

Family Matters: Gender and Family in Seneca's *Phaedra*

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Seneca the Younger, writing in the early Roman Empire, is the only known Roman tragedian whose works survive. His *Phaedra*, considered to be one of his earlier tragedies, is centered on the royal family of Athens, consisting of the hero Theseus, his current wife Phaedra, and his son, Hippolytus. Each of these three main characters exhibit shifts in their portrayed gender as the play unfolds. Hippolytus, first introduced as a hunter and strong leader, becomes hunted by his stepmother Phaedra, making him the passive participant in their relationship. This passive role was considered to be the feminine role by the ancient Romans. Theseus, the Athenian hero known for slaying the Minotaur of Crete, stays within the masculine sphere, but shows the full breadth of masculinity. His role as a hero both contrasts and compliments his roles as father and husband. Theseus' heroic identity causes him to exhibit a damaging form of hyper-masculinity; within his family, he shows a more benign masculine character. Phaedra, for her part, uses the feminine roles of virgin, wife, and mother to conceal her strong masculine traits. She is an apt hunter, choosing to die that she might continue to hunt Hippolytus in the underworld after his tragic death. Seneca, in writing this incestuous myth for a Roman audience, displays the consequences of gender subversion and the tragic effect this has on the royal family of Athens.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my partner, Ben. Thank you for your love and support, now and always.

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Introduction

The Life and Writings of Seneca the Younger

Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BCE - 65 CE),¹ perhaps best known for his philosophical writings and letters, is the only remaining tragedian of Rome. He is also the author of the only extant Roman tragedies. In the political sphere, he was very influential in his lifetime. Little is known about his early life, but Seneca was certainly known in the Roman political sphere to be a great orator and writer by 39 CE, when Emperor Gaius (Caligula) began his reign. It was during this same year that Seneca offended the Emperor through his orations and was ordered to commit suicide for the first time. In 41 CE, he was again ordered to commit suicide, this time by Emperor Claudius, being accused of committing adultery with Julia Livilla, the niece of Claudius.² However, this was changed to exile on the island of Corsica. He was then recalled around 49 CE to act as tutor to the young Nero,³ who had been named as heir to Claudius. In 54 CE, upon Nero's accession to emperor, Seneca was made political advisor alongside Afranius Burrus. For the eight years that these two men acted in this role, the empire enjoyed a period of good government.

However, Nero came under the influence of men who encouraged and condoned his crimes, greatly diminishing Seneca's power in the government. In 62 CE, upon the death of Burrus, Seneca requested that he be allowed to retire, leaving his wealth to Nero. In 65 CE, after three years of relative peace spent writing on philosophy, Nero demanded that Seneca commit suicide,

*All translations herein are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

¹ For a modern biography of Seneca the Younger, see both Miriam Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, 1976; and Emily Wilson, *The Greatest Empire: A Life of Seneca*, 2014.

² It is likely that this charge originated with Claudius's wife, Messalina.

³ Emperor Claudius was still reigning, but had by this time taken Agrippina as his fourth wife; she was the mother of Nero. It appears that it was Agrippina who requested the return of Seneca to tutor her son. See Tacitus, *Annals* 12.8, 13.2.

believing him to be a participant in the Pisonian conspiracy.⁴ Seneca did eventually kill himself in a Stoic, if not elaborate and heroic, fashion, as is related by Tacitus.⁵ The strong ties between Seneca the Younger and the Imperial family, as well as his political participation in Rome, invite scholarly investigation into the mechanics and politics of the imperial family. Thus, due to his proximity to the imperial household and therefore power, Seneca's tragedies and satires, in addition to his letters and philosophical works, are seen as having been influenced, in part, by the imperial power and political world of his time.

While the ten remaining Roman tragedies are all commonly ascribed to Seneca, it is likely that only eight were written by the philosopher.⁶ While no exact date remains for any of the extant tragedies, ancient authors⁷ describe Seneca as composing his dramas in the 50s CE,⁸ and a rough chronology of the plays can be established with decent certainty. Seneca's tragedies all share some main characteristics, such as the highly visual language utilized; the lack of any physical deities; a focus on the stories of the Greek heroes covered in 5th century BCE Athens by the three extant Greek tragedians; rhetorical display; and more grotesque or macabre action observed on stage.⁹

⁴ Seneca was unlikely an active participant in the affair, but may have had knowledge of the conspiracy.

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.60.3-64.6. Tacitus seems to record Seneca's death as a close imitation of Socrates' suicide, meeting his end without fear.

⁶ These being *Phaedra*, *Medea*, *Oedipus*, *Troades*, *Hercules Furens*, *Thyestes*, *Phoenissae*, and *Agamemnon*. *Hercules Oetaeus* follows in the same vein as Seneca's other works, particularly in being based upon Greek subject matter, but was dismissed as a tragedy of Seneca in the seventeenth century; current scholarship agrees that while it is modelled closely on Seneca's works and uses many passages present within Seneca's other plays, it was not composed by Seneca (see, for instance, Anthony J. Boyle's book *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*: 250). The remaining tragedy, *Octavia*, was ascribed to Seneca based, perhaps, on the fact that he is a character in the play. (See Brockett, Oscar Gross; Hildy, Franklin Joseph (2003), *History of the Theatre* (9th ed.), Allyn & Bacon: 50). However, for many of the same reasons that *Hercules Oetaeus* is now disregarded as a work of Seneca, so too is *Octavia*; in addition, it is based upon Roman history, which is not seen in any of Seneca's other tragedies.

⁷ Tacitus reports on the attacks on Seneca for his compositions of verse in his *Annals* 14.52.2-3; Tacitus also uses the word *carmina* or song in the singular at *Annals* 11.13.1 with the definition instead of 'tragedy'; Cicero, in his *De Senectute* uses *carmen* to refer to a tragedy as well (Cicero, *Sen.* 22). See also Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 3. Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria* notes a dispute between Seneca and Pomponius which was brought up in the prefaces to their respective tragedies (Quint., *Inst.* 8.3.31).

⁸ See Coffey, Michael and Roland Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 3-5, where the dating of Seneca's plays is discussed.

⁹ Richard J. Tarrant, in his article "Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents," discusses not only the Augustan predecessors to Seneca's writing, but also the Greek influences on the structure of the Roman plays. This includes,

There is debate concerning the performability of these tragedies on stage, though for the purposes of this thesis, it will be assumed that the plays were indeed presented on stage in front of an audience. Regardless, there was certainly an audience no matter the medium used to present the tragedies.

Phaedra, the focus of this thesis, is considered to be early,¹⁰ stemming from the generally-accepted chronology laid out by John Fitch, being an analysis of sense-pauses.¹¹ The exact date is not necessary for this analysis, although it is important to note that based on this estimation, any interpretation of the play as representing Agrippina and Nero is incorrect.¹² This early date, however, does not rule out Seneca broaching the subject of incest within royal families, considering that both Caligula and Claudius were accused of having sexual relationships with close family members.¹³ Based upon the Greek tale of Phaedra and Hippolytus, the theme of incest was not commonly broached on stage in the ancient world. It is possible that this is the first play to incorporate the theme of incest in ancient Rome;¹⁴ at any rate, it is among the earliest plays to so openly discuss the theme of incest. Euripides used this myth as the basis for two of his plays, the

most importantly for my thesis, the five act structure. Anthony J. Boyle's "Senecan Tragedy: Twelve Propositions" is also an important article in showing, clearly, the relationship in structure between the plays ascribed to Seneca.

¹⁰ See Roland Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*, 13; the play can be provisionally dated to the latter years of Claudius' reign, therefore, the mid-50s CE.

¹¹ Fitch, John, "Sense Pauses and Relative Dating in Seneca, Sophocles and Shakespeare," in *American Journal of Philology* 102 (1981): 289-307. In the commentary by Coffey & Mayer, further discussion of sense-pauses is given, wherein a "demonstration that in the genuine Senecan corpus the sense-pause in a mid-line position designated by any strong punctuation mark or change of speaker increases proportionately in a sequence" (Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 4). This places *Agamemnon*, *Phaedra*, and *Oedipus* as the earliest tragedies composed by Seneca, having the fewest sense-pauses; *Medea*, *Troades*, and *Hercules Furens* as middling; and *Thyestes* and *Phoenissae* as late, having the most sense-pauses. Coffey & Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 4.

¹² Mayer, Roland, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 13.

¹³ Suetonius records that Caligula had incestuous relationships with each of his three sisters in his *Life of Gaius*; Tacitus states that it was due to an incestuous affair that Claudius was destroyed (Tacitus, *Annals* 13.2).

¹⁴ Charles Segal notes, in his *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra* that, "*Phaedra* exposes a particular sin within the family that is still strongly tabooed: incest. Indeed, so deep-rooted was the taboo at Rome that no Latin dramatist of the early period had put the myth of Phaedra (or of Oedipus, for that matter) on to the stage, since the prospect of incest between stepson and stepmother (or between mother and son) was an unacceptable topic in that moral frost pocket, Republican Rome" (Segal, *Language and Desire*, 39).

extant *Hippolytus* and the fragmented *Hippolytus Veiled*.¹⁵ Based upon what remains of these plays, it is most likely that Seneca used the earlier, fragmented *Hippolytus Veiled* as his subject matter. In either case, the themes of these two plays are present within Seneca's version.

Synopsis of *Phaedra*: From Love to Death

A synopsis of the main action within Seneca's *Phaedra* provides, here, the background information on the play and its progression. This is required for a fuller understanding of the importance of both gender roles and familial relationships shown throughout *Phaedra*. Within the Senecan version of *Phaedra* there are no deities to compel the action, leaving it to the mortal characters to act upon their own desires. The play begins with a long prologue by an unnamed hunter who worships Diana. This is the audience's first introduction to Hippolytus, who remains unnamed until Phaedra's opening speech. Following his song, Phaedra and the Nurse enter speaking of the forbidden passion of Phaedra, though again not naming Hippolytus as the one Phaedra lusts after. Phaedra laments her marriage to the heroic and absent Theseus; she decides that in order to preserve her *pudor*, "shame," that she must commit suicide before her *furor*, "passion," for Hippolytus overwhelms her. The Nurse instead agrees to approach Hippolytus for Phaedra in an attempt to soften him towards women in general. The first act ends with a prayer to Diana by Phaedra, that she may be successful in her 'hunt' for Hippolytus. The second act focuses first on a conversation between the Nurse and Hippolytus, wherein Hippolytus lays out his penchant for the lost Golden Age and the evil disposition of women which culminates in the vilest

¹⁵ See Thomas Kohn, *The Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy*, where Kohn argues that "The most obvious influences for Seneca were the two Hippolytus plays by Euripides, both the extant *Hippolytus Stephanophoros* (ca. 428 BCE), and the earlier *Hippolytus Kalyptomemnos*, which remains only in fragments" (Kohn, *The Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy*: 78).

of women, Medea. Phaedra then enters abruptly, falling into Hippolytus' arms. The two speak about Phaedra's loneliness due to Theseus' absence, and Hippolytus vows to protect his stepmother. Phaedra then directly solicits Hippolytus, telling him of her love for him. Hippolytus, disgusted, spurns her and draws his sword against her. Unable to kill his stepmother, Hippolytus flings his sword away and flees.

The third act sees the return of Theseus from his underworld exploits. He senses the state of mourning permeating his household and demands to know the cause. Phaedra again threatens to commit suicide to retain her good name as a proper woman and wife. Theseus demands to know the reason why she would wish to leave him after he has so recently returned. Phaedra phrases the assault upon her body in generic terms, leading Theseus to draw his own conclusions. Believing that Hippolytus has raped his wife, Theseus curses his son using the last wish given to him by Neptune, vowing to hunt him down no matter where he may hide. The fourth act relates Hippolytus' off-stage death by a sea-bull. Theseus begins to feel some remorse for ordering the death of his son, but still ignorant to what happened between Hippolytus and Phaedra, is still content that justice has been carried out. In the fifth act, Phaedra sees the pieces of Hippolytus' body and finally tells Theseus that she was not raped, clearing Hippolytus' name of any wrongdoing. She then commits suicide that she may follow her beloved Hippolytus into the afterlife. Theseus, bereft of his family and mourning his losses, contemplates suicide. He instead gathers what parts of Hippolytus' body he can for the funeral pyre and curses Phaedra's body to remain covered with dirt as atonement for her sins.

The speed at which each of these five Acts occurs deserves a short comment. The first two acts, focused on the relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus, are both lengthy in comparison to the last three acts and comprise more than half of the lines of the tragedy. While there is no

certain reason for this lengthening, it is my belief that the first two acts are meant to introduce the two main characters in as much detail as possible. Phaedra, as the main interest for Seneca, has a large showing in these first acts, setting up her emotional struggles; laying out for the audience her genealogy and the curse which she bears as a result of her grandfather, Apollo, exposing the affair between Venus and Mars; and her utter despair at the state of her marriage and life. For Hippolytus, these two opening Acts are his only ones: his death occurs off stage in the fourth act, but he flees the advances of Phaedra at the end of the second act, making no appearance in the third act. Based upon this division of the play, it makes sense that Phaedra's *furor*, "passion," should be drawn out in the absence of Theseus, to better portray the physical effects which she feels from her unrequited love to the audience. The final three Acts, wherein the destruction of the household takes place, as well as all of the violence, are all rather short, suggesting that from the return of Theseus until the plans for Hippolytus' funeral begin, not much time has passed. The staccato nature of these final Acts brings the point home, again and again, that unrestrained passions beget disaster. Seneca uses the length of his Acts, taken as representative of the passing stage time, to show how long Phaedra's love has burned before she reaches a point where she can no longer hold it within herself and how quickly vengeance and destruction can be wrought. This brings the overall focus of the play onto Phaedra, as opposed to Euripides' focus on the character of Hippolytus,¹⁶ evidenced by her lengthy stage presence and death in the fifth act.

¹⁶ Euripides has Phaedra die in his *Hippolytus* at the end of the third act, discovered by Theseus in the fourth act; Hippolytus is mangled and near-death in the final Act, and dead by the end of the play.

Gender and Family in *Phaedra*

My thesis sets out to determine the relationship between gender roles and placement within the family unit as it is represented in Seneca's *Phaedra*; this will include analysis of Seneca's play, as well as mythological, literary, historical, and social documents to set out what construed proper behaviour within the family for each of its members. Through this, I will be able to determine when these socially constructed boundaries are crossed by the members of the Athenian royal household. I anticipate that in researching this topic in light of Seneca's tragedy, that a strong correlation between the subversion of expected gender roles and the place of the character within the family unit and larger civic society will be found. The subversion of gender roles and a shift in the character's place within the family unit is seen within *Phaedra* to particular fulfilment with the reversal of gender between Hippolytus and Phaedra in Phaedra's hunt for Hippolytus; this change is also seen in Hippolytus' supplanting of Theseus.¹⁷

Seneca, owing to his close relationship to the Imperial household, as noted in the opening of this introduction, is likely to have used his tragedies as a way to encourage the Imperial leaders and their fellow citizens to act in a manner which would not bring the consternation of the people or other civilizations.¹⁸ In using the example of gender changes, done by degrees and not all at once, Seneca shows that ultimately destructive decisions and actions are not typically immediate, but rather take time to occur. Both Phaedra and Hippolytus show this, in that neither switches from feminine to masculine, or vice versa, in the course of one line. It takes place over the course of multiple interactions and poor decisions, leading to the final tragic death of first Hippolytus, and then Phaedra. Theseus represents their foil in this, as he does, within the masculine sphere,

¹⁷ This is in reference to Hippolytus' offer to act as Theseus to Phaedra (633), but can also apply to Hippolytus' lack of fear at the sea-bull, as he takes his father's place as a conqueror of bulls (1066-1067).

¹⁸ See Denis Henry & Elisabeth Henry, *The Mask of Power: Seneca's Tragedies and Imperial Rome* for more on the association of Seneca, his tragedies, and Imperial Rome.

go from the damaging hyper-masculinity appropriate for the outside world, to the acceptable masculinity of a household leader. For him, his immediate shift between the two creates his tragic character. With all of the above considered, then, my thesis will track the subtle changes in the genders of Hippolytus and Phaedra, as well as the rapid shift seen in Theseus' character.

The first chapter will look at Hippolytus, and the play's depiction of him as masculine, seen specifically in his hunting exploits in the prologue. The second chapter will then examine the more feminine elements of Hippolytus, seen most clearly in the role reversal of lover and beloved developed between himself and Phaedra. The third chapter will move on to the construction of Theseus as a hyper-masculine character, based mainly upon his heroic identity and then moving to his representation as a softer and more acceptable masculine character seen in his relationship with both Phaedra and Hippolytus at different points, and therefore in his roles as husband and father. The fourth chapter will be dedicated to the feminine aspects of Phaedra, particularly as regards her roles as virgin, wife, and mother. The final chapter will focus upon the masculine characteristics of Phaedra, in particular her role as huntress. Each chapter will analyse two to three short passages from the play, though evidence to support the main argumentation of the chapter may be drawn from anywhere in the play.¹⁹

The main themes and motifs of *Phaedra* are intricately related to the gender portrayals. These include hunting, the separation of indoor and outdoor spaces, the struggle between *pudor* (shame) and *furor* (passion), nature (here being the inherited traits from ancestors), and the role each character plays within the family unit. Each chapter will take these main motifs into account and relate some or all of them to the chosen passages. Taking a look at each of these briefly here,

¹⁹ Note that due to the large amount of intertextuality present within Seneca's work, supporting evidence may also be drawn from other authors, including particularly Ovid, who wrote several treatments of the myth in his *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*, as well as shorter references in his other works.

then, will allow for a general idea of how they come into play within the tragedy. Hunting is by far the most important of the themes, as each of the three main characters engage in hunting activities and use language related to hunting. The separation of indoor and outdoor activities is directly related to a distinction between the masculine and feminine realms, as the activities within each sphere are drawn in stark contrast to each other. The balance, or lack thereof, of *furor*, “passion, madness,” and *pudor*, “shame,” and to a lesser extent, *ratio*, “logic, rationality,” drive many of the actions of the characters herein; Phaedra in particular, frequently calls upon the both *furor* and *pudor* in her attempts at deciding what she ought to do.²⁰ Finally, the roles that each of the three main characters fills within the family unit is important in determining not only their current roles, but also future familial roles. These also set out what activities would typically be expected of Theseus, Phaedra, and Hippolytus, thus allowing for identification of a lack of these activities as being a marker for the subversion of their gender and familial roles.

Owing to the more technical terms used in the argumentation of this thesis, a set of definitions for key terms is of the utmost importance. Sex will be defined as the biological sex of the character, being male or female. In contrast to this, gender will be defined as the characteristics a character possesses which are typically associated with either masculine or feminine activities. Continuing with this, masculine will refer to activities or qualities which are more closely associated with those of the male sex, as defined in ancient Rome; feminine will then be the activities or qualities more closely related to those of the female sex within the same time period.

²⁰ These are related to Stoic philosophy, of which Seneca was a practitioner; Segal in particular notes that “[as] a philosopher, Seneca is on the side of reason and reason’s control of passion. As a poet, he is concerned with shaping a compelling representation of the psychological forces that reason must suppress” (Segal, *Language and Desire*, 58). Roland Mayer continues upon this theme, stating that “[reason] (*logos* in Greek, *ratio* in Latin), which permeates the world, guides us to what is right. But it is opposed by passion, a defect brought about by mistaken judgment” (Roland Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 11). Considering both of these, then, in conjunction with the frequent calls to *furor* and *pudor* in *Phaedra*, it becomes clearer that Seneca uses, at the very least, this tragedy to highlight the problems which arise when passion outweighs the application of shame and reason. See also Christopher Star, *Commanding Constantia in Senecan Tragedy*: 210.

Examples of masculine qualities include a location outside of the house, hunting activities, and heroic deeds (such as monster slaying); feminine qualities include a location inside of the house, acting in the role of wife and mother, and engaging in activities related to the well-being of the household. In setting out these definitions, it is important to note that for both the ancient Greeks and Romans, gender and sex were one and the same.²¹ Males exhibited masculine characteristics and participated in masculine activities; females, then, exhibited feminine characteristics and participated in feminine activities. In separating these terms within my thesis, the activities and qualities associated with both presented sexes and genders will require specific notation.

The Latin terms *pudor* and *furor* will be used frequently throughout this thesis. These will be translated when they are brought up. Within the thesis, then, *pudor* and its derivations refers to the proper “shame” which prevented people of the time from acting in a manner which would bring their families notoriety. It was a marker of women and femininity to possess this sense of shame and not bring ill repute onto one’s household. In opposition to this, *furor*, “passion, madness,” is characterized by impulsive behaviour, or behaviour which the person knows is wrong in some way, but regardless wishes to do. *Furor* often causes some harm when it is ‘released;’ *pudor* prevents, or holds in check, the tendency towards *furor*.

Finally, references will be made to the two contrasting times present within the play, these being ‘stage time’ and ‘audience time.’ Stage time refers to the period of time which the actors engage in, here the Bronze Age, or heroic age of Greece. Audience time refers to the time period in which the first audience interacted with the play, here the first century CE in Rome and the larger Empire. It is likely that Seneca used the distant Bronze Age past, like his Greek

²¹ See, for instance, Corbeill, Anthony, *Sexing the World: Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex in Ancient Rome*, who discusses the close relationship between sex and gender in a grammatical sense, and noting in particular that the grammatical gender of objects in Latin is not arbitrary. See also Judith P. Hallett, *Roman Sexualities* (1997).

predecessors, as a setting for his plays in order to take a step back from the true actions which were being examined, such as contemporary Roman conceptions of gender and the proper roles associated with them. While many of the conclusions drawn in this thesis will incorporate both of these time periods, the gender and roles that each character inhabits and plays will be analysed largely in light of the audience and its norms and values of the early Roman Empire.²²

²² Sarah Pomeroy, in her *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* makes note that for the Greeks, the Bronze Age setting was a common one for tragedians, stating that “the royal women of epic were powerful, not merely within their own homes but in an external political sense” (Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, 93). For the mixing of Bronze Age myth and contemporary culture, see Shirley Barlow, 1997, “General Introduction” in K.H. Lee (ed. & trans.) *Euripides: Ion*. Aris & Phillips. Warminster. pp. 3-14.

Chapter One: The Imperial Hunter

The play begins with Hippolytus, the focus of the first two chapters of this study. The long prologue to the main action of the tragedy marks Hippolytus as a leader of his companions, as well as setting him up to be a devout worshipper of Diana, the goddess of the hunt. In this regard, the biological sex of Hippolytus is congruent with his portrayed gender, displaying many masculine traits. His masculinity is highlighted by his leadership skills, his Amazonian and Athenian ancestry, and his relationship with a specific manifestation of the goddess Diana. This chapter, then, will examine the masculine traits of Hippolytus evident at the out-set of the play, which will be used as a point of comparison for Hippolytus' shift into a feminine role, discussed in the second chapter. These include a masculine character through his role as a leader of men, his parentage, and his worship of the goddess Diana. Through understanding Hippolytus' character, here being masculine, a baseline can be set out for what constitutes proper masculine and male behaviour, allowing for the changes made over the course of the play to better be seen.

1.1: The Wide World of Hippolytus

At the out-set of the play, before any characters are directly introduced, the lay of the land is given. Indeed, the prologue provides the setting of the play, obviously centered in the area surrounding the Greek city of Athens, as well as introducing many of the main themes of the play to the audience.²³ The setting detail is rich, making note of many of the major cities in the Peloponnese. The land will be an important point of interest for much of the discussion concerning

²³ Segal, Charles, *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*: 60. Here it is noted that the prologue allows the audience to locate Hippolytus within his preferred realm of both the outdoors and engaged within the hunt. See also Trinacty, who notes that Senecan prologues present the first instances of the themes, motifs, and imagery which will continue throughout the respective tragedy (Trinacty, Christopher, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*: 129).

gender. The outside world which is described here is more closely associated with the masculine realm, as it is wild and uncivilized. It is male and masculine hunters which tame the land and bring civilization to it, so that females can in turn gain their domain. Hunters, then, are a necessity for the Greek way of life which is presented, as they allow for the safety of their citizens to be maintained. Within the prologue, the hunt which is taking place in this rich landscape is done as a means to protect the farmers, concerned as they are about the beast which has doubtless been attacking them and their livestock.²⁴

Considering the role of leader as being one who possesses at least some knowledge of the area in which they and their men are, Hippolytus, as the speaker here, shows the audience his great knowledge of the area, as well as highlighting its wild and untamed side. The first lines of *Phaedra* make note of the *umbrosas silvas*, “shady forests” (1), the *montis Cecropii*, “mountain of Cecrops” (2), and the *colles semper canos nive Riphaea*, “Riphaean hills always white with snow” (7-8). The setting laid out is clearly not meant to be one of indoors and safety, but of the outside world, with all its dangers. The only mention of any sort of civilization is the farmers who fear the boar (29-30), as agriculture and farming are markers of civilization. Without this, the entire prologue could represent any hunt of any sort of dangerous animal. There does not need to be a pre-existing civilization for a hunt to be necessary, only a desire to have the choice to establish one in a given area; by locating this as a hunt in relation to an existing civilization, a stronger connection can be drawn between the speaker and the population around him. Seneca is able to locate, generally, the area being traversed by Hippolytus and his companions in the prologue, but covers so large a swath of land, that there is no guarantee that they have set out to hunt around a specific city or town; the

²⁴ The speaker in the prologue notes that it is in this landscape that the “boar of many wounds” lives, who is “feared by the farmers” (29-30).

inclusion of the farmers, proving nearby agriculture and civilization, still does not give any specific location to the audience.

The culmination of this description of the setting is that Hippolytus inhabits a large world which seeks to kill him; in order to survive, he must fight it and its savage inhabitants. His tools in accomplishing this are his companions, whom he orders with surety, and his hunting dogs, of which he has a great deal of knowledge. From the text of the play, Hippolytus commands his men with a series of imperatives and jussive subjunctives, all discussed below (section 1.2). Of importance here is his knowledge of hunting dogs, which adds to his characterization as a hunter by giving him a more complete knowledge of his craft and making him, therefore, a more believable hunter to the audience.²⁵ In his description of the wilderness around him, as well as his relative ease within the wilds, it is safe to say that Hippolytus feels most at home in the woods among his hunting companions, dogs, and the beasts around. Here, he is able to exercise control over his hunting companions, taking upon himself the role of their leader.

1.2: Hippolytus the Leader

Almost as soon as the play begins, we are given ample evidence as to the qualifications and skills which Hippolytus possesses, some of which are outlined above. While he is not introduced to the audience by name at any point in this prologue, it can be said with a high degree of certainty that the hunter who describes the idyllic setting and commands his forces in a similar manner to that of a military captain, is the son of Theseus, king of Athens and Troezen.²⁶ The leadership

²⁵ This will be discussed below when looking at Hippolytus as a hunter; for now, it is sufficient to say that the knowledge which Hippolytus possesses is clear, in that he is able to name the breed of dog and give its main use for his current task with ease (31-42).

²⁶ The prologue identifies the setting as being Athens, based upon the areas of Attika mentioned. The large swath of land covered within these lines may be due to a Roman misunderstanding of Greek geography, or may instead be meant to show the large amount of influence held by the royal family of Athens at this point of the Bronze Age.

shown by Hippolytus in the prologue is immediate. From the very first word of the play, Hippolytus orders his men to certain advantageous areas in order that the beast may be more easily caught. His orders, marked by the imperatives *ite* (“go,” 1), *scandite* (“climb,” 7), and the repeated pronoun *hac* (“here,” 9) which denotes an expectation of movement, all strongly point to Hippolytus as being the leader of his companions. This also implicitly likens him to a commander setting up his troops for a military manoeuvre. The Hippolytus found within these lines is both male and masculine.²⁷ He is seen here engaging in a common male activity, with presumably male companions for his hunt, showcasing his strong leadership skills. This leadership quality is important to the development of male and masculine characters, especially ones who are of royal or elite birth;²⁸ such a development in a female or feminine character is more likely to bring consternation from peers,²⁹ such as members of the chorus or household slaves.

Hippolytus’ leadership here, then, is a clear marker of his masculinity. He is represented here as a leader of his people.³⁰ His strong leadership role is seen here within a microcosm, as it

Richard J. Tarrant, in his “Greek and Roman in Seneca’s Tragedies” makes note that “[although] [Seneca’s tragedies are] set in the heroic Greek past and in locations with specific Greek associations – Thebes, Argos, Mycenae – Senecan drama does not attempt a strict or even a loose rendering of authentic Greek backgrounds” (Tarrant, Richard J., “Greek and Roman in Seneca’s Tragedies,” in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 225). It may be presumed with at least a degree of certainty that while Seneca places Hippolytus and his companions into the more famous of Greece’s locations, the large geographical area described is not likely to have been all under the control of Theseus, and by extension, Hippolytus. Theseus, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three, was either the son of King Aegeus of Athens or was raised by him.

²⁷ It is often that epitaphs made note of a man’s military and political career as important roles that a man would fulfill. See for instance *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 1^{2.7} where the conquests of one Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus are highlighted.

²⁸ See J.P.V. Dacre Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome*, where he notes that “[hunting] was internationally the sport of aristocrats and of kings” (159; more generally, 159-161).

²⁹ Atalanta is one such female, who will be discussed later in this chapter. The Amazons are another such group of women, again discussed at Section 1.3 of this Chapter.

