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THREE SETTINGS IN SENECA'S *PHAEDRA*

ABSTRACT. Rzepkowski Krzysztof, Three Settings in Seneca's *Phaedra*.

In the following article I present my own concept for interpreting Seneca's *Phaedra*, demonstrating that the action takes place in three distinct settings: that of the royal palace (DOMUS), which is the domain of Phaedra's actions, that of the city of Athens (URBS), which is the realm of Theseus and the Nurse, and that of the forest (SILVAE), which constitutes the world of Hippolytus. In the second part of the article I propose to arrange the stage in a way that takes the proposed settings into account.

Keywords: *Phaedra*; Seneca; settings; scenic representation.

In this article, I'm going to present my own concept of organising the world presented in Seneca's *Phaedra*, demonstrating that the action takes place in three distinct settings: that of the royal palace called both by Theseus (v. 1275) and Nurse (v. 436) as DOMUS, that of the city of Athens – URBS (vv. 482, 733, 1000), and that of the forest – in the original always in plural as SILVAE (vv. 82, 403, 485, 718, 922).

The starting point for my considerations is an assumption that Seneca's tragedies were staged, or at least written with a view to being staged, thus allowing for their architecture and technical possibilities. This assumption results from Seneca's easily discernible care for preserving the genre's rules: introduction of a chorus, although its presence is relevant for the story to unfold, reducing the number of speaking characters to three, respecting the principle of the unity of space and that of the five-act play, which, as R. J. Tarrant¹ proves, was taken over by Seneca from middle and new tragedy, known to us from Menander's new comedy.² Although in older writings Seneca's plays were only

¹Tarrant 1978, 217–54.

²Cf. Boyle 1997, 11–12: “Recent analyses of Seneca's stage techniques reveal theatrical mastery in the shaping of dramatic action, the structural unfolding of dramatic language and imagery, the blocking of scenes and acts, the disposition of roles, the handling of actors and of the chorus, the interrelationship of chorus and act, the use of ghosts, messengers, extras, mutes, the dramatic and thematic use of stage-setting and props, the employment of implicit stage directions in the text itself (especially entrance and exit cues, random but more substantial than often

considered as dramas meant to be read or recited,³ today quite common is a view that since we have no evidence to deprive Seneca's tragedies of the right of staging, then one should not rule out that such performance actually took place. As *Phaedra's* commentators M. Coffey and R. Mayer write: "Though Seneca's primary intention was to provide a vehicle for animated recitation or declamation in which the audience was persuaded to share the illusion of an enacted drama, the possibility that his plays were performed in whole or part should not be excluded."⁴ So scholars go even further, and take for granted the staging of Seneca's plays at the times contemporary to him. As Boyle writes: "there is little possibility that either recitation or (even less) private reading was their intended primary mode of realisation"; and goes on to conclude: "Senecan tragedy belongs, if anything does, to the category of Roman performance theatre."⁵

I also believe that Seneca's dramas were staged with their nature perfectly fitting the tastes and predilections of the then audience. Therefore, in the second part of this article I will attempt to transfer the proposed settings onto the stage space of Roman theatre, and present my own vision of *Phaedra's* staging by confronting it with a vision of performance in the, let us call it, traditional spirit, i.e. in accordance with conventions developed by Attic tragedy.

Each of the three settings mentioned above is represented by the most important characters of the play: the setting of the royal palace (DOMUS) is represented by Phaedra, the setting of the city (URBS) – the Nurse, and Theseus in the ending, and the setting of the forest (SILVAE) – Hippolytus. Diana, goddess of the woods, is a patroness of the SILVAE setting as *regina nemorum* (v. 406), to whom the characters pray twice (vv. 54–81 and 406–423).

The play starts with a long eighty-verse lyrical monody in anapaestic metre, which is Hippolytus' hunting song: Against the backdrop of Seneca's other tragedies, which – in accordance with Euripides' convention – are opened by an expository prologue in iambic metre, this is a completely exceptional beginning: not only is it written in a metre adequate for chorus parts, but it is also unrelated to further unfolding of the story, and the character who announces it neither introduces himself to the audience, nor outlines any plot.

noted, identification cues, and implicit directions for stage business) – and in Senecan tragedy's manipulation of pace, movement, violence, spectacle and closure."

³A discussion on the stageability of Seneca's plays continued to this day was started in the second half of the 19th century by G. Boissier (1861). The most important texts that share the view of the recitative character of Seneca's plays include first of all a monograph by O. Zwielerlein (1966), and recently, the edition and commentary of M. Frank to *Phoenissae* (cf. Frank 1995, 42).

⁴Coffey, Mayer 1990, 15.

⁵Boyle 1997, 11 and 12. Arguments for stageability of Seneca's plays are also provided – in chronological order – among others by: C. J. Herington (Herington 1966, 422–71), B. Seidensticker (Seidensticker 1969), S. Fortey, J. Glucker (Fortey, Glucker 1975, 699–715), D. F. Sutton (Sutton 1986), P. Kragelund (Kragelund 1999, 235–247), A. J. Boyle (Boyle 1997).

