IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MEDEA

(A THEMATIC EXPLORATION FROM EURIPIDES TO MAGNUSON)

By

Ingeborg Elisabeth Lloyd

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Department of Comparative Literature

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

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This study attempts to trace three themes of the Medea-story from Euripides to the 20th century. First of all, Euripides' Medea is established as a model to which Seneca's Medea constitutes an almost diametrically opposed point of view. Most of the later plays range between these two poles, but the treatment of the material varies from play to play.

Medea's crime - the murder of her children and of Creusa - is the theme explored first. In the later plays this crime is no longer seen as a complete and indivisible act of revenge: from the 17th century onwards the motives for the child murder and the revenge on Creusa are no longer the same. The infanticide, more often than not, does not form a part of Medea's revenge on Jason but is caused by circumstances beyond her control (especially in Glover's, Klinger's, Legouve's, Anderson's and Alvaro's plays). The murder of her children ceases to be the carefully planned and executed deed it was in Euripides' Medea but happens on the spur of the moment. While the early Medeas exit in triumphant exultation at the end of the play, in the most recent plays (Lenormand, Anderson, Alvaro, Braun, Csokor) Medea and Jason are both defeated, although her revenge is still successful.

The second part of the study explores the development in the portrayal of Medea and Jason individually and of the relationship between them. The variety in Medea-portrayals is wide-ranging: she can be an admirable and extraordinary woman or a monstrous witch, a supernatural being beyond human understanding or a wretched victim of
circumstances. There also has been a marked change in the portrayal of Jason. While Euripides exposes him as a despicable and self-righteous character and condemns him because he does not live up to the image of a Homeric hero, the most recent plays (Lenormand, Anderson, Magnuson) portray him as a mere adventurer - a new breed of hero - whose failings are inherent in his nature. The image of the classical hero has been lost.

The increased role of sex in the relationship between Medea and Jason is stressed from the 17th century onwards by the emergence of Creusa as a fully developed and important character in the play. Throughout the years more attention has also been focussed on the children and on the effects of the marriage break-down on their lives. (Dolce, Galladei, Grillparzer, Legouvé, Jahnn, Lenormand, Anderson, Alvaro)

Finally, the paper traces the general change in attitude towards Medea which has occurred through the centuries. One of the most striking features emerging in the modern plays is the absence of a victor in the struggle between Medea and Jason and, especially in the post-Freudian plays, (Lenormand, Anderson, Magnuson), the shifting of the responsibility from the individual onto the society or on to other forces beyond man's control. The variety of explanations offered for Medea's action tends to reduce the importance of her crime and in some cases almost absolves her from guilt altogether.

Through the years several social and socio-political issues have been incorporated into the Medea-story. One of the themes raised already by Euripides, which reappears consistently is that of the stranger and barbarian in a civilized society. The 20th century, for instance,
introduces racial discrimination to highlight Medea's "otherness."

Although it has proven to be impossible to discern a national
trend in the treatment of the Medea-story, a faint historical pattern
can be seen to emerge. Seneca's Medea appears to have been the favourite
model during the Renaissance (Calladei, de Lapêruse) and the 17th century
(Corneille, Longepierre), but from the 18th century onwards Euripides'
Medea enjoyed the greater popularity amongst the writers recasting the
story. (Glover, Klinger, Grilparzer, Legouvê). In the 20th century,
however, the plays seem to range from one extreme (Anouilh, Braun) to
the other (Anderson, Csokor, Alvaro), although the preference given to
Euripides' play predomnates. The general finding of this study is that
the Medea-story fascinates every new generation and continues to be a
fresh source of inspiration for writers.
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MEDEA: Sind wir wieder verbunden?
JASON: Von Ewigkeit her.
MEDEA: Dass du schuldig an mir wirst?
JASON: Dass du mich aller Schuld zeihst.
MEDEA: Aber anders wie einst?
JASON: Immer anders!

Franz Theodor Csokor,
Medea Postbellica, Vorspiel.
I. INTRODUCTION

The legend of the sorceress Medea—saviour of Jason and the Argonauts and murderess of her own children—is an ancient one. Euripides was probably the first to present this tale in dramatic form as he was the first to represent the action on a realistic human plane. He succeeded in combining ancient myth and human reality into a great tragedy. Of the many writers who have through the centuries retold Medea's story, trying to improve or modernize it, not one has been able to stay so close to the myth without losing touch with reality or without sacrificing the myth to reality. Through the years some of the elements of the original play seem to have lost in meaning, and were ignored or replaced by later writers; others have gained in importance and were stressed and expanded. However, the impact of Euripides' play is still great and stands unchallenged, although many of these later writers have contributed valuable modifications or additions to the original story which, in some instances, have become part of the material transmitted from generation to generation.

The first one to present a Medea-play, which stands in many respects in direct contrast to the Euripidean one, was Seneca who portrays Medea as a monstrous witch to whom human moral standards no longer apply. At the beginning of Euripides' play Medea seems to be defeated while Jason is at the height of his glory, at the end, however, their positions are reversed. On the other hand Seneca, whose Medea has no redeeming features, presents a gradual crescendo of evil ending in a veritable orgy of destruction, but Jason remains unbroken and defiant.
From an extraordinary woman Medea has been transformed into a supernatural
demon-like being, exemplifying the evils of uncontrolled passions. Fur­
thermore in the Senecan play, the children are to be taken from Medea
in any case, and their murder is therefore no longer the deliberate,
carefully planned deed it was in the earlier play.

Euripides' and Seneca's plays represent opposite poles in the
treatment of the Medea-story between which most other plays range, al­
though some of the distinct and opposing features of these two plays
have eventually become merged in the more recent plays. In the 16th
and 17th century there seems to have been an inclination to follow in
Seneca's footsteps and only later Euripides appears to have become the
author most emulated. In the 20th century, however, we find a full range
of plays, touching both poles and even going beyond the limits set by the
classical plays. The traditional pattern appears to have been expanded
by the writers of this century.

The Medea-material serves as a framework for a problem fundamental
to human existence, that is, the conflict in the relationship between man,
the future-oriented adventurer and conqueror, and woman, the preserver of
the family, the hearth and the past. The story presents the writer with
a basic configuration within which a solution to conflict must be found:
Medea, betrayed by Jason and murderess of her own children. Within the
framework each writer presents his own answer to the problem, an explana­
tion which differs from play to play.

For later writers the necessity to make the child-murder credible
has always been one of the Medea-story's greatest challenges. This task
has become increasingly difficult through the years. In our age, children are no longer regarded as vital for the preservation of a man's fame and their death is no longer imperative for Jason's destruction. New explanations have therefore been found for Medea's action. In some plays the child-murder is hardly a crime any more. In others, it has ceased to be a dramatic or psychological necessity, but is merely used as the traditional ending to a well-known story.

In Euripides' play Medea's tragedy starts at the point where the extenuating circumstances end. All subsequent attempts to explain Medea's deed, to find reasons and excuses have wrought a change in Medea herself. No longer is she the determined being who deliberately chooses to do evil from which she knows she will suffer greatly but which will revenge her injured honour. Necessity, insanity, love or other circumstances beyond her control force Medea to commit her crime. The child-murder becomes a product of the situation and is no longer a self-willed act. Medea becomes a victim of her own deed.

Medea's helplessness is further stressed by the fact that she is a homeless stranger and, in the most recent plays, of different race or colour. Moreover, Medea acts no longer primarily to protect her injured honour in the later plays. Sexual jealousy spurs her on to her revenge on Creusa. Driven to her deeds by necessity or passion, she can no longer be held fully responsible for her crimes.

But not only Medea has been transformed through the centuries. Jason, too, has been changed from a classical hero into a common adventurer. Euripides already exposes Jason as a non-hero because he did not achieve
anything without Medea's help and because he broke his oath to Medea, but Euripides did not destroy the heroic ideal. Jason's transformation into an adventurer - the modern image of the hero - reveals the brittleness of heroism itself. The flaw lies within and is not caused by Jason's deeds or omissions. Euripides thus removes the Homeric hero from his pedestal while later plays destroy the myth of heroism as such.

The negation of heroism is connected with a refusal to accept personal responsibility. Guilt shifts from the individual to the gods, to fate, to society or other forces outside man himself. Individual guilt has thus gradually disappeared but so has the final triumph - there is no victor at the end. Both Medea and Jason are defeated. The only difference between them lies in the degree of insight gained through their suffering.

It has proven to be difficult, if not impossible, to isolate definite national or historical trends in the treatment of the Medea-story. Moreover, the findings have not revealed very significant patterns. It is, for example, not particularly revealing that the most cruel and cold-hearted Medeas are portrayed in some of the French plays. Although more Medea-plays have been written in French and German than in any other language, they vary widely and often stand in sharp contrast to each other, so that it would be mere conjecture to say what particular feature of the story, if any, attracted a particular nationality. All the Italian writers are concerned about the fate of the children, but then so are writers of other nations. And the three American plays of the 20th century show so great a variety in the handling of the Medea-story that no conclusion can be drawn. However, a vague historical pattern can be seen to emerge from
this thematic exploration, although the gradual movement from the Senecan influence to the Euripidean which started after the Renaissance has come to a halt in the 20th century where the pendulum seems to swing wildly from one extreme to the other.

There does not seem to be any consistency either in the age or stage in a writer's career at which he is attracted to the Medea-material. Some writers like Jeffers and Alvaro, for instance, were commissioned by leading actresses to write their plays for them. One minor fact, however, might be surprising: there exists no Medea-play written by a woman although Medea has been a favourite part for many great actresses.

We are left then with an almost inexplicable fascination of what is basically a banal story - the well-known triangle situation of a man between two women. However it does constitute a basic problem of human relations which seems to be of fresh interest to every new generation.

In the following pages Euripides' Medea will first be discussed as a model for the later plays and then the development of three aspects of the story will be traced: Medea's crime, the relationship between Jason and Medea and the changing attitude towards Medea.
II. Euripides' Medea - Summary of the Play

Euripides starts his play on Medea at a point where the heroic deeds and the youth of Jason and Medea are already behind them. The Argo had long since returned to Greece with the Golden Fleece and, their quest over, the victorious Argonauts had disbanded. However, Jason's and Medea's wanderings had not yet ended. We find them as homeless exiles in Corinth where Jason has just concluded an advantageous second marriage to the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, disregarding his commitments to his barbarian wife, Medea, and to his children by her.

At the beginning of the play the possibility exists, therefore, that Jason's fate might improve again. With this opportunity to obtain a dominant position in Corinth his future looks indeed very promising. The only obstacles in his way seem to be Medea and their shared past, which she represents and which she will not allow him to forget. Medea, on the other hand, is at the lowest point of her career: homeless, exiled, a barbarian amongst Greeks, she has not only been cast off by the man she loved above all else, for whom she has sacrificed family and home, and whom she has followed unquestioningly; she has also lost her protector and provider. Without Jason she is isolated as a homeless stranger, deprived of citizen's rights in a foreign land.

These facts are all brought forth by Medea's nurse before we actually see or hear Medea herself. The nurse begins in the past and bewails the fact that the Argo ever reached Colchis. It would have been better for all concerned if Medea had never set eyes on Jason. She describes Medea's present distracted state, her suffering, her refusal
to eat, her regret for father and home "betrayed when she came away with a man who now is determined to dishonor her." (1.32-33)

From the start, we are introduced to concepts which prove to be of supreme importance to Medea: her awareness of her homelessness and otherness and her sense of honour. The nurse also mentions that Medea has turned against her children, and then reveals that she is afraid of Medea's violent temper. She fears Medea's thoughts of revenge, which at this point she assumes to be directed against Jason and his new family. The children, unaware of their mother's grief, return from play. From their tutor we learn that Medea does not yet know the full extent of her troubles. She will have to face exile once more, as Creon intends to banish her and her children from Corinth. No help from Jason is to be expected: as for him obviously "old ties give place to new ones." (1.76) Again a warning note of danger to the children is sounded now that it becomes evident that Medea must need strike at someone, be it friend or foe, before her rage can abate.

This fear of Medea's destructive impulse is justified by her first outcry, heard from inside her house. Although she starts by wishing death upon herself, her anger soon turns to the cause of her suffering:

I hate you,
Children of a hateful mother. I curse you
And your father. Let the whole house crash.

(1. 112-114)

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1 Euripides, Medea, translated by Rex Warner, in Euripides, The Complete Greek Tragedies, ed. by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore, Washington Square Press, New York, 1971. (All quotes from Euripides' Medea are taken from this text.)
Thus before we even see Medea we realize that she is in a very dangerous frame of mind. Above all, Medea is bent on total destruction of Jason, not just of his person, but also of his line.

The chorus of Corinthian women now appears. These women are sympathetic to Medea and have come to help and comfort her. They hear her praying alternatively for her own and then again for Jason's and his bride's death.

However, when Medea appears and speaks to the women, she is apparently self-controlled. Her speech is clear and to the point. There are no signs of distraction, wild passion or mental imbalance. She very deliberately sets out to win the women's sympathy for her lot and their support for whatever her plans may be. From the first she stresses that she, as a stranger, must be doubly careful not to cause offense to her neighbours. However, Jason's betrayal has overwhelmed her because it has come so unexpectedly. She then proceeds to discuss her particular fate as an example of woman's lot in general, stressing woman's helplessness, her dependence on man, her lack of control over her own fate, and her lack of freedom to choose or change husbands. Moreover, as Medea lacks the protection of a father or brother, she will have to take revenge in her own hands. The women promise to keep silent as they feel Medea's cause is justified.

Next Creon appears, roughly ordering Medea and her children to leave Corinth. As he fears Medea's cleverness and her knowledge of witchcraft, he is determined to see her banished in spite of her pleas and promises. He reveals that he loves his daughter more than his
country, and that he wants Medea exiled to protect his daughter from any possible harm. Having found Creon's weakness and, for that reason, pleading her own children's cause, Medea, in spite of Creon's initial firmness, manages to get one day's delay in her banishment. Medea is very manipulative in this scene, playing on Creon's emotions with her humility while dissimulating her true feelings.

After Creon's departure and the chorus' expression of sympathy with Medea's new predicament, she immediately makes it clear that she had been in full control of the situation and that all her moves in the interview with Creon had been calculated. She now has one day to accomplish her revenge. There is never any question in her mind whether she will revenge herself; the only question is how to accomplish this without getting caught or having to kill herself too. Poison, rather than the sword or fire, is to be her means. She still needs to be assured of a place of refuge after having carried out her plans. Whatever the outcome may be however, she is determined not to "be mocked by Jason's Corinthian wedding." (l. 405)

The chorus then points to the reversal of nature caused by the deceitfulness of men and their breaking of oaths. Now unfaithfulness should no longer be attributed to women. If there were women poets they would be able to tell the other side of the story. Here sympathy for Medea has reached a climax which bodes ill for Jason who appears next.

Jason immediately reminds Medea that, if she is in a predicament now, she has only herself to blame. It is owing to her violent temper
that banishment has been imposed on her. He offers her financial assistance so that she "and the children may not be penniless or in need of anything in exile." (1.461/2) Medea, for the first and only time, loses her public composure as she is confronted by Jason's self-righteousness. She flares up and accuses him of cowardice and shamelessness in coming to gloat over her misfortune. She turns to the past and enumerates all she has done to help Jason and further his cause. If she has done evil and has made enemies, it has been only for his sake. Jason, however, does not give Medea credit for saving him; but claims that it was Aphrodite who compelled her:

You are clever enough - but really I need not enter into the story of how it was love's inescapable Power that compelled you to keep my person safe. (1.529-531)

But even if he were to admit that Medea helped him, Jason reasons that she received more from him than she gave. He has brought her, a barbarian, to Greece, introduced her to the Greek way of life and given her the opportunity to gain fame and honour as a clever woman. As far as his new marriage goes, he feels that it is the opportunity to improve his and his family's lot as exiles which makes this match so attractive. He strongly protests that he was not motivated by sexual attraction or a desire to have more children and proceeds to accuse women of being obsessed by sex. Men, he thinks, would be better off without them:

It would have been better far for men
To have got their children in some other way, and women
Not to have existed. Then life would have been good.
(1. 573-575)

Yet the chorus is still of the opinion that he has betrayed his
wife and is acting badly. Medea feels that Jason's shame for his foreign wife is at the root of his betrayal. She utters some veiled threats. Jason, however, does not understand how serious she really is, and leaves feeling he has done his best in this matter.

The chorus now sings about the wisdom of moderation in love; about the joys of belonging to one's country and about the value of true friendship, thus bridging the gap between the false friend, Jason, and the true friend, Aegeus who appears next. Aegeus is the only man who treats Medea as a friend and as an equal. He addresses her as a peer and as a woman famous for her wisdom. This attitude stands in sharp contrast to the patronizing or suspicious tone Creon and Jason have assumed towards her. Aegeus explains he has come from Delphi where he sought a cure for his childlessness. Now he is seeking an interpretation of the oracle's words. Aegeus then notices Medea's distraught air and enquires into her troubles. He is sympathetic to Medea's plight and promises her asylum in Athens, although he refuses to help her escape. Medea asks Aegeus to reinforce his promise with solemn oaths to the gods to protect her from her enemies once she has reached his house. For Medea an oath is still the most binding commitment between humans in spite of Jason's betrayal.

After Aegeus' departure, Medea, assured of a refuge, reveals for the first time her plans in full as she is now certain to succeed. She will call Jason, pretend to have come to her senses and agree to leave peaceably, but will beg to have the children remain in Corinth:
For I will send the children with gifts in their hands
To carry to the bride, so as not to be banished —
A finely woven dress and a golden diadem.
And if she takes them and wears them upon her skin
She and all who touch the girl will die in agony;
Such poison will I lay upon the gifts I send.
But there, however, I must leave the account paid.
I weep to think of what a deed I have to do
Next after that; for I shall kill my own children.
My children, there is none who can give them safety.
And when I have ruined the whole of Jason's house,
I shall leave the land and flee from the murder of my
Dear children, and I shall have done a dreadful deed.

(1. 784-796)

She will now have to pay the price for mistakenly following Jason from her father's house, but he must suffer too. Medea, like a Homeric hero, wants to be remembered as "one who can hurt my enemies and help my friends," (1. 809) and that, in her opinion, is sufficient justification for her deeds. However, the chorus reminds her that this is not the normal way of mankind, that she, a woman, is, in fact, assuming a man's point of view. Medea has suffered too much to be able to consider a compromise. This is the best way of wounding Jason and preventing her enemies from mocking her.

The shocked chorus now sings an ode to Athens, land of wisdom, gentle love and moderation, which is soon to become the refuge for this impure and unnatural murderess of her own children. (1. 846-865)

In his second encounter with Medea, Jason is completely taken in by her contriteness. Not for one moment does he doubt her words or wonder at the sudden change, so sure is he of the rightness of his own opinion. Medea, however, breaks down and cries whenever there is talk about the children's future, but she excuses herself with a woman's proneness to tears. She then persuades Jason to intercede with his new
wife on the children's behalf and to have them bear wedding gifts to
the princess.

After the children have left, the chorus knows that their fate
is sealed. Medea had stressed that the gifts must pass directly from
the children's hands into the bride's. As bearers of the fatal gifts,
they will be held responsible for her death. The women grieve for the
young bride, the children and Jason, but even now also for Medea:

In your grief, too, I weep, mother of little children,
You who will murder your own,
In vengeance for the loss of married love
Which Jason has betrayed
As he lives with another wife.

(1. 996-1001)

When the children return with their tutor, Medea knows that she
has no choice left open to her. The first part of her plan has been
carried out and now the consequences are inevitable. She is saying
farewell to her children, not because she is leaving for exile, but
because they must die. In a very moving monologue her mother-love
twice threatens to overcome her determination for revenge and causes
her to renounce her plans:

Why should I hurt their father with the pain
They feel, and suffer twice as much of pain myself?
No, no, I will not do it. I renounce my plans.

(1. 1046-1048)

But each time her strong sense of injured honour gains ascendance over
her womanly weakness:

Do I want to let go
My enemies unhurt and be laughed at for it?

(1. 1049-1050)

Fully aware of all the implications of her proposed deed, she sends the
children away and awaits the news of the princess' death:

I know indeed what evil I intend to do,  
But stronger than all my afterthoughts is my fury,  
Fury that brings upon mortals the greatest evils.  
(1. 1078-1080)

The Corinthian women follow with a comment on the troubles of parenthood. The worst affliction for a parent is to see your child die before you.

The messenger now enters with news from the royal palace which Medea is anticipating with fiendish delight:

But speak. How did they die? You will delight me twice  
As much again if you say they died in agony.  
(1.1134/5)

He gives a lengthy and detailed account of the acceptance of the gifts and their gruesome effects. Now the children's death is unavoidable. They will have to die either by the Corinthians' or their mother's hands. Medea steels herself for her dreadful task knowing that it will bring her unhappiness for the rest of her life:

Oh, come, my hand, poor wretched hand, and take the sword, 
Take it, step forward to this bitter starting point, 
And do not be a coward, do not think of them, 
How sweet they are, and how you are their mother. Just for 
This one short day be forgetful of your children, 
Afterward weeping for even though you will kill them, 
They were very dear - Oh, I am an unhappy woman!  
(1. 1244-1250)

Utterly distraught, the chorus prays that the gods may stay Medea's hand and prevent these murders while the children's pathetic cries for help are already heard from inside the house. It is too late; neither the gods nor the chorus have come to the children's defence.

At this point, Jason rushes on stage to protect his children
from the vengeance of Creon's relatives, only to hear that Medea has already killed them. As he tries to batter down the doors of the house, Medea appears on the roof in a chariot drawn by dragons, with the bodies of the children beside her. Jason, realizing his defeat, hurls abuse and loathing at her, the barbarian, the monster, who has taken everything from him:

For me remains to cry aloud upon my fate,  
Who will get no pleasure from my newly wedded love,  
And the boys whom I begot and brought up, never  
Shall I speak to them alive. Oh, my life is over!  

(1. 1346-1350)

Medea replies that although the children died by her hand, "they died from a disease they caught from their father." (1. 1364) She refuses to let him bury the children and mourn them. She will herself "establish a holy feast and 'sacrifice each year forever to atone for the blood guilt." (1. 1382/3) Jason, on the other hand, is doomed to die a totally unheroic death, "struck on the head by a piece of the Argo's timber," (1. 1387) for he is "a breaker of oaths, a deceiver" (1. 1392) and therefore not of heroic stature.

Medea's triumph at this moment is complete and her revenge totally successful. Her honour has been vindicated as her enemies will certainly not laugh at her or mock her. In the course of this play, Jason's and Medea's situations have been reversed. Jason has seen all his hopes for the future shattered, He has nothing but a miserable death to look forward to. He is as defeated as Medea seemed to be at the beginning of the play. Medea's final triumph is further stressed by her elevated position on the roof.
III. Medea's Crime

(1) Euripides

Even those only superficially acquainted with the Medea-story as we have come to know it, will be struck at least by the one horrifying fact that we are confronted here with a mother who murders her own children in cold blood. If, initially, we have felt sympathy for Medea and her plight, it is even harder to accept her suddenly as a cool and calculating murderess. We therefore tend to search for extenuating circumstances for her deed. Did she commit her murders in a fit of insanity? Is it after all a true crime passionnel, the consequences of which become clear to Medea only after her crime has been committed? We could then perhaps compare her deed to Heracles' slaying of his children. Or was Medea ordered and forced by the gods to take this terrible revenge on Jason because he had sinned against them when he broke his oaths? In this case, as for instance in the case of Orestes, the gods would be, if not wholly then at least partially, responsible for Medea's murders. Or is Medea, as the grand-daughter of Helios, no true human being, but a witch, a monster or a demon, whose deeds, like those of the gods, cannot really be measured by human moral standards? However, if Medea is excused on the grounds of insanity, victimization by the gods or superhuman privileges, she might easily be turned into a pathetic creature without a will of her own. Euripides undoubtedly sees her as a great tragic heroine who accepts full responsibility for her deeds and not as a victim of circumstances.

As far as the question of Medea, the evil witch or demon is concerned,
it must be noted that Euripides plays down from the first all references
to Medea's supernatural powers. Her ancestry, as well as the previous
murders of her brother, Apsyrtos, and Jason's uncle, Pelias, are mentioned,
but are not stressed until the end of the play. That she is well-known
as a wise and clever woman, is confirmed by Creon, Jason and Aegeus.
However, each of these three men have a different attitude towards
Medea's knowledge. Of the three only Creon fears her, more because of
her violent and wild temper than because of her witchcraft. Jason, who
obviously should know more about Medea's supernatural powers than the
others, adopts a patronizing air towards her and evidently does not
fear her. He doesn't even give her credit for any extraordinary gifts
employed in saving his life and helping him to obtain the Golden Fleece.
Aegeus, on the other hand, looks on her knowledge as wholly beneficial
and values her advice.

It becomes clear then that, at least until after the murder of the
children, we are to regard Medea as a woman who may have some knowledge
which is not accessible to all, but not as a supernatural being or a
demon. She is, of course, not just an ordinary woman: by birth she
is a royal princess, by marriage the wife of the leader of the Argonauts;
her position as a barbarian, an exile and a stranger naturally sets her
apart from the other women in Corinth. However, Medea herself equates her
lot with that of other women, and the Corinthian women accept her as one
of them. Until the murder of her children Medea must, therefore, be
regarded as a human being. It may be argued, and I think successfully,
that in killing her children Medea also kills her humanity. Her life,
not only in Corinth, but also as a true human being is left behind when she departs on the dragon chariot. Whether she returns to her ancestor, the sun, and rejoins her myth, or whether she spends the rest of her days in grief and atonement for the children's death, we do not know. But her life as a human being seems to be over after the infanticide and the final triumphant encounter with Jason.

Nor can we put the blame for Medea's deeds on the gods; although Jason suggests that, already in using her powers to save him, she did so only as an instrument of Aphrodite and not of her own volition. However, Medea categorically denies this. Later in her grief over the children's impending fate, she does once state:

The gods and I,
I in a kind of madness, have contrived all this.
(1. 1013/14)

But even then she stresses the responsibility of the self rather than of the gods, which is confirmed in her later exclamation:

Oh, what a wretch I am in this my self-willed thought!
(1. 1028)

Thus Medea is clearly not a helpless tool used by the gods in their schemes of revenge on Jason or herself, nor can she claim insanity. Although furious and passionately bent on revenge, she is not blinded by her emotions; her reason is never clouded. She knows and understands fully the extent of the evil she is about to perpetrate;

I know indeed what evil I intend to do,
But stronger than all my afterthoughts is my fury,
Fury that brings upon mortals the greatest evils.
(1. 1078-1080)

and the consequences this crime will have for her:
This one short day be forgetful of your children,  
Afterward weep; for even though you will kill them,  
They were very dear — Oh, I am an unhappy woman!  
(1. 1248-1250)

A case could perhaps be made that Medea hated her children so much that it was easy for her to murder them. It is true that the nurse feels the children are threatened, but she also fears Medea's anger towards herself:

Such a look she will flash on her servants  
If any comes near with a message,  
Like a lioness guarding her cubs.  
(1. 187-189)

Medea's anger seems to be more like the lashing out of a wounded animal, who will strike at whoever is closest, rather than an animosity directed at the children specifically:

Don't bring them near their mother in her angry mood.  
For I've seen her already blazing her eyes at them  
As though she meant some mischief and I am sure that  
She'll not stop raging until she has struck at someone.  
May it be an enemy and not a friend she hurts!  
(1. 91-95)

At the beginning of the play Medea's rage and hatred are directed as much at herself as at those around her and those who caused her suffering. Later, when she thinks more clearly, she does not resent the children, for instance, for resembling their father or for being the product of a now hateful union. It must be accepted that Medea genuinely loves her children, but unlike Creon, she does not give them prime importance in her life; her love, now turned to hatred, must be considered first. Medea obviously has been wife first and mother second:

It was everything to me to think well of one man,  
And he, my own husband, has turned out wholly vile.  
(1. 228/9)
Now her love of Jason has been rejected, her mother-love must take second place to her sense of injured honour and pride. Jason's desertion has changed Medea's previous deeds from proofs of her boundless love to useless crimes. As unquestioning as her love has been, so now is Medea's hatred. Once she knows how to hurt Jason most and bring about his total destruction, even her love for the children cannot save them any more; Medea is determined to regard them only as the perfect tools to accomplish her revenge. That this is not an easy decision for Medea to make, is already clear when she sees the children for the first time after having decided on her plans of revenge. But above all, in her long monologue after having sent the children to the palace and to their certain death, we see her torn between her love for the children and her fierce pride and sense of honour, knowing all the time though that her vacillations are fruitless: the children are already doomed.

The motivation for her crimes - both the murder of Creon and his daughter and that of the children - Medea states again and again. Medea feels her honour besmirched and herself mocked by Jason's new marriage. In her opinion, Jason used her and her powers as long as this was convenient for him. Now that she, as a barbarian amongst Greeks, has become an embarrassment and a burden rather than an asset, he leaves her without the slightest hesitation for this more advantageous match with a younger woman. But part of Medea's anger is also undoubtedly caused by sexual jealousy, a fact stressed by Jason, and which is revealed in such remarks as:

'Go! No doubt you hanker for your virginal bride,
And are guilty of lingering too long out of her house.'

