

4. Orpheus and the Ṛbhus Fashioning drinks for the afterlife*

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Abstract

The chapter centres on the figure of Orpheus and the Vedic Ṛbhus. After recapitulating the phraseological data which support the etymological connection between these two names and Hittite *harpp-mi* ‘to ally with, to join’, I examine a prerogative that Orpheus and the Ṛbhus seem to have in common: the capacity of constructing special objects that have a “ritual” relevance and/or fashion immortality.

1. Greek Ὀρφεύς and Vedic Ṛbhú-

In Greek sources of the Archaic and Classical Ages Ὀρφεύς is the name of a poet, who is identified as the son of Apollo or Oeagrus.¹

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¹ Both traditions are exemplified in Σ in Ap. Rhod. 1.23 (= Asclepiades *FGrH* III 8) εἶναι δὲ Ὀρφέα, κατὰ μὲν Ἀσκληπιάδην, Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ Καλλιόπης, κατὰ δὲ ἐνίουσ Οἰάγρου καὶ Πολυμνίας “According to Asclepiades, Orpheus is the son of Apollo and Calliope, according to others of Oeagrus and Polymnia.” Ancient commentators disagreed on whether Pind. *Pyth.* 4.176–177 follows a tradition according to which Orpheus is the son of Apollo (as per Chaeris *apud* Σ in Pind. *Pyth.* 4.313a) or whether ἐξ + genitive refers to φορμικτᾶς ‘*phorminx* player’ (as argued by Ammonius *apud* Σ in Pind. *Pyth.* 4.313a). Giannini 1995 [2012⁵]: 475 argues that ἐξ + genitive may indicate “sent from Apollo”. In the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius, taking part in the Argonauts’ expedition seems not to be Orpheus’ own idea; according to Apollonius, Orpheus participates following Chiron’s advice (Ap. Rhod. 1.33 Χείρωνος ἐφημοσύνησι πιθήσας). According to Pind. fr. 128c.11–12 SM, Orpheus is the son of Oeagrus (υἱὸν Οἰάγρου <δέ> || Ὀρφέα).

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As far as we know, his name first occurs in a fragment of the Greek choral lyric poet Ibycus (6th century BCE), who calls him ‘name-famed’ (ὄνομάκλυτον Ὀρφήν, Ib. fr. 10a PMG).² However, paradoxically, we know very little of his fame from texts dated to Ibycus’ time and before. From the Late Archaic to Early Classical Age, the situation changes notably. Now, Orpheus’ famous name seems to have acquired some kind of authority. Indeed, he is credited with various inventions. According to Pindar, he “fathers” the *oidai* (1.1); Aristophanes ascribes him the invention of ‘ritualistic practices of initiations’ (*teletai*, 1.2); Timotheus attributes him the invention of the lyre (1.3) and the fourth-century BCE sophist Alcidas the invention of the letters of the alphabet (*grammata*, 1.4).

1.1 Pind. *Pyth.* 4.176–177

ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος δὲ φορμικτὰς ἀοιδῶν πατήρ
ἔμολεν, εὐαίνητος, Ὀρφεύς

From Apollo came the well-praised *phorminx*-player Orpheus father of the songs.

1.2 Aristoph. *Frogs* 1035 (= *Orphica* 547 IT Bernabé)

Ὀρφεύς μὲν γὰρ τελετάς θ' ἡμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ' ἀπέχεσθαι

Indeed, Orpheus showed us the ritual practices of initiations and to refrain from murdering.

1.3 Timotheus *PMG* 15.222–223

πρῶτος ποικιλόμουσος Ὀρ-
φεύς <χέλ>υν ἐτέκνωσεν

Orpheus honer of poetic thoughts was the first to father the lyre.

1.4 Alcidas *Odysseus against the Treachery of Palamedes* 24

γράμματα μὲν δὴ πρῶτος Ὀρφεύς ἐξήνεγκε, παρὰ Μουσῶν μαθῶν

² Orpheus is probably represented on a marble relief from Delphi dated to 570–560 BCE (identified as the metope of the frieze of the Siphnian Treasury). The figure leading Argo is inscribed with <ΟΡΦΑΣ>; cf. *LIMC* s.v. Orpheus 6.

Orpheus was the first to invent the alphabet, having learned it from the Muses.³

Furthermore, Orpheus seems to have a special tie with the underworld and/or immortality. He is eponymous of the Orphic cult and Orphic corpus, a group of texts dealing with (1) mythological traditions that differ from those of ‘official’ Greek religion, for example the *Orphic Hymns* and the *Orphic Theogony*, and (2) rituals concerned with the destiny of the human soul after death.⁴ It is unclear whether Orpheus’ association with the afterlife relies on his poetic skills. In this chapter, however, I argue in favour of such a hypothesis. As noted by Bernabé & Jiménez San Cristóbal (2011: 71), we are told that other heroes or persons descended into the underworld (Theseus, Heracles, Pythagoras), but what they all do *not* have in common with Orpheus is being poets and/or being acknowledged as the source of information for poems about the afterlife. Conversely, Orpheus’ *katabasis* came to be mythologized in a way that seems to be conditioned by the role of poetry within the episode of “Orpheus aux Enfers” itself.

According to several ancient sources, Orpheus travelled into the underworld to retrieve his beloved Eurydike. He managed to persuade Persephone to give him his spouse back thanks to his musical skills (e.g., 1.5). However, he ultimately lost Eurydike because he disregarded Persephone’s instructions. Significantly, Orpheus *non omnis moritur*: according to a tradition attested in literary and iconographic sources dated to the 5th century BCE, after his body was torn to pieces by the maenads at the instigation of Dionysus,⁵ Orpheus’ head kept on singing and giving oracles.⁶

³ Cf. Linforth 1931 on the text. The tradition might be connected with what we read in Plato’s *Republic* (364e): charlatans refer to *bybla*, which they attribute to the Muses or Orpheus (βίβλων δὲ ὁμαδὸν παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως). A connection between Orpheus and writing may be further recovered from the inspection of a 5th-century BCE red-figure cup by the Painter of Ruvo from Cambridge (ARV² 1401): a man is writing down what seems to be dictated by Orpheus’ head.

