

Aspects of Love in Seneca's *Phaedra*

by

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Ursula Harrison

29 June 2004

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Thesis Abstract

Chapter One focuses on Phaedra's erotic behaviour in relation to Hippolytus. Phaedra utilises erotic behaviours common to the elegiac male, such as the *seruitium amoris*, and the use of pseudo-military terminology, in the pursuit of the beloved. Phaedra structures her pursuit of Hippolytus on the elegiac model and characterises his behaviour as relating to the elegiac mistress.

Chapter Two examines the role of heredity in Phaedra's passion, with particular emphasis placed on gendered forms of love. Phaedra's behaviour is modelled on her male ancestors, Jupiter and Apollo, rather than on the actions of her mother. The consequences of gender dislocation in the arena of love are explored through a comparison between Phaedra and Hercules.

Chapter Three explores Hippolytus' position as an acolyte of Diana, and how it may explain his response to Phaedra's declaration of love. Comparisons are made with myths from the *Metamorphoses* to highlight similarities between Hippolytus and other acolytes of Diana, and also to evaluate Hippolytus' response in a gender context.

Chapter Four concentrates on the role of heredity in explaining Hippolytus' anomalous behaviour, and also the responses of others toward him. Links are

made between Hippolytus and the bull from the sea to emphasise the ambiguous nature of Hippolytus.

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Introduction

This thesis explores questions of love and gender in Seneca's *Phaedra*.

The first chapter examines Seneca's use of the conventions of Roman elegy to explicate *Phaedra*'s passion. *Phaedra* herself turns to the forms and conventions of elegy to express her love for Hippolytus, as love elegy is the pre-eminent model for love in Roman literature. She uses the conventions of elegy as a guide for her actions. However, *Phaedra* with her appropriation of elegiac forms, turns elegy on its head by applying the role of elegiac lover to herself and that of elegiac mistress to Hippolytus. The language used by both *Phaedra* and the Nurse has strong echoes with that of elegiac poetry and the concerns of elegiac love. The characterisation of Hippolytus as elegiac mistress takes two forms. Prior to the revelation scene, Hippolytus is cast as the intractable mistress, to be wooed, won and overcome by the lover. Emphasis is placed on the harsh and intractable nature of Hippolytus. Military terminology is used to verbally frame the pursuit of Hippolytus and the hoped-for conquest. During the revelation scene, *Phaedra* apparently reverses her previous characterisation of Hippolytus by adopting the language of the *servitium amoris* and casting herself as the subservient lover, catering to the whims of a dominant mistress. However careful exploration of the dynamics of the scene reveals that her use of the *servitium amoris* is just another erotic stratagem in her pursuit of Hippolytus, a conclusion which is further emphasised by her continued use of military terminology. *Phaedra* is able to continue in her erotic fantasies concerning Hippolytus as she interprets his behaviour through the prism of elegiac convention. Any objections raised by the Nurse concerning Hippolytus' response to erotic overtures are seen by *Phaedra* as fulfilling elegiac expectations.

Chapter 2 explores *Phaedra*'s erotic behaviour in relation to her heredity and reveals links to masculine erotic behaviours. A comparison with other representations of love and its effects in the play reinforces the findings of the previous chapter, that *Phaedra*'s erotic behaviour is centred on the male pattern. Pasiphae is important in *Phaedra*'s heredity as a root cause, in that *Phaedra* too is attracted to an abnormal object of desire. However *Phaedra* does not see her mother as a model for erotic expression. *Phaedra*'s continued references to her divine ancestors, Apollo and Jupiter, both in justifying her actions and in providing a model which she follows, reinforces this finding. The Chorus's descriptions of the behaviours of Apollo and

Jupiter in love show that Phaedra utilises the same patterns of erotic aggression and deceit in her pursuit of Hippolytus. The Chorus also use terms which suggest the world of elegy, particularly in reference to the use of deceit as an erotic stratagem.

Phaedra's erotic behaviour is also compared to that of Hercules, in his erotic subjugation by Omphale which is detailed by the Chorus. Both Hercules and Phaedra undergo role reversals under the effect of love. The portrayal of the same episode in the *Fasti* and *Heroides* 9 is also examined, in order to gain an understanding of the conventions surrounding gendered behaviour, and also the implications that arise from the upsetting of these boundaries, both for themselves and others.

Chapter 3 centres on Hippolytus' response to Phaedra's declaration of love, and uses stories from the *Metamorphoses* as a tool to examine the tenor of his reaction. His position as an acolyte of Diana is explored with emphasis placed on the inherent contradictions and tensions arising from it. Hippolytus' position is compared with that of Daphne and Callisto, both in their appearance and the effect on others, and the similar language used to describe it, and also in their response to unwanted sexual advance. Stories of incest from the *Metamorphoses* are also examined, both in light of Phaedra's similarities with and differences from Myrrha and Byblis, and also in light of Hippolytus' response to an incestuous advance as compared with Cinyras and Caunus. The myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus also provides an example of female erotic aggression directed toward an unwilling male victim and the conclusions which can be drawn from this reversal of erotic roles. The revelation scene is explored again from Hippolytus' point of view, and argues that Hippolytus' inadequate response derives from his inability to take an active masculine role in his dealings with Phaedra.

Chapter 4 examines the root causes of Hippolytus' anomalous nature. His beauty is shown to be a key in revealing the ambiguities of his character, as it combines elements of both adult and adolescent beauty. The outwardly masculine cast of his beauty is shown to be false, as he is compared to both hyper masculine gods and gods famous for androgynous beauty. The Chorus also use language which suggests the beauty of the adolescent male when describing Hippolytus' beauty. Phaedra's erotic response to Hippolytus also reveals that she models her response to him on the basis of adolescent beauty. His anomalous status derives from the contradictions inherent in his

heredity, that of Amazon and Greek. Both elements conspire to form a person who cannot reconcile the warring tensions of his nature. A comparison with the bull from the sea, particularly in terms of appearance and characterisation, reveal that the bull mirrors Hippolytus' status as ambiguous and unnatural, and that his own birth is an unnatural event.

Chapter One: Phaedra and the Male Lover

In *Phaedra*, Seneca gives us the portrait of a woman who is the victim of an unnatural passion. She is overcome with love for her stepson, makes advances toward him, is utterly rejected and becomes a contributing factor in that man's death. Yet it is not merely the object of her love that is unnatural, her expression of love compels her to act in ways that go beyond the realm of conventional female behaviour. Phaedra experiences substantial shifts in her behaviour, especially in relation to erotic matters. Phaedra's erotic expression derives its form from the conventions of elegy. What makes her situation unusual is that she plays the male role in her erotic pursuit of Hippolytus.

Erotic dynamics: Phaedra the elegiac lover

Seneca represents Phaedra in ways reminiscent of the lover in Roman elegy. She presents herself as enslaved by her love for Hippolytus and during her scene with Hippolytus, her attempts to break down his resistance are evocative of the elegiac lover pleading with his mistress. Seneca makes use of language that emphasises these parallels, in particular the elegiac convention of the *seruitium amoris* in his dramatisation, a point that is duly noted by scholars.¹ As Segal says, "[Phaedra] speaks with the authority of the Roman *matrona* in her *domus*, but she also uses words that one would expect to find in the demimonde of Roman elegy".² While Seneca has certainly drawn on Ovid's conception of Phaedra in the *Heroides*, Seneca's use of the *seruitium amoris* is original to his characterisation of Phaedra. There has been recognition of the use of the vocabulary of elegy, but there has not been an exploration of the dynamics of power that the use of elegiac imagery entails. Due to Hippolytus' masculine identity not being fully realised, Phaedra has the freedom to adjust her own gender identity accordingly.³ Her behaviour toward Hippolytus has a violent and aggressive edge to it, placing him in a passive and ultimately defenceless position. This is most evident in her

¹See Boyle, A. J., *Seneca's Phaedra*, (X Francis Cairns 1987), p172; Segal, C. P., *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*, (Princeton, N. J. 1986), p158 ; Mayer, Roland, *Seneca: Phaedra*, (Duckworth, London, 2002) p27

²Segal, C. P. (1986), p158

appropriation of elegiac metaphor. Yet ultimately her approach will fail, due both to the inappropriateness of her efforts as a woman and the inconsistency of her approach. This inconsistency, it will be seen, arises in part from Hippolytus' failure to play the elegiac game.

Women and the *seruitium amoris*

Before discussing Phaedra's behaviour in terms of elegiac metaphor and anomalous gender behaviour, the appropriateness of such an approach needs to be examined. Lyne makes the point that "(i)t was a comparatively common idea for a woman to either appear as a "slave in love" or to express willingness to be the literal slave of a beloved man".⁴ He gives as evidence the elegiac examples of Briseis, Ariadne and Tarpeia.⁵ The question needs to be answered as to whether Phaedra resembles these heroines in her behaviour, or if her actions are anomalous in reference to conventions of feminine erotic behaviour, and therefore to be judged by masculine standards.

In the instances of Briseis and Ariadne, we are presented with two women who have been abandoned by their lovers and who are willing to go to any lengths to stay with their former lovers, even to the extent of entirely forgoing their previous erotic relationship. Briseis' identification with the actual role of slave is total, as she lacks the confidence to envisage a continuing erotic relationship with Achilles. Briseis even offers proof of her abilities to engage in traditional slaves' tasks as an enticement for Achilles to take her:

uictorem captiua sequar, non nupta maritum;
est mihi, quae lanas molliat, apta manus. (*Her.* 3.69-70)
(As captive let me follow my captor, not as wife my husband; I

³Hippolytus' problematic relationship with masculine identity will be explored in chapter 3.

⁴Lyne, R. O. A. M., "*Seruitium Amoris*" CQ 29 (1979) p118 n.1

⁵In Ovid, *Her.* 3; *Cat.* 64 and *Prop.* 4.4 respectively. The example of Tarpeia will not be examined as she does not specifically refer to herself as a slave but as a prisoner: *o utinam ad uestros sedeam captiua Penatis, / dum captiua mei conspicer ora Tati!* (O would that I

have a hand well fitted to spin the wool).

nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus,

et minuent plenas stamina nostra colos.

exagitet ne me tantum tua, deprecor, uxor --

quae mihi nescio quo non erit aequa modo --

neue meos coram scindi patiare capillos

et leuiter dicas: "haec quoque nostra fuit." (*Her.* 3.75-80)

(I shall be a lowly slave of yours and spin off the given task, and my threads shall lessen my full distaff. Only do not let your wife scold me, I pray -- for I do not know if she will be fair to me -- nor allow her to tear my hair openly while you say lightly: "She, too, once was mine.")

Briseis indulges in the masochistic fantasy of mistreatment at the hands of Achilles' imagined wife, which reveals the completeness of her identification with the servile state. She does not even presume to offer herself as a body-slave, as Ariadne does. Briseis' apparent use of the elegiac motif of the *seruitium amoris* goes beyond erotic rhetoric. As Verducci states in reference to Briseis' status, "Briseis is a *serua*; Achilles is her *dominus*".⁶ Ovid's use of the *seruitium amoris* metaphor in this instance is removed from the world of elegy because of the circumstances surrounding Briseis. The futility of her appeal to Achilles is highlighted as Briseis is an actual slave at this point. *Heroides* 3 cannot be classed as a primarily erotic poem, as erotic love is not Briseis' primary focus. Her plea to Achilles is for stability, not erotic fulfilment. Her use of elegiac terms serves to highlight the futility of her position and the distance from her actual status. Ovid's use of elegiac terminology makes a mockery of Briseis.⁷

In Catullus' version of the Ariadne and Theseus myth, Ariadne, whilst she too has been abandoned by her lover and also offers herself as a slave, does not evince the same level of abasement as Briseis. Ariadne sees herself as engaging in servile work "delightfully" rather than imagining scenarios of

sat a prisoner by your household gods if as a prisoner I could see my Tatius' face!) (*Prop.* 4.4.33f.)

⁶Verducci, Florence, *Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum*, (Princeton, N. J., 1985) p119

⁷Verducci, Florence (1985), p120

abuse carried out before a former lover's complacent eyes:

si tibi non cordi fuerant conubia nostra
 saeua quod horrebas prisci praecepta parentis,
 attamen in uestras potuisti ducere sedes
 quae tibi iucundo famulares serua labore
 candida permulcens liquidis uestigia lymphis,
 purpureae tuum constenens ueste cubile. (Cat. 64. 158-163)
 (If our marriage had not been to your heart because you
 dreaded the harsh commands of an old-fashioned father,
 nevertheless you could have led me to your ancient home that I
 might serve you as a slave in delightful work, stroking the white
 soles of your feet in clear water or spreading your couch with a
 purple coverlet.)

Ariadne begins by rationalising her abandonment by the faithless Theseus as due to fear of his father's stance on marriage. At this stage of the poem, Ariadne appears to envisage a scenario where there is some eroticised contact between herself as slave and Theseus, though she still sees herself as engaging in servile tasks.⁸ Both Briseis and Ariadne profess to be satisfied with a servile relationship, and accept that any erotic desires they may have will not be fulfilled. Both women accept that they are in a subservient position to their former lovers, and that any decision to be made concerning their futures lies in the hands of their lovers. Erotic fulfilment is not at the forefront of their excursion into the language of slavery.

In contrast, Phaedra's situation is not one of actual submission to a former lover's whims. She has not been abandoned by Hippolytus, nor has she already engaged in an erotic relationship with him. Her submission to Hippolytus is superficial only, both prior and during the scene. Phaedra demonstrates that she is the one actively pursuing erotic fulfilment rather than submissively acquiescing to a lover's whims. Phaedra offers her own enslavement to Hippolytus (611ff.) but then follows up her use of the imagery of the *seruitium amoris* with aggressive military imagery (613f.) such as is used by the male protagonists of elegy. In contrast, Briseis and Ariadne locate their offers of slavery in conventionally feminine areas such as wool-

⁸It should be noted that in *Her.* 10.89-92, Ariadne resolutely rejects the role of slave as being beneath her, as a king's daughter. She will be satisfied with the role of wife and no other.

working or in tending to personal needs. Like the elegists, Phaedra offers erotic slavery, as opposed to actual subservient acts. She does not offer a firm blueprint for the form her slavery will take. Her allegiance to the *seruitium amoris* remains in the realm of metaphor, it is not an offer of “literal servitude”.⁹ As for the male lovers of elegy, there is a world of difference between sleeping in the doorway and scrubbing that same doorway.¹⁰

Propertius 1.1.9-16: a mythological *exemplum*

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
 saeuitiam durae contudit Iasidos.
 nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,
 ibat et hirsutas ille uidere feras;
 ille etiam Hylaei percussus uulnere rami
 saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.
 ergo uelocem potuit domuisse puellam:
 tantum in amore preces et bene facta ualent. (Prop. 1.1.9-16)¹¹
 (Milanion, Tullus, by fleeing no hard labours, crushed the cruelty
 of Iasus’ daughter. For at times he used to wander, maddened,
 about the Parthenian glens, at times he went to see the shaggy
 beasts; hit by a blow from Hylaeus’ club, wounded, he groaned
 on Arcadian rocks. Thus he was able to tame the swift girl: such
 is the power of prayers and good deeds in love.)

Propertius’ programmatic first poem of his *Monobiblos* ostensibly sets out his submission to and domination by his mistress. While I do not propose to engage in a detailed discussion of Propertius, his mythological *exemplum* of the elegiac relationship is of use when analysing the elegiac overtones of Phaedra’s pursuit and attempted seduction of Hippolytus. There are parallels not only with the language used of both sets of lovers, actual and otherwise, but also in their circumstances.

Ellen Greene argues that Propertius, in his telling of the myth,

⁹To paraphrase the Lyne quote cited above in n. 4.

¹⁰A point duly noted by Sharon L. James in her book *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy*, (UCP, Berkeley, 2003), pp145-150

presents Milanion as the “ideal lover”, and uses him as a contrast to the stereotype of the passive elegiac lover. “[H]e presents an example that shows the lover in a heroic context in which he courageously endures the pain of *amor* and fearlessly encounters all obstacles, which not only wins glory for the hero but captures the object of desire as well.”¹² Greene goes on to suggest that the amatory model being presented is one of male dominance over the mistress, that ultimately, regardless of the submissive pose of the lover, he will win out over his mistress’s reluctance.¹³ Conversely the elegiac *puella*, for whom Atalanta is a paradigm, is crushed and tamed by the lover. I shall argue that there is a correlation between the language used of both Milanion and Phaedra, and also with Milanion’s actions and the methods that Phaedra wishes to employ in her seduction of Hippolytus.

There are marked similarities between the depiction of Milanion and the characterisation of Phaedra, in both the effect that love has upon them and in what they undergo in order to gain the object of their love. They both view the object of their affections in a similar way, seeing them as objects to be hunted in their erotic pursuit. Conquest, not erotic parity, is at the heart of their passion. Both characters also appear to lose control over their emotions, which is symbolised by a lack of physical control. Love for Atalanta causes Milanion to wander (*errabit*) through the forests (*antris*), in an emotionally unbalanced state (*amens*).¹⁴ He undergoes hardships and suffering in his pursuit of Atalanta; facing wild beasts (1.12) and being injured by Hylaeus, in Atalanta’s defence (1.13). Being wounded in love’s cause causes him to groan (*ingemuit*). Milanion’s behaviour recalls Phaedra’s own description of herself madly pursuing Hippolytus, both through this world and the underworld:

quacumque gressus tuleris hac amens agar (702)
(Wherever your steps bear you, crazed I will be driven)

¹¹The primary meaning of *antrum* is cave, yet in Lee’s translation and in the *OLD* (s. v.) the meaning is given as “glen, forest or dell” for this usage by Propertius.

¹²Greene, Ellen, *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*, (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998), p43; James, Sharon L., also espouses the view that Atalanta is “cast as a model for the elegiac *puella*” in “Her Turn to Cry: The Politics of Weeping in Roman Love Elegy” *TaPhA* 133 (2003) p105 n21

¹³Greene, Ellen, (1998), p43

¹⁴See n. 11 on Propertius’ use of *antrum*.

et te per undas perque Tartareos lacus,
 per Styga, per amnes igneos amens sequar (1179-1180)
 (And I, crazed, will follow you through the waves and through
 the Tartarean lakes, through Styx and through fiery rivers.)

Phaedra too is attracted to life in the woods (112; 233; 403). In an echo of the suffering undergone by Milanion, Phaedra vows to Hippolytus that she will undergo hardships in order to prove her love for him (613ff.). Phaedra too is affected physically by her love, tottering on uncertain feet (*uadit incerto pede*, 374) and passing the night in lamenting (*noctem querelis ducit*, 370), which recalls the wandering and groaning of Milanion.¹⁵

The outcome of Milanion's suffering is that he gets the girl. He is presented as deserving of Atalanta's love, because of what he has undergone: *tantum in amore preces et bene facta ualent*, Prop. 1.19 (Such is the power of prayers and good deeds in love). He wins out over apparently insurmountable obstacles, including Atalanta's own avowed rejection of love. He is ultimately able to tame Atalanta, which is akin to Phaedra's spoken aim in her pursuit of Hippolytus: *Amore didicimus uinci feros*, 240 (We have learnt that love conquers wild beasts). This is perhaps why Phaedra adopts similar methods in her pursuit of Hippolytus. She too employs prayers in her approach to Hippolytus: *descendi ad preces*, 669.¹⁶

There are also similarities in the characterisations of Hippolytus and Atalanta. Both are hunters associated with Diana. Unlike the typical mistress of elegy, who is ensconced in the urban *demi-monde*, both characters are associated with the natural world and lack a patina of civilisation. The emphasis on both characters' swiftness underlines their unwillingness to enter into the world of erotic love, and the erotic charge that Phaedra and Milanion derive from their pursuit. It is the "swift girl" (*uelocem puellam*) that Milanion tames. Phaedra, in outlining her willingness to pursue Hippolytus through myriad hardships, singles out Hippolytus' flight as his pre-eminent characteristic, which symbolises his status as a mistress to be wooed and won:

Hunc in niuosi collis haerentem iugis,
 et aspera agili saxa calcantem pede

¹⁵Boyle (1987) translates the phrase *uadit incerto pede* as "she wanders aimlessly".

¹⁶See also 635; 636.

sequi per alta nemora, per montes placet. (233-235)

(Although he holds fast to the ridges of snowy hills, and treads harsh rocks with nimble foot, it pleases me to follow through deep forests, over mountains.)

These objects of desire need to be tamed by their aspiring lovers before they can enter the world of erotic passion. Of course, Phaedra will not succeed in her erotic domination of Hippolytus. However it is not just with this brief Propertian interlude that Hippolytus shows some overlap with the characterisation of the elegiac female. Other elements of his characterisation will be discussed below.

Phaedra as elegiac lover: a beginning

Why does Phaedra choose the elegiac model to express her love? Of course the answer is that the elegiac model is the pre-eminent model for love in Roman literature. This is why, for Phaedra to put the elegiac model into operation, she has to take on a masculine role, as she is in the position of wishing to pursue Hippolytus. There is no adequate blueprint for the pursuit of a male by a female.¹⁷ So how is Phaedra characterised as having elements of the masculine lover in her behaviour? What factors come into play in her attempted seduction of Hippolytus? The world of love elegy encompasses the motif of the male lover, subject to domination by his powerful, sexually independent mistress. In a discussion of Propertius 1.9, Wyke outlines the journey that the elegiac lover undertakes: "[T]he man who enters into elegiac love is defined as one who loses freedom of speech (*libera uerba*, 2), who becomes prostrate and suppliant (*iaces supplexque*, 3), and who must learn to endure a woman who commands (*iura*, 3), governs (*imperat*, 4) and tames

¹⁷The representation of Sempronia by Sallust is a case in point. He specifically notes among her moral crimes that "her passions were so ardent that she more often made advances to men than they did to her." His opening remarks concerning Sempronia focus on the fact that she was a woman "who had committed many crimes that showed her to have the reckless daring of a man." Sempronia is judged by Sallust to have acted outside the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable behaviour for a woman, notwithstanding one of her class. Sallust, Cat. 24-5. Quotes taken from Lefkowitz, Mary R. & Fant, Maureen B. (edd.), *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook in Translation*, (Duckworth, London, 1982) p205.

(*domet*, 6) her lover.”¹⁸ I shall argue that within her approach to Hippolytus, Phaedra shares many of the standard attributes of the male elegiac lover. Briefly speaking, obvious common elements with Propertius 1.1 can be seen in her scene with Hippolytus; Phaedra too feels unable to speak (602); she lies suppliant at Hippolytus’ feet (667); and offers to obey the orders of Hippolytus (618). But what are the broader ramifications of Phaedra’s erotic approach?

The language and stratagems of love elegy are apparent in *Phaedra* even before Phaedra’s scene with Hippolytus. They are evident from her very first scene. An element of the elegiac prototype that applies to her behaviour is the rejection of traditional gender-linked pursuits. Ellen Greene outlines the conventional view of elegy as one where “the elegist, typically, portrays the male in the traditional female role of devoted, dependent, and passive and at the same time gives masterful, active conduct to his mistress”.¹⁹ The male lover experiences “womanish” emotions in his love for his mistress and dissociates himself from the traditional pursuits of the male world.²⁰ One way to achieve this is to align the narrator with the “feminine” role of the lover, by rejecting typically masculine enterprises.²¹ Usually the rejected activities take place in the public arena, so we see Propertius rejecting military service, not because he is afraid, but because he believes that he is more suited to the pursuit of love:

Non ego nunc Hadriae uereor mare noscere tecum

Tulle, neque Aegaeo ducere uela salo (Prop. 1.6.1-2)

(It’s not that I’m afraid to get to know the Adriatic sea or sail with you the Aegean sea, Tullus.)

non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis:

hanc me militiam fata subire uolunt. (Prop. 1.6.29-30)

(By birth I am not suitable for glory or for arms; Fate wishes me to submit to this service.)

¹⁸Wyke, Maria, *The Roman Mistress: Ancient and Modern Representations*, (OUP, Oxford, 2002), p168

¹⁹Greene, Ellen, (1998) pxiii

²⁰See *Am.* 1.9; *Prop.* 1.6; *Hor. C.* 1.8

Ovid goes so far as to offer the cheeky observation that love's service has more similarities than not with military service (*Am.* 1.9).

In an echo of elegy, Phaedra too spurns conventionally aligned gender activities. Phaedra has rejected the customary feminine pursuits of spinning and observance of female religious rites in order to take up hunting:

Palladis telae uacant
et inter ipsas pensa labuntur manus;
non colere donis templa uotiuus libet,
non inter aras, Atthidum mixtam choris,
iactare tacitis conscias sacris faces,
nec adire castis precibus aut ritu pio
adiudicatae praesidem terrae deam
iuuat excitatas consequi cursu feras
et rigida molli gaesa iaculari manu. (103-111)

(The loom of Pallas lies empty and the day's wool slips from between my hands; It is not pleasing to worship at the temple with votive offerings, nor to throw among the altars the torches, conscious of silent rites, mingling with the choral dancers of the Athenians, not to approach with pure prayers or pious vows the guardian goddess awarded to this land. It delights me to follow aroused beasts on their course and to throw the hard javelin with soft hand.)

Phaedra wishes to identify herself with Hippolytus, but only the pursuit of the hunt associates her with Hippolytus. Her behaviour is also consistent with that of the elegiac lover in so far as she is inverting gender roles in the pursuit of love. Yet Phaedra takes the erotic role-play of the elegiac lover one step further by her adoption of a traditionally masculine pursuit. While elegiac lovers may be constructed as "servile" or "womanish" in their emotions, traditionally they do not adopt feminine tasks such as weaving. They propose an alternative lifestyle which they still construct as masculine. Their poetry is a "declaration that the pursuit of love and poetry is a worthy alternative to more traditional equestrian careers".²² Phaedra's appropriation of the hunt is evidence of the masculine tenor of Phaedra's passion. She is in

²¹See Wyke, Maria(2002), p171ff.; Greene, Ellen, (1998) p18

²²Wyke, Maria (2002), p34

effect taking on the masculine role of erotic aggressor, whilst Hippolytus becomes her symbolic prey. Phaedra's language in her opening speech is suggestive of elegiac themes and the erotic nature of her hunt: *iuuat excitatas consequi cursu feras / et rigida molli gaesa iaculari manu*, 110f. (It delights me to follow aroused beasts on their course and to throw the hard javelin with soft hand).²³ The use of *molli* may be seen as signifying Phaedra's entrance into the world of elegy.²⁴ Just as the elegiac lover rejects traditionally masculine pursuits and appears "womanish", so too does Phaedra exhibit masculine tendencies. Her reference to the hunt foregrounds her gender dislocation, and the identification of Hippolytus as erotic object. The mere fact of loving Hippolytus creates gender confusion in Phaedra, even before she confronts him.

Initially, Phaedra lacks the complacency of the elegiac lover in confidently rejecting traditional pursuits. To begin with, Phaedra feels some shame at her love as her reference to the "pure prayers and pious vows" (*castis precibus aut ritu pio*, 108) that she is neglecting indicates. Yet as the Nurse attempts to shame Phaedra and recall her to a correct mode of behaviour, Phaedra's responses begin to recall the bravado and apparent helplessness of the elegiac lover in the face of love:

Nvt. quid deceat alto praeditam solio uide:

metue ac uerere sceptrum remeantis uiri.

Ph. Amoris in me maximum regnum reor

reditusque nullos metuo. (216-219)

(Nurse You see what befits a woman endowed with a lofty throne: fear and respect the sceptre of your returning husband.

Phaedra I judge love to be the greatest ruler over me and I fear no one's return).

Her refusal to recognise or accept the conventionally defined limits of gendered behaviour now reflects the stance of the elegiac lover.

The Nurse as elegiac go-between

²³For *gaesum* as phallic synonym see Adams, J. N., *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, (Duckworth, London, 1982), p21.

²⁴For a discussion of *mollitia* as signifying the world of elegy, see Edwards, Catharine, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, (CUP, Cambridge, 1993), p93ff.

By the end of this scene, the Nurse acquiesces in Phaedra's erotic fantasies, for rather than lose Phaedra to suicide, she herself adopts the elegiac role of go-between:

meus iste labor est aggredi iuuenem ferum
mentemque saeuam flectere immitis uiri. (272-273)
(My task will be to approach the wild young man and to bend
the cruel mind of that harsh young man.)

Yet as with other aspects of Phaedra's adoption of the elegiac role, the Nurse's role as go-between does not quite fit. The elegiac lover's use of his mistress's maid as go-between takes advantage of the proximity of the relationship between mistress and maid to further his own cause:

Colligere incertos et in ordine ponere crines
docta neque ancillas inter habenda Nape,
inque ministeriis furtivae cognita noctis
utilis et dandis ingeniosa notis
saepe uenire ad me dubitantem hortata Corinnam,
saepe laboranti fida reperta mihi-- (*Am.* 1.11.1-6)²⁵
(O Nape, experienced in collecting and placing in order scattered
hair, nor to be considered among maidservants, known for
beneficial assistance in the secret night and talented in giving
signals, often urging wavering Corinna to come to me, often
found faithful to me in hardship.)

The elegiac lover may use flattery or even seduction as a tool to gain the maid's allegiance. Ovid explores the elegiac topos of the maid as go-between in detail and gives specific advice in his elegiac handbook (*A. A.* 1.351-398). Yet though outwardly the Nurse's approach recalls the elegiac motif, it is doomed to failure because of the essential dissimilarity of her position. She does not stand in the same relation to Hippolytus as the elegiac maid does to her mistress. The Nurse's approach to Hippolytus will not take advantage of

²⁵See Tibullus 1.2.95; 2.6.45f. and Propertius 2.23.1-6 for other examples of the maid as go-between. Prop. 3.6 deals with a male slave as go-between.

a prior close relationship between the two.²⁶ Even though Hippolytus is presented as being sympathetic toward the Nurse, addressing her as “faithful nurse” (*fida nutrix*, 432), there is not a history of mutual affection between them, as is the case for Phaedra and her Nurse.²⁷ The Nurse is unable to convince Hippolytus of the normality of sexuality in general, let alone encourage him in the specifics of taking a particular lover. She cannot call on a previous affinity between herself and Hippolytus in order to further the cause of Phaedra as lover. From the beginning she is aligned with the cause of Phaedra, and proves that with her response to Hippolytus’ rejection. Her primary motivation remains the well-being of Phaedra. For all Phaedra’s efforts to replicate the elegiac milieu, her relationship with her Nurse at its essential core has more in common with the relationship between Phaedra and the Nurse portrayed in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. It cannot be successfully transplanted to the elegiac plane.

Hippolytus as elegiac mistress: a beginning

The elegiac relationship, as argued by Wyke, is not a relationship of parity between “two mutual lovers”, but rather is “formulated as between a lover and his beloved”.²⁸ Therefore the portrayal of the mistress is constructed around the concerns of the lover, his suffering or his erotic fulfilment. Accordingly, there are many common elements to the portrayal of elegiac mistresses, which centre around the mistress’s unattainability. Yet her intractability is viewed as part of her charm, and as a necessary part of erotic gameplay. This is borne out by Ovid’s advice to women in the *Ars Amatoria* to create imaginary difficulties to sustain the lover’s interest.²⁹ The elegiac lover often complains of his mistress as being harsh, cruel and unyielding, especially when she is seen as not conforming to her lover’s desires, and creates an image of the beloved as distant and unattainable or even hostile. Yet the harsh mistress, or *dura puella*, is exhibited as a kind of trophy to the lover’s persistence, a confirmation that his efforts have been worthwhile and his hardships myriad.

²⁶Conversely, Theseus will take advantage of the close relationship between Phaedra and her Nurse to discover why Phaedra is intent on killing herself (882-885). But Theseus does not use an elegiac model. He will not use flattery or seduction as a tool, rather force.

²⁷Which is the defining reason for the Nurse to aid Phaedra in her erotic pursuit.

