

**DIRECTING EURIPIDES' MEDEA**

by

Lois Marjory Anderson

B.A.(Honors), The University of British Columbia, 1986

B.F.A. The University of British Columbia, 1990

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Theatre)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2009

© Lois Marjory Anderson, 2009

## ABSTRACT

This thesis documents the directorial preparation and rehearsal process for the production of Euripides Medea, produced at the TELUS theatre, January 2009, as the thesis requirement for an MFA in Directing from the Theatre Department of the University of British Columbia. Included are a script analysis of the Kenneth McLeish translation of Medea, a rehearsal journal, and an essay examining the role and intervention of the gods in Euripides' Medea. This production was framed as a re-enactment by the household staff of Jason and Medea. The appendix includes a storyboard script for the household characters written by the director. The bibliography includes sources used by the director for script analysis research.

Challenges in staging Medea include the deus ex machina, the child actors and staging the Greek Chorus. An essential question explored in this production is the character of Medea and whether the audience is to consider her as a monster or as a human. This production explored the deus ex machina as an act of grace, signaling that the gods transcend societal codes of justice, and that Euripides offers the image of a complex woman, struggling and stumbling towards the divine.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
CHAPTER ONE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: DIRECTOR’S JOURNAL.....	45
CHAPTER THREE: OLYMPIAN INTERVENTION IN EURIPIDES’ MEDEA.....	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90
APPENDIX: HOUSEHOLD STORYBOARD SCRIPT.....	92

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of British Columbia. Specifically I would like to acknowledge Professor Malloy of the Theatre Department and Dr. Cousland of the Classics Department.

## **DEDICATION**

*for my girls, A. and E.*

## CHAPTER ONE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS

For this production of Euripides' Medea, I will be using the Kenneth McLeish translation. For my research I am also referencing James Morwood's translation.

### WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THIS SCRIPT?

Every time I read this play I feel tense. At some point my stomach grabs and I feel the roller coaster ride take off without being able to stop it. I am surprised by my emotional response every time. I feel grief. This is a play about loss. It is the last chapter of a love story. The potential of home, children and marriage are not realized. There is waste.

Euripides does not allow us, as audience, to sit comfortably and I love that as well. He assaults us with questions, instead of placating our tension with answers. So while we feel grief and horror over Medea's actions, we also find ourselves conflicted, applauding the courage she musters to shake off an oppressive patriarchal system, under which she is being forced to occupy an inferior position as a woman and as a barbarian. Her actions appear to receive affirmation from the gods. We share some of that affirmation but at the same time we cannot stomach the lengths she goes to to carry out justice.

As Sarah Iles Johnston points out in her introduction to Medea, people remember Medea. They continue to re-visit her story. Why? (Johnston, p.3). One of the qualities of the "Greek Hero" is that their name and their story live on. In The Iliad, when Achilles is considering his role in the Trojan War, his mother explains to him that he has two choices; he can refuse to fight and live the regular life of a normal man, or he can fight, die an honorable death, and his heroic name will be on the tongue of future Greeks forever. Medea's name is on our tongues. She is the heroic figure at the center of Euripides's play.

I love what Euripides does to me, the audience member, reading this play. My allegiance is pulled back and forth. I sympathize with Medea and I sympathize with Jason. I am suspicious of her actions, but I am also drawn into her psychological turmoil. I follow her logic and then I am sickened by her conclusions. I am unable to write her off as a monster because I have taken every step of the journey with her. I see the human being suffering and find motivation for her actions even as they repel me.

Euripides chooses a heroine with many cards stacked against her: a woman, a sorceress, a barbarian, a refugee, and a murderess (her brother and King Pelias). Then he adds one last card to further distance us from relating to her as a human being – he has her murder her children. Are we looking at a manipulative, vengeful woman who has lost the balance of her reason and her passion and has

gone too far? Or are we looking at a heroic rebel, who cannot accept a diminished existence – a woman who re-defines herself as an individual, fulfilling her goddess nature?

Euripides refuses to give us an easy answer. This problematic and complex woman is protected by the gods at the end of the play. No furies appear, as Jason predicts. Medea's safety is difficult to understand from the perspective of "justice". The deus ex machina at the end of the play appears to be an act of grace from the gods who transcend the human sense of justice which is careening forward in the drama. The Corinthians most certainly would kill Medea after what she has done. Perhaps after journeying through the story, finding sympathy with the character at points along the way I, like the sun god, feel compassion for this woman.

Sarah Iles Johnston suggests that this flipping back and forth of allegiance refuses the dichotomy of "self" and "other." If I keep myself apart from another and another's actions, I can define "myself" as normal and I can define the "other" as an alien or a barbarian. But if I see how I am similar to "the other," and if I can sympathize and understand "the other's" plight, then I can see myself in them (Johnston, p.17). Euripides' play then becomes an examination of humanity not simply an examination of one monstrous woman.

At this point in my artistic explorations I am less interested in portrayals of evil and good on stage. I am more interested in our common humanness. If we can shift perspective and understand what lies at the core of people's actions and see the seed of these actions in ourselves as well, we increase our ability to understand and communicate with each other, and we have the potential to feel compassion, even towards those who's actions are deplorable. Medea is a challenge for me. I want her to stop. But I have to admit, I fall for her. I am torn. I fall for Jason as well. I love that I can offer the audience this "torn" and uncomfortable place.

I love the language of this translation. It is punchy, quick, and spare. It is more like conversation than like poetry. I feel the pace of the piece as I read it. The story flies forward at break-neck speed into the final action.

#### WHAT APPEARS PROBLEMATIC WITH THIS PLAY:

1. The deus ex machina is the necessary and problematic climax of Medea. It is both technically challenging as an event and in terms of meaning in the story. Medea appears at the end of the play, high in the air, in a chariot drawn by a dragon. Does Helios the sun-god rescue Medea? Or does Medea assume goddess status in a godless universe? Are the gods rescuing a tragic human figure or has she deified herself beyond all reason and beyond what is recognizable as human? How do I create a deus ex machina in the TELUS theatre? Do I "Go Big or Go Small?"

2. I do not have a Medea in the student population.
3. The Chorus is potentially problematic and awkward. In Medea the Chorus is a group of dancing unison-voiced Corinthian women. How can I stage these sections without them looking silly and awkward? Some of their odes appear to be written to the Greek play formula not because the women have the compulsion to speak. The formula of scene, choral ode, scene, choral ode, sometimes feels sluggish and I wonder if Euripides was bound by the expected pattern, or if he used these odes to build dramatic tension by increasing our impatience to get back to the narrative.
4. The Nurse, in her opening speech, alludes to Jason and Medea's prior story. Athenians would have known the story of The Argo sea voyage, but our audience may not know this background history. How do I make sure our audience receives this information clearly? Possibilities include starting with a Prologue, a Shadow Play re-enactment of the voyage of the Argo, or set decoration allusions to the Argo.
5. Jason and Medea's children need to appear and later be murdered. How can I bring young children on-stage in a show about a mother killing her boys? How would this affect the child actors?

#### STORY:

1. What has happened before the play begins?

The story of Jason and the Argonauts is told by several authors. The following refers to the tale as written by Ovid and Apollonius. Jason and the Argonauts sailed from Iolcus to Colchis to locate and recover the Golden Fleece for King Pelias. King Pelias demanded it before he would give over Jason's rightful place on the throne of Iolcus. Arriving in Colchis, Jason is given tasks by King Aeetes that he must perform before he may take off with the Golden Fleece. These are impossible tasks, and King Aeetes knows it, but Jason has two goddess, Hera and Athena, on his side and they convince Aphrodite to strike King Aeetes' daughter, Medea, with an arrow in the heart so that Medea will aid the Argonaut in his tasks. Medea falls irrevocable and utterly in Love with Jason. She uses her magic and knowledge as a priestess of Hecate to help him accomplish his tasks and then escapes with him on The Argo for Iolcus. Her father, furious that she has helped his opponent, follows, but she slows him down by killing her own brother, chopping him into bits, and casting the bits on the sea behind The Argo. Her father, stopping to pick up the pieces of his son, loses the trail of his daughter. Once Jason and Medea reach Iolcus, Pelias refuses to accept the Golden Fleece and give over the throne, so Medea tricks his own daughters into killing him by boiling him alive. On the run again, Medea and Jason land in Corinth, have two sons, and are reported to live like any good Corinthian family, except that they are



refugees with a shady past. Jason decides to marry the princess, Glauce, and King Creon gives his blessing. Medea locks herself in the house. She hasn't eaten for days and is screaming and cursing like a wild animal when the play begins.

2. What actually happens in the play?

Stasis at the Beginning: A wife and mother is grieving and inert over her husband's marriage to another. She wants to die.

A Nurse comes out of Medea's house. She expresses regret that Medea ever met the Argonaut Jason. She tells us that Medea is a good Corinthian wife and that the citizens like her. Jason has married the daughter of King Creon.

Medea and Jason's two children enter with the Tutor. He has heard more: Creon is intending to banish Medea and her children from Corinth. The Nurse warns the Tutor to keep the children away from their mother. She is fearful about what Medea might do. The Nurse finds all the blame lies with Jason.

The Corinthian women enter, worried about the cries they hear coming from the house. They encourage the Nurse to bring Medea out to speak with them. Medea comes outside calmly and asks the Chorus to keep her secret if she can find a way to pay Jason and Creon back. The Chorus agree to this.

Creon arrives and banishes Medea and her children. She begs to stay and promises allegiance, but he does not trust her. He agrees to give her one day to ready herself but after that if she stays, she will be put to death.

Medea makes plans to poison the King, the Princess, and Jason. She will dispel the gods' justice herself. But she must find safety first.

The Chorus sings that the world is upside down; the rule of might has replaced the rules of Honor and Oath-Keeping. Men are not acting as honorable men should so women will not act as honorable women should.

Jason enters. Medea lists all she has done for him, but he counters and shows all he is doing for the family. The Chorus listens to their arguments and sides with Medea. Jason leaves, hoping Medea will see reason.

King Aegeus enters. He has been given a riddle from the Oracle regarding his future offspring. Medea offers him sons in exchange for sanctuary in Athens. She makes him swear an Oath to protect her. He does, but tells her that she must get to Athens on her own – he will break no laws.

Medea lays out her plan to poison Princess Glauce and announces that she will also kill her children. She will assume the power to determine the course of events, not allow others to determine her life. The chorus tries to dissuade her.

Medea sends for Jason and when he comes she admits she was wrong in everything. She reconciles with Jason and draws the family together. She kisses Jason. She asks that the children be allowed to stay and says that she will send the boys with gifts to the princess in order to convince her to ask her father, King Creon, for permission to keep the boys in Corinth.

The chorus expresses pity for all (Princess Glauce, the children, Jason, and Medea). A tutor announces that the gifts were received. Medea recognizes that she must now kill the children. She equivocates and then sends them inside.

The Chorus laments the state of parenting.

A messenger arrives, tells Medea to flee, and then recounts how the Princess died, poisoned by Medea's gifts. He describes how King Creon died trying to save his only daughter.

Medea steels herself to kill the children. The Chorus calls to the Sun to intervene and they try to dissuade Medea. She goes inside and kills the children while the Chorus wonders if they should stop her.

Jason arrives with soldiers. He has come for the children; Medea will be found and killed. The Chorus tells him that his children are dead. He breaks into the house but Medea appears overhead in the sun god's chariot with her two dead children. They argue over who is to blame. He asks to bury his children but she will not let him have them. She announces the future: she will live in Athens, the children will be buried in Hera's shrine, and he will die when a piece of the Argo lands on his head. The Chorus states that the actions of the gods are unpredictable.

New Stasis: A part-woman, part-goddess is triumphant, uplifted, and all-powerful. She is no longer a wife or a mother.

### 3. Where Are We?

We are in Corinth. We are outside and inside Jason's house.

#### 4. What Other Locations Are Mentioned That Lie Off-Stage?

Athens: King Aegeus' home city.  
Delphi: Where King Aegeus goes to hear the Oracle.  
Troezen: King Aegeus has come to speak to Pittheus of Troezen.  
This is the land where Theseus was born.  
Colchis: Medea's homeland.  
Iolcus: Jason's rightful kingdom. Medea has murdered King Pelias who stole the throne from Jason's father.  
Cephisus: a River in Athens.  
Pieria: a spring where the Muses live.  
A sacred spring where men play dice.  
A place where the Tutor and children have been playing ball.  
The houses where the Corinthian chorus live.  
The palace.  
The Princess' bedchamber and rooms.  
Hera's Shrine.  
The Argo.

#### 5. What Time of Year Is It?

Old Men are playing dice outside. Outside the house the Corinthians and the Nurse gather and talk. The children have been playing ball. It must be warm. Is there a season for weddings? Jason and Glauce are newly-weds.

#### 6. What Time of Day Is It?

Creon gives Medea one day. She must be gone by dawn the next day. It must be morning when he is speaking to her. The children playing ball, and the women arriving, all imply that it is morning when the play begins. The events take place between one morning and the next dawn when the sun rises with Medea in the Chariot.

In This Production: Time in the Household?

It is 7 pm. It is Dinner Time. We are inside Medea and Jason's family home. Off stage lie a kitchen, Medea's upstairs room, hallways, and linen closets.

#### 7. Economic Environment

Jason states that they are refugees, outlaws from Iolcus, and that they have experienced great disaster. His marriage to the Princess will safeguard their economic position. It will bring security and prosperity for the family and will bring royal status to his two boys. He does not want the family to live as beggars but as royalty. They are royals by nature (Medea is a princess of Colchis and Jason the rightful king of Iolcus) but they are living as refugees. They have nothing and were on the run when they landed in Corinth.

## 8. Political Environment

Creon encourages the marriage of Glauce to Jason. This is politically wise, and even Medea calls it reasonable. This marriage brings together two royal houses. Furthermore Jason is an Argonaut, so Creon is marrying his daughter into a heroic house and their children will have heroic lineage. Jason wants security and royal status. He has lost any hope of claiming his throne in Iolcus because of Medea's meddling actions there. He needs to fulfill his royal nature and secure royal title for his sons. There is only one way for Jason to do this and he speaks of this fortuitous opportunity, "I call it luck – to marry the king's own daughter" (Euripides, trans. Mc. p.55).

## 9. Social Environment

I am taking a Classical Studies course from Dr. Robert Cousland of the Classical Studies Department at UBC. He presents the idea of the virtuous wife as a value in ancient Greek culture. According to the Nurse, Medea has been a model Corinthian wife and citizen. She obeys her husband. Jason says the Corinthians respect her and that she has become famous because of her skill. This barbarian is a virtuous wife, thus fulfilling a Greek value. The Corinthian women claim that they care for her, and that she is a friend. She gives a speech to them about how difficult it is for a refugee to understand the social customs of their adopted land. She has tried to negotiate these customs especially concerning private and public space. She speaks to her neighbors, saying:

Women of Corinth, I have come out of the house fearing that you may find some fault with me. I know that many people are proud, some of them away from men's eyes, others publicly so. But others win a bad reputation for idleness from their quiet tenor of life.  
(Euripides, trans. Mo. ll. 215-219)

Her awkward trait is that she is clever:

I am clever, and so to some I am a butt for their odium, to others I seem wrapped up in myself, to others quite the opposite, and then again to others I appear anti-social. (Mo. ll. 302-305)

She acknowledges that her cleverness not only causes people to speak ill of her but that it also creates fodder for her reputation as an evil sorceress:

It crowds me, this reputation: the witch, the witch! (Mc. p.48)

She has tried to fit in but is regarded as different and as an outsider.

If we fall for Medea and are at the same time offended by her actions where does that land us? We cannot simply label her as a barbarian, or in our modern tongue as “uncivilized,” or “the bad guy.” Euripides does not make it that easy. We become emotionally attached to her and as we see her fight oppression in her immediate circumstances, and rise above it, we are conflicted. We admire her courage and yet are horrified by how far she goes to gain independence from her oppressors. Dr. Cousland indicates that in the Greek world fulfilling one’s nature is a high value. Euripides’ audience would probably have felt uncomfortable to see a woman banished and diminished who has both royal blood and roots to the gods.

#### The Social Environment of This Production:

Medea has just killed her children and is upstairs out of sight with them in her attic room. The household staff prepare the family table for dinner. The clock strikes 7 and it is dinnertime. They bring on the lamb dinner. No one comes to the table. The Household staff wait at their stations. This is a family well loved by the staff. A Housekeeper is in charge of the staff. This Housekeeper came from Colchis with Medea.

#### 10. Religious Environment

A detailed examination of the role of the gods in Euripides’ Medea is found in Chapter 3 of this thesis. I examine the intervention of the gods in this play and consider what Euripides is saying about the gods and their interest in Medea.

#### IDENTIFY THE STORY’S COMPELLING QUESTION:

What will Medea do?  
She is boxed into a corner.  
She has nowhere to go.

#### WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PLAY TO THE MYTH:

Medea’s children die in the myth. There are various versions of how. One story thread suggests that the Corinthians kill them and then establish a ritual in Corinth where they perform annual rites to atone for their crime. Medea refers to that ritual, which must have been a present day cult practice in Corinth. It is believed that Euripides was the first person to introduce the idea of Medea killing her own children. This would have been a complete shock and surprise to the audience – a new take on a known story (Storey and Allan, p.137).

### IS THERE AN ALTAR IN THE STORY?

There is no altar. However, Medea does refer to the killing of the children as a sacrifice, challenging, "If any here abhor this sacrifice, avert your eyes" (Mc. p.69). She kills the children inside the house. Hecate dwells in her hearth. The hearth could be a kind of altar.

### WHAT RITUALS ARE USED?

Prayer.  
Killing.  
Gifts delivered to a bride.

### WHAT RITUALS WILL BE EVOKED IN THIS STAGING?

Setting the Dinner Table.  
Grief Song.  
Marriage Song.  
Maenid Dance.

### IS THE AUDIENCE INVOLVED IN THE RITUAL IN THIS STAGING?

Perhaps they participate in a wake. Perhaps tea is served at intermission.

## CHARACTERS:

Polar attitudes of the principle characters both at the beginning and at the ending?

At the beginning of the play Medea believes Jason has performed a wrong action in marrying again and deserting her. Jason states that this action is good and is done to help the family and raise their children to the highest status possible.

At the end of the play Jason believes Medea has performed wrong actions in killing the children and the royal family. Medea believes her actions are justified and that her revenge actions are righteous in the eyes of the gods.

What right now threatens the ordinary circumstances and values of the character's lives, making the present extraordinary?

Jason has married Princess Glauce. Medea lies crying on the floor inside, eating nothing, and will not look up. There is danger in the air. The Nurse is fearful of what Medea might do. She leaves the house and goes outside to worry, leaving her post. The Tutor remarks that this is unusual behavior.

This is the home of two boys, two parents, and two mentioned slaves; a nurse and a tutor. Jason no longer appears to live here. He seems to have moved to the palace. The boys continue in their normal activities with their Tutor but their mother is completely beside herself.

## EXAMINATION OF THE CHARACTERS:

Name: Medea

**Age:** Medea was possibly 14 when she met Jason in Colchis. Dr. Cousland refers to age 14 as the age when Greek girls married. If her boys are now 6 or 7, Medea could be as young as 20 or 21 in this play.

**Status/Decorum:** A princess, daughter of Aetes. A priestess of Hecate. Wife of the leader of the Argonauts – a revered band of heroes. A barbarian in Corinth. Part goddess. She is a niece to Circe, and a grand-daughter of Helios. A Corinthian wife and mother. A murderess.

**Relationship to other characters:** Wife to Jason. Mother to the boys. Neighbor to the the Corinthian women. Mistress to the Nurse and the Tutor. Friend and equal to Aegeus.

What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of this character?

Medea is utterly committed to Jason and loyal to him. This is a strength when he needs her help to retrieve the Golden Fleece. This is a weakness in that she will

do anything to help him succeed; murder her brother, outwit her father, and murder Pelias. The completeness of her loyalty does not waver so that when Jason is disloyal to her the only response she can conceive of is utter destruction of all that he is and all that they had.

Medea has great integrity. She must be true to her heart. This is a heroic stance. It means, however, that the structures of society will not triumph over the impulses of the individual. This can bring pollution into the society and cause great disorder, but the individual can be revered as a hero. Medea is clever and can make a good argument. Medea is pious. She believes in the gods and conducts the rites and rituals of religion in the appropriate way. Medea is ruled by passion.

#### The Character's Desire:

Medea is "mad for him," (Mc, p. 41) says the nurse and "her heart unhinged in her love for Jason (Mo. l.7). Jason claims that Aphrodite is responsible for Medea's actions. She is clearly in the throes of Love in such a way that she cannot sustain having it taken away from her. Medea desires Jason utterly. In the myth, the goddess Hera is also responsible for Medea helping out the Argonauts, and the intervention of a god is irresistible for humans.

Jason says to his Medea:

You must change your wish, you know, and then you will seem more sensible.

You must never see what is to your benefit as distressing to you or think that fortune is against you when it smiles on you. (Mo. ll. 600-604)

But Jason does not realize that she cannot change her desire. It rules her.