For these reasons, some were even willing to consider this part of *Phaedra* as an interpolation,⁶ while others emphasised that it contributes nothing to the play.⁷ Actually, it's the opposite: this prologue not only constitutes an integral part of the entire tragedy, a part which – to be discussed further on – will find its counterpoint in the ending, but also is an excellent introduction in the realm of Hippolytus' actions and Diana's rule – in the *SILVAE* setting. Initially, this scene looks like this: Hippolytus enters in hunting dress into the forest setting followed by his hunt companions walking hunt dogs on leashes. It's early dawn, hunting fever passes over the hunters. Hippolytus gives loud orders to his troops, who disperse in indicated direction, and to his closest companions he gives detailed remarks concerning the course of the hunt (vv. 43–53). The leashes of some dogs are loosened up (vv. 31–34), and other dogs flinch at their masters' feet (vv. 35–43). When Hippolytus is praying to Diana (vv. 54–81), their barking can be heard (vv. 81–82) intensifying the atmosphere of excitement. When the troops are sent out, and the prayer is nearing the end, Hippolytus leaves the stage space and goes into the forest for hunting:

[...] uocor in siluas.
hac, hac pergam qua uia longum
compensat iter. (vv. 83–84)

[I am summoned to the woods. Here, here I'll hasten by the shortest way.]⁸

The action moves to the city (*URBS*) setting: *Phaedra* emerges from the royal palace accompanied by the Nurse, and begins her monologue (vv. 85–128), in which she says about her grief for being abandoned by her husband, and then she expresses the passion that overwhelmed her. After a long conversation, the Nurse reveals her plan of winning Hippolytus' heart for her mistress (vv. 271–273). Both characters get into the palace, and the orchestra is entered by a chorus composed of Athenian women, which in the first *stasimon* extols the power of Cupid (vv. 274–357). The Nurse emerges again from the palace, and her leaving is highlighted in the last verses of chorus' song:

Altrix, profare quid feras; quonam in loco est
regina? saeuus equis est flammis modus? (vv. 358–359)

[Nurse, tell the news thou bearest. How stands it with the queen? Hath her fierce flame any bound?]

⁶For more on this, see Wesolowska 1998, 90.

⁷Cf. Coffey, Mayer 1990, 88.

⁸Here and further on, the English translation of *Phaedra* after Miller 1917.

When the Nurse finishes her monologue, the action moves from the URBS setting to the DOMUS setting: the door of the royal palace is opened, and Phaedra appears in it:

Sed en, patescunt regiae fastigia:
reclinis ipsa sedis auratae toro
solitos amictus mente non sana abnuit. (vv. 384–386)

[But see, the palace doors are opening, and she herself, lying on golden couch, all sick of soul, rejects her wonted garments.]

A symbolic and very vivid scene begins, in which Phaedra changes her royal robes for a hunting dress (vv. 384–390), takes off her pearl beads and earrings (vv. 391–392), lets down her hair (vv. 393–396), and grabs a quiver, javelin and shield (vv. 397–403). As P. Kragelund rightly pointed out, this transformation had the touch of a ritual: “As if in ritual, Phaedra describes every detail of her transformation from queen to hunter, flattering herself that she now resembles Hippolytus’ Amazon mother.”⁹ It’s worth noting a symbolic dimension of this scene. In an attempt to win the heart of Hippolytus, Phaedra must pass on from the city setting to the forest setting accepting any conditions that prevail in that setting, namely dress and armament. Phaedra dressed up and armed declares that she is going to the forest: “*talis in siluas ferar*” (v. 403).

After these words, there follow two problematic verses, which the E manuscripts attribute to the chorus, and the A manuscript to the Nurse:

Sepone questus: non leuat miseros dolor;
agreste placā uirginis numen deae. (vv. 404–405)

[Cease thy complainings; grieving helps not the wretched. Appease the rustic divinity of our virgin goddess.]

Some publishers move them after verse 383 as a comment on the grievances and complaints of the Nurse (Peiper, Richter 1921), and some leave them where they are as an utterance of the chorus (Miller 1917, Herrmann 1921), or an utterance of the Nurse (Friedrich 1933, Vretska 1968, Coffey, Mayer 1990). Also, problems are posed by subsequent verses (406–430); some consider them as an utterance of the Nurse (Miller 1917, Peiper, Richter 1921, Herrmann 1924, Zwerlein 1987), and others as an utterance of Phaedra (Friedrich 1933, Vretska 1968, Coffey, Mayer 1990). Those who consider them as the utterance of the Nurse, regard the last verses (427–430) still as her words, and those who consider them as the utterance of Phaedra attribute these verses to the Nurse. Each of these solutions causes many reservations. Leaving verses 404–405,

⁹Kragelund 1999, 240.