⁴ Some of the texts belonging to the so-called Orphic corpus seem to have nothing to do with Orpheus. Indeed, “the one thing which we can be certain of is that some long-ago Orpheus was not the author [sc. of the *Orphica*]; rather some other author from a historical period has borrowed the name of Orpheus for his work (or has had it attached by another)” (Edmonds 2013: 3–4).

⁵ This is the subject of Aeschylus’ *Bassarids* (*TrGE*, 138–139 Radt = Eratosthenes *Catasterismi* 24 = *Orphica* 536 T and 1033 T Bernabé).

⁶ *LIMC* s.v. Orpheus 68–70. On Orpheus as founder of the Muses’ oracle in Lesbos see Graf 1988: 92–95; Faraone 2004; Watson 2013.

1.5 Eur. *Alc.* 357–359

εἰ δ' Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρήν,
 ὥστ' ἢ κόρην Δήμητρος ἢ κείνης πόσιν
 ὑμνοῖσι κηλήσαντά σ' ἐξ Ἴαιδου λαβεῖν

If I had the tongue and the song of Orpheus, so that I could lead you out of Hades, enchanting the daughter of Demeter or her husband with hymns...

It has long been pointed out that Greek Ὀρφεύς may be etymologically related to Vedic Ṛbhú-.⁷ In the *Rig Veda*, Ṛbhávas, plural of Ṛbhú-, applies to a group of three priest-poets (called Vāja, Vibhvan and Ṛbhu or Ṛbhukṣan) who achieve immortality thanks to their miraculous creations (I.6),⁸ namely the multiplication of one cup that belonged to the carver-god Tvaṣṭar (I.7), the milking (?) of a cow (I.8), the building of the chariot of the Aśvins, the creation of Indra's fallow bay horses, and the rejuvenation of their parents (I.9).

1.6 RV 4.36.4c

āthā devēṣu amṛtatvām ānaśa

So then you attained immortality among the gods.

1.7 RV 4.33.5

jyeṣṭhā āha camasā dvā karēti
kānīyān trīm kṛnavāmēti āha
kaniṣṭhā āha catúras karēti
tvāṣṭa rbhavas tát panayad váco vaḥ

The eldest said, “I will make two cups [from one].” The younger said, “We will make three.” The youngest said, “I will make four.” O Ṛbhus, Tvaṣṭar wondered at that speech of yours.

⁷ The proposal can be traced back to Lassen 1840. It was later reprised by Estell 1999 and Jackson [Rova] 2014, 2016, 2023. The etymological connection between Vedic Ṛbhú- and ON *álfr*, OE *ælf* as derivatives of **h₂elb^b-* ‘to be white’, proposed by Haudry (1987) and further supported by Kazanas (2015), can be now rejected in the light of a new, more convincing etymology of ON *álfr* as a derivative of IE **h₂elg^{wb}-* ‘to bring in, earn, fetch’ proposed by Ginevra (forthcoming a).

⁸ On the Ṛbhus in the *Rig Veda* cf. Ryder 1901; Chakravarty 1990; Brereton 2012.

1.8 RV 1.110.8a

nís cármaṇa ṛbhavo gām apimśata

O Ṛbhus, you carved out a cow from a hide.

1.9 RV 1.111.1

tákṣan rátham suvṛtam vidmanápasas
tákṣan hári indraváhā vṛṣaṇvasū
tákṣan piṭṛbhyām ṛbhavo yúvad váyas
tákṣan vatsāya mātāraṃ sacābbhúvam

They fashioned the smooth-rolling chariot, working with their know-how; they fashioned the two fallow bays that convey Indra and bring bullish goods. They fashioned – the Ṛbhus – for their parents youthful vigor; they fashioned for the calf a mother to stay by it.

From a purely formal point of view, Greek Ὀρφεύς and Vedic Ṛbhú- can be connected: Ὀρφεύς is a secondary *-ēu-*stem to **órp^hos*, i.e. a thematic derivative of the IE root **h₃erb^b-* ‘to turn, change sides’ (as per Weiss 2006), which also underlies Hittite *ḫarp(p)-^{mi}* ‘to become an ally or a collaborator (of someone)’; Ṛbhú- is a *-u-*stem derived from the same root.⁹ As I pointed out in a previous paper (Massetti 2017), phraseological analysis allows us to recover (1) a link between Greek Ὀρφεύς and Vedic Ṛbhú-, on the one hand, and (2) a link between Greek Ὀρφεύς, Vedic Ṛbhú- and Hittite *ḫarp(p)-^{mi}*, on the other. In what follows, I shortly recapitulate my hypothesis, accompanied by selected examples (Sections 2 and 3); then, building on Jackson Rova’s hypothesis on the “eschatology of glory-through-poetry”,¹⁰ I speculate on how the speaking names Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú- reflect a connection between the mythological figures of poets-*primi inventores* and the afterlife (Sections 4 and 5).¹¹

⁹ How the semantics of the names reflect a tie with IE **h₃erb^b-* ‘to turn, change sides’ is debated: Jackson Rova (2023) proposes that Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú- reflect the condition of client (‘ally, someone who is by one’s side’), which is peculiar to poets in several Indo-European traditions of old attestation.

¹⁰ See now Jackson Rova 2023: 33–76.

¹¹ Jackson [Rova] 2016.

2. Orpheus and the Ṛbhus as fashioners

Both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus are associated with poetic activity as well as with IE roots, which belong to the semantic field of ‘creation’ and ‘carving’. Just like Orpheus (see above, Section 1), the Ṛbhus are said to be poets, i.e., ‘fashioners of words/sacred formulations’ (2.1).

2.1 RV 10.80.7a

agnáye bráhma ṛbhávas tatakṣuh

For Agni did the Ṛbhus fashion their formulation.