Medea says:

What else can I do? Hard anger rules,  
The cause of all mortal pain. (Mc. p.70)

#### The Character's Will:

Medea struggles with her will. The psychological picture of her waffling back and forth trying to decide if she will kill the children or not displays a recognizable, although extreme, human state. She calls for extra strength from Hecate, and from the spirits of vengeance. She orders herself to go forward with her plans saying:

Do it. Dare. You must. Am I a coward? Shall sentiment melt me- am I so weak? (Mc. p.69)



And in the next breath she changes her mind, crying:

Aiai, what can I do? My heart's steel shattered, women, when I saw my children's bright eyes. I could never do the deed. Goodbye my former plans. (Mo. ll.1041-44)

What drives her will is passion, and ego. She cannot allow herself to be treated this way. Reflecting on Glauce, Jason and Creon, she claims:

His bride: she writhes and dies, when I decide.  
Who calls me pliant, powerless?  
I'm of another kind.  
On my friends I smile, my enemies I crush –  
What braver life could any mortal claim? (Mc. p.62)

She will not allow herself to be ruled by this royal family, nor will she submit to their power. She will assume her own power, which is the power of a part goddess. Re-asserting her dominion she cries:

Are Jason and his crew to laugh themselves to bed? Medea,  
granddaughter of the Sun? (Mc. p.51)

The Nurse warns the audience early on that Medea is not a simple woman:

She'll do such things. D'you think her simple,  
Easy? No pliant victim here. (Mc. p.42)

The Character's Moral Stance:

Medea stands, in her own mind, on strong moral ground. The gods punish injustice and Jason has broken his Oath. Creon has broken the host/guest relationship (xenia). She binds herself to the gods crying:

Evil, evil on every side.  
But watch, and see. (Mc. p.50)  
Holy of holies in whose name I live,  
Are they to hurt us and skip unscathed? (Mc. p.51).

She asks Jason how it is that he thinks the gods whom he swore by no longer operate?

I am at a loss to understand whether you think that the gods you swore by no longer rule or that men now live by new standards of what is right. (Mo. ll. 492-495)

However, when she starts to plot the killing of the boys she concludes that what she is going to do is wrong and wicked. She knows she is going too far and that her passion has rule over her rational self.

And I know what evil deeds I am about to do, but my fury against Jason is stronger than my counsels of softness, and it is fury that leads to the greatest evils for mankind. (Mo. ll.1078-81)

How is this character suffering – what do they do to resolve their suffering?

Medea is suffering the loss of love. Love has turned sour. She is inconsolable. She grieves:

This hand of mine,  
The one you held so hard,  
And crawled between these knees! (Mc. p.54)

In response she deals Jason the most painful blow possible by killing his future. Wife, royal prospects, and offspring are all completely destroyed. He has nothing at the end. She is also suffering because she is oppressed. Choices are being made for her. She is trapped and has nowhere to go.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the character?

Medea wants Jason. If she can't have his love she will kill his life. In both instances she will own his destiny. Beyond that, Medea wants freedom from this love story with a new story, her own story, crafted by her own hands not the hands of others. She wants freedom: from her oppressors, and from her own passion for Jason.

Name: Jason

Age: Jason had gone to Pelias' kingdom to assume his rightful crown when he came of age. He was probably 20. Then he traveled a year to Colchis, returned to Iolcus, and then moved on to Corinth. His boys could be 6/7. He could be as young as 26.

Status/Decorum: Jason is a hero, and leader of the Argonauts. He is a hero with a Barbarian wife. He is a prince without a kingdom and without hopes of ever gaining his own (Iolcus) back after his wife murdered the king there. An outlaw from Iolcus and from Colchis where they left behind Medea's murdered brother.

Relationship to other characters: Husband to Medea. Husband to Princess Glauce. Father of two boys. Master with servants. Son-in-law to King Creon.

What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of this character?

Euripides has penned a weak hero in Jason. He is ambitious, which is a strength, but all his successes have been through women. Medea aided him on the Argonaut voyage, and Glauce will raise his political status and that of his sons. Emily McDermott claims that Jason's fall is the fall of The Mediocre Man. She says that he is not a tragic hero nor a sympathetic character (McDermott, pp. 2-3).

In a way, Medea exhibits male heroic tendencies – taking her fate into her own hands and acting. In her article “Becoming Medea” Deborah Boedeker writes:

Euripides emphasizes the paradox of a character who aspires to male heroism within the confines of what are presented as inescapably female concerns. (Boedeker, p.136)

Jason exhibits almost female tendencies – finding security through marriage. Furthermore, he is unable, personally, to over-turn the banishment of his family by talking directly to Creon, but must go through his new wife to ask for safety for his sons. The arguments he puts to Medea are weaker than the ones she puts to him. He uses words like a sophist, making points glibly and sometimes flippantly. The Chorus indicates this when they say:

Jason, what you have said is superficially convincing. (Mo. l. 576)

Jason's strength is that he will provide for his sons. He will secure their rightful royal heritage. He says to them:

One day, with your brothers,  
You'll be the leading men in Corinth.  
Grow big and strong-  
Leave the rest to your father and the god  
Who work with him. (Mc. p.65)

Jason also appears to have some comprehension of Medea and her situation. He knows what she is feeling and he takes the time to assure her that he is not interested in Glauce beyond political ambitions. He believes that his actions will help the whole family.

My object was – and this is the most important thing – that we should live well, that I should bring up our children in a manner worthy of my house, and by producing brothers to my children by you, I should place them all on a level footing, unite them into one family and be prosperous.  
(Mo. ll. 559-565)

Jason's biggest weakness is lack of passion. He is coolly ambitious, driven by rational thought, but he completely underestimates the power of passion.

The Character's Desire:

Jason desires prosperity, security and status. He doesn't speak of his desire for women beyond what is reasonable and practical. In other words, he does not seem to be overcome with Love for either woman. However, Medea has obviously exercised some control over him and he has brought her along with him on the journey from Colchis even as she has left a path of murders behind her.

The Character's Will:

Jason's will is mushy. He accepts the banishment of his wife and his children while at the same time saying that he is acting to raise their status. However, he does not waver off of his plan to be husband to Glauce. He does not seem like a man who could disappoint a king by changing his mind and abandoning the princess. One wonders if Creon's will is holding Jason up when things start to heat up with Medea.

The Character's Moral Stance:

Jason appears to believe the gods are on his side, and that he is morally justified. But he breaks his Oath to Medea, he allows his family to be banished, and he refuses Medea as a supplicant.

How is this character suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

Jason is suffering because he is not living up to his potential. He is a refugee with nothing, living in someone else's kingdom. He is not living as a hero or a royal. This rubs him as a man. He resolves this by getting in with the royal family, marrying the only daughter, potentially becoming king someday.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal

Jason wants power and security for himself and his sons.

Name: Nurse

Age: The Tutor calls her old nurse.

Status/Decorum: She is a slave and a servant.

Relationship to other characters: Medea's mistress

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this character?

She loves her mistress. She loves the children. She feels and sees her mistress' distress. She is loyal, telling nothing of what she knows. She tries to help but is repelled. She does manage to get Medea to come out and talk to the Corinthians.

The Character's Desire:

She desires the household to be in good health again.

The Character's Will:

She does not disobey her mistress' commands.

The Character's Moral Stance:

She believes the gods are on Medea's side and that Jason is acting wrongly. She states that, "he stands plainly convicted of being a traitor to his friends" (Mo. ll. 83-84).

How is this character suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

The Nurse is so torn up at the beginning of the play with fears for her mistress and the children that she leaves her post and goes outside the house, alone, to talk to the sky. She also actively tries to keep the children away from their mother.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the Character:

She wants to save the family. Her obstacle is that she will obey her mistress. She has no power.

Name: Tutor

Age: Nurse calls him old friend.

Status/Decorum: He is Jason's man. He tutors the children. He is a Corinthian who can hang about where the old men play dice. He has a wise, practical and cynical view of life:

Are you only realizing now that everyone loves himself more than his neighbor, some justifiably, others simply to improve their situation.  
(Mo. ll.85-87)

Relationship to other characters: He and the Nurse are slaves. He is Jason's man. He does feel for Medea's plight.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this character?

His strength is that he accepts what happens in life. He is not crying. Jason's actions are commonplace. They bring pain but one must understand that that is the way of the world and not become overly emotional. One must accept what life brings. This is the attitude Jason wants Medea to take up. However, these words come out of the mouth of a slave. Medea is not a slave. The tutor's weakness is an inability to see the full danger of Medea's passion. Even later he tells Medea to accept fate, not seeing that she is far beyond that.

Desire/will/moral stance of the character:

The Tutor discourages high emotion from both the Nurse and Medea. He seems stoical. He seems to imply that there is virtue in accepting one's fate and not allowing passion to over-ride judgment. He says to Medea:

Why react like this? Incredible. You're not the first to be unyoked from sons. Mortal fate is hard. You'd best get used to it. (Mc. p.68)

How is the character suffering?

He is a slave. If the master's house goes down, he goes down with it. Once the children are no longer banished he sees no obstacles.

Super objective of the character:

The Tutor wants to calm everyone down and rationally make the best of things.

Name: Creon, King of Corinth

Age: The messenger refers to Creon's ancient bones.

Status/Decorum: He is king. He is an absolute ruler who makes the laws and carries them out. There are men who accompany his visit to Medea.

Relationship to other characters: He has one daughter who he loves above everything. He is father-in-law to Jason.

What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of this character?

Creon claims he is not a tyrant. He claims that he has shown mercy in the past. He grants Medea's request for one day, to use as she needs. He has insight into her character. He, along with her Nurse best sees Medea's capabilities. He recognizes her wisdom, and her abilities. He recognizes the size of her distress. He also sees her skill at argument. She lays out her case very well to him. He orders her to, "Stop this talk." (Mo. l. 322)

Creon is wise and discerning and correct in his distrust of Medea. His weakness is that he has a soft side. He reveals his Achilles heel (his love for his daughter). He also grants Medea one more day out of pity.

The Character's Desire:

He desires safety for the royal family.

The Character's Will:

His will is strong. He will not change his mind regardless of her pleading and supplication:

Get out. The decision's made: no smiles on Earth will change it. Be known our enemy. (Mc. p.49)

The Character's Moral Stance:

When Medea threatens him with Zeus, Creon says Fate will decide. Creon makes no reference to the gods. He banishes Medea even as she appeals to him on her knees as a supplicant. Only when his daughter is dying does he wonder which god is acting upon her. And then, he does not acknowledge his actions as having spurred the gods on. He appears to believe he is right in action because he is the king. The Chorus suggest that under his rule 'might is right', not 'piety is right.'

How is this character suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

Creon is nervous. He is afraid of Medea and what she might do. He banishes her to remove all threat.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the Character:

Creon wants a stable royal household providing happiness and safety for his only daughter. The only obstacle is Medea.

Name: Aegeus, King of Athens

Age: Aegeus is married but has no children. This is not an indication that he is old, however. If he were old he probably wouldn't question the oracle about his childlessness. This journey seems like the journey of a man in his prime trying to understand why he has no children.

Status/Decorum: He is a king. He is a former soldier. He enters attended. He addresses Medea as an equal.

Relationship to other characters: He calls Medea a friend. He praises her cleverness and asks for her help with the riddle. He has good relations with Corinth.

What is the strength and what is the weakness of this character?

Aegeus has no trouble recognizing that Medea is smarter than him. He shares his intimate difficulties with her as with a friend. He is trusting, friendly, compassionate, and provides sanctuary for her. He is a man of his word and will keep his Oaths. In his scene he re-affirms the sanctity of all the taboos broken flippantly by Jason and Creon; he swears an Oath with piety, he responds to her supplication, and he promises to honor the guest/host relationship if she comes to him. His weakness is that he is a bit naïve and not overly swift. He doesn't understand a fairly obvious riddle from the oracle, which even the audience

understands. He accepts all of Medea's plans out of friendship to her and because the plans appear "shrewd" to him. He takes Medea's side of the story at face value and bows to her higher wisdom.

The Character's Desire:

Aegeus wants children. His wisdom in this scene is probably skewed by his desire for children.

The Character's Will:

Aegeus seems to blow with the wind a bit. He set off on a journey to Delphi and picking up Medea's pieces along the way is a bit off track.

The Character's Moral Stance:

He finds Jason's actions incredible, saying to Medea:

And does Jason consent (to banishment)? I do not approve of this either.  
(Mo. 1.708)

He swears before the gods that if he breaks his oath:

May I be damned, like all who scorn the gods. (Mc. p.61)

How is this character suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

Aegeus' desire for offspring is strong enough to inspire his journey to the Oracle and then to Corinth to find an interpreter.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the Character:

Aegeus wants children.

Name: Chorus of Corinthian Women

Age: Married housewives. Medea's age.

Status/Decorum: They embody propriety and virtue as wives.

Relationship to other characters: Medea's neighbors.

What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of this character?

These women pull Medea out of her slump. They try to console her. They ally with her. Their weakness is that they are indecisive when the murders happen and ultimately they do not stop Medea.

The Character's Desire:

They desire that Medea and the children survive.



The Character's Will:

They do not have the will to stop the murder of the children.

The Character's Moral Stance:

They are pious. They question the order of things in the universe but they do not question the existence of the gods. They will re-tract their questions if questioning threatens the order of things.

How are these characters suffering – what do they do to resolve their suffering?

They watch the downfall of the household and do nothing but reflect on it.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the Character:

They want this to stop. They are being forced into a battle of allegiance. Their hearts and minds are being pulled into very difficult questions about morality, justice, oppression and nature. This makes them very uncomfortable.

Name: Medea and Jason's two children

Age: They are old enough to speak, play ball, and have a tutor. They are not youths yet with responsibilities. I suggest ages 6 and 7.

Status/Decorum: They are princes without a kingdom.

Relationship to other characters:

They are always with the Tutor. Their parents are loving: they kiss, they hold hands, and they are physical.

The Character's Will:

They are too young to exercise any will. They do as they are told. They play, learn, deliver gifts to the Princess, hug their father and go inside when told.

The Character's Moral Stance:

In death they call on the gods.

How are these characters suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

The household is not normal. Father has moved away. Mother is on the floor and according to the Nurse looks at them without joy. The two children obey all instructions.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the Characters:

They want to please their parents.

(I have invented the following characters for this production:)

Name: Housekeeper

Age: Older – 40

Status/Decorum: Colchian. She has traveled with her mistress to Corinth on the Argo. She was present at their wedding. She sang the blessing.

Relationship to other characters:

She has the highest status among the servants. She is a servant and a friend and confidant to Medea.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this character?

She loves her mistress, her master, and the children. Her weakness is that she does not stop the murders.

The Character's Desire:

A happy mistress. A happy home.

The Character's Will:

The Housekeeper tries to will the house into order. It is dinnertime.

The Character's Moral Stance:

She shares Medea's convictions about the gods and understands rites and ritual. She is pious.

How is this character suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

The Housekeeper is in shock and is grieving. She goes over the story from beginning (The Argonauts) to the present.

Super Objective/Intention/Goal of the Character:

She asks, "How did we get here?" She initiates the re-enactment, re-living the story to understand it. The obstacle to this re-telling is the imminent arrival of Jason and the presence of Medea upstairs.

Name: Household Staff

Age: 20 to 30 - the ages of the actors.

Status/Decorum: Corinthian servants. They are very efficient at the job. This is a royal household. These servants are loyal.

Relationship to other characters:

This family is well-loved and respected.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of these characters?

They are loyal. They did not stop the murders.

The Character's Desire:

To take back what has happened in the last few hours.

The Character's Will:

They will stand by their mistress and master and keep the house going.

The Character's Moral Stance:

They are pious. They see both the side of Jason and the side of Medea. They respect the gods.

How are these characters suffering and what do they do to resolve their suffering?

The staff are in shock. This can manifest itself in different ways: anger, tears, extreme efficiency, cooking food, drinking, and denial. To alleviate their suffering they act. They set the table. They re-call the events. They try to understand what happened to their beloved masters. They feel guilt. They are implicated.

## SCENE OBJECTIVES:

### Prologue:

Title: The Housekeeper Re-Calls the Prior Story.

Mood: grief and shock

Tempo: purposeful, active and deliberate.

Dramatic tension: there has been a murder in the house.

Text Style: monologue

Length of Scene: short

Character: The Housekeeper.

Objective: To re-enact the events that have happened in the last few hours in this house.  
To create order through telling the story of “how we got here.”

Physical Qualities:

Heartbeat: slightly elevated

Perspiration: mild

Stomach condition: sick

Muscle tension: not tense

Breathing: grounded

Rhythmic quality: very very still to active

Metaphor: Earth Mother

Character: Household Staff

Objective: To set the table for dinner

Physical Qualities

Heartbeat: fast

Perspiration: high

Stomach condition: sick

Muscle tension: tense

Breathing: rate, depth: fast and shallow

Rhythmic beginning and ending: agitated in shock to focused and obedient.

Metaphor: a startled school of fish

### Scene One:

Title: The Nurse Invokes the Gods

Mood: agitated

Tempo: quick

Dramatic Tension: Medea is planning something.

Text Style: monologue

Length: short

Character: Nurse

Objective: She wants the gods to intervene.

Physical:

Heartbeat: racing

Perspiration: yes

Stomach condition: churning

Muscle tension: open and not tense

Breathing: steady and deep

Rhythm beginning to end: desperate to focused

Metaphor: Buoy – sensitive to every minor shift in the sea.

Scene Two:

Title: The Tutor Reveals That Medea is Banished.

Mood: gossip

Tempo: quick

Dramatic Tension: he has a secret and they are afraid of their mistress.

Text: dialogue

Length: short

Character: Tutor

Objective: He wants the Nurse on Jason's side.

Physical:

Heartbeat: slow and steady

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: hungry

Muscle tension: none

Breathing: rate, depth: normal

Rhythm: cocky to agitated because they are on different sides.

Metaphor: all head

Character: Nurse

Objective: She wants an ally

Physical

Heartbeat: it increases

Perspiration: increases

Stomach condition: hollow

Muscle tension: not tense

Breathing: normal, deep

Rhythm: needy to taking control

Metaphor: A commander

Scene Three:

Title: The Nurse Prays

Mood: fearful

Tempo: ominous

Dramatic Tension: She knows something Medea doesn't. Medea is screaming inside.

Text: monologue with interruptions.

Length: short

Character: Nurse  
Objective: She wants the gods to help.  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: hard but slow  
Perspiration: cold  
Stomach condition: hollow  
Muscle tension: tense  
Breathing: rate, depth: slow and shallow  
Rhythm: in command to uncertain  
Metaphor: A supplicant.

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to die  
Physical  
Heartbeat: slow  
Perspiration: low  
Stomach condition: empty  
Muscle tension: releasing into pain  
Breathing: rate, depth: slow and deep  
Rhythm: growing upwards from the ground  
Metaphor: A bear in a leg-hold trap.

Scene Four:  
Title: The Corinthian Women Investigate  
Mood: energized, curious  
Tempo: quick  
Dramatic Tension: Danger is imminent  
Text: dialogue  
Length: short

Character: Corinthian Women  
Objective: They want to calm Medea down (give her advice, get her outside)  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: up from normal  
Perspiration: a bit  
Stomach condition: uneasy  
Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: calm  
Rhythm: calming moves to agitated  
Metaphor: A gaggle of Jewish mothers

Character: Nurse:  
Objective: She wants to find allies  
Physical  
Heartbeat: low

Perspiration: none  
Stomach condition: relief  
Muscle tension: relief  
Breathing: rate, depth: slow, deep breaths  
Rhythm: needy to relieved  
Metaphor: Writing to an advice columnist

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants relief (through death or justice)  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: fast  
Perspiration: body and voice fully active  
Stomach condition: like a ball of fire  
Muscle tension: not tense  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast and deep  
Rhythm: from giving up to planning  
Metaphor: Shaking off the shackles

Scene Five:

Title: Medea Gets the Chorus on her Side

Mood: calm, measured

Tempo: slow

Dramatic Tension: The emotional contrast between her calm public self and the woman they have heard screaming inside her house.

Text: monologue

Length: long monologue

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to ally with the women  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: steady  
Perspiration: none  
Stomach condition: controlled  
Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: slow, deep  
Rhythm: movement from the awkward foreigner to the courageous woman  
Metaphor: Best Friends Forever

Character: Chorus  
Objective: They want to ally with her  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: increasing  
Perspiration: none  
Stomach: held in/not breathing  
Muscle tension: tense  
Rhythm: controlled to emotional

Metaphor: Henry V “St. Crispian’s Day” pre-battle speech

Scene Six:

Title: Medea is Banished

Mood: skillful argument between equal minds

Tempo: stately

Dramatic Tension: Creon distrusts Medea

Text: dialogue, stichomythia, dialogue

Length: longish

Character: Creon

Objective: He wants to get her out

Physical:

Heartbeat: slow

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: controlled

Muscle tension: controlled relaxation

Breathing rate, depth: steady, deep

Rhythm: secure to wary to generous

Metaphor: A father talking to a naughty child

Character: Medea

Objective: She wants respect

Physical:

Heartbeat: controlled

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: churning

Muscle tension: she is tense

Breathing: rate, depth: slow and deep to match him

Rhythm: from oppressed to grasping for control

Metaphor: A kicked dog down

Scene Seven (a):

Title: The Penny Drops for the Chorus

Mood: sad

Tempo: slow

Dramatic Tension: She has nowhere to go. She is at a Dead End.

