

## Phaedra's Shining Roses: Reading Euripides in Sixth-Century Gaza\*

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Εἰ τοῖς ἀνθεσιν ἤθελεν ὁ Ζεὺς ἐπιθεῖναι βασιλέα, τὸ ρόδον ἂν τῶν ἀνθέων ἐβασίλευε. Γῆς ἐστὶ κόσμος, φυτῶν ἀγλαΐσμα, ὀφθαλμὸς ἀνθέων, λειμῶνος ἐρύθημα, κάλλος ἀστράπτων· ἔρωτος πνέει, Ἀφροδίτην προξενεῖ, εὐώδεσι φύλλοις κομᾶ, εὐκινήτοις πετάλοισι τρυφᾶ, τὸ πέταλον τῷ Ζεφύρῳ γελᾶ.

If Zeus had wanted to place one flower as king over all the rest, the rose would reign supreme: jewel of the earth, a prodigy among plants, most precious of all flowers, the meadow's blush, a stunning moment of beauty, the fragrance of Eros, invitation to Aphrodite; the rose luxuriates in fragrant petals, surrounded by the most delicate leaves, that ripple laughter as the West Wind strokes them.

(Achilles Tatius 2.1.2-3)<sup>1</sup>

Ancient tragedies put viewers in direct contact with death and grief, while representing distressing events and extreme situations before their eyes. After many centuries, tragedies still strike us vividly, even if our way of participating in ancient drama has changed radically. Over the course of time, in fact, much more 'secular' forms of participation have replaced the political and religious approach to the drama of fifth-century Athenians. Nevertheless, ancient tragedies still speak to modern readers with the same voice as they did to ancient viewers.

These considerations on ancient drama's immortality, which Gianni Guastella refers to as the modern reception of Greek tragedy,<sup>2</sup> also apply to the cultural environment of sixth-century Palestine, where Jewish and Christian traditions coexisted with Greek pagan culture. This coexistence, although often problematic, gave rise to an extraordinary flourishing of culture that lasted beyond the Arab invasion of the region (ca. 637). Ancient myth was still exerting its fascination on writers and artists, as demonstrated by the works of literature and art produced in that environment.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, not all the religious, social, and cultural values transmitted from antiquity were compatible with the new spirituality of Gazan readers. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, schoolteachers (γραμματικοί) in Gaza practiced a 'selective' reading of

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<sup>1</sup> Text edited by Jean-Philippe Garnaud, BL, Paris, 1991; English translation by John J. Winkler in Brian P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, Berkeley, 1989, 189.

<sup>2</sup> See Gianni Guastella, 'Introduzione', in Gianni Guastella (a cura di), *Le rinascite della tragedia*, Roma, 2006, 13-29 = 13.

<sup>3</sup> On the uses of myth from antiquity to late antiquity, see Alan Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World*, Oxford, 2004, 217-252.

classical works, through which Christian writers tried to legitimize the preservation of pagan παιδεία in schools.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the variations that Gazan authors introduced in their treatment of traditional myths should help us reconstruct their approach to literary works of the past and, more importantly, the tastes, values, and demands of their intended and/or actual audience.

In this paper, I propose an analysis of three poems dealing with the myth of Phaedra's love for her stepson Hippolytus.<sup>5</sup> Author(s), date(s), and place(s) of origin of the three poems are not known. However, the many similarities they present with the poems of John of Gaza allow us to consider them as products of the culture that flourished in Gaza in the fifth and the sixth centuries CE.

Phaedra's myth was elaborated in many ways over the centuries; nevertheless, its outline remained unchanged. Phaedra, the daughter of Pasiphae and the sister of Ariadne, marries Theseus and falls in love with Theseus' chaste son, Hippolytus. During one of Theseus' absences, Hippolytus learns about Phaedra's love and, shocked, rejects her. When Theseus returns, Phaedra accuses Hippolytus of attempting to violate her; Theseus curses Hippolytus, who dies, and Phaedra commits suicide.

In the fifth century BCE, Phaedra's myth was the subject of a tragedy by Sophocles (*Phaedra*) and two by Euripides. Euripides' plays, both entitled *Hippolytus*, are usually distinguished from each other by the adjectives καλυπτόμενος (Veiled) and στεφανηφόρος (Garland-bearer). Ancient sources report that Euripides wrote his *Hippolytus the Garland-bearer* (which won first place in 428) because of the criticism of the first, where Phaedra was portrayed as licentious and shameless.<sup>6</sup> Most probably, in fact, Phaedra confronted Hippolytus directly: the title, καλυπτόμενος, alludes to Hippolytus covering his head in shame when Phaedra propositioned him. In the second *Hippolytus*, Euripides introduced an innovation: it is Phaedra's nurse who reveals Phaedra's passion

<sup>4</sup> The most famous text is Basil the Great's essay 'To Young Men, in How They Might Derive Profit from Pagan Literature' (Roy J. Deferrari [ed.] with Basil's letters, vol. 4, LCL, Cambridge, 1934). On 'selective reading' in the schools of *grammatici* in Gaza, see my observations in 'Swarms of the Wise Bee: Literati and Their Audience in Sixth-Century Gaza', in Eugenio Amato, Alexandre Roduit and Martin Steinrück (eds.), *Approches de la Troisième Sophistique*, Bruxelles, 2006, 80-95 (henceforth: Ciccolella, 'Swarms').

<sup>5</sup> The Greek text and an English translation of the three poems can be found below in the Appendix. The text is quoted from my edition in *Cinque poeti bizantini*, Alessandria, 2000 (henceforth: Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti*), 220-237 (with an introduction, an Italian translation, and a commentary, to which I refer for an analysis of language and style).

<sup>6</sup> According to an anonymous *Vita Euripidis*, in the first *Hippolytus* 'women's shamelessness' (τὴν ἀναισχυντίαν ... γυναικῶν) was emphasized. An *Argumentum* to Euripides' second *Hippolytus* says that, with this tragedy, Euripides tried to make up for the failure of the earlier drama, whose content was indecent (ἀπρεπές) and worthy of an accusation (κατηγορίας ἄξιον). Both texts are quoted by Nauck (see below, n. 8). A passage of Aristophanes' *Frogs* confirms this claim. Aeschylus' treatment of ancient myth opposes that of Euripides (1043): 'But, by Zeus, I did not make Phaedras and Stheneboeas into prostitutes' (ἀλλ' οὐ μὰ Δί' οὐ Φαίδρας ἐπόλουν πόρναις οὐδὲ Σθενεβοίας). Aeschylus admits that Phaedra's story is true, but (1053-54) 'a poet must conceal evil, not bring it in or teach it' (μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ὄντ'· ἀλλ' ἀποκρύπτειν χρὴ τὸ πονηρὸν τὸν γε ποιητὴν / καὶ μὴ παράγειν μηδὲ διδάσκειν). These criticisms probably mirror the reasons for the failure of Euripides' first *Hippolytus*.

to Hippolytus and, in this way, sets events in motion. Later, in the first century CE, Ovid made Phaedra the author of a fictitious letter to Hippolytus (*Heroides* 4) and Seneca treated the myth in a tragedy (*Phaedra*).<sup>7</sup>

My analysis will focus mainly on Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, which offers important clues for explaining the language and content of the three poems, since too little remains of Sophocles' *Phaedra* and of Euripides' first *Hippolytus*.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, although some evidence suggests that Latin was known in late-antique Palestine, it is difficult to establish if, and to what extent, Latin literary works circulated in that area or were read in Greek rhetorical schools.<sup>9</sup>

A close reading of the three poems, however, reveals that art works and dramatic representations concerned with Phaedra's myth may have exerted some influence on their author(s). In fact, in addition to providing interesting insights into the reading of Euripidean drama in late-antique Palestine, these poems show an approach to ancient culture in which the respect for tradition comes to terms with the tastes of a 'new' audience.

### 1. 'Yesterday I had a thorn, but today I am healed by the rose, the lovers' medicine'.<sup>10</sup>

A group of nine anonymous anacreontic poems concludes the first part of the poetic anthology transmitted by MS Vaticanus Barberinianus gr. 310.<sup>11</sup> These poems follow the

<sup>7</sup> On the Latin versions and elaborations of Phaedra's myth, see the studies by Laurel Fulkerson, *The Ovidian Heroine as Author*, Cambridge, 2005 (henceforth: Fulkerson, *Ovidian Heroine*), 122-142; and Rebecca Armstrong, *Cretan Women*, Oxford, 2006 (henceforth: Armstrong, *Cretan Women*).

<sup>8</sup> The eighteen extant fragments of Sophocles' *Phaedra* (nos. 677-693 in *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* vol. 4: *Sophocles*, ed. Stefan Radt, Göttingen, 1999<sup>2</sup>) — probably written some time between the two Euripidean tragedies — do not convey any information about its plot. Likewise, only a few details can be inferred from the twenty fragments of Euripides' first *Hippolytus* (nos. 431-451 in *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* rec. Augustus Nauck, T. Lipsiae, 1889<sup>2</sup>). See Fulkerson, *Ovidian Heroine* (n. 7), 125 n. 9 (with bibliography).

<sup>9</sup> The proximity to the law school in Berytus also may have promoted Latin studies in Gaza. In his letters 13 and 145, Procopius of Gaza (ca. 465-528), in fact, mentions a Latin grammarian named Hierius, who probably combined his teaching with forensic practice; see Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, Berkeley, 1988, 293. Procopius' letters have been edited by Antonio Garzya and Raymond J. Loenertz (Ettal, 1963, henceforth: G.-L.). Along with Greek and Hebrew, Latin is the language of local inscriptions: see Carol A.M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Period*, Oxford, 1987. In his extensive study on Latin in late-antique Syria and Palestine, Joseph Geiger finds 'a surprising degree of penetration of Latin' in those areas; fifth- and sixth-centuries papyri found at Nessana have revealed that Latin poetry (Virgil) was also studied ('How Much Latin in Greek Palestine?' in Hannah Rosén [ed.], *Aspects of Latin: Papers from the Seventh International Colloquium in Latin Linguistics (Jerusalem, April 1993)*, Innsbruck, 1996, 39-57 = 43-44, 52).

<sup>10</sup> Τὸ[ν] χθὲς μὲν ἄκανθαν, σήμερον δὲ τοῦ ῥόδου / ἔσχον ὑγίειαν, τῶν ποθοῦντων φαρμάκου = [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 6a. 15-16.

