

Unlocking the Orphic Doors

Interpretation of Poetry in the Derveni Papyrus between Pre-Socratics and Alexandrians¹

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Prelude: Reader 1: The owner of the Derveni papyrus

The urge to attach an author's name to the Derveni papyrus is natural for everyone who reads it, which should remind us of why pseudepigrapha were so popular in the ancient world. I have my own preferences, admittedly based not so much on a dispassionate consideration of the evidence as on the reasons I was drawn to the papyrus myself, an interest in the forms of ancient literary scholarship. Though I have no specific proposal to make, going over the possible identities, both of its author and of its owner, and how we might argue for and against each one is in itself a useful way of evaluating the evidence we now have: it consists of the archaeological context of the find, the form of the book, the contents of the individual columns, and the quotations not only from Orpheus' theogony but also from Heraclitus and, I still believe, other authors as well.

We should really begin with the man whose ashes were found in the grave. Much has been made of the fact that any grave-goods connected with Orpheus might well be thought to indicate a sort of book of the dead, and the tendency to connect this book with the complex of Orphic afterlife-doctrine attested by Pindar, Plato, the gold tablets and other finds has proved overwhelming. The now-lost papyrus found in the right-hand of a corpse in a grave at Kallatis on the Black Sea seems to confirm it further, as does the southern Italian amphora that shows Orpheus with his lyre standing next to a seated man holding a papyrus scroll.² With all this background it seems almost inevitable to take the papyrus itself as a document of personal religious faith. (Note the emphasis on *pistis* in Column v). The contributions of Yannis Tzifopoulos and Dirk Obbink at this conference offer well-informed observations on this subject, and take the arguments *pro* and *con* to much more sophisticated level.

But I am one of those who find the contents of most of the papyrus difficult to reconcile with this interpretation of its owner, and so I want to press on to other possible reasons for its inclusion in the grave-goods. The collection of texts on books in burials by Wolfgang Speyer

¹ I am indebted to many at the conference for ideas and corrections (some acknowledged specifically below), but especially to Claude Calame, Albert Henrichs, Sarah Johnston, Franco Montanari, Glenn Most, Dirk Obbink, and Francesca Schironi. Note that in the Greek text cited below I have reproduced the brackets of KPT (for abbreviations see the appended bibliography) but not the dotted, which I hope is acceptable because I do not discuss doubtful readings.

² See Betegh 2002, and most extremely Bottini 1992.

(1970) as well as studies of papyrus-finds in general, remind us that books buried with a body have multiple possible meanings. They might be the books written by the entombed -- Propertius (2.10.25ff) imagines his funeral attended by no one but the books he has written for his girlfriend, whereas a malicious Horace (Satires 1.10.63-4) points out that Lucilius wrote far too much, so that his body could be completely burnt by his collected works without the need for any additional fuel. The sarcophagus of the Etruscan Laris Pulenas depicts him proudly holding a copy of his treatise on divination (Bonfante 2006), not really comparable with Greek burials but included here because of its religious connection and because it is more or less contemporary with the Derveni papyrus.

Books in a grave might also be a prized possession of the owner -- I know of no literary documentation of this motive, but people reading and holding scrolls was a favorite theme of Attic art, and pride in books seems likely to be behind the placement of a scroll of Timotheus near a wooden sarcophagus in the third century B.C. Egypt (MP3 1537, Hordern 2002 62-73), as well as luxury copies of Homer (MP3 642), Alcman (MP3 78) and perhaps Bacchylides (MP3 175) found later in burials. The body in Derveni tomb A was a military man, or, at any rate, greaves and a bridle were found among his grave-goods. It may seem odd that such a man owned any books at all, but stranger things can be imagined, as in the fragment of the fourth century comedy by Alexis, in which Linus tries to convince an unlikely pupil, Heracles, that he should develop a passion for books (Alexis, Linus PCG fr. 140):

ΛΙΝ. βιβλίον
 έντεϋθεν ὄ τι βούλει προσελθῶν γάρ λαβέ,
 ἔπειτ' ἀναγνώσει, πάνυ γε διασκοπῶν
 ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιγραμμάτων ἀτρέμα τε καὶ σχολῆ.
 Ὅρφεϋς ἔνεστιν, Ἡσίοδος, τραγωδίαι,
 Χοιρίλος, Ὅμηρος, <ἔστ' > Ἐπίχαρμος, γράμματα
 παντοδαπά. δηλώσεις γάρ οὔτω τὴν φύσιν,
 ἐπὶ τί μάλισθ' ὤρμηκε.

ΗΡ. τουτὶ λαμβάνω.

ΛΙΝ. δεῖξον ὄ τι ἐστὶ πρῶτον.

ΗΡ. ὀψαρτυσία,
 ὡς φησι τοῦπίγραμμα.

ΛΙΝ. φιλόσοφος τις εἶ,
 εὔδηλον, ὃς παρὲς τοσαῦτα γράμματα
 Σίμου τέχνην ἔλαβες.

Linus: Come up and take
 any book you want from here; then,

after looking quite carefully through the titles,
read quietly and at your leisure.

