised Persephone” (μητίσατο ...

⁶⁹ The opinion of most scholars is that these passages of the *Orphic Argonautica* were influenced by the Rhapsodies, though hints of Hesiodic influence (e.g., the prevalence of Chaos) are also detectable: see West 1983: 37, who says of the author of the *Argonautica* that “his opus-list gives pride of place to the Rhapsodies.” See also: Vian 1987: 7-8; Calame 1991: 235-236; Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 38-39; Sorel 1995: 62-63.

Φερσεφόνην, 22-23). Bernabé puts v. 28 after v. 23; it refers to “unspeakable oracles of Night concerning lord Bacchus” (χρησμούς τ’ ἀρρήτους Νυκτὸς περὶ Βάκχου ἄνακτος, 28). The second passage (vv. 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” (Γιγάντων τ’ ἔργ’ ἀΐδηλα, / ἀνθρώπων τὰ ὀλιγοδρανέων πολυεθνέα φύτλην, 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. At the same time, the poetic catalogue is problematic for a few reasons. First, 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.⁷⁰ Second, 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: v. 23 (about Zeus and Persephone), v. 28 (oracles about Bacchus), vv. 17-20 (offspring of Brimos, deeds of the Giants, creation of humans),⁷¹ which actually reconciles the chronology with vv. 421-430. Third, 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.⁷² Fourth, the lines of the *Argonautica* that follow *OF* 99 B (vv. 24-45) mention 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. Although scholars have found value in this passage as an interesting glimpse into the variety of Orphic literature in late antiquity,⁷³ the author of the *Argonautica* was not seeking to give a detailed *argumentum* of the Rhapsodies, but an entertaining poetic

⁷⁰ This does not deter Vian (1987:7-8) from thinking that the poet was mostly dependent upon the Rhapsodies.

⁷¹ Vian 1987: 8-10.

⁷² See Bernabé *ad loc.* and Vian 1952: 169-174, who point out that confusing or equating the Titans with the Giants was not an uncommon thing for later ancient authors. On the other hand, this could be a reference to the golden race of humans under Phanes or the silver race under Kronos; perhaps one of these races was created because of some deed by the Giants in a Rhapsodic narrative that has not survived. At any rate, the chronology of the poetic catalogue does not line up perfectly with other fragments of the Rhapsodies.

⁷³ See especially: West 1983: 37-38; Edmonds 2011c: 74-75.

catalogue that paints a picture of Orphic literature in general. The fifth 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 too are limited in value. Damascius, in his discussion of first-principles (which we have encountered in the last two chapters), relates how the first gods are narrated “in these Orphic Rhapsodies that are in circulation” (ἐν ... ταῖς φερομέναις ταύταις ῥαψωδίαις Ὀρφικαῖς), and from this passage we know that in the age of the later Neoplatonists this was “the current Orphic theology” (ἡ συνήθης Ὀρφικὴ θεολογία), but he goes no further in his summary of the narrative than Phanes.⁷⁴ Note too that there is no mention of Night (the first deity in earlier Orphic theogonies, and the second ruler of the gods in the Rhapsodies), though Aither and Chaos appear. There is no doubt that the Rhapsodies were available to the later 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 an historical figure who lived at the same time as Gideon, and he claims that Orpheus was first

⁷⁴ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 96 B = *OF* 60 K). Of course, the reason why Damascius does not relate any of the narrative after Phanes is that he is interested only in first-principles: thus the title, *De Principiis*. Bernabé (2004: 99) acknowledges the value of Damascius’ testimony on the primordial gods of the Rhapsodies but recognizes that he “alludes only to the first parts of the poem” (“carminis primis partibus tantum alludit”); see also Colli 1977 (4 [B 73]) and Ahbel-Rappe 2010 *ad loc.* As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, Damascius’ interest in the Eudemian and Hieronyman Theogonies also extends no further than the first gods.

and foremost a poet who wrote about the genealogy of the gods and the creation of the world.⁷⁵ He says that “this is what Orpheus expounded” (ἔστι δὲ ἄπερ ἐξέθετο Ὀρφεὺς ταῦτα): that in the beginning there was Chronos, along with Aither, Chaos, and Night; and that “the light broke the Aither” (τὸ φῶς τὸ ῥήξαν τὸν Αἰθέρα). This light was called Metis, Phanes, and Erikepaios, and he was the god who created the earth.⁷⁶ This passage, which both Kern and Bernabé include in their collections,⁷⁷ 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 diminished further 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.⁷⁸ 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” (οἱ ποιηταί), 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” (“potissimum sequitur”) 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.⁷⁹ The problem is that this passage was not actually written by Alexander. As Mirjam Kotwick has recently 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

⁷⁵ John Malalas, *Chronographia* 4.8 (51 Thurn).

⁷⁶ John Malalas, *Chronographia* 4.9 (52 Thurn) (OF 97 B = OF 65 K).

⁷⁷ Kern 1922: 141-142; Bernabé 2004: 99; see also: Lobeck 1829: 479; Colli 1977 ad loc (4 [B 75]); Festugière 1968: V 25, note ad loc. Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.168.15 Diehl (OF 98 III = OF 107 K), who says that Proclus is following Syrianus, who himself is following Alexander of Aphrodisias (but see Kotwick 2014).

⁷⁸ John Malalas, *Chronographia* 4.8 (51 Thurn) (OF 102 B = OF 62 K). He may have taken these excerpts from a compiler called Timotheos, possibly a contemporary (Croke 1990: 14; Pörtulas 2000: 403).

⁷⁹ (Pseudo-)Alexander Aphrodisiensis, in *Arist. Met.* 821.16 Hayduck; Syrianus, in *Arist. Met.* 182.9 Kroll (OF 98 I-II B = OF 107 K); see Kern ad loc. Colli (4 [B 39]) places Alexander between the late second and early third century AD, and Syrianus lived in the fifth century AD.

Syrianus, not the other way around.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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.⁸²

The commentary of Syrianus, on the other hand, carries more weight as evidence for the Orphic Rhapsodies, since Syrianus and his successors in the Neoplatonic school clearly had access to the text (or collection). Syrianus, the head of the Neoplatonic Academy from 432 to c. 437 AD, was determined 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.⁸³ This interest was passed on to his successor, Proclus (c. 437-485 AD), and although Proclus never wrote a commentary on Orpheus, the vast majority of Orphic fragments that we have are drawn from his texts.⁸⁴ The Rhapsodies were a continuous part of the curriculum for the Neoplatonists until at least the time of Damascius who, as we have seen, considered the theogony (or collection) to be “the current Orphic theology” (ἡ συνήθης Ὀρφικὴ θεολογία).⁸⁵ 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.

⁸⁰ Kotwick 2014: 84.

⁸¹ Kotwick 2014: 75-76, 84. Michael of Ephesus combines Syrianus with Aristotle, resulting in a summary of an Orphic theogony that never existed, in which the generations were: Chaos, Ocean, Night, Ouranos, Zeus; see in *Arist. Met.* 821.3–821.21 Hayduck (*OF* 167 III, 170 I, 174 I, 367 B).

⁸² The relevant fragments are: *OF* 98 I, 167 III, 170 I, 174 I B = *OF* 107 K.

⁸³ *Suda* s.v. Συριανός 4.210.10 Adler; see also: West 1983: 227-228; Brisson 1995: 48-51; Longo 2010: 616; Kotwick 2014: 83.

⁸⁴ Proclus said that he had wanted to write a commentary on Orpheus, but Syrianus appeared to him in dreams and convinced him not to (Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 27). Brisson counts 248 references to Orphic poetry in Proclus, 139 of which are from his commentary on the *Timaeus* alone (Brisson 1995: 53-54).

⁸⁵ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 90, 96 B = *OF* 60 K).

From Syrianus we find out that in the Rhapsodies “Night and Ouranos reign and, before them, their supremely great father” (Νύκτα μὲν καὶ Οὐρανόν ... βασιλεύειν καὶ πρὸ τούτων τὸν μέγιστον αὐτῶν πατέρα) who is named Erikepaios. So the first three kings 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” (τὸ δὲ Χάος ὑπὲρ τὴν τοῦ βασιλεύοντός ἐστι σχέσιν· τὸν δὲ Δία οὐ πρῶτον ἀλλὰ πέμπτον βασιλέα σαφῶς ὀνομάζουσιν οἱ πρὸς αὐτὸν παρὰ τῆς Νυκτὸς δοθέντες χρησμοί).⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸ 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” (παραδέδωκεν) by Orpheus. They are the same five kings listed by Syrianus, with the addition of the sixth king, Dionysus:

θεῶν βασιλέας παραδέδωκεν Ὀρφεὺς ... τῶν ὅλων προεστηκότας Φάνητα
 Νύκτα Οὐρανὸν Κρόνον Δία Διόνυσον· πρῶτος γὰρ ὁ Φάνης κατασκευάζει
 τὸ σκῆπτρον· ὃν πρῶτος βασιλευσε περικλυτὸς Ἡρικεπαῖος· δευτέρα δὲ ἡ
 Νύξ, δεξαμένη παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, τρίτος δὲ <ὁ> Οὐρανὸς παρὰ τῆς Νυκτὸς,

⁸⁶ Syrianus, in *Arist. Met.* 182.9 Kroll (*OF* 98 II = *OF* 107 K).

⁸⁷ Thus argues Kotwick 2014: 82-83.

⁸⁸ According to Kotwick (2014: 82-83), this is because in Syrianus’ allegorical interpretation Aither and Chaos are the Dyad that proceeds from the One (which was represented as Chronos). Kotwick argues that Syrianus remains silent about Chronos here because of the ineffable nature of the One; elsewhere he recognizes Chronos as the One (*in Arist. Met.* 43.23-24). In the same passage as *OF* 98 II B, in the part of the text that Bernabé does not include, Syrianus goes on to say that “the very first first-principle ... is the One and the Good, after which comes the Dyad which is above the function of kingship, Aither and Chaos” (ἡ πρωτίστη οὖν ἀρχὴ καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐν καὶ τάγαθόν, μεθ’ ἣν ἡ δυὰς ἡ κρείττων τοῦ βασιλεύειν, αἰθὴρ μὲν καὶ χάος, 182.22-23). “The One and the Good” in this passage must be Chronos. Kotwick (2014: 82-83) reads “the most primary and hidden classes of the gods” (τὰ πρότιστα καὶ κρύφια τῶν θεῶν, 182.24) as meaning Chronos, along with Aither and Chaos.

καὶ τέταρτος ὁ Κρόνος, βιασάμενος, ὡς φασι, τὸν πατέρα, καὶ πέμπτος ὁ Ζεὺς, κρατήσας τοῦ πατρός, καὶ μετὰ τοῦτον ἕκτος ὁ Διόνυσος.

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.⁸⁹

Proclus mentions all six royal generations again in his commentary on Plato’s *Cratylus*:

τῆς βασιλικῆς τῶν θεῶν σειρᾶς ἀρχομένης μὲν ἀπὸ Φάνητος, καταπτώσης δ’ εἰς τὸν δεσπότην ἡμῶν τὸν Διόνυσον ... μόνος ὁ Κρόνος, τὴν τετάρτην βασιλικὴν τάξιν κληρωσάμενος, παρὰ πάντας τοὺς ἄλλους ὑβριστικῶς δοκεῖ ... προσδέχεσθαι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ τὸ σκῆπτρον καὶ μεταδιδόναι τῷ Δίῃ· καὶ γὰρ ἡ Νύξ παρ’ ἐκόντος αὐτὸ λαμβάνει τοῦ Φάνητος ... καὶ ὁ Οὐρανὸς παρὰ τῆς Νυκτὸς ἐκούσης ὑποδέχεται τὴν ἐπικράτειαν τῶν ὄλων· καὶ ὁ Διόνυσος <ὁ> τελευταῖος θεῶν βασιλεὺς παρὰ τοῦ Διός ... μόνος δ’ ὁ Κρόνος καὶ ἀφαιρεῖται τὸν Οὐρανὸν τὴν βασιλείαν τελέως, καὶ τῷ Δίῃ παραχωρεῖ τῆς ἡγεμονίας, ‘τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος’, ὡς φησιν ὁ μῦθος.

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 hybriatic 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.⁹⁰

This passage yields the same six-generation sequence,⁹¹ with the added detail that each of the kings of the gods passes on the sceptre willingly, with the exception of Kronos “cutting and being cut” (τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος). This phrase is echoed in other Neoplatonic texts, from which Bernabé reconstructs a line of hexameter: “(both) cutting and being cut (Kronos

⁸⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.168.15 Diehl (*OF* 98 III B = *OF* 107 K).

⁹⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali (*OF* 98 IV B = *OF* 101 K).

⁹¹ A scholium to Proclus’ commentary on the *Timaeus* lists the first five kings as Phanes, Night, Ouranos, Aither, and Zeus. Bernabé includes this with (pseudo-)Alexander, Syrianus, and Proclus without mentioning in the notes that Aither replaces Kronos in this list (Schol. Proclus in *Plat. Tim.* 1.474.1 Diehl = *OF* 98 V B). He does, however, cite the same scholium at *OF* 190 V B with the qualification “Aither (in place of Kronos)” (ὁ Αἰθήρ (*pro* Κρόνος)).

crooked in counsel)” (<καὶ> τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος <Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης>).⁹² It expresses the fact that in the Orphic version of the Greek succession myth, Kronos castrates his father (as also in Hesiod), but is then in turn castrated by Zeus (not in Hesiod) when he steps into power. This agrees with Proclus’ other statement that Kronos “committed violence against his father” (βιασάμενος ... τὸν πατέρα) and Zeus “overthrew his father” (κρατήσας τοῦ πατρός).

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.⁹³ 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, seem to 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

⁹² *OF* 225 B = *OF* 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.-Clemens Rom. *Homil.* 6.13.1 (111.9 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke); and Origen, *c. Cels.* 1.17.

⁹³ Lobeck 1829: 576-577; Bernabé *ad loc.*

continuous poem, then the primordial gods beginning with Chronos and the six-generation succession myth seem to have been the core 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, but there are some fragments that still do not seem to fit. 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."⁹⁴ Although he is not sufficiently troubled to discuss these puzzling questions in any detail, he briefly mentions a few examples that are worthy of review, but there are other questions that could be raised.

The first set of puzzling questions appears right 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 seen in Chapters Two and Four, 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 interpretation of Hieronymus and Hellanicus. In the Rhapsodies, unlike the Hieronyman Theogony, there are no fragments that describe the physical appearance of Chronos,⁹⁵ but the narrative of events involving

⁹⁴ Edmonds 2013: 150-151, 156.

⁹⁵ West (1983: 231) notes that Damascius also does not give much detail of the physical description of Phanes in the Rhapsodies, despite his elaborate retelling of the Hieronyman Theogony. This is because the Rhapsodies were the current theogony, so he did not need to retell the details to his readers.

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” (ἀδιακρίτων πάντων ὄντων κατὰ σκοτόεσσαν ὀμίχλην),⁹⁶ which in another place he calls “continuous darkness” (ἀζηχὲς ... σκότος), adding that “it has been allotted a formless nature” (αὐτὴ ... ἀνείδρον λαχοῦσα τὴν φύσιν).⁹⁷ 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” (Νύκτα ζοφερήν) who “came first” (πρωτεύειν) according to Orpheus.⁹⁸ 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, there is no place for Erebus in the Neoplatonic system, so Erebus is “tacitly relegated to the status

⁹⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 1175.7 Cousin (*OF* 106 B = *OF* 67 K). Bernabé reconstructs this phrase into a line of hexameter, ἦν ἀδιάκριτα πάντα κατὰ σκοτόεσσαν ὀμίχλην; see Bernabé *ad loc.* and Bernabé 2000b: 68. It was Kern (1888a: 10) who first suggested that this was a quotation from the Rhapsodies. The phrase “shadowy mist” (σκοτόεσσαν ... ὀμίχλην) also appears in *OH* 6.6 (*OF* 143.6 B = *OF* 87 K).

⁹⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.386.2 Diehl (*OF* 105 B = *OF* 66 K). Proclus adds that “on this basis Orpheus too derives matter from the first level of the Intelligibles” (Ὀρφεὺς κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἀπὸ τῆς πρωτίστης τῶν νοητῶν ὑποστάσεως παράγει τὴν ὕλην), again using the noun ὕλη.

⁹⁸ John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (52 Thurn) (*OF* 107 B). Bernabé reads this fragment as evidence that a pre-existent entity called Night appeared at the beginning of the Rhapsodies, and this was the first of three distinct goddesses called Night; see his comments *ad loc.* and my discussion of Night in section (d).

of an attendant circumstance.”⁹⁹ Indeed, the Neoplatonists do not mention Erebus as a deity in the 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]” (στυγερώπα τε Ἀνάγκην λέγων προσελθεῖν ἅπ’ ἐκείνων) both West and Bernabé have suggested that Necessity was also with Chronos at the beginning in the Rhapsodies.¹⁰⁰ 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 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” (ἐξ ἀπείρου τῆς ὕλης) in a statement by Apion in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*.¹⁰¹ 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 context the *Homilies* are a narrative of Clement in conversation with a first-century Greek philosopher named Apion. In this discussion Apion recalls details from an Orphic theogony.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ Apion, as depicted in dialogue by Pseudo-Clement, 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” (ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐδὲν <ἦν> πλὴν χάος καὶ στοιχείων ἀτάκτων ἔτι συνπεφορημένων μίξις ἀδιάκριτος). He

⁹⁹ West 1983: 230-231; see also: Colli 1977: 422-423 (4 [B 72]) and Brisson 1995: 71. From the One proceed Limit and Unlimited, which make up the first Intelligible triad with the cosmic egg as median term; see section (c).

¹⁰⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.207.27 Kroll (*OF* 110 B = *OF* 126 K); West 1983: 231; Bernabé *ad OF* 111 B.

¹⁰¹ Apion *ap. Ps.-Clemens Romanus, Homiliae* 6.3.4 (107.9 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 103 V B); see *OF* 104 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*, who argues that the Rhapsodies began with this primordial material. Because of the use of the word ὕλη, Kern (*OF* 55-56 K) attached this passage of Apion to the Hieronyman Theogony.

¹⁰² *BNP* s.v. Pseudo-Clementine Literature.

¹⁰³ Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhoniae hypotposes* 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).

quotes the verse of Hesiod’s *Theogony* in which “Chaos was the first to come into being” (πρώτιστα Χάος ἐγένετο) 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.¹⁰⁴ Apion adds that “Orpheus says [Chaos] came into being as an egg, having been thrown forth from the boundless mud” (ὅπερ Ὀρφεὺς ὠὶν λέγει γενητόν, ἐξ ἀπείρου τῆς ὕλης προβεβλημένον). 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” (τῆς τετραγενοῦς ὕλης ἐμψύχου οὐσης καὶ ὄλου ἀπείρου τινὸς βυθοῦ ἀεὶ ῥέοντος ... ὡς εἰς γένεσιν ζώου δεθῆναι μὴ δυναμένον).¹⁰⁵ Apion says that the cosmic egg was formed out of the boundless mud, and he associates the egg (not the mud) with Chaos in Hesiod. In *Recognitiones*, Rufinus associates Chaos with the primordial mixture, not the egg, and he attributes to Orpheus the story that:

primo fuisse Chaos sempiternum, immensum, ingenitum, ex quo omnia facta sunt; hoc sane ipsum Chaos non tenebras dixit esse, non lucem, non humidum, non aridum, non calidum, non frigidum, sed omnia simul mixta, et semper unum fuisse informe.

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.¹⁰⁶

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” (*dicit primo fuisse Chaos*), giving a stronger indication that Chaos appeared at the beginning of the narrative, either alongside Chronos or before him.¹⁰⁷ 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

¹⁰⁴ Hesiod, *Theogony* 116; Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clemens Romanus, *Homiliae* 6.3.1 (107.10 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke). Apion also quotes Homer, *Iliad* 7.99: “but may you all become water and earth” (ἀλλὰ ὑμεῖς μὲν πάντες ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα γένοισθε).

¹⁰⁵ Apion *ap.* Ps.-Clemens Romanus, *Homiliae* 6.3.4 - 6.4.1 (107, 9-10 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 103 V, 104 I B).

¹⁰⁶ Rufinus, *Recognit.* 10.30.3 (346, 24 Rehm) (*OF* 104 II B).

¹⁰⁷ There is still the possibility that the Rhapsodies began with more than just Chronos; *cf.* Aristophanes, *Birds* 693 (*OF* 64 B = *OF* 1 K), which mentions Chaos, Night, Erebus, and Tartaros; and *Orphic Argonautica* 12-13 (*OF* 99 B = *OT* 224 K), which mentions both Chaos and Chronos. One could see how the Neoplatonists would concentrate on Chronos and simply ignore the others.

first in one text, Night in another, and Chronos in yet another, then there is no need to reconcile the different accounts.

Then 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.¹⁰⁸ 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” (κατὰ σπέος ἡεροειδές) in an Orphic verse quoted by Proclus.¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere Proclus mentions Phanes “seated eternally in the innermost shrine” (ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ διαιωνίως ἰδρυμένοι) and Hermias confirms that “inside the shrine of Night sits Phanes” (ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ τῆς Νυκτὸς κάθηται ὁ Φάνης).¹¹⁰ 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” (τούτῳ ἡ θεολογία παρέχει τοὺς ἵππους, ἅτε πρώτῳ ἐκφοιτήσαντι τῶν οἰκείων ἀρχῶν), and he adds that Phanes has wings, supporting this with a verse of the Rhapsodies in which Phanes is “carried here and there on golden wings” (χρυσείαις περὺγεσσι φορεύμενος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα).¹¹¹ Proclus quotes the Orphic poem saying that Phanes “was carried untiringly in a limitless circle” (τὸ δ’ ἀπειρέσιον κατὰ κύκλον / ἀτρύτως ἐφορεῖτο),¹¹² which is comparable to Apion’s comment that he “took his seat on the summit of the sky [or Ouranos]” (ἐπ’ ἀκρωρείας οὐρανοῦ προκαθέζεται).¹¹³ 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.

¹⁰⁸ West 1983: 214, cited in Edmonds 2013: 151 n. 39. Kern (1888a: 14) notes the same set of contradictions.

¹⁰⁹ Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = *OF* 97 K).

¹¹⁰ Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 3.169.15 Diehl (*OF* 164 I B = *OF* 104 K), Hermias *in Plat. Phaedr.* 162.6 Couvr. (*OF* 164 II B = *OF* 105 K).

¹¹¹ Hermias *in Plat. Phaedr.* 142.13 Couvr. (*OF* 136 I, 172 I B = *OF* 78 K), cf. Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 1.430.1 Diehl (*OF* 136 II B = *OF* 81 K).

¹¹² Proclus *in Plat. Tim.* 2.70.3 Diehl (I), Proclus *in Plat. Cratyl.* 74.29 Pasquali (II), Proclus *in Plat. Parmen.* 1161.22 Cousin (III), Proclus *in Euclid. Elem.* 155.15 Friedlein (IV) (*OF* 118-119 B = *OF* 71a K). Lobeck (1829: 475) 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.

¹¹³ Apion *apud* Pseudo-Clemens Rom. *Homil.* 6.6.2 (109.1 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 171 B = *OF* 56 K).

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" (διδαιωνίως), not simply because "the Neoplatonists are wrong" as West puts it,¹¹⁴ 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" (διδαιωνίως) can be read as Proclus' comment, not as the content of the poem.¹¹⁵ In order to reconcile these conflicting images of Phanes, West suggests that they simply come from three different moments in the narrative.¹¹⁶ 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 travelling in the sky. Indeed, *Orphic Hymn* 6 describes Protoponos "delighting in his golden wings" (χρυσέαισιν ἀγαλλόμενον πτερύγεσσι, 6.2) and "whirling with flapping of wings throughout the entire universe / bringing bright holy light" (πάντη δινηθείς πτερύγων ῥιπαῖς κατὰ κόσμον / λαμπρὸν ἄγων φάος ἄγνόν, 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 the 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 is very complex in Orphic myth. We have already seen that Night the "nurse of the gods" ([θεῶν] τροφὸς) appears as the first primordial deity in the Derveni and

¹¹⁴ West 1983: 215.

¹¹⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 66, 28 Pasquali (*OF* 109 II B = *OF* 68 K); Brisson 1995: 70-71.

¹¹⁶ West 1983: 215: "The apparent contradictions may best be reconciled by supposing that it was only when Phanes first appeared from the egg that he flew about on his wings, and that it was only while he was engaged in the work of creation that he abode with Night in the cave. Afterwards he 'set out on the vast circle', chariot-borne, and continued so ever after (or until Zeus swallowed him), surveying and illuminating the world from the rim of heaven."

Eudemian Theogonies.¹¹⁷ 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” (τριῶν γὰρ παραδεδομένων Νυκτῶν παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ)¹¹⁸ 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.¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ From one fragment to the next, it is not always clear which of the three Nights the author is discussing. As alternatives 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. In section (d) of this chapter, I question 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 section (d), 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

¹¹⁷ DP 10.11 (*OF* 6.2 B); Damascius, *De Principiis* 124 (3.162.19 Westerink) (*OF* 20 I B = *OF* 28 K); see Chapter Two, section (c) and Chapter Three, section (b).

¹¹⁸ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV, 147 II, 246 I, 248 II B = *OF* 99 K).

¹¹⁹ First Night: *OF* 105, 107, 112-113 B; second Night: *OF* 147-148, 150, 163-164 B; third Night: *OF* 168-171 B.

¹²⁰ West (1983: 209) refers to “riddles about night and day that involved the paradox of the mother becoming the daughter,” and Brisson (1995: 58) refers to the alternating of day and night, to suggest that the first Night is Phanes’ mother, the second his “complementary opposite” (“contraire complémentaire”) (i.e., both wife and sister), and the third his daughter, “in the sense that the alternating of Day and Night results in the creation by Phanes of a Sun and Moon” (“dans la mesure où l’alterance du Jour et de la Nuit résulte de la création par Phànès d’un Soleil et d’une Lune”).

that there are “many more.”¹²¹ There are not “many” major contradictions, only a few, 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.¹²² Edmonds claims that “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.”¹²³

West’s first point is more relevant to the Hieronyman Theogony, from which Athenagoras emphasizes deities with serpentine features as we saw in Chapter Four.¹²⁴ 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 Dionysus is born before the chariot-snatch. 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

¹²¹ See Edmonds 2013: 150-151 and n. 39, where he does not bother to demonstrate that there are “many more” contradictions, but only lists three examples in a footnote. Besides, these questions are only “puzzling” if one is trying to reconstruct a single, unitary source that is internally consistent.

¹²² West 1983: 95; cf. *OH* 18.3.

¹²³ Edmonds 2013: 150-151 & n. 39.

¹²⁴ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.3 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 89 B = *OF* 58 K). Among the fragments that Bernabé associates with the Rhapsodies, there is only one fragment that alludes to Zeus changing into a serpent: Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.25 Rabe) (*OF* 280 B; not in Kern). But the scholiast does not specify his source, so it is also possible that he is referring to the Hieronyman Theogony, or even Athenagoras.

Zeus, and [then] was abducted by Pluto” (τὴν Κόρην ὑπὸ μὲν τοῦ Διὸς βιάζεσθαι, ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ Πλούτωνος ἀρπάζεσθαι).¹²⁵

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” (λέγεται ... ζεύγνυσθαι τῷ Ἄϊδι καὶ συναπογεννᾶν τὰς ἐν τοῖς ὑποχθονίοις Εὐμενίδας).¹²⁶ 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” (ἀγλαὰ τέκνα πυρὶ φλεγέθοντα προσώποις).¹²⁷ 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 the first fragment, Proclus is discussing the etymologies of the names of Persephone and Kore (94.16-96.12), and in the second fragment, he is discussing 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” (ζωογονικὰς προβέβληται δυνάμεις) to the lower orders,¹²⁸ 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 the hypothesis of a single, consistent storyline.”¹²⁹ 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.”¹³⁰ This element appears in fragments where Zeus is born in Crete “in a cave of Dicte” (ἐν ἄντρῳ τῆς Δίκτης),¹³¹ Kore is raised “in a cave with

¹²⁵ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 85.22 Pasquali (*OF* 289 I = *OF* 195 K).

¹²⁶ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 95.10 Pasquali (*OF* 292 B = *OF* 197 K).

¹²⁷ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 96.19 Pasquali (*OF* 284 B = *OF* 194 K).

¹²⁸ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 96.15-16 Pasquali (not in Bernabé). See section (e) of this chapter on Persephone’s position within the Neoplatonist metaphysical system.

¹²⁹ Edmonds 2013: 151 n. 39.

¹³⁰ West 1983: 95.

¹³¹ Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.6 (*OF* 205 B; not in Kern).

the nymphs” (ἐν ἄνθρω ... μετὰ νυμφῶν),¹³² and Dionysus is born “in Crete” (κατὰ τὴν Κρήτην).¹³³ As for Asia Minor, there are indications of influence coming from there. The fact that Ida is one of the nymphs who takes care of Zeus in the cave of Night points to Zeus’ traditional association with Mount Ida.¹³⁴ 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.”¹³⁵ 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” (ὁ Ὀρφεὺς ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῆς Ἰπτας λόγοις).¹³⁶ This indicates that one of the twenty-four poems in the collection might have been specifically about 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.”¹³⁷ These complications, for which Edmonds suggests the solution of “abandoning the hypothesis of a single, consistent storyline,”¹³⁸ 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 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 stronger. On the topic of anthropogony, he notes a difference between Proclus’ account of the three races

¹³² Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 7 p. 46.17 Simonini (*OF* 279 III B; not in Kern).

¹³³ Diodorus 5.75.4 (*OF* 283 I B; not in Kern).

¹³⁴ *OF* 208-212 B; see especially *OF* 209 I, 211 B, which specifically 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.

¹³⁵ West 1983: 96. See Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.407.22 Diehl (*OF* 329 I B = *OF* 199 K); after Dionysus is born out of the thigh of Zeus, Hipta takes him “to the mother of the gods and Ida” (πρὸς τὴν μητέρα τῶν θεῶν καὶ τὴν Ἰδην), but Proclus does not specify whether he means the mountain Ida or the nymph Ida; see Chapter Six, section (b), for more on the Neoplatonists’ interpretation of Hipta.

¹³⁶ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 2.105.28 Diehl (*OF* 329 II B = *OF* 199 K).

¹³⁷ West 1983: 96; cf. Callimachus, *Aetia* fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*OF* 34 B = *OF* 210 p. 230 K); Euphorion fr. 14 Lightfoot (Tzetzes on Lycophron, *Alexandra* 207, p. 98.5 Scheer).

¹³⁸ Edmonds 2013: 151 n. 39.

of humans (golden under Phanes, silver under Kronos, Titanic under Zeus)¹³⁹ and Lactantius’ quotation of a verse of Orphic poetry in which “first of all Kronos ruled over earth-bound men” (πρώτιστος μὲν ἄνασσειν ἐπιχθονίων Κρόνος ἀνδρῶν).¹⁴⁰ 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 argues that “the conflict ceases to be a problem ... if two (or more) stories of anthropogony coexisted in the Rhapsodies.”¹⁴¹

Edmonds’ 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.”¹⁴² As we saw in Chapters Two and Three, not all early Orphic theogonies consisted of six generations. The Derveni poem seems to have 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.¹⁴³ In a similar manner, it is plausible to deduce from Olympiodorus

¹³⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = *OF* 140 K); Proclus, in *Hes. Op.* 127-128a Marzillo (55.15-55.3 Pertusi) (*OF* 216 II B = *OF* 141 K); cf. Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B).

¹⁴⁰ Lactantius, *Div. inst.* 1.13.11 (146 Monat) (*OF* 363 B = *OF* 139 K); cf. Servius, in *Bucol.* 4.10 (3.46.3 Thilo-Hagen) (*OF* 364 B = *OF* 29a K).

¹⁴¹ Edmonds 2013: 153 n. 47: he points out that Bernabé “places these two fragments with the alternative anthropogony in the section ‘Alia fragmenta theogonica origo incerta’” (i.e., *OF* 360-367 B).

¹⁴² Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (*OF* 174 VIII, 190 II, 227 IV, 299 VII, 304 I, 313 II, 318 III, 320 I B = *OF* 220 K); Edmonds 2013: 152 & n. 42, in which he directs the reader to Bernabé’s notes at *OF* 25 B, where “Bernabé collects the various attempts scholars have made to force the evidence into the preconceived pattern.”

¹⁴³ *Sibylline Oracles*, books 1-3; see: Lightfoot 2007: 3-253. Books 1 and 2 are of Christian origin, while book 3 is of Jewish origin. Book 3 appears to be older: Lightfoot (2007: 94) suggests that the first two books

that there could have been at least two theogonies in the Rhapsodic collection: one with six generations, and another with four.

Finally, as I argue in section (g) of this chapter, the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B = *OF* 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 clearly 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 section (c) of Chapter Three, 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” (Ζεὺς κεφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ’ ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται).¹⁴⁴ If the Rhapsodies consisted of a collection of twenty-four poems, then it is possible that one of these poems was a 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. For now, we may leave the question open until we have considered all of the evidence. On the side of a Rhapsodic Theogony, there are passages of ancient authors who had direct access to the Rhapsodies and who summarize 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 images of Phanes, the mixture of Cretan with Phrygian elements, 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

“can be seen as an interpretation of that book – a more systematic survey of world history.” Edmonds (2013: 152-153) notes that different genealogies in the *Sibylline Oracles* have different numbers of generations, and points out misleading statements by Lactantius about the contents of the *Oracles*, which suggests that his statements about the Rhapsodies might also be misleading.

¹⁴⁴ *OF* 243.2 B; cf. *OF* 14.2, 31.2 B.

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 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 the remaining sections of this chapter, I attempt to explain how the Neoplatonists used the Rhapsodic narrative of this six-generation succession myth as an allegory for their own metaphysical system. My approach is to treat the narrative as a Rhapsodic Theogony, but I recognize that this theogony might have been a part of a Rhapsodic collection, so in order to allow for both possibilities I often refer to this theogony as the Rhapsodic narrative.

(c) Chronos, the Cosmic Egg, and Phanes according to the Neoplatonists

According to Damascius and most modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodies, the narrative begins when Chronos (Time) emerges as the first god out of an undifferentiated mass of primordial elements.¹⁴⁵ Chronos gives birth to Aither and Chaos, and then 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 parallels, in the Rhapsodies the first god emerges out of a mass of pre-existing materials and he does not create the world, but he 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. It is well known that many of the fragments we have of the Rhapsodies were preserved because the Neoplatonists applied allegorical interpretations to them. So it is almost axiomatic that the preservation of these particular fragments are the consequence of

¹⁴⁵ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 109 VIII B = *OF* 60 K); e.g., West 1983: 70; Brisson 1995: 55.

their decisions about which passages to cite and what to say about them. This raises the question: what was there in the text of the Rhapsodies that the Neoplatonists found useful? The way to answer this question is to follow the chain from the top level of the Neoplatonic system to the bottom, so the first step is to look at how they interpreted the narrative of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes. Allegorically interpreting the Rhapsodies was not simply a matter of charting random correspondences between this deity and that philosophical concept. Rather, there were features of the text of the Rhapsodies that illustrated Neoplatonic metaphysical concepts very well, and they made use of these. For example, the physical description of the many-headed hermaphrodite Phanes was a perfect illustration of the way the “Living-Thing-itself” (ἀὐτοζῶον) contains multiplicity within unity. At the same time, there were some things in the Rhapsodies that did not suit their argument quite as well, and these things were swept under the rug, as it were. For example, Phanes in the act of creation seems not to have received much comment because it is Zeus, not Phanes, whom they interpret as the Demiurge. Studying the ways in which the Neoplatonists used (and did not use) descriptions, passages, and narrative episodes of the Rhapsodies will explain why they preserved these particular fragments, which will make the way more clear for understanding the Orphic myth.

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” (Χρόνον ... Ὀρφεὺς τὸ πρῶτον ἐκάλει).¹⁴⁶ Proclus says that “Orpheus calls the first cause of everything Chronos” (Ὀρφεὺς τὴν πρώτην πάντων αἰτίαν Χρόνον καλεῖ),¹⁴⁷ and Chronos is “the first of all” (τὸ πρώτιστον).¹⁴⁸ Damascius agrees that the Orphic theologians “put Chronos in the place of the one first-principle of the universe” (ἀντὶ ... τῆς μιᾶς τῶν ὄλων ἀρχῆς τὸν Χρόνον τιθέντες).¹⁴⁹ The Neoplatonists generally understood Chronos to be the first god who comes into being in the Rhapsodies, and as the first god

¹⁴⁶ Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 43.31 Kroll (*OF* 109 VII B).

¹⁴⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 59.17 Pasquali (*OF* 109 I B = *OF* 68 K).

¹⁴⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 1224.32 Cousin (*OF* 109 III B = *OF* 68 K).

¹⁴⁹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 109 VIII B = *OF* 60 K). Damascius sees it slightly differently, as we saw in Chapter Four. His reading of the Hieronyman Theogony suggests that the One truly was ineffable, and the first triad to proceed from the One was the water and mud, followed by Chronos. Damascius prefers this to the idea of Chronos being the One, because if one can say things about Chronos, then he is not truly ineffable.

Chronos 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 provides us with the first step toward understanding the complexities of Neoplatonic allegories. He explains that:

ὁ μὲν Ὀρφεὺς ... πάντα τὰ πρὸς τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ μέχρι τῆς πρωτίστης αἰτίας ὀνόμασιν ἐδήλωσεν, καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ ἄρρητον καὶ τῶν νοητῶν ἐνάδων ἐκβεβηκὸς Χρόνον προσεΐρηκεν, εἴθ’ ὅτι πάσης γενέσεως αἴτιον προϋπάρχον, εἴτε τὰ ὄντως ὄντα γινόμενα παραδιδούς, ἵνα τὴν τάξιν ἐνδείξῃται αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν τῶν ὀλικωτέρων πρὸς τὰ μερικώτερα ὑπεροχὴν, ἵνα ἡ ταῦτὸν τὸ κατὰ χρόνον τῶ κατ’ αἰτίαν, ὥσπερ ἡ γένεσις τῆ τεταγμένη προόδῳ.

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 should be identified with causal succession, just as generation is identified with ordered procession.¹⁵⁰

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.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵² Chronos is the first cause from which everything flows, and this is seen as an eternal

¹⁵⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 66.28 Pasquali (*OF* 109 II B = *OF* 68 K).

¹⁵¹ Elsewhere Proclus says that “the proceeding forth which goes out from the gods from the best cause is called properly birth in time” (ἡ πρόοδος ἢ τῶν θεῶν ἀπ’ αἰτίας προϊούσα τῆς ἀρίστης κατὰ χρόνον γένεσις κυρίως ἐπονομάζεται); see Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.28 (1.121.6 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 109 VI B = *OF* 68 K). In other words, all generation takes place in Time. Brisson (1995: 70-71) suggests that Proclus is identifying temporality with causality.

¹⁵² Cf. Simplicius, in *Aristot. Cael.* 560.19 Heiberg (*OF* 103 IV B), where Simplicius argues that “these people writing theologies through myths call birth the proceeding forth from causes” (διὰ μύθων οὗτοι θεολογοῦντες γένεσιν ἐκάλουν τὴν ἀπὸ αἰτίων πρόοδον).

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” (τὸ πρῶτον ὄλως οὐκ ὠνόμασεν), since *Theogony* 116 says that “Chaos was born” or “came into being” (Χάος γένετο), but the first-principle must be “ungenerated” (ἀγεννήτος).¹⁵³ 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:

Αἰθέρα μὲν Χρόνος οὔτος ἀγήραος, ἀφθιτόμητις
γείνατο καὶ μέγα Χάσμα πελώριον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,
οὐδέ τι πείραρ ὑπῆν, οὐ πυθμὴν, οὐδέ τις ἔδρα.

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.¹⁵⁴

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.¹⁵⁵ 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 the place of the two” (ἀντὶ μὲν τῆς μιᾶς τῶν ὄλων ἀρχῆς τὸν Χρόνον τιθέντες, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῖν δυεῖν Αἰθέρα καὶ Χάος).¹⁵⁶ Proclus explains in his commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus* that “just as Plato derived two causes, Limit and

¹⁵³ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 67.8 Pasquali; cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 1225.5 Cousin (*OF* 109 IV B), where Proclus calls Chronos “the cause of the manifestation of divine things” (τὸ αἴτιον τῆς ἐκφάνσεως τῶν θεῶν) and associates Chronos with the “mystical processions of what is ungenerated” (τῶν ἀγεννήτων μυστικὰς προόδους). See also Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 133.22 Kroll (*OF* 109 XII B), which refers to “the origin of the unborn Chronos” (τῶν τε ἀγενήτων ἀπὸ Χρόνου γενέσεις).

¹⁵⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.138.8 Kroll (*OF* 111 I B = *OF* 66 K); Simplicius, in *Aristot. Phys.* 528.14 Diehl (*OF* 111 VII B). Bernabé places lines 1-2 from Proclus with line 3 from Simplicius to form one fragment. See West 1983: 198-199, who compares this fragment with other myths: “In Pherecydes Chronos made fire, wind, and water out of his own seed; and all the parallel oriental Time-gods—the Egyptian Re, the Phoenician Ulom, the Iranian Zurvan, and the Indian Kala - generate progeny by themselves, without a consort.”

¹⁵⁵ Syrianus clarifies that “Orpheus calls Chronos the first” (Χρόνον δὲ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς τὸ πρῶτον ἐκάλει) and “Orpheus [calls] Chaos ‘the great monster Chasm here and there’” (Ὀρφεὺς τὸ Χάος ‘καὶ μέγα Χάσμα πελώριον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα’), at in *Aristot. Metaph.* 43.10 Kroll (*OF* 111 III B = *OF* 66 K).

¹⁵⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.19 Westerink) (*OF* 111 V B = *OF* 60 K); see Ahbel-Rappe *ad loc.*: “the one first-principle of the universe” (ἡ μία τῶν ὄλων ἀρχή) is Damascius’ typical term for “the One.”

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” (ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Πλάτων διττὰς παρήγαγεν αἰτίας ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνός, τὸ πέρασ καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁ θεολόγος ἀπὸ τοῦ Χρόνου τὸν τε Αἰθέρα καὶ τὸ Χάος ὑπέστησε, τοῦ μὲν πανταχοῦ πέρατος αἴτιον τὸν Αἰθέρα, τῆς δὲ ἀπειρίας τὸ Χάος· καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν δυοῖν ἀρχῶν τούς τε θεῖους γεννᾷ διακόσμους καὶ τούς ἐμφανεῖς).¹⁵⁷ 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” (τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἄπειρον Χάος ἐστίν, ὡς χωρητικὸν πάσης δυνάμεως καὶ πάσης ἀπειρίας, καὶ ὡς περιληπτικὸν τῶν ἄλλων ... τὸ δὲ πέρασ ὁ Αἰθῆρ, ὅτι καὶ οὗτος ὁ αἰθῆρ τὰ πάντα περατοῖ καὶ μετρεῖ).¹⁵⁸ The beginning of the Rhapsodic narrative, therefore, described Chronos generating Aither and Chaos, and the Neoplatonists equated these deities with the procession of Limit and Unlimited from the One.

Thus we have the top two levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system: the ineffable One that consists of perfect unity, neither limited nor unlimited, represented by Chronos; followed by Limit and Unlimited, represented by Chaos and Aither. Scholars have struggled to explain what this actually means. Brisson points out that Limit and Unlimited are a “complementary opposition” that “manifests itself on all levels of reality.”¹⁵⁹ Chlup explains how this opposition manifests itself: “while limit corresponds to

¹⁵⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.385.17 Diehl (*OF* 111 VIII B); τοῦ μὲν πανταχοῦ ... τὸ Χάος not in Bernabé. See also: Festugière *ad loc.* and Sorel 1995: 50, who reads the birth of Aither and Chasm as Chronos splitting the universe between top and bottom: Aither on top, Chasm on bottom. Hermias and Damascius relate Aither and Chasm to the Pythagorean concepts of monad and dyad: see Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 138.14 Couvr. (*OF* 111 XV, 114 IX B = *OF* 76 K); Damascius, *De Principiis* 50 (2.24.6-8 Westerink) (sentence immediately preceding *OF* 111 IV B = *OF ad* 66 K) and Westerink *ad loc.* Bernabé *ad OF* 116 B states that “it’s uncertain whether it is Proclus who explains the matter Pythagorically or Aither was described as Limit and Chaos as Unlimited already in the Orphic poem in a Pythagorean way” (“dubium est utrum sit Proclus qui Pythagorice rem explicet an Aether ut finis et Chaos ut infinitum iam in carmine Orphico more Pythagorico describeretur”), and he finds the latter option more likely. According to Brisson (1995: 70-71), Proclus is adopting an interpretation of Syrianus.

¹⁵⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 1121.27 Cousin. This appears immediately after the text that Bernabé included in *OF* 111 XI B. See also: Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.428.4 Diehl (*OF* 116 B = *OF* 79 K), where Proclus associates Aither and Chaos with Limit and Unlimited, and calls Aither the “root of all things” (ρίζωμα τῶν πάντων).

¹⁵⁹ Brisson 1995: 70-71: “opposition complémentaire ... se manifeste à tous les niveaux de la réalité.” He reads Aither, Chaos, and the cosmic egg as the first triad, Intelligible Being.

a precise logical arrangement, the unlimited is an endless stream of energy that flows through the universe, providing it with life and power.”¹⁶⁰ The moment a Form is generated from the One (keep in mind that “Form” in this context means Platonic Forms) or from some other level of the hierarchy, definition of the Form requires the imposition of limits, but at the same time there is an infinite potentiality of particular instances of the Form, and of other Forms. Thus, every level of the Neoplatonic universe involves the tension between Limit and Unlimited, beginning at the top two levels.

After Aither and Chaos, the other gods of the Rhapsodies are mapped onto a complex hierarchy of different levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. An understanding of this hierarchy will clarify how the Neoplatonists read the gods of the Rhapsodies, so before we proceed to the cosmic egg and Phanes, a brief explanation of Neoplatonic metaphysics is required.¹⁶¹ As Brisson points out, the gods are grouped into “two grand ensembles: the transcendent gods who correspond to the three first levels: Intelligible, Intelligible-Intellective, and Intellective; and the gods of the world correspond to three following levels: Hypercosmic, Hypercosmic-Encosmic, and Encosmic.”¹⁶² What each of these levels means will become clear as we encounter each of them in this chapter, but here I offer a brief definition of each:¹⁶³

Intelligible (νοητός): just below the One, the Intellect that is contemplated, containing all things unified (Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes)

Intelligible-Intellective: the middle point between Intelligible and Intellective, where the contemplated object and contemplating subject meet (Night, Ouranos, the Hundred-handers)

¹⁶⁰ Chlup 2012: 48.

¹⁶¹ In this digression, I am mostly dependent upon Brisson 1995: 69-81, who explains well how the deities fit but does not explain well what the metaphysical concepts actually mean, and Chlup 2012: 47-127, who explains Neoplatonist metaphysics very clearly (in this task he supersedes Dodds 1963 [1933], whose commentary on Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* had previously been the standard work on Neoplatonist metaphysics) but does not say much about how the gods of the Rhapsodies fit into the system. A useful point of reference is Chlup’s list of every level of the metaphysical hierarchy, along with corresponding deities in both the Rhapsodies and the *Chaldean Oracles*, in 2012: 125-127. This list is in turn based on Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485.

¹⁶² Brisson 1995: 71: “deux grands ensembles: les dieux transcendants qui correspondent aux trois premiers niveaux: intelligible, intelligible-intellectif et intellectif; et les dieux du monde qui correspondent aux trois niveaux suivants: hypercosmique, hypercosmique-encosmique et encosmique.”

¹⁶³ These simple definitions of Neoplatonist terms are based loosely on Duvick 2007: 179-177-183.

Intellective (νοερός): the Intellect that contemplates, containing all things but differentiating them (Kronos, Rhea, Zeus; Athena, Kore, Kuretes)

Hypercosmic (ὑπερκόσμιος): that which exists just above the cosmic celestial arch and just below the Intellective level (Zeus, Poseidon, Plato; Artemis, Kore, Athena; Apollo-Helios; Curetes)

Hypercosmic-Encosmic: the middle point between Hypercosmic and Encosmic (12 Olympians)

Encosmic (ὑποκόσμιον): that which exists within the cosmic sphere, separated from the Intellective levels by the celestial vault; created by the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus* (Dionysus, stars and planets, sub-lunar deities, Titans)

Primarily in this chapter we are concerned with the top three levels, the transcendent gods from the Intelligible to the Intellective. On each level of the hierarchical scheme, the process of generation is driven by the cycle of procession, remaining, and reversion. Everything ultimately proceeds from and reverts to the One, which, as Chlup explains, “is creative simply because of its perfection, the natural by-product of every perfection being the tendency to ‘overflow’, so to speak.”¹⁶⁴ In the cycle of procession, remaining, and reversion, this overflowing from the One causes other things to come into being. The generated entity “turns back upon the One and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking towards it,” so while “its halt and turning towards the One constitutes Being, its gaze upon the One [constitutes] Intellect.” At the higher levels of the system, “Intellect produces in the same way, pouring forth a multiple potency” that generates the next, lower level, and “this activity springing from the essence of Intellect is Soul.”¹⁶⁵ The process could be summarized in this way: (1) overflowing of perfection from the One, (2) generation of Being, (3) Intellect looks back toward the One, and (4) Soul overflows its own perfection, generating the next level. The Neoplatonic metaphysical system consists of this happening on multiple levels at once.

