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"Iphigenia as Orpheus in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*"

1. Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1211−15

εἰ μὲν τὸν Ὀρφέως εἶχον, ὦ πάτερ, λόγον,

πείθειν **ἐπάιδουσ’**, ὥσθ’ ὁμαρτεῖν μοι πέτρας

κηλεῖν τε τοῖς λόγοισιν οὓς ἐβουλόμην,

ἐνταῦθ’ ἂν ἦλθον· νῦν δέ, τἀπ’ ἐμοῦ σοφά,

δάκρυα παρέξω· ταῦτα γὰρ δυναίμεθ’ ἄν.[[1]](#footnote-1)

If I possessed Orpheus’ power of speech and could persuade **by incantation** so that rocks would follow me and I could charm anyone I pleased, I would use that power. But now all the skill I have is in my tears, and these I will give you: that is all I can do.

(Translations of Euripides: Kovacs, Loeb)

2. Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1467−73

ὑμεῖς δ’ ἐπευφημήσατ’, ὦ νεάνιδες,

**παιᾶνα** τἠμῆι συμφορᾶι Διὸς κόρην

Ἄρτεμιν· ἴτω δὲ Δαναΐδαις εὐφημία.

κανᾶ δ’ ἐναρχέσθω τις, αἰθέσθω δὲ πῦρ

προχύταις καθαρσίοισι, καὶ πατὴρ ἐμὸς

ἐνδεξιούσθω βωμόν· ὡς σωτηρίαν

Ἕλλησι δώσουσ’ ἔρχομαι νικηφόρον.

You young women, because of what has happened to me raise a **paean** in honor of Zeus’s daughter Artemis! Let the sons of Danaus keep holy silence! Let someone prepare the sacrificial basket, let the purifying barley meal make the fire blaze up! Let my father make his rightward course about the altar! For I am departing to give the Greeks salvation and victory!

3. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1629−32

Ὀρφεῖ δὲ γλῶσσαν τὴν ἐναντίαν ἔχεις·

ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἦγε πάντ’ ἀπὸ φθογγῆς χαρᾶι,

σὺ δ’ ἐξορίνας νηπίοις ὑλάγμασιν

ἄξηι· κρατηθεὶς δ’ ἡμερώτερος φανῆι.[[2]](#footnote-2)

You have a tongue that’s just the opposite of Orpheus. He led on all nature with the joy his voice engendered, whereas if you anger me with your childish barkings you’ll be led off under arrest—and once under control, you’ll show yourself a bit tamer!

(Translations of Aeschylus: Sommerstein, Loeb)

4. Euripides, *Bacchae* 560–564

τάχα δ᾿ ἐν ταῖς πολυδένδροισιν Ὀλύμπου

θαλάμαις, ἔνθα ποτ᾿ Ὀρφεὺς κιθαρίζων

σύναγεν δένδρεα μούσαις,

σύναγεν θῆρας ἀγρώστας.

Perhaps in the leafy coverts of Olympus where Orpheus, playing his lyre, once assembled the trees by his song, assembled the beasts of the wild.

5. Euripides, *Cyclops* 646−8

ἀλλ᾿ οἶδ᾿ **ἐπῳδὴν** Ὀρφέως ἀγαθὴν πάνυ,

ὥστ᾿ αὐτόματον τὸν δαλὸν ἐς τὸ κρανίον

στείχονθ᾿ ὑφάπτειν τὸν μονῶπα παῖδα γῆς.

But I know an **incantation** of Orpheus so wonderful that the firebrand all on its own will march up to his skull and set the one-eyed son of earth on fire.

6. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 231−8

φράσεν δ’ ἀόζοις πατὴρ μετ’ εὐχὰν

δίκαν χιμαίρας ὕπερθε βωμοῦ

πέπλοισι περιπετῆ παντὶ θυμῶι

προνωπῆ λαβεῖν ἀέρ-

δην στόματός τε καλλιπρώι-

ρου φυλακᾶι κατασχεῖν

φθόγγον ἀραῖον οἴκοις,

βίαι χαλινῶν τ’ ἀναύδωι μένει·

After a prayer, her father told his attendants

to lift her right up over the altar

with all their strength, like a yearling goat,

face down, so that her robes fell around her,

and by putting a guard

on her fair face and lips to restrain

speech that might lay a curse on his house

by force, by the silencing power of a bridle.

7. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 243−7

. . . πολλάκις

πατρὸς κατ’ ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους

ἔμελψεν, ἁγνᾶι δ’ ἀταύρωτος αὐδᾶι πατρὸς

φίλου τριτόσπονδον εὔποτμον **παι-**

**ῶνα** φίλως ἐτίμα.

. . . often

at the rich banquets in her father’s dining-chambers

she had sung, a pure virgin with pure voice,

duly and lovingly performing her father’s

**paean** for good fortune to accompany the third

libation.

8. Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1480−96

**ἑλίσσετ**’ ἀμφὶ ναόν,

ἀμφὶ βωμὸν Ἄρτεμιν,

τὰν ἄνασσαν Ἄρτεμιν,

τὰν μάκαιραν· ὡς ἐμοῖσιν, εἰ χρεών,

αἵμασι θύμασί τε

θέσφατ’ ἐξαλείψω.

ὦ πότνια πότνια μᾶτερ, οὐ δάκρυά γέ σοι

δώσομεν ἁμέτερα·

παρ’ ἱεροῖς γὰρ οὐ πρέπει.

ἰὼ ἰὼ νεάνιδες,

**συνεπαείδετ’** Ἄρτεμιν

Χαλκίδος ἀντίπορον,

ἵνα τε δόρατα μέμονε νάϊ’

ὄνομα δι’ ἐμὸν Αὐλίδος

στενοπόροις ἐν ὅρμοις.

**Dance** about the shrine,

about the altar, in honor of Artemis,

our lady Artemis,

the blessed: for if I must,

with blood, with sacrifice,

I shall blot out the oracles!

O lady, lady mother, I shall not tender you

my tears:

tears are not proper at a sacred rite.

Ho there, maidens,

**sing with me** to Artemis

whose temple stands opposite Chalcis,

where the wooden ships are keen for battle

because of my name

in the narrow-straited harbors of Aulis!

9. Euripides, *Alcestis* 357−62

εἰ δ’Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσα καὶ μέλος παρῆν,

ὥστ’ ἢ κόρην Δήμητρος ἢ κείνης πόσιν

ὕμνοισι κηλήσαντά σ’ ἐξ Ἅιδου λαβεῖν,

κατῆλθον ἄν, καί μ’ οὔθ’ ὁ Πλούτωνος κύων

οὔθ’ οὑπὶ κώπηι ψυχοπομπὸς ἂν Χάρων

ἔσχ’ ἄν, πρὶν ἐς φῶς σὸν καταστῆσαι βίον.

If I had the voice and music of Orpheus so that I could charm Demeter’s daughter or her husband

with song and fetch you from Hades, I would have gone down to the Underworld, and neither Pluto’s hound nor Charon the ferryman of souls standing at the oar would have kept me from bringing you back to the light alive.

10. Euripides, *Alcestis* 965−72

κρεῖσσον οὐδὲν Ἀνάγκας

ηὗρον οὐδέ τι φάρμακον

Θρήισσαις ἐν σανίσιν, τὰς

Ὀρφεία κατέγραψεν

γῆρυς, οὐδ’ ὅσα Φοῖβος Ἀ-

σκληπιάδαις ἔδωκε

φάρμακα πολυπόνοις

ἀντιτεμὼν βροτοῖσιν.

I have found nothing stronger than Necessity, nor is there any cure for it in the Thracian tablets set down by the voice of Orpheus nor in all the simples which Phoebus harvested in aid of trouble-ridden mortals and gave to the sons of Asclepius.

11. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1019−21

τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ γᾶν πεσὸν ἅπαξ θανάσιμον

πρόπαρ ἀνδρὸς μέλαν αἷμα τίς ἂν

πάλιν ἀγκαλέσαιτ’ **ἐπαείδων**;

But once the black blood of death

has fallen on the earth in front of a man,

who **by any incantation** can summon it back again?

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1. Euripides' text from Diggle 1981−94. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Aeschylus' text from Page 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)