Orpheus is there, and Hesiod, Tragedies,
Choirilus, Homer, there's Epicharmus, writings
of all kinds, and so you'll reveal your nature
by what you're eager for.

Heracles: I'll take this.

Linus: Show me what it is first.

Heracles: *The Joy of Cooking*,
according to the title.

Linus: You're a philosopher,
clearly: you pass by so many other writings
and seize the art of Simus.

Linus offers him Orpheus, Hesiod, tragedy, Homer and Epicharmus -- Choirilus here must be a joke-- as the authors from which he can choose, and in line 7 he says "that way you will show what you're like, your predilection". When Heracles naturally picks up a cookbook, his flattering teacher doesn't miss a beat, and praises his philosophical choice.

So for characterizing the owner of the book we have a range of possibilities. Even if he was not the author, but an owner-reader, he was in some sense an *addressee* of the book; why did he choose to read it? How did he read it? Was he a religious addressee, who need to be converted and instructed? Or a philosophical addressee, hoping to find confirmation for his cosmogony in specialized interpretation? Or perhaps a reader of literature who wanted some help when reading the Theogony of Orpheus? Or was the mere fact of ownership of such a finally-produced book his primary aim?

Reader 2: The author of the Derveni Papyrus and his diverse interests

For the author of the Derveni papyrus, our primary evidence is of course the contents of his work, and they are not entirely homogeneous. In figure 1 I give a conspectus of the total contents of the papyrus, with the column number, the section of the Theogony discussed, and the author's interpretation and any other texts quoted.

Figure 1 Conspectus of the contents of the Derveni papyrus

Column	Section of Theogony Discussed	Commentator's Interpretation
I	?	?
II	?	"Erinyes" mentioned

III	?	“Daimones...servants of the gods” mentioned
IV	?	Heraclitus cited (VS 22 b3, B94) on the Erinyes and the sun (εἰ γὰρ τι εὔρους ἔωυτοῦ ἐκβήσεται, Ἐρινύες νιν ἐξευρήσουσι)
V		Oracles and Dreams
VI	?	Reasons for offering σπονδαί, χοαί and πόπανα to the Eumenides
VII	Cf. [Plato], <i>Alcibiades</i> II.147d (below)	Orpheus’ poetry is αἰνιγματώδης (cites OF 13, 245.1)
VIII	Zeus succeeds Kronos (Orph. fr. 4-5)	Verses are in hyperbaton
IX	Zeus succeeds Kronos	τὰ ὄντα were placed in disorder and prevented from recombining
X	Oracle of Nyx (Orph. fr. 6)	φωνεῖν = λέγειν = διδάσκειν, so that πανομφεύουσιν (epithet of Nyx?) means πάντα διδάσκουσιν
XI	Oracle of Nyx	a) ἄδυτον (of Nyx) = the depth (βάθος) of darkness b) χρᾶν (“give prophecies”) = ἀρκεῖν (“be sufficient”), with 2 illustrative quotations (from prose)
XII	?	“Olympos” is not οὐρανός (εὐρύς), but χρόνος (μακρός)
XIII	Zeus hears θέσφατα from Kronos (Orph. fr. 7) Zeus swallows Phanes (Orph. fr. 8)	a) ?“variant reading” with ἀκούσας rejected? b) αἰδοῖον refers to ἥλιος

XIV	List of Kings: Ouranos (Orph. fr. 10)	A) Kronos is called a child of Helios and Ge because the sun causes τὰ ὄντα to strike against each other (κρούεσθαι) B) Kronos (= Nous) “robbed Ouranos of his rule” by causing things to stike against each other
XV	List of Kings: Kronos-Zeus (Orph. fr. 10)	a) the formation of the sun (cf. XXIV) b) the present state of the kosmos (ἡ νῦν μετάστασις) began with rule of Kronos, who is the same as Zeus
XVI	Creation from Protogonos (Phanes) (Orph. fr. 12-13)	What now exists was not created, but a rearrangement of previously existent matter
XVII	“Hymn to Zeus” (Orph. fr. 14)	Aer has always existed, but received the name Zeus when the present kosmos took shape; he will retain this name until the previous state returns.
XVIII	“Hymn to Zeus”	The πνεῦμα in Aer was named by Orpheus Moira (= φρόνησις τοῦ θεοῦ by common usage) before Zeus received his name.
XIX	“Hymn to Zeus” (Orph. fr. 3, 31, 243 etc.)	A) Zeus (= Aer) is called “everything” because Aer can predominate in everything. B) Moira (Διὸς φρόνησις) determines past, present and future
XX	?	Criticism of those who seek knowledge through initiation.
XXI	Birth of Aphrodite?	a) explanation of θόρνῃ (?) b) μίσγεσθαι = θόρνυσθαι (“mount”) =