Because of the constant tension between Limit and Unlimited, the Neoplatonists thought there needed to be a middle point between any two extremes, which Dodds referred to as a “law of mean terms.”¹⁶⁶ Between each set of opposites in the Neoplatonic universe

¹⁶⁴ Chlup 2012: 62.

¹⁶⁵ Chlup 2012: 64.

¹⁶⁶ Dodds 1963 [1933]: xxii. Dodds explains: “doubly disjunct terms AB and not-A not-B cannot be continuous, but must be linked by an intermediate term, either A not-B or B not-A, which forms a ‘triad’ with them.” He adds that this middle point was a useful way to “reconcile conflicting traditions.”

there must be a center point, which results in many levels and sub-levels within the basic cycle. Using Life as the center point between Being and Intellect, Proclus associates the triad of terms Being-Life-Intellect with the cycle of remaining, procession, and reversion. Chlup explains that “Being is ... its aspect of remaining in itself, Life corresponds to its procession out of itself, Intellect to its reversion to itself.”¹⁶⁷ This triadic structure is analogous to the triad of limit-unlimited-mixture in which “Being corresponds to limit, Life represents the unlimited stream of energy, Intellect the mixture of both.”¹⁶⁸ So, after the One (Chronos, along with Aither and Chaos as Limit and Unlimited), there are four major levels that correspond to Being (remaining), Life (procession), Intellect (reversion), and Soul (next stage of procession). These correspond to yet another triad of levels – Intelligible (Being), Intelligible-Intellective (Life), and Intellective (Intellect) – while Soul involves the Hypercosmic and Encosmic levels.

Simply put, the top level is Intelligible, the object of intellect, and the bottom level of the triad is Intellective, the intelligent subject that contemplates the Intelligible. The middle point between the two, therefore, is Intelligible-Intellective, because it is the point at which the Intellective subject and the Intelligible object meet. Each of these major levels is then split into sub-levels. On each of the levels of Intelligible Being and Intelligible-Intellective Life, there are three sub-levels that correspond to Being, Life, and Intellect.¹⁶⁹ Within the level of Being, there are three sub-levels: Intelligible Being, Intelligible Life, and Intelligible Intellect; and each of these sub-levels is a triad, corresponding to Limit, Unlimited, and Mixture. Within the level of Life, too, there are three sub-levels of Intelligible-Intellective Being, Intelligible-Intellective Life, and Intelligible-Intellective Intellect, and each of these sub-levels is a triad. The level of Intellect is slightly different: there are two triads corresponding to the level of Intellective Being and Intellective Life, and a monad corresponding to the level of Intellective Intellect.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Chlup 2012: 94, referring to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.1.7.9-13.

¹⁶⁸ Chlup 2012: 94.

¹⁶⁹ Chlup 2012: 125-126. More precisely, this is the case on the top two levels, Being and Life. On the level of Intellect, there is a triad of “paternal gods,” a triad of “immaculate gods,” and a “monad separating the previous gods from the lower orders.” On the level of Soul, there are four triads of Hypercosmic gods that are categorized according to different principles relating to the lower levels of the metaphysical system.

¹⁷⁰ Chlup 2012: 96-97, 125-126. Since this monad is associated with (a) Ouranos being castrated, (b) Kronos castrating and being castrated, and (c) Zeus castrating Kronos, it could perhaps also be thought of as a triad, but the sources do not speak of it as such. In section (f), I argue that this monad might be better understood as represented by Zeus himself, who becomes Demiurge through the act of castrating Kronos.

The interpretive task of the Neoplatonists was to connect each of these levels and sub-levels with particular deities in the Rhapsodic narrative (they also connected these with deities in the *Chaldean Oracles* and certain passages of Plato). In doing so, they needed to stretch the meaning of the texts in certain places, by splitting the cosmic egg and some deities (such as Phanes and Night) into triads, and by placing some deities (such as Zeus) on more than one level of the metaphysical system. Lewy, Brisson, and Chlup have listed these accordingly:¹⁷¹

- 1) The One: Orphic Time (Chronos):¹⁷² the henads in their aspect of Limit and the Unlimited: Orphic Aither and Chaos¹⁷³
- 2) Being: three triads of Intelligible gods¹⁷⁴
 - Intelligible Being (“in its three modalities of limit, the unlimited and mixture”): the cosmic egg [along with Aither and Chaos]
 - Intelligible Life: Orphic Tunic and Cloud, or Egg conceived and conceiving [and Phanes being conceived inside the egg]
 - Intelligible Intellect: the triad Phanes, Erikepaïos, Metis
- 3) Life: three triads of Intelligible-Intellective gods¹⁷⁵
 - Intelligible-Intellective Being: Night in her three manifestations
 - Intelligible-Intellective Life: Ouranos in his three manifestations
 - Intelligible-Intellective Intellect: the Hundred-Handers Cottus, Briareos and Gyges
- 4) Intellect: heptad of Intellective gods¹⁷⁶
 - Triad of paternal gods: Kronos, Rhea, Zeus
 - Triad of immaculate gods: Athena, Kore, Curetes
 - Monad separating the previous gods from the lower orders: castration of Ouranos by Kronos and of Kronos by Zeus

¹⁷¹ Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485; Brisson 1995: 69-81; Chlup 2012: 125-126. This list basically reproduces Chlup’s list, but I added certain items in square brackets for clarification. Chlup also lists correspondences with the *Chaldean Oracles* and certain passages of Plato, mostly based on Lewy. For sake of reference, the next few footnotes show which Neoplatonist passages Chlup uses as evidence for the Orphic gods being equated with their respective levels of the Neoplatonist metaphysical system.

¹⁷² Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.28.121; in *Plat. Tim.* 1.385.17-20; in *Remp.* 2.138.8-18; Damascius, *De Principiis* 1.316.19-317.1.

¹⁷³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.176.12-13; 1.385.17-22; in *Plat. Remp.* 2.138.8-18; Damascius, *De Principiis* 1.316.20-317.1.

¹⁷⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.428.1-20; Damascius, *De Principiis* 1.317.1-7.

¹⁷⁵ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.3, 5, 10, 24-26, 36, 39; in *Plat. Tim.* 3.174.17-175.26; Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 146.24-25; 147.16-150.2-9, 22.

¹⁷⁶ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.2-36; in *Tim.* 1.38.18-19; 1.166.2-31; 1.310.3-319.21; 3.246.29-250.28; 3.310.25-28; in *Plat. Remp.* 1.137.7-138.15; 2.225.1-5; Damascius, *De Principiis* 1.315.20-21

Note that for now I have only listed the top few levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system, which correspond to the first few generations of deities in the Rhapsodies, since these deities are the ones most relevant to the core succession myth.¹⁷⁷ The cosmic egg and Phanes represent different sub-levels of Intelligible Being, while Night and Ouranos are split into two triads as sub-levels of Intelligible-Intellective Life. In section (f) of this chapter, we see the significance of Phanes existing on the Intelligible level and Zeus on the Intellective level, and how the Neoplatonists made much use of the myth of Zeus swallowing Phanes.

In its initial creation, the cosmic egg represents the Mixture that results from Limit (Aither) and Unlimited (Chaos) in the triad of Intelligible Being, the top Intelligible triad.¹⁷⁸ Limit and Unlimited, occupying the top level of the metaphysical scheme under 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” (ἔτευξε μέγας Χρόνος Αἰθέρι δίω / ὤεον ἀργύφειον) in order to demonstrate that “everything that is unified is mixed” (πᾶν δὲ ἠνωμένον μικτόν). He adds that “the word ‘fashioned’ shows that the egg is an artifact and not naturally conceived” (τὸ γὰρ ‘ἔτευξε’ δηλοῖ τι τεχνητόν, ἀλλ’ οὐ γέννημα), which means that it “is mixed from two things at least, matter [Unlimited] and form [Limited]” (πάμμικτόν ἐστιν ἐκ δυεῖν τοῦλάχιστον, ὕλης καὶ εἶδους).¹⁷⁹ 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” (εἰ οὖν τὸ πρῶτον ἐκ πέρατος καὶ ἀπείρου τὸ πρῶτως ἐστὶν ὄν, εἴη ἂν ταῦτόν τό τε Πλάτωνος ὄν καὶ τὸ Ὀρφικὸν ὠόν).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ For the lower levels, including the Hypercosmic, Hypercosmic-Encosmic, and Encosmic gods, see Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485; Brisson 1995: 82-91; Chlup 2012: 126-127; and Chapter Six, section (b).

¹⁷⁸ See Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.19 Westerink) (*OF* 111 V B = *OF* 60 K), where Damascius says that Aither, Chaos, and the cosmic egg come after the One, “making this the first triad” (τριάδα ταύτην πρώτην ποιούντες); see also: Brisson 1995: 72.

¹⁷⁹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 55 (2.40.14 Westerink) (*OF* 114 I B = *OF* 70 K); see Westerink *ad loc.* Simplicius also quotes the words “silver-shining egg” (ὠεὸν ἀργύφειον) at: *in Aristot. Phys.* 146.29 Diel (*OF* 114 II B = *OF* 70 K).

¹⁸⁰ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.428.7 Diehl (*OF* 114 III B = *OF* 70 K). See also: Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 114 VIII B = *OF* 60 K), where Damascius says that in the Rhapsodies “the egg is in the place of absolute Being” (ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ ὄντος ἀπλῶς τὸ ὠόν).

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 undifferentiated from one another” (ὡς γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ ἀδιάκριτά ἐστι πάντα τὰ μέρη καὶ οὐχ ὡδὶ μὲν κεφαλὴ, ὡδὶ δὲ πούς, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τῷ νοητῷ ἀδιάκριτά ἐστι πάντα τὰ εἶδη ἠνωμένα ἀλλήλοις).¹⁸¹ This metaphor of the egg was not unique to the late Neoplatonists. In the *Homilies* of Pseudo-Clement, Apion introduces a beautiful image of the peacock egg, one simple thing that hides a multitude of colours:

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ τοῦ ταῶ γεννήματι ἐν μὲν τοῦ ὡοῦ χρῶμα δοκεῖ, δυνάμει δὲ μυρία ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ τοῦ μέλλοντος τελεσφορεῖσθαι χρώματα, οὕτως καὶ τὸ ἐξ ἀπείρου ὕλης ἀποκηθὲν ἔμψυχον ὠδὸν ἐκ τῆς ὑποκειμένης καὶ αἰεὶ ρεούσης ὕλης κινούμενον παντοδαπὰς ἐκφαίνει τροπὰς.

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.¹⁸²

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 second sub-level of the metaphysical system – Intelligible Life – consisted of the cosmic egg split into a triad of its own: the egg conceived, the egg conceiving, and Phanes being conceived inside the egg. Together, these constitute the middle point between Intelligible Being, which has the Forms in an undifferentiated state, and Intelligible Intellect, which has the Forms in unity but slightly more differentiated. Damascius argues that “to complete the second triad, they [i.e., Syrianus and Proclus] set as the last term the egg that is

¹⁸¹ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 4.4 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 114 VI B).

¹⁸² Apion, ap. Ps.-Clemens Romanus, *Homiliae* 6.5.1 (108.6 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 120 I B = *OF* 56 K). This way of talking about the peacock egg was a Hellenistic concept: see Turcan 1961: 20-21.

conceived and the egg conceiving the god, or the gleaming robe, or the cloud, because Phanes leaps forth from these” (εις δὲ τὴν δευτέραν τελεῖν ἦτοι τὸ κυούμενον καὶ τὸ κύον ὦδον τὸν θεόν, ἢ τὸν ἀργῆτα χιτῶνα, ἢ τὴν νεφέλην, ὅτι ἐκ τούτων ἐκθρόσκει ὁ Φάνης).¹⁸³ He adds that “perhaps the middle triad must also be thought of as the trimorph god still being conceived inside the egg” (μήποτε δὲ καὶ τὴν μέσσην τριάδα θετέον κατὰ τὸν τρίμορφον θεὸν ἔτι κυούμενον ἐν τῷ ὠῶ).¹⁸⁴ The triad of Intelligible Life consists of the egg conceived, the egg conceiving, and the unborn Phanes. The shell of the egg appears to have been 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:

ῥῆξε δ’ ἔπειτα Φάνης νεφέλην, ἀργῆτα χιτῶνα,
 <ἐκ δὲ> σχισθέντος κρανίου πολυχανδέος ὦοῦ
 ἐξέθορε πρότιστος ἀνέδραμε τ’ ἀρσενόθηλυς
 Πρωτόγονος πολυτίμητος.

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.¹⁸⁵

If we accept Bernabé’s reconstruction 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.

Phanes himself represents the triad at the sub-level of Intelligible Intellect, the lowest triad in the level of Being and the one that gives life to the level of Intelligible-Intellective Life. It was necessary for the Neoplatonists to split the egg into the triad above Phanes because of the way they interpreted Phanes in the Rhapsodies. Specifically, they needed Phanes to fit into the sub-level of Intelligible Intellect on the level of Being, because Phanes was in their view the “Living Thing” (ζῶα) mentioned in Plato’s *Timaeus*. In this dialogue, Timaeus suggests to Socrates:

¹⁸³ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.159.17 Westerink) (*OF* 121 B = *OF* 60 K). Despite Damascius’ attributing this idea to Syrianus and Proclus, Brisson (1995: 72) points out that none of Proclus’ (or Syrianus’) writings identify any Orphic deities with the second Intelligible triad.

¹⁸⁴ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.160.8 Westerink) (*OF* 120 III B = *OF* 60 K).

¹⁸⁵ *OF* 121 B. He reconstructs these lines 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., Homiliae* 6.5.4 (108.14 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke); 6.12.1 (110.28 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke); Rufinus, *Recognitiones* 10.17.3 (336.18 Rehm); 10.30.4 (346.28 Rehm). See Bernabé *ad loc.* All of these passages refer to some detail of Phanes emerging from the cosmic egg.

οὗ δ' ἔστιν ἄλλα ζῶα καθ' ἐν καὶ κατὰ γένη μόρια, τούτῳ πάντων ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸν εἶναι τιθῶμεν. τὰ γὰρ δὴ νοητὰ ζῶα πάντα ἐκεῖνο ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιλαβὸν ἔχει, καθάπερ ὅδε ὁ κόσμος ἡμᾶς ὅσα τε ἄλλα θρέμματα συνέστηκεν ὁρατά.

Let us lay it down 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.¹⁸⁶

The Neoplatonists equated Phanes with this Living Thing, as Proclus explains in his commentary on the same passage of Plato's *Timaeus*:

εἰ γὰρ πρῶτος καὶ μόνος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὠοῦ πρόεισιν Φάνης, ὁ παρ' ἐκείνῳ δηλοῖ τὸν πρῶτιστον νοητὸν νοῦν, τὸ δὲ ἐξ ὠοῦ προῖδον πρῶτον καὶ μόνον οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ζῶον, δηλον, ὅτι καὶ ὁ μέγιστος Φάνης οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἢ τὸ πρῶτιστον ζῶον καί, ὡς ἂν φαίη ὁ Πλάτων, τὸ αὐτοζῶον.

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.¹⁸⁷

As the “Living-Thing-itself” (αὐτοζῶον), Phanes “within himself contains in advance the causes of the secondary orders” (ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰς τῶν δευτέρων τάξεων αἰτίας προεἴληφε),¹⁸⁸ 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” (ὡς γὰρ τὸ ὠὸν τὴν σπερματικὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ ζῴου προεἴληφεν ... καὶ ὡς τὸ ζῶον ἤδη διηρημένως ἔχει, ὅσα ἦν ἐν τῷ ὠῷ σπερματικῶς, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁ θεὸς ὅδε προάγει τὸ ἄρρητον καὶ ἄληπτον τῶν πρώτων αἰτίων εἰς τὸ ἐμφανές).¹⁸⁹ Later in the same

¹⁸⁶ Plato, *Timaeus* 30c-d.

¹⁸⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.428.15 Diehl (*OF* 121 V B). See also: Brisson 1995: 72-73.

¹⁸⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.428.22 Diehl. By translating αὐτοζῶον as “Living-Thing-itself,” I am basically following the translations of Tarrant *et al.*, but αὐτοζῶον denotes the self-sufficiency of this Living-Thing – the αὐτοζῶον depends on nothing else for its sustained existence – so αὐτοζῶον could be translated (perhaps better) as “Thing-Living-itself” or “Thing-Living-by-itself”; cf. LSJ s.v. αὐτοζῶον: “self-existent, having life in itself.”

¹⁸⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.430.5 Diehl; cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.70.3 Diehl (*OF* 119 IB = *OF* 71 K): “The sphere is akin to the Demiurge because all things are contained in it, just as all things are contained by the Demiurge intellectually” (τῷ δὲ δημιουργῷ συγγενές τὸ σφαιρικόν, ὡς καὶ αὐτῷ νοερῶς ἐν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα περιέχοντι).

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” (ὁ θεολόγος μόνον παράγει τὸν Φάνητα ‘σπέρμα φέροντα θεῶν κλυτὸν’ ἀπὸ τοῦ κρυφίως ὄντος θεοῦ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου πάσας ὑφίστησι τὰς δευτέρας τάξεις τῶν θεῶν).¹⁹⁰ Damascius reads Phanes the same way when he argues that:

Ὁρφεὺς τὸν πολυτίμητον τοῦτον θεὸν ἀνευφήμησε τὸν σπέρμα φέροντα θεῶν, κλυτὸν Ἑρικεπαῖον. καὶ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ποιεῖ προϊούσαν ἅπασαν τὴν τῶν θεῶν γενεάν. ὡς μὲν δὴ κατὰ πλάτος εἶπεῖν, ἐκεῖ πάντα προεἰληπτα σποράδην, ὡς φησιν ὁ θεολόγος, κατὰ τὴν ἠνωμένην περίληψιν, ἦν σπέρμα πάντων ἐκάλεσε. πάντα γὰρ ἦν καὶ τὸ ἠνωμένον ἀδιακρίτως, διὸ πάντα ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ διεκρίθη.

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. Broadly speaking, all things are anticipated there in their seed form, as the theologian says, in a unified anticipation that he has called the seed of all things, since the Unified was all things in an undifferentiated state, and therefore all things are differentiated [upon their departure] from the Unified.¹⁹¹

The Orphic Phanes was thus a crucial point at which the Neoplatonists found agreement between Orpheus and Plato. As the 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, in a slightly more differentiated state, or more precisely, in both a differentiated and undifferentiated state, as the center point between the One and the Demiurge. The Neoplatonists found this to fit well with the idea of the Living Thing in Plato’s *Timaeus*.¹⁹²

Since Phanes alone fills out the triad of Limit, Unlimited, and Mixture on the level of Intelligible Intellect, the Neoplatonists split him into three to form this triad, 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

¹⁹⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.450.9 Diehl (*OF* 140 IX B = *OF* 85 K).

¹⁹¹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 98 (3.55.1 Westerink) (*OF* 140 V B = *OF* 85 K).

¹⁹² On the creative aspect of the “seeds” of Phanes as a hermaphrodite, see Casadio 1999: 113-114.

already seen this kind of syncretism applied to Phanes in the Hieronyman Theogony, which equates him with Zeus and Pan,¹⁹³ and it can also be seen in the *Orphic Hymn* to Protogonos, which calls him Erikepaios, Phanes, Antauges, and even Priapus.¹⁹⁴ Syncretism in general was not uncommon in the Hellenistic Period, 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” (Βρόμιός τε μέγας καὶ Ζεὺς ὁ πανόπτης) with “graceful Eros and wicked Metis” (ἄβρὸς Ἔρως καὶ Μῆτις ἀτάσθαλος).¹⁹⁵ It was simply a matter of deciding which three names fit best with their triadic scheme, so Damascius specifies that “in the third triad, Metis as intellect, Erikepaios as power, and Phanes himself as father” (τὴν δὲ τρίτην τὸν Μῆτιν ὡς νοῦν, τὸν Ἑρικεπαῖον ὡς δύναμιν, τὸν Φάνητα αὐτὸν ὡς πατέρα).¹⁹⁶ This makes sense, since Metis represents cunning intelligence and Phanes initiates procreative generation, so this passage might suggest that the name Erikepaios had something to do with power. On more than one occasion, Proclus and Damascius quote a Rhapsodic passage that equates Metis with Phanes:

πρῶτον δαίμονα σεμνόν
Μῆτιν σπέρμα φέροντα θεῶν κλυτόν, ὃν τε Φάνητα
πρωτόγονον μάκαρες κάλειον κατὰ μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον.

First the revered deity
Metis bearing the glorious seed of the gods, whom also the blessed ones
in great Olympos call first-born Phanes.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B = *OF* 56 K). One could also mention Chronos being called Herakles in the Hieronyman Theogony (Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160.17 Westerink) (*OF* 76 I B = *OF* 54 K). Syncretism in Orphic literature goes back to the Derveni Papyrus, where the goddesses “Demeter, Rhea, Ge, Mother, Hestia, [and] Deo” (Δημήτηρ [Ρ]έα Γῆ Μῆτις Ἡρ Ἔστια Δηϊώ, DP 22.12) are equated.

¹⁹⁴ *OH* 6 (*OF* 143 B = *OF* 87 K); cf. Rudhardt 1991: 269-274, who argues that polyonymy in Orphic myth was “not syncretistic,” but a way of expressing how “the one and the many are also still present in the divine reality.” Perhaps this was the case, but on the other hand it was the Neoplatonists who were concerned with the question of the One and the Many, not necessarily the Orphic poets.

¹⁹⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.336.6 Diehl (*OF* 141 I B = *OF* 170 K); cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.336.15 Diehl (*OF* 140 XI B = *OF* 85 K), where “[Metis] himself is continually called Dionysus and Phanes and Erikepaios” (αὐτὸς (sc. ὁ Μῆτις) δὲ ὁ Διόνυσος καὶ Φάνης καὶ Ἑρικεπαῖος συνεχῶς ὀνομάζεται). Phanes seems to have been a syncretistic appropriation of the characteristics of earlier deities: see Calame 1992: 193-197 on Eros; Detienne & Vernant 1974: 133-157 on Phanes; they point out that Metis appears rarely if ever in Greek literature after Hesiod, with the exception of Orphic literature. Thus the appearance of Metis in the Rhapsodies appears to be a direct response of the *bricoleur* to Hesiod. For more on Metis, see Chapter Two, section (d), and for more on Eros, see Chapter Three, section (a).

¹⁹⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.160.6 Westerink) (*OF* 139 I B = *OF* 60 K).

¹⁹⁷ *OF* 140 B = *OF* 85 K. Although no ancient source quotes all three lines, this passage was first reconstructed by Abel fr. 61 and was 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

Proclus refers to these lines to explain how “the Living-Thing-itself rejoices in solitude” (τὸ αὐτοζῶον μονότητι χαίρει) and “conceives by itself” (κύει ... ζῶον ἄφ’ ἑαυτοῦ),¹⁹⁸ and how Phanes “holds the paternal prominence in relation to all the Intellective gods” (πατρικὴν ἔχοντι πρὸς πάντα τοὺς νοερούς ὑπεροχὴν).¹⁹⁹ Proclus uses Phanes as an example of names “by which the inferior gods [i.e., the Olympians] address those prior to them” (δι’ ὧν οἱ καταδεέστεροι τοὺς προτέρους καλοῦσιν),²⁰⁰ which means that the lower orders of deities proceed from and revert to “Phanes himself as father” (τὸν Φάνητα αὐτὸν ὡς πατέρα) as Damascius puts it.²⁰¹ 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,²⁰² 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 Three 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.²⁰³ This association between Eros and Phanes, more likely drawn from ancient Near Eastern parallels and

as *OF* 140 I-II B, along with ten other passages in Proclus and Damascius (*OF* 140 III-XII B), all of which refer to these lines of poetry either to make the same point mentioned above, or to demonstrate that the names of the gods on the higher levels of the Neoplatonist universe are hidden. In *OF* 140 II B, Proclus says that “even Orpheus says that this is the first order that the other gods call by name” (Ὀρφεὺς πρώτην ταύτην (sc. τελεστικὴν) ὀνόματι φησιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων καλεῖσθαι θεῶν).

¹⁹⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.451.8 Diehl (*OF* 140 I B = *OF* 85 K).

¹⁹⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 48.14 Pasquali; this phrase is left out of *OF* 140 VIII B = *OF* 85 K.

²⁰⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 33.20 Pasquali (*OF* 140 III B = *OF* 85 K).

²⁰¹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 (3.160.6 Westerink) (*OF* 139 I B = *OF* 60 K).

²⁰² John Malalas associates the names Metis, Phanes, and Erikepaios with, respectively, “counsel, light, and life-giver” (βουλή, φῶς, ζῴοδοτήρ) (John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (53 Thurn) (*OF* 139 II B = *OF* 65 K)), but scholars have been hesitant to take Malalas’ etymology of the name Erikepaios at face value (Cook 1914: II 1024; Graf *ad BNP* s.v. Erikepaios). Cook (1914: II 1024) thought the name could have been Thracian-Phrygian, but West (1983: 205-206) suggests possible Semitic origins. Either way, it would be futile to look for the meaning of Erikepaios in Greek etymology if it had a non-Greek origin.

²⁰³ 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.

Hellenistic syncretism than from Neoplatonic metaphysical speculations, 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:

εἰ καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ νοηταὶ τάξεις εἰσὶν, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνων ὑφεῖται τὸ κάλλιστον· οὐ γὰρ μετέχουσι τοῦ κάλλους, ἀλλ’ ἐν αὐταῖς ἐστὶν ἡ καλλοποιὸς αἰτία καὶ τὸ πρότιστον κάλλος καὶ ἡ καλλονή. διὸ καὶ παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ κατὰ ταύτην τὴν τάξιν νοερῶς ἐκφαίνεται, ὡς τοῦ κάλλους ἤδη προόντος ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς τοῖς πρώτοις ἠνωμένως καὶ συνεχῶς ὁ Φάνης ‘περικαλλέος Αἰθέρος υἱὸς’ ὀνομάζεται καὶ ‘ἄβρὸς Ἔρωσ,’ ὅτι δὴ τῆς κρυφίου καὶ ἀρρήτου καλλονῆς πρώτος οὗτος ὁ θεὸς πεπλήρωται.

Although there are Intelligible orders before it [the Living-Thing-itself], the most beautiful [thing] is lower in the scale than them. They do not participate in beauty; rather, the cause that creates beauty, the very first beauty, Beauty [itself], resides in them. This is why in Orpheus Phanes appears in the Intellective mode on this [inferior] level – Beauty already pre-existing in the unified mode in the first Intelligibles – and is immediately named “son of most beautiful Aither” and “graceful Eros,” because this god is the first to have been filled with hidden and ineffable Beauty.²⁰⁴

Proclus argues that the Form of Beauty is contained within the higher sub-levels of the metaphysical system, but Phanes as Intellective Intellect is the first god to “participate” or “to have been filled with” Beauty. According to Proclus, the equation of Eros with Phanes represents how the Living-Thing-itself participates in the Platonic Form of Beauty. 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.

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. A hermaphrodite with wings and multiple animal heads, Phanes was the perfect image of multiplicity within unity. Phanes was definitely portrayed as a hermaphrodite in the Rhapsodies, perhaps with the word ἀρσενόθηλος (“masculo-feminine”).²⁰⁵ We saw in Chapter Four that in the Hieronyman Theogony

²⁰⁴ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.433.28-434.5 Diehl (*OF* 141 V B = *OF* 74 K); Bernabé cuts out most of this sentence, leaving only the words διὸ καὶ παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ ... ὀνομάζεται καὶ (sc. ὁ Φάνης) ‘ἄβρὸς Ἔρωσ.’

²⁰⁵ *OF* 121.3 B; see n. 184 above and Bernabé *ad loc.* The word ἀρσενόθηλος appears in Apion *apud* pseudo-Clement (*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.

Phanes was “male and female” (ἄρρενος καὶ θηλείας),²⁰⁶ or “two-bodied” (δισώματος).²⁰⁷ In the Rhapsodies he is called “female and ancestor, powerful god Erikepaios” (θηλυς καὶ γενέτωρ κρατερός θεός Ἐρικεπαῖος)²⁰⁸ and the author “introduces Phanes having his phallus behind around his anus” (τὸν μὲν Φάνητα εἰσφέρει αἰδοῖον ἔχοντα ὀπίσω περὶ τὴν πυγὴν).²⁰⁹ 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” (*aliter generare non quiverit, nisi haberet vim sexus utriusque, quasi ad ipse secum coierit aut sine coitu non potuit procreare*).²¹⁰ 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.²¹¹ 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,²¹² and how in the Rhapsodies he first gives birth to Night before he mates with her.²¹³

The Neoplatonists read this in a way that is slightly more abstract, as Proclus indicates when he interprets the words “female and begetter” (θηλυς καὶ γενέτωρ) to mean that “both maleness and femaleness are first of all in him as being the first Living Thing”

²⁰⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.1 Westerink) (*OF* 80 I B = *OF* 54 K).

²⁰⁷ Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 18.5 (130 Pouderon) (*OF* 80 II B = *OF* 57 K); cf. *Orphic Argonautica* 14 (*OF* 99 B), where Eros is called “double-natured” (διφυῆ), and *OH* 6.1 (*OF* 143 B), where Protogonos is called “double-natured” (διφυῆ).

²⁰⁸ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.429.28 Diehl (*OF* 134 I B = *OF* 81 K).

²⁰⁹ 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 = *OF* 80 K). West (1983: 202 note 85) adds that “this is where it would need to be if his vagina was normally situated.”

²¹⁰ Lactantius, *Divin. inst.* 4.8.4 (1.296.2 Br.) (*OF* 134 IV B = *OF* 81 K).

²¹¹ Brisson (2008: 81-92) argues that the idea of One and Many was already implicit in the poetic image of the double-gendered god. Bernabé (1998: 65-66) thinks that Aristophanes’ circle-people in Plato’s *Symposium* were influenced by an Orphic poem about Phanes, but Dover (1966: 46) does not consider the two relevant; more likely the Orphic poet was influenced by Plato. Casadio (1999: 113-115) interprets Phanes’ masculine side as “fertilizing power” and his feminine side as “procreative power,” both of them “united in him and complementary, but distinct, independently functioning.”

²¹² Athenagoras, *Pro Christ.* 20.4 (136 Pouderon) (*OF* 81 B = *OF* 58 K).

²¹³ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.450.22 Diehl (*OF* 147 I B = *OF* 99 K). The specific phrase is that “he introduces the Nights” (παράγει δὲ τὰς Νύκτας) and “mates with the middle one” (τῇ μέσῃ σύνεστιν). As I argue in section (d), there was only one Night in the Rhapsodies, whom the Neoplatonists split into three to form a triad. Brisson (2008: 81-92) sees Night as the feminine side of Phanes, in the simultaneous roles of mother, wife, and daughter, and describes Phanes/Night’s procreation as “self-incest” (“1’auto-inceste,” p. 91).

(ἐν αὐτῷ πρώτῳ τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρρεν ὡς ζῶφ πρώτῳ).²¹⁴ 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” (πατὴρ ἦν καὶ μήτηρ ὁ τρίτος θεός· ἐπεὶ καὶ εἰ τὸ αὐτοζῶφον ἐν ἐκείνῳ, δεῖ καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἄρρενος ἐκεῖ καὶ τὴν τοῦ θήλεος αἰτίαν πρώτως προϋπάρχειν, ταῦτα γὰρ ἐν ζῳοῖς).²¹⁵ 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. The Intelligible Intellect, corresponding to the Living Thing of Plato, contains the “seeds” (or Platonic Forms) of the division of the sexes, but is itself united – it 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,²¹⁶ 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” (κριοῦ καὶ ταύρου καὶ λέοντος καὶ δράκοντος ... κεφαλᾶς).²¹⁷ He quotes a line of the Rhapsodies in which Phanes is described “sending forth the might of a bull and a fierce lion” (βρίμας ταυρείους ἀφιεί<ς> χαροποῦ τε λέοντος).²¹⁸ Hermias quotes another line in which Phanes is “carried on golden wings here and there” (χρυσείαις πτερύγεσσι φορεύμενος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα).²¹⁹ Elsewhere the Neoplatonists describe him as having “four (pairs of) eyes and four heads” (τετραυγέα τετρακέρατον), “with four eyes” (τετράσιν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν), and “four-eyed and with four faces” (τερόμματον καὶ τετραπρόσωπον).²²⁰ None of the Rhapsodic fragments gives us as full a description of Phanes as we find in Damascius’ account of the Hieronyman

²¹⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.429.28 Diehl (*OF* 134 I B = *OF* 81 K).

²¹⁵ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.28 (4.81.20 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 134 III B = *OF* 81 K).

²¹⁶ See Chapter Four, section (c).

²¹⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.429.26 Diehl (*OF* 129 I B = *OF* 81 K).

²¹⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.427.20 Diehl (*OF* 130 B = *OF* 79 K).

²¹⁹ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 142.16 Couvr. (*OF* 136 I B = *OF* 78 K).

²²⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.169.28 Kroll (*OF* 131 B = *OF* 77 K); Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 138.14 Couvr. (*OF* 132 B = *OF* 76 K); in *Plat. Phaedr.* 91.5 Couvr. (*OF* 133 B = *OF* 76 K). In another passage the Rhapsodies mention “swift eyeless Eros” (ἀνόμματον ὠκὺν Ἔρωτα) (*OF* 144 B = *OF* 82 K), which has been a source of confusion to ancient and modern interpreters alike; see Bernabé *ad loc.*

Theogony, but it is clear that Phanes was a polymorphic creature in the Rhapsodies too. None of the fragments mentions any serpentine features,²²¹ but Phanes continues to have multiple heads and eyes, the heads of different animals, and wings. In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus expounds on the meaning of this at length:

ὁ νοητὸς κόσμος καὶ ἐν ζῶόν ἐστι καὶ πλῆθος, ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ τὸ πλῆθος συνηρηκῶς, ὥσπερ αὖ οὗτος ἐν τῷ πλήθει δεικνύει τὸ ἐν ... διὸ καὶ ὀλικώτατον ζῶον ὁ θεολόγος ἀναπλάττει κριοῦ καὶ ταύρου καὶ λέοντος καὶ δράκοντος αὐτῷ περιτιθεὶς κεφαλὰς, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ πρώτῳ τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρρεν ὡς ζῶῳ πρώτῳ ... αὐτῷ δὲ καὶ αἱ πτέρυγες πρώτων.

The Intelligible order is both a single Living Thing and a multiplicity, having brought multiplicity together in unity, just as this [order] for its part manifests unity in multiplicity ... This is why the theologian fashions a most universal Living Thing, placing on it the heads of a ram, a bull, a lion and a serpent, and why both maleness and femaleness are first of all in it as being the first Living Thing ... and he was also the first to have wings.²²²

Later in the same commentary, Proclus offers his interpretation again:

ἔστιν ἄρα τὸ αὐτοζῶον νοῦς νοητός, περιέχων τὰς νοεράς διακοσμήσεις τῶν θεῶν ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ συναγωγὸς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐνοποιὸς καὶ τελεσιουργός ... διὸ δὴ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς Φάνητά τε τὸν θεὸν τοῦτον προσηγόρευσεν ὡς ἐκφαίνοντα τὰς νοητὰς ἐνάδας καὶ ζῶων αὐτῷ μορφὰς ἀνέθηκεν ὡς ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας τῶν νοητῶν ζῶων ἐκφανεΐσης καὶ ιδέας πολυειδεῖς ὡς τῶν νοητῶν ιδεῶν πρώτως περιληπτικῷ.

The Living-Thing-itself, therefore, is an Intelligible Intellect which, since it includes within itself the Intellective orders of gods, is such as to bring them together, make them one, and bring about their perfection ... This is doubtless why Orpheus referred to this god as Phanes inasmuch as [the Living-Thing-itself] reveals the Intelligible henads [to the lower orders] and [Orpheus] entrusted to [Phanes] the role of making the Forms for living things, since the primary cause of Intelligible living things is revealed in him. He also entrusted him with multi-form Forms inasmuch as he includes the Intelligible Forms in a primary manner.²²³

²²¹ As I discussed in Chapter Four, Athenagoras emphasises serpentine features because it fits with his Christian apologetic agenda. On the other hand, serpentine features were not as useful to the Neoplatonists in their search for images of the One and Many as the image of Phanes with many heads. Supposing that perhaps there was a passage of the Rhapsodies that described Phanes with serpentine features, one could argue that these passages have not been preserved simply because the Neoplatonists had no use for them, and since the Rhapsodies were current they could assume familiarity among their readers.

²²² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.429.18-430.2 Diehl (*OF* 129 I, 134 I, 136 II B = *OF* 81 K). Bernabé does not include the first part of this passage, but begins with the words διὸ καὶ ὀλικώτατον ζῶον ὁ θεολόγος and cuts the remainder of the passage into three fragments.

²²³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.101.3-13 Diehl (*OF* 129 II B = *OF* 82 K); ἔστιν ἄρα ... τελεσιουργός and ὡς ἐκφαίνοντα τὰς νοητὰς ἐνάδας not in Bernabé.

As with the two sexes of Phanes, his four heads provided the Neoplatonists with a suitable image that helped them describe how the Living-Thing-itself could be “both a single living thing and a multiplicity.” As Intelligible Intellect, Phanes contains the “Intellective orders of gods” and brings them into being, so he is himself a polymorphic being.

As this last passage indicates, 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.²²⁴ The characterization of Phanes as the god who makes things visible and manifest was useful for Neoplatonists who wished to illustrate this concept. Of course, 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” (τὸν δὴ καλέουσι Φάνητα / <Πρωτόγονόν θ’> ὅτι πρῶτος ἐν Αἰθέρι φαντός ἔγεντο).²²⁵ Phanes is the one who makes things visible, he is the one who appears, and he is associated with bright light. When he first reveals this light in the Rhapsodies, the only one who can handle looking at it is, ironically, Night:

Πρωτόγονόν γε μὲν οὐτις ἐσέδρακεν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν,
εἰ μὴ Νύξ ἱερὴ μούνη· τοὶ δ’ ἄλλοι ἅπαντες
θαύμαζον καθορῶντες ἐν αἰθέρι φέγγος ἄελπτον
τοῖον ἀπέστιλβε χροὸς ἀθανάτιο Φάνητος.

No one looked upon Protogonos with their eyes,
except for sacred Night alone; but all the others
were amazed looking down from the unexpected light in the aither
so bright was the skin of immortal Phanes.²²⁶

Since Lobeck’s statement that “whoever can admire Phanes, when there is still nothing, is not apparent from here,”²²⁷ there has been some debate about who “all the others” (ἄλλοι ἅπαντες) 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

²²⁴ This is why the Neoplatonists developed theurgical techniques: so that they themselves could approach the higher levels of the Neoplatonist universe through the intermediary of deities (Chlup 2012: 26-32, 168-185). In the opposite direction, the One extends unhindered all the way down the chain to the Many.

²²⁵ *Et. M.* 287.29-32 (*OF* 126 B = *OF* 75 K). <Πρωτόγονόν θ’> supplemented by West 1983: 70 n. 5.

²²⁶ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 148.25 Couvr. (*OF* 123 I B = *OF* 86 K).

²²⁷ Lobeck 1829: 480: “quinam Phantem admirari potuerint, quum adhuc nihil esset, hinc non apparet.”

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.²²⁸ 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).²²⁹ 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” (τὸ φανότατον τῶν νοητῶν, ὁ νοῦς ὁ νοητός, καὶ τὸ ἀποστίλβον τὸ φῶς τὸ νοητόν, ὃ καὶ τοὺς νοερούς θεοὺς ἐκπλήττει φανέν καὶ ποιεῖ θαυμάζειν τὸν πατέρα, καθάπερ φησὶν Ὀρφεύς).²³⁰ Elsewhere he says that “Phanes, according to Orpheus, sends out the Intelligible light that fills all the Intellective deities with intelligence” (ὁ Φάνης παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ προΐησι τὸ νοητόν φῶς, ὃ πληροῖ νοήσεως πάντας τοὺς νοερούς θεοὺς).²³¹ The fact that Phanes is the god who makes the first creation appear is well-rooted in the Orphic tradition, as we saw with the Hieronyman Theogony, so Bernabé has even suggested that the name Phanes was created by the Orphic poets to accommodate Protogonos to this function.²³² 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.²³³ For some of the creation

²²⁸ Kern 1888a: 14; Avanzini 1993: 93-99.

²²⁹ *OF* 123 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*

²³⁰ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 3.22 (3.80.24 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 123 IV B = *OF* 86 K).

²³¹ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.83.4 Diehl (*OF* 123 V B = *OF* 86 K).

²³² Bernabé 1992: 45-46.

²³³ Bernabé’s fragments give the impression that there is one fragment where Proclus calls Phanes the demiurge in Orpheus, but this is explainable. He cites Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.306.13 Diehl (*OF* 153 V B): “the one for him who is the Demiurge in particular is Phanes” (ὁ μάλιστα παρ’ αὐτῷ δημιουργὸς ὁ Φάνης ἐστίν). But the “him” referred to here is not Orpheus, but Amelius (AD c. 216-300), an earlier Neoplatonist who studied under Plotinus (*BNP* s.v. Amelius). Proclus says that “Amelius makes the Demiurge triple”

account we rely on sources who were not Neoplatonists, such as Servius’ mention of Achelous,²³⁴ Malalas’ summary of the Orphic narrative,²³⁵ and Lactantius’ citation of the line in which Phanes “built an indestructible home for the immortals” (ἔκτισεν ἀθανάτοις δόμον ἄφθιτον).²³⁶ One important exception to this rule is Hermias quoting from the narrative of Phanes and Night giving birth to Ouranos and Gaia:

ἦ δὲ πάλιν Γαῖαν τε καὶ Οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔτικτε·
δειξεν τ’ ἐξ ἀφανῶν φανερούς οἱ τ’ εἰσὶ γενέθλην.

And again she gave birth to Gaia and wide Ouranos,
And showed them visible out of invisibility and they were offspring.²³⁷

This was easy to incorporate within the Neoplatonic universe, as Hermias explains:

μετὰ γὰρ τὴν τῶν Νυκτῶν τάξιν τρεῖς εἰσὶ τάξεις <τῶν> θεῶν, Οὐρανοῦ, Κυκλώπων, Ἑκατογχείρων ... ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τῶν ἔνδον ἐν αὐτῷ μινάντων τῷ Φάνητι πρῶτος φανερῶς ὁ Οὐρανὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ γέγονεν – ἔξω γὰρ προῆλθον πρῶτοι ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ Οὐρανὸς καὶ Γῆ.

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.²³⁸

Simply put, the birth of Ouranos is interpreted as another sub-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. Neither the poem nor Proclus is making a literal mention of the physical sky, but a personified deity called “Sky” in the poem, whom Proclus interprets as the triad of Intelligible-Intellective Life.

As another important exception, one might note the fragment in which Proclus refers to Phanes creating the golden race of humans:

ὁ μὲν θεολόγος Ὀρφεὺς τρία γένη παραδέδωκεν ἀνθρώπων· πρῶτιστον τὸ χρυσοῦν, ὅπερ ὑποστήσαι τὸν Φάνητά φησιν· δεύτερον τὸ ἀργυροῦν, οὗ φησιν ἄρξαι τὸν μέγιστον Κρόνον· τρίτον τὸ Τιτανικόν, ὃ φησιν ἐκ τῶν

(Ἀμέλιος δὲ τριττὸν ποιεῖ τὸν δημιουργόν) and “assumes” or “suggests” (ὑποτίθεται) that they are Phanes, Ouranos, and Kronos “in Orpheus” (παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ). Proclus cites Amelius to refute him, and argues that “the Demiurgic number should commence not from a triad, but from a monad” (οὐκ ἄρα ἀπὸ τριάδος ἄρχεσθαι δεῖ τὸν δημιουργικὸν ἀριθμὸν, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ μονάδος) (Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.306.1-32 Diehl).

²³⁴ Servius, *in Georg.* 1.8 (3.131.20, 132.18 Thilo-Hagen) (*OF* 154 I-II B = *OF* 344 K).

²³⁵ John Malalas, *Chronographia* 4.9 (53 Thurn) (*OF* 153 B = *OF* 65 K).

²³⁶ Lactantius, *Divin. Inst.* 1.5.6 (62 Monat) (*OF* 152 B = *OF* 89 K).

²³⁷ Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 154.23 Couvr. (*OF* 149 I B = *OF* 109 K).

²³⁸ Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.17 Couvr. (*OF* 149 II B = *OF* 109 K). Note the wordplay in Ouranos being born from Phanes with the adverb φανερῶς (“visibly, manifestly”).

Τιτανικῶν μελῶν τὸν Δία συστήσασθαι· συννοήσας ὡς ἐν τρισὶν ὄροις
τούτοις πᾶν εἶδος περιέχεται τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς.

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.²³⁹

This passage will be a major point of discussion in Chapter Six, 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 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 even say whether he is referring to Phanes or Zeus, and his topic of discussion is not actually creation. There are a few places where Proclus mentions the creation of the sun and the 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” (ἐν μηνὶ τρέπη ὅπερ ἥλιος εἰς ἐνιαυτόν).²⁴⁰ In other astronomical contexts, Proclus preserves these three lines:

μήσατό δ’ ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀπείριτον, ἣν τε Σελήνην
ἀθάνατοι κλήζουσιν, ἐπιχθόνιοι δέ τε Μήνην,
ἣ πόλλ’ οὔρε’ ἔχει, πόλλ’ ἄστεα, πολλὰ μέλαθρα.

And he contrived another boundless earth, which the immortals call Selene, and those who live upon the earth call it Mene (moon), which has many mountains, many cities, and many houses.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26-30 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = *OF* 140 K). Of course, Bernabé splits this passage into three fragments: one for Phanes, one for Kronos, and one for Dionysus and the Titans.

²⁴⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.56.4 Diehl (*OF* 156 I B = *OF* 92 K).

²⁴¹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.48.15, 2.282.11, 3.142.12 Diehl (*OF* 155 I-III B = *OF* 91 K).

Although West and Bernabé agree that this is a reference to Phanes creating the universe,²⁴² 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” (τοῦτον γὰρ ἐπέστησε τοῖς ὅλοις ὁ δημιουργός· ‘καὶ φύλακ’ αὐτὸν ἔτευξε κέλευσέ τε πᾶσιν ἀνάσσειν,’ ὡς φησιν Ὀρφεύς).²⁴³ 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 as the third triad of Hypercosmic deities.²⁴⁴ Add to this the obvious fact that Helios was a god in myth, and one could argue that this fragment might not be talking 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, and again Proclus does not specify which creator god he means when he quotes the lines:

διώρισε δ’ ἀνθρώποισι
χωρὶς ἀπ’ ἀθανάτων ναίειν ἔδος, ἢ μέσος ἄζων
ἡελίου τρέπεται ποτινεύμενος οὔτε τι λίην
ψυχρὸς ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς οὔτ’ ἔμπυρος, ἀλλὰ μεσηγύς.

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.²⁴⁵

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” (οὐ μόνον οἱ μαθηματικοὶ λέγουσι περὶ

²⁴² West 1983: 210 n. 111; Bernabé *ad loc.* West (1983: 49, 109) points out that the idea of the moon as another earth can be seen as early as Parmenides, who lived at about the time the Greeks discovered that the moon does not give out its own light, but reflects the light of the sun.

²⁴³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.227.29 Diehl (*OF* 158 I B = *OF* 96 K).

²⁴⁴ Chlup 2012: 126.

²⁴⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (*OF* 160 B = *OF* 94 K).

τοῦ μὴ πᾶν κλίμα γῆς ἀνθρώπους ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς οὕτωςι διορίζων).²⁴⁶ Generally speaking, therefore, Proclus mentions Phanes creating the universe only where it fits with 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 arguments about the astronomical movements of the sun and the 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” (πρῶτος γὰρ ὁ Φάνης κατασκευάζει τὸ σκῆπτρον).²⁴⁷ 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” (ἕξαμερὲς πισύρων καὶ εἴκοσι μέτρων).²⁴⁸ In his commentary on the *Cratylus*, Proclus says that Zeus “institutes a double order of existence – the celestial and the super-celestial, whence the theologian says that even his sceptre is ‘of twenty-four measures,’ because he rules over two sets of twelve” (διττοὺς ὑφίστησι διακόσμους, τὸν τε οὐράνιον καὶ τὸν ὑπερ<ε>ουράνιον ὅθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ σκῆπτρον εἶναί φησιν ὁ θεολόγος ‘πισύρων καὶ εἴκοσι μέτρων’ ὡς διττῶν ἄρχοντος δωδεκάδων).²⁴⁹ In this passage, “celestial” and “super-celestial” are equivalent to the terms “Hypercosmic” and “Hypercosmic-Encosmic” that were introduced above. These terms 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 this represented in the length of the sceptre.²⁵⁰ 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” (ὄρθιον ἕξαμερὲς πισύρων καὶ εἴκοσι μέτρων)²⁵¹ 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

²⁴⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (*OF* 160 B = *OF* 94 K).