where the manuscripts attribute them to be seems – regardless of whether these are the words of the chorus or the Nurse – to make no sense: to what could the words *seone questus* refer to, since in the previous verses Phaedra does not complain, but only changes to a hunting dress? On the other hand, verse 405 (“agreste placa uirginis numen deae”) announces the following prayer to Diana (“Regina nemorum...” v. 406 ff.), so moving it to after verse 383 is unjustified. The most important question, however, concerns the fact of who is praying to Diana. If it’s Phaedra, already fulfilling the announcement of verse 403 (“talis in siluas ferar”), then after verse 426 she must quickly go back to the palace not to meet Hippolytus, who only appears in verse 430.¹⁰ This solution seems artificial to me, and I’d prefer that the prayer to Diana be attributed to the Nurse. It’s she who is to carry through the intrigue, and win Hippolytus’ heart for her mistress, and the following words befit her perfectly:

Hecate triformis, en ades coeptis fauens.
 animum rigentem tristis Hippolyti doma:
 det facilis aures; mitiga pectus ferum:
 amare discat, mutuos ignes ferat.
 innecte mentem: toruus auersus ferox
 in iura Veneris redeat.(vv. 412–417)

[O three-formed Hecate, lo, thou art at hand, favouring our undertaking. Conquer the unbending soul of stern Hippolytus; may he, compliant, give ear unto our prayer. Soften his fierce heart; may he learn to love, may he feel answering flames. Ensnare his mind; grim, hostile, fierce, may he turn him back unto the fealty of love.]

Therefore, I believe that one should move verses 404–405 after verse 383 (as words of the chorus), close the palace door after verse 403, and attribute the prayer to Diana to the Nurse (vv 406–426) including verses 427–430. They refer to the crime that was ordered to be committed (“haud est facile mandatum scelus / audere”, vv. 427–428). Admittedly, the Nurse decided to win Hippolytus’ heart for her mistress all by herself,¹¹ and what we are dealing with here is an inconsistency, not the last one in the play, but no-one else could utter these words, all the more so as the successive utterance of Hippolytus refers precisely to her.

Where does the Nurse utter her prayer? Undoubtedly, in the *SILVAE* setting, at the statue of Diana. Hippolytus prayed here, and so does she. When Hippolytus appears again, she says:

¹⁰ In favour of this solution argue M. Coffey and R. Mayer (1990, *ad* 426)

¹¹ Compare the Nurse’s utterance in vv. 271–273: “temptemus animum tristem et intractabilem. / meus iste labor est aggredi iuuenem ferum / mentemque saeuam flectere immitis uiri.” (“Let us test that grim and stubborn soul. Mine is the task to approach the savage youth and bend the cruel man’s relentless will”).

Quid huc seniles fessa moliris gradus,
o fida nutrix [...]. (vv. 431–432)

[Why dost hither wend wearily thy aged steps, O faithful nurse [...]?]

His sudden appearance is most justified: after all, he is inside the forest all the time, hunting, circling around in search of wild game. The fact that it is the Nurse who enters the forest setting and not Hippolytus who enters the city setting, is testified to not only by her previous prayer to Diana, but also by the adverb *huc* used by Hippolytus. He is where he belongs, in the forest, with no reason to return to the city; and the Nurse must come to the forest to find the royal son, and carry out her plan. So, a conversation is held in the *SILVAE* setting between the Nurse and Hippolytus. This belief is confirmed by the Nurse's words, who initially asks Hippolytus with overt astonishment and resentment if he wants to spend his sad youth in the forest wilderness (vv. 461–462), and then encourages him not to shun the city and people.

urbem frequenta, ciuium coetus cole. (vv. 482)

[frequent the city; seek out the haunts of men.]

When their conversation grows intense and violent, and Hippolytus proudly admits that after his mother's death he is free to hate all women (vv. 578–579), Phaedra runs out of the palace, which is announced by the Nurse:

Sed Phaedra praeceps graditur, impatiens morae. (v. 583)

[But Phaedra is hurrying towards us, impatient of delay.]

Consecutive verses, in which the Nurse informs us that Phaedra faints and falls to the ground (vv. 585–586), arouse controversies among the commentators. Some deny the dramatic character of this scene, arguing that the Nurse only outlines it verbally.¹² In my opinion, Phaedra comes out of the palace, and runs to the forest guided by frantic passion, thus fulfilling her announcement from verse 403 (“*talis in siluas ferar*”).¹³ In a burst of emotion she collapses, and Hippolytus, still not knowing that he is an object of her love, brings her round by embracing her (“*tuus en, alumna, temet Hippolytus tenet*”, v. 588). Phaedra comes round,

¹²Zwierlein 1966 56–63; Coffey, Mayer 1990 *ad* 583–588.

¹³Similarly, P. Kragelund (1999, 240): “Hippolytus was drawn ‘towards the woods’ (*siluas*), and so is Phaedra (82; 403). Phaedra has dressed for the hunt, and so had Hippolytus. Where then, is it natural to assume that their fatal encounter takes place? In the forest, of course, which to Hippolytus seems a refuge from the temptations he shuns, while to Phaedra it promises the fulfillment of the longings she can no longer resist.”

and asks all witnesses to go away, as she wants to have a word with Hippolytus in private:

[...] *Commodes paulum, precor,
secretus aures. si quis est abeat comes.* (vv. 599–600)

[Lend ear to me privately a little while, I pray. If any comrade of thine is here, let him withdraw.]

