VIOLENCE AND FAMILY BOUNDS IN PHAEDRA'S THEME[1]

Filipe SOARES
filipeafsoares@gmail.com
FCSH – Universidade Nova de Lisboa

ABSTRACT
In World Culture love is presented as one the major topics explored by its intervenients. Concerning our study, it presents love and sexuality in terms of its disruptiveness: they are characterized as a force that destabilizes the *status quo* of human communities, leading to situations of Love/ Violence and Love/ Death.
From this point of view, the Theme of Phaedra (after Thompson's *Motif-Index*) can be analysed in this perspective. Its variations allow him to adapt to different chronologies – from early Sumerian Literature to its Greco-Roman counterpart –, but both its object and content remain the same: in a mixture of wrath, humiliation and fear, Phaedra's love leads to Hippolytus' death and, consequently, to the perturbation of the family's life and sociability.

KEYWORDS
Comparative Cultural Studies, Sexuality, Violence, Death, Phaedra, Hippolytus.

Introduction

The 1st millennium emphasizes the Mediterranean as a dynamic space, not only in terms of trade, but more important, in terms of cultural exchanges. Therefore, by compelling, comparing and interpreting literary themes, we argue that Greece, and later on, the Roman Empire were part of this socio-cultural environment. On the other hand, though the existence of similarities between these narratives, the circulation/incorporation of ideas from one place to another implies transformations on how they are understood/ seen by the new cultural ecosystem.

The presence of women in Ancient World Literature is related to the production of both texts and images by the males in their society. These texts explore, not only the 'fears', but also the 'anxieties' of this patriarchal society regarding female libido and its negative consequences (i.e.: Pr. 5.1-14; Pr. 7; Hom. *Il.* 5.348-349; Arist. *HA* 9.1608a-608b; Hyg. *Astr.* 2.20). Ultimately, women fall into two main ideas: whether they can or

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cannot adopt socially accepted behaviors (i.e.: *Inst. Any* 2:143[2]; Pr. 31.10-31; E. *Hipp.* 600; 680-690)[3].

This theme is characterized by a love triangle in which an older woman (married with one of the men) misbehaves, such as lustfulness attitudes, but also her trickiness toward others. In the two other vertexes, we have both male entities: the first one (α) is politically preeminent, but also credulous concerning the developments of the plot; the second male (β) is defined by his beauty, but also his respectability[4]. In terms of interpretation, though the Classical models of this theme (at least the tragedies Euripides' *Hippolytus Stephanephoros* and Seneca's *Phaedra*) are more familiar than their near eastern homologous, the presence of this plot in other chronologies (older than the two tragedians) suggests the idea that, despite their idiosyncrasies, they might present a common thought concerning sociability[5]. So, these texts condemn sexual misconducts concerning not only the uninhibited attitudes of these women toward relationships (on the verge of adultery, incest or an incestuous-adultery), but also the age difference between the two intervenients: ultimately, by introducing women's libidinous actions, the authors appoint them as a way to reflect upon the negative consequences of sexuality[6].

These texts can be divided into six elements that are common to all of them: 1) Young male (α), defined by his beauty and living in subordination to an older male (β); 2) The subordinated wife tries to seduce him; 3) The refusal is based on socio-cultural aspects; 4) The woman acquires an active position characterized by defamation of α, accusing (α) of attempt of rape; 5) Intervention of β condemns α to death/proscription; 6) Hereafter the author acquires his personal freedom, since he can either condemn α to death or, in a different perspective, can make him to return with a higher *status* in comparison to his initial one. The presence of violence and family bounds is due to the relation between passion and scenarios of both death and destruction.

The failure of their intentions led them to acquire, in a mixture of wrath, humiliation and fear, a cunning character, crucial to perpetrate their revenge against the one that repudiated their charms, regardless of the consequences. The relation between this theme and violence and family bounds concludes with the action from β. Driven by the feelings toward their wives, they end up as part of this vortex of emotions: in the climax of the action, their lack of judgment ends up to be decisive for condemning the **α** to exile and, consequently, to a possible death.

[2] M. Lichtheim (transl.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: a book of readings*, Berkeley, 1973-1980, vol. 2, 143.

[3] P. Easterling, "Women in Tragic Space", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 34, 1987, 26; J. Bremmer, "Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece: observation on a difficult relationship", in R. von Heahling (coord.), *Griechische Mythologie und Frühes Christentum*, Darmstadt, 2005, 7.

