

Université de Montréal

The Orphic Lyre  
*Music and Μουσική in the Rites of Orpheus*

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Ce mémoire intitulé

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*Présenté par*  
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## Résumé

Pour les Grecs de l'antiquité, la religion était indiscernable du reste de la vie quotidienne – au point que dans la *polis*, le concept d'une « division de la religion et de l'État », comme il est connu aujourd'hui, n'existe pas. La musique, ou l'idée grecque de μουσική, fonctionne de même, comme faisant partie intégrale de leurs rites et, par extension, de leur façon de vie; c'est-à-dire la musique et la religion deviennent une idée centrale à leur identité culturelle. Plusieurs de cultes civiques, comme par exemple le culte dionysiaque, utilisaient toujours la musique dans leurs rites – beaucoup d'exemples existent en antiquité qui montrent le rôle de la musique dans la pratique du culte, comme les images sur les vases et les murales, les hymnes, etc. L'orphisme, ou le culte qui utilisaient les écritures qui venaient prétendument du musicien légendaire Orphée, diffèrent des autres rites civiques dans la façon qu'il y en a des aspects plus ou moins obscurs. Il n'y a pas beaucoup d'information sur leurs rites hormis des écritures comme le papyrus de Derveni, un poème orphique qui détaille une théogonie pareille à celui d'Hésiode et les hymnes orphiques, qui changent la façon qui l'orphisme était vu dans le deuxième moitié du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Ce mémoire va donc utiliser ces sources pour découvrir le rôle de la musique dans les rites orphiques en antiquité tout en faisant des comparaisons entre l'orphisme et les traditions établies des autres cultes civiques. En regardant aussi l'utilisation des instruments et les autres conventions ritualistes, ce mémoire va découvrir le rôle d'orphisme dans la *polis* grecque.

*Mots clés : musique culte, la religion de la polis, l'antiquité grecque, l'orphisme, musicologie*

## **Abstract**

For the Greeks in Antiquity, religion was indiscernible from the rest of their daily lives – so much so that within the *polis*, the concept of a “separation between church and state”, in the way it is known today, did not exist. In this same realm of thought, music also functioned in a much similar way, an integral part of their religious ceremonies and, by extension, their way of life; through this, their music and religion became central to their idea of cultural identity. Many civic cults, such as the cult to Dionysus, utilized music to its fullest effect – many examples that detail the role that music played in their cult worship survive from antiquity, which vary from images found on vases and murals to hymns and other ritual texts. Orphism, or the cult which utilized writings said to have been passed down by the legendary musician Orpheus, differs from many other religious groups around Greece in that many aspects of it remain wrapped in an enigma. Not much is known about the specific cult practices outside of a few writings and inscriptions, including the Derveni papyrus, an analysis of an Orphic poem outlining a theogony similar to that of Hesiod, and the Orphic Hymns, both of which are changing the way scholarship on these practices has been viewed through the years. This thesis will, therefore, use these sources in order to discover the role that music played in the cult rituals of Orphism during this period while also making comparisons between Orphism and the established traditions of other civic cults. Taking into account the utilization of instruments and other ritualistic conventions, this thesis hopes then to uncover Orphism’s overall role in the Greek *polis*.

*Key words: cult music, polis religion, Greek antiquity, orphism, musicology*

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Of all the musicians throughout history, none were as revered in the same manner as the ancient musician, Orpheus, who was said to be able to charm to tears all living things. Plants, animals, and even the gods were so entranced by the voice and lyre of history's premier performer that his story profoundly resonated not only amongst the ancient Greeks but even today as his tale continues to be told. His story goes as follows: he was in love with a woman named Eurydice, who on their wedding day was bitten by a viper and was killed. Orpheus, devastated by the loss of his wife, journeyed down to the underworld in order to beseech the king and queen, Hades and Persephone, for the return of his wife. During this descent, he used the power of his lyre to soothe guardians and gods in order to ask for Eurydice's return. The king and queen agreed that she may be returned to him so long as Orpheus leads her out without looking back. However, in the moments leading up to their departure from the underworld, he faltered and reverted his gaze, losing his beloved Eurydice for a second and final time. The myths then state that Orpheus was distraught over the loss of his wife, and it is here where the mythological traditions of Orpheus split. Some say that he returned to Thrace, his country of origin, and was besought by maenads who, when Orpheus refused their advances, ripped his body to shreds. Other traditions say that while Orpheus was in the underworld, he learned the secret Mystery rites from Persephone and returned to spread these rites throughout Greece. So widespread was his prestige that these beliefs caught hold amongst the Grecian people and thus were the Mysteries of Orpheus born. These Orphic mysteries, what scholars call Orphism, have been intriguing scholars for centuries, and as more becomes known about this ancient cult, even more questions are raised about what exactly Orphism is and how it functioned in the everyday lives of the people who followed it. Moreover, the rituals of the Orphic cult are almost as mysterious as the people themselves, what these rites entailed and how specific aspects within them, such as the music, compared with those of the other cults around Greece. This research will focus on these religious ceremonies, looking closely at specifically the role text and music played in these ceremonies. In order to best understand these aspects, this introductory chapter will focus on answering three questions: 1) What role did religion play in the everyday lives of Grecian citizens, 2) how did these ancient Greeks view and relate to music, and 3) what exactly Orphism is, and how has the evidence found regarding the Orphic cults has changed throughout the years.

One of the leading models best used to understand how religion and mythology integrated into Grecian daily life is the *polis-religion* model. This model was coined by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood to show how closely linked religious, social, and political life was in the Grecian *polis*.<sup>1</sup> During the Archaic and Classical periods, before their eventual conquest by Alexander the Great, there was no central Greek government which united the city-states or *poleis* of Greece, nor was there an idea of an all-encompassing Grecian identity; however, when it came to their religious and mythic practices, due to a shared past and the spread of oral story-telling, there arose a religious tradition that led to similarities in myths and rites that remained between the various *poleis*.<sup>2</sup> The *polis-religion* model is one that allows scholars to understand more-or-less how the citizens of a particular *polis* might have viewed themselves within the context of their religion. This model also shows how Greek views on religion differed from how one in the modern world might view religion today. Unlike most contemporary religions, which links different people and groups together through a system of common beliefs that everyone in that group shares, typically led by elders or priests, Grecian religions did not look nor function in that way. There was no unifying *credo* which united everyone together under one blanket of beliefs. In this sense “religion was organized alongside the socio-political structures of the polis.”<sup>3</sup> Whereas there were aspects of city rituals where everyone in the *polis* participated, those linked intrinsically to the political center of that *polis*, there were also smaller cults, some run by families and others by those in similar professions, that allowed for more individualized religious connections to their gods. These ceremonies are also constantly undergoing innovations; they are always flowing, being influenced in part by cultural changes and other outside influences, while at the same time retaining aspects of it laid out by the traditions established by the *polis*. In the example of the smaller mystery religions, Kindt says that “despite their distinct features, Orphism, Bacchic cults and magical practices respond to and interact with more widely held beliefs and practices of mainstream Greek religion.”<sup>4</sup> While religion within the *polis* is ever-changing, research shows that mystery cults attach themselves to the cultural trends of the *polis*, such as through mythologic stories, rituals, festival celebrations, etc. When looking at the individual level, these changes might seem more

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Kindt, “Polis Religion – A Critical Appreciation”, *Kernos Revue internationale et pluridisciplinaire de religion grecque antique* 22, 2009, 10

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

appealing to those within the *polis* since they are more akin to what they would already be used to, even though that question remains open; on the *polis* level, this would hypothetically allow citizens to both choose to follow these lifestyles while not taking away from communal life in the *polis*.<sup>5</sup>

Another aspect of life in the *polis* which runs side-by-side with religion is music. Much like in today's time, music played such an integral part in the daily lives of the ancients, from religious ceremonies to theatrical performances. However, music had a broader definition to the Greeks than what people would consider music today. Μουσική “represented for the Greeks a seamless complex of instrumental music, poetic word, and coordinated physical movement.”<sup>6</sup> When related to the *polis*, music was as closely related as religion was, being influenced in part by the social and political spheres within it. For example, Murray and Wilson quote that

Classical Athens also developed its musical culture in directions not apparently taken elsewhere in Greece. This distinctiveness can productively be related to its political (and social) culture of democracy, to its massive size and to its unique position within the wider Aegean world.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, Athens was, according to some scholars, the cultural center of Greece throughout the Classical period, and as a result, their μουσική was as well. Μουσική was also in the touchstone of rituals in Greece, being an integral part of religious ceremonies and festivals dedicated to all deities. In regard to Orpheus, who was the world's “first professional musician,” it no doubt shows how μουσική would have played a role in his mysteries.

This thesis will place both the Orphic rites and their μουσική, notably their music and texts, within the model of the *polis religion*. Since all of the Orphica passed down exists in the form of text, this thesis will use the term μουσική to describe both the modern definition of “music” and the poetry used in these rites interchangeably, namely the Orphic Hymns and the Derveni Papyrus.

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<sup>5</sup> This paper makes use of terminology such as *polis* and the *polis religion model*. However, unless otherwise specifically stated, I am not referring to any specific *polis*, such as Athens specifically, but instead the overall mythic tradition developed in Greece as a result of oral tradition, trade, etc. While certain *poleis* would have indeed had their own variants of myths as a result of cultural identities developed over time, there are shared aspects between them. In the case of the Orphica, since it is impossible to nail down whether or not they belonged to specific *poleis*, and even specific time periods in some instances, I will be placing the Orphica within an “Orphic tradition” with each individual piece of Orphica connected together by individual “valid cues.” Along this same vein, the “*polis* tradition” is as Strauss Clay (2003) defines it as “a developed genre of theogonic poetry” from which Hesiod drew inspiration and vice-versa.

<sup>6</sup> Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, “Introduction: Mousike, not Music”, *Music and the Muses: The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City*, Oxford Scholarship Online: 2004, 1, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199242399.001.0001

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4

The goal of this thesis is not to make a huge innovative switch in the way one can view these ancient texts and rituals or in how these mystery religions interacted with the *polis*; the main goal of this research is to simply delve into an aspect of the Orphic mystery religion which has not previously been studied, how music and μουσική functioned within these ancient rites, as another avenue in which to view Orphism and how it functioned within the *polis*. Therefore, this research project will be defining Orphism using Radcliffe G. Edmonds III's book, *Redefining Ancient Orphism: A Study in Greek Religion*, as a guide. This critical work was chosen as the basis for defining Orphism for a few reasons; Edmonds does a fantastic job at clearly marking how the texts attributed to Orpheus can relate to both Orphic rituals and their function within Greek religion without creating an "Orphic exception" as Edmonds defines it. This introductory chapter will dissect Edmond's definition of Orphism, how it relates to the ever-changing world of scholarship on the Orphic cult, and how in turn Orphism relates both to other mystery cults and Athens as a whole. Chapter 2 will then look at both mythological and iconographical representations of the various instruments known to have been used in ancient rituals in order to understand the symbolism behind their use. Chapter 3 will follow up on this idea by looking for similar symbolisms in the Orphic Hymns, a set of hymns which are known to have been used ritualistically; the goal of this chapter will be to understand how the symbolism of music and μουσική in the Orphica relate to other *polis* traditions. Chapter 4 will then focus on the Derveni Papyrus, a work which houses an analysis of an Orphic poem and ritual; this particular piece of Orphica should fill in the gaps on both how μουσική related to Orphic rites and also how these rites functioned within the *polis* as a whole.

There are two basic roles that the Greeks attributed to Orpheus during this time: Orpheus the musician, the mythical son of a Thracian and the muse, Calliope, and Orpheus the author and creator of the Mysteries. When dealing with the label "Orphic", whether in antiquity or in modern scholarship, it is this second role that raises the most interest. Since Orpheus was not a historical figure, only a mythological one, somebody (or in reality multiple somebodies) must have conceived these writings and in turn attached the name of Orpheus to them. Edmond comments on this, saying that many in antiquity tried to connect Orpheus to their writings as

to claim the authority, not of the familiar cultural tradition, but of a specially privileged individual. Such

authority provided the incentive for many poets to circulate their poetry under the name of Orpheus.<sup>8</sup> What one can deduce from this is that many writings that might be labeled as “Orphic” under one definition of the word might not actually fit a mold as belonging to an Orphic cultic tradition.

While there might be similar themes amidst these writings, such as the myths regarding the Titans and Dionysus, myths in ancient times did not follow a strict set of beliefs that one might see in modern day religions; there was no “universal truth” or specific beliefs that every single person who, for lack of a better term, considered themselves Orphic would believe. For Edmonds, and many other Orphic scholars, this is where the idea of *bricolage* comes into play. *Bricolage*, a process of thought coined by Lévi-Strauss in 1966, is where authors would take pieces of various myths and stories and combine them into one whole, where “the way the pieces are combined and the way the construct is framed [is what] marks them as Orphic.”<sup>9</sup> As Edmonds puts it, these texts, or Orphica, were a result of this *bricolage*.<sup>10</sup> When looking at Orphism from this angle, in that there is no central core belief that would unite every single “Orphic,” one might then view scholarship on the topic as fruitless in that any little thing, whether bearing the name of Orpheus on it or not, would be too vast an undertaking since it is impossible to find nearly enough information on every single facet of individual belief. This is where Edmonds cites Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of “family resemblances,” in that

there is no single feature, be it the name of Orpheus or some particular doctrine of the soul, that makes something Orphic. Rather, if something – person, text, or ritual – boasted of extra-ordinary purity or sanctity, made a claim to special divine connection or extreme antiquity, or was marked by extra-ordinary strangeness, perversity, or alien nature, then that thing *might* be labeled Orphic...

which in his definition would also include things specifically marked by the name of Orpheus.<sup>11</sup> This idea of *bricolage* and family resemblances plays a huge role in understanding how the *μουσική* within the Orphica relates to the *μουσική* of the broader *polis*. In one sense, these texts show direct inspiration from outside influences, as one will see specifically with the Derveni Papyrus. By looking at these influences, one can begin to see connections not only from one piece of Orphica to another but also from Orphic writings to the broader *polis* traditions.

Since the increase of Orphic scholarship during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were, and still are,

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<sup>8</sup> Radcliffe G. Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism: A Study in Greek Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 4

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>10</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 7

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,

many debates on how Orphism as a cult was defined and viewed in the ancient world. As new discoveries arise, scholars' views change along with it. When delving into the world of Orphic scholarship, there are few tried-and-true answers, with many people holding fast to their own individual interpretations. Research is split on the topic, but scholarship can fall into one of three camps: a maximalist view which looks at Orphism as a full-bodied religion whose beliefs were said to be established by Orpheus himself, a minimalist view which discredits the existence of a central Orphic church and says that Orphism was simply a literary movement, and thirdly some combination of the other two.

Originally with the discovery of an Orphic theogony titled *The Rhapsodies* written in the first century CE and a series of golden plates discovered in 1879 which were believed to have been created sometime in the 4th century BCE, studies into Orphic beliefs concluded Orphics to be a part of a central, organized religion.<sup>12</sup> Torjussen mentions that scholars saw Orphism as “a reformation of the Dionysiac mysteries masterminded by Orpheus ... compar[ing] Orphism with Protestantism.”<sup>13</sup> Scholars that fall under this vein of thought tend to be referred to as maximalists. From the discovery of the golden tablets until the 1970s, maximalists viewed anything that could be attributed to Orpheus as further proof supporting their views. One of the major arguments against the maximalist position is that most maximalist scholars tended to view Orphism almost as a precursor to Christianity, choosing to look at Orphic texts as a sort of holy, divine word which speaks of a universal truth that all Orphics must follow in order to achieve bliss in the afterlife; however, this argument, which Edmonds calls the “Orphic exception”, goes against much of what scholars know to be true of how religion functioned in Greece around this time. That and for the fact that there is no evidence for a central Orphic church, this maximalist argument has largely been disproven in favor for more conservative views on Orphism.

On the other end of the Orphic spectrum, there are scholars like Martin West who largely discredit the presence of any religious activity related to the writings of Orpheus; these minimalists view Orphism as strictly a literary movement with almost no actual cultic activity linked to it, or in some cases that beliefs and practices cannot be similar amongst every single “Orphic.” In fact, West states in his book *The Orphic Poem* that

it is a fallacy to suppose that all ‘Orphic’ poems and rituals are related to each other or that they are to be

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<sup>12</sup> Stian Sundell Torjussen, “The Study of Orphism”, *Nordlit* 18, 2005, 289-90

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 291

interpreted as different manifestations of a single religious movement... the essential principle to remember is that a poem becomes Orphic simply by being ascribed to Orpheus. By the same token, Orphics are simply people who in their religious beliefs or practices ... accord a place of honour to texts ascribed to Orpheus.”<sup>14</sup>

This view of Orphism comes as a direct response to the maximalist view, mainly pointing out the fact that in other religious cults, there were no central religious texts or religious doctrines. While this point of view might take out any potential modern biases that the maximalist view may have, i.e. viewing Orphism with a Christo-centric lens, one major problem that a strictly minimalist view might have is the evidence which does link some Orphic texts with ritual functions, especially after the relatively recent discovery of the Derveni Papyrus. In most present-day scholarship, therefore, scholars tend to average out the two opposing positions, creating a grayer outlook on Orphic research which may more accurately reflect how the Orphica might have related to ritual ceremonies.

Dwayne Meisner, another prominent Orphic scholar, falls into the category of someone who would fall into this grayer area of thinking, saying in his book *Orphic Tradition and the Birth of the Gods* that

[i]f there ever was such a thing as Orphism, its members would have practiced Orphic rituals in which they used Orphic texts, and they might have called themselves Orphic. But if there was never such a thing as Orphism, then there were still Greek individuals who practiced Orphic rituals with the use of Orphic texts, and these people could be reasonably referred to as Orphics.”<sup>15</sup>

This is the stance that this thesis will take when trying to view Orphism and its relation to music and text. With what we know about ancient religion and beliefs, each individual person’s worship experience would have been molded to fit their own individual needs, with them participating in city-wide cult ceremonies as well as small-scale rites should they desire. This being the case, one could say at least this with certainty: there may not have been a unified code of beliefs regarding Orpheus and his writings, but there were people, whether dispersed or uniform, who took these texts and applied them to their own individual or small-group worship. While it may mean that there are no clear-cut and definitive answers in regard to how exactly Orphism functioned across the board, we can use what information we have in order to better understand the role it might have played within the *polis*.

Another aspect that is important to understand when tackling the subject of Orphism is the

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<sup>14</sup> M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, 3

<sup>15</sup> Dwayne A. Meisner, *Orphic Tradition and the Birth of the Gods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018,

development of the Orphic tradition and practices. As more information becomes uncovered, scholars begin to better understand how these traditions came about and relate to other cultic practices in each individual *polis*; understanding how and why these practices came about can help scholars better understand the role that these ideas played within the *polis*. Because of the relationship that Orphism has with its texts, these origins include literary developments in addition to societal ones.

One of the most popular and widespread of the mystery religions around mainland Greece were the Eleusinian mysteries. When looking at these mysteries side-by-side with Orphic beliefs, there certainly are characteristics that the two share. The Eleusinian Mysteries focused on the myths surrounding Demeter and her daughter, Persephone, who was taken by Hades to live as his queen in the underworld. Persephone also plays an important role in the Orphic myths as well, she whom the Orphics must please if they are to receive good fortune in the afterlife. Fritz Graf, a scholar of ancient Greek mystery religions, speaks of links between the mysteries in Eleusis and those of Orpheus in his book, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*. In this book, he outlines the relationship between two of the prominent mystery religions in Athens, paying attention to the usage of text and hymns between the two. Graf mentions that “however, they made him their Reformer or attributed to the Orphica a special role in the mystery rites: the context remained so preserved, the wisdom which the mysteries had proclaimed remained untouched,” showing how those in Eleusis might have also utilized the writings of Orpheus in their rites.<sup>16</sup>

Turning our attention now to the “literary” development of Orphism, Martin West attributes the “Orphic literary tradition” to “the convergence of three lines of evidence.”<sup>17</sup> The first of these is derived from Pythagorean views. West cites Ion of Chios, a literary contemporary of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, who says that “Pythagoras published writings of his own in the name of Orpheus” and that “certain taboos which Egyptians observe in the wearing of wool [as cited in Herodotus] ‘agree with the observances which are called Orphic and Bacchic, though they are really Egyptian and Pythagorean.’”<sup>18</sup> He also cites Epigenes, who says “the Descent to Hades and the Hieros Logos were really by Cercops the Pythagorean, and the Robe and Physika

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<sup>16</sup> Fritz Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*, Athens: De Gruyter, 2013, 3

<sup>17</sup> West, *The Orphic Poems* p. 7

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8



by Brontinus.”<sup>19</sup> This line of thinking derives all the way back to Herodotus, who according to Edmonds, gave authorship to a figure more based on historical evidence as opposed to purely mythological ones.<sup>20</sup> There are also some cultural similarities between the two sources, as cited in works by Plutarch and other ancient dramatists, such as the focus on purity, vegetarianism, and the immortality of the soul, qualities and beliefs which were often mocked by these ancient authors.

While there certainly is a connection between Pythagorean and Orphic ideals, there is another which is more clearly visible in ancient evidence. This other group of evidence West cites comes from Dionysian/Bacchic sources. From Aschylus, whose Bassarai showed opposition between an Orpheus associated with Apollo (more “Pythagorean”) and one with ties to Dionysus, to bone fragments found in Olbia, which show worship to Dionysus Baccheios but also bear legends with reference to Orpheus, these sources can also show a connection between Orphic rites and Dionysus.<sup>21</sup> In fact, many of the Orphic theogonies place particular emphasis on Dionysus, saying that Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Persephone and was intended to succeed his father.<sup>22</sup> In these theogonies, the perfect world created by the gods was thwarted by the Titans, who take Dionysus and rip him apart, consuming him in some versions of the myth and scattering the remains in others. From this ruination, mankind is created, containing two parts: one divine which derives from the pure Dionysus and one corrupt which is brought on by the ravaging Titans. According to Orphic beliefs, Robertson notes, to know of this plan is essential for one to pass into the realm of the underworld, into the world of Persephone.<sup>23</sup> Robertson quotes that “[the Greek initiates] lent themselves instead to the civic cults of, chiefly, Dionysus or Demeter and ... only when the community effort began to lose its hold did [the initiates] form private associations, like the Orphics.”<sup>24</sup>

To West, these two lines of literary origin converge in the Derveni Papyrus, an early Orphic poem found amongst a collection of funeral offerings at Derveni, twelve kilometers northwest of Thessaloniki.<sup>25</sup> A lot of mystery has surrounded the purpose of the Derveni Papyrus in Orphic

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>20</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 13

<sup>21</sup> West, *The Orphic Poems*, 5-18

<sup>22</sup> Noel Robertson, “Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual”, *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*, ed. Michael B. Cosmopoulos, Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2003, 218; As Meisner (2018) notes, though there is attention given to Dionysus, there is still a particular emphasis on Zeus and primordial deities.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 218

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 220

<sup>25</sup> Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, 51

ritual tradition, which involves understanding how this work shows the unification of these “lines of evidence” and the intention behind the author in its composition. West quotes that “there is reason to suspect that it was on one hand Dionysiac-Bacchic in orientation, and on the other hand incorporated a doctrine of metempsychosis through animal bodies very like the Pythagorean doctrine.”<sup>26</sup> Since we know that Greek religion did not hold central doctrines like modern-day religions might, these similarities in thought might show some influences from one cultic tradition to the other. West also speaks on how Orpheus “intruded into existing cults in many places... [being] established in ‘Bacchic’ cults over a wide area, [c]ertain of [which] had features in common with Pythagoreanism, such as abstention from meat.”<sup>27</sup> It is with this work that the connection between Orphic rites, *polis* rituals, and the μουσική of the two will converge.