		αφροδισιάζειν, so that Aphrodite (= Zeus, Harmonia and Peitho) received her name when the present kosmos had been mixed together (μιχθέντων)
XXII	Rhea “becomes” Demeter (cf. Orph. fr. 1019)	Ge, Meter (= Demeter), Rhea, and Hera are the same (with an illustrative quotation from the <i>Hymns</i>)
XXIII	Creation of Okeanos (subjugation of Acheloos) (Orph. fr. 16)	Okeanos=Zeus=Aer
XXIV	Creation of the Moon (Orph. fr. 16)	a) the moon is round and ἰσομελής b) φαίνει refers not to the brightness but to the <u>revelation</u> of the moon’s seasons
XXV		a) composition of sun, moon and stars out of particles with various heat and brightness b) cross-reference back to previous account of sun’s composition (cf. Columns IV, XV)
XXVI	Zeus mates with his mother (Orph. fr. 18) to produce a child	ἔαζ = “good” (two parallels in verse); If the poet had intended “his own” he could have written ἐοῖο

Of the 26 columns, the first six (on V and VI see now especially Sarah Johnston’s and Fritz Graf’s contributions to this conference) discuss belief in oracles and dreams, hostile *daimones* and Erinyes.³ But after that all but Column XX-- where we seem to have a religious

³ I would like to draw attention to a text that might suggest a possible poetic context for Columns III and V as well. In his dialogue *On the face in the moon* (Ch. 26 941F-942B, cf. *de defectu oraculorum* 420A ch. 18), Plutarch makes one character narrate a story he has heard from a stranger of the island of Cronus to the west beyond Britain. I’ve given you the text and a translation on pages 5 and 6, the story is more or less 1-of-a-kind, but scholars have frequently pointed to its possible origin as an elaboration of an Orphic theogony-detail: after Zeus overthrows Kronos, he binds him in sleep in a cave, where he is served by *daimones* who bring him nourishment and are themselves prophetic. But the greatest oracles these *daimones* bring down to earth are the dreams of Kronos, which foresee what Zeus intends. (Speculations and earlier bibliography in Bos 1989.)

critique, on which see below -- have a plausible reference point in Orpheus' Theogony as found in the later version of the rhapsodies. What is more, these reference points roughly concern a single complex of narrative in that poem, the succession from Kronos to Zeus and the creation that follows it, undertaken by Zeus perhaps from Protogonos on the advice of Nyx.

Column VII: The Selection of Orpheus and “Enigmatic License”

It has often been noted that the Derveni author's re-interpretations of poetry continue a well-attested tradition of tendentious interpretation of Homer by rhapsodes and Sophists (Richardson 1975). But we must not overlook one very original feature of this book: it chooses not Homer to interpret, as did almost all earlier and later allegorists, but “Orpheus.” It is striking that some of the poems ascribed to Orpheus at this time seem not to have been completely distinctive in content, but compete with already-known forms and stories: the Orphic Hymn to Demeter with the Homeric one, and the Theogony with that of Hesiod. The difference, as Fritz Graf has pointed out in connection with the Demeter poems, is probably that the competing poems by the fictitious author Orpheus and Musaeus “came into being within two closely related circles of theological-speculative interpretation,” in other words appealed especially to those who sought religious significance in their poetry.⁴ Thus it is not surprising that it is stated at the outset that Orpheus is “special” (Column VII):

ἔστι δὲ ξ[ένη τις ἢ] πόησις
 κ]αὶ ἀνθρώ[ποις[αἰνίγμ]ατώδης· [κα]ὶ [Ὀρφεὺ]ς αὐτ[ὸ]ς (5)
 ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμα]τα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰ]νίγμασιν δὲ
 μεγάλα ἱερ[]αὶ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀ[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου
 ἀεὶ] μέχρι (τ) οὗ [τελε]υταίου ῥήματος, ὧ[ς δηλοῖ] καὶ ἐν τῶι
 εὐκ]ρίντω[ι ἔπει· θ]ύρας γὰρ ἐπιθέ[σθαι κελ]εύσας τοῖ[ς]

In the Orphic Theogony as well as in the Derveni citations, Zeus receives prophecies not only from night, who is called *panompheuousan* in Column X, but also Kronos, note *thesphata akousas* in Column XIII. And Proclus, [In Platonis Cratylum commentaria](#) 27 Pasquali = Orph. fr. 239 I-V, also testifies to this double form of divination. We also see that in Column XI the *adyton* of Night and her oracular powers seem to be interpreted out of existence but to have been present in the poem.. Dreams would naturally be the province of Night as Sarah Johnston reminds me, and so perhaps Plutarch has adapted his myth from an episode in the Theogony of Orpheus--many of the right elements are there, though in a different way.

Yet it must be conceded that in Columns I-VI (not to speak of Column XX) not only the topic but also the method of discussion seem to be different in form from the rest of the work. Another point against any attempt to relate these early columns to the text of the poem is that Column VII introduces the foundation of the author's method of interpretation, his assumption that the poem is a riddle, and his quotation of a verse that limits the poem to a select audience.

⁴ Graf 1974 19. In his contribution to the conference, Graf suggested that the Derveni Theogony might in fact be viewed as a cultic hymn (cf. Column V.2) that formed the *legomena* to an initiation.