[4] P. Bénichou, *L'écrivain et ses travaux*, Paris, 1967, 249-253; A. Gérard, *The Phaedra Syndrome of Shame and Guilt in Drama*, Amsterdam, 1993, 3-4; L. M. Macía Aparicio, "Fedra e Hipólito", in E. Fernández de Mier – F. Piñero Torre (edd.), *Amores Míticos*, Madrid, 1999, 278.

[5] Bénichou, op. cit., 237.

[6] Bénichou, op. cit., 260-261; Gérard, op. cit., 2-3; Macía Aparicio, loc. cit., 265.

1. Practical Examples of Phaedra's Theme

The Epic of Gilgameš and the Epic of Aqhat

The textual data from the Near East underlines this theme as a strong one, resistant to the passage of time. These two epics allow us to understand the idea that, despite their transformation into smaller elements inside the text, or, at least, the existence of other ideas beyond them, they still preserve all their intrinsic elements: 1) Seduction; 2) Repudiation; 3) Slander; 4) Revenge.

The sixth table of the Epic of Gilgameš (hereinafter it will be presented as EG) presents the Akkadian version of the theme. Motivated by the beauty and the majestic look of Gilgameš (EG. 6.1-5), Ištar presents a monologue in which she tries to convince the king of Uruk to be her husband (EG. 6.6-9): her intention is to persuade him to lay down with her by appealing to the desire of ambition inherent to the idea of kingship (EG. 6.10-21). The rest of the text develops itself around his refusal, but also Ištar's revenge.

His actions are related with the idea that the destiny of Ištar's past lovers was unpleasant after the relation took place. Accordingly, after the words of the deity, Gilgameš' response to her is presented in terms of sarcasm and irony (EG. 6.42-43; 6.79): he underlines, in addition to the absence of a define pattern concerning her lovers (6 lovers, which were a mixture of gods, mortals and animals: EG. 6.48-78), also the fact that if he accepted her sexual offers, his destiny would not be much different[7].

Beside these questions, EG. 6.94-100, 6.101-122 and 6.106-111 add extra information about his refusal. The first two set of verses emphasize Ištar as a personification of chaos: her threaten toward Anu, where she states that the dead will "consume […] and outnumber the living" (6.99-100)[8], plus the 118th verse – "the level of the river was reduced by seven cubits" (6.118)[9] –, suggests a reinforcement of her vindictive character as able to throw the human world into total disorder. As for the last events – "the widow of Uruk has gathered chaff / The farmer of Uruk has grown hay" (EG. 6.110-111)[10] – they imply an antithesis in comparison to the first examples: contrary to them, this 'new' version of the deity approximates her to a motherly figure. Therefore, the refusal can be interpreted as an action of a man that keeps out of a woman's way (a deity), whose actions suggest a certain ambiguity toward reality: she is a complex entity, that combines both activeness (life) and destructiveness (chaos, alterity, death and, ultimately, violence)[11].

The encounter between Aqhat and Anat presents an internal structure much similar to the one above described: 1) the goddess excited with the presence of the hero, or with something the he possesses (Anat/ Aqhat; Ištar/ Gilgameš); 2) Anabasis of the deity; 3) Second dialogue (Ištar/Anu; Anat/ Ilu) where the goddesses try to convince the main deity to make available the means to revenge; 4) Revenge[12].

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[7] I. C. G. Almeida, *O Carácter do "Divino Feminino" na Literatura Mesopotâmica: Inanna/ Ištar – Personificação do Imaginário Feminino*, M. A. diss., Lisboa, 2009, 80.

[8] A. George (ed.), *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: an introduction, critical edition and cuneiform texts*, Oxford, 2003.

[9] George, op. cit.

[10] George, op. cit.

[11] R. Harris, "Inanna-Ishtar as paradox and a coincidence of Opposites", *History of Religions* 30.3, 1991, 270; Almeida, op. cit., 87.

[12] S. Parker, "Death and Devotion: the composition and theme of AQHT", in R. McClive et al. (edd.), *Love & Death in the Ancient Near East: essays in honor of Marvin H. Pope*, Guilford, 1987, 76-77.

Contrary to their human counterparts, the fact that both Ištar and Anat complain to their father figure, instead of a marital one, is enlightening regarding their *ethoi*. Several studies on the divine world[13] tend to highlight the idea that these goddesses, but also the gods in general, must be seen as polysemic/multifaceted entities: in our *case study*, though the presence of slander (like their human equivalents), both goddesses are neither wives, nor motherly ones (except on a metaphorical sense, like kingship).

