

## The Reception of Phanocles at *Georgics* 4.507-27

The longest extant fragment of the Alexandrian poet Phanocles is an elegy of twenty-eight lines that details Orpheus' love for the beautiful boy Calais, his murder by a group of Thracian women enraged at his introduction of ξρωτας / ἄρρενας (9-10) to Thrace, and the tattooing of the women as punishment for the murder:

Ἦ ὡς Οἰάγροιο πάϊς Θρηϊκίος Ὀρφεὺς  
 ἐκ θυμοῦ Κάλαιν στέρξε Βορηιάδην,  
 πολλάκι δὲ σκιεροῖσιν ἐν ἄλλεσσιν ἔζετ' αἰείδων  
 ὄν πόθον, οὐδ' ἦν οἱ θυμὸς ἐν ἡσυχίῃ,  
 ἀλλ' αἰεὶ μιν ἄγρυπνοὶ ὑπὸ ψυχῇ μελεδῶναι  
 5 ἔτρυχον, θαλερὸν δερκομένου Κάλαιν.  
 Τὸν μὲν Βιστονίδες κακομήχανοι ἀμφιχυθεῖσαι  
 ἔκτανον, εὐήκη φάσγανα θηξάμεναι,  
 οὐνεκα πρῶτος ἔδειξεν ἐνὶ Θρήκεσσιν ξρωτας  
 10 ἄρρενας, οὐδὲ πόθους ἤνεσε θηλυτέρων.  
 Τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν κεφαλὴν χαλκῷ τάμον, αὐτίκα δ' αὐτὴν  
 εἰς ἄλλα Θρηϊκίῃ ρίψαν ὁμοῦ χέλυϊ  
 ἦλθω καρτύνασαι, ἵν' ἐμφορέοιντο θαλάσση  
 ἄμφω ἅμα, γλαυκοῖς τεγγόμεναι ῥοθίοις.  
 15 Τὰς δ' ἱερῇ Λέσβῳ πολὴν ἐπέκελσε θάλασσα·  
 ἡχῆ δ' ὡς λιγυρῆς πόντον ἐπέσχε λύρης,  
 νήσους τ' αἰγιαλοὺς θ' ἄλιμυρέας, ἔνθα λίγειαν  
 ἀνέρες Ὀρφεῖν ἐκτέρισαν κεφαλὴν,  
 ἐν δὲ χέλυν τύμβῳ λιγυρὴν θέσαν, ἣ καὶ ἀναύδους  
 20 πέτρας καὶ Φόρκου στυγνὸν ἔπειθεν ὕδωρ.  
 Ἐκ κείνου μολπαί τε καὶ ἱμερτὴ καθαριστὺς  
 νήσον ἔχει, πασέων δ' ἐστὶν αἰδοτάτη.  
 Θρηϊκες δ' ὡς ἐδάησαν ἀρήϊοι ἔργα γυναικῶν  
 ἄγρια, καὶ πάντας δεινὸν ἐσήλθεν ἄχος,  
 25 ἅς ἀλόχους ἔστιζον, ἵν' ἐν χροῖ σήματ' ἔχουσαι  
 κυάνεα στυγεροῦ μὴ λελάθοιντο φόνου·  
 ποινὰς δ' Ὀρφεῖ κταμένῳ τίνουσι γυναῖκες  
 εἰσέτι νῦν κείνης εἶνεκεν ἀμπλακίης.

Thracian Orpheus, son of Oeagrus,  
 Conceived a heartfelt love for Calais, North Wind's son,  
 And often sat in the shady groves singing  
 His passion, nor was his heart at peace,  
 But sleepless cares always gnawed away at his soul,

