

ALBERTO BERNABÉ (ed.), *Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta. Poetae Epici Graeci. Pars II. Fasc. 1*. Bibliotheca Teubneriana, München-Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2004, lxxxv + 394 pp., ISBN 3-598-71707-5.

The book under review is the first volume of the second part of Bernabé's edition of Greek epic poets. The first part, published in 1987 (second edition in 1996), covered the poets of the epic cycle. The second part, an edition of the *Orphica*, will ultimately consist of three volumes; the first two volumes were published in 2004 and 2005 respectively, and the third is announced to come out late in 2006. The Orphic material is divided into two main parts that do not correspond to the division into two volumes. Part I, which takes up the entire Volume I and more than half of Volume II, contains fragments of and testimonies about Orphic poems, as well as testimonies about Orphic rites and Orphic practitioners and their relationship to other religious movements and rites. The second half of Volume II contains Part II, which presents the testimonia about Orpheus, his assumed disciples and followers (from Eumolpus and Museaus to Empedocles and Onomacritus), and authors who were supposed to compose, use, or interpret Orphic poetry. The third volume will contain the fragments of Musaeus, Linus, Epimenides, an Appendix containing the integral text of the Derveni papyrus, and numerous indexes. The object of this review, Fasc. 1 of Pars II, thus contains only about the first half of Part I of Part II of the *Poetae Epici Graeci*. For a proper assessment of the book, it is crucial to see that it is only a part—even though a central part—of a monumental, many-layered edifice.

As the preface makes it explicit, Bernabé's edition of Orphic fragments is designed to replace Otto Kern's *Orphicorum fragmenta* published in 1922, a book that served well generations of scholars. Bernabé's magisterial work, without any doubt, succeeds in its fundamental objective and will remain for a long time an essential

tool for anyone working on any topic related to Orphism. It is superior to Kern's in many respects, especially in its coverage, selection, and arrangement. It is a magnificent piece of scholarship that contains an unprecedented wealth of source texts accompanied by a very detailed philological apparatus and a vast amount of information about modern interpretations.

The most conspicuous difference between the two editions is their mere sizes. Overall, the new edition is more than three times larger than the one it is meant to replace. Kern lists 625 text items (262 testimonia and 363 fragments) while Bernabé's numbering in Vol. II ends at item number 1151. The fragments in the first two volumes (thus not counting Vol. III) take up 947 pages as compared to the 344 pages in Kern. The differences in these numbers come only partly from the new pieces of evidence discovered since Kern's time. The disparity in the literature used is even more striking. Kern's bibliography occupies 6 pages, while Bernabé's takes up 71 pages, with a further 14 pages in the Addendum of Volume II. Once again, even though the main part of the extra in Bernabé's bibliography is a result of the boom of literature since Kern, his coverage is much superior also for the time before Kern. To show the differences in depth and breadth, here are four randomly picked titles from the numerous items that were published before Kern, but are listed only by Bernabé: I. G. Hauptmann, *Prolusiones III de Orphei doctrina* (Gerae 1757); C. G. Haupt, *Orpheus, Homerus, Onomacritus sive theologiae et philosophiae initia apud Graecos* (Königsberg 1864); A. Dietrich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie II* (Leipzig 1903); A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge 1914). Indeed, Bernabé's comprehensive familiarity with the literature leaves its mark literally on every page of his edition, and the stupendous amount of philological and interpretative information compressed in the apparati is an invaluable help for any student of these texts<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the typographical conventions of the Teubneriana provide a format that is not particularly user friendly in the case of such extensive parallel apparati (one for the source or sources of the fragment, one for the parallels, one for interpretative questions etc.). As the different parallel apparati often run through several pages, it becomes unclear at

The next momentous difference is in the arrangement of the material. Kern starts his edition with the testimonia about Orpheus, his life, deeds, poetry, disciples, etc. A short section follows on authors who were said to be Orphics, descriptions of the 'Orphic life' and the *orpheotelestai*, then lists of the Orphic writings and of the supposed authors of Orphic texts. It is in Pars posterior that Kern presents the fragments from the different poems considered Orphic and the prose testimonia thereof. The difference is not only that Bernabé switches Kern's ordering between texts about Orpheus and Orphic texts, but that he arranges the testimonia about the Orphic practitioners, *orpheotelestai* and initiates, and their assumed rites together with the Orphic poems. It seems to me that both the reversal of the two parts and the relocation of the texts about Orphic actors and their religious practices and identities are happy choices. It is also a reflection of the fact that the focus of scholarly interest is on Orphism, its texts, practitioners, practices, and not on the mythical figure of Orpheus.