³⁰ The Nurse calls Antiope the wife of Theseus at 226; Phaedra beseeches Hippolytus to take up the sceptre which has been entrusted to him at line 617, suggesting that he does indeed have some power over the household. There is some scholarly debate as to who would be the heir to Theseus’ throne, considering that there are very clearly half-siblings of Hippolytus mentioned within *Phaedra*. However, as the eldest legitimate son of Theseus, and taking the use of *coniugi* at face value, the reader is meant to believe that Antiope and Theseus were wed, making Hippolytus the heir to the throne. Based upon the evidence within the play mentioned above, I believe it is safe to assume that Seneca envisioned Theseus having been wed twice before Phaedra: once to Ariadne, and again with Antiope. Greek mythology, as it comes down to us, was less convinced of this fact, with some modern scholars believing that

were, with the division of labour amongst the men and Hippolytus. Looking at the play, Hippolytus' commands begin at line 16ff., where the imperative is continued from line 1, *ite* ("go") and related by the pronoun *vos* (the plural "you"). Hippolytus is clearly giving a command of movement based upon his giving a location for the companion to travel to, at line 16, Marathon; at 20-21, Acharneus; at 22, with *alius* or "other," to Hymettus; and at 23, again with *alius*, to go to Aphnidae. This large swath of land covered in these few lines, all located to the north of Athens, is far more fitting for a large-scale battle than it is for the smaller scale boar hunt that is happening. The imperatives and orders given in this section is the true division of labour, as Hippolytus sends his men off to different locations. He is here acting the general, as he delegates different areas to his men to cover.

In the next grouping of commands, and continuing this line of argumentation, Hippolytus now gives orders to the men that are still near at hand. At 31ff., the imperative changes to one of action with *mittite* "let loose" or "send off" (31). This is coupled with *teneant*, "hold back" (32), here as a jussive subjunctive, giving a command, as well as *tendant*, again, "hold back" (33). Each of these is directed to a male hunting companion; these, however, refer not to a location, but give instructions on how the 'tools of war' are to be used, here the dogs filling that role as instruments associated with hunting. Finally, at 48ff., Hippolytus begins another line of commands with the jussive subjunctive *libretur* "let loose," as a command for the companion to now release his javelin, beginning the final attack on the enemy; these jussive subjunctives, acting with the force of imperatives, continue until Hippolytus begins his prayer to Diana at line 54. These examples are

Euripides' first Hippolytus play, *Hippolytus Veiled*, may have failed not only due to the forthcoming and upfront nature of Phaedra, but also due to the suggestion that Phaedra would help Hippolytus usurp the Athenian throne in return for his affections (see lines 620-621, where Phaedra tells Hippolytus that it is his right to rule as his father's son). See Hanna Roisman's article "The Veiled Hippolytus and Phaedra," in *Hermes* 127 (1999) for further information on this subject and the relation of Euripides' first Hippolytus play to that of Seneca's.

clear indications that Hippolytus is here acting in the role of a military leader and well within the masculine realm.³¹ He commands his ‘troops’ in ‘battle’; his first-person view of the action unfolding around him and his ability to describe the setting in such detail show his separation from the ‘frontline.’ Xenophon notes the close relationship between hunting and military leadership in young men, urging “young men not to despise hunting, [...] for from these pursuits they become well prepared for war” (Xen., *Cynegeticus* 1.18, trans. Arthur A. Phillips). The description given here is one of a commander who is well acquainted with the terrain and has the trust and obedience of his men to guide them away from injury or death and towards victory.

Hippolytus displays strong masculine traits in his role as quasi-military leader. He is confident in his placement of his companions around the boar and in his division of labour amongst his men and his hunting dogs. He maintains control over the situation and ensures that his people are kept safe (29). Certainly, these are the qualities of a good leader.³² However, these instances alone are not enough to mark out Hippolytus as being masculine when he is first introduced. The main thrust of Hippolytus’ masculinity within the prologue is found in the action.³³ It is also his comfort with and around other men, his dogs, proper hunting procedure, and hunting tools which add to his masculine gender. Considering here Xenophon’s *Cynegeticus*, where he begins by stating that both “[hunting] and hounds were first an invention of the gods Apollo and Artemis” (Xenophon, *Cyne.* 1.1, trans. Arthur A. Phillips), and who continues to extol the virtues of manliness and eventual leadership associated with hunting endeavours, there was a pervasive union in the ancient world between hunting and the masculine sphere.³⁴ The action of the hunt is

³¹ Anthony J. Boyle notes that these commands issued by Hippolytus mirror those spoken by Theseus at the conclusion of the play (Boyle, Anthony J., *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*: 57).

³² This scene is reminiscent of Aeneas’ hunt in Book 4 of Vergil’s *Aeneid*, wherein Aeneas takes control of the hunt, navigates the countryside with ease, and gives instructions for the kill (4.129-172).

³³ Women who act in accordance with their biological sex, thereby possessing and exhibiting feminine characteristics, would not be so involved with a hunt.

³⁴ As quoted above, Xenophon relates hunting with a preparation for war at 1.18 of the *Cynegeticus*.

what fully situates this scene within the male and masculine sphere.³⁵ Phaedra, and other women³⁶ like her who did not fit into the Greek (or Roman) idea of femininity were feared as women who possessed the qualities of men.³⁷

In the first eighty-four lines of *Phaedra*, Hippolytus is utterly masculine. He represents a hunter and a leader fully immersed in the world outside of the household. As will be argued in the second chapter, when Hippolytus goes inside, he enters a world where he can not maintain his masculinity that finds its expression in the wilds of Greece, in the hills and forests among his male hunting companions and his dogs, searching out their prey. It is only near the end of the play, in his final hunt, where Hippolytus faces his death in the form of a monstrous sea-bull, invoking his father and his heroic deeds, allowing himself to return to his masculine hunting identity.

1.3: The Heroic Amazon

Looking first at the heroic nature of Hippolytus, a defining characteristic of his masculinity which borders on the hyper-masculinity which Theseus possesses, Hippolytus is at the very beginnings of his heroic career. His language in describing the boar makes it out to be a larger foe to be tamed. In act four, Hippolytus' facing the sea-bull directly denotes his belief that through his father, he has also become a fully Greek hero. This section will look at these two scenes, both tied to the heroic identity which Hippolytus is just beginning to develop. This will show, when compared to Theseus' established heroic identity, a similarity between father and son, and

³⁵ From a mythological viewpoint, the women who participate in hunts for wild animals exhibit strong masculine traits. Atalanta, as one such example, is known for her wrestling in the funeral games of Pelias, her (occasional) participation in the voyage of the Argonautica, and her insistence that she would only be married to a man who could best her in a footrace. "There was no place in ordinary Greek society for a woman like Atalanta who loved to chase game, fight men, and wander at will" (Mayor, Adrienne, *The Amazons*: 7).

³⁶ The Amazons are the most famous of the outcast, 'other' women, who will be discussed further in Chapter 5 as relates to their association with the masculine realm.

³⁷ See Mayor, *The Amazons*: 26.

therefore the possibility that Hippolytus could have lived a life fully integrated into society like his father. However, combined with his Amazonian ancestry, Hippolytus is stripped of what would be a balance to his outdoors identity, causing him to only be of use and comfortable in the wilds.

The beginnings of a heroic identity were already apparent within the prologue; the language that Hippolytus uses to describe the setting and the “wild boar known for many wounds” (30) is reminiscent of heroic language, as it has the appearance of an epithet common to epic poetry and heroic deeds.³⁸ Considering the common motif of monster-killing in Greek and Roman mythology in order to impose civilisation on the wild, Hippolytus here seemingly joins such heroes as Hercules, Jason, and his father Theseus. In this first glimpse, Hippolytus represents a hero who is not quite as destructive in his masculinity as his father, but who nonetheless is representative of the human superiority over nature.³⁹

Hippolytus, as a hero, over-exerts himself and is complicit in his own destruction. Other heroes, again calling upon Hercules, Jason, and Theseus, also make decisions which lead to their destruction: Hercules killed his first family because Juno was angry at his successes in his heroic deeds; Jason, in setting aside Medea and forsaking their marriage vows, lost his children, fiancée, and place within the Corinthian palace; Theseus, as will be discussed in the third chapter, lost his son and wife because of quick anger and reaction to Phaedra’s story. His invocation of his father’s exploits suggests an over-estimation of his limits. Believing he is the equal of his father, Hippolytus acts hubristically and challenges the sea-bull directly.⁴⁰ In so doing, Hippolytus brings

³⁸ The language used to describe the boar, *vulnere multo iam notus aper*, denotes epic connotations. The epithet applied, *vulnere multo notus* “known for many wounds,” is vaguely Homeric, and “many wounds” is used twice more within *Phaedra* (at 1096 and 1266), both times referring to the dead Hippolytus. This ties the boar, hunted by Hippolytus at the beginning, to Hippolytus himself, hunted by Theseus, at the end of the play.

³⁹ For more on Theseus and his destructive masculinity, see Chapter 3, especially Sections 1 and 2.

⁴⁰ The comparison between father and son within the heroic sphere seems unique to Seneca; Euripides does not have Hippolytus attempt to make a last stand, but rather shows him attempting to control his horses and evade the monster (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 1210ff.). This suggests that Hippolytus has, to some extent, a heroic identity of his own. While this identity is not as fully formed as that of Theseus, who is represented as an older hero herein (see

about an earlier death; to make his first fully heroic debut against a supernatural creature he faces the creature head-on and is almost immediately torn apart by the frenzy of his horses attempting to flee the beast before them.⁴¹ In the mythological context, the death of Hippolytus is inevitable; however, it is brought about much earlier than in Euripides and as a direct result of Hippolytus' challenge to the bull. Despite his failure, Hippolytus demonstrates great leadership skills and a return to his masculine identity in challenging the bull.

The genealogy of Hippolytus lends a great deal to his masculine characterisation within the play. As the sole son of the hero Theseus and the Amazon Antiope, Hippolytus inherits much of his masculine persona from his parents.⁴² Looking first at Theseus, discussed briefly above, his identity as a hero suggests that he possesses more of a destructive hyper-masculine personality than a healthy one. However, Theseus, as he is presented within *Phaedra*, does attempt to redeem himself, or at the very least quell the more toxic elements of his personality.⁴³ The parentage of Theseus is more ambiguous in this play than in Euripides; there is little discussion as to the possibility of Neptune being his father instead of Aegeus.⁴⁴ Based upon this lack of evidence

lines 831-4, where the Chorus notes the older appearance of Theseus), Hippolytus has begun to develop this persona.

⁴¹ In his final moments, Hippolytus is again involved in a type of hunt, though here, as with Phaedra, he is the one being hunted and not the hunter. Not realising this, he faces the beast, feeling that he is to be victorious based upon earlier victories by both himself (as in the prologue) and of his father (as against the Minotaur). Just as when he was the prey to Phaedra's predator, his misinterpretation of his role within the relationship will be his downfall. See lines 1077-1079 for the predatory nature of the sea-bull; see lines 1066-1067 for Hippolytus' challenge to the sea-bull.

⁴² Funerary inscriptions often use a patronymic to identify the person interred there. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 1².12 records not only the deeds of the interred person, but also his father's great achievement of being the conqueror of King Antiochus. Hippolytus also does this to an extent, calling upon his father's heroic deeds when he faces the bull, described in the fourth act.

⁴³ Again, for more regarding the sex and gender of Theseus, see Chapter Three.

⁴⁴ In Euripides, the fulfilment of Theseus' first wish (of the three given to him by his 'father' Poseidon) seems to prove that Poseidon is indeed the true father to Theseus; for Seneca, Theseus uses his last wish to curse his son, suggesting that the previous two wishes have already been successfully granted. The lack of divine characters in this play is more a staple of Senecan drama, as Seneca goes far beyond Euripides in the demythologizing of drama (Tschiedel, Hans, *Phaedra und Hippolytus*, 1969: 56). "He adds relatively little to the basic plots of the Greek plays, and his action is often starker than the original outlines. Instead he lavishes his attention on the thickly enfolding fabric of rhetorical figures and on the emotional atmosphere around characters shown in limited perspectives" (Segal, Charles, *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*: 5).

either way, it is the heroic identity of Theseus which provides the masculine aspect, rather than a direct divine connection. Even barring this divine connection, the relationship between father and son is clearly manifest in Hippolytus' death by the sea-bull, but also in his innocent promise to Phaedra that he will take the place of his father that she may not feel alone (633).

In order to better inform the heroic identity of Hippolytus, his place within the family unit is also of importance. His role as the son of Theseus brings a great deal to Hippolytus' character. It is clear that he is a beloved son of Theseus and that he participates relatively regularly within the familial sphere. Upon first meeting with the Nurse after his hunt, he asks *sospes est certe parens sospesque Phaedra stirpis et geminae iugum?* "Is my father unharmed and Phaedra at any rate and also their twin offspring?" (433-434). Hippolytus' main concern upon his return home is his family's wellbeing.⁴⁵ This seemingly contradicts Hippolytus' penchant for nature and his close association with the countryside. However, taken in conjunction with the power Theseus has entrusted him with, referenced directly at line 618, Hippolytus is, for the time being, important to his direct family as well as his larger civic family. In this way, he shows his more Athenian side, with all its civic duties, attempting to quell the discontent he sees within his family. The early actions of Hippolytus denote his respect for his father, his strong ties to his family, and his wish to emulate the heroic actions of Theseus.

Hippolytus is, as represented here, much more balanced between his civic and societal duties and the wild, heroic duties he participates in within the prologue. In this role as son of the heroic Theseus, Hippolytus can be seen as a double to his father: he creates for himself a heroic identity based upon his father's, as shown in his invocation to his father when facing the bull; and he acts in the same role as Theseus, in the absence of his father, taking control of the civic duties

⁴⁵ This is the similar for Theseus upon his own return home, where, noting the sense of mourning around the house, immediately asks if the entrance to his home is a place of mourning (852).

and acting as head of the household. For Hippolytus, his heroic identity is one that still allows him to participate in society if he chooses to do so; it remains his choice not to participate more than is necessary in the absence of Theseus.

Looking now at his Amazonian heritage, Hippolytus was sent to live with his father and not exposed much to his mother or a steady female parental figure as a young child.⁴⁶ By law, the father was considered the only parent of any children, while the mother was more of an ‘incubation chamber’⁴⁷ for the father’s seed to grow in.⁴⁸ There is no evidence of the type of relationship between the parents of Hippolytus. There exist many previous versions of the tale of Antiope and Theseus, but no extant work records definitively marriage between the two. Within *Phaedra*, it is only the Nurse’s use of the word *coniugi*, meaning ‘spouse’ or ‘wife,’ which allows for the audience to consider that Theseus and Antiope were married (226), especially as the word is used elsewhere by both Phaedra and the Nurse to refer to either Theseus as husband or Phaedra as wife (91, 129). Certainly, there seems to have been more between the two than just the common perception of Amazonian women mating with male warriors in order to repopulate their tribe. A continuous relationship of at least nine months would be expected based on the fact that Theseus was present to take his son into his household.

⁴⁶ This is, of course, based upon the mythological history of the Amazons, who were a warrior clan of women whose only dealings with men were for the propagation of female infants to continue their line. As a male infant, Hippolytus would not have been welcome to participate in Amazonian society, and was therefore raised by his father, Theseus. Most typically in mythology, male infants were killed; Hippolytus is an obvious exception to this rule.

⁴⁷ Ancient authors, particularly Aristotle, taught that men, through their semen, provided the catalyst for conception, while women, through their menstrual blood, provided the matter which would be shaped into the child (Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 727b-728a); in this way, both a man and woman were required for procreation to take place, but it was the man who fertilized and initiated the process, while the woman gave only a weaker form of matter and the place for the foetus to grow. Within tragedy, this thought is echoed by Apollo, making the case that Orestes did not kill his parent (here, his mother), because the mother is not a parent (Aeschylus, *Furies* 657-666).

⁴⁸ *Retentio propter liberos* meant that the husband or father was always required to provide his children with support because they were members of his family, and not the wife/mother’s. Susan Treggiari, in *Roman Marriage* provides more information on the roles of men and women through divorce in Part V of her book.

Regardless of the type of relationship that Hippolytus' parents had, at some point after he was born, Theseus killed Antiope when she, in some sort of madness, attended the wedding of Phaedra and Theseus, seeking to kill Phaedra and regain her husband.⁴⁹ Such an event is not directly brought up in Seneca, only that Theseus killed Antiope (927). For Hippolytus, the death of his mother gave him a reason to shun the civilized world, considered by him to be related strongly and completely with the female race, in that it brought about Antiope's death. This is shown through Hippolytus' speech extolling the virtues of the Golden Age, which culminates in his utter disregard for the world which he lives in and its need for procreation. His reasoning for shunning all women is thus: *Solamen unum matris amissae fero, odisse quod iam feminas omnis licet*; "This is the one solace I bear from the death of my mother, that I am permitted to hate all women" (578-579). Hippolytus uses the death of his mother as a reason for his misogyny, as with her dead, he may hate all living women equally. Considering, then, that Antiope died at the hands of Theseus in an attempt to ruin the wedding of Phaedra and Theseus, similar to Medea's destruction of Jason's wedding, Hippolytus clearly places the blame on love and passion for his mother's outburst. He feels no more for his mother as he knew her, being possessed by a similar *furor*, or madness, which Phaedra has, but rather expresses love for the mother that he never knew, the one which was pure and tied closely to nature and hunting.⁵⁰

Clearly the genealogy and family with which Hippolytus is surrounded have shaped his persona. He is forced to play many roles within *Phaedra*, acting as leader of his people in his father's stead, as son to Theseus and Phaedra, as son to the now dead Antiope, and as himself. As

⁴⁹ A clear comparison can here be drawn between the barbarian Medea, who killed Jason's fiancée in order to prevent him from gaining a new home without her or the children they had together, and the Amazonian queen Antiope, who here sought to bring such vengeance upon Theseus, but was killed before her plans could be actualised.

⁵⁰ For more on the characterization of Amazons within myth, see Adrienne Mayor, *The Amazons*.

himself, Hippolytus would shed his family and the trouble he finds within the confines of the palace and the city walls; however, Theseus has, by leaving Hippolytus to rule in his absence, ensured that the young hunter must engage with his society. In being forced into these roles, Hippolytus must put on hold his own desires as he continues to hunt down his defining characteristics, as well as his place within his household and the larger community around him.

1.4: The Devout Hippolytus

In viewing the role of the virginal goddess within Seneca, there is an important distinction to make: the goddess addressed by Hippolytus in the prologue is not the same as the one which Phaedra addresses. Hippolytus directs his speech towards Diana *diva virago*, Diana “the divine female warrior” (54). Here, the masculine hunter aspect of Diana’s rule is invoked; Phaedra, at 406ff. seeks, at the urging of the nurse, Diana *virginis deae*, or the “virgin goddess.” This is an important distinction in setting out the masculinity of Hippolytus at this point of the play. Here, by invoking the role of Diana as huntress and warrior, Hippolytus aligns himself with that masculine element of the goddess. He is able to identify the huntress in her divine role as being a guide to both himself and his companions. In this, the goddess is masculine.⁵¹

Diana, as a goddess, is remarkably similar to the women of the Amazonian tribe as it was understood by the ancient Greeks and Romans.⁵² As a female, she engages in many outdoor

⁵¹ For Phaedra, she looks to the goddess not only in her role as huntress, but also as the one who guides young women from maidenhood into marriage. Phaedra is here about to embark on her hunt of Hippolytus, but as her goal is sexual, it is appropriate to ask favour of Diana instead of Venus. Coupled with this, should Phaedra ask for Venus’ aid in gaining Hippolytus as a lover, it would undermine her earlier argument that her family is cursed by the goddess of love.

⁵² Diana, in her role as huntress, is similar to depictions of the Amazons, most clearly in their respective uses of the bow and arrow as preferred weapons. Furthering this, both are strongly associated with the outdoors. Taking Diana as the Roman depiction of Artemis, there are numerous sources joining the huntress goddess with the Amazons. Diodorus Siculus states that the Amazons sacrificed to Artemis at Tauropolos (Diodorus Siculus, 2.46.2) and Pausanias records that the temple to Artemis at Ephesus was founded by the Amazons (Pausanias, 8.2.7). See Bron, Christiane, “The Sword Dance for Artemis,” in *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 24 (1996): 69-83 for more on the

physical activities, most prominently hunting. She has a retinue of female followers, who also choose to remain virginal as a sign of their devotion. Similar, then, to the followers of Diana, the Amazons remain virgins until they are proven capable of becoming contributing members of their society.⁵³ For Diana's companions, their celibacy is not only a sign of their devotion, but also prevents them from joining society fully, as they are unable to contribute children to the continuation of the society. Hippolytus, as a male, would not commonly fit within this grouping, but his strong desire to follow Diana and his worship of her at the ever-present shrine on-stage allow him to be favoured, as evidenced by his successful hunt in the prologue. That he is also virginal, like the female followers of Artemis in Greek myth, is purely coincidental in this case.

1.5: Hippolytus the Son

It is, of course, not only Hippolytus' participation in the hunt for the boar which marks him out as being masculine; Hippolytus is the heir apparent to the throne.⁵⁴ Even supposing that he

associations of Artemis with the Amazons. See also Tobias Fischer-Hansen and Birte Poulsen, *From Artemis to Diana: The Goddess of Man and Beast*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press (2009); particularly Luis Ballesteros-Pastor, "Bears and Bees in Themiscyra: A Sanctuary for Artemis in the Land of the Amazons?": 333-339.

⁵³ Mayor, *The Amazons*: 48. However, remaining single does not necessitate remaining virginal. It is within the societies of both stage and audience time that the idea of remaining single, for a female, would denote a virginal state.

⁵⁴ The Nurse calls Antiope the wife of Theseus at 226; Phaedra tells Hippolytus at line 617, *mandata recipe sceptrum*, "retake the sceptre intrusted [to you]," referring to the sceptre which, as leader, Theseus had held as a marker of his power, and which had been given to Hippolytus in his absence, granting Hippolytus the same power as his father and suggesting that he does indeed have some power over the household. There is some scholarly debate as to who would be the heir to Theseus' throne, considering that there are very clearly half-siblings of Hippolytus mentioned within *Phaedra*. However, as the eldest legitimate son of Theseus, and taking the use of *coniugi* at face value, the reader is meant to believe that Antiope and Theseus were wed, making Hippolytus the heir to the throne. Based upon the evidence within the play mentioned above, I believe it is safe to assume that Seneca envisioned Theseus having been wed twice before Phaedra: once to Ariadne, and again with Antiope. Greek mythology, as it comes down to us, was less convinced of this fact, with some modern scholars believing that Euripides' first Hippolytus play, *Hippolytus Veiled*, may have failed not only due to the forthcoming and upfront nature of Phaedra, but also due to the suggestion that Phaedra would help Hippolytus usurp the Athenian throne in return for his affections (see lines 620-621, where Phaedra tells Hippolytus that it is his right to rule as his father's son). See Hanna Roisman's article "The Veiled Hippolytus and Phaedra," in *Hermes* 127 (1999) for further information on this subject and the relation of Euripides' first Hippolytus play to that of Seneca's.

was born out of wedlock,⁵⁵ his position in his father's household makes it clear that he is expected to take over some functions, either militaristically, continuing his life outside of the confines of a city, or politically, becoming the leader to the Athenians. In either case, Hippolytus has been taught, or knows by the nature of his birth, how to lead. On the surface, Hippolytus engages in all of the masculine activities which are expected for a young man of his social standing. He is seen hunting from the out-set of the play and acts as leader of his companions within the hunt; within the household, he expresses concern for the well-being of those in his care and again acts as the head of the household in Theseus' absence. It is clear that Hippolytus knows what is expected of him within the masculine sphere, and can complete these actions without any great deal of trouble. Within the prologue and his first meeting with the Nurse in the second act, Hippolytus is represented as a proper masculine character, who engages in proper masculine activities, and has done so for quite a while at this point.

In his role as both son and head of the household, Hippolytus comes into contact with Phaedra with relative frequency. Based upon the concern expressed to the Nurse over the well-being of his family, Hippolytus has been gone for a period of time in completing the hunt for the boar. However, his time in the outdoors has not diminished his sense of familial duty. Finding Phaedra upset at the long absence of Theseus, to the point of calling herself a widow, Hippolytus offers words of comfort to her. However, Hippolytus' innocent words of comfort to Phaedra, *ac*

⁵⁵ The mythology on this point is hazy at best. Pausanias, in his *Descriptions of Greece* states clearly that Antiope fell in love with Theseus and betrayed the Amazons willingly, but makes no direct mention of a marriage (1.2.1); Plutarch, in his *Life of Theseus* mentions only the kidnapping of Antiope by Theseus as the cause for the war between the Amazons and the Athenians (26ff.); finally, in Euripides' rendition of the myth, Hippolytus exclaims upon his exile a wish that "none of [his] friends be born a bastard" (1083) suggesting that he is, in this iteration, a bastard (trans. Michael R. Halleran). However, the lack of a marriage ceremony is not the same as the lack of a marriage. Medea invokes a clasping of the right hand in Euripides' *Medea* as being a marriage agreement (Eur., *Medea* 21-22); the sexual union of Dido and Aeneas in Book 4 of the *Aeneid* can also be considered a marriage. Rebecca Armstrong, in her *Cretan Women*, believes that Theseus and Antiope were indeed married, and that it was the intent of Theseus to control the savagery of Antiope through marriage. (Armstrong, Rebecca, *Cretan Women: Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry*: 103).

tibi parentis ipse supplebo locum, “but I will supply the place of father to you” (633) take on a deeper meaning for Phaedra.⁵⁶ Should Theseus have been lost forever in his underworld exploits, as Phaedra secretly desires,⁵⁷ Hippolytus will, in all likelihood, continue in his role as leader of his people and head of the household.

Considering the above, then, Hippolytus is certainly being taught how to rule, again, as is apparent in his commanding of his companions, but he is not yet expected to marry.⁵⁸ While this may not be brought up directly within the play, considering Hippolytus’ age and Phaedra’s attraction to him, he has reached an age where it is appropriate to begin looking for a suitable bride.⁵⁹ Adding to this the refusal of Hippolytus to give up his virginity, as it were, there is some cause for concern. It was not common for a young man to begin his wedded life as a virgin; ample opportunities existed for young men of this time to lose their virginity before being married and it continued to be socially acceptable for men to engage in extra-marital affairs. Women, however, were to remain pure and chaste before marriage and faithful to their husbands following their wedding. This applies not only to the women of myth, but to all women of the time, both on the stage and in the audience.⁶⁰ For men, no such social stigma existed. Phaedra herself makes note

⁵⁶ Hippolytus, of course, does not recognize the trap that Phaedra has set, and is therefore unaware of the hidden meaning of his words to Phaedra’s ears.

⁵⁷ See lines 219-221, *non unquam amplius convexa tetigit supera qui mersus semel adiit silentem nocte perpetua domum*, “no one has before touched again the vaulted heavens who once went into the night, having been immersed in the house of perpetual silence.”

⁵⁸ Within stage time, Hippolytus is likely too young to be seriously considering marriage; however, for the audience, Hippolytus would soon be reaching an age where he would be married. No age is given for any of the characters, but some conclusions may be drawn based upon the timeline of the play. Theseus has entrusted Hippolytus with his sceptre, suggesting that upon Theseus’ departure, Hippolytus was mature enough to accept this office, making him, perhaps, in his late teens or early twenties; Theseus, upon his return, remarks that he has been gone for four years (838-839), making Hippolytus now in his early to mid twenties. For Athenians, thirty was closer to the age of marriage for men; however, for the Romans, marriage within the mid to late twenties was rather common, especially following the changes made by Augustus to marriage laws. See S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*: 84; the changes made to marriage law by Augustus made celibacy for men aged 25 to 60 illegal, forcing either illegitimate children by prostitutes to be conceived, or for the young man to marry around the age of twenty-five.

⁵⁹ Again, while perhaps not seriously looking for a bride, Hippolytus within audience time, should be beginning to consider settling down and beginning his own family.

⁶⁰ Consider here the literary trope of mythological women who commit adultery being cast-type as evil, somewhat masculine in their appearance and actions, as well as being power-hungry: this group includes Clytemnestra, who

that her coupling with her step-son would be permitted by her father, owing to his allowance of Theseus to take his daughter Ariadne as his wife (245). It may very well be that Hippolytus has only just reached an age where marriage would be considered. Treggiari states that marriages when a young man is first able to consummate the joining were uncommon; more typically, men would have been slightly older, perhaps in their early twenties, before marriage.⁶¹ Augustan legislation “made celibacy for men between 25 and 60 and for women between 20 and 50 socially and economically disadvantageous.”⁶² It is then unsurprising that Hippolytus may appear or act as a sex object for his stepmother, but not yet be prepared to enter into marriage himself.

To complete the idea of Hippolytus as a masculine hunter who follows Diana in every aspect of her role as huntress, Hippolytus decries urban life and the people found within cities. Perhaps related to his fantasy of the Golden Age, Hippolytus makes his hatred of all that is related to the urban life of his family well known. In his *agon* with the nurse in the second act, Hippolytus lays out what he sees as the benefits to the open air, as well as the detractions of city life (483ff.). A common theme within the conversations between Hippolytus and Phaedra/the Nurse, Hippolytus as a marginalized hunter is at best unimpressed with city life, and at worst disgusted by it. These feelings, which can be related to both his Amazon ancestry and his predilection for hunting, further mark Hippolytus as an outsider to society. He sees his choice to live in freedom outside of the city (and therefore outside the confines of marriage and without the entrapments and deceptions of women) as a part of his identity. Certainly, this keeps in line with his hunting, worship of Diana, and his genealogy, and is therefore a part of his masculine identity.

owing to her adulterous affair during the Trojan war, killed her husband, Agamemnon, upon his safe return home. Looking at the real world, Roman law, as well as Greek law, allowed for a woman caught in the act of committing adultery to be killed by her husband. Quintilian states that, “It is allowed to kill an adulterer with the adulteress. That is certainly law” (*Institutio Oratoria* 7.1.7). See Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 272-273.