(1. 623-4)
But her distress obviously goes much deeper than that. For the love of Jason, Medea has forsaken her father, killed her brother and Pelias, and has become a homeless exile, a stranger who followed him to a foreign land where he is her only security and support. Deserted by Jason and subsequently banished by Creon, Medea is threatened with complete isolation and expulsion into a friendless and hostile world. This is an insult to her honour, not only as a wife, but also as a princess and a wise woman. It is unthinkable that the greatness of her reputation should be turned into a hollow mockery by Jason's rejection and the banishment imposed by Creon, while Jason would reap the benefits of his new union with the king's daughter. For Medea this alone presents sufficient motivation to plan and to execute the most perfect and complete revenge she can devise.

In spite of Medea's passionate nature and her distraught state at the beginning of the play, there can be no doubt that a great deal of planning goes into her revenge. Her actions are never rash; her words — with the possible exception of her encounter with Jason — are never unintentional or uncontrolled. She is always in command of the situation and never loses sight of her long-range goal. She proves to be a master of dissimulation and manipulation. The Corinthian women's sympathy and their implied cooperation in remaining silent she manages to ensure from the start. There is never any question whether she will take revenge; she calmly selects the best method of accomplishing her aims without imperilling herself. The time she needs to think out her plan in detail, she gains from Creon through playing on his father-love; the refuge to
escape to, after her revenge has been accomplished, she obtains from Aegeus by stressing their bonds of friendship; and finally she uses effortlessly Jason's complacency to bring her plans to fruition. Her revenge is thought out completely and in every detail, including the murder of her children which - although it becomes a necessity after the death of Creon and his daughter - is nevertheless premeditated:

And give her the dress - for this is of great importance,
That she should take the gift into her hand from yours.
(1. 972/3)

These meticulously laid plans are carried out ruthlessly and successfully until the bitter and triumphant end.

In the execution of Medea's plans the most effective part, if one looks for perfection in revenge, must be considered the fact that Jason survives at the end to taste the full bitterness and sorrow of his destruction. Although initially Medea contemplates killing Jason together with his new bride and Creon, she comes to realize that letting Jason live, surrounded by the ruin of all his dreams, is a much more effective punishment for him than death.

It is in her encounters with Creon, Jason and Aegeus that Medea gradually perceives that childlessness is the worst fate for man. Jason himself gives as his main reason for the new marriage a desire to establish his progeny - both by Medea and the Corinthian princess - firmly on Greek soil. Without children to carry on the father's name and keep his fame and reputation alive, a man's labours are in vain. They die with him. Through his children and his children's children man can achieve immortality of a sort. Childlessness is the one reason
Medea would have accepted as a justification for a new marriage, and it is childlessness which drives Aegeus to the oracle at Delphi. In order to destroy Jason completely, it is thus necessary not only to kill his new bride — the mother of his future children — but also his children by herself so that his line will be extinct.

In following Jason, Medea cut off her ties with the past, in killing his bride and his children Medea cuts off Jason's ties to the future and invalidates his past. Far more effective than physical death is therefore the death of the house of Jason. What father would ever dare to give his daughter as a bride to Jason, knowing the fate of Creon and his daughter, and also knowing that Medea is still alive. Condemning Jason to live, conscious of the fact that he is virtually dead, is surely the most cruel punishment Medea could devise. That the punishment is out of all proportion with the crime cannot be questioned — certainly not in our day and age — but that it is the most complete revenge Medea could devise cannot be denied.

However, Medea does not only punish Jason by her deed. In a sense the murder of her children is as much directed against herself as at him. By wiping out the error she committed in putting her faith in Jason, she is also depriving herself of her children and all they mean to her:

Oh surely once the hopes in you I had, poor me,
Were high ones: you would look after me in old age,
And when I died would deck me well with your own hands;
A thing which all would have done. Oh, but now it is gone,
That lovely thought. For, once I am left without you,
Sad will be the life I'll lead and sorrowful for me.

(l. 1032-1037)
As her connection with the past has already been cut and there is no going back, once her hopes for the future — represented by the children — are destroyed, all her bonds with humanity in general have been severed. The children's murder not only destroys Jason but also Medea as a human being. For if Jason is acting dishonourably now and must therefore be punished, Medea brought dishonour upon herself and her family when she left her father's house against his will and killed her brother. Medea then acted in the passion of her love, and only love could justify her actions. However, Jason's rejection of her love makes Medea guilty of dishonouring her name and committing a crime as horrible as it turns out to have been gratuitous. Only now does she realize the consequences of her singleminded passion which has brought her only grief, dishonour and enmity:

Oh what an evil to men is passionate love!

(l. 330)

Medea's pride is too great, however, to let the stain of dishonour rest on her; all traces of it must be wiped out, no matter by what means. In taking revenge on Jason and defending her honour, she also destroys her own hope of future happiness. After all, she too survives to mourn the loss of her children. And while Medea predicts Jason's further fate and end:

While you, as is right, will die without distinction,
Struck on the head by a piece of the Argo's timber,
And you will have seen the bitter end of my love.

(l. 1386-1388)

we can only surmise Medea's future sorrow and grief for the children she loved and killed. Medea, triumphant, is as effectively punished and isolated as Jason, defeated.
In Euripides' Medea the murder of the children, although we have been carefully prepared for it, still comes as a shock. This is not so in Seneca's Medea. Here she murders her children as the crowning gesture in a steady progression of evils. It is an act of self-revelation and not self-destruction as in Euripides' play. For someone dedicated to a career of crime, infanticide is after all only the next logical step after having committed fratricide and instigated parricide.

Already in the prologue we are introduced to a Medea who invokes the gods of heaven and hell and calls on the Furies and her knowledge of magic to help in her revenge. Medea's reference to her children,

May his children — I can think of no worse imprecation — be like their father, yes, and like their mother. Born is my vengeance, already born; I have given birth. (p.367)

is ambiguous as yet, but she does go on to say that she will leave her husband the way she first followed him, "the bond concluded by crime must by crime be severed." (368) Remembering that her crime upon her union with Jason was fratricide, her words: "Now I am a mother, more impressive crimes are expected," (368) do sound far more ominous than the more general laments and curses uttered by Euripides' Medea, whose urge to destruction is initially directed against herself as much as

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2 Seneca, Medea, translated by Moses Hadas, in Roman Drama, The Library of Liberal Arts, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Indianapolis, 1965. (All quotes from Seneca's Medea are taken from this text.)
against those around her.

Seneca's Medea makes her first public appearance, raving in a fury of passion, whereas in Euripides' play she has herself completely under control by the time she appears on stage. In Euripides' Medea, we are aware of her sorrow and anger, partly from the nurse, partly from her own cries off-stage. Right from the start a fundamental difference between these two Medeas becomes apparent, and this difference in character must also change the nature, if not the actual execution, of the crimes.

We have seen that no extenuating circumstances could be found for Euripides' Medea - nor were they claimed by her - which might have diminished her responsibility for her crimes. The situation is different, however, in the case of Seneca's Medea. From the very first, it is stressed that Medea is a supernatural being. She continually refers to her ancestry as the granddaughter of the sun, to her intimacy with, and power over, the gods and nature. She is not accepted as a "mere" woman by anyone else. All of them, including Jason and her servants, fear her as a sorceress. She clearly does not need human craftiness, sympathy or moral support or even a guaranteed refuge to assure the success of her revenge: "Medea is left. Here you see sea and land, steel and fire and gods and thunderbolts." (p. 371) Medea then is obviously not a human being and therefore human moral standards cannot be applied to her. She is as amoral as the gods or fate. Thus the infanticide, along with the annihilation of Creon, Creusa and the whole palace, is similar to the havoc wrought when nature breaks loose, except that
Medea even has the power to pervert nature:

Heaven's law, too, have I confounded: The world has seen sun and stars together, and the Bears have touched the sea forbidden them. The order of seasons I have rearranged: By my witchcraft earth has blossomed in summer, and at my bidding Ceres has seen harvest in winter. Violent Phasis has turned its waters back to their source, and Hister, divided into many mouths, has constricted his truculent billows and fallen spiritless in all his banks. Waves have crashed and the sea has raged and swelled, though the winds were still. The home of the ancient woodland lost its shadows when daylight returned at my imperious voice. Phoebus has halted in mid-course, and at my incantation the Hyades totter and collapse. (p. 387)

As a supernatural, demonic being, she cannot really be held morally responsible for her monstrous deeds.

Added to that is the suggestion that perhaps Medea is a divine instrument to punish Jason, not so much for having broken his oaths to her, but for having disturbed the natural order of things. Seneca's chorus clearly states that the golden age of content was brought to an end by the expedition of the Argonauts who went beyond the limits set to men:

Stainless the ages our fathers saw, when trickery was far distant. Every man trod his own shore free of ambition and waxed old on his ancestral heath; rich on a pittance, he knew no wealth but what his native soil produced. Worlds well and lawfully dissevered that Thessalian timber forced into one; it bade ocean endure lashes and the hitherto isolated sea to be reckoned among human fears. (p. 376)

The voyage was successful, but at what a price: "And what was the prize of this voyage? The Golden Fleece and Medea, an evil worse than the sea and an appropriate cargo for the first of ships." (376/7) All of the
Argonauts seem to have been cursed and to have met with violent deaths. Only Jason is left and the chorus hopes that at least he would be spared: "Enough, ye gods, have you avenged the sea: Spare him who was ordered to his deed." (p. 385) But as Medea claimed Jason as her prize for having saved the Argonauts, she could very well be considered the means of his divine punishment and therefore not really responsible for the suffering she inflicts.

Probably Seneca's Medea is not actually insane when she murders her children, but there is no doubt that her mind is clouded, at least when she kills her first child. The vision of the Furies:

That unruly crowd of Furies - where are they rushing, whom are they seeking, for whom preparing their flaming strokes? (p. 392)

and of her dismembered brother:

Whose ghost is that approaching? Its limbs are scattered and it is hard to recognize; it is my brother and he is demanding vengeance. (p. 392)

do urge her on and certainly help to overcome her momentary hesitation:

Leave me to myself, Brother, use this hand of mine; it holds a drawn sword. With this victim I placate your ghost. (p. 392/3)

As a matter of fact she slaughters at least the first son like a sacrificial victim not only to atone for her brother's death, but also for the other crimes her passion made her commit: "...very well, it is finished. I have nothing more to offer you for atonement, my passion." (p. 394)

There seems to be no evidence that Seneca's Medea hated her children, but neither is there any proof that she loved them greatly. The strong
ties which existed between Euripides' Medea and her children are missing in Seneca's Medea, who has few human qualities. There seems to be a singular lack of depth of feeling in Seneca's Medea. There is passion, certainly, more than enough: passionate love which still flares up for Jason from time to time and also momentarily for the children, but which is matched by her at least equivalent passion for cruelty and revenge. Medea herself states: "If you ask, poor creature, what limit you should place on your hatred, copy your love," (p. 378) and the chorus comments: "The curbing of neither anger nor love does Medea understand; and now that anger and love are joined in their suit, what will the issue be?" (p. 390)

Sexual jealousy and a sense of being robbed of something which rightly belongs to her—Jason—and which is her last remaining possession seem to be the motives for Medea's crime. Seneca's Medea is not greatly concerned with her injured honour or the mockery of others, mainly because her ties with humanity as such, if they ever existed, have already been severed. She is even more isolated than Euripides' Medea, and her fight for Jason may be as much a fight for her only link to humanity as for the man she still loves.

Medea also blames Jason for violating her virginity. Her maidenhood in Colchis stands for all that is peaceful and good. Jason therefore destroyed her personal "golden age" much as the Argonauts brought an end to the Greek one. Medea seems to have a confused idea that in destroying all the evidence of her lost virginity and her union with Jason, she can return again to the past, unsullied by what has taken place in the meantime.
Now, now have I recovered my scepter, my brother; my father; again the Colchians hold the prize of the gilded ram; my royal state is restored, my virginity returned. (p. 393)

In spite of, or perhaps just because of, her wild protestations, Seneca's Medea seems to be very vacillating. She is never quite sure who her real enemy is, Creon or Jason:

Could Jason do this? He robbed me of father, country, kingdom; can he cruelly desert me, all alone and in a foreign place?... But what could Jason do, subject as he was to another's decision and authority?... The whole fault is Creon's; with capricious lordliness he dissolves marriages, tears mothers from children, and severs loyalties cemented by the most intimate of pledges. It is he that must be attacked; he alone shall pay the score he owes. (p. 370/1)

She never makes any definite plans nor confides in anyone. Her wild threats seem to serve to reassure her as much as to frighten others. She seems to need to reiterate her former crimes to give herself more confidence and to spur herself on:

Your own crimes should urge you on; recall them all: The glorious symbol of royalty stolen away; the impious girl's little brother dismembered with a sword, his death thrust upon his father, and his body scattered over the sea; the limbs of of aged Pelias boiled in a brass cauldron. How often have I perpetrated bloody murder! (p. 370)

When Medea acts, her deeds are seldom thought through. There is no careful planning and consideration of all the circumstances as we have witnessed with Euripides' Medea. When Seneca's Medea sets about her revenge on Creon and Creusa, psychological motives are ignored and there is no preparation to make sure that her gifts will be accepted by Creusa. She dispatches her lethal wedding gifts and just assumes that they will be effective:
All my power has now been exercised. Call my sons here to carry these costly gifts to the bride... Go, my sons, go. The mother that bore you is unlucky; placate your mistress and stepmother with presents and humble prayer. (p. 389)

There is no explanation given of what prompts Creusa to accept anything coming from the hands of such a dangerous and fearsome rival.

Medea's seizing on the perfect revenge on Jason occurs suddenly and by chance; then her mind is made up immediately: "Has he such love for his children? Fine! I have him, the place to wound him is uncovered." (p. 382) She changes her attitude and tone on the spot, apparently without arousing Jason's suspicion. There is no gradual growth of a definite revenge plan within her; no idea which is confirmed during successive encounters with other fathers. She never stops to think of the consequences to herself; she simply thinks no further than the accomplished deed. As she hopes to regain her lost past by her revenge, no thought is given to the future. Thus, when Medea has committed her crime, she has fulfilled herself; become her real self: "Now I am Medea; my genius has matured with evils." (p. 391) She has now completed her masterpiece of evil, and there is a finality in her last triumphant words which bears no thought of tomorrow but removes her definitely into the realm of the supernatural:

Lift your swollen eyes this way, ingrate Jason. Do you recognize your wife? This is how I am accustomed to flee. A path is opened in the sky and twin serpents submit their scaly necks to the yoke. Take your sons back now, Father. (She throws the bodies down to him.) On my winged chariot I shall ride through the air. (p. 394)

Medea's moods are so volatile that it is hard to be sure when she is merely dissimulating and when she is actually having a change of heart.
For her there is no great necessity to be able to manipulate her adversaries. Although Jason and Creon are generally more sympathetically portrayed than in the Euripidean play, they are no match for Medea. Jason is a rather weak and cowardly hero who lacks the self-righteous assurance witnessed in the earlier play. And Creon, although motivated by the threat of war and the just concern for his country is afraid of her very presence:

Beetling she strides toward me; her expression is menacing as she approaches nearer to address me. Keep her off, slaves! - far off from touch or access; bid her be silent. (p. 372)

Out of weakness, after some verbal wrangling, he grants a day's delay in Medea's exile although he suspects her of evil intentions.

Medea's crime is certainly also successful in this case, as she manages to hurt Jason where he is most vulnerable; this Jason really loves his children:

They are my reason for living, the solace of a heart burned black with cares. Sooner would I be deprived of breath, of limbs, of light. (p. 382)

However, Medea does not succeed in breaking his spirit, as is proven by his final defiant words. Although Jason acts rather cowardly in letting Medea take the full responsibility for the crimes committed to his benefit, he must be believed when he assures her that he does so only to save his children's lives. He is fully aware that he owes Medea his life and that he is breaking his oath, but father-love, coupled with a reluctance to oppose authority, wins over his sense of honour. As this Jason truly cares for his children as such, and not only as symbols of
his own immortality, it is no doubt a refinement of cruelty on Medea's part to kill the second child in front of his eyes and then fling the dead bodies at his feet. Because Medea is determined to exterminate every possible reminder of her life with Jason, she can leave her children to be buried and mourned by Jason:

If this hand of mine could be satisfied with one death it would have sought none; even though I slay two, the number is too petty for my passion. If any pledge of yours is lurking in my womb, even now, I shall rummage my vitals with a sword and with iron drag it forth. (p. 394)

For her the children are of no importance any more when she tosses them disdainfully at Jason's feet: "Take your sons back now, Father." (p. 394) Jason has spurned her love; he has been taken from her and in revenge she has destroyed all he ever loved.

As already mentioned, for Euripides Medea's crime is an act of self-punishment and self-destruction, albeit not physical, as well as of revenge on Jason. On the other hand, Señeca's Medea seems to urge herself on throughout the play towards the moment of self-revelation in her most evil form. She keeps insisting that her deeds so far have not yet been worthy of her true self. The enormity of her misdeeds must grow with increased maturity:

Paltry the punishment which innocent hands inflict.... Those were merely school exercises for my passion; could prentice hands achieve a masterpiece, could a girl's temper? (p.391)

Although Medea prides herself on her accomplishment so far, she must still prove herself. And the revenge on Jason is to be the climax of her career, her final proud triumph carried out openly for all to see:
"Now to work, my soul; your prowess must not be wasted in obscurity; demonstrate your handiwork for popular approval." (p. 393)

Unlike Euripides', Medea, Seneca's does not stop to gloat over her rival's death. Although she has killed not only Creon and his daughter by her magic, but caused the fire to burn down the palace and to threaten the city, this is regarded as only a preliminary to her real act of revenge: the murder of her children. For the Euripidean Medea the two crimes complement each other and her revenge would not have been complete without the one or the other. Seneca's Medea dismisses the reported annihilation of Creon and his house while she gloats over and even enjoys the murder of her children:

Though I am sorry, I did it; a delicious pleasure steals over me, without my will, and look, it is growing: All that was missing was yonder man to be spectator. What I have done so far I count as nothing; any crime I committed without his seeing it is wasted. (p. 394)

Her doubts about her action are only fleeting and quickly stifled by her joy in seeing Jason suffer. There is no bitterness or suffering in her triumph of revenge.
Renaissance: de Lapéruse, Galladei and Dolce

These three Renaissance writers all produced slightly different versions of the Medea story: Dolce more or less follows the Euripidean play, while Galladei models his play on the Senecan, and de Lapéruse seems to take a position somewhere in between the two ancient plays. All of them, however, change the original material somewhat, sometimes by developing certain aspects more fully, sometimes by cutting out certain features of the earlier plays, but none of them succeed in giving a satisfactory explanation for Medea's deeds or in improving on the previous works.

In all three plays Medea's responsibility for her crime is diminished. She is a known and feared sorceress and enchantress, able to command and control the powers of heaven and hell. In Dolce's play Medea can even raise the dead. Her supernatural powers are taken for granted, even if Dolce's chorus don't fear her at first and realize the consequences of her power and her thirst for revenge only when it is too late. There are Senecan scenes of incantation and calling forth of spirits in this as well as in the other two plays. Medea then is definitely not a human being, and her deeds cannot be measured by human moral standards. The powers that once served to save Jason are now harnessed to harm and destroy him.

Furthermore, in Dolce's play, Medea's mind is clouded by rage. She feels the poison of the serpent in her veins and is eventually possessed by the Furies who spur her on to murder her children very deliberately and purposefully, although she does love them. There is
a definite suggestion of temporary insanity and possession by the spirit of revenge and therefore of reduced responsibility in this play. The Medeas of de Lapéruse and Galladei are spurred on to their crime not only by the Furies, but also by the dismembered ghost of Apsyrtos. In Galladei's play these spirits of revenge are more than just a vision; they are actual characters, although possibly not visible to all. The Fury Megara and Apsyrtos appear in the prologue. Apsyrtos is promised revenge of his murder and punishment of his monstrous sister. The Fury and the ghost appear again in Act IV of the play to see how the action is progressing. Apsyrtos complains that all are still alive and appear to enjoy themselves. Megara promises him complete satisfaction and immediately drives Medea insane, depriving her of all human feelings, so that she will commit her gruesome murders, and they will be able to drag her off to hell for punishment.

...io te dispoglio
D'ogni pietà, d'ogni ragion humana.
Empiaicpèqueesto io t'empio
Di quel furor insano
Che ti sprona & conduce
Miserà & disperata
Inanzi tempo à vergognosa morte. 3

(Act IV, p. 57)

In all three plays then Medea's personal responsibility is further diminished by reason of her insanity.

De Lapéruse and Galladei also follow a Senecan idea in suggesting that the children have to pay the price for the murder of Apsyrtos, which their mother committed and from which their father benefited. This would

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3 Maffeo Galladei, Medea, Tragedia, Giovan Griffio, Venetia, 1558. (All quotes from Galladei's Medea are taken from this text.)
almost constitute a valid excuse for Medea, as the blood ties between brother and sister were considered to be stronger than those between mother and child. There are, after all, other examples in Greek mythology — such as Prokne, for instance — of a mother slaying her son to atone for her brother's death. In no other case though had the original murder been committed by the mother herself.

Only Dolce suggests that Medea was aware of the suffering she inflicted on herself by her deed. In the other plays she does not regard the children as her own anymore and therefore cannot suffer by her deed. Galladei has Medea kill the first son to atone for Apsyrtos, but the second one, after having stabbed him, she beheads and throws the head to Jason as she intends to keep only the "maternal part" of the child:

Ne qui l'ira in Medea
Si fermo, ma spiccata
La testa al pargoletto
Figliuol, contra al marito
D'alto gitolla, TOGLI
Togli Giason (gridando)
Di cui tu generasti
La puî honorata parte,
Godì tu questa, ch'io
L'altra per me ritegno.

(Act V, p. 70)

The Medea of de Lapéruse also states that the first child died for Apsyrtos while she insists that the second one must die alone and will not be spared: "Non, non, il mourra: c'est ton sang!" (75) In any case, de Lapéruse's Medea appears to lack maternal feelings altogether. She knows not one moment of hesitation, but slaughters her sons with complete

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4 J. de Lapéruse Médée, in Le Trésor des pièces angoumoisines, inédites ou rares, Société Archéologique et Historique de la Charente, Angoulême, 1866, Tome II. (All quotes from de Lapéruse's Médée are taken from this text.)
callousness. She seems neither to love nor hate them. They are just sacrificial victims to her passion of revenge.

Dolce's Medea loves her children; yet they are also the children of a traitor and an enemy. As she points out to Jason at the end, she did not kill them because they are hers, but because they are his:

Non, perche non gli amassi, essendo miei,  
Anzi hora per dolor mi scoppia il core,  
Ma uccisi gli ho, per esser tuoi figliuoli.  
(Act V, p. 50)

Both Dolce's and Galladei's Medeas expressly state their love of their children. In both cases the children, too, bemoan their separation from their true and loving mother. However, mother-love is not strong enough to seriously threaten either Medea's revenge.

Of the three, Dolce's Medea is most aware of her status as lady and queen and therefore feels her honour gravely injured by Jason's desertion. Time and time again, Medea stresses that once she was a great lady and a queen and now she is less than a servant:

"Non mi dite Reina, po ch'io sono  
Assai peggio, che serve."
(Act I, p. 8)

The contrast between Medea, the former queen, and Medea, the future servant and slave, is mentioned not only by her, but also by Creon, Jason and the chorus. Everyone in this play is very status-conscious. Creon is not merely afraid of Medea as a sorceress, but also fears her as a possible threat to his reign:

5 Lodovico Dolce, La Medea, Tragedia, Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, Vineria, 1560. (All quotes from Dolce's La Medea are taken from this text.)
E volendo regnar, procaccia altrove  
Altri regni, altri beni, altro marito;  
Ch'io di questa cittade, e del mio stato  
Do parimente a voi perpetuo bando.  

(Act II, p. 13)

Dolce's Medea also feels a great deal of jealousy which increases her desire for revenge. Not only does she suggest that Jason just wants a new bride in his bed, but she also refers to Creusa's wealth, youth and beauty. Dolce presents us for the first time with an aging Medea threatened by a younger and prettier rival, a theme which will be developed by later playwrights. The Medeas of de Lapéruse and Galladei are also motivated by jealousy. In all three plays the marriage between Jason and Medea was legally binding, even if it was generally considered more of a curse than a benefit.

Although de Lapéruse's and Galladei's Medeas are not as conscious of the honour due their social status, none of the Medeas like the thought of being mocked by their enemies and all are more or less isolated. Galladei stays closest to Seneca's image of Medea while de Lapéruse's chorus, on the other hand, is more supportive and partisan than even Euripides', realizing only at the end what horrible crimes their acquiescence and silence have made possible. However, Medea is always considered to be different from other women, mainly because of her supernatural powers and because of her birth. Dolce also stresses the difference between the barbarian and the Greek, which heightens her isolation.

In the treatment of the planning, the execution and the effects of Medea's major crime, the child murder, the three plays vary considerably
and depart in certain instances from the examples set by their predecessors.

The Medea of de Lapéruse implores the gods in her first monologue to drive Jason so mad that he will commit all the murders himself:

Mettez-le desloyal en si grande fureur
Par vos serpens cheueux que, vangeant son erreur,
Luy-mesme de ses mainsbourrellement meurtrisse
Ses filz, le Roy, sa femme, et que tousiours ce vice
Becquette ses poumons, sans qu'il puisse mourir.

(Act I, p. 16)

Later she makes it abundantly clear that she does not care what happens to her or to the children as long as she can harm Jason and Creon: Medea wants to die but take her revenge first. Throughout the play the fear for the life of the children is expressed by the tutor and the chorus, although Medea's threats have been very general at first. Medea herself asks Creon to let the children stay, to which he immediately agrees. He is suspicious of her motives in asking for a day's delay in her exile in spite of Medea's reassurance that one day is not enough for her to do any harm.

During the following stormy encounter between Medea and Jason, Medea suddenly suggests:

Sans plus, fay que ie donne
A ta nouuelleSe\&pouse une riche couronne,
Qui iadis du Soleil le chef doré orna,
Puis à son aîmé filz mon pere la donna:
Afin que desormais de moy il luy souviene,
Et nos pauures enfans comme siens elle tienne.

(Act IV, p. 60/61)

To which Jason surprisingly replies:

Cela me plaist tres-bien, et à ce i'aperçoy
Que ton corroux s'appaise: or sçache que le Roy
Le trouuera fort bon. Si tu m'en crois, Medée,
Fay que par nos enfans elle soit presentée.

(Act IV, p. 61)
It is not Medea then who sees to it that the children are implicated in Creon's and Glauque's murder. It is also Jason who later convinces a reluctant Glauque to accept the fatal present which she had at first refused.

Here too, as in Seneca's play, the fire not only destroys Creon and his daughter but also the whole palace. Medea reacts to this news very coolly, stating that she only needs to kill her sons now in order to complete her revenge:

On ne dira iamais, courageuse Medée,
Que sans te reuanger vn meschant t'aît blessée.
Que reste-il plus, sinon que massacrer les filz
QQu'avecq' ce desloyal mal-heureuse ie fis?

(Act V, p. 73)

She does not hesitate for one moment and neither the Furies nor the dismembered ghost of her brother were really needed to spur her on to a crime she was determined to commit anyway.

There is no need for her to play for a place of refuge as she knows she will be saved by the dragon chariot and she can take her time flinging the bodies of one child after the other to Jason who witnesses both murders:

Tien voilà vn des filz.

......

Tien, voilà l'autre filz: or' l'vn et l'autre est mort.

(Act V, p. 74/75)

Medea triumphantly exclaims that not only has she revenged herself by her crimes but also set praiseworthy example for all women spurned by their unfaithful lovers. Her revenge on Jason was certainly successful as he undoubtedly loved his children. De Lapéruse confronts us with the
most cold-blooded and the most inhuman of all Medea so far.

Galladei seems to try to outdo Seneca in the magnitude of the destruction wrought by Medea. She, however, pays with her life for the success of her revenge. This is the first play in which Medea commits suicide in her orgy of death and destruction. The outcome of the play is stated clearly already in the prologue when the Fury promises that Medea, the monster, will pay with her own life and that of her sons for Apsyrtos' murder. More innocent blood will be spilled to atone for innocent blood already shed. The idea of the "vendetta" emerges very strongly in this play. The murders are not so much planned by Medea as by the Fury who, after Apsyrtos' complaint in Act IV, intervenes herself to speed up the action. Galladei's Jason, like Seneca's, professes to Medea his love for the children and thereby gives her the idea of hurting him through them. She immediately begs his forgiveness and offers to send the children with gifts to Creusa. Only the chorus distrusts her motives. There is an even greater insistence on Medea's magical powers - her incantations, spells and curses - which are described at length. The play is full of evil omens also recited with relish and in detail; all the deaths - and they abound in this play - are described more than once.

For the first time the children have acting parts and are individually named and portrayed in this play. Amazingly enough they express their deep love for their mother along with the fear that they might be punished for the wrong done to her by their father:

Chi sa, ch'ella non voglia
Noi punir de la grave
Ingiuria, che riceve
Hoggi dal nostro padre?

(Act IV, p. 51)
Although the children are never banished together with their mother, the younger son, Tersandro, offers to accompany her into exile. Medea, however, declines. She only wants them for the one day granted to her.

Having sent the poisoned robe to Creusa, Medea is not yet sure how she will complete her revenge on Jason. It is at this moment that Megara, the Fury, and Apsyrtos, the ghost, conspire to drive Medea mad enough to kill her children:

Che tutta furiosa  
Divenga, & assai peggio  
In Corinto de propri  
Figli faccia, di quello  
Ch'ella gia fece in Colco,  
Del piccolo fratello.  
(Act IV, p. 56)

Although Medea promises to comply with all their wishes, they declare that they will remain until they can carry her off to hell and her just punishment. In this play, all the deaths occur off-stage and are reported in gruesome detail to the fascinated chorus by various secondary characters. No sooner has the destruction of Creon, Creusa and the palace been reported, than the nurse rushes on to tell of the murder of the children. The first one Medea apparently killed "senz macchia, senza colpo o peccato," (Act V, p. 67) while the second one is stabbed, beheaded and divided between father and mother in front of Jason's eyes.

