

For Bernard Knox

PHAEDRA AND PASIPHAE:
THE PULL BACKWARD

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Early in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Aphrodite says of Phaedra (47–48):

ἡ δ' εὐκλεῆς μὲν ἀλλ' ὅμως ἀπόλλυται
Φαίδρα.

The comment is two-sided. Phaedra is “of good repute:” not, then, the bad woman of the *First Hippolytus*, the seducing stepmother, the Potiphar's Wife type—or, as Aristophanes would say, another of Euripides' whores.¹ That is the first surprise. But the second (anticipated by the limiting μὲν) is that this new Phaedra is destroyed “all the same,” to bring Hippolytus down. Her bid for moral nobility fails. As Professor Knox and others have shown, it belongs to a larger pattern of effort and failure involving not just Phaedra, but Hippolytus, the Nurse, and Theseus as well.² Indeed, Phaedra's specific virtues, her aristocratic temper and insistence upon respectability and good fame, contribute to her downfall, which is all the more tragic on that account.

¹ See Arist. *Frogs* 1043 ff. (Phaedrass and Sthenoboeas); also *Thesm.* 497, 547, 550. *Frogs* 849–50 may intentionally associate “Cretan monodies” (and their bad prosody?) with “unholy marriages,” referring to the erotic passion of Acrope in *The Cretan Women*, or Pasiphae in *The Cretans* (see below), or Ariadne in *Theseus*, or Phaedra in the *First Hippolytus*.

² On Phaedra's failure and its involvement with that of Hippolytus, the Nurse, and Theseus, see esp. B. M. W. Knox, “The Hippolytus of Euripides,” *YCS* 13 (1952) 3–31. My interpretation of *Hippolytus* also owes much to the essays by A. Rivier, H. Diller, A. Lesky, and R. P. Winnington-Ingram, in *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique VI: Euripide* (Geneva 1958), and C. P. Segal, “The Tragedy of the Hippolytus: The Waters of Ocean and the Untouched Meadow,” *HSCP* 70 (1965) 117–69 (with supplementary observations in later articles elsewhere). My text is *Euripides' Hippolytus*, ed. with introd. and comm. by W. S. Barrett (Oxford 1964).

Her intellectual and moral effort and her failure are described, not uncharitably, by Artemis herself toward the play's end (1298–1312):

ἀλλ' εἰς τόδ' ἦλθον, παιδὸς ἐκδεῖξαι φρένα
 τοῦ σοῦ δικαίαν, ὥς ὑπ' εὐκλείας θάνη,
 καὶ σῆς γυναικὸς οἴστρον ἢ τρόπον τινὰ 1300
 γενναιότητα. τῆς γὰρ ἐχθίστης θεῶν
 ἡμῖν ὄσαισι παρθένειος ἡδονῇ
 δηχθεῖσα κέντροις παιδὸς ἡράσθη σέθεν·
 γνώμη δὲ νικᾶν τὴν Κύπριν πειρωμένη
 τροφοῦ διώλετ' οὐχ ἐκούσα μηχαναῖς, 1305
 ἢ σῶ δι' ὄρκων παιδί σημαίνει νόσον.
 ὁ δ', ὥσπερ οὖν δίκαιον, οὐκ ἐφέσπετο
 λόγοισιν, οὐδ' αὖ πρὸς σέθεν κακούμενος
 ὄρκων ἀφεῖλε πίστιν, εὐσεβῆς γεγώς·
 ἢ δ' εἰς ἔλεγχον μὴ πέσῃ φοβουμένη 1310
 ψευδεῖς γραφὰς ἔγραψε καὶ διώλεσεν
 δόλοισι σὸν παῖδ', ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔπεισέ σε.

Here Phaedra is revealed (a) as a victim of madness and passion. She had a "gadfly," she was stung by the "pricks of Aphrodite," by erotic passion for Hippolytus. Yet since (b) she tried to overcome that passion, and by implication Aphrodite herself, through reasoned intelligence and resolution, she may be granted a kind of nobility: "nobility," for her effort of resistance; "a kind of nobility," because (c) she failed. Aphrodite briefly recapitulates the domino-sequence of events: the Nurse's action, the reactions of Hippolytus, Phaedra, and Theseus. The repeated verb, *διώλετ'*, *διώλεσεν*, recalls how the inner destruction, or demoralization, of Phaedra led by Aphrodite's plan to the outward destruction of Hippolytus; but significantly too, it also suggests (together with much else in the play) an inner kinship of temper and principle between the two antagonists, both passionate for integrity, both doomed to disintegration.³

³ On the central and unifying theme of "loss of innocence," see K. J. Reckford, "Phaethon, Hippolytus, and Aphrodite," *TAPA* 103 (1972) 405–32, esp. 414–21. The destruction of the various characters is given specific connection by repeated terms. Most important are *ἀπόλλυμι* and related words (I mark the most significant occurrences or connections by asterisks) in: 39*; 47*; 248–49; 311; 319 (note the play of sound with the name of Hippolytus); 341; 353; 361; 368; 407; 575; 594; 596; 693; 725; 788; 801; 810*; 835; 839*; 846; 869; 878; 909; 965; 1028; 1032*; 1061; 1140; 1166; 1171; 1305*, 1311*; 1325; 1350; 1367; 1374; 1390; 1398; 1401*, 1403*, 1408*; 1433; 1447; 1457. Similarly, *διαφθείρειν* 376; 389 (but cf. 479, 516, 699); 682; 992; 1008; 1014 (text uncertain); 1357; 1436.

Far from condemning Phaedra, Artemis carefully mitigates her culpability. Phaedra, she says, "was ruined" by the Nurse's devices, "not of her own will." Here Artemis simplifies; she omits the inner complicity with which Phaedra surrendered her liberty of action to the Nurse, though more than half realizing what the latter intended. Nor does Artemis recall the cold, purposeful way Phaedra set about destroying Hippolytus, at once to regain good fame and to humble his masculine pride. We are left with the overall impression of a noble person who was a tragic victim of circumstances. That was more than objective on Artemis' part. It was even kind. And yet: when she prophesies, to console Hippolytus, that unmarried maidens will celebrate his passion, and that "never will it fall into silence, without a name, Phaedra's love for you," we must be reminded, ironically and sadly, of the immensity of Phaedra's failure. She will always be on men's lips, the woman who loved her stepson and brought about his death.

