

The Tragedy of Post-Phaedra in The Arts

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It is known that of the dramatic themes of antiquity, one of the most representative is forwarded in the conflict between the irreconcilable character types incarnated in Hippolytus and Phaedra. The unstoppable passion of a woman situated in the crux of her youth, directed towards her own stepson, will be opposed by the strict moral integrity of the youth, carrying them both towards a fatal whirlwind that will push them inexorably to a tragic death.

If the good nature of Euripides (rendering this as a necessary attribute for the survival of the mythic-religious element in classic Greek culture) prepares for the conflict by using the archaic costumes representative of a confrontation between gods (Aphrodite-Artemis) what is certain is that the outcome within the most pure limits of reactions and processes of the human soul, permits the great tragic to find the materialization (upon second attempt)¹ of a successful contemporary of late lineage in western drama.

In effect, the thematic nucleus of the Euripidean *Hippolytus* (who's end proceeds like the biblical story of Joseph), has experienced reelaborations, almost as numerous as ideas may allow, and many are noteworthy; to cite an example of the variety, there has been a production set in the not so distant Spanish political transition.

One of the most unique recreations of the myth, especially interesting considering actual dramatic works, is constituted without a doubt by a trilogy that, from Post-theater school, has been fulfilled by Joseph-Angel, the school's most representative playwright. The author approaches the theme (the way he will with the baroque theme of Berenice) under

¹ "It must be noted that previously, Euripides had composed another version of the work that furnished a sovereign failure, due to the harsh characterization of Phaedra". (Alberto Medina González y Juan Antonio López Férez, "Introducción general a Eurípides", from *Eurípides, Tragedias*, Madrid, Gredos, 1983¹, p. 25).

the form a trilogy, whose titles compose a perfectly structured triangular system. *Chromatic Phaedra*, *Photographic Phaedra* and *Topographic Phaedra* represent three different approaches to the ancient myth. Respectively, the titles evoke three elements of the plastic arts (color, light, space) employed as basic supports for the dramatic texts.

Chromatic Phaedra or CromoPhaedra

Chromatic Phaedra is a dramatic work whose writing is based on color and chromatic variations. The piece consists of nine scenes and has a circular structure. In the first edition² the didascalía of the first scene show a green sun at its zenith, below which are the silhouettes of three trees painted in various shades of red. Theseus appears, and reposes in the premonitory heat produced by the sunshine, and the tutor, who announces that it is about an incestual heat. Theseus then wipes the sweat with a real handkerchief made of elaborately decorated green cloth, which the author has physically included in the page.

In the last scene the characters repeat themselves and the situation is inverted. An announcement (verbal didascalía) now tells us of a chromatic mutation that has been produced: the drawing of the sun is now blood red, whilst below, the trees show shades of green. The sun's red, dyed by Hippolytus recently shed blood; the tragic cold invades the earth, penetrating Theseus's bones, who has just learned of the death of his son. A gelid sweat of death now wets his forehead and the handkerchief which he uses (again, an elaborate handkerchief) is now intensely red.

We find three types of didascalía (verbal, graphic, objectual) made perfectly coherent in the prologue to the manifesto or the "avant-propos"³ that precedes the work, in which the author accepts the use of words, but decidedly rebels against the tyranny used by the word in the dramatic text.⁴ In this work, form and content -inseparable in the greatest artistic creations- complement each other perfectly: the creation within the scene that announces the coming of the tragedy (essential element in the work by Joseph-Angel)

² *Phèdre Chromatique ou La couleur tragique du destin*, Barcelona, Investigació Teatrològica, 1985. However, the work is redone (according to the *ex libris*) in 1974, in Paris. The work was officially included in the doctoral program for theater in the University of Paris VIII (classes given by Professor Patrice Pavis, course 1986-87).

³ "Apostasier la religion de la tradition", *Phèdre Chromatique*, op. cit., pp. 7-20.