²⁸Wyke, Maria (2002), p157

The image that Phaedra and the Nurse create of Hippolytus conforms in many ways to the standard portrayal of the elegiac mistress. The language used in elegy has its echo in the language used by Phaedra and the Nurse. The characterisation that they ascribe to him also confirms the status of erotic object that Hippolytus inhabits. Broadly speaking, the characterisation of Hippolytus that Phaedra and the Nurse have constructed may be divided into two parts: prior to Phaedra and Hippolytus meeting, the description of Hippolytus concentrates on the pursuit of Hippolytus and thus the emphasis is on the harsh, intractable aspects of his character, and the pseudo-military aspects of the approach to Hippolytus. Hippolytus has not yet been won over. This is where the links with Atalanta and Milanion are apparent, especially in Phaedra's pursuit of Hippolytus. During her scene with Hippolytus, we see Phaedra attempt to seduce Hippolytus and thus place him in the position of the mistress who is dominant over her lover, and where the stratagem of the *seruitium amoris* comes into play.

It may seem from the Nurse's description of Hippolytus, both in her words to Phaedra, and her prayer to Diana, that his character is overly masculine and wild, and not therefore easily adapted to the elegiac prototype, especially in terms of his conforming to the role of elegiac mistress that the Nurse and Phaedra assign to him:

temptemus animum tristem et intractabilem.

meus iste labor est aggredi iuuenem ferum

mentemque saeuam flectere immitis uiri. (272-275)

(Let us assail that morose and intractable spirit. My task will be to approach the wild young man and to bend the cruel mind of that harsh young man.)

animum rigentem tristis Hippolyti doma:

det facilis aures; mitiga pectus ferum:

amare discat, mutuos ignes ferat.

innecte mentem. (413-416)

(Tame the inflexible spirit of gloomy Hippolytus: let him give willing ears; soften his wild heart: let him learn to love, and let him bear mutual fires. Bind his mind.)

Vt dura cautes undique intractabilis
 resistit undis et lacescentes aquas
 longe remittit, uerba sic spernit mea. (580-582)
 (Like a harsh and wild rock resists water and waves, and sends
 back assailing waves faraway, thus he spurns my words.)

Yet much of the language the Nurse uses of Hippolytus, both here and elsewhere, has its counterpart in the designation of the elegiac mistress. When talking of the character of Hippolytus, and the stratagems that they will employ in the pursuit of him, the language used has direct counterparts with the conventions of elegy. Both Phaedra and the Nurse are operating on the preconceived notion that Hippolytus will be intractable, based on their expectations derived from elegy. Phaedra is able to adapt her elegiac fantasy to Hippolytus, precisely because he does appear to exhibit elegiac obduracy. Yet his immunity to erotic persuasion is not derived from the rules of elegiac erotic gameplay, as Phaedra will discover to her cost.

The elegiac mistress is constructed as cruel and harsh, spurning her lover's advances. In keeping with this characterisation, a common *topos* of the elegiac mistress is that of the *saeua puella*. She is depicted as such when the elegiac lover complains of his wretched state, due to her refusal to comply with his demands or when he fears her abuse:

non tamen ausus eram dominae turbare quietem,
 expertae metuens iurgia saeuitiae (Prop. 1.3.17-18)
 (However I did not dare to disturb my mistress's rest, fearing
 the cruel quarrels I knew so well).

Quid prosunt artes, miserum si spernit amantem
 Et fugit ex ipso saeua puella toro? (Tib. 1.8.61-62)
 (But what do arts benefit, if the cruel girl spurns her miserable
 lover and runs away from bed?)³⁰

The motif of the *dura puella* is a natural corollary to the image of the *saeua puella*. Again the mistress is depicted as hard or harsh when the lover is not able to succeed in his aims, and is presented as a counterpoint to the suffering

³⁰For other instances of the *saeua puella* or *saeuitia* see Prop. 1.17.9; 1.18.14; Tib. 2.4.6

lover:

nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamus amores,
 atque aliquid durum quaerimus in dominam. (Prop. 1.7.5-6)
 (We, as accustomed, maintain our loves, and seek anything (to
 move) a harsh mistress.)

in ueteres esto dura, puella, senes. (Tib. 1.8.50)
 (Be hard, girl, on the experienced old men.)³¹

Tibullus' express advice confirms the expectation of the mistress as harsh and cruel. It is her designated role. But as Kennedy points out, the mistress is deemed hard because she is withholding sexual favours. The lover projects this image of hard-heartedness onto the beloved, which can only be resolved by acquiescence to the lover.³² Again, the tenor of the characterisation of the elegiac mistress depends on her relation to the lover. As we have seen, the Nurse uses both these indicators of Hippolytus (272; 580). It will be Phaedra's elegiac task to resolve the "harshness" of Hippolytus when she approaches him in the flesh.

The Nurse describes Hippolytus as harsh (*immitis*, 274), praying that he will lend willing ears (*det facilis aures*, 414) which is again in keeping with the usual characterisation of the elegiac mistress. The inference from the Nurse's words is that Hippolytus is not willing or easy by nature. Yet far from being a disincentive, this perceived harshness adds to his appeal. The discourse of elegy is constructed around the mistress being unattainable. Therefore we have Propertius apparently bemoaning that he is not visited by easy love:

uos remanete, quibus facili deus annuit aure,
 sitis et in tuto semper amore pares.
 in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras,
 et nullo uacuis tempore deficit Amor. (Prop. 1.1.31-34)
 (Stay in place, all you to whom god nods with easy ear, and be

³¹For other instances of the *dura puella* see Prop. 1.16.30; 1.17.16; 2.1.78; 2.22.11; Tib. 1.6.69; 2.6.28

³²Kennedy, Duncan, *The Art of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy* (CUP, Cambridge, 1993) p74

provided with love always secure. On me our Venus employs
bitter nights, and empty love fails at no time.)³³

Yet without the hardships of elegiac love, Propertius would have nothing to write about. Propertius gains stature as a lover precisely because of the elegiac travails that he undergoes. Whatever his apparent spoken desire for a god to hear his love with "easy ear", which the Nurse echoes in her plea to Diana (414), the fact remains that in a later poem to Cynthia, in which she has apparently been deceived by another lover, he gives her the following advice:

a nimium faciles aurem praeberere puellae,
discite desertae non temere esse bonae! (Prop. 2.21.15-16)
(Let girls who offer an ear, alas, too easily, not lightly learn from
desertion.)

The repetition of the same phrase underscores Propertius' conviction that he, because he had to prove himself as a lover, is a better bet than Cynthia's other choice.³⁴

Regarding the notion of the mistress being willing (*facilis*), Ovid's advice to women, both specifically to his mistress in the *Amores*, and in general in the *Ars Amatoria*, centres around strategies of retreat and passive display:

facilem iuueni promitte roganti
nec tamen e duro quod petit ille nega. (A. A. 3.475-476)
(Neither promise yourself too easily to the entreating youth, nor
yet deny harshly what he seeks.)³⁵

³³In 2.4 Tibullus seeks easy access to his mistress by means of his poetry, but grudgingly concedes that this will not occur, due in part to her avarice and the obstacles that she places in his way. In writing this poem, Tibullus places himself among the fellowship of suffering elegiac lovers.

³⁴Propertius completes this poem by saying "*nos quocumque loco, nos omni tempore tecum, / siue aegra pariter siue ualellte sumus.*" ("But as for me, in every place and every time, in sickness and in health, I'm with you still.") (Prop. 2.21.19f.)

³⁵Further examples of this kind of advice may be found at *Am.* 2.19.31ff.; *A. A.* 3.579ff. He also gives similar advice to men regarding the chaperonage of their wives at *Am.* 2.19.57f.

utilis est uobis, formosae, turba, puellae.

saepe uagos ultra limina ferte pedes. (A. A. 3.417-418)

(A crowd is useful to you, beautiful girls, so often bear your wandering feet over the threshold.)

A woman's role in erotic gameplay must fulfil a complementary role to that of the man's. His is one of action, of pursuit, whilst her behaviour creates an arena for him to operate in. Her behaviour is meant to subtly invite his interest and acknowledge his pursuit. But as Ovid advises, there must be resistance to give the game bite. A contest too easily won lacks a true sense of victory. Phaedra certainly interprets Hippolytus' behaviour as akin to a strategy of retreat. In answer to the Nurse's objections regarding Hippolytus' likely response, Phaedra makes it her task to pursue the unwilling beloved:

Nvt. quis huius animum flectet intractabilem?

exosus omne feminae nomen fugit,

immitis annos caelibit uitae dicat,

conubia uitat: genus Amazonium scias.

Ph. Hunc in niuosi collis haerentem iugis,

et aspera agili saxa calcantem pede

sequi per alta nemora, per montes placet. (229-235)

(*Nurse* Who will bend the other's intractable spirit? Hating, he flees all name of woman; harsh, he dedicates his life to celibate years, and shuns marriage: you should know the Amazonian kind. *Phaedra* Although he holds fast to ridges of snowy hills, and treads harsh rocks with nimble foot, it pleases me to follow through high forests, over mountains.)

Phaedra dismisses the legitimate concerns of the Nurse, and sets herself up as the energetic lover of elegy, overcoming the assumed resistance of the mistress. The perceived shortcomings of Hippolytus as a putative beloved merely add to his appeal in Phaedra's eyes. They heighten his attractiveness and also her resolve as a lover. For of course, Phaedra needs to have obstacles to overcome if she is to adequately play the elegiac role of lover. In the same way, Ovid's advice to women to display themselves before their public, utilising a passive means of attracting interest is replicated by the emphasis that Phaedra places on Hippolytus' looks in terms of her attraction to him. Phaedra's words to Hippolytus (646ff.) make it clear that she has

been ogling him from afar.³⁶

So how to win over the elegiac female? One strategy is that of persistence. Ovid is useful in this context as in the *Ars Amatoria* he gives advice based on the dynamics of the elegiac relationship.³⁷ As in keeping with the conventions of elegy, the idea is current that girls are naturally harsh (*immitis*). The Nurse herself describes Hippolytus as harsh (*immitis*, 274) and expresses the wish that his wild heart will be softened (*mitiga pectus ferum*, 414). Ovid in particular gives advice on how to soften girls up, to make them *mitis* rather than *immitis*. The key to success is continued persistence by the lover, even in the face of rejection:

si nec blanda satis, nec erit tibi comis amanti,
perfer et obdura: postmodo mitis erit. (A. A. 2.177-178)
(If she is not sufficiently caressing, nor obliging to your wooing,
carry through and persist; soon she will be soft.)³⁸

Another stratagem in winning over and softening the beloved is given by Tibullus. This one is of particular interest as Tibullus is speaking of a young boy as beloved, rather than of a female mistress.

Si uolet arma, leui temptabis ludere dextra:
Saepe dabis nudum, uincat ut ille, latus
Tum tibi mitis erit, rapias tum cara licebit
Oscula: pugnabit, sed tamen apta dabit. (Tib. 1.4.51-54)
(If he prefers arms, test to play with a gentle hand; often give
your exposed side, so that he may win. Then he will be soft to
you, then you will be allowed to steal a precious kiss: he may
fight, but at length he will give what is fitting.)

Here Tibullus is advocating a ruse by which the beloved is deceived into believing that he holds the power in the relationship, whereas the underlying reality is that the lover is using whatever pretext is available to achieve his

³⁶Phaedra's physical attraction to Hippolytus will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, pp112-114.

³⁷For a comprehensive discussion on this issue see James, Sharon L., (2003) Part 3 chapter 5 pp155-211

³⁸For other examples of this kind of strategy in Ovid see A. A. 2.187f; A. A. 2.461f.

own aims, in this case a kiss. This ploy will be utilised by Phaedra when she offers Hippolytus ostensible power over her, by offering him the sceptre (671f.).³⁹ As will be seen, Phaedra takes advantage of gender stereotypes and expectations in her scene with Hippolytus, attempting to manipulate them to her own ends.

If the elegiac mistress is necessarily harsh and cruel, then it follows that at some point the elegiac lover will be rejected by his chosen mistress. This kind of setback is a commonplace of the elegiac experience. The elegiac lover uses the image of the faithful mistress as a counterpart to the rejection he has suffered at the hands of his own woman and also uses his own experience to pass on advice to forsaken lovers. Once more the lover is placed in a favourable light, both for his persistence in the face of rejection, and also to emphasise his nobility in comparison to his faithless mistress:

sperne fidem, prouolue deos, mendacia uincant,
frange et damnosae iura pudicitiae! (Prop. 4.5.27-28)
(Then spurn fidelity, throw down the gods, let falsehoods win,
and shatter the laws of injured chastity.)⁴⁰

Gloria cuique sua est: me, qui spernentur, amantes
Consultent (Tib. 1.4.77-78)
(To each his own glory: mine is to consult lovers who have been
spurned.)⁴¹

For Phaedra to continue in her approach to Hippolytus, even after she has seen Hippolytus spurn the Nurse's words (*uerba sic spernit mea*, 582), in her role as elegiac go-between, is entirely in keeping with the elegiac blueprint that she has taken on.

Operation Hippolytus

Phaedra sends the Nurse to be her go-between and sound out the likely response of Hippolytus. The language that is used of this approach

³⁹This episode will be discussed in full later in the chapter, p29ff.

⁴⁰Propertius addresses this poem to a bawd, abusing her for her advice to a mistress, which, among other things, suggested putting profit before love.

replicates that of elegy, particularly in the use of militaristic language. The wooing of Hippolytus is formulated in the guise of a military campaign, which highlights the aggressive and masculine cast of Phaedra's love. Militaristic language, when used in elegy, confirms the mistress as a sought-after prize, worth fighting for. It also affirms the masculine aspects of the lover and denies any accusations of effeminacy which may be levelled at him. As Wyke states, "[T]his elegiac world makes love a battlefield on which the lover-poet hopes to exercise an erotic heroism (*militia amoris*) - virilely removing his rivals, violently subjugating his beloved".⁴² Yet both the Nurse and Phaedra take their use of militaristic elegiac language beyond that of normal usage, which indicates the desire to totally dominate Hippolytus and also foreshadows that her erotic approach to Hippolytus will go beyond the parameters of elegy and begin to replicate a rape scenario.

The Nurse, when rejecting Phaedra's delusional fantasies concerning Hippolytus, asks "Who will bend the other's intractable will?", 229 (*quis huius animum flectet intractabilem?*). When the Nurse has accepted her role in approaching Hippolytus, she assigns this task to herself: *meus iste labor est aggredi iuuenem ferum / mentemque saeuam flectere immitis uiri.*, 273f. (My task will be to approach the wild young man and to bend the cruel mind of that harsh young man). The use of *flectere* in elegy occurs when the object of the lover's aim is to persuade the mistress to conform to his will. The tactic used by the lover is not one of force or expensive gifts, but of persuading the mistress by means of words.

hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,
sed potui blandi carminis obsequio. (Prop. 1.8b.39-40)
(I could not bend her with gold or Indian shell, but I was able to
flatter her with favourable verse.)

nec exiguas, quisquis es, adde preces.
Hectora donauit Priamo prece motus Achilles;
Flectitur iratus uoce rogante deus. (A. A. 1.440-442)
(Nor, whoever you are, forget to add prayers. Achilles, moved
by prayer, gave back Hector's body to Priam; an angry god is

⁴¹For the use of *sperno* see Prop. 2.18b.3f.; Tib. 1.8.53-55; Tib.1.8.61f.

⁴²Wyke, Maria (2002), p171

swayed by the voice of prayer.)⁴³

Phaedra herself hopes that the power of prayer will work in moving Hippolytus: *precibus admotis agam*, 635 (I will approach with prayers). But the Nurse after expressing the wish to bend Hippolytus' mind (*flectere mentem*, 274) takes it further into a wish to bind Hippolytus' mind (*innecte mentem*, 416).⁴⁴ It has become more than a matter of wishing to persuade Hippolytus, but a question of wanting to dominate him utterly. It is perhaps an indication of the Nurse's awareness that in order to overcome Hippolytus' erotic obduracy, harsher methods will need to be used.

Yet the language of Phaedra and the Nurse is not always so innocuous. Not content with the language of persuasion, they formulate their approach in terms that suggest a military campaign: *Nvt. temptemus animum tristem et intractabilem*, 272 (Let us assail that morose and intractable spirit). *Temptare* is not only a martial term, but it is also erotically aggressive, associated as it is with love-making.⁴⁵

Saucius arrepto piscis teneatur ab hamo:

Perprime temptatam, nec nisi uictor abi. (A. A. 1.393-394)

(Hold your injured fish on the hook until seized: press hard your assault, not until you retire the victor.)⁴⁶

et quamuis duplici correptum ardore iuberent

hac Amor hac Liber, durus uterque deus,

subiecto leuiter positam temptare lacerto

osculaue admota sumere et arma manu (Prop. 1.3.13-16)

(But although seized violently by two-fold passion, under orders from Love on this side, and Bacchus on that, both harsh gods, to edge an arm beneath her, testing, and kiss with hand at work,

⁴³For the use of *flectere* see Prop. 1.19.24; A. A. 2.179f.

⁴⁴Boyle translates this as "snare", a point to which I will return later.

⁴⁵For the use of *temptare* see *Am.* 1.2.5; A. A. 1.455f.; Prop. 2.12.19f.;

and stand to arms.)⁴⁷

It is also addressed to the lover in an effort to give him courage in his erotic adventures. Tibullus addresses Delia, adjuring her to be brave:

Tu quoque ne timide custodes, Delia, falle,
Audendum est: fortes adiuuat ipsa Venus.
Illa fauet, seu quis iuuenis noua limina temptat. (Tib. 1.2.15-17)
(You too, Delia, do not fear, but deceive, the guard, you must be
brave: Venus herself aids the brave. She favours the young man
who assails a new threshold.)

Phaedra also addresses herself in a similar fashion when she is finally face to face with Hippolytus: *Aude, anime, tempta, perage mandatum tuum.*, 592 (Be brave, o spirit, test yourself, complete your charge). As well as echoing Tibullus' charge to Delia, Phaedra furthers the military analogy with the use of *mandatum*.⁴⁸

But the Nurse and Phaedra are not content with using the standard martial terms derived from elegy. Their usage of militaristic language is intensified by terms that suggest a complete rout, or total dominance, rather than a series of strategies in the game of love. The Nurse says of Hippolytus that she will approach him: *meus iste labor est aggredi iuuenem ferum*, 273 (My task will be to attack that fierce young man.). *Adgredior* does not normally occur in elegy, with its meaning of approaching aggressively or attacking.⁴⁹

⁴⁶In the context that Ovid is speaking of, this couplet also has overtones of rape as the language that he uses is quite violent in tone. He is suggesting that in gaining the complicity of the mistress's maid, any sexual advances made must be pursued until fulfilled.

⁴⁷The incident described by Propertius has suggestions of rape as Cynthia is asleep and therefore not consenting to possible sexual advances by Propertius. The language used by Propertius to describe his state also suggests violent sexual arousal.

⁴⁸For the use of *mandatum* see Prop. 2.24a.11; 3.6.37; 3.16.7; 3.23.11; 4.7.72; Tib. 1.3.15; A. A. 1.588.

⁴⁹The only use is at *Am.* 2.2.63f.: (*Non scelus adgredimur, non ad miscenda coimus / toxica, non stricto fulminat ense manus.* (It is not a crime we are entering upon, we are not coming together to mix poisons, no drawn sword flashes in our hands). The point of Ovid's poem is designed to win over the eunuch who is chaperone of his mistress, to get his aid in hiding

Fitch, in his translation, translates it as “tackle” which brings out the aggressiveness of the verb.⁵⁰ The use of such an aggressive word as *adgredior* is also in keeping with the characterisation of Hippolytus as a wild young man. The Nurse also speaks of taming Hippolytus: *animum rigentem tristis Hippolyti doma.*, 413 (Tame the inflexible spirit of gloomy Hippolytus). There is little elegiac provenance for the notion of taming the lover. Yet as seen previously, Propertius speaks of Milanion taming Atalanta through his efforts (Prop. 1.1.15). Propertius also uses it of young men, with the implication that they, along with Atalanta in the previous instance, need to be tamed in order to love, and to be taught how to play the game of love according to its rules:

ac ueluti primo taurus detractat aratra,
 post uenit assueto mollis ad arua iugo,
 sic primo iuuenes trepidant in amore feroces,
 dehinc domiti post haec aequa et iniqua ferunt.

(Prop. 2.3.47-50)

(Just as a bull will drag away at first against the plough, then accustomed to the yoke go gentle to the field, so wild young men in love at first are anxious but when tamed endure both fair and foul.)⁵¹

Certainly this can be seen as applicable to Phaedra and Hippolytus' situation. Phaedra speaks of herself as having been tamed and conquered by love: *uicit ac regnat furor, / potensque tota mente dominatur deus*, 184f. (Passion conquers and reigns, and a powerful god rules the whole mind). But it becomes clear that she wishes to extend this conquest to Hippolytus. Love may have conquered her, but she wishes now to actively conquer Hippolytus: *Ph. Precibus haud uinci potest? / Nvt. Ferus est. Ph. Amore didicimus uinci feros.*, 239f.

their relationship from his mistress's husband. It is interesting that Ovid uses it to state that he is “not entering on a crime”, when it is manifest that what Phaedra and the Nurse are proposing is manifestly that. Phaedra refers to her love as a “*scelus*” and a “*crimen*” precisely when she is steeling herself to approach Hippolytus (*Ph.* 594-598).

⁵⁰Fitch, John G., *Seneca: Hercules, Trojan Women, Phoenician Women, Medea, Phaedra*, LCB, (HUP, Cam. Mass. 2002)

⁵¹For the use of *domo* see also Prop. 1.9.5f; A. A. (2.183f.). In the latter example Ovid also raises the notion of taming bulls to the plough, though here he is talking of the female sex. It should be noted that the mythological example he uses at this point is also Atalanta (A. A. 2.185-193).

(*Phaedra* Will prayers not be able to conquer him? *Nurse* He is wild. *Phaedra* We have learnt that wild beasts are conquered by love.). The designation by Propertius of young men being fearful or anxious in love (*trepidant*) also has verbal echoes with the description of Hippolytus after his flight from *Phaedra*'s sexual advances. When accusing Hippolytus of the rape of *Phaedra*, the *Nurse* says: *en praeceps abit / ensemque trepida liquit attonitus fuga*, 729f. (Behold he rushes headlong and his sword is apparent in his anxious and headlong flight.) *Phaedra* uses markedly similar language in detailing Hippolytus' whereabouts to Theseus: *Hi trepidum fuga / uidere famuli concitum celeri pede*, 901f. (These servants saw him alarmed, agitated, swiftly fleeing on foot.) It is clear from these two descriptions of Hippolytus after *Phaedra*'s approach that her attempt to tame him has been unsuccessful. Prayer will also be the one of the methods *Phaedra* uses, albeit unsuccessfully. *Phaedra* recognises the difficulty of the lover's role but is ready to apply herself and conquer the beloved.

This exchange between the *Nurse* and *Phaedra* gives the clue to their characterisation of Hippolytus. He does not merely occupy a similar role to that of the elegiac mistress, his designation goes beyond this to one of Hippolytus as essentially animalistic. He is not just harsh (*immitis*, 231), he is wild (*ferus*, 240; *ferox*, 416), savage (*toruus*, 416), and intractable (*intractabilem*, 229, 271). The erotic characterisation of Hippolytus by *Phaedra* and the *Nurse* seems to owe much to Ovid's conception of women in the *Ars Amatoria*. Ovid frequently characterises women as animals, to highlight their irrational natures and proclaim the superiority of men in the game of love.⁵² The use of agricultural and military metaphors reveals the beloved to be an uncivilised object who is tamed and conquered through the agency of love. But the fact that the characterisation of Hippolytus extends beyond the parameters associated with the elegiac mistress, and that *Phaedra* and the *Nurse* take their approach to a more aggressive level is evidence that ultimately the attempt is doomed to fail. Hippolytus is patently unsuited to elegiac games.⁵³

⁵²Churchill argues in relation to Ovid that "[t]he use of force and deception, as well as the impulse to dominate and control, which may be appropriate to entrapping or domesticating animals, are made to seem appropriate to seduction." Churchill, L. J., *Heroic Erotics: the Anatomy of Misogyny in the Ars Amatoria*, (Phd dissertation, UCSC, 1985), p46

⁵³It is also an indication that the tenor of *Phaedra*'s sexual approach is such that Hippolytus has more in common with the rape victim of mythology than with the elegiac mistress. This idea will be discussed in chapter 3, pp75-86.

The Phaedra and Hippolytus scene: Phaedra's approach

The scene between Phaedra and Hippolytus gives us the inner workings of an occasion that we never actually see in elegy. We see Phaedra's attempt to put elegiac stratagems to use in her seduction of Hippolytus, which as a function of genre is always an event in the past or the future in elegy. Whereas previously the characterisation of Hippolytus by Phaedra and the Nurse has concentrated on identifying him with the unattainable and intractable mistress of elegy, now we see Phaedra attempt to use the convention of the *seruitium amoris* in her erotic seduction of Hippolytus and place Hippolytus in the role of dominant mistress over Phaedra.

The scene begins with the apparent failure of the Nurse to convince Hippolytus that he should indulge in appropriate sexual behaviour for his age. After Hippolytus' outburst against women, the Nurse realises that her approach is futile:

ut dura cautes undique intractabilis
resistit undis et lacessentes aquas
longe remittit, uerba sic spernit mea. (580-582)
(Like a hard and wild rock resists water and waves, and sends
assailing waves far back, thus he spurns my words.)

The Nurse is persuaded that her cause is hopeless. Phaedra herself overhearing these words faints (585), which would suggest that she too believes the Nurse has failed. Yet on coming to, she almost immediately debates the possibility of telling Hippolytus of her love (592ff.). Why this quick shift, if just moments before she was so persuaded of the failure of her mission that she fainted? The clue lies in the Nurse's comparison of Hippolytus with a "hard rock" (*dura cautes*) that spurns (*spernit*) waves, as Hippolytus does her words. As has already been argued, Phaedra and the Nurse's characterisation of Hippolytus has much in common with that of elegiac terminology. Phaedra is responding to the erotic trigger that the Nurse's language suggests to her; just as the lover must endure hardship the beloved is expected to resist. It is a recognition and verbal reminder of the elegiac fantasy image of Hippolytus that Phaedra and the Nurse have concocted. In Phaedra's fevered imagination, she can rationalise Hippolytus'

whole-hearted rejection of women as merely an elegiac pose (566ff.). Her delusional state is understandable when she wakes up from her faint actually in her beloved's arms (588ff.). At some physical level her desires have already been met, in that she is in his arms. Now all she needs to do is to combine her physical fulfilment with emotional fulfilment.

Before Phaedra embarks on her seduction of Hippolytus, she addresses herself with a long aside, aimed at convincing herself to begin:

Aude, anime, tempta, perage mandatum tuum.
intrepida constant uerba: qui timide rogat
docet negare. magna pars sceleris mei
olim peracta est; serus est nobis pudor:
amaui nefanda. si coepta exequor,
forsan iugali crimen abscondam face:
honestam quaedam scelera successus facit.
en, incipe, anime! (592-599)

(Be brave, o spirit, test yourself, complete your charge.
Compose calm words: who asks timidly, teaches the other to
refuse. A great part of my crime is formerly completed; my
shame is late: I have loved abominably. If I follow the beginning
to the end, perhaps I can hide the crime with the marriage torch:
success makes some crimes respectable. Come, begin, my
spirit!)

Boyle sees Phaedra's aside as emblematic of her moral conflict, pointing to her use of *crimen* and *scelera* to describe her love.⁵⁴ Yet her aside is also evidence of Phaedra fulfilling the erotic role she has created for herself. As Hippolytus' characterisation as the harsh mistress has just been redefined by the Nurse, Phaedra casts herself as the elegiac lover who proves his worth with persistence, by the use of *tempta* and *mandata*. Her words also suggest that while she may describe her love as a form of erotic crime, she also assumes that her approach will be a successful one (*successus*). Her advice to herself (*qui timide rogat / docet negare*) is another suggestion that her apparent submission to Hippolytus is an erotic stratagem rather than an instance of actual submission. Her words to Hippolytus may appear as if she is placing

⁵⁴Boyle, A. J., "In Nature's Bonds: a study of Seneca's *Phaedra*" *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.32.2, p1329

herself in a humble state before him, but her advice to herself says otherwise. However she may present herself to Hippolytus, fear and submission do not play a part in her sense of self.

Phaedra's elegiac stance is strengthened by Hippolytus' unexpected use of elegiac terminology, when, in response to her request that he hear her in secret (599f.), Hippolytus unwittingly uses erotic terminology:

Hi. animusne cupiens aliquid effari nequit?

Ph. curae leues locuntur, ingentes stupent.

Hi. committe curas auribus, mater, meis. (605-607)

(*Hippolytus* Does your spirit desire something it is unable to express? *Phaedra* Light cares speak, enormous ones are struck senseless. *Hippolytus* Entrust your cares to my ears, mother.)

Hippolytus speaks of "desiring" (*cupiens*) and "cares" (*curas*), a common synonym for love in erotic poetry.⁵⁵ The intimate setting of their conversation adds to Phaedra's erotic roleplaying. Circumstances play into Phaedra's elegiac fantasy as she and Hippolytus are alone together and Hippolytus appears to be choosing language that suggests an interest in, if not a reciprocity of, her passion. The juxtaposition of "cares" (*curas*) and "mother" (*mater*) may suggest to Phaedra that Hippolytus may be amenable to hiding their relationship under the guise of family. It is also a reminder for Phaedra that she is not in fact his mother, a fact which she is eager to reacquaint him with:

Matris superbum est nomen et nimium potens:

nostros humilior nomen affectus decet;

me uel sororem, Hippolyte, uel famulam uoca,

famulamque potius: omne seruitium feram. (609-612)

(Mother is a proud name and much too powerful: a humble name is seemly for our feelings; call me sister, Hippolytus, or call me a handmaiden, preferably a handmaid: I will bear all slavery.)

It is not merely a repudiation of the maternal role that Phaedra is expressing

⁵⁵For the use of *cura* see Prop. 1.1.36, 7.11.6; *Am.* 1.9.43; *A. A.* 1.554. For *cupio* see Prop. 1.1.2; 1.19.9; *Am.* 1.8.32, 2.4.22; *A. A.* 1.63

here. She is carefully positioning herself in the conventional role of *seruitium amoris*. To a reader familiar with elegiac poetry, Phaedra is stating her position clearly. She is offering to undergo slavery at the hands of Hippolytus, and to offer all power to him. With the use of *seruitium* and *famulam*, the erotic subtext is unmistakable.⁵⁶ She begs Hippolytus to give her orders, as it is not befitting for a woman to have power over a man:

mandata recipe sceptrā, me famulam accipe:
te imperia regere, me decet iussa exequi
muliebre non est regna tutari urbium. (617-619)
(Receive the sceptre that I entrust to you, take me as handmaid:
it befits you to rule, and for me to carry out orders. It is not for
a woman to guard the city's realm.)

Again she repeats the slavery motif (*famulam*), and reminds Hippolytus of the link between political and sexual power with the use of the phallic symbolism of the sceptre (*sceptrā*) and her willingness to take orders.⁵⁷ Phaedra is offering to bear sexual submission to Hippolytus, and her words and gestures, such as grasping his knees, further emphasise this.

Yet Phaedra's apparent physical submission to Hippolytus bears investigating. Although she is offering putative slavery to Hippolytus, an exploration of the dynamics of her actions paints a different picture. Recent scholarship has challenged the notion of the passive elegiac male, and explores both the putative and actual power dynamic in the elegiac relationship.⁵⁸ Whilst the elegist may wish to construct an alternative masculine dynamic to conventional Roman ideals, it does not necessarily follow that the relationships of power between men and women are being fundamentally challenged or altered. Greene, in particular, argues that the male lover uses the conventions of elegy to dominate and objectify the mistress, whilst retaining the real power in the relationship. The politics of erotics, in her view, do not elevate women but portray them rather as "objects of male fantasies of erotic domination".⁵⁹

⁵⁶For the *seruitium amoris* see Prop. 1.4.4, 1.5.19; Am. 3.8.14

⁵⁷For *sceptrum* as a phallic synonym see Adams, J. N. (1982) p17

⁵⁸This discussion draws upon the work of Maria Wyke, Ellen Greene, and Kathleen McCarthy amongst others.