Most critics, from the goddess Artemis onward, have treated Phaedra thoughtfully and considerately. It is not my intention to alter the generally accepted view of her character or her role in the dramatic economy of the *Second Hippolytus* (which may be the best understood of all Euripides' surviving plays). Rather, I wish to re-examine Phaedra's experience by setting it in a new and double perspective: first, in relation to the Phaedra of the *First Hippolytus*, or Phaedra 1; second, in relation to her mother Pasiphaë as she appeared in *The Cretans*. These comparisons not only shed light on several ironic or ambiguous passages in our play. They also throw into stronger relief the "kind of nobility" that Phaedra 2 demonstrates, and the tragedy of her failure, which evokes the greater pity and terror on that account.

PHAEDRA 1 AND PHAEDRA 2

Reconstruction of the *First Hippolytus* is hazardous.⁴ We have only a few fragments and notices; and Seneca's *Phaedra* is nowhere a sure

⁴ The view of W. H. Friedrich, *Euripides und Diphilos* (Munich 1953) 110-49, still seems largely convincing: that plot and characterization in Seneca's *Phaedra* go back, very largely, to the *First Hippolytus* and therefore help us determine what changes Euripides made in the *Second Hippolytus*, that "beautiful tragedy." But we must remain tentative, much more so than Cl. Zintzen, *Analytisches Hypomnema zu Senecas Phaedra* (Meisenheim

guide, since Seneca uses Sophocles' *Phaedra* as well as Euripides' two plays, conflates dramatic motifs and scenes, and introduces Roman and Stoic ideas and rhetorical commonplaces wherever he can. Yet even the most conservative position, which is Barrett's, allows for a basic core of action. Phaedra attempted, in Theseus' absence, to gratify her passion for Hippolytus by seducing him; the innocent youth rejected her advances (as Bellerophon with Sthenoboeia, in the familiar folktale pattern, or young Peleus with Astydameia); she slandered him to Theseus, accusing him of rape; Theseus brought about his son's death by invoking one of the three wishes granted him by his own father Poseidon, as a curse; and Phaedra, afterwards, killed herself, from sorrow or desperation. Anything further must be speculation; but I think, with Friedrich and other scholars, that if we compare Seneca's play with the Greek fragments of the *First Hippolytus* and the relevant notices, we shall be justified in a more ambitious reconstruction, which may in turn shed light on our later *Hippolytus*. More specifically, I am convinced that the play's action was forwarded by three crucial speeches, or *adikoi logoi*, delivered by Phaedra: to the Nurse, to Hippolytus, and to Theseus.

(a) It is unlikely that Euripides began simply with the "bad woman:" that would have been too melodramatic. She must have appeared as a victim of passion, a woman hopelessly in love; beyond that, Euripides may have created sympathy for the Cretan princess living in a strange land, her husband away on one of his careless, perhaps criminal adventures (he has gone to Hades, to be Peirithous' accomplice in the rape of Persephone, or else to rescue his friend from its consequences). The dramatic interest of the first part of the play must have centered on the way Phaedra nerved herself to the daring effort (*tolmē*) of seducing her stepson. There may have been a monologue, addressed to the Chorus; more certainly, there was a dialogue between Phaedra and her Nurse, who tried to dissuade her with conventional arguments of morality and good sense. Phaedra probably countered with the

am Glan 1960), despite his very useful gathering of detailed parallels with Senecan motifs which he thereby traces back to the *First Hippolytus*. Barrett 15-45 gives the extreme conservative view; B. Snell, *Scenes From Greek Drama* (Berkeley 1964) 23-46, and T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 64-71, largely accept Friedrich's position.

assertion, variously illustrated, that the power of love is irresistible.⁵ In Seneca, she says (180–82):

Quae memoras scio
vera esse, nutrix, sed furor cogit sequi
peiora.

If Euripides' audience found Phaedra shocking, it was not because she was a victim of godsent passion. That was common enough, quite understandable. What was shocking was the easy and quick surrender, the way Phaedra accepted her passion as a given and absolved herself of any further responsibility. Probably, too, Phaedra "prottested too much," using a multiplicity of Sophistic arguments. One of these may have referred (as in Seneca) to Theseus' violence, his faithlessness, and his present misconduct. (What obligation has she to such an enemy, a non-husband? Why should there be a double standard in sexual matters? But surely Theseus is dead, in any case, and will not return.) In another argument, Phaedra may have represented herself as a victim of the family curse, like her mother Pasiphae who loved the bull: the cause is still Aphrodite, who hates the offspring of the Sun god who revealed her adultery with Ares. Thus Phaedra's affliction has many precedents, being encouraged by Theseus' irresponsible (and typically male) behavior, inherited from poor Pasiphae, and ordained by Aphrodite.⁶ A Greek fragment suggests the confidence with which Phaedra may have summed up her argument, overbearing the Nurse's objections and confirming herself in her resolve to approach Hippolytus (fragment C, Barrett):

"Ἐχω δὲ τόλμης καὶ θράσους διδάσκαλον
ἐν τοῖς ἀμηχάνοισιν εὐπορώτατον,
Ἐρωτα, πάντων δυσμαχώτατον θεόν.

She has worked herself up to the required point of criminal "daring."

(b) The second and central *adikos logos* must have come in the

⁵ Compare fr. 840 (Nauck) from *Chrysippus*: "None of what you chide escapes me. But nature overcomes my intellect." Here, I would suggest (vs. Webster 112), Laius is not confessing his passion to Chrysippus, but rejecting a companion's good advice before the violent act, of rape.

⁶ Fragment S (Barrett), which combines the two themes of inherited and god-given evil, may have belonged to Phaedra's self-justifying argument; see Snell 29–30. There is a close parallel with Pasiphae's self-defense in *The Cretans* (on which, see below).

seduction scene. We do not know whether the Nurse, swayed by Phaedra's arguments or perhaps, as in Seneca, by her threat of suicide, co-operated in some way, perhaps preparing Hippolytus for the temptation by some general advice on enjoying life. In any case, Phaedra spoke directly to Hippolytus. In what way, and how gradually she broached the subject of her love, we cannot know; but probably the erotic proposal was combined with another temptation, that Hippolytus overthrow Theseus' rule and become king in his stead.⁷ In a similar way, Sthenoboeia tempted Bellerophon by offering him a bed and throne, and Aerope offered both herself and the golden lamb to Thyestes in *The Cretan Women*. Would this be a good place for Fragment D (Barrett)?

Οὐ γὰρ κατ' εὐσέβειαν αἱ θνητῶν τύχαι,
τολμήμασιν δὲ καὶ χερῶν ὑπερβολαῖς
ἀλίσκεται τε πάντα καὶ θηρεύεται.

