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Quis Tantus Furor? The Servian Question,
Gallus, and Orpheus in *Georgics* 4

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Quis Tantis Furor? The Servian Question,
Gallus, and Orpheus in *Georgics* 4

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In Servius' commentary, there are two elusive statements concerning the ending of the *Georgics*. Both of these statements seem to imply that Vergil changed the ending of the *Georgics* and that the Orpheus epyllion as it now stands was a later edition to the poem. The question of whether or not Servius is correct in this assertion is a central question in Vergilian studies. By focusing on the reception of Orpheus prior to Vergil, the Roman Orpheus of Vergil's time, and Vergil's own use of the Orpheus figure, a potential answer emerges to the Servian question

In order to answer this question, the primary inquiry of this paper seeks to find from where Vergil received his Orpheus story. A comprehensive analysis of references to Orpheus in ancient literature leads to the conclusion that before the first-century B.C.E. the primary narrative of Orpheus is not one of failure. Rather, Orpheus appears to successfully retrieve his wife from the underworld. Orpheus does not appear as an important figure in Roman literature until the second half of the first-century when nearly at the same time as Vergil is writing the *Georgics* Orpheus' popularity explodes in Roman art and literature. Yet, Vergil does not seem to be the source of Orpheus' popularity in Rome, nor does Vergil seem to be inventing a new narrative in which Orpheus fails. The missing source for Vergil's Orpheus figure appears to belong to the first-century.

Orpheus appears as a central figure in the *Georgics*, the *Eclogues*, the poems of Propertius, and the *Culex*. Each of these works is rife with references to the poetry of Cornelius Gallus. Given Gallus' prominence in first-century Roman poetry, his close association with Orpheus, the Servian claims of a *laudes Galli* in the fourth *Georgic*, and the rise of Orpheus' popularity in the second half of the first-century, Gallus seems a likely source for Vergil's Orpheus.

Keywords: Vergil, *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, Orpheus, Servius, Cornelius Gallus

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
Quis Tantis Furor? The Servian Question, Gallus, and Orpheus in <i>Georgics</i> 4	1
The Servian Question.....	3
History of Orpheus.....	6
Interpretation of Descent Texts.....	12
Roman Orpheus	21
Orpheus and Gallus.....	34
Works Cited	43

Quis Tantus Furor? The Servian Question, Gallus, and Orpheus in *Georgics* 4

*Hic primo in amicitia Augusti Caesaris fuit; postea cum venisset in suspicionem quod contra eum coniuraret, occisus est. Fuit autem amicus Vergilii, adeo ut quartus Georgicorum a medio usque ad finem eius laudes teneret; quas postea Augusto in Aristaei fabulam commutavit.*¹

*...Ultimam partem huius libri esse mutatam nam laudes Galli habuit locus ille qui nunc Orpheus continet fabulam; quae inserta est postquam irato Augusto occisus est.*²

There are perhaps no words that have caused as much rancor and disagreement in Vergilian studies as these—Servius’ famous statements concerning the *laudes Galli* and the ending of *Georgic* 4. Lines have been drawn. Many illustrious names³ stand firm in rejecting Servius’ claim that *ultimam partem huius libri esse mutatam*. While others⁴ have argued in their own way how and why Servius’ statement must be correct.

War has raged over this short passage. Anderson responding to Skutsch wrote, “The work just mentioned in spite of its ingenuity and enthusiasm, shows a lamentable lack of three great essentials—a judicial temper, accurate statement of facts, and cogent reasoning.”⁵ Coleman fired back at Duckworth declaring, “The Aristaeus Epyllion at the end of the 4th *Georgic* poses two major questions, which Professor Duckworth... ultimately fails to answer.”⁶ On all sides, various scholars claim the weight of consensus for their position. “Most scholars believe that the original conclusion of the poem was very different and contained the *laudes Galli*,”⁷ and anyone

¹ Serv. *E.* 10.2. At first, Gallus was in the friendship of Augustus Caesar; when he had come under suspicion because he plotted against him, he was killed. He was moreover the friend of Vergil, with the result that the fourth *Georgic* from the middle to the end held his praises, which afterward Augustus changed into the story of Aristaeus.

² Serv. *G.* 4.1.8. The last part of this book was changed, for that section had the praises of Gallus which now contains the story of Orpheus; which was inserted after he was killed by the irate Augustus.

³ See Anderson (1933) *vid.* Bibliography *infra.*, Heyne (1830), Duckworth, Voss (1800), Keightley (1846), Wang (1883), Volker (1840), Otis (1963), Oksala (1978), Perret (1965), Pulvermacher (1890), Wankenne (1970), Tittler (1857), and Skutsch (1901).

⁴ See Jacobson *vid.* Bibliography *infra.*, Coleman (1962), Cartault (1926), Paratore (1977), Drew (1929), Teuffel (1920), Saint-Denis (1956), and Buchner (1963).

⁵ W.B. Anderson, “Gallus and the Fourth *Georgic*,” *CQ* 27.3(1933): 36.

⁶ R. Coleman, “Gallus, the Bucolics, and the Ending of the Fourth *Georgic*,” *AJP* 83(1962): 55.

⁷ George Duckworth, “Vergil’s *Georgics* and the *Laudes Galli*,” *AJP* 80.3 (1959): 233.

disagreeing with this conclusion “must feel that he is pleading with a halter round his neck before a one-sided jury.”⁸ And yet, quite to the contrary it seems that “during the nineteenth century, rejection of Servius was the *communis opinio* among scholars.”⁹

No one is safe. Servius himself is demeaned. Anderson confidently declares, “Servius was not always a discriminating compiler, and he may have picked up this tale from an obscure and dubious source. It has probably grown out of some simple misunderstanding or willful distortion. If it is any way based on fact, the basis must be exceedingly slender,”¹⁰ and Coleman suggests that, “he [Servius] confused the *Bucolics* and the *Georgics* here or else failed to see through someone else’s confusion of the two.”¹¹ Even the quality of Vergil’s poetry is attacked: the Aristaeus epyllion is categorized as “an undoubted blot upon the perfection of the work,”¹² and “a mere mythological idyll about things that were never done by people who probably never existed, with no reference to historical fact from one end to the other.”¹³

I tread into this veritable war of words—two centuries of metaphorically red ink spread across commentary enough to fill volumes—for one figure alone, Orpheus. Orpheus is the central figure of the concluding epyllion, and yet very little ink has been spent drawing out Vergil’s reception of the Orphic figure.¹⁴ A careful analysis of Vergil’s own intertextuality leads to the conclusion that Vergil relied on a now lost source for his Orpheus epyllion. By examining and dating Vergil’s Orpheus and then comparing this Orpheus with other extant sources, a clear picture emerges of a first-century Roman text which repopularized the story of Orpheus. While

⁸ Anderson, 36.

⁹ H. Jacobson, “Aristaeus, Orpheus, and the Laudes Galli,” *AJP*:105.3 (1984): 272.

¹⁰ Anderson, 45.

¹¹ Coleman, 56: citing Duckworth.

¹² Coleman, 58.

¹³ Coleman, 55: quoting Gilbert Murray.

¹⁴ Aside from a fairly comprehensive page of Jacobson. A portion of this problem lies in the Orphic problem itself. The interpretation of various Orpheus passages is nearly as fraught with disagreement as the question of Servius’ commentary on *Georgic* 4.

this text has since been lost, an analysis of other first-century Roman sources containing Orpheus reveals a strong connection between the figure of Orpheus and Cornelius Gallus. In the poetry of Propertius, in the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and in the *Culex* every reference to Orpheus seems to be placed in tandem with known references to the work of Gallus. If we assume Gallus is the author of our hypothetical source for Vergil's Orpheus, the Servian question comes to a nice resolution. The Orpheus epyllion is a purely literary *laudes Galli* not a political praise.

The Servian Question

The confusion caused by the conflicting Servian commentary sits at the heart of the question of Orpheus' place in the *Georgics*. In order to fully feel this tension, a review of the major scholarship discussing the Servian commentary is helpful. Of course, any conversation concerning Servius and the *Georgics* must start with W.B. Anderson. Anderson's famous formalist argument—based upon the structure and language of the fourth *Georgics*—remains perhaps the most influential work on the subject of the *laudes Galli* to be published in the last century. Anderson attempts to prove that there are no obvious breaks in the poem large enough to remove and add again a significant section of text. In the end, this argument is built upon a literal interpretation of Servius and the conclusion that according to Servius the entire epyllion—both the Aristaeus and the Orpheus episode—*must* have been a part of the *laudes Galli*.¹⁵ According to Anderson, the *laudes Galli* contained praise of Gallus' political and particularly Egyptian accomplishments. These praises, if the *laudes Galli* existed, would have necessarily been extensive, else they would not have “necessitated the scrapping of half of a book”¹⁶ Having established both the scope and the purpose of the *laudes Galli*, Anderson carefully searches for

¹⁵ Anderson, 37. “Even the supporters of Servius do not always find it easy to believe that Vergil devoted a half a book to the praises of Gallus.”

¹⁶ Anderson, 37.

structural or linguistic evidence which provides evidence for this removal. Anderson finds no such evidence and concludes that Servius was simply wrong in his assessment.

George Duckworth expanded on Anderson's argument by performing a thorough structural analysis of the entire poem. Looking at larger themes, Duckworth assigns a natural theme to each book: *Georgic 1*—war, *Georgic 2*—peace, *Georgic 3*—death, *Georgic 4*—resurrection. With *Georgic 4* assigned the theme of resurrection, the story of Aristaeus—and the regeneration of the bees—is an integral part of the poem. The poem and its conquest of death is only resolved through the *bougonia* and the regeneration of the bees. Since the Aristaeus episode must have been an original part of the poem, “the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice cannot be a later addition, as it is an integral part of the epyllion of Aristaeus.”¹⁷ Duckworth repeats the problems found by Anderson almost verbatim. Taking Servius at his word that the entire epyllion must have been removed and replaced Duckworth notes that “praise of the political activity of Cornelius Gallus in Egypt extending to almost 300 verses would seem most inappropriate.”¹⁸ Yet, if the material on Gallus was incidental “why then would it be necessary to remove the entire second half of the book?”¹⁹ Anderson and Duckworth well represent the argument against Servius. This argument relies on a careful parsing of Servius, a narrow idea of what the *laudes Galli* must have looked like,²⁰ and a structural analysis of the *Georgics*.

Those writing on behalf of Servius focus on the absence of a prior narrative link between the elegaic Orpheus episode and the Homeric Aristaeus. Robert Coleman wrote a scathing response to Duckworth defending Servius and arguing that in fact the entire epyllion—both

¹⁷ Duckworth, 236.

¹⁸ Duckworth, 234.

¹⁹ Duckworth, 235.

²⁰ Duckworth, 238. This view is narrowly and completely political in scope. Anderson goes as far to characterize the supposed *laudes Galli* as “a rhapsody on Egypt with Gallus as the hero.”

Aristaeus and Orpheus episodes—belongs to a second edition of the poem.²¹ While both Anderson and Duckworth focused on the absurdity of a *laudes Galli* which consisted of praise for Gallus’ political achievements in Egypt, Coleman instead examines the relationship between the Aristaeus episode and the Orpheus episode. The crux of Coleman’s argument relies on the lack of a narrative link between Aristaeus and Orpheus prior to Vergil’s epyllion. If Vergil “actually invented the narrative link between the *Aristaeus* and the *Orpheus and Eurydice* where there was no traditional connection nor any compelling reason within the text of the *Georgics* themselves to associate the two tales, then this story of tragic personal loss must have had some special significance for him.”²² By examining this relationship, and the possible references to Gallus therein, Coleman concludes that the entire epyllion—because of its references to Orpheus—is a later addition added *in memoriam Galli*.

