

ORPHEUS AND THE COW:
INDO-EUROPEAN INHERITANCE AND VIRGILIAN VARIATION IN *GEORGICS* 4

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The epyllion with which Virgil concludes his *Georgics* consists of a remarkable combination of elements that coincide here and nowhere else in extant Classical literature. This dissertation participates in the ongoing debate as to whether the epyllion's seemingly unique narrative does indeed constitute a Virgilian innovation, or whether it is rather founded on an antecedent narrative. In particular, this study focuses on Virgil's incorporation of the aetiology of the *bougonia*, the process according to which bees can supposedly be generated from a bovine carcass, into his account of the fate of Orpheus.

The evidence accumulated in this dissertation leads its author to the conclusion that Virgil's text does indeed owe something of its composition to a previously established tradition emphasizing a significant relationship between Orpheus and cows. The first three chapters endeavor to demonstrate that several instances in Greek myth and religion show traces of such an erstwhile connection between Orpheus and bovines. The instances in question are 1. a variety of contexts pertaining to the myth of Dionysus' infanticide and subsequent rebirth, which apparently possessed special relevance in Orphic milieux, 2. the narrative of Hermes' invention of the lyre,

which appears to possess affinities with Orphic mythology and ideology, and 3. the events that occur during Orpheus' contest with the Sirens in the Argonautic narrative.

The fourth and final chapter applies comparative evidence from Vedic India to Virgil's amalgamation of Orpheus and the *bougonia*. Operating within the framework of Indo-European methodology, the author submits that the *Rig Veda*'s references to the supernatural activities involving a cow accomplished by the Ṛbhus, whose appellation is arguably cognate with Orpheus' name, comprises the Indic equivalent of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. This comparandum indicates that the tradition putatively providing the basis of Virgil's epyllion was one inherited by the Greeks from Indo-European tradition.

The author's position is that an awareness of the traditional foundation of Virgil's epyllion both increases our understanding of how the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex reflects Orphic ideology and enhances our appreciation of the ways in which Virgil appears to have adapted the tradition on which his variations depend.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John McDonald began his undergraduate studies in 1999 at the University of Alberta, where he did coursework in Classics and in Germanic languages. It is during his studies at the University of Alberta that he discovered the discipline of comparative Indo-European mythology. This discovery had an immediate and profound impact on his scholarly interests, and has informed and inspired his scholarship since then. In 2001, he transferred to the University of Toronto so as to be able to train in various Indo-European languages not taught at the University of Alberta, languages spoken by cultures possessing mythological traditions rich in elements inherited from Indo-European. In 2003, John earned his B.A. with a double major in Classics and Medieval Studies from the University of Toronto. He then spent the following year as a special student at the University of Toronto, doing coursework in linguistics, which had been lacking in his undergraduate education.

In 2004, John commenced graduate studies in Classics at the University of Georgia, where he trained in historical and comparative Indo-European linguistics with Jared Klein. Having earned his M.A. in Classics from the University of Georgia in the spring of 2006, John proceeded in the August of that same year to begin his Ph.D. in Classics at Cornell University. Upon having obtained the status of doctoral candidate in the spring of 2009, he went to spend 2009–2011 as a visiting scholar at Harvard University, studying with several experts in ancient Indo-European languages, and beginning to write his dissertation with the guidance of these mentors. In August 2011, he returned to Cornell to complete his dissertation, which he successfully defended in August 2013. John earned his Ph.D. in Classics from Cornell in the spring of 2014.

*For Moo-Moo the Cow-Cow,
who always keeps a watchful eye on all four of her calves*

*For Barn,
who time and again sheltered her brotherly bullock from the storm*

*And for all bovines everywhere, past, present, future, and eternal,
mythological, actual, and otherwise,
without whom the following work would not exist*

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I am meetly conscious of just how fortunate I am to be able to earnestly declare that so many people have provided me with so much support during the years spent writing this dissertation. The process was easily as difficult on a personal level as it was in a specifically academic sense, and so I begin by thanking those who provided me with personal sustenance. First and foremost among that league stands Jonathan, my partner through thick and through thin. My sister Katherine also did more to hold me up than I can readily articulate, and my Mum and Dad, who have always done more to keep me going than I tend to realize, continued to play that subtle but essential role while I sometimes wrote, sometimes tried to write, sometimes didn't write, and finally finished writing. Closer to home from the Cornelian perspective, my colleagues Lindsay Sears-Tam, Allison Boex, and Danielle Cudmore were similarly always there to keep me afloat, even when their own hulls were being inundated with academic challenges. Danielle deserves additional mention, because she is a fellow aficionado of comparative Indo-European mythology, and an inspiring practitioner thereof. In her, therefore, I found not only a source of personal comfort, but also a mind that is keen on the kind of work that I do, and full of suggestions as to how to improve that work.

Next, I would not fail to acknowledge the members of a dynamic duo who are in a class of their own: Linda Brown and Katrina Neff, that magnificent secretarial team whose incredible efforts are a crucial ingredient in the recipe that keeps Cornell Classics vital and vibrant. The number of times that they have patiently helped me solve one problem or another is without count.

Last but not least, to be sure, it goes without saying that a number of academic mentors have provided me with immense assistance along my way, but what does warrant expression is the admirable harmony produced by the various yet consonant advices given to me by such diverse individuals. It is a tremendous pleasure for me to grant the place of honour in this category to Frederick Ahl, the chair of my dissertation committee, who has unwaveringly believed in me and in my ideas ever since the day he agreed to guide this project of mine. I could not have worked with someone more motivating than Fred was for me, nor can I imagine there there might be someone else whose own scholarship exhibits more fully than Fred's the very sort of boldness and creativity that I strive to achieve in my work.

I am doubly fortunate in having found a second mentor of similarly infinite capacity in Gregory Nagy, with whom Cornell Classics generously authorized me to spend time working at Harvard. Greg has always somehow found space in his extremely busy schedule to make room for fostering my dissertation and for fostering my overall growth and development as a scholar, and in connection with the latter, I take great pride in acknowledging his efforts in developing my relationship with Olga Davidson, a pathfinding scholar of the Indo-European heritage of Classical Persian epic poetry. It is thanks to the cooperation of these two extraordinary mentors that I received the opportunity to speak at an international conference at University College Cork about some work of mine that is more or less outside of the scope of my dissertation, but that emerged over the course of dissertation research.

Two committee members remain. First, I extend my gratitude toward Hayden Pelliccia, whose cautious approach and sobering scrutiny engendered in me a certain amount of sometimes much

needed restraint, causing me to confront the weaknesses in my work and to reconsider the validity of some of the wilder bits. Last, but only so from an alphabetical perspective, comes Michael Weiss. I am eager to take this opportunity to voice some very hearty thanks for the huge quantity of help and careful linguistic attention that I received from this outstandingly generous and dedicated mentor, who deserves to be richly lauded, but who is far too humble to expect or to bask in any such praise. I can only hope that should the time come, I will guide prospective students as skillfully as Michael guided me.

In addition to the members of my dissertation committee and the virtual auxiliary committee member that I came to possess in Olga Davidson, two other mentors of mine must be thanked in this context. The first of these is Ann Dooley, a passionate teacher, brilliant advisor and splendid human being whose course on medieval Irish literature yielded the initial trigger for my longstanding interest in Indo-European bovine mythology, on account of the fact that I wrote my term paper for that class of hers on the hereditary aspects of the cattle in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the important role that Joseph Nagy had to play in the genesis of my dissertation. In 1990, this exceptionally gifted scholar of Indo-European comparative mythology published a groundbreaking essay about the inherited component of the lore of Orpheus' severed head, which I read for the first time while preparing the aforementioned term paper written for Ann Dooley. Immediately upon reading Nagy's essay, I became utterly smitten by it, and I continue to be an ardent admirer of it to this day. If he had not written this essay, I might never have developed the intense interest in Orpheus and his Indo-European facet that essentially led me to the topic of my dissertation. I hope that my own work on Orpheus' Indo-European ancestry can be said to reflect well on Nagy's pioneering analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Virgil's Orpheus-*Bougonia* Complex: A Traditional Configuration

Students of Virgil have long been fascinated by the combination of elements synthesized in the epyllion that concludes the *Georgics*. Among the puzzles of this text that have perplexed academics past and present is the fact that Virgil is the sole extant Classical author to amalgamate Orpheus, Aristaeus, and the *bougonia* into a causally concatenated series of events.¹ Although many, if not the majority agree that there must have been a precursor to Virgil's narrative,² that understanding necessarily remains speculative, and so the scholarly trend tends not to dwell on it, preferring to expend its intellectual energy within the parameters of Virgil's poem.

This dissertation rather steers its stamina toward an investigation of the very problem for which others see no possibility of progress. My own method, however, is not to hunt for signs of earlier combinations of Orpheus and the *bougonia* (as one might glean from the title of my dissertation, I shall not be primarily involved with Aristaeus), but instead to look for what I argue to be

¹ Virgil's triangulation of Orpheus, Aristaeus, and the *bougonia* might strike us as a novelty, but the *bougonia* itself is quite at home here. Several other texts designated as epyllia also focus on bovine thematics: so Moschus' *Europa*, Calvus' *Io*, and to a lesser extent Catullus 64, with its terse but memorable account of Theseus' encounter with the Minotaur, and its isometrical wordplay between the name of the latter and Mount Taurus (lines 79 and 105). See Höschele 2012, to whose survey I would add both the *bougonia* of the Aristaeus epyllion and the miniature Minotauromachia of Catullus 64. On Calvus' *Io* as an intertext for Virgil see R. Thomas 1988: 2.236 and 1999: 297-99, and Höschele 2012: *passim*.

² For references to some of the main studies concerned with the putative predecessors of the Aristaeus epyllion see Anagnostou-Laoutides 2006: 327, who also discusses the matter herself. I would also mention Huergon 1923 and Maass 1895, the latter of which I shall mention again below.

related contexts in which Orpheus, cows, and bees either simply coincide or could be said to coincide. In defense of my pursuit of what might be deemed something of an antiquarian interest, I voice my firm belief that surely it can only deepen our understanding of Virgil's text to know whether or not the latter has its basis in a traditional configuration. To anticipate the results of my research, it seems to me that the epyllion does indeed owe something to an antecedent. It goes without saying that Virgil has built upon this foundation a number of brilliantly idiosyncratic extensions, but the thrust of my project will be to provide substantial evidence for the established substructure that supports the poet's innovations.³

To rehearse the details of the epyllion essential to my inquiry: Eurydice, fleeing from the advances of Aristaeus, treads on a water-snake and dies, and Orpheus' attempt to recover her from the underworld is aborted when he forgets Proserpina's condition and looks back at her. Orpheus proceeds to adhere to an abstinent lifestyle, on account of which he is killed by the Ciconian women.⁴ In the wake of these events, Aristaeus' bees perish, and he seeks the aid of his mother Cyrene in regaining them. She instructs her son to coerce Proteus into revealing the cause of the demise of the bees, and Aristaeus succeeds in learning from the marine deity that it is Orpheus who has blighted his swarms:⁵

*...tibi has miserabilis Orpheus
haudquaquam ob meritum poenas, ni fata resistant,
suscitat, et rapta graviter pro coniuge saevit*

³ Biotti 1994: 340-4 similarly characterizes the Aristaeus epyllion as a crossroads of tradition and innovation.

⁴ As to whether or not these women are Maenads, see Egan 2001. Either way, we are in a Dionysiac context.

⁵ *Georgics* 4.454-6.

Wretched Orpheus rouses these punishments for you, far less than you deserve,⁶ if it were not for the intervention of the fates, and he is in a state of profound rage over the seizure of his wife.

Aristaeus reports back to his mother, and she informs him that in order to regain his bees, he must make a group of sacrificial offerings to Orpheus, Eurydice, and the nymphs who were Eurydice's companions. So Aristaeus sacrifices four bullocks and four heifers to the latter, and in so doing accomplishes the original execution of the procedure known to and described, if not always credited, by the ancients according to which bees might be obtained from a bovine carcass.⁷

*...liquefacta boum per viscera toto
stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis,
immensasque trahi nubes, iamque arbore summa
confluere et lentis uvam demittere ramis*

Bees buzz throughout the liquefied innards of the cows' entire bellies and, having broken through their ribcages, surge upward and gather into huge swarms, and then assemble at the top of a tree, and hang like a cluster of grapes from the supple branches.

The scholarship is in the habit of referring to this procedure as the *bougonia*, a Greek noun, although attested only in Latin as *bugonia*, which in the absence of an awareness of the phenomenon of ox-born bees can offer no more than the ambiguous sense 'cow-genesis,' but

⁶ The sense of this phrase is controversial. See Kronenberg 2009: 179.

⁷ *Georgics* 4.555-8. The possibility that observable insect behaviour played a role in the development of this notion, although a matter of interest in and of itself, does little to explain it. It is apparently true that bees will inhabit a desiccated carcass after it has been more or less picked clean (Rennie 1830: 7; Buchmann 2005: 122; Harissis and Harissis 2009: 78), but with the exception of the vulture bee, the range of which is limited to the Americas, and the diet of rotten flesh of which was observed by the scientific community only just recently (Roubik 1982), bees shun a variety of strong odours, including that of putrefying flesh. The hypothesis popularized by Osten-Sacken 1894 that the ancients confused a kind of scavenger fly morphologically similar to some bees has been effectively dismissed by Kitchell 1989. Even if we entertain the possibility of the belief in ox-born bees having emerged as a result of this insect being observed within a clean carcass, this still does not clarify why it is the cow in particular that is required for the procedure known to Classical authors, nor does it indicate why anyone would have thought that bees residing in a carcass had been spontaneously generated by it.

which will be understood by those in the know as meaning ‘coming into being from a [slaughtered] cow.’ It is possible that the application of this term to the process in question is a modern fiction, but even if so, it is at least an appropriate extension of the ancient state of affairs, given that Greek authors routinely apply the adjective βουγενής to bees generated by this method. Neither Virgil nor any other author who describes what we have come to refer to as the *bougonia* make use of this term, although the *Geoponica* apparently has βουγονή.⁸ In fact a mere couple of occurrences of the noun *bougonia* have survived. So Eusebius (Jermone’s translation) tells us that *Bougonia* was the title of one of the works of Eumelus,⁹ generally assumed to be the Corinthian epic poet of the 8th century.¹⁰ However we know nothing about the content of this poem, and cannot be certain that it had anything to do with what academics call the *bougonia*. That being said, it is hardly likely to have been about the rearing of cattle.¹¹ Eusebius adds that the same Eumelus also wrote a *Europia*, the title of which indicates an interest in bovine mythology, not animal husbandry. In fact the D Scholiast to the *Iliad* tells us that in this poem Eumelus treated Dionysus’ conflict with Lycurgus,¹² a narrative that is fundamentally bovine, as I shall discuss in Chapter 1.

⁸ Beckh 1994: 437.

⁹ West 2003: 220.

¹⁰ Erren 1983-2003: 2.897 suggests that we are dealing with a Hellenistic poet by the same name.

¹¹ The meaning of the title is so understood by West 2002: 109 and Gutzwiller 2005: 176 fn. 35, with reference to Boeus’ *Ornithogonia*, a work about the transformation of various mythological characters into birds. If there can be said to be any evidence suggesting that Eumelus would rather have been motivated to treat apicultural lore in his poetry, it would have to be that the eponymous chest into which the Corinthian tyrant Cypselus is placed by his mother is maybe on some level of interpretation a beehive, κυψέλη meaning both ‘chest, box’ and ‘beehive.’ Indeed the mythical Arcadian king Cypselus had a daughter Merope, whose name is to be connected to μέροψ ‘bee-eater,’ and his son Periander called his wife Melissa. It is therefore only appropriate that this Cypselus should rule an onomastically ursine domain. On the apian aspect of both the Corinthian and the Arcadian Cypselus see Silver 1992: 227-8. Pausanias (2.19.10) guesses that the verses inscribed on the chest of the Corinthian Cypselus were composed by Eumelus.

¹² West 2003: 244, 246.

To be considered in conjunction with the passage of Eusebius is a statement made by Varro's Vaccius, just after he has demonstrated his knowledge of bovine mythology:¹³ *denique ex hoc putrefacto nasci dulcissimas apes, mellis matres, a quo eas Graeci bugenes appellant...Sed bono animo es, non minus satisfaciam tibi quam qui Bougonia scripsit* "Last [I know that] sweetest bees, mothers of honey, which the Greeks call *bugenes*, are born from a putrefied [cow]...But be content, I shall delight you no less than he who wrote the *Bougonia*." Although he does not name its author, Vaccius is presumably referring to the same poem that Eusebius tells us was composed by Eumelus.¹⁴ Either way, given that Vaccius mentions this *Bougonia* together with a couple of bovine myths, and given that he characterizes the work as being rather charming, it seems once again that we would do better to imagine its contents as involving what we call the *bougonia* rather than instructions on cattle breeding.¹⁵ In any event, since βουγενής, the adjectival equivalent of the noun *bougonia*, is consistently used to describe bees born from bovine carcasses, I therefore see no need to depart from the conventional terminology, and so I shall continue to refer to the procedure for obtaining bees from a cow as the *bougonia*.

To return to Virgil's composition of Orpheus with the *bougonia*, I reiterate that no other extant work of either visual or verbal art transparently approximates the mythical poet with the phenomenon of ox-born bees; hence the controversy as to whether or not Virgil has concocted

¹³ Varro, *De Re Rustica* 2.5.5.

¹⁴ Mynors 1994: 294; Biotti 1994: 229.

¹⁵ Compare Myers 1994: 155.

this combination, which I shall refer to as the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.¹⁶ Ernst Maass guessed that a lost poem by Philetas, one of whose fragments is our earliest extant reference to bees as βουγενεῖς,¹⁷ formed the basis of the Aristaeus epyllion.¹⁸ In fact more could be said in support of Maass' proposal, including the fact that the Eros described by the cowherd named Philetas in the novel *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus, whose work shows the impact of none other than the Hellenistic poet that is the namesake of the character in question,¹⁹ is arguably of the Orphic variety.²⁰ However without the supposed verses of Philetas in hand, Maass' proposal remains just that.

Turning our gaze to the realm of visual art, Lucilla Burn suggests that the narrative of Virgil's epyllion is represented on one of three white-ground cups by the Sotades Painter of the 5th

¹⁶ Frustratingly, a number of authors, including ones that have had an impact on Virgil, discuss both Orpheus and the *bougonia*, sometimes even in close proximity, but never to the extent that the one is brought to bear on the other. So Nicander, whose work has variously influenced Virgil's (S. Harrison 2004), mentions both Orpheus and the oaks of Zone and the *bougonia*, but not in conjunction (*Theriaca* 462 and 741; cf. *Alexipharmaka* 466). To return to Eumelus, M. West 2002 argues that a number of the poems the authorship of which has been assigned to this name ought to be considered to constitute a Corinthian cycle. Given that Orpheus surfaces in this apparent Corinthia, we would obtain a kind of combination of Orpheus and the *bougonia* by admitting to this poetic cycle Eumelus' poem arguably named after the phenomenon of ox-born bees.

¹⁷ Spanoudakis 2002: 89, 181 assigns this fragment to the *Demeter*, which is a good guess, given Demeter's extensive association with both bees and bovines. In fact the goddess occurs in alternating juxtaposition with these two animals in the context of Cretan numismatics, coins from that island depicting her sometimes with bees and sometimes with bulls (Stefanaki 2001: 135). Furthermore, Philetas probably mentioned the Bourina, a spring holy to Demeter, which would yield another bovine element within the same poem in which he appears to have employed βουγενεῖς.

¹⁸ Maass 1895: 295-6. For more on connections between Virgil and Philetas see R. Thomas 1999: 174-81, 188-201, Spanoudakis 2002: 184, and Marinčič 2007: esp. 28-38.

¹⁹ Hunter 1983: 76-83.

²⁰ Chalk 1960: 34-37, 48; J. Morgan 2004: 179. Similarly Merkelbach 1988 sees in the figure of the herdsman in Longus' novel an allusion to the Orphic-Dionysiac officiant *boukolos*. Compare G. Nagy 1009c: 386. On the complex intertextual relationship between Philetas, Longus, and Theocritus' *Idyll* 7 see Bowie 1985. In light of the topic of this dissertation, it strikes me as worth noting that *Idyll* 7 contains the arguably bugonic tale of Comatas (Spanoudakis 2002: 184). The Theocritean scholia, moreover, associate Comatas with Thuri, and claim that his narrative was told before Theocritus by Lycus of Rhegium. As we shall see, Orpheus and Orphic ideology had a noteworthy presence in both Thuri and Rhegium.

century B. C. E., excavated from an Athenian tomb.²¹ The cup in question depicts a man confronting a large water-serpent amid a cluster of reeds and a prostrate woman whose body is in the process of sinking into the earth, apparently descending to the underworld. Burn's identification of these figures as Aristaeus and Eurydice emerges as a result of her observation that the iconography of the other two cups unequivocally involves bees and honey. One of them depicts two female figures and a tree bearing fruit, probably apples, one of whom is labelled Melissa. The latter is admittedly a common name, but it is one that nonetheless contributes an apian element to the cup, and in fact mythological figures who possess this name are often associated with bees and honey.²²

The third cup depicts the seer Polyidus and Glaucus inside a tomb; Polyidus is about to stab a snake that is slithering toward an apparently dead second snake. As we know from the literary renditions of this myth, both bees and honey are involved in the events leading up to the moment in the mythological narrative in question. So Polyidus divines the location of Glaucus' corpse when he observes bees emerges from a wine cellar; having entered the cellar, he discovers the body in a vat of honey, into which the boy had fallen while chasing a mouse.²³

By identifying the figures on the third cup as Aristaeus and Eurydice, all three vessels come to share a common apian element. And this is not all that they can be argued to share: if the female figures depicted together with the fruit tree are the Hesperides, then the apples become those of

²¹ Burn 1985: 96-100; seemingly accepted by Hoffmann 1997: 138.

²² Burn 1985: 95.

²³ Apollodorus 3.3.1; Hyginus *Fabulae* 136.

immortality; if they are *the* Melissai, then we have the aetiological ancestors of the women who celebrate Persephone during the Thesmophoria, which puts us in the context of the myth of that goddess' cyclical descent to and emergence from the underworld. In either case, all three cups arguably capture moments in sequences of events in which life overcomes death: those who eat the apples of the Hesperides become immortal; Polyidus revives the corpse of Glaucus, and although Orpheus fails to recover Eurydice from the underworld, Aristaeus succeeds in replacing his dead bees by means of the *bougonia*.²⁴

Add to this that the myth of Polyidus and Glaucus shares with the narrative of Virgil's epyllion not only a basic theme of death and rebirth and an apian element in particular, but also a common bovine element: in order to divine the location of Glaucus' corpse, Polyidus must solve the Curetes' riddle of how best to describe the alternating colouration of a calf in Minos' herd.²⁵ The apian and bovine elements of the myth of Polyidus and Glaucus admittedly do not possess the same kind of essential interdependence as do the bees and bovine of the *bougonia*, but in both instances, both bees and a bovine play essential roles in a narrative sequence of life emerging from death.²⁶

Burn's identification is attractive, but remains as speculative as that of Maass, so that we are still left in the dark as to whether or not Virgil was the first to assemble Orpheus and the *bougonia*.

²⁴ For the element of death and rebirth shared by these vessels see Burn 1985 and Hoffmann 1997: 138, although without reference to the *bougonia*. For a recent discussion of the common mellic aspect of these cups and the symbolism thereof, see Giuman 2008: 223-33. For discussion of the complexity of the myth of Polyidus and Glaucus see Muellner 1998.

²⁵ Sophocles iconically distributes the three colors over three separate lines of verse (Lloyd-Jones 1996: 210).

²⁶ G. Thomas 1978 similarly mentions the myth of Polyidus and Glaucus in connection with the *bougonia*.

Some of the other elements of the epyllion, however, are demonstrably traditional. To pick just one, Orpheus' vengeful nature and appeasement by means of sacrifice surfaces in several other texts independent of Virgil's. Friedrich Klingner compares the characterization and fate of Virgil's Orpheus to Conon's:²⁷ according to the latter, the Thracian and Macedonian women dismembered Orpheus and tossed the segments into the sea because he refused to allow them to participate in mystic rites (*orgia*), and possibly for other reasons as well. As a result, the land is ravaged by a plague (*loimos*). The people then learn from an oracle that they should locate Orpheus' head and bury it. They do so, build a hero-shrine about it, and offer it sacrifices and everything else with which it is appropriate to honour the gods.²⁸ Presumably Orpheus is to be considered the agent of the plague from which the Thracians and Macedonians suffered.

This all matches up rather closely with Aristaeus' appeasement of a rancorous Orpheus, who inflicts a plague (*morbus*) on Aristaeus' bees after he has been rent by the Ciconian women during the mystic rites (*orgia*) of Dionysus. Apollonius' Aristaeus similarly builds an altar on Ceos to Zeus Icmaeus and offers aetiological sacrifices to Sirius and Zeus in order to repel a pestilence (*loimos*) brought on by a heat wave by obtaining the Etesian winds.²⁹ Apollonius does not specify the nature of the sacrifice, but Nonnos describes it as consisting of the blood of a

²⁷ Klingner 1963: 356-7; seemingly accepted Wilkinson 1997: 116. M. Brown 2002: 303 notes that Conon's Orpheus narrative is like that of several other later authors, including Virgil, in that it seems to synthesize elements from a variety of sources, but he does not draw attention to any specific parallelisms.

²⁸ *Diegeses* 45. The remains of a dedicatory offering found in Maroneia inscribed with the name of Orpheus (D. Clay 2004: 83, 144-6) indicate that the latter as the recipient of sacrificial offerings is not just a literary conceit, but a historical reality. See also Ekroth 2002: 180 fn. 215, who notes that the exclusion of women from Orpheus' cult in Conon's narrative is a realistic detail.

²⁹ Apollonius 2.516-26. As in Virgil, Apollonius' Aristaeus is portrayed as the originator of a sacrificial practice that dispels a plague (apiian blight, heat wave). Furthermore, Sirius figures in both instances.

slaughtered bull and a simultaneous libation of honey, a combination of fluids reminiscent of the constituents of the *bougonia*.³⁰

Klingner's comparison could be extended with reference to two more comparanda. According to Pausanias, the inhabitants of Libethra learnt from an oracle of Dionysus that when the sun shone on the bones of Orpheus, which resided nearby in an urn atop a pillar, their city would be razed by a boar. One day a shepherd decided to take his siesta reclining against the pillar supporting Orpheus' ossuary. By virtue of his contact with what was left of Orpheus, the shepherd began to sing Orphic verses, and anyone close enough to hear him approached. In their eagerness to get as close as possible, the members of this mob destabilized the pillar, causing the jar to smash, exposing Orpheus' bones the light of the sun. That night Dionysus caused the river Sys to flood and destroy Libethra.³¹ In this case it is not Orpheus himself who wreaks vengeance, but he provides the stimulus for Dionysus' act of retribution.

For my final comparandum, I note that Lucian recounts how Neanthus, the son of Pittacus, tyrant of Mytilene, absconds with the lyre of Orpheus and plays it, expecting to charm animals, but is instead torn apart by the dogs that his jangling chords attract.³² Although Lucian does not tell us

³⁰ *Dionysiaca* 5.271-2. Nor is the honey to be dismissed as a generic libation in this instance: as Harissis and Harissis 2009: 76 point out, a scholium on Apollonius says that Aristaeus introduced beekeeping on Ceos, and Columella says that Aristaeus discovered apiculture on that same island. Given the frequency of connections made by Classical authors between honey and dew (Boedeker 1984: 46-9; Roscher 1883: 13-22), including the first line of *Georgics* 4, Zeus Icaeus, god of atmospheric humidity, is an appropriate deity to invoke in the context of something like the *bougonia*.

³¹ Pausanias 9.30.9-11. On Orpheus and the Libethrians see Romero 2011.

³² *Ignorant Book-Collector* 11-12. On Orpheus in Lucian see Andrisano 2009. Lucian's narrative may well be a kind of joke of his own making, but its basis at least seems to me to reside in traditional Orphic mythology.

as much, one guesses that it is the instrument's corporeally segmented but still very much alive owner who has punished Neanthus for stealing and abusing his property.

So a vindictive Orpheus, Aristaeus as the inventor of a cure by means of a novel sacrifice, and Orpheus as the recipient of sacrificing offerings are all elements to be found elsewhere.

Admittedly, however, none of the comparanda just surveyed bring Orpheus and Aristaeus into contact with one another. And yet it is natural that Virgil should have them meet, for in certain respects, these figures overlap. To be sure, the Orpheus and Aristaeus of Virgil's epyllion function in some respects as foils for one another,³³ but in other respects, they are quite analogous.³⁴ As we already know from the epyllion itself, Aristaeus is connected with both apiculture and the care of cattle. Heraclides Lembus mentions both of these occupations of Aristaeus in the same breath:³⁵

Ἀρισταῖον δέ φασι μαθεῖν παρὰ μὲν νυμφῶν τὴν προβάτων καὶ βοῶν ἐπιστήμην, παρὰ δὲ Βρισῶν τὴν μελιττουργίαν. φθορᾶς δὲ οὔσης φυτῶν καὶ ζώων διὰ πνεῖν ἐτησίας...

They say that Aristaeus learnt from the nymphs how to care for sheep and cows, and that he learnt beekeeping from the Brisae. There was a devastation of plants and animals because of the blasts of the Etesian winds...

Note that not only does Heraclides mention in conjunction Aristaeus' bovine and apian pursuits—the two components of Aristaeus' agrarian assets that he will have to exploit in order

³³ For a study heavily informed by the notion of Virgil's Orpheus and Aristaeus as opposites see Conte 2001. See also Bettini 1991: 231-3, who describes Virgil's composition of Orpheus and Aristaeus' respective narrative trajectories as being "disharmonic."

³⁴ On similarities between Virgil's Orpheus and Aristaeus see Segal 1989: 55, Gale 2000: 193, and Konstan and Nieto 2011: 347. A contributing factor might be the conflation of Aristaeus with Aristeas (Bolton 1962: 35, 169; Anagnostou-Laoutides 399-422), the latter being a figure who shares certain traits with Orpheus.

³⁵ Dilts 1971: 24.

to perform the *bougonia*—but that he mentions these things in conjunction with the tradition of Aristaeus dispelling the Cean plague, much in the same way as Aristaeus dispells the plague that has decimated his own bees by conducting the likewise apian-bovine *bougonia*.

Orpheus is also associated with agriculture in general and cows in particular. In fact he is reputed to have invented farming, and to have composed an agronomical work entitled *Georgia*,³⁶ so that he is decidedly well qualified for participation in Virgil's equivalent poem. Orpheus' agrarian aspect also surfaces in his involvement with the Eleusinian mysteries,³⁷ which actually situate him amongst cows, since Triptolemus, whom Pausanias tell us Orpheus mentioned in his poetry,³⁸ is connected to this animal. So Triptolemus competes with Bouzyges for the invention of the ox-plough,³⁹ and Clement, after recounting a version of the myth of Persephone's abduction in which Triptolemus is identified as a cowherd, goes on to state that this narrative is a topic in Orphic poetry;⁴⁰ Pausanias, in fact, seems to be referring to the same narrative.

Ovid's Orpheus, moreover, is to be found in spatial and sequential contiguity with farmers and their cattle, and his dismemberment—which the Maenads accomplish by means of the tools of these same farmers, suggesting that Orpheus' death, on some level of analysis, will have agriculturally fertilizing consequences—⁴¹ is effected directly after the Maenads have torn apart

³⁶ Bernabé 2004-7: 2.308-12. For a note on this work see Kivilo 2010: 54.

³⁷ Graf 1974 and 2009; Csapo 2008.

³⁸ Pausanias 1.14.3. See also the krater mentioned by Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2011: 97.

³⁹ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.199. A factor in this intersection is the name of the Eleusinian priesthood, the Bouzygai.

⁴⁰ *Protrepticus* 2.17–18. See Roig 2010 on Clement's references to Orphica.

⁴¹ Wender 1969; L. Morgan 1999: 230-5. Compare Segal 1989: 48 on Virgil's Ciconian women as *matres*.

the cattle.⁴² I return to this passage in the Conclusion, when discussing Picasso's illustrations for Albert Skira's edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Last but not least, Moschus in his *Epitaphios Bionis*, an intertext for Virgil's Aristaeus epyllion,⁴³ portrays Bion as a cowherd,⁴⁴ compares him to Orpheus, and compares Bion's anticipated return from death to that of Eurydice.⁴⁵ Perhaps Moschus' comparison rests not only on the fact that Orpheus is the poet *par excellence*, but also on an awareness that the latter possesses an affinity for bovines.

Orpheus also appears to share with Aristaeus an affinity for bees and honey. In the Orphic version of the myth of Zeus' dethronement of Kronos, the son incapacitates his father not by means of an emetic, as in other authors, but rather by arranging for him to become intoxicated by mead.⁴⁶ Porphyry quotes lines from the moment in this narrative in which Nyx advises Zeus as to how to proceed with the comatose Kronos:⁴⁷

εὔτε ἂν δῆ μιν ἴδῃαι ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισιν
ἔργοισιν μεθύοντα μελισσάων ἐριβόμβων,
δῆσον

As soon as you see him beneath the high-leaved oaks, drunken with the labours of of loud-buzzing bees, bind him.

⁴² *Metamorphoses* 11.30-43.

⁴³ Acél 2007. Virgil also draws on the poetry of Bion himself (Reed 1997: 27 fn. 57).

⁴⁴ *Epitaphios Bionis* 11, 65, 81. As does Bion himself (Reed 1997: 114).

⁴⁵ *Epitaphios Bionis* 18, 123-4. In light of the topic of this dissertation, it is interesting that in addition to being lamented by his cows, the honey of his hives decays in response to his death (line 34).

⁴⁶ *De Antro Nympharum* 16. In Books 13 and 19 of Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*, Aristaeus feeds honey to the gods, but is effectively put out of business in the wake of Dionysus' invention of wine, which the gods prefer. As we shall see, Nonnos makes considerable use of Orphic material.

⁴⁷ *De Antro Nympharum* 16; Bernabé 2004-7: 2.1.188.

Proclus quotes similar lines describing Demeter preparing the mead to be drunk by Kronos:⁴⁸

μήσατο γάρ προπόλους τε καὶ ἀμφιπόλους καὶ ὄπαδούς,
μήσατο δ' ἀμβροσίην καὶ ἐρυθροῦ νέκταρος ἄρδμόν,
μήσατο δ' ἀγλαὰ ἔργα μελισσάων ἐριβόμβων

She devised attendants and servants and followers, she devised ambrosia and the flow of red nectar, she devised the illustrious works of loud-buzzing bees.

Although Kronos' inebriation appears to derive from Near Eastern mythological tradition,⁴⁹ the mellic detail does not, in which case it is presumably an Orphic feature. So the Orphic version of Zeus' acquisition of supremacy, as well as several other contexts in which Orpheus seems to brush up against bees suggest that there was an established connection between the mythical poet and this insect.⁵⁰ Be that as it may, we are still left with the problem that no other extant source connects Orpheus with the *bougonia*. Perhaps worth noting, however, is Pseudo-Plutarch's report that Orpheus' body, after its head has been severed from it, transforms into a snake,⁵¹ which sounds like a variation on the notion that serpents are born of spinal columns, and which is a

⁴⁸ Proclus, *On Cratylus* 92.14; Bernabé 2004-7: 2.1.188-90. On the connection between the verses quoted by Porphyry and those given by Proclus see Duvick 2007: 167-8.

⁴⁹ On the Near Eastern component of this narrative, see López-Ruiz 2011. For discussions of Near Eastern elements elsewhere in Orphic literature, see López-Ruiz 2010: 130-170 and Bernabé 2009b.

⁵⁰ Quite another matter is Detienne's 1981 essay entitled "The Myth of 'Honeyed Orpheus,'" which does not bring Orpheus into contact with any concrete bees or honey. I would also mention the overlap between Orphic praxis and ideology and the praxis and ideology of the cult of Trophonios (Bonnet 2003: 97-8), in which bees are variously involved, as I shall discuss in Chapter 2. Sufficiently intriguing to seem to me to be worthy of mention, even if it should turn out to be a preposterous chimaera, is the passage of Orphic poetry quoted by Bryant 1807: 3.229, which is supposedly about a supernaturally generative hive of Aphrodite, although Bryant's interpretation depends on a reading of the Hesychian gloss on σερῖν, μέλιττα ἢ μελίττης οἶκος, that is demoted to the apparatus criticus by Latte and Hansen 2005: 3.275, who prefer the reading μέλιττα ἢ μελίττη εὐκοῦς. Bryant's analysis also relies on the faulty claim that Mylitta, the name of the Assyrian goddess whom Herodotus equates with Aphrodite, is to be related to the Greek bee word, which is hardly the case (De Jong 1997: 107). Bryant claims to have taken the Orphic verses from Natalis Comes, but I have yet to locate them in the latter's work, which, however, admittedly underwent fourteen editions between 1567 and 1627 (Cameron 2004: 250). As for Natalis Comes himself, he was a notorious confabulator (Cameron 2004: 250-1).

⁵¹ *De Fluviis* 3.4. Ahl suggests to me that wordplay between Orpheus' name and ὄφις might be involved here.

phenomenon that various authors discuss in conjunction with the *bougonia*. In fact Archelaus treated both spine-born snakes and the *bougonia*,⁵² probably in his *Idiophue*, and a work by the same title is attributed to Orpheus.⁵³ If the content of Orpheus' *Idiophue* was similar to that of Archelaus, we might imagine a description of spine-born snakes and *bougonia* in the voice of Orpheus.⁵⁴

Furthermore, in addition to the bugonic offerings made by Aristaeus at the conclusion of *Georgics* 4, Orpheus is involved in other instances of animal sacrifice, including cow sacrifice.⁵⁵ This might seem to fly in the face of the fact that numerous authors characterize the Orphic way of life as one that involved vegetarianism, but it is probably the case that this diet was a late and marginal feature of Orphic ideology, and more or less limited to the elite.⁵⁶ The Orpheus of myth, at any rate, does not shy from animal sacrifice. So in Apollonius he orchestrates the armoured dance that accompanies the sacrifice of oxen offered to Rhea by the Argonauts.⁵⁷ To be sure, this is no *bougonia*, but Rhea does respond to the offering by causing the local nature to

⁵² Giannini 1965: 25-7; cf. Varro, *Res Rusticae* 3.2.11, 3.16.4; Antigonus, *Historiae Mirabiles* 89.

⁵³ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 28.43.

⁵⁴ For discussion of Archelaus' poetry in an Orphic context see Leyra 2011.

⁵⁵ R. Thomas 1991, responding in particular to Habinek 1990, argues aggressively against conceiving of *bougonia* as sacrifice. To be sure, in all of the agronomical descriptions of this procedure, including Virgil's initial, Egyptian treatment thereof, it is not. However the proto-*bougonia* executed by Aristaeus in response to Orpheus' vengeance is clearly invested with sacrificial elements. For some recent statements to this effect see Gale 2000: 110, Feeney 2004, and Nappa 2005: 268 endnote 91. The unique quality of Aristaeus' *bougonia* is in fact good motivation for considering a tradition of Orphic cow sacrifice to be the ultimate foundation of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.

⁵⁶ Bremmer 2002: 14; Riedweg 2005: 67-9. The same tension is attached to Ovid's Pythagoras, who both decries cow sacrifice and mentions the *bougonia*, to which I shall return momentarily.

⁵⁷ Apollonius 1.1108-48. Compare 2.686-91, where Orpheus proposes the eventual goat sacrifice to Auroral Apollo. On Apollonius as a source for Virgil in general see Nelis 2001, and on Virgil and Apollonian bovine thematics in particular see Hunter 1989. On the Argonautic aspect of Virgil's Orpheus see Lucifora 2011. Apollonius seems to be well versed in bovine myth and ritual. For Apollonian allusions to the Bouphonia see Porter 1989. Furthermore, in describing how the Colchians wrap the corpses of their men in oxhides (3.204-7), he demonstrates knowledge of an actual Caucasian custom. See Ginzburg 1991: 263.

flourish,⁵⁸ and as we shall see, Rhea's alter ego Cybele is connected to a paradoxically regenerative cow sacrifice reminiscent of the *bougonia*. In the *Orphic Argonautica*, the source of which is also reflected in Virgil's poetry,⁵⁹ Orpheus himself sacrifices a bull,⁶⁰ and in the *Orphic Lithica*, we learn that he sacrifices a calf to Helios on an annual basis.⁶¹

Pythagoras, the ideology of whose belief system is in many respects consonant with Orphic ideology,⁶² who was initiated into the Orphic mysteries,⁶³ and who is even thought to have written poetry under the pseudonym Orpheus,⁶⁴ is also an agent of cow sacrifice. Although he, like the Orphics, is variously said to have advocated a vegetarian lifestyle, Porphyry claims that Pythagoras occasionally sacrificed chickens and pigs,⁶⁵ and Aristoxenus says that he abstained only from slaughter of the ram and the plough-ox.⁶⁶ So it need not come as a shock to learn from several authors that after having discovered his famous geometrical theorem, he sacrificed an ox, or even carried out a hecatomb!⁶⁷ Equally relevant for us is the fact that Ovid puts into the mouth

⁵⁸ See Appendix C.

⁵⁹ Nelis 2005.

⁶⁰ *Orphic Argonautica* 315-32. Wroe 2013: 79-80 similarly emphasizes the point.

⁶¹ *Orphic Lithica* 155ff.; also described in the hypothesis (Halleux and Schamp 1985: 80-81). For Orpheus as the genuine narrator of this text see Giangrande 1989: 39, which calls into question the popular understanding that Orpheus' name has been more or less artificially slapped onto this text (e.g. Hernandez Martin 2009: 371).

⁶² Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* 151 states that Orpheus was a model for Pythagoras. There are also the controversial phrases of Herodotus (2.81.2) that arguably relate these two figures to one another. For more on Orpheus and Pythagoras see Riedweg 2005: 51-7, 74-5, 88-9; Casadesús 2009; D'Anna 2010; Zhmud 2012: 221-38.

⁶³ Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* 146 records Pythagoras' account that he was initiated into the Orphic mysteries by Aglaophamos.

⁶⁴ Ion of Chios claims that Pythagoras was the actual author of works attributed to Orpheus, Pythagoras having assumed the name of the latter (Diels and Kranz 1952-60: 1.379).

⁶⁵ Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 36.

⁶⁶ Wehrli 1944-59: 2.15-16; Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* 150. On the confusing array of claims as to Pythagorean dietary restrictions see Detienne 1994: 37-59.

⁶⁷ Radicke 1999: 370; According to Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* 3.88), this was a habitual practice. Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 36 says that the ox was made of flour.

of this same philosopher a description of the *bougonia*, as well as a variety of equivalents, including the aforementioned phenomenon of spine-born snakes.⁶⁸

Similarly Empedocles, yet another figure whose ideology is affiliated with that attributed to Orpheus,⁶⁹ is said to have offered a sacrifice of flour bound with honey fashioned into the shape of an ox after having won an Olympic chariot race.⁷⁰ As for the *bougonia*, we could not expect anyone to bring Empedocles, a much more aggressive proponent of vegetarianism than either Orpheus or Pythagoras, into contact with this procedure in the way that Ovid has done with Pythagoras, but it is remarkable that Empedocles uses the adjective βουγενής to describe his primaeval anthropo-bovine hybrid entities,⁷¹ entities that could be said to call to mind the likewise primaeval and partly taurine Orphic Protogonos.⁷² This is one of the very few extant instances in which the adjective βουγενής does not refer to bees born from a cow, nor does it even seem to convey the sense ‘cow-born,’ since the creatures in question are not born from bovines, but are rather themselves semi-bovine.⁷³ Nonetheless, it seems to me that the occurrence of the adjectival equivalent of *bougonia* in an author compatible with Orpheus ultimately deserves to be compared with Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.

⁶⁸ *Metamorphoses* 15.364-7. In connection with Ovid’s Pythagorean *bougonia*, Konstan and Nieto 2011: 347-8 perceive a Pythagorean tinge to a passage of *Georgics* 4. Note that the line numbers cited by Konstan and Nieto are wrong. The correct numeration of the lines that they discuss is 219-27.

⁶⁹ On connections between Orpheus and Empedocles see Riedweg 1995 and Megino 2005 and 2009. On the impact of Empedocles on Virgil see Neils 2004. Empedocles also influenced Apollonius, an important source for Virgil (Kyriakou 1994).

⁷⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 8.53.

⁷¹ Inwood 2001: 247. On Ovid’s use of this line see Hardie 1995: 214.

⁷² Epimenides, another figure who seems to be affiliated with Orpheus, is also connected with cow slaughter to the extent that he consumes divine nourishment contained in the hoof of an ox (Diels and Kranz 1952-60: 1.27).

⁷³ Inwood 2001: 115 simply translates it “oxlike.”

So Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Empedocles are all three of them associated with cow sacrifice. When it comes to Virgil's concatenation of Orpheus with specifically bugonic cow slaughter, I suspect that we are dealing in the first instance with a reference to reincarnation, an element common to the Orphic, Pythagorean, and Empedoclean belief systems.⁷⁴ In fact as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4, Orpheus' very name, as well as that of his Vedic congeners, the Ṛbhus, articulates this very belief, deriving as it does from the inherited verbal root **h₃erb^h-* 'turn,' an etymology that finds its synchronic match in the metempsychotic κύκλος attached by various authors to Orpheus. A belief in reincarnation is probably what is meant by the terse but profound inscription βίος θάνατος βίος carved on an undeniably Orphic bone tablet from Pontic Olbia,⁷⁵ and the gold *lamellae*, which I am convinced deserve to be considered Orphic texts,⁷⁶ are designed to help the initiates for whom they have been made escape from the cycle (κύκλος) of birth and death, and in so doing to attain immortality.

The *bougonia* would make for a fitting emblem of reincarnation, not only because of the bees born from the dead bovine, but because both bees and bovines in and of themselves are variously

⁷⁴ On rebirth in Orphic ideology see Bernabé 2011b: 179-210. On the similarities between Orphic and Pythagorean notions of reincarnation see Zhmud 2012: 221-38. Pythagoras' connection with such a belief system brushes up against a cow in the narrative of the ox of Tarentum, in which the philosopher convinces the animal to stop eating beans (Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 23; Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* 60); compare Porphyry's claim that bees avoid resting on beans (*De Antro Nympharum* 8). Orpheus also had a presence in the eschatological traditions of Tarentum, as shown, for example, by the statue group of Orpheus and the Sirens that formed part of a Tarentine burial complex (Graf and Johnston 2013: 65). Perhaps Leonidas of Tarentum is playing with Orphic-Pythagorean bovine ideology when he advises a traveller to avoid a certain spring and to rather drink from a colder one near which heifers are grazing, which could be said to put one in mind of the two springs of the Orphic *lamellae* (Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 35). It is intriguing that Proserpina was the recipient of a cow sacrifice at the Tarentum of the Campus Martius. And of course it is in the shadow of Tarentum that Virgil's old Corycian dwells (*sub Oebaliae...turribus arcis*; *Georgics* 4.125).

⁷⁵ Dubois 1996: 154-5. On Orphic elements at Olbia see Detienne 2007: 13-30.

⁷⁶ See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2011. The influential study that denied an Orphic connection is Zuntz 1971.

associated with birth, death, and rebirth. That bees possess this symbolic property is an established and familiar fact;⁷⁷ we have already encountered a reflex of it in the myth of Polyidus and Glaucus, in which both bees and honey are crucially involved in the sequence of the boy's death and subsequent resurrection. The semiotic value of the bees and honey in this narrative is confirmed by the archaeological record,⁷⁸ as well as by other textual evidence: so for example the scholiast commenting on Hippolytus' reference to a bee identifies this insect with the soul.⁷⁹ How interesting that Theseus portrays Hippolytus as being an Orphic,⁸⁰ and that Hippolytus goes on to experience a bovine-induced death and subsequent rebirth, being fatally assaulted by the bull that Poseidon sends from the sea, and then reborn in Latium as Virbius,⁸¹ whom Ovid mentions in the wake of Pythagoras' speech.⁸² So Euripides' tragedy and the Italian component of Hippolytus' mythology yield an amalgam of bee, bull, Orpheus, and rebirth, an amalgam that corresponds to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex and the spiritual symbolism that I have ascribed to it.

⁷⁷ De Gubernatis 1872: 218-19; Cook 1895: 19-23; Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 64-5; Roscalla 1998: 41-59; Wilson 2004: 189-226; Bounas 2008: 72-5; Giuman 2008: 73-86; Herren 2008: 52-7. For other cultures see Ransome 1937: *passim*, especially 219-25. G. Thomas 1978: 32 compares the bee's association with rebirth in Greek tradition to the role of the bee in the Hittite Telepinu myth. Mazoyer 2008: 161-71 suggests that Hittite bee mythology influenced the mellic component of Aristaeus' mythological profile.

⁷⁸ That Glaucus' having fallen into honey is not a random detail is confirmed by the juvenile burial unearthed at Marathon, in which the boy's coffin is composed of the combination of two beehives (Crane 1999: 200). The same thing might have been done in Eretria (Crane and Graham 1985: 149). For photographs of the Marathon grave see J. Jones 1976: 89.

⁷⁹ Scholium on *Hippolytus* 77.

⁸⁰ *Hippolytus* 953.

⁸¹ Hawkins 2006: 79-152, 207 notes that the bull's emergence is described in vocabulary otherwise used to describe birth. For more on Hippolytus and the bull see Paschalis 1994: 107, 121-6.

⁸² *Metamorphoses* 15.497-546.

Hippolytus' taurine demise leads us to connections between cows and birth, death, and rebirth, connections which, like those that link bees to points of transition between life and death, are well established.⁸³ However in the case of the *bougonia*, in which the cow is not simply an emblem of death, but must itself be put to death, another element is involved: the implication of the cow in scenarios of what I shall refer to as paradoxically creative destruction, an ideology that informs numerous mythological narratives and religious practices owing something to Indo-European heritage.⁸⁴ A pair of examples is the fate of the both the cosmogonic bull and the complementary eschatological bull of the *Bundahišn*, a Middle Persian Zoroastrian text that has inherited a number of elements from the Indo-European mythico-religious tradition.⁸⁵ In light of the nature of our investigation, it is worth noting that several aspects of the *Bundahišn* find their Hellenic correspondents in none other than Orphic texts. So the White Hōm tree to which the *Bundahišn* repeatedly refers seems to be the Iranian equivalent of the white cypress of the Orphic *lamellae*,⁸⁶ and this same text's claim that during the renovation of the universe, the resurrected bodies of humanity will be made to undergo purification by passing through molten metal, which will feel to the righteous like warm milk, sounds to me an awful lot like the Orphic initiate leaping into milk as part of the process of obtaining release from death and becoming immortal, a process to which I shall return in Chapter 1.

⁸³ Frazer 1921: 2.376-82; Croon 1952, H. Rose 1954; Davies 1988; Vergados 2013: 241. Proclus, with reference to the Orphic verse in which the new moon is described as a calf, claims that this is so because she labours over genesis much in the same way as an ox labours (Bernabé 2004-7: 2.304; Marzillo 2010: 272).

⁸⁴ On the ideology of creative destruction see Aguilar i Matas 1991.

⁸⁵ Lincoln 1981: 69-93.

⁸⁶ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 28 casually mention this Iranian tree in their discussion of the Orphic one.

With respect to the cosmogonic bull of the *Bundahišn*, various items come into being as a result of his slaughter, including cows as we know them, which are born from his semen after the latter has been sent to the moon,⁸⁷ a second installment of bovine genesis that the native exegetical tradition interprets as an index of the cow's exceptional value.⁸⁸ As for this bull's eschatological counterpart, several passages of the *Bundahišn* tell us that when the world is born anew out of the destruction of our current one, the dead shall be revived by means of the slaughter of the bull Hadayōš, from whose fat and marrow, mixed with the White Hōm, an immortalizing beverage shall be prepared.⁸⁹

A Lithuanian folktale in which the maiden Aušrinė, a reflex of the Indo-European dawn goddess, slaughters a bull and three cows, and in so doing generates both terra firma and her own brother and causes the earth to flourish, similarly demonstrates a sequence of events in which cow slaughter yields unexpectedly productive results.⁹⁰ For a third and final comparandum, this time not from the realm of myth and folklore, but rather from funerary cult, I turn to the Hittite ritual text called the *šalliš waštaiš* 'great wrong' on account of the fact that this expression, which refers to the death of the Hittite king or queen, occurs in its opening line. Certain similarities

⁸⁷ As we shall see, Orphic tradition also connects the moon with the cow.

⁸⁸ Anklesaria 1956: 93-4. A detail of the fate of this ox lives on in Classical Persian visual and verbal art, on which see Melikian-Chirvani 1992: 126.

⁸⁹ Anklesaria 1956: 288-91; compare 196-7, 216-17. Furthermore, there is another eschatological bovine in the *Bundahišn* with a match in Greek: Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 222 compare the *daēnā*, who in the form of a both a cow and a maiden confronts the soul of the wicked person on its way to the afterlife, with Aristophanes' Empousa, who also assumes both of those guises. Yet again, we might be in an Orphic context. See Álvarez-Pedrosa 2011.

⁹⁰ Greimas 1992: 67. The Lithuanian folklore of bees is also rich in archaisms. See Grottanelli 1987.

have already been observed between Greek funerary traditions and the *šalliš waštaiš*.⁹¹ I

would now propose a connection between the following passage of that text and the *bougonia*:⁹²

*DINGIR-LIM-iš-ma-aš ku-e-da-ni UD-ti ki-ša-ri nu a-pí-e-da-ni UD-ti kiš-an i-ya-an-zi I
GU₄.APIN.LÁ šar-lu-ma-aš-kán a-pí-el ZI-ni ši-pa-an-da-an-zi na-an ki-it-kar-ši ha-ad-da-an-zi
nu ki-iš-ša-an me-ma-an-zi zi-ik-wa-za GIM-an ki-iš-ta-at ka-a-ša-wa-az QA-TAM-MA ki-ša-ru
nu-wa-aš-ša-an ZI-KA ki-i-da-ni GU₄-i kat-ta tar-na.*

On the day that (s)he becomes a god, on that day they do as follows: they sacrifice to his/ her soul a plough-ox of raising. They strike it on its head and speak thus: “As you have become a god, let this one become likewise. Let you soul transition down into this ox.”

The precise role of the ox is admittedly far from clear, but it seems as though the effect of its sacrifice is to trigger the release of the monarch’s soul from its body, whence into the cow and presumably thence to the afterlife where, like the Orphic initiate, it is to become a god.⁹³ In fact Walter Kelly has collected evidence for psychopompic cows in a variety of cultures of Indo-European provenience.⁹⁴ I submit that we can add the ox of the *šalliš waštaiš* to the list.

So I would propose that the *bougonia* is ultimately to be understood through the lens of an inherited ideology of paradoxically creative destruction, of which the cow is apparently the ideal host. That it is appropriate to assign to the *bougonia* such an archaic pedigree is confirmed by the

⁹¹ For a comparison of the *šalliš waštaiš* ritual and Patroklos’ funeral see Rutherford 2007: 223-36.

⁹² Kassian, Korolëv and Sidel’sev 2002: 46 lines 6-12.

⁹³ For comparisons of the *šalliš waštaiš* to the Orphic *lamellae* See Watkins 1995: 277-96, and Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 209-16. On similarities between Hittite literature and the Orphic hymns see Galjanić 2007: 227-57.

⁹⁴ Kelly 1863: 106-12.

fact that many other aspects of Graeco-Roman bovine lore and liturgy, including some of those drawn on by Virgil, are informed by traditions of Indo-European ancestry.⁹⁵

With respect to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex in particular, however, I think that there is also another element at work. As well known as the mortuary and regenerative symbolism of bees, if not better known, is their poetic symbolism,⁹⁶ and cows also possess substantial, if less familiar links to poetry, links that I shall discuss at length in Chapter 2. When it comes to *Georgics* 4 in particular, many have suggested that the bees of the epyllion, especially in light of their connection to Orpheus, have something to do with poetry.⁹⁷ It is hardly the case that the *bougonia* itself inherently possesses a poetic dimension, but one can imagine that it would easily lend itself to such an interpretation in an Orphic context. So my full argument is that the *bougonia* executed by Aristaeus in response to Orpheus' attack on his swarms simultaneously invokes the Orphic doctrine of reincarnation and functions as a symbol for poetry.

In fact poetry and rebirth form a conceptual cluster in the context of Orphic mythology and ideology. In myth, Orpheus' poetry defies and in some versions defeats death: so Orpheus at

⁹⁵ For an Indo-European analysis of Virgil's Cacus see Woodard 2006: 191-219. Furthermore, it is remarkable that Proteus derives from an Indo-European aquatic divinity (Puhvel 1987: 277-83, Oettinger 2009) whose reflexes consistently exhibit a bovine dimension. One wonders therefore whether his relationship to the *bougonia* had been fixed long before Virgil composed his epyllion. Louden 1999 similarly argues that the episode of Aristaeus' submarine descent, which involves him in the mythology of the same Indo-European marine divinity of whom Proteus is an heir, indicates that at least some portion of the seemingly heterogeneous content of the epyllion had already been assembled prior to Virgil.

⁹⁶ Waszink 1974; Roscher 1883: 69-73; Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 70-2; Roscalla 1998: 60-75; Giuman 2008: 87-94; Herren 2008: 50-2. For honey as prophetic see Jaillard 2007: 235.

⁹⁷ Farrell 1991: 247; Balavoine 1987; Béague et al. 1998: 49; Triomphe 1989: 343; Sibona 2002, Fyntikoglou 2008; and Griffin 1985, although hesitantly. Compare Horsfall 2010 on bees in *Aeneid* 6, where Orpheus is hanging about again.

times succeeds in recuperating Eurydice by enchanting Hades and Persephone with the music of his lyre, and he saves the Argonauts from the Sirens by overpowering their song with his, the potential for the eschatological significance of which triumph is indicated by a statuary complex of Orpheus and the Sirens that forms part of a Tarentine grave.⁹⁸

Orpheus' lyre is explicitly connected with the fate of the soul in a scholium on the line of the *Aeneid* that mentions the musician's instrument:⁹⁹ *autem dicit librum Orfei de uocanda anima liram nominari, et negantur animae sine cithara posse ascendere* "But [Varro] says that there is a book of Orpheus about the invocation of the soul called the *Lyre*, and it is denied that souls are capable of ascending without a lyre."¹⁰⁰ Perhaps also relevant is a bone tablet from Olbia, the decidedly Orphic bone tablets from which I have already mentioned, that is divided into seven sections, arguably representing a seven-stringed lyre.¹⁰¹ A bone plaque from nearby Berezan invokes Apollo in connection with the number seven and multiples of seven,¹⁰² and in an Apollonian context the application of the number seven to the lyre is patent.¹⁰³

The Orphic intercourse between poetry and rebirth is also suggested by the eschatological function of the spring of Mnemosyne in the Orphic *lamellae* on the one hand, and the poetic properties of Hippocrene on the other: while Orpheus assigns to the spring of the Muses' mother

⁹⁸ Graf and Johnston 2013: 65. For discussion of the salvific aspect of poetry with reference to Orpheus see Adluri and Bagchee 2012, and E. Henry 1992. Similar ideology is also associated with Linus, who is related to Orpheus. See Aguirre 2011.

⁹⁹ For the text see Nock 1927: 169. See also Nock 1929 and Molina Moreno 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Compare the aforementioned narrative told by Lucian, in which Neanthus expects to obtain a state of blessedness by playing the lyre of Orpheus.

¹⁰¹ M. West 1983: 58.

¹⁰² Burkert 1994.

¹⁰³ E.g. Callimachus, *Hymn to Delos* 249-254.

a role in the transition of the initiate's soul to the afterlife, the spring of the Muses is a source of poetic inspiration.¹⁰⁴

In light of the Orphic amalgamation of poetry and rebirth, it seems to me to be sound to perceive in Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex both an eschatological and a poetic dimension.

Furthermore, one manifestation of the Indo-European ideology of paradoxically creative destruction is that of the violent origins of poetry. So the dismemberment of Puruṣa, the cosmogonic humanoid of Vedic mythology, results in the genesis of the Vedas and of the poetic metres in which their hymns are composed,¹⁰⁵ the mead from which Norse poets derive their inspiration is made from a mixture of the blood of the slain sage Kvasir and honey,¹⁰⁶ and Irish poets acquire their talent by drinking from the river Boyne, which comes into being as a result of the dismemberment of its eponym, the goddess Bóand.¹⁰⁷

Something of this tradition of the violent origins of poetry informs Orpheus' mythological profile: as Joseph Nagy has demonstrated, Orpheus' poetry becomes dysfunctional in the wake of Eurydice's death, but the poet's severed head, which continues to vociferate after it has been

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Propertius 3.3. As we shall see, both Μνημοσύνη and Μοῦσα are from the root **men-*. Faraone 2002 argues that Pindar's image of the daughters of Mnemosyne and the water of Dirke at the end of *Isthmian* 6 blends the eschatological water of the spring of Mnemosyne and the poetic water with which the Muses are associated. Ennius' use of the verb *memini*, also from **men-*, in declaring his recollection of his previous incarnations, including Homer, similarly situates memory in a context that simultaneously involves defying the oblivion of death and poetic inspiration. Compare R. Thomas 1999: 186. The Welsh poet Taliesin experiences a series of transformations that are to be conceived of as rebirths in connection with his acquisition of his poetic abilities. For the text and analysis thereof, see Ford 1992.

¹⁰⁵ *R̥g Veda* 10.90.9.

¹⁰⁶ Faulkes 1998: 62.

¹⁰⁷ Thurneysen 1927: 268; Breatnach 1981: 86; P. Henry 1979-80: 117; Ó hÓgain 1991: 49.

separated from its body, regains, even exceeds its erstwhile poetic potency.¹⁰⁸ In fact the yields of Nagy's essay indicate that Orpheus' severed head is just one of several such heads to be found in mythological traditions of Indo-European heritage, heads that fail to articulate themselves while still attached to their bodies, but that paradoxically gain the ability to communicate their message once they have been sundered. So Orpheus' severed head is in both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationship with the *bougonia* of Virgil's Aristaeus epyllion: Orpheus' dismemberment motivates him to blight Aristaeus' bees, and so ultimately leads to the *bougonia*, but the event and aftermath of his dismemberment itself shares with the process of *bougonia* a sequence of violent action and paradoxically productive result.

My interpretation of the *bougonia* clearly reveals that I favour the optimistic side of the debate as to whether Virgil's characterization of this procedure is bleak and condemnatory, or sober but ultimately approbatory. Christine Perkell judiciously suggests that the critical disagreement between these two schools of thought reflects an ambiguity inherent to the poem.¹⁰⁹ I think that such a balanced perspective must be close to the truth, as I shall acknowledge in the Conclusion, but I myself prefer to emphasize the redemptive outcome of the *bougonia*. So I disagree with Perkell when she adds that Virgil accentuates the horror of the *bougonia*;¹¹⁰ more accurate, I

¹⁰⁸ J. Nagy 1990. Other aspects of the mythology of Orpheus' severed head might rather derive from Near Eastern traditions. See Faraone 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Perkell 1989: 13.

¹¹⁰ Perkell 1989: 79. Compare Boyle 1986: 74-5, whose perspective is ultimately pessimistic, but seems to allow for ambiguity.

suspect, is Monica Gale's perspective that the poem allows for both pessimistic and optimistic interpretations, enforcing neither.¹¹¹

Out of Egypt? The Apis Bull and Other Near Eastern Comparanda to the *Bougonia*

To argue that both the *bougonia* on its own and Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex have their basis in material not only native to Greek ideological and mythological traditions, but in fact inherited from Indo-European is necessarily to call into question the tendency of Graeco-Roman authors to locate the *bougonia* in Egypt, a tendency with which Virgil engages when he situates his initial description of the *bougonia* there.¹¹² Furthermore, authors who treat the *bougonia* tend themselves to be associated with Egypt or other regions of North Africa. So Antigonus of Carystus, one of the authors who identifies the *bougonia* as being an Egyptian practice,¹¹³ references Archelaus' aforementioned description of the *bougonia* and mentions that Archelaus was Egyptian.¹¹⁴ Philetas,¹¹⁵ whom we have already encountered as the earliest extant author to describe bees using the adjective βουγενής, was the tutor of Ptolemy Philadelphus.¹¹⁶ Columella tells us that the *bougonia* was discussed by by the Carthaginian agronomist Mago, whose extensive work on agriculture was originally composed in Punic,¹¹⁷ and the *Geoponica* tells us

¹¹¹ Gale 2000: ix.

¹¹² *Georgics* 4.287-94.

¹¹³ *Historiae Mirabiles* 19.1.

¹¹⁴ *Historiae Mirabiles* 19.4, 89.2.

¹¹⁵ *Historiae Mirabiles* 19.2.

¹¹⁶ Spanoudakis 2002: 23.

¹¹⁷ Columella 9.14.6.

that the Numidian king Iuba described the manner in which the *bougonia* was to be performed.¹¹⁸ Callimachus, a native of Cyrene, also seems to allude to the *bougonia* in his *Aetia*, a passage to which I shall return shortly.

In light of the persistent trend of associating the *bougonia* with Egypt, some scholars deem that the notion of ox-born bees must have originated in that land,¹¹⁹ and there are those who have even tried to link it with various scenarios in Egyptian visual and verbal art.¹²⁰ Needless to say, no obvious comparanda can be said to exist.¹²¹ Rather, it appears as though the association made by Classical authors between the *bougonia* and Egypt emerges from the notion that the latter is a realm in which marvels occur.¹²² Note, moreover that although he initially associates the *bougonia* with Egypt, Virgil does more to relocate it from Egypt to Greece, geographically supplanting Proteus and his seals from Pharos and transporting them to Pallene, and having Aristaeus accomplish the proto-*bougonia* on Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia.¹²³ Virgil also disrupts the continuity between Aristaeus' *bougonia* and the one that he describes as being practiced in Egypt by having Aristaeus perform something quite unlike the Egyptian version: instead, in accordance with the instructions given to him by his mother Cyrene—whom he consults in the

¹¹⁸ *Geoponica* 15.2.

¹¹⁹ Whitfield 1956: 117; Wheeler 1923: 238, followed by Corrington 1956: 99. As one might glean from the dates of the studies that I have just cited, the trend is on the wane.

¹²⁰ See for example Virey 1889. Again, efforts to establish an authentically Egyptian origin for the *bougonia* are no longer in vogue.

¹²¹ Manassa 2008: 113-17. Thanks to Caitlín Barrett for bringing this essay to my attention.

¹²² Thomas 1988: 2.196.

¹²³ Compare Acosta-Hughes 2012: 242-3. As to why Mount Lycaeus in particular, see Murgatroyd 1997. I would also repeat that Arcadia, what with its ursine name and mythology, could be conceived of as a rather suitable place for the procedure of *bougonia*.

Peneus, rather than in the Libyan city of which she is the eponym—Aristaeus performs a kind of sacrifice that in certain respects utterly defies the precepts of the Egyptian recipe.¹²⁴

Nonetheless, I think that it would be missing the point to dismiss Egypt as being of little or no import for our understanding of the *bougonia*.¹²⁵ Even if the *bougonia* is only notionally Egyptian, that should be enough to make us watch out for how such a notion might affect treatments of it, which could be secondarily informed by Graeco-Roman knowledge of or ideas about Egypt.¹²⁶ In fact Egypt and the Aegean were in the business of swapping aspects of bovine culture already in the Bronze Age, a form of exchange exhibited by the Minoan bull-leaping frescos at Avaris,¹²⁷ and the representation in artwork of the Theban Necropolis of Aegean traders delivering animal-headed rhyta, including bull-headed ones.¹²⁸ So Virgil, whose *Georgics* in fact demonstrate a considerable interest in Egyptian mystery cults,¹²⁹ would be participating in a time-honoured tradition by considering the *bougonia* in relation to comparable Egyptian material.