Earlier, Phaedra worked herself up to immoral "daring," or *tolmé*; now she seeks to involve Hippolytus, as though contagiously, in *tolmémata*. Her mind once made up, she not only throws herself at Hippolytus but proclaims, like a Callicles, the annihilation of all religious and moral values. Piety has no bearing on men's fortunes; only power matters: get this any way you can! If I am right, the temptation of Hippolytus was not just sexual, but political and philosophical as well—an attempt to "corrupt" him body and soul.

(c) What followed is hard to reconstruct. Hippolytus apparently fled in horror, his head veiled, leaving his sword. Phaedra (or the Nurse, now anxious for her mistress' honor) may have cried out for help. Theseus returned, unexpectedly, from Hades; he found his wife disheveled and distraught, and she convinced him, with cunning delay and deliberation, and using the abandoned sword, that Hippolytus had raped her. This was her third great scene, and there may have been a fourth, after Theseus' curse, Hippolytus' destruction, and, presumably, some revelation of Phaedra's guilt. According to a

⁷ This temptation, to supplant Theseus on the throne, is reflected ironically in Hippolytus' defense (lines 1010 ff.). In its present setting, the idea of acquiring the kingdom along with the bed is absurd, as Hippolytus himself argues; not so, if Theseus were presumed dead, as he is in Seneca and probably was in Sophocles' *Phaedra* and in the *First Hippolytus*.

notice in Plutarch (Fragment B, Barrett), Euripides “has made Phaedra actually bring the charge against Theseus that she fell in love with Hippolytus because of Theseus’ own lawless behavior.” Perhaps this only refers to Phaedra’s earlier rationalizations, to herself and the Nurse. But why not, once the truth is out, proclaim her contempt for Theseus in a final disclaimer of responsibility? “It’s your own fault that all this happened—you and your criminal ways!” Phaedra may have felt remorse, but she was beyond repentance. She went to suicide, by the rope, as boldly as she lived. Or perhaps, in a final act of self-assertion, she stabbed herself with the fatal sword.

If we return now to the *Second Hippolytus*, we may regard the words and actions of Phaedra 2 in a new light, against the background of the behavior of Phaedra 1 (as we have attempted to reconstruct it). For in Phaedra’s first great speech, she not only analyzes her predicament and explains her sane and honorable attempts to cope with it, but explicitly and at some length expresses her horror of adulterous women (403–30; the linguistic details are important, hence I quote in full):

ἐμοὶ γὰρ εἴη μήτε λανθάνειν καλὰ
μήτ’ αἰσχροῖα δρώσῃ μάρτυρας πολλοὺς ἔχειν·
τὸ δ’ ἔργον ἤδη τὴν νόσον τε δυσκλεᾶ, 405
γυνή τε πρὸς τοῖσδ’ οὐδ’ ἐγίγνωσκον καλῶς,
μίσσημα πᾶσιν. ὥς ὄλοιτο παγκάκως
ἥτις πρὸς ἄνδρας ἤρξατ’ αἰσχύνειν λέχῃ
πρώτῃ θυραίους. ἐκ δὲ γενναίων δόμων
τόδ’ ἤρξε θηλείαισι γίγνεσθαι κακόν· 410
ὅταν γὰρ αἰσχροῖα τοῖσιν ἐσθλοῖσιν δοκῇ
ἢ κάρτα δόξει τοῖς κακοῖς γ’ εἶναι καλά.
μισῶ δὲ καὶ τὰς σώφρονας μὲν ἐν λόγοις
λάθρα δὲ τόλμας οὐ καλὰς κεκτημένας·
αἰ πῶς ποτ’, ὦ δέσποινα ποντία Κύπρι, 415
βλέπουσιν εἰς πρόσωπα τῶν ξυνευνετῶν
οὐδὲ σκότον φρίσσουσι τὸν ξυνεργάτῃν
τέραμνά τ’ οἴκων μὴ ποτε φθογγὴν ἀφῇ;
ἡμᾶς γὰρ αὐτὸ τοῦτ’ ἀποκτείνει, φίλαι,
ὥς μήποτ’ ἄνδρα τὸν ἐμὸν αἰσχύνας’ ἀλῶ, 420
μὴ παῖδας οὐς ἔτικτον· ἀλλ’ ἐλεύθεροι
παρρησίᾳ θάλλοντες οἰκοῖεν πόλιν
κλεινῶν Ἀθηνῶν, μητρὸς οὐνεκ’ εὐκλεεῖς.

δουλοῖ γὰρ ἄνδρα, κἄν θρασύσπλαγχνός τις ᾗ,
 ὅταν ξυνειδῇ μητρὸς ἢ πατρὸς κακά. 425
 μόνον δὲ τοῦτό φασ' ἀμιλλᾶσθαι βίῳ,
 γνώμην δικαίαν καγαθὴν ὅτῳ παρῇ·
 κακοὺς δὲ θνητῶν ἐξέφην' ὅταν τύχῃ,
 προθεῖς κάτοπτρον ὥστε παρθένω νέῃ,
 χρόνος· παρ' οἷσι μήποτ' ὀφθείην ἐγώ. 430

In this passage three themes are subtly interwoven. The first (a) is the new Phaedra's emphatic resolution to repudiate, as it were, her earlier self. The sinful noblewoman corrupts other, lesser folk by her example (should we think of the Nurse?); this results in a confusion of values, of *aischra* and *kala*. The description of the bad adulteress would suit Phaedra 1 or other "bad women" of Euripides' plays, like Sthenoboeia or Aerope: they may speak like sensible, chaste wives, but secretly they "have acquired daring conceptions that are not honorable" (*tolmas ou kalas*). And how (we should recall the earlier Phaedra-Theseus confrontation) can they possibly look into the faces of the husbands who share their beds—and lie? Here and in Phaedra's subsequent remarks we perceive the other two themes, of concern with respectability and fascination with the possibility of evil-doing. For (b) Phaedra is concerned with behaving rightly in the sight and judgment of other people; she is motivated by *aidōs*, or other-directed "shame," and she wants *eukleia*, "good reputation." Her resolution is strengthened, she argues, by the realization that women are subject to prejudice as morally inferior creatures; women like Phaedra 1 (damn them utterly!) are responsible for that prejudice. We might expect Phaedra to argue that the prejudice is unfair, or to conclude that women must strive all the harder to redeem their fallen reputation. In fact, she does neither, but involuntarily shows (c) her inward fascination with becoming the kind of woman she is denouncing. For the weakness of the aristocratic position lies precisely in its dependence on what others see and think. What if one *could* sin secretly and get away with it? The tension between will and wish is emphasized by Euripides through manipulation of word order and language of seeing and being seen.⁸ Thus in 403–4 Phaedra wishes it might fall to her lot neither