The author of the Derveni papyrus takes on the role of a religious expert, understanding in great detail the rituals performed by members and initiates into the Orphic cult. While not much is known about the author of the Derveni papyrus himself, there exists evidence of wandering priests, experts in Orphic ritual traditions, who would travel around and spread knowledge of Orphic doctrine to the uninitiated. As one of these religious experts, the Derveni author, who Meisner quotes as, “[being] influenced by the Pre-Socratic philosophers of the sixth and fifth centuries,” took it upon himself to spread the secrets of the Orphic mysteries, seeing every word attributed to Orpheus as having hidden meaning only available to those initiated into his mysteries.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, only these religious experts were able to fully understand these writings and how they were used in cultic rituals – more will be spoken on how the text found in the Derveni papyrus related to Orphic rituals. West discredits the Derveni author, saying that “he has a preconceived system to which he is determined to fit Orpheus and everything else. The consequence is that his interpretations are uniformly false.”<sup>29</sup> When one places the Derveni author in the context of a polytheistic *polis* religion, in that every person has their own system of beliefs as a result of *bricolage* that they believe to be right, it is possible to view him in the light of having his own interpretations of Orphic-centric texts that he then in turn hopes to spread to others throughout the *polis*. Therefore, the Derveni author’s analysis of Orphic rites and writings can more or less inform scholars of some insight into Orphic rites and texts, but it is only one person’s perspective of

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<sup>26</sup> West, *The Orphic Poems*, 18

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, 54

<sup>29</sup> West, *The Orphic Poems*, 79

“Orphic” trends. While this perspective might have caught on as a result of his “teachings,” it is hard to say how representative it is of any large-scale “Orphic movement.”

Looking back at Edmonds, he does address this theory of the Derveni author and Orphic practitioners. In his chapter on “Orphic textuality: A hubbub of books,” he quotes Plato’s *Republic* where he talks about religious experts known as ἀγύρται καὶ μάντιες who go “to the doors of the rich, persuad[ing] them that there is a power provided to them by the gods in sacrifices and incantations to make amends with pleasures and feasts if he or any of his ancestors has committed some injustice.”<sup>30</sup> He places the Derveni author in this group of religious experts, saying that he and other religious experts are in competition with each other, using texts in order to persuade the people to call upon them for assistance. For them, they must make it seem that they have a certain knowledge that other “experts” might not hold and that they try to make it seem that they have answers that others might. While this was not limited to just Orphics or even just the texts of Orpheus, “the treatise of the Derveni author and his relation to the text of Orpheus can be better understood in the context of the sort of [...] religious practitioners depicted in Plato.”<sup>31</sup>

Taking all of this into consideration, how is Orphism qualified for the purposes of this research? Once again, my purpose is not to redefine how scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century look at Orphism or interpret Orphic texts. Orphism is rather to be viewed within a polytheistic *polis* system, in that it does not follow a strict set of beliefs but is instead a collection of separate points of view that each individual person holds according to general patria and the way each person copes with them. Through this system, we can look at things like texts and rituals on a more individual and personal level, knowing that this is just one of many possible ways that things might be interpreted. In light of this, this thesis simply chooses another avenue in which to view Orphic rites, through music, and how this music relates to texts and rites, both in Orphism and other mystery cults around Athens, placing it then in the context of this *polis*-religious system. In this, I will take apart each specific aspect of a religious ceremony, from the procession to the sacrifice and even private initiations, looking closely at how a given text, and by extension the music accompanying it, might be used during that specific part of the ceremony, what instruments were used and how these ceremonies might be represented iconographically. I will then apply this symbolism to the Orphica, specifically looking at the text as another facet of Greek μουσική in

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<sup>30</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 98-99

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 99

order to understand the differences and similarities between Orphic rites and the rites of the *polis*. One aspect that I found was the intentional use of philosophical symbolism, specifically of the Pre-Socratic and Platonic views on universal harmony; this calculated usage of symbolism directly relates to shifting cultural views regarding μουσική in the *poleis* around Greece.

## Chapter 2 – Μουσική in the *Polis*

In the ancient world, people had an intimate relationship with music; it was deeply infused into their daily lives. This connection was also shared between people and their deities, so much so that in many myths, deities were said to walk around and become involved in the mortal world. The interrelationship between society, music, and religion can be clearly seen within the rituals in which the people in Greek societies participated, as shown in extant texts and images which originate from antiquity. For those who followed the texts, or some texts, of Orpheus, this fact is no exception; this is even more deeply evidenced within the very nature of Greek μουσική, the relationship between the modern-day definition of “music”, the texts used alongside it, and how that μουσική was used in the context of a religious ceremony. The main difference between the Orphic cults and other more public ones, however, is that there are fewer examples of Orphica which outline specifically the relationship between music and Orphic rituals. Scholars are limited to external references to rituals which would have featured Orphic texts and the texts themselves, but there is little to no extant writings specifically detailing how these rituals used music. Therefore, Orphic scholars are required to analyze deeply the evidence that does exist and compare them to the overall tradition of religion in the *polis* in order to find how these rituals might have looked and functioned. Given that most of the evidence that exists are spread throughout antiquity, this chapter will view pieces of evidence throughout the various periods of Greco-Roman history in order to understand the cultural significance behind the relationship between music and ritual scenes. This chapter will then seek to search through these iconographical evidences of musical scenes and literary works that mention instruments or rituals in order to better understand the role that μουσική played in *polis* rituals.

In order to best approach this hypothesis is to first define a few things: how exactly did the Greeks view themselves within the framework of the *polis* in which they belonged, what was the interplay between ritual and religion, specifically the relationship between ceremonies and both public (aka the religion of the *polis*) and semi-public (aka Orphism) cults, and how did their views towards religion and μουσική relate not only to their sense of cultural identity but also their “social imaginary”, or “the capacity to see in a thing what is not, to see it other than it is... it is through the collective agency of the social imaginary that the characteristic and articulated social world of any society is created, that institutions are structured in a specific manner, that a society is given

coherence and identity.”<sup>32</sup> As mentioned in the introductory chapter, under the model of *polis religion*, the “religion” of a *polis* signifies an intimate relationship between social and political aspects in that *polis*.<sup>33</sup> As Greece did not feature a unifying government between differing *poleis* during the Archaic and Classical periods, ritual ceremonies and even forms a deity would take could be highly varied between city-states as the religion of a certain city would be tailored to the people who lived in that city. However, as Kindt mentions, because of both a shared past and the spread of literary forms, the various “religions” of each individual *polis* often resembled each other, drawing from a similar past, while also maintaining certain distinctions between each as a result of conquest, merchants or soldiers bringing foreign deities, etc. With that being the case, the ritualistic aspects of each city-state could resemble those of neighboring *poleis* while at the same time maintaining a certain level of individuality amongst themselves, even as far as the same festival differing in form between different cities.

As the polis constituted the basic unit of Greek life, the Panhellenic dimension of Greek religion – the religious institutions situated beyond the polis level, such as the large Panhellenic sanctuaries or amphictyonies and religious leagues – was accessed through constant reference to the polis and its symbolic order ... Sourvinou-Inwood thus concludes that polis religion embodies, negotiates, and informs all religious discourse, including religious practices above the level of the individual poleis.<sup>34 35</sup>

Also, as each deity related to a specific polis or ritual ceremony were

perceived to be the same gods (cf. also Herodotus 5.92-3), what differed was the precise articulation of the cult, its history, its particular modalities, which aspect of each deity each city chose to emphasize, which deities were perceived to be more closely connected with ...<sup>36 37</sup>

For each particular deity, notably in its relationship to the *polis* and the overall Greek world, each ceremony/festival would have relied both on the overarching tradition surrounding that deity/*polis* and the nature of the type of cult participating in that ritual.

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<sup>32</sup> Castoriadis, 1987, 127 as cited in Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, *Shifting Social Imaginaries in the Hellenistic Period: Narrations, Practices, and Images*, Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2013, 3; As mentioned by Eftychia Stavrianopoulou in note 19, “Castoriadis’ tendency to homogenize, which derives to some extent from his emphasis on society rather than individuals, has been criticized, cf. Strauss 2006, 324-6.”

<sup>33</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a [1990]) as cited in Julia Kindt, “Polis Religion”, 10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>35</sup> See also Sourvinou-Inwood, “What is *Polis* Religion”, 302. “Even festivals common to different *poleis*, such as the Thesmophoria, the most widespread Greek festival, were articulated by each *polis*, at *polis* level. Hence, the same festival could take different forms in different, even neighbouring, *poleis*.”

<sup>36</sup> Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, “What is *Polis* Religion?” *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander* eds. Murray and Price, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, 300

<sup>37</sup> One example of this can be seen in the coinage regarding the cult deities of Artemis Ephesia and Artemis Brauonia. Coin struck of Artemis Ephesia <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18222423> ; Coin struck of Artemis Brauonia <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18257941>

In the case of the Orphic cults, they could be considered on a certain level as semi-public – that is to say that while the ritual ceremonies utilized by those would could be called Orphic would have been open to anyone in the *polis* who wished to participate, the more intimate aspects of the ritual would have only been understood by those who were “initiated” into the cult, as is the case with all mystery cults. As Burkert mentions,

There were yearly festivals at fixed dates; private offerings were invited and accepted without restriction ... the interrelations between private initiations and official festivals are complicated and far from uniform ... there was an element of personal choice, an individual decision in each case.<sup>38</sup>

The important aspect here to note is the level of personal choice that comes in the introduction of semi-public cults into the model of the *polis* religion and of the social imaginary. On a macro level, civic cults operate hand-in-hand with the idea of cultural identity, with each person participating in a ritual as a member of that *polis*, often needing special permissions to participate in ceremonies in other *poleis*.<sup>39</sup> For mystery cults on the other hand, they are much more driven by personal reasons, drawing from aspects of the *polis* but not necessarily being tied to it in the same way. This delineation between the two types of cult/ritual is important to note, specifically in how they relate to μουσική; as we will see in Chapter 3 with the Orphic Hymns, μουσική in semi-public rituals both follow a form similar to traditions established by the *pol(e)is* and at the same time also feature aspects of innovation within them, drawn from personal inspiration, as one can see with other examples of *bricolage*. In that same vein, Charles Taylor proposed a new definition of social imaginary from Castoriadis that is both more individualized and also explains its relationship to cultural aspects, in our case those revolving ritual:

A social imaginary generates worldviews and perceptions, which directly affect embodied practices and imbue the accompanying cultural forms with meaning and legitimacy. The close interlinkage between practice and imaginary becomes even clearer when the latter changes, and established practices are reinterpreted, and new ideas lead to new practices.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore, in the context of the Orphic cult, as a semi-public cult, they still exist within the framework of both the *polis religion* and social imaginary of the *polis* in which they belonged.

This close relationship between cultural views/ideologies and religion are also well evidenced in the Greek usage of μουσική. As also mentioned in the introductory chapter, the μουσική encompassed more than what the modern term music does; for the Greeks, the idea of

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<sup>38</sup> Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987, 10

<sup>39</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood, “What is *Polis* Religion?” 296

<sup>40</sup> Taylor 2002, 106 as cited in Stavrianopoulou, *Shifting Social Imaginaries*, 5

μουσική is can be literally defined as “the art of the muses” which includes physical movement, i.e. dance, and poetry as well as our modern definition of music. This fact is important to mention because even though not many examples of notated music exist from antiquity, one can still determine the use of μουσική through these other means such as analyzing the use of hymns in ritual settings or how aspects of physical movement manifest in ritual. In these cases, using just the text or descriptions of movement can give scholars an insight on how music could have also functioned in a ritual context.

Images also provide another view of how the Greeks used music within their rituals, specifically by looking at how they utilized instruments in art. Ancient Greece was what Tonio Hölscher referred to as a visual culture: “Face-to-face visibility was deeply rooted in the cultural anthropology of Greek and Roman societies.”<sup>41</sup> This means that within the Greek *polis*, there was a great emphasis placed on personal interactions and communications between members of the community. This concept expands not only in interactive viewing between living people but also expanded to other aspects of visual media:

In this sense, viewing is not just a process of nature, directed by prestabilized laws of physiology. It is also an activity of culture, of culturally stamped behavior embedded in specific cultural practices... viewing is an interactive encounter, a kind of reciprocal activity between the active eyes of the viewer and the powerfully shining objects of the world. <sup>42</sup>

During antiquity, people were used to looking at details in visual spaces; before the popularization of writing becoming commonplace amongst citizens, people were more used to immediately understanding details and context from a scene painted on a vase or a temple. In this sense, works of art create a stronger, reciprocal effect on the viewer, which then in turn strengthens the effects of symbolism in a given work; concepts of μουσική or ritual acts become not only representations of ideals held by the artist who created them, but they would have also had a profound, reciprocal relationship on their audience. However, one issue when looking at visual sources, as Sheramy Bundrick notes, is that

visual images are essentially constructions, with the combination of different symbols and signs – musical instruments or otherwise – yielding meaning. Consciously or unconsciously, the artist created an image that expressed the ideals and values permeating Athenian culture, often based in reality but sometimes with an

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<sup>41</sup> Tonio Hölscher, *Visual Power in Ancient Greece and Rome: Between Art and Social Reality*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2018, 1

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3



element of fantasy.<sup>43</sup>

Images have the power of telling both individual values which the artist represented within the image and also cultural meaning, which will be outlined throughout this chapter. With this being the case, one must view these images as interpretations and not as exact representations of reality; through these depictions, the instruments and other aspects of μουσική become symbolic representations of Greek thought, as also exemplified through texts though not necessarily directly illustrated through image, which can then be evidenced and related directly or indirectly to religion.

Though there were many variations of instruments in antiquity, they can be divided into three main classes: stringed, wind, and percussion. This research will focus on the first two classes, more specifically on three instruments in particular: the chelys lyre, the kithara and the aulos. Within cult rituals, the most common used instruments were the stringed instruments, and as Bundryck mentions,

The ancient Greek terminology for these instruments is rather fluid, with the terms *lyra*, *kitharis*, *phorminx*, *chelys*, and *kithara* often overlapping[, but] the imagery, however, is not: Vase painters typically have a clear sense of which instruments are appropriate in certain situations.<sup>44</sup>

When looking at iconographic representations of these instruments, each was used in specific situations, which could, therefore, give scholars an insight on how an individual instrument could play into the imaginary of a specific *polis*. By looking at depictions of each, and its corresponding significance to myth and text, one can attempt to piece together how the artist utilized each one in order to determine the cultural symbolism behind them. Then by determining the overall cultural reception of each individual piece/symbol, one can use these parts to paint a bigger picture on the overall view of how μουσική was employed within the *polis*, and by extension how μουσική influenced how people viewed their *polis* or that polis' "social imaginary." From there, individual ritual scenes can be analyzed in the context of that polis' ritual tradition in order to determine how they can fit within the ritualistic conventions of the time.

### **CHELYS LYRE & KITHARA**

The first of the stringed instruments, and the one most commonly used in ritual, is the chelys lyre. Mythologically speaking, the first *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* speaks about the creation of the chelys lyre:

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<sup>43</sup> Sheramy Bundryck, *Music and Image in Classical Athens*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 3

<sup>44</sup> Bundryck, *Music and Image*, 14

ἦϕος γεγονῶς μέσῳ ἤματι ἐγκιθάριζεν,  
 ἐσπέριος βοῦς κλέψεν ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος  
 τετράδι τῆ προτέρῃ, τῆ μιν τέκε πότνια Μαῖα.  
 ὃς καί, ἐπειδὴ μητρὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτων θόρε γυίων,  
 οὐκέτι δηρὸν ἔκειτο μένων ἱερῷ ἐνὶ λίκνῳ,  
 ἀλλ' ὃ γ' ἀναΐξας ζήτει βόας Ἀπόλλωνος  
 οὐδὸν ὑπερβαίνων ὑψηρεφέος ἄντροιο.  
 ἔνθα χέλυν εὐρὼν ἐκτίσατο μυρίον ὄλβον:  
 Ἐρμῆς τοι πρότιστα χέλυν τεκτῆνατ' ἀοιδόν: (Hom. *Hymn 4*, 17-25)

Born with the dawning, at mid-day he played on the lyre, and in the evening, he stole the cattle of far-shooting Apollo on the fourth day of the month; for on that day queenly Maia bare him. So soon as he had leaped from his mother's heavenly womb, he lay not long waiting in his holy cradle, but he sprang up and sought the oxen of Apollo. But as he stepped over the threshold of the high-roofed cave, he found a tortoise there and gained endless delight. For it was Hermes who first made the tortoise a singer. <sup>45</sup>

One of the most notable characteristics of the chelys lyre, as evidenced in this myth, is that the



Figure 1 Head of Orpheus Attic Red Figure from the collection of the Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig No. Basel BS481 ca 475-425 BCE Painting attributed to Polygnotus

soundboard is made from a tortoise shell, χελώνη; in fact, this distinction is one of the reasons that allows scholars to clearly identify it from other examples of stringed instruments from the era. In the myth, Hermes grants the lyre to Apollo after playing it for him, and in many representations of the chelys lyre, it is often seen with “amateur musicians,” having an association with education and social status for youths, men, and mythological figures.<sup>46</sup> As such, the chelys lyre is one of

the most easily accessible of the stringed instruments and is likely one of the reasons for its heavy usage in ritual contexts.

Orpheus, who is said to have learned how to play the lyre from Apollo, is most often represented with this particular instrument as shown in Figure 1 which depicts the head of Orpheus spreading oracles and his mother, the muse Calliope who holds his chelys lyre.<sup>47</sup> There are a number of details which could be inferred from this image; as mentioned in the introductory

<sup>45</sup> Translation by H. G. Evelyn-White found on <https://www.theoi.com/Text/HomericHymns2.html>

<sup>46</sup> Bundrick, *Music and Image*, 14-15

<sup>47</sup> Image found on <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/recordDetails.asp?id=739236DF-5E2E-40C0-BE18-66F2598E781A&noResults=&recordCount=&databaseID=&search=>

chapter, there are two separate roles that Orpheus played in myth, Orpheus the musician and Orpheus the author.<sup>48</sup> According to Edmonds, in the context of the *polis* at large, there are distinct literary differences between the two:

There are few moments in the Argonautic tales (such as those of Apollonius Rhodios and the Orphic [Argonautica]) where the character of Orpheus founds a ritual or recites a cosmogony... The features that pertain to Orpheus the author are those that serve as the criteria for contemporaries to identify poems and rituals as Orphic.<sup>49</sup>

In the context of the myths of Orpheus within the *polis*, Orpheus was equated with all the symbolisms that being a lyre-playing son of a Muse would bring, but he did not necessarily carry the job as theologian; for the majority of the people within the various *poleis*, Orpheus would have simply played the role of the musician. However, for those who followed his writings, namely those who used the writings labeled as “Orphic” in cult rituals, he was directly equated to the spread of the mystery cults. While Orpheus is in the underworld, Persephone is said to have given him her Mysteries, which he then brought to the land of the living after losing Euridice, as quoted in this line from the Euripidians *Rhesus*:

and those dark mysteries with their torch processions were revealed by Orpheus, cousin of this dead man whom you have slain (Eur *Rhe* 943-5)<sup>50</sup>

Even though it is impossible to say whether or not the artist of this vase was a part of or was influenced in part by the “Orphic movement,” two things can hypothetically be inferred from this painting: its message and its reception.

Unlike some of the Homeric heroes, such as Odysseus and Paris, Orpheus did not start appearing in literature or in artwork until sometime around the sixth century.<sup>51</sup> West also notes that Orpheus was not related to the other mythological heroes by blood or shared myth.<sup>52</sup> This fact that Orpheus seemed to arrive later in history than the other heroes leads one to conclude that his arrival was related in some aspect to a cultural shift; while it is difficult to determine without conclusive evidence that Orpheus is a new creation of this period or that he existed prior to this in some long-lost epic, the apparent increased popularity of the character Orpheus could have very well been the result of an emphasis on the ideals he and his lyre represented. It is possible that this

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<sup>48</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 11-2

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>50</sup> Translation by E. P. Coleridge <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Eur.+Rh.+945&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0120>

<sup>51</sup> West, *The Orphic Poems*, 3-4

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

increased fascination with Orpheus is a result of a rise in “civilized values” in Athenian society, as defined by philosophers of the day, and the symbolism behind the chelys lyre would reflect that; since the chelys lyre has links with youth and education, it is likely that the myth of Orpheus as the first “famous” musician and poet, along with his lyre, would arise as an example of what Athenian ideals should look like. It is likely that Polygnotus himself is referring to Orpheus inspiring poets and to the magic that music holds over all living and non-living things in a more general sense, but this cultural shift that inspired this and other vase paintings might have inspired some of the “Orphic” poets to attribute their writings to Orpheus’ wisdom. With this myth, Orpheus represented the ideal connection between mortal and divine. For those who followed Orphic teachings, it is likely that their effort to follow in the prophetic message of Orpheus would have been inspired by this shift in his ability to represent this certain “Athenian ideal”: Orpheus was the perfect candidate for some poets and religious “experts” to attribute their writings and whatever other aspects of μουσική to him because of his position as the original poet, theologian, and musician and also because of his connection with both the mortal world and that of the divine.

