

Phaedra Main Text

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SENECA, PHAEDRA SENECA THE YOUNGER was a Latin playwright and philosopher who flourished in Rome in the late C1st A.D. during the reigns of the emperors Claudius and Nero. His surviving work includes ten tragedy plays, nine of which are based on mythological themes. His authorship of Hercules Oetaeus and Octavia is uncertain. Seneca. Tragedies . Translated by Miller, Frank Justus. Loeb Classical Library Volumes. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1917. The Miller translations of Seneca's tragedies are no longer in print having been replaced in the Loeb Classical Library series by those of John Finch. These are available new from Amazon.com (see left below for details). In addition to the translation of the plays, the two volumes contain the source Latin texts, Miller's introduction and footnotes and an index of proper names. PHAEDRA, TRANSLATED BY FRANK JUSTUS MILLER DRAMATIS PERSONAE HIPPOLYTUS, son of Theseus and Antiope, an Amazon. PHAEDRA, wife of Theseus and stepmother of Hippolytus. THESEUS, king of Athens. NURSE of Phaedra. MESSENGER SLAVES AND ATTENDANTS CHORUS of Athenian citizens. THE SCENE is laid throughout the court in front of the royal palace at Athens, and the action is confined to the space of one day. ARGUMENT Theseus had wed Antiope, the Amazons, and of their union had been born Hippolytus. This youth grew up to love the chase, austere and beautiful, shunning the haunts of men and scorning the love of women. Theseus had meanwhile slain Antiope, and married Phaedra, Cretan Minos' child. And now, for four years past, the king has not been seen upon the earth, for, following the mad adventure of his bosom friend, Pirithoüs, he has descended into Tartarus to help him steal away its queen, and thence, men think, he will never return.

Deserted by her lord, the hapless Phaedra has conceived a hopeless passion for Hippolytus; for Venus mindful of her old armour with Mars, which Phaedra's ancestor, Apollo [Phoebus or Sol the Sun], had exposed, has sent this madness on her, even as Pasiphaë, her mother, had been cursed with a most mad and fatal malady. HIPPOLYTUS [In the early morning, in the palace court at Athens. Enter HIPPOLYTUS with a large company of huntsmen armed with the various weapons of the hunt, and leading numerous dogs in leash. HIPPOLYTUS proceeds to assign the various tasks of the day to his followers.] [1] Go, girdle the shadowy woods and the topmost ridges of the mount, ye sons of Cecrops! With nimble feet wide wandering, scour the coverts that lie 'neath rocky Parnes and in the vale of Thria, whose swift-flowing stream lashes its

banks; climb the hills ever white with Rhipean snow. Here, here let others hie, where the all alder-thickets fringe the grove, where meadows lie which Zephyr soothes with his dew-laden breath and calls forth the herbage of the spring, where scant Ilissos flows sluggishly along through meagre fields and with ungenerous stream creeps o'er unfruitful sands.

[17] Go ye by the left path where Marathon opens out her forest glades, where with their small following the suckling mothers seek nightly forage; and ye, where rugged Acharneus tempers his frosts beneath the warm south-wind. [23] Let one tread sweet Hymettus' cliff, another, small Aphidnae; too long unharried is that spot where Sunium thrusts out the shores of the curving sea. If any feels the lure of the forest, Phlye calls for him; there is the haunt of the boar, terror of husbandmen, famed by now for many a wound. [31] But do you cast off the leashes from the dogs that hunt in silence; still let thongs hold the keen Molossians fast, and let the savage Cretans tug on the stout bonds with well-worn necks. But the Spartans (for their breed is bold and eager for the prey) hold in carefully with a tighter knot. The time will come when the hollow rocks will re-echo with their bayings; now, with heads low-hung, let them snuff the air with keen nostrils, and with muzzles to earth quest through the forest haunts, while the light is still dim, while the dewy ground still retains the well-marked trail.

[44] Let some of you make speed to load your necks with the heavy, wide-meshed nets, and others, with the smooth-wrought snares. Let a line decked out with crimson feathers hedge the deer with empty terror. Thou shalt brandish the dart, thou with right and left hand together hurl the heavy oak-shaft with broad iron head; do thou lie in hiding and with shouts drive the game on the headlong rush; and thou, when victory is won, shalt free flesh from hide with thy curved hunting-knife. [54] And do thou be with thy follower, O manlike goddess,¹ for whose sovereignty earth's secret places are reserved, whose darts with unerring aim seek out the prey which drinks the cool Araxes or sports on Ister's frozen streams. Thy hand aims at Gaetulian lions, thine at Cretan deer; and now with lighter stroke dost thou pierce swift-fleeing does. The striped tigers face thee, but the shaggy-backed bisons flee, and the wild ox with wide-spreading horns. All things that feed in the lonely fields, whether the Arabian knows them in his rich forests, or the needy Garamantian and the wandering Sarmatian on his desert plains, whatever the heights of the rough Pyrenees or the Hyrcanian glades conceal, all fear thy bow, Diana. If, his offerings paid, thy worshipper takes thy favour with him to the glades, his nets hold the tangled prey, no feet break through his snares; his game is brought in on groaning wains, his hounds have their muzzles red with blood, and all the rustic throng come home in long triumphant line. [81] Lo, goddess, thou dost hear me: the shrill-tongued hounds have given the sign. I am summoned to the woods. Here, here I'll hasten by the shortest way. [Exuent.] [Enter PHAEDRA, from the palace.] PHAEDRA [85] O mighty Crete, the vast sea's

mistress, whose countless vessels along every coast have held the deep, yea, whatever, lands, e'en to Assyria, making path for the prows of ships, old Nereus cleaves – why dost thou force me here, given o'er to an enemy's house as hostage, wife to my foe, to spend my days in wretchedness and weeping? Behold, fled is my lord afar and keeps his bridal oath as is the wont of Theseus. Through the deep shades of the pool which none recrosses is he faring, this brave recruit of a madcap suitor,² that from the very throne of the infernal king he may rob and bear away his wife. He hurries on, a partner in mad folly; him nor fear nor shame held back. And there

in the depths of Acheron he seeks adultery and an unlawful bed, this father of Hippolytus.³

[99] But another, greater smart burdens my woeful breast. No rest by night, no deep slumber frees me from care. A malady feeds and grows within my heart, and it burns there hot as the stream that wells from Aetna's caverns. Pallas' loom stands idle and my task slips from my listless hands; no longer it pleases me to deck the temples with votive offerings, nor at the altars, midst bands of Athenian dames, to wave torches in witness of the silent rites, nor with pure prayers and pious worship to approach the goddess⁴ who guards the land once granted to her! My joy is to follow in pursuit of the startled beasts and with soft hand to hurl stiff javelins. [112] Whither, my soul, art tending? Why this mad love of forest glades? I recognize my wretched mother's fatal curse⁵; her love and mine know how to sin in forest depths. Mother, my heart aches for thee; swept away by ill unspeakable, thou didst boldly love the wild leader of the savage herd. Fierce was he and impatient of the yoke, lawless in love, leader of an untamed herd; yet he did love something. But as for me, what god, what Daedalus could ease my wretched passion? Though he himself⁶ should return, mighty in Attic cunning, who shut our monster in the dark labyrinth, he could afford no help to my calamity. Venus, detesting the offspring of the hated Sun, is avenging through us the chains that bound her to her loved Mars, and loads the whole race of Phoebus with shame unspeakable. No daughter of Minos' house hath found love's bondage light; ever 'tis linked with guilt. NURSE [129] O wife of Theseus, illustrious child of Jove, quickly drive guilty thoughts from thy pure breast, put out these fires, nor show thyself obedient to this dread hope of love. Whoever at the outset has resisted and routed love, has been safe and conqueror; but whoso by dalliance has fed the sweet torment, too late refuses to bear the accepted yoke. [136] I know how the stubborn pride of princes, ill brooking truth, refuses to be bent to righteousness; but whatever outcome fate shall give I am ready to endure; freedom near at hand makes the aged brave.

