

1. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1629

(Aegisthus taunting the chorus)

’Ορφεΐ δὲ γλώσσῃσιν τὴν ἑναντίαν ἔχεις.
 “You have a tongue opposite that of Orpheus.”

2. Euripides, *Cyclops* 646-7

ἀλλ’ οἷδ’ ἐπιώδιον Ὀρφέως ἀγαθὴν πάνυ,
 ὥστ’ αὐτόματον τὸν δαλὸν ἐς τὸ κρανίου
 στεῖχονθ’ ὑφάπτειν τὸν μονῶπα παῖδα γῆς.
 “But I know a charm of Orpheus, a good one,
 to make that brand, all on its own, to the skull
 march up and torch the one-eyed son of earth.”

3. Euripides, *Alcectis* 963-70

ἐγὼ καὶ διὰ μούσας
 καὶ μετάρσιος ἦξα, καὶ
 πλείστων ἀψάμενος λόγων
 κρείσσον οὐδὲν Ἀνάγκας
 ἤρρον οὐδέ τι φάρμακον
 Θρηίσσις ἐν σανίσι, τὰς
 Ὀρφέα κατέγραψεν
 γῆρυς,

“With the Muse I have flown, even through the sky,
 and of great reasonings I have seized upon none
 greater than Necessity, nor have I found any cure
 in Thracian tablets which the voice of Orpheus wrote down.”

4. Euripides, *Hippolytus* 936-7, 948-57

(Theseus railing against Hippolytus)

φεῦ τῆς βροτείας -- ποῖ προβήσεται; -- φρενός.
 τί τέρμα τόλμης καὶ θράσους γενήσεται;....
 σὺ δὲ θεοῖσιν ὡς περισσὸς ὢν ἀνὴρ
 ξύνηι; σὺ σὴν φρονῶν καὶ κακῶν ἀκίρατος;
 οὐκ ἂν πιθόμην τοῖσι σοῖς κόμπτοις ἐγὼ (950)
 θεοῖσι προσθεῖς ἀμαθίαν φρονεῖν κακῶς.
 ἦδη νῦν αὐχέι καὶ δι’ ἀψύχου βορᾶς
 σίτοις καπηλευ’ Ὀρφέα τ’ ἄνακτ’ ἔχων
 βάκχευε πολλῶν γραμμιάτων τιμῶν καπνούς.
 ἐπεὶ γ’ ἐλήφθης. τοὺς δὲ τοιοῦτους ἐγὼ (955)
 φεύγειν προφρονῶ πάσι θηρεύουσι γὰρ
 σεμνοῖς λόγοισιν, αἰσχρὰ μηχανώμενοι.

Oh mortal heart, how far will it go? What limit of daring and boldness will
 there be?...Are you indeed an exceptional man, communing with gods? You,
 self-controlled and untouched by evils? I’ll never be persuaded by your clatter

to think poorly and impute folly to gods! Keep on boasting and peddle your
 meatless diet with your lord Orpheus, revel with Bacchus honoring the smoke
 of many writings—but you’ve been found out: I declare to all, flee men like
 this: for they prey on you with holy words, devising shameful acts.”

5. Plato, *Symposium* 179d

(Phaedrus’ speech on love)

’Ορφέα δὲ τὸν Οἰάγρου ἀτελῆ ἀπέπειψαν ἐξ Ἴαιδου, φάσμα δειξάντες
 τῆς γυναικὸς ἐφ’ ἣν ἦκεν, αὐτὴν δὲ οὐ δόντες, ὅτι μάλθακιζεσθαι
ἐδόκει. ἅτε ὦν κίθαρῶδος, καὶ οὐ τολμᾶν ἔνεκα τοῦ ἔρωτος
 ἀποθνήσκειν ᾧσπερ Ἀλκηστὶς, ἀλλὰ διαμηχανᾶσθαι ζῶν εἰσιέναι εἰς
 Ἴαιδου.

