

Ghost Light Theatricals

Phaedra

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List of commonly available versions of the Phaedra story

List and Diagram of Versions across Cultures: from *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in World Literature: An Anthology of the Story of the Chaste Youth and the Lustful Stepmother*

Copies of less commonly available versions:

Theseus: A Tragicomedy, by Emilio Carballido, in *The Golden Thread and Other Plays*

The Cretan Woman, by Robinson Jeffers, in *Phaedra and Hippolytus: Myth and Dramatic Form*

From *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in World Literature: An Anthology of the Story of the Chaste Youth and the Lustful Stepmother*:

“Anpu and Bata” (Egyptian)

Genesis 39 (Hebrew)

Moslem Parables (Arabic, Persian, English)

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Medieval Epics (Iranian, Spanish)

20th century - Thomas Mann's novels

Comparison of the Phaedra and Joseph stories: “Biblical Legend in Jewish-Hellenistic Literature with Special Reference to the Treatment of the Potiphar Story in the Testament of Joseph” in *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature*

Other versions: from *The Troubling Play of Gender: The Phaedra Dramas of Tsvetaeva, Yourcenar, and H.D.*:

“Marina Tsvetaeva: Language and the Labyrinth of Letters” – Dreams

“Marguerite Yourcenar: Negotiating a Feminine Authorial Self” – Voice & Gaze

“H.D.'s *Hippolytus Temporizes*: Temporizing with Gender” – Death & the Body

The Characters of the Phaedra Story: “The Old Phaedra” in *Nothing Is As It Seems: The Tragedy of the Implicit in Euripides' Hippolytus*

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Weapons: “Character Structure and Symbols of Power: Sword and Scepter” in *Language and Desire in Seneca’s Phaedra*

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Five major themes from *The Noose of Words: Readings of Desire, Violence, and Language in Euripides’ Hippolytus*:

“Speech and Silence”

“Desire”

“Violence”

“Imitation and Authority”

“The End” of the story of Phaedra

Oppositions and Negations in *Phaedra*: from *Toward a Freudian Theory of Literature*:

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“The Historical question of Myth and the Symbolic Negations”

“A System of Symbolic Negations”

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Bittersweet Nature of Knowledge: “Confusion and Concealment: Vision, Hope and Tragic Knowledge” in *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender, and Commemoration in Alcestis, Hippolytus, and Hecuba*

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Ghosts of the Past: “Seneca’s Patricide and the Trace of Writing” in *Language and Desire in Seneca’s Phaedra*

Arrogance vs. Piety: “Hippolytus’s Merits and Phaedra’s Love” in *The Character of the Euripidean Hippolytus: An Ethno-Psychoanalytical Study*

The Ethics of Greek Tragedy: “Greek Tragedy and Society: A Structuralist Perspective” and “Greek Tragedy: Writing, Truth, and the Representation of the Self” in *Interpreting Greek Tragedy: Myth, Poetry, Text*

Tragedy: “Tragedy and Moralism: Euripides and Seneca,” “The Tragedy of Passion: Racine’s *Phedre*,” and “Myth as Tragic Structure in *Desire Under the Elms*” in *Phaedra and Hippolytus: Myth and Dramatic Form*

Section 13: Archive: Programs, Postcards, Press Release

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List of commonly or locally available versions of the Phaedra story:

Euripides:

The Hippolytus

Seneca:

Phaedra

Jean Racine:

Phaedra (trans. Edwin Morgan, into Glaswegian-based Scots)

Phaedra (trans. Ted Hughes)

Phaedra (trans. & adapted Paul Schmidt)

Phaedra (trans. Richard Wilbur)

Phaedra (trans. Robert Lowell)

Phaedra (trans. Derek Mahon)

Phaedra (trans. Margaret Rawlings)

Kenneth Rexroth:

Phaedra

Eugene O'Neill:

Desire Under the Elms

Sarah Kane:

Phaedra's Love

Charles Mee:

True Love

***** Matthew Maguire:**

Phaedra

Susan Yankowitz:

Phaedra in Delirium

Bret Fetzer:

The Story of the Bull (five short plays including *Phaedra*)

Wooster Group:

To You, the Birdie!