[140] Best is the upright purpose and the unswerving path; next is the shame, that knows some measure in transgressing. To what end art thou hasting, wretched woman? Why heap fresh infamy upon thy house and outsin thy mother? Impious sin is worse than monstrous

passion; for monstrous love thou mayst impute to fate, but crime, to character. If, because thy husband sees not the realms of earth, thou dost believe thy guilt safe and devoid of fear, thou erre'st. Suppose that Theseus is indeed held fast, hidden away in Lethean depths, and must suffer the Styx eternally; what of him, thy father, who holds the seas under his wide dominion and gives law to a hundred⁷ peoples? Will he permit so great a crime to lie concealed? Shrewd is the care of fathers. Yet suppose that by craft and guile we do hide this great wickedness from him; what of him who sheds his light on all things, thy mother's sire?⁸ What of him who makes the heavens rocks, brandishing Aetnean bolts in his glittering hand, the father of the gods? Dost believe thou canst so sin as to escape the all-seeing eyes of both thy grandsires? [159] But grant that heaven's kindly grace conceals this impious intercourse; grant that to incest be shown the loyalty which great crimes never find; what of the ever-present penalty, the soul's conscious dread, and the heart filled with crime and fearful of itself? Some women have sinned with safety, but none with peace of soul. Then quench the fires of impious love, I pray, and shun a deed which no barbaric land has ever done, neither the Getae, wandering on their plains, nor the inhospitable Taurians, nor scattered Scythians. Drive this hideous purpose from thy chaste mind, and, remembering thy mother, shun strange matings. Dost purpose to share thy bed with father and with son, and receive in an incestuous womb a blended progeny? Then go thou on and overturn all nature with thy unhallowed fires. Why do monsters cease?⁹ Why does thy brother's¹⁰ labyrinth stand empty? Shall the world hear of strange prodigies, shall nature's laws give way, whenever a Cretan woman loves? PHAEDRA [177] I know, nurse, that what thou sayest is true; but passion forces me to take the worsen path. With full knowledge my soul moves on to the abyss and vainly seeks the backward way in quest of counsels sane. Even so, when the mariner urges his laden vessel against opposing seas, his toil goes for naught and the ship, vanquished, is swept away by the swift-moving tide. What can reason do? Passion has conquered and now rules supreme, and, a mighty god, lords it o'er all my soul. This winged god rules ruthlessly throughout the earth and inflames Jove himself, wounded with unquenched fires. Gradivus, the warrior god, has felt those flames; that god¹¹ has felt them who

fashions the three-forked thunderbolts, yea, he who tends the hot furnaces ever raging 'neath Aetna's peaks is inflamed by so small a fire as this. Nay, Phoebus, himself, who guides with sure aim his arrows from the bowstring, a boy of more sure aim pierces with his flying shaft, and flits about, baneful alike to heaven and to earth. NURSE [195] 'Tis base and sin-mad lust that has made love into a god and, to enjoy more liberty, as given to passion the title of an unreal divinity. The goddess of Eryx¹² sends her son, forsooth, wandering through all lands, and he, flying through heaven's void, wields wanton weapons in his boyish hands, and, though least of gods, still holds such mighty empire! 'Tis love-mad souls that have adopted these vain conceits

and have feigned Venus' divinity and a god's archery. Whoever rejoices in overmuch prosperity and abounds in luxury is ever seeking unaccustomed joys. Then that dire comrade of high estate, inordinate desire, steals in; wanted feasts no longer please, nor houses of simple fashion or modest cups. Why steals this deadly pest more rarely into humble homes, choosing rather the homes of daintiness? Why doth hallowed love dwell 'neath lowly roofs and the general throng have wholesome impulses? Why hath modest fortune self-control? Why, on the other hand, do rich men, propped on empire, ever grasp at more than heaven allows? He who is too powerful seeks power beyond his power. What becomes one endowed with high estate, thou knowest well; then fear and respect the sceptre of thy returning lord. PHAEDRA [218] Love's is, I think, the mightiest sovereignty over me, and I fear no lord's return. Nevermore has he reached sight of the vaulted skies who, once plunged in perpetual night, has gone to the silent home. NURSE [222] Trust not in Dis. Though he bar his realm, and though the Stygian dog keep guard o'er the grim doors, Theseus alone finds out forbidden ways. PHAEDRA [225] He will give indulgence to my love, perchance. NURSE

[226] Harsh was he even to a virtuous wife; foreign Antiope found his hand severe. But suppose thou canst bend thy angry husband; who can bend this youth's stubborn soul? Hating the very name of woman, he flees them all, sternly devotes his years to single life and shuns the marriage tie. Thou wouldst know him of Amazonian breed. PHAEDRA [233] Though he keep him to the peaks of snowy hills, though he course swiftly 'mongst the ragged rocks, still through the deep forests, over the mountains, 'tis my resolve to follow him. NURSE [236] Will he stop for thee and yield himself to thy caresses? Will he lay aside his pure practices for impure love? Will he give up his hate for thee, when 'tis for hate of thee, perchance, he repels all women? By no prayers can he be overcome. PHAEDRA [240] Wild is he; but wild things, we have learned, can be overcome by love. NURSE [241] He will flee away. PHAEDRA [241] Though he flee through the very seas, still will I follow. NURSE [242] Remember thy father. PHAEDRA [242] My mother I remember too. NURSE [243] He shuns the whole race of women. PHAEDRA [243] Then need I fear no rival.

NURSE [244] My husband will be here. PHAEDRA [244] Yes, comrade of Pirithoüs! NURSE [245] And thy father will be here. PHAEDRA [245] He will be kind, Ariadne's father. NURSE [246] By these gleaming locks of age, by this heart, worn with care, by these dear breasts, I beg thee check this made love and come to thy own relief. The wish for healing has ever been the half of health. PHAEDRA [250] Now wholly has shame fled my noble soul. I yield, dear nurse. Let the love which will not be controlled by overcome. Fair fame, I will not suffer thee to be defiled. This is the only way, the one sole escape from evil: let me follow my husband; by death will I forestall my sin. NURSE [255] Check, O my child, the rush of thine unbridled spirit; control thy

passion. For this cause do I deem thee worthy life, since thou declarest thyself worthy death.

PHAEDRA [258] I am resolved on death; I seek but the manner of my fate. With the noose shall I end my life, or fall upon the sword? or shall I leap headlong from Pallas' citadel? NURSE [262] Can my old age permit thee thus to go headlong to thy death? Resist this mad impulse. No one can easily be recalled to life.

PHAEDRA [265] No argument can stay from perishing one who has resolves to die and ought to die. Wherefore in protection of my honour let me arm my hand. NURSE [267] O mistress, sole comfort of my weary years, if so unruly a passion weighs on thy soul, scorn thou this fame; scarcely doth fame favour truth, being better to the worse deserving, worse to the good. Let us test that grim and stubborn soul. Mine is the task to approach the savage youth and bend the cruel man's relentless will. [Exuent into the palace.] CHORUS [274] Thou goddess, born of the cruel sea, who art called mother of both Loves,¹³ that wanton, smiling boy of thine, reckless alike with torches and with arrows, with how sure bow doth he aim his shafts! His madness steals to the inmost marrow, while with creeping fire he ravages the veins. The wound he deals has no broad front, but it eats its way deep into the hidden marrow. There is no open peace with that boy of thine; throughout the world nimbly he scatters his flying shafts. The shore that beholds the new-born sun and the shore that lies at this far western goal, the land lying beneath the burning Crab and the cold region of the Arcadian Bear, which sustains its ever-wandering husbandmen, all know these fires of his. He kindles the fierce flames of youth and in worn-out age he wakes again the extinguished fires; he smites maids' breasts with unknown heat, and bids the very gods leave heaven and dwell on earth in borrowed forms. [296] Phoebus as keeper of the Thessalian herd¹⁴ drove his cattle along and, laying quill aside, called together his bulls on the unequal reeds. How often did he put on lower forms, even he¹⁵ who made heaven and the clouds: now as a bird he fluttered his white wings with note sweeter than the dying swan; now with savage front as a wanton bull he lowered his back for the sport of maidens and through the strange kingdom of his brother's waves, using his hoofs in place of pliant oars, he breasted the deep sea and overcame it, a ferryman trembling for the prize¹⁶ he bore. The radiant goddess¹⁷ of the darksome sky burned with love and, forsaking the night, gave her gleaming chariot to her brother to guide in fashion other than his own. He learned to drive the team of night and to wheel in narrower circuit, while the axle groaned beneath the car's heavier weight; nor did the nights keep their accustomed length, and with belated dawning came

the day. The son of Alcmena¹⁸ laid by his quiver and the threatening skin of the huge lion, letting emeralds be fitted on his fingers and law be enforced on his rough locks; he bound his legs with cross-garterings of gold and within yellow sandals confined his feet; and in that hand,

with which he but now bore the club, he spun out threads with flying spindle.

