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From the Condemnation to the Revival of the Feminine: The Transmission and Reception of the Phaedra Myth in Tsvetaeva's Drama

'… A binary division between mind and body spirit and matter. Women's bodies have been consigned to the dual domains of the maternal or the sexual, venerated on the one hand, damned on the other.'[1]

Introduction

The article is devoted to the analysis of the reception of the Phaedra myth in Tsvetaeva's drama through the representation of gender in donor traditions (French, Latin and Ancient Greek). Although the study of Tsvetaeva's Classical and European literary sources has been of interest to scholars in recent years, especially Roman Voitekhovits[2] and Zara Torlone[3] the study of gender representation in Tsvetaeva's Neoclassical drama has not attracted sufficient attention.[4] A new approach to the study of gender representations in *Fedra* will be suggested in this article by introducing three planes through which Tsvetaeva, and the traditions she draws upon, reveal the distribution and depiction of female and male roles in different cultures. The extent of condemnation or absolution allotted to female and male characters is analysed in this article on the extra-textual plane (on which the viewpoint of the author is manifested) and the intra-textual plane, revealed on two levels: the macrocosmic plane of divine motivation behind character's actions and the microcosmic plane of hero's psychology (the female body/mind set against the male). This new approach will ensure a more

[1] A.M. Barker, J.M. Gheith ed., *A History of Women's writing in Russia*, Cambridge University Press (2002), P.9.

[2] Р. С. Войтехович Античные мотивы в творчестве Марины Цветаевой. Тарту, 2007; Цветаева и античность. Москва - Тарту, 2008; *eiusdem* Психея в творчестве М. Цветаевой: Эволюция образа и сюжета. Тарту, 2005. (Dissertationes Philologiae Slavicae Universitatis Tartuensis. 15.); *eiusdem* Ариадна Марины Цветаевой: Поэтика античности // Северный сборник: Proceedings of the №rFA Network in Russian Literature 1995–2000. Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature. 34. Stockholm, 2000. С. 232–242.

[3] Z. Torlone, "Voicing Passions: Phaedra of Euripides and Marina Tsvetaeva," ASEEES, November 2008. Washington, DC; Z. Torlone, So*ul and Passion: Marina Tsvetaeva's Classical Plays. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (co-authored with Maria S. Fox, published for educational purposes). Create Space (2011); Z. Torlone, "Muted Voices: Marina Tsvetaeva's Classical Heroines" In Brill's Companion to Classical Reception and Modern World Poetry (ed. Polina Tambakaki) 2019.

[4] The only exception is Catriona Kelly's discussion of gender and sexuality in Tsvetaeva's poetry in Kelly, C., A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820-1992, Oxford: Clarendon, 1998, Pp. 301-319.

precise differentiation between the interrelation of the feminine body and mind, and the understanding of the psychology of male and female characters, elucidating the reception and transmission of the Phaedra myth.

Marina Tsvetaeva was the first woman to rework the Phaedra legend;[5] before her it existed entirely in the domain of male authors and was treated by Euripides, Apollodorus, Seneca, Racine, Swinburne, A'Annunzio, de Unamuno and O'Neill. The legend of Phaedra, wife of Theseus and queen of Athens, is one of the most well-known myths of the classical world. The first extant mention of Phaedra's name is made in the *Odyssey*, when the eponymous hero descends into the Underworld to question the prophet Tiresias (11.321-22).[6] The initial encounter with Phaedra is limited to three single words ("I saw… Phaedra", "Φαίδρηντε… ἴδον"), of which one, the verb, is used to govern two other female names alongside hers ("ἴδον") and the other ('τε') is a polysyndetic particle: she is defined as nothing more than one of "the heroes' wives, whom [Odysseus] saw" (330). From this single reference it is hard to deduce whether Phaedra is referred to in the Homeric tradition as a famous woman in her own right or is reduced to a mere contextualising element, the named wife of a famous hero.

The schematic plot of Phaedra's fate is known from the mythological handbook ascribed to Apollodorus. In Apollodorus's *Epitome* Phaedra was the daughter of Minos and Pasiphae, sister of Ariadne, wife of Theseus, mother of two sons and step-mother of Hippolytus; she fell in love with her step-son; was rejected by him; accused him of rape and committed suicide (*Ep*. 1.18-19). In Apollodorus's account Phaedra is presented as a passive, one-dimensional character, whose name has survived primarily because of her connection to two males, Theseus and Hippolytus. Nothing but her body, as defined in the epigraph by the 'dual domains of the maternal or the sexual' comes into play (she is a wife, mother and illicit lover); her "mind" so far carries no interest to the patriarchal society of ancient Greece.[7]

Despite the static representation of Phaedra in mythology, her legacy, as is the case for many women of antiquity, is negative.[8] According to Seneca she is "a much, much greater evil than [Medea]",[9] she is the most nefarious of all women and the epitome of an evil step-mother.[10] Her crime, initially purely sexual, is converted into a grave moral flaw and is made to

[5] R. Lauriola and K. N. Demetrious ed. *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Euripides*, v.3, Brill, 2015, P.461.

[6] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.444.

[7] A. M. Barker, J.M. Gheith, P.9.

[8] The names of virtuous women such as Andromache, Penelope, Alcestis, Iphigenia, Polyxena, Hypermnestra etc. are few compared to those of wicked women such as Medea, Helen, Ariadne, Agave, Jocasta, Arachne, Clytemnestra, Niobe, Pasiphae, Stheneboea etc.

[9] 'Colchide noverca maius haec, maius malum est.' (697).

[10] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.445.

gradually expand into a failure not only of her body but also of her mind. This transformation of 'body' into 'mind and body' is implicitly invited by the absence of a predefined psychological dimension derived from mythology, in which Phaedra is acting but not suffering. Tsvetaeva, as each subsequent recipient of the myth, is thus left free to express her attitude to Phaedra and present her own rendition of the legend.

Part I. Extra-textual plane

The study of gender representation in the Phaedra narrative is best begun by deploying the first of the three planes by which the viewpoint of the poet is manifested in other writings external to the textual evidence of the play. The extra-textual plane can shed light on Tsvetaeva's representation of gender through epistolary accounts, drafts and letters to friends. In one of her letters to Yuri Ivask dated April 1933 Tsvetaeva divulges the source of her play: Gustav Schwab's *Sagen des klassischen Altertums*.[11] Some scholars, taking her 'confession' at face value, amplify Tsvetaeva's reliance on a 'didactic, moralising and frequently bowdlerized version of the Greek myths'[12] presented by Gustav Schwab and, without attempting to investigate the veracity of Tsvetaeva's assertion, use it to explain away 'her more startling departures from the traditional stories of… Phaedra'.[13] This assumption has, however, been proved erroneous by Michael Makin, who, in presenting numerous excerpts from Tsvetaeva's correspondence and diaries, demonstrates her intimate knowledge of European and Classical literature.[14]

Tsvetaeva's acquaintance with European literature and her excellent knowledge of major European languages can be shown by referring to a few well-known facts of her biography. In a single year (1902) Marina Tsvetaeva, then ten years old, went to three separate schools, one in Italy (Nervi near Genoa), one in Switzerland (Lausanne) and, since her father was concerned for her German (both her spoken and written French were native[15]), one in Freiburg (Germany).[16] At the age of sixteen Marina Tsvetaeva travelled to Paris in order to

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[11] M. Makin, *Marina Tsvetaeva: Poetics of Appropriation*, Clarendon Press Oxford, (1993), P.269.

[12] S. Karlinsky, *Marina Cvetaeva: Her Life and Her Art*, University of California Press, (1966), P.259.

[13] S. Karlinsky, P.259; M. Makin, P.269.

[14] To quote but a few: 'One poem *Pravda* has an epigram from Juvenal (I;:46). The first scene of *Priklyuchenie* is based on a scene from Apuleius' story of Psyche and Cupid. Tsvetaeva also quotes Ovid's version of the story of the Cumaean Sibyl in a letter to Bakhrakh in 1923. Later in that year in letters to Barkhrakh she claims: 'Сейчас лягу и буду читать Троянскую войну. Никого не могу читать, кроме греков. У меня огромный немецкий том: там всё. ' and 'Я редко бываю в городе, только в библиотеке, где читаю древних. ' and asks Bakhrakh to send her Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy' (Pis'ma Mariny Tsvetaevoi, ed. Bakhrakh, 2nd instalment, 322, 335, 337 (letters of August and September 1923) etc. M. Makin, P.269.

[15] 'За Марусю даже страшно: говорит, как взрослый француз, изящным, прямо литературным языком... пишет по-русски правильнее и литературнее пяти- и шестиклассников в гимназиях...': Письмо И. В. Цветаева к Л. А. Иловайской (26.06.1903).