Vedic *takṣ* ... *bráhman-*, a collocation resembling Ved. *takṣ* ... *vácas-* (matching Av. *vacastaṣti-* ‘strophe’, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.113 ἐπέων ... τέκτονες)¹² contains the root *takṣ*, which often applies to the work of the Ṛbhus (cf. 1.9) and can be traced back to the IE root **tēk-* ‘to fashion’. Although Greek derivatives of the same root (such as τεκταίνομαι ‘to build’, τέκτων ‘craftsman’) do not seem to describe the activities of Orpheus in the Greek sources in our possession, we may be able to recover a distant link between Orpheus and the semantic field of creation. As already touched upon (1.3 above = 2.2 below), Timotheus tells us that Orpheus fathers (Greek τεκνῶω) the lyre.

2.2 Timotheus PMG 15.222–223

πρῶτος ποικιλόμουσος Ὀρ-
φεὺς <χέλ>υν ἐτέκνωσεν

Orpheus honer of poetic thoughts was the first to father the lyre.

The verb τεκνῶω ‘to beget, father’ is remotely related to Vedic *takṣ*, since Indo-European **tēk-* ‘to fashion’ may reflect a reduplicated root ultimately based on **tek-* ‘to give birth’ (Bendahman 1993; cf. also *LIV*²: 638–639). The semantic link between **tek-* and **tēk-*, as well as the overlap between the notions of first fashioner/inventor and father (which intuitively and idiomatically overlap),¹³ can be further supported by making reference to the literary model of Timotheus’ verses,

¹² On which cf. Darmesteter 1878; Schmitt 1967: 297–298.

¹³ Derivatives of **tēk-* apply to the semantic field of parenthood in Greek; cf. Ronzitti 1998. On Orpheus as the ‘father of songs’ see above, example 1.1. Inventors are the *fathers* of their invention, e.g. (*Mercurium*) *curvae lyrae parentem* “(Mercury) father of the hollow lyre” (Hor. *Carm.* 1.10.6).

the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. In this text, the lyre is said to be an invention of the god Hermes, but his skill is described by means of Greek τεκταίνομαι (cf. Vedic *takṣ*).¹⁴

Significantly, in Timotheus' passage, Orpheus is said to be ποικιλόμουσος (freely translated by me as 'honer of poetic thoughts'). This compound displays a first member related to the Indo-European root *peik-, which underlies Greek ποικίλλω 'to decorate' and a second member related to the IE root *men- 'to think'.¹⁵ Indeed, as clearly shown by Calvert Watkins (1997: 248), IE *men- underlies Greek Μοῦσα. In this connection, it is significant that the Ṛbhus' work is also denoted by means of Ved. *peś* 'to carve', a cognate of ποικίλλω and ποικίλος 'decorated, variegated, wrought in various colours' (2.3).¹⁶

2.3 RV 3.60.2ab

γᾶbbhiḥ śácībhiś camasāñ āpimśata
γᾶyā dhiyā gām āriñīta cārmaṇaḥ

By the powers with which you **have prepared** the cups, by the insight with which you have driven the cow out of the hide.

From this short survey, it is possible to observe that creativity at a poetic and non-poetic level is connected with Orpheus and the Ṛbhus: indeed, they are both associated to several creations. Moreover, their creativity is occasionally described by means of lexemes that are etymologically related. The list of common traits, however, does not end here but further extends to the effects of their constructions in the world of men.

3. Making things move, making things that move

Orpheus is usually described as capable of displacing things, making immovable things move (together) or producing things that move. In several literary passages, he is said to make natural elements and animals move in time to his music (3.1–3.2). According to Apollonius Rhodius, Orpheus had led a group of wild oaks from the Pieria to the

¹⁴ *Hom. Hymn Herm.* 25 Ἑρμῆς τοι πρόωτιστα χέλυν τεκτήνατ' αἰοιδόν "Hermes was the first to make the *khélus* [= turtle and lyre] a singer."

¹⁵ For meta-poetic metaphors in which derivatives of this root occur cf. Jackson [Rova] 2002. For other derivatives of this root underlying speaking names of mythological characters with a cosmological relevance cf. Ginevra 2019.

¹⁶ This common phraseological trait and the comparison between Orpheus and the Ṛbhus is analyzed *in extenso* in McDonald 2014.

coast of Zone, where they had later remained as a memento of his *μολπή* (3.3). His kinetic capacity extends to the feelings of his listeners: when he arrives in the underworld, Orpheus manages to move the ‘innerly motionless’ souls of the dead (3.4).¹⁷

3.1 Simon. fr. 274 Poltera (567 PMG)

τοῦ καὶ ἀπειρέσιοι
 πωτῶντ’ ὄρνιθες ὑπὲρ κεφαλᾶς,
 ἀνὰ δ’ ἰχθύες ὀρθοὶ κυανέου ἐξ
 ὕδατος ἄλλοντο καλᾶ σὺν αὐδᾶ

An innumerable flock of birds circled above his head. Fish **jumped straight up** out of the dark water **in time to the beautiful voice**.¹⁸

3.2 Eur. *Ba.* 561–562

ἔνθα ποτ’ Ὀρφεὺς κιθαρίζων *σύναγεν*
 δένδρεα μούσαις,
σύναγεν θήρας ἀγρώτας

Where once Orpheus, playing the *kithara*, **led together** all the trees, **led together** all the wild animals around him with beautiful sounds.

3.3 Ap. Rhod. 1.28–31

φηγοὶ δ’ ἀγριάδες, κείνης ἔτι σήματα μολπῆς,
 ἀκτῆς Θρηκτικῆς Ζώνης ἔπι τηλεθόωσαι
 ἐξείης στιχόωσιν ἐπήτριμοι, ἄς ὄγ’ ἐπιπρό
 θελγομένας φόρμιγγι κατήγαγε Πιερίθην.

That song even today is attested by the **wild oaks** that on the coast of Zone, in Thrace, flourish, arranged by serried rows in order: **they are the oaks that with the enchantment of his *phorminx* the poet made move and descend down from Pieria.**

3.4 Verg. *Georg.* 4.471–472

*at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
 umbrae ibant tenues.*

¹⁷ As Claude Calame (2001: 20) clarifies, *μολπή* designates the union of dance and song.

¹⁸ We know that this fragment refers to Orpheus from Tzetz. *Chil.* 1.311–318.

But, stirred by his song, airy shadows floated in from the deepest depths of Erebus.

