Recherches et Rencontres - 1991 - n° 3, pp. 13-30

Orpheus: From Guru To Gay

When modern literature thinks of Orpheus, it invariably speaks of his love-story. Contemporary female poets even make Eurydice the protagonist of the myth (Segal 1988: 118-154, 171-198). It was not like that in ancient Greece. The early Greeks primarily considered Orpheus to be a musician and a poet, and the background of his myth has to be looked for in rituals of men's associations, as Fritz Graf (1987) has shown in a highly innovative study. It is the intention of this paper not only to add further support to his thesis by discussing Orpheus' age and wanderings (§ 2) but also to question one of Graf's arguments, that relating to Orpheus' homosexuality (§ 3), and, finally, to study the why and when of Orpheus' development from a singer into a guru of an alternative life-style (§ 4). Ladies first, however: we start with the problem of the name of Orpheus' wife (§ 1).

1. THE NAME EURYDICE

Given the popularity of the myth of Orpheus, it is highly surprising that the name of Eurydice appears only late in Greek mythology. The first reference to her occurs in Euripides' *Alcestis* (357-362) in which Admetus expresses his love by saying that if he had the «words and music» of Orpheus, he would go down to Hades in order to beseech its rulers to give him back his wife, and neither Cerberus nor Charon could keep him back «before I would bring you back alive to light». The passage clearly presupposes Orpheus' descent on behalf of his wife, but Eurydice herself is not mentioned. In the fourth century, Plato (*Symp.* 179DE) and Isocrates (*Bus.* 8) also leave the name of Orpheus' wife unnamed, and Eratosthenes (*Cat.* 24), Diodorus Siculus (4, 25) and Plutarch (*M.* 566C) are apparently still indebted to this tradition, as they also limit themselves to saying «the wife» in their descriptions of Orpheus' descent. The fact that only late antique mythographers, such as Servius (Verg. *G.* 4, 460) and the

Mythographus Vaticanus (1, 76), know anything about Eurydice's origin confirms, indeed, her early anonymity.

There could be two exceptions to this rule. In the late fifth century, the altar of the twelve Gods in the Athenian Agora was decorated with four reliefs. The originals are lost, but the Roman copy of one of these reliefs carries the captions Hermes, Orpheus and Eurydice. It is true that the particular spelling of Hermes, ΗΡΜΗΣ, does occur on a contemporaneous vase by Polion (*ARV*[2] 1171, n° 2), but the captions are lacking on the other copies, as they are on those of the other reliefs; moreover, there is nothing typically fifth-century about the letters and the curious mixture of normal and retrograde writing hardly inspires confidence in the authenticity of the inscription[1].

Until recently it was also thought that the name of Orpheus' wife could be found on a fragment of an Apulian volute krater of the third quarter of the fourth century, where «Eurydice» is written over the head of a woman, who is turned to the left, and where, to her left, the name «Aion» appears to the right of the head of a male; on another fragment, now lost but traditionally ascribed to the same krater, we find «... pheus» (= Orpheus) under a woman and an aedicula with «Pher...» (= Phersephone). If the two fragments belonged together — which cannot be determined on the basis of the drawing of the second one — the figures of the first fragment would be looking to the edge of the picture — a direction against the conventions of Greek vase-painting. Consequently, as Ingrid Krauskopf (*LIMC* I, 1, 1984, s.v. Antigone, n° 16) has argued, the two fragments do not seem to belong together and the Eurydice of the first fragment is the wife of Creon, as in Sophocles' *Antigone* (1183 ff, and Aion may be an error for Creon's son Haimon; the more so, we may add, as the occurrence of the visualized Aion would antedate all other testimonies by about three centuries (*LIMC* I, 1, 1984, s.v. Aion)[2].

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[1] Orpheus relief, Graf (1987), 102, n. 5, with recent bibliography; add now *LIMC* IV, 1 (1988) s.v. «Eurydice», no. 5 (G. Schwartz). Spelling of «Hermes», Threatte (1980), 40 and 46 cites some examples of ΗΡΜΕΣ; I am most grateful to Professor David Lewis for advice on this point (letter 30 March 1989).