When talking about the lyre, it is important to also mention the deity most commonly associated with stringed instruments: Apollo. For certain philosophers, the μουσική of Apollo was often associated with harmony, one notable example in Plato’s *Symposium*:

τὸ ἐν γὰρ φησι ‘διαφερόμενον αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συμφέρεσθαι,’ ὥσπερ ἀρμονίαν τόξου τε καὶ λύρας, ἔστι δὲ πολλὴ ἀλογία ἀρμονίαν φάναι διαφέρεσθαι ἢ ἐκ διαφερομένων ἔτι εἶναι. ἀλλὰ ἴσως τόδε ἐβούλετο λέγειν, ὅτι ἐκ διαφερομένων πρότερον τοῦ ὀξέος καὶ βαρέος, ἔπειτα ὕστερον ὁμολογησάντων γέγονεν ὑπὸ τῆς μουσικῆς τέχνης. Οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἐκ διαφερομένων γε ἔτι τοῦ ὀξέος καὶ βαρέος ἀρμονία ἂν εἴη: ἡ γὰρ ἀρμονία συμφωνία ἐστίν, συμφωνία δὲ ὁμολογία τις (Pla. *Symp.* 187a-b).

Now there is an absurdity saying that harmony [of bow and the lyre] is discord or is composed of elements which are still in a state of discord. But what he probably meant was, that, harmony is composed of differing notes of higher or lower pitch which disagreed once but are now reconciled by the art of music; for if the higher and lower notes still disagreed, there could be there could be no harmony—clearly not. For harmony is a symphony, and symphony is an agreement.<sup>53</sup>

The *Orphic Hymn to Apollo*, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, describes in great detail the relationship between Apollo’s lyre and the harmony of the universe, both texts mentioning the “high” and “low” of the lyre.<sup>54</sup> This concept of harmony and its relationship to

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<sup>53</sup> Translation by Benjamin Jowett found on <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>

<sup>54</sup> The Orphic hymn makes direct references to the νεάτος, or the lowest notes, and the ὑπάτος, or the highest notes of the lyre and how they “harmonize the poles.”

music has a direct correlation to Orphic rites, but does this Platonian outlook on the lyre, specifically speaking the chelys lyre, have any impact on the *polis* imaginary? In Plato's *Republic*, specifically in the "Myth of Er", Plato speaks on the "music of the spheres", a concept in which all of the heavenly bodies vibrate at a specific frequency, creating "universal harmony." For many philosophers, from Plato to Pythagoras, this music of the spheres was emulated in the human plane through the strings on the lyre, seven strings for the seven heavenly bodies (excluding the Earth, which was considered the center of the universe).<sup>55</sup> The culmination of universal harmony and its role in the *polis* will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 4 with the Derveni Papyrus, but for now, these depictions of the chelys lyre and Orpheus solidify the idea that the *polis* saw his μουσική the link between the philosophy of universal harmony with the rites that Orpheus spread.

Another stringed instrument widely used in the context of Greek rituals was the concert kithara. Unlike the chelys lyre, which was the stringed instrument most likely to be seen being held by a wide variety of people, the kithara was shown primarily with professional musicians; as a result, although women have been seen with the chelys lyre (and other stringed instruments, such



Figure 2 Calyx-krater ca. 450/440 BCE found in the British Museum in London

as the barbitos and the phorminx), they are almost never seen with the kithara, with Apollo being the primary divinity associated with the kithara; it was also present in parts of the ritual, namely the contests and processions. Its presence in iconography also reflects this. Figure 2 is just one example of the kithara being used in the context of a musical contest; a man holding a kithara is standing on a pedestal accompanied by winged Victory. The symbolism of this instrument would have held the same significance as the lyre in terms of its relationship to Apollo and the music of the spheres, but in this instance, it is associated specifically with professional musicians instead of the everyday citizen.

## AULOS

If Orpheus and his lyre can be seen as representing an Athenian ideal, what effect does that

<sup>55</sup> M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 224; The number of strings in the lyre and in other stringed instruments did vary from location to location, seven strings did seem to be the most common and most used among them.

have on the Orphica, those writings which are said to have been divinely inspired by Orpheus himself? Often times, these Orphica are identified by ancient authors by how distant they are from the traditional forms of worship in the *polis*:

The features of alien origin or strange and perverse elements woven into the tale provide more valid cues to distinguish the things labeled Orphic; it is the exoticism, the stamp of strangeness that connects with the name of Orpheus.<sup>56</sup>

While the rites of Orpheus would have definitely been open to any member of the *polis*, it would be right to think that there was some aspect of it which would have been different from the more “public” cults as a way of enticing those to join their circle. As a result, the Orphica tended to be myths and stories told within the tradition of the *polis* with “exotic” elements, a direct result of *bricolage*.<sup>57</sup> In terms of music, one instrument could possibly be seen through the light of the “strange” in the context of tradition, the aulos, and its connection with Greek worship.

Of all the instruments which were used in the ancient world, the aulos is the most misunderstood in terms of its reception and utilization in Greek society; The aulos is a wind instrument often mistranslated as a “flute” but is structured more similarly to the modern-day clarinet or oboe, in that it is made from a long reed which descends down from the mouth and a mouthpiece made from small pieces of brass, according to the *Pythian Ode XII*, two. Depictions of the aulos show that it can be made from one reed or from two, the latter of which being able to produce two separate tones. For years, the aulos was seen as an instrument which was only used in drunken revelry and did not have a place in what one might call “civilized Greek society”; it was also seen as an instrument only dedicated to Dionysus.<sup>58</sup> However, many depictions of the aulos show the contrary. The aulos is often seen as a commonplace instrument in ritual scenes, from processions to sacrifices; there are also examples of the aulos in association with the Muses and even Apollo himself.<sup>59</sup> However, it cannot be denied that there was some opposition to the aulos in ancient times, notably complaints made by Plato and Aristotle on its use in education, an aspect which is diametrically opposed to the sheer amount of evidence we have of its presence in everyday Greek society. Therefore, how does the symbolism behind its image reflect the function

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<sup>56</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 191

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 190

<sup>58</sup> Wilson 1999, 58; cf. also Wilson 2003, 2004 (although see p. 273). Beschi 1996 likewise envisions a conflict between aulos and stringed instruments played out in Classical Athens. As cited in Sheramy, *Music and Image*, 38 (note on p. 208)

<sup>59</sup> Sheramy, *Music and Image*, 41

that it played in the *polis*?

In order to best determine this, one must look at its creation myths. According to Pindar, a poet of the late archaic and early classical period, in the *Pythian Ode XII* the aulos was invented by Athena after Perseus killed Medusa:

εὐπαράου κρᾶτα συλάσαις Μεδοίσαις  
υἱὸς Δανάας: τὸν ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ φαμεν αὐτορύτου  
ἔμμεναι. ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ τούτων φίλον ἄνδρα πόνων  
ἔρρύσατο, παρθένος αὐλῶν τεῦχε πάμφωνον μέλος,  
ᾧφρα τὸν Εὐρυάλας ἐκ καρπαλιμῶν γενύων  
χρῖμφθέντα σὺν ἔντεσι μιμήσαιτ' ἐρικλάγκταν γόον.  
Εὗρεν θεός: ἀλλά νιν εὐροῖσ' ἀνδράσι θνατοῖς ἔχειν,  
ὠνόμασεν κεφαλᾶν πολλᾶν νόμον, εὐκλεᾶ λαοσσόων μναστῆρ' ἀγόνων,  
λεπτοῦ διανισσόμενον χαλκοῦ θαμὰ καὶ δονάκων,  
τοὶ παρὰ καλλιχόρῳ ναίοισι πόλει Χαρίτων.

Καφισίδος ἐν τεμένει, πιστοὶ χορευτῶν μάρτυρες (Pind. *Pyth XII* 15-27).

He stripped off the head of beautiful Medusa, Perseus, the son of Danae, who they say was conceived in a spontaneous shower of gold. But when the virgin goddess had released that beloved man from those labors, she created the many-voiced song of flutes so that she could imitate with musical instruments the shrill cry that reached her ears from the fast-moving jaws of Euryale. The goddess discovered it; but she discovered it for mortal men to have, and called it the many-headed strain, the glorious strain that entices the people to gather at contests, often sounding through thin plates of brass and through reeds, which grow beside the city of lovely choruses, the city of the Graces, in the sacred precinct of the nymph of Cephisus, reeds that are the faithful witnesses of the dancers. (15-29) <sup>60</sup>

This particular ode was written in celebration of Midas, an aulode, and his victory in the Pythian contest; therefore, the question can be asked if this particular story is part of a preexisting mythological tradition or was created solely for this particular instance.<sup>61</sup> The story of the aulos in Greece continues with Melanippides (along with other authors) and the myth of Marsyas.<sup>62</sup> Figure 3 shows a depiction of this myth on an Apulian bell krater. After the invention of the aulos, Athena quickly threw it away, having seen that it distorted her face whilst playing it. It was then picked

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<sup>60</sup> Translation by Diane Arson Svarlien found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0162%3Abook%3DP.%3Apoem%3D12>

<sup>61</sup> Zozie Papadopoulou and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, “Inventer et réinventer l’*aulos* : autour de la XIIe *Pythique* de Pindare”, *Chanter les dieux : Musique et religion dans l’Antiquité grecque et romaine*, Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2001, 42

<sup>62</sup> Ellen van Keer, “The Myth of Marsyas in Ancient Greek Art: Musical and Mythological Iconography”, *Research Center for Music Iconography*, New York: CUNY, 2004, 21

up by the satyr, Marsyas, who quickly learned to play it and then challenged Apollo to a musical contest. The Muses then deemed Apollo the winner, and Marsyas was flayed alive, his skin being made into a flask.



Figure 3 Apulian Red Figure Bell Krater depicting Athena playing the aulos ca. 370-360 BCE from the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Boston 00.348

These two myths create an interesting dichotomy between the views of the aulos of the two different *poleis*:

In Greek religion and mythology, stringed instruments had of old been associated with Apollo, the most ‘Greek’ of the gods, and wind instruments with Dionysos, a ‘strange’ and a ‘foreign’ god... The Theban poet Pindarus (ca. 480 B.C.) ascribed the invention of the *aulos* to the Greek goddess Athena (Pind. *Pyth.* 12,6-30). The Athenian texts, by contrast, have her discard the

instrument in disgust (cf. Athen. *Deip.* 14,161e)... Marsyas was therefore allegedly introduced into Greek mythology to account for Athena’s rejection of the flute and as an expression of the Athenian’s aversion of the instrument.<sup>63</sup>

However, while this does seem to be the case for these two depictions of the aulos, that does not explain the wealth of evidence showing its widespread usage in ritual, especially in Athens. It could be the case that these two depictions differ solely in the fact that the aulos was attributed to have originated in Thebes, much like Dionysus and Pindar. The apparent distain for the aulos as seen in the Marsyas myth could have something to do with increased competition between Thebes and Athens; Plutarch says that the aulos is

Θηβαίων παῖδες: οὐ γὰρ ἴσασι διαλέγεσθαι: ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, ὡς οἱ πατέρες λέγουσιν, ἀρχηγέτις Ἀθηνᾶ καὶ πατρῷος Ἀπόλλων ἐστίν, ὃν ἡ μὲν ἔρριψε τὸν αὐλόν, ὁ δὲ καὶ τὸν αὐλητὴν ἐξέδειρεν. (Plu. *Alc.* 2.5)

For the sons of Thebes; they know not how to converse. We Athenians, as our fathers say, have Athena for foundress and Apollo for patron, one of whom cast the flute away in disgust, and the other flayed the presumptuous flute player.<sup>64</sup>

In a way, the social views of the aulos could be seen as a result of the “social imaginary” of the *polis*, represented in the textual and visual depictions of its creation. Increased tensions between

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>64</sup> As cited in van Keer, “The Myth of Marsyas,” 22



two different *poleis* could have definitely been reflected in evidence which comes to us from the period despite their continued use in other contexts.

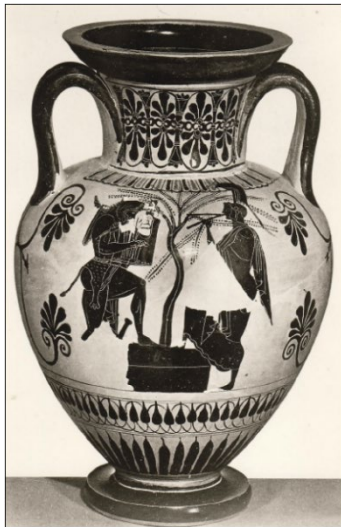


Figure 4 Athena plays flute. Attic black-figured panathenaic amphora of ca. 520-510 B.C. Private collection, Basel

With this in mind, one could easily ask themselves, “why is the aulos both allegedly hated by philosophers and poets in Athens but is also still used in so many ritual settings?” This answer can also be found in textual depictions of the aulos. In the Pindarian myth, the creation of the aulos was spurred by the terrible cries of the Gorgon sisters as a result of the death of Medusa. However, this ode is not the only time the aulos has been connected with sorrow; this association is also shown in *The Birds* by Aristophanes, which describes the aulos in this scene as a nightingale, leader of the chorus of birds:

ἄγε σύννομέ μοι παῦσαι μὲν ὕπνου, λῦσον δὲ νόμους ἱερῶν ὕμνων, οὓς διὰ  
θείου στόματος θρηνεῖς

τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ σὸν πολύδακρυν Ἴτυν: / ὃ καλλιβόαν κρέκουσ' αὐλὸν  
φθέγμασιν ἠρινοῖς, (Arist. *Birds* 209-12; 682-3)

Chase off drowsy sleep, dear companion. [210] Let the sacred hymn gush from thy divine throat in melodious strains; roll forth in soft cadence your refreshing melodies to bewail the fate of Itys, which has been the cause of so many tears to us both. / [682] Come, you, who play spring melodies upon the harmonious flute...<sup>65</sup>

There are some connections that can be made between the various representations of the nightingale and its relation to the aulos; for a little context in line 210, Aristophanes references “the fate of Itys,” recalling to the myth of Philomela, a story of deception and infanticide. In this myth, Tereus marries Procne, daughter of Labdacus king of Thebes, and begets a son named Itys.<sup>66</sup> Tereus then rapes Procne’s sister, Philomela, and cuts out her tongue so she cannot speak of the deed; as a result, Philomela weaves a robe detailing the story to Procne, who in horror kills her own son, boils him, and feeds him to Tereus. When Tereus turns on them, the gods turn them to birds, Philomela into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow.<sup>67</sup>

The Philomela account and that of Aristophanes are clearly connected by this same symbolism. As a result of the Philomela myth, the nightingale, a silent emblem, is representative of lament and grief. Aristophanes relates this, therefore, to the aulos. The symbolism of lament in

<sup>65</sup> Translated by Eugene O’Neill, Jr. found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Aristoph.+Birds+210&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0026>

<sup>66</sup> Translated by Sir James George Frazer found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Apollod.+3.14&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0022>

<sup>67</sup> Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3.14.32; also Ovid *Metamorphoses* vi 424-674

the nightingale also reflects the Pindarian ode, in which the aulos is created from the cries of the Gorgons. Therefore, it would be safe to say that there is indeed a level of intentionality behind this connection. In order to then understand how the nightingale relates to the music she makes, Andrew Barker says that

It is the myth, not the sounds themselves, which gives the nightingale qualities appropriate to the poem; and the song itself is not, in the last resort, the feature of her to which our attention is primarily drawn. The main focus of the simile is rather on the state of mind which, according to the postulates of the myth, is expressed in the song.<sup>68 69</sup>

Because of this, Aristophanes is drawing on an intentional relation between the aulos and the nightingale in order to elicit a specific reaction from his audience; he and his audience would have been familiar with all of the mythological stories surrounding the aulos and the nightingale, i.e. its creation due to the Gorgons' cry, its rejection by Athena, and in this case its connection with the nightingale and the lament of Itys, its symbolism coming full-circle. For the Orphics, the nightingale and the aulos being equated to the theme of sorrow also reflects two deities who were pivotal in the Orphic Mysteries, Demeter and Dionysus.

In addition to cosmological myths, then, myths associated with the festivals of Demeter and Dionysos and their attendants were the subject of Orphic poems. Many of these rites involved lamentation of the deities' vicissitudes (be it loss, rape, dismemberment, or some other trouble), as well as ecstatic celebration...and these festivals served to win the favor of these deities for the mortals propitiating them.<sup>70</sup>

One of the clearest connections between lamentation and these mythological stories occurs with the Rape of Persephone and Demeter's Lament, and within the Orphica, for example, there is a collection of hymns in the *Orphic Hymns* which detail rites that retell one of these Dionysian episodes (these specific hymns will be spoken on in more detail in Chapter 3).

As a result of all of this, there is a mythological connection which links the aulos with the symbolism of lament; however, what role does that play in both the *polis religion* and the ritual ceremonies in which the aulos is used? It is evidenced that the aulos was symbolically equated to heightened emotions, whether they be sorrow as in this instance or revelry, as mentioned in Aristotle's *Politics*:

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<sup>68</sup> Andrew Barker, "Transforming the Nightingale," *Music and the Muses*, eds. Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2004, 188, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199242399.001.0001

<sup>69</sup> In actuality, the aulos would have most closely represented the timbre of the human voice, both from a mythological standpoint as shown above and a physiological one as well – the double-reeds on the mouthpiece of the aulos would have related aurally to the human vocal cords more so than a lyre would.

<sup>70</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 186

ἔτι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ αὐλὸς ἠθικὸν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὀργιαστικόν, ὥστε πρὸς τοὺς τοιοῦτους αὐτῷ καιροὺς χρηστέον ἐν οἷς ἡ θεωρία κάθαρσιν μᾶλλον δύναται ἢ μάθησιν. (Arist. Pol. 8. 1341a)

Moreover, the flute is not a moralizing but rather an exciting influence, so that it ought to be used for occasions of the kind at which attendance has the effect of purification rather than instruction.<sup>71</sup>

Martin West mentions several examples of music being used to “manipulate people’s moods,” showing in fact the power that music, and in this case the aulos, had in affecting the psyches of man.<sup>72</sup>

In general, it was the pipe [aka the aulos] that was considered the instrument with the greatest power to produce strange effects. To ‘pipe on’ [καταυλεῖν] someone meant metaphorically to bewitch or put a spell on him.<sup>73</sup>

In many instances in which the aulos is mentioned, one could and would possibly assume that the aulos was only used in instances of debauchery and drunkenness, in supposed Dionysian-esque revelries; however, while it is clear that music did have the power to “excite the emotions”, notably in the case of the aulos, it is utilized just as often in other areas of Greek life. In Plato’s *Laws*, he says that

ἀγνώμονες δὲ περὶ τὸ δίκαιον τῆς Μούσης καὶ τὸ νόμιμον, βακχεύοντες καὶ μᾶλλον τοῦ δέοντος κατεχόμενοι ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς, κεραυνύντες δὲ θρήνους τε ὕμνοις καὶ παιώνας διθυράμβοις, καὶ αὐλωδίας δὴ ταῖς κιθαρωδίαις μιμούμενοι, καὶ πάντα εἰς πάντα συναγοντες, [700ε] μουσικῆς ἄκοντες ὑπ’ ἀνοίας καταψευδόμενοι ὡς ὀρθότητα μὲν οὐκ ἔχει οὐδ’ ἠντιοῦν μουσική, ἡδονῇ δὲ τῇ τοῦ χαίροντος, εἴτε βελτίων εἴτε χείρων ἂν εἴη τις, κρίνοιτο ὀρθότατα. τοιαῦτα δὴ ποιῶντες ποιήματα, λόγους τε ἐπιλέγοντες τοιοῦτους, τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐνέθεσαν παρανομίαν εἰς τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τόλμαν ὡς ἱκανοῖς οἴσιν κρίνειν. (Plat. *Laws* 3.700δ-701α)

they had no perception of what is just and lawful in music; raging like Bacchanals and possessed with inordinate delights-mingling lamentations with hymns, and paeans with dithyrambs; imitating the sounds of the flute on the lyre, and making one general confusion; ignorantly affirming that music has no truth, and, whether good or bad, can only be judged of rightly by the pleasure of the hearer. And by composing such licentious works, and adding to them words as licentious, they have inspired the multitude with lawlessness and boldness, and made them fancy that they can judge for themselves about melody and song.<sup>74</sup>

For Plato, each genre of music, and by extension each individual instrument, had their place in society, and it was the mixing of these that detracted from the role that μουσική should play in the *polis*. Even though certain depictions of the aulos, from vase paintings to myths such as the Marsyas myth (and even in other writings by Plato himself), paint the instrument as uncivilized,

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<sup>71</sup> Translation by H. Rackham found on <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=GreekTexts&getid=1&query=Arist.%20Pol.%201341a.20>

<sup>72</sup> West, *Ancient Greek Music* 31; see examples in his notes 88 and 89

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

<sup>74</sup> Translation by Benjamin Jowett found on <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.mb.txt>

one can still see its use all throughout the religious world of the Greeks, from the music contests to sacrifices.

