



About Euripides the anthropologist, and how he reads the troubled thoughts of female initiands

Citation

Nagy, Gregory. 2021.02.20. "About Euripides the anthropologist, and how he reads the troubled thoughts of female initiands." Classical Inquiries. http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:Classical_Inquiries.

Published Version

<https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/euripides-the-anthropologist-and-his-imaginings-about-wandering-minds-of-female-initiands/>

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Classical Inquiries

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About Euripides the anthropologist, and how he reads the troubled thoughts of female initiands

 Gregory Nagy

FEBRUARY 20, 2021 | By Gregory Nagy

2021.02.20 | By Gregory Nagy

§0. I have long admired what I would call the anthropological insights of Euripides into *aetiologies*, that is, into myths referring directly to rituals that frame these myths. Of course the very idea of linking anthropology with the poetry of Euripides is quite inaccurate in its anachronism, but the actual insights of this poet into the interweavings of *myth* and *ritual*—as anthropologists today tend to use these two terms—are I think quite accurate. A case in point, as I argued in “Hour 20” of the book *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Nagy 2013, second edition 2020; hereafter abbreviated H24H), is the myth about Hippolytus and Phaedra as transmitted in the ancient Greek city-state of Troizen, where the local population worshipped these two mythological figures as cult heroes linked with a ritual of female initiation. This localized ritual in Troizen was aetiologized in a localized myth telling about the unrequited love of Phaedra for Hippolytus, and Euripides, in a drama named after Hippolytus, actually poeticized this aetiology, as I argued in the book I cited (H24H 20§39 = pp. 481–482 of the second edition). What I now add to that argument is that this aetiology is linked by Euripides to the way he reads the actual feelings of female initiands as they relate in ritual to the prototypical feelings of Phaedra herself in myth. In the poetics of Euripides, the “wandering mind” of the lovesick Phaedra in myth is linked to personal anxieties experienced by girls who are about to be initiated into womanhood. Their troubled thoughts, as we will see, are pictured

as a musical continuation of an archetypal woman's own way of thinking about the sorrows of love



Illustration by Georges Barbier (1882–1932): Hippolytus and Phaedra, 1922. **Image** via Flickr.

§1. I am about to quote the text of the aetiology that Euripides has poeticized in his drama titled *Hippolytus*. The words in this text are spoken by the goddess Artemis, who foretells a

ritual of female initiation that will be established in the post-heroic future by the people of Troizen. The goddess reveals how this ritual will re-enact the myth about the unrequited love of Phaedra for Hippolytus. Artemis makes this revelation to Hippolytus himself, appearing to him in an epiphany and speaking directly to the hero, who at this moment is experiencing his final agonies of dying from the horrific injuries he sustained in a spectacular crash of his speeding chariot. I quote here in the original Greek the words spoken by the goddess, followed by the translation I give in H24H 20§35, “Text I” (at p. 480 of ed. 2):

l₁₄₂₃ σοὶ δ', ὧ ταλαίπωρ', ἀντὶ τῶνδε τῶν κακῶν l₁₄₂₄ τιμὰς μεγίστας ἐν πόλει
 Τροζηνίᾳ l₁₄₂₅ δώσω· κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων πάρος l₁₄₂₆ κόμας κεροῦνταί σοι, δι'
 αἰῶνος μακροῦ l₁₄₂₇ πένθη μέγιστα δακρύων καρπουμένῳ· l₁₄₂₈ αἰεὶ δὲ μουσοποιὸς ἐς
 σὲ παρθένων l₁₄₂₉ ἔσται μέριμνα, κούκ ἀνώνυμος πεσῶν l₁₄₃₀ ἔρωσ ὁ Φαίδρας ἐς σὲ
 σιγηθήσεται.

l₁₄₂₃ To you, poor sufferer, in compensation for these bad things that have happened to you here, l₁₄₂₄ the greatest honors [*tīmai*] in the city [*polis*] of Troizen l₁₄₂₅ I will give to you: unwed girls before they get married l₁₄₂₆ will cut off their hair for you, and throughout the length of time [*aiōn*] l₁₄₂₇ you will harvest the very great sorrows [*penthos* plural] of their tears. l₁₄₂₈ And for all time there will be a thought [*merimna*] that comes along with the songmaking directed at you by virgin girls, l₁₄₂₉ and it will be a troubled thought. The story and the names will not fall aside unremembered l₁₄₃₀ —the story of the passionate-love [*erōs*] of Phaedra for you. No, it will never be passed over in silence.