When he glanced at lively Calais.  
 The evil-plotting Bistonian women, whetting their sharp swords,  
 Surrounded him and killed him,  
 Because first among the Thracians he showed the love  
 Of males and never praised desire for women.  
 They cut his head off with bronze, and then threw it  
 Into the sea, nailing it fast to his Thracian lyre,  
 That they might both be borne together over the ocean,  
 Drenched by the blue waves.  
 The gray sea brought them ashore on holy Lesbos.  
 And since the sound of the shrill lyre reached  
 Over the sea and the islands and the sea-fringed beaches,  
 There men buried the clear-toned head of Orpheus  
 And placed in his tomb the shrill lyre, which pacified  
 Even the mute rocks and the hostile water of Phorcys.  
 From that time songs and lovely lyre-playing  
 Hold that island, and it is the most musical of places.  
 As the brave Thracians learned of the savage deeds of their women,  
 And terrible sorrow came over them all,  
 They branded their wives, that they might have a black mark  
 On their flesh and not forget their hateful carnage.  
 Such a penalty of that sin do the women of Thrace pay  
 Even now to the murdered Orpheus.<sup>1)</sup>

Phanocles' distinctive portrayal of Orpheus as bisexual has long been noted as an important source for Ovid's Orpheus in *Metamorphoses* 10-1.<sup>2)</sup> Similarly, a number of scholars have suggested that Phanocles exerted some influence on the characterization of Orpheus at *Georgics* 4.516-27. However, these comments have generally been made in passing, and, beyond pointing out a clear stylistic parallel between Phanocles 16-9 and *G.* 4.525-7, little attempt has been made to understand more comprehensively the relationship between the Virgilian and Phanoclean Orpheus.<sup>3)</sup> Even Erren's meticulous and comprehensive commentary on the poem

<sup>1)</sup> Citations of Phanocles are from Powell 1925, 106-7; the translation is from Hubbard 2003, 287-8.

<sup>2)</sup> At least since Gierig 1823, 88. For more recent discussion of the comparison, see Makowski 1996, 25-38.

<sup>3)</sup> For passing notes on the connection between Virgil and Phanocles, see Kern 1972, test. 77; Richter 1957, 401; Mynors 1990, 320; Formicola 2008, 53. For more detailed discussions of this topic, see Makowski 1996, 27-8; Couat 1931, 105-9; Day 1938, 24-6; Morelli 1950, 1-8; Barra 1975, 196-8; Marcovich 1979, 360-6; Santini 1992, 174-6; Biotti 1994, 394-403; Heath 1994, 166-7; Egan 2001, 57. Morelli, Barra, Marcovich, Santini, and Biotti all comment on the stylistic similarity

omits any mention of Phanocles in its discussion of *G.* 4.507-27.<sup>4)</sup> Undoubtedly, Virgil is less overt than Ovid in his use of Phanocles as a source, and the depiction of Orpheus as the committed heterosexual lover of Eurydice in the *Georgics* has led some to dismiss the relevance of Phanocles in interpreting Virgil's Orpheus.<sup>5)</sup> In contrast to this view, I suggest here that Phanocles' version of the story likely influenced Virgil in several important ways, and that a careful comparative reading of the two versions offers new insight into Virgil's conception of Orpheus as a tragic figure.

Aside from the stylistic resonance between Phanocl. 16-9 and *G.* 4.525-7, the influence of Phanocles has most frequently been noted at *G.* 4.516 (*nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei*) and 4.520 (*spretae Ciconum quo munere matres*), where *nulla Venus* echoes the misogyny of the Phanoclean Orpheus and *spretae* evokes Phanocles' elaborate description of the rage of the Thracian women.<sup>6)</sup> Beyond this, however, little has been said about the similarities and differences between the two treatments of the murder. Several smaller points in Virgil's treatment of this part of the story exhibit a high degree of similarity with Phanocles. Virgil substitutes *Ciconum... matres* for Phanocles' Βιστωνίδες, but both terms establish the women as from southern Thrace. The Virgilian *matres* is likely not intended to carry maternal connotations, but its use does presage the focus on Bacchic ritual in the subsequent lines.<sup>7)</sup> In both passages, Orpheus is murdered and

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between the repetition λιγυρῆς... λύρης... λίγειαν... λιγυρῆν in the description of Orpheus' lyre at Phanocl. 16-9 and the triple repetition of *Eurydicen* at *G.* 4.525-7.

<sup>4)</sup> Erren 2003, 984-90. Similarly, two sections in Gärtner's (2008, 24-43) comprehensive recent article on Phanocles are devoted to the influence of the fragment on Damagetos and Ovid, respectively, but no consideration is given to Virgil.