Bernabé indicates the nature of each fragment by one of the three letters F, T, and V. F texts (*fragmenta*) are those that our sources attribute to Orpheus or are described as Orphic (also by such tags as *hieros logos*, *palaios logos*, or *teletai*). Texts of direct transmission (papyri, inscriptions, and gold tablets) that expound doctrines that other sources describe as Orphic belong also in this category. The second category, the T texts (*testimonia*) are those that describe, from an external point of view, Orphic texts, doctrines or rites. Finally, there are the V texts (*vestigia*) that are not *strictu sensu* Orphic or describe Orphic texts, but show clear traces of Orphic influence<sup>2</sup>. These indications are no

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which part of the next page a given note continues, whether the space between chunks of text marks the next paragraph of the same note or the beginning of a different apparatus or again the continuation of something from the previous page.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from the *Praefatio*, see the more detailed description in A. Bernabé, "Nuovi frammenti orfici e una nuova edizione degli orfika", in

doubt useful. I however sometimes find it confusing why many doxographical reports are marked by Fs, and why for example verses from the *Orphic Argonautica* receive Ts.

The arrangement within Kern's Pars posterior, i.e. the proper Orphic fragments, is a mixture of different ordering principles: chronological, thematic, and alphabetical, starting with a section called *Fragmenta veteriora*, which is a ragbag of thematically different texts, ordered primarily, but not entirely consistently, according to the date of the source text from Aristophanes' *Birds* to Clemens of Alexandria and different scholiasts. Bernabé's arrangement is much more consistent. The primary organizing principle is thematic, and the fragments are chronological ordered within the thematic sections<sup>3</sup>.

The first and largest section contains fragments from different theogonic poems, which could also be called *hieroi logoi*. It is once again a good decision to start the collection with these texts in so far as our sources clearly indicate the central importance of such poems in Orphism. The first fragment is the assumed *incipit* of Orphic theogonies, which is followed by fragments from the poem quoted and interpreted in the Derveni papyrus. The third group of fragments is called *Eudemi theogonia*. The basis for this denomination is Damascius' report according to which Eudemus knew about a theogony attributed to Orpheus in which Night was the first divinity (*De princ.* 3.162.19 Westerink = fr. 150 Wehrli). Bernabé, following M. L. West (*The Orphic*

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M. Tortorelli Ghidini – A. Storchi Marino – A. Visconti (eds.), *Tra Orfeo e Pitagora: Origini e incontri di culture nell'antichità*, Napoli 2000, 43-80.

<sup>3</sup> Part One of the *Orphica* is divided into eleven sections. Volume I: (1) theogonic poems/*hieroi logoi*; (2) poems about Demeter and Persephone; (3) poems about the description of the world; (4) texts about the origin and fate of the soul. Volume II: (5) descriptions of rites that are supposed to ensure a blessed state of the soul, the gold tablets, taboos, and different texts about the identity of the Orphics also in relation to other mystery cults; (6) hymns and epigrams; (7) texts of the *katabasis* literature; (8) astrological, geological, agricultural, and medical fragments; (9) texts about Orpheus' oracles; (10) magical texts and practices; and finally (11) a section entitled *Varia*.