## DISSOLVING THE BORDER

From the information presented above, and from the evidence which comes down to us from antiquity, it would be easy to assume that while both the lyre and the aulos had their specific place in the *polis*, they never mixed; like oil and water, they interacted with each other but did not have any place together. With that being said, however, much like Apollo and Dionysus in the context of a polytheistic religious setting, there is a gray area to seemingly “opposing forces”:

If Apollos is to be identified in terms of boundedness and limitation, as the very *principium individuationis*, then the Dionysiac must be defined as a negation of those terms: unboundedness, excess, lack of individuation, distinction or limitations, the *coniunctio oppositorum*.<sup>75</sup>

As we can also see in Plato’s *Laws* again, there is place also for Dionysus in the harmony of the *polis*:

τάξει ρυθμὸς ὄνομα εἶη, τῇ δὲ αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκεραννυμένων, ἀρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορεύοιτο, χορεία δὲ τὸ συναμφοτέρον κληθεῖη. Θεοὺς δὲ ἔφαμεν ἐλεοῦντας ἡμᾶς συγχορευτάς τε καὶ χορηγοὺς ἡμῖν δεδωκέναι τὸν τε Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ μούσας, καὶ δὴ καὶ τρίτον ἔφαμεν, εἰ μεμνήμεθα, Διόνυσον. (Plat. *Laws* 2.665a)

I said that they [the young of all creatures<sup>76</sup>] were unable to keep quiet either in limb or voice, and that they called out and jumped about in a disorderly manner; and that no other animal attained to any perception of order, but man only. Now the order of motion is called rhythm, and the order of the voice, in which high and low are duly mingled, is called harmony; and both together are termed choric song. And I said that the Gods had pity on us and gave us Apollo and the Muses to be our playfellows and leaders in the dance; and Dionysus, as I dare say that you will remember, was the third.<sup>77</sup>

He goes on later to describe the gift that Dionysus brings to the city, namely wine, as excellent and “as a balm, and in order to implant modesty in the soul, and health and strength in the body.” Therefore, it can be deduced that instead of two separate entities existing disjoint from each other, they are merely two sides of the same coin; within the polytheistic system, each deity has his/her own attributes which may seem diametrically opposed to each other but in actuality are various parts of one unit. Apollo and Dionysus function in a much similar way – by extension the instruments, while carrying different symbolisms, both also played equal roles in the context of

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<sup>75</sup> Jenny Strauss Clay, “Fusing the Boundaries [Apollo and Dionysos at Delphi], *Métis. Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens* 11, 1996, 86, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/metis\\_1105-2201\\_1996\\_num\\_11\\_1\\_1048](https://www.persee.fr/doc/metis_1105-2201_1996_num_11_1_1048)

<sup>76</sup> Here Plato is referencing an earlier passage in the *Laws* Book 2.653δ

<sup>77</sup> Translation by Benjamin Jowett found on <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/laws.2.ii.html>

ritual. In fact, in the 10<sup>th</sup> Pythian Ode, Pindar does not hesitate in equating both the lyre and the aulos in the ideal society of the Hyperboreans:

Μοῖσα δ' οὐκ ἀποδαμεῖ  
τρόποις ἐπὶ σφετέροισι: παντᾶ, δὲ χοροὶ παρθένων  
λυρᾶν τε βοαὶ καναχαί τ' αὐλῶν δονέονται:  
δάφνα τε χρυσέα κόμας ἀναδήσαντες εἰλαπινάζουσιν εὐφρόνως.  
Νόσοι δ' οὔτε γῆρας οὐλόμενον κέκραται  
ιερᾶ γενεᾶ: πόνων δὲ καὶ μαχᾶν ἄτερ  
οἰκέοισι φυγόντες  
ὑπέρδικον Νέμεσιν. Θρασεῖα δὲ πνέων καρδίᾳ  
μόλεν Δανάας ποτὲ παῖς, ἀγεῖτο δ' Ἀθάνα,  
ἔς ἀνδρῶν μακάρων ὄμιλον: ἔπεφνέν τε Γοργόνα, καὶ ποικίλον κάρᾳ  
δρακόντων φόβαισιν ἤλυθε νασιώταις  
λίθινον θάνατον φέρων. (Pin. *Pyth. Ode X* 39-49)

The Muse is not absent from their customs; all around swirl the dances of girls, the lyre's loud chords and the cries of flutes. They wreath their hair with golden laurel branches and revel joyfully... Breathing boldness of spirit, once the son of Danae [i.e. Perseus] went to that gathering of blessed men, and Athena led him there. He killed the Gorgon, and came back bringing stony death to the islanders, the head that shimmered with hair made of serpents.<sup>78</sup>

For Pindar, and for many Greeks, music was an integral part of their rites, customs, and daily lives; it had the power to excite the emotions, give praise to the gods, and offer lamentation. In this ode, and in the passage from the *Laws*, all aspects of music were utilized and had a place in the daily lives of the *polis*, not despite the *polis*' supposed imaginary towards these instruments but because of it. Martin West quotes that “the music and dancing associated with religious ceremonies were designed above all to give pleasure to the onlookers. Only at the climactic moment of sacrifice did a solemn or reverential mood prevail.”<sup>79</sup> From this, one could determine the relationship that specific instruments had in specific ritualistic contexts; it is important to again mention that iconographic evidence does not depict 100% exactly how instruments would have been utilized. However, it, along with the literary evidence we have of ritual scenes, could give an idea of how specific areas of a ritual would have been interpreted by an audience.

## MOUSIKE IN RITUAL

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<sup>78</sup> Translation by Diane Arnon Svarlien found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0162%3Abook%3DP.%3Apoem%3D10>

<sup>79</sup> West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 18

With all that being said, both in terms of cultural symbolisms regarding the specific instruments utilized in ritual settings and in terms of the rituals themselves as they related to the *polis* in which they were performed, there are some commonalities between the μουσική of the ritual and the ritual itself – it is these commonalities which establish the tradition this research is based on. Jana Kubatzki outlines the different parts of a standard ritual and its corresponding musical elements.<sup>80</sup>

Part	Genre	Instrument	Musicians	Place
1. Procession	Prosodion, paian, partheneia, hymns, dithyramb	Aulos, kithara <sup>25</sup> , lyra, singing, choral dances	worshippers, artists' guilds, choruses of citizens	Processional way
2. Sacrifice	Hymns, hyporchema <sup>26</sup>	Aulos, lyra, solo singing, (choir), circular dance	Solo of priests or professionals, choruses	Altar
3. Feast	Drinking songs, symposium songs	Aulos, lyra, solo singing, chorus	Non-professionals, slaves, hetairai	Agora
4. Contest	1. Signalling 2. Contest genres: nomos, hymns (solo)	1. Salpinx <sup>27</sup> 2. Aulos, kithara, salpinx, vocal, dance	Professionals	Agora, theatre

Tab. 1 | Official rituals (not including private rituals such as symposia). – Written examples for each station: Procession: Pindarus, Paian 7; Sacrifice: Alkaios, A pollon hymnus 307 LP; Feast: Homer, Odyssey book 8, 44–108; Contest: Pausanias Histories X, 7, 2–7, Xenophon Hieron IX 24.

In this same article, Kubatzki states that “it seems reasonable to regard the sacrifice as the *cultic* purpose of the whole ceremony, as distinct from the procession and the communal meal which were its *social* purposes.”<sup>81</sup> Even though all aspects of a ritual ceremony would have been seen as being given to the gods, with the *polis religion* model, we can see that there were aspects of rituals which were used as a way

of unifying religion and the *polis* in terms of physical space.

In terms of social space, as determined by Tonio Hölscher, the procession would have utilized the space within the city as “the result of special interrelations and interactions of concrete actors and factors: that is, of beings and objects.”<sup>82</sup> As one processed through the city, that would have been the aspect of the ritual which most closely related the participant to the *polis* to which they belonged, hence its classification as a “social” part of the ceremony; the procession was, therefore, an active perception of the space in which a person lived.

This dimension of space is particularly prominent in collective rituals. Above all, communal processions are powerful means of more or less consciously bringing about the perception of common living spaces: processions produce space, and by producing space make it a physical experience.<sup>83</sup>

Kubatzki also notes processions as having “a territorial aspect ... link[ing] the members of

<sup>80</sup> Jana Kubatzki, “Music in Rites. Some Thoughts about the Function of Music in Ancient Greek Cults”, *eTopoi Journal for Ancient Studies* 5, 2016, 6; this division is made solely for the purpose of understanding how μουσική interwove with both political and religious aspects; this division would not have been perceptible to the Greeks undergoing these rites.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>82</sup> Holscher, *Visual Power*, 17

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 24-5

processions with the space they have traversed.”<sup>84</sup> This component of the ritual would have first and foremost connected those participating in the procession with their *polis*, and even further with their *polis* imaginary. Their city would have transformed from a space used for everyday living to a space teeming with religious symbology: the transportation of the sacrificial animal towards the temple, the music filling the air with dancers and singers, the smells of incense. As far as instrumentation goes, iconographical evidence shows the presence of the kithara, chelys lyre, and aulos; however, as noted by Kubatzki, there is a significant lack of music displayed in procession scenes during the period, almost in direct opposition to the literary evidence we have on the fact. She does note that since music was almost an understood aspect of religious festivals, there could have been no need to depict them in the scenes, despite their presence in the ceremonies.<sup>85</sup>

One of the largest and most detailed depictions of musicians in a processional scene can be found on the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon, located on the Athenian acropolis. While a chunk of the scene is lost, Figure 5 is a recreation of how the scene would have looked.

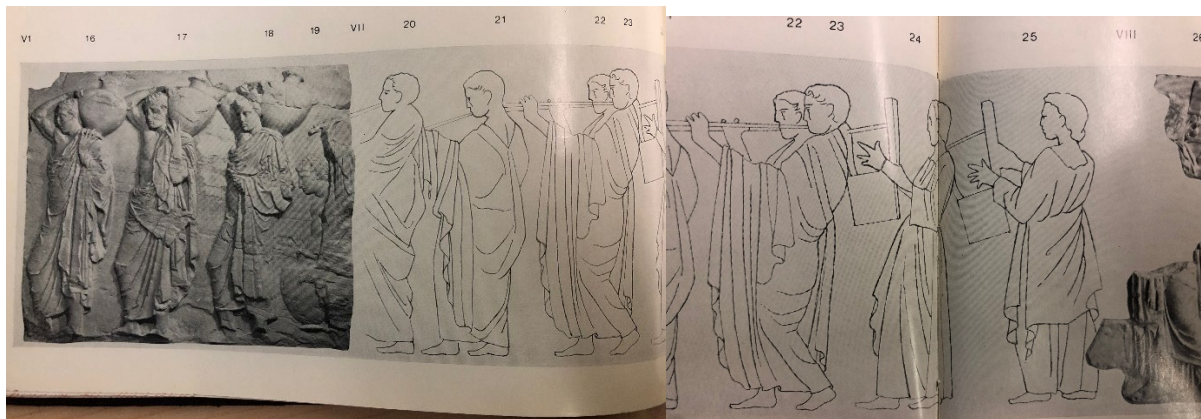


Figure 5 Photograph of Parthenon frieze taken by Alison Frantz in association with the British Museum

The entire frieze, which depicts what scholars believe to be the Panathenaic procession, wraps around the Parthenon just behind the larger pediments.<sup>86</sup> Its location in relation to the forward pediments and the exact nature of the frieze is slightly wrapped in an enigma, but some things can be derived from its presence. While the pediments detail large mythological scenes, such as the birth of Athena and the contest between Athena and Poseidon over the patronage of Athens, the

<sup>84</sup> Jana Kubatzki, “Processions and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece: Some Iconographical Considerations,” *Studies of the Ancient World* 49, 2018, 133, [https://edition-topoi.org/dEbookViewer/bsa\\_049\\_05.pdf](https://edition-topoi.org/dEbookViewer/bsa_049_05.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> Kubatzki, 143-4

<sup>86</sup> Martin Robertson, *The Parthenon Frieze*, London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1975, 8-10

frieze shows actual Athenians in a procession dedicated to the goddess of the Parthenon; furthermore, because the frieze is associated not only to the poliad deity of Athens but also potentially one of the largest festivals dedicated to her, the presence of these musicians shows the importance of music in an environment such as this. Given that kitharas were used in these sculptures, one could say that these were professional musicians, showing even further the pertinence of the quality of music. While one cannot be certain if the aulos and the kithara would have been played together at the same time based solely on this frieze, based on literary evidence, one can see that their use (whether individually or together) is well-attested.

While processions might have been a more or less social function in the context of Greek rituals, the sacrifice held a primarily religious function. In many depictions of a sacrifice, both literary and iconographical, offerings to that particular deity included the sacrificial animal, incense, and music, in addition to others. According to Kubatzki, 90% of iconography featuring sacrificial scenes included an aulos, with stringed instruments occurring less frequently; if we are to take iconographical evidence as representative of actual instrumentation during a sacrifice, one could say that since the aulos had the particular power to excite the emotions, it could have allowed the participants to feel most directly connected with the deity to whom they were making the sacrifice. With images of that deity likely adorning the walls of the temple and the smoke from both the incense and the sacrifice filling the air and spiraling towards the realm of the gods, the plaints from the aulos likely blended best with the voices singing hymns to that deity:

Ancient Greek texts paint a picture of human-divine communication that is interactive ... however, this interaction needed to take place within a safe frame, which is to say within a designated sacred space ... To provide such a sacred space, cultic rituals were needed to define the boundaries of the 'other world'. Ritual elements such as music, aromatic substances, cultic meals, specific garments and behavior helped to delineate the sacred space.<sup>87</sup>

One of the important elements that music brings to the sacrificial scene is allowing the participants of the rite to closely connect with the deity; it creates a reciprocal relationship between worshiper and deity through the use of hymns (the specific function of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3) and the auloi. Figure 6 depicts a sacrificial scene overseen by the goddess Nike as a piece of meat is burned on a flame. On the other side of this stamnos, undepicted, shows a scene with three youths, one of which holding a chelys lyre, who do not seem to be interacting with the

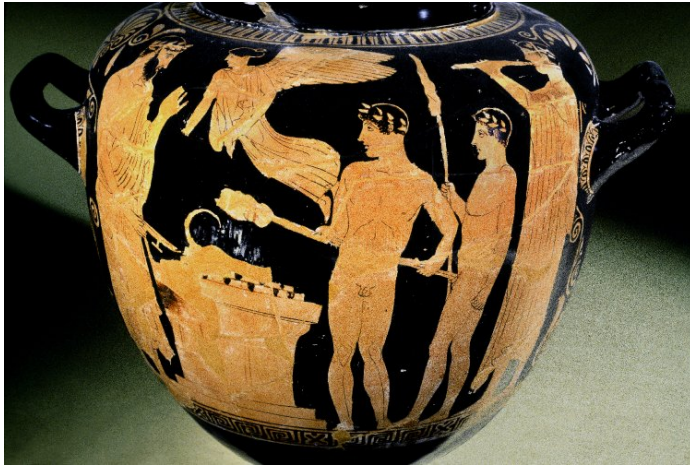
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<sup>87</sup> Kubatzki, "Music in Rites," 12



sacrificial scene. While the aulos is not a central part of the scene, it is nevertheless present, showing that for the painter, it played a role that was more than just symbolic. With that being said, however, J. A. Haldane presents the idea that

Figure 6 Red-figure stamnos depicting a sacrifice. Found in the British Museum no. 1839,0214.68



the reason why the *aulos* in particular should have been adopted in preference to the *kithara* was doubles fundamentally the practical one that it was the instrument of the people and could be played without much training or skill – and Greek religion was essentially democratic.<sup>88</sup>

While that is possible and could very well be one aspect into the aulos' primary function in sacrificial scenes, it is impossible to know for certain based solely on these iconographical depictions.

As we have seen, μουσική played a crucial role not only in a practical and ritualistic function but also as a means of showing Grecian ideologies. The seemingly diametrically-opposed instrumentation of Apollonian stringed instruments and Dionysian wind instruments did in fact function conjunctively with each other. In addition to this, these specific instruments played a role in identifying the *polis* imaginary as it relates not only to mythology but also to ritual functions themselves. For example, the lyre and kithara, two stereotypical Apollonian instruments, were equated to the philosophical concept of universal harmony, both in hymns and in philosophical writings; in that same vein, the chelys lyre specifically was used to represent “ideal Athenian citizens”: the educated, the youth, and mythological figures, notably Orpheus. Through the lyre, Athenians saw what they valued and how that is in turn represented with the large-scale harmony of the universe. The aulos, though seen as “inferior” by certain Athenian elite to the lyre, also had its place in the *polis*. For Thebes, for example, it was viewed in a positive light, unlike in Athens (at least in one of its etiologies); however, in both *poleis*, the aulos was equated with a sense of heightened emotion and thus was used in ritual settings as a way of connecting with the deity they were worshiping. What does this mean, therefore, for the Orphics? As I will show in later chapters, while Orphism operated as a semi-public cult and, therefore, had separate rites that would not have

<sup>88</sup> J. A. Haldane, “Musical Instruments in Greek Worship,” *Greece & Rome* 13(1), 1966, 101-2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/642360>

involved everyone in the *polis*, they would have still operated under the same umbrella under which the *polis religion* operated – that is to say that many of the same aspects involving the *polis* imaginary and cultural identity would have also been true for those who could be called Orphics. The tradition of ritual function, hymn writing, and music making would also apply to them as well. For us, knowing how μουσική functioned within the confines of the *polis religion* model, as well as the *polis* imaginary, gives us an insight on how it could have functioned in the world of the Orphics as well.

## Chapter 3 – Μουσική in the Hymns of Orpheus

One of the most common elements of ritual music was the usage of hymns; Greek ὕμνοι were songs typically sung in dedication to a particular deity, specifically in the context of ritual worship or celebration, and were one of the more common usages of music in Greek rites.<sup>89</sup> Amongst the vast opus of Greek hymns which survive to this day are the Orphic Hymns, a collection of 87 hymns of unknown origin which first seem to appear on manuscripts in Venice in 1423.<sup>90</sup> Scholars know even less about where exactly the hymns would have been placed in Antiquity since ancient sources are relatively mute on the topic. According to Athanassakis and Wolkow, analysis of the language and contents of the hymns seem to place their composition within the first four centuries CE though even that remains uncertain.<sup>91</sup> As for their use, Otto Kern believes that “Pergamum was the birthplace of the *Hymns* and that they were used in mystic Dionysian ceremonies in the *temenos* of Demeter in the city.”<sup>92</sup> With little information being passed down about the actual origin and exact nature of these hymns, how can they be used to answer the question of their role in rituals? The function of hymns is built on a large tradition of usage in worship; the Orphic hymns are no different. Since there is a specific tradition which would have been utilized by the hymn author, comparing various aspects of these hymns, such as form and content, could be used to answer some of the mysterious questions left by these hymns. By cross-referencing these “Orphic” hymns with hymns by other authors, one should, therefore, be able to determine their possible uses in Orphic rituals. It is important to mention again that because there is no central Orphic belief in antiquity, the analysis of these particular hymns only gives one piece of the puzzle regarding their function, and how μουσική would have related to them, in Orphic rituals, notably only from the point of view of the person/people who composed these hymns, but this one piece gives scholars a deeper look into ways that music could have been utilized in these rituals. This chapter will seek to break apart the three different aspects of μουσική – text, music, and physical movement – as used in the Orphic Hymns and compare them to hymns

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Parker, “Greek Hymns”, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, (2015). DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.3194

<sup>90</sup> Apostolos N. Athanassakis and Benjamin M. Wolkow, *The Orphic Hymns*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013: IX

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, X

<sup>92</sup> Otto Kern, “Das Demeterheiligtum von Pergamon und die orphischen Hymnen,” *Hermes* 46 no. 3 (1912): 431-6 as cited in *The Orphic Hymns* p. X

of a similar nature in order to understand how the nature of the μουσική within these hymns could have possibly related to cult rituals.

As noted in the introductory chapter, texts in the ancient world did not function ritualistically in the same way that religious texts do today. Our hymns, or any other collection of writings used in rituals, would not have any kind of doctrinal function in the same way as the Bible, Torah, or Quran. Therefore, how would one define the function of hymns as they relate to cult use? Edmonds clarifies this as such:

Orphic texts were indeed associated with ritual, but not as scriptures from which the participants in the ritual would derive sectarian doctrines, nor were the texts recited in the ritual as magical incantations to create some initiatory effect through the performative utterance... many of the poetic compositions attributed to Orpheus were associated with ritual simply because they were performed (or imagined to be performed) in the context of ritual.<sup>93</sup>



Figure 7 Red-figure bell-krater Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Catherine Page Perkins Fund, inv. 92.25.

As one looks at these texts and how they functioned in rituals, this distinction is important to note: these texts, as many other ritual texts in antiquity, carried more individualized interpretations of commonalities within the Orphic community, but they do not carry a universal doctrine as one would understand it today. Instead, the hymns could be looked as extremely personal invocations from one person to the deity whom he/she is worshipping.

Therefore, if hymns were not used to express doctrinal beliefs but were instead instructive on the beliefs of their composer or those who used them, what was their function within Greek ritual? As mentioned in Chapter 2, hymn use, and μουσική in general, was one of the most common and universal elements of any part of cult ritual. Evidence of this can be found all over Greek literature and through the immense amounts of iconographical evidence depicting the use of music in rituals. One such example is found in Xenophon's *Anabasis* where he details music in a cultic procession:

τέλος δὲ τὸ περσικὸν ὠρχεῖτο κρούων τὰς πέλας καὶ ὠκλαζε καὶ ἐξανίστατο: καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ἐν ῥυθμῷ ἐποίει πρὸς τὸν αὐλόν. ἐπὶ δὲ τούτῳ ἐπιόντες οἱ Μαντινεῖς καὶ ἄλλοι τινὲς τῶν Ἀρκάδων ἀναστάντες

<sup>93</sup> Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2013): 139

ἐξοπλισάμενοι ὡς ἐδύναντο κάλλιστα ἦσαν τε ἐν ῥυθμῷ πρὸς τὸν ἐνόπλιον ῥυθμὸν αὐλούμενοι καὶ ἐπαιάνισαν καὶ ὠρχήσαντο ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς προσόδοις. ὄρωντες δὲ οἱ Παφλαγόνες δεινὰ ἐποιοῦντο πάσας τὰς ὀρχήσεις ἐν ὄπλοις εἶναι. ἐπὶ τούτοις ὄρων ὁ Μυζὸς ἐκπεπληγμένους αὐτοὺς, πείσας τῶν Ἀρκάδων τινὰ πεπαμένον ὀρχηστρίδα εἰσάγει σκευάσας ὡς ἐδύνατο κάλλιστα καὶ ἀσπίδα δοῦς κούφην αὐτῇ. ἡ δὲ ὠρχήσατο πυρρίχην ἐλαφρῶς. (Xen. *Anab.* 6. 1.10-12)

Lastly, he danced the Persian dance, clashing his shields together and crouching down and then rising up again; and all this he did, keeping time to the music of the flute. [11] After him the Mantineans and some of the other Arcadians arose, arrayed in the finest arms and accoutrements they could command, and marched in time to the accompaniment of a flute playing the martial rhythm and sang the paeon and danced, just as the Arcadians do in their festal processions in honour of the gods<sup>94</sup>

Hymns were not only commonplace in the processions, but it was also in all aspects of the ritual, such as in the sacrifices as well. Figure 7 shows a bell-krater which depicts a scene of a sacrificial lamb being led to the altar accompanied by an aulode.<sup>95</sup> Even the feasts and contests after the sacrifices most commonly featured music and hymns as well. These hymns, which functioned as dedications and praise to specific deities, would have been used in order to invite the deity to appear/take part within the ritualistic sphere so that one might receive his/her divine blessing in return for their worship and sacrifice:

The hymnic performance is at once an instance of gift-giving and an instance of discourse that attempts to establish, maintain, or repair the *charis* between the community of its singers and the divine addressee.<sup>96</sup>

It is for this reason that hymns were pervasive throughout the Greek ritualistic sphere, appearing in all different manner of processional, sacrificial, and theatrical actions to the gods, and it is this hymnic tradition that shapes the uses of all various types of hymnic performance, both written and oral.