Whom does she mean? We know from the previous utterance of the Nurse that Hippolytus returned to the orchestra alone without his companions:

*intuor sollemne uenerantem sacrum
nullo latus comitante.* (vv. 424–425)

[The man himself I see, coming to perform thy sacred rites, no comrade at his side.]

In my view, there are three solutions. First: the words *si quis est* may suggest that nobody is disturbing the conversation between Phaedra and her stepson – they are alone, Phaedra just wants to underline that she intends to have a conversation without witnesses, and Hippolytus strengthens her by saying in verse 601:

En locus ab omni liber arbitrio uacat. (v. 601)

[Behold, the place is free from all witnesses.]

The second solution: we assume that during the conversation between Hippolytus and the Nurse there appear the men from his troop in the forest setting. And third solution: we assume that by the word *comes* Phaedra refers to the Nurse. Each of these solutions seems to be quite desperate; therefore the above mentioned words of Phaedra are considered by Coffey and Mayer as a “pointless request”, all the more so as in their opinion – despite Hippolytus’ words in verse 601 – the Nurse should not retreat to the palace, because her sudden return in verse 719 would be unnatural.¹⁴ In my opinion, Hippolytus’ companions appear during his conversation with the Nurse: after all, we are in the forest setting, where the hunt is on. In this constant movement I see the power of this play, and I perceive Seneca’s dramatic intuition: the hunters appearing again and again before the spectator’s eyes, with their yapping pack of hounds are a perfect contrast to static, long monologues of individual characters. It happens so in the opening monologue, and so it can happen here during Hippolytus’ long utterance (vv. 483–564). Hence, Phaedra’s words refer primarily to the silent

¹⁴Coffey, Mayer 1990, *ad* 600.

characters whose presence on the stage I demanded already in the prologue, and subsequently, to the Nurse, too. Her retreat is in fact – from the dramatic point of view – weak, because she will return to the stage in a moment (v. 719), however, I believe that this measure can be explained. We are at the climax of the play. In a while, there is going to take place the first, and at the same time the last confrontation of the stepmother with her stepson, the confrontation that will almost end up in manslaughter. Hippolytus will raise his sword above his stepmother's head, and if the Nurse was standing near, we would expect her reaction, screaming, calling for help. Still, Seneca wants the entire scene to happen only between those two so that Hippolytus could refrain from murdering his stepmother all by himself, without anybody's intervention. This should not surprise us, as many such dramatic interventions between men and women can be met in Euripides, like e.g. agons of Medea and Jason.

In spite of Phaedra's encouragement, Hippolytus casts away his sword and screaming "O siluae! O ferae!" (v. 716) he escapes into the woods, i.e. – in the reality of theatre space – he leaves the stage. His scream calls up the Nurse from the palace, who summons the chorus to her aid:

Adeste, Athenae! fida famulorum manus,
fer opem! (vv. 725–726)

[Help, Athens, help! Faithful band of slaves, come to our aid!]

She finds the sword – the crime evidence (*pignus sceleris*, v. 730), which – I believe – she takes with her to the palace, and orders the chorus to take the faint Phaedra to the city (*perferte in urbem*, v. 733). This verse, however, is interpreted in many ways, and there were attempts to improve the place in order to defend an interpretation in that the play's story takes place in front of the royal palace. For this reason, L. Herrmann (Paris 1924) suggested a hypothetical *in eadem* instead of *in urbem*. Grimal argued that Seneca uses the verb *perferre* meaning "bring a message" (*Sen. Tr.* 802 and *HO* 100): this is the way these words are understood, among others, by Coffey and Mayer,¹⁵ and F.-R. Chaumartin in the "Belles Lettres" edition of 1996. The interpretation "perferte <eam> in urbem" is supported by Ahl, Segal and Kragelund who confirms it by quoting a fragment from Seneca's letters: "pauci illam quam conceperant mentem domum perferre potuerunt" (*Sen. Ep.* 108.7).¹⁶ However, it's worth noting that here a group of A manuscripts provide a reading *referte*, which publishers and commentators pass over in silence, although a similar meaning and the same word position is used by Seneca in *Hercules Furens*:

¹⁵Coffey, Mayer 1990, *ad* 733 by invoking Calp. Sic. 3.93: "perfer et exora."

¹⁶Kragelund 1999, 242, footnote 24.

arma, arma, Theseu, flagito propere mihi
 subtracta reddi. sana si mens est mihi,
 referte manibus tela; si remanet furor,
 pater, recede: mortis inueniam uiam. (Sen. *Her. F.* 1242–1245)

[Arms, Theseus, my arms! I pray you quickly give back what you have stolen. If my mind is sane give back to my hands their weapons; if madness still remains, fly, O my father; I shall find a path to death.¹⁷]

Regardless of the adopted reading, and whether the *perferte* preferred by publishers refers to Phaedra or the information on what happened in the forest, Phaedra has to return to the palace, because when Theseus returns to the stage (i.e. to the URBS setting) (v. 834), he can hear moans coming clearly from inside the house, the DOMUS setting (*in limine ipso*, v. 852).