¹²⁴ On Virgil's two *bougoniae* see Pellegrini 2007 and Formicola 2008: 15-24.

¹²⁵ For such a dismissive opinion see Horsfall 2000: 88.

¹²⁶ Compare Stephens 2003: 119, 206, who presents the cow as a pivot for conflating Greek and Egyptian mythology. As for Virgil in particular, the situation becomes all the more interesting in light of Schork 1998, who argues that Virgil might have known some Egyptian.

¹²⁷ Aruz 2008: 132-36. There is also iconographical and possibly literary evidence for bull leaping among the Hittites. See Güterbock 2003.

¹²⁸ Wachsmann 1987: *passim*, esp. 56. As for the incorporation of Egyptian bovine myth and religion into Greek tradition, one might consider Martin Bernal's suggestion that Minos' name is to be derived from that of the Mnevis bull. See Bernal 1987-2006: 2.171-7. Given that we are concerned with the *bougonia*, I would also note the argument of Woudhuizen 1997 that the Cretan bee hieroglyph demonstrates Egyptian influence.

¹²⁹ P. Johnston 2009: esp. 256-62.

In light of this venerable tradition of exchange of bovine culture, it is reasonable to expect that the Greeks and Romans would have made efforts to syncretize the *bougonia* with ostensibly similar matter from Egypt. There were several sacred bulls in ancient Egypt, one of them *Hp*, whose name the Greeks and Romans rendered as Ἄπις/ *Āpis*.¹³⁰ It seems as though the Greeks and then the Romans took a good deal of interest in this bull, and the Greeks even integrated him into their mythological genealogy, equating him with Epaphos.¹³¹ Given our interest in the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, it will behoove us to note that Diodorus, who claims that Orpheus travelled to Egypt and and learnt its wisdom,¹³² introduced into Greece the Egyptian belief of the raising of the spirit of the Apis bull.¹³³ Orpheus' connection to Egypt in general and the Apis bull in particular might be a contributing factor in Virgil's approximation of Orpheus to the *bougonia*.

Furthermore, Callimachus references the Apis bull in a passage of the *Aetia* that is an intertext for the Aristaeus epyllion.¹³⁴ In the lines in question, a segment of the *Victoria Berenices*, Callimachus mentions Danaus, whom he calls βουγενής, Proteus and his seals, and the Apis bull

¹³⁰ On the various sacred bulls of Egypt see Dodson 2005, and Myśliwiec 2000: 59–63 and 2004: 75–80.

¹³¹ On the extent to which the Greeks and Romans took an interest in the Apis bull see D. Thompson 2012: 106-16; 247-55; Stephens 2003: 215.

¹³² Diodorus Siculus 1.23.2, 6-8; 1.69.3-4; 1.92.3; 1.96.1-3, 4-6. There is also Herodotus' controversial statement (2.81.2), in which he appears to seem to approximate Orphic and Egyptian traditions. For more on Orpheus' connection with Egypt see Burkert 2004: 71-98, Dousa 2011: 164, and Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005: 489-93. On Egyptian elements in the Orphic *lamellae* see Dousa 2011 and Kingsley 2010: 45.

¹³³ Diodorus Siculus 1.96. Compare *Orphic Argonautica* 45, where it is the voice of Orpheus himself that mentions the Apis bull when referencing his journey to Egypt.

¹³⁴ Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 239-42, who also discuss the connections between the *Aetia* and Book 3 of the *Georgics* demonstrated by R. Thomas 1999: 68-100. If Virgil's involvement of Cyrene with the *bougonia* is an innovation, perhaps we might perceive it as functioning in part as an allusion to Callimachus (S. Harrison 2007: 166-7). Virgil's epyllion might also be informed by the work of another author concerned with Graeco-Egyptian bovine mythology: as R. Thomas 1988: 2.236 notes, Orpheus' lament for Eurydike could be said to echo a line of Calvus about Io (which Thomas 1999: 303-4 had already connected to *Eclogues* 6), whose son Epaphos, moreover, was equated with the Apis bull, bringing us back to the latter.

in quick succession.¹³⁵ The combination of Proteus with Danaus βουγενής, the bovinity of whose descriptor is resumed in the Apis bull, is surely to be related to the comparable cluster of characters and elements in Virgil's epyllion.¹³⁶ In the most immediate sense, Danaus is βουγενής because he is descended from Io, but given that the adjective typically refers to bees born of the *bougonia*, and given that we are in an Egyptian context, and that the *bougonia* is typically situated in Egypt, it is hard not to see an allusion to the phenomenon of ox-born bees.¹³⁷ Yvan Nadeau, moreover, observes that Callimachus is here celebrating Berenice's victory in a chariot race at the Nemean Games, and that a scholium to Nicander speaks of a *bugonia* taking place at Nemea.¹³⁸

So it seems that Danaus' modifier does double duty, both indicating his descent from Io and alluding to the *bougonia*. This would not be the only bovine riddle in Callimachus' poetry;¹³⁹ furthermore, Callimachus demonstrates an interest in synthesizing Greek and Egyptian bee symbolism elsewhere in his work.¹⁴⁰ Given that Danaus βουγενής seems to be in part a reference to the *bougonia*, it is significant that the poet ropes the Apis bull into this passage. But why, one might ask, should the Apis bull in particular be brought to bear on the *bougonia*? Apis was a

¹³⁵ Harder 2012: 1.198-200. It is clear that the Apis bull is meant: see Stephens 2003: 9; Harder 2010: 2.412; Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 186. As Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 243 fn. 102 note, the transition is natural: Danaus is descended from Epaphus, and so from Apis.

¹³⁶ For what it is worth, the *Aetia* also mention Aristaeus and his acquisition of the Etesian winds, a narrative that we have seen might somehow be connected to the *bougonia*.

¹³⁷ Harder 2012: 2.400; Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2012: 243.

¹³⁸ Nadeau 1989: 100.

¹³⁹ For an apparently doubly riddling reference to the Bosphorus in the *Coma Berenices* see Prioux 2012: 212-13. Interesting for us that elsewhere Orpheus is associated with decoding the name of this strait (Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 4.345-7; *Orphic Argonautica* 1056-8). For another Callimachean bovine riddle to be mentioned in Chapter 2, see Bing 1984a, with corrigenda 1984b.

¹⁴⁰ Barbantani 2011: 186-7, to which I would add that the association of Zeus and bees is already established in the Greek mythological tradition.

variety of different things at different times and in different places,¹⁴¹ but in one of his aspects he was said to embody the soul of the reincarnated Osiris,¹⁴² whose name Virgil actually assigns to a momentary character of the *Aeneid*.¹⁴³ The sequence of events of Osiris' dismemberment and subsequent reincarnation as the Apis bull are arguably a decent match for the *bougonia*.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, with Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex in particular in mind, the Greeks, who equated Osiris with Dionysus,¹⁴⁵ did so especially with reference to the compatible rebirths of these two gods and to their common taurine aspect,¹⁴⁶ which are perhaps the two aspects of Dionysiac mythology and iconography in which Orphic tradition takes a special interest.¹⁴⁷ I return to Orpheus' taurine Dionysus in Chapter 1.

So we now have two reasons on account of which we might consider Apis to be a latent player in Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex: this bull surfaces in a passage of Callimachus that informs the composition of the epyllion, and Dionysus' taurine aspect, which the Greeks related to Osiris as Apis, was a matter of interest in Orphic tradition. But we have yet to encounter in Apis

¹⁴¹ For a survey of the development of and variation in the theology and cult of the Apis bull see Kákosy 1990.

¹⁴² Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 20, 43; Diodorus Siculus 1.85. Osiris and Apis become fused in *Wsir-Ḥp*, the compound deity whose name yields that of the Hellenistic god Serapis. See Moyer 2011: 147.

¹⁴³ *Aeneid* 12.458. On this Osiris see Reed 1998. Given that the Nile is equated with Osiris, we might perceive in Virgil's reference to the latter at *Georgics* 4.288 an allusion to the god. Tibullus 1.7.22-29 collocates Osiris, the Nile and the Apis bull.

¹⁴⁴ The Apis bull's generative aspect is also suggested by the festival in which women expose their genitals while facing the animal (Diodorus Siculus 1.85).

¹⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 35; Diodorus Siculus 1.96.

¹⁴⁶ Plutarch says that Dionysus brought two bulls from India, one of them being named Apis (*Isis and Osiris* 29), and he also links Dionysus' own taurine aspect with Apis (*Isis and Osiris* 35). Compare Diodorus Siculus 3.74.1, who identifies Epaphos as the Egyptian Dionysus, and Hyginus, *Fabulae* 150, in which Hera attempts to arrange for the Titans to dismember Epaphos.

¹⁴⁷ On the assimilation of Osiris to Dionysus in an Orphic context see Sánchez Ortiz de Landaluce 2011.

anything to do with bees.¹⁴⁸ If, however, we shift to looking at this bull with Roman eyes and more to the point listening to his name with Roman ears, we realize that *Āpis* is, aside from the length of the initial vowel, identical to the Latin bee word.¹⁴⁹ This would be just one of several interlingual puns in Latin literature.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps such wordplay informs the Ptolemaic depiction of the Apis bull together with bees on a vine in one of the so-called Bes chambers of the Memphite Necropolis,¹⁵¹ if the dating will allow for such a claim. Susan Stephens has similarly suggested that the combination of bull and bees in the iconography of the Merovingian king Childeric's funerary accouterments points to the existence of an understanding that the Apis bull was to be linked both by nature and by name to the process of *bougonia*.¹⁵²

Indeed the Greeks were already playing with Apis' name hundreds of years earlier: when Aeschylus refers in his *Suppliants* to *Ἀπίαν βοῶντιν* "hilly Apia," although he is referring in the immediate sense to the Argive Apis, he is surely also invoking the Apis bull,¹⁵³ in fact it is not until we arrive at the final syllable of *βοῶντιν* that it becomes clear we aren't dealing with the accusative singular of *βοῦς*. Perhaps the Romans similarly infused the name of the Apis bull

¹⁴⁸ Note, however, that although bees do not hover about Osiris in connection with his death and rebirth, he is associated with this insect in his connection to the House of the Bee, on which see El-Sayed 1975: 199-208 and Lichtheim 1973-80: 3.40.

¹⁴⁹ Many studies make this observation. See for example Peraki-Kyriakidou 2003: 162 and Stephens 2003: 4. The ostensible effort on the part of the Romans to connect the Apis bull to their bee word would fit in well with the overall process of Romanization of foreign deities, on which see Alvar Ezquerro 2008.

¹⁵⁰ For more on interlingual puns in Latin literature see Ahl 1985: 60-63.

¹⁵¹ Quibell 1907: Plate 1, described on page 17. Quibell's identification of the fragmentary bovine is supported by Kater-Sibbs and Vermaseren 1975-77: 1.12. For more on the Bes chambers, with reference to the painting of the bull and bees, see Volokhine 2010: 245-8.

¹⁵² Stephens 2003: 4. In light of the tradition that Childeric's semi-legendary father Merovech was sired by a tauriform monster called the Quinotaur, this would not be the only occasion on which a bovine figures in Merovingian ideology.

¹⁵³ *Suppliants* 117. The allusion has been pointed out on many occasions. See Murray 1958: 24; Johansen and Whittle 1980: 2.104-5; Griffiths 1986: 475. Later authors explicitly connect the Argive Apis with Egypt; see for example Clement, *Stromata* 1.21.106.

with new meaning by means of reference to the *bougonia*. In fact the Greeks seem to have fused the *bougonia* with an item of Egyptian bovine trivia that they would have known about from Herodotus: Antigonus' insistence that the horns of the cow buried for the purpose of *bougonia* must remain above the ground is surely to be related to the historian's claim that the Egyptians so inhumate their male cattle.¹⁵⁴

Suetonius and Cassius Dio tell us that Augustus scorned an invitation to visit the Apis bull.¹⁵⁵ These reports, if true, render all the more interesting the possibility that Virgil might have had this deity in mind when composing his epyllion.

* * *

In addition to the Apis bull, the Greeks and Romans might have also considered other instances in Near Eastern bovine myth and ritual in tandem with the *bougonia*. A sequence of events similar to those of the *bougonia* occur in the Mithraic tauroctony,¹⁵⁶ in which the wounds of the bull slaughtered by the god generate ears of grain. Given the aforementioned instances of

¹⁵⁴ Antigonus, *Historiae Mirabiles* 19; Herodotus 2.41. Ransome 1937: 117 notes the correspondence, but apparently considers it evidence of the *bougonia*'s Egyptian origin. Ptolemy similarly seems to have combined Greek and Egyptian ideologies of honey when he had Alexander preserved in the latter substance; compare Wunderlich 1972: 268. The Greeks and Romans might not have been the only ones to incorporate the Apis bull into their mythico-religious systems. On Cambyses and Artaxerxes III's supposed slaughters of Apis bulls as equivalents of the Mithraic tauroctony, see Merkelbach 1984: 34-5. These quasi-tauroctonies are, however, probably only fictional, since historical records demonstrate that the Persian kings were in fact quite dutiful in their attentions to the Apis bull (2000: 135-7), although see Depuydt 1995. For a proposal of Egyptian influence on the Mithraic tauroctony see Palmer 2009, and see Annus 2007: 31-49 for an argument as to the possibility of a Babylonian stratum.

¹⁵⁵ *Augustus* 93; Cassius Dio 51.16. The animosity was apparently mutual: Cassius Dio also claims that Apis anticipated Octavian's invasion, and so bellowed and wept.

¹⁵⁶ Turcan 1975: 75, 80, 86; see already Wheeler 1923: 101-2.

creative cow slaughter recounted in the *Bundahišn*, it is my opinion that this similarity between the *bougonia* and the tauroctony ultimately bespeaks a homologous relationship,¹⁵⁷ but in what would be an example of the phenomenon described by the phrase “synchrony recapitulates diachrony,” the Romans might have made an analogy between their procedure for obtaining ox-born bees and the central icon of Mithraic cult. Franz Cumont was skeptical that the ancients would have made such a connection,¹⁵⁸ but Mithras is decidedly associated with the leonine equivalent of the *bougonia*, as demonstrated by the red jasper gem depicting Mithras killing the bull on the obverse, and a lion with a bee in its mouth on the inverse.¹⁵⁹

That Virgil might have had Mithras in mind when composing his *epyllion* could be said to be indicated in the fact that the beekeeper of Tarentum is arguably a retired Mithraic pirate.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, in light of the fact that Virgil approximates the *bougonia* to Orpheus, we should take note of the fact that there was a considerable amount of intercourse between the Orphic and the Mithraic mysteries.¹⁶¹ In fact the Orphic tradition of a lunar cow is apparently derived from Zoroastrian lore,¹⁶² if it is not rather cognate with it.¹⁶³ Orpheus also turns up after a fashion in visual art informed by Mithraic iconography: so the Christ depicted on a Sardinian sarcophagus

¹⁵⁷ For a remark on the Indo-European heritage of Mithras Tauroctonus see Lincoln 1986: 66-7. On the Iranian Mithra's connection with cattle see Sick 2004.

¹⁵⁸ Cumont 1975: 209.

¹⁵⁹ Vermaseren 1956-60: 2.391. Perhaps Aristaeus is also connected with the tradition of the apian-leonine dyad: Heraclides Lembus states that the Brisae, the nymphs from which Aristaeus learnt apiculture, were frightened away from Keos by a lion (Dilts 1971: 24). For more on lions and bees see Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 34.

¹⁶⁰ Turcan 1975: 8-9, 73. See already Mackail 1913: 9.

¹⁶¹ Turcan 1975: 8; Van der Waerden 1978; Boyce 1991: 357; Russell 2001; Martín Hernández 2009 and 2010; Álvarez-Pedrosa 2009. For evidence as to the extent to which the Greeks knew Persian, see Willi 2004.

¹⁶² Gershenson 1978. For another instance of Orphic-Mithraic fusion involving a bovine element, see H. Jackson 1994.

¹⁶³ Graeco-Persian bovine amalgamations are also to be seen in artistic depictions of cows. See Kawami 1986.

in the pose of Mithras Tauroctonus, although with a sheep instead of a bull, wears the Phrygian costume of Orpheus,¹⁶⁴ and a sarcophagus in the Museum of Antioch depicts on one of its panels two Nikes sacrificing bulls, an image compatible with, if not the model for representations of Mithras and the bull,¹⁶⁵ and illustrates on another one of its sides Orpheus returning Eurydice from Hades to the world of the living.¹⁶⁶

I conclude this section by considering a third Near Eastern tradition that might have put the Greeks and Romans, if not Virgil himself, in mind of the *bougonia*: that of the Anatolian mother goddess' association with regenerative cow sacrifices.¹⁶⁷ Although the kind of *taurobolium* described, if presumably somewhat excessively, by Prudentius postdates Virgil's lifetime, as does the incorporation of the *taurobolium* into the cult of Cybele,¹⁶⁸ the latter and her alter egos had already by the time of these innovations been linked with both rebirth and with cow slaughter for hundreds of years.¹⁶⁹ As we have seen to be the case with the Mithraic mysteries, so too those of Cybele and her ilk became associated with Orpheus.¹⁷⁰ We have already encountered what could be said to be a manifestation of this tradition in the sacrifice of oxen to Rhea made by

¹⁶⁴ Friedman 1970: 77; see also Jesnick 1997: 41. For more on the Christian Orpheus, see Tülek 1998; Vieillefon 2003; Jourdan 2010-2011.

¹⁶⁵ Clauss 2000: 79.

¹⁶⁶ Gómez de Liaño 1998: 116.

¹⁶⁷ On the regenerative significance of cow sacrifice in a Metroac context see Turcan 1996: 52. For a reassessment of the element of salvation in the cult of Cybele see Gasparro 1985.

¹⁶⁸ On the development of the *taurobolium* see J. Rutter 1968; Duthoy 1969; McLynn 1996; Borgeaud 2004: 110ff.

¹⁶⁹ Özkaya 1997. See also Young 1995: 34. There is a formulaic association between Cybele and bull-slaughtering lions in Greek literature. See Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 400-1; Stesichorus (Campbell 3.573), and the Orphic hymns to Rhea and Meter (Athanasakis 1977: 22, 38).

¹⁷⁰ See for example Plutarch, *Caesar* 9.3. Clement claims that a foreign word in a line of Orphic verse is the Phrygian word for water (*Stromata* 5.8.46), on which see Herrero de Jáuregui 2010: 206-7. For more on Orpheus and the Mother Goddess see Athanasakis and Wolkow 2013: 103, 119-120.

the Argonauts, in which Orpheus figures as a prominent officiant.¹⁷¹ Cow sacrifices associated with Cybele do not possess an apian aspect, but bees and cows do coincide in another reflex of the Anatolian mother goddess: Ephesian Artemis, who is variously connected to both of these animals,¹⁷² and the iconography of whose cult statue juxtaposes them.¹⁷³

So it seems that the Greeks and Romans in general and Virgil in particular might have been in the business of melding the *bougonia* with Near Eastern bovine myth and ritual. Although without reference to the *bougonia*, the last pagans of Rome were up to something similar: all of the individuals mentioned in the epigraphy of the Phrygianum, a shrine to Magna Mater and Attis on the Vatican hill, were recipients of *taurobolia*, most were Mithraists, and three were *archibukoloi*, the ἀρχιβούκολος being an onomastically bovine sacral officiant in the cult of

¹⁷¹ Perhaps the instance of omophagy described by Euripides in his *Cretans* in conjunction with reference to Cybele and apparently to a hieratic βούτης (Collard and Cropp 2008: 538) is an Orphic scenario. For an evaluation of the Orphic affinity of this fragment see Bernabé 2004. If Virgil had Cybele in mind when composing the epyllion, we might want to speculate as to the possibility of latent wordplay between *gallus* in the sense of a metroac priest and the cognomen of Cornelius Gallus, whom Virgil is supposed to have praised in an earlier edition of the *Georgics*. Compare the apparent wordplay noted by Ahl 2007: 407 in Book 8 of the *Aeneid*, in which the sequence *anser...Gallos...Galli* transforms the Gauls into roosters. Many studies have addressed the possibility of Gallus' underlying presence in *Georgics* 4. See for example Duckworth 1959; Haarhoff 1960; R. Coleman 1962; Jacobson 1984; Mazza 2009.

¹⁷² And not just in Ephesus. Note also that Artemis Tauropolis intersects with the *taurobolium*. See Turcan 1996: 50.

¹⁷³ Portefaix 1994: 68-9 connects the *bougonia* with the iconography of Ephesian Artemis. However the identification of the protrusions that cover her chest as bull testicles is problematic. For a more convincing analysis of these mysterious lumps see Morris 2001. The Ephesian combination of bees and bovines arguably possesses indigenous antecedents as temporally remote as Çatal Höyük, the iconography of which combines bulls' heads with what might be bees and honeycomb. See Dietrich 1974: 104-5; 119-26, including a reference to the *bougonia* (p. 121). For the supposed honeycomb, see Mellaart 1963: 69, 80-1, 98 and plates XI and XII. Mellaart's identification is seemingly accepted with some qualification by Crane 1999: 40. Gimbutas 1974: 181-5 offers other prehistoric comparanda to the *bougonia*, including an artefact of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic Cucuteni culture, which she claims is a carving of a bull's head decorated with an image of a morphologically apian goddess (for a photograph, see Gimbutas 1974: 188). This too is accepted by Crane 1999: 41. Apparently the artefact in question was something of a type: see the photograph of the more or less identically shaped Cucuteni carving published by Forostyan et al. 2010, but this one without any decoration.

Dionysus to be revisited in Chapter 1.¹⁷⁴ No doubt there are a number of factors on account of which Metroac, Mithraic, and Dionysiac cult have been assembled in this context, but surely one of them must be their common denominator: the cow.

Some Methodological Remarks

I have now used the term “Indo-European” both in the title of this dissertation itself and on several occasions in the Introduction, but neither the term nor the concept and attendant methodology that it designates, although perfectly familiar in their heyday to most Classicists, and in fact owing their very existence to scholars trained in the Classics, are especially familiar to the current average Classicist, and so it would not do to proceed without having first provided the reader with some basic knowledge of what Indo-European means, and how Indo-European informs the methodology that I employ in this work. The term Indo-European indicates an inferred parent language and, for those of us who consider it valid to do so, is also used to indicate a concomitant parent culture to which a large number of the languages and cultures spoken in Eurasia and now beyond, including Greek, Latin, and the Romance languages, apparently owe something of their composition. The reason that the conjectured parent language, often referred to as a proto-language, lacks an authentic name is because we do not know what speakers of this remotely prehistoric form of speech, aspects of which we are able to glean only by analyzing its recorded linguistic descendants, might have called their language. So it has been dubbed Indo-European, a name that aims to describe the basic pre-colonial geographical extent

¹⁷⁴ Cameron 2011: 149.

of the area in which languages descended from the parent language, often called daughter languages, tend to be spoken.

The way that one goes about deducing the constitution of the proto-language, a process referred to as reconstruction, is by systematically comparing the linguistic content of the daughter languages, and assessing what the ancestral item of grammar, item of vocabulary, religious practice, mythological narrative, etc. that has yielded all of the putative descendants would have looked and sounded like. With respect to the reconstruction of mythological narrative, which for the most part is the realm in which I employ Indo-European methodology in this study, it goes without saying that one can not hope to apply methods as precise and as rigorous as those used to reconstruct language, which is why some scholars are uncomfortable with cultural reconstruction and avoid, if not object to it to one degree or another. Students of Indo-European aiming to reconstruct myths tend to conduct their research by making an effort to notice distinctive or unusual correspondences between myths composed by speakers of Indo-European languages, myths that appear to reflect traditions native to the ethno-linguistic groups in question, rather than being imported from neighbouring ones. The more unique the equivalent aspect(s) of the narratives in question, the stronger the argument that they in particular deserve to be compared, and all the better if there should be an elaborate cluster of correlating elements, rather than just one or a small number of them.

As to how one comes to feel justified in claiming that two or more such similar myths are genealogically related, so to speak, or cognate, to borrow the linguistic term used to identify elements of language that are related neither on account of mere chance nor on account of the

transmission of linguistic material from one language into another, but rather on account of the fact that they derive from a common source, the trick is to demonstrate that narratives like the ones under scrutiny are more or less limited to the mythological traditions of ethno-linguistic communities of fundamentally Indo-European heritage. To be able to demonstrate that versions of the narrative in question are mainly, if not exclusively told by speakers of Indo-European languages is to have grounds for claiming that the antecedent narrative that informs all of these versions was of Indo-European provenience. Of course stories can and do spread among various ethno-linguistic groups of Indo-European descent, but if the tales under investigation are only to be found here and there, with extensive geographical gaps in between, and if they occur only in cultures between which there has been very little in the way of direct and temporally relevant historical contact, then inheritance can come to be considered a more likely explanation. So, as we shall see in Chapter 4, I have been able to locate an apparent match for Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex in Vedic India but nowhere else, which suggests that the reason on account of which the literary traditions of the Graeco-Roman world and of the Vedic world, between which, as I shall indicate in Chapter 4, there does not seem to have been any interaction to speak of, exhibit these similar narratives is that they have both maintained reflexes of a common mythological narrative inherited from Indo-European.

Another way in which one might bolster a claim that multiple myths are cognate with one another is by isolating seemingly significant cognate linguistic elements shared by the precise

locution of the accounts of the myths in question.¹⁷⁵ These shared linguistic elements can be the names of characters who figure in the given narratives, crucial words the utterance of which the narrative seems to compel, or even fixed sequences of words, as Calvert Watkins has gone to great lengths to demonstrate.¹⁷⁶ So in Chapter 4 I strengthen my Vedic comparandum by invoking the claim that the collective name of the characters of the Vedic under discussion, whom I conceive of as being equivalent to Orpheus, is cognate with Orpheus' name, and by claiming that the precise phraseology according to which the bovine activities of Orpheus' Vedic brethren is described represents the Sanskrit equivalent of the compound noun *bougonia*.

Something about Indo-European comparative mythology that strikes its practitioners as beautiful, but that can raise the hackles of those who doubt it is the fact that any text can be argued to represent inherited tradition. This means that relatively recently composed texts can be considered to be legitimate candidates for mention in the same breath in which those of the utmost antiquity are discussed. Of course the onus is on the scholar to evince that the given younger texts deserve to be regarded as venues in which we might expect to encounter hereditary archaisms, but as long as their genuine conservatism or archaizing tendency can be reasonably

¹⁷⁵ As one might guess, it is the work on comparative Indo-European myth and religion done by scholars who enhance posited structural and thematic correspondences with linguistic evidence that most successfully convinces Indo-European linguists. In recent years, Michael Janda has done a lot of good work of this nature, and has impressed linguists generally reluctant to consider scholarship about comparative mythology and religion on account of the fact that it often lacks a linguistic component. I cite several of Janda's studies over the course of this dissertation. With more of a focus on ritual, the Indo-European linguist Michael Weiss has recently begun producing such work (for example Weiss 2010), consolidating his arguments by means of extensive and thorough linguistic evidence. Weiss has shown me a draft of a forthcoming essay about Indo-European religion co-authored by him and by Janda that promises to be an excellent survey of the subject.

¹⁷⁶ Watkins 1995, the author's magnum opus, which narrowly speaking is a study of the formulaic phrase with which the Indo-European poet recited the climactic moment in the serpent-slaying myth, but which in reality is both that and a comprehensive introduction to the discipline of comparative Indo-European poetics, remains the definitive study of inherited phraseology in literary traditions Indo-European ancestry.

established, then chronological variation is not to be thought of as posing an obstacle. So, for instance, in Chapter 1 I shall treat the *Dionysiaca*, an epic poem composed by the 4th/ early 5th century Egyptian author Nonnos, as providing evidence about Orphic mythology equal in value to that provided by much older texts.

Another thing about the incorporation of Indo-European methodology into what is otherwise an exercise in Classical philology that can ruffle feathers is that since certain aspects of Greek and Latin language and Greek and Roman culture are, from the Indo-European perspective, simply individuated versions of what already existed in the ancestral language and culture, both the reconstructed items of language and culture and their historical manifestations, which share an ultimate identity, are apt to be spoken about in conjunction with one another. The way I see it, this merger is not indicative of methodological sloppiness, but simply emerges as a consequence of the conceptual framework on which the methodology is founded, which conceives of a reconstruction as nothing more than the abstract antecedent of its historical reflexes. So for instance I speak in Appendix B of a hereditary conceptual association of the swan with cyclicity, but the wordplay to be observed at work in a number of authors between κύκνος and κύκλος is obviously a distinctly Greek expression of that association.

As far as I am concerned, it is a wonderful thing in and of itself to appreciate the hereditary status of those lingual and cultural elements that ethno-linguistic communities of Indo-European heritage owe to their forebears. Above and beyond that, however, an awareness of the heritage of these elements can help us to improve our understanding of the synchronic incarnation of that inherited material. So as we shall see over the course of this dissertation, the connection in Indo-

European ideology of the cow with both poetry and rebirth clarifies for us why Virgil approximates this animal to Orpheus, the ultimate poet and the notional founder of a belief system in which reincarnation looms large.

CHAPTER 1

Dionysus *Bougenes*:A Bacchic Correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*Bougonia* Complex

In this chapter I present two similar pieces of evidence in support of my thesis that Virgil's combination of Orpheus with the *bougonia* is informed by a traditional configuration. The first item to be investigated is the myth of the infant Dionysus' dismemberment and subsequent rebirth, a narrative that I shall argue possesses an onomastic correlate in the god's Argive epithet *Bougenes*. Given the extent to which Orphic and Bacchic mysticisms are involved with, if not at times interdependent on one another, it does not surprise that Dionysus' mythological dossier appears to contain material related to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.

Angelo de Gubernatis and Karl Kerényi have already demonstrated an awareness that Dionysus' infanticide and the *bougonia* as a general phenomenon are in some way affiliated,¹ and Llewelyn Morgan has applied such an understanding to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex in particular.² As far as I can see, however, the precise correspondence between Virgil's *bougonia* narrative and Dionysus' infanticide that I shall emphasize in the context of my own analysis does not emerge from Morgan's study, and it is not present in either de Gubernatis or Kerényi's analyses. To that extent at least I believe that my own discussion of the subject has something new to offer.

¹ De Gubernatis 1872: 2.217; Kerényi 1976: 38-41.

² L. Morgan 1999: *passim*, especially 144 fn. 128, 156-7, and 187-90.

The second item to be raised in this chapter is *Meliboia*, an epithet assigned to Persephone by Lasus of Hermione that I shall argue is an articulation the same apian-bovine dyad on which the *bougonia* depends. As we shall see, Persephone is a prominent and recurring figure in Orphic contexts, and furthermore, the Dionysus who undergoes dismemberment is the product of an incestuous union between Zeus and Persephone, so that it makes a certain kind of sense for something akin to the *bougonia* to pertain to both mother and son.

Dionysus' Tauriform Dismemberment

Many authors identify the myth of Dionysus' dismemberment as an Orphic narrative.

Philodemus makes the earliest extant statement to this effect,³ and then Diodorus Siculus soon after him:⁴

τοῦτον δὲ τὸν θεὸν γεγονέναι φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς καὶ Περσεφόνης κατὰ τὴν Κρήτην, ὃν Ὀρφεὺς κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς παρέδωκε διασπώμενον ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων.

People say that this god was born in Crete from Zeus and Persephone, and Orpheus has transmitted the tradition in his mystic rites that he was dismembered by the Titans.

To be sure, the myth of Dionysus' infanticide also circulated outside of the Orphic orbit, but I can not agree with the stance that there is nothing inherently Orphic about it other than the fact that the Orphic milieu made conspicuous use of it.⁵ Even if those who employed the myth of

³ Bernabé 2004-7: 1.66-7. For a recent edition, translation, and commentary on this passage see Henrichs 2011.

⁴ Diodorus Siculus 5.75.4. Pausanias (8.37.5) means as much when he tells us that it was invented by Onomacritus. For Onomacritus as an Orphic see D'Agostino 2007. Perhaps the Dionysiac mirror found in Olbia is to be considered as an allusion to this myth. See Graf and Johnston 2013: 216, 152, 165.

⁵ For a recent articulation of this position see Torjussen 2008: 128.

Dionysus' infanticide for Orphic purposes did not modify it accordingly, the narrative must at the very least have been invested with a distinct significance within Orphic contexts. We might be said to encounter such a distinction in the long-standing comparison of the demise of Dionysus with that of Orpheus, a comparison that presumably informs the iconography of the hematite gem depicting a crucified figure identified as *Orpheos Bakkikos*.⁶

And in fact several accounts of the myth do seem to incorporate into the telling details that reflect aspects of Orphic ideology. Radcliffe Edmonds has recently called into question much of the scholarship on supposedly Orphic elements in various versions of the Dionysus' dismemberment, claiming that the concept of original sin perceived by many to be at work in these texts is nothing more than an academic fabrication, and one, moreover, that relies too heavily on Olympiodorus' variously unique account, the unparalleled features of which Edmonds counters should not be assumed to represent elements traditional to the narrative.⁷ Edmonds' arguments are sobering, but the force of the evidence accumulated by those he opposes is impressive.⁸ Fortunately for us, the issues involved in their debate fall outside of the parameters of this project.

⁶ On this gem see Friedman 1970: 59.

⁷ Edmonds: 1999: 35-73. Unfortunately I have not been able to consider Edmonds' recent book-length reassessment of what constitutes Orphism (Edmonds 2013, *non vidi*), which was published after my defense.

⁸ For a recent study representing the stance opposed by Edmonds see Bernabé 2009a; for what I consider to be an especially judicious presentation of the subject see Graf and Johnston 2013: 66-93.

More relevant to our topic is Marcel Detienne's structural analysis of Dionysus' infanticide through the lens of Orphic ethics and dietary prohibitions.⁹ For Detienne, the myth is an Orphic critique of animal sacrifice and the consumption of meat, implications that apparently find expression in the eccentric manner according to which the Titans dissect and prepare Dionysus for eating. Detienne's interpretation is convincing, but in my opinion he goes astray when he insists that all competent renditions of the myth are to be interpreted as propelling the same critical agenda. Edmonds similarly finds fault with Detienne for not allowing that the myth might have been put to a multiplicity of ideological uses even within Orphic environments, and for characterizing versions incompatible with his presentation as out of touch with what he has identified as the narrative's sole native significance.¹⁰

In fact I propose that Orphic tradition also assigned another significance to the myth Dionysus' infanticide and rebirth that is not only different from Detienne's, but indeed in stark contrast with it. Recall how I have already indicated that vegetarianism does not appear to have been a fundamental component of Orphic ideology from either a diachronic or a synchronic perspective. What I shall therefore now suggest is that within a certain vein of Orphic ideology Dionysus' dismemberment, far from to be condemned, was rather conceived of as a positively valenced action essential to the god's rebirth, an illustration of the same kind of paradoxically creative destruction embodied by the bees born of slaughtered bovines in the *bougonia*, which Virgil combines with Orpheus.

⁹ Detienne 1979: 68-94.

¹⁰ Edmonds 1999: 53 fn. 52.

In order to support my *rapprochement* of Dionysus' infanticide and the *bougonia* I turn in the first instance to the magnum opus of the late 4th/ early 5th century Egyptian author Nonnos of Panopolis, whose epic *Dionysiaca*, rivaling in length that of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined, is an account of Dionysus' life from his conception onward. Such an extensive oeuvre is bound to be synthetic in terms of its models, sources and influences, and to contain elements of the author's own invention, but for all that, a significant portion of Nonnos' content derives from demonstrably Orphic material.¹¹

Furthermore, Nonnos is emphatically keen on and impressively well versed in bovine mythology. In fact what Nonnos has to say about cows will feature not only in this chapter, but more than once in the next one as well. I will not now anticipate any of the cases to be discussed later on, but one other instance may serve to provide immediate illustration of the point. As Alberto Bernabé observes, Nonnos' lines κερόεντι πανείκελος ἔσσυτο ταύρω/ ἔνθεν ὄρος πέλε Ταῦρος ἐπώνυμον "Zeus departed in the guise of a horned bull, from which the Taurus mountains are so named"¹² seems to indicate familiarity with something along the lines of the native Anatolian tradition about this same region, a tradition known to us from a Hittite text in which one of the interlocutors (perhaps a god) transforms himself into a bull and eases the Hittite army's march by pushing aside a mountain, crumpling his horns in the process.¹³

¹¹ On Book 6 in particular see Hernández de la Fuente 2002 and García-Gasco 2011; on the work as a whole see García-Gasco 2009. On similarities between Nonnos and the Orphic hymns see Morand 2001: 83-6.

¹² *Dionysiaca* 1.408-9.

¹³ Bernabé 1988: 5-10. There is also an Armenian comparandum to these passages, on which see Petrosyan 2002: 56. For another correspondence between Nonnos and Hittite literature see Watkins 1995: 459.

Nonnos is therefore formidably informed when it comes to cows, and this pet topic of his, when considered in conjunction with his propensity for Orphic traditions, makes his epic a likely venue for situations corresponding to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. Let me remind the reader that Nonnos has Aristaeus perform a sacrifice consisting of the blood of a slaughtered bull and a simultaneous libation of honey, a combination of ingredients reminiscent of the constituents of the *bougonia*, of which Virgil makes Aristaeus the agent.

In Nonnos' account of Dionysus' dismemberment, the god undergoes a number of metamorphoses as he struggles to free himself from his murderers. In his ultimate mutation Dionysus becomes a bull, and it is in this shape that he enters into his temporary demise:¹⁴

... ἄλλοτε ταύρω
 ἰσοφυῆς, στομάτων δὲ νόθον μυκηθμὸν ἰάλλων
 θηγαλέη Τιτῆνας ἀνεστυφέλιξε κεραίη.
 καὶ ψυχῆς προμάχιζεν, ἕως ζηλήμονι λαιμῷ
 τρηχαλέον μύκημα δι' ἠέρος ἔβρεμεν Ἥρη,
 μητρυιὴ βαρύμηνης, ἰσοφθόγγῳ δὲ θεαίνῃ
 αἰθέριον κελάδημα πύλαι κανάχιζον Ὀλύμπου,
 καὶ θρασὺς ὄκλασε ταῦρος. ἀμοιβαίῃ δὲ φονῆες
 ταυροφυῆ Διόνυσον ἐμιστύλλοντο μαχαίρῃ

Next he became identical to a bull, and giving vent to a feigned bellow from his mouth he thrust at the Titans with his pointy horns. He fought for his life until Hera, the profoundly wrathful stepmother, bellowed hoarsely through the air with her envious throat, and the gates of Olympus rumbled clamorously on high in echo of the equally clamorous goddess. Then the brave bull collapsed, and the slaughterers alternated in butchering tauriform Dionysus with a knife.

Although all of the formats that Dionysus assumes can be shown to be semiotically significant,¹⁵ for our purposes it will suffice to consider only his taurine manifestation, which after all is that in

¹⁴ *Dionysiaca* 6.197-205.

which the crucial event of his dissection takes place. In fact, although *sparagmos* is described and depicted as being practiced at one time or another on a variety of animals, perhaps the most prominent victims of this activity are bovines, a situation familiar from its vivid rendering in Euripides' *Bacchae*.¹⁶ Dionysiac ritual, to which I shall return shortly, corroborates this impression. Admittedly the aggressors of Nonnos' account do not subject Dionysus to *sparagmos*, but in several other versions of the myth this is the manner in which he is murdered.¹⁷

Furthermore, Dionysus himself is portrayed as tauriform in a number of contexts aside from Nonnos' presentation of his infanticide.¹⁸ Again the familiar cases are those from the *Bacchae*, in which the chorus exhorts the god to appear as a bull,¹⁹ and refers to him as one,²⁰ and in which Pentheus is deluded into mistaking a bull for Dionysus,²¹ and perceives him as having metamorphosed into one.²² The Orpheus of Aeschylus' *Bassarids* is apparently experiencing something similar when he observes: ὁ ταῦρος δ' ἔοικεν κυρίζειν "a bull seems to be butting [at me]."²³ Nonnos repeatedly represents the tradition of tauriform Dionysus: he applies the adjective ταυροφονῆς to the god on several occasions,²⁴ and he makes a clever joke to this effect when he has Zeus order Dionysus to be so well hidden that Hera herself will be unable to spot

¹⁵ Chuvin 1992: 29-31, 152-3.

¹⁶ *Bacchae* 700-47.

¹⁷ As L. Morgan 1999: 155 points out, the Paris scholiast to Clement of Alexandria even has Dionysus dismembered by the Maenads, the *par excellence* practitioners of *sparagmos*.

¹⁸ The bibliography on the topic is extensive. For two studies devoted to it see Grégoire 1949 and Tondriau 1949-53.

¹⁹ *Bacchae* 1017.

²⁰ *Bacchae* 1159.

²¹ *Bacchae* 618-19.

²² *Bacchae* 920-2.

²³ Sommerstein 2008: 23.

²⁴ *Dionysiaca* 5.564; 6.205; 9.15.

him καὶ εἰ ταυρῶπις ἀκούει,²⁵ an expression difficult to translate but surely ascribing to the goddess who is routinely elsewhere βοῶπις the ability to spot bulls with ease.²⁶

The god also figures as a bull in ritual, being described by the women of Elis as τῶ βοέῳ ποδὶ θύων “raging with bull’s foot,”²⁷ and in Athens the wife of the Archon Basileus entered into marriage with Dionysus in the Boukoleion, the name of which edifice at least implies the god’s association with cattle, if not actual zoomorphism.²⁸ He was also portrayed as a bull in the visual arts. For just one example, Athenaeus tells us of a tauriform sculpture of Dionysus in Cyzicus.²⁹

Despite all that, Nonnos’ rendition of Dionysus’ infanticide is admittedly the only one in which the god is said to transform into anything, let alone a bull. In light of Virgil’s concatenation of the *bougonia* with Orpheus, I posit that this is so because Nonnos has incorporated into his own composition an otherwise unattested detail either unique to or at least especially emphasized in the Orphic version of Dionysus’ dismemberment, in which the latter’s death in specifically taurine formation is to be understood as a correlate to the *bougonia*, that is an act of paradoxically creative bovine slaughter along the lines of that required for the generation of new bees in the *bougonia*, which Virgil has Aristaeus perform in response to the vengeance of Orpheus. It is as though both Virgil’s amalgamation of Orpheus with the *bougonia* and Nonnos’

²⁵ *Dionysiaca* 9.68.

²⁶ Rouse, Rose and Lind 1940-2: 1.309 fn. b.

²⁷ Plutarch, *Greek Questions* 36 = *Moralia* 299b.

²⁸ Kerényi 1976: 308; Morand 2001: 249.

²⁹ *Deipnosophistae* 476a. It would be convenient for me to be able to follow Grégoire 1949: 404 in speculating that the god’s byname Βάκχος might itself indicate the god’s affinity for bovines, if it is to be related to Latin *vacca*, but as Michael Weiss has confirmed for me, the proposition is linguistically untenable.

apparently Orphic account of Dionysus' tauriform infanticide have been formulated with reference to a common ideological matrix, in which Orpheus and the cow as ultimate host of creative destruction are intricately intertwined.

In fact Pierre Chuvin proposes that the Orphic hymn to Persephone alludes to a scenario more or less exactly the same as that described in full by Nonnos when it refers to its subject as μητέρα ἐριβρεμέτου πολυμόρφου Εὐβουλήος “mother of loud-bellowing, many-shaped Eubouleus;”³⁰ recall that in Nonnos Dionysus' bull manifestation is the last in a sequence of many, and that he bellows when in his taurine guise.³¹ If we are convinced by Chuvin's interpretation, it becomes highly relevant for us to take note of the fact that this comparandum occurs in an explicitly Orphic context. In light of Nonnos' Orphic inclinations, the fact that his account's putative correspondent occurs in a decidedly Orphic milieu could be said to lend some credence to my hypothesis that the tauriform version of Dionysus' dismemberment was apparently conspicuously accentuated in, if not particular to Orphic circles.³²

A narrative arguably related to that of Dionysus' infanticide also contains features that evoke the god's bovine aspect. I mean Lycurgus' attack on the latter, in the Homeric telling of which

³⁰ Athanassakis 1977: 42 line 8.

³¹ Chuvin 1992: 29. Ricciardelli 2000: 347 similarly notes that ἐριβρεμέτης could be meant to convey a specifically tauriform Dionysus, but does not go on to suggest that any particular scenario is to be envisioned.

³² Euphorion, whose account of Dionysus' dismemberment Philodemus describes as being consonant with the Orphic version (Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012), and who describes Dionysus using the adjective ταυροκέρως (Acosta-Hughes and Cusset 2012; cf. the Orphic hymn to the god of the triennial feasts), might also be argued to show signs of having told of Dionysus' tauriform dismemberment.

Lycurgus truly bullies and cows the god, wielding a βουπλήξ against him,³³ and driving him into the sea, where he seeks refuge and shelter in Thetis' bosom. Although the trend in modern times has been to conceive of this weapon as a prod or goad, the word can also refer to an axe.³⁴ If we imagine Lycurgus' weapon as something more along the lines of the latter, say a utensil for slaughtering cattle, the situation becomes far more threatening, indeed potentially lethal.³⁵

In fact while in Homer Dionysus escapes Lycurgus' onslaught frightened but otherwise unscathed, according to the poet Dinarchus the god ἔφυγε τὸν Λυκοῦργον, καὶ εἰς Δελφοὺς ἀπελθὼν ἐκεῖ τελευτᾷ “fled from Lycurgus, and having arrived at Delphi, he died there.”³⁶ As we shall see below, several accounts of the myth of Dionysus' dismemberment similarly state that his remains were retrieved from the Titans, conveyed to Delphi and later revived there.

Dinarchus' version thus seems to merge the myth of Dionysus versus Lycurgus with a conclusion otherwise associated with the narrative of his infanticide. So it appears as though the myth of Dionysus versus Lycurgus could also be presented as one in which the god suffered death and rebirth.³⁷

If this inference is correct, it is significant for our analysis that Lycurgus treats Dionysus like a bovine. Perhaps Aeschylus is up to something similar when he apparently refers to Dionysus'

³³ *Iliad* 6.135.

³⁴ The scholiast allows for both interpretations: βουπλήγι·μάστιγι ἢ πελέκει.

³⁵ In fact Homer describes Lycurgus as being murderous (ἀνδροφόνιοι; *Iliad* 6.134).

³⁶ Jacoby 1923-58: 399 1b.

³⁷ For an almost identical line of reasoning see Faraone 2011: 322, who also makes several other arguments in support of this interpretation.

entourage as ταυρόφθογοι in his *Edonians*,³⁸ the first play in his *Lycurgeia*, and that in which Dionysus dispatches the tetralogy's eponym.³⁹ Nonnos makes more or less explicit what is seemingly implicit in Homer, having Lycurgus address Dionysus as follows:⁴⁰

εἰ κεραοῖς Σατύροισι, κερασφόρε Βάκχε, κελεύεις,
 ὑμέας ἴσα βόεσσιν ἐμῷ βουπλήγι δαμάσσω.
 τουτό σοι ἐξ ἐμέθεν ξεινήιον, ὄφρα τις εἴπη,
 ἢ θεὸς ἢ μερόπων τις, ὅτι προπύλαια Λυκούργου
 ἡμιτόμοις μελέεσσιν ἐμιτρώθη Διονύσου...
 καὶ σε διατμήξας βοέου κατὰ μέσσα μετώπου
 ὑμετέρην ἐπίκυρτον ἀναρρήξαιμι κεραίην

“If you urge on horned Satyrs, horn-bearing Bacchus, I shall defeat you like cattle with my axe! This is my host's gift to you: that god and human alike may tell how the gates of Lycurgus were decked with the mangled limbs of Dionysus...having split your bovine brow in two, I shall snap off your curved horns!”

The myth of Dionysus' struggle with Lycurgus is told in numerous and varied sources, so that it would be wrong to claim that it was especially affiliated with Orphic literature the way that Dionysus' dismemberment appears to have been. That being said, it is perhaps reasonable to see something Orphic at work when it comes to this narrative's incorporation into Homeric epic.

Iliad 6 is one of only four instances in Homer in which Dionysus is mentioned, and it is the only occasion in which reference to him is more than incidental. Could it then be that we are dealing here with a case of Orphic interpolation by one of the Peisistratid editors of the Homeric epics?⁴¹

³⁸ Sommerstein 2008: 55 line 8.

³⁹ Sommerstein 2008: 63 fn. 3 rather sees this adjective as referring to bullroarers.

⁴⁰ *Dionysiaca* 20.314-16, 323-4.

⁴¹ Pausanias (8.37.5) assigns Onomacritus a special role in the composition of the myth of Dionysus' dismemberment. See also Casadio 1994: 229-62. On Orphic elements in Homer see Nagy 2001. The Peisistratean process of introducing Orpheus into Homer seems to have been in part motivated by an archaizing tendency informed by the notion that Orphic variants represented a more archaic tradition. See Nagy 2010: 341-76.

Aeschylus certainly juxtaposes with Orpheus his account of Lycurgus versus Dionysus: the second play of the *Lycurgeia* is *Bassarids*.

Furthermore, as Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood points out, a narrative transparently related to that of Lycurgus' assault on Dionysus, that of the latter's conflict with Boutes, contains a bovine element in the name of the god's opponent.⁴² According to Diodorus Siculus, Lycurgus, here the son of Boreas, had a brother named Boutes who attacked a group of Maenads and raped one of them, on account of which an outraged Dionysus drove him mad, so that Boutes threw himself into a spring and drowned.⁴³ In this case it is Dionysus' antagonist rather than the god himself who possesses a bovine aspect, and it is he, not Dionysus, who leaps into a body of water. Such transformations aside, the persistence of the bovine element is what is important for us. Again, although there is nothing in Diodorus' account to suggest that this narrative was in any way Orphic, we shall see in Chapter 3 that another Boutes who similarly nearly drowns is intimately associated not only with Orpheus, but also with a sequence of events that I shall argue is related to the *bougonia*.⁴⁴

The consistent bovine dimension of these affiliated narratives suggests that the Orphic tradition of Dionysus' dismemberment is participating in a broader category of Dionysiac rebirth narratives when it has the god transform into a bull at the moment of death. Furthermore, even if the *Dionysiaca* is the only extant literary text to manifestly portray Dionysus as tauriform at the

⁴² Sourvinou-Inwood 2005: 205.

⁴³ Diodorus Siculus 5.50. Other victims of madness induced by Dionysus also possess a bovine aspect: the daughters of Proetus, who scorn Dionysus and so become afflicted with boanthropy.

⁴⁴ *Boutai* also turn up repeatedly in the Orphic hymns.

instant of his ordeal, the actions that are performed in two separate Dionysiac rituals appear to represent that very scenario. According to Aelian, the citizens of Tenedos Διονύσω τρέφουσι κύουσαν βοῦν, τεκοῦσαν δὲ ἄρα αὐτήν οἶα δήπου λεχὼ θεραπεύουσι. τὸ δὲ ἀρτιγενὲς βρέφος καταθύουσιν ὑποδήσαντες κοθόρνους “nurture a pregnant cow for Dionysus, and as soon as she has given birth they tend to her as though she were a woman in childbed. But they put buskins on the newborn calf and sacrifice it.”⁴⁵

As scholars have long perceived, the role of this calf goes beyond what Aelian explicitly says. As indicated by its anthropomorphization, the victim is not to be understood as a mere offering to Dionysus: rather, the calf clad in Dionysus’ favourite footwear represents the god himself, and its sacrifice is a reenactment of the latter’s tauriform infanticide.⁴⁶ Aelian does not tell us as much—maybe his source was not made privy to the rite’s ultimate significance; maybe the level of meaning observed by modern scholars was no longer a cognitively active constituent of the event at the time at which Aelian’s informant made record of it. However our interpretation of the Tenedian ritual can perhaps be said to gain further credence in light of Firmicus Maternus’ description of a Cretan rite in which the participants are said to reenact Dionysus’ infanticide in great detail, beginning by lacerating a live bull with their teeth (*vivum laniant dentibus taurum*).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *De Natura Animalium* 12.34.

⁴⁶ Farnell 1896-1909: 174; Otto 1965: 192-3; Kerényi 1976: 54-5.

⁴⁷ *De Errore Profanarum Religiorum* 6.5. Pastorino 1956: 84 compares the passages of Aelian and Firmicus Maternus.

It should come as no surprise that the literary depiction of Dionysus' tauriform dismemberment apparently possesses a performative correlate. The Cambridge myth and ritual school has yielded the important insight that what happens to mythological characters in textual narratives regularly corresponds to the practices with which these same figures are associated in ritual contexts. Thus, for example, the sacrifice of a ram at the Pelopion, which would have involved special attention to the animal's shoulder,⁴⁸ correlates with the special attention paid to Pelops' shoulder in myth.⁴⁹ In the case of Dionysus' tauriform dismemberment and its ritual analogues, the analogy is perfect: whereas the fate of Pelops' shoulder in myth is similar to the fate of a ram's shoulder in sacrifice, the cow sacrifices that represent Dionysus' dismemberment wholly reenact the fate of the god in myth, who was himself tauriform at the moment of his dissection.

Notional Transformation in the Orphic *lamellae*: An Initiatory Correspondent to Dionysus' Tauriform Rebirth

An instance in Orphic literature indicates that Dionysus' initiates could experience a notional tauriform rebirth. The scenario in question is described in one of the aforementioned gold *lamellae*, texts that I have argued are justly identified as Orphic, but which are more to the point Orphic-Dionysiac, as demonstrated by their reference to Bacchus. Two of the *lamellae* from Thurii contain variants on an apparently formulaic sequence: θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου· ἔριφος ἐς

⁴⁸ Burkert 1983: 100.

⁴⁹ G. Nagy 1990c: 126.

γάλα ἔπετες “you have become a god from a human; a kid, you fell into milk;”⁵⁰ θεὸς δ’ ἔσθι
 ἀντὶ βροτοῦ/ ἔριφος ἐς γάλ’ ἔπετον “you will be a god instead of a mortal; a kid, I fell into
 milk.”⁵¹ Apparently the initiate’s apotheosis is imagined as involving the latter’s transformation
 into a kid and submersion into milk; the two events are consistently collocated. When the
lamellae from Pelinna were discovered, students of these texts were excited to find variations on
 this image:⁵²

Νῦν ἔθανες και νῦν ἐγένου, τρισόλβιε, ἄματι ταῖδε.
 εἶπειν Φερσεφόνοι σ’ ὅτι Βάκχιος αὐτὸς ἔλυσε.
 ταῦρος εἰς γάλα ἔθορες,
 αἶψα εἰς γάλα ἔθορες,
 κριὸς εἰς γάλα ἔπεσες.

Now you have died and now you have come into being, thrice-blessed one, on this [same] day.
 Tell Persephone that the Bacchic one himself freed you. A bull, you leapt into milk; swiftly you
 leapt into milk; a ram, you fell into milk.

I follow Jane Harrison in her understanding that in being said to undergo these transformations,
 the initiates become assimilated to Dionysus, who is associated with all three animals.⁵³ In fact
 he is actually said to metamorphose into each one of them. To begin with the Thurian *lamellae*,
 Apollodorus tells us that Dionysus was disguised as a kid in order that he might be concealed
 from Hera.⁵⁴ When it comes to the ram, despite Fritz Graf’s protestations that Dionysus is not
 associated with the latter,⁵⁵ he in fact disguises himself as one in Cratinus’ *Dionysalexandros*, in

⁵⁰ Graf and Johnston 2013: 3 line 4.

⁵¹ Graf and Johnston 2013: 5 lines 9-10.

⁵² Graf and Johnston 2013: 26a lines 1-5 = 26b, minus line 4.

⁵³ Harrison 1922: 594.

⁵⁴ Apollodorus 3.4.3. See Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 83.

⁵⁵ Graf 1993: 245.

which scenario Bernabé and Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal suggest that we are probably looking at a joke with its basis in Orphic tradition.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Plutarch tells us that the Argives threw a lamb into the Lernaian lake during the ritual in which they summoned Dionysus from its depths:⁵⁷

Ἀργείοις δὲ βουγενῆς Διόνυσος ἐπικλιν ἐστίν· ἀνακαλοῦνται δ' αὐτὸν ὑπὸ σαλπίγγων ἐξ ὕδατος, ἐμβάλλοντες εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ἄρνα.

Among the Argives Dionysus has the epithet Bougenes, and they summon him with the sound of trumpets from the water, casting a lamb into its depths.

Plutarch says that the lamb was a victim offered to the infernal deity Pylaochos, but I suspect that something more is going on here. A scholium on the *Iliad* tells us that Perseus Διόνυσον ἀνεῖλεν εἰς τὴν Λερναίαν ἐμβάλων λίμνην “killed Dionysus by casting him into the Lernaian lake.”⁵⁸ If we consider this myth to be the narrative correlate to the Argive ritual for Dionysus at Lerna, then surely we are to understand that the lamb is tossed into the lake not only in order to satisfy Pylaochos, but also in order to reenact Perseus’ casting of Dionysus into the same body of water. In fact the apparent ovine reenactment of Perseus launching Dionysus into Lerna sounds very much like the Orphic initiate’s falling into milk in notionally ovine format, which is a code for the latter’s rebirth in the afterlife.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 83. For a more involved discussion of this passage and related evidence see Bakola 2010: 262-70.

⁵⁷ *Isis and Osiris* 35 = *Moralia* 364.

⁵⁸ Scholium on *Iliad* 14.319.

⁵⁹ Faraone 2011: 325, 327 similarly brings the Argive ritual and the Orphic *lamellae* to bear on one another.

But it is of course the bull that interests us most. Just as I perceive a correlation between the ram of the *lamellae* and the lamb in the Argive mythico-ritual complex, I suspect that the Orphic initiate's notionally tauriform death and rebirth has the potential to evoke the Orphic tradition of Dionysus' tauriform death and rebirth. On the one hand, the formulaic status of the image of the animal falling into milk seems to indicate that the kid, bull and ram are interchangeable, in which case to single out one of them and to grant special significance to it but not the others would be methodologically flawed. However, although all three animals do indeed appear to be synchronically equivalent, this does not preclude them from having arrived at this joint context via diachronically disparate avenues. So the bull might have been selected as one of the forms to be claimed by the initiate with reference to Dionysus' tauriform infanticide, even if such a distinct aetiology is likely to have become attenuated or even effaced altogether once the bull apparently entered into free variation with the kid and ram.

In fact the *lamellae* are not the only context in which Orphic initiates can be argued to be portrayed as bovines. A variety of epigraphic and literary texts refer to an officiant in the Dionysiac hierarchy by the title βουκόλος, as well as to the apparent superior of the latter, the ἀρχιβούκολος.⁶⁰ This βουκόλος is referenced with noteworthy frequency in Orphic texts.⁶¹ For an officiant to be named 'cowherd' implies that the initiates whose activity the latter oversaw were conceived of as cows. Furthermore, I think that there is reason to suppose that at least one of the *boukolos*' functions was to assist the initiate in experiencing a notionally bovine symbolic

⁶⁰ For discussions of the *boukolos* see Nilsson 1957; Hordern 2000: 134, Jaccottet: 2003: 1.101-22, and Morand 2001: 249-87, 343-6.

⁶¹ Morand 2001: 249.

death and rebirth. How can I make this claim despite the fact that we know almost nothing about the role of the *boukolos*?

My argument rests on a remarkable piece of evidence, the inscription on the sarcophagus of the Dionysiac initiate Morsianos Hermaios, in which the latter offers a demystifying explanation of two apparently related Dionysiac symbols:⁶²

εἰ βούλει γνῶνε τί τὸ σκῆπτρον καὶ τί καλαῦρον ἐνθάδ' ἐντετύπαστε, στήθι, φίλε, καὶ τάδε γνῶση. τὸ σκῆπτρον Ἑρμοῦ προκαθηγέτου ἐστὶ προεῖον· τούτῳ γὰρ κατάγει ψυχὰς μερόπων ὑπὸ γαῖαν· οὕτως δ' ἔστ' ὁ καλαῦρον βροτῶν μείμημα τελευτῆς. μηδὲν ἄγαν φρονέειν· πᾶς γὰρ βίος κάμπτει ἐπ' ἄκρω. τοῦνεκα δῆτα γέγραπτε, ἵν' εἰδῆς θνητὸς ἐὼν σύ.

If you wish to understand what the sceptre and cowherd's crook have concealed here, stop, friend, and you shall learn these things. The sceptre is Hermes the Conductor's, for with this he leads the souls of humans under the earth. The cowherd's crook represents the death of mortals. Don't be excessively proud. For every life rounds the final turning point. This has been written for this reason: so that you would know that you are mortal.

Here we have an instrument employed by none other than a cowherd explicitly associated in a Dionysiac context with the fate of the soul. I agree with the common understanding that the significance of the cowherd's crook belongs to the same domain as that of the Orphic-Dionysiac official title *boukolos*.⁶³

Morsianos Hermaios' inscription associates the cowherd's crook with death alone, but a linguistic analysis of the word *boukolos* might also suggest a connection with rebirth.⁶⁴ What we

⁶² Heberdey 1941: 3.922.

⁶³ See for instance Burkert 1993: 266-9; Cole 1993: 291; Faraone 2011: 320.

⁶⁴ Cowherds are also associated with the defeating death in other cultures of Indo-European heritage. For an example from Slavic folklore see Toporov 1968: 118.

have here is a compound of βουῖς and a reflex of the Indo-European verbal root **k^helh_x-* which appears to have developed the secondary sense ‘turn,’ as reflected in κύκλος, etc. A *boukolos* might therefore be conceived as one who causes cows to circulate. What I propose is that in a mystical context, the *boukolos* caused the conceptually bovine initiate to circulate in a very particular way, that is to execute a κύκλος in the Orphic sense: a cycle of death and rebirth. In fact one of the Thurii *lamellae* combines an image of the initiate emerging from such a cycle with the animal falling into milk formula: κύκλῳ δ’ ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο...θεὸς δ’ ἔσσι ἀντὶ βροτοῖο/ ἔριφος ἐς γάλ’ ἔπετον “I have flown out of the deeply grievous, agonizing cycle...you will be a god instead of a mortal. A kid, I fell into milk.”⁶⁵

In order for my argument to work, it is necessary to assume that the etymology of βουκόλος was still transparent at the time at which it came to refer to a Dionysiac office. The formation is apparently very old, since it has a match in Irish *búachaill* and Welsh *bugeil*, the latter of which demonstrates the same delabialization of a labiovelar contiguous with another velar that βουκόλος does. This sound change, referred to as none other than the *boukolos* rule, probably occurred already in Proto-Indo-European. However comparable combinations of βουῖς and another inherited verbal root with cyclical semantics suggest that the Greeks might have for some amount of time maintained a linguistic understanding of βουκόλος.

⁶⁵ Graf and Johnston 2013: 3 lines 5-10.

I limit myself in this instance to two examples. First: Herodotus' narrative of Kleobis and Biton,⁶⁶ in which the two brothers assume the role of oxen so as to get their mother to the festival of Hera in timely fashion; if the second segment of Κλέοβις is not from βίος, as is Biton's,⁶⁷ but rather from the cow word, his very name, something like 'he whose fame is linked to cows,'⁶⁸ would reiterate the narrative's bovine's thematics. And Kleobis' fame is indeed linked with just that, for it is on account of the worthiness of the deed performed by him and Biton, that is becoming surrogate oxen in order to allow their mother to participate in Hera's festival, that the brothers are rewarded with a sudden, divinely ordained death, since it is better, as Solon tells us, for humans to die than it is for them to live.

What is significant for my argument is that this death of theirs is referred to first as a τελευτή,⁶⁹ and then as a τέλος,⁷⁰ both of which are reflexes of **tel-*, the basic sense of which seems to have been 'carry,' but which came to develop the more precise sense 'carry out, complete, bring full circle.'⁷¹ The eschatological dimension of this root is evident not only in Herodotus' account of Kleobis and Biton, but in other passages as well. Nagy observes that the entirety of Solon's dialogue with Croesus abounds with reflexes of **tel-*, including the name of another one of Solon's *olbioi*: Tellos, whose ideal death is, moreover, referred to as a τελευτή.⁷² Morsianos

⁶⁶ Herodotus 1.31.

⁶⁷ Although it is useful for me to argue for a bovine etymology for Kleobis' name, I am conscious of the misgivings voiced by Michael Weiss, who views it as preferable to understand it as sharing its etymology with that of Biton.

⁶⁸ Compare O'Brien 1993: 150.

⁶⁹ Herodotus 1.31.3.

⁷⁰ Herodotus 1.31.5.

⁷¹ A number of scholars, including O'Brien 1993: *passim*, especially 33 fn. 3, 148 fn. 86, derive τέλος from **k^helh_x-*, but we are in fact dealing with a separate root. See Waanders 1983.

⁷² Herodotus 1.30.4; G. Nagy 1990c: 245-6 fn. 129.

Hermaios also uses τελευτή to refer to death as symbolized by the cowherd's crook. Therefore from an etymological perspective, Kleobis and Biton's death is not to be conceived of as an endpoint, but rather as the completion of a cycle. Like the successful Orphic initiate, they have escaped from the circular process of death and rebirth back into this world, and their bovine feat clearly has something to do with that escape.

A collocation of βοῦς with *tel- also turns up in another context: the names of Archilochus' grandparents, Tellis and Kleoboia. We do not know of a bovine element in Kleoboia's own biography, but G. Nagy demonstrates that we should think of cows nonetheless when we hear her name: Archilochus' poetic fame, as we shall see in the next chapter, depends on this animal.⁷³ We have in Tellis and Kleoboia an onomastic pair very similar to the approximation of Tellos and Kleobis in the context of Solon and Croesus' conversation. And again, as with Kleobis and Biton, we are dealing with a couple whose biographical tradition apparently emphasizes their eschatological experience: Pausanias tells us that Polygnotos depicted on the Knidian Lesche Tellis and Kleoboia crossing the Acheron in Charon's boat.⁷⁴

Dionysus' Argive Epithet *Bougenes*

Having argued that the Orphic myth of Dionysus' tauriform dismemberment and Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex are both engaging with a common template, I now turn to *Bougenes*,

⁷³ G. Nagy 1990c: 431.

⁷⁴ Pausanias 10.28.3.

an Argive epithet of Dionysus recorded by Plutarch.⁷⁵ This epithet is applied to the god in same ceremony in which the Argives throw a lamb into Lerna and summon the god from the deep. I have suggested that this ritual possesses a correlate in the Pelinna *lamellae*, in which the initiate's death and rebirth coincides with the latter being imagined as transforming into both a ram and a bull. Now that I have introduced Bougenes into the discussion, we see that the Argive ritual and Pelinna *lamellae* coincide on both an ovine and a bovine level. Given that the formula of the animal falling into milk is consistently linked with the initiate's death and rebirth, it seems likely that the apparently affiliated ritual of Dionysus Bougenes has to do with the god's death and rebirth: it is as though by calling on him to ascend from the depths of Lerna, the Argives are bringing back to life the Dionysus whom Perseus killed and threw into that same body of water. In fact I suspect that the epithet applied to Dionysus in this ritual encodes that very sequence of events.⁷⁶

Lewis Farnell interprets Bougenes as simply as possible, suggesting that we are to imagine a tradition in which Semele was conceived of as a cow, so that Dionysus was βουγενής in the most obvious sense.⁷⁷ However to my knowledge Semele is never portrayed as possessing such a shape. One might mention that Greek has inherited from Indo-European a tradition of describing familial relationships by means of zoomorphic, particularly bovine imagery;⁷⁸ so Pindar says of Enarea: μία βοῦς Κρηθεῖ τε μάτηρ/ καὶ θρασυμήδει Σαλμωνεῖ “a single cow was the mother of

⁷⁵ *Isis and Osiris* 35 = *Moralia* 364; cf. *Greek Questions* 36 = *Moralia* 299b.