Continuing in this same vein, Howard Jacobson carefully analyzes some of the difficulties Anderson has with a second edition of the poem; namely, Servius’ contradictions with his own account, the political nature of the *laudes Galli*, and how these praises could reasonably fit into the original poem. Regarding Servius’ apparent contradictions, Jacobson notes, “it is perfectly conceivable that the contradictions are no more than a looseness of expression on Servius’ part, as he fails to distinguish precisely between the Orpheus and Aristaeus sections and to consider how much of Book 4 would have been occupied by the *laudes*.”²³ Responding to the absurdness of a political *laudes Galli*, Jacobson writes, “one need not assume that Vergil’s praise of Gallus focused on the latter’s Egyptian accomplishments.”²⁴

²¹ Coleman, 69. “The whole view of our argument clearly entails acceptance of the view that the Orpheus and Eurydice belongs to a second edition of the poem. Moreover, if the interpretation of the Homeric reminiscences in the Aristaeus-Proteus episode is sound, the whole epyllion and not just the central panel must belong to the later version.”

²² Coleman, 66.

²³ Jacobson, 274.

²⁴ Jacobson, 275.

Finally, Jacobson locates an easy place in which the *laudes Galli* could have been placed: “the episode of Orpheus and Eurydice is scarcely integral to a work of agriculture in general or apiculture specifically. If the 70-odd verses on Orpheus are removed and we make allowance for a *laudes Galli* passage of some forty verses, we have an original book of 540 lines, making books 1 and 4 the shortest of the poem.”²⁵ Jacobson’s argument relies on a refutation of the principal complaints raised by Anderson, and further provides a theory for where and what the *laudes Galli* may have looked like. As with Coleman, this idea rests firmly on the myth of Orpheus and its place in the poem.

Regardless of whether or not Servius’ commentary is correct, an understanding of Orpheus is essential to understanding *Georgics* 4. Those who argue against Servius see the Orpheus episode as an essential part of the entire work, while those arguing for Servius focus on the lack of prior narrative connection between Aristaeus and Orpheus. A historical examination of the figure of Orpheus—both of the early stories concerning Orpheus and later the tales that specifically mention his descent into the underworld—can help us trace Vergil’s own Orpheus to Gallus and ultimately lead us to understand the place of Orpheus in the *Georgics*.

History of Orpheus

While most modern readers might assume that the famous episode of Orpheus and Eurydice would be well attested in the ancient world, the opposite is actually true. The power of Orpheus’ music, Orpheus’ fame as a philosopher, and his death at the hands of women are attested literarily, numismatically, and artistically in a myriad of different sources. Yet his descent into the underworld makes little appearance in the literary record of Classical Greece and the Hellenistic age.

²⁵ Jacobson, 275.

Early references to Orpheus can be easily split into two different categories. First, there are references to a historical Orpheus as a poet/philosopher. These references occur primarily in early philosophical works where Orpheus is made the patriarch of Homer and Hesiod's lineage, is closely connected with Musaeus, and is made the author of a number of important philosophical texts along with being assigned rites and followers.²⁶ Secondly, there are mythological references to Orpheus, which can be placed into four separate categories: Orpheus as an Argonaut, the power of Orpheus' music, the death of Orpheus, and lastly Orpheus' descent into the underworld. These sections of Orpheus' life must be listed as disparate elements since no evidence of a cohesive narrative of Orpheus' life exists in Greek literature.²⁷ Rather, each early source seems to focus on a single aspect of Orpheus' life. The earliest sources focus solely on Orpheus' role on the *Argo*, the power of his music, and his place as a philosopher.²⁸

The name of Orpheus does not occur in the Homeric or Hesiodic poems. Orpheus is first mentioned in later lyric poetry and early philosophical works. In lyric poetry Orpheus is mentioned as renowned and famed, connected with Apollo, and possessed of power over

²⁶ Septem Sapientes Phil. *Testimonia* 1.27 contains a list of early philosophers with Orpheus and Musaeus listed among their number. Pherecydes, *Testimonia* 2.7 mentions writings of Orpheus. Iccus *Testimonia* 1.5 assigns Orpheus and Musaeus specific rites and followers. Cercops *Testimonium* 1.6 discusses Orphic works and assigns them real authors: *Descent into Hades* and the *Hieros Logos* were written by Cercops the Pythagorean and *Robe* and *Physika* were written by Brontinus. Ion even goes so far as to claim that Pythagoras himself published works under the name of Orpheus. Hell. 5 makes Orpheus the ancestor of both Homer and Hesiod. Pherecydes *Hist.*, 6 debates whether Orpheus was actually the bard of the Argonauts.

²⁷ Even J.D. Reid's *OGCMA* splits the references to Orpheus into three disparate grouping: general Orpheus references, the death of Orpheus, and Orpheus and Eurydice. One cohesive narrative of Orpheus does not exist; it is far easier to discuss the important aspects of Orpheus life one important detail at a time.

²⁸ See R. L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 448. Fowler confirms this picture of Orpheus. Fowler finds fragmentary evidence of Orpheus in Epim. 4.64, 75, 77 [Orpheus is initiated, initiatory rites are instituted by Orpheus, Dionysus is torn to pieces in the initiatory rites of Orpheus], Hec. 20, Hell. 5ab, 202A, [Orpheus and his place on the *Argo*], Her. 43, Ph. 26. See also Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993). Of the early Orpheus, Gantz say, "[For] the most famous part of his story, however—the descent into Hades to recover his wife and his subsequent tearing apart by Thracian women—the evidence is less plentiful. Nothing whatever survives of either of these tales prior to the fifth century, and even then there is surprisingly little." See Gantz 721-5 for a short summation of all the evidence.

animals.²⁹ There is no attestation in lyric poetry of the death of Orpheus, or of his descent into the underworld. In non-literary sources the death of Orpheus becomes a popular motif on vase paintings around 490 B.C.E, even though no extant literary work documents Orpheus' death.³⁰

Orpheus' use as a cult figure in mystery religion is first documented at Olbia.³¹ Here Orpheus appears to be connected to a Dionysiac mystery somehow assuring initiates a better afterlife. Orpheus' supposed power over death is also documented on a calyx crater in the British Museum which depicts Orpheus restraining Cerberus and offering his lyre to a young man who is being conducted towards a herm guarding the boundary of the underworld.³² While early evidence of Orphic rites is not well documented, Orphic sacraments, rites, and texts are thoroughly catalogued by the end of the Peloponnesian War.³³ Orpheus' importance as a cult figure is seen by the attribution of Orpheus to nearly every religious institution in the ancient Greek world.³⁴

Orpheus' descent into the underworld is first hinted at in the title the Pythagorean work *Descent into Hades*. A work whose author was allegedly Orpheus himself. Sadly, scant fragments of the text survive. There is no extant literary source that describes the descent of Orpheus into the underworld before Euripides. Interestingly enough the two oldest plays

²⁹ Ibycus 22 mentions the "renowned Orpheus." Simonides 62 says that above the head of Orpheus "flutter countless birds, and from the dark-blue sea fishes leap up in harmony with his lovely song." Pindarus *Pythia* 4.177 mentions Oeagrus as the father of Orpheus, connects Orpheus with Apollo, and includes Orpheus among the number of the Argonauts.

³⁰ See *LIMC* 7.1: 81-105 for a commentary on Orpheus' use in Greek and Roman art.

³¹ M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) presents a detailed case concerning Orpheus' use in early Greek cults.

³² British Museum (F270).

³³ See Plato *Respublica*, 364e3 "And they produce a host of books written by Musaeus and Orpheus." Also see the number of references contained in Euripides to Orpheus.

³⁴ See Ivan M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941) for a complete list of institutions that at one point or another claims Orpheus as a founder.

attributed to Euripides *Rhesus*—if indeed written by Euripides—and *Alcestis* (438 B.C.E.) both clearly reference Orpheus’ power over death.

An observation of the pre-Euripidean sources reveals a conflicted Orpheus. Orpheus was the bard of the Argo according to Pindar. While Pherecydes claims Orpheus was not aboard the ship. Pindar holds that Orpheus was associated with Apollo, while the votive tiles of the Olbian cultists tie him to Dionysus. In various texts Orpheus is Pythagorean, Bacchic, associated with Egypt or Thrace, founded every religious institution in Greece, and wrote innumerable books. No complete narrative of the life of Orpheus seems to have existed. Rather, the story of Orpheus seems to have been a series of disparate facts: Orpheus’ music was so compelling it granted control over nature, Orpheus had power over death, Orpheus was on the Argo, Orpheus founded religious institutions, and Orpheus died a tragic death. There is no evidence that these separate episodes were woven into a cohesive narrative. Furthermore, while each portion of the story is repeated across centuries, the details are constantly in flux.³⁵ Orpheus is a constant outsider in Greek mythology and seems less a mythological figure than a trope that can be used to grant an opinion or belief authority. This idea of an Orpheus figure who exists as a fragmented series of anecdotes goes a long way to explain the confusion and disagreement surrounding Orpheus’ famous descent into the underworld.

A Brief Catalogue of Descent Texts

Outside of the famous account in Vergil’s *Georgic* 4 and Ovid’s account in the *Metamorphoses*,³⁶ the descent of Orpheus into the underworld is mentioned in detail in nine

³⁵ This conflict was not lost on ancient authors. In a plot summary of Aeschylus’ lost *Bassarai*, Orpheus neglected Dionysus and honored Apollo (Aesch. in *TrGF* iii). In a rage, Dionysus inspired the Bassarids to come upon Orpheus and tear him limb from limb. Aeschylus here seems to be attributing the death of Orpheus to a conflict that is already demonstrated in ancient sources, whether Orpheus primarily worships Apollo or Dionysus. See Gantz, 722 for a detailed explanation of the problematic nature of this evidence.

³⁶ And later accounts such as Apollod. who are clearly relying on Vergil and Ovid’s Orpheus.

other texts preceding or contemporary to Vergil and Ovid: Euripides' *Alcestis*, Isocrates' *Busiris*, Plato's *Symposium*, Hermesianax, Palaephastus (quoting Heraclitus), *Lament for Bion*, Diodorus Siculus, Conon 45, and Hyginus' *Fabulae*.

1) The earliest extant reference to Orpheus' descent into the underworld occurs in Euripides

Alcestis 357-62 states:

εἰ δ' Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρῆν,
ὥστ' ἢ κόρην Δήμητρος ἢ κείνης πόσιν
ὑμνοῖσι κηλήσαντά σ' ἐξ Ἄιδου λαβεῖν,
κατηῆλθον ἄν, καὶ μ' οὔθ' ὁ Πλούτωνος κύων
οὔθ' οὐπί κώπη ψυχοπομπὸς ἄν Χάρων
ἔσχον, πρὶν ἐς φῶς σὸν καταστῆσαι βίον.³⁷

2) The next reference to the descent of Orpheus into the underworld is found in Isocrates'

Busiris:

ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐξ Ἄιδου τοὺς τεθνεῶτας ἀνήγεν, ὁ δὲ πρὸ μοίρας τοὺς ζῶντας
ἀπώλλυεν.³⁸

3) Plato in the *Symposium* mentions Orpheus' descent saying that Orpheus was presented with a phantom of his wife only rather than truly retrieving her:

Ὀρφέα δὲ τὸν Οἰάγρου ἀτελεῖ ἀπέπεμψαν ἐξ Ἄιδου, φάσμα δείξαντες τῆς γυναικὸς
ἐφ' ἣν ἦκεν, αὐτὴν δὲ οὐ δόντες, ὅτι μαλθακίζεσθαι ἐδόκει, ἅτε ὦν κιθαρωδός, καὶ οὐ
τολμᾶν ἔνεκα τοῦ ἔρωτος ἀποθνήσκειν ὥσπερ Ἄλκηστις, ἀλλὰ διαμηχανᾶσθαι ζῶν
εἰσιέναι εἰς Ἄιδου. τοιγάρτοι διὰ ταῦτα δίκην αὐτῷ ἐπέθεσαν, καὶ ἐποίησαν τὸν
θάνατον αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ γυναικῶν...³⁹

³⁷ If the tongue and song of Orpheus was given to me in order that I might charm Demeter's Daughter or her Lord, and snatch you up from Hades, I would go down to Hades; and neither Pluto's dog nor Charon, Leader of the Dead, would stop me until I had brought [you living] back into the light!

³⁸ Isocrates Orat., *Busiris* Orat. 11.8.1. But on the one hand [Orpheus] led the dead back from Hades, but he [Busiris] brought death to the living.