ὠσὶ]ν αὐτ[οὺς οὐ] ...εἰμ φη[σι τοῖς] πολλοῖς (10)
 “His⁵ poetry is rather strange
 and riddling for men; and Orpheus himself
 did not wish to speak competitive riddles, but by means of riddles
 (he wished to speak) great things holy⁶ (?) ... therefore from the first
 To the last word; he makes it clear thus also in the
 Easy to understand verse: for by commanding them to “attach doors
 To their ears” he does not say that he is ... ing for the many...”⁷

The concept of poetry as riddle is known before this text (Struck 2004 39-50), but I find particularly interesting the variant formulation of the principle in the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades II* 147D: After his interlocutor has expressed frustration with interpreting a poetic text, Socrates says that in fact the text is consistent: not only this poet but almost all other poets speak in riddles, since poetry is by nature enigmatic, and is not for any chance reader to understand (ἔστιν τε γὰρ φύσει ποιητικὴ ἢ σύμπασα αἰνιγματώδης καὶ οὐ τοῦ προστυχόντος ἀνδρὸς γνωρίσαι). And in addition to its being this way by nature, when poetry is in the hands of a resentful man who doesn't wish to communicate with us but rather conceal his wisdom as far as possible, the difficulty of understanding the thing that each poet actually means is stretched to an extreme (ἔτι τε πρὸς τῷ φύσει τοιαύτη εἶναι, ὅταν λάβηται ἀνδρὸς φθονεροῦ τε καὶ μὴ βουλομένου ἡμῖν ἐνδείκνυσθαι ἀλλ' ἀποκρύπτεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν αὐτοῦ σοφίαν, ὑπερφυῶς δὴ τὸ χρῆμα ὡς δὺσγνωστον φαίνεται, ὅτι ποτὲ νοοῦσιν ἕκαστος αὐτῶν). The text that he goes on to interpret is from an improbable source, the *Margites*: he uses the tactic of word-replacement (not found in the Derveni author) to alter the meaning of the line of the *Margites* to say, not that *Margites* knew everything badly -since to know something badly would be unacceptable to Socrates-- but that it was bad for him to know all the trivial things he did know. Certainly this broad statement of principle applied to an unlikely poetic text is not meant to be taken seriously -- it seems rather to be a parody of such literary interpretations, like Tiresias' linguistic re-interpretation of the birth of Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae* 286-296, or like the Platonic *Menexenus*, which often seems to parody the institution of the funeral oration. And yet, though Socrates is less than generous in the motives he ascribes to his allegorical poet, he claims the same enigmatic license that the Derveni author does in Column VII.

⁵ That the author is not speaking of poetry in general but of Orpheus in particular is clarified by the XVIII.2, 6, and the statements of method in Column XIII.5-6, XXIII.6-7.

⁶ Albert Henrichs remarked that the supplement ἱερ[ολογεῖ]ται (Consulted at the conference, Obbink found no trace of -εῖ-) seems somewhat bold, as it is otherwise first attested late and not on the middle or passive; but the presence of ἱερ[α] cannot be denied. A more neutral supplement would be μεγάλα ἱερ[α] ἥνικτ]αι

⁷ A well known Orphic verse = Orph. Fr. 1ab, 377-8.

Identification/Equivalence as Interpretative Tool

Despite choosing a poet and subject apt for religious interpretation and stating that he has some relation to *hiera*, the Derveni author goes on to use his license not for religious interpretation (as he had done in connection with rituals before Column VII), but to reinterpret the poem as speculative philosophy, as the “Homeric professors” like Metrodorus had done, with particular attention to cosmogony.⁸

Exactly how does he unlock his enigmatic text? When we put together a catalogue of all the licenses he takes in reading, it is somewhat surprising to discover that instead of a repertory of ingenious and sometimes outrageous misinterpretations, there is a dreary sameness and predictability to most of them. In the first instance, in contrast to Prodicus and other speakers who were interested in distinguishing the meanings of apparent synonyms,⁹ the Derveni interpreter postulates word-equivalencies to make his argument.

Identifications of words:

Column V ἀπιστή = ἀμαθία (μανθάνω = γινώσκω)

X. λέγειν = διδάσκειν = φωνεῖν

XI. Χρηῖσαι = ἀρκέσαι

XXI. μίσγεσθαι = θόρνυσθαι (“mount”) = αφροδισιάζειν

XXI. εἶκειν = πείθειν

Identifying different verbs or concepts with each other and using this chain of synonyms to establish a new meaning is not new,¹⁰ but is much more thoroughly practiced here than previously.

Nor is his second category of identification new: Etymological interpretation of gods' names such as Kronos and Demeter is known of course from Plato's *Cratylus* and elsewhere. Heraclitus famously said that Dionysus and Hades were the same, but like many of his formulations this was surprising, complex, based partly on the sound similarity of *aidoia*, *aidôs* and *aides*,¹¹ and above all it was expressed concisely. The Derveni interpreter runs this principle into the ground, more than a third of the columns postulating, usually without argument, the identification of gods or abstract concepts.

⁸ This paradox is noted by Laks 1997 35.

⁹ See most recently Sansone 2004 nn. 5, 56.

¹⁰ See Struck 2004 35.

