Hippolytus
By Euripides
Translated by E. P. Coleridge
Revised by Mary Jane Rein
Further Revised by Gregory Nagy

Before the royal palace at Trozen. A statue of Aphrodite stands on one side; a statue of Artemis on the other. The goddess Aphrodite appears alone.

Aphrodite
Powerful among mortals am I and not without reputation, I am called the goddess Kypris even in heaven. And those who dwell within the limits of the pontos and the bounds of Atlas 5 and who behold the light of the sun, whoever of those respects my power, to them I pay special honor; but I bring to ruin whoever has little regard for my greatness. For this feeling exists by nature even among the gods: they find pleasure when they are given tīmē by humans. I will soon prove the truth [alētheia] of my words [mūthoi]. 10 For the son of Theseus and an Amazon, Hippolytus, who was raised by Pittheus, alone among the citizens of Trozen, says that I am the most kakē of the daimones. He scorns the nuptial bed and takes no notice of marriage, 15 but to Artemis, the sister of Phoebus and daughter of Zeus, he gives tīmē and believes that she is the greatest of the daimones. Through the green wood he always joins with his virgin goddess and clears wild animals from the land with the help of his swift hounds, since he has come upon company which is beyond mortal. 20 But I don’t begrudge him these things just now, since what concern are they to me? However, for the errors he has committed against me I will have vengeance on Hippolytus on this very day, and since I accomplished many things some time ago I don’t need to go to much effort [ponos]. 24 When he [= Hippolytus] went, once upon a time, from the palace of Pittheus [in Trozen] 25 [to the territory of Athens] for the vision and rituals [telos plural] of the revered Mysteries [mustērion plural], 26 to the land of Pandion [= to Athens], then it was that the noble wife of the father [of Hippolytus] 27 saw him, yes, Phaedra saw him, and she was possessed in her heart 28 by a passionate love [erōs] that was terrifying—all because of the plans I planned. And before she [= Phaedra] came to this land of Trozen, 30 she established—on a side of the Rock of Pallas [= Athena], from where one could see a view 31 of this land [of Trozen] here, [she established]—a shrine [nāos] of Kypris [= Aphrodite], 32 since she loved [erân] a love [erōs], a passionate love, a love alien to the population [ek-dēmos]. In compensation for [epi] Hippolytus 33—she gave that name, which will last for all time to come—that is why, she said, the goddess has been installed there: “Our Lady of Horses Unbridled [hippo-luto-].” But now Theseus has left the Kekropian land, 35 fleeing the pollution for the blood of the sons of Pallas, and he has sailed here with his wife since he consented to a yearlong exile abroad. Here she mourns and is struck by pangs of passion and, wretched, she perishes in silence, 40 and none of her servants shares the knowledge of her affliction. But her secret passion ought not to end up in this way, for I will point out the matter to Theseus and everything will become clear. And this young man, who is hostile to me, his own father will kill with the curse which Poseidon, 45 the lord of the sea [pontos], granted as a prize to Theseus, that he might pray three times to the god and not pray in vain; but Phaedra shall perish, although with good kleos, since I shall not give tīmē to her misery before I take such
dikē against my enemies 50 as to have satisfaction. But now I see Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, on his way here straight from the labors of the hunt; I will get out of the way. A great reveling band [kōmos] of his attendants are following behind 55 and singing joyously with him, and they give tīmē to the goddess Artemis with hymns. He does not know that the gates of Hādēs are standing open, and that he is looking on his final daylight.

Aphrodite vanishes. Hippolytus and his hunting attendants enter, singing. They move to the altar of Artemis.

Hippolytus
Come here, come singing to the heavenly daughter of Zeus, 60 Artemis, whose concern we are.

Hippolytus and Attendants
Lady, most revered lady, daughter of Zeus, welcome, Artemis, welcome, 65 daughter of Leto and Zeus, you who are the most beautiful by far among the virgins, and in mighty heaven you dwell in the richly-gilded palace of Zeus. 70 Welcome most beautiful, most beautiful throughout Olympus!

Hippolytus
73 For you this plaited garland [stephanos] culled from an unspoiled 74 meadow [leimōn], O my lady [= Artemis], do I [= Hippolytus] bring, arranging [kosmeîn] it properly. 75 It is from a place where it is not fit for the shepherd to pasture his flocks, 76 nor has iron yet come there, but it is unspoiled, 77 this meadow [leimōn], and the bee in springtime goes through and through. 78 The goddess named Modesty [Aidōs] tends this place with pure river water, 79 and those who do not have to be taught but by their own nature [phusis] 80 are endowed with moderation [sōphrosunē] always in all things, 81 they are allowed by divine sanction to pick flowers there, but it is not sanctioned [themis] for those who are bad. So, my lady near and dear [philē], for your golden locks of hair 83 accept this headband from my properly worshipful hand. 84 For I alone among mortals have this privilege [geras]: 85 I keep company with you and I exchange words with you, 86 hearing your voice though not looking you in the eye. 87 That is the same way I should go round the turning post, heading toward the end [telos] of life just as I began it.

Attendant [therapōn]
Lord, since we ought to call upon the gods as our lords, would you accept some well-meant advice from me?

Hippolytus
90 Surely, for otherwise I should not appear to be sophos.

Attendant
Do you know the law [nomos] which is established among mortals?

Hippolytus
I don’t know; but what are you getting at?

Attendant
The law is to hate what is proud and not philon to all.

Hippolytus
And rightly, too, for is not the proud among mortals oppressive?

**Attendant**

95 But there is a certain grace [kharis] in courtesy?

**Hippolytus**

Very much, and also profit with little cost.

**Attendant**

Do you think the same holds among the gods as well?

**Hippolytus**

I suppose so, since we mortals draw our laws [nomoi] from the gods.

**Attendant**

Why then do you neglect to address a proud daimōn?

**Hippolytus**

100 Whom do you mean? Watch that your tongue doesn’t trip.

**Attendant**

Kypris herself, who is stationed above your gates.

**Hippolytus**

I greet her from afar, since I am pure.

**Attendant**

Yet she is a holy goddess far renowned [epi-sēmos] on earth.

**Hippolytus**

No god who is miraculous by night pleases me.

**Attendant**

105 My son, we ought to avail ourselves of the tīmai which daimones confer.

**Hippolytus**

Each, among gods and humans alike, has his own concern.

**Attendant**

I wish you happiness [eudaimonia] and as much noos as you need.

**Hippolytus**

Go in, attendants, and within the house prepare food, since after the hunt 110 a full table is always a delight. You ought also to rub down the horses, so that I may yoke them to the chariot and give them proper exercise when I have had my fill, and to your goddess Kypris I bid a long farewell.

*Hippolytus goes into the palace, followed by all the attendants except the leader, who prays before the statue of Aphrodite.*

**Attendant**

Since we ought not to imitate the young, 115 with sober mind and as is fitting for a slave to speak, I will offer up my prayer to your image, mistress Kypris. You should have forgiveness for all, even for one who in the eager spirit of youth utters vain words against you; pretend that you don’t hear him, 120 since the gods must be more sophoi than mortals.
He goes into the palace. The chorus of Trozenian women enter.