³⁹ Plato, *Symposium*. 179d2. But Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, they sent away empty handed, and presented to him a phantasm of her whom he sought, but they would not give up [Eurydice], because he showed no courage; he was only a harpist, and did not dare die for love like Alcestis, but was striving to enter Hades alive; moreover, afterwards [the gods] caused him to die at the hands of women...

4) Hermesianax begins his entire catalogue of lovers with the story of Orpheus and Agriope.

Orpheus appears to succeed in this passage, and his story is followed by stories of Musaeus, then

Hesiod:

ἔνθεν ἀοιδιάων μεγάλους ἀνέπεισεν ἄνακτας Ἀγριόπην μαλακοῦ πνεῦμα λαβεῖν
βιότου.⁴⁰

5) Phalaephastus quoting Heraclitus in *De incredibilibus* states:

ὡς Ἡρακλῆς κατελθὼν <εἰς Ἄιδου> ἀνῆλθεν
ἀνάγων τὸν Κέρβερον, καὶ Ὀρφεὺς ὡσαύτως Εὐρυδικὴν
τὴν γυναῖκα.⁴¹

6) The next reference to Orpheus' descent for his wife does not occur until approximately 95

B.C.E. in *The Lament for Bion*:

χὼς Ὀρφεὶ πρόσθεν ἔδωκενάδεα φορμίζοντι παλίσσυτον Εὐρυδικεῖαν, καὶ σέ, Βίων,
πέμψει τοῖς ὥρεσιν. εἰ δέ τι κήγώνσυρῖσδων δυνάμαν, παρὰ Πλουτέϊ κ' αὐτὸς
ἄειδον.⁴²

7) Also in the first-century, Diodorus Siculus briefly accounts the pertinent details of the

Orpheus story in his history; of Orpheus' descent into Hades he says:

καὶ διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα καταβῆναι μὲν εἰς ἄδου παραδόξως
ἐτόλμησε, τὴν δὲ Φερσεφόνην διὰ τῆς εὐμελείας ψυχαγωγῆσας ἔπεισε συνεργῆσαι
ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ συγχωρῆσαι τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ τετελευτηκυῖαν ἀναγαγεῖν ἐξ
ἄδου παραπλησίως τῷ Διονύσῳ;⁴³

8) While the prose in Hyginus' *Fabulae*, first-century C.E., is rudimentary and simplistic, these

fables remain an important source for the Augustan period primarily because the *Fabulae*

⁴⁰ Hermesianax 7.8. With song he won the underworld's great lords, for Agriope to take the gentle breath of life.

⁴¹ <Palaephastus> *De incredibilibus*. 33.8. As Heracles after going down into Hades went up leading Cerberus, so Orpheus [led up] Eurydice his wife.

⁴² Ps. Moschus 123-26. Even as she at one time granted Orpheus Eurydice's return because he played so sweetly, so likewise she shall give my Bion back to the hills; and had my pipe the power of his harp, I would have played [for this purpose] in the house of Pluto myself.

⁴³ Diod. Sic. 4.25. And on account of the love he had for his wife he dared to go down into Hades, where he entranced Persephone through melodious song and he persuaded her to assist him in his desire and to allow him to lead up his dead wife from Hades, in this thing resembling Dionysus;

recounts what an educated Roman might be expected to know of Greek mythology. Hyginus simply lists Orpheus among the number who descended to the underworld, saying:

Orpheus Oeagri filius propter Eurydice coniugem suam⁴⁴

9) Conon's mythography, likely written shortly after the *Georgics*, contains a transparent account of Orpheus' failure.⁴⁵ For the first time, Conon presents a connected narrative of all of Orpheus' life. Concerning Orpheus' descent into the underworld Conon writes:

κατέσχε δὲ δόξα ὡς εἰς Ἄιδου κατάβοι ἔρωτι τῆς γυναικὸς Εὐριδίκης καὶ ὡς τὸν Πλούτωνα καὶ τὴν Κόρην ὠίδαῖς γοητεύσας δῶρον λάβοι τὴν γυναῖκα• ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ὄνασθαι τῆς χάριτος ἀναβιωσκομένης, λαθόμενον τῶν περὶ αὐτῆς ἐντολῶν⁴⁶

Interpretation of these Descent Texts

Upon review, four separate possible conclusions may be drawn from these texts dealing with Orpheus' *katabasis*:⁴⁷ 1) the failure version does not come into existence until the Hellenistic period or later,⁴⁸ 2) the failure version was a fifth century product of Athens,⁴⁹ 3) Vergil invented the story of success,⁵⁰ or 4) there never was a story of success.⁵¹ After a close examination it appears that six of the texts cited above—Euripides' *Alcestis*, Plato's *Symposium*,

⁴⁴ Hyg. *Fab.* 251.1.1 Orpheus, the son of Oeagrus, on account of his wife Eurydice.

⁴⁵ Not including Vergil's own account of the story.

⁴⁶ Conon, *Narr.* 45. And the belief prevails that he went down to Hades out of love for his wife Eurydice and that, having enchanted Pluto and Kore with his songs, he received his wife as a gift. But he was not able to enjoy the favor of her revival, since he forgot the instructions concerning her.

⁴⁷ For a succinct explanation of various interpretations of the descent of Orpheus see Linforth, 16-21.

⁴⁸ Among Jacobson's very valuable notes (285): "Among those who believe the failure version did not come into existence until the Hellenistic period or later are O. Kern *Orpheus* (Berlin, 1920); M. Owen Lee, *Hesperia* 33 (1964); and C.M. Bowra *CQ* 11 (1952):122-125" (285) along with M.L West, *The Orphic Poems* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1983). For specific texts about the early success of Orpheus in retrieving his wife see: W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1935) and Peter Dronke, "The Return of Eurydice," *C. et M.* 23 (1962): 198-215.

⁴⁹ See primarily David Sansone, "Orpheus and Eurydice in the Fifth Century," *C. et M.* 36 (1985): 53-64 which follows Wilamowitz (1906) in arguing that the failure version of the myth of Orpheus derives from a lost tragedy of Aristias.

⁵⁰ The assertion that Vergil invented the failure narrative is made by several scholars see Jacobson, 285 for full notes: "G. Williams, *Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry*; P.A. Johnston, *TAPA* 107 (1977)."

⁵¹ J. Heath, "The Failure of Orpheus," *TAPA* 124 (1994): 164. "A close re-examination of all the relevant passages reveals that there is no compelling reason to assume that Orpheus ever returned to the world of light with his life." see also F. Graf. "Orpheus: A Poet Among Men" in *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* ed. J. Bremmer (New York: Routledge, 1987):80-106.

Isocrates' *Busiris*, Hermesianax, pseudo-Moschus' *Lament for Bion*, and Diodorus Siculus—are cited by all four disparate groups as evidence that their theory is correct.⁵²

In order to understand the reception of Orpheus in Vergil, some of this confusion must be resolved. This confusion can be approached through three lines of inquiry. First, we must ask whether a version of Orpheus' descent existed which appears to have ended in success. If the success narrative existed, the next question is whether Vergil could have invented the narrative of failure. If the prominent narrative of Orpheus' descent into the underworld was one of success and Vergil did not invent the failure narrative, the final step is to attempt to assign a date to the lost episode which Vergil must have used as his source.

The first question involves searching for early examples that speak of success. While each of the six most mentioned texts of *katabasis* on initial reading seem to imply success, there are several authors who believe these texts instead end in failure. Euripides *Alcestis* is a prime example of this conflict.⁵³ While some find the idea of Orpheus failing in Euripides *Alcestis* “absurd,”⁵⁴ others strongly disagree.⁵⁵

⁵² See Heath, 164. As an example J. Heurgon states “de tous les textes previrgiliens qui parlent de la tentative d’Orphee, six sur sept nous la representent, sans equivoque, comme couronnee de success” (11-12) yet, Ziegler on reviewing these same texts responds that he cannot find one example “which explicitly tells of Orpheus’ unmitigated triumph.”

⁵³ A.M. Dale, *Euripides Alcestis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954) ad loc. Dale is unusually indecisive on whether there was or was not a current version of Orpheus’ *katabasis* in 438 B.C.E: “There may, or may not, have been an earlier version of the story, in which Orpheus succeeded in bringing Eurydice, but there is nothing in this passage to indicate that Eur. is referring to such a version; still less can these lines be taken as evidence that a later tragic ending was not yet present.”

⁵⁴ Charles Segal, *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1989): 168. Segal presents several words which have been used to describe the idea of Orpheus failing in Euripides. Heurgon calls the idea “absurd” (11); Dronke also uses “absurd” (201-2); Linforth uses “inappropriate” (17); finally, Bowra calls the “happy ending more forcible” (119).

⁵⁵ See Heath, 176-180.

The argument against Orpheus' success in *Alcestis* relies on two tenets: first, that in Euripides' works "the dead do not return;"⁵⁶ and second, that the innate irony in the text is destroyed if we treat the Orpheus passage in a serious light.⁵⁷ Luckily, the works of Euripides abound with a large number of references to Orpheus.⁵⁸ A passage mentioning Orpheus found in Euripides *Rhesus*⁵⁹—which was written shortly before *Alcestis*⁶⁰—is of particular interest concerning the dead's ability to return to life:

οὐκ εἶσι γαίας ἐς μελάγχιμον πέδον:
 τὸσόνδε Νύμφην τὴν ἔνερθ' αἰτήσομαι,
 τῆς καρποποιοῦ παῖδα Διήμητρος θεᾶς,
 ψυχὴν ἀνεῖναι τοῦδ': ὀφειλέτις δέ μοι
 τοὺς Ὀρφέως τιμῶσα φαίνεσθαι φίλους.
 κάμοι μὲν ὡς θανῶν τε κοῦ λεύσσω φάος
 ἔσται τὸ λοιπόν: οὐ γὰρ ἐς ταῦτόν ποτε
 οὔτ' εἶσιν οὔτε μητρὸς ὄψεται δέμας:
 κρυπτὸς δ' ἐν ἄντροις τῆς ὑπαργύρου χθονὸς
 ἀνθρωποδαίμων κείσεται βλέπων φάος,
 Βάκχου προφήτης ὥστε Παγγαίου πέτραν
 ᾤκησε, σεμνὸς τοῖσιν εἰδόσιν θεός.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Heath, 175. "Both within the play itself and to the Greek audience there would be no parallels for someone successfully emerging from the underworld. There is no well-known individual in all Greek mythology except Alcestis who dies and is returned to human life without cosmic repercussions which are soon remedied."

⁵⁷ Heath, 176-180.

⁵⁸ Other references to Orpheus in the works of Euripides are as follows: *Bacchae*: 561-62, "Where Orpheus once played his lyre, brought trees together with his songs, collecting wild beasts round him;" *Rhesus* 966, "I will ask the virgin Persephone, daughter of Demeter, giver of fruit, to let my son's soul remain here, on Earth. She is obliged to show me that she truly honors all the friends of Orpheus. Of course, to me he will be just like any other man who has died and cannot see the light of day. He will never see me. He will never set eyes upon his mother and he will never approach her. He will be a man-god;" *Cyclops* 646, "Well, but I know a spell of Orpheus, a most excellent one, to make the brand enter his skull of its own accord, and set alight the one-eyed son of Earth;" *Medea* 543, "Give me no gold within my halls, nor skill to sing a fairer strain than ever Orpheus sang, unless there-with my fame be spread abroad;" *Iph. Aul.* 1211, "If only I could sing like Orpheus, father! Orpheus, who could charm even the heartless rocks into following him! If I could use such a voice and have everyone charmed, have them convinced to agree with me and follow me, then I would use that voice;" *Hippolytus* 953, "Go on, then, by all means, spout out all you want about your vegetarian diet like a quack. By all means, let Orpheus be your master! Enjoy, no, revere, if you so wish, all his idle musings, all of his many books."

⁵⁹ Following R. Lattimore, "Introduction to *Rhesus*," by Euripides. *Euripides IV*, ed. David Greene and R. Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958): 4-7.

⁶⁰ The date of *Alcestis* is 438 B.C.E., Lattimore claims that *Rhesus* was written before 440. See Lattimore, 5.

