

**THE MYTH OF PHAEDRA AS REVEALED  
IN THE DRAMATURGY OF  
EURIPIDES, JEAN RACINE AND SARAH KANE**

**Şaziye MEŞE**

**Yüksek Lisans Tezi  
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı  
Danışman: Doç. Dr. Tatiana Golban  
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İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the representations of the Phaedra myth in various texts. In *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love*, Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane revive the Phaedra myth, using the smallest constitutive units of the myth, called mythemes, such as Phaedra's love, concealment of passion and others and adding new significances to them. By observing the lines of the events and relations of units to each other, this study attempts to show how Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane represent the myth of Phaedra in their plays. In doing so, this study also shows how these playwrights alter the mythemes in order to fit their purposes. Euripides, who deals with the Phaedra myth, makes a play which presents divine intervention in human affairs. Racine, inspired by Euripides, reconstructs the myth of Phaedra and adds some new connotations to this myth. Kane deconstructs the earlier established meanings and creates new meanings with her radical adaptation.

**Key words:** Phaedra, Myth, Mytheme, Dramaturgy, Binary opposition, In-her-face theatre.

## ÖZET

Bu çalışma farklı tiyatro metinlerinde Phaedra mitinin nasıl ele alındığı üzerinde durmaktadır. *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* ve *Phaedra'nın Aşkı* oyunları Phaedra mitinden tanınan Phaedra'nın aşkı, aşkını saklaması ve bu çalışmada yer alan diğer mitsel öğeler (“mythemes”) üzerine kuruludur ve yazar bunlara yeni anlamlar yüklemiştir. Olayların dizesine ya da birbiriyle olan ilişkisine bakarak, bu çalışma Euripides, Jean Racine ve Sarah Kane'in Phaedra mitini nasıl ele aldığını incelemektedir. Bunu yaparak bu çalışma mitsel öğelerin amacına uygun olması için nasıl değiştirildiğini göstermeyi de amaçlamaktadır. Phaedra mitini kullanan Euripides tanrının insan yaşamına müdahale ettiği bir oyunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Racine, Euripides'ten ilham alarak Phaedra mitini yeniden kurmuş ve bu mite başka anlamlar katmıştır. Kane önceki anlamları bozarak sıra dışı adaptasyonu ile Phaedra mitine yeni anlamlar yüklemektedir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Phaedra, Mit, Mitsel öğeler (“mythemes”), Dramaturji, İkili karşıtlıklar, Suratına tiyatro.

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To my mother and my father...

To our story...

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## INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the establishment of the tradition of Phaedra myth in Antiquity and Neoclassical period, and it also considers the revival of the Phaedra myth tradition in the contemporary theatre. Given that specific target audiences live in different periods and cultural backgrounds, this study presents three different plays that belong to different periods and different playwrights. This study focuses in particular on Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Jean Racine's *Phèdre* and Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love* and discusses the ways in which these writers develop this myth in their works.

The aim of this research is to reveal how the myth of Phaedra is created, altered, recombined and transformed by Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane. It also attempts to show how these playwrights deal with the myth of Phaedra in their dramaturgy and present how they create new meanings to some already established mythemes.

This study attempts to reveal the Phaedra myth, dissect it into particular mythemes and observe which of the units of the Phaedra myth are reinvented or inverted by each dramatist. By discovering the alterations and mutations of the mythical units this study attempts to show how each of the mentioned playwrights create new meanings suitable for his age or background.

The first chapter firstly embarks on the definition of myth, showing myth encompasses various definitions. Following the defining myth, this chapter gives the Lévi-Strauss' theoretical approach to myth, as this study will rely on it and then it presents the emergence of the Phaedra myth and its different use to look for the origin of the myth of Phaedra in various literary sources. It also reveals the theoretical reason of the variations of the mythical units.

After giving some general remarks on Euripides' drama, involving his mood of character and characterization, the second chapter focuses on Hippolytus, by explaining how Euripides interprets the Phaedra myth in his play, *Hippolytus* and goes on the deep study on mythemes of Phaedra myth in *Hippolytus*.

Third chapter starts with the general introduction to Racine's theatre, presenting him as a neo-classical playwright and then explains how Racine constructs the Phaedra myth according to the principles of neo-classicism and reveals the distinguished features of Racinian Phaedra. The third chapter also elaborates mythemes of the Phaedra myth in *Phèdre*.

Introducing Sarah Kane as an in-her-face theatre playwright, the fourth chapter draws a correspondence between in-her-face theatre and Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and studies on the influence of Artaud's theatre on Kane's in-her-face theatre. This chapter focuses on the myth of Phaedra in *Phaedra's Love*, highlights the mythemes of Phaedra myth and reveals how Kane deconstructs the mythemes of the mythic scenario in this play.

The last chapter involves the comparison between three plays, *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love*. Giving differences and parallelism of three plays, the fifth chapter examines the three plays, considering the Phaedra myth.

The second, third, fourth and fifth chapter represent the application of the theories on myth. The study aims to analyze *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love* by the help of mythemes which belong to Phaedra myth. In these chapters, through the lens of appropriate comparative study, theoretical, structural and thematic examination, the main goal is to show how the thematic concern, representations of characters, events and ideas are treated in various ways by different playwrights belonged to different cultural and ideological backgrounds.

## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 Defining Myth

Since our study is based on the myth of Phaedra, starting with the definition of ‘myth’ serves our purposes greatly. As stated in most of the dictionaries, the origin of the word comes from modern Latin *muthus*, via late Latin from Greek *muthos*, which means speech, a narrative or legend. The first meaning of the word, in *Oxford Dictionary*, is given as “a purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions or events, and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena often used vaguely to include any narrative having fictitious elements”, and the second meaning is given as “a fictitious or imaginary person or object”.

When it comes to scholars, experts or mythologists, there is not any single definition; instead there are lots of different viewpoints; descriptions and understandings; so there is no agreement concerning the definition of myth. On one hand, Bruce Lincoln, one of the experts who sees discussions on definition of the word, shares his observation. Firstly, Lincoln states that the term myth “regularly denotes a style of narrative discourse and specific instances thereof” (1999, p. ix). Secondly, he points out that “[w]henver someone calls something a “myth”, powerful-and highly consequential assertions are being made about its relative level of validity and authority vis-á-vis her sort of course” (1999, p. ix). Lincoln suggests that the myth is defined as a narrative that asserts truth for itself and myth is seen by people as credible and authoritative. In these respects, Lincoln draws the attention to assertions on defining myth and he claims that these assertions might carry positive, negative and mild meanings. Lincoln gives the positive meaning of myth as “primordial truth or sacred story”, the negative meaning of myth as “lie or obsolete worldview”, or mild meaning of myth as “pleasant diversion, poetic fancy or story for children” (1999, p. ix). Lincoln presents these three assertions by focusing on the way how the meanings of myth are used in society. More than one meaning of myth is used in this regard and there appears various definitions of myth in his observation.

On the other hand, in his definition of myth Edmund Leach gives a narrower account of myth, by dividing it into two categories. According to him, a myth is either “a fallacious history – a story about the past we know to be false” or “a formulation of a religious mystery”; in this case, Leach thinks that myth is “divinely true for those who believe but a fairy tale for those who do not” (1973, p. 54). As it is seen from these definitions, initially, myth has a positive meaning, then, it takes on either positive or negative meanings as its meaning is related to those who believe or those who do not.

Rather than focusing on its style or its meaning, as Leach and Lincoln do, William Bascom defines myth in terms of genre conventions. He distinguishes between myth, legend and folktale and mentions that “prose narrative” is the term which can be attributed to these three forms. In other words, “prose narrative” is one of the common feature of these three forms. Bascom gives a detailed explanation about myth stating that “[m]yths are prose narratives which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in the remote past” (1965, p. 4). He gives a rather general definition and names them as “prose narratives”, but he attempts to point out that they are thought to be truthful accounts of the things which occurred in the earlier times.

Emphasizing upon story telling as the concern of myth, Marina Warner, in *World of Myths*, elaborates on a familiar definition of the word: “A myth is a story –a certain kind of story-about gods, goddesses, questing heroes and not a few persecuted maidens, about the origins of creation and natural phenomena, about deep time past and the ultimate possible destiny of this moment in which we find ourselves now” (2003, p. vi). Warner suggests that we learn about ourselves and predict the possible future by looking at the past time.

Lucilla Burn addresses the relationship between myths and the societies in which they flourish. While mentioning recent definition on myths, Burn states that myths are “traditional tales relevant to society” (2003, p. 6); however, Eric Csapo is opposed to this recent definition as he asserts that such definitions can cause all sorts of problems and exclusions. According to Csapo, “there can be myths about recent events,

contemporary personalities, new inventions” and he indicates that “[t]o insist that a myth or legend be a traditional tale is to confuse a symptom of their function of transmitting something of collective importance for part of their essence” (2005, p. 9). Thus, Csapo suggests that “myth is a function of social ideology”, and he claims that Bruce Lincoln would call it as “ideology in narrative form”. In this respect, Csapo asserts that we should not confuse the content with its function.

Mircea Eliade, one of the most prolific religious scholars, approaches myths and their truth value, within a religious context. She points out on myth as following:

Myth is regarded as a sacred story, and hence a “true history”, because it always deals with realities. The cosmogonist myth is “true” because the existence of the world is there to prove it; the myth of the origin of death is equally true because man’s morality proves it, and so on. (1963, p. 6)

As understood from Eliade’s viewpoints, myth refers to a religious, eternal and timeless story; it tells the deeds of supernatural beings and how the reality comes into existence. Eliade also explains that the language of a “sacred story” is symbolic. Through the presentation of a sacred story or a religious story, a myth reveals an eternal truth or a “true history” alluding to sacred stories. It shows the creation of the world; namely, how the cosmos came into existence how things happened and how it reflects the human existence.

Other scholars such as Gilbert Durand, and Joseph Campbell, who is a noteworthy writer on myth, prefer to analyse myth in terms of its structure and symbolism. In *Les Structures Anthropologiques de l’Imaginaire* (1960) Gilbert Durand proposes a comprehensive definition of myth and states that myth is “a dynamic system of symbols, archetypes and schemas, a dynamic system that tends, when prompted by a schema, to take the form of a story” (Durand cited in Brunel, 1992, p. x).

Like Eliade, Joseph Campbell states that the real meaning of myth is symbolic. In his book, written with Bill Moyers, called *The Power of Myth*, he expresses the symbolic meaning of myth like this:

All the gods, all the heavens, all the worlds, are within us. They are magnified dreams, and dreams are manifestations in image form of the energies of the body in conflict with each other. That is what myth is. Myth is a manifestation in symbolic images, in

metaphorical images of the energies of the organs of the body in conflict with each other. This organ wants this, that organ wants that. The brain is one of the organs. (Campbell & Moyers, 1991, p. 46)

Campbell implies the psychological dimension when he mentions the symbolic meaning of the myth. What he means is that myth tells a journey into inner life, inner world. Apparently, the myth tells about gods and heavens, however, it tells more than that if the myth discloses the psyche of a person. It shows the human unconscious via dreams; consequently, a person might learn about himself or herself. The influence of other writers on Campbell, who approach myth from the psychological perspective, such as Jung is apparent here. Jung advocates that on man and myth there must be a search deeper into human psyche, which is divided into three parts, such as the conscious ego, personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, to reveal messages of myths and essential truths about human condition. The third one of the human psyche involves powerful emotional symbols and patterns called archetypes. Jung gives the definition of myths, as “narrative elaboration of archetypal images” (Walker, 1992, p. 19) and states that myths represent the inner, unconscious world.

One of the writers who looks at myth, focusing on signs but from a different formal perspective, is Roland Barthes. He asks what is a myth today, and underlies the fact that he attempts to “define things, not words” answering that “myth is a type of speech”. In the same source Barthes explains:

It is not any type: language needs special conditions in order to become myth: we shall set them in a minute. But what must be firmly established at the start is that myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form. Later, we shall have to assign to this form historical limits, conditions of use, and reintroduce society into it: we must nevertheless first describe it as a form. (1957, p. 127)

Barthes’ treatment of myth from a semiotic perspective distinguishes him from the earlier scholars. He focuses on myth as a unit of systems of communication, by stating that myth is a speech (parole). He implies that myth has a meaning inherent in the systems of communication.

## 1.2 Claude Lévi-Strauss' Perspectives on Myth

Lévi-Strauss is one of the important scholars in the study of myth. Though there are multiple theories on myth, an extended mention of Lévi-Strauss' theoretical approach to myth has a critical relevance to the purpose of this research. We cannot disregard Strauss' contribution to the development of myths, due to the significance of his study on myth in the contemporary society. Primarily, Lévi-Strauss relies on structural linguistics and then he extends its principle from linguistics to mythology and anthropology.

Throughout his life, Lévi-Strauss studies on many different myths from different societies, approaching myth from the structural perspective, using an objective and scientific methodology. He suggests that “there is no single “true” version of which all the others are copies or distortions” (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 218). At that point, Lévi-Strauss takes the attention to the transformation in myths. He claims that “transformations are of the essence of sets of myth, for they demonstrate the continuity of the hard structural core” (Cohen, 1969. p. 347). Because of transformations, the basic structure goes on and transformations prove that the common structure might be used repeatedly. According to Lévi-Strauss, “the structure remains the same”, as a result, “the symbolic function is fulfilled” (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 203). In his book titled *Myth and Meaning*, he explains that the structure is similar, but the details evolve. (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, p. 39) The content of the myth changes and varies. If one element of myth is transformed, other elements are to be reordered. It is normal that one can find the same events in different myths and notice the transformations in myths when looking at them attentively. Myths are written again and again. They are retold or rewritten in different eras and in different social contexts; hence, affecting myriads of people, for they are altered and rearranged again.

As an anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss applies the structuralist perspective to kinship systems, cultural organizations and to myth. By looking at the structure of myths rather than their content, Lévi-Strauss finds out that all around the world myths from different culture are similar because “there is always an underlying structure common to all myths everywhere” (Panneerselvam, 1999, p. 23). This means that the structure of the

myths has some common characteristics everywhere, including primitive or civilized cultures. It also leads to the idea that the structure of the human mind is not quite disparate in different places. The thought quality of primitive men and civilized men is quite unlike.

The basic structure of myths can expose the similar subconscious levels of all cultures. Mythology, in this respect, can give a way to the understanding of “repressed feelings” (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 208) and Strauss finds the mythic thought revealed as a result of the structural investigation. Santucci, Gentili & Thury-Bouvet claims that Lévi-Strauss expresses his ideas about the mythical thought in the following manner:

Claude Lévi-Strauss mythical thought is not a prelogical thought, but a logical thought working at the sensitive level. It is a classifying thought which uses empirical categories (believed and cooked, fresh and rotted, wet and burned, etc.) in order to derive conceptual tools. Mythical thought is a form of “intellectual bricolage” that inventories, orders, and reinterprets the “remains of events” in order to construct meaning. (2011, p. 156)

As it is understood, the mythical thought involves rational and logical thinking whose stage is not completed. Mythical thought necessitates intellectual processes, focusing on thoughts to categorize things and to reach the abstractions. In simple terms, people use myths to solve some problems regarding inconsistencies or disorders in people’s lives. What the mythical thought does is all for producing meanings by creating, interpreting, giving meaning again and again, to understand the world around people and to make people’s lives easier.

Lévi-Strauss advocates that “all cultural forms express basic structural characteristics of the mind” and regarding the function, he explains that “this mind works through the process of binary discrimination” (Cohen, 1969, p. 347). According to Lévi-Strauss, opposition and mediation can appear as a fundamental pattern in all human thought. The same pattern works among these people between primitive and civilized societies. For Lévi-Strauss the binary opposition is crucial, as “all the myths are organized by the pair of opposites” (Panneerselvam, 1999, p. 2). The reason why “the human thought is essentially binary” might be explained by “the binary neurophysiological mechanism operating in the brain” (Runciman, 1969, p. 260).



Myth's essential role for Lévi-Strauss, as Panneerselvam asserts, is to “[b]inary opposition ... both as a way of identifying the structural components of myth and the same time as a mode of confirming the structural analysis” (Ibid., p. 25). The notion of binary opposition explains myth, analyzes the structural elements of myth relying on the structural study and proves the investigation. Consequently, binary opposition plays a significant role in Lévi-Strauss works.

Following the binary oppositions and its operations, Lévi-Strauss diverts his focus to a functional analysis. He mentions that each myth functions as a sign and can be analysed one. In this regard, there appears some facts and messages, which are latent or hidden. Therefore, by the help of structural analysis, Lévi-Strauss clarifies some facts, conditions and qualities of myth which suggest the presence or existence of a fact fruitful for further studies and explanations. According to Lévi-Strauss, “each myth is used to provide a clue for explaining the structure of another and the process goes on” (Panneerselvam, 1999, p. 25). He mentions that myths might be studied together comparatively, not in isolation.

The discovery of the structure of myth is of essential importance to Lévi-Strauss, for the examination of each myth contributes to the explanation of the others. In this respect, he is interested in reading the myths as a whole, as well as examining each. Cohen, who discusses Lévi-Strauss method, explains as the following:

Much of Levi- Strauss's recent work consists in using the method to read a whole set of myths, including a whole set of versions of the same myth, as one structural set. This demonstrates the repetition of a particular message whose underlying structure may be clothed in different narrative content. (1969, p. 346)

Lévi-Strauss illustrates that these examined structures point at a common basic theme, idea or a message which is recurrent in other myths. The same fundamental structure appears in different stories, in different myths, and it is studied by the help of the structural approach. In this respect, this approach facilitates the differentiation between similar and distinctive aspects of the myths during a comparative study.

Regarding their structural sameness, Lévi-Strauss also underlines that myth is language. According to him, myth should be studied or analyzed in the same way as language. He also claims that myth is also “objectively a part of language, which is its

primary means of expression” (Johnson, 2002, p. 235). Lévi-Strauss considers myth told as “a part of human speech”. On the other hand, he attempts to emphasize that myth is not as same as language. In his study on myth he suggests:

(1) If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, it cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined. (2) Although myth belongs to the same category as language, being, as a matter of fact, only part of it, language in myth exhibits specific properties (3) Those properties are only to be found above the ordinary linguistic level, that is, they exhibit more complex features than those which are to be found in any other complex features than those which are to be found in any other kind of linguistic expression. (Levi-Strauss, 1963, p. 210)

Firstly, in his proposition, he attempts to show how fragments connected to each other are important in the analysis in mythology. In fact, he believes that meaning comes from the combinations of elements as in language. He explains that the meaning is to be found not only in isolated constituent elements, but also in the ways how these elements are connected.

Secondly, though the analysis takes something from linguistics, it is more than that, as language in myth has some basic peculiarities. These peculiarities are to be examined while thinking about the common linguistic features. The structural analysis, regarding culture, the total field of social behaviour and so on, derives the content from form proceeding deductively and focusing less on function.

Thirdly, specific properties of language in myth do not only appear on the ordinary linguistic level. There should be deep investigation or deep look into language, then, structure, certain properties of units, elements and constituent parts of the myth until a thorough analysis of them en masse.

Depending upon his analyses related to language and linguistics, Lévi-Strauss presents two consequences. Firstly, he shows that myth is made up of elements or constituent units like any language. Then, he concludes that one can follow a path, reaching more complex order than the linguistic in the investigation; in other words, the investigation starts from the phoneme (the smallest phonetic unit) to morpheme (a minimal unit of meaning which cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts) to sememe (a minimum unit of meaning or the meaning of a morpheme) to the “gross

constituent units” which Lévi-Strauss calls mythemes. In this respect, myth is different from language which is described in linguistics.

After these consequences, he suggests “analyzing each myth individually breaking down its shortest possible sentences” and “writing each sentence on an index card bearing a number corresponding to the unfolding of the story” to reveal the relation (Ibid.), showing sets of relation which he calls “bundles of relations”. He strongly underlines: “The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations , and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined as to produce a meaning” (p. 211).

These relations between the constituent units as a whole, but not individually, play an important role in the investigation of the myth, for meaning arises from the combination of elements among themselves. Their combinations to each other give the meaning to the fundamental units of myth; in other words, they contribute to the new meaning of the myth when fragments or units come together in relation to the whole and express the whole. The full meaning, to Lévi-Strauss, comes from their oppositions to each other as he shows in Oedipus myth in his book entitled *Structural Anthropology*. In interpretation of the Oedipus myth, he suggests that events that are similar to each other should be written in the same axis, namely they should be grouped together. What is common to each of the events in a specific group or category should also be examined. By reading these elements and relations, the sum total of the statements are inferred and interpreted. This process of analysis also includes reading the mythemes both diachronically and synchronically, from left to right and top to the bottom. In the end of the examination of each myth and the investigation of myth comparatively, the structure of a myth becomes apparent and the message of myth, thought and themes becomes visible.

Briefly, Lévi-Strauss pays more attention to structure instead of content, but what a myth tells is also important for him. Throughout his studies, he attempts to show that the meaning results from the structure. He argues that the meaning results from the way the elements of myth are combined and ordered. He asserts that a compilation of tales and myths includes a number of moments which can be explained and examined.

He posits the notion of the ‘mytheme’, as explained earlier, to refer the smallest unit of discourse that shows relations between two or more concepts and includes all its variants. Mythemes tend to recombine from the various mythic moments or variations and, as a result of transformation in myth, mythic thought reveals or comes apparent after the investigation.

As mentioned earlier, the myth changes with the telling of each person. The teller recites what he remembers and adds something to the myth as there is no written version of the myth; as a result, finding the original scenario of the myth becomes difficult or even impossible. Graves, in *The Greek Myths* (1960), presents the myth of Phaedra by diving it into sequences of the events and gives the sources from which he takes. However, it is still hard to understand which sources are used for the each part to tell the Phaedra myth, as he uses a few sources for each part of the story.

This study’s basic concern, though, is not to reveal the original scenario of Phaedra myth. By comparing all the versions of the myth of Phaedra, this study tries to reveal the skeleton or basic scenario of this myth of Phaedra to show how various writers deal with it. The important, recognizable mythemes or constitutive units based on Lévi-Strauss ideas are the following:

1. Phaedra in love with her stepson( forbidden love )
2. The concealment of passion for her stepson
3. The confessing/Confession either to her nurse or to Hippolytus
4. Phaedra’s accusation against her stepson
5. Phaedra’s suicide
6. Hippolytus’ death

### **1.3 The Myth of Phaedra**

It is not certain when the Phaedra myth is firstly told and which version of the story is firstly told. Although there are multiple sources about the myth of Phaedra as encyclopaedias, dictionaries and etc., there is no definite version of this myth. In other words, there are different scenarios or slight differences on Phaedra myth in the examined sources, a situation that makes difficult the task of reaching a single one.

Sources differ concerning the narrative elements of the Phaedra myth. To begin with, related to the subject of love in the Phaedra myth, which playwrights are mostly interested in, it is noticed that there are multiple variations. In one of the versions, Aphrodite prepared a plan to revenge upon Hippolytus after she had seen “the offerings upon the altars of Artemis and no offerings upon her own” (Warner, 1967, p. 342). Causing Phaedra to fall in love with Hippolytus was one part of her vindictive plan upon Hippolytus. When Hippolytus was in Athens, Phaedra saw Hippolytus and fell in love with him despite the fact that it was against her intention. It reveals that the goddess Aphrodite forced her to love. On the other hand, Phaedra fell in love with Hippolytus without any external involvements in some versions of the Phaedra myth. In the book *Myth and Legend*, it is mentioned that Phaedra fell in love with Hippolytus, but Hippolytus rejected her advances, her love turned into hate (Bulfinch, 1993, p. 192); however, in some other resources, there is no mention about that.

When it comes to characterization of Hippolytus, there are also some discrepancies, as the one that Hippolytus hates women. (Bayladı, 2005, p. 411) The reader does not understand why Hippolytus hates women. Instead of writing on Hippolytus hatred towards women, Hamilton ignores this aspect and treats the story in this way: “Her stepson Hippolytus took no notice of her; he never noticed women” (Hamilton, 1948, p. 220). Hamilton also treats the story as Hippolytus was not a follower of Aphrodite and because Hippolytus despised Aphrodite, the goddess of love and only honoured the goddess of the hunt, Artemis.

The confession of love in the Phaedra myth meets also with some variations. Phaedra does not express her love to Hippolytus, instead her nurse informs Hippolytus of her mistress’ love for him and says that Phaedra is living for Hippolytus’ love and the Nurse demands that Hippolytus should give his love for the sake of love (Hamilton, 1948, p. 221); on the other hand, in some texts, it is seen that Phaedra confesses her love to Hippolytus.

In the book called *Who Is Who in Classical Mythology* (2002), Grant & Hazel specify that Phaedra declared her love, but Hippolytus was terrified by her declaration of love and she accused him to his father, claiming that Hippolytus had attempted to

attack her. Phaedra then killed herself. (p. 267) In addition to this, *Lemprière's Classical Dictionary* mentions that “she addressed Hippolytus with all the impatience of a desponding lover” (Lemprière, 1994, p. 508), but she was rejected. Then Phaedra accuses Hippolytus of having made an attempt upon her virtue before she kills herself. However, there is a different version of this part of the myth of Phaedra. In some books, it is written that Phaedra hangs herself, leaving a note (a message or letter is used in some sources) explaining that Hippolytus attempts to seduce or rape her. These examples demonstrate that the sequence of the events of the myth of Phaedra is different in some texts and there are different treatments of the subject.

The scenario of accusation changes from one source to another. What is read commonly is that she accuses either by denouncing Hippolytus, or leaving a note before she hangs herself. Another version that the reader is not familiar with is that Phaedra prepares a plan: Phaedra breaks the door and pulls her necklace out of her neck and destroys it. Then, she tells Theseus that Hippolytus does it in his attempt to rape her. (Bayladi, 2005, p. 411)

In addition, the reason why she accused Hippolytus differs. In most of the resources, it was written that Phaedra prepared a plan as she was afraid that Hippolytus would tell his father about her advances to Theseus. In this treatment of the myth, Phaedra was frightened by the idea that Hippolytus would complain about her, that's why she prepared a plan and lied to Theseus about Hippolytus's advances. In other variations, Phaedra wanted to give a punishment to Hippolytus by accusing him of improper advances since she was rejected.