The Nurse comes out of the palace to meet Theseus (v. 854), and she stays in the city setting to tell him about Phaedra's suicidal plans. Finally, Theseus demands to open the royal palace door:

Reserate clausos regii postes laris! (v. 863)

[Unbar the closed portals of the royal house.]

The door opens for the second time in this play to allow the spectator to move to the DOMUS setting: earlier, to show Phaedra shedding her robes, and now to show her with a sword in her hand preparing for suicide. Phaedra comes in front of the palace, and in a conversation with Theseus she denigrates her stepson, accusing him of abuse. She shows his sword as evidence (v. 896). Theseus, desperate, curses Hippolytus in a long monologue (v. 903–958), and asks his father, Neptune, to send death on his degenerate son. After his words, the chorus begins its song (v. 959). In his last words he announces the arrival of Messenger (v. 987), who brings a message of Hippolytus' terrible death (vv. 1000–1114). It must be noted here that the Messenger's account may shake the division into three settings proposed above, in which the play's plot unfolds. His long monologue begins with the words: "When with troubled steps he left the city, a fugitive" ("ut profugus urbem liquit", v. 1000), but Hippolytus actually met Phaedra in the forest setting, as mentioned before. Here, a question arises: did this meeting have to take place in the forest? Can we not assume that Phaedra had run out of the palace and collapsed before she crossed the line that divides both settings? Then, the narrative nature of the Nurse's utterance could be explained by an account of what happened in another setting. This idea seems tempting. However, there would be a problem with the Nurse's words *perferte*

¹⁷ English translation of *Hercules Furens* after: Miller 1917.

in urbem, regardless of whether they refer to Phaedra or the information on her fainting. Arguing with the reading *perferte »nouitatem« in urbem*, Kragelund asks rhetorically: “Why bring news to the city, if they were already there?”, and replies: “The answer is that they are not in the city. Instead they are where the text tells us to imagine them, in the forests outside Athens.”¹⁸ Thus, the scene when Phaedra faints, and then talks to Hippolytus, undoubtedly takes place in the forest setting, unless we decide to adopt Herrmann’s hypothesis *in aedem*, which would allow us to place the whole scene in front of the royal palace.

So how can one understand the words of the Messenger’s account? Kragelund, who also advocates the setting of the city and the forest in the tragedy under discussion, underestimates the problem by saying that there is no discrepancy in the Messenger’s words, because after fleeing from Phaedra (v. 716) Hippolytus had to return to the city to take his carriage and horses referred to by the Messenger in verse 1055 and consecutive ones.¹⁹ This explanation, however, does not convince me enough, and I’d rather advocate the author’s inconsistency.

The last words of the account provide information on what is happening on the stage. The Messenger says that Hippolytus’ servants are wandering about the fields, and gathering his remains where he was torn apart. The Messenger is in the city setting, and thus he says *illa loca* (v. 1106) about the forest setting. While he is speaking, Hippolytus’ remains are being taken in and placed in front of the palace. Taking a look at them, and arguably, pointing at them – which is suggested by the pronoun *hoc* – the Messenger cries out horrified:

Hocine est formae decus? (v. 1110)

[Has his glorious beauty come to this?]

In the final verses of his account, we find out that a funeral pyre is being prepared for Hippolytus (*ad supremos rogos*, v. 1113). Then, after verse 1122, the Messenger leaves the stage, and one who remains in front of the palace – as I suppose contrary to most of the publishers and translators – is desperate Theseus over his son’s defiled body. There begins a chorus song, the last, fourth stasimon (vv. 1123–1155), whose final part is disturbed by a shout coming from the palace, i.e. from the DOMUS setting:

Quae uox ab altis flebilis tectis sonat. (v. 1154)

[What voice of wailing sounds from the high palace?]

¹⁸Kragelund 1999, 242.

¹⁹Kragelund 1999, 242, footnote 25: “At Sen. *Phae.* 1000, the messenger describes how Hippolytus left the city (*urbem liquit*) but there is no contradiction here: having fled Phaedra, he must have returned to Athens to fetch his carriage and horses (1055 ff.)”

At this moment, Theseus, concerned, opens the palace door, and before his eyes emerges Phaedra with a sword in her hand, of which we are informed by the consecutive (and the last) verse of the chorus song:

strictoque uecors Phaedra quid ferro parat? (v. 1155)

[And what would maddened Phaedra with the naked sword?]

Phaedra comes in front of the palace and stands crying above Hippolytus' dead body, which is commented on by Theseus:

quid ensis iste quidue uociferatio
planctusque supra corpus inuisum uolunt? (vv. 1157–1158)

[Why that sword? What mean thine outcries and lamentations over the hated corpse?]