<sup>11</sup> The manuscript, copied in Constantinople in the second half of the tenth century, has been described by Maria Luisa Agati, 'Su due manoscritti in *bouletée* "élancée"', *Byzantion* 54

six anacreontics of the sixth-century poet and grammarian John of Gaza, who is better known as the author of a poetic description of a picture in a winter bath in Gaza.<sup>12</sup>

The nine poems, published by Pietro Matranga and Theodor Bergk under the name of George the Grammarian, are actually anonymous in the manuscript,<sup>13</sup> although I will continue to refer to their author as 'George' for convenience. Six of these poems are *ēthopoiiai*, that is, fictitious speeches delivered by mythological characters in given circumstances. Poems 7 and 8 are bridal songs (both entitled ἐπιθάλμια, 'bridal verses'), while poem 9 is an encomium to a grammarian named Colluthos for his

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(1984), 615-625 = 616-619, and 'Postilla al Barberiniano gr. 310', *Byzantion* 55 (1985), 584-588. On the formation and the characteristics of the Barberini anthology, see Carlo Gallavotti, 'Note su testi e scrittori di codici greci', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* n.s. 24 (1987), 29-83; Carmelo Crimi, 'Motivi e forme dell'anacreontea bizantina: una lettura delle due parti del Barberiniano gr. 310', in M. Salvatore (a cura di), *La poesia tardoantica e medievale. Atti del I convegno internazionale di studi (Macerata, 4-5 maggio 1998)*, Alessandria, 2001, 25-53; and Marc D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres*, Wien, 2003, 123-128. I have edited and commented on part of the poems of the first part of the Barberini anthology — which contains anacreontics written according to ancient prosody — in *Cinque poeti* (n. 5), and the five extant poems of the second part — i.e. poems in accentual heptasyllables or octosyllables — in 'Three Anacreontic Poems Attributed to Photius', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 64 (1998), 305-328; and 'Basil I and the Jews: Two Poems of the Ninth Century', *Medioevo greco 'zero'* (2000), 69-94.

<sup>12</sup> John of Gaza's description, in iambic trimeters and dactylic hexameters, is entitled Ἐκφρασις τοῦ κοσμικοῦ πίνακος τοῦ ὄντος ἐν τῷ χειμερινῷ λουτρῷ in the only manuscript that has transmitted it, Parisinus suppl. gr. 384 (see below, n. 16). A scholiast (probably Constantine the Rhodian: see Alan Cameron *The Greek Anthology from Meleager to Planudes*, Oxford, 1993, 300-328) added that the 'image' (εἰκῶν) described was in a public bath (δημοσίω, scil. λουτρῷ) 'in Gaza or in Antioch' (ἐν Γάζῃ ἢ ἐν Ἄντιοχείᾳ). See the discussion in Delphine Renaut's detailed study on *ekphraseis* in Gaza: 'Les déclamations d'*ekphraseis*: une réalité vivante à Gaza au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Catherine Saliou (ed.), *Gaza dans l'Antiquité Tardive: Archéologie, rhétorique et histoire, Actes du colloque international de Poitiers (6-7 mai 2004)*, Salerno 2005, 197-220 (henceforth: Renaut, 'Déclamations') = 201-202. John's *ekphrasis* has been edited, with a rich commentary, by Paul Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius*, Leipzig, 1912 (henceforth: Friedländer, *Johannes*). A new edition is being prepared by Daria Gigli Piccardi.

<sup>13</sup> Pietro Matranga, *Anecdota graeca*, pars secunda, Romae, 1850, 571-575, 648-664; Theodor Bergk, *Poetae lyrici graeci*, vol. 3, T, Lipsiae, 1882<sup>4</sup>, *Appendix Anacreonticorum*, 1080-1108. After John of Gaza's six poems, the index to the Barberini manuscript, which is *codex unicus* for most of the texts it contains, mentions a seventh poem by John and an Ἔρως Ἠλίου καὶ Ἀφροδίτης by George the Grammarian, which are now lost. The nine anacreontics follow, but the index lists only their titles, not their authors. Their attribution to George the Grammarian dates back to Leo Allatius (Leone Allacci), *scriptor graecus* at the Vatican Library from 1661 until his death in 1669: in his copy of the Barberini manuscript (Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, MS 210 = Carte Allacci CXXXIV), Allatius wrote Γεωργίου γραμματικοῦ before the title of the first poem, and τοῦ αὐτοῦ before the titles of the other eight poems. See Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti* (n. 5), 176; and 'Text, Interpretation, and Fate of Some Anonymous Ethopoiiai of the Sixth Century', in Eugenio Amato and Jacques Schamp (eds.), *ἩΘΟΠΟΙΑ*, Salerno, 2005, 163-175 (henceforth: 'Text') = 163-166.



*Brumalia*.<sup>14</sup> A George the Grammarian was probably the author of some epigrammatic *êthopoiiai* included in the Greek Anthology (*AP* 9.449-480): the hypothesis that this poet also composed the anacreontic *êthopoiiai* of the Barberini manuscript, albeit attractive, cannot be proven.<sup>15</sup>

The background common to the nine poems is the practice of schools of rhetoric. In late antiquity, anacreontic verses were often used for rhetorical exercises and compositions; in fact, some of the anacreontics of the Palatine collection, the poems of John of Gaza and Dioscorus of Aphrodito, and several epigrams of the Palatine anthology demonstrate that it was possible to treat rhetorical genres either in prose or in verse.<sup>16</sup>

As for the place of origin, the first of George's *êthopoiiai* contains a reference to Lebanon, while poems 7 and 9 were probably composed in Egypt.<sup>17</sup> Nothing certain can be said about the other poems. Cultural exchanges between Palestine and Egypt were frequent and intense in late antiquity: in fact, some of the most important representatives of the so-called School of Gaza — e.g. Aeneas, Procopius, Zacharias, and Timothy — received, or perfected, their education in Egypt.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps some of these poems

<sup>14</sup> *Brumalia*, originally a feast in honor of Dionysus, had become the 'feast of the initial' in the Byzantine age: it lasted twenty-four days, one for each of the letters of the Greek alphabet. See Frank R. Trombley s.v. 'Broumalia', in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 1, New York, 1991, 327-328; and Eugenia Bolognesi Recchi Franceschini, 'Winter in the Great Palace: The Persistence of Pagan Festivals in Christian Byzantium', *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995), 117-133 = 127-130.

<sup>15</sup> See Marc D. Lauxtermann, 'All about George', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 55 (2005), 1-6. Also, two still unpublished ἐγκώμια for St. Barbara have been handed down under the name of George the Grammarian in four manuscripts; see Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti* (n. 5), 176 n. 1.

<sup>16</sup> The Palatine anacreontic collection, handed down in MS Parisinus Suppl. gr. 384 (= Palatinus Heidelberg gr. 33, which also contains the Greek anthology and John of Gaza's *ekphrasis*), consists of sixty anacreontic poems dating from the late Hellenistic age to the Byzantine era; see the edition by Martin L. West, *Carmina Anacreontea*, T, Lipsiae, 1993<sup>2</sup> (henceforth: W.). Poems 52 and 60 explicitly refer to rhetorical schools; poems 7, 18, 47, and 51 are *êthopoiiai*, while poems 54 and 57 are *ekphraseis*; see Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, *The Poetics of Imitation*, Cambridge, 1992, 77-114. Of John of Gaza's anacreontics, the first is an *epibatêrion* ('speech for the disembarkation'), the second an encomium, the third a bridal song, the fourth and the fifth are epideictic speeches, and the sixth is an *êthopoiia*; another *êthopoiia* was the lost seventh poem. On John of Gaza's anacreontics, see my observations in 'Swarms' (n. 4). Dioscorus of Aphrodito's poems have been edited and extensively commented on by Jean-Luc Fournet in *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols., Cairo, 1999. More than eight hundred epideictic epigrams of various ages make up book 9 of the Greek Anthology.

<sup>17</sup> [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 1.61-62: Λιβάνου κλέος Κυθήρη / Χαρίτων ὄπου τὰ τόξα, 'Cythera is the glory of Lebanon, where are the arrows of the Graces'; [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 7.9-10: ὁ γέρων πάρεστι Νεῖλος / κεφαλὴν ῥόδοις πυκάσσας, 'here is old Nile, who has crowned his head with roses'. The dedicatee of [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 9, Κόλουθος, was most probably an Egyptian. His identification with the epic poet Colluthus of Lycopolis (late 5<sup>th</sup>-early 6<sup>th</sup> c.) cannot be demonstrated; however, the name 'Colluthus' is attested only in Egypt. See Ciccolella, 'Text' (n. 4), 166, 171-172.

<sup>18</sup> See Alan Cameron, 'Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt', *Historia* 14 (1965), 470-509.

represent a sample of the production of the anacreontic poets that the scholion to the first line of John of Gaza's *ekphrasis* mentions as one of the glories of Gaza.<sup>19</sup>

The six *êthopoiiai* deal with popular myths and have the same *leitmotiv*: the celebration of the rose. But they are not as frivolous as they seem to be, for George usually plays with traditional myths, showing a taste for paradoxes and a desire to amaze his audience by going off the beaten track. For example, in poems 1 and 2, the opposition between Aphrodite and Athena is a metaphor for a conflict between love and wisdom, beauty and physical strength; as we might expect from Gazan poets, the former prevails over the latter.<sup>20</sup> In poem 3, Ares, the rough god of war, reveals his love for Aphrodite with sweet words, using all the *topoi* of erotic poetry. In poem 4, something as small as a rose's thorn prevents the powerful god Apollo, who 'encompasses heaven and earth' (13-14), from embracing a girl, Daphne.<sup>21</sup> The last two *êthopoiiai* are pronounced by Phaedra. In the short poem 5, entitled 'What Phaedra would say seeing Hippolytus crowned with roses' (τί εἴποι ἡ Φαίδρα ὁρῶσα τὸν Ἰππόλυτον ἔστεμμένον ῥόδοις), Phaedra considers Hippolytus' wearing a crown of roses as a sign of Aphrodite's victory; in this way, the rose, which usually causes 'burning sufferings' (φλογεροὺς πόνους: 11) brings comfort to her heart (κραδίην ἐμὴν λαίνει: 12).

Poem 6, entitled ἄλλο (scil. ἀνακρεόντιον ὁ ποιῆμα) εἰς τὸν αὐτόν, was written as one poem in the Barberini manuscript, but it is probably the result of a merging of two poems.<sup>22</sup> The first, 6a, of sixteen lines, is a variation of poem 5. Phaedra sees Hippolytus wandering about with 'Cythera's crown' on his head, and is pierced by Eros' arrows (1-2); however, as all wild animals, free from 'Artemis' arrows' (βελέων ... ἰοχαιρῆς), rejoice on the mountains (9-10), so Phaedra, surrounded by Erotes, celebrates the rose, 'the lovers' medicine' (τῶν ποθοῦντων φαρμάκου: 16), for helping her satisfy her desire.