After the death of Hippolytus, Phaedra confesses her crime and desperately kills herself. In some sources, however, it is written that she puts an end to her life without confessing her crime. *The Encyclopaedia Americana International Edition* states that Theseus learns later that Hippolytus is not guilty (1975, p. 702), but it does not explain who reveals his innocence. In some sources there is no information about that; instead the myth is shortly summarized. In one version of the myth, Theseus learns of his son's innocence from the goddess Artemis. Artemis mentions that Theseus did not kill

Hippolytus, but Aphrodite killed him. She adds that Hippolytus will be remembered in song and story and he will be not forgotten. (Hamilton, 1948, p. 223)

Even the issue about the reason of her suicide is treated with some variations. In *The Encyclopaedia of Classical Mythology* (1965) it is written that Phaedra puts an end to her own life as she is tormented by remorse (p.117); she becomes regretful after the death of Hippolytus. As the sequence of the events' change, the reason of the suicide changes as well. Zimmerman illustrates Phaedra's feelings after being rejected by Hippolytus as she felt anger and humiliated and hang herself, but left a note accusing Hippolytus of having seduced her (1964, p. 202). In *The New Universal Library*, it is also explained why Phaedra kills herself as Phaedra puts an end to her life because her love is not returned by Hippolytus. (1967, p. 445)

After Theseus curses Hippolytus and Theseus expresses his unwillingness to have him in his land, Hippolytus answers: "I have no skill in speaking and there is no witness to my innocence. The only one is dead. All I can do is to swear Zeus above that I never touched your wife, never desired to, never gave her a thought. May I die in wretchedness if I am guilty" (Hamilton, 1948, p. 222). In some texts, his defence is not shown, the aspect concerning his defence being totally ignored. Warner shows that Hippolytus promises not to talk about Phaedra; even in great danger, Hippolytus will never break his oath. But he defends himself, expressing that he is innocent, and attempting to show that how pure and blameless his life always has been. (1967, pp. 348-349)

There are many uncertainties following Hippolytus' death. As it is seen, his story does not end. The myth of Phaedra is enriched even with a resurrection scenario. Although Hippolytus was killed, he was restored by the help of Diana's assistance. Diana took Hippolytus away from the power of his deceived father and false stepfather and took him to Italy under the protection of the nymph Egeria. (Bulfinch, 1993, p. 192)

In a detailed way, Graves, in his book *The Greek Myths* (1960), gives the narration of this part of the Phaedra myth, showing how much Asclepius try to restore

Hippolytus to life, using herb, touching Hippolytus' breast a few times and telling, Hippolytus, who is revived by Asclepius, raises his head from the ground. (p. 358)

There are some ambiguous elements in the myth of Phaedra. First of all, there is no clear reflection of the relationship of the marriage. One version which deals with Hippolytus shows that Theseus, the king of Athens marries Phaedra, who is the daughter of Minos and Pasiphae and the sister of Adriane and Theseus lives happily with Phaedra and they have two children (Warner, 1967, p. 341). Only a limited and one sided version of the story of Phaedra myth is represented in this version. It is shown that Theseus has happy days with Phaedra, but nothing is known about Phaedra's side. If they are happy together, it is not certain how happy and for how long they are happy together. In Warner's book, *The Stories of Greeks*, the Phaedra myth is handled from a different perspective when compared to other variations of the myth. What has been lived in this version of the myth is presented as the part of the plan of the goddess Aphrodite.

There are also different reasons for her denouncement of Hippolytus to Theseus. In some sources, the reason of the accusation is not revealed, so the reader does not grasp the real intention though she or he asks questions. In a similar way, the reason for Phaedra's suicide is also hidden; therefore, the reader only understands the consequences of the actions. Due to these ambiguities, the myth becomes blurred and open to many interpretations.

After Phaedra accuses Hippolytus, Theseus curses him. In one of the version, Theseus gives punishment for revenge without listening Hippolytus and learning Hippolytus' side of the story. For revenge he appeals to Poseidon, Poseidon's one of three curses. (Zimmerman, 1964, p. 202)

Other versions present Theseus' curse of Hippolytus and there is no specific reason why Theseus gives punishment to his son. Whether he asks for a help from Poseidon to fulfil his curse for revenge or for punishment as a king or as a father is not clear because of the variations and the lack of information; thus the readers have limited knowledge. All of these variations seen above bring about impermanent form of the



myth of Phaedra. Warner indicates that stories of mythology are the work of poets and emphasizes that there still arises changes in spite of their fixation of the stories:

Whatever their remote origins may have been, it is by poets that they have been shaped and through poets that they are known. And though certain great poets have, as it were, fixed the stories in something like a permanent form, there has still been a great variety of interpretation and of emphasis. (1967, p. vi)

At the end of the search of the myth of Phaedra, it occurs that the above mentioned sources take the myth from the works of some poets or told stories, a fact that might create confusion concerning the original version of the myth of Phaedra and the expectation of finding a permanent of this myth would fail.

The difficulty to reach the origin of Phaedra myth can be explained by the tradition of oral literature as Ong mentions in *Orality and Literacy* (1982): “Human society first formed itself with the aid of oral speech, becoming literate very late in its history, and at first only in certain groups” (p. 2). Goody who worked on versions of the Bagre recitation of the LoDagaa of northern Ghana many years, after he used audio recorder to research on recording, transcribing, translating the versions of the LoDagaa myth in his works, illustrates that there are infinite versions of a myth:

Each reciter will introduce variations of his own, some of which will be taken up by succeeding speakers for whom the previous version will have been the (or a) model. In this way changes are constantly being introduced in an interlocking chain by individuals but anonymously, without looking back to any fixed original. (2010, p. 46)

As it is understood above, each reciter invents a new version, then the other reciter sees the previous version as a model and changes occur constantly as there is no book to check whether their telling is the same or not and as there is usually no author to trace. In addition, since people have no good memory, forgetting occurs and variations or different versions of a myth appear. Goody explains the variations explicitly, as “[m]yths vary over time...People invent and fill in where they do not have a perfect recall. One result is a plurality of versions spread over time (and space), but no fixed text such as we find with written literature” (2010, p. 53).

In this point, Goody gives the emphasis on oral literature, writes about oral and written literature and points out that there is no fixed text in traditional or oral societies because these societies are not static. He continues his explanation:

There is no way that this aspect of oral 'myth' can be considered as static, and that presents us with a very different picture of the place of 'myth' in those cultures, not fixed and unitary, but diversifying and multiple, as well as of the place of creativity in them. (p. 66)

Considering individual differences in creating and inventing things, it can be declared that it is inevitable that changes appear. Furthermore, Goody emphasizes that audience is one of the factor which brings about changes; in other words, reciters deal with audiences who are the targeted and their way of telling differ according to audiences' reactions, as a result of all these mentioned above, there is no stable or fixed version of a myth.

Even in literary works, the myth of Phaedra provides different variations or different versions. As Warner tells, "[t]he stories of the Greeks come from many sources, from different periods of history and from different elements in experience" (1967, p. v). In addition, since there are some blanks or ambiguous points which are not told in the sources, from Antiquity to the present day, the Phaedra myth has been one of the subjects of many works which has been reshaped and rewritten so far. While some writers have altered the basic scenario by reshaping events, characters or themes, some others have adapted it without many changes. Beugnot, in the book *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes* points out:

The different versions of the myth or, more precisely, the variations on the theme, illustrate not only the relative rigidity of the narrative structure but also an ability to represent a wide range of different periods, points of view and outlooks through the use of slight variations, transpositions and allegorical interpretations. This has been made possible by all the latent and ambiguous elements contained within the original story, particularly in terms of the motivation of the characters and the explanation of events. (p. 943)

Beugnot draws attention that there is a rigid narrative structure of the myth of Phaedra though there are different versions. Moreover, he explains that latent and ambiguous elements in the myth of Phaedra provide opportunity for interpretations from different

points of view, dealing with the subject in different manners and thus revealing different historical moments, periods or outlooks.

### 1.3.1 Other Literary and Artistic Representations of the Phaedra Myth

The myth of Phaedra is attracted much attention and was treated in poems, tragedies as well as represented in art. In literary works, the myth has been frequently reshaped or reworked. Ovid is one of the important figures who dealt with the myth. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*, it is mentioned that in one version Asclepius restores Hippolytus to life and Hippolytus is taken to Diana's sanctuary at Aricia in Italy. (2004, p. 264) The book, *The Quest of Theseus* (1970) gives some names of the works which deal with Theseus, and it also includes some aspects of the myth of Phaedra as well as some works which deal with the myth. About Ovid's version, in this book it is mentioned that his *The Heroides* are a series of poetic epistles from sad women to their disloyal lovers. (Tidworth, 1970, p.176) *Heroides IV* involves a letter from Phaedra to Hippolytus. Virgil, in Book VI of *The Aenied* and in Book VIII includes the story of Phaedra. Furthermore, Petrarch's *Triumph of Love* is also related to this myth. Petrarch's treatment of the myth of Phaedra is different in some respects as Theseus appears between Ariadne and Phaedra and for her betrayal of Ariadne, Theseus and Hippolytus Phaedra is condemned.

Boccaccio's work *De Casibus virorum illustrium* involves a collection of stories from every source, such as classical, history, bible, and northern mythology and stories present the misfortunes of famous people and Boccaccio's work gives more places for the story of Theseus, when compared to Phaedra's. Chaucer writes *The Legend of Good Women*, taking an inspiration from the myth and Thomas Underdowne writes a poem, *The Excellente Historye of Theseus and Adriadne*. Spencer's *Faerie Queene*, which is an "Italianata romantic epic", has no big place for the myth of Phaedra; but Spencer writes three stanzas to Hippolytus and Phaedra. John Shepery wrote *Hippolytus Ovidianae Phaedrae respondens*, a Latin reply of Hippolytus to Phaedra in 1586. Browning also handled the myth of Phaedra in a different way: The tragedy finishes, when Browning's *Artemis Prologuizes* begins and Aesculapius tries to revive

Hippolytus. Pierre-Narcisse Guerin represented the myth in his *Hippolytus Accused* by Phaedra.

The story of Phaedra also has been dramatized a lot in tragedies in different ways. Sophocles wrote a tragedy, *Phaedra* which is lost today; in the same way, one of Euripides's work *Hippolytus Calyptotomenus* is not present today; but Euripides had a second surviving version, *Hippolytus Stephanephorus*. In one of the version, Phaedra dies after she accuses Hippolytus and causes him to die and in the other version, she dies without confessing her love to Hippolytus. Seneca writes *Hippolytus Crowned* (428 BC), bringing Phaedra and Hippolytus together, but Euripides keeps Phaedra and Hippolytus apart. In Euripides' version of *Phaedra*, Phaedra is not really the main character. Jean Baptiste Racine, in one of the great classical tragedies of French literature, places the heroine to the central attention in *Phèdre* (1677). One of the notable Spanish plays based on Phaedra myth is *Fedra* written by Unamuno, where the writer reconstructs and develops a Christian aspect to it.

Gabriele d'Annunzio produces *Fedra*, published in 1909, taking up Swinburne's conception of Phaedra "as a rebel against conventional morality, and expands it into a vastly ambitious symbolic drama" (Tidworth, 1970, p. 234). There are some contemporary plays involving Phaedra's Love (1996) by Sarah Kane, True Love by Charles M. Lee who gives a modernized adaptation of Phaedra myth taking inspiration from Euripides and Racine.

The myth of Phaedra has also been handled in by composers. Jules Massenet composed stage music for the Racine' *Phèdre*. Pizzetti, who is a composer, also dealt with the subject. Moreover, the myth has been treated in opera. *L'Abandon d'Ariane* is one of the three one-act operas to be performed. *La Délivrance de Thésée* is a skit on Racine's *Phèdre*. In 1928 Darius Milhaud produced *L'Abandon d'Ariadne*, a skit which stands to Ovid.

Phaedra is one of the distinguished subjects of the art. A manuscript in the British Museum with illustrations of the Minotaur, 'Aryane', Hippolytus and Phaedra has been shown. There are two majolica plates, also in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which depict the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra. Phaedra is also one of the figures

represented in paintings. In mural paintings Phaedra is occasionally presented as a woman, who is alone and full of grief.

In conclusion, the myth of Phaedra, though it lacks a fixed scenario, it gives inspiration to poets, playwrights and artists. In their work, they deal with the subjects with their new approaches and thus continue to reshape the Phaedra myth. Some of them, however, prefer to adapt the story of Phaedra myth.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 Euripides' Dramatic Contribution

Euripides (Greek, c 480 or 485-c.406 BCE), who is one of the Athenian playwrights and poets of ancient Greece, contributes to drama by presenting more private emotional life, human emotion; offering more character portraits and successfully representing human nature with the elements of plot, such as suffering, insanity and revenge. When Euripides is compared with those of his contemporaries Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides' plays are more psychological. Mostly Euripides is considered as the pioneer of the psychological theatre of the West, because it is considered that the portrayal of characters from a psychological perspective in ancient period resembles the modern drama.

His plays' resemblance to the modern drama also lies in his use of many female protagonists; he depicts female in search of pathos and appeals to the audiences' emotions to make them feel, arousing pity and terror and gives melodramatic remarks; in fact, he is the creator of melodrama. Euripides portrays women as mostly strong and complex characters. By increasing the role of women, he mostly presents domestic themes such as marriage, family and sex problems. His engagement with women in his plays contributes to gender issues and Greek drama, adding variety, diversity and richness to the theatre.

His remarkable dramatic contribution is that Euripides brings the theme of love to theatre through the increase of the role of women and uses it in his plays; namely, Euripides creates love-drama, adding new dimension of intrigue in his plays. Euripides' contribution of increasing the role of women and bringing the theme of love to drama make his play too modern for his time. Moreover, Euripides successfully mingles tragedy with comic effects, creating tragicomedies.

### 2.1.1 Hippolytus

Euripides takes his plays' subjects from myth and retells subjects, adding many new themes and many sensational episodes. By taking a new approach to traditional myths Euripides gives many new themes and pervasive subjects in theatre as seen in *Hippolytus*, written in 428 BC. *Hippolytus* is one of the plays, whose subject is taken from the myth of Phaedra and reshaped by Euripides.

### 2.1.2 Euripides' Interpretation of the Phaedra Myth

*In Hippolytus* Euripides presents mostly the relations between the divinities and human beings in her interpretation of the Phaedra myth. It might be thought that all the things which are experienced by humans are the cause of their destruction rather than an infliction brought about by gods. Euripides makes clear that all the actions are man-made. Linforth points out that "without the gods, the plot becomes one of human intrigue, and Phaedra becomes the centre of interest; as a central figure, she is not the object of our pity and commiseration, but of our disdain" (1914, p. 8). On the other hand, with divine presence, though in some respect, it might be thought that some individual actions lead to the ruin of the characters, thus affecting the entire community. Probably, the reason is, as seen in the Attic theatre, to "produce an effect something like that of a Dionysiac epiphany" (Burnett, p. xiv, 1998).

To start with the play, in contrast to the version of modern translation by Grene, Murray, in his translation, gives the detail of the two statues of the goddesses that appear in the play; that of Artemis on the right, and that of Aphrodite on the left. That two statues of the goddesses are in the opposite directions signals the conflict between them before the opening of the prologue. In a latent manner, this shows that there is a conflict between the goddesses in the play. This conflict between the goddesses, as well as Hippolytus' negligence and arrogance lead to an unhappy end for Hippolytus and for Phaedra. Related to this, in *Myth into Muthos: the shaping of tragic plot*, Burian mentions about some common story patterns which give the retribution pattern. According to him, "[t]he retribution pattern is organised around punishment for past

offences. It may involve conflict between gods and mortals, with the mortals' challenge to divine supremacy leading to their destruction" (1997, p. 187). This pattern is the basic skeleton of the tragic lines in Euripides' reworking of the myth of Phaedra. The vengeance of the goddess results in Hippolytus' punishment in *Hippolytus*. With all mythemes, Euripides attempts to show how the characters come to their destruction. The conflict between the goddesses, the conflict between the humans and the divinity; and the conflict between humans lead to disastrous actions and ends.

By the means of the goddess, Phaedra becomes the instrument which drives Hippolytus into a tragic figure. According to Linforth, with the gods "Phaedra is merely a tool of heaven" (Linforth, 1914, p. 8). It appears that Phaedra is the sacrificed one to serve the plan of Aphrodite. In this respect, Euripides shows no bad characterization of Phaedra. Instead, he shows the sequel of the events as happening because of the goddesses' vengeance.

Moreover, with divine presence, human condition is presented in a remarkable way. In this play, it is obvious that human circumstances are created or conditioned by the divinity. In front of the divinity, humans are limited. They want to get over their problems, but they do not show much effort in learning about how to deal with it. In this play, characters are passive and under the control of their passions; as a result, they cannot use their free will and there are not many choices left. The only thing human beings can do is to participate into the life or existence by being controlled by the goddesses, although the goddesses' actions which they take are not reasonable; namely, men are misguided and these conditions and situations bring about tragic actions for the characters.

With the help of the mythemes, Euripides shows the human condition in such a way that he draws the attention to the universal issues, by giving human life is full of grief and this is never- ending. The tirade of the Nurse shows that all humans suffer because of being mortal:

The life of man entire is misery:  
He finds no resting place, no haven from calamity.  
But something other dearer still than life  
The darkness hides and mist encompasses;



we are proved luckless lovers of this thing  
 that glitters in the underworld: no man  
 can tell us of the stuff of it expounding  
 what is, and what is not: we know nothing of it. (p. 252)

Putting emphasis on the issue of mortality in his interpretation of the Phaedra myth, Euripides attempts to indicate that life is full of pain and unrest for people, which make the play more appealing for the modern readers and audiences. For the nurse there is no place to bear it; probably the best place is the underworld. In addition, the nurse explains that people have not enough knowledge about it, and there are “lies, legends and fantasy about it.” In this point, by means of the characters the Nurse and Phaedra, Euripides draws a dark picture of life and shows that humans are limited in terms of knowledge. They have no knowledge of the underworld. They have no knowledge even of what is right or what is wrong because the truth is more complicated for them and the author makes clear this issue focusing on the human matters in his treatment of the myth. In addition, when it is looked at the characters, it appears that they have no struggle to reveal the truth and know what is right or what is wrong to do; in other words, they are in “guilty ignorance”, “types of blind spot”, as Hathorn asserts. Hathorn describes the characters and clarifies this as the following:

... in the narrowly blind Hippolytus, who does not desire to know the scheme of nature; in the rashly blind Theseus, who fails to bring his will into play and to investigate with due deliberation the circumstances of his wife’s death; and in the consciously blind Phaedra, who chooses to behave as though she does not know what she knows that she knows. (1996, p. 35)

Hippolytus, who has no knowledge of human nature, denies “cosmic force” which symbolizes the sexual force or eros; ironically, he is killed by this force. So, the play presents that eros or sexuality as one of the elements of the cosmic force cannot be denied or disrespected in order to keep living in a balanced way without having too much damage. In this respect, the play poses “the question of how far a man may go in denying the demands of some major life-force, like sexuality or emotional release, without being ultimately destroyed by it when it asserts its power” (Gassner, 1967, p. 61). The fact that Hippolytus sacrifices himself completely to Artemis, denying the presence of Aphrodite and refuse to respect her means that “he is entirely rejecting an entire aspect of the human condition” (Vernant, 1990, p. 113). In this respect,

Euripides constructs the Phaedra myth, revealing the human condition and putting more emphasis on human nature.

In Euripides' interpretation of the Phaedra myth, this work as a tragedy becomes "a unique psychiatric drama since Hippolytus is not simply any pious young man who respects his father's marriage" (Gassner, 1967, p. 66). In a tragical way, he is destroyed by Aphrodite, who is the "sexual force" that he rejects and suppresses. Moreover, in Euripides' tragedy the psychological conflict is apparent and it is presented in a skilful and poetical way in the representation of the myth of Phaedra. It is usually underlined that this Euripides' *Hippolytus* is psychological and, by saying this, most of the scholars attempt to point out that Euripides offers more character portraits rather than giving more probable plots. For instance, through the psychological treatment of Phaedra and the usage of the mytheme of love, Euripides gives Phaedra's interior states of mind and her emotional states involving her private feelings. That in ancient period Euripides presents the mytheme of love and reflects Phaedra's emotional life in the play *Hippolytus* gives a chance to have a journey into the characters' inner life, feeling their emotions resemble the modern drama. In *Hippolytus* Euripides is successful in portraying characters putting emphasis on rhetoric and the presentation of inner life.

While studying and analyzing the characters Hippolytus and Phaedra in the dramaturgy of Euripides, we understand that the moderation is important. According to Muller, the tragedy shows that "it is futile to deny the elemental passion of love, as wrong to try to suppress it entirely" (1956), p. 118). In this point, Euripides draws the readers and the audiences' attention to extremity and displays the consequences of the extreme feelings and ideas.

In his retelling of the Phaedra myth Euripides completes the dramatic composition by using Artemis' appearance in the last scene. With the appearance of Artemis, which is presented as a kind of compensation for Hippolytus' grief and suffering, Artemis promises that she honours Hippolytus:

Unwedded maids before the day of marriage  
will cut their hair in your honor. You will reap  
through the long cycle of time, a rich reward in tears.  
And when young girls sing songs they will not forget you,

your name will not be left unmentioned,  
nor Phaedra's love for you remain unsung. (pp. 294-295)

Thinking that tragedy was performed as part of ritual happening in the ancient Greece, this part might be considered as a part of ritual practises in the ancient Greece in Euripides' interpretation of the myth. According to Robinowitz, the ancient Greeks used ritual to identify "relations between mortals and immortals, but also among humans, and between humans and animals" (2008, p. 67). In the play "unwedded maids" cut their hair in the name of Hippolytus and they sing Phaedra's song and sacrifice it to Hippolytus, as seen in the dedication to the gods, such as hair locks left on the graves. Robinowitz asserts that this creation of the cult is often seen at the end of the plays and this contributes to the tragic resolution. From his explanation, we see that this cult confers meaning to the end and this tragic resolution is achieved by the help of the presentation of cult in *Hippolytus*. According to Robinowitz, the death of Hippolytus and his tomb will be "also the center of worship, becoming sites for the celebration of festivals or rites of passage; these cults would still be active in the lives of members of the audience" (2008, p. 75). From the play, it is understood that this kind of cult is present in the ancient period and will be alive and effective in the lives of the audience. As a result, by offering Hippolytus "everlasting life", Artemis helps human beings carry on their cult.

When Euripides rewrites the Phaedra myth, he also gives importance to the chorus as the presence of the chorus carries significance for a Greek play. As it is known, "the chorus represents the ideal spectator, the city, the common man/woman, the fifth-century world-view opposed to the archaic ethos of the heroic characters, the voice of the poet, and so on"; but it should be comprehended that "the chorus in theatrical terms, as raw material to be shaped as the mood and plot demand, a group of performers who influence the audience as much as the action" (Rehm, 1994, p. 60). In *Hippolytus*, the Chorus has a great impact on the readers and the spectators. At the end of the play, where Hippolytus is dying and the Chorus' appearance takes place, the grief of Hippolytus and the grief of the folk are presented through the Chorus. Segal claims that the grief presented throughout the play grows into a "common grief" at the end of the play, and it implies that climatic scenes, especially the characters' or the Chorus

‘crying or the lamentation, arouse strong emotions in the audience and then the audience has a “desired and appropriate emotional response”. In other words, the cathartic effect which Aristotle referred to in the ancient period occurs by the help of the dramatic scenes or the climactic scenes. Mentioning that, in *The Poetics*, by the help of catharsis, it is intended to give a, “individual response”, Segal goes further and broadens the effect of catharsis by underlying “public participation” for the emotional release in the theatre:

The ancient audience too, we should recall, is accustomed to group emotional participation in both public and private rituals, and so would also be accustomed to the resolution of intense emotion through the performance of ritual-like actions within the play. To this aspect of tragedy, as we shall see, the ritual meaning of Aristotle’s catharsis as ‘purification’ would be especially relevant. (Segal, 1996, p. 150)

As mentioned above, there are some common mythemes of Phaedra present in *Hippolytus*. Euripides takes these common mythemes and treats them in his work. In his interpretation the distinguishing feature is that his tragedy is based on conflict between two goddesses, between Hippolytus and Aphrodite, and between Hippolytus and Phaedra. In his retelling the portrayal of human sides of the characters and the gods are seen when Euripides engages with the fallible gods and the fallible hero in *Hippolytus*. The striking novelty of the myth of Phaedra is that he presents the passionate and violent love in a pathetic way and psychological way and shows related mythemes in his creation. In addition, the reader or the audience can probably take an insight into rituals and cults looking at the lines in his treatment of the myth of Phaedra.

### **2.1.3 Mythemes of the Phaedra Myth in *Hippolytus***

#### **2.1.3.1 Phaedra in Love with Her Stepson (Forbidden Love)**

One of the mythemes that Euripides uses in *Hippolytus* is Phaedra’s love for her stepson. To begin with this mytheme, it might be claimed that one of the distinguished features of Phaedra in the play is her passionate love as seen in the myth of Phaedra; namely, in a similar way, the mytheme of passionate love is presented in *Hippolytus*: Phaedra who is the stepmother of Hippolytus falls in love with Hippolytus.

At the beginning of the love in Euripides' text, it is seen that Phaedra is not the person who loves instinctively or chooses to fall in love with her stepson, rather the love is given to her by the goddess of love Aphrodite; in other words, her passion is caused by Aphrodite. In the prologue it is shown in Aphrodite's speech as the following:

Phaedra saw him  
And her heart was filled with the longings of love.  
This was my work. (p. 246)

It appears that the love is not natural as it is shown; in other words, this love is a part of Aphrodite's plan. In the prologue, Aphrodite explains her plan on Hippolytus explicitly. At this point, considering the play structurally, it might be said that it appears like a "metatheatre", as the work includes a play within a play.

The reason why Aphrodite makes Phaedra fall in love with Hippolytus is the fact that Hippolytus does not worship Aphrodite and shows any respect for her. As Aphrodite said in the prologue, his pride is "stiff-necked" against her and he is "alone among the folk" of the land of Troezen who has "blasphemed" her. Aphrodite thinks that Hippolytus behaves in such an unrespectful way that she makes her "vilest of the gods in Heaven". With this love plan Aphrodite wants to punish Hippolytus.

