

***Medea and Its Chinese Audience***

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This dissertation starts with chapters on the legends of Medea and the dramatic analysis of *Medea* centred on the filicide and the magic chariot, in which I argue that Medea is portrayed mostly as a positive figure, not a heartless demon, and Euripides is not a misogynist as some have argued. The center piece of the dissertation are the English and Chinese (Mandarin) translations of *Medea*. In Chinese translation, I aim to produce a lucid, literal and faithful prose translation of the Greek original. So far, the only available Chinese translation of *Medea* is that by Luo Niansheng, first published in 1938 and reprinted in 2004. My translation, utilizing the more recent editions of Greek text and commentaries, is a more up-to-date translation in modern Chinese. The Chinese translation is followed by a commentary written for the benefit of Chinese readers. The commentary is focused on the linguistic and cultural differences encountered in translating ancient Greek into modern Chinese. The perceivable difficulties Chinese audiences would face viewing Greek tragedy are discussed and some general theatrical differences between Chinese operas and Greek tragedy are explained, using the examples of Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy in recent years. I conclude that Greek tragedy can be a source of both confusion and fascination for Chinese audiences. In explaining the linguistic, cultural and theatrical context of Greek tragedy and *Medea*, I hope Chinese readers and audiences will gain a better understanding of *Medea* and appreciate more the immense power of Euripides' words.

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## PREFACE

I wish to thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Mae Smethurst of the Classics Department at the University of Pittsburgh, for inspiring me to work on *Medea*. The idea of focusing on the *Medea* arose from an excellent seminar with her, and she was the one who suggested a translation into Chinese. She has given me patient guidance throughout this process, and I am especially and deeply indebted to her for continuing to work with me while she has been on medical leave.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

There are seven parts to this dissertation: Introduction, Legend of Medea, Making Sense of *Medea*, Translations, Commentary, Conclusion, and Bibliography.

The chapter “Legend of Medea” gives an overview of Medea’s myths and legends mostly before the production of Euripides’ *Medea*. The absence of Medea’s intentional killing of her children while in a sound mind and the absence of her possession or association with a flying chariot in these legends strongly suggest that Euripides invents these particular developments for his dramatic purpose. This unique treatment of the Medea story by Euripides has significant meaning in its dramatic context, as will be argued in the next chapter.

The chapter “Making Sense of *Medea*” is essentially a dramatic analysis focusing on Medea’s filicide and her scot-free escape in the flying chariot. I focus on these topics because the interpretation of these topics decisively shapes the interpretation of the play and the understanding of the character of Medea. I argue that Medea’s filicide is an integral part of Medea’s revenge on Jason’s betrayal, as it is repeatedly said in the play by Medea, the chorus and Jason, that Medea kills the children to destroy Jason’s family line and to hurt him emotionally. Viewed from outside the dramatic context, the destruction of one’s children is an appropriate punishment for a perjurer, such as Jason is, as argued by Rickert (1987) and Kovacs (1993). In myths children tend to be killed accidentally or by someone else other than their

mother, but tragedians dramatize deliberate maternal filicide, especially in the lost Classical dramas (McHardy 2005). I speculate that Euripides employed filicide as a form of kin-killing in order to intensify the arousal of pity and fear. Both the fact that Medea commits filicide by following the heroic code of not being laughed at by one's enemies, and the fact that her filicide occurs only after heart-wrenching inner debates and much wavering, strongly suggest that she is not portrayed by Euripides as a crazed, cold-blooded, heartless, demonic murderer.

Euripides' unexpected treatment of Medea's escape on the flying chariot of her grandfather Helios has given rise to controversial interpretations among contemporary scholars. One view sees Medea in the finale as a witch on her broom, i.e. the flying chariot in this case. I refute this simplistic interpretation by arguing that Medea is portrayed as very human in this play and Euripides deliberately downplays the magic powers prominent in myths and legends about her. Another prevailing view sees Medea in her magic chariot as a demonic figure who has forfeited her humanity by virtue of her murders. To refute this view, I argue that the magic chariot is not an evil apparatus invented to fit the Medea's demonic status or to strike horror and awe in the audience. The only other known description of a flying dragon chariot in myths is that of Triptolemus. He uses it to traverse the earth and spread the blessings of agriculture to mankind. The dragon chariot, at least in this mythological context, is a benevolent thing. Furthermore, it is obvious from the text that the flying chariot is produced by Euripides to protect Medea from the hands of her enemies and to deliver her to her safe haven Athens. That is, the flying chariot is above all a safety device to Medea's advantage. It is hard to see Medea as a demon in her magic chariot since she appears as if a *deus ex machina*, endowed with the power and function of a god typically appearing in the finale in Euripides' dramas. Yet Medea in her

magic chariot is also intensely human as she is still engaged in very emotional verbal fight with Jason. She places the blame of the children's death squarely on Jason (1363-66, 1372) and professes her maternal love for her dead children. Medea in her flying chariot is still the wounded wife and a childless mother who loves her children and shares the emotional pain of their loss. The true significance of putting Medea on her high-flying chariot lies in two factors. First of all, it enables Euripides to signify the dramatic role reversal between Jason and Medea, both visually (i.e. Medea triumphant and out of reach in her chariot with Jason crushed below on the ground) and verbally (i.e. Medea's condescending words for Jason in 1319-1320 directly echo Jason's words in 610-612). Second, Euripides, by putting Medea on the flying chariot, engineers Medea's escape to safety scot-free. We have to bear in mind that Euripides is not confined or obliged by any tradition to offer such a dramatic deliverance and resolution to Medea's plight, but he nonetheless *chooses* to do so. His choice implies that he is not condemning Medea and her cause. I further argue that Euripides not only portrays Medea mostly as a positive and sympathetic figure in this play, but he also portrays women in general with great dignity and moral superiority in his other plays. That is, Euripides is not a misogynist, as some have argued.

The translations of the Greek text include both my translations into English and into Chinese (Mandarin). In both translations I aim to produce a lucid and straightforward modern prose-style rendering of the original text. The reason I work on *Medea* is to provide a more up-to-date translation to Chinese readers. So far, the only available Chinese translation of *Medea* is that by Luo Niansheng (1904-1990), a great Chinese classicist and translator who studied Classics in the US in the 1930s. His Chinese translation of *Medea* (first published in 1938,

reprinted in 2004) is based on the Greek text edited by Mortimer Lamson Earle (*The Medea* of Euripides, American Book Company, first published in 1904). He translated *Medea* in China under the harsh conditions of Sino-Japanese war in the 1930s with very limited resources. Since then, new editions of Greek text and commentaries have become available and Chinese language has also evolved over the last sixty years. I am in a fortunate position to use the more recent edition of Greek text (Diggle 1984) and commentaries (Page 1964 & Mastronarde 2002). However, I am indebted to Prof. Luo's translation in many ways. Above all, I follow his translation of Greek proper names which has become widely recognizable in China. Like Prof. Luo's translation, my translation is also in prose, but it is more modern reflecting the usage and style of modern-day Chinese. In mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, there has also been more interest in Greek tragedy as evidenced by several Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy in the last twenty years: Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* was produced in 1986 in mainland China, Sophocles' *Antigone* in 1988 in mainland China, *The Oresteia* in 1995 in Taiwan, *The Bacchae* in 1998 in Hong Kong, *Medea* (called *Hebei Bangzi Medea*) in 1989 (then again in 2002), Cantonese *Medea* in 2003 in Hong Kong, and *The Lady of Loulan* (based on *Medea*) in Taiwan in 1994 and again in mainland China in 2008. These productions were received with great enthusiasm and appreciation by Chinese audiences. *Medea* seems to have a special hold of fascination on Chinese audiences, since it has been produced more often than other plays. As a student knowing both ancient Greek and Mandarin Chinese, I am in a unique position to offer a new modern Chinese translation of *Medea* to meet the new interest of Chinese readers and audiences for Greek tragedy and for *Medea*.

In the “Commentary” following the translation, the focus is on the linguistic and cultural differences encountered in translating ancient Greek into modern Chinese. I also comment on the perceivable difficulties Chinese audiences, accustomed to traditional Chinese operas, would face viewing Greek tragedy as a dramatic genre and convention.

In the concluding chapter, I sum up these linguistic, cultural and theatrical differences. Regarding the Chinese translation, I make it clear that when unable to translate certain expressions, similes or imagery directly from ancient Greek into Chinese, I strive first to find similar expressions or cultural equivalents in the Chinese translation. If unsuccessful, I use a substitution.

Regarding the differences in theatrical traditions, I point out that the presence and role of the chorus will be difficult for Chinese audiences to appreciate and understand, since Chinese operatic theatres do not have chorus. I also describe very fluid but totally non-Greek use of chorus in the Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy. The use of masks is also a barrier to Chinese audiences who are accustomed to the make-up and face-painting in traditional Chinese operas. In the Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy, the actors do not wear masks. The meta-theatrical references to the physical aspects of the theatre, such as the double-door or the flying chariot on a crane in the Greek theatre, appear too realistic to Chinese audiences since the use of props are minimal and symbolic in traditional Chinese theatres. Such symbolic approaches to presentation are in tune with the traditional Chinese aesthetics which emphasizes the capture of the defining spirit of a subject rather than the physical reproduction of its shape or form. I also point out that the Chinese operas are performance-oriented and Greek tragedies are more words- or text-oriented. That partially explains why in the Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy, the

monologues and messenger's speeches are either cut or greatly curtailed. In conclusion, *Medea* and Greek tragedy can be a source of both confusion, but also fascination for Chinese audiences. Chinese audiences need to first understand Greek tragedy as a genre and a distinct theatrical tradition before they can truly appreciate the Greek sense of tragic and the character of Medea. In explaining the subtle linguistic and cultural differences which are either lost in translation or cannot be accurately translated, I hope to help Chinese readers gain a better understanding of the dramatic text of *Medea* and the immense power of Euripides' words.

The "Bibliography" includes books and articles referenced both in English and Chinese.

## 2.0                   LEGEND OF MEDEA

The Greek tragedies most often base their stories on heroic myth and divine legend<sup>1</sup>. The tragedians retain a certain amount of freedom in their treatment of traditional stories that may have different versions. The myth of Medea relevant to Euripides' play can be divided into the following four episodes, each associated with a specific place where the story is said to take place (Graf 1997; Mastronarde 2002).

- a. Medea, the helper-maiden, in Colchis: these stories center on how the Argonauts, led by Jason, arrived in Colchis and how Medea, the princess of Colchis, out of love for Jason, helped him obtain the Golden Fleece with her magic powers and consequently betrayed her father and her homeland.
- b. Medea, the murderess of Pelias, in Iolcus: after arriving in Iolcus from Colchis, Medea had Pelias killed through trickery.
- c. Medea in Corinth: the exiled life of Medea and Jason in Corinth and the death of their children.

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<sup>1</sup> There are exceptions. Phrynichus, a contemporary of Aeschylus, based his now-lost tragedy *The Sack of Miletus* (written in 494BC) on the contemporary event (i.e. the destruction of Miletus by the Persians in 495BC). He was prosecuted and fined for "reminding the Athenians of their own troubles" (Taplin 1978:168). Aeschylus' *The Persians* (produced in 472BC) dramatizes the Persian court's reaction to the defeat of the Persians in the Persian War.

- d. Medea, the evil step-mother, in Athens: Medea tried to have Aegeus' son Theseus killed.

## 2.1 MEDEA IN COLCHIS

A reference to the ship Argo and Jason is found in *Odyssey* (XII. 70), and Aeson, Jason's father, and Pelias (Aeson's half-brother) are also mentioned (XI. 254-260; Braswell 1988:7). This indicates that the story of the Argonauts is well-known since at least Homeric times.