²⁴⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.168.17 Diehl (*OF* 165 B = *OF* 107 K).

²⁴⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.69.29 Diehl (*OF* 166 II B = *OF* 157 K).

²⁴⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 52.26 Pasquali (*OF* 166 I B = *OF* 157 K).

²⁵⁰ For more information on which gods are included in the two dodecads, see Chlup 2012: 126-127.

²⁵¹ *OF* 166.2 B.

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 Rhapsodies themselves, the divisions of the official history of the dynasty as communicated to Orpheus by Apollo.”²⁵² In addition to being quite speculative, 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 Proclus found the sceptre useful as an image of the two dodecads that proceed from the Demiurge (i.e., Zeus). He also found significance in the fact that it was Phanes who first formed the sceptre, as he explains in his commentary on the *Timaeus*:

ὁ Ζεὺς μιμούμενος διττοὺς παράγει διακόσμους, τοὺς τε ὑπερουρανίους καὶ τοὺς ἐγκοσμίους· ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν Φάνης διττὰς ὑφίστησι τριάδας, ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς διττὰς δωδεκάδας· καὶ γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο τὸ σκῆπτρον αὐτοῦ λέγεται ‘πισύρων καὶ εἴκοσι μέτρων.’ αἰεὶ ἄρα τὸ δημιουργικὸν αἴτιον ὁμοιοῦται μὲν τῷ παραδειγματικῷ, πρόεισι δὲ εἰς πλῆθος ἀπὸ τῆς νοητῆς ἐνώσεως.

Zeus, imitating [Phanes], produces two orders [of gods], the Hypercosmic and the Encosmic. But while Phanes produces two triads,²⁵³ Zeus [produces] two dodecads. This, in fact, is why his sceptre is said to be “twenty-four measures.” So, while the demiurgic cause always bears a likeness to the paradigmatic cause, it proceeds from Intelligible unity into multiplicity.²⁵⁴

Phanes is the “paradigmatic cause” and Zeus is the “demiurgic cause,” which means that Phanes as Living-Thing-itself contains within himself the “Paradigm” (παραδείγμα) of the Forms of creation, and Zeus “imitating” (μιμούμενος) Phanes is the Demiurge who brings about the creation by means of further differentiation of the Forms. Later in this chapter, we will see how the narrative of Zeus swallowing Phanes was important to the Neoplatonists as an allegory for Phanes as Paradigm and Zeus as Demiurge. For now, it is sufficient to note that the sceptre was not only a poetic image that Proclus found useful for

²⁵² West 1983: 231-234. He also conjectures that “the verse presumably came in a context where the poet declared that he had invented this metre.”

²⁵³ Proclus is unclear about which “two triads” Phanes produces, but perhaps this refers to “the nocturnal and the heavenly orders” (νοχίους διακόσμους ... οὐρανίους) he has just mentioned, meaning the offspring of Night and Ouranos (see Runia & Share 2008 *ad loc.*). Night and Ouranos constitute the two triads immediately below that of Phanes, and in the Orphic myth they are children of Phanes. This makes sense, considering the next triad after Ouranos, the Hundred-handers, is produced by Ouranos and Gaia, not Phanes.

²⁵⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.451.2 Diehl (*OF* 166 III B = *OF* 157 K); second sentence not in Bernabé.

illustrating the proceeding of a double dodecad of deities from the Demiurge, but it also provided Proclus with a link to connect Zeus as Demiurge with Phanes as Paradigm.

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 Zeus, not the creation of 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.

(d) Three Nights, Three Skies, and Three Hundred-Handers

After Phanes creates the world and rules as the first king, he passes on the sceptre to Night who rules as queen, but because of Hermias' statement that "three Nights have been transmitted in Orpheus" (τριῶν γὰρ παραδεδομένων Νυκτῶν παρ' Ὀρφεῖ),²⁵⁵ there has been considerable confusion over where each of the fragments about Night fit into the narrative. West and Brisson 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),

²⁵⁵ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 147 II B = *OF* 99 K).

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,”²⁵⁶ so perhaps there is some basis in ancient literature for this idea. Brisson explains the episode of Phanes producing Night before he mates with her by reading Night as the feminine half of the hermaphrodite Phanes.²⁵⁷ As interesting as this might be, it still sounds more like an allegorical interpretation than a reconstruction 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:

παράγεται δὲ ἡ Δικαιοσύνη παρὰ τῶ θεολόγῳ ὑπὸ Νόμου καὶ Εὐσεβείας. οὐ μάτην δὲ οὐδὲ τὰ τρία ταῦτα ὀνόματα παρέλαβεν, αὐτὴν δικαιοσύνην, αὐτὴν σωφροσύνην, αὐτὴν ἐπιστήμην. τριῶν γὰρ παραδεδομένων Νυκτῶν παρ’ Ὀρφεῖ, τῆς μὲν ἐν ταυτῷ μενούσης τῆς πρώτης, τῆς δὲ τρίτης ἔξω προελεύσεως, τῆς δὲ μέσης τούτων, τὴν μὲν πρώτην μαντεύειν φησίν, ὃ ἔστι τῆς ἐπιστήμης, τὴν δὲ μέσην αἰδοίαν καλεῖ, ὃ ἔστι τῆς σωφροσύνης, τὴν δὲ τρίτην ἀποτίκτειν φησὶ τὴν Δικαιοσύνην.

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.²⁵⁸

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. 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 that early in the narrative. When Night actually does prophesy in the Rhapsodies, it is not to Chronos or

²⁵⁶ West 1983: 209-210. He cites *AP* 14.40 (= Theodectes 72 F4), 41.

²⁵⁷ Brisson 1995: 58; cf. Brisson 2008: 84-87.

²⁵⁸ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.14 Couvr. (*OF* 113 IV, 147 II, 246 I, 248 II B = *OF* 99 K).

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 the cosmic egg and Phanes split into triads.²⁵⁹ With reference to Night, Proclus seems to indicate that there were more than just three:

καὶ γὰρ τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ τῆς ἡμέρας τάξεις πολλαί, νοηταὶ καὶ νοεραὶ καὶ ὑπερκόσμιοι καὶ οὐράνιοι καὶ ὑπὸ σελήνην, ὡς καὶ ἡ Ὀρφικὴ διδάσκει θεολογία, καὶ αἱ μὲν πρὸ τῆς δημιουργίας, αἱ δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ περιεχόμεναι, αἱ δὲ ἀπ' αὐτῆς προῖοῦσαι.

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.²⁶⁰

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 which lower levels proceed. More precisely, the three Nights constitute the triad of deities pertaining to Intelligible-Intellective Being on the level of Life: the third level down in the Proclean hierarchy, after the One (represented by Chronos) and the Intelligible deities on the level of Being (represented by the cosmic egg and Phanes). So when Zeus, lower down in the hierarchy as an Intellective deity on the level of Intellect, turns to Night as a prophetess, the Neoplatonists read this as Zeus on a lower level (Intellective Intellect) proceeding from and reverting to Night on a higher level (Intelligible-Intellective Life).²⁶¹ The first Night

²⁵⁹ The Neoplatonists also placed certain deities at more than one level of their ontological system, especially Zeus, who appears on five different levels of Proclus' system. See Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.190.19-191.5 Diehl and Chlup 2012: 125-127. Zeus appears in a "triad of paternal gods" on the level of Intellect; in the "paternal/demiurgical" triad on the level of Soul; and again on the level of Soul/Nature; in the "sphere of the fixed stars" as the planet Jupiter on the level of Nature; and as one of "nine sublunary gods" on the level of Nature. Thus, according to Proclus' metaphysical system, there are five Zeuses.

²⁶⁰ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.88.18 Diehl (*OF* 113 V, 147 III, 246 II B = *OF* 99 K). Proclus actually lists five levels, not three. Calling this "something of a mismatch," Baltzly (*ad loc.*) suggests that "perhaps the correlations with the sacred sources ... admit of a certain elasticity." Another way of reading this is that Hermias is explaining, in particular, the triad of Nights at the Intelligible-Intellective level, but that Night appears again much lower in the metaphysical hierarchy, on the celestial and sub-lunary levels, in manifestations that have more to do with physical night, far removed from the Intelligible-Intellective triad.

²⁶¹ Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485; Brisson 1995: 70-91; Chlup 2012: 125-127.

who prophesies is not the first of three Nights who appear in the narrative, but the first Night in the Neoplatonic system of metaphysics, 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 on a slightly lower level of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system. In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus says that Phanes “brings forth the Nights and, as a father, has intercourse with the middle one” (παράγει δὲ τὰς Νύκτας, καὶ τῇ μέσῃ (sc. Νυκτί) σύνεστιν ὡς πατήρ).²⁶² So Bernabé includes this passage with others that describe Phanes mating with Night, in the section of fragments in which 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.”²⁶³ No fragment gives us any clue about where this second Night might have come from, so 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.²⁶⁴ Again, this sounds more like an allegorical interpretation than a narrative reconstruction, 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 and reverts to the higher-level 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” (κατὰ σπέος ἡεροειδές),²⁶⁵ from “inside the shrine of Night” (ἐν τῷ ἁδύτῳ τῆς Νυκτὸς),²⁶⁶ 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 the sceptre on to her, but

²⁶² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.450.22 Diehl (*OF* 147-148 B = *OF* 98 K).

²⁶³ *OF* 147 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*: “Phanes generans Noctem alteram (prima est Nox primordialis) ‘pluras’ Noctes affert.”

²⁶⁴ Brisson 1993: 165: “c’est avec la partie féminine de lui-même que Phanès se trouve en relation de toutes les façons possibles.”

²⁶⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = *OF* 97 K).

²⁶⁶ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 162.6 Couvr. (*OF* 164 II B = *OF* 105 K).

ontologically the Neoplatonists read this as Intelligible-Intellective Being on the level of Life (Night), proceeding from Intelligible Intellect on the level of Being (Phanes).²⁶⁷

It would then be the third Night who becomes queen, “having the famous sceptre of Erikepaios in her hands” (σκῆπτρον ἔχουσα ἐν χερσὶν ἀριπρεπὲς Ἡρικαπαίου),²⁶⁸ and it is she who as “mother of the gods” passes on the sceptre to her son Ouranos.²⁶⁹ Again, the Neoplatonists read this as the lowest of the three Nights in the triad of Intelligible-Intellective Being, from whom Ouranos (who is also split into three to form a triad) proceeds on the level of Intelligible-Intellective Life, the sub-level directly below Night.²⁷⁰ But Bernabé arranges the fragments chronologically, which seems to suggest 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” (μαῖα, θεῶν ὑπάτη, Νύξ ἄμβροτε),²⁷¹ it is the third Night, formerly the queen of the gods, to whom he addresses this query, despite the fact that Hermias says that it is the first Night who prophesies. Conversely, Bernabé associates 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” (κατὰ γὰρ τὰς ὑποθήκας τῆς Νυκτὸς).²⁷² Does this mean that Zeus has dealings with both the first and third Night, receiving prophesies 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, as we saw in the last section, and it is also what they did with Ouranos, splitting

²⁶⁷ Chlup 2012: 125-126; Brisson 1995: 74-75.

²⁶⁸ Alexander Aphrodisiensis [i.e., Michael of Ephesus], in *Aristot. Metaph.* 821.19 Hayduck (*OF* 170 I B = *OF* 102 K); Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 182.14 Kroll (*OF* 170 II B = *OF* 107 K).

²⁶⁹ Alexander Aphrodisiensis [i.e., Michael of Ephesus], in *Aristot. Metaph.* 821.19 Hayduck (*OF* 174 I B = *OF* 111 K); Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 182.16 Kroll (*OF* 174 II B = *OF* 107 K); Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 55.4 Pasquali (*OF* 174 III B = *OF* 107 K); in *Plat. Tim.* 3.168.22 Diehl (*OF* 174 V B = *OF* 107 K).

²⁷⁰ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.36 (4.107.13-23 Saffrey-Westerink); Chlup 2012: 126; Brisson 1995: 75.

²⁷¹ *OF* 237.1 B = Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.206.28 Diehl (*OF* 237 I B = *OF* 164 K); 3.179.10 Diehl (*OF* 237 II B = *OF* 164 K).

²⁷² Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 154.17 Couvr. (*OF* 246 I B = *OF* 99 K); Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.315.8 Diehl (*OF* 247 II = *OF* 160 K).

him into three members of an Intelligible-Intellective triad, each one corresponding to a part of the sky.²⁷³ Proclus explains the splitting of Ouranos in the following way:

τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἓν τὸ συνεκτικὸν τῷ νότῳ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ πάντα περιέχοντι ταῦτόν (ἓν γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ τὸ νῶτον, κατὰ μίαν ἀπλότητα περιλαμβάνον τὴν σύμπασαν περιφορὰν)· τὸ δὲ ὅλον τῷ βάθει τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῷ οἶον ὄγκῳ ταῦτόν (καὶ γὰρ τὸ οὐράνιον βάθος ὅλον ἐστίν, ἀπὸ τοῦ νότου μέχρι τῆς ἀψίδος ἐκτεινόμενον)· τὸ δὲ πέρασ τῆ ἀψίδι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

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.²⁷⁴

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 described as “applying themselves to all creative activity” (πάσης ἐφαπτομένους τῆς δημιουργίας) and being “fit for guarding” (φρουρητική).²⁷⁵ Likewise, Proclus says that “among the gods above the Demiurge the Hundred-handers are celebrated in song as being fit for guarding the Intellective kings” (ἐν τοῖς ὑπὲρ τὸν δημιουργὸν θεοῖς Ἑκατόγχειρας ὑμνεῖσθαί τινας φρουρητικούς ὄντας τῶν νοερῶν βασιλέων).²⁷⁶ The Neoplatonists did indeed find three Hundred-handers, and their names were Briareus, Gyges, and Cottos, not only in the Rhapsodies but also in Apollodorus and Hesiod.²⁷⁷ 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 narratives support their metaphysical system. Therefore, there were not three separate deities called Night in the Orphic Rhapsodies. If we relate the triad of Night to the three modalities of Limit,

²⁷³ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.36 (4.107.14-23 Saffrey-Westerink); Chlup 2012: 126; Brisson 1995: 75.

²⁷⁴ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.36 (4.107.14-23 Saffrey-Westerink). This passage is not included in Bernabé’s fragments because it does not refer directly to the Orphic narrative, but it is essential for explaining Proclus’ general theology, which informed his reading of the Rhapsodies and other mythical narratives.

²⁷⁵ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 150.2 Couvr. (OF 177 III B = OF 110 K). Hermias also mentions the Cyclopes; for more on this, see section (e).

²⁷⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.252.26 Kroll (OF 177 IV B).

²⁷⁷ Hesiod, *Theogony* 149; Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.1 (OF 177 I B).

Unlimited, and Mixture, then we might be able to make more sense out of Hermias' association of the three Nights with understanding, moderation, and justice. The first of the three Nights prophesies, and he associates her with "understanding" (ἐπιστήμη). This corresponds to her modality of Limit, which means that the first Night in the triad is Night proceeding from Phanes. Since the first Night is closest to the superior orders, she has an understanding of the superior orders and is able to prophesy. The second of the three Nights "is connected with moderation" (σωφροσύνη), which we might equate with Mixture, since this is the median term between Limit and Unlimited, and indeed this does correspond to her mating with Phanes.²⁷⁸ The third Night, who "gave birth to Justice" (ἀποτίκτειν ... τὴν Δικαιοσύνην), corresponds to Unlimited, because it is from Night in this modality that the inferior orders then proceed; the act of giving birth fits with the function of Unlimited, and it fits with the idea of Night exercising justice over the lower orders.

Perhaps the best way of understanding 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 of the gods, as a prophetess, as queen of the gods, and as consort of Phanes. As we saw in Chapters Two and Three, 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 goddess Night. From the Derveni Papyrus to 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.

There are some sources that 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 in Orpheus:

²⁷⁸ Cf. section (e), where we see Rhea and Kore in middle positions and associated with procreation.

ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀνεδείχθη τῷ Χρόνῳ ὁ Αἰθήρ ... καὶ ἐντεῦθεν κάκειθεν τοῦ Αἰθέρος ἦν Χάος, καὶ Νύξ ζοφερά πάντα κατεῖχε καὶ ἐκάλυπτε τὰ ὑπὸ τὸν Αἰθέρα, σημαίνων τὴν Νύκτα πρωτεύειν ... ἀκατάληπτόν τινα καὶ πάντων ὑπέρτατον εἶναι ... καὶ δημιουργὸν ἀπάντων καὶ τοῦ Αἰθέρος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς Νυκτὸς.

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.²⁷⁹

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” (Νύξ ζοφερή) 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” (ὡς ὁ θεολόγος Μωσῆς φησιν, ὅτι ἐγένετο ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ μετὰ τῶν ὑδάτων καὶ σκότος ἦν ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου· ὁ δὲ δηλοῖ ὁ Ὀρφεὺς οἶμαι ἐνταῦθα Νύκτα).²⁸⁰ As I mentioned in section (b), 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.

Nevertheless, 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” ([θεῶν] τροφὸς ἀμβροσίη Νύξ).²⁸¹ These exact words were repeated in the Rhapsodies, as Proclus attests.²⁸² Likewise, Damascius calls Night the “first being and nurse of all things” (πρώτην οὐσίαν καὶ τροφὸν πάντων), which seems to suggest that she is a primordial deity.²⁸³ This is how

²⁷⁹ John Malalas, *Chronograph*. 4.7 (52 Thurn) (OF 107 I B = OF 65 K).

²⁸⁰ Stephanus, *In Aristot. Rhet. Comm.* 319.1 Rabe (OF 107 III B).

²⁸¹ DP 10.9-11 (OF 6.2 B).

²⁸² Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 92.9 Pasquali (OF 112 I B = OF 106 K).

²⁸³ Damascius, *De Principiis* 62 (2.92.5 Westerink) (OF 112 II B = OF 131 K). Alternatively, it could suggest her demiurgic role in conjunction with Phanes, who creates the universe out of her cave.

Bernabé reads this fragment, suggesting that “Night as primordial material is born with Aither and Chasm, embraces everything to this point and is the nurse of the gods.”²⁸⁴ 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” (νοητῶς), and adds that according to the *Chaldean Oracles* she is “nourishment with respect to the Intelligible level” (τροφή τὸ νοητόν).²⁸⁵ Damascius adds that Night is “the Intelligible object [known by] Intellect” (τοῦ νοῦ οὔσαν τὸ νοητόν).²⁸⁶ Thus, according to the Neoplatonists’ reading, Night the nurse of the gods was not perceived as a primordial entity in the narrative, but as the Intelligible deity from whom the Intellectual deities proceed. To support this reading, Proclus quotes a line of the Rhapsodies in which “from all things Night nursed and raised Kronos” (ἐκ πάντων δὲ Κρόνον Νύξ ἔτρεφεν ἠδ’ ἀτίταλλεν),²⁸⁷ and Damascius confirms that Orpheus “represents Night as having raised Kronos in particular” (ἀνυμνουμένην αὐτὸν μάλιστα τὸν Κρόνον πεποιηκέναι τρέφουσαν).²⁸⁸ 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 is 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 has had since the Derveni poem. She also maintains this function in the *Orphic Hymn* to Night, being called “mother of gods and men” (Νύκτα θεῶν γενέτειραν ... καὶ ἀνδρῶν) and the “birth of all things” (γένεσις πάντων).²⁸⁹ Although Night was 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 was not the first deity to appear in the genealogy, the author of the Rhapsodies continued to portray her in ways that reflected her narrative functions in earlier Orphic theogonies.

²⁸⁴ Bernabé *ad OF* 112 B: “Nox ut materia primordialis ... cum Aether et Chasma nascuntur, omnia adhuc amplectitur et deorum nutrix fit.”

²⁸⁵ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 92.10-15 Pasquali; this comment is cut out by Bernabé’s edition of *OF* 112 II B.

²⁸⁶ Damascius, *De Principiis* 62 (2.92.9 Westerink); this comment is also cut out by Bernabé at *OF* 182 I B.

²⁸⁷ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 62.9 Pasquali (*OF* 182 I B = *OF* 129 K).

²⁸⁸ Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 182 II B = *OF* 131 K).

²⁸⁹ *OH* 3.1-2.

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” (πανομφεύουσα), and she is said “to prophesy from the innermost shrine” (χρηῆσαι ... ἐξ ἀ[δύτοι]ο) to Zeus about “all that it was permitted him to achieve” (ἅπαντα τά οἱ θέ[μις ἦν ἀνύσασ]θαι).²⁹⁰ Likewise, in the Rhapsodies she is said “to have the art of divination without lies in everything” (μαντοσύνην ... ἔχειν ἀψευδέα πάντη).²⁹¹ 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, assigns divination to her.”²⁹² 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” (οὐ πρῶτον ἀλλὰ πέμπτον βασιλέα σαφῶς ὀνομάζουσιν οἱ πρὸς αὐτὸν παρὰ τῆς Νυκτὸς δοθέντες χρησμοί).²⁹³ According to Porphyry it is Night who advises Zeus about how to overthrow Kronos, “suggesting the trick through honey” (ὑποτιθεμένη τὸν διὰ μέλιτος δόλον).²⁹⁴ As in the Derveni poem, Zeus approaches Night shortly after he has acquired royal power to ask her how he might secure this power.²⁹⁵ And again, there is some continuity with later Orphic literature, for the *Argonautica* mentions “unspeakable oracular responses of Night concerning lord Bacchus” (χρησμούς τ’ ἀρρήτους Νυκτὸς περὶ Βάκχου ἄνακτος).²⁹⁶ 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.

²⁹⁰ DP 10.9, 11.1, 10 (*OF* 6.2-4 B).

²⁹¹ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 150.9; 154.17 Couvr. (*OF* 113 II-III B = *OF* 103 K).

²⁹² *OF* 113 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*: “cum aeterna sit, Nox omnia scit; Tempus ergo, cum universum ordinavit, ei divinationem attribuit.”

²⁹³ Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 182.18 Kroll (*OF* 219 B = *OF* 107 K). Note that this fragment also makes clear that Zeus receives oracles from Night in a narrative in which he is the fifth king of the gods, not the fourth (as in the Derveni poem).

²⁹⁴ Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.18 Simonini (*OF* 220 B = *OF* 189 K).

²⁹⁵ *OF* 237.1-3 B = *OF* 164-166 K.

²⁹⁶ *Orphic Argonautica* 28 (*OF* 238 B = *OT* 224 K). West 1983: 99-100 suggests that this line “must have stood in the Rhapsodies, and presumably came there from the same source-poem as the earlier oracles of Night, those in which she instructed Zeus on how to take command of things.”

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" (σκῆπτρον δ' ἀριδείκετον εἶο χέρεσσιν / θῆκε θεᾶς Νυκτὸς, <ἴν' ἔχῃ> βασιληΐδα τιμῆν).²⁹⁷ In another fragment, she is described as "having in her hands the famous sceptre of Erikepaios" (σκῆπτρον ἔχουσα ἐν χερσὶν ἀριπρεπὲς Ἑρικαπαίου).²⁹⁸ 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.²⁹⁹ 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, just like in the Derveni and Eudemian Theogonies, Night is followed by Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus, but the author (or compiler) of the Rhapsodies attached the story of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes to the narrative before Night. The sceptre of Phanes is a motif that helps to tie in Night with the rest of the narrative.³⁰⁰ 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.

The shrine or cave that is associated with Night is an element that continues from the Derveni poem but is modified (or expanded) significantly in the Rhapsodies. In the Derveni poem, Night prophesies to Zeus "from the innermost shrine" (ἐξ ἀ[δύτου]ο).³⁰¹ She prophesies to Zeus again in the Rhapsodies, but none of the relevant fragments mentions a cave or shrine.³⁰² The ἀδύτος of Night appears elsewhere, in non-oracular circumstances. First, when Phanes creates the world, he does so from inside the cave of Night, with Night as his consort, and this is something that appears only in the Rhapsodies. Proclus quotes a

²⁹⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 54.28 Pasquali (*OF* 168 I B = *OF* 101 K). Bernabé compiles every reference to Night as queen in *OF* 168-171 B.

²⁹⁸ Alexander Aphrodisiensis [i.e., Michael of Ephesus], in *Aristot. Metaph.* 821.19 Hayduck (*OF* 170 I B = *OF* 102 K); Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 182.14 Kroll (*OF* 170 II B = *OF* 107 K).

²⁹⁹ Admittedly, this is somewhat of an argument from silence, but there is still room for the argument that her role as queen is new because this is how the author (or compiler) of the Rhapsodies reconciled the presence of Night with the addition of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes.

³⁰⁰ West (1983: 232) suggests that the sceptre of Phanes was invented by the author of the Rhapsodies, who "attached some importance" to it as a symbol of divine royalty that is passed through the six generations.

³⁰¹ DP 11.1 (*OF* 6.3 B).

³⁰² *OF* 219-220, 237-238 B.

verse in which Phanes “plucked the virginal flower of his own child” (ἐῆς παιδὸς ἀφείλετο κούριον ἄνθος),³⁰³ and according to Damascius “Orpheus says that Night lives with the male Phanes” (Ὀρφεὺς ὡς ἄρρени τῷ Φάνητι συνοικίζει τὴν Νύκτα).³⁰⁴ In a verse that seems to have come from a description of the world Phanes was creating, the Rhapsodies said that “these things are what the father made in the misty cave” (ταῦτα πατὴρ ποίησε κατὰ σπέος ἠεροειδές).³⁰⁵ Proclus calls Phanes and Night the “two rulers in the sky ... seated eternally in the innermost shrine” (τοῖς δύο βασιλεῦσιν ἐν οὐρανῷ ... ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ διαιωνίως ἰδρυμένοι),³⁰⁶ and Hermias says that “inside the shrine of Night sits Phanes” (ἐνδον ... ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ τῆς Νυκτὸς κάθηται ὁ Φάνης).³⁰⁷ 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 both reconciles the earlier idea of Night as a primordial deity with her new position in the third generation of deities, and it also 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” (ἐν τῷ ἄντρῳ τῆς Νυκτὸς) and protected by Adrasteia, who makes noise with cymbals “in the front entrance of the cave of Night” (ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ... τοῦ ἄντρου τῆς Νυκτὸς).³⁰⁸ Night, the nurse of the gods and in particular Kronos, thus takes on a protective role with Zeus as well, and her cave is an obviously appropriate location for this since in mainstream Greek myth Zeus is always raised as an infant in a cave.³⁰⁹ The cave appears to be the traditional locale 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, perhaps it is reasonable to deduce that she prophesies to Zeus from inside her cave or shrine, even though the relevant fragments do

³⁰³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.450.22 Diehl (*OF* 148 I B = *OF* 98 K).

³⁰⁴ Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 209 (2.42.21 Westerink) (*OF* 148 IV B = *OF* 98 K).

³⁰⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.312.15 Diehl (*OF* 163 B = *OF* 97 K).

³⁰⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.169.15 Diehl (*OF* 164 I B = *OF* 104 K).

³⁰⁷ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 162.6 Couvr. (*OF* 164 II B = *OF* 105 K).

³⁰⁸ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 161-162 Couvr. (*OF* 209, 211 B = *OF* 105 K).

³⁰⁹ For example, see Hesiod, *Theogony* 468-491 and other fragments of the Rhapsodies that mention Zeus’ infancy in a cave (*OF* 205-215 B). The story of Zeus’ being raised in a cave might have been mainstream, but the idea that this was the cave of Night in particular appears unique to the Rhapsodies.

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 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 with the addition of Chronos, the cosmic egg, and Phanes, Night is made the consort and daughter 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,³¹⁰ as well as Damascius’ statement that Night was the “first substance and nurse of all things” (πρώτην οὐσίαν καὶ τροφὸν πάντων),³¹¹ suggest that some passages of the Rhapsodies spoke of Night as if she was the first of the gods, as she had been known in the earlier Orphic theogonies. 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 seems to contradict the Rhapsodies, in which he says that “in Orpheus four kingdoms are transmitted” (παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ τέσσαρες βασιλείαι παραδίδονται), namely Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus-Dionysus, with no mention of Phanes.³¹² As

³¹⁰ John Malalas, *Chronograph.* 4.7 (52 Thurn) (*OF* 107 I B = *OF* 65 K); Stephanus, *In Aristot. Rhet. Comm.* 319.1 Rabe (*OF* 107 III B).

³¹¹ Damascius, *De Principiis* 62 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 112 II B = *OF* 131 K).

³¹² Olympiodorus, *in Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 174 VII B = *OF* 107 K).

Edmonds suggests, this fragment could be taken as evidence that there was more than one theogonic account in the Rhapsodic collection.³¹³ 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.³¹⁴ Maybe it would be excessive to 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, who appears in the Rhapsodies; nor the observation that Hermias’ statement about the three Nights is a statement about ontology, not chronology.

(e) The Royal Succession Myth and the Kronian Hebdomad

The royal succession myth of Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus is the narrative backbone of the Rhapsodies no less than in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. As a core 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 kings of the gods are Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus.³¹⁵ Certain details of the narrative are different from Hesiod, such as fragments in which 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

³¹³ Edmonds 2013: 152.

³¹⁴ DP 14.5 (*OF* 10.2 B).

³¹⁵ Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 182.9 Kroll; Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.168.15 Diehl; in *Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali (*OF* 98 II-IV B = *OF* 101, 107 K); see the discussion in Chapter Five, section (b). Syrianus, in *Aristot. Metaph.* 182.16 Kroll (*OF* 174 II B = *OF* 107, 111 K) quotes a line of the Rhapsodies that refers to Ouranos, “who was the first king of the gods after his mother Night” (ὅς πρῶτος βασίλευσε θεῶν μετὰ μητέρα Νύκτα), so these generations of the succession myth appeared immediately after Night.

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.³¹⁶

The Orphic poet seems to have built upon the traditional narrative by adding a few new details, but without departing from the major pattern of action. Of all the elements that were added by this *bricoleur*, perhaps the one that stands out as the most 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. It is similar to the story of Zeus swallowing his grandfather's phallus in the Derveni poem, so likewise it can be referred to the Hittite parallel of Kumarbi, who castrates his father and swallows his son.³¹⁷ 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 an original narrative.³¹⁸ From what we know of the fragments, the Rhapsodic narrative is easier to reconstruct than the Derveni poem, where Kronos castrates Ouranos and Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos. Between these two events, where is the 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.³¹⁹ Then it is the phallus of Kronos with which Zeus contends, 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

³¹⁶ On Ocean as non-participant of the castration plot, see *OF* 186 B = *OF* 135 K. This narrative also appears in Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.4, whether or not his source is an Orphic theogony. On Night advising Zeus in his plot against Kronos, 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 *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.

³¹⁷ See Chapter Two, section (d).

³¹⁸ Cf. West 1983: 121-136, 202-220, 266-267, who retrojects the Rhapsodic fragments back into the Eudemian and Hieronyman Theogonies, and then argues that the author of the Rhapsodies compiled and copied these episodes from these earlier theogonies. For example, at p. 136 he says that "if the castration of Kronos did not come in the Eudemian Theogony, it is difficult to explain where the compiler of the Rhapsodies found it." Alternatively, the "compiler" could have found it in his own imagination as he thought about other castration narratives in the wider theogonic tradition. Even if the author was familiar with earlier Orphic theogonies, he was composing original material, so the safest assumption is that this episode first appears in the Rhapsodies.

³¹⁹ *OF* 189 B (= *OF* 127 K) and *Theogony* 166-200.

τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος (“cutting and being cut”), which appears to be a direct quotation of the poem.³²⁰

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,³²¹ 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.³²² What better image for a dividing point could there be than the act of cutting? Oddly, the monad that represents this dividing point is not seen (by Brisson or Chlup) as a deity, but as the combination of these two actions: the castration of Ouranos and the castration of Kronos. This monad is combined with two triads to represent the Intellective orders, on the metaphysical level of Intellect. The top level, Intellective Being, is represented by the triad of Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus; the second level, Intellective Life, is represented by a triad of Athena, Kore, and the Curetes who protect Zeus in his infancy; but the bottom level, Intellective Intellect, is not represented by a triad but by Kronos “cutting and being cut.”³²³ The entire cluster of seven can be referred to as the Kronian hebdomad because all seven entities appear to revolve around Kronos, but at the end of this section I suggest that Zeus as Demiurge might be a

³²⁰ *OF* 225 B (= *OF* 137, 154, 220 K).

³²¹ Origen *c. Cels.* 4.48 (*cf.* *OF* 187 III, 200 VIII, 201 I, 214 IV B) refers to narratives of castration and swallowing, and says that these stories are “worthy of shame in themselves, even though interpreted allegorically” (αἰσχύνης αὐτόθεν ἀξίας καὶ ἀλληγορουμένης). Gregory Nanzianus also criticized the story of Kronos swallowing his children; see *Or.* 31.16 (306 Gally-Jourjon) (*OF* 200 VI, 201 III B = *OF* 171 K), 4.115 (276 Bernardi) (*OF* 200 VII, 201 II B). Although these criticisms show us how Christians understood Greek myths, Herrero (2010: 172) argues that references to Orphic theogonies in Origen, “lacking direct quotation and full of apologetic topics, ... hold scant interest for the reconstruction of the theogonies.” He also points out (2010: 175) that Gregory confuses the episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes with the episode of Kronos swallowing his children. Bernabé (*ad OF* 201 B) suggests that Origen and Gregory are speaking about the Rhapsodies, “because in Hesiod’s *Theogony* the formula πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε is never found in reference to Kronos” (“Origen. et Gregor. mea sententia de Orphei carmine loquuntur, quia in Hesiodi theogonia formula πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε de Saturno nusquam invenitur”).

³²² Brisson 1995: 76.

³²³ Brisson 1995: 76-81; Chlup 2012: 126.

better way of understanding the Intellective monad, since it is Zeus who castrates Kronos.³²⁴

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. In one passage, Hermias mentions both the Hundred-handers and the Cyclopes as orders that proceed from Ouranos and Gaia.³²⁵ Elsewhere Hermias notes that “there are many orders of Intellective gods from Ouranos to Zeus and many Forms” (πολλὰι τοίνυν τάξεις εἰσὶ τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ μέχρι Διὸς καὶ εἶδη πολλὰ).³²⁶ In the Rhapsodies, Ouranos and Gaia give birth to fourteen Titans, which contrasts with 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 will return to this matter in Chapter Six.³²⁷ 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 these marriages do not seem to play as significant a role as the narrative of succession in the Neoplatonic interpretation of the Rhapsodies. The simple fact is that there was more in the Rhapsodic narrative than just the elements of the Kronian hebdomad. There is not space here to explain each of these anomalies, but by noting their

³²⁴ This interpretation is in line with Westerink, who describes Zeus as “the Intellective intellect, the third order of the Intellectives” (“l’intellect intellectif, troisième ordre des intellectifs”); see Westerink *ad* Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 181 I B = *OF* 131 K).

³²⁵ Hermias *in Plat. Phaedr.* 148.19 Couvr. (*OF* 177 V B = *OF* 109 K) says that “after the order of Night there are three orders of gods: Ouranos, the Cyclopes, and the Hundred-handers” (μετὰ γὰρ τὴν τῶν Νυκτῶν τάξιν τρεῖς εἰσι τάξεις <τῶν> θεῶν, Οὐρανοῦ, Κυκλώπων, Ἐκατογχείρων), and it is unclear how this fits the general Proclean scheme, or indeed whether he is contradicting Proclus; cf. Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 31.16 (306 Gallay-Jourjon) (*OF* 191 II B = *OF* 171 K). In Hesiod, the Cyclopes and Hundred-handers are born after the Titans; see *Theogony* 139-153 and West *ad loc.* In the Rhapsodies (and in Apollodorus), the order is reversed and the Titans are born after the Cyclopes and Hundred-handers; see *OF* 177-179 B; Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.1 and Scarpi *ad loc.*

³²⁶ Hermias, *in Plat. Phaedr.* 143.13 Couvr. (*OF* 209 VII B).

³²⁷ 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; the list is identical to Hesiod’s, with the addition of Phorkys and Dione (cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 133-137). Proclus relates the Titans to “separation and progression” (διάκρισιν ... καὶ πρόοδον) at *in Tim.* 3.186.7 Diehl (*OF* 191 I B = *OF* 117, 135 K) and mentions “the Titanic division” (τῆς Τιτανικῆς διαίρεσεως) at *in Tim.* 3.249.16 Diehl (*OF* 202 II B).

presence the question that arises is why the Neoplatonists found certain elements, but not others, useful in their allegorical reading of the Rhapsodies. The best way to begin answering this question is by looking at how the Neoplatonists explained the Kronian hebdomad, and how they used it as an allegory for the Intellective orders.

Before looking at the details as they appear in the texts, a general overview will help to orient our reading of each fragment. Brisson explains the first triad of the Kronian hebdomad as parental. Kronos is “pure Intellect,” the source of generative power (Limit), who is paired with Rhea as “Intellective life,” the source of rest and movement (Unlimited). They give birth to Zeus, who completes the triad as “demiurgic Intellect,” the “source of identity and alterity” (Mixture).³²⁸ Chlup calls Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus the “triad of paternal gods,” and he calls Athena, Kore, and the Curetes the “triad of immaculate gods.”³²⁹ Athena is associated with love and wisdom, Kore is characterized by purity, and the function of the Curetes who guard Rhea and Zeus is to protect the transcendence of this triad and the one above it.³³⁰ Finally, the monad of τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος represents the separation of the gods in the Intellective sphere from the Hypercosmic and Encosmic levels below. But this monad can 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 Intellective Intellect, the third order of the Intellectives.”³³¹ 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 the Kronian hebdomad 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.

The first step toward understanding how the Kronian hebdomad works is to consider the Neoplatonic interpretation of Kronos as Intellect. Damascius explains the way

³²⁸ Brisson 1995: 76-77: “Kronos à l’être, qui est intellect pur ... [Rhea] qui est vie Intellective ... est source de tout *repos* et de tout *mouvement* ... [Zeus] qui est l’intellect démiurgique ... est source de l’*identité* et de l’*altérité*.”

³²⁹ Chlup 2012: 126.

³³⁰ Brisson 1995: 80-81.

³³¹ Westerink *ad* Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (*OF* 181 I B = *OF* 131 K): “l’intellect pur qui est le premier ordre intellectif ... l’intellect intellectif, troisième ordre des intellectifs.”

Kronos as Intellect relates to the levels above him in *De Principiis*, where he considers how the “unified” (ἡνωμένος) is an Intelligible 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” (Ὀρφεύς, τὸν Κρόνον εἰδῶς νοῦν ... τὴν Νύκτα ὡς πρώτην οὐσίαν ... ἀνυμνουμένην αὐτὸν μάλιστα τὸν Κρόνον πεποιηκέναι τρέφουσαν, ὡς τοῦ νοῦ οὔσαν τὸ νοητόν).³³² Night represents this Intelligible-Intellective intermediate, and it is through contemplating her that Kronos as Intellect comprehends the One. In Proclus’ commentary on the *Cratylus*, he relates the episode of Kronos being nursed by Night to the same allegory. He explains that Kronos, “by contemplating himself, is unified with the primary Intelligibles and is filled with the good things from that source” (ἑαυτὸν νοῶν ἡνωταὶ τοῖς πρωτίστοις νοητοῖς καὶ πεπλήρωται τῶν ἐκεῖθεν ἀγαθῶν).³³³ Kronos as Intellect is filled with everything that proceeds from the Intelligibles above him. This is an aspect of the cycle of procession, remaining, and reversion that Proclus relates to the concept of motion in another passage. He equates rest and motion with Orphic deities in the sense that:

πᾶς νοῦς ἢ ἔστηκε, καὶ ἔστιν νοητὸς τότε ὡς κρείττων κινήσεως, ἢ κινεῖται, καὶ ἔστιν νοερός τότε, ἢ ἀμφοτέρα, καὶ ἔστιν τότε νοητὸς ἅμα καὶ νοερός, καὶ ἔστιν ὁ μὲν πρῶτος Φάνης, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος, ὁ καὶ κινούμενος καὶ ἔστηκες, Οὐρανός, ὁ δὲ μόνον κινούμενος Κρόνος.

Every Intellect is either at rest and therefore is Intelligible because it is superior to motion, or it is in motion, and then it is Intellective, or it is both, and then it is Intelligible and Intellective at once. The first is Phanes, the second (that which is both in motion and at rest) is Ouranos, and the one that is only in motion is Kronos.³³⁴

Kronos as Intellect is the receptacle of everything that proceeds from and reverts to the Intelligible levels above him, through the intermediary of the Intelligible-Intellective levels, so he is always in motion, back and forth in a cyclical upward direction.

³³² Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.5 Westerink) (OF 181 I, 182 II B = OF 131 K; ὡς ... νοητόν not in Bernabé). Westerink (*ad loc.*) explains that “Kronos appears a pure Intellect which is the first Intellective order ... the Intellect that converts to the ‘substance that actually is’ ... represented by the Orphic Night who, in this way, is supposed to feed from the Intelligible the Kronian Intellect” (“Kronos figure l’intellect pur qui est le premier ordre intellectif ... l’intellect qui se convertit vers la ‘substance qui est réellement’ ... figurée par la Nuit Orphique qui, de cette façon, est supposée nourrir de l’intelligible l’intellect kronien.”)

³³³ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 62.7 Pasquali (sentence immediately preceding OF 182 I B = OF 129 K).

³³⁴ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 59.11 Pasquali (OF 190 III B = OF 107 K; πᾶς ... νοερός not in Bernabé).

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 Intellectual gods” (νοητὸς ... ὡς πρὸς τοὺς νοερούς πάντας). His transcendence is maintained by “his freedom from contact with matter, his undividedness and his unrelatedness” (τὸ ... ἀνέπαφον τῆς ὕλης καὶ τὸ ἀμέριστον καὶ τὸ ἄσχετον).³³⁵ On the basis of this allegory, Proclus explains how Kronos relates to the inferior members of the hebdomad:

τοσαύτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ τούτου πάσης τῆς πρὸς τὰ καταδεέστερα συντάξεως ὑπερβολὴ καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν ἄχραντος ἔνωσις, ὥστε μηδὲ τῆς Κουρητικῆς αὐτὸν δεῖσθαι φρουρᾶς, ὡσπερ τὴν Ῥέαν καὶ τὸν Δία καὶ τὴν Κόρην· πάντες γὰρ οὗτοι διὰ τὰς εἰς τὰ δεύτερα προόδους τῆς ἀτρέπτου φυλακῆς τῶν Κουρήτων ἐδεήθησαν· ὁ δὲ Κρόνος, ἐν ἑαυτῷ μονίμως ἰδρυμένος καὶ ἀφρ’ ὅλων τῶν δευτέρων ἀρπάσας ἑαυτὸν, τῆς παρὰ τῶν Κουρήτων ὑπερίδρυται φρουρᾶς, ἔχει δὲ καὶ τούτων ἐνοειδῶς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν αἰτίαν· τὸ γὰρ καθαρὸν τοῦτο καὶ τὸ ἄχραντον ὑπόστασιν παρέχεται πάσαις ταῖς τῶν Κουρήτων προόδοις.

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.³³⁶

The other, lower members of the hebdomad consist of a series of intermediary points between Kronos and the physical creation, under the protection of the Curetes. 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.³³⁷

³³⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 57.26-58.3 Pasquali.

³³⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1-10 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I B = *OF* 150 K). See Duvick *ad loc.*, who explains that “Rhea, Zeus and Core are responsible for the material creation of the Encosmic sphere ... These six deities along with a seventh Separative monad, which divides the demiurgic and cosmic sphere from the intellectual, make up the Cronian hebdomad.”

³³⁷ This is the exact opposite of the actual purpose of the Curetes in the myth, which is to protect Rhea and Zeus from Kronos; see below.

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” (ταύτην ... μητέρα τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τῶν ὄλων, δευτέραν δὲ τοῦ Κρόνου θεὸν Πλάτων τέ φησι καὶ Ὀρφεύς).³³⁸ 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 he suggests that the intermingling of Forms has a generative capacity that we understand as cause and effect. He argues that:

οὐχ ἡμεῖς ταῦτα ἀναπλάττομεν. ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ θεολόγοι ταῦτα αἰνίττονται διὰ τῶν ἱερῶν γάμων· ἀπλῶς μὲν γὰρ τὴν ὁμοφυῆ σύζευξιν καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν θεῶν αἰτιῶν μυστικῶς γάμον προσαγορεύουσι· ταύτην δὲ τὴν κοινωνίαν ποτὲ μὲν ἐν τοῖς συστοίχοις ὀρῶσι, καὶ καλοῦσι γάμον Ἥρας καὶ Διὸς, Οὐρανοῦ καὶ Γῆς, Κρόνου καὶ Ῥέας.

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 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.³³⁹

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” (πάσης τῆς Τιτανικῆς διαίρεσεως ἔξαρχον), while Rhea is the one “who comprehends in herself all the life-giving powers, and who at last brings forth Nature itself” (ἡ περιείληφεν ἀπάσας τὰς ζωογονικὰς δυνάμεις,

³³⁸ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.11 (5.35.22 Saffrey-Westerink) (OF 206 IV B = OF 134 K). See also: Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1-10 Pasquali (OF 198 I B = OF 150 K) and Duvick *ad loc.*, who explains that “Rhea, Zeus and Core are responsible for the material creation of the Encosmic sphere. Rhea represents the powers of generation which are handed down from the intelligible-intellectual region and become manifest in her as the power of bearing life. Zeus becomes the transcendent intellectual Demiurge.”

³³⁹ Proclus, *in Plat. Parmen.* 775.20-27 Cousin (OF 175 II, 194 I, 255 VI B; οὐχ ... ὀρῶσι, καὶ not in Bernabé, except for οἱ θεολόγοι); cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 83.1 Pasquali (OF 183 II B = OF 112 K). Bidez and Cumont (1938: 91-97) suggest that the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera was enacted in certain mystery rites. See also: Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.49.12 Diehl (OF 255 III B = OF 163 K), where he mentions “mystical texts and the sacred marriages that are related in secret texts” (τῶν μυστικῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγομένων ἱερῶν γάμων). Festugière (*ad loc.*) relates this passage to the sacred marriage of Dionysus in the Athenian Anthesteria, of Zeus and Hera at Athens, Zeus and Demeter at Eleusis, and Cybele and Attis, which “was especially dear to the Neoplatonists” (“la mythe d’Attis a été particulièrement cher aux néoplatoniciens”).

ἐπὶ τέλει καὶ αὐτὴν ἀποτίκτουσα τὴν Φύσιν).³⁴⁰ In other words, Rhea contains in 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:

πάντα δ' οὖν ἄπερ ἐκ τοῦ ἄρρενος, ταῦτα καὶ τὸ θῆλυ γεννᾷ τῆς ὑφέσεως σφζομένης· ἢ τε οὖν Ἥρα συμπρόεισι τῷ Διὶ πάντα ἀποτίκτουσα σὺν τῷ πατρί· διὸ καὶ ἰσοτελῆς αὐτῷ προσαγορεύεται· καὶ ἡ Ῥέα τῷ Κρόνῳ· πάσης γάρ ἐστι τῆς Κρονίας δυνάμεως κόλπος ἢ θεὸς αὕτη· καὶ ἡ Γῆ τῷ Οὐρανῷ· πάντων γὰρ ἡ Γῆ μήτηρ, ὧν ὁ Οὐρανὸς πατήρ.

So 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.³⁴¹

Kronos, possessing the generative power from which creation proceeds, fills Rhea with this power, and she acts as a receptacle, the “recess that harbours all [his] power.” She does not give birth to creation as such, but to Zeus the Demiurge, as Proclus explains in his *Platonic Theology*:

ἐπόμενος τοῖς θεολόγοις ὁ Πλάτων ἡμῖν ἐπεκδιηγείται, μετὰ τὴν Κρονίαν μονάδα τὴν τῆς Ῥέας βασιλείαν ἀνυμνῶν καὶ τὸν ὅλον δημιουργὸν ἀπὸ τούτων ὑφιστάς καὶ πᾶν τὸ συνυφαινούμενον αὐτῷ πλῆθος τῶν θεῶν.

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.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.249.16 Diehl (*OF* 202 II B = *OF* 56, 161 K). Festugière (*ad loc.*) suggests that “Proclus mixes here Hesiod and Orpheus” (“Proclus mêle ici Hésiode et Orphée”).

³⁴¹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.46.25-47.3 (*OF* 175 II, 196 III, 256 II B; πάντα ... σφζομένης not in Bernabé).

³⁴² Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.11 (5.37.26 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 196 III B). The other “multitude of gods” may refer to the other Olympians, but more likely Proclus is referring to the two dodecads that proceed from Zeus. See sections (f) and (g). The translation “Demiurge of the universe” takes τὸν ὅλον as an accusative of respect.