¹¹ There is another soundplay in fragment of Heraclitus quoted Column IV, between εὔρους and ἐξευρήσουσι.

XII. Ὀλυμπος = χρόνος¹²

XIV. Cronus = Nous

XV. Cronus = Zeus

XVII. Zeus = Aer

XVIII-XIX Pneuma = Moira = *Phronesis* of Zeus

XXI Aphrodite = Zeus, Harmonia and Peitho

XXII Rhea = Meter, Ge, Demeter, Hera

XXIII Oceanus = Zeus = Aer

It is important to add, however, that in making such divine identifications the Derveni author had on the one hand a very congenial poetic text to work on: in Column XXII he quotes from the Orphic Hymns a line that identifies six different goddesses as a unity, and divine identifications are found frequently in the extant Orphic Hymns;¹³ on the other hand, the underlying meaning that he aimed to extract with his re-interpretations was especially well-suited to divine identifications, consisting as it did in the post-Parmenidean tradition that posits an ultimate unity of existence and, based on Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia, postulates basic principles like *Aer* that are the same though they appear under various names.¹⁴

His third method is to redefine a word, either by etymology, citation of parallel passages, or synonyms:

X. πανομφεύουσιν = πάντα διδάσκουσιν

XI. ἄδυτον = ὃ οὐ δύνει (NOT = “cave”)

XI. χρᾶν = be sufficient” (NOT “give prophecies”)

XXVI ἐᾶς = “good” (NOT = “his own”)

¹² On the form of argument here see Betegh 2004 250, and for its recurrence in Alexandrian Homer scholarship see Schironi 2001.

¹³ Morand 2001 “Les rapprochements de dieux,” 156-158, 337-338. I owe this point to Claude Calame.

¹⁴ I owe this point to Glenn Most. For the physical system of the Derveni author see Laks 1997 127-134.

In at least three of these cases it seems very important for him to displace the more obvious meaning, and here he inadvertently helps us in the interpretation of the poem-- when he denies that a word means such and such, that, to me, is a pretty good indication of what it did actually mean in context.¹⁵

Interpreter and Text in Pre-Alexandrian Greece

Thus the value for us of the Derveni interpreter lies not so much in the originality--and certainly not the variety--of his method, but in the bulk of examples he gives us of a particular school of interpretation that was very different in intention from the Alexandrian scholarly treatment of literature in some important ways. Broadly speaking, post-Aristotelian Alexandrian scholarship is essentially canon-defending and antiquarian, motivated first by the desire to preserve, and next to study and interpret -- not that there is not considerable scope for competition, invention, and self-expression in this task,¹⁶ but the text comes first.

The Derveni interpreter's relationship to this text is different: it is for him a vehicle of self-expression, as it probably was for others before him, the real authorities for him are not poetic texts -- despite the attention he gives them -- but the intellectuals and philosophers of the fifth century that he is drawing on for his physical world-view and hermeneutic tools. In the case of hermeneutics, he offers us a bounty of the sort of application of new ideas of language and meaning that was done by virtuosi before Plato, note Diogenes Laertius' description of Protagoras (9.52 = VS 80 A1):¹⁷ "he abandoned the meaning, but discussed the word" (τὴν διάνοιαν ἀφείξας πρὸς τὸ ὄνομα διελέχθη). Similarly, Glenn Most's detailed study of the set piece of literary interpretation in Protagoras points to the de-contextualization of the words of the poem as a key element of this method.¹⁸ It is strikingly confirmed in the statement of principle in P. Derveni Column XIII.5-6:

ὅτι μὲν πᾶ[σ]αν τὴν πόησιν περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων

¹⁵ An accompanying interpretive tactic (XXIV.7, cf. XXVI.11-12) is to hypothesize what the author would have written if the rejected word were his intention: this is applied already by Themistocles in interpreting the Delphic oracle on Salamis (Herodotus 7.141), Sluiter 1994 notes the same method is used for scholarly purposes in the scholia on *Iliad* 5.408-9, to which P. Derveni can also be added.

¹⁶ Francesca Schironi has reminded me of Crates of Mallos especially, who is unusually innovative but still (I would maintain) working within the overall tradition of Homeric scholarship. Franco Montanari reminds me that, true as this is of Alexandrian scholarship, this period is an interpretive parenthesis: both the Presocratics before the Alexandrians and many scholars thereafter (notably the Neoplatonists) used poetry (including Orpheus) as a vehicle for their own philosophical views.

¹⁷ Cited in the valuable survey of Sluiter 1997.

¹⁸ Most (1994), see also his discussion of the "atomization" of Pindar's text in the hermeneutic tradition in Most 1985 36-38.

αἰνίζεται κ[α]θ' ἕπος ἕκαστον ἀνάγκη λέγειν.

“Since he encodes all his poetry about materiality into riddles, one must speak line by line.”