[2] For the whole question of these fragments see now Zuntz (1990) and M. Schmidt, this volume, 33, n. 5. In the fourth century, Orpheus and Eurydice, both uncaptioned, also appear on a terracotta relief from Olbia (pl. 2-3, Lejpunskaja, 1982, overlooked by *LIMC* s.v. Eurydice; although the identification is doubted by Margo Schmidt [letter 13 February 1991]) and on an Apulian volute krater (Trendall and Cambitoglou, 1982, 533, nr. 284). Sansone (1985) on Orpheus and Eurydice in the fifth century is unconvincing.

The anonymity of Orpheus' wife evidently hurts our sensibility but is less surprising in archaic and classical Greece. Whereas the name of the male protagonist in a myth was usually fixed, the names of the females were not (Bremmer, 1987, 18). In the myth of Œdipus, his foster-mother is variously called Merope, Periboia, Medusa or Antiochis and even the name of his mother, who is so important to us, alternates between Epikaste and Iokaste. Although the anonymity is surprising, there is no reason, then, to assume that Orpheus' wife had a fixed name in the tradition, the less so as the protagonist in the archaic version of the myth was evidently Orpheus himself and not his wife.

Eurydice is finally mentioned by the poet Hermesianax (about 300 BC), who calls her Agriope. Admittedly, in his enumeration of love affairs he mixes the playful (Homerus and Penelope) with the historical (Aristippus and Lais), but there always is some existing relationship between his lovers and there seems to be no reason to reject his testimony[3]. Unlike Apollonius of Rhodes, other great Hellenistic poets, like Callimachus and Theocritus, do not mention Orpheus at all and it is only in the anonymous *Epitaph for the poet Bion* (124), probably at the end of the second century (Fantuzzi, 1985, 139-146), that for the very first time the name Eurydice is found in a literary text; the fact that «Apollodorus» (1, 3, 2) also mentions her name seems to suggest that it here, like the *Epitaph*, goes back to a Hellenistic idyllion (Söder, 1939, 21-5). Subsequently, Virgil's and Ovid's accounts canonized Eurydice's name forever in Western tradition.

If the name Eurydice, then, seems to have become popular only in later Hellenistic times, where could it have come from? Of course, there are quite a few Eurydices in Greek mythology, such as the wives of Nestor (*Od.* 3, 452), Aeneas (Paus. 10, 26, 1 = Cypria F 23 = Ilias Parva F 22 Davies), and Kreon (above). We cannot, therefore, exclude the possibility that a Hellenistic poet chose her name from the great mythological name-pool. But there is also another possibility.

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[3] Hermesianax, fr. 7 Powell, rejected by Ziegler, 1942, 1277. The name Agriope is nearly identical with Argiope, the name of the mother of the Thracian singer Thamyris (Apollod, 1, 16; Paus. 4, 33, 3), but this is no reason to doubt Hermesianax or to change his text into Argiope, as is advocated by Heurgon (1932), 13-15.

In Hellenistic times, Eurydice was a name prominent in one and only one area in Greece: Macedonia. The earliest historical Eurydice we know of was the mother of Philippus II, a princess from the Lynkestid royal family and born about 410 (1). Philip's first wife was also called Eurydice (2), as was his last wife (3) and Adea, a granddaughter from his first marriage, who received this name after her wedding (4). Demetrius Poliorcetes married an Athenian Eurydice who probably received this name only after her wedding, considering the other Macedonian examples and the rather late attestation of the name Eurydice in Athens (5). Finally, we have the daughter of Antipater who became the wife of Ptolemaeus I (6), the daughter of Lysimachos after whom Smyrna temporarily was renamed Eurydikeia (7), and the wife of the Illyrian king Genthius, the last royal Eurydice (8)[4]. And whereas the name Eurydice is totally absent in the indices of the non-Macedonian volumes of *IG*, the corpus of *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* and the first volume of Peter Fraser's new *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Oxford, 1987), several examples can be found in Macedonia [5].