Chorus

strophe 1

121–124 There is a rock that is said to drip fresh water from the stream of Okeanos, sending forth from the crags above a steady flow for us to scoop up in our jars. 125 It was there that my friend [philē] was washing 126 purple robes 127 in the flowing stream, washing them, and then, on the face of a rock warmed 129 by the kindly sunlight did she throw them. From there 130 the rumor first came to me about the lady of the house,

antistrophe 1

131–134 how she is wasting away on her sickbed, keeping herself indoors, and a thin veil shadows her blond head. 135 This is the third day, I hear, that her lips have not touched food, and she keeps her body pure from the grain of Demeter, 140 eager to hide her sorrow [penthos] and to put into the cheerless harbor of death.

strophe 2

Dear Phaedra, are you possessed either by Pan or Hekatē, or do you wander because of the devoted Korybantes or the mountain mother? 145 Have you committed an error offending Artemis of Diktynna, with her wild beasts, and are wasting for neglect of her unoffered sacrifices? For she ranges through the sea, as well as over the islands of the sea, 150 upon the watery eddies of the brine.

antistrophe 2

Or your husband, the well-born ruler of the sons of Erekhtheus, does someone in the palace cherish him in a union hidden from your bed? 155 Or has someone sailing from Crete reached the harbor most welcome to sailors, bringing a report to the queen, and in distress over her sufferings [pathos pl.] 160 her psūkhē is tied down to her bed?

epode

161 Often, in women’s badly modulated [dus-tropos] 162 tuning [harmoniā], a bad and wretched sort of helplessness [amēkhaniā] dwells, arising both from the pains of labor and from lack of sensibility [aphrosunē]. 164 Right through my womb I once felt a rush of this 166 burst of wind [aurā] here, and, calling upon the one who helps in the labor of childbirth, the one who is the sky-dweller, the one who has power over the arrows, I shouted out her name, Artemis, and she, very much sought after, always comes to me, if the gods are willing. 170 But look, the aged Nurse before the palace doors is bringing this one [Phaedra] from the palace, and on her [= Phaedra’s] brow a gloomy cloud gathers. 173 To know what on earth is happening—my soul [psūkhē] passionately desires [erāsthai] to know this. 174 Why has she become completely undone? 175 Why has the complexion of the queen turned so strangely pale?

The Nurse and Phaedra enter from the palace.

Nurse

The woes and the hateful illnesses of mortals! What shall I do? What not do? Here is your sunlight, here the bright air. Now outside of the palace 180 is your sickbed, for
your every word was to come here, but soon enough you will be eager for your bedroom again, since, taking pleasure in nothing, you will quickly become helpless. Whatever is present does not please you, but that which is absent you think more dear. It is better to be ill than to care for the ill, for one is a single trouble, but to the other is attached both heartsickness and labor with one’s hands. The whole of human life is full of pain, and there is no rest from trouble. Whatever is present does not please you, but that which is absent you think more dear.

It is better to be ill than to care for the ill, for one is a single trouble, but to the other is attached both heartsickness and labor with one’s hands. The whole of human life is full of pain, and there is no rest from trouble. But if there is anything more than life, darkness hides it in the clouds in its embrace, and we show ourselves to be wretchedly in love with that thing which glistens on the earth, because of inexperience of any other life, and the things which lie below the earth are unrevealed. On tales we vainly drift.

Phaedra
Lift my body, keep my head up. The fastenings of my dear limbs have come apart. Hold on to my shapely arms, attendants. My hair all done up on top of my head is a heavy load to bear. Take out my hair pinnings, let the curls of my hair cascade over my shoulders.

Nurse
Be brave, child, do not toss your body so harshly; you will bear your sickness more easily in peace and with noble will. It is necessary for mortals to suffer.

Phaedra
I only wish I could, from a dewy spring, scoop up a drink of pure water, and, lying down beneath the poplars in a grassy meadow, I could find relief.

Nurse
My child, what are you saying? Will you not say such things in public, casting out words borne on madness?

Phaedra
Take me to the mountains—I will go to the woods, to the pine trees, where the beast-killing hounds track their prey, getting closer and closer to the dappled deer. I swear by the gods, I have a passionate desire to give a hunter’s shout to the hounds, and, with my blond hair and all, to throw a Thessalian javelin, holding the barbed dart in my hand.

Nurse
Why on earth, my child, are you sick at heart about these things? Why is the hunt your concern? And why do you feel a passionate desire for streams flowing from craggy heights when nearby, next to these towers, there is a moist hillside with a fountain? You could get your drink from here.

Phaedra
My lady Artemis! You who preside over the lagoon by the sea! You are where the place is for exercising, and it thunders with horses’ hooves! Oh, if only I could be there, on your grounds, masterfully driving Venetian horses!

Nurse
Why in your madness have you hurled out of your mouth this wording here? One moment you were going up the mountain to hunt - you were getting all set, in your
longing [pothos], to do that, and then, the next moment, you were heading for the beach sheltered from the splashing waves, in your passionate desire [erâsthai] for the horses. These things are worth a lot of consultation with seers: which one of the gods is steering you off course and deflects your thinking [phrenes], child?

Phaedra
Wretched me, what have I done? Where have I strayed from good sense? I have gone mad and fallen by derangement [atē] from a daimōn. Woe is me! Nurse, cover my head again; I feel shame [aidōs] for what I have said. Hide me! Tears fall from my eyes, and for shame my face is turned away. Although it is painful to come to one’s senses, to be mad is evil; dying in ignorance rules.

Nurse
I cover you, but when will death cover my body? Long life teaches me much, that mortals ought to pledge themselves to moderate ties of philia, and not that which goes to the core of the psūkhē, easy to be loosed from one’s phrenes, either to be pushed away or drawn tight, since for one psūkhē to grieve for two is a heavy burden, just as I feel pain for her. To pursue a strict course in life, men say, causes disappointment more than pleasure and is more at odds with health. Therefore I recommend “Nothing in excess” more than “Too much.” And wise people [sophoi] will agree with me.

Chorus
Old woman, faithful nurse of our queen, we see the sorry plight of Phaedra, but her distress is a thing without a clue to us; we would like to learn and hear of it from you.

Nurse
I don’t know, although I question her, for she does not want to say.

Chorus
Not even what the source of these sorrows are?

Nurse
The answer is the same, since she is silent on all things.

Chorus
How weak and wasted her body is.

Nurse
Why not? It is the third day she has gone without food.

Chorus
Is it because of some derangement [atē], or is she trying to die?

Nurse
I don’t know, but surely fasting will lead to the end of her life.

Chorus
It is remarkable that this satisfies her husband.

Nurse
She hides her sorrow from him and says that she is not ill.
Can he not judge from seeing her face?

Nurse
He happens to be away from this country now.

Chorus
Why not press her, in an effort to learn her disease and the straying of her phrenes?

Nurse
I have tried everything and accomplished nothing. Yet not even now will I relax my zeal, so that if you stay, you too will witness how devoted I am by nature to an unhappy mistress. Come, philē child, let us both forget our former words, and you be more mild, smoothing your sullen brow and your current of thought, and I, if in some way I have not understood you, will change my way and will find some better course. If you are sick with ills that cannot be named, there are women here to set your sickness straight. But if your trouble can be made known to males, speak, so that it can be told to doctors. Come then, why so silent? You ought not to remain quiet, child, but scold me, if I say something amiss, or agree if these things are spoken well. One word, one look this way. Ah me! Women, we toil at these labors in vain, we are as far away as ever, for she was not softened by my arguments before, and now she is not persuaded either. Be more stubborn than the sea, but know that if you die you are a traitor to your sons, for they will not have a share of their father’s estate. By the horse-riding Amazon queen, who bore a son to be master to yours, a bastard, though he believes himself to be noble, you know him well: Hippolytus.

Phaedra
Oh! Oh!

Nurse
Does this touch you?

Phaedra
You destroy me, Nurse. By the gods, I beg you not to mention this man’s name again.

Nurse
There now. You are yourself, but although sensible, you still do not wish to help your children and save your life.

Phaedra
I love my children, but I am tossed by another storm of fate.

Nurse
Child, are your hands pure of bloodshed?

Phaedra
My hands are pure, it is my phrenes that are polluted.

Nurse
Through a wrong done by some enemy [ekhthros]?

Phaedra
One who is philos destroys me, one unwilling as myself.
Has Theseus wronged you somehow?

Phaedra
Never may I be seen doing him harm.

Nurse
Then what strange thing is it that drives you to your death?

Phaedra
Leave me alone to make my mistakes, since my error is not against you.

Nurse
Never willingly. But if I fail, it will be at your door.

Phaedra
What are you doing? Are you trying force in clasping my hand?

Nurse
Yes, and also your knees, nor will I loose my hold.

Phaedra
Alas, for you these things would also be evil, if you should learn them.

Nurse
What is a greater evil for me than failing to win you?

Phaedra
You would perish. But this matter brings me tīmē.

Nurse
Even so you conceal it, though what I beg to know is something good.

Phaedra
I do, since out of disgraceful things I am devising noble [esthla].

Nurse
By speaking of it, then you would appear with even more tīmē.