[16] Каган Ю. М. И.В Цветаев. Жизнь. Деятельность. Личность. Москва, 1987. С. 144-149.

attend a lecture course on Medieval French literature and attained such proficiency in the language as to be able, in her later years, to translate into French Pushkin, Mayakovsky and Russian folk poetry.[17] In addition to this, her father, Ivan Tsvetaev, was a well-known Classicist[18] and the author of a dissertation on the textological history of Tacitus' *De origine et situ Germanorum*, in which he compared different manuscript traditions.[19] He specialised in teaching Latin and Greek at university and founded the first museum of ancient Greek casts in Russia (which Marina Tsvetaeva called her younger brother).[20] As a Classical scholar specialising in Latin epigraphy, Tsvetaev had a formidable library which was available to his daughter.[21] As was stated by a well-known specialist in Tsvetaev's family, a close friend of Anastasia Tsvetaeva and a Classicist herself, Judith Kagan, 'anybody studying Classics in Marina Tvetaeva's poetry cannot discard the professional interests of her father'.[22]

Tsvetaeva's acquaintance with ancient sources is further confirmed by one of her own letters dated to 1923, in which she manifests not just an abstract awareness of Euripides' *Hippolytus (*Innokenty Annensky published a readily available translation of the play in 1902)[23] but an exact knowledge of his approach, i.e. the role given to the Nurse in revealing Phaedra's secret.[24] Tsvetaeva's knowledge of her literary predecessors is further suggested by her awareness of the shift of attention from the male character in Euripides' play, manifested by his title *Hippolytus*, to the female, as initiated by Seneca in his tragedy *Phaedra*. Tsvetaeva must have known Seneca's play since it is the only tragedy of antiquity to begin, like her *Fedra,* with a Choral song about hunting.[25] It is difficult to determine whether Tsvetaeva's title goes back to Seneca's tragedy or to its French adaptation by Racine, but it is known that she very much admired Sarah Bernhardt, the actress who performed the role of Phaedra in Racine's play

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[17] W. Coudenys, «Те последние вы можете исправлять с точки зрения стилистики» : четыре забытых французских перевода Марины Цветаевой, Revue des études slaves (1994) V. 66, PP. 401-411.

[18] «4 бюста вывезены мною в 1876 году из Мюнхена (Зевс, Афина, Диана Версальская и Ватикан, амур). Тогда я был всецело занят заготовлением атласа facsimiles осских надписей и писанием докторской диссертации. Я купил их на сбережения от уроков, которые я давал по греческому языку в доме графа Бобринского» in Каган Ю. М. (1987.) С.152.

[19] Каган Ю. М. *И.В Цветаев. Жизнь. Деятельность. Личность*. Москва, 1987. С.24-25.

[20] Kagan's book on Ivan Tsvetaev is dedicated to his role as founder of the Museum of Fine Arts. (Каган Ю. М. И.В Цветаев. Жизнь. Деятельность. Личность. Москва, 1987).

[21] Tsvetaeva describes her father's library in one of her poems: 'Как переполненные соты — / Ряд книжных полок. /— Тронул блик / Пергаментные переплеты / Старинных книг. / Цвет Греции и слава Рима, — / Неисчислимые тома! / Здесь — сколько б солнца ни внесли мы — / Всегда зима. / Последним солнцем розовея, / Распахнутый лежит Платон... / Бюст Аполлона — план Музея - / И все.

[22] 'Тот, кто станет изучать античность в творчестве Марины Цветаевой, не сможет пройти мимо профессиональной увлеченности ее отца.' in Каган Ю. М. (1987.) С.152.

[23] R. D. B. Thomson, P.343.

[24] 'У Эврипида все выдает кормилица, без воли Федры. Ложь. – Кормилица только передает' in M. Makin, ibid., (1993), P.289.

[25] R. D. B. Thomson, P.343.

Phèdre.[26] However, the most likely explanation of Tsvetaeva's choice of title is her interest in the fate of the female character, despised and condemned by the earlier Classical tradition.

Consequently, the question arises why, at the expense of projecting herself as less educated than she really was, does Tsvetaeva deliberately conceal her knowledge of earlier renditions of the Phaedra legend. Some suggest that 'Tsvetaeva often presented herself as a somewhat uneducated poet in deliberate contrast to others such as Innokenty Annensky and Vyacheslav Ivanov'[27]. Others elucidate the problems faced by women in literary circles in terms of an 'anxiety of authorship, experienced by many Russian women writers, who have been made to feel that it is 'presumptuous' to take up the pen, and that intellectual women, especially women writers, are nothing but a freak, a 'crocodile in flannel or a dancing monkey' in Russian society'[28]. An alternative answer, however, can be proposed, namely that Tsvetaeva deliberately wanted to divorce herself from earlier renditions, so as to have more freedom to portray a new, nobler kind of Phaedra. This view is supported by one of Tsvetaeva's drafts, in which she states that her goal was to present Phaedra as a woman of moral integrity, who by her own virtue was free from criminal intent: "*дать Федру, не Медею, вне преступления, дать безумно любящую женщину, глубоко понятную*".[29] Thus, by concealing her knowledge of primary sources, Tsvetaeva underlined that her interest in retelling the Phaedra legend lay not in polemicising with early renditions, but in stepping away from them and presenting a completely new character, a tragic and, as shown below, completely blameless, female.

Unlike Tsvetaeva, who chooses to conceal her knowledge of her literary predecessors, the author of her potential French source, Racine highlights his proximity to both Euripides[30] and the mythological tradition[31]. By underlining his reliance on earlier traditions so prominently, Racine implicitly draws attention to his own innovations and their overall effect on his representation of the Phaedra myth. At the beginning of his play Racine offers his readers a preface, in which he outlines his approach to the Phaedra legend: to make 'Phaedra neither completely guilty nor completely innocent' ('Phèdre n'est ni tout à fait coupable, ni tout à fait innocente.'). The playwright inverts the balance between Phaedra as the negative and

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[26] R. D. B. Thomson, P.343.

[27] M. Stadter Fox, *The Troubling Play of Gender: The Phaedra Dramas of Tsvetaeva, Yourcenar, and H.D*, Associated University Presses, (2001), P.21.

[28] R. Marsh ed., *Women and Russian Culture: Projections and Self-Perceptions*, Berghahn Books, (1998), P.7.

[29] In this quotation Tsvetaeva enters into polemics with Seneca, who, as seen below, also compared Medea to Phaedra but arrived to the opposite conclusion from Tsvetaeva.

[30] 'Here is another tragedy whose subject was treated before by Euripides', 'Voici encore une tragédie dont le sujet est pris d'Euripide'.

[31] 'I refer to these sources because I wish to adhere very carefully to the myth', 'Je rapporte ces autorités, parce que je me suis très scrupuleusement attaché à suivre la fable.'

Hippolytus as the positive character, 'remaking them to a human measure'.[32] By mollifying the stark contrast between Phaedra's corruption and Hippolytus' purity, an integral element of both Euripides' and Seneca's renditions, Racine makes the traditional binary opposition between the two characters weaker and consequently softens the negative representation of Phaedra. At an extra-textual level, Racine offers his readers an elucidation of his understanding of the Phaedra myth, directing them from the very start of the play towards a more forgiving view of Phaedra and her fateful passion.

Unlike Tsvetaeva and Racine, Euripides and Seneca, by merit of their antiquity, have left no external accounts of how their characters are to be interpreted, instead leaving their audiences to deduce their views of gender relations from the texts of the plays themselves (the two internal macrocosmic and microcosmic levels) or from external sources (the extra-textual plane). Historiographical accounts, which can be viewed as an extra-textual background to the Greek and Latin literary representations of gender, reveal that the societies of ancient Greece and Rome were constructed on patriarchy, excluding women from public life. Apart from the role of priestess (particularly of Bacchus in Greece and of Vesta in Rome), women were consigned to the private domains of their own quarters or gynaeceums[33] and were assigned the functions of minding the house and bearing children.[34] Both these roles, although performed from an internal domain, were of paramount importance to the preservation of the external patriarchal society: by tending her husband's house and ensuring that all its inmates (including herself), were acting in accordance to expectations, a woman was in effect preserving a man's honour. By slacking in her duties, a wife could potentially ruin her husband's reputation and consequently his public role in society.[35]

The importance of the second female role, that of bearing children, is obvious; in addition to ensuring the continuation of lineage it provided a new influx of soldiers,[36] crucially important to an ancient society with either a defensive or expansive policy. Since women were allotted the binary function of both preserving and potentially destroying a male-orientated society, the plays of Euripides and Seneca gain an additional dimension: Phaedra's behaviour is damaging not only to herself and Hippolytus but also to the entire polis in which she reigns. Thus, at least to some degree both Euripides and Seneca must unavoidably condemn Phaedra,

[32] I even tried to make [the character of Phaedra] a little less hateful than in the tragedies of ancient poets' ('J'ai même pris soin de la rendre un peu moins odieuse qu'elle n'est dans les tragédies des Anciens') and 'I thought I should give [the character of Hippolytus] some weakness, which would make him a little more blame-worthy in the eyes of his father' (J'ai cru lui devoir donner quelque faiblesse qui le rendrait un peu coupable envers son père,). In R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.461.