While dealing with the mytheme of love Euripides embarks on pain and suffering, illustrated by the Chorus at first. In this point, it occurs that the mytheme of love in the myth of Phaedra is revealed by the Chorus, consequently, Euripides constructs the mytheme of love using the feature of Greek theatre. In *Hippolytus*, the Chorus mentions that Phaedra has sorrow of love and lies on her bed without eating anything for three days. It is asserted that Phaedra experiences emotional pain, as she has "diseased koita" (Padel, 1995, p. 162). Padel states that "diseased koita" is an ambiguous word and gives the meaning as "lying down" in sex or sickness. According to Padel, what diseases Phaedra is "sexual longing" and Phaedra's situation is also interpreted as a "divine disease" (1995, p. 163). The passionate love given by the goddess make her lie on her bed. Euripides presents passion not in an ordinary way; it is an extreme passion that Phaedra cannot cope with. In the play the Chorus explains Phaedra's situation as "fever wracks her". Her desire decreases her strength. She

suffers physically as presented “her body is pure and fasting” (p. 250). The statement also reveals her purity and innocence. At the same time, she suffers emotionally:

Phaedra groans in bitterness of heart  
and the goads of love prick her cruelly,  
and she is like to die (p. 246)

Her physical and emotional pain drives her into death. It is also obvious from these verses:

For she would willingly bring her life to anchor  
at the end of its voyage  
the gloomy harbour of death. (p. 250)

Related to love, as understood from these verses written above, Euripides reflects the mytheme of love in relation to death. At the beginning, she believes that she can get over this love and fight with it; but later, she gives up the struggle. The love Aphrodite has given to Phaedra brings destruction to her. Here arises essential questions: Is it the goddess who causes her death or is it Phaedra’ decision to die? The death, according to her, is a vehicle to virtue and honour. She believes that she cannot stand the idea, that she would be considered a “traitor” to her husband and her children. In contrast to the most of the versions of the Phaedra myth, Euripides’ play reveals Phaedra’s cleanness.

The love depicted in this play is so passionate and violent that it harms both Phaedra and Hippolytus. So, it can be said that this is a destructive love which is a part of the myth of Phaedra.

In these verses, destructive force of love is mentioned by Chorus:

Love is like a flitting bee in the world’s garden  
and for its flowers, destruction is in his breath. (p. 265)

Here arises a new meaning of the mytheme, being presented that destructiveness of love is unavoidable. The mytheme of love is dealt in such a distinct way that the “anguish of passion” is revealed in the play. Phaedra experiences excessive grief and she suffers a lot because of this forbidden love. As a result, she learns that love is full of sorrow. However, this is not a kind of maturation for her as she prefers to escape

from it. It is interesting to observe that in relation to the mytheme of love Euripides develops a new mytheme, which includes the yearning for escape and therefore a new meaning arises. Euripides' Phaedra desires to go to mountains, namely she wishes "elsewhere" or somewhere else.

In one way, it can be said that with the mytheme of forbidden love, Euripides makes the reader or the audience think about the incest. To demonstrate the issue of incest, Euripides relies on cultural environment, thus he embarks on the forbidden love. Although in Greek mythology lots of stories of incestuous relationships between family members are seen, but such relationships become unacceptable as the stories embark initially on establishing rules and principles. The Greek kingdom of Trozen is governed by the morals, values, principles, rules and beliefs which are created by the sentiment of shame. As seen in *Hippolytus*, people are adhered to the ethics, rules and beliefs; as a result, it is understood that in Greek society incestuous relationships are not accepted. In *Hippolytus* Euripides deals with the issue of incest in such a way that he presents the theme of shame through the characters and their actions. Phaedra suffers as she falls in love with her stepson which also means that she has a sense of shame and guilt due to her incestuous love.

In other words, it can be said that the mytheme of incest is masked by the goddess' intention, since the incestuous love plan is made by the goddess. As mentioned in the play, human beings are powerless in front of gods or goddesses. Phaedra is not the only person, as the Nurse said. She is innocent, not guilty because the incestuous love that she experiences is totally out of her control. However, she feels ashamed because of the fact that her love is forbidden on moral grounds.

Apparently, the outcome of love is not a pleasant one. It does not bring peace and happiness and the mytheme of love turns into the mytheme of revenge:

Bitter will have been the love that conquers me,  
 But in my death I shall at least bring sorrow,  
 upon another, too, that his high heart  
 may know no arrogant joy at my life's shipwreck. (p. 271)

As Phaedra is harmed as a woman and her love is scorned by Hippolytus' humiliation, she wants to give Hippolytus grief and drive him to destruction. In this respect, it is obvious that the revenge of the goddess leads to the revenge of Phaedra.

Binary opposition of love vs hatred emerges, reflecting the tense conflict between two sexes: male and female. While Phaedra loves Hippolytus too much, Hippolytus hates women and he rejects the pleasure of love:

The hatred towards women is obvious:  
 I'll hate you women, hate and hate and hate you,  
 And never have enough of hating...  
 say that I talk of this eternally,  
 yes, but eternal too is woman's wickedness.  
 Either let someone teach them to be chaste,  
 Or suffer me to trample on them forever. (pp. 268-269)

Hippolytus condemns not only Phaedra, but also all women. Surprisingly, Hippolytus specifies that he hates clever women. He humiliates all of them. He also makes sexual discrimination. For him, chastity is not about women. Admitting eros is not acceptable for him. Actually, from the very beginning, it is clear that he only worships the goddess of chastity, disregarding totally the goddess of love. In the play, latently, Hippolytus' repression of his feelings results in the denial of his sexuality, a fact which is included in his genetic map. As Whitmarsh mentions, "Hippolytus' mother was an Amazon, and Amazons – warrior women who lived apart from men – were associated particularly with the barbaric denial of their 'natural' sexual function" (2004, p. 82). Another element lies in the opposition of "adult male status". It seems that he is not willing to "leave adolescence". Whitmarsh, in the same book *Ancient Greek Literature* (2004), asserts:

Athenian youths (or 'ephebes') undertook a ritualized rite of passage into manhood known as the *ephebeia*, a period spent in the mountainous borders before reintegration into the community as an adult. Although we have no evidence for the formalized ritual as early as the fifth century, there is a clear association in Greek culture between hunting in the mountainous woods and coming of age as early as *the Odyssey* ... From this perspective, Hippolytus represents the adolescent's puerile desire for an infinite period sporting with his male companions, and his corresponding fear of the unknown (the female, sexuality). (p. 82)

In the beginning of Euripides' play, Aphrodite observes Hippolytus and tells:



He will none of the bed of love nor marriage,  
 But honors Artemis, Zeus' daughter,  
 counting her greatest of the gods in Heaven  
 he is with her continually, this Maiden Goddess, in the greenwood. (p. 245)

Hippolytus disregards both love and marriage. He worships only the goddess of chastity and hunting, Artemis. The word “greenwood” is used as a symbol of his loyalty for Artemis, not Aphrodite. He picks flowers for Artemis from the “virgin meadows” and this motif shows his great devotion to her and this is one of the indicators of his purity.

It is probable that Hippolytus condemns women, as he thinks that they are wicked and they have a deceitful nature. Mentioning about the perception of women in Athens, Easterling, in *Women in Tragic Space* (1987), explains that “the power of their sexuality makes them dangerous: they are a motivating force in male conflict, they have destructive wiles and guile” (Easterling, p. 15). Hippolytus, apparently thinks that women are dangerous. On the other hand, it cannot be declared that Euripides attempts to show “wicked women” in this work. It is alleged that “Euripides depicted not so much ‘bad women’, but women as characters of importance in the action. He was not doing anything new... but he did show frequently women acting and why they were acting” (Storey & Allan, 2014, p. 144). At this point, it can be said that these women are necessary as they carry the importance in the action as characters. Phaedra is necessary and an important figure in Euripides’ play in order to show why she is acting like this. She is a significant figure who maintains dramatic points or actions, necessary for the creation of tragic space. Though there is no bad women mytheme in *Hippolytus*, there is in “Potiphar’s Wife”, as Storey and Allan explains. They strongly defend that Phaedra is sympathetic instead of villains in this play: “Phaedra in *Hippolytus*, fighting against her roles as a “Potiphar’s Wife” and motivated by virtue and honour, who acts only when she fears that Hippolytus will break his oath and reveal her secret” (Storey & Allan, 2014, p. 144).

Euripides, in the first version of myth of Phaedra, which is lost, gives Phaedra a shameless role. Phaedra attempts to seduce Hippolytus deliberately. On the other hand, in *Hippolytus* Phaedra is characterized by virtue and honour, rather than by her

immorality. It is shown that she is the victim of Aphrodite. She tries to save her reputation for the sake of her own children. If it is thought about women in Greek tragedy, it is too difficult to reach generalization: “Yet talking collectively about ‘women in Greek tragedy’ is arguably as absurd as talking in generalizing terms about men in Greek tragedy” (Hall, 2010, p. 127).

### **2.1.3.2 The Concealment of Passion for Her Stepson**

Another mytheme present in the myth of Phaedra is the concealment of passion for her stepson. In contrast to some versions of the Phaedra myth, Euripides, while working on this myth, presents the character with her secret silence, consequently, the mytheme of concealment reloads a new meaning. Phaedra explains that keeping silence is her first plan to conceal her forbidden love and get over it. In other words, in the beginning Phaedra believes that she can “conquer love”. She knows that there will be disastrous results if she breaks the silence. Here, in the representation of the mytheme of concealment, arises another problem of “failed communication”. The mytheme of “failed communication” becomes apparent and more meaningful in relation to the mytheme of concealment. Phaedra thinks that you cannot trust the tongue because it judges and condemns other people’s mistakes; as a result of this, the owner of the tongue gets more trouble. So for Phaedra, the concealment is the way of staying away from problems which might come up through the confession.

In Euripides’ play, by the help of the mytheme of concealment the myth of Phaedra is reworked in terms of Phaedra’s inner world and the character’s sentiment is developed. Focusing on her inner world, Euripides reflects Phaedra’s psychology in relation to the issue of concealment of love. In this respect, this play is important.

In a successful way, Euripides describes Phaedra’s physical situation and the reader understands how her inner world is. In fact, the concealment of Phaedra results in the depiction of her physical and her emotional states. It is understood that she is in need of expressing herself. She desperately needs to communicate, as she is suffering and becoming weaker each day. In these words written below, Phaedra’s physical exhaustion is reflected:

Lift me up! Lift my head up! All the muscles  
 are slack and useless. Here, you, take my hands.  
 They're beautiful, my hands and arms!  
 Take away this hat! It is too heavy to wear.  
 Take it away! Let my hair fall free on my shoulders. (p. 252)

As a result of her suffering her life seems unbearable to her. Figuratively, she cannot carry the burden of life. She seeks repose and desires to be free:

Bring me to the mountains! I will go to the mountains!  
 Among the pine trees where the huntsmen's pack  
 trails spotted stags and hangs upon their heels. (p. 253)

Phaedra wants to escape from her situation and change her conditions. She is longing for isolated places like mountains and woods in order to restore the tranquillity. The words she utters now are different from the words she utters earlier. It shows that her mind is confused and damaged as her physical health goes worse. Surprisingly Phaedra does not want the things which the goddess Aphrodite demands, but she desires the things the goddess Artemis demands. As she says, she wants to have horses and to hunt wild beasts, though she is not interested in hunting and does not deal with such issues. After she utters those words to the Nurse, she admits that she goes into madness and she feels ashamed and regretful of what she tells. In this scene, Phaedra's complex psychological world is reflected.

The Nurse, who witnesses Phaedra's desperate situation, attempts to learn what has happened to her and what her real problem is. While the Nurse thinks that in silence there is no remedy, Phaedra advocates that keeping secret is better as it does not result in troubles. Phaedra escapes from the denouncement of her love, by keeping his secret telling the Nurse that "leave me to my sins. My sins are not against you" (p. 256). Her secret, for her, is a sin; in other words, it can be said that her incestuous love is a poison. She is aware of the importance of her silence and knows that her silence will preserve her honour. On the other hand, the Nurse says that she has the honour when she speaks: "Where honour is, speech will make you more honourable" (p. 257). In this respect, the importance of the language appears in the treatment of the Phaedra myth by Euripides.

### 2.1.3.3 The Confessing/Confession either to Her Nurse or to Hippolytus

The myth of Phaedra includes a mytheme of confession. In this play, The Nurse confesses Phaedra's love to Hippolytus. Euripides presents the innocent characterization of Phaedra by showing the confession by the Nurse.

After the Nurse's persuasive speech, Phaedra denounces the man whom she loves and whose mother was an Amazon. Though the Nurse predicts that Phaedra loves for Hippolytus, she still experiences a shock. She would rather die than learn this forbidden love. She is aware of the danger of the situation and thinks that this is the end for Phaedra:

She signals the danger of the goddess, Aphrodite:  
The chaste, they love not vice of their own will,  
But yet they love it. Cypris, you are no god.  
You are something stronger than God if that can be.  
You have ruined her and me and all this house. (p. 258)

In her tirade, the Nurse reveals how horrified she becomes as soon as she learns whom Phaedra loves, because she knows that Aphrodite can destroy them all. When the Nurse returns after a while, she tells Phaedra that her issue is not exceptional and she is not the only one who experiences this. The Nurse understands that "the Goddess in her anger has smitten" Phaedra and she falls in love with Hippolytus. In Euripides' interpretation Phaedra is the one, chosen by the goddess. The Nurse warns her that Aphrodite misbehaves anyone who dares to resist and who opposes her. In addition, the Nurse advises that she should regain her health. Though Phaedra finds confession immoral, the Nurse thinks that she is innocent as it is made by the goddess. Therefore, declaring love to Hippolytus is the best choice according to the Nurse. In this respect, the mytheme of confession appears as seen in the myth of Phaedra. Not Phaedra, but the Nurse declares Phaedra's love to Hippolytus. By the confession, the Nurse tries to help her and save her life, since Phaedra is ready to die for the sake of her family and her honour therefore the Nurse cannot bear her death decision.

The Nurse's insistence on the declaration of love to Hippolytus results in devastation. After the Nurse confesses Phaedra's love to Hippolytus, he becomes furious and her ideas about women emerge. He spilled out hatred against women:

Women! This coin which men find counterfeit!  
 Why, why, Lord Zeus, did you put them in the world,  
 in the light of the sun? If you were so determined  
 to breed the race of man, the source of it  
 should not have been women. Men might have dedicated  
 in your own temples images of gold,  
 silver, or weight of bronze, and thus have bought  
 the seed of progeny,... to each been given  
 his worth in sons according to the assessment  
 of his gift's value. So we might have lived  
 in houses free of the taint of women's presence. (p. 267)

Prior to confession, it is not very obvious that Hippolytus has too much hatred towards women. We only know that he worships the goddess of chastity, Artemis. Euripides adds the mytheme of hatred of women to Phaedra myth and it becomes intensified by the mytheme of confession, creating a firm tension in his interpretation of the myth.

From these words written above, it is clear that Hippolytus looks down on women and prefers a world without women. However, Euripides attempts to indicate that there is no bad women characterization in his play when it is considered that the forbidden love is the goddess' plan. Compared to the other versions of the myth of Phaedra, Euripides draws virtuous and honourable features for his protagonist. He does not show her as a seductress or a wicked character, as in the some other versions of the myth.

Euripides reworked the myth of Phaedra while dealing with opposition between male and female. The binary opposition of superior male vs. inferior woman is used via Hippolytus and Phaedra. Hall states that the Athenian democracy was a patriarchal community, and consequently women have always an inferior role in Greek tragedy. Hall alleges that "the category 'women in Greek tragedy' is in itself problematic" (1997, p. 106). He explains as, "it includes children and ageing widows, nubile virgins and multiple mothers, adulteresses and paragons of wifehood, murderesses and exemplars of virtue, lowly slaves and high priestesses, maenads, witches" (Ibid.).

Euripides, though, does not want to show the inferiority of the women in *Hippolytus* and does not give an inferior role to Phaedra.

Confession act also means that the love is offered via the Nurse to Hippolytus. It is not a direct expression of the love. The Nurse is the agent who declares Phaedra's love to Hippolytus. Not surprisingly, the result is unexpected for the Nurse. The confession does not give any solution. At this point, Phaedra is sure that there is no remedy for her cure:

She loved me and she told him of my troubles,  
And so has ruined me. She was my doctor,  
But her cure has made my illness mortal now. (p. 266)

As seen, the situation goes worse. Phaedra goes into panic. She thinks that she is destroyed and her honour will be ruined by Hippolytus, though the Nurse makes the confession.

Hippolytus promise keeping the secret.  
He will tell his father all your sin  
to my disparagement. He will tell old Pittheus, too.  
He will fill all the land with my dishonor. (p. 269)

She fears that what she conceals will be revealed and she believes that she will have always unending pain and she will suffer forever. Actually, the Nurse does not expect such a violent reaction from Hippolytus. As she does care for Phaedra so much, she wants to keep Phaedra alive, though this action is arguable morally. Her actions, not surprisingly, make Phaedra more hopeless and desperate. Her suicide comes after Hippolytus' extreme reactions. It can be said that The Nurse's confession is a tragic moment, a turning point for the character after which Phaedra's fortune goes worse. Euripides uses these tragic motifs which link the actions tightly and skilfully, causing character's downfall.

#### **2.1.3.4 Phaedra's Accusation against Her Stepson**

Another mytheme present in the myth of Phaedra is Phaedra's accusation against her stepson. Like in the Phaedra myth, Euripides develops Phaedra's accusation of Hippolytus. In this play, Phaedra takes the action for the fear that Hippolytus will break

his oath and tell Theseus. In fact, the reason why she is determined to accuse him is his violent reaction, arrogance and scorn. It is seen from the play that Euripides constructs the Phaedra myth through Hippolytus' characterization. Like Aphrodite, Phaedra swears to take the revenge:

he will have his share in this my mortal sickness;  
and learn of chastity in moderation (p. 271)

With the accusation letter, Phaedra wants Hippolytus to suffer and thus understand her pain. As the goddess Aphrodite complains about his arrogance while his worshipping only the goddess of chastity and contempting Aphrodite, Phaedra, in her turn, wants to give a lesson to him. She wants to teach him to be moderate, by writing a letter claiming that Hippolytus has raped her before hanging herself. It is also her way of taking revenge from him. In this part, the mytheme of revenge is reflected through the mytheme of Phaedra's accusation against her stepson.

### **2.1.3.5 Phaedra's Suicide**

The myth of Phaedra involves the mytheme of suicide as reflected in *Hippolytus*. When the first plan of keeping silence does not work, Phaedra decides to implement her second plan. In her despair and confusion she commits suicide. The method of hanging draws attention: "Some scholars have argued that hanging was a typically female method of suicide, and that women who use weapons against themselves are exceptional, even deliberately 'masculinized' by the poets" (Hall, 2010, p. 83).

Hall asserts that female prefers hanging as a suicide method rather than killing themselves with a weapon. It can be claimed that Euripides makes Phaedra "feminized" by choosing hanging instead of using other techniques. Regardless of the methods of suicide in relation to the female act, it can be pointed out that suicide is one of the mythemes seen in myths and works.

By means of this mytheme, "the symbolic of the dominant theme of failed communication" is revealed in the suicide letter stuck to Phaedra's wrist. (Storey & Allan, 2014, p. 80) Phaedra fails a good communication; thus she cannot express herself and reveal her identity. She tries to cope with her case and take the control, but

she cannot achieve it and prefers to escape from the subsequent events in the wake of her confession of her love, by putting an end to her life. Here arises a question which might remain in the audience's mind: What drives Phaedra to death? Her fate or her passion for him? Ozansoy states that fate has a new role in this play. (1946, p. 143) It makes Phaedra burn with unbearable passion or lust, which causes her death. In this case, we arrive at the conclusion that Euripides' characters are under the control of passions, not only fate. In addition, Buxton mentions about the tragedy in relation to fate and asserts that "contrary to a common misperception of what Greek tragedy is like, tragic myths do not simply illustrate the inevitability of fate" (2013, p. 140). Myths also show the fallible humans, dark sides of human nature and the importance of the role of humans to give a direction to their lives.

### **2.1.3.6 Hippolytus' Death**

One of the striking mythemes is death of Hippolytus. Compared to most of the version of the Phaedra myth, Euripides inverts the plot of the story, by inventing the goddesses, and reveals the mytheme of sin and punishment in relation to the death of Hippolytus. The mytheme of sin and punishment are treated in a dramatic way. The initial striking action which leads to the devastating end is the sin of Hippolytus. Hippolytus' conceited and ignorant behaviour towards Aphrodite is the main reason of the tragic end, involving the death of Hippolytus. The reasons of the sin are explained as the following:

He chose to live in defiance of the laws of the universe. He denied the value and importance of a certain element in the life of the world as the world is constituted. He failed to see that a man may not with impunity distort the cosmic adjustment of things. He glorified in the denial of a physical impulse which is planted in the nature of all living creatures, and which must be followed and not thwarted. (Linforth, 1914, p. 11)

Linforth points out that you cannot deny the existence of sexuality or eros as you cannot reject your need food to go on in life. Since Hippolytus cannot realise to see the things as they are, he makes mistakes; thus he is punished. On the other hand, it is a tragic moment when Hippolytus does not defend himself against the accusation and Theseus does not insist on his defense to sort out the issue of condemnation. Instead of listening to his son, sorting out the issue, Theseus believes in the accusation and



then he instantly gives punishment to Hippolytus. In fact, Hippolytus is primarily punished by Aphrodite by bringing death upon him, as Aphrodite mentions about the punishment, the death of Hippolytus in scene 1. This constitutes a common beginning, and halts the surprising end. She says:

He does not know  
that he doors of death are open for him,  
that he is looking on his last sun. (p. 247)

After his fierce rejection of Phaedra's declaration of love by the Nurse, Hippolytus has no awareness of what is going to happen in the future. Theseus believes in Phaedra's letter of accusation without letting Hippolytus speak in his defence. In order to destroy Hippolytus and take a revenge from him, Theseus wants to use one of the three curses his father gave to him as a punishment. The bull, which causes Hippolytus' death, roaring out of the sea and frightening Hippolytus' horses, is used symbolically, representing "both the granting of Theseus' curse by Poseidon and the culmination of Aphrodite's wrath, responsibility for the violent death is transferred to the gods" (Burian, 1997, p. 202). In another way, it can be pointed out that the bull from the sea reflects the passion that Phaedra recognises and resists; Hippolytus rejects and represses; "it expresses the human truth of the power of eros" (Burian, 1997, p. 203). In addition to that punishment, Theseus expels Hippolytus from the country. Theseus learns that he judges his son unjustly only when Artemis tells the story; but it is too late to go back since Hippolytus is badly damaged and dying. Theseus laments inconsolably feeling regretful and desperate. He addresses these words to the goddess:

Cypris, how many of your injuries  
I shall remember. (p. 296)

This is the tragic point for both Hippolytus and Theseus. In the end, Hippolytus is longing for death:

May death the healer come for me at last!  
You kill me ten times over with this pain.  
O For a spear with a keen cutting edge  
To shear me apart, - and give me my last sleep!  
Father, your deadly curse! (p. 293)

Euripides uses the mytheme of death in such a manner that he reveals that Hippolytus is yearning for death as a release from the pain. Hippolytus experiences both physical and psychological pain. His physical is caused by horses' horrible crash and, thus, he is dragged to his death due to his horses' panic. They give a serious harm to him. His psychological pain is caused by the fact that Theseus does not believe him and does not believe in his innocence. The mytheme of death gains a figurative meaning in this moment, in that it reveals death is a cure, a healing, or a release for him. At the end, Euripides presents that Hippolytus understands that death is too close, saying that "I can see that the Gates of death." (p. 295)

The play ends with the death of Hippolytus and the Chorus' lamentation of the folk. In the end of the play, the effective tirade of the Chorus is presented:

This is a common grief for all the city;  
it came unlooked for. There shall be  
a storm of multitudinous tears for this;  
the lamentable stories of great men  
prevail more than of humble folk. (p. 296)

It is understood that Phaedra's grief turns to a "common grief", as stated by Segal that "the Hippolytus moves from the hidden grief of Phaedra's private suffering at the beginning to the common grief at the end" (Segal, 1996, p. 150). As Phaedra, Theseus and Hippolytus have close relations to each other; the troubles influence them all and trigger their grief. The initiation of the goddess to take action against Hippolytus starts from the love plan for Phaedra and it brings about a chain of troubles and the grief for Hippolytus and much sadness for the folk. Segal explains more:

This shared grief, moreover, is not only that of the Troezenian community within the play, but also that of the community of the theatre that experiences the play. The gestures of lamentation at the end affirm the community of the audience in the shared emotion of the theatre, the 'common grief' among all the citizens... (1996, p. 150)

The myth of Phaedra is constructed in tragic way that allows the individual's purification of feelings of extending to the society's purification of the community. The Greek theatre targets the audiences of the theatre of that time. Thinking that there is a specific target audience living in that period and in that cultural background, the tragedy emerges as a matter of the community, allowing thus the individual and the

community share their common feelings and purify their feelings, while confronting the grief of the Troezenian community. In the dramaturgy of Euripides, the plot or the theme makes the audiences share the text and the audiences' feelings. In this respect, it suggests that there is a dynamic relation between text or the Greek theatre and the audiences during the performance; therefore, it can be claimed that the universal feelings can be reached as there is a space to share the common grief.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 Racine Theatre

Jean Racine (1639-1699), one of the distinguished French authors of the neoclassical age, gives more importance to character in his plays and he is more concerned with passion of love when compared to his contemporaries. He contributes to world drama with his tightly structured drama of destructive love.

The passion of love, which is the determining element in Racine's plays, forms the center of his plays; especially women of strong passions dominate his drama. For the heroine Racine gives women names to his plays, such as such as *Phèdre*, *Bérénice*, *Esther*, *Athalie*, *Andromaque* and *Iphigénie*. Deliberately Racine creates tragedy around women and to build tragedy he deliberately portrays women's passion, weakness and overpowering emotions. While presenting characters' portrayals, Racine focuses on his characters' psychological aspects and contributes to the modern 'psychological' drama. In his plays, Racine successfully presents inner conflict and increases the conflicting passions in such a way that he provides a powerful tension; at the same time, the audiences or the readers are given a feeling of almost unbearable tension to achieve the development of suspense.

When Racine gives his masterpieces, the aesthetic principles of neoclassical theory, taken from the practice of Greek and Roman drama and the writings of Aristotle, offering some rules and principles for dramatic works, including the imitation of ancient classical model, dominates the mid and late seventeenth-century France. This century sees the classic masterpieces as authoritative voice while imitating the ancients. In this century, the tragedies of Claude Boyer (1618-98), those of Thomas Corneille (1625-1709), Philippe Quinault (1635-88) and Jean Racine (1639-1699) show their interest in adapting ancient historical or mythological motifs for to fit the tastes of his audience.

### 3.1.1 *Phèdre*

Racine, undeniably, exhibits his fondness in adapting ancient and mythological materials, as it is seen in the play *Phèdre* which is written in 1677. In his preface to Phaedra, Racine explains that his play is taken from Euripides' *Hippolytus* and asserts that *Hippolytus* is the source of inspiration for him. Though Racine uses the basic elements from the Phaedra myth, he creates his own tragedy.

Thinking that a writer or a poet is under the influence of the period in which he lives and writes, it can be said that the usage of the myth of Phaedra in *Phèdre* is constructed according to the tastes and the practises of that period. Racine writes *Phèdre* in the seventeenth century, which is marked by the principle of neoclassicism. Racine's play *Phèdre* suit to the characteristics of the Classical play, but his plays also has its own peculiarities.