Text: song

Length: short short

Character: Chorus

Objective: We see you

Physical:

Heartbeat: regular

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: hollowness



Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: regular, deep  
Rhythm: slow lament  
Metaphor: A tiny boat alone on a big sea

#### Scene Seven (b)

Title: Medea Plans Murder  
Mood: euphoric  
Tempo: slow  
Dramatic Tension: We are watching a murderess, plotting.  
Text: monologue  
Length: long monologue

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to steel herself for murder  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: steady  
Perspiration: none  
Stomach condition: relaxed  
Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: steady, deep  
Rhythm: low to empowered  
Metaphor: Lady Macbeth

#### Scene Eight

Title: Women Will Rise  
Mood: Angry, Fighting, empowered  
Tempo: Energized  
Dramatic Tension:  
Text: choral call and response  
Length: longish

Character: Chorus  
Objective: They want to join Medea  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: fast  
Perspiration: much  
Stomach condition: fire in the belly  
Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast and deep  
Rhythm: builds from a sense of injustice to siding with Medea  
Metaphor: A Patti Smith concert. The maenad dance.

Scene Nine:

Title: Jason and Medea Talk

Mood: sexy, raw passion

Tempo: careful and deliberate

Dramatic Tension: needing these two to resolve, seeing their inability to resolve,  
knowing the stakes involve a murder plot.

Text: argument/ counter-argument, dialogue, stichomythia, dialogue.

Length: long scene

Character: Jason

Objective: He wants to get Medea on his side.

Physical:

Heartbeat: regular

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: tense

Muscle tension: forced relaxation

Breathing: rate, depth: regular, light

Rhythm: on top, flippant, to defensive and at a stale-mate

Metaphor: A sophist

Character: Medea:

Objective: She wants to get Jason back

Physical:

Heartbeat: fast

Perspiration: yes – the object of her passion is in the room

Stomach condition: turning over/butterflies

Muscle tension: trying to hold herself together

Breathing: rate, depth: fast, shallow then controlled then fast and shallow

Rhythm: Trying to keep control (using her words) to spitting, insulting, losing control.  
Head/heart/head/heart

Metaphor: A righteous queen becoming a completely defeated hag.

Character: Chorus

Objective: They want to stand by Medea

Physical:

Heartbeat: fast

Perspiration:

Stomach condition: tense

Muscle tension: tense

Breathing: rate, depth: shallow and fast

Rhythm: from angry, heckling crowd to silent horrified crowd

Metaphor: Watching the gladiators fight

Scene Ten:

Title: Prayer to Aphrodite

Mood: shock

Tempo: considering

Text: choral Song

Length: long

Character: Chorus

Objective: They got out of hand, and they want to re-assemble and be moderate.

Physical:

Heartbeat: slowing

Perspiration: mopping it up

Stomach condition: settling

Muscle tension: releasing it

Breathing: rate, depth: taking slow, deep breaths

Rhythm: movement from passion to a restoration of piety and moderation

Metaphor: Cleaning up after the party

Scene Eleven:

Title: A Savior Arrives at the Right Moment

Mood: friendly, generous, easy

Tempo: breezing forward

Dramatic Tension: Uneasy ending – where are we? What has she planned? Can we trust this as a possible joyful ending? We want to think she has abandoned her plan because she has found a savior. We feel fore-boding.

Text: stichomythia, dialogue, choral benediction

Length: longish

Character: Aegeus

Objective: He wants children

Physical:

Heartbeat: steady

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: relaxed

Muscle tension: none

Breathing: rate, depth: steady and deep

Rhythm: movement from confusion to a man with a plan

Metaphor: A kind oaf. A gentle giant.

Character: Medea

Objective: She wants safety

Physical:

Heartbeat: racing with hope

Perspiration: none

Stomach condition: relaxing

Muscle tension: relaxing  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast and deep  
Rhythm: defeated to hopeful  
Metaphor: A prostitute. A woman raising herself out of the mud

Character: Chorus  
Objective: To end the story well  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: strong  
Perspiration: none  
Stomach condition: relaxed  
Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: slow and deep  
Rhythm: serene  
Metaphor: Benediction

Scene Twelve:  
Title: The Path to Victory  
Mood: euphoric  
Tempo: active, energized  
Dramatic Tension: We watch her design the ultimate weapon – the children's death  
Text: monologue, dialogue  
Length: shortish

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to carry out Justice  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: fast  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: relaxed, sick, conscious relaxed  
Muscle tension: relaxed, very very tense, conscious relaxation  
Breathing: rate, depth: quick, deep. She stops breathing when she thinks of the children.  
Rhythm: She grows through the scene. Defines herself. Uses heroic language. Gets on her feet.  
Metaphor: Birth of a Goddess

Character: Chorus  
Objective: They want to stop Her  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: fast  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: sick  
Muscle tension: tense  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast, deep  
Rhythm: Language fails them  
Metaphor: A door slams shut in their face

Scene Thirteen:

Title: You Do Wrong

Mood: warning – you will pollute society

Tempo: slow

Dramatic Tension: impiety/ taboo here/ kin-killer

Text: choral call and answer

Length: too long

Character: Chorus

Objective: They want Medea to stop it.

Physical:

Heartbeat: slow

Perspiration: no

Stomach condition: sad

Muscle tension: no

Breathing: rate, depth: deep

Rhythm: like a love-song

Metaphor: A hymn to beauty/ innocence

Scene Fourteen:

Title: The Family Re-united

Mood: playful, loving

Tempo: quick

Dramatic Tension: do we trust her?

Text: monologue, dialogue

Length: long

Character: Medea

Objective: She wants to get Jason to take the boys, with the gifts, to Glauce.

Obstacle: She loves Jason

Physical:

Heartbeat: racing

Perspiration: non

Stomach condition: butterflies

Muscle tension: none

Breathing: rate, depth: fast and deep

Rhythm: working it, stumbling into love, working it, giddy.

Metaphor: Two great lovers self-destructing – Anthony and Cleopatra

Character: Jason

Objective: He wants to settle the family

Physical:

Heartbeat: joyful fast

Perspiration: no

Stomach condition: relaxed  
Muscle tension: none  
Breathing: rate, depth: excited, shallow  
Rhythm: cautious to patronizing, giddy, celebratory  
Metaphor: A Prince Assumes His Throne

Scene Fifteen:  
Title: Lament for the Players  
Mood: sad  
Tempo: slow  
Dramatic Tension:  
Text: choral Song  
Length: short

Character: Chorus  
Objective: They want to state their love for all; children, princess, Jason and Medea  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: pounding against the cavity  
Perspiration: none  
Stomach condition: wracked  
Muscle tension: the lament releases tension  
Breathing: rate, depth: slow, deep  
Rhythm: steady and equal  
Metaphor: Watching the destruction of a city

Scene Sixteen:  
Title: The Tutor Consoles  
Mood: joyous/tearful/awkward  
Tempo: quick  
Dramatic Tension: What is Medea going to do?  
Text: messenger speech/stichomythia  
Length: short short

Character: Tutor (I may change this to the Nurse)  
Objective: He wants to bring relief  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: quick  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: jiggled around from a run  
Muscle tension: no  
Breathing: rate, depth: panting, deep  
Rhythm: joyous to fore-boding  
Metaphor: Close the book – the story is done.

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to steel herself  
Obstacle: She is emotionally freaking out  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: picking up  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: churning  
Muscle tension: yes  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast, shallow  
Rhythm: panic/tears to control  
Metaphor: A deer – skittish, scared

Scene Seventeen:  
Title: Medea Talks to Her Children  
Mood: love, sadness, tenderness, revolt  
Tempo: slow  
Dramatic Tension: Will she or won't she?  
Text: monologue  
Length: long

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to prepare her sons for death. (Glorify it, justify it, and explain it).  
She wants to say good-bye to her sons. She loses. She tries to make their deaths a sacrifice but by the end of the scene she sees that her action is evil.  
Her passion over-rules her reason and she sees this. It is a realization.  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: steady  
Perspiration: none  
Stomach condition: tight  
Muscle tension: tense  
Breathing: rate, depth: she isn't breathing properly  
Rhythm: extreme fluctuations  
Metaphor: Agamemnon speaking to Iphigenia

Scene Eighteen:  
Title: The Curse of Parenting  
Mood: Philosophical  
Tempo: slow  
Dramatic Tension: We are tense because we need the action to proceed and these women are philosophizing.  
Text: choral call and answer  
Length: too long

Character: Chorus

Objective: Are they distracting, delaying the inevitable with words, protecting themselves by distancing themselves?

Physical:

Heartbeat: steady

Perspiration: no

Stomach condition: sick

Muscle tension: yes

Breathing: rate, depth: steady

Rhythm: rational thought

Metaphor: Waiting for the bomb to fall

Scene Nineteen:

Title: The Story of the Deaths of the Princess and The King.

Mood: horror

Tempo: story-telling: set-up, rising action, climax, philosophical musing

Dramatic Tension: Medea is rejoicing and we are horrified

Text: short dialogue then monologue

Length: long monologue

Character: Messenger

Objective: He needs to show her what she did. He wants her to escape.

Physical:

Heartbeat: fast

Perspiration: yes

Stomach condition: upside down

Muscle tension: no

Breathing: rate, depth: quick, deep, slowing to gather breath for the story then steady and deep.

Rhythm: quick/calm/quick/calm

Metaphor: A gory horror-film

Character: Medea

Objective: She wants to hear every single detail

Physical:

Heartbeat: quickened

Perspiration: cold

Stomach condition: excited

Muscle tension: not tense

Breathing: rate, depth: fast and deep

Rhythm: attentive and giddy

Metaphor: A maenad in ecstasy



Character: Chorus

Objective: They need to pass judgment. They need to state that Jason was brought to justice, but Glauce was an innocent. The children are also innocent.

Physical:

Heartbeat: beating

Perspiration: yes

Stomach condition: ill

Muscle tension: yes

Breathing: rate, depth: short, shallow

Rhythm: fore-boding

Metaphor: The Final Attempt

Scene Twenty:

Title: Medea Steels Herself for the Act

Mood: commanding

Tempo: energized

Dramatic Tension: we need the Chorus to do something!

Text: monologue

Length: short short

Character: Medea

Objective: She needs to kill the children.

Physical:

Heartbeat: fast

Perspiration: yes, feverish

Stomach condition: sick

Muscle tension: tense

Breathing: rate, depth: fast, deep

Rhythm: move forward, hesitate, and move forward

Metaphor: Hard steel. Male. Soldier.

Scene Twenty-One

Title: The Death of Jason and Medea's Sons

Mood: panic

Tempo: fast and furious

Dramatic Tension: we need the chorus to stop her!!!

Text: choral song, stichomythia

Length: short short

Character: Chorus

Objective: They want to stop the Action

Physical:

Heartbeat: fast

Perspiration: yes

Stomach condition: ill

Muscle tension: yes  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast, shallow  
Rhythm: praying, reasoning to screaming at Medea  
Metaphor: Neighbors of domestic violence who do not act.

Character: The children  
Objective: They want to stop the action  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: fastest  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: puking  
Muscle tension: yes  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast and gasping  
Rhythm: desperate  
Metaphor: The tape played at trial of the recorded murder.

Scene Twenty-Two:  
Title: Jason is destroyed and Medea Wins  
Mood: domestic fury –raw passion  
Tempo: fast  
Dramatic Tension: The audience has information which Jason does not have.  
Text: dialogue, monologue, stichomythia  
Length: long stichomythia

Character: Jason  
Objective: Get the kids out  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: fast  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: probably been puking  
Muscle tension: pain  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast, controlled until he loses it  
Rhythm: control, loss of control  
Metaphor: A chase scene. Dead man walking

Character: Medea  
Objective: She wants to cut the cord between them forever. End the story. End Jason.  
Begin Medea.  
Physical:  
Heartbeat: high  
Perspiration: yes  
Stomach condition: sick  
Muscle tension: no  
Breathing: rate, depth: fast, deep  
Rhythm: control, lose control, re-gain control  
Metaphor: Ascension

## THE CHORUS IN THIS PRODUCTION:

### Who are they?

The servants in the household of Jason and Medea. Sometimes they take on the role of “The Women of Corinth”. All of the odes and interjections are handled by the servants. The household staff is Greek, with a housekeeper who is Colchian.

### Why are they there?

Euripides’ Chorus is there to provide:

- A sense of social order and of how a member of the community (polis) should act. They often caution against ‘the voice of the individual’.
- The voice of a minority group who can echo the protagonist’s need to push against the system.
- A pious position.
- A context for the story.

In this production, the servants are there because there is nowhere to go. A murder has taken place within the last hour, their mistress is upstairs with the two dead children and they can only respond by assuming their 7pm task. They set the table for dinner. They are guilty of doing nothing.

### Does the Chorus develop?

They move emotionally from shock, to re-enacting what happened, and finally to acceptance of the devastation. They accept also their culpability as they re-enact. All are responsible for the deaths.

### Are they suffering?

Deeply

### Distribution of Chorus lines in this production?

There will be a mixture of choral song, solo song, song sung solely by the Housekeeper, some by the women, and some by the men.

### Movement and blocking?

They move from serving position into the salt circle and fully/ instantly re-enact the events of the day. They can travel on all of the TELUS audience levels. Scenes are bound by the salt circle but may break out. When Aegeus enters we can open up the playing space. The Chorus can talk directly to the audience.

## STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY:

### Opening Stasis:

A wife and mother is grieving and inert over her husband's new marriage to another woman.

### Closing Stasis:

A part-woman, part-goddess is triumphant, uplifted, all-powerful and protected by the gods. She is no longer a wife or a mother.

## THE WORLD OF THE PLAY:

### What are the rules of this world?

There is a king.

This is not a democracy.

Slaves are necessary to hold society together.

The Greeks are the highest civilization; all other cultures are inferior and barbarian.

This is a polytheistic world where people please and honor the gods in exchange for favors.

The gods are not moral.

The gods do not like to be offended.

Breaking an oath is offensive to Zeus.

Breaking guest relations is offensive to Zeus.

Hubris is offensive to the gods.

Ignoring the gods is offensive.

Acknowledging the gods and observing ritual is piety.

Children are the seed of the father.

The mother is simply the earth where the seed is planted and grows.

War threatens Euripides' Athens.

Reason (sophistry) threatens the cosmology.

## PRODUCTION CONCEPT:

### THEME OR CORE IDEA OF THE PLAY?

A hero's journey from co-dependency to independence. Medea begins at a dead-end. She subjugates herself in every way she can. The only course open to her is to stand on her own two feet and re-invent herself. Themes include personal freedom, justice, self-definition, and the fulfillment of one's nature.

### EMPHATIC ELEMENT?

Text and Music

### WHAT IS THE SPACE AND THE AUDIENCE'S RELATIONSHIP TO IT?

The play will be produced in the TELUS Studio Theatre. The theatre, including doors to outside stairwells, and the aisles where the audience sits, will be part of the house of Jason and Medea. The audience will be seated in the round. The

audience is in the house, not in a theatre. The household staff will not have a fourth wall – they can speak, and see the audience. When the audience enters the room will be in play. A procession from kitchen to dining room will occur. The household staff will be setting the table for dinner.

**SOUND:**

What do you hear when you read the play?

Vocals. Rhythm on metal and wood.

Is sound needed to suggest the unseen off-stage world?

I may need a ticking clock. I may need to boost the sound of the wall falling.

**Music:** What is the function of music in the play?

Music is a way to deal with grief and extreme emotion. It is an elevated theatrical form when narrative and emotion push the characters so far that they have to sing. It is communal. It can create a sense of solidarity. It can imply shared culture. Folksongs sung at the right time give the community something to do. Examples of this are cultural songs for funerals and weddings.

**DIRECTORIAL APPROACH:**

What is the concept for this production?

The audience is in Jason and Medea's House in Corinth. The play proper is re-enacted by the Household Staff.

Do we begin at the beginning or is there a framework for this production?

We begin after the moment Medea has killed the children. She is upstairs with them. It is seven pm. There is a second script, written by myself which describes the framework and transitions (see Appendix A). This script is the storyboard of the household staff over the course of the play.

**Big Picture Composition?**

This is not a theatre. This is a house. We are in the dining room. A Salt Circle is poured to create a space for the re-enactment of the story up to the present. Medea is upstairs. Servants inhabit all levels. The aisles behind the audience seats are like corridors in the house. The kitchen door is on the highest level. There is need for an internal servant's staircase so they can descend. Jason enters from an outside door in a wall. The wall collapses loudly for 1 minute and the sun shines into the house with excruciating brightness, at the end of the play. Medea exits towards the sun.

**Moment to Moment Staging Small Picture?**

The table and chairs can be used for re-enactment scenes. Creon could stand on a chair. Jason and Medea could sit on chairs in a domestic dinner table arrangement. When Jason enters from the outside door he and Medea fight through the catwalks and doorways as in a chase scene.

## STYLE OF THE PRODUCTION:

What is the style of the play?

Greek Tragedy

Of the production?

A non-traditional staging of a Greek tragedy using a framework. The acting style will be documentary film.

## SPACE:

What is the nature of the theatre?

Modernist. Steel and wood. Elegant.

How can this space be used in the concept of this production?

I will set the home in Greece 1920-1950. I want the space to feel warm, through high-lighting the wood and adding small lamps.

## GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PRODUCTION:

Cast:

Students. I don't have a student to carry the role of Medea. I need to multi-cast the role and then find a way to justify the multi-casting.

Rehearsal Time:

190 hours

Experience:

This imposition of a frame in the production concept may be an unfamiliar experience for the student actors.

## PERIOD:

What period is the play set in?

Corinth in the Age of Heroes – about 600 years prior to Euripides time.

How is it indicative of its period?

The distance allows Euripides a critical examination of Athens in 431 through the lens of folklore. He avoids landing his questions too on the nose.

What were the values of the period?

Virtue and wisdom. Be good at what you do and know well how to do what you do. Medea is expected to be a good Corinthian wife. This is a patriarchal society. Men have freedom of movement but women do not. Men are higher in the social hierarchy and lead the household. A wife submits to her husband's will.

What period will you set the play in?  
1920-1950.

Why?

I do not want to travel back further in time or I run into intense period costumes which are not necessary. I do not want to travel further forward into a modern world where gender politics are changing. I have to be in a world where there is still a predominant class structure, and expected male/female roles. Medea pushes against these social structures. I need to give some distance and not land this too on the nose with a modern political equivalent. This would not allow the audience the space Euripides allowed his audience to reflect on humanity by looking at past stories.

SET:

What do you see when you read the play?

A family home. There is minimal décor. This family has style, is royal, but is not flashy. Old money families are not flashy. This is a home well loved. It is not cold. I see wood balancing out the steel. There is a family dinner table. The home should feel elegant but domestic. There are emblems of Sun/Moon/The Argo ship in friezes. There is a shiny black marble floor.

What spatial elements are important in Greek staging?

Vertical staging is important. A separate choral space exists from the actors. Masks are used by the actors. There is a central door. Inside space and outside space are significant. There is a deus ex machina.

How will these be addressed?

The Chorus will for the most part be outside of the chalk circle, and the characters will be inside. I will use an inverted vertical idea, meaning the actors will be on the floor in the circle, and the Chorus can move up and down vertically. Character emblems will be worn as masks. A door will lead to the outside. The action will always take place inside until Jason bursts in from outside. However, in the circle we can create outside and inside space. For the deus ex machina, the walls of the house will crumble as the sun shines in on the proceedings with full force. The outside, the cosmos, breaks into the internal world of the characters and the house.

What is the big set piece/trick/money shot?

The walls of Jason's house fall down as the sun enters the house.

COSTUME:

What period is the production set it?  
1920-1950

Are the costumes fully realized or are they suggestive?

The household is costumed as staff; suits and servant uniforms. They wear an emblem when they become a character in the re-enactment. Examples of emblems may be crowns for the kings made out of the chafing dish, or a snake candleholder to suggest Medea's crown. The children are represented by two suit jacket tops belonging to two of the male servants. Medea and Jason are fully costumed when they enter at the end. Medea wears Corinthian clothing, is covered in blood, with her hair bound up. As she walks towards the sun she loosens her hair and drops her Corinthian robes. She walks in her slip towards the sun.

PROPS:

What props are in the script?

Poisoned presents.

What props do you see on the set?

Dinnerware for a family of four.

A jug of salt.

A lamb dinner platter.

A carafe of wine.

A samovar with tea?

Emblems for each character.

LIGHTING:

Household lamps will sit throughout the space and near the audience.

Hot light will be used for the flashback sequences. The lamps will go out when the scenes are occurring within the salt circle. The sun needs to be a huge light, blinding the audience.

IDEA:

Meaning of the Title?

This is a play about a woman named Medea. It is her story. She begins as a very unlikely protagonist (she is inside her house, out of sight, calling for death) and develops into a powerful woman/goddess.