“Orpheus, son of Oeagrus, they sent back from Hades in failure, showing him a
 shade of his wife for whom he came, not giving her very self, since he seemed
soft, being a kitharode, and not daring to die for love like Alcectis, but devising
 to descend to Hades alive.”

6. Plato, *Republic* 364e-65a

βίβλων δὲ ὄμαδον παρέχονται Μουσαίου καὶ Ὀρφέως, Σελήνης τε καὶ
 Μουσῶν ἐγόνων, ὡς φασί, καθ’ ἃς θηηπολοῦσιν, πείθοντες οὐ μόνον
 ἰδιώτας ἀλλὰ καὶ πόλεις, ὡς ἄρα λύσεις τε καὶ καθαρμοὶ
 ἀδικημάτων + διὰ θυσιῶν καὶ παιδιᾶς ἥδονῶν εἰσι μὲν ἔτι ζῶσιν, εἰσι δὲ
 καὶ τελευτήσασιν, ἃς δὴ τελετὰς καλοῦσιν, αἱ τῶν ἐκεῖ κακῶν
 ἀπολύουσιν ἡμᾶς, μὴ θύσαντας δὲ δεῖνὰ περιμένει.

And they bring forth a loud babble of books by Mousaeus and Orpheus, born
 from the Moon and the Muses, they say, according to which they conduct
 sacrifices, persuading not only individuals but cities too that there are
 deliverances and purifications from unjust deeds, through sacrifices and
 pleasures of child’s play while one is still alive, and for the dead there are what
 they call “last rites,” which will release us from evils there, but for those who
 haven’t sacrificed dreadful things are in store.”

7. *Diatheke* (“Testament”) of Orpheus (ca. 3rd-2nd cent. BCE?) (Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* bk 13, ch. 12; citing Aristobolus the Peripatetic, a 2nd c. BCE Alexandrian Jew.)

"Δεῖ γὰρ λαμβάνειν τὴν θείαν φωνὴν οὐ ῥητὸν λόγον, ἀλλ’ ἔργων
 κατασκευάς, καθὼς καὶ διὰ τῆς νομοθεσίας ἡμῖν ὄλην τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ
 κόσμου θεοῦ λόγους εἶρηκεν ὁ Μωσῆς. συνεχῶς γὰρ φησιν ἐφ’
 ἐκάστου· καὶ εἶπεν ὁ

(4.) θεός, καὶ ἐγένετο· δοκοῦσι δὲ μοι περιειργασμένοι πάντα
κατηκολουθήκεναι τοῦτω Πύθαγόρας τε καὶ Σωκράτης καὶ Πλάτων
 λέγοντες ἀκούειν φωνῆς θεοῦ, τὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν ὄλων
 συνθεωροῦντες ἀκριβῶς ὑπὸ θεοῦ γεγонуῖαν καὶ συνεχωμένην

ὀδριαίπτως· ἔτι δὲ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς ἐν ποιήμασι τῶν κατὰ τὸν Ἱερὸν
Λόγον αὐτῷ λεγομένων οὕτως ἐκτίθεται περὶ τοῦ διακρατεῖσθαι θεία
δυναμει τὰ πάντα καὶ γενητὰ ὑπάρχειν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντων εἶναι τὸν
θεόν· λέγει δ' οὕτως·

φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ' ἐπίθεοθε βέβηλοι,
φεύγοντες δικαίων θεσμούς, θείοιο τιθέντος
πᾶσιν ὁμοῦ· σὺ δ' ἄκουε· φασεσφόρου ἔκγονε Μήνης
Μουσαῖ· ἐξενέπω γὰρ ἀληθῆα· μηδέ σε τὰ πρὶν
ἐν στήθεσσι φανέντα φίλης αἰῶνος ἀμέρῃ... (5)
εἰς δὲ λόγον θεῖον βλέψας τούτῳ προσέδρευε,
ἰθύνων κραδῆς νοερὸν κύτος· εὐ δ' ἐπίβαινε
ἀτραπιτοῦ, μούνον δ' ἑώρα κόσμοιο τυπωτῆν
ἄθανατον· παλαιὸς δὲ λόγος περὶ τοῦδε φασίει·
Εἷς ἐστ' αὐτοτελής, αὐτοῦ δ' ὑπο πάντα τελεῖται, (10)
ἐν δ' αὐτοῖς αὐτὸς περινίσσεται, οὐδέ τις αὐτὸν
εἰσορᾷ ψυχῆν θνητῶν, νῶ δ' εἰσορᾷσεται.