[325] Persia and the rich, fertile realm of Lydia saw the fierce lion's skin laid aside, and on those shoulders, on which the royal structure of the lofty sky had rested, a gauzy cloak of Tyrian web. 'Tis an accursed fire (believe those who have suffered) and all too powerful. Where the land is encircled by the briny deep, where the bright stars course through heaven itself, over these realms the pitiless boy holds sovereignty, whose shafts are felt in the lowest depths by the sea-blue throng of Nereids, nor can they ease their heat by ocean's waters. These fires the race of winged creatures feel. Goaded on by love, the bold bull undertakes battle for the whole herd; if they feel that their mates are in danger, timid stags challenge to war. At such a time swart India holds striped tigers in especial fear; at such a time the boar whets his death-dealing tusks and his jaws are covered all with foam; African lions toss their manes and by their roarings give token of their engendered passion. When Love has roused them, then the forest groans with their grim uproar. Love sways the monsters of the raging sea, sways Lucanian bulls,¹⁹ claims as his own all nature; nothing is exempt, and hate perishes at the command of Love. Old grudges yield unto his fires. Why tell of more? Love's cares o'erwhelm harsh stepmothers. [Enter NURSE from the inner palace.] [358] Nurse, tell the news thou bearest. How stands it with the queen? Hath her fierce flame any bound? NURSE [360] No hope is there that such suffering can be relieved, and no end will there be to her mad fires. She is parched by a silent fever, and e'en though 'tis hidden away, shut in her heart, her passion is betrayed in her face; fire darts from her yes; again, her weary gaze shrinks from the light; nothing long pleases her unbalanced soul, and her limbs by ever-shifting pangs are tossed in changeful wise. Now with failing steps she sinks down as if dying, and can hardly hold up her head on her fainting neck; now she lies down to rest and, headless of slumber, spends the night in lamentations; she bids them to lift her

up and again to lay her down, to loose her hair and again to bid it up; her raiment, with itself dissatisfied, is ever changed. She has now no care for food or health. She walks with aimless feet, wasted now in strength. Her old-time sprightliness is gone, and the ruddy glow of health no longer shines on her bright face; care feeds upon her limbs, her steps totter and the tender grace of her once beautiful form is fallen away; her eyes, which once shone like Phoebus' torch, no longer gleam with their ancestral fire. Tears fall down her face and her cheeks are wet with constant drops, as when on the top of Taurus the snows melt away, pierced by a warm shower. [384] But see, the palace doors are opening, and she herself, lying on golden couch, all sick of soul, rejects her wonted garments. PHAEDRA [387] Away, ye slaves, with robes bedecked with purple and with gold; away, scarlet of the Tyrian shell, the webs²⁰ which the far-off Seres gather from the trees. Let a narrow girdle hold in my garments' unencumbering folds, let there

be no necklace at my throat, let no snowy pearls, the gift of India's ocean, weight down my ears, and let my hair hang loose, unscented by Assyrian nard. So, tossed at random, let my locks fall down upon my neck and shoulders and, moved by swift running, stream upon the wind. My left hand shall be busied with the quiver and my right wield a Thessalian spear. In such guise as the dweller by Tanaïs or Maeotis,²¹ leaving cold Pontus' tract behind, led her hordes, treading Athenian soil, and, binding her locks in a knot, let them flow free, her side protected by a crescent shield; so will I betake me to the woods.

CHORUS [404] Cease thy complainings; grieving helps not the wretched. Appease the rustic divinity of our virgin goddess. NURSE [406] O queen of the groves, thou who in solitude lovest thy mountain-haunts, and who upon the solitary mountains art alone held holy, change for the better these dark, ill-omened threats. O great goddess of the woods and groves, bright orb of heaven, glory of the night, by whose changing beams the universe shines clear, O three-formed Hecate, lo, thou art at hand, favouring our undertaking. Conquer the unbending soul of stern Hippolytus; may he, compliant, give ear unto our prayer. Soften his fierce heart; may he

learn to love, may he feel answering flames. Ensnare his mind; grim, hostile, fierce, may he turn him back unto the fealty of love. To this end direct thy powers; so mayst thou wear a shining face and, the clouds all scattered, fare on with undimmed horns; so, when thou drivest thy car through the nightly skies, may no witcheries of Thessaly prevail to drag thee down and may no shepherd²² make boast o'er thee. Be near, goddess, in answer to our call; hear now our prayers. [HIPPOLYTUS is seen approaching.] [424] The man himself I see, coming to perform thy sacred rites, no comrade at his side. [To herself.] Why dost thou hesitate? Chance has given thee both time and place. Thou must employ thy arts. Why do I tremble? 'Tis no easy task to dare a crime bidden by another, but whoso fears a sovereign's behests must lay aside and banish from his heart all thought of honour; shame is but an ill servant of a sovereign's commands. HIPPOLYTUS [431] Why dost hither wend wearily thy aged steps, O faithful nurse, with troubled brow and face dejected? Surely my sire is safe, Phaedra is safe, and their two sons? NURSE [435] Banish thy fear. The realm is in prosperous state, thy house is strong, flourishing under the smile of Heaven. But in this happy lot do thou show thyself less harsh; for distress for thee harasses my anxious heart, seeing that thou in thine own despite dost break thyself with heavy penances. If fate compels, 'tis pardonable to be wretched; but whoso of his own accord surrenders himself to misery and causes his own torment, he deserves to lose the happiness he knows not how to use. Nay, remember thy youth and relax thy spirit; go out o' nights, raising the festal torch; let Bacchus unburden thy weighty cares. [446] Enjoy thy life; 'tis speeding swift away. Now hearts are light, now love to youth is pleasing. Let thy heart rejoice. Why dost lie on a lonely couch? Free thy youth from gloom; lay hold on pleasures;

loosen the reins; let not life's best days escape thee. God has portioned out its proper duties to each time of life and led this span of ours through its own stages; joy befits the young, a serious face the old. Why dost hold thyself in check and strangle thy true nature? That crop will give to the farmer the best return which in the tender blade runs riot with joyous growth, and that tree with lofty head will overtop

the grove which no grudging hand cuts down or prunes away. So will right minds be reared unto a richer fruit of praise, if sprightly freedom nourish the high-born soul.

[461] Wilt thou, as a harsh wood-dweller, ignorant of life, spend thy youth in gloom and let Venus be forgot? Is it man's allotted task, thinkst thou, to endure hardship, curb horses in their swift course, and wage savage wars in bloody battles? How various are the forms of death that seize and feed no mortal throngs! the sea, the steel and treachery! But suppose these lacking: by thy path we make wantonly for murky death. The unwedded life let barren youth applaud; then will all that thou beholdest be the throng of one generation only and will fall in ruins on itself. In his providence did yonder almighty father of the universe, when he saw how greedy were the hands of Fate, give heed ever by fresh progeny to make losses good. Come now, let love but be banished from human life, love, which supplies and renews the impoverished race: the whole globe will lie foul in vile neglect; the sea will stand empty of its fish; birds will be lacking to the heaven, wild beasts to the woods, and the paths of air will be traversed only by the winds. Follow, then, nature as life's guide; frequent the city; seek out the haunts of men.