Euripides *Hippolytus* 1423–1430

§2. As I argue in H24H, Artemis here is foretelling a hero cult, still current in the post-heroic era of Euripides, in honor of not one but two cult heroes, both Hippolytus and Phaedra. The status of Hippolytus and Phaedra as cult heroes worshipped by the people of the city-state of Troizen is made explicit in the reportage of Pausanias, a traveler who lived in the second century CE. I am about to quote my translation of the relevant passage from Pausanias, where we will read our traveler’s description of a precinct in the city of Troizen that is sacred to Hippolytus, who is worshipped there as the city’s primary cult hero—and where Phaedra is also

worshipped as a cult hero. Before I quote my literal translation of the relevant passage, I emphasize, already now, the fact that the *peribolos* or ‘enclosure’ of Hippolytus, as mentioned at 2.32.2, is described already at 2.32.1 as the *temenos* or ‘sacred precinct’ of Hippolytus. Keeping this fact in mind, let us now consider the relevant passage:

{Pausanias 2.32.1} To Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, is dedicated a very famous precinct [*temenos*], in which is a temple [*nāos*] with an ancient [*arkhaion*] statue [*agalma*]. Diomedes, they say, made [*poieîn*] these, and, further, he was the first to sacrifice [*thuein*] to Hippolytus. The people of Troizen have a priest [*hiereus*] of Hippolytus, and he is consecrated [*hierâsthai*] [to Hippolytus] for life. Also, it is an established practice for them to have annual sacrifices [*thusiai*] performed [for Hippolytus]. In addition [to this ritual practice performed for Hippolytus] they have another one. They perform-a-ritual [*drân*] that is as follows. Every girl before marriage cuts off for him [= Hippolytus] a lock [*plokamos*] of her hair and, having cut it off, she brings it, in an act of bringing-in-procession [*pherein*], to his temple [*nāos*] and dedicates it. They [= the people of Troizen] are unwilling to accept that he died, dragged to death by his horses, and they do not show [*apophainein*] his tomb [*taphos*], though they know where it is. But they customarily-think [*nomizein*] that the one who is called the Charioteer [= Auriga = *hēniokhos*] in the sky, this one [*houtos*], is that one [*ekeinos*], the Hippolytus who receives this honor [*tīmē*] from the gods.

{Pausanias 2.32.2} Within this enclosure [*peribolos*] [of Hippolytus] is a temple [*nāos*] of Apollo Epibatērios [‘boarding (the ship)’], a dedication of Diomedes for having weathered the storm that came upon the Greeks as they were returning from Troy. They say that Diomedes was also the first to hold the Pythian Contest [*agōn*] in honor of Apollo. Of Damia and Auxesia (for the people of Troizen, too, share in their worship) they do not tell [*legein*] the same story [*logos*] as do the people of Epidauros and of Aegina, but they say that they were maidens [*parthēnoi*] who came from Crete. When factionalism [*stasis*] broke out everywhere in the city, even these girls, they say, were stoned to death by an opposing faction and they [= the people of Troizen] celebrate [*agein*] a festival [*heortē*] for their sake, calling it the Lithobolia [‘throwing of stones’].

{Pausanias 2.32.3} In the other part of the enclosure [*peribolos*] is a race-course [*stadion*] named after Hippolytus, and looming over it is a temple [*nāos*] of Aphrodite [invoked by way of the epithet] *Kataskopiā* [‘looking down from above’]. Here is the reason [for the

epithet]: it was at this very spot, whenever Hippolytus was exercising-naked [*gumnazesthai*], that she, feeling-an-erotic-passion-for [*erân*] him, used to gaze away [*apo-blepein*] at him from above, Phaedra did. A myrtle-bush [*mursinē*] still grows here, and its leaves—as I wrote at an earlier point—have holes punched into them. Whenever Phaedra was-feeling-there-was-no-way-out [*aporeîn*] and could find no relief for her erotic-passion [*erōs*], she would take it out on the leaves of this myrtle-bush, wantonly injuring them.