Phaedra
Go away, by the gods, and let go of my hand.

Nurse
I will not, since the gift which is mine you deny.

Phaedra
I will give it, since I feel respect [aidōs] for your reverent hand.

Nurse
From now on I will be quiet, and instead it will be for you to speak.

Phaedra
O, wretched mother, what a love was yours!

Nurse
Her love for the bull, child, is that what you mean?

Phaedra
And you, my wretched sister, wife of Dionysus!
Nurse
340 Child, what troubles you? Why do you speak ill of your family?

Phaedra
I am third to suffer, and in the same way I am also undone.

Nurse
I am amazed by you, where will this history lead?

Phaedra
Since long ago we are unfortunate, it is not new.

Nurse
I have learned nothing more of what I want to hear.

Phaedra
345 Ah, would that you could say what I have to tell!

Nurse
I am no prophet to judge for sure what is unclear.

Phaedra
What is it they mean when they talk of people being in love?

Nurse
At once the sweetest and bitterest thing, my child.

Phaedra
I will only find the latter half.

Nurse
350 What are you saying, my child? Are you in love with some man?

Phaedra
The Amazon’s son, whoever he may be.

Nurse
Hippolytus, you mean?

Phaedra
It was you, not I, that said his name.

Nurse
Ah me! What are you saying, my child? You destroy me. Women, this is unbearable, I cannot bear to live. 355 Hateful is the day, hateful the light I see. I give up this body, I will cast it off, and in dying I will cease from living. Farewell, I am no longer. Although unwilling, those who are balanced [sōphrones] have passions for evils. Kypris is no goddess, 360 but something far greater than a god, for she has been the ruin of this woman, and of me, and of this whole house.

Chorus
O, did you take note, did you hear our queen [turannos] crying out her unhappy and unheard-of suffering? Would that I might perish, philē, 365 before I reach your state of mind! O horrible woe for these miseries, and woe for the troubles [ponoi] on which mortals feed! You are destroyed, now that you have brought your evils to light. What awaits you during the hours of this day? 370 Some strange event will come to pass in
this house. There is no longer any clue [sēma] where your fortunes from Kypris will set, unhappy daughter of Crete.

**Phaedra**

Women of Trozen, who dwell here in the extreme front of Pelops’ land, 375 often before now in the long hours of the night I used to wonder why the life of mortals is spoiled. And it seems to me that it is not by the mind’s nature that they do wrong, for there are many who have good sense. We must view it in this light: 380 we understand and we can discern what is right, but we don’t always accomplish it, some from sloth, others from preferring pleasure of some kind or other to duty. There are many pleasures in life, long talks and leisure, a base enjoyment, 385 and aidōs, of which there are two kinds: one not evil, the other a curse to families. But if the proper time for each were clearly known, then these two would not have the same letters. So then, since I have made up my mind on these points, I am not about to change it because of some drug, 390 to reach a contrary point of view. And I will tell you, too, the way my judgment went. When love wounded me, I considered how I might bear it best. So from that day on, I began to hide in silence what I suffered. 395 For there is no trusting the tongue, or the alien thoughts of men who know how to admonish yet have countless miseries of their own. Next I strove to bear my folly nobly in an effort to master it by self-control [sōphroneîn]. 400 Finally when I failed by these means to subdue Kypris, it seemed best to die, and none could speak against my plan. For just as I would not have my good acts escape notice, so I would not have many to witness the disgraceful ones. 405 I knew the deed and the malady were of poor kleos, and in addition to these things I knew that I was a woman, an object of hate to all. Curses on the wife, whoever was the first to shame her marriage bed with other men. It was from noble families 410 that all this evil began to spread among women. For when shameful things appear right to those who are noble [esthloi], then surely it seems good to the kakoi as well. I hate those women who are moderate [sōphrones] when they talk, while in secret they carry on reckless deeds. 415 How then, lady Kypris, my mistress, do these women look their husbands in the face without fearing that the night, their accomplice, or the walls of the house may find a voice? It is this thing which causes me to die, philai, 420 so that I may never be found to disgrace my husband nor the children I bore. But let them grow up, free to speak and act, and let them dwell in glorious Athens, with good kleos from their mother. It would enslave a man, even one who was stouthearted, 425 if he should learn the evils of his mother or father. This alone they say can stand to compete in life: a good and just mind, in whomever these are found. For time reveals the kakoi among men, just as a mirror set before a young maid; 430 among these may I never be seen.

**Chorus**

Ah, how good equilibrium [sōphron] is, wherever it is found, which bears as fruit noble repute among mortals.

**Nurse**

Mistress, your misfortune, just now told, struck me at first with dreadful fear, 435 but now I consider that I was rash; among mortals second thoughts are somehow more sophoi. What you have suffered is not unusual nor unreasonable; the passion of Kypris has struck you. You are in love, what wonder? So are many more. 440 Do you then because of love destroy your psūkhē? There is little gain then for those who are in love and those yet to love, if they must die. For Kypris in her might is more than men can bear; peacefully she seeks those who are yielding, 445 but when she finds
someone arrogant and proud, she takes him and insults him unbelievably. Her path is in the sky and on the ocean’s surges; from her all nature springs. She is the one who sows the seeds of love and grants desire, 450 to which all of us on earth owe our being. Those who have writings of old, or who are themselves inspired by the Muses, know how Zeus once was in love with Semele, 455 and they know how once the beautiful, shining goddess of Dawn stole Kephalos to heaven because of love; and yet in heaven they still dwell and so do not avoid the god of love; they are content, I imagine, to yield to their misfortune. But you, why not yield? It ought to have been on special terms 460 that your father begat you, or with different gods for masters, if you will not content yourself with these laws. How many sensible people do you think, when they see their marriage-bed sullied, pretend they do not see? How many fathers, when their sons have gone astray, 465 assist them in love? Among the sophoi, unattractive things go unnoticed. Mortals should not excessively perfect their lives, for not even the roof with which a house is covered would you complete precisely. 470 Now since you have fallen into such a plight, how can you best escape it? If you have more good than misery, being human, you should be doing fairly well. Cease, philē child, from your evil thoughts. Cease having hubris, for it is nothing else but hubris, 475 your wish to be better than the daimones. Face your love, this is the god’s will. Though you are ailing, somehow turn your ill to good. There are charms and spells which soothe, some cure for your disease will be found, 480 but men would surely seek it out for a long time unless we women find the means.

Chorus
Phaedra, although she speaks more aptly in your present misfortune, still I praise [aineĩn] you; yet this praise [ainos] may sound more harsh to you 485 and more painful than her advice.

Phaedra
This is what destroys well-run cities and the homes of men, words too well put; we should not speak to please the ear but to find what leads to good kleos.

Nurse
490 Why do you make solemn speeches? It is not well-worded phrases that you need, but a man. Immediately he must learn and he should be frankly told. If you were not in such a crisis, or were in balance [sōphrōn], 495 never for the sake of the bed and its pleasures would I have urged you on this course; but now there is a great agōn to save your life, so this is not blameworthy.

Phaedra
What you propose evokes awe! Keep quiet and never utter those disgraceful words again.

Nurse
500 Disgraceful, maybe, but better for you than fine words. Better this deed, if it will save your life, than a mere name, which you take pride in and die for.

Phaedra
Oh, I beseech you by the gods! You speak well, but what you say is disgraceful. Go no further, since through my desire I am made ready in my psūkhē, 505 and if you should use specious words for these disgraceful matters, I will give way to the very thing I am trying to escape.

Nurse
If this is how it seems to you, it is best not to have erred; but as it is, hear me, for that is second best. I have in the house charms to soothe your love; I only just now thought of it. These will cure you of your malady, on no disgraceful terms and with your phrenes unhurt, if you will not be cowardly [kakē]. But from the one desired it is necessary to take some token, either a lock of hair or piece of clothing, and from the two to unite them as one pleasure [kharis].

Phaedra
Is your drug a salve or a potion?

Nurse
I cannot tell; be content, my child, to profit by it and ask no questions.

Phaedra
I am afraid that you will prove too sophē for me.

Nurse
You would be afraid of anything. But what scares you?

