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REWRITING EURIPIDES: OVID, *HEROIDES* 4

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Abstract. In *Heroides* 4, Ovid rewrites Euripides' *Hippolytus*, drawing upon motifs characteristic of Roman love elegy. Phaedra, however, has more in common with the elegiac lover than beloved. By means of mythological allusions, Ovid explores the origins of her passion and foreshadows its disastrous consequences.

Of the four known Greek tragedies on the subject of Phaedra and Hippolytus only Euripides' *Hippolytus Crowned* (428 BC) remains extant.[1] No other detailed treatment of the myth survives from all of classical literature until almost the beginning of our own era.[2] Just before the turn of the millennium, however, Ovid turned to the composition of a set of fifteen *Letters from Heroines* (*Epistulae Heroidum* or *Heroides*),[3] of which the fourth was a letter from Phaedra to Hippolytus.

Ovid begins at once by recalling Euripides and by distancing himself from his Greek predecessor: *quid epistula lecta nocebit?* ('What harm is there in reading a letter?', 4.3). With these words Ovid's Phaedra both asserts the non-dramatic nature of this work (we are reading a letter, not a play) and reminds us ironically of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (letters can indeed be deadly). The difference of genre is important. Firstly, drama is essentially concerned with process. In the case of the Euripidean Phaedra we see her move from silence to speech, from virtue to crime, from peril to disaster. Ovid's Phaedra is, in one sense, frozen in time. She writes at a particular moment. She can

[1] Euripides had written an earlier play on the subject, *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos* (*Hippolytus Veiled*), and Sophocles wrote a *Phaedra* (date unknown). The fourth century tragedian Lycophron is reported to have composed a play entitled *Hippolytus*. Only the title survives.

[2] The story was well known to Roman writers. See Cic. *Off.* 1.32, 3.94; Prop. 4.5.5; Virg. *Aen.* 6.445, 7.777. The very brevity of the references in Propertius and Virgil is significant in that it implies a readership familiar with the story.

[3] The exact date of the publication of the first book of *Heroides* is unknown. They were almost certainly published before 1 BC. See H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974) 306f. There are fifteen letters in the first book if we accept the letter of Sappho to Phaon as genuine.

refer to past and present but the future can only be implied, foreshadowed. Ovid and Ovid's readers, being familiar with Euripides, know her future. Phaedra does not. In another sense, of course, Ovid's Phaedra is not frozen, for the very act of writing a letter can effect significant psychological change; the writer alters as the letter is written. Secondly, while a drama at least purports to be objective, a letter presents an individual's point of view and does not pretend to do otherwise. Here are events already familiar to us but presented from Phaedra's perspective.[4]

How does this letter relate to Euripides' play? One possibility is suggested by *Amores* 2.18:

> aut, quod Penelopes uerbis reddatur Vlixi,
> scribimus et lacrimas, Phyllі relicta, tuas,
> quod Paris et Macareus et quod male gratus Iason
> Hippolytique parens Hippolytusque legant.
> (*Am.* 2.18.21-24)
>
> Or I write the words Penelope sends Ulysses
> And your tears, abandoned Phyllis,
> Words for Paris and Macareus and thankless Jason to read
> And Hippolytus' father and Hippolytus.

Is Ovid giving us the letter that Phaedra left for Theseus in *Hippolytus Crowned*? A love-letter, apparently addressed to Hippolytus but actually intended for Theseus' eyes, might well have served to ruin Hippolytus in that play. But this is not that letter, for not only are its contents different from the Euripidean letter (there is no accusation of rape here), but it would not fulfil one of Phaedra's primary aims, preservation of her reputation. Moreover, the very fact that Phaedra writes to Hippolytus marks a significant difference between Ovid and Euripides: in *Hippolytus Crowned* there is no direct communication between stepmother and stepson at all. In Ovid contact is direct though silent.

There are, of course, many similarities in circumstance and character between the Euripidean and Ovidian Phaedras. Both see themselves as victims of the goddess of love (Cypris/Venus). Both have responded to their circumstances with silence and speak only reluctantly. Both place a high value on their reputation (*eukleia*/*fama*) and for both shame (*aidôs*/*pudor*) is a

[4] For discussion of the generic qualities of the *Heroides* see Jacobson [3]; P. Steinmetz, 'Die Literarische Form der *Epistulae Heroidum* Ovids', *Gymnasium* 94 (1987) 128-45; M. Brownlee, *The Severed Word: Ovid's Heroides and the Novela Sentimental* (Princeton 1990).

cardinal value. Both have experienced intense moral struggle and indeed we see the Greek Phaedra continuing to engage with her predicament on the stage. For the Roman Phaedra, however, that phase has passed. Otherwise she would not be writing this letter.