{Pausanias 2.32.4} There is also the tomb [*taphos*] of Phaedra, not far from the tomb [*mnēma*] of Hippolytus, which is a piled-up tumulus near the myrtle-bush [*mursinē*].

§3. As we see from this reportage by Pausanias, the *temenos* or ‘sacred precinct’ of Hippolytus contains not only a *nāos* ‘temple’ that is sacred to him but also a *nāos* that is sacred to Apollo. And here is another detail that is even more interesting from the standpoint of my argumentation: also located inside this precinct of Hippolytus is a *nāos* that is sacred to Aphrodite, who is given an epithet, *Kataskopiā* ‘looking down from above’, that evokes the myth about the love of Phaedra for Hippolytus. I concentrated on that epithet in an essay I wrote for *Classical Inquiries* (Nagy 2018.06.21). But I concentrate here instead on another relevant detail reported by Pausanias: also contained by the sacred space of Hippolytus is the tomb of Phaedra herself. As I argued in the essay just cited, the presence of a tomb for the suicidal Phaedra within the *temenos* or ‘sacred’ precinct of Hippolytus is an indication of her own hero cult, symmetrical with the hero cult of Hippolytus.

§4. That said, I am now ready to analyze the relevance of the passage from the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, quoted at the beginning of my essay, where the goddess Artemis is foretelling a ritual of female initiation, localized at Troizen, in the context of what I view as a joint hero cult of Hippolytus and Phaedra. For background, I start with an analysis of a relevant theme that is poetically elaborated in the drama of Euripides. I have already analyzed this theme, to which I will refer hereafter as the “wandering mind” of Phaedra, in H244 20§§52–60 (= pp. 487–491 in the 2nd ed.) In that analysis, however, I did not emphasize adequately what I need to make more clear in what I will now argue: that the “wandering mind” of Phaedra is a dysfunctional prototype, in myth, of personal anxieties experienced by girls who are about to undergo, in ritual, initiation into womanhood.

§5. As I noted in H24H 20§52 (= pp. 487–488 of the ed. 2), Phaedra feels an empathy for the experiences of Hippolytus, which are male experiences. Her wandering mind focuses on the hero’s two primary activities—now on one and then on the other:

- 1) Hippolytus is hunting in the mountainous region of Troizen.
- 2) Hippolytus is performing athletic exercises in the seacoast region of Troizen. In particular, Hippolytus is racing his chariot on the sands of a long beach that extends along a lagoon next to the seacoast of Troizen.

Presiding over both these activities, as we will see, is the goddess Artemis. Her role, as we will also see, is essential. In what follows, I quote the relevant words, staged by Euripides, as spoken by Phaedra in dialogue with her “nurse.” I start with the original Greek, followed by the translation I give in H24H 20§52, “Text K” (at pp. 488–489 of ed. 2).