⁵⁹Greene, Ellen, (1998), pxiv

The conceit of the powerlessness of the male lover inherent in the *seruitium amoris* is revealed to be illusory. We receive the so-called dominant mistress through the male elegist's point of view, rather than through her own words. She has no right of reply.⁶⁰ Nor do we get a portrait of a woman pursuing a man. The elegiac mistress's power rests in the negative realm of refusal. The qualities ascribed to the mistress of inconstancy, infidelity and being emotional are still those thought of as typically female by the Romans.⁶¹ The lover still embodies the characteristics of masculine discipline and fidelity, albeit in a different realm. Greene suggests that more attention needs to be paid to "the degree of manipulation and posturing in the elegiac stance of servitude towards the mistress".⁶² In other words, the role playing of the elegiac lover is merely another tool to be used in an age old domination of male over female within sexual relationships.

In the case of Phaedra, it is clear she is attempting to manipulate Hippolytus by appearing submissive in order to gain the fulfilment of her desires. She even refers to her widowhood (*miserere uiduae*, 623), masking her sexual longing for Hippolytus behind the convention of giving compassion to the bereaved.⁶³ In the guise of a suppliant, Phaedra is reminding Hippolytus of his masculine status, and of the responsibilities entailed upon it, by outwardly conforming to social and sexual stereotypes. But in a negation of the masculine status that Phaedra apparently ascribes to Hippolytus, Hippolytus will only be allowed the same degree of control that the elegiac mistress has, the power of refusal.

The paradoxical aims of Phaedra are revealed by her use of language which suggests the *militia amoris*. As we have seen prior to this scene, Phaedra and the Nurse have formulated their approach to Hippolytus in terms of a military campaign. Phaedra uses the convention of the *seruitium amoris* to approach Hippolytus and outwardly appears submissive to him, but she

⁶⁰A view expressed by Kathleen McCarthy, "Seruitium Amoris: Amor Seruiti" in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture* edd. Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel (Routledge, London, 1998) p177.

⁶¹Wyke, Maria (2002), p173f.

⁶²Greene, Ellen, (1998), p62 in reference to Catullus 1.11

negates it with the use of militaristic language. Phaedra identifies herself with the ardent lover willing to undergo hardships in order to prove his love:

non me per altas ire si iubeas niues
 pigeat gelatis ingredi Pindi iugis;
 non, si per ignes ire et infesta agmina,
 cuncter paratis ensibus pectus dare. (613-616)
 (If you ordered me to go through deep snows, it would not
 disgust me to enter Pindus' icy ridges; nor, if I were to go
 through fires and hostile armies, would I delay to offer my
 breast to the ready swords.)

She has already made this claim to the Nurse in reference to Hippolytus (233ff.). Both Wyke and Greene make the point that the use of military metaphors, so common in elegiac poetry, counteract the effeminisation of erotic servitude by placing the lover in an avowedly masculine role.⁶⁴ Phaedra's use of military terminology suggests that her real aim is to conquer Hippolytus.

Having prepared the way, as she thinks, for her confession of love, Phaedra turns to her last erotic strategy, prayer.⁶⁵ Her final confession of love is brought about, after some hedging by Phaedra, by the apparent acquiescence of Hippolytus to Phaedra's covert erotic suggestions:

Hi. et te merebor esse ne uiduam putes
 ac tibi parentis ipse supplebo locum.
 Ph. O spes amantum credula, o fallax Amor!
 satisne dixi?--precibus admotis agam.
 Miserere, pauidae mentis exaudi preces (632-636)
 (*Hippolytus* And I will behave in such a way that you will not
 think of yourself as widowed, and I will complete for you a
 father's place. *Phaedra* O lover's credulous hope, o deceitful

⁶³ Yet there is an accompanying tradition of the sex-starved widow to which perhaps Phaedra is also referring. See Ovid, *A. A.* 3.430-432

⁶⁴See for example Propertius 2.26.29ff; Tibullus 1.4.41ff; Ovid *Amores* 1.9.9ff. Wyke and Greene quoted above, see n. 12 and n. 42.

⁶⁵As was noted in the section on Propertius 1.1.9-16, Milanion's final success over Atalanta was ascribed to prayers and good deeds (*tantum in amore preces et bene facta uolent*, 1.1.16).

Love! Have I said enough?--I will approach with prayers. Pity me and hear plainly the prayers of a silent mind.)

It is Hippolytus' words that give the final impulse to Phaedra's confession of love. When she does make her declaration of love, she does not take refuge in elegiac terminology as she assumes that Hippolytus has understood her meaning thus far. Yet after Hippolytus' undeniable rejection of her, Phaedra attempts to repeat her use of elegiac terminology:

te uel per ignes, per mare insanum sequar
rupesque et amnes, unda quos torrens rapit;
quacumque gressus tuleris hac amens agar--
iterum, superbe, genibus aduoluo tuis. (700-703)
(I will follow you, even through fires and raging seas, over cliffs
and rivers, which are seized by rushing waves; wherever your
steps bear you, crazed I will be driven--again, proud man, I
throw myself at your knees.)

Phaedra cannot accept that her attempt at seduction has failed and again repeats the elegiac imagery that she used in the beginning of their scene together. She still tries to prove herself the persistent and worthy lover of elegy, overcoming obstacles to gain the beloved.⁶⁶ With her addressing of Hippolytus as *superbe* (proud man) she suggests that she is in an inferior position to him, a suggestion she reinforces by physically throwing herself at his knees.⁶⁷ This behaviour recalls her use of the *seruitium amoris*.

Phaedra is occupying the paradoxical role of the sexually aggressive woman while taking on the language and poses of the putatively submissive male lover of elegy. She uses the language of subjection, yet her whole behaviour is geared towards pursuing and dominating Hippolytus. The shifts that Phaedra makes between the apparently powerless male lover and the militaristically minded lover in her exchange with Hippolytus enable her to gain control and subject Hippolytus to her declaration of love. He will not be able to forestall or escape her sexual interest, even if he chooses to reject it. Prior to Hippolytus' outburst, Phaedra is the dominating force in their scene

⁶⁶Again her language recalls the description of Milanion as *amens* (Prop. 1.1.11).

⁶⁷Propertius refers to both Cynthia herself and her behaviour as *superba* on a number of occasions: 1.10.21ff.; 1.18.25; 2.8.16; 3.8.36; 3.24.2; 3.25.15; 4.8.82.

together. She controls the movement of the conversation, as Hippolytus' uncomprehending and ambiguous responses have allowed Phaedra to interpret his words according to her own desires and act accordingly.

Yet it is not just Phaedra's elegiac fantasy that enables her to manipulate the action of the scene. It is Hippolytus' own flawed vision of the world, with its denial of the force of sexuality, and his slippery grasp of masculine authority, which allows Phaedra to control events. On one hand, Phaedra is advantaged by Hippolytus' sexual passivity and naivete, in that she is able to control the situation up to the point where she reveals her love, but on the other hand, Hippolytus' erotic disinclination and ignorance of the rules are what proves her undoing. Her fantasy will not become reality. Hippolytus has far more in common with the unwilling virgins of Diana, than he does with any sexually available mistress.⁶⁸ Hippolytus does not understand the rules of the erotic game, and if he did, would be unwilling to play. It also becomes clear that Phaedra, while still locked into her fantasies, does not recognise this lack. Phaedra stands the conventions of elegy on their head, by attempting to apply them to her own situation. Yet she is doomed to fail, as the blueprint does not conform to her own situation, and also because the clearly defined roles of lover and mistress are not understood by both parties.

In fact we do not really see Phaedra take a path that is comparable to the elegiac lover. Rejection of the current masculine political-social mode does not automatically mean an actual identification with the woman. While some emotions may be "feminised", we do not see the elegiac lover take up female pursuits such as spinning or dressing like his mistress. Love has the effect of confounding orthodox gender roles for Phaedra in all areas of her life. It is at this point that we can see that the characterisation of Phaedra as elegiac lover is flawed. How does a woman pretend to be a man who is taking on feminine traits to woo his mistress? The role of the *seruitium amoris* in particular cannot be readily sustained by a woman. It is a convention that applies to the male lover, abasing himself before his mistress. Phaedra's attempt to adapt this convention is ultimately not successful because of gender stereotypes pertaining to women. It is not out of place for a woman to hand over authority and to take a submissive role to a man. After all, this is precisely where the convention of the *seruitium amoris* gains its erotic

⁶⁸Hippolytus' similarity with the acolytes of Diana will be discussed in chapter 3.

frisson, in the overturning of gender roles. Phaedra is also unsuccessful in her attempt to cast the Nurse in the role of elegiac go-between.

Chapter two: The Pursuit of Love: Gender, Love and Desire

This chapter will concentrate on the presentation of love and desire in *Phaedra*. Particular attention will be paid to the Chorus's depiction of love's effect on different spheres of the natural world: animal, human and divine. Love's impact appears to take differing forms according to gender, in each of these three spheres. The question to be answered is what form does *Phaedra*'s erotic behaviour take? The issue of heredity in relation to *Phaedra*'s amorous behaviour will also be analysed.

Choral ode on Love: humans and animals

The first choral ode sings of the effect of love on divinity, humanity and the animal kingdom.¹ As Boyle states, it "[d]elineat[es] the universality of love's power, its irresistibility, its devastation, its violence."² Yet love does not have the same effect on all. There are clear gender divisions apparent in the experience of love. The Chorus's description of Love's effects is primarily focussed on masculine behaviours, both human and animal, with brief mention of female responses providing a clear contrast in both the emphasis given and the assumptions derived concerning the experience of love.

When singing of love's effect on humans, the chorus appear to make a clear distinction between the effect of love on the different sexes:

iuuenum feroces
 concitat flammas senibusque fessis
 rursus extinctos reuocat calores,
 uirginum ignoto ferit igne pectus (290-293)
 (He excites the wild flames of youth and recalls again
 extinguished passion in weary old age, he strikes virgins' breast
 with unknown fire.)

This passage suggests that the fires of love dwell within young men, only waiting to be aroused by love, whereas for young women love strikes them as an outside force. The language used also has overtones of sexual

¹The Chorus's view of love's effect on various gods will be dealt with later in this chapter.

²Boyle, A. J., "In Nature's Bonds: a study of Seneca's *Phaedra*" *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.32.2 (1985), p1295

aggression; *ferit* has violent connotations, and its use may suggest the experience of rape. In any case, man's experience of love is active, whether young or old, whilst women's experience is reactive. Yet the Chorus are selective in their choice of examples. While they sing of both young and old males, they choose only to refer to virgins when singing of women. It is noteworthy that the effect of love on the mature, sexually experienced woman is not mentioned.

When the Chorus sing of the animal kingdom, all the animals mentioned, bar one, are male. Bulls (339), stags (341ff.), boars (344ff.), lions (346f.), elephants and whales (350f.) all are depicted as fighting battles for mates under the effect of love:

Venere instinctus suscipit audax
grege pro toto bella iuuencus;
si coniugio timuere suo,
poscunt timidi proelia cerui
et mugitu dant concepti
 signa furoris;
tunc uulnificos acuit dentes
aper et toto est spumeus ore:
tunc silua gemit murmure saeuo.
Poeni quatiunt colla leones,
 cum mouit amor;
tunc uirgatas India tigres
 decolor horret.
amat insani belua ponti
Lucaeque boues. (339-352)

(The bold young bull urged on by Venus undertook war for all his herd; if they feared for their spouses, timid stags ask for battles and give signs with bellowing of the madness they have been taken by; then the wild boar whets his wounding teeth, and foams all in his mouth: then the forest groans with cruel roar. Carthaginian lions shake their necks, when love moves them; then swarthy India shudders at striped tigresses. The

beast of the raging sea loves, and Luca-bulls.)³

Yet the only female animal spoken of, the tigress, does not have a description of an action she undertakes (49f.). Rather it is the reaction of others that is noted.⁴ Love or nature's expected response, it is suggested by the Chorus, is to provoke aggressive behaviour in males. Conversely, love's effect on the female provokes a negative response from others. Love may engender madness in the male, but it is after all the world of nature that the Chorus sing of. The rage of animals is not an unnatural act which provokes undue comment. Yet the mere sight of a tigress, on an erotic prowl no doubt, causes India to shudder.

A model of female desire which Phaedra can follow in her pursuit of Hippolytus is not presented by the Chorus here. She is no virgin, struck by "unknown fire" (*ignoto igne*, 293). Regardless of her claim that she has never loved before (668f.), Phaedra is a married woman with sexual experience. She is at least aware of the part that sexual passion plays in the successful consummation of love, and structures her pursuit of Hippolytus accordingly. Phaedra follows the masculine model.

Phaedra, Diana and Pasiphae: Women in Love

There are two women in the play who perhaps might be seen as erotic templates for Phaedra's behaviour, Diana and Pasiphae. Phaedra dresses in a style that suggests Diana or one of her acolytes (396f.) and both women are attracted to the same man. Phaedra's behaviour has hereditary links with her mother, who also succumbed to a forbidden love. Yet whether these women provide an erotic model for Phaedra in the way she chooses to express her love, or pursue a resolution of her love is another matter.

Pasiphae

The Nurse seeks to shame Phaedra into renouncing her love by referring to the conception of her monstrous brother:

³As the gender of *lucae* shows, *boues* is technically feminine here. However, the whole phrase refers to elephants, with other translators inscribing it as either gender-neutral or as referring to bulls (see Fitch and Boyle).

prodigia totiens orbis insueta audiet,
 natura totiens legibus cedit suis,
 quotiens amabit Cressa? (175-177)

(Will the world so often hear of unnatural prodigies, will nature
 so often depart from its laws, as often as a Cretan woman
 loves?)

Yet even before the Nurse uses this tactic, Phaedra has recognised that her
 love does not take a natural form. Phaedra refers to her mother as a
 hereditary precedent for her illicit love:

Quo tendis, anime? quid furens saltus amas?
 fatale miserae matris agnosco malum:
 peccare noster nouit in siluis amor. (112-114)

(Whither are you striving, spirit? Why raging do you love the
 woodlands? I recognise the fateful evil of my wretched mother:
 our love learned to sin in the forests.)

Boyle argues that "the analogy between Phaedra and Pasiphae is sustained in
 the play not only by its overt occurrence (e.g. 242, 688ff., 698f.) but also by
 conspicuous and pervasive analogy between Hippolytus, object of Phaedra's
 love, and the bull, object of Pasiphae's."⁵ Boyle's findings are persuasive
 concerning the hereditary nature of Phaedra's passion and of the links
 between Hippolytus and Pasiphae's bull.

However I would suggest that Phaedra does not look to Pasiphae as
 a behavioural model. She does not use Pasiphae as a model for her actions in
 how she structures her pursuit of Hippolytus. The circumstances between the
 two are vastly different, as presented in *Phaedra*. Pasiphae's beloved is not
 human, although Phaedra does speak of Hippolytus as an animal to be tamed
 (240). Pasiphae must also rely on male help, in the person of Daedalus, to
 achieve her erotic aims. Phaedra shows her awareness of this when she
 bemoans that she has no such Daedalus to aid her:

⁴The noun *tigris* is almost invariably feminine, see *OLD* s.v.

⁵Boyle, A. J., (1985), p1316. See also Davis, P. J., "Uindicat omnes natura sibi: A reading of
 Seneca's *Phaedra*" in *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama* ed A. J. Boyle
 (Aurcal, Berwick, 1983) pp114-127

quis meas miserae deus
aut quis iuuare Daedalus flammis queat?
non si ille remeet, arte Mopsopia potens,
qui nostra caeca monstra conclusit domo,
promittat ullam casibus nostris opem. (119-123)

(What god or Daedalus would be able to help the flames of my wretchedness? Not if that man powerful in Mopsopian arts returned, who enclosed our monster in his blind house, could he promise any aid to my misfortune.)

It could be argued that in fact, as presented here, Daedalus is a major cause of the positive outcome of Pasiphae's affair with the bull, as he fashions the wooden cow. Pasiphae's main erotic task is to passively await the bull and to hope that he is deceived. Yet if Seneca, through Phaedra, had wished to present a portrait of Pasiphae actively pursuing the object of her affections, he could have drawn on the precedent already established by Ovid. Ovid deals with the Pasiphae myth in a humorous fashion in the *Ars Amatoria* (1.289-330). He presents Pasiphae actively wooing the bull with gifts of fodder, and removing her rivals.⁶ But in Seneca's version of the myth, Phaedra, in addition to emulating the unnatural passion of her mother, must also take the active role in pursuing a relationship with Hippolytus. Her lack of a Daedalus figure means that she must play the masculine role to achieve an outcome for her desire.

Diana

Another portrait given of a female in love is Diana. The question is whether Diana's experience of love as depicted by the Chorus differs in any way from Phaedra's. Do the two women, immortal and human, who love the same man, express their love in a similar fashion?

⁶The presentation of Pasiphae is more complex in the *A. A.* Pasiphae draws on both male and female aspects of elegiac roles in her wooing of the bull. She concentrates on her appearance (*A. A.* 1. 305), which is in accordance with Ovid's advice to women in book 3 (*A. A.* 3.101 *et passim*), but also presents the bull with gifts (*A. A.* 1. 299f.). Gifts are normally a part of male wooing, hence Ovid's advice on how to avoid gift-giving (*A. A.* 1.404 *et passim*). See also Propertius 1.3.25.

In their ode on love, the Chorus single out Diana as the only example of a goddess being affected by passion:

Arsit obscuri dea clara mundi
 nocte deserta nitidosque fratri
 tradidit currus aliter regendos:
 ille nocturnas agitare bigas
 discit et gyro breuiore flecti,
 nec suum tempus tenere noctes
 et dies tardo remeavit ortu,
 dum tremunt axes grauiore curru. (309-316)

(The shining goddess of the darkened universe blazed and forsaking the night handed over the chariot to her bright brother to rule in another way: he learns to drive the two-horse chariot by night and to turn in shorter circle, nor does night maintain her time and day returns with slow rising, while the axles tremble with heavier chariot.)

But while a large chunk of description may seem to be given to Diana, in truth, very little analysis or actual description of Diana, or of a portrait of a woman in love, occurs. We are merely told that she felt the effects of love and abandoned her usual pursuits. The reader assumes it is Endymion who is spoken of, but is not told directly who the object of Diana's affection is or how she may have wooed him. This is in direct contrast to the long descriptions of Jupiter's abduction of Europa and of the effect of love on Hercules.⁷ The bulk of the Chorus's description dwells on a humorous depiction of Diana's horses dealing with the unaccustomed weight of Apollo. It is notable that no tales of Venus' amours are sung of, even though the ode is ostensibly about her effect. The Chorus begin by apparently addressing the ode to Venus, but go on to assign the active role in love's dominion to Cupid:

Diua non miti generata ponto,
 quam uocat matrem geminus Cupido:
 impotens flammis simul et sagittis

⁷ Although in the latter case, Omphale is not even indirectly mentioned even though she is generally an important part of the myth. The story of Hercules and Omphale is covered in its own section later in this chapter, pp55-70.

iste lasciuus puer et renidens
 tela quam certo moderatur arcu! (274-278)
 (Goddess born of ungentle sea, whom double Cupid calls
 mother: simultaneously unrestrained in flames and arrows, your
 boy, wanton and smiling, guides the arrows assuredly from the
 bow!)

The Chorus delegate the main arena of Love's effect to her son. According to the Chorus, it is the masculine principle that stirs others in love and leads to action.

The Chorus refer to Diana's new passion for Hippolytus in the next choral ode, yet again it is a curiously passive representation of her love:

Aut te stellifero despiciens polo
 sidus post ueteres Arcadas editum
 currus non poterit flectere candidos.
 en nuper rubuit, nullaue lucidis
 nubes sordidior uultibus obstitit;
 at nos solliciti numine turbido,
 tractam Thessalicis carminibus rati,
 tinnitus dedimus: tu fueras labor
 et tu causa morae, te dea noctium
 dum spectat celeres sustinuit uias. (785-794)
 (But looking down on you from the star-bearing sky, a star born
 after the ancient Arcadians who is not able to guide her white
 horses. Behold she recently blushed, and no fouler cloud
 obstructs her bright face; but we, disturbed by the troubled
 divinity, believing her dragged by Thessalian songs, gave the
 jangling: you were her labour, and you the cause of delay, while
 watching you the goddess of the night checked her swift ways.)

Her passion is signposted by the reference to her blushing face. But again the emphasis is placed on Diana's inactivity. The greater weight is placed on Hippolytus' unknowing attraction for the goddess, and the part he inadvertently plays in her awakening desire. She, like Phaedra, has gazed on Hippolytus, but in contrast to the representation of Diana, it is Phaedra who has actively sought him. Moreover, the bulk of the description is again given to the responses of others to Diana's passion; in this case, it is the Chorus who

are disturbed by the aberrant signs and seek to rectify the situation. The suggestion from the Chorus is that the behaviour exhibited by Diana is out of character, and somehow alarming. She is referred to as a troubled divinity (*numine turbido*, 790) and the Chorus initially believe that she has been affected by witchcraft (791). This type of emotive description is not present in the representations of the male gods, where the emphasis remains on humour. The representations of Diana's passion have more in common with that of the tigress briefly mentioned by the Chorus (49f.). The responses of others are noted, rather than the subject's actions. Diana will not provide a template for the active expression of female passion in this play.⁸

Phaedra herself does not refer to Diana as a role model. Although the Chorus recognise that Diana has erotic designs on Hippolytus (785-794), Phaedra makes no mention of it. Phaedra mentions Diana only once, and then to equate her with Hippolytus: *tuaeque Phoebes uultus aut Phoebi mei*, 654 (His face was your Phoebe's or my Phoebus').⁹ In detailing her huntress dress, she does not refer to Diana, but Hippolytus' mother (397ff.).¹⁰ Others have seen a link between Phaedra and Diana in Phaedra's assumption of hunting dress, and in their shared erotic hunt of Hippolytus, but it is important to note that it is not a connection that she herself makes.¹¹ And as has been noted, Phaedra does not turn to her mother as a guide in expressing her love.

Phaedra, Apollo and Jupiter

⁸Although the Chorus perceives Diana's sexual interest in Hippolytus as a source of danger for Hippolytus, see Davis, P. J., (1983) p116f.

⁹This is in direct contrast to the Phaedra of *Heroides* 4 who specifically states that the only god for her is Diana: *iam mihi prima dea est arcu praesignis adunco / Delia; iudicium subsequor ipsa tuum*, *Her.* 4.39f. (For me the first goddess is the Delian, noted for her crooked bow; I myself imitate your judgement). As will be seen, Phaedra makes Apollo her pattern.

¹⁰As will be discussed further in chapter 4 pp119-124, the Amazons are notable as women who do actively make their own sexual choices. Therefore Phaedra is not being inappropriate in referring to Antiope as a model.

¹¹Davis, P. J., *Shifting Song: the Chorus in Seneca's Tragedies*, (Hildesheim, Olms-Weidmann, 1993), p101.; Boyle, A. J. (1985), p1302. Boyle refers to the "irresistibility and destructiveness of Diana's erotic gaze (785ff.)" but I would argue that is as far as her pursuit of Hippolytus goes.

Phaedra, in Seneca's version of the myth, is shown to replicate male patterns of erotic behaviour. We have seen how she turns the conventions of elegy on its head, by attempting to appropriate the role of the male lover. Whom then does Phaedra imitate in her pursuit of Hippolytus? A closer look at Phaedra's behaviour reveals that she patterns herself in terms of erotic behaviour, not on her mother or Diana, but on male gods, specifically Jupiter and Apollo. Her behaviour has elements in common with that of her divine male ancestors, particularly in their aggressive pursuit of young virgins. Phaedra chooses to align herself with the masculine experience of love and turns to male ancestors to define the path her expression of love will take. When Phaedra speaks of love's effect on the gods, she will refer only to male gods (187-192).

Phaedra's divine ancestry

It is clear from the outset that there will be no revelation scene between Phaedra and the Nurse. The Nurse's efforts in their opening scene together are directed toward an attempt to remind Phaedra of both the futility and unnaturalness of her love. The Nurse, in seeking to bring Phaedra back to her senses, reminds Phaedra of her illustrious ancestry: *clara progenies Iouis*, 129 (bright descendant of Jove). Her first words emphasise Phaedra's connection to her male ancestors and are used by the Nurse as a means of reminding Phaedra of the proper behaviour due to her position. In referring to her ancestors, the Nurse tries to forestall Phaedra's passion by reminding her of the male authority figures in her life, her husband (145f.), her father (149f.), Apollo (154f.) and Jupiter (155f.) who may punish her for her sexual transgressions:

quid ille rebus lumen infundens suum,
matris parens? quid ille, qui mundum quatit
uibrans corusca fulmen Aetnaeum manu,
sator deorum? (154-157)

(What of him who pours light on the world, your mother's father? What of him, who shakes the universe, brandishing Etna's thunderbolts in gleaming hands, the father of the gods?)

In chastising Phaedra, the Nurse does not comprehend that Phaedra is, in a sense, following the example of her divine ancestors, by aggressively

pursuing the object of her desire.

Phaedra's inheritance from the gods also has a physical aspect. The Nurse addresses her as "shining" (*clarus*, 129), suggesting a physical beauty, and informs the Chorus that Phaedra, undergoing the ravages of love, has lost her outward beauty which is an intimation of her divine heredity:

et qui ferebant signa Phoebeae facis
oculi nihil gentile nec patrium micant. (379-380)
(And those eyes which bore the sign of Phoebus' torch do not
have their ancestral sparkle.)

Of course the flames that ravage Phaedra now are the flames of love. Now Phaedra's eyes burn with desire: *erumpit oculis ignis*, 364 (Fires burst forth from her eyes). Segal translates *signa Phoebeae* as referring to Diana, and sees it as evidence of a link between Phaedra and Diana.¹² Yet the reference to "ancestral sparkle" makes it clear that the Nurse is referring to Apollo. Segal assumes that the reference is to Phoebe, as Diana is referred to as such (747), but Apollo is himself referred to as Phoebus, by Phaedra herself (654). It is telling that when Phaedra's appearance is mentioned, she is likened to a male god.¹³ Phaedra is also dissatisfied with the trappings of her appearance which firmly associate her with the feminine experience of the erotic, jewels, silks and perfume, wishing to rid herself of them (386-393). She now dresses as an Amazon huntress, defining herself as a woman who has a more active expression of desire.

Phaedra, when referring to the effects of love, uses imagery of flame and fire that recalls the Chorus's description:

Pectus insanum uapor
amorque torret. intimis saeuit ferus
[penitus medullas atque per uenas meat]
uisceribus ignis mersus et uenas latens
ut agilis altas flamma percurrit trabes. (640-644)
(Steaming love burns my raging heart. A wild fire rages
innermost and it passes through my veins and deeply in my

¹²Segal, C. P., *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*, (Princeton, N. J. 1986), p69f.

¹³Hippolytus himself will be compared to Diana in appearance, to her detriment (743ff.).

marrow, immersed in my womb and hidden in my veins, like an active flame passing through high beams.)

However the language Phaedra uses recalls the Chorus's description of the masculine experience of love as a flame burning within (*iuvenum feroces / concitat flammās*, 290f.), rather than as a force striking her from without.¹⁴ She refers to love's flame being deep within her womb, when speaking to Hippolytus, which may suggest a female expression of love to him but her actions will reveal otherwise.

Justify my love: Phaedra's use of Apollo and Jupiter

Phaedra, at the end of her first speech, outlines the reasons behind her illicit passion, particularly its hereditary nature. She sees her passion as a result of the curse placed her family as descendants of Apollo:

stirpem perosa Solis inuisi Venus
per nos catenas uindicat Martis sui
suasque, probris omne Phoebeum genus
onerat nefandis (124-127)

(Detesting the hated race of the Sun, Venus avenges through us Mars' chains and her own, and burdens all the descendants of Phoebus with unspeakable disgrace.)

But not only does Phaedra see her descent from Apollo as a reason for her experiencing illicit love, she also uses her familial ties to Apollo and Jupiter as a justification for her passion. Phaedra rejects the Nurse's sanctions, and her use of male kin as moral bogeymen. Phaedra's male ancestors are of importance to her, not as moral arbiters, but as models for her expression of desire. What Phaedra realises, and the Nurse doesn't, is that in referring to Apollo as "your mother's father" (*matris parens*, 155), the Nurse's use of the phrase is more a reminder of Phaedra's mother's illicit love than of use as a moral sanction. Phaedra is descended from Jupiter in the paternal line, and the story of his abduction of Europa, Minos' mother and Phaedra's grandmother, is covered in detail by the Chorus. The main role of Apollo and Jupiter in this play is not one of moral guidance, but of erotic example.

¹⁴Davis also notes "the closeness of the verbal parallels" between the two passages, but to support a different argument. Davis, P. J. (1993), p95

Phaedra does not compare herself to animals or humans, as sung of by the Chorus, when she outlines love's effect on her. Phaedra justifies her passion to the Nurse by referring to the effect of love upon Jupiter and Apollo:

hic uolucer omni pollet in terra impotens
 ipsumque flammis torret indomitis Iouem. (186-187)
 (This violent winged one is powerful throughout the whole
 earth, and burns Jove himself with fierce flames.)

ipsumque Phoebum, tela qui neruo regit,
 figit sagitta certior missa puer (192-193)
 (And Phoebus himself, whose weapons are guided straight from
 the bowstring, this boy pierces with an arrow more accurately
 sent.)

It is telling that Phaedra calls on examples of male gods affected by love as a blueprint for her passion as it foreshadows her own behaviour toward Hippolytus. She will follow their lead in her pursuit of Hippolytus and utilise similar wiles in her erotic campaign.

The Nurse has also referred to Phaedra's human moral guardians in the persons of Minos and Theseus. Phaedra rejects the sanctions of her husband and father (225; 245), in the throes of her erotic fantasy imagining them indulgent to her passion. It is as if Phaedra feels that she will be judged by the same erotic standards that apply to men: *Veniam ille amori forsitan nostro dabit.*, 225 (Perhaps he will give indulgence to my love.); *Nvt. Aderit maritus. Ph. Nempe Pirithoi comes?*, 244 (Nurse Your husband will come. Phaedra The companion of Pirithous?). She assumes indulgence from Theseus as he is presently involved in erotic misdemeanours of his own. Phaedra also assumes that Minos will be gentle to her as she believes he was to Ariadne (*Mitis Ariadne pater?*, 245), but this is a false assumption on her part as Minos, even if he had wished to be either gentle or harsh to Ariadne, was in no position to act, as Ariadne had fled Crete with Theseus, thereby putting her out of her father's reach. Phaedra's delusional beliefs concerning her ability to act as she pleases are not out of kilter with her behaviour, as she is undertaking the masculine role in her pursuit of Hippolytus. Therefore, to act like a man is, in her eyes, is to be judged by the same moral standards.