⁸ On one level, Phaedra's ambiguous language illustrates her earlier intuition, that "there is no trust in the tongue" (395). She cannot suppress or conceal her passion for

“to escape notice” for honorable deeds nor “to perform shameful actions and have many witnesses.” How *do* bad women *succeed* in carrying off these confrontations with their husbands? The very roof-beams, one would think, would cry out against them; and that is why Phaedra is dying, so that she “*may never be discovered* to have shamed husband . . . and children” (420–21). The overt meaning is, “So I may never shame them openly,” but she is still playing instinctively with the idea of sinning and not being caught. And finally, speaking of bad people shown up by Time, who sets a mirror before them as before a young maiden, she prays, “*Among these might I never be seen.*” The very words that express Phaedra’s aristocratic principles also reveal her deep longing to commit the desired adultery and get away with it, to be the secret bad woman whose part she still—with the (waning) force of conscious resolution—refuses to re-enact.⁹

No doubt, if we had the earlier play, we could see in detail how the *adikos logos* employed by Phaedra 1 in bolstering her resolve and overcoming the moral and prudential warnings of Nurse 1, is now transferred to Nurse 2 as she beats down Phaedra 2’s resolution and gradually induces her to surrender control of her own destiny. Earlier, Phaedra spoke of the contagious way in which moral values were confounded by noble sinners; now, ironically, it is the Nurse’s sophistic confounding of *aischron* with *kalon*, in her *adikos logos*, that overwhelms the noble Phaedra (who of course desires just that, to be overwhelmed). It is clear that the sceptical Nurse, who pays only lip-service to the Olympian gods, is in fact an instrument of Aphrodite: the goddess has stated that Phaedra must fall, so that Hippolytus will be destroyed. The pull back is “overdetermined;” it is both rooted in Phaedra’s psychology and ordained by divinity. But the way she connives, and must connive, with her own moral destruction against every attempt of resistance, is also brought out by the dramatic sense of *déjà vu* with which Euripides has been playing: as though Phaedra

Hippolytus. On another level, her language betrays that inner complicity with passion that works against her strong intelligence and will; she is shown *in transition* from success to failure. Thus the linguistic ambiguities both portray her state of mind and advance the plot.

⁹ On Phaedra’s character and motivation, see Knox 9, 17–18, and Winnington-Ingram 179–81; on her psychology, and esp. her surrender of judgment, Knox 3–12.

were swayed, not simply by the Nurse's temptation, but by the shadow self, the thought-corrupting adulteress, whom she rejected with such passionate insistence again, and again, and again.

The dramatic irony speaks for itself. When Phaedra realizes that she has been betrayed, she hangs herself from the roof-beams (though these have not witnessed her guilt) and, far from confronting Theseus face to face, she slanders Hippolytus in a letter that will, she thinks, simultaneously preserve her good reputation and humble her proud adversary. In fact, she gains the latter point but not the former. Passionately concerned to protect her respectability, she does the one thing that will ruin it forever. Equally ironic, but less obviously so, is the domination of both Hippolytus and Phaedra by false images. Hippolytus readily sees Phaedra as precisely the type of "bad woman" she rejected, the brazen adulteress. "I shall return with my father and observe closely how you look into his face—you and your mistress!" In other words: we know that Phaedra 2 would sooner die—indeed does—rather than face Theseus, even though she is innocent; but Hippolytus is dealing mentally and emotionally with Phaedra 1.¹⁰ And prejudice has a self-fulfilling power. Phaedra has already alluded to the prejudice generally held by men, that women are morally inferior creatures: a prejudice which, while apparently strengthening Phaedra's resolve to maintain her good reputation, may at the same time have weakened her moral self-confidence, making her more vulnerable to the assaults of the Nurse and, through her, of Aphrodite. There is a further suggestion, I think, that Hippolytus' prejudice plays a significant part in Phaedra's moral deterioration.¹¹ "I shall always

¹⁰ Hippolytus again reacts with indignation and fury, but this time to a seduction only suggested by the Nurse. The cruel injustice of his inclusion of Phaedra among the "bad women" is marked by precise echoes of her resistance to evil: thus *ἐκπνεῖ* (632; cf. 381) and *γνώμη* (644; cf. 377), and the intention of watching how she will look in Theseus' face (661–62, cf. 415 ff.). Now Phaedra will be driven to slander Hippolytus partly out of anger, but still more from shame and abhorrence of such a confrontation: line 662 looks forward to 720.

¹¹ W. D. Smith, "Staging in the Central Scene of the *Hippolytus*," *TAPA* 91 (1960) 162–77, argues that Phaedra is not onstage during Hippolytus' outburst. If so, not realizing that he will keep his oath, she anticipates an unreal situation in which Hippolytus will denounce her, unjustly, to Theseus' face (a reversal of the situation in the *First Hippolytus*). The verbal echoes, Smith argues, would still be effective given her absence. But apart from difficulties of staging, and particularly of giving the dochmiacs

tread on women," he says, "for they, on their side, are always somehow base." Phaedra 2 now returns to being Phaedra 1—even while we feel that this is unfair, that it should not be happening. As the wronged woman moves towards her new sureness of purpose (to die, but now to bring Hippolytus down with her), her very language changes, becoming tricky and equivocal like that of the Nurse earlier.¹² With "new words" this new-yet-old Phaedra deceives her audience, rejects the reservations of the Nurse, and makes the Chorus swear secrecy despite their intuitive foreboding that she is about to do some dreadful thing. The ironies of reversal are terrible, and the sense of *déjà vu* is very strong. For Phaedra 2 is now behaving exactly like Phaedra 1. Circumstances have brought her around to the point of re-assuming the shadow self, the role of the bad woman "who has taken evil daring upon herself." This is the culmination of Phaedra's

of 669–79 to the Nurse, Phaedra's change of mind, her decision to redeem her honor (as she thinks) and bring down Hippolytus, requires a double motivation of shame and anger, and the latter trait follows more naturally from her overhearing of Hippolytus' contemptuous speech.

Some peculiarities of Phaedra's dochmiacs may also be explicable if seen in reaction to Hippolytus' speech. My late colleague, Professor Douglas Young, argued that the otherwise irregular *σφαλίσαι* in 671 must be dative singular, not nominative plural; he proposed, with his customary ingenuity and force, to read:

τίνα νῦν ἢ τέχνην ἔχομεν ἢ λόγους;
σφαλίσῃ καθ' ἄμμα λύσει λόγους.