Now in the mythological tradition Orpheus is a Thracian, but in the historical period his real place of origin, Leibethra on the foothills of Mt Olympus, was part of Macedonia. This reality comes to the fore in the accounts of two contemporaries of Augustus. Conon (*FGrH* 26 F1, 45) depicts Orpheus as ruling over «Macedonians and Odrysians», and Hyginus (*Astr.* 2, 7) in a similar attempt at harmonising myth and history, locates Mt Olympus on the border between Macedonia and Thrace. But even if we did not have these testimonies, every Hellenistic poet would know that the so-called Thracian «homeland» of Orpheus was dominated by the Macedonians. If he had to chose a new name for Orpheus' bride or to chose between

[4] Eurydice (1): Kaerst (1909), 1326, no. 14; add now *SEG* 33, 556. (2): Kaerst (1909), 1326, no. 15. (3): Heckel (1978); Prestianni Giallombardo (1981). (4): Heckel (1983); Carney (1987). (5): Plut. *Dem.* 14, 53 (not in *RE*); late Athenian examples, *Fouilles de Delphes* III, 2, 29; *IG* III, 2, 2500. (6): Willrich (1909), 137. (7): idem; Cadoux (1938), 103 f and Robert (1951), 204 (Eurydikeia). (8): Livius, 44, 30, 2 (not in *RE*). In general: Badian (1982).

[5] Macedonia: *IG*, XII, 1, 501; *SEG*, 2, 396 (cf. Robert, 1940, 70 f), 27, 291, 29, 580, 36, 624; Feissel/Sève (1988), 450, no. 2; note also *Fouilles de Delphes*, III, 1, 44 (Larissa); Collitz (1899), 351, no. 1931 (Amphissa) and the Eurydice to whom Plutarch dedicated his *Praecepta conjugalia*.

existing names, might he not have preferred a name which was highly typical of Macedonian princesses[6]?

A more remote possibility, but perhaps not completely to be excluded, is that a poet wanted to honour one of these Eurydices (Ptolemaeus' wife?) by connecting her with a great singer. Similarly, Callimachus seems to have ranged Arsinoe among the Muses. His text was apparently not totally clear, but Pausanias saw a statue of Arsinoe on the Helikon, the mountain of the Muses[7].

2. ORPHEUS AS INITIATOR

Orpheus' love for Eurydice, then, belongs to a relatively late stage of the myth. Originally, as Graf (1987) has shown, Orpheus was connected with rituals of initiation. We can, I think, add two more arguments for this interpretation by focusing on Orpheus' age and the wandering of his followers. As far as I can see, until now no scholar seems to have been puzzled by the problem of Orpheus' age. Yet there can be no doubt in this respect. Already the earliest certain representation, a metope from the Sicyonian treasure-house at Delphi on which the names are added, may represent Orpheus as a beardless singer next to a bearded one. We cannot be so sure about this ascription, though, as earlier generations of scholars were, since De la Coste-Messelière has suggested that Orpheus is the bearded singer. It is true that the name «Orphas» actually is written rather to the left of the beardless singer, but this hardly seems decisive. For the spectators the caption would have been crystal clear from the position of the caption of the third person, which is unfortunately lost. In any case, Orpheus always appears as an adolescent on the Attic and Apulian vases[8].

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[6] Conon: considering that Conon was a contemporary of Augustus, he perhaps more likely derived the Macedonians from his source than from his own historical knowledge; for the «political» Orpheus see also Max. Tyr. 37, 6. Sources of Conon: Henrichs (1987), 244-247 and esp. 269, n. 17; note also Nikomedes of Akanthos (c. 4?) who wrote both a *Macedonica* and an *On Orpheus* (*FGrH* 772 F, 1 and 3). Hyginus' life and work: Le Boeuffle (1983), vii-xliii.

[7] Cf. Call. *Aetia*, fr. 2a, 5 ff (Pfeifer 2, p. 102), Schol. Lond. 42 ff (Pfeiffer 1, p. 7); Paus. 9, 31, 1. Note also that Call. *Ep.*, 51, called Berenice the fourth Charis.

[8] Metope of Sicyon: *Fouilles de Delphes*, IV, 1 (1909), 27-30 (description) and IV (1926), plate 4 (Orpheus as Argonaut), but see De la Coste-Messelière (1936),

Is such a young poet and singer credible, as *we* would hardly expect youngsters to be great and famous poets and singers before the arrival of pop music? I don't know of any historical Greek cases, but mythology supplies at least some examples of young poets and seers, categories which, although not identical, are sometimes related; after all, Orpheus, too, was reputed to be an oracle-giver and seer. As regards poets, we have the example of Amphion who built the walls of Thebes and became king afterwards, at least in Euripides' *Antiope*. As regards seers, Pherecydes (*FGrH* 4 F 115) considered the seer (*mantis*) Theoclymenus to be Telemachus' contemporary, but the best known example is Melampus, who as a young man already knew the language of the animals and later became king in Argos; for our purpose it is important to note that in Sicyon he was the leader of the adolescents who pursued the daughters of Proitos[9].