αὐτὸς δ' ἐξ ἀγαθῶν θνητοῖς κακὸν οὐκ ἐπιτέλλει
ἀνθρώποις· αὐτῷ δὲ χάρις καὶ μῖσος ὀπηδεῖ·

καὶ πόλεμος καὶ λοιμὸς ἰδ' ἄλγεα δακρυόντα· (15)
οὐδέ τις ἐοθ' ἔτερος, σὺ δὲ κεν ρέα πάντ' ἑσορήσω,
αἶ κεν ἴδης αὐτόν· πρὶν δὴ ποτε δεῦρ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν,
τέκνον ἐμόν, δειξῶ σοι, ὀπηνικά δέρκομαι αὐτοῦ
ἴχνια καὶ χεῖρα στιβαρῆν κρατεροῖο θεοῖο.

αὐτὸν δ' οὐχ ὀρώσω· περὶ γὰρ νέφος ἐστήρικται (20)
λοιπὸν ἐμοί· ὁτᾶσι δὲ δεκάπτυχον ἀνθρώποισιν.

οὐ γὰρ κέν τις ἴδοι θνητῶν μερόπων κραινόντα,
εἰ μὴ μουνογενῆς τις ἀπορροῶς φύλου ἄνωθεν
Χαλδαίων· ἴδρις γὰρ ἦν ἄστροιο πορείης

καὶ σφαίρης κίνημ' ἀμφι χθόνα ὡς περιτέλλει (25)
κυκλοτερές τ' ἐν ἴσῳ, κατὰ δὲ σφέτερον κνώδακα.

πνεύματα δ' ἠνιοχεῖ περὶ τ' ἠέρα καὶ περὶ χεῦμα
νάματος· ἐκφαίνει δὲ πυρὸς σέλας ἰφιγενήτου.

αὐτὸς δὲ μέγαν αὐθις ἐπ' οὐρανὸν ἐστήρικται
χρυσέω ἐνὶ θρόνῳ· γαίῃ δ' ὑπὸ ποσὶ βέβηκε· (30)

χεῖρα δὲ δεξιτερὴν ἐπὶ τέρμασιν ὤκεανοῖο
ἐκτέτακεν· ὀρέων δὲ πρέμει βάσις ἔνδοθι θυμῷ

οὐδὲ φέρειν δύναται κρατερόν μένος· ἔστι δὲ πάντως
αὐτὸς ἐπουράνιος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ πάντα τελευτᾷ.

ἀρχὴν αὐτὸς ἔχων καὶ μέσσην ἠδὲ τελευτήν, (35)
ὡς λόγος ἀρχαίων, ὡς ὑδογενῆς διέταξεν,

ἐκ θεοθεν γνώμησι λαβῶν κατὰ δίπλακα θεσιμόν,
ἄλλως οὐ θεμιτὸν δὲ λέγειν· τρομέω δὲ γε γαῖα,

ἐν νόῳ· ἐξ ὑπάτου κραίνει περὶ πάντ' ἐνὶ τάξει.
ὧ τέκνον, σὺ δὲ τοῖσι νόοισι πελάττει, γλώσσης (40)

εὐ μάλ' ἐπικρατέων, στέρνοισι δὲ ἔνθεο φήμην.