Choral ode on Love: Apollo and Jupiter

As has been discussed, the Chorus' description of Diana in love shifts from a shadowy and strangely absent depiction in the first ode to the troubled reaction of the Chorus in the second ode. The representation of the effect of love on the male gods is a much less complicated one, where the emphasis remains on humour, and the good-natured normality of the gods' actions. Apollo and Jupiter may express their love in unusual fashions, but it is suggested that any means necessary are legitimate to express masculine desire. Nor is much attention paid by the Chorus to the reactions of Jupiter's victims. The choral ode on love, which details Jupiter and Apollo's conduct in love, demonstrates that Phaedra also replicates the same patterns of behaviour shown by the gods.¹⁵

The Chorus, when beginning their section on the gods and love, refers to the gods' pursuit of love with mortals in the following terms: *et iubet caelo superos relicto / uultibus falsis habitare terras.*, 294f. (And he [Cupid] orders the gods above, heaven having been left behind, to inhabit the earth with deceitful faces.). The reference to "deceitful faces" is an intimation that the gods will achieve their erotic aims in ways employed by lovers in elegy and recommended by the teacher in *Ars Amatoria*.¹⁶ It also suggests that deceit is a legitimate erotic strategy.¹⁷

The first god that the Chorus sing of is Apollo, but rather than detailing his sexual pursuit of virgins, the Chorus refer to the myth of Apollo's erotic servitude to Admetus:

Thessali Phoebus pecoris magister

¹⁵Davis also notes that the hereditary links between Phaedra, Apollo and Jupiter are replicated in their experience of love but uses them to support arguments concerning the universality of love's power, a theme I am not concerned with here. Davis, P. J. (1993)

¹⁶We are not told enough concerning Diana's wooing of Endymion to know if she wears a false face, though we are told by the Chorus in the following ode that her face has been altered by desire (788f.).

¹⁷Jupiter's erotic deceit is referred to in the following terms by Ovid: *qualis erat Lede, quam plumis abditus albis / callidus in falsa lusit adulter aue*, *Am.* 1.10.3f. (Such was Leda, whom the false adulterer deceived in the guise of the bird with cunning plumage); *perque*

egit armentum positoque plectro
 impari tauros calamo uocauit. (296-298)
 (Phoebus the master of Thessalian herd drove cattle and put
 aside the lyre and called the bulls with unequal reed.)

Davis argues that this is "an instance of Love's power to transform and debase."¹⁸ Yet the Chorus' version of the myth is very straightforward and does not indulge in any condemnation of or emotive response to Apollo. Apollo's actions are baldly stated to be the effect of love. This myth, which the Romans eroticised, is also referred to by Tibullus (Tib. 2.3. 11-36). The Chorus's version stands in contrast to Tibullus' version, which speaks of the embarrassed reactions of others to Apollo's erotic servitude: *o quotiens illo uitulum gestante per agros / dicitur occurrens erubuisse soror!*, Tib. 2.3.19f. (O how many times his sister blushed to meet him carrying a bull calf home through the fields!).¹⁹ Apollo has certainly laid aside his normal role as master of the herd (*pecoris magister*, 294) but taken in conjunction with the Chorus's previous comments on the gods wearing false faces, it does not suggest that Apollo has truly become servile, but rather that he has taken on a subservient role in order to achieve his erotic aims.

In terms of Phaedra's response to the example of her ancestor, it can be seen that she, like Apollo, has laid aside her normal roles under the effect of love (103ff.). But Phaedra's transformation goes beyond this superficial resemblance. Both Jupiter and Apollo's behaviour can be seen to replicate the erotic strategies of elegy. In the myth referred to by the Chorus, Apollo takes on a subservient role for his beloved, in an echo of the *seruitium amoris*. It is telling that almost at the exact moment of Phaedra's revelation of her passion to Hippolytus, when she is detailing the attractions of Hippolytus through the mirror of Theseus, that she identifies herself with Apollo and claims him as her god: *tuaeque Phoebes uultus aut Phoebi mei*, 654 (His face was your Phoebe's or my Phoebus'). It is Apollo's example Phaedra is following in her pursuit of Hippolytus. She is also following his example in utilising the conventions of the *seruitium amoris*. Phaedra does not wish to be virginal like

fretum falso, Sidoni, uecta boue, A. A. 3.252 (not the Sidonian maid, carried over the sea by the false bull). Tibullus also refers to the Apollo and Admetus myth in 2.3.

¹⁸Davis, P. J. (1993), p96

Diana. Hippolytus, not Phaedra, is the character most closely identified with Diana in this play.²⁰ As a result of his identification with Diana, Hippolytus will share the same fate as many of Diana's acolytes at the hands of someone who identifies herself with Jupiter and Apollo, two well-known ravishers of Diana's followers.²¹

The Chorus take great delight in detailing Jupiter's erotic adventures. The "deceitful faces" referred to by the Chorus have a more obvious application in Jupiter's case. No censure is applied to his actions except for a brief reference to Europa as *rapina*, which can mean raped or stolen, though even then Jupiter is depicted as being solicitous on her behalf:

induit formas quotiens minores
 ipse qui caelum nebulasque ducit!
 candidas ales modo mouit alas,
 dulcior uocem moriente cygno;
 fronte nunc torua petulans iuuenus
 uirginum strauit sua terga ludo,
 perque fraternos, noua regna, fluctus
 ungula lentos imitante remos
 pectore aduerso domuit profundum,
 pro sua uector timidus rapina. (297-308)

(How often he assumed lesser shapes, he who leads clouds and sky! As a bird once with shining wings, sweeter in voice than a dying swan; now a wanton young bull with fierce brow spreading out his back for virgin's play, and through his brother's waves, an unfamiliar realm, his hoof resembling flexible oar, overcame the deep with opposing breast, fearful on account of his stolen passenger.)

It may be also that the use of *rapina* foreshadows Hippolytus' eventual designation as a ravished son (*rapto gnato*, 1199), and provides an extra link

¹⁹Although this condemnation of erotic slavery is not shared by the poet, who professes himself willing to share a similar shame (Tib. 2.3.83f.).

²⁰Hippolytus' links with Diana will be discussed in chapter 3, p71f..

between Jupiter and Phaedra as sexual aggressors.²² Like Jupiter, Phaedra deceives the object of her love by assuming a disguise; in Jupiter's case a beast, and in Phaedra's case a suppliant woman in need of aid. Jupiter utilises deceit in his abduction and seduction of virgins, pretending to be lesser (*minores*) than he actually is. But both Apollo and Jupiter, in apparently inhabiting humble or lesser states, are doing so in order to achieve their erotic aims.²³ Phaedra will offer servitude to Hippolytus and attempt to win his confidence through referring to her suppliant position as a widow, replicating the erotic tactics of both Apollo and Jupiter.

Hippolytus, when made aware of Phaedra's passion, calls on both Jupiter and Apollo and singles out Apollo in particular to witness the outrage committed by his descendant: *tuque, sidereum caput, / radiate Titan, tu nefas stirpis tuae / speculari?*, 677ff. (And you, lord of stars, radiating Titan, do you observe this sin of your offspring?). He is surprised by the gods' apparent failure to act. Yet the gods so far as they are characterised in this play are notable more for their erotic exploits than in their roles as guardians of morality. Phaedra appears to be aware of this when she calls on Jupiter and Apollo to be her witnesses as she makes her false accusation:

Te te, creator caelitem, testem inuoco,
et te, coruscum lucis aetheriae iubar,
ex cuius ortu nostra dependet domus (898-900)
(You, you, creator of the sky, I call on you as witness, and you,
gleaming splendour of heavenly light, from whom our house
derives origin.)

Phaedra's first reference to Apollo is in the context of her family's hereditary

²¹A full discussion of Hippolytus' links with the acolytes of Diana will follow in chapter 3, pp75-86.

²²The question of Hippolytus' sexual status will be raised in chapter 3, pp75-86; pp88-92.

²³Ovid in the *Amores* refers precisely to Jupiter's deception of Leda and Europa as a precedent for his own erotic behaviour. See McCarthy, Kathleen (1998). McCarthy argues that Ovid implicitly compares himself to Jupiter in *Am.* 1.3.19-26: "just as Jupiter was able to rape women through disguising himself as an animal (and so put the women off-guard; who would ever worry about being raped by a swan?), Ovid's disguise as an unassuming

tendency to illicit passion (124-127) and now she calls upon him when she is still attempting to protect her reputation. Jupiter and Apollo do not attract approbation for their erotic exploits, which may be why Phaedra calls upon them. Indeed, Jupiter is famed for his own infidelity and his acceptance of the deception carried out by other lovers.²⁴ This is the last time that Phaedra calls on either Apollo or Jupiter to justify or explain her behaviour. When she makes her final speech, atoning for her role in Hippolytus' death, she calls on the god, who she believes brought about his death, for punishment: *Me me, profundi saeue dominator freti, / inuade*, 1160f. (Me, me, cruel master of deep straits, attack me). Her change of god is emblematic of her desire for truth and atonement, and unwillingness to inhabit the world of erotic aggression and deceit. When Phaedra admits her guilt and her role in falsely accusing Hippolytus, she states: *falsa memorauit et nefas, / quod ipsa demens pectore insano hauseram, / mentita finxi*, 1191ff. (I related false things, and sin, which I crazed drew forth from insane heart, I invented with lies.). She acknowledges her guilt in accusing Hippolytus, but her words may also refer to her deceptive behaviour in her attempt to woo Hippolytus. At that time she was also guilty of relating false things, in her attempt to seduce him.

In her desire for and pursuit of Hippolytus, Phaedra follows a male pattern of erotic aggression and deceit. Her connection with Apollo and Jupiter has an important role in her atypical characterisation as a woman in love. Much emphasis is placed on Phaedra's descent from Jupiter and Apollo and she mirrors elements of their behaviour, notably the Chorus' report of the gods' behaviour when affected by love. She looks to the gods to provide not only support for her cause but also a precedent for her audacious behaviour. In this a continuance of the elegiac theme can be seen, as Jupiter and Apollo both occur as positive models for the elegiac lover. They have

slave, whose only desire is to devote himself to his *domina* (mistress), accomplishes pretty much the same thing." p176

²⁴Jupiter's indulgence to lovers is referred to by Ovid: *Iuppiter ex alto periuria ridet amantum, / et iubet Aeolios inrita ferre notos. / Per Styga Iunoni falsum iurare solebat / Iuppiter; exemplo nunc fauet ipse suo*, A. A. 1.633ff. (Jupiter from high smiles at the perjuries of lovers, and order the winds of Aeolus to carry them void away. Jupiter was accustomed to swear falsely by the Styx to Juno; now he favours his own example.) Yet unlike Jupiter, Phaedra is swearing falsely to her husband, which does not carry a divine precedent. However it is another example of Phaedra usurping the masculine role in her erotic life.

links to the world of elegy that Phaedra is attempting to replicate in her pursuit of Hippolytus.

Phaedra's identification of herself with Jupiter and Apollo is another way that she attempts to add substance and legitimacy to her fantasy. She might imagine that Hippolytus will be unable to resist the advances of a lover who lists Apollo and Jupiter as ancestors and has their example to follow. What Phaedra wilfully ignores is that the moral leniency of the deities does not apply to mortals. Not only will her advances be rejected, she will have to pay the price for her actions. And ultimately she rejects the approbation that she feels she has from the gods.²⁵

Gender Reversals: Hercules and Phaedra

Love, as presented by the Chorus, offers no real threat to the gods. Jupiter and Apollo are not depicted as being essentially changed by the effects of love. When the gods adopt lesser forms, it is in order to achieve their erotic aims. Love may have negative effects for their victims, but this is not a concern for the Chorus and is lightly skated over. On the other hand, the Chorus also devote some time to the story of Hercules and his sojourn in the world of women. The mythological basis of the tale is the enslavement of Hercules by Omphale, and the resultant sexual submission and gender reversal endured by Hercules. The basic elements of the story revolve around the cross-dressing of Hercules and Omphale, and the undertaking of women's tasks by Hercules.

The character of Hercules has resonance for the characterisations of both Phaedra and Hippolytus. Hippolytus is likened to Hercules in appearance (807) but the complexity of the symbolic role that Hercules plays goes beyond this superficial link, especially when in the same choral ode, Hippolytus is also likened to Hylas in appearance, Hercules' boy lover (781). The story of Hercules can be seen as a counterpoint to Phaedra's struggles with her gender identity. Hercules and Phaedra undergo almost a direct reversal of their situations. As Hercules lays aside the trappings of masculinity and takes up the accoutrements of femininity, Phaedra does the opposite. Segal briefly raises the similarity of gender dislocation in the cases

²⁵Further discussion of the links between Phaedra and Apollo and Jupiter will be raised in the next chapter, in reference to her pursuit of Hippolytus and his response, pp75-86.

of Phaedra and Hercules in a footnote, but does not expand this point elsewhere in his argument: "The power of love has just the opposite effect on Hercules whom it causes to exchange the masculine (and phallic) weapons of club and arrows for the woman's distaff."²⁶

In the Senecan version, the Chorus's story of Hercules and Omphale concentrates on the assumption of women's clothing by Hercules, and his attempts at traditionally female tasks (317-329). Particular emphasis is placed on the power of Love over Hercules in his behavioural transformations. At the time the Chorus sing of, Hercules is still mortal and therefore vulnerable to the effects of love, unlike the gods. At first reading, the essential difference in the presentation of Hercules and Phaedra is one of humour. Hercules' plight is regarded as comic, whilst Phaedra's gender confusion ultimately has tragic results for herself and others. However, a closer look at the Chorus's treatment reveals an undercurrent of tension regarding the possibly deleterious effects of love upon masculinity. Harm does not eventuate for Hercules, but the Chorus show an awareness of the dangers of love. So where does the possibility of harm come from?

The Chorus's treatment of the Hercules myth has a glaring hole at its centre. Whereas in the stories concerning Jupiter and his abductions, the victims are practically interchangeable, Omphale is a central part of this episode of the Hercules myth. Whether she is presented as retaining her essential femininity or as damaging Hercules' own masculinity, Omphale remains an important part of the story in other versions. Yet there is ringing silence regarding the position of Omphale on the part of the Chorus. As with their non-representation of Venus, the Chorus again choose to ignore a portrait of a sexually mature woman who is patently not a victim of another's sexual aggression. Does the silence regarding Omphale reveal underlying tensions or fears concerning the dangers of female passion for the male? If Phaedra is presented as a counterpart to Hercules, does she then fill the Omphale role? And what ramifications does this have for her pursuit of Hippolytus?

To gain an insight into the Chorus's version of the myth and the

²⁶Segal, C. P. (1986), p45 n24. See also Davis, P. J. (1993), p97 who also briefly raises the similarity between Phaedra and Hippolytus. Davis also notes the nexus between Hippolytus-Hercules-Hylas.

assumptions about gender dynamics that their interpretation raises, a comparison needs to be made with other Roman versions of the Hercules and Omphale fable, in order to compare the differing representations of the results of this gender re-invention. In particular the potential threat to masculine authority by gender reversal needs to be evaluated. The story of a man undergoing sexual submission at the hands of a woman has resonance in the dynamics of the Phaedra and Hippolytus story.

The Hercules myth in *Fasti* and *Heroides*

Before analysing the Chorus's version in detail, a discussion of the approaches toward the myth in both Ovid's *Heroides* and *Fasti* is useful in evaluating gender stereotypes and expectations. The interpretations of both Hercules' motivations and subsequent behaviours in each retelling rest at opposite ends of the spectrum. The *Fasti* episode (2.303-358) is essentially comic and derives its humour from mistaken identities and reinforces traditional assumptions regarding gender stereotypes. On the other hand, the bitter contempt of the abandoned Deianira (*Heroides* 9) dwells on the harm to Hercules' masculinity which she sees as caused by Hercules' erotic servitude to Omphale. Whilst both approaches see differing results from Hercules' gender-bending behaviour, both work from similar assumptions about what elements combine to constitute a masculine identity. Both approaches are of value in evaluating the Chorus's own position on love and gender.

Fasti (2.303-358): Hercules and Omphale

In the *Fasti* (2.303-358) Ovid uses the Hercules and Omphale story as a device to tell a comic story of mistaken identity and unsuccessful rape. The basic premise of the story is that Faunus is fired with passion for Omphale, and in attempting to rape her by night, he is fooled by the switched clothing of the couple and subsequently caught out by Hercules. Yet even though the couple swap clothing, there does not appear to be an attendant reversal of gendered behaviour. Nor is there any description of Hercules aping female behaviour, either in an emotional sense, in his reaction to Faunus' overtures, or in carrying out woman's tasks.

When Omphale attracts the desire of Faunus, she is characterised as a beautiful and erotically available woman. Her clothing, dainty and petite and

revealing, emphasises her attractiveness, but also symbolises her vulnerability and inability to resist unwanted advances without outside aid:

ibat odoratis humeros perfusa capillis
 Maeonis aurato conspicienda sinu:
 aurea pellebant tepidos umbracula soles,
 quae tamen Herculeae sustinere manus. (*Fast.* 2.309-312)
 (As the Maeonian girl went by, her scented locks streamed down
 her shoulders, her bosom shone resplendent with golden braid.
 A golden parasol kept off the sun's warm beams, held by
 Herculean hands.)

The sun's warm beams, from which Omphale needs protection, reminds us of Faunus' unsolicited gaze, who burns as he watches from afar: *vidit et incaluit*, *Fast.* 2.307 (He saw and burned.). Hercules' occupation can be characterised as somewhat trivial or even demeaning, nevertheless he is still depicted as rendering protection to Omphale, as he will when Faunus attempts to rape Omphale.

Clothing plays an important role in symbolising male and female characteristics. Female clothing both reveals and hides beauty, and its flimsy nature leaves women vulnerable both to the erotic gaze and actual attack. On the other hand, Hercules' clothing and accoutrements, the pelt, the quiver and the club, symbolise both his authority and power and both his imperviousness to attack and his ability to defend himself.

Hercules and Omphale exchange clothing, within the cave, apparently at Omphale's instigation (*Fast.* 2.317f.). However Ovid does not make much of the erotic powerplay in this version of the myth, and is not explicit concerning the events behind Omphale's apparent power over Hercules. What is emphasised are the comic elements of Hercules wearing women's clothing. He bursts sandals, breaks bracelets and rips the sleeves of Omphale's chemise with his bulky muscled arms. Her girdle is smaller than his actual girth:

dat tenuis tunicas Gaetulo murice tinctas,
 dat teretem zonam, qua modo cincta fuit.
 uentre minor zona est; tunicarum uincla relaxat,
 ut posset magnas exeruisse manus.

fregerat armillas non illa ad brachia factas,

scindebant magni uincula parua pedes. (*Fast.* 2.319-324)

(She gives him a dainty tunic dyed with Gaetolian purple, hands over the girdle she has just undone. The belt is smaller than his belly; he undoes the clasps of the tunic, so that he can thrust through his great hands. He shattered the bracelets, not suited to those arms, and his great feet split the little straps of her shoes.)

His inability to wear her clothing without damage to the items highlights both literally and figuratively that Hercules cannot be confined or restrained by female clothing. There is great contrast made between the refinement and fragility of the clothing (*tenuis*, fragile; *teretem*, polished) and the vast bulk and strength of Hercules. Underlying the comic nature of the scene is the sight of Hercules and his great hands and feet (*magnas manus*; *magni pedes*) literally ripping apart (*fregerat*) and tearing asunder (*scindebant*) Omphale's clothing. Her female chains, here symbolised by the clasps of her robe (*uincla*) and the straps of her sandals (*uincula*), are not able to bind Hercules. The scene also emphasises that female clothing does not provide adequate protection for the wearer and the inherent vulnerability of the female to masculine attack. The violence that Hercules perpetrates against Omphale's clothes mirrors Faunus' desire to sexually conquer Omphale herself. Masculine dominance is still emphasised, regardless of the comic nature of the scene. The tone of these lines is not so much one of Hercules brought low by Omphale's orders, but more one of masculine indulgence of Omphale's whims. The comic potential and erotic frisson of transvestism are highlighted, rather than the scene being used as a vehicle for serious exploration of gender roles and power. Gender stereotypes are reinforced, not questioned.

In opposition to the lengthy depiction of Hercules, at this stage Omphale is merely described as taking the quiver, pelt and club (*Fast.* 3.325f.). There is no description given of her actually wearing Hercules' gear or of the effect that masculine clothing has on her femininity. It is as if her feminine identity is negated by the masculine clothing. Omphale is not mentioned again until after Hercules has routed Faunus and reasserted his masculine identity and authority.

When Faunus sneaks into the cave, the comic potential of

transvestism is played up even further. Faunus is entirely deceived by the feel of the clothing, rather than sensing the shape of the bodies lying underneath. Faunus feels Hercules' pelt, yet Omphale's femininity is disguised and she is protected by the outward symbolism of power and authority reflected by male clothing:

ut tetigit fului saetis hirsuta leonis
 uellera, pertimuit sustinuitque manum
 attonitusque metu rediit. (*Fast.* 2.339-341)
 (When he touched the skin, shaggy with bristles, of the tawny lion, he was terrified and stayed his hand, and thunderstruck recoiled.)

The mere touch of male clothing is enough to fill Faunus with fear. Faunus then makes his way over to the other bed, and is deceived by the female clothes of Hercules. It is suggested that he is aroused by the touch of the clothing:

inde tori, qui iunctus erat, uelamina tangit
 mollia, mendaci decipiturque nota.
 ascendit spondaque sibi propiore recumbit,
 et tumidum cornu durius inguen erat. (*Fast.* 2.343-346)
 (Next he touched the delicate garments on the nearby couch, and was deceived by this misleading sign. He clambers aboard the cot, and lies down, his tumescent groin harder than his horns.)

The "softness" of the female clothing is threatened by the literal "hardness" of Faunus' desire, in an additional reinforcement of power and gender stereotypes. As before, there is no suggestion that Faunus is able to feel any male attributes of Hercules under the clothes. The softness of the clothes fires his response and fuels his expectations. It is not until Faunus raises the edge of the chemise and finds unexpectedly hairy calves that he realises that what he is looking for will not be found:

interea tunicas ora subducit ab ima:
 horrebant densis aspera crura pilis. (*Fast.* 2.347-348)
 (Meantime he lifts up the tunic by the hem of its skirt. Rough calves were bristling with coarse hair.)

While the clothes may be soft (*mollia*), Hercules himself retains his harsh (*aspera*) attributes. The episode ends with Hercules firmly stopping the aroused Faunus in his tracks (*Fast.* 2.349f.).

Paradoxically Omphale is provided a degree of protection by the wearing of Hercules' clothes, yet at the same time, Hercules is not rendered vulnerable to attack by the wearing of women's clothes. Hercules is still essentially masculine, as seen by the reference to his hairy legs, and still able to defend himself. The clothes may be "delicate" but Hercules himself still retains masculine attributes, he is "rough" and "hairy", contrasting with Omphale's initial description as golden and in need of protection by Hercules (*Fast.* 2.309-312). The initial defining of their gender roles holds true at the end even though Hercules wears Omphale's clothing. Even though Hercules and Omphale practice transvestism, their gender roles remain stable in this scenario, especially when under erotic attack. Hercules suffers no lack of power, even though he is seen as comic. The humour of the episode serves to reinforce his essential masculinity and the erotic vulnerability of the female.

Heroides 9: Hercules, Omphale and Deianira

Ovid also regales us with the story of Hercules and Omphale in the *Heroides*. Deianira writes a bitter, contemptuous letter to Hercules when she learns that Hercules has abandoned her and taken up with a female captive, Iole (*Her.* 9). In the course of her letter she also refers to the romantic interlude of Hercules and Omphale, but gives a very different interpretation of the effect that erotic subjugation has had on Hercules. Deianira is very much concerned with the effect upon Hercules' masculinity, and it is her view that Hercules has been compromised by his erotic thrall. According to Deianira, Hercules' erotic servitude does pose a threat to his masculine identity, and also correspondingly empowers the female.

Deianira begins her tirade with a description of Hercules in Omphale's clothing. Similar items are mentioned as in the *Fasti* episode, but here the effect upon Hercules is markedly different. Whereas in the former episode Omphale's vestments are destroyed by the mere fact of Hercules attempting to wear them (*Fast.* 2. 319-324), here the deleterious effect is reversed, and worked upon Hercules by the garments:

Maeandros, terris totiens errator in isdem,
 qui lassas in se saepe retorquet aquas,
 vidit in Herculeo suspensa monilia collo
 illo, cui caelum sarcina parua fuit.
 non puduit fortis auro cohibere lacertos,
 et solidis gemmas opposuisse toris?
 nempe sub his animam pestis Nemeaea laceris
 edidit, unde umerus tegmina laeuus habet!
 ausus es hirsutos mitra redimire capillos!
 aptior Herculeae populus alba comae.
 nec te Maeonia lasciuae more puellae
 incingi zona dedecuisse putas? (*Her.* 9.55-66)

(The Maender, so many times wandering in the same lands, who often twists back on themselves his wearied waters, saw a necklace hanging from the neck of Hercules, which found heaven a little burden. Were you not shamed to encircle strong shoulders with gold, and to contrast jewels against that firm chest? Truly it was these arms which brought forth the life from the Nemean pest, from whence your left shoulder has a covering. You dared to crown your shaggy locks with a turban! More fitting for the hair of Hercules was the white poplar. Do you not think that you have dishonoured yourself by encircling yourself with the Maeonian girdle like a wanton girl?)

Deianira traces a direct link between the assumption of women's clothing and a diminishing of Hercules' masculine status. In the *Fasti*, Hercules rips apart Omphale's clothing merely in attempting to put it on (*Fast.* 2.319-324), but here the clothing is seen to both bind and restrain him (*cohibere; redimire*). The clothing not only binds Hercules but changes his demeanour, formerly heroic and masculine, but now wanton and feminine. Deianira taunts Hercules, in an attempt to shame him, by stating that his vanquished foes would be ashamed to have been defeated by such a one as Hercules has become, dressed and diminished in his women's garb (*Her.* 9.67-72). She specifically states that he has become an unmanly foe, literally a "soft man": *detrahat Antaeus duro redimicula collo, / ne pigeat molli succubuisse uiro*, *Her.* 9.71f. (Antaeus would drag away the fillets from his hard neck, lest he be shamed at having surrendered to an soft man). The reference to the "hard neck" (*duro collo*) is a pointed reminder by Deianira of the contrast between Hercules'

proper masculine status which she feels he has abandoned, and which is still present in his physical appearance, and his current "softness" (*molli uiro*). In Deianira's view, Hercules' assumption of women's clothing has led to an emasculation of his status.

Deianira reacts in horror to the reports of Hercules engaging in women's tasks. This element of the myth is not raised in the *Fasti*, presumably because Ovid is concerned with themes of mistaken identity, and the sight of Hercules undertaking feminine activities would undercut Faunus' midnight deception. Again Deianira uses the contrast between Hercules' current status and his prior heroics in order to shame Hercules:

Inter Ioniacas calathum tenuisse puellas
diceris et dominae perimuisse minas.
non fugis, Alcide, victricem mille laborum
rasilibus calathis inposuisse manum (*Her.* 9.73-76)

(They say that you have held the wicker basket among the girls of Ionia, and have been ruined by your mistress's threats. Do you not flee, Alcides, from placing on the polished basket the hand that conquered in a thousand labours?)

a, quotiens digitis dum torques stamina duris,
praeualidae fusos conminuere manus! (*Her.* 9.79-80)
(Ah, how often, while with hard finger you twisted the thread,
have your too powerful hands crushed the spindle to pieces!)

Hercules' clumsiness and inability to adequately perform the female task of spinning is raised, but not for comic effect. Rather, it is a further attempt on Deianira's part to shame Hercules and remind him of the inappropriate nature of his current behaviour. Whereas in the *Fasti*, the contrast between the large hands and feet of Hercules and Omphale's flimsy clothing is played for laughs (*Fast.* 2.319-324), here the unsuitability of Hercules' body is contrasted with his tasks as a device to highlight the shameful nature of his behaviour. To further drive her point home, Deianira reminds Hercules of his past labours (*Her.* 9.85-100) and states that he is now unworthy to recount his former deeds: *factaque narrabas dissimulanda tibi*, *Her.* 9.84 (You told of deeds which you should have kept secret). Hercules' current emasculated status, according to Deianira, has had the effect of tarnishing all his previous exploits in retrospect. He is not worthy to lay claim to them any more.

Deianira saves her greatest invective for Omphale. Deianira's interpretation of their liaison is that not only has it resulted in Hercules' emasculation, but that correspondingly Omphale has arrogated Hercules' previous power:

se quoque nympha tuis ornauit Iardanis armis
 et tulit a capto notat tropaea uiro. (*Her.* 9.103-104)
 (Iardanus' daughter, the nymph has adorned herself in your
 arms and won famous trophies from the vanquished hero.)

qua tanto minor es, quanto te, maxime rerum,
 quam quos uicisti, uincere maius erat. (*Her.* 9.107-108)
 (You are as much less than she, o greatest of men, as it was
 greater to conquer you than those you vanquished.)

The erotic conquest of Hercules is accompanied by Omphale's apparent masculinisation. She, the soft woman, has been able to take spoils from the hard man:

O pudor! hirsuti costis exuta leonis
 aspera texerunt uellera molle latus!
 falleris et nescis - non sunt spolia illa leonis,
 sed tua, tuque feri uictor es, illa tui. (*Her.* 9.111-114)
 (O shame, that the rough skin stripped from the shaggy lion has
 covered a woman's soft side! You are mistaken and do not
 know it - that plunder is not from the lion, but you, you are the
 conqueror of the beast, and she of you.)

Yet the victory of Omphale over Hercules does not make Omphale a he-woman. Deianira characterises Omphale as a weak woman, hardly able to lift the spindle (*Her.* 9.115f.), but who has nevertheless taken up the club of Hercules. Hercules' club is phallic in its symbolism, and the weapon for which he is most famous. Omphale's victory is all the more shameful in Deianira's eyes because she is not a worthy foe, nor does she deserve to conquer a great hero such as Hercules. The shame arises from the fact that Hercules has allowed himself to be conquered by a woman, and has submitted to her erotic subjugation.

Choral ode on Love: Hercules

In the Senecan version of the myth, the Chorus's telling of the story appears to follow the comic tone set by the *Fasti*. The Chorus make great play with the sight of Hercules in women's clothing and attempting women's tasks. At first sight, it appears an uncomplicated and comic portrayal. Yet even though the scenario is presented as comic, there are disturbing undertones of violence and restraint. Even though Hercules is not presented as suffering negative effects from his erotic subjugation, there are hints that, for a man, playing the feminine role could have negative consequences, if ultimately not for Hercules himself, then for others. The silence regarding Omphale's role in Hercules' transformation serves to reinforce this idea. His story serves as a warning in light of Phaedra's behaviour and its ramifications for Phaedra and Hippolytus. Hercules and Phaedra undergo an almost exact reversal in their circumstances in relation to gendered behaviour.

According to the Chorus, Love has the effect of making Hercules' outward appearance effeminised, of making him prey to sexual subjugation. He lays aside his heroic status and becomes womanly and slave-like for love of Omphale:

Natus Alcmena posuit pharetras
 et minax uasti spolium leonis,
 passus aptari digitis smaragdos
 et dari legem rudibus capillis;
 crura distincto religauit auro,
 luteo plantas cohibente socco;
 et manu, clauam modo qua gerebat,
 fila deduxit properante fuso.
 Vidit Persis ditique ferax
 Lydia harena
 deiecta feri terga leonis
 umerisque, quibus sederat alti
 regia caeli,
 tenuem Tyrio stamine pallam. (317-329)

(The son of Alcmena discarded the quiver and threatening hide of vast lion, endured emeralds to fit his fingers and gave laws to rough hair; he bound his legs with adorned gold, restraining his feet in golden slippers; and with his hand, which once bore a

club, he drew out thread with hasty spindle. Persia and fertile Lydia's rich sands saw the hide of the fierce lion flung away and on his shoulders, on which the highest realms of the heavens had sat, a slender garment of Tyrian thread.)

The portrayal of Hercules is comic, almost buffoonish. The sight of this most masculine of men clumsily attempting to spin thread with his large hands, and wearing little slippers on his big feet creates the humour, with the contrast between his essential, masculine self and the womanly tasks he is attempting to perform.²⁷ Yet the depiction of Hercules is not so innocuous. The gender shift of Hercules is signposted in his designation as "son of Alcmena" (*Natus Alcmena*) rather than his more usual heroic epithets which link him to his illustrious male ancestor, Jupiter, and his grandfather Alceus.²⁸ The reference to Alcmena also recalls the trickery involved in the conception of Hercules, and the lengths that Jupiter went to in fulfilling his desires. Yet erotic deceit does not play a part in this particular episode. Hercules is not merely taking on a lesser form to achieve his erotic aims. It is love that is transforming him, not a tactic on Hercules' part for erotic fulfilment.

