

## “Close the doors of your ears”: Tracing a Bacchic/Orphic Formula in Augustan Poetry

### 1. ORPHIC FORMULA 1 F A/B (BERNABÉ):<sup>1</sup>

(A) ἀείσω ξυνετοῖσι· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι

I will sing to those with understanding: close the doors, you who are uninitiated.

(B) φθέγγομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι

I will speak to those for whom it is permitted: close the doors, you who are uninitiated.

### 2. WITH ὦτα/οὔατα ('EARS') EXPANSION:

a. Derveni Papyrus, col. 7.9-10 (OF 3 F Bernabé):

“**Θ]ύρας**” γὰρ “**ἐπιθέ[σθαι]**” κελ]εύσας “**τοῖ[ς]**

**[ὠσι]ν**” αὐτ[οὺς οὔτι νομο]θετεῖν φη[σιν τοῖς] πολλοῖς

τή]ν ἀκοήν [ἀγνεύο]ντας κατ[ὰ]

For, [Orpheus] having ordered them to “put doors to their ears,” he says that he is not legislating for the many [but addressing himself to those] who are pure in hearing...

b. Scholion of Elias on Aristotle's *Categories* (prooem. 125.4 Busse = OF 863 F Bernabé):

κακοφραδέων δὲ **βεβήλων** | **οὔατα** λαχνήεντα περισκεπέτωσαν ἀράχνη.

Let spiders cover over the shaggy ears of the foolish uninitiated.

### 3. GREEK REFLEXES:

a. Plato, *Symposium* 218a-b:

καὶ ὁρῶν αὖ Φαίδρους, Ἀγάθωνας, Ἐρυξιμάχους, Πausanίας, Ἀριστοδήμους τε καὶ Ἀριστοφάνους· Σωκράτη δὲ αὐτὸν τί δεῖ λέγειν, καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλοι· πάντες γὰρ κεκοινωνήκατε **τῆς φιλοσόφου μανίας τε καὶ βακχείας**—διὸ πάντες ἀκούσεσθε· συγγνώσεσθε γὰρ **τοῖς τε τότεπραχθεῖσι καὶ τοῖς νῦν λεγομένοις**, οἱ δὲ οἰκέται, καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος ἐστὶν **βέβηλός** τε καὶ ἄγροικος, **πύλας πάνυ μεγάλας τοῖς ὠσὶν ἐπίθεσθε**.

I have only to look around me, and there is a Phaedrus, an Agathon, an Eryximachus, a Pausanias, an Aristodemus, and an Aristophanes – I need not mention Socrates himself – and all the rest of them; every one of you has had his share of philosophic frenzy and ecstasy, so all of you shall hear. You shall stand up alike for what then was done and for what now is spoken. But the servants, and if anyone else is profane and boorish, must clap the heaviest of doors upon their ears.

b. Aristophanes, *Frogs* 354-70:

**εὐφημεῖν χρὴ κάξιστασθαι τοῖς ἡμετέροισι χοροῖσιν,**  
**ὅστις ἄπειρος τοιῶνδε λόγων ἢ γνώμη μὴ καθαρεύει,** 355

ἢ γενναίων ὄργια Μουσῶν μήτ' εἶδεν μήτ' ἐχόρευσεν,  
μηδὲ Κρατίνου τοῦ ταυροφάγου γλώττης Βακχεῖ' ἔτελέσθη,  
ἢ βωμολόχοις ἔπεσιν χαίρει μὴ 'ν καιρῷ τοῦτο ποιοῦσιν,  
ἢ στάσιν ἐχθρὰν μὴ καταλύει μηδ' εὐκόλος ἐστί πολιταῖς,  
ἀλλ' ἀνεγείρει καὶ ῥιπίζει κερδῶν ἰδίων ἐπιθυμῶν, 360

ἢ τῆς πόλεως χειμαζομένης ἄρχων καταδωροδοκεῖται,  
ἢ προδίδωσιν φρούριον ἢ ναῦς, ἢ τὰ πόρρητ' ἀποπέμπει  
ἐξ Αἰγίνης Θωρυκίων ὦν εἰκοστολόγος κακοδαίμων,  
ἀσκώματα καὶ λῖνα καὶ πίτταν διαπέμπων εἰς Ἐπίδαυρον,  
ἢ χρήματα ταῖς τῶν ἀντιπάλων ναυσὶν παρέχειν τινὰ πείθει, 365