Yet it seems natural that Phaedra should respond to Hippolytus' sweeping denunciation of all women, and especially of herself, with (a) a lament for women's ill lot generally (669); (b) the bitter realization that she is joined (and implicitly, the Nurse too) in their general failure (671, *σφαλίσαι*) and in the hopeless "knot" of word and argument; and (c) a gradual transition, via the first person plurals in 670 and 672, to the singular and to her singular problem as "the most ill-fated of all women" (673–74, 679). Compare the connections made in *Medea*, esp. 410–45, between Medea's special tragedy and the general question of women's honor. Like Medea, Phaedra follows up her expression of solidarity with her sex by a request to the chorus, for silence (and thus for complicity). She has begun in 671 and 674–77 to think both toward her suicide and toward the revenge against Hippolytus and clearing of her name that the suicide should effect. The "knot of argument" will be loosed in two ways: by Phaedra's hanging herself, and by Hippolytus' being caught in the reins and, eventually, "loosed" from them and from his life.

¹² Among the equivocal lines are: 675–77, looking toward her "unjust act" (abetted by Kypris); 688, marking the change to "new words" (and a new, or old, Phaedra); 709, moving to deceit, like the Nurse in 521; 714, the "ill deeds," 719–21, the "one life" not to be spared; and 722 ff., in which she quiets the forebodings of the Chorus much as the Nurse quieted hers earlier.

moral ruin. The destruction of her would-be nobility brings about in turn the physical destruction of Hippolytus; it is also juxtaposed to it, metaphorically and dramatically, in this many-layered tragedy of loss of innocence.

In comparing the *Second Hippolytus* to the *First*, I do not mean to imply that the existing tragedy is not self-sufficient, or that Phaedra's characterization forms a puzzle that would be incomplete if the earlier pieces were not supplied. Euripides gives us all the information we need to understand Phaedra's failure. At the same time, this failure gains in meaning when set against the usual legend, of the bad temptress, as it was embodied in Euripides' earlier, scandal-provoking play. His reworking of Medea's story supplies a close parallel. I have argued elsewhere that Euripides' surviving play is highly innovative; that he played down Medea's background of barbarism and sorcery in order to portray her as a sensitive and intelligent, in fact, very Athenian woman—who however is so demoralized, through mistreatment and psychological isolation, that she is transformed before our eyes into the wicked witch of legend.¹³ The woman, that is, disappears into the house, to kill her children; what emerges in the last scene, in the dragon-chariot, is the older, more primitive figure, who had appeared in Euripides' earlier *Peliades* and (probably) his *Aegeus*. Similarly, Phaedra's last scene shows a would-be noble person who has lost the struggle to lead a good, sane, and decent life, and who has returned, under human and divine pressure, to being the "bad woman" that, superficially viewed, she always was.

Euripides' re-play, then, of the Hippolytus-Phaedra story, through "second thoughts" and differences of character, intention, and act, to the same old bad ending, employs an efficient poetic shorthand to describe a very complicated process, of *the pull back into personal failure*, with which modern psychology is still largely concerned. There is Phaedra 1; there is the attempted resistance of Phaedra 2; and there is the failure of that resistance, which effectively destroys Phaedra 2 and leaves us with only Phaedra 1 again, a controlling non-person. The dramatic representation stirs pity and terror: not so much

¹³ See K. J. Reckford, "Medea's First Exit," *TAPA* 99 (1968) 329–59. The parallel between Medea and Phaedra will be exploited by Seneca; see lines 566–67, 700, 1196–97.

because wicked stepmothers, like wicked witches, are frightening (although they are), as because Phaedra's destruction, like that of Hippolytus, implies our universal doom. To put it differently, following Euripides' clear lead: you can't get away from Crete.

PHAEDRA'S MOTHER

It just so happens that we possess an *adikos logos* spoken by Phaedra's mother, Pasiphae, in *The Cretans*.¹⁴ Minos has learned of the existence of the Minotaur, her child by the bull, who had been hidden away in the Labyrinth; and Pasiphae, confronted by the evident truth, justifies herself with sophistic brilliance:

(a) She admits the fact; it's clear that she did it. (But there is a hint that she would have denied it if denial could have been "persuasive").

(b) Her main line of argument follows. What happened was a god's attack, a kind of madness. Hence the evil done was regrettable, to be sure, but involuntary. The point, that she cannot justly be held responsible for what happened, is bolstered by "proofs" in the form of an appeal to *eikos*, for what happened "has no likelihood," i.e., makes no sense in rational terms. The bull wasn't handsome (could a bull have sex appeal?). Pasiphae could neither have married him nor have hoped to have proper offspring by him. None of this made any sense. It was a disease, a madness, inflicted by divinity—hence beyond human power to combat.

(c) So far the argument might be convincing, even though some of the "proofs" are suspiciously frivolous, but now Pasiphae shifts the blame, to Minos. It is all his fault, really. When he failed to sacrifice the bull to Poseidon as he had vowed, the god took revenge on him—a just revenge, to be sure, but the burden of the "affliction" fell on Pasiphae. And while she, for her part, did the decent thing and hid the misfortune from curious eyes, Minos has published it forth to the

¹⁴ For the text, I have principally used *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in Papyris Reperta*, ed. C. Austin (Berlin 1968) 45–58. (See also D. L. Page, *Select Papyri*, III [Cambridge, Mass. 1950] 72–77.) The commentary of R. Cantarella, *Euripide, I Cretesi* (Milan 1965), is rich and helpful; the most important literary discussion is A. Rivier, "Euripide et Pasiphae," in *Lettres D'Occident. Études et Essais offerts à André Bonnard* (Neuchâtel 1958) 51–74.

world like the great fool he is. "It's all your fault, it all comes from you. Now do your worst."

Though hard to judge adequately out of context, this speech bears several features of the *adikoi logoi* that fascinated and scandalized Euripides' audiences. It is, first of all, a brilliant piece of pleading. What can you say when you are found to have made love with a bull? The situation has comic possibilities, calling for the playful genius of an Ovid;¹⁵ Euripides exploits these in a way that is not, finally, so very funny. Second, the speech reveals character. Pasiphae regrets the past: after all, it has turned out badly; but she is simply not interested in feeling guilty. But third: whatever our subjective impression of Pasiphae's character (and it is hard not to see her as a depraved person), yet she raises serious and troubling questions beyond her own comprehension. When, and how, is one responsible for an act committed in passion? And if love is a disease, or a madness, imposed from without by a divinity or from within by a controlling pathological condition, how can an act of love, in fairness, be condemned?