l₁₉₈ {Φα.} αἶρετέ μου δέμας, ὀρθοῦτε κάρα· l₁₉₉ λέλυμαι μελέων σύνδεσμα φίλων. l₂₀₀
 λάβειτ' εὐπήχεις χεῖρας, πρόπολοι. l₂₀₁ βαρύ μοι κεφαλῆς ἐπίκρανον ἔχειν· l₂₀₂ ἄφελ',
 ἀμπέτασον βόστρυχον ὤμοις. ... l₂₀₈ πῶς ἂν δροσερᾶς ἀπὸ κρηνίδος l₂₀₉ καθαρῶν
 ὑδάτων πῶμ' ἀρυσαίμαν, l₂₁₀ ὑπὸ τ' αἰγείροις ἔν τε κομήτη l₂₁₁ λειμῶνι κλιθεῖσ'
 ἀναπαυσαίμαν; ... l₂₁₅ πέμπετε μ' εἰς ὄρος· εἶμι πρὸς ὕλαν l₂₁₆ καὶ παρὰ πεύκας, ἵνα
 θηροφόνοι l₂₁₇ στείβουσι κύνες l₂₁₈ βαλιαῖς ἐλάφοις ἐγχιριμπτόμεναι. l₂₁₉ πρὸς θεῶν·
 ἔραμαι κυσὶ θωύξαι l₂₂₀ καὶ παρὰ χαίταν ξανθὰν ρῖψαι l₂₂₁ Θεσσαλὸν ὄρπακ',
 ἐπίλογχον ἔχουσ' l₂₂₂ ἐν χειρὶ βέλος. l₂₂₃ {Τρ.} τί ποτ', ὦ τέκνον, τάδε κηραίνεις; l₂₂₄ τί
 κυνηγεσίῳ καὶ σοὶ μελέτη; l₂₂₅ τί δὲ κρηναίων νασμῶν ἔρασαι; l₂₂₆ πάρα γὰρ
 δροσερὰ πύργους συνεχῆς l₂₂₇ κλειτύς, ὅθεν σοὶ πῶμα γένοιτ' ἂν. l₂₂₈ {Φα.} δέσποιν'
 ἀλίας Ἄρτεμι Λίμνας l₂₂₉ καὶ γυμνασίων τῶν ἵπποκρότων, l₂₃₀ εἴθε γενοίμαν ἐν σοῖς
 δαπέδοις l₂₃₁ πῶλους Ἐνετὰς δαμαλιζόμενα. l₂₃₂ {Τρ.} τί τόδ' αὖ παράφρων ἔρριψας
 ἔπος; l₂₃₃ νῦν δὲ μὲν ὄρος βᾶσ' ἐπὶ θήρας l₂₃₄ πόθον ἐστέλλου, νῦν δ' αὖ ψαμάθοις l₂₃₅
 ἐπ' ἀκυμάντοις πῶλων ἔρασαι. l₂₃₆ τάδε μαντείας ἄξια πολλῆς, l₂₃₇ ὅστις σε θεῶν
 ἀνασειράζει l₂₃₈ καὶ παρακόπτει φρένας, ὦ παῖ.

l₁₉₈ {Phaedra:} Lift my body, keep my head up. l₁₉₉ The fastenings [*sun-desma*] of my
 dear [*phila*] limbs [*melea*] have come apart [*le-lū-tai*]. l₂₀₀ Hold on to my shapely arms,

attendants. l₂₀₁ My hair all done up on top of my head is a heavy load to bear. l₂₀₂ Take out my hair pinnings, let the curls of my hair cascade over my shoulders. ... l₂₀₈ I only wish I could, from a dewy spring, l₂₀₉ scoop up a drink of pure water, l₂₁₀ and, lying down beneath the poplars in a grassy l₂₁₁ meadow [*leimōn*], I could find relief. ... l₂₁₅ Take me to the mountains – I will go to the woods, l₂₁₆ to the pine trees, where the beast-killing l₂₁₇ hounds track their prey, l₂₁₈ getting closer and closer to the dappled deer. l₂₁₉ I swear by the gods, I have a passionate-desire [*erâsthai*] to give a hunter’s shout to the hounds, l₂₂₀ and, with my blond hair and all, to throw l₂₂₁ a Thessalian javelin, holding the barbed l₂₂₂ dart in my hand.

l₂₂₃ {Nurse:} Why on earth, my child, are you sick at heart about these things? l₂₂₄ Why is the hunt your concern [*meletē*]? l₂₂₅ And why do you feel a passionate-desire [*erâsthai*] for streams flowing from craggy heights l₂₂₆ when nearby, next to these towers, there is a moist l₂₂₇ hillside with a fountain? You could get your drink from here.

l₂₂₈ {Phaedra:} My lady Artemis! You who preside over the lagoon by the sea! l₂₂₉ You are where the place is for exercising, and it thunders with horses’ hooves! l₂₃₀ Oh, if only I could be there, on your grounds, l₂₃₁ masterfully driving Venetian horses!

l₂₃₂ {Nurse:} Why in your madness have you hurled out of your mouth this wording here? l₂₃₃ One moment you were going up the mountain to hunt l₂₃₄ – you were getting all set, in your longing [*pothos*], to do that, and then, the next moment, you were heading for the beach l₂₃₅ sheltered from the splashing waves, in your passionate-desire [*erâsthai*] for the horses. l₂₃₆ These things are worth a lot of consultation with seers: l₂₃₇ which one of the gods is steering you off-course l₂₃₈ and deflects your thinking [*phrenes*], child?