The content of the forty-five lines of poem 6b is completely different: Phaedra mixes supplications with rhetorical questions and passes from hope to despair. Several textual problems and (intentionally?) obscure language make the interpretation of this poem extremely difficult. Phaedra is desperately in love (5-8, 17-20); she begins by invoking Aphrodite to 'strike Theseus' sweet son with her words' (1-4). Then she begs Hippolytus to accept shining roses from her (10: ῥόδα φαιδρὰ δέξο Φαίδρα, with a pun on her name, Φαίδρα, and the adjective φαιδρός, 'shining'), and to follow in the footsteps of his father, who was also well aware of the power of love (13-16).

<sup>19</sup> The scholion reads: ἡ πόλις αὕτη φιλόμουσος ἦν καὶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους εἰς ἄκρον ἑλληλακυία· ἐλλόγμοι ταύτης τῆς πόλεως Ἰωάννης, Προκόπιος, Τιμόθεος καὶ οἱ τῶν Ἀνακρεοντικῶν ποιηταὶ διάφοροι (This city [i.e. Gaza] loved the Muses and had reached the highest pitch in eloquence. Famous in this city were John, Procopius, Timothy and the various [or: distinguished] anacreontic poets).

<sup>20</sup> See Ciccolella, 'Swarms' (n. 4), 84.

<sup>21</sup> However, poem 4 is probably an anonymous ninth- or tenth-century imitation: at that time, some poets of the so-called Macedonian Renaissance — e.g. Constantine the Sicilian and Leo Magister Choroisphaktes — revived the language and style of late-antique anacreontics. See Ciccolella, 'Text' (n. 13), 174-175.

<sup>22</sup> The separation of the two poems was first proposed by Rosario Anastasi, 'Sul testo delle anacreontee di Giorgio Grammatico', *Helikon* 6 (1966), 653-659 = 656; and 'Giorgio grammatico', *Siculorum Gymnasium* 20 (1967), 209-253 = 246.

The γνῶμη at lines 21-23 marks the passage to the second part of the poem:

ὁ φιλῶν ὅτε στυγεῖται  
 ἀέρος σκιὰν διώκει  
 καμάτους φέρων ἄπνους

When a lover is hated, he follows an airy shadow, enduring sleepless toils.

In the following lines, Phaedra alternates invocations to Aphrodite (28-31, 40), reproaches to Hippolytus (24-27, 32-35), and bitter statements of her weakness (41-45).

The logical development of the story requires that the three poems be read in reverse order: 6b-6a-5. Nothing can be said about their author(s); these poems were perhaps composed as school exercises, collected together with other products of the same school, and finally incorporated into the Barberini anthology during the tenth-century anacreontic revival. The style of poem 6a is certainly very different from that of 5 and 6b, but these differences are not decisive, because they are mainly due to the metrical pattern employed.

Poems 5 and 6b are written in quatrains of anaclastic ionic *a minore* dimeters or anacreontics; they are stylistically very similar to the other four *êthopoiiai* of the same group. Poem 6a's structure — three quatrains of ionic *a minore* trimeters and a quatrain of iambic trimeters — is apparently anomalous in an anacreontic context. However, it is not strange that this poem was included in an anthology of anacreontic poetry. The ionic *a minore* trimeter or κουκούλιον became an integral part of anacreontics with Sophronius of Damascus, patriarch of Jerusalem (560-638); distichs of ionic trimeters constituted the refrain, which broke the rather uniform rhythm of sequences of quatrains in dimeters mostly accented on the fourth and seventh syllables. Moreover, a poem written entirely in ionic trimeters by Leo Magister (ninth-tenth century) appears in the Barberini anthology. Indeed, Sophronius' provenance from Syria-Palestine points to the popularity of ionic *a minore* trimeters in anacreontic poetry produced in those regions, and thus may confirm the link of at least one of the poems, 6a, with Palestine.<sup>23</sup>

The content of the three poems is a reflection of the popularity of Phaedra's myth in the Palestinian environment, as witnessed by Procopius of Gaza's Ἐκφρασις εἰκόνοσ and from mosaics discovered in that region. But it is to Procopius' text and local works of art that we now turn.

## 2. 'But what is ailing you, woman?'<sup>24</sup>

In his *Hippolytus*, Euripides emphasizes the visual aspect of Phaedra's love: as soon as Phaedra saw Hippolytus, 'her heart was seized with a dreadful longing' (26-27: ἰδοῦσα

<sup>23</sup> On the relationship between ionic dimeters and trimeters in Byzantine anacreontic poetry, see Federica Ciccolella, 'Octosyllables, Dodecasyllables or Hexameters? Reading Anacreontic Poetry in Byzantium', to be published in the Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium on Byzantine Poetry, 'HERMENEIA' (Paris, École des Hautes Études et Sciences Sociales, 23-25 February 2006). A couplet of ionic *a minore* trimeters also appears in the 'Egyptian' poem 9.

<sup>24</sup> Ἄλλὰ τί πάσχεις, ὦ γύναι; = Procop. Gaz. *Descr. imag.* 156 Fr. (n. 26).

Φαίδρα καρδίαν κατέσχετο ἔρωτι δεινῶ).<sup>25</sup> This aspect of Euripides' tragedy probably did not escape the author(s) of the three *ēthopoiiai*. Indeed, the references to the act of seeing contained in the three poems seem to concern an 'external' view and a physical perception rather than an 'internal', psychological representation.

Terms indicating 'seeing' are quite frequent in the three poems. The visual aspect appears in the title of poem 5: Τί εἴποι ἡ Φαίδρα ὀρῶσα τὸν Ἴππόλυτον κ.τ.λ., 'What Phaedra would say *seeing* Hippolytus, etc.'. Phaedra's first words, in lines 1-4, also contain the verb ὀράω:

τί καλὸν χρόνον δοκεῖω  
 Παφίην ὀρῶ τυχοῦσαν·  
 ὁ ποθούμενος γὰρ ἄρτι  
 ῥόδῳ στέφος κομίζει.

I *see* that the goddess of Paphos has obtained the beautiful thing to which I have long been *looking forward*, for now my beloved is wearing a crown of roses.

In 6a. 13-14, Phaedra *watches* the many Erotes surrounding her:

Μὰ τοὺς Ἔρωτας — νῦν ἀριθμὸν γὰρ μέγαν  
 χρεῶν ὀνομάζειν εἰκότως βλέπουσά γε —

By the Erotes — for now I must name a large number of them, and fairly, because I *am watching* them —.

Finally, in the first quatrain of 6b, Phaedra wishes that 'Aphrodite's words' may strike Hippolytus and lead him to love her,

ἵνα πᾶν μέλος συνάδῃ,  
 ἀκοή, φρένες σὺν ὄψει,

... so that everything may participate in my song: hearing and mind, together with sight.

On the one hand, in describing Phaedra talking so vividly about her passion, George may have simply tried to impress his readers. On the other hand, the image of Phaedra *seeing* Hippolytus and *watching* Erotes recalls one of the most interesting works of Procopius of Gaza: the Ἔκφρασις εἰκόνοσ ἐν τῇ πόλει τῶν Γαζαίων κειμένης, i.e. the description of a representation (a painting? a mosaic?) of Phaedra's myth that could be seen in

<sup>25</sup> Here and elsewhere, I follow the text and the English translation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* by David Kovacs (*Euripides*, vol. 2, LCL, Cambridge, 1995, 124-263). In the first stasimon, the chorus celebrates Eros for 'distilling liquid desire upon the eyes' (525-526: Ἔρωσ Ἔρωσ ὁ κατ' ὀμμάτων στάζων πόθον). Unlike Phaedra, Hippolytus is a 'non-voyeur', who avoids any sight that may involve him in the sphere of *eros*. Like Odysseus with Athena in Sophocles' *Ajax* (14-15), Hippolytus has the privilege of hearing Artemis' voice but cannot see her (86). Seeing representations of physical love does not divert him from his chastity: 'I am not eager to look at it either, since I have a virgin soul' (1005-1006: οὐδὲ ταῦτα γὰρ σκοπεῖν πρόθυμὸς εἰμι, παρθένον ψυχὴν ἔχων). See Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Eros', in *I Greci*, a cura di Salvatore Settis, vol. 1, Torino, 1996, 369-430 (henceforth: 'Eros') = 414-415; and the interesting remarks by Davide Susanetti, *Gloria e purezza*, Venezia, 1997 (henceforth: Susanetti, *Gloria*), 27, 40.

Gaza.<sup>26</sup> Procopius undoubtedly was describing an existing image,<sup>27</sup> but, like all *ekphraseis* of antiquity, his description was not intended to replace the view of the εἰκῶν.<sup>28</sup> What matters for the present study, however, is that several elements described in the *ekphrasis* also occur in George's three *êthopoiiai*.

The first lines of the *ekphrasis* contain a celebration of the power of Eros, and offer readers a clue to reading and interpreting the entire description. Procopius is not content with describing: he also wants to demonstrate the overwhelming force of love, which does not spare deities either. Procopius reinforces his assumption with a short list of mythical love stories: Zeus' falling in love with Semele, Europa, and Danae; Poseidon's endeavors; Apollo's passion for Daphne; and Aphrodite's desire for Adonis. These ἐρωτικὰ παθήματα were certainly part of the repertory of every late-antique rhetorician. In fact, the last two examples are the subject of George's anacreontic 4 and of John of Gaza's anacreontic 6, respectively; Adonis also appears in George's poem 5 (9: χαρῆεις Ἄδωνι, χαίροις, 'o lovely Adonis, rejoice', scil. at Phaedra's victory).<sup>29</sup> This confirms the rhetorical nature of Procopius' *ekphrasis* and its relationship with the Gazan anacreontics. Indeed, five of Procopius' seven extant declamations, as well as declamation 16 of his disciple Choricus, attest to the popularity of the myth of Aphrodite and Adonis, with the rose turning from white to red because of Aphrodite's blood; the myth was probably the object of declamations or performances every year during a public festival called the 'Day of the Roses'.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Procopius' *ekphrasis* has been published with a rich commentary by Paul Friedländer in *Spätantiker Gemäldezyklus in Gaza* (Studi e Testi, 89), Città del Vaticano, 1939 (henceforth: Friedländer, *Spät.*). The text of the ἔκφρασις (5-19) will be hereafter quoted as Fr.

<sup>27</sup> For the relationship between reality and invention in Gazan *ekphraseis*, see the studies by Rina Talgam, 'The *Ekphrasis Eikonos* of Procopius of Gaza: The Depiction of Mythological Themes in Palestine and Arabia During the Fifth and Sixth Centuries', in Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony and Aryeh Kofsky (eds.), *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, Leiden, 2004, 209-234 (henceforth: Talgam, '*Ekphrasis*'), 209-210; and Renaut, 'Déclamations' (n. 12), 202. Visual representations of the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus occur in paintings, mosaics, sarcophagi, and other media: see Sonia Mucznik, *Devotion and Unfaithfulness*, Roma, 1999 (henceforth: Mucznik, *Devotion*), 83-139 and plates 60-164.