⁶¹ Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 84.

⁶² Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 84.

For Hippolytus the outside world is the self-providing one of the Golden Age, where men are not required to work; the world around him provides everything that he requires. However, this is not the case; the earth must now be worked in order for food to be provided, evidenced by the presence of farmers in the prologue (29-30). He falsely recalls, as if by memory, a time which has not existed since Kronos ruled with the Titans. His deep connection with this time is understandable as it was lived in the open air, and came before men knew of the dangers of women. It was before strife had arisen amongst men. But as a hunter, Hippolytus is also intimately involved in both the activities of the lost Golden Age and its fall. He struggles to return to that time while engaging in activities that would preclude him from participation in the Golden Age world, namely, hunting. However, his fantasy is not completely erased until his father “recasts the Amazon mother as promiscuous rather than virginal (909-14), as barbarian degenerate rather than noble savage (cf. 660 and 906ff).”⁶³ Once this occurs, Hippolytus can never return to his previous life of innocence, wherein he straddles the line between the ages.

1.6: Conclusion

Seneca, in depicting Hippolytus, offers a character that is masculine on the surface, but with more feminine traits hidden beneath his heroic exterior. By allowing for the transgression of gender norms within his characters, Seneca introduces further strife into their lives. It is this strife which leads to the destruction of the household. Within the first introduction of Hippolytus to the audience, Seneca relies on fore-knowledge of the story to introduce major aspects of the narrative. For Hippolytus, this allows for an immediate role reversal, as we first see him in his element, hunting in a heroic manner, and enjoying his freedom outside of the palace and city walls. This

⁶³ Segal, *Language and Desire*: 96.

strong masculine character is hardly similar to the Hippolytus of Euripides, who from the beginning displays more feminine aspects, as well as a stronger affinity for his religious devotion. In so doing, Seneca allows for a stronger, more comprehensive characterization of Hippolytus, who, in his death, is all the more tragic. The strong masculine connotations which Seneca imbues Hippolytus with make for all the more tragic end; he has further to fall, and the change from masculine to feminine is far more pronounced. Had the Hippolytus of the prologue continued in his ways, his destructive tendencies may well have saved his life when Phaedra confronted him. As it stands, his refusal to grant Phaedra the freedom of death ensured that he would die.

Chapter Two: Hippolytus Hunted

This chapter will focus on the feminine aspects of Hippolytus' character, and how these traits lead, in part, to his untimely death. Hippolytus displays feminine characteristics only when forced into an unnatural and uncomfortable position by Phaedra's hunting and when fleeing the city, both of which lead directly to his death. To this end, attention will be drawn to Hippolytus' relationship to Phaedra and how the typical division of feminine and masculine traits within such a relationship is inverted, forcing Hippolytus into the feminine realm. In determining this, first, the innocence of character which Hippolytus presents will be analysed, and then used to determine how Hippolytus becomes prey to Phaedra. The focus of the relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus will here be given to the role of Hippolytus; Phaedra's part will be analysed in chapters four and five. To support the inversion of gender on the part of Hippolytus, an analysis of Hippolytus' innocence, both sexually and politically, and the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of his speech will be required, as well as Hippolytus' actions upon learning the full extent of Phaedra's plans.

In order to demonstrate the scope of Hippolytus' ignorance and innocence of the world around him, it is here pertinent to note the two meanings of innocence that will be discussed in this chapter. These are both related to the feminine realm. The first, analysed in the first section, is sexual innocence. This is, for Hippolytus, a combination of virginity and an ignorance of the world around him. Sexual innocence, or virginity, was a quality cherished in females in the ancient world. Susan Treggiari notes that according to Apuleius,⁶⁴ beauty and virginity together negated the need for a dowry.⁶⁵ Clearly this statement makes note of the stress placed upon virginity in a

⁶⁴ Treggiari, Susan, *Roman Marriage*: 101.

⁶⁵ The issue of chastity as being a part of a successful marriage is often seen in funerary epitaphs. For example, in the Epitaph for Aurelia (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL) 1².1221*), Aurelia is described as being "chaste in

new bride. As will be laid out within the first section, the setting which Hippolytus describes, both as a part of his hunt in the prologue, and as the ideal outdoor setting for an innocent man such as himself, is strongly tied to areas of the divine rape of young girls.⁶⁶ Here, then, the innocent character of Hippolytus, related tangentially to his physical sexual innocence, is unable to recognize that he too, being young, beautiful, and innocent is in danger of being set upon.⁶⁷

Related to his sexual innocence, the political innocence of Hippolytus is also apparent within *Phaedra*. Here, political innocence is related to Hippolytus' lack of experience within a given civilization or society. This leads him towards naivety and a strong sense of trust in those around him; however, as he states that people within a society are untrustworthy, given to all kinds of sin and wickedness, and far removed from the delights of the Golden Age, it is odd that he should be so trusting of his family members. Here, it appears, that in his innocence and naivety, Hippolytus does not recognize that such crimes and untrustworthiness could be found within his own home. This type of innocence, related in the second section of this chapter, marks a feminine character, in that females were not outside and exposed to political life. Thus, they ideally had a far narrower scope of understanding and experience within a city. While this was far more

body” and having “lived faithful to a faithful husband” (trans. E.H. Warmington, 1940). Clearly, her chastity and loyalty to her husband were important qualities. According to Susan Lape, the Romans placed a higher value upon physical virginity upon marriage than the Greeks did (Lape, Susan, “Heterosexuality,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Classical World*: 28). Susan Treggiari notes that despite the differences in standards of chastity applied to men and women, for women, “[the] preservation of virginity before marriage was essential” (Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*: 315).

⁶⁶ This point will be analysed at length later in this chapter, as a part of Section 2.1. The association of Hippolytus with maidens such as Europa (ancestor to Phaedra) and Proserpina (the goddess hunted by Theseus in the underworld) is important to his conflation with maidens in the outside world. The comparisons between Hippolytus and these maidens is drawn using the existence of the *locus amoenus*, which Hippolytus describes twice over the course of *Phaedra*. In addition to this, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* frequently have rapes occur in these “pleasant places” (see Bernstein, Neil W., “*Locus Amoenus* and *Locus Horridus* in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,” in *Wenshan Review of Literature and Culture* 5.1 (December 2011): 67-98).

⁶⁷ As will be discussed further in this chapter, Hippolytus does not associate his physical virginity with any sort of feminizing factor; for him, it simply is. It stems from his misogyny and shunning of women and their sphere, but has no bearing on how he carries himself and his activities in the wilds of Greece. See Section 1 of Chapter Four, where Phaedra's guise of virginity is used as a part of her feminine mask.

prevalent in the Greek world, Roman women were not as involved in public life as men were. Eve D'Ambra notes that "Roman women took part in public life to a greater degree than might be expected of ancient societies. [However], their access depended on the status of their fathers or husbands and [...] their activities and influence were often indirect."⁶⁸ Roman women, while they could possess a modicum of power and influence in the public sphere, derived this from their male relatives; this also means that women had less access to public life. Hippolytus, then, as one who removes himself from the political sphere found in urban centers, is more akin to a female, who is kept sequestered, for the most part, from any direct dealings with others in the public sphere.

2.1: Innocent Hippolytus

Hippolytus' innocence is often conflated with his virginity, but for Hippolytus, his virginity or celibacy quite simply does not matter; he recognizes in himself an innocence of character, but sees this as a marker of the idyllic Golden Age, and not something which could in any way be exploited. However, for those around him, particularly the Nurse, Hippolytus' celibacy is a concern, in that it prevents him from having a fulfilling life, or, in other words, traps him in a perpetual state of adolescence, not yet sexually active, nor politically active. Hippolytus views his physical separation from the city as a barrier between the sinful actions of the citizens and his pure persona. He begins his response to the Nurse by stating that:

*non ille regno servit aut regno imminens
vanos honores sequitur aut fluxas opes,
spei metusque liber, haud illum niger
edaxque livor dente degeneri petit;
nec scelera populos inter atque urbes sata
novit nec omnes conscios strepitus pavet
aut verba fingit; mille non quaerit tegi
dives columnis nec trabes multo insolens*

⁶⁸ D'Ambra, Eve, *Roman Women*: 142.

suffigit auro.

That man does not serve a king or an imminent kingship
he does not follow vain honours or fluctuating wealth,
he is free from hope and fear, black and greedy envy
does not seek that man with degenerate teeth;
nor does he know the evils which are planted
between the city people nor does he quake with fear,
guilty, at every sound or alter his words; he does not seek the riches
of a thousand-columned dwelling nor is he in want of beams
affixed with thick gold.

Phaedra, 490-498

By clearly stating what the innocent woodsman does not want, and placing himself in the same role, Hippolytus demonstrates more than a dislike for the opulence and wickedness which he sees in the cities, but an abject horror at what the world has become. His constructed life in the woods, while being simpler, provides him with all the comforts he requires. He clearly separates his forest realm from that of the city and does not see how the two worlds, different as they are, could in any way intersect. In this way, Hippolytus has created for himself a place of solitude and safety, where he does not need to fear the machinations of others. He does not know, in the sense that he has never before experienced and is ignorant of, the wickedness, or “evils which are planted between the city people nor does he [...] alter his words” (494-496).⁶⁹ His world is one where clear and plain language is spoken and no lies are told. Due to this straightforward manner of speaking there is no room for exploitation, deceptions, or omissions; the half-truths and double meanings which Phaedra uses in her speech are foreign and incomprehensible to him.

⁶⁹ Ignorant is here used in the sense that Hippolytus is ignorant of Phaedra’s plan, and does not here denote his virginity. Hippolytus’ celibacy does not detract from his masculine self, nor is it meant to display feminine tendencies. In his mind, his virginity is not central to who he is as a person, it is a side effect of his hatred for women, something which he has internalized as a part of his personality. Not once in the course of the play does Hippolytus bring up his own virginity. It is always something noted by other characters: the Nurse uses it to dissuade Phaedra from her passions; Theseus makes note of it when he curses his son; and Phaedra misinterprets it as a shared characteristic between the two of them (this will be discussed further in Chapter Four, where Phaedra’s feminine characteristics are explored and analysed).

It is interesting here to note that it is Hippolytus alone who makes no mention of his virginity. For him, it is truly only a by-product of his misogyny.⁷⁰ At most, he regards it as a part of his masculine character, in that it stems from a place of hatred for the female sex.⁷¹ However, for everyone around him, it is clearly something which marks him out as being ‘other.’ Just as he is separate from those around him, not being fully Greek, in this too he is alone. If it were a marker of his devotion to Diana, perhaps he would be surrounded by like-minded hunters. As it stands, by casting his virginity as a symptom of misogyny, he is alone. The Nurse is able to see that Hippolytus is not going to change his ways, especially not for his stepmother, stating *exosus omne feminae nomen fugit, immitis annos caelibit vitae dicat, conubia vitat: genus Amazonium scias*, “hateful, he flees everything called woman, harsh, he says he will live his youth single,⁷² he shuns marriage: you know the Amazonian race” (230-232) thereby blaming, in part, his Amazonian ancestry for his continued virginity. Theseus, when confronted with Hippolytus’ rape accusation, claims that it was Hippolytus’ continued virginity that caused him to lash out in violence, and also makes note of the Amazons being a cause for his celibacy, stating:

*est prorsus iste gentis armiferae furor,
odisse Veneris foedera et castum diu
vulgare populis corpus.
[...]
silvarum incola
ille efferatus castus intactus rudis,
mihi te reservas? a meo primum toro*

⁷⁰ Hippolytus’ misogyny stems from his mother’s death, as he states that [*solamen*] *unum matris amissae fero, odisse quod iam feminas omnis licet*, “[this] is the one solace I bear from the death of my mother, that I am permitted to hate all women” (578-579). This hatred of women, in addition to his blaming them for all that has gone wrong in the world, causes him to shun or reject all that has to do with the feminine sphere; this includes the possibility of a heterosexual relationship. Therefore, his virginity comes as a part of his refusal to interact with women outside of the family unit (the only women which he would be legally able to engage in a sexual relationship with, according to Augustan law). This correlation between misogyny and virginity is not explicitly stated within the text, but follows a progression of cause and effect.

⁷¹ Hippolytus admits that he does not know for sure what his reasons are behind his hatred of women, only that he takes a form of pleasure in hating them. *sit ratio, sit natura, sit dirus furor: odisse placuit*, “it may be rationality, it may be nature, it may be dreaded madness: it pleases me to hate [them]” (567-568).

⁷² “Single” here meaning as a bachelor, being unmarried.

*et scelere tanto placuit ordiri virum?
Iam iam superno numini grates ago,
Quod icta nostra cecidit Antiope manu.*

This madness is precisely of the female warrior tribe,
at first, they hate Venus and then long chaste,
they offer up their body to all.
[...]

You were an inhabitant of the woods
savage like a beast, virtuous, untouched, wild,
Did you save yourself for me? Did it please you, and
such wickedness, to use my marriage bed to first become a man?
Now, now I bear gratitude to celestial authority,
that Antiope died with a blow from my hand.

Phaedra, 909-911, 922-927

Theseus sees Antiope in his son, who like the other Amazons avoided marriage and set themselves apart from the male sex. This is not an incorrect assumption, as Hippolytus has gained much of his identity from his maternal ancestry and it plays a big part in his masculinity. This makes sense as the Amazons are closely related to the goddess Diana in their outdoor pursuits and preferred living arrangements. Furthermore, it is important that Hippolytus has chosen to devote himself to Diana. Again, this is done not out of any vow of chastity that he has made, but rather for her control over the sphere of hunting and the wild, savage world. Hippolytus, in the manner in which Theseus sees him, Amazonian and as a result, wild, is important to how he is viewed by the society which he inhabits. In contrast to the masculine nature of the Amazons laid out in chapter one, Hippolytus, as the sole male Amazon, is represented as more feminine.

Theseus is not wrong in claiming his son to be like the Amazonian warriors. In fact, Hippolytus does act in a very similar manner to his mother's tribe: he possesses masculine traits, shown in his hunting prowess laid out in chapter one; he prefers the outdoors to the cramped buildings of cities; he shuns the very idea of marriage; and he avoids the opposite sex. The issue, and feminizing detail for Hippolytus, is that by aligning himself with the virginal goddess Diana,

no matter what his reasons may be, he in turn aligns himself with her other devotees, being young maidens who want no part of civilization and choose, instead, to dedicate themselves and their chastity to the goddess of the wild. Hippolytus, then, as such a devotee, can be seen to inhabit both the masculine and feminine realms of the outdoors and hunting. In this, Hippolytus is different than Phaedra, who uses the outdoors and hunting, not as an escape from civilization, but rather as a means to impose civilization on the wild world which Hippolytus inhabits. Instead of using Hippolytus' virginity as a way to mark him as different from her, Phaedra uses it as a common point between them.⁷³ This is done through the point expounded upon by Hippolytus: he remains strongly tied to the natural world and in sexual and civic innocence because of the sin which he sees as being inherent within urban life. Serving both his Amazonian side and the goddess Diana allows Hippolytus a way to escape from the greedy and lustful world he sees around him, exchanging it for one free of mortal women and the destruction which, he believes, they bring with them.

For Hippolytus, and strongly related to his innocence regarding the world around him, the Golden Age has not yet ended; in this Golden Age reverie, he is accomplishing all that is required of him as a masculine character. However, within the real world, Hippolytus is still seen as possessing feminine qualities. He can not embrace the society around him and move from adolescent to adult until he leaves the Golden Age and the wilderness behind him. Instead, Hippolytus here takes upon himself the role of the innocent woodsman far removed from the wantonness of the city. In fact, he claims that *non alia magis est libera et vitio carens ritusque melius vita quae priscos colat, quam quae relictis moenibus silvas amat. non illum avarae mentis*

⁷³ Armstrong notes that Phaedra's claim to virginity mirrors Hippolytus true virginity, and in this way, she again infiltrates the spaces which Hippolytus had before occupied in solitude. (Armstrong, Rebecca, *Cretan Women*: 270). This idea will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Four.

inflammat furor qui se dicavit montium insontem iugis, “there is no other life so free and so free of vice and so better caring for the rites of ancient life, as that which leaves behind the city walls and loves the forests. No avarice or madness inflame that mind which devotes itself perpetually to the innocent mountains” (483-487). Procreative sex is unnecessary, as it only serves to complicate the simple and innocent life lived in the woods. Within *Phaedra*, this sentiment is given through Hippolytus’ speech to the Nurse,⁷⁴ discussing the masculine activities of the outdoors, and blaming women for the downfall of men; within this speech, Hippolytus states that *non in recessu furta et obscure improbus quaerit cubili seque multiplici timens domo recondit*, “the wicked man does not in secrecy or darkness seek out robberies nor fearing does he hide himself in a labyrinthine house” (522-524). This is in keeping with the Nurse who argues that procreation is, of course, a necessity of life (469-470),⁷⁵ setting out Hippolytus not just as a misogynist, but also as one who is deeply distrustful of civilization and the distractions which it brings.⁷⁶

Continuing with the innocence of Hippolytus in this manner, Littlewood states that:

[In] [representing] Hippolytus’ innocence Seneca has created him in generic terms less of the heaviness of tragedy than of the vulnerability of pastoral. In his *agon* with the nurse, and to a lesser extent in his opening song, Hippolytus shows his attachment to the innocence of a pastoral idyll and his suspicion of urban sophistication.⁷⁷

His introspection, then, allows him to recognize and dismiss this facet of his personality as inconsequential. It is Phaedra who recognizes it as something which she can exploit to reach her

⁷⁴ Of interest here, also, is that Hippolytus is successful in his *agon* with the Nurse. She is unable to give a response to his monologue. However, Hippolytus is not successful with Phaedra, marking out again the slight degrees of change within his gender.

⁷⁵ We do not know, of course, what Hippolytus’ feelings towards procreation are, only that he refuses to participate in the sexual act that is procreation. What can be said here is that Hippolytus has a strong preference for the freedom of the outdoors and wishes to stay there, not confined within a house.

⁷⁶ These distractions include the baser qualities of men, such as avarice and madness (or passion), the first of the ‘sins’ which he names at lines 486-487.

⁷⁷ Littlewood, Cedric A.J., *Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy*: 266.

own goal of possessing Hippolytus. Being so used to the outdoors and its simplicity, Hippolytus has developed a deep-seated hatred for urban centers. It is here that he recognizes the presence of vices which have grown to prevent the Golden Age that he craves. He is out of place within the political world of the city, not the least of all because he possesses what he deems to be higher morals than the citizens of the city. He decries the base nature of city-dwellers while extolling the good qualities possessed by those who live in the wilds for some eighty-one lines (483-564). In choosing to live in innocence, Hippolytus separates himself from the political and social world of the city, while at the same time separating himself from what he sees as the source of all evil: women. His innocence, while twofold, is expressed in a way which allows him with the one action of removal to deal with any and all issues that may arise to counter his Golden Age construction.

Hippolytus recognizes that this Golden Age is a false construction, as is proven by his hunting,⁷⁸ but he has built up so carefully the image of innocence around himself that he is unable to clearly see what the world has become, only decry its vices.⁷⁹ For Hippolytus' part, he is both a participant in the Golden Age and the harbinger of its fall, in that by participating in hunting activities, he proves that the Golden Age has ended. Within the ancient Golden Age which Hippolytus so desperately wishes to return to, there was no need for hunting. Food was provided by the earth for her inhabitants. Hippolytus recognizes this, but appears to dismiss it, or to reason away the necessity of hunting within his constructed Golden Age by seeing in it a shift towards the world as it exists around him. This is shown to particular effect in Hippolytus' description of

⁷⁸ In his monologue with the Nurse, Hippolytus recounts the lost idyllic Golden Age and its downfall caused by women; clearly, despite his longing for days gone by, he has at least some idea of the passing of time and the changes made within society; it is, however, clear that he remains, in part, within his constructed Golden Age, refusing all women, preferring the woods to civilization, and in general shirking his civic duties. As Phaedra mentions at line 617, Hippolytus has been entrusted with his father's sceptre, the symbol of his power; that we find him outside of the palace hunting a wild boar at the opening of the play suggests that he has chosen the physical pursuits of rule over the political ones.

⁷⁹ Hippolytus, in this same speech to the Nurse, makes note of everything wrong and evil concerning modern life within the city walls (lines 540-562).

his ideal life to the Nurse, stating *hoc equidem reor vixisse ritu prima quos mixtos deis profudit aetas*. [...] *sed arva per se feta poscentes nihil pavere gentes*, “truly I believe that this is how those, having been mixed with the gods in the first rites, lived many generations ago. [...] But the fields supplied the people with food, through their own volition, no one of them asking [for it]” (525-527, 537-538).⁸⁰ But for those around him, Hippolytus is odd in not being married or engaging in sexual activity, abnormal for choosing the harsh woods over the safety of a city, and foreign in his preference for difficulty over ease; ultimately through his innocence, he is construed as feminine.

By living in the woods and in nature as he does, Hippolytus does not recognize the danger in which he places himself. The setting he describes is one, which during the previous ages of the earth, would be rife with debauchery, specifically for virginal young women who are unaccompanied or left by the wayside to go about their business. Nature, as it is described by Hippolytus in his idyllic manner, is a perfect *locus amoenus* for rape.⁸¹ Certainly, this is a common enough motif in Greek mythology, and it continues into Roman mythology as well, particularly in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.⁸² It is within the very first lines of the play where the strongest evidence is drawn for the possibility of rape; in describing the setting for the hunt, Hippolytus directs the audience’s attention, by giving direction to his hunting companions, to a *nemus*, “grove” (9), a

⁸⁰ Hippolytus recognizes that this age is long past, but still yearns for it. However, based upon the world around him which does not so freely provide sustenance, *callidas tantum feris struxisse frauds* [...] *excussa silvis poma compescunt famem et fraga parvis vulsa dumetis cibos faciles ministrant*, “he arranges experienced snares for many wild beasts [...] fruit shaken from trees restrains his hunger and berries plucked from small bushes furnish his easily digested food” (502-503, 515-517).

⁸¹ A *locus amoenus* is literally a “pleasant place.” It is marked in Greco-Roman literature as consisting of trees, soft grasses, light breezes, a water source, and sometimes bird song (see Carole Newlands’ dissertation *The Transformation of the ‘Locus Amoenus’ in Roman Poetry* for a more in-depth view of the changes made in Latin literature to this trope). Typically secluded and marked out as being particularly beautiful, it was common within mythology for young maidens to be taken from such places as groves and meadows. Europa, ancestor to Phaedra is one such maiden, as is Proserpina, goddess of the underworld, whom Theseus is attempting to kidnap with Perithous. Hippolytus describes a location like these in the opening of the play, perhaps foreshadowing the attempt on his own chastity by Phaedra.

⁸² The Ovidian tales of Europa and Proserpina are related below, due to their association with Phaedra and Theseus respectively.

prata, “meadow” (10), and speaks of *vernas herbas*, “spring plants” (12). Adding to this the *rorifera mulcens aura*, “soft dew-filled breeze” (11) and the *graciles levis Ilisos labitur*, “graceful slim Ilisos [stream] flow[ing]” (13-14), all of the elements of a *locus amoenus* are established, based upon Carol Newlands’ description.⁸³ Hippolytus uses similar language to describe his ideal life at lines 505-514:

*nunc ille ripam celeris Alphei legit,
nunc nemoris alti densa metatur loca,
ubi Lerna puro gelida perlucet vado
solesque vitat. hinc aves querulae fremunt
ramique ventis lene percussi tremunt
* * * * *
veteresque fagi. iuvat <et> aut amnis vagi
pressisse ripas, caespite aut nudo leves
duxisse somnos, sive fons largus citas
defundit undas, sive per flores novos
fugiente dulcis murmurat rivo sonus.*

Now he picks a place along the **swift flowing river** Alpheus, now he inhabits the **shady and dense groves**, where the pure icy waters of Lerna shine forth and the sun lives. Here **birds twitter complaining** and branches tremble struck by **gentle winds**
* * * * *
and veteran beeches. He is pleased <and> at least he lies on **the banks of wandering rivers**, or fall asleep lightly **on the grass**, whether a **large spring** rushes pouring out water, or through **new flowers** **the sound of a sweet flowing river murmurs**.⁸⁴

Phaedra, 505-514

Clearly, Hippolytus surrounds himself with the quiet reaches of nature, in seclusion from urban life and other people. He does not see that in placing himself in such a location opens him up to attack. The stillness and beauty of his world at best betray his innocence and, at worst, strongly insinuate his vulnerability to a violent outside force.

⁸³ Segal, Charles, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*: 4.

⁸⁴ Emphasis added to show language common to the *locus amoenus*.

Ovid uses similar language to describe the rape of Proserpina in Book 5 of his *Metamorphoses*, stating that “[woods] crown the waters [...], their leaves like awnings barring the sun’s beams. The boughs give cooling shade, the watered grass is gay with spangled flowers. [...] Here, Proserpina was playing in a glade and picking flowers” (*Met.* 5.389-394, trans. A.D. Melville). Europa, too, in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, is kidnapped by Jupiter in such a pleasant location, described as being near the sea-shore where Europa and her friends often played; Jupiter, as a bull, walks through tender grass, and is eventually offered flowers by the timid Europa (2.840ff.). The language used by Ovid to describe the location of sexual violence is strongly mirrored within Seneca. Hippolytus, however, by living in such a place, is unable to see the tricks and traps set by Phaedra. By placing himself in a location known for the clashing of adolescent innocence and sexual violence, Hippolytus displays an utter lack of awareness, which culminates in his surprise and disgust at Phaedra’s solicitation of him. The location of Hippolytus in such a location, while he remains unaware of its connotations, allows for the audience to anticipate his pending feminization, as he is in a place known for its abduction and rape of female maidens; this also allows for the anticipation of Phaedra taking up the masculine role, being the initiator or perpetrator of the abduction/rape of Hippolytus.

Continuing this idea of the maiden ripe to be plucked from innocent nature, Ovid shows Hippolytus’ accepted innocence in his gaining a second life as the Roman god Virbius.⁸⁵ Virbius is recorded in *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* at length, though Ovid writes of Virbius and his previous life in other works as well.⁸⁶ To summarize Ovid’s words on the subject, following his death and the revelation that Hippolytus was innocent of the crime he had been accused of, Diana saw fit to reincarnate Hippolytus, granting him immortality and a place with the gods, giving him the name

⁸⁵ In Ovid, see *Met.* 15.497-546; *Fasti* 6.737-762; *Rem.* 64, 743-4; and *AA.* 1.511, 744.

⁸⁶ Trinacty, Christopher, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*: 67.

Virbius. This change from mortal to immortal, or even mortal into natural object, was most commonly allowed for maidens and nymphs who fled the unwanted sexual advances of various gods, heroes, and men. That Hippolytus should be counted among their number marks him out as a feminine male. Considering the close association of Seneca and Ovid in constructing the character of Phaedra, there is little doubt that Ovid's works concerning Hippolytus would have been in the mind of Seneca while he was writing this drama. It is, of course, not just the common myth that each relates, but a culmination of shared vocabulary, as evidenced above, and identical ordering of hunting scenes which allows for a clear link between the two poets.⁸⁷ Each is acutely aware that the death of Hippolytus within the tragedy is not necessarily the end of Hippolytus, thanks to his innocence.

Moving forward within the play, Hippolytus, when he is finally confronted by Phaedra, is innocent to the language and euphemisms which she uses regarding sexual intercourse. Indeed, when Phaedra solicits him, he is repulsed at the idea that he has in any way led his stepmother to love him; this continues to the point of self-blame, culminating at lines 683-4, with his pronouncement of *sum nocens, merui mori: placui novercae*, "I am culpable, I deserve death: I was pleasing to my stepmother." While this is not his first thought upon being approached by Phaedra, as the reality around him sets in, Hippolytus begins to re-analyse the conversations he has held with Phaedra, as well as reconsidering his choice of words, particularly those mentioned in relation to hunting and the outdoors. Segal states that when Hippolytus comes "[face] to face with Phaedra's sexual desire, he must rediscover and relive his suppressed knowledge that the family is a place not of purity, shelter, and innocence but of sexual desires, temptations, conflicts, anger, and hatred."⁸⁸ In a similar vein to his separation of the urban and the idyllic, with Phaedra's

⁸⁷ Mocanu, Alin, "Hunting in Seneca's *Phaedra*," in *Past Imperfect* 18 (2012): 34.

⁸⁸ Segal, Charles, *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*: 79.

proposition to him, Hippolytus must now shun his home as he has shunned women. Through this ignorance, Hippolytus proves that he must, by necessity, take the passive, and, according to the Roman social norms of the time, the feminine, role in their relationship.⁸⁹

The innocence of character which Hippolytus possesses helps bring forth the masculine persona of Phaedra, as will be discussed in the fifth chapter. For Hippolytus, he is forced to fill a role for which he feigns ignorance. He, through his misunderstandings of the ways of the world and a strong desire for the long past Golden Age which clouds his view of the way things are now, takes on the feminine persona of the hunted lover, while Phaedra fashions herself as the elegiac hunter.⁹⁰ The reasons behind his more feminine characteristics, as Hippolytus sees them, are not feminine in nature, nor are they in keeping with the world around him. Instead, by living in a world which he has created for himself off of the Golden Age type, Hippolytus has inhabited, unknowingly, a feminine role which those around him can clearly see and comprehend. Hippolytus is then forced, based on his sexual inexperience and Phaedra's misinterpretation of his reasons behind his chastity, to become a feminine character within both his constructed world and the real world that resists marriage, not based on principle or a deep hatred of the opposite sex, but rather because he has not yet been tamed or initiated into society.