Unfortunately, these data do not get us much further. For that reason, we will have to go outside Greek culture to look for parallels. Can we find, preferably within the Indo-European cultures, a young poet, who is the leader of a group of (young) males who are roaming the countryside? In fact we do. In ancient Ireland, there is a whole body of traditions commonly referred to as the Fenian cycle, the stories about Finn and his roving band, the *fian*. As the title of the most important piece of Fenian literature, the twelfth-century «The Boyhood deeds of Finn» (*Macgnimartha Finn*), shows, Finn is primarily a youth (*gilla*). As such he becomes the chief (*rigfennid*) of a band of youths (*fian*), which spends its time in the Irish countryside wandering and hunting. We can see a glimpse of their existence in the wilderness in a ninth-century charm: «wolves and deer and mountainwandering and young warriors of the *fian*.» But an early eighth-century law tract also includes in its description of the layout of the king's house the statement «on the other side, in the *fian*-champion's seat, a man at arms to guard the door». Evidently, the *fian* sometimes became «the retinue of the king... they were called *fiana* because they

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193-197, who is followed by Vojatzi (1982), 40-45. Vases: Panyagua (1972), 88-128; Margot Schmidt, this volume, ch. 3.

[9] Poets and seers: Chadwick (1942) who overstates the identity, cf. Finnegan (1977), 207-210. Amphion: *LIMC* I, 1 (1984), 718-723 (F. Heger). Melampus: *Od.* 11, 287-297, 15, 225-242; Apollod. 2, 28 f, cf. Burkert (1983), 172 (ephebes and kingship); Dowden (1989), 99-115, with a detailed analysis of the Melampus traditions.

were the *fennidi* (members of the *fian*) and the warriors of the king»; in this way, they could become a powerful political factor. Moreover, Finn is a poet, but not the normal eulogizing one in the service of the rich and famous. His poetry deals with nature and otherworldly persons or places or, just as in the case of Orpheus, consists of obscure mantic verse.

Albeit dimly, through the short references and allusions in archaic Irish literature we can see an age-set of the young which had to wander around, living from hunting and brigandage, until it passed to full membership of the *tuath* (the married landowners), usually at the death of the father or other next of kin. If, however, the father did not obligingly pass away at a decent age, the youth would have to continue to live in the *fian*. Consequently, the membership of these bands could comprise a mixture of youths and adults. In Finn and the *fian*, then, we have, I suggest, a suggestive parallel to the original social circumstances creating the myth of Orpheus'leadership. The more so as also on the Apulian vases Orpheus is connected with youths, as Margot Schmidt shows in her contribution to this volume (Ch. 3) — a connection which may well be based on a tradition independent from the Attic vases[10].

We find similar bands of wandering youths in the Iranian tradition, where they too must have been accepted in the king's retinue, as the designation of the Persian vassals still reflects the name for youths (*marika*). We may perhaps here also think of the Homeric word for «ally», *epikouros*, a word traditionally connected with Latin *curro* but perhaps more likely to be associated with *kouros*[11]. And in the *Germania*, Tacitus mentions that the noble youths, after their initiation, wandered from chief to chief and married relatively late (c. 20: *sera iuvenum venus*). We need not assume that these groups have existed ever since the Indo-European *Urzeit*. It is perhaps preferable to see in them a possibility of the initiatory structure which could be actualized whenever society did not offer sufficient possibilities to its youths to start a new household; a nice example would be the Roman *ver sacrum* (Versnel, 1986). In more recent times we have the

[10] On Finn and the *fian* see now Nagy (1985), esp. 17-40 («Finn, poet and outsider») and 41-79 («*Fennid*, *Fian*, *Rigfennid*»; McCone (1986); less helpful, hÓgain (1988).