<sup>28</sup> It is not clear if εἰκῶν refers to a painting or a mosaic: see Renaut, 'Déclamations' (n. 12), 199 n. 10.

<sup>29</sup> The erotic element in the εἰκῶν is also emphasized by the couple of fighting dogs — male and female — represented at the foot of Theseus' bed (141-143, 9 Fr. [n. 26]), and the pair of doves, which are sacred to Aphrodite, standing above Theseus' palace (67-82, 7 Fr.).

<sup>30</sup> Procopius' declamations have been edited by Garzya and Loenertz, together with the letters (n. 10). For Choricus, see the edition by Richard Foerster and Eduard Richtsteig (T, Lipsiae, 1929 [henceforth: F.-R.]; a new edition by Eugenio Amato is due to appear soon. The 'Day of the Roses' (ἡμέρα τῶν ῥόδων) is commonly identified with the *Rosalia*, originally a spring festival related to the coming of spring and the cult of the dead. See Martin P. Nilsson, 'Das Rosenfest', in *Opuscula selecta*, vol. 1, Lund, 1951, 311-329; and Mario Mello, *Rosae. Il fiore di Venere nella vita e nella cultura romana*, Napoli, 2003 (henceforth: Mello, *Rosae*), 8, 36. However, John of Gaza's anacreontics 4 and 5 suggest that in sixth-century Gaza the 'Day of the Roses' was only an occasion for public declamations of speeches and poems concerning spring, the rose, and the myths pertaining to them. For example, Procopius concludes his third declamation with a wish to 'see spring and sing the rose again'



After the introduction, Procopius smoothly moves to the real *ekphrasis*: 'But (the Erotes), as you can see, stretched out their arrows against Phaedra also' (10-11, 5 Fr.: οὗτοι (scil. οἱ Ἑρωτες) δὲ καὶ κατὰ Φαίδρας, ὡς ὄρας, ἀνετείναντο τὰ τοξεύματα). George probably had in mind a similar image in 6a. 1-2:

ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πανδαμάτωρ ὄπλα κορύσσει,  
ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πάντα βέλη νεῦρα τινάσσει,

It is against me that the All-Subduer (scil. Eros)<sup>31</sup> is raising his arms, it is against me that all bowstrings are striking arrows.

According to Friedländer's reconstruction, the central part of Procopius' εἰκῶν represented the interior of Theseus' palace. The king lies asleep in his bed, watched by the winged god Hypnos and surrounded by his servants. Phaedra, lovesick and restless, is sitting on a stool (ἔδρα) near her husband's bed. Her appearance bears witness to her feelings (166, 10 Fr.: τὸ γὰρ σχῆμα ταύτης ἐλέγχει τὸν ἔρωτα): her dress is untied (175-176, 10 Fr.),<sup>32</sup> her eyes are languid, her mind is exalted, and her body is weak, while her soul is about to depart from her (166-168, 10; 181, 11 Fr.).<sup>33</sup>

Four smaller panels were located above the main scene. Three of them show the antecedent facts: the arrival at Cnossos of the group of Athenian young men and women to

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(89, G.-L. [n. 9]). In his letters 11 and 18, Procopius lists to his brother Zacharias the elements that a Gazan 'sophist' (σοφιστής) should include in his writings to celebrate the return of spring: the calmness of the sea, the brightness of light, flowers, swallows, roses, and the myth of Aphrodite, Adonis, and the rose dyed red by the goddess' blood (9-10 and 14, G.-L.). On the other hand, in the introduction to his declamation 39, Choricus shows awareness that the endless repetition of that myth could bore the public (476, F.-R.). As for Procopius' *ekphrasis*, the short conclusive remark καὶ βοᾷ τὸ ῥόδον τὸν ἔρωτα, 'and the rose proclaims [Aphrodite's] love' (5, 10 Fr. [n. 26]) has led Friedländer to affirm that the entire work 'ist ganz aus der Stimmung jenes Frühlings- und Rosenfestes gesprochen' (*Spät.* [n. 26], 25). I would read this remark as a short allusion to a myth well known to the Gazan public, rather than as a reference to an actual circumstance or a festival, which would have required more emphasis.

<sup>31</sup> See Nonn. *Dion.* 2.223: πανδαμάτωρ Ἑρως.

<sup>32</sup> In some representations, Phaedra has her shoulders, or even her breast, naked: see Mucznik, *Devotion* (n. 27), 129.

<sup>33</sup> After offering a detailed description of Theseus (84-153, 7-10 Fr. [n. 26]), Procopius for a moment plays the role of an ideal viewer and addresses Phaedra directly with the voice of 'common sense': since her hopeless love will cause her only suffering and shame, he urges her to look away from Hippolytus' image and concentrate on her husband (156-162, 10 Fr.: ἀλλὰ τί πάσχεις, ὦ γύναι; ἀνόνητον πονεῖς οὐκ εὐτυχοῦντος τοῦ Ἑρωτος. πῶς γὰρ δὴ καὶ πείσεις τὸν καὶ σωφρονεῖν ἐπιστάμενον; τί σαυτὴν αἰσχύνεις ἀνόμῳ κοίτῃ πλησιάζειν ἐθέλουσα; βραχὺ τι μεταστρέφου καὶ δίδου τῷ συνοίκῳ τὸ βλέμμα καὶ μὴ τὸ παρὸν μέμφου, τὰ μὴ παρόντα ζητήσασα. αἰδοῦ δὲ τὸν σύνοικον καὶ καθεύδοντα καὶ μεταφέρου τῆς εἰκόνας πρὸς ἣν ἀφορᾷς. Ἴππόλυτος γὰρ ὡς ἔουκε σωφρονεῖ καὶ τοῖς χρώμασιν). But then he realizes that the realistic representation and his spiritual involvement in the story have carried him beyond his task, which is speaking not *to* Phaedra, but *about* Phaedra: (163-165, 10 Fr.) ἀλλὰ τί τοῦτο πέπονθα; τῆ τοῦ ζωγράφου τέχνη πεπλάνημαι καὶ ζῆν ταῦτα νενόμικα [...] οὐκοῦν περὶ τῆς Φαίδρας, μὴ πρὸς ἐκείνην φθεγγόμεθα.

be sacrificed to the Minotaur, Ariadne's device of the thread, and Theseus killing the Minotaur in the labyrinth. First, Ariadne is portrayed gazing at Theseus, who stands among the Athenian young men, and falling in love with him; then she is at the entrance to the labyrinth, giving Theseus the thread and looking at him lovingly. Procopius probably followed the artist in emphasizing the erotic component of the story. In any case, love is the first cause of all events for the author of poem 6b as well (13-16):

ἀρετῆς πόθεν μετέστη  
γενέτης τεὸς τοσαύτης;  
λαβύρινθε, μαρτύρει μοι  
ὅτι τὸ κράτος Κυθήρης.

Why did your father deviate from such a great virtue? O labyrinth, be my witness that it happened because of Cythera's power.

As in George's poem 6a. 13-14, in the εἰκῶν Phaedra is surrounded by Eroses.<sup>34</sup> A winged Eros, holding a torch in his left hand, points his right-hand finger at the image of Hippolytus hunting in a forest, represented in the fourth small panel (28-44, 6; 179, 183-184, 11 Fr.). Animals, hiding in caves or forests, are surrounded by the hunter's nets (42-44, 6 Fr.). In poem 6a. 9-12, this scene is reversed: since Hippolytus is wandering about conquered by Aphrodite and wearing a crown of roses, the wild beasts in the mountains can celebrate the end of the threat. Aphrodite's power, in fact, is so strong that it even can dissolve the traditional link between Hippolytus and Artemis, the goddess of hunting:

κορυφαῖς ἀνθοφόροις παίξατε, θῆρες,  
βελέων παυσαμένων ἰοχεαίρης,  
ὅτι παῖς Ἴππολύτης στέμμα Κυθήρης  
φορέων ἐν κροτάφοις ἀμφιπολεύει.

O wild beasts, play on flowery peaks, now that the arrows of the Arrow-Pourer (Artemis) have ceased, because Hippolyte's son (Hippolytus) is wandering around wearing Cythera's crown on his head.<sup>35</sup>

With his left hand, the same winged Eros 'lights up the torch, reaching the middle of [Phaedra's] heart, together with the sight [of Hippolytus]' (184-185, 11 Fr.: θατέρα [scil. χειρὶ] τὸν πυρσὸν ἀνάπτει, ὁμοῦ τῇ θεᾷ τῆς καρδίας ἀπτόμενος μέσης). A little earlier, Procopius had said that 'Eros' torch is heating Phaedra inwardly' (180-181, 11 Fr.: τὴν γὰρ δὴ Φαίδραν τουτὶ τὸ λαμπάδιον ὑποθάλλει τοῦ Ἔρωτος). In the

<sup>34</sup> Representations of Phaedra with Eroses are common on sarcophagi: see Mucznik, *Devotion* (n. 27), 91 and pl. 66.

<sup>35</sup> The εἰκῶν also included a second scene, whose relationship to the first is not clear from Procopius' description. Hippolytus is hunting with his companions: the artist has represented 'mountains, plains, a thick forest, hunters, and flocks' (237-238, 12 Fr.: ὄρη ταυτὶ καὶ πεδία ὕλη τε πολλή καὶ κυνηγέται καὶ ποίμνια), but no wild animals. Later, Procopius describes with much detail a bucolic landscape that probably constituted the main scene's background (306-350, 15-16 Fr.). Together with Hippolytus, Daphne (who hunts with Hippolytus in Eur. *Hipp.* 17) leads the group of hunters (238, 12 Fr.; 291-302, 14 Fr.).

same way, in 6b. 7-8, George's Phaedra invokes the fire that she is carrying inside herself:

φλέγε πῦρ, ἐγὼ κομίζω,  
φλέγε πῦρ, τὸ πῦρ τὸ καίον

Blaze, o fire! I am carrying with me — blaze, o fire! — the burning fire.

Also, the adjective φλογερός, 'flaming', which occurs very often in the George-group anacreontics, describes Eros' quiver (5.8), Phaedra's suffering (5.11, 6a.6), and Aphrodite's arrow (6b.39).

A second Eros stands in front of Phaedra and prepares the ink for the fatal letter, with which she is about to reveal her love to Hippolytus.<sup>36</sup> There is no mention of the letter in George's poems; nor is there any allusion to the other figures surrounding Phaedra in Procopius' εἰκῶν: the nurse, 'an old lady taken from tragedy' (196, 11 Fr.: τραγική τις γραῦς),<sup>37</sup> the three maid servants standing behind her (θεράπαινοι: 212ff., 12 Fr.), and the falconer, Hippolytus' 'benevolent servant' (276, 14 Fr.: φιλάνθρωπος οἰκέτης). The εἰκῶν also represented Hippolytus receiving the letter and the nurse being punished (242-275, 13-14 Fr.), and included four panels with scenes of the love between Paris and Helen, all drawn from the *Iliad* (351-420, 16-18 Fr.).