ἢ κατατιλᾷ τῶν Ἑκαταίων κυκλίοισι χοροῖσιν ὑπάδων,  
ἢ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῶν ποιητῶν ῥήτωρ ὦν εἶτ' ἀποτρώγει,  
κωμωδηθεὶς ἐν ταῖς πατρίοις τελεταῖς ταῖς τοῦ Διονύσου·  
τούτοις αὐδῶ καῦθις ἀπαυδῶ καῦθις τὸ τρίτον μάλ' ἀπαυδῶ  
**ἐξιστασθαι μύσταισι χοροῖς** 370

<sup>1</sup> Translations of 1 and 2b my own; translation of 2a that of Kouromenos-Parássoglou-Tsantsanoglou (eds.) 2006. Except where otherwise specified, all texts and translations are those of the relevant OCT, Teubner, and Loeb editions, with minimal modification for clarity.

Let him keep ritual silence and stand aside from our sacred dances, whoever is unfamiliar with such utterances as this, or harbors unclean attitudes, or has never beheld or danced in the rites of the noble Muses, nor been initiated in the Bacchic rites of bull-eating Cratinus' language, or enjoys rustic words from those who deliver them at the wrong time, or forbears to resolve hateful factionalism and act peaceably toward other citizens, but foments and inflames it from desire for personal gain, or as an official sells out the city when she's tossed on stormy seas, or betrays a fortress or fleet, or is a goddamned collector of 5% duties like Thorycion and ships contraband from Aegina, sending oar pads, flax, and pitch across to Epidaurus, or talks someone into supplying money for our adversaries' navy, or shits on the offerings for Hecate while singing for dithyrambic choruses, or is a politician who nibbles away the poets' honoraria after being lampooned in a comedy during the ancestral rites of Dionysus. To these I proclaim, and proclaim again, and three times proclaim: stand apart from the initiates' dances.

c. Euripides, *Protesilaus* fr. 648 (Collard/Cropp = Schol. on Sophocles, 10 = Suda β 218):

**οὐ γὰρ θέμις βέβηλον** ἄπτεισθαι δόμων.

For it is unlawful for the uninitiated to be in contact with the house.

d. Callimachus, *Hymn to Demeter* 1-3:

τῷ καλάθῳ κατιόντος **ἐπιφθέγγασθε** γυναῖκες  
'Δάματερ μέγα χάϊρε πολυτρόφε πουλυμέδιμνε'.  
τὸν κάλαθον κατιόντα χαμαὶ **θασεῖσθε βέβαλοι**.

As the basket comes, greet it, you women, saying 'Demeter, greatly hail! Lady of much bounty, of many measures of corn.' As the basket comes, from the ground you shall behold it, you who are uninitiated.

e. Theocritus:

*Idyll* 3.50-1: ζαλῶ δέ, φίλα γύναι, Ἰασίωνα, | ὃς τόσσων ἐκύρησεν, ὅσ' οὐ πεισεῖσθε, **βέβαλοι**

I envy Iasion, dear lady, whose fate was of a kind that you who are uninitiated will never know.

*Idyll* 26.13-14: ... ὄργια Βάκχῳ, ... τὰ τ' οὐχ ὀρέοντι **βέβαλοι**.

...Bacchic rites, ... which the uninitiated do not see.

#### 4. LATIN REFLEXES IN CULTIC CONTEXTS:

a. Catullus 64.256-64:

<i>harum pars tecta quatiebant cuspidē thyrsos,</i>	256
<i>pars e divolso iactabant membra iuvenco,</i>	
<i>pars sese tortis serpentibus incingebant,</i>	
<i>pars obscura cavis celebrabant orgia cistis,</i>	
<b><i>orgia quae frustra cupiunt audire profani;</i></b>	260
<i>plangebant aliae proceris tympana palmis,</i>	
<i>aut tereti tenuis tinnitus aere ciebant.</i>	

Some of them were waving thyrsi with shrouded points, some tossing about the limbs of a mangled steer, some girding themselves with writhing serpents: some bearing in solemn procession dark mysteries enclosed in caskets, mysteries which the profane desire in vain to hear. Others beat timbrels with uplifted hands, or raised clear clashing with cymbals of rounded bronze: many blew horns with harsh-sounding drone, and the barbarian pipe shrilled with dreadful din.

b. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.258-9: "*procul, o procul este, profani,*" | *conclamat vates, "totoque absistite luco"*

'Away! away! you that are uninitiated!' shrieks the seer, 'withdraw from all the grove!'