⁸⁹ Johnson and Ryan, in *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature* note that "being a man was equated with taking the active part in any relationship" (1); they continue, stating that "[the] sexual boundaries and etiquette associated with the active and passive partner also applied to male-female relationships as is widely attested in artwork, with the male dominant and the female subordinate" (4). This is furthered by ancient medical texts which proclaim the male/masculine figure as being the active participant and female (or male)/feminine figure as the passive participant (see Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.6 for why the female is less perfect than the male; see also pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 26-27 on the differences between male and female (here both passive participants) sexual partners). Finally, this idea translates well into the roles which the male and female take in the creation of a child, the male considered the active parent, while the female is the passive parent (see Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 737a; for a modern interpretation, see Carson, Anne, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," Chapter 5 in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. Halperin et al.).

⁹⁰ The imagery of Phaedra as being the masculine hunter is much stronger than that of the prey Hippolytus, but it is here my argument that one without the other cannot exist.

In Hippolytus' role as the innocent, uninitiated virgin, brought into conflict with the experienced matron, a shift occurs in the relationship as each takes on a role that is more familiar to them than they had perhaps anticipated. This simple exchange presents, in turn, a shift in the manner in which men and women speak to each other: Phaedra must take the lead in the conversation, typically reserved for the male in the exchange. Again, Hippolytus' innocence means that he cannot understand what Phaedra is trying to convey as the two are speaking what is tantamount to a different language. Phaedra speaks as the elegiac lover, while Hippolytus knows only idyllic or didactic language. His innocence is shattered when Phaedra finally speaks in a language that both are able to understand, removing all vestiges of shame and speaking clearly, without hidden meaning in her words. It is only then that Hippolytus is able to see what sort of web he has been caught in and attempts to cut himself free.

The issue for the action of this play is not whether or not Hippolytus and Phaedra will end up together; that has already been decided by the mythological and literary predecessors to the play. Instead, what remains to be determined is how the end will happen. Hippolytus, in his confrontation with Phaedra, does not understand that her trouble, as she describes it, is in confronting and gaining possession of him.⁹¹ This is related directly to his innocence regarding matters of the sexual world and the society in which he lives but does not take a part in, as evidenced above. The actions that he sees as being beneficial and proper for him to do, such as his offer to protect his stepmother (633), Phaedra misconstrues as his acceptance, and even return,

⁹¹ In asking Hippolytus to send away his companions, Phaedra prepares herself for a battle. In a similar vein to the heroic warfare of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the two heroes must fight each other one on one. Phaedra here has the upper hand, knowing that she is entering into a battle; she has even dressed the part, taking upon herself a masculine and Amazonian guise (387-403). Hippolytus, contrasted to this image and unaware of what he is entering into, is unprepared and taken aback when Phaedra's onslaught begins. Looking here at Hippolytus' role, his innocence of character has prevented him from seeing the danger in meeting with his stepmother alone outside of the house; he incorrectly believes that she would not sully a sacred place, such as the altar to Diana. Phaedra wins each bout with her words, yet Hippolytus, with the victory in hand, concedes the fight and flees.

of her passionate and lustful love. Hippolytus, however, cast in the role of prey here, is completely ignorant of the implications of his speech. When Hippolytus shows his feminine side, Phaedra is quick to take over the masculine role. Even in their prayers to Diana, the two of them worship opposite, but complementary forms of the goddess.⁹²

2.2: Hippolytus the Coward

The final struggle between Hippolytus and Phaedra begins anew the themes of hunting and innocence on the parts of both Hippolytus and Phaedra. Hippolytus, at the conclusion of the fight, and with Phaedra at the end of his sword, concedes to her, flinging his sword away and fleeing the city. Mythologically and historically, men who exhibited cowardice were seen as feminine. Hippolytus, in fleeing what should be his first heroic victory, exhibits cowardice more closely related to that of Paris in the *Iliad* (analyzed below). In this contest with Phaedra, Hippolytus, after gaining the upper hand, allows Phaedra to walk away free and banishes himself from the city.⁹³ He exhibits many of his more typical qualities related above to his innocence, in that he returns to his place of comfort (retreats to his version of a household), separates himself again from the opposite sex, and rededicates himself to Diana, as he asserts his continued physical purity (*castum*, “pure,” 714), while simultaneously mourning the loss of his mental purity, calling out for the waters of Neptune to cleanse him, even as he declares that *non ipse toto magnus Oceano pater*

⁹² Hippolytus, in the prologue, invokes Diana as the *diva virago*, or “the divine female warrior” (54); Phaedra, when she sets out upon her hunt for Hippolytus, makes a short prayer to Diana as *deae virginis*, or “the virginal goddess” (405) that she may be successful in her endeavour.

⁹³ It is the Nurse who narrates Hippolytus’ departure as a part of her loud lamentations at the ruin he has caused Phaedra. *en praeceps abit. enseque trepida liquit attonius fuga. pignus tenemus sceleris*. “See! He goes away rushing. And alarmed because of his terrifying flight, he left his sword. I will hold on to it as token of his crime” (728-730).

tantum expiarit sceleris, “not even the great father of the whole Ocean could purify so great a sin,” (717-718).

This act of cowardice is perhaps most similar to that of Paris in the *Iliad*, wherein the Trojan prince, finding himself on the battlefield engaged in heroic combat with Menelaus (Homer, *Iliad* 3.67-72), is wrapped in a cloud by Aphrodite and brought to Helen, within the palace (Hom., *Il.*, 3.373-374, 380-382). In this way, Paris abandons his rightful place and his weapon, thrown at his enemy, in the war in order to attend to his wife; Helen even chastises Paris for his cowardice, stating that she wishes that Paris had died on the battlefield, continuing that “[there] was a time before now you boasted that you were better than warlike [Menelaus], in spear and hand and your own strength. Go forth now and challenge warlike [Menelaus] once again to fight you in combat” (Hom., *Il.*, 3.430-433, trans. Richmond Lattimore). While Paris has a goddess to remove him from the heat of the battle, Hippolytus, despite being at the altar of his goddess, is forced to take matters into his own hands, fleeing before the strength of Phaedra.

Within philosophical texts, Aristotle too equates cowardice with femininity. In his *History of Animals*, he states that all female creatures are more prone to cowardice (Aristotle, *History of Animals* 9.1); this identification of the cowardly male with the female sex is continued in his *Politics*, wherein Aristotle makes the claim that a man who possesses as much courage as a woman would be considered cowardly (Arist., *Politics* 1277b20). There is clear precedent in both mythology and philosophical writings of ancient Greece to equate cowardice with females and the feminine realm.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ For more on this subject, see McInerney, Jeremy, “Plutarch’s Manly Women,” Chapter 15 in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*: 319-344.

With the focus here on Hippolytus, Phaedra has already begun to usurp his role as the hunter *par excellence*,⁹⁵ but has revealed her hand too early in approaching her stepson directly. She enters into the conversation with the hope that her hunt will end here. However, when it does not, Hippolytus is able to regain some of his previous vigour and entrap Phaedra. Catching her at the altar of a virginal goddess and Hippolytus' preferred deity is doubly poetic in this case, as he is able to take back control of his virginal status and his chaste character by killing the licentious Phaedra at the altar of the virginal goddess invoked by her Nurse at line 405. Phaedra has already laid claim to her version of virginity, but this is obviously false.⁹⁶ Hippolytus is correct in his observation that no other sacrifice upon Diana's altar has been so fitting, as he proclaims *iustior numquam focis datus tuis est sanguis, arqutenens dea*, "no blood has been more justly spilt on your altar, bow-bearing goddess" (708-709). Hippolytus sees the death of the overtly sexual Phaedra on the altar of the virginal goddess Diana as just owing to Phaedra, at this short instance, becoming victim to Hippolytus' wild predatory nature. Hippolytus sees this attack upon his pure body as ending upon the altar of a goddess who shares this trait with him. As for this sacrifice being the most just, in giving Phaedra to Diana as sacrificial victim, Hippolytus sees himself as removing from the world a perpetrator of all he sees wrong with society. Phaedra encapsulates the lust, greed, and anger that is wrong with society. By sacrificing her and removing her from the living world, Hippolytus regains a modicum of his Golden Age innocence.

Within this short contest between stepmother and stepson, Phaedra is bested by Hippolytus, in that she is the one ultimately facing death. Hippolytus, backed into a corner and now fully

⁹⁵ If Hippolytus is to be considered, in his role as hunter, as the best within the land (evidenced by his being the leader of the hunt of the wild boar in the prologue), then Phaedra, in her ability to track and trap Hippolytus usurps this role with only the aid of a single companion. However, as she is closing in on her prey, she makes what could be a fatal mistake in alerting Hippolytus of her presence and intentions. This allows Hippolytus to retain his identity as a strong and capable hunter for the time being.

⁹⁶ Phaedra and her claims to virginity will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

realizing the gravity of the situation, jumps back into the masculine realm and draws his sword and brings it to his stepmother's throat, as she is physically in a position similar to that of a suppliant.⁹⁷ This is the critical defining moment for both Phaedra and Hippolytus as regards their genders. The outcome of this heroic battle will determine their place within the household and their represented genders upon the return of Theseus. For Hippolytus, he begins the contest as feminine, though he is not aware of this. Hippolytus' innocence, as discussed above, ensures that at this point, he is the feminine beloved. The next stage of their conversation shows Hippolytus realizing the meaning of Phaedra's words. In this, Hippolytus loses a part of his innocence, and begins to regain his masculine self. Finally, when Hippolytus is able to regain his full masculine self, he holds his sword to Phaedra's throat, that he may kill her and seize control of all his masculine traits. However, in the last moment, Hippolytus decides that he cannot kill his stepmother in this way and instead leaves, tossing his sword aside. In this final moment, Hippolytus is unable to give Phaedra what she wishes: death by her beloved.

Yet this inability of Hippolytus to kill Phaedra also marks him out as feminine in another manner. The sword, as a common phallic metaphor or euphemism in Latin literature, does not penetrate Phaedra's flesh at the hands of Hippolytus.⁹⁸ Instead, she must kill herself. At the finale of their confrontation, Hippolytus leaves in the feminine role, bested by the masculine Phaedra.

⁹⁷ Hippolytus claims that he has his sword at her throat, with her hair twisted in his hand (706-708). This suggests that Phaedra is in a kneeling or crouching position, with Hippolytus above her holding his sword point at an angle pointing towards the ground.

⁹⁸ The common obscenity for male genitalia in Latin was *mentula*, or "membrum virile." Following Latin rules for the creation of diminutives, the word appears to come from *mens*, meaning "mind," therefore with a meaning akin to "little mind" or, in English terms, "the little/smaller head" (see Chantraine, Pierre, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* vol. III: 693 a). Looking at the euphemism of *ensis* and *gladius*, "sword" as meaning penis, Plautus uses this at line 909 of his *Casina*, where James N. Adams, in his *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, notes that while the slave speaking uses the term *gladius* in an innocent manner, "could only be taken in a sexual sense by the audience" (Adams, James N., *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*: 20). Petronius also uses the *gladius* as a euphemism for the male sexual organ in his *Satyricon* 9.5. Roman authors, particularly Petronius, Plautus, Catullus, and Martial, used a variety of other weapons as representative of the penis. See Adams, James N., "Mentula and Its Synonyms," Chapter Two in *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*: 9-79; particularly 14-43.

Of course, as in the rest of the play, Hippolytus does not see things in this manner. For him, he has granted Phaedra the right to live, that she may have to continue in her debilitating shame and guilt. He, by refraining from killing her, does not take upon him the curse that kin-killing brings. According to the laws which he lives by, he is free from retribution. But in allowing Phaedra to live, he allows her to take the role of victor and create her own history of events. Again, in his innocence and despite his long speech on the subject, he has forgotten that in this world, deception is more commonplace and he can not trust those around him.

2.3: Conclusion

Hippolytus, as he is forced into a feminine personality, represents an interesting case. Through analysis of his actions and the reasons behind his personality quirks, it is evident that he does not in any way feel that he has feminine qualities. His main pastime is one more associated with men; he prefers the outdoors and the freedom that it offers over the confines of the city or home life; he carries the beginnings of a heroic identity and associates himself with a virginal goddess only due to her hunting prowess. Indeed, in Hippolytus' mind, he is a completely masculine character. When analyzed from an outside point of view, here meaning from another character's point of view, Hippolytus' characteristics take on a much more feminine quality. He is not so much the hunter but the hunted. Phaedra's quest for her beloved fundamentally changes the manner in which he functions within society, causing him to be the feminine object of adoration. "[As] Phaedra and Hippolytus change their roles in [Seneca's] play, another switch occurs: the young man, the true hunter, becomes the erotic prey, while the female character takes on the role of the erotic predator."⁹⁹ His innocence, within the realm of his preferred Golden Age,

⁹⁹ Mocanu, "Hunting in Seneca's *Phaedra*," (2012): 29.

is perfectly acceptable. He does not require any great amount of knowledge over erotic things, because it is not a part of his reality. This in no way makes him feminine within his worldview, but does make him vulnerable to the predators within the city life which he shuns.

Indeed, it is again due to his innocence that he is unable to see the fragility of the Golden Age world and the vulnerable position it places him in. “Hippolytus’ failure to resist Phaedra is inevitable: the Golden Age has ended for everyone else and his innocence has no defence against the texts and arts familiar to Phaedra, the nurse and his readers.”¹⁰⁰ His innocence is fundamentally unable to protect him from the world around him; ignorance and a refusal to view the world as it is, and not as he wishes it to be, expose him to the attacks of Phaedra and the Nurse. Finally, at the end of his great heroic battle against Phaedra, he concedes the fight, allowing her to live. This in and of itself is neither masculine nor feminine, as Phaedra has reached out to him as suppliant. However, it remains the case that Hippolytus, with a willing victim at the tip of his sword, is unable to penetrate her, thereby ensuring his own death. Clearly, when viewed from another character’s perspective, Hippolytus is more naïve than previously thought, refusing to break out of his innocent-persona to recognize that by allowing Phaedra to live, he is allowing her the chance to write the narrative of events. This forces Hippolytus, once again, back into the role of prey, this time with his father as hunter.

The skill with which Seneca has created the character of Hippolytus is impressive. Within him lies the boldness of the young hero hunting down a great monster and the innocent nature of the young bride being led to the bedchamber on her wedding night. As Littlewood notes, Seneca’s “technique of making the audience through its literary expertise participate in the destruction of the victim is used to particular effect in Phaedra, where Hippolytus’ vulnerability and

¹⁰⁰ Littlewood, *Self-Representation and Illusion*: 299-300.

distinguishing characteristic is precisely his innocence.”¹⁰¹ In moulding his character, Seneca has with masterful craftsmanship made a man who, despite being comfortable in his personality, is beneath the surface at war with himself. Hippolytus’ fluctuation from seeing himself as a masculine hunter in an idyllic setting to seeing himself as the outside world does marks his particular gender transgressions as being all the more poetic. Hippolytus, as the play comes to its climax, sees that he has been pushed outside the confines of his preferred area of comfort, but also that he has been wholly unaware of this happening; Phaedra has created a world around him in which his innocence and naivety have caused him to become the feminine beloved. Given the chance to rectify this situation, he falls back into Phaedra’s construction and chooses to remain untainted by the pollution which Phaedra has wrought; he unknowingly, again, leaves behind his masculine identity, becoming the feminized prey once more.

¹⁰¹ Littlewood, *Self-Representation and Illusion*: 214.

Chapter Three: Theseus the Hero

This chapter will focus on the masculinity of Theseus, which becomes more acceptable to those around him, as he embraces his role as father and husband in the third, fourth, and fifth acts. Theseus, as he represents the epitome of masculinity, in its destructive heroic form, within *Phaedra*, as well as its healthier form as a father and husband, is important to the discussion of gender. Theseus is thoroughly masculine in the Roman Imperial sense, yet undergoes his own changes in gender, moving, as he does, from the outside world where he is hero and role model to Hippolytus, to the inside world where he is husband and political leader. He is, at the out-set of his reintroduction into his family unit, dismissive of his familial roles, causing his masculinity to be harmful to those around him.

This destructive version of masculinity is tied in strongly with his heroic identity; the characterization of Theseus is a common one to find in mythology.¹⁰² He is reckless, well-known for his infidelity and womanizing, and quick to jump to conclusions. This damaging masculinity maps well onto the behaviour of other traditional Greco-Roman heroes, such as Hercules. However, considering how many other heroes of Greco-Roman mythology acted within their family unit, such as the mistreatment of Medea by Jason, which caused his familial destruction, and Hercules murdering his first family, Theseus is shown to be a good father, particularly in light of the traditional male roles and ideals of the audience time, as he demonstrates in the fourth and fifth acts that he does truly care for his son and mourns that he was forced into cursing, and thereby killing, him.

¹⁰² Theseus joins the ranks of heroes such as Jason, who disregards the influence and power which Medea holds over him, losing his wife-to-be and children as a result (see Euripides, *Medea*; Seneca, *Medea*); Hercules, who in a fit of rage brought on by Hera, kills his children, and is later killed by his wife Deianeira because she believes that he no longer loves her (see Euripides, *Children of Herakles*; Seneca, *Hercules Furens*); and Agamemnon, who upon his return from Troy is killed by his wife Clytemnestra, having underestimated her intelligence and assuming that she has remained faithful in his absence (see Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*).

The history and ancestry of Theseus is far more complicated than that of Hippolytus, but informs his heroic deeds and personality greatly.¹⁰³ To unpack the character of Theseus as hyper-masculine is to examine his heroic identity, and thus his ancestry. In looking at Theseus, then, two scenes in particular from within *Phaedra* will aid in establishing his heroic identity and the dangerous heroic masculinity which Phaedra blames for her crime of passion: his reasons for travelling to the underworld and his recklessness at blaming Hippolytus. To counter this, and to conclude the chapter, Theseus' guilt at ordering the murder of his son will be examined as a proper and benign form of his masculinity.

Theseus, in his representation within the play, is shown to be more of a typical Greek civilizing hero, in that he brings society and civilization to others, such as the Amazons, and undertakes quests to dangerous places, such as his travels to the underworld to kidnap Proserpina. Based upon this, the audience would most likely have conflated Theseus with other heroes of this type, such as Hercules; they would have seen him as damaging or destructive to his family unit. However, Theseus, in his deep care for Hippolytus and the revelation that he has cursed his son due to Phaedra's deception combined with the deep grief and guilt that he feels after Hippolytus has been cursed, is rehabilitated into a more positive Greek hero, creating a more positive masculine identity for himself.¹⁰⁴ Within the fourth and fifth acts, then, Theseus is shown as upholding the values and norms held by Roman society and culture in the 1st century CE.

¹⁰³ In short, Theseus was the son of Aethra, a princess of Troezen, by either Aegeus or Poseidon. He went to claim his place in his father's household as an adolescent, where Medea attempted to poison him, likely to secure the place of her own children as heirs to the throne of Athens. Aegeus claims his son as legitimate; Theseus is then chosen as one of the fourteen youths which are to be sent to Crete as sacrifices to the Minotaur. Theseus kills the Minotaur with the aid of Ariadne, and sails back to Athens, leaving Ariadne on the island of Naxos. Aegeus, believing that Theseus is dead as Theseus has forgotten to change the sails on his ship from black to white, throws himself off the cliffside. Upon the king's death, his brother, Pallas, takes the throne, forcing Theseus out of the city; Theseus returns to Troezen and rules there for a time.

¹⁰⁴ The grief of parents, especially for the death of adult children. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 1².11 shows the epitaph of a twenty-year-old son who possessed great virtue and received the epitaph so that no one could ask why such a good son had received no honours.

Herein, the hyper-masculinity of Theseus will be analyzed, as he represents a subversion of gender, not to become more feminine, but rather from a damaging masculine personality, to one that is safer and acceptable within Roman Imperial society.¹⁰⁵ This change within a single gender shows that it is not only the subversion of gender from masculine to feminine or vice versa which can be damaging and threatening to the family unit, but also changes within a single gender. Theseus, as a husband and man, within both the stage and audience time, continually demonstrates the rights and privileges awarded to a man of both elite and heroic status, herein his direct challenge of death, his actions as an adulterer and disregard for his wife, and his distrust of his son. Each of these traits relates differently to the masculinity which Theseus possesses, but fall within the confines of his heroic identity. First, then, the idea of a heroic identity must be linked to masculinity in the Greco-Roman world. Following this, the heroic identity of Theseus will be described in relation to his hyper-masculine character and his association with Neptune. Finally, his actions as both husband and father, which are lacking in some areas, but are ultimately good and proper for a man of the early Roman Empire, will be examined, as they point to a more benign form of masculinity.

3.1: Heroic Identity and Masculinity

Heroes, and the accompanying influence and fame which they experience as a result of their deeds, are almost all men within the Greco-Roman world. Females who engage in heroic deeds are markedly masculine, such as Atalanta, discussed in chapter one,¹⁰⁶ or Medea, who has

¹⁰⁵ As will be discussed in this chapter, Theseus is able to move from the heroic hyper-masculine gender of the outside world which Hippolytus inhabits, to the safer and more acceptable masculinity of the inside world, which Phaedra inhabits. Thus, he conveys the scope of masculinity and the damage that being hyper-masculine can bring when it is used inside the household proper.

¹⁰⁶ The discussion of Atalanta is found on page 18, n. 35.

been brought up numerous times in her role as stepmother to Theseus.¹⁰⁷ The actions of heroes are often described as being physical labours, such as those which Hercules undertook. The Greco-Roman hero was also frequently involved in bringing order to the uncivilized world and attempted, through the killing of monsters and taming of barbarian peoples, to establish what they considered to be civil societies. The harmful characteristics which the heroic men of mythology possessed, such as violence and destructive tendencies towards the family and society, licentious behaviour, a shunning of their place within society, and a preference for a short life lived in fame over a long one lived in anonymity, are certainly not required for them to be considered heroes; instead, this seems to stem from a place of heroic violence and force which prevents them from returning to society to live peacefully within the civic and familial spheres.¹⁰⁸ Theseus, acting as a hero, engages in these same activities and possesses the same self-assuredness which leads him to

¹⁰⁷ There is no doubt that women were able to possess a heroic identity; Phaedra herself possesses a strong heroic identity, discussed in chapter five. However, women of antiquity who are considered to be heroines frequently possess many masculine characteristics. In both the Greek and Roman worlds, though more prevalent in the former, women were meant to be sequestered from men and a proper wife was one who was not spoken of. Johnson and Ryan, in their sourcebook on sexuality in the ancient world, make note that women “were expected to remain chaste and behave in a way that would not draw attention to themselves or bring disrepute to their husbands” (Johnson, Marguerite & Terry Ryan, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook*: 6). In being considered a heroine, women would of a necessity draw great attention to themselves; a large part of the Greek heroic identity was the possession of *kleos* or glory. Medea, in Euripides’ *Medea*, states that she is feared because she is a wise woman (296-306) and ridiculed because she has been abandoned by Jason (404-405), and her Nurse notes in the prologue that Medea is not one to endure mistreatment (38); Medea’s reputation has (rightfully) caused Creon to fear her, meaning that news of her deeds has already reached him. Therefore, Medea is at this point in possession of her own identity, separate from that of her husband, and is unable to abide by any ridicule from her peers. Other women of myth, such as Clytemnestra, possess a similar heroic identity associated with their more masculine personas.

¹⁰⁸ Within mythology, heroes fall into the category of ‘warriors,’ as laid out by Georges Dumézil in his *Flamen-Brahmen* and *Mitra-Varuna*. He identifies three functions which characters in myths serve: leader, warrior, and producer. The leader function is divided into two, one guiding his people in political matters, the other in religious matters, and calls upon the warrior in times of need; the warrior protects the society from outside dangers, but is otherwise not necessary to the running of the society, and often brings destruction in attempting to re-integrate into the society; the producers are the main body of citizens who keep the day to day operations of the city running, by providing food and children so that the city and society may continue to grow and thrive. Heroes and warriors, as a result of this, are important when the society is threatened, but otherwise are better off staying away from the society, in that their main function is to destroy and not to nurture. There are very few heroes who are able to maintain a stable homelife after going about and completing their heroic exploits, as they no longer see themselves as being a proper and functioning member of society. See Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (1987) for more on this tripartite division in Indo-European Mythology.

challenge death itself, as evidenced in *Phaedra*.¹⁰⁹ Heroism, then, while not confined to the male sex, is strongly associated with the masculine realm, dealing with more physical labours, as well as being tied in to the idea of recognition and glory which comes through the possession of a reputation. Theseus is meant to behave like a hero while he is outside of the household. He does not invert gender roles in the same manner as Hippolytus and Phaedra; he rather possesses two types of masculinity: his hyper-masculinity for his heroic exploits, and his ‘regular’ masculinity for his place as leader of the household. The issue with having both of these types of masculinity, both being appropriate and acceptable in different situations, comes when Theseus within the household, rapidly changes from his safe masculinity to his hyper-masculinity in cursing Hippolytus.

As an example of the damaging effects that hyper-masculinity can have on the household, and as one who comes from the same mythological time as Theseus, Hercules is one such hero who upon completing his labours, is no longer able to engage properly and with civility in his society. He was given twelve labours to complete by King Eurysthus as acts of penance. Of these twelve labours,¹¹⁰ three involved the slaying of monsters,¹¹¹ four involved the capture of wild animals,¹¹² and the remaining five involved stealing various animals and items, as well as cleaning the Augean stables.¹¹³ These labours apparently took twelve years to complete; upon his return home, Hera brought on a *furor*, “madness,” causing Hercules to kill his children, thinking them

¹⁰⁹ Theseus never divulges his reasons for being in the underworld, only that he was able to feel his sufferings (*sensus malorum*, Theseus was “perceiving of [his] evils,” 843). Phaedra’s account of Theseus’ whereabouts and reasons are the only ones present in the play (seen at lines 91-98, analysed later in this chapter).

¹¹⁰ There is some variation as to what the twelve labours were; the ones used here are the most common or prevalent of the labours associated with Hercules.

¹¹¹ Hercules was tasked with slaying the Nemean Lion, the Lernean Hydra, and the Stymphalian Birds.

¹¹² These being the Ceryneian Hind, the Erymanthian Boar, the Cretan Bull, and Cerberus.

¹¹³ The items stolen include the mares of Diomedes, the girdle of Hippolyta (note here that Hippolyta/Hippolyte is sometimes identified as the Amazonian mother of Hippolytus, but is called Antiope in Seneca), the cattle of the monster Geryon, and the apples of the Hesperides.

animals. He also destroyed his home and killed his wife Megara in doing so. Seneca also treated this myth in *Hercules Furens*. Taking Hercules as a stereotypical hero, Theseus maps out well onto his life, completing his own set of heroic tasks, culminating in his travels to the underworld with Perithous.¹¹⁴ Of course, it is by Theseus' own admission that the only way he was able to escape Hell was by Hercules dragging him out along with Cerberus (843-845). This adds to the gravity of Theseus' use of his last wish to curse Hippolytus; not even the thought of a premature death in the depths of Hell could entice Theseus to use that wish to ensure his escape. When cursing Hippolytus, Theseus makes brief reference to this, stating *numquam supremum numinis munus tui consumeremus, magna ni premerent mala*, "never would I have used up this last gift of yours, if not pressed by so great an evil," (949-950). The work or labours given to heroes most typically involves the use of physical strength¹¹⁵ and removes the hero from society for a length of time, making reintegration far more difficult, if not impossible.¹¹⁶

3.2: Heroic Theseus

Theseus, as a hero, is best known for his exploits on Crete with the Minotaur, killing a monster which consumed human flesh, an act which was markedly uncivilized; this act of monster-killing, combined with both his physical and sexual exploits, mark this type of his masculinity as

¹¹⁴ The main difference between these two heroes is Hercules' having animals to vanquish in his labours, whereas Theseus is relegated to handle human or semi-divine beings. Therefore, Hercules paves the way for civilization to be developed, while Theseus enters into already established societies and removes threats to their being able to continue into perpetuity. This makes Theseus' removal of Hippolytus, as a human threat to Athens a more common feat for him.

¹¹⁵ Female heroes are more likely to engage in acts which bring them glory, but avoid physical pursuits; Medea, as an example of this, has gained great renown and glory through her heroic deeds, but uses poisons and potions instead of physical combat to accomplish this. It is only with her children, younger and far weaker than herself, that she uses a sword to bring destruction. This fits with the Greco-Roman idea of women acting in a more deceitful manner, not facing their enemies head-on, but working in the background, carefully setting a plan in motion to accomplish their tasks without necessarily getting their hands dirty in the process.

¹¹⁶ In this, Hippolytus is also in possession of a heroic identity like his father's, in that he is removed from society in order to hunt and kill a boar within the prologue.

being harmful and destructive to those around him. The killing of monsters, who are themselves far more destructive than the hero himself, bring to the forefront of the hero's personality elements which make it near impossible to reintegrate fully and peacefully into society. Theseus is no different in this, as his homecoming marks the death of his father and leads to the usurpation of the Athenian throne by his uncle, Pallas. Theseus, killing his kin, is then forced to remove himself from Athenian society for a time, settling in Troezen, where Euripides' *Hippolytus* takes place.