This metaphysical explanation does not ultimately escape the concept of sexual generation. Filled 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 Intellectual 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 channelling his creative energy through Rhea.

The second Intellectual 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,³⁴³ so even in a strictly narratological sense Athena literally proceeds from Zeus. Proclus reads this allegorically as the leader of the Curetic order proceeding from the Demiurge, in the metaphysical sense of proceeding as the first step in the cycle of procession, remaining, and reversion. In his *Timaeus* commentary he relates this to some of Athena’s epithets. He suggests that:

ἔστι γὰρ φωσφόρος μὲν ὡς τὸ νοερὸν πάντα διατείνουσα φῶς· σῴτειρα δὲ ὡς πάντα τὸν μερικὸν νοῦν ἐνιδρύουσα ταῖς ὀλικάῃς νοήσεσι τοῦ πατρὸς· ἐργάνη δὲ ὡς τῶν δημιουργικῶν ἔργων προστάτις· λέγει γοῦν καὶ ὁ θεολόγος, ὅτι παρήγαγεν αὐτὴν ὁ πατὴρ ὄφρ’ αὐτῷ μεγάλων ἔργων κράντειρα πέλοιτο’.

She is “light-bringer” since she extends the Intelligible light in all directions, “saviour” since she establishes all particular Intelligence in the universal intellections of the father, “worker” since she is the director of creative works: at least the theologian says that the father produced her “so that she might become for him the fulfiller of great deeds.”³⁴⁴

Traditionally associated with wisdom and war strategy, Athena is seen here 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. The first inferior order that proceeds from the Demiurge is the Curetic order, of which Athena is the leader. According to Proclus, Athena “reveals rhythmic dance by the motion that she also shares first of all with the Curetic order,

³⁴³ OF 236-268 B and *Theogony* 886-900, 929a-t; cf. Lobeck 1829: 539-541; West 1983: 242-243; Brisson 1995: 65.

³⁴⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.168.27-169.3 Diehl (OF 264 B = OF 176 K; ἔστι ... πατρός not in Bernabé).

but secondly with the other gods as well; for by this power Athena is leader of the Curetes, as Orpheus says” (τὴν οὖν ἔνρυθμον χορείαν διὰ τῆς κινήσεως ὑποφαίνει, ἧς καὶ μεταδέδωκεν πρωτίστη μὲν τῇ Κουρητικῇ τάξει, δευτέρως δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς· ἔστιν γὰρ ἡ θεὸς κατὰ ταύτην τὴν δύναμιν ἡγεμὼν τῶν Κουρήτων, ὧς φησιν Ὀρφεύς).³⁴⁵ 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.

Traditionally characterized by their rhythmic dancing and crashing of drums and cymbals, the Curetes are often associated with mystery rites in which the *ρόπτρον* (“tambourine”) and *τύμπανον* (“drum”) are used.³⁴⁶ 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.³⁴⁷ In the Rhapsodies, the Curetes protect Zeus by standing outside the cave of Night and playing musical instruments loudly in order to drown out the cries of the infant and protect him from Kronos.³⁴⁸ In Apollodorus’ account Rhea gave birth to Zeus “in a cave of Dicte” (ἐν ἄντροφ τῆς Δίκτης) on Crete and “gave him to the Curetes and to the nymphs Adrasteia and Ida, daughters of Milesseus, to nurse” (τοῦτον μὲν δίδωσι τρέφεσθαι Κούρησιν τε καὶ ταῖς Μελισσέως παισὶ νύμφαις, Ἀδραστεία τε καὶ Ἴδη).³⁴⁹ Hermias says

³⁴⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 112.14 Pasquali (*OF* 267 I B = *OF* 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 = *OF* 151 K); in *Plat. Remp.* 1.138.12 Kroll (*OF* 268 B = *OF* 186 K); in *Plat. Tim.* 3.310.25 Diehl (*OF* 268 III = *OF* 186 K). See also: Strabo 10.3.19, where Athena appears as the mother of the Corybantes at Praisos in Crete, and West 1983: 137-138, who attributes to the Eudemian Theogony the motif of Athena as leader of the Curetes. He suggests that “what lies behind these associations of Athena is her connection with armed dancing.”

³⁴⁶ Bushala (1969: 171-172) describes the *ρόπτρον* as a “noise maker, striker, or a clapper, often used in orgiastic ritual dancing”; cf. Callimachus fr. 761 Pfeiffer; Agathon, *Anth. Gr.* 6.74.6-7; Cornutus, *Nat. deor.* 30 (59.21 Lang); and Lucianus, *Podagra* 36-38, all of whom associate *ρόπτρα* with the frenzied dancing of initiates. Bernabé (*ad OF* 212 B) points out that *τύμπανα* (or *τύπανα*) are associated with telestic Orphic practice at: Philodemus, *De poem.* (Herculaneum Papyrus 1074 fr. 30), p. 17 Nardelli; cf. *OF* 655 B and fr. 181 at Janko 2000: 401: “with the drum of an *orpheotelestes*” (Ὀρφεοτελεστοῦ τυμπάνῳ). The *τύμπανα* are associated with Phrygian rites in: Euripides, *Bacch.* 58-59; Diogenes, *TrGF* 88 F1, 2-4 Snell; and with Orpheus at: Apollonius of Rhodes 1.1139 (*OF* 526 B).

³⁴⁷ See *OF* 205 B and Bernabé *ad loc.* The myth of the Curetes guarding Zeus is quite ancient: in addition to Hesiod, a depiction of Zeus surrounded by the Curetes appears in a bronze *τύμπανον* from the late eighth century BC, found in a cave of Ida (Tiverios, “Zeus,” *LIMC* VIII (1997) 316 n. 11). Cave shrines to Zeus grew out of earlier Minoan and Mycenaean shrines, so the myths surrounding his infancy in a cave are rooted in at least the Archaic Period (Huxley 1967: 85-87; West *ad Hesiod, Th.* 453-506).

³⁴⁸ *OF* 208-213 B. See also: Hesiod, *Theogony* 468-491; Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.6-7 (*OF* 208 II, 209 III, 213 VI B) and Scarpi *ad loc.*

³⁴⁹ Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.1.6 (*OF* 205, 208 II B).

that Adrasteia and Amaltheia raise Zeus “in the cave of Night” (ἐν τῷ ἄντρῳ τῆς Νυκτός).³⁵⁰ Adrasteia takes up “copper tambourines” (χάλκεα ρόπτρα) and a “clear-sounding drum” (τύπανον λιγυρηγές) 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” (φρουρεῖν λέγεται τὸν ὄλον δημιουργόν ... οὕτως ἤχεῖν ὥστε πάντας ἐπιστρέφειν εἰς αὐτὴν τοὺς θεοὺς).³⁵¹ 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 Six.³⁵²

This point is obvious, but worth repeating: 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” (μηδὲ τῆς Κουρητικῆς αὐτὸν δεῖσθαι φρουρᾶς, ὥσπερ τὴν Ῥέαν καὶ τὸν Δία καὶ τὴν Κόρη· πάντες γὰρ οὗτοι διὰ τὰς εἰς τὰ δεύτερα προόδους τῆς ἀτρέπτου φυλακῆς τῶν Κουρήτων ἐδεήθησαν).³⁵³ 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 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

³⁵⁰ Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 161.15 Couvr. (*OF* 209 I B = *OF* 105 K) For more on Adrasteia and Amaltheia, see Bernabé *ad loc.* Amaltheia is variously depicted as the daughter of Ocean (Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 2.7.5), a nymph (Pindar fr. 70 (249a) Sn.-Maehl; Musaeus fr. 84 B), or a goat (Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 46-51).

³⁵¹ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 4.17 (4.52.16 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 212 B = *OF* 152 K); cf. Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 162.2 Couvr. (*OF* 211 B = *OF* 105b K).

³⁵² Brisson 1995: 66: “Kore remains in the house of her mother, whom the Kouretes guard ... who enter into three close relationships with Athena: Athena guides the Kouretes (*OF* 185 [K]), who are crowned with a branch of olive (*OF* 186 [K]), the tree sacred to Athena” (“Kore reste dans la maison de sa mère, que gardent les Kourètes ... lesquels entretiennent avec Athéna des relations très étroites: Athéna guide les Kourètes (*OF* 185 [K]), qui sont couronnés d’un rameau d’olivier (*OF* 186 [K]), l’arbre consacré à Athéna”). See also: Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.35 (5.127.21 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 278 II B = *OF* 151 K); in *Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1-10 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I, 278 I B = *OF* 150 K) and Duvick *ad loc.*, who explains that “Core is projected down into the middle principal triad from Demeter (*in Crat.* 169) who is identified with Rhea (*in Crat.* 167). Core thus becomes the generative power of particular life which may be traced back to its universal source in Rhea ... The first Curetic monad [Athena] thus remains with Cronus and is associated with sameness, the second [Kore] protects Rhea and the procession of Being and the third [Curetes] ensures that Zeus may both fabricate the cosmos and remain undefiled by it.”

³⁵³ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1 Pasquali (*OF* 198 I, 213 I, 278 B = *OF* 151 K).

his transcendence at the highest point of the Intellectual order, filtering his contact with material creation through Rhea. On this point, the Neoplatonists wander so far astray from the original meaning of the poem that they argue its opposite, but this is how the middle triad of the Kronian hebdomad functions in their metaphysical scheme. At least it is based on a substantial fact about the Curetes in traditional Greek myth, namely their function as guardians.

Finally, the monad at the bottom of the Intellectual order appears not to have been represented by a deity, but by an action: Zeus overthrowing Kronos by means of castration, at the climax of a non-Hesiodic episode encapsulated by the phrase τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος (“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 trees with high foliage / drunk with the works of loud-buzzing bees, / bind him” (εὖτ’ ἂν δὴ μιν ἴδῃαι ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισιν / ἔργοισιν μεθύοντα μελισσάων ἐριβομβέων, / δῆσον αὐτόν).³⁵⁴ 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” (παρὰ δὲ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ ὁ Κρόνος μέλιτι ὑπὸ Διὸς ἐνεδρεύεται· πλησθεὶς γὰρ μέλιτος μεθύει καὶ σκοτοῦται ὡς ἀπὸ οἴνου καὶ ὑπνοῖ).³⁵⁵ Finally, Kronos “steps aside from his rule to the advantage of Zeus, ‘cutting and being cut,’ as the myth states” (καὶ τῷ Διὶ παραχωρεῖ τῆς ἡγεμονίας, τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος, ὡς φησὶν ὁ μῦθος).³⁵⁶ Elsewhere, Proclus refers more explicitly to Kronos “being castrated by the mighty Zeus” (ἐκτεμνόμενος δὲ παρὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Διός).³⁵⁷ Here the Rhapsodic poet follows the same pattern of action as Odysseus and Polyphemos in *Odyssey* 9: first Zeus gets Kronos drunk, and then he attacks him in his sleep, mutilating not his eye but his phallus.

³⁵⁴ Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.18 Simonini (OF 220 B = OF 189 K); cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 92.14 Pasquali (OF 221 B = OF 189 K); West 1983: 133-136, where he uses Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 1.2.1.1) to argue that in the Cyclic Theogony Zeus gives Kronos a drug that makes him vomit up his other children. He also points out that the use of honey “recalls the importance of bees and honey in the Cretan setting” (p. 136).

³⁵⁵ Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.15 Simonini (OF 222 B = OF 154 K); cf. Clement Alex. *Strom.* 6.2.26.2 (OF 223 B = OF 149 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 1.138.23 Kroll (OF 224 B = OF 148 K).

³⁵⁶ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 55.12 (OF 225 I B = OF 137 K).

³⁵⁷ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.5 (5.24.10 Saffrey-Westerink) (OF 225 II B); Saffrey and Westerink (*ad loc.*) suggested that this passage should be included with the fragments because “the formula τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος might be a quote from the Orphic legend” (“la formule τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος serait une citation de la légende orphique”).

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 certain Near Eastern precedents, this is a common narrative pattern in which the storm god claims his position as king of the gods by overthrowing his father, sometimes with an act of mutilation. In the Rhapsodies, the added details of the honey-potion and castration expand the common traditional narrative, more widely known from the Hesiodic version, 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” (τομαὶ καὶ δεσμοί) enacted by the Demiurge:

ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ καὶ διαιρετικὰς εἶναι δυνάμεις οἱ θεολόγοι φασὶ καὶ συνεκτικάς, καὶ διὰ μὲν τῶν ἐτέρων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς διακρίνειν λέγουσι, διὰ δὲ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐξάπτειν πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ τὴν δημιουργίαν τῆς πατρικῆς μονάδος.

The theologians say that in the Demiurge there are powers that divide things and powers that connect things, and through the former he divides his own kingdom from that of the father, but through the remaining powers he fastens his entire creation to the paternal monad.³⁵⁸

In another passage of his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus explicitly relates this concept to the Orphic myth of Zeus castrating Kronos:

παραδειγματικά δὲ αἱ τομαὶ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ οἱ δεσμοί· καὶ γὰρ τέμνει πρῶτως ἐκεῖνον καὶ δεσμοῖ τοῖς ἀρρήκτοις δεσμοῖς, ταῦτα καὶ τῶν θεολόγων αἰνισσομένων, ὅποταν λέγωσι τάς τε Κρονίας ἐκτομάς καὶ τοὺς δεσμούς, οἷς ἑαυτὸν λέγεται περιβάλλειν ὁ τοῦ παντὸς ποιητής.

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.³⁵⁹

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” (δεσμὰ δὲ τὰ Κρόνου ἐστὶν ἡ σύμψηξις οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ... ἡ δὲ ἀποκοπὴ τῶν μορίων ὁ τῶν στοιχείων χωρισμὸς καὶ

³⁵⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.225.19 Diehl (*OF* 225 IV B).

³⁵⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.208.30 Diehl (*OF* 225 III B = *OF* 154 K).

διάκρισις).³⁶⁰ 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 triadic scheme of Neoplatonic metaphysics, he appears as an infant, the son of Rhea being protected by the Curetes from his father Kronos, on the top triad of the level of Intellect. At the bottom of the hebdomad, Zeus reappears in a monadic capacity as the Demiurge on the level of Intellective Intellect. His act of binding the drunken, sleeping Kronos represents the way the Demiurge is bound to the creation below him, but his act of castrating Kronos represents the way in which he cuts off the physical creation from the top monad of the Intellective hebdomad (and from the Intelligibles 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 themselves as a monad.³⁶¹ 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.³⁶² Proclus, in yet another passage of his *Timaeus* commentary, makes it clear that when he speaks of the Demiurgic Intellect, he means Zeus in the Orphic Rhapsodies:

ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ θεολόγος περὶ αὐτὸν ἴστησι τὴν Κουρητικὴν τάξιν, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων ‘φυλακὰς φοβερὰς’ εἶναι φησι περὶ αὐτὸν ... τίς μὲν οὖν ὁ δημιουργὸς ἐστὶ καὶ ὅτι νοῦς θεῖος τῆς ὅλης ποιήσεως αἴτιος, εἰρήσθω διὰ τούτων, καὶ ὅπως ὑπὸ τε Ὀρφέως καὶ Πλάτωνος ὁ αὐτὸς ἀνυμνεῖται δημιουργὸς Ζεὺς, ἀπὸ τούτων ὑπεμνήσθω.

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.³⁶³

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” (ἔστι ... ὁ

³⁶⁰ Apion *apud* Ps.-Clement Rom., *Homil.* 6.13.1 (111.9 Rehm-Irmscher-Paschke) (*OF* 225 VI B).

³⁶¹ Brisson 1995: 76-81; Chlup 2012: 126.

³⁶² As opposed to his appearance in the top triad, where the infant Zeus could be understood as Demiurgic Intellect coming into being.

³⁶³ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.317.14 Diehl (*OF* 229 I B = *OF* 151 K), citing Plato, *Prot.* 321d6-7.

δημιουργὸς ὁ εἶς ... ὁ τὸ πέρασ τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν ἀφορίζων).³⁶⁴ At the lowest point in the Kronian hebdomad, Zeus represents the level of Intellectual Intellect, and he 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 Intelligibles, who in turn revert to the One; and the Forms proceed down from him toward the lowest levels of physical matter, through the agency of lower demiurgic deities. Therefore, Zeus as Demiurge on the level of Intellectual 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 is the Kronian hebdomad, which consists of two triads and a monad. 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 the Demiurgic Intellect. The middle triad is the Curetic order: the Curetes, led by Athena, protecting Kore (as well as Rhea and Zeus). The monad at the bottom of the hebdomad is Zeus as Demiurge, at the moment when he overthrows Kronos, “cutting and being cut” (τέμνων καὶ τεμνόμενος). 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.³⁶⁵ 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.³⁶⁶ While Kronos sleeps, Zeus ties him up and castrates him, and this is how he acquires his royal power, his βασιληϊς τιμή, as king of the gods. In the poetic narrative found in the Rhapsodies, this is a reiteration of the traditional succession

³⁶⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.310.7 Diehl (*OF* 229 II, 243 XXXV B = *OF* 157 K). Runia (*ad loc.*) explains that the “Intellective gods” referred to here are “the so-called young gods (*Tim.* 42d6) who create the parts of the cosmos.”

³⁶⁵ See *OF* 208-213 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*

³⁶⁶ As I noted in section (a) of this chapter, this honey-based drink constitutes a deceptive gift, understood along the lines of Joseph Nagy (1981: 191-204). Consumption is related to the acquisition of royal power in Hesiod and a variety of other traditions, as Stocking (2013: 185) notes.

myth, into which the *bricoleur* has injected certain actions and motifs that are not found in Hesiod, but that still reflect familiar narrative elements from Greek and Near Eastern theogonic tradition. Another episode that is not found in Hesiod is Zeus swallowing Phanes: this is one of the means by which Zeus 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 is filled with the Forms – and this is the topic of the next section.

(f) Zeus swallows Phanes: Zeus as Demiurge and Phanes as Paradigm

In traditional Greek myth, after Zeus acquires power as king of the gods he faces certain types of challenges to his rule and he overcomes each one. 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*.³⁶⁷ 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 a mortal.³⁶⁸ Like his father Kronos and Hittite Kumarbi before him, Zeus uses the act of swallowing as one of the means by which he hopes to prevent a successor from taking away his royal power.³⁶⁹ As we saw in Chapter Two, this is an ancient narrative type that is central but controversial to 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.³⁷⁰ Although there is no easy answer to the debate over the Derveni Papyrus, there is no question that in the Orphic Rhapsodies Zeus swallows all of his ancestor Phanes, and in doing so he absorbs the entire creation into his own body.³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ On the Titans, see: Hesiod, *Theogony* 674-720; on Typhoeus, see *Theogony* 820-868. There also seems to be evidence of a Titanomachy in the Rhapsodies; see *OF* 178 B = *OF* 121 K; *OF* 192 B = *OF* 136 K; *OF* 232 B = *OF* 120 K; *OF* 234 B = *OF* 122 K; *OF* 235 B. On the Titans in the Rhapsodies, see Chapter Six.

³⁶⁸ On Metis, see: Hesiod, *Theogony* 885-900, 929e-t; see also: Chapter Two, section (d); Yasumura 2011: 86-96; on Thetis, see: *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.

³⁶⁹ See Chapter Two, section (d); Hesiod, *Theogony* 461-464.

³⁷⁰ *OF* 7-8 B = DP 13.1, 4; *OF* 12.1 B = DP 16.3; see Chapter Two, section (c).

³⁷¹ See *OF* 237-243 B; West 1983: 72-73; Brisson 1995: 62; section (a) of this chapter. This is the basic structure of this episode in modern reconstructions of the Rhapsodies.

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 undertakes 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 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 triad of the Intelligibles and contains the Forms of creation within himself, but in a relatively undifferentiated manner that completely transcends physical matter. Zeus is Intellective Intellect (νοερός 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 (αὐτοζῶον) as Intelligible object, which acts as a model or Paradigm. Based upon Syrianus' and Proclus' interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*,³⁷² 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, and I point out an important way in which their interpretation can inform our own reading of the Orphic Rhapsodies. The story of Zeus swallowing Phanes was absolutely central to the Neoplatonists' allegorical interpretation of the

³⁷² 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 = *OF* 129 K) and Runia *ad loc.*

Rhapsodies, which 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 of the story of Zeus in the Rhapsodies than of the story of Dionysus. This suggests that behind the Neoplatonic allegories, in the texts of the Rhapsodies themselves, Zeus was, if not more important than Dionysus, then at least more important than has been previously acknowledged.

Thanks to the emphasis that the Neoplatonists placed on the episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes, we have several significant passages of poetry from this narrative. First, Zeus consults with the prophetess Night, in order to find out how he might secure his royal power over the gods:

μαῖα, θεῶν ὑπάτη, Νυξ ἄμβροτε, πῶς, τάδε φράζε,
πῶς χρή μ' ἀθανάτων ἀρχὴν κρατερόφρονα θέσθαι;
πῶς δέ μοι ἔν τε τὰ πάντ' ἔσται καὶ χωρὶς ἕκαστον;

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?³⁷³

Night replies:

αἰθέρι πάντα περίξ ἀφάτω λάβε, τῷ δ' ἐνὶ μέσσω
οὐρανόν, ἐν δέ τε γαῖαν ἀπείριτον, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν,
ἐν δὲ τὰ τεῖρεα πάντα, τὰ τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται.
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν δεσμὸν κρατερόν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τανύσσης
σειρὴν χρυσεῖην ἐξ αἰθέρος ἀρτήσαντα.

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.³⁷⁴

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*” (ὄρθου δ' ἡμετέρην γενεήν, ἀριδείκετε δαῖμον).³⁷⁵ Holwerda

³⁷³ *OF* 237.1-3 B (= *OF* 164-166 K).

³⁷⁴ *OF* 237.4-8 B (= *OF* 164-166 K).

³⁷⁵ *OF* 239 B; See *OF* 220, 240, 247 II, 251 B and Bernabé *ad loc.* It might seem strange that after having castrated and overthrown his father, Zeus consults with his father and calls him “glorious deity” (ἀριδείκετε δαῖμον). This is similar to the Derveni poem, “when Zeus had heard the prophecies from his father” (Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ πατρὸς ἐοῦ πάρα [θ]έσφατ' ἀκούσα[ς], DP 13.1 = *OF* 7 B). To most scholars, this seems easy to

and West were inclined to think that they came from the same conversation, but Bernabé and Brisson think this occurs after Zeus has taken the sceptre and defeated the Titans.³⁷⁶ West argues that “this is certainly a Hellenistic contribution to the story,” where the golden chain is the means by which Zeus is able to “unify the contents of the cosmos” so that they might be contained within a finite area.³⁷⁷ 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” (καὶ καταπίνει τὸν πρόγονον αὐτοῦ τὸν Φάνητα καὶ ἐγκολπίζεται πάσας αὐτοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις).³⁷⁸ By swallowing Phanes, Zeus swallows all of the previous creation, as described in a fragment that has been reconstructed from five partial quotations by Proclus:

ὥς τότε Πρωτογόνοιο χανῶν μένος Ἡρικεπαίου
 τῶν πάντων δέμας εἶχεν ἐῆ ἐνὶ γαστέρι κοίλῃ,
 μῖξε δ' εἰς μελέεσσι θεοῦ δυνάμιν τε καὶ ἀλκὴν,
 5 τούνεκα σὺν τῷ πάντα Διὸς πάλιν ἐντὸς ἐτύχθη,
 αἰθέρος εὐρείης ἠδ' οὐρανοῦ ἀγλαὸν ὕψος,
 πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτου γαίης τ' ἐρικυδέος ἔδρη,
 Ὠκεανός τε μέγας καὶ νεῖατα τάρταρα γαίης
 καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ πόντος ἀπείριτος ἄλλα τε πάντα

explain: Holwerda (1894: 319) says that “the father seems not to have held a grudge against his son” (“videtur pater filio morem non gessisse”), West (1983: 72) says that Zeus “still has need of the defeated Kronos,” and Brisson (1995: 62) says that Zeus is “reconciled with his father” (“réconcilié avec son père”).

³⁷⁶ Holwerda 1894: 318-319; West 1983: 72-73. Brisson (1995: 61-62) thinks Zeus has a second conversation with Night in which Kronos is also consulted, after Zeus has already taken possession of royal power (*cf.* Lobeck 1829: 515-519). Bernabé’s chronological arrangement has Night’s advice to Zeus about the honey-drink at *OF* 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, which indicates that he agrees with Brisson’s reconstruction.

³⁷⁷ West 1983: 237-239. He relates this to the Stoic idea of “a divine breath ... that runs perpetually through all things and makes them one.” He is unsure whether this first appeared in the Hieronyman Theogony, “which we found to exhibit a Stoicizing tendency,” or in the Rhapsodies, but he is “more inclined to think that the Rhapsodist was responsible.” He suggests that the origin of the motif of the golden chain is an earlier allegorical interpretation of *Iliad* 8.19, where Zeus challenges the gods “to suspend a golden chain from the sky and try to pull him down.” This might be a case in which the allegorization of Homer influenced the writing of the Orphic poem (which in turn was subjected to another allegory), but most likely the Orphic poet did not have a physical allegory in mind: the golden chain could be a poetic metaphor for the belly of Zeus. On the golden chain in the *Iliad*, see Yasumura 2011: 39-57.

³⁷⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 62.3 Pasquali (*OF* 240 I B = *OF* 129 K).

10 πάντες τ' ἀθάνατοι μάκαρες θεοὶ ἠδὲ θεάιναι,
 ὅσσα τ' ἔην γεγαῶτα καὶ ὕστερον ὀπίσ' ἔμελλεν,
 ἔν γένετο, Ζηνὸς δ' ἐνὶ γαστέρι σύρρα πεφύκει.

So when he had taken in the might of first-born 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.³⁷⁹

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' new-found power in the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K). The 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 synonymous 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” (πάντα δ' ἀποκρύψας αἴθις φάος ἐς πολυγηθῆς / μέλλεν ἀπὸ κραδῆς προφέρειν πάλι, θέσκελα ῥέζων).³⁸⁰ Zeus re-creates 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” (πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε), which might refer in this context to his generative capacity as a creator deity.³⁸¹ From this point, the narrative seems to have followed the Hesiodic model, with the acquisition of

³⁷⁹ *OF* 241 B = *OF* 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). See Chapter Two, section (d) on this use of γαστήρ.

³⁸⁰ *OF* 243.31-32 B = *OF* 168 K.

³⁸¹ *OF* 244 B and Bernabé *ad loc.*; see *Iliad* 1.544 and Kirk *ad loc.* The appearance of this phrase in Homer in no way alludes to this Orphic episode of Zeus and Phanes, so in the Rhapsodies it might not be related to this episode, despite Bernabé's placing of *OF* 244 B in the midst of the fragments of this episode. Still, there might be a connection as indicated by Proclus' use of the phrase to elaborate on Zeus as “maker and father” (ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα) in Plato's *Timaeus* 28c, a concept to which his act of swallowing Phanes is repeatedly applied; see Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.318.22 Diehl (*OF* 244 I B).

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.³⁸²

As we have seen in section (d), the prophetess Night performs here a role that she has played since the Derveni poem, as a prophetess with whom Zeus consults. As in the Derveni poem, 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 aether. Zeus takes this advice to mean that he must swallow his ancestor Phanes, and in doing so he takes the entire creation into his own stomach. Having become momentarily synonymous with the entire universe, Zeus brings it back again out of his stomach and re-creates the universe, so he becomes the first, greatest, and most powerful of all the gods. In this way, his royal power as king of the gods is secured. Therefore, 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. The poet asks 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.

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” (τὸ πέρασ τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν ἀφορίζων) and elaborates that:

πληρούμενος μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν μονάδων καὶ τῶν τῆς ζωῆς πηγῶν, προϊέμενος δὲ ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν ὅλην δημιουργίαν καὶ προστησάμενος μερικωτέρους τῶν ὅλων πατέρας, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀκίνητος ἐν τῇ κορυφῇ τοῦ Ὀλύμπου διαωνίως ἰδρυμένος καὶ διπτῶν κόσμων βασιλεύων ὑπερουρανίων τε καὶ οὐρανίων, ἀρχὴν δὲ καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλη τῶν ὅλων περιέχων.

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 super-celestial and

³⁸² *OF* 244-331 B; *cf.* The wives, lovers, and children of Zeus are catalogued in Hesiod, *Theogony* 885-962.

the celestial, embracing the beginning, the middle and the ends of the universe.³⁸³

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 two dodecads of deities (mainly the Olympians) who proceed from Zeus. These deities make up the Hypercosmic and Hypercosmic-Encosmic levels of the Neoplatonic universe.³⁸⁴ Zeus is interpreted as the monad who exists on the level of Intellective Intellect. As such, he proceeds from the levels above him and is “filled” (πληρούμενος) by them, and he “projects from himself” (προϊέμενος ... ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ) 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” (γίνεται πάντα νοερῶς ὅσαπερ ἦν ἐκεῖνος νοητῶς).³⁸⁵ Elsewhere Proclus says that “Phanes is seen, and Zeus sees, and Phanes is swallowed, but Zeus fills himself with Phanes’ power” (ὁρᾶται μὲν ἐκεῖνος, ὁρᾷ δὲ οὗτος, καὶ καταπίνεται μὲν ἐκεῖνος, ἐμφορεῖται δὲ οὗτος τῆς ἐκείνου δυνάμεως).³⁸⁶ 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:

καὶ ὁ μὲν Πλάτων ὁρᾷν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ αὐτοζῶον εἶπεν, ὁ δὲ Ὀρφεὺς καὶ ἐπιπηδᾷν αὐτῷ καὶ καταπίνειν δειξάσης μέντοι τῆς Νυκτός· ἀπὸ γὰρ ταύτης νοητῆς οὐσης ἅμα καὶ νοερᾶς ὁ νοερὸς νοῦς συνάπτεται πρὸς τὸ νοητόν.

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

³⁸³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.310.7 Diehl (*OF* 229 II, 243 XXXV B = *OF* 157 K); cf. 1.317.14 Diehl (*OF* 229 I B = *OF* 151 K), where he says that Zeus is “a divine Intellect who is cause of the entire work of creation” (νοῦς θεῖος τῆς ὅλης ποιήσεως αἴτιος).

³⁸⁴ Brisson 1995: 77-84; Chlup 2012: 126-127.

³⁸⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 62.3 Pasquali (*OF* 240 I B = *OF* 129 K).

³⁸⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.312.9 Diehl (*OF* 240 III B = *OF* 97 K). See also: Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.93.18 Diehl (*OF* 240 VIII B) and Festugière *ad loc.*

simultaneously Intelligible and Intellective, the Intellective Intellect is connected to the Intelligible.³⁸⁷

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.³⁸⁸ In the same manner, lower order deities can only approach higher order deities through the mediation of those in between, so Zeus looks to Phanes through the mediation of Night.³⁸⁹

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 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” (ὁ μέγιστος Κρόνος ἄνωθεν τὰς τῶν νοήσεων ἀρχὰς ἐνδίδωσι τῷ δημιουργῷ καὶ ἐπιστατεῖ τῆς ὅλης δημιουργίας). Proclus continues by relating Zeus' swallowing of Phanes with Kronos' swallowing of his children:

διὰ δὲ τῶν καταπόσεων συνάγων τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πάλιν γεννήματα καὶ ἐνίζων πρὸς ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀναλύων εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μονοειδῆ καὶ ἀμέριστον αἰτίαν. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ δημιουργὸς Ζεὺς παρ' αὐτοῦ προσεχῶς ὑποδέχεται τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῶν ὄντων καὶ νοεῖ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ πρῶτως· μαντεύει μὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ ἡ Νύξ, ἀλλ' ὁ πατήρ προσεχῶς, καὶ πάντα τὰ μέτρα τῆς ὅλης δημιουργίας αὐτῷ ἐνδίδωσιν.

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

³⁸⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.102.1 Diehl (*OF* 240 VI B = *OF* 82 K); cf. Damascius, *De Principiis* 67 (2.92.13 Westerink) (*OF* 240 IV B) and Westerink *ad loc.*, who says that Night “is supposed to feed from the intelligible the Kronian intellect” (“Nuit Orphique qui ... est supposée nourrir de l'intelligible l'intellect kronien”).

³⁸⁸ Chlup 2012: 30-32, 168-185.

³⁸⁹ Referring to these lower orders, Hermias, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 148.10 Couvr. (*OF* 241 VI B = *OF* 167 K) says that “the gods under Zeus are not said to be united to Phanes, but only Zeus and he himself through the medium of Night” (οὐδὲ οἱ ὑπὸ τὸν Δία θεοὶ λέγονται ἐνοῦσθαι τῷ Φάνητι, ἀλλὰ μόνος ὁ Ζεὺς καὶ αὐτὸς διὰ μέσης τῆς Νυκτός).

the truth of what is real and primarily contemplates what is in him. For Night too prophecies to him, but his father does so proximately and instils in him all the measures of the universal creation.³⁹⁰

According to this allegory, Kronos swallowing his children and Zeus swallowing Phanes both represent these monads 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 for the way in which the monads on each level of the metaphysical system can only approach the higher levels through intermediaries. Kronos, as we saw in the last section, is in the top Intellective position and 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” both Kronos and Night. It is through them that he can revert 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 “is Zeus’ link to the Intelligible.”³⁹¹

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.³⁹² When Night advises Zeus to “stretch a firm bond over everything” (δεσμὸν κρατερὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι τανύσσης, *OF* 237.7 B), Proclus argues that “this is certainly the powerful and indissoluble bond that proceeds from nature and soul and Intellect” (δεσμὸς δὲ πάντως κρατερός καὶ ἀδιάλυτος ὁ ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ νοῦ).³⁹³ In his *Timaeus* commentary, he argues that:

ἡ θεία φιλία καὶ ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ χορηγία συνέχει τὸν ὅλον κόσμον ...
κρατερὸς μὲν γὰρ καὶ ὁ δεσμὸς ὁ ἀπὸ νοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς, ὡς καὶ Ὀρφεύς φησιν,

³⁹⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 27.21 Pasquali (*OF* 239 I B = *OF* 155 K). He relates this concept to Ouranos who “retains some gods [i.e., his children] in himself [more accurately, in Gaia], while to others he provides a separation” (ὁ προπάτωρ Οὐρανὸς τοὺς μὲν ἐν ἑαυτῷ κατέχει, τοῖς δὲ τὴν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ δίδωσι διάκρισιν), and to Dionysus who finds “nurture in the thigh” (τὴν ἐν τῷ μηρῷ τροφήν) of Zeus at: in *Plat. Tim.* 3.99.17 Diehl (*OF* 240 IX B).

³⁹¹ Duvick *ad* Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 27.21 Pasquali (*OF* 239 I B = *OF* 155 K).

³⁹² Chlup 2012: 101-104.

³⁹³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.313.31 Diehl (*OF* 237 IV B = *OF* 166 K).

ἀλλὰ μείζων ἢ τῆς χρυσοῦς σειρᾶς ἔνωσις καὶ μείζονων αἰτία τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀγαθῶν.

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.³⁹⁴

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" (πῶς δέ μοι ἔν τε τὰ πάντ' ἔσται καὶ χωρὶς ἕκιστον, *OF* 237.3 B). It can be this way because all things are held together by the chain. Damascius refers to this line 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" (ὥς γὰρ ὁμοῦ τὸ πᾶν γινόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, οὕτω συντιθέμενον καὶ λυόμενον· ἅμα γὰρ τῆ συγκρίσει καὶ ἡ διάκρισις ἐν αὐτῷ).³⁹⁵ The Neoplatonists actually refer to the golden chain on numerous occasions,³⁹⁶ 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 through the Hypercosmic sphere to the world of physical matter.³⁹⁷ The golden chain of Zeus is allegorized as the ontological link between Phanes as Intelligible Paradigm 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" (βλέπειν εἰς τὸ

³⁹⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.112.3 Diehl (*OF* 237 XI B = *OF* 166 K); ἡ θεία ... κόσμον not in Bernabé.

³⁹⁵ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaedr.* 1.331 (182 Westerink) (*OF* 237 III B = *OF* 165 K); ὥς γὰρ ... λυόμενον not in Bernabé.

³⁹⁶ *OF* 237 B = *OF* 164-166 K, which is a compilation of thirteen passages altogether; for example: Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.24.23 (*OF* 237 VII B); 2.53.21 Diehl (*OF* 237 IX B); Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 205 (2.32.25 Westerink) (*OF* 237 X B); Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Gorg.* 244.5 Westerink (*OF* 237 XII B).

³⁹⁷ Cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 50.24 Pasquali (*OF* 237 VIII B = *OF* 166 K) and Duvick *ad loc.*, who explains it well: "the course which both Zeus and all the things within his bonds follow is circular, leading all the way down to the mundane region on the one hand, all the way up to the intelligible on the other."

παράδειγμα τὸν δημιουργὸν).³⁹⁸ 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 that:

ὁ δὲ θεολόγος καὶ οἷον ἐπιτηδᾶν αὐτὸν τῷ νοητῷ καὶ καταπίνειν, ὡς ὁ μῦθος ἔφησεν· ἔστι γάρ, εἰ χρὴ διαρρήδην τὰ τοῦ καθηγεμόνος λέγειν, ὁ παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ Πρωτόγονος θεὸς κατὰ τὸ πέρασ τῶν νοητῶν ἰδρυμένος παρὰ τῷ Πλάτωνι τὸ αὐτοζῶον ... τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν νοητοῖς, ὅπερ ὁ Ζεὺς ἐν νοεροῖς· πέρασ γὰρ ἐκάτερος τῶνδε τῶν τάξεων, καὶ ὁ μὲν τῶν παραδειγματικῶν αἰτίων τὸ πρῶτιστον, ὁ δὲ τῶν δημιουργικῶν τὸ μοναδικώτατον· διὸ καὶ ἐνοῦται πρὸς ἐκεῖνον ὁ Ζεὺς διὰ μέσης τῆς Νυκτὸς καὶ πληρωθεὶς ἐκεῖθεν γίνεται κόσμος νοητὸς ὡς ἐν νοεροῖς.

The theologian supposed that [the Demiurge] 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 their respective orders, the one as the very first of the Paradigmatic causes, the other as the most monadic of the Demiurgic 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.³⁹⁹

Proclus attributes to Syrianus the interpretation that Phanes is the Intelligible αὐτοζῶον, “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 synonymous with the cosmos. Proclus in his commentary on the *Parmenides* cites the Orphic verse in which all things are mixed “in the stomach of Zeus” (Ζηνὸς δ' ἐνὶ γαστέρι, *OF* 241.11 B) and explains this interpretation more concisely:

ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ὀρφεὺς μετὰ τὴν κατάποσιν τοῦ Φάνητος ἐν τῷ Διὶ τὰ πάντα γεγονέναι φησὶν, ἐπειδὴ πρῶτως μὲν καὶ ἠνωμένως ἐν ἐκείνῳ, δευτέρως δὲ καὶ διακεκριμένως ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ τὰ πάντων ἀνεφάνη τῶν ἐγκοσμίων αἴτια.

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.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.324.16-17 Diehl.

³⁹⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.324.18-28 Diehl (*OF* 241 I B = *OF* 167 K).

⁴⁰⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 799.27 Cousin (*OF* 241 IV B = *OF* 167 K).

To put it simply, the narrative of Zeus swallowing Phanes was interpreted as an allegory for the way in which the Demiurge by looking to the Paradigm is filled with the Forms that he sees in the Paradigm. The Forms are “unified” (ἡνωμένως) in the Paradigm but “distinct” (διακεκριμένως) in the Demiurge. There is thus a distinction between the ways in which the Paradigm and the Demiurge are thought to contain the Forms, based on differing degrees of differentiation within each of them.

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 more. 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:

πληροῖ μὲν τοὺς νυχίους διακόσμους, πληροῖ δὲ τοὺς οὐρανίους τῆς ἑαυτοῦ παντότητος· ὃν καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς μιμούμενος διττοὺς παράγει διακόσμους, τοὺς τε ὑπερουρανίους καὶ τοὺς ἐγκοσμίους· ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν Φάνης διττὰς ὑφίστησι τριάδας, ὁ δὲ Ζεὺς διττὰς δωδεκάδας ... ἀεὶ ἄρα τὸ δημιουργικὸν αἴτιον ὁμοιοῦται μὲν τῷ παραδειγματικῷ, πρόεισι δὲ εἰς πλῆθος ἀπὸ τῆς νοητῆς ἐνώσεως.

[Phanes as Living-Thing-itself] fills both the nocturnal and the heavenly orders with his own all-ness; 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.⁴⁰¹

This passage, coming after a statement about how Phanes “brings forth the Nights” (παράγει δὲ τὰς Νύκτας),⁴⁰² equates the births of Night and Ouranos with “the nocturnal and the heavenly orders” that are filled by the Paradigm, while the Hypercosmic and Encosmic orders are produced by the Demiurge. Phanes produces the top two triads of the Intelligible-Intellective level, 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,

⁴⁰¹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.450.27-451.7 Diehl (this is the text surrounding *OF* 230 II B = *OF* 157 K).

⁴⁰² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.450.25 Diehl (*OF* 134 II B = *OF* 81 K).

both here and in his *Cratylus* commentary, where he discusses the two different roots of the name of Zeus (Ζεύς in the nominative and Δία in the accusative). Proclus argues that the double etymology of the name of Zeus is an indication of the double dodecads he produces:

τὸ δὲ δίχα διειληφθαι τοῦνομα ἐμφαίνει ὅτι μεριστῶς αἱ εἰκόνες τὰς ἐνιαίας τῶν παραδειγμάτων αἰτίας καταδέχονται καὶ ὅτι συγγενὲς τοῦτο τῷ τὴν νοερὰν ἐν ἑαυτῷ προστησαμένῳ δυάδα· καὶ γὰρ διττοὺς ὑφίστησι διακόσμους, τὸν τε οὐράνιον καὶ τὸν ὑπερουράνιον.

The fact then that the name [of Zeus] is determined in two forms shows that images dividedly admit the unitary causes of their paradigms, and 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.⁴⁰³

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.

The deities of the two dodecads are equated with “the more partial fathers” (μερικωτέρους ... πατέρας) to which Proclus refers in his *Timaeus* commentary when he says that the Demiurge “projects from himself the entire work of creation” (προϊέμενος δὲ ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν ὅλην δημιουργίαν). They are “the intermediate ranks” (τῶν μέσων τάξεων) through which the Demiurge enacts the creative process.⁴⁰⁴ A detailed discussion of each of these triads would take us far away from Zeus and Phanes, but the following list provides a general overview of the two dodecads that proceed from the Demiurge, at least as modern scholars have reconstructed it.⁴⁰⁵ They can be understood as two sets of four triads.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 52.23-27 Pasquali (text immediately before *OF* 230 I B = *OF* 157 K). The terms “celestial” and “supercelestial” are equivalent to “Hypercosmic-Encosmic” and “Hypercosmic,” respectively.

⁴⁰⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.310.11-12 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXV B = *OF* 168 K). At in *Plat. Tim.* 1.317.14 Diehl (*OF* 229 I B = *OF* 151 K), Proclus refers to them as “the intermediate ranks” (τῶν μέσων τάξεων).

⁴⁰⁵ For sake of example, note fragments that refer to Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto dividing the universe in the Rhapsodies (Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.2.1; Rufinus, *Recognit.* 10.19.2 (337.23 Rehm) = *OF* 236 B = *OF* 56 K), which takes up the motif from *Iliad* 15.187-193 (cf. Janko *ad loc.*, Plato, *Gorg.* 523a and Dodds *ad loc.*) and corresponds to the first Hypercosmic triad. Referring to the second Hypercosmic triad (Artemis, Persephone, and Athena), see Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.51.22 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 259 B), who calls it the “Koric” (Κορικὴ) triad. The Curetes as a Protective triad appears similar to their function in the middle Intellective triad. Chlup (2012: 127) connects the triads of Hypercosmic-Encosmic gods with Proclus’ reading of the twelve Olympians in *Phaedrus* 246e-247a.

⁴⁰⁶ Lewy 1978 [1956]: 481-485; Chlup 2012: 126-127; cf. Brisson 1995: 82-84; Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 52.27 Pasquali (*OF* 230 I B = *OF* 157 K) and Duvic *ad loc.*, who calls the dodecads “imitations of the double triads

Hypercosmic gods:

- a) Paternal: Zeus, Poseidon, Pluto
- b) Generative: Artemis, Persephone, Athena
- c) Perfective: Apollo/Helios (three modes)
- d) Protective: Curetes/Corybantes

Hypercosmic-Encosmic gods:

- a) Paternal: Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaestus
- b) Generative: Demeter, Hera, Artemis
- c) Perfective: Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo
- d) Protective: Hestia, Athena, Ares

Note that Zeus himself appears at the top sub-level of both the Hypercosmic and the Hypercosmic-Encosmic levels. No doubt this double Zeus reflects the double etymology proposed by Proclus. The triadic scheme connects the position of Zeus in the top triads to the level directly above, Zeus as Intellectual Intellect. The general point is that Zeus becomes the dividing point between unity and multiplicity. The Forms as they exist in the Paradigm achieve a greater level of differentiation when they proceed from the Demiurge, like different colours of light shining through a prism.

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? We do not need to follow the Neoplatonic interpretation, but neither should we dismiss it. 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. As I have been arguing, Neoplatonic allegory was not simply a matter of randomly mapping correspondences between genealogical and metaphysical charts, but a matter of finding substantial correlations between (a) poetic texts that they considered sacred and (b) metaphysical concepts that they found to be reflected in particular episodes. Neither did they separate myth from philosophy 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 to our own system of categorization, but it means that the poetic episode is the most clear and vivid way to understand the philosophical concept. It is the perfect illustration of the relationship between these two center points of the Neoplatonic

of Phanes"; Duvick explains that "his dyadic nature permits both a natural discrimination of and unity between the intellectual and mundane worlds."

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 – these fragments are a consequence of their decisions about which passages to discuss and which ones to ignore – yet I suggest that the opposite might also be true. The reason why the Neoplatonists found this episode useful for their allegories is that it actually was a substantial episode in the Rhapsodies. This argument is supported by the importance of Zeus swallowing Metis in Hesiod, swallowing the phallus of Ouranos in the Derveni poem, and relevant Near Eastern parallels such as the 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, for it explains in mythological terms how Zeus can be the greatest and highest of the gods, the “father of both men and gods” (πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε),⁴⁰⁷ 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? Even when we look at the story of Dionysus in Chapter Six, the fragmentary nature of the evidence will prevent 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 would lead us to believe. Orphic myth focused on more than just one narrative (i.e., 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 him. The next section looks at how the Neoplatonists used this hymn to expand upon their own interpretation of Zeus as Demiurge and Phanes as Paradigm.

⁴⁰⁷ *OF* 244 B.

(g) The Orphic Hymn to Zeus (Rhapsodic Version)

If the Rhapsodies were indeed a Rhapsodic collection and not a continuous Rhapsodic Theogony, then the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (*OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K; see Appendix A for text and translation) stands out as the most significant example of what might have been a completely separate poem. With a length of 32 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.⁴⁰⁸ As noted in Chapters Two and Three, the tag line “Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made” (Ζεὺς κεφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ’ ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται) appears to have been part of the Derveni poem.⁴⁰⁹ Around this nucleus of verses was formed a series of different hymns to Zeus, to which ancient authors from Plato to late antiquity make reference.⁴¹⁰ 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.⁴¹¹ 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” (τῶν πάντων δέμας εἶχεν ἐῆ ἐνὶ γαστέρι κοίλῃ).⁴¹²

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.⁴¹³ His head is the sky (11-12), his

⁴⁰⁸ This poem has been discussed as a hymn for a long time. Lobeck (1829: 527) suggested that it appeared “more similar to a hymnody than to a cosmogony” (“hymnodiae quam cosmogoniae similiorem”).

⁴⁰⁹ *OF* 14.2 B = DP 17.12.

⁴¹⁰ *OF* 31 B = *OF* 21, 21a K; see also Bernabé *ad loc.* and Chapter Three, section (c).

⁴¹¹ This is how the Rhapsodic narrative has been reconstructed by most modern scholars, with very little disagreement; see Lobeck 1829: 523-529; Kern 1888a: 35-36; Holwerda 1894: 325-327; West 1983: 218-220, 239-241; Brisson 1995: 61-66, 2889-2892; 2008: 88-90. In agreement with these reconstructions, Bernabé places *OF* 243 B immediately after the fragments in which Zeus swallows Phanes (*OF* 237, 240-241 B). According to West (1983: 240), the poet “has evidently interpolated into the theogony a passage of separate provenance.”

⁴¹² *OF* 241.2 B (= *OF* 167 K).