⁷⁶ Remember that Callimachus applies βουγενής to Danaus in close proximity to a reference to the Apis bull, the transition of Osiris' soul into which is conceivably something of a *bougonia*.

⁷⁷ Farnell 1886-1909: 126. For a similarly straightforward interpretation see Wright 1995: 213. This epithet was already a topic of discussion in the Middle Ages. See Casadio 1994: 232.

⁷⁸ Campanile 1974: 247-58.

both Crethus and daring Salmoneus.”⁷⁹ But I do not think that this manner of speaking can be said to throw any light on Bougenes: surely Dionysus’ mother would have to be more than figuratively bovine in order for her to generate this epithet in reference to herself.

In fact, should we choose to follow Farnell’s lead, another tradition of Dionysus’ maternity might prove more promising than that of his birth from Semele: according to Diodorus Siculus,⁸⁰ Dionysus’ mother was named Amaltheia and possessed a segment of land in the shape of the horn of a cow (κέρατι βοός), which lines up with the aforementioned bovine aspect of the other mythical figure named Amaltheia. To my mind more impressive still is an observation made by Walter Otto, who points out that in the aforementioned Tenedian ritual, in which the god is represented by a calf born of a cow to whom the citizens give special treatment both during pregnancy and labour, Dionysus’ mother is literally a cow.⁸¹

I do not intend to reject these ways of thinking about Bougenes, but I would like to introduce alongside them another possible line of reasoning, one which need not be considered to displace the validity of the first. The adjective βουγενής functions not only as an epithet of Dionysus: remember that we have already seen it used of bees in descriptions of the *bougonia*. Let me also remind the reader that virtually every extant occurrence of βουγενής has that meaning. I would therefore suggest that Dionysus’ epithet Bougenes also has the potential to signify something

⁷⁹ *Pythian* 4.142-3.

⁸⁰ Diodorus Siculus 3.68.

⁸¹ Otto 1965: 192-3; compare Kerényi 1976: 55.

more along the lines of what this adjective usually conveys in other contexts.⁸² In fact de Gubernatis has already made a similar claim in stating that “Dionysos...after having been torn to pieces in the form of a bull, was born again, according to those who were initiated in the Dionysian mysteries, in the form of a bee; hence the name of Bougenês also given to Dionysos.”⁸³

It turns out that de Gubernatis is mistaken to the extent that he speaks of Dionysus’ rebirth in apian format, a point to which I shall return shortly. So it is wrong to interpret Dionysus’ epithet Bougenes as a reference to his having undergone an experience *mutatis mutandis* identical with the *bougonia*. Instead we must subtract the bees from the equation and modify what de Gubernatis says by understanding that Dionysus’ tauriform death and rebirth is homologous to the *bougonia*, not an instance of it. Thus the god, like the bees, is literally born from a bovine, but the bovine question is his own self, and the birth that takes place is self-reflexive.

Let us now apply this analysis to Dionysus’ epithet Bougenes in situ so as to see whether or not the context points to the sense that the god is not simply born from a cow, but reborn from himself in tauriform guise. Remember that the aetiology of the Argive ritual appears to be the tradition that Perseus killed the god by throwing him into Lerna, and that by summoning

⁸² Remember that Callimachus appears to evoke the bugonic (and conventional) sense of βουγενής even as he uses it in the obvious (but exceedingly rare) sense, i.e. Danaus born from the boomorphic Io. Given that Callimachus uses this adjective in proximity to a reference to the Apis bull, it is interesting that Plutarch mentions Dionysus Bougenes in the same breath as he mentions Dionysus’ relationship to Osiris and Apis. Furthermore, in line with an observation made by Harder 2012: 2.401, I note the possibly more than fortuitous correspondence between Plutarch telling us that it is in Argos that Dionysus is called Bougenes and Callimachus applying this adjective to a figure who is of Argive descent and who returns to Argos.

⁸³ De Gubernatis 1872: 2.217.

Dionysus from the depths the Argives are presumably commemorating his rebirth subsequent to that same ordeal. Given the variety of contexts in which we have seen Dionysus' death and rebirth characterized as tauriform, perhaps we can see Bougenes conveying that sense here, even if the synchrony of the Argive ritual does not appear to otherwise manifest Dionysus' bovine aspect.

Of particular relevance to this dissertation is that fact that that Dionysus' epithet Bougenes seems to have appealed to Orphic sensibilities. Although it is only in Argos that we know Dionysus to have been called by this name, a variant of it is applied to the god in an Orphic text: Zopyros' *Mikroteros Krater*, in the title of which, as I shall discuss in Chapter 4, we appear to have an image of craftsmanship that approximates Orphic ideology to the activity of the Vedic Ṛbhus, Orpheus' etymological and functional brethren. In one of the fragments of this work that have come down to us, the poet calls Dionysus ταυρογενής.⁸⁴ This is the only extant occurrence of this adjective, and it is hard not to see it as an Orphic renovation of Bougenes.⁸⁵ If Zopyros did indeed mean for ταυρογενής to convey Dionysus' tauriform death and subsequent rebirth, then we have here a combination of elements very similar to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Bernabé 2004-07: 2.413 line 7.

⁸⁵ Numerous studies discuss ταυρογενής in relation to Bougenes. See for example Casadio 1994: 232.

⁸⁶ Perhaps this Zopyros of Heraclea is to be equated with Zopyros of Tarentum, a student of Pythagoras, whom we have seen to be connected with cows, including in Tarentum. However see Zhmud 2012: 130.

Dionysus' Apian and Mellic Associations

I noted that de Gubernatis is apparently mistaken in claiming that the conclusion to the myth of Dionysus' dismemberment is his rebirth as a bee—no extant source provides us with such a scenario. It is interesting to note, however, that in several versions of the myth the god's remains are retrieved from the Titans and conveyed to Delphi, and that Plutarch seems to imply that Dionysus is revived there.⁸⁷ Delphi is variously associated with bees: Pausanias tells us that its second temple was made out of birds' feathers and beeswax,⁸⁸ and Pindar refers to the Pythia as *μελίσσα/ Δελφίδος*.⁸⁹ In fact the scholiast on Pindar's Pythians associates Dionysus with the office that is otherwise hers: apparently Dionysus was the first to mount the tripod at Delphi and to deliver oracles there.⁹⁰ So perhaps there is something to what de Gubernatis' says, although it would have to be transformed from an invalid statement of fact into a somewhat compelling suggestion.

Furthermore, Dionysus is directly associated with bees and honey in a variety of other contexts. Yet again the most familiar case is probably that in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where preternaturally

⁸⁷ L. Morgan 1999: 154; see West 1983: 150. On Dionysus at Delphi see Ogden 2013: 178 fn. 182.

⁸⁸ Pausanias 10.5.5.

⁸⁹ *Pythian* 4.60.

⁹⁰ Drachmann 1903-27: 2.2 lines 13-14. For the Delphic *omphalos* as a beehive see Silver 1992: 68.

flowing honey is one of the symptoms of the Maenads' revelry.⁹¹ Utterly plain is Ovid's claim that Dionysus invented honey.⁹²

Also revealing for our topic is the fact that Dionysus' involvement with honey brings him into juxtaposition with Aristaeus, which could be said to situate the god within the realm of the *bougonia*—always assuming that Virgil is not innovating in making Aristaeus the inventor of this procedure. Apollonius has Aristaeus' daughter Makris nurse Dionysus on honey,⁹³ and Diodorus Siculus informs us that Aristaeus was initiated into the mysteries of Dionysus.⁹⁴

In contrast with these amicable situations, Books 13 and 19 of Nonnos' *Dionysiaca* portray Aristaeus as being in conflict with Dionysus, whose newly invented wine is clearly on its way to eclipsing the role of mead.⁹⁵ Here we are in the context of a topic that was apparently valued by Orphic tradition: as Porphyry tells us, *παρὰ δὲ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ ὁ Κρόνος μέλιτι ὑπὸ Διὸς ἐνεδρεύεται πλησθεῖς γὰρ μέλιτος μεθύει καὶ σκοτοῦται ὡς ἀπὸ οἴνου καὶ ὑπνοῖ ὡς παρὰ Πλάτωνι ὁ Πόρος τοῦ νέκταρος πλησθεῖς· 'οὔπω γὰρ οἶνος ἦν'* “according to Orpheus, Kronos is ensnared by Zeus by means of honey; for having had his fill of honey, he becomes drunk and oblivious as though

⁹¹ *Bacchae* 143, 711.

⁹² *Fasti* 3.735-6. Although it would be convenient for me to be able to follow Cook 1895: 6, 15 in asserting, with reference to the name of the Brisai, the nymphs who teach apiculture to Aristaeus, that the god's Lesbian epithet *Briseus/Brisaios* is to be related to the verb βλίττειν 'harvest honey,' (compare), Michael Weiss informs me that this claim is linguistically unsound.

⁹³ Apollonius 4.1129-34. Compare Oppian, *Cynegetica* 4.275.

⁹⁴ Diodorus Siculus 4.82. As to whether or not Dionysus' mellic aspect could be said to bring him into contact with Orpheus, Ovid describes Dionysus departing from the Hebrus and discovering honey in a tree in the vicinity of Rhodope and Pangaeus (*Fasti* 3.737), all of which locations evoke Orpheus. In fact *Georgics* 4 mentions all three places.

⁹⁵ A similar level of meaning may be involved in Dionysus' hostile relations with Lycurgus, whom Aeschylus identifies as a beer-drinker (*Deipnosophistae* 10.67).

with wine, and he falls asleep like Poros in Plato, who has had his fill of nectar, for ‘wine did not yet exist.’”⁹⁶ It thus appears as though not only the bovine but also the mellic component of Dionysus’ mythological dossier puts him in contact with Orphic themes.

So Dionysus is elsewhere connected with bees and honey, even though he is not explicitly portrayed as one in his *bougonia* homologue. This suggests that Dionysus and bees are somehow isofunctional within the context of paradoxically creative bovine slaughter. It is as though whereas the *bougonia* proper presents bovine and bees in syntagmatic relationship with one another, the connection between bovine and bee in Dionysus’ mythological profile is paradigmatic: in the *bougonia*, apian genesis is causally linked with cow slaughter; in the Dionysiac iconographic bestiary, both bovine and bee are alternating epiphanies of the god’s association with rebirth.

A brief reexamination of apian symbolism indicates that this is what is probably going on. As previously noted, one consistent function of the bee in the semiotic system of not only the ancient Greeks but also that of many other cultures is to signal points of transition between life and death, including rebirth. The Greek text most often quoted with reference to this topic is Porphyry’s statement that ψυχὰς εἰς γένεσιν ἰούσας μελίσσας ἔλεγον...τὰς μελλούσας μετὰ δικαιοσύνης βιοτεύειν καὶ πάλιν ἀναστρέφειν εἰργασμένας τὰ θεοῖς φίλα “[the ancients] refer to as bees the souls of those who, upon their entry into creation, are going to live in righteousness,

⁹⁶ *De Antro Nympharum* 16.

and who are going to return after they have accomplished what the gods desire.”⁹⁷ Virgil operates within the realm of this symbolism when he compares the denizens of the underworld to bees in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*.⁹⁸ Given that *Aeneid* 6 recapitulates in more than one instance content from *Georgics* 4,⁹⁹ it seems reasonable to assume that Virgil had also intended for the bees of the *bougonia* to be invested with spiritual symbolism.

In fact in another statement of Porphyry’s that I mentioned above in passing and that I promised to resume in greater detail establishes just such a connection: βουγενεῖς δ’ αἱ μέλισσαι, καὶ ψυχὰι δ’ εἰς γένεσιν ἰοῦσαι βουγενεῖς “bees are generated from bovines, and souls are generated from bovines upon their entry into creation.”¹⁰⁰ Not only bees but also souls are somehow mysteriously generated from bovines. Perhaps we are to conceive of Dionysus’ tauriform rebirth as an example of the latter.

Lasus of Hermione and Persephone *Meliboia*

Having related Dionysus’ Argive epithet Bougenes to his tauriform dismemberment and in turn to the *bougonia*, I would now like to propose something similar for *Meliboia*, an epithet applied

⁹⁷ *De Antro Nympharum* 19.

⁹⁸ *Aeneid* 6.707-9. See Norden 1984: 306.

⁹⁹ For some recent notes on the matter see Ahl 2007: 367 on lines 306-8, 368 on line 309, 369 on line 438. See also Crabbe 1978-1980 and Briggs 1980.

¹⁰⁰ *De Antro Nympharum* 18. Many scholars have discussed this passage in relation to *Georgics* 4: Wormell 1971: 430-1; Chomarat 1974: 189; Bettini 1991: 198-9; Farrell 1991: 262-4; Morgan 1999: 144. Interesting for us that Porphyry discusses the *bougonia* in conjunction with the moon, which he identifies as an agent of genesis, a bee, and a bull: Proclus mentions the moon as bull and generator in relation to the Orphic verse in which this celestial body is called a calf (Bernabé 2004-7: 304; Marzillo 2010: 272). Moon as bovine is not uncommon in Greek literature, but it is recurring in Orphic texts, and pervasive in Nonnos.

by Lasus of Hermione to Persephone:¹⁰¹ Δάματρα μέλπω κόραν τε Κλυμένοι' ἄλοχον
Μελίβοιαν “I sing of Demeter and Kore Meliboia, wife of Clymenus.”¹⁰² I perceive in the
compound Meliboia a reflection of the same apian-bovine dyad on which the *bougonia* is
founded.

There is no correlate to the *bougonia* in Persephone's mythological dossier with which this
epithet can be linked in the way that I have suggested that Dionysus' tauriform dismemberment
is the elaborated equivalent of what his epithet Bougenes has the potential to convey in a single
word. However Cretan coins combine Demeter and Persephone with bees on the one hand and
with bovines on the other,¹⁰³ and both of these animals occur together on another Cretan coin.¹⁰⁴
Furthermore, Persephone was the recipient of various cow sacrifices. In Cyzicus, which we have
already encountered as a location in which Dionysus was depicted as a bull, a black cow was
routinely sacrificed at the festival of Persephassa. However when the city was being besieged by
Mithradates, the citizens were apparently unable to access the cow destined to be offered, which
was at a distance, so that they worked some dough into the shape of a cow and placed that on the
altar instead. But then something marvelous occurred: the cow made its way to the altar of its
own accord.¹⁰⁵ A black cow was also offered to Proserpina at the eschatological venue of
Tarentum in a sacrifice established by one Valesius, whose ailing children were cured by the

¹⁰¹ *Deipnosophistae* 624e.

¹⁰² Μελίβοιαν is emended to μελιβόαν and made to agree with a likewise emended ὕμνον in the next line by Page 1962: 364. It is rather maintained by Brussich 2000: 35.

¹⁰³ Stefanaki 2001: 135.

¹⁰⁴ Stefanaki 2001: 135.

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch, *Lucullus* 10.

goddess there.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps Virgil has this rite in mind when he has Aeneas sacrifice a likewise black heifer to Proserpina before entering the underworld.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, Michael Janda points out that according to Pausanias, Demeter Chthonia was the recipient of an elaborate annual cow sacrifice at none other than Hermione,¹⁰⁸ an event celebrated in a poem by Aristocles.¹⁰⁹ Now Persephone's mother is not Persephone herself, but it is still surely significant that the latter's close relative receives impressive bovine offerings in the very place inhabited by the poet who calls her Meliboia; indeed, Lasus invokes Persephone Meliboia in conjunction with Demeter. Pausanias, moreover, mentions that Demeter and Persephone were worshipped jointly at sanctuaries in the vicinity of Hermione.¹¹⁰

The various cow sacrifices made to Persephone indicate the relevance of the second segment of her epithet *Μελίβοια*, an element which, as Janda notes, recurs in *Πολύβοια* 'She who has many cows,' an epithet uof both Artemis and Persephone.¹¹¹ Another mythological figure named Polyboia is also associated with both of these goddesses. In describing the altar of the temple complex at Amyklai, Pausanias tells us that *πεποιήται δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ καὶ ἡ Δημήτηρ καὶ Κόρη καὶ Πλούτων, ἐπὶ δὲ αὐτοῖς Μοῖραι τε καὶ Ὠραι, σὺν δὲ σφισιν Ἀφροδίτη καὶ Ἀθηνᾶ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμις. κομίζουσι δ' ἐς οὐρανὸν Ὑάκινθον καὶ Πολύβοιαν* "fashioned on the altar are also

¹⁰⁶ Pighi 1965: 50. On the eschatological significance of Tarentum, see Watkins 1995: 290 fn. 23, 347-56.

¹⁰⁷ *Aeneid* 6.251. Ahl 2007: 366 similarly connects Aeneas' offering to Proserpina and those that the goddess received at Tarentum.

¹⁰⁸ Pausanias 2.35.6-7; Janda 2000: 213.

¹⁰⁹ Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* 11.4.

¹¹⁰ Pausanias 2.34.6.

¹¹¹ Janda 2000: 213-14.

Demeter, Kore, and Pluto, and next to them the Moirai and Horai, and with them Aphrodite, Athena and Artemis. They are conveying to heaven Hyacinth and Polyboia.”¹¹²

So Persephone is both ritually and linguistically associated with cows. As for bees, recall that Philetas might have treated the *bougonia* in the context of his *Demeter*, and that a narrative recorded by Servius situates Demeter within the context of what Maurizio Bettini has identified as a variation on the *bougonia*:¹¹³ a group of women endeavour to ascertain the mysteries of Ceres from one Melissa, in whom the goddess had confided the secrets of her rites. When Melissa refuses to divulge the information, her enraged interrogators dismember her. Ceres then causes bees to emerge from the rent body of her devotee.

Admittedly the association of Persephone’s mother with a *bougonia* variant does not provide us with a direct connection between a *bougonia* variant and Persephone herself, but a scholium on Theocritus might be said to go some way in filling in the gap: here we read that the priestesses of both Persephone and Demeter are called μέλισσαι.¹¹⁴ The mystically savvy Melissa of Servius’ narrative is surely a representative of this group. Based on the scholiast’s remark, it appears as though the apian component of Persephone and Demeter’s mythico-religious profiles included a certain amount of shared material applicable to them both, so that Ceres’ quasi-*bougonia* is probably at least ultimately relevant to Persephone as well. Perhaps Virgil, who assigns

¹¹² Pausanias 3.19.4.

¹¹³ Servius on *Aeneid* 1.430; Bettini 1991: 215.

¹¹⁴ Scholium on Theocritus’ *Idyll* 15.94. On priestesses as bees see Herren 2008: 45-9.

Proserpina a subtle but key role in the events of the Aristaeus epyllion, was aware of this goddess' apparent connection with bugonic lore.¹¹⁵

In fact the Theocritean scholium is actually a discussion of the poet's evocation of Μελιτώδες 'Honey-like,' which the scholiast identifies as an epithet of Persephone, as does Porphyry.¹¹⁶ By analogy with Μελιτώδες, Μελίβοια, although etymologically to be understood as meaning 'She who cares for cattle,'¹¹⁷ could have been synchronically conceived of as 'She who has honey-cows,' i.e. cows yielding (milk like) honey or some such.¹¹⁸ This interpretation is arguably all the more reasonable given that we are in the context of a poem composed by Lasus, who had a reputation for being remarkably fond of wordplay.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, Janda has demonstrated in great detail that the myth of Persephone's abduction corresponds in several respects to one of the variously rendered core narratives of the *R̥g Veda*, that of the abduction of cows by a demonic withholder (Vṛtra, Vala) and their subsequent liberation by one or more protagonists (Indra, the Angirases, etc.). As Janda observes, the cows

¹¹⁵ On Proserpina in *Georgics* 4 see P. Johnston 1977: 161-72.

¹¹⁶ *De Antro Nympharum* 18.

¹¹⁷ Brussich 2001: 76.

¹¹⁸ Janda 2000: 213 rather suggests that the first segment of Μελίβοια is actually the honey word, a not unreasonable argument, but an unlikely one; his suggestion is supported by Pinchard 2009: 478. With my suggestion that compounds beginning with Μελι- might have been interpreted as beginning with the honey word, compare Prauscello 2011: 24 fn. 32.

¹¹⁹ D'Angour 1997: 338.

of this narrative are described in several instances as containing honey.¹²⁰ The mellifluous cows of the *R̥g Veda* provide diachronic support for the notion that the Greeks might have understood the first segment of Μελίβοια as constituting the honey word.

Earlier I proposed that Orphic tradition engages with Dionysus' epithet Bougenes. Similarly I suspect that Lasus' application of Meliboia to Persephone might also have something to do with the same Orphic interest in apian-bovine dyads that apparently informs Virgil's combination of Orpheus with the *bougonia*. According to Herodotus, Onomacritus was expelled by Hipparchus from Athens because Lasus caught him interpolating into Museaus an oracle stating that the islands off of Lemnos would sink.¹²¹ Perhaps we are to imagine that Lasus simply stumbled across Onomacritus in the act of forgery by mere chance. However I think that Herodotus' account could be understood as indicating that Lasus himself was also involved with Orphic poetry, which would explain how he was apparently qualified to identify what Onomacritus was doing with Museaus as inauthentic.

¹²⁰ Janda 2000: 216-17. *R̥g Veda* 1.177.22; 3.31.11; 3.39.6, 9; 5.3.3. Elsewhere in Indic literature, cows are associated with *amṛta* which, like its Greek cognate *ambrosia*, is a multiform of honey (Roscher 1883: 22-33, 67-9, etc.). So the cow Surabhī is actually made from this substance. There is also a Norse comparandum: the goat Heiðrún, from whose udder flows the mead consumed by the Einherjar (Faulkes 1982: 33). Cow and honey also coincide in the interlocking mythology and iconography of Amaltheia and Tyche. Amaltheia is one of the figures, sometimes a goat, sometimes a nymph (and in this case sometimes the daughter of the onomastically apian king Melisseus), involved in the nursing of the infant Zeus on a mixture of milk and honey in a cave on Cretan Ida, and the horn(s) of which become(s) (the) cornucopia(e) (Apollodorus 1.5; Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus* 48-9; Diodorus Siculus 5.70.1; etc.). According to Pherecydes, however, the horn of Amaltheia was that of a bull (Apollodorus 2.7.5; compare Diodorus Siculus 4.35.3). Amaltheia's mellic aspect is also reflected in the Callimachean scholium that describes her horns as flowing with nectar and ambrosia (Pfeiffer 1949-53: 2.44). As for Tyche, sculptures of this goddess often show her holding the sometimes bovine horn of Amaltheia (e.g. Pausanias 4.30.4; 7.26.3), her name comes from the Indo-European verbal root *d^heuǵ^h- 'milk,' which also yields the name of Tyche's Indic etymological and functional congener the wonder-cow Kāmaduh (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 286 fn. 41), and Lydus tells us that she was said to have the face of a cow (βουπρόσωπον; *De Mensibus* 4.46). Interesting in light of our topic is the fact that Tyche seems to have been an important goddess in Orphic contexts. See Martín Hernández 2011.

¹²¹ Herodotus 7.6.

In fact Nagy suggests that Herodotus presents Onomacritus and Lasus as rival poets,¹²² which would suggest that they were both trying to fill the same poetic niche. Based on the texts over which they come into conflict, it seems as though one feature common to both of their poetry might have been a special interest in Orphic traditions. For what it is worth, Lasus is elsewhere associated with the dithyramb,¹²³ a genre that appears to possess an Orphic dimension.¹²⁴

Furthermore, in addition to the fact that Orphic matters seem to have piqued Lasus' interest in particular, the mythico-religious traditions of Hermione in general appear to exhibit features that also surface in Orphic circles.¹²⁵ Pausanias notes that behind the temple of Demeter Chthonia at which the aforementioned cow sacrifice was executed are spots designated as belonging to Clymenus and Pluto, and as the Acherousian lake; Herakles is said to have emerged with Kerberos from a chasm in the first of these places.¹²⁶ Strabo tells us that there was a shortcut to the underworld in Hermione, so that its residents did not put passage money into the mouths of their dead.¹²⁷

Not all of these elements of Hermionian landscape and culture are characteristically Orphic, but some are.¹²⁸ In light of this fact, it is interesting to note that the Hermione described in the

¹²² Nagy 1990c: 173.

¹²³ Nagy 1990c: 388-9.

¹²⁴ See Prauscello 2013, of which I have seen only segments on Google Books. See also Mendelsohn 1992.

¹²⁵ Ferrari and Prauscello 2007; Prauscello 2013.

¹²⁶ Pausanias 2.35.8.

¹²⁷ Strabo 8.6.12.

¹²⁸ Ferrari and Prauscello 2007; Prauscello 2013; Kivilo 2010: 55.

Orphic Argonautica,¹²⁹ as pointed out by Georges Dottin and demonstrated at length by J. R. Bacon, although geographically that of the Germanic Hermiones, is in substance that of the Argolid:¹³⁰ so we hear of the Hermionians' special proximity to Hades and the fact that their dead therefore do not need to pay the standard fare for accessing it.

A statement made by Pausanias might also be said to suggest some sort of connection between Orpheus and Hermione: Δήμητρα δὲ Χθονίαν Λακεδαιμόνιοι μὲν σέβειν φασὶ παραδόντος σφίσιν Ὀρφέως, δόξη δὲ ἐμῇ διὰ τὸ ἱερὸν τὸ ἐν Ἑρμιόνη κατέστη καὶ τούτοις Χθονίαν νομίζειν Δήμητρα “The Lacedaemonians say that the worship of Demeter Chthonia was handed down to them by Orpheus, but in my opinion it is on account of her temple in Hermione that they also began to revere her.”¹³¹ It seems as though the cult of Demeter Chthonia was associated on the one hand with Orpheus, and on the other with Hermione, so that it was possible—according to Pausanias—for the Lacedaemonians to mistake their source for the worship of this goddess.

So the poet who applies the epithet Meliboia to Persephone was apparently involved with Orphic poetry, and the mythico-religious traditions of his place of origin coincide with those that circulated in Orphic contexts. Perhaps it is with an Orphic agenda in mind that Lasus calls Persephone Meliboia,¹³² in which compound we have a combination of elements similar to the constituents of the *bougonia*, which procedure Virgil connects with Orpheus. And yet as I have

¹²⁹ *Orphic Argonautica* 1136-42.

¹³⁰ Dottin 1930: lxxv; Bacon 1931: 181-2.

¹³¹ Pausanias 3.14.5.

¹³² Perhaps it is significant that Thessalian Meliboia occurs as part of the route of the voyage of the Argonauts (Apollonius 1.592; *Orphic Argonautica* 167 where, according to Vian's text, it is modified by the adjective εὐγλαγῆς ‘abundant in milk,’ perhaps in pointed reference to the toponym's bovine component).

already stated, no episode in Persephone's mythological profile directly clarifies the sense of her epithet Meliboia, so that we can never really know whether its semantics belonged to the same conceptual domain as that of the *bougonia*. However, recall that another epithet of Persephone is Polyboia, and that she participates in transporting a maiden by that same name to heaven. This suggests that when used in relation to Persephone, the name Polyboia has eschatological connotations. Maybe the same can be said for Meliboia.¹³³

The name of another figure could also be said to further indicate that Persephone's bovine epithets share a common eschatological significance. We have already met her: Archilochus' grandmother Kleoboia, whom Pausanias describes travelling to Hades in Charon's boat, and who is therefore yet another onomastically bovine character with eschatological affinities. The other detail that Pausanias provides about Kleoboia is that she imported the rites of Demeter from Paros to Thasos.¹³⁴ So Kleoboia is connected with Persephone's mother, if not Persephone herself. And in fact she is ultimately connected to them both: as Nagy points out, we are surely to think of Kleoboia's involvement with Demeter's rites when Archilochus speaks of himself as a participant in a Δήμητρος ἀγνῆς καὶ Κόρης/ τὴν πανήγυριν "festival of holy Demeter and Kore."¹³⁵ Here both mother and daughter are involved.

* * *

¹³³ It is interesting and perhaps pertinent to my analysis that Larson 1995: 86-7 sees some degree of similarity between the brother-sister pairs Hyacinth-Polyboia and Amyklas-Meliboia.

¹³⁴ Pausanias 10.28.3.

¹³⁵ West 1971-1972: 322; Nagy 1990c: 431.

I conclude this chapter by considering the possibility that Virgil might have conceived of the name *Meliboeus* as possessing the same semantics that I have argued the Greeks could have imposed on its feminine equivalent *Meliboia*. In the *sphragis* to the *Georgics*, Virgil revisits words previously spoken by Meliboeus in the *Eclogues*.¹³⁶ As I shall argue in Chapter 3, the *sphragis*, which occurs in direct contiguity with the conclusion of the Aristaeus epyllion, continues the epyllion's apian thematics. So perhaps the allusion to Meliboeus just mere lines after Aristaeus' successful completion of the *bougonia* is in part motivated by the fact that the herdsman's name seems to encode the same apian-bovine dyad of which the *bougonia* consists. In fact Virgil places the Meliboeus of his *Eclogues* in proximity to both bees and bovines.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ On the relationship between *Georgics* 4.566 and *Eclogues* 1.1, as well as the complexities of Virgil's Meliboeus, see Nappa 2005 219-32.

¹³⁷ *Eclogues* 1.45, 54; 7.11, 13. That Meliboeus' presence in the *sphragis* is to be related to the content of the epyllion is also suggested by the fact that Virgil portrays Meliboeus as something of an Orpheus. See Perkell 1990.

CHAPTER 2

Hermes *Bouphonos* and the Invention of the Lyre:A Homeric Correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*Bougonia* Complex

The correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex essayed in this chapter occurs in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. One would do well to inquire on what basis I propose that the hymn contains a valid comparandum to Virgil's combination of Orpheus with the *bougonia*, given that neither does Orpheus himself have a role to play in its events, nor do extant sources provide significant indication that the hymn's narrative was associated with Orphic contexts in the way that we have seen the narrative of Dionysus' infanticide to have been prominently and extensively identified as Orphic. In the hymn's pivotal episode, however, Hermes invents the lyre, with which instrument Orpheus is also substantially involved. More to the point, in addition to Orpheus being simply connected with the lyre, the Milesian poet Timotheus in his *Persae* portrays him as the inventor of this device: πρῶτος ποικιλόμουσος Ὀρ-/ φεύς [χέλ]υν ἐτέκνωσεν "Orpheus of modulating music first sired the lyre."¹

Orpheus and the Lyre

Timotheus is admittedly the only extant author to assign the lyre's creation to Orpheus with utter clarity, although the author of the Pseudo-Lucianic *Astrology* has Orpheus construct at least a, if

¹ Campbell 1982-93: 791 lines 221-2; Hordern 2002: 221.

not the original lyre (πηξάμενος γὰρ λύρην).² Furthermore, for what it is worth, Pseudo-Plutarch portrays Orpheus as being the primal musician, claiming that he did not imitate anyone in his compositions, since there were no predecessors for him to turn to other than auletes, whom Plutarch dismisses as irrelevant.³ Perhaps Pindar has such an understanding in mind when he refers to Orpheus as ἀοιδᾶν πατήρ,⁴ a description that has been compared to Timotheus' similarly paternal image of Orpheus begetting the lyre.⁵

If there was a tradition of Orpheus as progenitor of music in general, we might consider his status as inventor of the lyre as constituting a specific instance thereof. As we shall see later on in this chapter and at greater length in Chapter 4, Orpheus' putative Indic brethren, the Ṛbhus, although not characterized as inventors, are creators to the extent that they fashion various products. The comparative perspective therefore suggests that Orpheus' composition of the lyre, far from a Timothean fabrication, reflects an indigenous capacity for craftsmanship that Orpheus has inherited from his Indo-European ancestor.

Finally, we might also wish to entertain the possibility that the aetiology of the plant named *cithara* reported by Pseudo-Plutarch might be informed by a tradition of Orpheus as inventor of the lyre and its morphological equivalents: according to this author, the blood of Orpheus'

² *Astrology* 10. Compare Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.204, where Orpheus is one of the competing inventors of the cithara.

³ *On Music* 1132ff.

⁴ *Pythian* 4.177.

⁵ Janssen 1984: 138; Power 2010: 277 fn. 230.

severed head generated a plant that produces the sound of a cithara and is therefore so named.⁶

For the cithara as isofunctional with the lyre we need only consider the main text under investigation in this chapter, in which the instrument that Hermes constructs is variously referred to as a lyre,⁷ a cithara,⁸ and a phorminx.⁹

Of course it is not through conscious agency that Orpheus effects this plant; furthermore, we are within context of a familiar narrative pattern in which the botanical entity resulting from a victim's demise is distinguished by some mark identifying its inadvertent originator.

Nevertheless we might consider the apparent tradition of Orpheus as inventor of the lyre, perhaps of stringed instruments overall, to be a contributing factor in the composition of this vegetal vignette.

In any event I consider it legitimate to proceed with the understanding that there existed an established tradition of Orpheus as the lyre's creator alternative to, if not competitive with that in which the construction of this instrument is attributed to Hermes. Indeed this is not the only item the invention of which is alternately assigned to Orpheus or Hermes: both are also credited with the creation of writing.¹⁰ Perhaps the extensive cooperation of Orpheus and Hermes in later times

⁶ *De Fluviis* 3.4. Again, compare Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.204, where Orpheus is one of the competing inventors of the cithara.

⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 423.

⁸ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 509, 515.

⁹ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 64, 506.

¹⁰ So Orpheus in an epigram discussed by Pseudo-Alcidamas (Blass 1871: 190-1), on which see Linforth 1962: 5-11; for other connections between Orpheus and writing see Detienne 1989, *passim*, and J. Nagy 1990: 226-8, 231. Hermes is the inventor of writing according to Diodorus Siculus (1.16.1) and Hyginus (*Fabulae* 277).

represents the resolution of an earlier agonistic interaction of which these two culture heroes' apparent contest for claim to authorship of the lyre and writing are examples.¹¹

In fact this conjecturally competitive nature of Orpheus and Hermes' alternating status as the lyre's inventor arguably manifests itself on the verbal level. As Michael Estell observes, the composition of Timotheus' line *πρῶτος ποικιλόμουσος Ὀρ-/ φεύς [χέλ]υν ἐτέκνωσεν* is remarkably similar to the hymnist's description of Hermes' creative act: *Ἑρμῆς τοι πρῶτιστα χέλυν τεκτῆνατ' ἀοιδόν* "Hermes first fashioned the poet-seer's lyre."¹² Admittedly these are to a certain extent generic utterances of the *protos-heuretes* type. With respect to the musical realm in particular, August Baumeister notes the correspondence between the hymnic line and the Delphic poetess Boeo's description of Olen: *πρῶτος δ' ἀρχαίων ὕμνων τεκτάνατ' ἀοιδάν* "he first fashioned a song of ancient hymns;"¹³ we can add to his observation that Boeo's verse is just as suitable a comparandum to Timotheus' phrase. So the hymnist's and Timotheus' statements could have been independently formulated with reference to the same traditional formulaic phraseology. Nevertheless, in light of the fact that both the hymnist's and Timotheus' lines share the additional factor of being concerned with the same specific event, it strikes me as reasonable to consider their similarity as indicative of analogy.

¹¹ See Herrero de Jáuregui 2010: 101-4 for some recent remarks on the proximity of Orpheus and Hermes in late antiquity. Authors who tell us that Orpheus inherited the lyre from Hermes (e.g. Hyginus, *De Astronomia* 2.7.1) are perhaps representing a pro-Hermaean tradition that does what it can to diffuse tension with the Orphic version by conceding as much as possible to Orpheus while maintaining Hermes' supremacy.

¹² *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* line 25; Estell 1999: 331-2.

¹³ Pausanias 10.5.7; Baumeister 1860: 190.

Convenient as it would be in the context of this project to conceive of Timotheus' line as the model off of which the hymnist composed his, it is hard to imagine an author working within a tradition as influential as the *Homeric Hymns* feeling motivated to appropriate and to alter the text of an author as uncanonical as Timotheus. However Estell proposes a triangular scenario in which Timotheus is to be understood as derivationally representing the hymnist's source. Having juxtaposed the combination of the hymnist's and Timotheus' statements with the Vedic verse *bráhma ṛbhávas tatakṣur* "the Ṛbhus fashioned a *brahman* (sacral poetic utterance),"¹⁴ in which the form *tatakṣur* is cognate with Greek τεκταίνομαι, the verb that the hymnist uses in articulating Hermes construction of the lyre, Estell posits the following sequence of events: both the Greek and Indic literary traditions inherited a formulaic collocation of Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' common precursor **H₃r^bh^éus* with **tetk-*, whence the Sanskrit verb *takṣ-* and τεκταίνομαι, which in the Greek formulaic repertoire produced the syntactic unit **Ὀρφεὺς χέλων τεκτήνατο*.¹⁵ Timotheus then modified this syntagm by replacing τεκταίνομαι with a form of the phonetically and semantically proximate verb τεκνοῶ.¹⁶ Indeed there might have been a tradition of figurative synonymy between these verbs: compare with Boeo's ἀρχαίων ὕμνων τεκτάναι' αἰοιδάν the compound ὕμνοτόκος.¹⁷ The hymnist, similarly aware of this apparently eminent phrase **Ὀρφεὺς χέλων τεκτήνατο*, maintained its original verb, but ousted its agent and introduced Hermes in his stead.

¹⁴ *R̥g Veda* 10.80.7b.

¹⁵ I would go one step further and argue not simply for a collocation of **H₃r^bh^éus* with **tetk-*, but more fully for a formulaic syntagm **H₃r^bh^éus* FASHION (**tetk-*) POETIC ITEM (*χέλων; bráhma*).

¹⁶ Although it does nothing to damage the essence of Estell's argument, I draw the reader's attention to the analysis of the hymnist's τεκτήνατο versus Timotheus' ἐτέκνωσεν made by Detienne 1996: 70, in which the latter perceives a significant semantic contrast at work rather than a basic synonymy.

¹⁷ I owe my awareness of the compound ὕμνοτόκος to Janssen 1984: 138, who similarly brings it to bear on Timotheus' line.

If we accept Estell's prehistory of Timotheus' line, it emerges that Orpheus is a diachronically speaking more deserving candidate for the status of the lyre's inventor, although this tradition has become eclipsed by the version in which this deed is assigned to Hermes, a version so much more successful that even in the *Orphic Argonautica* it is Hermes rather than Orpheus whose name goes hand in hand with mention of this instrument.¹⁸ And yet despite this version's ultimate success, further evidence for its erstwhile instability may be said to be provided by the fact that Orpheus is apparently not the only one to contend with Hermes for the status of the lyre's inventor: Apollo also earned the reputation of having fashioned it.¹⁹

In fact although the hymnist portrays Hermes as transferring the lyre to Apollo without hesitation or resentment, Pausanias tells us that Lysippus in his statue group on Helicon depicted the two gods as quarrelling over this instrument;²⁰ perhaps the altercation is not simply about ownership but also about claim to authorship. Although Lysippus could not be expected to represent the alternate tradition of Orpheus as the lyre's inventor by having him participate in the skirmish, it is perhaps worth noting that in the vicinity there was also a statue of Orpheus surrounded by animals listening to his music.²¹ In fact although the sculpture of Orpheus is not in interaction with those of Hermes and Apollo, it is involved in yet another, this time implicit expression of

¹⁸ *Orphic Argonautica* 383. Apollonius imitates the hymnist's description of Hermes' cosmogony when he describes the one sung by Orpheus. See Vergados 2013: 114, 499-500. Vergados 2013: 116 also compares Apollonius' description of Orpheus playing the lyre in order to dominate the song of the Sirens to a line of the hymn. In these cases, it is Orpheus who absorbs Hermes.

¹⁹ The instances are assembled by Hägg 1989: 62 fn. 96; however the latter questions the extent to which this tradition is actually to be conceived of as mutually exclusive with that of Hermes as inventor of the specifically tortoise-shell lyre. As to whether there was a genuine tradition of Terpander as inventor rather than simply modifier of the lyre see Hägg 1989: 64 fn. 105. For Terpander as the heir of not only the physical lyre from Orpheus, but also the heir of Orphic musical techniques and themes, see Power 2010: 358-9, 361.

²⁰ Pausanias 9.30.1.

²¹ Pausanias 9.30.3.

rivalry: near Orpheus was a statue of Thamyris holding broken lyre.²² Orpheus and Thamyris are also contrasted by means of virtually identical iconography as successful versus failed musician in Polygnotos' underworld panorama in the Cnidian Lesche at Delphi.²³

Therefore despite the fact that Orpheus himself is not an active participant in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, this text's crucial action is one the agency of which another tradition attributes to Orpheus. Furthermore, although we have no grounds on which to suggest that its narrative enjoyed significant circulation in Orphic milieu, several scholars have observed that the hymn displays lexical, formulaic and stylistic elements more or less absent from the other Homeric hymns but characteristic, indeed sometimes otherwise exclusive to Orphic texts.²⁴ Other instances of the verb συσσεύειν,²⁵ of the adjective γεράσμιος,²⁶ of the noun προθύραιον,²⁷ and of the phrase ἄντρον ἐς ἠερόεν/ ἄντρον ἐς ἠερόεντι, which is of formulaic status in the hymn,²⁸ are limited to the Orphic hymns,²⁹ and ὑψιμέλαθρος³⁰ occurs elsewhere only in the Orphic hymns and in Nonnos,³¹ whom we have already seen appears to draw extensively on Orphic texts when composing his own. Furthermore, the hymnist describes Hermes by means of a series of

²² Pausanias 9.30.2.

²³ Pausanias 10.30.6-8. I owe my understanding of the apparent tradition of visually representing Orpheus as Thamyris' antithesis to Richard Martin 2001: 30, who so isolates the pair in the context of Polygnotos' underworld painting. As I shall discuss in Chapter 3, Orpheus also appears to have a competitor internal to the Argonautic tradition.

²⁴ Vergados 2013: 44. The *Hymn to Ares* also displays Orphic features.

²⁵ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 95.

²⁶ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 125.

²⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 388.

²⁸ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 172, 234, 359.

²⁹ Vergados 2007: 36, 39.

³⁰ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 103 and 399.

³¹ Vergados 2007: 36; N. Richardson 2010: 172.

uninterrupted epithets,³² a technique that dominates the composition of the Orphic hymns.³³

The possibility of an Orphic affinity in the case of the latter of these lines in particular is further indicated by the hymnist's usage of *πονεύμενος* as an epithet, participles being so used with characteristic frequency in the Orphic hymns and Nonnos.³⁴

The Cow, the Lyre, and Bovine Symbolism in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*

So the critical accomplishment of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* is one that this text's eponym shares with, if not vies for against Orpheus, and the hymnist articulates himself at certain points by means of characteristically Orphic locution. Therefore it might be reasonable to suspect that some other portion of the hymn's content is also shared with or imported from material pertaining to Orpheus. Surely certain elements of the hymn belong to Hermes and no other. However as I shall now endeavour to demonstrate, the hymn appears to contain a cluster of events compatible with those of the *bougonia*, and in light of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, I suspect that these events owe their presence here at least in part to the hymn's apparent Orphic component.³⁵

³² *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 13-15, 436.

³³ N. Richardson 2010: 155; Vergados 2007: 327.

³⁴ Radermacher 1931: 151; Vergados 2007: 327; N. Richardson 2010: 207.

³⁵ It is in the spirit of this argument that I note Diodorus Siculus 1.96, in which the author claims that when the Greek Hermes is described in his psychopompic capacity as conveying souls, he is doing so in imitation of the Egyptian Hermes raising the soul of the Apis bull, a belief that Orpheus introduced into Greece.

In an episode that has received a lot of scholarly attention for reasons beyond our immediate concern, Hermes, having rustled Apollo's cattle, sacrifices two of them.³⁶ The extent to which the procedures performed by Hermes conform to or defy the realities of Greek cow sacrifice is controversial,³⁷ but for our purposes it is enough to observe that as with Virgil's description of the *bougonia* performed by Aristaeus, the scenario is irrefutably intended to be perceived as sacrificial, whether or not it accurately reflects real practices.

At first glance, I admit that a comparison between Hermes' cow sacrifice and the *bougonia* seems unmotivated. Bees are not born in its wake, nor is another entity that we could consider to be isofunctional in the way that I argued in the previous chapter for Dionysus as a multiform of the bees in the context of his tauriform dismemberment and subsequent rebirth. However according to Apollodorus' version of this narrative, Hermes fashions the strings of the lyre out of tissue taken from the two sacrificed cows;³⁸ similarly in Sophocles' *Ichneutai*, the satyrs surmise that Hermes obtained the hide that he has attached to the tortoise's shell from Apollo's cows.³⁹ Hermes uses cowhide to fashion the soundboard in the hymn as well,⁴⁰ but in this case, the skin does not come from Apollo's herd, which Hermes has yet to encounter. Rather it is simply mentioned in passing, seemingly already prepared, without any explanation as to the source from which it has been acquired.

³⁶ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 115-37.

³⁷ For Hermes' actions as "pseudo-sacrifice" see Kahn 1978: 41-73; for an understanding that the episode involves elements of authentic praxis see J. S. Clay 2004: 117-27; for a recent assessment of the issue see Leduc 2005.

³⁸ Apollodorus 3.10.2.

³⁹ Lloyd-Jones 1996: 314 lines 345ff. The epitome of Eratosthenes' *Catasterisms* 24 indicates that in this author's version too Hermes incorporated material from Apollo's cattle into the construction the lyre, but there is reason to suspect that this is an interpolation. See Robert 1878: 138.

⁴⁰ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 49, 51.

That the hymnist has inverted the traditional order of events, if not already evident from the comparatively curious structure of his narrative, is clarified when we compare the hymn with the Ossetic tradition of the invention of the lyre.⁴¹ The folklore of the Ossetes is rich in elements inherited from the Indo-European mythological repertoire, and it is therefore appropriate to relate it to Greek mythology. The folktale in question relates how Syrdon steals and slaughters the cow of Haemyts; the latter then kills the former's family and creates the lyre, stringing it with the entrails of his enemy's sons.⁴² Although here it is the tissue of slain humans rather than slaughtered bovines that is used in the composition of the lyre, cows are killed in both the latter and in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, and the more coherent version of Hermes' invention of the lyre related by Apollodorus and alluded to by Sophocles indicates that the common ancestor(s) of the Greek and Ossetic bovines under scrutiny was/ were first slaughtered and then utilized in the construction of a stringed instrument.

So the comparative evidence reinforces the impression that the hymnist departs from the conventional configuration of events in situating the invention of the lyre before the cattle raid. In fact this is not the only aspect in which the hymn appears to have parted ways with the conventions of this narrative. Tomas Hägg, for instance, argues that the hymnist innovates in having Hermes kill the tortoise. Although the hymn's authority secured for this detail canonical status in most later renditions of its narrative, according to Lucian,⁴³ Servius,⁴⁴ and the Classical Persian poet 'Unṣurī in his *Vāmiq and 'Adhrā*, an adaptation of the fragmentary anonymous

⁴¹ These narratives are similarly brought to bear on one another by Sergent 2000-2004: 2.384, Sergent 2005: 283.

⁴² Dumézil 1965: 161-3.

⁴³ *Dialogues of the Gods* 7.4.

⁴⁴ Servius on *Georgics* 4.463.

Greek novel *Metiochus and Parthenope*, Hermes finds the tortoise already dead, which Hägg proposes to be the original state of affairs.⁴⁵ Perhaps in having Hermes kill the tortoise the hymnist aims to maintain the violent component of the lyre's origin present in other versions, a component to which he has lost access by inverting the order of events.⁴⁶ Indeed, as Nicholas Richardson observes, the hymnist's descriptions of the method according to which Hermes slaughters the tortoise are remarkably consonant with those according to which he slaughters the cows.⁴⁷

So unlike the *bougonia*, Hermes' sacrifice does not result in the compensatory generation of another living entity; however in the apparently traditional version of the narrative, from which the hymnist departs, the slaughter of Apollo's cattle is an essential precondition to the invention of the lyre. Upon initial inspection, a musical instrument might seem to be an inept multiform of the bees born of the *bougonia*, but in light of the aforementioned poetic symbolism of bees taken together with the likewise aforementioned correlation between music and rebirth in general, and between the lyre and rebirth in particular in the context of Orphic ideology, a fundamental isofunctionality between these two superficially dissimilar items comes into focus.⁴⁸ In fact the use to which Hermes puts the newly invented lyre indicates that it possesses a generative, indeed regenerative dimension. As Émile Benveniste demonstrates, the sense of κραίνω in the description of Hermes' theogony is neither problematic nor abnormal: what we are dealing with,

⁴⁵ Hägg 1989: 70.

⁴⁶ Hägg 1989: 71 similarly imagines that the hymnist had Hermes's cow sacrifice in mind when he apparently decided to have him kill the tortoise.

⁴⁷ N. Richardson 2010: 174.

⁴⁸ Note the gem on which is illustrated a mixed creature with a humanoid head and the body of a bee superimposed over a lyre (Ransome 1937: 103).

to use Benveniste's own expression, is a "[m]étaphore hardie" in which Hermes, by performing a cosmogony, is actually to be conceived of as bringing the gods into being.⁴⁹ So when the hymnist describes Hermes and the content of his song as κραίων ἀθανάτους τε θεούς καὶ Γαῖαν ἐρεμνήν/ ὡς τὰ πρῶτα γέγοντο "bringing into existence the immortal gods and dark Earth, how they first came into being,"⁵⁰ κραίων, although lexically distinct from γέγοντο, is semantically equivalent to and in anticipation of it from a textual perspective, and a recapitulation of it from a chronological stance.

The generative outcome of Hermes' sacrifice might also be encoded in the fact that Apollo, upon experiencing for the first time his passion for the lyre, addresses Hermes using the adjective βουφόνος.⁵¹ It is hardly the case that all instances of this adjective occur in remarkably eventful contexts, but I would point out that βουφόμος was the title of the officiant responsible for performing the ritual of which he is the namesake, the Bouphonia, which constitutes yet another instance of paradoxically creative cow slaughter, and is possibly to be understood as a sort of relative of the *bougonia*, a comparison that I shall develop in Chapter 4 and in the Conclusion. The adjective βουφόμος also functions as an epithet of Dionysus,⁵² in the context of whose mythico-ritual complex we have encountered several instances of paradoxically creative cow slaughter.⁵³ Perhaps Apollo's use of the term here similarly alludes to the productive outcome of

⁴⁹ Benveniste 1969: 2.40; cf. Detienne 1996: 71-2.

⁵⁰ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 427-8.

⁵¹ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 436.

⁵² *Deipnosophistae* 10.84.

⁵³ Compare Lycurgus striking Dionysus' entourage with his goad/ sacrificial axe, Homer's description of which yields a phrasal collocation of θείνω, the one of the verbal relatives of φόμος, with the cow word: θεινόμεναι βουπλήγι (*Iliad* 6.135).

Hermes' cow sacrifice. Therefore while I agree with Athanassios Vergados' assertion that the hymnist is not alluding to the Bouphonia,⁵⁴ the seemingly semantically marked significance of βουφόνοϛ that could be said to be latent in both the title of the Bouphonia's sacerdotal agent and Dionysus' epithet could be independently at work in the hymn as well.

That the connection between Hermes' cow sacrifice and the invention of the lyre is more than incidental is indicated by the aforementioned fact that Greek ideology appears to have inherited from Indo-European a tradition in which poetry has its origins in the paradoxically productive killing of an entity,⁵⁵ a reflex of which we have recently seen in the violent origins of the Ossetic lyre. In fact Orpheus himself could be conceived of as an example of this ideology: although a powerful poet to begin with, the potency of his utterances is enhanced following, and therefore as a consequence of his dismemberment.⁵⁶ Comparable situations elsewhere in Indo-European indicate the hereditary status of this ideology. So the Vedas and their poetic metres are generated from the dismemberment of the primaeval entity Puruṣa,⁵⁷ the mead from which Norse poets derive their inspiration is made from a mixture of the blood of the slain sage Kvasir and honey,⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Vergados 2007: 327; 2013: 514.

⁵⁵ Burkert 1984: 841, although without reference to the Indo-European comparanda, perceptively identifies the sequence of Hermes' cow sacrifice and invention of the lyre as reflecting an ideology of the violent origins of song. Habinek 1990: 216 mentions Burkert's perspective on Hermes' sacrifice in the context of his own essay on Virgil's *bougonia*, but his application of the former to the latter does not anticipate any of the particulars of my synthesis of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and Virgil's *Orpheus-bougonia* complex.

⁵⁶ See Calame 2010: 15, who sees a relationship between Orpheus' limbs (*melē*) and segments of poetry (*melos*), and Friert 1991: 35, who argues that Orpheus' dismemberment could be conceived of as a metaphor for the composition of poetry. Compare the Graeco-Roman tradition of describing poetic composition in terms of animal sacrifice, on which see Svenbro 1984, Habinek 2005: 221-33, and West 2007: 367. Friert 1991: 47 brings Hermes and Orpheus together in his discussion of this tradition.

⁵⁷ *Rg Veda* 10.90.9.

⁵⁸ Faulkes 1998: 62.

and Irish poets acquire their talent by drinking from the river Boyne, which comes into being as a result of the dismemberment of its eponym, the goddess Bóand.⁵⁹

In addition to this ideology of the violent origins of poetry, Hermes' invention of the lyre also intersects with the Indo-European semiotic association between cows and poetry, an association residually exhibited by our Ossetic narrative, the connection between cow and lyre having become somewhat dissolved in this instance. This relationship between cow and poetry exists not only within the notional domain, but also within the socioeconomic sphere. The conventional form of currency with which a Vedic patron reimbursed a poet for his compositions consisted of one or more cows, called the *dákṣiṇā* cow.⁶⁰ Medieval Irish poets were likewise conventionally rewarded by means of bovine currency,⁶¹ and the Greeks also maintain this transaction in the bull awarded to victors of dithyrambic competitions.⁶² In light of our topic, it seems worth noting that Nonnos portrays Oeagrus, the father of Orpheus as a dithyrambic victor and recipient of the attendant bull.⁶³

Οιάγρου δὲ κάρηνον ἄναξ ἐστέψατο κισσῶ,
καὶ γενήτης Ὀρφῆος ἐπιρρήσων χθόνα ταρσῶ
ἄσμενος ἄζυγα ταῦρον ἐδέξατο μισθὸν ἀοιδῆς

The lord (Dionysus) wreathed Oeagrus' head with ivy, and Orpheus' sire, stamping on the ground with the sole of his foot, gladly received the unyoked bull as a reward for his poetry.

⁵⁹ Thurneysen 1927: 268; Breatnach 1981: 86; P. Henry 1979-80: 117; Ó hÓgain 1991: 49.

⁶⁰ For more on the *dákṣiṇā* cow see Oguibénine 1998: 124-134.

⁶¹ Meyer 1917: 21-23. I suspect there is a pun in this poem's reference to the words (*ferba*) of poets just before the catalogue of different kinds of cows that are to be awarded for different kinds of poems: *ferb* can mean both 'word' and 'cow.' On these homonyms see Carey 1999. Eventually the cow falls out of favour, and horses become expected. See Stokes and Windisch 1880-1909: 3.67.

⁶² For more on the dithyrambic bull see Ceccarelli and Milanezi 2007: 204-7; Burkert 2001; Jaillard 2007: 226-7.

⁶³ *Dionysiaca* 19.112-14.

In addition to this financial situation, more abstract, sometimes rather esoteric connections between cows and poetry are articulated in various literary traditions owing something to Indo-European heritage.⁶⁴ So the Vedic poet states:⁶⁵

*yá usrāṅām apīciyā
véda nāmāni gúhiyā
sá kavīḥ kāvīyā purú
rūpām dyaúr iva puṣyati*

The poet who knows the secret, hidden names of the dawn cows causes his poetry to flourish, as the sky its beauty.⁶⁶

An Irish example is the aforementioned goddess Bóand, whose name begins with the Irish reflex of the basic Indo-European cow word, and the entirety of whose name reflects an inherited theonym.⁶⁷ As noted above, the narrative of her demise,⁶⁸ which is chock full of archaic elements,⁶⁹ relates how Bóand's death results in the genesis of the Boyne, the waters of which bestow poetic abilities on those who drink them.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ A contributing factor in this association might be the fact that cows demonstrably enjoy music; in fact, for dairy cows to hear music increases their productivity. See the study cited by Krueger 2013: 183.

⁶⁵ *Rig Veda* 8.41.5b-e.

⁶⁶ For more on the poetic symbolism of the cow in Vedic semiotics see Renou 1955-69: 1.9-10 and Carri 2000: 19, 32. On the cognate bovine symbolism of the *Avesta*, see Schwartz 2003. For a study devoted to Vedic bovine symbolism, poetic and otherwise, see Srinivasan 1979.

⁶⁷ Campanile 1985. There are also related concatenations of sentential scope, such as Avestan *gəm vīdāt*, which Schwartz 2006: 459 notes is of Indo-Iranian provenience.

⁶⁸ Gwynn 1905-35: 3.30-1; Stokes 1894: 315-16; Stokes 1892: 500.

⁶⁹ Dumézil 1968-73: 3.21-89; Ford 1974b; Puhvel 1987: 277-83; Olmsted 1994: 234.

⁷⁰ Bóand's poetic aspect is also manifested in her sons Goltrade, Gentrade, and Súantrade, the three great harpists of Ireland. See Meid 2009. Furthermore, the Mórrígan, a goddess closely related to Bóand (Olmsted 1994: 203-6), claims that a cow she drives is payment for a poetic composition (Corthals 1987), and one of the various Eithnes of medieval Irish literature (another of whom is none other than Bóand by another name, on which identification see Carey 1995), is a main character in *Esnada Tige Buchet*, the narrative of which involves both cows and song (Stokes 1904), and the name of the protagonist of which is, like *Bóand*, descended from the repertoire of Indo-European bovine formulaic language (McCone 1991).

As for Greek, perhaps the hereditary connection between cow and poetry informs the setting and name of the bucolic, a genre which in fact features cows that themselves produce a kind of poetry, vociferously lamenting the death of their herder.⁷¹ We might also consider Callimachus' riddling description of his verses as ploughing oxen.⁷² The Muses, moreover, possess cattle, which are tended by none other than Aristaeus,⁷³ and in addition to possessing their own cows, they also receive this animal as a sacrificial victim. That the victim in this case is not generic but rather linked to the nature of the divinities to whom it is being offered is indicated by Cicero's (scornful) report that the recipient of the oxen that Pythagoras used to sacrifice after having made geometrical discoveries was the Muses.⁷⁴ In this case the cow is an emblem of intellectual rather than poetic inspiration.⁷⁵ In fact it is the Muses whom Virgil invokes to tell of Aristaeus' discovery of the *bougonia*.⁷⁶ Graeco-Roman poets admittedly call upon the Muses to narrate the content of poetry about more or less any topic, but as Michael Putnam points out, this is the only occasion in the entirety of the *Georgics* on which the Muses are so addressed,⁷⁷ so that it might be legitimate to perceive a special connection in this instance between the Muses and the subject matter that they have been asked to relate.

⁷¹ Moschus, *Epitaphios Bionis* 23-24; compare the lamentation of the oxherd Hymnos in Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 15.

⁷² Bing 1984a links this riddle more immediately to the established image of poetic ploughing, but perhaps the latter in turn owes something to the Indo-European semiotic association of cow with poetry.

⁷³ Apollonius 2.513. Apollonius uses the word *mēla*, which is usually opposed to bovines, but Heraclides Lembus (Dilts 1971: 24) and Nonnos (*Dionysiaca* 5.224) mention cows among the animals that Aristaeus herds.

⁷⁴ *De Natura Deorum* 3.88. The animal sacrifices that Comatas dedicates to the Muses seem to result in his acquisition of poetic abilities (Hunter 1999: 177).

⁷⁵ With a shift from poetic to musical, Lucian's Perliaus tells Phalaris that the flutes attached to nose of the bronze bull will transform the shrieks of its victims into music (*Phalaris* 1.11).

⁷⁶ *Georgics* 4.315.

⁷⁷ Putnam 1979: 276.

In a number of other instances, the poetic significance of the cow surfaces by means of combination with the lyre, a collocation that we have already encountered in the Ossetic folktale of Haemyts and Syrdon.⁷⁸ Cow and lyre alternate between the two Theban foundation myths, Cadmus being led to the site of the prospective city by a cow, and Amphion constructing its walls by means of the music of his lyre.⁷⁹ Furthermore, there is also a combination of cow and lyre internal to the second of these narratives to the extent that Zethos tends to cattle while Amphion plays his lyre.⁸⁰

Elsewhere we encounter cowherds who play the lyre, examples being Kerambos,⁸¹ and various Trojan princes including Tithonos, Anchises, and Paris.⁸² There is also a Pythagorean—and therefore at least peri-Orphic—combination of lyre and bovine: Porphyry tells us that the Pythagoras ἐκάλει... τὴν δὲ Πλειάδα Μουσῶν λύραν “refers to the Pleiades as the lyre of the

⁷⁸ As well as in the harpists Goltrade, Gentrade, and Súantrade, sons of the cow goddess Bóand. For another Irish combination of stringed instrument and cow, consider the narrative of the Fomoiré’s theft of both cattle of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Dagda’s harp, which Sergent 2000-4: 2.374-85 compares to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. On the tripartite effect of the music of both Hermes’s lyre and the Dagda’s harp, see Sergent 2000-04: 2.172ff. and 2005: 282.

⁷⁹ Statius brings together this foundational bovine and Amphion’s lyre, portraying Amphion as holding the latter and wearing a helmet decorated with an image of the former, here a bull (*Thebaid* 7.279). It is interesting to note that Statius appears to incorporate Orphic ritual and myth into the *Thebaid*; see Chinn 2013. Perhaps Statius has Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex in mind when he brings this bovine to bear on Amphion, a sort of Orpheus analogue.

⁸⁰ Apollodorus 3.5.5. In fact a combination of cow and lyre also surrounds Cadmus, since he too is associated with this instrument. See Power 2010: 352 and Book 1 of Nonnos’ *Dionysiaca*. Compare the alternation of Apollo tending to Laomedon’s cattle (*Iliad* 21.448-9) and building the walls of Troy with his lyre (Ovid, *Heroides* 16.180).

⁸¹ Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 22. Svenbro 1999 puts this myth into contact with the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. Similarly Apollo plays the lyre while tending to Admetus’ cattle (Tibullus 2.3, Euripides, *Alcestis* 583). The narrative of Apollo herding the cattle of Admetus and that of the Homeric hymn intersect in Antoninus Liberalis’ report that the cattle of Apollo that Hermes was intending to steal were grazing together with those of Admetus (*Metamorphoses* 23). See also Vergados 2013: 107 fn. 62.

⁸² Maas and Snyder 1989: 84; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 15; *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 79-80; Theocritus, *Idylls* 27.1. Virgil shows an appreciation of the importance of Anchises’ bovine aspect when he gives him a servant named Butes (*Aeneid* 9.647).

Muses.’⁸³ The Pleiades are part of none other than the constellation Taurus. So here we have a stellar lyre within the somatic boundaries of an astral bull, and all due to the innovative astronomical terminology of a figure the ideology of whose teachings is similar to and perhaps sometimes to be identified with that attached to the name of Orpheus. How appropriate, therefore, that in Callistratus’ description of a statue group of Orpheus charming various animals, it is the bull in particular that listens to the music of the poet’s lyre.⁸⁴

Also of interest to us is the fact that the poetic cows of the *R̥g Veda* are often specifically lactiferous. The following Vedic verses, for example, place the name of the goddess Vāc ‘Speech,’ whose attention is repeatedly sought by the Vedic poets, in apposition to the noun *dhenu* ‘milch cow:’⁸⁵

devīṃ vācam ajanayanta devās
tāṃ viśvárūpāḥ paśāvo vadanti...
dhenúr vāg asmān úpa súṣṭutaitu

The gods gave birth to the goddess Vāc. All kinds of animals praise her. Vāc, milch cow, enter us!

In light of the fact that Vāc is identified as a milk cow, it seems to me to be significant that more than one author draws attention to the lactating breast of Vāc’s Greek functional and partial

⁸³ *Life of Pythagoras* 41. The author of the Pseudo-Lucianic *Astrology* interprets the animals surrounding Orpheus as the constellations of the zodiac, with the bull representing Taurus (*Astrology* 10). Presumably Pythagoras’ Pleiades as Lyre has something to do with the later association of Taurus with poetry and musicality, on which see Berk 2004: 336. The presence of the lyre in depictions of Theseus and the Minotaur (Maas and Snyder 1989: 38, 85) might also be relevant.

⁸⁴ *Ekphraseis* 7.

⁸⁵ *Rig Veda* 8.100.11a-b, c.

etymological equivalent, Orpheus' mother the Muse Kalliope, the second half of whose name is a linguistic match for Vāc.⁸⁶ So Nonnos describes an infant Orpheus as follows:⁸⁷

Ὀρφέα καλλείγας ἐπὶ γούνασι Καλλιοπέης
νήπιον ἀρτιχύτῳ μεμελήμενον εἰσέτι μαζῶ

He (Oeagrus) left Orpheus on Kalliope's knees, an infant still keen on her freshly lactating breast.⁸⁸

Nonnos is rather fond of breasts,⁸⁹ and seems to know his mammary lore, so that we should pay heed when he mentions this part of the body. That Kalliope's milk is to be conceived of as more than a mere source of nourishment, but rather a source of poetic inspiration is indicated by an anonymous epigram:⁹⁰

Καλλιόπη μὲν ἐγὼ Κύρω δ' ἐμὸν ὄπασα μαζόν,
ὃς τρέφε θεῖον Ὅμηρον, ὄθεν πίε νήδυμος Ὀρφεύς

I am Kalliope, and I granted Cyrus my breast, which nourished divine Homer, and from which sweet Orpheus drank.

Finally we may combine these literary references to Kalliope's breast milk with Pausanias' report that on Mount Libethrius—recall the ultimate importance of Libethra for Orpheus' mythical biography—there are images of the local Muses and nymphs as well as springs shaped like breasts, from which water issues like milk:⁹¹

ἀγάλματα δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ Μουσῶν τε καὶ νυμφῶν ἐπὶ κλησὶν ἐστὶ Λιβηθρίων· καὶ πηγαὶ... γυναικὸς μαστοῖς εἰσὶν εἰκασμένοι, καὶ ὅμοιον γάλακτι ὕδωρ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἄνεισιν.

⁸⁶ Watkins 1997: 246-7.

⁸⁷ *Dionysiaca* 13.430-31.

⁸⁸ I am at a loss as to how to capture in English the phonetic echo of Nonnos' καλλείγας... Καλλιοπέης.

⁸⁹ Newbold 2000.

⁹⁰ *Greek Anthology* 16.217.

⁹¹ Pausanias 9.34.4.

On it [Mount Libethrius] there are representations of the Muses and nymphs called Libethrian. And there are springs...resembling a woman's breasts, and water like milk emanates from them.

So although synchronically there is nothing explicitly bovine about Kalliope, my understanding is that the recurring attention paid to her breast milk represents the diachronic development of a hereditary tradition in which the goddess of speech was portrayed as a lactiferous cow.⁹²

Furthermore, as we are about to see, in one instance the Muses are connected with a cow in a context of poetic inspiration.

The legitimacy of applying this Indo-European perspective to the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* is corroborated by the fact that the frame narrative of the hymn appears to have as its model the Indo-European cattle raiding narrative.⁹³ This is true not only on a structural level but also, as Sarah Iles Johnston argues, ideologically: the synchronic initiatory significance that she assigns to the hymn reflects to a certain extent an inheritance of the partially overlapping initiatory value of the cattle raid already at the Indo-European level.⁹⁴

The fate of those of Apollo's cows which Hermes does not sacrifice provides further indication of these animals' poetic essence. Recall that one Indic manifestation of the Indo-European semiotic connection between cows and poetry is the *dākṣiṇā*, the gift, traditionally consisting of

⁹² For an Irish poet said to have obtained his skills from drinking the beestings of a cow see T. O'Rahilly 1946: 331-2 fn. 4; Ó hÓgain 1991: 335 and 2004.