Archaeological excavations in Palestine and Jordan reveal that the picture described in Procopius' *ekphrasis* is not an isolated example; as several scholars have pointed out, the εἰκῶν was probably very similar to the representation of Phaedra's myth in a mosaic pavement of the so-called Hall of Hippolytus, discovered in Madaba (Jordan).<sup>38</sup> Clearly, the rhetorical nature of an *ekphrasis* warns against overestimating the exactitude of the information it conveys because, as already noted, the literary text is not aimed at

<sup>36</sup> Procopius goes as far as to give his readers the text of Phaedra's letter: 'How long shall you be chaste, Hippolytus? Phaedra desires you and yearns for you' (194-195, 11 Fr.: μέχρι δὴ τίνος σωφρονήσεις, Ἴππόλυτε; Φαίδρα δὲ ποθεῖ σε καὶ βούλεται). This quite naive detail adds realism to the description.

<sup>37</sup> Once again, Procopius shows a taste for *êthopoia*: 'And [the old lady] seemed to say: "What is it that ailed you, my child? Why are you so desperate? Write, come on, and take me as a servant to necessity"' (201-202, 11 Fr.: καὶ [ἡ γραῦς] λέγειν ἔουκε· "Τί πέπονθας, ὦ τέκνον; τί δὲ τοσοῦτον ἠπόρησαι; γράφε καὶ θάρρει καὶ δέχου με τῆ χρέα διακονον"). Mixing rhetorical genres was a characteristic of Gazan rhetoricians: see Ciccolella, 'Swarms' (n. 4), 80.

<sup>38</sup> See Helmut Buschhausen, 'La Sala dell'Ippolito presso la chiesa della Vergine Maria', in Michele Piccirillo (a cura di), *I mosaici di Giordania*, Roma, 1986, 117-127. For a detailed description of the mosaic pavement of the so-called Hall of Hippolytus, see Michele Piccirillo, *Chiese e mosaici di Madaba*, Jerusalem, 1989, 41-66 (henceforth: Piccirillo, *Chiese*); and idem, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, ed. by Patricia M. Bikai and Thomas A. Dailey, Amman, 1993, x-xiii, 66. Similarities and differences between Procopius' εἰκῶν and other representations of the same age and environment have been analyzed by Talgam, 'Ekphrasis' (n. 27). After comparing the complex painting described by Procopius to the much more schematic mosaic representations of Phaedra's myth, Talgam concludes (220): 'The question arises whether the differences derive from differences in the education level of the Gaza artist who has received an upper-class classical education, or are due to differences in the artistic media. Both probably affected the nature of the composition'.

replacing an actual view of the object and descriptions usually imply a good deal of subjectivity.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, it is not easy to establish if, and to what extent, the author(s) of the three poems could have been influenced by representations of Phaedra's myth on mosaic pavements of the fifth and sixth centuries, but the connection between the couples Phaedra-Hippolytus and Aphrodite-Adonis, mentioned *en passant* by Procopius and in more detail by George (5.9-12), also appears in the Madaba mosaic. Over the panel dedicated to Phaedra's myth, another panel shows Aphrodite seated on a throne next to Adonis. Six Erotes, the three Graces, and a peasant girl complete the extremely lively scene. One of the Graces brings a winged Eros near to Aphrodite and the goddess threatens him with her sandal. She holds a flower in her right hand while, at her feet, another Eros is emptying a basket of red flowers. Aphrodite's punishment of Eros as responsible for Phaedra's sufferings may establish a link between the two scenes. Also, the flowers in the goddess' hand and scattered out of Eros' basket, which are probably roses, may relate the Madaba mosaic to the 'Day of the Roses', a relationship possible for Procopius' *ekphrasis* as well.<sup>40</sup>

Like George's poems, these visual representations testify to the persisting vitality of ancient mythology within a Christian context. Procopius' εἰκῶν and the mosaic of Madaba seem to have a common background: a local variant of Phaedra's myth, probably elaborated through the mimes or pantomimes that in late antiquity had replaced ancient drama.<sup>41</sup> According to Lucian (*Salt.* 40) and Libanius (*Or.* 64.67), the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus was a typical subject of mimes. Choricus attests to representations of the myth — most probably pantomimes — in which the same dancer (ὄρχηστῆς) 'imitated' (μιμούμενος) both Hippolytus and Phaedra, who was 'in love' (ἐρώσαν: 21.1, 248 F.-R.). Hippolytus was represented as 'a decent, exceedingly vigorous, self-controlled, and wise young man' (νεανίσκος εὐπρεπῆς καὶ λίαν ἐρωωμένος, ἐγκρατῆς δὲ καὶ σώφρων: 29.31-32, 323 F.-R.),<sup>42</sup> whereas Phaedra, who suffered from the 'natural cowardice' of the female sex (δειλίαν ἔμφυτον τὸ θῆλυ νοσεῖ: *decl.* 35.3, 386 F.-R.), killed herself with no consideration for her husband or her kingdom. Phaedra was

<sup>39</sup> On the relationship between subjectivity and reality in *ekphrasis* see Jas Elsner's remarks in *Art and the Roman Viewer*, Cambridge, 1995, 23-28, especially 26: 'What [the rhetor] wants is in effect an *interpretation* and not a "description". The reader's seeing will come about from hearing the totality of the event as interpreted by the sophist, plus a stylistic mimesis of the "quality" of the event effected by the virtuosity of the sophist's rhetoric'.

<sup>40</sup> See above, n. 30. Talgam ('*Ekphrasis*' [n. 27], 223-224) reads the whole scene as an allegorical representation of 'the mystery of natural growth and the joy of nature'. Since the representation of Eros emptying a basket of flowers is less common than that of Eros raiding a beehive (see Piccirillo, *Chiese* [n. 38], 65 n. 42), we may suppose that the variation was introduced with a purpose, i.e. to celebrate the 'Day of the Roses'.

<sup>41</sup> See Glen W. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History*, Cambridge, 2006 (henceforth: *Mosaics*), 31-63. Mucznik (*Devotion* [n. 27], 19) maintains that 'theatrical performances produced a more powerful impression on the artist than any text'.

<sup>42</sup> Choricus' two passages echo Libanius, *Or.* 64.67 (in *Libanii opera* rec. Richard Foerster, vol. 4, T, Lipsiae, 1908, 462): Φαίδραν ὄρχηστῆς ἐποίησεν ἐρώσαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἴππόλυτον προσέθηκεν, ἐγκρατῆ νεανίσκον, 'a dancer creates Phaedra in love, and adds as well Hippolytus, a self-controlled young man' (translation by Bowersock, *Mosaics* [n. 41], 56).

probably represented on stage as unseemly and indecent. In fact, Lucian (*Salt.* 2) mentions Phaedra together with Parthenope and Rhodope, the 'love-sick minxes, the most erotic of all antiquity' (ἔρωτικὰ γύναια, τῶν πάλαι τὰς μαχλοτάτας), as being performed by a 'girlish fellow ... with dainty clothing and bawdy songs' (θηλυδρίαν ἄνθρωπον ... ἐσθήσει μαλακαῖς καὶ ἄσμασιν ἀκολάστοις).<sup>43</sup> We do not know enough about mimes and pantomimes of Phaedra's myth to evaluate their impact on artistic and literary works produced in sixth-century Palestine,<sup>44</sup> but, as we shall see, the immorality that Lucian and Choricus attribute to Phaedra's character seems to have influenced George's poems.

### 3. 'Cypris is not after all a deity, but something even mightier'.<sup>45</sup>

At first sight, George's Phaedra seems to be completely different from the Phaedra of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, but the differences seem to have been constructed too carefully to be accidental. For this reason, we should consider the three *ēthopoiiai* as a response to, rather than an imitation of, Euripides' tragedy.

More or less explicit references to Euripides' *Hippolytus* are interwoven into George's poems. For example, it is easy to recognize 'Cythera's crown', the crown of roses (5.4; 6a.3 = 7 = 11), as a reference to, as well as a reversal of, the 'plaited garland gathered from a virgin meadow' (πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτου λειμῶνος) that Hippolytus offers to Artemis in Euripides' play (73-74): there is an obvious contrast between the flowers that Euripides describes as untouched by flocks and iron (75-76), and George's roses, which are sacred to Aphrodite.<sup>46</sup>

In Euripides' second *Hippolytus*, Phaedra says that she will remain silent and conceal her illness (394); she reveals her feelings only to the nurse, in the presence of the women of the Chorus. Speech and silence fight a hard battle, and Phaedra is torn between her need to reveal her passion and her intention of keeping it secret to preserve her honor

<sup>43</sup> Translation by A. M. Harmon in *Lucian*, vol. 5, LCL, London, 1955, 211.

<sup>44</sup> On mimes and pantomimes at Gaza, see Zeev Weiss, 'Games and Spectacles in Ancient Gaza: Performances for the Masses Held in Buildings Now Lost', in Bitton-Ashkelony (n. 27), 23-39 = 28-32; and Violaine Malineau, 'L'appart de l'*Apologie des mimes* de Chorikios de Gaza à la connaissance du théâtre du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Saliou (n. 12), 149-169 (with extensive bibliography).

<sup>45</sup> Κύπρις οὐκ ἄρ' ἦν θεός, / ἀλλ' εἴ τι μεῖζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ (Eur. *Hipp.* 359-360).

<sup>46</sup> The rose is linked to Aphrodite, as well as to Dionysus, in myths and legends variously elaborated in antiquity. For ancient writers, the rose — and particularly the red rose, considered as the most valuable (Plin. *Nat. hist.* 21.16) — was a symbol of beauty, frailty, and sometimes even of virginity, as, for example, in some post-classical Latin poems (e.g. *Pervigilium Veneris*, 19-27; *De rosis nascentibus*, 43-50; *AL* 84 and 87). See Charles Joret, *La rose dans l'antiquité et au Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1892, repr. Genève, 1993, 45-87; and Mello, *Rosae* (n. 30), 22, 95-103. On the symbolism of roses in Byzantium, see Costas N. Constantinides, 'Byzantine Gardens and Horticulture in Late Byzantine Period, 1204-1453: The Secular Sources', in Antony Littlewood, Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Byzantine Garden Culture*, Washington, 2002, 87-103 = 102.



and reputation (αἰδώς).<sup>47</sup> In poem 6b, George reverses the situation of Euripides' drama: not only does Phaedra describe at length her feelings, but in lines 9-14 she addresses Hippolytus directly, and in lines 10-12 she even propositions him (as happens, for example, in Seneca's *Phaedra*). Phaedra's initial invocation to Aphrodite (lines 1-2) explains this issue:

γλυκὸν Θησέως τὸ τέκνον  
βάλε καὶ λόγους με, Κύπρι,

O Cypris, strike Theseus' sweet son and me with (your) words.