[33] R. D. B. Thomson, 'Tsvetaeva's Play "Fedra": An Interpretation', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (1989), P.344.

[34] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*, Cornell University Press (1993), P.174.

[35] 'mak[ing] and unmak[ing] culture', N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, P.158-9.

[36] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, P.174.

as a woman who has failed in both her 'venerated'[37] roles of wife and mother and put herself in the position of a potential threat to Greece's principal city, Athens.

Part II. Intra-textual plane

Section 1. Macrocosmic level

The representation of gender in Tsvetaeva's *Phaedra* can be revealed with the help of the second, intra-textual plane, exploring divine motivation in exonerating or condemning the female (as opposed to male) protagonist. Tsvetaeva's play contains allusion to divine motivation but does not feature gods as physical entities, synthesizing the approach to divine intervention of her literary predecessors. The two traditions, Tsvetaeva draws upon, go back to Euripides' *Hippolytus*, which contains active divine intervention in the form of speaking gods, and Seneca's *Phaedra* and Racine's *Phèdre*, which remove divine action from the stage entirely, containing only metonymical references to the gods.

In Tsvetaeva's *Phaedra* the function of the gods as motivators of human folly is to some extent indebted to Euripides' play, which opens with an introductory monologue of 57 lines by Aphrodite. In this monologue the goddess clearly states her part in the action[38] and outlines, in the minutest detail, the manner in which she will execute her vengeance. She looks back to the past when she made Phaedra behold Hippolytus for the first time[39] then to the present, when Phaedra is already sick with her passion,[40] and finally to the future when Hippolytus and Phaedra will be dead and their fate handed to posterity.[41] The three temporal spheres (past, present and future), through which Aphrodite traces her plan demonstrates the completeness of her control over Phaedra's and Hippolytus's fate. Although Aphrodite's overarching plan may seem to exonerate Phaedra fully of her crime,[42] one crucial detail is absent from the goddess' speech, a detail which conditions the extent of Phaedra's ultimate condemnation. Aphrodite accepts the responsibility for making Phaedra fall in love with

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[37] A. M. Barker, J.M. Gheith, P.9.

[38] 'Yet for his sins against me I shall punish Hippolytus this day', 'ἃ δ᾽ εἰς ἔμ᾽ ἡμάρτηκε τιμωρήσομαιἹππόλυτον ἐν τῇδ᾽ ἡμέρᾳ:' (21-22). All translations are taken from LOEB editions.

[39] 'his father's high-born wife Phaedra saw him, and her heart was seized with a dreadful longing by my design.' ('πατρὸς εὐγενὴς δάμαρἰδοῦσα Φαίδρα καρδίαν κατέσχετο,' 26-27).

[40] 'the poor woman, groaning and struck senseless by the goad of love, means to die in silence, and none of her household knows of her malady.' ('ἐνταῦθα δὴ στένουσα κἀκπεπληγμένη κέντροις ἔρωτος ἡ τάλαιν᾽ ἀπόλλυται σιγῇ, ξύνοιδε δ᾽ οὔτις οἰκετῶν νόσον,' 38-40).

[41] 'I shall reveal the matter to Theseus and it will come to light,[2] and the young man who wars against me shall be killed by his father with the curses of the sea-lord' ('δείξω δὲ Θησεῖ πρᾶγμα κἀκφανήσεται.καὶ τὸν μὲν ἡμῖν πολέμιον νεανίανκτενεῖ πατὴρ ἀραῖσιν ἃς ὁ πόντιος ἄναξ Ποσειδῶν ὤπασεν Θησεῖ γέρας,' 42-45); 'But Phaedra, noble though she is, shall nonetheless die. I do not set such store by her misfortune as to let my enemies off from [50] such penalty as will satisfy my heart.' ('ἡ δ᾽ εὐκλεὴς μὲν ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως ἀπόλλυταιΦαίδρα: τὸ γὰρ τῆσδ᾽ οὐ προτιμήσω κακὸντὸ μὴ οὐ παρασχεῖν τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἐμοὶ δίκην τοσαύτην ὥστ᾽ ἐμοὶ καλῶς ἔχειν,' 46-50).

[42] A. Powell ed., *Euripides, Women and Sexuality,* Routledge, (1990), *P.47.*

Hippolytus and for making Theseus curse him, but leaves out the reason why Theseus is so enraged with his son. Neither does she acknowledge that Phaedra's accusation of Hippolytus is her doing. Phaedra herself must thus be held responsible for the shameful lie. The appearance on stage of a second divinity, Artemis, confirms this, since she states that Phaedra herself thought up the false accusation in order to save her reputation.[43] By reaffirming Aphrodite's role in the tragic events of the play and underlining that no god, let alone mortal, could stop her[44], Artemis highlights Phaedra's powerlessness to resist her love. Thus, as compared to the mythological and Homeric traditions which make no mention of divine participation in Phaedra's fate, Euripides executes a partial rehabilitation of Phaedra: her love and death are given clear divine motivation, but her shameful accusation against Hippolytus is not. She cannot be viewed entirely as a tool[45] or puppet[46] of the gods and yet cannot be held fully responsible for her criminal passion: divine motivation can be used to exonerate her 'body' but not her 'mind'.[47]

Since explicit divine motivation is absent from Tsvetaeva's other potential sources (Seneca's *Phaedra* and Racine's *Phèdre*), it can be suggested that the poet owes her allusion to [perhaps 'conception of'?] the gods' intervention to Euripides, although unlike him she does not give them active, speaking roles. From the beginning of her play a clear-cut tension is set up between the same two goddesses, Artemis and Aphrodite, which feature so prominently in Euripides. Hippolytus serves the former ('Артемиде служу. А ты?') and Phaedra the latter ('Афродите служу'). Although this opposition is steadily but subtly kept up throughout the play, with Hippolytus hating Aphrodite as much as he does in Euripides ('хулитель Афродитин')[48] and Phaedra still performing the function of the woman in whom the goddess has inspired seductive charms, expressions of divine motivation are rare. The Nurse gives one when she calls her mistress 'Aphrodite's slave' ('Афродитиной рабы.') and Theseus the other when he proclaims hatred for 'персты / Афродитиной!', implicitly accusing Aphrodite of the present tragedy. The only real confirmation that, as in Euripides' play, Aphrodite is responsible for Phaedra's death is delayed until the very end of the play, after Hippolytus has been killed and the queen's secret has been revealed. Since in the course of the play Phaedra had uttered no

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[43] 'And Phaedra, fearing lest she be put to the proof, wrote her false letter and destroyed your son by deceit, and though it was a lie, she persuaded you.', 'ἡ δ' εἰς ἔλεγχον μὴ πέσῃ φοβουμένηψευδεῖς γραφὰς ἔγραψε καὶ διώλεσενδόλοισι σὸν παῖδ', ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔπεισέ σε.' (1310-1312).

[44] 'Aphrodite willed that things should happen thus, sating her anger. Among the gods the custom is this: no god contrives to cross the will of another, but we all stand aside', 'πληροῦσα θυμόν. θεοῖσι δ' ὧδ' ἔχει νόμος:οὐδεὶς ἀπαντᾶν βούλεται προθυμίᾳ1330τῇ τοῦ θέλοντος, ἀλλ' ἀφιστάμεσθ' ἀεί.', (1328-1330).

[45] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, P.167.

[46] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.453.

[47] A. M. Barker, J.M. Gheith, P.9.

[48] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.453.

false accusation against Hippolytus but was guilty only of love (now revealed to have been inspired by Aphrodite), she is fully exonerated.

Tsvetaeva keeps this divine motivation behind Phaedra's actions back till the closing scene, allowing almost the whole play to unfold with the audience believing Phaedra to be responsible for her love (Tsvetaeva idealises Hippolytus's beauty and courage making his own merits responsible for the queen's illicit passion).[49] This innovation signals that Tsvetaeva's interest lay less in pointing a finger of blame at one individual or another, than in analysing the tragedy of a loving woman, rejected and forced to die of grief for an ideal youth. Because Phaedra's body is cleared of all blame only at the end of the play, she is able, with no god acting as intermediary, to convince the audience of her innocence by the purity and power of her mind. It would not be an exaggeration to state that in Tsvetaeva's play the female body is represented as being fully conquered by her mind.