⁹³ For the etymology of Hermes' name as semantically equivalent to that of the demon who withholds the cows in the Indic reflex of the Indo-European cattle raiding myth see Janda 2005: 23-45.

⁹⁴ S. I. Johnston 2002: 112-15. For more on the hereditary component of the Homeric Hymns see Sowa 1984. On Indo-European elements in the Homeric epics see Katz 2005.

one or more, usually many cows, with which the Vedic patron remunerated his poet, a transaction which I have suggested has a straightforward Greek correlate in the bull awarded to dithyrambic victors. In an insightful essay, Paul-Louis van Berg connects the cows of Apollo, which the latter gives to Hermes in exchange for the lyre and tutelage in its use, with the *dākṣiṇā* cow.⁹⁵ In fact it seems to me that the bull with which Hermes, playing the lyre and singing, is depicted on a black-figure amphora is of the dithyrambic variety, since next to it is a goat, the animal that was a lower-ranking prize in the context of dithyrambic competitions.⁹⁶

As an expansion of van Berg's analysis, however, I would add that to my way of thinking the comparison, while apt, is complicated by the fact that unlike the case of the dithyrambic bull, the transaction in the hymn is not a simple equivalent of what goes on with the *dākṣiṇā* cow, but more like a directionally inverted variant thereof. Rather than envisioning Hermes as poet receiving the cows from Apollo as patron, we would do better to see the aspiring poet offering the cows to his prospective instructor.

That the latter is a more accurate interpretation is demonstrated by a moment in Archilochus' biographical tradition. In the narrative of the Mnesiepes Inscription, a text written on stone blocks and that were erected in the Parian Archilocheion, a pre-poetic Archilochus encounters a group of three women on the road on his way to sell a cow. After some amount of interaction characterized by the penchant for invective that is to recur in Archilochus' future verse, the

⁹⁵ Van Berg 2001: 200; Dunkel 1979: 256 already connected the role of cattle in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* with the *dākṣiṇā* cow in a passing remark. P. Jackson involved the hymn's cows in a similar analytical complex at a conference on Indo-European elements in Graeco-Roman poetry held at Yale in April of 2009.

⁹⁶ See Maas and Snyder 1989: 84, 103 for discussion and a photograph of this amphora.

women ask him if the cow is for sale, to which question he responds affirmatively. Suddenly both the women and the cow are gone, a lyre is at Archilochus' feet, and the newly endowed poet realizes that the women were the Muses and the lyre their gift:⁹⁷

ἐπερωτῆσαι, εἰ πωλήσων ἄγει τῆμ βοῦν· φήσαντος δέ, εἰπεῖν ὅτι αὐταὶ δώσουσιν αὐτῷ τιμὴν ἄξιαν· ῥηθέντων δὲ τούτων αὐτὰς μὲν οὐδὲ τῆμ βοῦν οὐκέτι φανεράς εἶναι, πρὸ τῶν ποδῶν δὲ λύραν ὀρᾶν αὐτόν· καταπλαγέντα δὲ καὶ μετὰ τινα χρόνον ἔννου γενόμενον ὑπολαβεῖν τὰς Μούσας εἶναι τὰς φανείσας.

They asked if he were taking the cow to be sold. He replied that he was, and they said that they would give him a worthy price for it. After having said these things the women and the cow were no longer to be seen, but he saw a lyre before his feet. Although he was shocked, once he had come back to his senses he realized that the women who had appeared [to him] were the Muses.

As in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the currency with which the lyre is purchased, if unwittingly in this case, is bovine, a correspondence already observed by Nicholas Kontoleon in his *editio princeps* of the Mnesiepes Inscription.⁹⁸ Indeed as William Thalmann points out, the parallelism exists even on the verbal level: the Muses offer to buy Archilochus' cow for a τιμὴν ἄξιαν “worthy price;”⁹⁹ Apollo tells Hermes: πεντήκοντα βοῶν ἀντάξια ταῦτα μέμηδας “these things you have conceived (i.e. the lyre and the performance of the cosmogony during which Hermes plays it) are equal in **worth** to the fifty cows!”¹⁰⁰

In light of the similarity of the scenarios in which Apollo acquires his lyre from Hermes and Archilochus his from the Muses, it might be worth noting that a dedicatory block found on Paros

⁹⁷ D. Clay 2004: 106 lines 32-37. G. Nagy 1990c: 431 suggests that the Mnesiepes Inscription's bovine ingredient in Archilochus' subsequent poetic success possesses an onomastic correlate in the name of the poet's grandmother, Kleoboia.

⁹⁸ Kontoleon 1952: 64-8. See also Jaillard 2007: 216-17 and Vergados 2011: 88-90.

⁹⁹ D. Clay 2004: 106 line 33.

¹⁰⁰ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 437; Thalmann 1984: 155.

in Tris Ekklesies, which is very near the Archilocheion and is itself the location at which an epitaph identifying the grave of Archilochus was discovered, is illustrated with a cow and reads EPMEI AMAΞEITEI EYXHN “a votary offering to Hermes of the wagon.”¹⁰¹ Thus the bovine component of both Archilochus and Hermes’ mythico-religious complexes seemingly received prominent attention on Paros, so that we can imagine the two interacting with one another.

So the exchange of cow(s) for lyre and attendant poetic skill that figures in both the hymn and the Mnesiepes Inscription appears to constitute a Hellenic renovation of the inherited semiotic relationship between cows and poetry. As to what might have encouraged this association to gravitate toward the lyre in particular beyond the simple fact that at least in the literary realm cowhide appears to be a consistent option, if not the standard material for constructing the soundboard,¹⁰² and that the arms are repeatedly said to be made of horn,¹⁰³ I offer for consideration the bull-lyres of ancient Mesopotamia, so called because these instruments are actually sculpted into the shape of bovines (in fact the full range of bulls, cows, and calves is represented).¹⁰⁴ Given that the Greeks received the technology of the lyre from the Near East,¹⁰⁵ it seems reasonable to understand the equivalency of cow and lyre in the *Homeric Hymn to*

¹⁰¹ D. Clay 2004: 167 fn. 96.

¹⁰² As Roberts 1981: 309 notes, the extant realia cannot confirm whether or not this was also true of actual lyres.

¹⁰³ Barker 1998: 79. Rituals that involved both bovines and the playing of the lyre, which occur as early as the funerary activity represented on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus, might also be involved.

¹⁰⁴ For discussion of bull-lyres and photographs of the remains, restored to a semblance of their erstwhile magnificence, see Norborg 1995: 11-30 and Schauensee 2002: 50-77; 87-103.

¹⁰⁵ A provenience of which the Greeks were well aware. See Power 2010: 387-9.

Hermes and Mnesiepes Inscription as having been influenced by the zoomorphism that this instrument frequently possessed in the very cultural milieu from which the Greeks adopted it.¹⁰⁶

The likelihood that the Greeks were familiar with these morphologically bovine lyres in particular is indicated by the fact that one of them is decorated with a plaque depicting animals playing musical instruments, including an equid, probably a donkey, which is stationed at a lyre.¹⁰⁷ As Helen Adolf has argued, the various connections between donkeys and lyres in Greek tradition and the lyrical asinine member of the bull-lyre's decorative plaque are presumably to be traced to the same source.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the connection between cow and lyre is not the only aspect of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* that appears to owe something to Near Eastern traditions: Jennifer Larson proposes that select details of Hermes' cow sacrifice have been formulated with an eye to a similar sacrificial scenario in the Sumerian epic *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*.¹⁰⁹

The reciprocity between cow and lyre that figures in both the hymn and in the Mnesiepes Inscription therefore appears to constitute a synergistic fusion of Indo-European inheritance and Near Eastern importation. More simply rooted in Indo-European heritage is the semiotic value of the hoof-prints of Apollo's cattle in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, hoof-prints that Hermes, by driving the cows backwards, has given an orientation that is the reverse of what one would

¹⁰⁶ There are also ideological correspondences between Greek and Near Eastern narratives concerning the lyre. See Silver 1992: 281-6 and Franklin 2006. For a pathfinding study of Near Eastern influences on ancient Greek culture and ideology, see Burkert 1992.

¹⁰⁷ See Schauensee 2002: 58 for a photograph.

¹⁰⁸ Adolf 1950: *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ Larson 2005.

expect, in the hope of thwarting Apollo's pursuit. It is only after Apollo has managed to decipher these riddling tracks that he is able to find Hermes and the cows, and thereby exchange the latter for the lyre and instruction in its use. The track of the cow, often characterized as hidden, if not confused, is likewise an esoteric formulaic expression for the Vedic poet's trajectory toward inspiration, and in the Vedic cattle-raiding narrative ultimately cognate with that on which the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* is founded, the poets achieve an inspired state by locating and liberating stolen cows.¹¹⁰

*triḥ sapta nāma āghniyā bibharti
vidvān padāsya gūhiyā nā vocad
yugāya vipra úparāya śikṣan*

The cow bears thrice seven names. The one who knows her track should tell them as secrets, in order to serve as a poet for the future generation.

As van Berg convincingly argues, the cryptic course of Apollo's cows represents the Greek reflex of the same semiotic tradition from which the significance of the Vedic concept of the track of the cow derives.¹¹¹ In light of the other enigmas and omens that occur in the hymn, van Berg's riddling interpretation of the cows' hoof-prints seems perfectly at home.¹¹²

One more aspect indicates that the cattle of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* are legitimately and profitably interpreted through the lens of the Indo-European symbolic link between cows and

¹¹⁰ *R̥g Veda* 7.87.4b-d.

¹¹¹ Van Berg 2001: 197, 200. Perhaps Epimenides' hoof is at least in part a reflex of the hereditary notion of the inspirational track of the cow. Burkert 1972: 147, 1987: 31 suggests a Mesopotamian origin, but Richard Martin 1993: 122 rather connects Epimenides with various Indic sages, including Vasiṣṭha, who owns the wonder-cow. Compare Thalmann 1984: 231 fn. 43. duBois 2010: 65-7 supports Martin's presentation. Note that Epimenides' bovine aspect also surfaces in his conflation with Bouzyges. See Bremmer 2002: 149.

¹¹² For the transformation of tortoise into lyre as enigmatic see Borthwick. For Hermes' fart as portentous, see Pelliccia 1995: 73 and Katz 1999: 316 fn. 3.

poetry: as several studies have argued, Apollo’s cattle are cognate with those of Helios.¹¹³

The solar cattle of Greek mythology have matutinal matches in the Indic dawn cows,¹¹⁴ cows

that are prominent in the Vedic hymns, and that that the Vedic poets frequently associate with

poetic inspiration.¹¹⁵ Sometimes cows are present together with the Indic dawn goddess Uṣas,¹¹⁶

who is an agent of poetic inspiration;¹¹⁷ on other occasions, the cows themselves are *usríya-*

‘auroral’ or, by metonymy, simply designated by the word for dawn: *usrā́-* ‘dawn [cow].’ To

repeat a Vedic passage quoted above:

yá usrā́ṇām apīciyā
véda nāmāni gúhiyā
sá kavīḥ kāvīyā purú
rūpām dyaúr iva puṣyati

¹¹³ See Shelmerdine 1984, N. Richardson 2010: *passim*, especially 165, 177, and Janda 2005: 203. Vergados 2007: 50 fn. 121, 178; 2013: 106 fn 62 is perhaps correct in disputing some of the particulars used to support this perspective, but wrong to my mind in rejecting it altogether. Compare Bekker 1814-21: 2.752. Note that since Tithonus’ connection with Eos renders his cattle—presumably those of his father Laomedon—peri-auroral, and since Apollo also herded Laomedon’s cattle, Apollo’s own cows could by extension also be conceived of as peri-auroral. Furthermore, Hermes’ connection with Aloeus’ second wife Eriboia (*Iliad* 5) also connects the god with dawn cows: Ἐπίβοια / Ἡερίβοια is *mutatis mudandis* the unverbated equivalent of the phrase *usríyāḥ...gávo* “dawn cows” and its variants, which are of formulaic status in the *R̥g Veda* (Janda 2000: 214-15). Another Eriboia intersects with a solar bovine: the Athenian maiden who is sent as one of the prospective victims of the Minotaur, the semi-taurine son of Helios’ daughter Pasiphae. Yet another Eriboia is the mother of Telamonian Ajax, who is variously associated with both bovines and the dawn (e.g. West 2003: 116; Sophocles, *Ajax* 172). Note that in Ajax’s parentage, we have yet another combination of **tel-* and βούς.

¹¹⁴ Many studies address the hereditary status of the solar cattle of Greek mythology. See for example Boedeker 1974: 59-61; Campanile 1990: 130-8; Frame 1978: 44-7, 56; Janda 2000: 214-15; Sick 1996 and 2004: *passim*, especially 437-44; Watkins 2009; M. West 2007: 218, 223-4. For Irish comparanda, see Jouet 2007 and Campanile 1996. On the milk of the dawn cows as an ancestral detail, see Watkins 2009 (whose linguistic analysis is doubted by Lindeman 1990) and Tsagalis 2008: 153-87. Both celestial bovines and lactiferous celestial bovines in particular transcend Indo-European. See Rochberg 2010 and Whittaker 2009. Orpheus is connected with a sort of solar bovine when he sacrifices a calf to Helios in the *Orphic Lithica*. He is also connected with lunar bovines (Bernabé 2004-7: 2.304), and the combination in the Orphic *lamellae* of the initiate’s new name Astral on the one hand and notional taurine transformation on the other is surely to be connected to other onomastically astral figures with bovine affinities. For more on the latter see Gershenson 1978.

¹¹⁵ Watkins 1995: 72. Aelian identifies the cattle tended to by Daphnis as the sisters of those of Helios (*Varia Historia* 10.18). For Helios as a source of inspiration, compare the role of the Heliades in Parmenides’ journey toward the goddess from whom he is to learn all things.

¹¹⁶ Citations of a number of relevant passages are conveniently assembled by Macdonell 1897.

¹¹⁷ Oguibénine 1988.

The poet who knows the secret, hidden names¹¹⁸ of the **dawn cows** causes his poetry to flourish, as the sky its beauty.

Eos, Uṣas' Greek etymological equivalent and most obvious functional equivalent,¹¹⁹ is put into direct contact with cows to the extent that her dawning is mentioned in connection with the yoking of oxen.¹²⁰ She is also the lover of the cowherd Tithonos, who is, moreover, a poetic cowherd, being consistently depicted with a lyre.¹²¹ In addition, the mythology of the Indo-European dawn goddess has in some respects been more amply inherited by other goddesses than it has by Eos. One such goddess is Aphrodite,¹²² whose connection with auroral-poetic cows surfaces in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, in which the goddess approaches Anchises while he is playing his lyre in the cattle stall on Ida, an event that the hymn juxtaposes with Eos' seduction of Tithonos.¹²³

The Muses, whom we have already seen to be associated with inspirational cows, have also inherited aspects of the mythological dossier of the Indo-European dawn goddess.¹²⁴ In light of the topic of this dissertation, it is worth noting that the Muses' auroral heritage surfaces most

¹¹⁸ The name of cow(s), like the track of the cow, is another Vedic coded expression for poetic inspiration. See Watkins 1995: 72. For a Greek comparandum see van Berg 2005. Note also the importance of the name of the cow in *Meddygon Myddvai* (Pughe 1861: xxvii).

¹¹⁹ See P. Jackson 2005 for a recent treatment of this comparison.

¹²⁰ Hesiod, *Works and Days* 581; Callimachus, *Aetia* (Harder 2012: 1.).

¹²¹ See Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 15. Kephalos is also depicted with a lyre (Maas and Snyder 1989: 84). Compare the affair of the cowherd Endymion and the emphatically bovine, sometimes boomorphic goddess Selene, who is after a fashion Eos' complement.

¹²² G. Nagy 1990b: 223-62; Boedeker 1974.

¹²³ Compare Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 15.

¹²⁴ Recently discussed by Jackson 2006a. The verbal root **men-*, from which the name of the Muses derives, occurs in contexts of bovine poetic inspiration in Vedic as well, e.g. *manvata prathamāṃ nāma dhenóḥ* "[the Uśijes] remember the supreme name of the milch cow" (*Ṛg Veda* 4.1.16). Similarly the religious enthusiasm of the Maenads, whose name is also from **men-*, induces them to dissect various animals, including cows.

often in Orphic contexts. So the Orphic hymn to the Muses and that to the Muses' mother Mnemosyne are in sequential contiguity with the Orphic hymn to Eos,¹²⁵ and Pythagoras claims that while he was being initiated into the Orphic mysteries, he learnt that Kalliope instructed Orpheus on Mount Pangaion, which is also where Orpheus used to go to welcome Helios at dawn.¹²⁶ In fact Orphic tradition as a whole seems to have been especially interested in ancestral auroral mythology: in one of the fundamental narratives of Uṣas' mythological biography, she is sexually assaulted by her father, Dyauṣ, a Hellenic comparandum to which myth surfaces only in the Orphic tradition of the rape of Persephone, who variously exhibits features of the Indo-European dawn goddess,¹²⁷ by Zeus,¹²⁸ Dyauṣ' Greek etymological and functional equivalent.¹²⁹

Given that poetic cows are frequently specifically dawn cows in Indic tradition, it is surely no mistake that Apollo's are apparently solar. For what it is worth, if we follow Martin West in interpreting the Mnesiepes Inscription's expression πρώιτερον τῆς νυκτός, σελήνης λαμπούσης as referring to very early morning, just prior to sunrise, it turns out that Archilochus' similarly poetic cow is peri-auroral.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Orpheus' Mnemosyne, moreover, is exhorted to rouse (ἐπέγειρε) the memory of initiates (Athanasakis 1977: 101), which puts her into etymological and thematic contact with the Indo-European dawn goddess, who is a formular agent of the verbal root **h₁ger-* (Jackson 2006a). Ricciardelli 2009: 331 misses the point when she says that we would rather have expected the hymn to Eos to appear in contiguity with those to Helios and Selene rather than those to the Muses and Mnemosyne. For another explanation as to the situation of the Orphic hymn to Eos, see Athanasakis and Wolkow 2013: 208.

¹²⁶ Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 146; Sommerstein 2008: 3.17.

¹²⁷ Pinchard 2009: 474ff.

¹²⁸ Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians* 20; Bernabé 2004-7: 1.96.

¹²⁹ Jackson 2006b: 91.

¹³⁰ West 1964; see also D. Clay 2004: 106 line 26.

Mantic Maidens and the Birth of Orion: Hermes Betwixt Bees and Bovines

So much for the cows of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. But what about bees? Earlier on I suggested that we conceive of the lyre, constructed in part from the tissue of the cows sacrificed by Hermes, as isofunctional with the bees born of the *bougonia*. However, a group of apian entities also has a role to play in the hymn, and more to the point, the function of this group is closely affiliated with that of the cows. At the narrative's resolution, when Apollo gives Hermes his cattle in exchange for the lyre, the former also gives the latter a triad of prophetic maidens whom the scholarly literature tends to refer to as the Bee Maidens,¹³¹ on account of the fact that they appear to be morphologically and behaviourally quasi-apian: they are winged and can fly, the barley that dusts their heads is arguably to be interpreted as pollen,¹³² and the verb *δονέω*, which describes their activity, is elsewhere used to indicate the buzzing of bees.¹³³ Furthermore, the Bee Maidens gain access to their mantic powers only after having consumed honey.¹³⁴

Admittedly the Bee Maidens, although handed over to Hermes in combination with the cows, still cannot be said to form an indivisible apian-bovine unit in the same way that these animals are dependent on one another within the context of the *bougonia*. However, remember that we have encountered other loosely associated clusters of bovines and bees in contexts of paradoxically creative destruction. Furthermore, I would argue that to stress the pairing of the

¹³¹ For two studies devoted to these figures see Scheinberg 1979 and Larson 1995.

¹³² N. Richardson 2010: 220 cites some of the studies that voice this opinion.

¹³³ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 563; N. Richardson 2010: 222.

¹³⁴ Habinek 1990: 223 fn. 38 mentions the Bee Maidens in his study of Virgil's *bougonia*, but he does not articulate that they, like the bees of the *bougonia*, are affiliated with bovines.

Bee Maidens with the cows is shown to be a sound tactic when we note that even if they are not codependent, they are correlative, not only because they are both components of the same transaction, but because the domains to which they pertain, poetry in the case of the cows and prophecy in the case of the Bee Maidens, formed at an early stage of Greek intellectual history a conceptual amalgam.¹³⁵

In fact as Gregory Nagy demonstrates, the concluding events of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* constitute a narrative exploration of the distraction of poetry and prophecy's erstwhile synthetic relationship.¹³⁶ The connection between the cows and the Bee Maidens is therefore profound and organic, and so the two groups deserve to be considered as an apian-bovine composite homologous with the *bougonia*.¹³⁷

Further evidence that the cows and Bee maidens of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* should be recognized as constituting a unit comes from Hermes' involvement in the birth of Orion. In this narrative the Boeotian Hyrieus, who is without offspring, hosts Zeus, Poseidon and Hermes, and roasts an entire ox for these very important guests of his. The three gods then urinate or ejaculate onto the hide of the slaughtered ox and bury it, instructing Hyrieus to unearth it after a certain amount of time. When he does so, he discovers Orion inside the hide.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Scheinberg 1979: 21ff.

¹³⁶ G. Nagy 1990a: 57-9.

¹³⁷ The hymn's dyad of cows and mantic Bee Maidens (μάντις < *men-; see Flower 2008: 23) has a match in the Bacchantes, who rend cows and whose μανία (also < *men-) is accompanied by streams of honey. Compare Kerényi 1976: 84.

¹³⁸ For a survey of the various accounts of the birth of Orion see Renaud 2004: 132-3, 184-96.

Several studies have pointed out the similarity between the events of this version of Orion's birth and the process of *bougonia*: both require the proper incubation of a slaughtered bovine, and both result in the genesis of new life from the cow in question.¹³⁹ But there is more: Orion's father and Orion himself both possess an apian aspect. In the case of Hyrieus, it is his name, apparently related to ὄπov, which Hesychius glosses as a word for beehive in the Cretan dialect.¹⁴⁰

In fact Hyrieus is connected with bees in the narrative of his treasury, built by Trophonius and Agamedes, but then routinely robbed by the architects, which habit eventually results in an aborted raid that ends in Trophonius beheading Agamedes (literally to save face) and then being himself swallowed by the earth at Lebadeia; sometime thereafter, a swarm of bees leads the Boeotians to the site of Trophonios' disappearance, and they establish an oracle on the spot.¹⁴¹ The relevance of this other narrative involving Hyrieus to that of Orion's birth is suggested by the fact that Hermes has a sort of presence at the oracle of Trophonios, which is tended to by two boys called Hermai,¹⁴² and by the fact that the ritual praxis and eschatological ideology of this oracle feature a number of curious bovine details.¹⁴³ So both the narrative of Orion's birth and that of the aetiology, practices, and belief system of Trophonios' cult incorporate both Hermes and Hyrieus, and both apian and bovine elements.

¹³⁹ Kerényi 1976: 38-43; Fontenrose 1981, Bonnechere 2003: 228-31.

¹⁴⁰ Kerényi 1976: 42-43.

¹⁴¹ Pausanias 9.37.5-7; 9.40.1-2. For Hyrieus' treasury as a beehive, see Silver 1992: 66.

¹⁴² Pausanias 9.39.7.

¹⁴³ Bonnechere 2003: 178. In light of the fact that Trophonios' cult variously corresponds to Orphic traditions, Hermes' involvement with the former puts him into indirect contact with the latter.

As for Orion, his mythology seems to concern wine's overthrow of mead, a development illustrated by his hostile interaction with the onomastically vinous Oinopion.¹⁴⁴ The ancients apparently appreciated this coded apian dimension of Orion's mythology: the narrative of his birth was told by Aristomachus of Soli,¹⁴⁵ who spent fifty-eight years studying bees.¹⁴⁶

So the Bee Maidens and the cows of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* ought to be treated as a dyad. Additionally, Apollo's cows themselves might be said to possess a mellic element. As noted above, the mellifluous cows of Indic mythology are sometimes said to contain *amṛta*,¹⁴⁷ the Indic etymological and functional congener of *ambrosia*, which is similarly synonymous with honey. In light of this fact, we might want to consider the possibility that Apollo's cattle, which the hymnist refers to as ἄμβροτοι,¹⁴⁸ are being designated as internally ambrosial rather than simply as belonging to an immortal.

The presence of the prophetic Bee Maidens alongside Apollo's cows could be said to reinforce the poetic significance of the latter for which I have argued. The poetic cows of the *Ṛg Veda* are similarly to be found in combination with honey, as in the passage in which the divine poet Bṛhaspati discovers both dawn cows and honey.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Orion's apian aspect also manifests itself in his connection to the Pleiades, who are connected to bees in a wide variety of cultures (Andrews 2004); for a Greek example, consider Merope 'Bee-eater,' the name of the Pleiad with whom Orion becomes infatuated. Given that Pleiades are located within Taurus, we have, after a fashion, an astral combination of bees and bull, which emerges in a verse of the American poet Bayard Taylor (Olcott 1911: 425).

¹⁴⁵ Most 2007: 318-19.

¹⁴⁶ Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 11.9.19.

¹⁴⁷ Compare the collocation of *amṛtāt* with cows in the *Avesta*.

¹⁴⁸ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 71.

¹⁴⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 10.64.4a, c, 7d, 8a.

* * *

So it appears that the concatenation of bovines, bees and paradoxically generative sacrifice in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, a text the pivotal action of which is otherwise assigned to Orpheus, and the locution of which contains several elements characteristic of Orphic literature, owes something to the same nexus that forms the basis of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. But can Virgil's text be argued to share with the hymn the poetic significance that I have assigned to the latter? Many have suggested that these bees, especially in light of their connection to Orpheus, have something to do with poetry.¹⁵⁰ It is hardly the case that the *bougonia* itself inherently possesses a poetic dimension, but one can imagine that it would easily lend itself to such an interpretation, and in fact several authors layer such a meaning onto it. So Erykios incorporates the *bougonia* into a poetic context when he uses the adjective βούπαις to describe the bees that he hopes will perpetually attend the tomb of Sophocles as emblems of the sweetness of his verse,¹⁵¹ and Pseudo-Theocritus involves the *bougonia* in a musical context when he refers to the bee as ταυροπάτωρ in his riddling description of the syrinx.¹⁵² I would suggest that Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex is another case in point. In fact the other main character of *Georgics* 4 might also point to a poetic interpretation of the *bougonia*: as previously noted, Aristaeus tends to the flocks of the Muses, who, moreover, instruct him in the art of prophecy.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Farrell 1991: 247; Balavoine 1987; Béague et al. 1998: 49; Triomphe 1989: 343; Sibona 2002, Fyntikoglou 2008; and Griffin 1985, although hesitantly. Compare Horsfall 2010 on bees in *Aeneid* 6, where Orpheus is hanging about.

¹⁵¹ *Palatine Anthology* 7.36.3.

¹⁵² *Syrinx* 3.

¹⁵³ Apollonius 2.512. Furthermore, the infant Aristaeus is entrusted to Hermes for delivery to his nurses, the Horai and Gaia (Pindar, *Pythian* 9.59-61).

I close this chapter by noting that I might have been anticipated in comparing the events of the hymn to those of the *bougonia* by a number of centuries. In an iconoclastic and to my mind somewhat misled but essentially convincing essay, Mark Edwards has suggested that the cattle-stealing god mentioned by Porphyry in his *De Antro Nympharum* is not Mithras, but rather Hermes.¹⁵⁴ If Edwards' line of thinking is more or less valid, it is surely pertinent to our topic that Porphyry references the cattle-stealing god in association with the *bougonia*. Perhaps Porphyry too perceived in the events of the hymn a bugonic scenario, and so mentions Hermes in proximity to the *bougonia*.

In case Edwards' argument does not convince, we might turn to the *Cyranides*, which claims Hermes as its ultimate author, and which mentions the *bougonia*.¹⁵⁵ Here at last Hermes comes into incontrovertible contact with the phenomenon of ox-born bees.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards 1993: 124. In light of the Commagenian composite deity Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes (all four of whom possess solar aspects and are connected with cattle) at Nemrut Dağ, Beck 2006: 198 fn. 7 notes that Edwards is wrong to insist that the deity in question could not be both Mithras and Hermes at the same time. See also Turcan 1975: 88 and Lincoln 1991a.

¹⁵⁵ *Cyranides* 2.39.31-3.

CHAPTER 3

Boutes Overboard:

An Argonautic Correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*Bougonia* Complex

One of the more prominent episodes in the journey of the *Argo* provides the third and final Greek comparandum to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex for which I shall argue in this project. We have already encountered other remarkable instances bovine lore in the Argonautic tradition, so that we might almost expect an equivalent of the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex to manifest itself among the Argonauts' adventures. However before we investigate the Argonautic narrative for Orphic elements, we need to consider the extent to which Orpheus can be conceived of as a germane participant thereof.

Odd Man Out? Orpheus among the Argonauts

On the one hand, Orpheus consistently figures in many of the earliest verbal treatments and visual representations of Argonautic scenarios.¹ With respect to the latter, the sculpture group on the metope of the Sicyonian treasury at Delphi is especially instructive. Orpheus' presence in this instance in particular indicates the tenacity of his membership among the crew. A scholiast to Apollonius' *Argonautica* tells us that Pherecydes attested to an alternate tradition in which the poet on board the *Argo* was Philammon.² The Delphic statuary complex is not content to choose between these two versions, and includes figures of both Orpheus and Philammon. Philammon is

¹ West 2005: 46.

² Bernabé 2004-7: 1.465.

variously linked to Delphi, so that his inclusion here makes sense, and yet Orpheus persists alongside him.³ It is as though Orpheus is essentially attached to the narrative, even when there are epicchoric motivations for preferring his competitor.

On the other hand, the primarily poetic Orpheus is arguably somewhat at odds with the other mainly martial members of the expedition. So it seemed to the same scholiast who reported Pherecydes' variant:⁴

Ἡρόδωρος δύο εἶναι Ὀρφεῖς φησιν, ὃν τὸν ἕτερον συμπλεῦσαι τοῖς Ἀργοναύταις... ζητεῖται δέ, διὰ τί Ὀρφεὺς ἀσθενὴς ὢν συνέπλει τοῖς ἥρωσιν· ὅτι μάντις ὢν ὁ Χείρων ἔχρησε δύνασθαι καὶ τὰς Σειρήνας παρελθεῖν αὐτοὺς Ὀρφέως συμπλέοντος.

Herodorus says that there are two Orpheuses, one of whom sailed with the Argonauts...it is controversial as to why Orpheus, being a weakling, sailed with the heroes: because Cheiron, who possessed prophetic powers, predicted that if Orpheus were to sail with them, they would be able to get past the Sirens.

Putting aside Herodorus' claim, interesting in that it indicates a genuine compulsion to eject Orpheus from the Argonautic crew, but very silly in and of itself, let us rather consider the following explanation of Orpheus' inclusion among the Argonauts. The latter has merit to the extent that Orpheus' confrontation with the Sirens is an important moment in the Argonautic narrative, and in fact it is this same moment that I shall examine in this chapter. However Orpheus also offers the Argonauts invaluable assistance on several other occasions, especially in the function of ritual practitioner.⁵ Utterly at odds, moreover, with the scholiast's depiction of

³ Graf and Johnston 2013: 168; West 2005: 46 fn. 29; Power 2010: 275-6.

⁴ Bernabé 2004-7: 1.465.

⁵ For Orpheus as the Argonauts' sacral officiant see Karanika 2010. Martín Hernández 2009 and Bernabé 2009d also make similar remarks.

Orpheus as a weakling are other portrayals that represent him as possessing a martial facet, which could be said to secure him a seat among a company otherwise composed of characters who are essentially warriors. Consider, for instance, what Euneus says of Orpheus in Euripides' *Hypsipyle*.⁶

μοῦσάν με κιθάρας Ἀσιάδας διδάσκειται,
τοῦτον δ' ἐς Ἄρεως ὄπλα ἐκόσμησεν μάχης

He instructed me in the music of the Asiatic lyre, and prepared him [Thoas] with respect to the weapons of Ares' war.

Orpheus is similarly associated with martial initiatory rites in Conon's aforementioned account of the events leading up to his dismemberment at the hands of the Thracian and Macedonian women. So although it does not seem to have been an aspect of the dominant conception of Orpheus, he is assigned military affinities in a variety of independent circumstances. As it turns out, Orpheus is just one representative of an entire host of poetic warriors/ martial poets to be found both elsewhere in Greek and in other traditions of Indo-European heritage.⁷ That Orpheus might owe something to this hereditary amalgamation of singer and soldier emerges from Michael Estell's comparison of the latter with the Ṛbhus, Orpheus' Indic congeners, who are similarly associated with both poetry and heroism.⁸

⁶ Collard and Cropp 2008: 2.314.

⁷ For a book-length study of such individuals see Compton 2006.

⁸ Estell 1999: 330, who develops his presentation of Orpheus' martial persona in Estell 2000: 24-34, 56-60. J. Nagy 1990: 208-9 similarly comments on Orpheus' martial aspect from an Indo-European perspective. For more on the Indo-European poetic warrior see Compton 2006: 179-80, 210-13. See also E. Brown 1981: 60.

In fact a certain component of the Orpheus' mythological biography appears to have its match in none other than episodes of the Argonautic narrative,⁹ as a result of which correspondence it becomes evident that above and beyond his poetic prowess and its utility against the Sirens, Orpheus is an ultimately qualified and indeed almost inevitable participant in this textual tradition: if elements of the latter have indeed been drawn from events attached to Orpheus even before he became his differentiated Greek outcome, he has simply clung to them and come along for the cruise.

In light of Orpheus' apparently indigenous status within the Argonautic narrative, we need no longer question the fundamental legitimacy of the *Orphic Argonautica*. In so stating, I do not deny the possibility that select portions of this text have been artificially introduced by authorial hands invested in Orphic enterprises, and so motivated to augment its Orphic dimension beyond that which is native to it. However given that the Argonautic tradition does seem to possess an indigenous Orphic stratum, in adding to it, authors with an Orphic agenda are simply effecting an instance of the phenomenon neatly described as “synchrony recapitulates diachrony.”

So we may proceed with the understanding that Argonautic literature communicates authentic Orphic material, whether or not some of it has been layered on at a later stage, especially in the case of the *Orphic Argonautica*.¹⁰ Whether it belongs in the former category or the latter, a case

⁹ See Appendix C.

¹⁰ Another contributing factor in the Orphic stratum of the Argonautic tradition might be the stage at which it was performed by Lesbian citharodes. See Power 2010: 274.

in point is the aforementioned passage so relevant to our study of Virgil's *Orpheus-bougonia* complex, in which Orpheus performs an elaborately explicated bull sacrifice:¹¹

Καὶ τότε δὴ κραντῆρα βοῶν περιμήκεα ταῦρον
 σφάζον, ἀνακλίνας κεφαλὴν εἰς αἰθέρα διὰν
 ζωοταμῶν· περὶ δ' αἷμα πυρῆ χέον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.
 Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κραδίην ἐρύσας ποπάνοισιν ἔθηκα,
 λείψας ὑγρὸν ἔλαιον, ἐπ' αὐτῷ γλάγος ἀμνῆς,
 ἥρωας δ' ἐκέλευσα περισταδὸν ἀμφιχυθέντας
 δούρατ' ἐμαμπήξασθαι ἰδ' ἄορα κωπήεντα
 βύρση σπλάγχνοισί τ' ἐρειδρομέναις παλάμησι.
 Θῆκα δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσω τεῦχος κυκεῶνος ἐρείσας
 ὀστράκεον, τῷ πάντα περιφραδέως ἐμέμικτο,
 Δήμητρος μὲν πρῶτα φερέσβιος ἀλφίτου ἀκτῆ,
 αἷμα δ' ἐπεὶ ταύροιο θαλάσσης θ' ἄλμυρον ὕδωρ.
 Στέψασθαι δ' ἐκέλευσα κλάδους ἐρόεντας ἐλαίης·
 καὶ τότε χρυσεῖην φιάλην χεῖρεσσιν ἐμαῖσιν
 ἀμπλήσας κυκεῶνος, ἐφεξείης ἐπένειμα
 γεύειν ἄνδρα ἕκαστον ἐρισθενέων βασιλέων.
 Πυρκαϊῆ δ' ἐκέλευον Ἰήσονα λαμπάδα θέσθαι
 πεύκης ἄζδαλέης· ὑπὸ δ' ἔδραμε θεσπεσίη φλόξ.
 Δὴ τότε ἔγώ, πρὸς χεῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης
 χεῖρας ἐπαντείνας, τάδ' ἀπὸ γλώσσης ἀγόρευσα...

And then I slit the throat of a huge bull, flexing his head to the heavenly sky and hewing him even as he was still living, and I poured his blood on the fire here and there. Then, after having extracted the heart and positioned it on the sacrificial cakes, and having made a libation, first of fluid oil, and then of ewe's milk, I exhorted the heroes circled around me to stab their spears and their hilted swords into the skin and organs with their thrusting hands. And I set in their midst a clay vessel of brew, in which everything had been skillfully blended, first the vivifying grain of Demeter's barley, and then bull's blood and briny seawater. I exhorted them to wreath themselves with lovely branches of olive. And then having filled by hand a golden cup with the brew, I distributed it so that each of the powerful kings could sip some. I exhorted Jason to place a torch of dry pine in the fire, and the divine flame sprang up. And then, stretching my hands toward the waves of the deep-booming sea, I uttered the following with my tongue...

¹¹ *Orphic Argonautica* 315-32. In terms of its specific details, there is nothing Orphic about this sacrifice. See Vian 1987: 177. On Orphic elements elsewhere in the *Orphic Argonautica* see Sánchez Ortiz de Landaluze 1996: 227-74 and more briefly but more recently 2009, as well as Schelske 2011: *passim*, esp. 68-81.

Of course remarkable as it is, there is nothing bugonic about this sacrifice, and as I have already noted, the above passage is not the one to be analyzed in this chapter. Rather we are concerned with another Argonautic episode that is quite as renowned as the one just quoted is obscure: Orpheus' encounter with the Sirens, or more precisely both this event and the immediate consequence that it catalyzes.

Boutes' Briny Bound

When the Argo arrives at the Sirens' haunt, Orpheus endeavours to drown out the their irresistible voices with the music of his lyre. His efforts are largely, but not entirely successful:¹²

...παρθενικὴν δ' ἔνοπην ἐβίησατο φόρμιγγ...
 ἀλλὰ καὶ ὣς Τελέοντος ἐὺς πάϊς, οἷος ἑταίρων
 προφθάμενος, ξεστοῖο κατὰ ζυγοῦ ἔνθορε πόντῳ
 Βούτης, Σειρήνων λιγυρῆ ὀπι θυμὸν ἰανθείς·
 νῆχε δὲ πορφυρέοιο δι' οἴδατος, ὄφρ' ἐπιβαίῃ,
 σχέτλιος. ἦ τέ οἱ αἶψα καταυτόθι νόστον ἀπηύρων,
 ἀλλὰ μιν οἰκτεῖρασα θεὰ Ἔρυκος μεδέουσα
 Κύπρις ἔτ' ἐν δίναις ἀνερείψατο, καὶ ῥ' ἐσάωσεν
 πρόφρων ἀντομένη Λιλυβηίδα ναιέμεν ἄρκην

...and the lyre dominated their virginal voices...but even so Boutes, Teleon's noble son, leapt in anticipation from the smooth bench into the sea, the only one of the company to do so, inflamed in his heart by the shrill voices of the Sirens, and he swam through the surging waves in order to mount the beach, utterly determined. They intended to deprive him of his homecoming on the spot, but Cypris, the goddess who presides over Eryx, feeling compassion for him, seized him even as he was still in the eddies, and greeting him benevolently, salvaged him so that he could inhabit the Lilybaian promontory.

¹² Apollonius 4.909, 912-19.

Now to begin to demonstrate that in this event we are dealing with something akin to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. To be sure, Orpheus is crucially present in the Argonauts' brush with the Sirens, but as for an overt bovine there is admittedly neither hide nor hair. However as we have already seen in my treatment of one of his namesakes, Boutes is by name none other than a cowherd.

The validity of conceiving of the onomastically bovine Boutes as the functional equivalent of a cow finds support in the fact that the other Boutes whom we have already discussed, Lycurgus' brother, also acts within a bovine slot, hurling himself into a spring upon being driven mad by Dionysus, a chain of events that possesses a structural and thematic correspondent in the narrative of the quasi-aurine Dionysus being assaulted by Lycurgus and similarly seeking refuge in a marine asylum. So in fact the Boutes previously examined is compatible his Argonautic namesake not only in that respect, but also behaviourally: the former, maddened by Dionysus, proceeds to execute a fatal aquatic plunge, and the latter, enchanted by the Sirens, dives from the Argo and strives to swim toward what seems sure to be his death, only to be rescued by Aphrodite from the surf of the Sirens' island.

Furthermore, remember my understanding that the myth of Lycurgus' pursuit of the virtually bovine Dionysus is in turn related to that of the god's tauriform dismemberment and subsequent rebirth, a myth that possessed some sort of special currency in Orphic milieux. So although the narrative of Lycurgan Boutes' demise does not itself appear to be associated with Orpheus, the corresponding myth of Dionysus' reincarnation is decidedly Orphic. That this Boutes is just one step removed, after a fashion, from an Orphic narrative is surely relevant to the fact that the

pivotal moment in the biography of the Argonautic Boutes occurs in the context of one of the greatest feats performed by none other than Orpheus. The former Boutes acts within a chain of events thematically consonant with another that is explicitly Orphic; the latter Boutes acts within the events of which Orpheus is one of the principal agents.¹³

We might also perceive a reflection of the Argonautic Boutes' bovine aspect in the cardinal narrative pertaining to the Sicilian monarch Eryx. Apollodorus gives the latter's parentage as being Poseidon and Aphrodite,¹⁴ but Diodorus calls him the son of Aphrodite and Boutes,¹⁵ although he does not identify Boutes as an Athenian Argonaut, but rather refers to him as a native Sicilian king (βασιλέως τινὸς ἐγγχωρίου). François Vian explains this discrepancy by arguing that the Argonautic Boutes consists of a conflation of at least one Athenian by this name and the local Sicilian monarch identified by Diodorus.¹⁶ However we have seen that Lycurgan Boutes, a figure immediately unrelated to his Argonautic namesake, is nevertheless behaviourally consonant with the latter, so I am not so sure that Vian's understanding is correct. Rather we could be dealing with the distraction of an erstwhile intact Boutes into many derivative ones, the Sicilians, Athenians and authors of the Argonautic narrative all eager for a piece of the cow, so to speak. Or maybe both synthetic and fractural processes are at work.

¹³ Remember as well that *boutai* are repeatedly mentioned in the Orphic hymns, as well as other arguably Orphic texts.

¹⁴ Apollodorus 2.5.10.

¹⁵ Diodorus Siculus 4.83.1.

¹⁶ Vian and Delage 1974-81: 1.244.

In any event, it will suffice for the present purposes to observe that we are dealing in Diodorus with a multiform of the Argonautic Boutes, to whose link with Eryx Apollonius alludes when he refers to Aphrodite as θεὰ Ἐρυκος. To stick with Diodorus, whose account is more or less in accord with those of others from this point onward,¹⁷ Eryx' moment in the mythological limelight is that in which he challenges Herakles to a boxing match, of which his prize, should he emerge the victor, is to be the cattle of Erytheia,¹⁸ which Herakles has just had conveyed to Sicily,¹⁹ fording the sea while grasping the horn of one of the bulls.²⁰

This bovine event of Eryx's biography is apparently so fundamental as to more or less necessarily surface in any mention of him. Thus Lycophron, in an aggressive metonymic figure, collapses the association and calls Eryx himself a bull.²¹ The same seemingly inevitable correlation is more elaborately explored in *Aeneid* 5, in which Virgil models the boxing match between Entellus and Dares, the prize for which is a bull, on that of Herakles and Eryx, likewise concerned with a bovine issue: so Acestes, in his attempt to galvanize Entellus into opposing Dares, reminds the target of his harangue that he was trained by Eryx;²² Entellus announces that the stretch of beach on which he and Dares are to fight is the site of the pugilistic competition

¹⁷ Diodorus Siculus 4.22.6-23.2.

¹⁸ Or just a single errant bull (Apollodorus 2.5.10).

¹⁹ Apollodorus rather has it that one of the bulls broke away from the herd and swam there of his own accord; Herakles leaves the rest of the cattle in Hephaistos' care and pursues the runaway.

²⁰ According to Pausanias (3.16.4), the whole herd crosses to Sicily of its own accord. McInerney 2010: 111 similarly mentions the bovine significance of Boutes' name in connection with the myth of Eryx and Herakles' combat over the cattle of Erytheia.

²¹ *Alexandra* 866.

²² *Aeneid* 5.391-2.

between Herakles and Eryx,²³ and brandishes the boxing gloves worn by the latter;²⁴ and upon having won and slaughtered the bull, Entellus dedicates the victim to Eryx.²⁵

Furthermore, and of especial relevance to our current interest in Eryx, Virgil conjures the presence of the latter's mortal father even as he refers to yet another Boutes, the thusly named son of the Bebrycian king Amycus, whom Virgil tells us that Dares left mortally beaten on Hector's tomb,²⁶ and the bovine significance of whose name could be said to be reflected in his ethnicity (as though Bebrycia were from βρυχάομαι) and paternity (as though Amycus were from μυκάομαι).²⁷ So Virgil allusively unites the otherwise separately manifested bovine dimensions of father and son.

Therefore in Boutes I claim to grasp the bovine component of my proposed Argonautic correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. I shall now proceed to demonstrate that there are also apian elements at work in the episode under scrutiny.

²³ *Aeneid* 5.411.

²⁴ *Aeneid* 5.401-3, 412.

²⁵ *Aeneid* 5.483-4.

²⁶ *Aeneid* 5.371-4.

²⁷ On the bovine wordplay of this passage see O'Hara 1996: 161-2, who pursues prior work, and Paschalis 1997. See also the related wordplay of Book 9 discussed by Paschalis 1997: 316-17. Ahl 2007: 359 similarly mentions Boutes the Argonaut and father of Eryx in conjunction with Virgil's Bebrycian Butes.

Apian Elements in the Boutes Episode

In the case of the first datum to be examined, we simply proceed with Boutes, whom we shall see offers within his own personal parameters an apian-bovine dyad comparable that of the *bougonia*. When Valerius Flaccus introduces Boutes, he describes him as follows:²⁸

*proximus hinc Butes Actaeis dives ab oris;
innumeras nam claudit apes longaque superbus
fuscat nube diem, dum plenas nectare cellas
pandit et in dulcem reges dimittit Hymetton.*

Next there is Boutes from the shores of Attica,²⁹ wealthy, for he nests an endless number of bees, and proudly dims the sky with their expansive cloud, while he opens their hives, full of honey, and sends the kings to sweet Hymettus.

It is a curious fact that laypersons acquainted to any degree with Boutes are likely to know about his apicultural activity. This is not because such individuals are aficionados of Silver Epic, nor is it because other Graeco-Roman texts identify Boutes as a beekeeper; in fact Valerius is the only extant Classical author to do so. The reason on account of which Boutes' association with beekeeping extends rather amply beyond the academy is because it is regularly mentioned in popular treatments of Classical mythology, due, I suspect, to the fact that Robert Graves states it in his *Greek Myths*,³⁰ and also, for those who have read the same author's *Golden Fleece*, because in the that novel Graves has transformed Boutes into a virtual melissomaniac.³¹ Yet despite or perhaps simply because of the fact that Valerius is unique in so describing Boutes'

²⁸ Valerius Flaccus 1.394-7.

²⁹ For *Actaeus* as meaning "Attic" see Kleywegt 2005: 231; Galli 2007: 223, and Zissos 2008: 266.

³⁰ Graves 1955: 1.169, 2.217.

³¹ Graves 1944: 121-2, 131, 161, 171, 187, 215, 256.

occupation, commentators on his *Argonautica* tend to have very little to say about this remarkable passage. Adrian Kleywegt is content to note that Apollonius does not attribute such a pursuit to Boutes.³² Daniela Galli has a point when she remarks that references to bees are common in epic poetry, but fails to satisfy in her subsequent opinion that as an Athenian, Boutes was more or less bound to become associated with beekeeping, since the hives on Hymettus produced, indeed still produce some of the world's most celebrated honey.³³ Andrew Zissos claims that we are simply dealing here with a distinct, possibly artificial Boutes with whom Valerius has replaced Apollonius' and suggests that the lines about his apian endeavours are "more an exercise in embedded erudition than a genuine attempt to individualize."³⁴

It is true that Boutes is not characterized as a beekeeper anywhere else, but far from being in the habit of fabricating innovative details, Valerius is on the contrary a profoundly allusive author, and one well-versed, we would do well to note, in Orphic traditions,³⁵ which we might suspect to be at work in the characterization of a figure so crucially linked to Orpheus. This is not to say that Valerius is lacking in creativity; far from it. However it is rather in his unique deployment of established traditions that he exercises his artistic ingenuity. So we should not identify Boutes' beekeeping as Valerius' invention simply because it is not to be found elsewhere in extant literature. In fact if we are willing to flit again a little ways from Boutes toward his son, we will find ourselves hovering about another apian element.

³² Kleywegt 2005: 231.

³³ Galli 2007: 222. That being said, apiculture does seem to run in the family. Columella, *De Re Rustica* 9.2.4 relates that Boutes' brother Erechtheus introduced beekeeping to Athens.

³⁴ Zissos 2008: 266.

³⁵ On the Orphic component of Valerius' *Argonautica* see Nelis 2005.

As a preface to the piece of evidence in question, I would point out that Sicilian honey was and still is quite as famous as that of Hymettus. In fact Malcolm Bell notes that Pindar, although habitually fond of mellic imagery, employs the latter with especial frequency in compositions for his Sicilian patrons, likening, for instance, Xenocrates' son Thrasyboulos to a honeycomb.³⁶ Furthermore, Valerius' contemporary Silius Italicus portrays Sicily and Hymettus as being in commercial rivalry with one another over this commodity.³⁷ Valerius himself similarly integrates these two places in depicting Persephone—a goddess whose priestesses were bees—and her companions dancing alternately on Hymettus and in Sicily.³⁸

In light of both the prominence of Sicilian honey and its apparent competitive relationship with that of Hymettus, let us recall that after having hurled himself overboard, Boutes is recused by Aphrodite and conveyed by her to Lilybaeum, where he is established as a king and succeeded by his son Eryx, to which result Apollonius alludes when he refers to Aphrodite as the goddess of Eryx. During his own reign, Eryx commissions the construction of a temple for Aphrodite.³⁹ When Daedalus visits this temple, he fashions in gold a remarkably realistic offering to the goddess.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the manuscripts are at odds with one another when it comes to identifying the design of this item: it was either a ram (κρίον) or a honeycomb (κηρίον).⁴¹ The popular imagination tends to be taken with the honeycomb. It serves, for instance, as the eponym

³⁶ *Pythian* 6.52; Bell 1995: 28-9.

³⁷ *Punica* 14.26, 199-200.

³⁸ Valerius Flaccus 5.343-5. On the geographical complexity of this passage see Spaltenstein 2002-5: 2.477.

³⁹ Diodorus Siculus 4.83. So Boutes is just one step removed from the construction of this temple. Compare Pache 2011: 20 fn. 15 on the sacerdotal implications of Aphrodite's abduction of Boutes.

⁴⁰ Diodorus Siculus 4.78.5.

⁴¹ Ayrton 1967: 292, 298 eliminates the need to choose by having Daedalus fashion both a honeycomb and a ram!

of Vincent Cronin's Sicilian travelogue.⁴² In fact an artefact wrought of gold that arguably represents a honeycomb has been discovered not in Sicily, but in Crete, Daedalus' residence, then prison prior to his aeronautical escape and eventual arrival in Sicily.⁴³

That there is some value in considering this find in connection with Daedalus' putative honeycomb is indicated in the fact that another Sicilian temple of Aphrodite is also associated on the one hand with Daedalus and is matched on the other by the Cretan archaeological record. After the daughters of Daedalus' protector, the Sicilian king Cocalus, have killed Minos, who had demanded that Daedalus be surrendered to him, Minos' entourage construct a two-storey tomb for their monarch, the bottom of which was enclosed and held Minos' remains, and the top of which contained a shrine to Aphrodite. As noted by Arthur Evans, a tomb unearthed at Knossos possesses this same bipartite form and function.⁴⁴

If we entertain a self-referential perspective, moreover, we might expect Daedalus to fashion a honeycomb rather than a ram, given that Classical authors frequently liken bees to craftsmen.⁴⁵ The scholarly literature, however, tends to prefer the reading κριόν. Pascale Giovannelli-Jouanna suggests that κριόν has become κηρίον on account reference a few sections prior to Daedalus and Icarus' wings,⁴⁶ the feathers of which are held together with wax (διὰ κηροῦ).⁴⁷ It strikes me that he is correct in connecting the wax wings and what he considers to be the chimerical

⁴² Cronin 1954.

⁴³ Not everyone agrees as to what this object represents. See Lafleur et al. 1979.

⁴⁴ Evans 1921-36: 4.959.

⁴⁵ P. Johnston 1980: 97; Ahl 1985: 252.

⁴⁶ Diodorus Siculus 4.77.8.

⁴⁷ Giovannelli-Jouanna 1999: 637.

honeycomb, but I do not follow him in understanding the latter to be an artificial, merely scribal extension of the former. Rather it seems to me that the apparent reiteration of mellic elements in Daedalus' dossier indicates a natural multiplication rooted in an inherent relationship between Daedalus and bees.⁴⁸

In fact Frederick Ahl suggests that in Daedalus and Icarus' wax-winged flight from the slain Minotaur's labyrinth, we have a sequence reminiscent of the bees emerging from the carcass of the slaughtered bovine in the *bougnia*.⁴⁹ Indeed Ovid seems keen on putting the reader in mind of the apian authors of this wax when he mentions our airborne fugitives passing over Calymne, which he describes as *fecunda...melle* "rich in honey";⁵⁰ Barbara Pavlock, moreover, perceives in the toponym Calymne itself wordplay with κάλυμμα, which can refer to the covering of a honeycomb.⁵¹

It seems to me that Ahl's interpretation of the airborne Daedalus and Icarus as bees might have a Classical antecedent in Martial's imagination, if not in that of the sadistic masterminds behind

⁴⁸ In fact many of the mythological characters whom Diodorus discusses in the later sections of Book 4 are substantially involved with bees and honey.

⁴⁹ Ahl 1985: 252. If we conceive of the myth of the Minotaur as being somehow bugonic, then given that the function of the cow of the *bougnia* is to be slaughtered and give birth to bees, it is with a kind of clairvoyance that Borges' Minotaur wants to die. On the labyrinth as a locus of the threshold between life and death, of which Book 6 of the *Aeneid* demonstrates that Virgil was aware, see Habinek 2005: 254-6. The astral given name of the Minotaur is somehow to be related to the identical new name of the Orphic initiate of the gold *lamellae*, who experiences a tauriform rebirth, and Minos as underworld judge is a recurring aspect of Orphic eschatology (Albinus 2000: 77 fn. 28). For connections between Crete and Orphism see Bremmer 2002: 37. On the Cretan Orphic *lamellae* see Tzifopoulos 2010.

⁵⁰ *Metamorphoses* 8.222.

⁵¹ Pavlock 1998: 150. Cook 1895: 5 fn. 27 compares the same conjunction of feathers and beeswax in the construction of the second Delphic temple, with the bees themselves involved in this case.

the spectacular execution in the Colosseum of a criminal in the guise of Daedalus, the moment of whose imminent demise Martial reactivates:⁵²

*Daedale, Lucano cum sic lacereris ab urso,
quam cuperes pinnas nunc habuisse tuas*

Daedalus, given that you are being so mauled by a Lucanian bear, how you must wish that you had your wings now.

Maybe it is just a flight of fancy, but my impression is that Martial, if not the inventors of this scenario themselves, intended to portray Daedalus as a bee in having him ravaged by a bear, an animal that feeds on airborne bees, and that severs and consumes the content of beehives not so much for the honey contained therein, but rather more for the resident mature and especially larval bees, which are highly nutritious.⁵³ It is with an eye to this particular ursine dietary tendency that many cultures have developed a number of abstract connections between bees and bears. The two animals are more often found in alternation rather than in combination in Greek tradition, particularly in reference to Artemis,⁵⁴ although there are situations in which they intersect. According to Luis Ballesteros-Pastor's interesting proposal, bee and bear meet in an Artemisian context in the siege tactic employed at Themiscyra, a municipality that appears to have been particularly devoted to Artemis, the inhabitants of which repel the invading Romans

⁵² *De Spectaculis* 10.

⁵³ G. Brown 2009: 202.

⁵⁴ Artemis' ursine aspect has been extensively studied; see for example Walbank 1981. On Artemis and the bee see Elderkin 1939; Giuman 2008: 170-98.

by sending bears and bees into the tunnels that their assailants have excavated under the city wall.⁵⁵

So perhaps our amphitheatrical Daedalus' ursine undoing is meant to portray him as a bee. Note that in making reference to the absence of Daedalus' wings (perhaps actually displayed in the arena, as though the victim had already been swatted by the bear and so lost his wings?) Martial draws attention to Daedalus' conceivably apian anatomy, if he does not rather have an avian image in mind. It must be acknowledged that bears are not infrequently the administrators of carnage in the Colosseum,⁵⁶ but criminals tend to be killed by animal aggressors appropriate to the mythological figures with whose identity they have been invested. We need only consider the woman who is to be penetrated by a bull in the manner of Pasiphae.⁵⁷

In fact another criminal exterminated by a bear was portrayed as Orpheus,⁵⁸ whose music the animal, in a cruel inversion of mythological convention, fails to appreciate.⁵⁹ Again in the interests of full disclosure, much in the same ways as bears are frequent agents in the

⁵⁵ Ballesteros-Pastor 2009. See also Silver 1992: 202-3, who makes the interesting, if specious proposal that the yellow robes worn by Brauronian initiates, far from representing bearskins, rather symbolize honey. The interaction between Artemis and Orion, who has a complicated relationship with bees and honey (on which see Kerényi 1976: 41-3, 75-7) also belongs here. Bees and bears also coincide in Zeus' mythological dossier. So Zeus transforms Melisseus' daughters, who nursed him on honey during his infancy, into the constellations Ursa Major and Minor (Apollodorus 1.2; Callimachus *Hymn to Zeus* 49-51; Diodorus 4.80.1-2, 5.70.1), and Typhon wraps Zeus' sinews in a bearskin and then places both Zeus and his dissected tissues under the supervision of the Delphic dragon in the Corycian cave (Apollodorus 1.6.3). Parnassus and Delphi are recurrently associated with bees (see Sourvinou-Inwood 1979: *passim*, esp. 239-42); with respect to the Corycian cave in particular, the Corycian nymphs, denizens thereof, are similar to, if not to be identified with the Bee Maidens of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (see Larson 1995).

⁵⁶ K. Coleman 2006: 87-9.

⁵⁷ *De Spectaculis* 6. Far from an experience of blissful bestiality as was the case for her mythic precursor, this Pasiphae's enforced zoophilic encounter will be lethal. See K. Coleman 2006: 64.

⁵⁸ *De Spectaculis* 24 and 25.

⁵⁹ K. Coleman 2006: 179.

amphitheatre, so too this same animal is a staple member in mosaic depictions of Orpheus enchanting the animals with his lyre,⁶⁰ so that there need not be any pointed allusion behind the choice of a bear as the assailant of “Orpheus.” However it could be that Martial has it wrong, and that the bear, far from approaching out of irritation, is rather irrepressibly drawn to the exceptional sweetness of Orpheus’ song, which, after all, is μελίγηρυς “honey-voiced”.⁶¹ In that case, the bear would simply be acting in accordance with its nature by aiming to ingest the source of this mellifluous effluence.⁶²

Aphrodite, the recipient of Daedalus’ apparent honeycomb, might be a third participant in encouraging the presumed mellic format of her offering. On the one hand, sheep possess a noteworthy presence in cult of Aphrodite,⁶³ and given that the object wrought by Daedalus is alternately a golden ram in particular, we should note that Apuleius has Venus send Psyche to obtain a tuft of wool from golden sheep in an episode that on more than one occasion echoes Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, the narrative of which is similarly preoccupied with an aureate, ovine hide.⁶⁴ On the other hand, there is some evidence for an association between Aphrodite and the bee. A case in point is the passage of Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, in which Aphrodite is likened to a bee in the context of the destructive passion with which she inflames Semele.⁶⁵ This image presumably depends on the same tradition as that of Theocritus’ *Idyll* 19, in which Aphrodite

⁶⁰ Jesnick 1997: 83, 200-1.

⁶¹ *Orphic Argonautica* 73, 420. This remark of mine is in part inspired by the modified presentation of an argument of Burn 1985 made by Pache 2004: 117.

⁶² Compare Jesnick, 81.

⁶³ Ammerman 2002: 345; Currie 2005: 277-83.

⁶⁴ Zimmerman et al. 2004: 450.

⁶⁵ *Hippolytus* 560-4.

assimilates Eros, who has just been stung by a bee, to his similarly small but significantly injurious attacker.⁶⁶ This connection between the bee and the potentially pernicious outcome of erotic pursuits is probably quite old: Bonnie MacLachlan argues that it occurs already in Sappho,⁶⁷ and Kama, the Indic god of love, wields a bow the string of which is a series of bees.⁶⁸

So perhaps we are ultimately to understand the honeycomb offered by Daedalus to Aphrodite in a temple constructed by Boutes' son Eryx as the result of the triangular confluence of Boutes, Daedalus and Aphrodite's mellic aspects. I would therefore now claim that in Boutes we have not only the bovine component of our Orpheus-*bougonia* correlate, but also a manifestation of the apian component thereof. In fact much in the same way as the *bougonia* consists of an indivisible compound of bovine and bees, so too the onomastically bovine and occupationally apicultural Boutes amalgamates within himself these same two items.

There is, moreover, another apian element involved in the Argonauts' encounter with the Sirens. It is none other than the Σειρήνες themselves, whose name is hardly to be divorced from the identical common noun σειρήν, referring to a kind of solitary bee or wasp that produces a honeycomb.⁶⁹ It seems to me that we must either understand the underlying etymology of this form as having possessed a basic sense appropriate to both the Sirens on the one hand and bees

⁶⁶ On this scene and its Anacreontic parallel see Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 173. Aphrodite is also contrasted with the bee as an emblem of chastity in *Idyll* 1. See Hunter 1999: 97.

⁶⁷ MacLachlan 1989. See also Lawler 1954: 103.

⁶⁸ Ransome 1937: 45.

⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* 623b12. For σειρήν designating bee rather than wasp see Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 73-5; Beavis 1988: 198. On the regular lack distinction between bees and wasps see Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 75. For a discussion of the apian aspect of the Sirens, see Roscalla 1998: 41-59. Aelian, *On Animals* 5.13 curiously involves the Sirens with bees, describing the latter as being drawn to the apiculturist's music as though to a Siren.

on the other, but applied with a different significance in either case, or else that one is simply the development of the other. If the latter, it seems to me that the common noun must be the source of the personal one, since it strikes me as far-fetched that *the* Sirens would provide the model for a kind of bee, whereas we shall see that bees could well provide a model for the Sirens.

With an eye to *σειρή* ‘cord, rope,’ we might guess that the Sirens are so called because some bees are banded, but it could rather be the case that the Sirens obtain their name because of the binding capacity poetry.⁷⁰ Either way, it is perhaps inevitable that the Sirens would have been conceived of as apian on account of a secondary association with the other meaning of their name.⁷¹ For our purposes it will suffice to observe that the name of the Sirens also designates a kind of bee, and that the former were therefore bound to become associated with the latter, if these same bees are not simply themselves the Sirens’ eponyms.

I would mention in passing at this point that there seems to be a Macedonian outcome of this word in *Ζειρήνη*, which Hesychius tells us is an epithet or byname of Aphrodite. Jean Kalleris cautions that the phonetic resemblance hardly guarantees an etymological relationship and personally rejects the connection, although admitting that it is possible.⁷² If we rather deign to consider the possibility, then given that we have seen some amount of evidence for an

⁷⁰ On the binding property of Sirens’ song, which Xenophon’s Socrates portrays as erotically ensnaring, see Faraone 1999: 6. On erotic elements in Apollonius’ Siren episode see Knight 1995: 204. Although the Sirens of extant verbal art are always feminine, this is not the case in the visual arts. See Holford-Strevens 2006: 17.

⁷¹ Compare Bader 1993: 63, although note that her involvement of the root **seh₂*- “bind” is linguistically impossible.

⁷² Kalleris 1988: 1.179-80.

association between Aphrodite and bees, one might see in her Macedonian appellation a manifestation of her apparent apian aspect.

Of course the Sirens are never actually explicitly represented as bees; rather, they are frequently portrayed as winged, yet with wings of the avian variety, having humanoid heads, but transitioning at some lower point of their anatomy into birds. However alternations between and combinations of bees and birds are common, and not only in Greek but elsewhere as well. A case in point is the word *σειρήν* itself, which can also refer to a small songbird. Further afield geographically but not topically, the Irish hero Conn and then his son Art sail to the otherworld and encounter there both swarms of bees flitting about in a blooming orchard and women inhabiting a house thatched with bird wings,⁷³ a florid, insular realm that Gerald Gresseth compares to the Sirens' similarly flowery island, although without reference to the animal correspondences between the two locations.⁷⁴

Furthermore, although any overt apian aspect has completely fallen away from the Sirens, several of their various relatives maintain instances of such a morphology. So Philostratus tells us that the Muses assumed the shape of bees when they guided the Athenian colonists to Ionia;⁷⁵ note that the Muses, whose basic relationship with the Sirens I shall resume shortly, are here

⁷³ Gresseth 1970: 212 fn. 19.

⁷⁴ Best 1907: 156. Cormac also encounters such an avian abode. See Stokes and Windisch 1880-1909: 3.195. This house with its roof of bird wings sounds an awful lot like the second Delphic temple, which Philostratus says was made of bird's feathers and beeswax (*Life of Apollonius* 6.10), and which Pausanias says was later sent to Hyperborea (10.5). How interesting that the Greeks connected Hyperborea with the Celts. See Ahl 1982: 393; 1991: 141.

⁷⁵ *Imagines* 2.8. See Germain 1962: 95.

more like them than ever in that they are involved with sailors, although to their benefit rather than to their detriment. The Gorgons, another mythological bevy related to the Sirens, are also conventionally depicted as winged or even described as being morphologically avian,⁷⁶ but on an iconographically bizarre vase from Eleusis, they seem to be represented as having the heads of bees, although monstrous bees, since their antennae are snakes.⁷⁷ The name of one of the Graiae, yet another similar group of female figures, is Pamphredo, which seems to have as its basis the common noun *πεμφορηδών*, designating a kind of wasp.⁷⁸

As for Sirens themselves, although bees plain and simple are never brought into conjunction with them, there are residual indications of this erstwhile identity. Homer's Sirens describe their own voice as *μελίγηρυς* "honey-voiced."⁷⁹ The pervasive connection between honey and poetry alone could be responsible for that, but this adjective's application to the Sirens in particular might have an additional significance, as I have already suggested that it might be of more than conventional substance when used of Orpheus. In fact the adjective that Odysseus uses to describe them, *ἄδινός*, in this case "loud," is elsewhere used of swarming bees;⁸⁰ remember that we have already seen something similar at work in the description of the Bee Maidens' activity by means of the verb *δονέω*, which can describe the buzzing of bees.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ahl 1982: 406; 1991: 144-5.

⁷⁷ Richards-Mantzoulinou 1979: 82.

⁷⁸ Gresseth 1970: 212 fn. 19.