Beyond the *Epic of Gilgameš*' interpretation regarding the duality life/ death (i.e.: OBV[14] 10.3.1-14; EG 10.308-322), it can also be seen as an important document for the understanding of Mesopotamian view on kingship. So, even if Gilgameš' question – "What bridegroom endured forever?" (EG 6.42) – suggest consciousness toward kingship (a king's reign is not *ad aeternum*), we argue that the scribe is using the episode to reflect upon the idea of kingship. The refusal completes a whole set of ideas. By repudiating Ištar's affection, the king is not simply ridiculing her "sexual life" (6.42-44; 6.79), but instead a deeper feeling related with the magico-symbolic aspects of her eroticism: her words – "Come, Gilgameš, you be the bridegroom […] you shall be my husband and I will be your wife!" (6.7-9)[15] – might point to an invitation for the Sacred Marriage. So, he is excluding divine affection (particularly Ištar's) as the symbolic mainstay of kingship, and to whom 6.10-21 is a fine example. Ultimately, beside the duality live/ death, the epic points to a 'political treaty' with the references to the Sacred Marriage, and to the Sacred Bull as a consequence of divine wrath against a *hybristic* king[16].

As for Aqhat's, our perspective coincides with the proposals of Walls[17] and Natan-Yulzary[18]: these two authors contributed to the idea of death as a major topic of this poem, by suggesting that Anat's trickiness to get the bow led to Aqhat's death[19]. On the other hand, we tend to accept Anat's attitudes toward the bow as roughly equal to Sumerian Love Poetry, whose divine presence suggest an expression of divine freedom[20]. Ultimately, Day[21] understood Anat's complexity: by studying her epithets, particularly *btlt*[22], she emphasizes that "as a *btlt* there is no gender boundary to impede her, and so she is 'free' to participate in the culturally masculine pursuits of warfare and hunting".

Finally, the scribes present several aspects of their worldview. Despite of the idiosyncrasies between Ugarit and Mesopotamian texts, by dramatizing a textual structure that is similar to the human world, they reveal themselves familiarized with the complexity of the divine world.

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[13] Cf. J. A. Hackett, "Can a sexist model liberate us? Ancient Near Eastern 'Fertility' Goddesses", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5.1, 1989, 65-76; J. Stuckey, "Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults", *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* 7.1, 2005, 32-44.

[14] Abbreviation for *Old Babylonian Version* (translation after S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: creation, the flood, Gilgamesh, and others*, Oxford, 2000).

[15] George, op. cit.

[16] W. Moran, "The Gilgamesh Epic: a masterpiece from Ancient Mesopotamia", in J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East IV*, London, 1995, 2333.

[17] N. H. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth*, Atlanta, 1992.

[18] S. Natan-Yulzary, "Contrast and Meaning in the 'Aqhat Story", *Vetus Testamentum* 62, 2012.

[19] Walls, op. cit., 204-205; Natan-Yulzary, loc. cit., 445.

[20] F. Caramelo, "Erotismo e Sexualidade na Mesopotâmia: 'Quem se deitará naquele linho comigo?'", in J. A. Ramos et al (edd.), *A Sexualidade no Mundo Antigo*, Lisboa/ Coimbra, 2009, 129.

[21] P. L. Day, "Anat: Ugarit's 'Master of Animals'", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51.3, 2012, 183.

[22] According to *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD 2.173), *batūltu* means "adolescente, nubile girl".

The Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers and Gn. 37-50

Both texts are written in a similar way to those related with Wisdom Literature, which underline, not only the importance of family bounds between individuals, but also the moral qualities of these male individuals (Bata and Joseph). Despite this feature, other textual data suggest the idea that both Egyptians and Hebrews are familiar with the idea that sexuality and eroticism is something that can be related with violence and death.