In contrast to Tsvetaeva's play in which divine intervention is made explicit through references to gods by other characters, in Seneca's *Phaedra* and Racine's *Phèdre*, divine action is removed entirely, only leaving room for the gods, Venus and Diana in particular, to be addressed with abstract apostrophes or envisaged as metonymies for love and chastity. In Seneca's 1280-line play the name of Venus appears only five times, Diana's once, and only twice in the whole play is any divine being blamed for the tragic events on stage. On one occasion Phaedra tries to attribute some responsibility for her love to Venus,[50] but the Nurse hastily brushes it off, asserting that Venus is nothing more than a phantom.[51] The second time Phaedra claims that she is cursed by some divinity with a 'fatal evil' ('fatale… malum', 113), which she cannot resist.[52] Since no active participation of the divinity or even its name is encountered in the play, Phaedra's claim has been regarded as insincere and a mere mask behind which she tries to hide her own morally culpable passion.[53]

In Racine's play Venus has much the same function as in Seneca's version, since although she is regularly invoked by Phaedra, she is not explicitly shown as a direct motivator of the queen's passion. Rather than an active deity, Venus is regarded more as metonymy for love: 'Implacable Venus, am I sufficiently in your thrall?' (814) and 'Of what brave men has

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[49] 'Ипполита оленьеокого / С ртом негоупругим, / С ртом - луком неломким! /... / Дивен слух чей, чуден взгляд чей. / Легче скока никто не имывал - / Ипполита необгонимого'.

[50] 'Venus, detesting the offspring of the hated Sun, is avenging through us the chains that bound her to her loved Mars', 'stirpem perosa Solis invisi Venus per nos catenas vindicat Martis sui suasque, probris omne Phoebeum genusonerat nefandis:' (124-127).

[51] 'Love-mad souls adopted these vain conceits and have feigned Venus' divinity and a god's archery.', 'vana ista demens animus ascivit sibi Venerisque numen finxit atque arcus dei.' (202-203).

[52] A. S. Gérard, *The Phaedra Syndrome: Of Shame and Guilt in Drama*, Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA (1993), P.21.

[53] A. S. Gérard, P.21.

Venus not been conqueror' (123); or as an evil force inspiring criminal sexual passion: 'O Venus' hatred! O fatal anger! To what distraction did love not drive my mother!'. Racine's reluctance to use the deity as an active, thinking presence in his play can be accounted for two ways; firstly, the French playwright was a devout Christian and secondly, he, like Seneca, wanted to make Phaedra solely responsible for her immoral actions. By removing any divine motivation for Phaedra's actions, both Seneca and Racine make it impossible for her name to be cleared at the end of the play – for posterity she remains the sole perpetrator of her crimes. Thus, at the macrocosmic level, Seneca's and Racine's rendition of the Phaedra legend are unequivocally more damning than their predecessor Euripides or literary successor Tsvetaeva.

Section 2. Microcosmic level

The last of the three planes through which each individual poet reveals his understanding of the Phaedra legend can be termed the microcosmic, since it is concerned with the psychology of individual characters within the text. Although, in contrast to the epic and mythological tradition, all four dramatic renditions of the legend endow Phaedra with a complex psychology, this new dimension is given a different impetus by each poet.

In each of the plays, the characterisation of Phaedra falls into four separate stages, each serving to illuminate a different aspect of her character. The first stage occurs when the queen comes on for the first time and is presented to us via her opening speech. Here we are able to glimpse her internal psychology, the way in which she herself, as yet without the external influence of her Nurse, copes with her illicit passion, repressing or expressing it, depending on the degree of moral integrity with which she is endowed.[54] The second stage occurs when the queen enters into dialogue with her Nurse and when she ultimately reveals her love for Hippolytus. The relative speed with which she does so and her response to the reaction of her Nurse both serve to represent the level of her internal strength and ability to withstand pressure. The third stage occurs when the passion of Phaedra is revealed to Hippolytus, and when she, rejected, decides upon a course of action. This stage is the most crucial of the four, in that it introduces a male character with whom the female Phaedra (and indeed her Nurse) is compared and contrasted. Whereas the previous two stages of her characterisation revealed her internal 'mind', this stage allows each poet to determine the external impact she has on the male characters around her. Finally, the fourth and most problematic stage occurs at the end of the play when Phaedra is either dead (as in Euripides and Tsvetaeva) or planning her suicide (as in Seneca and Racine). At this stage the poet analyses the motivation for her suicide, and can

[54] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.461.

reveal conclusively to the audience how far Phaedra is to be condemned or absolved in the play.

The first stage of Phaedra's representation is shown by Tsvetaeva through the queen's initial 'sickness' and her subsequent interchange with the Nurse. Almost from the very first line of the second scene Phaedra utters a prophecy, foreshadowing her own hanging on a myrtle branch and the killing of Hippolytus by his horses. Neither the Chorus nor the Nurse can appreciate Phaedra's prophetic vision and both continue guessing at a physical malady which they believe is afflicting her. Even when Phaedra elaborates her prophecy with 'Трещи, кожа! Теки, сок!', conjuring up the image of her splitting skin and the sap trickling out of a broken branch and with 'На суку тяжелый плод. / Бьется плод, гнется сук', an explicit allusion to her convulsing body dangling from a tree, the Nurse remains oblivious to her superior foresight and brusquely dismisses Phaedra's vision as nothing 'А плод каков?.../ А скок каков? Да вовсе нет.' Phaedra, the heroine who gives Tsvetaeva's play its name, speaks fewer lines than even her slave the Nurse[55] and participates only in two extended stichomythic dialogues. There is a marked difference in register between her and the Nurse: whereas the colloquial speech of the latter is reminiscent of a 19th century Russian peasant woman[56] and approaches vulgarity,[57] the speech of the former is marked by a higher register, more like the speech of the male characters, who, according to Karlinsky, have an 'archaised diction that suggests the Bible and the Iliad'.[58] By introducing a differentiation in registers, Tsvetaeva raises her Phaedra out of the petty gynaeceum,[59] her traditional female location, and places her on the same level as the male characters: she is able to make her own decisions and act according to them.

Tsvetaeva's innovation in Phaedra's characterisation is made explicit through comparison with Euripides. In the Greek play Phaedra is carried onto the stage, weak and broken, her spiritual sickness concealed behind a physical malady: 'Raise up my body, hold my head erect! My limbs are unstrung.' ('αἴρετέ μου δέμας, ὀρθοῦτε κάρα: λέλυμαι μελέων σύνδεσμα φίλων.', 198-199). By making Phaedra allude only to a physical weakness and remain silent about her psychological turmoil (which is only shown later, when she reveals her inner conflict to the chorus), Euripides firmly locates her in her socially acceptable female niche: her body is visible to (the entirely male) audience but her mind is repressed.[60]

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[55] R. D. B. Thomson, P.340.

[56] S. Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva: The woman, her world and her poetry*, Cambridge University Press, (1985), P. 201.

[57] M. Makin, P.292.

[58] S. Karlinsky, P. 201.

[59] R. D. B. Thomson, P.344.

[60] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.447.

The whole of the first stage of Phaedra's representation reveals a desire to cast off this repression and free herself from female bonds: she asks the Nurse to carry her out of the traditional, closed female locus and take off the burdensome veil concealing her hair (202).[61] Phaedra proceeds to express an even more disturbing desire to go out of the city and into the mountains, where Hippolytus lives. The colouring which Euripides gives to Phaedra's desire to leave her lawful location is negative: both the Nurse and the Chorus condemn it and encourage Phaedra to return to her 'female' role before she violates the boundaries of propriety and says too much.[62] In Euripides this stage of characterisation reveals a more violent conflict between the queen's repressed mind and her visible body than the one presented by Tsvetaeva: the Russian Phaedra is not silenced and reminded of her female role. She does not yearn to break free from her physical location, and most importantly, unlike Euripides' Phaedra, she is not starving herself to death in an effort to preserve the outward, physical semblance of honour.[63]

In contrast to Tsvetaeva, the French playwright Racine offers a similar first stage of characterisation to that of Euripides. Although Phaedra enters the stage herself, her femininity betrays her: she is weak compared to the young, boisterous Hippolytus who has just left the scene: 'I can't support myself: my strength has left me. / My eyes are dazzled, on seeing the light of day,/ My knees, trembling beneath me, have given way' (154-6). Much as in Euripides' Phaedra and unlike Tsvetaeva's queen, who foresees her own punishment, Racine makes her rave about leaving the palace of her husband and retiring to watch a chariot, an explicit reference to Hippolytus, the tamer of horses and lord of chariots.[64] However, as soon as Phaedra comes to her senses, she reports her conscious decision to end her life: 'Oh Sun, I come to look on you for one last time', ('Soleil, je te viens voir pour la dernière fois.', 172). Like the Greek Phaedra, she appears to have accepted what is required of her by society (physical presence, mental absence) and sees no other way out but to destroy her body by the power of her repressed mind.[65]

Of all the four plays studied in this article and in direct contrast to Tsvetaeva, Seneca's *Phaedra* has the most negative first stage representation, due mainly to the fact that his queen is given a more active, 'masculine' role and so robbed of the sympathy elicited by Tsvetaeva's feminine Phaedra. To begin with, Seneca's queen is not physically sick and does not adopt a

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[61] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, P.162.

[62] 'Won't you stop saying such things before the crowd, hurling wild words that are mounted on madness?', 'οὐ μὴ παρ᾽ ὄχλῳ τάδε γηρύσημανίας ἔποχον ῥίπτουσα λόγον;' (213-214).

