

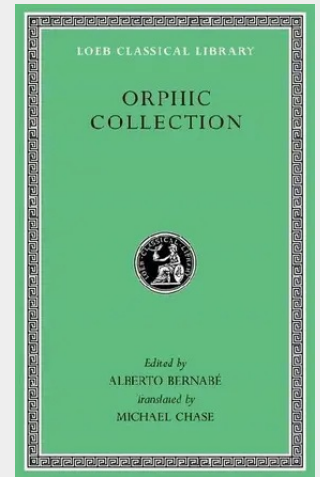
Orphic Collection

Cult classics. Orpheus is familiar from Greek mythology as a peerless bard, the Thracian son of a Muse with superhuman musical abilities that enabled him to win the release of his young wife Eurydice from Hades, only to lose her on the way back. But he was also considered an authentic poet preceding Hesiod and Homer and on a par with Musaeus, and was credited with poems, oracles, and the foundation of rituals in a tradition that remained vital and creative from Archaic Greece through to the Roman Empire and beyond. Essentially Dionysiac, but without the violence and blood sacrifice, and with a focus on theogony, cosmogony, and the origin and destiny of souls, Orphism was at once a distinctive and an open tradition, with significant change and development over time but with features that made the works and rituals cumulatively attributed to Orpheus identifiable to followers. This tradition endowed them with a lasting coherence despite the absence of dogma or control by priests. Although Orphism departed in profound and fascinating ways from conventional accounts, it proved highly adaptable to various religious and philosophical systems, especially Pythagorean and Neoplatonist but also Judaic and Christian. This edition collects works representing the most ancient Orphic literature, excluding later mythological, scientific, and pseudo-scientific poems opportunistically attributed to him.

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