By the Egyptian worldview, early in the Old Kingdom (c. 2649-2150 BC) sexuality is already part of a speech that combines both violence and family bounds. In his instruction, Ptahotep adverts to women by writing "beware of approaching the women!" , but also "a short moment like a dream, / Then death comes for having known them […] When one goes to it the heart rejects it. He who fails through lust of them" (*Inst. Ptah.*)[23]. During the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1070 BC), Any, by writing about the destructiveness of passions, points to the relation between stranger women and violence/death: "Beware of a woman who is a stranger […] When she has no witnesses; / She is ready to ensnare you, / A great deadly crime when it is heard" (*Inst. Any.*)[24]. For the Greco-Roman Period (c. 332-30 BC), the *Instruction of Ankhshonq* still quotes a possible association between sexuality and scenarios of death and violence: "do not take to yourself a woman whose husband is alive, lest he become your enemy" (*Inst. Ankh.*)[25].

As for the Old Testament, the best examples of the lexical field of violence and its relation with sexuality are from the *Book of Proverbs*[26]. Both Prov. 2.18-19 and Prov. 5.4-5 are enlightening about this: the first one points to "for her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life". The second one stresses that "her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell". A last reference comes from the chapter seven of this book, where the enamored man is compared to a bull, suggesting that "he [the enamored man] as an ox goeth to the slaughter" (Prov. 7.22).

Both texts are written in order to highlight the moral qualities of both Joseph and Bata, in opposition to women's actions. Regardless of the survival of the male individuals, they equally suggest a relationship connecting women/sexuality/violence (death).[27] Wisdom Literature (Egyptian instructions; *Book of Proverbs*) plus our main texts (The Egyptian tale of *The Two Brothers*; Gn. 37-50) underline that both Egyptians and Hebrews were familiar with the idea of eroticism and violence: ultimately, they warn about the perfidious nature of women's sexuality, and how it enhances the breakdown of households.

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[23] Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: a book of readings*, vol. 1, 68.
[24] Lichtheim, op. cit., vol. 2, 137.
[25] M. Lichtheim, op. cit., vol. 3, 166.
[26] Herbert Marks (ed.), "Proverbs", in *The English Bible: King James version*, New York, 2012, vol. 2, 1106-1155.
[27] Parker, "Death and Devotion: the composition and theme of AQHT", loc. cit., 77.

Bellerophon/ Antheia/ Proetus

For the Greek world, Book VI of *Iliad* is the oldest reference (so far) to the existence of this triangle. According to *Il.* 6.159-162 we are told on how Antheia tried to seduce the Corinthian prince, but also on his roams: among his heroic deeds we find the slaughter of the Chimaera and the defeat of both the Solymus and the Amazons. In the end "Bellerophon came to be hated by the gods […] wandered alone […] shunning the paths of men" (Hom. *Il.* 6.200-202)[28].

Regarding its interpretation, "Homer's" attention to the socio-cultural implications of war allows us to suppose the existence of other questions more relevant for the interpretation of the myth as a whole, rather than the possible adultery between Antheia and the Corinthian hero. Like the Egyptian and the Hebrew texts, the Greek epic also uses the verses to highlight moral and ethical attitudes of both Bellerophon and Proetus. Their actions suggest them as *kaloi kai agathoi*: the first one is able to demonstrate his respectability to his host; the second one, by the verse *Il.* 6.167 – "to slay him he probate, for his soul had awe of that"[29] –, shows *sophrosyne* to avoid social misconduct concerning his guest, but also regarding society in general[30]. On the other hand, though their antiquity, epic poets and others authors are familiar about *Eros*' mythological background. Among "Homer", beside Diomedes' response to Aphrodite's presence in war (Hom. *Il.* 5.345-350: women susceptibility to love is part of the Argolian hero speech), *Eros* is a force able to "subdue all immortals and mortal men"[31] (Hom. *Il.* 14.199). As for Hesiod's *Theogony*, *Eros* is the "fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them" (*Th.* 120)[32].

So, it is possible to find in Homeric Poetry episodes that articulate *Eros* with violence and family bounds. In the book VIII of the *Odyssey*, Demodocus sang about the love affair between Ares and Aphrodite, and how it caused Hephaestus' wrath (*Od.* 8.266-281). During Odysseus' katabasis (*Od.* 11.409-434), it is said by Agamemnon that his wife Clytemnestra (with the help of Aegisthus) killed him. Albeit their importance, the Trojan War is a fine example on how *Eros* (and his effects) can cause scenarios of violence: Helen's abduction by Paris led Menelaus to seek for military support from Agamemnon against the Trojans (i.e.: Apollod. *Epit*. 3.3-6). Besides Menelaus' menace toward Peisander (Hom. *Il.* 13.620-627), Athenian dramatists developed this episode in their plays. In Euripides' *Andromache*, the play writer emphasizes that "it was not as a bride that Paris brought Helen to lofty Troy into his chamber but rather as mad ruin" (*Andr.* 103)[33]. As for Paris' social misconduct, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is clarifying. In addition to vv. 710-15 and 710, both vv. 385 and 700-705 are enlightening: "by stealing away a wedded wife"[34] (v. 384), the Trojan

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[28] A. T. Murray (transl.), Homer, *The Iliad,* Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, 1924.