> et pugnare diu nec me submittere culpae
> certa fui—certi siquid haberet amor.
> victa precor genibusque tuis regalia tendo
> bracchia! quid deceat, non videt ullus amans.
> depudui, profugusque pudor sua signa reliquit.
> (*Her.* 4.151-55)[5]
>
> And I was resolved to fight long and not
> to yield to my fault—if love has any resolution.
> Conquered I pray and stretch out my royal arms
> to your knees! No lover can see what is right.
> My shame is gone and, escaping, it abandoned its standards.

This Phaedra's moral crisis is over and she is now attempting to approach Hippolytus. By choosing to speak to Hippolytus, Ovid's Phaedra has already aligned herself with the more daring Phaedra of *Hippolytus Veiled*.[6]

If Ovid's Phaedra is different from the familiar Euripidean character, she is unique among the fictive writers of *Heroides*. All the other heroines have been abandoned by, or simply separated from, their lovers or husbands. In each case an established relationship exists. Penelope is already married to Ulysses, Hermione to Orestes, Deianira to Hercules, Medea to Jason, Laodamia to Protesilaus and Hypermestra to Lynceus, Briseis has been mistress to Achilles, Phyllis to Demophoon, Oenone to Paris, Hypsipyle to Jason, Dido to Aeneas, Ariadne to Theseus, Canace to her brother, Macareus, and Sappho to Phaon. What makes Phaedra's case different is the fact that she has not been separated from her lover at all. Indeed, she has no lover. This letter is her bid to begin a sexual relationship: Phaedra is attempting to seduce Hippolytus.

As an established love poet, Ovid already possessed an elaborate repertoire of concepts and images for representing an erotic relationship. Not

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[5] I have used G. Showerman and G. Goold (edd. and trr.), *Ovid: Heroides and Amores* (Cambridge, Mass./London 1977) (Loeb Classical Library) for all quotations from *Heroides*. The translations are mine.

[6] For discussion of the relationship between *Heroides* 4 and *Hippolytus Veiled*, see E. Oppel, *Ovids Heroides: Studien zu inneren Form und Motivation* (Erlangen-Nürnberg 1968) 91f.

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surprisingly, we find some of the same concepts and images in *Heroides* 4. The very sending of a letter is of course a typical amatory ploy and is recommended by Ovid as an opening gambit in the *Art of Love* (*Ars Am.* 1.455f.; cf. *Am.* 1.11f., Prop. 4.3). Moreover, Phaedra employs language characteristic of Ovid's own elegies when, failing to address Hippolytus by name, she calls him *uir* ('man', but often used in the sense of 'lover')[7] and herself *puella* ('girl', but often used to mean 'girlfriend' or 'mistress').[8] Phaedra's choice of language drawn from the military (14, 66, 86,[9] 153) is also typical of Ovid's own *Amores* (cf. *Am.* 1.2, 9), as is her treatment of love as fire (19, 20, 33, 52; cf. *Am.* 1.2.9, 1.15.27) or wound (20; cf. *Am.* 1.2.29, 44). Her use of agricultural images (21f.) also has parallels in the *Amores* (e.g., *Am.* 1.2.13-16, 1.10.25-28) as do her references to the difficulties she and Hippolytus will not face, difficulties like difficult husbands and stubborn door-keepers (cf. *Am.* 1.4, 6). Phaedra also draws upon other erotic writers. Her claim that she would prefer Hippolytus to Jupiter (35f.) recalls the words of Catullus' Lesbia (poem 70), while her loss of pride (150) recalls the opening lines of Propertius' first elegy.

