«*FALLAX AMOR*» [SEN. *PH.*, 634]
LITERARY AWARENESS AND ELEGIAC FALLACY
IN SENECA'S *PHAEDRA*

This article aims to investigate the intertextual background of Phaedra's love for her stepson Hippolytus in the only extant Roman tragedy on this theme, the *Phaedra* of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, written during the later years of the reign of Claudius (c. 53 B.C.). While the extent to which Seneca projected philosophical beliefs – mostly Stoic elements – into his tragic writings always remains an area for fruitful discussion, for many scholars Phaedra's uncontrolled desire to pursue Hippolytus does not only raise issues of «moral responsibility» that concern Seneca in those of his prose works which deal with the destructive power of passions,[1] while some others have shown that her portrayal by Seneca does not either draw exclusively on previous treatments of the myth by Euripides but on a variety of amatory themes and *topos* found in other genres. This paper comes to enhance this kind of argumentation, initiated mainly by Morelli and Littlewood,[2] by adding critical elements to the tragedy's close connection with the elegiac discourse and some erotic narratives in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Thus, it will be made apparent that beyond the portrayal of the person in whom «emotion and intellect struggle

1. A. Schiesaro, «Passion, Reason and Knowledge in Seneca's Tragedies», in S. M. Braund – C. Gill. (eds.) *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 109-111, argues that there are profound difficulties in a Stoic, moralizing interpretation of Seneca's tragedies. See the bibliography on this issue in M. Coffey – R. Mayer (eds.), *Seneca Phaedra*, Cambridge 1990, pp. 26-30. On the contrary, E. Lefèvre (ed.), *Senecas Tragödien*, Darmstadt 1972, pp. 343-75 and others read Phaedra's anger in Stoic terms. See especially Sen. *De Ira* 1. 1-2, 2. 4-5 where Seneca argues that if *furor* is allowed to gain control of reason, it leads to insanity and a total eclipse of the personality and cf. Sen. *Phaedra* 360-380.

2. See A. Morelli, «Le Preghiere Di Fedra. Modelli Della Seduzione Nella Phaedra Senecana», *MD* 35 (1995) 77-89 and C. Littlewood, *Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy*, Oxford 2004, pp. 259-301.

with disastrous results»,[3] there is an extremely delicate balance between different poetic genres such as drama, elegy and epic, that constitute a complex system of literary laws which Phaedra and Hippolytus have to cope with.

The fact that not one fragment from a lost *Phaedra* or *Hippolytus* survives from the major Roman tragedians of the Republic has led some scholars to believe that for Seneca, at least in the case of his *Phaedra*, Euripides was the guide-dramatist *par excellence*.[4] Euripides' second *Hippolytos (*written in 428 B.C.), the so-called «*Stephanephoros*»,[5] which earned him one of his few first prizes, is the only extant counterpart for Seneca's treatment of the myth in his *Phaedra*. However, there is no doubt that the story of Phaedra was well known to the Romans from other treatments of the myth,[6] as Ovid seems to confirm in *Fast.* 4. 737f.: *notus amor Phaedrae, nota est iniuria Thesei: / devovit natum credulus ille suum*.[7] Mythological figures like Ariadne, Medea and Phaedra, long standardized as *femmes fatales* in Augustan poetry, were being reprocessed as part of the Augustan classicism during the Neronian period.[8] Thus, their erotic sufferings in post-Augustan literature may not simply draw on Euripidean models, but rather expose a partial, selective reading of his tragedies by the post-Euripidean tradition.[9]

This is the case with Phaedra in the play of Seneca, whose framework features a literary sensibility shaped by the shifting political, social and

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3. As in P. Grimal, «L'Originalité de Sénèque dans la Tragédie de Phèdre», *Revue des Études Latines* 41 (1963) 300.

4. See Ch. Segal, *Language and Desire in Seneca's Phaedra*, Princeton 1986, p. 203: «The ghost of Euripides haunts every line». See also J. J. Gahan, «Imitatio et aemulatio in Seneca's Phaedra», *Latomus* 46 (1987) 383-384 who investigates *Phaedra*'s «imitatio and emulatio» in Euripides' plays. For different views, see Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), pp. 5-9 and Coffey – Mayer, ibid. (n. 1), p. 32.

5. This is because the young man offers a garland to his patron goddess Artemis. Euripides' first play, *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos* (veiled), is fragmentary, but an ancient hypothesis informs us that the play contained «something unseemly and worthy of condemnation that caused serious offence to the Athenian audience». See H. Roisman, «The Veiled Hippolytus and Phaedra. Reconsideration of Hippolytus Veiled», *Hermes* 127 (1999) 397-409.