HIPPOLYTUS [482] There is no life so free and innocent, none which better cherishes the ancient ways, than that which, forsaking cities, loves the woods. His heart is inflamed by no mad greed of gain who has devoted himself to harmless ranging on the mountain-tops; here is no shouting populace, no mob, faithless to good men, no poisonous hate, no brittle favour. No slave is he of kings, nor in quest of kingship does he chase empty honours or elusive wealth, free alike from hope and fear; him venomous spite assails not with the bite of base-born tooth; those criems that spawn midst the city's teeming throngs he does not know, nor in guilty consciousness does he quake at every sound, or frame lying words. He seeks not in pride of wealth to be sheltered by a roof reared on a thousand pillars, no in insolence plates he with much gold his rafter-beams. No streams of blood drench his pious altars, no hecatombs of snow-white bullocks, sprinkled with the sacred meal, bend low their necks; but his lordship is over the empty fields, and beneath the open sky he wanders blameless. [502] His only craft is to set cunning snares for the wild beasts, and, when weary with hard toil, he refreshes his body in Ilissos' stream, chilled by the snows. Now he fares along the bank of swift-flowing Alpheus, now traverses the lofty grove's deep places,

where cool Lerna is transparent with its crystal shoals, and the silent forest-depths, wherein the complaining birds make music, and the ash-trees and ancient beeches quiver, moving gently in the breeze. Sweet it is to lie on the bank of some vagrant stream, or on the bare sward to quaff light-stealing slumbers, be it where some copious spring pours down its hurrying waters, or through budding flowers some brook murmurs sweetly as it glides along. [515] Fruit shaken from the forest trees stays his hunger, and berries plucked from the low bushes afford an easy meal. It is his passion to flee far from royal luxury. 'Tis from anxious cups of gold that the proud drink! how sweet to catch up with the bare hand the water of the spring! Here slumber more surely soothes as he lays him down, care-free, on his hard bed. He guiltily plots no stealthy deeds in secret chamber and on a hidden couch, nor hides fearfully away in his labyrinthine palace; 'tis the air and light he seeks, and his life has heaven for its witness. [525] 'Twas in such wise, methinks, they lived whom the primal age produced, in friendly intercourse with gods. They had no blind love of gold; no sacred boundary-stone, judging betwixt peoples, separated fields on the spreading plain; not yet did rash vessels plough the sea; each man knew only his native waters. Then cities were not surrounded with massive walls, set with many towers; no soldier applied his fierce hand to arms, nor did hurling engines burst through closed gates with heavy stones. Not yet did earth, suffering a master's rule, fruitful of themselves, fed nations who asked nothing more; the woods gave men their natural wealth, and shady caves afforded natural homes.

[540] Unholy passion for gain broke up this peaceful life, headlong wrath, and lust which sets men's hearts aflame. Next came cruel thirst for power; the weaker was made the stronger's prey, and might took the place of right. At first men fought with naked fists [next they began to lay hand to deadly weapons²³] and turned stones and rough clubs to the use of arms. As yet there was no light cornel-shaft, tipped with tapering iron; no long, sharp-pointed sword hung at the side; no helmets crested with plumes gleamed from afar; rage furnished arms. Warlike Mars invented new modes of strife and a thousand forms of death. From this source streams of blood stained all lands and the sea grew red. Then crime stalked unchecked through every home and no impious deed lacked precedent. Brother was slain by brother, father by the hand of son, husband lay dead by

the sword of wife, and unnatural mothers destroyed their own offspring. I say naught of stepmothers; they are no whit more merciful than the beasts. But the leader of all wickedness is woman; 'tis she, cunning mistress of crime, besets our minds; 'tis by her foul adulteries so many cities smoke, so many nations war, so many peoples lie crushed beneath the ruins of their kingdoms, utterly o'erthrown. Let others be unnamed; Aegeus' wife alone, Medea, will prove that women are an accursed race. NURSE [564] Why make the crime of few the blame of

all? HIPPOLYTUS [565] I abominate them all, I dread, shun, curse them all. Be it reason, be it instinct, be it wild rage: 'tis my joy to hate them. Sooner shall you mate fire and water, sooner shall the dangerous Syrtes offer to ships a friendly passage, sooner shall Tethys from her far western shore bring in bright dawn, and wolves gaze on does with eyes caressing, than I, my hate o'ercome, have kindly thought for woman. NURSE [574] Oft-times does Love put curb on stubborn hearts and change their hate. Look at thy mother's kingdom; those warlike women feel the yoke of Venus. Thou bearest witness to this, of her race the only son.²⁴ HIPPOLYTUS [578] I count it the one solace for my lost mother, that now I may hate all womankind. NURSE [580] [Aside.] As some hard crag, on all sides unassailable, resists the waves, and flings far back the flood importunate, so does he spurn my words. [583] But Phaedra is hurrying towards us, impatient of delay. Whither will fortune go? Whither will madness tend? [PHAEDRA enters and falls as in a swoon.] [585] Her fainting body has fallen suddenly to earth and death-like pallor has overspread her face.

[HIPPOLYTUS hastens to raise her in his arms.] [587] Lift thy face, break silence. See, my daughter, thine own Hippolytus embraces thee. PHAEDRA [589] [Recovering.] Who gives me back to grief and again sets in my soul this fever dire? How blest was my unconsciousness of self!

HIPPOLYTUS [591] Why dost thou shun the sweet boon of life restored? PHAEDRA [592] [Aside.] Courage! my soul, essay, fulfil thine own behest. Fearless be thy words, and firm; who makes timid request, invites denial. The chief part of my guilt is long since accomplished; too late for me is modesty – I have loved basely. If I follow up what I have begun, perchance I may hide my sin behind the marriage torch. Success makes some sins honest. Come now, my soul, begin! [To HIPPOLYTUS.] Lend ear to me privately a little while, I pray. If any comrade of thine is here, let him withdraw. HIPPOLYTUS [601] Behold, the place is free from all witnesses. PHAEDRA [602] But my lips refuse passage to the words I seek to frame; some strong power urges me to speak, and a stronger holds me back. I call you all to witness, you heavenly powers, that what I wish – HIPPOLYTUS [606] Thy heart desires somewhat and cannot tell it out? PHAEDRA [607] Light troubles speak; the weighty are struck dumb. HIPPOLYTUS [608] Entrust thy troubles to my ears, mother.

PHAEDRA [609] Mother – that name is too proud and high; a humbler name better suits my feelings. Call me sister, Hippolytus, or slave – yes, slave is better; I will endure servitude. Shouldst thou bid me walk through deep-drifted snows, I would not shrink from faring along the cold peaks of Pindus; shouldst thou send me through fire and midst deadly battle ranks, I would not hesitate to offer my breast to naked swords. Take thou in my stead the sceptre committed to my care, accept me for thy slave; it becomes thee to bear sway, me, to obey thine orders. It

is no woman's task to watch o'er royal cities. Do thou, in the vigour of thy youth's first bloom, rule o'er the citizens, strong in thy father's power; take to thine arms thy suppliant, and protect thy slave. Pity my widowhood – HIPPOLYTUS [623] The most high God avert that omen! In safety will my father soon return. PHAEDRA [625] The overlord of the fast-holding realm and of the silent Styx has made no way to the upper world once quitted; and will he let the robber²⁵ of his couch go back? Unless, perchance, even Pluto sits smiling upon love! HIPPOLYTUS [629] Him surely the kindly deities will bring again. But while God still holds our prayers in doubt, with due affection will I care for my dear brothers, and so deserve of thee that thou shalt not deem thee widowed, and myself will fill for thee my father's place. PHAEDRA [634] [Aside.] O credulous hope of lovers, O deceitful one! Has he not said enough? I'll bring my prayers to bear upon him and attack. [636] [To HIPPOLYTUS.] Have pity! hearken to the prayers my heart may not express. I long – and am ashamed – to speak. HIPPOLYTUS [637] What, pray, is this thy trouble? PHAEDRA [638] A trouble thou wouldst scarce believe could befall a stepmother.