#### 5. LATIN REFLEXES IN NON-CULTIC CONTEXTS:

a. Horace, *Odes* 3.1.1-4:

*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo;*  
*favete linguis: carmina non prius*  
*audita Musarum sacerdos*  
*virginibus puerisque canto.*

I shun the uninitiated crowd and keep it at a distance. Keep silence! As priest of the Muses I am singing to girls and boys songs never heard before.

b. Plautus, *Pseudolus* 469-70: ***fac sis vocivas, Pseudole, aedis aurium*** | *mea ut migrare dicta possint quo volo.*

Make the chambers of your ears open, Pseudolus, so that my words might be able to go where I want them to go.

c. Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> 7.251-61:	
<i>quos ubi placavit precibusque et murmure longo,</i>	251
<i>Aesonis effatum proferri corpus ad auras</i>	
<i>iussit et in plenos resolutum carmine somnos</i>	
<i>exanimi similem stratis porrexit in herbis.</i>	
<b><i>hinc procul Aesoniden, procul hinc iubet ire ministros</i></b>	255
<b><i>et monet arcanis oculos remove profanos.</i></b>	
<i>diffugiunt iussi, passis Medea capillis</i>	
<b><i>bacchantum ritu flagrantes circuit aras</i></b>	
<i>multifidasque faces in fossa sanguinis atra</i>	
<i>tingit et infectas geminis accendit in aris</i>	260
<i>terque senem flamma, ter aqua, ter sulphure lustrat.</i>	

When she had appeased all these divinities by long, low-muttered prayers, she bade her people bring out under the open sky old Aeson's worn-out body; and having buried him in a deep slumber by her spells, like one dead she stretched him out on a bed of herbs. Far hence she bade Jason go, far hence all the attendants, and warned them not to look with profane eyes upon her secret rites. They retired as she had bidden. Medea, with streaming hair in the manner of the Bacchants, moved around the blazing altars, and dipping many-cleft sticks in the dark pools of blood, she lit the gory sticks at the altar flames. Three times she purified the old man, three times with water, three times with sulphur.

#### 6. LATIN REFLEXES AS AMATORY POETICS IN OVID:

a. <i>Ars Amatoria</i> 2.601-12:	
<i>quis Cereris ritus ausit vulgare profanis</i>	601
<i>magnaue Threicia sacra reperta Samo?</i>	
<i>exigua est virtus praestare silentia rebus;</i>	
<i>at contra gravis est culpa tacenda loqui.</i>	
<i>o bene, quod frustra captatis arbore pomis</i>	605
<i>garrulus in media Tantalus aret aqua!</i>	
<i>praecipue Cytherea iubet sua sacra taceri;</i>	
<b><i>admoneo, veniat nequis ad illa loquax.</i></b>	
<i>condita si non sunt Veneris mysteria cistis</i>	
<i>nec cava vesanis ictibus aera sonant,</i>	610
<i>at tamen inter nos medio versantur in usu,</i>	
<i>sed sic, inter nos ut latuisse velint.</i>	

Who would dare to publish to the profane the rites of Ceres, or the great ceremonies devised in Samothrace? Keeping silence is but a small virtue, but to speak what should not be uttered is a heinous crime. Well is it that garrulous Tantalus clutches in vain at the apples on the tree, and parches in the water's midst! Cytherea above all forbids her rites to be told of; I give warning that no talkative person approach them. Even if the mysteries of Venus are not hidden in chests, nor does the hollow bronze resound to frenzied blows, yet are they habitually so practiced in our midst as to desire concealment.

b. *Amores* 1.8.77-8: ***surda*** sit oranti ***tua ianua***, laxa ferenti; | *audiat exclusi verba receptus amans*

Let your doors be deaf to prayers, but wide to the giver; let the lover you welcome overhear the words of the one you have excluded.

#### 7. BEYOND THE AUGUSTAN PERIOD:

a. Claudian:

*De Raptu Proserpinae* 1.1-4:

*Inferni raptoris equos adflataque curru*  
*sidera Taenario caligantesque profundae*  
*Iunonis thalamos audaci promere cantu*  
*mens congesta iubet. gressus remove profani.*

My full heart bids me boldly sing the horses of the ravisher from the underworld and the stars darkened by the shadow of his infernal chariot and the gloomy chambers of the queen of Hell. Remove your footsteps, you who are uninitiated.

*De Bello Gothico* 100-4:

***procul arceat altus***  
*Iuppiter, ut delubra Numae sedesque Quirini*  
*barbaries oculis saltem temerare profanis*  
*possit et arcanum tanti deprendere regni.*

May Jove from on high forbid that the barbarian should outrage even with a glance Numa's shrine or Romulus' temple, or discover something of the secrets of our empire.

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