⁷⁹ *Odyssey* 12.187; Bright 1977: 28 fn. 3; Bader 1993: 63.

⁸⁰ *Odyssey* 23.326; Bright 1977: 28 fn. 3.

⁸¹ *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 563.

Furthermore, another apian product is also at work in Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens: the beeswax⁸² with which Odysseus plugs the ears of his companions in order to deafen them to the Sirens' song.⁸³ Although the nature of the relationship between this wax and the Sirens is synchronically antithetical, a diachronic perspective suggests that it has emerged out of an earlier cooperative connection between the Sirens and bee products. In fact we would do well to recall that Aristotle mentions his siren specifically within a catalogue of bees that fashion honeycombs.⁸⁴

These curious indications add up to an oddly reduced yet persistent affiliation between Sirens and all things apian. And in fact perhaps the connection did not seem so obscure to the ancient as it does to us: Virgil, in referring to Naples as Parthenope in his *sphragis* to the *Georgics*,⁸⁵ is surely evoking the city's original Sirenian eponym.⁸⁶ The *sphragis* is admittedly a distinct textual entity, but its contiguity with the fourth *Georgic*, which is of course preoccupied with bees, suggests to me the possibility that Virgil incorporates Parthenope into the *sphragis* as a thematic echo of the preceding segment of text.⁸⁷

That Parthenope is dovetailing with at least the honey of the bees of the fourth *Georgic*, if not the bees themselves, is indicated in Virgil's modification of her name by means of *dulcis* "sweet," an

⁸² Calypso calls it κηρὸν...μελιηδέα (*Odyssey* 12.48).

⁸³ Bright 1977: 28 fn. 3.

⁸⁴ I also find worth considering a suggestion made by Rigolioso 2009: 201, who notes that both the Sirens and the Pythia are connected with the *tetraktys*, and who posits a common melic aspect as the reason.

⁸⁵ *Georgics* 4.564.

⁸⁶ For a recent advocacy of this argument see Gale 2003.

⁸⁷ Given that the physical seals on which poetic *sphragides* are modelled are made of wax, they are in a sense the ideal literary context in which to evoke an apian entity.

adjective that he has just finished applying to honey on numerous occasions. So Virgil's Parthenope is therefore surely μελίγηρυς, if not morphologically apian. Note, moreover, that Virgil describes Parthenope as having *me...alebat...studiis florentem* "nourished me, efflorescent in my studies," the floral imagery of which could be said to evoke bees harvesting nectar for the making of honey, and the verb of which could be said to put us in mind of *ala*, which refers to all kinds of wings, including those of bees, as often in the fourth *Georgic*.⁸⁸

Poetry and Rebirth: An Orphic Conceptual Cluster in the Boutes Episode

So the scenario of Orpheus' confrontation with the Sirens and Boutes' subsequent bound overboard yields a nexus of elements formally equivalent to those of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. But does our Argonautic episode share both of the significances that I have argued are simultaneously and interdependently at work in the latter? I would argue that it does. To begin with reincarnation, we might interpret Boutes' near-death experience as an attenuated rebirth. Several elements of the situation indicate that it warrants being so conceived. For one thing, as we have already seen, Orpheus' music is an antidote for death, as in the case of his (initial) recuperation of Eurydice, and in the case of the Pythagorean concept of the music of his lyre as an expedient to the afterlife for the soul. With reference to Orpheus' expression of his musical capacity in his clash with the Sirens in particular, remember that this scenario is illustrated in funerary contexts, presumably with the understanding that it possesses a post-mortem meaning,

⁸⁸ The involvement of Sirius in *Georgics* 4 might also be in part an allusion to the Sirens, whose name Hesychius tentatively connects with that of the star. However there are reasons on account of which Virgil mentions Sirius. See Hawkins 2006: 79 on the connection between Sirius and Osiris, the transition of whose soul into the Apis bull is conceivably something of a *bougonia*.

in the same way that Orpheus himself facilitates the soul's journey in other cases of mortuary iconography.

In fact the Sirens themselves are variously associated with the afterlife, cases in point being their role in the myth of Er, their reputation for mourning the dead, and their routine appearance in funerary art.⁸⁹ Their apparent apian aspect is presumably involved here, given the extensive association between bees, death and rebirth with which we have become quite familiar.⁹⁰

Another indication that it is appropriate to consider the Argonautic Boutes' nearly fatal marine plunge a modified rebirth is that in this episode's aforementioned correspondent, Lycurgus' brother Boutes is driven mad by Dionysus and makes a lethal leap into a spring of water. We do not hear anything of this Boutes being reborn or attaining the afterlife, but remember that this narrative is in turn related to that of the quasi-aurine Dionysus being driven into the sea by Lycurgus, as well as that of the same god's auriform death and attendant rebirth, a myth that is recurrently designated as being somehow Orphic, and which explicitly relates a process of rebirth along the lines of that described by the Orphic-Dionysiac *lamellae*, in which the initiate transforms into bull, leaps into milk, and is reborn a god. Orpheus' Argonautic companion Boutes seems to be experiencing something similar.

From a diachronic perspective, the fact that Boutes is rescued by Aphrodite also points to an underlying theme of rebirth. From an immediate, synchronic point of view, the situation is

⁸⁹ See Appendix B.

⁹⁰ Compare Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 64-5.

basically sexual, as is Aphrodite's motivation for rescuing Paris and conveying him to Helen's bedchamber in *Iliad* 3. However in delivering these heroes, Aphrodite is acting in her capacity of reflex of the Indo-European dawn goddess, who not only saves but also immortalizes the endangered protégés with whom she absconds.⁹¹

The fact that we are in an Orphic context might also point to an eschatological angle to the selection of Aphrodite as the goddess who rescues Boutes. A lead tablet from Selinus, very much like the Orphic gold tablets with respect to both physical format and literary content, assimilates Aphrodite to Persephone, the staple goddess of death and rebirth, as do the Orphic tablets, several of which are also from Sicily.⁹² How interesting that Aphrodite lifts the onomastically bovine Boutes from the sea into which he has leapt—an action ultimately homologous with the Orphic initiate becoming a bull and leaping into milk in the text of the gold tablet from Pelinna—and removes him to Lilybaeum—which is quite close to Selinus, both being in the province of Trapani—and that she does so precisely in conjunction with a grand display of Orphic musical exertion.

It seems to me, therefore, that there might be something Orphic involved in the fact that it is specifically Aphrodite who grants Boutes an attenuated rebirth in textual contiguity to Orpheus'

⁹¹ On the extent to which the salvific and erotic components of the mythological dossier of the Indo-European dawn goddess inform the composition of narratives involving Aphrodite, see Nagy 1990b, Boedeker 1974, and Suter 1987.

⁹² Kingsley 1995: 270-1. The amalgamation of Aphrodite and Persephone in an Orphic context might involve the fact that both goddesses have inherited aspects of the Indo-European dawn goddess; this is especially the case for the Persephone of Orphic mythology: the Orphic narrative of her rape by her father Zeus derives from the mythological dossier of the Indo-European dawn goddess. See Jackson 2006b: 91.

moment in the Argonautic limelight, and in geographical proximity to locations the Orphic communities of which we know identified Aphrodite with Persephone. The Sirens' island, moreover, was traditionally situated near southwestern Italy, and so in the vicinity of Locri, the iconographical traditions of which also combine Aphrodite with Persephone, and which exported a considerable amount of artwork to Selinus.⁹³

It might also be worth noting that Aphrodite assumes her death-defying role in the *Argonautica* in what I have shown to be a multifariously apian context. The chorus of Euripides' *Hippolytus* likens her to a bee in reference to an instance of rebirth.⁹⁴

βροντῶ γὰρ ἀμφιπύρῳ
 τοκάδα τὰν διγόνοιο Βάκ-
 χου νυμφευσαμένα πότμῳ
 φονίῳ κατηύνασεν.
 δεινὰ γὰρ τὰ πάντ' ἐπιπνεῖ, μέλισσα δ' οἴ-
 α τις πεπόταται

She gave in marriage to fulgurous thunder the mother of twice-born Bacchus, and put her to bed with a murderous destiny. Awesome, she exhales upon all, and she flits like a bee.

Note that although Aphrodite is immediately portrayed as an ill-intentioned killer in this passage, the result of her provocation of Semele's erotic impulses are ultimately the opposite of lethal: rather, Dionysus Digenes is born a second time from Semele's ashen remains, or rather he is reborn upon emerging from Zeus' thigh, into which he is stitched after having been extracted from Semele's incinerated womb. Surely the association of the bee with death and rebirth is

⁹³ Kingsley 1995: 270-1.

⁹⁴ *Hippolytus* 560-4. Compare the aforementioned scholiast's spiritual interpretation of the previous reference to bees in the *Hippolytus*.

involved in this simile.⁹⁵ And of course Aphrodite will bring about the ultimately regenerative death of this tragedy's eponym Hippolytus, whom Theseus identifies as an Orphic, and whose mortal end is triggered by the onrush of a bull. But Hippolytus' taurine demise, as we have already seen, is the beginning of a new stage existence as Virbius.

So much for an element of rebirth in Apollonius' Siren episode. What about the poetic significance that I have ascribed to Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex? Poetry is decidedly at work in Orpheus' contest with the Sirens. And a contest it is, one in which the Sirens, having lost, hurl themselves to their deaths,⁹⁶ the penalty assigned to losers of other poetic competitions in Greek mythology and elsewhere in Indo-European.⁹⁷ Of course the Sirens are rather depicted in this instance as more or less antitheses of poets, as they are in the *Odyssey*, robbing heroes of their homecoming and causing them to perish prematurely, instead of extending their life beyond the grave through song and accomplishing their *nostos* in epic hexameter. But in other cases the Sirens are evoked as positive representatives of poetic prowess, multiforms, rather than foils, of the Muses.⁹⁸ An interesting example that I have not seen mentioned in treatments of the Siren's relationship with the Muses is Plutarch's description of Archimedes' source of intellectual enthusiasm.⁹⁹ This entity, alternately identified as a Siren and as a Muse, hovers somewhere between the destructive Sirens of Homeric and Argonautic tradition, and the inspirational Muses,

⁹⁵ Barrett 1964: 266 denies the simile any profound significance whatsoever, but others do see a deeper meaning at work here. So Anagnostou-Laoutides 2006: 306 fn. 63, following Dietrich 1974: 120 fn. 311.

⁹⁶ *Orphic Argonautica* 1284-90.

⁹⁷ West 2005: 47.

⁹⁸ Holford-Strevens 2006: 22. I do not agree with Pollard 1952, who considers the tradition of the Sirens as equivalent to the Muses to be only late and lacking in authenticity. Certainly some manifestations of their relationship are artificial, but it seems to me that the foundation is genuine.

⁹⁹ *Marcellus* 17.6.

for it causes Archimedes to atrophy because he is so obsessed with his discoveries that he ceases to tend to his health, but as a result of this self-negligent focus he achieves many astounding insights.

Elsewhere Siren and Muse are simply identical, as in the line of Alcman in which the one is in apposition to the other.¹⁰⁰ In fact the Homeric Sirens attempt to effect just such an identification, describing themselves to Odysseus in the precise terms otherwise applied to the Muses.¹⁰¹ In the same way that the Muses are connected with bees and honey, the Sirens' apian aspect, although to be linked in part to their funerary dimension, must also have something to do with their poetic capacity.¹⁰²

Finally, it seems to me that in Boutes' irrepressible attraction to the song of the Sirens we have a reflex of the hereditary relationship between cows and poetry with which we are now familiar. In fact this is not the only occasion on which the Sirens are connected with cows. According to Lycophron,¹⁰³ the Neapolitans perform an annual cow sacrifice for Parthenope. In light of this rite, it is perhaps worth noting that Neapolitan didrachms display a female head on the obverse, and a bull with a humanoid face on the reverse. These figures have been identified as Parthenope and her father Acheloos, who is often represented as a bull.¹⁰⁴ If this is correct, we might

¹⁰⁰ Campbell 1982-93: 2.418.

¹⁰¹ Pucci 1998: 6-7.

¹⁰² Compare Germain 1962. Even the wax used to block their voices could originally stem from an association with, rather than an opposition to their song. Roessel 1990 argues for Sulpicia's deployment of wax as a symbol of poetry in the name of Cerinthus. See also Erycius, *Palatine Anthology* 7.36.4-6.

¹⁰³ *Alexandra* 720.

¹⁰⁴ K. Rutter 1979: 44-5.

consider that the Neapolitans chose to juxtapose Parthenope with her boomorphic father on account of an appreciation of her apparent affinity for bovines. It appears as though the Sirens allure cows time and again.

The involvement of Aphrodite in Boutes' adventure might also be significant with respect to its poetic dimension. I have already discussed the Vedic myth of the liberation of the dawn cows, in which one of the agents of the cows' release is often the dawn goddess Uṣas herself. Recall, moreover, that the emancipation of the imprisoned dawn cows is often accompanied by a discharge of contained honey. In light of the fact that the Vedic dawn cows and the honey with which they are associated are both symbols of poetic inspiration, perhaps the Indo-European ancestor of this narrative, which has many Greek reflexes (including that of Herakles, Geryon and the solar cattle of Erytheia over which Boutes' son Eryx and Herakles quarrel!) informs the salvation of the onomastically bovine and occupationally apicultural Boutes by Aphrodite, one of the Greek descendants of the Indo-European dawn goddess.

In fact Boutes' seaward plunge and subsequent salvation take place shortly after dawn,¹⁰⁵ as is also the case in Homeric cattle narratives owing something to Indo-European auroral-solar mythology.¹⁰⁶ This would not be the only instance in which Aphrodite's hereditary relationship with poetry, which she shares with her Indic correlate Uṣas, manifests itself in connection with

¹⁰⁵ Apollonius 4.885.

¹⁰⁶ Note that in addition to Boutes, son of Telamon, there is also another Argonaut, Ἐριβώτης, son of (the same or another?) Teleon. Could this Eribótes' name mean or have meant 'Auroral cowherd' (see Janda's aforementioned analysis of (H)ερίβοια)? Note that in Boutes' paternity we have yet another combination of βουῦς and *tel- in a quasi-eschatological context.

cows: Aphrodite comes upon Anchises as he is playing his lyre in the cattle stable on Ida,¹⁰⁷ much in the same way as she grasps the bovine Boutes while Orpheus is striking this same instrument for all he is worth.¹⁰⁸

In sum, the magnetic influence that the apian Sirens, despite honey-voiced Orpheus' attempt to intervene, possess over the apicultural and bovine Boutes appears to be informed on the one hand by an Orphic narrative of bovine death and rebirth, and on the other by the conceptual and semiotic concatenation of cow and poetry, the two significations that I have ascribed to Virgil's likewise Orphic, bovine and apian Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. In enticing Boutes from the Argo and toward themselves, the Sirens are therefore simply bringing the cow home.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 79-80.

¹⁰⁸ Remember that Nonnos approximates both Eos and Aphrodite to cows (*Dionysiaca* 15). For depictions of female lyre players that apparently represent Aphrodite herself see Maas and Snyder 1989: 242 fn. 97.

¹⁰⁹ Pascal Quignard 2008: 26 expresses his appreciation of the musico-poetic significance of Boutes' leap when he says in his *Boutès*: "J'approche du secret. Qu'est-ce-que la musique originaire? Le désir de se jeter à l'eau."

CHAPTER 4

The Ṛbhus Create a Cow:

A Vedic Correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*Bougonia* Complex

The last three chapters have provided us with scenarios in Greek mythico-religious narrative arguably owing something of their composition to the same traditional configuration of elements that inspires Vergil's combination of Orpheus with *bougonia*. Although I have endeavoured to demonstrate that a connection with Orpheus can be interpreted in the cases in which he is not actually present, the fact remains that Orpheus himself is an overt participant only in the event of his poetry contest with the Sirens, during which the onomastically bovine and occupationally apicultural Boutes undergoes his ordeal. However, I think that one remaining situation can bring Orpheus into more precise contact with the *bougonia* than those we have considered so far.

It is perhaps something of a paradox that in order to access this ultimately proximate comparandum to Virgil's approximation of Orpheus to the *bougonia* we need to step outside of the Graeco-Roman cultural sphere and travel to Vedic India. And yet in light of the clarification that Vedic literature has yielded in several preceding sections of this study, we should not be so surprised that the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex finds its decisive correspondent in that textual tradition. It is therefore with complete methodological confidence that I proceed in this chapter to promote the comparative evidence from an auxiliary role to one in which it is the centre of attention.

Recycling Souls: The Etymology and Semantics of Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú-

Deferring to Appendix A a linguistic analysis of Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú-, I here limit myself to resuming what I have already mentioned: both of these names are soundly argued to derive from the root **h₃erb^h-* ‘turn,’ and both might reflect a common onomastic antecedent that we could reconstruct (without insisting on the particulars) as **H₃r^héus*. As to why Orpheus and his Vedic brethren might have been so named, remember that a diversity of Orphic texts consistently imagine the process of transmigration as a wheel, usually referred to as a κύκλος. The latter, based on another Indo-European root meaning ‘turn,’ **k^uelh_x-*, consists of a reduplicated formation, **k^ue-k^ulh_x-o-*, the morphology of which is mimetic of the functional cyclicity of the device that this word designates. It is surely significant for the Orphic κύκλος that the Samanic religions, famous for their doctrine of reincarnation, which they refer to as *saṃsāra* ‘flowing together,’ often describe the latter as a *cakra* ‘wheel,’ sometimes specifically *brahmacakra* ‘wheel of Brahmā,’ Brahmā being the god of creation. In fact *cakra* is cognate with Sanskrit κύκλος.¹

Given that the precise notions and terminology of Samanic reincarnation ideology are not present in the Vedas, there is no chance of finding the Vedic Ṛbhus connected with them. Nor do other texts have much to offer us in this instance, since the Ṛbhus surface only occasionally in them. However, it strikes me as worth noting that in Classical Sanskrit literature the Ṛbhus, sometimes

¹ The form **k^ue-k^ulh_x-o-* is also the source of Modern English *wheel*, as is apparent in Old English *hweogol*. Roider 1979 proposed an Irish equivalent to *saṃsāra*, but his argument has been called into question by Dröge 1982.

just a single Ṛbhu, figure(s) as the son(s) of Brahmā, the deity whom we have just seen to be intrinsically involved with the *cakra* of *saṃsāra*.²

Furthermore, although references to *saṃsāra* and its wheel do not occur in the Vedas, the concepts are to be found in the Brāhmaṇas, and the attendant nomenclature in the Upaniṣads. It is therefore feasible that such an ideology, or at least some precursor to it, already existed at the point in time during which the Vedas were being composed, so that we might suppose that its absence in these texts is indicative of extra-Vedic rather than post-Vedic status. The variegated nature of references to the afterlife in the Vedas certainly suggests that Vedic civilization was one characterized by religious pluralism,³ even if the contemporary texts do not provide a comprehensive representation of all the available options. Indeed no few studies have endeavoured to demonstrate that correlates to Samanic reincarnation concepts can be perceived in the Vedas.⁴

Although to the best of my knowledge no one has argued for Vedic hints of a metempsychotic *cakra*, if we conceive of both the Samanic *cakra* and its apparent Orphic comparandum as reflexes of a common, hereditary tradition, we must necessarily understand that their joint ancestor was conceived long before the Vedas were composed. It is perhaps not so odd that the notion was not incorporated into the belief systems that made their way into the Vedas. Orphic ideology is similarly marginal compared to the more standard varieties of ancient Greek religion.

² E.g. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 4.8.1.

³ Butzenberger 1998: 2, in which article the author resumes the discussion of his 1996 article.

⁴ For just one of the many essays working within this school of thought see Schmidt 1997: 207-34. For a study of the aspects of the eschatological traditions of India and Iran that can be traced back to a common heritage see Ara 2008.

Some would rather attribute the similarity between the Orphic κύκλος and the Samanic *cakra* to processes of cultural transmission, but evidence for substantial interaction between Greece and India prior to the date of our earliest Orphic texts is rather sparse.⁵ Furthermore, other even earlier Hellenic comparanda to Samanic notions of reincarnation have been proposed, one of which I suggest is of particular relevance to our topic: Nick Allen perceives Indo-European heritage at work in both the conventional techniques by which the *cakra* is depicted in Buddhist art and in what he suggests are visually and functionally compatible features in Homer's ekphrasis of Achilles' shield.⁶

To build on Allen's analysis, I think that it is significant for us that the rim of Achilles' shield is decorated with Okeanos, a morphologically circular deity who was associated with cycles of life and death,⁷ and who was rather important in Orphic thought,⁸ presumably for precisely that reason. It is of course Okeanos' concentric shape that makes him suitable for illustration on the shield's circumference, much like the panel of elders presiding over a lawsuit, which is depicted as sitting ἱερῶ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ "in a sacred circle."⁹ The Orphic hymn to this god explicitly references his shape, referring to him as ὃς περικυμαίνει γαίης περιτέρμονα κύκλον "he who surges around the binding circumference of the earth."¹⁰

⁵ See Allen 2005, which is in response to McEvelley 2002.

⁶ Allen 2006: 221-3. Yoshida 1964: 5-15 paved the way in proposing an Indo-European component to the ekphrasis of Achilles' shield. Rees and Rees 1961: 189 note the similarity between Achilles and Cú Chulainn's shields.

⁷ On Okeanos as a source of genesis and of regeneration see Patton 2007: 56-64. Note the presence of Okeanos on the sarcophagus illustrating the death and birth of a man whose soul is represented as a butterfly, which is often in alternation with the bee. See Mitchell 1905: 693; Zanker and Ewald 2012: 54.

⁸ For a recent treatment of Orphic Okeanos see G. Nagy 2011.

⁹ *Iliad* 18.503.

¹⁰ Athanassakis 1977: 104 line 3 of 83.

Okeanos' roundness is a basic component of Greek cosmography, but perhaps it was especially common to recognize it in Orphic contexts. With respect to the importance of Okeanos in Orphic tradition, I draw attention to an observation made by Gregory Nagy, who points out that Plato juxtaposes what he considers to be equivalent Homeric and Orphic passages describing Okeanos and Tethys as primordial progenitors,¹¹ as though suggesting that any serious discussion of Oceanic mythology automatically entails recourse to Orphic traditions.¹² In fact in the *Orphic Argonautica*, the list of gods whom Orpheus invokes after having sacrificed a bull, although semantically beginning with Nereus and other marine deities, syntactically commences with a reference to Okeanos, and next identifies Tethys:¹³

Ὠκεανοῦ μεδέοντες ἀλικλύστοιό τε πόντου
ἐμβύθιοι μάκαρες, καὶ ὅσοι ψαμαθώδεας ακτὰς
ναίεθ' ἀλικροκάλους καὶ **Τηθύος** ἕχαστον ὕδωρ

Rulers of **Okeanos** and the surging sea, blessed ones who dwell in the deep, and those who inhabit pebbled, gravely shores and **Tethys'** remotest water...

Although Orpheus does not describe Okeanos and Tethys as primaeval parents, perhaps their sequential primacy is to be understood as an iconic method of identifying them as such. If so, we have some indication that the tradition of Okeanos and Tethys as original generators might have been especially associated with Orphic texts. Perhaps Achilles' shield, encircled as it is with Okeanos, can similarly be thought of as having possessed an Orphic equivalent in which the κύλκος formed by this aquatic divinity represented the process of metempsychosis.

¹¹ *Cratylus* 402b-c.

¹² G. Nagy 2009: 250-3, 262-3. See also G. Nagy 2011. On the relationship between Plato and Orphic traditions see Bernabé 2011a.

¹³ *Orphic Argonautica* 333-5.

As I have already conceded, the Ṛbhus are not connected with *samsāra*, let alone its *cakra*.

However, some of the feats they perform could be said to reflect similar notions. In one of their most celebrated feats, the Ṛbhus make their decrepit parents young again.¹⁴ It would not do to equate this act of rejuvenation with one of rebirth, but perhaps it could be said to be isofunctional with the latter. Furthermore, the Ṛbhus' parental rejuvenation is mentioned in conjunction with another of their marvelous achievements, this time one that is in fact quite literally an act of reincarnation:¹⁵

*nís cārmaṇa ṛbhavo gām apiṃśata
sām vatsénāsrjatā mātāram pūnaḥ
saudhanvanāsaḥ suapasyāyā naro
jīvrī yūvānā pitārākṛṇotana.*

From a hide, Ṛbhus, you crafted a cow [and] reunited the mother with her calf. Sons of Sudhavan, skillful heroes, you rejuvenated your elderly parents.

There is nothing cyclic about the way in which the Ṛbhus' act of bovine craftsmanship is portrayed, but elsewhere the Ṛbhus are connected with the creation of circular objects. So Soma is asked to accomplish the poets' wish *ṛbhúr ná ráthiyam návam* "as an Ṛbhu [accomplishes] a new chariot wheel,"¹⁶ and Agni is exhorted to bend toward the sacrifice as the Ṛbhus bend the spoke of a wheel (*nemím*).¹⁷

¹⁴ The deed is also mentioned at *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.4, 1.110.8, 1.111.1, 4.33.3, 4.35.5, 4.36.3, and alluded to at 1.161.7.

¹⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 1.110.8.

¹⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 9.21.6a.

¹⁷ *Ṛg Veda* 8.75.5a.

Furthermore, another one of the Ṛbhus' most illustrious deeds is their creation of a chariot for the Aśvins.¹⁸ The etymology of the Sanskrit word for chariot, *rátha-*, a derivative of **ret-* 'turn,' indicates that this vehicle was essentially defined by its wheels; Latin *rota* and Irish *roth*, both also reflexes of **ret-*, refer solely to the latter. Several verses of the *Ṛg Veda* draw attention to the wheels and circular motion of the Aśvins' chariot. One such passage, which contains reflexes of no less than three roots meaning 'turn,' is especially emphatic: *ráthas* (< **ret-*) *tricakráḥ* (in which *-cakráḥ* < **k^helh_x-*) *pári vartate* (< **uert-*; compare Latin *verto*) "the three-wheeled chariot revolves."¹⁹ Elsewhere the Ṛbhus themselves, here apparently in a chariot of their own, or perhaps bringing the Aśvins theirs, are exhorted to turn (*vartayantu*) it toward the poet.²⁰

It is significant for our purposes that the Ṛbhus fashion this vehicle for the Aśvins, since the latter have a penchant for rescuing the imperilled, rejuvenating the aged and even revitalizing the dead, roles that are expressed in their byname *Násatya-*, cognate, inter alia, with *νέομαι* 'return home,' *νόστος* 'homecoming' and *Νέστωρ*.²¹ Although Rebha is only *mamṛvāṃsam* "as though dead" when the Aśvins rescue him,²² another verse says that the Aśvins *nikhātam/ úd ūpathur*

¹⁸ Mentioned at *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.3, 1.111.1, 1.161.3, 10.39.12.

¹⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 4.36.1b.

²⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 7.48.1d.

²¹ The pioneering work on this subject is that of Frame 1978: *passim*, who returns to Nestor in particular in his 2009 magnum opus. For a recent survey of the issue see P. Jackson 2006b: 96-109.

²² *Ṛg Veda* 10.39.9b.

“raised one who was buried,”²³ and elsewhere they *új jīvása* “revitalize” Śyāva, who has been cut up into three pieces.²⁴

The description of the Aśvins saving Vandana is of particular interest to us: they are said to raise him from the state of being buried in the lap of the dread goddess Nirṛti ‘Destruction.’²⁵ In another hymn, the heartbroken Purūravas informs Urvaśī that he is on the verge of heading off *ánāvṛt* (in which *-vṛt* < **uert-* ‘turn’) “with no return,”²⁶ and then goes on to imagine himself as being situated in Nirṛti’s lap. By lifting Vandana from this same odious location, the Aśvins therefore appear to be doing nothing less than literally putting him back into circulation.

The Aśvins often come to the rescue in one of a number of salvific vehicles, including their chariot, with which they recover Bhujyu.²⁷ In fact when the poet calls upon the chariot of the Aśvins, his life apparently depends on it (*jīváse*).²⁸ This vivifying aspect of the Aśvins’ chariot is also suggested in the following simile: *yuvám cyávānaṃ sanáyaṃ yáthā rátham/ púnar yúvānaṃ caráthāya takṣathuḥ* “you [Aśvins] made aged Cyavana young again like [one makes] a chariot so that he was able to move.”²⁹ Although minus the chariot, the poet is drawing on the same

²³ *Rg Veda* 1.117.12c-d.

²⁴ *Rg Veda* 1.117.24d.

²⁵ *Rg Veda* 1.117.5.

²⁶ *Rg Veda* 10.95.14a.

²⁷ *Rg Veda* 1.117.15.

²⁸ *Rg Veda* 1.119.1b.

²⁹ *Rg Veda* 10.39.4a-b.

formulae when he says of the Ṛbhus: *pitārā...púnar yúnānā caráthāya táksatha* “you made your parents young again so that they were able to move.”³⁰

I propose that the emphatically wheeled, revitalizing chariot crafted by the Ṛbhus for the Ásvins is the Vedic correlate of the Orphic κύκλος. In fact Simplicius tells us that Orpheus’ wheel of reincarnation is also perpetuated, if not fashioned, by a divine craftsman:³¹

ενδεθῆναι δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ τὸ κατ’ ἀξίαν πᾶσιν ἀφορίζοντος **δημιουργοῦ θεοῦ** ἐν τῷ τῆς εἰμαρμένης τε καὶ γενέσεως **τροχῷ** οὐδὲν ἀδύνατον ἀπαλλαγῆναι κατὰ τὸν Ὀρφέα μὴ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐκεῖνους ἰλεωσάμενον “οἷς ἐπέταξεν” ὁ Ζεὺς “**κύκλου τ’ ἀλλῆξαι καὶ ἀμψῶσαι κακότητος**” τὰς ἀνθρωπίνας ψυχάς.

[Ixion] was bound by the **demiurgic deity**, who apportions to everyone what they deserve, to the **wheel** of Destiny and of genesis, from which, according to Orpheus, it is impossible to attain release, unless one propitiates the gods “whom” Zeus “ordered to cease from the **cycle** and to slake” human souls “from misery.”³²

This description also recalls an aspect of the Ṛbhus’ immortalization, to be discussed in Appendix A: in much the same way as Simplicius has Orpheus claim that the favour of the gods is the key to immortality, it is through having acquired the *devānām...sakhyaṁ* “friendship of the gods” that the Ṛbhus gain access to the Soma sacrifice.³³ I therefore interpret the Ṛbhus’ divinization as their cessation from the very cycle of rebirth with which I have argued them to be implicated when they rejuvenate their parents, fashion a new, live cow out of the hide of a dead one, and craft the rolling chariot that is one of the vehicles in which the Ásvins hasten to succour

³⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 4.36.3c-d.

³¹ Heiberg 1894: 377 lines 12-19.

³² The alliteration of my sequence “slake...souls” is an attempt to do something to maintain in English the wordplay between ἀμψῶσαι and ψυχάς.

³³ *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.2c; compare 11b.

those in danger, the elderly, and the dead.³⁴ The Ṛbhus are thus both operators and graduates of their cycle, Revolvers and Evolvers alike.

Orpheus also participates in his own transmigratory κύκλος in the myth of Er, a text to which Virgil had substantial recourse when fabricating the eschatology of *Aeneid* 6.³⁵ Among the Orphic elements involved in the myth of Er is the almost dizzyingly rotational Ἀνάγκης ἄτρακτον “spindle of Necessity,” at which the Moirai generate new life cycles (περιόδου).³⁶ In this spindle we have Plato’s adaptation of the Orphic κύκλος, which Virgil in turn converts into the *orbis* described by Anchises,³⁷ a translation that fortuitously results in a latent *figura etymologica*: remember that Ὀρφεύς and *orbis* both derive from **h₃erb^h*-.

In addition to Ananke’s spindle, however, I suspect that Plato also makes a very splendid allusion to the Orphic κύκλος in his description of Orpheus’ imminent reincarnation as witnessed by Er, the discussion of which I pursue in Appendix B.

Crafty Poets and Poetic Craftsmen: Approximating Orpheus and the Ṛbhus’ Activities

Having established Orpheus and the Ṛbhus’ common onomastic heritage, I turn now to another issue: the seeming discrepancy between Orpheus’ predominantly poetic persona and the fact that

³⁴ Compare *Mahābhārata* 3.247.22, where Ṛbhus *na kalpaparivarteṣu parivartanti* “do not turn with the turning of the *kalpas*.” A *kalpa* is a subset of the Indic cyclical systematization of time.

³⁵ The fact has long been recognized but recently resumed with a number of novel observations by Ahl 2007 in his endnotes to Book 6, first on p. 365 and then *passim* thereafter. In fact Virgil even appears to mimic the format of Plato’s text, Book 6 containing the epic’s only instance of dialogue. See Feeney 1986.

³⁶ *Republic* 617d.

³⁷ On the *orbis* of *Aeneid* 6 see Clark 1975.

the Ṛbhus are chiefly portrayed as craftsmen.³⁸ In fact a pervasive semantic flux between poetic and artisanal creativity is elaborated in many cultures of Indo-European heritage.

Something of this notion is manifest in Greek ποιήτης itself, derived as it is from ποιέω ‘make.’³⁹ Celtic words for poet are more explicit: Irish *cerd* means both ‘craft(sman)’ and ‘poet(ry).’⁴⁰ As for Germanic, Old English *scop* is ultimately related to the verb *sciepan* ‘shape,’⁴¹ and Old Norse has expressions such as *ljóðasmiðr* ‘word-smith.’⁴² The divine poet Bragi himself is referred to as a *frumsmið bragar* ‘primordial smith of poetry.’⁴³

This last expression is inherited in both its imagery and in its diction. The shared base of the alternating names of the Vedic divine poet, Bṛhaspati and Brāhmaṇaspati, is cognate with that of Bragi’s, all from a root **b^hreǵ^h-*,⁴⁴ and Bṛhaspati is likewise compared to a smith when he is said to have forged the gods into being.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Saint Patrick’s *Lorica* offers protection *fri*

³⁸ Craftsmanship is also a significant factor in the competing effort to link the Rbus with the Elves, who possess an artisanal aspect; see Haudry 1987b: 189-92, and add the observation made by Dronke 1997: 261-2.

³⁹ Watkins 1995: 117 compares the semantic development of Welsh *prydydd* ‘poet,’ cognate with Irish *creth* ‘poetry,’ both from **k^her-* ‘do, make.’ The Sanskrit reflex of this root repeatedly describes the Ṛbhus’ activity.

⁴⁰ G. Nagy 1990c: 57, 118 and Watkins 1995: 76 note that this word is cognate with Greek κέρδος ‘gain,’ which is associated with poetry at *Isthmian* 2.6, where Pindar describes the Muse as φιλοκερδής. This lexical uniformity of poet and craftsman is matched by simultaneously poetic and artisanal figures in Irish lore. A good representative is Finn, on whom see J. Nagy 1985: 33-34. For Amairgen, see Ford 1990: 27-40.

⁴¹ Matasović 1996: 153.

⁴² M. West 2007: 39-40. Old English has an invective equivalent in *wrohtsmið* ‘insult-smith.’ The Anglo-Saxon poet Deor compares himself to the smith Weland; see Foley 1999: 263-70 for a comparison of the techniques of Deor’s verse and Homeric epic.

⁴³ Faulkes 1998: 1.19.

⁴⁴ Matasović 2009: 79.

⁴⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 10.72.2.

brichtu (< *b^herǵ^h-) *ban agus gobann agus druad* “against the **spells** of women and **smiths** and druids.”⁴⁶

Elsewhere the equivalence of poet and artisan is articulated by means of images of textile craftsmanship.⁴⁷ Greek ῥαψωδός, designating a recitational poet whose *métier*, from a diachronic perspective, consists of fabricating idiosyncratic combinations of traditional poetic material, derives from ῥάπτω ‘stitch.’⁴⁸ The process of poetic composition can also be portrayed as weaving.⁴⁹ The significance of Helen’s weaving in the *Iliad* famously hovers somewhere between textile and textual.⁵⁰ This concept also manifests itself on the level of diction; Pindar, for instance, exhorts the lyre to ἐξύφαινε...μέλος “weave a song.”⁵¹

The Ṛbhus participate in this conceptual intersection of poet and craftsman.⁵² They are, for example, characterized as *dhīrāso* “endowed with poetic insight,” from the verbal root *dhī-* ‘perceive.’⁵³ The poet is conceived of as possessing either enhanced vision or paradoxically compromised eyesight, sometimes lacking it altogether, in numerous cultures of Indo-European

⁴⁶ Stokes and Strachan 1901-3: 2.357. As Watkins 1995: 152 notes, the syntagm *brichtu ban* is both formulaic and archaic, the most precise and most impressive comparandum being the phrase *briptom bnanom* in a Gaulish inscription from Larzac.

⁴⁷ The issue was first broached by Durante 1976: 159-66, and given further impetus by Schmitt 1967: 298-300. See also Matasović 1996: 136-38, 150-51.

⁴⁸ For an extensive discussion of rhapsodes and their diachrony see G. Nagy 1990c: 28; 1996a: 80-93; 1996b: 61-76; 2002: *passim*.

⁴⁹ M. West 2007: 36-8. Tuck 2006: 539-50 makes a very interesting argument as to the practical dimension that could be said to inform this concept.

⁵⁰ Clader 1976: 6-9.

⁵¹ *Nemean* 4.44-5; compare Bacchylides’ ὑφάνας ὕμνον (Campbell 1982-93: 4.138 lines 9-10).

⁵² Many studies draw attention to this aspect of the Ṛbhus’ characterization, for example Haudry 1987b: 183-4; Minkowski 1989: 189; Moisson 1993: 305, 325-6.

⁵³ *Ṛg Veda* 4.36.7c.

descent. The notion is especially popular in Celtic. Irish *fili* ‘poet’ is cognate with the Welsh verb *gwelet* ‘see,’ and Welsh *awen* ‘inspiration,’ although often connected to *awel* ‘breath,’ might rather be related to Hittite *au(š)-* ‘see.’⁵⁴

The Ṛbhus’ poetic aspect is apparently quite prominent, since it is on this basis that Soma is equated with them: *ṛbhúr dhīra uśānā kāvīyena...viveda...apīciyaṃ gúhiyaṃ nāma gónām* “An Ṛbhu, endowed with poetic insight by Uśānā Kāvya, [Soma] found the secret, hidden name of the cows.”⁵⁵ As we have already seen, the name(s) and track of the cow(s), which the Vedic poets crave and which they are forever striving attain, are formulaic metonyms of poetic inspiration, with a Hellenic correspondent in the inverted hoof prints of Apollo’s cattle that Hermes ingeniously contrives.

Agni’s poetic capacity also brings him into juxtaposition with the Ṛbhus:⁵⁶

*ṛbhús cakra ṛḍiyaṃ cāru nāma
viśvāni devó vayūnāni vidvān
sasāsya cārma ghṛtāvat padāṃ vés
tād id agní rakṣati áprayuchan*

⁵⁴ Watkins 1995: 117, departing from Watkins 1963: 215-16. Watkins’ new etymology is corroborated by a passage of Gerald Cambrensis, who tells us that the *Awenyddion* receive their prophecies *in somnis per visiones* (*Description of Wales* 1.16). Llywarch Hen similarly seems to portray *awen* as a form of mental insight; for the passage in question see Ford 1974a: 82. However, the Welsh clearly thought that a connection with breath was equally valid. The Holy Bard of Brecon’s Ode to Saint David collocates *awen* and *awel*; for text see Morris-Jones and Parry-Williams 1933: 197 line 2. In *Preideu Annwn* the poet Gweir brings his *awen* into proximity with *oanadyl naw morwyn* “the **breath** of nine maidens;” for text see Haycock 2007: 435. This last situation should sound familiar to Classicists: as Hesiod tells us, ἐνέπνευσαν δέ μοι αὐδὴν/ θέσπιν “[the Muses] **breathed** into me a divine voice” (*Theogony* 31-2).

⁵⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 9.87.3.

⁵⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 3.5.6.

An Ṛbhu, the god who knows all knowledge, made a laudable, beautiful name. Agni diligently guards the skin of food rich in clarified butter, the track of the bird.

The *īḍiyam cāru nāma* “laudable, beautiful name” that Agni makes and the *padām vés* “track of the bird” that he guards are variants on the riddling formulae “name(s)/ track of cow(s); in fact elsewhere it is precisely the name and track of the cow with which Agni is rather associated.⁵⁷

For the equally poetic significance of the bird’s track compare the verse in which the *padām vés* “track of bird” is brought into proximity with the *ṛtāsya padām* “track of Truth,” which is guarded by *kavāyo* “poets” who also keep *gúhā nāmāni* “secret names.”⁵⁸

In fact poet and artisan have so thoroughly merged in the Ṛbhus’ identity that the items they fabricate are themselves produced by means of poetic inspiration. Since we shall return to that subject, for the moment I provide just a one example, a reference to the Ṛbhus’ celebrated quadruplication of the gods’ originally single drinking vessel that had been fashioned by the

⁵⁷ *Ṛg Veda* 4.5.3 Ahl 1991: 148-9 argues for a similar complex of riddle, bird, and feet as an allusion to metrical poetry in the mythology of the Sphinx. In light of the fact that this combination of elements has a Vedic parallel, it comes as no surprise that Katz 2006: 157-94 demonstrates that the Sphinx and her association with riddles are inherited from Indo-European. Compare M. West, 2007: 368. On the poetic symbolism of foot prints in Indic semiotics see G. Thompson 1995a and 1995b. In fact the usage of words for foot and their relatives as technical terms for units of verse in various Indo-European languages may also reflect an inherited tradition. See M. West 2007: 60; G. Thompson 1995a: 80, 1995b: 7 cautions that such a perspective can only go so far in explaining the synchronic complexities of the Indic situation. I would add to this discussion that numerical sequences of feet in particular appear to be associated with riddles alluding to poetry. The oldest extant iteration of the Sphinx’s riddle is probably ἔστι δίπουν ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ τετάρτων, οὗ μία φωνή/ καὶ τρίπων “There is a two-footed and four-footed and three-footed entity on the earth, which has one voice;” for text see M. West 2003: 40. With the latter compare the description of the Gāyatrī metre at *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 5.14.7: *gāyatrī asy ekapadī dvipadī tripadī catuṣpadī/ apad asi na hi padyase* “Gāyatrī, you are one-footed and two-footed and three-footed and four-footed and footless because you do not go about on foot,” and one of the riddles from *Hervarar Saga ok Heiðriks*, where Gestumblindi asks Heiðrik: *Hverir eru þeir tveir/ er tíu háfa fætr/ augu þriú/ ok ein hala* (Jónsson 1981: 2.50) “Who are the two that have ten feet, three eyes, and one tail?”, to which the answer is Óðinn riding his eight-legged steed Sleipnir. Óðinn, whose name is related to Old Norse *óðr* ‘poetry,’ is the Norse god of poetic inspiration. See Watkins 1995:118.

⁵⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 10.5.1-2, where *padām vés* is isometric with its occurrence at 3.5.6c. A similar cluster of elements also occurs at *Ṛg Veda* 1.177.1-2. See Thompson 1995a: 92-4; 1995b: 24-6.

Ṛbhus' rival-analogue Tvaṣṭṛ: *kimmáyaḥ svic camasá eṣá āsa/ yám kāvīyena catúro vicakrá*
 “Of what material was that cup that you quadruplicated **by means of poetic inspiration?**”⁵⁹

Elsewhere, the poetic aspect of the Ṛbhus' craftsmanship shifts from an instrumental role to an objective one, so that the fruit of their labour is itself a poem: *bráhma ṛbhávas tataksur* “the Ṛbhus fashioned a *brahman*.”⁶⁰ Sanskrit *bráhman*- ‘formulaic poetic utterance’ derives from **b^herǵ^h-*, a root that we have already seen to be associated with other poetic craftsmen. The poetic product of this creative act is emphasized by the semantic parameters of the verb according to which it is accomplished. As first observed by James Darmesteter, Sanskrit *taks-*, inherited from IE **tetk-*, is a semantically bivalent verb used to describe not only the construction of tactile items, but also the composition of verbal ones.⁶¹ So it is entirely appropriate that the Ṛbhus frequently act by means of this verb.

The Greek reflexes of **tetk-*, τέκτων ‘carpenter’ and its denominative verb τεκταίνομαι ‘fashion’ also occur in contexts in which poet and craftsman become amalgamated: Pindar refers to the ἐπέων κελαδενῶν, τέκτονες οἷα σοφοὶ ἄρμωσαν “resounding words that wise craftsmen have joined together,”⁶² in which the sequence ἐπέων...τέκτονες is *grosso modo* matched by *vácāṃsi...takṣam* “I fashion words.”⁶³ It is therefore no wonder that Sophocles calls the Muse

⁵⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 4.35.4.

⁶⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 10.80.7b.

⁶¹ Darmesteter 1878: 319-21; Schmitt 1967: 14, 296-8.

⁶² *Pythian* 3.113-14.

⁶³ *Ṛg Veda* 6.32.1d.

τεκτόναρχος.⁶⁴ The same *mélange* informs the Homeric and Hesiodic passages that collate poets and craftsmen;⁶⁵ Welsh notionally collapses the two professions in the expression *seiri gwawd/ cerdd* “carpenters of poetry.”⁶⁶

In fact according to Michael Estell, the Ṛbhus have inherited their affinity for the verb *takṣ-* from **H₃r^bh^héus*.⁶⁷ We have already seen Estell propose that Timotheus’ statement **πρῶτος ποικιλόμευος Ὀρ-/ φεὺς [χέλ]υν ἐτέκνωσεν** “Orpheus with his modulating music first sired the lyre” is to be related to the line Ἑρμῆς τοι **πρῶτιστα χέλυν τεκτῆνατ**’ αἰοιδόν “Hermes first fashioned the poet-seer’s lyre” in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the latter beautifully unifying the poet-craftsman interface by having Hermes craft a physical object, but one that has a poetic function. However, Estell does not simply suppose that the hymnic line is the antecedent on which Timotheus modeled his remark; rather, on the basis of the aforementioned Vedic verse *bráhma ṛbhávas tatakṣur* “the **Ṛbhus fashioned a brahman**,”⁶⁸ he suggests that both Timotheus and the hymnist’s line have been independently developed with reference to a traditional syntagm ***Ὀρφεὺς χέλυν τεκτῆνατο**.

To summarize and somewhat expand on Estell’s line of reasoning, in the hymn, a competing tradition of Hermes as the lyre’s inventor appears to have triggered a shift in subject,

⁶⁴ Jebb 1917: 1.111.

⁶⁵ *Odyssey* 17.375, *Works and Days* 25-6. For a discussion of these passages see G. Nagy 1990c: 56; 1999: 311; 1996b: 75 and 1996a: 90. The amalgamation of poetic and artisanal professions is hardly unique to Indo-European: the twin Howler Monkeys of the *Popol Vuh* are described as flautists, singers, writers, sculptors, jade-workers and smiths. See Christenson 2000: 70.

⁶⁶ I. Williams 1944: 7.

⁶⁷ Estell 1999: 331-2.

⁶⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 10.80.7b.

synchronically ousting Orpheus from his diachronic slot,⁶⁹ whereas Timotheus retains the formula's original agent but replaces τεκταίνομαι with a form of the phonetically similar verb τεκνοῶ, a substitution that Estell suggests was in the main metrically conditioned, but which also has the appeal of shifting the basic image of the crafting of the lyre to a more abstract one of Orpheus "begetting" it. If we accept Estell's argument, then we have evidence for an inherited concatenation of **H₃r^héus* with **tetk-*, perhaps even for a specific phrase something like **H₃r^héus* FASHION (**tetk-*) POETIC ITEM (χέλυν, *bráhma*). That Estell is right to trace both Timotheus' **πρῶτος** ποικιλόμουσος Ὀρ-/ φεῦς [χέλ]υν **ἐτέκνωσεν** and the hymn's line Ἐρμῆς τοι **πρῶτιστα** χέλυν **τεκτήνατ'** αἰοιδόν to a common Orphic source is corroborated by an Orphic *tertium comparationis*: φηγυνέην **πρῶτον τεκτήνατο** νῆα "[Athena] first fashioned an oaken ship."⁷⁰

In the phrase *bráhma ṛbhávas tataksur*, the Ṛbhus literally fashion poetry. In other instances, the objects that the Ṛbhus make, often by means of the poetically charged verb *taks-*, can be interpreted in the light of Vedic semiotics as symbols of poetry. Recall that Ṛbhus are said to fashion a chariot for the Ásvins. The chariot is a conventional metonym for poetry in the figurative lexicon of the *Ṛg Veda*. For example: *imāṃ te vācam vasūyánta āyáno/rátham ná dhīrah suápā atakṣiṣuḥ* "the sons of Āyu, keen on profit, fashioned this speech as a skilled

⁶⁹ Recall that we have already seen Orpheus as originator of the lyre.

⁷⁰ *Orphic Argonautica* 67. Athena's association with craftsmanship also surfaces on numerous occasions in Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus*. The description of her craftsmanship in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (12-13) might also be drawing on Orphic diction and imagery: **πρώτη** τέκτονας (< **tetk-*) ἄνδρας ἐπιχθονίους ἐδίδαξεν/ ποιῆσαι σατίνας τε καὶ ἄρματα ποικίλια (< **peik-*) χαλκῷ "she **first** taught mortal craftsmen to make cars and chariots decorated with bronze." The Ṛbhus fashion a chariot and often accomplish their creations by means of the verbs *taks-* (< **tetk-*) and *pis-* (< **peik-*).

worker, endowed with poetic insight, [fashions] a chariot.”⁷¹ The Ṛbhus are never directly implicated in these analogies, but they rub up against one such instance of the latter when the poet invokes the Aśvins to come in their *ráthaṃ yám vām ṛbhávaś cakrúr* “chariot, which the Ṛbhus made for [you].”⁷²

The comparative evidence indicates that the Vedic tradition of chariot as symbol for poetic composition has been inherited from the Indo-European semiotic repertoire, although the invention of the chariot proper postdates the dispersal of the proto-Indo-European ethnolinguistic community, so that its expression must have originally depended on other kinds of wheeled vehicles. Perhaps initially the focus was on the wheel itself: in Celtic, we have the Irish phrase *roth creth* ‘wheel of poetry,’ where *roth*, as mentioned above, is cognate with Sanskrit *rátha-* ‘chariot.’⁷³ As G. Nagy has argued, a similar concept informs the notion of the epic κύκλος.⁷⁴ In fact the Ṛbhus’ apparently poetic chariot might be said to have a specific Greek correspondent, if Martin West is correct in assuming that the authorship of the Epic Cycle was assigned to Orpheus.⁷⁵

This should all sound pretty familiar to Classicists, since Graeco-Roman literature also incorporates the chariot into poetic contexts. For just a couple of examples, Pindar situates

⁷¹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.130.6ab. Compare *etám vām stómam aśvināv akarma/ átaḥśāma bhṛgavo ná rátha* “We have made and fashioned this praise for you, Aśvins, as the Bhṛgus [make and fashion] a chariot” (*Ṛg Veda* 10.39.14).

⁷² *Ṛg Veda* 10.39.12.

⁷³ Matasović 1996: 162.

⁷⁴ G. Nagy 1996a: 38, 89-90; 1996b: 74-5.

⁷⁵ M. West 1983: 125.

himself in the chariot of the Muses (ἐν Μοισᾶν δίφρῳ),⁷⁶ and says that his patron Thorax yoked that same vehicle (ἔξευξεν ἄρμα Πιερίδων).⁷⁷ The etymology of ἄρμα is a contributing factor in the chariot's poetic dimension, deriving as it does from IE *ar- 'join,' the Greek verbal reflex of which, ἀραρίσκω, is the that with which Pindar's aforementioned craftsmen join their words. As G. Nagy has shown in great detail, other reflexes of *ar- are also connected with music and poetry: so ἁρμονία, and the name of Homer himself.⁷⁸

That we should interpret the Ṛbhus' chariot as a symbol for poetry is evident in the means by which they make it: *rátham yé cakrúh suvṛtam sucétaso/ ávihvarantam mánasas pári dhyáyā* "the wise ones made a smoothly rolling, unfaltering chariot by means of the **poetic insight of their mind**."⁷⁹ The poetic particularities of *dhī-* have been extensively studied.⁸⁰ As for *mánas-*, it is a nominal derivative of *men- 'think' and formally identical with Greek μένος, but more to the point here, it is therefore also related to Μνημοσύνη, mother of the Muses, and probably to Μοῦσα itself.⁸¹ It is appropriate that the Ṛbhus design this apparently poetic chariot for the Ásvins, keen as the latter are to gain poetic wisdom from Dadhyañc, a Vedic relative of Orpheus from whom this coveted knowledge can not be acquired until he has been decapitated and a horse's head replaces his own.⁸²

⁷⁶ *Olympian* 9.81.

⁷⁷ *Pythian* 10.65. Galjanić 2007: 185 adds an Empedoclean example to the dossier.

⁷⁸ G. Nagy 1999: 297-300; 1990c: 373; 1996a: 74; 1996b: 89-90; 2006.

⁷⁹ *R̥g Veda* 4.36.2b.

⁸⁰ See Gonda 1963.

⁸¹ For a recent assessment see Janda 2005: 141.

⁸² J. Nagy 1990: 218-20.

In addition to the Aśvins' chariot, the Ṛbhus also use their *manas* to fashion the two bay horses that drive Indra's chariot.⁸³ Indra, like the Aśvins, is a suitable recipient for a poetic object, since his identity is inexorably intertwined with that of the divine poet Bṛhaspati.⁸⁴ Yet again, the verb is *takṣ-*.⁸⁵ The poetic symbolism of the horse in Indo-European tradition is well established. We just had occasion to mention Dadhyañc, whose equine head yields poetic wisdom to the avid Aśvins. The latter are themselves, moreover, literally 'Equestrians,' *Aśvina-* being derived from *ásva-* 'horse,' the Sanskrit cognate of ἵππος and *equus*.⁸⁶

The paradigmatic poetic horse in Greek tradition is of course the son of the musical Medusa, Pegasus, who with a blow from his hoof generates the Hippocrene, haunt of the Muses. We might be looking at something similar to the Aśvins beheading Dadhyañc and then communicating with an equine proxy in the fact that Pegasus is born from Medusa's gullet in the wake of her decapitation.⁸⁷ The Aśvins are associated with an event similar to the genesis of the Hippocrene: they cause a horse's hoof to gush a hundred jars of wine and honey.⁸⁸

⁸³ *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.2b, 3.60.2c.

⁸⁴ Schmidt 1968.

⁸⁵ At *Ṛg Veda* 3.60.2, the collocation of *mánas-* and *takṣ-* is preceded by a form of *piś-*, another verb of creation the semantics of which I discuss on page of this chapter. P. Jackson 2002a: 51-2; 2002b: 89-90 notes that these three roots also appear in close proximity to one another in Avestan and Greek poetic texts, in fact consistently in the context of describing the night sky in the case of Avestan and Greek, so that we can speak of an inherited verbal nexus of **pejk-*, **men-* and **tetk-*.

⁸⁶ The Aśvins' equine aspect is in fact a hereditary trait which they share with their Hellenic brethren, the Dioskouroi, whom Pindar calls λευκοπόλων Τυνδαριδᾶν (*Pythian* 1.66), and who marry the Leukippides. The study of the Indo-European Divine Twins is a venerable and popular pursuit with a bibliography too massive to report here. For a recent attempt at a comprehensive survey of the evidence see M. West 2007: 186-93. One should add the Iranian comparanda discussed by O. Davidson 2013: 162-77, and the recent treatment in P. Jackson 2006b: 95-109.

⁸⁷ An instance in Welsh mythology offers a similar cluster of elements: the magnificently musical birds of the equine goddess Rhiannon entertain the men at Harlech in conjunction with Brân's convivial severed head (Thomson 1961: 15).

⁸⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 1.116.7 and 1.117.6.

That the Ṛbhus' construction of Indra's bays has a poetic dimension is also suggested by the situation's Greek correlate, Epeios' fabrication of the Trojan horse. As Françoise Bader observes, the compound with which Lycophron describes Epeios, ἵπποτέκτων, is the unverbated equivalent of the syntagms narrating the Ṛbhus' equine undertakings (*áśvam atakṣata; tatakṣúr...áśvā*).⁸⁹ If we couple this observation with Bruce Louden's proposal that Epeios' name could be from **uek^h*- 'speak,' the source of ἔπος, εἶπον and the like, in which case it would be *mutatis mutandis* identical with Sanskrit *vacasyā* 'eloquence,'⁹⁰ we arrive at another instance of the junction of poet and craftsman under discussion.⁹¹

With this etymology of Epeios' name in mind, it becomes pertinent to note that the horses generated by the Ṛbhus are not only made by thought, but are also *vacoyújā* "harnessed by speech."⁹² The first element of this compound is also from **uek^h*-. The common heritage behind both Epeios and the Ṛbhus' equine episodes is therefore maintained even on the level of diction, to the extent that I would suggest the existence of a phraseological ancestor something like:

POETIC CRAFTSMAN (Ṛbhus, Epeios)
 FASHIONS (**tetk^h*- > *takṣ-*, ἵπποτέκτων)
 HORSE (**ék^h*mos > *áśva-*, ἵπποτέκτων)
 with SPEECH (**uek^h*- > *vacoyújā*, Ἐπειός)

⁸⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.7c (*áśvam atakṣata*) and 4.34.9b (*tatakṣúr...áśvā*). See Bader 1999 and 2000. On the Indo-European component of the Trojan horse itself see C. Rose 2006: 229-58. Hephaistos similarly fashions colts for the Kabeiroi (Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 29.197-200).

⁹⁰ Louden 1996: 277-304.

⁹¹ As Michael Weiss brings to my attention, however, there is no evidence for a digamma, so that it would be better to derive Epeios' name from the horse word.

⁹² *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.2a.

In the Greek reflex of the verbal nexus I am proposing, Epeios combines within himself both the agentive and the instrumental constituents.

Whereas Epeios' duality is encoded, in other figures the bivalence is overt. Amphion builds the walls of Thebes by means of the music of his lyre;⁹³ while Hermes (as well as Orpheus, according to Estell's analysis) constructs a lyre, Amphion constructs *with* one. It will behoove us to note that Pausanias juxtaposes Amphion with Orpheus. The analogy occurs in the information provided by the Egyptian who claims that Pelops received an object from Amphion, and that it was this object, having been buried by Pelops at Taraxippus, that spooked Oenomaus' horses:⁹⁴

ἡξίου δὲ οὗτος ὁ Αἰγύπτος εἶναι μὲν Ἀμφίονα, εἶναι δὲ καὶ τὸν Θρᾷκα Ὀρφέα μαγεῦσαι δεινόν, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐπάδουσι θηρία τε ἀφικνεῖσθαι τῷ Ὀρφεῖ καὶ Ἀμφίονι ἐς τὰς τοῦ τείχους οἰκοδομίας τὰς πέτρας

This Egyptian thought that Amphion and Orpheus the Thracian were formidable sorcerers, and that it was because of their incantations that animals approached Orpheus, and that stones for building the walls approached Amphion.⁹⁵

Furthermore, Amphion is not the only poetic artisan with whom Orpheus is associated.

According to Diodorus Siculus, whose dossier on Orpheus draws from a variety of sometimes substantially older texts,⁹⁶ the latter spent some time as a pupil of the Dactyls, who are most prominently portrayed as magical metallurgists, but who also practice incantations (ἐπωδὰς),⁹⁷

⁹³ Apollonius 1.735.

⁹⁴ Pausanias 6.20.18.

⁹⁵ Plato (*Laws* 677d) similarly includes both Orpheus and Amphion in his list of illustrious artists and inventors.

⁹⁶ Rusten 1982, for example, has demonstrated that Diodorus' source for Argonautic events was Dionysus Scytobrachion.

⁹⁷ Diodorus Siculus 5.64.4.

and who are in fact credited with the invention of several different kinds of music.⁹⁸

Remember that smiths are also brought into combination with incantations in Indic, Celtic and Norse tradition.

Diodorus also notes that Orpheus trained with the Dactyls while they are on Samothrace, during which sojourn they amazed residents with their skills in mysteries and initiations to the extent that they were mistaken for divinities. This is one of numerous passages identifying the Dactyls with the Samothracian gods. Elsewhere both of these groups are also understood as being related to or identical with the Kabeiroi, another set of superhuman smiths who are sometimes said to be the sons of Hephaistos.⁹⁹ Orpheus is brought into contact with the Kabeiroi in the long list of deities he invokes at the beginning of the *Orphic Argonautica*,¹⁰⁰ the Argonauts as a whole, upon their arrival at Lemnos, are welcomed and feasted by the Kabeiroi in Aeschylus' play by that name,¹⁰¹ and the great Orphic savant Nonnos mentions the Kabeiroi frequently. Furthermore, Orpheus is variously associated with the Kabeiroi's alter egos, the Samothracian gods. Diodorus tells us that Orpheus was initiated into the Samothracian mysteries, and that he successfully prayed to its deities to calm storms that threatened the Argo.¹⁰² In light of the fact that the

⁹⁸ On the Dactyls' musical facet see S. I. Johnston 1999: 111-16. Perhaps a variation on the connection between craftsmen and poetry is to be perceived in Callimachus' identification of his hostile poetic rivals as Telchines. Sergent 2000-2004: 2.541-74 argues that the Telchines are related to the Irish Fomoir. He does not suggest as much, but perhaps there is a connection between the Telchines' apparent negative association with poetry and the fact that the Fomoir steal the Dagda's magical harp and kidnap his harper. For the passage in question see Gray 1982: 70.

⁹⁹ E.g. Herodotus 3.72.1.

¹⁰⁰ *Orphic Argonautica* 27.

¹⁰¹ Sommerstein 2008: 3.108.

¹⁰² Diodorus Siculus 4.43.1-2, 4.48.6; compare Apollonius 1.916.

Samothracian gods are popularly, even if only syncretically associated with the Kabeiroi, the title of one of their priesthoods, κοίης/ κόης, becomes pertinent to our investigation.

This word, the meaning of which we owe to Hesychius, appears to be cognate with Lydian *kaveś*, which also refers to a kind of priest, and with Sanskrit *kaví-*, which in the Vedas designates hieratic figures associated with sacerdotal poetry, but which in the Classical form of the language simply means ‘poet.’ Seemingly related verbs include Greek κοέω ‘perceive,’ Latin *caveo* ‘beware’ and German *schauen* ‘look, see’ and English *show*, which could all go back to a **(s)keuh_x-* ‘perceive.’¹⁰³ We are therefore dealing with another manifestation of the aforementioned concept of poet as visionary.

However, mythological figures who bear names derived from **(s)keuh_x-* are not exclusively poet-priests, sometimes not at all. The Ṛgvedic figure Uśanā Kāvya is occasionally identified as a *kaví-*, and we have seen that he endows Soma as Ṛbhū with poetic inspiration, but he is also an artisan, alternating with Tvaṣṭṛ as the fabricator of Indra’s awesome weapon, the *vájra-* ‘smasher.’¹⁰⁴ Given that one Greek correlate of this weapon is the stake with which Odysseus blind Polyphemus,¹⁰⁵ it strikes me as significant that an ἐπωδὴν Ὀρφέως is said to be able to

¹⁰³ Watkins 1995: 88. In light of the fact that the name of the Kabeiroi might have a Near Eastern origin, M. West 1997: 58 accordingly prefers to link the name of their priesthood with the Semitic priest word. I am fully open to this alternative, but also consider the possibility of an Indo-European etymology worth pursuing, and proceed to do so here.

¹⁰⁴ Uśanā Kāvya: *Ṛg Veda* 1.121.12, 5.34.2; Tvaṣṭṛ: 5.31.4, etc. On the name and mythology of this figure see Jamison 2007a: 119-50; 2007b: 155-68. The groundbreaking comparative study of Uśanā Kāvya and his congeners is that of Dumézil 1968-73: 2.147-227.

¹⁰⁵ As Watkins 1995: 410 notes, Homer describes this tool as χλωρόν (*Odyssey* 9.320), and the *vajra* is formulaically described by means of the adjective *hári-* ‘yellow,’ the Sanskrit cognate of χλωρός, both from **ǵhel-*.

cause a torch to attack the Cyclops of its own accord.¹⁰⁶ Here Orphic poetry functions as a substitute for the role otherwise assumed by a weapon the backstory of which, as indicated by the comparative evidence, consisted of its crafting by one or more exceptional artisans.¹⁰⁷ In fact we have already seen an overt nexus of Orpheus, craftsmanship and incantations in Diodorus' report that Orpheus studied with the Dactyls, who employ just such songs (ἐπωδῶς).¹⁰⁸

Iranian characters onomastically akin to Uśanā Kāvya also demonstrate an affinity for craftsmanship. The name of Faridun's smith is Kāve, and Key Kāus is no poet, but rather an architecturally industrious monarch who oversees the building of several magnificent edifices. Furthermore, the Balto-Slavic verbs that apparently derive from **(s)keuh_x-* actually mean 'smite.'¹⁰⁹

All Hesychius tells us is that the role of the κοίης was to purify homicides, but given that the root **(s)keuh_x-* seems to be particularly attached to poets and craftsmen, we might imagine that the activities by which this priesthood performed its duties at least initially involved a poetic-artisanal dimension. Such a facet would certainly be in accord with the nature of the divinities for whom the κοίης worked, the Kabeiroi being themselves portrayed as metallurgists, as well as being consistently mentioned in conjunction with or assimilated to various other poetic and

¹⁰⁶ Euripides, *Cyclops* 646.

¹⁰⁷ As Eliade 1978: 97-8 observes, a mythical craftsman fashions the weapon by which the hero defeats his monstrous opponent in narrative traditions of trans-Eurasian distribution.

¹⁰⁸ Diodorus Siculus 5.64.4.

¹⁰⁹ For a cautious note to this effect see Daryae 2001: 16. Sayers 1984: 245 suggests that the name of the Irish smith Culann, which becomes part of the name of Cú Chulainn 'Culann's hound' once the latter takes on the role of former's watchdog, might be related to these verbs. For a critical assessment of the effort to assign the poet-priest nouns and the smithing verbs to the same root see Matasović 1996: 143.

artisanal characters. In light of the fact that the Argonautic tradition presents Orpheus as an initiate of the Samothracian mysteries, perhaps it is not too wild to suggest that we see him assuming the mantle of κοίης when he purifies homicides in this same narrative tradition.¹¹⁰

In fact in the case of the Argonauts' accidental slaughter of the Doliones, Orpheus' method of helping to expiate this inadvertent offense strikes me as rather appropriate to the Kabeiroi: he has the younger of the Argonauts perform an armed dance, the noise of which is intended to smother the inauspicious cries of the remaining Doliones, who are mourning Cyzicus' death. Strabo, in discussing the Curetes and their analogues, including the Kabeiroi, says that all of these figures orchestrate martial dances.¹¹¹ That the Kabeiroi and their ilk are in the background of the military dance which Orpheus choreographs in order to obscure the Doliones' lamentation is further suggested by the fact that the Orphic hymn to the Samothracian Curetes refers to the latter's formally and functionally equivalent armoured dance, the noise of which saves the infant Zeus by making his cries inaudible to Kronos.¹¹²

Of course Hesychius does not actually say that the κοίης had any presence on Samothrace, but given the widespread, if contested, relationship between the Samothracian gods and the Kabeiroi, he might well have meant as much in calling the κοίης a Kabeiric priesthood. For what it is

¹¹⁰ Apollonius 1.1134-8; *Orphic Argonautica* 1366-8.

¹¹¹ Strabo 10.3.7.