HIPPOLYTUS [639] Words of doubtful meaning thou utterest with riddling lips. Speak out and plainly. PHAEDRA [640] 'Tis burning love scorches my maddened heart. A hot fire glows deep in my inmost vitals and hides darkly in my veins, as when nimble flames dart through deep-set timbers. HIPPOLYTUS [644] 'Tis with pure love for Theseus thou dost burn? PHAEDRA [645] Hippolytus, 'tis thus with me: Theseus' features I love, those former looks of his which once as a youth he had, when his first beard marked his smooth cheeks, when he looked on the dark home of the Cretan monster, and gathered in the long thread o'er the winding way. How glorious was he then! Fillets bound his locks, and his young face glowed with the blush of modesty; strong muscles lay beneath the softness of his arms; and his features were as of thy Phoebe or of my Phoebus – or, rather were thy own. Such, yes, such was he when he won his foeman's²⁶ valour; just so he bore his head erect. In thee more brightly shines a beauty unadorned; all of thy sire is in thee, and yet some portion of thy mother's sternness blends with an equal charm; on Grecian face shows Scythian austerity. If with thy father thou hadst come to the shores of Crete, for thee and not for him would my sister have spun the thread. Thee, thee, O sister, wherever amidst the starry heavens thou shinest, I call to aid for a cause like to thine own. One house has ruined two sisters: thee, the father, but me, the son. [She kneels to HIPPOLYTUS.] [666] See, a king's daughter lies fallen at thy knees, a suppliant. Without spot or stain, pure, innocent, I am changed for thee alone. With fixed purpose have I humbled myself to prayer; this day shall bring an end either to my misery or my life. Have pity on her who loves – HIPPOLYTUS [671] Great ruler of the gods, dost thou so calmly hear crimes, so calmly look upon them? And when wilt thou send forth thy thunderbolt with angry hand, if now 'tis cloudless?

Let all the sky fall in shattered ruin, and in murky clouds the day; let the stars be turned backward and, wrenched aside, go athwart their courses. And thou, star of stars, O radiant Sun, dost thou behold this shame of thy race? Hide thy light and take refuge in darkness. Why is thy right hand empty, O ruler of gods and men? why is not the world in flames by thy forked lightning? Me let thy thunder smite, pierce me, me let thy swift-darting fire consume. I am guilty, I have deserved to die; I have stirred my stepmother to love. [684] [To PHAEDRA.] Look thou! Am I fitted for adulteries? For such crime did I alone see to thee an easy instrument? Hath my austerity earned this? O thou, who hast outshined the whole race of women, who hast dared a greater evil than thy monster-bearing mother, thou worse than she who bore thee! She did but pollute herself with her shameful lust, and yet her offspring by its two-shaped infamy displayed her crime, though long concealed, and by his fierce visage the hybrid child made clear his mother's guilt. That was the womb that bore thee. Oh, thrice and again blest of fate are they whom hatred and treachery have destroyed, consumed, and given unto death! O father, I envy thee; than thy Colchian stepdame²⁷ this is a curse, greater, greater far! PHAEDRA [698] I, too, recognize the fortune of my house: we seek what we should shun; but I am not mistress of myself. Thee even through fire, through the mad sea will I pursue, yes, over crags and rivers, swollen by torrent streams; where'er thou shalt direct thy steps, there will I madly rush. Once more, proud man, I grovel at thy feet. HIPPOLYTUS [704] Away with thy impure touch from my chaste body! What? Even rush into my arms! Out, sword, and mete her just punishment. See, with left hand in her twisted hair have I bent back her shameless head. Never has blood been more justly spilled upon thy altar, O goddess of the bow. PHAEDRA [710] Hippolytus, now dost thou grant me fulfilment of my prayer; thou healest me of my madness. This is beyond my prayer, that, with my honour saved, 'tis by thy hands I die. [She grasps the sword and points it at her breast.] HIPPOLYTUS

[713] Begone, live, lest thou have thy wish; and let this sword, polluted by thy touch, quit my chaste side. [He throws his sword from him.] [715] What Tanaïs will cleanse me, what Maeotis, with its barbaric waves rushing into the Pontic sea? Not great Father Neptune's self, with his whole ocean, could wash away so much of guilt. O woods! O beasts! [He rushes off into the depths of the forest.] NURSE [719] Her sin has been found out. O soul, why dost stand inactive and aghast? We must throw the crime back on him himself, and ourselves charge him with incestuous love. Crime must be concealed by crime. 'Tis safest, when in fear, to force the attack. Whether we first dared the sin or suffered it, since it was done in secret, who of his own knowledge is to testify? [She raises her voice in loud cry.] [725] Help, Athens, help! Faithful band of slaves, come to our aid! The ravisher, Hippolytus, with vile, lustful intent, is after us; he is upon us and threatens us with death; with the sword he is terrifying our chaste queen – ah! he has rushed headlong forth and, dazed, in panic flight, has left his sword. We hold the proof

of guilt. But the stricken queen, revive her first. Let her dishevelled hair, her torn locks, stay even as they are, the marks of that great guilt. Bear her to the city. Now come back to consciousness, my mistress. Why doest tear thyself and shun the glances of us all? 'Tis thinking makes impure, not circumstance. [Exuent.] CHORUS [736] He fled like a raging tempest, swifter than cloud-collecting Corus,²⁸ swifter than flame which speeds on its way when a star,²⁹ driven by the winds, extends its long-trailing fire. [741] Let fame compare with thee³⁰ all ancient beauty, fame, admirer of the olden time; as much fairer does thy beauty shine as gleams more brightly the full-orbed moon when with meeting horns she has joined her fires, when at the full with speeding chariot blushing Phoebe shows her face and the lesser stars fade out of sight. Such as he is the

messenger of night, who brings the first shadows back, Hesperus,³¹ fresh bathed in ocean; and when the shadows have been driven away again, Lucifer³² also. [753] And thou, Bacchus, from thyrsus-bearing India, with unshorn locks, perpetually young, thou who frightenest tigers with thy vine-clad spear, and with a turban bindest thy hornèd head – thou wilt not surpass Hippolytus' crisp locks. Admire not thou thy beauty overmuch; story has spread through every nation whom³³ the sister of Phaedra preferred to Bromius. [761] O beauty, doubtful boon to mortals, brief gift for but a little time, how swiftly on quick foot thou dost slip away! Not so swift are the meadows, beauteous with early spring, despoiled by the hot summer's glow, when with solstitial fire midday rages, and the nights sweep headlong in their brief course. As lilies wither and their leaves grow pale, so do our pleasing locks fall from the head, and the bright glow which shines on youthful cheeks is ravished in a moment and no day takes not spoilt of our body's beauty. Beauty is a fleeting thing. Who that is wise would trust so frail a blessing? Enjoy it while thou mayest. Time is silently undermining thee, and an hour, worse than the last, is ever creeping on. [777] Why seek desert places? Beauty is no safer in pathless regions. Hide thee in the woods when Titan has brought midday, and the saucy Naïds, a wanton throng, will encompass thee, wont in their waters to imprison shapely boys,³⁴ and for thy slumbers the frolicsome goddesses of the groves will lay their snares, the Dryads, who pursue Pans wandering on the mountains. Or else, looking down on thee from the starry heavens, the orb³⁵ that was born after the old Arcadians³⁶ will lose control of her white-shining car. And lately she blushed fiery red, though no staining cloud obscured her bright face; but we, anxious for our troubled goddess, thinking her harried by Thessalian charms, made loud jingling sounds: yet 'twas thou³⁷ hadst been her trouble, thou the cause of her delaying; while gazing on thee the goddess of the night checked her swift course. [795] This face of thine let frosts more rarely ravage, let this face more seldom woo the sun; 'twill shine more bright than Parian marble. How pleasing is the manly sternness of thy face and the severe dignity of thine old-seeming brow! With Phoebus mayst thou match that gleaming neck. Him locks that