But the presence of elegiac motifs hardly makes Phaedra's letter exceptional among the *Heroides*. And given that Phaedra is unique among Ovid's heroines, we would expect these motifs to be employed in a distinctly different fashion. And so it is, for Phaedra is depicted in ways more reminiscent of the elegiac lover than the elegiac mistress. From the outset she adopts the masculine role, describing herself, for example, in terms reminiscent of Ovid's self-description in the *Amores*. As Cupid appeared to Ovid in *Amores* 1.1 and compelled him to write love elegy, so Love appears to Phaedra and commands her to write Hippolytus a love-letter:

> ille mihi primo dubitanti scribere dixit:
> 'Scribe! dabit victas ferreus ille manus'.
> (*Her.* 4.13f.)
> He spoke to me first when I was hesitant to write:
> 'Write! That man of iron will surrender his conquered hands'.

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[7] *Vir*, of course, often means 'husband' in elegy, but when combined with *puella* (as here) it frequently means 'boyfriend', e.g., *Am.* 1.7.38, 1.9.6, 1.13.9, 2.9a.15; *Ars Am.* 1.54, 275, 682; 3.31, 45, 107, 381, 433, 799.

[8] E.g., *Am.* 1.1.20; 1.3.1; 1.4.3; 1.6.63; 1.7.4, 45; 1.9.6, 9, 43; 1.13.9, 25, 26. Jacobson [3] 147 also notes the elegiac overtones of *puella* and *uir*.

[9] If *militia* ('campaign') is the right reading.

At the god's command Ovid and Phaedra become poet-lovers. But whereas for Ovid the result is inglorious captivity (*Am.* 1.2), for Phaedra, says Love, the result will be victory and acceptance of the enemy's surrender. From the outset, then, the Phaedra-Hippolytus relationship is represented as an aggressive one with Phaedra playing the active role.

Also important in this respect is the concept of the gaze, a notion linked by feminist critics with male voyeurism and violence against women.[10] Certainly one characteristic of the masculine lover in Roman elegy is his concern with gazing pleasurably at the female form and, by implication, with sharing that pleasure with his (male?) readers. Consider, for example, Ovid's description of Corinna in *Amores* 1.5 (cf. *Am.* 1.7.11-18):

> ut stetit ante oculos posito uelamine nostros,
> in toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.
> quos umeros, quales uidi tetigique lacertos!
> forma papillarum quam fuit apta premi!
> (*Am.* 1.5.17-20)
> As she stood before my eyes with clothing cast aside,
> there was a fault nowhere on her whole body.
> What shoulders, what arms I saw and touched!
> The beauty of her nipples: how right for squeezing!

Delight in viewing the female form is so characteristic of the elegiac lover that we are not surprised when, in the third book of the *Art of Love*, Ovid instructs his female students to play up to this masculine propensity to the point of advising them which sexual positions to adopt so as to appear most attractive to their partners (*Ars Am.* 3.769-88). By contrast, he tells men not to be too concerned about their looks, simply to be neat and clean, for in a male excessive concern with appearances is a sign of effeminacy (*Ars Am.* 1.505-24).

What is extraordinary about Phaedra is that she behaves in a way that, for Ovid at least, is more characteristic of males than females: she embodies the gaze. What first attracted Phaedra to Hippolytus was his physical appearance:

> Tempore quo nobis inita est Cerealis Eleusin,
> Gnosia me uellem detinuisset humus!
> tunc mihi praecipue (nec non tamen ante placebas)

[10] See, e.g., A. Richlin, 'Reading Ovid's Rapes' in A. Richlin (ed.) *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (Oxford 1992) 159f.

acer in extremis ossibus haesit amor.
candida uestis erat, praecincti flore capilli,
flaua uerecundus tinxerat ora rubor,
quemque uocant aliae uultum rigidumque trucemque,
pro rigido Phaedra iudice fortis erat.
sint procul a nobis iuuenes ut femina compti!
fine coli modico forma uirilis amat.
te tuus iste rigor positique sine arte capilli
et leuis egregio puluis in ore decet.
siue ferocis equi luctantia colla recuruas,
exiguo flexos miror in orbe pedes;
seu lentum ualido torques hastile lacerto,
ora ferox in se uersa lacertus habet,
siue tenes lato uenabula cornea ferro,
denique nostra iuuat lumina, quidquid agis.
(*Her.* 4.67-84)

That time I went to Ceres' Eleusis,
I wish the land of Cnossus had held me back!
Then especially (though you did not displease me before)
keen love stuck fast in my innermost bones.
Your clothes were brilliant white, your hair decked with flowers,
a modest blush stained your golden face.
The countenance other women call rough and fierce
instead of rough was strong in Phaedra's view.
Far from us be young men adorned like a woman!
male beauty loves to be tended in due measure.
Your ruggedness and artlessly placed hair
and a light sprinkling of dust on your face become you.
Whether you bend back the struggling neck of your spirited horse,
I wonder at those feet made to turn in a tiny circle;
or whether with strong arm you whirl the pliant javelin
your arm has my gaze turned towards itself,
or whether you hold the broad-bladed cornel hunting spear.
In short, all you do pleases my eyes.