It would be wrong to accept Pasiphae's statement at face value, but equally wrong to conclude that her passion was *not* inspired by a god, or gods. Almost certainly it was. The audience will have learned this fact, as in the *Second Hippolytus*, from a Prologue. Perhaps, as Phaedra alleges, she was implicated as a secondary victim in Poseidon's vengeance upon Minos for not fulfilling his vow. (The parallel with the situation of Phaedra and Hippolytus would be very close; all the more so, if, as Carl Robert believed, Minos refused to sacrifice the bull because of his personal religious convictions, which required ascetic living and prohibited blood-sacrifices.)¹⁶ We may equally imagine,

¹⁵ So Ovid, *Ars Am.* 1. 289-326: mainly a humorous account of how Pasiphae observes, maltreats, and cannily sacrifices her bovine rivals. Since the story is well known (297, *nota cano*), Ovid can compress the main events into the final lines. Contrast Virgil's more serious treatment of the story (note 21, below).

¹⁶ The bull symbolism is crucial. Minos himself was begotten by Zeus who carried off Europa in the form of a bull. Already in *The Cretans* the bull may stand for sexuality as against purity, which is represented at least by the Chorus of Initiates of Idaean Zeus. According to Pseudo-Apollodorus, Poseidon was indeed angry because Minos failed to sacrifice the bull to him as he had vowed. A vase-painting (M 22 in Cantarella) suggests that Minos may have offered first-fruits, disliking blood-sacrifice: so Robert; but Cantarella 119-20 thinks this unlikely. It is curious that the motif of vegetarianism occurs, rather inappropriately, in Theseus' denunciation of Hippolytus, lines 952-53.

following a different mythographic tradition, that Aphrodite brought about the tragedy in hatred of the Sun god, Helios, and his descendants (Pasiphaë being his daughter);¹⁷ this would provide another, somewhat different parallel with our *Hippolytus*. A further, very tempting possibility is suggested by Cantarella. Poseidon and Aphrodite may—each following a personal grudge—be working in concert against Minos and Pasiphaë, much as Athena and Poseidon are shown working together, planning evil for the Greeks, in the Prologue of *The Trojan Women*.¹⁸

Pasiphaë's remarks, then, on god-inflicted passion may be in keeping with the truth, or at least with some portion of the truth. But while we may concede, in theory, that godsent passion is irresistible—a conclusion strengthened by our reading of such Euripidean tragedies as the *Second Hippolytus*, or *The Bacchae*—yet should we divorce Pasiphaë from moral culpability as easily as she would have us do? We cannot help feeling, subjectively, that she might have struggled a little harder against this particular divine rape. She drifts so easily, and so complacently, with the current; she is incapable of the normal human sentiments, of regret and repentance. Euripides is not trying here to delimit moral responsibility.¹⁹ That task awaits Aristotle and his successors. He is only exploring the paradox of ordinary moral assumptions in an amoral, irresponsible cosmos. If, as seems likely, Minos rationalized the situation, and blamed Pasiphaë simply

¹⁷ Hyginus tells that Venus made Pasiphaë fall in love with the bull because Pasiphaë had not sacrificed to her for many years. This account is probably spurious: see Cantarella 50; but Aphrodite's hatred of Helios and his family, to which Phaedra I probably referred her passion (as Seneca's Phaedra does), may have been revealed first in *The Cretans*.

¹⁸ This suggestion of Cantarella 113, that the two gods may be working in collaboration, each from a personal motive for revenge, seems very likely. Curiously, Aphrodite and Poseidon collaborate in *Hippolytus*, to produce the bull from the sea-foam: see B. D. Frischer, "Concordia discors and Characterization in Euripides' *Hippolytos*," *GRBS* 11 (1970) 90.

¹⁹ For Euripides' treatment of the problem of responsibility, see A. Lesky in *Entretiens* (note 2, above) and the good discussion with Diller, Rivier, and Zuntz, pp. 155–61. Note (a) that the speaker may convey more of the true situation than she herself realizes or intends (thus, the Nurse in *Hippolytus*, on the power of Aphrodite); and (b) that the two causal factors, psychological abdication of responsibility and divine manipulation, may work in concert. No character's judgment of herself or of another should ever be thought adequate to explain the full situation.

for indulging in sexual passion, then his view of the world was extremely short-sighted. It had no place for the gods, or for the depths of the human soul. But this does not mean, in turn, that Pasiphae is justified in taking the easy way out and shifting the burden of responsibility to Minos, or to the gods. On the contrary, her *adikos logos* betrays a demoralized, indeed god-afflicted personality. It embodies what Rivier has called, in a notable phrase, "le pouvoir de transgression:" the way in which certain human beings depart from right and ordinary human limits, against their better inclination, bringing disaster upon themselves and upon those close to them.²⁰

Despite, then, the ultimate doubt that Euripides throws on the meaningfulness of our ordinary moral judgments, it seems fair to conclude that Pasiphae, at least when she gives this defence, is a morally inferior person. It is hardly surprising that she ends her days in a Cretan prison, probably by hanging herself. She was not able to "escape" on wings like her friend and mentor Daedalus.²¹ But her daughter Phaedra will try, in a different way, to escape from her fate; and it is to this attempt, together with its failure, that we again return.

Crete is first mentioned before Phaedra's entrance. The friendly Chorus speculate: was her sickness brought on by the sexual infidelity of Theseus, or by some grievous news (presumably a death in the immediate family) brought by a sailor from Crete? While the Chorus are off the track, their guesses are not irrelevant.²² We saw that

²⁰ Rivier (note 14, above) 72.

²¹ Daedalus, it seems, felt compassion for Pasiphae's love, aided her, was imprisoned by Minos, escaped on wings but lost his son Icarus while so doing. Virgil's sensitive treatment of Daedalus in relation to the Cretan tragedy probably goes back to Euripides: in *Aeneid* 6.14-33, Daedalus represents an artistic and intellectual creativity which cannot, however, transcend the general human fate of sorrow and loss. (For Virgil's interest earlier in Pasiphae, and a pastoral re-working of an elegiac version of her passion, see *Eclogue* 6.45-60.)