Nor is the depiction of Hercules entirely comic, as an exploration of the language used reveals. Hercules, when under Omphale's thrall, endures (*passus*) jewels on his fingers, gives order (*dari legem*) to his hair and has his legs bound (*religauit*) with gold and feet restrained (*cohibente*) in slippers. The language used does not only recall Phaedra's actions, but also the invective of Deianira in *Heroides* 9.²⁹ The Ovidian Hercules has his arms bound with gold (*fortis auro cohibere lacertos*, *Her.* 9.59) and hair bound (*redimire*, *Her.* 9.63). Both Hercules are spoken of as being weighed down by jewels, which is literally an impossibility: *vidit in Herculeo suspensa monilia collo / illo, cui caelum sarcina parua fuit.*, *Her.* 9.57f. ([Maeander] has seen hanging from the neck of Hercules, the neck which found the heavens a slight burden, bejewelled

²⁷This episode has comic themes in keeping with the story of Venus and Adonis in *Metamorphoses* 10. Venus takes on the huntress role more usual to Diana, through love of Adonis. Yet her essential femininity is not compromised by this action. She only hunts little or timid beasts such as the hare or timid doe; she avoids the boars, lions, wolves and bears (*Met.* 10.536ff.).

²⁸The reference to *Natus Alcmena* may also be a reminder of Hercules' mortal status at this time, and therefore his potential vulnerability concerning the effects of Love.

²⁹Connections with Phaedra will be explored later in this chapter, pp65-70.

chains.); *passus aptari digitis smaragdus*, 319 (endured emeralds to fit his fingers). It is the symbolism which associates the wearing of jewellery with the feminine that smothers the masculinity of the Hercules. Both the Senecan Hercules and the Hercules of the *Heroides* stand in contrast to the Hercules of the *Fasti* who is depicted as breaking and shattering the feminine trappings of Omphale (*Fast.* 2.319-324). The Hercules of *Fasti* 2 cannot even fit Omphale's girdle around his middle, while Deianira states that Hercules is made like a wanton girl in the wearing of one (*Her.* 9.365f.). The fact that there are verbal echoes of *Heroides* 9 in the Chorus's version of the Hercules myth suggests that there is an underlying threat to Hercules, even though outwardly the Chorus attempt to emphasise the comic elements of the myth.

Hercules' life becomes sedentary as a result of his servitude, and his clothing reflects this. He becomes restrained by the expectations of womanhood. Hercules leaves aside the totems of his heroic status, the lion skin and the quiver (317f.), which he has earned the right to bear. He replaces them with jewels (319), arranges his formerly unruly hair (320) and wears robes of Tyrian purple (329). He also lays aside his club, the symbol of his masculine authority and physical strength (323). Yet it is important to note, that unlike the version of the myth set out in the *Heroides* and *Fasti*, Omphale does not take up Hercules' weapons. Here the quiver and lion skin are discarded (*posuit*) and flung away (*deiecta*). There is no mention of the exchange with Omphale, or her role in his transformation or his adoption of feminine tasks. The Chorus do not allow Hercules, while he takes on the female role, to surrender his masculinity, and the totems associated with it, to someone else. Omphale is not even mentioned by the Chorus, either directly or indirectly. According to the Chorus, Love has wielded this power over Hercules, not Omphale. It is a case of the Chorus protesting too much.

As told by the Chorus, this episode of erotic servitude is not an ongoing threat to Hercules' masculine status. The Chorus's interpretation of the tale as comic allows the Chorus to deny that a serious threat is posed to Hercules and his essential masculinity. In this version, Hercules, in laying aside the outward symbols of his maleness, does not actually change his character. Omphale does not pose a threat to his gender identity. But the lack of Omphale's presence reveals that there is underlying tension in Hercules' transformation. In the *Fasti*, Omphale recedes into the background after the exchange of clothing with Hercules. The emphasis stays on Hercules as the main character, with his actions reinforcing his big and manly status.

Omphale is not needed. However Omphale's presence in the background in the Chorus's version is not a by-product of her unimportance. Rather it is a tacit acknowledgment of the danger of female passion and its ability to harm the male.

Omphale is not named in the choral ode on love. Yet, in a sense, Phaedra plays Omphale to Hercules. Phaedra and Hercules undergo an almost exact reversal in their circumstances. As Hercules labours under the burden of female expectations, it is precisely these same burdens that Phaedra is wishing to escape. It is as if a direct transfer is occurring between the two of them. Hercules lays aside the totems of his heroic status, the quiver and lion skin (317f); Phaedra is unable to participate in women's tasks and religious rites, and symbolically lays aside the distaff (103ff.). Hercules wears jewels and arranges his hair (319ff.); Phaedra casts aside her pearls and allows her hair to flow free (391ff.). Hercules abandons his club, a phallic symbol of potency and masculine authority, and learns to use the spindle (323f.); Phaedra takes up the javelin (397), which she has previously referred to in suggestively erotic terms: *iuuat excitatas consequi cursu feras / et rigida molli gaesa iaculari manu*, 110f. (It delights me to follow aroused beasts on their course and to throw the hard javelin with soft hand).³⁰ Phaedra's behaviour recalls the Ovidian characterisation of Omphale, particularly in the *Heroides*. As Omphale wields the club, so Phaedra takes up the javelin. In both cases, the juxtaposition is made of their soft femininity to the hard male appurtenances they take up (110f.; *Her.* 9.111f.). In any case, Phaedra would like to be in a position of erotic dominance over Hippolytus, as Omphale is presented as being over Hercules.

The stripping away of the outward trappings of her gender and social status symbolises Phaedra's desire to break out of the apparent restraints she finds herself under:

Remouete, famulae, purpura atque auro inlitas
uestes, procul sit muricis Tyrii rubor,
quae fila ramis ultimi Seres legunt:
breuis expeditos zona constringat sinus,
ceruix monili uacua, nec niueus lapis

³⁰For *mollis* as an erotic term see Edwards, Catharine, (1993), p93ff. For *gaesum* as phallic synonym see Adams, J. N., (1982), p21

deducat auris, Indici donum maris;
 odore crinis sparsus Assyrio uacet.
 sic temere iactae colla perfundant comae
 umerosque summos, cursibus motae citis
 uentos sequantur. laeua se pharetrae dabit,
 hostile uibret dextra Thessalicum manus. (387-397)

(Remove, slaves, this purple and clothing daubed with gold, let the Tyrian red-purple dye be far, and the thread which the most distant Chinese gather from trees: a brief girdle should restrain these unimpeded folds, my neck be empty of a necklace, nor let snowy jewels, gift of the Indian sea, weigh down my ears; let my loosened hair be without Assyrian scent. Let my scattered hair flow anyhow over my neck and tops of shoulders, moved by swift motion while I follow the winds. My left hand will take the quiver, my right hand brandish the Thessalian javelin).

Phaedra's description of her clothing suggests that she feels impeded by her gender, and that she lacks both the physical and emotional freedom of the male, or of the Amazon. She wishes for her body to be literally "empty" of the burdens (391, 393) of perfume and jewels. Her ears are "weighed down" (*deducat*) by pearls. The wish for her hair to flow free is a reminder of the more normally tightly bound and dressed Roman matron's hairstyle, as well as of the elegiac motif of flowing hair.³¹ Phaedra wishes for only a brief girdle "to restrain" (*cohibente*) her waist, suggesting that her normal clothing is more restrictive. Of course, more burdensome than the literal weight of her clothing and jewels, is what they signify. Her jewels and silks are symbols of her wifhood and sexual maturity, and also her sexual submission to her husband. They remind her of the moral obligations of being a wife. Given that the Romans associated immoral behaviour in women with the wearing of silks and expensive jewels, it is ironic that Phaedra is clad in austere dress when she makes her approach to Hippolytus. Clothing and jewels also serve to objectify women by using them to display the outward signs of a man's wealth and prestige.³²

³¹For a discussion of matron's hair styles see La Follette, Laetitia, "The Costume of the Roman Bride" in *The World of Roman Costume* edd. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante, (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1994)

Phaedra's behaviour as the new Omphale does not threaten Hercules, however it does hold dangers for the object of her desire, Hippolytus. Hippolytus is threatened by Phaedra's behaviour precisely because his masculinity is in a parlous state and his gender identity is not stable. This is symbolised by his comparison to both Hercules and Hylas (779f.; 807). In contrast to the tale of Hercules, Phaedra's confusion of gender boundaries has major ramifications, not only for herself but Hippolytus.

³²see Lucius Valerius' speech on repealing the Oppian law, when he suggests that because women cannot hold political offices as men do, they should be allowed fine clothing and jewels, in keeping with their status as Roman wives. He believes it is not fitting for Roman women to be unadorned, when they can see women from lesser cities in all their finery. Livy, 38.1-8

Chapter Three: Hippolytus as Rape Victim

Hippolytus has attracted the sexual interest of a goddess, Diana, and also the sexual interest of a woman, Phaedra, who has modelled her pursuit of Hippolytus on the erotic behaviour of her divine male ancestors. Yet there are different scenarios that come into play for one who has attracted the sexual interest of a divinity. The question needs to be asked as to whether Hippolytus fits the model of an adolescent male beloved, or of a lover of a goddess, or whether he has more in common with the victims of unwanted aggressive sexual desire. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which covers erotic relationships between gods and mortals provides a useful comparison with the story of Hippolytus and is also of use in evaluating Roman attitudes to questions of gender and sexual desire.

Hippolytus and Diana

Hippolytus' relationship with his chosen goddess, Diana, is problematic. There is a wide gulf between his presumptions concerning their bond and the actual circumstances of their relationship. In part, these problems arise because of Hippolytus' mistaken views concerning his supposed affinity with Diana. Yet there are also tensions caused by the contradiction inherent in his attempt to forge a bond with the woodland goddess.

Hippolytus, when addressing his prayer for a successful hunt to Diana, refers to Diana and himself in the following terms: *Ades en comiti, diua uirago*, 54 (Come to your comrade, manlike goddess). His use of terms is revealing both in his evaluation of his own position and of the reasons for his attraction to Diana. Hippolytus regards himself as the companion of Diana (54), with the use of *comes* suggesting a notion of equality between the two. A comparison with Euripides' *Hippolytus* reveals the Senecan Hippolytus' arrogance in addressing Diana in such a way. In *Hippolytus*, the Euripidean Hippolytus refers to himself as a servant (*hyperetes*, *Hipp.* 1397) and to Diana as mistress (*despoina*, *Hipp.* 74), which clearly sets out the inequality of their relationship.¹ He is worshipper, she is goddess. The Senecan Hippolytus refers to himself as a favoured worshipper (*gratus cultor*, 73) at the conclusion of his prayer, but it is clear that he thinks that his relationship is on a more

¹Boyle, A. J., *Seneca's Phaedra*, (X Francis Cairns, Liverpool, 1987), p138

equal footing than that of goddess and worshipper, by the manner in which he starts his prayer.

Hippolytus also surprises by his description of Diana as *virago*. Diana's more common epithet is *virgo*, which is to be expected as her chastity is a notable feature of her character.² Hippolytus' use of *virago*, along with his use of military terminology in his opening speech, highlights the fact that Diana's attraction for Hippolytus rests on his attraction to her apparently widespread power rather than her virginity. But there are other tensions surrounding Diana's chastity in this play. What Hippolytus does not realise is that Diana's virginity has been compromised. The Chorus are aware, as he is not, of her past passion for Endymion (311ff.), and of her current passion for Hippolytus (785ff.). Hippolytus' designation of Diana as the "man-like goddess" poses problems as it suggests that Hippolytus himself is attracted to what he perceives as ambivalent or contradictory elements in Diana's nature. If she is the "man-like goddess", is he the "girl-like man"? And is his position tenable?

Hippolytus' position as an acolyte of Diana raises immediate problems when we note that her usual companions are female and virginal. In addition, even though Hippolytus believes that he is privy to Diana's favour, he is not admitted to her physical presence. His maleness means that he does not and cannot belong to the privileged band of Diana's favourites. Hippolytus' role as an acolyte of Diana is unconvincing and unsustainable, and moreover he is unable to recognise the danger the goddess herself poses to him. Unlike the other acolytes of Diana who are raped by Jupiter and Apollo amongst others, Hippolytus' sexual violation and death come about partly through the agency of Diana.

Stories of beloved boys: *Metamorphoses* 10

We might expect, given his gender, that Hippolytus' experience is modelled on the stories of boys beloved by the gods in Ovid's version of Greek mythology. Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 10 gives us examples of adolescent boys loved by the gods and recounts the stories of Cyparissus and Apollo,

²Boyle, A. J. (1987), p138

Hyacinthus and Apollo, and Venus and Adonis.³ Ovid's description of the affairs is, for the most part, brief, both in physical descriptions of the mortal adolescents, and also in the effect of love upon the gods. All the boys mentioned meet their deaths, yet their circumstances differ greatly from Hippolytus'. Ovid also tells the tale of Cephalus' abduction by Aurora. Whether or not Hippolytus' story in its essential aspects resembles those of the boys favoured by the gods remains to be seen.

The boys mentioned by Ovid share a physical attractiveness which is noted for its superlative beauty. Cyparissus, a beloved of Apollo, is described as the handsomest youth in Cea (*Ceae pulcherrime gentis*, *Met.* 10.120). No direct mention is made of Hyacinthus' appearance, though at the time of his death he is compared with flowers (*Met.* 10. 190f.) which suggests his physical beauty. No detailed description is given of Adonis' looks, though it is mentioned that even Envy praised Adonis' beauty which rivalled that of Cupid's (*Met.* 10.15f.) Yet while these boys' beauty is noted, a precise catalogue of their features is not given. We are not told, for example, if they have wavy hair or attractively shaped limbs. The details of appearance are not considered as important in these descriptions of relationship with divinity.

Ovid does give more details in terms of the relationships that these boys have with their gods. While we do not get a detailed picture of the bond between Cyparissus and Apollo in terms of shared activities, it is such that Apollo is moved by Cyparissus' grief over the killing of a pet stag (*Met.* 10.130f.) and is led to offer advice in moderating grief. When Cyparissus refuses to be consoled, Apollo uses his powers to grant Cyparissus' wish to grieve forever by transforming him into a cyprus (*Met.* 10.134f.). Apollo's relationship with Hyacinthus is noteworthy for their delight in hunting together and the exclusivity of their bond: *te meus ante omnes genitor dilexit, et orbe / in medio positi caruerunt praeside Delphi*, *Met.* 10.167f., (My father loved him before all others, and Delphi, placed in the centre of the world, lacked its ruler.).

Ovid also tells of the story of Venus and Adonis. It is included in this section as the story is constructed on the homosexual model. Adonis fulfils

³This last example is included as Venus and Adonis' relationship can be interpreted as being constructed on the homosexual model. The story of Ganymede and Jupiter is not covered as it is so briefly told by Ovid.

the role of beautiful boy, while Venus is the superior partner in this relationship, giving him advice (*Met.* 10.542f.) and deciding when and where they shall rest (*Met.* 10.554f.). Venus is also depicted as taking sexual pleasure in Adonis: *sic ait ac mediis interserit oscula uerbis*, *Met.* 10.559 (And she places kisses between words as she speaks). The two have an ongoing relationship (*Met.* 10.529f.) with Venus preferring Adonis to heaven (*Met.* 10.532). The common theme to the these stories briefly told by Ovid is the fact that they all describe ongoing relationships rather than depictions of rape and sexual violence. These beloveds are in fact the comrades of their gods and are their preferred companions. Nor do these stories involve a description of the pursuit, hunt or chase of the beloveds by the gods, or involved descriptions of their physical beauty. The reader is not invited to participate in a voyeuristic objectification of the beauty and pursuit of the beloved. The relationship is more important than the possession of beauty. There is no sexual aggression represented by Ovid in these stories.

All three beloveds undergo death and/or transformation, which gives another dimension to their relationships with the gods. As noted above, Apollo grants Cyparissus' wish for transformation (*Met.* 10.134f.). Hyacinthus' death is a result of his youthful impatience to have a turn with the discus, running forward to get it before it has fully landed. He is fatally wounded by the discus bouncing up in his face (*Met.* 10.182f.). Apollo is distraught at losing Hyacinthus, and even though his death is clearly the result of misadventure, Apollo blames himself (*Met.* 10.17ff.). Hyacinthus' transformation into the flower of the same name results from Apollo's wish for Hyacinthus to be with him forever (*Met.* 10. 202-206). Adonis dies as a result of his disregarding of Venus' advice concerning the dangers of the boar (*Met.* 10.542f.). Venus is grief-stricken and as a lasting memorial to him, transforms him into an anemone (*Met.* 10. 730f.). In these stories, transformation is not used as an instrument of punishment, nor as a way of eluding a pursuer, rather it is used by the gods as a way of granting a beloved's wish or as a *memento mori* for the gods to always keep their beloveds with them.

In *Metamorphoses* 7 Ovid also tells the story of Cephalus' abduction by Aurora. The case of Cephalus differs from that of Hippolytus and the boys mentioned in *Metamorphoses* 10 in so far as he is a sexually mature male, but he also comes to no direct harm from a divinity. Aurora carries him off against his will, but does not do any physical harm to him: *vertice de summo*

semper florentis Hymetti / lutea mane uidet pulsus Aurora tenebris / inuitumque rapit, *Met.* 7.703ff., (From the top of Mount Hymettus, where it is always blooming, golden Aurora, who drives away the shadows in the morning, saw me and carried me off unwillingly). The case of Cephalus suggests sexual aggression by the use of *rapit* but this aggression is not borne out by the rest of the story. The use of *rapit* suggests that Aurora's primary interest in Cephalus is sexual and related to his beauty. However, Cephalus' unwillingness to be with Aurora suggests a parallel with Odysseus, who grieved by day but lay by the goddess Kalypso each night (*Od.* 5.154ff.), rather than an overt case of sexual aggression. The mortal and the goddess do not share a relationship comparable with the former cases, in fact Aurora sends Cephalus away when he angers her by making clear his preference for his wife, Procris. Yet beyond a spiteful slur on his wife's fidelity, Aurora does not punish Cephalus for his rejection (*Met.* 7.12ff.).

There are common elements in these stories of boys beloved by the gods, of ongoing relationships, emotional bonds and genuine grief on the part of the gods when their beloved dies. Yet a closer look at Hippolytus' circumstances will reveal that his story does not resemble the almost idyllic pastoral relationships presented by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 10. His story has far more in common with that of the victims of divine rape.

Hippolytus and the *Metamorphoses*: stories of rape

There are parallels in both the appearance and actions of Hippolytus which recall those of Ovid's heroines, most particularly the acolytes of Diana. It is here that we might look for a suitable response for Hippolytus to follow when confronted by Phaedra, a response to the shared experience of violation. It becomes clear that even though Hippolytus does not share the favour of his goddess, he will share a fate common to her other followers. In particular, when Hippolytus is compared with the depiction of Daphne and Callisto by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, it becomes clear that similarities of situation and appearance abound. Hippolytus, Daphne and Callisto all share a fate of unwanted sexual attention and violence against their bodies, for which they, not the perpetrators, are punished.

Despite their opposed theoretical positions, Leo Curran and Amy Richlin both outline common elements that occur in Ovid's depictions of rape. Curran highlights the "violation of youth and the defilement of beauty" as

well as the predatory nature of the rapist who takes pleasure in mastering his victim's will.⁴ Curran also sets out a hierarchy of desirability of the rape victim, beginning with the married or sexually mature victim, the inexperienced virgin and the greatest prize of all, the virgin who is not only inexperienced but has "a positive aversion to sex", as the rapist is then free to "enjoy his mastery over her futile resistance against what she finds detestable and degrading".⁵ Curran believes that the terror and flight of the victim act as aphrodisiacs for the rapist in Ovid's depiction, but does not believe that the reader is also invited to take voyeuristic pleasure in these details.⁶ Richlin, in her discussion of Ovid's presentation of rape in the *Metamorphoses*, also cites common features that occur in Curran's argument. There is the beauty of the rape victim, usually female, which is regarded by the rapist as an "incitement to lust inherent in the woman"; a bucolic setting, scene of many of the *Metamorphoses'* rapes, and the stealthy approach of the lustful rapist, either openly or through disguise (e.g. Jupiter disguised as Diana *Met.* 2. 425).⁷ However Richlin's interpretation of Ovid's aims differs greatly from Curran as she believes that the reader is invited to find the distress of the victim erotically attractive, a concept that she defines as the gaze, whereby male voyeurism is linked to violence against women.⁸ Both Curran's and Richlin's accounts have resonance for the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra.

Daphne and Hippolytus

The story of Daphne, as presented in the *Metamorphoses*, reveals that she has much in common with Hippolytus. At the most basic level, the similarity in the description of their appearance is quite striking. They both have unarranged hair which is a common elegiac attribute of the beloved (*sine lege capillos*, *Met.* 1.477; *te frons hirta decet, te breuior coma / nulla lege iacens*, *Ph.* 803f.)⁹ Daphne's eyes are said to "gleam like stars" (*Met.* 1.498f.), a feature also noted in Phaedra's description of Hippolytus (1174). Their appearance has a similar erotic quality, which is independent of their actual

⁴ Curran, Leo, "Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*" *Arethusa* 11 (1978), p236

⁵ Curran, Leo (1978), p231

⁶ Curran, Leo (1978), p227; p232

⁷ Amy Richlin, "Reading Ovid's Rapes" in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* ed. Amy Richlin (OUP, New York, 1992), p172

⁸ Richlin, Amy (1992), p159ff.

views on sexuality.¹⁰

The appearance of both Daphne and Hippolytus also gives rise to a similar type of response from others, a response that neither Hippolytus or Daphne anticipate or appreciate. Apollo is smitten with love for Daphne and dwells upon her physical charms:

Phoebus amat uisaeque cupit conubia Daphnes,
quodque cupit, sperat, suaque illum oracula fallunt (*Met.* 1.490-491)

(Phoebus loves Daphne at sight and longs to lay with her; and what he desires, that he hopes; and his own prophecies deceive him).

sic deus in flammis abiit, sic pectore toto
urit et sterilem sperando nutrit amorem.
spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos
et 'quid, si comantur?' ait. uidet igne micantes
sideribus similes oculos, uidet oscula, quae non
est uidisse satis; laudat digitosque manusque
brachiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos;
si qua latent, meliora putat. fugit ocior aura
illa leui (*Met.* 1.495-503)

(So did the god go down in flames, so did he burn in all his heart, and nourish his barren love on hope. He observes her unadorned hair hanging down her neck, and says: "What if it were combed?" He gazes at her eyes sparkling like the fire of stars, he gazes upon her lips, which to gaze on is not enough. He praises at her fingers, hands and wrists, and her arms, bare to past the middle; and what is hid he thinks even better. But she flees him swifter than the fickle breeze.)

In keeping with Richlin's argument, much emphasis is placed on Apollo's

⁹See Prop. 2.22.9; *Am.* 1.5, 1.14.19-22

¹⁰Additional emphasis is placed on Daphne's physical attributes, which is not unexceptionable in a catalogue of desire. The combination of beauty and skill dwelt on in descriptions of Hippolytus help to emphasise his adolescent gender status, which will be further discussed in chapter 4, pp106-117.

pleasure in watching Daphne unawares, and also on his desire to refashion Daphne according to his own canon of desirability. Here, to begin with, the rapist also plays the part of voyeur. Apollo gazes on Daphne's hair and wishes to arrange it, thereby wishing her more pliant and feminine, and amenable to his overtures. The effects of love are also similar for both sexual aggressors. Apollo is consumed by love and feels the flames burning him, as does Phaedra:

Pectus insanum uapor
 amorque torret. intimis saeuit ferus
 [penitus medullas atque per uenas meat] (640-642)
 (Steaming love burns my raging heart. A wild fire rages
 innermost and it passes through my veins and deeply in my
 marrow.)

Phaedra also wishes and believes that Hippolytus will be able to be tamed by love: *Nvt. Ferus est. Ph. Amore didicimus uinci feros.*, 240 (Nurse He is wild. Phaedra We have learnt that wild beasts are conquered by love). Clearly Daphne and Hippolytus fulfil a similar role as the object of desire.

It is when confronted by their uninvited amorous overtures that Hippolytus and Daphne reveal further similarity, by responding in the same manner. They both display surprise and incomprehension and flee the scene. Daphne and Hippolytus, by their actions and demeanour, also enhance their desirability, according to Curran's hierarchy of desire. Their response serves to inflame the desire of their sexual pursuers. Daphne flees Apollo "more swiftly than the breeze" and is likened to an animal in the hunt (a hare being chased by a hound, *Met.* 1.533ff.) The Chorus describe Hippolytus as "fleeing like a raging tempest" (*Fugit insanae similis procellae*, 736) and as mentioned above, Phaedra has already likened Hippolytus to a beast. At no time is there any feeling that either Hippolytus or Daphne acquiesces in violation. There is no sense of reciprocation. Daphne still shrinks away from Apollo when transformed into a tree (*Met.* 1.566). Hippolytus cannot even carry out his threat to kill Phaedra when he realises that this will be a perverse fulfilment of her wishes (710ff.).

After the approaches of Apollo and Phaedra both Daphne and Hippolytus shift in status from hunter to hunted and assume the victim's role. Richlin argues that Daphne's distress in flight plays a part in her

attractiveness: “but surely, the narrator stresses how visually attractive the disarray of flight, and fear itself, made the victim”.¹¹ However in Seneca’s *Phaedra*, it is the Chorus, not Phaedra herself, who give a detailed description of Hippolytus’ appearance. The Chorus’s physical description of Hippolytus is made when Hippolytus himself is fleeing in fear to the woods, after the sexual approach of Phaedra. The Chorus appear to condemn Phaedra for her sexual overtures to Hippolytus, and are aware of his distress (736) and focus on the dangers his beauty has brought to him. But their own lingering description of Hippolytus’ beauty and flight places them in the position of voyeurs (736-823).¹² The Chorus pray that Hippolytus be saved from the dangers of beauty, but are themselves participating in the visual attack on him. Diana too also takes pleasure in the flight of her acolyte (*Ph.* 785ff.).

Moving beyond physical appearances and their consequences, Daphne and Hippolytus are also linked by ideology. Both profess loyalty to Diana, and share in her love for the hunt:

fugit altera nomen amantis
 siluarum latebris captiuarumque ferarum
 exuuiis gaudens innuptaeque aemula Phoebe:
 uitta coercebat positos sine lege capillos.
 multi illam petiere, illa auersata petentes
 inpatiens expersque uiri nemora auia lustrat
 nec, quid Hymen, quid Amor, quid sint conubia curat. (*Met.*
 1.474-480)

(But she fled even the name of love, delighting in the retreats of the woods, and in the spoils of beasts which she had captured, rivalling with the maiden Phoebe. A single fillet restrained her locks placed without rule. Many wooed her; but she, turned away from suitors, impatient of control and without a husband, roamed the pathless woods, nor cared at all what Hymen, love, or wedlock might be.)

illa uelut crimen taedas exosa iugales
 pulchra uerecundo suffuderat ora rubore

¹¹Richlin, Amy (1992), p162

¹²A detailed discussion of Hippolytus’ beauty and its effect on others will be raised in Chapter 4, pp106-117.

inque patris blandis haerens ceruice lacertis
 'da mihi perpetua, genitor carissime,' dixit
 'uirginitate frui! dedit hoc pater ante Dianae.'
 ille quidem obsequitur, sed te decor iste quod optas
 esse uetat, uotoque tuo tua forma repugnat (*Met.* 1.483-489)
 (But she, hating the wedding torch as if it were a crime, would
 blush red over her beautiful modest face, and, hanging around
 her father's neck with flattering arms, would say: "O dearest
 father, grant me to enjoy virginity forever. Her father has
 already given this to Diana." He, indeed, complied with her
 request. But that beauty of yours, Daphne, prohibited the
 fulfilment of what you desired, and your form was opposed to
 that prayer.)

Both Daphne and Hippolytus find pleasure in hunting because it removes them from contact with urban, human society. The landscape they traverse is one of pathless groves and woods (*nemora auia lustrat*, *Met.* 1.479; *tutior auis / non est forma locis*, *Ph.* 778), following what they conceive as a divine example. Daphne vies with Diana in hunting and virginity, as the use of *aemula* (*Met.* 1.476) suggests, much as Hippolytus does with Apollo, Mars, Castor and Pollux in hunting, archery, horsemanship and beauty (795-819), and Daphne seeks to put herself on the same level as her goddess, in asking for the same privilege of virginity that Diana enjoys. In this presumption, she recalls Hippolytus' description of himself as Diana's comrade (*ades en comiti*, 54) rather than of Diana as his patron. Both Hippolytus and Daphne believe that they are fitted to join with the gods, and Hippolytus believes that he is actually reliving the Golden Age, when men mixed with the gods (525ff.)

This close relationship that both Daphne and Hippolytus seek with the divinities also leaves them vulnerable to similar fates. It is made clear throughout the *Metamorphoses* and the first choral ode in *Phaedra* that when mortals associate with the gods the relationship is often characterised by erotic misadventure and adverse outcomes for the mortals. The choral ode concentrates on the effects of love from the divine point of view and presents it in a humorous fashion. Therefore none of the humans mentioned by the choral ode (Leda, 301f.; Europa, 303ff.; Endymion, 309ff.) suffers a fate comparable to Hippolytus. However nor is an ongoing relationship presented either. Yet clearly both Hippolytus and Daphne are headed for similar perils because of their desire to live outside the normal human

experience and in close consort with the gods. Even without the crisis precipitated by Phaedra's advance, Hippolytus' zealous attachment to Diana is in itself one of the reasons for his downfall.

Although Hippolytus and Daphne may share a religious zeal, there is an important distinction to be found in the details of their beliefs. Whilst Daphne's love of the hunt is mentioned (*Met.* 1.474f.), it is also made clear that she makes a conscious and deliberate decision in favour of virginity. She rejects men, love and marriage (*Met.* 1. 480), as any follower of Diana should, and moreover she justifies this decision on the basis of her desire to follow Diana. Hippolytus' justification for his zealous following of Diana is largely based on his enjoyment of the hunt, violence and power. His invocation of Diana as a "man-like goddess" (*diua uirago*, 54) is telling; much of her attraction is bound up with his notions of the hunt as a military exercise. He is drawn to her exercise of power, rather than to her virginity. Hippolytus never fully rationalises his rejection of his own sexual nature, and his position as an acolyte of Diana becomes even more strained.

Callisto and Hippolytus

The comparison between Hippolytus and Callisto, as she is depicted in the *Metamorphoses*, provides a broader picture of Hippolytus' ambivalent response. Callisto's story differs from Daphne's as the former undergoes sexual violation at the hands of a god and is transformed not in response to her own prayer for safety (cf. Daphne *Met.* 1.544f.), but as a punishment from the jealous wife of Jupiter. The attitudes and responses of both Callisto and others to her rape are illuminating in giving an interpretation of Hippolytus' own behaviour and his eventual fate.

Like Daphne and Hippolytus, Callisto too is an acolyte of Diana. She is expressly spoken of as being a favourite of Diana's: *nec Maenalon attigit ulla / gratior hac Triuia; sed nulla potentia longa est.* *Met.* 2.415f. (Nor was any nymph who roamed over the slopes of Maenalus in higher favour with her goddess than was she. But no power is of long duration). Like Hippolytus and Daphne, Callisto fails to realise that this favour provides no protection, especially where the sexual interest of other gods is concerned. The hunting gear which Callisto wears and which advertises her allegiance to Diana, does not prevent her rape by Jupiter (*Met.* 2.409f.). Indeed he takes advantage of Callisto by taking on the appearance of Diana to lull her into a false sense of

security: *protinus induitur faciem cultumque Dianae Met. 2.425* (Immediately he adopted the appearance and dress of Diana). Jupiter's behaviour as presented here in the *Metamorphoses* anticipates his duplicitous erotic behaviour as displayed in *Phaedra*.