"For we must understand the voice of God not as spoken words, but as
construction works, just as Moses in our Law has spoken of the whole creation
of the world as words of God. For throughout he says of each work, "And God
said, and it was so." It seems to me that he has been very carefully followed in
all by Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato, who said that they heard the voice
of God, when they were contemplating the arrangement of the universe so
accurately made and indissolubly combined by God. Moreover, Orpheus, in
verses taken from his writings in the *Sacred Account*, thus sets forth the
doctrine that all things are governed by divine power, and that they have had a
beginning, and that God is over all. And this is what he says:

"I speak to those who lawfully may hear: / Depart, and close the doors, all
ye profane, / Who hate the ordinances of the just, / The law divine announced
for all alike. / But you, Musaeus, child of the bright Moon, / Lend me thine ear,
for I have truths to tell. / Let not the former fancies of thy mind / Deprive you
of the dear and blessed life. / Look to the word divine, keep close to that, / And
guide thereby the deep thoughts of your heart / Walk wisely in the way, and
look to none, / Save to the immortal Framers of the world: / For thus of Him an
ancient story speaks: / One, perfect in Himself, all else by Him / Made perfect:
ever present in His works, / By mortal eyes unseen, by mind alone / Discerned.
It is not He that out of good / Makes evil to spring up for mortal men. / Both
love and hatred wait upon His steps, / And war and pestilence, and sorrow and
tears: / For there is none but He. All other things / 'Twere easy to behold,
could'st thou but first / Behold Himself here present upon earth. / The footsteps
and the mighty hand of God / Whene'er I see, I'll show them thee, my son: /
But Him I cannot see, so dense a cloud / In tenfold darkness wraps our feeble
sight. / Him in His power no mortal could behold, / Save one, a scion of
Chaldaean race: / For he was skilled to mark the sun's bright path, / And how in
even circle round the earth / The starry sphere on its own axis turns, / And
winds their chariot guide o'er sea and sky; / And showed where fire's bright
flame its strength displayed. / But God Himself, high above heaven unmoved, /
Sits on His golden throne, and plants His feet / On the broad earth; His right
hand He extends / O'er Ocean's farthest bound, the eternal hills / Tremble in
their deep heart, nor can endure / His mighty power. And still above the
heavens / Alone He sits, and governs all on earth, / Himself first cause, and
means, and end of all. / So men of old, so tells the Nile-born sage, / Taught by
the twofold tablet of God's law: / Nor otherwise dare I of Him to speak: / In
heart and limbs I tremble at the thought, / How He from heaven all things in
order rules. / Draw near in thought, my son; but guard thy tongue / With care,
and store this doctrine in thine heart."

8. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.77-93, 11.1-5, 15-28

Esse deos Erebi crudeles questus, in altam
se recipit Rhodopen pulsumque aquilonibus Haemum.

Tertius aequoreis inclusum piscibus annum
finierat Titan, omnemque refugerat Orpheus

femineam venerem, seu quod male cesserat illi,
sive fidem dederat. Multas tamen ardor habebat
iungere se vati, multae doluere repulsae.

Ille etiam Thracum populis fuit auctor amorem
in teneros transferre mares citraque iuventam
aetatis breve ver et primos carpere flores.

Collis erat colleumque super planissima campi
area, quam viridem faciebant graminis herbae.

Umbra loco deerat. qua postquam parte resedit
dis genitus vates et fila sonantia movit,

umbra loco venit. Non Chaonis afuit arbor.

non nemus Heliadum, non frondibus aesculus altis,
nec tiliae molles, nec fagus et innuba laurus,....[catalog of trees]

80

90

11.1: Carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum

Threicius vates et saxa sequentia ducit,

ecce nurus Ciconum, tectae lymphata ferinis

pectora velleribus, tumuli de vertice cernunt

Orphea percussis sociantem carmina nervis,....

Cunctaque tela forent cantu mollita, sed ingens

clamor et infracto Berecynthia tibia cornu

tympanaque et plausus et Bacchei ululatus

obstrepuere sono citharae: tum denique saxa

non exauditi rubuerunt sanguine vatis.