[29] Murray, op. cit.

[30] A. W. H. Adkins, "Homeric Values and Homeric Society", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 91, 1971, 10; A. W. H. Adkins, "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 92, 1972, 3.

[31] Murray, op. cit.

[32] H. G. Evelyn-White (transl.), *Hesiod. Theogony*, Harvard, 1914.

[33] D. Kovacs (transl.), *Euripides. Children of Heracles. Hippolytus. Andromache. Hecuba*, Cambridge, 1995.

[34] H. W. Smyth (transl.), *Aeschylus Oresteia: Agamemnon, Libation-Bearers, Eumenides*, Cambridge, 1926.

prince committed a *hybristic* act against, not only marriage, but also "hospitality and […] Zeus" (A. *Ag*. 700-705)[35].

By the presence of both *arete* and *time* (these two *aristoi* are *kaloi kai agathoi*), the myth suggests a warning to the dangers regarding women and sexuality. On the other hand, its similarity to the Trojan War (Paris/ Helen/ Menelaus – adultery; *philia*; *xenia*) lead us to conclude that the *sophrosyne* shown by both men avoided an armed conflict and, consequently, scenarios of violence and family bounds.

Hippolytus/ Phaedra/ Theseus

As for the dramatic interpretation of this topic, Man is a creature endowed with potentiality, but at the same time a whole set of weakness that are able to soak society into chaos[36]. The presence of *Eros* underlines the weakness of the human being: according to mythology, he is a divine force with the capability to plunge the individual into a vortex of emotions, whose effects culminate in the breakdown of socio-political ecosystem (i.e.: *polis* and everything that it represents)[37].

Though our tragedy culminates with an example of "humanization" – only men demonstrate capacity for forgiveness, contrary to the deities, which are defined as selfish entities in defense of its own interests (E. *Hipp*. 10-20, 1405-1415 […] 1440-1455, 1420-1430) –, the truth is that the author apprehended the universe of *Eros* and its relationship with the social[38]. For Euripides, regardless of Phaedra's resemblance with Inanna/Ištar (Phaedra ≈ *Phaidra* ≈ "Shinning" suggests her as the embodiment of eastern goddesses with a *dinĝir*)[39], the Cretan princess (and her theme) converges toward the destructive aspects of *Eros* (*Hipp*. 725-730), culminating in a chaotic atmosphere, to which contributed both Hippolytus' and Phaedra's death.

Her failure of seducing her stepson is crucial to, in a mixture of anger, humiliation and fear, Hippolytus' defamation. She commits suicide, but in the process, ends up sealing the fate of the prince: by writing an epistle, she accuses him of having tried to violate her (*Hipp*. 725-730; 860-865; 875-855; 1055). Driven by the feelings toward his wife, Theseus ends up dragged into the epicenter of this destructive vortex. At the climax of the action, his incapability to demonstrate coldness, but above all, discernment, ends up to be the determinant factor for having his son exiled and condemned to death (*Hipp*. 895; 1055-1060).

The many faces of Seneca's *Phaedra*

As for Phaedra's and Hippolytus' myth, it entered the Roman world, and finds its main theorist in Seneca. However, even if he was a receiver of a tradition older than him (we include here both literature and art), he was not a simple user of it. Instead of that,

[35] Smyth, op. cit.

[36] M. C. Fialho, "Rituais de Cidadania na Grécia Antiga", in D. Ferreira Leão et al. (edd.), *Cidadania e Paideia na Grécia Antiga*, Lisboa/ Coimbra, 2010, 137.

[37] M. C. Fialho, "Eros Trágico", in José Augusto Ramos et al (edd.), *A Sexualidade no Mundo Antigo*, Lisboa/ Coimbra, 2009, 265.

[38] C. A. E. Lusching, "Men and Gods in Euripides' *Hippolytus*", *Ramus* 9, 1980, 97-99; J. Blomquist, "Human and Divine Action in Euripides' *Hippolytus*", *Hermes* 110.4, 1982, 407, 412; V. Muñoz Llamosas, "Las ideas religiosas de Eurípides a través de sus obras", *Myrtia* 17, 2002, 108.