Phaedra exhibits, of course, the taste in masculine beauty prescribed by Ovid in the *Art of Love*. What is remarkable is the extent to which she lingers over the details of Hippolytus' bodily appearance. Whereas, for example, Virgil depicts Dido falling in love for a variety of physical and psychological reasons,[11] Phaedra's experience is represented as wholly physical. She was

[11] Dido is impressed with the hero's *uirtus* ('courage', *Aen.* 4.3), the glory of his family (4.4), his face and words (4.4f.). When she describes Aeneas to Anna (*Aen.* 4.11) the terms she chooses oscillate between the physical and the psychological (*ore* ['face'] is physical, while *pectus* ['spirit'/ 'chest'] and *armis* ['prowess'/ 'shoulders'] are ambiguous).

impressed by Hippolytus' general appearance at Eleusis (his clothes, his hair, his blush) and she admires his vigorous masculinity, his ruggedness, his artless hair, the dust on his face. She likes to watch him display his skill with horses and different kinds of spear. Indeed, she simply likes to watch him whatever activity he is engaged in. As Corinna delights Ovid's eyes, so Hippolytus' body gives pleasure to Phaedra's gaze.

That Phaedra adopts the masculine role is also reinforced by imagery. For example, she employs agricultural images to suggest her inexperience in love:

> scilicet ut teneros laedunt iuga prima iuuencos,
> frenaque uix patitur de grege captus equus,
> sic male uixque subit primos rude pectus amores,
> sarcinaque haec animo non sedet apta meo.
> (*Her.* 4.21-24)
> Evidently as the first yoke harms the tender calves
> and the horse captured from the herd scarcely endures the reins,
> so barely and with difficulty does my inexperienced heart undergo first love
> and this burden does not sit well upon my soul.

If we recall that Ovid's readers would have been familiar with Virgil's *Georgics*, in particular with the vivid way in which Virgil represents the force of the sexual instinct in cattle and horses, and the violent behaviour to which they are driven for the sake of their beloveds (*G.* 3.209-41, 250-54), then images drawn from the agricultural world seem particularly appropriate for Ovid's purpose. The animals to which Phaedra likens herself, the calf and the horse, are chosen for their sexual power. They are also specifically masculine: the calf is a young bull (*iuuencus*), the horse is a young stallion (*equus*).[12]

Also important, as in Euripides, is the idea of the hunt. As the Euripidean Phaedra prays to Artemis (*Hipp.* 228) and longs to join in the hunt (*Hipp.* 215-22), so this Phaedra claims Delia[13] as her primary goddess (*prima dea est*, 39) and longs to follow the hounds, throw the javelin, rest on the

[12] Cf. *Am.* 1.2.13-16, where similar images (cattle and horses) are used of the male lover, in this case the poet himself. C. Pearson, 'Simile and Imagery in Ovid *Heroides* 4 and 5', *ICS* 5 (1980) 112 points out that these animals are particularly important in the myths concerning the families of Minos and Theseus.

[13] That is, Diana, Artemis' Roman equivalent.

ground and restrain fleeing horses (41-43).[14] In Euripides, as Knox points out,[15] Phaedra's 'yearning for the poplar and the grassy meadow, for the chase and the taming of colts on the sand, is a hysterical expression of her desire for Hippolytus'. In this poem too Phaedra acknowledges Hippolytus' association with the hunt. In following Delia Phaedra is following his choice (40). She admires his hunting skills (79-83) and draws upon her knowledge of the hunt and mythic hunters in her attempt to persuade Hippolytus to adopt a more relaxed way of life. But there is more than this, for at the end of the poem Phaedra suggests that Hippolytus resembles not so much a hunter as a savage beast:

> flecte, ferox,[16] animos! potuit corrumpere taurum
> mater; eris tauro saeuior ipse truci?
> (*Her.* 4.165f.)
> Bend, savage man, your spirit! Mother could seduce
> a bull; will you be more fierce than the brutal bull?