The earliest extant reference to the name of Medea is found in Hesiod's *Theogony* in which the "neat-ankled" Medea is the daughter of Aeetes, niece of Circe and granddaughter of Helios (*Theogony* 961). In later passages, without mentioning her name, Hesiod continues with the story of Medea and Jason (*Theogony* 992-1002):

Aeson's son, by the immortal gods' design, took from Aeetes, the Zeus-fostered king, his daughter, after having finished many painful labors, which the great and overbearing king, the insolent Pelias, the brute and doer of wrong, had imposed on him. Having completed them, the son of Aeson arrived in Iolcus after long sufferings, bringing on his swift ship the bright-eyed girl, and made her his fresh bride. And tamed by Jason, shepherd of the people, she bore him a son, Medeos, whom Chiron, Phyllyra's son, raised in mountains. So great Zeus' will was done<sup>2</sup>.

The only complete account of the voyage of the Argonauts and the quest for the Golden Fleece extant before Euripides' *Medea* is found in Pindar's *Pythian* IV, written in 462 BC. According to Pindar, Jason demanded the throne back from his uncle Pelias, king of Iolcus, who had seized the throne from Jason's father, the rightful heir. Pelias agreed to give the throne back

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<sup>2</sup> The English translation is mine. It is based on the Greek text in West's commentary (1966:148).

to Jason, on the condition that he should fetch him the Golden Fleece from Colchis, secretly wishing Jason a voyage of no return. Jason sailed to Colchis on board the ship Argo with a host of other heroes. Upon their arrival at Colchis, Jason was asked by Aeetes, the king of Colchis, to yoke fire-breathing bulls and plow a field with them before he could take the Golden Fleece. Using love charms taught by Aphrodite to strip Medea, daughter of Aeetes, of her reverence for her parents and to infuse her with longings for Greece, Jason procured from Medea, the woman skilled in all remedies (*Pythian* IV: 233), a pain-proof “body-lotion” against the fiery breath of the bulls, and completed the impossible task. Jason then killed the dragon which had guarded the fleece “with certain cunning,” and abducted the fleece and Medea, “the murderess of Pelias”, with her own consent (*Pythian* IV: 250)<sup>3</sup>. Pindar addresses Medea as a prophetic Muse who inspires him to sing his song. Pindar also briefly mentions Medea in his *Olympian* XIII (53-54), saying that Medea “against her father’s will, arranged a marriage for herself, and saved the Argo, ship and crew alike” (Miller 1996:140). Pindar thus identifies Medea as a maiden princess aiding her lover’s heroic exploits by betraying her father, a sorceress skilled in all remedies, and a murderess who later caused Pelias’ death.

Apollonius Rhodius’ epic *Argonautica* (written in the third-century BC), though post-dating Euripides’ *Medea*, is worth mentioning because Apollonius could have drawn his plots from the resources available to Euripides but lost to us. His long narrative provides numerous details of the Golden Fleece story. Shot by the arrows of Eros, who was prompted by Aphrodite under the urging of Hera and Athena, Medea was struck with love for Jason and offered him a

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<sup>3</sup> The summary of Medea story in *Pythian* IV is based on the English translation by Sandys (1989).

charm against the fire-breathing bulls and a “sleeping pill” for the dragon guarding the fleece. Having thus obtained the fleece, Jason fled with the willing Medea on board the Argo, while Aeetes and Apsyrtus, Medea’s older brother, were in hot pursuit of them. On the island of Artemis, Jason, using Medea as bait, ambushed and killed Medea’s older brother Apsyrtus, and cut off his extremities<sup>4</sup>. Pherecydes, the mythographer of perhaps 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, says that it is Medea who took Apsyrtus, cut him into pieces and threw them into the river in order to delay Aeetes’ pursuit (Bremmer 1997:85). So in the *Argonautica*, Medea is portrayed as a priestess of Hecate, a sorceress with magical powers, an accomplice in her brother’s murder, and, most memorably, as a passionate maiden princess madly in love who betrayed her father to help her lover.

## 2.2 MEDEA IN IOLCUS

There are practically no extant pre-Euripidean literary accounts about what happened after Medea arrived in Iolcus with Jason following their flight from Colchis. The *Peliades* by Euripides (produced in 455 BC) and *Rhizotomoi* by Sophocles may have dealt with this subject (Mastronarde 2002: 48), but they are lost. It is generally believed that Medea is responsible for Pelias’ death, as Pindar calls her “the murderess of Pelias” (*Pythian* IV 250). Gantz (1993: 367), basing his account on vase paintings and later sources, writes that “Medea persuades the daughters of Pelias to attempt the rejuvenation of their father by cutting up a ram and bringing it

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<sup>4</sup> The summary of the Golden Fleece story in *Argonautica* is based on the English translation by Coleridge (1960).

back to life in a cauldron...the daughters then perform this same operation on Pelias, unwittingly causing his death”. Again there are no extant sources before Euripides’ time about the aftermath of Pelias’ death. Later resources report that Jason and Medea leave Iolcus for Corinth, either willingly or in exile (Gantz 1993:367-8).

### 2.3 MEDEA IN CORINTH

The earliest extant reference to the Corinthian story is from the Corinthian poet Eumelus’ *Corinthiaca* (around 8<sup>th</sup> century BC). It records that Medea and Jason “were summoned to Korinth, where Medea, through her father Aietes, was declared queen, and Jason, co-ruler with her” (Gantz 1993:368). It goes on to say that each time Medea had a baby, she hid it in the temple of Hera, intending to make it immortal. But the children died and when Jason discovered this he left Corinth and Medea (Mastronarde 2002:52). The scholia to Euripides’ *Medea* (post-Euripidean) attest to a different version concerning the death of Medea’s children: it was the Corinthians who killed them at the temple of Hera, either out of hatred at having a foreign woman as their ruler, or out of vengeance for Medea’s killing of their ruler Creon (Gantz 1993:369; Page 1964: XXIV). In the fragments of Neophron’s play *Medea*, Medea is described as debating with herself whether she should go on with the plan of killing her children (Mastronarde 2002: 59). The dating of Neophron’s *Medea* has been a hot topic of debate, with Page, Knox and Mastronarde arguing for a post-Euripidean date, Thompson and Michelini for a pre-Euripidean date (Page 1964: XXXVI, Knox 1968, Mastronarde 2002:64, Thompson 1944

and Michelini 1989). Thus the question of whether there is a pre-existing tradition that Medea intentionally killed her children is still unresolved.

## **2.4 MEDEA IN ATHENS**

Again there is no extant pre-Euripidean literary account about what happened in Athens after Medea left Corinth, although the lost plays of Sophocles' *Aegeus* and Euripides' *Aegeus* (probably produced around 450BC) may have included these stories. Later sources depicted Medea, now the wife of Aegeus, king of Athens, as an evil step-mother who tried to kill Aegeus' as-yet unrecognized son Theseus (Graf 1993:36; Griffiths 2006:20).

### 3.0 MAKING SENSE OF *MEDEA*

Women are predominant figures in Greek tragedies, especially in the plays of Euripides. Most of his seventeen surviving plays give women the leading roles: *Electra*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Phoenissae*, *Trojan Women*, *Alcestis*, *Helen*, and *Medea*. But Euripides was often seen as portraying women in a negative light and acquired a reputation as misogynist even in his own lifetime, as popularized by Aristophanes' comedies *Frogs* and *Thesmophoriazusai*. This stereotype lives on in contemporary scholarship, and Euripides' *Medea* is often seen as the prime example of his misogyny<sup>5</sup>. According to Griffiths

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<sup>5</sup> McDermott and Rabinowitz, for example, regard Medea as a negative female figure although they do not explicitly label Euripides as a misogynist. McDermott (1989:114) argues that Euripides' *Medea* gives women a bad name: "While Medea's self-identification with all women is revealed as shatteringly inappropriate as the play proceeds, there are nonetheless sinister hints that the seeds of Medea are within all women. The outcome of Medea's case does not remove from Woman the evil fame she has traditionally won from Greek poets (as the Chorus hopefully predicts), but carries it to its furthest potentiality." Rabinowitz (1993:153) essentially argues that Euripides constructs the murderous persona of Medea as an embodiment of the nightmare of a breakdown of male dominance: "To the extent that the authorial audience sees Medea as standing for all women, the vengeance will be generalizable, and she will seem to pose a threat to marriage as well: her act may raise the specter of all women killing the sons of their faithless husbands...The threat is not merely that mothers will kill sons, depriving the father of legitimate progeny, but that they will do so on the grounds of betrayed sexual desire and through a formidable rhetorical power. Coming to terms with Medea means coming to terms with masculine control of representation, the ability of the dominant order to construct the female and femininity in ways consistent with its needs. It is important to understand what Euripides is trying to do: the murder of the children is his choice, not Medea's. What better way to make her justifiable rage terrifying to Athenian men and women than to make her kill her children?"

(2006:83), “The extremity of Medea in Euripides’ play could be read as the ‘worst of women’, challenging the crown held in drama by Klyteimnestra”.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that Medea is not portrayed by Euripides as the “worst of women,” and that he is not a misogynist. My arguments will be presented in the following five parts:

Part 1: The Filicide: I will discuss the motives for the filicide as given by Medea in the play. The motif of maternal filicide will also be discussed.

Part 2: The Magic Chariot: I will discuss the structural purpose of the magic chariot in the play and its symbolic meaning. A brief overview of the major interpretations on this topic will be surveyed.

Part 3: The Portrayal of Medea: I will argue that Medea is portrayed as a heroine and her filicide is portrayed as being committed with great inner struggles.

Part 4: The Portrayal of Jason: I will argue that Jason is portrayed as an anti-hero, an oath-breaker, and a dynamic sophistic speaker who violates *philia* and destroys his family but refuses to take responsibility for the destruction.

Part 5: Conclusion: I will conclude that, based on the reading of *Medea* and other plays, the women on the Euripidean stage are mostly positive figures with positively powerful voices, and Euripides is not a misogynist.

### 3.1 THE FILICIDE

The character of Medea is viewed negatively by some critics largely because she kills her own children in the play. Thus, an understanding of the context of the infanticide is crucial to one's interpretation of the play.

#### 3.1.1 Is Filicide Euripides' Invention?

Greek tragedians most often derive their plays from myth and legends, but they retain considerable freedom in their treatment of the traditional stories. As Rabinowitz (2008:80) points out, "the use of myth does not completely control the author... because it does not entail using the same version of the story". In Euripides' *Medea*, Medea deliberately kills her children to punish Jason for his betrayal. This version of the story is not found anywhere in pre-Euripidean myth on Medea. The fragments of a play by an obscure playwright Neophron seem to share the same version, but the dating of his play is highly controversial (Mastronarde 2002:57-64).

An anonymous hypothesis says that Aristotle and his student Dicaearchos believed that Euripides derived his play from a similar one by Neophron (Mastronarde 2002:57-8). The *Suda* (a 10th century Byzantine lexicon of the ancient Mediterranean world) also reports that Euripides' *Medea* was based on Neophron' play (Mastronarde 2002:58). But Page argued that certain linguistic and stylistic features in the fragments are unlikely to be found before 431 BC, and he surmised that a post-Euripidean Neophron wrote the play in imitation of Euripides which was then erroneously attributed to a pre-Euripidean Neophron (1938; 1964 XXX III-XXXVI).

Thompson (1944) rejected Page's linguistic objections and argued for the chronological priority of Neophron's *Medea*. He argued that the two oddities of Euripides' play, the unmotivated appearance of Aegeus and the use of only two actors, were inherited from Neophron's original play. Following Thompson, Michelini (1989) argued that the language of the fragments offers no sure proof of a later date than fifth century BC and that the ancient authorities placing Neophron before Euripides should be upheld.