⁶¹ Eur. *Rh.* 962-73. He shall not go into earth's dark soil; so earnest a prayer will I address to the bride of the nether world, the daughter of the goddess Demeter, giver of increase, to release his soul; and, debtor as she is to me, show that she honors the friends of Orpheus. And to me for the rest of time he will be as one who is dead and does not see the light; for never again will he meet me or see his mother; but he will lie hidden in a cavern of the land with veins of silver, restored to life, a deified man, just as the prophet of Bacchus dwelt in a grotto beneath Pangaeus, a god whom his votaries honored. (Translation Gilbert Murray, 1913).

In this passage, Orpheus is clearly given power over death: Rhesus will be *restored to life*. Because of Orpheus, Rhesus will be a prophet of Bacchus.⁶² Through Orpheus’ “dark mysteries with their torch processions,”⁶³ Rhesus will escape death and be deified. This makes Orpheus’ power over death a central theme of *Rhesus*. While the text of *Rhesus* certainly does not prove that Orpheus has power over death in *Alcestis*, the burden of proof would seem to fall on those suggesting that Orpheus does not succeed—as *Rhesus* suggests a very different reception of Orpheus.

The second reason detractors of Orpheus’ success question whether or not Orpheus succeeds in *Alcestis* is the innate irony found in the passage. There is no reason to question this irony—Admetus’ request to have the power of Orpheus. But there is also no reason to ascribe this irony to Orpheus’ eventual failure. Several alternate reasons for irony can quickly be listed. Admetus swears off music shortly before calling on Orpheus’ power. If Admetus is a believer in the power of Orpheus, the afterlife should not be so fearful to him. Finally, Admetus desires the unattainably impossible. Orpheus is a distant, ancient figure considered the father of Homer and Hesiod, an outsider full of magic, charms, and mysterious writings. Admetus must have been aware of the impossibility of this comparison. This same type of plea for the music of Orpheus is found in *Iphigenia Aulidensis*,⁶⁴ but of course the power of Orpheus is not a gift easily given to mortals. We do not doubt Orpheus’ power to move the very rocks with his voice; perhaps we should not doubt his power to return with his wife.

⁶² Y. Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 104. Ustinova citing Diggle (1994) proposes a conjecture that defines Rhesus as a prophet of Bacchus rather than like one.

⁶³ Eur. *Rh.* 943-46.

⁶⁴ Heath, 176. “The oft-cited comparison with Eur. *Iph. Aul* 1211 is instructive. Here we find a similar construction in a wish for the powers of Orpheus. Iphigenia is noting that she did not have Orphic powers of persuasion to move rocks, no doubt at least partially an unflattering allusion to her father and the other Greek leaders. Her point is that this one young woman has no way to avoid her death by relying on her own verbal strengths. Her only maneuver is to weep.”

There is no reason to doubt the success of Orpheus in *Alcestis* given Orpheus' power over death in *Rhesus*, and the myriad potential ironic reasons for Admetus' wish to be granted the powers of Orpheus. Orpheus, according to this account, seems to have gone to Hades and brought back his wife. No mention of loss or of tragedy is apparent in the passage. In fact, the story seems to end immediately after the retrieval of his wife from Persephone.

This idea of a shortened account where Orpheus pleads for his wife's return and is granted his request—at which point the story ends—is further reinforced by the narrative of Orpheus' descent found in Plato's *Symposium*. Orpheus returns with nothing but a phantom. The story ends; Orpheus “succeeded” in a hollow, phantomesque sense. There is no reason to question when Orpheus discovers his wife is a fake,⁶⁵ or wonder at which point he really failed. This allows Plato to merely add an addendum to the existing story; no other stories need exist.⁶⁶

In both Isocrates *Busiris* and the *Lament for Bion*, critics of Orpheus' success question the parallelism in the text. Isocrates states, “But on the one hand [Orpheus] led the dead back from Hades, but he [Busiris] brought death to the living.” Isocrates does not outright declare the success of Orpheus. Concerning this absence, Graf concludes, “It is difficult not to see that he did not mention the outcome in order to avoid endangering his *recherché* comparison.”⁶⁷ Again, in the *Lament for Bion* Eurydice will be brought to Orpheus as Bion is brought to the Hills. Eurydice was brought to Orpheus regardless of success or failure. The text does not clearly proclaim Orpheus' success.

⁶⁵ Heath, 179. “It would be absurd to think that behind this variant hides Orpheus' happy reunion and new life with his restored wife... the incorporeality of his wife must have been revealed at some point.”

⁶⁶ Denying this idea creates a third necessary interpretation of the text, somewhere between success and failure. See Sansone, 180. Sansone argues “that Plato follows Aristias' tragedy, [this third narrative] which depicted the gods' refusal to restore Orpheus' wife to him because they considered him inferior to both *Alcestis* and *Heracles*.”

⁶⁷ Graf, 31.

Neither *Busiris* or the *Lament for Bion* contain an unambiguous parallel regarding Orpheus' *katabasis*. But in Palaephastus,⁶⁸ there seems to be a clear unassailable parallel:

ὡς Ἡρακλῆς κατελθὼν <εἰς Ἄιδου> ἀνῆλθεν
ἀνάγων τὸν Κέρβερον, καὶ Ὀρφεὺς ὡσαύτως Εὐρυδίκην
τὴν γυναῖκα.⁶⁹

As Palaephastus is allegedly quoting Heraclitus, this would make this reference to Orpheus' success older than any other extant *katabasis* text. Considering that *De incredilibus* is a work dedicated to providing philosophical scientific explanations for mythological events, there is no reason to question the parallel. Herakles brought up Cerberus, and Orpheus brought up his wife.⁷⁰

The best course might be to take these texts at face value. Orpheus could succeed in *Alcestis*. The parallelisms in *Lament for Bion* and *Busiris*, while not explicit, imply success. The text of Palaephastus makes all of these interpretations not only possible but likely. Furthermore, since Plato's narrative seems to end at the moment of Orpheus' retrieval of Eurydice, perhaps the earliest accounts of Orpheus *katabasis* ended at this point as well. Heath himself comments, "indeed, the sources often seem to be positively indifferent to the events after Orpheus' bewitching performance in the underworld."⁷¹ An empty gap between the retrieval of Eurydice and the death of Orpheus explains away supposed problems such as the lack of a female wife at Orpheus' death. Each portion of the early Orpheus narrative stood on its own. This theory could resolve some of the most difficult questions surrounding Orpheus.⁷² Only one narrative need

⁶⁸ To my knowledge the text of Palaephastus has not been used in any major article or book concerning Orpheus' *katabasis*.

⁶⁹ Palaephastus, *De incredilibus*. 33.8. As Herakles after going down into Hades led up Cerberus, so likewise Orpheus led up his wife.

⁷⁰ Some might argue that both had to return to the underworld, which is true. Death is a necessity regardless. The question is if Orpheus succeeded in truly bringing her back into the light for a time.

⁷¹ Heath, 165.

⁷² As an example of some of the difficulties that might be resolved see Heath, 164-65. "Bowra's analysis for example, must assume three Greek poems of which we have no trace: 1) a poem, at least as early as the mid-fifth

exist with various addenda added, such as the one proposed by Plato. After bringing Palaephastus' account into the dialogue concerning Orpheus' success, there is no reason to doubt this same success in *Alcestis*, *Busiris*, *Symposium*, and *The Lament for Bion*.⁷³

If the standard version of the story seems to be one of success, did Vergil invent the failure narrative? This seems highly unlikely. While the exact date of Conon's mythography is unknown, it closely follows the publication of the *Georgics*. If Conon relied on Vergil's narrative for his story of Orpheus and Eurydice, his brief recantation of “ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ὄνασθαι τῆς χάριτος ἀναβιωσκομένης λαθόμενον τῶν περὶ αὐτῆς ἐντολῶν”⁷⁴ seems rather out of place. Contrasting Conon's Orpheus with Apollodorus' *Library* (2nd century C.E) yields an interesting contrast:

ἀποθανούσης δὲ Εὐρυδίκης τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ, δηχθείσης ὑπὸ ὄφεως, κατῆλθεν εἰς Ἄιδου θέλων ἀνάγειν αὐτήν, καὶ Πλούτωνα ἔπεισεν ἀναπέμψαι. ὁ δὲ ὑπέσχετο τοῦτο ποιήσειν, ἂν μὴ πορευόμενος Ὀρφεὺς ἐπιστραφῆ πρὶν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ παραγενέσθαι: ὁ δὲ ἀπιστῶν ἐπιστραφεὶς ἐθεάσατο τὴν γυναῖκα, ἣ δὲ πάλιν ὑπέστρεψεν.⁷⁵

Apollodorus' *Library* mentions the death of Eurydice by stepping on a snake and Orpheus famously turning back, details which are clearly laid out in Vergil, and which are conspicuously absent from Conon's account. From this comparison, Conon appears to use a failure version prior to Vergil's *Georgics*; be that as it may, after the publication of the *Georgics*, the details found in Vergil became canonical.

Likewise, Conon dedicates eight lines of text to recounting Orpheus' death, so he has no problem telling detailed stories; one line summarizing the climax of Vergil's epyllion seems out

century, portraying Orpheus' complete success in recovering his wife; 2) a poem, also at least as early as the mid-fifth century, in which Orpheus' success was very limited (evidence for which he finds in Plato, the Orpheus-relief, and Plutarch); 3) a Hellenistic poem on which Virgil and Ovid drew, which first contained the tragic ending.”

⁷³ See Jacobson, 285 for another conclusion which is in agreement with my own. “My own view is that the evidence tends to show that the failure story was a considerably later development.”

⁷⁴ But he was not able to enjoy the favor of her revival, since he forgot the instructions concerning her.

⁷⁵ Apollod. 1.3.2. After Eurydice died, being bitten by a snake, [Orpheus] went to Hades desiring to bring her back, and he persuaded Hades to send her up. Hades promised to do this, if as Orpheus was returning he would not turn back until he was at his own house. But he disobeyed, turning back he saw his wife, so she turned back.

of place. Conon does not seem to have a problem dealing with problematic or contradictory texts. Concerning conflicts about the story of Orpheus' death, Conon states: ὅτι οὐ μετεδίδου αὐταῖς τῶν ὀργίων, τάχα μὲν καὶ κατ' ἄλλας προφάσεις.⁷⁶

If there were clear conflicting accounts of Orpheus' descent, the reader might expect some explanation from Conon. Yet, the loss of Eurydice is simply given a single vague line. If Vergil was indeed the source of the failure narrative, one would expect more details concerning the loss, and perhaps a mention of the famous account of Orpheus' turning back. Conon's narrative can be understood by accepting the disparate nature of Orpheus stories, and understanding a *katabasis* that generally ended with the success of Orpheus. One popular story of Orpheus prior to Vergil containing an addendum—similar to Plato's account—which continued with the anabasis of Orpheus and his eventual failure could easily explain Conon's single line addition.

Conon's account all but guarantees Vergil did not invent the failure narrative. Instead, Vergil must rely on another source for his Orpheus and Eurydice episode. Vergil's use of intertextuality throughout this section of *Georgics* 4 reinforces this assertion. After creating a list of intertextual references in *Georgics* 4, several clear patterns emerge.⁷⁷ The first section of the Aristaeus epyllion—the introduction of Aristaeus, the loss of his bees, and his pleas to his mother Cyrene⁷⁸—contains a great deal of material that appears original to Vergil, with obvious parallels to Homer. As expected in these seventy-one lines we find a total of thirty lines that contain clear references to Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, Callimachus, Catullus, and Varro.

⁷⁶ Conon 45. [Orpheus was killed] because he did not give a part of his rites, and also perhaps for other reasons.

⁷⁷ This list was created primarily using notes found in the following commentaries: R.F. Thomas, *Virgil: Georgics 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) and R.A.B. Mynor, *Virgil: Georgics Edited with a Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). These commentaries were then supplemented with other references to intertextuality found in texts from the bibliography. It cannot claim to be a complete list, but I still find the conclusions to be highly enlightening.

⁷⁸ Verg. *G.* 4.315-86.

Hellenistic authors—sources which are present in Ovid’s account.⁸³ In fact, there are as many references to Vergil’s own work in the *Eclogues* and other portions of the *Georgics* as there are to other authors.