### 3.1.2 Racine's *Phèdre* as an Example of Literary Representation of the Phaedra Myth

From most of the comments, it might be pointed out that Racine shaped and constructed the myth of Phaedra according to the requirements of neo-classicism. To start with, in *Phèdre*, Racine used one of the requirements of neo-classicism, three unities of time, place and action, which are inherited from Aristotle, and adapted them to the reality of theatrical practises. According to this principle, stage action occupies no more time than the time of the performance; there should be one, a single stage, and the characters and the plot lines should be centered on a single, focused action. In *Phèdre*, the action develops over a few hours and throughout the play, its setting is represented in the same place, within or just outside the palace of Troezen. Thus, it is obvious that Racine rigidly follows the rule of the unities of time, place, and action. It is declared that this three unities brings "the concentration of emotional effect typical of French tragedy" though this principle may be regarded as a necessity of conventional framework. (Brereton, 1954, p. 139) According to Brereton, unity of time compels playwrights to choose the most important period of emotional crisis and to

form their plays around that and unity of action. This also means that playwrights have to focus on a single plot as well as economy in the number of the characters.

By means of the unities, the readers and the audiences concentrate on *Phèdre*; especially on the emotional crisis with an increased pleasure, by being in the mental and emotional state. As a result, it might be declared that three unities give an emotional motivation and make people have a ‘taste’ called *biéissance*.

Simplicity is one of the important peculiarities of classical French tragedy, which is found in *Phèdre*. It is obvious that from the beginning to the end, Racine is focused on his protagonist Phaedra, and succeeds a simple plot. The incident, from beginning to the end, is clear, not complicated because there are not any subplots or secondary lines of action and all characters and episodes serve to the requirement of the central plot. The development of the plot is achieved through the subordination of all secondary action and episodes to the main action. In a simple word, from a simple plan of the construction of the single incident, which is “Racinian” and “classical”, the playwright establishes *Phèdre*’s qualified plot. It is classical because the play obtains the principle of simplicity and it is Racinian because “external episode and material act contribute to an internal development” what it means that Racine reflects the protagonist’ soul from one state to another which is the basic movement through the external movements. (Weinberg, 1963, p. 266)

Moreover, the verisimilitude, one of the rules of neo-classical theatre, is achieved in *Phèdre*. If it is given the dictionary meaning of verisimilitude, in *Longman*, it is stated as “the quality of a piece of art, a performance, etc. that makes it seem like something real”. Though it does not give the exact meaning of the Latin word, it can be explained as “credibility” or “plausibility”. According to the precepts of verisimilitude, “characters and events on stage must not strain the spectator’s credulity by venturing into the fantastic or improbable” (Gainor, Garner JR & Puchner, p. 1468). Racine, in his preface to Phaedra, explains that he tried to follow the fable as given in Plutarch, and found that Theseus descended into the underworld to save Proserpine. Racine adds that it was a journey and in that journey Theseus was captured after he killed Peirithous. Racine declares that he tied to

keep the verisimilitude of the story, without losing anything of the ornaments of the fable, which is an abundant storehouse of poetical imaginary; and the rumor of Theseus's death, based on this fabulous voyage, gives an opportunity to Phaedra to make a declaration of love which becomes one of the principal causes of her misfortune, and which she would never have dared to make so long as she believed that her husband was alive. (pp. 1776-177)

In order to achieve verisimilitude Racine studies various antecedent passages and stories, because the audience needs to believe and whatever is written or mentioned must be credible according to the requirements of verisimilitude. In that point, it seems that Racine provided verisimilitude. Racine is

a disciple of reason, but the word has a different meaning with him. Literature must be reasonable and free from fantastic interpretations of character, complicated plots and impossible climaxes. Reason, appears, then, in the author rather than in the chief character, and the whole plot gains in naturalness, and in vraisemblance. (Wright, 1912, p. 352)

The reason of the usage of verisimilitude is the fact that the audiences are also targeted when a writer reconstructs his or her own work. According to Hawcroft, to affect the audience and arouse their emotion, the best way was thought to create an illusion of reality (vraisemblance) and thus he suggests that this goal could come true, provided that playwrights "observed a number of so-called rules, including the unities of time, place, and action" (2011, pp. 263-264). Racine, in that point, arouses emotion, giving the illusion of reality and following the principles of neo-classical theatre in *Phèdre*.

Additionally, decorum (bienséance) is also one of the principles of neo-classical theatre which is obtained in *Phèdre*. Decorum refers to the "the manners of the highest social classes, manners in the widest sense, of breeding, dress, speech, and action" (Bagley, 1937, p. 18). To give the principle of decorum in a play dramatic action must not go over the limits of the propriety: Without violating the spectator's expectations or giving harm to its sensibilities characters must speak and act according to their classes, their standing and their situations. Violence should take place offstage, as seen in the Greek theatre. When looking at *Phèdre*, it is obvious that characters speak and behave in a suitable way for their classes, manners and situations. The importance of verisimilitude and decorum is revealed as:

Through the principle of verisimilitude and decorum seventeenth-century dramatists sought to give the dramatic world compression, coherence, and logic. At its finest,

neoclassical tragedy offers an intensified dramatic experience in which the operations of character and fate are revealed within a theatrically distilled, internally coherent moment of time.” (Gainor, Garner JR & Putschner, 2009, p. 1468)

By means of verisimilitude and decorum, the tragedy of *Phèdre* achieves comprehension, coherence and logic, as a result, by removing the irrelevant points and the disturbing factors issues related to the play Racine gives the dramatic effect.

In addition to all mentioned above, ability of reason or lucidity is one of the important characteristics of the French seventeenth century tragic character, though he or she experiences the highest emotional crisis. Descartes, in that century, emphasizes the importance of human reason. However, Racine’s characters make the error which brings about their misfortune despite their full awareness of the situation and consequences. (Moravcevic, 1972, p. 57). Racine’s characters in *Phèdre* have no decision to take. They live in a disintegrated world, as they themselves are not integrated. For example, it is seen that Phaedra has no power of decision and she is unable to find a place for herself. Her world is a dying place, though her love is undying.

Though Racine uses the basic elements from the Phaedra myth and uses the classical rules, he creates and shapes his own tragedy with his extraordinary representation of drama. One of the peculiarities of Racinian drama, as seen in *Phèdre*, is its psychological aspect, which makes his drama distinguished from the dramatic representations that stick to the principles or rules of neoclassicism. Racine might be called a psychological poet as far as it is revealed from this play and most of the critics’ claim.

In *Phèdre*, Racine creates the characters under the influence of emotions and passions. What Racine attempts to reveal is “inner action or problem of character” (Wright, 1912, p. 353). The peculiarity of his treatment is that “the action takes place on an inner level” (Gassner, 1962, p. 72). Racine reflects internal movements in the heroine rather than focusing more on the external movements. In other words, the action is psychological rather than physical. The drama occurs through the character’s emotional struggle. Racine successfully portrays characters’ psychological tendencies by showing their inner conflicts, their feelings and their ideas; so this work provides



an opportunity to see what Phaedra and Hippolytus think or feel. That's why, Racine is considered to have established the foundations of the psychological drama, which emerge and flourish later.

In fact, Racine's play is a study of "of individual *états d'âme* or crises" (Wright, 1912, p. 353). Racine progressively develops the single passion and increases the emotional crisis in the heroine and she reaches the critical point; in fact, the crisis of the heroine is presented throughout the play. With his treatment of crises, inner action or problem of the character Racine exposes the tragic character Phaedra who suffers struggles, makes mistakes, and goes into the unhappy end as a tragic character. According to McCollom, the tragic hero is often the victim of crushing and unmerited sorrow. (1951, p.16) This tragic character, as exposed by Aristotle, arouses pity and terror as seen in Phaedra, because tragic character is the one who makes mistake, suffers, falls from the good fortune and goes into destructive and tragic end. As a result, the audiences feel sorry and afraid for the tragic character, Phaedra. In Preface to Phaedra, Racine mentions that he is indebted to Euripides for the idea of Phaedra's character because Phaedra fulfils Aristotle's demands for the tragic character and this feature is necessary for arousing pity and terror. According to Racine:

Phaedra is neither guilty, nor entirely innocent; she is involved, by her fate and the wrath of the gods, in an unlawful passion, of which she is the first to feel horror; she makes every effort to overcome it; she prefers to let herself die rather than to confess it to anyone; and when she is forced to discover it, she speaks of it with a confusion that makes plain that her crime is rather a punishment of the gods than a movement of her will. (Racine, 1960, p. 175)

Phaedra is depicted as an unwitting victim of a tragedy. She is a victim of love for Hippolytus, the gods and her nurse Oenone; that's why, she is not entirely guilty.

By following the main concern of theme of love, Racine uses his talent to present his representation of the myth and to reveal the romantic love, helped by his poetic language and the psychological characterization of his characters. Moreover, Racine shows his creativity in the arrangement of the events and mythemes, a fact which contributes to the arousal of the emotional response from a theatre audience.

Racine's choice of the myth of Phaedra rests on his intention to recreate the mytheme of passionate love and forbidden love from different angles, and to reveal the psychology of his characters and make the play more appealing. In addition, it can be said that "Racine's tragedies often derive their power from the portrayal of the dark side of human sexual urges when these are combined with the exercise of political authority" (Hawcroft, 2011, pp. 268-269).

What Racine, taking this myth as an ideological product, adds to the myth of Phaedra in this tragedy is his treatment of the mytheme of political crisis or political uncertainty. It is pointed out that "political power is the basis of grandeur, is the essential reason for it, and is, thus, a significant part of the tragic action" (Nelson, 1965, p. 24). Theseus' absence brings about some problems. The basic problem stems from Theseus' disregard of his responsibility as a husband and a father and then as a king, by leaving the kingdom for the sake of some exotic adventures. The most distinguished problem that Racine presents successfully in this play is the problem of political authority. Considering the political picture, there appears a political uncertainty as there is no king in Troezen. Hippolytus as a son of the king and Phaedra as a wife of the king neglect their duty. Racine, at that point, deals with the issue of passion & duty and individual & state. He creates these characters in a way that they both fall in love and they both disregard the State and the duty to rule, by focusing on their inner world. In addition to this, Racine portrays the characters as an individual and reveals their incapability of ruling. Thus, in the stage, the audiences do not see Hippolytus and Phaedra who serve and sacrifice their life to the State.

There are some possibilities of the inheritance of the kingdom of Troezen by Hippolytus, by Phaedra, or her son, or remotely, Aricia. Deviating from the original myth, Racine, in his tragedy, focuses on the political matter, thus, taking the readers or the audiences away some from the emotional matters for a limited time. By means of Panope, the woman of Phaedra's suite, the tension experienced in the citadel is delivered:

For the choice  
Of ruler, Athens is divided. Some  
Vote for the Prince, your son, and others, madam,

Forgetting the laws of the State, dare give their voices  
 To the son of the stranger. It is even said  
 An insolent faction has designed to place  
 Aricia on the throne. I thought you should  
 Be warned about this danger. Hippolytus  
 Is ready depart, and it is feared,  
 If he becomes involved in this new storm,  
 Lest he drew to him, all the pickle mob. (p. 188)

Hearing the news, Oenone tells Phaedra that her fortune is turning. According to Oenone, the palace must be filled, since Theseus is dead. She demands that Phaedra should struggle for her son. Oenone says to Phaedra “slave if he loses you, a king if you live”. At this point, it is understood that Oenone tries to make Phaedra change her mind and live. She tells that Troezen is Hippolytus’s portion, adding however that “he knows that the laws give your son the lofty ramparts Minerva builded” (p. 189). Finding Aricia as their common enemy, Oenone suggests to be engaged in combat with Aricia by the help of Hippolytus. At the same time, the political crisis discloses Phaedra’s inner world. Phaedra is not an active person who has power to rule. As a result of her restlessness she has lost her reason. In this respect, it might be pointed out that “Racine constantly doubts the power of man’s reason and intelligence to aid in the solution of a moral or psychological dilemma” (Gassner, 1962, p. 72).

Han claims that in the play the political uncertainty is “overshadowed by a more pressing consideration: the question of family allegiance” (1973, p. 22). In this respect, it is apparent that Racine adds this aspect to the myth of Phaedra in his work. Racine puts the love and family issues into the center, alluding to political instability. According to Greenberg, Racine presents dramatic actions embarking on the protagonist’s tragic predicament and “this predicament is foregrounded by the political crisis”. Greenberg explains as the following:

Quickly, however, Racine moves from the political instability of the outer world into the psychological turmoil of the play’s protagonist. In an extremely subtle play of inversions, the tragic plot will work itself out, resolving the political crisis, by and through the sacrifice of the tragic hero. Racine moves from the larger political stage of an empire in crisis to the narrower but analogous ferment of the tragic hero, who, becoming the victim of that world’ trauma, is immolated to expiate the sins of society and, by so doing, restores order to it. (1998, p. 54)

With the return of Theseus, the political uncertainty goes away, but it brings about other tragic problems, such as Phaedra's accusation of Hippolytus, that triggers Hippolytus' death and Phaedra's death.

It is mostly claimed that Racine focuses on humans' moral nature in his drama as seen in the works of Greek poets, and he stresses Greek poets that it is desirable that the drama should both entertain and instruct the audience, as it happened in ancient texts. In the preface to Phaedra he points out that "it could be wished that our works were as solid as full of useful instructions as those of poets". Racine stresses that "virtue" is mostly prominent in *Phèdre* when the characters' tiniest faults are revealed:

the least faults are severely punished; the very thought of a crime is regarded with as much horror as the crime itself; the weakness of love are shown as true weakness; the passions are displayed only to show all the disorder of which they are the cause; and vice is everywhere depicted in colors which make the deformity recognized and hated. That is properly the end which every man who works for the public should propose to himself; and it is that which the first tragic poets kept in sight above everything. (p. 177)

According to Bagley, Racine is not concerned with the morality of his characters up to this time and he claims that "Phèdre is always conscious of her sin. This is Racine's first Christian drama" (1937, p. 235). Bagley claims that Racine focused on the moral responsibility of the individual and underlines an important point which suggests that Phaedra is not totally and morally guilty explaining that Racine represents Phaedra as "pathetic victim of passionate love" in spite of showing Phaedra as a "morally responsible" character. At this point, Bagley also pays attention to the Phaedra's nobility in many respects and emphasizes that Phaedra has no power or will to overcome her forbidden love. Most of the critics find a moral lesson in *Phèdre*. For example, it is declared that Racine's *Phèdre* "conceives a character within a moral scheme" (Greene, 1939, p. 52). At the same time, it is asserted that Racine's former teachers of Port – Royal found Racine's *Phèdre* as a Jansenist play which gives a moral lesson. The reason is explained by the fact that the play "depicts human nature in sin because unilluminated by Grace, and the evil passions therefore necessarily triumphant, as in the austere creed of Port – Royal" (Wright, 1912, p. 357).

If this comment on moral nature of the drama is considered, it seems that critics consider that Racine revives his belief in Jansenism. The reason for his Jansenist influence is explained by his education in Port – Royal which is under the control of Jansenists. Jansenist influence is reflected also through the Christian doctrine of predestination. It is claimed that Racine reflects this influence in his play and makes his touches with his brush by using the Greek concept of fatality. It is considered that the effect of Jansenism is shown in *Phèdre*, while “depicting fallen nature without the illumination of Grace” (Wright, 1912, p. 352). Moreover, it is explained that

since no motive for Venus is stated, since Phaedra is frequently seen as arbitrary afflicted by all supernature, one discerns in the background of the play that harsh version of Christianity called Jansenism, in which the human soul is too corrupt to seek salvation actively, and an inscrutable God damns or saves as it please Him. (Wilbur, 1986, p. xiv)

Furthermore, it is shown that Racine attempts to exhibit that human nature is decayed and the detrimental passions prevail. Actually, the reason is defeated by an extensive passion. Passions win though it hurts or gives damages in this tragedy of Racine. Guyer underlines an important point asserting that “they teach no lesson of fortitude and nobility to a world of weaker mortals. They are true and natural representatives of frail humanity. Here we see the influence of the age” (1932, p. 89).

Though Frenchmen see Racine as being under the influence of Classical school, it cannot be denied that he contributed to the creation of “beautiful poetry and gave a rational and realistic portrayal of universal or general passions and emotions” (Wright, 1912, p. 359). In this respect, it can be said that “the drama of Racine thus represents the flowering of the Classical play, but stands almost alone” (Ibid, p. 360). He portrayed a modern atmosphere by changing the characters’ behaviour and by reworking and modifying the mythemes and plots. In fact, Racine’s talent lies in his making them natural and appropriate to audiences of his own time, appealing to the tastes of the audiences. It can be pointed out that Racine adapted and created his own version of Phaedra myth considering political and social changes in his own time.

### 3.1.3 Mythemes of the Phaedra Myth in *Phèdre*

#### 3.1.3.1 Phaedra in Love with Her Stepson (Forbidden Love)

The mytheme of love, one of the mythemes seen in the myth of Phaedra, is reworked by Racine in *Phèdre*. As seen in the scenario of myth, Phaedra loves her stepson Hippolytus passionately and fatally. Taking the issue of love as the basic element in his play, Racine presents Phaedra's forbidden but immortal or eternal love which leads to her destruction.

In *Phèdre*, the central plot is Phaedra's love and all the events, all personages are subordinated to this plot. Racine, thus, provides the simplicity, which is one of the prerogatives of neoclassicism. There are no secondary actions which might confuse the readers' or the audiences' mind. Although Racine places Phaedra into the center of the action, the central preoccupation is in fact the issue of love. It is apparent that Racine is much interested in this issue. The reason why Racine chooses and emphasizes love is explained as:

Love is the blindest of all passions, the one most deliberately pointed toward self-destruction. Such a theme as ambition, for example, would have to by definition maintain a greater lucidity and self-esteem. The whole meaning of tragedy is revived and explored by Racine in his treatment of love. (Gassner, 1962, p. 73)

According to Gassner, the whole meaning of tragedy is strengthened and renewed with Racine's interpretation of love. It might be declared that Racine, implementing the rule of verisimilitude into the treatment of love, gives a drama which is "true to life"; in other words, due to Racine's representation of love from a new perspective, the readers or the audiences live the impression that events related to love take place in real life.

In the re-vision of Phaedra myth, Racine obviously focuses on passion. It is pointed out that this passion is not related to "the soft idealized emotion"; instead it is "an intoxication of the end, that deprives it of its freedom and balance, a blind urge, fatal in its birth, normally destructive, often cruel" (Cazamian, 1960, p. 184). Phaedra's complex destructive feelings also bring 'melancholy'. It is mentioned that "Phaedra's melancholy appeared within the context of feminization of the malady before 1660s" and it is asserted as, "through the love of melancholy of the title character and of

Hippolytus in *Phèdre* (Phaedra; 1677), Jean Racine understands his characters' illness as a result of (an illicit) passion and represents the interdependence of soma and psyche" (Höfer, 2009, p. 176).

To start with the mytheme of love, Racine illustrates that the destructive love begins to give damage to Phaedra's body, as much as it hurts her heart, as seen in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Racine portrays her difficult situation by showing the weakness of her physical body. Phaedra has no energy to go on with her life because of her physical and emotional weakness. The love takes her energy and power away since this love is forbidden. The nurse does not know the reason of Phaedra's weakness and devastation, since this love is secret at the beginning. As she feels such an intense guilt, she tries to escape from everything, especially the daylight which represents life in the play. Phaedra's health decayed. She is neither happy nor pleased; that is why she has tendency to complain about everything:

Adornments, how these veils, now weigh me down.  
What busy hand, in trying all these knots,  
Has taken care to gather on my brow  
This heavy load of hair? Now all afflicts me,  
Hurts me, and conspires to hurt me. (p. 183)

The nurse, Oenone, tells Phaedra that it was Phaedra who wanted to show herself by getting dressed and decking her hair and at the same time it was her who was unwilling to see the light of the day. Racine tries to show Phaedra's contradictory nature when she is in unforbidden love. Phaedra is in such a turmoil and chaos that what she wants is exactly makes the earlier chosen act meaningless, and she instantly changes her decision.

Her contradiction is reflected by Racine through her body, which lacks unity, as Ubersfeld explains:

the representation of the body is challenged: though Phèdre's body appears twice as a unity, once as suffering body and as passionate body, it is for the most part a bown-up and scattered shape: whether as hands, mouth, eyes, bosom, features, arms, blood or ears, the human body in Racine nearly always appears in fragmentary form. (1981, p. 209)

The external action is a reflection of Phaedra's inner world: What is felt by her body is reflected by her feelings and emotions related to forbidden love. That the body is shattered reflects that her inner world is fragmented. In this respect, it can be said that the body is the representation of her psyche. The body is not unified as a symbol of the character's psychology. Racine constructs the mytheme of love by showing the actions in an inner level. The actions imply her conflict which results in her emotion changes constantly and her contradictions.

In other words, it can be pointed out that she is between the states of "being" and "nonbeing" because she initially wants to show herself, but then she changes her mind and she decides to hide herself. At this point, the binary opposition of dying vs. living emerges in the play and it confers the tension to the play. Dying woman figure is present in front of the reader's or the reader's eyes, namely Phaedra always wants to die, but the Nurse tries to change her mind and the death of Phaedra delays. In that respect, "her love is a desire for death" and "love is pushing her to die" (Mason, 1999, p. 207).

Additionally, love is reworked in relation to the mytheme of hatred. Racine reworks the myth of Phaedra and presents it anew by showing how Phaedra tries to struggle to get rid of love. Firstly, Phaedra rejects this love and for her, by arousing hatred in Hippolytus, it becomes a way of overcoming love. Therefore, on purpose she causes Hippolytus' exile. She drives Hippolytus away, rather than escaping from him. Furthermore, in order to forget him Phaedra disregards Hippolytus' presence. The lines she utters to Hippolytus explain how she behaves:

I've taken care to invite your enmity,  
And could not bear your presence where I dwelt.  
In public, and in private, your known foe,  
I've wished the seeds to part us, an even forbidden  
The mention of your name within my hearing. (p. 196)

As far as it is understood from Hippolytus' speech with Theramenes, Phaedra behaves him in a rude way and saddens and wounds Hippolytus. The reason is obvious as written in the play: to resist and overcome her love, to seem to Hippolytus hateful and inhuman. Surprisingly, Racine, in the first act, reveals that happy days have gone for



Hippolytus. Hippolytus thinks that there has been no happiness in Athens and at court, since the gods sent the queen, the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, Phaedra. In addition, he explains that he is not afraid of her hostility. What makes him anxious is that Theseus, his father, the king of Athens, is absent for six months. Therefore, Hippolytus has to deal with his stepmother alone and also has to figure out what happened to his father, Theseus. The play shows that Phaedra has such an obsessive and excessive love and passion that she becomes the enemy of the man she is in love. In the reworking of mytheme of love it is seen that “love and hate are, in the dramaturgy of Racine, strong sentiments which are difficult to dissociate and separate” (Gassner, 1962, p. 72). Love and hate are firmly constructed in the play to point out that passionate and intensive love leads to hatred when it has no answer except the humiliation from the lover.

In *Phèdre*, Racine shows the novelty in his interpretation of Phaedra, adding the mytheme of jealousy to the mytheme of love and creating the character, Aricia. Contrary to the mythical scenario, Hippolytus falls in love with someone called Aricia, who is the sister of Theseus’ enemy, although Phaedra has thought that Hippolytus’ heart is closed to all women. It is asserted that “Racine, perhaps feeling that both verisimilitude and decorum would be violated by a prince who shied away from women, introduces the requisite amatory subplot (and his chief innovation on the ancient sources) into a dramatic situation already suffused with *erōs*” (Burian, 1997, p. 235). Hippolytus represents gallantry with Racine’s manner of characterization. Racine makes a lover from a hero and he is always a lover.

Compared to the myth of Phaedra, it is seen that the treatment of love is different. It is considered that “Racine delights in presenting, as his audiences must have delighted in watching, the display of sexual jealousy with all its aches, torments, and perils” (Hawcroft, 2011, p. 268). In this play, in a different way, the mytheme of love is dealt with the characterization of Phaedra, Hippolytus and Aricia and the presentation of mytheme of love vs. jealousy relation is represented by these three figures. Racine, by creating the rival character for Phaedra called Aricia, enriches the mytheme of love, adding the mytheme of jealousy in his work and extending the love of Phaedra. Racine deals with Phaedra’s complicated feelings: love, hatred, passion,

jealousy and so on. Jealousy is one of the factors of Phaedra's mental derangements. As a result of her love and jealousy, the feeling of rival, the forbidden or the passionate love become more intense, her mind loses the balance and her passion becomes more cruel and destructive. At that point, Racine clearly enriches the Phaedra myth by creating new meanings.

When Phaedra learns that Hippolytus loves Aricia, she flames up. She gets shocked by this discovery. As she cannot find a way to Hippolytus' heart, she feels strong jealousy. In a successful way Racine draws a figure of rival in his treatment of jealousy:

... Hippolytus feels love,  
 But not for me. Aricia has his heart!  
 Aricia has his faith! Gods! When the ingrate,  
 Pitiless to my pleading, armed himself  
 With eye so proud and brow so stern, I thought  
 His heart to love would be forever closed,  
 Invulnerable to all my sex; and yet  
 Another has bent his will, and in his eyes  
 Another has found favor. Perhaps he has  
 A heart that's easily touched. I am alone  
 The object of his scorn. And I undertook  
 The task of his defense! (p. 213)

It is clear that Hippolytus' reactions and answer to Phaedra increase her anger. She feels that she is the only one who is the object of contempt. The discovery of Hippolytus' love for Aricia and "her jealousy impedes her impulse to justice and honesty" (Weinberg, 1963, p. 261).

It is shown that this news has influence on Phaedra in three ways: "it arouses her jealousy as a woman in love, it offends the desire for purity which characterises her as a tragic heroine and it destroys the illusion that she had discovered a being with whom she could live in the world" (Goldmann, 1964, p. 389).