Phaedra
That you may indicate something to Theseus’ son.

Nurse
Leave it to me child, I will set everything aright.

Lady Kypris, my mistress, you alone be my accomplice. For the rest of my purpose it will be enough to speak to my philoi inside.

The Nurse goes into the palace.

Chorus

strophe 1

Love, Love, who drips desire upon the eyes, and brings sweet grace [kharis] into the psūkhē against whom he camps, never appear to me with evil, nor come without measure. Neither fire nor meteor hurls a mightier bolt than Aphrodite’s shaft shot by the hands of Love, the child of Zeus.

antistrophe 1

In vain by the banks of Alpheus, in vain within the Pythian shrines of Phoebus, does Hellas heap up slaughtered steers, while we neglect to worship Love, the turannos of men, who holds the key to Aphrodite’s sweetest chamber, but when he comes, he lays waste to mortals and casts them through all sorts of misfortune.

strophe 2

There was that maiden in Oikhalia, a filly unwed, a husbandless virgin still, whom, unyoking from Eurytos’ house like some running Naiad or Bacchant, amidst blood and smoke and murderous marital vows, Kypris gave as bride to Hēraklēs, the son of Alkmene. What a wretched wedding hymn!

antistrophe 2

O sacred walls of Thebes, O mouth of the fountain of Dirke, you could testify what course Kypris follows. For in an engulfing lightning-bolt she lay the mother of twice-born Dionysus to rest in murderous death, though she was still a bride.
Phaedra stands listening at the door of the palace.

**Phaedra**

565 Be quiet, women, I am undone.

**Chorus**

What is it, Phaedra, that scares you within the house?

**Phaedra**

Hold still, let me hear what they are saying inside.

**Chorus**

I am quiet. This is surely the prelude to evil.

**Phaedra**

570 Oh my! How awful are my sufferings ![pathos]!

**Chorus**

What cry do you make? What are you shouting? Say what frightens you, woman, overwhelming your ![phrenes].

**Phaedra**

575 I am destroyed. Stand here at the door and listen to the noise spreading through the house.

**Chorus**

You are by the door, it is for you to note the talk conveyed within the house. 580 Then tell me, tell me what evil has arisen.

**Phaedra**

It is the son of the horse-loving Amazon, Hippolytus, uttering terrible, evil words on my servant.

**Chorus**

585 I hear the cry, but I cannot tell clearly; it is through the door that the sound reached you.

**Phaedra**

Yes, yes, he plainly calls her a matchmaker of evil, 590 and says that she betrays her master’s bed.

**Chorus**

Woe is me for these evils! You are betrayed, ![philē]. What counsel will I give you? Your secrets have been revealed, you are utterly destroyed. 595 Alas, betrayed by a ![philos]!

**Phaedra**

She has destroyed me in speaking of my misfortune; it was meant kindly, since she was trying to cure my illness, but it was not right.

**Chorus**

What now? What will you do, having suffered ![paskhein] this state of helplessness ![amēkhania]?

**Phaedra**
I know but one way: to die as soon as possible, 600 this is the only cure for my present woes.

Hippolytus bursts out of the palace, followed closely by the nurse.

Hippolytus
O mother earth and sun’s expanse! What words unfit for speech I have heard!

Nurse
Be quiet, child, before someone hears your shouting.

Hippolytus
I cannot hear such awful words and keep quiet.

Nurse
605 I implore you by your strong right arm.

Hippolytus
Let go of my hand and don’t touch my clothes!

Nurse
By your knees I beg you, don’t destroy me utterly.

Hippolytus
Why, if, as you say, you have said nothing wrong?

Nurse
This tale [mūthos], child, was not for everyone to hear.

Hippolytus
610 Surely fair words are fairer when told to many.

Nurse
You would not dishonor your oath.

Hippolytus
My tongue did swear an oath, but not my phrenes.

Nurse
Child, what will you do? Destroy your philoi?

Hippolytus
No one without dikē is philos to me.

Nurse
615 Forgive, child; to err is human nature.

Hippolytus
Zeus, why did you set women to dwell in the light of the sun to be a false evil to the human race? If you wished to multiply the mortal race [genos], you need not accomplish it by means of women, 620 but instead in your temples mortals should lay down bronze or silver or a sum of gold to buy their sons, each man in proportion to his wealth, and so in independence they would live at home, free from women. 625 It is clear from the following how great an evil a woman is: the very father who begot and nurtured her then pays a dowry and settles her elsewhere to be rid of the trouble. 630 Then the husband who takes the plant of doom [atē] into his house happily lavishes a fine display on his sorry idol and struggles to keep her in dresses, poor
fellow, squandering his house’s wealth [olbos]. 635 It is easiest for him to have a cipher as a wife, except that a simple woman set up in a house is no benefit. 640 But it is the sophē woman I hate, for I would not have in my house a woman who knew more than she need, since Kypris breeds more mischief-making in sophai women, while the resourceless [amēkhanos] woman is kept from folly by her shallow intelligence. 645 It ought to be that servants have no access to women; wild beasts should live with them, who bite, not talk, so that they could not speak to anyone, nor be answered back by them. But as it is, evil women [kakai] plot evils within the house, 650 and their servants broadcast it outside. So you, kakē, have come to invite me to my father’s untouchable bed. I will wash away your words in running streams, dashing the water in my ears. How could I be so kakos, 655 when just hearing of it I feel myself polluted? Rest assured, woman, that it is my piety alone which saves you. For if I had not been taken unawares by oaths before the gods, I would not have been able to keep myself from telling all to my father. Now I will keep away from the house while Theseus is abroad, 660 and I will keep my tongue quiet. But when my father returns I will watch how you face him, both you and your mistress. May you perish! I can never satisfy my hatred for women, 665 even though some say that I always speak of it, for somehow they are always kakai. Either let someone prove them balanced [sōphrones], or let me still trample on them forever.

Hippolytus exits.

Phaedra
Oh, the cruel, unhappy fate of women! 670 What craft, what argument have we to untie the knot of a word, when we have slipped? I have met with dikē. O earth and light of day, how can I escape fate? How will I conceal my misfortunes, philai? 675 What god will appear to help me, what mortal will take my part or help me in unrighteousness? The present pathos moves across my life, and there is no escape. I am the most wretched of all women.

Chorus
680 Alas, it is done, your servant’s schemes have gone awry, mistress, and it bodes poorly.

Phaedra
Worst in all ways, destroyer of your philoi, what you have done to me! May Zeus, my ancestor, strike you with his bolt and uproot you utterly! 685 Didn’t I tell you, foreseeing your intent [phrenes], to keep quiet on the very matter which is now bringing me the name of kakē? But you would not be still, and thus I will not be buried with good kleos. Now I need to plan anew. In the keenness of his fury, 690 he will tell his father of my error and the aged Pittheus of my misfortune, and fill the whole land with stories to my great disgrace. May you perish, and whoever else is eager to do service for unwilling philoi in ways not good!

Nurse
695 Mistress, you may blame my bad works, for sorrow’s sting overpowers your judgment. Yet I can answer you in the face of this, if you will accept what I have to say. I raised you and have good noos for you, but in seeking to find a cure for your illness I found what I did not want. 700 Had I succeeded, I would have been considered sophē; for the credit we get for phrenes is measured by our success.

Phaedra
Are these things just [dikaia] or sufficient—to wound me and then come to terms in words?

**Nurse**
We dwell on this too long. I did not show moderation [sōphrosunē], 705 but it is still possible to be saved [sōzein] from your troubles, my child.

**Phaedra**
Be euphēmos! Even before you did not advise me well, and your attempted scheme was evil. Now get out of my way and see to your own affairs. I will take care of myself well enough.

_The nurse goes into the palace._

710 But you, noble daughters of Trozen, promise me what I ask: hide in silence what you have heard today.

**Chorus**
I swear, by holy Artemis, never to bring your woes to the light of day.

**Phaedra**
715 You have spoken well. But I, with all my thought, have only one remedy for my misfortune, so that I can give a life of kleos to my children and find myself some help as matters stand. I will never bring shame on my Cretan home, 720 nor will I, to save one poor psūkhē, face Theseus after my disgrace.