How does each scene lead directly to the idea?

Medea List of Scene Metaphors:

a bear in a leg-hold trap

shaking off the shackles

best friends forever

a kicked dog down

Lady Macbeth

A righteous queen becoming a defeated hag.



prostitution  
the birth of a Goddess  
Anthony and Cleopatra destructing  
a skittish deer  
Agamemnon speaking to Iphigenia  
the ecstasy of the maenads  
hard steel  
ascension

Quotes and metaphors which support this idea from the script:

Medea calls herself a granddaughter of the Sun 4 times. In Granddaughter of the Sun, in her chapter, "*The Battle of the Stories*," C.A.E. Luschnig refers to the imagery in the play. She points out that maritime imagery is abandoned part way through the play for imagery of the hand. The maritime imagery alludes to Medea's old story where she is with Jason and part of the voyage of The Argo. Hand imagery is connected to defining her self.

CORE TONE:

What is the first impression the actors and the design should make on the audience?

This is a well-loved family space. There is something wrong here. There is tension in the air.

What should their final impression be as the play ends?

The audience should be upset. They should have been given the opportunity to fall in love with the whole family. They should need to talk. They should feel confused about their feelings of allegiance and about their sense of morality. They should feel confused about themselves.

How do you propose getting from the first impression to the last impression?

Taking each step in each scene. I can't miss a single step. Each actor must establish objectives, have clear actions and know when they are winning or losing their objective.

DRAMATIC METAPHOR: A butterfly caught in a jar.

## CHAPTER TWO: DIRECTOR'S JOURNAL

January 2007

Where does this journey begin?

I am flying across the Atlantic reading Neil LaBute's Bash. I had tried to get into the show at the Trafalgar Studios in London but the line up was huge. I got into the Lobby – the people going to the show were 30-something hipster/ fleet street suits. I bought the script from the bar and left. I thought, “Wow, the Greeks re-visited and people are coming out in droves – why?”

What is it about the Greek stories that make them accessible now? Why are we interested in these larger than life characters from ancient amphitheatres? Why can we relate to these stories, now? What makes a “hero?” He acts. What does an actor do? Act.

January 2007

Reading Bash, I am drawn to Medea Redux. I consider staging Medea three times. Once, as LaBute redraws her, once for my outside project as a dinner party (the feast which Zeus is protector of), and then finally to direct Euripides' Medea for my thesis. I am interested in Medea herself - child murderer, a witch, a sorceress. Surely Euripides didn't write a 'fairy-tale' about a bad witch. He must have penned someone more complex than that or we wouldn't still be staging the piece. I don't think we are as interested in 'fairy-tales' right now, as a society, as we are in complex human drama. The good guy/bad guy stories are crumbling with the “axis of evil” politics. We seem to need to see character complexity in our stories.

Summer 2007

Bash. LaBute draws a complex female character – she is vulnerable and manipulative, justified and flawed in her reasoning.

September 2007

I return to The Voyage of Argo, translated by R.E. Rieu, originally written by Apollonius. I remember first reading this in an English class and it captivated me. I read the chapter about Jason and Medea meeting in Colchis.

This is a love-story! This is the story of a 14 year old maiden meeting a young heroic figure, falling in love and banding together with him to take on all obstacles. Not only that, these two figures are under the influence of Hera and Athena who conscript Aphrodite to help them with their divine plans. Eros goes off and shoots Medea in the heart with an arrow.

Meanwhile Eros, passing through the clear air, had arrived unseen and bent on mischief...In the porch, under the lintel of the door, he quickly strung his bow and from his quiver took a new arrow, fraught with pain. Still unobserved, he ran across the threshold glancing around him sharply. Then he crouched low at Jason's feet, fitted the notch to the middle of the string, and drawing the bow as far as his hands would stretch, shot at Medea. And her heart stood still.

With a happy laugh Eros sped out of the high-roofed hall on his way back, leaving his shaft deep in the girl's breast, hot as fire. Time and again she darted a bright glance at Jason. All else was forgotten. Her heart, brimful of this new agony, throbbed within her and overflowed with the sweetness of pain.

A working woman, rising before dawn to spin and needing light in her cottage room, piles brushwood on a smoldering log, and the whole heap kindled by the little brand goes up in a mighty blaze. Such was the fire of Love, stealthy but all consuming, that swept through Medea's heart. In the turmoil of her soul, her soft cheeks turned from rose to white and white to rose.

(Appolonius, trans. Rieu, p.117)

These words pop out for me: mischief, pain, hot as fire, agony, all consuming, and turmoil. What is Medea's problem? She is not free. She is oppressed by Love. It consumes her. Aphrodite's weapon is irresistible.

At the end of Euripides Medea, Medea is rescued by Helios, the sun god. Why is she rescued if she is an evil witch? Maybe her journey is a journey towards freedom from this Arrow. Does she need relief from pain? Or does she need Jason? I wonder if she needs to end the Jason and Medea story and move on. The only way forward is to kill the story. To annul the story. The children represent the love story of Jason and Medea. Does she kill them to say, "this story never happened – it is gone, erased?"

January 2008

Steven Hill and I read The Voyage of Argo out loud, eating tuna fish sandwiches. It is a compelling story and we can't put it down. Very exciting. I want to do a Dinner Party version of Jason and Medea: the love story chapter pre-Corinth based on Chapter 5 of The Voyage of Argo. This could be set in the Russian Hall and involve a 5 course meal. There could be a servant/house-keeper in the house and a Singer.

Ideas/images which emerge:

- blood on the white tablecloth.
- Tipping the wine glass – red wine/blood/sacrifice.
- Scapegoat – society is purged and cleansed through the scapegoat.
- Tragedy – the song of the goat.
- Eating meat
- Catharsis
- Ritual
- Death
- Bones lined up for re-incarnation in Colchis.
- Truth versus fiction
- There are 25 versions of Hamlet – why does the Storyteller tell each particular version?
- Society needs to feel safe, secure, powerful, and invincible.
- Elegance: a hall, with height, emptiness/spareness of design, darkness lies outside the island of the Dinner Table.
- Zeus is the God of Hospitality.

- Chiron – Jason was raised by a Centaur in the mountains. He has an innate connection to earthy things ...he is not just an urban royal.
- Food is served in Colchis – a feast to welcome guests.
- Necessity
- What signs do the Gods give? (the entrance of King Aegeus in Medea, would have been interpreted by an Athenian audience as a sign from the Gods. Medea interprets his arrival this way.)
- Aphrodite
- Pain
- In The Voyage of Argo, Medea hesitates 3 times at the threshold of her bedroom before she goes to help Jason. This hesitation (shame versus desire) is found in Euripides' play. Medea hesitates and backs down several times. This makes her human and invites the audience into her pain.
- Dramatic tension.

How does the audience care about the characters and the story? How do I create warmth? Intimacy? How do I create a place for the audience in the room? How do I build in surprise? What is extraordinary is the ordinary.

What do I set up for the audience at the beginning and what does the event look like at the end? What is the distance travelled. What is the opening stasis and the closing stasis? Is there movement from tidy, to chaos, to tidy? I think the Dinner Table is the center of the play.

Summer 2008- June

I read everything I can about Euripides and Medea.

I read Medea, a novel by Christa Wolf. How the Medea story is re-told by Wolf is interesting. Medea is a character with many different mythical tellings of her story. Some are more sympathetic, some less so. This is a new telling of the story based on historical information. Having more than one student actress portray Medea will allow for the variety of versions of her character. It is like putting Cleopatra on-stage – we all have an idea of what she should be. By multi-casting I can put different aspects of Medea on-stage: warm mother, dangerous sorceress, etc. How does society absorb truth and re-tell a story for the benefit of society.

In Wolf's book:

Medea does not kill her brother.

Medea does not kill her children

She is a healer not a practitioner of black arts.

There is a plague ravaging the city of Corinth.

There is famine.

The immigrant/refugee population becomes the scapegoat.

There must be someone punished/sacrificed.

There is an earthquake.

There are astronomers.

There is human sacrifice.

What is the truth about Medea? Monster? Human? Why did she kill the children? What happened? How did it get so far? The servants can ask, "How did we get here?" There is a Murder Mystery aspect to this story. In the Dinner Party is there a sense that 'The Woman' is present somewhere in the Russian Hall the whole time? A curtain blowing, a ghosting moment, screams? An interesting image is the mad woman in the attic from Jane Eyre. Wolf describes a Dionysian frenzy (Wolf, p. 159). She also describes Medea as a priestess of Hecate (Wolf, p. 45).

Summer 2008

Thoughts about staging Euripides' Medea in the TELUS. I imagine the show as a courtroom drama – put Medea on trial – bring her in in shackles. A prop table / evidence table stands to one side with masks on it. The audience sits on the floor with the actors in the towers. Members of the actor jury come forward to re-enact the events of the Jason and Medea story in a white salt circle. The re-enactment will lead us to judgment. Medea will be condemned by the human justice system but then the walls of the theatre behind the audience will fall down. The sun god, Helios, will break into the proceedings and rescue her. A higher Justice will transcend the human one. At the end of Euripides' Medea, the Chorus says:

In heaven, Zeus holds the balance.  
Expect the unexpected.  
What mortals dream, the gods frustrate;  
For the impossible they contrive a way.  
So it was with what happened here, today. (Mc. p. 80)

The Jury in the courtroom is made up of women. This will be the Chorus. They can sing from the Jury box. Are they women from different time periods? Victorian, Modern, Ancient Greece? I like the look of the Victorian woman in my mind - is she the Nurse from the narrative? She wears a little servant uniform – black with a white apron. She loves her mistress. Are they defending Medea? Or condemning her? Jason is in the other "box." Medea's children are perhaps puppeted with something off of the "evidence table." A toy, a small coat?

Ideas that emerge:

I want to do this show with the students not with a professional actor as Medea. I want to work with the students because I am interested in teaching acting. I also think that this is a young person's story. Doing the math, Medea could be 14 when she meets Jason, and they have 6-year-old boys. She could be as young as 20 years old in the play. I don't have a student to play Medea- it is a role which I feel requires a very experienced actress. I will multi-cast it. I have to find a way to justify that multi-casting so it isn't just a student exercise.

July 2008

Maybe I should put Euripides on trial? He received last place in the Drama Competition for this play. He seems to be making heroic an outsider, barbarian, woman, and sorceress. Euripides also seems to question the nature of the gods. At a time when

Athens was at war, could he be warning the city not to underestimate the barbarian; not to view the outsider as less human? There danger lies. Could I put him on trial for treason?

July 2008

I read Classical Mythology, by Mark Morford. Some facts from the book:

- Pelias usurps the throne of Iolcus from Aeson.
- Aeson and Alcimede are the parents of Jason
- Pelias is stepson to Cretheus who is the father of Aeson and the grandfather of Jason.
- Jason's mother, Alcimede sends Jason to be reared and educated by -Chiron in the hills. Life with Chiron? What does he learn? He comes of age at 20.
- Pelias' fate is that he will be killed by a descendant of Aeolus. Pelias is told to watch out for the man with one sandal.
- Jason returns to Iolcus from the mountains at 20 years of age to re-claim his father's throne. He sees an old woman by the river and he carries her across, losing a sandal in the mud. The woman is Hera (queen of the gods of Olympus). She favors Jason. When Pelias sees Jason, with one sandal, he promises to yield up the throne if Jason brings him the Golden Fleece. Jason proceeds to build The Argo.
- Argo: means swift.  
It was built by Argus with Athena's help. At the prow was laid a piece of oak-wood that had the Power of Speech.
- Greeks of later ages were eager to claim an Argonaut for an ancestor; thus for reasons of family pride or local patriotism, authors inserted names of their own ancestors in the catalogue.
- The Clashing Rocks.  
The Argonauts sent a dove through to test the rocks and passed through safely.

Conclusion: Tell the actors the story of Jason and Medea from the Voyage of Argo on the first day of rehearsal. This is the first chapter of the love story and shows how utterly compelling the attraction between Jason and Medea is. It also shows that the gods have a strong over-seeing hand in the story. Where are the gods when Medea calls for them, later, in Corinth? They started her on this journey towards Jason – why don't they come and pick up the pieces of their mess?

July 2008

Thoughts about my outside project with Steven Hill or The Last Feast Dinner with Jason:

- Steven as Host/Storyteller
- Dinner Party for 14.
- Inspiration: The Game of Clue.
- A House with a Library (for cocktails where we wait for the Master of the House - Jason), a Billiard Room (to re-enact Jason's fight with the Fiery Breathing Monsters using pool balls and the pockets of the pool table), a Conservatory with water (the story as it moves out onto the Sea), a sense of A Woman who doesn't appear.
- Influences: Murder Mysteries. European movies with big family Feasts.
- A musician as Housekeeper/singer. Turkish music.

- A cook, cooking a lamb dinner. Wine spilling – blood.
- This is a Greek Villa.
- 17 seated for dinner. 5 nights of performances.

August 2008

I read Euripides and His Age by Gilbert Murray. Some facts:

- 431 Euripides writes Medea at the start of the Peloponnesian War.
- 27 years later Athens falls.
- Socrates was killed for thinking/treason.
- When the Greeks won against the Persians, they felt that freedom had defeated despotism; democracy had defeated kings.
- virtue (be good at what you do; citizen, soldier, or boot cleaner.)

I read Euripides: Medea by John Ferguson. Euripides was born on the day of the Battle of Salamis 480. Aeschylus was the poet of the hero. Sophocles was the poet of Athenian culture. Euripides was the questioning poet. Euripides was a friend to Socrates.

Euripides is questioning in this play. Involve the audience in the debate. What is Justice? Whose side are we on – Jason/Medea?  
 Illuminate the arguments in their speeches and allow them to state their cases well.  
 I want the audience to swing to all sides of the argument so that they feel conflicted about pointing fingers.

Ferguson claims:

He (Euripides) shows shoddy Greeks and sympathetic foreigners, shoddy men and dominating women, shoddy nobles and decent peasants, shoddy freemen and free-minded slaves. (Ferguson, p.8)

He attacked Athens because he loved her, attacked her when she fell below herself. (Ferguson, p.8)

Euripides seems to be calling on his democratic society to “think”. He seems to warn his society against making themselves “the good guys” and all other peoples “the bad guys”. He is engaging his audience’s mind. I love that.

Medea is built around 3 confrontations between Jason and Medea. Ferguson identifies the following themes: Homelessness, Respect for Oaths, Heroic Character, Children and Childlessness, Power, Voyage. Power is shown through the use of agon, in male/female relationships, and in spatial relation where vertical height implies higher status.

If Medea is a witch she should be able to enchant the audience.

---

Create an audience experience that enchants, that is sensory, that feels like it is touching you.

---

I read Euripides: Alcestis, Medea and Hippolytis by Robin Mitchell-Boyask. He indicates that Athens saw itself as the defender of the civilized world. Medea is Georgian. Theme: One nation claiming cultural superiority over another. He describes Jason as a weak hero, whose language indicates this. He is weak – he has always relied on woman to get him where he needs to go (first Medea and then Glauce.) Jason has broken his oaths.

Medea's language is more heroic. Boyask also suggests that the gods seem distant in this play. He suggests that Medea carries out the justice of the gods by punishing Jason. Jason may be a weak hero but I want us to feel compassion for him too. He is a man who needs to move up the ladder to his rightful position. He is a prince without a throne. His nature is royal: he should be a king.

I read Euripides' Medea: The Incarnation of Disorder by Emily McDermott. Exciting book! Medea is regarded as a rebel. McDermott writes that Jason's fall is the fall of a mediocre man. She describes him as a non-hero. She finds that Medea's actions are heroic. There is precedent for heroic actions that lead to the destruction of family (example: Antigone). But McDermott points out that Medea is also human. Her emotional wavering in decision making is human not god-like.

McDermott introduces the exciting idea that Euripides is challenging his audience by upsetting their moral expectations. He befuddles them. He surprises the audience. She suggests that the real clash is not between the characters but between Euripides and the audience. Should I put Euripides on trial for offending the audience, and changing mythic tradition? He is the first to have Medea kill her children.

August 2008

My Outside Project. I am worried about the time I need to produce the Dinner Party piece with Steven Hill. Maybe I can float forward the ideas from this into my thesis production. Some of the most outstanding images are:

1. There is a real Medea ghosting around the edges of the Dinner Party inspired by the mad woman in the attic.
2. Dinner. Roast. Wine. Domestic Table.
3. A re-telling of the story puppeting the events using the cutlery and table ware.

August 2008

I get into the TELUS theatre again. I am worried about how much writing I will have to do to pull off the Trial of Medea or Euripides. How much framework will I have to build with language? I would like to stick to the text and not write a new play. I don't have the time to write a new play. I read Euripides' Medea out loud. I am taken with the pace of the text. It feels like a brush fire, hurtling forward. It is really good. And the McLeish



translation is tight, direct and abrupt – little poetry here. I just want to do this script and not write around this story.

The TELUS building feels like an elegant home. What if I pull that “Victorian servant” idea out of the Trial version and put her into this home? What if this is the home of Jason and Medea and the audience walks into this home – here and now- like I wanted to do with Steven and the Dinner Party. There is a Singer, but there are other servants who sing with her. The Chorus? And there is still a feeling of dinner being cooked somewhere in the house. The smell of lamb? The kitchen is somewhere in this house. The doors into the stairwells could lead to other parts of the house. A kitchen, a pantry... and the catwalks look like hallways too.

I think about the film Gosford Park. The servants of the house in that film frame the audiences’ viewpoint into the world. Jason and Medea’s house – a Greek manor house – not English.

August 2008

One of the books I am reading is Simon Goldhills’ How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today. He identifies 6 major challenges for the director of greek tragedy.

1. Theatrical space.
2. The Chorus
3. The actor and the text
4. Politics
5. Translation
6. Staging larger-than-life heroes and Divinities. (The problem of Helen of Troy)

I think the chorus is a huge challenge. I need a musical director. I need to envision this chorus. I don’t want an awkward group of circling women in chiffon.

If we are in Gosford Park/Greece the servants of the house could be the Chorus and also could represent humanity. They would be witnesses to the crime that happens in the home of their beloved mistress and master. They are also culpable because they do nothing to stop the murders of the boys. They are the audience. When someone falls, society is culpable. There are no bad people in this story, and if we can see the human-scale story of one domestic household maybe the characters are not “larger-than-life”; maybe they are like us. Then we can feel compassion for the people who “fall”.

Theatrical space: The TELUS looks like a minimalistic modern home. The audience can be invited into the home. Extend the playing space beyond the floor to encompass the aisles and catwalks. I don’t have to deal with a proscenium.

Time period: The TELUS space is modern. I don’t want to do a costume drama so I need to land this somewhere no earlier than 1920. I could extend the period into the 40’s but after that we get into new social territory regarding gender politics and class structure. This is a world where there are male/female traditional roles and servant/master roles.

Masks: I have wondered about the actresses playing Medea using masks which they pass off. I don't want to use masks if this is Jason and Medea's home. That doesn't make any sense. Maybe instead of masks, the actors draw from things on the dinner table much like Steven would have done in the Dinner Party show.

Chafing dish – looks like a crown? Spoons? Napkins? A Medea emblem to replace the masks?

September 2008

This is a story about a family well loved.

This is a story about a hero – a prince

a heroine – a princess

and two children – young boys.

This is a story of a family well loved by their house staff.

Loyal servants (like Kent in King Lear)

The Housekeeper is one of Medea's people.

The other servants are from Corinth.

This is a story about waste:

Wasted life.

Wasted love.

Wasted food. Food smells. The family dinner at the end uneaten.

This is a love-story from beginning to end. This is the last chapter of the love story of Jason and Medea.

September 2008

In Greek theatre the actors have to hit the ground running. There is no build.

September 2008

Meeting with Costume Designer:

I tell the story. We are in 1920-1950. I tell her this is a minimalist looking piece. We need to keep the design minimal so that the actor's journeys are the biggest and most noticeable thing. She asks me "why I am doing Medea?" I talk about compassion.

Trying to understand other people instead for judging them as bad or good. She responds to that idea. I want to give her lots of dreaming time and I don't need her to nail things down too early – we need to jam as long as we can. I don't want finished drawings until needed.

Meeting with Composer about music:

We walk through the script. I try to show her a sketch of where the music may land. I hope to collaborate with her on this. We talk about a song for the dead. We talk about Medea's home versus Corinth and how we can capture that in terms of musical difference and rhythms. I don't want musical instruments – I want soundscape and song created by voices and using the TELUS space for creating rhythm. I think we should "play the space" using the steel and wood and metal in the TELUS. We talk about the space itself "breathing". We arrange to go out and look at the space together.

Meeting with Set Designer.

I talk about the deus ex machina - Medea needing to go up in the dragon chariot at the end of the show. I describe a wall falling down that I saw once in a show in Holland. I think we want to create the idea that the inside space collapses right at the moment when Medea is about to be killed by Jason. Right at the moment when human justice would demand Medea's life, the gods intervene and the walls of this increasingly claustrophobic house fall away. We need to feel the outside space. I want the sunlight to be so bright that the audience has to look away. Huge movie-lights. The Designer shares my excitement about the wall idea and the sunlight. I tell him the same thing I tell Costumes – we should keep our conversation open as long as we can until we find the right thing for us.