The heroic quest on Crete led to Theseus' marriage to Ariadne, Phaedra's sister, emphasizing both his destructive nature and his strong sexual side, in killing the Minotaur and seducing Ariadne, respectively. These characteristics are typical of Greek heroes, especially of Hercules. This first marriage abruptly ended when Ariadne was deserted on the return trip to Athens. She would later go on to be the wife of the Greek god Dionysus (in Roman mythology, Bacchus). At some point following his return to Athens from his Cretan adventures, Theseus mounted a force against the Amazons. Literature differs on what transpired during this encounter, but in all cases, Antiope (at some times called Hippolyte) became pregnant by Theseus and bore him a son, Hippolytus.¹¹⁷

Within *Phaedra*, there is ample evidence to support the marriage of Antiope and Theseus: the Nurse refers to Antiope as *coniugi*, "wife," of Theseus (226-7), and Hippolytus' place within the family unit seems to be that of legitimate heir, based upon Theseus' entrusting him with the royal sceptre (617). Finally, his marriage to Phaedra took place as a means to secure a political

¹¹⁷ In relation to his identity as a hero, Adrienne Mayor states that "[every] great champion of myth [...] proved his valor by overcoming powerful warrior queens with their armies of women" (Mayor, *The Amazons*: 11). Taking this in conjunction with the mythology surrounding Theseus, it can be assumed that no matter how he came to have intercourse with Antiope, there was certainly a battle involved. Mayor furthers this idea by postulating that "[the] opportunity for an especially strong, ambitious woman to head women-only or mixed-sex raiding parties or even armies was exaggerated in Greek myths into a kind of war of the sexes, pitting powerful Amazon queens against great Greek heroes" (Mayor, *The Amazons*: 37).

alliance with King Minos of Crete;¹¹⁸ Phaedra questions in her opening lines why Crete (and therefore her father) have forced her into marriage with a man she hates (89-91). Antiope was killed at this marriage due to her outrage at being set aside for a presumably younger and more politically desirable wife.¹¹⁹ Theseus freely admits to killing Antiope within *Phaedra*, content that her savagery, which would in all likelihood have brought down his household around him, has been brought to an end. Theseus indeed seems proud that he was able to take on the Amazon Antiope, claiming *iam iam superno numina grates ago, quod icta nostra cecidit Antiope manu*, “[now], now I bear gratitude to celestial authority, that Antiope died with a blow from my hand” (926-927). Theseus, then, tracks perfectly onto the heroic model laid out in mythology in his participation and leadership of quests, his behaviour, his sense of entitlement, and his strong association and comfort in his renown and glory, stemming from the successful completion of his heroic deeds. Theseus’ heroic identity, which is based upon the heroic model given in the first section of this chapter, represents the extreme or dangerous form of masculinity which led him to travel to the underworld without a clear way to return to the living, as well as his using his last wish to curse Hippolytus.¹²⁰

Despite his late appearance on-stage, Theseus is involved in the action of the play from the very beginning. Within Phaedra’s first speech she makes reference to Theseus and his deeds. Even when he is far removed from the stage, Theseus is never far from the minds of the characters.

¹¹⁸ Timothy Gantz speaks of the oddity of Theseus and Phaedra’s union in Chapter 9 of his *Early Greek Myths*, believing that it is representative of a political union (Gantz, Timothy, *Early Greek Myth*: 285).

¹¹⁹ In a similar manner to Jason, who set aside his marriage to Medea in favour of the Corinthian princess, Theseus, in marrying Phaedra gains more political clout, as she is not considered as foreign as an Amazon and provides with her name and family a better position for Theseus, politically gaining the support of Crete for military endeavours, as well as cementing a relationship between Crete and Athens.

¹²⁰ Theseus, acting within the heroic model, adds to Hippolytus’ masculine character, as Hippolytus seeks to emulate his father, specifically in his role as a hero, in confronting the sea-bull (1064-1067).

Before Phaedra can lay blame on her husband, she already dismisses him as being a philanderer, stating:

*profugus en coniunx abest
praestatque nuptae quam solet Theseus fidem.
fortis per altis invii retro lacus
vadit tenebras miles **audacis** proci,
solio ut **revulsam** regis inferni abstrahat;
pergit **furoris socius**, haud illum **timor**
pudorve tenuit: **stupra**¹²¹ et **illicitos toros**
Acheronte in imo quaerit Hippolyti pater.*

My husband is absent, run away
and Theseus exhibits to his bride his accustomed loyalty.
Manly, he rushes along lofty roads through the shady lake
with no way back, he rushes as the soldier to a **bold** suitor,
to drag away from the throne of the king of the underworld
she who was taken;
he continues as the friend of madness, he does not possess
either fear
or shame: the father of Hippolytus seeks **violation**
and an **illicit mistress**
in the deepest realm of Acheron.¹²²

Phaedra, 91-98

Phaedra here describes what she believes Theseus' actions are, giving the audience his location in the underworld, as well as his reason for being there: the kidnapping and rape of Proserpina. The

¹²¹ The use of *stuprum*, which Susan Treggiari notes is of particular importance when discussing male adultery and the negative impact that it could have on society. She continues, stating that Greek philosophers, such as pseudo-Demosthenes, who gave three instances of proper heterosexual relationships (man with courtesan, concubine, or wife), argued against husbands committing adultery; Plato presented the strictest form of this, stating in his *Laws*, that sexual intercourse should only occur between a man and a woman with whom he wished to have children (Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*: 199-201). See also Fantham, Elaine, "Stuprum: Public Attitudes and Penalties for Sexual Offences in Republican Rome," in *Classical Views* 35, Issue 10 (1997). Additionally, *stuprum*, in its sense of "rape" was a legal charge within the Roman Republic, which Nghiêm L. Nguyen discusses in his "Roman Rape: An Overview of Roman Rape Laws from the Republican Period to Justinian's Reign" in *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law* 13, Issue 1 (2006): 75-112.

¹²² The language contained within these eight lines is strongly reminiscent of a negative act in Roman poetry and prose, particularly the areas marked in bold. Framed within the Latin by *coniunx*, "husband," and *Hippolyti pater*, "father of Hippolytus," the act here of advancing upon an already kidnapped goddess with seditious purposes further characterizes Theseus' behaviour as negative and damaging. By being framed within two masculine roles ideally marked by piety, restraint, and respect for both the gods and one's family, Seneca seems to be implying a further negative and destructive thread within the character of Theseus.

language used here to describe the underworld is clearly identified with the characteristics of Hades/Pluto. Adding to this, the use of *miles audaci proci, soli out revulsam regis inferni abstrahat*, “he rushes as a soldier to a bold suitor, to drag away from the throne of the king of the underworld she who was taken” (94-95) gives the journey a more heroic feel. The greater number of lines given to the journey also give this description a more heroic feel; however, this is undone or subverted by the reason behind the trip to the underworld: the rape of Proserpina. Also note that no space is dedicated to Theseus’ challenge and conquering death, which should, by all accounts, be the most important aspect of his trip, being the most heroic. Instead, Seneca has Phaedra recite the heroic and perilous journey, as well as the purpose for it, adding that this type of behaviour is typical for Theseus.¹²³

Related to his masculinity, this description given by Phaedra early in the play makes Theseus out to be everything a proper man should not be. He has left behind his wife and family, something which is apparently common for him to do. Despite being in the underworld, he is not meant to be considered dead, as he has gone there willingly that he may kidnap and rape the goddess Proserpina. He evidently had no plans for returning, in that he has no way back to the land of the living (93). Finally, he has neither fear nor shame. In short, for the chance at seizing and raping a goddess, Theseus has given up his place within his family, carelessly entering into the underworld with no clear plan of returning. This short passage marks out much of the heroic identity and damaging masculinity present in Theseus’ character. In particular, his reckless nature is evident in the lack of a return plan. Theseus has, according to the words of his wife, gone blindly

¹²³ Continuing with the comparison of Hercules and Theseus as both being typical male heroes, Hercules is present in the underworld to retrieve Cerberus as a part of his twelve labours (843-845); Euripides, in his *Alcestis*, also has Hercules fight Thanatos (Death) for Alcestis, who had died in her husband’s place. Whether these actions occurred at the same time or not is highly debatable. However, it is important that when Hercules descends to the underworld or fights with chthonic beings, such as Thanatos, he does so for a noble cause; Theseus has gone to the underworld for rape and lust. Consider also Orpheus, who travels to the underworld to bring his wife Eurydice back, again a noble cause.

into the underworld to steal from the king of Hell. This challenge to death itself, although not explicitly stated, is among the ultimate heroic deeds; it is rather common for a hero to be able to cross from the land of the living and back again, done by Hercules at least once, Ulysses (Odysseus in Greek), and Orpheus.

Considering the role of Theseus as a hero, then, his deeds and his current absence from the home are spectacular, in that he faces death and attempts to steal from him, and lives to return to the land of the living; his reason for accomplishing this task, however, is not meant to be spectacular or something to be emulated. Phaedra frames the actions of Theseus as personal attacks against her, citing her continued commitment to the marriage and her 'chastity' against Theseus' apparent dismissal of his wife and his adulterous ways. In this, Phaedra tries to convince herself that at least some part of her actions stems from a place of revenge, not pure unabated lust. But, for Theseus, it is exactly his heroic identity which makes allowances for his actions. His mythic past before his marriage to Phaedra is filled with monster-killing, travels around Greece for various reasons, and generally, the actions in which heroes engage themselves with. His current expedition to the Underworld should be seen as no different.

Theseus' hyper-masculinity is further marked by his refusal to see his son before laying judgment upon his head. Theseus claims that only the gravest of evils would be able to force him to use the last gift given to him by Neptune, clearly marking out the gravity of Hippolytus' attack upon the household. However, little consideration is given to the use of this last wish; a mere ten lines are dedicated to the description of the gift, its provenance, and finally, its use against Hippolytus (941-950). It is Theseus' belief in Phaedra's complete dedication to him which can lead him to believe her so readily and to proclaim his son as guilty without first seeing him acting in combination with his heroic role of removing human threats to an established society. Seeing

Hippolytus as one such threat, Theseus' shift into heroic hyper-masculinity, as well as his unwavering belief that Phaedra is telling the truth, cause him to lay the curse upon his son's head. This belief in Phaedra's dedication can be coupled with the fact that she did not lie in relating her story to her husband, only that she phrased her words in such a way as to push Theseus to a wrong interpretation of the events.¹²⁴

His recklessness is also a marker of his identity as a hero, as well as a part of his family history. It is a common enough motif for heroes of Greco-Roman mythology to act before fully thinking their actions through.¹²⁵ Theseus is no different in this; taking only a partial story and combining it with his own thoughts and observations on the character of Hippolytus, the Amazons,¹²⁶ and his trust in Phaedra, he calls upon Neptune to enact the curse.¹²⁷ Theseus here directly blames Hippolytus' Amazonian ancestry for his actions, stating *est prorsus iste gentis armiferae furor, odisse Veneris foedera et castum diu vulgare populis corpus*, "this madness is typical for the female warrior tribe, at first they hate Venus and then all day they give their bodies to the people" (909-911). This hasty pronouncement of guilt overrules any sort of judicial system, wherein the accused may defend himself, a staple of Athenian and Greek culture.

¹²⁴ Phaedra, as part of both her feminine and masculine personas, is rather deceitful, disguising her true feelings from Hippolytus and twisting her words so that Hippolytus can take the blame for the consequences of her passion.

¹²⁵ To use the example of Hercules again, in his success as a hero, he brings the consternation of Hera/Juno. By not heeding the goddess in her attempts to kill or subdue him, Hercules brings about the destruction of his household. He does not see that in proving himself, he is destroying himself. To add to this in a more general sense, the heroes of Greco-Roman myth are less prone to planning out an attack, and far more likely to face problems head on with the hope that things will work themselves out. Consider Odysseus, who lays out the plan for the Trojan horse and is identified with the epithets "cunning," "resourceful," and "mastermind of war." In particular, his identification as "cunning" (in Greek, *polymetis*, or "much-cunning") is also applied to Medea in her possession of forethought, as well as Athena (in Rome, divided between Bellona, goddess of war, and Minerva, goddess of household crafts), goddess of war as it relates to the use of strategy or fore-thought and planning. This distinction is not typically given to heroes, who act in a more reckless manner.

¹²⁶ See also Roland Mayer, *Seneca: Phaedra*: 44.

¹²⁷ The idea of the wishes given to Theseus by Neptune is important in helping to determine the characteristics of Theseus. He clearly states that this is his last wish, strongly implying that he is an older and more experienced hero at this point in time. It also allows for the audience to see the desperation of Theseus at learning of his son's supposed actions. Not even while trapped in the underworld for the past three years did Theseus use his last wish. Hippolytus' betrayal of his father's trust is more painful and more destructive to Theseus as both a hero and a father than his 'death' was.

However, Theseus, from the audience's viewpoint, is acting in accordance to the law of *patria potestas*, "power of the father." In this sense, Theseus is able to call for the death of Hippolytus in order to maintain the integrity of his household; Theseus may be considered reckless in calling for a permanent solution without hearing the case of Hippolytus, but is well within his rights as the *paterfamilias*, "father of the family." From *Phaedra*, it is evident that Theseus truly believes that he is acting in the best interest of his household in cursing Hippolytus, even if that should bring about the death of his heir. He calls out asking *unde ista venit generis infandi lues?* "Where did this **abominable pestilence** on our family come from? (905). Here, the language of disgust that Theseus expresses suggests that he believes his actions are protecting his household from further exposure to the nefarious Hippolytus. Furthermore, Theseus continues to place all the blame on Hippolytus, whom he claims comes from *degener sanguis*, "ignoble blood" (908), and calls him, among other things, *ficta maiestas viri*, a "fictitious majesty of men" (915) whose *pudor impudentem celat*, "shame hides [his] shamelessness" (920). Taking all of this into consideration, Theseus acting in the role of husband and leader of his household displays a more positive example of masculinity here as he strives to protect himself and his family from further harm; however, as a father and in his role as hero, Theseus presents a reckless approach to calling for the death of Hippolytus, placing all blame on his son at the word of Phaedra and the evidence of a sword.

Theseus' hyper-masculinity underscores Hippolytus' preference for the masculine realm and his refusal of all things feminine. It also causes him to act in a way which Phaedra takes as a personal attack, thereby causing her to find rationality for her pursuit of Hippolytus. His actions as a hyper-masculine hero, just as the actions of her mother Pasiphae and her sister Ariadne, allow Phaedra to believe that her incestuous passion for Hippolytus is not completely outside of the realm

of possibility. Nor is the idea that she could manage to engage in an affair with Hippolytus free from the public eye and without any immediate recourse.¹²⁸ Theseus, in his blatant disregard for his marriage vows to Phaedra and his long absence in the land of the dead has allowed for the passion of Phaedra to fester and grow to the point where, now, she can no longer keep it inside of her. In this way, Theseus in his hyper-masculine and heroic character drives the main force of the end of the tragedy: he has, in Phaedra's mind, brought her to sin, and he will act in a heroic manner to quell the threat which he sees attacking his house, here his 'rapist' son Hippolytus.

For Theseus, then, his quick reaction and judgment of Hippolytus' actions sets in motion his son's death. Of course, owing to this, his grief and guilt will be exponentially larger by the end of the play.¹²⁹ Considering here, not the aftermath of his pronouncement, but the reasons behind his impatience, a further mark of Theseus' hyper-masculinity can be seen. Had Theseus trusted his son as much as he trusted his young wife, he need not have been so rash. According to Roman society of the time, the idea of the young seductress stepmother was a prevalent enough phobia to induce laws against it. Treggiari records that:

There seems to have been a clear preference among middle-aged men who lost a previous wife by death or divorce to seek a match with a woman near the beginning of her child-bearing years and consequently at the height of her physical attractiveness. [...] A stepmother could be as young as her stepchildren or even younger. [...] Hence the phobia, or at least rhetorical theses, about adultery between stepmother and stepson.¹³⁰

Certainly, this situation should apply to Theseus as well, who has already by this point in his life had three marriages and countless dalliances with other women. However, Theseus places all his

¹²⁸ The Nurse quickly tries to quell this idea, reminding Phaedra that all sin is eventually uncovered (152-164).

¹²⁹ Kohn here states that owing to Theseus' ready belief in Phaedra's tale, his quick punishment of his son causes his grief to become so much worse when he learns the truth (Kohn, *The Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy*: 80).

¹³⁰ Treggiari, Susan, *Roman Marriage*: 401.

trust in the woman who should, by all accounts, be trusted the least amongst his immediate family members, especially in matters concerning Hippolytus.

For Theseus, his hyper-masculine, heroic identity is helped by his close association with Neptune. Looking now at the sea-bull which killed Hippolytus, we find our last instance of the dangerous and destructive masculinity which Theseus exudes. The bull is a common motif for power and masculinity;¹³¹ here showing it killing the young Hippolytus is representative of the ultimate power which Theseus holds over his son, an example of *patria potestas*.¹³² It remains in Theseus' hands to serve justice and punishment as he sees fit within his own family, according to Roman laws and societal norms of the time. A well-balanced masculine character would be far more likely to hear both sides of the story before making a final judgment,¹³³ but here, again, Theseus' anger and reckless nature get in the way of clear thinking.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Bulls were often related to powerful male deities in Greco-Roman mythology and literature; Phaedra and the Cretans recognized the bull as having a great deal of power. For them, it could be seen as Zeus/Jupiter, who kidnapped Europa, or as the famous Cretan bull, sent by Poseidon/Neptune for sacrifice. For more on bulls, and more generally, cattle, see Jeremy McInemey, *The Cattle of the Sun: Cows and Culture in the World of the Ancient Greeks*, Princeton (2010).

¹³² See the discussion above regarding Theseus' use of *patria potestas* in his role as *paterfamilias* to curse Hippolytus to death.

¹³³ Christopher Star notes that for the Stoics, "the passions are intimately related to reason and intention, spring from *voluntas* and judgment, and can thus be quelled by the application of reason" (Star, Christopher, "Commanding Constantia in Senecan Tragedy," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136 (Spring, 2006): 210). Thus, Theseus, acting as he is in a fit of anger, is unbalanced, focused more on his *furor* (passion) than his *ratio* (reason). It is the balance of these two qualities in any sex or gender which allows for level-headedness in dealings with other members of society. Within the masculine gender and the male sex, a balance of this sort allows for justice to prevail; medical and philosophical texts provide evidence of the need for balance between the four humors to ensure good health (Hippocrates is thought to have developed this idea of the four humors). In addition to this, men were seen to possess warm and dry characteristics, while women, being their opposite, were cold and wet (Galen and Aristotle are the main proponents of this argument). This division was applied by Aristotle, Galen, and in the Hippocratic writings to determine what the differences were between the physical nature of men and women, men being seen as the more perfect of the pair. Therefore, both men and women required balance in their physiognomic and mental selves; an imbalance led to pain, either in the form of sickness, or, in the case of Theseus here, an irrational reaction causing the destruction of his household. Looking at the law of the audience time, balance was upheld by allowing both the prosecution and defense a speech to make their case; this was also the norm in Athenian law courts. Here, Theseus hears only the prosecution's side of things, giving his judgment based solely upon the words of Phaedra.

¹³⁴ Other heroes experience this lack of proper judgment, also to their eventual disadvantage. Examples include Aegeus, father of Theseus, who upon seeing the black flags of Theseus' ship, immediately jumped to his death in grief. While this was mainly Theseus' fault in forgetting to change the sails from black to white, which was a pre-

The bull, as it is, represents both the sexual aggression of Theseus and the distinctly non-sexual aggression of Hippolytus within the play.¹³⁵ In fact, there is already allusion to the sexual aggression of bulls in the play, as the Chorus recalls the young girl, likely Europa, who is taken by Zeus/Jupiter in bull form and raped, bearing from this union Minos, father of Phaedra (303-308). Theseus, who calls forth the bull, possesses the potential for this sort of aggression; he is, in fact, rather well-known for it:

Abduction and rape would be in character for Theseus, who was a serial sexual predator. [...] In various myths, Theseus ravished and abandoned other women, including underage maidens. Long before Theseus abducted the Amazon Antiope, for example, he had abducted Helen of Troy when she was just a girl of ten.¹³⁶

Like many heroes, Theseus' aggression and willingness to take whatever and whomever he desired is well documented. By some accounts, his coupling with Antiope was forcible. The bull called upon by Theseus is representative of his strong sexual presence and is related to Theseus' characterization as sexual aggressor and predator, and therefore as a marker of his destructive masculinity.

Looking, then, at the implications of having a sexually aggressive bull attack Hippolytus, we may draw the conclusion that this shape was chosen as it relates well to all parties involved in the action. For Theseus, as the sexually aggressive and masculine father, the bull is related also to his heroic exploits, especially in his having killed the Minotaur;¹³⁷ for Phaedra, the bull reminds immediately of the crime of her mother, Pasiphae, who is brought up often within the first half of

arranged sign of the outcome of Theseus' quests, Aegeus does not wait for the ship to dock to investigate matters further.

¹³⁵ Fitch, John & Siobhan McElduff, "Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama," in *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002): 29.

¹³⁶ Mayor, *The Amazons*: 260.

¹³⁷ The Nurse, in attempting to quell the overpowering passion she sees building in Phaedra, brings up the labyrinth which now sits empty because of Theseus' deed (174).

the play;¹³⁸ and for Hippolytus, it is reminder of the masculine heroic identity which he strives for but is unable to attain, as well as the shared epithet *torvus* given to Hippolytus and the bulls mentioned in *Phaedra*.¹³⁹

Michael Paschalis recognizes a pattern in the use of the epithet *torvus*, “wild or savage,” as it is repeated throughout the play. It first describes the Cretan Bull, the bed-companion of Pasiphae at 117 as *torvus, impatiens iugi*, “wild, [and] unable to bear a yoke;” it is used twice to in describing Hippolytus, once at 416 where he is *torvus aversus ferox*, “wild, hostile, [and] spirited” and again at 798, where his *est facies torva viriliter*, “face is courageously (or manfully) savage;” and it is finally used in describing the monstrous bull at 1063 as *torva currus*, “running wild.”¹⁴⁰ That Hippolytus should be directly related to two bulls tied to Neptune is important in and of itself; it is here, however, more important that Theseus, favoured by Neptune, should express his fatherly power in the form of a bull, highly symbolic of masculine and divine power.

In addition to this, Segal reconciles the use of the bull as representative of the savage nature of those involved, stating that “[the] imagery of the wild, opening into the psychic borderland of fantasy, dream, repressed fears and desires, serves as a screen onto which each projects his or her hidden self in the shape of the monstrous double: for Phaedra, Pasiphae’s lust; for Hippolytus, the sea-monster that ravages the woods and destroys all living creatures; for Theseus, the violent outlaws whom he has subdued in the wild places of Greece but not in his own soul.”¹⁴¹ In either case, each character is destroyed, in some manner, by the masculine bull. This relation of the bull and the wildness of Hippolytus’ character is tied into Theseus’ masculine identity through the

¹³⁸ For instance, Phaedra recalls the crime of her mother, but also laments that Pasiphae was able to partake in the love of the bull, while she is unable to do so with Hippolytus (115-119).

¹³⁹ Hippolytus, when faced with the bull, does not recoil, but associates himself with both his father and his father’s heroic identity, proclaiming that he is unafraid as conquering bulls was Theseus’ job (1067).

¹⁴⁰ Paschalis, Michael, “The Bull and the Horse: Animal Theme and Imagery in Seneca’s *Phaedra*,” in *The American Journal of Philology* 115 (Spring, 1994): 108.

¹⁴¹ Segal, *Language and Desire*: 76.

slaying of the Minotaur. For Theseus, much of his masculine identity is held within his strongly masculine and often destructive heroic identity.

3.3: Theseus as Husband and Father

Upon Theseus' return home, he senses the aura of mourning which permeates his household. Shifting immediately from the hyper-masculinity associated with his heroic deed, recently completed, Theseus adopts the proper masculinity asking after the welfare of his household. In the same way that Hippolytus, upon meeting the Nurse, asked after his father, Phaedra, and their children, Theseus shows his capabilities as a household leader, and one who, at this point, can still have a successful homecoming. Upon hearing the accusation from Phaedra, Theseus immediately readopts his heroic and damaging masculinity, swearing to hunt down his son to the ends of the earth, before finally using his last wish to allow Neptune to find and kill his son in his stead. Therefore, Theseus shows that he can be re-integrated into society upon his arrival home, but when he learns of the threat and violence done against his household, he returns to his hyper-masculinity.

Following the report of Hippolytus' death, and before knowing of his son's innocence, Theseus regains some balance in his life, regretting his hand in the death of his son. This turn from vengeful father, forcibly removing any threat to his reign from his household, into the recently returned father who seeks only to find his house in good order is rapid, but poignant. It would seemingly be the report of the savagery which Hippolytus suffered in his final moments which draws out from Theseus some compassion and the first instances of guilt. While he does not yet mourn the loss of his son, still believing him to be a criminal, he does regret, deeply, his involvement in Hippolytus' death. Twice Theseus mentions to the Messenger that despite his

homicidal rage, he wishes he had not ordered Hippolytus' death. Clearly, he has begun to recognize the ill-effects of a quick reaction. This recognition leads Theseus to move from the proper outdoor hyper-masculinity that he portrayed in facing death and in cursing his son, into the less damaging masculinity of the husband and father, seen immediately upon his return from the underworld and here, again, as he hears of the grotesque manner of Hippolytus' death. This 'softer' masculinity will continue until the end of the play, best seen when Theseus learns that Hippolytus was innocent of the crime he was accused of.

Within the fifth act, Theseus, upon learning the truth of Phaedra's story, mourns deeply for the life of his son. However, his grief comes too late.¹⁴² In a macabre twist of fate, Theseus, who had sworn to hunt Hippolytus to the ends of the earth to exact his vengeance (938-940), is now forced to hunt down Hippolytus' body parts, that he may receive proper burial rites.¹⁴³ Clearly, Theseus is made to atone for his sin of recklessness through his mourning of the loss of his eldest son, as well as his final decision to remain among the living, instead of resigning himself to follow Phaedra in her suicide.¹⁴⁴ Poetically, in this, Hippolytus takes the place of his father in the land of the dead.¹⁴⁵ Theseus spends over forty lines contemplating how he will kill himself (1199-1243) before he can be convinced otherwise. Even after the Chorus' intervention, Theseus' grief is raw as he pieces together Hippolytus body, telling himself to *complectere artus, quodque de nato est*

¹⁴² Segal, *Language and Desire*: 192.

¹⁴³ This odd twist of fate is mirrored by Hippolytus' own, as upon hearing and understanding Phaedra's intentions with him, he exclaims that *non ipse toto magnus Oceano pater tantum expiarit sceleris*, "not even the great father of the whole Ocean could purify so great a sin," (717-718). Based upon the circumstances of his death, it is indeed the great waters of Neptune which wash away his evil deeds, considering that based upon the report of the Messenger, the bull itself was made of water.

¹⁴⁴ Upon Phaedra's suicide, she claims that Theseus, in his role as father, was worse even than her (1191-1192); Theseus, immediately upon learning that Hippolytus was innocent, proclaims *quid facere rapto debeas gnato parens, disce a noverca: condere Acherontis plagis*, "what a parent ought to do when a child has been taken, I learned from a stepmother: hide in Acherontes through slaughter" (1199-1200). However, Theseus is persuaded by the Chorus to put aside his thoughts of suicide and instead give Hippolytus a proper burial (1244-1246).

¹⁴⁵ Boyle, Anthony J., *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*: 66.

super, miserande, maesto pectore incumbens, fove, “seize [these] limbs, everything which has been thrown from your son, o pitiable [me], embrace them and press them against your sad chest, cherish them” (1254-1255). Here, Theseus is finally able to make the transition from the destructive hero to the family-oriented and safely masculine role of father.

3.4: Conclusion

Theseus, instead of showing a transgression of his gender roles, displays a magnification of his masculine identity which causes him issues, as is commonly seen in heroic figures. It is certainly interesting that Seneca does not cause Theseus to fully subvert his gender roles in the same way as Hippolytus and Phaedra; he does not display any strong markers of a feminine identity.¹⁴⁶ Instead, Theseus is subjected to a rapid change between the masculinity of the outdoors (his hyper-masculinity) and the indoors (his proper masculine character of father and husband). That it is his hyper-masculinity which brings about Hippolytus’ death serves to create a more tragic character, in that he is the cause of his own destruction in almost every way. His time upon the stage is short, but frequent references to his presence and activities place him at the heart of the home. His heroic past is brought to the forefront of the first half of the play due to his inextricable relationship with Phaedra and her family. At every instance where Pasiphae, Ariadne, or the Minotaur are mentioned, the audience cannot help but bring Theseus to mind as well. Being quick to anger, as well as the willingness of the gods to encourage destruction, forces him to face his character flaws and decide whether his life is one worth living, now that he is devoid of wife and

¹⁴⁶ It would not have been remiss for Theseus to possess some sort of feminine characteristics; Hercules, as one of his recorded labours, was sent to act as handmaiden to Omphale, queen of the Lydians. In this capacity, he was dressed as a woman and engaged in feminine activities (Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods*, 15; Statius, *Achilleid* 1.256-261). Achilles too spent some time dressed as a woman and acting in a feminine manner, as related in Statius’ *Achilleid*; this was done that Thetis could save her son from death in the Trojan War (Statius, *Achilleid* 1.267-274).

son. By choosing to remain alive, Theseus punishes himself, having to live each day with the constant reminder that Phaedra's pronouncement upon him was correct. Indeed, it is a bad thing for Theseus to return home (1164-1168).

Chapter Four: Virgin, Mother, and Wife

Phaedra steals the show in the third act, as in her desperation, she reverts into what should be a more familiar guise – that of mother and wife. While previously within the play she has shown some strong masculine traits,¹⁴⁷ her displays of femininity are most prevalent within the third act. It is here that we finally see Phaedra as the wife of Theseus, rather than her estimation of what being the wife of Theseus entails. However, due to the presence of her husband, perhaps this is not the true Phaedra, but rather the mask which she hides behind for her own protection. For this chapter, then, the traits which can safely be ascribed to the feminine side of Phaedra will be examined.