<sup>5)</sup> Day 1938, 25-6; Makowski 1996, 28; Segal 1972, 477; Egan 2001, 57. Makowski, for example, observes that "Vergil's familiarity with the homoerotic element in the Orpheus legend is clear from the subtle but unmistakable traces at *Georgics* 4.516, *nulla Venus, non ulli animum flexere hymenaei*, and at 520, *spretae matres*. These, however, are merely vestigial hints from earlier sources."

<sup>6)</sup> Makowski 1996, 25-38; Marcovich 1976, 363: "In addition, compare here 520 *spretae... matres* with Phanocles' 10 οὐδὲ πόθους ἦνεσε θηλυτέρων and with Ovid *M.* 10.82 *multae doluere repulsae*"; Richter 1957, 401: "Am geläufigsten war die Motivierung, daß Orpheus sich der Knabenliebe zugewandt und sich dadurch den Haß der Frauen zugezogen habe (Phanokles fr. 1, 9 Powell; *Ov. met.* 10, 83 f.); auch dies war ursprünglich vielleicht ein selbständiges Motiv. So hat auch Verg. die Sage gelesen; sein generelles *spretae* (520; vgl. *Ov. met.* 11, 7 *nostris contemptor*, anders als 10, 82 *multae doluere repulsae*) läßt noch diese Fassung durchschimmern"; Morelli 1950, 7; Barra 1975, 196-7. Citations of Virgil are from Mynors 1969.

<sup>7)</sup> Cf. Mynors 1990, 320.

subsequently decapitated (*marmorea caput a cervice revulsam* at *G.* 4.523 and κεφαλὴν χαλκῶ τάμον at Phanocles 11). The phrase *caput a cervice revulsam* is taken directly from Ennius,<sup>8)</sup> but Virgil's *marmorea*, which mirrors neither Ennius nor Phanocles, is intended to highlight Orpheus' own beauty and thus intensify the tragedy of his demise.

It is clear that Phanocles and Virgil approach the myth of Orpheus with different literary objectives. The Phanocles fragment is a classic Alexandrian αἴτιον that seeks to explain, *inter alia*, the Thracian custom of tattooing their women.<sup>9)</sup> The depiction of the women as savage and deserving of the wrath of their husbands (e.g., Βιστωνίδες κακομήχανοι at 7, with reinforcement from ἄγρια and δεινὸν at 24) lends itself to Phanocles' tidy conclusion in lines 25-6: ἄς ἀλόχους ἔστιζον, ἴν' ἐν χροῖ σήματ' ἔχουσαι / κυάνεα στυγεροῦ μὴ λελάθοιντο φόνου. Similarly, the Βιστωνίδες' motive for the murder is explicitly stated and introduced by οὐνεκα, making the opening of the murder sequence aetiologically straightforward (τὸν . . . θηλυτέρων at 7-10). In the *Georgics* Virgil has appropriated several key aspects of the logical structure of Phanocles' αἴτιον. Orpheus' new sexual preferences are described (*nulla Venus, non ulli animam flexere hymenaei*), followed by a characterization—more elliptical than in Phanocles, but nevertheless clear—of the Thracian motive for the murder (*spretae Ciconum quo munere matres*) and discussion of the killing and disposal of the body. Virgil, however, completely sets aside the parts of Phanocles that deal with the tattooing of the Thracian women and therefore has no need to relentlessly characterize them as evil in anticipation of a climactic punishment scene. Instead, as suggested in the above discussion of *marmorea*, Virgil's focus is on crafting a moving portrait of Orpheus' demise and his devoted love for Eurydice. Virgil has preserved the contours of the Phanoclean αἴτιον but softened its rather rigid structure to allow for greater development of the tragic potential of the Orpheus myth, a topic that will be considered in detail throughout the remainder of this note.<sup>10)</sup>

Perhaps the most dramatic difference between the two murder scenes is the prominence Virgil gives to Bacchic motifs. There is no explicit mention of Bacchic

<sup>8)</sup> Conington 2007, 396; Mynors 1990, 320; Biotti 1994, 400; Thomas 1988, 235.