Timberlake Wertenbaker:

The Love of the Nightingale (subplot about Phaedra within play about Philomele)

Benjamin Britten (British composer, conductor, pianist):

Phaedra (1976 dramatic cantata)

Jules Dassin:

Phaedra (1962 film)

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List of questions toward creating a new version of the Phaedra story:

Plot:

1. Do Phaedra and Hippolytus have sex?
2. Does Hippolytus attempt to rape Phaedra?
3. Is Theseus really absent? Or is he merely “absent” emotionally or mentally? If Theseus is there, does Phaedra have sex with him? And if so, does she dream of Hippolytus? And if so, why?
4. Does Theseus die, or seem to die, during the play? Does Phaedra’s pursuit of Hippolytus follow what she thinks is Theseus’s death? Does he reappear, not actually dead?
5. Does Oneone reveal Phaedra’s feelings to Hippolytus with Phaedra’s consent?
6. What does Oneone have to gain or lose by this series of events?
7. Do Phaedra and Hippolytus discuss whether to tell Theseus? Or do they surmise that each other will tell Theseus “their” version of the story, to the other’s detriment? Or do they have the discussion, and then the private fears? Do they both tell Theseus, and compete to be believed?
8. Does a rape accusation accompany Phaedra’s death?
9. Is Phaedra’s death a suicide? Or is Phaedra “dying” of love? What would it be like for Phaedra to have a fatal “illness”? Is Phaedra starving herself to death slowly over her love for Hippolytus?
10. Is suicide an acceptable choice? What other choices could Phaedra make? Or does the suicide happen through self-neglect, rather than one specific single choice?
11. Does Hippolytus rise to live another day?
12. Is any of the seduction, rape accusation, suicide, execution a hallucination? A mental fabrication? A result of a drug overdose?
13. Are there any games in *Phaedra*? Is there any playfulness, or is the pursuit of love and lust all serious?
14. What are the points of *inevitability* in the plot’s actions? Where do the crossroads of multiple choices become closed off?
15. Under what conditions could Phaedra and Hippolytus be together? Who could give permission for that societal rule to be broken?

Characters:

1. Is Hippolytus an adult or a child/teenager? How does this change Phaedra sense of prerogative about what she can do to/with Hippolytus?
2. How does Phaedra feel about herself? About Hippolytus? Does she feel competition with Artemis? Or pity for Hippolytus’s situation?
3. If the rape allegation is a lie, does Phaedra fear for her reputation? Or is she angry at rejection?
4. Why does Oneone decide to reveal Phaedra’s feelings to Hippolytus? What is her relationship to Phaedra, i.e. nurse, nanny, friend, in love with Phaedra, envious of her, etc.?

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List of questions toward creating a new version of the Phaedra story (cont'd):

5. What has caused Hippolytus's strong allegiance to Artemis, and strong antipathy toward women? How does he feel about men?
6. How does Hippolytus's status as a "bastard" affect his feelings and choices?
7. Why does Phaedra feel so strongly about Hippolytus, knowing of his feelings toward women? Or does she not know of those feelings beforehand?
8. How does Phaedra feel about Theseus? About her marriage to Theseus? And about his long absence? How does she feel about being a young wife with an absent spouse?
9. Do either Phaedra or Hippolytus enjoy sex? Have they ever? How do they feel about their bodies? What would it take for either of them to enjoy sex or feel celebratory about their bodies?
10. Do either Phaedra or Hippolytus feel at ease with eye contact, in general? With each other?
11. How much does Ariadne (sister) haunt Phaedra? Does Ariadne appear as a ghost?
12. What kind of relationship does Hippolytus have to Oneone?
13. Why does Theseus believe the accusation against Hippolytus so easily?
14. How did Hippolytus get so jaded and bored? Just by being a prince? Does he find it exciting to be accused of rape?
15. What was Hippolytus's relationship to his mother? How does this affect his feelings toward Theseus? Does he discuss this with anyone?
16. Which humans *does* Hippolytus have a strong relationship with?
17. Is there a daughter of Phaedra (Strophe) in this play? If so, why?
18. How are sex and rape blurred for Phaedra or Hippolytus?
19. Who in this play is crazy?
20. Who in this play might be a hero/ine? Who wants to be a hero/ine? And fails?
21. Who in this play is insatiably curious? What is the role of curiosity in the play's action?