⁴ "Cette pièce de théâtre, destinée à l'optique du lecteur et non à son acoustique, est un appel à l'insoumission contre l'obligation d'écrire avec des mots. Auteurs, elle vous invite à vous débarasser de vos croyances alphabétiques et à utiliser le dessin, l'image ou la couleur." (Joseph-Angel, "Apostasier...", op. cit., p. 12).

appears effectively and is undoubtedly brought on by a basic principle in Post-theater: to use the non-verbal means in the script, but the substitution always be rich expressiveness and can enhance the work. In this case, the chromatic mutation produced in the final scene adequately materializes the confirmation (read in the red light of the sun) of the son's death, that in the first scene was only foreshadowing (read in the crimson of the trees). Through the announcement of the messenger, the tragic element invades the heavens, surviving the end of the earth as a place of warmth and love (trees) and the cosmic contamination with the blood of the youth (sun). The handkerchief, finally, powerfully reinforces the feeling of tragedy, ascended to the universe from its uncontainable human magnitude;⁵ the semantic weight of this textual fragment reaches its most potent level by the use of the handkerchief which could actually be used by the reader to wipe his own tragic sweat, therefore assuming the identity of Theseus.

For what refers directly to the spoken text or dialogue, each one of these scenes contains two replicas of the verbal character. Joseph-Angel in this way lays a base for action, setting only those elements that he feels are essential and leaving the actor (or spectator-reader) absolute liberty to interpret or imagine the rest of the situations.

This same open-character⁶ is found in the rest of scenes in which the different characters (Theseus, Hyppolytus, Phaedra, nurse and tutor) have dialogues between each other through a textual representation made up of graphic undulations that insinuate the concentrated presence of each character⁷ and leaves the imagination of the interpreter or receptor to choose the addition of the verbal and physical gestures. By just the fifth scene (that occupies a central position), at the end of a long, undertermined and (we suppose)

⁵ "La nuance végétale du premier mouchoir a fait place à un rouge délavé, comme trempé dans du sang dilué. Cet accessoire délicat acquiert ainsi l'importance d'un objet fatidique (souvenons-nous du mouchoir de Desdémone, messager de la mort)." (Liliane Alexandrescu, "Mise en scène imaginaire du post-théâtre. Exercices de pratique théâtrale", *Teatro (Revista de Estudios Teatrales)*, Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, 1991, p. 265).

⁶ "En conséquence, les comédiens, qui mettront cette pièce sur pied, devront s'en tenir pieusement aux instructions chromatiques. Par contre, ils auront la liberté de profaner les répliques, de parler sans arrêt ou de se taire." (Joseph-Angel, "Apostasier...", op. cit., p. 11).

This root brings Post-theater together with other avant-guard pan-artistic movements, of which the work John Cage is representative: "In the decade of the 1950's Cage works profoundly with this question with coherence, progressively abandoning all control of the creative process and expanding the influence of chance in the phase of *composition* and *execution*, benefiting from the greatest degree of liberty from the later." (Marco de Marinis, *El nuevo teatro, 1947-1970*, Barcelona, Paidós, 1988, p. 31).

⁷ Liliane Alexandrescu proposes the following interpretation of these dialogues via graphic undulations as a Post-theater setting of scenes: "Dans cet ensemble de références visuelles, la juxtaposition et la combinaison musicale ou émotionnelle des répliques construiront un labyrinthe aux murs transparentes, où chaque personnage sera pris dans son propre discours et dans son rêve, n'écoutant que le tumulte de son monologue intérieur (*walkman*)." (*Op. cit.*, p. 266).

tense dialogue with Hyppolytus, we hear the words of Phaedra imploring that the youth agree to the end of her wish.

Once again, the break of the order established in the traditional theatrical text (or, what is the same, the complete substitution or part the written word for a graphic procedure-undulations, in this case) is shown absolutely coherent with the creative will of the author and with the contents that he wishes to communicate (his vision and version of the Euripidean theme), in that way intensely effective in transposing, in a practical mean, his conception of theater not so much by a specific verbal change, but of an open artistic phenomenon.

Joseph-Angel has recreated the classic myth from his profound knowledge of the Euripidean tragedy, and has passed it through the sieve of Racine's classic French recreation.

As is known, Euripides forms his Hyppolytus through a system of norms, well established in the practice of Greek tragedy, and codified by writers as far reaching as Aristotle.