A messenger then follows to report on Medea's death; she has stabbed herself with the same knife used on her children, thrown herself from the roof and has been led away to hell by the waiting Megara and Apsyrtos. Jason then kills himself so that he can join his children and continue his revenge on Medea in the other world. Finally, on the advice of the
chorus, the old nurse goes to drown herself so that she may not fall victim to the wrath of the Corinthians, leaving the chorus to pray for the quiet and peaceful life in the hereafter.

Dolce, on the other hand, follows Euripides quite closely as far as planning and execution of the crime are concerned. The drama of the child murder itself is heightened, however, by the escape of the children who come to beg the chorus for protection. But Medea just orders the chorus to stand back and drags the children by their hair into the house and to their death. The possibility of danger to the children is hinted at throughout the play, especially by the nurse who has a dream-premonition of events to come.

Dolce's Medea is an even greater master of dissimulation than the Euripidean one. She, who has such a strong sense of her social position, offers herself as a servant and slave to Creon, just so that her children may stay with their father. She explains to the chorus, however, that she will never let the children fall into enemy hands and that she can only envisage killing them because she is resolved to die with them. This resolution is not carried through in the end when Medea, together with her children's bodies, simply vanishes into thin air. At one point Medea appears to accept the chorus' advice to kill Jason and spare the children whom she loves, but she still sends them off to Creusa with the fatal gifts. In this play, her revenge is initiated before Aegeus appears on the scene and offers her refuge and friendship. Medea loves her children but does not want to see them as servants to the Corinthians or to their future step-brothers. When she, too, has destroyed not only
Creusa and Creon, but with them the palace and many innocent bystanders — although her gifts were meant to hurt only Creon and Creusa — she declares herself satisfied to die now that her enemies are dead. Suddenly, however, Medea becomes possessed and in a fit of insanity kills the children. Here the second child, seeing how she stabs the first one over and over again, even asks to be put of his misery quickly:

O miserò fratello
Io ti farò ben tosto compagnia
Madre apritemi il petto:
O segate col ferro
Questo miserò collo,
Oime.

(Act V, p. 39)

Against Jason's wrath Medea is protected by the same magic she used to save Jason. This Medea knows she will suffer for her murders, but her desire for revenge was greater. On the whole though, Dolce's Medea seems so undecided that, had it not been for her temporary madness, she probably would never have stayed of the same opinion long enough actually to kill the children. Why and how she disappears at the end of the play, instead of committing suicide as she intended to, is never explained.

In summary then, we can trace a growing dehumanization of Medea along with a shift from tragedy to melodrama in these Renaissance versions of the Medea-story. The emphasis of Medea's reasons for revenge has shifted from injured honour and punishment of the oath-breaker to sexual jealousy. It is the revenge of the rejected woman who is supplanted by a younger rival. Only Dolce still stresses the implications of the loss of social status and of Medea's consciousness of her injured honour. Not one of these plays portrays a Medea whose tragedy it is
that she consciously chooses to do evil, knowing fully well that she
too will suffer for her deed and that she alone bears the responsibility
for it.
17th Century: Corneille and Longepierre

The two French Medeas of the 17th century also follow more the Senecan than the Euripidean example. Corneille denies being influenced by Euripides at all, while Longepierre acknowledges both Seneca and Euripides as well as Corneille as models. Although there is no question that Medea still is a powerful witch in these two plays, she has become more human and more realistic than the Renaissance Medeas. Medea is sorely provoked by her adversaries who really are quite despicable and must carry a large share of the blame. Medea's revenge, of course, exceeds reasonable punishment.

In Corneille's play Medea is rejected because Jason not only finds Creusa more attractive but also because a match with her has political and social advantages. In addition to the usual deeds to save Jason, Medea, at his request, has also rejuvenated Aeson, Jason's father, which gave her the idea for the murder of Pelias. Creon promised asylum to the exiles, but then, when threatened with war by Acastus, traded off Medea in a peace settlement. She has thus become a political pawn. Medea's exile also allows Creon to save Jason and to remove Medea as the one obstacle to his daughter's love and his own desire for a son-in-law.

Medea feels her honour has been injured because she has not been consulted and is used in a political manoeuvre. Furthermore, she certainly has reasons for jealousy. This Creusa is quite openly and unabashedly in love with Jason, so much so that she is prepared to break her previous betrothal to Aegeus, King of Athens, in order to marry the
penniless and homeless, but young and handsome Jason.

Medea's victims actually play into her hands. There is little need for her to dissimulate, scheme or plan. Creon pronounces her banishment only for the following day. And Creusa asks for Medea's robe, of which she has long been envious, in exchange for interceding on the children's behalf with Creon. Jason, with his usual lack of perception and tact, points out to Medea that the robe is not appropriate to her new status as a homeless exile. Medea's resentment of Creusa is thus quite justified:

C'est trop peu de Jason que ton oeil me dérobe,
C'est trop peu de mon lit, tu veux encore ma robe,
Rivale insatiable; et c'est encore trop peu,
Si, la force à la main, tu l'as sans mon aveu;
Il faut que par moi-même elle te soit offerte,
Que perdant mes enfants, j'achète encor leur perte;
Il en faut un hommage à tes divins attrats,
Et des remerciements au vol que tu me fais.

(p. 598-9)

Under these circumstances no special intrigue is needed to induce Creusa to wear the fatal gift.

Corneille's Medea is also extremely proud. She never begs Creon for the return of Jason. She still loves Jason and does ask him to at least keep his faith, if he cannot keep his love. When she realizes that he is lost to her, she swears that at least her children will never become brothers to Creusa's children:

Je l'empêcherai bien ce mé Lange odieux,
Qui déshonore ensemble et ma race et les dieux.

(p. 595)

6 Pierre Corneille, Médée, in Théâtre Complet, Tome I, Editions Garnier Frères, Paris, 1971. (All quoted from Corneille's Médée are taken from this text.)
For Medea their death thus becomes necessary not only to punish Jason but also to protect Medea's honour. Medea's spell on the robe is so that it will be fatal only to Creon and Creusa. Thus the test of the robe which Creon undertakes after he has been warned about Medea's dangerous arts does not reveal its fatal propensity. In this play, for the first time, Creon and Creusa die on stage, consumed by invisible fire. Both charge Jason with the revenge of their deaths. Medea's future is not endangered in this play as she knows that the dragon chariot will be at her disposal and Aegeus — whom she frees from prison by her magic — not only promises her asylum in Athens, but also his crown and his hand.

Medea has some misgivings about killing the children — who never actually appear in the play — but then decides that: "Il faut qu'il souffre en père aussi bien qu'en amant." (p. 610) However, in this play the child murder becomes an addition to the more important removal of her rival. That the unfortunate children were doomed in any case in the struggle between their proud and jealous mother and their self-seeking father becomes evident when Jason decides to kill the children in revenge for Creusa's death:

Instrument des fureurs d'une mère insensée,
Indignes rejetons de mon amour passé,
Quel malheureux destin vous avait réservés
A porter le trépas à qui vous a sauvés?
C'est vous, petits ingrats, que, malgré la nature,
Il me faut immoler dessus leur sépulture
Que la sorcière en vous commence de souffrir;
Que son premier tourment soit de vous voir mourir.
(p. 616)

After Medea's final taunts and disappearance — content with her
day's work - Jason realizes the extent of his failure and his isolation. As he cannot revenge himself on Medea, he, like Galladéi's Jason, commits suicide, but only so that he may rejoin his beloved Creusa.

Longepierre's Jason is even more enamoured with Creusa than Corneille's. He is a perfect picture of the love-sick hero lying at his beloved's feet. In this play Creusa only admits her love of Jason freely when she is dying. Creon has arranged the marriage with Jason, but Creusa is afraid of Medea's anger and her supernatural powers, which are minimized by Jason.

Medea can tame nature with her great magical powers but she cannot overcome her love for Jason and is extremely jealous of Creusa. Her sense of honour is also injured by Jason's betrayal. Again Creon, of his own accord, offers Medea the day's grace in her order for exile. Her tone is very haughty in her interview with Creon whom she does not ask for any favours. She is determined to flee in glory, remembered by the Corinthians forever.

However, this Medea would be prepared to leave without taking revenge, if only she could have the children. On two occasions she begs Jason for them, but he refuses to give them up. Medea cannot bear the thought of her children enslaved to Creusa's children. She feels she must free them from this dishonourable fate. Deprived of her children, nothing stands in the way of Medea's revenge. She, like Euripides' Médée, decides to dissimulate and apologizes to Jason offering the robe which she knows Creusa admires:
There is no doubt therefore that her gift will be accepted. She instructs her reluctant children to humble themselves, to forget their proud ancestry and to bow to fate. Creon and Creusa are both heedless to warnings and die consumed by invisible flames. Creusa dies in Jason's arms, professing her love for the first and last time, and begging him to live so that her memory might survive.

Only after the children have left with the present, which again will bring harm only to Creon and Creusa, does the necessity of murdering her children present itself fully to Medea. After Creusa's death, Jason, whose inconstancy in love has become quite evident, might and probably would marry again and the children would be doomed to a life of slavery:

Esclaves, Estrangers, sans appui, sans secours,
Quelle suite de maux va marquer tous leurs jours.
C'est en vain que je vais leur ravir leur Marâtre,
De quelque objet nouveau mon perfide idolâtre,
Les remettra bientôt sous un joug odieux,
Et les accablera d'un poids injurieux.

(p. 94)

It is mother-love which strengthens her resolution for revenge:

Tu les aimes, cruelle, et tu les laisses vivre!
Aux malheurs les plus grands ta foiblesse les livre,
Et ta cupidité barbare en respectant leurs jours,
Du plus affreux destin leur prépare le cours.

(p. 98)

7 Hilaire Bernard de Requeleyne, Baron de Longepierre, Médée, Editions A. - G. Nizet, Paris, 1967. (All quotes from Longepierre's Médée are taken from this text.)
Jason's treason has given Medea the strength to wipe out all the traces of their horrible love, even if her magic is unable to overcome that love. Although Medea enjoys to see Jason suffer, she feels she was a tool used by the gods for Jason's punishment:

Vengeurs des trahisons, Ennemis des Ingrats,
Les Dieux pour t'accabler ont employé mon bras;
La foudre étoit trop peu pour punir ton offense.
J'ai servi leur justice et rempli leur vengeance.

(p. 111)

She too knew about her means of escape, but she is ready to regain her mythical realm rather than Aegeus' Athens. She can take her time taunting and torturing Jason as her magic has rooted him to the spot. After her departure, the only revenge left to Jason by the inhuman gods is suicide. Preferring the useful to the honest, has had fatal consequences for Corneille's and Longepierre's Jason.
Lessing uses the Medea story only as a remote model for his Miss Sara Sampson. His bourgeois tragedy is, however, the first Medea play in modern dress. There is no child murder in this play which is not so much concerned with Medea's crimes but with the dilemma of a young girl who loves both her seducer and her virtuous father. Having been led astray, she is doomed, even though her father forgives her, while the lover, having lost faith in himself and humanity, commits suicide.

If Lessing's Medea-figure was the incarnation of evil, Glover presents us for the first time with a Medea who is really good. She is not at all responsible for the murder of her children committed in a fit of madness. The real villain of the play is the impious, arrogant and ambitious Creon, who, together with Jason's father Aeson, commands the divorce and the new marriage. Medea has everyone's sympathy, even the gods'. In this play Jason has come to Corinth alone in order to form a military alliance with Creon against Acastus and has been coerced into this marriage. He deeply regrets his decision and begs Medea's forgiveness the moment he sees her again, who, impatient for his return, has followed him with the children to Corinth. Aeson, who knows that Jason will succumb to Medea's beauty, tries to prevent a meeting between the two. Medea, however, refuses to listen to Jason's assurance of repentence and rejects him. From Creon who treats her in
a very overbearing manner:

To debate, weak woman,
Is thy known province; to command is mine.\(^8\)
(p. 45, Act III)

she only asks for three hours to prepare for exile. She is a woman renowned for her wisdom and magical powers which so far she has employed for good only; none of her usual crimes are mentioned in this play. In desperation Medea conjures up Hecate and asks for revenge since the powers of hell cannot offer compassion for suffering. Medea feels Creusa is too insignificant to be punished, and the gods are already determined to punish Creon, which leaves her with Jason. In spite of Hecate's warning, Medea wants to know whether Jason will ever love her again. The prophecy is misinterpreted by her:

Against thyself, unhappy, thou prevail'st.
Ere night's black wheels begin their gloomy course,
What, thou dost love, shall perish by thy rage,
Nor thou be conscious, when the stroke is giv'n;
Then a despairing wand'rer must thou trace
The paths of sorrow in remotest climes.

(Act III, p. 53)

The thought of killing Jason dismays her so much that she calls for Jason again prepared to forgive him. But by now it is too late: he has ratified his marriage to Creusa. At this news Medea goes mad; she sees visions and kills her children without being conscious of her deed. Jason, in the meantime, has another change of heart. He renounces Creusa and - living up to his heroic image for the first time - convinces even Aeson of their unjust behaviour. Just as Medea comes to her senses again and realizes the enormity of her deed, Jason brings her the news that

\(^8\) Richard Glover, *Medea*, H. Woodfall, London, 1790. (All quotes from Glover's *Medea* are taken from this text.)
they will flee together. When he hears the awful truth, he not only shows compassion for Medea but assumes the full guilt himself:

O thou, whose equal balance to mankind
Distributes justice, and restoring mercy,
If pray'rs from this polluted breast may reach
Thy pure abode, exert thy righteous pow'r;
Drop thy asswaging pity on her heart;
On me exhaust the quiver of thy vengeance.

(Act V, p. 92)

Both Medea and Jason want to commit suicide, but are stopped by divine intervention. Medea is transported in the dragon chariot to some mysterious place for atonement. Jason must live to reclaim his father's throne and be a protector to the helpless and homeless:

Thus shall the censure which thy frailty merits,
Be changed to blessings on thy gen'rous deeds,
And time's light finger loosen from thy breast
Its root of care till peace of mind return.

(Act V, p. 98)

The blasphemous Creon is disposed of by the angry and insulted goddess Juno, and a sad peace returns to Corinth.

Glover's Medea then is an ill-starred being who kills her children due to a coincidence of unfortunate circumstances.

Gotter

This play starts only after Medea's exile. She returns on her dragon chariot to take revenge, yet she cannot decide what her revenge will be. Death seems too light a punishment for Jason, and Creusa has no children by him yet, the thought of her own children occurs therefore from the beginning: "Alles, was ihm zugehört, ist strafbar - Sein Andenken werde von der Erde vertilgt? - durch dich, Unglückliche?"

(p. 10) She has a vision of Jason's suffering and despair which she

9 Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter, *Medea*, Carl Wilhelm Ettinger, Gotha, 1775. (All quotes from Gotter's *Medea* are taken from this text.)
greatly enjoys. However, when she chances to see the children and they
tell her how they have missed her, she reconsiders. She thinks about
taking them with her but fears discovery. They must not be left in
enemy hands as a sad fate awaits them. The kindest thing Medea can
do for them is to kill them and thus free them from future slavery. She
draws a dagger, but drops it again to embrace the children and orders them
to flee. She is ready to kill herself when she hears shouts from the
wedding feast which seem to mock her. Revenge is now unavoidable:
"Noch bist du Medea! - Räche dich und stirb dann!" (p. 17) For her
crime however, she needs darkness for which she calls on the powers of
hell who oblige her wish: "Das ganze Theater wird Nacht, und das
Ungewitter ist mit allen seinen Schrecken da." (p. 19) Medea rushes
off triumphant with dagger drawn while the thunderstorm continues.
After the deed which she feels has given freedom to her children she
commits them to Juno's care. But her revenge is not yet completed:

Peitscht ihm her
Den Verbrecher,
Dass er sehe
Dass er höre,
Dass noch Götter,
Götter leben!
(p. 20)

Jason arrives in "orestischer Raserei", (p. 21) not knowing where he
is or what has happened. Creusa has been snatched from his arms and
now Medea appears in her chariot, almost invisible at first and points
to the children killed by her. Medea loved them and killed them to free
them. Jason's curses are ineffective as Medea disappears triumphant in
her dragon chariot again. Jason does not dare to touch his children's
bodies. Revenge must be left to the gods and this Jason, too, has no alternative but to commit suicide.

We see thus a Medea who acts quite without plan and kills the children to free them from envisaged slavery and to revenge herself on Jason. Creusa's fate is never revealed. There is no indication of humanity in Medea as she already appears on her dragon chariot at the beginning of the play and as her power over the elements is demonstrated by her changing day into night.

Klinger

In Klinger's Medea in Korinth fate appears in the prologue to explain the action to come. Medea and Jason are both part of Aphrodite's revenge plan on Phoebus who revealed her affair with Ares. First Medea, the granddaughter of the Sun, and the daughter of Hecate, queen of the underworld, had to fall in love with Jason. She voluntarily gave up her magic powers for the love of man. But in Corinth Jason was made to fall in love with Creusa and to reject Medea's passion. Medea, as well as Jason, is an instrument of Aphrodite's revenge then. Furthermore, Medea is ordered to kill her children by her mother Hecate who demands their blood to atone for the killing of Apsyrtos and for the death of a baby son Hecate lost through negligence while grieving for Apsyrtos. When Medea hesitates to kill her children, Hecate hardens her heart and makes her blind to their looks and deaf to their pleas. She also tells her that Jason will probably reject Medea's sons once he has children by Creusa. Medea cannot, therefore, be held fully responsible for these deaths ordained by rival goddesses.
Furthermore, Medea is at no time considered to be a human being, although she tries to be just like one. Her greatness is always frightening even in love. Jason now fears her and longs for the love of an ordinary woman:

Ich liebe sie nicht mehr, und that ichs je, so war's Verblendung, vielleicht Werk ihrer Zauberey. Mich gelüstet nach einem Weibe, der ich mich freywilling gebe, von der ich fordern kann, was sie von mir fordert; die mich nicht mit eiernen Banden der Nothwendigkeit, der Menschens Unterdrückern, fessle. Mich gelüstet nach einem Weibe, deren Nerven aus gleichem Thone mit mir gebildet seyen, die schwach und weder stärker fühle, und in dieser leichten Mischung mit empfinden lasse, ihre Mutter sey von dem Stoff der meinen.

(Act I, p. 169)\(^{10}\)

Medea is feared by all even though she has not committed any crimes in Corinth. As a matter of fact Medea shows incredible restraint with Creon, for instance: "Eben darum, dass ich durch einen Wink Dich tödten kann, tödt' ich Dich nicht." (Act II, p. 185) With Jason Medea really humbles herself. Love has tied her to the human race, but she has never been accepted or understood. Neither her deeds nor her emotions can be measured by human standards. She cannot feel repentance for her murders although she loves her children even more than she does Jason.

There is no need for planning on the part of Medea. Smarting from Jason's rejection, from her humiliation and from the thought of separation from her children, she calls on her mother Hecate and from that moment on the direction of the revenge is taken out of her hands. The children

\(^{10}\)F.M. Klinger, Medea in Korinth, in Werke, Zweyter Teil, Verlag von Gerhard Fleischer, Leipzig, 1832. (All quotes from Klinger's Medea are taken from this text.)
who have been permitted to accompany Medea for a part of the way, are asleep. With the oncoming darkness Medea ceases to be the granddaughter of the sun, but becomes wholly Hecate's daughter. Although torn by her love for them, she kills the children at her mother's command: "Ich heische der Schläfer Blut für die Geliebten!" (Act IV, p. 228) The Furies then are ordered to take the children's bodies to the temple and expose them to the bridal party. Creusa dies instantly from shock, while both Jason and Creon are hounded by the Furies for the rest of their lives for their share of guilt in having broken their oaths, and the laws of hospitality in rejecting and banishing Medea. Medea, who is beyond the Furies' reach, returns in her dragon chariot to take the children's bodies for burial and

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\text{Dann flieh' ich von meinen Drachen gezogen in die Felsenhöhlen des Kaukasos, starre hin in meiner schrecklichen Grösse, betrachte mich in meinem furchtbaren Selbst!}
\]

(Act V, p. 242)

The 18th century brings for the first time in Glover's play a Medea who is good, but there are attempts at excusing or justifying Medea in all the plays. The child murder is no longer an act of the conscious will but is done in a fit of insanity or on divine command. Medea, although still of divine origin, is no longer a witch or a monster. Responsibility shifts on forces outside Medea and Jason: Creon is the villain or the gods and circumstances are to blame. Furthermore, Medea's crime - the murder of the children and of her rival - has become two separate acts. No longer are both deeds necessary to complete Medea's revenge. In the three most important plays Creusa is not killed by
Medea; in Lessing's play there is no child murder. Nevertheless, there is more emphasis on sexual jealousy than on injured honour and Medea has become more of a woman - even if perhaps a rather overwhelming superwoman - than Euripides' Medea with her masculine concepts of honour and justice. Jason, although he still carries a fair share of the blame, is portrayed as being more manly and more responsible, although for him considerations of political expediency still overrule the idea of justice.

The aspect of Medea, the stranger and the barbarian, as well as social problems in general are underplayed in most of the plays. Lessing also removes the story from the classical background to a contemporary setting. The most important innovation of the 18th century, however, is the transformation of Medea from a free agent into a victim in Glover's play. The trend to see Medea as a victim will become even more evident in the 20th century.
(6) **19th Century: Grillparzer, Lucas, Legouvé**

The 19th century brings us one Austrian and two French Medea-plays, of which Grillparzer's is by far the most outstanding. There is a marked return to the Euripidean treatment of the material and, due to 19th century positivism, the preoccupation with the supernatural is diminishing, especially in Grillparzer's and Legouvé's plays where the action is entirely on the human level and the motivation for Medea's dreadful deed is psychological rather than mythical.

**Grillparzer**

Grillparzer's Medea is a woman torn between her barbarian ancestry and her adopted Greek way of life, personified by her nurse Gora, on the one hand, and Creusa, on the other hand. Medea is a being in transition. There is no possibility of a return to her barbarian past and her attempts to assimilate Greek culture fail, mainly due to Jason's indifference and lovelessness but also due to Medea's impatient and passionate nature. She tries to be like Creusa - quiet, submissive, kind and gentle - but is bound to fail because she lacks Creusa's rather stupid docility and her childish lack of feeling and understanding. Medea is a woman, clever, wise and passionate, who cannot exist within the self-imposed confines of the dutiful wife, especially since she fails to get any moral support from Jason. After her desperate attempt to win Jason back with his favourite childhood song, she fully realizes her isolation. There is neither past nor future for her. There is only the present, and she now battles for the survival of her true self.

As long as Medea still has her children, all is not lost. But these
now prove to be true sons of their father. They reject her for Creusa and the comfort and ease of their new life. It is an innovation Grillparzer brings to the Medea story to let the children choose whether to follow their mother into exile or stay with their father, and they prove that man can be bribed by the good things in life at a very early age. This lack of loyalty to Medea stands in marked contrast to Galladei's children one of whom voluntarily offered to follow Medea into exile. For Grillparzer's Medea, rejection is thus twofold: as a wife and as a mother, life now has lost all meaning for her. In her experience it is only suffering and misery. Although she seems to hesitate before killing the children, she does not feel remorse for her crime, because the children are really the lucky ones. Through their death they have been saved from the dreariness of existence while Medea and Jason are condemned to live. The real tragedy is life, not death:

Nicht traur' ich, dass die Kinder nicht mehr sind, 
Ich traure, dass sie waren und dass wir sind.

(p. 72)  

Medea's feelings for her children seem to be a mixture of hatred for their father, whom she sees in them; anger at the children's own betrayal of her; love of them, which will not leave them motherless and with strangers; and pride, which refuses to let her abandon her children to the enemy. She, like Euripides' Medea, kills the children in cold blood. There is no insanity, no supernatural constraint, nor are there

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11 Franz Grillparzer, Medea, in Marie Luise Kaschnitz, Franz Grillparzer: Medea, Ullstein Bücher, Frankfurt/M., 1966. (All quotes from Grillparzer's Medea are taken from this text.)
Furies and ghosts luring her on. She is fully aware of the consequences of her deed and of the suffering she is inflicting on herself, but she accepts them. Her last words to Jason: "Trage! Dulde! Büsse!" (p. 73) have a very Christian ring to them. They also seem to indicate that through the intensity of her suffering and despair, and despite the enormity of her deed, Medea has attained a new resigned dignity. By returning the Golden Fleece to Delphi and submitting herself to the verdict of the oracle, Medea has finally made the transition to Greek civilization. The barbarian in her would seem to have been destroyed by the enormity of her deed, and she has attained the quiet resignation she vainly sought at the beginning of the play.

Grillparzer's Medea then does not destroy her humanity and rejoin the world of the supernatural with the triumph of her revenge, but has submitted herself to the will of the gods and the fate of ordinary humans, that is to the suffering and hopelessness of existence. Medea's earlier crimes are minimized in this play. She seems to be innocent of her brother's death who committed suicide rather than stay in captivity as Jason's hostage. There are three different versions of how Pelias died of which hers - which would prove her innocent - is not the least convincing. Medea has been wronged, humiliated and rejected, yet she is only able to take her dreadful revenge when she regains possession of the Golden Fleece - the symbol of human greed, ambition and evil - which she had buried upon arrival in Corinth. The return of the Fleece to Delphi where it had been stolen seems to complete the cycle of Grillparzer's trilogy The Golden Fleece, of which Medea is the third and
final play. Medea has regained an imposing dignity and appears far less
guilty than many previous Medeas, although she is prepared to expiate
her crime. She, unlike Jason, has lost her dreams of happiness and fame
and is willing to accept life for what it really is:

Was ist der Erde Glück? - Ein Schatten!
Was ist der Erde Ruhm? - Ein Traum!
Du Armer! Der von Schatten du geträumt!
Der Traum ist aus, allein die Nacht noch nicht.
(p. 73)

Lucas

The Medea of Lucas is rather conventional and tends to follow a
variety of previous versions of the story, bringing but few innovations.
Here the marriage between Creusa and Jason has been planned in secret
for fear that Medea, who has been left behind in Iolcos with the
children, and Jason's father Aeson, will find out about it and use her
frightful magic powers to prevent it from taking place. However, Medea
does arrive in Corinth to find out what caused Jason's delay. Creon
considers her an inhuman monster who has already poisoned her children's
minds, so that they must be banished with Medea, in spite of Creusa's
pleas on their behalf. Nevertheless he gives Medea one day's grace al-
though he does not trust her feigned calm and assurances of goodwill.
Jason, however, fears for his children's fate, if left in Medea's custody.
He wants to have them brought up by the centaur who educated him. In
this play Medea has committed all previous crimes and coldly admits them
as she feels the world is full of similar deeds: for her destruction is
the law of the universe. Medea invokes the Furies of hell to assist in
her revenge but then calms down again and does not reveal her revenge
plans to anyone. In the meantime, it is Creon who tries to arrange for Medea's asylum in Athens with Aegeus who has just landed in the harbour of Corinth. The wedding procession therefore starts without Creon, but is halted by Medea who expresses her wish to hand over her husband personally to Creusa and even offers her children to her protection. The poisoned cloak and tiara are put on Creusa by Medea herself. Creon assures Medea of her safe passage and exile in Athens and she bids her children farewell. She tries to kill them, but her motives for doing so are not convincing. There really seems no need for this deed in this particular play. It isn't surprising therefore that she changes her mind and decides to take them with her on to Aegeus' ship. Jason worries about his children's fate as soon as the poisoned garments finally start to work and the flames are consuming Creusa. Jason himself is not affected by the flames because Medea's magic protects him so that he may continue to live and suffer. Suddenly, Medea reappears, having killed the children in a nearby temple instead of making for the safety of Aegeus' ship. Her magic stops Jason and his soldiers and the curtain falls on Jason's final curse.

In this play the motivation for the infanticide seems to be very weak. There is hatred of the father and a desire for revenge. However, there is no internal struggle, no necessity or humiliated pride overcoming mother-love. The children are not implicated in Creusa's death and Medea's escape and future are secure. Although Medea's magic powers are undoubtedly great, she is neither possessed nor insane when she kills her children, nor does she sacrifice them to atone for her brother's
death. It is simply a cold-blooded and completely unnecessary murder which doesn't even have the desired effect of destroying Jason.

Legouvé

Legouvé's Medea is much closer to Grillparzer's — a woman much wronged and misunderstood. Worn out, cold and starving, Medea and her children arrive in Corinth in search of Jason. They are offered food and shelter by Creusa, who on the eve of her marriage is trying to appease the goddess Diana. The augurs for her proposed marriage to Jason, who has convinced Creon and his daughter that Medea deserted him, have been frightening. The two women feel great sympathy for each other. Both are in the sway of love, although Medea's sad experience contrasts sharply with Creusa's joyful hopes. Only when Medea reveals her joy and pride, hearing from Orpheus that Jason lives, do the two women realize that they love the same man.