will not be confined, streaming o'er his shoulders adorn and robe; but thee a shaggy brow, thee shorter locks, lying in disarray, become. 'Tis thine with manly strength to dare meet the trough and warlike gods and by

the spread of thy huge body to overcome them; for even in youth thou dost match the muscles of a Hercules, art broader of chest than war-waging Mars. Shouldst thou be pleased to ride a horn-footed horse, with hand more agile on the rein than Castor's thou couldst guide the Spartan Cyllarus. Stretch thong with thy first fingers³⁸ and shoot the dart straight with all thy might; still not so far, though skilled to hurl the dart, will Cretans send the slender shaft. Or should it please thee to shoot thy arrows into the sky, in Parthian fashion, none will come down without its bird, but, deep fixed in the warm breast, will bring prey from the very clouds. [820] To few men hath beauty (scan the ages past) not brought its penalty. May God, more merciful, pass thee by unharmed, and may thy illustrious beauty pass the threshold o'er of shapeless age. [824] What would the woman's headlong madness leave undared? She is preparing outrageous charges against this guileless youth. Behold her guilty wiles! By her torn hair she seeks to be believed; she disorders all the glory of her locks, bedews her cheeks with tears. She is marshalling her plot by every art that woman knows. [A man is seen approaching who proves to be THESEUS.] [829] But who is this, wearing a regal dignity on his face and with head borne high? How like the young Pirithoüs he is in countenance, were his cheeks not so deathly pale and did not unkempt squalor stiffen in his bristling hair. See, it is Theseus himself, restored to the upper world. THESEUS [835] At last I escaped the realm of eternal night, the dark world which in vast prison-house o'ershades the dead, and scarcely do my eyes endure the longed-for light. Now for the fourth time is Eleusis harvesting the bounty of Triptolemus,³⁹ as many times has Libra made day equal unto night, since dubious battling with an unknown fate has kept me between the ills of death and life. Though dead to all things else, one part of life remained to me – my sense of ills. Alcides was the end, who, when he dragged the dog by violence out of Tartarus, brought me, too, along with him to the upper world. But my strength is spent, has lost its old-time vigour, and my steps do falter. Alas, how hard a struggle it was from lowest Phlegethon to attain the far realms of air, at once to flee from death and follow Hercules!

[850] But what is this tearful outcry that strikes my ears? Let someone tell me. Greiving and tears and woe, and on my very threshold sad lamentation? – auspices that well befit a guest from hell. NURSE [854] Phaedra holds unbending purpose of self-murder; she scorns our tears and is on the very edge of death. THESEUS [856] What cause for death? Why die, now that her husband is come back? NURSE [857] That very cause has brought with it speedy death. THESEUS [858] Thy riddling words some weighty matter hide. Tell me plainly what grief weighs

on her mind. NURSE [860] She discloses it to none; though sorrowing, she hides her secret grief and is resolved to take with her the woe whereof she dies. But come now, I pray thee, come; there is need of haste. THESEUS [863] Unbar the closed portals of the royal house. [The doors are thrown open and THESEUS encounters his wife just within.] [854] O partner of my couch, is it thus thou welcomest thy lord's return and the face of thy long-sought husband? Come, put away the sword from thy right hand, give me heart again, and whatever is driving thee out of life, declare it. PHAEDRA [868] Alas, O Theseus, great of soul, by the sceptre of thy kingdom, by thy children's lives, by thy return, and by my body already doomed to dust, allow my death. THESEUS

[871] What cause forces thee to die? PHAEDRA [872] If the cause of my death is told, its fruit is lost. THESEUS [873] No one else shall hear it, save myself. PHAEDRA [874] A chaste woman dreads her husband's ears alone. THESEUS [875] Speak out; in my true heart will I hide thy secret. PHAEDRA [876] Where thou wouldst have another silence keep, keep silence first thyself. THESEUS [877] No means of death shall be granted unto thee. PHAEDRA [878] If one wills to die, death can never fail. THESEUS [879] Tell me what sin is to be purged by death. PHAEDRA [880] That I still live. THESEUS [880] Do not my tears move thee? PHAEDRA [881] 'Tis best to die a death to be wept by friends. THESEUS

[882] She persists in silence. Then by scourge and bonds shall her old nurse reveal whatever she will not tell. [To attendants.] Bind her with chains. Let the power of the scourge drag forth the secrets of her soul. PHAEDRA [885] Hold! I will myself confess. THESEUS [886] Why dost turn away thy sorrowing face and hide with veiling robe the tears that suddenly o'er flow thy cheeks?

PHAEDRA [888] Thee, thee, O sire of the heavenly gods, I call to witness, and thee,⁴⁰ bright radiance of celestial light, on whom as founder of this house of ours depends – though sorely tempted, I withstood his prayers; to sword and threats my soul yielded not; yet did my body bear his violence. This stain of shame shall my blood wash away. THESEUS [894] Who, tell me, was the destroyer of my honour? PHAEDRA [895] Whom thou least thinkest. THESEUS [895] Who is he? I demand to hear. PHAEDRA [896] This sword will tell, which, in his panic terror, the ravisher left behind, fearing the gathering of the citizens. THESEUS [898] Ah me! What villainy do I behold? What monstrous thing do I see? The royal hilt of ivory, embossed with tiny figures, gleams before me, the glory of the Athenian race. But he, whither has he escaped?

PHAEDRA [901] The slaves, here, saw him speeding swift away in headlong flight. THESEUS [903] O holy Piety, O ruler of the heavens, and thou⁴¹ who with thy billows dost sway the second realm, whence came this infection of infamy in our stock? Was that man nurtured by

the land of Greece or by the Scythian Taurus and Colchian Phasis? The breed reverts to its progenitors and debased blood reproduces the primal stock. This, truly, is the madness of that warlike race,⁴² to condemn Venus' laws and to prostitute the long-chaste body to the crowd. O abominable race, yielding to no laws of a better land! Even the very beasts do shun incestuous love, and instinctive chastity guards Nature's laws. Where are those features, that feigned austerity of the man, that rough garb, aping old-fashioned and archaic ways? Where thy stern manners and the sour severity of age? O two-faced life, thou keepest thy true thoughts hidden and dost clothe foul purpose with an aspect fair – chaste bearing hides unchastity; meekness, effrontery; piety, sin unspeakable; false men approve truth and the soft affect hardihood. [922] O thou lover of the woods, the boasted wild man, continent, rough, unstained, is it for me thou keepst thyself in check? With my couch, by such crime as this, was it thy pleasure to make first test of manhood? Now, now I give thanks to the heavenly powers that Antiope fell stricken by my hand, and that, descending to the Stygian pit, I did not leave to thee thy mother. Fugitive, traverse nations remote, unknown; though a land on the remotest confines of the world hold thee separated by Ocean's tracts, though thou take up thy dwelling in the world opposite our feet, though thou escape to the shuddering realms of the high north and hide deep in its farthest corner, and though, placed beyond the reach of winter⁴³ and his hoar snows, thou leave behind thee the threatening rage of cold Boreas, still shalt thou pay penalty for thy crime. Fugitive, through all thy hiding-places untiringly will I pursue thee; regions remote, blocked, hidden away, far separate, trackless, will I traverse, and no place shall stop me – thou knowest whence I am returned. Whither weapons cannot be hurled, thither will I hurl my prayers. My father of the sea granted me thrice to fashion prayers whereto the god would bow, and, calling upon Styx, confirmed the boon.