[63] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.162.*

[64] 'Gods! Why am I not sitting in that dark forest? When shall I follow the chariot with my eyes, charging nobly on, through the dust that flies?' ('Dieux ! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts! / Quand pourrai-je, au travers d'une noble poussière, / Suivre de l'oeil un char fuyant dans la carrière?', (176-178)).

[65] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, P.162.

sitting or reclining position as in the other plays. Instead her sickness is purely spiritual: 'a malady feeds and grows inside me,' ('alitur et crescit malum' (99-102)). Secondly, she is not surrounded by a Chorus of caring women, but is instead accompanied only by her slave (the Nurse) and dominates the stage alone. She gives no speech of weak delirium, which only hints at her passion, but, instead of concealing her love like the Greek, French and Russian Phaedras, casts off customary female propriety and begins her opening speech with a confession. Her character radically differs from the other three representations in that she is made the protagonist of the play: Hippolytus and Theseus seem to participate only as foils to illuminate her character rather than as independent individuals.[66] In addition to this, Seneca's Phaedra stands out from the Russian, Greek and French renditions by her independence of mind: in order to set the play in motion she has to persuade the Nurse to approve her passion; she decides to approach Hippolytus herself and confess her passion; she decides to accuse him herself, and is executed without resorting to written means of communication or the intercession of her slave woman.[67] Such a radical departure from the mythological tradition and the earlier version of Euripides, has led scholars to suggest various explanations: some claim that Seneca wanted to portray a more emancipated Phaedra, in order to provide social commentary on the moral corruption of the early Principate;[68] others that he is displaying nostalgia for the old Republican value of verecundia;[69] others still that he used Euripides' first version of *Hippolytus*, *Hippolytus Veiled*, a play with a more outspoken, active Phaedra as his source.[70] The most likely reason, however, appears to be that Seneca sought to recast Phaedra, the traditionally silent female character of Greek tragedy, in a new light and endow her with a louder voice and more developed mind than before. This new dimension to Phaedra's representation necessarily entails a more negative reading of her character, since she is made to transcend social norms and step out of her role as a silent, visible woman, a body without a mind, into a masculine role inclusive of mental and vocal abilities.

In the second stage of Phaedra's characterisation the extent of her psychological strength and ability to withstand pressure from the Nurse is analysed through her verbal interchange with her servant. Of the four dramatic renditions of the Phaedra legend, Tsvetaeva

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[66] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.453.

[67] A. S. Gérard, P.27.

[68] M. Budzowka, trans. A Grzelak-Krzymianowska, *Phaedra - Ethics of Emotions in the Tragedies of Euripides, Seneca and Racine*, Peter Lang AG, (2012). P.122.

[69] M. Budzowka, P.122. The second version is alluded to frequently (for example by Aristophanes), and seems to have been very well known in Antiquity. The surviving Euripidean play is commonly regarded as th later one although there some controversy surrounds precise dating (cf. Gibert, J., "Euripides' Hippolytus Plays: Which Came First?", *Classical Quarterly* 47, 1997, p. 85ff; Hutchinson, G.O., 'Euripides' Other *Hippolytus*', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 149, 2004, pp.15-28).

[70] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.453.

again proves the most forgiving, since she amplifies the negative characteristics of the Nurse in order to contrast Phaedra's own innocence and morality with them. The Nurse, a Mephistopheles-like character,[71] not only manipulates Phaedra into renouncing her husband and confessing to adulterous thoughts but also encourages them.[72] She emphasises her own closeness to Phaedra by setting up an alternative form of relationship; she denounces blood ties, instead claiming that a milk bond between nurse and child is stronger: 'молочный голос – млеку покоримся – есть второе материнство'.[73] By reminding Phaedra that she had brought her up, the Nurse subtly arouses in Phaedra a sense of gratitude and manipulates her into believing that her counsel, like that of parents, will be most beneficial for her. The scene begins with the speech of the Nurse, who narrates the fate of Pasiphae and Ariadne, Phaedra's mother and sister respectively, and reminds her mistress that Theseus, before becoming her husband, was her sister's lover and betrayer: 'Ариадну супруг твой нынешний / Богу продал во время сна', implying that after Theseus' desertion of Ariadne she was raped by Dionysus. To further the effect of her accusations, the Nurse highlights Theseus' age and his consequent unsuitability for Phaedra: 'А с царем-то – с лица старик!.... Федра, он тебе в отцы!'. Despite these provocations the queen is able to remain steadfast, replying to her Nurse's jibes with a series of aphorisms stressing her love for her husband. Instead of falling for the Nurse's manipulative speech and being drawn into a confession, Tsvetaeva's queen begs her to desist: 'Няня, я ему жена. / И оставь свои речи глупые!'. This is a noticeable departure from the earlier renditions of Euripides, Seneca and Racine, where each respective Nurse begs Phaedra to be silent, not vice versa.[74] The strength of Phaedra's character is further revealed by the number of lines required by the Nurse to pry out her secret (330 lines belonging to the Nurse as compared to the queen's 101 lines[75]) and her moral integrity is illuminated by the series of kind remarks with which, despite his absence and evident neglect of her, she describes Theseus:[76] 'Во-первых, – храбр… С каждым прохожим запросто/ Говорит… Щедр… Дальнего чтит… Седина ль Тезеева / Не мудра… На побежденных с кротостью / Зрит.' By making the Nurse a cunning temptress and Phaedra (initially) a loyal wife this scene in Tsvetaeva's play furthers the representation of the queen's strength of resolve.

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[71] Анненский, И., 'Трагедия Ипполита и Федры', Серия "Литературные памятники": Анненский И. Ф., "Книги отражений", М., "Наука", (1979).

[72] R. D. B. Thomson, P.349.

[73] M. Stadter Fox, *P.55.*

[74] Euripides' Nurse does however undertake the role of intermediary for Phaedra, which may have inspired Tsvetaeva in her negative portrayal of the character.

[75] R. D. B. Thomson, P.349.

[76] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.462.

In Euripides, the second stage of Phaedra's characterisation is, like the first stage, dramatically different from Tsvetaeva's, since, rather than making a conscious effort to pry Phaedra's illicit passion out of her, the Nurse stumbles upon it by mistake. The dramatic irony of the long dialogue between the Nurse and Phaedra in Euripides' tragedy consists mainly in the servant's inability to understand why the queen is hurt by her speech.[77] The Nurse erroneously attributes to Phaedra the feeling of hatred for Hippolytus rather than love for him. When at last Phaedra's fatal attraction is discovered by the Nurse, it elicits dread, rather than support from the old woman.[78] In this scene Euripides makes Phaedra and her illicit desires too complex for her simple servant to understand and her mind too deep for the Nurse, a more conventionally portrayed female, to fathom. It is worth noting that in Tsvetaeva's play the nurse is unconventionally presented as having a sharp 'male' devious mind (cf. Annensky's comparison of the Nurse with Mephistopheles).

Like his Greek predecessor and in contrast to his Russian successor, Racine, in the second stage of Phaedra's characterisation, makes the Nurse unable to understand her mistress and similarly stumble upon the name of Hippolytus by mistake. When at last Phaedra reveals her illicit love, the Nurse's response is as piteous as her Greek counterpart's: 'Just heaven! All the blood's frozen in my veins. O despair! O crime! O you race without shame! Unfortunate voyage! O, miserable shore! Why did you come then to this place of danger?' ('Juste ciel ! tout mon sang dans mes veines se glace. / O désespoir ! ô crime ! ô déplorable race ! / Voyage infortuné ! Rivage malheureux, / Fallait-il approcher de tes bords dangereux?', (265-268). Like Euripides, Racine makes Phaedra too complex for the Nurse to understand, highlighting the dichotomy between the simple, open Nurse and her troubled mistress. Although her intelligence matches her Greek counterpart, the French Phaedra has a clearer sense of self-awareness; she analyses her own speech and comes to the realisation that verbally she has overstepped the boundaries of propriety.[79] However, when these boundaries are overstepped, Racine's Phaedra, unlike that of Euripides, shows little to no fear or remorse for what she has done: 'I've confessed it all: and I repent of nothing.' (312)[80] At this point Phaedra's 'conscious mind is subordinate to her passion'[81] and her previous self-awareness has irrevocably gone.

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[77] 'a bastard with thoughts of legitimacy, you know him well, Hippolytus', 'νόθον φρονοῦντα γνήσι', οἶσθά νιν καλῶς, Ἱππόλυτον' (309-10).

[78] 'This is my death! Women, this is unendurable, I can not endure to live! Hateful to me is the day, the light I see! I shall throw myself down, die and be quit of life! Farewell, I am gone! ('οἴμοι, τί λέξεις, τέκνον; ὥς μ' ἀπώλεσας.
γυναῖκες, οὐκ ἀνασχέτ', οὐκ ἀνέξομαι ζῶσ': ἐχθρὸν ἦμαρ, ἐχθρὸν εἰσορῶ φάος ῥίψω μεθήσω σῶμ', ἀπαλλαχθήσομαι βίου θανοῦσα: χαίρετ', οὐκέτ' εἴμ' ἐγώ.' (353-357).