<sup>9)</sup> Marcovich 1979, 362; Gärtner 2008, 18-24; Hopkinson 1988, 178, who notes the characteristic use of ἐκ κείνου (21) and εἰσέτι νῦν (28).

<sup>10)</sup> Cf. Gärtner 2008, 18, who calls Phanocles' elegy "aetiological and scientific rather than personal and subjective", and also suggests that (partly because of this rigidity) Damagetos and Ovid engage Phanocles in a "polemical rather than affirmative" manner. Because the Orpheus passage in the *Georgics* is not presented as an explicit αἴτιον, some readers have argued that the motives presented for Orpheus' murder are insufficient and implausible (see Egan 2001, 57).

ritual in Phanocles, and the only potential implication of such themes comes from the connotations of ἀμφιχυθείσαι at 7.<sup>11</sup> *G.* 4.520-2 is far more explicit: *spretae Ciconum quo munere matres / inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi / discernptum latos iuuenem sparsere per agros*. In addition to the whole scene being called an *orgia Bacchi*, *sparsere* is quite likely intended to be a gloss on *σπαράγμῶς*, the term for the ritual dismemberment of a victim during a Bacchic celebration.<sup>12</sup> On a simple level, Virgil's inclusion of a detailed description of the mutilation of Orpheus' body, a feature absent from Phanocles' elegy, provides an additional reason for the reader to pity his tragic fate.<sup>13</sup> Beyond this, Virgil no doubt had complex motivations for making the murder scene so strongly Bacchic that likely extend well beyond his engagement with Phanocles and the scope of this note. One potential explanation is that the emphasis was intended to suggest a connection between Orpheus' sexual behavior (the rejection of heterosexual sex with any woman other than Eurydice) and the common association of *σπαράγμῶς* with denial of Dionysiac sensual liberation.<sup>14</sup>

The descriptions of the fate of Orpheus' head are also illustrative of the transformative relationship between Virgil and Phanocles. In Phanocles, Orpheus' head, nailed to a lyre, is cast into the sea and drifts to Lesbos. After burial on the island, it is ultimately transported to a body of water in the underworld (Φόρκου στρυγγὸν . . . ὕδωρ, 20), the identity of which has been the subject of some debate.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, at *G.* 4.524 Orpheus' head is cast into a Thracian river (the *Oeagrius Hebrus*) and is never described as traveling to the underworld.<sup>16</sup> If, as seems most reasonable, Φόρκου should be emended to Ὅρκου, then Virgil appears to have constructed an interesting combinatorial allusion to Phanocles. In both treatments the head ends up in a river, where it performs a lament that is mentioned in passing

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Alexander 1988, 42: "In Phanocles' line, ἀμφιχυθείσαι is said of persons, a use of the verb already attested in Homer, where, however, the verb (cf. L.S.J. s.v. II) means 'surround,' 'embrace' in a friendly manner; here the embrace by the Βιστωνίδες is a hostile one (*oppositio in imitando*)." Given the large number of women involved, the "hostile" embrace implied by ἀμφιχυθείσαι might suggest the frenzied attack of a mob.

<sup>12</sup> See Thomas 1988, 235.

<sup>13</sup> For detailed discussion of interpretations of *sparsere per agros*, see Morgan 1999, 230-5.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. especially the portrayal of Pentheus' theomachy in, e.g., *E. Ba.* 45-6, 325, and 1255-6.

<sup>15</sup> Barns and Lloyd-Jones 1963, 226-7; Giangrande 1987, 85-6; Alexander 1988, 81-2; Lloyd-Jones 1990, 214-5. As reviewed by Giangrande, Barns and Lloyd-Jones (1963) argue that Φόρκου is a reference to the harbor of Hades. Lloyd-Jones (1990) subsequently changed his opinion on the passage, concluding that Phanocles was referring to the Styx and accepting Salmasius' emendation of Φόρκου to Ὅρκου.