In this way, the work structures itself in alternative successions of four episodes and other pieces, after the prologue and initial pieces, and ends in a final exodus. The alternating dramatic material therefore is perfectly balanced and composed of essential elements and other secondary elements.⁸

The Post-theater version supposes a depuration of such structure (by way of a simplification that permits one to grasp more profoundly that fundamental circumstance, the tragic nucleus), by an alteration of the fable's order and that of the episodes.

Joseph-Angel's tragedy employs structural modifications (the four episodes are converted, without exact narrative or hierarchical correspondence, in nine scenes) with no more liberty than what is contained in the division on five acts in Racine. From the aforementioned are taken essential motives, as in the meeting between Theseus and Phaedra or the dialogue of Phaedra with Hyppolytus, that is not found in Euripides and that occupies -as we have seen- a central position in the Post-theater version.

In the *dramatic personae* there is a selection of characters realized (the fundamental triangle, support to the incestuous conflict: Phaedra, Hyppolytus and Theseus; plus the nurse and tutor, co-operating elements necessary for the development and denouement of the tragic action). It deals with the human elements necessary for the function of the tragedy, in the same way that they prove to be the only ones common to both Euripides and Racine. In his version, Joseph-Angel does not add any more

⁸ "All theatrical work is, moreover, the story (anecdotal or visual) of one or various circumstances. When only one circumstance 'narrates', this structure brings from the beginning to the end a succession of actions or images. (...) Another option besides the possibility cited are those in which the fundamental circumstance of the work is enriched by other circumstances unfundamental (accidentally or not) that have an impact of the first degree." (Angel Berenguer, *Teoría y crítica del teatro*, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, 1991, p. 159).

characteres, but does disregard others (althought used in one of his sources) that, equipped with more a appropriate personality, serve most of all to link (an anchor) the respective themes and historic moments of those creations.

This way, the chorus, personification of the Athenian society, become obsolete in the new context of the tragedy (from Racine); the lyrical element in it becomes unnecessary given the close following of the tragic nucleus; the stress upon the unavoidable force of destiny has been substituted by a simple yet effective chromatic notation ("La couleur tragique du destin", was the subtitle of the first edition), that is balanced between the verses, antiverse, and epodos of the Euripidean chorus.

The goddess Aphroditi and Artemis, representations of the mythic-religious element and polar opposites that unleash the movement of action, had already seen their power mitigated in the attention given them by the Salamina's tragic in the gestation of conflict within the arena of human passion. For this very reason, Joseph-Angel has placed in one character the figure of the servant and messenger, making that the first assume the functions of the later.

The characters added by Racine are intentionally disregarded, for they create a complication of intrigue (Arice) and an insertion of themes over conceptions of power, duty of the state and liberty, not only proper to the court of the 'Sun King'.⁹

They are guides that direct, we have said, a search, for the primitive tragic nucleus, divesting any anecdotal element (that, on another hand, is assumed to be known by the reciever-audience, conoisiseur of classic theater). Produced by way of synthesis is a stylized myth and the essence of human and dramatic conflict.¹⁰ The purification process, the work of Joseph-Angel in this case, is consistent with the general concept of theater but placing his work in the line that we could call theater of suggestion (a succession of images that do not necessarily correspond with a succession of allocutions).¹¹

⁹ Emilio Nájuez explains the adaption of classic tragedy to the circumstances of France in the XVII century: "The tragic figure is always a rebel, the way history unfolds in France when Christian humanism discovers, by light of the ancient world, a Christianity demanding freedom from engagement. Corneille and Racine, then, adapt a Sophocles, Euripidies and Seneca. The evocation of the old unfortunate and bloody happenings, the reverse of the greats of this world guided by a moral cap a and profane mysteries, appear served by the rethoric of Horace and Aristotle." ("Forma y sentido de la tragedia de Racine", en Jean Racine, *Andrómaca. Fedra*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1985, p. 32).