6. As in A. J. Boyle, *Seneca's Phaedra*, Liverpool 1987, pp. 15-16. In the Hellenistic period, Lycophron is recorded to have written a tragedy titled *Hippolytus* around 280 B.C.

7. See N. H. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A Commentary* [Mnemosyne Supplement 198], Leiden - Boston - Köln 2000, pp. 494f., where there is a long note on Hippolytus translated to Italy. Cf. also Cic. *De Natura Deorum* 3. 76 referring to the Hippolytus myth as an example of a god making a mistake. For other minor references to Hippolytus or Phaedra in Latin literature, see Prop. 2. 1. 51-4, Ov. *Ars* 1. 511, *RA* 743 and, of course, *Heroides* 4.

8. See the fruitful study of R. Armstrong, *Cretan Women: Pasiphae, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin poetry*, Oxford 2006 and L. Fulkerson, *The Ovidian Heroine as Author,* Cambridge 2004, pp. 122-142 [Ch. 6 on «Reading like a virgin: Phaedra and Ariadne»].

9. As in Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), p. 7.

cultural climate in early Empire. This climate led some poets to use in their works various elements from different poetic genres that had flourished in Roman literature up to their time.[10] Ovid was the most skilful in this kind of «fusion» together with his preference for hyperbole and absurdity in depicting mythological heroes and heroines at exaggerated postures and extreme emotional states. Commentators have already noticed many parallels between *Phaedra* and the 4th Epistle in Ovid's *Heroides*, addressed by Phaedra to Hippolytus, which constitutes the only extant treatment of the myth in Roman literature, apart from the play examined here. However, as Littlewood has shown, «when *Phaedra* revisits *Heroides* 4, Seneca does not so much re-appropriate this particular epistle as absorb an elegiac reading of tragedy».[11] Actually, we shall see that it is to the Ovidian oeuvre as a whole and to the idea of a poetry that crosses and re-crosses generic boundaries that Seneca is indebted. For our purposes, however, it is still useful to start with a brief glance at Euripides' extant *Hippolytos*, as this masterpiece forms part of the framework within which Seneca's *Phaedra* will be examined.

Euripides' play features all standard ingredients, namely a failed seductress, an innocent youth and a deceived father. Phaedra is re-presented as loyal to her family (εὐγενὴς δάμαρ - 26), an honorable queen who falls victim to Aphrodite's vengeance on Hippolytus, an act caused by the latter's contempt for her and his exclusive devotion to chaste life and Diana (lines 9-22). As a result, Phaedra suffers from a secret malady, the nature of which she tries desperately to conceal.[12] Later on, after her love for Hippolytus is revealed, the heroine wins our sympathy, when she expounds to the Chorus the emotional stages she has been through while attempting to thwart the effects of her infatuation (392-402):

> ἐπεί μ' ἔρως ἔτρωσεν, ἐσκόπουν ὅπως
> κάλλιστ' ἐνέγκαιμ' αὐτόν. ἠρξάμην μὲν οὖν
> ἐκ τοῦδε, σιγᾶν τήνδε καὶ κρύπτειν νόσον·
> γλώσσῃ γὰρ οὐδὲν πιστόν, ἣ θυραῖα μὲν   395
> φρονήματ' ἀνδρῶν νουθετεῖν ἐπίσταται,
> αὐτὴ δ' ὑφ' αὑτῆς πλεῖστα κέκτηται κακά.
> τὸ δεύτερον δὲ τὴν ἄνοιαν εὖ φέρειν

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10. See Boyle, ibid. (n. 6), pp. 11-12.

11. See Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), p. 6.

12. Cf. Eur. *Hip.* 38-40: ΑΦΡ. ἐνταῦθα δὴ στένουσα κἀκπεπληγμένη / κέντροις ἔρωτος ἡ τάλαιν' ἀπόλλυται / σιγῇ, ξύνοιδε δ' οὔτις οἰκετῶν *νόσον*. Phaedra here seems determined to endure her passion σιγῇ (40) and not confess it even to her Nurse. Euripides treats her obsession with excellent delicacy as a disease (νόσον - 40) of body and mind that Phaedra is unable to control.