Themes & Images:

1. Why examine "rule-breaking"? To find one message to convey? To demonstrate multiple examples and outcomes?
2. What other themes or images are related to rule-breaking? Sin, transgression, failing, crime, deviance, abnormality, unusualness, illness, infirmity, weakness, rebellion, mutiny, revolution, revolt, insurgency...
3. For whom do we set rules? Or follow rules? For personal integrity, or societal stability? To maintain power relations? To allow freedoms or inhibit choice? How do we maximize personal freedom, and is that an important value? When does collectivity become servitude?
4. What are the pro's and con's of repression?
5. How much of rule-adherence is etiquette and appearance? And how much is substantive, for integrity and honesty? How much is performance, as opposed to real conviction?
6. What is the balance between rules and truth? When should one supercede the other?
7. Should the theme of rule-breaking overtly comment on contemporary events?

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List of questions toward creating a new version of the Phaedra story (cont'd):

8. How much physical sexuality and violence will be shown onstage? Why? Is there some aspect of rule-breaking (a la Sarah Kane) in regard to these staging choices? Will the show incorporate rule-breaking in its form, as well as examining rule-breaking in its content?
9. Who is envious or jealous of whom?
10. What are the internal politics of bringing home a new young wife to upset the existing household balance?
11. What are the adjustments and feelings associated with having/being a new stepmother?
12. How is silence used strategically?
13. What kinds of knowledge are sources of fear and power in the play?
14. How does royalty, or social class, or money, relate to the issues of rule-making and rule-breaking? And the validity of love vs. propriety?
15. Does the play end up as a tragedy yet again?
16. How do we feel about a young man being involved with an older woman?
17. What is desire, and why can we never be free of it? How does desire work upon us? What are its a/moral mechanisms?
18. What is the worst combination of (adult) people who could have an affair with each other? How does the stepmother-stepson combination compare? Are there rules about love, or just about sex?
19. Is pursuit of forbidden love the breaking of a rule, or is it an illness that might be cured? What kind of cure could there be?
20. Is it noble or heroic to fight against forbidden desire? Or is it just self-defeating? Or something else, or all of these things at the same time?
21. What is the place of forgiveness in the play? Of justice? Does punishment serve justice, when rules are broken? Or does rule-breaking set a permanent example that a rule can be broken, however fleetingly?
22. What if a rule was broken inadvertently, realized only after the fact? How does ignorance relate to culpability?
23. Where does judgment come from? Does self-judgment lead to judgment of others, regarding rule-breaking? Or does parental discipline lead to self-judgment? Does Phaedra operate in a panopticon in which servants and family members are always around to see her?
24. What's the difference between a rule and a taboo? What in *Phaedra* is which one?
25. How does loyalty relate to rule-breaking? Is rule-breaking more acceptable if it's done out of loyalty? How is loyalty defined?
26. What is *freedom*? And how does freedom relate to rules? Can there be freedom with anything other than self-made rules? How are rules related to *ethics*?
27. Are the characters influenced by Greek gods alone, or by American influences, particularly Christian figures of Jesus, Mary, and/or the devil? Or by contemporary American constructions of evil, such as Al Qaeda?
28. How do images of monsters or monstrosity (especially moral monstrosity) fit into *Phaedra*?

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List of questions toward creating a new version of the Phaedra story (cont'd):

Structure:

1. Will the Greek names be kept, or replaced with contemporary names?
2. Regarding dialogue structure, will there be consecutive scenes, or will there be (as in Matthew Maguire's version) multiple concurrent overlapping conversations all at once?
3. Does the characters' dialogue correspond to who they are and what they feel, or is it mostly diversion and denial?
4. Will the characters ponder love at length verbally? Or will their dialogue be spare and plot-driven?
5. Will the entire script be in English, or will some sections incorporate foreign languages? If so, why? To illustrate different worlds, and different rules, or some other reason?
6. Will this production be one *Phaedra* or multiple versions, as done by One Year Lease, who performed versions by Hughes, Kane, and Maguire concurrently? (See website at: <http://www.oneyearlease.org/past.html>)
7. How is gender built into the structure of rules? And into the structure of the play? And its staging?
8. Will there be a chorus? What will its function be? Will it be similar to the traditional Greek tragic chorus, teaching traditional values? Or will it subvert that traditional role?