[39] W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Berkeley, 1982, 114-115.

though his use of Hellenic *mythoi*, he constructed and interpreted those materials according to Latin Culture[40]. In addition to it, this myth was already part of Roman mentality (Plu. *Thes.* 28; Paus. 1.22.1).

During the last years of the Republic, Cicero's *De natura Deorum* (*N.D.* 3.76) and *De Officiis* (*Off.* 1.32) presents the main attributes of the myth. He did not add much information about it, but informed about Hippolytus' death as a consequence of Theseus' curse. Hyginus, on the other hand, gives us a resume of both this Athenian triangle and Smyrna's incestuous love toward her father (Hyg. *Fab.* 47 and *Fab.* 58 respectively).

Vergil's *Aeneid* presents these two figures in both books VI and VIII. In the first one, the Latin author is much similar to 'Homer' (Hom. *Od.* 11.321), since the Cretan princess is part of a catalog of women who, judging by the text, are characterized by their unhappiness toward the masculine element (Verg. *A.* 6.437-458). The second book is an allusion to Hippolytus, in which the main attributes are presented (Verg. *A.* 7.756-790). Beside the presence of these two characters, Vergil is also known by having presented, not only Daphnis' death (his *Ecl.* 5 continues both Diodorus' 4.84.1-4 and Theocritus' *Idyl* 1 texts), but more important, examples of violent and deadly passions (which will be used by Seneca): the episode between Dido and Aeneias stresses out, her loss of both *ratio* and *potentia* (the impetuosity of *passiones*), as well as her suicide using the Trojan's sword (Book IV)[41].

We can also find *exempla* of these passions in the poetry. Alongside with Hippolytus/ Phaedra/ Theseus, other examples are presented, such as Phoenix/ Phtia/ Amintor. Horace (*Carm.* 4.25), for instance, writes about the first one: "for neither from the shadows bellow does Diana virtuous Hippolytus set free; nor can Theseus break Lethe's chains from his dear Pirithous"[42]. Propertius, in his *Elegies*, reveals himself familiarized with both myths: the first one comes from *Prop.* 2.50 ("If I must take the cups that stepmother Phaedra mixed/ cups fated not to her stepson harm"[43]); the second triangle is driven out (possibly) from a late version of the myth, since this poet emphasizes that "Chiron, Phillyra's child, healed Phoenix's eyes"[44] (*Prop.* 2.60)[45]. Catullus, on the other hand, along with with a reference to sexual transgression – "to live content with one man, Aufilena,/ is the glory of highest glories for a bride:/ but it's better to sleep with whoever she likes, than be mother of her cousins by her uncle" (*Cat.* 111)[46] – explores other myths related with both sexuality and divine wrath. His 63rd poem explains Attis' myth: besides vv. 77-81, where the poet underlines that "Cybelle […] Force him to the forest in a fit of madness", the 90th verse refers to "half-female Attis"[47] (*Cat.* 63) on a clear reference to his castration.

Along with the reference in the *Metamorphosis*, Ovid's *Fasti* – *Fast.* XI. Kal. 21st and *Fast.* 4.211-262 – present both the Athenian's love triangle and Attis' myth. The

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40 P. S. Ferreira, *Séneca em cena: enquadramento na tradição dramática greco-latina*, Lisboa, 2011, 170.
41 C. A. André, *Caminhos do Amor em Roma: sexo, amor e paixão na poesia latina do século I a.C.*, Lisboa, 2006, 228. Phaedra (the character) will also use Hippolytus' sword (vide: *Phaedr.* 258; 609).
42 N. Rudd (transl.), *Horace. Odes and Epodes*, Cambridge, 2004.
43 G. P. Goold (transl.), *Propertius. Elegies*, Harvard, 1990.
44 Goold, op. cit.
45 According to the *Iliad* (9.448-484), Phoenix (Amyntor's son) was blinded by his father after having an incestuous adultery relation with his father concubine. Euripides' *Phoinix*, on the other, though fragmented, might suggest a change in the script: Phoinix is now presented as a victim of Phthia's accusation (vv. 804, 805, 808 and 816). Later on Diodorus (3.13.8) presented this version of the myth.
46 R. Rowland (transl.), *Catullus. The Poems of Catullus*, London, 1989.
47 Rowland, op. cit.

first one states that "familiar, too, the wrong that Theseus did, when, too confiding, he did curse his son to death" (*Fast.*) while the second one, states that "Attis went mad, and imagining that the roof of the chamber was falling in, he fled and ran for the top of Mount Dindymus […] was bereft of every sign of manhood"[48] (*Fast.*). On the other hand, both Byblis and Smyrna's are two examples of incestuous relation (or attempt of) toward their relatives (Ov. *Met.* 9.446-665; Ov. *Met.* 10.319-256; Ov. *Ars.* 1.281-288).