τῷ σωφρονεῖν νικῶσα προυνοησάμην.
τρίτον δ᾽, ἐπειδὴ τοισίδ᾽ οὐκ ἐξήνυτον   400
Κύπριν κρατῆσαι, κατθανεῖν ἔδοξέ μοι,
κράτιστον (οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ) βουλευμάτων.

Having realized that silence (σιγᾶν - 394) and self-control (τὴν ἄνοιαν εὖ φέρειν / τῷ σωφρονεῖν νικῶσα - 398f.) are rather ineffective, Phaedra decides that suicide is the wisest course of action. In Seneca's play, by contrast, this kind of reasoning is absent. In a rhetorical *controversia* with her nurse (129-273), Phaedra is unwilling to enter into a debate with herself and gives in passively to her *furor*, admitting from the very beginning that she is moving in full knowledge towards disaster.[13] In lines 112-114 she recalls allusively that her erotic passion and consequent predicament have a well established literary background that makes any further treatment of her passion redundant or, simply, repetitive on a dramatic as well as on the textual level (112-114):

> *Quo tendis, anime? quid furens saltus amas?*
> *fatale miserae matris agnosco malum:*
> *peccare noster novit in silvis amor.*

In the above lines, Phaedra does not only realize that she is yet another victim of the curse on all Cretan princesses, mostly on her mother, to suffer from a fatal love. The use of *agnosco* (113), one of the most common «reflexive annotations» registered by Hinds,[14] illustrates that the origins of her passion are associated with literary memories of the texts which define her role in Seneca's play, just as they do in the case of her mother Pasiphae and her sister Ariadne in other works.[15]

On the same ground, in lines 185-186, where Phaedra claims that there is a god (*deus* - 186) who dominates her mind and makes her unable to combat

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13. Cf. Sen. *Ph*. 177-180: Ph. *Quae memoras scio / vera esse, nutrix; sed furor cogit sequi / peiora. Vadit animus in praeceps sciens / remeatque frustra sana consilia appetens.* Notice here the emphatic use of *scio* (176) and *sciens* (179) which illustrate Phaedra's awareness of her guilt by evoking Medea's notorious *video meliora proboque: / deteriora sequor* at Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 7. 19-21, as Coffey – Mayer, ibid. (n. 1), ad loc note.

14. See S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext,* Cambridge 1998, pp. 8-10.

15. See also lines 124-128 where Phaedra admits she is doomed to repeat the sins of her family: *stirpem perosa Solis invisi Venus / per nos catenas vindicat Martis sui / suasque, probris omne Phoebeum genus / onerat nefandis: nulla Minois levi / defuncta amore est, iungitur semper nefas.* Segal, *Language*, p. 35, n. 10, Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), p. 263 and O. Zwierlein, *Senecas Phaedra und ihre Vorbilder*, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 8-10 maintain that in these lines Phaedra is echoing not only Ov. *Her*. 4. 55-66, 163f. but also Ovid's Iphis (*Met*. 9) in order to lament the weight of literary tradition.

her *furor* with *ratio*, it is obvious that it is not only the common philosophical theme of the impotence of knowledge or reason against the constraints of passion that matters[16] (185-186):

> *quid ratio possit? Vicit ac regnat furor,*
> *potensque tota mente dominatur deus.*

It has been observed that Seneca here particularly follows Ovid's *Epistle*, where Phaedra claims to Hippolytus that Love reigns and has power over the gods he controls (*Amor regnat et in dominos ius habet ille deos* – Ov. *Her*. 4. 12).[17] However, commentators have disregarded the fact that it is Medea in the *Metamorphoses*, whom Seneca must have in mind too. Like Seneca's Phaedra, Ovid's Medea also strives to thwart *furor* with her *ratio* being herself confronted with the same god (*Met*. 7. 10-13):

> (aside) *et luctata diu, postquam ratione furorem*
> *vincere non poterat, 'frustra, Medea, repugnas:*
> *nescio quis deus obstat,' ait, 'mirumque, nisi hoc est,*
> *aut aliquid certe simile huic, quod amare vocatur.*

Though pleading ignorance, Medea also «knows» well enough the god who will make herself, a mother, stain her hands with the blood of her children. Her *nescio quis* (12) may not simply refer to «some god», but function as a kind of reflexive comment on the textual history of her awareness versus her non-awareness from Euripides onwards.[18] Returning now to Seneca's *Phaedra*, it is obvious that a similar textual history of «awareness of the guilt» does exist in the dramatic and textual background of the play.[19] Furthermore, Phaedra's reference to Cupid (*deus* - 186) as almost «programmatically» invincible may not only recall Ovid's *Epistle* (see above Ov. *Her*. 4. 12) and Medea in the *Metamorphoses*, but also allude to Cupid's similar function in various episodes of rape in the *Metamorphoses* where gods in a state of erotic

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16. See n. 1 and cf. Eur. *Hipp*. 380ff., *Med*. 1078f. and Arist. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139a35.