One can also imagine that Orpheus' capacity of 'putting other beings in motion' or 'making them change place' is further reflected through his attempt at making Eurydike's soul come back to life. Remarkably, this aspect of his mytho-biography is comparable to the destiny of the Ṛbhus. As suggested by Miyakawa,¹⁹ the Ṛbhus were ultimately able 'to change sides' by achieving immortality (cf. 1.6 above and 3.5 below).

3.5 RV 4.33.4d

tábhīḥ śámībhir amṛtatvám āśuḥ

They attained immortality by these labors.

At the same time, the miracles by means of which they 'attained immortality' seem to be represented as the creation of things that move or turn. In *Rig Veda* 8.75, the Vedic sacrificer asks the fire-god Agni to bow his head for the sacrifice, as 'the Ṛbhus do with the wheel-felly' (3.6). As an inner-Vedic phraseological analysis makes evident, the verb *nam* (3.6) and its compounds *á-nam*, *ní-nam* may denote the submission and consent of a participant in ritual. The verb *ní-nam* has this value in *Rig Veda* 3.33.9ff. (3.7). In this hymn, the poet-priest (Vedic *kāru-*) Viśvāmitra asks the rivers to bend down so as to allow the Bharatas to cross the water-stream.²⁰

3.6 RV 8.75.5

tám nemím ṛbhávo yathā

á namasva sáhūtībhīḥ

nédīyo yajñám aṅgīraḥ

As craftsmen [/Ṛbhus] bend the felly, bend here, closer to the sacrifice, with the shared invocations, o Aṅgiras [= Agni].

3.7 RV 3.33.9–10

ó śú svasāraḥ kārāve śṛṇota

yayāu vo dūrād ánasā ráthēna

ní śú namadhvam bhávātā supārā

¹⁹ In Melchert 2010 and Jackson [Rova] 2016: 189.

²⁰ On the Rigvedic hymn cf. Kwella 1973.

adhoakṣāḥ sindhavaḥ sroti yābhiḥ
ā te kāro śṛṇavāmā vácāmsi
yayātha dūrād ānasā ráthena
ní te namṣai pīpi yānéva yóṣā
máryāyeva kaní yā śásvacái te

[Viśvamitra:] Listen well to the bard, sisters. He has driven to you from afar with his wagon and chariot. **Bow down**; become easy to cross, staying below his axle(s) with your currents, you rivers.

[Rivers:] We will listen to your words, bard. You have driven from afar with wagon and chariot. I [= one river] will bow down to you like a young woman swollen [with milk, to her infant], [while] I [= other river] **will bow** to you like a maiden to her cavalier.

By bowing down or in one direction (Vedic *nílā-nam*), the ritual participant allies/collaborates with the poet-priest, since (s)he is persuaded by the poet-priest's powerful word. Significantly, Hittite *ḫarp(p)-mi* ('to change sides, to join someone', as per Melchert 2010), another linguistic cognate of Greek Ὀρφεύς and Vedic *Ṛbhú-*, expresses a similar notion within Hittite rituals. In the Neo-Hittite "Ritual of Iriya for the Purification of a City" (CTH 400, 3.8; cf. also the "Ritual for the Purification of a City", CTH 401), rivers and mountains *ḫarp(p)-*, that is, ally/collaborate, with the ritual-performer (3.8), after he asks them to 'side with him'.

3.8 KUB 30.35 + KUB 60.75, Rs. iii (= G) §12, 59–64 (CTH 400)

PÚ.^{HLA} GAL.GAL PÚ.^{HLA} TUR.TU[R] *kuwat uwanun*
kuit dariyanu[n]
 [...] *nu=mu=ššan* [] *šumešš=a ḫara[pten]*
wete[n]ante[š kišan daranzi?]
lē=ta nāḫi
 [*uiēš=ta ḫarpuw(eni)*]

[He goes to the water and at the spring says thus:] (11) – Fountains great and small [Do you know] why I have come? [Do you know] why I have laboured? [...] and you also **be on my side** [lit. **join me**]! And the waters [thus say]: – Do not fe[ar] for yourself: **we will be on your (side)** [lit. join you].²¹

The use of Hittite *ḫarp(p)-mi* in 3.8 is comparable to that of *nam* in *Rig Veda* 8.75 and 3.33 (3.6–3.7): this lexical juxtaposition provides us with an important piece of combinatory evidence for the semantics

²¹ I print the text as per *Thesaurus Linguarum Hethaeorum digitalis*, Melzer & Görke (eds), hethiter.net/: CTH 400.1 (Expl. -, 20.04.2017, last accessed 04/12/2024).

of Indo-European **h₃erb^b-* and its Greek and Indic nominal derivatives: Ὀρφεύς and Ṛbhú-. Both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus are the ones who are capable of making natural elements *side with them* (cf. Hittite *ḫarp(p)-mi*), through ‘internal’ or ‘external’ motions.

As already pointed out, the Ṛbhus are said to have created objects or beings that are capable of moving, such as the chariot of the Ásvins, the fallow bay horses of Indra (1.9, above). In this connection, it may be worth noting that the rejuvenation of the Ṛbhus’ parents is also described as the restoration of the capacity of moving (Ved. *caráthāya*, 3.9).

3.9 RV 4.36.3cd

jívri yát sántā pitárā sanājúrā
púnar yúvānā caráthāya tákṣatha

[It will be proclaimed] that you fashion your parents as youths for them to keep going, even though they were enfeebled, worn out by age.