The Derveni Papyrus as Proto-Commentary: lemmata, style, paragraphoi

But along with being indisputably pre-Alexandrian in some respects, the book has a close affinity with Alexandrian scholarship as well, since-- even though not all of the text seems to treat the poem of Orpheus-- it clearly prefigures in many ways a commentary.¹⁹

The book's form, surely given to it by a scribe rather than the author, is decisive for this interpretation. Scholars of ancient books have observed that the 36-character line, which accommodates the standard-length dactylic hexameter verse, is adopted as the column-width of the ancient commentary so that lemmata will be independent, and the earliest example known of this phenomenon is the papyrus of Derveni.²⁰

One might even speculate that the lemmatized commentary-form is an attempt to domesticate and manage the decontextualization that is inherent in the process of citation and interpretation. The most intriguing and controversial feature of this commentary-form is the use of the paragraphos, the symbol we associate primarily with the change of speaker in early dramatic texts. In this kind of text, that is clearly not necessary, but it appeared to me to be the scribe's aid to the readers, to orient themselves when the voice changes from the interpreter to his texts and back again. That is the way it often appears in papyrus commentaries.²¹ (See further the discussion in detail in the appendix to this article.)

And it is also an important characteristic of the Derveni interpreter, at least as I read him, that, for all his cavalier treatment of texts, nevertheless just like Didymus on Demosthenes or other prolific post -alexandrian interpreters, he would be lost without them : the poem of Orpheus is cited again and again, even in the first six columns he cites Heraclitus, and I still believe it quite possible that in Column XI and Column XX he cites unnamed prose texts (see the Appendix). I also cling to my opinion that, although he clearly uses the technical vocabulary of citation on several occasions for effect, not all citations have to be carefully introduced or their author specified, the principle of seeking parallels and ideas from

¹⁹ See Dorandi 2000 and Lamedica 1992.

²⁰ Irigoien 1984 88, Parsons at Turner and Parsons 1987, 151 n. 113, Obbink 44-45 n. 9. I owe this point to Dirk Obbink.

²¹ Andrieu 1954, 263: “Le paragraphos est essentiellement un signe de séparation, et son utilisation dans le dialogue n'est qu' un aspect particulier de ses possibilités.” He discusses its use in the papyri of prose authors 292-297. For Ptolemaic papyrus-commentaries using the paragraphos see MP3 161, 466, 54.

texts is sufficiently clear that one need never be surprised by a citation around the next corner, and in these cases the scribe has often given us help.

And so, although one can have reservations about the methods and the originality of this writer, nevertheless his voracious reading, intimate familiarity with his text, and zest in expounding it and using other texts to carry his ideas further, is certainly something we can agree deserves admiration.

APPENDIX: REVISITING THE USE OF THE PARAGRAPHOS IN P. DERVENI X.10–11, XI.8–9, XIII.5–6, XX.10 (ESPECIALLY) AND XXIII.7

Clearly I should have set forth this argument more thoroughly in 1985, since the interpretation of the paragraphos that seemed to me obvious then has met with universal resistance, in fact there is a general tendency to deny that paragraphoi mark any interruptions of the authorial voice except from those texts explicitly introduced as the words of Orpheus and Heraclitus. It seems to me that paragraphoi have been added by the scribe to mark not only verse quotations, but shifts in the subject such as X.10-11 (switching from the exegesis of *πανομφεύουσιν* to *τροφόν*), interruptions such as statements of method in Column XIII.5-6 (where *μέν* has no answering *δέ*), and XXIII.7,²² as well as the un-sourced illustrative quotation XI.8-9.²³ All these have been rejected by subsequent scholars and at least one instance has been deemed “irrational”;²⁴ but special disfavor²⁵ has been reserved for my proposal that the paragraphos in Column XX.10 marks the end of a quotation (of which the beginning is lost in the previous column’s end), followed by a paraphrase by the Derveni author.

I give a structural outline and a translation:²⁶

ὅσοι μὲν οὖν] ἀνθρώπων [ἐμ] πόλεσιν ἐπιτέλεσαντες [τὰ ἱε]ρὰ εἶδον,

Firstly then, those people who observe the sacred after being publicly initiated

ἔλασσον σφᾶς θαυμάζω μὴ γ[ι]νώσκουσιν

these I am less surprised that they do not attain knowledge

²² Rejected by KPT, Bernabé, the latter paragraphos called “irrational” by Obbink 44 (see below).

²³ Treated as colloquial speech rather than a prose quotation by KPT, Bernabé, although elsewhere (XVIII.4, XIX.4-7, XXI.8-9, XXIII.10) the author uses *φασί* or *λέγουσιν* or *λέγεται* *κατὰ φάτιν* to introduce such colloquial expressions, and in these cases there is no scribal paragraphos, probably because there is no interruption of authorial voice.

²⁴ Obbink 44, on XXIII.7.

²⁵ Already in Burkert 2006 (1986) 94 n. 17, *Lamedica* 1992 328.

²⁶ The commentary on Column XX by Kouremenos in KPT 233-242 and Bernabé 238-241 is especially full, and these, as well as my discussion in Rusten 1985 138-140, are taken for granted below.

(οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε ἀκοῦσαι ὁμοῦ καὶ μαθεῖν τὰ λεγόμενα),
 (for it is not possible to hear and learn what is being said at one and the same time);
 ὅσοι δὲ παρὰ τοῦ τέχνημ ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερά (sc. εἶδον),
 But those who (have observed the sacred) from an individual craftsman of the sacred
 οὗτοι ἄξιοι
 They deserve
 θαυμάζεσθαι καὶ οἰκτε[ί]ρεσθαι,
 both (my) surprise and pity;
 θαυμάζεσθαι μὲν ὅτι
 Firstly surprise: because
 δοκοῦντες πρότερον ἢ ἐπιτελέσαι εἰδήσειν
 although they think they will attain knowledge before they are initiated,
 ἀπέρχονται
 they end up
 ἐπιτέλεσαντες πρὶν εἰδέναί
 being initiated before they attain knowledge,
 οὐδ' ἐπανερόμενοι
 and not asking additional questions either,
 ὥσπερ ὡς εἰδότῃς τ[ι]
 as if (they did not need to) because they had some knowledge
 ὧν εἶδον ἢ ἤκουσαν ἢ ἔμαθον²⁷
 of what they had seen and heard and learned
 [οἰ]κτε<ί>ρεσθαι δὲ ὅτι
 Secondly, pity: because
 οὐκ ἄρκε[ί] σφιν τὴν δαπάνην προανηλωσθαι
 it is not enough for them to have spent their money in advance,
 ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς γνώμης²⁸ στερόμενοι προσαπέρχονται
 But they also end up in addition being deprived of their knowledge
 (*paragraphos*)

πρὶμ μὲν τὰ [ι]ε]ρά ἐπιτελέσαι ἐλπίζον[τε]ς εἰδήσειν

²⁷ εἶδον ἢ ἤκουσαν ἢ ἔμαθον a variation on εἶδον ([τὰ ἱε]ρά), ἀκοῦσαι and μαθεῖν (τὰ λεγόμενα) in the first part

²⁸ τῆς γνώμης στερόμενοι a variation on μὴ γ[ι]νώσκειν in the first part, closing the ring with the opening idea. This stylistic feature explains what Kouremenos finds “a not particularly successful choice of word” (KPT 241).

Although before participating in the sacred things they hope they will attain knowledge ἐπ[ιτελέσ]αν[τες] δὲ στερηθῆντες κα[ὶ τῆ]ς ἐλπί[δος] ἀπέρχονται.
After participating they end up being deprived of their hope.

I can of course understand the impulse to vindicate the first 10 lines for the author of the Derveni papyrus: they offer a forceful expression not only of criticism²⁹ but of amazement and pity at certain religious practices, containing the only first-person singular verb in the entire text, an abundance of highly loaded sacral and cognitive terminology, in a long well-structured sentence with a variety of vocabulary and contrast-forms, and ending in a ring with its opening words. In contrast to Columns V-VI, which explain existing practices with new formulations and without criticism, Column XXII gives us criticism of religious rituals without exegesis: he uses the existing traditional terminology (λεγόμενα, ἱερὰ ἰδεῖν) to make a contrast between two possible modes of initiation, the public (ἐν πόλεσιν) and the private (παρὰ τοῦ τέχνημ ποιουμένου τὰ ἱερὰ), and finds both unsatisfactory. The reader is left to wonder, is there any way to be initiated successfully? It is striking that, whereas in Column V-VI he was merely quoting Heraclitus, in Column XX the author seems to adopt not only the vocabulary of Heraclitus (Kouremenos' commentary in KPT see also Obbink [1997] 46), but also his skeptical attitude toward ritual.

Obbink (1997) 44-45 attempted to give readers good papyrological grounds to ignore the *paragraphos* here. I will quote his argument at length in three parts, with my comments interspersed. Initially, he argues that the *paragraphos* after line 10 could only indicate the beginning of a quotation:

A. "Rusten (1985) argued that the discrepancies between this column and the surrounding ones were sufficient to presume that the first 10 lines of this column are an extensive quotation from another author, the conclusion of which is marked by the *paragraphos* after line 10. Closer consideration showed otherwise. Although the author does introduce a brief prose quotation earlier (Column XI.8-9) for the illustration of an alleged meaning of a word (in addition to at least three prose lines of Heraclitus in Column IV), the scribe's consistent graphic practice when a quotation ends before the end of a line, as does line 10 of Column XX, is to fill out that line with the following text of the author's remarks." In addition, the scribe always begins the initial quotations, which serve as lemmata for the discussion (as opposed to individual words or phrases from the lemma), on a new line. The quotations are regularly marked by a *paragraphos* above and below the line(s) quoted. Given the fact that in Column XX line ten stops significantly short of the surrounding lines (34 letters as against 38-9 letters in the surrounding lines), and is followed by a

²⁹ Here I differ from Graf in his contribution to the conference: he links Column XX with earlier statements to defend the view of the Derveni author as himself a religious entrepreneur (see also Burkert 2006 (1980) 202), and that his commentary on the poem offers his answers to the questions the initiate should ask.

paragraphos, lines 11ff. could well be a new (prose) quotation continuing into the lacuna at the end of Column XX, and concluding with an expression like: 'so-and-so says'."³⁰