In Legouvé's play it is only because Medea threatens Creusa that she is banished by Creon who had abjured his daughter's marriage in spite of Creusa's pleas and Jason's threats. Creon is concerned for Medea's safety. Also when Medea begs for her children he supports her suit. Only if she gives up Jason willingly will Creon give his consent to the new marriage. Medea eventually gives in thinking to keep at least the children. Jason, finally, allows Medea to choose one of them to follow her into exile. However, her love for them makes a choice impossible and she asks for the children to decide. But they too have been seduced by Creusa's gentleness and the joys of a carefree childhood in Corinth. Faced with a possible return to misery and starvation with a
a mother whose wild moods they fear, they too cannot tear themselves from the haven which Creusa and Corinth represent for them. They still love their mother, and when she calls her eldest he obeys albeit reluctantly. Medea feels that Creusa has stolen the children's affection and bids him to return to Creusa:

I blame him not, he is young, hath suffered much, and is of misery weary! But thou, false-hearted one, to rob a wretched outcast of her only wealth, seduce her children, after luring from her the husband who owed all to her - thou hast made him false, hath rendered them ungrateful, and now reservest for me, as crowning blow, a torture dire and atrocious, invented with malignant art, for he, the sight of mine own children deserting me for thee! Oh gods! No more, no more!

(p. 31)

Jason's victory is complete now, because even her sons are no longer hers. In utter despair she resolves to kill Creusa and the children because they are the three beings Jason loves most. Her revenge will destroy the race of traitors and make Jason feel the desperation and isolation that are hers, even if it means her own death. However, when Medea actually holds the children in her arms she cannot commit the murder. She realizes that their very gratitude to Creusa for saving their lives causes their ingratitude towards their mother.

In this play, Medea is actually given a chance to flee with her children. However, Medea's chance comes too late. Already the poisoned veil she had conveyed to Creusa has taken its toll, and beset by the infuriated and bloodthirsty citizens of Corinth, she kills the children rather than letting them fall into enemy hands. Medea's further fate is left unresolved. The curtain falls on her standing with raised dagger over her

12 Ernest Legouve, Medea, translated from the Italian version of Montanelli by Thomas Williams, John A. Gray & Green, New York, 1867 (All quotes from Legouve's Medea are taken from this text.)
children's bodies, accusing Jason of their murder, while he and the
angry crowd have momentarily fallen back in horror.

The 19th century plays have reintroduced Creusa as an important
character and give the first hints of a possible friendship between the
two women. Creusa, however, becomes guilty by not only stealing Jason's
but also the children's affection and therefore, must die. The children
also gain in importance again and their betrayal of their mother lessens
her guilt. In general there is a return to psychological motivations
and Euripides Medea from a preoccupation with the supernatural intro­
duced by Seneca. Creon generally is seen in a far more sympathetic
light while Jason remains a coward and an opportunist. Medea is the one,
however, who gains most in stature and dignity as she once again assumes
full responsibility for her deeds in Grillparzer's and Legouve's plays.
The success of her revenge however leads no longer to the final triumph
of Euripides' play. The theme of the stranger and barbarian again
becomes crucial in these plays.
20th Century - Attempts at Conclusion

The 20th century brings a revised interest in the Medea-story with at least nine plays so far. Although the treatment of the material is quite divergent, there are some trends and interests which are common to many of the plays. There is generally a strong interest in the social aspect of Medea's predicament as a stranger and barbarian amongst the Greeks. In these post-Freudian plays personal responsibility and guilt are often diminished as the blame shifts from the individual to society. Medea's tragic stature results not from the contrast to Jason's lack of heroism but from her protest against external circumstances. In many plays Jason's and Medea's marriage is doomed because of social pressures rather than because of personal failings. Death is often seen as the only escape from an impossible situation in which Medea and her children are entrapped.

(a) before 1939: Jahnn, Lenormand, Anderson

The three first plays of the 20th century, written before the second world war, already contain the essence of most of the themes developed and stressed in the later plays. Only these three plays will therefore be discussed in greater detail. In spite of their diversity, Jahnn's Medea, Lenormand's Asie and Anderson's The Wingless Victory also show some remarkable similarities. In all three plays, as in many later ones, Medea's "otherness" is made visible by portraying her as being of a different race: Black, in Jahnn's play, and Asiatic in the other two. Furthermore, the horror of the child murder is generally lessened by the fact that the children are not accepted by either race and seem to be
doomed in any case. Their death appears a release from an uncertain and unhappy future.

Jahn's Medea is an old, ugly and fat negress while Jason has retained his youth and beauty thanks to Medea's magic powers. These powers are limited however: she can foresee the future but not interpret it; she can wrest favours from the gods for her loved ones but not for herself. Out of love for Jason Medea, who is of divine origin, gave up her own immortality to secure Jason's and her sons' beauty and youth. Their normal aging process will begin only with her death. But this temporary immortality has brought little happiness to Medea's family. Jason not only retains the irresponsibility of youth, but is embarrassed by his growing sons who become his rivals in looks and strength. The children also realize that their father's youth has created an unnatural situation in the family. The younger son is even afraid that he will never grow, but turn into a dwarf on his mother's death.

Apart from their preoccupation with age, all characters in this play are in the sway of their senses which seem to be the main activating forces in their lives. The younger son - Medea's favourite - loves his older brother but is rejected by the latter after he has fallen in love with Creon's daughter. Medea is delighted with her son's proposed marriage as she is looking forward to the pleasure of assisting at his wedding night. Jason, however, agrees only reluctantly to intercede with Creon on his son's behalf. Out of pity he also promises himself to Medea for the coming night. He has neglected her because he obviously
finds her physically repellent. Medea, who had been gloomy and depressed, rejoices. At first she refuses to believe the messenger who comes to invite Medea and her sons to Jason's wedding to Creon's daughter. The eyes of the messenger which have witnessed Jason's betrayal are torn out at Medea's command. After this deed Creon, to whom Medea and her sons are little more than animals, has them banished. He arrogantly informs Medea that he would never have given his "white" daughter to a man of mixed race.

In this play Jason's betrayal of Medea is threefold: he broke his marriage vows and his promise for the coming night and further cheated Medea out of witnessing her son's wedding night. Jason, in his youthful egotism, will always choose immediate self-gratification over his marital and paternal duties. He is bothered by the drives which rule him but he cannot help himself:

Befreiung, Befreiung aus dem Joch,
in das mich ungestalte Triebe spannen!
Vor Richtern möchten ich stehen, die mich
dem Tode weihn.

(p. 633)_{13}

But as Medea refuses either to let him age or kill him, and as her magic holds no spell to make him faithful to her, he must always follow his desires and seek youth, beauty and pleasure. Medea cannot and will not destroy what she has created - Jason's beauty and youth - for which she has sacrificed her own immortality and beauty. Jason, sensing only the humiliation of his dependence curses his quest for the Fleece and

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_{13} Hans Henny Jahnn, Medea in Dramen I, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt am Main, 1963. (All quotes from Jahnn’s Medea are taken from this text.)
immortality. He decides to have no longer any part of Medea, her past crimes and her future fate. After all he is still young and now that he has broken with Medea, is free to wed again.

At this point, Medea realizes that the end is near and that the dark premonitions which have troubled her for so long will become true. The blinded messenger is dispatched with the fatal gifts which are to prove to Creon and to Jason that she is vanquished and which will assure her the desired delay in her banishment. Medea knows that Jason, guided by lust, will insist that Creusa wear the golden robe which will make her irresistible before it destroys her. Nor will Creon resist the temptation of possessing Medea's magic ring. Her plan cannot fail. She only needs to wait for news from the palace and in the meantime make sure that her sons are safe within her reach. The older boy, half-crazed by the rejection of his love, holds the younger one in a murderous embrace when Medea runs her sword through both of them. They smile as they die; life had become impossible for them.

With this deed Medea has cancelled her marriage to Jason. The children are now hers alone:

Mein sind die Kinder jetzt!
Der Leib ist mein, denn seine Schönheit
hab ich Helios abgetrotzt.
Tot nur ist Jason Same, Der Knaben Bildung
lebt als Gott mit Göttern.

(p. 661)

Jason remembers his children too late and Medea refuses even to let him see them. He has been completely destroyed. His search for immortality has ended in death:
Du hast vernichtet mein Blut, hast meinen Samen augejätet aus dieser Welt, hast brennend meine Eingeweide gemacht nach dem Lebendigen und hältst mir Totes, abermals und immer wieder Totes vor.

(p. 659)

But Medea's desire for revenge is not yet fully satisfied. Jason's youth is to be as accursed as her age. He is doomed to live a slave to his senses, but his seed will bring death and force him to live a nameless fugitive and beggar. Medea herself disappears with her sons' bodies in a final triumph of death and destruction. Having killed the last vestiges of her love which bound her to humanity she has become as merciless and cruel as the gods she rejoins:

Gesorgt für uns hat sie, wie Götter sorgen. Ein stinkend Loch, in dem betasten wir uns können.

(p. 666)

Lenormand's Medea play Asié takes place in the 20th century, on a boat returning from Indochina and France, Medea here is the princess Katha Naham Moun from a remote Indochinese kingdom which Jason, here a French adventurer called De Mezzano, discovered and ruled with her help for eight years until they were ousted and De Mezzano decided to return to France for his children's sake as well as his own. The Princess accompanies him because he feared he would not have been allowed to leave alone. Once in France he intends to regain power in the kingdom through industrial and economic means. De Mezzano and his wife have not seen their sons for three years. The children had to be sent to a Catholic mission on the coast as they could not survive the climate of the interior.
Already from the beginning the princess admits that the children's frail health is caused by their mixed blood and that perhaps they should never have existed. This separation has already driven a wedge between the mother and the children who have become strangers to her with their new Christian names and upbringing. From the beginning there is an uneven battle between the parents for the children's love and loyalty. Each tries to stamp out the other's part in them and make them wholly of one race. However, their childish curiosity and vitality inclines them more towards the machines of Europe than towards the magical monsters of the Orient.

Already on the ship bringing them back to France, De Mezzano meets Aimée de Listrac, daughter of an influential colonial official. She falls in love with him and for De Mezzano she embodies all that home, country and race had ever meant to him. He wants to escape his past and find a new lease on life:

Je m'éloigne du monde jaune comme de la pourriture, dont il a l'odeur. Je lui échappe comme à la mort, dans une joie de revivre dont je ne me croyais pas capable....Vous êtes l'Europe, vers qui je me précipite à la vitesse de deux cents milles par jour.

(p. 38)

The children, however, must remain with him although he will only consider them truly his once all trace of their maternal ancestry has been erased. To become white and European the children must be separated from their mother. To ease his conscience, De Mezzano plans to send

14 H. -R. Lenormand, Asie, in Théâtre Complet, IX, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1938. (All quotes from Lenormand's Asie are taken from this text.)
the princess back to Indochina with the backing of a French development company which will assure her power in her backward country. To her, however, this constitutes a double betrayal. He has not only betrayed her but now intends to betray her country too. He will make life unbearable with his machines, roads and railways:

Déjà, les routes, à travers la jungle. Bientôt, les gares et les usines. Jusque dans mon palais, on entendra le pic et la hache. Il m'a rendu mon dernier refuge inhabitable. Il a souillé mon pays, comme l'âme de mes enfants!

(p. 113)

Because of Katha's threats against Aimée she is served with a deportation order but by feigning reason and docility she manages to obtain a ten-day delay to say farewell to her children. This, she feels, will give her all the time needed to revenge herself on Aimée. Only when De Mezzano admits that he loves his children more than Aimée or his own life is their fate sealed. He has himself pronounced their death sentence. Once the children are dead, De Mezzano will never marry Aimée:

Je serai la main, la flèche et le poison. Quant à elle, la blonde Europe, qu'elle vive, pour le voir délirer de désespoir. Ils sont perdus l'un pour l'autre. Il n'épousera pas celle qui aura causé la mort de ses enfants!

(p. 113)

Mother love, however, almost overcomes the desire for revenge. But when she realizes that the children are lost to her already, that the machine age has them firmly in its grip and that their father is killing her image in their hearts, Katha decides that she must liberate at least their souls. As long as they live, her children will always be divided - one half the enemy of the other one - betraying what is not of European
origin within them. Her children must not become slaves to Western civilization:

Non, ils ne deviendront pas les domestiques des monstres qui mangent l'espace! Ils n'inventeront pas de machines. Ils ne tireront pas de leurs cervelles ces cauchemars de roues, de griffes et d'éclairs. Je sauverai l'âme que je leur ai donnée!

(p. 120)

However, it is the song of the nuns rather than her tales of gods and dragons which lulls them peacefully into their last sleep. Even in death the children are not wholly hers. Their bodies are left behind for the father to mourn, only their souls will accompany her to the land of her forefathers. In an ecstatic vision Katha asks the setting sun, her mythical ancestor, to send his fiery chariot for her and throws herself out of the window to her death. Her nurse looks for her in the glow of the sunset, ignoring the shattered body on the ground.

Anderson moved his Medea out of the classical setting into puritanical Salem of the early 19th century. Nathaniel McQueston, the Jason of this play, returns to his native town and his impoverished family with his wife, the South Sea Princess Oparre, and their two daughters in a ship loaded with spices from the Orient. While Nathaniel and his wealth are welcomed by family and friends, Oparre and her children are shunned and ostracized as "blackamoors." Their presence is tolerated only at Nathaniel's insistence. Behind Nathaniel's back the elders and his clergymen brother Phineas conspire against him as they resent the power of his wealth. When they discover that Nathaniel's title to the ship might have been acquired through an act of piracy, he is given the
choice of standing trial or of sending Oparre and the children away from Salem. If he chooses to leave with them, he must forfeit all his wealth. Although Nathaniel wavers at first he chooses wealth, security and social acceptance over his love of Oparre. Confronted with Oparre's unquestioning love and loyalty he changes his mind again. But when she offers to go alone, he accepts although he knows that with her goes what was best in him. Nathaniel, defeated by the pressures of society, knows that their parting will be final. He is too weak to defend his love and his convictions. Deeply hurt, but still loving and loyal, Oparre blames the failure of their union on the hypocrisy and cruelty of the puritans rather than on her husband. Renouncing the "pale Christ" she submits again to the laws of her native gods who demand that she and her children must die. Oparre returns to the ship, The Wingless Victory, and poisons herself and her children. Her nurse freely follows them into death.

For these children too the future looks very bleak and death might be considered salvation for them:

They're not wanted.
The white men of the East would have made them whores.
It is not fitting the daughters of a queen should be whores or slaves.

(p. 131)  

Oparre, who still loves Nathaniel, hopes he will never hear of their deaths by which she intends to set him free. However, Nathaniel realizes only too late that the past cannot be denied and that a man needs his self-respect more than he needs his possessions. He arrives on the ship

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15 Maxwell Anderson, The Wingless Victory, Anderson House, Washington, D.C., 1936. (All quotes from Anderson's The Wingless Victory are taken from this text.)
only to find his children dead and Oparre dying. He accepts his guilt for which he will atone until he is reunited with them in death. Salem however, and its pious puritans have seen the last of him too.

The Medeas of these three plays all still love Jason at the beginning of the play, although in the first two plays, it is a very possessive love. For Jahnn, who revives and explores the theme of the aging woman threatened by a young and beautiful rival, sexual jealousy is of paramount importance as a motive for Medea's crime. For both Lenormand and Anderson, who move the Medea story out of its classical background, it is society rather than her rival for her husband's love which poses the real threat to Medea. Lenormand's Aimée is an "old maid" of 27, while Anderson's Faith never attempts to regain Nathaniel's love. It is therefore only Jahnn's Medea who is motivated by jealousy and who kills both the children and her rival. In the other two plays only the children are killed. In Anderson's play the element of revenge has disappeared completely. Jahnn's Medea breaks her last ties to humanity with her murders and the children become completely hers in death. Lenormand's Katha tries to free her children's souls from enslavement to the European civilization. She cannot succeed completely though as even the children have been "corrupted" by Christianity. Katha's deed, however, inspires pity and sympathy rather than awe and horror because De Mezzano and society in general must bear a large share of the responsibility for her crime. Aimée's life is spared because she will lose De Mezzano in any case. Oparre not only frees the children from a future as slaves or prostitutes, but with this final act sets Nathaniel free. Oparre has no
rival for Nathaniel's love. He betrays her not for another woman but for wealth and social acceptance. Nathaniel's love is undermined, almost turned to hatred by the isolation forced on him by the ostracism through the people of Salem. As the deaths have become an act of self-sacrifice Oparre's deed is no longer horrifying. As a matter of fact she towers over the people of Salem by her nobility and selflessness. Her "barbarity" stands in sharp contrast to the heartlessness and cruelty of the "civilized" Christians of Salem.

(b) after 1945: Jeffers, Anouilh, Csokor, Alvaro, Braun, Magnuson

The lack of consensus in the treatment of Medea's crime which was already apparent in the first three plays of the 20th century becomes more pronounced in the most recent plays. There is Anouilh's Medea, for instance, whose cold-blooded murder of her children is only equalled by Lapéruse's and Lucas' Medeas. Jeffers' and Braun's Medeas are also quite horrifying women who kill in a passion of sexual frustration and hatred. In this respect these three plays certainly seem to follow the Senecan model of Medea, even though the writers may have felt closer to Euripides' play. In the other three plays Medea is again a noble and proud woman who may be guilty but who still arouses our sympathy and has nothing in common with the Senecan witch. The two extremes in portrayal are probably Anouilh's Médée and Alvaro's La lunga notte di Medea. In Alvaro's play Medea kills her children to save them from an enraged mob of Corinthians which has already tried to stone them. Nor is it sure whether Medea actually tried to murder Creusa. The gifts are never accepted or worn because Creon suspects Medea's motives in sending
them. A mere rumour of Creusa's death is already enough to turn the populous against the innocent children of the hated Medea, who had come to Corinth to find peace and a quiet life far away from the power struggles of the courts. The revenge motive may thus be entirely missing from this play; it is impossible to ascertain whether Medea's gifts were deadly or not.

The other extreme is represented by Anouilh's Medea who is already filled with hatred from the beginning of the play and who only needs the slightest provocation to give way to her unbridled passions. She, like Jeffers' and Braun's Medeas, has already a long criminal career behind her and refuses to break the chain of evil and violence. Unlike Jason, she will not compromise and affirm life. She finds her end in an orgy of fire and destruction which engulfs her and her children.

Perhaps it should be noted at this point that the 20th century preoccupation with the violent aspects of the Medea story equals and perhaps even surpasses that of the Renaissance. The destructive urge is not only expressed in increased savagery and bestiality but also in the frequency with which it is turned against Medea per se. There is undoubtedly a death-wish already in Euripides' Medea, but for the first time since Galladei's play Medea kills herself again, although in Anderson's play the suicide is a form of self-sacrifice. There are however great similarities in the deaths of Galladei's, Anouilh's and even Lenormand's Medeas. In Braun's play Medea does not actually commit suicide but has degenerated into an animal-like state of insanity which would seem worse than death, while Alvaro's Medea faces the mob ready to die. Only Jeffers'
and Magnuson's Medeas exit triumphant, unscathed and unscorned, their revenge successful and their pride redeemed. In Jeffers', Braun's and Magnuson's plays Medea's deed also leads to scenes of general destructiveness such as rioting, looting and rebellion. Medea's revolt thus spreads to the city which is left masterless after Creon's death. In Braun's play however, Jason and the citizens of the chorus rush back to the aid of embattled Corinth.

Although Csokor's Anna carries out her revenge successfully, she does not gloat over Peter's defeat at the end. Her own suffering and punishment are probably greater than his. She has however become resigned and gained insight and a new dignity through her suffering. She kills her unborn child to protect it from the corruption of his father's world. Her revenge on Peter is the destruction of her rival Dora and not the child-murder. Alvaro's Medea experiences no triumph of revenge either as she kills the children to spare them from a worse death and is ready to die in expiation of her crime. For Anouilh's and Braun's Medeas, revenge is self-destructive. Both are defeated at the end of the play.

While the 20th century brings the most horrifying as well as the most excusable murders of the children, an attempt is made in most of these plays to find some excuse for Medea's crime, be it insanity, lack of all human emotions, sexual frustration or a desire to protect them. Csokor's Anna is the only one who cannot claim extenuating circumstances and who most closely resembles Euripides' Medea in the clear-sighted execution of her deed. The element of revenge is less important in this play than the deep sense of betrayal experienced by Csokor's Anna who is
as single-minded as Euripides' Medea. She sacrifices her feminity and her desire for children to the ideals she believes in. She has fought like a man at Peter's side, only to find herself betrayed by Peter's easy compromise with life's expectations. War has forced an unnatural way of life on her, has hardened and aged her prematurely, and now the battle is won, she is asked to step aside for the pleasure-seeking and pampered Dora. Peter, in his desire for self-gratification, even betrays his unborn child — Anna's one means to become a woman like any other again. Individual happiness is no longer possible for Anna. The child's conception was rooted in guilt and after Peter's betrayal it can no longer live but must die in expiation of his parents' guilt, while Anna must dedicate the rest of her life to the homeless and motherless. Anna is as fully aware of the consequences of her deed as Euripides' Medea. Only for Anna the element of self-punishment is greater than the desire for revenge, at least as far as the death of the child is concerned.

In summary it must be noted that the 20th century writers although attracted by the Medea story more than ever before do not seem to have solved the problem posed by Medea's crime either. There does not appear to be a generally discernible trend in the handling of Medea's crime although an attempt is usually made to find extenuating circumstances which, in some instances, almost free Medea from blame altogether. However, there are still plays in which Medea ends in a blaze of destruction. No writer, whatever the merits of his play, seems to have been able to equal Euripides' feat of presenting us with a Medea who is both great
and horrible, who strikes us with awe because she consciously and deliberately chooses to do evil which she knows will cause her great suffering, and who suppresses all natural feelings of mother love to revenge her injured honour. Many writers have come close to the Euripidean model, but his Medea still towers over her successors.
IV. The Relationship Between Jason and Medea

(1) Euripides

By setting the story of Jason and Medea on a human and realistic level, Euripides changed not only their image but also the relationship between them. We have already seen that Euripides placed very little emphasis on Medea's knowledge of black magic. She is seen as a woman rather than as a witch or a semi-divine being. Only at the end, after her ancestor Helios has come to her rescue, does she show her prophetic powers by foretelling Jason's future. Her former deeds, with the exception of the murder of Pelias, are regarded far more as heroic exploits than as the machinations of a sorceress.

However, it is obvious that Medea is not an ordinary woman, in spite of the fact that she sets out to convince the Corinthian women that she is just like them. Jason is quite correct when he states at the end of the play that "there is no Greek woman who would have dared such deeds." (1. 1339) But neither would he have found an ordinary Greek woman who would have saved his life and helped him to obtain the Golden Fleece. Medea's actions are always of great and heroic dimension. She is undoubtedly more intelligent than most of the people she encounters. However, the most significant feature in which she differs from the other Greek women is that she thinks and acts like a man. She takes her fate in her own hands, makes independent decisions and is prepared to go to any length, shirking no pains or discomforts, if she feels justified in her action. Her whole life is guided by a masculine code of honour, which could have been that of a Greek hero:
Let no one think me a weak one, feeble-spirited,
A stay-at-home, but rather just the opposite,
One who can hurt my enemies and help my friends;
For the lives of such persons are most remembered.
(1. 807-810)

While for an ordinary Greek woman it would have been the most honourable aim not to draw any attention to herself, be it for good or evil, Medea cannot bear to go unnoticed. Just as she did not meekly wait to be allotted a suitable husband, so she will not meekly suffer rejection from the man of her choice.

As a wife, Medea is fiercely loyal. She leaves her home, kills her brother and Pelias, all to help the man she loves. As long as her love is returned, she places Jason and his interests above all else. She does not even shrink from crime, if she feels it to be to his advantage. She insists, however, upon her conjugal rights and his absolute fidelity: Jason must be hers exclusively. As he is all she has and all that matters to her, his faithfulness and loyalty are essential to her life. With Jason's desertion, Medea loses her raison d'être and turns into the revengeful fury we see at the end of the play. As long as Jason remained faithful, she could let him bask in his glory as the hero and leader of the Argonauts, even though a great deal of the credit was due to her. His honour was her honour; his glory reflected on her. With the dissolution of the marriage between Jason and Medea, however, Medea's own personal honour suddenly becomes of first importance again. This honour is mocked by Jason's new wedding and can, according to Medea's code only be redeemed by Jason's destruction. Medea then is a very loyal, devoted and demanding wife. She is ready to give all, but, in return, she demands complete loyalty.

Under these circumstances, motherhood can only be of secondary
importance to Medea, although there is genuine love:

Come, children, give
Me your hands, give your mother your hands to kiss them.
Oh the dear hands, and 0 how dear are these lips to me,
And the generous eyes and the bearing of my children!
I wish you happiness, but not here in this world.
What is here your father took. Oh how good to hold you!
How delicate the skin, how sweet the breath of children!

(1. 1069-1075)

But the children are not essential to her very being. She loves them for their warmth, their tenderness and their innocence. She has been looking forward to seeing them grow up:

Before I have seen you happy and taken pleasure in you,
Before I have dressed your brides and made your marriage beds
And held up the torch at the ceremony of wedding.

(1. 1025-1027)

Until Jason's desertion Medea's relationship with her children seems to have been a good one. The children certainly appear to trust her and they show no fear of her. As a matter of fact, they have to be prevented from running to her when they get back from play. It is only when Medea's honour is injured, and they become the necessary tools of her plans for revenge, that her love for them cannot overcome her fury at her rejection by their father. Nevertheless, she feels deep sorrow and regret for the children's death, both before and after the deed, which stands in sharp contrast to her pitiless attitude towards Creon and his daughter.

However, just as Medea the loving mother probably always came second to Medea the passionate wife, so she must of necessity lose out to Medea the insulted woman with her strongly developed sense of honour. But it is this awareness of Medea as a loving mother which makes her murder of the children so horrifying. Again, if Medea had been a man
whose honour had been injured, her revenge might still be considered extreme and the infanticide a crime, but the deed would not have been as revolting as it is committed by a woman and mother. There is a real dilemma in Medea's duality. If she has been accepted as a human being, a wife and a mother, whose plight has aroused our sympathy, it is difficult to explain Medea the ruthless and calculating child-murderess, unless we point to her loss of humanity at the close of the play. Her deed just does not seem to be humanly possible. This is one of the problems all of the later playwrights have wrestled with in their Médée interpretations.

While Medea emerges from Euripides' treatment of the story as an almost overdimensional and certainly complex figure of heroic stature, the same certainly cannot be said for Jason. Looking at his previous exploits as leader of the Argonauts in the light of what happens in this play, we must question his integrity and his credibility as a hero. Euripides has successfully reduced him from a splendid hero to an ordinary human being who craftily exploits whatever advantageous opportunity presents itself. It should be clearly understood, however, that according to Greek law as it existed in Euripides' days, Jason was absolutely within his rights when he repudiated Medea and her children in order to marry Creon's daughter. Marriage between a Greek and a foreigner — in this case even a barbarian — was not legally binding. Their union was thus very likely more in the nature of a common-law relationship, even if a proper marriage ceremony was performed, which is not stated explicitly in the play. Medea certainly regards herself as Jason's lawful
wife, but she only refers to the oaths he swore. This might have been no more than a private pact between them, like the oaths by which Medea later seeks to bind Aegeus to his promise of refuge. This scene with Aegeus serves, however, to stress the implicit faith Medea puts in an agreement confirmed by oaths to the gods. Moreover, under Greek law, Jason's and Medea's children would be considered illegitimate and non-Greek.

Legally therefore, Euripides' Jason is justified in acting as he does. Morally, probably not even the fifth century all-male audience could approve of his behaviour. This is brought out by the chorus who keep insisting that, in spite of his arguments and rationalizations and in spite of the severity of his punishment, Jason has done wrong and must blame himself for the consequences:

\[
\text{Heaven, it seems, on this day has fastened many EVIILS on Jason, and Jason has deserved them. (1. 1231-1232)}
\]

Nowadays however, Jason is probably disapproved of more because of his incredible self-righteousness than because of his perjury. Although he cannot be considered to be bad - he lacks greatness for that - and although his punishment is too severe for what he has done, it is practically impossible to feel sympathy for him. Pity, perhaps, because he is essentially an insignificant little man: an opportunist who is always ready to profit from an advantageous situation; an egoist who is primarily concerned for himself only; a materialist who grabs at any chance to improve his economic condition.

Another striking feature of Jason is his vanity. Not only is he convinced that Aphrodite personally cares about him and has compelled
Medea to save his life, but he also feels that his new bride
will agree to anything for love of him:

If my wife considers me of any value,
She will think more of me than money, I am sure of it. (1. 962-963)

But he is proven wrong in his assessment of her too, as is borne out
by the messenger's report: It was only on seeing the dress that Creusa
agreed to Jason's proposals. As Medea rightly surmised "gold does more
with men than words." (1. 965).

Euripides' Jason is a shallow and rather despicable character. He
breaks his oaths to the gods; he repays love and favours with ingratitude
and banishment; and he is willing to abandon those that depend on his
protection when they have become a nuisance to him. His overall beha­
viour casts serious doubts on the greatness of his exploits as the hero
of the Argo expedition. Thus, even if we are to believe that he did act
with the best of intentions and out of concern for the welfare of his
family, he is not a very admirable man and certainly not a hero. Besides
if he was so certain of the rightness of his cause, why did this new mar­
riage have to be arranged and concluded in secrecy from Medea?