[79] 'Maddened, where am I! What did I say? Where have I let my will and spirit go play? I have lost them' ('Insensée, où suis-je ? et qu'ai-je dit ? / Où laissé-je égarer mes voeux et mon esprit? / Je l'ai perdu', (179-181).

[80] A. S. Gérard, *P.87.*

[81] A. S. Gérard, *P.87.*

Finally, turning to the most damning of the three male accounts of the Phaedra legend, Seneca presents the dialogue between the Nurse and Phaedra in direct opposition to that of Tsvetaeva; where in the Russian version the Nurse requires 330 lines to entice Phaedra into indulging her guilty thoughts, in the Latin play almost two hundred lines are needed for the Nurse to give up trying to persuade Phaedra against her passion. Seneca continues his representation of Phaedra in a 'masculine role', making her assert herself independently from the Nurse and announce both her illicit passion and its object. The only thing the Nurse can do for this new version of Phaedra is to caution her: 'quickly drive guilty thoughts from thy pure breast, put out these fires, nor show thyself obedient to this dread hope of love' ('nefanda casto pectore exturba ocius, extingue flammas neve te dirae spei praebe obsequentem:', (130-132). The effect achieved by this radical departure from both the earlier rendition of Euripides, is to transpose the responsibility for not concealing her passion from Phaedra *and* the Nurse, to Phaedra alone. Since in Seneca the queen's mind is more independent than its previous and subsequent counterparts, it necessarily carries more blame for her sinful conduct.

The third stage of Phaedra's characterisation has the greatest bearing on the overall representation of her 'mind', since it introduces a binary opposition between the male and the female[82], which allows the poet to reveal the psychology of the two women (the Nurse and Phaedra) against a patriarchal backdrop. For two of the four plays studied in this article, this stage also completes Phaedra's characterisation and provides conclusive evidence as to whether the playwright intended to condemn or to rehabilitate the queen.

From the very beginning of the 'revelation' stage, Tsvetaeva, in her choice to have the Nurse deliver a letter from Phaedra, without orally relaying the passion of her mistress, radically departs from the plot-line supplied both by the mythological tradition and her predecessor Euripides. This innovation, which can be traced back to Ovid's *Heroides* 4,[83] gives scope for Phaedra to address Hippolytus herself, revealing at first hand the inner workings of her mind: her intelligence in adapting to Hippolytus' interests[84] and the strength of her character, required to keep her raving passion under control.[85] The first crucial detail in Tsvetaeva's representation of a nobler, purer Phaedra, is to make Hippolytus and Phaedra meet

[82] A. Kondjak, K. Pomorska, S. Rudy eds. *Myth in Literature*, New York University Slavic Papers Volume V, (1985), P.105.

[83] Phaedra is given a voice in Ovid's *Heroides* 4, where she able to describe both the physical effects of her passion (7ff) and her changing pursuits, which she adapts to suit Hippolytus (37ff).

[84] Searching for the first spark of her love, Phaedra picks wholly natural phenomena: 'Началом / Взгляд был… Шаг был. Ошибаюсь: куст был началом звук был Рога,– чащ звук'. Phaedra is endowed with the sensitivity to adapt herself closely to Hippolytus' interest, and, at least in her eyes, increases her chances of winning Hippolytus over.

[85] At this stage in the play Phaedra fully reveals the extent of her passion: 'Деревцо стояло, щедрой / Тенью путников поило. / Это я его спалила / Исступлением, тоскою' and consequently her strength with which hereto she suppressed her love.

for the first time[86]: the young man does not recognise Phaedra and she is forced to introduce herself to him: 'Не меня ль отец твой вдовый...'. Tsvetaeva thus distances Phaedra from Hippolytus almost to the point of displacing her from her role of step-mother, making her love-declaration less perverse. This initial mollification however is dramatically overthrown by the plethora of nouns which Hippolytus showers on Phaedra, highlighting their mother-son relationship and eliciting, as she is reminded of her maternal duty, both sympathy and contempt for the queen: 'Мачеха! Жена царева!... Тезееву супругу… Слово сына!'. In addition to this, Tsvetaeva remoulds other elements of the traditional Phaedra legend: the queen is closer in age to Hippolytus than to her husband Theseus, and her marriage is childless, something highly unnatural in an ancient society.[87] The effect of this is initially to soften the impact of the queen's confession by distancing her from her bodily roles of wife and mother, and then to emphasise her mental sin: of the 'dual domains' to which her female body is consigned, the 'venerated… maternal' is absent, whereas the 'sexual' is highlighted by her youth and childlessness.[88] The tragedy of Phaedra's representation is deepened by her death; the only body she can produce is her own hanged corpse.[89] Instead of giving life and earning merit through 'correct' female behaviour, Phaedra brings death, reversing her traditional role and earning condemnation, mixed however, as shown later, with pity. The scene concludes with Hippolytus' blunt rejection and silence from Phaedra, who as we learn from the next stage direction ('Кормилица (над телом Федры)'), will never speak again.

At this point in the play Tsvetaeva introduces the most crucial element which lifts blame from Phaedra: unlike the three other renditions of the legend, the Russian queen dies before the accusation of rape is launched and is completely innocent of Hippolytus' death. Ulterior motives such as fear for her eukleia (good name) present in the shame-culture driven Phaedra of Euripides or jealousy which motivates Racine's Phaedra, are removed from her psychology.[90] Tsvetaeva's Phaedra is above pragmatism or pettiness; her death is caused by unrequited love.[91] Whereas in earlier versions of the Phaedra legend, the queen accuses Hippolytus herself, Tsvetaeva fully clears Phaedra of any accusation concerning the rape. The blame lies fully upon the shoulders of the vengeful Nurse: 'Берегись, пес-женодав!/ … черное – белым,…/…белое – черным, / Явь – ложью, ложь – явью / Предстанет, представл**ю**.' The effect achieved by this radical departure from tradition is to heighten the

[86] M. Stadter Fox, *P.51.*

[87] M. Stadter Fox, *P.55.*

[88] A. M. Barker, J.M. Gheith, P.7.

[89] M. Stadter Fox, P.56.

[90] A. S. Gérard, P.6.

[91] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.461.

audience's sympathy for the dead queen; her sin was only illicit love, incestuous but fruitless, not murder. Consequently, the pity which earlier Phaedras lose on account of guilt, remains fully with Tsvetaeva's queen.[92]

Although Euripides' departure from the mythological tradition is less stark than that of Tsvetaeva, the third stage of characterisation in his play is marked by a crucial innovation: it is the Nurse who reports Phaedra's passion to Hippolytus, whereas the queen does not encounter the young man at all. This absolves the queen of breaking her proper female silence (a noble woman explicitly declaring her love on stage would have been inconceivable for the audience[93]) and to further her representation as a passive instrument of the well-meaning Nurse. Phaedra can only listen in on the conversation which determines her fate and comment on it for the audience: 'I am destroyed. Stand next to this door and listen what kind of din is being raised in the house.' ('ἀπωλόμεσθα: ταῖσδ᾽ ἐπιστᾶσαιπύλαις ἀκούσαθ᾽ οἷος κέλαδος ἐν δόμοιςπίτνει.'). The Nurse's confession brings to light a further crucial element in Euripides' gender representations, that of distorted communication[94]. Throughout the whole play mortal women converse with mortal women (Phaedra with the Nurse and the Chorus) and mortal men with mortal men (Theseus with Hippolytus).[95] The only breaches of this pattern result in death: the Nurse's speech to Hippolytus ends in Phaedra's death, Phaedra's written communication to Theseus ends in Hippolytus's death and the Nurse's disappearance from the plot. The play clearly shows that any puncture of the male bubble by a female is severely punishable and women, in order to avoid death and destruction, should keep to their own silent world.[96] So Hippolytus, a character traditionally regarded as the epitome of an ideal youth but, at closer investigation, irreverent and full of hubris,[97] outlines in his diatribe against women: 'men should put to live with [women] beasts, which bite, not talk, in which case they could not speak to any one nor be answered back by them' ('ἄφθογγα δ᾽ αὐταῖς συγκατοικίζειν δάκηθηρῶν, ἵν᾽ εἶχον μήτε προσφωνεῖν τιναμήτ᾽ ἐξ ἐκείνων φθέγμα δέξασθαι πάλιν.' (646-650)).

Hippolytus's speech as a whole, delivered by the male protagonist of the play, reveals the prevalent attitude to women in ancient Greece: a female was regarded first and foremost as

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[92] R. D. B. Thomson, P.343.

[93] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.462.

[94] C. Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender and Commemoration in Alcestis, Hippolytus and Hecuba*, Duke University Press, (1993), P.92.