## ORPHIC HYMNS IN HYMNIC TRADITION – TEXT IN ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗ

Since the use of hymns was commonplace throughout ritual as a means of asking divine favor from the gods, where do the “Orphic” hymns stand in this long tradition? In order to understand their function within the Greek cultic tradition, one must first define what makes these hymns “Orphic” and how they relate to each other as a unified work. As noted in the introductory chapter, works labeled as “Orphic” were not all necessarily written by a common author nor were

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<sup>94</sup> Translation by Carleton L. Brownson found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0202%3Abook%3D6>

<sup>95</sup> Gullög C. Nordquist, “Instrumental Music in Representations of Greek Cult”, *The Iconography of Greek Cult in the Archaic and Classical Periods*: 142-168. <https://books.openedition.org/pulg/199?lang=en>

<sup>96</sup> Yurly Lozynsky “Ancient Greek Cult Hymns: Poets, Performers and Rituals,” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2014. [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68111/1/Lozynsky\\_Yuriy\\_201406\\_PhD\\_thesis.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68111/1/Lozynsky_Yuriy_201406_PhD_thesis.pdf)

they necessarily part of the same *polis* since works were often attributed to Orpheus in order to claim authority to him. In the case of these hymns, Athanassakis and Wolkow note that the hymns relate to other pieces of Orphica through a common mythology:

Despite these many and convoluted accounts, certain details are found again and again in our sources with enough consistency that we can at times with some confidence designate something as “Orphic” or at least influenced by “Orphic” literature.<sup>97</sup>

One of the most notable examples which supports this connection is the sixth hymn to Protogenos, or “First-born”. It is believed that Protogenos, an important deity in many pieces of Orphica, was born from an egg, from which the universe was created. The hymn states,

born of the egg, delighting in his golden wings, the begetter of blessed gods and mortal men.<sup>98</sup>

This “cosmic egg” is said to have derived from Time and Night within the Ether, a point which could explain its positioning after the hymn to Ether within the set. There are also epithets which connect Protogenos to Dionysus, another important deity in Orphic mythology.<sup>99</sup> In fact, Dionysus appears in many forms throughout the opus: “The first indication is given by the massive presence of Dionysus, to whom are dedicated, under various names, eight hymns of the collection.”<sup>100</sup> In addition to the hymns which are directed specifically to Dionysus himself, many other hymns reference him as well; for example, hymn number 58 calls Hermes “offspring of Dionysus” and hymn number 36 refers to Artemis as both “Titanic and Bacchic.” These facts not only link the hymns together as more or less a cohesive “set” but also connects them to the Orphic literature tradition.

Connecting these hymns in the context of an Orphic tradition can give scholars answers as to how these hymns might have not only functioned ritually within their own tradition but also in the context of other ritualistic practices. Dwayne Meisner states that

Although there must have been some common ground among the Orphics, the specific way in which these texts were used was probably different to some extent in each individual case, suited to the needs of each particular individual or group, with the result that a search for a coherently unified community is not likely to succeed.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, XII

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 All translations of the hymns, unless otherwise stated, are by Athanassakis

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 81

<sup>100</sup> Marianne Hopman-Govers, “Le jeu des épithètes dans les Hymnes orphiques,” *Revue Internationale et Pluridisciplinaire de Religion Grecque Antiqua*, 14 (2001): 39. DOI : 10.4000/kernos.766

<sup>101</sup> Dwayne A Meisner, *Orphic Tradition and the Birth of the Gods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2018): 6

As a result, comparing these hymns with other hymns from the same tradition opens up the doors which allow scholars to view more individualized and personal interpretations of what they considered Orphic ideals. One of the more interesting aspects regarding the Orphic Hymns is how they compare structurally to hymn types from other authors around ancient Greece. While these hymns contain many similarities to other similar types of hymns, there are also clear distinctions which set them apart. One of these distinctions lies in the form of deific invocations. Throughout many of these hymns, instead of retelling the great deeds of the deities to whom they are dedicated, like many of the Homeric hymns do, they instead functioned as invocations, inviting the corresponding deity to enter the space in which the hymn was chanted, another aspect which informs scholars that these hymns were indeed used in ritual action. Throughout the hymn, each deity is referred to numerous times by multiple names and titles; traditionally invocation of a deity by his/her name had a certain power to ask the divinities to send their divine favor to those involved in the ritual.<sup>102</sup> This particular nature of the hymns is not unique to just this collection of hymns – this technique is also generally used in other hymn types more frequently found after the Alexandrian period. One example of a poem that is characterized by its extended use of epithets are aretalogies, for example like those in Egypt to the goddess Isis.

Εἷσις ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ τύραννος πάσης χώρας· καὶ ἐπαιδεύθην ὑπὸ Ἑρμοῦ καὶ γράμματα εὗρον μετὰ Ἑρμοῦ, τὰ τε ἱερὰ καὶ τὰ δημόσια γράμματα, ἵνα μὴ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς πάντα γράφηται. (Cyme Aretalogy 1-4)

I am Isis, the mistress of every land, and I was taught by Hermes and with Hermes I devised letters, both the sacred hieroglyphs and the demotic, that all things might not be written with the same letters.<sup>103</sup>

It is likely that these aretalogies had an important part in ritual ceremonies for the Isiac cults, likely a priest(ess) reciting the aretalogy in garb resembling that of the goddess.<sup>104</sup> What makes the Orphic hymns stand out in this tradition, however, is where the majority of aretalogies seem to be more “self-praising” and “auto-biographical” in form, with the majority of them consisting of verb forms in the first person (we do have evidence of two aretalogies being found in the second and third persons), the Orphic hymns use epithets as invoking mechanisms in exclusively the second person, calling upon the many forms of the deity in order to be present in the rite and to ask favors

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<sup>102</sup> Hopman-Govers, “Le jeu des épithètes”, 44

<sup>103</sup> Translation taken from F.C.Grant *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* (1953)  
[http://www.attalus.org/poetry/isis\\_hymns.html#2](http://www.attalus.org/poetry/isis_hymns.html#2)

<sup>104</sup> Paraskevi Martzavou, “Isis Aretalogies, Initiations and Emotions: the Isis Aretalogies as a source for the study of emotions”, *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World* (2012) p. 276

from them.

Another aspect of these hymns is the utilization of “praise,” or exclaiming the wonderful deeds of the god/goddess to which a particular hymn is dedicated. Most hymns, like the Homeric hymns, consist of a tripartite form: 1) epithets to the deity, 2) retelling of a myth, 3) entreatment of that deity. For most hymns of this type, there is a clear division between the first two parts; however, what sets the Orphic hymns apart is that instead of dividing each hymn into three distinct sections, the pattern of epithet and praise is repeated numerous times throughout each hymn, effectively blurring the tripartite division of form. The Orphic hymns seemed to use the aspects common to many different hymns, i.e. epithet, praise, and prayer, but with these, the organization of these different aspects place emphasis on differing parts of the hymn; numerous epithets were used throughout each hymn as a way of invoking the deity into the rite, then culminating with a request to that specific deity, the formation of which placing particular emphasis on the end of each hymn, ending with a prayer, or a specific request to that deity. Many of the Orphic hymns request for a specific deity to heal initiates from states of *mania*, to be generally present within the rite, or for them to give their general blessings or support to the initiates of the mysteries. An example of this lies again in the Hymn to Protogonos:

ἀλλά, μάκαρ, πολύμητι, πολύσπορε, βαῖνε γεγηθῶς  
ἐς τελετήν ἀγίην πολυπόικilon ὀργιοφάνταις. (OH 6, 10-1)

O blessed one of the many counsels and of the many seeds, come joyfully to the celebrants of this holy rite, of this very intricate rite.<sup>105</sup>

Even though the formation of these hymns might have emphasized certain aspects depending to the needs of the rite or the desire of the composer, “these hymns are all part of shared tradition, drawing on many of the same conventional features and language.”<sup>106</sup> While the tripartite division of many different hymns is more or less obscured in the Orphic ones, the epithets, praises, and prayers are still present within them. For those hearing these hymns, they would have compared the forms of these hymns to others with which they were familiar; each hymn would have been interpreted by those who heard them within the confines of hymnic traditions in Greek ritual, therefore, making it possible for the Orphic hymns to be compared textually, musically, and functionally to other hymns from this same tradition.

## USE OF MUSIC IN HYMNS – MUSIC IN ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗ

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<sup>105</sup> Martzavou, “Isis Aretalogies”, 8-9

<sup>106</sup> Lozynsky, “Ancient Greek Cult Hymns”, 241



Given that these hymns would have had a specific function musically as well as textually, comparisons of musical usages with these hymns can also be made with others of the same tradition. Looking within the hymns themselves, there is no specific mention of how music was used in the context of the ritual; however, some of them utilize specific musical vocabulary, the most detailed of which being the 34<sup>th</sup> hymn dedicated to Apollo.

Σὺ δὲ πάντα πόλον κιθάρη πολυκρέκτω  
 ἀρμόζεις, ὅτε μὲν νεάτης ἐπὶ τέρματα βαίνων,  
 ἄλλοτε δ' αὖθ' ὑπάτην, ποτὲ Δώριον εἰς διάκοσμον  
 πάντα πόλον κινᾶς, κρίνεις βιοθρέμμονα φύλα,  
 ἄρμονίη κεράσας παγκόσμιον ἀνδράσι μοῖραν·  
 μίξας χειμῶνος θέρεός τ' ἴσον ἀμφοτέροισιν,  
 εἰς ὑπάτας χειμῶνα, θέρος νεάταις διακρίνας,  
 Δώριον εἰς ἔαρος πολυηράτου ὄριον ἄνθος. (OH 34, 16-23)

You make everything bloom with your versatile lyre, you harmonize the poles, now reaching the highest pitch, now the lowest, now again with a Doric mode, harmoniously balancing the poles, you keep the living races distinct. You have infused harmony into the lot of all men, giving them an equal measure of winter and summer: the lowest notes you strike in the winter the highest notes you make distinct in the summer, your mode is Doric for spring's lovely and blooming season.<sup>107</sup>

This hymn, along with others from this collection, call upon the idea of cosmic harmony, which was a concept that each of the planets or heavenly bodies in the sky vibrate at a specific frequency and that everything in the universe creates a balanced harmony.<sup>108 109</sup> With this hymn, music is symbolized as the universal balance of nature, something which Orpheus symbolizes as well, as mentioned in Chapter 2. With his lyre, Orpheus is able to bring peace and balance to his surroundings, charming and placating man, beast, and the environment around him. In the context of this hymn, the singer speaks of the “versatile lyre” of Apollo and how he can “harmonize the poles” by both “reaching the highest pitch [and] now the lowest.” Apollo, and by extension his music, in Orphic tradition represents the overall balance of the universe.

This “harmonic balance” is seen clearly in the specific vocabulary that the hymn writer utilizes. In verse 19 and 20 of the hymn, the words νεάτης and ὑπάτης refer to the highest and lowest note in a Greek scale respectively. They reappear in line 22 of the poem with reads in Greek:

<sup>107</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 30-1

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

<sup>109</sup> See again “The Myth of Er” in Plato’s *Republic*

ταῖς ὑμάταις χειμῶνα, θέρος νεάταις διακρίνας <sup>110</sup>

It could be possible that this hymn references important ritual moments in the year for the initiates. For instance, he pairs winter χειμῶνα with ὑμάταις, or the lowest note. One theory is that this pairing could make a reference to the descent into the underworld by Persephone, an important figure in Orphic belief, during the winter; it also could, by extension, represent the katabasis made by Orpheus or the descent into the underworld by Dionysus during his death; this is likely the case as the rituals around Dionysus at Delphi occurred during the winter.<sup>111</sup> According to the *Rhapsodies*, a set of Orphic theogonic poems, Dionysus was destroyed by the Titans, and Zeus sent Apollo to bury the limbs to Parnassus, the mountain near Delphi.<sup>112</sup> According to Robertson, the tearing apart of Dionysus was represented ritualistically at Delphi during the winter months, the ὑμάτη in this case possibly referring to the time when Dionysus was honored; likewise, the return of Apollo to Delphi could be referenced by the νεάτη, or the height of Apollo's power at Delphi. Likewise, lines 17-19 prior might refer to the timing of specific Orphic rituals as well:

ὅτε μὲν νεάτης ἐπὶ τέρματα βαίνων,  
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖθ' ὑπάτης, ποτὲ Δώριον εἰς διάκοσμον  
πάντα πόλον κινρῆς κρίνεις βιοθρέμμονα φῶλα <sup>113</sup>

Again, the writer of this hymn references the “highest” and “lowest” notes again, but this time, they are in two distinct phrases all indicated by temporal markers, ὅτε and ἄλλοτε, along with the discourse particles μὲν and δέ. These temporal words give the listener the indication that “reaching the highest pitch” and “[reaching] the lowest” occur at two separate times of the year.

There is one other aspect that ties this hymn to Delphi; just as this hymn finds balance between the highest and lowest, the Greeks believed Delphi to be the center of the world.<sup>114</sup> While this centrist belief was in one part nationalistic, as shown in Book 7 of Aristotle's *Politics*, it was also philosophical. To the Greeks, notably to Aristotle, the idea of universal balance was seen clearly in his idea of the “golden mean” or the ideal space between two extremes, excess and deficiency.<sup>115</sup> This is a concept which would have probably been known to those who used these

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<sup>110</sup> Literally “separating winter with the lowest notes and summer with the highest”

<sup>111</sup> Robertson, *Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual*, 223

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 226; Meisner, *Orphic Theogonies* 70

<sup>113</sup> now reaching the highest pitch, / now the lowest, / now again with a Doric mode, / harmoniously balancing the poles, / you keep the living races distinct.

<sup>114</sup> Strabo, 9.3.6 who cites Pindar

<sup>115</sup> Found in Book II Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translation by H. Rackham found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0054%3Abook%3D2>

hymns in their rites: with his music, Apollo brought harmony to the universe during the summer and the winter, two “extremes” which when brought together bring about the balance that allows the universe to exist.<sup>116</sup> Here in the middle, he “harmoniously balance[es] the polls, [keeping] the living races distinct”, here at the seat of his oracle in Delphi.<sup>117</sup>

This hymn is the only one from the collection which mentions music in any great detail, but it alone does not answer the question of how these hymns relate to rituals and musical performance; though it may be impossible to say if the Orphic Hymn to Apollo does in fact make reference to ceremonies at Delphi, it might still be possible to glean some information from another source in order to make the comparison; one possible place to look would be the Delphic Hymn to Apollo, which also gives us insight on the relation between music and hymns. One of its aspects, besides its archaic character, that make it so interesting is the fact that not only does it have specific musical references in its text, like the later Orphic hymn to Apollo, but also it is one of the few examples of notated music from the ancient world, meaning that scholars have a clearer understanding of how this hymn sounded in its original context. Corey Hackworth, in his analysis of the hymn, details the discovery of the hymn by the École Française d’Athènes in 1893 and mentions how this hymn, though fragmentary, gives us deeper insight to cultic song, while other hymns, like the Orphic hymns, exist only in text or are too fragmentary to study effectively.<sup>118</sup>

ἀγίοις δὲ βωμοιοῖσιν Ἄ-φαιστος αἰεῖθε<ι> νέων μῆρα ταούρων· ὄμου-οῦ δὲ νιν Ἄραψ ἀτμός ἐς ἼΟλυμπον  
ἀνακίδν[α]-ται· λιγὺ δὲ λωτοὸς βρέμων ἀειόλοισι μ[ε]-λεσιν ὠδαῖαν κρέκει· χρυσέα δ’ ἀδύθρου[ς κι]-θαρῆς  
ῥυμοισιν ἀναμέλπεται (DH 12-16)

On holy altars Hephaistos kindles into flame the thighs of young bulls.

Joined with this, Arabian vapor rises up to Olympos,

The shrill Lotus-reed, roaring with nimble numbers, plays a song,

And the golden, sweet-voiced, kithara, with hymns raises up its strains.<sup>119</sup>

This hymn follows the same tripartite structure that is common in most hymns: the epithet, the

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<sup>116</sup> It is important to note here the importance of universal balance to the Pre-Socrates, who the author of the Derveni Papyrus is said to be. There is a belief that the universe exists in equilibrium on a “vortex”, and balance must be maintained in order to keep the universe “spinning”, i.e. relating back to the harmony of the spheres. More will be talked about in Chapter 4 on the relationship between the Derveni author and the pre-Socrates and how the idea of the “universal vortex” relates to music and Orphic rites. Even though these particular hymns were probably written after the turn of the millennium, these points of evidence show that the same concept of universal harmony traveled down through Orphic tradition.

<sup>117</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 31

<sup>118</sup> Corey M. Hackworth, “Reading Athenaios’ Epigraphical Hymn to Apollo: Critical Edition and Commentaries,” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2015), 2-3

<sup>119</sup> Translation of this hymn done by Corey Hackworth, p. xiii

praise, and (speculated because of the absence of the last section of text) invocation. The text shown above comes from the second part where the composer of the hymn, attributed to Athenaios, describes a sacrificial scene, which details the sacrifice of a bull, the use of Arabian incense – paralleling the use of incense noted in each of the Orphic Hymns – and the playing of the aulos (“Lotus-reed”) and the kithara, a scene which would have been a part of what scholars believe to be the Pythian festival – based on “the association of the author of the second hymn (Limenios) with one of the Pythaïdes inscriptions [which] has convincingly placed both hymns in association with these festivals.”<sup>120</sup>

Comparing the two, both the Delphic and Orphic hymns would have been a part of the same tradition of hymn writing familiar to Greek ritual; additionally, innovation within the context of tradition would have been an essential contextual aspect for both hymns, which will be expounded upon later. Because both of these hymns would have represented the individual interpretation of the author who composed them in the context of hymnic tradition, it is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty how these hymns would have been received by the people listening to them because they too would hear the words and the music and rely on their own personal understanding to form their own individual interpretations; however, because both hymns would have come from this similar hymnic, literary, and cultural tradition, people’s minds would have instinctively made their interpretations within the sphere of this tradition. With this being the case, there are some comparisons that can be made between them in order to determine in part how they could have been utilized in ritual ceremonies, as Hackworth puts it:

What significations or narratives lie dormant within the text, ready to be activated by a reader or audience, to be recognized, linked, or associated? ... Every text and word *can* exist as a new creation, a freestanding construct, self-contextualizing—the words gaining meaning from use.<sup>121</sup>

Based on the passage above of the second strophe from the hymn, we see that this hymn likely took place during a sacrifice; Hackworth says that “the lyrics of this strophe do in fact describe what has taken, or will take, place”, but it is likely that they do not outline the events of the ceremony as they are happening.<sup>122</sup> However, it is likely that this text does reflect what has or will take place during the ceremony, be it real or imagined, albeit not concurrently.

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<sup>120</sup> Hackworth, “Athenaios Hymn”, 8; also noted in Hackworth that the inscription dates from the Pythaidēs of Dionysios in 128/7 BCE, *FD* III, 2 no. 47

<sup>121</sup> Hackworth, “Athenaios Hymn”, 154-5

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 219

Using this information, what can we carry over to our Orphic Hymn? First of all, it is important to contextualize the hymn's intended audience as it would affect how the writer wrote the hymn and the interpretation of those listening. From what scholars know about Orphism, it is believed that these Orphic circles of initiates were not as city-wide as the Pythian celebrations would have been; in fact, one of the common cues of an Orphic text is "Close the doors of your ears, ye profane," hinting that these ceremonies were intended to be understood only by those who were initiated into this circle. While the initiations would have been open to anyone in the *polis* who wished to participate in them, some aspects of symbolism behind the hymn would only have been understood by those to whom they would have been taught. Likewise, for those undergoing these "Orphic initiations," it would, therefore, be possible that those hearing the hymn would have been more intimately familiar with the themes being taught to them by these orpheotelestai, or other priests. When placed in the context of an Orphic ritual, it is likely that the symbolism found in these hymns would have been on the forefront of the minds of those who were prepared to hear them. While it would not have been impious to listen to one of these hymns without having been aware of some of these "hidden truths," these special themes would have been lost to an uninitiate, even if many things in it would have been more easily understandable for any Greek.

While both the Orphic and Delphic hymns would have been subject to the traditions in which they fell, there is also another important aspect to look at when talking about audience interpretations: innovation. For the Delphic hymn, as stated above, it would have been used in the context of the Pythian Games, the site for music contests where kithara players and aulodes would compete in music competitions:

These famous competitors surely won by means of something stronger than demonstrating a better tremolo technique. Rather, they must have innovated as they performed, following the constraints of a recognizable *nomos*, presenting something that was both recognizable and familiar to the audience, but in a way that they placed the stamp of their own ingenuity and talent on it.<sup>123</sup>

While this particular hymn was used as a part of the sacrifice and not within the music competitions themselves, due to the nature of innovation on familiar traditions that would have been held within this festival, it is possible to conclude that this hymn would have inadvertently been compared to others like it in the minds of the observing audience:

If Athenaios' hymn was the only hymn sung at the festival, any prior observation of, or participation in, the

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<sup>123</sup> Hackworth, "Athenaios Hymn", 295-6; 309

festival will echo in the memory, leading to a comparison. Even at the founding occasion of Pythaidēs festival, all prior hymns to Apollo could readily resonate in the minds of the audience.<sup>124</sup>

This fact has wider implications for the way that rituals were viewed throughout Greece, including the use of the Orphic hymns in the context of ritual ceremonies. While viewing Orphica within the context of *bricolage*, each hymn inherently holds some aspect of innovation within it, with each individual hymn coming from the interpretation of the composer; however, Edmonds puts it best when saying that “[w]hile rituals too were being constantly reinvented and modified, they nevertheless had to seem ancient and traditional, the customs of the ancestors, the same thing that had always been done.”<sup>125</sup> One of the clear markers, therefore, when looking at the Orphic Hymns and other Orphica is that they relied on this balance between innovation and tradition, using aspects taken from other sources through *bricolage* as a way of separating themselves from other “groups” in the *polis* while at the same time relying on the established traditions of general cultural memory, both in reference to the hymns specifically and through their broader application of Orpheus’ name on their works.