Ac primum attonitas etiamnum voce canentis

innumeras volucres anguesque agmenque ferarum

Maenades, Orphei titulum, rapuere, theatri.

Inde cruentatis vertuntur in Orphea dextris

et coeunt ut aves, si quando luce vagantem

noctis avem cernunt. Structoque utrimque teatro

ceu matutina cervus periturus harena

praeda canum est. vatemque petunt et fronde virentes

coniciunt thyrsos non haec in munera factos.

20

25

cunning master of his art (he also is the subject of a Hellenic legend), tamed the wild beasts by the mere might of song: and transplanted trees-oaks-by music....

To me, therefore, that Thracian Orpheus, that Theban, and that Methymnaean, - men, and yet unworthy of the name, - seem to have been deceivers, who, under the pretence of poetry corrupting human life, possessed by a spirit of artful sorcery for purposes of destruction, celebrating crimes in their orgies, and making human woes the materials of religious worship, were the first to entice men to idols; nay, to build up the stupidity of the nations with blocks of wood and stone, - that is, statues and images, - subjecting to the yoke of extremest bondage the truly noble freedom of those who lived as free citizens under heaven by their songs and incantations. But not such is my song, which has come to loose, and that speedily, the bitter bondage of tyrannizing demons; and leading us back to the mild and loving yoke of piety, recalls to heaven those that had been cast prostrate to the earth. It alone has tamed men, the most intractable of animals; the frivolous among them answering to the fowls of the air, deceivers to reptiles, [etc.].... And so all such most savage beasts, and all such blocks of stone, the celestial song has transformed into tractable men. [...] Behold the might of the new song! It has made men out of stones, men out of beasts. Those, moreover, that were as dead, not being partakers of the true life, have come to life again, simply by becoming listeners to this song. It also composed the universe into melodious order, and tuned the discord of the elements to harmonious arrangement, so that the whole world might become harmony. It let loose the fluid ocean, and yet has prevented it from encroaching on the land.... The violence of fire it has softened by the atmosphere, as the Dorian is blended with the Lydian strain; and the harsh cold of the air it has moderated by the embrace of fire, harmoniously arranging these the extreme tones of the universe. And this deathless strain, - the support of the whole and the harmony of all, - reaching from the centre to the circumference, and from the extremities to the central part, has harmonized this universal frame of things, not according to the Thracian music, which is like that invented by Jubal, but according to the paternal counsel of God, which fired the zeal of David. And He who is of David, and yet before him, the Word of God, despising the lyre and harp, which are but lifeless instruments, and having tuned by the Holy Spirit the universe, and especially man, - who, composed of body and soul, is a universe in miniature, makes melody to God on this instrument of many tones...⁷⁾

10. Eusebius, *Praise of Constantine* (4th cent. CE)

Thus, I say, did our common Saviour prove himself the benefactor and preserver of all, displaying his wisdom through the instrumentality of his human nature, even as a musician uses the lyre to evince his skill. The Grecian myth tells us that Orpheus had power to charm ferocious beasts, and tame their savage spirit, by striking the chords of his instrument with a master hand: and this story is celebrated by the Greeks, and generally believed, that an

9. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen* ch. 1 (2nd cent. CE)

“Amphion of Thebes and Arion of Methymna were both minstrels, and both were renowned in story. They are celebrated in song to this day in the chorus of the Greeks; the one for having allured the fishes, and the other for having surrounded Thebes with walls by the power of music. Another, a Thracian, a

unconscious instrument could subdue the untamed brute, and draw the trees from their places, in obedience to its melodious power. But he who is the author of perfect harmony, the all-wise Word of God, desiring to apply every remedy to the manifold diseases of the souls of men, employed that human nature which is the workmanship of his own wisdom, as an instrument by the melodious strains of which he soothed, not indeed the brute creation, but savages endowed with reason; healing each furious temper, each fierce and angry passion of the soul, both in civilized and barbarous nations, by the remedial power of his Divine doctrine.