Obbink does not give a list of examples for his claim that a scribe always fills the line at the end of a quotation fully, but I presume he means the like of VIII.3-4, XV.5-6, 10-11 (24, 26 and 19 letter-lines respectively preceding hexameter quotations) as well as the one he cited, XI.7-8 (11-letter line preceding an unsourced prose quotation.; especially lacking, however, is evidence for the claim that a line with 34 as opposed to 38 characters is not "full". A glance at the photos in KPT shows that many lines are this short without any such external criterion, and a more important factor in line division is obviously that this scribe rarely divides syllables within words between one line and the next (XII.4-5 and XX.6-7 seem to be the only examples). In XX.10 he might have made the line slightly longer by adding $\pi\rho\iota\nu$ from the next sentence (as he does with short words e. g. VI. 5 (new total 36 characters) XVI.8 (new total 40 characters) , XVII.3 (new total 39 characters)), but at XXI.13 he avoids continuing a 34-character line with the available short initial words ($\tilde{\eta}\nu \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \gamma[\acute{\alpha}\rho]$) of a new sentence; at XX.10 there is in addition the factor of another awkward $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ without answering $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ (as at XIII.5-6), so that there are multiple reasons for beginning a new line. The “consistent graphic practice” does not operate here.

But Obbink goes on to cast doubt on the possibility of a quotation of any sort:

B. "Caution, however, must be exercised at this juncture. Though the scribe's graphic practice appears to be relatively consistent, the use of a paragraphos in school exercises and sub literary texts and even in some ancient critical editions is notoriously irregular, a problem that is compounded by the fact that they are overlooked or inconsistently reported by modern editors; the 19th century *The delineatores of the Herculaneum papyri*, for example, neglected to report them over 50% of the time. In the Derveni papyrus there is at least one irrationally placed paragraphos [XXIII.7], while the paragraphos at XIII .6 may mark nothing more than a strong grammatical clause, as Burkert (1985:5 note 16) notes. I have collated all *paragraphoi* recorded either in published texts or photographs of the Derveni papyrus. But I've not seen the original and am doubtless not aware of them all."

Apart from the difficulty of positing a scribe who is “consistent” at one time and “irrational” at others, the two *paragraphoi* considered anomalous (XIII.6, XXIII.7) are in fact also strikingly different from their surroundings, both being statements of interpretative method (cited above), quite possibly taken from another context (the first has $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ without answering $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$), but in any case explanatory interruptions in the process of interpretation.

³⁰ Obbink’s initial suggestion that XX.11 is not the end but the start of a quotation would be much strengthened if it were certain that there is a paragraphos after XX.13, as KPT report but Bernabé does not; it is not easy to discern it on the photograph.

Obbink concludes:

C. "On these grounds I conclude that lines 1-10 of Column XX are not the quoted words of another author, followed by a "feeble prose paraphrase of the last few lines" by the Derveni author. For in this case, we would expect (based on the scribe's procedure followed elsewhere) line 10 to be filled out by the author's own remarks we should also be prepared to consider that the paragraphos after line 10 may mark no more than the inception of a grammatical unit. In that case, lines 11 and 12 would represent the author's rounding out the sentence by reiterating his point in the preceding passage."

While my term "feeble prose paraphrase" was doubtless too harsh for lines 11-12, Obbink's "rounding out" and "reiterating" seem too generous for them: while lines 1-10 never use the same form twice, every word in lines 11-12 is either a word that has appeared in 1-10 or a gloss on one (πρὶμ glosses πρότερον ἢ ἐπιτελέσαι, ἐλπίζου[τε]ς + future infin glosses δοκοῦντες + future infin. and ἐλπίδος glosses γνώμης (i. e., the expectation of knowledge). Furthermore, these lines, although reproducing (in an anacoluthon) μὲν/ δὲ from 1-10, lack a sentence connective with what comes before.

Thus even apart from the paragraphos, there are good reasons for assuming a departure from the author's voice in XX.1-10: The sole first-person verb, sophisticated sentence structure at odds with the commentary form in the section (and with the author's practice even in Columns I-VI) and, between lines 10 and 11, a lack of explicit sentence-connection combined with total redundancy of contents.

Of course, it remains a matter of speculation whether the paragraphos here marks an actual quotation, but that does not give readers license to ignore it: the scribe is alerting the reader to some form of discontinuity in authorial voice, and we should not ignore him.³¹ Interpretations of the papyrus as a whole that are founded primarily on XX.1-10 as the crucial expression of its author's views (Burkert, Laks, Janko, Graf) still seem to me to rest on less than firm ground.³²

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³¹ The ingenious suggestion of Tsantsangelou and Kouremenos (KPT 10, 242) that XX.11-12 is an authorial variant of XX.1-10, as postulated for some passages in Aristotle, has not proved convincing. Johnson 1994 suggested (without reference to P. Derveni) that the paragraphos might serve as a re-orientation point for someone reading the text aloud.

³² I suggested (Rusten 1985 140) that the "quotation" might be from the mystery criticism of Diagoras of Melos; Janko 2001, while following Obbink in rejecting it as a quotation, went on to suggest that Diagoras is the author of the entire papyrus.

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