Although Euripides has been regarded since antiquity as an innovator, it remains unknown whether he invented the intentional infanticide by Medea. But this question need be of little concern because even if this version of the story existed before Euripides, it is not imposed on him and he is in no way obliged to follow suit<sup>6</sup>. He nevertheless *chooses* to present Medea as a deliberate child-murderer (Brockett 1958:24). So the real question is: why does Euripides choose to make Medea kill her children?

### 3.1.2 Why Filicide?

The question of the filicide will be explored within the play itself and outside the play. First of all, Euripides makes the filicide an integral part of Medea's revenge. The importance of children to the parents and household is a recurrent theme throughout the play (March 1990; Easterling

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<sup>6</sup> As is pointed out by Taplin (1978:163), the Homeric myths are not definitive and tragedians exercise freedom in re-arranging traditional myths or inventing new versions in their plays. His examples: in the *Odyssey* 11, Epicaste hangs herself but there is no mention of the blinding of Oedipus, as depicted in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Oedipus is blind and Jocaste is still alive.

1997), and the motive and the plan of killing the children is slowly revealed and formulated in the play as its plot unfolds.

The potential threat posed by the anguished Medea to her children is foreshadowed in the beginning of the play. The nurse in her opening monologue seems to be worried for the children's safety at the hands of Medea: "she hates the children and takes no pleasure seeing them. I am afraid that she is planning some new evil" (36-37)<sup>7</sup>. The nurse then cautions the tutor to keep the children inside and not to let them go near their mother in her gloomy mood (90-95). Upon hearing Medea's laments from inside, the nurse warns the children, by addressing them directly, to hurry inside and not to go near their raging mother (98-105). Medea answers this from inside, "May you accursed children of a hateful mother die with your father, and may the whole house perish!" (112-114). Her curse on the children obviously stems from her hatred of their faithless father, and the nurse protests that the children are innocent of their father's crime (116-117). This outburst against the children should not, however, be perceived as a threat or intention to harm the children at this point in the play, since in her extreme anguish and despair Medea even wishes death upon herself in the same breath: "May the flame of heaven strike my head! What profit is there for me to live any longer? Alas, alas! May I take my rest in death, leaving this hateful life!" (144-147). The wish to die is expressed again by Medea when she comes on stage to talk to the chorus of Corinthian women, "I am undone and I want to give up the pleasure of life and die!" (226-227). It is nonetheless undeniable that Medea desires the total destruction of Jason's family, old and new:

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<sup>7</sup> All the English translations of *Medea* quoted in this document are my own.

O great Themis and Lady Artemis, do you see what I suffer, though I bound my accursed husband with great oaths? May I one day see him and his bride violently destroyed, house and all, what kind of injustice they have dared to commit against me unprovoked? (160-165).

But as it turns out, Medea has even more to lament: Creon, the king of Corinth, comes on stage and orders her and her children to leave the city in exile without any delay (271-276). This news should come as no surprise to the audiences as they have heard the rumor from the tutor earlier (70-72). It is the fear for his daughter's life, professes Creon, which has prompted his decision: "I am afraid of you---there is no need to cloak my words---that you may do some incurable harm to my child" (282-283). Having tried in vain to reassure Creon that his fear is groundless, Medea resorts to pleading with him on the basis of his paternal feelings, as parent to parent:

Allow me to stay this one day and figure out how we will go into exile and a refuge for my children, since their father prefers to work out nothing for his children. Take pity on them. *You too are a father of children.* It is likely that you should have good-will toward them. For I have no thought for my own person, if we go into exile, but I weep for them suffering ill-fortune (340-347).

In response to this plea, Creon relents and grants Medea one day's stay in Corinth. Enough time, proclaims Medea, for her to make three of her enemies corpses: the father, the daughter and her husband (374-375). This is the first time in the play that Medea herself expressly states her intention to kill her enemies. After settling on the use of poison as a means of killing (384-385), Medea turns her thoughts to where she will go after the murder (386-391).

Then Jason enters, with the stated purpose of seeing whether Medea and the children will need anything for their life in exile. But Medea immediately launches into an invective against

him for having shamelessly betrayed her after she had sacrificed everything for him and after she had borne him children:

Having reaped these benefits from me, O vilest of men, you have betrayed us and procured a new marriage, although children have been born (488-490).

Jason in his defense answers that he remarried not because he was “struck with desire for a new bride” (556) but because he wanted to father more children and raise them in a manner worthy of his house so that he would prosper (562-565). He then complains that women attribute too much importance to their bedroom affairs (569-573) and he wishes that men could beget children from some other source, and that the female race, troublemakers for men, did not exist (573-575). In Jason’s eyes, women seemingly have only one reason to exist: to bear children for men. He makes it amply clear that women are not important for men, but children are. On this bitter note, Jason and Medea part.

And as it turns out, Medea does not need to wait long for her “tower of safety” to appear (390). Aegeus, king of Athens, happens to be passing through Corinth. This is perfect timing for Medea! By promising Aegeus the cure (φάρμακα, 718) for his childlessness, Medea obtains a safe haven from him in Athens, provided that she can find her own way there (719-730).

The child-parent theme is thus very important in Medea’s encounter with both Creon and Aegeus, as is pointed out by Easterling: “With Creon it is his feelings as a parent she exploits, with Aegeus his longing to be a parent,” (Easterling 1997: 185). Their love for children is clearly stated in the play (φιλῶ γὰρ οὐ σὲ μᾶλλον ἢ δόμους ἐμούς, 327; φεῦ φεῦ, βροτοῖς ἔρωτες ὥς κακὸν μέγα, 330; οὕτως ἔρωξ σοὶ πρὸς θεῶν τελεσφόρος γένοιτο παίδων, 714-715) and used by Medea to achieve her purpose. The importance of children to Jason probably does not escape the notice of Medea either.

It is not until after Medea has found a refuge with Aegeus that she reveals to the chorus her detailed plan of vengeance: she is going to fake reconciliation with Jason, ask him to let the children stay, and send the children carrying the poisoned gifts to Jason's new bride in order to facilitate her petition (764-789). Then she reveals that she will kill her "dearest" children (τέκνα γὰρ κατακτενῶ τᾶμ' 792-3; φιλάτων παίδων φόνον 795). This is the first time in the play that Medea expressly states her intention to kill her children. Up to this point, her intended targets have been her husband, his new bride, and his father-in-law (374-375). But what drives her decision to commit infanticide? Multiple reasons or motives are provided by Medea herself:

Here I dismiss this topic. I wail aloud when I think what kind of deed I must do afterwards. I shall kill the children, my own ones. There is no one who will take them away. Having destroyed the entire house of Jason I shall go out of the land, fleeing (the consequence of) the murder of my dearest children, and having dared the most unholy deed. For it is not tolerable to be laughed by my enemies, my friends. [Let it go. What gain is there for me to live? I have no fatherland, no home, no refuge from misfortunes.] I made a mistake at that time when I left my father's house, having been persuaded by the words of a Greek man, who with the god's help will pay me the penalty. For he will never see his children by me living hereafter, nor will he beget a child by his newly-wedded wife, since she the wretched must die a horrible death from my poison. Let no one think that I am thoughtless and feeble, and quiet, but [I am] of the opposite disposition, harsh to my enemies and kind to my friends. For the life of such people is most glorious (790-810).

First, Medea seems to imply that she will kill her children so that they will not fall into the wrong hands (τέκνα γὰρ κατακτενῶ τᾶμ', οὔτις ἔστιν ὅστις ἐξαιρήσεται, 792-93). Then after she has learned from the tutor that the gifts have been delivered and received, Medea stresses the necessity to kill the children: "By the avenging fiends below in Hades, it will never come to pass that I will abandon my children for my enemies to insult. At all events, they must die. And since

they must, I who gave them birth shall kill them” (1059-1063). The same point is made again by Medea after she has learned from the messenger that Creon and his daughter have died a miserable death from the deadly gifts she sent:

My friends, I have decided on this thing, that, after killing my children, I should depart from this land as soon as possible, and that *I should not delay and surrender my children to another more ill-minded hand to kill*. By all means there is a necessity for them to die. And since it is necessary, I will kill them I who gave birth to them (1236-1241).

This motive for killing the children is accepted by some critics at face value and leads to the following interpretation of the infanticide:

The parent becomes convinced of a threat to the children that clinches the feeling that they would be better dead. Such an interpretation seems much more relevant to Medea’s case than any of the others that have been put forward (Easterling 1997:189).

So is the threat to the children posed by the kinsmen of the royal family, as perceived by Medea in this passage, reflected elsewhere in the play? Jason obviously shares this perception (not knowing that the children are dead already) after having learned that Medea has killed the royal family:

But I do not have concerns for her as for the children. Those whom she harmed will harm her, but I came to save the lives of my children, *lest the kinsmen do anything to them* to my grief, avenging the unholy murder committed by their mother (1301-1305).

So it is safe to say that the danger to the children from the kinsmen of the slain is real, but does this mean, within the confines the play, that their death is inescapable and there is no alternative? Throughout the play, Medea is certainly convinced that she herself will escape safely after the murder, although she never mentions how. She also entertains the idea that she could take the children out of Corinth to live with her in Athens:

I could not do the deed. Goodbye to my former plans. I shall take my children from the land (1044-1045).

Let them be, wretch, spare the children! Living with us there (in Athens), they will make you happy (1057-1058).

If we move forward to the ending of the play, we see that Medea escapes safely, in her never-before-mentioned magic chariot, “the defense against enemy hand” (1322). The magic chariot is big enough to carry the children’s dead bodies, as it seems. And one cannot help but speculate that if Medea could take the children out of Corinth *dead* in her divine magic chariot, she certainly could have taken them out *alive*. Therefore judging from the context of the play, her self-rationalization that she has to kill the children because they are doomed to die anyway is based on an unsustainable premise. So it seems that the children do not have to die, but Medea *decides* that they have to. Why? The second and the third motives suggested by Medea may answer this question.

Secondly, several times Medea claims that she is going to kill the children because she will not tolerate being laughed at by her enemies (οὐ γὰρ γελᾶσθαι τλητὸν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν, 797). She would rather have a well-reputed life earned by “being harsh to enemies and kind to friends” (βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοιςιν εὐμενῇ, 809). By “enemies”, she clearly means Creon, his daughter, and Jason, as is shown in her final confrontation with Jason:

But you were not about to live out a pleasant life *laughing* at me after having dishonored my bed, nor was the princess, nor was Creon, the one offering you the marriage, going to cast me out of this land with impunity! (1354-1357).

Earlier Medea also uses the same rationale to urge herself on to exact vengeance on the royal family and Jason (“You must not incur laughter through this marriage of Jason with the

Sisyphids”/ οὐ γέλωτα δεῖ σ’ ὀφλεῖν, τοῖς Σισυφείοις τοῖς τ’ Ἰάσονος γάμοις, 404-5). Having murdered two of her enemies, Creon and his daughter, Medea uses the same rationale to steel her resolve to kill her children and not to spare them:

But what is wrong with me? *Do I want to incur laughter by letting my enemies go unpunished?* I must dare the deed! (1049-1055).

Medea clearly is thinking that, by killing her children, she is punishing her enemies, by whom she obviously means Jason, the only enemy left to punish at this point. She is thinking that if she kills her children, her enemy, Jason, will not be able to go on living laughing at her, a point reinforced again in her final confrontation with Jason *after* the death of the children (“It atones for the pain if you are not laughing,” 1362). So in the end, Medea does not want *Jason* to go unpunished, and to go on laughing at her (“γέλωτ’ ὀφλεῖν” 1049; ἐγγελῶν 1355; μὴ ᾿γγελᾶς 1362), and that is why she kills *their* children. This leads us to the third motive for infanticide given by Medea in the play: to hurt Jason.