11. *The Ruin* (Anglo-Saxon, 8th cent.)

Wraetlic is þes wealstan, wyrde gebreæcon;
 burgstede burston, broснаð enta geweorc.
 Hrofas sind gehrorene, hreorge torras,
 hrungeat berofen, hrim on lime, 5
 scearde scurbeorge scorene, gedrorene,
 ældo undereotone. Eorðgrap hafað
 waldend wyrhtan forweorone, geleorene, [...] 21
 Beorht wæron burgreæced, burnsele monige,
 heah horngestreon, heresweg micel,
 meodoheall monig mondreama full,
 oppæt þæt onwende wyrd seo swipe.[...]

Wondrous is this stonewall, wrecked by fates;
 town building fallen, broken work of giants.
 Roofs are in ruins, towers tumbled,
 barred gate plundered, frost in the mortar,
 storm-covers gaping, torn, collapsing,
 undermined by age. Earth's grip holds
 masterbuilders, perished, departed.[...]
 Bright was the townhall, bathhouses many,
 plenty of high gables, great noise of battle,
 many the meadhalls, full of men's revels,
 till that was changed by fate the mighty.[...]
 The place falls to ruin, shattered into
 mounds of stone, where once many a man,
 joyous and gold-bright, dressed in splendor,
 proud and flushed with wine, gleamed in armor;
 he gazed on his treasure—silver, precious stones,
 jewelry and wealth, all that he owned—
 and on this bright city in the broad kingdom.

12. *Boethius* (475-524), *Consolation of Philosophy* (3.m.12:5-16)

quondam funera coniugis / vates Threicius gemens
 postquam flebilibus modis / silvas currere mobiles,

amnes stare coegerat / iunxitque intrepidum latus
 saevis cerva leonibus / nec visum timuit lepum
 iam cantu placidum canem, / cum flagrantior intima
 fervor pectoris ureret

Once, having buried his wife / the Thracian singer lamenting
 made with his sad strains / woodland trees run free
 and streams stand still, / a stag unfrightened lay down
 beside ferocious lions, / a hare wasn't scared to see
 a hound now calmed by song. / While deep inside his heart
 distress raged all the fiercer—

13. *King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Consolation of Philosophy* (late 9th cent. CE)

“It happened long ago that there was a harper in the nation known as Thrace, which was in Greek dominion. This harper was so good it was unheard of; his name was Orpheus. He had a very fine wife, who was called Eurydice. It began to be said that the harper could harp so that the woods moved, and the stones moved at the sound, and wild deer would run to him and stand as though tamed, so still that even if men or hounds came to him, they were not frightened by them. Then they said that the harper's wife must die and her soul be led to hell. The harper became so sad that he could not live among other men, but took to the woods and sat on the mountain day and night; he wept and harped so that the woods trembled and rivers stood still, and hart did not shun lion, nor hare the hound, nor did any animal feel rage or fear at another for the song's mirth. Then the harper thought that nothing in this world could bring him joy; he thought he would seek hell's gods, and try to win them with his harp and bid them to give back his wife. Then he came there....”

email: matfox@princeton. Corrections, comments and correspondence welcome

*****Select Bibliography

- Burkert, Walter. 1985. *Greek religion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp.290-304.
 Detienne, Marcel. 2002. *The writing of Orpheus*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
 Friert, William K. 1991. “Orpheus: a fugue on the polis.” In Pozzi, Dora and John Wickersham. *Myth and the polis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 32-48.
 Friedman, John Block. 1970. *Orpheus in the middle ages*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
 Harrison, R.M. 1962. “An Orpheus mosaic at Ptolemais in Cyrenaica.” *JRS* 52: 13-18.
 Jesnick, Ilona Julia. 1997. *The image of Orpheus in Roman mosaic*. Oxford: Archaeopress.
 Laks, A. and G. W. Most (eds.). 1997. *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
 West, M.L. 1983. *The Orphic poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.