Without a clear source, the Orpheus episode of the *Georgics* 4 stands out from the rest of the Aristaeus epyllion. The sheer number of intertextual references in the opening of the Aristaeus epyllion and the clear Homeric model for the Proteus episode are sharply contrasted with the intertextuality of the Orpheus episode. The only explanation for this phenomenon is a source that we have since lost. This conclusion, along with the date of Conon’s mythography, seems to eliminate the possibility that Vergil invented the failure of Orpheus.

If the narrative of success seems to be part of the early story and Vergil did not invent the failure narrative, the final problem lies in dating the narrative of Orpheus’ failure. While the failure narrative might be dated to the later fifth century,⁸⁴ Isocrates, Plato, and the *Lament for Bion* are all most easily interpreted if the primary narrative ends with Orpheus’ success and no mention of the ascent. The ambiguity of Hermesianax’s⁸⁵ account and Conon’s clear reference to Orpheus’ failure might date the failure narrative to Hellenistic elegy. But this narrative does not seem to be in wide circulation.⁸⁶ An examination of how Orpheus was used in the first-century B.C.E., particularly in Latin literature, allows us to firmly place Vergil’s Orpheus in a first-century framework suggesting Vergil’s source also belongs to the first-century.

Orpheus in Rome

⁸³ Indeed, one of Ovid’s principle changes in the Orpheus story in the *Metamorphoses* is to add some of these Hellenistic details missing from Vergil’s story. Phanocles and the homoerotic reason for the death of Orpheus is perhaps the most obvious example of this.

⁸⁴ See Sansone.

⁸⁵ For a detailed description of why Hermesianax might reference a narrative of failure see Michael Tueller, “An Allusive Reading of the Orpheus Episode in Hermesianax Fr. 7,” *The Classical Bulletin* 83.1 (2007): 93-108.

⁸⁶ In particular, a comparison of Cicero, Diodorus Siculus and other early 1st century references to 2nd century Hellenistic accounts of Orpheus reveals a less mystical more cosmologically minded Orpheus, less a mythological figure than an influential philosopher. This image of Orpheus rapidly shifts in the latter half of the 1st century C.E.

During the Hellenistic period the myth of Orpheus declines in popularity, stabilizing into a story focused on the power of Orpheus' music, his descent into Hades (but not his return), and his eventual death⁸⁷—with reasons for this death multiplying into myriad disparate theories. The mystical otherworldly powers of Orpheus also seem to decline in Hellenistic writing. As an example, Apollonius of Rhodes in *Argonautica* seems to have largely removed any of Orpheus' mystic powers, instead focusing on a more philosophical cosmological Orpheus.⁸⁸ References to Orpheus are nearly absent in the second century B.C.E. with the majority of references tightly focused on the philosophical Orpheus, his theogonies and cosmology.⁸⁹ The treatments found in Cicero and Diodorus Siculus also seem to confirm the picture of a more philosophical, less mystical Hellenistic Orpheus.

However, by the end of the first-century a very different Orpheus emerges: Orpheus is charming animals, descending into the underworld, and suffering tragic loss. The shift from a Hellenistic Orpheus heralded most for his cosmology and role in establishing Greek religion to a more mythological Orpheus seems to have been incited by the publication of a new Orphic theogony in the first-century.⁹⁰ While a familiarity with the the Orphic theogonies is assumed by most second century authors, this new *Rhapsodic Theogony* births an entire Orphic movement.

⁸⁷ Apollonius of Rhodes less mystical Orpheus in the *Argonautica* serves as a prime example of this Hellenistic Orpheus.

⁸⁸ Orpheus' song in Ap. Rh. is a cosmological song; the songs wonder seems to come as much from the topic then the power of Orpheus' voice. Orpheus also serves as the religious leader of the expedition offering libations, reading the omens, and offering the advice of a prophet.

⁸⁹ A *TLG* search for variations of the name Orpheus yielded very little material for the second century B.C.E. Orpheus is referenced in: Dionysius Thrax *Fr.* 52.9, Agatharchides *De mari Erythraea* 7.54, Aristobulus Judaeus *Fr.* 2.47, Diogenes *Test. et Fr.* 68.3,18, Dionysius Scytobrachion *Fr.* Jac.-F 1a,32F 8.23-38, 14.212-218, Cornelius Alexander *Fr.* 14.14, 52.7, and Posidonius *Fr.* 133.66, and Jab. F 2a,87,F 70.64. These second century references seem entirely concerned with Orpheus' place as a philosopher. Aristobulus claims that Moses is the predecessor of Orpheus. Dionysius Scytobrachion quotes Orphic theogonies on the cyclical movement of the cosmos. Posidonius establishes that Orpheus was the very first Greek to learn philosophy from the Egyptians.

⁹⁰ While dates for the *Rhapsodic Theogony* range from the early first century B.C.E. through the 2nd century C.E. West firmly fixes his date for this theogony in the early 1st century B.C.E. The *Rhapsodic Theogony* or *Theoi Logoi* became the Orphic cosmology of choice in the Roman Empire. The fact that Orpheus emerges as a popular figure in Rome around this same period seems to confirm West's date.

The *Rhapsodic Theogony* is published, and subsequently Orpheus is adopted as a central figure in Greek neo-bucolic poetry. Shortly thereafter, Orpheus arrives as a prominent figure in Latin poetry. In a parallel manner, Orpheus—a figure never featured in Roman art—becomes a popular figure in Roman mosaics.⁹¹ This interest in Orpheus should not be surprising considering that the previous composition of an Orpheus theogony had coincided with another period of societal strife. The Eudemian Theogony was composed in the second half of the fifth century—coinciding with the Peloponnesian War—and was shortly followed by the explosion of Orpheus references found in Euripides.⁹²

Orpheus becomes a central figure in first-century Greek bucolic poetry, a notable change from earlier bucolic poetry since no mention of Orpheus is found in Theocritus or any of the other major Hellenistic bucolic writers. The shift is so prominent that Paschalis coined the term neo-bucolic to describe this movement.⁹³ Paschalis uses the *Lament for Bion* as a prime example of the neo-bucolic. A comparison of the *Lament for Bion* and Vergil's *Eclogues* reveals that both poems clearly belong to this neo-bucolic movement. Vergil appears to have found his Orpheus in the pastoral, mediated through Gallus.

Following Paschalis' framework for first-century neo-bucolic, three unique parallels emerge: (1) The bucolic poet is explicitly and emphatically identified with the herdsman in both poems—in the *Lament for Bion* this occurs for the first time in extant bucolic poetry, while in Vergil this is an assumed fact. (2) The poet of the *Lament* focuses on poetry as a whole, comparing Bion's bucolic poetry to Homer's epic. Likewise, Vergil focuses heavily on creating

⁹¹ *LIMC* 7.1:81-105 For prime examples of Roman mosaics featuring Orpheus gathering the animals around him see Pompei VI 14, 20; Pompei II 2-5; Aquincum; Saint-Romain-en-Gal, Mus. Arch. 282; Berlin, Staatl. Mus. Inv. Mos. 72; Tripoli, Mus. 420; Paphos, Maison d'Orphee; Tunis, Bardo. De La Chebba; Petronell, Freilichtmus. De Carnuntum.

⁹² West, 260-62.

⁹³ M. Paschalis, "Virgil's Sixth *Eclogue* and the *Lament for Bion*," *AJP* 116.4 (1995): 617-21.

poetry about poetry and his reference to Orpheus in *Georgics* 4 explicitly connects Homer and epic to Orpheus and pastoral elegy.⁹⁴ Finally and most importantly, Orpheus is central to both works.⁹⁵

A closer examination of the *Georgics* can highlight some of these similarities. The *Lament for Bion* “makes its fictionalized Bion the master of bucolic poetry but also refigures all Greek poetry as bucolic, or subordinate to bucolic, and sets it within a world that is highly responsive to poets and their songs.”⁹⁶ Poetry is not only central to the *Lament for Bion*; the *Lament for Bion* suggests that its subject is “poetry *per se*.”⁹⁷ In the same way, one of Vergil’s principle goals in the *Georgics* is to subordinate all poetry to his bucolic model. Vergil’s subject in the *Georgics* can only be poetry, hidden within the guise of other stories.

Vergil’s epyllion in the fourth book is often attacked for the whiplash caused by running the Homeric episode directly into the elegiac story of Orpheus.⁹⁸ Yet the *Lament for Bion* constructs “a close kinship between its hero [Bion] and Homer, who therefore eclipses Theocritus as Bion’s chief peer.”⁹⁹ When Vergil runs his Homeric episode directly into the Orpheus epyllion he is following a well-established precedent for comparison. Homer suffers in both poems as the lesser of the poets—being eclipsed by Bion in the *Lament for Bion*, and by Vergil/Orpheus in the *Georgics*. Orpheus, as the best of all the poets, is ascribed a power to sway nature that Homer could never have.¹⁰⁰ Vergil’s comparison between poetic genres—between

⁹⁴ Further evidence for the potential involvement of Gallus who seems to have combined mythologically centered elegy with a more pastoral setting. This also helps to resolve many of the concerns stated by those supporting Servius who feel that the juxtaposition between the Homeric and Orphic episodes feels unwieldy.

⁹⁵ Paschalis, 617-21.

⁹⁶ R. Kania, “Orpheus and the Reinvention of Bucolic Poetry,” *AJP* 133.4 (2012): 656.

⁹⁷ Kania, 659.

⁹⁸ In particular see Coleman.

⁹⁹ Kania, 664.

¹⁰⁰ Kania, 669. “Orpheus easily becomes a foundational figure for a world in which the best, and most ‘bucolic,’ poets are distinguished by nature’s posthumous verdict.”

Homeric epic and an elegiac Orpheus—aligns with the *Lament for Bion*'s own comparisons between Bion and Homer.

A distinct lack of second and third-century sources for Orpheus, coupled with the renewed interest for Orpheus in Rome and a first-century neo-bucolic framework centered on Orpheus, seem to firmly place the source for Vergil's Orpheus in the first-century. All that remains is to determine when in the first-century this source was most likely written. Orpheus is first mentioned in the works of Cicero, but this Orpheus reflects the older Hellenistic attitudes towards Orpheus as an important poet and philosopher and disregards his descent. In both the *Tusculanae Disputationes* and *De Natura Deorum* Orpheus is listed with the prominent poets, Musaeus, Hesiod, and Homer. In each of these references it is to Orpheus as a poet, cosmologist, and Pythagorean that Cicero refers.¹⁰¹ These mentions of Orpheus closely correspond to the earlier Hellenistic narrative.

The next mention of Orpheus and his powers is found in Varro:

Ibi erat locus excelsus, ubi triclinio posito cenabamus, quo Orphea vocari iussit. Qui cum eo venisset cum stola et cithara cantare esset iussus, bucina inflavit, ut tanta circumfluxerit nos cervorum aprorum et ceterarum quadripedum multitudo, ut non minus formosum mihi visum sit spectaculum, quam in Circo Maximo aedilium sine Africanis bestiis cum fiunt venationes.¹⁰²

Varro's emphasis on the mystical powers of Orpheus over animals—the most popular aspect of Roman art depicting Orpheus—is a first in Roman literature. Contemporaneous with Gallus, the first traces of a mythological Orpheus are emerging in Latin literature.

¹⁰¹ See Cic *Tusc.* 1.98.9 and Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.41.2, 107.11, 1.107.13, 3.45.12. Cicero also mentions that Aristotle did not believe that a poet Orpheus ever lived, Orpheus' link to Pythagorean writings, and Orpheus place as a god with Rhesus.

¹⁰² Varro, *Rust.* 3.13.3.2. In it was a high spot where the table was spread at which we were dining, to which [table he bade Orpheus be called. When he appeared with his robe and harp, and was bidden to sing, he blew a horn; whereupon there poured around us such a crowd of stags, boars, and other animals that it seemed to me to be no less attractive a sight than when the hunts of the aediles take place in the Circus Maximus without the African Beasts.

Shortly thereafter, at the same time Vergil is writing, the popularity of Orpheus explodes.