Though she decides to reveal the truth of Hippolytus' innocence beforehand, she changes her mind again. At this point, jealousy turns into revenge:

Take pity on my jealous rage. That girl  
 Must be destroyed; the anger of my husband  
 Against her hateful blood must be aroused

To no light penalty. The sister's crime  
Exceeds the brother's. In my jealous fury  
I wish to urge him... (p. 214)

Phaedra wants this revenge to look like a kind of Theseus's revenge. She wants that Aricia's brother also has corruption with Aricia's penalty, but still the conflict in her inner world maintains. She asks herself what she is doing, where her reason has gone, and whether she has jealousy or not. In fact, Phaedra loses her reason. She tries to remind herself that her husband is not dead. However, she gradually loses the perception of reality. She experiences another shock, because she is informed that Theseus is not dead after the news of his death. Her thoughts astonish her. She knows that she exceeds the measure and balance, but she cannot go into the direction which makes her better. At that point, Racine reflects her psyche, where her reason and passion clashes. She still feels ashamed and guilty, as she has incestuous love and she thinks of taking revenge on Aricia. Her inner world becomes more complex. Her guilt, shame and blame turn into self-hatred which makes her feel unworthy of life:

I breathe the stench of incest and deceit.  
My murderous hands, all apt for vengeance, burn  
To blunge in innocent blood! Wretch! And I live! (p. 214)

In this respect, the issue of love is developed in relation to the guilt and shame. Using the theme of love, Racine portrays the complexity of her psychology. Since her love is not ending and consuming, she blames herself more. She thinks of taking revenge from Aricia, but later she realises that the conflict emerges from in her mind fully presents emotions. In her awareness, Phaedra sees that she is losing her reason. Racine, here, successfully presents the character's conflict. Moreover, Racine deals with the theme of jealousy in a credible way. He reveals the states of her mind and emotions in a manner which makes all her stages of her complex psychology being felt. She firstly rejects the love, resists, tries to overcome it, then feels jealousy and cannot endure the pain:

Forever and forever they will love.  
At the moment when I speak\_ ah! deadly thought!\_  
They brave the fury of a maddened lover.  
Despite the exile which will sunder them,  
They vow eternal faith. I cannot bear (p. 214)

The thought that Hippolytus and Aricia will love each other forever though Hippolytus is exiled enrages Phaedra. The jealousy becomes brutal and extreme one. What makes Hippolytus and Aricia happy does not make Phaedra happy. Because her love is not answered. Her personal pride is devastated. As a result, she feels that she cannot tolerate or bear it anymore.

Racine also develops the mytheme of love by inventing the love of Hippolytus to Aricia. Phaedra is not the only one who falls in love. Hippolytus is in love with Aricia and Aricia is in love with Hippolytus. At the beginning, it is seen that Hippolytus escapes Aricia and he thinks that he cannot choose her.

Racine deals with the love from a different angle. Bringing novelty to this mytheme, he creates the love for an enemy in *Phèdre*. It is known that Aricia is the foe of Theseus due to her brother. Theseus refuses Aricia and there are strict laws which forbid her marriage. Because of that, Theramenes, tutor of Hippolytus, says that Hippolytus has a “secret passion”, while there is a “secret passion” of Phaedra for Hippolytus. For Hippolytus, his pride precedes love.

Hippolytus explains that his pride comes from his mother and he underlines that he becomes mature by learning who he is, learning who his father is and Theseus’ heroic history. However, he does not become mature yet. He wants to be like his father, in other words, he wants to be a hero. He wants to identify himself with his glories, a fact that shows that he has not fulfilled his identity yet. He compares himself with his father as following:

My base affections, unlike those of Theseus,  
Can claim no heap of honors as excuse,  
And so deserve more scorn. As I have slain  
No monster yet, I have not earned the right... (p. 181)

Hippolytus tries to remind himself that Aricia is the enemy and an obstacle. In this moment, the way Racine treated the mytheme of forbidden love respects the scenario of the myth of Phaedra, but he introduces a variation. Hippolytus thinks that he has no right to make a mistake as he has not conquered a monster or win a battle yet. Racine tries to portray a son of a king who tries to accomplish himself and who attempts to

form his identity. That's why he prefers to go on a journey and search for his father, the king who is lost and find him rather than deal with love issues.

Hippolytus declares his love to Aricia only after he learns that his father is dead. Before the declaration he lets her have freedom:

Do what you will. Dispose of your own heart,  
And in this Troezen, my heritage,  
Which has forthwith accepted me as King,  
I leave you as free, nay freer, than myself. (p. 192)

Racine blends the mytheme of love with hostility, freedom and "being" yourself when he characterizes Aricia and Hippolytus and their relations. Unlike the myth of Phaedra, which focuses on unrequited love, Racine presents us a couple who loves each other. Hippolytus explains to Aricia his plan. Though "Hippolytus love for Aricia lacks energy to go public" (Pavel, 1989, p. 275), he proposes to marry her secretly in a temple and escape with him. He says that they should escape from Troezen. He believes that the gods will be the witnesses of their holy love and gods will show generosity towards his love.

The meetings between Hippolytus and Aricia signify Hippolytus' estrangement from Phaedra. In this contradiction, love is represented. In one place, there is a loved person, in the other place, there is unloved person. Seeing the requited love, Phaedra's unanswered love becomes vivid and more intense. Aricia – Hippolytus relation makes Phaedra's passion more uncontrolled and unbridled:

The repetitive structure in *Phèdre*... where both Hippolyte and Phèdre have fallen in love against their will and with the wrong person, allows preparation, contrasts, and echoes; it orients our interest, plunges us more rapidly to greater emotional depths with each entrance of Phèdre, and finally provides Phèdre with her worst torment, jealousy. (Moravcevic, 1972, p. 55)

Against their will, Phaedra and Hippolytus fall in love with the wrong person. With this presentation of Hippolytus' and Phaedra's love, Racine presents two kinds of passions and two pictures for us; so the readers or the audiences have a chance to see two different treatments of love. Racine's major focus is Phaedra's love, but he shows that this love torments her and, as a result it generates conflict and complex feelings which cause chaos and disaster. Racine shows the love's paradoxes as following:

Love's paradoxes are mystery to us, both fated and willed, both 'volontaire' and 'involontaire', so that the lovers can at one and at the same time be both innocent and guilty, both agents and passive victims - as soon as Phèdre comes on we are presented with the dramatic fact, and we become inward with that fact without knowing what it is we are inward with Phèdre is a walking embodiment of the paradoxes of that mystery. (Mason, 1999, p. 206)

In this tragedy, the readers or the audiences encounter the mytheme of love, which is extended significantly by the introduction of passion and love of Phaedra.

Racine reveals the complexity of psychology as revealed in emotions of amorous love, guilty love mingled with jealousy, hope, shame, remorse, and repentance. Related to this, Phaedra's criminal passion and remorse are dramatized.

### 3.1.3.2 The Concealment of Passion for Her Stepson

The mytheme of concealment or passion occurs in *Phèdre* in the same manner as in the myth of Phaedra. Phaedra explains that telling her secret equals to dying:

... Spare me the rest. I die  
Because I cannot such confession make. (p. 185)

Phaedra tries to hide her secret from everybody, but the nurse tries to learn why she is so terrified. Phaedra does not reveal it. In this respect, the mytheme of "failed communication" occurs just seen in Euripides' *Hippolytus*; she has inability to communicate well with anyone as she has conceals her forbidden love and keeps her problem hidden. What she explains the nurse is that she is dying, since she cannot make confession; however, Oenone insists on revealing her secret.

What Phaedra hides torments her physically and psychologically, thus she finds death as a remedy. Oenone understands that Phaedra makes preparations for her death and she gets angry:

Die then; and keep inhuman silence still.  
But seek another hand to close your eyes (p. 185)

Racine gives the motherly love explicitly when he deals with the mytheme of concealment of passion and deviates from the original myth. In *Phèdre*, the reader or

the audience learns that the nurse has dedicated her whole life to Phaedra. Since Phaedra keeps secret from her, the nurse finds this behaviour unkind:

Cruel! When have I betrayed your confidence?  
Think, that my arms received you at your birth,  
For you I've left my country and my children.  
Is this the price of my fidelity? (p. 185)

For Oenone, confession is a way of showing trust; however, Phaedra mentions about how horrified she will be by her secret if she exposes it. In a convincing and motherlike way, Oenone expresses her death is more horrifying. Oenone asks her to free her mind from doubt and she wants to be sure what her secret is. Racine triggers the meaning of the play by means of this mytheme. Moreover, Racine shows how the hidden secret affects Phaedra's wellness and he also presents Phaedra's struggle with her secret in her inner world. Thus, Racine intensifies the meaning of concealment and the whole mytheme.

In a parallel way of the concealment of love of Phaedra, but in a different manner from the Phaedra myth, Racine presents that Hippolytus conceals his love for Aricia. Theramenes, the tutor to Hippolytus, tries to have Hippolytus confess his love for Aricia. He says that Hippolytus loves, burns and perishes from an illness. But Hippolytus does not confess; instead, he clearly changes the subject and attempts to show how determined he is to find his father. He replies asking: "Can you ask me repudiate my former proud, disdainful sentiments" (p. 182). As far as it is understood, his love is repressed and the matter of the absence of his father prevails in the play. Racine constructs two concealment motifs just as he constructs two loves while reworking the mytheme of love. With this concealment of requited love, Racine gives a new dimension to the play and makes the mytheme of concealment more dynamical.

### **3.1.3.3 The Confessing/Confession either to Her Nurse or to Hippolytus**

Mytheme of confession is present in this play though in a different manner from the mythical scenario. The treatment of the confession is revealed in a similar manner with the myth of Phaedra. Phaedra confesses Oenone that she is in love with

Hippolytus after Oenone's long try to find out what gives terror to Phaedra's heart. First of all, Phaedra hesitates to tell her secret and her speech persists on her death. Finally, she confesses her love for Hippolytus without knowing that he loves Aricia. However, this confession is "not for the real Hippolytus, who is going away and who loves Aricia, but for another, imaginary Hippolytus, a being pure and without weakness, capable of inspiring a fatal and criminal weakness" (Goldmann, 1964, pp. 385-386).

Believing that her husband Theseus is dead, Phaedra confesses her love to Hippolytus, whom she is disastrously in love with. In the confession part, "self-deception" is revealed: Phaedra comes closer to Hippolytus to talk about the political situation "in the wake of his father's reported death", but she cannot help talking about the issue (her love) what she really wants to confess, "in fact, the scenario is repeated with different characters and different emphases no fewer than five times in the first two acts of *Phèdre*" (Kay, Cave & Bowie, p. 155).

According to Oenone, her passion is not a crime, and with Theseus' death and her "love becomes a usual love" (p. 188). In that point, it seems that Phaedra could find a reason to confess her love and struggle for the political power, but Phaedra has no power to cling to life and it is doubtful that her spirit can be reanimated by the love for a son. Oenone advises Phaedra that she should reign the palace without lamenting herself and finding the peace in nobler cases, in ruling. Phaedra answers:

I reign? To place the State  
Under my law, when reason reigns no longer  
Over myself; when I have abdicated  
From the empire of my senses; when beneath  
A yoke of shame I scarcely breathe; when I  
Am dying. (p. 200)

It might be pointed out that Racine draws a picture of a woman who has lack of power and ambition in the political background. The queen, as a result, has no possibility to dominate. Racine, using the feature of decorum and verisimilitude, gives the protagonist proper roles within a natural atmosphere to make the play credible. This provides intensifying unbridled love and makes it more believable. In that respect,



though there is a political matter, the play turns into an internalization of drama dealing with Phaedra's fantasized inner world.

At first, in order to deal with the political matter, Phaedra asks help from Hippolytus for her son, explaining, that his youth is not safe and it is threatened by enemies that encourage him to arm against them. But her inner world is in so restless and full of conflict and crisis that this political talk turns into the delivery of her love for him. In other words, her emotions and feelings prevail over the political matters. What she really intends to reveal is her love to Hippolytus.

In fact, Phaedra is encouraged to confess her passion by the nurse, Oenone. Oenone wants to help Phaedra and console her advising to reveal her love to Hippolytus, her stepson. Phaedra, however, feels that she will be judged when she tells him the truth. What Hippolytus wants to do is to go away and never hear any word, but Phaedra confesses her love to him, she insists on mentioning about her love:

Know Phaedra, then, and all her madness. Yes,  
I love; but do not think that I condone it,  
Or think it innocent; nor that I ever  
With base complaisance added to the poison  
Of my mad passion. Hapless victim of  
Celestial vengeance, I abhor myself  
More than you can... (pp. 197-198)

Racine illustrates love with its complex feelings and intensifies the mytheme of love and confessions. The love given by the gods to Phaedra gives more conflict in herself. Her reason and passion bring a big clash in her psyche. She is aware that this love is a madness and it takes her reason from her.

Not only does Phaedra confess her love, but also her resistance to this love. Her speech includes "self-accusation and self-justification" (Goldmann, 1964, p. 387). She admits that the passion is not innocent and fatal passion is given by the goddess. In her confession of love, "Phèdre tells Hippolyte that her passion was a poison stronger than her will" (Hartle, 1961, p. 137). In these lines, Phaedra exposes her feelings:

Believe me, Prince,  
This dreadful monster would not seek to flee.  
There is my heart: there you should aim your blow.

I feel it now, eager to expiate  
 Its sin, advance towards your arm. Strike.  
 Confession monster sin (p. 198)

This shows that Phaedra cannot control her passion as it is too strong. She reveals her “self-condemnation” as she feels guilt and shame. It is very significant to mention, “for Phèdre, an increase in her guilt can come about only through its “publication”; since it had long since reached a maximum as an internal state, her knowledge that other interested persons now know will constitute a new source of suffering for her” (Weinberg, 1963, p. 259).

Hippolytus pretends that he did not understand Phaedra’s declaration of love. He does not listen anymore when Phaedra reveals her love, especially with these words: “Phaedra would have returned with you, or else been lost with you” (p. 197). As she goes on speaking,

her language becomes more and more disturbed and disturbing. The lines trace her confusions of identity, as he rewrites the past in terms of the immediate present. Hippolyte, appalled, guesses the true meaning of what he is hearing and interrupts her; but Phèdre has lost her already perilous hold on reality. (Goeder, 1999, p. 215)

Phaedra’s uttered words show her complex psychology; for instance, firstly she says that Theseus cannot be sent back by the gods as he is dead, then she says that Theseus is not dead since he still lives in Hippolytus. Therefore, Phaedra sees her husband before her eyes. It is strange that she mentions about her dead husband Theseus to Hippolytus, whom she loves, connecting Hippolytus to his father. It is seen that Phaedra is not herself; she changes her identity in front of Hippolytus. She cannot speak logically, properly and organizedly. This speech of confession is a speech that “enacts the displacements of desire, of time, place, and people which run all through the play – a speech in which a woman gives herself away, and in doing so (as Hélène Cixous puts it ) loses a life and kingdom” (Goeder, 1999, p. 215).

Unlike in scenario of the myth of Phaedra, in Racinian play the mytheme of confession to Theseus occurs at the end of the play. The guilt and shame of Phaedra make Phaedra tell what has happened. She wants to reveal Hippolytus’ innocence:

Hear me, Theseus. It was I myself  
 Who cast upon your chaste and modest son

Unholy and incestuous eyes. The heavens  
 Put in my breast that fatal spark\_the rest  
 Was undertaken by the vile Oenone. (p. 224)

Phaedra puts the blame on Oenone, feels remorse and “she confesses her responsibility but insists that heaven is the real author of her crimes” (Mason, 1999, p. 197). In short, Phaedra’s confession is made three times; namely, she breaks before Oenone, before Hippolytus and before Theseus. It is asserted that

these three outbursts have a mourning gravity; from one to the next, Phaedra approaches an increasingly pure state of language. The first confession is still narcissistic, Oenone is merely her maternal double: Phaedra disburdens herself to herself, seeks her identity, makes her own history; her confession is an epic one. The second time, Phaedra binds herself magically to Hippolytus by a performance: she represents her love, her avowal is dramatic. The third time, she confesses publicly before the person who by his mere being has instituted the transgression; her confession is literal, purified of all theatre; her language is totally coincident with the fact, it is a correction: Phaedra can die, the tragedy is exhausted.” (Barthes, 1992, pp. 116,117)

As it is understood from Barthes, the confessions of Phaedra carry different forms as well as different meanings. Using these forms and meanings, Racine constructs and reconstructs the mytheme of confession, creating his own version and through these constructed three ways of confessions the action leads to a tragedy and make the play a tragedy.

What is not seen in the myth of Phaedra is the presentation of the confession of Hippolytus’ love. Giving a different dimension to the play, Racine adds the confession of Hippolytus love for Aricia, which echoes Phaedra’s earlier confession. Hippolytus cannot carry his love without exposing her any more:

I must inform you, madam, of a secret  
 My heart no longer can contain. You see  
 Before you a lamentable prince, a type  
 Of headstrong pride. I, rebel against love,  
 For long have scorned its captives. I deplored  
 The shipwreck of weak mortals, and proposed  
 To contemplate the tempests from the shore.  
 But now enslaved under the common law (pp. 193-194)

In *Phèdre*, the mythical Hippolytus is portrayed in a different way since Hippolytus becomes a captive of love. Love captures him, though he rebels. He loses himself. He

escapes from Aricia, but he says that he cannot go on living like this. He sees her image everywhere and feels desperate and being tortured. As in the case of Phaedra, he loses his “reason”. He forgets his “bow”, “spears”, “chariot which might make him a hero, which might make him himself. For Phaedra and Hippolytus, the confession of love and some speeches show that love is “romantic love” type in this play.

### **3.1.3.4 Phaedra’s Accusation against Her Stepson**

One of the mythemes seen in the myth of Phaedra is Phaedra’s accusation against her stepson. However, Racine deals with the accusation motif in a different way. In *Phèdre*, that Racine Theseus’ absence appears has an important and dynamic role in the play. Due to Theseus’ appearance after the news of his death and then the news of his being alive, Phaedra is stressed about Hippolytus’ knowledge of her incestuous love and “adulterous passion”, so Oenone suggests the accusation of Hippolytus.

Mytheme of accusation is reworked here. Unlike the myth of Phaedra in Racinian play, Phaedra does not accuse Hippolytus by writing a letter or telling that he made improper advances to her. In this play, Oenone tells Theseus that Hippolytus wants to seduce his mother Phaedra; in other words, the accusation is done by Oenone. Without searching for truth, Theseus believes the accusation and finds Hippolytus a traitor, a “rash traitor”. He admits “all the lies told to him as truths and all the truths as lies” and “he wants to be deceived, and accepts the final truth only with the greatest reluctance” (Goldmann, 1964, p. 381). Therefore, Theseus condemns his son and asks Neptune to punish him.

Racine makes the mytheme of accusation anew in his creation as a need to answer to the neoclassical principle of decorum. Racine puts emphasis on duty, but Hippolytus neglects it as a son of King, since he loves Aricia, who is the sister of their enemy. Phaedra also neglects her duty as a queen and embarks on her love to Hippolytus. It is late to be the king of Athens, since Phaedra’s older son has already pronounced himself as the new kings of Athens and Phaedra as his regent. Even it is late to seek his father as his father appears alive in Troezen. Hippolytus cannot replace Theseus as a king and does not correspond to his duties. As a result, there appears pressure on duty and

pressure on lovers, developed by the needs of decorum. At this point, the mytheme of accusation deviates from the original myth and produces new meanings.

Phaedra regrets and wants to reveal the falseness of her accusation of rape after her awareness of what she has done to Hippolytus, but she unexpectedly learns that Hippolytus loves Aricia, whom she thinks to in conflict with Hippolytus. So, confession of accusation delays because of Phaedra's jealousy. By using the mytheme of jealousy in his treatment of this myth, Racine brings novelty to the play.

Due to her jealousy, her forbidden love becomes intense which brings more conflict and which fades her hope away from life, however, the accusation is not revealed until the end of the play. When Phaedra sees what her accusation causes, her guilt and blame exceed, and she cannot bear it any longer. Since she becomes too much regretful, she tells the truth at the end and she tries to show Hippolytus' innocence. She breaks the silence before her death speaking, by revealing the accusation.

In his interpretation of the myth, in revealing the accusation, Racine prevails the innocence by means of Phaedra in an effective way. As far as it is understood from Phaedra's lines, she attempts to show she is not totally guilty; instead of assuming her guilt, she keeps accusing the others, gods and her nurse Oenone. In that respect, it can be said she is a victim of circumstances in this tragedy.

### **3.1.3.5. Phaedra's Suicide**

The mytheme of suicide is present throughout the play, but as an action, it takes place at the end. Racine constructs the mytheme of suicide by showing Phaedra's three attempts: The first attempt to commit suicide is seen in Phaedra's starvation. Then, the second is seen in the confession scene. At the end, she poisons herself. Phaedra would rather die than be humiliated by Hippolytus. She asks Hippolytus to destroy her heart:

Or if you think it unworthy of your blows,  
 Your hatred envying me a death so sweet,  
 Or if you think your hand with blood too vile  
 Would be imbrued, lend me your sword instead. (p. 198)

After seeing Hippolytus' unwillingness, Phaedra grasps his sword and attempts to slay herself. According to Braga, in Phaedra's obsession with death Phaedra's sexual fantasy is hidden. Phaedra desires to "consummate the bloody sacrificial rite by dying at the hands of the tender thrust of his sword", unless she gets "physical attention" from Hippolytus, unless he admits her advances at "coitus" in life (Braga, 1990, p. 291). For Phaedra, to live is all related to the answered love or death must come from the hands of the lover.

When Phaedra is about to stab herself by the sword, Oenone comes and prevents her from killing herself. Racine rewrites the delay of Phaedra's death by the help of Oenone. Since Phaedra yearns for death, she is in such death preparations. Oenone, however, thinks that ending her life is a crime and tries to change Phaedra's mind. At that point, Oenone puts the emphasis on "living", while Phaedra concentrates on death. In that respect, the binary opposition of living vs. death comes into prominence. Oenone strives to bring Phaedra back to the life. In order to change her mind and prevent her from "starving herself", she puts forward three rational arguments: "Suicide is an offence to the gods", meaning it is the sin in the eyes of the gods, "a betrayal of her husband and a deprivation to her children" (Braga, 1990, p. 290). As the play progresses, it is understood that "Oenone's strategy of bringing Phèdre back to the concerns of the "living" and the "livable" becomes only truly effective when Phèdre's vanity and jealousy are piqued upon discovering that Hippolyte has known love and that she has a rival in Aricie" (Ibid., p. 295).

Contrary to the scenario of the myth of Phaedra, in this play the suicide takes place by Phaedra's poisoning herself, which is the last way to end her own life. Reconstructing the mytheme of Phaedra's suicide, Racine makes Phaedra's "sense of guilt" and "remorse" reach its height and intensifies the mytheme of Phaedra's death. After revealing Hippolytus' innocence, she desires to die at the end:

... Baring my remorse  
 Before you, I wished to take a slower road  
 To the house of Death, I have taken\_ I have made  
 Course through my burning veins a deadly poison  
 Medea brought to Athens. (pp. 224-225)

Her death is the only solution for her as she thinks she cannot achieve to live in peace in this world. In that speech, Phaedra relates to Medea, who is another mythical figure that has a tragic end. Phaedra “comes on stage to confess, having previously taken a very real poison brought to Athens by that other great culprit and victim of love, Medea” (Hartle, 1961, p. 138). What Phaedra might imply is that her final fate resembles Medea. Her last words are melancholic. Goldmann asserts:

The last words of Phaedra might perhaps have allowed a certain vagueness and misunderstanding to exist. In trying to live in the world\_ and this was her illusion\_ she had tried to raise it to her own level in order to achieve a dialogue with it. Until the very end she had spoken to Hippolytus who was wholly good and wholly courageous, and she is now leaving this world in order to enable the cosmic and social order (‘the heavens and my husband’) to resume its course. (1964, p. 382)

To be clear, the protagonist’ relation to life is less than the relation to death. Phaedra tries to have a dialogue with life through the love of Hippolytus. She creates her own life, but this is an illusion and it is devoid of reason. As she cannot connect with life, she tries to connect with death. In that respect, the binary opposition of living vs. dying is vivid again. Racine underlines this binary opposition throughout the play and intensifies it.

In an original way, by using the mytheme of death Racine gives a detailed description of how the poison entered into the heart and gradually killed her:

... Already the venom  
Has reached my dying heart, and thrown upon it  
An unimagined cold. Already I see,  
As through a mist, the sky above, the husband  
My presence outrages; and Death, that robs  
My eyes of clearness, to the day they soil  
Restores its purity. (p. 225)

Racine reinvents the way Phaedra dies and makes the mytheme of death anew, while considering Phaedra who dies in front of Theseus’ eyes and who feels death in her body. In her speech written above, the dying heart is used figuratively. The extreme cold reaches into Phaedra’s body. Death, for her, reinvents the purity. In other words, for her death purifies her. It is presented that “only her death by purifying the Universe can purify her” (Borgerhoff, 1950, p. 170). It means that she cannot have purity with life. It is impossible to gain it.

In this speech written above, Racine represents feelings of a woman who suffers her agony, feels the poison and also the coldness of the death. On the other hand, paradoxically, the poison which infests her body gives purity to her. Purity is achieved through her honest confession that saves her innocence:

Though she speaks of preserving her honor or good name, her true and hopeless hunger is for innocence, for a state of soul called “purity,” which both she and Hippolytus associate with the *jour*, the clean light of day. And “purity,” indeed, is the last word spoken by her dying lips. (Wilbur, 1986, p. XV)

After her confession, she dies. Before dying, her sincere words make the reader or the audience think and arouse pity and terror, as she says: “the heavens put in my breast that fatal spark – the rest was undertaken by the vile Oenone” (p. 224). In Racine’s preface and in other sources, it is shown that Phaedra’s crime is done involuntarily or she is not completely guilty; in other words, her crime is “a punishment of the Gods”. In that respect, it can be said that she is a victim, since she is not offered much choice, so she cannot find any way to be out of her imprisoning passion. On the other hand, there appears a paradox. Phaedra sentences herself to death, but at the same time she lays the blame on the gods. At that point, the question of her free will emerges. According to Monaco, “suicide shows most acutely both the power of the gods and the power of the individual to bring on her own ruin” (1955, p. 454).

### 3.1.3.6 Hippolytus’ Death

Another mytheme present in *Phèdre* is the mytheme of Hippolytus’ death. Through Phaedra’s nurse, Hippolytus is accused of attempted rape. Since Theseus believes that his son betrays him, he gives punishment by the help of Nephune. While Hippolytus is driving his chariot by the seashore, a sea monster appears from the sea. The horses get terrified, but Hippolytus fights. Mytheme of death is revealed by Theramenes, tutor to Hippolytus, in order to emphasize the tragic situation and suffering, but though his death is a loss, death as an action refers to a personal accomplishment and it unfolds the fact that it takes place only in the end:

His huge head armed with menacing horns, his body  
Covered with yellow scales, half-bull, half-dragon,  
With his croup curved in involuted folds.