[11] Iranians: Widengren (1953), 59-62; idem (1969), 86-92; idem (1975), 61 f; for a possible Indian parallel see Bollée (1981). *Epikouros*: Negri (1977). I am grateful to Professor R.S.P. Beekes for advice in this question (letter 5 April 1989).

phenomenon of the *iuvenes* (Duby, 1973, 213-225), the young twelfth-century knights who had to wander around in search of a wealthy bride and whose wanderings are reflected in the legends of the knights errant (Chênerie, 1986, ch. 1). We may perhaps also compare the *peregrinatio academica* of the noble students (Mornet, 1973) and the obligatory wandering of the journeymen of the guilds (Reininghaus, 1981; Didier, 1984), both phenomena going back to our earliest records of universities and guilds respectively.

In its various Macedonian and Greek traditions, then, the myth of Orpheus preserved the memories of an archaic social organisation, in which the youths, but probably also less fortunate adults, roamed the countryside of Pieria under the supervision of a poet-singer. Similar Indo-European groups always seem to belong to the layers of the free-born, if not the aristocracy. The roaming, therefore, also seems to point to groups of youths like the *fian*: established aristocrats would surely have used horses to move around.

In recent decades, linguists have shown that the Indo-European term for these warrior groups of youths on the brink of adulthood was **koryos*, which survived in Greek *koiranos*. For our purpose it may be important to observe that onomastic testimonies for this term were especially frequent in Thessaly and Macedonia. On the other hand, a Thracian origin for Orpheus' association can, perhaps, not be totally excluded, as tradition told of an earlier Thracian population of Pieria (Graf, 1987, 87). If so, it is interesting to observe that the Thracian singer Thamyris was reputed to have been king of the Chalcidice or the Scythians (Thracians?)[12].

3. A GAY ORPHEUS?

Having shown the initiatory background of the Orpheus myth, Graf (1987, 92) goes on to argue that also the tradition of «Orpheus introducing homosexuality to Thrace might preserve older traditions than we had thought». At first sight his suggestion is very attractive, as pederasty was a standard feature of ancient Greek initiation

[12] **koryos*: Benveniste (1969, 111-115); Heubeck (1978), who overlooked Robert (1963, 385-396); McCone (1987). Thamyris: Strabo 7, fr. 35; Conon *FGrH* 26 F 1, 7.

(Bremmer, 1989). Yet at closer inspection doubts arise. The oldest authority for Orpheus' pederastic activities is Phanocles, an author of whom we know virtually nothing but who did not live before the third century. From his poem *Erotes e kaloi* a fragment (fr. 1 Powell = Hopkinson, 1988, lines 834-861) has survived which tells how Orpheus was murdered by the Thracian women, who resented the fact that he shunned them but loved Calais, the son of Boreas; from then on, as a punishment, the Thracian males tattood their women (Zimmermann, 1980; Jones, 1987, 145). Other, even later authors, such as Ovid (*Met.* 10, 83-85), Hyginus (*Astr.*, 2, 7) and Philargyrius (*Georg.*, 4, 520), also call Orpheus the inventor of pederasty but do not mention Calais, whose pederastic role was probably invented by Phanocles himself, as no other account mentions him: he was a well-known fellow Argonaut who came from Thrace and whose name recalls the *kaloi* of the title of the poem (Hopkinson, 1988, 178).

On the other hand, all these accounts clearly connect Orpheus' pederasty with his shunning of women. Such a contrast is post-classical, as classical pederastic males were usually married, but we may compare the statement of Aristotle (*Pol.*, 2, 7, 5) that the Cretan lawgiver instituted pederasty in order to prevent women from having many children. Such a negative valuation of pederasty only appears in the course of the fourth century. Orpheus' homosexuality, therefore, does not belong to the original myth. Hardly surprisingly, the parallel tradition of Thamyris being the inventor of pederasty is equally late[13].

This conclusion is supported by a scrutiny of the myths related in those places which claimed to have Orpheus' grave. The central site was Leibethra on the foothills of Mt Olympus, where women were forbidden to enter the sanctuary of Orpheus. Here, as the natives related, Orpheus used to assemble the warriors of Macedonia and Thrae, although they had to leave their weapons outside. The women resented their exclusion and one day they collected these weapons, forced their way into the building and tore Orpheus to pieces. No homosexuality here, but Conon (*FGrH* 26 F 1, 45), the source of the

[13] Thamyris and pederasty: Apollod., 1, 3, 3; Eustath. on *Il.*, 298, 40; in general, Robert (1920), 413-416; Marcade (1982); add now the society of Boeotian Thamyriddontes (*SEG*, 32, 503). As regards our conclusion, note also Robert (1920), 404: «Als die ältesten (viz. causes of his death) werden die zu gelten haben, die von der Eurydikesage unabhängig sind.»

story, adds that some say that the women may well have resented the fact that Orpheus was not interested in their love, thus demonstrating that this version was not told in Leibethra itself but had become important in Augustus' time.