*Poems*, Oxford 1983, 117ff.), assumes that the genealogy that Plato's Timaeus attributes to 'the children of gods' refers to the theogonic poem known by Eudemus. It seems to me that the arguments for this attribution are weak. First and foremost, the only piece of information we know about Eudemus' theogony is that it starts with Night, whereas the theogony referred to by Timaeus starts with Okeanos and Tethys—so we need to devise some clever argument to show why Timaeus prefers to leave Night in silence. But even if we accept that Timaeus refers to an actual theogonic poem attributed to Orpheus (which I am still reluctant to do—I would be more tempted to give a V instead of an F to this text) and that it indeed started with Night but, for whatever reason, Timaeus leaves Night out (which I am even more reluctant to accept), we would still need some proof that this theogonic poem known to Plato was the same as the one known to Eudemus. The Derveni papyrus proves beyond doubt that different versions of the Orphic theogony were in circulation, with differences in their respective genealogical schemes. Indeed, Bernabé accepts, in different further subsections, the existence of such parallel, partly overlapping versions. For all that we know, Plato and Eudemus may or may not have known the same version. Assuming that they knew the same version, and only one version, Bernabé then adds further details to 'Eudemus' theogony' on the basis of theogonic references in Plato's *Cratylus* and *Euthyphro*.

Early in the section on theogonies, Bernabé lists the contested material about Dionysus' dismemberment by the Titans and the testimonies about the so-called Egyptian *hieros logos*. The next main sub-section is devoted to the 'Hieronymus and Hellanicus' theogony. Bernabé's organizing principle is particularly conspicuous in this case. He cuts up the continuous source texts into fragments corresponding to the stages of the narrative so that one such fragment is composed of the parallel descriptions of the same event in different sources. This arrangement certainly has its advantages, especially when one wants to see the differences and convergences between the various accounts in order to reconstruct an assumed original. On the other hand, this procedure disrupts the continuity of the individual accounts, and may thus obscure the internal logic and motivations of the source.

An important difference as compared to Kern is that Bernabé, rightly I think, does not include the material from Ps-Clemens' *Homilies* and the somewhat different version found in the *Recognitions*. Bernabé follows Burkert and West in treating these accounts to be somewhat distorted and allegorically interpreted references to the *Rhapsodies*. I myself am more inclined to accept Amersfoort's arguments that the material in the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* is evidence for a further version (or versions) of the Orphic theogonic poems, independent of both the 'Hieronymus-Hellanicus' theogony and the *Rhapsodies*.

By far the largest part of the section on theogonic poems—and indeed of the whole book—contains the fragments of the so-called *Hieroi Logoi in 24 Rhapsodies*, sometimes referred to simply as Orphic *Rhapsodies*. The 269 fragments of and about this work take up almost 200 pages (as compared to 108 pages in Kern—no newly discovered material here). In the case of the *Rhapsodies* the arrangement applied already for the Hieronymus and Hellanicus version is clearly preferable and Bernabé's descriptive subtitles are especially helpful in working with such a complex and jumbled material. Having listed the testimonies concerning the title of the work and providing the outlines of the narrative, Bernabé attempts to reconstruct a more or less continuous plot and arranges the fragments accordingly. To show how difficult it may be to harmonize the different sources to come up with a coherent narrative, let me only refer to the very first phase of the story. Damascius (*De princ.* 3.159.17 Westerink) clearly states that Chronos was the first being in this theogony. Yet there are indications coming from other sources according to which there was already some primeval matter before the birth of Chronos<sup>4</sup>. What is more, Bernabé assumes on the basis of testimonies by John Malalas and the Suda that the *Rhapsodies* spoke about the 'dusky Night' before Chronos. In order to reduce the number of contenders for the first place, Bernabé takes it that Night in this theogony is not a divine character but a name for primeval matter.

<sup>4</sup> It is somewhat surprising that Bernabé lists also Aristotle *De caelo* 298b25 as a source in support for this point.

After some theogonic fragments of uncertain origin, Bernabé's next important section deals with those fragments that Kern ranges under the heading *Διαθήκαι*. Bernabé follows Riedweg in considering this work to be a Hellenistic Jewish imitation of an Orphic *hieros logos* and in distinguishing only two versions of it (a first version and a second one reworked and expanded by Aristobulos) as opposed to Kern's three versions and Walter's four.