September 2008

My Classical Studies “Greek Religion” course. This is going help to bring me into the world of Euripides. Themes, politics, script structure, symbols and ritual are what I am mining for in this course. I think for my term paper I will do a religious analysis of Medea. How did Euripides perceive the gods in his play? I wonder what the religious taboos are that are broken in the story? What does it mean when the sun god arrives?

September 2008

Auditions. I bring the Composer along to hear the voices. As I watch I discover that am more interested in Medea's vulnerability and softness. These women are young. Medea is their age. They do not have to act older or more powerful then they actually are. I want access what is already within each one of them. I need to feel that Medea is human and accessible for us.

October 2008

What I have to think about:

-Chart the action of the Household Staff:

1. Action at Audience entrance
2. Prologue of Housekeeper
3. Way into the re-enactment  
Why?
4. Switching actors  
When? Why?
5. Medea's presence upstairs  
When? What?
6. Ending for the Household staff
7. Epilogue of Housekeeper

-Cast the actors in their Medea roles.

-Break down and cast Chorus Odes into single voice or ensemble, women or men.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> week

I take some tiny doll furniture from my daughter. A table. Four chairs. Some white string to draw the salt circle. 12 doll people and chess pieces. I keep them in a red box. I carry them everywhere these days. I pull them out and put them out on tabletops. I read the script again thoroughly with these little cast members. When do the Medeas change? There emerge 3 distinct Medeas: social or public speaking Medea, sorceress Medea, and sensual/sexy Medea who is in the scenes with Jason. I create 3 opening tableaux with the furniture and dolls.

1. Staff set table
2. blood drip, murder, scream
3. Housekeeper singing song of mourning. Draw salt circle. Nurse speaks and the lights shift.

October 2008

Second meetings with Set and Costume Designers.

Set Designer has designed a dome for the ceiling. I suggest emblems of the Argo, sun, and moon in the house.

Costume Designer brings in some ideas – we decide that the pictures are too elaborate and too modern.

I suggest the snake as an emblem of Hecate and Medea.

October 28, 2008

Meeting with faculty advisor.

The wall problem: If I don't set up the wall so it is established then it is not a surprise when it goes down. Danger: wall falling, and an audience in a moat below a raised stage. Where do I put the wall? If the towers are in the round I have to put the wall behind the towers. We can open up the back of the towers by taking off the fabric and then we will be able to see the wall as it falls down. A raised stage will have sloping ramps. Safety problems for the audience's footing.

I am trying to pin down the theme and determine "what Medea wants"? I think she wants freedom. We talk about freedom meaning 'relief'. My advisor brings up the difficulty for the audience of investing in the last (real) Medea if we only see her at the end.

Suggestion: that we see, not just hear her, during the evening. We establish her in the audience's mind before she emerges in the final scene.

Suggestion: she kills the boys at the top of the show? The audience hears it from the lobby? The audience enters into a murder scene, blood.

Problem: wall. I can't crack open the towers and have spaces in-between them where we see a wall or the audience can't get up the towers.

I FEEL LIKE I'M BANGING MY HEAD AGAINST A WALL. If it is this hard I need to change the wall idea or simplify.

Meeting with Production Manager:

I ask about the towers. We can only afford a wall or a staircase, not both.

Make meetings with Set Designer for Friday, and Composer and Costume Designer for Monday.

October 28, 2008

Meet with visiting professor, K.O. Chong-Gossard. I have some questions for him:

1. The dragon chariot – does it arrive or does Medea call it? Is she rescued by the gods or does she rescue herself? Is there a god in this play or is there just Medea as demi-goddess forging her own destiny, taking on divine power?
2. Is she a monster? Or is she someone we can relate to?
3. Is she manipulative or does she honestly believe and hope that the situation can change – that Jason will return to her?
4. Age of the children?
5. Colors of Corinth?
6. Emblems? Moon...frog...snake...

November 6, 2008

Meeting with my advisor.

I solve the wall. It looks like a horseshoe shape in the tower formation will allow me the space I need for a wall and a door.

Question: Do I need the moated audience to separate them from the playing space? If I want them in the house of Jason and Medea how about seated on the floor on furniture – dining room chairs with lamps and rug runners underneath them. The moated separation creates more of a theatre space and I am trying to create a house space.

I want to simplify the design now. Simplify the build. I may be able to do without staircases.

Absolutely necessary elements. A wall that collapses. The sun enters (big lighting effect).

I find my advisor very helpful in clarifying magic and finding ways to achieve maximum surprise effect. He sees the surprise from the audience's perspective. This is something I have much less experience in devising. But I do have experience as an audience member and need to think back in my experience to how I have been surprised. This also applies to thinking through the sense I want the audience to have when they enter and leave the space and how to maximize that.

November 5, 2008

First meeting with my stage manager. We chart out the rehearsal schedule.

I tell him my strength is working with the actors. My weakness is scheduling and tech. I tell him I will rely on him to help me schedule the weeks.

I will rely on him for tech weekend. He shares my excitement about the show. I realize I need to cast the sections of the script now that are shared.

November 7, 2008

Meeting with Set Designer in the TELUS space. We move around, we draw, we walk the space. We can cut the staircase and the elevated floor to save money for the wall and the lights. I explain how the wall works after visiting the Great Northern Way shop this morning and getting a demonstration. It seems easier than we thought and possibly cheaper to construct. He would still like internal stairs to give us playing space up to the other levels from the first level. I suggest we could just have stairs up to the second level and then actors could go up the stairwells to get to the top level. We are addressing design less with build and more with set-decoration; lamps, furniture, rugs, wooden panels, and paint.

I am worried about the sun. He does not have access to bright, big lights and they are too expensive. He suggests casting the light on a bright scrim. He will look around for lights.

He suggests chandeliers that will shake and long organza fabric that will fall when the wall starts to go.

I ask about blood and talk about the opening –the murder has just happened?

I am concerned that we are allowed to have actors (Medea and Jason) on the catwalks. Very important.

He wants to use a fog machine to increase the sunrays but there is a problem with fire systems.

Great jam today.

November 9, 2008

I am used to working in an environment I can alter and design – warehouses, farms, halls. I realize that I can't fight the building and its structure. I abandon the idea of the room being alive when the audience enters. I am beginning with a blackout. Let the audience settle – I can't have a live space with actors for 15 minutes pre-show.

Audience on the floor may be claustrophobic but I may have to accept it.

Vocals in this room are unusual.

Note: chairs will be pushed up against our metal panels. We want to play those metal panels. I want to begin Medea with a bang in the first few minutes and then a brush –fire takes off.

November 8, 2008

Opening sequence.

Blackout.

Lights up. Setting the table for dinner tableau. Medea crossover in bridge. Blackout.

Lights up. Murder. Blood drips from the bridge. Blackout.

Lights up. A maid is scrubbing the blood up. The Housekeeper is singing a mourning song and creating a chalk circle. She chooses a woman, places on her an emblem, the woman steps into the chalk circle and lights shift into re-enactment, the song stops mid-song, the Nurse begins. The song can later hum. The house staff outside echo some of her key lines.

November 11, 2008

Meeting with Costume Designer. I talk about the metaphor for the show.

Butterfly in a jar .....wanting freedom. We talk about the costume that our real Medea is going to wear at the end of the show. I am thinking something very human.... a woman in a slip having taken off her constrictive clothing.

Great talk. It is getting clearer for us. The house staff are uniformed except for the Housekeeper. Jason in an expensive suit and Medea in a tight Corinthian dress. 1920-1930.

She will need to design the emblems as well. We have simplified, we have time for this, and there is no panic. She now has a simple design to present to the costume department tomorrow.

Next meeting next week maybe with Set Designer included? I need to bring my blue Greek plate for color palette, and my chafing dish.

November, 2008

I am reading a lot about The Wooster group for my director presentation. I don't want to do natural realism. I want the audience to engage. I respect the audience. They are intelligent and creative. I want to give them a bit of a puzzle to solve. I don't want to do the play from 'a to b', and I do not want to spoon-feed the audience all my images and have them explained. I am interested in ritual, and symbolism. I want to invite the audience in to see what they see. In Pre-Raphaelite paintings all the flowers have symbolic significance – the viewer doesn't pick up on them all – but the viewer senses that the paintings are heavy with symbolism. In this show I see the symbols of sacrifice: the communion table, wine, blood, and the lamb dinner. I see symbols of religion; the choir in the chancel around the communion table.

There is a lot of high church in this production. The gods/religion are present. I think about narrative and meta-narrative; creating a framework for the narrative.

December 1, 2008 first day of rehearsal.

1. Introductions
2. Director speech: Hopes and Fears - both are present when you create a new work. Only with risk can you fly or fail. But you have to take artistic risk. I talk about Van Gogh.

The measure of success: That the audience goes away thinking and talking: That we create and offer to the audience a human story on a human scale, not a fairy tale with larger than life characters and bad guys/monsters.

There will be two scripts: Euripides' script and the script of the Household Staff. This is a house well loved by the staff.

Every character in this play wants: love, safety, freedom.

Acting style: naturalism.

3. Presentations:
  - Set Presentation
  - Costume Presentation
  - Music: Composer/Housekeeper sings.
4. The Story of Jason and Medea from The Voyage of Argo. I tell this story.
5. Read the play. I assign parts and edits.
6. Lunch
7. Music after lunch.

December 5, 2008

Talks with Set and Costume

The wall is challenging to design and build and there are safety concerns about it.

December 7, 2008

I have to tell the story. It is important to tell it again and again.

Searching for objectives – I write everything down the actors say when they search for actions and try to repeat back what I hear.

The first week we work away from “I hate you” as a choice to “I love you” or “I respect you” between the characters. I remind the actors that for me, “this is a love story”. This is the story of something horrific that happened to a house-hold well-loved.

How to get an actor where you want them to go without telling them what to do?

Creatively get them there: I must ask:

What do you want?

What are you doing to get it?

What would you do – you, in life to get that?

There is no one right way to say a line.

We must find together the choices that best support the director’s vision.

December Week Two, 2008

Blocking. I want to run this show a few times before we break at Christmas. I need to see this “version “ of the play fully realized on its feet before I can re-write. We keep working to find actions.

Where did you just come from?

What is the clock on your scene?

What do you want?

What are you doing to get it?

December Week Two, 2008

I have been working with Paintings as Tableaux for the Household staff. I am painting with them. Grief tableau. At the foot of the Cross tableau. It is a quick blocking method. I love the music. I think the Household staff look beautiful standing and singing. They look like humanity – watching, witnessing the fall of the few greats among



them. And they stand and serve with loyalty. They are like the soldiers to Kings. They reflect.

December, 2008

Lots and lots of text work. Breaking down scenes into objectives and actions. Excruciating work. But I always get everyone on their feet to bash about with the text at the end of a “table” session. I have them do their table work in the middle of the salt circle and I sit way out by the towers. I want them to begin, at this early stage, to send their voices through the space. So I use the “table conversations” for this. They send their conversation to me. But they are not conscious of this – they just do this. Later when I ask them to send their voices up to the Chorus in the audience towers I hope they will remember how they did this naturally with me, without “projecting” in a false actory way.

December Week Two, 2008

I block the scenes. They run through the scenes. I watch and draw pictures of movements I like which they have organically proposed and places I need them to go to open out to the whole space. Then I walk them through my pictures and we set something. I always say, “ this blocking is still at improvisation level. This is a general plan but keep playing out there every time we re-visit this scene.”

December Week Two, 2008

How to explore Medea's pain. The pain is what motivates their actions. Relief from pain. We improvise pain in the body – trying to get it out – brings out some interesting thrashing and tantrums. Good work today.

December Week Two, 2008

Sex. I need to feel that there is sexual energy between Jason and Medea and within the room itself. I create the Hecate dance with the women. I ask them to choose 4 words from the monologue and use the word ‘sex’ as a 5<sup>th</sup> word. I ask them to come up with a physical moving emblem for each word and then string these movements together in a dance that can loop over and over. Interesting movements. It is a beginning towards sensuality.

December, 2008

Thoughts with my advisor: What is the story? How to set up surprise? How to find a place for “the audience” in the event? Why are there 3 Medeas? And probably the most important thing right now is a realization that I don’t have to always work collaboratively. I should try to do this one without the ‘collaborative model’ which I have often been involved in in the past. This is hard because I really believe 2 or 3 director heads are better than one and also because it is very lonely and scary on my own. But I can see that it would be new territory for me to continue to fly solo on this and see my own vision through. Trust myself.

December, 2008

Some of my questions for the actors:

“I know you have never been a king, but is there a time in your life when you had to command? Have you ever been a lifeguard? Some experience when you had to take control with your voice and presence over some group of people. Maybe a camp counselor? I don’t know. Can you find a substitution?”

“Can you find a way to process faster and to think on the line?”

“Have you ever felt extreme physical pain? Can you locate physical pain somewhere specific in your body? For Medea, whenever you think of the man you love, Jason, those cramps kick in and you can’t stop the pain. The only way to get away from the pain is to talk to the Chorus and to try to plan a way out. But the pain can hit at any time throughout this story and it is debilitating.”

“Can we do an improvisation with Medea where you are kissing Jason and beating him at the same time?”

“Did you go for your action there?”

“You’ve never had sons who have been murdered by their mother. But is there a time in your life when you have been angry? Has someone ever let you down and surprised you by becoming someone else? Can you bring your real experience of that to your character?”

Some rules with the text:

Go up on the last word of each line.

Find the comparison statements and make the comparisons.

Follow thoughts through to the end of the thought without breaking it up too much.

Think on the line not before it.

Speak faster because the audience can process faster than you think.

I ask the composer, “can you find a sound here for the gang?” or “ can you find a grief sound? A rhythm here? Let’s all improv this for a while.” These times build the creative ensemble. They try stuff, and we chuck it or keep it. “Well, that’s nothing” or “ that’s interesting let’s keep it as an improv for the next run.” The cast sing together every day and this is both a bonding tool as well as a way to open their voices and breathing.

December, 2008

Exhausted. I encourage the actors to stay healthy. Eat, drink water, run, do what makes you happy and energized.

We are ambassadors for the art of Theatre. Every time we get on stage we say, “ Look, this form of story-telling is fantastic – ephemeral, here and now.” We can’t fail or we lose our audience. I ask them to tell me how they felt about the run-through today. They said it felt slumpy. I ask them to tell me why they think it was slumpy. We have a good talk about actions, and pace. I confirm that the run-through today was “muddy” and we don’t ever need to do that mud run again.

December 18, 2008

Two run-throughs before Christmas. I ask them to come in off book after the Christmas break. I say that I might re-haul the entire concept over Christmas but this will not affect the integrity of “Euripides’ scenes” or change the work we are building on within the salt circle. I am really exhausted but proud that we got this far in 3 weeks. We have a strong base to continue building on. I have a really helpful chat with the Voice Instructor about the space. I do feel lonely. To direct Euripides’ play is one thing, and on top of that to teach acting technique, and to create a conceptual framework for the piece is a lot to take on as one person. I tell everyone they are beautiful and this is a real “ensemble” piece and together we will hold this gem in our hands and offer it to the audience. I know I have to re-jig the Household Staff entry into the re-enactment and I have to do that on my own over Christmas. I have to re-imagine this show a bit. The actors are happy. We drink some wine. I think the process has been very very organized. We have passed through each scene 3 times and have had a couple run-throughs. When I first met my stage manager I told him that I was no good at scheduling but I really got on top of that fast because I needed to get this on its feet so I could see it.

December 24, 2008 Christmas Eve.

I go to midnight mass, alone. I wanted to experience that formalized choral event. It’s interesting how the high Anglican Church “set” onstage is present in the set of our show.

January 5, 2009

Voice tutor arrives. We keep the voice work integrated with objectives, actions. Should I get real boys to play the sons? Raises problems but I must remember that we serve the Story – we are here to serve the Story.

January 6, 2009

I have been working with a fourth wall. I need to get rid of it now. This is a good time to use the extra help - movement and voice coaches - because I am getting tired. There are production challenges with bringing in two boys, and with the wall. Don’t panic.

Who is the audience in this? I need to find a cleaner Prologue.

What happens at the top of the show?

The re-enactment feels contrived and forced right now.

When does the murder happen?

I am going to try a party atmosphere with the house staff seating the audience and party bouzouki music playing. This will begin the show with no fourth wall. Then a murder happens.

January 7, 2009

I need to let the cast tell me their worries now. I ask them to tell me what their concerns are instead of keeping quiet and going over and over something that isn't working for them and not telling me. They start lining up after rehearsals to talk to me about questions. The room feels very open and I think I am very approachable. I just need to be in the zone. Be there, and come up with the improvisations and the questions in the moment. I have to be in the moment. It is at this time when I feel in the best place as a director.

I am not going to deal with two boys in this space along with everything else. I'm going to try recording the boys. I need to evoke their presence. This is a piece of theatre, after all. A fight upstairs, doors slamming, a shoe flying over the balcony.

January 8, 2009

I like the boy's coats. They let me, the viewer discover, "Oh, that is the device. I see the device. They aren't tricking me. I will invest in the other devices, and the other emblems, because I see that there will be emblems."

January 9, 2009

Narrative and meta-narrative. What does meta-narrative give us?

If we break open the museum piece we see things in a new and unexpected light. We stop looking for ancient Greece and we see a story we didn't know was there. We stop thinking about history and we see human nature/family/us.

When I performed in In the Time of Miracles at The Caravan Farm:

There were little sand piles with worry dolls who represented the Mayan villagers. They were stamped out by conquistadors (men riding metal hobbyhorses). At the end of the play an audience member tried to re-set the worry dolls in the sand. Stage management tried to stop him. He said "my people were conquistadors" – he was visibly distressed. In not creating natural realism in the play we allowed the audience to engage their imagination, to fill in the gaps, and be active.

I'm not doing the show from 'a to b', asking the audience to believe in realism. I am showing them that there is a re-enactment. I am asking them to believe in the household staff. They can invest in that or not. By the end of the play I am asking them to believe in the real Jason and Medea.

When we did Salome with The Leaky Heaven Circus we set it in a cabaret strip club. The audience could invest in the strip club or not...but Salome was acted out on the cabaret stage with strippers taking on some of the roles. We didn't ask the audience to believe in the realism of the Salome story. As the story progressed, however, the audience became emotionally hooked in – like a spell. More so, perhaps, than if they had arrived and a curtain had opened and we had set designed a palace and asked the audience to enter into natural realism. Why does meta-narrative work? It allows the audience a place to imagine – to engage.

I want the audience to be actively thinking “what is going on?”

January 10, 2009

I got into the space and sat there and then walked and tried to figure out the beginning.

Repeat the murder.

Repeat the murder.

A Child’s shoe

The household staff are saying, “We are defending Medea because we love our mistress. We love our master. We loved these children. We defend her. She is not a monster. You don’t know what happened here. We need to tell you the story of this house.”

I sit in the TELUS alone. I need to cut the bouzouki music/party beginning. There has to be another way in. I sit all morning drawing little maps of the actors. I walk the space. I draw the time-line of the show. I read the script out-loud by myself. I sit in the audience space. I don’t feel like I have evoked either the murder or the presence of the boys in the house.

Begin with seating the audience. No fourth wall. Then the murder repeated 3 times with a little more information each time. Blood. We need to comprehend that a murder happened. Then the Nurse speaks in the present half of her monologue and she shifts into the past via reference to the children. The shoe. The shoe. Keening. Ritual. Ritual can lead us back.

January 11, 2009

Most of my notes: Go up at the end of your lines. Pace pace pace. The audience is ahead of you and we’re getting bored. Think faster. Shift faster.

Don’t take so long in that scene or you are taking time away from our ability to invest in the next scene. You are sucking airtime. Drive your action. Stakes, stakes, stakes.

Where have you come from? We don’t have the right to go onstage unless we inspire, grab, keep them on the edge of their seats. Don’t let them sit back in their seats. Don’t let them look at their watches. Don’t play the end of scene. Look for joy, hope, dreams and go for those things. Don’t play tragedy. Pretend you don’t know the ending of each scene. Maybe the play ends with Jason and Medea together again. The characters don’t know how the play ends. You are an ensemble. We serve the story. Together you can make this fly or fail. This is an ensemble piece.

You don’t know the wall is going to fall: audible reaction.

I ask the ASM to do scene breakdown timings during the show so we can see which scenes are adding time.

January 12, 2009

All I can do is ask over and over “what do you want?” I’ve figured out, over a long time, something of how to “be in the moment” as an actor. I am getting a glimpse of that state as a director. I am completely engaged in the room and things just reveal themselves now. I have done so much preparation for this show and script analysis and I can draw on that when I need to. And sometimes I have to re-read the script again and tell the

story of the play again. But really, I have to throw everything out and be present in the moment.