Though the works mentioned above are relevant for the history of this myth, Ovid's last contribute to it comes from his *Heroide* IV. At the first glance, Phaedra's discourse suggests a passive attitude toward passions (*Her.* 4.7; 4.17; 4.53; 4,165). Notwithstanding the familiarity with Phaedra's Cretan inheritance (*Her.* 4.53-67; 4.165), Ovid adds Phaedra's hate toward Theseus is part of the justifications for her adulterous-incestuous love (*Her.* 4.105-156). By the poet's action, the princess loses much of her respectability (given by the Attic dramatists), and adopts a submissive posture toward both *uitia* and *passiones*[49].

Seneca's *Phaedra*

Like the Attic tragedians (in our case Euripides), Seneca also underlines *Love* as a destructive force with ability to drive human communities into a vortex of affecting emotions[50]. On the other hand, the key to understanding *Phaedra*'s is related with the Aristotelic concepts of tragedy, such as the case of *Hamartia*: for the philosopher (*Poet.* 1453a), *hamartia* is a failure which acts as a catalyst for the action. In the case of *Hippolytus Stephanephoros*, both the prologue (with Aphrodite), and the epilogue (with Artemis as *ex machina*) contribute to the definition of a mythological plot. The action (and error) turns out to be articulated with a cosmic battle between two deities, which were brought into the epicenter of the action by the lack of discernment of Theseus' son (*Hipp*. 5-10; 10-15; 20; 55; 100-110).

His interpretation differs from the Attic tragedy: he maintained the internal structure that characterizes its myth, but the nature of the intervenients is reconstructed based on a gradation process, since they start relatively stable, but end up to be fully submitted to the passions and desires (Sen. *Phaed.* 130-135; 250-255; 590; 640-645; 700). By the loss of both *hamartia* and *catharsis*, and adoption of *exemplum/ exempla*, his tragedies provide a reflection (a sense of pedagogy) about certain attitudes that are seen as negative and to be avoided[51].

Seneca, by the process of gradual wasting away, exposes to the roman "audience" the normal effects of a *perturbatio*, and its relation with sexual misconduct: her incapability to contain and restrain those passions ends up to submerge her, and the others, into a vortex of negative actions that culminate in her death, with direct influence on the fate of other intervenients[52].

[48] J. G. Frazer (transl.), *Ovid. Fasti*, Cambridge, 1931.

[49] M. C. Álvarez Morán – R. M. Iglesias Montiel, "La Fedra de Ovidio", in A. Pociña Pérez – A. López López (edd.), *Fedras de Ayer y de Hoy: teatro, poesia, narrativa y cine ante un mito clásico*, Granada, 2008, 193.

[50] Fialho, "Eros Trágico", loc. cit., 265.

[51] A. Pociña Pérez, "Finalidad Politico-Didactica de las Tragedias de Seneca", *Emerita* 44, 1976, 301.

[52] M. C. Pimentel, *Quo Verget Furor? Aspectos estóicos na* Phaedra *de Séneca*, Lisboa, 1993, 40; Ferreira, *Séneca em cena…*, op. cit., 2011, 180.

2. Conclusion

Ultimately, despite the contrasts between the Classical authors and their Eastern counterparts, it is possible to identify, by examining the myth of Phaedra, the existence of a common set of ideas.

These narratives have the particularity to take the "audience" on a reflection about certain assumptions that make up the social connivance. Their condemnation of sexuality is dependent on how it steps away from what every society considers to *the norm* and approaches itself to sexual misconduct, and, by that, leads to the perturbation of something that is understood as a stable and well defined patriarchal hierarchy. The failure in their purposes led them to acquire, in a mixture of wrath, humiliation and fear, a cunning character, crucial to perpetrate their revenge against the one that repudiated their charms, regardless the consequences.

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