The seashore trembled with his bellowing;  
 The sky with horror saw that savage monster;  
 The earth was moved, the air infected with it;  
 The sea which brought it started back amazed.  
 Everyone fled; seeing all courage vain;  
 They sought asylum in a neighboring temple.  
 Hippolytus alone, a worthy son  
 Of a heroic father, stopped his horses,  
 Seized his javelins, approached the monster,  
 And, with a dart, thrown with unerring aim,  
 Wounded it in the flank. With rage and pain,  
 The monster leapt... (p. 222)

Racine uses familiar mythical scenarios considering the mythical stories. He reinvents Hippolytus' death by using the monster symbolically and creating Hippolytus as a heroic figure. According to Hartle, "in purging the earth of this monster Hippolyte achieves before his death the heroic stature he had longed for" (Hartle, 1961, p. 139). At the same time, he wins or reveals his manhood, which is directly related to his admiration for his father's heroic adventure. As it is asserted, "the monster against which Hippolytus to win his manhood and his filial legitimacy fulfils the intuition of his account of [his] father's story" (DeJean, 1987, p. 802). Therefore, Racine brings novelty while using this mytheme in such a way that Hippolytus gains a heroic status, just like his father. At the same time, Racine depicts the supernatural scene in a manner that gives the credibility to the play and fits also the neoclassical demand of verisimilitude. It gives a natural effect.

From a different perspective, it can be said that the monster is also used as an opponent of Hippolytus. Han asserts as, "[j]ust as the wounded monster confronts Hippolyte and his horses, so Phèdre confronts Hippolyte as her opponent" (1974, p. 86). But, in the end Hippolytus dies though he fights with his opponent, the monster bravely and Theseus gets remorse learning of his son's death and innocence.

Racine deviates from the original myth and constructs this mytheme giving a role to Aricia. To replace his son Hippolytus, Theseus admits Aricia as his child and the play attains a new dimension. For the readers and the audiences it is interesting and surprising that Theseus admits Aricia as a true child for him, because, it is known that she is the sister of his enemy and he is captured as a consequence of this enmity. Han

claims that “the king’s desire to attach himself to Aricia indicates his ultimate lack of comprehension, and though this gesture could ever restore the balance in the social unit” (1973, p. 25). On the other hand, it might be a compensation of Theseus’ mistake, as Theseus caused his son’s death because of Phaedra’s instant decision to conceal the truth. Hippolytus, before dying, asks his tutor, Theramenes to look after Aricia and asks to inform Theseus to look after Aricia when he is about to die. Theramenes informs his last words to Theseus.

Racine deals with issue of enemy and the lover in a remarkable way through the myth of Phaedra. With his emphasis on reconciliation, Racine reshapes the myth of Phaedra.

The mytheme of death is presented in such a way that Hippolytus is also a victim of love like Phaedra. Unlike Phaedra, he loves Aricia and he is destroyed as a result of Phaedra’s fatal love for him and his own love for Aricia. Accordingly, this tragic end is an inevitable for Hippolytus as it is asserted that Hippolytus has “premature ambition” to take over his father’s role in addition to Phaedra’s “monstrous desire”. (DeJean, 1987, p. 801)

## CHAPTER 4

### 4.1 Sarah Kane Theatre

Sarah Kane (1971-1999), one of the remarkable and well-known British playwrights of the British Theatre in the 1990s, introduces a radical theatrical representation which has a powerful impact on contemporary British theatre.

Kane, as a playwright of 1990s, rejects the norm of the contemporary British stage and reveals taboos like sex, rape, torture, nudity and cannibalism, presenting shocking, unrepresentable, violent acts and images. One of the basic features of her playwriting is explicit representation of violence and sex, which are also distinguished characteristics of 1990s playwriting, in-your-face theatre. Kane displays extremity in language and content through disturbing images, using unusual language, form and content, focusing on images rather than dialogues in her provocative plays. According to Urban, “[n]ot dominated by dialogue, her plays use images and movement to re-imagine the British stage” (2001, p. 40). Kane is preoccupied with her unique theatrical vision, rather than embarking on long dialogues.

Her dramaturgy presents frightening and painful scenes with extreme emotions and brutality. Kane uses same basic themes, such as incest, murder, rape, suicide, in her plays *Phaedra's Love*, *4.48 Psychosis* and *Crave*, to convey the intended feelings.

When it comes to theatrical representation, Kane does not give many instructions to theatrical representation, none for the actors, readers and the directors. If every piece of playwriting is envisaged for the representation of the drama or the performance, for Kane this active collaboration becomes of essential importance. In Kane's theatre, the integration of the directors and the actors is important. As for the directors and actors, there is no complete authorial closure; even audiences become integral parts of her plays' meanings; so her texts allow the richness of theatricality in terms of acting, directing and staging. Kane's play *Phaedra's Love*, which is the focus of this study, attains its meaning by the help of this cooperation of the writer, directors, actors and spectators.

### 4.1.1 Phaedra's Love

Phaedra, written in 1996, is one of Kane's plays which exhibit some peculiarities of in-yer-face theatre. Kane writes a contemporary play, taking the subject from the Phaedra myth.

### 4.1.2 In-yer-face Theatre

In the 1990s, a group of writers emerged and contributed to theatre by using disturbing, shocking acts and images to awaken the audience; presenting a new dramatic vocabulary, which includes violent, vulgar and aggressive words and aiming at making the audience feel and respond. This group of writers formed a new style of drama: in-yer-face theatre. Aleks Sierz, the theatre author and critic, defines the term 'in-yer-face', which is presented in *The New Oxford Dictionary* "as something 'blatantly aggressive or provocative, impossible to ignore or avoid'", and by *The Collins English Dictionary* as "confrontational" adding this adjective to the definition. Aleks Sierz widely defines "In-yer-Face" theatre as:

any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message. It is a theatre of sensation: it jolts both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves and provoking alarm. Often such drama employs shock tactics, or is shocking because it is new in tone or structure or because it is bolder or more experimental than what audiences are used to. Questioning moral norms, it affronts the ruling ideas of what can or what should be shown onstage; it also taps into more primitive feelings, smashing taboos, mentioning the forbidden, creating discomfort. (Sierz, 2000, p. 4)

In-yer-face theatre is different from the conventional theatre in terms of tone, structure and content, as far as it is understood from what Sierz points out. Showing unusual tone, structure and content, in-yer face theatre aims to give a kind of discomfort to make the audiences take into action until they have the message; instead of making the audiences sit back comfortably. It gives them a kind of emotional journey; in other words, in-yer face theatre rests upon the idea that there is a savage world, which is hidden in the masks of humanity and society though, we live in a modern one. Thus, in yer-face theatre disturbs shocks and provokes to have a response from the audience,

by forcing them to question the existence and the identity of humankind until they take the action.

Sarah Kane, Antony Neilson and Mark Ravenhill, who share a similar sensibility, are considered as seminal playwrights of in-yer-face theatre. These playwrights write socially unacceptable plots, bringing the violence on stage to question the socially constructed truths and norms and to question identity of humans and existence, forcing them to think and encouraging the audiences to take action.

Sierz explains how people understand whether a play is in-yer-face theatre:

the language is usually filthy, characters talk about unmentionable subjects, take their clothes off, have sex, humiliate each another, experience unpleasant emotions, become suddenly violent. At its best, this kind of theatre is so powerful, so visceral, that it forces audiences to react: either they feel like fleeing the building or they are suddenly convinced that it is the best thing they have ever seen, and want all their friends to see it too. It is the kind of theatre that inspires us to use superlatives, whether in praise or condemnation. (Sierz, 2000, p. 5)

According to Sierz's descriptions of in-yer-face theatre, *Phaedra's Love* fits exactly into the new theatrical form of writing, in-yer-face theatre. First of all, the theatrical representation of violence and sex is a kind of revolt in his playwriting. This characteristic of her playwriting has a close relation to in-yer-face theatre. What's more, Kane reveals psychological and emotional aspects, such as extreme love which leads to spiritual pain and suffering and presents inappropriate sexual relations, as depicted in *Phaedra's Love*. Filthy language of in-yer-face theatre share common characteristics with Kane's blatant and direct language; also, Kane's dialogues are furious, fast and provocative. Through the powerful language, Kane demonstrates the pain experienced by her characters and she also engages various dimensions of violence, such as physical, verbal and sexual, as examined in "in-yer-face theatre". Thus, she attracts the attention to these various forms of violence and confronts people with these matters and forces them to experience horrifying feelings during the performance. As seen in "in-yer-face theatre", Kane shakes the audience with unexpected and unrepresentable scenes while they are sitting and watching; so they are integrated into the performance by their response. In short, Kane's provocative features of her plays, rejecting the norms of contemporary British theatre in terms of

form and language is associated with in-yer-face theatre; that's why she is generally accepted as the quintessential writer of in-yer-face theatre in 1990s. (Sierz, 2000, p. 121)

#### **4.1.2.1 The Impact of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty on Sarah Kane's In-yer-face Theatre**

The relationship between in-yer-face theatre and Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty rests upon the fact that Antonin Artaud is the modern ancestor of this form of theatre. In yer face theatre and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty are considered as a provocative and confrontational theatrical forms, whose elements are also found in Sarah Kane's in-yer-face theatre.

To start with the definition of cruelty, according to Artaud, "this rigor, this life that exceeds all bounds and is exercised in the torture and trampling down of everything, this pure implacable feeling is what cruelty is" (1958, p. 114). Any excessive feeling which is repressed, gone beyond the borders, distorts everything and shows itself in the form of cruelty. In that respect, Artaud draws the attention to extremity what Kane is embarked on in her in-yer-face theatre.

Kaplan asserts that Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty is a "theatre of brutal, immediate and cleansing experience" and this form of theatre has a great impact on Sarah Kane. (2005, p. 126) What links Kane to Artaud is the fact that Kane has a great ability to make the terror of violence so immediate to the spectators. In Sarah Kane's in-yer-face theatre, Kane gives stage directions to make the audience watch this horror, providing a zone which is detached from the comfort. Artaud declares that the violence must be directly shown in the stage, this holds a great appeal for Kane and for Kane, without any barriers, the audiences watch directly the violent act which is in front of them. Kane brings the cruelty so close to the spectators that she makes them a witness to this brutality. Artaud's and Kane's form of theatre awakes the audience and shocks. Focusing on the performance of cruelty and shocking the senses, Kane tries to awake the mind and this remind us of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. As mentioned in Artaud's work *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958), we need a theatre that "wakes up: nerves and

heart” (1958, p. 84) So, this awaking helps the audiences to be involved the action. The audience thus becomes an active audience rather than remaining a passive one that sits still in their seat.

Artaud’s regarding as “[t]he misdeeds of the psychological theatre descended from Racine have unaccustomed to us that immediate and violent action which the theatre should possess” (Artaud, p. 84), reminds us of Kane’s use of extreme actions and excessive use of violence, which also echoes in-yer face theatre sensibility.

Unifying feature between Artaud and Sarah Kane’s in-yer face theatre might be the presentation of cruelty. Like Artaud, Sarah Kane focuses on unrepresentable images on extreme action. According to Artaud, “[t]he theater must give us everything that is in crime, love, war, or madnes” (1958, p. 85). In order to present different matters and to reach the audience, Kane uses images, especially dirty images to tell more in her theatre, almost identical to Artaud’s style.

Artaud’s influence on Kane is also seen in her giving more importance to action over words. She uses short and direct language. The details are achieved through stage directions and acting just as found in Artaud’s theatre, so performance has important part in Kane’s in-yer-face theatre.

In an interview with Nils Tabert, Kane speaks and clarifies this issue:

It’s pretty weird – because a lot of people said to me for a long time ‘You must really like Artaud’, and I hadn’t read any of that. Artaud was recommended to me by a lecturer at university who I hated so much that I thought, “Well I’m not going to read it if he thinks Artaud is good. He simply can’t be’. So I only started reading him very recently. And the more I read it thought, ‘Now this is a definition he’s saying’. And I was amazed on how it connects completely with my work. Also his writings about theatre are stunningly good. And it’s amazing to me that I’d never read it. (as sited in Saunders, 2002, p. 16)

Apparently, Kane admits that her work is linked to Artaud’s vision on theatre. Although to reveal this resemblance is not the main focus of this study, it can be mentioned that Kane contributes to the contemporary theatre by continuing and developing Artaud’s stage directions, aggressive language, setting and content, and in the process of reshaping the Phaedra myth these elements become vivid. Though

inspired by the myth of Phaedra, Kane still seeks her originality and succeeds in doing so in her dramatic form.

#### 4.1.3 The Myth of Phaedra in Sarah Kane's Play *Phaedra's Love*

Sarah Kane, one of the distinguished playwrights of British Theatre, rewrites the myth of Phaedra in her play *Phaedra's Love*. It is mostly alleged that *Phaedra's Love* is inspired by the play of Seneca. It is also declared that Kane takes many elements from Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy:

Kane's second play, *Phaedra's Love*, not only retains the tragic protagonist from Seneca's classical Roman drama, but its bloody climax also transposes elements from Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy, in which a form of staged violence is performed that is both outlandish and shocking to the sensibilities. (Saunders, 2002, p. 80)

According to Saunders (2002), "using Seneca's version as a loose model", Kane presents "a personal interpretation of the source material" (p. 72). Thus, Kane shows her own exploration of the Phaedra myth. Kane, in the interview with Tabert, clarifies this:

I read Euripides after I'd written *Phaedra's Love*. And I've never read Racine so far. Also, I only read Seneca once. I didn't want to get too much into it - I certainly didn't want to get too much into it - I certainly didn't want to write a play that you couldn't understand unless you knew the original. I wanted it to stand completely on its own. (as cited in Saunders, 2002, p. 72)

It is obvious that Kane wanted to create some distinctive features in her play without completely being enmeshed into the myth of Phaedra and the earlier models. She attempted to make it understandable, leaving the burden of reading the original source from the reader and the audience. She presents a linear narrative, using the same mythemes as seen in the scenario of Phaedra myth.

While revisiting the Phaedra myth, Kane focuses on both content and the form. She constitutes the dramatic form in such a way that the play conveys the literal meaning. Urban (2001) gives some information about it as the following:

For Kane, content was nothing without a form that best expressed such exploratory demands, and thus, each of her plays literally recasts dramatic form. But as Kane herself



noted, “the element that most outrages those who seek to impose censorship is form”.  
(p. 40)

It is seen that Kane reworks the myth of Phaedra and uses the mythemes to explore the political and socio-cultural contexts related to the historical contexts in the 1990s. *Phaedra's Love* shows not only the self-destruction, but also the corrupted society. In her version of the myth of Phaedra while dealing with the love issue, Kane puts sexually corrupted individual and society to the centre. Meanwhile, she presents matters of class “spreading from the destruction of individual family units more pervasive issues of social decay” (Marshall, 2011, p. 169).

In addition, the myth of Phaedra is used to explore the celebrity culture in that decade. It is asserted that public obsession with celebrities gains new depths in the 1990s though glamour has been part of the society. It appears that “Kane is interested in the modern phenomenon of the adulation of celebrity, lumping the Royal family in with those who are famous and not for any extraordinary talent” (Marshall, 2011, p. 169). The term ‘Cool Britannia’ is pervaded in the 1990s. The term is a:

media-inspired label which celebrates the creativity of British culture in the mid-1990s, acting as both tourist magnet and cultural boosterism. In 1996, Newsweek magazine calls London the ‘the coolest city on the planet’, and the idea of ‘Cool Britannia’ brings together pop music, art, film, theatre, fashion, and even eating out, hyping up national pride, exemplified by the use of the Union Jack to decorate the guitars of musicians or the clothes of celebrities. (Sierz, 2012, p. 14)

Her work is said to have been theatre’s chief contribution to the brief cultural period of the mid 1990s known as ‘Cool Britannia’. (Saunders, 2009, xxiii) She writes in this period and this cultural context in which her play was produced. She makes her play contemporary one using the mythemes of Phaedra and directs the play the contemporary audiences.

In Kane’s presentation of the play, characters are treated in such a way that the contemporary issues of isolation and aimlessness are revealed. Characters, portrayed in a contemporary setting, have no aim and have no good communication with each other. It is alleged as the following:

In the 1990s wave of British dramatists was collectively characterised by a more widespread emphasis on challenging physical and verbal immediacy, and bleak

(arguably nihilistic) observations of social decay, severed isolation and degradation into aimlessness... (Rabey, 2003, p. 192)

In *Phaedra's Love*, In a Royal family and Royal boundaries characters live and they do not go out of these boundaries. In other words, they isolate themselves. They lost in one space having no fulfilment. Though the Royal family and common people are seen in the same setting in the last scene, there appears no healthy integration.

Kane deconstructs the myth of Phaedra, by reworking Hippolytus in her own manner. She chooses a contemporary setting, a room and she deals with such issues like the addiction to the television, the mechanical car, a fast food and sex which are all related to the play station generation. The play opens with this theatrical presentation which is different from other representations of the Phaedra myth and shocks the people by depicting onstage violence, extreme sexuality, and a disgusting way of life.

Kane shows the alienation of Hippolytus, and presents his corrupted and mechanic way of life as mostly seen in postmodern way of life. The isolation of the individual as a result of nihilistic way of life in the contemporary world is revealed. Hippolytus finds the salvation only in his room. At this point, it is seen that Kane deals with the mytheme of salvation. The mechanical car being controlled by Hippolytus in an aimless way is a theatrical image. (Saunders, 2002, p. 20) Kane uses images to tell more in her play; namely images are important means of meaning; especially she presents horrific images of violence. Brutal images demonstrated in the play give more meaning to the play. It might be declared that his operating the car resembles his aimless journey of life, namely, this journey presents his nihilistic way of life. Though it is not healthy, he finds his salvation in a mechanical toy, sex, masturbation, television, junk food and birthday presents. In this respect, it is seen that Kane engages with these contemporary matters in *Phaedra's Love*; in other words, retreating the mythemes of Phaedra and subverting these mythemes, Kane depicts the postmodern condition presenting such issues including consumerism, celebrity culture, violence and so on.

Kane uses the same theatrical presentation to show that Phaedra finds her salvation in the journey of love and to save Hippolytus, in the same way, Strophe finds her salvation to restore the family. Kane puts these characters in the same family to mirror such matters including ills of the individual and the society for the contemporary audience.

Kane's extraordinary voice, the contemporary flavour of language and its content present some provocative matters, deconstructing the myth of Phaedra in her original play. Kane's style of the writing is different from the traditional way of writing and *Phaedra's Love*, which is inspired by the Phaedra myth, shows her resourcefulness.

Kane, in the light of mythemes of love, revenge, accusation, suicide, murder and death, challenges the reader or audience to confront cruelty, brutality, incest and rape situations. So, Kane forces people to feel horror, terror and disgust during her plays' performances and thus shakes them and demands the taking an action instead of a passive awaiting for a purification of their bad feelings.

From beginning to the end, the play presents such motifs as the degradation of the Royals, including sexually decay, violence of the Royals, as well as the degradation of society. If it is accepted that in-yer-face theatre is an extremely violent and aggressive form of art, it might be pointed out that this form of art is an appropriate form of writing for the portrayal of these motifs.

Moreover, *Phaedra's Love* is found as "scathing" and "comedic" (Urban, 2001, p. 42). Sarah Kane, in an interview with Tabert, explains that *Phaedra's Love* is "my comedy" (as cited in Saunders, p. 78). On the other hand, it seems that tragic and cruel elements which appear in the play prevails the comic and funny actions.

#### **4.1.4 Mythemes of the Phaedra Myth in Phaedra's Love**

##### **4.1.4.1 Phaedra in Love with Her Stepson (Forbidden Love)**

One of the distinctive features of the Phaedra myth is Phaedra's love. Taking the mytheme of love from the Phaedra myth and putting this mytheme as the core of the dramatic action in the play, Kane reloads the meaning of the mytheme of love.

While reconstructing the myth of Phaedra, Kane revives the mythemes of love in her play *Phaedra's Love* but challenges the former established meanings. In her treatment of the myth, she develops the mytheme of love by including the physical or sexual love. In her version Phaedra wants to unite Hippolytus not only spiritually but also physically.

Phaedra: Can't switch this off. Can't crush it. Wake up with it, burning me. Think I'll crack open I want him so much. I talk to him. He talks to me, you know, we, we know each other very well, he tells me things, we're very close. About sex and how much it depresses him, and I know. (p. 7)

With Kane's reworking of the myth of Phaedra, the play presents "Hippolytus demonstrating an unconventionally explicit and persistent refusal of shame which enhances his regal sense of sexual privilege, whilst Phaedra poeticizes her own sense of searing, powerless rapture of passion for him" (Rabey, 2003, p. 207). Phaedra romanticizes her love; for even her sexual intercourse is romanticized. On the other hand, for Hippolytus, sex represents copulation. Hippolytus does not feel anything about love or sex; to him it is just a way of filling up the time. Since for Phaedra's love is a physical and spiritual unification, she feels the desperate need to express her love both sexually and spiritually.

Kane adds a new character Strophe, who is Phaedra's daughter, and deviates from the initial scenario by disclosing daughter and mother relationship. Phaedra shares her private life with her daughter as if she were a friend and asks her about Hippolytus' attractiveness. Phaedra mentions that Hippolytus is loved by everyone and she boasts about Hippolytus' popularity. At this point, Kane reveals celebrity cult as a part of the presentation of contemporary matters. Hippolytus as a member of Royal family is the main focus of attention to the public. His birthday is on the agenda, though there are important matters such as war, violence and crime around the world. There are lots of letters and lots of presents for Hippolytus' birthday. Phaedra mentions about the great interest he represents for his subjects: "People brought them to the gate. I think they'd like to have given them to you in person. Taken photos" (p. 75).

Although extremely popular among his subjects, Hippolytus never cares about preserving a polite or sophisticated image of himself, instead he always speaks in a

direct and honest way. He complains about being royal and the royal birthday: “News. Another rape. Child murdered. War somewhere. Few thousand jobs gone. But none of this matters’ cause it’s a royal birthday” (p. 74).

Kane tries to reveal that in the 1990s, the period in which Sarah Kane writes *Phaedra’s Love*, there is a huge gap between rich and poor people. There is Bosnian War. The media is dominated by bad news as seen in the play. The violence and events are shown; but nobody seeks a meaning in them: “television deals with events, not their meaning. It deals with ‘culture’ only when it can be made an anodyne consumer product” (Saunders, 2002, p. 189).

Kane makes a critique of the media and consumerist culture of the 1990s. Besides the issue of consumerist culture she also reveals the celebrity culture in the context of the play. However, the mytheme of love is the main focus of the play. For Phaedra, love is the unforgettable issue. She focuses on her love rather than other matters because she is burning for love.

Phaedra’s desire for Hippolytus is so great that she cannot get him out of her head. Her inability to refuse love and resist it makes her passion intensify. Though Strophe warns Phaedra of Hippolytus’ cruel behaviour towards people whom he has slept with, Phaedra does not listen to her and replies Strophe that it might help her get over him. For the sake of her love, Phaedra wants to save Hippolytus from his bad situation.

In this mytheme, the portrayal of obsessive love is seen. Phaedra, full of desire, says that she “can feel him through the walls, sense him and feel his heartbeat from a mile” (p. 71). Love makes her feelings more complex and then makes her blind. As a result, she cannot think in a logical way and then she loses balance. Though Strophe explains that this love is forbidden and irrational, she persists in it:

Strophe: He’s twenty years younger than you.

Phaedra: Want to climb inside him work him out.

Strophe: This is not healthy.

Phaedra: He’s not my son.

Strophe: You’re married to his father.

Phaedra: He won’t come back, too busy being useless.

Strophe: Mother. If someone were to find out.

Phaedra: Can’t deny something this big. (p. 71)

Phaedra does not actually listen to Strophe and her daughter's warnings do not represent obstacles of Phaedra's love, because Phaedra is not happy about his husband Theseus and does not have a good relationship with him. She refuses to consider Hippolytus her son. In this respect, she refuses that there is an incestuous relation.

When compared to other versions of the myth of Phaedra in Kane's play, the mytheme of love is depicted in a different way. In *Phaedra's Love* the mytheme of love is extended by the issue of sexuality, made clear through the use of striking language and unusual theatrical representation. The explicit sexual desire expressed by Phaedra is shocking:

Phaedra: Have you ever thought about having sex with me?

Hippolytus: I think about having sex with everyone.

Phaedra: Would it make you happy?

Hippolytus: That's not the word exactly.

Phaedra: Not, but –

Hippolytus: No, I never do. (p. 79)

Hippolytus who masturbates all the time and has sex with everyone fails to experience any pleasure from sexual intercourse. He explains that the reason why he has sexual encounters is the fact that life is long; in other words, to cope with the boredom of existence he spends time with dissatisfying sexual relations. For him, life is boring and he waits to see something happening. Phaedra indulges into thinking that Hippolytus would have pleasure with her, but it is not as Phaedra thinks or imagines.

The treatment of the myth of Phaedra discloses this mytheme, which is revealed so radically with emphasis on extreme sexuality. Accordingly, Sarah Kane breaks the taboos and the conventional limits and shows it directly on stage. Phaedra, full of passion, wants to make Hippolytus happy, giving her body as a present. At the same time she wants to see Hippolytus' face when he loses himself. In order to prove her romantic love, she begins an oral sexual intercourse with Hippolytus. However, Hippolytus is indifferent even to Phaedra. His eyes are stuck to the television, giving no reaction to the act of oral sex. It is concluded that "Phaedra's sexual encounter in which she offers herself to him illustrates the one-way nature of the infatuation and the gross inappropriateness of her desire and actions" (Marshall, 2011, p. 173).

Radically Kane brings sexuality to the stage and shows the impossible acts by changing the details of the mytheme of love. Extreme love is reworked with the elements of violence and cruelty; in other words, cruelty, as part of a life, is shown with the help of mytheme of love. Kane does not show what the spectators expect to see; instead, her display of cruelty becomes disturbing for them. According to Artaud, in his work called *The Theatre and Its Double*, “everything that acts is a cruelty. It is upon this idea of extreme action, pushed all limits, that theatre must be rebuilt” (1958, p.85). Artaud draws the attention to the performability of the action and according to him extreme actions like going beyond border of the instructions of theatre must be represented in a theatrical space. It seems that Kane pushes the limits of theatrical representation by revealing the meaning of ‘extremity’. Extreme love and extreme cruelty are shown and the issue of sexuality is presented in an excessive way in the frame of the mytheme of love.

Although Phaedra confesses that her extreme love devastates her, Hippolytus does not change and remains indifferent. He is like a robot. Kane shocks the reader or the audience when in her interpretation Hippolytus confesses to Phaedra of having sex with her stepsister, Strophe.

Hippolytus: She’s less passionate but more practised.

I go for technique every time.

Phaedra: Did you make her come?

Hippolytus: Yes. (p. 84)

Phaedra, who lives in her dream of love, confronts the reality. Phaedra, who lives a romantic love, gets frustrated when she learns it. She acknowledges that she doesn’t know anything about Hippolytus at all.