January 14, 2009

Talks I have given over the course of the rehearsal:

Stanislavsky tricks the dog: Stanislavsky's dog could tell when rehearsals were over and would go stand at the door 10 minutes beforehand. Stanislavsky wondered if the dog could tell time? Then he realized that 10 minutes before rehearsal ended he was giving notes and the actors all talked about the notes in a natural tone of voice. The dog heard the natural tone and it was different than the "acting tone". After that Stanislavsky would ask the actors to try and trick the dog; to speak with a natural voice all through rehearsal so that the dog wouldn't know that "acting" had begun or finished. For this piece, we want the characters to feel human and domestic. We want to hear the natural voice not a character voice or an operatic voice.

The Ensemble: This is an actor's piece. It will sail or fall in your hands. Be an ensemble. Give your focus and energy when you are witnesses to each other's scenes. Never ever be neutral or casual.

You are extraordinary: Like a hockey player. Or a concert pianist. Your work is not work that just anyone can do. It requires you to be in peak physical condition. Go into training. Work harder.

What do I mean when I say work harder:

Actions

Stakes

The clock on the scene.

Listen

Go over your script every show and prepare for the show by reviewing what your actions are in each scene. What do you want? What are you going to do to get it? Then enter each scene prepared and listen to what comes at you from your scene partner and from the audience.

Never stop working.

Party on closing not opening. Stay bright and clear and keep healthy every night of the run. Opening is the beginning not the end.

How to deal with the rising emotion and continue to function in the outside world? Find your way to enter a vulnerable place when you come to the theatre each night. Find your exit out of that place each night. It will be different for everyone. Some people feel it harder, other people have less trouble switching from "in the world of the play" to the outside world.

Gift yourself.

Go up at the ends of the line. Keep working on this. Underline the end of the line in your script. Find the action that makes you lob the line to the other person and go up.

Never stop working. We are here, and now we have to go further.

Pace pace pace pace. Put the clock on the scene! Why can't you take 15 minutes to do a 2-minute scene? Find a reason. Are there soldiers coming down the road?

Find the reason you, as an actor, are doing this play. Find your connection to every play you do so you can commit your head, heart, soul and guts to the material. Don't just do it for the director or because it is a job.

Be proud of the play and give it to the audience. Not just your part. Give the whole play. What is your objective with the audience? You need to know the answer to that. Is it, "I want to take them on a journey?" or "I want to tell them a good story," or "I want to surprise them so that they are sitting on the edge of their seats." If you know your objective with them and you go for that, you won't put them to sleep. You will begin to develop your awareness of where they are at and if you have them in your hand or if you are losing them.

Allow for 5 percent change in the show every night – that's what keeps it alive and in the moment. The pendulum swing from 1 to 100 percent is too much of a change from run to run.

You are beautiful. Honor your characters by giving them grace in movement. Jog, run, be in peak physical condition. That's what it takes.

January 15, 2009

Engagement. The wall is still a huge challenge. But tonight I find my technical director in the loading bay with little pieces of wood and rope, "I think I have a solution," he says. He is engaged. My follow spot operator is engaged, my sound operator is engaged.... the actors are all engaged. Somehow engagement creates this incredible energy. Everyone knows they are necessary to pulling off the "event" of the evening. The production can't happen without them. They are not replaceable. This is live.

Things feel confident. But we need to go deeper.

I talk about emotion generated by a show and how that can be difficult to come down from or shake at the end of the night. Different people say the show is giving them nightmares. I talk about how an actor has to find a way to open that vulnerable place every night and close it to protect themselves during the day. I pass out vitamins. I feel like such a "mother" tonight.

I ask the Medea actors to write out and give to me "the reasons Medea has to kill her children." Why does she do it? I need to see the logic of this decision in Medea's mind.

I also ask them to get together and go through “their” story together. Remember what happened to Medea before they do each scene. In the scene where the 3 Medeas are arguing together, I remind them “ you are fighting for life and death – the life and death of your boys. Fight harder – don’t be mushy and whiny – you are fighting with the other side of yourself over your sons. If you could physicalize this you would be shaking each other, fighting, tearing each other’s hair out. Be aggressive.”

I tell the actors to think, “what do I want?” before they walk into a scene or sing a song not 3 lines into the scene or song.

We talk about the action of each song.

I tell the composer how beautiful the music is.

January 21, 2009 Opening Night

Pre-show we ‘italian’ scenes – jump up and do a scene and if you hear your cue jump up and join your scene partner. They have fun.

I say:

This is an actor show. You are an ensemble. Together you will make this show work. Pace. Think: we are storytellers and we are going to take the audience into this tale. Offer them this exquisite gem. Don’t think: am I a good actor? Be storytellers. Don’t party until closing. Take care of your health. You have 9 shows: commit now to making every single one of those 9 shows brilliant. Don’t falter. Keep working. Be proud. Be courageous and take each audience, every night, on a ride.

January 23, 2009

I see now how my initial “Trial” production concept became distilled down to the scene between Jason and Medea with a heckling Chorus. I see how Steven Hill and the Dinner Party show became distilled down to the house of Jason and Medea and the domestic dinner table as the central image.

January 29, 2009

I watch the show again. After Monday when the show report showed 5 extra minutes on the show-time, I e-mailed the cast and asked them to keep the show tight and to work hard to shave off those 5 extra minutes.

They have been coming in ever since to ‘italian’ the show – pre-show. That is impressive. That is an ensemble mentality and I am proud of them for taking on “the whole show” like an ensemble. Tonight the pace was very hot but they skipped over a few key emotional moments and beats. So, tonight I sent around a few notes just to take a few specific moments back and not to rush through those specific moments.



## February 2009 Final Thoughts

I wanted to create a domestic, human-scale story. I also wanted to fully use the space that I had. I felt that the TELUS theatre space was used very well to tell this story. I did “sit” with that space early on, trying to see what the room offered. Scent, real sound, the bare natural voice without accompaniment, use of acting planes around and above the audience were successful tools for me in discovering what the TELUS had to offer. In a strange way this was environmental theatre – the kind I’ve always been drawn to as a theatre practitioner. The question for me always begins with “what does this space offer?” I’ve worked outside and in non-traditional venues, but I have often found an actual theatre building makes this question difficult to ask. The TELUS was evocative - steel, vertical planes - and claustrophobic. I decided to use the space instead of fighting with the room, pretending it was something else.

With my Set Designer, I augmented the space to further the domestic quality with sound, smell, lamps, and rugs. We had cooking onions, and rosemary pumped through the ventilation. One of the ushers said to me, “this room smells like home, like my mother’s home”. I thought that was perfect. The coldness of the TELUS became warm and the warm closeness became tense.

The waves at the top of the show were really an “inside vocabulary nod” to myself. No one would remember this but me – I started Medea Redux with the sound of waves and a series of blackouts. The waves evoke the sea-tale of Jason and Medea in The Voyage of Argo. They also evoke the Mediterranean setting of Greece. But mostly they were a connector for me between my two shows and my exploration of the Medea stories. It was a little message I put into the show for myself – when I sat down I knew I would hear that connector back to LaBute’s Medea Redux and back to that initial plane ride from London when I read that script in 2007.

I wanted to multi-cast Medea. I realized as this idea developed that putting Medea on-stage was like putting Helen of Troy or Cleopatra on-stage. These characters are composite collages of images; impressions and expectations which history, myth and time have assigned to them.

Through multi-casting Medea, I embraced this collage, and allowed for different interpretations of her. I chose three women who brought three different aspects to the table; social grace, sensuality, and danger. The combined character of Medea was interesting to me because we approach the story trying to understand her and trying to comprehend how she could perform such a horrific act as killing her own children. We are examining her. I wanted the audience to be aware that we are examining her. My original idea of staging this show as a Trial would have brought awareness to our position as judges. By breaking the character up, I didn’t expect the audience to become emotionally involved with one actress. I wanted the audience to become involved in the questions of the play.

The classic, wild, passionate, angry, emotionally charged Medea entered at the end. We were ready, I think, to see that classic Mediterranean force of nature after we had been primed to examine and consider her many different faces by the presentations of the other 3 Medeas.

I saw something Brechtian in the re-enactment and the interrupting choral odes. As an audience member I liked that I wasn't being manipulated into an emotional place by the narrative. I wanted to hear the arguments (agon) of the piece. I wanted to hear the text. Surprisingly, the piece did work for me on an emotional level as well, but the piece was not aiming to grab the audience emotionally; I needed to grab their minds first. The emotional experience crept up on me as I watched the show. The environment that we created in that room crept in on me and I found that I was very tense by the end. Other people commented on that feeling of increasing tension in the room.

I also wanted to do a student production. I wanted the opportunity to teach acting to students. Part of the exploration of my degree was to consider how we teach the craft of acting. The BFA acting students provided the perfect theatre lab.

I feel that I increased the students' understanding of their craft. The last time I watched the show I thought the students had really taken in the work we had done together. They were using action, understanding pace, and using the text well. Fake emotion quickly becomes melodrama in tragedy and I think we avoided melodrama by the end, which was a huge accomplishment.

Ritual is interesting for me and I liked the ritual at the beginning of the play. It seemed to grab the audience and hold them, hanging in silence, within the first minutes of the play. I remember thinking that I never wanted that hold to drop. I felt that the opening tableau led the audience to a point where they were ready for text. The Nurse's first line came at the right moment – when we needed speech. This was a way into the text that I felt was organic. We got the audience on-board right away and it was agonizing to lose them even for a moment after that.

Pace and rhythm had a lot to do with our ability to hold the audience, as well as clear actions and emotional connection. Ultimately, I think, we moved close to a balance between pace, clear action, and listening.

In front of an audience I learned something about the Medea/Aegeus scene. The audience desperately needed to laugh right about then. And they did. This scene was charming. Aegeus looked like a nice guy who just didn't have a clue what he was getting himself into. There was humor in that. The Oath Aegeus swears is an understatement. He doesn't understand the seriousness of the situation at all. I originally described him as a nice guy but not as swift as Medea. He isn't even as swift as the audience who understand the riddle. We are all smarter than him and that is part of the joke. I didn't realize this, but Euripides was very clever here. We needed this scene right here so we could lighten up a bit. And that's what happened when I watched this scene with the audience present. The audience relaxed for a moment and started breathing after the very tense Jason and Medea dinner table argument. The lighter this Aegeus scene the more "space" we bought for Medea's next monologue, where she makes her chilling decision. Certainly, I did give the actresses a huge challenge in asking them to maintain the whole journey of Medea even though they didn't get to play the whole journey of Medea.

Do people get the 3 murder tableaux at the beginning? Or do they think that there are two murders? I think they get that there is "MURDER" in the air. Confusion around what they are seeing and what it means is okay. It is similar to a murder mystery where

the audience thinks, “what is with the bucket girl mopping up - is that a clue to something?” or “what am I looking at?”

Do people understand that there is a re-enactment going on? Probably they don't get the moment when the Nurse begins the re-enactment in the salt circle – but they catch up by the time the children arrive and are represented by coats. The audience catches up. It didn't matter to me that it took a little while longer for some people. An active audience was one of my goals. And I liked giving them a puzzle that they had to engage in.

I would like to address the 6 challenges that are identified by Simon Goldhill in How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today.

1. The Chorus. I loved our Chorus. I loved the high Anglican Church aspect of their voices and their positioning around the table evoked communion and the idea of a sacrificial lamb. I love that they were women and men, instead of just “the Corinthian women” that Euripides had penned. I felt like they were witnesses, and I felt that they shared in the tragedy because they were part of the “village community” of their master's house.
2. The Theatrical Space. A central door is important which separates the outside world from the inside world. In this case I inverted the door so that we, the audience, were inside the house not, as Euripides wrote, outside the house. I also added a second “door,” or “threshold,” which was the salt circle. This salt circle was an outside space and the inside of Medea's house was represented by a lighting cue which indicated Medea's front door. Vertical space is important to staging the Greeks. I used the vertical space, but for the deus ex machina, I again inverted the use of the space. Medea came downstairs from above to walk out the door and meet the Sun, instead of going up from the ground. I liked playing with poetic staging versus realistic staging. I know every scene in the play is en-acted outside Jason and Medea's front door. I liked having scenes set on furniture – more a recognizable or clichéd stage picture than a picture accurate to the narrative. For example, Jason and Medea's first scene was staged at the dining room table like a domestic argument at three in the morning over food and spilled wine. This picture was more important to me than staying within the narrative setting outside the front door of the house. I think the poetic staging allowed people to recognize the scene as an iconic domestic scene.

I fought for the wall collapse but I also compromised on it. I felt it was fundamental to the story that we have something crash dramatically and unexpectedly. The wall fell right when our attention was most focused on the tight domestic image of Jason and Medea scrabbling violently in the salt. At that point I felt that we were so far inside the interior domestic story that the outside intrusion would feel like a real surprise. I liked the combination of wall, noise, door opening and sunlight. I found it profoundly beautiful and

evocative. Without actually seeing the dragon chariot which Euripides describes we, as the audience, felt a distant presence. I had initially wanted more more more. More light blinding the audience and more wall falling so that in the confusion of the moment the audience would wonder if the theatre was collapsing. I had to compromise on the scale because of budget restrictions: the compromise created more of a “beautiful moment” than a powerfully “earth-cracking moment.” However, I think surprise was accomplished. And with all the safety concerns I was happy to hold onto whatever amount of wall I could get.

3. Politics. The politics of ancient Athens, on the verge of war with Persia come into this play. Euripides pens a barbarian woman who is clever and uses heroic language and imagery. I believe he was cautioning Athens from underestimating “the other” and from believing they were the best and therefore infallible. I also believe he was considering the politics of male and female traditional roles. This play has a weak male (Jason) and an intelligent, pious, psychologically complex female (Medea). Who did Euripides think his Athenian audience would side with? I have thought, over the course of this rehearsal, about America and how in the last decade America put the “barbarian” or “axis of evil” label on nations to justify going to War. In the Bush years, America sounded very like Athens, considering itself the height of culture, civilization, the protector of democracy, and favored by God. Athens eventually fell – and it seems as if Euripides is warning us against national arrogance. America is falling as recession hits. Interesting political parallels.

However, I think this play is more of a domestic story. Here, I disagree slightly with Goldhill. I think the Greek stories are all family tragedies. We relate to the story if we can recognize the human story and see ourselves in the characters. This story is about love, betrayal, ambition, change, passion, oppression, loss of control over one’s life and choices. This is human.

4. The translation. I was very pleased with the McLeish translation. I felt that it popped in a very direct way, cutting out much of the excessive poetry of other translations, making the language more natural for the student actors. We did have other translations on hand and I encouraged the actors to look up their text in other translations. The McLeish text was sparse and there were rich clues about what was being said in the more expansive translations. I kept a couple different translations on hand in the rehearsal room and we looked up things all the time. When I first heard the McLeish text come out of the actors mouths at the auditions I was so taken with how easy it was for them to speak it. It lifted off the page very easily for this young student cast.

5. The Helen of Troy problem. How do you put gods and heroes on stage without disappointing audience expectation? I tackled this challenge head-on. I didn’t put one Medea onstage. I actually did most of the show without the

true Medea. I staged a collage of the character of Medea which I think honored her as a historical and mythical figure and gave the audience space to create her in their own minds.

6. The actor and the text. We spent a lot of time working with text. I identified that the emphatic element of this play was text and we worked hard to use the text and dig into the language. We discussed techniques for speaking this sort of text: popping key words and mining narrative information; knowing what form your piece is written in and how that indicates rhythm shifts (stichomythia, monologue, agon, dialogue); using argument to win, not emotion; going up at the ends of the lines and following thoughts through.

In conclusion I felt that what I saw on-stage was the story I set out to tell. I was proud of the elegance that we achieved in the set, the lights, the costumes and in the acting. I felt that the actors were intelligent, graceful, grounded, and worked with the vocabulary of “objectives”. I felt that they became an ensemble in that together they took on telling the story. I felt that this ensemble was cultivated to include my technical team and my design team. I feel that the actors developed as actors and committed to the work. I liked my concept. I thought the production was provocative and treated the audience as intelligent, active participants in the event. I felt that this story was very close, very domestic, very human, and tragic.

## CHAPTER THREE: OLYMPIAN INTERVENTION IN EURIPIDES' MEDEA

I begin with a Wall. I am directing Euripides' Medea at the TELUS Studio Theatre in January 2009. I meet with my set designer early in September of 2008 to discuss my Wall. Having read my way through Simon Goldhill's accessible, How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today, I come to appreciate the importance in Greek Theatre of the central door, separating the outside space from the inside space. My design involves the wall of Medea's house which will collapse piece by piece with an ear-shattering clatter as the Sun breaks into the interior space where Medea has slaughtered her children. My set designer asks me, "does she initiate the collapse of the wall, or does the god crumble it?" This question has sent me into a detailed exploration of whether or not the gods are present in Medea, or whether, in a godless universe, Medea herself assumes goddess status. The conclusion I reach is that Euripides does in fact affirm the existence of the gods, and I now must ask, "if they do exist, what motivates them to intervene in her story?" Which leads me back to my wall; how does it come down, and what is the tone of the Sun's entrance?

Euripides was the playwright who most questioned the Greek cosmology, and the nature of the gods. Particularly he seems to question the anthropomorphic Olympians. In the Women of Troy his Hecuba calls to Zeus, but is unable to define his nature:

O thou who dost uphold the world,  
whose throne is high above the world,  
thou, past our seeking hard to find, who art thou?  
God, or Necessity of what must be,  
or Reason of our reason?  
Whate'er thou art, I pray to thee (Hamilton, p.51)

Euripides' Heracles also questions the anthropomorphized intervention of the gods:

What you say of the gods is hardly relevant.  
I don't believe gods tolerate unlawful love.  
Those tales of chainings are unworthy; I never did  
And never will accept them; nor that any god  
Is tyrant of another. A god, if truly god,  
Needs nothing. Those are poets' lamentable myths. (Vellacott, p.195)

In Euripides' time philosophers (sophists) began to question the nature of the divine, challenging the authority of the poets on the gods. In his chapter, "Philosophical Religion" in Greek Religion, Walter Burkert charts the attempts of early Greek philosophers to understand the nature of the universe.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Anaximandros proposed that the world was made of natural elements which balance each other out (flame/vapor, moist/dry) and in place of the Olympian deities, there was a Divine Beginning, the element and force from which everything begins and passes away. At the same time, Xenophanes named this force “nous” – Mind. He refuted anthropomorphism, attacking the poets Homer and Hesiod, suggesting, “If they could paint...horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses.” (Burkert, p.310) Anaxagoras, developing natural science, explained that the sun was not a god but a hot mass of stone. Protagoras read his paper in Euripides house claiming “Man is the measure of things; there is no truth to be had beyond the impression made on a man’s mind.” (Burkert, pp. 305-321)

If God is the eternal Being, Mind, or Breath (spiritus) which is the order of the cosmos this creates a very different picture from that of the Olympian gods. The Olympians are anthropomorphic. For example, they travel within the cosmos to their altars to receive gifts and partake of pleasing smoke-feasts. One of the questions that evolves is ‘what is the relationship between god and man?’

...the reciprocity of charis was missing. Who could still say that the divine cares for man, for the individual man? Here a wound was opened in practical religion which would never close again. (Burkert, p.311))

How do these considerations affect Euripides and his re-telling of the Medea myth? The biggest question would be, “do the gods actually take sides in the story or does Medea assume the role of the gods as the dispenser of Justice?” Does the Chariot at the end of the play imply that Helios has sent for her or that she assumes goddess status herself, physically placing herself in the vertical space of the deus ex machina? Certainly the god, Helios, does not appear. There is no appearance of the gods in Medea. Aegeus’ Delphic riddle could be read as an appearance by a god. However, Medea makes herself the vessel of the ‘divine’ prophecy by offering herself as the answer to the riddle. When the riddle is resolved as a promise of children for Aegeus, Medea says, “I’ll cure your childlessness...I’ve drugs, I’ve ways. You’ll spill the seed of sons” (Mc. p.60). She calls on Zeus, Themis, and Artemis to act on her behalf and dispense Justice but none physically appear. The Olympian gods feel deaf and distant. Medea could be seen as character who, on her own initiative, assumes her full and true nature. Edith Hall in her introduction to Medea says that:

Euripides is interpreted as a humanist who denies any but human motivation to human action and whose works operate on a similar principle to... rationalist and atheological determination, that it is human nature...which drives and conditions history. (Mo. p. xxix)

On the other hand, one could consider that Euripides does very much affirm the existence of the gods – that in his plays he is searching to understand the divine and how the divine is manifest, but that in his questioning he affirms the deities, unknowable as they may be.

In his very dark tragedy, The Trojan Women, the intervention of the gods in the Trojan War appears excessive but undeniable. As Ian Storey suggests in A Guide To Ancient Greek Drama:

by the end Hecuba and the chorus realize what we know from the start, that the gods exist but they don't care. (Storey, p.267)

When Medea calls to the gods to support her and carry out justice on her behalf, she calls to Greek Gods. She has adopted Jason's gods and as such holds him to his own cosmology and system of justice. The character has no doubt that the gods exist, and questions Jason's frivolousness towards them.