¹⁰ The essentialization of the classic theme obliges us to bring up a recreation of the same tragedy by Miguel de Unamuno. Note the way this quote supports what we have proposed (found in the *exordio* written by the author): "I have tended, due to my professional familiarity with Greek tragedy, to find the greatest level of simplicity, taking out all scenes that are purely entertaining, and all characters that merely decorate, and all scenes that are only transitional." (Miguel de Unamuno, *La esfinge. La venda. Fedra*, Madrid, Castalia, 1987, p. 187).

¹¹ Let us apply this point to the established difference, given the temporal character of dramatic action, by Angel Berenguer: "Consequently, a dramatic piece may present a form of *argumentation* (the way

One of the most notorious characteristics of Joseph-Angel's creations, well illustrated in the works cited, is given by his references to aesthetic and cultural models which underlie the term *post-modernism*.

From the semiotic point of view, it could be said the post-modernity of Joseph-Angel (the Post-theater) takes root in the substitution of the referent external signs (that, in the traditional artistic creation, is inserted into the exterior reality of art), by a relating character, equally artistic, relative to that creation. The sign then stops being an element that transmits a reality of nature different to the system to which it belongs; the new post-modern artistic sign denotes a portion of its own art, therefore the artistic language of post-modernity converts itself into a meta-language (a language that speaks to itself).¹²

Consequently, in post-modern artistic creation, invention is of less importance (it is uninterested in the discovery of neither new nor old external realities); the creative act falls back on the limits of art and looks to relieve existing artistic realities.¹³

In this constant reference to the world of art, consubstantial to Post-theater, the second version of the work is intensified (that the author has prepared to be published in the first volume of his *Complete Work*).

Effectively, the second version shows a remarkable level of perfection in the Post-theater writing technique: the initial didascalia (relative to the precision of the setting) has divested itself of part of the picto-dramatic element (text in which a drawing substitutes the word which designates and object), at the same time reducing its extension. The setting is indicated in the incestual garden of Trezen, in which the idea is conveyed by a reproduction of Piero della Francesca's statue of a blind Cupid. But now we see that the arrow which Eros holds has been substituted by a paintbrush whose strokes trace the lines that (substituting the undulations that transcribed the cues of the first edition) now imitate the format of a cardiogram, converting the text into an 'emotionalgram' where the pulses of

it occurs in epic theater) or of *suggestion*. Such is the formula applied to the production cited by Bob Wilson." (*Op. cit.*, p. 159).

¹² "Modern logic distinguishes between two levels of language: 'language of objects' and 'metalanguage'. But this not only constitutes the scientific instrument necessary for logical thinkers and linguists, but also it plays an important role in the language we use every day. (...) Every time that the speaker/listener need to verify whether they are using the same codes, they all attention to the Code: it represents a METALINGUISTIC function." (The essays of Roman Jakobson over the linguistic functions may be consulted in *Lingüística y Poética*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1983². The above quote, referring to metalinguistic functions, appears on pages 36-37 of the mentioned edition).

¹³ "The fiction of the creating subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, exception, accumulation and repetition of already existing images. Notions of originality, authenticity and presence (...) are undermined." (Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins", en Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture*, London, Pluto Press, 1983, p. 53).

the tragic passion are registered. The paintbrush with which the demi-god will paint the tragic color of destiny, relates the concept introduced in this second edition: effectively, in the first scene, in the location of the sun appears a drawing of a mustache, also green and reminiscent of Velazquez-style portraits, whilst the trees have been substituted by crosses of Santiago (in various shades of red) identical to the pectoral crosses exhibited by the painter's self-portrait in *Las Meninas*. Paintbrush, mustache and crosses of Santiago (graphic didascalía) convey an intra-artistic reality (in this case, the painting): once again we have come across art as a reference to the Post-theater creation, yet now brought to a new level of intensity, set forth by the intra-artistic character of the painting's signer.

The major elements of post-modernity correspond with the intensification of another fundamental root in Joseph-Angel's creations: the fact that this "erudite art"¹⁴ always presumes (of the audience, receivers) the knowledge of the artistic past. If then first edition of *Chromatic Phaedra* subjugates the myth of Phaedra, the new incorporates not only the knowledge of the Euripidean theme, but also the Velazquez-style creation (pan-art) and of course, the author's own first edition. Diverse artistic references (dramatic, pictorial and post-theatrical): pan-art and intra-art, art as a reference to itself.