### USE OF HYMNS IN RITUAL

By placing these hymns and their music within this balance of tradition and innovation, one can begin to see clues on how they might have been used not only within the context of a ritual setting but also within the context of Greek religion as a whole. One aspect of these hymns that connects them to ritual is that each of them is accompanied by the name of a specific incense or perfume. As each hymn was used as a devotion to a particular god/goddess in order to seek divine favor from them, incense was often used as an offering to that deity. This further points scholars in the direction of their use in particular ritual ceremonies although it is not always clear as to the connection between a particular deity and the type of perfume that accompanies that hymn.<sup>126</sup> There also seems to be a certain level of symbolism in the usage of incense for ritual settings; there is significant evidence behind the idea of “spirals” transcending from one realm to another, take for example the fumes at the Pythia leading to her divine revelations or the symbolism of Tartarus spiraling in the depths of the underworld. For the Greeks, incense and sacrificial vapors were viewed in this way, swirling along with the smoke from the sacrifice, having been seen as the best accoutrements to enter the realm of the gods and invoke deities into their rites. Another clue that

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 314

<sup>125</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 143

<sup>126</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, XVII

relates these hymns to ritual is the organization of each hymn within the collection; while we have determined above that this particular collection of hymns does indeed fall under the umbrella of Orphica, it is hard to tell whether this collection as a whole was composed by one singular author for one singular event, one author for a variety of events, or a series of different authors throughout time with this collection being simply a compilation of hymns by a later person. While each hymn follows a similar bipartite form, as opposed to the more common three-part form, that in and of itself does not prove singular authorship; as shown above, these hymns would have fallen under a specific tradition of hymn writing, and as such it would make sense that hymns under the “Orphic tradition” would follow a similar form even if not composed by the same composer. With that being said, however, what can be gleaned from the organization of these hymns, whether composed or compiled, is an interesting look into links from one hymn to the next, the overall Orphic mythological tradition, and general rites for Orphic circles of initiates.

There are several theories as to their significance and use in Orphic rituals. For example, Fritz Graf sees the entire collection in the context of an entire overnight ritual, with the beginning hymns to Hekate and to Night referring to “the time when the ritual took place, as was the case with Eleusis and other mystery rites ...” and ending at dawn, “[t]owards the end of the book, we find Night’s opposite power, Dawn, *h.* 78. If the rites begun at dusk, they ended at dawn.”<sup>127</sup> If one were to view the entire collection of hymns in this way, the series of hymns from no. 44-54, which seem to outline a specific feast related to Dionysus, would have acted structurally as the pinnacle of the rite; however, it is most likely the case that these particular hymns were placed in close proximity to each other by the compiler of this collection simply because of their relationship to each other in the context of the mythological story regarding Dionysus’ birth. This series of hymns does in fact give scholars insight behind how this myth might have related to this particular feast celebration.

While it is difficult to say whether this set of 10 hymns was intended to be used for a singular function, they do seem to be specifically and particularly related to one another, with each of these hymns making specific reference to feasts occurring every third year, which according to hymn 44 are reenacted to honor the honors granted to Semele by Persephone:

τιμὰς τευξαμένη παρ’ ἀγαῆς Περσεφονείης

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<sup>127</sup> Fritz Graf, “Serious Singing: The Orphic Hymns as Religious Texts,” *Kernos Revue internationale et pluridisciplinaire de religion grecque antique* 22, 2009, 171-2, DOI: 10.4000/kernos.1784

ἐν θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν ἀνὰ τριετηρίδας ὥρας,  
ἡνίκα σοῦ Βάκχου γονίμην ὠδῖνα τελῶσιν,  
εὐϊερόν τε τράπεζαν ἰδὲ μυστήριά θ' ἀγνά.  
Νῦν σέ, θεά, λίτομαι, κούρη Καδμηΐς ἄνασσα,  
πρηθύοον καλέων αἰεὶ μύστησιν ὑπάρχειν. (OH 44, 6-11)

Noble Persephone granted her honors among mortal men, honors given every third year. For all mortal men reenact your travail for your son Bacchos: the sacred ritual of the table, the ritual of the holy mysteries.<sup>128</sup>

It is most likely that these hymns reference a retelling of the birth of Dionysus, which his initiates would reenact:

ὠμάδιε, σκηπτοῦχε, χοροϊμανές, ἡγέτα κώμων·  
βακχεύων ἀγίας τριετηρίδας ἀμφὶ γαληνάς· (OH 52, 7-8)

[y]ou take raw flesh, and sceptered you lead us into the madness of revel and dance, into the frenzy of triennial feasts that bestow calm onto us.

ὃς παρὰ Περσεφόνης ἱεροῖσι δόμοισιν ἰαύων  
κοιμίζει τριετήρα χρόνον Βακχίῳ ἀγνόν.  
Αὐτὸς δ' ἡνίκα τὸν τριετῆ πάλι κῶμον ἐγείρη,  
εἰς ὕμνον τρέπεται σὺν εὐζώνοισι τιθήναις, (OH 53, 3-6)

In the sacred halls of Persephone, he slumbers and puts to sleep pure Bacchic time, every third year. When he himself stirs up the triennial revel again, he sings a hymn together with his fair-girdled nurses. As the seasons revolve, he puts to sleep and wakes up the years. (53 3-6)

Κλῦθί μευ, ὃ πολύσεμνε τροφεῦ, Βάκχοιο τιθηνέ,  
Σιληνῶν ὄχ' ἄριστε, τετιμένε πᾶσι θεοῖσιν  
καὶ θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν ἐπὶ τριετηρίσιν ὥραις,  
ἀγνωτελής, γεραρός, θιάσου νομίου τελετάρχα·  
εὐαστής, φιλάγρυπνε σὺν εὐζώνοισι τιθήναις; ...  
σὺν Βάκχαις Λήναια τελεσφόρα σεμνὰ προπέμπων,  
ὄργια νυκτιφαῆ τελεταῖς ἀγίαις ἀναφαίνων,  
εὐάζων, φιλόθυρσε, γαληνιῶν θιάσοισιν. (OH 54, 3-5; 9-11)

Hear me, foster father of Bacchos, father and nurturer, best of the Silenoi, honored by all the gods, honored by mortal men in the same triennial feasts. Pure and prized marshal of the pastoral band, wakeful reveler and companion of the fair-girst nurses ... The Bacchantes escort the holy Lenaian procession in sacred litanies revealing torch-lit rites, shouting, thyrsus-loving, finding calm in the revels. <sup>129</sup>

According to Athanassakis, these hymns form

a series (through OH 54) whose focus is on Dionysos; in particular, these hymns are linked by the motif of

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<sup>128</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 38-9 Greek text taken from <http://www.hellenicgods.org/the-orphic-hymns-in-ancient-greek-online>

<sup>129</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 43-44



(re)birth ... A number of them refer to ritual contexts and, insofar as the hymns are performative acts, probably reflect something of the actual activities of our cult during this particular rite, though details are vague.<sup>130</sup>

With these hymns, one can see an interesting parallel between the texts and particular ritual events.

The myth regarding the birth of Dionysus is recounted throughout the collection of the *Orphic Hymns*, but it is also referenced in the *Orphic Rhapsodic Theogony* as well. A brief summary of this myth is that Zeus mates with Demeter and sires Persephone, with whom he also mates in order to birth his son Dionysus (OH 29, 1-2 & OH 30, 7; OF 276-283). Dionysus is then killed and eaten by the Titans, except for his heart which is saved (OF 301-317). Zeus then strikes down the Titans with his thunderbolt, turning them to ash from which the human race is born (OH 37, 6). Dionysus is then brought back to life by Zeus (OF 318-331).<sup>131</sup> There is a second account of Dionysus' birth, which the series of hymns seems to outline. Zeus becomes infatuated with Semele, daughter of Kadmos, and seduces her. She is then tricked into seeing Zeus at the height of his godly nature and is burned to ash, after which the still unborn Dionysus is saved by being sewn into his thigh (OH 44, 3-5 & 48, 2; OF 237). After his birth, he is sent to be nursed by Hipta, the Nymphs, and Silenos (OH 49, 51, & 54; OF 327-329). He then is placed at Zeus' side and rules with him, but "Zeus ultimately retains his power, as the Orphic verse seems to imply; 'Zeus ruled/accomplished (κραῖνε) all things, but Bacchus ruled in addition (ἐπέκρανε).'"<sup>132</sup> This dual-nature of Dionysus is important to note because in many of the hymns, Dionysus is noted as being "thrice-born" or "son of two mothers," as noted in hymn no. 30 to Dionysus:

πρωτόγονον, διφυῆ, τρίγονον, Βακχεῖον ἄνακτα  
primeval, two-natured, thrice-born Bacchic lord<sup>133</sup>

Therefore, given that these hymns are set up by the composer/compiler in such a way as to emphasize this dual nature of the myth and its reference to the "triennial feast", it is likely that this myth would have played a major role in this particular ritual, provided that these hymns were indeed used in the same ritual; it is also likely that the initiates used these hymns, or others lost, to act out the story of Dionysus' double birth, as noted again in the final lines of hymn 44 cited above (although whether within the context of the same ritual or in separate ones remains uncertain).

There is an intention not only behind the placement of this set of hymns within the context

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 151

<sup>131</sup> This section is also summarized and noted in Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, p. 237

<sup>132</sup> Proclus, in *Plat. Tim.* 3.316.5 Diehl (OF 300 1 B = 218 K) as cited in Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, p. 237

<sup>133</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, p. 27

of the entire collection but also with the placement of specific hymns related to others in the set. For example, hymns 45, 46, 47, and 50 all refer to Dionysus under specific cult names, Dionysus Bassareus, Liknites, Perikionios, and Lysios Lenaios. As we have seen in previous hymns, whenever a deity is invoked, multiple epithets are used in order to call upon the various different aspects of that particular deity, referring back to the bipartite form of each hymn. However, in the case of Dionysus, he is referred to by various specific cultic identities in separate hymns: Dionysos Bassareus in Thrace, Liknites in Delphi, Perikionios in Thebes, and Lysios Lenaios in Corinth and Thebes (Lysios) and Athens (Lenaios).<sup>134</sup> Within the concept of *polis* religion, each specific cultic identity of a deity would have either a different function or symbolism depending on where that iteration of the deity was found; for example, Isis Pelagia was viewed as the goddess of the sea in places like Delos whereas Isis Pharia was specifically linked with the city of Alexandria and was the goddess of lighthouses and merchants. In the case of these specific hymns, the composer is calling for specific iterations of Dionysus in order to invoke them all to be present at this rite. Following these invocational hymns are two hymns which refer to specific feasts which close off the set. Instead of referring to specific cult characteristics, these closing hymns refer to the cult in a broader sense:

“Triennial” refers to a celebration every two years (the ancient Greeks counted inclusively). While there were a number of festivals that occurred biennially (e.g., the Isthmian Games and Nemean Games), it appears that a large number of such celebrations were devoted to Dionysos, particularly maenadic ones ...<sup>135</sup>

It is likely that the hymns prior to this one call upon the various identities of Dionysus in order to be present at these specific triennial festivals. It is also likely that each identity represents a key part of either the ceremony or the mythological story the composer/compiler is trying to evoke.

### **MANIA IN THE ORPHIC HYMNS – MOVEMENT IN ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗ**

Another interesting aspect of this set of hymns as it relates to ritual is its specific reference to “frenzies” or “madness”, often shown utilizing the third and final aspect of Greek μουσική, physical movement; within this set of 11 hymns, all but one (hymn 48 to Sabazios) utilize words relating to revels and frenzies, the most common of these being variations of the word *μανία* from which the English word *mania* derives.<sup>136</sup> The concept of mania in the context of Greek ritual was

<sup>134</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 152-8

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

<sup>136</sup> Specific examples: *μαινόλα* OH 45 & 52, *μανίησιν* OH 46, *βακχευτά* OH 47, *θυρσομανέες* OH 50, *οϊστρομανεῖς* OH 51, *χορτομανέες* OH 52 or other references to revels and dances such as *κεχορευμένα* OH 46, *χοροῖσιν* OH 49, and *κώμων* OH 52 & 53

not only limited to Dionysiac worship; in fact, mania and trances are often associated with other aspects of Greek religion, one notable example with Apollo and his oracle at Delphi.<sup>137</sup> In the *Phaedrus* of Plato, he mentions that there are four different kinds of madness – prophetic, initiatory, poetic, and erotic – and each is associated with a different deity – Apollo, Dionysus, the Muses, and Aphrodite/Eros respectively.<sup>138</sup> In regards to the initiatory mania, or telestic mania – i.e. the type of mania most closely related to Dionysus – Plato elaborates on its function in the context of ritual in his *Laws*:

ἐξωθέν τις προσφέρει τοῖς τοιούτοις πάθεισι σεισμόν, ἢ τῶν ἐξωθεν κρατεῖ κίνησις προσφερομένη τὴν ἐντὸς φοβερὰν οὖσαν καὶ μανικὴν κίνησιν, κρατήσασα δέ, γαλήνην ἡσυχίαν τε ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φαίνεσθαι ἀπεργασαμένη τῆς περὶ τὰ τῆς καρδίας χαλεπῆς γενομένης ἐκάστων πηδήσεως, παντάπασιν ἀγαπητόν τι, τοὺς μὲν ὕπνου λαγχάνειν ποιεῖ, τοὺς δ' ἐγρηγορότας ὀρχουμένους τε καὶ αὐλουμένους μετὰ θεῶν, οἷς ἂν καλλιεροῦντες ἕκαστοι θύοσι, κατηγάσατο ἀντὶ μανικῶν ἡμῖν διαθέσεων ἕξεις ἐμφρονας ἔχειν. Καὶ ταῦτα, ὡς διὰ βραχέων γε οὕτως εἰπεῖν, πιθανὸν λόγον ἔχει τινά. (Pla. *Laws* 791 a-b)

... to affections of this kind, the external motion thus applied overpowers the internal motion of fear and frenzy, and by thus overpowering it, it brings about a manifest calm in the soul and a cessation of the grievous palpitation of the heart which had existed in each case. Thus, it produces very satisfactory results. The children it puts to sleep; the Bacchants, who are awake, it brings into a sound state of mind instead of a frenzied condition, by means of dancing and playing, with the help of whatsoever gods they chance to be worshipping with sacrifice. This is—to put it shortly—quite a plausible account of the matter.<sup>139</sup>

To Plato, and also an aspect of which is quoted in the Orphic Hymns, music and dance, referring back to our previous definition of the term μουσική as a union of musical, physical, and textual aspects, brings calm to those suffering from mania. Using this, one can see how music and mania would have functioned together in the context of the ritual setting behind this set of hymns.

Within these hymns, the *μανία* is often associated by a symbolism of release, one example of which being found in the Dionysian epithet *Λυσίος*, literally meaning one who releases, whose temple was housed in Thebes, his native land, as mentioned by Pausanias in his *Depiction of Greece*:

πρὸς δὲ ταῖς καλουμέναις πύλαις Προϊτίσι θεάτρον ᾠκοδόμηται, καὶ ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ θεάτρου Διονύσου ναὸς ἐστὶν ἐπίκλησιν Λυσίου: ἐνταῦθα οἱ Θηβαῖοι τὸ ἕτερον τῶν ἀγαλμάτων φασὶν εἶναι Σεμέλης: ἐνιαυτοῦ δὲ ἅπαξ ἐκάστου τὸ ἱερὸν ἀνοιγνύναι φασὶν ἐν ἡμέραις τακταῖς. (Paus. 9.16.6)

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<sup>137</sup> Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, (1985), 187

<sup>138</sup> Translated by Benjamin Jowett found on <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/phaedrus.html>

<sup>139</sup> Translated by R.G. Bury. Cambridge, MA, found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166%3Abook%3D7%3Apage%3D791>

Near the Proetid gate is built a theater, and quite close to the theater is a temple of Dionysus surnamed Deliverer ... One of the two images here the Thebans say is Semele. Once in each year, they say, they open the sanctuary on stated days.<sup>140</sup>

In the Euripidian *Bacchae*, Dionysus is present in Thebes and drives the women of the house of Kadmos into frenzy:

καὶ πᾶν τὸ θῆλυ σπέρμα Καδμείων, ὅσαι  
γυναῖκες ἦσαν, ἐξέμηνα δωμάτων:  
ὁμοῦ δὲ Κάδμου παισὶν ἀναμειγμέναι  
χλωραῖς ὑπ' ἐλάταις ἀνορόφοις ἦνται πέτραις.  
Δεῖ γὰρ πόλιν τήνδ' ἐκμαθεῖν, κεῖ μὴ θέλει,  
ἀτέλεστον οὔσαν τῶν ἐμῶν βακχευμάτων,  
Σεμέλης τε μητρὸς ἀπολογήσασθαί μ' ὕπερ  
φανέντα θνητοῖς δαίμον' ὃν τίκτει Δί. (Eur. Ba. 1 35-42)

And all the female offspring of Thebes, as many as are women, I have driven maddened from the house, and they, mingled with the daughters of Kadmos, sit on roofless rocks beneath green pines. For this city must learn, even if it is unwilling, that it is not initiated into my Bacchic rites, and that I plead the case of my mother, Semele, in appearing manifest to mortals as a divinity whom she bore to Zeus.<sup>141 142</sup>

Based on these two texts, along with the evidence from the Hymns and from Plato, it would seem that the role Dionysus plays in terms of these manic episodes is that he is at the same time inflictor of mania and releasor from it: “It is at one and the same time sickness and healing of sickness...”

<sup>143</sup> According to the text from the *Bacchae*, Dionysus causes the mania within the women of Thebes, and this mania can only be cured through participating in his mysteries, thus Dionysus curing and releasing them from the madness he inflicted in the first place. Referring briefly to the myth of Orpheus, after he fails to bring Euridice back from Hades, he is distraught and is then beset upon by a group of maenads, or followers of Dionysus. Because Orpheus refuses to participate in the rites of the maenads, he is torn to pieces. In these contexts, only participating in the rites of the god, and through the music of that god, can the mania be calmed.

This dual nature of mania – of madness and calm – directly reflects the Orphic concept of

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<sup>140</sup> Translated by W.H.S. Jones, Liit.D., and H.A. Ormerod, M.A., found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D16%3Asection%3D6>

<sup>141</sup> Translated by T. A. Buckley found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0092%3Acard%3D1>

<sup>142</sup> Dionysus Lysios is also related to Dionysus Perikionios, or “twined round the pillar.” Both are worshiped in Thebes and are related to the death of Semele. According to the myth regarding Dionysus’ birth, and in the *Bacchae*, the house of Semele was covered with ivy after her death. (Eur. Ba. 1 10)

<sup>143</sup> Rouget, *Music and Trance*, 197

universal harmony as detailed in the Orphic Hymn to Apollo. Rouget notes that

This fright [i.e. mania] is an internal movement (*kinesis*). Dance and “musia” then intervene as an “external shaking (*seismos*), and by virtue of their specific movement, which overcomes the earlier one and “overpowers” it, restore calm and tranquility... this movement is inseparable from the “harmonies and revolutions of the Universe.” By virtue of their movement, dance and “musia” are thus able, in short, to reintegrate into the ordering of the Universe the individual who had become separated from it by the disordered movement of fright.<sup>144</sup>

Through the *teletai*, or specific rites for a deity, one undergoes mania caused directly by the god, mania which can only be cured through participating in his rites. Through his μουσική, the mania is then calmed; they are thenceforth returned to the balance of the universe. As mentioned above, there is a belief that is common amongst Orphica stating that the universe exists in balance and harmony caused by a *vortex*, refer to note 116, or in other words the balance of the universe is maintained by constant motion. It could be said that the movement in the soul would reflect that same universal movement. Through the χόροι and μουσική which would take place during these rites, as described in the Orphic Hymns themselves, the body would externally move as caused by mania, restoring not only a balance to their souls but symbolically restoring balance to the universe as a whole.<sup>145</sup>

## RITUAL COMPARISONS AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Knowing that these hymns were used in a ritualistic setting of some sort, two questions arise regarding their function within the “Orphic” tradition: how did the music and ritual practices that were attributed to the name and label “Orphic” differ if they do from other practices around Greece and what cultural implications did these differences hold for the people who participated in these rites? As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the label of Orphic was attributed not to a group of people who followed a set doctrine of beliefs but to rituals and people that boasted a set of practices “extra-ordinary” to or set apart from what one might conceive as “usual ritual practice.”<sup>146</sup> Within this realm of thought, these hymns might have boasted the same extra-ordinary nature within the context of ritual traditions. It might, therefore, be likely to say that while the rituals carrying the name of Orpheus were not exclusionary in the idea that only a specific group of people separate from the rest of the *polis* would be able to participate, there would have been a

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<sup>144</sup> Rouget, *Music and Trance*, 204

<sup>145</sup> See also Figure 5.1 on page 207 in Rouget (1985) to see how music in movement relates to universal harmony and also how that relates to ritual in the context of the *polis*.

<sup>146</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 244

particular focus on maintaining the balance between extra-ordinary and ordinary, innovation and traditional, as a way of not only validating their mysteries in the context of the *polis* at large but also finding a way to stand out as innovative in comparison to these traditions.

One of the biggest aspects which relate Orphic rituals to those of the *polis* is the nature in which they set themselves apart from other city rituals. For example, Edmonds writes that there is a particular desire to reach a certain level of purity or connection with a specific deity; Through this,

The special rituals designed to perfect the individual's relation to a particular deity, often called *teletai* or mysteries, are unusual by their very nature; they are designed to provide a positive relation to a degree beyond that obtainable from the normal ritual interactions of mortals and gods in sacrifice and prayer.<sup>147</sup>

More detail on the specific types of Orphic rituals and their relationship to the *polis* will be discussed in the following chapter, but how does this idea relate our hymns to those of other ritual traditions? When making these comparisons, it is important to note that many individual aspects, when viewed on their own, can also be seen in the contexts of other cults; purification rituals, for example, were just as much a part of “city festivals” as they were for Orphic rituals, as were the use of hymns related to *μαυια* or various other aspects of Orphic mythology or philosophy, such as universal harmony. However, it was the intentional use of these elements in the context of *bricolage* as a means of showcasing innovation within traditional means in order to maintain balance through their rites.