⁴¹³ Reitzenstein & Schaeder 1965: 69-103; West 1983: 240; Ricciardelli Apicella 1993: 47-48; Lujan 2011: 85-91. On the other hand, Bernabé suggests that this was an Egyptian teaching, citing a passage of Eusebius (*Praep. Ev.* 3.9.12) that mentions “the teaching of the Egyptians, from which Orpheus took his theology and thought the cosmos was the god, composed of many gods who were parts of himself” (Αἰγυπτίων δὲ ὁ λόγος, παρ’ ὧν καὶ Ὀρφεὺς τὴν θεολογίαν ἐκλαβὼν τὸν κόσμον εἶναι τὸν θεὸν ᾧετο, ἐκ πλειόνων θεῶν τῶν αὐτοῦ

stomach is the earth (26-27), and his feet are “the roots inside the earth” (χθονὸς ἔνδοθι ρίζαι, 29). This is not the traditional Greek presentation of Zeus, especially when one takes into account the additional descriptive elements of “golden hairs” (χρῦσσαι ... ἔθειραι, 12), “two golden horns of bulls” (ταύρεα ... δύο χρῦσσια κέρατα, 14) and “wings” (πτέρυγες, 25). This is not how Zeus was typically portrayed, as countless works of Greek art will attest. Perhaps the golden hair, horns, and wings were derived from the syncretism of Zeus with Phanes in certain passages of Orphic theogonies.⁴¹⁴ West points out that “this is not the Zeus of the theogonies, but the Zeus of some Hellenistic syncretism.”⁴¹⁵ These features might point to the same Near Eastern parallels that we saw in Chapter Four, 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, but this does not mean that the poet was writing for the sake of Vedic or Stoic ideas.⁴¹⁶ Whatever the source of these ideas, the poet’s means of expressing them was the traditional form of mythical poetry.

As can be expected, the Neoplatonists made much use of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus as an allegory for one of their own metaphysical concepts. As I demonstrated in the previous section, they interpreted the episode of Zeus swallowing Phanes as an allegory for Phanes as Living-Thing-itself operating as Paradigm, and Zeus as Demiurge. As such, 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. The Neoplatonists interpreted the Orphic Hymn to Zeus as an allegory that illustrates the Demiurge containing the Forms that proceed from the Paradigm. No one explains this better than Proclus himself. Commenting on a passage of

μερῶν). Boned (2011: 35-38) points out similarities between the Orphic Hymn to Zeus and the presentation of Isis in Apuleius, *Metamorphosis* 11. For more on Vedic parallels, see my discussion of Reitzenstein & Schaefer and Lujan in Chapter One, section (b).

⁴¹⁴ The Hieronyman Theogony in: Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.162.15 Westerink) (*OF* 86 B = *OF* 54 K). The Rhapsodies in: Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.336.6 Diehl (*OF* 141 I B = *OF* 170 K); *in Plat. Alcib.* 109d (283 Segonds) (*OF* 141 II B = *OF* 170 K).

⁴¹⁵ West 1983: 240.

⁴¹⁶ West compares earlier versions of the hymn to Stoicism (1983: 218-220) and the Rhapsodic version to eastern parallels (1983: 239-241).

Plato's *Timaeus*, in which Timaeus discusses the “maker and father of this universe” (τὸν ... ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντός, 28c), Proclus says that this “maker and father” is Zeus. In support of this point he quotes the Orphic Hymn to Zeus:

εἰκότως ἄρα καὶ νῦν ὁ Πλάτων εἰς τὸ παράδειγμα βλέποντά φησι δημιουργεῖν αὐτόν, ἵνα τῷ νοεῖν ἐκεῖνο πάντα γενόμενος τὸν αἰσθητὸν ὑποστήσῃται κόσμον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἦν νοητῶς πᾶν, αὐτὸς δὲ νοερῶς πᾶν, ὁ δὲ κόσμος αἰσθητῶς πᾶν· διὸ καὶ ὁ θεολόγος φησί· ‘πάντα δ’ ἀποκρύψας αὐθις φάος ἐξ πολυγηθῆς / μέλλεν ἀπὸ κραδῆς προφέρειν πάλι, θέσκελα ῥέζων.’

It is therefore quite suitable that Plato in this present passage⁴¹⁷ too says that he creates while looking towards 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.”⁴¹⁸

Zeus represents the center point, as it were, 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” (τῷ νοεῖν) about the contents of the Paradigm, the Demiurge “becomes all things” (πάντα γενόμενος), thus absorbing the Forms on the level of Intellective Intellect, and he “gives existence to the sense-perceptible cosmos” (τὸν αἰσθητὸν ὑποστήσῃται κόσμον). It is from Zeus on the level of Intellective 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 raises the question:

πῶς γὰρ ἄλλως ἔμελλε θεῶν πάντα πληρῶσειν καὶ πρὸς τὸ αὐτοζῶον ἀφομοιώσειν τὸ αἰσθητὸν ἢ πρὸς τὰς ἀφανεῖς αἰτίας τῶν ὄλων ἀνατεινόμενος, ἀφ’ ὧν αὐτὸς πεπληρωμένος ‘ἀπὸ κραδῆς προφέρειν πάλι θέσκελα ἔργα’;

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,

⁴¹⁷ Plato, *Timaeus* 28c: “However, let us return and inquire further concerning the cosmos, after which of the paradigms did its architect construct it?” (τόδε δ’ οὖν πάλιν ἐπισκεπτέον περὶ αὐτοῦ, πρὸς πότερον τῶν παραδειγμάτων ὁ τεκταινόμενος αὐτόν;); cf. Brisson 1995: 78.

⁴¹⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.325.4 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXI B = *OF* 168 K); ἵνα τῷ νοεῖν ... νοερῶς πᾶν not in Bernabé.

himself filled with these, is in a position to “bring forth back again from his heart wondrous deeds”?⁴¹⁹

In these two passages of Proclus’ commentary on the *Timaeus*, 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” (πάντα δ’ ἀποκρύψας, 31) to mean that the Demiurge contains within himself the Forms, and that he gathers the Forms when he “stretches out towards the invisible causes of the universe” (πρὸς τὰς ἀφανεῖς αἰτίας τῶν ὅλων ἀνατεινόμενος). When the physical creation is brought forth again (προφέρειν πάλι, 32) from “inside the great body of Zeus” (ἐν μεγάλῳ Ζηνὸς ... σώματι, 10), this is interpreted as an allegory of the Demiurge who is able “to make the sense-perceptible realm resemble the Living-Thing-itself” (πρὸς τὸ αὐτοζῶον ἀφομοιώσειν τὸ αἰσθητὸν).

According to the Neoplatonists, the tag line “Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things were made” expressed how the Demiurge contains all of the Forms and projects them into the world of sense-perceptible objects. In one passage of his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus attributes this interpretation of Zeus to Syrianus:

ἔστι τοίνυν ὁ δημιουργὸς ὁ εἷς κατ’ αὐτὸν ὁ τὸ πέρας τῶν νοερῶν θεῶν ἀφορίζων θεὸς καὶ πληρούμενος μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν μονάδων καὶ τῶν τῆς ζωῆς πηγῶν, προϊέμενος δὲ ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν ὅλην δημιουργίαν καὶ προστησάμενος μερικωτέρους τῶν ὅλων πατέρας, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀκίνητος ἐν τῇ κορυφῇ τοῦ Ὀλύμπου διαιωνίως ἰδρυμένος καὶ διττῶν κόσμων βασιλεύων ὑπερουρανίων τε καὶ οὐρανίων, ἀρχὴν δὲ καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλη τῶν ὅλων περιέχων.

[According to Syrianus], therefore, there is a single Demiurge, the god who marks off the limit of the Intellectual 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.⁴²⁰

The verbal similarities between Proclus’ phrase “beginning and middle and end of the universe” (ἀρχὴν δὲ καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλη τῶν ὅλων) and the line “Zeus the head, Zeus the

⁴¹⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.207.16 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXII B). Note the slight difference in wording between this fragment and the previous one: θέσκελα ῥέζων is changed to θέσκελα ἔργα.

⁴²⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.310.7 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXV B = *OF* 168 K); Bernabé adds “(sc. sec. Syrianum)” after δημιουργός. Runia (*ad loc.*) points out that the “more partial fathers” are “the so-called young gods (42d6) who create the parts of the cosmos.”

middle, and from Zeus all things are made” indicate that he is referring to the second line of the hymn. Similarly, Damascius says that “the beginning and middle and end are the father’s portion” (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ μέσον καὶ τὸ τέλος μέρη ἄττα).⁴²¹ The parallels can be strengthened by considering those versions of the line in which κεφαλή is exchanged for ἀρχή,⁴²² and by the use of τελείται (cognate with τέλη) instead of τέτυκται in the scholiast of Galen.⁴²³ 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” (τῶν δὲ ἰδεῶν πλήρης ὢν διὰ τούτων ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ ὅλα περιείληφεν, ὡς καὶ τοῦτο ἐνδεικνύμενος ὁ θεολόγος ἐπήγαγε).⁴²⁴ In his *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” (τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὰς καὶ τέλη περιέχει).⁴²⁵

From Proclus’ commentary on Plato’s *Cratylus*, the following passage elaborates upon the demiurgic progression of the lower levels of the Neoplatonic metaphysical system from Zeus as Intellectualive Intellect. Bernabé includes this passage as one of the sources for the Orphic Hymn to Zeus because the different levels Proclus mentions seem to relate to the different parts of the universe contained in Zeus’ body. Whether or not Proclus is commenting on the hymn in particular is not clear, but either way, it helps clarify the way he interprets the hymn:

τὸ ἐνιαῖον κράτος τῆς ὅλης δημιουργικῆς σειρᾶς κληρωσάμενος καὶ τὰ τε ἀφανῆ πάντα καὶ τὰ ἐμφανῆ παράγων καὶ ὑφιστάς, νοερός μὲν αὐτὸς ὑπάρχων κατὰ τὴν τάξιν, τὰ δ’ εἶδη τῶν ὄντων καὶ τὰ γένη προάγων εἰς τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν διακόσμησιν, καὶ τῶν μὲν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτὸν θεῶν πεπληρωμένος, τοῖς δ’ ἐγκοσμίους πᾶσιν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν εἰς τὸ εἶναι πρόοδον παρέχων. διὸ δὴ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς δημιουργοῦντα μὲν αὐτὸν τὴν οὐρανίαν πᾶσαν γενεᾶν

⁴²¹ Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 245 (2.83.3 Westerink) (*OF* 243 IV B = *OF* 168 K).

⁴²² Plutarch, *de defectu oraculorum* 48 p. 436d (*OF* 31 V = *OF* p. 206 K); Plutarch, *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* 31 p. 1074d (*OF* 31 VI); Schol. *Plat. Leg.* 715e (p. 317 Greene) (*OF* 31 IV B = *OF* 24 K).

⁴²³ Schol. Galen. 1.363 (ed. Moraux, *ZPE* 27, 1977, 22) (*OF* 31 VII B). For more on these textual variants, see Chapter Three, section (c).

⁴²⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.313.17 Diehl (*OF* 243 III B = *OF* 97 K). This fragment is only the most representative example. For other comments of the Neoplatonists, in less clear, complete, or eloquent terms, which quote the Orphic Hymn to Zeus as an allegory for these concepts, see Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 311 (3.82.5 Westerink = 177.8 Ruelle) (*OF* 243 IV B = *OF* 168 K); Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.8 (6.40.1 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 243 VI B = *OF* 168 K); in *Plat. Tim.* 1.202.23 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXI B); 1.161.21 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXII B); 2.45.5 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXVII B = *OF* 168 K); 1.318.22 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXVI B = *OF* 168 K); 3.209.3 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXXVIII B = *OF* 168 K).

⁴²⁵ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.8 (6.40.1 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 243 VI B = *OF* 168 K).

παραδίδωσιν καὶ ἥλιον ποιοῦντα καὶ σελήνην καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀστρώους θεοῦς, δημιουργοῦντα δὲ τὰ ὑπὸ σελήνην στοιχεῖα καὶ διακρίνοντα τοῖς εἶδεσιν ἀτάκτως ἔχοντα πρότερον, σειρὰς δ' ὑφιστάντα θεῶν περὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον εἰς αὐτὸν ἀνηρημένας καὶ διαθεσμοθετοῦντα πᾶσι τοῖς ἐγκοσμίοις θεοῖς τὰς κατ' ἀξίαν διανομὰς τῆς ἐν τῷ παντὶ προνοίας.

Being allotted the unified power of the whole demiurgic series, he introduces and institutes both all invisible and visible things. And while he himself is Intellective in his rank, he leads forth the Forms of real beings and their genera into the order of perceptible objects; and while he is filled with the gods above him, from himself he provides all the Encosmic creatures with the procession to Being. It is on this account, then, that Orpheus portrays him [1] as the Demiurge of all the celestial generation together, the one who creates the sun, moon and the other astral gods, but [2] also as the Demiurge of the elements under the moon, which he discriminates by means of Forms from their previous disorderly state, [3] as the one who institutes series, which depend on him, of gods around the whole cosmos, and [4] as the one who decrees to all the Encosmic gods the distributions, according to worth, of providence in the universe.⁴²⁶

This passage of Proclus is consistent with his interpretation of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus in other passages. Whether he is referring directly to the hymn is uncertain, but a close reading might show that at least he is referring to it indirectly.

First he calls Zeus “the Demiurge of all the celestial generation together, the one who creates the sun, moon and the other astral gods,” which might refer to lines 11-16 of the hymn:

τοῦ δὴ τοι κεφαλὴ μὲν ἰδεῖν καὶ καλὰ πρόσωπα
οὐρανὸς αἰγλήεις, ὃν χρύσειαι ἀμφὶς ἔθειραι
ἄστρον μαρμαρέων περικαλλέες ἠερέθονται,
τάυρα δ' ἀμφοτέρωθε δύο χρύσεια κέρατα,
ἀντολίη τε δύσις τε, θεῶν ὁδοὶ οὐραγιῶνων,
ὄμματα δ' ἠελίος τε καὶ ἀντιόωσα σελήνη.

Indeed, see his head and beautiful face
as the radiant sky, around which his golden hairs
of twinkling stars, very beautiful, float,
and two golden horns of bulls on both sides,

⁴²⁶ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 48.22 Pasquali (*OF* 243 XXXIII B = *OF* 168 K). Referring to *Odyssey* 1.45 and *Iliad* 8.31, Proclus continues: “Following Orpheus, Homer too commonly praises him as ‘father of both gods and men,’ as ‘leader,’ ‘king,’ and ‘highest of lords’” (καὶ Ὅμηρος δ' ἐπόμενος Ὀρφεὶ πατέρα μὲν αὐτὸν ἀνυμνεῖ κοινῇ θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἡγεμόνα καὶ βασιλέα καὶ ὑπατον κρειόντων). This is an example of the Neoplatonists’ attempts to make Orpheus and Homer agree with Plato and the *Chaldean Oracles*, and a reminder that they applied their allegories to more authors than just Orpheus. They interpret Zeus in Homer and Hesiod the same way as they interpret Zeus in Orpheus. This focus on the Orphic material merely begins to scratch the surface of the Neoplatonic exegetical enterprise.

both rising and setting, the paths of the celestial gods,
and on opposite sides the eyes as both the sun and the moon.

At the same time, it is possible that Proclus is referring to passages of the Rhapsodies that describe the act of creation by Zeus, which occurs after the moment described in the hymn. As we saw in the discussion of the Neoplatonic reading of Phanes, some fragments are unclear about whether the creator is Phanes or Zeus, despite the fact that Bernabé presents these fragments as being about Phanes. Some of these fragments mention the sun and the moon.⁴²⁷

Second, his mention of “the elements under the moon” (τὰ ὑπὸ σελήνην στοιχεῖα) might refer to the appearance of the four elements in the hymn. The four elements are listed in line 8, along with night and day (πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ αἰθήρ νύξ τε καὶ ἡμαρ), and they also seem to be equated with Zeus’ body parts in lines 22-28 of the hymn:⁴²⁸

σῶμα δέ οἱ περιφεγγές, ἀπείριτον, ἀστυφέλικτον,
ἄτρομον, ὀβριμόγυιον, ὑπερμενές ὧδε τέτυκται·
ῶμοι μὲν καὶ στέρνα καὶ εὐρέα νῶτα θεοῖο
ἀήρ εὐρυβίης, πτέρυγες δέ οἱ ἐξεφύοντο,
τῆς ἐπὶ πάντα ποτᾶθ’, ἱερῆ δέ οἱ ἔπλετο νηδὺς
γαῖά τε παμμήτειρ’ ὀρέων τ’ αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα·
μέσση δὲ ζώνη βαρυηχέος οἶδμα θαλάσσης.

His body blazing like *fire*, boundless, undisturbed,
fearless, strong-limbed, exceedingly mighty was formed like this:
the shoulders and chest and wide back of the god
were the *air* of broad sway, and wings grew out of him,
upon which everything flew, and his stomach was sacred
earth and the all-mother of hills and the lofty peaks;
and in the middle his waist was the swell of the *ocean* heavy with deep roaring.

In the hymn, Zeus’ body is fire, his shoulders and chest are air, his stomach is earth, and his waist is water. In Proclus’ commentary on the *Timaeus*, he quotes some of these lines verbatim to explain Timaeus’ statement that “in the midst between fire and earth the god set water and air” (πυρός τε καὶ γῆς ὕδωρ ἀέρα τε ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ θείς), and he comments that “these four elements ... exist primarily in the Demiurge of the universe in accordance

⁴²⁷ *OF* 155-158 B. See especially Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 3.227.29 Diehl (*OF* 158 B = *OF* 96 K), where he quotes the verse “and he made [Helios] guardian and ordered him to rule over everything” (καὶ φύλακ’ αὐτὸν ἔτευξε κέλευσέ τε πᾶσιν ἀνάσσειν) and reads this as referring to the Demiurge (δημιουργός), which to him is a reference to Zeus.

⁴²⁸ Reitzenstein & Schader (1965: 72-74) read the inclusion of sky, sun, and moon with the four elements as a list of seven elements taken from the Persians.

with its cause and in a unitary manner” (τὰ δὴ στοιχεῖα ταῦτα τὰ τέτταρα ... πρώτως μὲν ἔστιν ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ τῶν ὅλων κατ’ αἰτίαν καὶ ἐνοειδῶς).⁴²⁹ What he means is that the Platonic Forms of each of the four elements exist on the level of Intellective Intellect, but on this level they are not yet physically manifest or fully differentiated. He refers this to the Orphic Hymn to Zeus by saying that “the theologian, knowing these things, says about the Demiurge: [vv. 22, 24-25, 28-29]” (ταῦτα ... ὁ θεολόγος εἰδὼς περὶ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ φησιν).⁴³⁰ Indeed, the Orphic Hymn to Zeus equates different parts of his body with different parts of the cosmos in a way that seems to correspond with the four elements. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the elements are specifically listed in line 8 of the hymn. On this point, Proclus finds a substantial correspondence between the Orphic poem and his own metaphysical understanding of the Demiurge, which is informed by his reading of Plato’s *Timaeus*.

The third thing Proclus mentions in the *Cratylus* commentary is the “series of gods around the whole cosmos” (σειρὰς ... θεῶν περὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον). This phrase might refer to “the paths of the celestial gods” (θεῶν ὁδοὶ οὐρανόων) in line 15 of the hymn, where these paths are envisioned as “two golden horns” (δύο χρύσεια κέρατα). After the series of gods, the fourth thing Proclus mentions is that Zeus is “the one who decrees to all the Encosmic gods the distributions, according to merit, of providence in the universe” (διαθεσμοθετοῦντα πᾶσι τοῖς ἐγκοσμίοις θεοῖς τὰς κατ’ ἀξίαν διανομὰς τῆς ἐν τῷ παντὶ προνοίας). This does not appear to refer to anything contained in the hymn, but the Rhapsodies seem to have continued with Zeus giving birth to other deities (*OF* 244-283 B). This might have included episodes in which Zeus distributes different roles to these gods as he does in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. In Hesiod, after the Olympian gods defeat the Titans, Zeus begins his rule over them, “and he distributed their honours among them” (ὁ δὲ τοῖσιν ἐν διεδάσσατο τιμὰς, 885). Perhaps Proclus’ commentary is evidence of a similar passage in the Rhapsodies but, if this is the case, then it has nothing to do with the Orphic Hymn to Zeus. If Proclus in his *Cratylus* commentary is referring to the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, then he is only doing so in a partial and indirect manner. Nevertheless, his reading of the hymn elsewhere is consistent with his interpretation of the Demiurge here.

⁴²⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.44.26-28 Diehl (not in Bernabé); Plato, *Timaeus* 32b; cf. Brisson 1995: 79.

⁴³⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.45.5 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXVIII B = *OF* 168 K).

Brisson has already demonstrated that Proclus found the Orphic Hymn to Zeus particularly useful for explaining the activities of the Demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus*. He lists eight passages of Timaeus’ account of creation, in order of their appearance in the *Timaeus*, for which Proclus uses the hymn in his commentary.⁴³¹ There is no need to repeat Brisson’s work here, but perhaps a reversal of his analysis will be a useful exercise. In what follows, I offer a mini-commentary of the hymn that discusses how the Neoplatonists used it, in order of the appearance of the lines of the hymn (see Appendix A for a text and translation). In addition to Proclus’ commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, I take into account other Neoplatonic commentaries, which also adds to Brisson’s work.

Lines 1-8: Proclus makes use of the first eight lines, the section of the hymn that most closely resembles the earlier versions, in his commentary on the *Timaeus* and elsewhere. Especially the phrases “from Zeus all things are made” (Διὸς δ’ ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται, 2) and “Zeus himself the first cause of everything” (Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀπάντων ἀρχιγένεθλος, 5) help Proclus explain how “the maker and father of this universe” (ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς, 28c) in Plato’s *Timaeus* “was filled with the Forms, [and] it was by means of them that he embraced the universe within himself” (τῶν δὲ ἰδεῶν πλήρης ὢν διὰ τούτων ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ ὅλα περιείληφεν).⁴³² Also in his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus quotes line 2 of the hymn to demonstrate that “Zeus comprehends the beginnings and ends of the universe” (τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὰς καὶ τέλη περιέχει).⁴³³ Damascius discusses the hymn in a similar context in his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides*, where he cites lines 1, 3, 4, and 6 to support his assertion that “the beginning and the middle and the end are the father’s portion” (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ μέσον καὶ τὸ τέλος μέρη ἄττα).⁴³⁴

Line 6: Zeus is called “one deity” (εἷς δαίμων) in line 6, and Proclus refers to this designation on a few occasions. In *Timaeus* 31a appears the statement, “that which embraces all Intelligible living creatures could never be second” (τὸ γὰρ περιέχον πάντα ὅποσα νοητὰ ζῶα μεθ’ ἑτέρου δεύτερον οὐκ ἂν ποτ’ εἶη). Proclus refers this to Phanes as “the Living-Thing-itself [who] rejoices in solitude” (τὸ αὐτοζῶον μονότητι χαίρει). In imitation of Phanes, Zeus as Demiurge also rejoices in solitude and by “analogy”

⁴³¹ Brisson 1995: 77-80; he cites Plato, *Timaeus* 28c, 28c-29a, 31a, 32b, 32b-c, 33c, 34b, and 36b.

⁴³² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.313.17 Diehl (*OF* 243 III B = *OF* 168 K); cf. Brisson 1995: 78.

⁴³³ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.8 (6.40.1 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 243 VI B = *OF* 168 K).

⁴³⁴ Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 311 (3.82.5 Westerink) (*OF* 243 IV B = *OF* 168 K).

(ἀνάλογον) is called μῆτις and δαίμων.⁴³⁵ Proclus refers to line 6 of the hymn again in a discussion of Timaeus’ statement that the demiurge “generated [the sensible world] to be a blessed god” (ταῦτα εὐδαίμονα θεὸν αὐτὸν ἐγεννήσατο, 34b). He argues that, since the Demiurge “ensouled” (ψυχώσας) the universe, “the presence of soul and the participation of Intellect ... bring it about that the universe is a god” (ψυχῆς γὰρ παρουσία καὶ νοῦ μετουσία ... θεὸν ἀποτελεῖ τὸ πᾶν).⁴³⁶ In other words, the universe is εὐδαίμων because it is ensouled by the Demiurge, whom Orpheus calls a δαίμων.⁴³⁷

Proclus refers to the uniqueness of the Demiurge again in his commentary on the *Parmenides*, where he discusses Socrates’ comment that “if [someone] shows that absolute unity is also many and the absolute many again are one, then I’ll be amazed” (εἰ ὁ ἔστιν ἓν, αὐτὸ τοῦτο πολλὰ ἀποδείξει καὶ αὖ τὰ πολλὰ δὴ ἓν, τοῦτο ἤδη θαυμάσομαι, 129b-c). Proclus argues that where there is both unity and plurality, this cannot be the One, “for it is transcendent over all things; for the One is neither a genus nor a species” (ἔστι γὰρ πάντων ἐξηρημένον· οὐ γὰρ ἔστι γένος ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἐν ἧ εἶδος).⁴³⁸ Instead he suggests that the mixture of unity and plurality resides in the Demiurge and, relating this concept to the story of Zeus swallowing Phanes, he concludes that “the One, then, must be said to be that character which is the wholeness of the entire demiurgic Intellect, that to which the theologian is looking when he says, ‘he became one’” (ἐκεῖνο τοίνυν ρητέον τὸ ἐν, ὃ ἔστιν ὀλότης παντὸς τοῦ δημιουργικοῦ νοῦ· εἰς ὃ καὶ ὁ θεολόγος ἀποβλέπων, ‘ἐν ἐγένετο,’ φησίν).⁴³⁹ Unity and plurality cannot co-exist in the One, but they do co-exist in the Demiurge. According to Proclus, the Demiurge is portrayed as Zeus in the hymn: when Zeus swallowed Phanes, “he became one” in the sense that he contained in one body the multiple parts of the cosmos.

Line 9: On five occasions Proclus quotes line 9, in which Zeus is called “Metis the first ancestor and much-delighting Eros” (Μῆτις πρῶτος γενέτωρ καὶ Ἔρωσ πολυτερπῆς). Immediately this brings to mind those fragments in which Phanes is equated with Metis and Eros,⁴⁴⁰ and reminds us that by swallowing Phanes Zeus also swallows Metis and Eros.

⁴³⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.451.8-15 Diehl (*OF* 140 I, 243 VII B = *OF* 168 K); cf. Brisson 1995: 78-79.

⁴³⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.111.15-18 Diehl (not in Bernabé).

⁴³⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.112.9 Diehl (*OF* 243 VIII B = *OF* 168 K); cf. Brisson 1995: 79.

⁴³⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 763.4-5 Cousin (not in Bernabé).

⁴³⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Parm.* 763.21-23 Cousin (*OF* 243 IX B); ἐκεῖνο ... νοῦ not in Bernabé. Here Proclus is not quoting the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, but another passage of the Rhapsodies: *OF* 241.11 B, which he quotes in its poetic context at in *Plat. Tim.* 1.313.2 Diehl (*OF* 241 II B = *OF* 167 K).

⁴⁴⁰ *OF* 139-143 B.

This is what Proclus has in mind when he quotes this line to claim that “long ago the theologian celebrated the demiurgic cause in Phanes ... and in Zeus he celebrated the paradigmatic cause, for he in turn is also Metis” (πάλαι γὰρ ὁ θεολόγος ἔν τε τῷ Φάνητι τὴν δημιουργικὴν αἰτίαν ἀνύμνησεν ... καὶ ἐν τῷ Διὶ τὴν παραδειγματικὴν, Μῆτις γὰρ αὖ καὶ οὗτός ἐστιν). He argues that “all of these causes have participated in each other and exist in each other” (πάντα ἄρα μετείληχεν ἀλλήλων τὰ αἴτια καὶ ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἐστίν).⁴⁴¹ Elsewhere he applies this line to the idea that the Demiurge “has in himself the cause of Eros ... hence it is reasonable that he is the cause of friendship and agreement among the things he has created” (ἔχει δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν τοῦ Ἔρωτος αἰτίαν ... εἰκότως ἄρα φιλίας ἐστίν αἴτιος τοῖς δημιουργήμασι καὶ ὁμολογίας).⁴⁴² He uses this line to explain how “the body of the cosmos was harmonized by proportion” (τὸ τοῦ κόσμου σῶμα ... δι’ ἀναλογίας ὁμολογήσαν, 32c) in Plato’s *Timaeus*.⁴⁴³

Proclus quotes line 9 of the hymn again in a discussion of the epithets of Athena, noting that Plato uses the epithet “lover of wisdom” (φιλοσόφος) to describe both Athena and Eros.⁴⁴⁴ He suggests that Eros is “an intermediary between two totalities” (μεσότητα τῶν ὅλων): he is the “one who draws us up to Intelligible wisdom” (πρὸς τὴν νοητὴν σοφίαν ἀνάγοντα), while Athena is “the unifying force of demiurgic wisdom” (τῆς δημιουργικῆς σοφίας ἔνωσιν). The Demiurge “as Metis gives birth to Athena, while as Eros he is the parent of the erotic series” (ὡς μὲν Μῆτις τίκει τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, ὡς δὲ Ἔρωτος ἀπογεννᾷ τὴν ἐρωτικὴν σειράν).⁴⁴⁵ As Metis and Eros, therefore, Zeus is interpreted as a unifying force between the higher and lower orders, which “exist in each other” (ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἐστίν). As Eros, he is “the cause of friendship and agreement among the things he has created” (φιλίας ἐστίν αἴτιος τοῖς δημιουργήμασι καὶ ὁμολογίας), and as Metis he gives birth to Athena, who is “the unifying force of demiurgic wisdom” (τῆς δημιουργικῆς σοφίας ἔνωσιν). Simply

⁴⁴¹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.336.7-18 Diehl (Μῆτις ... οὗτός ἐστιν in Bernabé, *OF* 140 XI, 243 XVII B = *OF* 170 K); in this passage Proclus equates Dionysus with both Zeus and Phanes.

⁴⁴² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.54.21-27 Diehl (ἔχει ... αἰτίαν in Bernabé, *OF* 243 XIII B = *OF* 184 K).

⁴⁴³ Cf. Brisson 1995: 79.

⁴⁴⁴ Proclus is commenting on Plato, *Timaeus* 24c7-d3, where Plato calls Athena φιλοσόφος. Plato calls Eros φιλοσόφος at *Symp.* 203d7, 204b2-5.

⁴⁴⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.169.14-21 Diehl (this passage is the context in which *OF* 243 XVI B = *OF* 168 K appears); cf. Tarrant *ad loc.* Proclus also refers to line 9 of the hymn twice at in *Plat. Alcib.* 103a (54 Segonds), 109d (284 Segonds) (*OF* 243 XIV-XV B = *OF* 168, 170 K).

put, Zeus as Metis and Eros is the point of connection between the Intelligible levels above him and the celestial and Encosmic levels below him.

Line 10: Proclus quotes line 10, “for inside the mighty body of Zeus all these things lie” (πάντα γὰρ ἐν μεγάλῳ Ζηνὸς τάδε σώματι κεῖται), to further explain the “maker and father” (ποιητὴν καὶ πατέρα, 28c) in the *Timaeus*. He states that “in the Demiurge all things exist demiurgically” (ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ πάντα ἐστὶ δημιουργικῶς).⁴⁴⁶ As we saw above, the image of Zeus containing the universe in his body was useful to the Neoplatonists as an illustration of the way in which the Demiurge contained the Forms within himself – for example, the four elements, not yet physically manifest or fully differentiated – and this is most likely what Proclus means by the adverb “demiurgically” (δημιουργικῶς).

Line 17: Damascius in his *Philebus* commentary refers to line 17, which says that “his truthful and royal mind was the imperishable aither” (νοῦς δέ οἱ ἀψευδῆς βασιλήϊος ἄφθιτος αἰθήρ), in order to support his answer to a question he has posed: “why is Intellect on the side of Limit” (διὰ τί ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τοῦ πέρατος).⁴⁴⁷ In the *Philebus*, Socrates suggests that “wisdom and knowledge and mind” (φρόνησιν δὲ καὶ ἐπιστήμην καὶ νοῦν, 28a) are on the side of Limit (as opposed to Unlimited, where Socrates classes pleasure and pain) because “mind is king of heaven and earth” (νοῦς ἐστὶ βασιλεὺς ἡμῖν οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς, 28c). Damascius argues that Intellect (νοῦς) is on the side of Limit “because it converges on itself and determines and orders itself and also imposes the good on other things” (ὅτι συννεύει πρὸς ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἑαυτὸν ὀρίζει καὶ τάττει καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐπιτάττει τὰ ἀγαθὰ). Because “the judgment of Zeus sways the universe” (βασιλεύει τοῦ παντὸς ἢ τοῦ Διὸς κρίσις), Damascius concludes that “the manifest kingship is that of Intellect; hence Orpheus speaks of ‘his truthful and royal mind’” (ἐν δὲ γε τῷ φανερωῷ ὁ νοῦς βασιλεύει· διὸ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς φησὶ ‘νοῦς δέ οἱ ἀψευδῆς βασιλήϊος’).⁴⁴⁸ The use of βασιλήϊος in line 17 is the key point at which Damascius relates Zeus’ royal mind, or the Demiurge as Intellect, to the ruling principle of the cosmos.

⁴⁴⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.307.27 Diehl (*OF* 243 XVIII B = *OF* 168 K). ἐν τῷ ... δημιουργικῶς not in Bernabé. See also: Brisson 1995: 78 and Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.209.3 (*OF* 243 XXXVIII B = *OF* 168 K), where Proclus discusses Zeus as the maker and father in more detail. He does not refer specifically to the hymn, but the idea is consistent with his reading of the hymn when he says that “maker alone is the cause of divided creation” (ποιητῆς δὲ μόνως ὁ τῆς μεριστῆς ἐστὶ δημιουργίας αἴτιος).

⁴⁴⁷ Damascius, in *Plat. Phileb.* 127.1 (61 Westerink). Aither in the Rhapsodies was classed with Limit in the first Intelligible triad; see section (c).

⁴⁴⁸ Damascius, in *Plat. Phileb.* 127.1-12 (61 Westerink) (*OF* 243 XXIII B); 127.1-10 not in Bernabé.

Lines 17-20: Proclus uses lines 17-20 to explain Timaeus' statement that the world "had need neither of eyes ... nor of hearing" (ὀμμάτων ... ἐπεδεῖτο οὐδέν ... οὐδ' ἀκοῆς, 33c). Prompted by this statement, Proclus poses the question of "whether the universe is perceptive or not" (εἴτε αἰσθητικόν ἐστι τὸ πᾶν εἴτε μή),⁴⁴⁹ and he quotes passages of the *Chaldean Oracles*, Homer, and Orpheus, all of which refer to the perceptive abilities of deities.⁴⁵⁰ In order to demonstrate that the poets "did not decline to say that the Demiurge himself possesses [perception]" (οὐδὲ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ παραιτουμένων λέγειν), Proclus quotes the Orphic Hymn to Zeus:⁴⁵¹

νοῦς δέ οἱ ἀψευδῆς βασιλῆϊος ἄφθιτος αἰθήρ,
 ᾧ δὴ πάντα κυκλεῖ καὶ φράζεται· οὐδέ τις ἐστὶν
 αὐδὴ οὔτ' ἐνοπὴ οὔτε κτύπος οὐδὲ μὲν ὄσσα,
 ἢ λήθει Διὸς οὔα.

His truthful and royal mind was the imperishable aither,
 in which he moves around and considers everything;
 and there is no voice or shout or noise or sound
 that escapes the notice of the ears of Zeus.

He goes on to argue that there are different types of perception, and since the universe's perception is a type that is superior to ordinary living beings, it has no need of eyes or ears.⁴⁵²

Lines 22-28: As I demonstrated above, Proclus refers to lines 22-28 of the hymn, in which different parts of Zeus' body are equated both with parts of the cosmos and with the four elements, to comment on Timaeus' statement that "in the midst between fire and earth the god set water and air" (πυρός τε καὶ γῆς ὕδωρ ἀέρα τε ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ θεῖς, 32b). He argues that the four elements exist inside the Demiurge "in a preliminary way and in a unitary manner" (πρώτως ... καὶ ἐνοειδῶς).⁴⁵³

Lines 29-30: In addition to the elements, Proclus uses the hymn to explain the discussion of numerical ratios in Plato's *Timaeus* (36b), specifically the ratio of 256 to 243. Proclus argues that even the lowest levels of the metaphysical system follow patterns of numerical ratios, since "even the causes of these pre-exist in the Demiurge, just as Orpheus

⁴⁴⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.82.1 Diehl (not in Bernabé).

⁴⁵⁰ *Chaldean Oracles* fr. 7-8 Majercik; *Iliad* 3.277; *Odyssey* 11.109.

⁴⁵¹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.82.13 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXIV B = *OF* 168 K).

⁴⁵² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.82-85 Diehl; cf. Brisson 1995: 79.

⁴⁵³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.44.26-28 Diehl (not in Bernabé).

says” (καὶ ἐν τῷ δημιουργῷ προὑπάρχει καὶ τούτων τὰ αἷτια, καθάπερ φησὶν Ὀρφεύς).⁴⁵⁴ He quotes lines 29-30 of the hymn, which equate the bottom of Zeus’ foot with “the roots inside the earth, / both mouldy Tartarus and the final boundaries of the earth” (χθονὸς ἔνδοθι ρίζαι, / Τάρταρά τ’ εὐρώεντα καὶ ἔσχατα πείρατα γαίης, 29-30), to show that even the lowest levels of the system proceed from the Demiurge as Intellect.

Damascius, in his commentary on Plato’s *Phaedo*, uses lines 29-30 to explain Plato’s description of subterranean channels flowing into and out of Tartarus (111c-112e), specifically when Phaedo says that “one of the chasms of the earth is greater than the rest ... [which] many other poets have called Tartarus” (ἐν τι τῶν χασμάτων τῆς γῆς ἄλλως τε μέγιστον τυγχάνει ὄν ... ἄλλοι πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν Τάρταρον κεκλήκασιν, 111e-112a). Damascius says that “Tartarus is a god in charge of the lowest extremity of the world” (ὁ Τάρταρος θεὸς ἐστὶ τὰς ἐσχατίας τοῦ κόσμου ἐπισκοπῶν).⁴⁵⁵ In the *Iliad*, the Titans are said to be “under Tartarus” (ὑποταρτάριοι, 14.278), so Damascius argues that this is “because they are the Tartarean gods of the sensible world, but subordinate to the higher Tartarean deities” (ὡς Ταρτάριοι μὲν ἐν τῷ αἰσθητῷ, ὑπὸ δὲ τοὺς ἀνωτέρω Ταρταρίους).⁴⁵⁶ He refers to the hymn when he says that “if the sky is said to be the Demiurge’s head, the world of coming-to-be the middle of his body, Tartarus his feet, and if he brings forth gods from every part of his body, it is evident that there must be also a kind of Tartarean gods ... and whatever else is found at the extremity of each series” (εἰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ λέγεται κεφαλὴ μὲν ὁ οὐρανός, μέσα δὲ ἡ γένεσις, βάσις δὲ ὁ Τάρταρος, ἀπὸ παντὸς δὲ ἑαυτοῦ προάγει θεοὺς, εἰκότως ἄρα εἰσὶ καὶ Ταρτάριοι θεοὶ τινες ... τὰ τε ἄλλα πέρατα τῶν σειρῶν).⁴⁵⁷ Quoting both Homer and Orpheus, Damascius uses the image of Tartarus as Zeus’ feet to place the Titans in the lowest level of the metaphysical system, the level at which the divine actually makes direct contact with the physical universe; but as Tartarean gods, they are also connected to the Demiurge from whom they proceed, connecting them to the top level of the series.

⁴⁵⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.231.25 Diehl (*OF* 243 XXVIII B = *OF* 168 K).

⁴⁵⁵ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.537 (275 Westerink) (not in Bernabé).

⁴⁵⁶ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.538 (275 Westerink) (not in Bernabé).

⁴⁵⁷ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.540 (67 Westerink) (*OF* 243 XXIX B; εἰκότως ... σειρῶν not in Bernabé). Westerink (*ad loc.*), regarding these Tartarean souls, wonders whether “Tartarus is their natural habitat, rather than a place of punishment,” and points out that “the question concerns only the depth of the descent and is essentially different from that of eternal damnation.”

Lines 31-32: In the *Timaeus* the question is asked, “after which of the paradigms did its [i.e., the universe’s] architect construct it” (πρὸς πότερον τῶν παραδειγμάτων ὁ τεκταινόμενος αὐτὸν, 28c). Proclus explains that the architect is Zeus as Demiurge, who looks to Phanes as Paradigm. As I mentioned above, Proclus quotes the last two lines of the hymn to illustrate how “by thinking its [i.e., the Paradigm’s] contents he becomes all things and gives existence to the sense-perceptible cosmos” (τῷ νοεῖν ἐκεῖνο πάντα γενόμενος τὸν αἰσθητὸν ὑποστήσεται κόσμον).⁴⁵⁸ The image of Zeus having all things in his belly was particularly appropriate to illustrate this Neoplatonic allegorical concept.

The Neoplatonists found much of value in the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, not only as it relates to the central concept of Zeus as Demiurge, but also as it helped them to explain less directly related topics, such as an epithet of Athena and the concept of numerical ratios. Not only Neoplatonists but also Christian apologists made use of the hymn 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 as being 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.⁴⁵⁹ 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” (τὸν γὰρ Δία τὸν νοῦν τοῦ κόσμου ὑπολαμβάνοντες, ὃς τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδημιούργησεν ἔχων τὸν κόσμον).⁴⁶⁰ 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” (κατὰ τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς τὴν πυρώδη καὶ θερμὴν οὐσίαν τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν φάσκοντας εἶναι τοῦ

⁴⁵⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.324.5-6 Diehl (context of *OF* 243 XXXI = *OF* 168 K).

⁴⁵⁹ The other source is Stob. Flor. 1.1.23 (1.19.9 Wachsm.) (*OF* 243 II B = *OF* 168 K), who simply introduces the poem with <Ὀρφέως> (add. Gaisf., see Bernabé *ad loc.*). He is not quoting the Rhapsodies directly, but an extended passage of Porphyry’s *On Statues* (fr. 354 F Smith) in which Porphyry quotes from the Rhapsodies; see Herrero 2010: 190.

⁴⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.9.2 (*OF* 243 I B = *OF* 168 K).

κόσμου καὶ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι σῶμα καὶ τὸν δημιουργὸν αὐτὸν οὐδ’ ἕτερον τῆς τοῦ πυρὸς δυνάμεως).⁴⁶¹ Clearly Eusebius disagrees with this pantheistic vision, and he also rejects the Neoplatonists’ interpretation:

ὁ γάρ τοι τῶν ὅλων δημιουργικὸς νοῦς οὔτ’ ἐκ πλειόνων μερῶν συνέστηκεν οὔτ’ ἂν γένοιτο αὐτοῦ κεφαλὴ οὐρανός, οὐ σῶμα πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ ἥλιος καὶ σελήνη. πῶς δ’ ἂν εἶεν ὠμοὶ καὶ στέρνα καὶ νῶτα’ καὶ νηδὺς τοῦ τῶν ὅλων δημιουργοῦ θεοῦ ἄηρ εὐρυβίης’ καὶ γῆ ὀρέων τ’ αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα’; ἢ πῶς ὁ αἰθήρ νοῦς ποτ’ ἂν ἐπινοηθεῖ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων ποιητοῦ, ἢ τοῦ νοῦ τοῦ δημιουργικοῦ;

For neither does the creative mind of the universe consist of many parts, nor can his head become the sky [*cf.* vv. 11-12], nor can his body become fire and water and earth [*cf.* v. 8], nor yet his eyes the sun and moon [*cf.* v. 16]. And how can “the wide expanse of air, and earth, and lofty hills” be the shoulders [*cf.* vv. 24-25], breast, back, and belly of the Demiurge of the universe [*cf.* 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 [*cf.* v. 17]?⁴⁶²

Eusebius mocks the idea that Zeus’ mind is aither and his body is the air. He argues that:

σῶμα δὲ ὁ αἴηρ καὶ πολὺ πρότερον ὁ αἰθήρ ... καὶ πῶς ἂν ταῦτὸν ἐπινοηθεῖ σῶμα καὶ νοῦς κατὰ διάμετρον ταῖς φύσεσι διεστῶτα;

The air is body, and the aither a much more primitive kind of body ... but how can body and mind be conceived the same, since in their natures they are diametrically opposed?⁴⁶³

In support of this argument, Eusebius cites lines 17-20 of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to show that “aither is plainly declared to be the mind of Zeus” (σαφῶς ὁ αἰθήρ νοῦς ἀνείρηται ὢν τοῦ Διός).⁴⁶⁴ According to Brisson, there are two critiques in Eusebius’ treatment of this hymn: “one denounces his anthropomorphism and the other his pantheism.”⁴⁶⁵

John Philoponus, a Christian philosopher of the sixth century AD, likewise refers to the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to criticize the idea that Zeus is synonymous with the cosmos. In one passage, he says that “collecting the deceit of the myths, Plato declares that the god is the cosmos, taking it from Orpheus” (τῆ τῶν μύθων ἀπάτη συνενεχθεὶς ὁ Πλάτων θεὸν εἶναι τὸν κόσμον ἐκ τῶν Ὀρφείως λαβὼν ἀπεφήνατο).⁴⁶⁶ Further down in the same text, he

⁴⁶¹ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.9.8 (OF 243 XIX B = OF 168 K).

⁴⁶² Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.10.2 (OF 243 XX B = OF 168 K); see Bernabé *ad loc.*

⁴⁶³ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.11.3-4.

⁴⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 3.11.4 (OF 243 XXV B = OF 168 K).

⁴⁶⁵ Brisson 1995: 2892: “l’une dénonçant son anthropomorphisme et l’autre, son panthéisme.”

⁴⁶⁶ John Philoponus, *De aetern. mun.* 332.19 Rabe (OF 243 XXXIX B = OF 69 K).

says that “even if he says that the god is the cosmos, taking from the Orphics Plato mentions the same god, having followed more mythically the custom of the poets” (κἂν λέγῃ θεὸν εἶναι τὸν κόσμον, ἐκ τῶν Ὀρφικῶν λαβὼν ὁ Πλάτων τῆ τῶν ποιητῶν συνηθείᾳ μυθικώτερον ἀκολουθήσας θεὸν αὐτὸν εἴρηκεν).⁴⁶⁷ He continues by criticizing the way “the poets make gods out of everything in existence, not only fire and earth and the rest of the elements, but also human experiences and deeds” (πάντα γὰρ οἱ ποιηταὶ τὰ ὄντα θεοπεποιήκασιν, καὶ οὐ μόνον πῦρ καὶ γῆν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ στοιχεῖα ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πάθη καὶ ἔργα).⁴⁶⁸

A few centuries earlier, Clement of Alexandria had referred to the Orphic Hymn to Zeus to support a different 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.”⁴⁶⁹ Clement argued 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” (τὴν ἐκ τῆς βαρβάρου φιλοσοφίας Ἑλληνικὴν κλοπὴν).⁴⁷⁰ Herrero suggests that Clement’s source for all of these authors, including the Orphic poem, was an “anthology for apologetic use,” rather than the complete texts.⁴⁷¹ In one section, Clement quoted the hymn along with many other authors, including Sophocles, Pindar, and Hesiod, as evidence that the Greeks stole the idea of God’s omnipotence from the Hebrews. Clement referred to lines 6-8 of the hymn to argue that the Greeks stole the idea of one all-powerful god from Hebrew monotheism, and he added the hymn’s mention of “one power, one deity ... and one royal bodily frame” (ἐν κράτος, εἷς δαίμων ... ἐν δὲ δέμας βασιλείον, 6-7) 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

⁴⁶⁷ John Philoponus, *De aetern. mun.* 631.25 Rabe (OF 243 XL B = OF 69 K).

⁴⁶⁸ John Philoponus, *De aetern. mun.* 632.2-5 Rabe (not in Bernabé).

⁴⁶⁹ Herrero 2010: 190.

⁴⁷⁰ Clement Alex., *Stromata* 5.14.1.1.

⁴⁷¹ Herrero 2010: 188-189 and n. 105. He notes variants in the wording between Clement’s citation and the same verses as they appear in OF 243 B, and he points out that the variants “have a common trait: they do not place as much emphasis on the kingly nature of the god they invoke as they do on his pantheistic essence.” On the basis of West’s argument that lines 6-29 of the hymn were interpolated from a separate Hellenistic version of the hymn (West 1983: 239-241), Herrero suggests that Clement might be quoting this Hellenistic hymn instead of the Rhapsodies.