Phaedra takes upon herself feminine roles and values to hide her true self from both Hippolytus and Theseus. Additionally, she uses these to define herself, especially in her relationship with her own mother Pasiphae at lines 113-114 and 127-128, highlighting her role as a cursed female member of the Cretan royal family, as well as to ground herself in relation to the household. Phaedra wishes for the wilds of the outdoors, but only that she may chase and tame Hippolytus, bringing him back into the home with her. Taking this into account, then, Phaedra will be analysed in her use of feminine positions that allow her to continue to hunt Hippolytus.¹⁴⁸ As she is not fully committed to the feminine sphere, it will be important to note within this chapter and the fifth chapter the difficulties and dangers faced by the household and family when the *materfamilias*, “mother of the family,” upsets the expectations placed upon her gender.¹⁴⁹ As will

¹⁴⁷ See chapter five for the discussion of Phaedra as a masculine character.

¹⁴⁸ Even when Phaedra is acting fully as both mother and wife, her goal remains the capture of Hippolytus, causing Phaedra to be in strong possession of both masculine and feminine traits. This is shown in her pretended virginity and her roles as both stepmother to Hippolytus and mother to Theseus’ children, as will be discussed at length in this chapter.

¹⁴⁹ Jennifer Larson notes that “[in] antiquity deviation from gender roles and sexual norms was at best a cause for reproach, and at worst a criminal transgression. [...] A recurrent motif in Greek and Roman texts is the need to

become apparent over the course of this chapter, Phaedra is not comfortable in her feminine role, but instead uses it in attempting to achieve her goal of seducing Hippolytus. Phaedra uses the feminine roles of virgin, wife, and mother in order to pursue and draw Hippolytus in closer to her. Ovid, in his *Heroides* has Phaedra suggest that living in the same house as Hippolytus will make their affair easier to hide (Ovid, *Heroides* 4.141-144); in *Phaedra*, Phaedra briefly considers and then dismisses using the marriage bed to hide the pollution of her sin (1185-1186). This chapter, then, will analyse the three main areas of the feminine sphere that Phaedra aligns herself with, being her self-representation as a virgin,¹⁵⁰ and her roles as both wife and stepmother within the family.

4.1: The Virginal Phaedra

Both Greek and Roman society held males and females to different standards as regards sex and virginity. Indeed, in any society where men and women are held to different standards regarding sex, women are required to remain virgins until marriage.¹⁵¹ Men had much greater freedom in obtaining sexual outlet; women were kept sequestered and relatively separate from men who were not related to them before marriage. In both societies, a woman was expected to be virginal when entering into her first marriage.¹⁵² Obviously, in subsequent marriages, virginity would in no way be expected; continued loyalty and chastity, however, were markers of a proper Roman *matrona*, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Therefore, women were expected to

control female sexuality (hence female mobility, dress, education, etc.) both before and during marriage” (Larson, Jennifer, *Greek and Roman Sexualities: A Sourcebook*: 79).

¹⁵⁰ This self-identification, an obvious lie based upon the socially accepted idea of virginity at the time, can be seen as a mirror to the actual virginity of her beloved, Hippolytus, which is discussed in chapter two.

¹⁵¹ Treggiari, Susan, *Roman Marriage*: 315.

¹⁵² This, as Susan Lape states, was likely more necessary in the Roman world, as the Romans seemingly placed more value upon the virginal status of a woman upon her first marriage (Lape, Susan, “Heterosexuality,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Classical World*, ed. Golden and Toohey: 28).

remain loyal to one man (at a time) for the entirety of their lives. Women who accomplished this were referred to as *univirae*, “women who have had only one husband.” Phaedra, as wife to Theseus, is able to refer to herself using much of the same language as a virgin, the two stages of a woman’s life sharing terms such as *pudor*, “shame,” and *castitas*, “chastity.”¹⁵³ The role of the woman as being a virgin, then, is laid out as a marker of proper femininity within the time before her first marriage. Phaedra, as a woman who is not only married, but has also birthed two children, cannot make any true claim to virginity; instead, Phaedra uses language which implies that she retains her virginity or has in some way not lost the entirety of her virginity.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, Phaedra grants herself the status of virgin. She makes the claim to Hippolytus that she is *respersa nulla labe et intacta*,¹⁵⁵ *innocens tibi mutor uni*, “I am by no one defiled, [by no one] disgraced and I am of spotless reputation, innocent; for you alone I changed” (668-669). This echoes the narrative set out by Ovid in *Heroides* 4, which will inform this section. Phaedra repeatedly and doggedly inserts herself into the world of Hippolytus, and her claim to virginity is no different. She uses her so-called virginity to develop a relationship between Hippolytus and herself; this already subverts her position regarding her feminine gender and her role within the family, as she casts herself in the virginal and maidenly role while actively pursuing Hippolytus, thereby violating the norms of behaviour appropriate to a virgin,¹⁵⁶ as well as a wife and mother.

¹⁵³ The relation between Phaedra as virgin and Phaedra as wife/mother regarding the shared language between the two will be discussed further in section 2 of this chapter.

¹⁵⁴ By this, I mean that in Ovid’s *Heroides*, Phaedra makes the claim to virginity based on the fact that she has not known love before; her physical virginity is only a part of what she considers to be virginity (Ovid, *Heroides* 4.19).

¹⁵⁵ *Intacta* can mean “intact, unharmed, undefiled,” and is a term often applied to virgins, meaning “pure, chaste.” Phaedra’s use of it here is an example of her use of a double speech, in that her words are open to interpretation, implying to Hippolytus here that she is a proper wife, but meaning for herself that she believes she possesses the traits of a virgin. Within Ovid’s *Heroides*, Phaedra makes the claim to purity, meaning therein virginity, at 4.17-18, 31-2. Phaedra’s words here echo those of Dido in the *Aeneid*, who claims that perhaps she can allow herself just one weakness in succumbing to her attraction for Aeneas (Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.19).

¹⁵⁶ As was discussed in chapter two, Hippolytus is innocent to the meaning of Phaedra’s words; in a fragmentary work of Plautus, it is suggested that a part of the wedding night is teaching virginal brides the language of sex (*virgo sum: nondum didici nupta verba dicere*, “I am a virgin: I do not yet know the words for a bride to say” (Plautus, *Fragmata* 68 in W.M. Lindsay). This would further extend the role of virgin to Hippolytus, while at the same time

As Armstrong notes, “Phaedra’s claim to maidenhood is disingenuous, sophistic, but it also mirrors Hippolytus’ real and jealously guarded virginity. The purity she loves in him she wishes to embrace as her own.”¹⁵⁷ It is perhaps not so much that she actually sees herself as a virgin in the way that society would define it, but rather that she either recognizes and wants to obtain the innocence which she sees in Hippolytus or wants to use her virginity to obtain the innocent Hippolytus. Her virginity, then, is meant to serve as a mask behind which she is able to hide her true feelings for Hippolytus.

In Ovid, Phaedra makes her claim to virginity more clearly and with stronger language, stating that she is a virgin in the sense that she has never before known love.¹⁵⁸ This, of course, is in no way capable of making her a virgin as was defined by the Greeks and Romans. Instead, Phaedra makes herself out to be virginal with the intention of enticing Hippolytus. She, as is the case for much of the communication within the play, misunderstands his reasons for celibacy, and associates it with how his mother Antiope lived, not with her death. For Phaedra, then, she sees the virginal non-virgin Antiope as a way to enter into not only the pure realm of Hippolytus, but also as a means to place herself outside of the house within his outdoor realm. In imitating a virgin to entice Hippolytus, Phaedra sheds her role as a mother and a wife, and thus any ties to her stepsons’ family. She presents herself as still being within a non-sexual rival male’s house (i.e. father, brother, uncle, etc.); she attempts to be seen as a young girl, like the *puella*, “girl, maiden” that she names herself in Ovid (*Heroides* 4.2). This means the male, Hippolytus, has less need to fear repercussions from charges of adultery (she is not married) and incest (she is not tied to *his*

cementing Phaedra’s role as being non-virginal, as she already knows the language regarding sex. This will be explored further in the fifth chapter of my thesis.

¹⁵⁷ Armstrong, Rebecca *Cretan Women*: 270.

¹⁵⁸ “Because it has come late, love has come deeper” (Ovid, *Heroides* 4.19); consider also “[but] even if the innocent purity in which I have always lived my life were to be stained by this unaccustomed sin, I would regard this fortune that burns me with such flames a kindly fortune.” (Ovid, *Heroides* 4.43-47, trans. Harold Isbell).

family).¹⁵⁹ This makes her freer in choosing who she enters into a sexual relationship with, especially as she appears an Amazon, not a Roman or Greek woman; again, she removes any marker of her noble status, changing into the garb of a huntress, and recognizing that she now has the appearance of Antiope, *severi mater Hippolyti*, “mother of severe Hippolytus” (398).¹⁶⁰ She has separated herself completely from the society and household around her in order to hunt the virginal Hippolytus, with herself also as a virgin.

Phaedra sees that Hippolytus locates a great deal of his personality as being related to the outdoors and the purity he finds in nature, which is severely lacking in society as he understands it. Hippolytus sees women, and more specifically wives and mothers, as bringing about the end of the Golden Age and being the destruction of man. Hippolytus, nearing the end of his anger-filled rant to the Nurse in the second act, accuses brothers of killing brothers, wives killing husbands, and mothers of killing their children (555-558). However, he continues, blaming women for any number of disasters, stating:

*Sed dux malorum femina: haec scelerum artifex
obsedit animos, huius incestae stupris
fumant tot urbes, bella tot gentes gerunt
et versa ab imo regna tot populous permunt.
sileantur aliae: sola coniunx Aegei,
Medea, reddet feminas dirum genus.*

But woman is captain of evil: her mind full of wicked deceptions
she brings siege to the minds of men, so many cities
have burned, so many wars have they borne,
and kingdoms overturned, and citizens enslaved by their adulteries.
Be silent on the rest: remember only the wife of Aegeus,
Medea, who yields that all women are abominable.

Phaedra, 559-564

¹⁵⁹ Roman law dictated that intercourse between steprelations was *incestum*, “incest.”

¹⁶⁰ The change of appearance that Phaedra undergoes will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Again, his anger is associated most strongly with wives and mothers. Young maidens and girls are not mentioned in this summation of familial and societal destruction. Phaedra's guise as a virgin, then, tracks again onto Hippolytus' worldview, in that mothers, wives, and stepmothers are the bringers of death and destruction. Young maidens, pure and chaste in a similar sense as himself, do not necessarily bring about such great destruction. Additionally, Hippolytus, as a follower of Diana, would likely have come into some sort of contact with her more typical devotees: virginal maidens of the sort that Hippolytus does not blame for damaging the world. These young girls are akin to him, and Phaedra, in styling herself a virgin and outfitting herself in the clothing of a hunter if not an Amazonian, models herself upon these maidens.¹⁶¹

Phaedra, then, in calling herself a virgin, ties herself to the feminine realm both within stage time and audience time. The terms she most commonly uses, *pudor*, "shame" and *castitas*, "chastity" can be applied equally well to both young maidens and married women, as they are indicative of a proper feminine woman, no matter her marital status. However, it is interesting that in no way whatsoever does Phaedra's claim to being a virgin rest upon the use of the term *virgo*, "virgin, maiden;" instead it is dependent upon a reading of her claims of being, for example, *intacta*, "intact" (668) and *innocens*, "innocent" (668). In neither *Heroides* nor *Phaedra* do Hippolytus or Phaedra use the term *virgo* "maiden, virgin"; only the Chorus (293, 304) and the Nurse (405) use the word, or variations thereof. The meanings of virginity and chastity are related, but have enough of a distinction to warrant further discussion.

Both Hippolytus and Phaedra can make claims of *pudor*, as both act with shame at different parts of the play; however, only Hippolytus is able to make the claim of being a *virgo*, "virgin."

¹⁶¹ As discussed in chapter three, Theseus' journey to the underworld has extremely negative connotations, despite its being a heroic undertaking. Phaedra here makes an attempt on Hippolytus in the same way that Theseus sought out Proserpina: she has inserted herself into his realm, seemingly innocuous and pretending to be something that she is not, with a truly nefarious purpose, in that she wishes to entice Hippolytus to engage in sexual relations with her.

As has been the focus of the first two chapters of my thesis, Hippolytus embodies the true sense of the word *virgo* as he has not engaged in any sort of sexual activity. He is the only true maiden, in this sense, present within the play; Phaedra, in contrast, has obviously engaged in marital relations with Theseus, as the two have at least two children mentioned within the play.¹⁶² Phaedra, then, can make no claim of being a *virgo*, “virgin,” but can claim that she has acted and continues to act with the proper *pudor*, or “shame,” for a married woman. Indeed, until her declaration to Hippolytus, Phaedra can continue to assert that she possesses the proper chastity for a woman in her position.

4.2: (Step)Mother Phaedra

While it is known from nearly the beginning of the play that Phaedra is unhappy in her marriage,¹⁶³ the audience receives a very one-sided view of the relationship for the first two acts. The return of Theseus in the third act allows for the audience to determine for themselves if Phaedra is being as mistreated in her marriage as she has claimed previously.¹⁶⁴ Building on this reunion of husband and wife, Phaedra, instead of welcoming her husband home with open arms, brings to him the ‘facts’ of the crime which has only just been committed against her. Indeed, the audience’s first introduction to Phaedra and Theseus shows the softer, more feminine side to Phaedra, in that she acts with appropriate shame. It is not until after Theseus orders that the Nurse be tortured that Phaedra begins her story (882-903). It is no wonder that Theseus is able to so readily believe that his son has committed this heinous act, as Phaedra plays the part of the victim

¹⁶² Hippolytus, upon meeting with the Nurse, asks after his father, Phaedra, and their two sons (433-434).

¹⁶³ Her discontent is brought up within a few scanty lines of her appearance onstage. From the very introduction of Phaedra to the audience, then, some blame for her position as a wife in a foreign land is placed on Theseus (89-92).

¹⁶⁴ Phaedra, in her opening speech, places much of the blame for her current predicament on Theseus, sarcastically stating that *profugus en coniunx abest praestatque nuptae quam solet Theseus fidem*, “my fugitive husband Theseus is absent and manifests to his wife his habitual loyalty” (91-92).

well. This is summarized by John Fitch and Siobhan McElduff, who state that the ever-changing self-representation of Phaedra causes her to “misidentify and fragment [her] authentic self, leading to alienation from that self and ultimately to its destruction, as well as the destruction of others.”¹⁶⁵ Phaedra’s inability to stay within the confines of a single self-representation cause her to fragment herself into so many pieces that she is not able to see or know her original self any longer. Here, with Theseus, she quickly falls into the role of chaste wife, a stark difference from the predatory woman seen in the second act.

As discussed within the first section of this chapter regarding Phaedra’s claim to virginity, much of the language that she uses to identify herself as a virgin can also be applied to her position as wife and mother.¹⁶⁶ In her role as wife, her claims of *pudor*, “shame” and *castitas*, “chastity” are used to reference her position as a proper, Roman *matrona*. Most strikingly, when she first reveals to the audience that she may be anything but the chaste mother, she decides upon suicide to retain her chastity, stating *proin castitatis vindicem armemus manum*, “then let me arm myself that I may avenge my chastity,” (261). It is her greatest wish at her first instance of declaring her love for Hippolytus that she may die before she brings any greater shame to herself, or any stain on her reputation.¹⁶⁷ Again, when Phaedra first confronts Theseus with the story of her rape by Hippolytus, she references her purity, calling herself *pudica*, “chaste, pure, virtuous” (874) and *pudoris* “possessing shame, modesty, decency” (893).¹⁶⁸ These terms are incredibly important as they act as markers to a woman’s excellence. Livy, in his story of Lucretia (Livy 1.57-9), makes

¹⁶⁵ Fitch, John & Siobhan McElduff, “Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama,” in *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002): 36.

¹⁶⁶ These terms being most frequently *pudor*, “shame,” *castitas*, “chastity.”

¹⁶⁷ Women “were expected to remain chaste and behave in a way that would not draw attention to themselves or bring disrepute to their husbands” (Johnson & Ryan, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature*: 6). See also Propertius 4.11, 4.3.

¹⁶⁸ Lucretia and her relation to the story of Phaedra will be related at greater depth later in this chapter. Other such women in Latin literature and mythology include Claudia Quinta (Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 14.34; *de Haruspicum Responsis* 13.27) and the Vestal Virgins.

specific note of her *vim*, “virtue” (1.57.9), *castitas*, “purity, chastity” (1.57.9), and *pudicitia*, “chastity” (1.58.7).

After her declaration of great love to Hippolytus, Phaedra must immediately readopt her chaste and pure persona¹⁶⁹ in order to relate her version of history to Theseus. The ideas of chastity and purity were important, not only to virgins, but also to proper Roman *matrona*. From within the text of the play, Phaedra, when relating her tale to Theseus, implies that she is pure, saying that *auris pudica coniugis solas timet*, “a chaste wife fears only the ears of her husband” (874); she continues her defence, telling Theseus that *labem hanc pudoris eluet noster cruor*, “my blood will cleanse this stain to my chastity” (893). Considering the close association of women to the ideas of chastity and purity as virgins, wives, and mothers within the Roman Republic and Empire, it is no wonder that Phaedra has chosen this guise to deceive Theseus. Without his expectation of Phaedra’s continued loyalty over the course of his absence, her word would mean very little. Indeed, for the Greeks and Romans, “[a] husband should take Odysseus as his model and a wife Penelope.”¹⁷⁰ It is only through this trust between husband and wife, namely that the wife remains faithful to her absent husband, which allows Phaedra to deceive Theseus. If there were any taint to her character, there would be greater distrust between the two, causing, in all likelihood, further investigation into the matter on the part of Theseus. As it stands, Phaedra’s personality around her

¹⁶⁹ For the Romans, there existed a goddess of purity, Pudicitia, who was “associated with the safety and security of the state” (Larson, Jennifer, *Greek and Roman Sexualities*: 183). Susan Lape adds that “the sexual integrity of Roman *matronae* was also believed to be necessary for the well-being of both men’s households and the larger sociopolitical order” (Lape, Susan, “Heterosexuality,” in *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Classical World*: 27). For much of Rome’s history, the safety of the state was determined by the chastity of its women. The Vestal Virgins, likely organised by the mythical King Numa (see Plutarch, *Life of Numa*) remained chaste for most of their lives, protecting the sacred flame of Hestia. The consequences for their loss of virginity while in the service of the goddess resulted in their being buried alive, attested in Livy 2.42. See also Langlands, Rebecca, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome*.

¹⁷⁰ Treggiari, Susan *Roman Marriage*: 215-216.

husband, and within the early years of their marriage, ensures that Theseus will not question the words of his wife, believing that she has remained devoted to him in his absence.¹⁷¹

Her role as wife, then, marks her out as feminine, in that she quickly adopts the proper personality traits of chastity, deference to her husband, and a strong will to protect the household and its reputation from harm. While the purposes behind this transition are fully selfish, Phaedra does, nonetheless, act in accordance to her place within the family unit. Phaedra is acting in this manner that she may avoid taking blame upon herself, aiding in her self-preservation.¹⁷² In addition to this, cunning and deceitfulness were seen as being feminine aspects, first noted by Hesiod in his *Works and Days*.¹⁷³ For Hippolytus in particular, he views all women as liars and destructive forces, as evidenced by his misogynistic speech to the Nurse in the second act, particularly at lines 559-564. Phaedra here proves Hippolytus right in masterfully hiding the truth of her attack behind implied statements, leading Theseus to reach an incorrect conclusion of the events seemingly on his own.

Phaedra attempts to act like Lucretia of Roman mythology, who when raped by Sextus Tarquinius, lives long enough to tell her father of her shame before committing suicide. Phaedra here attempts the same with Theseus. Immediately upon Theseus' arrival from the underworld, he is met with a house in mourning; the household, already privy to the 'rape' of Phaedra, mourns her, knowing that to retain the pure and chaste status, which she has so carefully retained, she must commit suicide.¹⁷⁴ Phaedra, however, uses the idea of suicide to remain pure in a slightly different manner. At her first mention of suicide, she recognizes that she will not be able to contain her

¹⁷¹ Theseus makes this abundantly clear upon his return, questioning why Phaedra should want to leave him so soon after his reappearance and calling upon their marriage bed (856, 864-865).

¹⁷² This is also a reason behind her use of vague language when soliciting Hippolytus; she may retain her chastity so long as she is not the one who broaches the subject of an affair with him.

¹⁷³ Pandora is given deceitful ways by Hermes, as recorded in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 67.

¹⁷⁴ Lucretia, in killing herself because of her rape, does so in order that no unchaste women after her may use her as an excuse to live (Livy 1.58).

passions indefinitely, and chooses death to ensure that she will never be able to act impurely (250-254).¹⁷⁵ In the second instance of suicide, she chooses to die by Hippolytus' hand. Here, she has openly sinned with her mind, inviting Hippolytus into her bed. Death, at this point, grants her a return of *sanas*, "sanity;" it also allows her to retain her *pudore*, "chastity or purity" (710-712). In her final quest for death, Phaedra has shown her sinful mind to her Nurse, Hippolytus, and now Theseus. She still maintains her bodily purity, as she has not had sexual intercourse with Hippolytus, but her mind can no longer bear to live without him, especially as he has now moved to the underworld. In this last instance, Phaedra is able to finally commit suicide, this time with the belief that *o mors amoris una sedamen mali, o mors pudoris maximum laesi decus, confugimus ad te: pande placates sinus*, "o death only you are able to allay the evils of love, o death only you are able to return my greatly wounded virtue of chastity to me, I run towards you: hold me against your bosom and soothe me" (1188-1190). In her quest for death, tied closely with her feminine possession and retention of *pudor*, "shame" Phaedra realizes that only death can preserve her good name; shame can only keep her silent for so long.

The return of Theseus immediately following Phaedra's entreaty to Hippolytus only serves to add to the tragedy of her act, as well as ensure that the perpetrator will be properly punished.¹⁷⁶ In her disclosure of the crime, Phaedra acts as the proper, dutiful wife. She fully exhibits all the signs of femininity associated with the Roman matron.¹⁷⁷ It is also in her role as wife that Phaedra believes she can hide her sins. Ovid, as brought up in the introduction to this chapter, has Phaedra claim that her marriage, and the presence of Hippolytus within her household as a result, will allow

¹⁷⁵ In this, she is a direct opposite to Lucretia: Phaedra has sinned with her mind, but not her body; Lucretia sinned with her body, but not her mind.

¹⁷⁶ This is evident based upon the Nurse's insistence that no one fix Phaedra's appearance, as it 'proves' Hippolytus' crime (731-732); Theseus, upon his return, notes Phaedra's sad appearance and the tears still upon her face (886-887).

¹⁷⁷ As discussed above, the Roman *matrona* was expected to behave with the same shame and chastity as a maiden, avoiding disrepute for herself, her husband, and her household (Prop., 4.3, 11).

them to have an easier affair. There will be no need for sneaking into a barred household to reach each other, as they already share living space (Ovid, *Heroides* 4.141-144). Seneca also broaches this idea, having Phaedra, before she solicits Hippolytus, mentally prepare herself for her ‘attack’ by stating that *si coepta exequor, forsani iugali crimen abscondam face*, “if I carry through what I have begun, perhaps I will be able to conceal my crime beneath the marriage torch” (596-597). Just as in Ovid, Phaedra here believes that her marriage will be able to mask her crime of passion by providing the cover of a proper and chaste relationship between stepmother and stepson cohabitating.

Phaedra, continuing within her use of roles within the feminine sphere to hide her true intentions, changes her appearance from that of noble woman to huntress. In her actions and dress, Phaedra sets herself up as the ultimate ‘barbarian’ mother. In so doing, her association with the feminine realm is clear, now looking like Antiope, mother to Hippolytus; it is her execution of the plan, as well as her insistence upon the Amazonian personality which are the cause for concern. In and of itself, it is noble for Phaedra to take it upon herself to be a good mother for her children, including those who are from Theseus’ previous marriage. It is, however, an extreme problem that in focusing her intentions and ministrations upon Hippolytus, she not once mentions her own children by Theseus. They are only brought up by Hippolytus, in asking after their welfare and that of Phaedra when he returns from his hunt in the prologue. Phaedra, then, fails as a mother and as stepmother, despite her attempts.

When altering her appearance, Phaedra sets aside all of the accoutrements of her role as mother and member of the royal family. Instead, she adopts hunting gear, recognizing in herself the visage of Antiope as the “mother of severe Hippolytus” (398). She continues, making note of what changes would be required in her complete appearance to make her appear wholly of the

Amazonian race. In her recognition, in some part, of Antiope within herself, Phaedra is able to maintain her air of femininity, as she associates herself with the mother of Hippolytus, yet another female and feminine mask that she is able to use to further associate herself with Hippolytus. In this, again, she inserts herself into Hippolytus' world, reaching back to his birth, and bringing the incestuous relationship that she seeks to a higher level, in that sex between mother and son was even less acceptable to Roman society than between stepmother and stepson; Roman law considered the two relationships to be of the same calibre, but society would doubtless have considered this a worse boundary to cross.

However, just as Phaedra can make no true claim to virginity, she is also not able to take upon herself the role of mother completely. She is and will remain stepmother to Hippolytus. Her crime as stepmother is enough to disgust Hippolytus; his recognition of her as an evil worse even than Colchian Medea (697) tracks with the already existing trope of the evil stepmother.¹⁷⁸ Brought up many times within *Phaedra* is the wicked stepmother *par excellence*, Medea. Within Roman society, stepmothers were often accused of poisoning their stepchildren over inheritance claims; it is not often that they are, within the audience's real world, accused of loving their stepchildren.¹⁷⁹ However, in looking at Phaedra as a mother, her love for Hippolytus is odd even in the platonic sense. "[The] stepmother is traditionally hateful towards her stepchildren, and one

¹⁷⁸ Examples of the *saeva noverca* include, as mentioned above, the Medea of tragedy who seeks to poison Theseus. However, the trope of the evil stepmother is present in mythology, comedy, and orations. David Noy, in "Wicked Stepmothers in Roman Society and Imagination" details the presence of this theme through Roman literature, noting that most stepmothers who are considered 'evil' in the Roman period attempted to prevent stepchildren from gaining access to inheritances (Noy, David, "Wicked Stepmothers in Roman Society and Imagination," in *Journal of Family History* 16, No. 4 (1991)). However, the idea of the wicked and licentious stepmother is also present within Roman thought, again, most notably in tragedy and mythology. See also Watson, Patricia A., "The *Saeva Noverca* in Roman Literature," chapter 4 in *Ancient Stepmothers: Myth, Misogyny, and Reality*, Brill (1995). Examples of the "evil stepmother" are herein pulled from Roman literature, including declamatory pieces, novels, tragedy, mythology, and epic poetry.

¹⁷⁹ Watson makes note of amatory stepmothers in "The *Saeva Noverca* in Roman Literature," Chapter Four in *Ancient Stepmothers*. The case study she gives is of a stepmother accused of poisoning herself to prevent pregnancy because she loved her stepchildren so much; her husband already had three grown sons and the wife did not wish to bring in any unnecessary contention amongst brothers (she here cites Quintilian, *Declamations* 327).

of the most frequent rhetorical points made in the drama is that the love Phaedra feels for Hippolytus is somehow additionally ‘unnatural,’ since as his stepmother she should dislike him.”¹⁸⁰ From the play, the first Choral Ode finishes with the pronouncement that *vincit saevas cura novercas*, “[love] conquers stepmothers, the most savage beasts” (356-357). Despite the hateful associations of stepmothers to evil deeds, the compassion which Hippolytus shows for Phaedra before her great declaration of love implies that the two have had a good relationship thus far.

In her role as a stepmother, and less apparent in the play, as a mother, Phaedra ought to take upon her certain feminine traits. These would include the bearing of legitimate children, the nurturing of children (or at least seeing that the children are nurtured and raised well by someone within the household), and, again, maintaining the reputation of the household. Phaedra, however, is not so concerned with any of these roles within the timeframe of the play. She has borne two sons to Theseus, but they are only mentioned in passing by Hippolytus and the Nurse (433-436); *domusque florens sorte felici viget*, “and the house is lively blooming with great luck” (436). Clearly, the Nurse has taken upon herself some degree of responsibility for the children and the household in the wake of Phaedra’s illness of passion. Phaedra, again uses her feminine character only when it suits her interests, and chooses the best type of feminine role to use for each situation. It is as stepmother that Hippolytus approaches her after speaking to the Nurse as this is the role or capacity that he is most used to seeing her in.

Hippolytus’ offer of protection and comfort to his stepmother, stating that he will act as his father for Phaedra, demonstrate his good-nature and the respect he feels for her. Phaedra, as a stepmother, inhabits the feminine role and acts as the female leader in the family, but ought to be

¹⁸⁰ Mayer, Roland *Seneca: Phaedra*: 42.

considered in some regards as an outsider to the previous family, especially when children are involved; being a stepmother relates to her feminine role here as it speaks to her assumption of the role of mother, which Hippolytus refers to her as at line 608. This also brings her into the household which she hopes will be able to hide her passion, and brings her into close proximity to her beloved.