²² The Chorus' guesses about Theseus and Crete are very suggestive (much more of this material being developed in Seneca and Racine). (a) Although unjustified in this play, lines 151-54 ironically contrast Theseus the high king with Theseus the covert lover, "shepherded" by passion. The chorus are wrong (see 320-21): the "hidden passion" is Phaedra's; yet the theme of Theseus' guilty love affairs was surely prominent in the *First Hippolytus* as part of Phaedra 1's self-justification. (b) Mention of Crete implies Phaedra's tragic heredity and background, and the "sailor from Crete" anticipates lines 752-63 of the great escape ode. (c) Other references in *Hippolytus*, to the

Phaedra 1 probably justified her conduct by citing Theseus' misbehavior as a provocation or precedent; she may also have dwelt at length on her unfortunate family background. Phaedra 2, on the contrary, implicitly rejects the Nurse's suggestion that Theseus may have committed a fault against her: "Might I never be seen doing harm to him!" (As later, her language betrays her concern for appearances and the attraction of the forbidden act.) As for her family, she only mentions them briefly and, it seems, unwillingly, as a preliminary step towards the revelation of her passion for Hippolytus (337-43):

Φα. ὦ τλήμων, οἶον, μήτερ, ἡράσθης ἔρον,
 Τρ. ὃν ἔσχε ταύρου, τέκνον; ἢ τί φῆς τόδε;
 Φα. σύ τ' ὦ τάλαιν' ὄμαιμε, Διονύσου δάμαρ.
 Τρ. τέκνον, τί πάσχεις; συγγόνους κακορροθεῖς;
 Φα. τρίτη δ' ἐγὼ δύστηνος ὡς ἀπόλλυμαι.
 Τρ. ἔκ τοι πέπληγμαι· ποῖ προβήσεται λόγος;
 Φα. ἐκεῖθεν ἡμεῖς, οὐ νεωστί, δυστυχεῖς.

We would say today that the Nurse, like a skilled psychoanalyst, has elicited a portion of the traumatic family background that Phaedra has been repressing. But what is characteristic of Phaedra 2 is the reticence with which she treats sexual passion, whether her relatives' or her own. Not only does she postpone mention of Hippolytus as long as possible, but she glides quickly over the erotic tragedy of Crete, making only brief, allusive mention of her mother's love and her sister's. It is the Nurse who specifically recalls the bull and who implies that Ariadne should be condemned for her love affair.²³ We could say that Phaedra 2 does not wish to dwell on her Cretan past, still less to use it (as Phaedra 1 did) as self-justification; but that the Nurse's well-meant efforts to break through her psychological resistance are in fact impelling

Mountain Mother, Artemis-Dictynna, and the Corybantes, may recall the atmosphere of *The Cretans*; see Cantarella 105 note 9. But by contrast, references to Crete were probably much more extensive in the *First Hippolytus* (to judge from Seneca) from its Prologue onward, than in the *Second*.

²³ Ariadne was included in the category of "unholy loves" by Tzetzes on *Frogs* 850; he may have been thinking of Euripides' *Theseus*. See Barrett 222-23 on *Hippolytus* 339: Ariadne may have sinned against Dionysus, deserting him for Theseus, much as Coronis deserted Apollo for a mortal lover. But Webster 108 argues that Ariadne's sin consisted of her betraying her country for love of Theseus.

Phaedra forward, as she herself instinctively realizes, dreads, and yet wishes, on the slippery path leading to destruction—the familiar, Cretan path.

The Chorus pick up the mention of Crete (371–72):

ἄσσημα δ' οὐκέτ' ἐστὶν οἱ φθίνει τύχα
Κύπριδος, ὧ τάλαινα παῖ Κρησία.

To them, Phaedra is still another victim of the family curse, of destructive passion. Choruses generally jump to this sort of explanation; it is enough for them if trouble can be explained in terms of some remote human precedent or divine injunction. Yet even as they finish singing, on that note of doom, *Κρησία*, the “poor child of Crete” comes forward to explain her efforts of resistance. She does not, interestingly, mention Crete or her parents; her emphasis seems rather to be on the environmental conditions which contribute to the breakdown of moral resolution. And critics have shown how true her analysis is, even of her own state in the moment when she is speaking.²⁴ What has been noticed less is her concern with *heredity* toward the end of this same resistance speech. The Nurse had blackmailed Phaedra into speaking by mentioning the loss her children would incur were she to die; now Phaedra tells how she wants her children to grow up free and outspoken in famous Athens, of good repute from their mother: “for a person is enslaved, even one endowed with natural fortitude, if he be conscious of a mother’s ills or a father’s.” For the time, this perhaps unintentional allusion is the only reference Phaedra makes to her family background. But Euripides keeps it in the picture. It is always there; as though Crete were the spiritual location of an atavistic criminality that Phaedra were trying not to think about—that and the whole pull backward that it implies.

Against this background, the next, long-delayed reference to Crete is extremely powerful. It forms part of the chain of verbal equivoca-

²⁴ On the force of environment, see Knox, Diller, and Winnington-Ingram (note 2 above); on heredity, see Winnington-Ingram, esp. p. 175, and Rivier, in the same volume, p. 195. Frischer (above, note 18) 91, notes the ironic parallel with Hippolytus, who also recalls his parentage at an important point in the play (1082): “Both were born to mothers who engaged in illicit sexual relationships. Hippolytus is the ‘son of the Amazon’ (10, 351, 382) and a bastard (309, 962, 1083; cf. 1455). Phaedra’s mother is Pasiphae. . . .”

tions used by the new, dishonest Phaedra who has decided, out of desperation, to clear her name by slandering Hippolytus (or in other words, has reverted to the role of Phaedra 1; lines 715-21):

*καλῶς ἐλέξαθ'. ἐν δὲ πρὸς τούτοις ἐρῶ·
εὖρημα δὴ τι τῆσδε συμφορᾶς ἔχω
ὥστ' εὐκλεᾶ μὲν παισὶ προσθεῖναι βίον
αὐτῇ τ' ὄνασθαι πρὸς τὰ νῦν πεπτωκότα.
οὐ γάρ ποτ' αἰσχυνῶ γε Κρησίους δόμους
οὐδ' εἰς πρόσωπον Θησέως ἀφίξομαι
αἰσχροῖς ἐπ' ἔργοις οὐνεκα ψυχῆς μᾶς.*

On the surface, Phaedra wishes to preserve her children's good fame and her own; she will not bring shame to her family, nor will she face Theseus over shameful matters (the discovery of her love for Hippolytus) just to spare one life (her own). But there is another, covert sequence of meaning. Phaedra will ensure good fame (for her children and herself) and reap the additional benefit of destroying her now-enemy, Hippolytus (a point she hints at more strongly in her last lines, 728-31). His is the one life that will not be spared. In her great line,

For never will I shame my Cretan House,

we hear the outraged fury, crying for vengeance, of a very proud woman who has been betrayed. Phaedra 2 merges here with her earlier self, with Phaedra 1. Her reluctance to look into Theseus' face after acting shamefully, which earlier marked her aristocratic sense of honor, now makes its contribution to her new and dreadful contrivance: she will slander Hippolytus without risking the direct confrontation with Theseus. From the different situation, personalities, and "second thoughts," comes the same old result. But Phaedra 2 not only merges with Phaedra 1. She shows herself at last in her true colors, as

la fille de Minos et de Pasiphae,

but in a still further sense that she herself cannot fully comprehend: for Euripides is using "Crete" to represent, not just sexual passion, but the inevitability of moral failure.