[945] [To NEPTUNE.] Now fulfil the sad⁴⁴ boon, O ruler of the sea! Let Hippolytus see the bright day no more, and in youth pass to the ghosts that are wrathful with his sire. Now

bring aid, which my soul abhors, O father, to thy son; never should I squander this last boon⁴⁵ of thine, did not great ills o'erwhelm; in depths of Tartarus, in presence of dread Dis, and imminent menace of hell's lord, I was sparing of this prayer. Keep now thy promised faith. Father, dost thou delay? Why are thy waves yet silent? Now veil the night with dark clouds driven by the winds; snatch stars and sky from sight; pour forth the deep; and, rising high, summon the floods from Ocean's self. CHORUS [959] O Nature, mighty mother of the gods, and thou, fire-bearing Olympus' lord, who through the swift firmament whirlst the scattered stars, and the wandering courses of the planets, who makest the heavens on swift axis turn, why dost thou take such care to keep perpetual the pathways of the lofty sky, that now the hoar frosts of winter may strip the woods, now to the plantations their umbrage come again, that now in

summer the Lion's fervent heat may ripen the grain and the year regulate its powers? But why, again, dost thou, who holdest so wide sway, and by whose hands the ponderous masses of the vast universe are poised and wheel their appointed courses – why dost thou dwell afar, all too indifferent to men, not anxious to bring blessing to the good, and to the evil, bane? [978] Fate without order rules the affairs of men, scatters her gifts with unseeing hand, fostering the worse; dire lust prevails against pure men, and crime sits regnant in the lofty palace. The rabble rejoice to give government to the vile, paying high honours even where they hate. Warped are the rewards of uprightness sad virtue gains; wretched poverty dogs the pure, and the adulterer, strong in wickedness, reigns supreme. O decency, honour, how empty and how false! [989] But why does yon messenger haste hither with rapid pace, his sad countenance wet with grieving tears? [Enter MESSENGER.] MESSENGER [991] O lot bitter and hard, O cruel servitude, why calls fate upon me to bear unutterable tidings? THESEUS

[993] Fear not to speak out boldly the disaster, cruel though it be; I bear a heart not unprepared for suffering. MESSENGER [995] My tongue refuses utterance to the grief-bringing woe. THESEUS [996] Tell what mischance weighs down this shattered house. MESSENGER [997] Hippolytus, woe is men, lies in lamentable death. THESEUS [998] That his son was dead the sire has long since known; now is the ravisher dead. But tell the manner of his end. MESSENGER [1000] When with troubled steps he left the city, a fugitive, unfolding his swift way with flying feet, he quickly brought his prancing steeds 'neath the high yoke and curbed their mouths with tight-drawn reins. Then much did he utter, communing with himself, and, cursing his native land, called oft upon his sire, and with loose reins fiercely shook the lash; when suddenly from out the deep the vast sea thundered and starward heaved itself. No wind was blowing on the briny sea, from no quarter of the clam sky came the noise, but a self-born⁴⁶ tempest stirred the peaceful deep. Not so violently does the south wind distress Sicilia's straits, nor so madly does the Ionian sea swell beneath the north-west's tyranny, when the cliffs tremble under the shock of waves and the white spray smites Leucate's summit. The mighty deep heaves up into a huge mound, and the sea, swollen with a monstrous birth, rushes to land. [1017] Nor is that vast destruction piled up for ships; 'tis the land it threatens. With no light sweep the flood rolls forward; some strange thing in its burdened womb the heavy wave is carrying. What new land shows its head to the stars? Is a new Cyclad rising? The rocks, the sacred seat of the Epidaurian god,⁴⁷ were hid, and the cliffs famous for he crime of Sciron, and the land⁴⁸ which is hemmed in by two seas.

[1025] While we in dumb amaze are wondering what this means, behold, the whole sea bellows, and the cliffs on every hand echo back the sound; the highest peak is wet with dashed-up spray; it foams, and then in turn spews back the flood, as when a cavernous whale

swims through the deep ways of ocean, spouting back streams of water from his mouth. Then the great globe of waters shivered, shook and broke, and brought to the shore a thing more terrible than our fear; the sea rushed landward, following its monster. My lips tremble in the telling. How the thing looked! how huge! A bull it was, towering high with a dark blue neck, and he reared a high mane upon his verdant crest; his shaggy ears stood up; his eyes flashed with changing colour, now such as the lord of the wild herd might have, now such as one born beneath the sea – now his eyes dart flame, now they flash wondrous with cerulean gleam. His brawny neck with great muscles bulges and his wide nostrils roar with his gaping draughts of air. His breast and dewlap are green with clinging moss, and his long flanks with red seaweed are spotted. His hinder parts are joined into monstrous shape, and, all scaly, the huge beast drags his measureless length along. Such is that sea-monster of the outer ocean which swallows or crushes swift-flying ships. The lands quaked with fear; herds fled in frenzy in all directions through the fields, and the herdsman forgot to follow his cattle. All beasts fled from their wooded haunts; all hunters stood trembling, pale with chilling fear. Hippolytus alone, quite unafraid, with tight reins holds fast his horses and, terror-stricken though they are, urges them on with the encouragement of his familiar voice. [1057] There is a deep passage towards the fields through the broken hills, hard by the neighbouring stretches of the sea below. Here that huge creature sharpens his anger and prepares his wrath. When he has gained his spirit, and with full trail rehearsed his wrath, he darts forth, running swiftly, scarce touching the surface of the ground with flying feet, and stands, in grim menace, before the trembling steeds. Thy son, rising up, confronts him with fierce, threatening look, nor does he change countenance, but loudly thunders: "This empty terror cannot break my spirit, for 'twas my father's task to conquer bulls." But straightway his horses, disobedient to the reins, seized the chariot and, roaming from the road, wherever frenzied terror carried them in their mad flight, there they plunged along and dashed amid the rocks.

[1072] But he, as a helmsman holds his ship steady on the boisterous sea, lest it give its side to the waves, and skilfully cheats the floods, in like manner guides his swift-moving

steeds. Now he drags on their mouths checked by the tight-drawn reins, and now, oft plying the twisted lash, he forces them to his will. His companion⁴⁹ holds doggedly in pursuit, now racing alongside the horses, now making detour to face them, from every side filling them with fear. [1080] But now they could flee no further; for he charged full front upon them, that bristling, horned monster of the deep. Then, truly, the plunging horses, driven by mad fear, broke from control, struggled to wrench their necks from the yoke, and, rearing up, hurled their burden to the ground. Headlong on his face he plunged and, as he fell, entangled his body in the clinging reins; and the more he struggled, the tighter he drew those firm-holding coils. The

horses felt their deed, and now, with the light chariot, since none controlled, wherever fear bade on they dashed. Just so, not recognizing their wonted burden, and indignant that the day had been entrusted to a pretended Sun, the horses⁵⁰ flung Phaëthon far from his heavenly track. Far and wide the fields are stained with blood, and his head, dashed on the rocks, bounds back from them. The brambles pluck away his hair; the hard stones ravage that lovely face, and his ill-fated beauty is ruined by many a wound. The swift wheels drag his dying limbs; and at last, as he is whirled along, a tree, its trunk charred into a stake, stays him with its stock driven right through the groin and holds him fast, and for a little while the car stands still, held by its impaled master. Awhile that wound stays the team – then equally delay and their master, too, they break.⁵¹ Thereafter the thickets slash his half-dead body, the rough brambles with their sharp thorns tear him and every tree-trunk has taken its toll of him. [1105] Now bands of his mourning servants are scouring the fields through the places where Hippolytus was dragged, marked in a long trail by bloody traces, and his whimpering dogs are tracking their master's limbs. But not yet has the painstaking toil of his grieving friends availed to fill out his body. Has his glorious beauty come to this? He who but now as the illustrious partner of his father's throne, who but now, his acknowledged heir, shone like the stars, he is being gathered from every hand for his last burning, and collected for his funeral pyre. THESEUS [1114] [Weeping.] O nature, all too potent, with how strong ties of blood dost thou hold parents! how we cherish thee, even against our wills! Guilty, I wished him dead; lost, I lament him.

MESSENGER [1118] Not rightfully may any weep what he has willed. THESEUS [1119] Truly I deem this the crowning woe of woes, if fortune makes what we must loathe that we must long for. MESSENGER [1121] If thou still keepst thy hate, why are thy cheeks wet with tears? THESEUS [1122] Not that I lost, but that I slew, I weep.