17. See Boyle, ibid. (n. 6), ad loc.

18. According to Ph. Hardie, «Approximatives Similes in Ovid. Incest and Doubling», *Dictynna* 1 (2004) 86 n. 4 and 88 n. 9, Ovid alludes here *e contrario* to Virgil's 8th *Eclogue*, 43, 47-8: *nunc scio quid amor sit /…/Saevus Amor docuit natorum sanguine matrem / commaculare manus; crudelis tu quoque, mater*. On Medea's self awareness in Seneca's *Medea*, cf. Sen. *Med*. 166: Me. *Medea superest: hic mare et terras vides*, 171: Nut. *Medea* Me. *Fiam*, 910: *Medea nunc sum; crevit ingenium malis* and see the discussion of these lines in Th. Antoniadis, «Η Μήδεια στον «αλλότριο» χώρο και χρόνο του ρωμαϊκού δράματος: Νόμος, Ρητορική και Ιδεολογία στη *Medea* του Σενέκα», *Hellenika* 59 (2009) 215-217.

19. On the function of «passion, reason and knowledge» in Senecan tragedies, see Schiesaro, ibid. (n. 1), pp. 90-98.

madness seduce mortal women.[20] This can be confirmed in lines 187-194 where the list of gods which Phaedra invokes to demonstrate Cupid's irresistible power even over the immortals concludes with Apollo being wounded by Cupid's «more unerring» arrow (192-194):

> *ipsumque Phoebum, tela qui nervo regit,*
> *figit sagitta certior missa puer*
> *volitatque caelo pariter et terris gravis.*

At first sight, the scene recalls elegy, alluding to the poet-lover's «initiation» scene in Ovid's *Am*. 1. 1. 25-26: *Me miserum! certas habuit puer ille sagittas. / uror, et in vacuo pectore regnat Amor*. There is, however, one slight but crucial difference; Seneca emphasizes the intertextuality of Cupid's *certa sagitta* by transferring through an *hypallage* the epithet as *certior* to the winged god (*puer* - 193).[21] The use of comparative is not simply another rhetorical expansion on the part of the dramatist. Apollo's capitulation, used here as an *exemplum* by Phaedra to justify her submission to her passion without confrontation, recalls the famous episode in *Met*. 1. 453-567, where Apollo is punished by falling in love with Daphne.[22] Upon receiving the wound, Apollo acts as an elegiac lover and adopts a full-scale amatory rhetoric in his attempt to seduce Daphne. In lines 519-520, Phoebus claims that even he himself is wounded from Love, because Cupid possesses a *more unerring* (*certior* - 520) arrow than his own (*Met*. I 519-520):

> *certa quidem nostra est, nostra tamen una sagitta*
> *certior, in vacuo quae vulnera pectore fecit!*

Thus, Phaedra's mythological exemplum seems to be alluding to both ovidian passages (*Am*. 1. 1. 19-20 and *Met*. 1. 453-567) exploiting their programmatic character.[23] Just as Cupid made the poet-lover of the *Amores* abandon his poetic aspirations about *bella* and *arma*[24] and obliged even the god Apollo

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20. See below the reference to Apollo and Daphne and Coffey – Mayer, ibid. (n. 1), p. 26.

21. In lines 274-278, Chorus mentions Cupid's unerring bow this time: *Diua non miti generata ponto, / quam uocat matrem geminus Cupido: / impotens flammis simul et sagittis / iste lasciuus puer et renidens / tela quam certo moderatur arcu!* On these lines see also P. J. Davis, «The First Chorus of Seneca's Phaedra», *Latomus* 43 (1984) 396-397.

22. Boyle, ibid. (n. 6), ad loc and Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), p. 294, discussing lines 192-194, also refer to the Apollo and Daphne episode in *Met*. 1 but only as a passage of comparison rather an allusion.

23. Both passages are fruitfully discussed by Ph. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 34-5, 45-50. See also W. S. M. Nicoll, «Cupid, Apollo and Daphne», *CQ* 30 (1980) 174-182.