Euripides *Hippolytus* 198–202, 208–211, 215–238

§6. From the wording of this exchange between Phaedra and her “nurse” in “Text K,” it is revealed that the female experiences that we see being projected through the feelings of the female chorus at the beginning of this drama have come true in the feelings of Phaedra herself.

In what follows, I quote the relevant words, staged by Euripides, as sung and danced by the chorus at the beginning of his drama. I show first the original Greek, followed by the translation I give in H24H 20§46, “Text J” (at pp. 485–486 of ed. 2):

l₁₂₁₋₁₂₄ Ὠκεανοῦ τις ὕδωρ στάζουσα πέτρα λέγεται, βαπτὰν κάλπισι παγὰν ρυτὰν προιεῖσα κρημνῶν. l₁₂₅ τόθι μοί τις ἦν φίλα l₁₂₆ πορφύρεα φάρεα l₁₂₇ ποταμίᾳ δρόσῳ l₁₂₈ τέγγουσα, θερμᾶς δ’ ἐπὶ νῶτα πέτρας l₁₂₉ εὐαλίου κατέβαλλ’. ὅθεν μοι l₁₃₀ πρώτα φάτις ἦλθε δεσποίνας, l₁₃₁₋₁₃₄ τειρομένην νοσερᾶ κοίτῃ δέμας ἐντὸς ἔχειν οἴκων, λεπτὰ δὲ φάρη ξανθὰν κεφαλὰν σκιάζειν· ... l₁₆₁ φιλεῖ δὲ τᾶ δυστρόπῳ γυναικῶν l₁₆₂ ἄρμονιά κακὰ δὴ l₁₆₃ στανος ἀμηχανία συνοικεῖν l₁₆₄ ὠδίνων τε καὶ ἀφροσύνας. l₁₆₅ δι’ ἐμᾶς ἦξιέν ποτε νηδύος ἄ l₁₆₆ δ’ αὔρα· τὰν δ’ εὖλοχον οὐρανίαν l₁₆₇ τόξων μεδέουσαν ἀύτευν l₁₆₈ Ἄρτεμιν, καί μοι πολυζήλωτος αἰεὶ l₁₆₉ σὺν θεοῖσι φοιτᾶ. l₁₇₀ ἀλλ’ ἦδε τροφὸς γεραιὰ πρὸ θυρῶν l₁₇₁ τήνδε κομίζουσ’ ἔξω μελάθρων. l₁₇₂ στυγνὸν δ’ ὄφρῳν νέφος αὐξάνεται· l₁₇₃ τί ποτ’ ἐστὶ μαθεῖν ἔραται ψυχῇ, l₁₇₄ τί δεδήληται l₁₇₅ δέμας ἀλλόχροον βασιλείας.

l₁₂₁₋₁₂₄ 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. l₁₂₅ It was there that my friend [*philē*] was washing l₁₂₆ purple robes l₁₂₇ in the flowing stream, l₁₂₈ washing them, and then, on the face of a rock warmed l₁₂₉ by the kindly sunlight did she throw them. From there l₁₃₀ the rumor first came to me about the lady of the house, l₁₃₁₋₁₃₄ how she is wasting away on her sickbed, keeping herself indoors, and a thin veil shadows her blond head. ... l₁₆₁ Often, in women’s badly modulated [*dus-tropos*] l₁₆₂ tuning [*harmonia*], a bad and l₁₆₃ wretched sort of helplessness [*amēkhaniā*] dwells, l₁₆₄ arising both from the pains of labor and from lack of sensibility [*aphrosunē*]. l₁₆₅ Right through my womb I once felt a rush of this l₁₆₆ burst of wind [*aurā*] here, and, calling upon the one who helps in the labor of childbirth, the one who is the sky-dweller, l₁₆₇ the one who has power over the arrows, I shouted out her name, l₁₆₈ Artemis, and she, very much sought after, always l₁₆₉ comes to me, if the gods are willing. l₁₇₀ But look, the aged Nurse before the palace doors l₁₇₁ is bringing this one [*Phaedra*] from the palace, l₁₇₂