After the fragments of the different *hieroi logoi* comes the much shorter second main thematic section of the book containing fragments from Orphic poems on Demeter and Persephone. Bernabé's conception of the poems belonging in this group considerably differs from Kern's. Accepting Graf's arguments, he denies that there is anything Orphic in Euripides, *Hel.* 1301ff. that Kern considered to be the main evidence for the oldest version of the poem. More importantly, and once again rightly, Bernabé does not accept either Diels' thesis that the gold tablet from Thurii (Tablet C Zuntz = 492 Bernabé) is a hymn to Demeter or Zuntz' suggestion that it is Kore's prayer to Demeter. The already familiar technique of arranging parallel passages next to each other even when it sacrifices the continuity of the source texts is applied here as well. So the evidence coming from *P. Berol.* is cut up into seven fragments. A new text included in this section is fr. 398 F = *P. Derveni* col. 22.7, which the author of the papyrus takes from 'the hymns (or: *Hymns*):' Bernabé I think correctly takes the six divine names to refer to the same divinity (a practice well-known from later Orphic hymns); but exactly for this reason it may remain open to question whether the names come from a hymn to *Demeter*. Bernabé lists the verses relevant to the myth from the Orphic *Argonautica* (as T texts), but does not include the relevant sections from the different *Orphic Hymns*, which he mentions only in the introduction to the section.

The next thematic section collects fragments of and references to different poems, sometimes attributed to Pythagorean authors, that apparently gave mythic descriptions of the world in fanciful images (*The Net, The Robe, The Sphere, The Mixing Bowl*). New additions are the four fragments related to *The Lyre*, omitted by Kern.

The fourth and last section bears the title *Fragmenta de animae natura origine et fato*. It is difficult to assess this section on its own because it is closely related to the next section called *Fragmenta orphica de rationibus quibus animae aeternam beatitudinem adsequi possint*, which comes unfortunately only in Vol. II. Indeed, the arrangement of individual texts between the two sections may be a question of different approaches.

What is particularly striking in this section is how meagre and yet doctrinally diverse the material collected here is—especially when compared with the confident pronouncements of many scholars about ‘the Orphic doctrine of the soul.’ The section contains only 16 F fragments (seven from Plato, four from Vettius Valens, two from Clemens of Alexandria, one from Aristotle, Herodotus, Diogenes of Oenoanda) plus the Olbia bone plates (interestingly marked as T texts). A number of V texts complete the section (from Pindar, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Euripides, and Plato) that may show the influence of Orphic ideas about the nature and fate of soul. What, I think, emerges from the texts gathered by Bernabé’s is that there was no unique and unified Orphic doctrine, but different Orphic texts (and presumably practitioners) propounded various and often conflicting ideas about the origin, metaphysics, physics, and fate of the soul. In particular, the ideas expressed in some of these texts seem difficult to square with the idea, espoused also by Bernabé, that transmigration and the immortality of the individual soul is a permanent and central doctrine of Orphism. Some of these texts suggest to me rather that different Orphic texts worked with overlapping but divergent conceptions of salvation, founded on divergent conceptions of the soul.

This brief overview could not do justice to the innumerable fine details, judicious philological and interpretative choices that makes this volume such an outstanding piece of scholarship. Kern published his *Orphicorum fragmenta* when the fascination with Orphism, marked by the studies of Harrison, Dietrich, Reinach, and Macchioro, was at its peak. Bernabé’s collection of Orphic fragments came at a moment when Orphism is once again a hot topic. And just as with Kern’s *Orphicorum fragmenta*, the new edition is not merely a presentation of the material but, by its principle of selection and scheme, is a crucially



important contribution to the scholarly debate, running from Harrison and Dietrich through Wilamowitz and Guthrie to Burkert, Brisson, and Edmonds, about what Orphism is and which texts could or should count as Orphic. It is a crucially important contribution, because students of Orphism will use this excellent and authoritative edition for a good many years and their—our—work will inevitably be affected by Bernabé's choices and arrangement.

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