Nor can Jason have been a very satisfactory husband to a woman
like Medea. He turns out to be the weaker partner in every respect. His
self-righteous rationalizations do not stand up to the force of her
passion, nor do his calculating arguments make an impression on her supe­
rior intellect. It would appear that Medea must always have been the
more dominant and forceful of the two. Jason certainly does not seem to
understand Medea with her passionate love, her fierce loyalty and her
overwhelming sense of honour. Or otherwise how could he offer her money when she wanted absolute faithfulness? How could he believe in her sudden meek acquiescence to his plans, if he were not totally blind to the real Medea? Jason's gullibility in his second encounter with Medea seems to know no bounds. He has to be incredibly insensitive and self-satisfied not to become suspicious of the terrifying irony in Medea's words:

I should have helped you in these plans of yours,  
Have joined in the wedding, stood by the marriage bed,  
Have taken pleasure in attendance on your bride.  
But we women are what we are - perhaps a little  
Worthless; and you men must not be like us in this,  
Nor be foolish in return when we are foolish.  

(1. 886-891)

As far as his infidelity goes, Jason accuses Medea of an extreme interest in the sexual aspects of life, disregarding the expediencies which motivate him. He protests time and again that his interest in his new bride is not sexual, but merely political, and he probably believes this himself. However, after his bride has died, he himself puts the lie to this statement when he complains that now he will get no pleasure from his newly wedded love and accuses Medea of killing their children merely "for the sake of pleasure in the bed." (1. 1338)

Nor is Jason very convincing as a loving father. He does not seem to have any scruples about letting his children go into exile with Medea, apart from a wish to ease their financial needs. It must be borne in mind that at that time he is still counting on the prospect of further children from his Corinthian bride, although he protests that he is not marrying for the sake of having more children. After all, these future children would have been his only legitimate and Greek progeny. It is
not surprising therefore that Medea is not impressed by his arguments that he has concluded this new match for the benefit of their children. Medea's children would still be bastards and non-Greeks and could not legally succeed him. And how could they benefit from their father's improved situation when they are banished from Corinth? It is Medea who eventually, for reasons of her own, suggests that the children remain with Jason in Corinth. He initially doubts whether Creon will agree to let the children stay, but when Medea plays on his vanity in suggesting his new bride might grant him this wish, he is confident of success.

Only when Jason realizes that the children are all he has left does he rush to their rescue. But his concern for the children has come too late. Now that Medea has destroyed him and his house, his father-love makes itself manifest and he longs to touch and kiss them. He did not ask to see them and bid them farewell when he knew they were to be exiled. Medea, however, refuses him access to them nor does she allow him the right to bury and mourn them. She feels that, unlike herself, he never really loved them when they were still alive:

Now you would speak to them, now you would kiss them.
Then you rejected them.

(1. 1401-1402)

The question remains open whether Jason's grief is more for himself and the destruction of his house or for the children themselves. But not even in his defeat does Jason become a tragic figure, because he has gained no insight. His curses and his lamentations at the end are as pathetic and futile as the rest of his life appears to have been. It
seems to be Jason's fate always to be overshadowed by Medea who is of truly heroic and tragic stature.

An interesting aspect about this ill-assorted couple is their apparent male-female role reversal, to which the chorus refers already quite early on in the play:

Flow backward to your sources, sacred rivers,
And let the world's great order be reversed.
It is the thoughts of men that are deceitful,
Their pledges that are loose.
Story shall now turn my condition to a fair one,
Women are paid their due.
No more shall evil-sounding fame be theirs.  
(1. 410-420)

Medea uses deceit in full consciousness of her ultimate aims directed against her enemies. There is not a trace of female meekness, subservience or dependence in her. She takes full responsibility for her actions and is willing to bear their consequences whatever they may be. Jason, on the other hand, grasps every favourable opportunity which presents itself. He always seems to be dependent on someone else to rescue him from danger or merely from unpleasant situations. He takes credit for success but failure is always blamed on others. Jason is deceitful, secretive and volatile in his affections. His new marriage is plotted in secrecy until he has the full support of the authorities behind him. Although Medea is very devious in encounters with her enemies, she is direct and truthful in her statements to the Corinthian Women whom she trusts. Jason also seems to have a vanity generally ascribed to women, which Medea lacks. She, in turn, has the pride and the sense of honour which is not found in Jason. There is no doubt that the misunderstanding between the spouses is mutual. Medea must have
fooled herself with a girlish image of a Greek hero, or Jason's desertion would not have come as quite such a shock and surprise to her. Once her eyes are opened, she soon realizes his true nature, which enables her not only to manipulate him according to her will but to strike back at him where he is most vulnerable. Jason, however, is not aware of the dangerous passion for revenge which his idesertion aroused in Medea nor does he seem to have learnt anything once it has been unleashed. First, he accuses Medea of being a sex fiend, then again he accepts her meek behaviour unquestioningly, only to accuse her of being an inhuman monster at the end.

In the course of the play there is also a reversal of their respective situations. Jason, self-assuredly rejoicing in his good fortune at the beginning of the play turns into a snivelling, self-pitying wreck of a man. Medea whose wild lamentations and curses are heard at the start of the play, turns into a jeering woman exulting in her triumph of destruction. Nevertheless, there is one thing Jason and Medea share at the end of the play. While Medea at first resented and cursed the children along with herself and Jason, and Jason was plainly indifferent to them, they now both share in their grief over their death. However instead of uniting them in their suffering only serves to drive them further apart with mutual accusations and recriminations. Suffering turns out to be a destructive force for both Medea and Jason.
In comparison to the Euripidean characters, the Senecan Jason and Medea do not receive a very realistic portrayal. Jason's appearance is very short and sketchy. He is too shadowy and insignificant a figure to leave the impression of a definite personality. Medea, herself, is not subject to the laws of nature and to fate like ordinary mortals. "Fortune has always stood inferior to me," (p. 381) she proudly proclaims. She has all the attributes of a destructive force of nature, or of a nightmare haunting Jason's life, a demonic curse from which he cannot escape. This makes it almost impossible to look at Jason and Medea as a couple and speculate on the nature of the relationship between them. Medea seems to regard Jason as a possession which rightly belongs to her and which Creon and his daughter are stealing from her. Jason is her prize, of which she will not let go, no matter how he himself feels about it. Very little real love for him thus enters her considerations.

Throughout the play, Medea is portrayed as a sorceress, and an evil one at that, who prides herself on the crimes she has committed. Although she, too, claims to have done evil only to serve Jason. She feels that, since he has profited by her crimes, he must share the responsibility for them with her. She stresses over and over that she not only saved Jason's life but also that of all the other Argonauts. Without her help Greece would have lost its noblest princes:

*This alone have I brought with me from my Colchian realm, that myself I saved that magnificent and illustrious flower of Greece, bulwark of the Achaean race, progeny of gods.* (p. 373)
As sole reward Medea claims Jason for herself:

Of the leader of leaders I say nothing; for him there is no debt, him I charge to no one's account. The others I brought back for you; Jason, for myself. (p. 373)

Although Medea keeps stressing her rights to Jason more than her love for him, it is clear that her interest in him is not yet over. She tries to excuse him and blames only Creon for the new marriage. She even professes a willingness to forego her revenge if only Jason will flee with her. It is only when Medea finally realizes that because of his fears and his weariness Jason is definitely lost to her that her full rage breaks loose.

Her feelings for Jason, whatever they may be, certainly outweigh her mother-love, which seems to be wholly contingent on Jason's love for her. There is only one short moment of tenderness which is quickly overcome by her anger:

Here, dear children, sole solace of a house overthrown, come here and fuse your limbs with mine in close embrace. Your father may have you unharmed, provided your mother, too, may have you. But exile and flight press hard; any moment they will be torn from by bosom, weeping and sighing amidst their kisses as they are snatched away. They are lost to their mother; let them be lost to their father. (p. 392)

Because they are Jason's children, Medea loves them as long as he is hers and disowns them when he is no longer hers: "I resign them, disclaim them, disown them!" (p. 381) Although Medea seems to be briefly aware of the full horror of her proposed crime, she feels the children must pay the price for their father's infidelity: "Children once mine, you must pay the price for your father's wickedness." (p. 391) She is so successful in suppressing any motherly feeling in her, that
in the fury of her revenge she even regrets she has not more children she could slay to punish Jason:

Would that proud Niobe's brood had issued from my womb, that I had given birth to twice seven sons! I have been too sterile for vengeance, but two I did bear... (p. 392)

For the Senecan Medea, unlike the Euripidean one, these killings are quite in character and we do not experience a shock of disbelief in witnessing them. She is a monster from start to finish; killing her children is just one further refinement in her career of crime. Her flight in the dragon chariot is wholly consistent with this concept of an apotheosis of evil.

Jason, too, has undergone some changes compared to his Euripidean predecessor. Gone are his smugness, his complacency and his hunger for power and social status. We find here already a hint of the tired and weary hero who is to reappear again in later plays. He admits that he is worn down by his troubles and ready to give up. This Jason is overawed by worldly power: "I am terribly afraid of lofty scepters", and Medea's question has a superb touch of irony: "Are you sure you do not covet them?" (p. 382) Because all the evil is concentrated in Medea, Seneca's Jason is, in spite of his weakness and cowardice, more sympathetic than Euripides' hero. He never denies that he owes Medea his life, although he now feels ashamed at having let her buy his life with her crimes. He also lacks the self-righteousness of the Euripidean Jason and is certainly not a heroic figure. Having to choose between breaking his oath or possible death, he prefers to save his and his children's life, while abandoning Medea to her fate. In order to avoid a war with Acastus, the son of Pelias, and to secure Creon's goodwill for himself and the children,
he is willing to let Medea take the full blame for the crimes she com-
mitted in his favour. He knows that he is breaking his word, but we
can believe him when he says that the children's safety and well-being
were his main concern. He is afraid to flee with Medea and he even
fears that his long encounter with Medea might arouse Creon's suspicion.
Jason evidently makes a poor impression as a great hero and leader of
the Argonauts. Even Creon who has chosen him as son-in-law, calls him
"an exile helpless and haunted by pressing fear." (p. 374) Yet the
chorus seems to be very impressed, at least by his physical beauty:

If our Jason, Aeson's scion, would display his
beauty, then would the wicked lightning's off-
spring yield to him, even Bacchus who harnesses
tigers to his chariot. Yield, too, would Apollo...
(p. 369)

They are also very much in favour of his new marriage and certainly do
not rebuke him for having broken his word:

Delivered from the wedlock of uncouth Phasis,
schooled fearedly and with unwilling hand to
fondle the bosom of an incontinent mate, now,
happy groom, take unto yourself an Aeolian maid;...
(p. 369)

This Jason seems to grow during the course of the play and is not left
totally annihilated at the end. He is heart-broken, angry and very
bitter, but still defiant as he shouts his last words to Medea:

Ride through the lofty spaces of high heaven,
and wherever you go bear witness that there
are no gods. (p. 394)

He has learnt his lesson. It is unhealthy for a mere man to tangle with
supernatural beings like Medea. As there is no divine order or providence,
it can only lead to death and destruction.

That Seneca's Jason was a truly loving father cannot be denied.
He could not bear to see his children go into exile with Medea, and thereby gave Medea the idea for her revenge. When he is forced to watch the murder of his second child, Jason offers himself in his son's stead, but Medea would rather see him suffer than dead:

Nay, here will I drive my sword, where you like it least, where it will hurt you most. Go now, proud man, find maids to marry, and abandon mothers. (p. 394)

In Seneca's *Medea* we do not really encounter a male-female reversal of roles, although Jason's conduct is far from heroic and Creon accuses Medea of having "a woman's irresponsibility for reckless daring and the strength of a man, with no thought of reputation." (p. 374)

It is at the best a very uneven struggle between an ordinary man and a witch with extraordinary powers.

Nor do we find a reversal of fortunes in this play. Already at the start of the play, Medea is angry, rather than hurt, and although she begs, bargains and fights for Jason, her rage increases steadily to climax with the infanticide and her apotheosis. Jason, on the other hand, never feels very secure in his position and is always aware of his guilt towards her. He just appears to harbour the vain hope that Medea will see reason and leave quietly. However, he does not break under his afflictions either. This mismatched couple does not even share in a common grief over the death of their children. With the murder of the children, Medea has shed the last reminder of her love for Jason. She departs truly triumphant and unrepentent, having driven her cruelty and inhumanity to a new extreme and leaving Jason alone to mourn his children and curse man's fate.
THE RENAISSANCE: De Lapéruze, Galladei and Dolce

In the portrayal of Medea herself these Renaissance writers have followed Seneca's example more closely than Euripides'. The trend to dehumanize Medea has continued. The treatment of Jason, on the other hand, shows greater variation.

As these writers devote more attention to Creusa - although she is not yet a character on stage - and, in the case of Galladei and Dolce, to the children, there occur some significant changes in the relationship between Jason and Medea. The marriage ties and the family life are starting to gain importance by this strengthening of these secondary characters.

As we have seen earlier, all three writers regard Medea as a supernatural being, a witch and a sorceress. Even Dolce, who presents the most sympathetic picture of Medea, has the nurse point out that apart from her dangerous knowledge of magic, Medea is harder and more cruel than any other woman. Although she might be pitied, and although it is generally recognized that Creon and Jason have wronged her with this new marriage, Medea is never treated or regarded as a woman like others. And, with the exception of Dolce's Medea, she is not different because she is of better birth than the women of the chorus but only because she has magical powers which frighten normal human beings. Dolce's Medea is also an extremely proud woman, who is conscious of her rank and of her offended honour: "Io sono figlia di Re, son Donna offesa." (Act II, p. 16)

As wives the Medeas of de Lapéruze and Galladei are very similar to Seneca's. They both want Jason back, although they do not express
much love for him. They too regard Jason as their prize for having
saved all of the Argonauts. Only Dolce's Medea does not mention the
others. She has saved Jason's life and he has sworn lasting faith­
fulness to her. She, like the Euripidean Medea, never begs Creon to
give him back to her. She has been wronged; and she is looking for
revenge. Although Jason is called a perjurer, there is less emphasis
on the sacredness of  ©a-ths, than in the Greek play. There is no question,
however, in any of the three plays that Jason's and Medea's marriage is
not legally binding. In Dolce's play the new marriage has already taken
place, while in the other two plays the drama develops in the midst of
the marriage ceremonies. Whatever her love for Jason may be or may have
been, Medea vows in all three plays that her hatred shall be at least
as great as her love and that her divorce will be marked by even greater
Crimes than her marriage.

The Medea of de Lapéruse never shows any feelings towards her
children. They are merely mute victims of her revenge. As a matter of
fact she even offers the children to her brother's spirit, to save herself
from his wrath:

Ie le voy, ie l'entens, il veut prendre vangeance
Deamoy, cruelle soeur, il veut punir l'outrance
Que ie lui fis à tort; il est ores recors
Que trop bourselelement ie demembroy son corps.
Non, non, mon frère, non: voicy ta recompense.
Jason traistre me fist te faire ceste offense,
Voicy, voicy ses filz. Renuoye les furies,
Renuoye ces flambeaux, sans que tu m'iniuries;
La main qui te meurtrit mesme te vangera;
Pour mon frere tué, mon filz tué sera.
Tien doncq', frere, voicy pour apaiser ton ire,
Ie t'offre corps pour corps: ie t'en vay l'vn occire.
(Act V, pp. 73-74)
Both Galladei and Dolce pay greater attention to the children than any of the previous writers. Galladei not only gives them names to lift them out of their position as mere anonymous, shadowy figures, but he also has the children discuss their feelings towards their parents. The children love and respect both parents. They suffer from the dissen­sion between them and they worry about their new step-mother. The younger son, Tesandro, even offers to accompany Medea into exile, so that she would not be so lonely. Galladei is the first to treat the theme of the disrupted family life in the Medea-story. It is this younger son, incidentally, whom Medea divides up between Jason and herself. Why the children — and for that matter also Jason in this play — should be so attached to Medea who shows them very little love and who frightens even her own nurse, is not made clear in the play. Dolce also gives us additional information about the children, who are quite young, the oldest not being seven yet. These children question why they are ex­pected to love a father who clearly does not love them. Their escape and appeal for help to the chorus is touching. The way Medea brutally draggs them off to their death clearly shows the change which has over­come her. Medea, however, does suffer by herrydeed and does keep the children's bodies with her, so that Jason, who rejected them while they were alive, would not have them dead either.

The portrayal of Jason varies quite considerably: de Lapêruse appears to conceive him as a cowardly fool, Galladei almost as the tragic hero of the play and Dolce again as a power-hungry egoist.

The Jason of de Lapêruse has perjured himself and has proven to
be false. This is pointed out by Medea's nurse, the children's tutor and the chorus. He did intercede with Creon to stop him from killing Medea, but he acted out of fear when he agreed to the new marriage. He tries to put the blame for Medea's exile on her alone and never even tries to justify his actions to Medea; he only points out that he has saved her life, without him she would already be dead. Jason professes to feel sorry for Medea and offers her money so that she will have sufficient means to leave. He is delighted when Medea's suggests the gift for Glauque, and he himself proposes the children as bearers. He does not suspect Medea's motives for one moment. He is obviously attracted by Glauque's beauty and youth and it is he who convinces a reluctant and suspicious but vain Glauque to accept Medea's gift. All in all, de Lapéryse's Jason appears to be a rather pitiable and foolish hero, who even at the end still does not understand what went wrong:

Helas! moy mal-heureux! mal-heureuse ma vie!
O Dieux! que vous avez dessus mon bien envié!
Qu'ay-ie doncques forfait? quel est mon si grand tort?
(Act V, p. 75)

A completely different Jason emerges from Galladei's play. As a matter of fact Jason seems to be the protagonist and tragic hero of this play. Medea herself does not even appear till Act II. The chorus stress Jason's heroism throughout the play and at the end they mourn the loss of a great prince and leader:

Quel gran Giason, quel raro
Prencipe, quel famoso
Che doveva inalzarti
Con la sua gloria sopra
Tutta la Grecia, il Duca
De' tanti, & tanti Heroi
Glace prostrato & morto.
(Act V, p. 71)
Creon chose Jason as his son-in-law out of all the eligible suitors for his daughter on the advice of the oracle. He threatened Jason and his family with death if he would not comply with Creon's wishes. The cruelty, injustice and tyranny of Creon are stressed throughout the play. He first gave Jason and Medea asylum in Corinth and even purged them of their guilt in Pelias' death. Now he arbitrarily accuses Medea again of the crimes from which he had purged her. Jason appears to be a weary man, feeling persecuted by ever new troubles. He had lived quietly in Corinth, feeling neither content nor unhappy when this new blow of fate struck. Although he does not love Medea - nor does he appear to love Creusa - he is well aware of the debt he owes her and of her grief and anger caused by the divorce, remarriage and exile. He is afraid of giving in to her tears and has to be reminded by the tutor to act like the eheherbehésis supposed to be. Having made up his mind to marry Creusa, he should now carry out his decision. After all Medea injured his honour as a hero by her misdeed and he should consider his debt to her paid off. Galladei's Jason is not attracted by the power and renown he will gain, but he will bow to necessity and fate. He points out to Medea that, although everyone hates and abhors her, he has always held her dear as long as fate permitted this: Now they must both submit to the will of the mighty and of fate. This Jason is the first in a line of tired and resigned heroes. He sees that reality has changed his ideas and reality is stronger. But his weakness shows through his heroic image, even if his entourage has not noticed this yet. Only at the end, after he has lost both sons, does Jason shake off his resignation and pursue Medea
in a Herculean rage, killing himself in order to join his sons and be buried with them, but also to continue the vendetta against Medea in the other world.

Dolce's Jason again is modelled quite closely on the Euripidean figure. He will always give preference to the useful over the honest and truthful, a creed which seems to be accepted by most of the characters in this play. He is definitely hungry for power and riches. He is attracted to Creusa not only because of her youth and beauty but also because of her rich dowry and her access to the crown. Dolce's Jason is not a hero who has only now become corroded by misfortune and social ambitions. The nurse points out from the beginning that it was not noble courage which made Jason set out on the quest for the Golden Fleece but a craving for adventure. Dolce thus introduces Jason the adventurer rather than the hero. Dolce's Jason is also very vain. He accuses Medea of having helped him out of passion and not compassion:

...non fu pieta, ma caldo foco,
Ch'amoroso pensier ti mise in core,
D'haver un Greco Re per tuo marito;
O mossa da bellezza, o da virtute,
Che in me ti parve di vedere alhora,
O dal chiaro splendor del mio lignaggio;

(Act II, p. 18)

He imputes his own motives to Medea, points to the great advantages she gained from her life with him and in Greece and concludes that she has benefited more from their relationship than he has:

Hai maggior beneficio ricevuto
Da me, di quel, che tu stessa ti vanti
D'havermi fatto:...

(Act II, p. 19)

If possible, this Jason is even more smug and self-righteous than the
Euripidean one. He is censored both by the chorus and by Aegeus who find him unworthy of being called a hero. Even Creusa does not seem too enamoured with him. She almost despises him for having had children by someone like Medea. At the end, he first watches helplessly how Creon and Creusa die and later, after the murder of the children, he is left to lament his life and curse Medea.

While Dolce's Jason is a father who loves himself more than anyone else, including his children, and who only discovers too late how much they actually meant to him, the Jason of de Lapéruse first agrees to let the children go into exile with Medea and is accused by the chorus of having failed them:

_Mais cestuy-là qui plus deust avoir soin_  
_De vous ayder, vous desfaut au besoin._  

(Act II, p. 35)

He later does offer his life in return for at least one of the children. Galladei, following Seneca's example, presents us with a most devoted father who agrees to the new marriage only to save the children's life and who, when he is unable to save them from Medea's anger, even refuses to survive them.

In these three Renaissance plays it is hard to trace a valid relationship between the spouses, as Medea is dehumanized and cannot be considered as a partner in a real marriage. Strangely enough, she seems to be an advocate of feminine rights and powers in de Lapéruse's play, although she certainly does not have the support of her sex. Medea is such an incredible monster in Galladei's play that one wonders why he lets his Jason proclaim always to have held her dear. In Dolce's play
Medea is a cruel sorceress and Jason a pompous egoist. Both are so conscious of their own worth that one is bound to wonder how they could have lasted side by side for so many years. As a couple none of these Medeas and Jasons are very realistically portrayed. The only realistic note introduced in these Renaissance plays is the emphasis on Creusa as the other woman and on the predicament of the children. These themes will be taken up again by many of the later writers.

The Renaissance writers' interest in man as such is shown by this increased attention paid to Jason, the children and Creusa. Human relationships seem to have become more important than Medea's internal struggle between injured honour and mother-love. There is an interesting paradox in the portrayal of Medea as a supernatural being tortured by the very human jealousy of her rival.
17th Century: Corneille and Longepierre

Both writers place great emphasis on the relationship between the sexes and the triangle situation, which is particularly important in Corneille's Médée.

Medea is a very proud woman in both plays. She is very conscious of her ancestry and will not demean herself in any way. Creon especially is both impressed and annoyed by her haughty arrogance.

Although Medea differs from the Renaissance witch, there is still great emphasis put on her supernatural capacities. Not only does she have the usual powers over nature and the gods; but she can transfix people with her magic wand, and in Corneille's play she can even bestow invisibility to Aegeus and create a phantom to take his place in prison. The only force over which Medea has no power is love. She is neither able to regain Jason's love nor to root out her own love which can only be turned into an equally passionate hatred. However, Corneille's Medea is a weary sorceress who, as she explains to Aegeus, would prefer to live an ordinary human existence without using her magic:

Si je vous ai servi, tout ce que j'en souhaite,  
C'est de trouver chez vous une sûre retraite,  
Où de mes ennemis menaces ni présents  
Ne puissent plus troubler le repos de mes ans.  
Non pas que je les craigne; eux et toute la terre  
A leur confusion me livreraient la guerre;  
Mais je hais ce désordre, et n'aime pas à voir  
Qu'il me faille pour vivre user de mon savoir.  
(pp. 607-608, Act IV)

Both Medeas have been very happy in their marriage to Jason and, because they still love him, are now very jealous of his new attachment.

Corneille's Medea is a far more indifferent mother than
Longepierre's who seems to suggest that precisely because she loves the children, she must kill them. In both plays, Medea visualizes future slavery and unhappiness for the children if they remain in Corinth, and she therefore considers them better off dead. But in these children she is also killing off her love for Jason: only with the children's death is Medea finally free of her love. The children have again faded into the background in these two plays, as much greater emphasis is put on the relationship between the parents.

There is a greater difference in the portrayal of Jason than of Medea in these two plays. In both, Jason has grown weary of Medea. He still pities her but a new love has made him completely indifferent to her suffering and quite reckless with regard to her dangerous anger. The image of the French courtier has influenced the portrayal of Jason.

Corneille's Jason, however, is entirely despicable - a self-centred hypocrite, an egoist and a fortune-hunter:

Aussi je ne suis pas de ces amants vulgaires;
J'accomode ma flamme au bien de mes affaires;
Et sous quelque climat que me jette le sort,
Par maxime d'Etat je me fais cet effort.

(Act I, p. 570)

He is occasionally troubled by guilt feelings about Medea, but he always rationalizes his behaviour with concern for the welfare of the children. As a man this Jason is certainly not appealing, and in the course of the play his heroism becomes questionable too. Although he takes the credit for having aborted Aegeus' attempt to kidnap Creusa, we find out later that Pollux was the real hero of that adventure. Medea points out to him at the end that his life and his deeds are her creations and that
without her help he is completely helpless:

Et que peut contre moi ta débile vaillance?
Mon art faisait ta force, et tes exploits guerriers
Tienent de mon secours ce qu'ils ont de lauriers.

(Act V, p. 617)

Jason's faithlessness becomes even more apparent by the reference to Hypsipyle whose love he used to his advantage and whom he then left behind on Lemnos. As Medea well knows, he is power-hungry and will exploit women to achieve his aims. Jason is also very callous in his attitude towards the women he has abandoned. He feels that Medea will have to forgive him because she loves him, just as Aegeus is supposed to prove his love for Creusa by letting her marry Jason. That Jason is not the devoted father he pretends to be is obvious from the fact that he wants to kill his children to avenge his bride's death.

Longepierre's Jason is not quite the same power-hungry opportunist. He is, however, already the image of the romantic lover, sighing at his beloved's feet and vowing that he will die for her. His heroic exploits do not seem to play too great a part in this play, although Creusa and Creon admire him as a great Greek hero. His inconstancy in love is also pointed out by Creusa who fears that in time she will meet with the same fate as Hypsipyle and Medea:

Hypsipyle et Médée, objets de vos amours,
Se sont laissé surprendre à de pareils discours,
Et de nouveaux objets votre âme possédée,
A laissé cependant Hypsipyle et Médée.

(Act III, pp. 70-71)

Jason, however, tries to reassure her that her case is quite different from theirs. Creusa is also bothered by Medea's legitimate claims on Jason. Despite Jason's assurance that Greece and the gods disapprove
of his marriage to Medea, his new happiness cannot quite make him forget Medea. Longepierre's Jason is as devoted a father as Medea a mother. There is a real tug-of-war between them for the children. Jason cannot live without them, and Medea kills them so that he shall not have them either. Had Jason allowed Medea to keep the children, she feels she would have been able to love his image in them, and the catastrophe could have been averted.

Both writers place great emphasis on the relationship between the sexes. Corneille not only treats the dilemma of a man choosing between the obligations to his wife, the mother of his children, and the advantages of a beautiful, young and rich girl, but also that of the girl, betrothed to a rich old man but in love with the more flamboyant penniless younger man. The war of the sexes: love, jealousy and hatred, are at the centre of his play. Not only does Medea, the rejected wife, seek revenge but she is joined in this by the rejected suitor Aegeus. Medea, however, proudly declines all human help in her revenge, although she does not reject Aegeus' offer of marriage outright. Longepierre also is preoccupied with love but he stresses the unhappiness which it is bound to cause.

The relationship between Jason and Medea and also Jason and Creusa - who appears for the first time in these plays as a character - gains thus increasing importance in these plays. The dead almost appear as the victims in this war of the sexes.
(5) 18th Century: Lessing, Glover, Gotter and Klinger

Lessing:

In his Miss Sara Sampson Lessing has concentrated solely on the triangle relationship. He shows a weak man entrapped by an evil woman who destroys both him and the innocent girl who had the misfortune of falling in love with him.

Glover

In this play Creusa again loses all importance and the main focus is on the relationship between Medea and Jason and on the predicament of their children. Medea is a woman gifted with extraordinary wisdom and powers, which so far she has used only to Jason's benefit. She has a reputation of being hospitable and compassionate:

Oft hath her known benignity preserv'd
The Grecian strangers on our barb'rous coast.
(Act III, p. 40)

She is also a proud and formidable woman who bows before no one, and her pride is insulted by Jason's betrayal. This Medea is of great and ageless beauty, and there is certainly no indication that Jason has tired of her, quite to the contrary. Aegeus knows that his plans for Jason and Creusa will be foiled the moment Jason sees Medea again. In spite of Medea's knowledge of magic, she has no power over love: she can command Jason's body but not his feelings. There is no doubt that she is deeply in love with Jason and that their marriage has been a happy one. When she hears Hecate's ominous prediction, she immediately jumps to the conclusion that it is Jason who is to die through her. She wants to avoid that at all cost: "Destroy my Jason! The dear, false hero! Perish first my art" (Act III,
Glover's Medea is a loving mother and is loved in return by her children, who beseech their father not to take them away from her. The children want the family to be reunited and beg their father to come back to them. There is bitter irony in the fact that Medea, when she recovers from her madness, tries to seek comfort for her situation with the children:

I will at least possess the short relief
To see my infants. Sure, my faithful friends,
From my sad heart no evils can erase
Maternal gladness at my children's sight.
Go, lead them from the temple - They will smile,
And lift my thoughts to momentary joy.