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. In the Hieronyman Theogony and the Rhapsodies, these theriomorphic elements meet with Hellenistic patterns of syncretism where Zeus is equated with Phanes, Metis, and Eros. Theriomorphic elements and Hellenistic syncretism converge with yet 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 of the Orphic poet.⁴⁷² Likewise, the pantheistic vision of Zeus as the cosmos indicates contacts with Vedic and/or Stoic philosophy, but this does not mean that the poet should be considered a Vedic or Stoic, any more than someone today who refers to a Freudian slip should be considered a psychoanalyst. The *bricoleur* mixed elements of strange, foreign myths with elements of current philosophy in his presentation of Zeus, but he did so 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 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. As we saw in the last section, the answer is that he swallows Phanes and re-creates the cosmos. In the hymn, the poet asks what happens to the original creation when Zeus swallows Phanes before re-creating the cosmos. The answer is that Zeus absorbs the old creation, and then “brings forth” (προφέρειν, 32) the new creation from “inside [his] mighty body” (ἐν μεγάλῳ ... σώματι, 10). Whether the 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 consistently synonymous with the cosmos, but

⁴⁷² Empedocles fr. 31 A37 D-K (Aristotle, *Met.* A4, 985a31-33), 31 B6 D-K (Aetius 1.3.20), 31 B17 D-K (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 157.25). See *BNP* s.v. Stoicheion: Plato, Aristotle, and the Pythagoreans further developed ideas about the elements, while the Hippocratic writers (in *De morbis* 4) and Galen (in *De natura hominis*) equated the four elements with the four humours. The Latin word *elementum* usually refers to the four elements: e.g., Seneca, *Quaest. Nat.* 3.12; Cicero, *Acad.* 1.26; Lucretius 1.907-914; 2.688-691.

one in which the cosmos is inside the belly of Zeus for a brief moment in narrative time.⁴⁷³ 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.

The Neoplatonic interpretation is a discourse that proceeds out from the Orphic Hymn to Zeus, and again 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 represented by 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” (δημιουργικῶς).⁴⁷⁴ 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

⁴⁷³ *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.

⁴⁷⁴ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.307.27 Diehl (*OF* 243 XVIII B = *OF* 168 K).

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 the influence of or at least familiarity with current philosophical ideas 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 is also representative of the ways in which ancient authors used Orphic texts. The Neoplatonists refer to it often as an allegory for their own metaphysical speculations, while the Christian apologists read it literally as a point of contention. 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 and Zeus were central to the core structure of the six-generation succession myth. Phanes and Zeus were at least as important to the Rhapsodic narrative as Dionysus. 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 thesis discusses the Rhapsodic myth of Dionysus and the Titans in three sections: (1) a discussion of modern scholarship on the Zagreus myth and its complicated relation to Orphism, (2) an explanation of the various ancient interpretations of the story of Dionysus and the Titans, including the Neoplatonists and Christian apologists, and (3) my own interpretation of the story of Dionysus as one of the episodes in the Rhapsodic narrative.

Chapter Six – 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 (*OF* 260-262 B),¹ 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 generation of a series of divine births. Zeus has sex with his mother Rhea, who gives birth to Persephone (*OF* 276-269 B). In the form of a snake, Zeus has sex 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” (καίπερ ἔόντι νέῳ) as the poem probably said (*OF* 299.3 B).² But the Titans smear gypsum on their faces and lure Dionysus to themselves with toys, one of which is a mirror. As the young Dionysus gazes at himself in the 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, vapours are released from their bodies, and from the ashes of these Zeus creates 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 accomplished/ruled all things, but Bacchus accomplished/ruled in addition [to Zeus]” (κράινε μὲν οὖν Ζεὺς πάντα πατήρ, Βάκχος δ’ ἐπέκραινε).³

Over the last two hundred years, many scholars have considered this narrative of Dionysus and the Titans to have been the central, defining myth of Orphism. The “Orphic

¹ In the Rhapsodies Aphrodite is born twice: once from Ouranos as in Hesiod, and a second time from Zeus. Having failed to seduce Dione, Zeus ejaculates in the sea and the second Aphrodite is born from the foam.

² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.310.29 Diehl (*OF* 299 III B = *OF* 207 K). Line 3 of this fragment is Bernabé’s restoration based on Proclus’ prose summary; see Bernabé *ad loc.*

³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.316.5 Diehl (*OF* 300 I B = *OF* 218 K). For more on the use of κράινω, see section (c) of this chapter, especially notes 249-252.

myth of Dionysus,” as some have called it,⁴ or “the Zagreus myth,”⁵ 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,⁶ but controversy continues over when these elements first emerged 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 at least the fifth or sixth century BC.⁷ At the other end, there are scholars who argue that the anthropogony of the Zagreus myth is an invention 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.⁸ The elements of this 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.⁹ 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 see the Zagreus myth as the central salvation myth of an Orphic religious community, but they still argue that the myth is important for understanding Orphic doctrine, with the result that the myth is usually applied to new evidence like the gold tablets.¹⁰

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” (παλαιὸς πένθος) 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

⁴ E.g., Detienne 1979: 69; Brisson 1995: 494-495; Graf & Johnston 2007: 65; see also: Bernabé 1996: 75: “a central myth of Orphic poetry” (“un mito centrale della poesia orfica”).

⁵ Edmonds 1999: 37; 2013: 297. For sake of clarity, in this chapter I refer to the “Zagreus myth” when I mean the complete modern reconstruction with all of its anthropogonic implications, and I refer to the “myth of Dionysus and the Titans” or “the dismemberment myth” when referring to the myth as it appears in the ancient sources, particularly as a part of the Rhapsodic narrative.

⁶ Two notable exceptions are that none of the Neoplatonists or apologists mentions the name of Zagreus (Linforth 1941: 311), and that some elements of the anthropogony might have been introduced by Olympiodorus (*OF* 320 I B; Brisson 1995: 481-499; Edmonds 2009a: 511-532).

⁷ Lloyd-Jones 1990: 90-101; Bernabé 2002d: 416-420; Graf & Johnston 2007: 69-93; see below.

⁸ Linforth 1941: 359-360; Ellinger 1978: 7-35; Edmonds 1999: 44-47; 2013: 298.

⁹ Pindar fr. 133 Snell-Maehler (Plato, *Meno* 81b-c) (*OF* 443 B); Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = *OF* 220 K); see n. 6 above.

¹⁰ Bernabé 2010: 435-438; Herrero 2010: 23 & n. 49; Graf & Johnston 2013: 193.

hands of Hades.¹¹ This is a matter of weighing possibilities, since both interpretations are reasonable but neither one can be 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 (as Linforth and Edmonds have argued), 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, so that then we might see how the Rhapsodies as a whole fit into Orphism. 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.

(a) 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,"¹² Graf and Johnston insist that "no scholar we know would side with this position nowadays."¹³ They are referring to the century-old idea that this myth was, as Macchioro put it, "the cornerstone of the Orphic mystery"¹⁴ because it was about salvation from "a sort of original sin."¹⁵ In the complete modern reconstruction of the Zagreus myth, humans

¹¹ 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; Graf & Johnston 2007: 69; Bernabé 2002d: 416-418; 2010: 437; Dowden 2011a: 287. But Edmonds (2013: 304-322) argues that Persephone instead grieves over her own abduction.

¹² Edmonds 2013: 296; cf. Burkert 1977: 1-2: "In the wake of Tylor, it was Jane E. Harrison in England, Erwin Rohde, Albrecht Dieterich, and Otto Kern in Germany who set forth a new evaluation of Orphism as an important and original religious phenomenon."

¹³ Graf & Johnston 2013: 193.

¹⁴ Macchioro 1930: 76; cf. Rohde 1925: II 341: "the culminating point of the doctrinal poetry of the Orphics"; Nilsson 1935: 202: "the cardinal myth of Orphism."

¹⁵ Macchioro 1930: 101; cf. Rose 1943: 248. The characterization of the Titanic nature as "original sin" is still around: e.g., Christopoulos 1991: 217.

are created from the vapours that rise from the Titans when Zeus strikes them with lightning.¹⁶ Therefore, according to “Orphic doctrine,” as Rohde puts it, humans have a double nature, both Titanic and Dionysiac, so one must “free himself from the Titanic element” by participation in Orphic-Bacchic mysteries.¹⁷ Observed through the proto-Christian model, this anthropogony, combined with the myth of a dying god who is resurrected, seemed to earlier scholars like it was relevant to the eschatological hopes of Bacchic initiates. So, when the Petelia tablet was discovered, instructing the deceased initiate to say to the “guardians” (φύλακες) in the Underworld that “I am a child of Earth and starry Sky” (Γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος), Comparetti argued that this “can be easily understood” as reflecting Orphic ideas about the “Titanic origin of the soul.”¹⁸ Thus began a tradition that exists to this day of understanding the gold tablets as the material remains of Orphic-Bacchic initiation ritual, and interpreting them as references to the Zagreus myth.¹⁹

This was how the Zagreus myth fit into the “house of dreams” (as Dodds expressed it)²⁰ that was dispelled by Wilamowitz and Linforth, both of whom attempted to minimize the myth’s importance. Referring to Bacchic mysteries and the Zagreus myth, Wilamowitz argued that “Orpheus has nothing to do with them.”²¹ 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.”²² 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.²³ This line of thinking was followed by Zuntz, who denied any relationship between the gold tablets and anything Orphic or Bacchic.²⁴ As scholars began to awaken from this Orphic “house of dreams,”²⁵ the Zagreus

¹⁶ Brisson (1995: 491) argues that it is not from the ashes, but from the “*sublimé*,” or humid vapours, arising from the Titans, that humans are born; see below.

¹⁷ Rohde 1925: II 341-342; cf. Macchioro 1930: 101; Nilsson 1935: 224-225.

¹⁸ *OF* 477 B; Smith & Comparetti 1882: 116-117.

¹⁹ E.g., Graf & Johnston 2013 [2007]; Calame 2009: 210-223; Parker 1995: 498.

²⁰ Borrowing a phrase from Dodds 1951: 147-148; see Chapter One, section (a).

²¹ Wilamowitz 1959: II 190: “Orpheus hat mit ihnen nichts zu tun”; see also: Burkert 1977: 4.

²² Linforth 1941: 311; cf. Guthrie 1952: 112; Henrichs 1972: 59. On the other side, no source in which the name of Zagreus is found also mentions Orpheus, and some make no reference to Dionysus; with the exception of Nonnus’ *Dionysiaca* 5.565, which of course is a very late source.

²³ Linforth 1941: 330; Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = *OF* 220 K).

²⁴ Zuntz 1971: 277-286, 381-393.

²⁵ Dodds 1951: 147-148.

myth was questioned on the basis of its antiquity, its meaning, and its applicability to the interpretation of the gold tablets.

As a result of this sceptical reaction, more balanced accounts of Orphism emerged as scholars began to reframe it not as the religious movement of the Orphic church but as a cluster of ideas that can 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 found interest in certain ideas that they found in Orphic poetry. In this conceptualization of Orphism, the Zagreus myth was 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" and agreed that "nothing is known of their doctrines," so he analysed Orphism "in connection with the whole of the stream of religious ideas in the archaic age."²⁶ Still, he argued that the Zagreus myth was "the cardinal myth of Orphism" because it was known at least as early as Callimachus.²⁷ Combined with ideas about the afterlife and cultic connections with a chthonic Dionysus, the Zagreus myth was at "the centre of their religious thinking."²⁸ At around the same time, Guthrie called the Zagreus myth "the central point of Orphic story"²⁹ and argued that the Orphics created the Zagreus myth to provide "a mythical framework" for their "new religion," one that "enshrines the peculiarly Orphic thought of our own mixed earthly and heavenly nature."³⁰ 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 thought" (Guthrie). The modern reconstruction of the myth and its eschatological implications remained basically undisturbed, despite ongoing redefinitions of Orphism.

²⁶ Nilsson 1935: 184-185; cf. Nilsson 1955: I 679-680: "Orphism must not be considered in isolation, it is only one of the mystical and cathartic currents of the Archaic Period" ("Der Orphizismus [*sic*] darf nicht isoliert betrachtet werden, er ist nur eine der mystischen und kathartischen Strömungen der archaischen Zeit").

²⁷ Nilsson 1935: 202-203; cf. Nilsson 1961: II 661 where, referring to Callimachus, *Aetia* fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*OF* 34 B = *OF* 210 p. 230 K), he says that Dionysus Zagreus was identified with Sabazius; and Nilsson 1955: I 686 n. 1, where he cites Aeschylus fr. 5 Nauck (calling Zagreus the son of Hades) and Euripides *Cretans* fr. 472 Nauck (mentioning the *omophagia*) as earlier examples of the occurrence of the name Zagreus in other contexts.

²⁸ Nilsson 1935: 230.

²⁹ Guthrie 1952: 107.

³⁰ Guthrie 1952: 119-120.

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.³¹ 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.”³² 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” (εἰπεῖν Φερσεφόνα σ’ ὅτι Β<άκ>χιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε).³³ Following Comparetti, recent scholars have consistently referred these tablets to the Zagreus myth, since the Pelinna tablet in particular makes clear that whether or not the people buried with these tablets were Orphics, in their eschatology they associated Persephone with Dionysus.³⁴

The gold tablets are not fragments of literary tradition but 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, for “to go from boiling to roasting or to roast boiled meat is to invert the sacrifice.”³⁵ Not many scholars follow Detienne’s general view of Orphism, but his

³¹ *OF* 474.16 B; see Zuntz 1971: 275-393; Burkert 1977: 2; Graf & Johnston 2007: 6.

³² Burkert 1977: 6.

³³ *OF* 485.2 B; see Graf & Johnston 2007: 36.

³⁴ Parker 1995: 494-498; Graf & Johnston 2007: 69-93; Calame 2009: 210-223; Bernabé 2010: 437.

³⁵ Detienne 1979: 70-72, 83; cf. Ps.-Aristotle, *Problemata* 3.43 Bussemaker; Athenaeus 14.656b (*OF* 312 II B), in which the author asks: “why is it not lawful to roast what is boiled, but lawful to boil what is roasted? Is it because of something said in the mystery rite?” (διὰ τι οὐ νόμος τὸ ἐφθὸν ὀπτᾶν, νόμος δὲ ὀπτὸν ἔψαι; πότερον δὲ διὰ τὰ λεγόμενα ἐν τῇ τελετῇ;) and “they say they must not roast what is boiled or boil [what is roasted]” (ἐφθὸν ἐποπτᾶν οὐ φασι δεῖν οὐδ’ ἐφέψαι). See also: Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 2.18.1 (27 Marc.) (*OF* 312 I B = *OF* 35 K), where he quotes the Rhapsodic line in which the Titans “fixing [his limbs]

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.”³⁶ 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 rites.” West argued that the Zagreus myth “suggests ... a ritual of initiation into a society – presumably a Bacchic society.”³⁷ As for animal sacrifice, West basically 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.”³⁸ All of this suggests that the Zagreus myth might be a vital point of connection between Orphic text and Orphic 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 Orphic ritual, a more sceptical analysis has been raised once again by Edmonds, who protests more loudly than Linforth that the Zagreus myth is an invention of nineteenth century scholars based on a misreading of Olympiodorus.³⁹ It is a simple fact that 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

on spits held them over Hephaestus” (ἀμπεύραντες ὑπεύρεχον Ἡφαίστειο). This is a Homeric phrase (*Iliad* 2.426) that appears in a type scene depicting sacrifice, so the appearance of this phrase in the Rhapsodies indicates that the Orphic poet associated the consumption of Dionysus with Greek sacrificial procedure.

³⁶ West 1983: 140.

³⁷ West 1983: 145; cf. Lada-Richards 1999: 192-193, who calls Dionysus “a prototypical initiand.”

³⁸ West 1983: 161; cf. Parker 1995: 502-503, who also agrees with Detienne.

³⁹ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 299 VII, 304 I, 313 II, 318 III, 320 I B = *OF* 220 K); Edmonds 1999: 35-73, and again in 2004: 37-40 and 2009a: 511-532, and especially in 2013: 296-390. Likewise, Brisson (1995: 481-499) raises doubts about Olympiodorus. Bernabé (2002d: 401) in defense of his view of the Zagreus myth presents his argument as a response to both Brisson and Edmonds: “Luc Brisson shook one of the bases of the reconstruction of the myth in his analysis, ingenious but questionable, of a fundamental text [and] Radcliffe Edmonds undid again, this time fully, Penelope’s web, in favor of a much more radical proposition” (“Luc Brisson ébranlait l’une des bases de la reconstruction du mythe dans son analyse, ingénieuse mais discutable, d’un texte fondamental ... Radcliffe Edmonds défaisait à nouveau, cette fois-ci entièrement, la toile de Pénélope, en faveur d’une proposition beaucoup plus radicale”). Truly Edmonds is resurrecting an argument of Linforth (1941: 330).

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 argues that the appearance of any one of these strands in an ancient source does not necessarily assume all of the others. 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,”⁴⁰ and he further argues 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.⁴¹

Before the publication of *Redefining Ancient Orphism* in 2013, one could criticize Edmonds’ deconstructive efforts on the basis that he had not yet presented a satisfactory alternative to the interpretation he was “tearing apart.”⁴² Now he has remedied this gap by “recycling” the fragments that he does not believe to be references to the Zagreus myth: so Pindar’s ancient grief of Persephone is over her abduction by Hades, the gold tablets say that “the Bacchic one himself has released you” simply because Dionysus Lyseus releases people, etc. Simply put, it is now a case of two competing interpretations for each of these fragments.

Despite Edmonds’ confidence that he has unravelled this modern fabrication of the Zagreus myth, most Orphic scholars today remain unconvinced. Bernabé responds by calling Edmonds’ views “radical.” He argues that “the work of the specialist is to reconstruct the paradigm of the myth ... from various allusions.”⁴³ After reviewing each of the texts that make allusions to the Zagreus myth, Bernabé concedes that each author draws upon “different elements of the paradigm,” but “they never add elements incompatible with the pattern” of the myth, which “is so consistent that we can reconstruct it in a very plausible

⁴⁰ Edmonds 2013: 297-299.

⁴¹ Edmonds 2013: 302-303.

⁴² Edmonds 1999: 35-73, see title.

⁴³ Bernabé 2002d: 402-404: “radicale ... Le travail du spécialiste consiste à reconstituer le paradigme du mythe ... en partant des différentes allusions.

way.”⁴⁴ 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*.”⁴⁵ In agreement with Bernabé, Herrero argues that “in spite of sceptical doubts, it seems clear that the anthropological implications derived from [the Zagreus myth] date back to the Classical period.”⁴⁶ 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.”⁴⁷ While accepting the possibility of an early origin of the Zagreus myth, Herrero still recognizes that not all Orphic myth and practice were about one central myth.⁴⁸ 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 basic 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 analyse data like the gold tablets from “reconstructed contexts.”⁴⁹ So the debate over the Zagreus myth could essentially be characterized as a battle between a single “reconstructed” context and a number of different “recycled” contexts.

In the next few pages, 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.

⁴⁴ Bernabé 2002d: 422-423: “Comme il arrive avec la plupart des mythes en général, les différents auteurs qui rapportent ce mythe puisent chacun à son gré dans différents éléments du paradigme, mais ils n’ajoutent jamais des éléments incompatibles avec le schéma retracé à l’intérieur, de la structure narrative ... Le schéma du mythe est si cohérent que nous pouvons le reconstruire de manière très vraisemblable.”

⁴⁵ Bernabé 2002d: “C’est une grave erreur que de travailler avec ce type de textes comme s’il ne s’agissait que d’un phénomène littéraire.” And: “La présence de ce mythe dans les *teletai* n’a de sens que si ceux qui participent au rite comprennent que la connaissance de cette vérité contribue à leur salut.”

⁴⁶ Herrero 2010: 23-24; see n. 49-50, where, referring to Edmonds with a bit of irony, he remarks that “overskepticism constructs from a preconceived idea an image of messy disorder without proofs and against the evidence.”

⁴⁷ Herrero 2010: 19, 336.

⁴⁸ Herrero 2010: 24: he finds it “tempting to see in the myth of the Titans the cornerstone that gives unity to the whole Orphic building,” but he approaches Orphism from a balanced position by recognizing that “not all Orphic poetry had to deal with anthropogony and eschatology, and not even all Orphic anthropogony had to originate in the myth of the Titans.”

⁴⁹ Graf & Johnston 2013: 193.

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:

οἷσιν κε Φερσεφόνα ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος
 δέξεται, εἰς τὸν ὕπερθεν ἄλιον κείνων ἐνάτω ἔτει
 ἀνδιδοῖ ψυχὰς πάλιν, ἐκ τᾶν βασιλῆες ἀγαοὶ
 καὶ σθένει κραιπνοὶ σοφία τε μέγιστοι
 ἄνδρες αὖξοντ'· ἐς δὲ τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ἥρωες
 ἀγνοὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καλεῦνται.

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.⁵⁰

Bernabé relates this fragment of Pindar to the Zagreus myth, along with the gold tablets and the Gurôb Papyrus, as a reference to Persephone's receiving compensation for the death of her son Dionysus. He compares it to Demeter demanding compensation for her intercepted attempting to turn Demophoön into an immortal: likewise, Persephone demands compensation "for the loss of her divine child."⁵¹ This is exemplary of the typical modern interpretation of this passage of Pindar, which was first suggested by Rose.⁵² 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."⁵³ Edmonds takes Linforth's scepticism a step 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

⁵⁰ Pindar fr. 133 Snell-Maehler (Plato, *Meno* 81b-c) (*OF* 443 B); Bernabé's text.

⁵¹ Bernabé 2010: 437-438; cf. Bernabé 2002d: 416-418. Wilson (2002: 13-34) argues that ποινή denotes a type of compensation that must be understood in terms of reciprocity as a method of resolution.

⁵² Rose (1943: 247-250) proposed that Pindar's fragment is a reference to the Zagreus myth, "not of course precisely and in all detail the legend of Zagreus as it is told in our surviving authors, but one like it in its main outline," and one that included "a sort of doctrine of original sin"; cf. Pollard 1965: 101: "the 'grief' to which the poet refers to could only have been occasioned by the loss of her son at the hands of the Titans"; Lloyd-Jones 1990: 90: "the grief caused her by the Titans"; Graf & Johnston 2007: 69: "Most scholars are agreed that 'Persephone's ancient grief' refers to the loss of her child ... Pindar's threnody thus places our myth in the mid-fifth century"; Dowden 2011a: 287: "This slain Dionysos seems to be her son, and well might she grieve in that case."

⁵³ Linforth 1941: 348-350.

blood-price, but rather ritual honors in recompense for her traumatic abduction to the Underworld by Hades.”⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ If Bernabé and others are correct, then this fragment of Pindar is the earliest evidence of the Zagreus myth, and the myth 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” (ὄρκων καὶ πίστεων καὶ τὸ παράπαν θεῶν μὴ φροντίζειν, τὴν λεγομένην παλαιὰν Τιτανικὴν φύσιν ἐπιδεικνῦσι καὶ μιμουμένοις).⁵⁶ Many scholars, from Kern to Bernabé, 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.⁵⁷ But Linforth objected that “there is nothing to suggest the myth of the dismemberment” 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.”⁵⁸ Alderink followed Linforth by suggesting that instead of having a Titanic nature, humans “instead

⁵⁴ Edmonds 2013: 304-305. But see Johnston 2011: 123-124, who relates Persephone’s grief to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* in a different way: “This story inevitably would have brought to mind another story about a mother’s loss of a child (Demeter and Persephone) and the mother’s subsequent anger. The story of Demeter underpinned the Eleusinian mystery cult, which was already thriving at the time that the new myth of Dionysus emerged; the similarity between the two myths implicitly aligned the newer mystery cult with the older one.”

⁵⁵ Edmonds 2013: 313. He refers to Johnston 1999: 161-249, who discusses various myths about maidens who die prematurely and receive cult honours as compensation, many of them related to Hecate: e.g., Erigone (pp. 219-224), Carya (pp. 224-228), Iphigenia (pp. 238-249) – which is ironic since Johnston herself disagrees with Edmonds about the meaning of Pindar fr. 133 (see n. 52 above).

⁵⁶ Plato, *Leges* 3.701b (OF 37 I B = OF 9 K). This passage is also associated with Plato, *Leges* 9.854b (OF 37 II B): “the evil force that now moves you and prompts you to go temple-robbing is neither of human origin nor of divine, but it is some impulse bred of old in men from ancient wrongs unexpiated, which courses around wreaking ruin” (οὐκ ἀνθρώπινόν σε κακὸν οὐδὲ θεῖον κινεῖ τὸ νῦν ἐπὶ τὴν ἱεροσυλίαν προτρέπον ἰέναι, οἷστρος δὲ σέ τις ἐμφυόμενος ἐκ παλαιῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀδικημάτων, περιφερόμενος ἀλτιηριώδης); see Bernabé *ad loc.*

⁵⁷ See Bernabé *ad OF* 37 B; Kern 1888a: 44; Nilsson 1935: 202; Guthrie 1952: 156; Sorel 1995: 82-83; Bernabé 2002d: 418-420; Dowden 2011a: 287.

⁵⁸ Linforth 1941: 343-344.

are capable of acting in a manner or after the pattern of the Titans.”⁵⁹ 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.”⁶⁰ 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,”⁶¹ but if Bernabé is correct, then Plato provides us with another piece of early evidence of the Zagreus myth.

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,⁶² and the dismemberment myth is mentioned more than once by Euphorion.⁶³ The Gurôb Papyrus, dated to the third century BC, contains certain details that line up with the Zagreus myth.⁶⁴ By the first century BC, the story of the dismemberment of Dionysus was definitely known, whether or not it existed

⁵⁹ Alderink 1981: 70. Likewise, Brisson (1995: 497) suggests that Plato is discussing “a resemblance between the Titans and that which is evil in society” (“une ressemblance entre les Titans et ce qu’il y a de mauvais dans la société”).

⁶⁰ Edmonds 2013: 329.

⁶¹ Edmonds 2013: 333.

⁶² Callimachus fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*Etymologicum Magnum* 406.46 s.v. Ζαγρεύς) (*OF* 34 B = *OF* 210 p. 230 K): “[Persephone] giving birth to her son Dionysus Zagreus” (ὑἷα Διόνυσον Ζαγρέα γενναμένη). He associates Dionysus Zagreus with a Cretan festival, which leads Harder (*ad loc.*) to conclude that he was “originally a chthonic god of Crete.” See above n. 27: the name Zagreus may appear in earlier sources but in different contexts not related to the story of Dionysus.

⁶³ Euphorion fr. 14 Lightfoot (Tzetzes on Lycophron, *Alexandra* 207, p. 98.5 Scheer) refers to the Titans throwing Dionysus’ limbs into a cauldron and preserves the line, “In(to) the fire those arrogant beings cast divine Bacchus” (ἐν πυρὶ Βάκχον δῖον ὑπερφίαλοι ἐβάλλοντον) (trans. Lightfoot), and at fr. 40 Lightfoot (fr. 33 De Cuenca = 41c van Groningen) (Philodemus, *de Piet.* 192-193 (vv. 4956-4969) Obbink) Euphorion attributes to the Orphics a story in which Dionysus is dismembered by the Titans and revived by Rhea. Euphorion fr. 130 Lightfoot (Herodian, *On unique word-formation*, *GG* III.2, p. 951.20 Lentz) (*OF* 35 B) seems to mention the Titans smearing gypsum on their faces with the line, “his face was all cadaverously pale” (πάντα δέ οἱ νεκρηδὸν ἐλευκαίνοντο πρόσωπα) (trans. Lightfoot), according to Bernabé (*ad loc.*), but Lightfoot (*ad loc.*) counts this as a fragment of uncertain origin. See also: 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; Graf & Johnston 2007: 76-78; Edmonds 2013: 352.

⁶⁴ The Gurôb Papyrus (*OF* 578 B = *OF* 31 K) includes the injunction to “[receive my gift] as payment for [lawless] ancestors” (δῶρον δέξ[ατ] ἐμὸν ποινὰς πατ[έρων] ἀθεμίστων, 1.4). It mentions Brimo, Demeter/Rhea, Protogonos and Eubouleus (1.5-6, 18), as well as some of the toys used to lure Dionysus: “cone bull-roarer, knuckle-bones ... mirror” (κ]ῶνος ρόμβος ἀστράγαλοι ... ἔσοπτρος, 1.29-30). See Pépin 1970: 304; Henrichs 1972: 59; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356; Bernabé 2002d: 415-416.

as the complete version that modern scholars have reconstructed. For example, Diodorus Siculus and Hyginus, both alive at around that time, made clear references to the myth but said nothing about anthropogony.⁶⁵ In the second century AD, Pausanias attributed the story to Onomacritus, who “composed the *orgia* and made the Titans for Dionysus to be the authors of his sufferings” (συνέθηκεν ὄργια καὶ εἶναι τοὺς Τιτᾶνας τῷ Διονύσῳ τῶν παθημάτων ἐποίησεν αὐτουργός).⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ At least Pausanias gives us proof that the myth appeared in Orphic poetry by his own time, a late enough date that it is likely that the Rhapsodies were already in circulation.

Around the same time as Pausanias, Plutarch used the myth of Dionysus’ dismemberment to argue against the eating of meat:⁶⁹

ἀλληγορεῖ ... τὰς ψυχὰς, ὅτι φόνων καὶ βρώσεως σαρκῶν καὶ ἀλληλοφαγίας δίκην τίνουσαι σώμασι θνητοῖς ἐνδέδενται. καίτοι δοκεῖ παλαιότερος οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἶναι: τὰ γὰρ δὴ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον μεμυθευμένα πάθη τοῦ διαμελισμοῦ καὶ τὰ Τιτάνων ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τολμήματα, κολάσεις τε τούτων καὶ κεραυνώσεις γευσσαμένων τοῦ φόνου, ἠνιγμένος ἐστὶ μῦθος εἰς τὴν παλιγγενεσίαν· τὸ γὰρ ἐν ἡμῖν ἄλογον καὶ ἄτακτον καὶ βίαιον οὐ θεῖον ἀλλὰ δαιμονικὸν οἱ παλαιοὶ Τιτᾶνας ὠνόμασαν, καὶ τοῦτ’ ἐστὶ κολαζομένου καὶ δίκην διδόνος.

[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 stories told about the sufferings and dismemberment of Dionysus and the assaults of the Titans

⁶⁵ 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); see also: Cornutus, *De nat. deor.* 30 (62.10-16). Hyginus was a freedman who worked for Augustus at the Palatine library after 28 BC; see *BNP* s.v. Hyginus, C. Iulius.

⁶⁶ Pausanias 8.37.5 (*OF* 39 B = *OT* 194 K) (Onomacritus fr. 4 D’Agostino).

⁶⁷ Nilsson 1935: 202; cf. Guthrie 1952: 107-108. Pollard (1965: 99) agreed with the early date of the myth, but rejected the idea that Onomacritus could have single-handedly introduced the myth, for “it seems hardly possible that such an arresting feature could have been invented or manipulated by one man.” Di Marco (1993: 101-102) sees Onomacritus as the *terminus post quem* for the myth.

⁶⁸ Linforth 1941: 352-353; cf. Lobeck 1829: 335, 384.

⁶⁹ This occurs in a discussion of Xenocrates, which has led some scholars to believe that the Zagreus myth could be as early as him; see Linforth 1941: 338; Westerink *ad* Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.2 p. 28 n. 2; Brisson 1995: 496-497.

upon him, and their punishment and blasting by lightning after they had tasted of murder, speaking in riddles it 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.⁷⁰

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 Plato.⁷¹ The question is whether the 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 favour 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” (παλιγγενεσία) 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,⁷² but Linforth objects that this idea is “clearly avoided” by Plutarch.⁷³ 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.”⁷⁴ It was “an allegory of the general human condition, not a tale of the preceding cause of it.”⁷⁵ 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

⁷⁰ Plutarch, *De esu carn.* 1.7 p. 996b-c (*OF* 318 II B = *OF* 210 K); φόνοϛ meaning “blood” is rare in prose, but frequent in Homer (*Iliad* 10.298, 16.162, 24.610), more often meaning “murder” or “slaughter.” Here it seems to go with the middle form of γεύω in the genitive absolute, but it could be a genitive of charge; see LSJ s.v. γεύω, φόνοϛ; K-G 1.380.

⁷¹ Plato, *Gorgias* 493a: scholars have debated whether Plato’s source here is Orphic; see Chapter One, section (d). Casadio (1991: 133) notes that this passage does not appear in the Empedocles fragments of Diels and Krantz and complains that it should be.

⁷² Guthrie 1952: 108; Detienne 1979: 83; Casadio 1991: 132-134; Bernabé 1996: 75-76; Dowden 2011a: 287; see also: Bernabé *ad OF* 318 B; 2002d: 408-409.

⁷³ Linforth 1941: 338-339; cf. Brisson 1995: 496-497.

⁷⁴ Edmonds 2013: 341-342.

⁷⁵ Edmonds 2013: 344.

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.

In Bernabé's defence of the complete version of the Zagreus myth, he collects fragments about rituals that are in some way related to the dismemberment of Dionysus: Pausanias discusses the origin of certain rituals in which a text was read; Herodotus associates Dionysus with Orisis in a discussion of sacred mysteries; the Gurôb Papyrus "significantly helps our understanding"; and the gold tablets also indicate "a paradigm where all the facts are linked."⁷⁶ Diodorus Siculus says that the dismemberment story was told by "Orpheus in the initiations" (Ὀρφεὺς κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς).⁷⁷ Clement of Alexandria reveals that the toys used to lure Dionysus are used in "the mysteries of Dionysus" (τὰ Διονύσου μυστήρια),⁷⁸ and Firmicus Maternus claims that the Cretans celebrate a festival in which "they tear a living bull with their teeth, stimulating the cruel banquet" (*vivum laniant dentibus taurum, crudeles epulas ... excitantes*).⁷⁹ 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 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."⁸⁰

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" (ἔργ' αἰδηλα / Γιγάντων, οἱ λυγρὸν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐστάξαντο / σπέρμα γονῆς).⁸¹ Along with this passage of the *Argonautica*, Bernabé mentions other authors who refer to humans being born from the blood of Giants or the Titans, including

⁷⁶ Bernabé 2002d: 412-414; referring to Pausanias 8.37.5: "Son témoignage fait référence à l'origine de certains rites traditionnels où l'on récite un texte sacré"; he cites Herodotus 2.61, 132, 170, 4.79; referring to the Gurôb Papyrus: "nous aide notablement à sa compréhension"; p. 414: "Tout indique, à nouveau, un paradigme où tous les faits s'enchaînent: les Titans sont les ancêtres des hommes et leurs fautes doivent être rachetées par ceux-ci. L'expiation du châtimeut produit la libération du cycle des naissances. Le drame sacré devient alors l'expression de ce que l'on doit connaître pour, atteindre le salut."

⁷⁷ Diodorus Siculus 5.75.4 (*OF* 283 I, 311 XII B); cf. 1.23.2 (*OF* 327 IV B = *OT* 95 K).

⁷⁸ Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.17.2 (26 Marc.) (*OF* 306 I B = *OF* 34 K).

⁷⁹ Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 6.4-5 (89 Turcan) (*OF* 332 B = *OF* 214 K).

⁸⁰ Edmonds 2013: 345-346.

⁸¹ *Orphic Argonautica* 17-19 (*OF* 99, 320 V B = *OT* 224 K); see Bernabé 2002d: 409-410.

Dio Chrysostom, Oppian, Julian, and an inscription from Perinthos (second century AD).⁸² 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.”⁸³ But Bernabé argues that this is unlikely since the Titans’ punishment after the Titanomachy is imprisonment in Tartarus, not being struck by lightning; but “the lightning would be the only outcome of the Titanic action against Dionysus.”⁸⁴ 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.”⁸⁵ 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:

τούτους ὀργισθεὶς ὁ Ζεὺς ἐκεραύνωσε, καὶ ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν τῶν ἀναδοθέντων ἐξ αὐτῶν ὕλης γενομένης γενέσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. οὐ δεῖ οὖν ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἑαυτοῦς ... ὡς τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν Διονυσιακοῦ ὄντος· μέρος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν, εἴ γε ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν Τιτάνων συγκείμεθα γευσαμένων τῶν σαρκῶν τούτου.

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

⁸² Dio Chrysostom 30.10 (*OF* 320 VII B) “all of us humans are of the blood of the Titans” (τοῦ τῶν Τιτάνων αἵματός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς ἅπαντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι); cf. 30.26, 33.1; Oppian, *Hal.* 5.9-10 (*OF* 320 XIV B): “yet when also we were born of god-poured bloody defilement / of the Titans” (εἴτ’ ἄρα καὶ λύθροιο θεορρύτου ἐκγενόμεσθα / Τιτήνων); Julian, *Epist.* 89b 292 (159.19 Bidez) “Zeus ... brought forth the race of humans from drops of sacred blood falling from the sky” (Ζεὺς ... σταγόνων αἵματος ἱεροῦ πεσοῦσῶν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βλαστήσειε γένος); for the inscription, see Kaibel, *Epigr. Gr. Suppl.* 1036a (*OF* 320 XI B): “blood and fire and dust were mixed” (αἶμα καὶ πῦρ καὶ κόνις μίγῃσεται). Bernabé (2002d: 412) also points out that humans being born “from the blood of the rebel gods” (“du sang des dieux rebelles”) appears in Mesopotamian myth: cf. *Atrahasis* I, 212-217 (Lambert-Millard p. 59); *Enūma Eliš* 6.1-2.

⁸³ Edmonds 2013: 372.

⁸⁴ Bernabé 2002d: 411: “les hommes apparaissent à un moment aussi reculé dans la cosmogonie que celui de la Titanomachie ... le foudroiement serait le seul résultat des actions titaniques contre Dionysos.”

⁸⁵ Edmonds 2013: 374-375.

bodies are Dionysiac; for we are a part of him, being made from the soot from the Titans who ate his flesh.⁸⁶

Scholars are divided over whether Olympiodorus found this idea in an Orphic poem⁸⁷ or it was his own invention.⁸⁸ 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” (ἐκ τῶν Τιτανικῶν μελῶν ... συστήσασθαι)⁸⁹ and Damascius says that humans were created “from the fragments of the Titans” (ἐκ Τιτανικῶν θρυμμάτων),⁹⁰ so the Neoplatonists together confirm that this particular element of the story appeared in the Rhapsodies. Because other sources say that humans were created from the blood of the Titans,⁹¹ Bernabé considers it “uncertain whether in the Rhapsodies humans are born from the ashes of the Titans ... or from their blood ... probably from both.”⁹² 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 we 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.”⁹³ Note that 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

⁸⁶ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = *OF* 220 K).

⁸⁷ Dodds 1951: 177 n. 135; Guthrie 1952: 120; Christopoulos 1991: 215-221; Parker 1995: 495; Bernabé 2002d: 404-408; Graf & Johnston 2007: 66; Herrero 2010: 23 & n. 49. Yates (2004: 193) suggests that “perhaps ... there is a slightly earlier, slightly veiled reference” to the double nature of humans in Proclus’ account of the three races at: in *Plat. Remp.* 2.74-75 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = *OF* 140 K).

⁸⁸ Linforth 1941: 327-330; West 1983: 164-165; Brisson 1995: 481-495; Mancini 1999: 158-159; Edmonds 1999; 2009a; 2013: 374-390.

⁸⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26 Kroll (*OF* 320 II B = *OF* 140 K).

⁹⁰ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B); see also: Eustathius, in *Il.* 332.23 (*OF* 320 XII B).

⁹¹ Dio Chrysostom 30.10 (*OF* 320 VII B); Oppian, *Hal.* 5.9-10 (*OF* 320 XIV B); Iulianus, *Epist.* 89b 292 (159.19 Bidez); Titulus, *a Cyriac. Ancon. Perinthi* (*OF* 320 XI B).

⁹² Bernabé *ad loc.*: “incertum utrum in Rhapsodiis homines a Titanum cineribus (ut narravit Olympiodor.) an ab eorum sanguine (ut Dio, Iulian, Tit. Perinth.) orti sint; probabiliter ab ambobus.”

⁹³ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = *OF* 220 K).

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.⁹⁴ 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.”⁹⁵ Olympiodorus “does not say that he found the idea that the body of man is Dionysiac in an Orphic poem” but “offers this implication as a conjecture of his own.” Linforth calls it “an audacious conjecture” for Olympiodorus to claim that a part of the body is divine, since no other Platonist would “locate the divine element ... anywhere but in the soul.”⁹⁶

Likewise, Brisson finds “undeniable originality” in Olympiodorus’ claim that humans come “from the sublimate (*sublimé*) of the humid vapours arising from the Titans.”⁹⁷ He argues that translating *αιθάλη* 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*.”⁹⁸ In other words, the *αιθάλη* 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.”⁹⁹ He

⁹⁴ Linforth 1941: 327-328. He notes that “in Proclus all mortal creatures, men and animals included, are sprung from the Titans,” but only “Olympiodorus expressly limits his statement to human beings.”

⁹⁵ Linforth 1941: 329-330.

⁹⁶ Linforth 1941: 330.

⁹⁷ Brisson 1995: 490-491: “originalité indéniable”; “du ‘sublimé’ des vapeurs humides s’élevant des Titans frappés par la foudre de Zeus.”

⁹⁸ Brisson 1995: 493-494: “opération alchimique”; “vapeurs qui, elles-mêmes, donnent un sublimé.”

⁹⁹ Brisson 1995: 493-494: “non comme un témoignage sur la teneur d’un épisode supporté par la théogonie orphique, mais comme l’interprétation ‘mystique’ d’une opération alchimique.”

concludes that “this anthropogony ... is not truly Orphic.”¹⁰⁰ 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,”¹⁰¹ and not all scholars agree that this one detail is even impacted.¹⁰²

As usual, Edmonds pushes the sceptical 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.”¹⁰³ 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.¹⁰⁴ On the contrary, Olympiodorus is our first source to suggest that there is something divine in our bodies: “if the Titans from whom the human body is created consumed Dionysos, then the human body itself must partake of the divine.”¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ 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.”¹⁰⁷

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

¹⁰⁰ Brisson 1995: 494: “on peut en conclure que cette anthropogonie, dont les spécialistes font la pierre angulaire de l’Orphisme, n’est pas véritablement orphique.”

¹⁰¹ Graf & Johnston 2013: 193.

¹⁰² Bernabé (2002d: 405-406) disagrees with Brisson: “this translation is, to say the least, questionable. Nothing prevents us from believing that *aithale* takes in the text of Olympiodorus the vulgar sense of ‘soot, ash or residue,’ and not an alchemical sense” (“cette traduction est, pour le moins, discutable. Rien n’empêche de croire que *aithale* prend dans le texte d’Olympiodore le sens vulgaire de ‘suie, cendre ou résidu’, et non un sens alchimique”).

¹⁰³ Edmonds 2013: 375.

¹⁰⁴ Edmonds 2013: 379, criticizing Bernabé 2002d: 404-408. He claims that it is “a circular argument” to treat Olympiodorus as “evidence for another text that does include original sin as its central theme ... the Orphic Rhapsodies.”

¹⁰⁵ Edmonds 2013: 388.

¹⁰⁶ Edmonds 2013: 381-390. He concludes that Olympiodorus’ version of the Zagreus myth is “the product of careful and deliberate manipulation of the mythic tradition, rather than the mindless preservation of a single text”; cf. Yates 2004: 192-193.

¹⁰⁷ Edmonds 2013: 297.

implications are not that we must cleanse our souls from their Titanic nature, but that we must preserve our bodies with 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 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."¹⁰⁸ Herrero also objects to Edmonds and argues that "ancestral fault" is a more accurate term than "original sin."¹⁰⁹ 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 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' snake form. 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" (εἰς δράκοντα μεταμορφωθῆναι καὶ τῇ ἰδίᾳ θυγατρὶ μιγῆναι).¹¹⁰ This is a late source, but Clement of Alexandria mentions this element too.¹¹¹ So it is reasonable to think

¹⁰⁸ Graf & Johnston 2013: 193.

¹⁰⁹ Herrero 2010: 336: "the Christian idea of the original sin committed by the first human beings is not equivalent to the 'antecedent sin' committed by the 'ancestors' of human beings, the Titans ... they inherit 'genetically' from them a physical impurity from which they need to be purified, not a moral responsibility that demands redemption." Gagné (2013: 454-461) relates the notion of ancestral fault to Orphic theistic practice and suggests (p. 460) that ancestral fault in the Zagreus myth "is not a determined value ('the Orphic doctrine of inherited guilt'), but a resonant idea with many possible shapes, configurations, and ramifications in time and kinship."

¹¹⁰ Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.25 Rabe) (*OF* 280 B); see also: West 1983: 95-98.

¹¹¹ Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.16.1. For some reason Bernabé does not include it anywhere in his collection of theogonic fragments, but he does include it at *OF* 589 I B, and he cites it in his notes at *OF* 89 B.

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 seems to point back to ancient Cretan rituals that became associated with chthonic Zeus in the Archaic Period. Along with the Curetes and the cave in Crete, this indicates an early origin of at least this element of the myth.¹¹² The motif of inverted sacrifice might point to an early 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.¹¹³

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.¹¹⁴ Walter F. 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

¹¹² 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 = *OF* 58-59 K); cf. Nonnus, *Dion.* 5.565-566: "high-ruling Zeus having desire for dreadful-fated Zagreus, / whom Persephone gave birth to in the dragon-like bed of Zeus" (αἰνομόρου Ζαγρήος ἔχων πόθον ὑψιμέδων Ζεύς, / ὃν τέκε Περσεφόνηα δρακοντείη Διὸς εὐνή); Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 26.1 (139 Turcan) (*OF* 589 VI B): "bull and serpent father of serpent and bull" (ταῦρος δράκοντος καὶ ταύρου δράκων πατήρ). For the association of chthonic Zeus with Crete, see Kerényi 1951: 1-13; Faure 1964; Huxley 1967: 85-87; Verbruggen 1981: 91-99; West *ad* Hesiod, *Theogony* 453-506; Bernabé *ad OF* 205 B; *LIMC* VIII s.v. Zeus, 316 n. 11. Callimachus, *Aetia* fr. 43b43 Harder = fr. 43.116 Pfeiffer (*OF* 34 B = *OF* 210 p. 230 K) associates Dionysus Zagreus with Cretan rituals.

¹¹³ Prometheus in Hesiod, *Theogony* 507-616; Pelops in Pindar, *Ol.* 1; Thyestes in Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1215-1245; on the importance of consumption in the Prometheus myth, see Stocking 2013: 183-210. Detienne and Vernant (1986: 23-29) make clear that the Prometheus myth in Hesiod is not merely an aetiological explanation of one aspect of sacrifice (humans getting the meat, the gods getting bones wrapped in fat), but it is about the fundamental division between humans and gods. Likewise, the Titanic sacrifice of the Orphic myth establishes the relationship between mortal and immortal because in this case the result is anthropogony.

¹¹⁴ In case it does not suffice, see also: Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.5.1, where Dionysus drives Lycurgus mad so that he kills his wife and son; Plutarch, *Qu. Gr.* 38, 299e-300a, where Dionysus drives the Minyads mad so that they kill one of their sons; Pausanias 9.30.5, where Orpheus is killed by the maenads; and the *sparagmos* and *omophagia* of the maenads and wild animals in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

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."¹¹⁵ He 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."¹¹⁶ Nor is this the only myth that sends Dionysus to the Underworld, as Aristophanes' *Frogs* and other sources attest.¹¹⁷ 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" (μαινομένοιο Διωνύσοιο, 6.132) who flees to the sea from "man-slaying Lycurgus" (άνδροφόνοιο Λυκούργου, 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 the question of the antiquity of the myth, there is no reason to disbelieve that some elements of the myth were very early. On 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 of Dionysus and the Titans in a literary context where we know that a narrative of this myth was found: that is, in the Orphic Rhapsodies. Because of the numerous references to this narrative in both Neoplatonists and Christian apologists, we have a relatively clear idea of the content of this narrative in the Rhapsodies and how this content 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,

¹¹⁵ Otto 1965 [1933]: 191-192.

¹¹⁶ Otto 1965 [1933]: 200-201.

¹¹⁷ There was an Argive ritual in which Dionysus was invoked out of the sea, and every year Dionysus was called back to life at Delphi (Plutarch, *De Is. et Osir.* 35, 364f-365a; cf. *Iliad* 6.130-140, where Dionysus flees to the sea to escape Lycurgus). See also: Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.5.1, where Dionysus is driven mad but then cured by Rhea, who performs a purification rite and teaches him τελεταί.

none of which centered around a notion of original sin or ancestral fault. Neoplatonic allegories were merely the last in a succession of interpretations, so the next section reviews six of these ancient interpretations.

(b) Ancient Interpretations of the Myth 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 the time of Hecataeus (sixth century BC) to the time of Damascius (sixth century AD), Greek prose authors attempted through various methods, such as etymologies, Euhemerist interpretations, and allegories, to rationalize traditional tales.¹¹⁸ These rationalizations took on a number of different forms that did not necessarily conflict with each other or even with traditional myth. As Hawes has recently argued, rationalization was a form of storytelling, a “revisionist mode” that operated along with Greek tradition because it was a part of it.¹¹⁹ Indeed, “rationalizing critique engages in ‘bricolage’, creating new narrative by tinkering with familiar motifs and patterns.”¹²⁰ 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) Euhemerist, (3) apologetic, (4) Stoic cosmology, (5) Neoplatonic metaphysics, and (6) Neoplatonic spiritual interpretation.¹²¹ A discussion of the different interpretations that were applied to the myth of Dionysus and the Titans will also reveal what each of these ancient sources can tell us about the contents of the

¹¹⁸ Hawes 2014: 6-13; Hecataeus fr. 1 Fowler. Hawes points out that Herodorus of Heraclea (*fl. c.* 400 BC) rationalized myths in a few different ways, but maintained some details without rationalization: e.g., using the story of Heracles capturing Cerberus to explain a local plant as Cerberus’ bile, while not attempting to rationalize the fact that Cerberus was the three-headed hound of Hades (Herodorus fr. 31 Fowler).