This is why, finally, the motif of Crete recurs in the beautiful and poignant choral ode following Phaedra's last exit into the palace. Here

the Chorus first utter the wish that they could fly like birds over the sea to some far Western land of unending joy. They then apostrophize the white-winged Cretan ship which made its flight over the sea, taking Phaedra from her "prosperous home" to Athens—a flight which, however, was "ill-omened at both ends, both when it left the land of Minos and when at last the stern-cables were tied up on Attic soil." What the Chorus mean, of course, is that things have worked out badly. Critics have pointed out the relevance of the imagery to Phaedra's fate: the sea water, of experience and pollution, being contrasted with the fresh springs of wished-for innocence and purity; the coiled rope of complexity and death, now providing the only possible escape from misfortune.²⁵ (Much of this same imagery involves and anticipates the destruction of Hippolytus, which is always associated with that of Phaedra.) But still more, I would suggest, Euripides is insisting in this extraordinary lyric passage on *the failure of Phaedra to escape from her past into a better future*. The "land of Minos" was a rich but unhappy home. In one sense, Phaedra attempted to escape from that background of tragic passion, into the "safe harbor" of Mounychion—the clarity and control of an Athenian existence; but tragedy followed her: she was not to escape from the sea of overwhelming passion into a safe harbor of mind and spirit. At the same time, the meaning of the sea-image may be reversed in view of Phaedra's failure. She was ill-omened at both ends, as the Chorus say—when she left Crete, when she came to Athens. Her hope for a better life was therefore like the moment of magical transition, or suspension, which we may enjoy on a sea voyage, when we are floating free between two lives and two kinds of commitment. A bride experiences that kind of joyful moment between her father's house and her husband's. It is a moment of escape that cannot last. Phaedra is like that white-winged Cretan boat; we feel (and the changing meter

²⁵ See H. F. Graham, "The 'Escape' Ode in *Hippolytus*, 732–75," *CJ* 42 (1946–47) 275–76; Segal (note 2, above) 133–35; and esp. H. Parry, "The Second Stasimon of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (732–75)," *TAPA* 97 (1966) 317–26. The bird becomes a bad omen; the "ship" becomes swamped with sea water; the looked-for happy marriage proves destructive; the "cable" becomes a rope for hanging; the wish to escape proves to be a death-wish. In addition to these imagistic connections, the ode may gain force from *The Cretans*, where escape from Crete by wings was indeed possible, for Daedalus (at an intolerable cost) but not for Pasiphae.

reinforces this feeling) the exultation of swift movement, then the sad slowing down and stopping, as the boat comes to its stopping-place and Phaedra, finally, to hers. It is a voyage from sorrow to sorrow, and from birth to death.

Previous critics have written, and very well, about one kind of re-enactment in the *Hippolytus*, the way in which Hippolytus and Phaedra, the Nurse and Theseus, even Aphrodite and Artemis trace out the same, or very similar patterns of speech and action. I have tried in this essay to demonstrate the tragic force of another kind of re-play and re-enactment against the background of earlier plays, *The Cretans* and *The First Hippolytus*. In an Aeschylean trilogy, such repetition is obvious. The three plays forming the Oresteia could serve as acts of a single drama. Clytemnestra enters into disaster as Agamemnon did; the blood-curse of the House of Atreus continues, act by act, until a final resolution is attained. Euripides, not working in trilogy form, is more subtle; but we are meant, throughout the *Second Hippolytus*, to have that sense of *déjà vu*, the awareness, which becomes increasingly conscious, that an old tragedy is working itself out in a new way.

More specifically, I have argued that Phaedra's failure is marked out plainly in relation to her "earlier self" (Phaedra 1), her mother Pasiphae, and her Cretan background. Her "kind of nobility" consists in a losing struggle to maintain personal integrity and a life of honor and respectability; but this means that Phaedra 2 attempted, more or less consciously, to avoid following the earlier path of adultery and moral irresponsibility marked out by Pasiphae and Phaedra 1. She struggles to repudiate her parentage and her past. With a god's help, she might have succeeded. As it is, Aphrodite stage-manages Phaedra's failure, which is marked, step by step, by her increasing absorption in the older, fatal role of the "bad woman" from Crete.

We may say, finally, that "Crete" stands for more than inherited sexual passion in this play. Instead, it comes to stand metaphorically for evil itself, for the pull backward into the subhuman past that contradicts, as it frustrates, all our better designs of mind and spirit. At the same time, Euripides forces his Athenian audience to awaken from fairy tale to reality. In the familiar and beloved story, the king's son, Theseus, sailed to Crete to confront the wicked king Minos, kill the

Minotaur, and rescue the Athenian youths and maidens from slavery and death. Aided by the king's daughter, he escaped from the Labyrinth and returned home. But in tragedy, it is no simple matter to escape from Crete. Phaedra's "wings" prove inadequate to the task; her only possible escape will be in death. Theseus, grown old, rages like the evil Minos; he invokes his father's promise, to destroy his son; and Poseidon once more sends a bull from the sea, like the one Pasiphae loved, as if to round off the tragic cycle of action and reaction. The monster is not just in faraway Crete. It is in Theseus' domain, and within our several hearts.²⁶ We cannot escape evil by sailing into a safe harbor of Athenian reason and control: hence Phaedra's tragedy evokes terror as well as pity. We all have our appointment in Crete, unless a god's grace cancels it; re-play and re-enactment of evil mock our every effort of intelligence and will to escape that fatal pull backward: yet we would be less than human, and much less than noble, if we did not (like Phaedra) try.

²⁶ I should like to suggest two final parallels. First, in *Medea*, Euripides lays much stress on the point (which I shall develop elsewhere) that Medea will come, on her dragon-chariot, to Athens. That city of bright air and clean water, the realm of Aegeus, will not prove immune to the contagion of evil. Second, Euripides' presentation of Hermione in *Andromache* comes very close, in its pattern of heredity, attempted resistance, and ironic re-enactment, to that of Phaedra in *Hippolytus*; see L. V. Hinckley's essay, "Helen's Daughter," which was presented before the American Philological Association in company with my own essay.