<sup>16</sup> For additional similarities here between the two poems, cf. Alexander 1988, 80-1, on the link between πέτρας at Phanocl. 20 and *toto referebant flumine ripae* at *G.* 4.523.

in Phanocles but described in detail in Virgil (*Eurydicen* . . . *ripae* at *G.* 4.525-7). Virgil, however, combines the functions of two distinct bodies of water in Phanocles (θάλασση and Ὀρκοῦ) into a single one—the *Hebrus* is both the initial repository for Orpheus' head after the murder and the scene of the miraculous singing. In terms of shifting literary purpose, this change helps to replace one prong of the Phanoclean αἴτιον (the explanation of why Lesbos is renowned for song) with an elaborate description of Orpheus' posthumous lament for Eurydice.

As discussed above, the most striking and frequently described stylistic parallel between Phanocles and Virgil concerns the triple repetition of *Eurydicen* at *G.* 4.525-7. It has been repeatedly argued that this repetition was influenced by Phanocles' λιγυρῆς . . . λύρης . . . λίγειαν . . . λιγυρῆν at 16-8, and little remains to be said about the specifics of the reference.<sup>17)</sup> Virgil's use of the repetition to emphasize *Eurydicen* rather than the lyre is a natural extension of his shift in focus toward Orpheus' devoted love for Eurydice. Phanocles mentions the λίγειαν . . . κεφαλῆν of Orpheus (16-7), implying that there is a close relationship between the head and the lyre that enables the astonishing production of the music long after his death. Virgil makes this notion explicit by eliminating the lyre altogether—it is Orpheus' *caput* . . . *revulsum* that calls out the name of his beloved, placing the focus entirely on Orpheus and his relationship with Eurydice. Virgil further parallels Phanocles by repeating the instrument producing the sound—*vox* and *vocabat* at 4.525-6—much as Phanocles makes repeated mention of the lyre. The lament of Virgil's Orpheus is a personal, uninhibited expression of grief over the tragedy of the situation.

The opening of Phanocles' elegy (Ἡ ὡς Οἰάγοροιο πάϊς Ἐρηῆκιος Ὀρφεὺς . . . θαλερὸν δερκομένου Κάλαιν, 1-6) does not address the execution or consequences of Orpheus' murder but instead presents a somber account of Orpheus' unrequited homoerotic love for Calais.<sup>18)</sup> Marcovich previously suggested that Virgil appropriated elements of this passage in his description of Corydon's love for Alexis at the opening of *Eclogue* 2.<sup>19)</sup> I propose that the influence of this part of Phanocles on Virgil is not restricted to the *Eclogues* but is also significant in shaping the description of Orpheus' grief at *G.* 4.507-20. Both passages serve to preface the main discussion of Orpheus' death by characterizing the behavior (homoerotic desire in Phanocles

<sup>17)</sup> See n. 3 for a summary of past discussion on this point.

<sup>18)</sup> For discussion of the distinctive elegiac tone of the opening stanza and its contrast with the rest of Phanocles' poem, see Luck 1959, 33; Marcovich 1979, 362; Stern 1979, 140; Hopkinson 1988, 178.

<sup>19)</sup> Marcovich 1979, 362: "Now only part I [of Phanocles] shows a genuine pastoral inspiration. This was noticed by Vergil who clearly imitates part I in the opening lines of his Second *Eclogue*." On the possible influence of Phanocles in the *Aeneid*, see Hollis 1992, 277.

and intense grief in Virgil) that later becomes objectionable to the Thracian women. Extending the comparison further, Phanocles' description of unrequited love provides Virgil with a framework for characterizing Orpheus' bereavement at the death of Eurydice. In Virgil, mourning effectively substitutes for unrequited passion. Phanocles' Orpheus is perpetually worn down by the ἄγρυπνοι . . . μελεδῶναι (3) that stem from his relationship with Calais, and he remains in persistent emotional turmoil (οὐδ' ἦν οἱ θυμὸς ἐν ἡσυχίῃ, 3). Orpheus' mourning is similarly taxing, consuming him for seven whole months (*septem illum totos perhibent ex ordine mensis*, *G.* 4.507).<sup>20)</sup> Of particular interest is the role of setting and song in both passages. In his grief the Virgilian Orpheus is exiled to the ends of the earth, and Virgil's setting provides a concrete representation of his emotional state.<sup>21)</sup> Similarly, the wanderings of Phanocles' Orpheus take place σκιεροῖσιν ἐν ἄλσεσιν (3),<sup>22)</sup> the subdued pastoral setting effectively mirroring the tone of the passage. While situated in these distinctive, natural settings, both the Virgilian and Phanoclean Orpheus unsuccessfully attempt to use music to improve their situations. At Phanocl. 3-4 Orpheus sings a melancholy song (ἔξετ' αἰείδων / ὄν πόθον), but his poetic expression of passion is incapable of winning the heart of Calais or otherwise altering his situation.<sup>23)</sup> Similarly, Orpheus' melodious lament at *G.* 4.510 (*agentem carmine quercus*) is not sufficient to ameliorate his grief or spare him from his subsequent murder.