Thirdly, Medea reveals that she intends to destroy the whole house of Jason (δόμον τε πάντα συγγέας’ Ἰάσονος, 795) by killing his children, so that “he will never see his children by me living hereafter, nor will he beget a child by his newly-wedded wife” (803-805). Believing that in this way Jason will be hurt most, this is how she will punish him (τείσει δίκην 802), as she tells the chorus:

**Χο.** ἀλλὰ κτανεῖν σὸν σπέρμα τολμήσεις, γύναι; 816

**Μη.** οὕτω γὰρ ἂν μάλιστα δηχθεῖη πόσις. 817

Chorus: But will you endure to kill your children?

Medea: Yes, for my husband will be hurt most this way!

This motive for killing the children, namely to hurt Jason for her loss of the marriage-bed, is also recognized by the chorus, though disapprovingly (“But I lament next over your wife, o miserable mother of children, you who will slay your children *because of your marriage-bed*, which your husband lawlessly abandoned to your hurt to live with another consort,” 996-1001). And Medea proves to be right in thinking that by killing her children she will hurt Jason most. Worried that his children may be hurt by the kinsmen of the slain royal family, Jason rushes in to protect them, only to be delivered an unexpected blow:

**Χο.** παῖδες τεθνᾶσι χειρὶ μητρώα σέθεν. 1309

**Ια.** οἶμοι τί λέξεις; ὥς μ’ ἀπόλεσας, γύναι. 1310

Chorus : Your children have been killed by their mother’s hand.

Jason: Alas, what do you mean to say? How you have *destroyed* me, woman!

The death of the children is a deadly blow to Jason, as he indicates when he cries out to Medea when she appears on her magic chariot with the dead bodies of the children: “you ruined me by *making me childless* (τεκοῦσα, κάμ’ ἄπαιδ’ ἀπόλεσας, 1326). And Jason also understands why Medea did this:

ἦρξω μὲν ἐκ τοιῶνδε· νυμφευθεῖσα δὲ 1336

παρ’ ἀνδρὶ τῷδε καὶ τεκοῦσά μοι τέκνα, 1337

εὐνῆς ἕκατι καὶ λέχους σφ’ ἀπόλεσας. 1338

But you started from these sorts of deeds.

Having been married to me (this man) and having given birth to children for me,  
*on account of your bed and sex* you destroyed them.

Jason then goes on a tirade against Medea, regretting having married a child-murdering barbarian woman and a lioness (1327-1350). To which tirade Medea simply answers: “Call me whatever you like....for I have wrenched your heart in return, as I ought to” (τῆς σῆς γὰρ ὡς χρὴ καρδίας

ἀνθηψάμην, 1360). The fact that Medea killed her children to hurt Jason is re-iterated in the rest of their final confrontation:

**Ια.** λέχους σφε κήξίωσας οὔνεκα κτανεῖν. 1367

**Μη.** μικρὸν γυναικὶ πῆμα τοῦτ' εἶναι δοκεῖς; 1368

**Ια.** ἥτις γε σώφρων· σοὶ δὲ πάντ' ἐστὶν κακά. 1369

**Μη.** οἷδ' οὐκέτ' εἰσὶ τοῦτο γάρ σε δήξεται. 1370

Jason: Did you deem it right to kill them on account of your bed?

Medea: Do you think that is a small grief to a woman?

Jason: For a sensible one at least. But for you it is all the evil in the world.

Medea: They are no longer alive. *For this will sting you!*

**Ια.** ὦ τέκνα φίλτατα. **Μη.** μητρί γε, σοὶ δ' οὔ. 1397

**Ια.** κᾶπειτ' ἔκανες; **Μη.** σέ γε πημαίνουσ' 1398

Jason: Oh dearest children!

Medea: To their mother surely, but not to you!

Jason: And so you killed them?

Medea: Yes, *hurting just you!*

As is pointed out by March (1990:41), “the infanticide is really her *passionate* desire for revenge carried to its *logical* conclusion, that which will hurt Jason most”. Thus for Medea, killing the children is an essential part of her revenge against Jason.

So within the context of the play, ultimately Medea kills her children to punish and hurt Jason for his betrayal; within the structure of the play, the infanticide “is inevitable because it is a necessary part of her vengeance on Jason” (Schlesinger 1968:297).

Other motives for the infanticide have also been explored by scholars outside the immediate context of the play. Kovacs (1993) suggests that Medea is a divine agent punishing Jason for breaking his oaths, and that it is the will of Zeus, the steward of oaths, that she should murder her children. He argues that the punishment for perjury not only entails the death of the perjurer himself, but also “the destruction of his line after him”. The same observation is made by

Rickert (1987), who points out that since Homeric times the penalty for perjury includes the destruction of one's children, citing among other things, speeches by fifth-century BC orators. In the same vein as Rickert's (1987:112) view that "Medea's destruction of the children as the means to punishing Jason for his perjury is appropriate", Kovacs (1993:60) concludes that "the murder of Jason's children punishes him in a fashion recognizably appropriate for perjury".

Mills (1980) proposes that the infanticide makes *Medea* a revenge play in the pattern of the Ino/Procne stories where the first wife kills her children to punish her husband for his taking another woman. Such a filicide motif seems to be prominent in the fragments of the lost plays of Classical Athens. As McHardy (2005:150) observes, "the development of the motif of deliberate filicide springs from tragedy, whereas in earlier versions of the same myths the children tended to be killed accidentally or by people other than their mothers". One can speculate that the filicide motif found favor with the tragedians because such murders by mothers could arouse intensified pity and fear in the audience, and because kin-killing made the best plot for tragedy, as claimed by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1453b19-22). The kin-killing is the key word here. The tragic effect of the kin-killing in part explains why Medea does not kill Jason. Husband and wife are not considered kin since they are not related by blood, as is argued by the Furies in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (212, 605). The exploitation of kin-killing for tragedy is best exemplified in Aeschylus. As is pointed out by Taplin (1978:163), in the *Odyssey* "Aegisthus is the chief agent of Agamemnon's murder and chief object of Orestes' vengeance", but Aeschylus remolds the story to make Clytaemnestra the sole murderer and chief victim of vengeance. I speculate that this re-arranging of the traditional myth enables Aeschylus to exploit kin-killing to its fullest in

his trilogy. Examined in this light, another form of kin-killing, filicide, is a highly appropriate motif for tragedy.

Euripides himself seemingly tries to draw our attention to the filicide in the myth when he makes the chorus mention Ino as a paradigm for Medea, after she has killed her children within the house:

I have heard that one woman of those living before laid her hands on her dear children, Ino, driven mad by the gods, when the wife of Zeus sent her out of the house in mental distraction. The wretched one fell into the sea because of her unholy murder of her children, having stretched her feet over the sea cliff, and dying along with her two children, she was destroyed (1282-1289).

As Newton (1985:496-7) points out, there seems to be a convention that “the tragic choruses frequently allude to *exempla* when acts of violence occur, or about to occur, in a play”, in order to “render the horrors less shocking”. The rationale that “this has happened before” is intended to have some comforting effect psychologically is also seen in the play itself. When Medea hears from the tutor that the gifts have been successfully delivered, she weeps at what she has done and what she is going to do to her children. Having mistaken this for grief of her imminent separation from her children, the tutor tries to comfort Medea by saying that she is not the only woman who has to be separated from her children and she should try to bear it with a light heart (1017-18). Although starting off with the confirmation of the mitigating effect of a catalogue of mythological paradigms, Newton nonetheless concludes that Medea’s filicide is unparalleled and shocking since it doesn’t coincide exactly with the Ino story. Following Newton, Mastronarde (2002:370) also argues that the use of only one exemplum is evidence that this comparandum is not intended for consolation or mitigation, but serves to emphasize “the superlative quality of the present event”. Mastronarde also points out that the Ino comparandum is not exactly apposite to

Medea, since Ino is described as “driven mad by the gods” while Medea is portrayed as fully within her wits when she commits the filicide. Thus it may be reasonable to speculate that Euripides intends his portrayal of Medea’s filicide to have a full shocking theatrical impact on the audience.

To further our understanding of tragic filicide by mothers, a rarity in the extant classical plays, we shall examine Medea’s filicide within the context of the broader filicide motif in Greek tragedy, especially in the fragments of the lost classical plays where it features more prominently.

Broadly speaking, there are three types of tragic filicide by mothers. The first one is the Althaea type where a mother commits filicide in preference for her natal kin (father and siblings) over her conjugal kin. Althaea is said to have killed her son Meleager because he killed her brother. Her story is featured in lost plays by Phrynichus, Sophocles and Euripides (McHardy 2005:145). The second is the Agave type where a well-meaning mother unknowingly commits filicide in a state of god-sent madness. In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Agave, a maenad driven mad by Dionysus, kills her son Pentheus, young king of Thebes, unknowingly. Euripides probably invented this filicide (March 1990:55). The third is the Ino/Procne type where the first wife kills her son(s) to punish her husband for taking another woman.

There are many variants of Ino myth (McHardy 2005). In one variant, Ino is the second wife of Athamas who plots the death of the children of the first wife. Sophocles probably used this version in one of his two *Athamas* plays. In Euripides’ *Ino*, the second wife mistakenly kills her own children believing they are those of her rival, the first wife Ino. Only in later time (in Plutarch) is Ino said to have killed her son out of maddening jealousy for her husband’s affair with a slave.

This is the version closest to the case of Euripides' Medea. In other versions of Ino myth, Ino kills her son(s) when driven mad by Hera, without the factor of marital jealousy.

Procne's story is featured in Sophocles' *Tereus*, produced probably shortly before 431 BC (Newton 1985:499). In this play, Procne, an Athenian princess, is the wife of Tereus, king of Thrace. She persuades Tereus to bring her sister Philomela from Athens to join her. But Tereus rapes Philomela and cuts out her tongue to silence her (Knox 1968). After Procne learns the truth from a piece of embroidery Philomela has woven, she is said to be "stung by jealousy" and to kill her son Itys and serve him up as a feast to his father (McHardy 2005). The play ends with the transformation of all three of them into birds. The fragments also show that the filicide is condemned as being worse than the crime of the husband ("He is mad! But they act even more madly in punishing him by violence", McHardy 2005:144). The story of Procne comes close to that of Medea not only in that both kill their son(s) to punish their husbands but also in that both lament the plight of women:

Now separated (from my family), I am nothing. Many a time I have observed that in this case our sex, the female sex, is nothing. When we are children, in our father's home, our life is the most pleasant in the world; young girls grow up in the thoughtless delight. But when we reach maturity and intelligence, we are expelled, bought and sold, far away from the gods of our fathers and from our parents, some to barbarians, some to houses where everything is alien, others to houses where they meet with hostility. But all this, when one night has joined us to our husband, we must acquiesce in, and pretend that all is well<sup>8</sup> (Knox 1968:289).

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<sup>8</sup> This passage is Knox's translation of fr. 583 of Sophocles' plays (Pearson 1917:228-229).

This speech of Procne certainly reminds us of Medea's eloquent speech about women's lot ("of all creatures we women are the most unfortunate", 230-251). The "strange combination of infanticide and programmatic speech about the lot of women" in these two plays, as Knox (1968:289) observes, may serve to illuminate the tragedians' heightened awareness of women's powerless position in their society. It probably would not be far-fetched to speculate that by presenting purposeful filicide on stage tragedians are trying to draw attention to women's sufferings and grievances.