I am at a loss to understand whether you think that the gods you swore by no longer rule or that men now live by new standards of what is right- for well you know that you have not kept your oaths to me. (Mo. ll. 492-495)

In her book, Granddaughter of the Sun, C.A.E. Luschnig writes:

If we look at Medea's words, we find in fact that she is the upholder of traditional morality. She is the guardian of marriage and the keeper of oaths. (Luschnig, p.65)

The characters call upon and refer to several gods in the course of the play:

ZEUS: Zeus's different epithets are referred to; Zeus, King of the Gods, Zeus, The Keeper of Oaths; Zeus, God of the Host/Guest relationship, xenia. He is also the God of Supplicants.

Supplication is a formal entreaty, accompanied by ritualized touching of knees, chin, or hand, which puts the recipient under a religious obligation to accede the supplicant's requests. (Mo. p. xxxi)

Medea appeals to Zeus, King of the Gods:

Come Zeus, bolt of lightning, and pierce my head." (Mc. p.44) and "O Zeus, you give clear signs to mark true gold from dross – why no hallmarks to tell true men from men? (Mc. p.54)

The Chorus refers to Zeus of Oaths as Advocate:

Leave Zeus to settle it.  
She calls to Zeus who seals all promises. (Mc. p.45)  
...how she cries out upon.... Zeus, acknowledged the protector of oaths among mortals (Mo. l. 170)



Medea calls to Zeus of Oaths, saying, “ Zeus, do not let the man guilty of these evils your vigilance.” (Mo. ll. 333)

To Aegeus she says, “Swear an oath. Words alone are frail; An oath’s protected by the gods and binds us fast.” (Mc. p.60)

Aegeus refers to Zeus of Oaths:

This Oath shall be ....as I heard you say.  
(Medea: And if you break your oath-?)  
May I be damned, like all who scorn the gods. (Mc. p.61)

This foreshadows Jason’s end for his flippant arrogance towards his Oaths and the gods.

Medea refers to Zeus of Supplicants when speaking to the two Kings: “Creon, I’m on my knees” (Mc. p.50) and “Aegeus, on my knees I beg you, pity me.” (Mc. p.60)

ARTEMIS: Artemis is the goddess of the transition from girlhood/virginity into marriage. “Occasionally girls are placed for a longer period in the exclusive service of Artemis as part of an initiation ritual (preparing for marriage)” (Burkert p.151). The reference to Artemis brings to mind the rightness and propriety of the state of marriage. Medea may be calling on Artemis in regards to the impiety of the marriage between Glauce and Jason. This new marriage is not right.

THEMIS: Themis maintains the sanctity of prayers and Oaths.

O great Themis and Lady Artemis, do you see what I suffer, though I bound my accursed husband with great oaths? May I one day see him and his bride pounded to nothing, house and all. (Mo. ll. 160-162)

Do you hear what she says, how she cries out upon Themis, goddess of prayers (Mo. ll. 168-169)

Victim of injustice, she calls upon the gods, upon Themis daughter of Zeus, goddess of oaths, who brought her to Greece across the sea (Mo. ll. 208-210)

HECATE: Hecate is the goddess of magic and also has cultic links to the Underworld. She is associated with the Moon and with Persephone, who she heard crying out after being kidnapped by Hades. Medea has personal allegiance to this goddess.

I swear by the mistress whom I revere above all gods and have chosen as my co-worker, Hecate, who dwells in a recess of my hearth (Mo. ll 395-397)

Goddess of midnight, Hecate, Holy of holies in whose name I live... (Mc. p.51)

HELIOS: Medea is descended from the Sun god. Her father Aeetes and her aunt Circe are children of Helios.

Chorus: Mother Earth, hear us;  
All –dazzling Sun, look down.  
She’s gripped by fate.  
.... From your golden seed she grew,  
More than mortal –  
...Lord of light, reach down,  
Stop her, snatch her up...(Mc. p.75)

Medea: Medea, granddaughter of the Sun, Do it. You can. (Mc. p.51)  
Medea: My father’s father, the Sun himself, provides (Mc. p.66)

Medea asks Aegeus to swear by the Sun:

Swear by Mother Earth,  
By my father’s father the Sun,  
By all the generations of the gods (Mc. p.61)

At the end of the play she is borne in the air by the chariot of the Sun-god.

Such is the chariot that the Sun, father of my father, has given me to defend me against my enemies’ hands. (Mc. p.36)

APOLLO: Apollo is the god of music. The Chorus refers to the fact that Apollo does not give women a voice, “otherwise I would have rung out my answer, singing against the male sex.” (Mo. 427) Apollo is also the god of the Delphic Oracle. Aegeus receives a riddle from the oracle concerning his childlessness. Medea fulfills the riddle/ makes herself the answer to the riddle.

APHRODITE: Aphrodite is the goddess of sex and passionate love. She holds a different function than Artemis in that the nature of this love is not necessarily tied to marriage. When Jason claims that Aphrodite was responsible for their coming together he puts their relationship into the frame of “passion and lust” instead of in the frame of a proper marriage rite and union (Artemis).

Jason: You overdo it. Aphrodite helped me:  
It was she – no other – who saved our ship.  
No one denies your witchery –  
But it was Aphrodite’s weapon, passion,  
That made you save my skin. (Mc. p. 54)

The Chorus sings about Aphrodite, referring to her gifts as good in moderation, but dangerous if “barbed with desire.”

May temperance befriend me,  
the gods most lovely gift,  
and may dread Cypris (Aphrodite) never madden my heart. (Mo. ll. 637-9)

HERMES: Hermes is the protector of travelers. The chorus evokes Hermes to lead Aegeus safely home because he has acted nobly and with integrity.

ATHENA: Athena is the patron goddess of Athens. She is also the goddess of wisdom and justice. Medea seeks safety in Athens (a civilized city) under the goddess who represents justice. Referring to Aegeus, King of Athens, she says, “To him I shall fasten my stern cable by going to Athens, city of Pallas” (Mo. 1.770). Helios helps her to journey there. Are the gods saying that her actions in the play are just, because she ends up in the city of Justice? The Chorus seems to suggest otherwise, warning that her actions will bring pollution to Athens:

How shall such a city  
Of sacred streams, such a kindly land,  
Shelter you...child-killer,  
Befouled, unclean? (Mc. p.63)

Yet at the end of the play the Chorus recognizes that they do not understand how the gods conceive of Justice.

In heaven, Zeus holds the balance.  
Expect the unexpected.  
What mortals dream, the gods frustrate;  
For the impossible they contrive a way.  
So it was with what happened here, today. (Mc. p.80)

Both Jason and Medea refer to the gods at different times as being on their side. They each claim that they stand in a pious place in the eyes of the gods:

Jason: Gods, will you witness this?  
I have done all I could – for you, for them

Medea: With God’s good help  
Your honeymoon will soon turn sour. (Mc. p.57)

Jason: Unholy. Vile. Woman!  
Hated by gods

Medea: The Sun, my father's father,  
Bears me high in his chariot,  
Beyond my enemies. (Mc. p.77)

Jason: You destroy my sons and still you live,  
Face Mother Earth, stare down the Sun?  
.... hound of Hell

Medea: Zeus the father knows  
All I did for you and how you did for me. (Mc. p.77-78)

Jason: Zeus, do you hear? She spits on us...  
As long as life is left in me  
I'll weep for them, remind the gods...(Mc. p.79)

The presence of the gods in Medea is subtle because they are acting in part through Medea. She calls upon Hecate to give her strength and she does become strong and single-minded. She calls for justice and then carries out justice as far as she humanly can. When she pushes at the edges of the human justice system and breaks human taboos (kin-killer) the Sun intervenes to rescue her, operating within a different set of rules regarding Justice. The Chorus calls for the Sun to stop her. The Sun doesn't stop her, instead at the end of the play His presence is implied by her escape route and the Chorus concludes that He has intervened. Perhaps Euripides in questioning the nature of the gods lands us no further than the question. He does not give answers. To call him an atheist is perhaps to go too far although Aristophanes in Women at the Thesmophoria, pens a garland-maker who complains that Euripides has ruined her business because he "had persuaded people that the gods do not exist" (Murray p.13). Edith Hall suggests:

one rhetorical function of skepticism is to affirm the belief being  
doubted simply by raising it to consciousness. (Mo. p. xxix)

So, we have a playwright couched in the struggle of understanding the gods who appears to affirm their existence. In The Bacchae Euripides writes a horrible end for a King who insists on understanding the universe only through the mind (sophistry). King Pentheus represents rational order and he refuses to acknowledge the god Dionysius. He is punished with the fullness of Dionysus' wrath (Pentheus is ripped apart by his own mother). As Burkert says, "irrationalism rises against enlightenment" (Burkert, p.317). Burkert also refers to a lost play, Bellerophon:

Bellerophon, finding that evildoers thrive while the pious are helpless, can no longer believe in the existence of the gods; he wants to arrive at certainty by ascending to the sky with his winged horse Pegasus; yet the outcome is not knowledge but a fall to destruction and madness. (Burkert, p.316)

The question arises: does Medea define herself as a goddess or is Medea defined, affirmed, and supported by the Olympians? I would say both. Does the Wall fall down because the Sun rises, or does she motivate the collapse of the walls of her house? I would say both.

Medea must fulfill her nature. This is the hero's journey. She must be true to herself. She is part goddess. Jason and Creon are oppressive and are trying to force her into their box. She cannot comply – it goes against her sense of right. It is not virtuous to accept their definition of her life and of herself. She throws off their limitations and expands into her self. The gods reach down and lift her up as she ascends upwards towards them. Aegeus unwittingly defines this relationship of human/god-helper when he tells her:

You must leave this country on your own initiative. But if you come to my palace yourself, you will stay there safe from harm and I shall not hand you over to anyone. (Mo. ll. 728-730)

Likewise when Medea reaches towards her true nature, breaking out of the shackles which confine her, the gods condone her actions and take her up to safety. Jason refuses to take the gods seriously. He puts his ambition ahead of his oaths and vows. He refuses the voice of supplicant Medea, and through allowing her banishment he dishonors the host/guest relationship. He will end up destroyed by the gods with not even a seed of his line to continue forward.

Having decided that the gods intervene, the question now becomes, 'Why?' One possibility is that the gods accompany heroes. Medea's journey can be seen as that of a hero. People remember Medea. They continue to produce her story. Why? This is one of the qualities of the "Greek Hero" – your name and your story live on. When Achilles is considering his role in the Trojan War, his mother tells him that he can refuse to fight and live the regular life of a normal man or he can fight, die an honorable death, and his heroic name will be on the tongue of future Greeks forever. Medea's name is on our tongues. She is a hero, and a fighter, even as her story develops along painful and dark pathways.

Qualities of a Greek hero include setting oneself apart as an individual against the societal position. Simon Goldhill, in his chapter on the role of the Chorus, writes:

The hero.... is a figure who makes the boundaries of life problematic: the hero goes too far, and going too far is both transgression and transcendence. The greatness of the hero is achieved at the expense of his ability to fit into normal social parameters...passionate self-belief and self-commitment is set in juxtaposition to the cooperative virtues of the community. (Goldhill, p.47)

Electra and Antigone exemplify this stance. In Greek society women were to keep inside and be obedient to the male head of the household:

Respectable women of citizen families were ideally imagined as confined indoors, silent and subservient. (Mastronarde p.26)

In Euripides' Electra we have a woman raging outside, disheveled and causing attention to herself.

Look at me – my hair uncared-for,  
My dress in tatters!  
Would not his daughter's appearance  
Bring shame to King Agamemnon,  
And make Troy blush to remember her conqueror?  
(Vellacott, ll. 183-189)

Of Sophocles' Electra, Goldhill writes, "Sophocles' heroine revels in breaking all the bounds of female propriety – and the space she inhabits is the physical embodiment of this" (Goldhill, p.33).

In Antigone, a woman refuses to obey the laws of the land, insisting on burying her dead brother Polyneices, against the orders of the King. In both cases the Chorus represents the voice of society, cautioning the protagonist from acting against the accepted rule. Medea begins the play lying on the floor, refusing to eat, calling for death. The chorus in Medea advises:

So her husband revels in another's bed –  
Is it worth such frenzy, just for that?  
Leave Zeus to settle it.  
It's over, your marriage.  
No need to break your heart. (Mc. p.45)

And later:

Aphrodite, lady, never loose  
Your golden bow at me,  
Unerring arrows, barbed with desire.  
Better a sensible life. (Mc. p.57)

Like Electra, Medea occupies the public space in front of her house, drawing attention to her plight. Like Antigone, she speaks to kings, arguing (agon), holding her ground, and ultimately rebelling against the social order. Electra, Antigone, and Medea, all march to the beat of their own drum, unable to act outside of their nature, and it is this quality that is heroic, even in its tragic consequences.

Metaphors used by the Greek playwrights can also point to the heroic aspect of the character. In *Medea*, the imagery which surrounds her includes wild animal: “bull-glares”, “lion-claws (Mc. p.46), and soldier: “Come, hand: the sword. This course must be run” (Mc. p.74). In her chapter, “The Battle of the Stories,” Luschnig sets out a very interesting line of metaphor, tracking the maritime imagery that surrounds *Medea* in the beginning of the play and how that is, on her own initiative, replaced with imagery of the hand. She argues that the maritime imagery belongs to the *Medea* and *Jason* story, and that when it shifts to imagery of her own hand, she begins to create a new story for herself, leaving the old story behind, moving towards her own destiny as goddess. Through *Medea*’s choices, her “hand,” *Medea* takes the initiative of ordering her and her son’s lives:

I shall not delay and so surrender them to other, crueler hands to kill. (Mo. l.1239)  
Come, my cruel hand, take the sword...(Mo. ll. 1243-4)

*Jason* is forced to acknowledge her orchestration of events. She will not let him touch the children and so negates any power he might have had to affect the events of their lives. He laments:

...as much as I am able, calling on the gods to witness how you prevent me from touching their bodies with my hands, or burying them. (Mo. ll. 1410-13)

*Mastronarde* describes the hero’s role in revenge narratives. The hero is unable to accept being treated in a lesser capacity.

For her sense of outrage over the failure of her partner to abide by the heroic code of mutual exchange and loyal good will, she may be compared to the *Achilles* of the *Iliad*. (*Mastronarde*, p.9)

*Medea* cannot accept oppression from *Creon* and *Jason*, and she cannot accept laughter from her enemies. As a hero, she must protect her honor and act back.

*Medea* makes her tragic decisions because she gives precedence to her heroic status and to following the dictates of the heroic code of retaliation.  
(*Mastronarde*, p.9)

What you plan, now do; this is the test.  
Your sufferings are known.  
Are *Jason* and his crew to laugh themselves to bed?  
*Medea*, granddaughter of the Sun,  
Do it. You can. (Mc. p.51)

This is the lesson that Achilles learns, sitting in his tent in the middle of the war on Troy. He refuses to be heroic, and even his best friend, Patroclus, suggests that he is acting less than himself. A hero must protect his honor. In The Iliad, Patroclus cries out:

But you are intractable, Achilles!  
Cursed in your own courage! What good will a man,  
even one in the next generation, get from you....  
He was not your father, the horseman Peleus – Thetis  
was not your mother. (Homer, Book 16: 33-39)

All of the heroes of Greek myth are assisted and protected by gods. Achilles, in The Iliad, is accompanied by Athena.

Athena rushed to Achilles, her bright eyes gleaming,  
.... At last our hopes run high, my brilliant Achilles –  
...we'll kill this Hector...No way for him to escape us now, no longer.  
(Homer, Book 22: 113-120)

Athena also enters Odysseus' story in The Odyssey, intervening to aid the hero on his home ward journey.

So Athena vowed, and under her feet she fastened the supple sandals, ever-  
glowing gold, that wing her over the waves...And down she swept from  
Olympus' craggy peaks and lit on Ithaca, standing tall at Odysseus' gates...  
(Homer, Book 1: 113-120)

Medea is aided by Helios. The fact that a god intervenes in her story implies that she shares heroic status with the Homeric heroes. To Jason at the end of the play she cries:

We're out of reach.  
The Sun, my father's father,  
Bears me high in his chariot,  
Beyond my enemies. (Mc. p.77)

We see again the metaphor of "hands." The Sun will not allow anyone to defeat her, or diminish her heroic nature.

A second explanation for the god's intervention is compassion. The Greek gods don't often appear to act compassionately. If ever compassion was needed it would be in Euripides' Trojan Women. Athena and Poseidon are quite capable of punishing humans excessively and painfully because of dishonor done to the gods.



Athena tells Poseidon:

... they shall burn...while dead men choke the winding bay. So Greeks shall learn to reverence my house and dread all gods. (Hamilton, p.16)

But there is precedent for considering compassion as a motivation for intervention. Apollo initiates the Oracle at Delphos so that people can have some access to understanding the gods and their actions. This seems to be a purely compassionate act, although it must be repaid through gifting and honoring the god. Athena helps many young heroes; Perseus (killing Medusa), Heracles, The Argonauts (safety through The Clashing Rocks), Odysseus. There is explanation for some of her actions but others seem simply to be acts of aid motivated by care and love. Even with Odysseus, who she may have helped because he condemned Ajax's act of pulling Cassandra off her altar, the length and breadth of her aid throughout his homeward journey seems more than simple payback. She assumes the status of patroness and is concerned for his well-being.

And sparkling-eyed Athena drove the matter home:  
'Father, son of Cronus, our high and mighty king,  
surely he goes down to a death he earned in full!  
Let them all die so, all who do such things.  
But my heart breaks for Odysseus,  
that seasoned veteran cursed by fate  
so long-far from his loved ones still,  
he suffers torments off on a wave-washed island  
rising in the center of the seas. (Homer, Odyssey, Book 1: 53-60)

In The Iliad, Zeus, watching Achilles and Hector fight, calls on Athena and Apollo to step back and give the mortals a break:

...and the father of men and gods broke forth among them now: 'Unbearable – a man I love, hunted round his own city walls and right before my eyes. My heart grieves for Hector... Come, you immortals, think this through. Decide. Either we pluck the man from death and save his life or strike him down at last.  
(Homer, Book 22: 200 – 208)

Medea is rescued by Helios. It is surely not morality which draws him there. As Jason says, for her immoral act of kin-killing the Furies should come and pursue her.

I pray that the Fury roused by our children and  
Justice, the avenger of bloodshed, may destroy you. (Mo. II. 1389-90)

The entrance of Helios' chariot at the end of Euripides' play would have been an unexpected action. Seeing her in a tight corner, about to be killed by the Corinthians for killing her sons, perhaps Helios looks down from his Chariot and commits an act of grace, transcending human justice, and over-throwing the cycle of retaliation common to Greek story.

In her book The Great Transformation, Karen Armstrong suggests that through Greek tragedy we experience compassion:

Today we are living in a tragic world where, as the Greeks knew, there can be no simple answers; the genre of tragedy demands that we learn to see things from other people's point of view... to bring light to our broken world, we need... to go in search of the lost heart, the spirit of compassion that lies at the core of all our traditions. (Armstrong, p.399)

Perhaps Euripides shares a similar perspective and is challenging his audience with it.

It is this facet of Medea that has moved to the forefront in the twentieth century—her role as the other whose allegedly “barbarian” actions force us to reevaluate the depths of our own souls. Appropriately we no longer live in a world where the other can be embellished (... as in Homer...) and thus be banished to a convenient and reassuring distance. In confronting Medea, we confront our deepest feelings and realize that behind the delicate order we have sought to impose upon our world lurks chaos. (Iles Johnston, p.17)

The political environment for Euripides was interesting. He wrote the play in 431 BC when Athens had spent a year in the Peloponnesian War. Euripides lived during the glory days of Athens. The Athenians believed they had created in their city the highest pinnacle of civilization. They valued virtue and wisdom and piety. All other societies and cities were considered inferior culturally and politically. When Euripides was four the city had been in danger from the Persians, and the Athenians interpreted their victory to mean that the gods favored Athens. It was “piety” that had won the war and “the Persians had been destroyed because, being monotheists, they had denied the Gods.” (Murray p.22) Herodotus writes:

The Greek race was distinguished of old from the barbarian as more intelligent and more emancipated from silly nonsense (or savagery)...and of all the Greeks the Athenians were counted first in Wisdom. (Her. I.60)

Euripides lived in a patriotic city that believed itself to be the best and all others to be weaker and lesser. This is always a dangerous position. Medea is a barbarian from the Persian world, a woman, and a sorceress. The men in the play expect her to be less clever, less powerful, and less favored by the gods. But she confounds these expectations by being extremely clever, powerful and by the end clearly in the gods favor. Euripides seems to be warning his society against hubris and arrogance. He possibly is suggesting that under-estimating “the other,” suppressing and oppressing “the other”, considering “the other” as barbarian is dangerous. The “other” is like us, and we can sympathize with “the other” if we shift our perspective and allow them a voice. Under-estimating “the other” and considering them as something other than human and less than the glorious Athenian citizen is dangerous in war and in life – for they are as powerful as we: clever, righteous, wise, with a powerful sense of justice and the gods.

John Ferguson writes:

He attacked Athens because he loved her, attacked her when she fell below herself. He shows shoddy Greeks and sympathetic foreigners, shoddy men and dominating women, shoddy nobles and decent peasants, shoddy freemen and free-minded slaves. (Ferguson, p.8)

Emily McDermott writes that Euripides surprises the audience's expectations. He resists giving them what they want and forces them into uncertainty about society and order.