Once again, form and content are perfectly harmonized: the rich didascalía for props, the hankerchiefs (green and red) of the first edition now exhibit, lovingly imprinted, ways to reproduce classic painting: the first (green, amiable as the sun-universe, now converted into mustache-creator) represents all the courtly opulence of the *Meninas*; the second (blood red, cruel like the testimony of the painter which it symbolizes) shows, through a play of reflection-refraction, the most degraded levels of the social pyramid: as imaginary reconstruction of *Las Meninas* (of low caliber) by Murillo, inversion obtained through a replacement of figures in the Velazquez painting for more humble types, as in the painter's portraits of children.

At plays with art, but without forgetting life:¹⁵ the play of artistic reflections corresponds to the perfection of mirrored life of baroque society.

¹⁴ "Le théâtre de Joseph-Angel est donc un 'théâtre d'artiste'. J'y ajoute: 'théâtre d'érudit'(...) Il faut avoir lu Racine, Shakespeare ou Lope de Vega pour comprendre le message hautain, dédaigneux des convenances, et l'humour de Joseph-Angel." (Liliane Alexandrescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-270).

¹⁵ Once again we must appeal to the connection of Post-theater with the artistic vanguards: "The idea-force that constitutes the nucleus of Cage's poetry is, essentially, equal to Duchamp's (...); that is to say, the *aproximation, almost at the identification, of Art and Life*; the idea that in the 1950's converts itself into holy, marking almost all artistic vanguards and which witness reformulations and radical changes in the political sense around 1968." (Marco de Marinis, *op. cit.*, p. 29).

Photographic Phaedra or PhotoPhaedra

If *Chromatic Phaedra* constitutes the search for a new theatrical script based on color, *Ce n'est pas Hippolyte* assumes the pursuit -by a notably more complex path- of the same search, now employing light as a medium with the utilization of modern photographic techniques

This theatrical creation has also known a second version. In the first, the work retook the classic myth, focusing its attention on Hippolytus (which, we must not forget, recalls Euripidean tragedy). The small piece, included with eight others in a collective volume, *Le mot de la fin et huit autres pièces de théâtre*,¹⁶ constitutes one of the sections in which the volume investigates the different modes, possibilities and grades of theatricality (in the distinct dramatic elements), materialized from its very existence into a fragment, a cue, didascalía, to its presence in one word (precisely at the end of the text) and (why not?) on a blank page.

In *Ce n'est pas Hippolyte* and in two other short works, the dramatic character is the center of consideration. In all of them, the possibilities for theatricality expand indefinitely, breaking all bounds that have been established in dramatic tradition. In the work entitled *Quelqu'un*, this word constitutes the only element in the play. This work then is reduced to the character, undetermined and able to meld into any imaginable figure. In *Liste de personnages*, the dramatic work is reduced to the 'dramatis personae', of which is now the only base for theatricality. Nevertheless, this list contains the inscription "Un personnage historique", the possibilities expanding into the inclusion of any character in classic work. A similar extension, through an inverse route, is that conferred in *Ce n'est pas Hippolyte*, which by excluding the "historic" character (the Euripidean-Racinean hero), it is accepted the inclusion of any other. In a similar way the dominion for theatricality is expanded spatially (in any place, except in Trezen) and verbally (any reply, except for the word "quoi"). If the conjunction of these three classic elements (Hippolytus character, the city of Trezen, uttering the reply (cue) "quoi") constitute within themselves an adequate basis for theatricality, the exclusion of the same elements supposes the inclusion of all the rest and the expansion, therefore, of the "theatrical" character to the most hidden confines of art and of life. In this way, the work summarizes the distinct facets that make up the volume's main consideration, theatricality.

It constitutes then, the expressive paradigm of a creative work that, oriented towards the future, at the same time sinks its roots in the knowledge of western theatrical tradition.¹⁷

¹⁶ Barcelona, Investigació Teatrològica, 1985. The *ex libris* situates the date of its creation in 1973 and the place, Avignon.