and on her [= Phaedra's] brow a gloomy cloud gathers. |₁₇₃ To know what on earth is happening—my soul [*psūkhē*] passionately-desires [*erâsthai*] to know this. |₁₇₄ Why has she become completely undone? |₁₇₅ Why has the complexion of the queen turned so strangely pale?

Euripides *Hippolytus* 121–134, 161–175

§7. In what follows, I epitomize from H24H 20§53 (= p. 489 ed. 2), correlating what we read here in “Text J” with what we have already read in “Text K,” which is situated at a later point in the drama. There we saw the first reference to the “wandering mind” of Phaedra. Here at lines 161–168 of Text J, at an earlier point in the drama, we see a metaphor that connects a woman whose uterus is in pain and a stringed instrument that is out of tune—as when the *harmoniā* (162) or ‘accordatura’ or ‘tuning’ of a lyre is *dus-tropos* (161), ‘having bad modulations [*tropoi*]’. So also in line 199 of Text K, the words of Phaedra herself declare: ‘the fastenings [*sun-desma*] of my dear [*phila*] limbs [*melea*] have come apart’. The form *melea* here is the plural of the word *melos*, which is in fact not one word but two. One of these two words means ‘limb’ but the other means ‘tune’. So, there is another possible meaning that comes out of Phaedra’s wording, and it is this: ‘the fastenings [*sun-desma*] of my dear [*phila*] tunes [*melea*] are unstrung’—as if the woman were a stringed instrument that had lost its *harmoniā* or ‘tuning’ (162). Phaedra is now like a lyre that is out of tune, since the tuning is *dus-tropos* or ‘badly modulated’ (161). So, Phaedra herself is out of tune. A more literal translation of her wording would be: ‘I have come apart [*le-lū-mai*] in all the places where the tunes [*melea*] dear [*phila*] to me are connected with each together’—or ‘...where my dear [*phila*] limbs [*melea*] are connected with each together’. These two meanings can even come together in Text J when the members of the chorus are dancing with their own ‘dear’ limbs while singing their feelings of disconnectedness. And just as the collectivized female voice of the chorus of women in Text J feels an *amēkhaniā* or ‘helplessness’ (163), shouting out the name of Artemis in hopes of relief (167–168), so also Phaedra in Text K shouts out the name of the goddess (228–230) in her own moment of utter helplessness.

§8. Here I epitomize further, from H24H 20§54–60 (= pp. 489–491 in ed. 2):

{H24H 20§54}

The troubled thinking that a woman experiences is blamed on her uterus in the choral song of Text J (165), but there is no such direct blaming in the words uttered by Phaedra herself in

Text K. She does not understand the cause of her troubled thinking—why her mind wanders. But her own wording, without her intending it, does show the cause. She is ‘out of tune’, and that is a metaphorical way of blaming the uterus after all. In the words of the chorus, as quoted in Text J, a woman’s bad tuning is caused by an inner *amēkhaniā* or ‘helplessness’ (163), which is in turn caused simultaneously by *ōdīnes* or ‘pains of labor’ and by *aphrosunē* or ‘lack of sensibility’ (164). So, a ‘lack of sensibility’ is supposedly just like a pain in the uterus, which a woman can feel rushing through her insides like a sudden burst of wind (165–166).