The ability of the Ṛbhus to produce real and metaphorical vehicles may be compared to one of Orpheus’ creations. According to Apollonius Rhodius, Orpheus performs an εὐτρόχαλος ἀοιδή to save his companions from the Sirens (3.10).²² Greek εὐτρόχαλος, ‘well-running’, ‘running on good wheels’ or ‘well rounded’, consists of εὖ° ‘good’ and a second compound member to τρέχω ‘to run’, possibly τροχός ‘run’ or τροχός ‘wheel’. The use of the adjective in Apollonius’ *Argonautica* may actually point to a tie between °τρόχαλος and τροχός ‘wheel’. Indeed, the epithet also applies to wheeled vehicles (ἄμαξα, 1.845, 2.46, ἀπήνη, 3.889) or round objects (i.e., the ‘well-rounded ball’, σφαῖρα, 3.135). The idea of a song that ‘runs well’ or ‘goes on good wheels/is well rounded’ can be considered a common poetic *topos*, that of the ‘song’ as a moving vehicle, for which several parallels can be identified in other Indo-European poetic traditions.²³

3.10 Ap. Rhod. 4.903–909

οἱ δ’ ἀπὸ νηός
ἦδη πείσματ’ ἔμελλον ἐπ’ ἠίονεσσι βαλέσθαι,

²² As Calame 2014: 166 points out, Orpheus rescuing the Argo’s crew from the Sirens (cf. Ap. Rhod. 4.901–909) may be represented on an early 6th-century BCE black-figure vase in Heidelberg.

²³ Nünlist 1998: 83–125 on the Greek evidence; Massetti 2019: 191–202 on the comparative evidence (Greek and Old Indic).

εἰ μὴ ἄρ' Οἰάγραοιο πάϊς Θρηϊκίος Ὀρφεύς
 Βιστονίην ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἑαῖς φόρμιγγα τανύσσας
 κραιπνὸν εὐτροχάλοιο μέλος κανάχησεν ἀοιδῆς,
 ὄφρ' ἄμυδις κλονέοντος ἐπιβρομέωνται ἀκουαί
 κρεγμῶ

Already they were about to cast the cables from their ship onto the beach, had not Thracian Orpheus, Oeagrus' son, strung his Bistonian lyre in his hands and rung out the rapid beat of a **well-rounded** [Race 'lively'] **song**, so that at the same time the men's ears might ring with the sound of his strumming. (transl. Race 2009, modified by the author)

To sum up: Greek Ὀρφεύς can be traced back to Indo-European **h₃erb^h-* 'to turn, change sides', together with Vedic Ṛ**ḅhú-** and Hittite *ḫarp(p)-^{mi}*. According to the proposed interpretation, Orpheus bears a speaking name, which ultimately reflects the capacity of *moving* (things/people) and/or *making* (things/people) *join a side*. This power of his is comparable to that of poets/seers/ritual performers of ancient India and Anatolia. Finally, both Orpheus and the Ṛ**ḅhus** are credited with the creation of things that move.

So far, I have focused on the creative and kinetic capacities of Orpheus and the Ṛ**ḅhus** and my analysis has shown that these figures are associated with the creation of material things. I will now turn to their connection with the building of immaterial things as well as to the relevance of these creations to the attainment of immortality.

4. Fashioning glory in the Orphic gold tables

As pointed out by Jackson Rova (2016, 2023), Indo-Iranian poetic and ritual texts (Rigvedic hymns and Avestan *Gāthās*) and Greek lyric texts of the Late Archaic to Early Classical Age, especially Pindar's *epinicia* and *thrēnoi*, allow us to recover a system of interconnected values concerning what I call here the 'eschatology of the (poetic) glory' (Vedic *śrávas-*, Greek κλέος): immortality is achieved through song in Greece and India (4.1–4.2), while the *Gāthās* repeatedly mention the "House of Praise" (*garō dāmāna-*, 4.3),²⁴ "not just as a house in (or of) which one sings, but ultimately as a dwelling forged by the poet's song itself" (Jackson [Rova] 2016: 180).

²⁴ Schwartz 2023 and Schwartz's (forthcoming) contribution in this volume, focusing on the audiovisual architectonic of Yasna 45.3.

4.1 Pind. *Pyth.* 3.111–115

ἐλπιδ' ἔχω κλέος εὐρέσθαι κεν ὑψηλὸν πρόσω.
 Νέστορα καὶ Λύκιον Σαρπηδόν', ἀνθρώπων φάτις,
 ἐξ ἐπέων κελαδεννῶν, τέκτονες οἷα σοφοί
 ἄρμωσαν, γινώσκομεν ἅ δ' ἀρετὰ κλειναῖς ἀοιδαῖς
 χρονία τελέθει.

I hope that I may win lofty fame hereafter. We know of Nestor and Lycian Sarpedon, still the talk of men, from such echoing verses as wise fashioners joined together. Excellence endures in glorious songs for a long time.

4.2 RV 1.164.23

yád gāyatrē ádhi gāyatrám áhitam
traiṣṭubhād vā traiṣṭubham nirátakṣata
yád vā jágaj jágaty áhitam padám
yá it tád vidús té amṛtatvám ānaśuh

How the *gāyatrī* [track] [= *gāyatrī* line] is based upon a *gāyatrī* [hymn] or how a *traiṣṭubh* [track] [= *traiṣṭubh* line] was fashioned out of a *traiṣṭubh* [hymn], or how the *jagat* track [= *jagatī* line] is based on the *jagat* [= *jagatī*] [hymn] – only those who know this have reached immortality.

4.3 Y. 50.4

xśaṭrācā yā *iṣō stāṅhaṭ ā paiṭī*
ākā aradrēṅg *dāmānē garō sṛaoṣānē*

And with the power by which [one truthful] puts refreshments on the path toward the efficient ones, I wish to be heard in the house of praise.

In addition, the centrality of glory during men's lives and afterwards allows us to explain some crucial aspects of the 'Orphic Gold Tablets'. These are poetic texts engraved on golden *lamellae* mostly found in Magna Graecia and dated between the 5th and 3rd centuries BCE, which, like other "instructions/gifts for/to (or from) the afterlife", were ascribed to Orpheus. In some of the Gold Tablets (e.g. 4.4), the ritual adepts are invited to drink fresh water from the Lake of Memory.²⁵ Only after drinking will they be able to tread the holy path (*ἱερόν* [sc. *όδόν*]) in glory (*κλεινοί*).

²⁵ On the Afterlife landscape featuring the "Lake of Memory" cf. Lincoln 1982.