**Chorus**
What irreparable evil are you planning?

**Phaedra**
To die—but in what way I must still consider.

**Chorus**
Don’t speak ill-omened words.

**Phaedra**
You also advise me well. 725 Today I will gladden Kypris, my destroyer, by giving up my psūkhē, and so I will be vanquished by bitter love. But in dying I will be a misery to someone else, 730 that he may learn not to exult at my misfortunes; when he comes to share my suffering, he will learn to be moderate [sōphrōn].

_**Phaedra enters the palace.**_

**Chorus**
str 1

732 Oh if only I could be down under the steep heights in deep cavernous spaces, 733 where I could become a winged bird 734—a god would make me into that, and I would become one of a whole flock of birds in flight, yes, a god would make me that. 735 And if only I could then lift off in flight and fly away, soaring over the waves of the sea [pontos] 736 marked by the Adriatic headland, and then over the waters of the river Eridanos 738 where into the purple swirl comes 739 a cascade from unhappy girls in their grief for Phaethon,—a cascade of tears that pour down 741 their amber radiance.
Then to the apple-bearing headland of the Hesperides would I finally arrive, to the land of those singers of songs where the ruler of the sea, pontos, with its seething purple stretches of water, no longer gives a path for sailors to proceed any further, and there I would find the revered limit of the sky, which Atlas holds, and there the immortalizing ambrosiai spring waters flow right next to the place where Zeus goes to lie down, and where she who gives blessedness makes things grow. She is the most fertile one. She is the Earth, the one who makes the good blessing of superhuman powers keep growing for the gods.

strope 2

White-winged Cretan boat, which brought my queen through the roaring ocean waves from her prosperous home, to have the joy of a most kakos marriage; surely evil omens from either port were with that ship both from Crete, when she winged her way to glorious Athens, and when the crew made fast its twisted cable ends upon the beach of Mounikhos, and stepped out onto the land.

antistrophe 2

So it was that her phrenes were crushed by the cruel affliction of unholy passion sent by Aphrodite, and overwhelmed by bitter grief; she will tie a noose around her white neck from the rafters of her bridal chamber, since she feels aidōs for her hateful fate, and choosing instead the report of good reputation, she strives in this way to rid her phrenes of passion’s sting.

Within the palace.

Nurse
O, help! Come quick, help, whoever is near the palace—our mistress has hanged herself, Theseus’ wife!

Chorus
Alas, the deed is done. The royal woman is no more, she is hung in a dangling noose.

Nurse
Why don’t you hurry? Someone bring a two-edged knife to cut this from her neck.

Chorus
Philai, what shall we do? Do you think we should go into the house and loose the queen from the tight-drawn noose? Why should we? Aren’t there young menservants here? It is not safe in life to do too much.

Nurse
Lay out the sorry corpse, straighten the limbs; this was surely a bitter way to keep my master’s house.

Chorus
She is dead, poor lady, so it seems. Already they are laying out her corpse.

Theseus and his retinue have entered unnoticed.

Theseus
Women, can you tell me what the uproar in the palace means, since a mournful sound from the servants reached my hearing? None of my household thought it
worthwhile to open the palace gates in welcome to receive me, though I have just come from being a witness [theōros] to what the oracle said. Nothing has suddenly happened to old Pittheus? 795 He is well advanced in years, yet I would still be mournful should he leave this house.

Chorus
It is not the fate of the old which concerns you; it is the young whose death will bring you pain.

Theseus
Oh no! I am not robbed of the life of one of my children?

Chorus
800 They live; but cruelest of all for you, their mother is dead.

Theseus
What, my wife dead? By what fate?

Chorus
She fastened a strangling noose around her neck.

Theseus
Was she chilled by grief or some misfortune?

Chorus
I know only this, Theseus, for I have just arrived at your house 805 to express grief [penthos] over your misfortunes.

Theseus
Oh, why have I crowned my head with woven garlands when my being witness [theōros] to the oracle has meant such misfortune? Unbar the doors of the gates, servants, unloose their fastenings, so that I can see the bitter sight of my wife 810 whose death is death to me.

The doors of the palace open, revealing the corpse.

Chorus
Oh, how wretched are the woes that you suffered [paskhein]! What you have done is enough to overthrow this family. Ah, the daring of it! Dying violently and by unnatural means, 815 the desperate effort of your own poor hand. Who cast this shadow over your life, poor woman?

Theseus
Oh, I am full of pain. I have suffered [paskhein] the greatest of my miseries. Fate, how heavily you have settled on me and my house, 820 inflicting from some avenging god a nameless stain. It is the destruction of my life, making it unlivable. I see such a wide sea of troubles that I can never swim to shore again, nor get through the tide of my misfortune. 825 With what words will I come to address the fate of your deep suffering, poor wife? You are like a bird vanished from my hand, so swiftly did you leap from me to Hādēs. 830 Alas, this is surely a bitter, bitter sight. It must be a fate sent by the daimones for the errors of an ancestor, which I bring on myself from some far source.

Chorus
These sufferings [pathos pl.] do not come to you alone, lord; 835 you have lost a
cherished wife just like many others.

Theseus
Below the earth, below the darkness, in the shadow of death, I long to make my home, now that I am robbed of your most philē company. You have destroyed me more than yourself. 840 Where did it come from, the fatal stroke that reached your heart? Who will say what happened, or does the palace merely shelter a useless crowd of my servants? Your death is such grief to me, 845 such is the pain that I now see in my house, intolerable beyond words. I am ruined, my house is desolate, and my children orphaned. You have left us, left us, philē, best [aristē] of all women 850 who behold the light of the sun and the starry moon.

Chorus
Poor man, so great is the misfortune of your house. My eyes are wet with streams of tears to see your fate. 855 But the grief on top of this one has long been making me shudder.

Theseus
Look, what is this? There is some tablet here hanging from her philē wrist. Does it have something new to signal [sēmainein] for me? Surely she has written a message bidding me to care for our marriage and children. 860 Take heart, poor wife, no woman will come into the bed or house of Theseus as a wife. Seeing the stamp of my dead wife’s golden seal warms my heart; untwisting the seal 865 I will see what the tablet has to say.

Chorus
Alas, here is yet another evil in the succession which the god sends. Seeing what has happened, my life is no longer livable, 870 for I declare that the house of my turannoi is ruined; it no longer exists. O daimōn, if it be at all possible, I pray that you not overthrow the household! Hear me as I beseech you! For like a seer I see a bird-omen coming from something evil.

Theseus
O horror! Misfortune upon misfortune, 875 and still they come, too deep for words, too heavy to bear.

Chorus
What is it? Speak, if I may share in it.

Theseus
This letter cries out, it cries out insufferable things. Where can I flee this burden of woes? I am gone, destroyed. Such a song I have seen in this writing, 880 giving voice to horror.

Chorus
Your words reveal evils yet to come.

Theseus
I can no longer keep this accursed tale within the gateway of my lips, though it is cruel. Listen, polis of Trozen: 885 Hippolytus has dared to enter my bed by force, and so to treat without timē the august eye of Zeus. Therefore, Poseidon my father, of the three prayers which you once promised to me, answer one of them against my son: do not let him escape this day, 890 if in fact these prayers were truly offered.
Chorus
My lord, by the gods, I beg you to take back your words, for in future you will know your error. Believe me.

Theseus
It cannot be. Furthermore I will banish him from this land, so that he will be struck down by one of these two fates: 895 either Poseidon, out of respect for my prayer, will cast his dead body into the house of Hādēs; or, exiled from this land, wandering as a stranger, upon some foreign land he will live out his sorry life.

Chorus
Here comes your son Hippolytus now, just in time; 900 dismiss your evil anger, and consider what is best for your house.

Hippolytus enters.

Hippolytus
I have come with haste, father, since I heard your cry. I don’t know the reason for your call, but I would like to hear of it.

905 Ah! What is this? Your wife is dead. How strange this is. I only just left her, it was but a moment ago that she looked upon the light. How did she come to suffer [paskhein] this? In what way did she die? 910 Father, I want to learn of this from you. Do you still remain quiet? Silence does no good in a time of evils. 915 It is not just [dikaion] to conceal your misfortunes from your philoi, and even more than philoi, father.