### **3.2 THE MAGIC CHARIOT**

After having heard from the messenger the detailed description of the miserable death of Creon and his daughter from the poisoned gifts, Medea urges herself to take the sword and kill the children (1236-1250). The chorus, in their song, cry in vain to Helios to stop the murder of his own blood (1251-1260). Then the helpless cry of the children is heard from behind the doors as their fate is being sealed by the "nets of the sword" woven by their mother (1270a-1278). Jason rushes in only to be told that the children have died by their mother's hands. While he is frantically trying to force open the door to find the children's corpses and Medea, and when the audience's eyes must be fixed on the doors, Medea appears, high up in the air, in a winged chariot, carrying the children's bodies (1377-end.). Poised, calm and superior, she has such words for him:

Why are you shaking these doors and trying to force them open, searching for the corpses and for me the one who has done the killing? Stop this toil. But if you have need of me, say it, if you want

something, but you will never lay your hand on me. Such a chariot Helios the father of my father gives me, a defense against the enemy's hand (1317-1322).

As Medea cares to explain to Jason, the chariot is a gift from her grandfather Helios to protect her from her enemies. Medea has identified herself as the granddaughter of Helios earlier in the play ("I...born from a noble father and Helios" 406; "the father of my father Helios" 746). She also claims that "the delicate robe and the golden garland" (949) were given by Helios, the father of her father, to his descendents (954-955). But up to this point she has never mentioned or hinted at any other gifts from Helios or at any means of escape. So her appearance in this flying chariot, high, unreachable and secure, is nothing short of unexpected. Up to this point, the only expectation has been that Medea will pay the price for killing Creon and his daughter, and that she has no way of escaping unpunished. This is at least the assumption of the messenger who comes to report the death of the royal family, and he only imagines the traditional means of escape: ship or chariot on land,

Messenger: [ O horrible deed you have done lawlessly, ] Medea, flee, flee, leaving behind neither carriage of ship nor chariot moving on the ground! (1121-1123).

Messenger: And let your affairs be left out from my account. For you yourself will experience the visitation from the punishment (1222-1223).

Jason certainly shares the same perception except that he is convinced that Medea cannot get away unless she can fly:

Jason: Women, who are standing near this house, is Medea who has done those horrible things still in this house, or has she gone into exile? For it is necessary for her to be hidden down below the earth or *raise her winged body to the height of the ether*, if she is not going to pay the penalty

to the royal family. Does she believe that, having killed the rulers of the land, she herself will escape from the house unpunished? (1293-1300).

Medea does escape unpunished. She does fly away, in an air-borne chariot! This unexpected staging of Medea in a winged chariot, on a plane usually reserved for *deus ex machina*, free of any retribution for her murder of the royal family and her children, has caused great controversy among critics and has prompted different interpretations of Medea and the play.

### 3.2.1 “Medea Is a Witch”

The magical nature of the flying chariot and its unprepared-for appearance has led some critics to call Medea “a sort of a witch” (Cunningham 1954:153). As Page asserts, “because she was a witch she could escape in a magic chariot” (Page 1964: XXI). Worthington (1990:504) finds “flying off is also consistent with the supernatural aspect of Medea’s character”.

This simplistic view that the chariot-riding Medea is presented as a witch with magic powers not only finds no textual support within the play but also undercuts the true significance of the character of Medea.

First of all, Medea is presented as very human by Euripides in this play, as is argued by Schlesinger (1968:299), Knox (1968:286) and March (1990:38-39). “In the course of the play he had presented Medea as completely human” (Schlesinger 1968:299); “In the play Euripides wrote, Medea has no magical powers at all.....She has only two resources, cunning and poison” (Knox 1968:286). Not as willing to go to the length of Knox, Mastronarde (2002:24) nonetheless concedes that “Medea’s skill in magic is a major aspect of her mythological personality, both before and after Eur., but again the restraint of Eur. in deploying this motif is noteworthy.”

March (1990:38) notes that, far from emphasizing the supernatural qualities of Medea as depicted in the common legends, Euripides “has been at pains to omit any hint of magical powers in his Medea”. This omission or downplaying of Medea’s magical powers is especially conspicuous in Euripides’ depiction of her heroic past and her reputation. In regard to the death of Pelias, he makes Medea simply say “I killed Pelias, in the most painful way to die, at the hands of his own daughters” (486-7), without mentioning any details of the attempt at rejuvenation (Knox and March). In the story of the Golden Fleece, Euripides makes Medea say that she saved Jason, and that she killed the dragon, without mentioning any use of magic (475-482). Creon confesses to Medea that he is afraid of her because she is “clever and skilled in many means of harm” (σοφῇ πέφυκας καὶ κακῶν πολλῶν ἴδρις, 285). By “means of harm” Creon is “alluding rather vaguely to her magic powers, which Eur. downplays to the extent possible” (Mastronarde 2002:220, note 285). I think Euripides’ purposeful downplaying of Medea’s legendary magic powers is consistent with his persistent effort to make Medea and her situation as human (and Athenian) and as universal as possible. Only by making Medea as identifiable as possible to the rest of the womanhood in that society can Euripides make her a suitable spokesperson for her sex; only by doing so can Euripides make her speech beginning “of all the creatures which have life and mind, we women are the most unfortunate” (230-251) ring true in the ears of her audience. To sum up, I agree with McDonald’s conclusion that (1997:300) the concept of Medea as a witch (or a madwoman) undercuts “the heroic greatness Euripides bestowed on her”.

Second, the two “magical” powers or objects that are depicted as in Medea’s possession, *pharmaka* and the chariot of Helios, are not particularly associated with witchcraft. Concerning

the magical chariot, Knox (1968:283) points out that “supernatural winged chariots are hardly an identifying mark of witches: they are properties, in Greek mythology, of gods....of Helios”. Medea’s divine associations do not lessen her intensely human struggles (Griffiths 2006:41). Medea’s divine origin (and her temper) and the human nature of her struggles put her more in the category of a mortal hero like Achilles. Just as Achilles fights his own battles relying on his prowess, with occasional support from his divine mother, so Medea fights her battles relying on her cunning (*sophia*), with only one little contribution from her divine grandfather Helios. This help, in the form of a magical chariot, does not come until her revenge has been accomplished solely by her cunning intelligence, skillful manipulation of her enemies, and strong determination. The only purpose the chariot has in the play is to keep Medea safe in the aftermath of her murders (and the true significance of putting Medea on the chariot on high will be dealt later in this chapter).

As for *pharmaka*, two kinds are mentioned in the play and neither of them is a hallmark of witchcraft or magic powers. One kind is the *pharmaka* Medea claims that she will use to anoint the gifts for the bride, a delicate robe and a golden garland, which will kill the girl. “If she takes these adornments and puts them on her flesh, she will die a terrible death, as will anyone who touches the girl. With such drugs (φαρμάκοις) I shall anoint the gifts” (787-789). Medea resolves on this “straightforward” way of killing----killing by poison----over other alternatives, such as setting the house on fire or killing by sword (376-383), because “we women are especially skilled by nature to destroy them with poison” (κράτιστα τὴν εὐθεΐαν, ἣ πεφύκαμεν σοφαὶ μάλιστα, φαρμάκοις αὐτοὺς ἐλεῖν, 384-385). Here Medea describes the use of poison as a woman’s specialty for inflicting harm when needed. As is pointed out by Knox (1968:285), “love

charms, drugs, and poisons are the age-old last recourse of the unloved or vengeful wife in fifth-century Athens”, and they are not considered as the exclusive expertise of a goddess or a sorceress. In Euripides’ *Andromache*, Hermione falsely accuses Andromache of using drugs to make her childless and hateful to her husband (τούσδε, στυγοῦμαι δ’ ἀνδρὶ φαρμάκοισι σοῖς, νηδὺς δ’ ἀκύμων διὰ σέ μοι διόλλυται, 156-7). Andromache, however, is not accused of being a witch. In Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*, Deianira uses a poisoned robe to try to win her husband back, and Creusa in Euripides’ *Ion* uses a poison to try to kill her yet-unrecognized son Ion (Knox 1969:285) ---- yet Deianira and Creusa are never thought of as witches. Nor should Medea be considered as such, as is argued by March (1990: 39). Mills (1980), however, arguing for the “supernatural aspect” of Medea, points out that the poison of Deianira and Creusa come from “fabulous sources” ---- one from a Centaur’s blood and another from a Gorgon’s blood ---- and are not of human manufacture. But there are instances outside tragedy where ordinary women are said to have obtained poison from human sources and poisoned their husbands with it, as found in forensic speeches and philosophical discussions of Classical Athens. The orator (or logographer) Antiphon, a contemporary of Euripides, writes a speech (*Antiphon 1*) against a step-mother who allegedly killed her husband with poison (Carawan 2000). Aristotle, in his discussion of morality and guilt (*Magna Moralia* 1188b.32–39), mentions that a woman is tried for poisoning her husband but pleads that she acts out of love (Carawan 2000). So Knox’s argument is still valid, as supported by evidence of the use of poison by women outside of tragedy.

Medea also claims that she has φάρμακα to stop Aegeus’ childlessness (παύσω δέ σ’ ὄντ’ ἄπαιδα καὶ παίδων γονὰς σπεῖραί σε θήσω· τοιάδ’ οἶδα φάρμακα, 717- 718). These

φάρμακα are nothing magical because their effectiveness rests on Medea's ability to decipher for Aegeus the god's oracle ("you should not loosen the hanging foot of the wine skin before reaching your father's hearth again", 679-681). It is Medea's human intelligence that works "magic" in this situation and wins her a place of refuge.

### **3.2.2 "Medea Has Lost Her Humanity"**

The view that Medea is intended to appear inhuman or demonic in her magical chariot was first proposed by Cunningham. He argues that "by the tone of her speech and by the use of the machine Euripides seems to suggest that the price Medea has paid for her own course of action has been to suffer the loss of her own humanity....in exchange for something of the awful, implacable, inhuman character of a *theos*" (Cunningham 1954:159). He further explains that her becoming like a *theos* is not "a true apotheosis" but an "awful and terrible retribution" for her action, because her action "has stripped her of human qualities so that she has reached an extreme of evil which is the antithesis of the human idea of the mean" (1954:159). He thus concludes that "the appearance of Medea in the exodus constitutes a sort of visual metaphor emphasizing the utter evil and callousness of Medea and her loss of human qualities as a result of what she had done" (1954:160), and her exodus in the flying chariot will leave the audience in a state of "combined horror and awe" (1954:159). This view that Medea's appearance on her magic chariot symbolizes her loss of humanity has found quite a following in the scholarly community.

Musurillo (1966:69-70) thinks that “the grim dragon-born chariot” is “the natural complement of the bestial violence that has been unleashed in the course of the play” and he finds riding the chariot of the Sun a fitting exit “for a woman whose vast passion recalls the demons and the Furies”. Conacher (1967:198) claims that due to the “improbable” and “inorganic” ending of the play, “it is fair to suggest that by this final macabre touch of symbolism, the poet is once again expressing the transformation of a human heroine back to the folk-tale fiend of magic powers”. According to Schlesinger (1968:310), “the granddaughter of Helios may stand in triumph on her dragon-chariot, but Medea the woman is dead”. Easterling (1977:190-191) speculates that the use of the supernatural device of the chariot “transforms Medea’s status from that of runaway criminal to something outside ordinary human experience....into a sort of living Curse”. Mills (1980:296) concludes that the dragon chariot scene “spectacularly affirms Medea’s identity as a supernatural figure analogous to the fairy or demon of the folktale”. Mastronarde (1990:265-266) asserts that Medea’s status at the end of the play has become both “quasi-divine” and also “inhuman” through her revenge. Dunn (1996:41) argues that “the demonic epiphany literally embodies Medea’s inhuman fury, which cannot be contained on the human stage”.