[95] Save for a few very brief exchanges between Theseus and the female chorus (e.g.790-810).

[96] For a more detailed study of the function of silence as opposed to character speech in Euripides' *Hippolytus* see Knox, B. M., (1952).

[97] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.453.

a creature who could 'threaten social structures'[98] and who, consequently, should be kept under lock and key.[99] Hippolytus shares Pericles' view that the best fate for a woman is to be both silent herself and unspoken of by men: 'It will be much for your honour not to recede from your sex and to give as little occasion of rumour amongst the men, whether of good or evil, as you can.' (Thucydides, 2.45.2).[100] In addition to depriving women of their voice, Hippolytus offers to strip them of their fundamental role in society, that of child-bearing,[101] suggesting that buying children from temples would be better: 'not from women should [men] draw their stock, but in thy temples offer gold or iron or ponderous bronze and buy a family, each man in proportion to his offering, and so in independence dwell, from women free.' (618-624). Understanding that his hope of buying children is an adynaton, Hippolytus rails against clever women, indicating his preference for bodies without minds: 'But a clever woman—that I loathe! May there never be in my house a woman with more intelligence than befits a woman! For Aphrodite engenders more mischief in the clever. The woman without ability is kept from indiscretion by the slenderness of her wit.' (640-644). For Hippolytus a woman's mind is so inexorably linked with her sexual body that it cannot function independently; it pollutes a man with its filth, resulting in his need to physically wash himself[102]. The destructive circuit of female body to female mind to male mind to male body, outlined by Hippolytus, is complete in Euripides' play, resulting in death and the destruction of the Athenian royal house.

Before the Nurse confesses to Hippolytus, Phaedra is able to restrain herself[103] but as soon as her secret is out and the female sphere is violated, Phaedra is compelled to act swiftly and provide an answering breach of her own: a letter to her husband. Whereas previously her communication was limited to the female sphere of her Nurse and the Chorus of women, now Phaedra, like her Nurse, enters the 'public realm of men'.[104] Although the queen is herself physically powerless to withstand the male influence of Hippolytus, her mind is as yet capable of providing a defense mechanism, playing one man (Theseus) off against another (Hippolytus). Ironically, although her living body is powerless to protect her from dishonour, her dead body, once its thinking mind has been exterminated, is able to do so. In other words, by claiming that her female body has been violated, she is able to protect her reputation and her

[98] 'Women can both make and unmake culture – a man's honour can be tarnished through her…' - N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, P.157.

[99] 'Hippolytus enumerates three systems of exchange – financial, sexual, linguistic- from which women must be excluded or in which they must be controlled. Women are seen as gifts exchanged by men to cement relations between men.'. N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.158.*

[100] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.159.*

[101] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.158.*

[102] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.158.*

[103] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.165.*

[104] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.158.*

mind.[105] Furthermore, when Phaedra resolves to die: 'I know but one thing, to die with all speed, the sole remedy for my present troubles', 'οὐκ οἶδα πλὴν ἔν, κατθανεῖν ὅσον τάχος,τῶν νῦν παρόντων πημάτων ἄκος μόνον. (599-600), she does so without commonplace hysteria or fatalism, but wisely and responsibly[106], realising that she has no other recourse to save not only her own reputation but also that of her children.[107] Although Tsvetaeva's Phaedra chooses what for a modern reader may anachronistically seem the most 'honourable' way out of her dilemma, Euripides' Phaedra, from the point of view of a shame-culture society, cannot kill herself before speaking out in defense of herself.[108] The only three roles Phaedra is allowed to adopt in this play are either silent, as at the start of the play or sexual, when she gives rein to her passion, or devious, as when she accuses Hippolytus.[109]

In Racine's play the third stage of characterisation is also marked by a considerable departure from tradition since he, unlike all the other playwrights, remolds the character of Hippolytus to suit the taste of his audience: he removes Hippolytus' hubris and chastity, which could have seemed curious if not comic elements from the point of view of a 17th French audience.[110] In addition to this, he also reduces the potential guilt of Phaedra through her belief that when she declares herself to Hippolytus she is a widow.[111] By introducing these two dramatic innovations Racine adds a 'new psychological element', female jealousy of Aricia, which in turn allows him to trace the heroine's 'moral decline' from self-control to vindictive vengefulness.[112] Instead of having the Nurse confess Phaedra's love for Hippolytus, Racine makes the queen speak to her beloved herself, revealing by this tactic the extent of the queen's self-criticism. She has a mind, which she uses to disclose and then analyse her guilt.

At this stage in Phaedra's characterisation it is more fruitful to examine Racine alongside, rather than separately from, Seneca, since their versions are mirror opposites. In Racine's play Phaedra's confession of love for Hippolytus is set in the context of her request that he protect her son after the reported death of Theseus.[113] In Act I the upright Oenone had

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[105] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.166.*

[106] Анненский, И., (1979).

[107] 'But I, with all my thought, can but one way discover out of this calamity, that so I may secure my children's honour, and find myself some help as matters stand. For never, never will I bring shame upon my Cretan home' ('ἐγὼεὕρημα δῆτα τῆσδε συμφορᾶς ἔχω,ὥστ᾽ εὐκλεᾶ μὲν παισὶ προσθεῖναι βίοναὐτή τ᾽ ὀνάσθαι πρὸς τὰ νῦν πεπτωκότα.οὐ γάρ ποτ᾽ αἰσχυνῶ γε Κρησίους δόμους' (715-719)).

[108] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.166.*

[109] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.167.*

[110] R. Lauriola, K. N. Demetrious, P.460.

[111] This probably had precedent in Sophocles' *Phaedra*, where Theseus undertook a journey to the underworld and went missing, presumed dead. See Barrett, W.S., 1964, ff. 29.

[112] A. S. Gérard, *P.92.*

[113] 'I come, on my son's behalf, to explain my fears. My son is fatherless…you alone can protect him from his enemies.', 'Je vous viens pour un fils expliquer mes alarmes. / Mon fils n'a plus de père… / Vous seul pouvez contre eux embrasser sa défense', (586-590).

already suggested this course of action.[114] Seneca, on the other hand, has Phaedra only feign the countenance and position of a poor widow, revealing in an aside that the queen's true intent is to arouse sympathy and love in Hippolytus: '[Aside.] O credulous hope of lovers, O deceitful Love ! Have I said enough? I'll bring my prayers to bear upon him and attack', 'O spes amantum credula, o fallax Amor! satisne dixi? precibus admotis agam. [the following words are not translated in your preceding text] Miserere, tacitae mentis exaudi preces—libet loqui pigetque.' (634-636).[115] Racine makes his Phaedra genuine, Seneca – false. At a fundamental level the psychology of the two women differs, eliciting compassion at the plight of one and horror at the shamelessness of the other.

In addition to this, Seneca has Hippolytus condemn Phaedra, whereas Racine makes his prince silent, too noble to censure his own step-mother.[116] Instead Phaedra, acknowledging her own fault, herself utters the very words which Seneca has his Hippolytus speak.[117] Racine's Phaedra urges Hippolytus to punish her,[118] whereas Seneca's prince draws his sword himself:[119] Racine's Phaedra labels herself as a 'dreadful monster' ('monstre affreux', (703)), whereas Seneca's prince condemns the queen as unnatural ('your monster-bearing mother, thou worse than she who bore thee' (688-689)); Racine's Phaedra understands that her blood is too filthy to be shed by Hippolytus' noble hand,[120] whereas it is Seneca's prince[121] who feels disgust at her touch.[122] The build-up of the French Phaedra's self-loathing makes her final wish to die appear much more genuine than that of her Latin counterpart, whose submission to Hippolytus' sword can be read as a manipulative gesture to make the prince feel sorry for her great love.[123] Whereas Racine's Phaedra is deeply aware of her own wickedness and is spontaneous in her confession, Seneca makes Phaedra act and speak deliberately: from the very start of her conversation with Hippolytus, she consciously tries to seduce him using every trick she can think of and 'embarks on her evil course of action in full knowledge that she is violating the rational-ethical principles that should govern human conduct'.[124]

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[114] A. S. Gérard, *P.81.*

[115] A. S. Gérard, *P.81.*

[116] A. S. Gérard, *P.84.*

[117] A. S. Gérard, *P.84.*

[118] 'Take vengeance: punish me for loathed delight.', 'Venge-toi, punis-moi d'un odieux amour.' (699).

[119] 'Out, sword, and mete her just punishment. See, with left hand in her twisted hair have I bent back her shameless head.' (705-6).

[120] 'Or if you think it not worthy of your blow… Or if your hand by my vile blood would be stained', 'Ou si tu le crois indigne de tes coups…/ Ou si d'un sang trop vil ta main serait trempée,', (707-709).

[121] 'And let this sword, polluted by thy touch, quit my chaste side.', 'hic contactus ensis deserat castum latus.' (714).