¹¹² Athanassakis 1977: 52-4.

worth, Karl Lehmann and Denys Spittle have restored κοίης into an inscription from the Samothracian altar court.¹¹³

In any event, if we allow ourselves to conceive of Orpheus as donning the office of κοίης when he absolves homicides, it seems to me to be worth keeping in mind the poetic and artisanal connotations exhibited by this word's cognates. Given that Orpheus' Vedic brethren are simultaneously poets and craftsmen, and given that Orpheus himself is associated with similarly bipartite figures, perhaps his own characterization was once itself dyadic. If so, this might have made him a suitable candidate for the station of κοίης. In fact reflexes of **(s)keuh_x-* also occur in reference to the Ṛbhus, who fashion *kāvīyena* “by means of poetic inspiration,¹¹⁴” and who are themselves referred to as poets (*kaváyo*)¹¹⁵ furthermore, remember that Soma *as Ṛbhu* receives his poetic inspiration from *Uśanā Kāvya*.¹¹⁶

The comparative evidence therefore suggests that **H₃r^bh^héus* was both a poet and a craftsman, a complex role that was perhaps articulated by means of the similarly complex semantics of the roots **tetk̂-* and **(s)keuh_x-* already in the proto-language. In Orpheus, however, the balance has shifted in such a way that we are dealing with more of a crafty poet than a poetic craftsman. By that I mean that the artisanal aspect of Orpheus' profile has become so understated by the time of

¹¹³ Lehmann and Spittle 1964: 125-32. For a skeptical appraisal of the emendation see Cole 1984: 19.

¹¹⁴ *Ṛg Veda* 4.35.4b.

¹¹⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 4.36.7c.

¹¹⁶ In light of the fact that the Ṛbhus' interaction with reflexes of **(s)keuh_x-* provides a correspondence to my notion of Orpheus as Kabeiric κοίης, I consider it worth noting that while the Ṛbhus fashion a horse, the Kabeiroi are the recipients of colts forged by Hephaistos. Furthermore, the Ásvins, whom we have seen are closely linked with the Ṛbhus, are also designated by the noun *kaví-* (*Ṛg Veda* 8.8.2d). It is therefore rather striking that an Attic hydria portrays a priestess identified as κόας tending to the Dioskouroi (see Lehmann and Spittle 1964: 125, fn. 61). Remember that the Dioskouroi are the Ásvins' Hellenic congeners.

our sources that he emerges as an almost exclusively poetic figure. However, remnants of an earlier dualism remain. His crafting of the lyre reflects this dwindling angle of his persona, as does his association with Amphion, with the Kabeiroi, and very tentatively indeed with the latters' office κοίης.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, in one instance, Orpheus is a craftsman pure and simple:¹¹⁸

Λακεδαιμονίοις δὲ ἀπαντικρὺ τῆς Ὀλυμπίας Ἀφροδίτης ἐστὶ ναὸς Κόρης Σωτείρας· ποῆσαι δὲ τὸν Θρακὰ Ὀρφέα λέγουσιν, οἱ δὲ Ἄβαριν ἀφικόμενον ἐξ Ὑπερβορέων

Across from that of Olympian Aphrodite the Lacedaemonians have a temple of Kore the Saviour. Some say that Orpheus the Thracian made it, others Abaris, having come from the Hyperboreans.”

To be considered in combination with these vestiges of Orpheus' erstwhile artisanal aspect is the fact that Orphic ideology demonstrates a robust interest in craftsmanship. To mention just a few instances, we have already seen that Simplicius assigns the perpetuation of Orpheus' κύκλος to a divine demiurge. One of the Orphic hymns is dedicated to Hephaistos.¹¹⁹ There is also the famous Orphic fragment ἔτευξε μέγας Χρόνος αἰθέρι δίῳ ὄεον ἀργύφειον “great Khronos fashioned a shining silver egg out of divine aither.”¹²⁰ Here the verb by which creation is achieved is semantically prosaic, but as Alexander Nikolaev observes, several other creative acts

¹¹⁷ Blakely 2006: 154 similarly notes that Orpheus shares some features with artisanal figures. Another aspect of Orpheus' persona that could be said to have been influenced by his artisanal component is his geographical liminality. Eliade 1978: 89-90 notes a typological trend wherein smiths are physically removed from the communities they serve, and often correlatively viewed as somehow alien or threatening. Perhaps something of this tendency and its attendant ideology is at work in the remote grave of a smith unearthed at Tattershall Thorpe. For a specialist's take see Hinton 1998: 14-15, and for a detailed study of this burial see Hinton 2000. Dronke 1997: 260 points out that something along these lines is also at work in Norse mythology: the smith Völundr inhabits the isolated region Úlfdalir 'Wolf-dales.' The lupine component of this toponym emphasizes the location's isolation. On the liminal symbolism of the wolf in Indo-European semiotics see Campanile 1979; Gerstein 1974, and Gershenson 1981. Smith and wolf are also brought into contact in the name of Cú Chulainn. A synchronically rather distinct but diachronically related concept is at work in the name and narrative of Lykambes, on whom see G. Nagy 1999: 242-52.

¹¹⁸ Pausanias 3.13.2.

¹¹⁹ Athanassakis 1977: 86, 88.

¹²⁰ Alberto Bernabé 2004-7: 1.122. On the Orphic egg see Luján 2011.

described in Orphic literature are accomplished by means of the forms (ἐ)μήσατο and μητίσατο, for example μήσατο δ' Ὠκεανοῖο μέγα σθένοσ εὐρὸν ῥέοντοσ “he conceived the great might of broadly flowing Okeanos.”¹²¹ It is very interesting for our topic that a verb of mental activity appears to alternate with a more basic verb of craftsmanship in Orphic diction: recall that the Ὶbhus fashion both the Ásvins' chariot and Indra's horses by means of *mánas-* ‘mind, thought,’¹²² a situation for which there are Iranian correlates.¹²³

The comparative evidence thus suggests both Orpheus and the Ὶbhus have inherited from **H₃r^bh^héus* a capacity for cognitively conditioned creativity. Although neither μήδομαι nor μητίομαι are etymologically related to *mánas-*, in light of the phonetic identity of their initials, perhaps we should understand the former two a lexical renewals assuming the formulaic slot that Indo-Iranian indicates was traditionally reserved for reflexes of **men-*.¹²⁴

Elsewhere Orphic craftsmanship takes the form of weaving. Later on we shall see that Plato's spindle of Ananke has as its model the Orphic κύκλος. Porphyry notes that παρὰ τῷ Ὀρφεῖ ἡ Κόρη, ἥπερ ἐστὶ παντὸσ τοῦ σπειρομένου ἔφοροσ, ἰστουργοῦσα παραδέδοται, τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν βηλὸν εἰρηκότων οἶον θεῶν οὐρανίων περίβλημα “according to Orpheus, Persephone, who is the supervisor of everything that is sown, is portrayed as a weaver, and the

¹²¹ Bernabé 2004-7: 1.29. Sasha Nikolaev discussed these passages in his talk “Thus Spake Zaratustra: an Avestan Eye on Orphic Cosmogonies,” presented on April 26, 2009 at the Yale conference on Greek, Latin and Indo-European Poetry.

¹²² *Rg Veda* 4.36.2b; 1.20.2b, 3.60.2c.

¹²³ Nikolaev rather attributes these correspondences to the influence of Zoroastrian texts on Orphic poetry, but I maintain a preference for seeing common heritage at work here. Compare M. West 2007: 354. I would add that the combination of *taks-* and *mánas-* could be said to have a Greek correlate in the aforementioned Sophoclean fragment Μοῦσα τεκτόναρχοσ.

¹²⁴ With the Vedic collocations of *taks-* and *mánas-* compare μητιν...τεκτήναιτο at *Iliad* 10.19.

ancients referred to the celestial threshold as the garment of the gods.”¹²⁵ Similar fabric occurs in the Orphic hymn to Zeus Keraunos, where the latter tears the χιτῶνα/ οὐράνιον “heavenly robe” with his lightning bolt.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the titles of the Orphic poems Δίκτυον and Πέπλος suggest weaving.¹²⁷ It therefore comes as no surprise that it is apparently the Ṛbhus who are described as *tántum ā tanvate divi* “weav[ing] a web in the sky.”¹²⁸ If we are correct in understanding the Ṛbhus as being the subject of this statement, then as with the correspondence between Orphic scenarios of mental creation and the Ṛbhus fashioning by means of thought, what Orpheus describes others doing his Vedic congeners actually do themselves.

The names of two other Orphic poems might also be relevant: the Κρατήρ and Μικρότερος Κρατήρ.¹²⁹ We have already encountered the latter in discussing the Orphic narrative of Dionysus’ tauriform dismemberment and rebirth: remember how I argue that the latter ordeal is expressed in both Dionysus’ epithet Βουγενής and in the *Mikroteros Krater*’s variant thereof, the adjective ταυρογενής. We know very little about either work; nothing has survived of the former, and as for the latter, although it yields the form ταυρογενής so significant to my dissertation, this word occurs in one of only a few remaining fragments. However, despite not being very well informed as to the content of these poems, I submit that it is reasonable to conceive of their eponymous subjects at least in part as products of craftsmanship, that is wine kraters. Recall that

¹²⁵ *De Antro Nympharum* 14.

¹²⁶ Athanassakis 1977: 30 lines 16-17.

¹²⁷ Bernabé 2004-2007: 1.336-8. Scheid and Svenbro 1996: 81 similarly argue for a textile significance to the title of another Orphic poem. On cosmic weaving in Indo-European see M. West 2007: 372-4. Cosmic weaving is by no means unique to Indo-European; see Katz 2000: 81.

¹²⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 1.159.4c.

¹²⁹ Bernabé 2004-2007: 1.340-45.

the Ṛbhus are similarly associated with the formation of drinking vessels in their quadruplication of the cup fashioned by their rival-analogue Tvaṣṭṛ from which the Vedic deities drink Soma, the Indic elixir of immortality.

The obvious Greek correlate to this deed is Hephaistos' role as steward who serves to the Olympian gods cups of nectar drawn from a krater,¹³⁰ a scenario for which there are in turn many other correspondents, such as the ale prepared by the smith Goibniu through which the gods of the Irish pantheon maintain their divinity.¹³¹ In fact Goibniu, like the Ṛbhus, forms part of a triad together with the carpenter Luchtna/ Luchtaine and the brazier Crédne.¹³² Perhaps the crapulous Kabeiroi's characteristic connection with the consumption of wine is also sprung from this apparently traditional collocation of craftsman with containers for alcohol.¹³³

In light of the comparative evidence, it strikes me as reasonable to speculate that the Orphic *Krater* might also constitute a reflex of this inherited tendency to combine craftsmen with utensils for immortalizing intoxicants. On the one hand, the topic of the *Krater* is perhaps to be conceived of as a geological formation. In fact we shall encounter a telluric Orphic crater in the Conclusion. However, as Peter Kingsely points out, topographical and vinous kraters are inexorably intertwined in the Graeco-Roman imagination, notably in intellectual traditions

¹³⁰ M. West 2007: 156. For other correspondences between Hephaistos and Goibniu see Sayers 1984: 245 and Sergent 2000-2004: 2.527-39.

¹³¹ D'Arbois de Jubainville 1903: 175.

¹³² For this trio in context see Gray 1982: 54.

¹³³ On the Kabeiroi's consistent association with wine see Burkert 1985: 281.

related to Orphism.¹³⁴ We are therefore justified in considering both types of cavity when contemplating the identity of the Orphic *Krater*.

That the subject of this poem was at least partially portrayed as a mixing vessel is further suggested by the fact that it, the *Net* and the *Robe* are all attributed to a single author, Zopyrus.¹³⁵

The way I see it, the common denominator that the titles of these three works could be said to share is that their subjects are all products of craftsmanship. So we really should keep a wine krater in mind when considering what the *Krater* might have been about. Such a vessel, moreover, is at home in the Orphic milieu: in describing the fate of the Orphic initiate's soul, the Pelinna tablet states οἶνον ἔχεις εὐδαίμονα τιμήν “you have wine as your fortunate honour,”¹³⁶ and Plato parodies the notion of an infinite Orphic postmortem banquet at which the revelers are perpetually inebriated.¹³⁷

The seemingly dual significance of the Orphic *Krater* is also matched by a similar synthesis of terrestrial depression and culinary container in Welsh mythology, where Brân possesses a magic cauldron that emerges from a lake called nothing less than Llyn y Peir ‘Lake of the Cauldron,’ and that has the magical property of reviving slain warriors whose corpses have been placed inside it overnight.¹³⁸ As we shall see in the Conclusion, Orpheus reemerges from the realm of the dead into the world of the living via a crater, and dead bodies emerge from Brân's cauldron

¹³⁴ Kingsley 1995: 133-41, 254.

¹³⁵ Bernabé 2004-2007: 1.336, 340-41.

¹³⁶ Graf and Johnston 2013: 36 Pelinna line 6.

¹³⁷ *Republic* 363d.

¹³⁸ Thomson 1961: 5-6.

alive. It is significant that Brân in particular owns this vessel, since he, like Orpheus, is fated to become a posthumously vociferous severed head.¹³⁹

The Ṛbhus and Their Cow

Having established at considerable length that Orpheus and the Ṛbhus share a common ancestry,¹⁴⁰ let us now assess the comparandum that is of pivotal relevance to our topic: as we are about to see, the Ṛbhus are the agents of a feat that corresponds to Virgil's concatenation of Orpheus with the *bougonia*. In fact we have already encountered the Ṛbhic congener of the *bougonia* in passing: recall that the Ṛbhus, in addition to rejuvenating their parents, also fashion a cow.¹⁴¹ This is only one of six references to the deed.¹⁴²

This act of bovine craftsmanship is an inherited scenario. The most immediate parallels come from the Yasnas, several of which describe the fashioning of (a) cow(s). All save one of these occur in the *Gāthās*, which represent in certain respects the oldest stratum of Avestan literature. In the most vivid and memorable instance, it is the very *gāuš uruuā*, which for our purposes we

¹³⁹ In fact both Brân's head and his cauldron have contributed to the conception of what is perhaps the quintessential vessel of vitality: the Grail, which is often associated with figures nominally and functionally related to Brân, and the functional slot of which the Middle Welsh Arthurian romance *Peredur* replaces with a platter containing a severed head. On Brân and the Grail see Carey 2007: 245-67 and L. Jones 1994: 24-38. Norse mythology provides a *tertium comparationis*: Mímisbrunnr, the Norse congener of the Orphic spring of Mnemosyne, is the abode of both the loquacious severed head of Orpheus' congener Mímir (J. Nagy 1990: 216-20) as well as the source from which the horn Gjöll is filled; elsewhere Gjöll itself is the name of a body of water. See Lincoln 1991b.

¹⁴⁰ Orpheus and the Ṛbhus also correspond in a number of other respects. I pursue discussion of these additional comparanda in Appendix C.

¹⁴¹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.110.8.

¹⁴² Compare the similar statements at *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.3, 1.111.1, 4.34.9; and the anticipation of the deed at 1.161.3.

can simply translate as “soul of the cow,”¹⁴³ that speaks of the event, interrogating its creator, the *tašā gəuš* “**fashioner** of the cow:” *kahmāi mā θβarōždum kē mā tašaṭ* “for whom did you craft me? Who **fashioned** me?”¹⁴⁴ As Stephanie Jamison observes, that this statement and its variants are in the past tense distinguishes them from the remaining majority of the Gathic text, which is largely a present tense narrative.¹⁴⁵ We might say that the grammatical anteriority of these utterances is indicative of their relative antiquity.

Of especial interest to us are the forms *tašaṭ* and *tašā* bolded above, which are cognate with our old friend Sanskrit *takṣ-*: the Ṛbhus similarly make their cow by means of this verb: *tákṣan dhenúṃ* “[the Ṛbhus] **fashioned** a milch cow,”¹⁴⁶ *tákṣan vatsāya mātáram* “[the Ṛbhus] **fashioned** a mother for a calf,”¹⁴⁷ *dhenúṃ tatakṣúr ṛbhávo* “the Ṛbhus **fashioned** a milch cow.”¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, Ahura Mazdā refers to the cow’s creator as *θβōrəštā*,¹⁴⁹ which is the Avestan equivalent of the name of the Ṛbhus’ rival-analogue, Tvaṣṭṛ. Tvaṣṭṛ is similarly associated with a cow in the context of the Dadhyañc narrative, where the poetic wisdom that the Ásvins strive to attain from Dadhyañc is identified as *gór...nāma tváṣṭur apīciyam* “the secret name of **Tvaṣṭṛ’s cow**.”¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, Tvaṣṭṛ, together with several other divinities, is

¹⁴³ For a discussion of this expression’s complexities see Humbach, Elfenbein and Skjærø 1991: 2.29-30.

¹⁴⁴ *Yasna* 29.2. Compare the similar statements at *Yasna* 12.7, 37.1, 44.6, 47.3, and 51.7.

¹⁴⁵ Stephanie Jamison 2005: 127, 2007: 36-37.

¹⁴⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.3c.

¹⁴⁷ *Ṛg Veda* 1.111.1d.

¹⁴⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 4.34.9b; Humbach et al. 1991: 2.31.

¹⁴⁹ *Yasna* 29.6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 1.84.15a-b. Furthermore, the form *θβarōždum* in the soul of the cow’s first question derives from the same root, **tṣerḱ-*, that is also the source of *Tvaṣṭṛ* and *θβōrəštā*. In fact the sequence *gəuš uruuā gərəždā/ kahmāi mā θβarōždum* “the soul of the cow laments: ‘for whom **did you craft** me?’” is notably similar to that at *Ṛg Veda* 1.84.15a-b: *átrāha gór amanvata/ nāma tváṣṭur apīciyam* “then they remembered the secret name of **Tvaṣṭṛ’s cow**.” This passage is also brought to bear on *Yasna* 29 by Humbach et al. 1991: 2.30.

described as creating a number of items including a cow.¹⁵¹ We shall soon reexamine this passage with greater attention, as it is important for our investigation.

Later Iranian tradition also knows of an important act of bovine craftsmanship: the making of the *gorz*, the cow-headed mace commissioned by Faridun in order that he might wield it against *Zaḥḥāk*.¹⁵² The *gorz* is the Persian etymological and functional relative of the aforementioned Vedic *vajra*, the weapon fashioned alternately by *Uśanā Kāvya* or *Tvaṣṭṛ*, whom I just noted also creates cow. In the *Shāhnāme*, the fashioning of this weapon is the collaborative effort of several anonymous smiths.¹⁵³ However, Ferdowsi's epic is merely one incarnation of an oral tradition, and although it has become the dominant and most familiar version, the rich variation of alternative tellings should not be overlooked.¹⁵⁴ In fact other accounts of the *gorz* episode are more representative of the tradition than Ferdowsi's *chef d'oeuvre*. One in particular, recited by a *naggāle-xān* from former Shabsavar, pertains to our analysis:¹⁵⁵

می گویند گاوسر فریدونی یکی از جمله وسائل
 حربی بود که در زمان ساطنت ساه فریدون
 بوسیله امیر کاوه کویانی با یل مهارت و
 استادی مخصوص ساخته شد، بطوری که کاوه
 دو سال تمام وقت صرف ساختن این اسلحه
 افسانه ای کرد

They say that Faridun's **cow-head**[ed mace] (*gāv-sar*) is one among the agents of battle that was crafted in the time of King Faridun's reign by Amir Kāve Kāvyaṇi with such manual dexterity and particular skill that Kāve spent **two** entire **years** crafting this magical weapon.

¹⁵¹ *R̥g Veda* 10.65.10-11.

¹⁵² On material cow-headed maces see Harper 1985.

¹⁵³ Khaleghi-Motlagh 1988-2008: 1.71.

¹⁵⁴ For a discussion of Ferdowsi from the perspective of oral tradition see O. Davidson 1998: 63-8.

¹⁵⁵ I have taken the text from Daryaei 2001: 13, who cites its original source, *non vidi*.

Here the *gorz*'s smith, far from nameless, is Uśanā Kāvya's onomastic congener Kāve, who made a cameo appearance in my discussion of the Kabeiric office κοίης. Furthermore, it takes Kāve *do sāl* "two years" to complete his bovine masterpiece. Recall that the Ṛbhus shape their cow over the course of a year (*saṃvatsam*).¹⁵⁶ I propose that we are dealing here with reflexes of a common Indo-Iranian *détail singulier*.

Instances of bovine craftsmanship also occur in Greek mythology. As Adalbert Kuhn noted long ago, an obvious candidate for comparison with the Ṛbhus' bovine deed is Daedalus' fabrication of the artificial cow through which Pasiphae is able to have sex with her beloved bull.¹⁵⁷ Sarah Morris has demonstrated at length that much about Daedalus and his ilk derives from Near Eastern concepts of and narratives about craftsmen.¹⁵⁸ It does not, however, lessen the impact of this important research to observe traditions of Indo-European heritage at work alongside those adopted from cultures of the Near East. So Bacchylides' description of Daedalus' deed is dictionally consonant with our Vedic and Gathic descriptions of bovine creation.¹⁵⁹

Πασι[φ]ά[α...
τεκτόν[ω]ν σοφω[τάτω
 φράσε Δαιδάλω ἄσ[πετον
 νόσον. ὄρκια πίσ[τ' ἔλαβε ξυλίαν
 τε τεύχειν κέλευ[σε **βοῦν**

Pasiphae confessed her unspeakable ailment to Daedalus, most skilled of **craftsmen**. She made him swear sturdy oaths and ordered him to build a wooden **cow**.

¹⁵⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.4b.

¹⁵⁷ A. Kuhn 1855: 112-3.

¹⁵⁸ Morris 1992. In fact English *smith* and its family might have a Semitic origin: see Vennemann 2004: 601-13.

¹⁵⁹ Campbell, 4.242-4.

Given the phrases *tákṣan dhenúm* “[the Ṛbhus] **fashioned** a milch cow,”¹⁶⁰ *tákṣan vatsāya mātāram* “[the Ṛbhus] **fashioned** a mother for the calf,”¹⁶¹ *dhenúm tatakṣúr ṛbhavo* “the Ṛbhus **fashioned** a milch cow,”¹⁶² *gəuš uruuā gərəždā...kə mā tašaṭ* “the soul of the cow complains: ‘who **fashioned** me?’,”¹⁶³ *gəm tašō* “you (Ahura Mazdā) **fashioned** the cow,”¹⁶⁴ and *gəm...tašaṭ* “[you (Ahura Mazdā) who] **fashioned** the cow,”¹⁶⁵ each of which conveys its action by means of a form of **tetk-*, I suspect that we are looking at precise verbal inheritance when Bacchylides describes Daedalus as *τεκτόνων σοφωτάτω* in conjunction with reference to his crafting of the cow. When combined, the constituents of the Vedic, Gathic and Greek passages suggest the following formulaic syntagm:

CRAFTSMAN (Ṛbhus, Tvaṣṭṛ; *tašā gəuš*,¹⁶⁶ *θβōrəštā*, Ahura Mazdā, Kāve; Daedalus)
 FASHIONS (**tetk-* > Sanskrit *takṣ-*; Avestan *taš-*; Greek *τεκτόνων*)
 COW (**g^hōu-* > Sanskrit *gām*; Avestan *gəuš*, *gəm*; Persian *gāv-sar*; Greek *βοῦν*)

One should note, however, that Vedic is energetically innovative when it comes to what Avestan and Greek suggest was the default object of this formula: only once is the result of the Ṛbhus’ bovine craftsmanship expressed by means of the unmarked cow word, and just when we do get the lexically traditional object, the verb is renewed: *ṛbhavo gām apimśata* “the Ṛbhus formed a cow.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.3c.

¹⁶¹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.111.1d.

¹⁶² *Ṛg Veda* 4.34.9b.

¹⁶³ *Yasna* 29.1.

¹⁶⁴ *Yasna* 44.6, 51.7.

¹⁶⁵ *Yasna* 47.3.

¹⁶⁶ On clarifying the identity of this figure see Kellens 1995: 347-57.

¹⁶⁷ *Ṛg Veda* 1.110.8a.

Daedalus is not the only craftsman of Greek myth to fashion bovines. Hephaistos makes bronze bulls for Aeëtes, and while these, like Daedalus', are artificially generated, they come to life like that of the Rbhus.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, the scenario has also been acted out on the stage of Greek history: I mean the bull of Phalaris, which we have already encountered in discussing the pervasive connection between cows, poetry and music.

Although Phalaris' bull does seem to have actually existed, its composition has been conditioned by bovine mythology. The mythological underpinning of this device is evident even at the level of diction: Diodorus' description of its creation, οὔτος γὰρ τὸ μηχανήμα τοῦ ταύρου χαλκουγήσας τοῖς μυζωτήρσι τοῦ βουός ἐτέκνηεν ἀλίσκους “[Perilaus], having wrought the device of the bull in bronze, **fashioned** little in pipes the **bull's** nostrils,”¹⁶⁹ appears to incorporate a reflex of the formula CRAFTSMAN (Perilaus) FASHIONS (**tetk-* > ἐτέκνηεν) COW (**gʰō-* > βοός).

Although such a lexically fixed expression seems to be limited to Graeco-Indo-Iranian, the situation itself is not. There is at least one clear instance of bovine craftsmanship in Irish mythology: the god Lugh, who is variously associated with craftsmen and craftsmanship,¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Apollonius 3.215.

¹⁶⁹ Diodorus Siculus 9.19.

¹⁷⁰ T. O'Rahilly 1946: 308-17.

orchestrates the construction of deceptive wooden cows from which Bres is made to drink poisonous pseudo-milk.¹⁷¹

Elsewhere mythical craftsmen are more simply associated with cows rather than specifically fashioning them. Uśanā Kāvya is implicated on several occasions in the aforementioned narrative of the liberation of cows from the demonic cavern Vala,¹⁷² and his onomastic relative Kay Ūs has a central role to play in a bovine narrative.¹⁷³ The Irish smith Goibniu's folkloric descendants Gaiblín, Gavida, etc. are consistently attached to the magical cows Glas Ghaibhleann, Glas Gaibhnann, etc.¹⁷⁴ The poetess Brigit, who variously intersects with craftsmen, is also variously associated with cows; her artisanal and bovine attributes converge in the *brat*, the bolt of fabric which farmers leave out overnight for her to lengthen, and which is then put to various uses, including being draped over cows in the advent of difficult parturition.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Gwynn 1903-35: 3.218; Macalister 1938-56: 4.228-9; Stokes 1894: 438-40. A mythical craftsman also creates a cow in a text that is external to the narrative traditions of fundamentally Indo-European heritage: in the *Kalevala*, the smith Ilmarinen, as one of a series of lacklustre efforts building up to his invention of the mysterious and magnificent *sampo*, fabricates several defective items, including an impudent heifer, which he therefore smashes and tosses back into the forge as fuel for his next endeavour (Magoun 1963: 60). I would remind the reader, however, that in addition to its indigenous Finno-Karelian foundation, the *Kalevala* appears to have incorporated a significant amount of material acquired through contact with cultures of Indo-European provenance. For what it is worth, the *sampo* itself has long been thought to be conceptually affected by and linguistically dependent on Sanskrit *skambhā-* '(cosmic) pillar.' See Erdödi 1932: 214-19.

¹⁷² Jamison 2007a: 133-4.

¹⁷³ Gignoux and Tafazzoli 1993: 58-60.

¹⁷⁴ For an Indo-European study of these characters see Leavitt 2000: 209-24. The adjective *glas* covers a range of colours including green, blue and gray. I wonder if the magical *glas* cow of the smith in Gaelic folklore might have something to do with the Babe, the supernatural blue ox of the prodigious lumberjack Paul Bunyan.

¹⁷⁵ H. R. E. Davidson 1996: 91-106; 1998: 35-6, 93. Perhaps Cú Chulainn, whom we have already seen to be associated with the smith Culann both in name and in deed, and who is intimately involved with cattle, is another Irish reflex of the connection between craftsman and cow.

As for Greek, it is perhaps worth noting that the majority of the offerings made at the Theban Kabeirion are in the form of zoomorphic statuettes.¹⁷⁶ Although many votives of this kind are found elsewhere,¹⁷⁷ they might have had a special significance in this context. Maybe we see something of a special relationship between Kabeiroi and cow in the iconography of the Kabeirion-ware vase that depicts a bull next to a figure that appears to be a Kabeiros.¹⁷⁸

Having established the Indo-European heritage of the Ṛbhus' bovine feat, we are now in a position to profit from the examination of several verses that enhance their description of this deed with a detail that is crucial for my analysis, one instance of which we have already met in reference to the Ṛbhus' association with reincarnation. To repeat the relevant line: *nís cármaṇa ṛbhavo gám apimśata* "you, Ṛbhus, formed a cow out of a hide."¹⁷⁹ Here it seems that the hide provides the material from which the new cow is constituted, much like the cow slaughtered in the Athenian Bouphonia is restored to a semblance of vitality. Perhaps there is an echo of this motif in Daedalus' artificial bovine, which Apollodorus says was made from the hide of real cow.¹⁸⁰

Elsewhere, however, the deed is accomplished by means of a different verb: *nís cármaṇo gám ariṇīta* "you **extracted** the cow from the hide."¹⁸¹ This is a fundamentally different situation.

¹⁷⁶ For many images of the metallic ones of these see the initial plates in Schmaltz 1980.

¹⁷⁷ Schachter 2003: 126-7.

¹⁷⁸ Schachter 2003: 124.

¹⁷⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.110.8a.

¹⁸⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 3.1.3. In fact Ahl 1985: 251-2 has suggested that Daedalus' and Icarus' flight from the bovine Minotaur's maze on wings made in part of beeswax should make us think of the *bougonia*.

¹⁸¹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.7a= 4.36.4b, with slight variation at 3.60.2b.

Here the hide remains part of the creative process, but is not contained in the end product, which rather emerges from it. In fact the situation is remarkably similar to the *bougonia*, in which the bees emerge from the carcass of slaughtered bovines, and which Aristaeus performs in the wake of the vengeance wrought by Orpheus.

The *bougonia* and the Ṛbhus' bovine craftsmanship are admittedly distinct from one another on several major points. In the first instance, the logic of the *bougonia* is predicated on an ideology that entails a strict balance between creation and destruction, and as the vivid violence of Virgil's account emphasizes, the destructive half of this binary is by no means to be thought of as having been cancelled out by the marvelous birth of bees. In contrast with this equilibrium, the Ṛbhus are nowhere explicitly said to kill the old cow whose hide is a necessary ingredient in the generation of the new. Rather, we meet the hide *in medias res*, all mention as to how it came to be having been utterly elided.

Nevertheless, regardless of the means by which the Ṛbhus acquire this hide, their act of bovine craftsmanship consists of a sequence in which death is the precedent of new life, a progression that is similar, if less drastic, to the ideology on which the *bougonia* depends. Furthermore, one verse does in fact portray the Ṛbhus in the midst of a cow sacrifice:¹⁸²

śronām éka udakām gām ávājati
*māmsám ékaḥ **pimśati** sūnáyābhṛtam*
á nimrúcaḥ śákṛd éko ápābhara

¹⁸² *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.10. As Michael Weiss informs me, the description of the Ṛbhus' activities here might be a coded reference to the soma pressing, but even so, on the surface level it puts them in the midst of a cow sacrifice.

One [Ṛbhu] drove the limping cow to the water, one **carved** her flesh, conveyed in a basket, and one carried off her dung at dusk.

The moment of the victim's death is not overtly described, but there is no mistaking what matter of business is under way here.¹⁸³ At the risk of being simpleminded about it, I propose that in this passage we get our only glimpse into the hide's backstory. In light of how the *bougonia* works, I would suggest that the Ṛbhus must similarly kill a cow before they are able to bring a new one into being from its remains, even if this part of the process is understated in the scenario's synchronic representations. As we have already seen, the cow is the host of creative destruction *par excellence* in Indo-European semiotics.

That the Ṛbhus' cow sacrifice is related, if not the sheer antecedent to their fashioning of the cow is also suggested by the fact that the verb *piś-* occurs in both situations. It is appropriate that this verb's range of meanings can itself be said to house a notion of creative destruction: while it can have the sense 'carve' as in 'cut up,' as in the passage quoted just above, it can also mean also 'form' (i.e. carve into existence) and 'adorn' (i.e. enhance artistically by superficial carving).¹⁸⁴ The second of these senses pertains to the Ṛbhus' creation of the cow: *ṛbhavo gām apimśata* "the Ṛbhus formed a cow;"¹⁸⁵ *saṃvātsam ṛbhāvo mā āpiṃśan* "the Ṛbhus formed [the cow's] body over the span of a year."¹⁸⁶ It is as though the constructive meaning of *piś-* in these cases is

¹⁸³ Moisson 1993: 311. The Elves similarly receive a bull sacrifice. See Ásmundarson 1893: 57.

¹⁸⁴ My presentation builds on that of P. Jackson 2002b: 9-10.

¹⁸⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 1.110.8a.

¹⁸⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.4b.

meant to be in stark contrast to its reductive sense in the verse in which *māṃsām ékah piṃśati* “one [of the Ṛbhus] **carves up** the [sacrificed cow’s] flesh.”¹⁸⁷

The Greek reflex of the Indo-European root in question, **peik-*, is ποικίλος and its family, the meaning of which is restricted to the last listed sense that *pis-* can convey; compare the similarly narrowed semantics of Latin *pingo*. Given that the Ṛbhus’ activity is more than once, and seemingly with a great deal of care, articulated by means of *pis-*, it is perhaps significant that Timotheus describes Orpheus with a compound containing ποικίλος: πρῶτος **ποικιλόμουσος** Ὀρ-/ φεδς [χέλ]υν ἐτέκνωσεν. The adjective ποικίλος is frequently applied to music, and even yields ποικιλία, a technical term associated with harmonic complexity. However, Tjitte Janssen notes that Orpheus is reputed to have been the first to amplify the lyre to a state of nine strings, and so might have been especially associated with the concept and term ποικιλία.¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, Joshua Katz points out that the image of Aeschylus’ phrase ποικιλείμων νῦξ is similar to the description of Νῦξ as ἀστροχίτων in the *Orphic Argonautica*,¹⁸⁹ and that the Orphic aficionado Nonnos brings into contact the pertinent elements of both in the sequence εἰ πέλες Αἰθήρ/ **ποικίλος**, **Ἄστροχίτων** δὲ φατίζεαι—ἐννύχιοι γὰρ/ **οὐρανὸν** ἀστερόεντες ἐπαυγάζουσι χιτῶνες.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ *R̥g Veda* 1.161.10b.

¹⁸⁸ Janssen 1984: 152.

¹⁸⁹ *Prometheus Bound* 24; *Orphic Argonautica* 1028; Katz 2000: 77.

¹⁹⁰ *Dionysiaca* 40.407-9; Katz 2000: 78. Furthermore, the adjective ποικίλος also turns up in Pherecydes’ description of Ge’s wedding veil, a narrative related to Orphic notions of cosmic weaving. One more possibly relevant mythologem: Pausanias (9.30.6) tells us that the nightingales that nest on Orpheus’ tomb sing more sweetly than others (cf. Antigonus, *Historiae Mirabiles* 5), and Hesiod calls the nightingale ποικιλόδειρον (*Works and Days* 203), which refers not to dappled plumage but rather to variegated song. See G. Nagy 1996b: 59, 65 on this adjective.

So although Timotheus' application of ποικιλόμουσος to Orpheus is perfectly explicable on synchronic grounds alone, we are perhaps not misled in suspecting that this attributive is diachronically informed by an inherited collocation of $*H_3r^b^h \acute{e}us$ and $*pej\hat{k}$ - that also surfaces in the Ṛbhus' formulaic interaction with $piś$ -. Such a hunch becomes more persuasive in light of our understanding that Timotheus' ἐτέκνωσεν appears to be the author's renewal of a form of τεκταίνομαι, the Greek cognate of Sanskrit *takṣ*-, the other verb by which the Ṛbhus formulaically fashion their creations. We might therefore even go so far as to say that between Timotheus and the Ṛg Veda, we have evidence for a hereditary, triangular interaction of $*H_3r^b^h \acute{e}us$, $*tet\hat{k}$ - and $*pej\hat{k}$ -.

While the process performed by Aristaeus appears to have been specifically designated by the technical term *bougonia*, the Ṛbhus' bovine deed is not attached to a similar item of nomenclature. However textual collocations of $*g^u \acute{o}u$ - 'cow' and the verbal root $*\hat{g}enh_1$ - 'become' occur in a number of mythological narratives informed by Indo-European inheritance, narratives that are thematically and structurally congruous with the *bougonia* and the Ṛbhus' bovine craftsmanship. It will suffice to revisit just one instance here. Recall that the primaeval being Puruṣa is sacrificially slaughtered and dismembered, an act of deconstruction which results in a veritable panoply of constructive consequences.¹⁹¹ Among the numerous entities that come into being as a result of Puruṣa's demise are cows: *gávo* (< $*g^u \acute{o}u$ -) *ha jajñire* (< $*\hat{g}enh_1$ -) *tásmāt* "cows came into being from that [sacrifice]."¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Ṛg Veda 10.90.

¹⁹² Ṛg Veda 10.90.10c.

To focus on the cows created from Puruṣa to the virtual exclusion of the other members of what is a variegated and extensive catalogue is indeed to distort the synchronic state of affairs; however, such an emphasis is valid and intellectually productive from a diachronic point of view, since the cow in particular plays a prominent role in many cosmogonic myths of Indo-European heritage. In fact it will be helpful for us to remind ourselves at this point that in the Iranian correspondent to the Puruṣa myth, it is not only the primordial humanoid Gayomard but also the original ox who suffer miraculously generative deaths; in this case, cows as we know them are created from the semen of the slain ox, a second installment of bovine genesis that the native exegetical tradition interprets as an index of the cow's exceptional value.

Of course phrasal concatenations of $*g^u o\bar{u}-$ and $*\hat{g}enh_1-$, although radically compatible with the compound *bougonia*, do not provide precise formal matches for the latter. As I shall argue in the Conclusion, however, the *bougonia* finds a semantic sibling in the action of and ideology behind the Athenian Bouphonia, the formation of which term, moreover, is obviously reminiscent of *bougonia*. In the case of βουφονία, the comparative evidence yields not only collocations of $*g^u o\bar{u}-$ 'cow' and $*g^{uh} en-$ 'slay',¹⁹³ but also an exact morphological match in the Irish toponym Benn Bóguine,¹⁹⁴ the aetiological narrative of which corresponds with that of the Bouphonia to the extent that both involve the punitive slaughter of insolent cattle.¹⁹⁵ So we can speak with confidence of a $*g^u o\bar{u}-g^{uh} on-\hat{i}eh_2$ as part of the Pre-Proto-Indo-European mythico-religious

¹⁹³ On Indo-Iranian combinations of $*g^u \bar{o}u-$ and $*g^{uh} en-$ see Gippert 1998.

¹⁹⁴ Watkins 1995: 412.

¹⁹⁵ Stokes 1895: 153-4; 1893: 473.

lexicon. With the advent of the *boukolos* rule, the form would have gone on to become $*g^u\bar{o}u-g^h\bar{o}n-i\bar{e}h_2$ in Proto-Indo-European.

In fact the form $*g^u\bar{o}u-g^h\bar{o}n-i\bar{e}h_2$ would have offered an even closer phonetic match for combinations of $*g^u\bar{o}u-$ and $*\hat{g}enh_1-$ than βουφονία offers *bougonia*. The former is not the phonologically automatic outcome of $*g^u\bar{o}u-g^h\bar{o}n-i\bar{e}h_2$, which would have and probably did yield $*boukhonia$. However, $*boukhonia$ is etymologically opaque, and so has been analogically restored to βουφονία, which shows the develarization of $/*g^{uh}/$ to $/\varphi/$ that o-grade reflexes of $*g^{uh}en-$ undergo outside of *boukolos*-rule contexts, for example φόνος, -φόντης and φονόω. I propose that βουφονία and something like *bougonia* were in interaction with one another in the Pre-Greek cultural milieu, when the verbal roots of their names still both began with velars distinguished only by their secondary articulations. I suspect that the interplay between these two items operated on both the phonetic and on the conceptual level: the *bougonia* is, after all, just as much of an act of cow slaughter as is the Bouphonia, and the Bouphonia is, like the *bougonia*, a generative event to the extent that the hide of the slaughtered cow is notionally revitalized.

Maybe a $*g^u\bar{o}u-\hat{g}onh_1-i\bar{e}h_2$ existed alongside $*g^u\bar{o}u-g^h\bar{o}n-i\bar{e}h_2$ already in the proto-language, although in the absence of any precise morphological matches for *bougonia*, the antiquity of the formation is impossible to confirm. Perhaps $*g^u\bar{o}u-\hat{g}onh_1-i\bar{e}h_2$ was rather an exclusively Pre-Greek innovation, one that might have been conceived with reference to the inherited formation $*g^u\bar{o}u-g^h\bar{o}n-i\bar{e}h_2$, as though the latter encouraged Pre-Greek speakers to press a conceptually related and phonetically proximate formulaic sequence of $*g^u\bar{o}u-$ and $*\hat{g}enh_1-$ into a compound of the same morphological category. However, even though we don't have the data that we

would need to insist on a Proto-Indo-European **g^hōu-ĝonh₁-i₂eh₂*, it is harmless and convenient to speak of such a form as a *Transponat*, and I will use this reconstruction to refer to the common ancestor of the *bougonia* that Aristaeus conducts in the response to Orpheus' revenge and the Ṛbhus' bovine deed, as though we had access to a **gojaniyā-*.¹⁹⁶

In fact even if assigning the morphology of the form **g^hōu-ĝonh₁-i₂eh₂* to Proto-Indo-European, let alone specifically to the Ṛbhus' act of bovine creativity, is a purely speculative gesture, one passage suggests that the basic constituents of this *Transponat* are justly applied to the deed. The lines in question, the content of which I elliptically referenced above, describe a series of divinities creating a series of items, including a cow:¹⁹⁷

*tvāṣṭāraṃ vāyūṃ ṛbhavo yá óhate
daívyā hótārā uśasaṃ suastáye
bṛhaspátim vṛtrakhādám sumedhásam
indriyám sómaṃ dhanasā́ u īmahe
bráhma **gām** áśvaṃ **janáyanta** óśadhīr
vánapátīn pṛthivīm párvatām apáh*

We beseech Tvaṣṭṛ and Vāyu, who are regarded as **Ṛbhus**, the two divine oblation priests, Uśas, wise Bṛhaspati, destroyer of Vṛtra, [and] Soma, Indra's companion, who grant wealth, for prosperity. They **generated** a *bráhman*, a **cow**, a horse, plants, the lords of the forest (i.e. trees), the earth, the mountains and the waters.

It is surely significant that among the deities at work here is Tvaṣṭṛ who, somewhat curiously together with Vāyu is metonymically referred to as an Ṛbhu. I do not consider it devious of me for the present purpose to focus on Tvaṣṭṛ as Ṛbhu at the expense of his fellow generators. Of all

¹⁹⁶ The phrase is at least univerbated in the adjective *gójāta-*, which is esoterically used to describe the gods. Are we dealing with the gods who are revitalized, and so perhaps quasi-born out of the sacrifice of cattle? This would approximate the semantics of *gójāta* to those of βουγενής.

¹⁹⁷ Ṛg Veda 10.65.10-11.

the deities on the list, he and the Ṛbhus with whom he is in apposition are the ones who are otherwise most frequently, sometimes exclusively said to make the objects of *janáyanta*. Vāyu generates the Maruts,¹⁹⁸ Uṣas is formulaically referred to as *mātā́ gávām* “mother of cows,”¹⁹⁹ and Bṛhaspati is described as a father on several occasions and stimulates the growth of plants,²⁰⁰ but the Ṛbhus fashion a *bráhmaṇ*, cow, and horses, and they trigger the spontaneous genesis of plants and waters at the end of their period of residence at Agohya’s. As for Tvaṣṭṛ, he is often portrayed as the paradigmatic generator,²⁰¹ and in the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* he is even credited with the creation of the entire world, with particular reference, moreover, to his role in the generation of the horse.²⁰² Furthermore, remember that Ahura Mazdā refers to the fashioner of the cow as *θβōrāštā*, which is the Avestan equivalent of *Tvaṣṭṛ*. That we should have Avestan comparanda in mind when thinking about the passage under discussion is more or less confirmed by the passage in which where Ahura Mazdā *gāmca...dāṭ apascā....uruuarā́sca* “made the **cow**, **waters** and plants”²⁰³ just as Tvaṣṭṛ et alii’s range of creations also include a cow (*gám*), plants, and water (*apáh*).²⁰⁴

It is therefore clearly no coincidence that Tvaṣṭṛ as Ṛbhu is at the head of the list of gods at work here: he and his appositive are above all others the agents most characteristically involved in the

¹⁹⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 1.134.4f.

¹⁹⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 4.52.3b, syntactically inverted at 7.77.2b.

²⁰⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 2.26.3, 4.50.6, 6.73.2; 10.97.15, 19.

²⁰¹ E.g. *Ṛg Veda* 3.4.9.

²⁰² *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* 29.9.

²⁰³ *Yasna* 37.1. Compare *Yasna* 51.7.

²⁰⁴ *Ṛg Veda* 10.65.11a and 11b. Soma admittedly generates cows, waters, hymns, the earth, and plants (*Ṛg Veda* 1.91.22b; 1.91.22b, 9.96.3c; 9.96.5a; 9.96.5b; 1.91.22a), but this is only to be expected: recall that Soma’s name occurs in apposition to that of the Ṛbhus (*Ṛg Veda* 9.87.3).

majority of the subsequent acts of generation. Therefore I consider it legitimate for our purposes to isolate from the rest of this passage a phrasal core *ṛbhavo...gā́m...janáyanta* “the Ṛbhus generated a cow.” In so doing, we come to recognize that not only does the *bougonia* of Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex have a semantic congener in the Ṛbhus’ genesis of a cow; in addition, the precise verbal collocation of Ὀρφεύς with *bougonia* implicit in Virgil’s epyllion is mirrored item for item in the sequence *ṛbhavo...gā́m...janáyanta*. This correspondence seems to me to more or less confirm that the narrative of bovine creation with which **H₃ṛb^héus* was associated must have been described already in its Proto-Indo-European telling with a phrasal concatenation of **g^hōu-* and *ḡenh₁-*, if not with the precise form **g^hōu-ḡonh₁-īeh₂*.

Whereas in the *bougonia* bovine slaughter results in the generation of bees, the Ṛbhus’ bovine craftsmanship is rather an involuted process in which the dead matter of one cow yields a new, live one. We have already seen other similarly redundant scenarios of bovine creativity: the death of the Iranian primordial ox results in the genesis of cattle, and the cow killed in the Bouphonia is notionally revitalized. No reference to the Ṛbhus’ fashioning of the cow mentions anything about bees, but various Vedic verses associate them with bees and honey. So a hymn of the *Atharva Veda* brings the Ṛbhus into contact with the honey-whip of the Aśvins, honey itself, honey’s multiforms *amṛta* and Soma, and bees,²⁰⁵ and the poet of a Ṛgvedic hymn compares the Aśvins to both the Ṛbhus and to honey-bearing bees in a cow (*sāraghēva gāvi*), and also asks

²⁰⁵ *Atharva Veda* 9.1. Interesting that *Atharva Veda* 9.2 celebrates a first-born Kāma ‘Love’ who is described as a bull, which puts one in mind of the Orphic assimilation of Eros and Protogonos, who also has a taurine aspect. Does Orpheus also call Protogonos Herakles in part because of the latter’s involvement with cattle raiding? On the Orphic Herakles see Olmos 2011.

that his cows contain milk like honey (*ná pakvám mādhu góṣu antár*).²⁰⁶ The Aśvins on the one hand as Ṛbhus and on the other as bees in a cow brings together the same fundamental elements as those of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.

In addition to his formative presence in the apian context of the Aristaeus epyllion, remember that Orpheus is connected also with honey in the Orphic version of Kronos' deposition, in which Zeus inebriates his father using honey, that is mead. That the mellic element of this Orphic narrative deserves to be compared with Ṛbhus' association with bees and honey is indicated by the fact that although the Greeks of the first millennium sometimes used honey to sweeten their wine, they did not produce mead (hence lacking a specific word for it).²⁰⁷ Various authors demonstrate some knowledge that barbarian cultures consumed beverages made from honey,²⁰⁸ but such ethnographical trivia are hardly likely to have entered into the composition of the myth of Zeus' dethronement of Kronos. The Orphic verse, moreover, is to my knowledge the only Greek text that explicitly refers to the intoxicating capacity of honey aside from a passage of Pseudo-Plutarch, in which the author notes that the Illyrians ferment honey and make wine from it, and in which that technology is presented as something that the Greeks used to know about but had forgotten, whereas the Orphic verse does not present mead as being either surprisingly novel or dimly archaic or unusual in any way.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 10.106. On another hereditary feature in the imagery of this hymn see Skjærvø 2005.

²⁰⁷ Note that at *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.3 and 4.35.4 the Ṛbhus as Soma-drinkers are specifically said to drink honey.

²⁰⁸ Scheinberg 1979: 17-18.

²⁰⁹ *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus* 22.

That we are dealing in Kronos' inebriation by means of mead with a native element rather than an intrusive one also emerges from the fact that the Greeks definitely used to know about mead, because the Indo-European proto-language had both a word for honey, **melit-*, and a word for mead, **medhu-* (of which Modern English *mead* is a reflex). Some sub-groups of Indo-European, such as Celtic, maintain both terms and the original semantics thereof (Old Irish *mil* "honey" < **melit*; Old Irish *mid* < **medhu-*). In Greek, the honey word, **melit-*, is reflected in μέλι and derivatives such as μέλισσα, and the mead word, **medhu-*, yields the more poetic Greek word for wine, μέθυ, and the verb μεθύω 'be drunk.'²¹⁰ So in describing Kronos as ἔργοισιν **μεθύοντα μελισσάων** "drunk with the works of bees," the Orphic poet has brought into direct contact with one another both of the inherited honey words. Perhaps we are witnessing the vestiges of an understanding that the verb μεθύω derives from an old word for fermented honey. If so, that such an etymological appreciation has been encoded in an Orphic context points to the profundity of the connection between Orpheus and bees that I argue informs Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Remember that the mythology of both Orion and of Dionysus encodes the historical shift from the drinking of mead to the drinking of wine. The semantic shift of **medhu-* to μέθυ also occurs in Indo-Iranian languages. So Sanskrit *mádhu*, which sometimes means 'mead,' but also possesses the attenuated sense 'honey' on account of the fact that Indic has not maintained the inherited honey word, can also mean 'wine;' contrast Ossetic *myd* 'honey' with Avestan *mađu*, Sogdian *mδw* and Persian *may* 'wine' (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 518). On Iranian innovations in the inherited vocabulary of bees and honey see Witzak 2005. On *rong*, the legendary mead of the Narts, see Christol 2008: 353-81 and Thordarson 2009: 16, 56-7. Hesychius knew about the equivalent beverage actually consumed by the ancestors of the Ossetes: μελίτιον· πόμα τι Σκυθικόν.

²¹¹ It might also be worth taking note of Nyx's role in the inebriation of Kronos (μεθύοντα) by means of mead. Given the importance of this goddess in Orphic traditions (Kingsley 1995:136; Christopoulos 2010), her presence in this instance is perhaps due to nothing more than that. The Ṛg *Veda*, however, frequently juxtaposes Nyx's Vedic cognate Naktā with honey (*mádhu*; e.g. Ṛg *Veda* 1.90.7).

Furthermore, another Vedic verse suggests that the Ṛbhus' cow might have contained honey:

tākṣan dhenūṃ sabardúghām “[the Ṛbhus] fashioned a cow yielding *sabar*.”²¹² The word *sabar*

is apparently cognate with Modern English *sap*, and might be nothing more than a poetic

synonym for milk in this context, perhaps in the tradition of “language of gods” versus “language

of men.”²¹³ However, I suspect that here at least the use of this marked term is rather an

indication that the cow's contents are not of the usual variety.²¹⁴

In fact elsewhere *sabar*, like its English cognate, seems to refer to botanical sap. In a hymn to

Soma, *sabardúgha-* modifies the latter's epithet *vānaspāti-* ‘lord of plants.’²¹⁵ Furthermore, the

cow to whom the adjective *sabardúgha* is applied *vísṡvā vāsūni dohate* “yields all good

things;”²¹⁶ we have here the Vedic antecedent of the hugely important Kāmaduh ‘Wonder-cow’

of Classical Sanskrit literature. Remember that the iconography of Kāmaduh's Greek

etymological and functional congener Tyche brings bovines and honey into contact: she herself

is boomorphic, as well as consistently depicted with the horn of the sometimes bovine

Amaltheia, which is variously conneted to honey and its multiforms nectar and ambrosia.

²¹² *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.3c.

²¹³ See Watkins 1995: 38, 181-2 for discussion of some manifestations of this tradition.

²¹⁴ Sāyaṇa identifies the *sabar* of the Rbhus' cow as being *amṛta*, which, like its Greek cousin *ambrosia*, is consistently associated with honey. Dave 1955: 196-7 correctly perceives a connection between the Ṛbhus' cow and the *bougonia*, but to my mind very oddly indeed argues that the Vedic comparandum is a metaphor for a beehive, which figure of speech he claims the *bougonia* to have improperly rendered into literal terms. Nor does Dave have common heritage in mind: he proposes that the Mitanni brought the Indic tradition to Egypt, where the Romans eventually came to know of and distort it! In addition to the pages of Dave 1955 just cited, there is apparently another section of his serial essay devoted to the topic of the Ṛbhus' cow that is inexplicably absent from the copy of the journal to which I have access. See Kapil 1971: 109, whose bibliography claims that an installment entitled “The Ribhus and Their Nectar-Cow” appears in volume 17 (1955) of the *Indian Bee Journal* (pp. 49-63). In mine those pages contain articles by other authors, nor was the supposed section in question to be found elsewhere.

²¹⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 9.12.7b.

²¹⁶ *Ṛg Veda* 1.134.4b.

We saw in Chapter 1 that several Vedic passages juxtapose cows and honey, some of these even describing cows as containing honey. Furthermore, the cow that the Ṛbhus fashion is described as *viśvárūpām* “omniform,”²¹⁷ and another hymn states: *indro hárī yuyujé aśvínā rátham/ bṛhaspátir viśvárūpām úpājata* “Indra yoked the two bay horses; the Aśvins [yoked] their chariot, Bṛhaspati drove the omniform [cow].”²¹⁸ We know that Indra’s bays and the Aśvins’ chariot were fashioned by the Ṛbhus, so it is hard to see the cow driven by Bṛhaspati as anything other than that fashioned by the Ṛbhus. In fact the Ṛbhus’ act of bovine craftsmanship is mentioned in the very next verse of the same hymn.²¹⁹ Remember that Bṛhaspati is involved in situations in which cows and honey coincide, for instance: *úd gā ājad ábhinad bráhmaṇā valám...ásmāsiyam avatám bráhmaṇas pátir/ mádhudhāram abhí yám ójasāṭṛṇat* “[Bṛhaspati] drove out the cows and clove (the demonic cavern) Vala with a *bráhmaṇ*...the stone spring, which Bráhmaṇaspati (= Bṛhaspati) had opened with his might, gushed honey.”²²⁰

Furthermore, Tvaṣṭṛ’s cow is in formulaic alternation with honey: the poetic wisdom that the Aśvins seek from Dadhyañc is conceived of as the *gór...náma tvāṣṭur* “name of Tvaṣṭṛ’s cow,”²²¹ whereas elsewhere it is referred to as *mádhu...tvāṣṭráṃ* “Tvaṣṭṛ’s honey.”²²² As I have already pointed out, the decapitation that Dadhyañc undergoes in this same narrative is conceptually akin to the semantics of Orpheus’ severed head.

²¹⁷ *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.8.

²¹⁸ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.6a-b.

²¹⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.7a.

²²⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 2.24.3c, 4a-b.

²²¹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.84.15a-b.

²²² *Ṛg Veda* 1.117.22c-d.

As for the apparent shift from honey to bees in the *bougonia*, one factor appears to be what I would call the apian carcass event, most famously represented in Samson's discovery of bees in the carcass of the lion that he had slain,²²³ but clearly also known to the Greeks, as indicated by the bees that take up residence in Onesilus' skull.²²⁴ However, as I noted in my initial treatment of bees inhabiting carcasses, the *bougonia* can not be reduced to a manifestation of the latter alone for several major reasons. For one, bees, which shun putrescence, will deign to dwell only in dessicated remains. Furthermore, it is not clear that the ancients thought of bees nesting in a carcass as having been generated by their makeshift hive, and in no instance of it other than the *bougonia* is the host a bovine. Both the generative and the bovine element of the *bougonia* are rather descended from the pervasive and enduring Indo-European semantic nexus of cow and creation, a nexus that is verbally realized in the formular collocation of **gʰōy-* with **ĝenh₁-*, of which *bougonia* is itself a reflex.

So it seems that what I shall call the Indo-European creative cow matrix, in addition to generating the **H₃r̥bʰ*ic cow sacrifice from which the R̥bhus' bovine feat and the *bougonia* of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex descend, also gave rise to an independent and somewhat different notional mode of cow slaughter, one that was formulated with reference to the apian

²²³ *Judges* 14.8. In fact the relationship between the Hellenic *bougonia* and the Biblical narrative of the bees in Samson's lion skin might be even closer than previously suspected. Wilhelm 2000 argues that the Pelasgoi, also known as the Pelastoi, are to be identified with the Philistines, and it is en route to his marriage to a Philistine woman that Samson discovers the bees. Perhaps the similarities between the *bougonia* and the Samson narrative demonstrate the exchange of lore between the Greeks and the Philistines, or common heritage, if the Philistines are indeed speakers of an Indo-European language. How curious that several authors associate the Pelasgians with Arcadia in particular. See Yadin 2002 for a totally different argument that also places the Samson narrative in a Hellenic context. On the so-called Orpheus jug, which is considered by some to be a Philistine artefact, see Yasur-Landau 2008.

²²⁴ Herodotus 5.114.

carcass event. That would be the *bougonia* “proper,” that is the process according to which bovine slaughter miraculously generates bees. Orpheus’ cow sacrifice, possibly also referred to as the *bougonia* (and if so no less properly than its namesake) or maybe just described by means of phrasal concatenations of βούς and γίγνομαι, probably did not focus exclusively on the genesis of bees, but was similarly generative in some fashion, perhaps encoding metempsychotic ideology, and so inevitably bound for comparison with the other. So Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex represents the assimilation of Orpheus’ (quasi-)*bougonia* and the *bougonia* “proper.” And yet Virgil leaves enough of a discrepancy between his initial description of the Egyptian *bougonia* and Aristaeus’ sacrificial *bougonia* to make for a sort of tension between the two. I illustrate these stages of development in the figure that concludes this chapter.

The Ṛbhus’ act of bovine craftsmanship also involves the same poetic dimension that I have argued is implicit in the *bougonia* of the Aristaeus epyllion, that surfaces in Apollo’s receipt of the lyre in exchange for his cattle and the Bee Maidens, and that is reflected in the poetry contest between Orpheus and the Sirens during which Boutes undergoes his ordeal. We have already seen that the chariot and horses fashioned by the Ṛbhus are probably to be interpreted as symbols of poetic inspiration, and now it appears that the cow they craft appears to convey the same thing. The poetic aspect of the Ṛbhus’ is evident in the means by which they make her: *nís cármaṇo gām ariṇīta dhītībhir* “you extracted the cow by means of **poetic insight**.”²²⁵ In fact the cow is equated with *dhī(tī)*- ‘poetic insight’ in several Vedic verses.²²⁶ Furthermore, another

²²⁵ Ṛg Veda 1.161.7a = 4.36.4b, with slight variation at 3.60.2b.

²²⁶ For a discussion of several of these passages see Gonda 1963: 126.

Vedic act of bovine craftsmanship is overtly poetic: the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* informs us that Prajāpati *vāco gāṃ nirmimīta* “fashioned a cow from Vāc.”²²⁷

Last but not least, we have just seen that the Ṛbhus’ cow is apparently designed for the divine poet Bṛhaspati. The latter’s association with poetry takes on a bovine format in the *Taittirīyā Saṃhitā*: after the head of the Gāyatrī metre has been split open, Bṛhaspati seizes the first of the poetic essence that emerges, which thereupon transforms into a cow.²²⁸ In fact a Vedic verse calls Indra *sabardūghāṃ... gāyatrāvepasam...dhenúṃ* “a *sabar*-yielding milch cow inspired by songs,”²²⁹ where the first element of the compound *gāyatrāvepasam* ‘inspired by songs,’ *gāyatrā-* ‘song,’ is the form from which the name of the Gāyatrī metre is derived. Here we have an explicitly poetic and *sabar*-yielding cow, in light of which we should remind ourselves that the Ṛbhus’ cow is also *sabardūgha*.

Tvaṣṭṛ’s cow is also explicitly poetic, its secret name functioning as an expression for the poetic knowledge the Aśvins learn from Dadhyañc. Also note that when Tvaṣṭṛ as Ṛbhu et alii generate various items, the first and second creations to come into being are a *brāhman* and a cow: *brāhma gām...janāyanta* “they generated a *brāhman*, a cow.”²³⁰ The sequential contiguity of poem and cow could be said to bespeak semiotic affiliation.

²²⁷ *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.252. The verb *mā-* is also employed in poetic contexts elsewhere, and is cognate with Greek μέτρον, used of units of verse as early as Herodotus; see M. West 2007: 59.

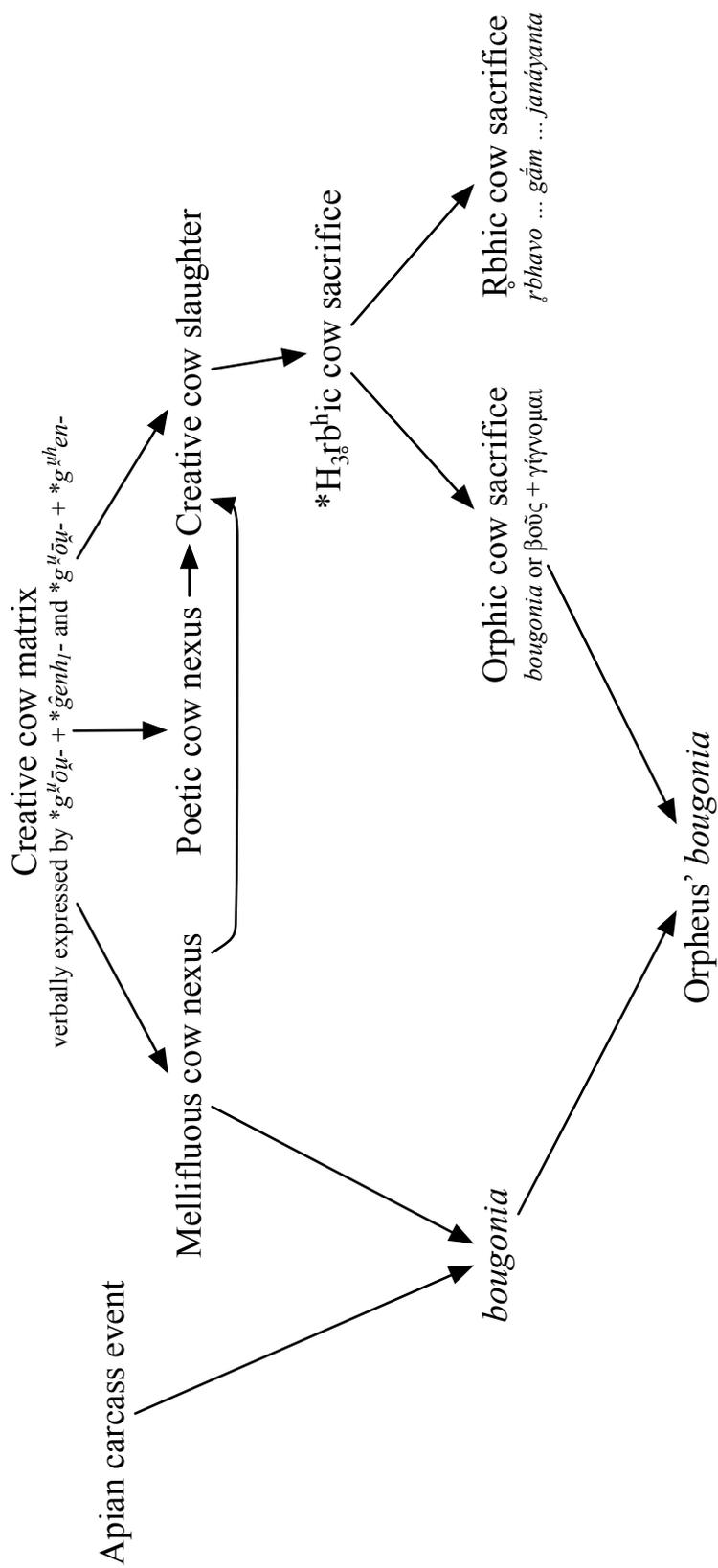
²²⁸ *Taittirīyā Saṃhitā* 2.1.7.

²²⁹ *Ṛg Veda* 8.1.10.

²³⁰ *Ṛg Veda* 10.65.11a.

So the comparative evidence indicates that both the *bougonia* of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex and the Ṛbhus' act of bovine craftsmanship have inherited a poetic dimension from their common ancestor. In light of the fact that the Ṛbhus' deed has this semantic valence, and in light of the fact that the verb *takṣ-* according to which it is sometimes accomplished is also poetically charged, there is really only one good way to translate into English the phrases *tákṣan dhenúṃ*, *tákṣan vatsāya mātāraṃ*, and *dhenúṃ tatakṣúr*:²³¹ “[the Ṛbhus] *composed* a cow/mother for the calf.”

²³¹ Ṛg Veda 1.20.3c; 1.111.1d; 4.34.9b.



CONCLUSION

Virgil's Orpheus-Bougonia Complex: An Intersection of Tradition and Innovation

The chapters of this dissertation have sought to demonstrate that the mythico-ritual nexus of Dionysus' death and rebirth, the events of the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the Boutes episode of the Argonautic narrative, and the Vedic mythology of the R̥bhus point in turn all four of them to the existence of a traditional amalgamation of Orpheus, bovines, bees, rebirth, and poetry,¹ the same amalgamation that I perceive to be at work in Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. These comparanda indicate that Virgil's epyllion is at least based on an established narrative configuration, and at most revisits one or more earlier treatments that had concatenated Orpheus with the phenomenon of ox-born bees in particular, and perhaps with Aristaeus as well. My research, which has not been an exercise in *Quellenforschung* in the immediate sense, neither brings us any closer to guessing the identity of Virgil's presumed source, nor does my analysis interest itself in that inquiry. Rather than striving to ascertain the putative precursor(s) of the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, I have instead striven to convey the extent to which there exists correlative material suitable for comparison to the component of Virgil's epyllion in question. Hence the formulaic subtitle of each of my chapters: "A Bacchic/ Homeric/ Argonautic/ Vedic Correlate to Virgil's Orpheus-*Bougonia* Complex."

¹ Recall that I introduced the poetic dimension only in Chapter 2, the mythology of Dionysus' dismemberment seeming to lack such an element. That being said, Dionysus is otherwise connected to poetry, for instance in his manifestation Dionysus Melpomenos, which actually brings us into indirect contact with Orpheus, for the priests of Dionysus Melpomenos were of the Euneidai, whose eponymous ancestor, Euneus, was trained by Orpheus (Power 2010: 366).

My project has, however, taken an interest in another kind of diachronic perspective: as argued in Chapter 4 and anticipated at various points prior to that chapter, it is not just that (a) pre-Virgilian author(s) told something along the lines of what happens in the epyllion, but also that the elements of this scenario had already been made to cohere in the mythological tradition of the Indo-European parent culture. This insight emboldens me to reject the claim made by a number of specialists in Orphic tradition that the latter lacks any sort of indigenous singularity, but rather distinguishes itself by means of adhering the name of Orpheus to mythological and religious traditions developed outside of the Orphic milieu.² My work discredits this notion by showing that certain aspects of the lore and ideology associated with Orpheus are on the contrary wholly native to his profile. In fact, there was never a time at which these aspects were anything other than his: as illustrated by the Vedic evidence, they had already been stitched into the tissue of the mythological dossier of Orpheus' progenitor **H₃r^héus*.