Euripides perceives the dangerous power of the word: things are irrevocable once they are verbalized (368). His *Hippolytus* demonstrates that words can be useful and harmful at the same time: the nurse reveals Phaedra's secret to Hippolytus to help her, but this only causes her death.<sup>48</sup> Such a problematic view is completely absent in George's poem, where Phaedra only acknowledges that 'Aphrodite's words', i.e. erotic language, can transform Hippolytus' feelings toward her.

Apparently, George read Euripides' tragedy as a contrast between Aphrodite and Artemis — i.e. between sexuality and chastity — which is outlined in the speeches of the two goddesses in the prologue (Aphrodite: 1-57) and the last episode (Artemis: 1325-1341). Then he reversed the conclusion of the drama: Hippolytus wears a crown of roses, the flower sacred to Aphrodite (5.1-4), a visible symbol of his yielding to the goddess' dictates and to Phaedra's erotic passion. Instead of desperation and death, mutual love will bring joy and pleasure to Phaedra and Hippolytus, as in the conclusion of poem 5 (17-18):

Χαρίτων φέρει τὰ τερπνὰ  
ὅτε τις φιλῶν ποθεῖται.

When a lover is desired, he carries the pleasures of the Graces.

This γνώμη, in turn, reverses the tercet that a desperate Phaedra utters in 6b.21-23, about the 'sleepless toils' brought by unreciprocated love. Needless to say, respecting Aphrodite's precepts does not imply for George anything sacred or religious, but is just a way to enjoy a purely earthly happiness.

Like Euripides' Phaedra, the speaker of George's *êthopoiiai* lets herself be carried away by the overwhelming power of passion. In Phaedra's speeches, we can observe a remarkable frequency of terms indicating pointed and stinging objects. For example, at the end of poem 6b, Phaedra implores Aphrodite to curb her fury: she is tormented by the roses of the goddess, which hit her like arrows and inspire her with desire (40-45):

Παφίη, χόλω μετρήσης·  
ὁ χόλος πόθω με βάλλει,  
ὁ πόθος ρόδοις με τήκει·

<sup>47</sup> See Douglas L. Cairns, *Aidos*, Oxford, 1993, 314-340; Jens Holzhausen, *Eros und Aidos in Phaidras Monolog (AAWM, 1995, 1)*, Mainz, 1995 (henceforth: *Eros*); and Armstrong, *Cretan Women* (n. 7), 148.

<sup>48</sup> On the power of language in Euripides' *Hippolytus* see Susanetti's observations in *Gloria* (n. 25), 61-62, 72-73.

πόσα τις βέλη κομίσσει;  
 Φύσις οὐκ ἔμεινε, Κύπρι,  
 τὰ σὰ μὴ φέρουσα κέντρα.

O goddess of Paphos, be moderate in your fury; your fury hits me with desire, desire wears me out with your *roses*. How many *arrows* can one carry? My nature did not hold out, Cypris, because it could not endure your *goads*.<sup>49</sup>

These lines are written in a very elaborate style and contain some textual problems:<sup>50</sup> evidently, the author's main objective was to display his rhetorical ability. No fewer than three sharp objects are mentioned in four lines (42-46): roses, arrows, and goads. In line 43, Aphrodite's arrows (βέλη) echo Eros' arrows in 6a. 2, whereas, in line 45, κέντρα, 'thorns' or 'goads', suggest an identification of the goddess with her flower. It is worth noticing, though, that Euripides uses the same term to refer to Phaedra's love and both times within a goddess' speech. In *Hipp.* 38-39, in fact, Aphrodite describes Phaedra as 'being distraught by the goads of love' (ἐκπεπληγμένη κέντροις ἔρωτος). In lines 1301-1303, Artemis reminds Theseus that Phaedra fell in love with his son because she had been 'stung by the goads (δηχθεῖσα κέντροις) of that goddess most hated by us'.<sup>51</sup> Shortly before, in line 1300, Artemis had defined Phaedra's insane passion as οἷστρος, the 'gadfly' that drives people mad. Both κέντρον and οἷστρος belong to erotic language in general and to the *usus scribendi* of the six *êthopoiiai* in particular. Κέντρον is used either literally, to indicate the thorn of roses, or metaphorically, for passion.<sup>52</sup> As for οἷστρος, the term occurs in 6a.6, another invocation to Aphrodite:

Χρονίων, Κύπρι, πόθων ἔλαθι Φαίδρης,  
 φλογερῆς παῦσον ἐμῆς οἷστρον ἀνάγκης,

O Cypris, have mercy on Phaedra's longlasting desires, put an end to the *goad* of my burning anguish.

For George's Phaedra, then, roses bring torments (6a.15; 6b.42). However, roses can also heal the wounds of love, as in 6a. 15-16:

<sup>49</sup> These lines probably allude to *Hipp.* 5-6 and 444-446: Aphrodite is mild with those who yield to her and mistreats those who oppose her. In the *Hippolytus*, Aphrodite and Artemis are seen as anthropomorphic divinities, as well as unrestrainable and pitiless natural forces. As Charles Segal has pointed out ('The Tragedy of the *Hippolytus*: The Waters of Ocean and the Untouched Meadow', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 70 (1965), 117-169 [henceforth: Segal, 'Tragedy'] = 158), '[t]he divinities of the *Hippolytus* [...] possess both the indifference and the power of the elements with which they are associated'.

<sup>50</sup> For example, the polyptota χόλω / χόλος and πόθω / πόθος in lines 40-42 are remarkable. Also, the same syllable, με, occurs in the same position in the first three lines (μετρήσης, με βάλλει, με τήκει). Line 40 is probably corrupt; the verb μετρέω, which properly means 'to measure', makes sense only if considered as equivalent to μετριάζω, 'to be moderate'.

<sup>51</sup> Moreover, in *Hipp.* 563, the Chorus compares Aphrodite to a bee.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g. [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 1. 75-76 (φλογεροῖς ἐμοῖσι κέντροις / βροτέη φύσις κρατεῖται, 'human nature is dominated by my burning goads'); 80 (μάθε καὶ πόθου τὸ κέντρον, 'learn the goad of desire too'); and 119 (φλογεροῦ ῥόδον τὸ κέντρον, 'the thorn of the flaming rose') etc.

τὸ[ν] χθὲς μὲν ἄκανθαν, σήμερον δὲ τοῦ ῥόδου  
ἔσχον ὑγίειαν, τῶν ποθούντων φαρμάκου

Yesterday I had a thorn, but today I am healed by the rose, the lovers' medicine.

Thus, for George, the rose is the φάρμακον, the 'drug', which Euripides' Phaedra was seeking in vain (389), hoping to win over Hippolytus (516) and to bring relief to her νόσος, 'sickness'.<sup>53</sup> Once again, George reverses one of the main points of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, the depiction of Phaedra's passion as an incurable illness sent by Aphrodite (372, 438, 764-766, etc.),<sup>54</sup> and makes it possible to cure it with a rose, a gift from the goddess herself.

The theme of hereditary passion leads to another intentional reversal. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Phaedra recalls the illicit love stories of the women of her family (337-343): her mother, Pasiphae, and her sister, Ariadne. She will be the third to 'perish wretchedly' (341):<sup>55</sup> she is aware that a force attracts her to a fate of guilty sexuality. Her erotic passion, therefore, is biological rather than psychological.<sup>56</sup> George's Phaedra, on the other hand, accuses Hippolytus of descending from a father who 'deviated from virtue' because of Cythera's power (6b.13-16).<sup>57</sup> It is Hippolytus, therefore, who bears the marks of vice. Phaedra suggests that lust is hereditary and, as such, inescapable. From his mother, the Amazon Hippolyte (6a.3, 7, 11), Hippolytus has inherited a wild character,

<sup>53</sup> The term νόσος and its derivatives (νοσέω, νοσερός) occur frequently in the *Hippolytus*: e.g. 131, 179, 205, 269, 293, 394, 405, 477, 512, 597, 764-766, 1306.

<sup>54</sup> In Greek, φάρμακον means both 'cure, medicine, remedy, treatment' and 'poison'. Holzhausen (*Eros* [n. 47], 13 and n. 36) remarks that Euripides most frequently uses φάρμακον in its positive meaning (e.g. *Andr.* 272, *Phoen.* 472 and 893, *Or.* 1190, *Bacch.* 283). In the *Hippolytus*, however, the term preserves its ambiguity: revealing Phaedra's love to Hippolytus, which the nurse sees as a remedy (479), eventually causes Phaedra's death.

<sup>55</sup> Pasiphae, wife of Minos and Phaedra's mother, conceived an insane passion for a bull and generated the Minotaur, who had the body of a man and the head of a bull; on the myth, see Armstrong, *Cretan Women* (n. 7), 10-11. The reference to Ariadne is not immediately clear: according to the traditional version of the myth, Ariadne married Dionysus after being abandoned by Theseus, who fell in love with Aegle or Hippe (see Hesiod, fr. 147, 298 Merkelbach-West, in the edition of Hesiod's poems by Friedrich Solmsen, Oxford, 1970). Thus, Ariadne was guiltless, and was even made immortal, according to Hesiod (*Theog.* 947-949). However, in *Od.* 11.321-325 Dionysus killed Ariadne because she had chosen Theseus instead of him; see Guido Paduano's remarks in *Euripide. Ippolito*, Milano, 2000, 65. Armstrong remarks that Euripides may have chosen the older and less common version of Ariadne's myth to place Phaedra's passion 'in a line of female transgression and impiety'. In fact, '[h]er inheritance of sexual sin is not presented as an excuse for present behaviour, but rather as a recognition of a family curse' (*Cretan Women*, 62).

<sup>56</sup> See Holzhausen, *Eros* (n. 47), 9; and Nadia Fusini's suggestive account in *La luminosa*, Milano, 1990.

<sup>57</sup> According to Plutarch (*Thes.* 18-20), Aphrodite saved Theseus from the Minotaur by causing Ariadne to fall in love with him; at the same time, however, the goddess made Theseus fall in love with Aegle and abandon his rescuer. According to Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.7; *Epit.* 1.23), Theseus kidnapped Helen.

the cult of chastity, and a rejection of sexuality and marriage.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, Hippolytus' father, Theseus, the hero who freed his land from monsters and criminals, is himself a violent and sexually immodest man.<sup>59</sup> Thus, just as Euripides' Phaedra harbors illicit passions in her genes, so George's Phaedra can expect Aphrodite's victory over Hippolytus because of his inborn lustful nature.