4.4 Gold Tablet from Hipponion (4th century BCE) ll. 11–16²⁶

δίψαι δ' εἰμ' αὔρος καὶ ἀπόλλυμαι· ἀλ<λ>ὰ δότ' ὄκα
 ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ πιέναι τῆς Μνημοσύνης ἀπὸ λίμ<ν>ης.
 καὶ δὴ τοὶ ἐρέουσιν {ι}ὑποχθονίῳ βασιλεί<αι>·
 καὶ {δὴ τοὶ} δώσουσι πιεῖν τᾶς Μναμοσύνας ἀπ[ὸ] λίμνας
 καὶ δὴ καὶ σὺ πῶν ὁδὸν ἔρχεα<ι> ἄν τε καὶ ἄλλοι
 μύσται καὶ βάκχοι ἱερὰν στείχουσι κλε<ε>ἰνοί.

“I am parched with thirst and am perishing, but quickly grant me cold water from the Lake of Memory to drink.” And they will announce you to the Chthonian Queen, and they will grant you to drink from the Lake of Memory. And you, too, having drunk, will go along the sacred road on which other initiates and bacchoi tread in glory.

As noted by Faraone (2002), the phraseology of some of the Gold Tablets, like the one quoted above (4.4), is reminiscent of that found in the final verses of Pindar’s *Isthmian Six* (4.5), in which the poet declares that he will drink the water of Mnemosyne’s daughters. Elsewhere, the performers of songs are imagined as pouring out their voice (4.6)²⁷ or, directly, as fashioning poetic drinks (4.7). In addition, Pindaric images concerning the fashioning of poetic glory (4.1 above) may be echoed by Orphic references to the *glorious* path (στείχουσι κλε<ε>ἰνοί), which Orphic adepts tread once they drink the water of Mnemosyne. Furthermore, not only does the poet say that he will drink the water of Mnemosyne’s daughters but he also affirms that he will offer poured nectar, i.e. a drink of immortality (4.8), to his *laudandus*. In other words, the poet, who possesses the gift of memory, fashions, in the guise of a choral performance, a metaphorical drink of immortality to his *laudandus*. We may conclude that the poet is a fashioner of words and of poetic drinks.²⁸

4.5 Pind. *Isth.* 6.74–75

πίσω σφε Δίρκας ἀγνὸν ὕ-
 δωρ, τὸ βαθύζωνοι κόραι
 χρυσοπέπλου Μναμοσύνας ἀνέτει-
 λαν παρ' εὐτειχέσιν Κάδμου πύλαις

²⁶ I print the text as according to Bernabé & Jiménez San Cristóbal’s (2008) edition. The provided translation is my own.

²⁷ On the phraseology [TO POUR–WORDS/PRAYERS] cf. Kurke 1989; Dardano 2018.

²⁸ All these metaphors have Indo-European comparanda. Cf. Massetti 2024; Ginevra 2020: 73ff.

I will drink the holy water of the Dirke, which the deep-girded daughters of the gold-clad Mnemosyne have sent up at the well-walled gates of Cadmus [= in Thebes].

4.6 Pind. *Pyth.* 10.55–59

ἔλπομαι δ' Ἐφυραίων
 ὄπ' ἀμφὶ Πηγεῖόν γλυκεῖαν προχεόντων ἐμάν
 τὸν Ἴπποκλέαν ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον σὺν αἰοδαῖς
 ἕκατι στεφάνων θαητὸν ἐν ἄλιξι θησέμεν ἐν καὶ παλαιτέροις,
 νέαισιν τε παρθένοισι μέλημα

And I hope that, while the Ephyreans pour forth my sweet voice beside the Peneius, with my songs I will make Hippocleas even more admired for his garlands by boys his age and by his elders, and I will make the girls think of him.

4.7 Pind. *Nem.* 3.4–7

μένοντ' ἐπ' Ἀσωπίῳ μελιγαρύων τέκτονες
 κώμων νεανῖαι, σέθεν ὅπα μαιόμενοι
 διψῆ δὲ πρᾶγος ἄλλο μὲν ἄλλου,
 ἀεθλονικία δὲ μάλιστ' αἰοδᾶν φιλεῖ

For by the Asopian water are waiting the fashioners of honey-voiced revels, young men who seek your voice. Different deeds thirst for different things, but victory in the games loves song most of all.

4.8 Pind. *Ol.* 7.7–8

καὶ ἐγὼ νέκταρ χυτόν, Μοισᾶν δόσιν, ἀεθλοφόροις
 ἀνδράσιν πέμπων, γλυκὺν καρπὸν φρενός

So, I also send poured nectar, the gift of the Muses, to the men who carry off the prize [the gift of the Muses], a sweet fruit of the spirit.

Certainly, the anonymous ritual adepts of the so-called ‘Orphic Gold Tablets’ are not Pindar’s wealthy and powerful *laudandi*. They did not become objects of the ‘speech of men’ because a poet like Pindar celebrated them in front of an audience. However, thanks to the ritual and poetic legacy of Orpheus, the grandson of Mnemosyne and poet par excellence, they partake in poetic memory, so as to proceed along the holy path of glory. Once again, Orpheus is given credit for making his ritual adepts ‘change sides’, as he makes their condition change for the

better: instead of being innerly motionless and anonymous shadows, they achieve poetic glory and become glorious, like celebrated heroes.²⁹ In the light of all this, Orphic ritual texts may be considered as texts of a cult in which the *teletai* achieve immortality with the aid of poetry: the verses that instructed the adepts on how to drink from the lake of Mnemosyne were believed to have been *fashioned* by Orpheus. At the same time, the texts are poetic in nature, most of them consisting of hexameters: as the adepts pronounce the poetic instruction, they fashion glory for themselves in the afterlife, just like poets do for themselves and their patrons. For all these reasons, the fabrication of verses, which are occasionally identified as a liquid substance, features as a fundamental means to *fashion* glory in life and in the afterlife.