Through Kane’s contribution of the new manner to the mythic scenario, the mytheme of love exposes that Hippolytus is jealous of people who are happy with their lovers, enjoying their time and living without boredom. Hippolytus’ jealousy and hate is treated in such a way that the mytheme of hate comes after the mytheme of love. In this point, the binary opposition of love vs. hate is revealed:

Hippolytus: Some people have it. They're marking  
time, they're living. With a lover.  
Hate them. (p. 80)

From Hippolytus' violent and cruel behaviour towards Phaedra, it is guessed that Hippolytus used to love Lena and has a story of broken love. After that relationship, Hippolytus must have hated all lovers and their sexual behaviours. He wants to forget everything about what he has had before. As De Vos claims, "[m]emory is the gate to emotional weakness that Hippolytus tries to erase at all costs" (2011, p. 135). In fact, he is a man who hates people. In *Cruelty and Desire in the Modern Theatre*, De Vos states that Hippolytus "starts off as Artaud would call a mummy, the prototype of Western man, spoiled and brain-dead due to an overdose of consumerism" (2011, p. 133). He is passive and cruel man. In the same book, his characteristic including "the dumbness and non-feeling" is explained by Edward Bond "as characteristic of our posthumous society" (p.133). Hippolytus' indifference to Phaedra's feelings is expressed through his extreme brutality:

Hippolytus: See a doctor. I've got gonorrhoea.  
Phaedra: (Tries to speak. A long silence. Eventually.)  
No. Why do you hate me?  
Hippolytus: Because you hate yourself. (p. 85)

In this cruel manner Hippolytus tries to reject Phaedra's love. Eventually, Phaedra sees that her love is unrequited. From Hippolytus' cruel behaviour, Phaedra understands that he has no heart: "You're a heartless bastard" (p.84). Her hope collapses. She becomes more frustrated and she suffers from the pain of unrequited love. Phaedra who lives with her romanticized love, confronts the cruelty of life. While the nature of her love is romantic, Hippolytus is brutal and lacking any involvement. At this point, mytheme of love is blended with the issue of cruelty.

#### **4.1.4.2 The Concealment of Passion for Her Stepson**

One of the used mytheme of Phaedra myth is concealing of passion for her stepson. In Sarah Kane's play, Phaedra initially conceals her love for Hippolytus. Kane adds a doctor as a contemporary figure in her play, and Phaedra has to conceal her love from the Doctor as well. The Doctor is like a detective who tries to reveal the secret of the



Royal family, or a psychologist who attempts to reveal the repressed feelings. In general, it can be claimed that the Doctor replaces the Nurse from Racinian play and represents a kind of gaze of the society which attempts to expose the secrets of the Royalty.

The Doctor comes in order to treat Hippolytus, as Hippolytus stays all day eating junk food, having unsatisfying sexual relations, watching television and having oral gratifications. The epilogue is shocking as it reveals these images which are the carriers of the postmodern condition. Hippolytus, as a mythical character, fails to meet the expectation of the reader since Kane portrays him, as a fat, sexually promiscuous prince, who uses sex to get rid of the banality of his life and spends his time with junk food and television staying at his room all day instead of presenting Hippolytus, as an handsome, charismatic prince who does hunting, taming horses and other mythical works. Kane gives a radical interpretation to Hippolytus in *Phaedra's Love*.

To understand the problem of Hippolytus, the Doctor asks many questions. The conversation begins with the Hippolytus' depression, but unexpectedly, changing the subject, the Doctor randomly asks Phaedra whether she loves Hippolytus or whether she loves his husband, Theseus. Regardless of Phaedra's position as a queen, the Doctor asks more provocative questions. Kane makes explicit references to the issue of sex, and this straightforwardness in language contrasts with the intention of the characters to conceal some facts:

Phaedra: He's got hobbies.

Doctor: Does he have sex with you?

Phaedra: I'm his stepmother. We are royal. (p.66)

In Kane's radical interpretation of the Phaedra myth, she reveals the unexpected and shocking dialogues between Phaedra and the Doctor. The myth of Phaedra gains a different dimension with the revision of this scene. Phaedra conceals her love for her stepson, Hippolytus from the Doctor, not the Nurse, as seen in the scenario of the myth of Phaedra. By adding the Doctor, Kane turns the focus to Hippolytus' problems, in order to increase the awareness from dealing with individual and pervading the Royal family issues to contemporary matters.

At the same time, Kane, while Kane presenting the mytheme of concealment, she uses irony to make people understand that Phaedra is in love and cannot resist it, though she is royal. At this point, love does not listen to the matter of royalty. The Doctor provokes Phaedra to get over Hippolytus, alluding her love to Hippolytus, while Phaedra tries to hide the fact that she doesn't know what to do about her incurable love for Hippolytus.

It is seen that the mytheme of concealment is developed interestingly by Kane, especially by Phaedra attempt to keep her secret from the Doctor, who asks very private questions. Secondly, Phaedra conceals her love from her daughter, Strophe. But she cannot keep it secret from Strophe and exposes her secret. Strophe insists on the concealment of love from Hippolytus and others:

Strophe: No one must know.  
Not even Hippolytus. (p. 73)

Strophe knows that this forbidden love will make them pay a big price if she confesses. Strophe discourages her mother's love and tries to make her give up this forbidden and obsessive love. In this respect, she has a role to be a keeper of integrity of the Royal family.

Strophe replaces the Nurse, from Racine's play, in that she assumes the role of a confidant to Phaedra. However, Kane brings an innovation to the earlier scenario, since as Phaedra's confidant; Strophe defends the concealment of Phaedra's emotions, as they would lead her only to her destruction; whereas the Nurse insists on the confession of Phaedra's passion. As we have seen in Racine's play, the Nurse unwillingly misguides Phaedra, a fact which triggers later unhappy events. In Kane's version, Strophe, through concealment, wants to prevent exactly Phaedra's own destruction and also want to preserve the Royal family's image and moral integrity.

#### **4.1.4.3 The Confessing/Confession either to Her Nurse or to Hippolytus**

One of the important mythemes taken from the myth of Phaedra is confession. There is a clear variation of the mytheme of confession *in Phaedra's Love*. Kane

changes the figure, the Nurse and puts Strophe in place of the Nurse. Phaedra, firstly, confesses to her daughter, Strophe. While Strophe is working, she enters. Through Kane's reinvention of the Phaedra myth, Phaedra is represented as aggressive because of her treatment by the Doctor. Phaedra expresses her anger in front of her daughter using tense and vulgar language which is found in in-her-face theatre: "Go away fuck off don't touch to me stay with me" (p. 69). But, Phaedra is ready to communicate and determined to expose herself in this play. She opens a beginning to talk about her feelings: "Have you ever thought, thought your heart would break" (p. 69). In this respect, the myth of confession varies and Kane deals with the spiritual pain, as it is obvious in the dialogue between Phaedra and Strophe. Furthermore, Kane draws the attention to the body in pain:

Phaedra: Wished you could cut open your chest tear it out to stop the pain?  
 Strophe: That would kill you.  
 Phaedra: This is killing me.  
 Strophe: No. Just feels like it.  
 Phaedra: A spear in my side, burning. (p. 69)

Kane, using figurative meaning of spear, reveals the latent meaning of pain caused by love. She depicts the pain of love through the help of pain experienced by physical body. Kane's concrete language reminds of physicality implied by Artaud in theatrical presentation. Phaedra, using a symbol, tries to mention about the pain of her body and attempts to make it heard.

When Phaedra utters that she is in love with Hippolytus, she laughs hysterically. The reaction, the behaviour of Phaedra becomes more complex with the work of Kane. Suddenly Phaedra asks Strophe whether Hippolytus is attractive or not. Kane deconstructs the mythical obedient Phaedra and make her protagonist speak in an unusual and unexpected way. Mytheme of confession creates new meaning with the presence of Hippolytus. Mytheme of physical love is used in such a way that Phaedra asks Strophe's ideas about Hippolytus' physical appearance. In this respect, it is seen that mytheme of confession is interrelated to the mytheme of love. Strophe attempts to show the real picture, while Phaedra conceptualizes her own world concerning the issue of love.

Additionally, by adding a new character, Strophe, Kane tries to reveal complex family issues, withdrawing from the mythic scenario; Phaedra confesses her love to her daughter, not to her nurse, as seen in the myth of Phaedra. The readers or audiences see the intertwined family relations.

Kane deviates from the original myth and brings some new meaning to the mytheme of confession by the help of Strophe. The mytheme of jealousy in terms of family matters appears as well:

Strophe: You don't talk about anything else any more.

You don't work. He's all you care, but you don't see what he is.

Phaedra: I don't talk about him that often.

Strophe: No. Most of the time you're with him. Even when you're not with him you're with him. And occasionally, when you remember that you gave birth to me and not him, you tell me how ill he is. (p. 72)

It is obvious that Phaedra neglects her duty as a mother and does not take care of Strophe enough. Strophe is jealousy of Hippolytus as Phaedra's mind and heart is busy with him. Strophe mentions that Phaedra does not give a birth to him. But there arises a question. Does Phaedra admit Hippolytus just as somebody else if she does not admit him as a son? In Kane's variation of the mytheme of confession and others, Kane deals with these issues such as being mother, stepmother, brother, stepbrother, sister, stepsister, father, stepbrother and draws the family charts relation in her work. She wants to make people think and question about these matters.

The myth of confession to Hippolytus also takes place in Kane's play. Phaedra and Hippolytus look at each other in silence, but Hippolytus turns back to the television and car. Phaedra unexpectedly asks: "Have you ever thought about sex with me?" In Kane's treatment of confession, the issue of sex arises and Kane deconstructs the issue of love in her reinterpretation. Before the confession of her love, she asks about sexual affair with her. Only then she declares her love for Hippolytus and Hippolytus asks why. Phaedra answers: "You thrill me" (p. 80). Kane, revealing a broken tie of family, presents ongoing confession:

Hippolytus: Why don't you go and talk to Strophe, she's your child, I'm not. Why all this concern for me?

Phaedra: I love you.

Hippolytus: Why?

Phaedra: You're difficult. Moody, cynical, bitter, fat, decadent, spoilt. You stay in bed all day then watch TV all night, you crash around this house with sleep in your eyes and a thought for anyone. You're in pain. I adore you. (pp. 78-79)

Phaedra explains why Hippolytus attracts her and she cannot resist to him. Kane, here, uses unfamiliar explanation and takes people's attention, shocking them. Here Kane breaks down the conventional way of confession of love.

Phaedra's lofty love is interpreted in a wrong way by Hippolytus when she declares her love to Hippolytus. Hippolytus does not believe her exalted love and sees it as a simple sexual experience. At the end, the readers see how badly Phaedra is rejected, thus her intention to save Hippolytus ends in her destruction. As it is seen explicitly, Kane takes the mytheme of confession and uses the basic elements from the Phaedra myth and alters most of the details.

#### **4.1.4.4 Phaedra's Accusation against Her Stepson**

One of the mythemes reworked in *Phaedra's Love* is Phaedra's accusation against her stepson. Compared to the myth of Phaedra, in *Phaedra's Love*, the mytheme of accusation drives Hippolytus to feel fulfilment, though it leads to the tragic destruction making the a human tragedy, so this mytheme is deconstructed in such a way that presents Hippolytus as satisfied with this end.

The first reaction of Hippolytus against the accusation of rape is dealt in an unexpected way in *Phaedra's Love*. When Hippolytus learns about the accusation from Strophe, he does not take it seriously and mocks about it: "She is? How exciting" (p. 86). Kane goes on giving comic effect with the usage of ironic way of speaking. Phaedra's accusation leads Hippolytus to experience a weird kind of joy. Hippolytus, who tries to fill up the time, has a chance to get rid of his boredom with the accusation of rape.

Hippolytus: Then rape is the best she can do.  
Me. A rapist. Things are looking up. (p. 87)

Kane increases comic effect by using irony and draws the attention to the accusation: “A rapist. Better than a fat boy who fucks” (p. 88). The playwright makes us laugh using “defamiliarizing motive”. (Urban, 2008, p. 152) In this respect, it appears that the play displays some comic features, thus, making the reader or audience to take their attention and confront the unexpected. As it seems, Kane presents the mytheme of rape in an unexpected way in order to fit her aim.

In Kane’s invention, Strophe tries to reveal the truth about accusation. Strophe is like a detective. When she asks him whether he has raped Phaedra or not, he replies that he does not know, and asks what it means. Regarding his words, meaninglessness of meaning arises. For Hippolytus, nothing is meaningful. Blocker asserts:

In one sense, if meaning is a kind of projection and the recognition of projection is a sense of meaninglessness, then the sense of meaninglessness rests on the nature of meaning. Looking at it the other way, if meaning is only possible by a kind of projection which is regarded as meaningless, then, equally, meaning rests on the condition of meaninglessness. (1974, p. XI)

As seen in the Phaedra myth, Phaedra accuses Hippolytus of rape before she kills herself. For Kane the reason why Phaedra uses the accusation of rape is the fact that the word itself expresses violence which is one of the demonstrators of in-her-face theatre. Kane also mentions about the ability of the language to describe dissatisfying emotions:

There was something about the inadequacy of language to express emotion that interested me. In Phaedra’s Love, what Hippolytus does to Phaedra is not rape – but the English language doesn’t contain the words to describe the emotional decimation he inflicts. “Rape” is the best word Phaedra can find for it, the most violent and potent, so that’s the word she uses. (Saunders, 2009, p. 73)

According to Ward, “there can be little doubt about that Phaedra was abused, at least emotionally. But there is nothing in Kane’s play to suggest that she was raped in any sense that might be recognized in law” (2013, p. 235).

In *Phaedra’s Love*, Strophe tries to make Hippolytus reject the accusation of rape and she warns him about the effect of this admission of rape. At this point, the playwright strikingly and latently reveals the mytheme of royalty. The accusation of rape has bundle of relations with the deeper meaning. In his respect, Kane displays the

family relationship of mother and daughter. By adding Phaedra's daughter Strophe as a stepsister of Hippolytus, Kane tries to reveal progressively the family ties which are unhealthy and broken. In this point, Kane brings a new perspective to the myth of Phaedra and intensifies its meaning. Strophe explains why she helps him:

Strophe: Sake of the family.  
 Hippolytus: Ah.  
 Strophe: You're my brother.  
 Hippolytus: No I'm not.  
 Strophe: To me.  
 Hippolytus: Strange. The one person in this family who has no claim to its history is the most sickeningly loyal. Poor relation who wants to be what she never will. (p. 88)

But after the accusation Strophe questions Hippolytus. As Phaedra is her mother, Strophe wants to learn the truth. The words what she has used is suspicious whether she really wants to learn about the accusation of rape, because she also asks to learn if Hippolytus had sex with her mother. In an indifference way Hippolytus asks more provocative questions:

Strophe: She's my mother.  
 Hippolytus: So?  
 Strophe: My mother says she was raped.  
 She says you raped her. I want to know if you had sex with my mother.  
 Hippolytus: Because she's your mother or because of what people will say?  
 Strophe: Because she's my mother.  
 Hippolytus: Because you still want me or because you want to know if she was better than you? (p. 87)

From Strophe's words, it might be thought that Strophe has motherly love, but when her sexual relations with Theseus her stepfather and her stepbrother Hippolytus are revealed, there are doubts about that. On the other hand, although Strophe attempts to protect the Royal family integrity in front of society, she conceals complex sexual relations inside the family and therefore, their corruption and lack of purity and virtue are also hidden.

Hippolytus uses direct and humorous way of speaking to deface the truth. Though he is not a lovable character, he does not wear any mask. In 1998, Tabert's interview, Kane says:

For me Hippolytus was always sympathetic because he's always completely and utterly direct with everyone no matter what the outcome is going to be for him for the others. You can never misunderstand anything that he's saying. And I suppose that's one of the things I personally strive for – to be completely and utterly understood. Hippolytus for me is an ideal. If I was like him I'd be quite pleased with myself. He's a completely shit, but he's also very funny, and for me that's always redeeming. If they do it with a sense of humour, then you can forgive them. Whether or not you should is somehow beside the point. (as cited in Saunders, 2009, p. 71)

Kane brings more variation to Phaedra myth with the addition of the Priest to the play and with Hippolytus' direct way of speaking, there occurs such issues such as family, religion, morality and royalty in the mytheme of accusation in *Phaedra's Love*. Like Strophe, the Priest tries to discourage Hippolytus from the admission of accusation. The Priest meets him after his incarceration to make him reject the accusation and he states that he is responsible of his Royal family, but Hippolytus reveals the broken ties of the family which are hidden from society:

Priest: It's not an ordinary family.

Hippolytus: No. None of us are related to each other.

Priest: Royalty is chosen. Because you are more privileged than most you are also more culpable. (p. 93)

For the Priest, the Royal family represents the state and the state is in danger because of Hippolytus's act. He states that his act equals to the violation of the country. That's why, the priest tries to make Hippolytus deny the rape and confess the sin for the sake of the state's future.

Priest: You are in danger of committing it. It's not just your soul at stake, it's the future of your family –

Hippolytus: Ah.

Priest: Your country.

Hippolytus: Why do I always forget this?

Priest: Your sexual indiscretions are of no interest to anyone. But the stability of the nation's moral is. You are a guardian of those morals. You will answer to God for the collapse of the country you and your family lead. (p. 94)

The Priest directs the attention to the morality, but this morality is just a representation; in fact, the states' goodness is more important than his sexual misdeeds. As Krasner claims, “[t]he moral conundrum is not the act of rape, but the implication to the state. The personal is of little if any concern: the social fabric is all. Kane deliberately illustrates the hypocrisy of moral priority in the 1990s” (2016, p. 491).



Kane shows that Hippolytus resists the status quo as he does not fit into it. Kane criticizes the religious and social institutions as they dominantly govern people's life and they are not morally honest and innocent as they seem.

In addition to all, contrary to the scenario of the myth of Phaedra, the issue of "rape" in Kane's play is represented as a true rape scene in the midst of trial of Hippolytus. Theseus, not recognizing Strophe, rapes and slaughters his stepdaughter, since she defends Hippolytus, who is accused of rape. One of the reasons why Kane uses "rape scene" must be to portray the violence. Ward says that "[a]nother common feature, very obviously appropriate in the context of rape, is violence. Kane's violations are each violent, and each differently so" (2013, p. 223).

Kane, in rape scene, displays the violence of this event. The presentation of the accusation of rape is milder than the application for the violent action of rape. To see rape onstage is shocking just as in-her-face theatre aims to shock the audience with unusual and unrepresentable acts. Kane shows the cruelty, brutality and violence of this action which make her play distinguished and unique in her creation of the Phaedra myth.

#### **4.1.4.5 Phaedra's Suicide**

The mytheme of Phaedra's suicide is one of the distinguished mythemes in *Phaedra's Love*. The love brings about the death of Phaedra. Unlike in the myth of the Phaedra, in Kane's play the suicide leads to more complex and bloodier results. Marshall mentions that "Phaedra's suicide sets in motion events that will lead to the disembowelment of Hippolytus and the barbecuing of his genitals at the hand of a mob whipped in a frenzy by his own father Theseus, who kills in turn rapes and kills his stepdaughter Strophe before cutting his throat" (2011, p. 172).

It is interesting to see the way Kane reworks the mytheme Phaedra's suicide. Considering the myth of Phaedra, it can be said that the common point what drives Phaedra to kill herself is unbridled love for her stepson Hippolytus. But with Kane's reinterpretation, some new aspects are revealed. In this play, Phaedra is badly and cruelly rejected by Hippolytus: "Now you've had me, fuck someone else" (p. 84). In

Kane's adaptation, Phaedra is sexually ignored and scorned. Hippolytus' vulgar, tense and direct way of speaking makes the play more extreme, a fact which provides more changes in the reworking of this mytheme.

When Hippolytus asks for his birthday present, Phaedra experiences a kind of sudden awareness about Hippolytus, especially about his cruelty. Hippolytus prevents her from her leaving his room saying: "See a doctor. I've got gonorrhoea" (p. 85). It suggests that Hippolytus is indifferent to have sex with Phaedra, which also means that she is refused in terms of sexual love. It is possible that she recognizes how obsessed she is with this sexual love and how much she puts her passionate love in the center of her life. In this point, reworking of the mytheme of suicide makes the play contemporary.

This mytheme includes also in the issue of "self-hatred" which might lead to Phaedra's death. Before Phaedra leaves the room, Hippolytus explains the reason of her hatred: "Because you hate yourself" (p. 85). At that moment, Phaedra cannot utter any words. At that time, she might have inner conflicts. She might recognize her self-hatred and have a kind of epiphany. The sudden awareness of her confrontation of her self-hatred must create a kind of trauma caused by her conflicts. From this perspective, it can be pointed out that the individual gets frustrated with the sudden confrontation of the "self" and her repressed feelings. Phaedra as a contemporary character finds herself in the middle of nowhere. She tries to constitute her identity only with the help of love and attempts to find a salvation in love. In other words, Phaedra identifies herself with love for Hippolytus and herself is subjected to love. She puts lots of meaning on Hippolytus and her love. While she strives for saving Hippolytus from his blank life, she falls into the darkness of the emptiness without love.

Phaedra's inability to resist her sexual and passionate love, Hippolytus' humiliation on her, Hippolytus' indifference to Phaedra and her confrontation of self-hatred might lead her to suicide. Looking from this angle, it is seen that the mytheme of suicide is given in a more extended way. This mytheme goes into the direction which might reveal the characters' complex psychological representation.

#### 4.1.4.6 Hippolytus' Death

One of the striking mythemes in Kane's work is the death of Hippolytus. Supernatural presentation of the moment in the myth of Phaedra is deconstructed in Kane's work and the mytheme of the death of Hippolytus gains new meanings. Kane draws the portrait of the execution scene in a performative way, but it is opposite to the traditional funeral rite. The death of Hippolytus is represented so vividly that Kane makes the audience conceptualize the death scene step by step. In her depiction of the scene, the body, dismemberment and body mutilation occur.

While revisiting the mytheme of death of Hippolytus in her play, Kane adds some collective characters without giving any names, which stand for common folk. The representation of the common folk and royal, given by some figures, reflects vip cult, including royal vs. anonymous people. Kane suggests that there is a disintegration of a corrupt society. With these people, she portrays more naturalistic scene with the demonstration of the violence, especially collective violence which is done by the collective characters.

As a different presentation of the death trial in Kane's work, the death of Hippolytus starts with the roar of common people and goes on with their fierce and brutal reactions. Man 1 strangles Hippolytus taking a tie from around a child's neck, Theseus is about to start the execution and Strophe tries to prevent him. Everyone expects that Hippolytus will be executed, but there appears that Theseus rapes the woman whom Theseus later recognizes as his stepdaughter Strophe. The playwright shocks the audiences or the readers and deconstructs the mytheme of death of Hippolytus by adding new actions. Kane breaks the expectation, shocks the audience, goes on with her unexpected action and shocks them again and again. Using shock tactics she prevents people from being trapped into the characters world, and forces them to feel, not only see what happens from inside and purge their feelings, and thus respond to the action.

With this chaotic atmosphere, the play gives us the barbaric representation of the world. The crowd watches the rape scene and cheer and Theseus cuts the woman's

throat after raping her. While they are there to see the punishment of rape scene, they allow another rape. So, Kane deconstructs the earlier established meanings in this mytheme in a postmodern manner. When Theseus recognizes that he has raped and killed Strophe, he confesses that he has never liked Strophe. Theseus expresses his repressed feelings about her, but it seems that here some ambiguity arises. It is not understood why. There are lots of uncertainties which must be clarified to understand his motivations. The only clear thing present in the text is his violence: “If I’d known it was you I’d never have” (p. 102). Living the shock of rape of Strophe, Theseus cuts his own throat in the end which makes the play more bloody.

In *Phaedra’s Love*, the punishment of Hippolytus is given by Theseus and the common folk. Woman 2 cuts off Hippolytus’ genitals after Man 1 pulls him down. Even children are part of this brutal execution: “A child takes them off the barbecue and throws them at another child, who screams and runs away” (p. 101). Kane, in this mytheme, implies that even children are part of this violence and brutality. From the mytheme of death, it is understood that under the aspect of nobility lies sexually degradation, violence, aggression and brutality. On the other hand, common people are not different from the Royals. It is clear that Kane puts emphasis on the ills of society in general.

From different perspective, the persecution act reminds us the Dionysian Bacchants. As represented in the play of Euripides, *The Bacchae*, Dionysus is “vengeful purveyor of a cult that promotes blood sacrifice (sometimes human), orgiastic excesses, and madness” (Lima, 2005, p. 6) The key words such as brutality, extreme violence, extreme joy, ecstasy, frenzy, taken from *The Bacchae*, echo Dionysian Bacchants. As seen in *The Bacchae*, people can’t distinguish the true from the false in the persecution act in *Phaedra’s Love*. For example, as presented in *The Bacchae*, the Maenads tear the king Pentheus and his own mother Agaue mutilates his corpse, tearing off his head. In the similar way, the extreme violence, extreme pain and brutality are shown by the people in this scene in *Phaedra’s Love* and having a kind of Dionysian frenzy and giving a sacrifice people have a kind of ecstasy and extreme joy from the brutal and violent acts as seen in the Bacchants and the Maenads. In *Phaedra’s Love*, by sacrificing Hippolytus people believe that they gain release no

matter how cruel and violent they are; they have a pleasure and relief from the violence.

As it is seen, Kane's deconstruction of the mytheme of death of the Hippolytus is conducted in an extremely original manner. She uses brutal images such as the tossing of Hippolytus' genitals onto a barbecue, and his being cut from groin to chest and so on. This shows that Kane presents atrocious scenes on stage and she brings such violence to the stage. The mytheme of death of Hippolytus is reworked in such a way that it seems Kane's experimental writing is appropriate to the in-her-face theatre. She portrays cruelty and violence using shock tactics to mirror the atrocities and making people confront the unexpected scenes such as excessive verbal violence, rape, brutality, violated bodies and cruelty and make people take attitude against them.