In claiming that Virgil's epyllion is informed by a traditional narrative I do not, however, expect that tradition alone will provide us with anything like an absolute understanding of the poem. Far from it, it seems to me that what makes the epyllion such an elusive and enigmatic text is that the poet has imbued it with a variety of significances. I am impressed, for instance, by Llewellyn Morgan's political interpretation of Virgil's *bougonia*, one which strikes me as especially attractive because it succeeds in assigning to both the apian and the bovine element of this procedure a common meaning: so the bees are the Quirites, and their bovine womb is *Italia*, Calf

² For a recent promotion of this stance see Edmonds 2011: 73.

Country (compare *vitulus*);³ thus both components of the *bougonia* stand for the Roman people.⁴ I therefore offer my own interpretation not in competition with such convincing analyses, but rather in addition to them. In so doing I participate in the very plurality of meaning that I submit is intended by and inherent to Virgil's text.

So although this dissertation has dwelt on the traditional foundation of Virgil's epyllion, there are, as I acknowledged already in the Introduction, a variety of elements that depart from the model that the poet has adopted from his antecedent(s). For the remainder of this subsection of the Conclusion, I limit myself to exploring just one of these novelties: the fact that Virgil's narrative complicates my optimistic reading of his association of Orpheus with the *bougonia* by variously portraying Orpheus in a negative light.⁵

On the surface, Virgil's Orpheus is a fundamental failure, his most obvious blunder being that of his absentminded glance back at Eurydice. Peter Kingsley argues that this version of the myth represents the efforts of an anti-Orphic agenda aimed at undermining the authority of the mythical bard and the ideology promoted with reference to his name.⁶ If that is so, then in selecting this version, Virgil is presumably to be thought of as being substantially critical of Orpheus. However the epyllion to a certain extent mitigates the damage done by the account of

³ Virgil appreciated this etymology. See Ahl 2007: 385-6.

⁴ L. Morgan 1999: 130-4. For a similar political interpretation of the bees see Stipanovic 2006. This would be an interesting twist on the animal imagery employed during the Social War discussed by Ahl 2007: 436.

⁵ For some recent remarks on Virgil's negative characterization of Orpheus see Nappa 2005: 200-16.

⁶ Kingsley 1994: 189. Orpheus is not the only figure who in contrast to his success in other authors fails in the *Georgics*. On Melampous' medical incompetence in *Georgics* 3 see Gale 2000: 127, 227.

Orpheus' infernal failure when it alludes to the tradition of his severed head,⁷ in which the latter survives its dissection and in fact obtains an even more elevated vocal status than before by becoming a potently poetic and prophetic resident of Lesbos. And yet even as Virgil seems to rehabilitate Orpheus by referencing the favourable fate of his head, he also seems to divest that allusion of whatever force it might have been able to transmit, declining to take the head as far as its insular abode and abandoning it afloat in the waters of the Hebrus *anima fugiente* "with its spirit departing,"⁸ as though in denial of the tradition that Orpheus defied death and persisted in producing powerful poetry and prophecy.

To return to Orpheus' careless backward glance, I suspect that Virgil makes a cruel joke to this effect when he has Cyrene instruct Aristaeus to appease the poet in part by means of an offering of poppies.⁹ On the one hand, these flowers need not incur our suspicion, being conventionally associated with the underworld,¹⁰ an association that Virgil emphasizes by describing them as *Lethaea*. On the other, these oblivion-inducing blossoms remind us of the fact that the very reason on account of which Orpheus is currently in the position of recipient of funerary offerings is that he himself forgot. And let us not forget that the entire point of the Orphic *lamellae* is to recall for their owners that they must drink from the spring of Memory and avoid its amnemonic antithesis.¹¹

⁷ The causal relationship that these two events in Orpheus' biography possess in the epyllion might itself constitute a Virgilian innovation. See Lee 1996: 12.

⁸ *Georgics* 4.526.

⁹ *Georgics* 4.545.

¹⁰ Thomas 1988: 238.

¹¹ The importance of memory in Orphic ideology is also implied in an inscription on one of the aforementioned bone tablets from Olbia, which opposes ψεῦδος to ἀλήθεια, lexically 'truth' but etymologically 'non-forgetting.'

Nor are the poppies the only respect in which Aristaeus' group of sacrifices seems to poke fun at Orpheus. Note that the latter is from a certain perspective a mere auxiliary recipient, for although Proteus assigns the agency of the blighting of Aristaeus' bees to Orpheus,¹² Cyrene rather attributes the deed to the nymphs, and so renders them the core beneficiaries of the offerings that she advises Aristaeus to make.¹³ In fact for all my talk of what I have dubbed Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, our author in the end curiously disrupts the integrity of that alleged complex: Aristaeus dedicates the four bulls and four heifers from which his new bees emerge to the nymphs alone. The distraction of Orpheus from this eightfold *bougonia* becomes even more pronounced in light of the fact that the victim of which he is the recipient is a ewe, whereas even Eurydice receives a calf.¹⁴ Only Orpheus receives a victim that is not a bovine, and that is therefore a victim void of bugonic potential.

So Virgil rather marginalizes Orpheus in the context of the narrative's purported climax. The Orpheus of *Aeneid* 6 is similarly relegated to the background. Although this book of the epic is on the one hand informed by Orphic eschatological tradition,¹⁵ Virgil allows Orpheus himself no more than a mere cameo. Furthermore, Virgil appears to have used as a model for Aeneas' ascent from the ivory gate of false dreams the satirical narrative recounted by Plutarch,¹⁶ in which Orpheus exits the underworld via a crater that is the source of dreams and proceeds to forget the

¹² *Georgics* 4.454-6.

¹³ *Georgics* 4.532-43.

¹⁴ *Georgics* 4.546-7.

¹⁵ On the Orphic component of *Aeneid* 6 see for example Zetzel 1989: 266-8, 283-4; Freyburger 1993; Molyviati-Toptsis 1994; Bremmer 2009.

¹⁶ M. West 1990: 41.

proper identity of this location, thereafter falsely conflating it with the Delphic oracle.¹⁷ So an oblivious Orpheus lurks in the background of Virgil's underworld, and the epic's eponym, whose actions Orpheus inspires, emerges from his subterranean stint at a location that makes him similarly suspect.

Virgil's Orpheus is therefore a far cry from the purely paragonic poet and praiseworthy proponent of religious ideology that we find elsewhere. Still, it is my opinion that Virgil leaves room for us to perceive these more traditional facets of Orpheus as work in the epyllion alongside the sometimes vicious variations that he has introduced into his portrayal of the mythical bard. The way I see it, these Virgilian innovations destabilize rather than invalidate my interpretation of the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, and to return to what I have already said about the multitude of meanings that Virgil's text apparently intends to communicate, I would argue that this destabilizing effect reflects an inherent property of the epyllion's programme.

In conclusion, I advocate the characterization of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex as an intersection of tradition and innovation. And yet it is the only extant text to attest to the tradition that it evidently represents. This could be due to nothing more than sheer chance. However, we have now seen that a number of the basic elements of the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex concurred already in the Indo-European mythological tradition, so that we might have expected similar situations to occur with some frequency in Classical literature. In the next section, I shall attempt

¹⁷ Plutarch, *De Sera Numinis Vindicta* 566. Kingsley 1995: 136-7 argues that this narrative is ultimately to be understood as Delphic propaganda.

an explanation as to why the kind of scenario on which Virgil based the narrative of his epyllion seems rather to have been remarkably rare.

Cryptic Cows and Bovine Imbroglis: Attaching and Detaching the *Bougonia*

In his study of the esoteric and agonistic rhetorical device generally referred to as the εικάζειν, Hayden Pelliccia proposes that the reason on account of which these expressions, the indigenous context of which is the symposium, also seem to surface with relative ease in other environments is that they are inherently designed to be readily adapted to a variety of circumstances.¹⁸ We might say that they are the socialite's bantering equivalent of the oral poet's formular hoard, ready-made witticisms that the symposiast who does not wish to devise his own from scratch can modify or simply recycle. As Pelliccia points out, Aristophanes attests to the prevalence of this sort of imitation, and there is even a papyrus containing what amounts to an εικάζειν chrestomathy.¹⁹ On account of the fact that the εικάζειν aims for flexibility, it is prone to being obscure and hence manipulable in sentiment, and it is therefore also prone to becoming detached and applied elsewhere.

To the extent of its particulars, the features of the εικάζειν have been conditioned by the institution of the symposium. In more general terms, however, I think that the εικάζειν is to be situated within the broader context of the tradition of competitive, sometimes hostile riddling that

¹⁸ Pelliccia 2002: 221-30.

¹⁹ Pelliccia 2002: 224.

is shared by numerous cultures of Indo-European ancestry.²⁰ The Indic manifestation of this inherited form of interaction is the *brahmodya*, which has a vibrant and versatile synchronic life of its own, but the ultimate antiquity of which is suggested by its conspicuous presence in several archaic milieu, such as the liturgy of the *Aśvamedha*, a ritual with correspondents in Rome and medieval Ireland.²¹ Glaucus and Diomedes' encounter in *Iliad* 6, one of the venues of the particular εικάζειν central to Pelliccia's essay, is similarly a veritable magnet for inherited verbal and thematic material.²²

It is therefore appropriate that in his essay on Indo-European donkey lore Watkins has detached Pelliccia's notion of detachment from the agonistic context in which he discusses it, and employs it instead in the domain of mythical narrative, noting that individual constituents of established thematic complexes also appear to undergo dislocation, occurring at times in isolation from the other elements with which they are conventionally concatenated elsewhere.²³ It occurs to me that if we adopt Watkins' reapplication of Pelliccia's concept, but at the same time retain one of the aspects of the original treatment that Watkins' extension does not incorporate, we might find ourselves at a vantage point that could be said to offer some perspective on the *bougonia*. I suspect that a union of Pelliccia and Watkins' work will be fruitful because on the one hand the *bougonia* can be conceived of as a theme, which is where Watkins comes in, but on the other it is

²⁰ Katz 2006: 165. In India, competitive riddling can be very dangerous indeed: the head of one who can not process the encrypted information in question is apt to explode. See Witzel 1987: 363-415. Greek also has instances of such extreme situations: Glaucus loses only armour, but Calchas, Homer and the Sphinx lose their lives. See M. West 2007: 73-4.

²¹ On the hereditary status of the *Aśvamedha* see Puhvel 1970: 159-72; Watkins 1995; and Jamison 1996: 65-88.

²² On some of the inherited components of this episode see Watkins 1995; Skjærvø 2000: 175-82 and E. West 2006: 237-58.

²³ Watkins 2004: 77-8.

a theme which, I shall argue, is founded on a purposefully riddling expression and thus, like the intrinsically enigmatic εικάζειν, is one that is especially ripe, in fact actually devised for detachment and circulation.

It is a typological phenomenon that riddles are often conveyed by means of zoomorphic imagery. Within Greek, the most prominent representative of this global trend is the αἴνος, which often assumes the format of an animal fable in which the actions of the bestial players encode a hidden meaning.²⁴ Such is the case in Hesiod’s αἴνος of the hawk and the nightingale, of which the poet says: νῦν δ’ αἴνον βασιλεῦσιν ἐρέω φρονέουσι “and now I shall tell a fable to kings who understand.”²⁵

Riddling animals are universal, but more peculiar to Indo-European is the frequency with which the animal that figures in coded contexts is the cow. We have already seen that the cow is perhaps the paramount vehicle of semiotic polyvalence in the *R̥g Veda*. Roman tradition knows of a bovine imbroglio in Faunus’ puzzling statement *det sacris animas una necata duas* “let one slaughtered [cow] provide two lives for the sacrifice,”²⁶ which Numa must decipher in order to glean what the Fordicidia entails.²⁷ That we are dealing here with a native Italic reflex of the Indo-European cryptic cow is more or less confirmed by the fact that the Fordicidia itself appears to be an inherited institution, matched as it is by the slaughter of a pregnant cow in other

²⁴ G. Nagy 1990c: 148-9, 426-28; 1999: 237-40. Compare M. West 2007: 364, 367. Competitive riddles often reference animals in Norse as well: for some instances in context see Kuhn and Neckel 1983: 1.45-55. The same is true of Indic. For a study of the *brahmodya*, in which animals recur, see Thompson 1997: 13-37.

²⁵ *Works and Days* 201.

²⁶ *Fasti* 4.665.

²⁷ Bader 1989: 139-40 situates the Fordicidia in the context of Indo-European riddles.

religious traditions of Indo-European heritage, including the riddlingly named Vedic *aṣṭāpadī* ‘eight-legged’ ritual.²⁸ In Iran, the riddle is not only about the cow, but posed by the soul of the cow itself, which interrogates its creator: *kahmāi mā θbarōždum kē mā tašaṭ* “for whom did you craft me?”²⁹

As for Greek, we have already encountered more than one Callimachean bovine riddle, and we shall see that Helios’ cattle signify the days of the year.³⁰ Orpheus describes the new moon on the first day of the month as a one-horned calf.³¹ Theocritus brings bovine and αἴνος into contact: αἴνός θην λέγεται τις ἔβα ποκὰ ταῦρος ἀν’ ὕλαν’ “the fable says that once a bull entered the forest.”³² Even if this expression’s implications for the situation at hand are relatively accessible, there is still at least a flair for the mysterious in its terseness and allusive character. Explicitly enigmatic is the bovine in the statement of Argos’ watchman: βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσση μέγας/ βέβηκεν...μαθοῦσιν αὐδῶ κού μαθοῦσι λήθομαι “a great ox stands upon my tongue...I speak to those who understand, but when it comes to those who do not, I have forgotten.”³³ In fact the implicit focus on the ox’s hoof here recalls the now familiar formulaic status of the cow’s track as a symbol for hidden meaning in the *R̥g Veda*: much in the same way as the pressure of the ox’s weight prevents the watchman from speaking clearly, *trīḥ sapṭá nāma ághniyā bibharti/ vidván padásya gúhiyā ná vocad* “the cow bears twenty-one names. He who knows the track

²⁸ Gamkrelidze and Ivanov: 1.488.

²⁹ Again Bader 1989: 161-2 also locates this passage within the category of Indo-European riddles.

³⁰ Appendix C. As if these cattle were not already sufficiently obscure, Archimedes drives them into the context of a mind-boggling mathematical problem (Mugler 1970-2: 3.170-3).

³¹ Bernabé 2004-7: 304; Marzillo 2010: 272.

³² *Idyll* 14.43; Bader 1989: 160 fn. 138.

³³ *Agamemnon* 36-7, 39. This is not the only instance of inherited bovine imagery in the play. See Campanile 1974: 248.

should tell them **like secrets**.”³⁴ The cognate significance of the inverted hoof prints that Apollo must decipher in order to find his cows and thereby acquire the lyre is just one of many Greek instances of the cow’s poetic symbolism that we have already discussed. In the case of Minos’ multicoloured bovine, so difficult to describe, the cow *is* the riddle.³⁵

I suspect that the *bougonia* is founded in part on this tradition of bovine enigmas.³⁶ The semantics of its name are, without context, ambiguous, and the correct meaning is actually counter-intuitive: in the absence of an understanding of what the *bougonia* entails, one’s first guess would hardly be that ‘cow-genesis’ refers to the creation of something else as a consequence of the cow’s destruction. It is as though the formation *bougonia* were meant to engender a *bouversement* of intellectual expectations. Indeed even once fully explicated, this fantastical phenomenon remains as riddling as ever, a *dictu mirabile*.³⁷

In fact we have already seen that the various outcomes of the Indo-European conceptual matrix that combines cow and creativity consistently involve a destructive counterpoint. For just one case, let us quickly revisit the Indo-European cosmogonic myth, in which the cow is an essential figure. In its Vedic reflex, the cosmogonic victim Puruṣa is killed, and cows come into being as a result, an event that is expressed by the phrase *gāvo ha jajñire*, etymologically and even

³⁴ *Rg Veda* 7.87.4.

³⁵ See also the lowing of the cow in the riddle for Rhodes (Forster 1945: 45; Luz 2013: 94).

³⁶ The leonine relative of the *bougonia* experienced by Samson is also presented as a riddle (*Judges* 14.14-18). See Shipley 1918.

³⁷ *Georgics* 4.554.

sequentially identical to the segments of the compound *bougonia*.³⁸ Here we have what I would suggest is one of the more obvious senses that *bougonia* could convey to the uninitiated: the genesis of bovines. In the Iranian congener of the Puruṣa myth, both a primordial man and ox suffer miraculously generative deaths, but at the same time new cattle are brought to life from the semen of the latter, so that we have a *bougonia* not only in the same obvious sense, but also in the actual sense: paradoxically generative bovine slaughter.³⁹ I have argued that something similar is at work in the Ṛbhus' crafting of a new cow from the remains of an old one, a deed that appears to be predicated on an understated cow sacrifice. In Norse, the relationship between cow and creativity is reimagined yet again: here the primaeval cow Auðumbla herself comes into being from the thaw of the primal frost, and then brings the primordial humanoid Ymir into being, but rather than being required to undergo harm in order to do so, she simply licks Ymir out of the salty block of ice in which he is encased. Ymir himself, however, thereafter suffers a cosmogonic dismemberment.⁴⁰

What I propose is that an intentionally equivocal collocation of **gʷō̯-* and **ǵenh₁-* functioned as the formulaic means by which manifestations of the Indo-European creative cow matrix were expressed. This verbal collocation and the situations it described had the potential to realize themselves in two basic ways: a cow could be brought into being through violence, or a cow could bring into being by becoming the victim of violence. The Iranian cosmogony is ambidextrous in this respect, the death of the primal ox resulting in the compensatory genesis of

³⁸ Remember that Empedocles' primaeval semi-bovine monstrosities, to which he applies βουγενής, serve as an argumentative hinge between Indo-European cosmogonic mythology and the *bougonia*.

³⁹ Compare the Lithuanian folktale mentioned in the Introduction.

⁴⁰ Faulkes 1982: 11-13.

cattle. The destructive constituent of the creative cow matrix could also be unambiguously articulated by means of the combination of $*g^u\bar{o}u-$ with $*g^{uh}en-$, which coexisted in enigmatic alternation with its phonetically proximate fellow, the pairing of $*g^u\bar{o}u-$ with $*\hat{g}enh_1-$. Hence the conceptual consonance between the *bougonia* and Bouphonia.

So it seems that like the εικάζειν, the semantic fluidity offered by the collocation of $*g^u\bar{o}u-$ with $*\hat{g}enh_1-$ resulted in its widespread deployment in various veins of thought and in various venues, including the description of the phenomenon of ox-born bees. To conceive of the *bougonia* as endowed with the same sort of detachability as that with which Pelliccia characterizes the εικάζειν might be said to go some way in explaining the rather perplexing fact that no extant scenario aside from the Aristaeus epyllion connects Orpheus with this procedure. Given that the Vedic evidence demonstrates that the relationship between Orpheus and the *bougonia* is founded on an inherited combination of elements, the fact that he is not associated with it more often is remarkable.

However, if we keep in mind the εικάζειν's tendency toward becoming detached, the rarity of the connection between Orpheus and the *bougonia* begins to make a strange kind of sense. The εικάζειν has its home in a symposium, but is also fluently transplanted elsewhere. The *bougonia* normally occurs apart from Orpheus, but it is ripe for attachment to him. Orpheus is, after all, magnetic.⁴¹

⁴¹ Plato, *Ion* 536b.

Interpreting the *bougonia* of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex in particular as a kind of riddle is an appropriate manoeuvre. A number of authors comment on the fact that the Orphic manner of expression strove for opacity. The author of the Derveni papyrus attests to this predilection when he refers to the poetry of Orpheus as being αἰνιγματώδης “riddling.”⁴² One such riddle is the equation of Kronos and Khronos, hardly unknown outside of Orphic contexts, but apparently particularly prominent in them.⁴³ Note that the phonetic play between *Kronos* and *Khronos* is quite close to the one that I have argued was at work between *bougonia* and **boukhonia*, which is how βουφονία must have sounded before it was analogically restored.

Another Orphic riddle, if not a very perplexing one, is the aforementioned description of the new moon on the first of the month as a one-horned calf.⁴⁴ To be sure, the moon's association with cattle is not uncommon in Greek literature, but to actually identify her as a bovine could be said to render this tradition somewhat more obscure than it otherwise tends to be. I would also recapitulate in this context the Orphic inscription mentioned in the introduction, βίος θάνατος βίος, a terse and riddling statement that in just three words encodes the Orphic doctrine of metempsychosis.⁴⁵

⁴² Bernabé 2004-7: 3.202.

⁴³ López-Ruiz 2010: 151-67; Athanassakis and Wolkow 2013: 102.

⁴⁴ Bernabé 2004-7: 2.304; Marzillo 2010: 272. Remember that Porphyry mentions the identification of the moon as a bovine and the *bougonia* in the same breath, although he, unlike Proclus, does not mention Orpheus in connection with the lunar bovine. For another (peri-)Orphic bovine riddle compare secret (κρύφιον) goad of the cowherd (Clement, *Protrepticus* 2.16.3).

⁴⁵ See also Van den Broek 1972: 142 for the Phoenix as an Orphic riddle.

In light of the three Orphic riddles just discussed, the first of which involves a phonetic game similar to that between *bougonia* and **boukhonia*, the second of which involves a calf, and the third of which alludes to reincarnation, it seems quite reasonable to conceive of the *bougonia* of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, which likewise involves a cow and arguably functions as an emblem of reincarnation, as belonging to the same category of enigmas.⁴⁶

Although originally referencing specifically wild animals, Claude Lévi-Strauss' influential maxim “on comprend enfin que les espèces naturelles ne sont pas choisies parce-que ‘bonnes à manger’ mais parce que ‘bonnes à penser’”⁴⁷ has come to be considered an apt description for how the human mind engages with all kinds of animals. As we have come to see, the Indo-Europeans thought that bovines in particular were “good for thinking,” an intellectual tradition that continued to circulate within the Orphic orbit.

Phoenician Bees in Byrsa: The Afterlife of the *Bougonia* in the *Aeneid*

Although Virgil makes no explicit mention of the *bougonia* in the *Aeneid*, one might expect him to allude to it over the course of an epic in which both bees and bovines figure on multiple occasions. Furthermore, lines of the *Georgics* repeated in the *Aeneid* are most frequently lines

⁴⁶ As G. Nagy has demonstrated, Plato alludes to this Orphic predilection for arcane articulation when he refers to Tethys' name as an ὄνομα ἐπικεκρυμμένον (*Cratylus* 402c) in the wake of having quoted Orpheus on Okeanos and Tethys (G. Nagy 2009: 253 fn. 126, 254, 259-60, 262). We have in Plato's expression ὄνομα ἐπικεκρυμμένον the Orphic equivalent of the *gór...nāma tváṣṭur apīciyam* (*Ṛg Veda* 1.84.15a-b) “secret name of Tvaṣṭṛ's cow” that Orpheus' Indic analogue Dadhyañc reveals to the Aśvins.

⁴⁷ Lévi-Strauss 1985: 132.

from *Georgics* 4,⁴⁸ so that we might expect something of the thematic content of *Georgics* 4 to accompany the precise language of the latter that has been reiterated in the *Aeneid*. Given that lines of *Georgics* 4 that recur in the *Aeneid* most often occur in the first book of the epic, it could be said to be rather appropriate that bees and a bull are to be found in rather close proximity to one another in Book 1; the bees in question, moreover, are described using language according to which the bees of *Georgics* 4 had already been described.⁴⁹

These epic bees are invoked in the simile in which Virgil likens the busily working Carthaginians to a hive of industrious bees.⁵⁰ In light of the fact that this repetition is apt to trigger an association with the last quarter of Virgil's agronomical oeuvre, and therefore has the potential to call to mind the narrative of the epyllion, it seems to me to be significant that Virgil refers to the taurine aetiology of Byrsa just a bit more than sixty lines before the bee simile.⁵¹ Although bull and bees are more than negligibly distracted from one another in this instance, we might still consider the possibility that there is a very subtle allusion to the *bougonia* at work here: it would be as though the bull slaughtered in order to procure the eponymous hide from which Dido prepares the strips used to delineate Byrsa's boundaries has given birth to a citizenry of bees: the Carthaginians, whom Virgil likens to that very insect.⁵² For what it is worth, when Aeneas addresses Venus just a few lines after she has mentioned the aetiology of Byrsa, and therefore relatively shortly before the bee simile, he voices his reluctance to repeat his entire story

⁴⁸ All entirely and partially repeated lines are collected and tabulated by Briggs 1981-2: 146-7.

⁴⁹ Compare *Aeneid* 1.430-36 with *Georgics* 4.162-9. On Virgil's other sources for these lines beyond his own previous composition, see Polleichtner 2005: 138-51.

⁵⁰ *Aeneid* 430-6.

⁵¹ *Aeneid* 1.367-8.

⁵² See Leach 1977: 11 for a similar interpretation. On Dido/Elissa as a sort of queen bee, see Grant 1969.

by saying *o dea si prima repetens ab origine pergam*,⁵³ the phrasing of which for the most part reiterates that with which Virgil signals to his audience that he is about to describe the *bougonia* (*expediam prima repetens ab origine famam*).⁵⁴

It would be tempting to perceive in the recurring bovines and the apian simile of *Aeneid* 6,⁵⁵ the next book of the epic in terms of frequency of repetition of lines of *Georgics* 4, and the epic's most extensively Orphic book, an extensively splayed allusion to the Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, but that must be considered rather too much of a stretch.

Picasso, Cocteau, and Apollinaire: Orpheus and the Cow in the Visual and Verbal Arts of the Twentieth Century

In the Introduction, I mentioned Lucilla Burn's identification of Aristaeus and Eurydice on a white-ground cup as being the only proposed visual representation of the narrative that unfolds over the course of Virgil's Aristaeus epyllion, no definite depiction of this scenario being known to exist. Nor does the extant art of Classical Antiquity depict Orpheus in conjunction with the cow. When it comes to Late Antiquity, however, we do have something of the sort. What I have in mind are the Orpheus mosaics, the rather fixed imagery of which consistently shows the poet playing his lyre, surrounded by a motley crew of rapt animals. There is a certain amount of

⁵³ *Aeneid* 1.372.

⁵⁴ *Georgics* 4.286. See Briggs 1981-1982: 134.

⁵⁵ *Aeneid* 6.24-6; 38; 251-3; 707-9.

variation to be found with respect to which animals are shown to be present, especially when it comes to more exotic ones. A stock character in these mosaics, however, is the bull.⁵⁶

It would be perverse to argue that the bull of these mosaics routinely alludes to the connection between Orpheus and the cow for which I have argued, but I would like to consider that possibility in the case of one of the Orpheus mosaics from Palermo (3rd–6th century).⁵⁷ Here Orpheus, who is holding the plectrum of his lyre with arm outstretched, seems to be pointing with the tip of that implement at none other than the bull, which is relatively proximate to the poet, and looks directly at him. To be fair, Orpheus also holds the plectrum in more or less just this manner in a number of other mosaics,⁵⁸ so that the fact that its tip is being directed at the bull in this instance might be simply fortuitous. But perhaps it would not be overly indulgent to rather credit the artist with a subtle reference to Orpheus' association with this animal, maybe even a reference to the poetic dimension of this association. Note that other animals involved in the composition of Orpheus' lyre figure in the audience: so the arms of the instrument, which are lengthy, twisted horns, are duplicated in the compatible horns of the gazelle, and the instrument's tortoise-shell body has its live match in the specimen of the animal from which it was taken,⁵⁹ conspicuous on account of the fact that it alone does not conform to the orientation obeyed by the rest of the depiction, but rather seems to defy the laws of gravity, clinging to a segment of earth that runs parallel to the edge of the mosaic.

⁵⁶ Jesnick 1997: 83, 202-3. As Jesnick 1997: 81 notes, the cow's udder in a 19th-century illustration of the Saint-Romain-en-Gal Orpheus mosaic is probably the prudish modification of what used to be testicles.

⁵⁷ For a description of this mosaic see Jesnick 1997: 129 (Palermo I).

⁵⁸ For such similar postures see Jesnick 1997: 169, figure 6; 184-6, various; 248.

⁵⁹ Jesnick 1997: 81 also notes the resonance between the tortoise-shell lyre and the live tortoise.

So maybe Orpheus' apparent gesture toward the bull alludes to the fact that bovine tissue can also be involved in the composition of the lyre, if it is not a reference to the more profound triangulation of Orpheus, cows, and poetry that this dissertation have endeavoured to demonstrate. If there is any merit to my interpretation of this mosaic, then Callistratus had it just right when in describing a representation of Orpheus of this type, he states that the bull in particular is the animal that listens to the lyre.⁶⁰

Whimsical as my effort to isolate Orpheus and the bull of the Palermo mosaic might be, manifest combinations of Orpheus and this animal are to be seen and read in the visual and verbal arts of the twentieth century. In 1930, Pablo Picasso began working on a series of etchings for Albert Skira's edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1931).⁶¹ One of the events that Picasso chose to depict was the death of Orpheus.⁶² Picasso's illustration, however, does not quite limit itself to a single moment in Ovid's narrative, but rather represents a telescoping of two successive stages. In Ovid the Maenads, having spotted Orpheus, then spot oxen ploughing and farmers tilling with tools. The latter flee at the sight of the Maenads, leaving their tools on the soil. The Maenads then pick up the abandoned implements, and having first slaughtered the oxen, return to Orpheus and kill

⁶⁰ *Ekphraseis* 7. In light of the fact that this mosaic is from Sicily, I would note that the Sicilians seem to have been substantially interested in bovine mythology. So the island on which the cattle of Helios pasture is sometimes identified with Sicily, for instance by Archimedes (Mugler 1970-2: 3.170). A Sicilian interest in these cattle might have encouraged Stesichorus, who is said to have been from that island, to compose his *Geryoneis*, the cattle of the eponym of which are variously identified as being solar. On what she identifies as a predilection at Selinus for the iconography of Europa and the bull, see Marconi 2007: 95. The Sicilians also seem to have been rather interested in Orphic tradition, on which see Kingsley 1995: 115-16.

⁶¹ On Picasso's illustrations for Skira's *Metamorphoses* see Florman 2000: 14-69.

⁶² For the final illustration, as well as its first and second states, see Bernstock 1991: 119-121.

him.⁶³ Picasso's illustration combines this series of slaughters into a single event, the Maenads attacking their bovine victim (in Picasso a bull) and Orpheus simultaneously.

It is perhaps inevitable that Picasso, whose artistic output demonstrates a sustained and pronounced fascination with the bull in general and with the bullfight in particular, should have latched onto the bovine detail of Ovid's text.⁶⁴ In fact Orpheus' pose resembles that in which Picasso elsewhere depicts matadors and picadors struck by bulls.⁶⁵ But perhaps in the same way that Ovid's combination of a Maenadic bovine *sparagmos* with the death of Orpheus could be said to reflect the connection between Orpheus and the cow that is the subject of this dissertation, we might perceive in Picasso's insistent juxtaposition of the poet and this same animal something more than a reflex of his interest in the corrida. We might even suppose that familiarity with Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex has further encouraged Picasso to enhance the relationship between Orpheus and the oxen of Ovid's narrative. In addition to the fact that Picasso was substantially acquainted with Classical literature and mythology, the Aristaeus epyllion had been treated by Juan Pérez de Montalbán in the second canto of his *Orfeo en la lengua castellana*, with *toro* and *Orfeo* occurring in contiguous lines of verse.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Metamorphoses* 11.30-43.

⁶⁴ On Picasso and the bull see Cox and Povey 1995: 28-47 and Dupuis-Labbé 2001.

⁶⁵ Wye 2010: 62.

⁶⁶ Pérez de Montalbán 1999: 340, 347. See also the proximity of Orpheus and bull in the first stanza of the *Circe* of Lope de Vega (quoted, translated, and discussed by Wilks 2010: 161). Lope de Vega supposedly provided considerable assistance in the composition of Montalbán's *Orfeo* (Felipe Pedraza Jimenez 1991: ix-xiii). For a discussion of the Orpheuses of Montalbán and Lope de Vega in the broader context of Orpheus in Spanish literature of the Baroque see Gamechogoicoechea Llopis 2011: 115-17, 132-5.

In a moment of frustration during a Museum of Modern Art symposium on *Guernica*, Picasso, irritated by the various interpretations to which critics had subjected his painting, burst out with the oft-quoted statement: “this bull is a bull.”⁶⁷ To subject the bull of his etching of Orpheus to any sort of analysis might seem to defy this apparently anti-interpretive declaration. However as Picasso went on to clarify, his remark was not meant to suggest an absence of deeper meaning in his work; what he protested was the tendency for critical interpretations to conceive of the artist as consciously assigning an exclusive meaning.⁶⁸ Given that Picasso encourages us to discover the meaning of art free from preoccupation with the constraints of authorial intention, I am encouraged to comment on his illustration of Orpheus. What I would point out is that the looseness of the manner in which Picasso has drawn the contours of some of the figures almost causes them to merge,⁶⁹ an effect that is even more pronounced in the earlier states of the illustration. So in the latter Orpheus and the bull begin to dissolve the one into the other, the dying poet becoming difficult to distinguish from the dying animal.

However as Ovid’s narrative emphasizes what Virgil’s only hints at, Orpheus does not die. On the contrary, he goes on to enjoy a successful sequel to his first stage of existence as an unabatedly vociferous, indeed paradoxically enhanced severed head on Lesbos. So perhaps Picasso’s identification of Orpheus with the bull could be said to convey something along the lines of the metempsychotic symbolism that I have claimed is conveyed by the *bougonia* of Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex. Judith Bernstock similarly suggests that Picasso’s

⁶⁷ The entire statement, of which this is just a phrase, is quoted by Oppler 1988: 201.

⁶⁸ And in fact later on Picasso did assign symbolic values to the animals of *Guernica*. See Russell Martin 2002: 167-8.

⁶⁹ For a like-minded remark see Florman 2000: 33.

illustration is informed by Orpheus' link to Dionysus and his tauriform death and rebirth,⁷⁰ which could well be the case, given that Picasso's private collection included the Dionysiac-inspired Master of the Procession of the Ram's *Procession of the Fatted Ox*,⁷¹ the eponymous bovine of which is presumably destined for slaughter. So perhaps Picasso was aware of the same nexus of Orpheus, cows and death and rebirth for which I have argued in this dissertation, even if he would deny that he was consciously operating within such a nexus while etching Orpheus and the bull.⁷²

But what of the poetic dimension that I have assigned to the *bougonia* of Virgil's Orpheus-*bougonia* complex—does a comparable significance surface in Picasso's illustration as well?

Perhaps: Bernstock notes that Orpheus seems to be cupping his hand about one of the eyes of the bull, as if to protect it, an apparent action that she interprets as the poet attempting to preserve the organ so essential to the artist;⁷³ indeed, the member with which Orpheus seemingly endeavours to protect the bull's eye is equally indispensable to the artist. So we might perceive in Orpheus' gesture an indication that the eye of the bull, if not the entirety of the animal, symbolizes artistic

⁷⁰ Bernstock 1991: 168.

⁷¹ Cox and Povey 1995: 37.

⁷² That Picasso might have thought of the dying bull as possessing regenerative symbolism is suggested by the fact that he seems to employ to Mithraic motifs, on which Clair 2001; this would probably be via Georges Bataille, the impact of whose work is variously apparent in Picasso's. See Florman 2000: 150-55. Note that the works of Picasso that seem to reflect Mithraic elements include his *Crucifixion*, which he completed in none other than 1930, the same year in which he etched Orpheus and the bull. See Kaufmann 1969. A line of Picasso's poetry envisioning bees surrounding a bull's head (*abejas aureoleando la cabeza del toro*) suggests that he might have had the *bougonia* in particular in mind. See Bernadac, Piot, Volk and Bensoussan 1898: 100. Bee and bull seem to merge in Picasso's 1956 lithograph *Taureaux sur une branche*, which represents little bulls with insect wings settled on and hovering around flowers. Although this lithograph is known to the Internet, I have yet to discover mention of it in any printed book; variously discussed, however, is his similar 1956 drawing of a single bull on a branch, but this one wingless. See Cox and Povey 1995: 40.

⁷³ Bernstock 1991: 168-169.

creativity, much in the same way as the cow functions as a symbol for poetic inspiration in Orphic semiotics. In any event, Bernstock is right to attach some sort of special significance to this detail, for the eye of bull is a theme in Picasso's literary work.⁷⁴

Some of my remarks on Picasso's combination of Orpheus and the bull in his 1930 illustration might seem strained, but their validity is confirmed by the fact that a comparable and contemporaneous combination occurs in *Le Sang d'un poète*, the first installment of Jean Cocteau's *Orphic Trilogy*, which was released in 1932, but filmed two years earlier. Cocteau and Picasso were already old friends by that time, and had already professionally collaborated in the production of the ballet *Parade* (1917), for which Picasso designed the costumes and sets, and for which Cocteau composed the scenario. Given that they had already been both friends and colleagues for a number of years prior to the filming of *Sang*, one would suppose that they had formed a habit of discussing with one another their current projects, and Orpheus may well have arisen in the context of those discussions. In fact Orpheus, Cocteau, and Picasso converge after a fashion in Cocteau's claim that he invented the name of one of the characters in his 1925 stage play *Orphée* while on his way to visit Picasso at his Paris apartment.⁷⁵ With respect to *Le Sang d'un poète* in particular, Picasso attended a 1930 private projection for the Noailles, who had funded the film.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Bernadac 2005: 191-192.

⁷⁵ Bernstock 1991: 167. For the text of this play see Cocteau 2003: 383-424, 1663-70.

⁷⁶ Williams 2006: 36.

As in the case of Picasso's artistic output, Cocteau's work demonstrates a persistent interest in cows, both before and after the filming of *Sang*.⁷⁷ For example, although neither the events of the pantomime ballet *Le boeuf sur le toit* (1920), for which Cocteau was the choreographer, nor the lyrics of the Brazilian song after which composer Darius Milhaud named the ballet have anything to do with cows,⁷⁸ before the premiere, Cocteau and Madame Alphonse Daudet ate ice cream topped with decorative miniature oxen.⁷⁹ Nor did the bovine imagery surrounding *Boeuf* end with its performance. In 1921 proprietor Louis Moysès relocated the Gaya, the bar frequented by Cocteau and his friends, and renamed the new venue *Le boeuf sur le toit*.⁸⁰ A poster advertising the new bar shows Cocteau at the window of an edifice in shape of bull's head, the window being its eye.⁸¹ Inevitably, Cocteau and Picasso came to interact with one another within the context of their shared taste for things bovine. So they attended bullfights together,⁸² and Cocteau recalls how Picasso transformed the discarded seat and handlebars of a bicycle into the head and horns of a bull.⁸³

⁷⁷ See the bizarre bull illustrated by Cocteau in 1929 (photograph in Païni, Nemer and Loth 2003: 316). Many years later, Cocteau would produce the illustrations for Jean-Marie Magnan's *Taureaux* (1965).

⁷⁸ See Aschengreen 1986: 88-96.

⁷⁹ Peters 1986: 72.

⁸⁰ Knapp 1989: 41.

⁸¹ Païni, Nemer and Loth 2003: 245; Williams 2008: 91. For a time, the walls of the *Boeuf* were lined with drawings by both Cocteau and Picasso (Richardson and McCully 1991-2007: 3.208).

⁸² On Cocteau and the bullfight see Peters 1986: 180-3, which includes a photograph of Cocteau and Picasso together, both dressed as toreros. The bullfight witnessed by Cocteau in Seville on May 1st, 1954, in which the matador Dámaso Gómez dedicated one of the bulls to him, inspired Cocteau to compose his *Corrida du premier mai*.

⁸³ Crosland 1972: 268. Similarly the bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguín recalls the image described in a poem by Rafael Alberti dedicated to him, in which the poet imagines that Picasso is a bull, and he a picador (Picasso, Dominguín, and Boudaille 1961: 12). Compare Scholes 1992: 183-184, who portrays Picasso and Joyce interacting with one another via their intersecting interest in the mythology of the Minotaur.

In the final scene of *Sang*, the Poet, who is anonymous, but who becomes Orpheus in the second film of Cocteau's trilogy, plays a game of cards with a woman dressed in white, who turns out to be the white sculpture that he had brought to life in his studio, and that seems to function as the Poet's Muse (Cocteau never calls her by this name, but I shall proceed to do so). The Muse wins the card game, and informs the Poet that he is done for, at which point he commits suicide by shooting himself in the head. Then the Muse leaves the building in which the card game had been played, and beckons with her hand, in response to which an ox (Cocteau calls it a bull in the screenplay) ambles into the shot.⁸⁴ Now there is a new shot of the Muse leading the ox, and then a close-up of what appear to be the tips of the ox's horns, but what turn out to be the horns of the lyre that the Muse is shown to be holding in the following shot.⁸⁵

Rumour has it that Cocteau spontaneously drove this ox into the film because during the production of the latter, he learnt that Luis Buñuel was going to be putting a cow in bed in a scene of *L'Âge d'or* (1930),⁸⁶ which was also being funded by the Noailles,⁸⁷ and which was therefore perhaps somewhat in competition with *Sang*. Surely, however, there is something more than cinematographical rivalry involved here. For one, a torn map of Europe has been plastered onto the ox's side, and in the shot in which the Muse is shown to be holding a lyre, she is also holding a globe, so there is some sort of geo-political comment at work. In addition, perhaps

⁸⁴ How fitting that Cocteau met the American photographer Lee Miller, who played the role of the Poet's statue-Muse, at the *Boeuf sur le toit* (Fell 1979: 441).

⁸⁵ The ox, which was rented from an abattoir and in a very sorry state, had only one horn, for which Cocteau fashioned prosthetic partner (Peters 1986: 115).

⁸⁶ Fell 1979: 441 fn. 3.

⁸⁷ Williams 2006: 35.

Cocteau, who, like Picasso, was well versed in Classical mythology,⁸⁸ had picked up on the connection between Orpheus and the cow for which I have argued in this dissertation.⁸⁹

With respect to the element of death and rebirth that I have argued is involved in Orpheus' connection with cows, the white Muse and her ox correspond to the bull and the Dame Blanche in Cocteau's *Corrida du premier mai*, in which Cocteau explains that the White Lady is Death.⁹⁰ Furthermore, recall that the Muse summons her ox after the Poet has killed himself, and although this death is not demonstrated to be anything other than permanent, the Poet has already shot himself in the head and remained alive earlier on in the film. So this seeming death of the Poet is in fact not a death at all, but a new beginning, a mystery that Cocteau advertises in *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1960), the third installment of his *Orphic Trilogy*, when he makes reference to Salvador Dalí's concept "phoenixology," according to which the artist must undergo a continuous cycle of deaths and rebirths.⁹¹

That the ox at the end of *Sang* is a symbol of rebirth is also suggested by the equivalent scene in *Le Testament d'Orphée*, in which the Poet, this time Cocteau himself, experiences a death and

⁸⁸ Tsakiridou 1997. For a Classicist's remarks on Cocteau's stage play *Orphée* see Rutledge 1989: 49-51. Vulović 1998: 141 notes that Orpheus says "J'ai soif!" upon returning from underworld, which might indicate that Cocteau was familiar with the Orphic *lamellae*. On Cocteau and Greece in general see La Touche 2003, and Bépoix and Kontaxopoulos 2007.

⁸⁹ Cocteau's murals in the Menton Salle des Mariages combines the Orpheus myth with imagery of the corrida (La Touche 2003: 93-7). Much in the same way that Bernstein argues for a Dionysiac element in Picasso's etching of Orpheus, D'Anger 1998: 40 discusses Cocteau's ox in the context of the Orphic-Dionysiac bull. Borgal 1977: 191 mentions tauriform Dionysus in his study of Cocteau, but does not link the god with the bovine dénouement of *Sang*. Many years after having produced *Sang*, Cocteau would compose the stageplay *Bacchus* (1952).

⁹⁰ Crosland 1972: 284, 288, 292.

⁹¹ On Dalí's phoenixology see his *Diary of A Genius* (Dalí 1965). It is appropriate that Cocteau should raise the phoenix in an Orphic context. On the Orphic phoenix see Van den Broek 1972: 142.

rebirth.⁹² Much in the same way as the Poet of *Sang* is observed by an audience while he is playing cards with his Muse, and applauded when he shoots himself, Cocteau's death in *Testament* is observed by a group of his friends, including Picasso and the matador Luis Miguel Dominguín; in the screenplay, moreover, Cocteau describes these spectators as though they are sitting in the presidential box at a bullfight.⁹³

Furthermore, there is something of the *bougonia* in *Sang*, for in the scene before that in which the Poet plays cards with his Muse, a boy is killed in a snowball fight, and his body is covered and absorbed by his guardian angel, whose time spent on top of the boy is accompanied by the (buzzing?) sound of a car motor,⁹⁴ and whose wiry wings, far from the feathery variety, are rather described by Cocteau in the screenplay as representing the nervous system of a bee.⁹⁵

Cocteau resumes the mortuary symbolism of bees in *Orphée*, the second film of the *Orphic Trilogy*, in which Heurtebise claims that to look at oneself in a mirror for an extended period of time is to see "la Mort travailler comme des abeilles."⁹⁶ Elsewhere Cocteau combines bee with bull. So for example in 1960 he produced two stylistically similar gold sculptures, one entitled *Taureau* and the other *Monseigneur Abeille*.⁹⁷ Bee and bull coincide in a context of death, if not

⁹² On the equivalency of these scenes see Williams 2006: 94-5.

⁹³ "...comme dans la loge présidentielle d'une corrida" (Cocteau 1961: 78).

⁹⁴ In the screenplay, Cocteau 1948: 83 uses the verb *ronfler*, which can be used to describe the buzzing of bees, although the verb usually used when referring to the noise made by this insect is *bourdonner*.

⁹⁵ "...système nerveux d'une abeille" (Cocteau 1948: 65). Cocteau's work shows a recurring interest, if not always perfectly accurate knowledge, of the mythology of bees. On Cocteau's bees of Solomon, by which he must have meant the bees of Samson, see Cocteau 1993: 188. In connection with the apian angel of *Sang*, note that Cocteau illustrated the unedited *Douze Poèmes* of Paul Valéry, one of which is entitled "Abeille spirituelle" (Nadal 1968: 7).

⁹⁶ Jemma-Jejcic 2006: 137 identifies Heurtebise as a kind Aristaeus to the extent that he accompanies Eurydice. Tsakiridou 1997: 93 sees these bees of Death as being linked with decaying flesh, which could be said to put us in mind of the *bougonia*.

⁹⁷ For photographs of these sculptures see Bépoix and Kontaxopoulos 2007: 195, 197.

rebirth, in both his *Journal d'un inconnu*, in which he refers to “le labyrinthe ouvert de Knossos où se cachent des idées de taureau rouge et d’abeilles,”⁹⁸ and in a line of Coctelian verse, in which the poet describes a matador dressed in gold as “une géante abeille.”⁹⁹

So Cocteau even more so than Picasso seems to demonstrate an appreciation of the connection between Orpheus and the cow for which I have argued. As for the poetic dimension that I have claimed is at work in the *bougonia* of Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, in both *Sang* and *Testament*, we are dealing with the death of a Poet in particular. It seems that Cocteau understood the relationship between Orpheus and the cow to possess a poetic component as well.¹⁰⁰ Cocteau clearly associates the ox of *Sang* with poetry in having its horns become confounded with the arms of the Muse’s lyre, an association that the artist revisited when illustrating for the Menton music festival a poster that depicts a bull’s head with the strings of a lyre between its horns.¹⁰¹ Cocteau literally brought this lyric bull to bear on Orpheus in his costumes for Roland Petit’s ballet *Orphée et Eurydice*, Orpheus’ outfit including a lyre to be worn on the head,¹⁰² a coiffure that surely transforms Orpheus into something of a bull; in fact, Cocteau’s notes indicate that he wanted this cephalic lyre to look just like the one in *Sang*,¹⁰³ which, as we have already seen, emerges out of the horns of an ox.

⁹⁸ Cocteau 1953: 232.

⁹⁹ Cocteau 2002: 182.

¹⁰⁰ On the relationship between death and poetry in *Sang* see Evans 1977: 84-101.

¹⁰¹ For a photograph of this advertisement see La Touche 2003: 59.

¹⁰² For Cocteau’s sketches of this costume see Bépoix and Kontaxopoulos 91, 103. Compare the *Orfeo* of Savinio (1932), in which the lyre is not on a head; rather, the lyre *is* a head. See Fiorillo 2009: 94 for a photograph of this painting. On Petit’s *Orphée et Eurydice* see Aschengreen 1986: 162.

¹⁰³ Quoted by Caizergues 1992: 145-6. Touzot 2000: 135 also compares the coiffure to horns. See also the illustration in the Rocher edition of *Sang* in which the head of the Muse, the lyre, and the bull’s head merge (Cocteau 1957: 97).

What is arguably an ancestor of our Picassan and Coctelian Orphic bovines reared its head already in 1911, when Guillaume Apollinaire, who was friends with both Picasso and Cocteau,¹⁰⁴ published *Le bestiaire ou le cortège d'Orphée*, for which Raoul Dufy produced a series of woodcuts, but which was originally supposed to have been illustrated by Picasso.¹⁰⁵ The final poem, *Le boeuf*, is a cherub, conceived of as a winged ox in Dufy's woodcut.¹⁰⁶ Yet again, this ox is eschatological, not only because it is angelic, but because Apollinaire speaks in *Le boeuf* of rebirth in heaven. That the ox ambles in at the very end of the poem suggests that it possesses a special significance; similarly the first animal of the *Bestiaire* is the tortoise, the Orphic essence of which is already familiar to us.

I conclude my foray into twentieth-century visual and verbal art with some tentative remarks on a painting of Marc Chagall. In 1977, this artist completed *Le mythe d'Orphée*, which depicts Orpheus playing his lyre next to the prostrate body of Eurydice. Above Eurydice hovers a little animal which, based on other paintings of Chagall in which the animals are more obviously or

¹⁰⁴ For a study of the influence of Apollinaire on the work of his circle friends see Hicken 2002.

¹⁰⁵ On Picasso's sketches for Apollinaire's *Bestiaire* see Cox and Povey 1995: 21 and Read 2008: 53-8. Even though in the end Picasso did not commit to the project, Apollinaire seems to have continued to view his poem as somehow linked to Picasso, sending the artist a manuscript on which he wrote a quatrain that manipulates the conventional image of animals following Orpheus, and instead has both animals and Orpheus follow Picasso (Read 2008: 55). Based on his illustration of what appears to be a wizard surrounded by a host of fabulous creatures and a caricature of Apollinaire, it seems that Picasso had also been intending to illustrate *L'enchanteur pourrissant*, Apollinaire's narrative of the entombed Merlin (Read 2008: 53), a sort of Arthurian Orpheus. On the correspondence between Picasso and Apollinaire see Caizergues and Seckel 1992. For Orpheus as the matrix of communication between Apollinaire and Cocteau, see Cocteau's comparison of Apollinaire's face illuminated by two candles to the severed head of Orpheus (Read 2008: 240).

¹⁰⁶ For both the poem and the woodcut see Apollinaire 2011: 60-1. On winged bulls in Picasso's verbal and visual art see Bernadac 2005: 191-2 and Gasman 2007, *passim*. Dufy would later produce the scenes and costumes for Cocteau's *Boeuf sur le toit*.

expressly bovine seems to me to be a little heifer.¹⁰⁷ That Chagall's painting deserves to be considered in conjunction with Cocteau at least is suggested by the figure standing next to Orpheus, which appears to be a humanoid with a horse's head. Similar upright horses figure at various stages in Cocteau's Orphic oeuvre.¹⁰⁸

* * *

This dissertation has made much of Orpheus' connection to the cow, but I believe that it is justified in having done so, given the residual prominence of cattle in Greek mythology and religion, a prominence descended from this animal's preeminence in the mythological and religious traditions of the Greeks' Indo-European ancestors, who were already telling stories about Orpheus' antecedent in which the cow loomed large. Edward Evans-Pritchard, the distinguished anthropologist who studied the Nuer, a Nilotic ethnic group the economy and culture of which are heavily based on the cattle, famously exhorted those of his readers that truly desired to understand this people: "cherchez la vache."¹⁰⁹ I submit that Evans-Pritchard's claim is just as applicable to the ancient Greeks, as well as to their cultural forebears and congeners, for

¹⁰⁷ Compare *La vache à l'ombrelle*, *La vache rouge dans le ciel jaune*, *La crucifixion mystique*, *La maison à l'oeil vert*, *Solitude*, etc. With the French artist's juxtaposition of Eurydice and what seems to be a bovine compare the line of Pierre Emmanuel's *Tombeau d'Orphée* (1941) in which Orpheus describes the abyss of Eurydice as a "taureau ou dieu, peut-être" (Emmanuel 1967: 60). Emmanuel also combines Orpheus with bees (p. 41).

¹⁰⁸ On Cocteau's two-legged horses see Touzot 2000: 134. Chagall also knows about the poetic and musical significance of the cow. See his *Solitude* (1933—the year after that in which Cocteau's *Sang* was released), in which a cow adjacent to a violin or fiddle almost seems to be playing it; compare *Les vaches sur Vitebsk*, *La danse*, etc.

¹⁰⁹ Evans-Pritchard 1940: 16. One need only look at studies such as Rice 1998, Sharpes 2006, and Velten 2007 to see that Evans-Pritchard's statement holds true for a number of cultures around the world both past and present. McInerney 2010: 2-12 acknowledges Evans-Pritchard and his expression "bovine idiom" as an inspiration for his study of cattle in ancient Greek culture. Lincoln 1981 consists of a typological comparison of the handling of cattle in the cultures of various East African ethnic groups, including the Nuer, with the handling of cattle in the cultures of various ethnicities of Indo-European heritage.

whose poets, after all, it was imperative to track and find the cow, just as the aspiring lyricist Apollo does in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.

The comparative perspective that I have applied time and again, including just now, might be conceived of as something of a curiosity when considered from within the parameters of Classics as the discipline is conventionally defined, but much in the same way as Cocteau, whose avant-garde *Sang d'un poète* broke new cinematographical ground, acknowledges in the preface to the screenplay of that film “Je n’y tue certes pas le taureau selon les règles,”¹¹⁰ I credit the bulk of whatever progress my dissertation could be said to have yielded to my having wandered off of the beaten track. I do not claim that in having done so I have found all of the answers to the multifaceted mystery of Virgil’s Orpheus-*bougonia* complex, but I expect that I have at least steered us in right direction.

¹¹⁰ Cocteau 1948: 18.

APPENDIX A

Ὀρφεύς and *R̥bhú-*:

A Linguistic Assessment

In our earliest literary reference to Orpheus, Ibycus of Rhegium calls the mythical poet ὀνομάκλυτον.¹ Ibycus' characterization remains accurate to this very day, and yet despite the enduring fame of Orpheus' name, there has never been much interest, let alone consensus, in terms of what it could be said to mean. There are a few ancient speculations on the matter,² ingenious and valuable inasmuch as they can help us understand how their inventors conceived of Orpheus, but not likely to be thought of as possessing etymological validity.

As for modern attempts, Pierre Chantraine fares little better in proposing a connection with ὀρφανός, or more to the point with its evident precursor **h₃órb^hos*, a form seen in Latin *orbis*, Armenian *orb* and Finnish Indo-Iranian loan-word *orpo*, all meaning 'orphan.'³ With ὀρφανός in mind, Chantraine suggests that Orpheus' name encodes the myth of the loss of his wife and his subsequent desolation.

The semantics of this explanation do not strike me as especially convincing. It is hardly likely that the apparently innovative, if not subversive emphasis on Eurydike's aborted ascension

¹ Campbell 1982-93: 3.268.

² These are conveniently assembled by Bernabé 2009c: 1.17 fn. 6.

³ Chantraine 2009: 800. An unextended Greek reflex of **h₃órb^hos* is apparent in the Hesychian glosses ὀρφοβόται· ἐπίτροποι ὀρφανῶν, ὀρφοβοτία· ἐπιτροπή and ὄρφωσεν· ὠρφάνισεν. The Armenian cognate *arbaneak* 'administrator' shows a suffix similar to that of ὀρφανός, but as Weiss 2006: 256 fn. 29 points out, the fact that ὀρφανός is apparently a relatively recent formation suggests that its suffixal morphology and that of *arbaneak* represent independent developments rather than reflexes of an inherited form.

provided the onomastic grist for the narrative's protagonist. As we are about to see, from an onomastic perspective, Orpheus is more fundamentally connected to several other aspects of his mythological dossier than he is to the Eurydike narrative.

It is appropriate that Ibycus' attribution ὀνομάκλυτον descends from a hereditary collocation paralleled by Tocharian A *ñom-klyu* 'name-fame' and the Vedic syntagm *nā́ma śrútyam* "[Indra] renowned with respect to his name,"⁴ because I suspect that a diachronically deeper and specifically Indo-European perspective is needed to access the etymology of Ὀρφεύς. Given that the behaviour and properties of Orpheus' severed head, as well as various facets of Orphic ideology have been conditioned by inherited concepts and narratives, it seems reasonable to suppose that his name itself might also derive from this same heritage.

⁴ *R̥g Veda* 8.46.14c. See Watkins 1995: 65.

In fact Orpheus has long been thought to possess a set of onomastic congeners in the Vedic Ṛbhus, a trio of divine craftsmen whose potential relationship to Orpheus Chantraine ignores.⁵

What I just said about Orpheus also pertains to these figures: it comes as no surprise that their collective appellation appears to derive from the Indo-European mythico-religious onomasticon, given that their mythological profile seems to contain a number of hereditary features, many of which offer grounds for a *rapprochement* with none other than Orpheus himself.⁶

Let us begin by considering the onomastic equation that originally motivated the comparison of Orpheus with the Ṛbhus. The lexeme that provides the joint theonym of the latter functions not only as such, but is also used to describe several other Vedic divinities, as well as the occasional object. As a result of this ostensible double usage, the notion has arisen that what we are dealing with is first and foremost an adjective *ṛbhú-* meaning something like ‘skillful,’ which was only

⁵ These names were first brought into juxtaposition by Lassen 1840: 487. An alternative etymology connecting the Ṛbhus with the Germanic Elves appears to have its origin in Kuhn 1855: 109-10. Haudry 1987b: 159-219; 1987a: 118, 122, 129, 198-200 has endeavoured to lend credence to this understanding by elucidating a number of characteristics that the Ṛbhus and the Elves may be said to have in common. See Janda 2010: 188, 190 for a recent treatment of these etymologies. I prefer to think of the evidence that this chapter provides for a connection between Orpheus and the Ṛbhus as more substantial, but must concede that some of the correspondences Haudry proposes are rather compelling. Perhaps we can imagine a situation in which an otiose Proto-Germanic descendant of the same onomastic ancestor behind Orpheus and the Ṛbhus, whose name we shall reconstruct as **H₃r^bh^héus*, transferred some of his attributes to the phonetically similar Elves, whose appellation apparently derives from **h₁alb^ho-* ‘white,’ a form seen in Latin *albus*, Greek *ἀλφός* ‘leprosy’ and Hittite *alpa-* ‘cloud.’ In any event Kazanas 2001: 276 is wrong in claiming that there is “no substantial reason, philological or semantic, why Gk *Orpheus* and Gmc *elf* should not be related to Vedic *Ṛbhú-*.” Blažek 2010: 5-6 presents the evidence for both etymologies. Bernal 1987-2006: 1.71 posits that Orpheus’ name has been appropriated from a phonetically similar epithet of the Egyptian underworld deity Geb, and claims that the latter is to be identified with the goose that lays the cosmogonic egg, which Bernal compares to the original ovoid of Orphic cosmogony. I cannot follow Bernal’s linguistically problematic presentation, but I am willing to consider that the Greeks might have perceived a relationship between Orpheus and Geb much as Bernal has done. Such a notional connection might have gained further impetus in light of the fact that Geb’s relationship with the goose could be said to call to mind Orpheus’ reincarnation as a swan in Plato’s myth of Er, a situation which I shall argue has its basis in an established tradition (see Appendix B). The efforts of Wagner 1970: 57 to compare Ὀρφεύς and *Ṛbhú-* to a putative deity mentioned in the Gaulish Coligny calendar are incredibly problematic.

⁶ In other respects, the Ṛbhus are of uniquely Indic composition. For a remark to this effect see Jamison 2000: 7 who references Joel Brereton’s unpublished work on the subject.

thereafter fixed as the definitive term for *the* ῥbhus, whose characteristics were considered to quintessentially exemplify the inherent sense of this word.

Both phonologically and semantically, the obvious candidate for a radical source would be *ra(m)bh-* ‘hold, grasp,’ which is proximate in sense to and probably a regional variant of *la(m)bh-* ‘receive,’ i.e. take for oneself. In light of the probable Greek cognates λάφυρα ‘booty’ and ἀμφιλαφής ‘wide, spreading,’ *la(m)bh-* appears to be the underlying form.⁷ An adjectival derivative of this apparent **lab^h-* ‘hold, handle, lay hands on’ could be argued to have developed the meaning ‘handy, skillful.’⁸

In fact it is far from clear that this is what is going on. To my mind the process at work, at least in its inception, was quite the opposite: many of the contexts in which this supposed adjective *ῥbhú-* occurs can just as well be understood as analogies in which it is rather *the* ῥbhus who are being invoked in apposition to the subjects at hand, the latter being so correlated because their immediate activity or characterization overlaps with actions or traits typically associated with *the* ῥbhus. We will see several good examples.

Since this proposed appositional usage of *ῥbhú-* is bound to have depended on an analogy with the ῥbhus’ characteristics, in other words on the connotative significance of their name, it could only be said to incidentally convey something about the latter’s etymology, if at all. That *ῥbhú-*

⁷ Mayrhofer 1986-2001: 2.435.

⁸ I think that this etymology was first proposed by Debrunner and Wackernagel 1896-1964: 1.70; Mayrhofer 1986-2001: 1.259 seems to tentatively support it.

as appositive does eventually seem to have been reinterpreted as an adjective conveying something like ‘skillful’ should not prevent us from understanding that such a usage represents the development of a tradition of metonymic references to the Ṛbhus.

So although my criticisms have no impact on the linguistic credibility of deriving *Ṛbhú-* from *ra(m)bh-*, it strikes me that the intellectual process of getting there is misled. Furthermore, if *ra(m)bh-* does indeed go back to **lab^h-*, while the latter could be said to yield *Ṛbhú-*, it can not be the source of Ὀρφεύς, since the Greek dialects maintain the original distribution of their inherited liquids. In anticipation of the fact that this chapter aims to provide what I consider to be excellent evidence for a substantial kinship between Orpheus and the Ṛbhus, let us necessarily reject *ra(m)bh-* and reconsider.

With the correspondence Ὀρφεύς ~ *Ṛbhú-* as our point of departure, the root in question, as Hisashi Miyakawa has proposed, must be **h₃erb^h-*.⁹ This radical is most famous for its Hittite reflex *ḫarp(p)-*, a semantically elaborate verb the definition of which Calvert Watkins renders as ‘change membership from one group to another,’ used of livestock straying from their owner’s herd into another, and of divorced couples realigning themselves with their new spouses.¹⁰

⁹ Miyakawa’s proposal, which he first made public in the discussion following the conference-paper version of Melchert 2010, made its first appearance in print as reported by P. Jackson 2002a: 84 fn. 52, who also participated in this same conference. Miyakawa himself presented his hypothesis for the first time in 2003: 118-19, and then again in 2004: 158. For a recent discussion see Janda 2010: 348.

¹⁰ Watkins 2000: 60.

Watkins presents the meaning of *harp(p)-* as reflecting the basic semantic value of **h₃erb^h-*, but as Michael Weiss has recently pointed out, this is inherently unlikely.¹¹ Furthermore, the expanded lexical dossier that Weiss has assembled for this root indicates that a reassessment is in order. The new data that Weiss admits include Latin *orbis* ‘circle, disk’ Tocharian B *yerpe* ‘disk, orb,’ and Lydian ἄρφύρνον, which Hesychius glosses as ὁ δίσκος.

When considered in conjunction with *harp(p)-*, these additional items demonstrate that the basic sense of **h₃erb^h-* must have been simply ‘turn.’¹² Hittite *harp(p)-* therefore represents an abstraction from the root’s primary sense. A more literal rendering of *harp(p)-* would be something like ‘undergo a societal change.’ The underlying semantics are nicely captured in Craig Melchert’s alternative translation of the Cuneiform Luvian relative of *harp(p)-*, the noun *harpanalla/i*: traditionally thought to mean ‘enemy,’ Melchert suggests that the correct sense is rather ‘rebel, *turncoat*’ (my italics).¹³

Another set of derivatives of **h₃erb^h-* also deserves to be mentioned in the context of this discussion: the aforementioned family Greek ὀρφάνος, Latin *orbis*, Armenian *orb*, and Finnish *orpo*, which Weiss demonstrates are to be etymologically interpreted as ‘one who is turned over,

¹¹ Weiss 2006: 259.

¹² In combining *orbis*, *yerpe* and ἄρφύρνον Weiss follows Grošelj, but he expands on the latter’s analysis by providing these words with an etymology. Weiss also adds Umbrian **urfeta**, a technical term for a ritual implement in the *Igvine Tables*.

¹³ Melchert 2010: 185.

undergoes transfer.’¹⁴ Chantraine’s effort to connect Ὀρφεύς with ὀρφανός, although semantically flawed, is thus etymologically valid.

As for the morphology of Ὀρφεύς and *Ṛbhú-*, the latter is in the zero-grade, so that the former can be assumed to conform in that respect,¹⁵ but there is a discrepancy between their desinences. However, despite the lack of identity, the terminations of Ὀρφεύς and *Ṛbhú-* are conspicuously similar with respect to their vocalism. The Greek nouns in -εύς do not have an exact match in any other Indo-European language, which has given rise to the school of thought that they consist of a morphological innovation unique to Greek, one that the Greeks either developed themselves, or one that they adopted from another language.¹⁶

However, a competing stance sees in pairs like Ὀρφεύς and *Ṛbhú-* an indication that such a category existed already in Proto-Indo-European, but that the individual daughter languages subsequently levelled the grade of the suffix in various ways, thereby synchronically obscuring the hereditary status of their formation.¹⁷ In light of the possibility that Greek eu-stems more or

¹⁴ See Weiss 2006: 256-68, who here modifies and improves on previous analyses. Armenian *arbaneak* is presumably to be understood as ‘one who turns things over,’ i.e. accomplishes them. The notion is perhaps similar to the Modern English fiscal term *turnover*.

¹⁵ Weiss 2006: 259 fn. 43 cautiously notes that while the data with which he is working tends toward indicating **h₃erb^h-* as the most likely reconstruction for the root under study, the evidence neither confirms as much nor excludes the possibility that **h₂erb^h-* is the correct form. If we were to admit Orpheus to the dossier and understand his name as being in the zero-grade, we would have confirmation that the root began with the third laryngeal.

¹⁶ Bernal 1987-2006: 3.157 has recently advocated the latter position, linking the formant -εύς with an Egyptian morpheme.

¹⁷ Perpillou 1973: 27-8. Schindler 1976: 349-52 more cautiously proposes that the basic morphological constituents and processes from which the eu-stems have been formed are inherited.

less reflect a type of nominal inflection inherited from the grammar of the proto-language, we could reconstruct the name of Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' common ancestor as **H₃r^héus*.¹⁸

This is in fact the route that I shall follow, but given that assigning the eu-stems to Proto-Indo-European remains a speculative, I think that it is worth considering an alternate explanation as to why Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú- are not exact matches. Although nouns in -εύς can be formed in several ways, they are most often derived from o-stems; for just one example note the derivation of ἀριστεύς from ἄριστος. Ὀρφεύς therefore may have had its source in an **orpho-*.