[122] A. S. Gérard, *P.84.*

[123] A. S. Gérard, *P.77.*

[124] A. S. Gérard, *PP.27-28.*

The fourth and final stage of Phaedra's characterisation is the most problematic since in two of the four plays (those of Euripides and Tsvetaeva) Phaedra is already dead and so incapable of condemning or absolving herself of her crime. The role of ultimate judge is handed over to the male protagonists of the play, who speak after the females are robbed of their voices[125]. The first time we encounter Theseus in Tsvetaeva's play is almost at the very end when he enters on stage, wondering why his house is abandoned: 'Двор вымер, дом вымер.' Like Euripides' Theseus, the king of Tsvetaeva's play first asks if the silence at court is caused by the death of his son 'Сын помер, / Что ль?'. Since Phaedra has no children, Theseus can only be referring to Hippolytus, his illegitimate son from the Amazon Hippolyta. The king treasures this son more than his wife, fearing, when he attributes to his death the same weight as an enemy intrusion or plague ('Враг в доме?... Мор грянул?'), for Hippolytus' health as much as for the safety of the whole house. This homo-centric attitude finds precedent in Euripides, who, like Tsvetaeva, has his Theseus ask first[126] after his father and then after his sons.[127] When at last, after eleven lines, Theseus understands that his wife is dead, his mourning is directed more at himself and his wretched fate than at lamenting Phaedra's untimely death.[128] The king's callousness becomes all the more conspicuous when juxtaposed to the grief of the Chorus, expressed entirely from the point of view of Phaedra: 'Alas, poor woman, how luckless you are!... Who was it, poor woman, that brought your life down to darkness? ('ἰὼ ἰὼ τάλαινα μελέων κακῶν: τίς ἄρα σάν, τάλαινʼ, ἀμαυροῖ ζόαν;' (8111; 816)). This negative characterisation of Theseus allows both Euripides and Tsvetaeva to explore the fate of a woman, psychologically more developed (as has been shown in stages one, two and three of Phaedra's characterisation) than her husband, contrasting her dynamic but repressed conscience with his free but one-dimensional mind.

The final revelation of Hippolytus' innocence and Phaedra's criminal passion has a slightly different manifestation in each play. In Tsvetaeva, Theseus takes full responsibility for the tragedy of Phaedra's and Hippolytus' death, claiming that the gods (on the macrocosmic plane analysed above) are punishing him.[129] Theseus, a flat, one-dimensional character, appears at the very end of the tragedy and re-evaluates the whole play, making himself the centre of the whole plot.[130] His masculine desire to impose himself at the centre of all action is severely

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[125] M. Stadter Fox, *P.51.*

[126] 'Has something happened to old Pittheus? … Alas! Does death rob me a child's life…' ('μῶν Πιτθέως τι γῆρας εἴργασται νέον;', 'οἴμοι: τέκνων μοι μή τι συλᾶται βίος;' (794; 799).

[127] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.68.*

[128] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.68.*

[129] M. Stadter Fox, *P.62.*

[130] M. Stadter Fox, *P.62.*

ironised by Tsvetaeva both in the name of the play itself (*'Fedra'*) and by the overall title of the trilogy into which *Fedra* falls: *'Thesee'*. Although the character of Theseus is used by the poetess to unite three women (Ariadne, Phaedra and Helen) he is 'almost an empty centre which functions only as a binding element.'[131] The main interest of Tsvetaeva lies not in analysing Theseus's desire for Ariadne or Phaedra (or indeed Helen, who, according to some Classical sources, was only seven at the time of Theseus' rape), but in exploring their characters and individual female tragedies.

The concluding scene of Euripides' tragedy similarly revolves around the characters of Theseus and Hippolytus and their reunion after the accusation of rape has been absolved by Artemis as *dea ex machina*. Leaving aside the immortals, the resolution of the plot takes place between two men once the temporary, female interference has been abolished.[132] Only after both Phaedra's 'sexuality' (body) and her 'speech' (mind) have been 'controlled' by the two males can the play end in relative harmony (father and son reconcile at last).[133] By concluding *Hippolytus* with the embrace of father and son, while the female, formerly princess of Crete, daughter of King Minos and Queen of Athens, now a speechless body, is removed from the prominent role she occupied through the entire tragedy, Euripides reaffirms the prince's earlier claim that women are nothing more than an object of monetary value, used in this play to explore male relationships.[134] In Phaedra the 'binary division between mind and body' has been displaced, leaving only her body on stage, her name has survived not in her spiritual or maternal hypostasis but in the corporeal, sexual domain where she is 'damned' in the eyes of posterity.[135]

The other two plays studied in this article, those of Seneca and Racine manifest the fourth stage of Phaedra's characterisation in a dramatically different way from their predecessor Euripides and successor Tsvetaeva, in that both of them allow Phaedra to survive until after the death of Hippolytus. This allows Phaedra to speak out for herself rather than surrender, like Tvetaeva's or Euripides' heroines, to a male judgment of her sin. Both Seneca and Racine give their respective Phaedras the option of escaping death and punishment by upholding their initial lie about Hippolytus' crime.[136] This is facilitated by the fact that in both plays the Nurse, the only witness to the false accusation, conveniently disappears from the

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[131] M. Stadter Fox, *P.52.*
[132] A. S. Gérard, *P.34.*
[133] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.156.*
[134] N. Sorokin Rabinowitz, *P.156.*
[135] A. M. Barker, J.M. Gheith, P.7.
[136] A. S. Gérard, *P.34.*

plot.[137] However, both Phaedras make their conscious decision to forego this opportunity and confess to their crime, simultaneously robbing themselves of their reputation and life. In Racine Phaedra punishes herself more severely than the Roman Phaedra, since before appearing on stage to make her confession, she takes a slow-acting poison brought by Medea from Colchis.[138] Even in the unlikely event that Theseus forgave her crime and begged her not to commit suicide, Phaedra has no way of turning back: she has evaluated her crime and dispensed justice herself without resorting to male intervention. Much like Racine's Phaedra, Seneca's queen undergoes what has been termed 'a shockingly abrupt psychological change' in that, whereas formerly her mind and her body worked in unison, both deliberately seductive, by the end of the play her mind has broken free of her body.[139] Unlike Euripides, Seneca has his Phaedra realise her crime and ask forgiveness.[140] Her characterisation, initially the most negative of the four versions of the Phaedra legend, is redeemed at the end of the play. As in the case of Euripides' Phaedra there is a 'binary division between [her] mind and body',[141] but in an altogether different form: her mind has overcome her body and led her to the noblest course of action available to a fallen queen, death.

Conclusion

In this article the representation of gender in Tsvetaeva's play has been analysed through the reception and transmission of the Phaedra myth in preceding literary sources from three different cultures, Greek, Roman and French. The three plane approach (extra-textual, macrocosmic and microcosmic) offered in the article has facilitated a precise analysis of the extent to which the female body and mind have been condemned or rehabilitated by each poet. It can be concluded that the earliest of the four plays, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, sets up a relatively sympathetic interpretation of the Phaedra legend: although on the extra-textual plane his society, constructed around a patriarchy, condemned Phaedra's bodily crime as wife and mother, at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels Euripides provides sufficient mollification to adopt a balanced view of Phaedra's body and mind respectively: she is represented as both a victim and a wrongdoer. Seneca's play, chronologically the next after Euripides, presents a completely different representation of gender in the Phaedra myth: both the queen's body and mind are condemned at the macrocosmic level and extra-textual plane, with only the fourth

[137] A. S. Gérard, *P.34.*

[138] A. S. Gérard, *P.103.*

[139] A. S. Gérard, *P.35.*

[140] A. S. Gérard, *P.45.*

[141] A. M. Barker, J.M. Gheith, P.9.

stage of the microcosmic level providing a mitigating feature, the voluntary confession of her bodily crime and the redemption of her mind. Racine's rendition of the Phaedra legend reverts back to Seneca in that it attempts to absolve Phaedra's mind of her sin on two planes, the external and microcosmic, only the macrocosmic plane which reveals an absence of divine motivation serves to condemn the queen. Thus, at all the three levels, Tsvetaeva's play, the last of the four in terms of chronology, can conclusively be named the most sympathetic rendition of the Phaedra legend, since the poet, inheriting the schematic plot of the myth, has recast it through her own female viewpoint. Tsvetaeva has rescued Phaedra 'from her portrait as [a] destructive… being – the familiar… interpretation of masculine tradition'[142] and reshaped her into an independently thinking, innocent woman trapped in a homo-centric society. Tsvetaeva's heroine has overcome the 'binary division between mind and body – spirit and matter'[143] liberating herself of the bonds of a patriarchal society. In Tsvetaeva's play Phaedra is endowed not only with a mind which is independent of her body (she is able to suppress her passion and fight back against the tempting Nurse) but also noble enough to lead her to the finest course of action, death without accusation.

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[142] B. Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, Indiana University Press (1987), P.131.
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