Theseus
Humans, many are the errors you commit in vain. Why teach your countless crafts, why scheme and seek to find a way for everything, while one thing you don’t know nor have you made your own: 920 a way to teach those without noos to have phrenes.

Hippolytus
You speak of a very master in his craft, a man who can force to think well people who don’t think at all. But this is not the time to speak in subtleties, father; I fear your tongue runs wild because of your misery.

Theseus
925 There ought to be some token for people to test their philoi, a touchstone of their phrenes, for the ascertaining [diagnōsis] of which philos is true [alēthēs] and which is not; and everyone should have two voices, a just [dikaios] one in addition to whatever he should happen to have, 930 so that the honest voice could refute its opposite, and then we would not be deceived.

Hippolytus
Surely some philos who slanders me now holds your attention, so I am now accused, although guiltless. I am amazed, for your words astound me; 935 surely you are out of your phrenes.

Theseus
Oh, the phrēn of mortals, to what lengths it will go! What limit will its bold assurance have? If it goes on growing as man’s life advances, and if each successor outdoes his predecessor in villainy, 940 then it will be necessary for the gods to add another
sphere to the world, which will have room for the *kakoi* and not *dikaioi*. Look at this man, my own son, who has disgraced my bed 945 and is clearly proven to be most *kakos* by my dead wife. Since I am already polluted by you, look your father in the face. Are you the man who joins with the gods, as though superior? You are moderate [sōphrōn] and uncontaminated by evil? 950 I would not believe your claims and be guilty then of attributing ignorance to the gods. Go and boast now, advertise your psūkhē-less foods, and with Orpheus as your leader enjoy Bacchic revels in honor of those elusive writings. Now you are caught. 955 I warn everyone to avoid such men; they hunt with fine words and all the while are scheming villainy. She is dead; do you think that this will save you? By this you are condemned most of all, most *kakos*. 960 What oaths, what words are better than this letter, that might acquit you? You will say that she hated you, and that the bastard is by nature at odds with the freeborn. You would say then that she was a bad bargainer with her life, 965 if to satisfy her hate for you she lost what was most *phila* to her. And might you say that stupidity is not found in men but exists by nature in women? Yet young men in their prime are no more secure than women when Kypris stirs their *phrenes*, 970 but their male sex comes as a benefit to them. Yet why now do I struggle with words when the corpse that lies here is the surest witness? Begone from this land at once, and never set foot again in god-built Athens, 975 nor anywhere in the boundaries of my rule. If I submit to you, having suffered your outrage, then Sinis, the robber of the Isthmus, will no longer bear witness that I killed him but say that my boasts are idle; nor will the Skironian rocks, 8 which fringe the sea, 980 say what a burden I was to *kakoi*.

**Chorus**

I don’t think that I can call any mortal fortunate, for the first has turned and now is last.

**Hippolytus**

Father, your *menos* and the intensity of your *phrenes* are terrible. Although your arguments are well put, if one lays them bare, your charge is no good. I have little skill in speaking before a crowd; I am more *sophos* with my own contemporaries and small groups. But this is fate: those whom the *sophoi* dislike are more skilled in addressing a crowd. 990 Yet it is necessary in the present circumstance to break my silence. First I will speak of the point which you used at first to undermine me so that I might not respond. You see this sunlight and earth? There is no man here, 995 though you may now say otherwise, who is more moderate [sōphrōn] than I. First, I know how to reverence the gods, and to adopt as *philoi* those who do not attempt injustices, and who have aidōs of suggesting anything base or of returning kindness with disgrace. 1000 To mock my *philoi*, father, is not my way either: I am the same behind their backs as to their face. The crime in which you think to have caught me I am up to this moment untouched by, for my body is still pure of sexual love. I know nothing of its practice except what I have heard or seen in pictures. 1005 I am not even eager to look at these since my psūkhē is virginal. My moderation [sōphrosunē] may not persuade you; well then, it is necessary for you to show how I was corrupted. Was Phaedra the most beautiful woman? 1010 Or did I hope to have your house by taking your wife in marriage and so have your possessions? I would surely then have been a fool and out of my *phrenes*. Then will you say that being *turannos* is sweet to men who are balanced [sōphrones]? I say not, 1015 since monarchy is only pleasing to those whose *phrenes* are impure. I would rather be first at all the games [agōnes] in Hellas, but second in the *polis*, and in this way to enjoy always good fortune among my most noble *aristoi* *philoi*. There it is possible to be happy, and the absence of
danger 1020 gives a more powerful pleasure [kharis] than tyranny. There is one more thing I have not said, but the rest you have heard. If there were a witness to my worth, or if I were contesting Phaedra still alive, you would see who is evil by reviewing the facts. 1025 But as it is, I swear by Zeus, the god of oaths, and by the ground on which we stand, that I never touched your wife, nor would I wish to, nor would I conceive the thought. May I die without kleos and nameless, 1030 and let neither sea [pontos] nor land receive my flesh when I am dead, if I am a kakos man. I don’t know if she destroyed herself through fear, but more than this it is not lawful [themis] for me to say. She remained in balance [sōphrōn], although she was not balanced [sōphrōn] by nature; 1035 I am in balance [sōphrosunē], but I have not used it well.

Chorus
The oath you speak by the gods sufficiently refutes the charge; it is a strong pledge.

Theseus
Does he think he is some sorcerer or enchanter, to think he can first treat his father without tīmē, 1040 and then by his cool talk master my psūkhē?

Hippolytus
These same things amaze me in you too, father. For if you were my son and I your father, I would have killed you and not punished you with banishment, if you saw fit to lay hands on my wife.

Theseus
1045 Your remark is worthy of you. No, you will not die in this way that you pronounce for yourself, for a swift death is an easy end for wretchedness. Exiled from your fatherland, you will live out your miserable life wandering in a foreign land.

Hippolytus
1050 Oh, what will you do? Banish me without even waiting for the evidence of time on my behalf?

Theseus
Indeed, beyond the pontos, beyond the bounds of Atlas, if I could, so much do I despise the sight of you.

Hippolytus
1055 What! Banish me untried, without even testing my oath, the pledge I offer, the voice of seers?

Theseus
This letter here, though it bears no seers’ signs, denounces your pledges; as for birds that fly over head, I bid them a long farewell.

Hippolytus
1060 Oh gods, why don’t I unlock my lips, since I am ruined by you though I still reverence you? No, I won’t, since not even then would I persuade those whom I must, and in vain I would break the oath I swore.

Theseus
Your righteousness is more than I can bear. 1065 Get out of this land as soon as possible.
Hippolytus
Where, in my misery, can I turn? What house can I enter as guest [xenos], exiled on such a grave charge?

Theseus
Whoever enjoys receiving as guests [xenoi] corrupters of wives and partners in evil.

Hippolytus
1070 This wounds my heart and brings me close to tears, that I should appear so kakos and you believe me so.

Theseus
Your cries and forethought should have come before you dared to bring hubris to your father’s wife.

Hippolytus
Oh house! Would that you could find a voice 1075 to testify for me, if I were a kakos man.

Theseus
Wisely you run to a voiceless witness; this deed here is voiceless too, but it clearly proves your guilt.

Hippolytus
If only I could stand outside myself and look; then I would weep to see the evil I suffer [paskhein].

Theseus
1080 It is your character to honor yourself far more than your parents, as it would be right [dikaios] for you to do.

Hippolytus
Unhappy mother! Bitter birth! Let none of my philoi suffer to be born a bastard.

Theseus
Why don’t you drag him away, servants? 1085 Didn’t you hear me proclaim his exile long ago?

Hippolytus
Whoever lays a hand on me will regret it. If this is what your thūmos desires, force me from this land yourself.

Theseus
I will, if you don’t obey my words. I feel no pity come over me for your exile.

Hippolytus
1090 It is fixed then, so it seems. I am wretched, for although I know well these things here, I know no way to indicate them.