I am going to argue that this theory of Medea losing her humanity through her all-consuming vengeance is based on erroneous premises or assumptions about the use of the magic chariot. I will also argue that the dehumanization argument finds no support from Euripides’ presentation of Medea.

First of all, before examining the symbolic meaning of Medea’s appearance on the magic chariot, let us first look at the practical purpose of this device. Above all, the magic chariot is

introduced by Euripides (though out of nowhere) mainly as a protective transporting device to ensure Medea's safety, and her unpunished departure from Corinth after the murders. As Medea claims, the chariot, a gift from her grandfather Helios, is a "defense against the enemy hand" (τοιόνδ' ὄχημα πατρὸς Ἥλιος πατὴρ δίδωσιν ἡμῖν, ἔρυμα πολεμίας χερός, 1321-1322). Riding high in this divine chariot also enables Medea to taunt Jason with impunity and sarcasm in their last *agon*-debate, thus completing her victory over him. In this way the chariot provides a platform for the final confrontation between the two, and helps visually to emphasize the reversal of roles between the two. So to put it bluntly, the chariot is used by Euripides not to make Medea look "bad" but to make her safe and superior, both on the practical and symbolic level.

Secondly, Medea's statement that she is out of Jason's reach in her chariot is a clear indication that she is riding high, probably on a crane, on a level usually occupied by a *deus ex machina*. It would be a hard case to argue that Euripides has "enhanced" Medea's status, raising her to the level of *deus ex machina*, just in order to demonize her. Although there is no denying that the gods in tragic theatre are not always presented as paragons of moral perfection or absolutely fair judges of human justice, they are nonetheless portrayed as authoritative figures, much revered, and objects of envy to humans.

Thirdly, a few words need to be said about the chariot itself. The depiction of the chariot as drawn by winged serpents is derived from scholia and vase paintings (Page 1964: XXVII; Mastronarde 2002:377). In the play itself, Medea simply refers to it as a chariot without any descriptive qualifiers (ὄχημα 1321). The conjectured presence of serpents presents certain problems, as is noted both by Page and Mastronarde, since "snakes have no place in a chariot of the Sun" (Page 1964: XXVII), which on the contrary is always depicted "with horses or winged

horse” (Mastronarde 2002:377). Mastronarde (2002:377) further conjectures that “the serpent-chariot may be an iconographic borrowing from the tradition of images of Triptolemus”, who is depicted with a flying serpent-chariot in Attic vases (dated c. 480-470 BC) and is described as such by Sophocles (“two dragons twined around the axle”, fr. 596) in the fragments of his play *Triptolemus*, produced around 468 BC. But Mastronarde nonetheless agrees with Page’s conclusion that the serpents are suitable to Medea as an oriental sorceress or a figure with magical powers, based on certain Attic and Etruscan vase paintings (dated about 500 BC and earlier) depicting Medea with serpents. This conclusion is unfortunately at odds with the fact that Euripides, in *this* play, has been at pains to repress the “witch” side of Medea as depicted in popular legends in his time. Given this fact, it is hard to imagine that he would have used a serpent-chariot in the actual performance of the play in 431 BC, although it must be said that there is no way to prove it either way, because of the lack of evidence.

Even if we suppose a serpent-chariot were used, would it have to have been intended to appear as monstrously horrifying? Is a serpent-chariot in myth generally perceived as an ominous thing? Seemingly it is not so in the case of the flying serpent-chariot of Triptolemus:

The goddess also sent him (Triptolemus) forth from Eleusis in a magic chariot drawn by a pair of dragons, to traverse the earth, and to diffuse among mankind the blessings which had been first bestowed upon Attica (Pearson 1963:240).

Obviously the flying serpent-chariot is depicted here as a vehicle for the spreading of blessings. No doubt this is benevolent. Is there any evidence that the flying chariot in *Medea* is intended to provoke horror and fear? At least Jason, the beholder of the flying chariot, does not react to it as such. Instead, without any comments on the chariot, he immediately launches into an invective against Medea for her hateful filicide. But somehow this image of a serpent-drawn

chariot has invoked a sense of unintended horror in the minds of modern readers and critics which may have contributed to the idea that the chariot is a horrifying carriage suitable only to a demon.

Lastly, it is necessary to examine closely whether there are signs that Medea is *portrayed* as having “lost her humanity” while standing aloft on her flying chariot. Apart from talking like a god regarding the future (i.e. the institution of the festival, and prophesying the death of Jason), mostly she is portrayed as actively engaged in the present, i.e. in her *agon*-debate with Jason. At first, upon her entrance in the air, she seems to maintain a certain degree of separation and aloofness from what is going on “beneath” her, in the world she has left behind after wrecking havoc. She calmly asks Jason to stop his frantic search for her; but if he needs something, all he must do is ask (1317-20). After Jason’s long invective about how hateful a woman she is and how wrong he was to have married her (1323-1350), Medea, not deigning to answer his charges one by one, simply states that she has succeeded in hurting him as he deserves (1360). After that she is fully drawn into the heated argument of their *stichomythia*, a line-for-line dialogue (1361-end).

She confirms to him that she killed the children to hurt him, because of her loss of her marriage-bed (1367-70; 1398); she argues that although it was her hand that killed them, it was their father’s betrayal that ultimately caused their death and planted the seeds of destruction (1363-66; 1372); she proclaims that the children are dearest to her as their mother (1397), and she admits that she shares the pain of their death (1361), thus making it amply clear that her crime is not without emotional consequence for herself. She has not become an unfeeling, cold-blooded demon after all. Although she appears untouchable and triumphant, Medea does not

seem freed from her human struggles as she continues her quarrel with Jason, and as she tries to tell her side of the story in purely emotional and human terms. She still expresses human feelings, from the perspective of a woman wronged, with the cry that the loss of the marriage-bed is no small bane for a woman (1368). The physical separation created by the chariot now seems nothing but an illusion. It fails to sever her ties to her world, and it fails to remove her from her emotional self, her hatred, anger, and pain. The chariot will only provide a transit to a new life, still within the human realm, with Aegeus in Athens (1384-1385) where she will once again play the role of wife or possibly even of mother as well. In the end, Medea denounces Jason and all the broken promises he represents, but she does not denounce womanhood or motherhood, where her future lies.

### 3.2.3 “Medea Is a Theos”

Another popular interpretation is that Medea on her magic chariot has become a divine incarnate punishing Jason for his betrayal.

As Knox (1968:281-2) concludes,

Medea is presented to us not only as a hero, but also, at the end of the play, by her language, action and situation, as a *theos*, or at least something more than human...Perhaps the appearance of this ferocious incarnation of vengeance in the place of an Olympian god is meant to reinforce in the audience's mind that disconcerting sense of the disintegration of all normal values which the play as a whole produces, to emphasize visually that moral chaos which the chorus sang of earlier.

Contrary to Knox's view that Medea is a *theos* and that the absence of an Olympian god in the finale symbolizes “moral chaos”, Kovacs (1993) concludes that Medea is a divine agent

bringing justice to fulfillment. He suggests that the play, with its frequent references to Zeus and oaths, has a strong theme of “divine governance of the universe”, and that “what happens to Jason happens by the will of Zeus in punishment for his perjury”. He argues that “Zeus rarely employs the thunderbolt or intervenes in any overtly miraculous way”, but instead works through “coincidence” (i.e. the opportune arrival of Aegeus to help Medea’s cause) and “human agents” (i.e. Medea as the agent of punishment for Jason the oath-breaker). Thus Kovacs sees the finishing lines that “gods bring many things to pass unexpectedly” (1415-1419) as particularly appropriate to the play, since they signify that “the gods’ rough justice rules the world” and “the impious are punished”.

Rabinowitz (2008:153) agrees with Kovacs that Medea is a divine agent, but with a twist:

Medea is also not quite human.....she is the agent of the gods maintaining the sanctity of the oaths that he betrayed. That divine status is corroborated in her final appearance in the place usually reserved for the *deus ex machina*, and her declaration that she will found a cult....This escape does not have to signify divine approval of Medea; it might stand for her transformation into a god, and therefore her subjection to different codes of behavior. Gods are capable of great cruelty....in this reading, she is no longer subject to mortal justice or mortal feelings, of either pleasure or pain, and the author would not expect her to arouse pity, only the fear.

In the end, although both Knox and Rabinowitz regard Medea as some sort of *theos*, they concede that Medea’s new divine status on the chariot only symbolizes “moral chaos” and “cruelty and fear”. Thus their interpretation harks back to Cunningham’s view that Medea’s evil actions earn her the inhuman character of a *theos*.

It is true that Medea appears in the place usually reserved for gods in Euripidean theatre, and she takes on certain roles of gods when she foretells her institution of the festival and the

death of Jason. However, as Knox noted (1968:281-2), these roles are taken on by mortal characters too on rare occasions (i.e. in *Heraclidae* and *Hecuba*) and it is difficult to see why Medea is “deified” after her murders, for good or for bad. There are no instances in Greek tragic theatre of someone being “deified” symbolically as a means of character assassination, or literally as a punishment for evil deeds. The true significance of Medea aloft in her magic chariot may rather lie in the *absence* of the gods from the *deus ex machina* and the absence of punishment for her.

Unlike many other plays of Euripides, gods play no part in *Medea* and are not named as the true engineers behind human actions or misfortunes. Simply put, Medea has no divine advocate (or foe) throughout the play. She is an abandoned wife, stranded in a foreign land, deprived of social or legal support. Though dishonored and wronged, she is advised to acquiesce in the arrangements of the more powerful and let it go at that (314-315, Jason’s words in 459 and Aegeus’ words in 699). So she is told by the chorus of Corinthian women: “If your husband devotes himself to his new wife, do not be cut with anger at him for that. Zeus will be your advocate here” (155-157). But Zeus does not come to her rescue. The lack of a tangible divine advocate only calls further attention to Medea’s utterly desperate and helpless situation as an abandoned wife in that society. Left to her own devices, Medea takes justice into her own hands and fights back single-handedly and “wins”. Riding high on her flying chariot, with her enemy, Jason, totally crushed under her feet, she proves to have been the agent of her actions, the mastermind behind her schemes, and the advocate of her own cause. The fact that Euripides chooses to make Medea escape scot-free and in grand fashion can only signify that he does not

condemn her cause. This lack of condemnation is consistent with how he presents Medea throughout the play.

### 3.3 THE PORTRAYAL OF MEDEA

First of all, Euripides chooses to portray Medea as a hero. She is depicted as operating on the heroic honor code of “not being laughed at by your enemies” (404-405, 797) and “being harsh to enemies and kind to friends” (767):

Let no one think that I am thoughtless and feeble, and quiet, but of the opposite disposition, harsh to my enemies and kind to my friends. For the life of such people is most glorious! (807-810).

The vengeance Medea exacts on her enemies is presented in heroic terms, as though she were Achilles or Ajax, as is pointed out by Knox (1968). In her unrelenting wrath and overwhelming grief Medea also resembles Achilles after Patroclus’ death: she lies in bed without food and retreats from her friends and is impervious to their words of comforts (Hopman 2008:170). Like Achilles she debates with her *thumos* what she should do (Hopman 2008:170). The similes comparing her to rocks and waves, and her “bull-stare” (92) and “lioness-glare” (187), are heroic in flavor (Boedeker 1997:131). She uses military and athletic terms to urge herself on to her murders (765, 1242-1250). Like Homeric heroes, she takes pride in her divine lineage as granddaughter of Helios (406), and she tolerates no dishonor or insults. Her heroic stature is stressed by Bongie (1977:32):

Actually Medea is probably the most genuinely 'heroic' figure on the Greek stage in that she shows greater determination in the achievements of her ends and makes greater sacrifices to her honor than does any other tragic figure.