(Act V, p. 87)

When she has found out about the child-murder, she wants to live no longer. Jason is a hero who is respected by all, although he seems to be a gentle and easily persuaded man. He is torn between his conflicting responsibilities and obligations towards his father and towards Medea. In his first encounter with Medea he is contrite and humbles himself, realizing that he has wronged her greatly. From the beginning, he has not been sure himself about his true motives in agreeing to the new marriage:

Oh! in some future hour of sad reflection
May not my heart with self-reproach confess,
This plea of public welfare was ambition;
And filial duty was a feeble tie
To authorize the breach of sacred vows.

(Act II, p. 22)

When he becomes aware of the suffering he has inflicted on Medea by his breach of faith, he resolves to renounce Creusa and flee Corinth with Medea. Even after the murder of the children he blames himself rather than her. He has to be reminded to be more manful on several occasions,
both in admitting his wrong, and in being more resolute with his father and Creon. Later he has to be prevented from avoiding his responsibilities by suicide.

There is no doubt that this Jason loves Medea:

No other form of beauty,
No qualities or talents to thy own
Have I preferr'd......
........At thy approach
Light flashes through my error; to thy feet
Contrition brings me no ignoble suppliant:

(Act II, p. 35)

He has been manoeuvred into a situation from which only the manly resoluteness, he unfortunately acquires too late, can extricate him.

The children have to remind Jason that their welfare is his responsibility. But when he offers them his protection, they refuse to be parted from their mother. They want a reunited family. Jason later sees a basis for a new start between Medea and himself in their common love for the children. With their death his race has become extinct and his life is of no value to him. Glover is the first to point to the comraderie existing between Jason and Medea as a result of their shared labours in the past. The marriage is based upon more than only the vows exchanged between them:

Not love alone, not Hymen's common ties,
But fame and conquest, mutual toils and hardships,
All, which is marvellous and great, conspir'd
To make us one.

(Act IV, p. 62)

Their shared past and their children bind and hold them together, even after the catastrophe has occurred.

Gotter

Gotter's Medea is an extremely isolated being: "Ich bin allein in der Schöpfung!" (p. 7) she exclaims. She is not drawn as a well
defined character. She is made to change her mind so often that it is impossible to gather what she is supposedly thinking. It seems Medea still loves Jason, but she does not really show it. She considers their marriage, before her exile, to have been a happy one. No reasons to explain Jason's unfaithfulness are put forward in this play. As a mother Medea seems to have functioned satisfactorily. The children have missed her during her absence and seem to be genuinely attached to her. Although Medea states that she must kill the children to free them from their dismal fate which awaits them in Corinth, it is more likely that she kills Jason's likeness in them:

Kein Erbarmen! Es ist die Natterbrut Jasons—
Sein Blut klopft in ihren Adern, sein heuchlerisches Lächeln schwebt auf ihren Lippen

(pp. 15-16)

Yet she warns them against her and her love which spells their death. She intends to kill herself after she has murdered the children, but never carries out her intention.

All we hear about Jason is that he is very beautiful. When he finally appears on stage, he is obviously confused and in his impotence to revenge himself, he commits suicide. He seems to have shown some concern for his children, as they were not exiled with their mother. In this play Creusa loses all importance but there is again more emphasis placed on the children and the disrupted family life.

Klinger

In Klinger's Sturm und Drang play we have for the first time a confrontation of the two women vying for Jason's love. We find the expression of unlimited passionate love - la grande passion - in Medea,
while Creusa expresses gentle and compassionate human love: Creusa tries to explain her feelings to Medea:


(Act III, p. 190)

Medea's passion is too great and overpowering for Jason who does not like to owe all to his wife. Even though Medea tries to be submissive and docile, she is forcing herself into a human mold she does not really fit. There can be no question that Medea truly loves Jason and that her suffering over her rejection is great. She is not only jealous, but deeply hurt in her pride. She has given up all for this one human love and is rejected. Through her love for Jason Medea has been tied to humanity and, with its rejection, she breaks completely with the weak and false race of men to become again her terrible self.

While her love for Jason is passionate, Medea is most human in her love for her children. However, the children have already made friends with Creusa and she feels Creusa will rob her of them too. If need be Medea is prepared to give up Jason, if only she can keep the children with her: "Sie sey Dein Weib, nur nicht meiner Kinder Mutter!"

(Act III, p. 211) She resists her mother's command at first, but is forced into killing them after all. She is fully aware that she is killing her own children and not just Jason's which increases her suffering. In the end she takes them for burial in the temple where Jason first swore his love to her.

Jason is in love only with Creusa. He does not love Medea anymore
and even suspects that he has been a victim of her magic spell before.

He suffers under his bondage to Medea and feels that he is her creation.

He wants to become his own man, a hero in his own rights. With his rejection of Medea he thinks to rejoin humanity:


(Act III, p. 200)

He accuses Medea of having no understanding of human emotions and suffers, but he does not understand her either whose every emotion is on a larger scale than a mortal's. At the end, however, Jason does seem to realize that he is guilty too and he accepts his punishment: "...ich darf der Mörderin nicht fluchen, die wuthende Erinnis drückt den Fluch in mein glühendes Herz zurück." (Act V, p. 239)

Jason is a loving father who begs the very compliant and willing Creusa and Creon to extend their protection to his children. Jason wants to keep his children because he understands their humanity and can make men out of them:

Auf diese Kleinen fiel durch mich das Loos der schwachen Menschheit. Du fühlst es niemals rein; Du fühlst es nicht beständig. Der Faden, der Dich an sie knüpft, ist Deinem Geist zu dünn. Ich will sie zu Menschen weihen, von Deinen Verbrechen reinigen, und zu Männern bilden.

(Act III, p. 210)
Again great emphasis is placed on the children who are torn between their love for their father and mother and want them to stay together. Jason and Medea are shown as a couple who are doomed because of their different spheres. Medea can never make herself into a real human being, and Jason will always fear the sorceress in her. Jason, on the other hand, is a mortal with all the failings and weaknesses common to humanity, who can never understand or accept Medea's lofty spirit:

Der Mensch wird nur zum Mensch gezogen; der Traum, der uns zu höhern Wesen hebt, verschwindet, wenn unsre Seelen, durch unsre Augen, durch unsre Sprache sich vermischen.

(Act I, p. 170)

Jason lacked the heroic stature which Medea's passionate nature demanded. His new marriage was not inspired by political consideration or by love but by a longing for a simple human existence far from the awesome greatness and solitude of Medea.
(6) **19th Century: Grillparzer, Lucas, Legouvé**

The 19th century writers not only show an increased interest in the relationship between Jason and Medea and Jason and Creusa but also between Medea and Creusa. The effects of a break-up of a marriage on the children involved are again explored as both Grillparzer and Legouvé present us for the first time with a Creusa who is not only a rival for the love of Jason but also for that of the children.

**Grillparzer**

Grillparzer gives us the fullest development of Medea's character so far since his trilogy *The Golden Fleece* shows us Medea, the maiden in her native Colchis before the intrusion of the Greek adventurers and before the arrival of the Fleece, symbol of human lust and greed. Medea, in those days, was as innocent and pure in her way as the seemingly ageless and colourless Creusa in the last play of the trilogy, *Medea*. It is through the intrusion of the strangers, first Phrixus, then Jason and his Argonauts, that Medea's eyes are opened to the ways of the world. She becomes mature, wise and understanding, but also guilty, for her love is coupled with guilt. In the *Medea* we find a woman who has aged because she has accepted life as she found it. She has seen all her hopes and dreams shattered, yet she is still trying valiantly to make the best of it although she realizes that life means suffering, humiliation and misery. Hence stems Medea's darkness compared to Creusa's lightness or transparency.

Creusa's simplicity reflects the uncomplicated and uneventful life she has led. But her simplemindedness turns into tactlessness,
her kindness into cruelty, because she lacks experience and understanding. In front of their mother she calls Medea's children orphans and happily revives childhood memories with Jason thereby excluding Medea completely. Whenever Creusa gets a glimpse of reality, she shies back and refuses to hear or see the truth. In the end we cannot really feel sorry for Creusa's fate. It does not seem to come totally undeserved. After all she deprives Medea of husband and children while professing her friendship and assistance to the stranger who puts herself under her protection.

Grillparzer's Medea tries very hard to mould herself into a model Greek wife and to please both Jason and the Greeks. She buries the Fleece and all that goes with it; she changes her dress and even tries to play the lyre. But it is already too late. Jason no longer loves her. Nor could a man like Jason ever be held by one woman only, since he is always in need of fresh conquests to prove himself. Medea's attempts at pleasing him are doomed from the outset and lead to the scene of her greatest humiliation. Jason refuses to listen to her play the lyre and sing a childhood song she learned with great difficulty because he is too engrossed with Creusa. By the time he pays attention to her, she has forgotten the song, and Jason asks Creusa to sing it for him instead. In the ensuing struggle over the lyre, the instrument breaks and frees the original Medea from the self-imposed yoke of submission to Jason and Greece. It is now that Medea's struggle for survival and her revenge begin.

Medea has remained loyal to Jason although she knows him only too well, as she assures Creusa:

Du kennst ihn nicht, ich aber'kenn' ihn ganz!
Nur er ist da, er in der weiten Welt,
Und alles andre nichts als Stoff zu Taten.

Grillparzer's Medea tries very hard to mould herself into a model Greek wife and to please both Jason and the Greeks. She buries the Fleece and all that goes with it; she changes her dress and even tries to play the lyre. But it is already too late. Jason no longer loves her. Nor could a man like Jason ever be held by one woman only, since he is always in need of fresh conquests to prove himself. Medea's attempts at pleasing him are doomed from the outset and lead to the scene of her greatest humiliation. Jason refuses to listen to her play the lyre and sing a childhood song she learned with great difficulty because he is too engrossed with Creusa. By the time he pays attention to her, she has forgotten the song, and Jason asks Creusa to sing it for him instead. In the ensuing struggle over the lyre, the instrument breaks and frees the original Medea from the self-imposed yoke of submission to Jason and Greece. It is now that Medea's struggle for survival and her revenge begin.

Medea has remained loyal to Jason although she knows him only too well, as she assures Creusa:

Du kennst ihn nicht, ich aber'kenn' ihn ganz!
Nur er ist da, er in der weiten Welt,
Und alles andre nichts als Stoff zu Taten. 
Medea's love is mingled with hatred or at least disenchantment from the beginning of her union with Jason. Yet there is always the awareness of a bond between them which cannot be broken by words or deeds:

Das war es, was mein Vater sagte!
Ich dir zur Qual, du mir. - Doch weich' ich nicht!
Vor allem, was ich war, was ich besass,
Es ist ein einziges mir nur geblieben,
Und bis zum Tode bleib' ich es: dein Weib.

Medea feels deeply for her children and it is only after their rejection of her that she has to admit to herself that resignation is no longer possible and revenge becomes almost inevitable. She, who has been heartbroken at being allowed only one of her children to accompany her into exile, cannot bear to see them betray her for Creusa. Medea's feelings for her children are passionate and violent. She has often seen and hated their father's image in them and has thereby frightened the children who prefer the even-tempered and sweet Creusa. They also reject Medea because life with her means discomfort, uncertainty and misery. Seeing the children following their father's example in choosing the easy way out, when to her life only means suffering, she cannot feel remorse after their death because she has saved them from life — the real bane of mankind. She tells Jason:

Dir scheint der Tod das Schlimmste;
Ich kenn' ein noch viel Aergres: elend sein.
In Jason Grillparzer seems to have portrayed the man he saw and disliked in himself. Jason is the adventurer, the man who must conquer to prove himself—moving from victory to victory but hiding an inner void. Jason lives only through his deeds and conquests, be it in love or in war. However, when he obtains the Golden Fleece, and with it Medea, Jason becomes a proprietor and as such he has to fail. This is the reason for his attempt to shed the past and return to his youth. Creusa represents all the ambitions and hopes of the young man, as yet untainted by the price he has had to pay for success or by the greed associated with the quest. But Creusa is also another conquest—a new adventure to embark on. Medea becomes an unwelcome reminder of the reality of life. Jason's heroism is brittle. He is an opportunist even more than a man of action. He accepts the benefits of Medea's deeds—perhaps even suggests or inspires them—but refuses to accept the responsibility for them: "Nicht der Gedanke wird bestraft, die Tat." (p. 47)

Medea who has acted out of love becomes a scapegoat and a burden to him now he has returned to Greek civilization. Grillparzer thus exposes Jason's hollow heroism as lust and greed for power and happiness.

Given his disposition, Jason is bound to be an unsatisfactory husband. Medea's first resistance to his advances was a challenge to him, but once overcome he dropped her like a broken toy:

So stand er da, in Kraft und Schönheit prangend,  
Edn Held, ein Gott, und lockte, lockte,  
Bis es verlockt, sein Opfer, und vernichtet;  
Dan warf er's hin, und niemand hob es auf.  
(p. 25)
Although he is the last one with a right to accuse her, he loathes her all the more because he owes her too much. Even his admission, that he might have a share in the guilt by his omission to act, he only uses to gain Creusa's sympathy. Jason is also the man drawn to two types of women (as Grillparzer seems to have been): one mature, passionate and perhaps too demanding, the other young and pure - almost frigid. What Jason really feels for anyone but himself is hard to gauge. The end of the play seems to indicate that he suffers mainly from self-pity and hurt pride. He does not seem to have gained any insight and certainly looks rather despicable in comparison to Medea's calm dignity. Again there seems to be a male-female role reversal in Jason and Medea. It is the masculine in Medea and the feminine in Jason which both attracts and repels them and which binds them until the end despite their efforts to free themselves from their relationship.

Lucas

Again Medea and Creusa meet face to face in this play. Medea even restores Creusa who has lost consciousness after having been attacked by a lion whom Jason later slays. Creusa loves and admires Jason as the greatest of mortals, but will not confess this to him until she is dying. In answer to Medea's warnings, she justifies her consent to the proposed marriage with filial obedience. Although this Medea is a beautiful woman with regal bearing, Jason is unmoved by her beauty. He does not believe in her love, but feels she only used him as a convenient means to leave Colchis and gain personal fame in Greece. He excuses his infidelity with his weariness of her uneasy love and of her
crimes and a need to provide a secure future for the children. Jason, renowned for his god-like beauty and bearing and his success with mortal and immortal women, seems to be nothing but a frustrated hero. All his deeds have been brought about with the help of Medea's magic. He is protected from all danger; he cannot achieve anything because he is never allowed to risk anything. Medea's deeds have destroyed him as a man as well as a hero. However, he admits, albeit only to himself, that this is but a rationalization. In truth what he wants is Creusa with her youth, her beauty and her innocence. It is the excitement of the conquest of a new virgin which attracts him. In a way the Medea and the Jason of Lucas appear to be worthy of each other. Both seem to be opportunists and quite cold-hearted. It is hard to say whether it is more incredible that Jason and Creusa actually plan to marry in the temple, where Medea and her children have taken refuge on their arrival in Corinth, or that Jason stands by while Medea puts the poisoned garments personally on Creusa, pretending to accept the loss of husband and children with a completely uncharacteristic resignation.

As parents both Medea and Jason seem to be fairly concerned for the welfare of their children. Medea feared for their lives on the voyage to Corinth; she considerately has them moved out of earshot, when she is first told about Jason's new involvement, and she wants to flee with them. Why she eventually kills them any way remains unexplained and inexplicable. Nor does it make sense that Jason fears from the first for their children, professes that they hold the first place in his heart, yet decides to ship them off to the centaur who educated him rather than
keep them with him in Corinth. Although the children do not play such
a prominent part in this play, Medea points to the evil effects a mar-
riage break-up has on the children involved.

Pourtant, outre l'effet des querelles jalouses,
Plus d'un abus se joint au changement d'êpouses
C'est jeter la discorde et les débats amers
Au milieu des enfants dont les droits sont divers.
La fraternelle paix leur refuse ses charmes.
Aussitôt qu'ils sont grands ils recourent aux armes.
Plus loin qu'on ne le croit on pousse l'attentat;
La famille est la base où repose l'Etat. (p. 33)

Legouvé

Again the male-female relationship is emphasized and the lot of
the children becomes central to the play as a whole. Medea, sad, dis-
illusioned and guilty, but still of noble and majestic appearance, meets
Creusa who is the image of the young Medea before her innocence was
sullied by Jason's guilty passion, which caused her to forsake parents
and country and to commit fearful crimes at his behest. The two women
are attracted to each other but nevertheless remain fairly guarded.
Medea confides in Creusa until she finds out that it is Jason Creusa
loves. Her jealousy aroused, she resolves to kill Creusa, who is will-
ing to save her from the angry populace but not to give up Jason in
spite of Medea's pleas and her father's orders. Medea, who has already
been banished from all other parts of Greece, carries with her an aura
of horror which arouses extreme panic and hatred in the people of Corinth.
Creon and Orpheus, who know her personally, however only fear a desperate
deed of revenge from a humiliated and rejected wife and mother.

6 Hippolyte Lucas, Médée, Tragédie d'après Euripide, Michel Lévy Frères
Paris, 1855. (All quotes from Lucas' Médée are taken from this text.)
As a wife Medea is loyal, possessive and very jealous. Out of love Medea has become guilty. She is willing to accept this guilt, but she refuses to give up the man who was the cause of it all. Medea is very conscious of the fact that it is not only love but also common guilt which unites them:

The close entwining of our hearts doth not from love alone arise -- but quite as much from guilt!
In all my crimes thou had'st thy share! -- briefly, then, we are accomplices, e'en more than consorts!

However, Medea comes to accept Jason's betrayal and is even prepared to let him go. But she is incensed at Jason's baseness in trying to use her love of the children to gain her consent to the divorce, and of then depriving her of the children too. There is no doubt that this Medea loves her children far more than she loves Jason. From the beginning she fears that they may be the means of punishment for her crimes. She realizes that a child needs joy and a sense of security and that the life they lead with her is perhaps not in their best interest:

My ceaseless grief must weary them! A child has need of happiness, and recoils from endless tears and features seamed with care! Besides, no daughter of Greece am I, but a barbarian! my very love is fierce, the very transports of my passionate affection alarm my little ones! While kissing them, I often feel I frighten them!

There is thus from the beginning an indication that it is Medea's love which is fatal to the children. Because she understands the children's fears, Medea is able to forgive them their betrayal. Her mother-love overcomes her desire for revenge and she is ready to flee with them into an unknown future, for this Medea has no friends, no promised exile and
no dragon chariot awaiting her. When their flight is prevented, Medea kills her children because she loves them and will not let them fall into enemy hands. If they are to die for her crimes, they must die by her own hand.

Legouvé's Jason, on the other hand, is a very unpleasant person—an envious and conceited braggard, a liar and an oath-breaker. He is the type of hero who relies on brute force only. Slaying dragons and seducing maidens are all the same to him:

Thou lovest the blooming virgins, e'en as the mountain-bear the savory honey-combs, the leopard the well-fattened flock, or the torrent its flowery banks, — that it may sully their fragrant treasures and whirl them headlong in its turbid course! (p. 6)

Jason is the aggressor and the conqueror. Destruction is his way of life, and that which is not given freely, is taken by force. But once he has obtained the object of his desire, he has no further use for it. To this Jason Legouvé opposes the poet Orpheus who conquers with the word, and who has the wisdom to cultivate that which he has won. The settler is contrasted with the warrior, the man of reason with the opportunist. In such a comparison between the preserver and the destroyer, Jason is bound to be the loser. He is needed to free the people from their fears, but he is not respected as Orpheus is. Jason spurred Medea on to her crimes, but does not hesitate to desert her for a new love. His baseness is fully revealed to Medea when he uses the children to gain his ends:

Yes! lacerate my heart with thy base treachery, discard me, and in my place elect another, — all this I can imagine! such crimes are of thy race; but to speak of thy children, to feign
anxiety for their welfare, while thy heart
is busy with adulterous plans, to mingle their
innocence with thy guilty thoughts, and shield
thine infamy beneath the name of father — this
is beyond all bearing! Thou thrill’st me with horror!
(p. 20)

For Jason the children's death could only be of secondary im-
portance to Creusa's. It is not the achievement of utter and final
destruction as it was in Euripides' play, for instance.

In Legouvé's play we find no male-female role reversal. Al-
though Jason is at the root of Medea's crimes and does not hesitate
to benefit from them, he is also a man of action himself. He is com-
pletely unscrupulous and instigates the crimes for which she is then
left to bear the full responsibility. Through her love of Jason and
the crimes engendered by it, Medea is isolated throughout the play and
in the end becomes a figure of utter despair, who has been completely
destroyed by her love.

The 19th century brings us again Jason, the adventurer, the con-
queror and ladies' man. Life has been a series of conquests in which
Creusa and the throne of Corinth are his next goal. Medea, generally,
is more mother than wife and the killing of the children has for the
first time an element of salvation in it, although it is still mainly
motivated by a desire for revenge. Furthermore, in both Grillparzer's
and Legouvé's plays, Medea has become the betrayed mother as well as the
betrayed wife.
(7) 20th Century – Attempt at Conclusion

Interest in the relationship between Jásón and Medea and their children, and in Creusa, as the other woman, is generally great in the 20th century plays. One of the new aspects introduced in some of these plays is the portrayal not only of the dilemma of the man between two women but of that of two women in love with the same man. There is an emerging consciousness of sisterhood amongst women, which is not strong enough, however, to overcome the rivalry for the love of the man.

(a) Before 1939 – Jahnn, Lenormand, Anderson

Undoubtedly Jahnn's Medea is not an ordinary woman. She is the proud granddaughter of Helios and, although she has lost her immortality, she has retained sufficient magic powers to frighten those around her, including Jason who is the main beneficiary of her magic. Only her younger son understands her terrible predicament: she herself cannot benefit from her magic. She abhors her ugliness as much as Jason does, but asks some semblance of love from him, so that she may carry on in her efforts to keep him young and beautiful. Jason's betrayal makes her aging and her daily struggle with the gods meaningless.

While Medea was able to forgive Jason's constant infidelities, she cannot allow this new marriage which would deprive her of Jason completely. Her love of him is exceedingly possessive: Jason is her creation. Once he cuts himself loose from Medea and his sons, the catastrophe is inevitable. Medea's love turns to hatred, and she must destroy every link with humanity to set herself free to return to her divine origin.
Neither the Medea-figures of Lenormand or Anderson possess magic powers. They are of royal rather than divine descent. The princess in Lenormand's play Asie is a proud woman of primitive origin but with a wisdom and understanding which is not acquired by mere education. She fell in love with the white stranger who appeared like a god out of the jungle; she saved his life and helped him to power. Her love of De Mezzano is also very possessive. She loves him best when he is completely dependent on her:

Tu étais à moi comme un cadavre. A moi, comme une chose qui ne peut pas s'enfuir!

(p. 24)

In Europe the princess has become dependent on De Mezzano and has lost her hold over him. Although she loves him enough to leave her homeland with him, she shows at all times a great resentment of Christianity and European civilization and all it implies. Her pride is not only injured by De Mezzano's rejection of her but also by his attempts to humiliate her in front of her children and to erase all traces of their maternal heritage. His promise to bring progress to her country makes his betrayal even more infamous. De Mezzano denies Katha her past and intends to spoil her future. She recognizes that the machines and he are too strong for her. As she has been deprived of all hope for the future, she is determined to destroy his future too, by whatever means necessary.

For the first time since Glover's Medea, we find in The Wingless Victory a Medea-figure who is beautiful, good and noble, and who is still loved by her husband. Oparre is a devout, newly converted Christian, ready to humble herself and forget her royal origins in an effort to gain acceptance in her husband's hometown. Although only a meagre welcome is
extended to her, she is willing to stay for Nathaniel's sake. Nathaniel
never ceases to love Oparre; it is only the threat to his wealth which
divides them. Oparre's love for Nathaniel and her faith in him are
absolute: she sacrifices home, children and herself for her love. She
cannot understand Nathaniel's weariness, his need for security and ac-
ceptance by his own kind and for wealth so that he may buy the respect
he has always craved. Love is Oparre's whole life.

Although Jahn's Medea loves her children, her love is a sensuous
love and as possessive as her love of Jason. She accuses the eldest son:
"Was Sklaven du vergöttlichst: badend dich zu schaun, sahn meine Augen nicht."
(p. 605) Her mother-love, however, never competes with her desire for revenge.
She does not have to give up her children who in death are more completely
hers than alive. Medea is well aware of the fact that her children find
her repulsive, and that at least the older son has little love for her.
However, she hopes the older son's proposed marriage will finally give
her some justification. She will see with her own eyes his youthful body
for which she has paid so dearly. There is no inner struggle in Medea
before killing her sons. Once Jason has renounced her, their fate is
sealed and Medea mercilessly sets her plans in motion.

Lenormand's Katha is a loving mother who has greatly suffered
from the earlier separation from her children who were turned into
strangers by the Catholic missionary school. She is concerned about
her children and worries about their frailty. Both parents have a strong
feeling of guilt towards their children and see only a bleak future ahead
for them. Perhaps it might have been better if they had never been born:
"Nous sommes aussi coupables l'un que l'autre. Nous ne devions pas avoir d'enfants!" (p. 47) As long as they live, these children will be torn between their father and their mother and between the races and cultures each represents. Only in death can their heritage be divided.

Anderson's Oparre is a tender mother who accompanies her daughters into death after having sacrificed them to her love of Nathaniel. Both parents are, however, far more concerned with their own dilemma than with the fate of the children.

For Jahnn's Jason Medea's gift of youth and beauty is as much of a curse as a boon. He is troubled by the unnaturalness of his situation: his inability to age, his excessive sexual drives and his rivalry with his sons. Although irresponsible and pleasure-seeking, Jason is not wholly callous. He pities Medea and recognizes that he is in her debt, but it is only with an effort that he can support her presence since only youth and beauty attract him. There is little of the heroic left in this beautiful and light-hearted male. There is no doubt that Jason's punishment is excessively cruel. Not only does Creusa wither away and decay just when she has aroused his desires to a fever pitch, but Medea tells him later that, had he overcome his revulsion, Creusa would have been restored to her former youth and beauty. In the end Jason is nothing but a beautiful and empty shell enslaved to lust which was at the root of his betrayal. Jason's quest for immortality has turned into a nightmare of death.

Lenormand's De Mezzano and Anderson's Nathaniel McQueston are adventurers returned home. De Mezzano has loved war and violence, but
now wants to settle down, shed his past life and all that reminds him of it. He is an opportunist who will always rationalize his selfish deeds. What is useful to him becomes a necessity and nothing is allowed to stand in his way. Aimée, though unable to resist him, rightly recognizes his type: "Les hommes comme toi...sont le délice et le fléau du monde." (p. 75). Without scruples, she will always get what he wants listening to no reason but his own.

Nathaniel set out from Salem seeking fame and fortune. He is easy going and gullible, so that the townspeople have no trouble getting his money while plotting his destruction. Only too late does Nathaniel realize that wealth does not bring happiness and that respect cannot be bought. Although Nathaniel does not become unfaithful to Oparre he is a weak man whose love cannot support public disapproval:

I love you still - but they've made our love a torment - it's the world that does it - it won't have us together. - We touched at ports before we came here - east and west - and always I saw them pointing at us - there goes a white man with a black woman - they think us obscene - somehow they make it obscene. - They make me ashamed of my love -

(p. 106)

Nathaniel seems to be a kind but rather indifferent father, while Jahmm's Jason seems to feel very little love for his sons, who are his rivals in youth and beauty, and constitute a threat to him. He wants to shake them off as well as Medea: "Auch meiner Kinder Winseln ist mir widerlich, weil sie mich hassen von jetzt ab." (p. 643) Jason's unreliability is stressed from the beginning. He first cheats the younger boy out of the horse he desires and then the older one out of Creusa's love. Jason's father-love only awakens when the children are dead and he
has already lost Creusa. Their death however seems to be far more necessary for Medea, who wants to liberate herself from all reminders of her marriage, than for the revenge on Jason whose real punishment lies in Creusa's death and in the curse overshadowing his future.

Of the three De Mezzano is by far the most loving father. As a matter of fact, his only weakness seems to be his children. His feelings for them are tinged with a sense of guilt and a sense of duty:

Puisque j'ai commis la faute d'engendrer des métis, aux désirs contradictoires, aux âmes perpétuellement offensées, aux destins difficiles, je ne puis la réparer qu'en me consacrant à eux. La malédiction qui coule dans leur sang augmente mon amour et me dicte mon devoir. (p. 91)

De Mezzano feels that the only way he can find a place in life for them is by "painting them white" and turning them into little French boys as one can never be homeless or uprooted as long as one is with someone of his own race. This is Aimee's great attraction for him:

L'homme, même arraché, transplanté, soufflé d'un continent à l'autre, sera toujours à sa place entre les bras d'une femme de sa couleur... (p. 74)

It is ironic therefore that Aimee seems to be the only person who understands Katha and sympathizes with her. She senses her isolation, her helpless anger and desperation. She points out to her father and De Mezzano the facile reasoning and the hypocrisy with which they are trying to cover up the cruelty of their own crime: depriving a homeless stranger of husband and children. Aimee's sympathy is, however, tinged with condescension. She sees Katha as an animal deprived of her mate and her young. Nor does the pity she feels for Katha overcome her love for De Mezzano or her involvement in the conspiracy against the princess:
Thus, as in Grillparzer's and Legouvé's plays, the woman who could have been the urgently needed friend and helper is also her rival for the affection of the man and the children. In this play the children are attracted by the gentle and kind Aimée and all she stands for, but they still love their mother and feel guilty because of their divided loyalty.