References to Orpheus are found in Propertius, Horace, and Vergil. Propertius twice mentions

Orpheus in his poetry. The first reference is found in Prop. 1.3.41-46:

nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum,
rursus et Orpheae carmine, fessa, lyrae;
interdum leviter mecum deserta querebar
externo longas saepe in amore moras:
dum me iucundis lassam Sopor impulit alis.
illa fuit lacrimis ultima cura meis.¹⁰³

In this passage Orpheus is used in an elegiac context, aside from Hermesianax's catalogue of lovers—which contains most important Greek authors—this inclusion seems rather odd. There is no evidence of a tradition of Orpheus in elegy prior to the first century B.C.E. The next reference to Orpheus found in Propertius, Prop. 3.2.3-8 seems to be more standard Orphic fare:

Orphea delenisse feras et concita dicunt
flumina Threicia sustinuisse lyra;
saxa Cithaeronis Thebanam agitata per artem
sponte sua in muri membra coisse ferunt;
quin etiam, Polypheme, fera Galatea sub Aetna
ad tua rorantis carmina flexit equos:¹⁰⁴

Orpheus' power over nature encompasses the taming of wild creatures, holding back rivers, and moving the stones themselves. Furthermore, this poetic power seems to extend itself and Polyphemus' songs are also ascribed some degree of power over nature. Horace continues to focus on Orpheus' power to sway nature:

Quem virum aut heroa lyra vel acri
tibia sumis celebrare, Clio?
Quem deum? Cuius recinet iocosa

¹⁰³ Prop. 1.3.41-46. Till a moment ago, I fought off sleep, weaving the purple threads, and again, being weary, with the sound of Orpheus's lyre. Until Sleep compelled me to sink down under its delightful wing I, all alone, was moaning gently to myself for you, delayed so long, so often, by a stranger's love. That was my last care, among my tears.'

¹⁰⁴ Prop. 3.2.3-8. They say Orpheus with his Thracian lyre tamed wild creatures; held back flowing rivers: Cithaeron's stones were whisked to Thebes by magic, and joined, of their own will, to form a section of wall. Even, Galatea, it's true, below wild Etna, wheeled her brine-wet horses, Polyphemus, to your songs.

nomen imago
aut in umbrosis Heliconis oris
aut super Pindo gelidove in Haemo?
Unde vocalem temere insecutae
Orphea silvae
arte materna rapidos morantem
fluminum lapsus celerisque ventos,
blandum et auritas fidibus canoris
ducere quercus.¹⁰⁵

Between Varro, Propertius, and Horace clear evidence is emerging that Orpheus becomes a central figure in Roman poetry in the first century B.C.E, and his mystical powers which had been relegated to the dustbin in Hellenistic literature return fully restored.

At the same time, another shift in the Orpheus narrative also occurs. Orpheus' power over death is openly doubted:

Quid si Threicio blandius Orpheo,
auditam moderere arboribus fidem?
Num vanae redeat sanguis imagini,
quam virga semel horrida,
non lenis precibus fata recludere,
nigro compulerit Mercurius gregi?¹⁰⁶

The text seems clear Mercury does not allow anyone to return from the underworld on account of the supplications of mortals. Orpheus could not have succeeded because success is not possible. Furthermore Mercury's *virga horrida* is clearly given power over death, a further testament that to Horace power over life and death belongs only to the gods. *Carmina* was published around 23 B.C.E., thus falling after the publication of the *Georgics* in approximately 29 B.C.E. Horace is drawing either on Vergil for the failure of Orpheus or an earlier Roman

¹⁰⁵ Hor. *Carm.* 1.12.1-12. What man or hero do you choose to celebrate with lyre or shrill pipe, Clio? What God? Whose name will the merry echo send resounding on the leafy slopes of Helicon or on Pindus' summit or on cold Haemus, from where the woods followed Orpheus' voice in haste and confusion, as by his mother's art he checked the rapid course of rivers and the swift winds? He was charming enough to make even the oaks prick up their ears and to lead them in his train by his melodious strings.

¹⁰⁶ Hor. *Carm.* 1.24.13-18. Even if you played on the Thracian strings, listened to by the trees, more sweetly than Orpheus, would blood then return to that empty phantom, once Mercury, by means of his fearsome wand—who won't simply re-open the gates of Fate by means of gentle prayers—has gathered him to the dark flock?

source. Given that Vergil could not have invented the failure narrative—nor did he single-handedly popularize Orpheus—Horace is probably looking back to the same source which Vergil used.

An interesting glimpse of this source appears in the text of the *Culex*. While the *Culex* does not appear to be a genuine work of Vergil, it was widely accepted as a work of Vergil in the first-century C.E. Since this work was accepted at an early date as a work of Vergil, the forgery was apparently quite convincing. The *Culex* serves as a valuable reference point in examining the pre-Vergilian Roman Orpheus; since, the entire story of Orpheus and Eurydice is laid out in the text of the *Culex*:¹⁰⁷

quid, misera Eurydice, tanto maerore recesti,
poenaque respectus et nunc manet Orpheos in te?¹⁰⁸

iam rapidi steterant amnes et turba ferarum
blanda voce sequax regionem insederat orphei;
iamque imam viridi radicem moverat alte
quercus humo [steterant amnes] silvaeque sonorae
sponte sua cantus rapiebant cortice avara.
labentis biiuges etiam per sidera Lunae
pressit equos et tu currentis, menstrua virgo,
auditura lyram tenuisti nocte relicta.
haec eadem potuit, Ditis, te vincere, coniunx,
Eurydicenque viro ducendam reddere. non fas,
non erat in vitam divae exorabile mortis.¹⁰⁹

sed tu crudelis, crudelis tu magis, Orpheu,
oscula cara petens rupisti iussa deorum.

¹⁰⁷ All *Culex* translations are taken from Joseph J. Mooney, *The Minor Poems of Vergil, Comprising the Culex, Dirae, Lydia, Moretum, Copa, Priapeia, and Catalepton* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1916).

¹⁰⁸ *Culex* 268-69. Why went the wretched Eurydice back? / 'Twas Orpheus looked behind and now on thee / The punishment remains.

¹⁰⁹ *Culex* 278-89. Already rapid streams had stood / And throngs of beasts had occupied the place / Enticed by Orpheus's alluring voice, / And now the oak had from the verdant soil / Dislodged on high its lowest root [the streams / Had stood] and of themselves the sounding woods / Were soaking up his songs with greedy bark. / The Moon her horses gliding through the stars / In two-horse chariot has checked as well / And thou, O maiden of the month, to hear / His lyre didst hold thy running horses back, / The night relinquished. Able was this lyre To conquer thee, O spouse of Dis, as well, / And get thee to surrender of thyself / His Eurydice to be led away. It wasn't right, it was not easily that he / Persuaded the goddess queen of Death / That she should be restored again to life.

dignus amor venia, veniam si Tartara nossent;¹¹⁰

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice found in the *Culex* contains all the missing elements of Orpheus' descent: the famous turning back, Eurydice's loss, an emphasis on Orpheus' power over nature, and a silence concerning what Orpheus said to persuade Persephone to yield up Eurydice. Since the *Culex* was viewed as a genuine source for the early poetry of Vergil, and the text of the *Culex* appears to be largely derivative the *Culex* serves as a sounding board, echoing traces of the earlier Roman Orpheus.

While Cicero might contain the first references to Orpheus in Latin literature, Propertius, Horace, Varro, the *Culex*, Vergil, and Ovid all make use of a different newer Orpheus. The Roman Orpheus can be tied more closely to the neo-bucolic Orpheus found in the *Lament for Bion*. This new Orpheus is a distinctly Roman creation formed by combining Orpheus' place as the 'best' of the poets in neo-bucolic poetry with the desire of Roman poets to rehabilitate the image of the poet—particularly Vergil and Horace's desire to reclaim the hallowed name *vates*. This was accomplished by syncretizing “the old Roman seer who sang in verse with the image of the Greek primitive poet who sang about the gods and the universe. Orpheus, Musaeus, and Linus thus came to be regarded as the Greek forerunners of the Roman *vates*, who knew the secrets of nature and enlightened the world with their song.”¹¹¹ The new Roman Orpheus represents both the neo-bucolic ideal of the 'best' poet and the Roman ideal of the *vates*.

These ideas of Orpheus as *vates* and as the best of the bucolic poets intertwined with reemerging ideas of the Golden Age. The eventual conception of the Augustan Golden Age best

¹¹⁰ *Culex* 292-294. The bounty of the goddess with her tongue. / But cruel, more than cruel, Orpheus, you, / Desiring kisses dear, did break the gods' / commands. His love was worthy of pardon though, / If Tartarus had known a pleasing error.

¹¹¹ Stephen Wheeler, *A Discourse of Wonders: Audience and performance in Ovid's "Metamorphoses,"* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999): 64.

found its description in the works of Ovid, Vergil, and Horace. Vergil declares that during the Golden Age:

ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni:
ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.¹¹²

This total harmony of nature with the figure of man has no greater parallel than Orpheus' music. This harmony with nature would have immediately recalled a world without work during the rule of Saturn in Italy.¹¹³ The increasing popularity of mosaics featuring Orpheus taming animals manifests the Roman fondness for this Saturnian idyllic in the second half of the first-century B.C.E.¹¹⁴

While traces of this new Roman Orpheus can be seen in Propertius and Horace, Vergil's *Eclogues* provide a clear and fully developed image of the Roman Orpheus, who is mentioned in four of Vergil's *Eclogues*. Following the neo-bucolic model, Orpheus clearly represents the best of all poets:

Et nobis idem Alcimedon duo pocula fecit
et molli circum est ansas amplexus acantho
Orpheaue in medio posuit silvasque sequentis;¹¹⁵

Here the image of Orpheus is a fitting prize if Menalcas wins the poetry contest. Menalcas himself wagers two cups one with the figure of Conon and the other a man who "marked out the whole heavens for mankind with his staff."¹¹⁶ Wormell elegantly argues that the other man is

¹¹² Verg. *G.* 1.125-28. Fields knew no taming hand of husbandmen / To mark the plain or mete with boundary-line. / Even this was impious; for the common stock / They gathered, and the earth of her own will / All things more freely, no man bidding, bore.

¹¹³ For a fascinating discussion on the origins and place of the myth of the golden age in Augustan Rome see: A. Wallace, "The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology," *Past & Present* 95 (1982): 19-36.

¹¹⁴ *LIMC* 7.1: 81-105.

¹¹⁵ Verg. *Ecl.* 3.44-6. And that same Alcimedon made two cups for me, / the handles are twined around with sweet acanthus, / in the center he placed Orpheus and the following woods.

¹¹⁶ W. Clausen, *A Commentary on Vergil's Eclogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994): 176.

Archimedes—a fact obscured only because the name of Archimedes would not fit into dactylic hexameter. Both of these figures study the heavens and because of their study have aided the farmer in his work. These suitable images of astronomy are waged against Orpheus; a figure who exists in a different world from the farmer. The farmer toils, forcing nature to his will, while with Orpheus' mere song the woods take up their roots and follow him.

Orpheus is next mentioned in *Eclogue 4* with the lines:

non me carminibus vincat nec Thracius Orpheus
nec Linus, huic mater quamvis atque huic pater adsit,
Orpei Calliopea, Lino formosus Apollo.¹¹⁷

Here Orpheus represents the height of poetic inspiration. Vergil wishes to sing greater praises to the child than predecessor, and sing of the Golden Age which this child will bring to the world. Even Pan, the god of rustic poetry, will concede Vergil's poetic superiority.¹¹⁸ The Roman Orpheus is closely tied to the concept of a Golden Age.

The next mention of Orpheus is found in *Eclogue 6*:

nec tantum Rhodope miratur et Ismarus Orpheia.
Namque canebat uti magnum per inane coacta
semina terrarumque animaeque marisque fuissent
et liquidi simul ignis; ut his exordia primis
omnia, et ipse tener mundi concreuerit orbis;
tum durare solum et discludere Nerea ponto
coeperit, et rerum paulatim sumere formas;¹¹⁹

Vergil claims the song of Silenus is even more astounding than the song of Orpheus ever was.