Medea is also depicted as being σοφή, having great intellect or cunning intelligence, as recognized by Creon, Jason and Aegeus. To Creon, Medea is σοφή (285) in a threatening way, and that is why he exiles her out of fear that she might use her cunning to contrive harm for his daughter. But Medea coaxes one day's stay from Creon by her skillful manipulation of his paternal feelings and by her tearful (κλαίω 347) supplication as a mother. Jason acknowledges that Medea has a "subtle mind" (νοῦς λεπτὸς 529) and that she is clever (539), but he underestimates how badly hurt she has been by his betrayal. Self-conceited and trapped in his own singular perspective, he suspects no foul play in the feigned reconciliation staged by Medea, because Medea talks to him in a "sensible" way (σώφρονος 913) and in exactly the same terms of benefit/profit which she has appropriated from him. Beguiled by Medea's words, Jason unknowingly gives a helping hand in her revenge plan by taking the children with the poisoned gifts to his new bride. Aegeus, an outsider to the dramatic conflicts, respects Medea as an equal and confirms Medea's reputation as being clever. He admits to her that he is in need of "her intelligent mind" (σοφῆς φρενός 677) to explicate the god's enigmatic oracle. Having understood the hidden meaning of the oracle, Medea promises Aegeus to end his childlessness. Medea thus obtains a refuge from him by supplication as an exile and as a woman wronged by her husband, and by her promise of the cure for his childlessness. Medea also obtains moral support and practical cooperation from the chorus of Corinthian women and the nurse by appealing to their sense of solidarity as women (230-267; 823). Medea's clever use of her intelligence, her powers

of persuasion, her 'womanly' tears and her manipulation of traditional female roles are crucial to her success in carrying out her plan of revenge.

Euripides also portrays Medea as a sympathetic figure, at least up to the filicide. With the revelation of her plan to kill her children, she loses the moral support of the chorus ("we forbid you to do such things", 813). Even with the filicide, Euripides makes a great effort to portray an internal battling within Medea between her desire to punish Jason and the maternal feelings that prompt her to spare her children. Simply put, Euripides does not make Medea a cold-blooded child-killer.

The pleasure that Medea takes in her revenge is mixed with the pain of filicide. She laments over her decision from the first time she announces her murderous intentions ("I wail aloud when I think what kind of deed I must do afterwards. I shall kill the children, my own ones," 791-793). When she calls the children out to meet with their father in the token reconciliation, Medea cannot conceal her feelings of fear, anguish and pity, both for the children and for herself:

Ah me! (I say this) since I am indeed thinking about some of the bad things that are hidden. O children, will you stretch out your dear arms, thus living for a long time? Miserable me, how I am close to tears and full of fear! (899-905)

While Medea cries over the children she is going to kill, the chorus sheds tears as well (906). It is noteworthy that the tears Medea sheds on stage are solely tears for her children at their forthcoming exile (347) or death. Medea is heard to cry, curse and lament behind the doors, but on stage she is collected except when she weeps for her children. When Jason notices her excessive tears for the children and asks why, Medea reveals only half the truth: "I gave birth to them. And when you prayed that the children should live, pity came upon me whether your

prayer would be granted” (930-931). After the children have been dispatched with the poisoned gifts, the chorus realizes that the hope for their survival is gone. They then sing a lament for the children, the princess, Jason, and Medea, “the miserable mother of the children” (996-997). Although the chorus disapproves of Medea’s plan of filicide, they nonetheless recognize that Medea experiences the pain of her own murderous intention.

Medea weeps again when the tutor reports that the gifts have been successfully delivered. To the astonished old man, she explains that she cannot help but weep, because she and gods, “thinking wrongly, contrived these things” (κακῶς φρονοῦσ’ ἐμηχανησάμην, 1013-1014). She is fully aware of the evil and unholy (ἄνοσιώτατον 796; δυσσεβοῦς φόνου, 1383) nature of her murder.

After the tutor leaves, Medea, now alone with her children on stage, laments over the loss of the sweet hope she has had of seeing them grow up to manhood. As she looks at her children’s sweet faces, her motherly heart softens and her murderous resolve wavers:

Alas, Alas! Why do you look at me like this, my children? Why do you smile this last smile of all? Aiai, what shall I do? My resolve is gone, women, when I saw my children’s bright eyes. I could not do the deed. Goodbye to my former plans. I shall take my children from the land. Why should I, as I seek to pain their father through their sufferings, win twice as much agony for myself? I will not do it. Goodbye to my plans (1040-1048).

She admits to herself that by killing her dear children to hurt their father, she will only inflict twice as much pain on herself. But her brief weakness in listening to her own heart is quickly overshadowed by the thought of her enemies laughing at her cowardice. She tells herself that she must dare the murderous deed (1051). But again she wavers and begs her heart to spare the children (“do not, my heart, please do not do this. Let them be, wretch, spare the children!”

1056-1057). This merciful thought is then taken over by her belief that the children's death is necessary. So she decides to take one last look at her children, to shower kisses on their hands, their sweet lips and their soft skin, and to relish their sweet presence one last time. She thus allows herself to be the loving mother one last time until she cannot bear the pain that is tearing her heart apart:

I can no longer look upon you but I am overwhelmed by evils. And I know what evil deeds I am about to do, but my angry passion is stronger than my deliberations (1076-1080).

Again Medea is shown to be well aware of how evil and wrong her murder is, but she cannot let go of her desire for revenge.

After having savored the news of the death of Creon and his daughter, Medea decides that now she has to act on her plan of filicide. Again she is portrayed as having to steel her unwilling heart and her unwilling hand to do the evil thing. She has to act against her maternal instincts and her love for her dear children, forcing herself forget her motherhood for this one brief day, and then mourn for her children for ever. She has to make herself believe that her love for them, alive or dead, will remain the same and they are dear to her no matter what. She knows that the murder she is about to commit will make herself the most unhappy woman:

But come on, arm yourself, my heart. Why do I delay doing these terrible but necessary evils?

Come, o my wretched hand, take the sword, take it, go to the painful starting-point of life, and do not play the coward and do not think of the children, how very dear they are and how you bore them. But for this one brief day at least forget your children, and then lament. For even if you will kill them, they were nevertheless dear. But I am an unfortunate woman (1242-1250).

With that word, Medea leaves the stage and the children's pitiful cries are heard from within. When Medea appears in her magic chariot carrying the children's bodies, she announces

that she will establish a festival and ritual for the remainder of time in payment for her unholy murder (1382-1383). Throughout, therefore, Medea is portrayed as going through heart-wrenching pain and indecision in both conceiving and committing the infanticide. She is portrayed as fully aware of the evil nature of the act, as already mourning for their death and her loss before the murder. Her revenge against Jason thus comes at the price of hurting herself twice as much by killing the children she loves. As is pointed out by Barlow (1989), Medea is portrayed as “clever, articulate and above all self-aware”.

Medea’s filicide, the dominant theme in the second half of the play, is often taken out of context and used to represent the theme or meaning of the whole play. McDermont (1989:5) argues that the love of mother for children is “normative of comic order” and Medea, by her breach of this order, “has become an embodiment of disorder”, and so has the play. This line of argument misses one basic but crucial fact: Medea would not have killed her children if her husband had not abandoned her for another woman and thus destroyed the whole household. *Medea* is essentially a play about an abandoned woman who *becomes* a vengeful ex-wife and murderous mother. Tales of abandoned wives are not a rarity in Greek literature, but Euripides’ *Medea* has emerged as the most powerful, most multi-faceted and most unique of them all. This uniqueness or “radicalism” of the portrayal of Medea can be best appreciated if compared with Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*, another important play which dramatizes a wife’s action in the face of the imminent loss of her husband to another woman.

*Trachiniae*, produced after 431 BC, a far cry from plays of “Sophoclean heroes”, is regarded by some as Sophocles’ attempt to emulate Euripides’ *Medea* (Easterling 2004: XXIII<sup>9</sup>). There are, no doubt, many similarities between the story lines of the two plays: both protagonists have shown themselves to be devoted model wives before the tragedy unfolds (Medea by sacrificing everything for Jason and by complying with him in everything; Deianira by patiently waiting for her absentee husband and magnanimously ignoring his infidelities); both lose (or are about to lose) their husbands to a much younger rival; both send poisoned robes with lethal effect, motivated by the loss of marriage-bed. But the portrayal of Deianira and Medea could not be more different. Before we compare the differences between these two characters, let us take a look at the plot of Sophocles’ play. In this play, Deianira, the devoted wife of Heracles, has been anxiously waiting for her long-absent husband to return home. Then a messenger comes, with a train of captive women, and tells her that her husband is near and will be home soon. Deianira is overjoyed, but her joy is mixed with a surprise: she learns that one of the captive girls, Iole, is her husband’s new love. Fearing that she will lose Heracles’ bed to her younger rival (“This, then, is my fear, lest Heracles, in name my spouse, should be the younger's mate,” 550-551), Deianira dyes a robe with the blood from the Centaur Nessus as a love charm for Heracles’ heart, and sends it to Heracles as a gift. Upon learning that Heracles is dying from the poisoned robe, Deianira kills herself with a sword on their marriage-bed. It is generally agreed that Deianira means no harm in her use of the poisoned robe as a love charm and she is not considered as one of those murderous and vengeful wives of tragedy although it has been argued that Deianira is

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<sup>9</sup> “It has been held that the bold example of Euripides in making Heracles the subject of a tragedy induced Sophocles to do likewise.”

not as innocent as she seems since she acts with the foreknowledge of the lethal effect of the Centaur's blood (Carawan 2000). It is also generally acknowledged that Sophocles invented Deianira's innocence by casting her as a submissive good wife while in myth she is an aggressive warrior princess whose name literally means "manslayer" (Carawan 2000). The focus here, however, is on seeing how differently these two characters are portrayed by two different playwrights despite being similar in their fate of being betrayed by their husbands and in the destructive actions (intentional or not) that they take as a result.

First of all, Deianira is cast as "a perfect type of gentle womanhood" (Easterling 2004): weak, timid, gentle, submissive, passive, patient, sympathetic, understanding, conformant, self-controlled and magnanimously tolerant of her husband's past infidelities. This forms a sharp contrast to Medea who is strong, audacious, passionate, spirited, emotional, assertive, active, proud, defiant, and intolerant of infidelities and insults. If Deianira represents perfect womanhood, Medea represents a departure from this perfect model. The fact that Medea does not follow the social convention or expectation, obviously constructed by males, of acquiescing in her situation also marks a real difference from ordinary plays about abandoned wives. Euripides carefully constructs a social expectation, i.e. a socially expected or accepted way of reacting to abandonment, but only to have Medea defy that every step of the way. Euripides also portrays Medea as conscious of this expectation but using it in perverted ways to gain trust and achieve her ends.