There begins Phaedra's long, dramatic monologue (vv. 1159–1198), in which she first turns to Theseus (*O dure Theseu...*, v. 1164 ff.), and then to Hippolytus' dead body (*Hippolyte...*, v. 1168 ff), and the chorus (*Audite, Audite...*, v. 1191 ff.). Finally, she pokes the sword in her chest and falls down beside Hippolytus (vv. 1197–1198). Over their dead bodies, Theseus gives a desperate monologue (vv. 1199–1243) during which the old hunt companions are circling around in the forest setting searching for their guide's torn-apart remains. The chorus request Theseus to prepare the funeral for his son (vv. 1244–1246), and Theseus turns to Hippolytus' companions to bring his remains to in front of the royal palace:

Huc, huc, reliquias uehite cari corporis
pondusque et artus temere congestos date. (vv. 1247–1248)

[Hither, thither bring the remains of his dear body and heap together, as they come, the burden of his limbs.]

Pointing to his torn-apart dead body (once again demonstrative pronoun *hic*), he exclaims:

Hippolytus hic est? (vv. 1247–1248)

[Is this Hippolytus?]

He leans over the dead bodies and tries to put them in order. Arguably, this is the way the following words should be interpreted (v. 1256–1261), which the publishers attribute to Theseus (Zwierlain 1987, Coffey, Mayer 1990) or the chorus (Peiper, Richter 1921, Herrmann 1924). I'm in favour of attributing them

to Theseus, because then they become still more tragic. Theseus orders to open the palace door (v.1275), and calls to the inside:

uos apparate regii flammam rogi! (v. 1277)

[Do you make ready the flames of the royal pyre.]

Then, he turns to Hippolytus' men, and calls them:

*at uos per agros corporis partes uagas
inquirite.* (v. 1278–1279)

[do you seek through the fields for his body's parts still wandering.]

Finally, he points to Phaedra's dead body and says:

*istam terra defossam premat,
grausque tellus impio capiti incubet.* (vv. 1279–1280)

[As for her, let her be buried deep in earth, and heavy may the soil lie on her unholy head!]

So ends the play. What conclusions result from the division into *DOMUS*, *URBS* and *SILVAE*? Firstly, note that with his final monologue Theseus unites both settings: standing in front of the royal palace, i.e. in the *URBS* setting, he activates both the *DOMUS* setting by turning to the palace inside, and the *SILVAE* setting by calling Hippolytus' old companions. Thanks to his instructions, all three settings meet at the finale of the play focusing on the dead bodies of Hippolytus and Phaedra laid at the palace entrance. Secondly, the clear division into the forest, city and royal palace settings helped Seneca to achieve a thus far unrecognised effect: faithful to his principles Hippolytus who overtly hates the city by deeming it a place of crime (v. 494), war (v. 532) and lust (v. 561) never crosses during his lifetime the boundary dividing the beloved forest and the hated city: he remains in his natural environment, the *SILVAE* setting. He is not induced by the Nurse ("urbem frequenta, ciuium coetus cole"; v. 482), and he will not show up in the city as long as he is alive; only after his death do his remains wind up at the royal palace. Thirdly, as mentioned above, wanting to win his love, Phaedra sheds her royal robes and wears the hunting dress, and the changing scene, like the final scene with Theseus, also unites three settings: while staying in the palace, i.e. the *DOMUS* setting, she sheds her robes in which she functions as the *URBS* setting queen, and goes to the *SILVAE* setting. Fourthly, introduction of the plot settings allows us to easily see Seneca's excellent concept which inseparably connects the entire play. In the beginning, Hippolytus sends out his troops in all directions, and in the end, these troops come back, and bring from all directions the remains of the

torn-apart Hippolytus. Hence, the last scene is a counterpoint to the initial scene, one visible already in the play text itself, and yet, it could be brought out even more on the stage: the troops set out for the hunt in jolly excitement, one can hear bustle, dogs yapping, perhaps even a hunting horn, whereas they return in terrifying silence, which is only interrupted by Theseus' sobbing.

At this point, it's worth asking a question which is perhaps the most important one: how could these plot settings translate into organisation of the stage space during performance of the play? I have two propositions: one, let us call it a traditional proposition, and the other – a bolder one which invokes more the imagination rather than being based on any specific premises in the play text. In traditional staging, individual settings could be translated into realities of the Roman theatre as follows: the *DOMUS* setting is obviously implemented in the *skene* building, the *URBS* setting – the spectator's right side of the *proskenion* as there the conventional exit to the city is located, and the *SILVAE* setting (presented vividly by *décor*) – the left side of the stage with exit outside the city, here – into the woods.²⁰ The statue or altar of Diana is also located here. If we assume that the convention of the entrances and exits is observed, then both Hippolytus and Theseus, who returns from the kingdom of the dead, enter the stage on this side.