Most philē daimōn of all to me, daughter of Leto, partner and comrade in the chase, I am exiled from glorious Athens. Farewell, polis, and land of Erekhtheus; 1095 farewell, Trozen, you hold the many happinesses [eudaimoniai] of youth. Looking at you for the last time I bid farewell. Come, young men, companions of my country, greet me kindly and escort me from this land. 1100 Never will you behold another man so moderate [sōphrōn] as I am, even if I seem otherwise to my father.
Hippolytus exits with many followers. Theseus enters the palace.

Chorus

strope 1

When I consider how much the gods care for human beings, my grief is lessened, 1105 yet, though I cherish a hidden hope for some understanding, I fall short of it when I look at the fortunes and deeds of mortals. For change succeeds change, 1110 and man’s life is variable and ever shifting.

antistrophe 1

May fate grant me this prayer from the gods: good fortune followed by prosperity [olbos], and a thūmos free from pain. 1115 And let me not hold opinions which are too strict nor counterfeit [para-sēmos], but lightly changing my ways day by day, let me have good fortune throughout my life.

strope 2

1120 My phrenes are no longer clear, I see things which I never expected, since the bright star of Hellenic Athens 1125 I now see driven to a foreign land because of his father’s anger, O sands of the city’s shores, O mountain oaks where he used to hunt with his fleet hounds 1130 together with the goddess Diktynna.

antistrophe 2

No longer will he mount behind his yoke of Venetian steeds, filling the course around Limna with the sound of trained horses’ hooves. 1135 And the sleepless music below the strings of the lyre will cease in his father’s palace, and the resting places of Artemis will go without garlands throughout the deep green meadow. And by your exile the rivalry for your bridal bed among the unwed girls is lost.

epode

Meanwhile, with tears at your unhappy fate, I will live out my own sad destiny. Poor mother, 1145 who gave you life in vain, I rage at the gods. Linked Graces [Kharites], why do you send him from his homeland 1150 innocent of this ruinous damage [atē]? Look, I see an attendant of Hippolytus with a troubled expression hastening towards the palace.

A messenger enters.

Messenger

Women, where can I find the king of this land, Theseus? If you know, indicate [sēmainein] to me. 1155 Is he inside the palace?

Chorus

Here he is coming out of the palace now.

Theseus enters.

Messenger

Theseus, the news I bring is a matter of concern for you, and for the citizens who dwell in Athens and within the bounds of the land of Trozen.
What is it? Has some new calamity overtaken these two neighboring cities?

**Messenger**
Hippolytus is no more, to speak just a word [epos]; although he still sees the light of day, he is in a slender balance.

**Theseus**
At whose hands? Did some man come to blows with him, 1165 whose wife he disgraced by force, just as his father’s?

**Messenger**
It was his own chariot that killed him, and the curses that you uttered against him, when you prayed to your father Poseidon, lord of the pontos, to kill your son.

**Theseus**
O gods! Poseidon, you are truly my father, 1170 since you heard my curse! How did he perish? Tell me how the hammer of dikē fell on him for his crime against me.

**Messenger**
Hard by the wave-beaten shore we were combing out the horse’s manes, and we were weeping, 1175 for a messenger had come to say that Hippolytus was harshly exiled by you and would never set foot on this land again. Then Hippolytus himself came to us on the beach with the same tearful song, and with him was a countless throng of philoi, who followed after. 1180 In time he stopped his lament and spoke: “Why do I grieve over this when my father’s words must be obeyed? Servants, harness my horses to the chariot, for this polis is no longer mine.” 1185 Thereupon each one of us hastened, and faster than you could say, the horses were readied and standing by our master’s side. Then he caught up the reins from the chariot rail while fitting his feet into place. 1190 But first with outspread hands he called on the gods: “Zeus, let me live no longer if I am kakos, and let my father learn how he treats me without tīmē once I am dead, if not when I still see the light.” By now he had taken up the whip and goaded the horses, 1195 while we attendants, near the reins, kept up with him along the road that leads straight to Argos and Epidauros. Just as we were coming to a lonely spot, a strip of sand beyond the borders of this country, 1200 sloping right to the Saronic gulf, there came a rumbling sound from the earth, like the thunder of Zeus, and a deep roar issued forth that was horrible to hear; the horses raised their heads up to heaven and pricked their ears, and among us there was wild fear to know the source of the sound. 1205 Then, as we gazed toward the wave-beaten shore, we saw a tremendous wave reaching to heaven, so that from our view the cliffs of Skiron vanished, for it hid the Isthmus and the rocks of Asklepios. 1210 The wave swelled and frothed with a crest of foam, and from the raging sea it made its way to shore where the four-horse chariot was. And in the moment that the mighty wave broke, it issued forth a wild bull, 1215 whose bellowing filled the whole land with frightful echoes, a sight too awful, as it seemed to us who witnessed it. A terrible panic seized the horses at once, but our master, who was quite used to the horses’ ways, 1220 pulled back as a sailor pulls on an oar, leaning back on the reins with all of his weight; but the horses biting into the forged bits with their jaws wildly bore him on, regardless of their master’s guiding hand or rein or jointed car. Whenever he would take the reins and steer for softer ground, the bull would appear in front to turn him back again, making his horses mad with terror, 1230 but if in their frantic rage they ran toward the rocks, the bull would draw near the chariot rail, keeping up with them, until, suddenly dashing the wheel against a stone, he overturned and wrecked the car. Then
there was confusion everywhere, 1235 wheel naves and axle pins were thrown into the air, while poor Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, was dragged along, bound by a stubborn knot, his own head dashed against the rocks, his flesh torn while he cried out terribly: 1240 “Horses reared in my own stables, stop; don’t wipe me out! Father, your pitiless curse! Is there anyone who will save a most noble [aristos] man?” Many of us wanted to help, but we were left behind. At last he got himself free 1245 and fell from the knot of the reins, I don’t know how, and there was still a faint breath of life in him; but the horses disappeared, and that portentous bull, over the rocky ground, I can’t say where. I am just a slave in your house, lord, 1250 and yet I will never be able to believe that your son is kakos, not even if the whole race [genos] of women should hang themselves, or if someone should fill with writing every pine tree grown on Mount Ida. I know that Hippolytus is noble [esthlos].

Chorus 1255 Alas, a misfortune of new evils is accomplished; there is no escape from fate and necessity.

Theseus In my hatred for the man who suffered [paskhein] these things, at first I was glad at your words, but now because of respect [aidōs] for the gods and for him, since he is my son, 1260 I feel neither joy nor sorrow at his woes.

Messenger What then? Do we bring him here? What should we do to please your phrēn? Consider this, if you will take my advice: don’t be harsh to your son in his sorry state.

Theseus 1265 Bring him here, so that I can see him with my own eyes and condemn him with words and with this misfortune from the daimones, since he has denied that he abused my wife.

The messenger exits.

Chorus Kypris, you guide the unyielding phrenes of gods and mortals, together with Love, 1270 who on painted wing embraces his victims in swift flight. He flies over the land and over the resounding salty sea [pontos], on golden wings, 1275 maddening the hearts and beguiling the senses of all whom he attacks: mountain-bred cubs, creatures of the sea, and whomever else the earth nourishes under the light of the sun, including men. 1280 Kypris, you alone have this royal tīmē, to rule them all together.

Artemis herself appears.

Artemis Noble son of Aegeus, I bid you listen; 1285 it is I, Artemis, the daughter of Leto, who speaks. Theseus, why, poor man, do you rejoice over this news, when you have killed your own son impiously, believing in the false tales [mūthoi] of your wife though they were unproven? Clear now is your ruin [atē]from this. 1290 Why do you not hide your body in disgrace in the blackness below the earth, or trading this life for wings take off and fly away from your misery? Among agathoi men 1295 you now have no share in life. Listen, Theseus, to the state of your misfortune. Although it can do no good, still I wish to pain you, for I came with this intent: to show you your son’s just phrenes so
that he might die with good *kleos*, 1300 and also the mad passion and, in some sense, the nobleness of your wife. For she was cruelly stung with a passion for your son by that goddess who is most hostile to those who take pleasure in virginity. Though she tried to conquer her passion by resolution, 1305 nevertheless she fell, thanks to the schemes of her nurse, who against her will revealed [*sēmainein*] her malady to your son under oath. But he would have none of her advice, as was right [*dikaios*], and not even when you abused him did he take back his oath, for he was pious. 1310 But Phaedra, in fear of being found out, wrote that deceitful note and destroyed your son by guile, though you believed her.