In Anderson's *The Wingless Victory* Faith, Nathaniel's childhood sweetheart, never tries to regain his love. But she cannot be Oparre's friend either. Their love for the same man also stands between them. But more than the love for Nathaniel, it is Oparre's colour which prevents Faith from reaching out a sisterly hand to Oparre. In spite of her sympathy and pity, social pressure and conditioning is too strong for Faith. At the end she is selfless enough, however, to urge Nathaniel not to let Oparre leave alone, even if her advice is not heeded. Both Aimée and Faith survive at the end of the plays, but not so Jahnn's Creusa who, however, is not a mere innocent victim. Her guilt lies in having first encouraged the son's love and then betrayed him for the father. She too seems to have to pay the price for following her desires only.

In all three plays the children become the innocent victims of their parents' unconventional love. Their lives seem to hold little happiness in store for them and once they lose the protection of both parents they are doomed. While the children are of great importance in all three plays, it is especially in Lenormand's *Asie* that the relationship between the couple and their quarrel over the children is at the
heart of the play. The children themselves become important characters who not only choose between their father and their mother but also between what each race has to offer them. In all three plays, however, death seems to come as salvation from a future of misery, slavery or prostitution.

(b) After 1945 - Jeffers, Anouilh, Csokor, Alvaro, Braun, Magnuson

With the exception of Anouilh and Braun, all of these last playwrights present us with Medeas who are both proud and of noble origin. Only in Csokor's play is there no mention of her supernatural, or at least extraordinary, powers. However, Medea is generally an isolated being ravaged by solitariness and suffering. In three of the plays Medea's "otherness" is further accentuated by the fact that she is of a different race, although the colour problem as such is of importance only in Magnuson's African Medea. In that play Medea kills her children because of their father's white blood which flows in their veins. Like Lenormand's Katha she considers the children hers alone only in death. Medea's homelessness is generally not stressed. Only in Braun's play is she refused a refuge even by Aegeus, and has thus truly nowhere but the desert to turn to.

There seems to be almost an equal number of Medeas who are weary of their former way of life, who would like to forget the past and who have made a valiant effort to adapt to their new situation, as there are Medeas who refuse to compromise and restrain their passion. Anouil's Médée fiercely refuses any rapprochement to humanity and Braun's Medea is already on the brink of insanity and steeped in crime at the beginning of the play. Medea's past clings to her and overshadows the
Past crimes seem to engender new and greater crimes. Not one of these later Medeas bears Jason the self-sacrificing love of Anderson's Oparre, although at least Alvaro's and Csokor's Medea-figures still love their husbands at the beginning of the play. Anouilh's and Braun's Medeas, on the other hand, never even try to hide their hatred and rage.

Most of the times Medea seems to love her children although these have ceased to be quite as important as in the previous three plays. Creusa, as the rival mother, and the betrayal by the children are no longer mentioned in these most recent plays. Generally the interest in Creusa as an individual seems to have diminished again. Only Csokor's Medea postbellica again contrast the ageing wife with her pretty young rival. This is also the only play in which there is again a reference to the respect women can have for each other, in spite of their love for the same man. After Dora finds out that the kerchief she has received from Anna is infected with leprosy, she submits herself to the will of the stronger woman. She turns against Peter who is the cause of her misery and accepts Anna's suggestion that she serve in a leper village. Both women have lost what was most precious to them, but they accept their fate without bitterness and part from each other with forgiveness instead of hatred.

In Anouilh's and Braun's plays it is Jason who is weary of his past and who wants to find peace and order in his new life. In both of these works Jason grows in the course of the play and is a sadder but wiser man at the end. Medea's revenge does not leave him broken but more than ever determined to restore order and to live a normal human
life, forgetting Medea's passion and destructiveness. In all the other plays, Jason is again the egotistic adventurer striving for social or political gain or, in Csokor's play, for mere self-gratification. Jason generally is ambitious, power-hungry and future-oriented. Medea and the memories of the past she represents have become a burden to him which he must shed so that he may "escape" into the future. However, Jason does not succeed in denying the past either. Again Jason, the adventurer, is but a brittle hero whose fatal flaw is inherent in the adventurer's desire to conquer and dominate, without regard to the pain and suffering he causes. In all these plays Jason is left a broken and defeated man at the end, but only Csokor's Peter tries to commit suicide.

Jason is generally not greatly concerned about his children and his father-love tends to awaken only when they are already dead. Csokor's Peter, for instance, seems to have no feelings of remorse at leaving a pregnant Anna although later he is full of wild accusations when he hears about the abortion. Alvaro's Jason too stands idly by while his children are threatened and stoned by the angry mob, caring only for the faint and trembling Creusa. When he eventually rushes to their rescue, it is already too late.

The idea of the doomed couple - the impossibility of marriage - reappears especially in Anouilh's and Csokor's plays and turns them from tragedies of the individual into tragedies of marriage. In Anouilh's Médée it is habit which has killed love. Jason and Medea were comrades-at-arms and accomplices, but have grown bored with each other. In spite
of a long history of infidelities on both sides, they have never been able to break free, and it is Jason's attempt to compromise and to forget the past which unchains Medea's rage. Csokor's Anna, too, could have forgiven infidelities but not a rejection of all she believed in and had fought for. Again it is Peter's easy compromise with life which clashes with Anna's absoluteness. War which turned Anna into a fellow-soldier and comrade has destroyed their relationship as man and woman. They know each other too well to survive as a couple.

Due to the diversity in the portrayals of both Jason and Medea and of their relationship, it is nearly impossible to draw a valid conclusion or establish a common trend. Usually there seems to be no equal balance between Jason and Medea, the greatness of the one is gained at the expense of the other. However, the opposition of Medea's triumph to Jason's ruin at the end of the play has become less frequent. Often both Medea and Jason have suffered defeat, but only one of them has gained the insight which lends a certain tragic dignity.
VI. CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS MEDEA

(1) Euripides

It is not too easy to establish a clear attitude towards Euripides' Medea. There is always the dilemma of reconciling Medea's deeds, which cannot but shock and horrify, with her personality and her circumstances which, in turn, have aroused our sympathy. This ambiguity of feeling is heightened by the fact that sympathy for Medea is firmly established from the beginning and increases gradually throughout the play, till suddenly at the end we can no longer reconcile our feelings with the facts as they are presented. Medea's former misdeeds, the murders of her brother and Pelias, are deliberately minimized in order to give our sympathy free rein. Her adversaries obviously treat her badly even though she is superior to them. The one man who treats her as a friend and a highly respectable person is no less than the King of Athens, which is another point in Medea's favour. And although Medea clearly states her intentions from that moment on when she first knows that her plans have a chance of succeeding, it has by that time become difficult to believe that she will actually carry out her plans. We do not see her commit the murders of her children; we only hear their frightened cries for help. These desperate cries off-stage suddenly force the full horror of her action on our consciousness. It is at this point that the frightening conspiracy which almost turns us into accessories is fully exposed. We can no longer feel sympathy for Medea. Yet we have gone along with her already for such a long time, that we are now left with a welter of unresolved and contradictory emotions.
Her exit on the dragon chariot with the bodies of her children removes her physically and metaphorically from the human sphere, but the spectators still have to cope with the problem of Medea the aggrieved human being and child-murderess.

It is probably easiest to trace the general reaction towards Medea by following the responses from the chorus which might serve as a guide to audience reaction. These Corinthian women come first of all to offer their support to Medea, the deserted wife. They seem to harbour no hostility or ill-will against her as a barbarian or as a sorceress. Quite the contrary, they come as friends to see what they can do to alleviate her grief and to prevent her from doing anything rash in her first urge of self-destruction:

My willingness to help will never
Be wanting to my friends.
(l. 178-9)

Medea responds to their appeal and tells them of her wrongs and her desire to take revenge, with which the chorus concur:

Your are in the right, Medea,
In paying your husband back.
(l. 267-8)

The chorus give Medea silent support, although it is quite clear that she has already at that time murder on her mind, although they assume it to be Jason's and perhaps Creon's. The women sympathize even more with Medea after every successive encounter, first with Creon then with Jason. These Corinthian women clearly identify with Medea's lot. They do not seem to be aware that Medea is no ordinary woman. Not only is she a foreign princess, but even a barbarian, whose customs and demeanour must be quite different from those of these women. The chorus never
refer to this cultural and racial difference. They do not blame her otherness as the reason for her troubles. In Euripides' days women, in general, had as few privileges as foreigners any way. Nor do these women stop to think that, if Medea has no home to return to and no father or brother to defend her, it is because she is not the helpless, dependent woman she claims to be now. Her life has been one of independent decisions and actions. Rather, the chorus respect her because she risked all for the man she loved. Medea followed Jason of her own free will; she was not abducted from her father's house. And although it was mainly Jason who benefited from her former murders, which now leave her friendless and without refuge, she was never forced to commit these deeds.

After Aegeus has promised Medea asylum in Athens and she has, for the first time, revealed her plans in detail, the chorus try to dissuade her but still show sympathy and understanding for her situation:

Since you have shared the knowledge of your plan with us, I both wish to help you and support the normal Ways of mankind, and tell you not to do this thing. (1. 811-813)

The women are quick to see that Medea's deed will bring great unhappiness to herself also. After the children have left with their fatal wedding gifts, they know that: "Now there is no hope left for the children's lives." (1. 976) They express their pity not only for the young bride who will "accept the curse of the gold", (1. 978) and for Jason who, trying to improve his social position, brings death to his bride and his children, but also for Medea:
In your grief, too, I weep, mother of little children,  
You who will murder your own,  
In vengeance for the loss of married love  
Which Jason has betrayed  
As he lives with another wife.  

(1. 996-1001)

Even when the messenger brings news of the princess' and Creon's horrible deaths, the chorus still feel that Jason got no more than he deserved. However, when Medea rushes into the house to kill her children, the chorus calls on the earth and the sun, Medea's ancestor, to

\[
\text{hold back her hands,}  
\text{Check her, and drive from out the house}  
\text{The bloody Fury raised by fiends of Hell.}  
\]

(1. 1258-1260)

Though it is only when they hear the children's desperate cries for help that the women call Medea a "woman fated for evil" (1. 1272) and hard-hearted:

\[
\text{O your heart must have been made of rock or steel,}  
\text{You who can kill}  
\text{With your own hand the fruit of your own womb.}  
\]

(1. 1279-1281)

They can only compare Medea's deed to that of Ino, who in a fit of madness killed her children and herself. Woman's love and jealousy are at the root of much evil. The chorus, however, never transfer their sympathy to Jason; he is pitied in his sorrow as is Medea. They conclude that the ways of the gods are beyond the understanding of man and thus the conflict of sympathy and aversion toward Medea is left unresolved.

How the fifth century Athenian male audience reacted to this play, written by a man and acted by male performers, we cannot know for sure. It is one of the few plays by Euripides which won a prize, although it only came third. Undoubtedly though, it made a powerful impact, as it
still does today. It is a play which has been re-interpreted time and again. The story of a mother murdering her own children seems to have fascinated many writers. However, in none of the later plays are we left with such a dilemma of contrasting emotions as in Euripides' Medea. No wonder then that we would dearly like to find some extenuating circumstances for her, such as insanity, divine responsibility or the fact that, if Medea does not kill the children, the Corinthians certainly will. But there is no excuse. Medea claims and accepts full responsibility for her actions. She knowingly committed evil and we, like the chorus, approved it, at least implicitly through our sympathy for her. Therein lies, no doubt, the unrivaled greatness of Euripides' Medea.

It is therefore not too important to find out what really motivated Euripides to present us with his version of the Jason-Medea story. Was it just a desire to shock and horrify? Was he, as a social critic, trying to point out the unfairness of the Athenian marriage laws and of the general attitude towards women and foreigners? Maybe, but it certainly is not the most important message of the play, or it would no longer hold such an appeal for a modern audience. Is the Medea merely a study of human passions, selfishness and greed? Certainly these are all depicted in the play. Or was Euripides attempting to deflate the Greek heroic tales by putting overdimensional figures like Medea or Jason in a realistic human setting and show what this would do to them? This is again a possibility, as Euripides seems to have done the same thing to other heroes, such as Orestes, for instance.
There is a traditional view that Euripides' Medea is a misogynist's attack on women in general, which, however, seems to be an untenable argument. For no matter how evil Medea may appear, what Euripides does to Jason, the fearless leader of the Argonauts, is undoubtedly far more damming. At least Medea's greatness, even if it is in crime, is unquestionable, while Jason's fame and stature as the hero of the Argonauts has been reduced to nothing.

Whatever Euripides' real motivation and the cause of his fascination with the Medea story may have been, he has — as we shall see — produced a greater and more effective play than his many successors. Often in trying to correct so-called flaws in Euripides' play, these later writers have considerably weakened the overall impact of their plays.
(2) Seneca

In a certain sense, it is much easier to form an opinion about Seneca's Medea than about Euripides'. Although she displays great emotional instability, she is not as ambiguous and as complex a figure as the Medea of Euripides. First of all, one's feelings never really become engaged, and no sympathy for her lot is enlisted. Seneca's Medea exists from beginning to end outside the human sphere. She does not confide her troubles or her plans, and neither chorus nor audience are drawn in enough to make them feel accomplices in her deed. This distance between Medea and her surroundings is brought out quite clearly by the attitude of the chorus towards her. The chorus never express sympathy with Medea or her lot. She is never regarded as a woman amongst other women. Medea is isolated, by her origin and her behaviour as much as by the chorus' attitude towards her, the stranger and the barbarian, and by their fear of her sorcery. They regard Medea as a curse and feel Jason is completely justified in leaving her and marrying someone more suitable:

Delivered from the wedlock of uncouth Phasis,
schooled fearfully and with unwilling hand to fondle the bosom of an incontinent mate, now, happy groom, take unto yourself an Aeolian maid; only now can you marry with the blessings of the bride's kin. (p. 369)

Even the nurse, who seems to be closest to her, fears her more than she loves her. But then Medea herself never appeals for human sympathy and compassion. It is true she begs Creon for mercy and a repeal of her exile, but she does this merely to gain time. Medea is so convinced of the due claim she has on Jason and of the debt Greece owes her, that
she demands the return of her possession rather than compassionate and sympathetic understanding of her situation. That the people of Corinth do not share her conviction, is made quite clear by Creon and the chorus. All, with perhaps the exception of Jason, view Medea as a frightening monster which cannot be removed from Corinthian soil too quickly.

It must be stressed, however, that although Medea certainly receives very unsympathetic treatment by the chorus and Creon, this is not entirely unjustified. Already in the prologue Medea threatens death and destruction to Creon, his house and the whole city. She stresses time and time again her supernatural powers and gloats over her crimes. Obviously, it would be difficult for either chorus or audience to identify with such inhumanity and glorification of crime. Medea is clearly a monster from beyond the human realm who reaches the apex of her criminal career with the murder of her children. We can only watch her self-induced progress from fury to fury with mounting horror but without getting involved in her fate.

As Medea never confides in the chorus, they never have a chance to advise her. The play therefore never evokes the feeling of personal guilt for our acquiescence and lack of interference, which certainly plays a part in the reaction to Euripides' play. Although Seneca clearly states at what point Medea first decides to hurt Jason through their children, it is with a sense of helplessness that we must let this action engendered by a supernatural power take its course. Added to that is the fact that Medea's emotions vacillate so much that one can never clearly predict her next decision and whether she will actually carry it out.
Her hesitation just before killing the children and the very fact that some time elapses between the first and the second murder, seem to point again to mental instability rather than to a real upsurge of mother-love. It seems to be clear that Seneca does not intend to show us a Medea torn between two conflicting passions, her desire for revenge and her love for her children, who destroys herself as well as the children by her crime, but a Medea who is totally in the sway of her passions and has abandoned all reasoning powers:

I am buffeted by a riptide, as when rushing winds wage ruthless war and from both sides opposing waves lash the seas and the cornered surface seethes... (p. 392)

Seneca's Medea has really no choice, either for good or for evil. Neither does Seneca seem to have been particularly interested in pointing out social injustices in the treatment of strangers and women, nor in deflating the ancient myths by portraying them in a realistic setting. Quite to the contrary, Medea never becomes real but remains the sorceress and witch of the ancient myth. But neither must it be assumed that Seneca's only intention is to shock and horrify. There is an obvious moral purpose involved in showing the destruction wrought by unbridled passions. According to Stoic concepts, Medea's passionate love was bound to have as disastrous results as her hatred. That the Medea seems to be a showpiece demonstrating the evil effects of anger also seems confirmed when comparing the portrait of anger contained in his moral essay De Ira with a description of Medea, such as the one given by the nurse:

Her cheeks are hectic, her breath a deep panting, she shouts, she floods her eyes with a gush of tears, she beams with ecstasy,
she passes through the gamut of every passion. She is frustrated, she threatens, she seethes, she complains, she groans. How will her mind's weight veer, how will her threats be directed, where will that surging wave break? Her fury spills over its bounds. (p. 377)

Medea should therefore be regarded as an allegorical figure depicting the evils and the madness of excessive anger.

Perhaps Seneca also intended to point out in this play the dangers inherent in man's trying to go beyond the natural limits set to him. When the Argonauts set out on their venture into the unknown, they did conquer the ocean and open the way for man's further and wider exploration. However the price paid for the success of their quest was not only the end of the golden age of content, and the death of the adventurers; but the prize itself, the Golden Fleece, was brought back to Greece together with its curse, Medea. Jason's bitter resignation and defiant words at the end of the play seem to confirm that man can only carry the burden of his life. There is no ultimate hope for humanity. Jason thus seems to have matured into the example of a Stoic hero.
THE RENAISSANCE: de Lapéruse, Galladei and Dolce

The trend to dehumanize and to isolate Medea from her surroundings was started by Seneca and is continued in these Renaissance plays. Her lot can never be compared to that of other women because she is separated from them by her supernatural powers. Even if sympathy can be aroused for her because of the wrongs she has suffered - as in Dolce's play, for instance - there can be no identification with Medea as a woman. It is highly ironic, therefore, that the Medea of de Lapéruse, the most callous and inhuman of the three, should proclaim herself an example for her troubled sisters to follow:

Qui aura désormais de faux amant le blasphme,
A l'exemple de toy se garde du danger
Par qui l'apren mon sexe à se pouuoir vanger!
(Act V, p. 76)

In the course of these plays the chorus tend to lose their importance as valid commentators or sounding-board for the action or opinions expressed. It becomes more and more difficult for an audience to be guided by or rely on the chorus in forming its opinion and to identify with them. The audience must, therefore, pay more attention to the interplay between, and the reactions of individual characters in the plays.

The chorus of de Lapéruse do not seem to be able to make up their mind, bewailing once Medea's lot and then again Jason's, when they are not indulging in rather inane and irrelevant comments. They fear Medea and consider her a curse on Jason and Greece. It would have been best for all concerned if Medea had never existed:

Medée, trop heureuse
Et hors de tous regrets,
Si par mer fluctueuse N'eusse suiuy les Grecs!
They do express some sympathy with Medea's lot, but are quick to point out that all her moaning and wailing is not going to bring Jason back. Although they agree that both Creon and Jason are in the wrong, they do not approve of Medea's revenge. The chorus also tries to warn Creusa about accepting gifts from the enemy but, at the end, they meekly bow to fate. All in all, this chorus seem to advocate moderation in a situation which is too explosive for them to understand. They are not willing to take a stand either way.

Galladei's chorus are totally prejudiced in favour of Jason and very vindictive towards Medea. They are also incredibly curious and absolutely avid to receive all the horrible news first. As all the action is reported, it seems to be the chorus' main function to intercept messengers and coax them into divulging the news to them first. Thus messengers to Creon and to Jason are delayed long enough to make their warnings futile. Creon is advised by the oracle to give Creusa to Jason as a wife. Jason, although penniless and homeless, has the reputation of a hero and certainly commands the respect of the Corinthians. The chorus, and even Jason's tutor, fully support Creon's decision as all fear and abhor the evil witch Medea:
Quando questo nefando
Monstro fara partita
Del nostro Regno? quando
Uscira di Corinto
Questa peste crudele?

(Act III, p. 43)

They, like Seneca's chorus, deplore the price they had to pay for the Golden Fleece:

A' noi, Argo porto la pretiosa
Pelle de l'oro, a far Grecia felice.
Ma aggiungi a cio, Medea
D'ogni maligna & rea
Malia sola inventrice,
(O' merce indegna) che dolente & tristo
Tì pentirai di tal dannoso acquisto.

(Act II, p. 28)

Only the chorus suspect Medea's sudden change to humility which they find more frightening than her rage. However, they certainly don't help matters by continually delaying messengers who carry vital information. At the end the chorus ask why the good and the bad had to be destroyed together:

O ciel perché consentì
Ch'equalmente patisca
Il giusto e'l peccatore?
Perch'a morte condanni
L'inìquo, & l'innocente?
Perche un pietoso padre,
Perch'una scelerata
Madre, conduci & menì
Ad uno istesso fine
Miserabile & brutto?

(Act V; p. 75)

The only hope left to man is in the hereafter, if monsters like Medea are allowed to give free rein to their violent passions. Gallandeis Medea certainly never asks for or receives any sympathy from anyone else in the play - except from Jason and it is hard to conceive how an audience could feel anything but horror and revulsion for her.

Dolce's chorus, after an initial disapproval, turn out to be very
supportive of Medea, objecting only to the child murder. Otherwise they identify completely with Medea's revenge and even applaud her for it. They seem to be blind to the consequences of their cooperation with Medea. Only at the end they are suddenly brought face to face with the realization of their share in the guilt. They seem to be taken in by Medea's flattering comment that Corinth is not worthy of such excellent and charitable ladies as they are. The irony of that statement becomes evident at the end of the play, when many innocent Corinthians have lost their lives in the conflagration caused by Medea's magic. It is true that at first neither the chorus nor Medea's nurse are very happy with her craving for revenge although they sympathize with her lot, especially now that she is a queen no longer. Medea quite systematically sets out to win the sympathy of the chorus and by her flattery gradually succeeds in evoking their compassion and even in enlisting their help. Although they know that Medea intends to kill Creon and Creusa they still express very strong support:

Stimate d'haver noi
In ogni uostra uoglia
E compagne e sorelle.
(Act II, p. 16)

They do intercede for the children though. They can understand Medea's wish to kill her rival and enemy but they can never forgive an inhuman deed such as the murder of innocent children. Medea tries to explain that they cannot understand how deeply she has been offended. At this point, however, the chorus start turning against her. Only when she lets herself be convinced to spare the children and kill Jason instead, does the chorus again approve her. At the end, realizing that they have not
prevented Medea, they revile her but also acknowledge their own guilty silence:

Quanto mal commettemmo  
A non haver scoperto  
Cio, ch'ella in noi commise:  
Creonte, e la figlia;  
E i fanciulli meschini,  
Hora sarebbon vivi,  
Ella portato havria degno flagello  
Ne la istessa cittade  
De la sua crudeltade.  

(Act V, p. 38)

Later they resign themselves to the fact that after all no man can foresee what the future will bring. These women of the chorus appear to be as changeable and undecided as Medea herself.

The portrayal of Creon becomes more interesting as the chorus loses in status and reliability. De Laperuse’s Creon freely admits Jason’s share in the guilt, but is prepared to disregard it. He is very ironic in his exchange with Medea. Yet he does fear her, not only as a threat to him, but also to the country. He agrees without a moment’s hesitation to keep Medea’s children. He is suspicious of Medea’s motives and regards her as a hardened criminal. Eventually he grants her the day’s delay despite himself. Creon is thus the only real adversary Medea has to overcome. He regards her as a monster against whom he, a mere mortal, stands no chance. In this play, Creon seems to be the most sympathetic of the main characters, although he is not guiltless either. His opinion would probably carry a great deal of weight with an audience. He seems justified at least in trying to free his country from the evil Medea, even if it is hard to understand why he should want Jason, about whom he has no illusions, for a son-in-law.
Galladei's Creon, on the other hand, is depicted as a rather cruel tyrant who doggedly continues the wedding preparations even when all portents forecast evil. He has sent a messenger to Delphi to consult the oracle again, but the evil tidings arrive too late to stop the catastrophe. This Creon cannot be regarded as an innocent or blameless victim of Medea's passion for revenge; he is the one who practically coerced Jason into leaving Medea.

Dolce's Medea is treated quite differently by Creon and by Aegeus. Creon recognizes that Medea is worthy of better treatment:

> Se, come sei ne l'apparenza humana  
> Fosse conforme a le parole il core,  
> Non solo in mia citta luogo honorato  
> Terresti; ma vorrei, che fosti ancora  
> Dopo Creusa la primiera Donna.  
> (Act II, p. 14)

But he fears her as a sorceress and a threat to his throne and has, therefore, no alternative except to kill or at least banish her. Aegeus is just as aware of Medea's rank and social position, but does not consider her a threat. For him she is a valuable ally, and he greets her like a beloved sister or daughter. He offers Medea asylum, but does not know or care to know if and how she will revenge herself. That he is suspicious of perhaps being involved in something unsavoury, might explain why he is so eager to leave Corinth immediately in spite of Creon's pressing invitation to stay for the wedding festivities. Dolce's Medea is certainly able to arouse sympathy. However it must become fairly evident that she too, like all the other characters in the play, is motivated solely by what is useful to her. Like Creon, Jason and even Aegeus, Medea will always prefer usefulness to honesty.
All three Renaissance writers — perhaps Galladei more than the other two — seem to wish to portray the supernatural. Descriptions of incantations, spells, curses, premonitions and oracles abound. This stress on the supernatural however does reduce the tragic aspect of the plays. An evil witch cannot be considered a tragic heroine.

It appears fairly obvious that Galladei's melodrama probably has no further motive than to shock and horrify. The play is crowded with gory descriptions recounted in minute detail. There are so many horrible deaths and suicides — even the priestess at Delphi kills herself instead of the sacrificial animal. Furthermore a jarring note is introduced in the middle of the play when the two boys, Dindimo and Tersandro, pause in Act IV, while discussing their troubled family life, to praise Philip of Austria and the Catholic religion imposed and enforced by him. Perhaps Galladei was afraid that Philip of Austria might take offence at the cruelty and tyranny of Creon, king of Corinth. His attempt to outdo Seneca cannot be taken very seriously, however.

Dolce, apart from his preoccupation with power and rank and the master-servant relationship, seems to be the first writer since Euripides, who again shows some concern for existing prejudices towards strangers and barbarians. Especially, Creon feels very strongly that, only if separated from their mother, Medea's children will have a chance to grow up to be worthy sons of their father. In addition, the opinion is expressed by all characters and throughout the play that the useful must always take precedence over the honest and the true. The result of such an attitude can only be disaster.
If de Lapérouse truly held his Medea to be a representative of womanhood, he would appear to be the misogynist Euripides was not. (It is possible that de Lapérouse's death at the age of 24 apparently caused by syphilis, might have had some bearing on his attitude towards women.) In any case, his Medea is so inhuman that it would be hard for anyone to identify with her. Aside from this, one is hard pressed to trace anything other than a fascination with violence, crime and the supernatural in his version of the Medea-story.

Although each of these writers has touched on certain aspects and problems of the story which will be taken up and further developed by later writers, neither of these three plays can really be considered great tragedies or great plays. In all three plays Medea has lost her tragic stature due to her inhumanity and extraordinary powers of witchcraft.

The chorus can no longer be regarded as a wise and good counsellor; they have become partisan, undecided and ineffectual and can therefore no longer be regarded as a guide to audience reaction. At the same time, Creon has emerged as a worthy adversary of Medea, whether his portrayal is sympathetic or not. Reasons of state appear for the first time as a motivation for Jason's remarriage and Medea's banishment. And there is a strong preference given to the useful over the honest and just, especially in Dolce's play. Hand in hand with this goes the trend to give less importance to Jason's broken oath. Perjury for reasons of expediency does not necessarily affect his heroic image.
17th Century: Corneille and Longepierre

The chorus have disappeared in both of these plays and have been replaced by various confidents whose function it is to listen, give advice and comment on the action. They are thus more of a theatrical convenience than actual characters.

In Corneille's play almost all the characters are guilty in some respect or other. Medea's crime therefore is monstrous only in its magnitude and ruthlessness. The usual contrast between her extraordinary evilness and the mere human frailty of the other characters does not exist in this play. Revenge is on everybody's mind. With their last words both Creon and Creusa ask Jason to avenge their death, although they do recognize that greed and vanity have made them guilty too. Their treatment of Aegeus, who himself favours revenge for his insulted honour by any available means, also belies their nobility. Only Pollux, who as Jason's confident is not really a character as such, seems to be blameless.

Longepierre does not present quite such a black picture of humanity as Corneille. It is fate or the heartless gods who are to blame for men's miseries. Jason is hopelessly infatuated with Creusa and — with the exception of his love for his children — blind to all except his desires. Creusa at first fights her love for Jason and feels concern and pity for Medea's fate and that of the children. Creon is mainly concerned with matters of state. He refuses to have Medea killed, but he agrees to her exile out of political necessity. It is Medea's total isolation and the threatened separation from her children which finally lead her to kill them. Love is a very violent and destructive force in human life and can only lead to unhappiness. Longepierre seems to underline
above all that happiness is not man's lot in life. Only occasional moments of joy are possible, and then they are hardly ever shared by the beloved. This idea is probably best expressed by the dying Creusa for whom Jason's presence is both utter bliss and utter torment.

It is obvious that both plays still show a great preoccupation with the supernatural, but there are fewer scenes of violence and horror than in the Renaissance plays. The children are killed off-stage. Creon and Creusa are consumed by an invisible fire which internalizes and in a sense diminishes their torture compared to the former horrifying descriptions of their death. There seems to be a definite change in taste.