The image is reversed: Hippolytus is not hunter but beast. The true hunter is the sexually aggressive Phaedra herself.

But Phaedra fails and one reason for her failure is that she is self-deceived.[17] In particular she pays little or no attention to Hippolytus' true character. At the beginning of the letter she supposes that her words might actually give Hippolytus pleasure (4). It is only at the very end, and then in the briefest of parentheses, that Phaedra acknowledges Hippolytus' misogyny:

> sic tibi dent Nymphae, quamuis odisse puellas
> diceris, arentem quae leuet unda sitim.
> (*Her.* 4.173f.)
> So may the Nymphs give you, though you are said to hate
> girls, water to relieve your parching thirst.

And if Hippolytus hates all women, how is he likely to respond to sexual advances from his stepmother? His response, outright and unqualified

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[14] Each of these elements has a precise parallel in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. The Euripidean Phaedra wishes to lie in a meadow (211), follow the hounds (216f.), throw the javelin (220) and subdue Venetian colts (231).

[15] B. Knox, 'The *Hippolytus* of Euripides', *YCS* 13 (1952) 6.

[16] Some manuscripts read *feros* ('bestial'). That reading would make the point even more strongly.

[17] For Phaedra's self-deception see Oppel [6] 89, 93; Jacobson [3] 147; Pearson [12] 114.

rejection, is wholly predictable but is not foreseen by Phaedra.

But perhaps the most striking aspect of this Phaedra's character is her moral cynicism, for although she professes adherence to traditional values, she is in fact wholly indifferent to them.[18] For example, like the Euripidean Phaedra she claims to value her renown. She speaks of her 'reputation' (*fama*, 18) as blameless and offers Hippolytus first fruits of her 'long-preserved reputation' (*seruatae . . . libamina famae*, 27). She also professes to place a high value on 'shame' (*pudor*, 9, 10, 155). She speaks of her firm resolve to fight her passion (151f.), but that phase has passed as the writing of this letter attests. Despite her assertions to the contrary, this Phaedra is no longer committed to traditional moral values. She denies, for example, that it is through depravity (*nequitia*, 17) that she will break her marriage pact. Rather she will do it because of overwhelming sexual passion (19f.). That hardly frees her from guilt: lust is a cause of adultery, not an excuse. She speaks as if she were inexperienced in love (21ff.), ignoring the fact that she is actually a married woman. Moreover, this contradiction is highlighted by her choice of imagery:

> est aliquid, plenis pomaria carpere ramis,
> et tenui primam delegere ungue rosam.
> (*Her.* 4.29f.)
> It is something to pluck the orchard with full branches,
> and to pick the first rose with delicate nail.

Which image is appropriate for Phaedra? Is she like the mature orchard whose branches are filled with fruit? Or is she like the virginal first rose? The former is true for Phaedra who is a married woman and a mother (123), but she would have Hippolytus believe the latter. She claims to have lived a life of spotless purity (*candor*, 32) but congratulates herself on choosing a worthy lover: *peius adulterio turpis adulter obest* ('worse than adultery is a base adulterer', 34). The concept of an adulterer who is not 'base' is a novel one in a language in which the combination *turpis* ('base') and *adulter* ('adulterer') is tautological: adulterers are by definition 'base'.[19]

By the end of her letter, however, Phaedra has abandoned all pretence at commitment to conventional values. Indeed, she now rejects the very

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[18] For Phaedra's cynicism see A.-F. Sabot, *Ovide: Poète de l'amour dans ses oeuvres de jeunesse* (Paris 1976) 306.

[19] Indeed lawyers defined adultery as being 'dishonourable by nature': *adulterium natura turpe est* (Justinian, *Digest* 50, 16, 42, sect pr, 2).

concept of virtue as intolerably rustic:[20]

> ista uetus pietas, aeuo moritura futuro,
> rustica Saturno regna tenente fuit.
> (*Her.* 4.131f.)
> That ancient piety, doomed to die in some future age,
> was rustic in Saturn's reign.