¹⁷ "Ce Post-théâtre a un caractère bien défini, bien à lui. Il prend ses racines dans le passé et

In the second version, different in appearance, the conceptual nucleus remains identical, yet the work progresses with fidelity towards the precepts of the Post-theater credo. Effectively, the theatrical script has totally replaced the word for drawings, and their composition now explain the title: *Photographic Phaedra*. The main text and the didascalia share the new possibilities of a dramatic text different from a literary one, consecrated in the author's creation. The work is presented by format of a photographic album in which the first page appears a camera and a photographer (based on the character elements of a XVII century French comedian). The final page shows us the figure to which the objective seems to direct itself, a reproduction of Versailles king. But the rest of pages, all identical, are formed by empty spaces by the artistic composition of classic moulding. These spaces, each given destiny the preceding photographs, should be filled in by the audience (the reader in this case), who will place in them photographs with footnotes which denote various scenes and characters. These, for their part, consist in disconnected expressions, lacking in logical coherence, that create a surrealist history, in which anachronisms and characters are mixed: Louis XIV, Molière, Marie Antoinette, Pompadour,...

The theatrical possibilities (materialized by the possibilities given by this photographic setting of scenes) can be extended again with regard to characters, scenes, and moments of action that the imagination of the user, stimulated by the illogical semantics of the written text, will come to choose and later translate the work. Like many of the best creations of known dramatic practice, since Martin Esslin, under the label "absurd", the verbal text is broken precisely because of the lack of correspondence with the discourse or the visual images.

The consideration given to the concept of theater is again penetrating and becomes manifest by eminently graphic mediums, that assume the distortion of the written word as a base for the theatrical text. The theatricality, by effect, is transferred here from the verbal to the visual plane, by the setting of scenes (materialized by the succession of photos).

This *scenogram* shows the balance between distinct symbolic codes, which have resulted to be interchangeable in a dramatic creation, and at the same time breaking down the prepotency of the verbal element and its dramatic literary derivations.

The figures included in both the first and last pages of the work are historic reproductions of Molière (in the character of Sganarelle) and Louis XIV. Once again, we see the meta-artistic character of Post-theater productions.

paradoxalement ouvre de nouveaux horizons à la théâtralité." (Claudine Élnecavé, "De la parole au graphisme post-théâtral. Une nouvelle langue théâtral", *Teatro (Revista de Estudios Teatrales)*, op. cit., pp. 219).

TopoPhaedra or Topographic Phaedra

The Post-theater trilogy over the classic myth of Phaedra is completed by the work *Topographic Phaedra*, the first edition published in Slovenian, with the title *Krajepisna Fedra* (it was officially included in the course syllabus for drama studies in the University of Ljubljana).¹⁸ The work involves itself in the romantic process, whose evolution brings on tragedy, for it is subtitled "Le chemin tragique de l'amour". To transmit this process the author employs a text that along with the use of replies (cue) and didascalia, he includes a principle graphic element, this time inspired by the lunar landscape (the work is conceived precisely the same year that Armstrong first steps upon the cosmic virginity of the selenite topography).

The 'dramatis personae' returns once again to an intra-artistic reference by presenting Phaedra as an injured *Niobida*, whose physical appearance corresponds well with the psychological state of the Euripidean heroine. Hippolytus, graphically characterized as a classic young Grecian, with a tunic and laurel crown, begins -like an astronaut of destiny- the long journey imposed by fate, of which we only see a succession of naked footsteps (abecedary of the feet), over the geological surface of blank pages whose open and infinite character, like the sea of tranquility¹⁹, is barely able to transmit the immense tragic decision: given the infinite choices that were available to him, the youth (remember his moral rigidity in the classic tragedy)²⁰ "he has chosen the road to tragedy."

The path of the footsteps travels, one after the other, the full nineteen pages of the work; Hippolytus's progression is only detained (like his thoughts) in a meditation that attracts to an imaginary deserted beach, and a second time, the moment he makes his tragic decision. In a central position within the development of the work, the footpath has created the form of a heart,²¹ justly preceding and following the two verbal replies

¹⁸ The work was included in the coursework of Profesor Marko Marin, during the academic year 1985-86. The date of the work's creation is 1974 (the *ex libris* situates it in Paris) and published: Barcelona, Investigació Teatrològica, 1986.