There is also a renewed concern with the concept of barbarity, especially in Longepierre's Médée. Usually it is Medea who is cursed as a barbarian, especially by Creon who shows great prejudice against her:

V'a, sors de mes Etats, sors barbare Etrangere.
Abandonne Corinthe, et cours en d'autres lieux,
Porter tes attenats et le courroux des Dieux.
D'un monstre tel que toi délivre mon Empire,
Cesse d'infecter l'air qu'en ces lieux on respire;
De ton horrible aspect ne souille plus mes yeux;
Et n'empoisonne plus la lumière des Cieux.

(Act II, p. 58)

But Medea points out the Greek barbarity of separating a mother from her children:

Tu m'ôtes mes Enfans; tu me ravis, barbare,
Le seul bien qui pouvoit adoucir mon malheur.

(Act II, p. 67)

And before killing the children Medea is torn between the "barbarian pity" which would let them live and the murder which turns her into a barbarian mother. She has no choice but to be barbarian. There is no possibility for happiness for Medea either.
18th Century: Lessing, Glover, Gotter and Klinger

In Lessing's play the contrast between the barbarian, unprincipled passion and civilized Greek reason is translated into the opposition of the anti-bourgeois bohemian and the orderly bourgeois way of life. Lessing also creates the first Medea-play in a modern setting.

Glover

Glover's Medea is not only absolved of guilt, she is also the Medea who meets with most sympathy and compassion from those around her. She herself is known to have shown compassion to doomed Greeks and still now shows a great deal of consideration for her entourage. The play is unique in that, even after the infanticide, the others do not abhor but pity her. The true villain of Glover's play is Creon who, by his violation of all that is sacred and by his chauvinistic attitude, arouses not only the wrath of the gods — and especially of the goddesses — but also of the Corinthian people who rise against him. A kind of melancholy order is reinstated in Corinth after Creon's arrogance and presumption have been punished and Medea, the instrument of the gods and the granddaughter of the Sun, has been restored to her own.

Glover shows, especially in the portrayal of Creon, a strong preoccupation with the dominating male and with prejudice against strangers. Creon, for instance, even takes it upon himself to punish Medea for her disobedience in having left her father's home. Mention is also made of the injustice of the divorce laws giving all rights to the husband:

How could'st thou lead this all-excelling princess
From clime to clime, the associate in thy toils,
To fall the victim in a foreign land
Of those unrighteous statutes, which appoint
Imperious husbands masters of divorce;
How think, th'establish'd practice of the Greeks,
Or all, which varnish'd policy might plead,
Could e'er absolve thee from a solemn tie
With such uncommon obligations bound
By those superior, those unwritten laws,
Which honour whispers to the conscious heart?

(Act II, pp. 24-25)

Gotter

Gotter's melodrama was interspersed by music and seems to have been a great success in its day. However, nothing new has been added by Gotter to the interpretation of the Medea-story.

Klinger

Klinger's Medea is hated and misunderstood by all but her children. When humanity finally rejects her and she regains her demonic majesty, her break with mankind is terrible. Klinger shows us a portrait of a semi-goddess whose greatness is unbearable to the common man.

Klinger also touches some social issues, such as the consequences of a marriage break-up, the paternalistic treatment of women and the fear and suspicion shown to the barbarian outsider by the masses. That this refusal to accept otherness or superiority in fellow beings can have devastating consequences is made abundantly clear in this play.

Medea also questions the real value of the famous Greek civilization when opposed to the simple faith of the barbarian:

Ruhig würden die mächtigen, furchtbar erhabenen Kräfte in meinem freundlichen Busen geschlummert haben, denn nie hätte ich unter meinem treuen aufrichtigen Volke die Falschheit, die Laster geahndet, die ich in Dir, in Deinem Volke entdeckte, die Du und Dein Volk gegen mich begangen hast. Von dem Augenblicke, da ich Griechenlands Boden betrat, verfinsterte die schwarze Erfahrung an euch, den reinen Geist der Enkelin der Sonne, und muss sie sich einst euch, als Tochter der furchtbaren Hekate zeigen, so zwingt ihr sie dazu.

(Act III, p. 204)
(6) **19th Century: Grillparzer, Lucas and Legouvé**

In these plays the chorus has again been dispensed with and the attitude towards Medea varies. Generally we find her to be misunderstood and ostracized, although she seems to make a greater effort than ever before to adapt herself to the Greek way of life. In all three plays Creon seems to have turned into a reasonably just and fair ruler, yet, he regards Medea as a monster and a threat.

**Grillparzer**

In Grillparzer's play Medea's notoriety precedes her actual appearance on stage. Her reputation as a witch and the rumour of her crimes arouse great fear amongst the Corinthians. Creusa recoils on first hearing her name, but is won over by Medea's genuine desire to please although her occasional bursts of passion still repel her. Grillparzer's Creon seems to be a very sensible man who has only the best interests of his daughter and his country in mind. But he too shares the general overbearing attitude of the Greeks towards the stranger and the barbarian. Again there is a strong emphasis on the barbarity of the so-called civilized Greeks in their treatment of strangers. Although inherently a reasonable man, Creon is affected by the greed of mankind when he demands the Fleece from Medea and has it sent to Creusa thus precipitating the catastrophe himself. He, however, learns through his experience and unfortunately too late his own injustice towards Medea and Jason's share of guilt.

Although Grillparzer's Medea is humiliated and hurt, she attains a resigned and solitary dignity at the end. She never has a real friend or sympathizer. Gora, her nurse, who inspires the revenge with her tales
of Althea, despises her while Medea tries to adapt herself and denounces her when she finally acts. Creusa lacks in experience and insight to become the friend Medea seeks, and it is she who deals her finally the most crushing blow by estranging the children from her too. Throughout the play Medea retains her humanity, which assures her the sympathy of the audience in spite of the enormity of her deed. Also the horror of the infanticide seems to be mitigated and to come almost as an anti-climax following on the children's betrayal of Medea. There seems to be no inner struggle between mother-love and desire for revenge. The murder appears to be the inevitable product of the situation Medea finds herself in. The children were fated to die and for Medea (and Grillparzer) death was after all not the worst thing that could happen to them.

It seems to be fairly clear that Grillparzer was personally very involved in the triangle situation he portrayed in his Medea. He appears to have recognized himself in Jason, the way Jason recognized himself in the mirror image held up by Medea:

Entsetzliche! Was rasest du gen mich?  
Machst mir zu Wesen meiner Träume Schatten,  
Hältst mir mein Ich vor in des deinen Spiegel  
Und rufst meine Gedanken wider mich? (p. 38)

In Jason he castigated his own inability to find happiness in his relationship with women. In their union he portrayed his fear of the chains of marriage and his belief that a lasting relationship between a man and a woman was impossible. On a more general plane, the play also reflects Grillparzer's conviction that man strives in vain for power and happiness.

Lucas

Lucas' Medea is not such an isolated figure, nor does she seem
to be overly affected by her situation. Throughout the play, her nurse
stays staunchly at her side. Creusa and her maidens are impressed by
her regal bearing. It is only her name which provokes a reaction of
fear and horror because word of her crimes has preceded her. Although
Creon regards her as a monster, he never doubts that Aegeus, who is a
friend and admirer of Medea's, will offer her his protection on her
journey and a safe haven in Athens. The play's decided weakness seems
to stem from an attempt to incorporate too many divergent patterns of
the Medea-story. It therefore lacks coherence and credibility.

Legouvé

Here again is a very solitary and isolated Medea. The only
person to whom Medea can confide her troubles, Creusa, turns out to be
her rival. This Creusa is more realistic and certainly has more insight
than Grillparzer's Creusa, however it is love that makes her guilty too.
Although Creon and Orpheus are at first on Medea's side and try to pro­
tect her against the enraged populace, Medea's threats and final revenge
turn them against her too.

It is finally the threat of the enraged mob descending on Medea
which drives her to the murder of her children – far more an act of self-
destruction than of revenge on Jason. At the end of the play Legouvé's
Medea seems like a trapped animal whose last escape route has been cut
off. She kills her young to save them from the attacker and is poised
for the fight unto death. This Medea is not triumphant after her deed,
but "alone, trembling and horror-stricken" (p. 34). She had feared that
the children would be her means of punishment, but she had never realized
the nature and the extent of that punishment. Both Medea and Jason have
been destroyed by their relationship which united them to the end in mutual horror and guilt.
20th Century: Attempt at Conclusion

The 20th century has produced the most divergent attitudes towards Medea so far. Almost all the themes raised at one time or another in the past are incorporated and developed in one of the plays. The Medea-portrayals themselves range from horrifying witch or semi-goddess to the image of self-sacrificing womanhood. Yet whatever Medea's attitude towards life and towards her surroundings may be, she is always different and set apart from ordinary women. The emphasis on her "otherness" is stronger than in any previous century: In some plays her masculine traits are stressed, in others, her familiarity with the unknown and mysterious forces of the universe, her witchcraft or her divine origin. In six of the nine plays Medea is of different colour and race, which adds racial discrimination to the discrimination against the stranger and barbarian. Thus Medea's action is seen as a desperate response to an inimical environment, and the guilt has been shifted from the individual onto society whose prejudices and injustices are exposed.

(a) Before 1939 - Jahnn, Lenormand, Anderson

Jahnn's Medea stands completely alone, understood and loved by no one, not even her children. Her isolation is however to a great extent voluntary:

Von meinem Zorn verstehst du nichts.
Von meinem Leid erfährst du nichts.
Und deinen Untergang erkennst du nicht.
Ich aber sehe, sehe, sehe. (p. 613)

Rejected love turns Medea into a monster of hatred who repulses all life, and it is this voluntary isolation which turns her to evil. She sounds like Klinger's Medea when she exclaims:
In grauenhafter Einsamkeit steh ich.
Und böse wird der Einsame. (p. 625)

Even her servants who showed her at least a measure of loyalty are badly recompensed in the end:

Zurück bleibt harrend, was im Hause diente.
Ihr wollt ein Wort von mir. Ein Schicksal sollt ihr haben. Versinken soll
mit euch bis auf den Grund des Meeres
und tausend Klafter tiefer noch das Haus.

(pp. 664-665)

But Jahnn also wanted to exemplify in Medea the fate of woman who sacrifices her own youth and beauty to bear children to her husband. Her strength is sapped so that he may have sons to carry on his name. However, with her last orgy of hatred and revenge Medea removes herself completely from the human plane. Like the gods she rejoins, she seems to thrive on human blood and she does not appear to have much in common with ordinary women anymore. The transformation from haggard wife to revengeful goddess of destruction seems to be too abrupt to be fully convincing.

The Medea-figures in the other two plays are no longer of divine origin and they arouse a great deal of sympathy. Lenormand's Katha has been uprooted from her native soil and is treated with undeserved callousness and cruelty by her new compatriots. Betrayed again and again, she can see no other solution to her despair than death for the children and herself. She is as much the victim as the instrument of her revenge. Oparre does not try to fight her husband's culture and standards as Katha does. She is a devout converted Christian and tries her utmost to adapt to the customs of the Salem puritans. However, her every move is
misinterpreted and, when even Nathaniel seems relieved to see her leave, she too is desperate in her isolation. She plans no revenge because she does not blame her husband but only the townspeople who have pressured him into forsaking her.

In Anderson's play the noble barbarian princess stands in strong contrast to the narrow-minded, cold-hearted and materialistic McQueston family and the Salem puritans. With only one exception, Oparre and her children are treated like unclean animals or incarnations of the devil. The darker colour of Oparre's skin makes her no better than a slave in the eyes of the people of Salem. This contrast between the "barbarian" and the "civilized" leads to a strong condemnation of false Christianity. Under the cloak of religious practice often hides a pitiless cruelty usually attributed to barbarian heathens. By denouncing society's hypocrisy, Anderson has added a new note of social criticism. Already in Lenormand's play much of the blame for the catastrophe seems to be laid on the attitude of the others towards Katha. Racial prejudice is rank throughout the play. De Mezzano himself seems to have little regard for the people whose leader he was for eight years, a fact of which the princess is well aware.

Mon père et mon frère, à cause de leur couleur, n'étaient même pas des hommes, à tes yeux. "Un sauvage de plus ou de moins, qu'est-ce que ça peut faire?" J'ai entendu la phrase. (p. 80)

It is an attitude not unknown to contemporary society. For all the whites these yellow barbarians are little more than animals to be tamed and exploited. Even De Mezzano's children are regarded as little trained monkeys whom society is not yet ready to accept as human beings.
Lenormand stresses above all the problems of the mixed marriage and of racially mixed children, while Anderson points an accusing finger at us all by shifting the guilt to the puritans of Salem and showing us how slow prejudices are to die.

Although Jahnn was the first to raise the colour problem, he does not develop it fully. Medea, being of divine origin and endowed with magic powers, is not as affected by racial discrimination as the Medea-figures of the other two plays. Medea's children are even of god-like appearance because Jahnn seems to have seen in the mixed race hope for a positive development of humanity. Yet these children of mixed blood are doomed as those in Lenormand's and Anderson's plays.

Lenormand also depicts the crass arrogance of the white race in attempting to bring the benefits of progress to these backward nations. There is a warning note sounded throughout the play that perhaps one day the exploited will turn on their "benefactors":

Craignez les cervelles sauvages gonflées de vos inventions. Craignez l'Asie cruelle en vêtements de travail. Si vous faites d'elle un enfer pareil au vôtre, il en sortira des démons qui répandront vos poisons sur la terre. Et vous serez leurs premières victimes. (p. 123)

As already Seneca warned, the prime country may have to pay for the riches brought back by its explorers may be too great. Usefulness and the prospect of political and economic gain again tend to overcome honesty, reason and ultimately justice.

While Lenormand and Anderson seem to show increased social awareness and tend to shift responsibility from the individual onto society, Jahnn still stresses individual guilt. Jason not only betrays Medea
threefold but also each one of his sons. Creusa, too, turns traitor in preferring Jason to his son. Furthermore the oldest boy betrays the love of the younger one after his meeting with Creusa. All of Jahnn's characters also show a tremendous need for love regardless of the consequences. The younger boy exclaims: "Du darfst mich töten, wenn du mich nur liebst." (p. 629)

Jahnn's Expressionist play has many similarities with Klinger's Sturm und DrangMedea. In both plays Medea attempts to become human for love of Jason and fails to keep his love. Her break with humanity is apocalyptic and seems to emphasize that a union between mere man and a supernatural being is unnatural and doomed to fail. Jahnn further stresses man's quest for immortality: as symbolized by the Golden Fleece: death can be staved off temporarily but will always win in the end. Jahnn's obsession with pan-sexualism, incest and brother-love, however, puts a strain on the Medea material.
(b) After 1945 - Jeffers, Anouilh, Csokor, Alvaro, Braun, Magnuson

It is difficult to find some common characteristics in the attitude towards Medea in the plays written after 1945. All the writers recasting the theme must initially have been attracted by the traditional story. They must have been willing to work within a given frame and use a set configuration of characters. In other words, where there is a Medea, there always must be a Jason, a betrayal followed by revenge and children fated to die by their mother's hand. However, the inevitability and certainty of the story's outcome has not led to a unity in conception or interpretation of the material. On the contrary, this given structure has in some cases been stretched to the breaking point or again it has been use as a convenient dramatic vehicle. In Anouilh's Médée, for instance, the murder of the children is completely unmotivated; it merely forms part of the traditional story. At the centre of this play is instead the relationship between Jason and Medea, their disgust with each other and their inability to break free from each other.

This basically rather ordinary story of a man between two women and of the rejected woman's revenge seems thus to be capable of being treated with infinite variety. The story is based on a fundamental truth of human relations: love does not have the same meaning to a man and to a woman. The woman is seen as the preserver of the home and the past, for whom love means everything and who is unswervingly loyal as long as her love is reciprocated. The absoluteness of her love is carried over into her revenge, when her love is rejected. For the man love
is adventure and conquest; he is always striving towards new horizons and new experiences. He is driven to explore the unknown and the uncertain, in other words, the future. Wife and children become a burdensome reminder of a responsibility he no longer recognizes. They are shackling him to a past he rejects.

In spite of this set pattern underlying all of the Medea-plays some significant differences become apparent in a comparison of the Euripidean Medea and Jason with their 20th century counterparts. Some of these changes are quite subtle, some have occurred gradually during the course of the centuries while others again are rather startling and appear to stand in direct contrast to the original.

One of the more fundamental changes which has occurred through the years is due to the fact that less and less importance has been attached to the fact that Jason broke his oath to Medea. Condemnation of Jason is therefore usually based on other grounds, such as callousness, egotism, ambition, opportunism and sexual infidelity. In other words, traits which were already present in Euripides' Jason but which only added to his basic guilt of treason and perjury have now become the main reason for his punishment. Often also Jason may appear as a perfectly reasonable man who is above reproach, while Medea's rage is out of all proportion or completely unfounded. Most often though the 20th century view seems to be that Medea's failings were inherent in his nature so that his punishment, for a fault he could not help but commit, must appear excessively harsh.

As Jason's oath loses in importance so does Medea's sense of injured honour. More and more her revenge appears to be caused by her
excessive possessiveness and jealousy. Medea's crime gains all the aspects of a crime passionnel: the rejected wife takes revenge on her rival. This change in the underlying cause of Medea's revenge also brings about a change in the nature of the crime itself, and as a rule the motives leading to the murder of Creusa are different from those leading to the murder of the children.

Medea's crime has thus become two separate acts. In Euripides play these two deeds were complimentary and inseparable. For his Medea, neither deed was complete within itself but only together with the other constituted "perfection in revenge." There is another reason why Medea's crime has become two separate acts. For Euripides' Jason childlessness is tantamount to a living death. All his life and his achievements become futile without children to carry his name and tell of his glory. This importance of children for a man is further stressed in Medea's discussion with Aegeus, who will go to any length in order to have progeny. Medea's revenge is thus incomplete unless Jason loses not only his children but also the mother of his future children. Creusa, therefore, presents a threat to Medea not merely because she is a rival for Jason's love but also because she is the prospective mother of his future children. In the 20th century, children are generally far less vital to a man's life and, although Jason may grieve over their death, he is not as completely and utterly destroyed as his Euripidean precursor. Contemporary writers have therefore been forced to find other reasons for Medea's child-murder. Often these explanations of her deed tend to exculpate her. Necessity, love, a desire to protect or save, or delusion
and insanity, all become reasons leading to the infanticide. Guilt no longer seems to rest on Medea either.

In these post-Freudian plays guilt is often explained away as far as both Jason's and Medea's actions are concerned. We are shown how one action inexorably leads to another until Jason's betrayal and Medea's murders are no longer deeds for which they are personally responsible but merely products of the situation in which they have become entangled. In most of these recent plays, Medea and Jason - the couple - are doomed from the start and their relationship can only end in a catastrophe.

This lifting of the responsibility from the protagonists brings about one of the most fundamental changes in the structure of the play: victory has become synonymous with defeat. The triumphant exultation, experienced by the Euripidean or by the Senecan Medea, is no longer possible for the Medeas of the 20th century. Medea, like Jason, has become a victim.

There are further changes in the portrayal of other characters in these 20th century plays. It has been noted already that Creusa has steadily gained in importance during the years. In many plays she serves as a foil and counterpart to Medea. Often she is the only one to show some understanding of Medea, however, a friendship between the two women is prevented by their love for the same man. Creusa's rise in importance seems to be directly linked to the change in motivation from injured honour to jealousy.

Creon, who at times has been portrayed as an outright villain or a
crafty politician, has become a concerned and capable statesman in many of these most recent plays. He is seen as a guardian of justice and peace. Often he may feel sympathy and compassion for Medea but, since she poses a threat to the welfare of his people, he must place the good of the state above his personal feelings. Characteristics of Euripides' Aegeus seem thus to have been incorporated into the 20th century Creon. The role of Aegeus, if he is introduced at all, appears to be rather vague and dubious in most of the modern plays.

The chorus, who has gradually lost in importance since Euripides' Medea and who has disappeared completely from the 19th century plays, for instance, is reintroduced in the 20th century. This is no doubt due to the lack of concern with realism in modern theatre. But the chorus does not regain the position they held in the Greek theatre. They seem to serve primarily as a group of commentators who are usually very partisan and biased either for or against Medea.

One of the most striking features common to almost all of these plays is the increase in violence and brutality. Already Euripides' Medea contains a large measure of gruesome detail which is, however, made bearable by the general tone of the play and the stature of Medea herself. With few exceptions, the 20th century writers exhibit a gloating fascination with cruelty and bestiality, often expressed in strong and revolting language, which does not seem to have a place in tragedy. It is a violence and savagery unequaled since the Renaissance. Violence seems to be increasing in our daily lives and to have become a sign of our times. Like the present, the Renaissance was a time of transition and of great
upheavals in men's lives and thinking. This might be one explanation for
the similar preoccupation with violence in both of these periods.

Through the years many social and political problems have been
exposed in various Medea-plays. The most important of these is the
theme of the stranger and the opposition of the barbarian to the
civilized person. This theme has been an important part of the Medea-
story since the days of Euripides. In the 20th century Medea's "other-
ness" has often been further emphasized by portraying her as a woman
of different race or colour. In the most recent plays, however, the
emphasis on social issues appears to have diminished slightly, and
interest is focused mainly on the intricacies of human relations in
general and especially on the relationship between men and women.

It has been found then that some of the major themes of
Euripides' Medea are still of vital interest today. Moreover, the
Medea-story has proved to be rich enough to serve as an inspiration
or a dramatic vehicle for new themes and concerns which were unknown
in Euripides' time.
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## VII APPENDIX

### (1) MEDEA-PLAYS LISTED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<td>Medea</td>
<td>ca. 55 A.D.</td>
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<td>Magnuson</td>
<td>Afric an Medea</td>
<td>1971</td>
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SUMMARIES OF THE LAST SIX PLAYS

Jeffers, Medea (1946)

This play follows Euripides' Medea quite closely with only few modifications. Medea is, however, Asiatic and a witch, but not an evil one at first. No great interest is placed in the problem of racial discrimination as such. The women of the chorus are very partisan in their support of Medea until she commits her crime, at which point they turn from her. Creon banishes Medea and her children although he pities her and admits that she has just cause for grievance. It is Medea's nurse who brings Aegaeus to her as a means of salvation. From him she hears how important children are to a man. Aegaeus reluctantly promises to protect Medea if she comes to Athens and will make him fertile. Jason does not want to keep the children with him, but offers to have them educated at Epidauros. But Medea refuses to hand her children to strangers. She will part with them only, if they are allowed to stay in Corinth, and to achieve this purpose sends her fatal gifts to Creon and Creusa. With Creon's death there is a general uprising in the masterless city. Medea kills the children because they are her last bond with Jason and to prove that her hatred of Jason is greater than her love for her children. Jason is left miserable and defeated while Medea exists suffering, but triumphant and unscorned.
Anouilh, Médée (1946)

In a gipsy wagon outside of town, Médée awaits Jason's return from Corinth. He has gone to ask for asylum for himself and his family. Médée is disturbed by the sounds of joy coming from the town which jar her somber mood. When a messenger arrives to tell her of Jason's impending marriage to Creon's daughter, the news is an almost welcome relief to her. She can now give free rein to her hatred. The relationship between Jason and Médée had already long been loveless. Only habit and a sort of complicity held them together. Jason, however, has now grown tired of their restless and unsavoury life. He seeks order and security, and do a sense of belonging, even though it may mean compromise. Médée refuses to give in; she will always say no to life. After Creon's and Creusa's deaths, she kills the children like little sacrificial animals without a moment's hesitation. They represent the last links binding her to Jason. She then sets herself aflame in her gipsy caravan hoping with her last desperate deed to impress her image forever on Jason. He, however, is determined to forget her, to start a new life and to bring order and security to the ordinary people whose daily lives are unaffected by Médée's desperate act.

Peter (Jason), a Greek partisan leader, and his wife Anna (Medea), a doctor with the partisans, meet after a year's separation in a remote communist guerilla camp towards the end of the second world war. Anna is to be the certifying doctor at an execution ordered by Peter. The evidence against the accused couple is meagre and uncertain, but their attitude and background are such that they must die. Waiting for the execution, the woman thinks of her son who will revenge her while the man only thinks of himself. Anna is very upset by her task and would like to help them. The woman warns her that men only want power and gratification and that Anna's ideal of a new and just society after the war is but an empty dream. In spite of her protests, Peter comes to Anna that night and she conceives. The war over, Anna still wears her uniform and works in an orphanage. Peter, as police commissioner, stops a street altercation and offers a roof for the night to the beautiful, pampered and pleasure-hungry Dora. The next day Peter cannot resist her attractions and decides to leave Anna whom he considers a comrade rather than a woman. Peter and Anna are visited by Zoe, a former partisan fighter who had killed her lover to stay true to the cause and later purposely contracted leprosy so that she might infect the enemy troops. However, peace has made her sacrifice useless. Anna has Peter take Zoe to a leper hospital where she can still be of use telling the other patients about the new world which is dawning. In the meantime Dora returns to tell Anna about Peter's betrayal. She is attracted by a beautifully embroidered kerchief Zoe left behind and Anna eventually gives it to her.
Before Peter's return Anna aborts her baby. Only too late do Peter and Dora realize where their search for pleasure and gratification has led. Dora takes Zoe's place in a promiscuous leper village, while Anna will devote herself to the war orphans and will continue working for a better world. Peter is left broken, but he must live, as suicide would be too easy.
Medea, a beautiful amazon (Negro, in the English translation), anxiously awaits Jason's return from the Corinthian palace. Jason and Medea want to live a quiet, secluded life in Corinth forgetting the past. But Medea is disliked by the populace who blame her supernatural powers for any misfortune or disaster. Creon fears Jason's and Medea's power and fame and, for political reasons, intends to bind Jason to his house by marriage. Medea and her children are not only banished but outlawed. Medea's only wish is for a safe refuge for herself and her children far from the angry crowds and the intrigues of rulers. Aegeus, who once loved Medea and seeks a cure for infertility from her, refuses, however, to save her children; he will only grant them refuge, if they make their own way to safety. Creon and Jason then decide to hold the children as hostages against Medea's good behaviour. Jason is power hungry and not ready to give up his worldly ambitions. He must flee forward away from Medea and the memories of the past. Medea promises to hand the children over during the wedding festivities. Although the children are well received at first, Creon suspects Medea's gifts. A false rumour of Creusa's death by poison spreads and the children are forced to flee the infuriated crowd who tries to stone them. When the mob breaks down the doors of her house, Medea kills the children and asks for death for herself. Jason, who at first was only concerned for the frightened Creusa, arrives too late to save his sons. Creusa, watching him brave the mob, falls to her death from the lookout tower. Medea survives to mourn her children, while Jason returns to his native village, unknown and nameless, his dreams of power and adventure shattered.
Braun, Medea (1958)

Jason's and Medea's life before coming to Corinth has been one of destruction, death, violence and crime. To Creon, however, they offer friendship and riches. Jason, who only cares for fame, gold and power, sees in Creon's daughter Glauke a means to political power. Medea, on the verge of insanity already at the beginning of the play, never appears quite human. The women of the chorus are concerned about the safety of the city and hostile to Medea who causes uproar and dissension. Creon first orders Medea's death, then relents and allows her a day's grace for the children's sake. Jason lost Iolcos because of Medea's precipitated murder of Pelias and now wants to rule Corinth instead. He tells her that he is tired of the criminal life they have led and tempted by peace, order and the fellowship of other men. Medea rejects the temptation of the city and refuses to play their game. She prefers Jason's hatred to his well-meaning indifference. Aegeus, whose son fell in the battle for Corinth, shows Medea the importance of children to a man. He flatly refuses to help the feared and hated Medea. There is no refuge in Athens for this Medea. She cannot escape from her past crimes and must live up to her reputation. Evil only engenders more and greater evil; there is no escape or reprieve. Medea deceives both the chorus and Jason begging that the children may stay as they are not safe with her. She admits to Jason that she has considered killing them. Medea's gifts are to assure their acceptance. She shows no sign of triumph at the news of Creon's and Glauke's death, but denies her guilt and hysterically asks for her children which she then kills and buries. She
is insane, dehumanized and animal-like. Defeated and despised she leaves for the desert while Jason and the chorus rush to the aid of the city which is torn by riots and civil war.

This play follows the Euripidean model fairly closely, but its action is set in a large city on the West Coast of Africa at the beginning of the 19th century. Medea is a tribal princess from the interior and Jason a white slave trader who is on the point of marrying the Portuguese governor's daughter. He enters this new marriage because he wants power, riches and a chance to be free to move into the future. The Argo expedition of the Greeks has been transformed into a slave drive up the Congo from which Jason returned alive only thanks to Medea's help. She is a wise woman of noble descent liked and respected by the chorus - a group of helpless slave women. Governor Barretto exiles Medea not only because he fears her occult powers but also because there are signs of an imminent slave uprising which could be fanned by Medea. Barretto, however, refuses to kill Medea as he is tired of violence and bloodshed. Medea receives her day's grace and immediately starts to plot revenge. Adago, the only black chief invited to the wedding, promises Medea escape from Africa, if she reaches his tribe and will cure him of infertility. The children are sent with the gifts and their exile is revoked but the governor's daughter does not wear the poisonous robe immediately. Medea's plans seem foiled. In the meantime the slave revolt has broken out in the city, the police have mutinied, but the governor's mansion is still untouched. Medea's robe is not worn until the actual wedding ceremony when the flames destroy the governor and his daughter. Medea kills her children because of the white blood which flows in their veins and because they must not fall into enemy hands.
She leaves triumphant with their bodies, leaving Jason to mourn by the rotting slave ship "Argo."