{H24H 20§55}

Such disturbingly troubled thinking, which is surely troubling even for modern readers, emerges from the empathy felt by the chorus for the female experiences of Phaedra. But then Phaedra herself shows the empathy she feels for the male experiences of the one with whom she is madly in love. As we have seen in Text K, the wandering mind of Phaedra conceives a passionate desire to be a hunter just like Hippolytus (215–222, 233–234) and, the next moment, to be an athlete just like Hippolytus (228–230, 234–235).

{H24H 20§56}

Artemis presides over these male experiences of Hippolytus just as surely as she presides over the female experiences of Phaedra. After all, Artemis is the goddess of the hunt, and she is also the goddess who presides over the athletic exercises of Hippolytus. So, Phaedra is really at one with Artemis when this troubled woman lets her mind wander off—first to the mountains where Hippolytus would do his hunting (215–222, 233–234) and then to the sheltered long beach where Hippolytus would speed around in his racing chariot (228–230, 234–235).

{H24H 20§57}

I focus for a minute here on a most telling detail, already quoted in Text K, about the passionate desire of Phaedra for the hunt. Here is how she says it: ‘I swear by the gods, I have a passionate-desire [*erâsthai*] to give a hunter’s shout to the hounds, | and, with my blond hair and all (in the background), to throw |₂₂₁ a Thessalian javelin, holding (in the foreground) the barbed |₂₂₂ dart in my hand’ (219–222). In repeating my translation here, I have now added within parentheses the cues “in the background” and “in the foreground.” That is because, in her painterly imagination, Phaedra even poses here in the act of hurling a hunting javelin that is foregrounded against the golden background of her blond hair flowing in the wind. Holding this pose, Phaedra can become the very image of Artemis.

{H24H 20§58}

The tragedy in all this is that Artemis, who presides over both the male experiences of Hippolytus and the female experiences of Phaedra, makes it impossible for a woman like Phaedra to share in the male experiences that Artemis reserves for Hippolytus. Only Aphrodite allows female and male experiences to merge, but that merger can happen only in the adult world of heterosexuality, not in the pre-adult world represented by Hippolytus. In the pre-adult world, activities like hunting and athletics can already become part of male experiences, but the experience of heterosexual relationships must wait until adulthood is reached.

{H24H 20§59; also from 20§44 and 5§111}

I describe Artemis as a prenuptial as well as a postnuptial goddess in comparison to Aphrodite as a nuptial goddess. My purpose is to highlight the complementarity of these goddesses in the lives of women. And by now we have seen the most obvious example of complementarity in the case of Artemis: she presides over a woman's uterus both before and after marriage, but the heterosexual experience of intercourse and becoming impregnated is reserved for Aphrodite. As for the lives of men, the complementarity of these two goddesses is less clearly defined. For example, although Artemis presides over the activities of hunting and athletics as ritualized preliminaries to adulthood, these activities are clearly not restricted to pre-adults. It is only in the case of mythological figures like Hippolytus that the linking of these activities with pre-adulthood is accentuated.

{H24H 20§60}

The world of ancient Greek myth and ritual tends to differentiate, like it or not, the experiences of men and women from each other. Now we see the cost of such differentiation, as expressed in myth: Phaedra must die because the experiences of men and women must be kept distinct.

§9. While Phaedra in myth must die, the girls of Troizen who are transitioning into womanhood by way of a localized ritual of initiation that is signaled by Euripides will not have to die, except notionally. They die to their old girlhood, notionally, only to live again in their new womanhood. And the wonder of it all is that their experiencing the ritual of initiation comes to life in their singing and dancing, that is, in ritualized choral performance. Pausanias never gets to say that, but Euripides the anthropologist not only says it: he turns their song into his own songs in his own theatrical creation, where the choral experience of the female singers and dancers of Troizen becomes an experience of civic education for the male chorus who re-

enact, in Athenian State Theater, the troubled thoughts of female initiands, girls from a distant place who re-enact in their song and dance a love from a distant time—but who may be in fact the singing and dancing girls of the here-and-now.