Through their hymns, those who followed Orphic rites seemed to emphasize the philosophical notion of harmony and balance, which also parallels views regarding music as well. Looking back at the *Hymn to Apollo*, the composer of this hymn intentionally wrote the text in such a way as to show this notion. In line 7, the author of this hymn relates Apollo to Bacchos, to “seemingly” opposing deities but as shown in Chapter 2 intrinsically balanced in their relationship to music in ritual. In line 15, he is described as “the beginning and the end to come are yours.” Apollo is the deity that “harmonizes the poles” from the “highest to the lowest.” Both he and his music represent this Orphic idea of universal harmony. With this hymn in particular, this symbolism is extremely clear, but this idea is pervasive throughout the entire collection; for example, hymn no. 27 to the Mother of the Gods is the “queen of the sky; in the cosmos yours is the throne, the throne in the middle, because the earth is yours, and you give gentle nourishment

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<sup>147</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 197

to mortals,” specifically placed after hymn no. 26 to Earth who is also quoted as being the “mother of men and of the blessed gods.” Another example is found in comparing hymn 59 to the Fates and the text found within the Derveni Papyrus:

Μοῖρα γὰρ ἐν βίῳ καθορᾷ μόνον, οὐδέ τις ἄλλος  
ἀθανάτων, οἱ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου,  
καὶ Διὸς ὄμμα τέλειον· ἐπεὶ γ’ ὅσα γίγνεται ἡμῖν,

Μοῖρά τε καὶ Διὸς οἶδε νόος διὰπαντὸς ἅπαντα. (OH 59 11-14)

In life Fate alone watches; the other immortals who dwell on the peaks of snowy Olympos do not, except for Zeus’ perfect eye. Fate and Zeus’ mind know all things for all time. <sup>148</sup>

“Μοῖραν” δ’ “ἐπικλῶσαι” λέγοντες τὰ ἐόντα καὶ τὰ γενόμενα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα, ὅπως χρὴ γενέσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι καὶ παύσασθαι. (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. XIX)

When they say that “the Fates spin,” they say that the wisdom of Zeus ordains all that all things which are and were and will be ought to happen and to be and to cease to be.

“Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυτος” (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. XVI)

Zeus came first, Zeus lightning-bearer was last

Even Dionysus was of dual-birth, one divine with Persephone and the other mortal with Semele; from the death and rebirth of Dionysus with the death of the Titans by Zeus comes the dual-nature of man, one half titanic and the other divine.

When it comes to mania, this concept is also clear; within the context of Dionysiac rituals, the person inflicted with the madness uses μουσική in order to rid him/herself of the madness to restore balance. This is not a particularly Orphic concept. Again, mania was found in all aspects of Greek religion, from oracle divination to “inspiration” and of course ritual madness. However, we do see clear relations between the rituals mentioned in the Orphic Hymns and μουσική; for example, this line from Orphic Hymn 52

ὠμάδιε, σκηπτοῦχε, χορομανές, ἡγέτα κώμων·  
βακχεύων ἀγίας τριετηρίδας ἀμφὶ γαληνάς (OH 52 7-8)

says that the χορομανές, or the manic dances, bring γαληνάς, calm. This is also seen in Hymn no. 39 to Korybas,

κλῦθι, μάκαρ, φωνῶν, χαλεπὴν δ’ ἀποπέμπεο μῆνιν,  
παύων φαντασίας ψυχῆς ἐκπλήκτου ἀνάγκης. (OH 39 9-10)

O blessed one, hear our voices, banish harsh anger, free from fantasies souls stunned by compulsions [necessity].<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 48-9

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 35

With these examples, one can see that those who utilized Orpheus' name in these texts did not take these concepts out of thin air; ideas of mania and universal harmony were already prevalent throughout Greek religion. It is these ideas that have Orphism rooted in a sense of tradition. In order for this "movement" to seem viable and interesting to a population, it would make sense for it to be at first something that people would be able to find familiar. What sets Orphism apart, however, is how they take the familiar and use it in a way that sets them apart from other groups in the *polis*, with all of its extra-ordinary elements. That, in addition to its emphasis on maintaining balance (traditional vs innovation, ordinary vs extraordinary, universal harmony, etc.) that is a key marker in understanding Orphic rituals and their relationship not only to μουσική but to the *polis* at large; therefore, whether these hymns were written by one singular author or by multiple different authors, this symbolism is pervasive and intentional.



## Chapter 4 – Orphic Harmony and Μουσική in the Derveni Papyrus

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I discussed the usage of instrumentation in text and visual media and how these representations might have reflected ideals shared by the *polis* or by those who utilized Orphica in their rites, specifically symbolisms related to universal harmony and the balance between tradition vs innovation. In Chapter 3, I analyzed in detail the Orphic Hymns, looking at vocabulary that are specifically related to music and the three different aspects of μουσική – text, music, and physical movement – to see if these Orphic writings showed these same symbolisms as they related to the overall hymnic traditions of Classical and Hellenistic Greece and to see their possible use in a ritualistic setting. From here, I will broaden my scope to include the Derveni Papyrus in order to place another piece of Orphica within the context of the *polis* at large so as to attempt answering the questions of Orphism’s relationship to the *polis* and in what ways it utilized music (or musical symbolism) to either unite or separate itself from the wider Greek religious tradition. The Derveni Papyrus is proven to have clear connections to Orphic rituals, much like the hymns were; however, it features no explicit mention of music in its text. In light of this, scholars can on some level infer a similar connection between the poem mentioned in the Derveni Papyrus and those of other hymn types from the time (like the Homeric Hymns or even the later Orphic Hymns).<sup>150</sup> This chapter will begin with a detailed analysis of the contents of the papyrus, connecting it to ritual and the *polis*. Once the connection to ritual has been established, the chapter will use that information to determine what type of musicological information can be derived from this piece of Orphica in order to complete the link between μουσική and the Orphica in the context of the *polis*.

As a brief recap, because of the mystery nature of Orphism, little is known about the specifics behind their rites. From what we do have, scholars know that the writings of the Orphica follow a system of *bricolage* in that aspects of them are taken from traditions around them, either from the *polis* in which they were a part or from outside influences brought to them by merchants, travelers, etc. This fact tells scholars that Orphism, in its various forms, would have at a base level

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<sup>150</sup> The Derveni Papyrus is both an analysis of an Orphic poem, i.e. hymn, and an Orphic ritual; the text within the papyrus is not the poem itself. However, because we know that the hymn would have most likely been a part of the same hymnic tradition as defined in Chapter 3, we can use that same understanding towards this papyrus. Its similarities and differences to other hymns would have been treated the same way as the Orphic Hymns would have, simultaneously a part of tradition and *bricolage*.

operated within the tradition of the *polis* in which a specific piece of Orphica would have been found. When looking at how religion functioned within the *polis*, this comes as no surprise; because Greek religion did not function with a singular or normative code of beliefs, each variation of a specific cult would have differed from one *polis* to the next. With that being said, however, even though there was not a doctrine which placed Orphism as a unified religion, there are enough similarities within the various pieces of Orphica throughout history that some semblance of an Orphic tradition could be seen. In this case, there must have been some aspect of Orphism that drew people into its rites. While not a closed circle of initiates who excluded those who were not a part of the mysteries, some aspects of symbolism were only understood by those who were taught it, as is a fact in many Greek cults: many did have their own set of stories, rites, myths, and beliefs, even if Orphism implies a more comprehensive background. While Chapters 2 and 3 sought to uncover the symbolism behind the Orphica and their relationship to the world, this chapter will then place the rites and the Orphica used within them back into the context of Greek *polis* religion, attempting to place another piece of the puzzle that is the “Orphic mysteries.”

One of the most recently discovered examples of Orphica that relates the writings of “Orpheus” to specific cult rituals is the Derveni Papyrus, which was briefly presented in the introductory chapter. This papyrus is divided into two main sections: the first of which is a description by the author of a particular ritual ceremony featuring a sacrifice to the Erinyes and the second of which is an analysis of an Orphic poem detailing a theogony similar to that of Hesiod.<sup>151</sup> It is possible that the poem in the second part is related to the ceremony which occurs in the first; if so, this would grant scholars an inside look on the relation between Orphic texts, and by extension its implicit *μουσική*, and their religious ceremonies. Another aspect of this particular piece of Orphica is the relationship between the belief of the Derveni Author and the beliefs of other groups of people around him, namely those of the Pre-Socratics:

It appears that the Derveni author was influenced by other philosophers, including Anaxagoras, Diogenes, and most conspicuously Heraclitus, who is cited and mentioned by name (DP 4.5-9).<sup>152</sup>

Based on the symbolism used in his cosmogony, it would be likely that the author was inspired by Pre-Socratic ideologies, notably regarding the idea of universal harmony, recalling again this same

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<sup>151</sup> The papyrus describes the poem as a *hymnus*. Although it may not have been a hymn in the same way that the Orphic Hymns are, its clear use in ritual is all the evidence we have placing it in the same hymnic tradition as other hymns. Without the original text, it is almost impossible to say.

<sup>152</sup> Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, 53

symbolism as it related to both the lyre of Orpheus/Apollo and Dionysiac *mania*. It is also likely that given the prevalence of these ideologies in later Orphica, this influence was adapted and utilized in other Orphic circles.

First of all, it is important to understand who the Pre-Socratic thinkers were in history and how they were viewed and viewed themselves in context with the *polis*. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the name “Pre-Socratic” is a misnomer; it is an older term that was used to denote philosophers who were contrasted with Socrates. Chronologically, however, they do not pre-date him but are often his contemporaries.<sup>153</sup> Those named “Pre-Socratic” seemed to have been mostly concerned with matters of cosmological significance as opposed to moral issues, though this is mainly due to the fragments that still exist today – cosmogony, being the perfect movement of stars, could also be viewed as a moral model; they also considered themselves separate from other writers and poets, evidenced by a few fragments by Heraclitus:

Hesiod is most men’s teacher. Men are sure he knew very many things, a man who did not know day or night!  
They are one. R. P. 39 b <sup>154</sup>

One of the biggest markers of philosophers, notably starting with the Pre-Socratics, is the apparent desire to explain the universe with physical evidence and not with mythology.<sup>155</sup> However, not all philosophers labeled “Pre-Socratic” had the same base views on the world, but it is their “fundamental characteristic ... to explain the world in terms of its own inherent principles” that unites them together.<sup>156</sup> What is interesting about the Derveni Papyrus, and what will be explored further in this chapter, is how it is clearly influenced by Pre-Socratic philosophical ideas while also at the same time relating these ideas in a mythological and ritualistic context.

One of the biggest markers of Pre-Socratic influence in the Derveni Papyrus can be found in the utilization of “spinning” symbolisms; many Pre-Socratic thinkers believed that the universe existed on the basis of opposing elements kept in balance by a vortex or δίνη. For example, Democritus said

ἀεὶ κινουμένων τῶν ὄντων ἐν τῷ κενῷ (DK 68 A 40) <sup>157</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Patricia Curd, “Presocratic Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presocratics/> (published on 4 Apr. 2016)

<sup>154</sup> John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, London: A & C Black, 1920, as cited on [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments\\_of\\_Heraclitus](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus)

<sup>155</sup> An excellent source discussing the beginning of “Greek Rationality” is Heit’s “Did Rationality Originate in Ancient Ionia?”. Also, the works of Pierre Vesperini, such as “De Thalès à Anaxagore: les Ioniens à l’école des dieux.”

<sup>156</sup> Curd, “Presocratics”

<sup>157</sup> John Ferguson, “ΔΙΝΟΣ”, *Phronesis* 16, no. 2, 1971, 101 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4181862>

While things (i.e. the elements) are always moving in the void.

Πάντα τε κατ' ἀνάγκην γίνεσθαι, τῆς δίνης αἰτίας οὔσης τῆς γενέσεως πάντων, ἣν ἀνάγκην λέγει (D.L. 9, 45 = DK 68 A 1) <sup>158</sup>

And all things come to pass because of necessity, with the vortex being responsible for the creation of all things, he calls it necessity.

For those philosophers, the universe existed in constant motion, and that motion was caused in part by a vortex of elements constantly moving. These elements existed in pairs, fire and water, hot and cold, etc., and each philosopher had a different idea for which element was the base from which everything is derived: Anaximenes with air and Heraclitus with fire for example.<sup>159</sup> In the Derveni Papyrus, this idea of opposition in relationship to the universal vortex can also be found in a number of examples, this first of which coming from column 9 – this text resembles also a line from the Orphic Hymn to the Sun:

Γινώσκων οὖν τὸ πῦρ ἅτε μεμειγμένον τοῖς ἀλλοῖς, ὅτι ταράσσοι καὶ κ[ωλ]ύοι τὰ ὄντα συνίστασθαι διὰ τὴν θάλασσαν (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. IX)

Knowing now the fire as it mixes with the other (elements), it may agitate and prevent those things which are from mixing with one another because of the heat.

ρόμβου ἀπειρεσίου δινεύμασιν οἴμον ἐλαύνων ...

κόσμου τὸν ἐναρμόνιον δρόμον ἔλκων (OH 8 7-9)

You drive your way with an endless spinning motion... drawing in harmony the path of the universe

Within these two texts, fire has the capacity to “mix” with the other elements, much like the image of wine and water being mixed in a δίνος, related to the vortex δίνη. However, according to the Derveni author, if fire is too prevalent, its heat may actually prevent mixing and stop the universal vortex from taking place. For the Derveni author, this shows scholars that the intricate balance of the universe was held together by the particular balance of these “spinning” elements, further supported later on by this same symbolism in the Orphic Hymns.

However, the Derveni author was not just influenced by pre-Socratic philosophers; there is strong evidence within the Derveni papyrus to suggest that he was also influenced by Plato, notably in the relationship between the symbolism of “spinning” and the “Myth of Er” in Book X of Plato’s *Republic*. There is a passage within this specific mythological episode which details the “spindle” around which the heavenly bodies rotate, located on the knees of Necessity.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> E. Theodossiου and V. N. Manimanis, “The Cosmology of the Pre-Socratic Greek Philosophers”, *Memorie della Societa Astronomica Italiana Supplement 15*, 204 <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/2010MSAIS..15..204T>

καὶ ἰδεῖν αὐτόθι κατὰ μέσον τὸ φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὰ ἄκρα αὐτοῦ τῶν δεσμῶν τεταμένα—εἶναι γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ φῶς σύνδεσμον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, οἷον τὰ ὑποζώματα τῶν τριήρων, οὕτω πᾶσαν συνέχον τὴν περιφορὰν—ἐκ δὲ τῶν ἄκρων τεταμένον ἀνάγκης ἄτρακτον, δι’ οὗ πάσας ἐπιστρέφεσθαι τὰς περιφορὰς ... ἄλλας δὲ καθήμενας πέριξ δι’ ἴσου τρεῖς, ἐν θρόνῳ ἐκάστην, θυγατέρας τῆς ἀνάγκης, Μοίρας, λευχειμονούσας, στέμματα ἐπὶ τῶν κεφαλῶν ἐχούσας, Λάχεσιν τε καὶ Κλωθῶ καὶ Ἄτροπον, ὕμνεῖν πρὸς τὴν τῶν Σειρήνων ἀρμονίαν, Λάχεσιν μὲν τὰ γεγονότα, Κλωθῶ δὲ τὰ ὄντα, Ἄτροπον δὲ τὰ μέλλοντα. (Pla. *Rep.* 616; 617).<sup>160</sup>

To this they came after going forward a day's journey, and they saw there at the middle of the light the extremities of its fastenings stretched from heaven; for this light was the girdle of the heavens like the undergirders of triremes, holding together in like manner the entire revolving vault. And from the extremities was stretched the spindle of Necessity, through which all the orbits turned ... And there were another three who sat round about at equal intervals, each one on her throne, the Fates, daughters of Necessity, clad in white vestments with filleted heads, Lachesis, and Clotho, and Atropos, who sang in unison with the music of the Sirens, Lachesis singing the things that were, Clotho the things that are, and Atropos the things that are to be.<sup>161</sup>

As we briefly talked about in Chapter 2, this myth does have some relations between the *polis* imaginary and universal harmony, as evidenced by its relation to the lyre and the “music of the spheres.” However, there are direct correlations which link this myth to the rite as described in the Derveni Papyrus. In that particular Orphic theogony, Zeus is the father of Heavenly Aphrodite, who is considered in Orphic tradition to be the mother of Necessity.

Ζεὺς γείνατο θορνηὶ Πειθῶ, Ἀρμονίην, τε καὶ Οὐρανίην Ἀφροδίτην (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. XX)

Zeus bore Persuasion, Harmony, and Heavenly Aphrodite

Οὐρανίη ... Ἀφροδίτη ...

... δολοπλόκε μήτηρ ἀνάγκης

πάντα γὰρ ἐκ σέθεν ἐστίν, ὑπεξεύξω δέ τε κόσμον,

καὶ κρατέεις τρισσῶν μοιρῶν ... πειθοῖ (OH 55 1; 3-4; 9)

Heavenly Aphrodite ... O scheming mother of Necessity. Everything comes from you; you have yoked the world, you control all three realms [the three muses]... O Persuasion.<sup>162</sup>

In this tradition, Heavenly Aphrodite (the deific representation of Harmony) is the origin of the universal spindle which is maintained by her daughter, Necessity, and her three granddaughters,

<sup>160</sup> Notice the similarities between Plato’s description of the Fates and the one found in the Derveni Papyrus: “Μοῖραν” δ’ “ἐπικλῶσαι” λέγοντες τὰ ἔόντα καὶ τὰ γενόμενα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. XIX). There is also a direct link between Necessity here and the *Orphic Hymn* 39 to Korybas: κλυθι, μάκαρ, φωνῶν, χαλεπὴν δ’ ἀποπέμπεο μῆνιν, παύων φαντασίας ψυχῆς ἐκπλήκτου ἀνάγκης: O blessed one, hear our voices, banish harsh anger, free from fantasies souls stunned by Necessity.

<sup>161</sup> Translation by Paul Shorey found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D10>

<sup>162</sup> Athenassakis, *The Orphic Hymns*, 44-5

the three Fates.

This depiction of harmony relates directly to μουσική in a number of ways. This same description of harmony almost directly recalls that of the Orphic Hymn to Apollo as mentioned in both Chapters 2 and 3. The universal harmony as maintained by the pre-Socratic δίνη is the same that is created by the seven-stringed lyre of Apollo. This concept was not a foreign one to the Greeks. To them, the music created by the lyre would have spun and vibrated much like the planets to which they were attuned. For those reading or listening to these writings, the implicit musical symbolism would have been clearly understood in these references to universal harmony as mentioned by the pre-Socrates, Plato, and the Derveni author.

The Orphic Deity Protogonos, who was introduced in Chapter 3, is the link that connects both the philosophical teachings of the pre-Socrates and Plato and also the *polis* tradition as passed down by poets such as Hesiod.

Αἰδοῖον τὸν ἥλιον ἔφ[η]σεν εἶναι, δε[δήλ]ωται. ὅτι δὲ ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων τὰ νῦν γίνεται λέγει. «πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου, τῷ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀθάνατοι προσέφυμ μάκαρες θεοὶ ἠδὲ θεάιναι... (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. XVI)

He says that the sun is a phallus, it is shown. But he says that things now come from existing things. “The phallus of the first-born king [Protogonos] from which all the immortals came, the grand gods and goddesses...”

This deity is described in more detail in Aristophanes' *The Birds* under the name Eros:

... Ἐρέβους δ' ἐν ἀπείροσι κόλποις  
τίκει πρωτίστον ὑπηνέμιον Νύξ ἢ μελανόπτερος ῥόν,  
ἐξ οὗ περιτελλομένας ὥραις ἔβλασταν Ἔρωσ ὁ ποθεινός,  
στύλβων νῶτον πτερύγοιν χρυσαῖν, εἰκῶς ἀνεμώκεσι δίναις.  
Οὗτος δὲ Χάει πτερόεντι μιγείς νυχίῳ κατὰ Τάρταρον εὐρὺν  
ἐνεόττευσεν γένος ἡμέτερον, καὶ πρῶτον ἀνήγαγεν ἐς φῶς.  
Πρότερον δ' οὐκ ἦν γένος ἀθανάτων, πρὶν Ἔρωσ ξυνέμειξεν ἅπαντα:  
ξυμμιγνυμένων δ' ἐτέρων ἐτέροις γένητ' οὐρανὸς ὠκεανὸς τε  
καὶ γῆ πάντων τε θεῶν μακάρων γένος ἄφθιτον... (Arist. *Birds* 695-702)

Firstly, black-winged Night laid a germless egg in the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus, and from this, after the revolution of long ages, sprang the graceful Eros with his glittering golden wings, swift as the whirlwinds of the tempest ... That of the Immortals did not exist until Eros had brought together all the ingredients of the world, and from their marriage Heaven, Ocean, Earth and the imperishable race of blessed gods sprang into being.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Translation by Eugene O'Neill, Jr. found on [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%20text%2Ftext%2F1-100001a.html)

For the Derveni author, though not necessarily the creator of this myth, the spinning aspect of Protogonos and its relationship with the sun, the most powerful fire (relating back to the vortex described by Heraclitus), and the creation of all things was probably influenced in part by the Pre-Socratics. In its connection to Plato, as Zeus swallows the phallus of Protogonos, he takes into himself all of the creation that Protogonos represented, as noted in column XVI of the papyrus:

Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένητο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέρανος (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. XVI)

Zeus came first, Zeus lightning-bearer was last

One could say that in a literal sense, Zeus became the very vortex which Protogonos represented, passing it to his daughter Harmony, who is the originator of the universal vortex mentioned in the “Myth of Er.” In the Derveni Papyrus, he is using a philosophical explanation for the creation and maintenance of the universe and is relating it to a mythological tale, more than likely another example of *bricolage*.

It is important to contextualize the Orphic cosmogony and theogony as described in the Derveni Papyrus and compare it to the *polis* tradition (in this case, the widely accepted theogonic tradition as described by Hesiod) before embarking on its use in Orphic ritual specifically. As we have seen before, the deity Protogonos has direct correlation with the symbolism of the lyre as a means of bringing about universal harmony. This episode in the Derveni Papyrus has direct reflections in the theogony of Hesiod. For example, whereas in the Orphic theogony, Zeus both cuts the genitals of Protogonos and then swallows them, this account can be seen in two different episodes in Hesiod: the first with the transfer of power from Ouranos to Cronos and then to Zeus, and the second in the episode regarding the swallowing of Metis and the birth of Athena. In the first of these episodes, Cronos cut off the genitals of his father in hatred and, with this deed, assumed the power to rule (Hes *Theo* 179-82). After Cronos received a prophecy that one of his own would in turn usurp the throne from him, he swallowed his own children, all except Zeus who was saved by Rhea; in this instance, the act of swallowing failed Cronos (Hes. *Theo* 455-506). Zeus then ended up taking the power from his father as ruler over the skies and the heavenly realm. When Zeus ended up receiving the same prophesy from his grandparents, he tricked Metis, representation of cunning and wisdom to the Greeks, and swallowed her before she could bear a son; however, she was with child, and Athena was born from the head of Zeus (Hes. *Theo* 885-900). As we can see between these two different myths, while they are different in content, the

episodes still line up; in fact, one could outline the same “spinning” symbolisms between the two mythologic traditions.<sup>164</sup> By comparing these two works in this way, one can see to what extent the Orphica was indeed a part of the *polis* tradition. Orphism was not a completely separate entity that existed outside of the *polis* religion, operating as what some call “The Orphic Exception.” In fact, the reason why Orphism and the Orphica were able to gain and maintain popularity was because they related to what the members of that *polis* were accustomed to. They just provided another way of explaining phenomena, such as the creation of the universe and the nature of the standard Greek pantheon with philosophical ideas. In addition to this, they were not the only group to do this; philosophy as a concept was created as a means of explaining the universe with more or less physical phenomena. Orphica and Orphic rites are just specifically marked together by their intentional use of certain elements and relating them in part to established ritual conventions.