Alan Nussbaum has suggested to me that this **orpho-* could itself go back to an **orph-w-o-*. The existence of such a form, and the possibility of its role in Orpheus' onomastic ancestry, could be said to find some support in the fact that Vedic has the form *ṛbhva-*, which occurs exclusively as an alternative to *ṛbhú-* in its appositional usage. We could thus speak of a common Graeco-Indo-Iranian form **h₃r^h-u-o-* associated with the mythological personage who has spawned both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus, Orpheus' name having been formed directly from it, and the Ṛbhus' name, itself from an unextended **h₃r^h-u-*,¹⁹ alternating with it.

Should we prefer this analysis, one way of reconciling Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' slightly different morphological histories would be to consider that both **h₃r^h-u-* and **h₃r^h-u-o-* might have started out as alternating epithets of Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' joint precursor before developing full onomastic status, at which time they apparently displaced the very theonym that they

¹⁸ P. Jackson 2002a: 83; Miyakawa 2003: 119; 2004: 158.

¹⁹ Maybe Lydian ἀροφύτων could also be said to have as its basis this unextended **h₃r^h-u-*.

originally modified. Such a situation could be said to go some way in explaining the appositional use of *ṛbhú-* and *ṛbhva-* in the Vedas: an epithet is more easily detached and applied elsewhere than a theonym.

The synchrony of the Vedic situation would thus represent the entirety of a diachronic process, *ṛbhú-* (and maybe *ṛbhva-* too at a stage prior to Vedic) functioning on the one hand as the personal appellation of the Ṛbhus (previously alternatively the Ṛbhvas?), but on the other being used in alternation with *ṛbhva-* to modify the names of several divinities during moments in which their behavior was thought to be functionally equivalent to that of *the* Ṛbhus. In Greek, **h₃r^h-u-* is not maintained, and **h₃r^h-u-o-* does not appear to have developed a broader application; at least in extant literature, Ὀρφεύς does not behave as a formulaic appositive.

Admittedly *ṛbhva-* and the **orph-w-o-* that I am proposing might be the source of Ὀρφεύς could just as easily be the result of independent thematizations rather than reflexes of a Graeco-Indo-Iranian **h₃r^h-u-o-*. And the existence of an **orph-w-o-* is in and of itself admittedly purely hypothetical. Of course the alternate explanation that Ὀρφεύς and *Ṛbhú-* both reflect distinct outcomes of a common Indo-European eu-stem inflection is also theoretical, but at least its argument has its basis in extant forms, whereas we have generated **orph-w-o-* solely with reference to *ṛbhva-*. So I shall proceed to refer to Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' shared antecedent as **H₃r^héus*. Note that this reconstruction has the advantage of bringing the diachrony of Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' names into a state of perfect morphological cohesion.

Now we must inquire as to why **H₃r^héus* might have been so called. I have dismissed Chantraine's notion that Orpheus' name is to be approximated to ὀρφανός and interpreted as an allusion to the narrative of his wife's death. As we now know, the meaning of ὀρφανός represents a specific development of **h₃erb^h*- 'turn.' In particular, the word's synchronic connotation of abandonment and destitution on which Chantraine's analysis depends has nothing to do with its etymology. I do not think that we should understand the derivative semantics and implications of ὀρφανός as being present in Ὀρφεύς as well.

Let us then return to the primary sense of **h₃erb^h*- and see what it has to offer our investigation. I intend to show that both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus are associated with concepts and activities that in some cases implicitly and in others explicitly involve concentric objects and motions. I aim for us to emerge from the discussion with the understanding that both Orpheus and his triplicated brethren have inherited this apparent affinity for turning from **H₃r^héus*, and that it is this same affinity that has spawned the latter's very name. Turning, it seems, was the very *raison d'être* of **H₃r^héus*.

As noted above, Miyakawa has already derived Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú from **h₃erb^h*-. However, his analysis precedes Weiss' recent reassessment of this root, and thus does not have turning in mind. Rather, Miyakawa observes that the Ṛbhus, who are originally men, proceed to become immortal after having impressed the gods with their fantastic capacity for craftsmanship.²⁰ Miyakawa suggests that this transition from human to divine is expressed in the Ṛbhus' theonym

²⁰ P. Jackson 2002a: 84 fn. 52; Miyakawa 2004: 158.

itself, the assumption being that the sense of *Ṛbhú-* is akin to that of Hittite *ḫarp(p)-* ‘change membership from one group to another.’

To the best of my knowledge, Miyakawa has not extended the semantic angle of his analysis to Orpheus, but I think there are grounds for doing so. I have already advocated the understanding that the Orphic *lamellae* are legitimately referred to as such, and that they derive from an eschatological tradition maintained in several literary traditions informed by Indo-European heritage, including the Brāhmaṇas.²¹ It thus comes as no surprise that various aspects of the *Ṛbhus*’ mythological profile also appear to correspond to the content of these Orphic texts.

One shared feature is the prominent role of divinization. The *Ṛbhus*’ is mentioned on numerous occasions, such as when the poet refers to them as *yé devāso ábhavantā* ‘who have become **divine**.’²² Perhaps this statement and its variants are related to the formulaic references to divinization in the Orphic *lamellae*, the function of which texts, as previously discussed, appears to be to help their owners break away from a cycle of reincarnation by attaining immortality: θεὸς ἐγένου ‘you have become a god,’²³ θεὸς δ’ ἔσῃ ‘you will be a god,’²⁴ and δῖα γεγῶσα ‘[Caecilia] having become **divine**,’²⁵ with an etymological match in the last (*devāso* and δῖα, although morphologically rather different, both ultimately from **dej-u-*).²⁶

²¹ Mendoza 2009.

²² *Ṛg Veda* 4.35.8a. The *Ṛbhus*’ immortalization is also mentioned at *Ṛg Veda* 1.110.3-4, 3.60.2-3, 4.33.4, 4.35.8, 4.36.4.

²³ Graf and Johnston 2013: 8 line 4.

²⁴ Graf and Johnston 2013: 12 line 9.

²⁵ Graf and Johnston 2013: 18 line 4.

²⁶ Kahle 2011: 23 identifies the *Ṛbhus*’ immortalization as a Vedic antecedent of the doctrine of transmigration.

Divinization is of course a typological feature of many religious and mythological traditions, but that should not prevent us from observing the significant fact that such a motif, however generic, surfaces here in contexts pertaining to cognate figures. Furthermore, the Ṛbhus ascend to the gods by the *amṛ́tasya pántām* “path of immortality,”²⁷ a route that calls to mind the ὁδὸν...ἱερὰν described in the Orphic *lamella* from Hipponion,²⁸ and the statement δεξιὰν ὁδοιπόρ[ει]/ λειμῶνας τε ἱεροῦς καὶ ἄλσεα Φερσεφονείας “travel the road to the right to the meadows and groves of Persephone” in one of those from Thurii.²⁹

Imbibing is also a crucial part of both the Ṛbhus and the Orphic initiate’s acquisition of immortality. The Ṛbhus gain theirs by being granted access to the Soma sacrifice, at which they are permitted to drink from the third pressing of this ritual’s eponymous beverage, the Indic equivalent of the Olympian gods’ nectar. The Orphic soul’s transition to the afterlife similarly involves drinking water from Mnemosyne’s spring, a body of water that derives from the inherited component of the *lamellae*’s content.³⁰ Of course Soma is not water, but the the Indic correspondent to Mnemosyne’s spring, the lake Śaryaṇāvat, contains Soma, and Mímisbrunnr, the Norse functional and perhaps even etymological relative of Mnemosyne’s spring, similarly contains mead.

²⁷ *R̥g Veda* 4.35.3c.

²⁸ Graf and Johnston 2013: 4 lines 15-16.

²⁹ Graf and Johnston 2013: 8 lines 5-6. Compare the *pathibhir devayānaih* “path of the gods” with which the Ṛbhus are associated at *R̥g Veda* 4.37.1b, in which we have a partial etymological match for Pindar’s functionally compatible Διὸς ὁδὸν (*Olympian* 2.70), a road that has as its model an eschatological landscape that is either Orphic or related to the latter.

³⁰ Lincoln 1991b.

The *Ṛg Veda*, moreover, reports an exhortation that the Ṛbhus make to the gods: *idám udakám pibatéty abravītana* “you [Ṛbhus] said: ‘drink this water’.”³¹ We might have in this instruction the Vedic congener of the formula ὕδωρ πίνειναι by means of which the soul requests Mnemosyne’s water in many of the Orphic *lamellae*.³² Both the Ṛbhus and the Orphic initiate are apparently eager to drink: the Vedic poet addresses the Ṛbhus with the statement *ná vo atītrṣāma* “we have not left you thirsty,”³³ and the soul is parched (δίψαι) in numerous *lamellae*.³⁴

Another event mentioned in conjunction with the Ṛbhus’ consumption of Soma also appears to be paralleled by the activities that take place in the Orphic *lamellae*. The *Ṛg Veda* tells us that *anyā nāmāni kṛṇvate suté* “at the pressing [of the Soma] they assumed different names” and that *anyair enān kanīyā nāmabhi sparat* “the maiden gladdened them with these different names.”³⁵ The identity of this maiden and the specifics of her role are admittedly more or less mysterious, but perhaps the gist is clear enough to allow for a couple of superficial comparisons. First, in the *lamella* from Pharsalos the soul similarly assumes a different name when, in conjunction with requesting a drink from Mnemosyne’s spring, it informs the sentinels Ἀστέριος ὄνομα “my name

³¹ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.8a. At *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.9a-b the poet addresses the Ṛbhus, claiming *āpo bhūyīṣṭhā iti éko abravīd/ agnīr bhūyīṣṭha iti anyó abravīt* “‘waters are most essential,’ said one of you; ‘Agni is most essential,’ said another.” Agni, whose name is cognate with Latin *ignis*, is the Indic fire god. Maybe this sequence of statements is connected to Pindar’s similar aphorism: ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ, ὃ δὲ χρυσὸς αἰθόμενον πῦρ/ ἅτε διαπρέπει νυκτὶ μεγάνορος ἕξοχα πλούτου “best is water, but gold, flashing like fire in the night, transcends all lordly wealth” (*Olympian* 1.1-2). Haudry 1987a: 120 fn. 52 offers an Empedoclean parallel to the Ṛbhus’ gnomic utterances.

³² Graf and Johnston 2013: 4 line 12, 6 line 8, 16 line 13, 20 line 1 of both Eleutherna 1 and 2, 22 line 1 of both Eleutherna 3 and 4, 24 line 1 of Eleutherna 5, 26 line 1 of Mylopotamos, 28 line 1 of Rethymnon 2, 34 line 10, 40 line 1 of Thessaly.

³³ *Ṛg Veda* 4.34.11a.

³⁴ Graf and Johnston 2013: 4 line 11, 6 line 9, 16 line 14, 20 line 1 of both Eleutherna 1 and 2, 22 line 1 of both Eleutherna 3 and 4, 24 line 1 of Eleutherna 5, 26 line 1 of Mylopotamos, 28 line 1 of Rethymnon 2, 34 line 10, 40 line 1 of Thessaly.

³⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.5.

is Astral.”³⁶ Second, two of the *lamellae* from Thurii involve the soul’s encounter with *the* Maiden, Persephone: Δεσποίνας δὲ ὑπὸ κόλπον ἔδυν χθονίας βασιλείας “I have sunk below the bosom of the Mistress, the chthonic queen;”³⁷ νῦν δ’ ἰκέτις ἦκω παρὰ ἄγνην Φερσέφονειαν/ ὣς με πρόφρων πέμψηι ἔδρας ἐς εὐαγέτων “Now I come as a suppliant before sacred Persephone, so that she may send me to the dwelling places of the radiant ones.”³⁸

The Ṛbhus and the Orphic initiate might also correspond on a genealogical level. The *lamellae* frequently instruct the soul to state that it is descended from Ge and Ouranos,³⁹ and the poet of a Vedic verse addressed to Dyaus ‘Sky’ and Pṛthivī ‘Earth’ is often thought to be referring to the Ṛbhus when he mentions *té sūnāvah suāpasah* “your very skillful sons.”⁴⁰ Whether or not this interpretation is correct, the Ṛbhus are associated with Dyaus and Pṛthivī in another verse, in which they cause them to flourish.⁴¹

Finally, the Ṛbhus are frequently referred to by the noun *nāra-*, which is on the one hand often an unmarked word for ‘man,’ sometimes even ‘person,’ but which also seems to have a specialized sense something like ‘hero,’ much in the same way that its cognate *ánh̄r* functions as

³⁶ Graf and Johnston 2013: 34 line 4.

³⁷ Graf and Johnston 2013: 12 line 7.

³⁸ Graf and Johnston 2013: 14 lines 6-7 of both Thurii 4 and 5.

³⁹ Graf and Johnston 2013: 4 line 10, 6 line 6, 16 line 12, 20 line 3 of both Eleutherna 1 and 2, 22 line 3 of both Eleutherna 3 and 4, 24 line 3 of Eleutherna 5, 26 line 3 of Mylopotamos, 28 line 3 of Rethymnon 2, 34 line 8, 40 line 3 of Thessaly. Furthermore, the *lamellae* from Petelia and Entella have the soul insist of the sentinels at Mnemosyne’s spring τόδε δ’ ἴστε (< **uejd-*) καὶ αὐτοὶ “you yourselves know this” (6 line 7, 16 line 15), in which statement τόδε refers to the soul’s γένος (< **geh₁-*), and *Rg Veda* 4.34.2a describes the Ṛbhus as *vidānāso* (< **uejd-*) *jánmano* (< **geh₁-*) “knowing [their] birth.”

⁴⁰ *Rg Veda* 1.159.3a. This interpretation is promoted, for instance, by Bergaigne 1878-97: 411. Elsewhere the Ṛbhus are said to have two other fathers, both of whom Estell 1999: 328-30 argues can be specifically identified with Orpheus’ apparently alternate sires, Oiagros and Apollo.

⁴¹ *Rg Veda* 4.36.1d.

a synonym of ἥρωες in the formular thesaurus of the Homeric bard. As I shall resume below, the Ῥbhus are recurrently depicted as martial figures, which further suggests that *nára-* should be understood as ‘hero’ when applied to them. In light of the Ῥbhus’ apparently heroic aspect, it seems to me to be worth noting that the *lamella* from Petelia informs the soul τότ’ ἔπειτ’ ἄ[λλοισι μεθ’] ἥρωεσσιν ἀνάξει[ς] “then you will reign in the company of the other **heroes**.”⁴²

Miyakawa’s proposal that the Ῥbhus’ name indexes their divinization is therefore corroborated by the corresponding element of divinization in the Orphic *lamellae*, which also appear to be related to the Ῥbhus’ mythological profile in several other ways. However, as I pointed out above, the meaning of Hittite *harp(p)-*, which is what Miyakawa has in mind, does not reflect the primary meaning of **h₃erb^h-*.

This is not necessarily problematic: there is nothing to prevent us from understanding **h₃erb^h-* as having assumed already in the proto-language the secondary sense developed by *harp(p)-*.

Alternatively, Nuclear Indo-European could have independently developed a meaning of **h₃erb^h-* something along the lines of ‘change membership from one group to another.’

However, although I am in general accord with Miyakawa’s analysis, by reminding ourselves that the basic sense of the root from which *Ῥbhú-* and Ὀρφεύς have evolved means ‘turn,’ we can situate his claim in a broader context. This is what I have done in the first subsection of Chapter 4.

⁴² Graf and Johnston 2013: 6 line 11.

APPENDIX B

Orpheus and the Swan:

Cygnean and Cyclic Semiotics and Wordplay

I noted in passing in Chapter 4 that Plato appears to make a very splendid allusion to the Orphic κύκλος in his description of Orpheus' imminent reincarnation as witnessed by Er:¹

ιδεῖν μὲν γὰρ ψυχὴν ἔφη τὴν ποτε Ὀρφέως γενομένην κύκνου βίον αἰρουμένην, μίσει τοῦ
γυναικείου γένους διὰ τὸν ὑπ' ἐκείνων θάνατον οὐκ ἐθέλουσαν ἐν γυναικὶ γεννηθεῖσαν γενέσθαι.

He said that he saw the soul that had been Orpheus' choosing the life of a swan out of resentment of womankind, being unwilling to be born in a woman since it was through them that she had met her death.²

I think that an interactive nexus of notions is at work here. In the first instance, transitions between life and death are pervasively conceived of as involving birds. We have already discussed Homer's intermediate incarnation as a peacock prior to his becoming Ennius.³ In Welsh mythology, the singing of Rhiannon's birds has the effect of reviving the dead.⁴ More grizzly is the Celtiberian belief recorded by Silus Italicus, according to which the afterlife is only to be attained once one's corpse has been consumed by vultures.⁵ As for Orphic ideology, a line

¹ *Republic* 620a.

² In making explicit the grammatically feminine nature of the soul I follow Ahl 1982: 373; 1985: 191 who observes a subtle irony at work in the fact that the latter is in the process of scorning women by electing to be reincarnated as a swan.

³ Skutsch 1985: 164 fn. 19 denies that Ennius could have had Plato in mind; I myself am agnostic, but whether the former passage is reacting to the latter or not, both are still to be understood as sharing a common semiotic foundation.

⁴ Bromwich and Evans 1992: 24; Epstein 1997: 126 fn. 28 situates Rhiannon's birds in a broader Celto-Germanic context.

⁵ *Punica* 3.342-3. Epstein 1997: 127 approaches Silius' passage from a common Celto-Germanic perspective. She resumes the topic in Epstein 1998.

in one of the *lamellae* from Thurii, κύκλῳ δ' ἐξέπταν βαρυπενθέος ἀργαλέοιο “I have flown out of the deeply grievous, painful wheel,”⁶ is presumably intended to convey an avian image.⁷

The Ṛbhus similarly ascend to heaven as eagles.⁸

The bird associated with death and rebirth is often specifically the swan. Something of the notion might inform the swans that Aristotle, contesting the rumour that Avernus is bereft of birds, tells us inhabit its waters.⁹ It is perhaps significant for us that Cumae appears to have been an Orphic-Dionysiac hub.¹⁰ Another incarnation of the swan’s association with death and rebirth is the belief that the swan marks its own transition to the afterlife by means of an unsurpassed musical performance.¹¹ As for the human realm, Apollo transforms the Ligurian Cygnus, once dead, into a swan,¹² and Frederick Ahl has demonstrated that Amphiaraus, who has a special relationship with the souls of the dead, is associated with a fantastically elaborate nexus of cygnean elements.¹³

This pervasive relationship between swans, death and rebirth in Greek thought is apparently founded on a hereditary complex. Indic tradition also connects the swan with the afterlife. While the Ṛbhus ascend to heaven as eagles,¹⁴ the sage does so in the form of a *hamsa*-, which is from

⁶ Graf and Johnston 2013: 12 line 5.

⁷ Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 120.

⁸ Ṛg Veda 4.35.8.

⁹ *De Mirabilibus* 839a.

¹⁰ Parker 1995: 485. For a recent discussion of the possibly Orphic inscription at Cumae see Rebillard 2009: 15-16.

¹¹ E.g. *Phaedo* 84b-85d.

¹² I direct the reader toward the discussion of Cygnus’ rebirth in Ahl 1982: 389. Bader 1998: 47-74 explores a similar cluster of topics to that presented in Ahl 1982. The latter returns to the topic in Ahl 1985: 183, 190.

¹³ Ahl 1982: 387-8.

¹⁴ *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 6.6.9.2.

Indo-European *ǵʰans-, many reflexes of which yield words for ‘goose’ (χήν, Latin *anser*, and the Germanic goose word, including English *goose*), but the Sanskrit outcome of which means both ‘goose’ and ‘swan;’ Irish *géis* means only ‘swan.’ The Aśvins, whom we have encountered hastening to those in mortal peril and reviving the dead, are compared to swans,¹⁵ and their chariot in which they come to the rescue is driven by swans.¹⁶ Furthermore, *haṃsa* is used as a technical term designating the individual soul, usually mentioned in contrast with the *paramahaṃsa* ‘ultimate swan,’ an expression designating particularly experienced Vedantic ascetics who are so called because of their ability to merge their personal souls with the infinite and in so doing to transcend death.¹⁷

The swan is also associated with the advent of life, death and life after death in Norse mythology. According to the Icelandic mythographer Snorri Sturluson, two swans inhabit Urðarbrunnr.¹⁸ The latter is a spring located at one of the roots of the cosmic tree Yggdrasill. It is supervised by the trio Urðr, Verðandi and Skuld, whom Snorri identifies as Norns, a loose category of supernatural women responsible for shaping, sometimes weaving mortal destinies from the cradle onward.¹⁹

It is surely worth noting that Urðarbrunnr is not the only spring situated at one of Yggdrasill’s roots: such is also the station of Mímisbrunnr, the residence of Orpheus’ Norse congener

¹⁵ *Rg Veda* 5.78.1.

¹⁶ *Rg Veda* 4.45.4.

¹⁷ On the *paramahaṃsa* see the *Haṃsa Upaniṣad*. For a comparative analysis of correspondences in Greek and Indic swan lore see Prévost 1992: 90-102.

¹⁸ Faulkes 1982: 19.

¹⁹ Kuhn and Neckel 1983: 1.130.

Mímir,²⁰ and itself the congener of the Orphic spring of Mnemosyne,²¹ which has its implicitly amnemonic antithesis not only in the anonymous spring that the Orphic initiate is instructed to avoid, but also in the Ἀμέλητα ποταμόν “river of Forgetfulness” in the myth of Er.²² Furthermore, Plato depicts the Norns’ Hellenic analogues, the three Moirai Lachesis, Clotho and Atropos, as operating the spindle of Necessity,²³ and much in the same way as swans inhabit Urðarbrunnr, the Moirai are accompanied by the avian Sirens, who are perched on Ananke’s spindle.

Cygnean symbolism plays a more active role in the mythology of the Valkyries, another class of supernatural women who convey the souls of select slain warriors to Vallhøll and who functionally overlap, sometimes even merge with the Norns.²⁴ The Valkyries are said to assume the form of swans on several occasions. The pre-Germanic inhabitants of Northern Europe might have had a role to play in the formation of this tendency: Grave 8 of the Mesolithic Ertebølle culture cemetery unearthed in Vedbæk, Denmark contains a mother and infant, the latter nestled inside the wing of a swan.²⁵ Perhaps this pinion points to a tradition of swan as psychopompic escort.²⁶

²⁰ J. Nagy 1990: 216-20.

²¹ Lincoln 1991b.

²² *Republic* 621a. On the role and value of memory in Orphic ideology see Jiménez San Cristóbal 2011.

²³ *Republic* 617c; M. West 2007: 383.

²⁴ Snorri portrays Skuld as both a Norn and a Valkyrie (Faulkes 1982: 18, 30). His equation might be artificial, but even if so, the impulse presumably originated in some sort of authentic correspondence between these two groups of beings. Both the Norns and the Valkyries weave; for the respective passages see Kuhn and Neckel 1983: 1.130, and Thorsson 1996: 356-9.

²⁵ For photographs and description of this grave see Albrethsen and Petersen 1975: 30-33, 57.

²⁶ Swans also play a role in Scythian funerary culture: see Rudenko 1970: 41-4, 117, 152. Elsewhere we encounter the remains of geese in graves: see Megaw 1970: 17.

Furthermore, at least one cyngnean Valkyrie is connected with reincarnation.²⁷ The hero Helgi and his Valkyrie consort start their life together as Helgi Hjörvarþssonar and Sváva, but are then reborn as Helgi Hundingsbani and Sigrún, and then yet again, according to the prose epilogue of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, as Helgi Haddingjaskati and Kára. The fate of these last two is recounted in what is left of *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar*, where Helgi Haddingjaskati, with an excessively animated brandishing of his sword, accidentally kills his Valkyrie, here Lára rather than Kára, as she hovers protectively over him in battle in the form of a swan. Helgi himself dies at the hand of his opponent soon thereafter.²⁸ And yet in light of what we know about these two characters, one can only anticipate that they will soon be resuming existence in new incarnations. Given that elsewhere cygnean Valkyries are responsible for ensuring that warriors reach the afterlife, perhaps Lára's swan manifestation can be said to similarly signal the reincarnation we might expect her and Helgi to undergo.²⁹

In Irish mythology, the swan is associated not so much with the afterlife, but rather with travel to its multiform, the otherworld.³⁰ One example is an episode from the mythical biography of Óengus Óg, who lives in Brug na Bóinne, that is Newgrange, the Neolithic ringfort that was thought to be a *síd*, an entrance to the faery otherworld. On Samain, the time at which the

²⁷ For others situations in which Valkyries appear as swans, see Kuhn and Neckel 1983: 1.116, 220.

²⁸ Jónsson 1981: 2.417.

²⁹ The swan's connection with rebirth is not limited to Indo-European tradition: Lemminkäinen's quest to kill the swan of Tuonela, the Finno-Karelian underworld, first results in his murder and dismemberment, but ends in his reconstitution and revitalization. See Magoun 1963: 85-94. The swan and its allomorphs are also associated with the underworld elsewhere in Finno-Ugrian, as well as in Tungusic tradition: see Róheim 1954: 22-3, who notes that in the Mansi Bear Songs the denizens of underworld squawk like geese and ducks, and that in Evenk ideology a duck or swan resides at the bow of the boat that conveys the dead to the underworld.

³⁰ Rees and Rees 1961: 236.

boundaries between different realms of existence become especially permeable (as is still the case in this festival's contemporary guises, such as Hallowe'en), Óengus locates his lover Cáer, who is in the form of a swan, and matches his shape to hers. The two then fly off together and enter the Brug.³¹

The comparative evidence thus suggests that Orpheus' decision to reincarnate as a swan is informed by an established semiotic tradition linking this bird with vicissitudes of life and death. In addition, however, Orpheus' choice might also reflect his poetic aspect. We have already mentioned that the swan becomes an especially prodigious singer when moribund. Ahl has shown the crystallization of this tradition in the myth of the Ligurian Cygnus, who by wordplay with his ethnonym, as well as by nature is a shrilly singing swan.³² Callimachus calls swans Μουσάων ὄρνιθες, ἀοιδότατοι πετεηνῶν "the Muses' birds, supreme poet-seers of winged creatures,"³³ and the chorus of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* states that κύκνος μελω-/ δὸς Μούσας θεραπεύει "the melodious swan serves the Muses."³⁴ According to Aelian, swans join the attendants in temple of Hyperborean Apollo in singing the god's praises.³⁵ The winged Gorgons are also both musical and sisters of the cynomorphous Graiai, if not swan-shaped themselves.³⁶

³¹ Shaw 1934: 63.

³² Ahl 1982: 374, 389; 1985: 33-4, 194-5; 1991: 139-40.

³³ *Hymn* 4.252.

³⁴ *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1103-4.

³⁵ *On Animals* 11.1. As G. Nagy 1990c: 277 fn. 15 points out, Hyperborea is a multiform of the afterlife. Its swans are therefore to be understood as participating in the traditional association between these birds, death and life after death. Maybe something of this is present in Ovid's description of the Hyperboreans having the ability to cover their bodies in plumage (*Metamorphoses* 15.356-7).

³⁶ Ahl 1982: 406-7; 1991: 144-6.

The swan's musical symbolism even extends to the iconography of instruments, as can be seen by the swan-necked lyres of Minoan and Mycenaean material culture.³⁷

Swans are also suggestive of poetry in Vedic semiotics. The divine poet Bṛhaspati is accompanied by *haṃsair iva sākhibhir vāvadadbhir* “companions who vociferated like swans.”³⁸

As for Irish lore, swans figure as spectacular singers yet again: upon their arrival at the Brug, Óengus and Cáer in their swan guises intone such enchanting music that the residents are lulled into a sleep lasting three days and three nights.³⁹

The poetic aspect apparently contributing to Orpheus' cygnean reincarnation need not be taken as being in competition with that of the swan's association with death and rebirth. Rather, the two notions can be seen as coexisting harmoniously with one another. Indeed it is specifically when dying that the swan performs its musical *tour de force*, and recall that we have seen how Homer's reincarnation as Ennius is simultaneously a literal rebirth and a poetic revitalization.

Last but not least, there may be yet a third, once again complementary factor involved in Orpheus' decision to incarnate as a swan, one that might be said to integrate his metempsychotic κύκλος. Etymologically, κύκνος derives from IE **keuk-* ‘shine, burn,’ the same

³⁷ Vorreither 1975: 93-7.

³⁸ *Rg Veda* 10.67.3a. Compare *Rg Veda* 3.53.10 and 9.97.8.

³⁹ Shaw 1934: 63. It is appropriate that such a restful scenario takes place in a *síd*, the etymological meaning of which is ‘peace.’ See Ó Cathasaigh 1977-8: 137-55. Rhiannon's birds similarly both produce the most beautiful songs that have ever been heard and have a soporific effect on their live listeners. For the relevant passages see Thomson 1961: 16 and Bromwich and Evans 1992: 24. Furthermore, Rhiannon is a reflex of the Celtic horse goddess, and this equine aspect might also contribute to her poetic persona.

root that yields Sanskrit *śuc-* ‘shine, glow, burn and Tocharian B *śukye* ‘shining.’⁴⁰ However, Ahl points out that within the context of Greek soundplay and wordplay, κύκνος is repeatedly associated with κύκλος.⁴¹ We see this concatenation in action if we expand the Callimachean passage quoted just above:

κύκνοι δὲ θεοῦ μέλποντες ἄοιδοὶ
Μηόνιον Πακτωλὸν ἐκυκλώσαντο λιπόντες
ἐβδομάκις περὶ Δῆλον

Swans, the god’s singing poet-seers, left Maeonian Pactolus and **circled** Delos seven times.

The same combination is manifest in the aforementioned Euripidean passage:

λίμναν θ’ εἰλίσσουσαν ὕδωρ
κύκλιον, ἔνθα κύκνος μελω-
δὸς Μούσας θεραπεύει

...and the spring swirling **circulating** water, where the melodious **swan** serves the Muses.

I would add several passages to this dossier. Recall that Aristotle insists that swans dwell in Avernus. To provide the pertinent details of his statement: περικεῖσθαι...περὶ αὐτὴν λόφους κύκλω...αὐτὴν εἶναι τῷ σχήματι κυκλοτερῆ...πληθὸς τι κύκνων ἐν αὐτῇ γίνεσθαι “hills lie round it in a **circle**, it itself is in the shape of a **circle**, and a number of **swans** are in it.” We should also revisit the aforementioned passage of Aelian, who describes the swans that sing at Apollo’s Hyperborean temple. Before entering the building, the latter encircle it (περιελθόντες). Given that wordplay does not appear to be at the forefront of Aelian’s description, we have here

⁴⁰ The swan is so named for its radiant plumage in many languages. See Puhvel 1984: 209-12.

⁴¹ Ahl 1982: 377; 1985: 193-4.

an indication that the swan's connection with circular motion resides in both a phonetic and a conceptual association.

Perhaps somewhere between sonic and notional is Hesiod's location of swans in Okeanus as it is depicted on the rim of Herakles' shield.⁴² Remember that we have seen Okeanos conceived of as a globally binding κύκλος, including in the Orphic milieu. In light of the fact that Orpheus is connected with cyclicity and reincarnates as a swan, it is surely significant that Hesiod has swans inhabit a concentric body of water that apparently possessed special currency in Orphic circles.⁴³

Furthermore, Hesiod turns to another allusively cyclical swan only lines later when Herakles enters into chariot combat with the onomastically cygnean Cynus. Chariot and swan go so far as to merge in Himerius' prose account of Alcaeus' paeon, in which κύκνοι τ' ἦσαν τὸ ἄρμα "swans were the chariot"⁴⁴ that convey Apollo to Hyperborea.⁴⁵ It is as though these birds are to be simultaneously identified as both κύκνοι and κύκλοι. Ahl compares Alcaeus' fusion of swan and vehicle to the Dupljaja chariot, an artefact in which the poles undergo seamless metamorphosis

⁴² *Shield* 316.

⁴³ Perhaps there is also something Orphic about the swans of the Hebrus that sing for Apollo in Aristophanes' *Birds* (769-74). We have already seen Apollo loosely linked to this river in another poetic context: he rescues Orpheus' still singing severed head from a snake on the shores of Lesbos, whither it has floated after having been tossed into the Hebrus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.56-60). That Aristophanes' cygnean Hebrus might be an Orphic allusion is also suggested by the fact that he mentions it shortly after his mock Orphic cosmogony.

⁴⁴ Campbell 1982-93: 1.354.

⁴⁵ There are a number of tantalizing hints that Orpheus might have been associated with this Hyperborea. Both he and Boreas are from Thrace; in fact Phanocles has Orpheus fall in love with Boreas and Orytheia's son Calais (Powell 1925: 107). One of the Orphic *lamellae* was found in a vessel depicting Boreas' abduction of Oreithyia; for an illustration and discussion see Olmos' appendix in Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 297-301. There is also an Orphic hymn to Boreas (Athanasakis 1977: 102) and Pausanias (1.22.7) claims that either Musaeus or Onomacritus wrote a poem about Boreas. In the pseudo-Platonic *Axiochus* (371), the Hyperborean Maidens Opis and Hecarge convey to Delos copper tablets with eschatological content that sounds similar to that of the Orphic *lamellae*. Bridgman 2005: 75, 144 also gleans that Orpheus might have been linked to Hyperborea.

into swans at their tips.⁴⁶ We have already seen that the Sanskrit word for chariot is a metonymic term cognate with Latin *rota*, and the Greeks might have similarly focalized the way they thought about this kind of vehicle: the meaning of *a-mo* /*harmoni*/, the Mycenaean equivalent of ἄρμα, is ‘wheel.’⁴⁷ As Ahl observes of Alcaeus’ image, we are in the midst here of the same combination of swan and car that informs the constitution of various cygnean charioteers including Cygnus and Amphiarus.⁴⁸ Remember that the Aśvins’ chariot is also led by swans.

The conceptual combination of swan with cyclicity appears to be inherited. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* states: *haṃso bhrāmyate brahmacakre* ‘the swan (i.e. the individual soul) roams within Brahmā’s wheel.’⁴⁹ Furthermore, a swan conveys the chariot in which Brahmā’s consort Brahmī rides.⁵⁰ One of Brahmā’s sons is actually named Haṃsa. Potentially rather important for our investigation is the fact that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* mentions the latter alongside another of Brahmā’s sons: Ṛbhu.⁵¹ If we choose to consider the cluster of items assembled in this passage as significant rather than more or less accidental, we could be looking at a terse Indic correspondent to Orpheus’ connection with the swan. Although I do not know of the Ṛbhus being brought into contact with swans anywhere else, we need to keep in mind that the Aśvins,

⁴⁶ Ahl 1982: 391. Swan and charioteer are also brought into contact in Irish epic: Cú Chulainn tethers swans to his chariot. For the text see C. O’ Rahilly 1967: 31; 1976: 24.

⁴⁷ G. Nagy 1996a: 90; G. Nagy 1996b: 74. With the semantics of Mycenaean *a-mo* compare Sanskrit *ará-* ‘spoke.’

⁴⁸ Ahl, 1982: 407, 1991: 139, 144-5. The Valkyries are similarly connected with both swans and horses. For a discussion of these animal aspects see Epstein 1997: 124-7. As for Indic, the *Ṛg Veda* describes the steed Dhadikrā as winged (4.40.) and calls him both an eagle (4.38.) and a swan (4.40.5), but at *Naighaṇṭuka* 1.14 his name occurs as a poetic synonym for horse.

⁴⁹ *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.6.

⁵⁰ Recurringly in *Markaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Swan, soul and cyclicity also coincide in the context of the *haṃsa mantra*. See Yelle 2003: 28-30.

⁵¹ *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 4.8.1.

with whom the R̥bhus are closely allied, sometimes to the point of being isofunctional with them, are associated with this bird.

From a diachronic perspective, the swans of Urðarbrunnr are also associated with cyclicity by virtue of their very location. The name of the Norn Urðr, after whom the spring is apparently named, is derived from the Old Norse verb *verða* ‘be, become;’ more transparent in this respect is the name of Urðr’s cohort Verðandi. However, the primary sense of **uert-*, the aforementioned Indo-European root from which *verða* derives, is ‘turn,’ as seen in Latin *verto* and Sanskrit *vartate*. A similar semantic development appears to be at work in *πέλω* ‘be, become,’ which comes from our old friend **kelh_x-* ‘turn,’ the same root that gives us *κύκλος*. Perhaps the swans that inhabit Urðarbrunnr descend from an archaic collocation of swan and **uert-* that was formulated before the Germanic reflex of this root shifted its meaning away from ‘turn’ to ‘be(come).’⁵²

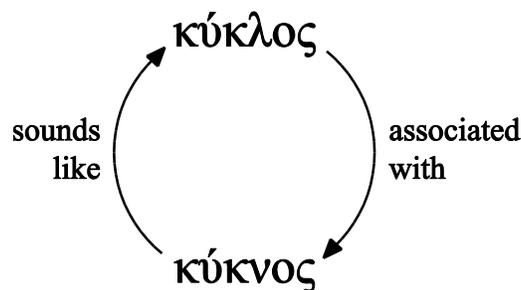
Irish texts also connect the swan with rotational motions. Óengus and Cáer move thus in their swan guises: *con-tuilet i ndeilb dá géise co timchellsat a lloch fo thrí* “they slept in the form of two swans until they had circled the lake three times.”⁵³ We have here not only a situational but also an etymological match for the passage from *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* quoted above: *haṃso bhrāmyate brahmacakre* “the swan roams within Brahmā’s wheel.” Remember that *géis* and

⁵² M. West 2007: 383 similarly argues for an etymological awareness of the names, positing that the rotational semantics we would thereby gain could be said to be reflected in the Norn’s association with spinning thread.

⁵³ Shaw 1934: 63. Ross 1992: 309 notes that Étaín and Midir also circle in their swan manifestations. Again, the verb is *do-imchell* (Bergin and Best 1934-8: 184).

haṃsa are both from * \hat{g}^h ans-, and the radical source of both *cakra* and the compound verb *do-imchella* from which the preterite *timchellsat* has been formed is * k^u elh_x-.

The comparative evidence emphasizes that the combination of κύκνος and κύκλος, although immediately enhanced by their phonetic proximity, is ultimately founded on a hereditary association between swan and cyclicity. The potential for soundplay between these two words is increased by the fortuitous labialization of κύκλος' reduplication vowel, a development that probably took place already in Proto-Greek, given that the name Κυκλεύς appears as *ku-ke-re-u* in Mycenaean.⁵⁴ We can therefore imagine a situation in which the inherited conceptual dyad of swan and cyclicity and the synchronic sonic similarity of κύκνος and κύκλος came to interact with one another in an appropriately circular process of mutual reinforcement:



In light of the swan's apparently pervasive connection with cyclicity, I interpret Orpheus' decision to reincarnate as one as an allusion to his metempsychotic κύκλος.

⁵⁴ Chantraine 1972: 201-2.

APPENDIX C

Sun, Seasons, Sexism and So On:

Further Correspondences Between Orpheus and the R̥bhus

In addition to the parallelisms discussed in Chapter 4, Orpheus and the R̥bhus also correspond in a number of other respects. I begin with their common solar facet. Orpheus' has been brilliantly incorporated into *Orfeu Negro*, Marcel Camus' adaptation of the Brazilian playwright Vinicius de Moraes' *Orfeu da Conceição*. In this film, set in Rio de Janeiro during Carnival, Orfeu dons a fabulous costume that is entirely golden and includes a shield decorated with a sun. Furthermore, Benedito and Zeca, two boys that live in the same shanty town as Orfeu, believe that the latter causes the morning sun to rise by playing on his guitar; at the end of the film, after Orfeu has been killed by the maenadic Mira, Zeca, at Benedito's behest, ensures that sunrise will not fail to transpire by taking up the instrument and strumming a tune on it just as the sun crests the horizon.

The reader will not be surprised to learn that Max Müller once voiced an impression that Orpheus and his Indic congeners shared an association with the sun.¹ However, not only did Müller's heliocentric tendencies cause him to wrongly characterize them both as dominantly solar in their constitution; he also somehow overlooked precisely the evidence that to my mind could have made his argument convincing. I will now supply what I consider to be more

¹ Müller 1909: 161-2.

substantial grounds for the position that Orpheus and the Ṛbhus both display elements of a common solar heritage.

The Ṛbhus are said to journey to the *savitúr dāsúšo gṛhám* “house of generous Savitar,”² who appears to be identical with the figure Agohya “who can not be concealed” mentioned in the next verse.³ Savitar is a sun god, ultimately distinct from but sometimes overlapping in function with another Vedic solar deity, Sūrya;⁴ the luminous significance of his apparent byname Agohya is indicated by the fact that it also occurs as an epithet of the fire god Agni.⁵

Presumably derived from the same source as this event in the Ṛbhus’ mythological dossier is Orpheus’ transferral of his devotion from Dionysus to Helios in Aeschylus’ *Bassarai*.⁶ Helios is Sūrya’s etymological congener.⁷ That Orpheus’ association with Helios and the Ṛbhus’ with Savitar share a common background is further indicated by the alternative aetiology of the relationship between Orpheus and Helios in the *Orphic Lithica*, the protagonist of which text we have already seen is properly considered to be Orpheus. Recall that the hypothesis has a juvenile Orpheus enter a ἱερὸν τοῦ Ἥλιου as a fugitive from a snake, and that in the text itself he appears as an adult on his way to perform a now habitual annual sacrifice of a calf at this same place of

² Ṛg Veda 1.110.2d.

³ Ṛg Veda 1.110.3b; compare 1.161.11c, where the Ṛbhus repose *ágohiyasya...gṛhé* “in Agohya’s house.”

⁴ Both dispell nightmares (Savitar: Ṛg Veda 5.82.4, Sūrya: 10.37.4), and Savitar makes men sinless (4.54.3), while Sūrya is exhorted to declare men sinless (7.60.1, 7.62.2).

⁵ Ṛg Veda 10.64.3a.

⁶ Sommerstein 2008: 3.18-23. Compare Kazanas 2001: 275-6. Whether or not Pseudo-Eratosthanes’ identification of Helios with Apollo in his synopsis of the play is an anachronism is a matter of no little debate, but the issue does not affect my analysis.

⁷ P. Jackson 2002a: 79-80; Janda 2006: 6.

worship, here called a βωμός,⁸ in gratitude for the god’s protection. Orpheus’ special involvement with this ἱερὸν τοῦ Ἡλίου is surely the Hellenic correspondent to the Ṛbhus’ stay at the *savitúr dāsúšo gṛhám* “house of generous Savitar.”

The authenticity of the *Lithica*’s narrative seems to me to find support in a similar nexus of elements in Apollonius. Here Apollo reveals himself to the crew at dawn,⁹ motivating Orpheus to address his comrades as follows:¹⁰

εἰ δ’ ἄγε δὴ νῆσον μὲν Ἑωίου Απόλλωνος
 τήνδ’ ἱερὴν κλείωμεν, ἐπεὶ πάντεσσι φαάνθη
 ἦος μετιῶν τὰ δὲ ῥέξομεν οἷα πάρεστιν,
βωμὸν ἀναστήσαντες ἐπάκτιον εἰ δ’ ὀπίσσω
 γαῖαν ἐς Αἰμονίην ἀσκηθεῖα νόστον ὀπάσσει
 δὴ τότε οἱ κεραῶν ἐπὶ μηρία θήσομεν **αἰγῶν**

Come, let us call this sacred place the island of **Auroral Apollo**, since he showed himself to us all when passing by at dawn, and let us sacrifice what we can, erecting an **altar** on the shore, and if after this he grants us a safe homecoming to our Haemonian land, then we shall sacrifice the thighs of horned **goats** to him.

As in the *Lithica*, we have here the combination of Orpheus, diurnal luminosity, a solar deity¹¹ and animal sacrifice at an altar. Indeed we would expect Apollonius, who was born Egypt but, as indicated by his surname, lived for a portion of his life on Rhodes, where the worship of Helios loomed larger than anywhere else,¹² to know his solar mythology.

⁸ *Orphic Lithica* 159.

⁹ Apollonius 2.669-71.

¹⁰ Apollonius 2.686-91.

¹¹ The fact that Orpheus is associated with a solar Apollo in Apollonius suggests that Pseudo-Eratosthanes accurately reflects the contents of the *Bassarai* when he says that Aeschylus also calls Helios Apollo. For evidence of solar Apollo in Olbia, where the aforementioned incontrovertibly Orphic bone plaques were discovered, see Dubois 1996: 111, 156.

¹² Athanassakis and Wolkow 2013: 85-6.

Another respect in which Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' solar components coincide is a connection in both instances with a period of twelve days. The Ṛbhus are said to sleep as guests chez Agohya for twelve days.¹³ The span of time, far from casual, is rather an essential detail with a crucial ritual correspondent: as Alfred Hillebrandt observed, many of the Vedic hymns to the Ṛbhus are prominently recited during the Dvādaśāha, the duration of which ceremony was an eponymous period of twelve days.¹⁴

In light of this dodecahemeral dormancy, I am inclined to consider significant that Er comes back to life laid out on a pyre on the twelfth day after his death in battle.¹⁵ This is not the only occasion on which the number twelve occurs within a mortuary context in Greek literature,¹⁶ but nevertheless I suspect that from a diachronic perspective we are dealing with a synchronic transformation of an Orphic analogue to the Rbhus' solar twelve days. Furthermore, the time at which Er reopens his eyes is none other than dawn (ἔωθεν).¹⁷

Furthermore, Finnian Moore Gerety and I are of like mind in perceiving an analogue to the Ṛbhus' stay Agohya's in the portage of the Argo from the shores of Lybia to Lake Tritonis, an event that also lasts twelve days.¹⁸ Again, a solar dimension appears to be involved. Upon arrival at Lake Tritonis, Orpheus interacts with the Hesperides, goddesses of the land of the setting sun,

¹³ *R̥g Veda* 4.33.7.

¹⁴ Hillebrandt 1980-81: 84-5.

¹⁵ *Republic* 614b.

¹⁶ *Passim* with respect to Hector's body (*Iliad* 24).

¹⁷ *Republic* 621b.

¹⁸ *Pythian* 4.25-6, *Argonautica* 4.1386-7. Gerety's understanding that the Ṛbhus and the Argonauts' dodecahemeral phases are cognate antedates my own.

a role that is encoded in the names Aigle, whose brilliance is solar, and Erytheis, whose ruddiness, like that of the island Erytheia, where Helios' cattle pasture, is that of dusk. I suspect that Orpheus emphasizes the Hesperides' attachment to Helios when he addresses them as ἱερὸν γένος Ὀκεανοῖο "sacred descendants of Okeanos,"¹⁹ in whom the sun spends the night.

That we are right to perceive a solar dimension to the Argonauts' dodecahemeral stint is corroborated by an illuminating observation made by Gerety, who points out that in *Iliad* 1, Zeus the other gods in tow, spends twelve days feasting with the Ethiopians along banks of Okeanos.²⁰ However one chooses to interpret the semantics of the Ethiopians' ethnonym, they are affiliated with the sun, be it because they are sunburnt or otherwise. Eos as Memnon's mother is a genealogical manifestation of this relationship.²¹ Also note that the gods seek out the company of the Ethiopians precisely for the purposes of rest and relaxation, as do the Ṛbhus Savitar's house.²²

¹⁹ Apollonius 4.1414.

²⁰ *Iliad* 1.423-5. Miyakawa 2003: 119 fn. 329 also casually relates the Ṛbhus' stay at Agohya's with the banquet of the Ethiopians, but without any further analysis, although perhaps he does so in another paper of his that he references in this same footnote, *non vidi*.

²¹ Janda 2005: 12.

²² The number twelve also turns up in other seemingly solar contexts. As Boedeker 1974: 59-60 notes, the Phaeacians used to live in the toponymically solar realm of Hyperia; furthermore, they are connected with the Cyclopes, who, as Frame 1978: 66-69; 2008: 41, notes, are also solar. It is thus presumably pertinent that the Phaeacians have twelve kings, with Alkinoos as a thirteenth ultimate monarch. For an interesting proposal as to the synchronic political significance that the twelve Phaeacian kings might be said to express see Frame 2009: 522.

The portage of the Argo also corresponds with the Ṛbhus' stay at Agohya's in terms of the events that mark its conclusion: having been supplicated by Orpheus to direct the parched crew toward a source of water, the Hesperides cause the landscape to suddenly flourish with verdure.²³

καὶ δὴ χθονὸς ἐξανέτειλαν
 ποίην πάμπορωτον· ποίης γε μὲν ὑψόθι μακροὶ
 βλάστεον ὄρπηκες. μετὰ δ' ἔρνεα τηλεθάοντα
 πολλὸν ὑπερ γαίης ὀρθοσταδὸν ἠέζοντο.
 Ἑσπέρη, αἴγειρος, πτελέη δ' Ἐρυθηΐς ἔγεντο.
 Αἴγλη δ' ἰτεΐης ἱερὸν στύπος

First of all they caused grass to sprout out of the earth, and tall shoots shot up above the grass. Then thriving saplings grew straight up high above the ground. Hesperie became a poplar, Erytheis a willow, and Aigle the sacred stump of a willow.

Aigle then describes the spring that Herakles generated the day before, and the dehydrated adventurers flock to it and guzzle.

The Ṛbhus similarly cause nature to flourish in conjunction with their stint at Agohya's:²⁴

duvādaśa dyūn yād āgohiyasya
atithyē rāṇann ṛbhāvaḥ sasāntaḥ
sukṣétrākṛṇvann ānayanta śindhūn
dhānvātiṣṭhann ṣādhīr nimnām āpaḥ

“When the Ṛbhus spent twelve days taking delight in sleeping as guests of Agohya, they made the fields florid [and] they channelled the rivers. Plants arose in the desert, water in the basin.²⁵

²³ Apollonius 4.1423-8.

²⁴ *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.7.

²⁵ Compare *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.11. Orpheus is similarly the agent of a session of sleep that is praeternaturally productive, although musically rather than environmentally (Pausanias 9.30.10). There is also an Orphic hymn to Hypnos (Athanasakis 1977: 106). On sleep and dream in an Orphic context see Torallas Tovar 2011.

Perhaps Orpheus' description of the environs of Helios' altar, although synchronically working within the tradition of the *locus amoenus*, also owes something to this motif.²⁶

γλυκερή δὲ πέλει περὶ βωμὸν ἄνακτος
 τερπωλὴ χλοερὸν τε πέδον μαλακαὶ τ' ἔπι ποῖαι
 καὶ λασίαις πτέλησιν ὑπο σκιῇ· ἄγκι δ' ἄρ' αὐτῶν
 ὕδωρ ἀέναον λισσῆς ὑπο πυθμένι πέτρης
 λευκὸν ἀναβλύζον κελαρύζεται εἴκελον φῶδι

Sweet is the pleasure of the environs of the lord's altar: the green ground, the soft grass on it, and the shade beneath the shaggy elms. Near these things water, perpetual, glistening, gushing chuckles melodiously from deep within the smooth stone.

Furthermore, the Argo's portage is not the only dodecahemeral phase in the Argonauts' adventure: they are also delayed by tempests for twelve days in the land of the Doliones after having accidentally killed Cyzicus and many of his men.²⁷ Not only does this episode have several elements in common with that of the Argo's portage; it also corresponds with the R̥bhus' stay in house of Savitar in ways in which the portage narrative does not.

To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing solar about the Doliones, but I think it is worth noting that the winds which impede the the Argo's departure finally disperse at dawn,²⁸ in which detail it is perhaps valid to perceive the solar signature we might expect of this scene. This passage, moreover, opens with the Argonauts asleep, all save Acastus and Mopsus, who are on nightwatch. A halcyon then appears above Jason's head, revealing the method by which the stranded adventurers might see an end to the storm. Mopsus, who is able to understand the bird's

²⁶ *Orphic Lithica* 159-63.

²⁷ Apollonius 1.1079. Orpheus is also connected not with twelve days but rather with twelve years in the title of the Orphic poem Δωδεκαετηρίδες (Bernabé 2004-2007: 2.290-300).

²⁸ Apollonius 1.1151.

cries, rouses Jason and tells him that they must sacrifice to Rhea on Dindyumum; Jason in turn wakes the rest of the men, and they proceed to propitiate the goddess with an elaborate variety of offerings, which Orpheus take a prominent role in orchestrating. The *R̥g Veda* similarly describes the R̥bhus' transition from sleep to wakefulness at the end of their stay at Agohya's: *suṣupvāmsa r̥bhavas tād apr̥chata/ ágohiya ká idám no abūbudhat* "after having slept, R̥bhus, you asked: 'Agohya, who awakened us?'"²⁹

Last but not least, the Argonaut's twelve-day detention in the land of the Doliones also concludes with burgeoning nature. Once appeased, Rhea causes vegetation to flourish:³⁰

δένδρεα μὲν καρπὸν χέον ἄσπετον, ἀμφὶ δὲ ποσσὶν
 αὐτομάτη φύε γαῖα τερείνης ἄνθεα ποίης.
 θῆρες δ' εἰλυοὺς τε κατὰ ξυλόχους τε λίποντες
 οὐρῆσιν σαίνοντες ἐπήλυθον. ἦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλο
 θῆκε τέρας· ἐπεὶ οὔτι παροίτερον ὕδατι νᾶεν
 Δίνδυμον· ἀλλὰ σφιν τότε' ἀνέβραχε διψάδος αὐτῶς
 ἐκ κορυφῆς ἄλληκτον

The trees were inundated with an overwhelming amount of fruit, and the earth around their feet produced of its own accord blossoms from the tender grass. The animals, leaving their woodland lairs, came and fawned on them with their tails. And [Rhea] also made another wonder: previously Dindymum did not flow with water at all. But now a constant [amount of it] gushed for them from the thirsty peak.

That we are justified in associating the Argonauts' dodecahemeral episodes and their solar conclusions with Orpheus in particular is suggested by the prominence of Helios in Orphic

²⁹ *R̥g Veda* 1.161.13. *R̥g Veda* 1.161.13c states that *śvānam bastó bodhayitāram abravīt* "the goat said that the **dog** was your awakener." It is curious that Mopsus rouses the Argonauts after having interpreted the cries of an ἀλκυών, literally 'salt-dog.' Greek κύων is cognate with Sanskrit *śvan-*.

³⁰ Apollonius 1.1142-48. Compare the flourishing of the earth as a consequence of cow slaughter in the Lithuanian folktale mentioned in the Introduction.

contexts, including the instances of solar iconography and epigraphic reference to Helios among the finds from Olbia, where the aforementioned incontrovertibly Orphic bone tablets were discovered.³¹

In addition to their common dodecahemeral dimension, Orpheus and the Ṛbhus are also variously associated with other units of time, a trend which, like that of their hereditary involvement in processes of reincarnation, might be a reflex of their etymological and functional connection with cyclicity. Numerous authors from Herodotus onward imagine the passage of time as the rotation of a κύκλος. Proclus, whose work is heavily influenced by Orphic ideology, combines the image of a metempsychotic cycle with a temporal one.³² As for Indic, the wheel can function as a riddling description of the year in both Vedic and Classical Sanskrit semiotics.³³ Similarly the chariot that the Ṛbhus fashion for the Aśvins, which we previously encountered as one of the vehicles in which the latter come to rescue those in danger, rejuvenate the old, and revive the dead, is also linked with the advent of the dawn, day and night.³⁴ Elsewhere the Ṛbhus themselves regulate the dawns.³⁵

³¹ See Hirst 1903: 42-3 and Dubois 1996: 80, 111.

³² For a collection of passages from Greek authors that describe time as being cyclic see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 118-19. The notion is hardly limited to the Hellenic imagination. See Eliade 1954, Katz 1994, and Weiss 2010: 225-244.

³³ M. West 2007: 371.

³⁴ E.g. *Ṛg Veda* 10.39.12.

³⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 4.51.6.

While we have seen that the Ṛbhus sleep in Agohya's house for twelve days,³⁶ another passage portrays them waking there *samvatsarā* "after a year."³⁷ This alternation between twelve days and the span of a year is probably to be understood as a reflex of the apparently Indo-European calendrical tradition that specially designates the twelve days before the new year, a period of time familiar to Anglophones as the twelve days of Christmas, in which we have the secularization of a pagan Yuletide event. By interpreting the Ṛbhus' stay at Agohya's as a congener of this special stint we come to understand why they cause nature to thrive at its end: the conclusion of their visit coincides with the notional advent of spring. Perhaps something of the New Year also resides in the Argonauts' two dedecahemeral episodes, both of which conclude with the environment's proliferation.³⁸

The number twelve and the New Year are also both features in the mythico-religious dossier of the Ṛbhus' Roman congener, the smith Mamurius Veturius 'Old Mars.' The latter was first brought to bear on the former by Georges Dumézil, who proposes that the Ṛbhus' quadruplication of the gods' drinking vessel has an analogue in Mamurius Veturius' replication of eleven additional *ancilia* identical with the original for a grand total of twelve: *scuta anni unius*, as a Vatican manuscript says of *ancilia*.³⁹ The copies were so faithful that their model could no longer be singled out, at which the Romans took offense and expelled Mamurius from

³⁶ *R̥g Veda* 4.33.7a.

³⁷ *R̥g Veda* 1.161.13.

³⁸ The number twelve is also associated with the year in Greek riddles. See Bader 1989: 146 and M. West 2007: 371.

³⁹ Dumézil 1947: 207-46. Mamurius requests *gloria* as payment for his work (Ovid, *Fasti* 3.389), and so Numa ensures that his name is celebrated in the Salian hymn. The Ṛbhus are similarly *ámartīyeṣu śráva ichámānāḥ* "desirous of glory among the immortals" (*R̥g Veda* 1.110.5d). On the formulaic composition of this phrase see G. Nagy 1974: 194.

the city.⁴⁰ These events have a correlate in ritual: an annual scapegoat, who was given Mamurius' name, was driven from Rome on March 15th, the festival of the annual goddess Anna Perenna. Old Mars is therefore the old year being driven out by the new.

Another instance in which the Ṛbhus are connected with the year might also be said to have a correspondent in Orpheus' biography:⁴¹

yāt saṃvātsam ṛbhāvo gām āraḥṣan
yāt saṃvātsam ṛbhāvo mā āpiṃśan
yāt saṃvātsam ābharan bhāso asyās
tābhiḥ śāmībhir amṛtatvām āśuḥ

For a year the Ṛbhus tended to a cow. For a year the Ṛbhus crafted her flesh. For a year they maintained her brilliance. On account of these efforts they obtained immortality.

Orpheus is not involved with a bovine for the duration of a year, but he sacrifices a calf to Helios annually.⁴² In fact the inherited word for calf in both Greek and Sanskrit is etymologically related to the year word: Greek ἔτος, ἔτειος 'yearling' and ἔταλον 'calf,' the source of Latin *vitulus*, are all part of the same family, and their Sanskrit cognate *vatsá-* means both 'year' and 'calf.'⁴³ It is therefore no surprise that the calf is a symbol for the year in Indic semiotics.⁴⁴ Elsewhere grown bovines assume an annual significance, for instance in the *Odyssey*, where Helios' three hundred and fifty cows represent the days of the year.⁴⁵ In Magnesia a bull was

⁴⁰ Lydus, *De Mensibus* 4.36.

⁴¹ *Ṛg Veda* 4.33.4.

⁴² Haudry 1987a: 265 notes that in Scottish folklore a cow mates with bull of the Elves once a year.

⁴³ On these words, their other relatives, and the diachrony of their morphology see Rau 2007: 281-92.

⁴⁴ M. West 2007: 371.

⁴⁵ *Odyssey* 12.129-131; M. West 2007: 371-2.

dedicated to Zeus at the beginning of the agricultural year,⁴⁶ and the Argive Hecatombaia, celebrated in the first month of the Argive calendar, was in honour of the year goddess Hera, whose name is actually cognate with Modern English *year*,⁴⁷ and who is herself routinely βοῶπις.

The Ῥbhus are also associated with the Ῥtus,⁴⁸ a set of temporal divinities. The name of the latter is from *ar- ‘join,’ a root that we have already seen in connection with its derivative ἄρμα, and has an exact Greek equivalent in ἀρτύς· σύνταξις.⁴⁹ The Ῥtus are therefore literally “fitting” points in time, but they often specifically represent the seasons. In light of the Ῥbhus’ connection with these sometimes seasonal figures, a passage from Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* becomes apparently pertinent. Philostratus tells us how Apollonius chided the Athenians for celebrating the Dionysia in ways that he did not consider appropriate:⁵⁰

ἐπεὶ δὲ ἤκουσεν ὅτι αὐλοῦ ὑποσημῖναντος λυγισμοὺς ὀρχοῦνται, καὶ μεταξὺ τῆς Ὀρφείως ἐποποιίας τε καὶ θεολογίας τὰ μὲν ὡς ἽΩραι, τὰ δὲ ὡς Νύμφαι, τὰ δὲ ὡς Βάκχαι πράττουσιν, ἐς ἐπίπληξιν τούτου κατέστη.

But when he heard that they were performing undulating dances to the prompting of the pipe, and that interspersed with the epic poetry and sacral verses of Orpheus they were imitating the Horai, the Nymphs and the Bacchantes, he resolved to criticize this.

From Apollonius’ perspective, these impersonations are intrusive to the context at hand, but for the Athenians, this combination of customs was presumably felt to form an organic unit. In any

⁴⁶ Harrison 1927: 150-1.

⁴⁷ On Hera’s annual aspect see O. Davidson 1980: 197-202; Haudry 1987a: 103-241; and O’Brien 1993: 114-19. On the Argive Hecatombaia see O’Brien 1993: 142-66. Bovines are also connected with the year in Chinese tradition: see Armstrong 1945: 200-207.

⁴⁸ Ῥg Veda 4.34.2.

⁴⁹ Mayrhofer 1986-2001: 1.257.

⁵⁰ *Life of Apollonius* 4.21.

event, for our purposes it will suffice to note that the Horai were apparently seen as having some sort of connection with Orphic verse. In fact there is an Orphic hymn to the Horai.⁵¹

Perhaps both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus have inherited from **H₃r^hé_us* an affinity for the seasons.

Another way in which Orpheus and the Ṛbhus might be related is a shared antipathy for the opposite sex. Orpheus' is frequently portrayed and variously imagined, whereas the Ṛbhus' is more subtle. After the Ṛbhus have brilliantly quadruplicated the originally single Soma cup that had been fashioned for the gods by Tvaṣṭṛ, the latter *gnásu antár ní ānaje* “concealed himself among the female [divinities].”⁵² It is interesting that Tvaṣṭṛ, who is often associated with female gods, withdraws to this feminine locale in reaction to the Ṛbhus' improvement on his invention.

Stella Kramrisch suggests that we are dealing with a binary opposition of artificial versus natural, therefore inherently feminine creativity.⁵³ In fact a fetal Tvaṣṭṛ performs a generative act from within the definitive locus of female creativity, making a husband and wife when he is still in the womb.⁵⁴ Tvaṣṭṛ's more natural craftsmanship thus appears to be in contrast with the Ṛbhus' supernatural deeds. With this in mind, I think it is worth noting that in their only appearance within the sprawling breadth of the *Mahābhārata*, the Ṛbhus, although admittedly

⁵¹ Athanassakis 1977: 60.

⁵² *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.4d. This phrase could also be interpreted as describing an act of transvestitism. See Witzel, Gotō, Dōyama, and Ježić 2007: 723.

⁵³ Kramrisch 1959: 116.

⁵⁴ *Ṛg Veda* 10.10.5.

quite distinct from their Vedic predecessors, might be said to be similarly detached from the feminine in the fact that they *na teṣām strīkṛtastāpo* “do not suffer the aggravations of women.”⁵⁵

Orpheus and the Ṛbhus might also be said to display vestiges of a common healing aspect. Aside from rejuvenating their decrepit parents, the Ṛbhus’ skill in carpentry functions as the point of comparison in the passage of the *Atharva Veda* that constitutes one of several Indic reflexes of a inherited healing incantation also maintained in Germanic, Celtic and Baltic literature.⁵⁶

Pausanias tells us that Mikythos of Rhegium erected various statues, including ones of Orpheus, Asclepius and Hygeia, as repayment for the recovery of his ill son.⁵⁷ Euripides, moreover, portrays Orphic tablets (Θρήσσαις ἐν σανίσιν, τὰς/ Ὀρφεία κατέγραψεν/ γῆρυς)⁵⁸ as containing a remedy (τι φάρμακον)⁵⁹ comparable with the remedies (φάρμακα)⁶⁰ of “Asclepius’ descendants,” that is physicians. The analogy is not lessened by the fact that both are negatively presented as ultimately ineffectual against Ananke’s immutable effect on mortals. Furthermore, Pliny the Elder knows of a tradition that Orpheus was the first to write about herbs,⁶¹ and recall that the cithara herb comes into being from the blood of Orpheus’ dismembered body, a narrative that I

⁵⁵ *Mahābhārata* 3.247.20.

⁵⁶ *Atharva Veda* 4.12.2; the comparanda were first brought into contact by Kuhn 1864: 49-74, 113-57, and have been revisited many times since: see Schmitt 1967: 285-94; Jamison 1986: 161-81, Watkins 1995, and Matasović 1996: 128-32. The strikingly similar incantation that occurs in the *Kalevala* (Magoun 1963: 91) is probably an adaptation of this Indo-European tradition. Smith 1993: 231 fn. 73 misses the point in assuming that the geographically widespread distribution of these incantations means that they are generic.

⁵⁷ Pausanias 5.26.2-3. Recall that Ibycus of Rhegium celebrated Orpheus in his poetry. Orpheus also had a noteworthy presence elsewhere in Calabria, e.g. Orpheus of Croton, and the Orphic iconography of the Locrian *pinakes* (Kingsley 1995: 270; Redfield 2003).

⁵⁸ *Alcestis* 967-9.

⁵⁹ *Alcestis* 966.

⁶⁰ *Alcestis* 971.

⁶¹ Graf and Johnston 2013: 173 caution that Orpheus’ medical aspect is at best very slight, noting that Pliny himself is skeptical.

argued has Irish and Iranian correlates in the genesis of medicinal herbs from the grave of the slain surgeon Míach,⁶² and the creation of healing plants from the marrow of the slaughtered primordial ox.

Both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus are also alternately associated with particular piety and implications of impiety. The Ṛbhus are often said to attain immortality in part because they are exceptionally dutiful sacrificers,⁶³ and Orpheus is so devoted to hymning the gods that he is apparently unwilling to vulgarize this talent in the context of a poetry recital.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Tvaṣṭṛ portrays the Ṛbhus' quadruplication of his cup as an act of sacrilege and suggests that they be slain,⁶⁵ while Zeus blasts Orpheus with lightning for profaning mysteries by communicating them to the uninitiated,⁶⁶ a fulgurous fate that he shares with several possessors of Orphic *lamellae*.

Finally, Orpheus and the Ṛbhus also both exhibit a martial aspect, a correspondence that I have already discussed in Chapter 3.

⁶² Míach is the son of Dían Cécht, who is involved in an Irish reflex of the same inherited healing incantation with which the Ṛbhus intersect; see Watkins 1995: 532-4. Orpheus and the Ṛbhus' medical aspect is to be joined to their poetic-artisanal complex: Dían Cécht alternates with the smith Goibniu as healer in the St. Gall Incantations (Stokes and Strachan 1901-3: 2.248-9), and the triple Brigits are respectively a poet, craftswoman and doctor (Stokes and O'Donovan 1868: 23). The association of craftsman and healer is hardly unique to Indo-European: the Sakha infernal smith K'daai Maqsín mends broken limbs; see Eliade 1978: 82.

⁶³ For example *Ṛg Veda* 1.20.8; 1.110.4, 3.60.3.

⁶⁴ Pausanias 10.7.2.

⁶⁵ *Ṛg Veda* 1.161.5.

⁶⁶ Pausanias 9.30.5.

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