Curran argues that Ovid "draws out the implications" of the stories he presents, highlighting that the victim cannot expect sympathy from others and that the burden of guilt rests on her shoulders.¹³ Curran's argument is of particular relevance to Callisto's rape. It is clear that Ovid presents Callisto in a sympathetic light. That is to say, he does not blame her for her plight, and portrays her as an unwilling victim:

illa quidem contra, quantum modo femina posset
(adspiceres utinam, Saturnia, mitior esses),
illa quidem pugnat, sed quem superare puella,
quisue Iouem poterat? (*Met. 2.434-437*)
(She, in fact, fought against him, using her feminine way, (would that you had witnessed it, Saturnia, you might have been more gentle) but whom could a girl conquer, who could have power over Jove?)

Callisto is forced by Jupiter to acquiesce, as is seen by the reference to a struggle. It is intimated that it is not just her divine assailant that prevents Callisto from saving herself, but the fact that she is a girl (*puella*). The assumption that the narrator of the *Metamorphoses* appears to make is that in a trial of strength, a girl will always lose against a man. However, Callisto's struggle is not enough to exonerate her even though she had no chance of escaping her assailant. She is blamed not only for her insufficient resistance, but also for attracting the attention of her attacker. As Curran states, "[g]uilt is perhaps the most unjust burden the victim must bear".¹⁴

If Callisto is to be held accountable for her part in the rape, the narrator makes it clear that it is Juno who will sit in judgement and Juno who might forgive her (*mitior esses*). There can be no denying Jupiter's guilt; he recognises his inability to restrain himself as wrong, but expects that the most he will have to deal with will be the grumblings of Juno: *hoc certe furtum*

¹³Curran, Leo (1978), p223

¹⁴Curran, Leo (1978), p223

coniunx mea nesciet' inquit, / 'aut si rescierit, sunt, o sunt iurgia tanti!' Met. 2.423f. ("Here, of course," he said, "my wife will know nothing of my intrigue; or if she finds out, they are, they are, worth the abuse!"). It makes little difference if Juno is unwilling or just unable to inflict a more severe punishment on her husband. No punishment is meted out to Jupiter even though he is clearly the aggressor.

By contrast, Juno inflicts a cruel and inhuman punishment upon Callisto, transforming her into a bear but leaving her human faculties intact (*Met. 2.466ff.*). According to Juno, Callisto's crime is adultery and Juno addresses her not as a victim of sexual violence, but as a rival who has wronged her:

'scilicet hoc etiam restabat, adultera' dixit,
ut fecunda fores, fieretque iniuria partu
nota, Iouisque mei testatum dedecus esset.
haud inpune feres: adimam tibi namque figuram,
qua tibi, quaque places nostro, inportuna, marito.' (*Met. 2.471-475*)

("Certainly, this still remained, adulteress," she said, "than for you to be fruitful, and give signs of injury by birth, a witness to my Jove's dishonour. But by no means will you bear without punishment: for I will take your beauty away from you, with which you please yourself, insolent girl, and my husband.")

For Juno, the other part of Callisto's crime is that she tempted Jupiter with her physical appearance, yet there is no indication that Callisto "delights in her beauty" or has deliberately used it to attract Jupiter. Indeed, Callisto was asleep and unprotected when Jupiter first spied her: *Iuppiter ut uidit fessam et custode uacantem Met. 2.422* (When Jupiter saw her there, tired out and unprotected). What is put into action here is the aggressive action of the gaze directed toward the unknowing and unwilling victim, rather than a provocative display of beauty.

Both Callisto and Daphne are unaware that they are being gazed upon and are the objects of others' lust. Juno makes the assumption that Callisto knowingly uses her beauty to attract Jupiter, and Callisto herself acknowledges the strength of this societal double standard, as she feels ashamed of her body as the site of her guilt (*Met. 2.462*). The function of

beauty is to attract sexual attention, and it is their appearance that attracts erotic attention to Callisto, Daphne and Hippolytus. It is the ignorance of Diana's acolytes of the effect that their beauty will and does have on others, that leads in part to their fate. "Beauty is dangerous. The victim's beauty (...) is an invitation to and a justification for rape."¹⁵ Daphne's beauty is noted by the narrator as "not fitted to her prayer" to remain virginal: *sed te decor iste quod optas / esse uetat, uotoque tuo tua forma repugnat Met. 1.488f.* (But that beauty of yours forbade the fulfilment of your desire, and your form fitted not with that prayer). Hippolytus does not live safe in the woods with his patron goddess in a renewal of the Golden Age. The Chorus' prayer for his beauty to go unpunished, in itself a revealing word, is a prayer that the Chorus know will go unfulfilled. It is the hopeless conclusion to their ode:

Raris forma uiris (saecula perspice)
impunita fuit. te melior deus
tutum praetereat formaque nobilis
deformis senii monstret imaginem. (820-823)
(Rare has man's beauty (look at the ages) been unpunished.
May a better god pass you by safe and noble beauty show old
age's misshapen image.)

The woods hold more dangers for Hippolytus, and also for Daphne and Callisto, than the society he professes to despise. Neither Daphne, Callisto nor Hippolytus recognise that the wish to stay virginal and to reject beauty's effect on others is impossible.

It is understandable, whilst not laudable, that Juno blames and punishes Callisto for her husband's rape from motives of jealousy. However Diana, who is the protectress of Callisto, also blames her and punishes her with banishment when her pregnancy is discovered (*Met. 2. 460-465*). Even though she might provide assistance to a faithful and favoured follower, she chooses not to. Diana states that she does not want her sacred pool polluted (*'nec sacros pollue fontis!'* *Met. 2.464*) and we should not be surprised by this response. Callisto threatens the sanctity of the sacred pool with evidence of her sexual violation, as her rape places her in an ambiguous state, neither chaste maiden nor wedded wife.

¹⁵Curran, Leo (1978), p226

More surprising than Juno's victimisation of and Diana's abandonment of Callisto however, is the fact that Callisto also blames herself for Jupiter's attack and feels ashamed and guilty, even though she is seen to have resisted (*Met.* 2.434ff.). She too blames the victim of rape. She views the attack and the resultant pregnancy as a crime:

heu! quam difficile est crimen non prodere uultu! (*Met.* 2.447)
 (Alas! How difficult it is for a crime not to appear in the face!)
 qua posita nudo patuit cum corpore crimen (*Met.* 2.462)
 (The crime was exposed in her nude body when it [her clothing]
 was laid aside.)

Callisto blushes at her sexual guilt: *rubore pudoris Met.* 2.450 (with guilty blushes); *Parrhasis erubuit Met.* 2.460 (The Arcadian blushed). Callisto's own response to her rape reveals the attitudes underpinning sexual stereotypes and the values surrounding gender and sexual assault. Her sense of shame and guilt is also mirrored in Hippolytus' response to Phaedra. There is an expectation that the victim of sexual violation will feel guilt and therefore it should not be surprising that they attract punishment from others and themselves.

Metamorphoses: Phaedra, Jupiter and Apollo

The stories of Daphne and Callisto as told in the *Metamorphoses* also provide parallels between Phaedra and the gods. Apollo burns with passion for Daphne, just as Phaedra burns for Hippolytus, and neither of them is willing to recognise the futility of their passion and the likelihood that it will not be reciprocated (*Met.* 1.544f.). Jupiter attempts to deceive Callisto by taking on the dress of the virginal Diana when his purpose is to sexually approach an acolyte of Diana's (*Met.* 2.425). We might see this as foreshadowing of Phaedra approaching Hippolytus in the guise of a helpless widow to gain his sympathy, and also of her appropriation of hunting gear to make herself seem as one with his world. Jupiter and Apollo are two gods who have sexually violated the acolytes of Diana, and so they provide an obvious role model for Phaedra to follow. In relation to Phaedra's eventual death, it is her choice to reveal her role in Hippolytus' fate, and she punishes herself for it. If she had chosen to remain silent, she too could have escaped punishment as a rapist as Jupiter does in the case of Callisto.

The elements common to rape scenarios in the *Metamorphoses*, as argued by Curran and Richlin, are all present in the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra, from the forest setting to the voyeuristic pleasure the Chorus take in Hippolytus' distressed flight from Phaedra's advances. Phaedra also disguises her true intentions under the guise of a suppliant widow when she approaches Hippolytus and his beauty is a major factor in his violation.

The Phaedra and Hippolytus scene: an interpretation

Before an analysis can be made, it is useful to set out what action actually occurs in this scene. Phaedra falls in a faint (585f.) on hearing Hippolytus' misogynist outburst (566ff.) He then offers aid to her, and in an aside Phaedra reveals her love for Hippolytus and her intention to reveal it to him (592-599). However at first she is unable to proceed with her revelation (602-605). It is not until Hippolytus utters the trigger word of "mother" that Phaedra is able to start the process. Phaedra takes refuge in elegiac images, hoping that Hippolytus will see through her words and recognise her underlying meaning (609-623), but Hippolytus does not understand what Phaedra is driving at. Unfortunately, he states his misunderstanding in ambivalent terms (629-633) that add fuel to Phaedra's passion. She admits that she is suffering the pangs of love (640-644), which Hippolytus presumes to be love for Theseus (645). Phaedra then embarks on her long speech comparing Hippolytus to Theseus and admitting finally that she loves Hippolytus himself (646-671). Hippolytus' first response is to ask the gods to punish him for so great a crime as to attract a stepmother and then he compares Phaedra to her mother Pasiphae, rating Phaedra the more evil of the two (671-697). Phaedra admits her passion and her inability to control it, ending by falling at his feet (698-703). Barring the assistance rendered to her in her faint by Hippolytus, this is the first time she has touched him. Hippolytus is appalled by this and threatens to sacrifice her at the altar of Diana (704-709). Phaedra sees this as the fulfilment of her prayers, as she will die with her modesty safe at the hands of her beloved (710-712). When he realises this, Hippolytus flees, dropping the sword, to what he believes is the safety of the woods (713-718). This is the last time we see him alive on stage. With his departure, Phaedra faints again (730).

What are the underlying dynamics of this scene? I have examined the scene from the point of view of Phaedra and her use of elegiac terms as indicators both of her passion and of the gender reversals that her behaviour

reveals. Now Hippolytus' reaction to Phaedra's declaration of love needs to be examined. Phaedra has threaded clues to her love for Hippolytus throughout the scene, but Hippolytus lacks the necessary emotional apparatus and knowledge of elegy to unravel her meaning. Ultimately, Phaedra plainly spells her meaning out both physically, sinking to her knees (667), and verbally: *miserere amantis*, 671 (Pity a lover). Hippolytus cannot help but to understand her now.

Hippolytus' reaction to Phaedra's confession has called forth a mixed response. Much of the approbation attached to his character has stemmed from reaction to this scene, and the apparent violence exhibited by Hippolytus. Boyle in particular is severe in his representation of Hippolytus:

To Phaedra's appeal Hippolytus reacts with frenzied self-righteousness, scornful horror, unmodified vilification (676-697). Though his response could not have been otherwise, the chasm between Phaedra's pitiable and pitiaably presented torment and Hippolytus' manic response, sensitive only to the invasion of his self-constructed universe and to Phaedra as paradigmatic female obscenity, marks Hippolytus' behaviour as humanly, as morally deficient.¹⁶

For Boyle, the sympathy in this scene rests entirely with Phaedra, though he does admit that Hippolytus could not have behaved "otherwise".

Mayer admits to a feeling of unease about Hippolytus' reaction to Phaedra but does not attempt to either reason out his own reaction or that of Hippolytus:

One aspect of his characterisation however does surprise and disturb. His reaction to Phaedra's direct assault upon his feelings is unexpected: he wants heaven to incinerate him with a lightning bolt (lines 682-3). This complicates his character somewhat, in that he realistically feels soiled by her attentions, as if he had somehow encouraged it. His wish that he were dead seems an over-reaction, but there is a certain plausibility to it.¹⁷

¹⁶Boyle, A. J. (1985), p1336

¹⁷ Mayer, Roland, *Seneca: Phaedra*, (London, 2002) p55

Mayer does not provide any sustained reasoning for why “realistically” Hippolytus is repulsed by Phaedra’s attentions or for why Hippolytus may feel that he encouraged her.

Hippolytus’ response to Phaedra

Hippolytus’ speech to Phaedra provides many clues as to his psychological makeup. When Hippolytus is finally confronted by Phaedra’s passion for him, in a way that he cannot misconstrue, his initial reaction is one of shock and, interestingly, guilt:

Magne regnator deum,
 tam lentus audis scelera? tam lentus uides?
 et quando saeua fulmen emittes manu,
 si nunc serenum est? omnis impulsus ruat
 aether et atris nubibus condatur diem,
 ac uersa retro sidera obliquos agant
 retorta cursus. tuque, sidereum caput,
 radiate Titan, tu nefas stirpis tuae
 speculari? lucem merge et in tenebras fuge.
 cur dextra, diuum rector atque hominum, uacat
 tua, nec trisulca mundus ardescit face?
 in me tona, me fige, me uelox cremet
 transactus ignis: sum nocens, merui mori:
 placui nouercae. dignus en stupris ego?
 scelerique tanto uisus ego solus tibi
 materia facilis? hoc meus meruit rigor? (671-686)

(Great ruler of the gods, so you indifferently hear these crimes? So you coolly hear them? And when will you send a thunderbolt with cruel hand, if now is serene? Let all the heavens, struck, collapse and let the day be buried by black clouds, or let stars turn backwards and twisted back drive slanting courses. And you, head of stars, radiate Titan, do you observe this sin of your offspring? Sink your light and flee into darkness. Why, ruler of gods and men, does your right hand lie empty and the world is not burning with three-pointed torch? Thunder forth against me, transfix me, burn me pierced with rapid fire: I am guilty, I deserve to die: I pleased a stepmother.

Behold am I worthy of disgrace? Did I alone seem favourable matter to you for such a crime? Did my sternness deserve this?)

Hippolytus calls on the gods, apparently bewildered that there has been no immediate divine response to Phaedra's declaration. His conception of the gods focuses on their stern, patriarchal aspects, based on power and authority. As noted previously, he is attracted to Diana in her martial, rather than virginal, role; *virago* as opposed to *virgo*. He does not appear to recognise the gods in their role as lovers. The Jupiter he prays to is the ruler of the heavens (671). Hippolytus does not seem aware of the Jupiter who ravishes young girls in the guise of a bull or swan (299-308) or of the Apollo who humbles himself for the sake of love (296ff.). Nor does he know of the Diana who loved Endymion (309ff.), or of her current interest in Hippolytus. This omission in Hippolytus' knowledge of the world renders him vulnerable. Gods who themselves have indulged in illicit, or deceitful forms of expressing love may be more compassionate towards one suffering from love, rather than to one who refuses to acknowledge the power of love.

The logical inference to be made from the opening of his speech is that Hippolytus is asking for Phaedra to be punished, particularly as he calls on Titan to witness Phaedra's sin: *tu nefas stirpis tuae / speculari?*, 678f. But an unexpected twist occurs, the one that Mayer finds so disturbing. Hippolytus is asking the gods to punish him: *in me tona, me fige, me uelox cremet / transactus ignis: sum nocens, merui mori*, 682f. (Thunder forth against me, transfix me, burn me pierced with rapid fire: I am guilty, I deserve to die). He is not asking the gods to punish Phaedra, as one would expect, but himself. Segal questions the sincerity of this speech:

Hippolytus ostensibly blames himself as well as Phaedra for his loss of purity... But in 683 he is far from any conviction of his own fault. Far from behaving as though deserving to die, he nearly puts Phaedra to death (706). He remains as blind to the sources of violence in himself now as he was to the destructiveness of his Golden-Age innocuousness earlier (502).¹⁸

Yet the prayer Hippolytus makes is fulfilled to the letter. The tree trunk that pierces his groin is describes as having a burnt stake, which is suggestive of a

¹⁸Segal, C. P. (1986), p89

tree hit by lightening, Jupiter's weapon of choice and the punishment that Hippolytus has asked for (*tandemque raptum truncus ambusta sude / medium per inguen stipite erecto tenet*, 1098f.). His initial response is not one of anger directed towards Phaedra, or horror or disgust, though these emotions do follow. His first thought is guilt, guilt at attracting the sexual desire of another. Hippolytus' response echoes that of Callisto, the victim of rape, who accepts that her sexual violation is a cause for her own shame. Hippolytus displays the guilt of the rape victim, the passive object of sexual assault. He feels that his purity and chastity have been violated because he has aroused the desire of another. Even though Hippolytus is aware that he has not consciously invited this response, and participated in an erotic interplay, he still feels that he needs to be punished.

On the other hand, Hippolytus feels that Phaedra's passion has contaminated him, as seen by his comparison of her and Pasiphae: *o maius ausa matre monstifera malum / genetrice peior! illa se tantum stupro / contaminavit*, 688ff. (Daring greater evil than your monster-bearing mother, worse than your mother! She polluted only herself with so great a crime). Hippolytus demonstrates obsessive, guilt-ridden behaviour about the sanctity of his physical body: *Procul impudicos corpore a casto amoue / tactus*, 704f. (Remove your shameless touch from my pure body). This recalls Callisto's shame in her body as the site of her guilt (*Met.* 2.462), and Daphne's shuddering away from Phoebus' touch, even after her metamorphosis into a tree (*Met.* 1.556). After Hippolytus' initial disgust, he attempts to strike out at Phaedra, though he is not able to follow through with his threats as he thinks that this too will compromise his chastity. It is as if any form of physical contact is contaminating, especially as Phaedra sees death at Hippolytus' hands as a form of sexual fulfilment:

quid hoc est? etiam in amplexus ruit?
 stringatur ensis, merita supplicia exigat.
 en impudicum crine contorto caput
 laeua reflexi: iustior numquam focis
 datus tuis est sanguis, arquiteuens dea.
 Ph. Hippolyte, nunc me compotem uoti facis;
 sanas furem. maius hoc uoto meo est,
 saluo ut pudore manibus immoriar tuis.
 Hi. Abscede, uiue, ne quid exores, et hic
 contactus ensis deserat castum latus.

quis eluet me Tanais aut quae barbaris
 Maeotis undis Pontico incumbens mari?
 non ipse toto magnus Oceano pater
 tantum expiarit sceleris. (705-718)

(*Hippolytus*. What is this? Still she rushes to my embrace? Let the sword be unsheathed, let it exact deserved punishment. Behold her twisted hair in my left hand, her shameless head bent back: never have your altars been given more justified blood, goddess of the bow. *Phaedra*. O Hippolytus, now you make my prayers fulfilled; you heal the raging. This is better than my prayer, I will die at your hands with my modesty safe. *Hippolytus*. Depart, live, lest your entreaty be successful, and this unclean sword leave my pure side. What Tanais or what foreign Maeotian shore lying next to the Pontic sea will wash me clean? Not even the great father Ocean could purify such a crime.)

Hippolytus may realise that Phaedra too is to blame and needs to be punished, but he cannot bring himself to be the punitive agent. The reasoning he gives is that this act would further compromise his chastity. Hippolytus' inability to act comes from within. He cannot take the active role in Phaedra's fate. He does not even take the active role in his own death, unlike Phaedra herself. He passively attracts the attention of others, and this passivity is followed through in his response to it. Hippolytus has been characterised as harsh and violent in this scene, but we don't actually see much physical evidence of that in this scene. Phaedra has displayed more violence towards Hippolytus in her aggressive pursuit of him and in her conduct of her pursuit as a military campaign. Hippolytus flees at the end of this scene, but Phaedra will continue to pursue him aggressively: *et te per undas perque Tartareos lacus, / per Styga, per amnes igneos amens sequar*, 1179f. (And I mad, will follow you through the waves and through the Tartarean lakes, through Styx and fiery rivers.) Segal remarks, albeit with a different interpretation: "Far from behaving as though deserving to die, he *nearly* puts Phaedra to death [my emphasis]."¹⁹ Why nearly? Because when faced with the choice, Hippolytus is unable to act. He can *feel* guilty, and *react* to Phaedra, but instead of taking a decisive action all he can do is flee. His character is an amalgam of masculine and feminine behaviour. He is verbally violent but physically passive. It is this mix of opposing forces which allows

¹⁹ Segal, C. P. (1986), p89

Phaedra to depart from the usual behaviours associated with gender roles herself. She is able to become sexually aggressive as Hippolytus cannot call forth appropriately masculine responses to her attempted seduction.

The status of Hippolytus as a rape victim is reinforced by the language that others use of him. The Chorus, when detailing the danger that beauty attracts, refer to "the brightness which beams in tender cheeks is seized in a moment" (*et fulgor teneris qui radiat genis / momento rapitur*, 770f.). This recalls Phaedra's language when detailing Hippolytus' attractions for her through the mirror of Theseus' adolescent self, as she singles out the beauty of his cheeks: *cum prima puras barba signaret genas*, 647 (when first a beard marked his pure cheeks); *et ora flauus tenera tinguebat pudor*, 652 (Golden shame tinged his pure face). And of course Phaedra has behaved in a sexually aggressive way toward Hippolytus.²⁰ But it is at the moment of his death that Hippolytus' status as a rape victim is crystallised. The tree trunk that has thrust through Hippolytus' groin is described in the following terms: *tandemque raptum truncus ambusta sude / medium per inguen stipite erecto tenet*, 1098f. (At length a tree trunk with a burned stake ravishes the middle of his groin and holds him with a stake driven in.) The sexual symbolism of his death is inescapable. Hippolytus, who was unable to exercise dominance over Phaedra and her advances, and lost control over his horses, has his ambiguous sexual status confirmed by the manner of his death. His death is the literal emasculation that follows on from Phaedra's actions. This is only reinforced by Theseus' description of his son as a *rpto gnato* (1199).

Hippolytus and Phaedra: The *Metamorphoses* and stories of incest

For Hippolytus, Phaedra's sexual advance is not only violation of his chastity, it is also incestuous. It could be argued that on a technical level a relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus is acceptable, as they are after all related only by marriage. It would be wrong however to assume that such a relationship would be viewed as morally right, if only because it would be adulterous. Yet even if Hippolytus could put aside the issues of chastity and adultery, a relationship with Phaedra is still morally repellent because she is his step-mother. The nurse makes her opposition to Phaedra's proposal

²⁰As noted in chapter two p52f., the use of *rapina* in reference to Europa as one of Jupiter's victims, foreshadows Hippolytus' status in relation to Phaedra, who models her actions on Jupiter's.

clear; it is wrong for a father and son to share a lover (171f.). When Hippolytus calls Phaedra mother she begs him to use another term in order to hide this aspect of her crime (609). Clearly the relationship carries the stigma of incest.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells several stories of incest, both unrequited and fulfilled, and these stories provide a context for both Hippolytus' and Phaedra's actions. The myths of Byblis and Caunus, and of Myrrha and Cinyras, document the progression of female desire and shame and uncontrollable passion. The response of the male protagonists contrasts with that of Hippolytus in a similar situation and reveal culturally appropriate standards of male behaviour. Through examining other examples of incestuous relations it again becomes clear that scene between Phaedra and Hippolytus is full of confused gender roles and complexities.

Phaedra, Byblis and Myrrha

There are distinct similarities in Ovid's presentation of Myrrha and Byblis with the story of Phaedra. All three women attempt to justify their passions with similar reasoning, yet it is in the way that the three women choose to pursue the realisation of their incestuous desires that their circumstances differ. All three women recognise their passion as illicit and the ensuing result for all these women will be their destruction. But only in the case of Hippolytus and Phaedra is there concomitant destruction for the male.

Phaedra, Byblis and Myrrha share a strong moral sense and an awareness that their passions are sinful and invert social norms and therefore turn to other areas to find justifications for their passion. Myrrha turns to the world of nature, the world of animals, to find precedents for the desire she is feeling while Byblis turns to the divine realm:

illa quidem sentit foedoque repugnat amori
 et secum "quo mente feror? quid molior?" inquit (...)
 coeunt animalia nullo
 cetera dilectu, nec habetur turpe iuuencae
 ferre patrem tergo (...)
 felices, quibus ista licent! humana malignas
 cura dedit leges, et quod natura remittit,

inuida iura negant. (...) ²¹ (Met. 10.324-331)

(She indeed realises and resists her abominable love and says to herself "Whither is my spirit tending? What am I contriving?" ...Other animals mate with no choice, nor is it held a disgrace for a young heifer to bear her father on her back...Happy are they to whom it is allowed! Human concerns have given malicious laws, and that which nature concedes, envious laws forbid.)

di nempe suas habuere sorores.

sic Saturnus Opem iunctam sibi sanguine duxit,

Oceanus Tethyn, Iunonem rector Olympi.

sunt superis sua iura! quid ad caelestia ritus

exigere humanos diuersaque foedera tempto? (Met. 9.497-501) ²²

(But surely the gods have had their sisters. So Saturn married Ops, joined to him by blood; Oceanus, Tethys; the ruler of Olympus, Juno. But the gods are above the laws! Why should I try to consider human customs by heavenly and different covenants?)

Myrrha and Byblis have to turn to outside sources to justify and perhaps understand the roots of their diseased passion. Phaedra does not have to make any such emotional journey. Phaedra only has to look as far as her family which is famous for its unconventional passions. She recognises where the seeds of her abnormal love lie: *Quo tendis, anime? quid furens saltus amas? / fatale miserae matris agnosco malum*, 112f. (Whither are you striving, spirit? Why raging do you love the woodlands? I recognise the fateful evil of my wretched mother.) Myrrha and Byblis are aware that their emotions place them outside the realm of normal human experience, hence when they both question where their impulses arise, their questions are an agonised cry for help and understanding: *quo mente feror?*, Met. 10.325; *quo feror?*, Met. 9.509. Even though Phaedra expresses herself in a similar fashion, Phaedra's

²¹Myrrha's examples stand in direct contrast to Theseus' reasoning, when he accuses Hippolytus of perverting Venus' laws: *ferae quoque ipsae Veneris euitant nefas, / generisque leges inscius seruat pudor*, 913f. (Even wild beasts themselves shun the sins of Venus and ignorant shame saves the laws of birth).

²²But although here Byblis rejects the divine example she has chosen, she goes onto refer to the example of the Aeolidae (Met. 9.507-509) as a precedent for her incestuous desires.

questions are merely rhetorical. She already knows the answers, both as to the object of her love and the hereditary impulses behind it.

Both Byblis and Phaedra suggest the concealment of stolen love behind normal relationships and conventions. Byblis directly addresses Caunus' potential concerns in a letter:

tantum sit causa timendi,
dulcia fraterno sub nomina furta tegemus.
est mihi libertas tecum secreta loquendi,
et damus amplexus, et iungimus oscula coram. (*Met.* 9.557-560)
(And yet if there is cause for fear, beneath the sweet name of
siblings we shall hide our secrets. And I have freedom to talk in
secret with you, and we may give embraces, and kiss publicly.)²³

Phaedra uses this type of reasoning more in an attempt to convince herself to both begin an attempt to explain her passion to Hippolytus, and perhaps (*forsan*) also to assure herself of success:

si coepta exequor,
forsan iugali crimen abscondam face:
honestam quaedam scelera successus facit. (596-598)
(If I follow the beginning to the end, perhaps I can conceal the
crime with the matrimonial torches: success makes some crimes
respectable.)

Both women try to resort to subterfuges based on the conventions of familial relationships. This behaviour runs counter to their rejection of familial designators. Byblis wishes Caunus would call her Byblis, not sister and calls him her lord, with its marital and erotic overtones, rather than brother: *iam dominum appellat, iam nomina sanguinis odit, / Byblida iam mauult, quam se uocet ille sororem*, *Met.* 9.466f.²⁴ This disgust with reminders of kinship has echoes in Phaedra's rejection of the appellation of mother given to her by Hippolytus (609ff.). Myrrha's crime is perhaps too great for her to comprehend or

²³The Phaedra of Ovid's *Heroides* uses similar reasoning in her letter to Hippolytus, *Heroides* 4.138ff.

²⁴For *dominus* as an erotic term, see Ovid, *Amores* 3.7.11; also noted by Boyle, A. J (1985), p1331 n.91

attempt this kind of destructuring of familial relationships. She is all too aware of the crimes of nature she would be perpetuating in this kind of incestuous relationship, for all her prior talk of animals not feeling shame at mating with family members:

et quot confundas et iura et nomina, sentis?
 tune eris et matris paelex et adultera patris?
 tune soror nati genetrixque uocabere fratris? (*Met.* 10.346ff.)
 (Are you thinking of confusing every name and every law?
 Surely you will not be the rival of your mother and adulteress of
 your father? Will you be called the sister of your son or the
 mother of your brother?)

Even her Nurse who aids her in the execution of her desires cannot bring herself to name Cinyras as father: "*uiue,*" *ait haec, "potiere tuo" et, non ausa "parente" / dicere, Met.* 10.429f. ("Live," she says, "you will possess", but she dared not say "father").

Myrrha as a requited and Byblis as an unfulfilled incestuous lover, Callisto as pregnant rape victim and Daphne as a maiden who wishes to retain her virginity all transgress societal boundaries. They cannot adapt to the roles prescribed for them and therefore are outside the realms of human experience. Yet they all have in common the self-knowledge that their behaviour has in some way violated cultural codes. Daphne is aware that in pleading for eternal virginity, she is rejecting the recognised cultural roles of marriage and motherhood (*Met.* 1.480f.). Callisto has internalised and accepted the cultural guilt of her predicament (*Met.* 2.447). Myrrha comprehends that she has overthrown familial boundaries with her passion and resultant pregnancy (*Met.* 10.346ff.). Before she becomes irrevocably mad, Byblis briefly grasps the abnormality of her desire (*Met.* 9.500f.) Phaedra too realises that her passion is founded upon the violation of the moral code (178; 698f.).

Even though Phaedra, Myrrha and Byblis may share an awareness of the illicit nature of their desires, and similarities in justifying them, they differ in their attempts to resolve their passion. Byblis resorts to sending a letter to Caunus via a go-between (*Met.* 9.516) in which she spells out her passion for him. Yet this attempt fails. There is no direct confrontation scene between Caunus and Byblis detailed by Ovid. Byblis, still in the grip of mad passion,

rationalises Caunus' rejection as stemming from the servant's ineptitude (*Met.* 9.610ff.). She vows to undertake an approach in person; Caunus, realising that he cannot dissuade her advances, flees (*Met.* 9.633f.). Byblis, entirely under the control of madness, publicly proclaims her love and wanders the earth, eventually metamorphosing into a fountain (*Met.* 9.635-665). She is never able to leave her fantasy world. She is the one who meets a destructive fate as the result of her passion. On the other hand, Myrrha and her Nurse realise that a direct approach will never work in her case. They undertake to deceive Cinyras by insinuating Myrrha into his bed, while her mother is observing rites of celibacy (*Met.* 10. 436ff.). Myrrha, although she is portrayed as somewhat unwilling when the moment of execution comes (*et uellet non cognita posse reuerti*, *Met.* 10.461), nevertheless repeats her crime night after night (*Met.* 10. 473f.). However, it is Cinyras who brings the crime to light, not Myrrha. When her sin is discovered, she flees and prays that she may be transformed and punished by being refused life or death (*Met.* 10. 483ff.). In the case of Phaedra, she undertakes to directly approach Hippolytus and inform him of her love. Phaedra takes the masculine role in her scene with Hippolytus, and not only tells him of her desire, but tries to position him as elegiac mistress. In contrast to Byblis, Phaedra realises very quickly that Hippolytus does not reciprocate her feelings (701f.) and has to face the consequences of her actions. Yet unlike Byblis and Myrrha who attract transformation and madness as a result of their love, Phaedra is the one who brings punishment on herself, when it would have been possible for her to avoid detection. The differences in approach of these three women have ramifications for the responses of the males to these incestuous overtures.