24. See Ov. *Am*. 1. 1. 1-2: *Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam / edere, materia conveniente modis*.

to fall in love and adopt an elegiac profile in an epic work like the *Metamorphoses*, similarly Seneca's Phaedra, though a tragic figure, upon receiving the wound from Cupid finds herself attracted to the idiom of other poetic genres in order to validate her erotic furor/passion.[25] This will make her adopt too, like Apollo, a full-scale amatory rhetoric in order to seduce Hippolytus.

Littlewood and Morelli have already revealed some very critical aspects of Phaedra's indebtedness to elegiac discourse, as aforementioned (see n. 2 and *passim*). Some other aspects in her rhetoric, however, are still worth to be examined further such as her striking behavior as an elegiac amatrix in lines 233-235 where she confesses to her Nurse that she is ready to abandon any thoughts for Theseus and follow Hippolytus everywhere, amid snows, mountains and forests (233-235):

> Ph. *Hunc in nivosi collis haerentem iugis,*
> *et aspera agili saxa calcantem pede*
> *sequi per alta nemora, per montes placet*.

In lines 611-617 Phaedra will declare again readiness to endure the bleakness of the hoary mountains (*altas nives, gelatis iugis* - 614f.) following Hippolytus, if only the latter accepts her love (611-617):

> Ph. *me vel sororem, Hippolyte, vel famulam uoca,*
> *famulamque potius: omne servitium feram.*
> *non me per altas ire si iubeas nives*
> *pigeat gelatis ingredi Pindi iugis;*
> *non, si per ignes ire et infesta agmina,*   615
> *cuncter paratis ensibus pectus dare.*
> *mandata recipe sceptra, me famulam accipe:*

Commentators recognized here one of the standard amatory motifs – the «lover's pursuit for the beloved» – found in Propertius and Tibullus.[26] One may also note that in lines 615-616 this theme is given in almost epic terms (*infesta agmina* - 615, *paratis ensibus pectus dare* - 616) with Phaedra re-

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25. M. Paschalis, «The Bull and the Horse: Animal theme and Imagery in Seneca's Phaedra», *AJPh* 115 (1994) 106-108, explores also the stories of Apollo and the cattle of Admetus and of Europa and the bull, in the first choral ode (274-357), showing that they function as the archetypes of Phaedra's passion.

26. Cf. Prop. 2. 26. 29-32: *Heu, mare per longum mea cogitat ire puella,* | *hanc sequar et fidos una aget aura duos.* | *unum litus erit sopitis unaque tecto* | *arbor, et ex una saepe bibemus aqua;* Tib. 1. 4. 41-46: *neu comes ire neges, quamvis via longa paretur* | *et Canis arenti torreat arva siti,* | *Quamvis praetexens picta ferrugine caelum* | *Venturam anticipet imbrifer arcus aquam.* | *vel si caeruleas puppi volet ire per undas,* | *ipse levem remo per freta pelle ratem*; See Coffey – Mayer, ibid. (n. 1), p. 103.

calling Ovid's exhaustive use of the *militia amoris* topos in *Am*. 1. 9. Further-more, asking Hippolytus to test her loyalty, Phaedra employs another elegiac *locus communis*, the *servitium amoris*, in order to convince him to accept her even as a sister (*sororem* - 611) or a serving maid (*me famulam accipe* - 617).[27] For Coffey and Mayer her desire to repudiate her actual relationship in favor of one that would license passion appears to recall a similar attempt from Byblis towards her brother Caunus in the *Metamorphoses* (9. 454-665).[28] Personally, I think that Ovid's programmatic elegies in the *Amores*, namely *Am*. 1. 1, at the scene of the poet's capitulation to Cupid's «unerring arrow» discussed above, and *Am*. 1. 3, where the poet-lover Ovid asks his puella το *accept his services*, may provide – through the use of *accipe* – two more interesting parallels to Phaedra's erotic call to Hippolytus (*Am*. 1. 1. 23-24 / *Am*. 1. 3. 5-6):

> *lunavitque genu sinuosum fortiter arcum,*
> *«quod» que «canas, vates, accipe» dixit «opus!»*

> *Accipe, per longos tibi qui deserviat annos;*
> *accipe, qui pura norit amare fide!*

To start with *Am*. 1. 1, while *accipe* and *opus* (24) keep their obvious sexual connotation, they mainly serve to point out Ovid's poetic initiation to elegy and amatory rhetoric, if one recalls the programmatic function of *accipe* instituted by Vergil in *Ecl*. 6. 69-70 where Linus initiates Cornelius Gallus in neoteric poetry: *Hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae, / Ascraeo quos ante seni; quibus ille solebat.* McKeown suggests also that *accipe ... opus* (24) may be modeled on the common phrase *vulnus accipere*, which would connect well with the *militia amoris* material in Phaedra's speech mentioned above (*paratis ensibus pectus dare* - 616).[29] A similar programmatic function

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27. On Phaedra's *servitium amoris* here, see also Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), p. 14.