In Dium, a neigbouring town which also claimed to have Orpheus' grave, at first the women were not even mentioned. When the traveller Strabo arrived here in the time of Augustus, he was told that political opponents had killed Orpheus. It is curious to note that in this account Orpheus is depicted as a typical Orpheotelest, the itinerant initiation priest: «a wizard (*andra goeta*) who at first collected money (*agyrteuonta*) through his music, prophecies and initatory rites»; this tradition was hardly well-disposed towards Orpheus[14]. When two centuries later Pausanias (9, 30, 4-12) arrived in the same town, the natives had apparently thought it wiser to adapt their story to the more popular version and they could indicate to him the exact spot where the women had killed Orpheus.

It is clear, as Graf (1985a, 391 f) has seen, that the myth of the murdering women finds its origin in the exclusion of women from this sanctuary — in other words, it is an aetiological myth. Comparable myths existed in Clazomenae where the exclusion of women from the sanctuary of Hermotimos was explained by the treason of his wife, which had led to his murder and, most likely, in Tarentum, where women were excluded from the sanctuary of the Agamemnonids — an exclusion hardly to be separated from Clytaemnestra's murder. In a number of cults, such as those of Hermotimos, Achilles and Heracles, the exclusion of the women points to ancient men's associations with their rituals of initiation. In some way, as we have seen (§ 2), Orpheus is also to be connected with such rituals.

Both in Leibethra and Dium, then, the women were supposed to have objected to Orpheus taking away their males from them, not against his being a misogynist or a pederast. It is this tradition which we also find on some of our earliest sources, the Attic red-figured vases, which from the 480s onwards display Orpheus surrounded by males only. A misogynistic and, consequently, pederastic Orpheus only becomes historically credible in the fourth century and after

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[14] Strabo, 7, fr. 18, cf. Strabo, 10, 3, 23 who explicitly connects *to agyrtikon kai goeteia* with Dionysiac and Orphic crafts. Orpheotelests: Burkert (1982, 4-6; note also the characterisation of Teiresias by Œdipus in Soph. *OR.*, 387 f as a *magos* and *agyrtes*.

when the man-wife relationship became more bourgeois. The changing emphasis on Orpheus' lovelife is an interesting example of how the Hellenistic periode kept myths alive by shifting the accents of the narration away from its religious and social aspects towards a more psychological approach towards its protagonists[15].

4. ORPHEUS AS GURU

After Graf's (1987) investigation, the problem of Orpheus has become even more complicated. For how can we explain the fact that an initiator ended up as a poet of abstruse speculations as well as a kind of guru for Greeks dedicated to an alternative life-style? The question is perhaps insoluble but there is certainly room for a few observations. Let us therefore once again look at the earliest testimonia of Orpheus. The oldest certain reference occurs on the metope of the Sicyoniam treasurehouse at Delphi which dates from before 550 B.C. where Orpheus is pictured as an Argonaut (above); the reference of Ibycus (*PMG*, 306) to the «famous Orpheus» may also come from an Argonautic epos as Karl Meuli (1975, 657) has persuasively suggested. Various sources agree that his major feat on board was to have outsung the Sirens. We cannot be sure that an Attic black-figured lekythos in Heidelberg (580-570), depicting a singer between two Sirens, represents Orpheus (Gropengiesser, 1977, doubted by Vojatzi, 1982, 43 f), but around 400 B.C. Herodorus of Heraclea (*FGrH* 31 F 43 a) mentioned that Cheiron had advised Jason to take Orpheus along with him as protection against the Sirens, a tradition also recorded by Apollonius of Rhodes (1, 32-35). In addition, around 320/310 a nearly life-size terracotta group of Orpheus and two Sirens was made and buried in an underground Tarentine chamber tomb (Frel, 1979, 25 f). His quality as a master-singer, then, is well attested as the oldest stratum of his Greek tradition. Orpheus' skill in singing is also stressed in Conon's account and it seems perfectly acceptable that the archaic Greeks selected the singing as the most striking quality of the activities of this Macedonian cult figure. So the question remains why and when Orpheus was transformed from a singer into the poet of «Orphic» poetry?