5. What did the Ṛbhus fashion?

Images of poetic drinks linked to the Orphic cult and to Pindar's encomiastic poetry can be further connected with the main creations of the Ṛbhus. Indeed, as Joel Brereton (2012) showed, the Ṛbhus' miracles seem to "encode the acts of the soma ritual, and, more especially, the acts of the third soma pressing", which the gods are said to "have made with their good labor" (cf. 5.1). In particular, the four cups created by the Ṛbhus correspond to the four main soma recipients in the third pressing; the fabrication of the chariot may hint at the shaping of the sacrifice, as sacrifice is often compared to a chariot in the *Rig Veda* (Sparreboom 1985: 13); the fashioning of Indra's horses may be connected to the *yajñapuccha* ('tail of the sacrifice'), at the opening of which Indra's horses are invoked to leave the ground; the cow-miracle might allude to the image of *milk*, a substance that soma resembles; the rejuvenation of the Ṛbhus' parents may be associated with the Aśvins or to the fertilization of the sacrificer and his wife by means of the third pressing.

5.1 RV 4.35.9ab

yát tṛtīyam sávanam ratnadhéyam
ákr̥nudhvam svapasyá suhastāḥ

²⁹ On the phraseology making reference to the initiated as 'hero' in Tablets L2–L3, see Bernabé & Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008: 20. On the 'social life' of heroes as opposed to that of the dead cf. Ginevra's (forthcoming b) chapter in this volume.

The Third Pressing, the conferring of treasure, which you made by your good labor, o you of skillful hands.

In this regard, it may be significant that a passage from the Young Avestan *Hōm Yašt*, Yasna 10, a ritual text celebrating the *haoma* (the exhilarating substance of Zoroastrian ritual), may provide the missing link between ‘fashioning’ and the fabrication of the inebriating ritual drink. Within the exaltation of *haoma*, *haoma* is said to have been fashioned (YAv. *taš* = Ved. *takṣ*) by a good-worker (5.2), YAv. *hūuāpah-* is a word built with the same lexical material as Vedic *svapas-yá-* (cf. 5.1, above). The passage seems to be in a complementary relationship to the Vedic passages about the Ṛbhus and thus indirectly confirms the hypothesis that the Ṛbhus played an important role in one of the soma pressings. Yasna 10.10 thus allows us to project the theme of the ‘fashioner of the ritual drink’ at an Indo-Iranian level. More specifically, in the *Rig Veda* the Ṛbhus’ work is constantly described by means of Vedic *takṣ*, which may hint at the construction of the different ‘components’ of the Third Pressing (cf., e.g. 1.9, above). However, the shaping of the sacrifice or the soma, all together, is not commonly described by means of *takṣ* (cf., e.g. 5.1). Conversely, Yasna 10.10 does not mention the Ṛbhu(s) as the inventors of the *haoma*. Even so, the creation of the *haoma* is described by means of Avestan *taš*, i.e. the Young Avestan counterpart of what is the Ṛbhus’ ‘favourite verb’ in Vedic.

5.2 Y 10.10

auruuantəm θβā dāmidātəm
baγō tatašaṭ hūuāpā

The Good-labourer fashioned you [sc. *haoma*], the hero constructed by the creator.

To sum up: it is likely that the Ṛbhus were *fashioners of ritual drinks and ritual formulations*, which allow poet-priests and patrons to achieve prosperity and, possibly, immortality. It is through the production of this ritual that the Ṛbhus achieved immortality and came to be mythologized as *divine fashioners* of things: objects (chariot, horses; cf. 1.9, above), abstract things (‘youthful vigour’; see 5.4 below) and formulations (see 2.1 above). The fashioning of ‘ritual actions’ overlaps with the fashioning of ‘words’ because words are concomitant to ritual actions. As a matter of fact, the thirst for soma and the need of praise are said to be satisfied simultaneously (5.3).

5.3 RV 4.34.11ab

*nāpābhūta ná vo atīṛṣāma
āniḥśastā ṛbhavo yajñé asmín*

You have not kept away. We have not let you be thirsty, O Ṛbhus, nor are you unpraised in this sacrifice.

It is, therefore, by fashioning ritual drinks and ritual formulations that the Ṛbhus ‘changed sides’ and moved from mortality to immortality. When the poet-priest *fashions* a hymn for them, he, together with his patron, has the chance to ‘change sides’ by achieving poetic glory and prosperity in this life and the one hereafter. Remarkably, the Ṛbhus are explicitly invoked to *fashion* immaterial objects for the sacrificers: fresh energy, prosperity and fame. The construction of these very immaterial things can be identified as one of the leitmotifs of *Rig Veda* 4.36, a hymn to the Ṛbhus, the text of which is presented below (5.4).

5.4 RV 4.36

1 *anaśvó jātó anabhīśúr ukthyo, ráthas tricakráḥ pári vartate rájaḥ
mahát tát vo devyasya pravācanam, dyám ṛbhavaḥ pṛthivīm yác ca púṣyatha*
2 *rátham yé cakrúḥ suvṛtam sucétaso, ávihvarantam mánasas pári dhyáyā
tām ū n_i asyá sávanasya pítáya, á vo vājā ṛbhavo vedayāmasi*
3 *tát vo vājā ṛbhavaḥ supravācanam, devéṣu vibhvo abhavan mahitvanám
jūrī yát sántā pítará sanājūrā, púnar yúvānā caráthāya tákṣatha*
4 *ékam ví cakra camasám caturvayaṃ, nís cármaṇo gám ariṇīta dhītībhīḥ
áthā devéṣu amṛtatvám ānaśa, śruṣṭī vājā ṛbhavas tát va ukthyaṃ*
5 *ṛbbutó rayīḥ prathamásravastamo, vājaśrutāso yám ájījanan náraḥ
vibhvataṣṭó vidátheṣu pravācyo, yám devāso ávathā sá vícarṣaṇiḥ*
6 *sá vājī árvā sá řṣir vacasyáyā, sá śúro ástā pṛtanāsu duṣṭáraḥ
sá ráyās póṣaṃ sá suvṛyam dadhe, yám vājo vibhvām ṛbhávo yám áviṣuḥ*
7 *śréṣṭham vaḥ péso ádhi dhāyi darsatám, stómo vājā ṛbhavas tām jujuṣṭana
dhírāso hí řṭhā kaváyo vipascítas, tán va enā bráhmaṇā vedayāmasi*
8 *yūyám asmábhyaṃ dhiśánābhyaṣ pári, vidvāṃso víśvā nárjāni bhójanā
dyumántam vājam vřśásuṣmam uttamám, á no rayīm ṛbhavas takṣatā váyabḥ*
9 *ihá prajám ihá rayīm rárānā, ihá śrávo vírávat takṣatā naḥ
yéna vayám citáyemāti anyán, tám vājam citráṃ ṛbhavo dadā naḥ*

1. Produced without horse and rein, the praiseworthy chariot with its three wheels rolls through the airy space. This is the great proclamation of your divinity: that you prosper heaven and earth, o Ṛbhus.