¹¹⁹ Hawes 2014: 18-22. She calls it a “linguistic game” and points out that what was different from traditional storytelling was that rationalization made narratives “convincing according to a particular standard of plausibility.”

¹²⁰ Hawes 2014: 225.

¹²¹ Pépin (1970: 306-312) summarizes four types of ancient exegesis of the dismemberment myth: naturalist exegesis, which is physical allegory; cosmological exegesis, which is essentially Stoic; metaphysical exegesis, which is the Neoplatonist allegory; and spiritual exegesis, which is basically a consequence of the Neoplatonist metaphysical allegory (“*exégèses naturalistes ... exégèse cosmologique ... exégèse métaphysique ... exégèse spirituelle*”). In order to take into account the way Christian authors make use of this myth (e.g., Clement of Alexandria and Firmicus Maternus), I add two more categories: apologetic and Euhemerist.

myth. After taking note of the different 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 interpreting the gods as representing some aspect of the physical universe, so naturally some authors subjected the dismemberment myth to a physical allegory in which Dionysus represented grapes.¹²² Diodorus Siculus (first century BC) relates what “the mythographers transmitted” (παραδεδωκότων ... τῶν μυθογράφων) about Dionysus being torn apart “by the earthborn” (ὑπὸ τῶν γηγενῶν). In this account, Dionysus is the son of Zeus and Demeter, which means that the vine grows “from the earth and rain” (ἐκ τε γῆς καὶ ὄμβρων). His dismemberment by the earthborn represents the grapes being harvested “by the farmers” (ὑπὸ τῶν γεωργῶν).¹²³ 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” (σύμφωνα δὲ τούτοις εἶναι τὰ τε δηλούμενα διὰ τῶν Ὀρφικῶν ποιημάτων καὶ τὰ παρεισαγόμενα κατὰ τὰς τελετάς).¹²⁴ Likewise, Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (first century AD) mentions a version in which Dionysus “was put together again by Rhea” (συνετέθη πάλιν ὑπὸ τῆς Ρέας). He adds that “those who transmit the myth say allegorically that the farmers, being creatures of the earth, mix up the grapes” (αἰνιττομένων τῶν παραδόντων τὸν μῦθον ὅτι οἱ γεωργοί, θρέμματα γῆς ὄντες, συνέχεαν τοὺς βότρυς). The putting together of Dionysus’ limbs represents the “flowing together of new wine” (σύρρυσις τοῦ γλεύκου).¹²⁵ 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

¹²² On this particular physical allegory, see Lobeck 1829: 710; Linforth 1941: 315; Pépin 1970: 306-307; Sorel 1995: 75; Brisson 1995: 67; Bernabé 2004: 65. West (1983: 141-142, 245-246) suggests that this allegory was actually a part of the Rhapsodic poem, since in certain fragments Dionysus is called Wine, but this is a case in which there is a fine line between allegory and metonymy; Dionysus is called Wine at: Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 108.13 Pasquali (*OF* 303, 321 I, 331 I B = *OF* 216 c K); 109.9-19 Pasquali (*OF* 314 III, 331 II B = *OF* 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; Hawes 2014: 29-37. A good example of physical allegory is Heraclitus’ *Homeric Problems* (late first century AD), in which the myths of Homer are subjected to explanations which, according to Hawes (2014: 30), “reduce the plots of Homer’s epics to a series of speculations on the nature of the world”; cf. Russel & Konstan 1985: xiii-xxix.

¹²³ Note the wordplay between the phrases ὑπὸ τῶν γηγενῶν and ὑπὸ τῶν γεωργῶν.

¹²⁴ Diodorus Siculus 3.62.6-8 (*OF* 58, 59 III, 399 III B = *OF* 301 K).

¹²⁵ Cornutus, *De nat. deor.* 30 (62.10-16).

version of the myth of Dionysus and the Titans, and thus he may serve as a *terminus ante quem* not only for the composition/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 (*fl. c.* 300 BC), who explained the gods as humans in the distant past who were deified in later cult practice, long after it was forgotten that they had been humans.¹²⁶ 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” (τῶν δὲ μυθογράφων οἱ σωματοειδῆ τὸν θεὸν παρεισάγοντες)¹²⁷ and discusses at length the debate about whether there was one Dionysus or three (3.63-74). He says nothing further in this passage about the dismemberment story, but he is a useful source for the Euhemerists’ interpretations of 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.¹²⁸ 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” (*satellites suos qui Titanes vocabantur in interioribus regiae locat partibus*) and “with rattles and a mirror” (*crepundiis ac speculo*) 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” (*interceptus trucidatur et ut nullum possit necis inveniri vestigium particulatim membra concisa satellitum sibi dividit turba*).¹²⁹ In order to discard the evidence they “cooked the boy’s limbs in various ways and devoured them” (*decocta variis generibus pueri membra consumunt*), but Liber’s sister Minerva saved the heart and “unfolded the tale of the crime” (*ordinem facinoris exponit*) to her father.¹³⁰ The angry king “put the Titans to various sorts of torture and killed them” (*Titanas quidem vario*

¹²⁶ Hawes (2014: 26-29) distinguishes between Palaephatean rationalization, which is “a form of narrative interpretation,” and Euhemerism, which “explains the nature of contemporary cultic practice.”

¹²⁷ Diodorus Siculus 3.63.1.

¹²⁸ Herrero 2010: 136; see Bernabé *ad OF* 304 B: “from Euhemerus or his imitator” (“ex Euhemero vel eius imitatore”), following Decharme 1966 [1904]: 385.

¹²⁹ Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 6.2-3 (88 Turcan) (*OF* 304 III, 309 VII, 313 III B = *OF* 214 K).

¹³⁰ Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 6.3 (88-89 Turcan) (*OF* 313 III, 314 IV B = *OF* 214 K).

genere excruciatos necat), and “he had a statue of the boy molded in plaster” (*imaginem eius ex gypso plastico opere perfecit*) with the heart placed in the chest of the statue.¹³¹

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 *satellites* of the king’s wife. This is what Maternus claims to reveal as “superstitions, of which the secrets must be revealed” (*superstitiones, quarum secreta pandenda sunt*), because the point of his Euhemerist interpretation is to explain the origin of Dionysiac rites¹³² and to argue that “in these profane cults ... the deaths of humans have been made sacred” (*in istis profanis religionibus ... mortes esse hominum consecratas*).¹³³ Maternus goes on to narrate how, after all of these violent events had occurred:

Cretenses ut furentis tyranni saevitiam mitigarent festos funeris dies statuunt et annum sacrum trieterica consecratione componunt, omnia per ordinem facientes quae puer moriens aut fecit aut passus est. vivum laniant dentibus taurum, crudeles epulas annuis commemorationibus excitantes ... praefertur cista in qua cor soror latenter absconderat tibiaram cantu et cymbalorum tinnitu crepundia, quibus puer deceptus fuerat, metiuntur, sic in honorem tyranni a serviente plebe deus factus est qui habere non potuit sepulturam.

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.¹³⁴

This Euhemerist interpretation was used both to rationalize the myth and to explain the origin of certain rites that apparently were practised by the Cretans. With the mention of gypsum (*ex gypso plastico*), rattles and a mirror (*crepundiis ac speculo*), this fragment has commonly been mentioned in modern discussions of the relationship between the

¹³¹ Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 6.4 (89 Turcan) (*OF* 318 V, 325 B = *OF* 214 K).

¹³² See Bernabé *ad OF* 304 B: by referring to *Liberi et Liberae*, Maternus is referring to the mysteries of Dionysus and Persephone; see also: Le Bonniec 1958: 333-340; Turcan *ad loc.*

¹³³ Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 6.1 (88 Turcan) (*OF* 304 III B = *OF* 214 K).

¹³⁴ Firmicus Maternus, *De err.* 6.5 (89-90 Turcan) (*OF* 315 IV, 332 B = *OF* 214 K).

dismemberment myth and initiation ritual.¹³⁵ 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.”¹³⁶ Rather, it seems that Maternus is mixing 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.¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸

(3) *Apologetic interpretation.* Herrero has outlined the approaches of Christian apologists toward Orphic literature, ranging from outright “rejection” to “appropriation” or “omission” of certain elements.¹³⁹ He points out that every reference to Orphic literature by Christian authors from the second to fifth centuries AD is oriented toward “presenting Christianity and confronting its rivals.”¹⁴⁰ Considering it unlikely that anyone other than Christians would have been interested in apologetic literature, he conjectures that their most likely audience was Christians, whom they “sought to instruct ... in tools for confronting paganism.” Their sources were “above all literary” – in fact, most later apologists were not working with original Orphic poetry, but only with what they found in anthologies and in earlier apologists, especially Clement of Alexandria (second century AD).¹⁴¹ Typically the

¹³⁵ Pépin 1970: 312-313; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356-360; West 1983: 154-159; Villarrubia 2011: 111-117; Cordero 2011: 119-122. Henrichs (1972: 56-74) relates the preservation of the heart to Egyptian eschatology. Herrero (2010: 156) views the mention of the rattles and mirror as “a very powerful indication of their importance in the myth and perhaps in the ritual on which the Euhemerist version is based.” At least the use of a mirror in ritual is attested by the Neoplatonists (see below).

¹³⁶ Henrichs 1978: 148; cf. Herrero 2010: 158: “Leaving aside the practical difficulty of devouring a live bull with one’s teeth ... this is not an imitation of the fate of Dionysus, who was obviously not devoured alive but rather sacrificed beforehand.” As Burkert (1983: 1-82) argued, ritual also tended to mitigate the cruelty of sacrificial killing.

¹³⁷ Herrero (2010: 158) argues that “Crete’s mysterious aura for the purposes of all religious activity allows Firmicus to mix in any and every Bacchic ritual element ... without worrying about internal contradictions.”

¹³⁸ Herrero 2010: 239.

¹³⁹ Herrero 2010: 238-250.

¹⁴⁰ Herrero 2010: 127.

¹⁴¹ Herrero 2010: 217-219.

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 Four. In many of their accounts of Orphic myth, the response they attempt to invoke with their tone of “scandal or mockery” is “indignation and laughter.”¹⁴²

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.¹⁴³ 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 the 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.¹⁴⁴ 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.¹⁴⁵ He criticizes the way “Zeus is both the father and the seducer of Kore, and he has sex with her in the shape of a snake” (πατήρ καὶ φθορεὺς Κόρης ὁ Ζεὺς, καὶ μίγνυται δράκων γενόμενος, 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” (τὰ γὰρ Διονύσου μυστήρια τέλειον ἀπάνθρωπα, 2.17.2). To make the myth seem even more inhuman, he emphasizes Dionysus' youth: “while he was still a child” (εἰσέτι παῖδα ὄντα) the Titans “deceived him with childish toys” (ἀπατήσαντες παιδαριώδεσιν ἀθύρμασιν), and “they dismembered him

¹⁴² Herrero 2010: 231, 238, 242-250: “rejection” as opposed to “appropriation” or “omission.”

¹⁴³ Herrero 2010: 131.

¹⁴⁴ Eusebius (*Praep. Ev.* 2.2.64) says that before Clement's conversion, he had been initiated into the mysteries, but Herrero dismisses this claim because of “Clement's imprecisions.” For example, his statement that Bacchic orgies included “the eating of raw flesh” (ὠμοφαγία, 2.12.2) indicates that he confused the *omophagia* in myth and what really happened in ritual. Herrero (2010: 55, 218) suggests that either Orphic-Bacchic rites “had an important role in imperial Egypt” or that, whether they existed or not, they were “equally considered to exist by his pagan audience.” See also Herrero 2010: 188-189 & n. 105, where he suggests that Clement had access to a Hellenistic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus: this implies that he might have had access to other Hellenistic Orphic poems, such as the Hieronyman Theogony, but none of this is certain.

¹⁴⁵ Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.17-18 (*OF* 306 I, 312 I, 315 I, 318 I, 322 I B = *OF* 34-35 K). Likewise, the fact that these two sections are cut into five separate fragments is typical of Bernabé.

when he was still a child” (διέσπασαν, ἔτι νηπίαχον ὄντα).¹⁴⁶ Herrero points out that by using the verb διασπάω three times, “Clement uses verbs characteristic of maenadism ... as if ... it were a *diasparagmos* in which the flesh is devoured raw.”¹⁴⁷ 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.¹⁴⁸ 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.¹⁴⁹ Clement attributes to Orpheus two hexameter lines describing the toys with which the Titans lure Dionysus into their trap:

κῶνος καὶ ῥόμβος καὶ παίγνια καμπεσίγνια,
μῆλά τε χρύσεια καλὰ παρ’ Ἑσπερίδων λιγυφώνων.

Cone and spinning-top and limb-moving playthings,
and beautiful golden apples from the clear-toned Hesperides.¹⁵⁰

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 were ritual objects.¹⁵¹ One indication that they are ritual objects is that after Clement quotes these lines, he takes the opportunity “to exhibit for condemnation” (εἰς κατάγνωσιν παραθέσθαι) what he believes to be “the useless symbols of this mystic rite” (τῆσδε ... τῆς τελετῆς τὰ ἀχρεῖα σύμβολα). These include: “knuckle-bones, ball, hoop, apples, spinning-top, mirror, tuft of wool” (ἀστράγαλος, σφαῖρα, στρόβιλος, μῆλα, ῥόμβος, ἔσοπτρον, πόκος, 2.18.1).¹⁵² 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

¹⁴⁶ Clement, *Protr.* 2.17.2 (26 Marc.) (OF 306 I B = OF 34 K); νηπίαχος, originally a diminutive of νήπιος, is a stronger word than παῖς, perhaps better translated as “little boy” or “infant.”

¹⁴⁷ Herrero 2010: 267.

¹⁴⁸ It is not so clear that the Titans use their teeth: Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (OF 301 I B = OF 210 K) uses σπαράττειν: the Titans “tear to pieces,” and Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 6.169-173 (OF 308 I B = OF ad 209 K) says that they killed him “with a sacrificial knife” (μαχαίρη).

¹⁴⁹ Herrero 2010: 228; cf. Lollianus, *Phoinikika* and Henrichs 1972: 56-73.

¹⁵⁰ Clement, *Protr.* 2.17.2 (26 Marc.) (OF 306.1-2 B = OF 34 K).

¹⁵¹ Gow 1934: 5-7; Jeanmaire 1951: 388-389; Guthrie 1952: 120-123; Henrichs 1972: 61-62; Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356-360; West 1983: 157-159; Bernabé *ad loc.* For example, the spinning-tops and knucklebones seem to have just been toys, but there are indications of ritual associations in the pine-cone (the head of the thyrsus) and the apples of the Hesperides (associated with immortality).

¹⁵² Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.1 (OF 588 I B = OF 34 K); this phrase does not occur in Bernabé’s collection of the Rhapsodic fragments, but with fragments pertaining to Orphic ritual.

them down, and then ‘fixing them on spits, held them over Hephaistos’” (οἱ δὲ Τιτᾶνες, οἱ καὶ διασπάσαντες αὐτόν, λέβητά τινα τρίποδι ἐπιθέντες καὶ τοῦ Διονύσου ἐμβαλόντες τὰ μέλη, καθήψουν πρότερον ἔπειτα ὀβελίσκοις ἀμπεύραντες ὑπείρεχον Ἡφαίστοιο).¹⁵³ Zeus strikes the Titans with lightning and gives Dionysus’ body parts to Apollo, who “bore the dismembered corpse to Parnassus, and there deposited it” (εἰς τὸν Παρνασσὸν φέρων κατατίθεται διεσπασμένον τὸν νεκρόν).¹⁵⁴

Clement is exemplary of the way other apologists treated this myth. Indeed, according to Herrero most later apologists “add no new information ... [but] are inspired by this section of the *Protrepticus*.”¹⁵⁵ Arnobius relates that Liber “was occupied with childish games and dismembered by the Titans” (*occupatus puerilibus ludicris distractus ab Titanis*) and lists many of the same items as Clement, calling it a “secret and unspeakable matter” (*arcana et tacenda res*).¹⁵⁶ Origen rejects the scandalous elements of the myth, saying that “in [Moses’ writings] no one ever dared to commit such things as” (οὐδεὶς ... παρ’ αὐτῷ ἐτόλμησε ... ὅσα) Zeus having sex with his daughter.¹⁵⁷ He suggests that Biblical narratives “appear more worthy of respect” (σεμνότερα φανεῖται) than the story of Dionysus’ dismemberment.¹⁵⁸ Clement is also an example of what the apologists did not say. Herrero points out that neither Clement nor Arnobius calls Dionysus the son of Zeus or mentions that the Titans eat him (unlike Firmicus Maternus, who describes it in detail), possibly avoiding the theme because Christians were accused of cannibalism.¹⁵⁹ 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).¹⁶⁰

¹⁵³ Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.1-2 (*OF* 312 I, 315 I B = *OF* 35 K).

¹⁵⁴ Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.2 (27 Marc.) (*OF* 318 I, 322 I B = *OF* 35 K). Clement mocks Zeus for “having appeared afterward” (ὑστερον ἐπιφανείς) with the parenthetical comment that “since he was a god, perhaps he participated in the flavour of the roasted flesh [of Dionysus’ body], which your gods agree to ‘receive as their due share’” (εἰ θεὸς ἦν, τάχα που τῆς κνίσης τῶν ὀπτωμένων κρεῶν μεταλαβὼν, ἧς δὴ τὸ ‘γέρας λαχεῖν’ ὁμολογοῦσιν ὑμῶν οἱ θεοί).

¹⁵⁵ Herrero 2010: 149.

¹⁵⁶ Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 5.19 (273.7 Marchesi) (*OF* 306 II, 312 III, 318 VII B = *OF* 34 K). He lists “knuckle-bones, mirror, spinning-top, spinning wheels and round balls and golden apples taken from the virgin Hesperides” (*talos speculum turbines, volubiles rotulas et teretis pilas et virginibus aurea sumpta ab Hesperidibus mala*).

¹⁵⁷ Origen, *c. Cels.* 1.17 (*OF* 282 B).

¹⁵⁸ Origen, *c. Cels.* 4.17 (*OF* 326 IV B).

¹⁵⁹ Herrero 2010: 249, 355-357; Clement, *Protr.* 2.18.1, Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 5.19; Firmicus Maternus 6.3.

¹⁶⁰ Herrero 2010: 214-216, 248-249, 328-335; Origen, *c. Cels.* 3.22-43.

The apologetic interpretation of the myth of Dionysus and the Titans is at least indirectly based on the Rhapsodies, since Clement seems to have had access to the Rhapsodies and most later apologists relied on Clement. The apologetic interpretation reads 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 Greek myths. In a tone of mockery, Clement lists the “useless” (ἀχρεῖα, 1.18.1) items used to lure Dionysus and he describes the involvement of the 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, he and other apologists avoid uncomfortable topics, such as cannibalism and resurrection. Simply put, the apologetic approach 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. Pépin refers to Plutarch’s interpretation of the dismemberment myth as an allegory for the “alternation of ἐκπυρώσεις and διακοσμήσεις” (i.e., ‘conflagration’ at the end and ‘setting in order’ at the beginning of the cosmic cycle) which “defines the cosmology of ancient Stoicism.”¹⁶¹ Plutarch discusses the connection between Apollo and “Dionysus, whose share in Delphi is no less than Apollo’s” (τὸν Διόνυσον, ὃ τῶν Δελφῶν οὐδὲν ἦττον ἢ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι μέτεστιν). He refers to “the theologians” (οἱ θεολόγοι) writing in both verse and prose about Dionysus “undergoing transformations of himself” (μεταβολαῖς ἑαυτοῦ χρώμενος). Dionysus is equated with Apollo because of his “solitary state” (μόνωσις), 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” (τῆς δ’ εἰς πνεύματα καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆν καὶ ἄστρα καὶ φυτῶν ζώων τε γενέσεις τροπῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ διακοσμήσεως τὸ μὲν πάθημα καὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν διασπασμὸν τινα καὶ διαμελισμὸν αἰνίττονται). Plutarch even mentions the name of Zagreus, so he is one of the first ancient authors to refer explicitly to that name in

¹⁶¹ Pépin 1970: 307-308: “cette alternance d’ἐκπυρώσεις et de διακοσμήσεις définit la cosmologie de l’ancien stoïcisme.”

the context of the dismemberment myth.¹⁶² Pépin explains Plutarch’s allegory as 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.¹⁶³ As the next section demonstrates, this association of Dionysus with differentiation and Apollo with unification was repeated in Neoplatonic interpretations.

(5) *Neoplatonic metaphysics*. This is the way the story of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies fits into the Neoplatonic allegorical scheme that was the topic of Chapter Five. 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 the 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 intellect of the world” and “the son that in the Hypercosmic series ... Kore gave to Zeus” – Dionysus is the deity whom Proclus equates with the world soul in Plato’s *Timaeus*.¹⁶⁴ 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 having sex with her in the form of a snake to give birth to Dionysus.¹⁶⁵ We saw in Chapter Five how Kronos, Rhea, and Zeus form the top triad of the Kronian hebdomad in the Neoplatonic universe; in the second triad Kore appears with Athena and the Curetes; and at the bottom we find the monad Zeus as

¹⁶² Plutarch, *De E apud Delphos* 9.388e-389a (*OF* 613 II B).

¹⁶³ Pépin 1970: 307-308.

¹⁶⁴ Brisson 1995: 84: “L’intellect du monde, c’est Dionysos, le fils que dans la série hypercosmique ... Koré donne à Zeus”; Plato, *Timaeus* 34b: “and in the midst thereof he [i.e., the Demiurge] set Soul, which he stretched throughout the whole of it [i.e., the cosmos]” (ψυχὴν δὲ εἰς τὸ μέσον αὐτοῦ θεῖς διὰ παντός τε ἔτεινεν). The earliest appearance of the Neoplatonic allegorical interpretation of the dismemberment myth is Alexander of Lycopolis, *Cont. Manich.* 5.74 Brinkmann (*OF* 311 XI B), written before AD 280: Alexander claims that the myth represents the way “the divine power is divided into matter” (τὴν θεῖαν δύναμιν μερίζεσθαι εἰς τὴν ὕλην). See Lobeck 1829: 710; Linforth 1941: 320-321; Bernabé *ad loc.*

¹⁶⁵ 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.

Intellective Intellect. 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”¹⁶⁶ (τῷ μὲν Κρόνῳ συνοῦσα κατὰ τὴν ἀκρότητα τὴν ἑαυτῆς), but “together with Zeus unfolding the whole and partial orders of the gods, she is called Demeter” (μετὰ Διὸς ἐκφαίνουσα τοὺς τε ὅλους καὶ τοὺς μερικοὺς διακόσμους τῶν θεῶν, Δημήτηρ). As Demeter she “together with Zeus generates Kore” (συναπογεννᾷ τὴν Κόρην μετὰ τοῦ Διός).¹⁶⁷ 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.¹⁶⁸

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 of the level of Soul, which consists of four triads of Hypercosmic deities. The top triad, “paternal/demiurgical,” consists of Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto.¹⁶⁹ 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.¹⁷⁰ In his commentary on Plato’s *Cratylus*, Proclus elaborates on the way Kore

¹⁶⁶ See translation of Saffrey-Westerink *ad* 5.38: “par son sommet,” which agrees with LSJ s.v. ἀκρότης; “summit”; but see *DGE* s.v. ἀκρότης, which suggests “culminación, perfección.”

¹⁶⁷ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 5.11 (5.39.8-24 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 206 III, 276 II B = *OF* 153 K). See Saffrey & Westerink *ad loc*: “As the transcendent demiurge, Demeter-Rhea generates Zeus with the help of Cronos, and as the coordinated demiurge, she generates Kore with the help of Zeus” (“En tant que transcendante au démiurge, Déméter-Rhée engendre Zeus avec l’aide de Cronos, et en tant que coordonnée au démiurge, elle engendre Coré avec l’aide de Zeus.”)

¹⁶⁸ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1 Pasquali; *Theol. Plat.* 5.35 (5.127.21 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 278 I-II B = *OF* 151 K); 6.13 (6.66.4 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 279 I B = *OF* 191 K); see Chapter Five, section (e) for more detail. 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: “Rhea represents the powers of generation which are handed down from the intelligible-intellectual region and become manifest in her as the power of bearing life ... Core thus becomes the generative power of particular life which may be traced back to its universal source in Rhea.”

¹⁶⁹ Chlup 2012: 126; Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.6-9. According to Duvick *ad* Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 58.1, these three Demiurges “can be viewed as different aspects of the same universal deity,” though “each has his own identity and role within the *huparxis*.”

¹⁷⁰ Brisson 1995: 82: “qui correspond en fait aux aides du démiurge dans le *Timée*”; Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.10-11; Plato, *Timaeus* 42d-e: “he [i.e., the Demiurge] delivered over to the young gods the task of shaping mortal bodies, and of completing and ruling all the rest of the human soul which it was still necessary to add, together with all that belonged thereto, and of governing this mortal creature in the fairest and best way

relates to “the demiurgic triad which divides up all the cosmos” (τῆς δημιουργικῆς τριάδος τῆς διελομένης τὸν σύμπαντα κόσμον):

πατήρ μὲν ὁ Ζεὺς, δύναμις δ’ ὁ Ποσειδῶν, νοῦς δ’ ὁ Πλούτων ... ζωῆς πάντων αἴτιοι πάντες, ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν οὐσιωδῶς ὁ δὲ ζωτικῶς ὁ δὲ νοερῶς. ὅθεν καὶ ὁ θεολόγος τοὺς μὲν ἄκρους μετὰ τῆς Κόρης φησὶ τὰ τε πρῶτα καὶ τὰ ἔσχατα δημιουργεῖν, τὸν δὲ μέσον καὶ ἄνευ ἐκείνης, ἀπὸ τοῦ σφετέρου κλήρου τὴν γεννητικὴν αἰτίαν συντάξαντα· διὸ καὶ φασὶν τὴν Κόρην ὑπὸ μὲν τοῦ Διὸς βιάζεσθαι, ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ Πλούτωνος ἀρπάζεσθαι.

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 the 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.¹⁷¹

Kore’s mating with both Zeus and Pluto is allegorically interpreted as the procession of paternal, demiurgic power through the generative triad toward the lower orders; it is through Kore that Zeus and Pluto “create the first and the last creatures.” According to Saffrey and Westerink, on the Hypercosmic level Kore plays “the same role that Rhea played in the triad of Intellectualive gods,”¹⁷² so the paternal power of Zeus and Pluto is channelled through the generative power of Kore to produce living beings. With Zeus she gives birth to Dionysus,¹⁷³ and with Pluto she gives birth to “nine grey-eyed daughters”

possible” (τοῖς νέοις παρέδωκεν θεοῖς σώματα πλάττειν θνητά, τό τ’ ἐπίλοιπον, ὅσον ἔτι ἦν ψυχῆς ἀνθρωπίνης δέον προσγενέσθαι, τοῦτο καὶ πάνθ’ ὅσα ἀκόλουθα ἐκείνοις ἀπεργασαμένους ἄρχειν, καὶ κατὰ δύναμιν ὅτι κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα τὸ θνητὸν διακυβερνᾷ ζῶον). See also: Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 106.5 Pasquali (text immediately following *OF* 293 B = *OF* 197 K): “[Artemis] is characterized by her quality of stability, [Athena] by that of reversion, while the generative aspect is allotted the middle order of her [i.e., Kore]” (ἡ μὲν κατὰ τὸ μόνιμον αὐτῆς, ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἐπιστρεπτικὸν χαρακτηρίζεται· τὸ δὲ γεννητικὸν μέσην ἐν αὐτῇ τάξιν ἔλαχεν).

¹⁷¹ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 85.5-23 Pasquali (*OF* 281 I, 289 I B = *OF* 195 K); τῆς δημιουργικῆς τριάδος ... ὁ δὲ νοερῶς not in Bernabé; cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.12 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 281 II B = *OF* 195 K).

¹⁷² Saffrey & Westerink *ad* Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.149: “On voit que Corè va jouer dans cette triade le même rôle que jouait Rhéa dans la triade des dieux intellectifs.” For more on Rhea in the Kronian hebdomad, see Chapter Five, section (e).

¹⁷³ For more evidence that this happens in the Rhapsodies, see *OF* 283 I-III B: in Diodorus 5.75.4, “they say this god was born from Zeus and Persephone in Crete, whom Orpheus in the mysteries taught was dismembered by the Titans” (τοῦτον δὲ τὸν θεὸν γεγονέναι φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς καὶ Φερσεφόνης κατὰ τὴν Κρήτην, ὃν Ὀρφεὺς κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς παρέδωκε διασπώμενον ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων); Ps.-Nonn. *ad Gregor. Orat. in Iulian.* 5.30 (207 Nimmo Smith) says that with Zeus “Persephone gave birth to Dionysus Zagreus” (Περσεφόνη γεννᾷ τὸν Ζαγρέα Διόνυσον) who was dismembered; Schol. Lucian. 52.9 (212.22 Rabe) identifies this Dionysus with Sabazius (Σαβάζιος) and associates him with “nocturnal and hidden honours” (τὰς τιμὰς νυκτερινὰς καὶ κρυφίους).

(έννεα θυγατέρας γλαυκώπιδας), the Eumenides.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, “the Koric order is twofold” (διττῆς δὲ οὔσης τῆς Κορικῆς τάξεως): “co-arranged with Zeus” (συντάττεται τῷ Διί), she “constitutes with him the one Demiurge of partible natures [i.e., Dionysus]” (μετ’ ἐκείνου τὸν ἕνα δημιουργὸν ὑφίστησι τῶν μεριστῶν), but with Pluto she is said “to animate the extremities of the universe” (ψυχοῦν τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ παντός).¹⁷⁵ As the middle term of the generative triad of Hypercosmic deities, Persephone is the channel through which the lower orders proceed from Zeus and Hades, who constitute the two extreme points of the paternal demiurgic triad.

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” (τὸν οὐρανὸν πέπλον ... οἶον θεῶν οὐρανίων περιβλήμα) when she is abducted by Hades.¹⁷⁶ 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.¹⁷⁷ The robe helps explain Persephone’s connection with Athena in the Neoplatonic triad, since the art of weaving, “originating” (ἀρχομένην) from Athena, “proceeds to the life-bearing series of Kore” (προιοῦσαν δ’ εἰς τὴν ζωογόνον τῆς Κόρης σειράν). Proclus uses this image of the robe as an allegory of how

¹⁷⁴ Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 106.5 Pasquali (*OF* 293 B = *OF* 197 K).

¹⁷⁵ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.4 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 295 B = *OF* 198 K); cf. Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.457.14 Diehl (*OF* 294 B = *OF* 190 K), where Kore is called “alone of her kind” (μονογένεια) in the Rhapsodies, and Proclus interprets this to mean that “since she presides over all Encosmic beings like a leader and is the cause of living things which are ‘alone of their kind’” (ὡς τῶν ἐγκοσμίων ἀπάντων ἡγεμονικῶς προϊσταμένην καὶ τῶν μονογενῶν ζώων αἰτίαν) (see Bernabé *ad loc.* for other ancient texts who use *μονογένεια* or its cognates); and Proclus, *in Plat. Cratyl.* 95.10 Pasquali (*OF* 292 B = *OF* 197 K), where Proclus says that “she is called Persephone especially when she associates with Pluto and orders the lowest elements of the universe with him” (Περσεφόνη καλεῖται μάλιστα τῷ Πλούτωνι συνοῦσα καὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ διακοσμοῦσα τὰ τελευταῖα τοῦ παντός).

¹⁷⁶ Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 14 p. 56.10 Simonini (*OF* 286 I B = *OF* 192 K). Bernabé (2004: 237) suggests that this part of the theogony was inserted “probably from a Pythagorean poem called *Peplon*” (“probabiliter ... e Pythagorico carmine Πέπλου intitulato”); cf. Lobeck 1829: 549-550; Kern 1888a: 97; West 1983: 244-245. But it might also be a response to Pherecydes of Syros (fr. 68-69 Schibli = 7 B2 D-K): “Zas fashions a robe both big and beautiful, and on it he embroiders Earth and Ogenos and the abodes of Ogenos” (Ζᾶς ποιεῖ φᾶρος μέγα τε καὶ καλὸν καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ποικίλλει γῆν καὶ Ὠγηνὸν καὶ τὰ Ὠγηνοῦ δόματα).

¹⁷⁷ 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 = *OF* 115 K); Lobeck 1829: 607; West 1983: 157 n. 68. For the scorpion, see Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 2.62.9 Kroll (*OF* 290 B = *OF* 196 K). For the Gigantomachy, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.85.14-16 Diehl and Tarrant *ad loc.* (p. 230). The inclusion of a scorpion is probably Hellenistic in origin, since it points to the sign of Scorpio in the Zodiac; see Festugière *ad loc.*; West 1983: 244-245; Brisson 1995: 66 n. 27. Dionysius Periegetes begins his description of the known world with Ocean (vv. 1-7), which is a geography, not a cosmology; but Lightfoot (*ad loc.*) notes similarities between this passage of Dionysius and other cosmologies such as Hesiod.

Kore is said to “weave the order of life” (ὕφαινειν ... τὸν διάκοσμον τῆς ζωῆς).¹⁷⁸ Damascius says that “the Hypercosmic robe-making of Kore” (Κορικῆς ὑπερκοσμίου πεπλοποιίας) produces the orderly arrangement of the universe, and he characterizes this process as “resemblance/copying” (ἀφομοιωτική), because “the imitation of Intelligible images is woven in as a pattern” (τὰ μιμήματα τῶν νοερῶν εἰδῶν ἐνυμφαίνεται).¹⁷⁹ 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” (τὸ γὰρ ‘ἀτελές’ ... τῶν ἰστῶν ἐνδείκνυται κάκεινο τὸ μέχρι τῶν αἰδίων ζῶων ἀτελές εἶναι τὸ πᾶν).¹⁸⁰

According to Neoplatonic allegory, the pattern Kore weaves in the robe represents the proceeding of the Hypercosmic and Hypercosmic-Encosmic deities, followed by Dionysus at the summit of the Encosmic deities. 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 (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’s *Phaedrus* 246e-247a: (1) Paternal: Zeus, Poseidon, Hephaestus; (2) Generative: Demeter, Hera, Artemis; (3) Perfective: Hermes, Aphrodite, Apollo; and (4) Protective: Hestia, Athena, Ares.¹⁸¹ 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, remaining “detached from the world.” The level of Encosmic deities is “the sensible world,” and the top sub-level of this is Encosmic Intellect, “a deity constituted of a body formed through the four elements ... a soul and an intellect.” Dionysus is “the intellect of the world,” so when Proclus says that Zeus “makes him king of all the Encosmic gods together” (βασιλέα ποιεῖ τῶν ἐγκοσμίων ἀπάντων θεῶν), Brisson takes this to mean that “he becomes the agent of the partial demiurge.”¹⁸² Dionysus is at the head of the Encosmic

¹⁷⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 22.1 Pasquali (*OF* 271 I, 286 III B = *OF* 192 K).

¹⁷⁹ Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 339 (3.123.14 Westerink) (*OF* 286 VI B = *OF* 192 K).

¹⁸⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.223.7 Diehl (*OF* 288 II B = *OF* 192 K).

¹⁸¹ Brisson 1995: 82-84; Chlup 2012: 126-127.

¹⁸² Brisson 1995: 82-84: “Les dieux hypercosmiques ... interviennent au niveau de ... celui de l’âme du monde transcendante ... Les dieux hypercosmique-encosmiques, c’est-à-dire les dieux détachés du monde, sont ceux que règnent sur la nature imparticipée ... Le monde sensible ... C’est un dieu constitué d’un corps formé à partir de quatre éléments ... d’une âme et d’un intellect. L’intellect du monde, c’est Dionysos ...

deities who correspond to Nature: while every level discussed in Chapter Five 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 which constitute the divine body.¹⁸³

With reference to this cosmic role of Dionysus, Proclus explains the Rhapsodic verse in which “the sweet offspring of Zeus was called forth” (γλυκερὸν δὲ τέκος Διὸς ἐξεκαλεῖτο) as referring to “the cosmic Intellect being a child of Zeus, proceeding down in relation to that which remains in Zeus” (ὁ κοσμικὸς νοῦς Δίῳς ὄν, κατὰ τὸν ἐν τῷ Διὶ μείναντα προελθόν), because “it is impossible for Intellect without Soul to be present in anything” (νοῦν ἄνευ ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τῷ).¹⁸⁴ Since Intellective Intellect transcends Encosmic Nature, it needs Hypercosmic Soul 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:

ἐν τοῖς νέοις ἄρα θεοῖς καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς δημιουργίαν τῶν θνητῶν καὶ τὴν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας αἰτίαν ὁ δημιουργὸς ἐνέθηκεν, ὥσπερ ἀπάντων τῶν ἐγκοσμίων ἐν τῇ μονάδι τῶν νέων θεῶν, ἣν καὶ αὐτὴν νέον θεὸν προσηγόρευσεν Ὀρφεύς.

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.¹⁸⁵

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

devient l’agent de la démiurgie partielle”; Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 55.5 Pasquali (*OF* 299 I = *OF* 208 K). See also: Festugière *ad* Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.310.29 Diehl (*OF* 299 III B = *OF* 207 K); Brisson 1995: 186: “the sensible world, i.e. the cosmos, is the image of living-in-self, of Phanes swallowed by Zeus” (“Le monde sensible, c’est-à-dire le cosmos, est l’image du Vivant-en-soi, c’est-à-dire de Phanès avalé par Zeus”).

¹⁸³ Chlup 2012: 127; Brisson 1995: 67: Hipta is a nymph who takes Dionysus to Mt. Ida when he is born from Zeus and Semele; for more on her, see below.

¹⁸⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.408.7 Diehl (*OF* 296 B = *OF* 199 K) (τῷ without accent in Bernabé *ad loc.*).

¹⁸⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.241.14 Diehl (*OF* 299 V B = *OF* 205 K).

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:

κλῦτε, θεοί· τόνδ' ὕμιν ἐγὼ βασιλῆα τίθημι
ἀθανάτοις καὶ πρωτίστας τιμὰς νέμω αὐτῷ
καίπερ ἔόντι νέῳ καὶ νηπίῳ εἰλαπιναστῆι.

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.¹⁸⁶

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” (τῆς μονάδος τῶν νέων θεῶν), he quotes a line of the Rhapsodies in which “Zeus accomplished/ruled all things, but Bacchus accomplished/ruled in addition [to Zeus]” (κραῖνε μὲν οὖν Ζεὺς πάντα πατήρ, Βάκχος δ' ἐπέκραινε).¹⁸⁷ Likewise, Damascius says that “Dionysus completes the work of Zeus ... who is the producer of all” (ὁ Διόνυσος ἐπικραίνει τὰ τοῦ Διὸς ἔργα ... ὀλοποιοῦ).¹⁸⁸ Damascius calls the activity of Zeus “demiurgic union” (ἔνωσις ... δημιουργική): Phanes the Paradigm contains the Forms undifferentiated as a whole, but Zeus the Demiurge is “the whole manifesting the parts” (ὀλότης ... τὰ μέρη προφαίνων) and “Dionysus is the unlimited plurality already divided” (τὸ ἄπειρον ἤδη μεριζόμενον πλῆθος).¹⁸⁹ In his *Parmenides* commentary, Proclus clarifies that “the One is one only and

¹⁸⁶ *OF* 299.1-3 B. No 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 = *OF* 208 K) and Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.4 (31 Westerink) (*OF* 299 II B = *OF* 208 K). Line three is cited in: Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.310.29 Diehl (*OF* 299 III B = *OF* 207 K) and in *Plat. Parmen.* 686.36 Cousin (*OF* 299 IV B = *OF* 207 K). These citations 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 [at *OF* 299] III” (“versum restitui e Procl. III paraphrasi”).

¹⁸⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.316.3 Diehl (*OF* 300 I B = *OF* 218 K). For more on this line, see section (c), and especially notes 249-252.

¹⁸⁸ Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 245 (2.83.1 Westerink) (*OF* 300 II B = *OF* 218 K); see Westerink *ad loc.*, who views this passage as a commentary on the line quoted by Proclus in *OF* 300 I = *OF* 218 K.

¹⁸⁹ Damascius, in *Plat. Parmen.* 160 (1.68.11 Westerink) (*OF* 300 III B = *OF* 218 K). He adds that “that is why Dionysus and Zeus, and the founders of mysteries, are analogous to Phanes from the point of view of unlimited plurality” (διὸ καὶ ὁ Διόνυσος καὶ ὁ Ζεὺς, καὶ οἱ τελετάρχαι ἀναλογοῦσιν τῷ Φάνητι κατὰ τὸ ἄπειρον πλῆθος). See Westerink *ad loc.*: “Between the activity of Zeus, under the sign of the demiurgic union, and that of Dionysos under the sign of the division of the unlimited plurality, Damascius inserts under the sign of the totality, the mediating activity of Sabazius, a Phrygian deity often considered as a hypostasis of Zeus or Dionysus” (“Entre l’activité de Zeus, sous le signe de l’union démiurgique, et celle de Dionysos sous le signe de la division de la pluralité illimitée, Damascius insère, sous le signe de la totalité, l’activité médiatrice de Sabazios, divinité phrygienne, souvent considérée comme une hypostase soit de Zeus, soit de

precedes thought, Intellect thinks all ideas as one, and Soul sees them all one by one” (ἐκεῖνο μὲν γὰρ ἔν μόνον ἐστὶ καὶ πρὸ νοήσεως· ὁ δὲ νοῦς ὡς ἔν πάντα νοεῖ, ἢ δὲ ψυχὴ καθ’ ἔν πάντα ὁρᾷ).¹⁹⁰ 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” (τὴν θεῖαν δύναμιν μερίζεσθαι εἰς τὴν ὕλην).¹⁹¹

Damascius points out that “as long as Dionysus sits on the throne of Zeus, he is undivided” (ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ Διόνυσος ἐν μὲν τῷ θρόνῳ τοῦ Διὸς ἀμέριστος),¹⁹² but Dionysus does not stay on the throne for long, for he becomes divided when the Titans dismember him. The Neoplatonic idea here goes back to a passage of Plato’s *Timaeus* (35a-b), where Plato says that between indivisible and divisible Being, there is a middle point that is both Same and Different.¹⁹³ 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). A literal reading might conclude that the reason why his body is split into seven pieces is that there are seven male Titans and the meat is distributed evenly,¹⁹⁴ but according to Neoplatonic allegory his dismemberment represents the fragmentation of Soul into seven portions.¹⁹⁵ With reference to this passage of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Proclus says that:

Dionysos”); cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 54.21 Pasquali (*OF* 98 IV, 299 X B = *OF* 101 K): “the royal succession of the gods originates from Phanes, but extends as far as our lord Dionysus” (τῆς βασιλικῆς τῶν θεῶν σειρᾶς ἀρχομένης μὲν ἀπὸ Φάνητος, καταπτώσεως δ’ εἰς τὸν δεσπότην ἡμῶν τὸν Διόνυσον).

¹⁹⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 808.17-19 Cousin (text preceding *OF* 314 II B = *OF* 210 K).

¹⁹¹ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Cont. Manich.* 5.74 Brinkmann (*OF* 311 XI B) attributes this idea to “the more graceful of the Greeks” (οἱ ἐν τούτοις χαριέστεροι τῶν Ἑλλήνων). Modern interpretations of these fragments focus on the literal meaning of Dionysus ruling together with Zeus; e.g., Parker 1995: 495: “At some time, therefore, Zeus and Dionysus ruled together, neither clearly superior to the other. The idea even of joint-rule of our present world would be a very radical innovation. But the fragment is phrased in the past tense, and probably refers to the few days that preceded the Titans’ crime. Perhaps the ‘reign of Dionysus’ was no longer than that.”

¹⁹² Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.4 (31 Westerink) (*OF* 299 II B = *OF* 208 K).

¹⁹³ See Pépin 1970: 309-310; Brisson 1995: 186-188. Plato, *Timaeus* 35a-b: “midway between the Being which is indivisible and remains always the same and the Being which is transient and divisible in bodies, he blended a third form of Being compounded out of the two, that is to say, out of the Same nature and the Other” (τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ἐχούσης οὐσίας καὶ τῆς αὖ περι τὰ σώματα γιγνομένης μεριστῆς τρίτον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἐν μέσῳ συνεκεράσατο οὐσίας εἶδος, τῆς τε ταυτοῦ φύσεως αὖ περὶ καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἑτέρου).

¹⁹⁴ Lobeck 1829: 557; Brisson 1995: 67, 186-187.

¹⁹⁵ Pépin 1970: 309: it is through his dismemberment that “Proclus established a parallel effect on the one hand between the scattered members of the young god and the divisible substance of the Soul extended through the universe, on the other hand between the heart saved from the dispersion by Athena and the indivisible substance of the Intellect” (“Proclus établit en effet un parallèle, d’une part entre les membres épars du jeune dieu et la substance divisible de l’Ame étendue à travers l’univers, d’autre part entre le coeur sauvé de la dispersion par Athéna et la substance indivisible de l’Intellect”). The seven pieces are not to be

τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν τοῦ θεοῦ σῶμα πᾶν τὴν ψυχικὴν σύστασιν, εἰς ἑπτὰ καὶ τοῦτο διηρημένον· ‘ἑπτὰ δὲ πάντα μέλη κούρου διεμοιρήσαντο,’ φησὶν ὁ θεολόγος περὶ τῶν Τιτάνων, καθάπερ καὶ ὁ Τίμαιος εἰς ἑπτὰ διαιρεῖ μοίρας αὐτήν. καὶ τάχα ἂν τὸ διὰ παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου τεταμένην εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ Τιτανικοῦ μερισμοῦ τοὺς Ὀρφικοὺς ἀναμνησκῶσι, δι’ ὃν οὐ μόνον ἡ ψυχὴ περικαλύπτει τὸ πᾶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τέταται δι’ αὐτοῦ παντός.

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 [*Timaeus* 36d]. Perhaps the fact that Soul is stretched through all the cosmos is meant to remind the Orphics of the Titanic division because, not only does Soul envelop the universe, but it is also stretched through all of it [*Timaeus* 34b].¹⁹⁶

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 “the Titanic division” (ὁ Τιτανικός μερισμός).

Unlike the apologists, the Neoplatonists do not make a point of listing all of the toys and/or ritual items 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 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” (οἱ τελούμενοι τῷ Διονύσῳ δηλοῦσι ναρθηκοφοροῦντες) and that “it is brought forth by the Titans to Dionysus” (προσάγεται ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων τῷ Διονύσῳ), and then he adds that “another Titanic god is Prometheus” (τιτανικός δὲ θεὸς

read as a reference to the seven notes in the Pythagorean octave, but as referring to numerical ratios, as Festugière (1967: 245 n. 1) argues: “He is not discussing the seven notes (or intervals) that compose the octave, but the corresponding ‘ratios’ to the octave and to the double octave. If the first octave is expressed by the ‘ratio’ 2:1, the second octave will be 4:2. And if one adds these three numbers 1, 2, 4 the sum is 7.” (“Il ne s’agit pas des sept notes (ou intervalles) qui composent l’octave, mais des ‘raisons’ correspondant à l’octave et à la double octave. Si la première octave est exprimée par la ‘raison’ 2:1, la seconde octave sera 4:2. Et si l’on additionne ces trois nombres 1, 2, 4, la somme est 7.”)

¹⁹⁶ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.146.9 Diehl (*OF* 311 I B = *OF* 210 K); cf. in *Plat. Tim.* 2.197.24-198.5 Diehl (*OF* 311 II, VI B = *OF* 210 K); in *Plat. Parmen.* 808.27 Cousin (*OF* 311 III B = *OF* 210 K). Linforth (1941: 324) points out the “analogy” between Τιτάνες and τεταμένην (“being stretched/extended”) and argues that “this form of expression suggests that the etymological figure and the idea of the extension of the soul were not in the Orphic poem. Perhaps, after all, there was nothing in the poem but the bare myth, and Proclus attributed to the Orphic poet his own lofty speculations because he believed them to be implicit in the myth itself.”

καὶ ὁ Προμηθεὺς).¹⁹⁷ Westerink argues that the Titans hand Dionysus the fennel-stalk instead of the sceptre, “apparently to take away his royal power.”¹⁹⁸ Since the sceptre is an important motif in the Rhapsodies, representing divine royal power, the fennel-stalk makes sense as a sort of inverted sceptre, representing the negation of royal power. According to Damascius, the two items represent the opposing forces of division and unification:

ὁ νάρθηξ σύμβολός ἐστι τῆς ἐνύλου δημιουργίας καὶ μεριστῆς ... διὰ τὴν ὅτι μάλιστα διεσπασμένην συνέχειαν, ὅθεν καὶ Τιτανικὸν τὸ φυτὸν· καὶ γὰρ τῷ Διονύσῳ προτείνουσιν αὐτὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ πατρικοῦ σκῆπτρου, καὶ ταύτη προκαλοῦνται αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν μερισμόν. καὶ μέντοι καὶ νάρθηκοφοροῦσιν οἱ Τιτᾶνες· καὶ ὁ Προμηθεὺς ἐν νάρθηκι κλέπτει τὸ πῦρ.