Despite Phaedra's repeated attempts at emulating what she sees as a proper mother-figure, her failings are numerous in this. However, it can be said with certainty that she acts in accordance with the society of the time in supporting her husband and raising her children, in that the household is running smoothly in the absence of Theseus and her Nurse is aware of how the children are faring (435-436); the household is running rather efficiently from what little can be gleaned from the text, though how much of this is due to Phaedra is unknown. She acts, depending on who is around her, as maiden, matron, and mother, to name a few of her feminine roles. Even accounting for her insistence that Hippolytus find a name to call her other than 'mother,'¹⁸¹ Phaedra defines herself, most often, in terms of her role as a female and feminine personality.

Regardless of this self-recognition, or self-definition, Phaedra does not seem comfortable within the feminine sphere. Her lack of happiness in her feminine roles proves that they are merely tools for her to use in order to gain access to Hippolytus and hide her shame; if she were truly happy within her proper feminine role, Phaedra would not be hunting Hippolytus, but would be content with her feminine duties. As things stand, Phaedra finds no happiness in weaving, sacrificing to the goddess of the land, leaving votive offerings at the temples, or to participate in sacred rites (103-109); instead she prefers the masculine realm where she may participate in activities she does enjoy. *iuvat excitatas consequi cursu feras et rigida molli gaesa iaculari manu,*

¹⁸¹ *Matris superbum est nomen*, "Mother is too proud a name" (609).

“[it] delights me to rouse wild beasts, pursuing them, running [after] them and hurling stiff javelins with my softened hands” (110-111). The mention of her *molli manu*, “softened hands” (111) shows that in the recent past, Phaedra had been content to stay indoors and act as a proper Roman woman. It is seemingly a recent development that she no longer finds any joy in the activities she mentions. Her *furor*, her passion, has been growing and has only recently reached a point where she has put aside the duties of a *matrona* in preference to outdoor activities. Phaedra has only recently, then, begun to exercise her masculine self, finding the constraints of her feminine character to be too confining. Seneca, then, uses Phaedra’s obvious and blatant disdain of the commonly feminine activities to show that she is taking on, by degrees, a more masculine role. In much the same way as she sheds her noble clothes piece by piece, she too sheds her feminine nature in bits and pieces until she is ready to emerge as fully masculine, prepared to hunt Hippolytus in the underworld.

This recent change is shown in her initial approach and entreaty of Hippolytus. Phaedra must mentally prepare herself to speak to him plainly; at first, she seems completely unwilling to go through with her plan. She finds that she is ashamed of her feelings, using the verb *pigere* in its metaphorical sense, “to cause regret, to cause shame” (637).¹⁸² Thus, despite the burning longing which she feels for Hippolytus, she is unable to tell him what her affliction is when he first asks. She is left, then, to ask for his pity and try again, with new and stronger language each time, to gain Hippolytus’ attention and understanding. She begins her second attempt:

*O spes amantum credula, o fallax Amor!
 satisne dixi? – precibus admotis agam.
 Miserere, tacitae mentis exaudi preces –
 libet loqui pigetque.
 Quod in novercam cadere vix credas malum.*

O how lovers do not suspect their hopes, o deceitful Love!

¹⁸² Simpson, David P., *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*, 1968: 449.

Have I said enough? – I will prompt [him] with entreaties
applied [by me].
May you have pity [on me], hear my prayers from a silent mind –
it is pleasing [for me] to speak but it brings [me] shame.
You would scarcely believe my pain would be visited
upon a stepmother.

Phaedra, 634-638

She has already here laid out the foundations for her argument, having claimed that she will be his servant and that it is within his right to rule over the people, herself included (612-622). In this attempt, her shame is shown, calling towards Ovid again, who has Phaedra write that *qua licet et sequitur, pudor est miscendus amori; dicere quae puduit, scribere iussit amor. quidquid Amor iussit non est contemnere tutum*, “Modesty is shy but Love is bold: it is Love that commands me to write to you because modesty made me silent. Whatever Love commands must not be ignored” (Ovid, *Heroides* 4.9-11, trans. Harold Isbell). Phaedra’s shame at first makes her voice more feminine, as she has not yet found the words she needs to make Hippolytus understand; her love emboldens her to speak directly and proclaim her love for him. Phaedra must leave behind her *pudor* so that she can attain her *amor*.

From the beginning of the play the audience can see how little she wishes to be married to the absent Theseus. Phaedra here echoes the sentiments of Procne, given in a fragment of Sophocles’ *Tereus*.¹⁸³

<ΠΙΡΟΚΝΗ> νῦν δ’ οὐδέν εἰμι χωρίς. ἀλλὰ πολλάκις
ἔβλεψα ταύτη τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν,
ὡς οὐδέν ἐσμεν. αἱ νέαι μὲν ἐν πατρὸς
ἡδιστον, οἶμαι, ζῶμεν ἀνθρώπων βίον•
τερπνῶς γὰρ αἰεὶ παῖδας ἀνοία τρέφει.
ὅταν δ’ ἐς ἡβὴν ἐξικώμεθ’ ἔμφρονες,
ὠθούμεθ’ ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
θεῶν πατρῶων τῶν τε φουσάντων ἄπο,
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,
αἱ δ’ εἰς ἀγηθῆ δώμαθ’, αἱ δ’ ἐπίρροθα.

¹⁸³ Sophocles, *Tereus* fr. 583.

καὶ ταῦτ', ἐπειδὴν εὐφρόνη ζεύξῃ μία,
χρεῶν ἐπαινεῖν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

<PROCNE>I am nothing now, apart. But often
I have examined the nature of women like this,
How we are nothing. As girls we live the sweetest life
of all human beings, I think, in our father's house.
But ignorance nurses children always with pleasure.
When we come with full wits to adolescence,
We are sent out and made ready for sale,
Away from our paternal gods and our parents,
Some sent to foreign husbands, some sent to barbarians;
Some are sold to unhappy homes, some are wed to horrors.
And then, once a single evening has joined us,
We need to praise it and think that this is living well.¹⁸⁴

Tereus, Fragment 583

Procne, like Phaedra, laments the treatment of women in marriage, and brings up the important idea that after the wedding night, the wife, no matter the type of husband which she has, must praise her marriage. Phaedra, as she describes her treatment at the hands of Theseus, must consider herself to be in an unhappy home with a horror for a husband. However, Phaedra feels that she must fill the roles of wife and mother in order to be accepted into society and count herself lucky that she is married. Her long silence regarding her treatment stemmed from her feminine nature; the outbursts seen in *Phaedra*, with occasional return to shame and invocations of chastity, act as markers of her change into a more masculine character, and her discontent at her lot as wife to who she considers an absent and horror of a husband.

Phaedra is conflicted and caught between the feminine persona which she knows, but does not fit her well, and the masculine, which she yearns for but does not yet know. In choosing to die for love, she embraces the masculine side of her persona, settling upon an eternity of hunting her beloved in the underworld. This shift in no way detracts from her previous feminine leanings,

¹⁸⁴ Unknown translator; from <https://sententiaeantiquae.com/2015/04/23/the-horrors-of-a-marriage-arranged-sophokles-fr-583-tereus/>

only serves to show how uncomfortable they were for Phaedra, and how much better the freedom suits her and her fully masculine identity.

4.3: Conclusion

In looking at the feminine aspects of Phaedra's character, as well as her role within the family as wife and mother, her position is certainly aided by the Nurse, who dispenses advice and wisdom freely. Considering also that much of the Nurse's speech is brought about by either conversation with her mistress, or at her mistress' bidding, it is, I believe, safe to take these two characters as related enough to grant them a shared chapter. While neither is above reproach, taken together, the two leading females of *Phaedra* act on the whole as proper women when in the presence of others. Phaedra, uneasy with her role within the household, and unhappy at being married to an absent husband who freely and openly engages in extra-marital affairs, at best dislikes her feminine side which allowed for her to be married for political gains, and at worst quietly despises Theseus' household and the children which she ignores. The Nurse, in contrast, happily performs her duties with an eye to holding the more dubious of Phaedra's outbursts and ideas back, that Phaedra may continue to be seen as the ever-dutiful wife, thus avoiding the condemnation of Theseus and Minos, who both have a degree of control over her. For each of these women, though starkly different in their actions and their emotions, their feminine sides are prevalent and important to the overall structure of the play, as they allow, particularly for Phaedra, the ability to fully deceive the masculine characters to their own benefit.

Chapter Five: Phaedra the Huntress

The final chapter of my thesis deals with the masculine qualities of Phaedra, many of which have already been alluded to in the first, second, and fourth chapters. The masculine qualities which Phaedra embraces show her strength of character, her absolute devotion to Hippolytus, and her neglect of the feminine realm. These qualities mark her out as being a ‘bad’ woman in the company of Medea and Pasiphae, both of whom are discussed earlier in this thesis. Phaedra, then, joins these two women who transgress the boundaries placed upon them by their sex. Most important of the masculine qualities which Phaedra possesses is her hunting prowess, established as a male activity in the first chapter. Phaedra consistently pushes forward the idea of her being a hunter by assuming the physical form of one and dressing as an Amazonian warrior; by presenting herself as a follower of Diana, also brought up in Ovid’s *Heroides*; using hunting language in her pursuit of Hippolytus; and, in the final Act of the play, choosing death over life, so that she may continue chasing Hippolytus. Phaedra, in taking upon herself the masculine position as hunter, uses a more direct approach in her speech in order to seduce the innocent, and therefore passive and feminine to the ancient audience, Hippolytus. In doing so, she calls upon such men as Caesar and Cicero, who through their direct approach to problems, were able to quickly find fitting solutions. Phaedra’s direct approach of Hippolytus will comprise Section 2 of this Chapter.

Secondary to her hunting, Phaedra exhibits, through her ancestry, a penchant for the outdoors, which helps to inform the level of comfort she feels in the wilds of Greece, as well as the suffocation she experiences inside the house. Concerned with each of these points, and discussed in Section 3 of this Chapter, the actions of Pasiphae and Ariadne, being the mother and sister of Phaedra respectively, help to inform and add to her masculine identity. Hippolytus relegated to the passive and feminine role was discussed in the second chapter. The main force of

this chapter, then, focused on the hunting aspect of Phaedra's personality, will be to establish how Phaedra uses hunting to subvert typical gender roles and how this subversion brings about the destruction of the household, using her appearance, language, and ancestry as evidence for this.

5.1: Phaedra the Hunter

The hunting motif runs strongly throughout the entirety of the play and is connected to Hippolytus, Diana, and Theseus. It is, however, Phaedra who is the ultimate hunter within *Phaedra*. In the first chapter, the masculine characteristics of hunting were set out, some of which bear repeating here. Hunting was a masculine endeavour. As Xenophon describes it, the Greeks used hunting as preparation for war (Xenophon, *Cynegeticus* 1.18). From within *Phaedra*, the proper hunting scene acted out in the prologue has the male Hippolytus, with his male companions, hunting a wild animal outdoors. As the outside world was reserved for males within Greek society, and to a lesser extent in Roman society, the aspects of hunting are all strongly tied to the male and masculine identity. Adding to this, Theseus' absence from the first two acts of the play is due to his hunting of the goddess Proserpina in the underworld, mirroring Phaedra's eventual death that she may continue to hunt Hippolytus within the same realm, again showing the masculinity associated with the act of hunting within the ancient world and the world of *Phaedra*. That here Phaedra should take upon herself the masculine role as active pursuer shows not only her determination, but also her true feelings towards Hippolytus, here in the feminine and passive role. She is not now, nor ever will be, content to allow the young hunter to escape her grasp. She must, then, become the masculine initiator of the relationship.

Seneca, by modelling his play upon elegiac poetry, allows himself, through careful wording, to surprise the audience anew with an old tale. Alin Mocanu states that not only does

Seneca reverse the typical roles of elegy by having Phaedra act as lover and Hippolytus the loved,¹⁸⁵ but that this is taken a step further, as “Roman love-elegy often associates the lover, the feeble man, with the hunter (even though he is not at all suited to a martial activity like hunting), while portraying the beloved, the cruel and dominant woman, as his prey.”¹⁸⁶ Opposing this, Seneca places Hippolytus, the true hunter, in the position of the dominant woman and erotic prey, leaving for Phaedra the role of feeble man and erotic predator. Of course, both Phaedra and Hippolytus show their prowess for hunting; it is instead shown that Hippolytus has more potential to be successful in his hunt than Phaedra. For Phaedra is unable to attain the erotic love of Hippolytus in life and must, then, continue her hunt in death. From within the play, Hippolytus is also clearly well-acquainted with hunting and other associated activities; he is comfortable outside of the house. Phaedra, however, must find for herself proper attire for hunting, settling on what she considers to be Amazonian dress and weaponry:

*Removete, famulae, purpura atque auro inlitas
vestes, procul sit muricis Tyrii rubor,
quae fila ramis ultimi Seres legunt:
brevis expeditos zona constringat sinus,
cervix monili vacua, nec niveus lapis
deducat auris, Indici donum maris;
odore crinis sparsus Assyrio vacet.
sic temere iactae colla perfundant comae
umerosque summos, cursibus motae citis
ventos sequantur. laeva se pharetrae dabit,
hastile vibret destra Thessalicum manus:
[talīs severi mater Hippolyti fuit.]*

Remove, maid-servants, this blanket woven with purple and gold,
let the scarlet dye of Tyre be far from [me],
whose threads are gathered from branches beyond Seres:
let a small belt cinch my narrow waist,
that my neck may be bare [remove] the necklace, and also
the snowy pearls which
draw upon the ears, a gift from the Indian sea;

¹⁸⁵ Mocanu, Alin, “Hunting in Seneca’s *Phaedra*,” in *Past Imperfect* 18 (2012): 27.

¹⁸⁶ Mocanu, “Hunting in Seneca’s *Phaedra*,” in *Past Imperfect*: 29.

let my hair be spread out free from Assyrian perfume.
Just anyhow let my hair flow down carelessly around my neck
and over the tops of my shoulders, following, moved, stirred
by the rushing winds. Give to my left hand a quiver,
and may my right hand hurl a Thessalian spear:
[the mother of severe Hippolytus was like this.]

Phaedra, 387-398

This passage, which has been referenced previously in my thesis,¹⁸⁷ has a great deal of bearing on both the masculine and feminine aspects of Phaedra's character. Within these lines, Phaedra makes the decision to give up all the markers of her wealth and status in order to gain an appearance appropriate to the world she is about to enter into, that of the huntress. The identification of many of her items as being from specific regions, such as the *muricis Tyrii*, "scarlet dye of Tyre" (388) and the *odore Assyrio*, "Assyrian perfume" (393), shows the opulence and wealth which Phaedra is accustomed to. These items are, additionally, typically associated with females and femininity.¹⁸⁸ For her to relinquish all of this in favour of a *brevis zona*, "small belt" (390), hair loose around her neck and shoulders (394-395), and a *pharetrae*, "quiver" (396) in one hand and a *hastile Thessalicum*, "Thessalian spear" (397) in the other hand, is yet another indicator of her determination to pursue Hippolytus, as well as a strong marker of her crossing into the masculine realm. Phaedra, then, taking the role of the feeble hunter, recognizes only a part of what being a hunter includes, being the dress and a few projectile weapons.

Just as there is a striking inversion of Phaedra as hunter and Hippolytus as the hunted, so too does *Phaedra* invert the worlds of the interior and exterior. This is strongly reminiscent of elegy, although, again these two settings are completely at odds with each other. The forests and

¹⁸⁷ See, for instance, page 45 n. 91; see also later in this thesis pages 103 n. 203; 113 n. 234.

¹⁸⁸ For more on female dress and attire in Rome, see Olsen, Kelly, "Matrona and Whore: The Clothing of Women in Roman Antiquity," in *Fashion Theory* 6, No. 4: 387-420.

mountains which Hippolytus recognizes as his home are described invariably as being cold and harsh. Hippolytus describes the setting of the hunt as including the Rhiphaean hills always white with snow (7-8) and the boundary between the warm breezes of south and the icy winds of Acharneus (20-21). The land is filled with rocks (4), has infertile sands of no use for cultivation (15), and has for a long time not been used by humans (24). When addressing Diana, Hippolytus notes that the animals she hunts drink from the icy waters of Araxes and play on the frozen Histrus (58-59). Talking of his ideal world, Hippolytus again notes the coldness of it, the woodsman bathing in melted snow from Ilissus (504); it remains harsh and unforgiving as well, shelter coming from caves (539) and they sleep on hard surfaces (521) here, presumably, being the ground, as sleep is often found on the banks of rivers (510-514). In stark contrast, the city and palace are hot and oppressive places, represented by the burning and fiery passion which Phaedra holds within herself. She frequently addresses this, comparing it to the explosions of Mount Etna (102-103), and as bringing heat even to Vulcan, who stirs the fires of Mount Etna (189-191).

The hunt, despite the opposing placement at the beginning of the play, is strongly tied to the forest, as for Seneca, “the forest replaces the elegiac house, and through the inversion of gender roles that Seneca brings about (following Ovid), Phaedra becomes the elegiac lover and Hippolytus, the elegiac beloved.”¹⁸⁹ Phaedra leaves the confines of the palace, which have long held her in check, considering the power of the passion burning within her, entering into the outdoor realm of Hippolytus. Here, she is able to prepare herself for the hunt, changing her attire, as mentioned above, and entering fully into the cold forest realm of Hippolytus. Her first entrance, however, marks out her relative inexperience, as she stumbles, falling into the arms of Hippolytus. The Nurse, forever protective of Phaedra, makes note of her appearance, stating:

Sed Phaedra praeceps graditur, impatiens morae.

¹⁸⁹ Mocanu, “Hunting in Seneca’s *Phaedra*,” in *Past Imperfect*: 51.

*quo se dabit fortuna? quo verget furor?
terrae repente corpus exanimum accidit
et ora morti similis obduxit color.
attolle vultus, dimove vocis moras:
tuus en, alumna, temet Hippolytus tenet.*

But Phaedra walks rushing, impatient of delay.
What does fortune give to her? What will her passion incline itself [towards]?
She has fallen to the ground unexpectedly; her body lifeless
and her face is covered by a colour like death.
Lift up your face, dismiss the delay of your voice:
you, you my nursling, Hippolytus holds you.

Phaedra, 583-588

Phaedra here shows that she is unaccustomed to the outdoors, immediately falling to the ground upon her exit from the palace; however, she remains determined, as after being picked up by Hippolytus, she prepares herself for her ‘battle’ and ensures that Hippolytus is alone (*commodes paulum, precor, secretus aures. si quis est abeat comes*, “allow me for a short time, I ask of you, your ears in secret. If any companion is [here], let him leave” (599-600). This allows her to accomplish two tasks related to her masculine identity: she now knows that no one else is around to attack her, bodily or with words, whether she fails or succeeds; and she is able to engage in a more heroic type of battle, as she and her opponent face each other alone. For her role as huntress, Phaedra has acclimatized herself to the outdoors, despite an initial setback, and is now fully prepared to face Hippolytus in single combat.

Phaedra, in her previous incarnations, sent her nurse to collect Hippolytus for her; Seneca has Phaedra seek out her prey by herself, with the Nurse only aiding in setting the trap for the young hunter. Thus, by subverting expectations, Seneca paves the way for a full transformation and transgression from feminine to masculine for Phaedra. This change is done so masterfully that, within Seneca’s tragedy, Phaedra is far more comfortable within the masculine realm, seemingly only adopting, reluctantly, feminine qualities when they suit her purposes and allow her

to construct her plans. In this, Phaedra, as the true hunter within the narrative, is able to use her *gravitas* and power to push the young Hippolytus into his own uncomfortable feminine realm,¹⁹⁰ thus making him her prey.¹⁹¹ For Phaedra, her inability to fill the feminine role that should, by all rights, be hers as a wife and mother, creates further dramatic tension, culminating in the elegiac huntress following her beloved even into the depths of Hell.¹⁹² The vast array of hunting images which can be found within *Phaedra* add to the dramatic tension which Seneca has created, and force much of the action within the play.

Phaedra, as hunter, ought to be considered the best of all the characters due to her dedication in finding her prey. “In elegiac poetry, the lover must follow the beloved, no matter where she may flee.”¹⁹³ Phaedra is the only one to accomplish this within the play. Hippolytus’ hunt, which opens *Phaedra*, is presumably successful, but the final outcome is not directly mentioned. Instead, Hippolytus relates what a faithful follower of Diana *can* expect following a hunt.¹⁹⁴ For Theseus, his hunt for the body parts of his son is unsuccessful, as he does not locate all of the pieces (1260-1261). Phaedra is the only one who confronts her prey and is determined enough to follow her hunt through to the bitter end. It is she who crosses the boundary between life and death in her pursuit. This marks her as being the true hunter within the play, and highlights her masculine character in her doggedness of pursuit.

¹⁹⁰ Discussed at length in chapter two, Hippolytus is unknowingly pushed into a feminine position by Phaedra as she takes on the masculine role in their (imagined) relationship. Being a strongly masculine character, and one more acquainted with life outside of the household, Hippolytus does not fit into the role of prey or femininity easily. He quickly flees Phaedra’s advances and attempts to reassert his masculinity within nature, away from civilization.

¹⁹¹ This is a theme noticed by countless scholars, however, few, if any, relate Phaedra’s hunting with a cross into the masculine realm.

¹⁹² Trinacty, Christopher, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*: 63.

¹⁹³ Trinacty, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*: 71.

¹⁹⁴ Hippolytus says at lines 73-80 that a favoured follower can expect that his nets will entrap his prey, the ropes woven together will remain unbroken by kicking feet, and that his bag will be heavy with spoils. As he is soon after called into the woods by the braying of the dogs, presumably the hunt for the boar is about to reach its end successfully, suggesting that Hippolytus sees himself as one of these favoured followers of Diana.

The frequent language used of Phaedra's actions belie her penchant for the hunt. From the first act, she finds herself unable to perform the typically feminine duties, as has been mentioned above. As huntress, she has found that she is more attuned to the world of her beloved, modelling herself upon Hippolytus to learn his ways. However, as has been brought up previously, Phaedra misunderstands the reasons behind Hippolytus' characterizations. Her perversions of Hippolytus' holy sacrament in the forests of Greece show her lack of understanding of her prey. The prayer given to Diana by the Nurse, beginning with the invocation at 405, shows a disregard for Hippolytus' worship of the goddess, as Phaedra hopes to gain a sexual companion through asking favour of a virginal goddess.¹⁹⁵ Surely a prayer to Venus would be more fitting here, especially when considering Phaedra's insistence in the first act that her evil passion is borne from Cupid's bow (185-186); even taking into account Phaedra's belief that her love for Hippolytus is another instance of revenge by Venus for Sol-Apollo's revealing her affair with Mars, Venus should still hope to bring about Phaedra's downfall by seeing her succumb to her passions. For Littlewood, the hunt which Phaedra engages in both "mimics and deforms"¹⁹⁶ the chaste hunt undertaken by Hippolytus.

This lack of understanding between the two can be related to their different views about the world. "[For] Phaedra, the woods have elegiac connotations, but for Hippolytus his conception centers on a Golden Age reverie, more attuned to pastoral or didactic principles."¹⁹⁷ In her efforts to comprehend Hippolytus' actions and insert herself into his activities, she misconstrues so much

¹⁹⁵ The Nurse is the one to make the prayer to Diana, that perhaps she may soften Hippolytus to her suggestion of entering into a sexual relationship. Of course, it is Phaedra who misunderstands this connection the most, as the Nurse has told her that Hippolytus is stubborn and is not interested in the female sex (230-232, continuing into the stichomythia at lines 236-243). The Nurse and Phaedra are invoking the Diana who aids females, in particular, in the move from childhood in the father's home to married life in the husband's home. In this sense, they are praying to the proper goddess, should Phaedra's eventual goal be a type of marriage with Hippolytus. The Diana who Hippolytus worships is purely the huntress of the wilds and outdoors.

¹⁹⁶ Littlewood, Cedric A.J., *Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy*: 71.

¹⁹⁷ Trinacty, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*: 72.

of his personality that she is unable to ever gain a strong hold over Hippolytus. Thus, she is forever constrained to follow Hippolytus wherever he may go.

Through the play, Phaedra's passion clearly grows from a point where she is willing to retain her chastity and the sanctity of her marriage by dying, until, in the last Act, she declares to all her love for Hippolytus and makes known the lies which led to his death. At the three points in the play when Phaedra declares her love for Hippolytus, not only does she grow bolder in allowing more people to see into her mind, but she also extends the lengths to which she is willing to go in order to have Hippolytus.

[The] first time that Phaedra speaks of following Hippolytus, she restricts the spatial reference to the mountainous landscape of Attica where the action takes place. The second time (241), she expands this reference, saying that she would follow or hunt her beloved even on the sea. Finally, when she speaks directly to Hippolytus (700-701), the paroxysm reaches its climax. She claims that she would follow him through blazing fire, and then she ends by enumerating every geographical space imaginable: she would pursue him across seas, through rivers, and up mountain slopes.¹⁹⁸

The culmination of this extension is Phaedra's final promise, to follow Hippolytus even in death, promising that *et te per undas perque Tartareos lacus, per Styga, per amnes igneos amens sequar*, "and across the waves and through hollow Tartarus, across the Styx, across fiery rivers I will follow you senselessly"¹⁹⁹ (1179-1180). This grants her the position of the greatest hunter within *Phaedra*; even in death she will pursue her prey. This shows Phaedra's masculine tendencies as she is willing to forgo all of the trappings of a noble life, the comforts of her home, and engage in the masculine and outdoor hunt in order to catch her prey. Her frenzied dedication here rests as a marker of her predatory nature, as well as the masculine determination which drives her actions.

¹⁹⁸ Mocanu, "Hunting in Seneca's *Phaedra*," in *Past Imperfect*: 47.

¹⁹⁹ I here use the word 'senselessly' for *amens* for its double meaning. *Amens*, from *a-mentis* denotes a lack of mind, or in this case senses. However, English handily uses the term 'senselessly' to also imply that the action will never be completed, making it a fool's errand. Phaedra here sets out to follow Hippolytus in the realm of the dead, not only without her senses, but also embarking on a mission which has no positive outcome.

There remain distinctions between the types of hunting which both Hippolytus and Phaedra engage in. Hippolytus hunts to grant protection to his citizens, to foster a relationship with Diana, and as an alternative to allowing part of himself to come under the influence of Venus.²⁰⁰ From his own words, however, his hunting is more representative of his attempt at creating a Golden Age world for himself, as well as setting aside a place of solitude away from the destruction and debauchery of women. For Phaedra, however, while she may hunt her prey and make the same motions as he does, she is unable to engage in the same pure exhilaration which Hippolytus feels. For her, hunting has an entirely different meaning. It is not related to any sort of past age, nor tightly wound up in her ancestry;²⁰¹ instead, hunting grants her the thrill of the chase, which at its end will allow her to continue in her masculine identity, leading Hippolytus into his manhood by removing from him his innocence. This is not the type of hunt which Hippolytus engages in. Phaedra, as long as she does not see the differences inherent between Hippolytus and herself, can not truly possess him as she wishes. By misunderstanding his characteristics and the reasons he has for his actions, Phaedra ensures that she remains his hunter into perpetuity. She will never catch her prey in the manner which she wants, and must be content with being always a few steps behind him. To catch Hippolytus, Phaedra will be required to force herself upon him in a show of hyper-masculinity akin to that of Theseus.

²⁰⁰ The use of hunting and devotion to Diana as an outlet for Hippolytus' sexuality can be seen, in a broad sense, in his description of his ideal locale, found at lines 501-539. Here, Hippolytus extols the virtues inherent in outdoor living and hunting for sustenance. At the center of his argument here, Hippolytus rejects, vehemently, any association with Venus and her realm, instead placing all of his efforts into pursuing a platonic relationship with Diana. His separation from urban life and family, misogyny, and utter distrust and distaste for society ensure that his rejection of Venus is complete. His focus is on hunting and the outdoors, company with other men or solitude, and fostering a close relationship with Diana. The Nurse recognizes this, asking Diana for her aid in bringing Hippolytus under the purview of Venus (417); she knows that in his devotion to Diana, there is no room for Venus, and therefore asks the goddess to lessen her grip on Hippolytus' heart that Venus may find space therein.

²⁰¹ Phaedra's family is not known for hunting, but is very involved with the outdoors and wild beasts.

Continuing this theme of hunting and misunderstanding, Phaedra attempts to model herself not only upon her beloved Hippolytus, but also upon his Amazonian mother. The masculine traits of the Amazonian race have been discussed in the first chapter, as they relate to Hippolytus' masculine character; however, as she does with so much concerning Hippolytus, Phaedra takes the image of Antiope and twists it into something which she can use in her trap. Phaedra realizes that it is not hunting alone which governs Hippolytus' character, but also the loss of his mother. She hopes to replace Antiope for him, though without the distinction of being called mother.²⁰²

Phaedra, in attempting to remove herself from the feminine distinction of being a mother and recasting herself as the servant of Hippolytus (612), seems to forget that she has modelled her appearance upon Antiope.²⁰³ Her words, then, seem to carry little meaning, fleeing from the title of mother, asking to serve Hippolytus, all while appearing to be an Amazon, if not Antiope herself. She unconsciously merges the identities of hunter and Amazon together to create something which may spark appeal in Hippolytus,²⁰⁴ forgetting that while his mother grants him reason to hate all women, it does not evoke any sort of sexual reaction within him.

[Antiope] was a wild, virginal woman, but was tamed and yoked in marriage by the 'civilized' Theseus; later she was killed by him, to leave a legacy of virginal wilderness in the form of their son Hippolytus [...]. Phaedra, by contrast, makes the transition from tame to wild because of the force of her passion, and crosses

²⁰² Phaedra, as discussed in chapter four, balks at Hippolytus' reference to her as mother; she suggests instead that she be his slave or servant. She exclaims [*matris*] *superbum est nomen et nimium potens*, "The name 'mother' is too distinguished and has excessive power" (609ff.). See Trinacty, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*: 76 for Phaedra's reception of a role of *servitium amoris*, the servant of love. Compare also Fitch, John & Siobhan McElduff, "Construction of the Self in Senecan Drama," in *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002): 32.