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[15] For a similar changing interpretation of a myth see Graf (1988).

Regarding Orphic poetry there are at least three traditions which seem to go back into the early classical, if not archaic age: Orphic theogonic poetry, Pythagorean Orphica and Eleusinian eschatological poetry. Would not a closer look at these traditions perhaps help us to find the answer? Let us start with the Orphic theogonies. West (1983) has shown that the oldest theogony claiming to have been written by Orpheus can hardly be older than 500 B.C. and may be even later than Parmenides whose work it seems to echo at various places. Unlike West, though, his reviewers Brisson (1985) and Richardson (1985) have stressed that the content of this theogony has to remain largely obscure. This observation is important for the determination of the area where this theogony originated. Having persuasively established a connection of the theogony with Parmenides and Empedocles, West (1983, 110), in the end prefers Ionia above Sicily or Southern Italy on the basis that the theogony is connected with the Sabazian cult myth. However, his main argument — the connection of Sabazius with Meter Hipta — overlooks the fact that Meter Hipta is only connected with Sabazius in a highly limited area of Lydia, where her cult is not attested before imperial times. Moreover, Hipta appears only for the very first time in an Orphic context in the *Orphic Hymns* (no. 48 f = OF 199), poems which were the product of a Dionysiac society in imperial times. It is surely in this syncretistic period that we would expect Sabazian influence, the more so as no other Sabazian elements have been demonstrated for the Orphic theogonies. With Hipta out of the way, there seems no reason not to accept that the oldest Orphic theogony originated in Sicily or Southern Italy, exactly the area where we would have expected the birth of such speculations[16].

Given the close resemblance of Orphism to Pythagoreanism one might even wonder whether Orphism did not originate in the same area as a split off from Pythagoreanism sometime between Parmenides and Empedocles; it should be remembered that it cannot

[16] West (1983): this highly ingenious but also highly speculative study has to be read with the reviews by Brisson (1985), Graf (1985b), Richardson (1985) and Casadio (1986, 1987). Meter Hipta and Sabazius: *Tituli Asiae Minoris*, V, 1, 264 (= Lane, 1985, no. 40), 352 (= Lane, 1985, no. 36), 459 (= Lane, 1985, no. 36), 529; note also Zgusta (1964), 204, § 481. Sabazian ritual: Graf (1985b, 589) points out that West (1983, 97) wrongly derives the «Schlangenhochzeit» from Sabazian ritual.

be proved that a Pythagorean philosophy or science existed before Parmenides (Burkert, 1972, 283, 289).

In Eleusis, Orpheus, Orphic ideas, and Orphic poems, such as the Orphic account of Demeter's entry into Eleusis, are not demonstrable before the second half of the fifth century (Graf, 1974, 79-150). The only exception seems to be a late sixth-century Eleusinian *katabasis* of Heracles, in which Graf (1974, 146) thought to detect Orphic-Pythagorean eschatological ideas, which he tentatively ascribed to Musaeus, a figure closely related to Eleusis (Henrichs, 1985). Graf based himself on Attic imagery (now *LIMC*, IV, 1, 1988, pp. 805-888) and Aristophanes' mention of malefactors in Hades in his *Frogs*, but the occurrence of Orphic-Pythagorean ideas in late sixth-century Athens seems too early, as Pytagorean influence in that periode is hardly credible. Moreover, Orpheus' connection with the mysteries is in general of a much later date: a *katabasis* ascribed to Orpheus was not part of the Eleusinian canon (Marmor Parium *FGrH* 239 F 14). Now «Apollodorus» (2, 5, 12) only mentions Heracles' initiation but not a meeting with the Eleusinian initiates in Hades, and so does Euripides in his *Heracles* (610-613). As «Apollodorus» almost certainly depends on the Athenian mythographer Pherecydes (Van der Valk, 1958, 129), it seems perfectly possible that in the later fifth century Orphic-Pythagorean ideas were inserted into the existing version of Heracles' *katabasis* which until then had only mentioned his initiation.