Could one venture a different staging? According to the commentators and publishers, the entire prologue scene takes place at the *proskenion*, in front of the royal palace,²¹ and the troop deployed by Hippolytus is only imaginary.²² In my opinion, regardless of staging type, the hunt companions to whom Hippolytus turns are realised as silent characters (extras), as in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, were one of the them is even engaged in a dialogue with the title character. The unreflective “in-front-of-the-palace setting” of this scene was opposed by Kragelund, who emphasises the technical possibilities of the Roman theatre, which allowed another, bolder staging: “[...] the Roman theatre took great pride in its ability to change one set into another. [...] And whichever way the trick was done, with painted back-drops or otherwise, there is a semiotic and linguistic fact which should be kept in mind: given the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified, virtually everything can, on a stage, be used to signify something else.²³” Why not go one step further, and set this scene, which – as is commonly assumed by the commentators – violates the theatre conventions anyway, at a location whose semi-circular shape resembles the amphitheatre arena, where Romans so much enjoyed to watch *uenationes*? Indeed, the theatre of the imperial epoch was

²⁰The assumption that the *exodus* on the spectator's right side leads to the city, and the left one to the countryside, is based on a controversial and probably corrupted message by Pollux (4.126–7), however, it is quite often accepted in both the old and newer studies; compare Duckworth 1952, 85–87; Marshall 2006, 50–52.

²¹Miller 1917, Grimal 1965.

²²Axer 1991 71

²³Kragelund 1999, 242–243.

used to organise performances typical of amphitheatre: gladiator fights and animal hunts.²⁴ Can we not assume that since Seneca fails to follow other theoreticians' guidelines by showing homicide and suicide scenes to his spectators, here too he needs not follow the strict rule, at least according to modern science, which perhaps from as much back as the middle comedy times, and surely new comedy times, does not allow actors to cross the boundary dividing the *pulpitum* from the orchestra? Early Empire Roman theatre is far from the conventions from three hundred years previous (all the more so from the theatre convention of Euripides to whom Senecan theatre is continuously compared). Seneca's extant plays testify to this, just like Horace's recipes, whose postulates I deem as both a theoretician's and aesthete's reaction to what he has seen in contemporary theatre.

[...] non tamen intus
 digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles
 ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens:
 ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet
 aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus
 aut in auem Procne uertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
 quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi. (Hor. *Ars* 182–188)

[Yet you will not bring upon the stage what should be performed behind the scenes, and you will keep much from our eyes, which an actor's ready tongue will narrate anon in our presence; so that Medea is not to butcher her boys before the people, nor impious Atreus cook human flesh upon the stage, nor Procne be turned into a bird, Cadmus into a snake. Whatever you thus show me, I discredit and abhor.²⁵]

The above verses from *Ars Poetica* testify to the cruelty that was commonplace in the Roman theatre. Should this cruelty surprise us since the Roman's favourite entertainment is based on it? So, one can imagine the orchestra, where, similar to the amphitheatre, *uenatio* takes place as organised with a flourish. Then, the plot settings would be the following: DOMUS – skene building, URBS – *pulpitum*, SILVAE – orchestra. The boundary between the forest and the city is set by the line of chorus which – reduced to just a few choreutes – is present, as I assume, at the *pulpitum*. Already in the 1970s, A. W. Gomme and F. H. Sandbach in their commentary to Menander's plays proved that the late 3rd century B.C.E. chorus only used to be composed of from four up to seven choreutes at the most.²⁶ Probably of similar number was the composition the Roman theatre of the 1st century C.E. This is proved, among others, by W. M. Calder, who argues that the chorus in Seneca's plays is made up of three up to seven choreutes.²⁷ However, whereas in Hellenistic times this small chorus continued to perform its songs

²⁴ Compare, among others, Sear 2006, 43–44.

²⁵ Rushton Fairclough 1936, 465–7.

²⁶ Gomme, Sandbach 1973, 12, footnote 1.

²⁷ Calder 1975, 32ff.

at the orchestra, it is believed that the Roman theatre chorus from Vitruvius' time would appear at the *pulpitum*, and at the orchestra seats were placed in a semi-circle along the *balteus* for the senatorial class.²⁸ The presence of the chorus at the *pulpitum* rather than at the orchestra receives twofold justification in this play. Firstly, at the orchestra, which is the realm of Diana and Phaedra, there takes place *uenatio* in which the chorus does not participate. Secondly, the chorus is composed of Athenian women who clearly belong to the URBS setting, and not the SILVAE one. In this stage arrangement, the statue of Diana is naturally placed at the orchestra, perhaps in its centre, at *thymele*.

In my opinion, the stage space thus suggested allows us to organise the performance with a flourish typical of Nero's times. At the orchestra, we can see restless hunters, dogs yapping, or follow feverish Hippolytus, who gives orders to his troops in melorecitation: in short, the play starts as if we were in the amphitheatre and followed an introduction to the *uenatio* about to begin. The orchestra is filled with three times with Hippolytus' men, each time during a long monologue, as if Seneca wanted to diversify the solo parts: first, during Hippolytus' prologue and songs (vv. 1–84), and then during his long monologue in verses 483–564, which can be testified to by Phaedra's words from verse 600 ("si quis est abeat comes") referred to above, and finally during the Messenger's account who in the last words speaks about Hippolytus' companions gathering his remains (vv. 1105–1114). They are turned to twice by Theseus (vv. 1247–1248 and 1278–1279) at the end of the play.