²⁰³ Phaedra, emerging from the house at the beginning of the second act, and as quoted above, removes the markers of her easy indoor life and takes upon herself the image of Antiope (*talis severi mater Hippolyti fuit*, "the mother of severe Hippolytus was like this" 398). Phaedra continues into the following lines (399-403) to describe the Amazons, finishing her description with *talis in silvas ferar*, "like this I will have rushed into the woods" (403). The next time that Phaedra is seen, she is entering the outdoor space, specifically near to the altar of Diana where Hippolytus is speaking to the Nurse (583-588). No mention is made here of Phaedra's appearance, but as she changes her dress and speaks to Hippolytus within the same scene, it is extremely likely that Phaedra is still in her outdoor, 'Amazonian' garb.

²⁰⁴ Mocanu, "Hunting in Seneca's *Phaedra*," in *Past Imperfect*: 41.

outside the bounds of civilization with her incestuous impulses (which are, of course, exacerbated by her temporary resemblance to Hippolytus' real mother).²⁰⁵

Thus, as Phaedra tries to emulate the masculine hunter and distance herself from her maternal role, she instead reinforces her crime of incest by choosing a guise which marks her not only as the masculine warrior which she wants, but also as the virginal mother to her object of desire. Even in her best effort to escape her feminine side and become masculine, she is doomed to fail, remaining part-feminine until her end.

5.2: The Direct Phaedra

It is, of course, not only Phaedra's love of hunting which marks her out as being a masculine character. There remains her direct approach to her problem, not seen in Euripides' version of the myth.²⁰⁶ Even in Ovid, as a contemporary of Seneca, Phaedra writes a letter to her beloved, captured in *Heroides* 4. For Seneca, the action must come directly from the source; for this, Phaedra must arrange a meeting with Hippolytus where she may propose the affair to him. This is done through the intermediary of the Nurse, who comes upon Hippolytus praying at the altar of Diana (424); however, Phaedra rushes forth from the palace that she may assuage her passion without further delay (583). She attempts, using the language of love which is known to her, to make Hippolytus understand her intentions, but realizes this is futile. She recalculates her plan; *satisne dixi*, "have I said enough?" (635). This marks a change in the language Phaedra uses.

²⁰⁵ Armstrong, Rebecca, *Cretan Women: Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry*: 103.

²⁰⁶ Directness and decisiveness were common masculine traits within the early Empire. Julius Caesar, for example, spent only eleven days between his election to consul and gathering troops for his war against Pompey (see the beginning of *De Bello Civili* book 3); Pompey, to accomplish many of the same tasks in setting up his own army takes at least a full year. Looking at oratory, Cicero, despite threats to his person, addressed the Senate concerning Catiline and his conspiracy to overthrow Rome (see Cicero, *In Catilinam* for the four speeches Cicero gave against Catiline). Phaedra, like the Roman men of this time, marks her out as being masculine, both in her direct approach and in her decisiveness.

It was not an issue before of the number or quality of words used, but rather that they allowed Hippolytus too much room for interpretation. Phaedra must use direct language, speaking as she is to a virgin who does not yet know the language of love and marriage.²⁰⁷ Where before Phaedra made vague references to her relationship to Hippolytus and her concerns over the absence of Theseus,²⁰⁸ she begins now to speak bluntly, describing the love she had for the Theseus of her past, the one who had come to Cnossus to slay the Minotaur, and the one with whom Hippolytus now shares his physical appearance (646-660). Phaedra continues, after multiple comparisons between the beauty of Theseus and that of Hippolytus before her, to act as suppliant, making herself completely vulnerable:

*en supplex iacet
adlapsa genibus regiae proles domus.
respersa nulla labe et intacta, innocens
tibi mutor uni. certa descendi ad preces:
finem hic dolori faciet aut vitae dies.
miserere amantis.*

As suppliant I throw [myself]
having fallen at your knees, daughter of a royal house.
No one has defiled [me] with disgrace and intact, innocent
for you alone I changed. Resolute, I have sunk to prayer:
This day will be either the end of my grief or my life.
Pity me, I am in love [with you].

Phaedra, 666-671

²⁰⁷ Consider again the fragment of Plautus, wherein the new bride must be taught the words of sexual intercourse on her wedding night (Plautus, *Fragmata* 68 in W.M. Lindsay).

²⁰⁸ It is Hippolytus' use of the term *mater*, "mother," (608) which gives Phaedra the opening she needs to begin explaining her predicament. She attempts first to adopt the role of *sororem*, "sister," (611), but quickly changes her mind, asking to be called *famulam*, "handmaiden," (611). By granting herself the status of a slave or servant in the use of "handmaiden," Phaedra calls upon a long history in literature of the *servitium amoris*. "The persona of slave has a particularly useful ambiguity, since through it she can and does evoke established connotations of the *servitium amoris*" according to John Fitch and Siobhan McElduff; literally the term translates as "slave of love," but colloquially, it represents the lengths which one is willing to go to in the name of love. It is a common role in Roman elegy, but Hippolytus is unfamiliar with it, shown by his response to Phaedra's suggestion that she may serve him in the absence (read: death) of his father. *Summus hoc omen deus avertat. aderit sospes actutum parens*, "May god above avert this omen. My father will soon be here safe" (623-624). Hippolytus continues, in an attempt to assuage Phaedra's apparent fears at being left a widow, by offering to act as his father in his relationship with her (633).

This final line, *miserere amantis*, “pity me, I am in love [with you]” (671) speaks to Phaedra’s state of mind and her absolute need for Hippolytus. She had already approached him as a suppliant at line 623, but finding that her words were not then enough for Hippolytus to understand her, she must be direct, thereby opening herself to attack. For this approach to work, Phaedra must take upon herself the role of the aggressor or initiator, in ancient society reserved for the more masculine of the participants. Thus, Phaedra, in directly telling Hippolytus what she feels for him and what she hopes to gain out of this conversation, acts in a masculine manner. She can not completely let go of her feminine nature, however, and speaks all of this in the position of suppliant. This allows her some escape route should it be necessary.

In asking pity from one who has never before felt the flames of passion, and does not understand their power, Phaedra places a great deal of trust in Hippolytus; for her plan to come to fruition, he must not only be open to engaging in a sexual relationship with a woman, but also engaging in such a relationship with her. Phaedra, then, again acts in a masculine manner, particularly in the elegiac sense, as she opens herself up to be hurt by her love, but continues as she can no longer bear being without him. Uncommon as it was for women to take such control of their own affairs, Phaedra’s insistence that she should approach the wild Hippolytus marks out another instance of her masculine identity. She feels trapped within her femininity, and her decision to leave the palace and approach Hippolytus in person allows her to step outside of her home and her feminine role, shedding her pure and chaste persona,²⁰⁹ and adopting instead a masculine character, rife with power and freedom. Segal notes that Phaedra’s “desire for a more masculine mode of dress and movement in also paradoxically the desire for the freedom from sexual constraints that is more characteristic of the male than the female in Roman society and in

²⁰⁹ This is accomplished in her refusal of her proper, noble attire in favour of the hunting clothing which she sees as being like that of the Amazons (386-403).

classical myth.”²¹⁰ Her hunting attire and exit from the household grant her just enough freedom that she is able to approach Hippolytus, acting in yet another feminine role, the widow, hiding her true feelings and masculine self, that she may get close enough to capture her prey.

Upon her failure, Phaedra pleads for Hippolytus to end her life with the sword he holds to her throat. Hippolytus, rejecting Phaedra’s advances and fleeing her embrace, finds himself unable to penetrate his stepmother to kill her, and instead flings his sword away from himself and leaves the forest, now tainted with sexual desire and womanhood.²¹¹ Phaedra’s attempts, then, at gaining the favour of Hippolytus fail, as does her mission to die trying.²¹² At every turn, Phaedra is seemingly not worth much notice because of her sex. At each of her cries for death at a masculine hand, she is met with silence, forced in the end to kill herself with a man’s weapon.²¹³ She is, as a female, ignored by the men around her; it falls upon her shoulders, then, to make herself heard with a masculine voice. For Seneca’s Phaedra, a letter simply will not suffice, as it does not possess the ability to convey her deep and burning feelings to Hippolytus, as Ovid attempts in his *Heroides*. This direct and masculine Phaedra must face her opponent, state her case, and await the outcome with courage and hope.

5.3: Phaedra’s Cretan Family

Turning away from her hunting mannerisms and the directness of her character, the family history of Phaedra is rife with women who cross boundaries. Phaedra is a Cretan princess,

²¹⁰ Segal, Charles, *Language and Desire in Seneca’s Phaedra*: 31.

²¹¹ Phaedra breaks Hippolytus’ Golden Age construction by invading his space and attacking him. This invasion and planned course of attack catch Hippolytus off guard and put him at a great disadvantage. As much as Phaedra has attempted to assimilate herself into Hippolytus’ world, she has the upper hand in their relationship by having been a significant part of both the real world around both of them and Hippolytus’ imagined world.

²¹² In speaking plainly to Hippolytus, Phaedra makes the claim that this day will see either the end of her grief (should Hippolytus agree to the affair) or her death (if he should reject her).

²¹³ Armstrong, *Cretan Women*: 286.

daughter of King Minos and Queen Pasiphae. She comes from a family and island of transgressions and laws.²¹⁴ Phaedra finds herself in this contradiction repeatedly in *Phaedra*. Her ancestral identity becomes mingled with the literary and mythological background which Seneca ascribes to her, culminating in a character who is at the same time masculine and feminine, civilized and wild, pure and impure. In the same way as Hippolytus is left with a series of conflicting character traits, so too is Phaedra. The difference between the two is that for Phaedra, one side has won the ‘war,’ while Hippolytus still fights himself.²¹⁵

Considering the nature of Phaedra’s family history and its effect on her personality, it is here prudent to make mention of the more notorious members of her family, as well as their deeds and how their actions have molded Phaedra, skewing her views on what a proper feminine woman is meant to do, and what is proper to leave to a man or masculine figure. Beginning with Europa, kidnapped by Jupiter in bull form, and likely alluded to in the first choral ode,²¹⁶ Phaedra’s family shows a fascination with not only the wild places of the earth, but also with the ferocity of the bull. This, of course, continues famously with her own mother, Pasiphae, who seized by desire for a bull given to King Minos to sacrifice to Neptune, conscripts the inventor Daedalus to create a way for the Queen to couple with the bull. From this union, the Minotaur is conceived, born, and sentenced to live his life in the Labyrinth,²¹⁷ until slain by Theseus. Also important to the tale here, and weighing heavily on Phaedra’s mind is her elder sister, Ariadne, who aided Theseus in

²¹⁴ Armstrong, *Cretan Women*: 14.

²¹⁵ Hippolytus is represented in a string of opposites each attempting to emerge victorious; Segal relates this torn self-image as being “Greek and barbarian, urban and savage, “soft” and “hard” primitivism” further noting that these contradictions “are at war rather than in harmony with one another.” (Segal, *Language and Desire*: 81).

²¹⁶ The Chorus here sings *fronte nunc torva petulans iuvenus virginum stravit sua terga ludo, perque fraternos, nova regna, fluctus ungula lentos imitante remos pectore adverso domuit profundum, pro sua vector timidus rapina*, “now a youthful bull, full of lust, scowls beneath dark brows, and permits the maidens to play on his back, and across his brother’s realm, a new kingdom, hooves rowing as the oars of a flexible ship, his chest against the current of the sea, he subdues the depths, the timid bearer himself bears his booty” (303-308).

²¹⁷ The mythology behind Phaedra’s family can be found in Timothy Gantz’s book, *Early Greek Myth*, Chapter 7.

his escape from the Labyrinth, but was subsequently abandoned on the island of Naxos. These three female figures inform Phaedra of what she ought to expect from her love life.

Putting the tale of Europa aside for now, the stories of Pasiphae and Ariadne allow Phaedra to add to her masculine persona. Each of these women takes control of their lives, for better or worse, that they may not remain idle and unhappy in the confines of the Cretan palace. Pasiphae represents for Phaedra the ability to sin in the open air, as Pasiphae had Daedalus build her the contraption which allowed her to engage in sexual relations with the Cretan bull outside of the household and in the open air;²¹⁸ the Nurse, always present and lending proper feminine opinion to Phaedra, reminds her that it is impossible for her to sin in complete secrecy (152-155).²¹⁹ It is also a fundamental part of these women that they are drawn to savage and wild men, as well as beasts. Phaedra's association with hunting and the wilds of Greece may not, in fact, be due only to her love of Hippolytus. Her close relationship with her family as it relates to her character, and which has become a part of her literary construction, may in fact have played a significant part in her early declaration that feminine things are not for her, being, as she is, more comfortable with a javelin in her hand.²²⁰

Phaedra's relation, as it concerns her character and her representation as a masculine figure, then, can be assumed to be a result of a combination of her intentions towards Hippolytus and her recognition of her family within herself. Here, then, it remains as to how these two elements aid in Phaedra's definition as a masculine character. Having already covered her hunting aspect and its relation to Hippolytus, as well as her strong desire to follow Hippolytus wherever he may go

²¹⁸ Segal, *Language and Desire*: 39.

²¹⁹ Consider here, also, Phaedra's suspicion that her family is cursed because of Sol, or Apollo in his capacity as god of the Sun, uncovering and bringing light to the indiscretions of Venus; Phaedra here hopes to sin without alerting her grandfather, while simultaneously recognizing that it was his revelation which has caused the unlucky loves of the Cretan women.

²²⁰ Phaedra claims at lines 110-111 that she prefers to hunt wild beasts with a javelin in her hand, as opposed to the proper feminine activities she has just listed, such as offering sacrifice to the gods or weaving.

and in whatever he may do, her association with other female members of her family requires further unpacking. The women of Crete seem to take it upon themselves to enact for themselves a heroic identity, engaging in a type of combat with wild beings in need of taming,²²¹ and using their charms to entice the beasts to yield to the yoke of civilization and civility.²²² For *Phaedra*, Hippolytus is repeatedly referred to in language related to his identity in the outside realm and suggesting an air of wildness. Over the course of the play, Hippolytus is *ferus*, “wild” (240, 272, 414), *intractabilis*, “intractable” or “fierce” (229, 271), *immitis*, “harsh” (273), *saevus*, “savage” (273), *torvus*, “stern” or “savage” (416), *ferox*, “ferocious” or “wild” (416), *silvester*, “woodman”²²³ (461), and *silvarum incola*, “inhabitant of the woods” (922).²²⁴ Phaedra, as emblematic of the interior household and the civilized realm of Venus, seeks to quell this savageness in Hippolytus by introducing him to the delights of society. In the same way as Theseus and other heroes seek to destroy monsters, so too do the women of Crete set out to tame the lands around them. For Phaedra, this means bringing the wild and savage Hippolytus under her control, that he may grow up to take his father’s place and continue his father’s line.²²⁵ Her passion for him, while her main goal, is nevertheless the weapon which she uses to subdue him.

Turning now to the other prominent female used for comparison to Phaedra, Medea, the full thrust of Phaedra’s heroic identity can be seen. Within *Phaedra*, Medea is used as the prime

²²¹ Armstrong, *Cretan Women*: 90.

²²² In the same way that Theseus’ heroic identity is a marker of his masculinity, so too is the heroic nature of Phaedra an indicator of her masculine nature. She is included in Deborah Lyons’ *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* as one who “[brought] cult-images of Eileithyia from Crete (Paus. 1.18.5), [and] founded temple of Aphrodite Kataskopia or the temple was renamed for her spying there on Hippolytos (Paus. 2.32.3)” (Lyons, Deborah, *Gender and Immortality*: 225).

²²³ *Silvester* here implies a sense of deprivation. See Richard J. Tarrant’s commentary on the *Thyestes*, line 142.

²²⁴ See McAuley, Mairéad, “Specters of Medea: The Rhetoric of Stepmotherhood and Motherhood in Seneca’s *Phaedra*,” in *Helios* 39 (Spring 2012): 44-45.

²²⁵ While it is a part of her more indirect speech to Hippolytus that she brings up his eventual rule, Phaedra does indeed foresee Hippolytus as being the king following Theseus’ death, as she states *tu qui iuventae flore primaevoviges, cives paterno fortis imperio rege*, “you who are strong in the first bloom of youth, should rule over the strong people through your father’s decree” (619-620).

example of the evil which a stepmother can cause. However, just as the audience knows what a Medea is expected to do, so too do they know what it means to be Phaedra.²²⁶ The mere mention of these names brings to the forefront images of forbidden lust and utter destruction. Medea, being Phaedra's cousin,²²⁷ is known within the tragic world for killing her children in order to bring about deep pain to Jason, who has forsaken her to gain a better position in Corinth. Considering, also, that Seneca draws upon the full extent of the literary tradition in creating his characters, the Euripidean Medea, so obsessed with her reputation possesses a strong heroic identity. This is shown in Seneca's treatment in allowing her to proclaim, "I am become Medea" (Seneca, *Medea* 910). Working from this point, then, it is clear that Seneca's women are allowed to possess great strength of character, to the point that they may carve out for themselves a reputation for their heroism. Phaedra takes advantage of this masculine obsession with continued remembrance and heroism not in leaving letters, but in leaving Theseus bereft of his family, forever cursing her name.²²⁸

In concluding this chapter, Phaedra's manner of death is the topic of discussion. Certainly, hers is the most masculine death within the play for she commits suicide with a sword. While it is unclear what sword she uses to commit her final crime, Kohn notes the possibility of her having used Hippolytus' sword; "such a recycling of props would make a powerful statement."²²⁹ Here, Phaedra completes what Hippolytus could not: she dies by penetration, and is thus able to complete her quest. In addition, she takes the masculine place in shedding blood.²³⁰ Loraux notes that

²²⁶ Fitch & McElduff, "Construction of the Self," in *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002): 26.

²²⁷ Both are grandchildren of the Sun, though Medea seems to have a better relationship with the deity than Phaedra, as Medea is aided in her escape from Corinth with the chariot of the Sun in both Seneca's *Medea* and Euripides'.

²²⁸ The play ends with Theseus laying his curse upon Phaedra's head, proclaiming *istam terra defossam premat, gravisque tellus impio capiti incubet*, "That woman, bury her, and may the heavy earth crush down her impious head" (1279-1280).

²²⁹ Kohn, Thomas, *The Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy*: 76.

²³⁰ For the Greeks in particular, a death with blood was performed by a male. Thanatos, in the Greek mythos was said to have carried a sword. Phaedra, in using a sword to shed blood takes the male, and therefore masculine

“[even] suicide in tragedy obeys this firm rule, that a man must die at a man’s hand, by the sword and with blood spilt.”²³¹ Her journey to the Underworld in search of Hippolytus grants her an eternity of hunting, and he an eternity of fleeing, locking them forever in their respective roles of predator and prey, masculine and feminine, lover and loved.²³²

5.4: Conclusion

Each of Seneca’s main characters, namely Phaedra, Hippolytus, and Theseus, are unsure of themselves and their characterization at different points of the play. This uncertainty manifests itself, for the purposes of this thesis, in the near-constant changes between genders, flowing from masculine to feminine and back again. The characters must, within the confines of their personas, hunt down their place within the family unit and within their society. Until this can be completed, the action of the play is left uncertain. Phaedra, in keeping with this, sheds, at the end, any vestiges of her feminine self. She leaves it unclear as to her reasons for dying, either to preserve her reputation as a good wife, or to continue her hunt for Hippolytus.²³³ However, this distinction is perhaps not all that dissimilar. For her to die for Theseus, she keeps intact her identity as a chaste and pure wife, slightly feminine, but with strong overtones of the retention of a heroic identity.

position. See Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* for more on the distinction of blood-shedding as being male.

²³¹ Loraux, Nicole, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*: 12.

²³² This death is rather similar to that of Dido in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, where upon Aeneas’ departure, Dido commits suicide by killing herself on what she took to be their marriage bed. There are some key differences in the stories of Phaedra and Dido, namely that Phaedra never believed that she was married to Hippolytus, but the two women are remarkably alike in other regards. Dido reigned over Carthage in the absence of any male relatives; Phaedra, despite power being given to Hippolytus, would doubtless have had some power over the Athenians while Hippolytus was absent from the city. While the sword that Phaedra uses to kill herself is not ever referred to as being Hippolytus’ sword, while Dido uses a sword given to her by Aeneas, the fact remains that both women kill themselves at sword point because of a lost love. The last difference between the two is that Dido commits suicide because of Aeneas’ betrayal, whereas Phaedra commits suicide to preserve a modicum of chastity and to follow Hippolytus into the underworld.

²³³ Phaedra, at her end, is indecisive on her reasons for dying, stating that *morere, si casta es, viro; si incesta, amori*, “if you are chaste, die for your husband; if unchaste, for your love” (1184-1185).

Should she die for Hippolytus, she remains hunter in their relationship, strongly within the masculine realm. In either case, then, Phaedra's death allows for her to take control of her past, her passions, and her future. This freedom to choose is again a masculine trait.²³⁴ Phaedra has already brought forward that despite her strong ties to civilization and the palace, she is not a stranger to the wilds of Greece, nor is she beholden to the bonds which keep her inside. Her passion, at the end, is for the outdoors, where she may follow her love. In this, she seems to have given up the idea of civilizing or taming Hippolytus. It did not work for Theseus to tame Antiope, nor is it likely to work for Phaedra and Hippolytus. Instead, she must embrace her masculinity, let go of her ties to the feminine sphere, and follow her beloved Hippolytus through the wilds and dangers of the underworld.

Phaedra's final speech fulfills her unspoken wish to hunt down Hippolytus, making him fall prey to her predatory nature. Not even in death can Hippolytus escape the clutches of his stepmother. It is then within this final chapter that the masculinity of Phaedra shall be discussed. Phaedra, as a masculine character, is extremely similar to Hippolytus. This is not without her design, as she has attempted to emulate him from early in the play.²³⁵ Now, she is able to fully achieve her role as the masculine hunter who stalks her innocent prey, completing the elegiac subversion of gender which has been occurring to increasing degrees throughout the play. It is

²³⁴ Phaedra takes upon herself the physical attributes of Antiope, most noticeably dressing like her at lines 387-403, wherein she refuses the dress of a noble Athenian (a blanket of gold and purple weaving, items dyed Tyrian red, silks from China, pearls and other jewelry, and Assyrian perfumes) and instead requests a simple belt, loose hair, and weaponry. The physical similarities between Phaedra and Antiope, then, are forced, in that Phaedra must forcibly remove and disregard the formal clothing befitting a woman of her status. Among her reasons for loving and admiring Hippolytus is his freedom to move from inside to outside the household; Phaedra feels trapped within the house, especially within her role as wife and mother, and becomes envious of Hippolytus; this moves her to abandon her dress for something more freeing and akin to the Amazons, as evidenced above. See Fitch & McElduff, "Construction of the Self," in *Mnemosyne* 55 (2002): 33.

²³⁵ From early in her opening speech, Phaedra admits that she is no longer able to complete the common actions of women, such as weaving and pious attendance to the local gods (103-109); instead, she longs for the world of Hippolytus and to carve out her own place therein (110-111).

without a doubt that the beginnings of this change were apparent from the first act; however, until the prey is caught, the hunt can never be fulfilled. In the same way that Theseus ‘hunted’ down his son with the curse in act three, here Phaedra must hunt down her love until it can be completed.²³⁶ For this final chapter, then, the main aspects of the masculine Phaedra will be the focus. These are her role as huntress, hunting the unsuspecting Hippolytus; her use of direct speech not seen in her other manifestations, such as in Ovid or Euripides; her genealogical background, which is rather obsessed with the outdoors and the wild things of the world; and the manner in which she chooses to kill herself, which accomplishes what Hippolytus could not, in penetrating herself with a phallic weapon and shedding her own blood.

²³⁶ It is interesting here to note that Theseus uses a great deal of hunting imagery after sending out the curse against Hippolytus, which is mirrored by the hunting imagery ascribed to the monster by the Messenger in his speech; this, in turn, is again mirrored in the language used by Phaedra to explain the lengths that she is willing to go to in order to be with Hippolytus. The use of hunting imagery is nothing new for love poetry (see Littlewood, *Self-Representation and Illusion*: 268), but the various uses within this play to describe each of the main character’s tendencies towards violence is masterful.

Conclusion

Seneca uses, with great acuity, the works of both his predecessors and contemporaries to lay out the foundations of his tragedies. He moves outside the confines of the tragic genre, pulling themes and motifs from elegy, philosophy, amatory, and epic works. In so doing, “he is able to create a dialogue between these genres and show how they can influence his characterization of dramatic figures, their actions, and tragedy itself.”²³⁷ This blending of genres creates a rich framework which Seneca uses to display the severe mental anguish and intense physical pain of his characters, seen to great effect in the consuming passion of Phaedra and the mangled and torn body of Hippolytus.

The family as a unit is very important in laying out gender roles for its members. However, as evidenced throughout the play, and as argued in this thesis, these roles are either magnified to a point of near destruction, or subverted for nefarious gains. By not staying within the confines set out by society and family role, each of the members of the royal household play a part in their own – and their household’s – destruction. For Hippolytus, his trusting that Phaedra is indeed the proper Roman *matrona* leads him to trust her; Phaedra, taking upon herself the masculine role of hunter in pursuing Hippolytus, and unable to face whatever shame may come from having her lust discovered, causes the death of Hippolytus; Theseus, as a hyper-masculine character, acts too rashly, pronouncing judgment on Hippolytus before hearing his defense. Each character has flaws inherent within their construction, which display themselves most strongly through their gender.

Hippolytus begins the play as a male and masculine character participating in an activity which was proper and conventional for males of both the stage and audience time; through his innocence shown in the second act, he is forced to subvert conventional gender roles and become

²³⁷ Trinacty, Christopher, *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*, 19.

the hunted beloved of Phaedra. His refusal to enter into the public realm, thereby becoming an active and willing participant in society, creates an imbalance within his persona. This ensures that he will never be able to fulfill his duties as the heir to his father's throne, as well as enhancing his misogynistic personality to a point where it becomes destructive. Seneca, here, uses slow degrees of change between the masculine and feminine, which allows for Hippolytus to slowly shift away from the strong masculine character shown in the prologue and into the more ambiguous or out-right feminine role he takes on when dealing with Phaedra.

Theseus amplifies his masculine identity as is typical for heroes. He is filled with unabated rage upon discovering the crime of Hippolytus, and immediately curses him using the last wish granted to him by Neptune; not even three years stranded in the underworld gave him cause to use this wish, showing the absolute gravity of the situation. In his role as husband and father, he expresses a greater deal of balance, to the point where he mourns ordering the death of Hippolytus. His grief is greatly increased upon Phaedra's confession that Hippolytus was innocent of her alleged rape. Additionally, he causes the destruction of his household, as Phaedra places the blame for her incestuous passion upon his long absence and Theseus is the one to order Hippolytus' death. It is no great wonder that upon discovering the truth of the situation, Theseus wishes to return to the underworld. It is the lack of degrees of change within Theseus' masculinity which cause many of his issues, in that he goes from extreme hyper-masculinity to balanced masculinity and back in rapid succession, not allowing himself time to acclimatize to his life within society and the household.

Phaedra, for her part, uses her roles within the feminine sphere as wife, mother, and daughter to hide her true feelings and actions. For her, femininity is a mask which grants her access to her beloved Hippolytus. It also ensures that her intentions and actions are not seen by

Hippolytus until she speaks directly and plainly to him, declaring her love. Her masculine character is far more pronounced, but the imbalance brought by her overwhelming passion prevents her hunt from being successful in the living world; she must follow her prey into the underworld in order to continue her chase. In this case, Phaedra employs similar degrees of change, as she tests out different feminine roles in order to hide her true intentions and therefore take the male members of her family unawares. This includes both her solicitation of Hippolytus in act two and her revelation of the truth to Theseus in the fifth act.

Each of the characters within the royal household portray conventional gender roles as well as a subversion of these roles.²³⁸ Related strongly to their place within the family as father, mother, and son, when they act in accordance to the gender roles which society ascribes to them, the family is able to continue into perpetuity. Hippolytus, through his misogyny, refuses to continue his father's line, subverting the role given to him by the society which he shuns; this brings about his innocence, as he does not know how his society functions, which in turn grants Phaedra the ability to approach him. Phaedra, strongly tied with society and civilization, is extremely aware of the boundaries set upon her. It is her desire to break out of the stifling urban setting and enjoy the outdoors which brings her into contact with Hippolytus. This sparks her passion and amplifies her wish to disregard her proper role as wife and mother, preferring to hunt and taking upon herself an Amazonian identity. Theseus, as patriarch, leaves his family in a hunt of his own, assuming that the chaste wife he left behind will remain so in his absence. His hyper-masculine identity as a hero causes him to act rashly, condemning Hippolytus based solely on the words of his wife and the 'evidence' of a sword. The imbalance inherent within the members of the royal household

²³⁸ Phaedra moves from the feminine sphere into the masculine; Hippolytus moves from the masculine into the feminine. Theseus, however, is different from both, in that he moves from one extreme end of the masculine spectrum to a more middling and acceptable version of masculinity. This shows that he can not at the same time act as a hero and as a father to Hippolytus or husband to Phaedra.

cause each of them, in turn, to subvert their proper roles in different manners, culminating in the absolute destruction of the family unit.

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