At *G.* 4.507-27, Virgil appears to exhibit awareness of Phanocles' place in the tradition of Orpheus, as evidenced by several stylistic parallels, the association between the openings of the two passages, selective appropriation of the structure of Phanocles' elegy, and other similarities discussed above. My intention in this note has not been to suggest that Phanocles was a comprehensive or even extensive model for Virgil's Orpheus. Rather, my primary aim has been to offer a detailed comparative analysis of the two versions of the Orpheus story as a way to gain a deeper perspective on a pivotal part of the *Georgics*. In light of this analysis, the exceptionally allusive character of the *Georgics*, and the more expansive views of

<sup>20)</sup> The introduction of the passage with an Alexandrian footnote (*perhibent* at *G.*4.507) further suggests that Virgil is engaging closely with prior material on Orpheus in this passage.

<sup>21)</sup> Cf. Mynors 1990, 320 on *Riphaeis* at 4.518: "These north-eastern names, far beyond Thrace, serve merely to emphasize cold and loneliness . . . A reference to Orpheus' bereavement would surely be as frigid as the Rhiphaean snows themselves."

<sup>22)</sup> As pointed out by Stern (1979, 138-9), the settings of several elegies of Propertius are also similar to Phanocles, and it is possible that Phanocles influenced Roman poets other than Virgil. For discussion of the elegiac similarities between Virgil, Propertius, and (putatively) Gallus, see Morgan 1999, 166-70 and Alfonsi 1953, 379-83.

<sup>23)</sup> This is in sharp contrast to Orpheus' oft-noted ability to affect inanimate objects with his music (cf. ἀναύδους / πέτρας καὶ Φόρκου στυγνὸν ἔπειθεν ὕδωρ, 19-20). See also Stern 1979, 141.

intertextuality that have recently been embraced,<sup>24)</sup> it is entirely reasonable that Phanocles influenced Virgil in non-negligible and interesting ways. Previous work, spread across a wide range of time periods and studies, has persuasively established that Virgil read and at least superficially alluded to Phanocles. Similarly widespread has been the tendency to dismiss, with little justification or detailed examination, the possibility that there is any serious connection between the two authors. Moving beyond these simple observations and denials toward a more nuanced comparative characterization of Orpheus should naturally enrich our understanding of the *Georgics*. Wherever one is inclined to draw the line on how specifically Virgil alluded to Phanocles, the Phanoclean Orpheus remains part of the relevant tradition, and the Virgilian Orpheus ought to be considered with this in mind.<sup>25)</sup>

Princeton University  
1566 Frist Center, Princeton, NJ 08544-1115, USA  
jdexter@princeton.edu

Joseph P. Dexter

Received: May 2011; accepted: September 2011

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<sup>24)</sup> As a representative example of this attitude, cf. this passage from Hinds 1998, 50: "A series of case-studies in allusive inexactitude, then, has yielded a poetic of corresponding inexactitude, which draws on but also distances itself from the rigidities of philological and intertextualist fundamentalisms alike. What my discussion has attempted to do is to blur those hard methodological edges by deploying a 'fuzzy logic' of allusive interpretability—to borrow a term from computer modeling which encodes precisely the paradox of exact inexactitude offered as a goal at the end of section 2."

<sup>25)</sup> I thank Pramit Chaudhuri, Damien Nelis, Andrew Ford, and multiple anonymous referees for reading various drafts and making many helpful suggestions. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of the Atlantic States and the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of New England.



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