In this stage arrangement, the above mentioned concept of Seneca for Hippolytus to never cross the boundary between the city and the forest is superbly highlighted during the staging. The realms of Diana and Phaedra is the orchestra symbolising the forest, symbolically separated from the URBS setting by raising the *proskenion*. When Phaedra crosses this boundary dressed as an Amazon, she will collapse as if she entered a realm which was inaccessible to her, almost prohibited.

I realise that the staging suggested above may raise many objections, as it violates our common idea of the Roman theatre. However, I believe that this idea is too often based on theatre practices of the old Attic tragedy, and too seldom invokes the facts and evidence of the authors of the late republican and imperial epochs. In one of his letters, Cicero, in reporting to his friend Marcus Marius the course of the official opening of Pompeius' theatre, writes that during Actius' *Clytemnestra*, Agamemnon's entrance was attended by six hundred (i.e. in Latin phraseology "very many") mules, and during the *Trojan Horse* as many as three

²⁸ Compare Vitr. 5.6.2: "ita latius factum fuerit pulpitum quam Graecorum, quod omnes artifices in scaena dant operam, in orchestra autem senatorum sunt sedibus loca designate"; also compare Boyle 1997, 11 and 218, footnote 21. For arrangement of senator seats in semi-circle along the *balteus*, see Sear 2006, 5–6.

thousand craters were used.²⁹ Horace writes about the audience which demands bears or boxing fights during the performance, in which it takes delight,³⁰ and goes on to add that even equites, i.e. a seasoned part of the audience, do not take delight in merely listening, and they prefer a performance organised in grand style, during which “troops of horse and files of foot sweep by: anon are dragged in kings, once fortune’s favourites, their hands bound behind them: with hurry and scurry come chariots, carriages, wains, and ships; and borne in triumph are spoils of ivory, spoils of Corinthian bronze”,³¹ and furthermore, on the stage appear wild animals – giraffes and elephants.³² Half a century later, Livius writes about the insanity (*insania*), which overpowered the theatres during *ludi*, and which is so huge that it would be difficult to accept it in rich kingdoms.³³ The imperial theatre was thus a huge performance, a show, which is sometimes closer to the circus in the present meaning of this word, than to the Greek theatre. In this context, and not that of Euripides, should Seneca’s works be considered.

The three plot settings which I have presented above can be obviously arranged on the stage in a totally different manner. I do not consider the suggested solution as the only one possible: this is just a proposal which is to demonstrate how Seneca adapts Greek tragedies by basing his plays on them, and at the same time, how he adjusts their stage dimensions to the tastes and expectations of his contemporary audience.

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²⁹“Quid enim delectationis habent sescenti muli in *Clytaemestra* aut in *Equo Troiano* creterrarum tria milia aut armatura uaria peditatus et equitatus in aliqua pugna?” (Cic. *Fam.* VII 1.2).

³⁰[...] “media inter carmina poscunt | aut ursum aut pugiles; his nam plebecula gaudet” (Hor. *Ep.* II 1.185–186).

³¹Rushton Fairclough 1936, 413.

³²„Verum equitis quoque iam migravit ab aure uoluptas / omnis ad incertos oculos et gaudia uana. / quattuor aut pluris aulae premuntur in horas, / dum fugiunt equitum turmae peditumque cateruae; / mox trahitur manibus regum fortuna retortis, / esseda festinant, pilenta, petorrita, naues, / captium portatur ebur, captiua Corinthus. / si foret in terris, rideret Democritus, seu / diuersum confusa genus panthera camelo / siue elephans albus uolgi conuerteret ora” (Hor. *Ep.* II 1.187–196).

³³„Inter aliarum parua principia rerum ludorum quoque prima origo ponenda uisa est, ut appareret quam ab sano initio res in hanc uix opulentis regnis tolerabilem insaniam uenerit” (Liv. VII 2.13).

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TROIS PLANS D'ACTION DANS LA PHÈDRE DE SÉNÈQUE

Résumé

L'action de la *Phèdre* de Sénèque se déroule sur trois plans : celui du palais royal (*domus*), celui de la ville d'Athènes (*urbs*) et celui du forêt (*silvae*). Chaque un de ces plans constitue un domaine d'action d'un autre personnage : le plan de la *domus* est réservé à Phèdre, le plan de l'*urbs* est un espace d'action de la Nourrice et, puis, de Thésée, et, enfin, le plan des *silvae* est dominé par Hippolyte qui ne passera ses frontières qu'après la mort. Dans la réalisation scénique de la pièce à ces trois plans d'action correspondent trois parties architecturales du théâtre romain : le palais royale est visualisé par le décor de la façade de la skéné (*frons scaenae*), la ville d'Athènes est représentée sur le *pulpitum*, et le forêt où Hippolyte et ses gens organisent une *uenatio* – sur l'orchestre.