Once again Orpheus is the supreme example of the poetic figure. Clausen notes that “the song of

¹¹⁷ Verg. *Ecl.* 4.55-7. Thracian Orpheus and Linus will not overcome me in song / though his mother helps the one, his father the other, / Calliope Orpheus, and lovely Apollo Linus.

¹¹⁸ Verg. *Ecl.* 4.58-60. Rhodope and Ismarus are not so astounded by Orpheus. / For he sang how the seeds of earth and air and sea and liquid fire / were brought together through the great void: how from these first / beginnings all things, even the tender orb of earth took shape: / then began to harden as land, to shut Nereus / in the deep...

¹¹⁹ Verg. *Ecl.* 6.30-6. Rhodope and Ismarus are not so astounded by Orpheus. / For he sang how the seeds of earth and air and sea and liquid fire / were brought together through the great void: how from these first / beginnings all things, even the tender orb of earth took shape: / then began to harden as land, to shut Nereus / in the deep, to gradually take on the form of things:

Silenus originates in Apollonius' song of Orpheus,¹²⁰ Here *Argonautica* 1.496-501 is reproduced:

ἦιδεν δ' ὡς γαῖα καὶ οὐρανὸς ἠδὲ θάλασσα,
τὸ πρὶν ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι μιῇ συναρηρότα μορφῇ,
νεῖκος ἐξ ὀλοοῖο διέκριθεν ἀμφὶς ἕκαστα:
ἦδ' ὡς ἔμπεδον αἰὲν ἐν αἰθέρι τέκμαρ ἔχουσιν
500 ἄστρα σεληναίη τε καὶ ἠελίοιο κέλευθοι:
οὔρεά θ' ὡς ἀνέτειλε,¹²¹

The song of Silenus continues long after the song of Orpheus has stopped. Orpheus continues until Zeus is a small child but Silenus keeps singing. His song is in fact a “neoteric *ars poetica* artfully concealed with but a single subject... poetry as conceived by Callimachus.”¹²² Silenus, through the poetry of Vergil, represents the height of the poetic tradition conceived by Callimachus, and his song is great enough to even overcome the poetry of the greatest poetic figure of all—Orpheus. This program foreshadows Vergil’s use of Orpheus in the *Georgics*, where once again Vergil asserts the claim that his poetry has surpassed all other poets, including Homer and Orpheus.

The final reference to Orpheus in the *Eclogues* is found in *Eclogue* 8:

certent et cynnis ululae, sit Tityrus Orpheus,
Orpheus in siluis, inter delphinas Arion.¹²³

This couplet depicts sets of opposites; wolves run from sheep, oaks bare apples, alders flower with blossoms, shriek-owls compete with swans and Tityrus is given the greatest power of poetry. Orpheus' greatest power is represented through how trees obey him. Arion is saved after being thrown overboard by charming dolphins with his music.

¹²⁰ Clausen, 176.

¹²¹ He sang how the earth, the heaven and the sea, once mingled together in one form, after deadly strife were separated each from other; and how the stars and the moon and the paths of the sun ever keep their fixed place in the sky; and how the mountains rose.

¹²² Clausen, 177.

¹²³ Verg. *Ecl.* 8.55-6. Let shriek-owls vie with swans, let Tityrus be an Orpheus, / an Orpheus in the woods, an Arion among the dolphins

These four uses of Orpheus found in the in *Eclogues* are a clear match to the neo-bucolic Orpheus found in *The Lament for Bion*. Orpheus singularly represents the height of the poetic tradition and the greatest of all the poets. Orpheus is connected with the ideas of the golden age, and Orpheus represents the ideal that the poet should strive to surpass. Orpheus' greatest power is that nature itself follows him, which in the *Eclogues* is best represented by the movement of the trees themselves.

Orpheus seems to be reflecting these same traits in the *Georgics*. Orpheus is clearly paired with Homer, following the neo-bucolic precedent seen in *Lament for Bion*. This pairing helps explain the sudden change in genre between the Homeric Aristaeus episode and the more elegiac Orpheus episode. The natural structure of the epyllion places Orpheus at the climax of the poem, at a place that naturally emphasizes Orpheus' superiority to Homer. Vergil's careful correction of the Proteus episode can be seen as Vergil's attempt to subsume and supersede the poetry of Homer, in a manner reminiscent of Vergil's entire program in the *Aeneid*. The Orpheus episode must be viewed in this same light. If Vergil believed his poetry was greater than Homer, he also believed that he had surpassed or at least rivaled the legendary Orpheus. Besides this pairing of Homer and Orpheus, Vergil's epyllion focuses on the mystic power of Orpheus' music. The philosophical/rational Orpheus that emerged in the Hellenistic age and is best represented by the rational figure of Orpheus found in Apollonius of Rhodes completely disappears under this newer mystical Roman Orpheus.

This Roman Orpheus, coming out of the reinvigorated Orpheus of the *Rhapsodic Theogony* and neo-bucolic poetry, features in every prominent author of the later half of the first-century in Rome and coincides with the rise of popular Orpheus motifs in Roman art. The Roman Orpheus is most closely associated with power over nature and represents the best of all

the poets. And yet, unlike in the *Lament for Bion*, for the first time (in extant literature) Orpheus clearly has failed to retrieve his wife. The presence of the Roman Orpheus in Varro, Propertius, Horace, and the *Culex*—along with the impossibility of Vergil inventing the failure narrative—leaves us looking for another Roman author, writing contemporaneously with Varro or shortly before, who could be responsible for the creation and popularity of the Roman Orpheus.

Orpheus and Cornelius Gallus

Turning back to Vergil's intertextuality in the Orpheus epyllion in *Georgics* 4, one of the most interesting observations is the extraordinary number of references referring back to Vergil's own poetry, either in the *Eclogues* or to passages earlier in the *Georgics*. In this section of seventy or so lines there are thirteen lines that identifiably reference Homer,¹²⁴ two lines that reference Catullus,¹²⁵ and one reference to Ennius,¹²⁶ far fewer references than other comparable sections of the Aristaeus epyllion. Yet, Vergil references his own poetry seven times in this same passage¹²⁷—an unusual occurrence when compared with the rest of the *Georgics*.

These references show a great deal of intentionality in the composition of the Orpheus passage. The Orpheus episode cannot have been tacked on as a quick fix once Gallus fell out of favor—as often suggested by Servius' supporters; since in the epyllion, Vergil consistently refers back at the *Georgics* as a whole while thematically reconciling the *Eclogues* concept of love with Orpheus' love.

¹²⁴ Verg. *G.* 4.471-75, 499-502, 511-15. For additional commentary, turn to Thomas on each of these lines.

¹²⁵ Verg. *G.* 4.490, 515.

¹²⁶ Verg. *G.* 4.523.

¹²⁷ For example, compare Verg. *G.* 4.481-84 with Verg. *G.* 3.37-9, and Verg. *G.* 4.516 with Verg. *G.* 3.520-21

Of particular interest are the number of lines that refer back to either *Eclogues* 6 or 10,¹²⁸ specifically those lines linked directly to Cornelius Gallus.¹²⁹ *Georgics* 4.517 is directly parallel to the end of the song of Gallus at *Eclogues* 10.65-66 while *Georgics* 4.494-495 and *Eclogues* 10.22-24 see similar questions posed to both Gallus and Orpheus. In the *Georgics* the question is asked;

Illa, ‘Quis et me,’ inquit, ‘miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu, quis tantus furor?’¹³⁰

While in the *Eclogues* Gallus is asked:

‘Galle, quid insanis?’ inquit; ‘tua cura Lycoris / perque niues alium perque horrida castra secuta est.’¹³¹

Orpheus’ loss uses the same amatory language seen in the *Eclogues*—Orpheus’ loss is due to a loss of control caused by *amor*.¹³² These passages tie Orpheus’ *furor amoris* in the *Georgics* to Vergil’s conception of love in *Eclogues*, and indirectly connect with Gallus and his elegiac conception of love. Further Thomas notes several additional lines which may have been directly drawing on the poetry of Gallus.¹³³ The Orpheus episodes reliance on *Eclogues* 6 and 10, both of which are also tied to the figure of Gallus, and these hints of Gallus’ own poetry reinforce the essential part Gallus’ poetry performs in the Orpheus episode.

¹²⁸ Thomas, 228-34. Verg. *G.* 4.461, 488, 494-95, 517, 526 all contain notes in Thomas’ commentary linking back to Vergil’s own work.

¹²⁹F. Cairns, *Sextus Propertius: The Augustan Elegist* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006): 143. Cairns ties the style of both *Eclogue* 6 and 10 to Gallus: “*Eclogue* 6, which introduced Gallus to Virgil’s public, is a *recusatio*; and *Eclogue* 10, although not primarily recusatory, makes much of the clash and confluence of Virgilian bucolic and Gallan elegy. It would seem then that Gallan elegy embraced literary polemic which is reinforced by the imprint of Gallus on a number of Propertian elegies.”

¹³⁰ Verg. *G.* 4.494-95. ‘Orpheus,’ she said, ‘What great madness has destroyed wretched me and you.’

¹³¹ Verg. *Ecl.* 10.22-4. ‘Gallus what madness is this?’ he said, ‘Lycoris your lover / follows another through the snows and the rough camps.’

¹³² Thomas, 230. This line also ties *incautum* back to the heedlessness of the farmer causing lost labor in *Georgics* 2.303.

¹³³ See Thomas’ commentary on the following lines: *Georgics* 4.465-6 The style of this line may draw on Gallus; *Georgics* 4.466 another feature of Gallus’ poetry; *Georgics* 4.525 another potential feature of Gallus see *Ec.* 10.47-9 where the word a! is also repeated three times which Servius says is directly taken from Gallus.

An effective examination of Gallus' importance in coloring the Vergilian Orpheus begins best by examining *Eclogues* 6 and 10. These are the seminal texts for understanding Gallan poetry¹³⁴ since Gallus appears explicitly at *Ecl.* 6.64-73, and the entirety of *Ecl.* 10 is dedicated to him.

Several sections of *Ecl.* 10 directly surrounding line 46 have been attributed to the poetry of Gallus.¹³⁵ Servius also notes that line 46 is drawn directly from Gallus: "Tu procul a patria (nec sit mihi credere tantum)."¹³⁶ Thematically, Gallus pervades *Ecl.* 10. So, when Vergil, restating questions posed to Gallus concerning the madness of love (*furor amoris*), uses material from *Ecl.* 10 in *Georgics* 4, he inexorably ties Orpheus to love's madness and to the poetry of Gallus.

Gallus' initiation stands central to *Ecl.* 6 and this episode is thought "to reflect something of Gallus himself."¹³⁷ Lipka also believes *Ecl.* 6.64-73 contains references to Gallan material:¹³⁸

Tum canit, errantem Permessi ad flumina Gallum
Aonas in montis ut duxerit una sororum,
utque uiro Phoebi chorus adsurrexerit omnis;
ut Linus haec illi diuino carmine pastor,
floribus atque apio crinis ornatus amaro,
dixerit: "Hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae,
Ascraeo quos ante seni; quibus ille solebat
cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos.
His tibi Grynei nemoris dicatur origo,
ne quis sit lucus quo se plus iactet Apollo."¹³⁹

¹³⁴ D.O. Ross, Jr., *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy, and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975): 20. see 23-27 for a detailed discussion of Orpheus in *Ecl.*

¹³⁵ M. Lipka, *Language in Vergil's Eclogues* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001): 89. Gallan references are "especially around line 46."

¹³⁶ Serv. *E.* 10.46. Hi autem omnes versus Galli sunt, de ipsius translate carminibus

¹³⁷ J.L. Lightfoot, *Parthenius of Nicaea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 62.

¹³⁸ Lipka, 89.

¹³⁹ Then he sings of Gallus wandering by the waters of Permessus, / how one of the Muses led him to the Aonian hills, and how all the choir of Phoebus rose to him: / how Linus, the shepherd of divine song, / his hair crowned with bitter celery and flowers, / cried: 'Here, take these reeds, the Muses give them to you, / as to old Ascraean Hesiod before, with which, singing, / he'd draw the unyielding manna ash-trees from the hills. / Tell of the origin of the Grynean woods, with these, / so there's no grove Apollo delights in more.'