Knowing now to the extent that the Derveni author was influenced by pre-Socratic and Platonic philosophy and how that could be applied to myth, how does this symbolism relate in part to Orphic rituals? In order to understand the relationship between this symbolism and the rite described in the earlier part of the Derveni Papyrus, it is important to understand the context in which this was written. Meisner quotes it best when he says that the Derveni author “uses his philosophy to promote his own expertise as better than others in his field.”<sup>165</sup> Edmonds also mentions that the Derveni author is one of the “religious specialists who ... ‘make a craft of the rites,’ providing ritual services to a variety of clientele in different circumstances.”<sup>166</sup> Therefore, it is likely that this text was written by a religious expert who sought to showcase his own knowledge as it came to the philosophical nature of this particular Orphic poem. Knowing this, it would be the case that while the poem featured in the author’s analysis could have been used in the ritual ceremony described in the first part of the papyrus, the text in the papyrus itself was not used directly in rites. This is true not only for just his analysis of the poem itself but of the sacrifice as well. In the first six columns, he is not merely describing step-by-step how to perform the sacrifice, but he is also detailing what should be used and why those specific elements should be used; he is once again detailing his particular knowledge on the Orphic rites as opposed to his

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<sup>164</sup> Ouranos, as a representation of the sky, makes his “spinning” rotation in the heavens, much like Helios. For the Greeks, Metis was an Oceanid, a being who was whirling in nature, and so the Greek word μήτις is equated to a type of wisdom which is not straight but whirls around itself. Even Cronos is called ἀγκυλομήτης in his epithets.

<sup>165</sup> Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, 54

<sup>166</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 106



opponents.<sup>167</sup> Sarah Iles Johnston brings up the point regarding the Orphic myth regarding the birth of Dionysus which can be applied here to our Derveni author; there are four possible models, though non-exclusive, for the creation and usage of mythic aspects of this nature by the Orphic authors: 1) the myth existing prior to the author writing it down<sup>168</sup>, 2) the author misappropriating the myth by labeling it as “Orphica”, 3) the author believing that the words he was writing/analyzing was truly the words of Orpheus, and 4) the author believing that his words were “divinely inspired” and that his attribution of Orpheus’ name was attributing them to a more renowned poet associated with cosmogonic poetry.<sup>169</sup> In the case of the Derveni Papyrus, it is difficult to say whether any of these aspects specifically apply to the author; however, Johnson also says it best that “for the best chance at success, new myths and cults need to tie in to established ones.”<sup>170</sup> In regards to his philosophy, in order to best spread it with its conjunction to myth and for it to succeed, it would have needed to, in part, relate to the established traditions which the people were used to.

With this contextualization, it is feasible to say that much like the author was using his knowledge to separate himself above his contemporaries, the symbolism within this texts marks also a certain level of innovation within the system of the traditional religious system of the *polis*. Edmonds says that

[t]he apparently ‘rationalizing’ exegesis that explain Orpheus’ cosmogonic hymn according to the motion of air, fire, and other elements, are not anti-religious but rather representative of the most avant-garde trends in theological discourse. Such ideas might seem extra-ordinarily strange and perverse to some, but they were intended to appeal to their audience as extra-ordinarily arcane and wise.<sup>171</sup>

On the one hand, this particular philosophical outlook on an Orphic cosmogony could have been interpreted by some as blasphemous while on the other hand, it would have been intriguing to others; it provided a different way to worship the gods in addition to the established traditions of the *polis*. This would in turn entice people who were interested in these more tangible cosmological explanations not only to participate in these rituals but would have also persuaded them to return,

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<sup>167</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 129-30

<sup>168</sup> Unfortunately, there is no proof as to if these myths did or did not exist before the writing. Just because we do not have any evidence of it existing prior, much like with the myth of Orpheus’ katabasis before the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, that does not mean that it did or did not; it just means that whatever evidence has not been discovered yet.

<sup>169</sup> Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnson, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, 71-2

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 73

<sup>171</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 131

in this case to the services which the Derveni author was providing. This also relates to Edmonds' idea of Orphism being marked by its particular intent to separate themselves from the traditional by this "extra-ordinary" nature, much like the pre-Socratics efforts to place themselves apart from others. It is not as all philosophers they were trying to create a completely separate set of beliefs that contradict the myths of the *polis*, even though some philosophers were critical of myths.<sup>172</sup> In fact, Plato regularly uses new myths in his writings, especially in the cases which

pertain to everything having to do with the soul and with the distant past ... he [also] recognizes the efficacy of myth in the field of ethics and politics for most of those individuals who are not philosophers and in whose souls the desiring (*epithumia*) part predominates.<sup>173</sup>

These philosophical explanations, when related to the mythological tradition in which people would have been raised, might have been intriguing to people, especially as another way of explaining the nature of the universe: as Brisson states regarding Aristotle's views on myth, "it is equivalent to a reappropriation of that [mythological] tradition, of the memory shared by all Greeks, and in particular all Athenians."<sup>174</sup> For the common person in the *polis*, they would have more than likely not been privy to the deep philosophical nature behind the creation of the universe; more than likely the Derveni author knew this, hence his reasoning behind creating an allegorical analysis of this Orphic poem and connecting the philosophical symbolism with myth.<sup>175</sup>

Knowing this, what kind of rite could the Derveni author be describing in this instance to warrant Pre-Socratic philosophical allusions and how exactly would μουσική have been used within it? In the beginning columns of the papyrus, the author makes several references to the "Erinyes" and "Eumenides":

Μύσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι κ[ατὰ τὰ] αὐτὰ μάγοις. Εὐμενίδες γὰρ ψυχαί εἰσιν. (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. VI)  
Initiates make the preliminary sacrifice to the Eumenides, in the same way as the magi. For the Eumenides are souls.

This ritual is also related to the symbolism found in the second part of the papyrus; the Derveni author quotes Heraclitus, saying

The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out.  
R. P. 39.

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<sup>172</sup> Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 1-2

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 26

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>175</sup> Dwayne Meisner also reaches the same conclusion; he says that in relation to the theogonies, the early Orphic poets used them "as a means to think about the nature of the gods in ways that were different from Hesiod" (*Orphic Tradition*, 46). This was not only an Orphic aspect; Meisner then goes on to discuss Plato's treatment of myth in the same way, as a *bricoleur*, citing Edmonds 2004: 221-237.

The Erinyes are marked by “spinning” symbolism as well, described as “snake-haired” (OH 69 16; 70 10) and as “in charge of Necessity,” ἀνάγκη (OH 70 5), related both to the vortex by Democritus as cited above (See note 6) and to Plato’s spindle, and by extension the spinning notes of the lyre.<sup>176</sup> Not only does this fact further connect this work with the pre-Socratics, but it also further connects the ritual with the poem being analyzed in the second half. It is likely the case that the ritual, with the visual of the smoke from the sacrifice spiraling to the heavens, is used to appease the “vengeful souls” of the Erinyes, perhaps as a way to maintain the universal balance caused by Ἀνάγκη.

One can not be sure of exactly what kind of ritual this particular text was referencing, most likely a purification ritual of some sort. However, one can see that sacrifices were not made to just the Erinyes alone though probably to other chthonic deities, as evidenced in column VI of the papyrus, but the Erinyes did receive a special place in the ceremony as the first to receive the sacrifice. The joint sacrifices to both chthonic deities and Olympian deities, as Walter Burkert describes them, was a common occurrence in Greek ritual ceremonies. Much like the dichotomy between the aulos and the lyre, chthonic and Olympian rites functioned as two sides of the same coin, fundamentally opposed to each other but still united in the *polis*.

The cult of the dead and the cult of the gods have much in common both in the patterns of ritual and in their psychological and social functions. In both there are fixed places of worship set apart from profane use, and in both there are sacral meals through which common fellowship is established, with animal sacrifices, fire, food offerings, libations, and prayers.<sup>177</sup>

For this particular chthonic ritual, it is likely one of purification as evidenced by the description of the sacrifice in column VI:

Τὴν θυσίην τούτου ἔνεκεμ ποιῶσιν οἱ μάγοι, ὡσπερὶ ποινὴν ἀποδιδόντες, (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. VI)

The *magoi* make the sacrifice because of this, as if they are paying a blood-debt.

However, one question that arises is whose blood debt is being paid if the initiates (μυσται) are all participating in this sacrifice? It is unlikely that if there were more than one person undergoing this ritual “initiation”, they would all be in the need of a purification sacrifice to appease the Erinyes, even one of cakes, milk and water. Edmonds offers a possibility based on the “extraordinary” nature of “Orphics.”

One of the cues most likely to indicate the label of Orphic is an emphasis on maintaining or obtaining purity,

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<sup>176</sup> Athanassakis, *Orphic Hymns*, 55-6

<sup>177</sup> Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991, 199

especially during the Classical and Hellenistic periods... The rituals founded by Orpheus often involve purification of the individual as an instrument to special and privileged relations with the divine...<sup>178</sup>

It is likely that this ritual is purificatory in the sense that it allows the initiands to maintain a special relationship to the deities in which the sacrifices are being made:

Participation in such rites could be a cause of pride, a mark of piety and holiness, and some, like Apuleius, could point to the fact that they had undergone many such rites as a proof of their status as respectable worshippers of the gods. On the other hand, excess in such exercises might be seen as ridiculous, like the superstitious client of the Orpheotelest who comes once a month to undergo the ritual.<sup>179</sup>

In fact, the Orphic Hymn to the Eumenides summons them to “bring me holiness of mind” (OH 70 11). This viewpoint also reflects what was said about the Orphic Hymns and their structure, i.e. their goal to use ritual as a means of creating intimate relations between the mortals and the deities to whom they were making sacrifices.

Another important aspect mentioned in this papyrus is the use of μουσική and ὕμνοι. The papyrus makes mention of incantations done by *magoi* as they are performing the sacrifice; the *magoi* were Persian priests who prepared sacrifices in that particular tradition. The Derveni author makes specific reference to the traditions and songs of these *magoi* in the context of this rite, and scholars have an idea about how this rite would have looked based on a passage from Herodotus’ *Histories*:

θυσίη δὲ τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι περὶ τοὺς εἰρημένους θεοὺς ἦδε κατέστηκε: οὔτε βωμοὺς ποιῶνται οὔτε πῦρ ἀνακαίουσι μέλλοντες θύειν, οὐ σπονδῆ χρέωνται, οὐκὶ αὐλῶ, οὐ στέμμασι, οὐκὶ οὐλῆσι: διαθέντος δὲ αὐτοῦ Μάγος ἀνήρ παρεστεῶς ἐπαείδει θεογονίην, οἷν δὴ ἐκεῖνοι λέγουσι εἶναι τὴν ἐπαιοιδίην: ἄνευ γὰρ δὴ Μάγου οὐ σφι νόμος ἐστὶ θυσίας ποιέεσθαι. (Her. *Hist.* 132.1&3)

And this is their method of sacrifice to the aforesaid gods: when about to sacrifice, they do not build altars or kindle fire, employ libations, or music, or fillets, or barley meal ... When he has so arranged it, a Magus comes near and chants over it the song of the birth of the gods, as the Persian tradition relates it; for no sacrifice can be offered without a Magus.<sup>180</sup>

In this context, we see that the sacrificial scene would not have looked like those presented in Chapter 2; there would be no auloi and no dancing. Instead, the *magoi* would approach the sacrifice after it had been prepared and sang a hymn regarding the birth of the gods, most likely in the case of the Derveni Papyrus, the hymn mentioned in the second part of the papyrus.

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<sup>178</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 196-7

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 215 & 216

<sup>180</sup> Translation by A. D. Godley found on <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hdt.+1.132&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126>

ἐπωιδὴ δὲ μάγων δύνатаι δαίμονας ἐμποδῶν γινομένους μεθιστάναι ... μυσται Εὐμενίσι προθύουσι κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ μάγοις (OF Pars II. Fasc. 3 col. VI)

The enchantment of the *magoi* can remove the daimons present in one's path... Initiates make sacrifices to the Eumenides in the same manner as the *magoi*.

In the context of the *polis* religion, this small change would have been drastically different from what people would have seen in city-wide cults. As noted in the previous chapters, music and μουσική were intrinsically linked with their ritual ceremonies; music played an integral part not only in allowing human connections with their deities but also as a means of expressing cultural identities and imaginaries. Many ancient sources specifically mention whenever μουσική was absent from rites, emphasizing the relative oddity of it not being present. The most likely reason for its absence in this case is the “exoticism” of using Near Eastern aspects in a Greek ritual; in fact, taking exotic elements from foreign rites and deities is well-evidenced and -documented throughout all periods of the Greco-Roman world. Therefore, for the myth being described in the Derveni Papyrus, it is likely that the priest (or the individual performing the sacrifice, i.e. the initiates) would not have used lyres or auloi in this rite but would have instead chanted this theogonic Orphic ὕμνος over the sacrifice *a capella*.

In addition to the lack of instruments in this particular rite, one of the key connections between Orphism and Persian rites – as noted by Edmonds, Meisner, West, and other scholars of ancient religion – is a tendency to utilize “extraordinary sources” or details from Near Eastern myths.<sup>181</sup> This could be the result of a few different aspects coming together. On the one hand, Orpheus, and by extension Dionysus, are often marked by their “foreignness.”

The unknown author of the Derveni papyrus argues that Orpheus' bizarre tales actually compel the reader to seek for their hidden meanings ... The myths he tells, and the rituals to which some of these myths pertain, are at times also labeled as foreign, deriving from some non-Greek source. Some of these mythic elements may actually have been foreign, but the name of Orpheus is often used as a way to mark things within the Greek tradition as strange or extraordinary where there is no real indication that they derived from another cultural tradition.<sup>182</sup>

As Orpheus was the son of a Thracian king, it does seem likely that his name would be used to attribute certain elements as foreign in the context of the traditional *polis* system. Along the same line as the use of philosophy to explain cosmological matters, this could have been intriguing to

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<sup>181</sup> See Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 80; also Meisner, *Orphic Tradition*, 282; and West, *The Orphic Poems*, 20

<sup>182</sup> Edmonds, *Redefining Ancient Orphism*, 80, 81

other members of the *polis*, as a way of convincing them to participate in the rites. Another element, as West mentions citing E.R. Dodds, could have been a cultural reaction to specific events happening around Greece during the period:

Under the stresses of the Peloponnesian War and the Plague, people turn increasingly to superstition, and there is a new market for diviners and purveyors of charms, exotic cults, and religious revelations. Oracles of Musaeus and Bakis, last heard of at the time of the Persian Wars, circulate again.<sup>183</sup>

There seems to have been a fascination with charms and myths told by shamans of Near East religions, so this particular Orphic ritual takes aspects from these Persian rites and appropriates them into his own rite, a direct result of *bricolage*. While the inclusion of Near Eastern elements was not strictly Orphic, nor was it a 5<sup>th</sup> century Athenian creation, it was, as Meisner puts it, “characteristically Orphic.”<sup>184</sup> Marketing this rite with both notably philosophical elements and Near Eastern aspects does not separately make the factors of this papyrus innovative, but it is the unique combination of elements as they relate to the established *polis* traditions that both marks it as innovative and provides valid cues between this work and other Orphica.

As evidenced in this chapter, the Derveni Papyrus is the link that combines many of the aspects previously discussed and places them in the context of the *polis*. It contains an analysis of a theogonic poem similar to that of Hesiod that allows one to see just how Orphica can indeed relate to an established religious tradition within the *polis*. The clear use of pre-Socratic and Platonic symbolisms then in turn give scholars an idea into the very nature of the Derveni author, explaining how the symbolisms relate not only to the theogony of the second half but an Orphic rite as described in the first half. From there, one can see the relationship between this particular Orphic rite and the city rites, extending our understanding not only of Orphic rituals but the role that they play in the overall *polis*. Μουσική and its relation to the Derveni Papyrus open the door into understanding exactly how this work interacts with the imaginary of the *polis* to which it belongs. The discovery of the Derveni Papyrus was one of the most important discoveries of Orphic research. With it, scholars are able to answer some of the most asked questions in terms of how Orphic rites could have looked and how they could have utilized Orphica, the use of which being one of the key definers of what makes something “Orphic.”

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<sup>183</sup> E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 188-95, as cited in West, *The Orphic Poems*, 20-1

<sup>184</sup> Meisner, *The Orphic Tradition*, 283

## Chapter 5 – Conclusion: What Now

The goal of this research project was to better understand how the Orphica, and the overall Orphic tradition, fit in the context of the Greek religious system. In order to do this, I picked a specific aspect, μουσική, and tried to figure out a few different things: 1) I looked at how it related to aspects of cultural identity and the *polis* imaginary, and then how that in turn was reflected using a model such as the *polis religion* model created by Sourvinou-Inwood. 2) I then took specific pieces of Orphica that I knew for a fact had religious functions, i.e. the Orphic Hymns and the Derveni Papyrus, and placed it against the backdrop of the *polis* tradition in order to determine the role that each of those individual pieces of Orphica played within the context of the Greek city. As an overall uniting factor between them, it was the insisted use of philosophical learnings – specifically those from pre-Socratic philosophers and Plato for instance – that played a huge role in how the Orphics organized their rituals. For example, in the context of the Orphic Hymns, the idea of a “universal harmony” is pervasive throughout the corpus. Many of the hymns, such as no. 8 to the Sun and no. 34 to Apollo, mention the relationship between those deities, their “golden lyres”, and the “harmony” they bring to the universe. Later on, the hymns surrounding the birth(s) of Dionysus relate the concept of *mania*, closely related to Dionysus and his μουσική, as a way to not only bestow calm but also bring *harmonia*. In the case of the Derveni Papyrus, the “harmony of the universe” is extended to include the pre-Socratic concept of the “universal vortex” as caused by the elements, the most powerful of which (according to the Derveni author) being fire as caused by the Sun. The harmony about which the Derveni author speaks is directly related to the Orphic theogony, which directly relates to rites and sacrifices to the Erinyes and potentially other chthonic deities.

What I was able to deduce from this research was that the Orphics were not alone in using these aspects in their mythologies nor were they an entity completely separated and isolated from the *polis* at large. In fact, they were bound by the same traditional aspects which had been passed down not only to them but to every aspect of the *polis*’ religion. It was, however, their careful usage of these symbolisms in their own ritual contexts that allowed me to find what made Orphic rites not only innovative but also traditional. There was a need for their rites to both intrigue those participating to stay involved but also relate them to what they had been familiar with for their entire lives. When looking in the context of the hymnic tradition, the Delphic hymns also showed

this same level of innovation in the ritual celebrations at Delphi. With those hymns, in particular the Delphic Hymn to Apollo, scholars see an intentional use of innovation as a way of drawing people in; the same could be said for the Orphica within their own rituals. Within the framework of *bricolage*, for example, the authors of each individual piece of Orphica would have taken aspects from other myths/cultures that were not only interesting to him but were also intriguing to the people whom they were trying to reach. In the case of the *orpheotelestai*, these innovative aspects would have been employed as a way of “selling their rites” to their consumers. For the Derveni author, the innovation used in his usage of both philosophical aspects and Near Eastern ritual practices would have shown to people his unique interpretation of Orpheus’ words and rites.

Μουσική in the context of Orphic rites was also directly related to the pervasive usage of symbolic representations of universal harmony. Μουσική was one of the most popular ways to represent the harmonic balance within the universe, from Pythagoras to Plato, the ideal model being the seven-stringed lyre; for most people in the various Greek *poleis*, this idea would have been well-known. Along with its presence as a universal construct, notably with the music of the spheres, the harmony of its dual nature – both Dionysiac and Apollonian – was also seen with the same light. Both the lyre and the aulos, in seemingly opposing worlds, had their own place in the context of Greek rituals, each with their own role to play; it was the unity of these two instrument groups within the context of various parts of the ritual ceremony that allowed citizens to connect not only with their deities but also with the *polis* at large. The same balance of opposing forces can also be seen in the concept of *mania*, especially telestic mania. Μουσική, and by extension their patron deities Apollo and Dionysus, has the power to both cause mania and release those who suffer from it. According to the Orphic hymns, it is the power of Dionysus’ music which both generates the mania in his rites and restores the calm, bringing harmony back to the initiands. One of the clearest connections between *mania*, harmony, and Platonic philosophy also occurs in the Orphic Hymn no. 39 to Korybas where the mania is directly caused by Necessity (see note 161); Necessity, driver of the universal vortex, is also the one who brings mania to the initiands. Within the Orphic tradition, mania is directly related to the harmony of the universe.

This research focused on mainly two pieces of Orphica and their relationship to ritual; however, there are many other examples of Orphica found throughout the Greco-Roman world, including but not limited to the Rhapsodic Hymns, other theogonic fragments, the gold lamellae, etc. My reasoning for choosing these specific pieces of Orphica were two-fold. One was the time



restraint, having only one year to write this thesis, and the second was the clear and obvious link between the prior two pieces of Orphica and rituals. That does not mean that the other pieces of Orphica were not involved in ritual ceremonies, so further research will need to be done in order to see exactly how the other works could have/would have related to Orphic rites. Another limiting factor in this research was the lack of direct connection between iconographical pieces of evidence and specifically Orphic rites; while it does not mean that these images never existed, it is difficult to see any direct correlations between the pieces of art and Orphic rites specifically. However, further research can be done on the role of μουσική in iconographical representations of cult groups closely related to those of Orpheus, namely the cults to Demeter and Dionysus, in order to see the role that musical instruments played in those cults, extending the reach to include other instruments, such as percussion instruments and the various other stringed instruments. Research in the realm of the Orphics is constantly undergoing changes; as new evidences arise, oftentimes that has the possibility of completely changing our understanding of how mystery religions and semi-public cults functioned in the context of the *polis*. However, despite the fact that many aspects of Orphism remain wrapped in an enigma, we can safely say that for the Greeks, their religion and their μουσική was an integral part of their daily lives, allowing themselves to see idealized versions of themselves in their deities; this fact, as reflected in their art and literature, is what allows their lives and views to persist even today.

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