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.¹⁹⁹

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 fulfilment” (ἐπιτηδειότητος ... σύμβολον πρὸς τὴν νοερὰν ἀποπλήρωσιν τοῦ παντός). Proclus says that when Dionysus looked into the mirror, “he proceeded into the universal divisible creation” (προῆλθεν εἰς ὅλην τὴν μεριστὴν δημιουργίαν).²⁰⁰ Damascius says that “when Dionysus had projected his reflection into the mirror, he followed it and was thus scattered into the universe” (ὁ γὰρ Διόνυσος, ὅτε τὸ εἶδωλον ἐνέθηκε τῷ ἐσόπτρῳ, τούτῳ ἐφέσπετο καὶ οὕτως εἰς τὸ πᾶν ἐμερίσθη).²⁰¹ The mirror represents the reflection of

¹⁹⁷ Proclus, in *Hes. Op. 52a* Marzillo (33.17-24 Pertusi) (*OF* 307 I B); cf. Lobeck 1829: 703: “Proclus seems to count staffs with rattles” (“ferulas Proculus crepundiis ... adnumerare videtur”). This fragment was omitted by Kern; see Bernabé *ad loc.*

¹⁹⁸ Westerink *ad* Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II B).

¹⁹⁹ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II B; ὡς ψευδώνυμον ... οὐ ξύλον not in Bernabé); see West 1983: 156, who discusses the use of the fennel-stalk in Dionysiac ritual.

²⁰⁰ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.80.19 Diehl (*OF* 309 IV B = *OF* 209 K); cf. in *Plat. Tim.* 1.336.29 Diehl (*OF* 309 V = *OF* 209 K) (see Festugière *ad loc.*), in *Plat. Remp.* 1.94.5 Kroll (*OF* 309 VI B = *OF* 209 K). At in *Plat. Tim.* 1.142.24 Diehl (*OF* 309 III B = *OF* 209 K), Proclus says that the mirror was made by Hephaestus, whom he calls “a fashioner of sensible things, not of psychic or Intellective deeds” (τῶν αἰσθητῶν δημιουργός, ἀλλ’ οὐ τῶν ψυχικῶν ἢ τῶν νοερῶν ἔργων). Proclus says that the mirror, as well as Hephaestus’ being lame, are “symbols of his productivity in the sensible realm” (σύμβολα τῆς περὶ τὸ αἰσθητὸν αὐτοῦ ποιήσεως). As Lobeck (1829: 555) pointed out, there might be a reference to the mirror in the Rhapsodies in Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.3.12 (*OF* 309 I B = *OF* 209 K); cf. Tortorelli Ghidini 1975: 356-360; Brisson 1995: 2895; but this fragment might be more applicable to the spiritual interpretation (see below).

²⁰¹ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.129 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 309 II B = *OF* 209 K).

the Intellective Forms into Encosmic Nature and the dispersal of these reflections into matter.

In the Rhapsodies, Athena saves the heart of Dionysus, the only one of his body parts that the Titans do not eat, so the Neoplatonists interpret the heart of Dionysus as the indivisibility of Encosmic Intellect.²⁰² As Proclus argues:

τὰ μὲν ἄλλα δημιουργήματα αὐτοῦ πάντα μεμερίσθαι φησὶν ὑπὸ τῶν διαιρετικῶν θεῶν, μόνην δὲ τὴν καρδίαν ἀμέριστον εἶναι προνοία τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς· ἐπειδὴ ... ψυχαὶ μὲν καὶ σώματα δέχονται πολλὴν τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτὰ διαίρεσιν καὶ τὸν μερισμόν, νοῦς δὲ ἠνωμένος μένει καὶ ἀδιαίρετος ... ‘μούνην γὰρ κραδίην νοερὴν λίπον,’ φησὶν, ἄντικρυς νοερὰν αὐτὴν προσαγορεύων ... οὐ μέντοι πᾶς νοῦς, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐγκόσμιος· οὗτος γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ καρδία ἢ ἀμέριστος, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τούτου δημιουργὸς ἦν ὁ μεριζόμενος θεός. τὸν μὲν δὴ νοῦν ἀμέριστον οὐσίαν τοῦ Διονύσου καλεῖ.

[Orpheus] says all [the Demiurge’s] other creations have been divided by the divisive gods [i.e., the Titans], except for his heart that is indivisible thanks to the providence of Athena. Since ... souls and bodies admit of many divisions in relation to themselves and are very fragmented, while Intellect remains undivided and unified ... “leaving alone only the intellectual heart,” he says, directly calling it Intellective ... [Dionysus is] not all Intellect, but the Encosmic [Intellect]. For this is the indivisible heart since even of this the divided god [i.e., Dionysus] was the creator. He calls the Intellect the indivisible Being of Dionysus.²⁰³

In his *Parmenides* commentary, Proclus claims that “division is the peculiar function of Soul” (ταύτη τοίνυν προσήκει τὸ διαιεῖν πρώτως) and adds that “this is why the theologians say that at the dismemberment of Dionysus his Intellect was preserved undivided through the foresight of Athena and that his soul was the first to be divided” (διὸ καὶ οἱ θεολόγοι τὸν μὲν νοῦν ἐν τοῖς σπαραγμοῖς τοῖς Διονυσιακοῖς ἀμέριστον προνοία τῆς

²⁰² Henrichs (1972: 70) suggests that since this allegory is attributable to the Neoplatonists, “it remains uncertain whether [Athena saving the heart] is the old tradition [and] it could involve deliberate falsification” (“bleibt ungewiß, ob das alte Tradition ist. Es könnte sich um bewußte Verfälschung handeln”). But this element of the myth probably appeared in the Rhapsodies, being important to the Neoplatonists for spiritual reasons, or at least to Proclus as shown in his own hymn to Athena: “You who saved the heart, as yet unchopped, / of lord Bacchus in the vault of heaven, when he was once divided / by the hands of the Titans” (ἡ κραδίην ἐσάωσας ἀμιστύλλετον ἄνακτος / αἰθέρος ἐν γυάλοισι μεριζομένου ποτὲ Βάκχου / Τιτήνων ὑπὸ χερσὶ) (Proclus, *Hymn* 7.11-13 = *OF* 327 II B).

²⁰³ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.145.18 Diehl (*OF* 314 IB = *OF* 210 K); ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ... καὶ ἀδιαίρετος and εἰ τοίνυν ... μεριζόμενος θεός not in Bernabé. See Linforth 1941: 322-323, who finds the ideas of Proclus, Plato, and Orpheus “so intricately interwoven that it is almost impossible to disentangle them,” but clarifies that “the cosmos, which is the result of division, is the body of Dionysus.”

Ἀθηνᾶς σώζεσθαι λέγουσι, τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μερίζεσθαι πρώτως).²⁰⁴ In his *Cratylus* commentary, he says that the heart of Dionysus is “the indivisible essence of Intellect” (ἡ ἀμερήσ τοῦ νοῦ οὐσία).²⁰⁵ This interpretation of Athena saving the heart, again referring to Plato’s *Timaeus* 35a-b, provides a visual representation of the idea that Dionysus as Encosmic Intellect is both Same and Different. The heart represents indivisible Intellect (Same), while the seven dismembered parts of his body represent divisible Soul (Different).

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:

τριτταὶ παραδέδονται τῶν Τιτάνων κολάσεις· κεραυνώσεις, δεσμοί, ἄλλων ἀλλαγῶ πρόοδοι πρὸς τὸ κοιλότερον. αὕτη μὲν οὖν οἶον τιμωρίας ἐπέχει τάξιν, ἐπιτρίβουσα αὐτῶν τὸ διαιρετικὸν καὶ ἀποχρωμένῃ τῷ κερματισμῷ αὐτῶν εἰς σύστασιν τῶν ἀτόμων ἄλλων τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων· ἡ δὲ μέση κολαστική, τὰς διαιρετικὰς ἐπέχουσα δυνάμεις· ἡ δὲ πρώτη καθαρτική, ὀλίζουσα αὐτοὺς κατὰ μέθεξιν. δεῖ δὲ περὶ ἕκαστον τὰς τρεῖς θεωρεῖν, εἰ καὶ ὁ μῦθος μερίζει· ἐν ἑκάστῳ γάρ εἰσι πρῶται καὶ μέσαι καὶ τελευταῖαι δυνάμεις.

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.²⁰⁶

It is not at all clear whether all three of these punishments were narrated in the Rhapsodies, but Damascius could have been referring to the general 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 a Titan in shackles.²⁰⁷ All three punishments, wherever

²⁰⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Parmen.* 808.19-28 Cousin (*OF* 311 III, 314 II B = *OF* 210 K); ταύτη τοίνυν προσήκει τὸ διαιρεῖν πρώτως and τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν μερίζεσθαι πρώτως not in Bernabé; cf. Proclus, in *Plat. Alicb.* 103a (35 Segonds) (*OF* 316 I B = *OF* 210 K); Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.130 (83 Westerink) (*OF* 316 II B).

²⁰⁵ Proclus, in *Plat. Cratyl.* 109.19 Pasquali (*OF* 314 III B = *OF* 210 K).

²⁰⁶ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.7 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 318 IV B).

²⁰⁷ Cf. Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.130 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 289 III, 311 VIII, 352 II B): “like Kore, the soul descends into genesis, like Dionysus it is scattered by generation, like Prometheus and the Titans it is chained to the body” (Κορικῶς μὲν εἰς γένεσιν κλάττεισιν ἡ ψυχὴ, Διονυσιακῶς δὲ μερίζεται ὑπὸ τῆς γενέσεως, Προμηθειῶς δὲ καὶ Τιτανικῶς ἐγκαταδεῖται τῷ σώματι). Prometheus is also mentioned at Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II, 352 III B = *OF* 143 K); see below.

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” (δηλοῖ τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἀμερίστου δημιουργίας μεριστὴν πρόοδον εἰς τὸ πᾶν ... τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους Τιτᾶνας ἄλλας λήξεις διακεκληρωσθαί).²⁰⁸ Presumably this “different allotment” was being struck by lightning, if Proclus is reading the Rhapsodies here. The anthropogonic element of the story is discussed below as part of the 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.²⁰⁹

Having punished the Titans, Zeus orders Apollo to collect the remains of Dionysus “to be buried” (καταθάψαι), according to Clement of Alexandria,²¹⁰ but Damascius says that Apollo “gathers him together and brings him back up” (συναγείρει τε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀνάγει).²¹¹ Proclus says that Apollo “collects and reunites the dismembered limbs of the

²⁰⁸ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.173.1 Diehl (*OF* 319 B = *OF* 215 K); cf. Simplicius, in *Aristot. Cael.* 375.12 Heiberg (*OF* 319 II B = *OF* 215 K). Atlas’ role in the Rhapsodies seems to have been similar to his usual role in traditional myth. The lines Proclus quotes are: “Atlas by constraints of necessity holds up the broad heaven / at the limits of earth” (Ἄτλας δ’ οὐρανὸν εὐρὸν ἔχει κρατερῆς ὑπ’ ἀνάγκης, / πείρασιν ἐν γαίης). However, West (1983: 164) notes that Atlas is not one of the fourteen Titans listed in the Rhapsodies; he suggests that “the poet seems to have taken the opportunity to supply grounds for the heavy task imposed on him, which Hesiod failed to explain.” Alternatively, Proclus could have been referring to another poem in the Rhapsodic collection, such as a hymn to Atlas.

²⁰⁹ Brisson (1995: 2895), referring to “the dismemberment of Dionysos as the illustration of the descent of the soul of the world and the human soul in the world of generation” (“le démembrément de Dionysos comme l’illustration de la descente de l’Ame du monde et de l’âme humaine dans le monde de la génération”), calls it a “double interpretation, metaphysical and anthropological” (“double interprétation à la fois métaphysique et anthropologique”). Sometimes it is difficult to know whether a Neoplatonist is referring to particular souls of humans or to the universal Soul: e.g., Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.198.7 Diehl (*OF* 329 III B = *OF* 211 K): “for it is also necessary for the soul to participate in the Dionysiac Intellect, as Orpheus says, for since it bears the god on its shoulders, the soul should be divided in accordance with this number” (καὶ γὰρ ἔδει νοῦ μετέχουσιν αὐτὴν Διονυσιακοῦ καί, ὡς Ὀρφεὺς φησιν, ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς φέρουσαν τὸν θεὸν διηρῆσθαι κατ’ ἐκείνον).

²¹⁰ Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.18.2 (27 Marc.) (*OF* 322 I B = *OF* 35 K).

²¹¹ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.129 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 322 II B = *OF* 209 K). Westerink (*ad loc.*) translates καὶ ἀνάγει as “and brings him back to heaven,” but ἀνάγω might also be translated “bring up [from the dead]” or “bring back [to Zeus]”; see LSJ s.v. ἀνάγω; *DGE* s.v. ἀνάγω.

boy Dionysus in accordance with the will of his father” (συνάγων καὶ ἐνίζων τὰ μερισθέντα τοῦ Διονύσου μέλη κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν τοῦ πατρὸς).²¹² 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” (ὁ τῆς ἐνώσεως αἴτιος καὶ ὁ πλῆθος ἀνάγων εἰς τὸ ἓν).²¹³ 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” (Ὀρφεὺς ἐφίστησι τῷ βασιλεῖ Διονύσῳ τὴν μονάδα τὴν Ἀπολλωνιακὴν ἀποτρέπουσαν αὐτὸν τῆς εἰς τὸ Τιτανικὸν πλῆθος προόδου καὶ τῆς ἐξαναστάσεως τοῦ βασιλείου θρόνου καὶ φρουροῦσαν αὐτὸν ἄχραντον ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει).²¹⁴ The Neoplatonists equate Apollo with Helios at the Hypercosmic level of perfective gods. In his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus claims that Orpheus and Plato consider Helios to be “the same as Apollo” (ταυτὸν ... τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι).²¹⁵ 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” (ὡς δὲ Διόνυσσον περὶ τὸν κόσμον διηρημένον, ὡς δὲ Ἀπόλλωνα μέσον, συνάγοντα μὲν τὴν Διονυσιακὴν διαίρεσιν, τῷ δὲ Διὶ παριστάμενον).²¹⁶ Therefore, Apollo-Helios represents the power of unification by which the lower levels of the Neoplatonic universe revert back to the One.

²¹² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.198.10 Diehl (*OF* 322 IV B = *OF* 211 K).

²¹³ Proclus, in *Crat.* 96.27-28 Pasquali.

²¹⁴ Proclus, in *Plat. Alcib.* 103a (68 Segonds) (*OF* 305 I = *OF* 211 K). According to Westerink *ad* Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.14 (*OF* 305 II B = *OF* 212 K), Proclus might be referring to a scene in the Rhapsodies: “Apollo standing by the throne of Zeus, on the occasion when he tries in vain to dissuade Dionysus from leaving his Father’s throne and joining the Titans.”

²¹⁵ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.12 (6.58.1 Saffrey-Westerink) (*OF* 323 B = *OF* 172 K); *cf.* Brisson 1995: 82-83; Chlup 2012: 126. Lobeck (1829: 614) suggests that in the Rhapsodies “Sun himself is mixed with Apollo, unless Proclus ... narrates to us his own dream” (“Solque ipse permiscetur cum Apolline, nisi suum nobis somnium narrat Proculus”). This suggestion was quickly rejected by Kern (1889: 501): “the proof that in the Orphic Rhapsodies Apollo was identified with the sun has been to my knowledge never before provided” (“der Beweis, dass in den orphischen Rhapsodien Apollo mit der Sonne identifiziert wurde, ist meines Wissen bisher noch nie erbracht worden”).

²¹⁶ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.14 (37 Westerink) (*OF* 305 II, 322 V = *OF* 212 K); see Brisson 1995: 186-188 and Westerink *ad loc.*

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.²¹⁷ Hyginus uses the word *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” (*cuius cor contritum Iovis Semele dedit in potionem, ex eo pregnans cum esset facta*).²¹⁸ 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,²¹⁹ but the one thing Proclus chooses to allegorize is the role of Hipta.²²⁰ In his *Timaeus* commentary, Proclus refers to “Orpheus in his discourse on Hipta” (ὁ Ὀρφεὺς ἐν τοῖς περὶ τῆς Ἴπτας λόγοις), which is puzzling since it could refer to a particular passage of the Rhapsodic narrative, a separate poem within the Rhapsodic collection, or another poem altogether.²²¹ 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” (λίκνον ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς θεμένη καὶ δράκοντι αὐτὸ περιστέψασα τὸν καρδιαῖον ὑποδέχεται Διόνυσον). Then she “hastens to Ida, to the mother of the gods ... hence Hipta is said to assist Zeus in giving birth” (ἐπείγεται γὰρ πρὸς τὴν μητέρα τῶν θεῶν καὶ τὴν Ἴδην ... διὸ καὶ συλλαμβάνειν ἢ Ἴπτα λέγεται τίκτοντι τῷ Δί). Proclus interprets Hipta as an allegory for “the Soul of the universe” (τοῦ παντὸς ... ψυχῆ) and explains that “it is with the most divine [part] of her that she ... receives Encosmic

²¹⁷ 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 add. & corr. at Bernabé 2007a: 449) he again talks about Dionysus being born from Persephone and also being called Sabazius; cf. *TrGF* F21 and Kannicht-Snell *ad loc.*: διμάτωρ Βρόμιος seems to have been a phrase used in lyric and tragedy (this could point to an early origin for the Zagreus myth); the Doric form of διμάτωρ also appears at *OH* 50.1, 52.9; see *DGE* s.v. διμήτωρ.

²¹⁸ Hyginus, *Fabulae* 167 (p. 139 Marshall) (OF 327 III B).

²¹⁹ Proclus refers to Semele or to Dionysus being born from 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 = OF 199 K); 3.99.17 Diehl (OF 328 III B).

²²⁰ There has been some debate about whether Hipta should be associated with Dionysus’ birth from Persephone or from Semele, though most scholars lean toward Semele: Lobeck (1829: 581-583) suggested Semele; Holwerda (1894: 364-365) preferred Persephone; most scholars agree with Lobeck: Nilsson 1975 [1957]: 42-43; West 1983: 96; Brisson 1995: 67; Morand 1997: 174; Bernabé *ad loc.*; Platas 2011: 133-138.

²²¹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 2.105.28 Diehl (OF 329 II B = OF 199 K). West (1983: 245) traces Hipta back to the Protogonos Theogony “via the Hieronyman Theogony.”

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” (τῷ ... ἑαυτῆς θειοτάτῳ ... δέχεται τὸν ἐγκόσμιον νοῦν. ὁ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ μηροῦ τοῦ Διὸς πρόεισιν εἰς αὐτὴν ... καὶ προελθὼν ... ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν αὐτὴν ἀνάγει καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πηγὴν).²²² Hipta’s allegorical role as Encosmic Soul is analogous to the roles of Rhea and Kore in the Intellectual sphere: she is the channel through which Dionysus as indivisible 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.²²³

More precisely, the Titans represent the division that occurs as the Forms proceed from Soul into matter (Nature, body), 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.²²⁴ Another early indication is

²²² Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 1.407.22-408.7 Diehl (*OF* 329 I B = *OF* 199 K; τῷ ... τὸν ἐγκόσμιον νοῦν not in Bernabé); see Festugière *ad loc.*

²²³ Linforth 1941: 320.

²²⁴ This is suggested by Linforth 1941: 335-339; Pépin 1970: 310-311; Casadio 1991: 132-134.

Plotinus, who mentions “the souls of humans seeing images of themselves such as those of Dionysus in the mirror” (ἀνθρώπων δὲ ψυχὰι εἶδωλα αὐτῶν ἰδοῦσαι οἷον Διονύσου ἐν κατόπτρῳ).²²⁵ 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,²²⁶ 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 of Orphic anthropogony in the Rhapsodies is not Olympiodorus’ argument against suicide, but Proclus’ account of the three races of humans in his commentary on Plato’s *Republic*:

ὁ μὲν θεολόγος Ὀρφεὺς τρία γένη παραδέδωκεν ἀνθρώπων· πρῶτιστον τὸ χρυσοῦν, ὅπερ ὑποστήσαι τὸν Φάνητά φησιν· δεύτερον τὸ ἀργυροῦν, οὗ φησιν ἄρξαι τὸν μέγιστον Κρόνον· τρίτον τὸ Τιτανικόν, ὃ φησιν ἐκ τῶν Τιτανικῶν μελῶν τὸν Δία συστήσασθαι· συννοήσας ὡς ἐν τρισὶν ὅροις τούτοις πᾶν εἶδος περιέχεται τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς ... τριττῆς οὖν οὔσης τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς τὸ μὲν πρῶτιστον ἀπὸ τοῦ Φάνητός ἐστιν, ὃς πᾶν τὸ νοοῦν συνάπτει τοῖς νοητοῖς, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον ἀπὸ τοῦ Κρόνου τοῦ πρώτου, φησὶν ὁ μῦθος, ‘ἀγκυλομήτου’ καὶ πάντα πρὸς ἑαυτὰ ποιοῦντος ἐπιστρέφειν, τὸ δὲ τρίτον ἀπὸ Διὸς τοῦ τῶν δευτέρων προνοεῖν καὶ διακοσμεῖν τὰ χείρονα διδάσκοντος· τοῦτο γὰρ ἴδιον δημιουργίας.

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 the 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

²²⁵ Plotinus, *Enneades* 4.3.12 (OF 309 I B = OF 209 K). According to Brisson (1995: 2895), Plotinus interprets the dismemberment myth as “the descent of the soul of the world and the human soul in the world of generation” (“l’illustration de la descente de l’Ame du monde et de l’ame humaine dans le monde de la génération”); it is a “double interpretation, metaphysical and anthropological” (“double interprétation à la fois métaphysique et anthropologique”).

²²⁶ See Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 6.11 (6.50.12 Saffrey-Westerink) (OF 289 II B = OF 195 K), where Kore “imparts soul to things which are of themselves inanimate” (ψυχῆς μεταδίδοναι τοῖς παρ’ ἑαυτῶν ἀψύχοις); in *Plat. Tim.* 2.146.9 Diehl (OF 311 I B = OF 210 K), where “Timaeus divides the soul into seven portions” (ὁ Τιμαῖος εἰς ἑπτὰ διαιρεῖ μοίρας αὐτήν); in *Plat. Parmen.* 808.27 Cousin (OF 311 III B = OF 210 K), where “it is appropriate that Soul should have the function of division and of seeing things discursively” (οἰκεῖον οὖν αὐτῇ καὶ τὸ εἶδος τῆς διαιρετικῆς καὶ τὸ θεωρεῖν μεταβατικῶς); in *Plat. Alcib.* 103a (35 Segonds) (OF 316 I B = OF 210 K), where “the unreasoning powers, such as plot against the reasonable life and Titanically attempt to tear it apart” (αἱ ἄλογοι δυνάμεις, οἷον ἐπιβουλεύσαι τῇ λογικῇ ζωῇ καὶ Τιτανικῶς αὐτήν ἐπιχειροῦσαι σπαράττειν), and in *Plat. Tim.* 2.198.10 Diehl (OF 322 IV B = OF 211 K), where “by virtue of the harmony among these portions, the soul is a symbol of the Apollonian order” (τὴν δὲ ἐν ταύταις ταῖς μοίραις ἁρμονίαν ἔχει τῆς Ἀπολλωνιακῆς τάξεως σύμβολον).

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.²²⁷

This passage of Proclus seems to be reliable evidence that there was a myth of three ages of humans in the Rhapsodies: golden, silver, and Titanic. Clearly this is the result of the influence of Hesiod's myth of the five ages in *Works and Days* (106-201) and its 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), but Vernant argues that instead there is an alternating between *dike* and *hybris*. The golden and heroic ages are better while the silver, bronze, and iron ages are worse, which implies the potential that the cycle will once again bring an age characterized by *dike*.²²⁸ Nevertheless there is a 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.²²⁹ 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 Mazda explained to him that they were the ages of the world."²³⁰ 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*) in which the ages are not symbolized by different types of metal but "named after the [four] throws of the die."²³¹ Hesiod thus operates within a wider context of myths of the ages and reinterprets them to fit with his own objectives. Later Greek and Latin authors responded to Hesiod by reinterpreting the myths of the ages in different ways. A significant

²²⁷ Proclus, in *Plat. Remp.* 2.74.26-2.75.12 Kroll (*OF* 159, 216 I, 320 II B = *OF* 140 K; συνοήσας ὡς ... συνάπτει τοῖς νοητοῖς not in Bernabé); cf. translation of Festugière *ad loc.*: "la troisième est issue de Zeus qui enseigne à prendre soin des êtres de second rang et à organiser l'inférieur: car c'est là le propre de l'activité démiurgique." On the three races, see also: West 1983: 75, 98-100, 107.

²²⁸ Vernant 1983 [1965]: 1-9.

²²⁹ Van Noorden (2014: 23-39) points out that this element remains despite the different ways in which later authors (e.g., Plato, Aratus, Ovid) played with the details of the Hesiodic myth.

²³⁰ 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); see also: Reitzenstein & Schaeder 1926: 45-68.

²³¹ West 1997a: 313 and n. 104, citing the *Mahabharata* (3.148, 186, 188) and *Laws of Manu* (1.68-74, 79-86). He notes that this myth is "alluded to here and there in the Upanishads and Puranas, but absent from the older literature, the Vedas and Brahmanas."

example is Aratus, who refers to the golden, silver, and bronze ages in a brief narrative that does follow 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.²³² As van Noorden demonstrates, there were a number of other ancient authors from Plato to Juvenal who 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.²³³

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 that “now Kronos had to be content with the silver race” but, because in Hesiod the golden race under Kronos is “proverbially paradisiac,” 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” (ζῶον δ’ ἴσον ἀκροκόμοισιν / φοινίκων ἔρνεσσιν).²³⁴ 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” (τοῦ ἀργυροῦ γένους βασιλεύειν ... τὸν Κρόνον, τοὺς κατὰ τὸν καθαρὸν λόγον ζῶντας ἀργυροὺς λέγων, ὥσπερ τοὺς κατὰ νοῦν μόνον χρυσοῦς).²³⁵ 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, which Proclus associates with “the inferior [orders]” (τὰ χείρονα) of the Neoplatonic universe. He takes it to mean that human beings participate in multiple levels of the

²³² Aratus, *Phaenomena* 96-136 (Budé edition of Martin 1998). Van Noorden (2014: 168-174) argues that Aratus is a response to Hesiod, but one that “raises the problem of recapturing Hesiod’s didactic authority in an era of more specialized knowledge.”

²³³ Van Noorden 2014: 306. One theme that reoccurs is Justice (Dike): in Hesiod (*Works and Days* 213) and Plato (*Republic* 4.420c) the myth is used to argue in favour of choosing justice over injustice, and the narrative of Aratus is all about the decision of Justice to leave the earth.

²³⁴ Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 8.4.2 p. 723 e (OF 218 B = OF 225 K); West 1983: 107; Bernabé *ad loc.* agrees that this passage of Plutarch refers to the age of Kronos in the Rhapsodies.

²³⁵ Proclus, *in Hes. Op.* 127-128a Marzillo (54.15-55.3 Pertusi) (OF 216 II B = OF 141 K).

Neoplatonic universe: 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” (ἐκ τῶν Τιτανικῶν μελῶν). Commenting on Plato’s *Phaedo*, Damascius says that humans are created “from the fragments of the Titans” (ἐκ Τιτανικῶν θρυμμάτων),²³⁶ and Olympiodorus says that they are created “from the soot from the vapours that rise from them” (ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν τῶν ἀναδοθέντων ἐξ αὐτῶν).²³⁷ This does not make it easy to reconstruct the literal Rhapsodic narrative,²³⁸ but the Neoplatonists seem to have agreed that the myth is allegorically applicable to the plight of the human soul. 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” (ἐκ μὲν τῶν θρυμμάτων, ὡς ἀπεστενωμένοι τὴν ζωὴν εἰς ἔσχατον μερισμόν· ἐκ δὲ τῶν Τιτανικῶν, ὡς ἐσχάτων δημιουργῶν καὶ τοῖς δημιουργήμασι προσεχεστάτων).²³⁹ Elsewhere in his *Phaedo* commentary, 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” (Κορικῶς μὲν εἰς γένεσιν κάτεισιν ἡ ψυχή, Διονυσιακῶς δὲ μερίζεται ὑπὸ τῆς γενέσεως, Προμηθειῶς δὲ καὶ Τιτανικῶς ἐγκαταδεῖται τῷ σώματι).²⁴⁰ Therefore, “the object of the initiatory rites is to take souls back to a final destination ... in the whole Zeusian life” (σκοπὸς τῶν τελετῶν ἐστὶν εἰς τέλος ἀναγαγεῖν τὰς ψυχὰς ... ἐν τῇ ὅλῃ ζωῇ τῇ Δίῳ).²⁴¹

²³⁶ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B).

²³⁷ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 320 I B = *OF* 220 K).

²³⁸ It is more difficult still when taking into account fragments in which humans are created from “mournful seed of offspring” (λυγρὸν ... σπέρμα γονῆς) (*Orph. Arg.* 18-19 = *OF* 320 V B = *OT* 224 K) or “the blood of the Titans” (τοῦ τῶν Τιτάνων αἵματός) (*Dio Chrysostum* 30.10 = *OF* 320 VII B; cf. *Iulianus, Epis.* 89b292 (159.19 Bidez) = *OF* 320 IX B). Eustathius (*in Il.* p. 332.23 = *OF* 320 XII B) relates the creation of humans to gypsum: “broken up small gypsum in rocks is called τίτανος, as though some Titanic punishment has come into being in it also” (τιτανώδους διαθρυφθὲν ἐν λίθοις λεπτὸν τίτανος ὀνομάσθη, οἷα ποινῆς τινοῦ Τιτανικῆς γενομένης καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ).

²³⁹ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.8 (33 Westerink) (*OF* 320 IV B).

²⁴⁰ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.130 (81 Westerink) (*OF* 289 III, 311 VIII, 352 II B); see Westerink *ad loc.*: “There is no evidence that the chained Prometheus figured in the Orphica; he may have been introduced here because no other instance of a delivered Titan was available ... However, the Orphic epic did refer to the theft of the fire.” This occurs in Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.170 (103 Westerink) (*OF* 307 II, 352 III B = *OF* 143 K): “the Titans bear the fennel-stalk and Prometheus steals the fire in a fennel-stalk” (ναρθηκοφοροῦσιν οἱ Τιτᾶνες καὶ ὁ Προμηθεὺς ἐν νάρθηκι κλέπτει τὸ πῦρ).

²⁴¹ Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.168 (101 Westerink) (*OF* 299 VI B).

Damascius mentions “the Titanic mode of life” (ἡ Τιτανική ζωή), which is “irrational” (ἄλογός) because by it “rational life is torn apart” (ἡ λογική σπαράττεται). He adds that through the Titanic mode of life “we tear apart the Dionysus in ourselves” (τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν Διόνυσον διασπῶμεν) because “while in this condition, we are Titans; but when we recover that lost unity, we become Dionysus and we attain what truly can be called completeness” (οὕτω δὲ ἔχοντες Τιτᾶνες ἐσμεν· ὅταν δὲ εἰς ἐκεῖνο συμβῶμεν, Διόνυσοι γινόμεθα τετελειωμένοι ἀτεχνῶς).²⁴² This idea of “Dionysus in ourselves” is similar to Olympiodorus’ interpretation of the dismemberment myth. Bernabé, with his Titanic powers of division, splits the most crucial passage of Olympiodorus into five fragments, the last of which contains the innovation that was discussed in the last section:

τούτους ὀργισθεὶς ὁ Ζεὺς ἐκεραύνωσε, καὶ ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν ἀτμῶν τῶν ἀναδοθέντων ἐξ αὐτῶν ὕλης γενομένης γενέσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. οὐ δεῖ οὖν ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἐαυτοῦς, οὐχ ὅτι, ὡς δοκεῖ λέγειν ἢ λέξις, διότι ἐν τινι δεσμῷ ἐσμεν τῷ σώματι ... ἀλλ’ ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἐξάγειν ἡμᾶς ἐαυτοῦς ὡς τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν Διονυσιακοῦ ὄντος· μέρος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν, εἴ γε ἐκ τῆς αἰθάλης τῶν Τιτάνων συγκεῖμεθα γευσαμένων τῶν σαρκῶν τούτου.

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.²⁴³

Later in his *Phaedo* commentary, Olympiodorus 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” (ἐνδούμεθα μὲν τῇ ὕλῃ ὡς Τιτᾶνες διὰ τὸν πολὺν μερισμόν).²⁴⁴ 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” (‘συναγείρεσθαι’ καὶ ‘ἀθροίζεσθαι’ τουτέστιν ἀπὸ τῆς Τιτανικῆς ζωῆς ἐπὶ τὴν ἐνοειδῆ).²⁴⁵

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

²⁴² Damascius, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.9 (33 Westerink); see Bernabé *ad OF* 320 B.

²⁴³ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 1.3 (41 Westerink) (*OF* 299 VII, 304 I, 313 II, 318 III, 320 I B = *OF* 220 K). 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 divine.

²⁴⁴ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 8.7 (123 Westerink) (*OF* 320 III B).

²⁴⁵ Olympiodorus, in *Plat. Phaed.* 7.10 (113 Westerink) (*OF* 322 III B = *OF* 211 K).

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 *τέλεται* 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 first-principle of the universe. As Encosmic Intellect, he is a combination of indivisible Intellect and divisible Soul, and this make him accessible to human souls because of their participation in Encosmic Soul. If in the direction of proceeding the Titans represent the lowest level of the Neoplatonic universe, then in the direction of reversion Dionysus represents the lowest monad through which humans can approach the Hypercosmic deities. This may not explain the role of Dionysus in early telestic Orphism, but it clarifies his role in Neoplatonic theurgy.

(c) The Story of Dionysus in the Rhapsodies

The myth of Dionysus and the Titans has been interpreted in many different ways, 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. In section (a) of this chapter, I reviewed some of the ways in which modern interpreters have related the myth anachronistically 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 that of the Neoplatonists, 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 indeed, 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 having sex with Persephone, the cave in Crete, and the Curetes all point back to archaic roots in Crete.²⁴⁶ The role of the Titans as antagonists of the gods is well known from Hesiod, from Plato's reference to the "ancient Titanic nature," and from many

²⁴⁶ See Chapter Five, section (e).

other sources. The motif of dismemberment can be seen in the obvious similarities between Dionysus and Osiris, already noticed by ancient authors,²⁴⁷ and it is also comparable with the castration of Ouranos and this motif's Near Eastern precedents that we saw in Chapter Two. 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 (see Chapters Two and Three), 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 Two, the meaning of this action is similar to Kronos swallowing his children, Zeus swallowing Metis, and certain Near Eastern myths such as Kumarbi in Hittite myth. 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.²⁴⁸ This contrast is analogous to the contrast between the sceptre that Phanes gives to Zeus and 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 this 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,

²⁴⁷ Diodorus Siculus 1.96.3-5 (*OF* 48 II B = *OF* 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).

²⁴⁸ It is also an extension of Kronos, a Titan, swallowing his children in Hesiod. All of these narratives relate consumption to the acquisition or protection of divine rule, but one difference between the Titans eating Dionysus and the act of swallowing by both Kronos and Zeus is the lack of culinary terms in the narratives of Kronos and Zeus. The Titans cut, boil, and roast Dionysus, but neither Kronos nor Zeus does any of these things.

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 there being 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 as his successor. Why does he do this? Despite the 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 ruled/accomplished all things, but Bacchus ruled/accomplished them in addition [to Zeus]” (κραῖνε μὲν οὖν Ζεὺς πάντα πατήρ, Βάκχος δ' ἐπέκραινε)²⁴⁹ 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 “to 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.²⁵⁰ 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.”²⁵¹ In the

²⁴⁹ Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.316.3 Diehl (*OF* 300 I B = *OF* 218 K). Usually κραίνω + accusative means “accomplish” (e.g., *Iliad* 1.41); when used absolutely, it means “hold sway, reign” (e.g., *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 at Colonus* 448-449 θρόνονος / καὶ σκῆπτρα κραίνειν; *Trachiniae* 126 πάντα κραίνων); see LSJ s.v. κραίνω; K-G 1.367-369.

²⁵⁰ Beneviste 1973: 327-333. In the *Iliad* the verb κραίνω is used with the sense of a god who fulfills a wish (e.g., *Iliad* 1.41 = 504, 2.419). It is related to the noun κάρα, so κραίνω contains a sense in of nodding one's head to give assent. Later senses of κραίνω (e.g., in tragedy) have the meaning of “to reign” because this sense grew out of the connotations of divine royal authority indicated by the nod of the head. Nagy (1990: 59-60) translates κραίνω as “authorize.”

²⁵¹ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 427 (cf. vv. 531-532, 559); Nagy 1990: 59-60. Benveniste (1973: 331) translates it as “bringing into existence” with reference to the occurrence of the verb at *Odyssey* 5.169, where Calypso

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 (ἐπι-), which in other contexts tends to reflect a sense of complementarity or the fulfilling of a wish on more than one occasion.²⁵² 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 had 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 (e.g., fighting the Titans or Typhon, swallowing Metis or Phanes). As one of the last episodes of a six-generation theogony, the dismemberment myth can be seen as being 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

says that the gods are superior to her “both in planning and in execution” (νοῆσαι τε κρῆναί τε) in a context where Odysseus is looking for authorization to leave her island.

²⁵² The prefix refers to complementarity at *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 531, where Apollo gives Hermes a staff that will assist him “in accomplishing everything” (πάντας ἐπικραίνουσ’). Nagy (1990: 59) takes this to mean that Hermes authorizes what Apollo has learned from Zeus. It refers to repeated action at *Iliad* 1.453-455, where Chryses prays to Apollo, “if ever you have heard me praying ... even so now fulfill for me this desire” (ἦ μὲν δὴ ποτ’ ἐμεῦ πάρος ἔκλυες εὐξαμένοιο ... ἦδ’ ἔτι καὶ νῦν μοι τόδ’ ἐπικρήνηνον ἐέλδωρ), basically asking Apollo to accomplish or authorize what he desires in addition to previous instances of divine favour; cf. *Iliad* 2.419, 8.242, 16.599; *Lfgre* s.v. κραι(αι)νω.

this does not contradict the supremacy of Zeus as the 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 (and in doing so provides justification for his importance in Orphic practice) 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 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 other 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 (whether this idea appeared in the earliest archaic versions of the myth or was a fabrication of Olympiodorus), 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 his Near Eastern precedents tends

to be defined in negative contrast with the golden age of the distant past.²⁵³ 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.²⁵⁴ 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 that might have narrated it (see Chapter Three). 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 the *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. 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

²⁵³ Again, in Hesiod this is not because of simple progressive decline but because of a cyclical “pattern of dichotomies” (Vernant 1983: 23) that are made between the different ages.

²⁵⁴ For more on this, see Cole 1993: 276-296.

cut” is the means by which Zeus gains his power, so he secures this power 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 brings things to completion in addition to Zeus (ἐπέκραινε). 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 was not 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.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

What can these studies of Orphic theogonies contribute to the study of Orphic literature and Orphism in general? First and foremost I have argued that Orphic literature was produced within a 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 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 the Orphics also introduced 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 (Metis in Hesiod, Eros *passim*) 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 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 content of Orphic myth than saying that the Zagreus myth was the one and only central myth of Orphism.

A study of Orphic literature reveals three types of activities associated with Orphic literature: telestic, literary, and interpretive. The telestic type seems to have emerged in the

¹ Edmonds 2011c: 73.

² Porphyry, *De antro nymph.* 16 p. 58.15 Simonini (OF 222 B = OF 154 K); cf. Clement Alex. *Strom.* 6.2.26.2 (OF 223 B = OF 149 K); Proclus, *in Plat. Remp.* 1.138.23 Kroll (OF 224 B = OF 148 K).

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 characterised 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 the most likely performance context of many of these early theogonic hymns was ritual. Yet there is also a possibility that early Orphic poems functioned like the *Homeric Hymns* and were recited in the same types of rhapsodic performances in which the Homeric epics were recited. There is no more room here to fully explore this hypothesis but, 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 type of Orphic literature.

The literary type of Orphic activity 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 Theogony and the Rhapsodies we see evidence of the most recent scientific

³ To borrow a phrase from West (1983: 23) translating Plato’s βιβλῶν δὲ ὄμαδος (*Republic* 2.364b-365a).

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,⁶ 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 were keeping up with the trends of Hellenistic syncretism.⁷ Beginning in the Hellenistic Period, 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. These poems never completely discarded their association with Orphic ritual, but the poets were more self-consciously literary. 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 them being used in various ways, most commonly in allegorical interpretation. 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 what was new was the way they elevated the status of these poems. 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

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 = *OF* 91 K); on the zones of the earth, see Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.123.2 Diehl (*OF* 160 B = *OF* 94 K); *cf.* West 1983: 210-211.

⁵ Damascius, *De Principiis* 123 bis (3.160 Westerink) (*OF* 75 I B = *OF* 54 K); *OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K.

⁶ DP 22.12.

⁷ Proclus, *in Plat. Tim.* 1.336.6-15 Diehl (*OF* 140 XI, 141 I B = *OF* 85, 170 K); *OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K.

Orphic poetry was representative of the entire Greek mythical tradition.⁸ 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 defences of ancient Paganism against a changing world. What distinguished the Neoplatonic approach was therefore not so much the use of allegory as the reasons why they used these allegories. 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 extant. It is this particular way of perceiving the texts and engaging with them that can be referred to as the Neoplatonic approach to 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: 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 other themes and characteristics that appear from the Derveni poem to the Rhapsodies. First, there is always in Orphic myth a presence of Near Eastern elements. Admittedly, Near Eastern influence has also been detected throughout the poems of Homer and Hesiod but, as West puts it, in Orphic tradition these elements “stand out undigested.”⁹ Second, the Orphic fragments

⁸ See Edmonds 2013: 13-47 for a fuller discussion of this.

⁹ West 1966: 28-29.

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. Third, Orphic poets thought about the nature of Zeus and his relationships with Phanes and Dionysus in diverse ways. Greek literature regularly 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. Zeus swallows the phallus of Ouranos in the Derveni poem and all of Phanes in the Rhapsodies, he is envisioned in various ways by the Orphic Hymns to Zeus, and at the climax of the Rhapsodic narrative he establishes a complementary but subordinate role for Dionysus in ruling the universe.

All of these characteristics help us in understanding what Orphic literature was, but admittedly the same characteristics can be found elsewhere in Greek literature. Much of the content of Greek myth was influenced by Near Eastern myth; all philosophers engaged with poetry and myth; many poets engaged with philosophy; and the Orphics were not the only ones who speculated about the nature of Zeus.¹⁰ These elements were not exclusively Orphic, but they were characteristically Orphic, so perhaps it was their particular combination that defined Orphic literature. As we continue to identify other elements of Orphic myth, our understanding of Orphic literature will inevitably become more precise, and consequently our definitions of Orphism in general will become more precise. 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 theogony. Yet this study of Orphic theogonies contributes to the debate about definitions of Orphism by observing these three basic characteristics of Orphic myth: the presence of Near Eastern influence, the discourse between myth and philosophy, and speculations about the natures of not only Dionysus, but also Zeus, Phanes and other deities. If we are ever to be able to define Orphism precisely, then we must abandon the idea that the Zagreus myth was the one and only central myth of Orphism and see this narrative in a balanced way, because Dionysus is no more important to our understanding of Orphic myth than “Zeus the head, Zeus the middle.”¹¹

¹⁰ See West 1997a on the influence of Near Eastern myth on Homer and Hesiod. Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* is a good example, since he is both a philosopher who engages with poetry and a poet who speculates philosophically about the nature of Zeus; see Chapter Three, section (c).

¹¹ *OF* 14.2, 31.2, 243.2 B.

Appendix A: The Orphic Hymn to Zeus (Rhapsodic Version)

The following is a text and translation of the Rhapsodic version of the Orphic Hymn to Zeus as found in *OF* 243 B = *OF* 168 K (text: Bernabé; translation: mine):

- Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυτος,
 Ζεὺς κεφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται.
 Ζεὺς ἄρσην γένετο, Ζεὺς ἄφθιτος ἔπλετο νύμφη.
 Ζεὺς πυθμὴν γαίης τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος.
 5 Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀπάντων ἀρχιγένεθλος.
 ἐν κράτος, εἷς δαίμων, γενέτης μέγας, ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων,
 ἐν δὲ δέμας βασιλείων, ἐν ᾧ τάδε πάντα κυκλεῖται,
 πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ αἰθήρ νύξ τε καὶ ἡμαρ
 καὶ Μῆτις πρῶτος γενέτωρ καὶ Ἔρωσ πολυτερπής·
 10 πάντα γὰρ ἐν μεγάλῳ Ζηνὸς τάδε σώματι κεῖται.
 τοῦ δὴ τοι κεφαλὴ μὲν ἰδεῖν καὶ καλὰ πρόσωπα
 οὐρανὸς αἰγλήεις, ὃν χρύσειαι ἀμφὶς ἔθειραι
 ἄστρον μαρμαρέων περικαλλέες ἠερέθονται,
 ταύρεα δ' ἀμφοτέρωθε δύο χρύσεια κέρατα,
 15 ἀντολίη τε δύσις τε, θεῶν ὁδοὶ οὐραγιῶνων,
 ὄμματα δ' ἠελίος τε καὶ ἀντιόωσα σελήνη·
 νοῦς δέ οἱ ἀνευδὴς βασιλήϊος ἄφθιτος αἰθήρ,
 ᾧ δὴ πάντα κυκλεῖ καὶ φράζεται· οὐδέ τις ἐστὶν
 αὐδὴ οὔτ' ἐνοπὴ οὔτε κτύπος οὐδὲ μὲν ὄσσα,
 20 ἢ λήθει Διὸς οὔας ὑπερμενέος Κρονίωνος·
 ὧδε μὲν ἀθανάτην κεφαλὴν ἔχει ἠδὲ νόημα.
 σῶμα δέ οἱ περιφεγγές, ἀπείριτον, ἀστυφέλικτον,
 ἄτρομον, ὀβριμόγυιον, ὑπερμενές ὧδε τέτυκται·
 ὧμοι μὲν καὶ στέρνα καὶ εὐρέα νῶτα θεοῖο
 25 ἀῆρ εὐρυβίης, πτέρυγες δέ οἱ ἐξεφύοντο,
 τῆς ἐπὶ πάντα ποτᾶθ', ἱερὴ δέ οἱ ἔπλετο νηδὺς
 γαῖα τε παμμήτειρ' ὀρέων τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα·
 μέσση δὲ ζώνη βαρυηχέος οἶδμα θαλάσσης
 καὶ πόντου· πυμάτη δὲ βάσις χθονὸς ἐνδοθὶ ρίζαι,
 30 Τάρταρά τ' εὐρώεντα καὶ ἔσχατα πείρατα γαίης.
 πάντα δ' ἀποκρύψας αὔθις φάος ἐς πολυγηθὲς
 μέλλεν ἀπὸ κραδίης προφέρειν πάλι, θέσκελα ῥέζων.

Zeus was born first, Zeus of the bright lightning is last,
Zeus the head, Zeus the middle, and from Zeus all things are made,
Zeus was born male, Zeus became an imperishable bride,
Zeus the foundation of earth and starry sky,
5 Zeus the king, Zeus himself the first cause of everything.
One power, one deity, great ancestor, ruler of everything,
and one royal bodily frame, in which all these things revolve:
fire and water and earth and aither and night and day
and Metis the first ancestor and much-delighting Eros;
10 for inside the mighty body of Zeus all these lie.
Indeed, see his head and beautiful face
as the radiant sky, around which his golden hairs
of twinkling stars, very beautiful, float,
and two golden horns of bulls on both sides,
15 both rising and setting, the paths of the celestial gods,
and on opposite sides the eyes of both the sun and the moon;
and his truthful and royal mind was the imperishable aither,
in which indeed he moves around and considers everything;
and there is no voice or shout or noise or sound
20 that escapes the notice of the ears of Zeus the very mighty son of Kronos;
this god holds an immortal head and thought.
His body blazing like fire, boundless, undisturbed,
fearless, strong-limbed, exceedingly mighty was formed like this:
the shoulders and chest and wide back of the god
25 were the air of broad sway, and wings grew out of him,
upon which everything flew, and his stomach was sacred
earth and the all-mother of hills and the lofty peaks;
and in the middle his belt was the swell of the ocean heavy with deep roaring
and of the sea; and the bottoms of his feet were the roots inside the earth,
30 both mouldy Tartarus and the final boundaries of the earth.
And having concealed everything in turn, he intended to bring it forth
back again into the delightful light from his heart, doing wondrous things.

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