CHORUS [1123] How chance whirls round the affairs of men! Less does fortune rage midst humble folk, and more lightly God smites the more lightly blessed, Unnoticed ease keeps men in peace and a cottage bestows age untroubled. [1128] The mountain-peaks, lifted to airy heights, catch east, catch south winds, mad Boreas' threats, and the rain-fraught north-west gale. Seldom does the moist valley suffer the lightning's blast; but Caucasus the huge, and the Phrygian grove of mother Cybele, quake beneath the bolt of high-thundering Jove. For in jealous fear Jove aims at that which neighbours on high heaven; but the low-roofed, common home ne'er feels his mighty blasts. Around thrones he thunders. [1141] On doubtful wings flies the inconstant hour, nor does swift Fortune pledge loyalty to any. He⁵² who with joy beheld the clear, starry skies and bright day, the night⁵³ now left behind, in grief is lamenting his sorrowful return, and finds his welcome to his father's dwelling more doleful than Avernus' self. [1149] O Pallas, ever to be revered by the Athenian race, for that thy Theseus looks on sky and

upper world and has escaped from the pools of Styx, chaste one, thou owest naught to thine uncle, the all-devouring; unchanged the tale⁵⁴ remains for the infernal king.

[1154] What voice of wailing sounds from the high palace? And what would maddened Phaedra with the naked sword? [Enter PHAEDRA with a drawn sword in her hand.] THESEUS [1156] What fury pricks thee on, wild with grief? Why that sword? What mean thine outcries and lamentations over the hated corpse? PHAEDRA [1159] Me, me, assault, O savage ruler of ocean's depths; against me send forth the blue sea's monsters, whate'er in his restless waves' embrace Ocean hides in his remotest flood. O Theseus, always harsh, who never without harm unto thy loved ones dost come back, son and father have paid for thy homecomings by their death. Thou art the destroyer of thy home, hurtful ever, whether through love or hatred of thy wives.⁵⁵ [Turning to the mangled corpse.] [1168] O Hippolytus, is it such I see thy face? such have I made it? What savage Sinis, what Procrustes, has scattered thy members so, or what Cretan bull, fierce, two-formed monster, filling the labyrinth of Daedalus with his huge bellowings, has torn thee asunder with his horns? Ah, woe is me! whither is thy glorious beauty fled, and thine eyes, my stars? Dost lie low in death? Come back for a little and hearken to my words – no shameful thing I speak – with this hand will I make amends to thee, in my wicked heart will I thrust the sword and set Phaedra equally free from life and crime. Then through waters, through Tartarean pools, through Styx, through rivers of fire will I madly follow thee. Let me appease thy shade; take the spoils of my head, and accept this lock torn from my wounded forehead. It was not ours to be joined in life, but surely 'tis ours to be joined in death.

[1184] [To herself.] Now die, if thou art pure, for thy husband's sake; if impure, for thy love. Shall I seek again my husband's couch by so great crime defiled? The one horror lacking was that, as if pure, thou shouldst enjoy his couch claimed as thy right. O death, thou only solace of evil love, O death, thou chiefest grace to damaged honour, I fly to thee; spread wide thy forgiving arms.

[1191] Hear me, O Athens, and thou, his father, worse than baleful stepdame: I have lied to you, and the crime which, crazed with passion, I had conceived I my own mad breast, I falsely charged to him. Thou, father, hast punished to no purpose; an the chaste youth, through charge of the unchaste, lies there, all pure and innocent. [1196] [To HIPPOLYTUS.] Recover now thine honour. My impious breast is bare to the sword of justice, and my blood makes atonement to a guiltless man. [1199] [To THESEUS.] What thou, his father, shouldst do, now that thy son is murdered, learn from his stepdame: hide thee in Acheron. [She falls upon her sword and dies.] THESEUS [1201] Ye jaws of wan Avernus, ye Taenarean caves, ye waves of Lethe, welcome to the wretched, ye sluggish pools, hide ye in my impious self, plunge deep and bury me in unending woes. Come now, savage monsters of the deep, now, vast sea, and

whatever Proteus has hidden away in the furthest hollow of his waters, and hurry me off, me who felt triumph in crime so great, to your deep pools. And thou, father, who didst e'er give too quick assent to my angry prayer, I am not worthy of an easy death who have brought unheard-of destruction on my son and scattered his mangled limbs throughout the fields; who, while, as stern avenger, I was punishing an unreal crime, have myself fallen into true guilt. Heaven, hell, and ocean have I filled up by my sin; there remains no further lot⁵⁶; three kingdoms know me. [1213] For this have I returned? Was the way opened to the light of heaven that I might look on two funerals and a double murder, that, wifeless and childless, I might with one torch light the funeral pyres of son and wife? O giver of light that is but darkness, Alcides, give back his boon⁵⁷ to Dis; give me up again to the ghosts whom I escaped. Impiously, I make vain prayers for the death I left behind. Thou bloody man, skilful in deadly arts, who didst contrive unheard-of, barbarous ways of death, now upon thyself inflict fitting punishment. Shall a pine-tree, its top bent down to earth, split me in two, shot back into the air?⁵⁸ Shall I be hurled headlong over the Scironian cliffs? More dreadful things have I seen which Phlegethon bids imprisoned sinners suffer, compassing them about with his stream of fire; what punishment waits for me, and what place, I know.

[1229] Ye guilty shades, make room, and on these shoulders, these, let the rock rest, the endless task of the aged son⁵⁹ of Aeolus, and weight down my weary hands; let water, lapping my very lips mock my thirst⁶⁰; let the fell vulture leave Tityus and fly hither, let my liver constantly grow afresh for punishment; and do thou rest awhile, father⁶¹ of my Pirithoüs – let the wheel that never stops its whirling bear these limbs of mine on its swift-turning rim. Yawn, earth; take me, dire Chaos, take me; this way to the shades is more fitting⁶² for me – my son I follow. And fear not, thou who rulest the shades; I come clean-handed⁶³; receive me into thy everlasting home, to go forth no more. My prayers move not the gods; but if I asked impious things, how would they bend to answer!

CHORUS [1244] Theseus, time without end awaits thy lamentations. Now pay the rites due to thy son and bury with speed the scattered limbs mangled so shamefully. THESEUS [1247] Hither, thither bring the remains of his dear body and heap together, as they come, the burden of his limbs. Is this Hippolytus? Mine is the sin, I do acknowledge it; 'tis I who have murdered thee, and, lest once only or alone I might be guilty, when I his father would dare crime, my own sire I summoned to my aid. Behold, I enjoy my father's boon. O childlessness, bitter misfortune for broken years! Come, clasp his limbs and all that is left thee of thy son, thou wretched man, and, in thy sad breast fondling, cherish them. CHORUS [1256] The scattered parts of his torn body set thou, his sire, in order, and put back in place the random pieces. Here should be his strong right hand, here we must put his left, skilled in managing the reins; traces of his left side

I recognize. But how large a part is still lacking to our tears! THESEUS [1262] Be firm, my trembling hands, for your sad duty; be dry, my cheeks, stay your flowing tears, while a father is portioning out members to his son and fashioning his body. What is this shapeless, ugly piece, with many a wound torn on every side? What part it is of thee, I know not; but it is a part of thee. Here, here lay it down, not in its own but in an empty place. Is this that face which once gleamed with fire as of the stars,

which turned his enemy's eyes aside? Has his beauty fallen to this? O dire fate, O cruel favour of the gods! Thus comes back son to father in answer to his prayer? [Placing some ornaments on the torn body.] [1273] Lo, these are thy sire's last gifts. Take them, O thou who must oft be borne to burial. Now let the fire consume these limbs. [1275] [To attendants.] Open wide my palace, gloomy and foul with slaughter, and let all Athens with loud laments resound. Do you make ready the flames of the royal pyre; do you seek through the fields for his body's parts still wandering. [Pointing to PHAEDRA's corpse.] [1279] As for her, let her be buried deep in earth, and heavy may the soil lie on her unholy head! THE END