He challenges the audience's assumptions about the moral, social, civic fabric of mankind in order to uproot mental complacencies. (McDermott, p.2)

The gods can also be seen to intervene when family members are threatened or killed. They seem to take very seriously *la familia*; family matters, so don't mess with the family. Medea is Helios's granddaughter. He will protect her because she is kin. The question, of course, becomes why does He not intervene when the Chorus calls for him to save the children, who are also his kin. I can only answer this in terms of the Greek understanding that children are a direct line of the father. In The Eumenides, Apollo claims that it is the father's seed that produces offspring, for the mother is simply the "earth" in which the seed is planted.

The mother is no parent of that which is called her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed that grows. The parent is he who mourns.  
(Lattimore, ll. 657-660)

The boys, then, can be seen as Jason's children, and not descendents of the Sun. Precedents for the gods protecting their kin include the fate of Erechtheus, who led the Athenians in a war against the Eleusinians. Eumolpus, Poseidon's son, is killed by Erechtheus in battle, and an angry Poseidon kills Erechtheus in return (Mikalson, p.59).

In The Odyssey, Poseidon also wishes to exact revenge on Odysseus for blinding his son, Polyphemus. Homer describes:

...the Earth-Shaker, Poseidon, unappeased, forever fuming against him for the Cyclops whose giant eye he blinded: godlike Polyphemus....And now for his blinded son the earthquake god – though he won't quite kill Odysseus – drives him far off course from native land. (Homer; Book 1, 81-90)

The breaking of Oaths also rouses the gods to action. As we have seen above, Jason breaks his marriage oath to Medea and she questions why he thinks he can get away with that. Burkert writes, "in the institution of the oath, religion, morality, and the very organization of society appear indissolubly linked together" (Burkert, p.250). The gods and society understand and commit to the sacredness of Oaths. Precedents for punishment of Oath-breakers abound in Greek myth. In Ovid's Metamorphoses, we read

the story of Tereus, Pandion, Procne, and Philomela. Philomela wants her sister Procne to come visit and sends her husband, Tereus, off to fetch her. He is charged with an Oath by Pandion, the father:

My son, since links of love leave me no choice,  
And both have set their hearts...I give her to your keeping;  
And I beseech you by your honor, by the ties  
Of family and by the gods above,  
To guard her with a father's love and send  
Back soon...The darling solace of my somber age.  
...and (he) took their hands and joined them, his and hers, to seal their pledge.  
(Ovid, VI: 480-520)

Once they have embarked, Tereus rapes and holds Philomela captive. When Procne finds out, her revenge is swift and brutal. She rescues her sister, kills the child of the rape, feeds him to his father Tereus in a pie and then, as the Furies arrive to punish her, the sisters turn into birds and escape. This story echoes Euripides' *Medea* in that she flies away from the possibility of the Furies after killing Jason's sons. *Medea* also refers to the physical taking of the oath, hand to hand, with Jason.

...for well you know you have not kept your oaths to me. Alas for this right hand which you often held, alas for these knees – touched by an evil man in an empty gesture... (Mo. II. 495-497)

In *The Trojan Women*, Cassandra is pulled off Athena's altar, raped by Ajax, and then is given as spoils to Agamemnon. Hecuba cries out that Apollo protected her as a Virgin Priestess, and Cassandra has vowed herself to serve him in this function. When the Greeks rape her, they refuse to acknowledge her oath before Apollo. Hecuba cries:

Oh never. She is God's, a virgin, always.  
That was God's gift to her for all her life. (Hamilton, p.24)

Athena is the goddess who takes revenge on the Greeks because Ajax defiles her temple in the act.

In Euripides' *Hecuba*, Troy has fallen and Hecuba begins her journey to Greece. She learns that her son Polydorus has been murdered by Polymestor, to whom he had been sent for safety. Hecuba and the women lure Polymestor into their tent, blind him, and kill his two sons. Agamemnon has to judge between Hecuba and Polymestor. She appeals:

Agamemnon, if you help this man, you help an impious, perjured, and polluted traitor, and by upholding evil soil your own fair name. (Vellacott, 1232)

Agamemnon judges against the Oath-breaker, Polymestor.

As seen in Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*, Athena intervenes to establish a new order and break a revenge cycle. In the revenge cycle of *Medea*, Medea punishes Jason for

breaking his Oath, kills his offspring, and should then be punished herself. This is the Greek pattern of justice. The Orestia follows this pattern. Orestes is directed by Apollo to mete out justice (dike) for his father's death by killing his mother, Clytemnestra. By carrying this out Orestes in turn is pursued by the Furies calling for justice for the death of Clytemnestra. In The Eumenides, as in Medea, at the moment when the protagonist should be punished by the Furies, a god intervenes and disrupts the cycle of justice by revenge. "Athena does not reject the Furies outright, and submits Orestes' case to a jury of 12 Athenian men" (Story, p.249). The Jury is split, but Athena casts her vote and Orestes' case is upheld. This intervention by Athena completely re-invents the concept of justice for the Athenians. When Helios's chariot plucks Medea out of the city of Corinth and takes her off to safety, the implication is that the Corinthian system of justice and morality is broken and re-defined by the gods.

Often, the human level is affected by skirmishes between the gods above. Intervention by the gods into the human sphere is part of a larger entanglement, or attempt at balance, between the Olympians. Examples of this include the Trojan War, which was started over a beauty competition between three goddess (Hera, Athena, Aphrodite), and fuelled by bribery on the part of Aphrodite. The Trojan Paris was offered the Greek Helen if he selected Aphrodite as the most beautiful (see Appendix: C Judgment of Paris). Another example comes to us from Euripides Iphigenia at Aulis. Agamemnon is forced to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to appease Artemis, after a deer is shot by the Greeks. On the human level, the Greeks story cannot proceed (the wind has literally died) until they resolve the story that is playing out on the Olympian level.

Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite initiate Medea's life story when they seek safety and aid for Jason and the Argonaut quest. Hera is initially on the side of the Argonauts because she is seeking vengeance against Pelias for committing murder in her temple. She needs Jason to assume his rightful throne of Iolcus by unseating and killing Pelias. Medea is used by the goddesses as the agent in the death of Pelias. Under the influence of Aphrodite, which is irresistible, Medea falls in love with Jason. Medea's passion is all-consuming and she helps Jason fulfill all of his impossible tasks, including acquiring the Golden Fleece, returning to Iolcus, and murdering Pelias. From this perspective, when Jason betrays his marriage vows for a new union with Glauce, we observe a heroine (Medea) who has been acting under the influence of the gods, and who is now trapped, abandoned, and banished. The intervention of Helios is perhaps a way to re- balance the other acts of the gods on Medea's life. She was an unwitting instrument for them, and now she must be saved, not simply left to die the ignoble death of a murderess.

Back to the wall. I conclude that the gods are active in Euripides' Medea, in both subtle and extremely theatrical ways. Medea and the Chorus call upon various deities to bring justice to pass. Through her own initiative, Medea designs the course of justice but the course she sets is in keeping with divine precedent. She punishes the Oath-breaker with destruction, focusing on Jason's own betrayal of his family by killing all members of his line; his new royal wife, his father-in-law, and his sons. We may consider that every prayer for intervention is in fact answered: Medea calls to Zeus, Themis, and Artemis for Justice, she calls to Hecate for strength, and she grows to embody these qualities within

herself as dispenser of justice; when she searches for safety, the arrival of Aegeus at the right moment may also be considered a divine answer. The presence of the divine is perhaps in keeping with Euripides' religious searchings. No anthropomorphic god walks on the earth in this play, as Athena and Poseidon do in his Trojan Women, but perhaps a spirit, or active energy can be viewed subtly acting within the narrative; the extraordinary entrance of the deus ex machina is a more theatrical suggestion of Olympian activity. Precedent for the god's intervention can be applied to this story and, as I have examined, the action can be seen as completely motivated by family allegiance, or deeper Olympian plot lines, a means to address impiety, or an act of grace in the presentation of a different moral code, where an eye-for-an-eye is replaced by compassion. Working through the Wall design with my set designer, I decide that the wall must fall as an act of grace, signaling that the god is transcending the social codes of Corinthian society – that Euripides is offering us a way to consider “the other” as human, not monster.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Aeschylus. "The Eumenides" (Richmond Lattimore, trans.) in Greek Tragedies Vol. 3, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953
- Appolonius. The Voyage of Argo (Rieu, E.V. trans.) Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, England, 1975
- Armstrong, Karen. The Great Transformation. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2006
- Boedeker, Deborah. "Becoming Medea: Assimilation in Euripides" in Medea (Clauss and Johnston ed.). Princeton University Press, 1997
- Burkert, Walter. Greek Religion. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1985
- Clauss, James J. and Sarah Iles Johnston. Medea. Princeton University Press, 1997
- Euripides. "The Bacchae" (William Arrowsmith, trans) in Greek Tragedies Vol.3, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953
- Euripides. "Electra" (Vellacott, Philip, trans.) in Medea and Other Plays. Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1963
- Euripides. "Hecuba" (Vellacott, Philip, trans.) in Medea and Other Plays. Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1963
- Euripides. "Heracles" (Vellacott Philip, trans.) in Medea and Other Plays. Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1963
- Euripides. "Medea" (McLeish, Kenneth and Frederic Raphael, trans.) in Greek Tragedy. Nick Hern Books Ltd., London, 1994
- Euripides. "Medea" (Morwood, James, transl. and Edith Hall, Intro.) in Euripides, Medea, And Other Plays. Oxford University Press, 1997
- Euripides. The Trojan Women (Edith Hamilton, trans.). W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1937
- Ferguson, John. Euripides: Medea. The Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1979

- Goldhill, Simon. *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2007
- Herodotus. *The Histories* (Aubrey de Selincourt, trans.) Penguin Books, London, 1954
- Homer. *The Iliad* (Robert Fables, trans.) Penguin Books, New York, 1990
- Homer. *The Odyssey* (Robert Fagles, trans.) Penguin Books, New York, 1996
- Luschnig, C.A.E. *Granddaughter of the Sun*. Brill, Leiden, 2007
- Labute, N. *Bash: Latterday Plays*. Overlook Press, Woodstock, 1999
- Mastrorarde, Donald J. *Euripides Medea*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK., 2002
- McDermott, Emily A. *Euripides' Medea: The Incarnation of Disorder*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989
- Mikalson, Jon D. *Ancient Greek Religion*. Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA., 2005
- Mitchell-Boyask, Robin. "Introduction", in *Euripides: Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytis*. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 2007
- Morford, Mark P.O. *Classical Mythology*. Longman, N.Y. and London, 1991
- Murray, Gilbert. *Euripides And His Age*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1946
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses* (A.D. Melville, trans.) Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986
- Storey, Ian C. and Arlene Allan. *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama*. Blackwell Publishing, MA, 2005
- Tripp, Edward. *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Mythology*. Meridian, New York, 1970
- Wolf, Christa. *Medea* (J. Cullen, trans.) Nan A. Talese, New York, 1998



## **APPENDIX: HOUSEHOLD STORYBOARD SCRIPT**

There are three Medeas played by different staff:

- Medea 1 is the social face of Medea who speaks to the neighbors
- Medea 2 is Hecate Medea
- Medea 3 who talks with her husband, Jason

There are 3 distinct household lighting states:

- House light lamps indicate time present.
- “Rembrandt” light on Household staff tableaux: When they are watching, entering or exiting a re-enactment.
- Re-enactment lighting which is a tight white light on the salt circle.

### **PRE-SHOW:**

Audience enters- houselights are initiated by lamps.

Sound: waves

Visual: a Family Dinner Table set with plates, cups.

Tone: a domestic scene that looks warm lovely and homey.

There is money here. Nothing ominous.

Smell of cooking.

### **PROLOGUE AND THREE TABLEAUX:**

Blackout

Sound: clock ticking

Lights snap up.

First moving Tableau: The Household Sets the Table for Family Dinner.

Household 1, 2, 3, 4 enter from 3<sup>rd</sup> tier and process with chafing dish, lamb dinner tray, wine carafe, and cutlery on silver tray.

Household 5 and 6 enter on 2<sup>nd</sup> tier and stand in preparation.

Household 7 and 8 enter on floor and stand in preparation at aisles.

Household 1, 2, 3 process to second tier and downstairs towards ground floor. 1, 2 and 3 hand lamb, chafing dish, and wine one by one to Housekeeper who stands behind Table and then they stand in preparation.

Household 4, following, drops silver tray with cutlery on the stairs. Housekeeper is just taking the wine.

All gasp and look over.

Shoes heard over-head.

All look up to bridge.

Medea crosses whispering to herself.

Housekeeper puts down the wine on the table.

Blackout.

Lights snap up.

Second moving tableau: The Murder  
Blood drips from lighting bridge.  
All scream and run towards table.  
Housekeeper and all look up.  
Blackout

Sound: Nurse voice softly crying  
Housekeeper begins the Mourning Song

Lights bleed up into lamp state.  
Third moving tableau: The Salt Circle  
Housekeeper is holding pitcher of salt standing in front of table  
Maid enters with pail and cloths and scrubs up blood.

The household staff are in tableau at Table: THE GRIEF TABLEU  
Housekeeper draws salt circle, singing, as maid departs.  
Housekeeper takes off cloth from her waist or cloth from arm of wait staff and  
walks to Nurse. Housekeeper winds it around the Nurse's head and leads her to  
the circle. As the Nurse' foot enters the circle and hits the ground, lights snap to  
"re-enactment state" and the song is cut off abruptly,  
All staff watch circle. Nurse monologue.  
No emotional residue from the moment before.

#### SCENE ONE

Nurse's Monologue: The House staff are still in GRIEF tableau but watching the  
salt circle. They echo the Nurse's lines occasionally.  
Nurse looks to the right and freezes. Side light on GRIEF TABLEU.  
Housekeeper takes the jackets of two male servants. One follows her and  
becomes the Tutor. She is humming.  
They circle around and he enters the salt circle with jackets as children, stage left.

Page 43 edit:

Housekeeper as Medea voice:	Yoh!
Nurse:	Medea's tearing herself apart.
Housekeeper:	Weep. Grief. Pain.
Nurse:	Keep away from your mother. Keep out of sight.
Housekeeper:	Yoh, mo-ee, mo-ee. Die. Let me die.
Nurse:	She's wild. Hate's in her blood. She feeds her rage. Go in, quickly.

Page 44 edit:

Medea: add a female voice.

Page 44 edit:

Nurse:	The gods look down and take their toll. Look: The Neighbors
--------	--

Staff: Look: The Neighbors

(Staff shift into standing tableaux: The School of Athens - Raphael)

## SCENE TWO

Chorus: 3 female maids with plate-fan, and napkin emblems enter.

Housekeeper as Medea: A-ee! Zeus! Earth!

(add voices and begin rhythm which will build into cacophony until Medea's entrance when everything will cut to silence.)

Nurse Exit Stage R.

Chorus women exit the salt circle one by one speaking in unison. Medea 1 takes snake emblem and places it on her head.

Medea 1 puts her foot into salt circle we switch to re-enactment light.

## SCENE THREE

Medea 1 monologue to audience who represent the chorus.

Medea 1 turns upstage and freezes after: Chorus: "But here comes Creon, his majesty, Full of new plans for you."(Mc. 48)

Men chant Creon Theme.

Housekeeper hands Creon/servant the chafing dish frame. He takes chair and places it upstage center in salt. He then enters and stands beside chair with hand on it.

When Creon says: "You...Our frontiers, and come back home content" (Mc. 48) Medea upstairs screams/wails/cries. Lights flip to house-light lamp state. All household scurry to their positions. Medea 1 drops the snake emblem in the center of the circle. Creon runs out. All look up. Wait. Wait. Wait. All look to the emblem. All look to Medea 1. She refuses.

Medea 2 walks in and takes the emblem. Puts it on her head and resumes position facing upstage towards Creon's chair. Creon re-enters. He repeats his entire first paragraph.

Creon exits. He takes chair out of salt circle.

Medea stands.

Housekeeper sings 'you are alone' - solo then duet.

When Medea conjures Hecate the women have been circling the salt.

Women hum Hecate theme.

They move clockwise around the circle.

They sing Maenad piece circling fast, hair comes out, aprons drop.

Medea circles outward and joins them outside the salt circle.

They move together.

They chant: "Jason. Jason. Jason."  
They point to a male servant up a level.  
They race to him and pull him down the stairs. They tear off his jacket and push him into the salt circle.

#### SCENE FOUR

Jason does the first 3 paragraphs alone in the salt circle to the chorus as if to Medea.

Chorus on tiers.

They heckle.

Jason straightens his clothes: this is his emblem

Two people place table. Housekeeper places Jason's chair.

Medea 3 places chair. She puts on snake emblem- lighting changes to white light.

This scene is played at table: image: domestic late night husband and wife argument - uncrossable chasm.

Medea: glass of wine spills.

Jason: overturns his chair and leaves.

Chorus sings 'sensible life song'.

Medea 3 takes off emblem lays it on chair.

Lights change to household.

She sets up the chair.

Maid hands her the bucket and cloth.

Medea 3 scrubs up the wine.

Household take out table.

Pick up aprons/restore hair.

Aegeus gets handed the emblem. He goes up a tier.

Medea 1 takes the snake emblem, sits in Medea chair.

#### SCENE FIVE

Tight white light hits Aegeus up on 2<sup>nd</sup> tier.

Medea 3 bows her way out of the salt circle.

Household in Symmetrical Tableau arranged standing behind table.

Medea 1 and Aegeus exit stage l and r in unison.

Medea 1 leaves snake emblem in the god light spot downstage r.

Pin-spot ending on emblem

Household Benediction

The Story is over.

#### SCENE SIX

Medea 2 athletic leap onto table on line:

"O Zeus! Justice of Zeus! Light of the Sun!" (Mc. 61)

She jumps into the pin light and puts on the emblem.

Household: Religious Painting Tableau: Re-Enact Their Guilt.

They speak from outside the circle.

pp. 62-63 overlap dialogue between Chorus and Medea until Medea: "On! On! Deeds, not words."(Mc. p.63)

Silence.

Oath is made. Call and response.

Medea 2 exits and hands snake emblem to Medea 3

Household whisper hymn of pollution

#### SCENE SEVEN

Jason enters first: he straightens his cufflinks.

Nurse brings children coats.

Cut lines to nurse to bring boxes.

The house staff mime passing a box. They indicate "glorious gifts!" and "suspicion" of the box.

They pass the mime into the salt circle.

Jason and children exit stage L

Medea 3 waits through lament song.

#### SCENE EIGHT

Nurse enters with children coats.

Exits stage r. leaving coats with Medea 3

#### SCENE NINE

Medea 1 and 2 join Medea 3.

Paragraph 1: Medea 3

Paragraph 2: Medea 1

Paragraph 3: Medea 2

Paragraph 4: Medea 1

Paragraph 5: Medea 2

Paragraph 6 Medea 3

Unison: "It's cruel. Wicked. Yes it is, it is.  
What else can I do? Hard anger rules,  
The cause of all mortal pain."(Mc. p.70)

Appearance of Medea upstairs. House lamps. All scatter leaving lit snake emblem in the god light. Chorus philosophizes about parenting looking up.

#### SCENE TEN

Messenger enters. Medea 2 is a dis-embodied voice outside the chalk circle. She leaps into the god light for p.74 monologue.

Ecstasy.

She exits stage L.

#### SCENE ELEVEN

Household leaps into the light.

Invocation.

Four groupings.  
Prayer tableau reaching up to the gods.  
Children tableau reaching downward.  
They re-enact the children's voices and their own reactions.

## SCENE TWELVE

Real Jason bangs on outside door.  
All scatter, scuffing the salt circle as they run through it.  
Move Medea line (We're out of reach. The Sun, my father's father, Bears me high in his chariot, Beyond my enemies (Mc. p.77.) to after the wall falls.

Jason works his way upward and Medea works her way down to the floor with dead children.

p. 79 edit:

Medea: "No. Request denied."  
Jason: "Zeus, do you hear?  
...That tigress who killed her sons."

Wall falls, Sun enters. Household drone chant.

Medea: "We're out of reach. The Sun, my father's father, Bears me high in his chariot, Beyond my enemies" (Mc. p.77)

Medea lays down the children in salt circle.  
She removes her dress.  
She loosens her hair.  
She picks up the children and walks into the Sun.  
Doors close behind her and Sunlight out.

Jason comes down to the floor to watch.  
Jason lays prostrate in the salt.  
His last lines.

The House staff restore the table and the chairs.  
Jason is quietly weeping.  
The House staff speak the final text.

Housekeeper upstage, behind table facing the door.  
Starts to sing 'marriage song' turning to face out.  
Lights out with pin-spots on Lamb dinner, Jason spot and door.  
Blackout.

The house-hold story-board script was re-worked throughout the rehearsal period. This appendix contains the original script of the story-board which was used in rehearsal as the basis of the framing device. Reference to changes, specifically to the story-board prologue, have been documented in The Rehearsal Journal, Chapter Two, of this thesis.