Hippolytus, Caunus and Cinyras

Hippolytus, Caunus and Cinyras are all the recipients of unwanted incestuous advances. Yet there are differences not only in the responses of the three, but also in their fates. The urge to violence is common to all three, but is not carried out in any case. Yet Hippolytus' inability to make reprisal against Phaedra does not stem from similar grounds to Caunus and Cinyras.

Caunus is informed of Byblis' passion in a letter. Caunus' reaction is one of outrage and he can barely check himself from committing violence against the Messenger:

attonitus subita iuuenis Maeandrius ira
 proicit acceptas lecta sibi parte tabellas,
 uixque manus retinens trepidantis ab ore ministri,
 'dum licet, o uetitae scelerate libidinis auctor,
 effuge!' ait 'qui, si nostrum tua fata pudorem
 non traherent secum, poenas mihi morte dedisses.' (Met. 9.574-579)

(The young man, grandson of Maeander, senseless in sudden anger flung away the received tablets which he had read part way, and scarcely holding back his hands from the quaking servant's face, said "While it is permitted, flee, o criminal originator of a forbidden passion! If your fate had not attracted shame to us, you would have paid the punishment to me with death.")

His anger is directed outwards, he does not blame himself or see himself as responsible for attracting the erotic attention of Byblis. This stands in contrast to Hippolytus who feels guilt and shame at his unsought-for sexual violation. The blame rests entirely with Byblis; the only restraint on Caunus' actions is the desire to keep such a crime secret, for the sake of family honour. This is in direct contrast to the behaviour of Hippolytus. He is not prevented by outside forces in his desire to wreak revenge on Phaedra, his inability to act comes from within. Byblis continues to acquaint Caunus with her desire and we are told that Caunus flees the country: *patriam fugit ille nefasque, / inque peregrina ponit noua moenia terra.*, Met. 9.633f. (He flees his fatherland and the abominable crime, and founds a new city in a foreign land). Yet Caunus does not suffer a destructive fate as a result of Byblis' unwanted attentions. He does not flee as Hippolytus does, to his own eventual death. Caunus makes the decision to leave his sister behind, yet goes on to have a successful outcome, that is, founding his own city. He still fulfils the destiny expected of him as a king's son, in that he becomes a ruler. Even though he does not take direct action against Byblis, he is not punished as his lack of response to her derives from concern for societal mores rather than an inability to act.

The reactions of Caunus and Cinyras are remarkably similar, in that in both cases their first thought is one of violence. On the other hand, their circumstances differ. Caunus is plainly innocent of any involvement in Byblis' illicit passion. However, Cinyras could be considered culpable in the incestuous passion of Myrrha. He commits adultery and he neglects to find

out the identity of his nocturnal companion before embarking on a sexual relationship. However, he does not regard his actions as culpable. There is the same sense of outraged purity in his response. He does not recognise any guilt of his own:

inlato lumine uidit
 et scelus et natam uerbisque dolore retentis
 pendenti nitidum uagina deripit ensem;
 Myrrha fugit: tenebrisque et caecae munere noctis
 intercepta neci est (*Met.* 10.473-477)
 (Cinyras brought in a light and saw the crime and his daughter;
 holding back his sorrow he tore down the brilliant sword
 hanging from the sheath; Myrrha fled: the shadows blocked her
 death with the gift of dark night.)

The language used of Cinyras points to his sexual revulsion when he snatches his "bright sword" from the "sheath" near by. Not only is this phrase loaded with sexual overtones it also shows Cinyras acting masterfully within the context of a sexual encounter and is suggestive of his belief in purity and blamelessness. Even though the term *uagina* does not have explicitly sexual overtones in Latin, the sexual significance of the scene is suggested by the context of the action not language. Cinyras attempts to kill Myrrha. Again it is easy to see the contrast with Hippolytus' response to Phaedra. There is no guilt, no delaying, just a violent attempt to avenge a wrong. Myrrha, the one who is perceived as the guilty party in this scene, is the one who flees, not Cinyras, regardless of the blame he may share. Myrrha is only saved from her father's violence by the blackness of the night.

Hippolytus' attitude is in direct contrast to the behaviours of Caunus and Cinyras, both of whom are also the targets of incestuous desire. Neither Caunus or Cinyras blames himself for attracting unnatural passions, yet Hippolytus does. In both cases, anger and disgust is directed outwards. Unlike the cases of Cinyras and Caunus, where outside forces prevent their retaliation, Hippolytus' inability to act comes from within.

Metamorphoses 4.284-389: Salmacis and Hermaphroditus

The story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in the *Metamorphoses* presents a different type of sexual encounter. This tale of a sexually

aggressive woman pursuing a sexually passive male has many parallels with the tragedy of Hippolytus and Phaedra. Salmacis' unsolicited advance has much in common with Phaedra's just as Hermaphroditus' inability to deal with her advances is mirrored in Hippolytus. It is an example of a sexually aggressive woman threatening a sexually vulnerable male.

Curran believes that the rape of men in the *Metamorphoses* is negligible.²⁵ In relation to the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, he argues that "Salmacis, so long as she retains the form of a woman, cannot use force on Hermaphroditus".²⁶ Yet if the consequences of Salmacis' actions are considered, she has used force on Hermaphroditus, as she has caused an entire change in his physical body. Her sexually aggressive actions lead to his emasculation. Richlin sees the rape of Hermaphroditus as "threatening" to notions of male gender, and argues that Salmacis' actions, unlike those of male rapists, are categorised as a "bad thing" as she is a woman who takes on the male role.²⁷ There are obvious resonances in this story with that of Phaedra and Hippolytus, as her actions have the effect of threatening and displacing his precarious gender status.

Salmacis is a Naiad, who dwells outside the civilised world amongst the solitude and wilderness so beloved of Diana's followers. From the start however, she is presented as different from her sisters, who prefer to roam the woods as huntresses:

nympha colit, sed nec uenatibus apta nec arcus
flectere quae soleat nec quae contendere cursu,
solaque naiadum celeri non nota Dianae. (*Met.* 4.302-304)
(A nymph inhabits [the pool], but not one that is fitted for the
chase, nor accustomed to bend the bow nor to strive in running,
she alone of the Naiads is not marked out by swift Diana.)

Rather than expend her energies engaging in hunting and the like, Salmacis spends her time in passive, traditionally feminine pursuits concerned with personal appearance.²⁸ She cultivates her appearance and seeks out physical

²⁵Curran, Leo (1978), p216

²⁶Curran, Leo (1978), p216

²⁷Richlin, Amy (1992), p166

comfort:

sed modo fonte suo formosos perluit artus,
 saepe Cytoriaco deducit pectine crines
 et, quid se deceat, spectatas consulit undas;
 nunc perlucenti circumdata corpus amictu
 mollibus aut foliis aut mollibus incubat herbis (*Met.* 4.310-314)
 (But sometimes she bathes her beautiful limbs in the spring, and
 often draws down the boxwood comb in her hair, and she looks
 at the water to see what suits her; now enclosed in a transparent
 garment, she lies her body on the soft leaves or soft grass.)

In this recognition of her body and its role in sexual attractiveness and desire Salmacis is unlike Daphne, who does not recognise that her beauty does not accord with hopes of virginity (*Met.* 1.488f.). Salmacis' rejection of hunting can be read as a readiness to leave behind the world of adolescence and to enter the adult world of sexual passion. Her rest upon the grass contrasts with Hippolytus' austere outdoor lifestyle (510f.), and holds more erotic promise than Callisto's post-hunt nap (*Met.* 2.422). Her sisters, the Naiads who follow Diana, are truly virginal because they have not yet reached the stage of recognising sexuality. This is not a nymph who would reject Jupiter's advances.

Unlike Daphne and Callisto, Salmacis occupies a virginal status only in the physical sense: emotionally she is ready for sexual experience. Even the language used helps to emphasise this. The repetition of "soft" (*mollibus*) suggests the world of erotic experience.²⁹ Salmacis and Phaedra share a common bond in this respect. Within the realms of her erotic fantasy Phaedra attempts to identify with Hippolytus by acting out the role of a huntress. But Phaedra is no virgin huntress, she has worn the silks and jewels of the sexually mature woman (387-393) and eroticism plays a role in her passion. Hippolytus is her erotic prey. Even though she takes on the garb of the huntress, this hunt has more in common with the erotic motif of the elegy than with Diana's virgins.³⁰

²⁸As suggested by Ovid in *Ars Amatoria* 3.129ff.; 3.169ff.

²⁹See Prop. 1.3.12, 1.6.31; *Am.* 1.4.24; see also Edwards, Catharine (1993), p93ff.

³⁰For the use of the hunt as erotic metaphor, see Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 1.45 *et passim*

However, for all Salmacis' focus on her appearance and apparent femininity, Richlin has pointed out that Salmacis is also identified with Apollo, a renowned rapist, in the *Metamorphoses*.³¹ Richlin's evidence lies in the description of Salmacis as she is raptly gazing upon the form of Hermaphroditus:

tum uero stupuit, nudaque cupidine formae
Salmacis exarsit; flagrant quoque lumina nymphae,
non aliter quam cum puro nitidissimus orbe
opposita speculi referitur imagine Phoebus (*Met.* 4. 346-349)
(Then she was spellbound, Salmacis burned with desire at the
naked form; the nymph's eyes shone bright, as when Phoebus'
dazzling face is reflected with opposed image from the surface of
a mirror.)

It is Salmacis' eyes that are identified with Apollo, which is another instance of the gaze operating as a indication of sexual aggression. Phaedra too has links with Apollo as sexual aggressor, and her eyes are also associated with Apollo (379f.).³² Just as it is in the case of Phaedra and Hippolytus, it is the usurpation of the aggressive male sexual role by Salmacis that will lead to Hermaphroditus' downfall and highlight his inability to successfully inhabit the male role.

Salmacis sees Hermaphroditus and is fired with love for him. From the description given, it is evident that Hermaphroditus is not yet a fully adult man, and still virginal in both body and emotions. He is only fifteen (*Met.* 4.292) and unaware of love and sexual desire: *pueri rubor ora notauit;/ nescit, enim, quid amor; sed et erubuisse decebat*, *Met.* 4.329f. (But the boy's face blushed; / for he did not know love; but his blush became him). His ignorance and innocence add to his charm. Like Hippolytus (658), Hermaphroditus' appearance suggests his gender ambiguity: *cuius erat facies, in qua materque paterque / cognosci possent*, *Met.* 4.290f. (In his face both mother and father could be seen); *est genitor in te totus et torvae tamen / pars aliqua matris miscet ex aequo decus*, 679 (All of your father is in you and yet some part of your savage mother is mixed in with equal beauty.). Hermaphroditus

³¹Richlin, Amy (1992), p165

³²Her links with Apollo both in *Phaedra* and the *Metamorphoses* have been discussed earlier in this chapter, p75-86 and in the previous chapter, pp46-55.

occupies a sexually intermediate stage, due to his adolescence and innocence. Much more emphasis is placed on the attractiveness of his naked body and Salmacis' response to it, than was evident in the stories of beloved adolescent boys in *Metamorphoses* 10. The objectification of Hermaphroditus' beauty has more in common with the representation of Daphne and Callisto.

Salmacis approaches Hermaphroditus boldly, after gazing on him secretly, and praises his beauty (*Met.* 4.316ff.). He does not react positively to her overtures and rejects her:

poscenti nymphae sine fine sororia saltem
 oscula iamque manus ad eburnea colla ferenti
 "desinis, an fugio tecumque" ait "ista relinquo?" (*Met.* 4.334-335)
 (When the nymph demanded without limit at least a sisterly kiss,
 and was about to throw her hands around his snowy neck, he
 cried, "Cease, or must I flee and leave this place and you?")

Hermaphroditus' response to Salmacis resembles the rejection of Phaedra by Hippolytus. Both youths flee physical contact, when faced with sexually importunate women. Yet the nascent masculinity of Hermaphroditus is not able to repel or call forth appropriate responses to the sexual dominance of Salmacis.

Faced with Hippolytus' reaction, Phaedra recognises her wrongdoing and is shamed. However this does not stop her from acknowledging her desire for him nor stop her pursuit of him, even though she knows now that he is unwilling. His reaction is not such that it is able to deter Phaedra from the desired resolution of her passion. Salmacis is undeterred by rejection and prays to the gods that her wishes for erotic unity be granted:

"pugnes licet, inprobe," dixit,
 "non tamen effugies. ita, di, iubeatis, et istum
 nulla dies a me nec me deducat ab isto."
 uota suos habuere deos; (*Met.* 4.370-373)
 ("You may struggle, wilful boy, " she said, "however you will
 not escape. Thus, gods, I command, and may no day draw him
 from me nor him from me." The gods honoured her prayers.)

Salmacis calls Hermaphroditus *inprobe* (wilful, perverse), suggesting that his

rejection of her sexual advances is not in accordance with what she had expected. The gods fulfil her prayer perversely:

sic ubi complexu coierunt membra tenaci,
 nec duo sunt et forma duplex, nec femina dici
 nec puer ut possit, neutrumque et utrumque uidentur.
 'Ergo ubi se liquidas, quo uir descenderat, undas
 semimarem fecisse uidet mollitaque in illis
 membra, manus tendens, sed iam non uoce uirili
 Hermaphroditus ait: "nato date munera uestro,
 et pater et genetrix, amborum nomen habenti:
 quisquis in hos fontes uir uenerit, exeat inde
 semiuir et tactis subito mollescat in undis!" (*Met.* 4.377-386)

(Thus when their limbs were united in a clinging embrace, nor were they two forms but both, neither able to be called a woman or a boy, they seemed neither of one sex or the other. Consequently, when he saw that the flowing waters, into which he had descended a man, had made him half male and his limbs were softened, stretching out his hands, Hermaphroditus said, with a voice not now manly, "Grant this gift to your son, o father and mother, who has both your names: whoever comes into this pool a man, let him leave from this a half man and let him suddenly become soft at the touch of the water.")

Yet the effect of the prayer is not to grant Salmacis' wish, but to punish Hermaphroditus. The resultant hermaphrodite has the personality of Hermaphroditus. There is no outward trace of Salmacis remaining, in terms of uniquely recognisable human characteristics. The effect of their joining is that Hermaphroditus has been emasculated, not that Salmacis has been masculinised. He becomes, or rather stays, a lesser male. He will not pass from adolescence to the next stage of adult masculinity. He, like Hippolytus, loses his masculine identity when faced with a sexually dominant woman.

This episode suggests that fleeing, rather than confronting and dominating a sexually aggressive female, has the effect of emasculating the male and destroying the traces of his masculinity. The correct behaviour would be to overpower the female, either through sexual dominance, or with aggression against her if her advances are not acceptable. Cinyras and Caunus, when faced with unwanted sexual advances, take this course, and

their masculine authority and status are not endangered. The effect of Salamacis' actions is to threaten the dominance and authority of the male. Yet both Hermaphroditus and Hippolytus are unable to take the course that would grant them victory over a sexually rapacious woman who confuses notions of gender. Hermaphroditus is powerless as he is still an adolescent and has not reached a stage of male sexual dominance. The seeds of Hippolytus' inability to respond appropriately to Phaedra will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Hippolytus and Ambiguous Beauty

Hippolytus' beauty and the part it plays in both revealing the ambiguities of his nature and its role in his downfall is central to Seneca's *Phaedra*. On the surface, Hippolytus' looks appear to conform to the canons set out for mature masculine appearance. However a closer reading of both the language used and the comparisons made of Hippolytus reveal a tension between his apparently harsh, masculine exterior and the perception of Hippolytus by others which conforms more closely to a model of adolescent male beauty.

Parameters of beauty

In order to evaluate the type of Hippolytus' beauty and its effect on others, the parameters of masculine beauty must be explored. The definition of beauty shifts in relation to the adolescent and adult stages of masculinity. In fact it may be an anomaly to speak of adult male beauty, as it is not normally a criterion on which a man is judged.

Ovid, in his *Ars Amatoria*, sets out, albeit briefly, the criteria on which men's attractiveness is to be judged. It is worth quoting in full as it encapsulates many conventional Roman attitudes concerning male appearance and masculinity.

Sed tibi nec ferro placeat torquere capillos,
 Nec tua mordaci pumice crura teras.
 Ista iube faciant, quorum Cybeleia mater
 Concinitur Phrygiis exululata modis.
 Forma uiros neglecta decet; Minoida Theseus
 Abstulit, a nulla tempora comptus acu.
 Hippolytum Phaedra, nec erat bene cultus, amauit;
 Cura deae siluis aptus Adonis erat.
 Munditie placeant, fuscentur corpora Campo:
 Sit bene conueniens et sine labe toga:
 Lingula ne rigeat, careant rubigine dentes,
 Nec uagus in laxa pes tibi pelle natet:
 Nec male deformet rigidos tonsura capillos:
 Sit coma, sit trita barba resecta manu.
 Et nihil emineant, et sint sine sordibus ungues:

Inque caua nullus stet tibi nare pilus.
 Nec male odorati sit tristis anhelitus oris:
 Nec laedat naris uirque paterque gregis.
 Cetera lasciuae faciant, concede, puellae,
 Et siquis male uir quaerit habere uirum. (A. A. 1.505-524)

(But do not please yourself in curling your hair with the iron, nor in polishing your legs with the biting pumice. Order those to do it, by whom mother Cybele is sung of in howling chorus in the Phrygian way. A neglected beauty is becoming to men; Theseus carried off Minos' daughter, though no pins adorned his head. Phaedra loved Hippolytus, though he was not well refined; Adonis, fitted to the woods, was the love of a goddess. Let your body please with cleanliness, tanned by the Campus; let your toga fit well and be without blemish: don't let your shoe-strap be tight, let your teeth be free from a film, nor let your foot swim about in a loose shoe: don't let your rigid hair be shaped by bad shaving: let hair and beard be cut by a skilled hand. Don't let your nails project, and let them be without filth: nor let a single hair stand in the hollow of your nose. Let not the breath of your mouth be bitter or smell badly: nor let the lord and father of the herd offend the nose. All else, yield to wanton women to do, and men who seek to have other men basely.)

Ovid's advice to men concerning appearance centres less on attributes which may be considered attractive by others, than on acceptable standards of personal hygiene. His advice is more notable for the advice on what to avoid as being unacceptable for a man, with an undercurrent that suggests that an emphasis on or interest in looks is somehow unmanly (*Forma uiros neglecta decet*, A. A. 1.509). Ovid even refers to Theseus and Hippolytus as paradigms of unkempt male beauty, who succeeded in attracting women without even trying. Unlike his advice on appearance to women in book 3, Ovid does not detail any physical attributes which may be considered more attractive than others in male physiognomy, such as eye colour or build. It is enough for men to be men, and clean. There is no need to detail artifices by which to hide shortness (cf A. A. 3.263f.) or thinness (cf A. A. 3.267f.) or fat hands (cf A. A. 3.275f.), as seen in his advice to women. It is not the job of the adult man to attract sexual attention by means of physical beauty.

However when it comes to the adolescent male and his place in the

hierarchy of Roman desire, emphasis is placed on his looks and their role in attracting the sexual attention of others, both male and female. What is noticeable in descriptions of the charms of the adolescent male is the equation of his beauty with that of the female. He is valued for those attributes commonly associated with women, such as hairlessness, softness and a general prettiness. Narcissus is an outstanding example of the beauty of the adolescent male. As presented by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus is a youth who attracts the attention of both youths and maidens: *multi illum iuuenes, multae cupiere puellae*, *Met.* 3.353 (many young men desired him, and many girls). In terms of what constitutes his attractiveness for others, more emphasis is placed on his looks rather than any physical prowess.¹

ut e Pario formatum marmore signum;
spectat humi positus geminum, sua lumina, sidus
et dignos Baccho, dignos et Apolline crines
inpubesque genas et eburnea colla decusque
oris et in niueo mixtum candore ruborem,
cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse (*Met.* 3.419-424)
(Like a statue formed from Parian marble; placed on the ground
he looks at his eyes, twin stars, and his hair, worthy of Bacchus,
worthy of Apollo and his youthful cheeks and his ivory neck and
the glory of his face and red mixed in with dazzling whiteness,
and he marvels at the whole, which makes himself
extraordinary.)

The elements that make up Narcissus' beauty are for the most part interchangeable with descriptions of beautiful girls. Williams states, "there is an assumption pervading the Roman sources that beardless young men, blessed with the "flower of youth" (*flos aetatis*), stand at the acme of physical desirability."² Erotic objectification of the adolescent male is a commonplace.³ Yet their attraction does not rest solely on their looks. Physical prowess in the adolescent boy is also sexually intriguing for the lover:

¹The emphasis placed on Narcissus' looks stands in contrast to the presentation of beloved adolescent boys in *Metamorphoses* 10, where the descriptive element of physical beauty is minimal. See previous chapter, p73-75.

²Williams, Craig A., *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, (OUP, New York, 1999), p73.

o fuge te tenerae puerorum credere turbae:
 nam causam iusti semper amoris habent;
 hic placet, angustis quod equum compescit habenis;
 hic placidam niveo pectore pellit aquam;
 hic, quia fortis adest audacia, cepit: at illi
 virgineus teneras stat pudor ante genas. (Tib. 1.4.9-14)
 (Ah, avoid entrusting yourself to the tender crowd of boys: they
 always give a reason for a justified love; this one is pleasing
 because he restrains a horse with tightened reins; this one strikes
 the water with his snow-white breast; this one has captivated
 you because he shows brave daring; while that one's tender
 cheeks are marked with a maidenly modesty.)

The features of male adolescence were also attractive to women, both in mythology and the world of elegy. Endymion and Attis were loved by women, and Narcissus by both men and women. Tibullus counsels women to spare their youthful lovers, saving harshness for the veterans in love, as youthful beauty is its own reward:

carior est auro iuuenis cui leuia fulgent
 ora nec amplexus aspera barba terit.
 huic tu cadentes umero suppone lacertos
 et regum magnae despiciantur opes. (Tib. 1.8.31-34)
 (Dearer than gold the youth with smooth and shining face
 whose kiss no stubble rasps. Under this one's shoulder lay your
 dazzling arms and look down on the wealth of kings.)

Adolescent boys attract potential lovers with an intriguing mixture of prettiness and masculine activities. Yet this mixture may also prove their downfall. "In between those two extremes lay the golden years, the "flower of youth" (*flos aetatis*), when boys were no longer prepubescent children, but not yet men; when they were at the peak of desirability and thus of vulnerability."⁴ The combination of fresh beauty and male abilities may prove destructive.

³For example Tib. 1.4, 1.8; Prop. 1.20; Cat. 24, 48.

⁴Williams, Craig A. (1999), p19.

The beauty of Hippolytus

The Chorus sing of Hippolytus' beauty in an encomium dwelling on his perfection. He is compared favourably to the Olympian gods, themselves ideals of beauty and strength:

quam grata est facies torua uiriliter
 et pondus ueteris triste supercili!
 Phoebo colla licet splendida compares:
 illum caesaries nescia colligi
 perfundens umeros ornat et integit;
 te frons hirta decet, te breuior coma
 nulla lege iacens; tu licet asperos
 pugnacesque deos uiribus audeas
 et uasti spatio uincere corporis:
 aequas Herculeos nam iuuenis toros,
 Martis belligeri pectore latior. (798-808).

(How pleasing is that wild and manly face and stern weight of ancient eyebrows! With Phoebus your bright neck may be compared: his hair not knowing how to collect itself pouring over his shoulders adorns and covers; a shaggy brow befits you, short hair lying under no law befits you; with your strength you may dare the harsh and combative gods and conquer them with vast body's bulk: now young you equal Hercules' muscle, with chest more broad the war-mongering Mars.)

At first sight, Hippolytus fulfils the masculine ideal. He is more roughly handsome (*viriliter*), hairier, stronger and more muscled than either Apollo, Mars or Hercules. As the paradigm of masculine beauty, he surpasses the gods themselves. There appears to be no suggestion that his appearance is anything less than definitely masculine, with the Chorus's emphasis on his rugged good looks.

However a warning note is sounded in the very first line (*quam grata*, "how pleasing"). For Hippolytus' beauty to be seen as pleasing places Hippolytus in the role of erotic object.⁵ This has the effect of aligning

⁵The identification of Hippolytus as erotic object in *Phaedra* has its roots in the portrayal of *Phaedra* in Ovid's *Heroides* 4. In that epistle, *Phaedra* dwells on both Hippolytus'

Hippolytus with the sexual role is given to women, slaves and boys, the usual objects of sexual desire in the classical hierarchy of sexual politics. Adult men do not play the "pleasing" role in attraction, as seen by Ovid's disregard of a canon of male beauty (A. A. 1.505-524). Not even the Roman love poets, who play with the conventions of gender identification in their poetic personae, discuss their own physical attributes and how they appeal to their mistresses or boys. Nor does Phaedra, even though she is a woman, in her assumption of the male erotic role detail any features she may have that Hippolytus may find attractive. Of course, Hippolytus himself is not seeking to attract others' sexual interest, but he is the object of it nonetheless. Hippolytus is likened to Hercules here, but later he is identified with Hercules' love object Hylas, and Phaedra is more convincingly compared with Hercules.⁶

Yet the catalogue of Hippolytus' features does not immediately suggest a link with the adolescent male, dwelling as it does on masculine attributes such as muscles and broadness of chest. Other than a reference to his hair resembling Apollo's, a god noted for his androgynous beauty, there is no link with the canon of desirable adolescent features. The mention of hair is not a decisive factor in determining physical adolescence. Therefore Hill, who categorises Hippolytus as an adolescent on the basis of his response to Phaedra, is confusing an emotional state akin to adolescence, with the physical condition of adolescence.⁷ Yet there are disquieting elements to the physical description of Hippolytus, as he is compared to both hyper-masculine gods such as Hercules, and androgynous gods such as Apollo and Bacchus. The Chorus also sing of Hippolytus surpassing of the gods in physical activities such as wrestling (804ff.), horse riding (809f.) and archery (812ff.). Segal argues that "the overreaching of the hyperbole begins to undercut the praise. It is, in fact, ambiguous male beauty (*forma*, 820), not manly strength (*vires*, 805), that sets him apart."⁸ Whilst I would agree with Segal that the Chorus' praise of Hippolytus reveals tensions concerning his eventual fate, I would

physical prowess and physical beauty (*Her.* 4.67-84). The Chorus's descriptions of Hippolytus' beauty and physical prowess overlap those mentioned in *Heroides* 4 (e.g. *Ph.* 809-819; *Her.* 4.79-83). See Davis, P. J., "Rewriting Euripides: Ovid, *Heroides* 4" *Scholia* rs Vol.4 (1995) 41-55 and Casali, Sergio, "Strategies of Tension (Ovid, *Heroides* 4)" *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 41 (1995) 1-15.

⁶This issue has been covered in chapter 2, pp55-70.

⁷Hill, D. E., "Seneca's Choruses" *Mnemosyne* Vol. LIII, 2000, p568

⁸Segal, C. P., *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*, (Princeton, N. J., 1986), p109

suggest that it is the combination of manly strength and adolescent vulnerability that causes Hippolytus to be "set apart".

It is not so much Hippolytus' features that mark his perceived adolescent status but rather what and whom he is compared to. In particular, the Chorus with their use of floral imagery to suggest the dangers besetting Hippolytus, and their identification of him with Hylas imply the ambiguous nature of Hippolytus. The ambiguity of Hippolytus' apparently masculine beauty is made clear in the Chorus's earlier identification of Hippolytus with Hylas:

Quid deserta petis? tutior auiis
non est forma locis: te nemore abdito,
cum Titan medium constituit diem,
cingent, turba licens, Naidēs improbae,
formosos solitae claudere fontibus. (777-781)
(Why seek deserted places? Beauty is not safer in pathless
places: conceal yourself in the wood, when Titan causes the
middle of the day to stand, a licentious band of perverse Naiads,
accustomed to enclose the beautiful in springs, will encircle.)

Hylas is unequivocally a model of adolescent beauty, one who is attractive to both sexes, both Hercules and the insatiable (*improbae*) Naiads. Water will also pose a threat to Hippolytus, with the site of Hylas' death mirroring Hippolytus' eventual one. In line with the Chorus's previous citing of the gods, Hippolytus is also compared favourably to Bacchus, a sexually ambiguous god who is here referred to as a youth (*iuuenis*, 754):

Et tu, thyrsigera Liber ab India,
intonsa iuuenis perpetuum coma,
tigres pampinea cuspide temperans
ac mitra cohibens cornigerum caput,
non uinces rigidas Hippolyti comas.
ne uultus nimium suspicias tuos:
omnis per populos fabula distulit,
Phaedrae quem Bromio praetulerit soror. (753-760)
(And you, Liber, from thyrsus-bearing India, youth, hair always
unshorn, frightening tigers with vineclad spear and horned head
contained by a turban, you do not conquer Hippolytus' rigid

hair. Nor esteem your face too much: the fable has spread throughout all the peoples, whom Phaedra's sister preferred to Bromius.)

Hippolytus apparently surpasses Bacchus, famous for his androgynous beauty, with his masculine charms. His appearance is denoted as "rigid" (*rigidas*, 757). However Hippolytus himself has been called a youth (*iuuenis*, 807). But there appears to be nothing "youthful" in the descriptions of Hippolytus. Hippolytus' appearance is spoken of as being "wild" (*torua*, 798), "manly" (*viriliter*, 798), "shaggy" (*hirta*, 803) and "vast" (*uasti*, 806).

There are also similarities between the description of Narcissus, the paradigm of adolescent beauty, and descriptions of Hippolytus (*Met.* 3.419-424).⁹ Hippolytus too has been compared to and even surpassed Apollo and Bacchus. The Chorus also liken Hippolytus' face to Parian marble: *lucebit Pario marmore clarius*, *Ph.* 797 (It will shine clearer than Parian marble). The reference to Parian marble suggests a statue and highlights the status of both Hippolytus and Narcissus as passive objects of desire. Phaedra, after Hippolytus' death, mourns his beauty and his eyes like stars: *heu me, quo tuus fugit decor / oculique nostrum sidus?*, 1173f. (Alas, where has your beauty fled and eyes that were my stars?). It becomes clear that it is the emotional and erotic response of others to Hippolytus that ultimately determine his link with adolescent status, rather than actual physical adolescence.

Hippolytus' beauty is also compared with Diana's, to her detriment. He not only surpasses the male gods in form (798-808), he overshadows the beauty of a virginal goddess:

Conferat tecum decus omne priscum
fama miratrix senioris aevi:
pulcrrior tanto tua forma lucet,
clarior quanto micat orbe pleno (741-744)
(Let ancient beauty compare with you all fame wondering at
olden times: your body shines more beautiful, and clearer than
the moon sparkling full.)

His beauty is more perfect than the moon, shining full. However while he

⁹As quoted previously on p108.

may outshine the moon in its normal phases, his effect on the moon is otherwise. His beauty causes eclipse:

Aut te stellifero despiciens polo
sidus post ueteres Arcadas editum
currus non poterit flectere candidos.
en nuper rubuit, nullaue lucidis
nubes sordidior uultibus obstitit;
at nos solliciti numine turbido,
tractam Thessalicis carminibus rati,
tinnitus dedimus: tu fueras labor
et tu causa morae, te dea noctium
dum spectat celeres sustinuit uias. (785-794)

(But looking down on you from the star-bearing sky, a star born after the ancient Arcadians who is not able to guide her white horses. Behold she recently blushes, and no fouler cloud obstruct her bright face; believing her dragged by Thessalian songs, gave the jangling: you were her labour, and you the cause of delay, while watching you the goddess of the night checked her ways.)

