Troyen and Athens in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*: Myth, Politics, and Liminality

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(all translations Kovacs 1995, with adjustments)

HIPPOLYTUS. For you, lady, I bring this plaited garland I have made, gathered from a virgin meadow, a place where the shepherd does not dare to pasture his flocks, where the iron scythe has never come: no, virgin it is, and the bee makes its way through it in the springtime. Reverence tends it with streams of river water, for those to pluck who owe nothing to teaching but in whose very nature chastity in all things alike has won its place: the base may not gather. So, dear lady, take this coronal for your golden hair from a worshipful hand. I alone of mortals have this privilege: I spend my days with you and speak with you, I hear your voice but never see your face. May I end life’s race even as I began it!

ARTEMIS. To you, unhappy man, I shall grant, in recompense for these sorrows, supreme honors in the land of Troyen. Unmarried girls before their marriage will cut their hair for you, and over the length of ages you will harvest the deep mourning of their tears. The practiced skill of poetry sung by maidens will for ever make you its theme, and Phaedra’s love for you shall not fall nameless and unsung.

APHRODITE. Before she came to this land of Troyen, she built, next to the rock of Pallas, a temple to Cypris overlooking this land since she loved a foreign love. After ages shall name the goddess’ shrine for Hippolytus.
Φα. ἡμᾶς γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸν θυσίαν ἀποκτεῖναι, φίλαι, ὡς χάριν ἀνόδρα τὸν ἐμὸν αἰσχύνας' ἀλῶ, μὴ παίδες οὐς ἑτοῖμον ἄλλη ἐλευθεροὶ παρρησίαι δῆλλοντες οἴκοις πόλιν κλεινὸν Ἀθηνῶν, μητρὸς οὐνεκ' εὐκλεῖες.

Χο. ἡ πόσιν, τὸν Ἐρεχθείδαν ἁγγάγον, τὸν εὐπατρίδαν, ποιμαίνει τις ἐν οἶκοις κρυπτὰ κοίται λεχέων σῶν; (151-54)

Χο. ὅλομένους γάρ, οὐκέτ’ ὄντας, λέγω, φεῦ, φεῦ, τὸν ἐμὸν τυράννων δόμους. (869-70)

Αγ. ποῦ ἡν ἀνακτα τήσερε Θησέα μολὼν εὐρομί᾽ ἂν, ὁ γυναῖκες; (1153-54)

Θη. τόδε μὲν οὐκέτι στόματος ἐν πύλαις καθέξω δυσεκπέρατον όλον κακόν· ἵπ πόλις. (882-84)

Θησεύς, μερίμνης ἄξιον φέρω λόγον σοι καὶ πολίταις σι τ’ Ἀθηναίων πόλιν ναιοσει καὶ γῆς τέρμονας Τροζηνίας. (1157-59)

PHAEDRA. My friends, it is this very purpose that is bringing about my death, that I may not be convicted of bringing shame to my husband or to the children I gave birth to but rather that they may live in glorious Athens as free men, free of speech and flourishing, enjoying good repute where their mother is concerned.

ΧΟΡΟΣ. Or is it your husband, the nobly born king of Erechtheus’ folk? Does some other woman rule his passion, someone in the palace, making secret love to him apart from your bed?

ΜΕΣΣΕΝΙΟΡ. Women, where must I go to find Theseus, this land’s king?

ΘΗΣΕΥΣ. Go forth from this land at once into exile, and come no more either to god-built Athens or to the borders of any land ruled by my spear!

ΧΟΡΟΣ. For I say that the house of my king has perished, ah me, is no more.

ΜΕΣΣΕΝΙΟΡ. Theseus, I bring you news that will cause solicitude to you and all the citizens who dwell in Athens and in the land of Trozen.
Θη. τί δ' ἐστι; μόν τις συμφορὰ νεώτερα
dίσος κατείληφ' ἀστυγείτονας πόλεις;
(1160-61)

Θη. ἀδελφίν' Ἀφαίας Παλλάδος θ' ὀρίσματα,
οἷον στερήσεσθ' ἀνδρός.
(1459-60)

6. Θη. ἐπεὶ δὲ Θησεύς Κεκρόπιαν λείπει χθόνα
μίασμα φεύγων ἀἵματος Παλλαντίδων
καὶ τήνδε σὺν δάματι ναυτολεί χθόνα
ἐνιαυσίαν ἐκδήμου αἰνέσας φυγήν...
(34-37)

Αφ. ἐρόσ' ἐρωτ' ἐκδήμοιν...
(32)

Αφ. ὁ γὰρ με Θησέως παῖς, Ἀμαζόνος τόκος,
Ἱππόλυτος, ἄγνωστος Πιτθεοῦ παιδεύματι,
μόνος πολίτην τήσδε γῆς Τροζηνίας
λέγει κακίστην δαιμόνων πεφυκέναι.
(10-13)

Φα. Τροζηνίαι γυναίκες, αἱ τόδ' ἐσχάτων
οἰκεῖτε χώραις Πελοπίας προνύστων,
ηδὸν ποτ' ἄλλως νυκτὸς ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ
θνητῶν ἐφρόντισ' ἢ διέφθαρται βίος.
(373-76)

THESEUS. What is it? Has some recent
disaster befallen the two neighboring
cities?

THESEUS. Glorious territory of
Erechtheus and Pallas, what a man you
will be bereft of!

THESEUS. But Theseus left the land of Cecrops,
fleeing the blood guilt he incurred for the murder of
the Pallantidae, and sailed with his wife to this land,
consenting to a year-long exile from his home.

APHRODITE. ...since she loved a foreign love...

APHRODITE. Theseus’ son Hippolytus, offspring
of the Amazon woman and ward of holy Pittheus,
alone among the citizens of this land of Trozen,
says that I am the worst of deities.

PHAEDRA. Women of Trozen, dwellers in this
outermost forecourt to the land of Pelops, I have
pondered before now in other circumstances in the
night’s long watches how it is that the lives of
mortals have been ruined.
Bibliography