As in Euripides' drama and in Procopius' εἰκόν, the world of George's Hippolytus is wild (6a.9-10); hunting establishes a sort of ritual link between him and Artemis, the chaste goddess who rules over wild nature.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, Phaedra's passion projects her into Aphrodite's world: the sea is the realm of the sea-born goddess (Eur. *Hipp.* 3-4, 415, etc.), and from the sea comes the bull, which, at the end of Euripides' drama, will kill Hippolytus (1207, 1213).<sup>61</sup> Indeed, George's Phaedra uses marine metaphors to express her despair (6b.17-20):

ἀνέμων πνοαῖς ἐρίζω,  
πελάγους βάθος διώκω·  
λιμένας φίλους δοκεύσω;  
ἔνεκεν τίνος πλανῶμαι;

I strive with gusts of wind, I pursue the sea depths. Shall I ever watch friendly harbors?  
Why am I wandering?<sup>62</sup>

Euripides' Phaedra would like to participate in Hippolytus' universe (208-211, 215-222, 228-231): this 'distorted reflection of the devotion of her beloved stepson'<sup>63</sup> represents an attempt to absorb into the sphere of *eros* the sacred space of Hippolytus' cult of Artemis. George's Phaedra expresses a similar wish.<sup>64</sup> However, in accordance with the 'new' Hippolytus conquered by Aphrodite, she would like to become a rose (5.13-16):

<sup>58</sup> According to ancient sources, Hippolytus' mother was Antiope or Hippolyte: see Isocrates 12.193; Diodorus Siculus 4.28, Plutarch in *Vita These.* 26.1 and 27.5, and Pausanias 1.2.1. and 41.7. Susanetti (*Gloria* [n. 25], 25-26) remarks that Euripides' Hippolytus is neither asexual nor insensitive to female beauty, if he calls Artemis 'by far the fairest of maidens' (66; cf. also 70-71). Rather, Hippolytus is the androgyne, that is, the opposite of the 'mother woman' that Phaedra represents.

<sup>59</sup> In Ovid's *Heroides* 4, Phaedra's letter to Hippolytus, Theseus' offences are emphasized to justify Phaedra's unfaithfulness (109-126). Similarly, in his *Phaedra*, Seneca portrays Theseus as sexually unrestrainable and lustful (93-98). See Armstrong, *Cretan Women* (n. 7), 275-286. On Ovid's Phaedra see in particular Fulkerson, *Ovidian Heroine* (n. 7), 122-142.

<sup>60</sup> On hunting in Euripides' *Hippolytus* see Giovanni Bárberi Squarotti, *La rete mortale*, Caltanissetta, 1993, 147-173.

<sup>61</sup> See Segal, 'Tragedy' (n. 49).

<sup>62</sup> In *Hipp.* 752-762, the Chorus mentions Phaedra's departure from Crete on 'a Cretan vessel with wings of white canvas' (λευκόπτερε Κρησία πορθμῖς), to become an unhappy bride in Athens. The marine image continues with Phaedra's 'sinking under her cruel misfortune' (χαλεπῆ δ' ὑπέραντλος οὔσα συμφορᾷ) in line 767. In lines 822-824, Theseus describes himself as looking upon 'a sea of troubles' (κακῶν ... πέλαγος εἰσορῶ), out of which he cannot swim (ἐκνεύσαι); nor can he 'cross the flood of this sorrow' (μηδ' ἐκπερᾶσαι κύμα τῆσδε συμφορᾶς).

<sup>63</sup> Armstrong, *Cretan Women* (n. 7), 99.

<sup>64</sup> Such ἀδύνατα are very common in ancient love poetry. See, e.g. *AP* 5.83, 84, 174, and *anacr.* 22.5-16 W. [n. 16]

ῥόδον ἤθελον γενέσθαι  
 ἵνα μετρίως τυχοῦσα  
 ἐπικειμένη μετώποις  
 μετεβαλλόμεν φιλούσα.

I wish I had become a rose so that, lying modestly on his forehead, I might have been transformed by loving him.

As soon as Hippolytus agrees to wear a crown of roses, he becomes aware of ‘Cythera’s burning arrow’ (6b.39) and is cast away from Artemis’ realm: thus, wild animals can celebrate their release from the arrows of the goddess of hunting, which Hippolytus will not — and cannot — throw any longer (6a.9-12). However, George goes further: at the beginning of poem 6b, he describes Hippolytus’ yielding to Phaedra’s wish as a sexual initiation. Here the distance from the Euripidean model becomes more evident. In Euripides’ play, Phaedra never addresses Hippolytus directly: she cannot even mention his name (351-352). Conversely, in poem 6b, Phaedra alternately addresses Aphrodite and Hippolytus and mixes invocations with monologues. After mentioning, in a broken style, the burning passion that she is nurturing in her heart (7-8), Phaedra implores Hippolytus to accept her ‘shining roses’ (ῥόδα φαιδρὰ δέξο Φαίδρα: 10), instead of bringing a crown to Artemis (στεφάνους τί νῦν κομίζεις; 9). In fact (11-12),

ἐὰν ὀκλάσης ἀφάσσω  
 τότε μανθάνεις τὸ κρεῖσσον,

If you stoop to touch them, you can learn what is better.

Of course, Phaedra may be simply celebrating the rose, which is the subject of the other *éthopoiiai* of the same group. However, scholiasts and lexicographers tell us that the rose, in antiquity, was often used metaphorically to indicate female genitals.<sup>65</sup> Phaedra,

<sup>65</sup> See Hesychius, s.v. ῥόδον· Μιτυληναῖοι τὸ τῆς γυναικός (403, ed. by Peter Allan Hansen, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, vol. 3, Berlin, 2005, 243). Also, Hesychius glosses ῥοδωνιά (Lat. *rosarium*), ‘garden of roses’ (404, *ibid.*) with ὁ τόπος ἔνθα φύεται τὰ ῥόδα, ‘the place where roses grow’, but adds: δηλοῖ καὶ τὸ ἀναιδές, ‘[this word] also indicates what is shameless’, i.e. the genitals (cf. αἰδοῖα, Lat. *pubenda*). A scholion to Theocritus 11.10 confirms that both ῥόδον and ῥοδωνιά could mean ‘the female part [of the body]’ (τὸ γυναικεῖον μόριον: ed. by Carl Wendel, T, Lipsiae, 1914; ‘rosario’ still has the same meaning in some South Italian dialects). Athenaeus (629e) mentions the ‘flower-dance’ (ἄσθεμα), probably a mime, which was accompanied by the following song (*Carmina popularia* fr. 6 = *Poetae melici graeci* ed. Denys L. Page, Oxford, 1962, fr. 852):

ποῦ μοι τὰ ῥόδα, ποῦ μοι τὰ ἴα, ποῦ μοι τὰ καλὰ σέλινα;  
 ταδὶ τὰ ῥόδα, ταδὶ τὰ ἴα, ταδὶ τὰ καλὰ σέλινα.

Where are my roses, where are my violets, where is my beautiful parsley?  
 Here are the roses, here are the violets, here is the beautiful parsley.

According to *Geoponica*, parsley (σέλινον) ‘makes women more prone to sex’ (κατωφε-  
 ρεστέρας εἰς τὰ ἀφοδίσια ποιεῖ τὰς γυναῖκας: 12.23.3, ed. Heinrich Beckh, T, Lipsiae,  
 1895, repr. Stuttgartiae, 1994). In Photius’ *Lexicon*, σέλινον is also τὸ γυναικεῖον αἰδοῦ-  
 ον, ‘the female genitals’ (ed. Samuel A. Naber, vol. 2, Leiden, 1864-1865, 150). Parsley and  
 roses are associated in two comic fragments full of sexual allusions: Cratinus, fr. 116 (in



therefore, provides an example of the 'words of Cypris' mentioned a few lines earlier (2): she will perform the same function of the goddess, that of 'striking' (2: βάλε) Hippolytus and convincing him to quench her inner fire. Unlike the flowers of Hippolytus' crown to Artemis (Eur., *Hipp.* 75-76), Phaedra's roses can be 'touched' (11: ἀφάσσω); thus, Hippolytus, who sublimates his sexuality through the cult of a virgin goddess that he cannot even see, is invited to participate in a less lofty and much more carnal sexual relationship. The presence of sexual allusions in other *êthopoiiai* of the same group reinforces this interpretation of Phaedra's words.<sup>66</sup>

Phaedra's proposition, on the one hand, recalls the versions of Phaedra's myth that, from Euripides' first *Hippolytus* onwards, included a direct confrontation between Phaedra and her stepson.<sup>67</sup> George may have revived this tradition to vary a pattern that, as Procopius' *εἰκόν* demonstrates, was commonly accepted and repeated in literary and artistic works produced in a Palestinian environment. On the other hand, Phaedra's explicit sexual allusion probably echoes the licentiousness lamented in mimic and pantomimic representations of Phaedra's myth and, therefore, complies with the perception that George's audience had of Phaedra.

#### 4. Conclusions

The three anonymous *êthopoiiai* about Phaedra analyzed in this paper show the same tendency toward contaminating different literary genres that has already been observed in John of Gaza's poems.<sup>68</sup> In particular, poem 6b offers a clear example of George's method of partly following and partly reversing Euripides' models. George varies Phaedra's traditional image — as an embodiment of shame, modesty, wifely chastity, and good reputation<sup>69</sup> — by drawing from visual representations and, possibly, from mimes and pantomimes, which were certainly more familiar to his audience than ancient plays; these later theatrical representations exaggerated Phaedra's erotic potential to such an extent that she was considered a shameless character. Like Euripides' Phaedra, the protagonist of the three *êthopoiiai* is desperate and possessed by passion; for George, as for Euripides, Hippolytus is a chaste young man devoted to hunting, while Aphrodite is the bitter-sweet goddess who bestows the toils and pleasures of love. However, the first two poems pose a possible solution to the conflicts implied in Euripides' play (male and

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*Poetae Comici Graeci*, Rudolf Kassel and Colin Austin (eds.), vol. 4, Berlin, 1983); and Pherecrates, fr. 113.29 (*ibid.*, vol. 7, 1989). See Leo Citelli in Luciano Canfora (ed.), *Ateneo, Deipnosophisti*, vol. 3, Roma, 2001, 1625f.

<sup>66</sup> For example, in [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 1.43-46, Athena gives up her virginity after experiencing Aphrodite's desires. See Ciccolella, 'Texts' (n. 13), 170 and n. 23.

<sup>67</sup> A representation of Phaedra confronting Hippolytus can be identified in a wall-painting of Pompeii. Phaedra looks toward Hippolytus, who raises one hand in a gesture of denial, and holds a spear in the other hand; see Mucznik, *Devotion* (n. 27), 115 and pl. 134.

<sup>68</sup> See Ciccolella, 'Swarms' (n. 4.), 82.