28. Cf. Ov. *Met*. 9. 466-467: *iam dominum appellat, iam nomina sanguinis odit, / Byblida iam mavult, quam se vocet ille sororem*. Coffey – Mayer, ibid. (n. 1), ad loc note that, like Byblis who calls her brother "lord" and prefers that he not call her «sister», Phaedra too does not reply to Hippolytus' *mater* with a corresponding *mi fili*, but uses his given name asking him to consider her in a new light, *even* as a sister or a serving maid. *Soror* was also a part of lover's language, and is so used by Lygdamus at [Tib.] 3. 1. 26: *sive sibi coniunx sive future soror*. However, the theme of a lover's servitude to the beloved is found as early as Catullus 64, where Ariadne, Phaedra's sister, had likewise requested from Theseus to be at least his slave if not his wife. Cf. Cat. 64, 161: *quae tibi iucundo famularer serva labore*. A similar rhetoric is adopted by Scylla towards Minos in *Ciris* (Appendix Vergiliana) 414-415: *illa ego sum, Minos, sacrato foedere coniunx / dicta tibi: tamen haec, etsi non accipis, audis,*

29. See J. C. McKeown, *Ovid: Amores Vol. II: A Commentary on Book One*, Leeds 1989, *ad loc*. On the sexual connotation of *accipe* and *opus* see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, Baltimore 1982, p. 157.

of *accipe* is to be found in its emphatic double presence in *Am*. 1. 3. 5-6, where Ovid is using it in his erotic inviation to Corinna which simultaneously appears as an attempt to initiate her in the elegiac world. By the same token, if Phaedra's *me famulam accipe* (617), apart from denoting her erotic subjugation to Hippolytus, endorses a slight programmatic connotation, then it may invite Hippolytus to accept elegiac discourse and enter the world of love elegy, where *servitium amoris* or *militia amoris* is not a shame (but only a *topos*) and lustful passions are less censored.

At this kind of double (erotic as well as generic) invitation, Hippolytus reacts with extreme anger and savageness, not hesitating even to tear Phaedra's hair with his sword, as lines 707-708 and 731-732 suggest.[30] Upon the revelation of Phaedra's emotions, he is also dominated by *ratio* and *furor,* a kind of *furor,* though, unregistered in the erotic contexts we have seen above with Phaedra and Medea as protagonists (566-568):

> Hi. *Detestor omnis, horreo fugio execror.*
> *sit ratio, sit natura, sit dirus furor:*
> *odisse placuit.*

This kind of *dirus furor*, which is rather incompatible with the chaste and innocent profile that myth and literary tradition attribute to Hippolytus, was already exposed in his hunting instructions (31-53) and his prayer to Diana (54-84).[31] In the prevailing military imagery of that scene, a polemical defender of the ways of the woodlander seeks nothing else but to attack, ensnare, kill and destroy.[32] However, while it is not unlikely that Hippolytus' clamorous rhetoric, his violent and destructive emotions draw generally on the world of Senecan tragedy which is often interpreted simply as «over-whelmingly evil»,[33] the truth is, as seen in the case of the «hunting for the beloved» theme above, that the figure of a hunter lends itself all too readily to eroticization. Littlewood has shown that Hippolytus' hunting song in the opening lines of the tragedy (1-26) places him in an intertextual landscape

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30. Cf. lines 706-708: Hi. *stringatur ensis, merita supplicia exigat.* / *en impudicum crine contorto caput* / *laeua reflexi* and 731-732: Nut. *crinis tractus et lacerae comae* / *ut sunt remaneant, facinoris tanti notae.* On Hippolytus' warlike profile in the tragedy, see F. Ahl, *Seneca Phaedra. Translated with an Introduction*, New York 1986, pp. 38-39.

31. See Coffey – Mayer, ibid. (n. 1), pp. 28-9 and Lefèvre, ibid. (n. 1), pp. 92-128.

32. See for example lines 51-54: *tu praecipites clamore feras* / *subsessor ages;* / *tu iam uictor curuo solues* / *uiscera cultro.* For a detailed description of the military imagery and the *potentia* theme see Boyle, ibid. (n. 6), p. 19.