**Theseus**

Oh no!

**Artemis**

Does my story [*mūthos*] hurt you? Be quiet a little longer; hear what follows so that you can lament even more. 1315 Do you know those three prayers from your father which have certain result? You have now used one of them pitifully on your own son instead of against some enemy. Your father of the sea [*pontos*] meant kindly, but he granted what was necessary, since he had promised. 1320 Now you have shown yourself to be *kakos* both to him and me, since you would not wait for proof or the utterances of seers; you did not make inquiries nor did you take time for consideration, but with undue haste you cast curses against your son and killed him.

**Theseus**

1325 Goddess, let me die.

**Artemis**

You have done an awful thing, yet it is still possible for you to have forgiveness even for this. For it was Kypris who willed these things to be, in order to satisfy her own *thūmos*. This is law amongst the gods: none is allowed to oppose the will of another, 1330 but we stand ever aloof. Know well that if I did not fear Zeus, I would never have come to the disgrace of allowing the man most *philos* to me of all mortals to die. 1335 As for your mistake, in the first place your ignorance absolves you of its being evil, but also that your wife, when she died, was lavish in her use of arguments to persuade your *phrenes*. On you especially these misfortunes burst, but they are grievous to me as well. The gods take no pleasure when the righteous die, 1340 but the *kakoi* we destroy utterly, their children and their homes.

**Chorus**

Look, here he comes now, poor thing, his youthful skin and fair head shamefully abused. Oh, the pain [*ponos*] of the household, 1345 what twofold sorrow [*penthos*] has fallen on your halls from the gods!

*Hippolytus enters, carried by his attendants.*

**Hippolytus**

Oh, I am wretched, I have been undone by the unjust [*a-dikos*] curses of my unjust [*a-dikos*] father. 1350 I am thoroughly destroyed. Pains shoot through my head, and there is a throbbing against my brain. Enough, let me give up my body. 1355 Pitiful horses, nourished by my own hand, you are my ruin and my death. By the gods, servants, handle my wounded flesh gently. 1360 Who is standing on my right side? Support me carefully and lead me steadily, with a evil *daimōn* and cursed by my mistaken father. Zeus, do you see these things? I am your reverent worshipper, 1365
the man who surpasses everyone in moderation [sōphrosunē]; now I am on my way to Hādēs, and my life is completely lost; in vain did I struggle to respect men piously. 1370 Oh, oh, the pain is on me, let me go, wretched as I am, and let death come to me. Kill me at last and end my sufferings. 1375 I want a two-edged sword to cut with and to lay down my life. Wretched curse of my father! The crimes of bloody kinsmen, 1380 ancestors of old, now come forth without delay and are upon me. But why, since I am not guilty [aitios] of any evil? 1385 How will I give up my life without suffering [pathos]? I wish dark Hādēs, lord of the night, would lay me in my misery to rest.

**Artemis**
Poor boy, you are yoked to such misfortune! 1390 The nobility of your phrenes has destroyed you.

**Hippolytus**
O, the divine scent! Even in my misery I sense you and feel relief; she is here, in this very place, my goddess Artemis.

**Artemis**
She is, poor boy, the goddess most philē to you.

**Hippolytus**
1395 You see me, my mistress, in my suffering?

**Artemis**
I see you, but it is not themis for me to shed a tear.

**Hippolytus**
There is none to lead the hunt or serve you.

**Artemis**
None now, yet even in death I love you still.

**Hippolytus**
There is none to groom your horses nor be the guardian of your image.

**Artemis**
1400 It was Kypris who devised this evil.

**Hippolytus**
Ah! Now I know the daimōn who has destroyed me.

**Artemis**
She was jealous of her slighted tīmē and angered by your sōphrosunē.

**Hippolytus**
One, I see, has destroyed three.

**Artemis**
Yes, your father, you, and third, your father’s wife.

**Hippolytus**
1405 Then I mourn the bad luck of my father also.

**Artemis**
He was deceived by the plotting of the daimōn.
Hippolytus
O father, the misery of your misfortune!

Theseus
I am ruined, son, life holds no pleasure [kharis] for me.

Hippolytus
I mourn for you, in your mistake, more than for myself.

Theseus
1410 If I could I would die in your place, my son.

Hippolytus
The gifts from your father Poseidon are bitter.

Theseus
I wish my lips had never spoken those words.

Hippolytus
But why? You would have killed me anyway, so enraged were you then.

Theseus
Because of the gods I was mistaken in my resolve.

Hippolytus
1415 Would that the race [genos] of mortals were a curse to the daimones.

Artemis
Enough! Even when you are under the dark of the earth, the wrath of the goddess Kypris will not, despite her zeal, fall on you unavenged. I give you this as recompense [kharis] for your noble and righteous phrēn. 1420 By my own hand and with these unerring arrows I will take vengeance against whichever mortal is most philos to her. 1423 To you, poor sufferer, in compensation for these bad things that have happened to you here, 1424 the greatest honors [tīmai] in the city [polis] of Trozen 1425 I will give to you: unwed girls before they get married 1426 will cut off their hair for you, and throughout the length of time [aiōn] 1427 you will harvest the very great sorrows [penthos plural] of their tears. 1428 And for all time there will be a thought that comes along with the songmaking directed at you by virgin girls, 1429 and it will be a troubled thought. The story and the names will not fall aside unremembered - the story of the passionate love [erōs] of Phaedra for you. No, it will never be passed over in silence. You, son of old Aegeus, take your son in your arms and embrace him, since you have destroyed him against your will. Human beings are bound to commit wrongs when the gods put it in their way. 1435 And Hippolytus, I warn you not to hate your father, for in this death you meet your own fate. Now farewell, since it is not themis for me to look on the dying and to pollute my eyes with the last gasps of death; already I see that you are full of this evil.

Artemis vanishes.

Hippolytus
1440 Farewell, blessed [olbia] virgin, go now! How easily you leave behind our long association! As you wish, I let go of the quarrel with my father, for even before I used to obey your wishes. Already the darkness is settling on my eyes. 1445 Take me, father, and make straight my body.
Theseus
O my son, what are you doing to me, ill-fated as I am?

Hippolytus
I am lost, even now I see the gates of death.

Theseus
Do you leave me behind with stained hands?

Hippolytus
No, no, I free you of my murder.

Theseus 1450 What are you saying? You release me from your bloodshed?

Hippolytus
Artemis, mistress of the bow, I call as my witness.

Theseus
Most philos, how noble you show yourself to be to your father.

Hippolytus
Farewell to you, a long farewell, father.

Theseus
Alas for your reverent and noble phrēn!

Hippolytus
1455 Pray that your lawful sons are such men.

Theseus
Don’t leave me, son, be strong.

Hippolytus
I have no more strength. I am gone, father; cover my face quickly with my robe.

Theseus
Glorious Athens, land of Athena, 1460 what a man you have lost! Often I will recall your evils, Kypris.

Chorus
This shared akhos has come unexpectedly on all our citizens. There will be a great shower of tears, 1465 for reports worthy of penthos about great men have a strong hold upon us.

Notes
[back 1. The metaphor is that women are like a stringed instrument, in need of tuning [harmonia] or balance.

[back 2. Phaedra’s mother was Pasiphae, wife of King Minos of Crete and mother of the Minotaur, a creature half-man and half-bull.

[back 3. Phaedra’s sister was Ariadne, who ran away with Theseus after helping him kill the Minotaur in the labyrinth. When Theseus abandoned her on Naxos, she was
rescued by Dionysus. In another version, she was already the wife of Dionysus, and Artemis killed her for running away with Theseus.

[back] 4. To win Iole, daughter of Eurytos, Hēraklēs destroyed her city and killed her family.

[back] 5. The word *euphēmos* means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[back] 6. Phaethon was the son of Helios, the sun. He lost control of his father’s chariot, so Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt.


[back] 8. Skiron used to hurl his victims off the cliffs that received his name after he was killed by Theseus.

2017-12-18