To prove the point she cites the precedent of Jupiter's marriage to his sister Juno. The argument, of course, is plausible, for the double nature of their relationship was well known: Juno was both sister and wife to Jove (Virg. *Aen.* 1.47). But if their relationship was technically incestuous, at least it was not adulterous. But it is the conclusion to this argument that most effectively highlights Phaedra's cynicism, for she declares that the family that sleeps together stays together:

> illa colit firma generis iunctura catena,
> imposuit nodos cui Venus ipsa suos.
> (*Her.* 4.135f.)
> That family association is held firmly chained together
> upon which Venus herself has placed her knots.

In Phaedra's view incest does not violate but actually strengthens family ties.

Why then does Phaedra love Hippolytus? Lines 165f. suggest that Hippolytus is not just the object of Phaedra's lust, but a doublet of Pasiphaë's bull: as Pasiphaë loved the bull, so Phaedra loves Hippolytus. Here Phaedra points to an analogy between her condition and her mother's with a precision not found in Euripides. In *Hippolytus* Phaedra refers to her mother's passion for the bull (337), implying a resemblance between herself and her mother, but she does not take the further step and suggest a similarity between the bull and Hippolytus.

In fact Ovid's Phaedra is very much aware of her ancestry. In her opening address to Hippolytus she describes herself as a *Cressa puella* ('Cretan girl', 2). Indeed she suggests that her predicament may be linked to the experiences of her grandmother, Europa, of her mother, Pasiphaë, and of her sister, Ariadne:

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[20] Jacobson [3] 154 talks of a joke here. Irony seems a more appropriate term: rusticity is precisely what does appeal to Hippolytus.

forsitan hunc generis fato reddamus amorem,
et Venus ex tota gente tributa petat.
Iuppiter Europen—prima est ea gentis origo—
dilexit, tauro dissimulante deum.
Pasiphae mater, decepto subdita tauro,
enixa est utero crimen onusque suo.
perfidus Aegides, ducentia fila secutus,
curua meae fugit tecta sororis ope.
en, ego nunc, ne forte parum Minoia credar,
in socias leges ultima gentis eo.
(*Her.* 4.53-62)

Perhaps we should attribute this love to my race's destiny,
and perhaps Venus seeks tribute from our whole family.
Jupiter loved Europa—that is our family's first origin—
a bull concealing the god.
My mother, Pasiphaë, placed beneath the deceived bull,
gave birth to her crime and her burden.
Aegeus' treacherous son, following the thread which led him,
escaped the winding house with my sister's help.
Behold, now I, lest I be thought too little one of Minos' family,
last of all I come under my family's laws.

Phaedra could scarcely be more explicit. All the women of Phaedra's family have been subject to a passion that is in some way unhappy or perverse. Europa was lured to Crete and motherhood by Jupiter in the form of a bull, while Pasiphaë conceived a passion for a real bull. Ariadne was seduced and abandoned on Naxos by Theseus after he employed her help in slaying a half-bull, the Minotaur, and now Phaedra has fallen in love with her stepson (who will of course be killed by a bull from the sea). Phaedra draws the obvious conclusion: she is just like all the other female members of her family. It follows, then, that there must be some law of fate controlling their and her destinies. What that law's origin might be Phaedra does not speculate.

But fate or her family's heredity is perhaps not the sole cause of Phaedra's passion. As in *Hippolytus Veiled*,[21] Phaedra complains of Theseus' wrongs against herself and also against others. She refers to his preference for Pirithous' friendship over his love for her and to the fact that he slew her brother, the Minotaur, and abandoned her sister, Ariadne, to wild beasts. Indeed, Phaedra believes Theseus' misdeeds against Hippolytus, his treatment of Hippolytus' mother, and the fact that he has fathered legitimate children by

[21] A. Nauck and B. Snell, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Hildesheim 1964) fr. 430; Plut. *Mor.* 27f-28a.

Phaedra, to be sufficient reason for Hippolytus to show no respect for his father's marriage bed (109-28).

We know, of course, that Phaedra will not persuade Hippolytus. There is sufficient in Phaedra's letter for us to infer that one reason for her failure will be Hippolytus' heredity. Blinded by her passion for Hippolytus, Phaedra sees an analogy between father and son: *Thesides Theseusque duas rapuere sorores* ('Theseus' son and Theseus have snatched away two sisters', 64). As Theseus won Ariadne's heart, so Hippolytus has won Phaedra's. Phaedra, of course, ignores the fact that, whereas Ariadne was a maiden in love with a stranger, she is a married woman in love with her stepson. She also ignores the true character of both son and father. In the very first couplet Phaedra addresses Hippolytus as *Amazonio . . . uiro* ('the Amazonian male', 2), a reminder that Hippolytus is the sole masculine member of a tribe of asexual females. Although aware that Hippolytus is said to hate women (173f.), Phaedra fails to make the necessary inference: Hippolytus' misogyny is the consequence of his Amazonian nature, for he has inherited his mother's sexuality, not his father's.