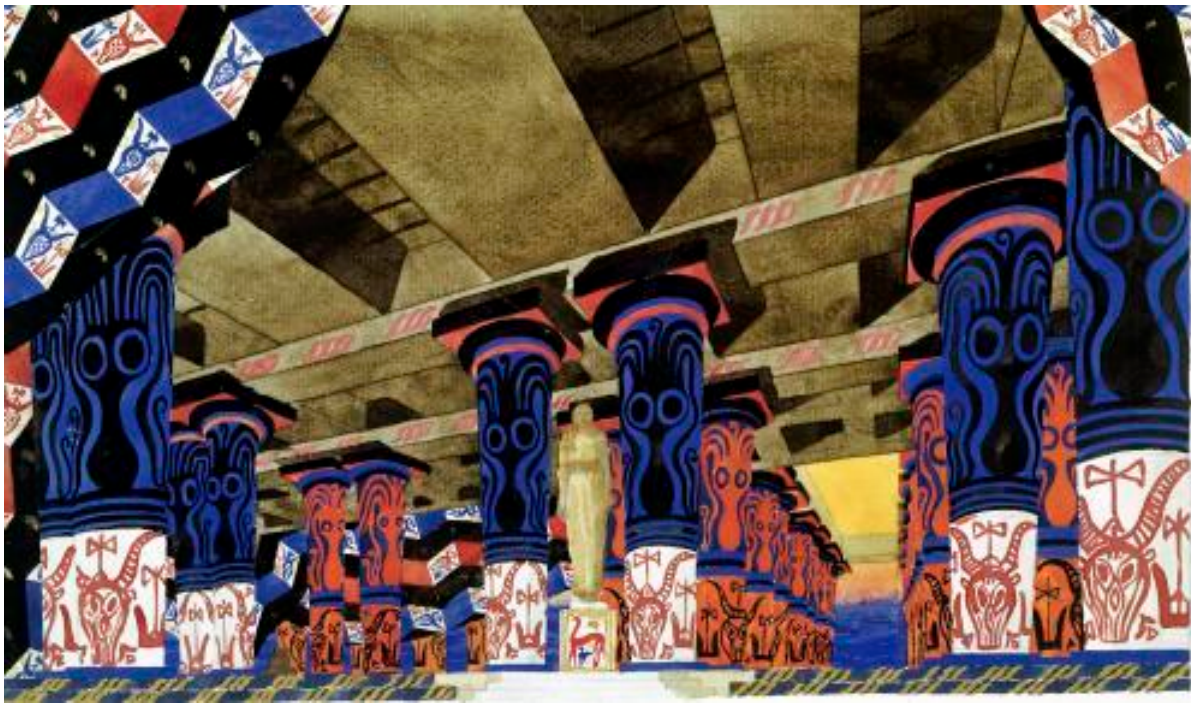
§10. But how are we to imagine what I just described as the troubled thoughts of girls in Troizen, back in the time of Euripides, in the late fifth century BCE, who are about to be initiated into womanhood? In an earlier essay (Nagy 2016.02.11, linked [here](#)), I interpreted the choral singing and dancing of these girls as “a sad love song.” Or, to say it in the words of Euripides in his *Hippolytus*, the song of these girls is ‘a troubled thought that comes along with songmaking’ (μουσσοποιῶς ... μέριμνα 1428–1429). The Greek word that I translate here as ‘a troubled thought’ is *merimna*, which means literally a ‘care’ or a ‘concern’. A *merimna*, in other words, is what you have on your mind. In a song of Bacchylides (19.11), the same noun *merimna*, which I translate here as ‘a troubled thought’, can even refer to the thought-processes of the poet himself as he is pictured in the act of composing his song. I think that the troubled thoughts of Euripides are in this case musically channeling, as it were, the personal anxieties of long-forgotten female initiands in the distant past.



Illustration from *Oeuvres complètes de Jean Racine* (Paris, 1816). British Museum no. 1900,1231.627. **Image** © The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), drawing of Sarah Bernhardt as Phaedra, in a production of Racine's *Phèdre*. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, no. RP-P-1949-584. **Image** via the Rijksmuseum, public domain.



Set design for a 1923 production of *Phèdre*, by Léon Bakst. **Image** via Wikimedia Commons.

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Euripides, Hippolytus, myth, Pausanias, Phaedra, ritual