33. Hippolytus speaks of triumph in lines 78-80: *tum rostra canes sanguine multo* / *rubicunda gerunt, repetitque casas rustica longo* / *turba triumpho.* Note in lines 67-71 that the geographical bounds of Diana's kingdom suggest those of Rome in Seneca's time. See Boyle, ibid. (n. 6), pp. 23-24.

which, through memories of «less innocent texts» of erotic narrative and hunter figures (Gallus in Vergil's 10th *Eclogue*[34] is a good example that Littlewood mentions), presents him as vulnerable to erotic contamination.[35] Similarly, Segal revealed Hippolytus' repressed sexuality at the scene where he throws away his sword, for he feels it as already polluted by contact with Phaedra (*et hic / contactus ensis deserat casum latus*, 713f.).[36] One could add here other parallels too which show that Hippolytus' problem is not so much one of self-awareness, but of un-awareness of the texts and narratives that make himself, an innocent hunter, literally «attractive» to Phaedra. Milanion, at the famous mythological exemplum of the opening poem of *Monobiblos* (Prop. 1. 1), Propertius himself (in 2. 19. 17-20) and Tibullus through his invention, Sulpicia (4. 3. 11-20), took up country life and dedicated them-selves to rural activities such as hunting, in order to become more appealing to their objects of love.[37] To Phaedra's misfortune, Hippolytus, for his part, seems unable to understand the erotic texts and topoi that can make him literally, even in a dramatic play, a «love hunter». Nevertheless, this para-meter makes him ironically succeed in what Phaedra and Medea fatally failed; to thwart *furor*, i.e. his stepmother's lustful passion offered to him, with *ratio*.

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34. In this eclogue Gallus, the elegiac poet Cornelius Gallus, suffers from an «*insanus amor*» and tries desperately to escape from his erotic slavery to Lycoris by joining the pastoral world and taking up hunting in the icy mountains. See the fruitful analysis of the tenth Eclogue in G.-B., Conte (tr. Ch. Segal), *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Vergil and Other Latin Poets*, New York 1986, pp. 105-119.

35. On the erotic connotation and rich intertext (mostly in *Heroides* 4 and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) of phrases like *Ite, umbrosas cingite silvas* (1), *summaque montis iuga Cecropii* (2), *celeri planta lustrate vagi/ quae saxoso loca Parnetho subiecta iacent* (3), see Littlewood, ibid. (n. 2), pp. 269-301. According to Littlewood (pp. 263-264), even Hippolytus' nostalgic de-scription of a sexless Golden Age (527-538) evokes elegiac memories, being modeled on specific passages from Ovid's *Amores*. Cf. especially Sen. *Ph.* 527-538 with Ov. *Am*. 3. 8. 41-8.

36. See Segal, ibid. (n. 4), pp. 133-136 who notes that *latus* often means «phallus» in Latin poetry and Adams 1982, 49.

37. Cf. Prop. 1. 1. 9-16: *Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores / saevitiam durae contudit Iasidos. / Nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris, / rursus in hirsutas ibat et ille feras; / ille etiam / Hylaei percussus vulnere rami / saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit. / ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam: / tantum in amore fides et benefacta valent*, 2. 19. 17-20: *ipse ego venabor: iam nunc me sacra Dianae / suscipere et Veneris ponere vota iuvat. / incipiam captare feras et reddere pinu / cornua et / audaces ipse monere canis;* [Tib.] 4. 3. 11-20: *Sed tamen, ut tecum liceat, Cerinthe, uagari, / ipsa ego per montes retia torta feram, / ipsa ego uelocis quaeram uestigia cerui / et demam celeri ferrea uincla cani. / Tunc mihi, tunc placeant siluae, si, lux mea, tecum / arguar ante ipsas concubuisse plagas:/ …/ Nunc sine me sit nulla Venus, sed lege Dianae / caste puer, casta retia tange manu*. Conte, ibid. (n. 34), pp. 116-120 discusses these texts in relation to Gallus' futile resort to the pastoral landscape in order to cure his desire for Lycoris in Verg. *Ecl*. 10. 52-60

This kind of Hippolytus' epic and warlike stance as a result of his «textual» un-awareness will soon break Phaedra's delusions (634-635):

Ph. *O spes amantum credula, o fallax Amor!*
satisne dixi?--precibus admotis agam.