How does Ovid cope with the problem of foreshadowing the future? One way is to have Phaedra refer to her female relations, for the examples of Pasiphaë and Ariadne are hardly encouraging. Allusion to them presages disaster. Use of carefully chosen epithets is another. Theseus, for example, is called not only Theseus but *Aegides* ('Aegeus' son', 59) and *Neptunius heros* ('the hero, son of Neptune', 109). These patronymics point to more than Theseus' disputed birth, for 'Aegeus' son' recalls his past, while 'hero, son of Neptune' hints at the future. The phrase 'Aegeus' son', especially when used in connection with Ariadne, reminds us that when returning from that expedition to Crete Theseus became responsible for his father's suicide through failing to replace his ship's dark sails with white ones,[22] while 'the hero, son of Neptune' anticipates a similar act of culpable neglect, his appeal to his divine ancestor, Neptune, to kill his son.[23] Hippolytus' death is also foreshadowed when Phaedra refers to his skill with horses:

[22] The story would have been most familiar to Roman readers from Catullus 64.238-48.

[23] Cf. Statius' use of the same phrase for the same purpose at *Theb.* 12.588. On this see P. J. Davis, 'The Fabric of History in Statius' *Thebaid*' in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 7 (Brussels 1994) 464-83. The phrase occurs in only Ovid and Statius.

siue ferocis equi luctantia colla recuruas,
exiguo flexos miror in orbe pedes.
(*Her.* 4.79f.)
Whether you bend back the struggling neck of your spirited horse,
I wonder at those feet made to turn in a tiny circle.

Hippolytus' skill with horses is a familiar part of the myth and is emphasised in the prologue of Euripides' play, where Hippolytus orders an attendant to care for his horses (110ff.), and in the messenger's speech, where both the messenger and Hippolytus himself insist upon his close relationship with his team (1219f., 1240). The Ovidian Phaedra's words are intended to remind us that in his confrontation with the bull from the sea Hippolytus' skill is insufficient to save his life. Phaedra also alludes to the place where Hippolytus will die:

aequora bina suis obpugnant fluctibus isthmon,
et tenuis tellus audit utrumque mare.
hic tecum Troezena colam, Pittheia regna;
iam nunc est patria carior illa mea.
(*Her.* 4.105-08)
Two seas attack the isthmus with their waves,
and a slender strip of land hears a twofold surf.
Here I will dwell in Troezen with you, Pittheus' realm;
already now it is dearer to me than my homeland.

Troezen, of course, is the setting for Euripides' play and Hippolytus' death takes place within sight of the Isthmus of Corinth (*Hipp.* 1209).[24] By referring to Hippolytus' skill with horses and to the Isthmus, Phaedra unwittingly looks forward to her stepson's death.

Some of Phaedra's arguments also point to the joint destinies of writer and recipient. Taking account of the fact that Hippolytus is a hunter, Phaedra argues that other hunters have yielded to love's temptations. In particular, she refers to the cases of Cephalus, Adonis and Meleager:

clarus erat siluis Cephalus, multaeque per herbas
conciderant illo percutiente feras;
nec tamen Auroras male se praebebat amandum:
ibat ad hunc sapiens a sene diua uiro,
saepe sub illicibus Venerem Cinyraque creatum

[24] For discussion of the location of Hippolytus' death see W. Barrett (ed.), *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford 1964) 382-84 and his map.

sustinuit positos quaelibet herba duos,
arsit et Oenides in Maenalia Atalanta;
illa ferae spolium pignus amoris habet.
(*Her.* 4.93-100)

Cephalus was famed in the forest, and many wild beasts
fell on the grass when he struck;
and he did not do badly offering himself in love to Aurora.
Wisely the goddess went from her aged husband to him.
Often beneath the ilex trees some grassy spot supported
Venus and Cinyras' son as they lay there.
And Oeneus' son blazed for Maenalian Atalanta;
she has the wild beast's hide as pledge of love.