2. The very perceptive ones who made from mind by insight the smooth-running chariot, which never overturns – [to you,] o Vājas, o Ṛbhus, we now dedicate [the soma] of this pressing for you to drink.

3. Your greatness became well proclaimed among the gods, O Vājas, Ṛbhus, and Vibhūs: that you **fashion your parents as youths for them to keep going**, even though they were enfeebled, worn out by age.
4. You divided the single cup into four; out of a cowhide you made a cow to flow [milk] by your insights. So then you attained immortality among the gods by your obedience, o Vājas, Ṛbhus: that is your praiseworthy [attainment].
5. From the Ṛbhus comes **wealth** that best brings the foremost **fame**, which the men **famed** as Vājas have produced, that is **fashioned** by the Vibhvan, that is to be proclaimed at the ritual distributions. Whom you help, o gods, he has wide boundaries.
6. He is a prizewinning charger; he a seer through his verbal artfulness; he a champion, an archer, who is difficult to overcome in battles; he has received an increase of **his wealth** and he an abundance of good heroes – he, whom Vāja and Vibhvan, whom the Ṛbhus have helped.
7. An excellent, beautiful robe has been placed upon you: [this] song of praise, o Vājas, Ṛbhus. Take pleasure in it! Because you are insightful poets perceiving inspired words, we dedicate [it] to you with this formulation.
8. You who know all the things that nourish men, for us [fashion] from the Holy Places [= the ritual ground] the highest heavenly prize that brings the explosiveness of a bull; **fashion** for us **wealth** and **vitality**, o Ṛbhus.
9. Giving offspring here and **wealth** here, **fashion** here for us the **fame** that heroes accompany. The bright prize by which we would be brilliant beyond others, o Ṛbhus, have you given to us.

The hymn is programmatically defined as the “great proclamation of the divinity” of the gods (1c); their “greatness became well proclaimed among the gods” (3ab); and the Ṛbhus are said to have “attained immortality among the gods” (4c). All in all, the first part of the text (stanzas 1–4) emphasizes the divine status of the Ṛbhus, which they earned through their labours.

At the same time, the proclamation of the Ṛbhus’ divine power consists in a celebration of their main skill: *fashioning*. The repetitions of the Vedic root *takṣ* are combined in a circular structure, we may call a ‘*takṣ*-composition’ (a ring composition consisting in the repetitions of the root *takṣ*): the Ṛbhus *fashioned* (*takṣ*) their parents into youths ‘to keep going’ (3d); fame-bringing (*śrávas*-) wealth (*rayí*-) is said to be *fashioned* (*takṣ*) by Vibhvan, one of the three Ṛbhus (5ac), and, in the two last stanzas of the hymn, the Ṛbhus are invoked to *fashion* (*takṣ*) wealth, fresh energy and glory (*rayí*-, *váyas*- and *śrávas*-, 8–9).³⁰

³⁰ Besides echoing Pindar’s closing words in *Pythian Three*, in which ἐπέων [...] τέκτονες (Pind. *Pyth.* 3.113) are surrounded by references to ‘glory’ (ἐλπιδ’ ἔχω

Since they are fashioners of ritual drinks and of holy formulations as well as fame, which provides immortality, we can conclude that the Ṛbhus resemble Orpheus.

6. Conclusions: to the afterlife, through poetic drinks

In this chapter I have tried to highlight common traits between Greek Ὀρφεύς and Vedic Ṛbhú-. I hope to have managed to show that the similarities which one can identify between these figures go beyond the level of pure linguistic reconstruction. In particular:

- I argue for considering Greek Ὀρφεύς and Vedic Ṛbhú- as speaking names (or appellatives) that can be traced back to PIE **h₃erb^b-* ‘to join, ally, change sides, side with’.
- The capacity ‘to join, ally, change sides, side with’ is expressed in Hittite by means of another **h₃erb^b-* derivative, which, in ritual texts, applies to the power of the poet-priest, who makes the natural elements side with him.
- At the same time, Orpheus and the Ṛbhus share some mythobiographical achievements and qualities: they are associated with the creation of material things and poetic words.
- Moreover, they are capable of displacing things, making things move, or creating movable objects.
- On the other hand, Orpheus and the Ṛbhus are the ones, who, par excellence *changed sides*: the Ṛbhus are said to have achieved immortality thanks to their creations. The same may apply to Orpheus, who happens to be the *only* hero who travelled into the underworld and is a poet. Furthermore, his head survives Dionysiac dismemberment. It is probably thanks to his poetic skills that Orpheus’ poetic and ritual legacy survives within the Greek tradition and Orpheus emerges as fame-named (ὄνομάκλυτος).
- Finally, I propose that the inventions that allowed Orpheus and Ṛbhus to achieve immortality and are provided to the ritual adepts (namely, the Orphic adepts and the sacrificers of the

κλέος εὔρεσθαι κεν ὑψηλὸν πρόσω “I hope that I may win lofty fame hereafter”, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.111; ἄ δ’ ἀρετὰ κλειναῖς ἀοιδαῖς ἢ χρονία τελέθει “excellence endures in glorious songs for a long time”, Pind. *Pyth.* 3.114–115), the collocation [to FASHION–FAME] has a Greek perfect match: the man’s name Κλεοτέκτων (IG II² 6014, 3rd century BCE); cf. Massetti forthcoming.

Vedic ritual) are connected with (1) the *fashioning of poetic glory*, which grants immortality to the poet and the ritual adept, and (2) the fashioning of a ritual in which metaphoric and/or concrete drinking plays a significant role.

I hope to have contributed, through my chapter, towards shedding light on some important figures of the Greek and Vedic traditions, who are tightly connected with the technology and the eschatology of glory-through-poetry.

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