Finally, the Pythagorean Orphica. Unfortunately the only passage which might connect Pythagoras with Orpheus is highly enigmatic. According to Heraclitus (B 129), «Pythagoras son of Mnesarchus practised inquiry most of all men, and having made a selection of these writings he claimed for himself expertise, polymathy, knavery». According to Burkert, Heraclitus may have meant Orphica with «these writings», but the expression itself is obscure and the explanation presupposes the existence of Orphic writings within Pythagoras' life-time, something which is still to be demonstrated[17].

[17] Pythagoras and Orphism: Burkert (1972), 125-132; note that Mansfeld (1983), 249 perhaps preferably translates with: «... und indem er eine Auswahl aus seinen diesbezüglichen Notizen vornahm, machte er sich daraus eine eigene Weisheit, Vielwisserei, schlimme Machenschaften.»

Early Orphic writings, then, are not attested before the beginning of the fifth century, although they were already current before Pindar's *Second Olympian* of 468 (Lloyd-Jones, 1985), and they do not help us in our quest for Orpheus the poet. Yet there may be one exception. The most popular — after all, Pythagoras had also descended into Hades — early Pythagorean-Orphic writing seems to have been one or possibly various books entitled *Descent into Hades* which was variously ascribed to Bro(n)tinus, Zopyrus or Orpheus Camarinus of Camarina (OT 222, OF 293-296), none of which goes back with any certainty into the sixth century. One of these *Descents*, presumably the most authoritative one, is generally agreed to have been written in an autobiographical form, just as the later Orphic *Argonautica* which seems to refer to it (41 f). It seems not impossible that we find here the link between Orpheus the singer and Orpheus the poet/guru. The autobiographical form of this poem must have established Orpheus as a poet and his visit to the underworld must have transformed him into an expert on the afterlife, an issue of importance to the Orphics; an extension of the knowledge of «Orpheus» into other areas would then be only a matter of time. Does not the authentication of these successive writings with the name of «Orpheus» also point to a date in the early classical rather than the archaic age? When sixth-century Athens (Eleusis?) created a fictitious poet in order to enhance the credibility of oracles, it still invented the name Musaeus. Later times could do without the immediate invocation of the Muses[18].

We have started with Orpheus and Eurydice, we will also end with them. In a fascinating section of his study of Orpheus, Graf (1987, 82-84; Monnier, this volume, ch. 6) has drawn attention to the mainly North American «Orpheus Tradition», in which a man (rarely a woman) goes to the world of the dead to fetch back a near relative, such as a wife. Graf is inclined to accept that the Greek story eventually derives from this tradition. This seems doubtful, however, as the absence of a number of related stories in the area between Greece and Pacific Asia is a strong argument against a diffusionist explana-

[18] Early Pythagoreans and Orpheus: West (1983), 7-15. Descent of Pythagoras: Burkert (1972), 155-163. Autobiographical Orpheus: E. Norden on Verg. *Aen.* 6, 119; Graf (1974), 142, n. 6, who points out that the autobiographical form goes back at least into Hellenistic times; West (1983), 12. Diminishing role of the Muses: Calame (1986), 31-54.

tion. Moreover, Orpheus' demonstration of his musical power in the underworld is only a logical extension of his power over humans, animals and nature; the inclusion of his wife is one possible motivation amongst many others. It also seems improbable that the sixth century already knew of a *katabasis* of a man for his wife: such an attempt hardly fits into the general spirit of the archaic period. It is even harder to accept that the motif originated among the Orphics themselves, as they seem to have felt rather hostile towards sexuality. On the other hand, the Pythagoreans promoted marriage and strict monogamy. Is it not possible that they invented the motif of Eurydice, perhaps improving upon an earlier version[19]? Such a suggestion is of course pure speculation, but would the Pythagoreans or Orphics have disapproved of that[20]?

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[19] Orphics and sexuality: Eur. *Hipp.*, 952-954; Detienne (1975), 70-79; Parker (1983), 301. Pythagoreans and marriage: Burkert (1972), 178, n. 94.

[20] I am indebted to Rob Beekes, Richard Buxton, Fritz Graf, Annette Harder, Professor David Lewis, Jan van Ophuijsen, and Professor Margot Schmidt for various information and advice.

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