Each of these examples closely parallels the relationship between Phaedra and Hippolytus.

As it happens, the first of these examples is drawn from Euripides, for the Nurse, in her attempt to persuade Phaedra of love's power over the gods, alludes firstly to Zeus' love for Semele and secondly to the Dawn goddess's snatching of Cephalus to heaven for the sake of love (*Hipp.* 453-56). If Zeus and Eos submitted to love, so too should Phaedra. But the Ovidian Phaedra's point is different, for she is concerned with the effect of love not on the gods but upon mortals. Cephalus, she says, did well in allowing himself to be loved by Aurora. The story is one that is analogous to this one. Aurora left her husband, Tithonus, to sleep with the youthful Cephalus. The move was a wise one on Aurora's part because Tithonus was old and feeble and not a satisfactory sexual partner. Phaedra too prefers a young man to an older one. This preference, she implies, is wise.[25] The case of Venus and Cinyras' son, Adonis, involves the love of a goddess for a mortal. Like Hippolytus, Adonis was a hunter and, like Hippolytus, Adonis was killed by a savage beast. Phaedra hints at the danger to Hippolytus from the wild boar (104), the animal which killed Adonis, but he is in fact destined to be killed not by a boar but by the third bull to afflict Phaedra's family (cf. 56, 57, 165).[26] Oeneus' son, Meleager, loved Atalanta. The most important event in his career was his involvement in the hunt for the Calydonian boar. Meleager was successful and, as Phaedra notes, gave the spoils to Atalanta. The upshot,

[25] Jacobson [3] 153 points to additional parallels with the Cephalus and Eos story. In particular he singles out the hunt and the death of Procris (Cephalus' wife). The parallel would be more convincing if death befell Dawn (impossible, since she is a goddess) or Cephalus. But it is Procris, Cephalus' wife, who dies and she has no parallel in the Phaedra-Hippolytus myth.

[26] Euripides had alluded to this story at *Hipp.* 1420-22.

however, was that Meleager killed his jealous uncles. To avenge her brothers, Althaea, Meleager's mother, became responsible for her son's death and then hanged herself. The parallels with Hippolytus and Phaedra are plain. Like Meleager, Hippolytus angers his stepmother. Like Althaea, Phaedra becomes responsible for her stepson's death and, as in Euripides, hangs herself. Each of these three myths, then, parallels an aspect of the situation of Phaedra and Hippolytus. In particular, the second and third stories foreshadow their deaths.

What, then, is Ovid's contribution to the development of the literary tradition concerning Phaedra and Hippolytus? Given the paucity of our knowledge concerning both Sophocles' *Phaedra* and Euripides' *Hippolytus Veiled* (let alone Lycophron's *Hippolytus*) that is a difficult question to answer. One thing we can be reasonably sure of, however, is that Ovid's influence is decisive in directing primary interest away from Hippolytus to Phaedra. The central character in the plays of Seneca, Garnier, Racine and D'Annunzio is Phaedra. For them Hippolytus is secondary. Secondly, Ovid brings about a major shift in emphasis in the telling of the story, for, whereas in Euripides Aphrodite's hostility was aimed at Hippolytus, in Ovid and subsequent writers her hatred is levelled at Phaedra. But perhaps Ovid's most important contribution was to focus on Phaedra's complex subjectivity.[27] In this poem Ovid explores in more detail than we find in Euripides the psychology of a woman passionately in love with her stepson. He suggests parallel reasons on both divine and human levels for her propensity to unfortunate love, Venus' hatred for her family and her genetic inheritance from Europa and Pasiphaë. He points to her unsatisfactory relationship with her husband. He also implies, by his emphasis on the gaze, the solid physicality of Phaedra's lust. Ovid explores the moral dimension to her character, her tendency to self-deception and her actual contempt for conventional values. To sum up, Ovid presents us with a vigorous woman who has abandoned all scruples and single-mindedly sets out to fulfil her sexual cravings. He also foreshadows the disaster to come.[28]

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[27] It will be evident that I do not agree with Jacobson's [3] 157 verdict on this poem: 'And so, the lack of complexity in Ovid's characterization . . . . The whole tale is transformed into a joke with Phaedra as the butt'.

[28] I would like to acknowledge the support of the Australian Research Council for my research.