The moon is blushing (*rubuit*, 788), a sign she has been affected by sexual passion.¹⁰ A lunar eclipse is suggested by the use of *labor*.¹¹ Hippolytus' beauty disturbs the natural order, it causes a virgin goddess to feel passion, and a Cretan woman to feel the pull of her hereditary desires for unnatural passion. The Chorus may suggest that Hippolytus' beauty is pure and harks back to the golden age (741f.), and is unsullied by sexual passion, however the effect of his beauty is anything but pure.

Phaedra and her conception of Hippolytus' beauty

Phaedra makes an explicit link between Hippolytus and the possession of adolescent beauty. She does not directly dwell on his charms, but reflects her intense preoccupation with Hippolytus' form through the

¹⁰As seen in Virgil's *Aeneid* 12. 67-69 in reference to Lavinia's love for Turnus.

¹¹See Virgil *Aeneid* 1.742; *Georgics* 1.748; Pliny the Elder *Natural History* ii.vii.54 which mentions an eclipse and the fear that the moon was poisoned, with the people coming to its aid with the jangling of cymbals.

mirror of Theseus' adolescent charms:

Hippolyte, sic est: Thesei uultus amo
 illos priores, quos tulit quondam puer,
 cum prima puras barba signaret genas
 monstrique caecam Gnosii uidit domum
 et longa curua fila collegit uia.
 quis tum ille fulsit! presserant uittae comam
 et ora flauus tenera tinguebat pudor;
 inerant lacertis mollibus fortes tori,
 tuaeque Phoebes uultus aut Phoebi mei,
 tuusue potius—talis, en talis fuit
 cum placuit hosti, sic tulit celsum caput.
 in te magis refulget incomptus decor:
 est genitor in te totus et toruae tamen
 pars aliqua matris miscet ex aequo decus:
 in ore Graio Scythicus apparet rigor. (646-660).
 (Hippolytus, it's like this: Theseus' face I love, those looks
 formerly, when he bore them long ago as a boy, when first a
 beard marked his pure cheeks, and he saw the Cnossan
 monster's blind house, and collected long threads on the
 winding way. How he shone then! A band covering his hair
 and golden shame covering his face; contained in his soft arms
 were strong muscles, his face was your Phoebe's or my
 Phoebus; or rather yours—he was such, behold such was he
 when he pleased an enemy, thus he bore his head high. In you
 beauty shines more rudely: all your father is in you and yet
 some part of your savage mother is mixed in with equal beauty:
 Scythian hardness appears in a Greek face.)

However much Hippolytus may resemble Theseus, it is patently obvious that the two are not at the same stages of physical development. It has already been illustrated that Hippolytus' beauty is outwardly of a decidedly masculine cast. Yet Phaedra's description of Theseus makes it clear that he is an adolescent, a golden youth. He is still occupying an androgynous stage, with the first beard (*prima...barba*, 648) marking his tender cheeks (*puras...genas*, 648). His body is not yet fully masculine, with "soft arms containing hard muscles" (*inerant lacertis mollibus fortes tori*, 653). Erotic tension is created by

this combination of opposites.¹²

Segal argues that "(i)n Phaedra's fantasy Hippolytus is the ideal blend of civilized Greek and severe, he-man barbarian. Hippolytus, of course, is nothing of the kind. The two sides of his nature - Greek and barbarian, urban and savage, "soft" and "hard" primitivism - are at war rather than in harmony with one another."¹³ Segal perhaps takes his binary opposites too far, as there does not seem to be much evidence for an "urban" side to Hippolytus' nature. Indeed he resolutely rejects the city:

Non alia magis est libera et uitio carens
ritusque melius uita quae priscos colat,
quam quae relictis moenibus siluas amat. (483-485)
(No other life is more free and without vice which worships the
ancient customs of our ancestors, than that which abandoning
the city walls left behind, loves the forests.)

Segal also argues that Phaedra is attracted to Hippolytus because he reminds her of her former love for Theseus. "She projects upon her present love the happy time when she first saw and loved Theseus, and in her fantasy improbably amalgamates the puritanical huntsman and the womanizing, monster-slaying adventurer (646-666)."¹⁴ Yet I would argue that Segal has misconstrued this passage. Phaedra is not wishing to replace the father with the son, as she has never had love for the father.¹⁵ Phaedra is attracted to

¹²Seneca is drawing on *Heroides* 4, where Phaedra makes definite the attraction of Hippolytus' mix of masculine hardness and adolescent modesty: *candida uestis erat, praecincti flore capilli, / flava uerecundus tinxerat ora rubor, / quemque uocant aliae uultum rigidumque truemque, / pro rigido Phaedra iudice fortis erat.*, *Her.* 4.71-74 (Your garment was shining white, your hair girded with flowers, a modest blush had tinged your golden face, and what others call a stern and grim face, was strong rather than hard in Phaedra's opinion.)

¹³Segal, C. P. (1986), p81

¹⁴Segal, C. P. (1986), p82

¹⁵If any doubts remained about the extent of Phaedra's previous feelings for Theseus, Phaedra's own version of his character should suffice to remove them: *cur me in penates obsidem inuisos datam / hostique nuptam degere aetatem in malis / lacrimisque cogis? profugus en coniunx abest / praestatque nuptae quam solet Theseus fidem*, *Ph.* 89ff. (Why compel me, given as a hostage to a hated house, married to my enemy, to always spend my

Hippolytus because of the adolescent qualities she perceives in him, regardless of his rugged exterior. She even refers to him as being in the first flower of youth: *tu qui iuuentae flore primaueo uiges*, 620 (You who flourish early in the first flower of youth). She specifically compares Hippolytus to Theseus at a time when Theseus was innocent, a boy (*puer*, 647), not a “womanizing, monster-slaying adventurer”. She pointedly refers to Ariadne’s passion for Theseus, not her own. There is no intimation that Phaedra herself felt any passion for Theseus. Her awakening has come about through desire for Hippolytus:

si cum parente Creticum intrasses fretum,
tibi fila potius nostra neuisset soror.

Te te, soror, quacumque siderei poli
in parte fulges, inuoco ad causam parem:
domus sorores una corripuit duas,
te genitor, at me gnatus. (661-666)

(If you had entered the Cretan sea with your father, my sister would have rather spun for you. You, you, sister, in whichever region of the starry heavens you shine, I call you to the same cause: one house has carried off two sisters, you the father, me the son.)

In her love for Hippolytus, Phaedra feels that she is feeling love for the first time. Phaedra attributes the rugged qualities of Hippolytus far more to his Amazonian mother, whom she tries to emulate in some fashion, than to the disgraced Theseus. It is the hybrid mixture of the erotic vulnerability of the adolescent Theseus mixed with the Amazonian hardness (*rigor*) that Phaedra finds attractive.

Dangers associated with possession of beauty

The Chorus sing of Hippolytus’ beauty in terms that suggest both adolescent beauty and danger. A sense of threat pervades their ode, a threat which suggests more than sexual vulnerability. Death stalks beauty, specifically the beauty of Hippolytus. Why then is Hippolytus so at risk?

life in evil and tears? Behold my fugitive husband is absent and Theseus offers his wife the faith he is accustomed to.). The reference to herself as a hostage and to Theseus as an enemy does not suggest a marriage built on love.

What is it about his possession of beauty and his character that attracts peril? Does his defencelessness differ in any way to the vulnerability of other adolescents?

Hippolytus' beauty is spoken of by the Chorus in terms that suggest the "flower of youth" (*flos aetatis*) and the vulnerability it possesses. The ode which extols Hippolytus' appearance carries a sense of menace, a sense that Hippolytus is under danger because of his bodily perfection:

Anceps forma bonum mortalibus,
exigui donum breue temporis,
ut uelox celeri pede laberis!
non sic prata nouo uere decentia
aestatis calidae despoliat uapor
(saeuit solstitio cum medius dies
et noctes breuibus praecipitat rotis),
languescunt folio lilia pallido
et gratae capiti deficiunt rosae,
ut fulgor teneris qui radiat genis
momento rapitur nullaue non dies
formosi spoliū corporis abstulit. (761-772)

(Beauty is an ambiguous good to mortals, little time's briefest gift, as rapid it slips with swift foot! Nor so swiftly is the beautiful meadow in early spring despoiled by the heat of hot summer (when the middle of the day rages at the solstice and rushes headlong on night's brief wheel), the lilies become weak with pale petal and the roses pleasing to the head fade, as the brightness which beams in tender cheeks is seized in a moment and no day has not taken spoils from the body's beauty.)

The Chorus sing of danger stalking Hippolytus, but they do so in terms which suggest the beauty of the female or of the adolescent male (*teneris...genis*, 770). The images are all associated with youthfulness; early spring (*nouo uere*, 764); the rose (*rosae*, 769); and the lily (*lilia*, 768). The ode begins with Hippolytus being compared to a raging tempest (*insanae...procellae*, 736) but as the ode continues it becomes clear that Hippolytus is not a force that will destroy, but rather that he will be destroyed by nature. His beauty is waiting to be despoiled (*despoliat*, 765), seized (*rapitur*, 771) and plundered (*spoliū...abstulit*, 772). As Segal states,

“[t]he passage utilizes the Ovidian *topos* of a forest retreat that suddenly shifts from virginal seclusion to sexual vulnerability. This is the landscape of deluded innocence, of purity about to be lost to sexual violence in the background.”¹⁶ Segal also argues that the reference to the “raging heat of the noon hour at the summer solstice” reminds us that it is “the proverbial time of lascivious behaviour.”¹⁷ The reference to the heat of the sun wreaking destruction on the tender meadow and flowers also reminds us of Phaedra and her link to the sun through Apollo, and the part that she plays in Hippolytus’ downfall. Ultimately, the Chorus do not believe that Hippolytus will escape a harsh fate, no matter how they may wish otherwise:

Raris forma uiris (saecula perspice)
impunita fuit. te melior deus
tutum praetereat formaque nobilis
deformis senii monstret imaginem. (820-823)
(Rare has man’s beauty (look at the ages) been unpunished.
May a better god pass you by safe and noble beauty show old
age’s misshapen image.)

The despair of the Chorus is palpable, as they realise that Hippolytus’ beauty has played and will play a major role in his death. The “misshapen” fate that awaits Hippolytus will not be the usual passing of age, but a wholesale destruction.

Genus Amazonium scias: “You know the Amazonian breed” (232)

Hippolytus’ beauty may be seen as an anomaly, being made up of disparate elements. It combines both outwardly masculine features, but is compared favourably to both the beauty of adolescent boys and a goddess. From where does this combination of dissonant elements arise?

Phaedra sees Hippolytus’ beauty as arising from the combination of maternal and paternal elements:

est genitor in te totus et toruae tamen
pars aliqua matris miscet ex aequo decus:

¹⁶Segal, C. P. (1986), p68

¹⁷Segal, C. P. (1986), p68

in ore Graio Scythicus apparet rigor. (658-660)

(All your father is in you and yet some part of your savage mother is mixed in with equal glory: Scythian hardness appears in a Greek face.)

We might expect that Hippolytus' ambiguous beauty derives from feminine elements from his mother and masculine elements from his father, however Phaedra's description confounds these expectations. She specifically compares Hippolytus to a Theseus who is young and golden (646f.) and at the height of adolescent beauty, and ascribes the harshness of Hippolytus' visage to his mother. Yet even though we know that Theseus is a youth when he seduces Ariadne, no evidence is given as to his status when he marries Antiope. But given that he is married, it is safe to assume that he is an adult male both in status and physicality.

The mixed heritage which has given Hippolytus his ambiguous beauty can also be seen as responsible for the anomalies of his character. Hippolytus combines the exterior elements of a masculine character, as seen in the organisation of the opening hunt, but when placed under duress by Phaedra's declaration of love, his actions have more in common with those of the vulnerable female or adolescent male.¹⁸

To gain an understanding of the character of Hippolytus, it is necessary to look at his parentage. Just as Phaedra's heredity has been seen as important in understanding her psychological makeup, so too the mixed Greek and Amazon background of Hippolytus plays a role in both his perfect, yet ambiguous, beauty and unnatural character.¹⁹ Conflicting views on the Amazons and their effect on Hippolytus' heredity are found both within the play and also in the secondary literature.²⁰ His parentage has done more than provide Hippolytus with a beautiful face; it has also had a marked effect on his character. Hippolytus is famous as the man who is celibate, who rigidly shuns sexual relationships and lives outside of society. Yet does his behaviour replicate that of the Amazons, and more importantly, that of his mother?

¹⁸See previous chapter, pp75-86, pp100-195.

¹⁹For the importance of heredity in the character of Phaedra, see especially Boyle, A. J., "In Nature's Bonds: a study of Seneca's *Phaedra*" *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.32.2 (1985).

²⁰See Segal, C. P. (1986), pp93-96 *et passim*; Boyle, A. J. (1985), p1309.

Other characters in the play see Hippolytus' Amazonian background as responsible for all his personality anomalies. The Nurse sees it as responsible for his celibacy (*exosus omne feminae nomen fugit, / immitis annos caelibit vitae dicat, / conubia vitat: genus Amazonian scias.*, 230-232 (Hating, he flees all name of women, / Harsh, he dedicates his life to celibate years, / and shuns marriage: You know the Amazonian kind), Phaedra for his beauty (657-660) and Theseus for his "unnatural" attempted rape of his stepmother (*redit ad auctores genus / stirpemque primam degenes sanguis refert* , 907f. (Race returns to its ancestors / and degenerate blood returns to the first stock). Yet whether their prejudices concerning both Hippolytus and the Amazons are well-founded is another question.

How do Amazonians differ from societal norms in the view of the other characters? There are discrepancies in their presentation. The Nurse believes that they are celibate, whilst Theseus castigates the Amazons as being ultimately perverse and licentious. Phaedra prefers to dwell on the Amazons' supposed freedoms, both sexually and socially. Phaedra's version is closer to the truth than she supposes, however her fantasies concerning Hippolytus do not allow her to realise the contradictions of Hippolytus' character. In regard to the Nurse's views, the Amazon women do not practice celibacy as such. Hippolytus is unusual not because he is the only child of that race but because he is the only son of that race: *testaris istud unicus gentis puer*, 577(You give witness as the only son of that race). The use of *puer* makes this point explicitly.

In general, Amazons are seen as different in relation to the rest of society as they inhabit a sexual status that differs greatly from the usual behaviours set out for women. The Amazons do not participate in monogamous, faithful relationships with men nor do they expend their energy in rearing male children. This anomalous status is expressed by their pursuing sexual relationships that fall outside the parameters of a normal social system. The Amazons live in tribes of women, and choose male sexual partners from outside the tribe, but do not live with them or marry them. The Amazons are sexual, not virginal.²¹ However their sexuality is expressed in a socially unproductive way. It does not benefit the patriarchal system,

²¹Tyrell, Wm. Blake, *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1984),p78

which may explain the other part of the Amazonian myth that Amazons are also famous for killing boy babies. The Amazon occupies a space which is outside of normal social boundaries, she occupies a social limbo. Tyrell categorises the Amazons as "daughters in limbo, neither man nor woman nor nubile girls."²² These words could be as easily applied to Hippolytus, neither man nor adolescent nor nubile girl, yet combining elements of all three.

However when it comes to Hippolytus' Amazon mother Antiope, the usual classification of the Amazon does not apply. Antiope stands outside of the normal characterisation of the Amazonian woman. Antiope is unusual, as an Amazon, precisely because she has married a man according to normal societal conventions, and has borne a son. She has succumbed to traditional gender roles under the influence of Theseus. Therefore Phaedra is misguided in her taking of Antiope as a role model in expressing sexual freedoms: *talis seueri mater Hippolyti fuit.*, 398 (Such was the mother of austere Hippolytus). Phaedra refers to Antiope's *rigor*, yet the most notable element of Antiope's life is her death at Theseus' hands: *experta saeuam est barbara Antiope manum*, 227 (Foreign Antiope experienced his cruel hand). Theseus, the apparently civilised Greek, is the savage here. The end result of attempting to fit two disparate elements together, the Amazon and the Greek, results in the death of one. And what will be the result for the product of this unnatural union?

Theseus, in his speech cursing Hippolytus, certainly believes that his alleged behaviour is due to his Amazonian heredity. An important thing to note is that there does not seem to be any shock in Theseus' response. There is certainly rage, but no sense of surprise. Theseus' reaction appears to be in line with his prejudices concerning the Amazons and he certainly seems very ready to believe wrong of Hippolytus. Theseus lashes out at Hippolytus' Amazonian heredity as the basis for his perverted sexuality:

Pro sancta Pietas, pro gubernator poli
et qui secundum fluctibus regnum moues,
unde ista uenit generis infandi lues?
hunc Graia tellus aluit an Taurus Scythes
Colchusque Phasis? redit ad auctores genus
stirpemque primam degener sanguis refert.
est prorsus iste gentis armiferae furor,

²²Tyrell, Wm. Blake (1984), p65. .

odisse Veneris foedera et castum diu
 uulgare populis corpus. o taetrum genus
 nullaue uictum lege melioris soli!
 ferae quoque ipsae Veneris euitant nefas,
 generisque leges inscius seruat pudor. (903-914)

(By Holy Piety, by the governor of the sky, and you who move the second realm with waves, whence came this pestilence of unnatural race? Did Greek land nourish him or Taurian Scythes or Colchian Phasis? Race returns to its ancestors and degenerate blood returns to the first source. Truly this is the rage of the arms-bearing tribe, to hate Venus' covenant and to prostitute a too long chaste body to the crowd. O hideous race subdued by no laws of a better country! Even wild beasts themselves shun the sins of Venus, and ignorant shame observes the laws of birth.)

Theseus uses very strong language (*taetrum genus*) to show his disgust for both Hippolytus and the Amazons. Segal details Theseus' attack on Hippolytus and the Amazonians, but he appears to accept it at face value: "But now his childhood past, viewed through Theseus' accusing eyes, seems to contain the same corruptions and the same propensity towards sexual crime (*Veneris nefas*, 913; *nefandum*, 921; cf *nefas* describing Pasiphae and Phaedra in 143 and 166)."²³ However Theseus' condemnation of Hippolytus and Antiope is wrong and not based on fact. The Nurse, whose allegiance is owed to Phaedra, describes Antiope as a pure wife (*Immitis etiam coniugi castae fuit: / experta saeuam est barbara Antiope manum*, 277ff. (He was harsh even to a pure wife: / Foreign Antiope experienced his cruel hand). There is no other suggestion of licentiousness on Antiope's part.

Theseus places great emphasis on the hereditary nature of Hippolytus' alleged crime and sexual perversity but does not closely examine his own behaviour. Hippolytus is allegedly guilty of a rape which could be considered as more shameful as it is allegedly perpetrated on a member of his own family, but as Phaedra has already pointed out, Theseus himself is guilty of *stuprum* (97), a harsh but true accusation. Yet if Hippolytus were truly a rapist he would be following in his father's footsteps, who after all has just returned from an abortive attempt to carry off the wife of Hades,

²³Segal, C. P. (1986), p95

Persephone. Theseus has also sinned against the laws of hospitality by seducing then abandoning the daughter of his host. In addition to this, it is Phaedra's family that has sinned against the laws of Venus, a fact that Theseus cannot fail to be aware of. Hippolytus certainly draws upon his knowledge of Phaedra's family when confronted by her passion for him: *ille te uenter tulit*, 693 (That womb bore you). Theseus is married to a member of the Cretan royal family, a family where the mother mates with a bull, a daughter betrayed a father for love and was betrayed in return, and as he shall find out, a stepmother conceived an unnatural passion for her stepson. In light of his frequent references to bloodstock and background in his speech, it is strange that this has not occurred to him. Or perhaps he is susceptible to the same blindness as his son. Theseus himself is not "subdued by the laws of a better country" as his own sexual career of adultery and rape shows. He also does not have the "excuse" of a "long-held chastity" to explain away his excesses either.

The Birth of Hippolytus

The real crime in this play is not the passion of Phaedra for Hippolytus. Just as Phaedra's seeds for her sin lay in her heredity, so Hippolytus' life and death derive from his own hereditary impulses and their effect on others. The real crime is that of Theseus marrying an Amazon and begetting a son.

There are clues in the language used of both Hippolytus and the Minotaur that suggest a link between the two. Hippolytus describes Pasiphae and the birth of the Minotaur in the following terms:

*illa se tantum stupro
contaminavit, et tamen tacitum diu
crimen biformi partus exhibuit nota,
scelusque matris arguit uultu truci
ambiguus infans (689-693)*

(She polluted only herself with so great a disgrace and however the birth proved by its two-form appearance the crime silent for a long time, and the ambiguous infant with its savage face exposed the crime of the mother.)

On another level, this can be read as referring to Antiope and Hippolytus

himself. Like the Minotaur, Hippolytus is savage (*truci*, 692; *truculentus*, 461) and also occupies a dual nature, being the offspring of Amazon and Greek. The Nurse, when she attempts to shame and dissuade Phaedra from her love for Hippolytus refers to the unnaturalness of sexual relations with both father and son:

memorque matris metue concubitus nouos.
miscere thalamos patris et gnati apparas
uteroque prolem capere confusam impio? (170-172)
(Be mindful of your mother and fear novel affairs. Do you
prepare to mix a marriage bed with father and son and to
conceive confused offspring from an impious womb?)

The Nurse suggests that the result of an affair with Hippolytus would be another monster such as the Minotaur: *cur monstra cessant?*, 174 (Do the monsters cease?). Yet the language she uses (*miscere*) recalls Phaedra's description of Hippolytus' beauty deriving from Greek and Amazon parentage being mixed (*miscet*) together. Hippolytus also refers to the Golden Age when men mixed with gods as an ideal time (525f.), yet it is another combination of disparate elements that often leads to disaster for the mortal. If Pasiphae is an unnatural mother, then so too is Antiope, the only Amazon who marries, bears and raises a son, against an Amazon's usual inclinations. Theseus is also an unnatural father, as he will be implicated in the death of his own son, and also has a sexual career which does not conform to moral standards. He has also killed the mother of his son. The elements of the unfeminine mother and the excessively masculine father are at war within Hippolytus.

Boyle argues that "(t)he analogy between Phaedra and Pasiphae is sustained in the play not only by its overt recurrence (e.g. 242, 688ff., 698f.) but also by conspicuous and pervasive analogy between Hippolytus, object of Phaedra's love, and the bull, object of Pasiphae's."²⁴ Both are seen as unnatural objects of love, an animal and a stepson. This analogy can be further explored in regard to Hippolytus. There is no question that Pasiphae's passion for a bull is unnatural, indeed the confusion of species results in a monster being born. However, whilst passion for a stepson was a cultural taboo in regard to Roman sensibilities, and was an illegal act, it does not

²⁴Boyle, A. J. (1985), p1316

confound blood ties as does incest nor cross species borders. It is not the mere fact of Hippolytus being a stepson that makes him an unnatural love object. The roots of his erotic abnormality go deeper than that. It is the confusion of natural boundaries within Hippolytus that makes him abnormal and attracts the love of a Cretan woman. She herself dwells on the erotic overtones of his mixed parentage (657-660). Of course Hippolytus himself thinks that he resembles the men "who lived mixed with the gods" (*quos mixtos deis*, 526). Yet, on the strength of the linguistic evidence linking him to various bulls in the play, he has more in common with the Minotaur, the half-man, half-bull. It is the Minotaur, the monster, which attracts Phaedra, rather than the bull. The mix of Greek man and Amazon woman has produced its own unnatural offspring.

Hippolytus as monster

Hippolytus views himself as the last remaining link between the present day and the golden age. In his opinion, he stands above the common herd, removing himself from the vices of the city dweller. He believes that he too lives a life as one who is mixed with the gods: *Hoc equidem reor / uixisse ritu prima quos mixtos deis / profudit aetas.*, 525-527. However Hippolytus' double is not a golden age "noble savage" but the monster who arises from the sea and takes his life. The verbal echoes between Hippolytus and the monster, and also Pasiphae's bull, serve to highlight the true reasons for Hippolytus' separation from the herd. Hippolytus is revealed not to be a god-like man, but rather a monstrous hybrid; a hybrid which threatens nature and must be destroyed.

In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Hippolytus is killed by a bull which comes from the sea. Other than its place of origin, there is no mention of abnormality about its appearance. Indeed the description is brief:

But at the very moment when it broke, the wave threw up a monstrous savage bull. Its bellowing filled the land, and the land echoed it, with shuddering emphasis. (*Hipp.* 1213-1216)²⁵

²⁵*Hippolytus*, trans. David Grene in *Euripides 1: Alcestis, The Medea, The Heracleidae, Hippolytus*, edd. David Grene & Richmond Lattimore (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955)

The same is true for Ovid's telling of the myth in *Metamorphoses*. However Seneca chooses to devote a long passage to the description of the monster, a decision which has not met with unalloyed approval. It has been seen as "self-indulgently long...the passage is too long and its very detail diminishes the audience's terror."²⁶ Yet when dealing with an author who is so precise with his verbal linkages, this castigation is unmerited. Why does this passage focus on so much detail? What does the detail reveal about the monster?:

Quis habitus ille corporis uasti fuit!
 caerulea taurus colla sublimis gerens
 erexit altam fronte uiridanti iubam;
 stant hispidae aures, orbibus uarius color,
 et quem feri dominator habuisset gregis
 et quem sub undis natus:hinc flammam uomunt
 oculi, hinc relucent caerula insignes nota;
 opima ceruix arduos tollit toros
 naresque hiulcis haustibus patulae fremunt;
 musco tenaci pectus ac palear uiret,
 longum rubenti spargitur fuco latus;
 tum pone tergus ultima in monstrum coit
 facies et ingens belua immensam trahit
 squamosa partem. talis extremo mari
 pistrix citatas sorbet aut frangit rates. (1035-1049)

(Such an appearance that vast body had! A lofty bull bearing a dark blue neck raising up a high mane from its green brow; its hairy ears stand, changing colour with its eyes, and both that which a leader of the herd ought to have borne and that of one born under the waves: on this side eyes vomiting flames, on that side eyes gleaming with noted blue mark; an abundant neck lifting bulging muscles and broad nostrils roar with gaping draughts; the chest and dewlap are green with clinging moss and the long side is scattered with reddish lichen; then from behind the final part of its back combines in a monstrous shape and the scaly large beast drags a vast part. Such in the farthest sea a sea monster swallows or shatters the fastest ships.)

Segal also raises questions about the narrative voice of the messenger scene, arguing that it is "less that of a messenger who has really seen such a thing

²⁶Coffey, Michael & Mayer, Roland (edd.), *Seneca: Phaedra*, (CUP, Cambridge, 1990), p180

than that of the poet himself who wants us to "see" the object of terror with our inner vision of emotional participation."²⁷ Yet the lack of "I" and "we" in the speech strengthen the unnaturalness of both the event and the monster that is being described. It also highlights that Hippolytus is alone in this scene, emphasising his status as an outsider. What is revealed about the appearance of the bull? Undoubtedly it is a threatening animal in its gestures. But the menace felt in the bull's presence goes beyond mere aggressive behaviour. Its very appearance is frightening because of its abnormalities. It cannot be adequately categorised; it is a composite of disparate elements rather than being just a bull from an unfamiliar element. It is neither a land mammal or a water creature; it is both. It combines the colours of the sea (*caerulea*, 1036; *uiridanti*, 1037) with the colour of earth and fire (*rubenti*, 1045). Its hide is covered with moss and lichen which are associated with water and dampness (1044f.). Yet the monster also vomits flames from its eyes (1040). And while it is called a bull, its hindquarters end in a scaly tail (1046). It is not merely the size and bulk of this animal that are threatening. The monster lacks a blueprint, a history of experience. How will it act? How can it be defeated? How can we overcome it, or failing that, how can we flee? It is no accident that these are the types of questions, in an erotic context, which the Nurse and Phaedra raise in discussing an approach to Hippolytus. That scenario too lacked prior experience. The solution that they applied, utilising elegiac forms, did not succeed.

Close reading of the passage also provides links between the bull from the sea and Hippolytus, particularly in the description the Chorus provide.²⁸ Descriptive emphasis in both cases is placed on the neck (*colla*, 1036; *colla*, 800); the chest (*pectus*, 1037; *pectore*, 808); ; brow (*fronte*, 1037; *frons*, 803) and general bulk (*corporis uasti*, 1035; *uasti...corporis*, 806). Verbal echoes also recall Pasiphae's bull (*dominator ...gregis*, 1039; *ductor indomiti gregi*, 118). Characteristics such as savagery are shared by the bulls of this play. The bull from the sea is savage (*torua*, 1063). Phaedra bemoans the lack of response from Hippolytus, in a comparison with Pasiphae's bull (115ff.).

²⁷Segal, C. P., "Senecan Baroque: the Death of Hippolytus in Seneca, Ovid and Euripides", *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 114 (1984), p318

²⁸See Boyle, A. J. (1985) p1316ff.; Paschalis, Michael, "The Bull and the Horse: Animal Theme and Imagery in Seneca's *Phaedra*" *AJP* 115 (1994); Furley, W. D., "Seneca's Horrible Bull: *Phaedra* 1007-1034" *C. Q.* 42 (1992)

Hippolytus displays ambiguous characteristics both in his beauty and his behaviour, and confuses natural boundaries with his own existence. He has the effect of causing desire in his stepmother and a virgin goddess, and also brings about the unnatural act of a father killing his son. The bull from the sea also mirrors Hippolytus' effects on others:

Tremuere terrae, fugit attonitum pecus
 passim per agros, nec suos pastor sequi
 meminit iuuencos; omnis e saltu fera
 diffugit, omnis frigidus exsanguis metu
 uenator horret. solus immunis metu
 Hippolytus artis continet frenis equos
 pavidosque notae uocis hortatu ciet.
 Est alta ad Argos collibus ruptis uia,
 uicina tangens spatia suppositi maris;
 hic se illa moles acuit atque iras parat.
 ut cepit animos seque praetemptans satis
 prolusit irae, praepeti cursu euolat,
 summam citato uix gradu tangens humum,
 et torua currus ante trepidantis stetit.
 contra feroci gnatus insurgens minax
 uultu nec ora mutat et magnum intonat:
 haud frangit animum uanus hic terror meum:
 nam mihi paternus uincere est tauros labor.' (1050-1067)

(The land trembled, thunderstruck the herd fled, everywhere throughout the fields, nor did the shepherd remember to follow his bullocks: every wild beast dispersed from its glade, deathly pale every hunter shuddered chilling with fear. Alone without fear Hippolytus restrains the trembling horses with tight rein and calls on them by name with encouragement in a known voice. A deep way is broken from Argos to the hills, touching neighbouring spaces lying beneath the sea; here the mass sharpens itself and prepares its anger. When it took its spirit and practising its anger had tested it enough, it rushes with swift course, scarcely touching the surface of the earth with rapid step, and savage stood before the anxious team of horses. Opposite your son increases threats with a fierce face nor changes his visage and thunders forth greatly: "This empty terror does not break my spirit: for it is my father's task to conquer bulls.")

The bull causes fear in both domesticated animals (*iuuencos*, 1052) and wild beasts (*fera*, 1052) as well as both the hunter (*venator*, 1054) and the shepherd (*pastor*, 1051). Yet Hippolytus is described as being “alone with out fear”: *solus immunis metu*, 1054. The implication is that he should be. The hunter shudders at the bull in language reminiscent of Hippolytus shuddering at women (*horret*, 1055; *horreo*, 566) with the distinction being that Hippolytus mistakenly believes that women have no place in his world, but the hunter is right to shudder at this unnatural phenomenon. This passage highlights both the animal’s strangeness as it has no place in either sphere, domesticated or wild, and also the fact that it poses a threat to both areas of nature and civilisation. Society is based upon divisions inherited from nature and the bull makes a mockery of them. The bull resembles Hippolytus who also is a destructive element in nature and society as he refuses to carry out the covenant of fertility with nature and attracts the illicit passion of both Phaedra and Diana. It is evidence that both the bull and Hippolytus are not easily categorised, and that boundary violations pose a threat to all areas of nature and society.

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