<sup>69</sup> See Froma I. Zeitlin, 'The Power of Aphrodite: Eros and the Boundaries of the Self in the *Hippolytus*', in Peter Burian (ed.), *Directions in Euripidean Criticism*, Durham, 1985, 52-111 (henceforth: Zeitlin, 'Power') = 52.

female, chastity and sexuality, Artemis and Aphrodite, etc.),<sup>70</sup> whereas in the third poem, Phaedra's suffering dissolves into a rhetorical emphasis that deprives it of seriousness and credibility.

George's contamination of genres undoubtedly appealed to the refined literary tastes of his audience. It is reasonable to suppose that, in spite of the general decadence of ancient drama in late antiquity, Gazan literati were familiar with Euripides' plays. Although tragic performances probably were limited to the reading of passages from some plays,<sup>71</sup> the many quotations from ancient tragedies by Gazan authors demonstrate that Sophocles, Euripides, and, to a lesser extent, Aeschylus were still read in schools.

The Athenian audience of the fifth century BCE rejected Euripides' first representation of Phaedra because a woman directly displaying her erotic passion was seen as a possible cause of social disintegration and a threat to morality.<sup>72</sup> Eleven centuries later, the Jewish and Christian audience of Gaza, certainly familiar with the Biblical episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7 ff.), may have held the same opinion. In some of his poems, John of Gaza seems concerned about not offending his audience; he fills his bridal song with fanciful compound adjectives instead of the usual sexual allusions (*anacr.* 3), apologizes for teaching pagan mythology (*anacr.* 5), and relates a Neoplatonic-Christian interpretation of a pagan myth (*anacr.* 6).<sup>73</sup> If George was addressing the same audience, the depiction of Phaedra in poem 6b is striking, to say the least. Indeed, reducing Phaedra's myth to a form void of substance — within the context of a pagan festival converted into an occasion for rhetorical declamations — may correspond to a deliberate attempt to devalue the contents of Greek education that Jews and Christians believed to be less compatible with their religions.

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<sup>70</sup> According to Zeitlin ('Power' [n. 69], 70), conflicts represent the religious and moral core of the play: 'Only in discovering that the universe is one of conflict, and that words, values, and man himself are ambiguous, can one accept a problematic vision of the world and acquire a tragic consciousness'.

<sup>71</sup> See Massimo Bernabò's recent study 'Teatro a Bisanzio: le fonti figurative dal VI all' XI secolo e le miniature del Salterio Chludov', *Bizantinistica* s. 2, 6 (2004), 57-85 and plates I-XXV: 58-63 (with extensive bibliography).

<sup>72</sup> See Zeitlin, 'Eros' (n. 25), 412.

<sup>73</sup> See Ciccolella, 'Swarms' (n. 4), 90-95.

APPENDIX: [Georg. gramm.] *anacr.* 5 and 6  
(Ciccolella, *Cinque poeti*: 222-225, 228-237)

5. Τί εἶποι ἡ Φαίδρα ὀρώσα τὸν Ἴππόλυτον  
ἔστεμμένον ῥόδου

Τί καλὸν χρόνον δοκεύω  
Παφίην ὀρῶ τυχούσαν·  
ὁ ποθούμενος γὰρ ἄρτι  
ῥοδόεν στέφος κομίζει.

5 Ὀλίγην Ἔρωτος αἴγλην,  
Παφίη, ῥόδοισι μείξον,  
ἵνα τοὺς πόνους νοήσας  
φλογερὴν λέγη φαρέτρην.

Χαρίεις Ἄδωνι, χαίροις·  
10 διὰ σοῦ ῥόδον γὰρ ἄνθος  
φλογεροῦς πόνους προπέμπον  
κραδίην ἐμὴν ἰαίνει.

Ῥόδον ἤθελον γενέσθαι,  
ἵνα μετρίως τυχούσα  
15 ἐπικειμένη μετώποις  
μετεβαλλόμεν φιλοῦσα.

Χαρίτων φέρει τὰ τερπνὰ  
ὅτε τις φιλῶν ποθεῖται.

6a. Ἄλλο εἰς τὸν αὐτόν

Ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πανδαμάτωρ ὄπλα κορύσσει,  
ἐπ' ἐμοὶ πάντα βέλη νεῦρα τινάσσει,  
ὅτι παῖς Ἴππολύτης στέμμα Κυθήρης  
φορέων ἐν κροτάφοις ἀμφιπολεύει.

5 Χρονίων, Κύπρι, πόθων ἴλαθι Φαίδρης,  
φλογερῆς παῖσον ἐμῆς οἴστρον ἀνάγκης,  
ὅτι παῖς Ἴππολύτης στέμμα Κυθήρης  
φορέων ἐν κροτάφοις ἀμφιπολεύει.

Κορυφαῖς ἀνθοφόροις παίξαιτε, θῆρες,  
10 βελῶν παυσαμένων ἰοχαιρῆς,  
ὅτι παῖς Ἴππολύτης στέμμα Κυθήρης  
φορέων ἐν κροτάφοις ἀμφιπολεύει.

Μὰ τοὺς Ἔρωτας — νῦν ἀριθμὸν γὰρ μέγαν  
χρεῶν ὀνομάζειν εἰκότως βλέπουσά γε —  
15 τὸ[ν] χθῆς μὲν ἄκανθαν, σήμερον δὲ τοῦ ῥόδου  
ἔσχον ὑγίειαν, τῶν ποθούτων φαρμάκου.

5. What Phaedra would say seeing Hip-  
polytus crowned with roses

I see that the goddess of Paphos has obtained  
the beautiful thing to which I have long been  
looking forward, for now my beloved is  
wearing a crown of roses.

O goddess of Paphos, mix some of Eros'  
radiance with the roses, so that he may under-  
stand my toils and lay down his burning  
quiver.

O lovely Adonis, rejoice: thanks to you, the  
rose's flower, which sends burning suffer-  
ings, cheers up my heart.

I wish I had become a rose, so that, lying  
modestly on his forehead, I might have been  
transformed by loving him.

When a lover is desired, he carries the pleas-  
ures of the Graces.

6a. Another poem for the same (Hippoly-  
tus).

It is against me that the All-Subduer is raising  
his arms, it is against me that all bowstrings  
are striking arrows, because Hippolyte's son  
is wandering around, wearing Cythera's  
crown on his head.

O Cypris, have mercy on Phaedra's long-  
lasting desires, put an end to the goad of my  
burning anguish, because Hippolyte's son is  
wandering around, wearing Cythera's crown  
on his head.

O wild beasts, play on flowery peaks, now  
that the arrows of the Arrow-Pourer have  
ceased, because Hippolyte's son is wandering  
around, wearing Cythera's crown on his head.

By the Erotes — for now I must name a large  
number of them, and fairly, because I am  
watching them — yesterday I had a thorn, but  
today I am healed by the rose, the lovers'  
medicine.

## 6b. &lt;Ἄλλο εἰς τὸν αὐτόν&gt;

Γλυκὺ Θησέως τὸ τέκνον  
βάλε καὶ λόγοις με, Κύπρι,  
ἵνα πᾶν μέλος συνάδῃ,  
ἀκοή, φρένες σὺν ὄψει.

5 Ὁ πόθος πόθους ἐρίζει,  
ἀγαθὸν πέφυκε νεῖκος·  
φλέγε πῦρ, ἐγὼ κομίζω,  
φλέγε πῦρ, τὸ πῦρ τὸ καῖον.

Στεφάνους τί νῦν κομίζεις;  
10 ῥόδα φαιδρὰ δέξο Φαίδρα·  
ἐὰν ὀκλάσῃς ἀφάσσω  
τότε μανθάνεις τὸ κρεῖσσον.

Ἄρετῆς πόθεν μετέστη  
γενέτης τεὸς τσοαύτης;  
15 λαβύρινθε, μαρτύρει μοι  
ὅτι τὸ κράτος Κυθήρης.

Ἄνεμων πνοαῖς ἐρίζω,  
πελάγους βάθος διώκω·  
λιμένας φίλους δοκεύσω;  
20 ἔνεκεν τίνος πλανῶμαι;

Ὁ φίλων ὅτε στυγεῖται  
ἀέρος σκιὰν διώκει,  
καμάτους φέρων αὐπνους.

Παφίης Ἔρωτα φεύγων  
25 Παφίης ῥόδοις τί τέρπη;  
φιλέων ῥόδον Κυθήρης  
ἔχε καὶ νόον Κυθήρης.

Παφίη, πόθων ἀνάσσεις,  
Παφίη, κρατοῦσα δεῖξον,  
30 ἵνα τοῖς τεοῖς βελέμνοις  
φιλῆς γένοιτο τέρψις.

Στυγέων Ἔρωτος ἔργα  
φρένα σὴν ῥόδοις νοθεύεις·  
ἐρατῆς γὰρ Ἀφροδίτης  
35 ἐρατὸν πέφυκεν ἄθος.

Βέλος ἄρχεται κομίζειν  
ὑπὸ Κύπριδος γελώσης,

## 6b. &lt;Another poem for the same&gt;

O Cypris, strike Theseus' sweet son and me  
with your words, so that everything may  
participate in my song: hearing and mind,  
together with sight.

Desire fights against desires: a good contest  
has arisen! Blaze, o fire! I am carrying with  
me—blaze, o fire!—the burning fire.

Why are you carrying crowns? Accept shin-  
ing roses from Phaedra: if you stoop to touch  
them, you can learn what is better.

Why did your father deviate from such a  
great virtue? O labyrinth, be my witness that  
it happened because of Cythera's power.

I strive with gusts of wind, I pursue the sea  
depths. Shall I ever watch friendly harbors?  
Why am I wandering?

When a lover is hated, he follows an airy  
shadow, enduring sleepless toils.

If you flee from Eros, the son of the goddess  
of Paphos, why should you rejoice at the  
roses of the goddess of Paphos? If you love  
Cythera's rose, harbor Cythera's feelings too.

O goddess of Paphos, you rule over desires. O  
goddess of Paphos, show your power, so that,  
thanks to your arrows, the joy of love may  
arise.

Although hating Eros' works, you are cor-  
rupting your mind with roses: for lovely is the  
flower of lovely Aphrodite.

He begins to carry an arrow from laughing  
Cypris so that he may know how much

ἵνα γνῶ πόσον δαμάζει  
φλογερὸν βέλος Κυθήρης.

40 Παφίτη, χόλω μετρήσης·  
ὁ χόλος πόθῳ με βάλλει,  
ὁ πόθος ῥόδοις με τήκει·  
πόσα τις βέλη κομίσσει;

Φύσις οὐκ ἔμεινε, Κύπρι,  
45 τὰ σὰ μὴ φέρουσα κέντρα.

Cythera's burning arrow can prostrate.

O goddess of Paphos, be moderate in your  
fury; your fury hits me with desire, desire  
wears me out with your roses. How many  
arrows can one carry?

My nature did not hold out, Cypris, because  
it could not endure your goads.