

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

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

εἰ μὲν τὸν Ὀρφέως εἶχον, ὃ πάτερ, λόγον,  
πειθῆναι ἐπάιδουσ', ὥσθ' ὀμαρτεῖν μοι πέτρας  
κηλεῖν τε τοῖς λόγοισιν οὕς ἐβουλόμην,  
ἐνταῦθ' ἄν ἦλθον· νῦν δέ, τὰπ' ἐμοῦ σοφά,  
δάκρυα παρέξω· ταῦτα γὰρ δυναίμεθ' ἄν.<sup>1</sup>

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

ὕμεῖς δ' ἐπευφημήσατ', ὧ νεάνιδες,  
παιᾶνα τήμῃ συμφορᾷ Διὸς κόρη  
Ἄρτεμιν· ἴτω δὲ Δαναΐδαις εὐφημία.  
κανᾶ δ' ἐναρχέσθω τις, αἰθέσθω δὲ πῦρ  
προχύταις καθαρσίοισι, καὶ πατήρ ἐμὸς  
ἐνδεξιούσθω βωμόν· ὡς σωτηρίαν  
Ἑλλησι 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,  
σύ δ' ἐξορίνας νηπίοις ὑλάγμασιν  
ἄξιη· κρατηθεὶς δ' ἡμερώτερος φανῆι.<sup>2</sup>

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 barking 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, ἐνθα ποτ' Ὀρφεὺς κιθαρίζων  
σύναγεν δένδρεα μούσαις,  
σύναγεν θήρας 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' ἐπωδὴν 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.

<sup>1</sup> Euripides' text from Diggle 1981–94.

<sup>2</sup> Aeschylus' text from Page 1972.

6. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 231–8

φράσεν δ' ἀόζοις πατήρ μετ' εὐχὰν  
δίκαν χμαίρας ὑπερθε 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  
πατρός κατ' ἀνδρῶνας εὐτραπέζους  
ἔμελπεν, ἀγνᾶι δ' ἀταύρωτος αὐδαῖ πατρός  
φίλου τριτόσπονδον εὐποτμον **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

**ἐλίσσει** ἀμφὶ ναόν,  
ἀμφὶ βωμόν Ἄρτεμιν,  
τὰν ἄνασσαν Ἄρτεμιν,  
τὰν μάκαιραν· ὡς ἐμοῖσιν, εἰ χρεῶν,  
αἵμασι θύμασί τε  
θέσφατ' ἐξαλείψω.  
ὦ πότνια πότνια μᾶτερ, οὐ δάκρῦά γέ σοι  
δώσομεν ἀμέτερα·  
παρ' ἱεροῖς γὰρ οὐ πρόπει.  
ἰὼ ἰὼ νεάνιδες,  
**συνεπαιίδει** Ἄρτεμιν  
Χαλκίδος ἀντίπορον,  
ἵνα τε δόρατα μέμονε νάϊ'  
ὄνομα δι' ἐμὸν Αὐλίδος  
στενοπόροις ἐν ὄρμοις.

**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  
ὑμνοῖσι κηλήσαντά σ' ἐξ Ἄιδου λαβεῖν,  
κατῆλθον ἄν, καί μ' οὐθ' ὁ Πλούτωνος κύων

οὐθ' οὐπὶ κόπηι ψυχοπομπὸς ἄν 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  
ἠΰρον οὐδέ τι φάρμακον  
Θρήισσαις ἐν σανίσιν, τὰς  
Ὀρφεῖα κατέγραψεν  
γῆρυς, οὐδ' ὅσα Φοῖβος Ἄ-  
σκληπιάδαις ἔδωκε  
φάρμακα πολυπόνοις  
ἀντιτεμῶν 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 πεσὼν ἄπαξ 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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