¹⁹ "Quand l'homme marcha sur la lune pour la première fois, j'ai pensé -dit Joseph-Angel- que la Mer de la Tranquillité était la page idéale pour écrire une histoire d'amour éternel, pour écrire sur la superficie lunaire, où il ne pleut jamais et où le vent ne souffle pas, les blessures sur le cœur d'Hypolyte et de Phèdre." (Liliane Alexandrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 256).

²⁰ "Note that the uncompromising and virtuous character of Hypolytus, which will dictate his doom, is the same as Phaedra's unfortunate passion." (Alberto Medina González y Juan Antonio López Férrez, *op. cit.*, pág. 349, note).

²¹ "L'espace blanc crée une atmosphère d'espoir où tout peut se faire. Un duel s'engage entre la spatialité et le graphisme qui gagne du terrain en formant une forme de cœur englobant tout l'espace. La

(cues), the only ones in which the two lovers confess their irrepressible desires. Right after this vacillating moment, Hyppolytus's steps mark a fatally straight path leading hopelessly to the youth's death, externalized through the physical disappearance of his body until leaving only sections of him on the limits of the past page.²² A complex didascalia (that unites graphic gesture, onomatopoeia and text) underlines the tragic gravity of this denouement.

The second version, its revision to be included in the *Complete Work* of the author, possesses the same import given to the other two remodeled versions of the trilogy. The semiotic complexity of the work has become richer and there are new meta-artistic signs.

The presence of cultural elements and modern art is incremented, perhaps for intentional correspondence with the lunar adventure that inspired the first creation of the work. Hyppolytus remains reminiscent of a Grecian with the laurel crown, but instead of the tunic, he now wears a modern courtly infant's dress, immediately evoking the sailor suit worn by the young protagonist in the film *Death in Venice* (Visconti). Whilst meditating tranquil thoughts, perhaps relaxing on a beach, he is found sitting on a rocking horse, the toy with which he enters and exits scenes, and also a psychoanalytic allusion to the type of death Euripides makes him suffer. The heart drawn by the fatal footpath (which also marks the title on the front page) considerably reinforces its erotic connotations: the only two footprints that it contained have been substituted by an elegant pair of black high-heeled shoes, uncared for and effeminately abandoned, along the same amatorial lines that precede the carnal enjoyment of the most genuine Hollywood mythologies.

The intensification of the tragic element that will terminate the lives of the protagonists acquires its most vivid and striking expression because of a new sign, converted into a graphic-objectual didascalia: Hyppolytus enters the scene (initial page) with a cut produced by a chilling sheet of steel whose design includes a drawing that includes the symbols of masculine and feminine sexuality, transposing the heartbreaking duality (carnal desire faced by moral prohibition) of the incestuous relationship. Hyppolytus abandons the scene (final page) because of a new knife cut (is it now uncompromising morals?) that dismembers his body and in this way symbolically expresses the castration produced by the repression of sexual desire. His route is designed, therefore, by passing by "the blade of a knife", which like Damocles's sword, dangles on top of the youth's head.

From the classic work we conserve the tragic nucleus: the central pair of characters, Phaedra's uncontrollable desire, the uncompromising morality of the youth, and the relentless flow of both lives towards a tragic death. Once again, bringing the theme to

figure du coeur met à nu toute la problématique de la pièce racinienne où le mot coeur est repris 34 fois." (Claudine Élnecavé, *op. cit.*, p. 221).

²² "L'énoncé du départ d'Hippolyte, les 'je suis agité, j'ignore, je fuirai', sont traduits par le graphisme des traces de pas. Graphisme qui montre le désarroi d'Hippolyte." (*Ibid.*).

its essence and condensing theatricality from even the most hidden elements. The tragic conflict effectively seen in a manner distinct from current and traditional canons is precisely the point learned from the reelaboration of the classic theme contained in the Post-theater trilogy of Joseph-Angel.