This song of Gallus attributes a unique power to Hesiod and it seems a distinctly Gallan concept that because Hesiod was an Orpheus figure; he like Orpheus could lead trees.¹⁴⁰ *Eclogue 6* not only mentions this Orphic power, it directly ties Orpheus to Linus, and in the song of Silenus uses an Orphic cosmology found in Apollonius of Rhodes. The initiation of Gallus becomes a sort of poetic genealogy with the power of poetry being passed from Apollo to Linus and Orpheus, on to Hesiod, on to Apollonius of Rhodes, and then finally to Gallus himself with the implication that Vergil has received this poetic power as well.¹⁴¹ Ross notes that because of this genealogy the theme of *Eclogue 6* can only be poetry itself.¹⁴² The passage of poetic power transcends poetic genre and instead falls upon the most worthy poet.¹⁴³ The central elements of Silenus' song—the pipes, the Grynean Grove, a renewed Linus¹⁴⁴—all have been tied to Gallus.¹⁴⁵ The renewed Roman interest in Orpheus easily fits into this same pattern.

Ecl. 6 and *10* are primarily concerned with poetry and the power which poetry wields. Poets are given incredible power as Orpheus' power is passed on to his poetic heirs. In the *Eclogues* Orpheus emerges as a central figure who chiefly represents the power and potential of the poet; in fact, "it may have been Gallus who saw Orpheus as the archetypal cosmic poet."¹⁴⁶

At the same time divine poetry is "subject to human weakness, to which all things must yield. The second half of the *Eclogue* book begins with the expression of potential power and ends with the realization of failure."¹⁴⁷ Because of this the Gallan poet is doomed. Humans by necessity must give into their weakness, and *furor* surrounds us all. In Vergil's Orpheus all of

¹⁴⁰ Cairns, 125.

¹⁴¹ Ross, 25.

¹⁴² Ross, 19.

¹⁴³ Ross, 38.

¹⁴⁴ Ross, 23-7. Ross sees a new figure in Vergil's Linus, distinct from the previous usages of Linus. Orpheus also seems to have undergone this same transformation.

¹⁴⁵ Lightfoot, 63.

¹⁴⁶ Ross, 36.

¹⁴⁷ Ross, 105-6.

these themes come together. Orpheus is made the best of all the poets, a poet whose poetic power passes on through initiation to all the poets who follow, the *Eclogues* conception of love and its madness is mirrored in Orpheus' own *furor amoris*, and because of human frailty he is bound to fail even after being compelled to the edge of greatness by that very madness.

For more information on Gallan poetry, it is necessary to turn to the other Latin elegists since Gallus is central to an understanding of Latin love elegy. Ovid, himself, suggests that Gallus was the inventor of Latin love elegy.¹⁴⁸ In Ovid's *Tristia* we find yet another mention of Orpheus and the loss of his wife:

...Orpheus et dura canendo
saxa, bis amissa coniuge maestus erat¹⁴⁹

Further evidence tying together Gallus, Orpheus, and loss is found in the elegy of Propertius. The mere fact that Orpheus is assigned an important role in the works of Ovid, Vergil, and Propertius hints at a reliance on an earlier Latin elegist, who could only be Gallus. Direct evidence of Gallan influence has been detected in Propertius 2.1.3 regarding the conjuncture of Orpheus' parents.¹⁵⁰ Further, in Propertius 2.13-3-8 we have a near parallel of *Eclogues* 6: the Muses, the grove of Ascrea, Linus, and Orpheus.¹⁵¹ These similarities between the poetry of Propertius and Vergil seem to draw on a common source. Considering the central nature of both Gallus and Orpheus in *Eclogues* 6 and Propertius 2, the most obvious conclusion is that the common source lies with Gallus. If this is the case the same or another Gallan initiation is reflected indirectly in *Ecl.* 4.55-9, as these lines once again link Orpheus and Linus.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Ovid *Trist.* 4.10.53.

¹⁴⁹ Ovid *Trist.* 4.1. Great Orpheus by his voice rocks could move, when he was mourning for his twice lost love.

¹⁵⁰ Cairns, 144.

¹⁵¹ Cairns, 124. "Here the characters and scenery of Eclogue 6 largely reappear: the Muses, the grove of Ascrea, Helicon, Orpheus, and Linus." See also Ross, 35.

¹⁵² Cairns, 122.

Traces of Gallus found in Latin elegy seem to point to a Gallan initiation poem that featured Orpheus. Orpheus' power over nature seems to have a key role in Gallan poetry. The Orpheus narrative concerning the madness of love and loss all seem to stem from Gallus as well. Obviously without the poetry of Gallus, we can merely conjecture; but, the present sources seem to indicate a strong relation between Gallus and Orpheus.

Ovid's own reception of the Orphic figure seems to point to an author behind Vergil's account. While examining both Vergil's and Ovid's Orpheus and Eurydice episode side by side, several oddities emerge. Ovid goes out of his way to make sure that Orpheus is not treated as a figure of reverence.¹⁵³ Vergil is silent on the song of Orpheus, while Ovid makes the song of Orpheus nearly meaningless platitudes.¹⁵⁴ Finally Ovid reduces the sacrifice of Orpheus to nearly meaningless ending his version of the story with:

Umbra subit terras, et quae loca viderat ante,
cuncta recognoscit quaerensque per arva piorum
invenit Eurydicen cupidisque amplectitur ulnis;
hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo,
nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevious anteit
Eurydicenque suam iam tuto respicit Orpheus.¹⁵⁵

The unspoken commentary that Orpheus was too cowardly to die in the first place to be reunited with his wife is painfully obvious. Ovid's attempt to reduce the sacredness and importance of Orpheus is apparent, what is not quite so readily apparent is Vergil's own reverence for the

¹⁵³ In particular, the mention of Orpheus pederasty would not have endeared him to Roman ears. This explanation is found in Phanocles (Stobaeus *Florilegium*, 64) which describes the love of Orpheus for the youthful Calais, son of Boreas. On account of this love he was subsequently killed at the hands of the Thracian women. This is a Hellenistic detail left out by Vergil that Ovid seems almost gleeful to add.

¹⁵⁴ W.S. Anderson, "The Orpheus of Ovid and Vergil: flebile nescio quid," in *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*, ed. J. Warde, (Toronto: John Hopkins University Press, 1982): 40-1. "And so the song [Ovid] assigns Orpheus is anything but unique: it makes no emotional appeal whatsoever, but works with cheap, flashy, and specious rhetoric to persuade Hades to go against his own nature... Almost every phrase [in Orpheus' song] was a commonplace for Roman ears, the trite baggage of expectable words about death."

¹⁵⁵ Ovid *Met.* 11.61-6. The ghost of Orpheus sank under the earth, and recognized all those places it had seen before; and, searching the fields of the Blessed, he found his wife and eagerly held her in his arms. There they walk together side by side; now she goes in front, and he follows her; now he leads, and looks back as he can do, in safety now, at his Eurydice.'

figure of Orpheus. A reading of Vergil's account does not reveal a strongly reverential attitude. Vergil's Orpheus remains silent in the underworld—perhaps evidence of reverential treatment, but the emphasis on the Orpheus' failure and Vergil's claim to be a poet as great as Orpheus seem to deny an overly reverential tone. However, if both Vergil and Ovid are in some way referring back to a Gallan initiation—in near certainty a reverential text—containing the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, Ovid's resistance to a reverential story begins to make a great deal more sense. If this were the case, Vergil's silence regarding the speech of Orpheus in the underworld could very well be taken from a potential Gallan source for the story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

The story of Orpheus' loss of Eurydice is not clearly detailed in any extant literature until the latter half of the first-century, yet Roman elegy speaks clearly of this loss. The theme of the madness of love is closely associated with Gallus. In fact, Parthenius dedicated an entire collection, *Erotica Pathemata*, full of tragic stories involving love and loss to Gallus—the story of Orpheus and Eurydice is notably absent from this collection. Parthenius' influence on Gallus also provides a perspective on what Gallan poetry may have looked like. Parthenius' Greek elegy was “pre-eminently narrative and mythological,”¹⁵⁶ and used “mythological material to illustrate the experiences of the first person speaker.”¹⁵⁷ This created an almost epyllion-like effect, indeed Parthenius first introduced the epyllion to Rome.¹⁵⁸ Vergil's use of Orpheus in *Georgics* 4 exactly matches this view of epyllion-like mythological elegy where love and loss is a central theme. Everything we know about the poetry of Gallus helps to confirm the idea that Vergil uses the Gallan Orpheus.

¹⁵⁶ Lightfoot, 64.

¹⁵⁷ Lightfoot, 73.

¹⁵⁸ Lightfoot, 51.

The *Rhapsodic Theogony* and the rise of Orpheus in first-century B.C.E. Roman art show that Orpheus was a popular figure in Rome around the time of Gallus. We know that Vergil cannot be the source of this myth of loss as Conon's date all but assures this. However, Gallus may very well be Conon's source for the brief addendum which details Eurydice's loss. For, if Gallus wrote an elegy detailing the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, and thereby, achieved some degree of popularity, his text may be the missing link between Conon and Vergil. Gallus' relationship to various passages of the *Culex* is well documented,¹⁵⁹ indeed reliance on Gallus to imitate the early Vergil's work makes perfect sense. With much of the *Culex* potentially being tied to the poetry of Gallus, here is another opportunity for the story of Orpheus to be tied to Gallus.

While guessing what Gallus' work may have looked like is a difficult proposition, there is a surprising amount of material that connects Orpheus to Gallus. *Eclogues* 6 contains both the figures of Orpheus and Gallus. The *Georgics* episode containing Orpheus is constantly looking back to *Eclogues* 6 and 10—both of which contain significant portions attributed to Gallus. Extrapolating from Vergil and Propertius, it appears that Gallus may have written about an initiation ritual that linked Linus and Orpheus. The sudden increase in the popularity of Orpheus in Roman authors coincides with the dates in which Gallus was writing. Further, Ovid's reception of the Orpheus episode fits more neatly if Ovid is in part responding to a reverent initiation ritual in which Orpheus plays an integral part.

Assuming that Gallus composed the Orpheus and Eurydice episode also solves an important part of the Servius question; namely, why Gallus would even be associated with the final book of the *Georgics*. Those opponents of Servius, who speak of the inappropriateness of a

¹⁵⁹ Cairns, 74. "As is often the case with *Culex* passages, these lines (*Culex* 94-7) reflect Gallus." See also Duncan F. Kennedy, "Gallus and the *Culex*," *CQ* 32.2 (1982): 371-89.

long digression concerning Gallus in Egypt are not incorrect. Their argument that the Orpheus and Eurydice episode seems integral to the structure of the *Georgics*—both in the language of the poem¹⁶⁰ and in the underlying structure and theme¹⁶¹—contains a great deal of merit. The inappropriateness of a political digression on Gallus' success—combined with the fact that Vergil has a distinct program in which he is attempting to supersede the poets who have gone before concluding with the greatest of all poets—undercuts every argument presented by those who support the correctness of Servius' comments on the *Georgics*. If Vergil's program of systematically superseding prior poets is followed to its natural conclusion, Orpheus must be found at the climax of the poem, which is very much the case. The little ground left to defend Servius is further eroded, because any argument that relied on the strange connection between the Homeric Aristaeus/Orpheus episodes in the *Georgics* is rendered nearly meaningless by this same comparison between Homer and Orpheus found in *The Lament for Bion*.

If the Orpheus episode must have always been a part of the poem, from where did the Servian conclusion that *laudes Galli* were once in the *Georgics* arise? If Servius knew that the final portion of the *Georgics* was supposedly a praise of Gallus—and found no mention of Gallus in the fourth book—his conclusion that Gallus must have been removed makes perfect sense. The *laudes Galli* could have existed as an extensive literary reference to Gallus' own work. Assuming Gallus is the author of an episode containing Orpheus' failure to rescue Eurydice neatly resolves any problems with Servius' commentary: Servius is allowed to be correct in his claims that the final portion of the poem contained the *laudes Galli*, and we can allow that the Orpheus and Eurydice episode was always an integral part of the *Georgics*.

¹⁶⁰ Anderson, 43-5.

¹⁶¹ Duckworth, 235-7.

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