Speaking aside, Phaedra realizes that all her amatory rhetoric was based on a *Fallax Amor*, evoking Horus' famous words to Propertius (4.1b, 135-6): *at tu finge elegos, fallax opus (haec tua castra!)*.[38] That this *fallacia* is bound to the elegiac *discourse* is a subject of a series of studies exploring the mechanisms discovered in the love poems of Propertius and, mostly, of Ovid.[39] Of course, there is a difference. In Horus' words, *fallax opus* has active connotations based on the idea that elegiac poet-lovers try to seduce their mistresses (and, on a metapoetic level, delude their readers) by representing in their verses (*opus*) feelings and emotions that, far from being sincere, derive from the use of literary topoi.[40] On the other hand, Phaedra's infatuation is real and devastating. Though she employed, acting as an elegiac poet-lover, all the mechanisms and erotic topoi of the elegiac genre in constructing an illicit and illusive passion, she realizes that she has become a victim of her own illusions as Hippolytus seems unwilling to enter the textual, aesthetic, historical and ideological borders of love elegy and behave himself too as an elegiac amator. In lines 685-686 Hippolytus seems astonished that Phaedra imagined he could ever become her loving subject (685-686):

Hi. *scelerique tanto visus ego solus tibi*
materia facilis? hoc meus meruit rigor?

Elegiac *fallax opus* can only exist, if the object of love is willing to provide *materia*. This is what Ovid implies to Corinna in *Am*. 1. 3. 19-20: *te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebe / -provenient causa carmina digna sua.*

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38. Cf. also Tib. 1. 9. 81-84: *At tua tum me poena iuvet, Venerique merenti / fixa notet casus aurea palma meos: /'Hanc tibi fallaci resolutus amore Tibullus / dedicat et grata sis, dea, mente rogat'.*

39. Cf. Prop. 1. 7. 21: *foederis heu taciti, cuius fallacia verba*. On the so-called *elegiac discourse* and its «poetics of illusion», see Hardie 2002, ibid., pp. 30-61 and D. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy,* Cambridge 1993.

40. After speaking aside in lines 635-636, Phaedra asks Hippolytus to listen to the prayers of a *tacitae mentis* (*Miserere, tacitae mentis exaudi preces* - 637) evoking a series of elegiac parallels that Morelli, ibid. (n. 2), 86-89, has found in emending the lines. Morelli bases his preference for *tacitae…mentis* (instead of *pavidae*) on numerous quotes on elegiac poetry. Cf. particularly Ov. *Am*. 1, 4, 23: *siquid erit, de me tacita quod mente queraris, / pendeat extrema mollis ab aure manus*, *Ars* I 601f., Tib. III 12,16.

Using the same word, *materia* (686),[41] Hippolytus declares openly to Phaedra that he is *not* the «easy material» she is looking for to construct her literary passion. In essence, he speaks – only here – the language of poetics to make her undertand he is not going to participate in her metapoetic game.

To sum up, there is no question that the tragedy of Phaedra's love for Hippolytus is in Seneca's play overdetermined. Phaedra is bound to fall fatally in love, because myth and literary tradition dictate her being weak, lonely, unloved and vulnerable to Venus and Cupid's arrows.[42] This is a pretext she invokes when underscoring in every possible way the heredity of her unnatural passion as she does in lines 112-128. However, beyond the coexistence of various reasons that make her succumb to her infatuation, there lies an inevitable contradiction between different formulations in her rhetoric and reasoning. While speaking and breathing on the dramatic stage of tragedy, she appears to be nothing more than a mere guest, an outsider on this stage because she recognizes nearwhile the power of literary tradition and succumbs to it. Thus, she struggles to allure her object of love by expressing and validating her passion through the dynamics of poetics in mostly elegiac terms, whereas Hippolytus, remains impervious to her discourse. As a result, Phaedra is finally rejected not so much because myth and literary tradition provide a chaste profile for Hippolytus, but because the latter prefers to remain a purely tragic figure and do not follow alternative generic rules which define Phaedra's erotic invitation.

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41. For *materia* used in this sense cf. Ov. *Am.* 1. 3. 19-20: *te mihi materiem felicem in carmina praebe – provenient causa carmina digna sua* and see McKeown, ibid. (n. 29), ad loc.

42. As in Armstrong, ibid. (n. 8), p. 298. On literary fate in general and characters following prescripted myths see A. Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama*, Cambridge 2003, p. 201, who notes «the present is menaced by the spell of the past (as represented by a literary heritage)».