In the end of the play, Kane shocks the audience or the reader by exploiting the audience's expectations. The mytheme of the death of Hippolytus is deconstructed in a bizarre way. Unexpectedly Hippolytus does not die yet, opens his eyes, mocks death and expresses that he has pleasure lived by him from this moment has no precedent. Before a vulture descends to devour him, he says:

Hippolytus: Vultures.  
(He manages a smile.)  
If there could have been more moments like this. (pp. 102-103)

Ironically, he experiences the only veritable moment of his existence only moments prior to his death. It could be observed Hippolytus' reaction to death as an authentic experience. Veritable death being preferred by him to false life he experienced. About his line it is stated that Hippolytus

expresses satisfaction at the spectacularly non-canonical death rite that has just been performed, and which stands in stark opposition to the conventional funeral pyre lit by Theseus at Phaedra's burial. His line, however, also sounds as a tongue-in-cheek metatheatrical commentary on Kane's dogged determination to confront her audience with an overdose of violence in order to push theatrical representation to its limits and thereby make its conventions transparent. (Soncini, 2010, p. 125)

Kane exceeds the theatrical boundaries using extreme violence, making people confront this excessive violence and inflicting upon them terrifying and disgusting feelings. What people expect is exploded and new meanings radically arise. Here,

Kane uses the mytheme of death in a different way and reloads it with new meanings. Hippolytus enjoys the brutal death rite and death because it is the way to express himself, 'self', which is the best kind of satisfaction or pleasure. His smiling shows that he enjoys his brutal destiny. It is the moment that he is able to feel. In Tabert's interview, Kane expresses:

The only way back to any kind of sanity is to connect physically with who you are, emotionally and spiritually and mentally. And the thing with Hippolytus is that in his moment of death everything suddenly connects. He has one moment of sanity and humanity. But in order to get there he has to die. (as cited in Saunders, 2002, p. 81)

In the same interview, Kane mentions that Hippolytus

recognizes the inanity of his condition in finding meaning and contentment through embracing a violent and bloody death... I don't think he's taking the piss in the last line, but I don't think he's unaware of the fact that it's funny. He's aware of the paradox. (as cited in Saunders, 2002, p. 81)

According to Kane, as a characteristic of Hippolytus, to find meaning in life is meaningless. He finds no pleasure or satisfaction with sex, fast food, his belongings and happenings, as he thinks life is boring and pointless. Surprisingly, in the meaninglessness of his life, meaning arises only on the verge of death. Hippolytus, for Kane, is conscious that the purpose of someone's life consists of discovering a meaning and he is aware of this paradox.

Hippolytus also experiences physical gratification with his violent act of death. Death is the only way to reach this accomplishment:

The disconnect created by commodity culture (humorously shown in the play's opening montage of images, where Hippolytus watches TV, eats a hamburger, and masturbates into a sock) gives way to physical completion, but only in the moment of Hippolytus' violent martyrdom. (Urban, 2001, p. 42)

At the end of the play Hippolytus dies and "a vulture descends and begins to eat his body" (p. 103). The living body is not alive any more. The audience can see the corpse, flesh of the body when the vulture devours the body. Kane focuses on "the imagery of the incineration of bodies and body parts" (Marshall, 2011, p. 178) and deals with body issues in detail, showing the tortured body and body mutilation. De Vos comments as the following:

Nothing must remain from the body which is, then, torn apart. This is precisely what makes Kane's and Artaud's theatre so gruesome; cruelty is not a goal in itself but is seen as an instrument to break out of the chains of the symbolic order. The final aim, then, is to unite body and soul, to obtain a divine aura and do away with the human condition. The osmosis of dualisms resulted in the divine unity Kane always dreamt of, but the closer one gets to this abyss of completeness – which, in the end, comes down to nothing – the crueller and more destructive the effects are. (pp. 156-157)

Hippolytus does not plan his final moment beforehand. His refusal to reject to the accusation of rape and also the death of Phaedra leads to his death. However, according to De Vos, this might cause unification of body and soul and what remains from the death rite of Hippolytus is more detrimental results. It is seen that a Royal family collapses and the result almost brings about an empire's collapse.

In addition, in contrast to the scenario of the myth of Phaedra, Kane deconstructs the character of Hippolytus and with the variation on this mytheme creates an anti-hero character, who stands in opposition to the conventional hero of the myth. Kane deconstructs the character of Hippolytus, by presenting him as a scapegoat figure.

#### **4.1.4.6.1 Hippolytus as a Scapegoat Figure**

From a different point, Hippolytus is portrayed as a scapegoat figure, a term which is developed by René Girard and defined as an arbitrarily chosen one. According to Girard, people were the first sacrificial victims and there needed someone who was guilty and needed a scapegoat. Scapegoat figure is the one who is blamed and expelled from the society.

Hippolytus is arbitrarily elected and is wrongly persecuted. By destroying the scapegoat, people feel relieved of their tension and anger and also feel that they prevent the scapegoat from giving any harm to them as they think that Hippolytus is responsible for the destruction of the social order, a kind of plague which can spread over the society. He is really envisaged as the cause of the crisis and disorder in the society. For people the murder of the victim is for the society's sake. To destroy him people show violence and cruelty towards Hippolytus, because people believe that they will possess the peace and order.

From the beginning, Hippolytus knows that the best thing for himself is his own death. Instead of purifying himself, Hippolytus is willing to die. Unlike Girard's definition of the scapegoat figure, in *Phaedra's Love*, the scapegoat figure is different from the one Girard mentions, as De Vos asserts that the arbitrarily chosen scapegoat in this play is "not a mere victim, but a hero driven by his dangerously determinate willpower"; in this respect, with *Phaedra's Love*, Sarah Kane has written a contemporary tragedy. (De Vos, 2011, p. 160) While Girard's scapegoat is weak and innocent victim, Hippolytus appears "as a conscious subject", he "consciously takes on the role of sacrifice to quell society's anger" and he is not portrayed as a "helpless victim"; instead, Kane's Hippolytus "takes an active role in his appointment as the surrogate victim" (p. 159). In Kane's contemporary tragedy, Hippolytus takes "the leading role in the process and has, paradoxically, from the moment of Phaedra's own self-sacrifice to his lynching, full control over the events"; unlike Girard's offer of scapegoat and understanding of sacrificial victim, it should be mentioned that in *Phaedra's Love* Hippolytus sacrifices himself first and foremost in order to save himself, to help himself get in touch with real life again" (p. 159). In this respect, it is obvious that Sarah Kane uses the myth of Phaedra and inverts some of the mythemes to write a contemporary play, presenting a sacrificial hero, not a mere sacrificial victim. In this tragedy, different from the traditional scapegoat, as De Vos asserts, in *Phaedra's Love* the scapegoat, Hippolytus, taking an active part in the play, "grows into a hero".



## CHAPTER 5

### 5.1 Comparison between *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love*

This study focuses on the myth of Phaedra, as presented in the dramaturgy of Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane. Using the mythemes of Phaedra myth, Euripides, Racine and Kane create new themes and new meanings in their plays. In their usage and interpretation of the Phaedra myth, there appears some similarities as well as some certain essential differences. In *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *In Phaedra's Love*, the playwrights represent the myth of Phaedra in various ways; as a result, there rise some differences due to their reworking of this myth.

First of all, in a paralleled way, Euripides and Racine take the myth as an ideological product, to serve tragedy, Phaedra, in both plays, *Hippolytus* and *Phèdre* is used as a tragic product though there are some melodramatic remarks of Phaedra in both of the plays. Phaedra is not able to struggle and cannot make herself fall out of love, as she has no control over her feelings and actions. In both plays, she is controlled. In Euripides' play, she is controlled by the goddesses, just as she is controlled by the gods and her nurse Oenone in Racine's play; that's why, she fits well for a tragedy. When it comes to Hippolytus characterization, there appears a crucial difference. Euripides' Hippolytus dies as a passive character. Through this tragic character, Euripides' Hippolytus tells the story of Hippolytus and how he comes to be revered as a cult figure, but Racine's Hippolytus combats his victim and struggles with the injustice of the divine order and the human order and reaches salvation, for he dreams of emulating to be called a hero; however, Hippolytus fits into tragedy as he victimized by the love of Phaedra and the gods and Theseus.

In Greek play *Hippolytus*, the conflict between two goddesses Aphrodite and Artemis is dramatized. Tragedy emerges from the conflict between goddesses, the divine intervention in human relations and the arrogance of Hippolytus. Constructing the Phaedra myth, Euripides extends the play of goddess. Unlike Racine's or Kane's play, in Euripides's work, the goddesses appear as characters in the play. In Euripides,

Hippolytus is the main character and Phaedra is only the secondary character. On the other hand, Racine puts Phaedra in the center of the play. Changing the main character from Hippolytus into Phaedra, Racine gives a new direction to the play; as a result, focusing on Phaedra, the love of Phaedra is dramatized and the mytheme of love is intensified. The similarity between *Hippolytus* and *Phèdre* is that the gods directly interfere in the actions of Hippolytus. When it comes to *Phaedra's Love*, the love is not given by the gods, as explained by Kane: "I didn't want the passion imposed by the external force of the gods. I wanted to give it to the characters, to make it a human tragedy, so turned him into something quite different" (Benedict, 1996).

As seen in *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love*, Racine and Kane reveals a human tragedy in their dramaturgy. Kane concentrates on Hippolytus, giving an active role to him, though *Phaedra's Love* is based on Phaedra's unbridled love. He participates in the play actively. So, Hippolytus is dominant in the play.

Basically, the reworking of mytheme of love brings some changes into the scenario of the Phaedra myth. It is apparent that Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane take the mytheme of incestuous and unrequited love from the Phaedra myth and reshape it in their dramaturgy. In fixed form, Phaedra's love for Hippolytus is preserved in three plays. Euripides, Racine and Kane present the incestuous desire of the wife of Theseus for her stepson Hippolytus.

However, the way of presentation of the love is different. Dealing with love issues, Racine intensifies the romantic desire, while Sarah Kane deals with more sexual and violent desires. Racine's play is "really a masterly pathological study of a woman who is maddened and diseased by ungovernable passion, a play different at all points from Euripides' except in the mere external features of the plot" (Linthorpe, 1914, p. 9). Racine adds political aspects to the mytheme of love. He puts a political crisis in the play and enlarges the love motif, since it loses the private aspect and becomes an issue of the state. Therefore, it is different from the play of Euripides. It is asserted that Racine wrote "polite tragedy" and it is pointed out that what he has written thought classic, but now it is called as "neo-classic" (Freedley & Reeves, 1968, p.134). Racine, in the light of French classicism, reveals human nature in a rational way. He illustrates

emotional realities and gives plausibly universal feelings. Hippolytus' love for Aricia is also represented in a rational way. It seems that these feelings illustrated by Racine is true for all humanity. On the other hand, Euripides, by developing the love to Phaedra as a result of divine intervention, presents a tragedy which gains some ritual features. When it is compared with Euripides, Racine makes the events more natural altering the manners of characters. It is asserted that Euripides play is unquestionably "the prototype of the modern realistic and psychological drama" (Gassner, 1967, p. 61). It is seen that there are realistic aspects of the play *Hippolytus* involving presentation of human condition and there is a psychological presentation of Phaedra; however, Racine gives more factual sequence of dramatic actions and more complex psychological presentation of Phaedra.

In the matter of revenge, in Euripides' play though Phaedra takes revenge on Hippolytus, she is "acting out of realistic drama" (Muller, 1956, p. 119). Muller states that Hippolytus is "more realistic, indeed, than most later tragedies of "romantic love" (Ibid). In *Phèdre*, she takes the urge from her jealousy.

In *Hippolytus*, the story of Phaedra illustrates the same basic theme. It seems that Racine borrows from Euripides as it is based on the same theme; in other words, they share the same theme. Main events, some lines and phrases resemble Euripides' *Hippolytus*; for example, the depiction of Phaedra's weakness is illustrated in a similar way. In *Hippolytus*, Euripides writes Phaedra's speech with the Nurse as the following:

Lift me up! Lift my head up! All the muscles  
are slack and useless. Here, you, take my hands. (p. 252)

Racine, in his play, reflects the same meaning, his words resemble much the ones from Euripides' *Hippolytus*. In *Phèdre*, Phaedra tells the nurse, Oenone:

Phaedra: Let's go no further, dear Oenone, stay  
I've reached the limit of my strength; (p. 183)

Though in both plays, Phaedra is blinded by her passion and her passion drives her madness, In Racine's Phaedra is less rational and she is portrayed as a weak chair, that's why, she is not capable of ruling the kingdom.

Racine's novelty is in his "his principle "interiority" or the "intimacy" of the central action, a principle of his art that led him to place the really important events of the plot within the soul of his protagonist rather than in external episodes" (Weinberg, 1963, p. 256). Weinberg insists that Racine directs to the external actions as well as the change in an emotional level: "Since he was writing drama, of course, there needed to be an externalization of those events; but the real movement and progression of the plot was to consist, ideally, in a change from one state of soul to another state of soul, through intermediate steps and in a probable order" (Ibid.). In Racine's play, the aesthetic form is achieved through the inner reflection of the clash between passion and reason.

On the other hand, although the theme of *Phaedra's Love* relies on Phaedra's love, the presentation of love is inverted in Kane's creation. Because she puts sexually distorted family in the play while dealing with the love issue. Relying on dominant themes in contemporary time period, Kane presents extreme violence and extreme sexuality. However, Kane shows that she preserves issues of mythemes of the Greek theatre: "I wanted to keep the classical concerns of Greek theatre – love, hate, death, revenge, suicide – but use a completely contemporary urban poetry. I see the writing as poetic. Just not verse" (Benedict, 1996).

Kane takes these concerns, changes cultural context of the original one and puts a contemporary cultural context and make the play contemporary. "By Using the title *Phaedra's Love* and by preserving the names of the central characters – Phaedra, Hippolytus, and Theseus – Kane is insisting that the audience be aware that an intertext exists" (Marshall, 2011, p. 172).

Kane maintains the names of the main characters of the mythic scenario: Phaedra, Hippolytus and Theseus. *Phaedra's Love* diverges from the basic pattern of the myth with the use of the Doctor, Strophe, the Priest and common folk. Kane engages with the classical model, but she shows a radical adaptation with her personal interpretation of the Phaedra myth.

Racine gives a simple plot, which is firmly focused on the protagonist Phaedra. On the other hand, Kane gives more complex sequence of events, deconstructing thus the

original myth. Kane displays more complex relations, focusing on sexually corrupt Royal family. Phaedra's oral sex with her stepson, Hippolytus; Strophe's sexual relations with both her stepfather Theseus and stepbrother Hippolytus and Hippolytus' multiple sexual encounters with different people reflect this corruption. The promiscuity of the family is intensified by Theseus, who without recognizing Strophe, rapes her in the trial on Hippolytus. While dealing with complex dramatic actions, Kane presents the matter of class, a sexually decayed Royal family, sex, social decay and matters of postmodern life. In doing so, she gives a new perspective and gives a new insight into the complex contemporary matters.

The basic difference between *Hippolytus* and *Phèdre*, in terms of mytheme of love, is that there are two lovers of Hippolytus in *Phèdre*. Racine adds Aricia as an another lover. In that respect, the delineation of love varies. Racine illustrates love-jealousy relation which makes Phaedra crueller. In the light of this study, it is revealed that Racine changes the portrayal of Hippolytus and makes him fall in love with Aricia, reconstructing the myth of Phaedra. Unlike Euripides' Hippolytus, who is an enemy of women, Racine's Hippolytus is a lover, though Hippolytus is honest and proud in both of the version. In *Phèdre*, the characterization of Hippolytus is discussed as following:

Racine's Hippolyte may appear at first a pale image of the Hippolyte we meet in the classical dramatists and in Garnier. The legendary adjuncts of his hunting, horse-taming, out-of-door life are reduced to a minimum and even presented negatively. His companions have vanished; even his fierce chastity has been taken away from him. Yet the Racinian Hippolyte has a very definite personality, but the essence of the character is determined by Phèdre's passion for him. (Mourgues, 1967, p. 102)

It reflects that characterization of Hippolytus also varies. Euripides and Racine make Phaedra fall in love with Hippolytus, who is sympathetic and attractive. When it comes to Kane, the meaning is totally deconstructed. Kane explains:

This supposedly beautiful young boy is, to my mind, totally unattractive and other than the influence of the gods, I couldn't see why Phaedra would fall in love with him. I wanted that same drive towards destruction at the end" (Benedict, 1996)

Kane portrays Hippolytus as an unpleasant and fat boy. She uses an anti-mythical Hippolytus when presenting Phaedra's love and focuses primarily on Hippolytus,

creating an anti-hero character. She deconstructs the image of mythical hero in *Phaedra's Love* when she presents an anti-hero, who is completely engaged with sex, oral gratification, watching of television and playing electronic car without any pleasure.

The well-known mythical unit of queen, prince, king is subverted and reinvented in *Phaedra's Love*. The repetition of the unit of royalty leads directly to the criticism of class.

In *Phèdre*, Phaedra herself declares her love to Hippolytus and the nurse, Oenone makes the accusation. In Euripides, the Nurse informs Hippolytus of Phaedra's passion for him. In three plays, the crisis occurs due to the absence of Theseus.

In Racine's play, Phaedra does not try to drive Hippolytus to destruction. She listens to Oenone and does what she says. The accusation of Hippolytus is her suggestion and accusation is done by Oenone. Using the nurse as partially responsible for Phaedra's actions gives the play completely a new road to the play. In Euripides' play, Phaedra revenges because of Hippolytus' abusive words and arrogance, leaving an accusation letter and causing his destruction. Phaedra feels shame and guilt in both Euripides' and Racine's versions, and it is related to the incestuous love.

Unrequited love all brings about Phaedra's suicide. The final state for both Hippolytus and Phaedra is death. In *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra's Love*, before the return of Theseus, Phaedra kills herself. On the other hand, Racine changes it. Phaedra kills herself at the end of the play. Only in *Phèdre*, Phaedra dies at the end taking poison. Therefore, the illustration of psyche of Phaedra is intensified with the reworking of the Phaedra myth. When it comes to *Phaedra's Love*, Phaedra kills herself after the confession of love to Hippolytus. Phaedra's suicide drives to such bloody and violent acts.

In *Phaedra's Love* Phaedra's suicide also leads to Hippolytus' destruction. But when the play is analyzed, it is disclosed that Hippolytus' encounter with the death brings fulfilment and satisfaction to him. For Hippolytus, nothing is meaningful except death. In that respect, it is seen that Kane does not show the same ending when the

meaning of mytheme of death is considered. Hippolytus is destroyed by society, men; not by horses, as seen in Euripides and Kane. In that point, Kane reveals the violence, illness and decay of the society, while revealing the myth of Phaedra, and deconstructs the mytheme of Hippolytus. In both Euripides and Racine, Hippolytus becomes a tragic victim, while he becomes anti-hero in Kane. Hippolytus is a victim of love in all three plays. As a consequence of Phaedra's unrequited love for him, Hippolytus is destroyed.

In the play of Euripides and the play of Racine, violent actions happen off-stage. They are narrated, not shown. On the other hand, Sarah Kane chooses to show the violent actions intentionally on stage. She invents her own dramatic form showing impossible acts on stage. Benedict (1996) mentions that Kane has a problem with the idea of the violence since all takes place on the stage. Benedict gives Kane's words: "I mean, if you're not going to see what happens, why not say at home? Why pay ponds 10 to not see it?"

Kane uses extreme violent scenes, showing the unrepresentable acts on stage. In this respect, it is apparent that she uses a different dramatic technique in her reworking of the Phaedra myth. In her presentation of the Phaedra myth, she also uses a different dramatic effect. It can be pointed out that her dramatic composition varies. Considering the importance of the motivation of the characters for a playwright, Kane deals with her characterization by reconstructing and deconstructing it. Kane turns Hippolytus into an alienated man who does not want a meaningful communication and meaningful life. Kane deals with 'self' in such a way that there arises untamed feelings, isolation and fragmented thoughts and speeches. Gritzner states that in many ways Kane's reflection of the self is more radical as "she explores the possibilities and limits of self-construction in a way that reveals the extent to which subjectivity has become instrumentalized and therefore almost extinguished within late-capitalist consumer society" (2008, pp. 334-335).

Dramatic surprise is broken in Euripides, as Aphrodite explains her plan in the beginning. Kane, in *Phaedra's Love*, uses dramatic surprise a lot, while disclosing the Phaedra myth. She shocks the audience again and again. When the reader or the

audience expects anything, this expectation is distorted instantly. For example, while people expect that Hippolytus is dead, he opens his eyes and speaks in an unexpected way. As a result of this dramatic effect and dramatic surprise, the structure of the Phaedra myth is disrupted.

Kane subverts the predictable events and character development in terms of Hippolytus, Phaedra and Theseus. She deconstructs the myth of Phaedra to represent some new perspectives and ideas to reflect her era; especially she uses the Phaedra myth to engage with the late twentieth century global capitalism latently. She subverts the mythical expectation and presentation of the Phaedra myth, dealing with postmodern matters, while Euripides and Racine rely on their own period.

Euripides and Racine arouse emotions for a theatre audience and bring emotional release for the audience to make the audiences purify their feelings, such as pity and fear. In Racine's work, Phaedra goes into tragic end when she realises her crime. At that moment, the audience feels pity and fear in both *Hippolytus* and *Phèdre*. Kane goes beyond this and tries to shake the audience by confronting them with fierce realities of life and make them take action. She presents social disruption, relying on brutal and violent content in *Phaedra's Love*. She targets audience response. Using shock tactics, she tries to make the audiences awake. In short, it reveals that Kane brings new understanding and new interpretation to the Phaedra myth.

In *Phaedra's Love*, the action is more important than the speech. Kane reduces speech. In contrast, Euripides and Racine give importance to the speech. As a director, Kane also pays attention to the performativity of the text. In writing, she shows her different understanding in the reworking of the Phaedra myth. In addition to this, compared to *Hippolytus* and *Phèdre*, *Phaedra's Love* is written in such a way that there arises fragments in the speech coming from the fragments in thought. This makes the myth of Phaedra subverted and makes the play more contemporary. The sequence of dialogues displays a kind of absurd and not meaningful speeches. Kane especially plays with the speech of Hippolytus and presents an ironic, paradoxical, direct and dark humorous speech. In this respect, it becomes distinguished from the version of Euripides and Racine.



In addition to all, Euripides and Racine respect the Aristotelian three unities. In contrast, Kane ignores unities of time, place and action. Racine complies with the neoclassical ideals such as the simplicity, decorum, verisimilitude, bienséance (taste) and so on. Neo-classicism sees the classic masterpieces as authoritative models and it is based on the imitation of the ancients. Racine, relying on neo-classical rules brought from the practice of Greek and Roman drama and the ideas of Aristotle, imitates the Greek play of Euripides, but at the same time he makes his own version, while revealing the myth of Phaedra. Kane deals with the postmodern condition, following a contemporary way of playwriting. Euripides uses a traditional way of playwriting in Greek theatre, using messenger and chorus, as Chorus of Huntsmen and Chorus of Troezenian are seen in *Hippolytus*.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, myth has a capacity to be altered or transformed; however, there is always a discovered, a similar structure as seen in the myth of Phaedra. What makes it different is details. This research has showed that the myth of Phaedra has a basic skeleton involving structural units, called mythemes, which help the researcher study how the myth is used in three texts, *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love*. In this study, it has been also revealed that there are common mythemes belonging to the myth of Phaedra which are seen in the plays of Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane; moreover, in the light of mythemes, the study concludes that Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane disclose the Phaedra myth.

Through the mythemes *Hippolytus*, *Phèdre* and *Phaedra's Love* carry the basic pattern, which shows us the resemblance in their general structure vividly, but these mythemes allow the creation of various meanings in the each play of Euripides, Jean Racine and Sarah Kane. New meaning arises from the interpretation of the taken elements in relation to the whole of the each play. It is apparent that the unrequited love of Phaedra is a starting point for Euripides, Racine and Kane, because it gives them a line to start their plays. New meaning comes from the different interpretation of this mytheme in relation to the whole mythemes of the Phaedra myth. Euripides, Racine and Kane build a strong frame to make the characters drive into an end, thus they also give much importance to the mytheme of death in their creations.

The playwrights represent the Phaedra myth in a different way, revealing different historical moments, periods, points of view and outlooks. Euripides, revisiting the Phaedra myth, illustrates the Greek spirit and understanding of theatre at that period. By the help of the mythemes, his version of the Phaedra myth is more similar with the mythic scenario. With the slight differences of the Phaedra myth, Jean Racine reflects the spirit of neoclassical ideals. Both Euripides and Racine are more closed to the origin of the Phaedra myth though they have their own peculiar language, narration, tone and style in their texts, and though they give different taste to their audiences. Euripides as an Ancient playwright and Racine as a Neo-classical playwright create

their own works disclosing the origin of the mythic scenarios. On the other hand, Kane as a contemporary playwright is not much loyal to the mythic scenarios; she directs to the contemporary period, deconstructing the Phaedra myth, and challenges the established meanings and creates her own meanings. At that point, this research reveals that the needs of the contemporary audiences, and styles and form of the creation of the mythic scenarios in this period are much more different than the Ancient and the Neo-classical audiences and styles and forms of the mythic scenarios in these periods. The contemporary audience would rather see very different creation of the mythic scenarios from the classical models than see a general narration of the mythic scenarios.

What's more, the essence of the transformations in these works lies in the allegorical, paradoxical and symbolic ways of telling. The usage of motifs, images and irony makes each play different. In this respect, the playwrights look for the potentiality of the literature, theatre or explanation of the events and characters in the original myth or other interpretations in plays or works. In addition, the playwrights find ambiguous points in the Phaedra myth, such as why Phaedra kills herself or why she accuses Hippolytus of rape, and in another works, and they create a variation of the Phaedra myth through their own explorations.

While transforming the Phaedra myth in plays, characterization of the characters carries importance as there appears sameness or difference in the structure and the content of the plays. In interpreting myth, reinventing the motivation of the character is also important. Playwrights create the characters in a way that the audiences find the tastes of the period in which the play is written. Sarah Kane shows a radical presentation of the motivation of the characters, which proves that mythemes seen in the Phaedra myth is dislocated to produce numerous meanings and inverted to make the audiences shock. In *Phaedra's Love*, there appears a radical difference while there is a slight difference in the interpreting of the motivation of the characters in Euripides and Racine as the characterization of the characters are different in the period in which Euripides and Racine write their plays.

Euripides, Racine and Kane add their points of view and perspectives to the myth of Phaedra and the myth of Phaedra gains new meaning. They take the basic element or elements of the Phaedra myth and intensify it or them and perpetuate the same meaning, as seen in the case of Phaedra's love in Racine, or change the meaning by constructing, reconstructing and the deconstructing the element as seen in Hippolytus' death in Kane's play.

Kane reveals the dynamic feature of the mythemes in her interpretation. She especially makes the mytheme of death more dynamic. She plays with the mythemes with her extraordinary interpretation and distorts the earlier established element or meanings, such as Phaedra's love and Hippolytus' death. *Phaedra's Love* is an appropriate model which reflects the variations on theme, plot, and characterization, motivation of the characters and chains of events while disclosing the myth of Phaedra.

Briefly, as it is understood, the change of each unit in the structure of the Phaedra myth reveals how the myth is represented. Regarding the structure, when mytheme is changed, recombined and transformed, what has been written in an earlier work, might change into a new one. In that respect, it is seen that myth is flexible and mythemes have a capacity to create innumerable meanings. Therefore, they might be changed from one meaning to another by construction, reconstruction and deconstruction. As a consequence of the transformation of the meaning, a new version of the play of Phaedra myth occurs.

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