The chorus of the Corinthian women advises Medea to let go of her anger and let Zeus be her advocate (157-158), undoubtedly a stereotypic word of empty advice for abandoned women, but Medea ignores it. Creon exiles Medea, "the woman angry with her husband" (271), for fear

that she might cause harm to his daughter. Medea, in response, assumes the stance of a harmless submissive woman and proclaims that she will “keep quiet after having been subdued by the powerful” (316). This stance, though feigned, nonetheless aims to duplicate the socially expected reaction of an abandoned woman. Aegeus simply advises Medea to let Jason go (699). Jason expects Medea to be “prudent” like any other woman. In their final confrontation, in response to Medea’s rhetorical question whether he considers the loss of the marriage-bed a small bane to a woman, he says that it would be so to a prudent woman (σώφρων 1369). Jason expects Medea to be devoid of anger (447), to keep quiet (450, 457, 607), and to acquiesce in the arrangements of the powerful (449), like a prudent woman. Medea however shows herself to be of a different nature and reaction and feels totally justified in being so. But again, deeply aware of Jason’s expectations, she uses them to stage the fake reconciliation as a means of accomplishing her goal of revenge. In this meeting, she “confesses” that she has been “senseless” (ἄφρων 885) in her objection and that she should have helped him to gain this marriage alliance, even standing beside the bed and tending his new bride (884-888). Medea’s “change of heart to a sensible course” meets with praise from Jason. He considers Medea’s new found wisdom in accepting his new marriage “the characteristic of a sensible woman” (σώφρονος 913). Medea thus plays the good prudent little wife in this meeting, as if to gratify Jason’s fantasy. To sum it up, Euripides in a subtle way sets up a framework of social convention for the expected behavior of an abandoned woman through all of Medea’s interactions with the rest of the society, with her fellow-women (the chorus), with the male authority figure (Creon), with an impartial male outsider (Aegeus), and with her male counterpart, the husband figure (Jason). Euripides then

makes Medea act in full defiance of that social convention, against the stereotype of submissive womanhood, to get the justice she deserves.

Second, Deianira is represented as trying to distance herself from the evil name of a “daring woman”. After having sent the poisoned robe, she begins to have a misgiving that her “love charm” may result in harm, and she is worried that her action will be perceived as reckless or daring. She confesses that she will not know or learn vicious daring because she hates “daring women” (κακὰς δὲ τόλμας μήτ’ ἐπισταίμην ἐγὼ μήτ’ ἐκμάθοιμι, τὰς τε τολμώσας στυγῶ, 582-583). She would rather die than live with an evil name (ζῆν γὰρ κακῶς κλύουσιν οὐκ ἀνασχετόν, ἥτις προτιμᾷ μὴ κακὴ πεφυκέναι, 721-722). Unlike Medea, who finds the shame of being dishonored and laughed at intolerable, Deianira finds the shame of being labeled an evil woman intolerable. In a sense this portrayal of Deianira reflects Sophocles’ effort to avoid alienating his audience and to gain their sympathy for his good and innocent heroine. Euripides, on the other hand, by portraying Medea with a sense of heroic honor, but lacking in “womanly virtue”, challenges his audience to transcend the stereotype of bad women and appreciate his heroine for all her frank emotional intensity, her unyielding determination, her sharp intellect and her courageous fight for justice. Unfortunately, to judge by the less-than-enthusiastic reaction of their contemporary audience, neither playwright seemed to have succeeded in his endeavor.

Third, Deianira’s “unintentional” killing of Heracles is interpreted as fulfilling the prophecy that Heracles, the living, will be slain by the dead (the Centaur). Thus ultimately Deianira is reduced to a passive human agent driven to “kill” her husband by divine causation. This treatment of the character, though it lessens her guilt, adulterates the significance of her motive to “kill” and sidetracks the theme of abandoned wives and their grievances. The fact that

Deianira is only present in the first half of the play also adds to the above effect. Medea, on the other hand, is portrayed as self-motivated, with justifiable and well-articulated reasons for revenge, fully aware of the nature of her action, and solely responsible for her deeds. She makes no excuse for her enemies' actions or for her own, she makes no effort to hide her outrage and she makes no apology for her violence. She commands total dramatic concentration and remains the focus of the whole play. Her consistently strong and overwhelming presence makes it impossible for the audience to lose sight of the focus of the play ---- the grievances and sufferings of abandoned women, and the ultimately irresolvable gender conflicts.

Last, Deianira is portrayed as mildly complaining of her treatment by her husband:

And we twain are to share the same marriage-bed, the same embrace. Such is the reward that Heracles hath sent me,- he whom I called true and loyal,- for guarding his home through all that weary time. I have no thought of anger against him, often as he is vexed with this distemper  
(*Trachiniae* 539-542; Easterling 2004).

Her complaint is controlled and expressed without anger. She only has a blind hope that a love charm will rectify all her wrongs. One almost has a feeling that in his effort to avoid making Deianira "look bad", Sophocles fails to explore the full emotional impact of a husband's heartless betrayal on a woman. Thus Sophocles' Deianira lacks the emotional and intellectual depth Euripides bestows on Medea. Medea not only vehemently protests against her mistreatment, she also eloquently protests against the powerless and precarious position of women in that society (230-251). Medea not only does not hide her feelings of hurt and suffering, she also passionately articulates them. She not only complains about the injustice, she also fights back to get justice done, albeit rather excessively. Through Medea's eloquent protests and passionate articulation, one woman's wrong has risen to represent the wrong suffered by all

women and one family squabble has risen to represent the eternal question of gender conflicts and social justice. The portrayal of the character of Medea is thus gripping and powerful. This portrayal again will not be fully appreciated without one more comparison, i.e. that with her male counterpart Jason.

### **3.4 THE PORTRAYAL OF JASON**

In sharp contrast to the “heroic” Medea with her strong sense of honor and justice, the leading male character Jason is portrayed as a typical anti-hero. No longer the fearless leader embarked on a heroic expedition on board the Argo, Jason is reduced to a mere social-climber whose “heroic exploits” include exploiting women shamelessly, and using marriage to upgrade his social standing and to fulfill his social ambition. Not only is he portrayed as a faithless and ungrateful husband, he is also a man of glib tongue and no moral scruples.

The identification of Jason as a traitor to Medea is made both by the nurse and the chorus: the nurse says that Jason “is bedded in a royal marriage, after having betrayed his own children and my mistress” (17-18), and the chorus calls Jason “the traitor to Medea’s bed” (207). And to Medea, Jason is simply “the worst husband” (229; 690) for having betrayed and wronged the family (φίλους κακῶς δρᾶσαντ’ 470). His betrayal is judged as “most shameful” by Aegeus (695) and “unjust” and “lawless” by the chorus (δοκεῖς προδοῦς σὴν ἄλοχον οὐ δίκαια δρᾶν, 578; ἀνόμως 1000). He deserves to be punished by Medea, as is pointed out by the chorus (ἐνδίκως γὰρ ἐκτεῖσθαι πόσιν, 267), who also swears secrecy on the subject of Medea’s murderous

plan as a way of showing their solidarity. And after they have heard the messenger's narrative report of the miserable death of Creon and his daughter from the poisoned gifts, the chorus, though sympathetic with the victims' fate, concludes that it is just that god "links Jason with many disasters on this day" (1231-1232).

It is noteworthy that Jason is portrayed as having betrayed both his wife *and* his children (προδοὺς γὰρ αὐτοῦ τέκνα δεσπότην τ' ἐμήν, 17; cf. 76-77 and 515) and that he does not try to revoke the exile of his children on his own initiative, to the disbelief of the nurse (καὶ ταῦτ' Ἰάσων παῖδας ἐξανέξεται, πάσχοντας, εἰ καὶ μητρὶ διαφορὰν ἔχει; 74-75). She wishes him dead because he has been "caught being bad to his family" (ἀτὰρ κακός γ' ὢν ἐς φίλους ἀλίσκεται, 84). His abandonment of both wife and children is considered a violation of *philia* by the tutor, who points out that Jason "is no longer a friend to this house" after he has abandoned it for his new royal marriage (76-77). To the nurse's dismal exclamation what kind of (bad) father the children have (82), the tutor answers that he is a selfish kind who no longer loves his children "because of his (new) marriage-bed" (εἰ τούσδε γ' εὐνής οὐνεκ' οὐ στέργει πατήρ, 88). The tutor also recognizes the fact that Jason puts his self-interest above that of his *philoï* ("everybody loves himself more than his neighbor," 86). Jason's lack of concern for the children's welfare does not escape Medea's notice and she cleverly uses it to her advantage. She coaxes one day's stay from Creon by pleading that she needs the time to make arrangements for the children's exile since their father "prefers to work out nothing for them" (343). This paternal neglect, however, does come back to haunt Jason after the children's death. In their final confrontation, Medea rebuffs Jason's request to touch the children's dead bodies by pointing out his former neglect of them ("Now you talk to them, now you kiss them, then you thrust them away," 1401-1402).

Just to be fair, Jason does make some grand, though perfunctory, gesture of concern for the children. After having heard the news of their exile, he comes to talk to Medea so that she and the children may not “go into exile without money or in need of anything” (461-462). Coming with empty hands, he offers to give money and tallies for his guest-friends (610-615). At Medea’s refusal, Jason then emphatically caps his show of concern by calling the gods as witness that he *does* willingly and generously offer every help to his family to no avail (619-620). As far as he is concerned, his job is done.

To ward off any accusation of being a “bad” father, Jason argues that he has remarried in order to father royal children as a way of benefiting his living children (ἐμοί τε λύει τοῖσι μέλλουσιν τέκνοις τὰ ζῶντ’ **ὀνῆσαι**, 567) and he claims that he is the family’s “great friend” for doing so (549). Thus he basically argues that he has not violated *philia* but to the contrary he has done his family a great favor by re-marrying. He shows the same attitude when he talks face to face to his children in the feigned reconciliation orchestrated by Medea. He tells them that “he has provided great safety” for them (σωτηρίαν 915) and that he wishes them grow up “stronger than his enemies” (921). Earlier Jason also makes it clear that he wants to father more royal children to be “the bulwark” for his house (ἔρυμα δώμασι 597). Thus it seems that Jason’s love for children hinges on his hope that they will bring him protective power and prosperity in the future (565). At the same time, he is oddly oblivious to the fact that he has heartlessly abandoned them and is not, as he claims, providing them any tangible help or safety, thus allowing them to be thrown into exile, a life which “drags many evils in its train”, as he is well aware (462-463).

Jason’s character is best brought out in his first *agon*-debate with Medea. The first thing Jason says in answer to Medea’s long list of accusations against him (465-519) is, “I must prove

that I am not bad *at speaking*” (522), not that “I must prove that I am not *a bad man*”. He feels no moral uneasiness about being the bad guy and he could not care less if Medea tells the whole world what a bad man he is, as he said earlier (452). As far as he is concerned, his defense is nothing but “a contest of words” (546) and he will win simply by making his actions appear ‘beneficial’ to the family he has abandoned.

In his defense, Jason first denies Medea’s crucial help in saving his life; he ascribes that to Cypris, in other words, to what an *eros*-arousing body he has (531), for which he is not indebted to Medea, who physically and literally saved his skin by giving up everything she had. Not only does he not owe Medea any favor, he argues that actually it is Medea who stands to benefit from his actions, for she is able to live in Greece now and to enjoy fame near and far in the civilized world, all thanks to him! No doubt, in his opinion, that is what Medea married him for, although even that costs him nothing.

Secondly, Jason argues that it is for the benefit of Medea and her children that he has remarried (566-567), a smart, prudent and altruistic move (548) to “save Medea” (595-596):

ἃ δ’ ἐς γάμους μοι βασιλικοὺς ὠνεΐδισας 547  
ἐν τῷδε δειξῶ πρῶτα μὲν σοφὸς γεγώς, 548  
ἔπειτα σῶφρων, εἴτα σοὶ μέγας φίλος 549  
καὶ παισὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖσιν 550

Not only does Jason not think he did anything wrong, he even claims that he should be thanked for being such a great friend (μέγας φίλος 549). While Medea argues from the view-point of what is right and wrong (580), Jason argues from the point of what is profitable to him only (τὰ χρηστὰ 601, κερδανεῖς 615). Just as Cowherd (1983:134) points out, “Jason has no standard beyond self-interest”. Their clash of values is capsulized by Medea’s cry that she wants no

prosperous life which grates on her heart (598-599), while Jason counter-wishes that she would pray one day that useful things not appear painful to her (600-602). Their domestic conflict thus is not only a conflict of interests, but also a conflict of different values.

It is noteworthy that Jason offers no apology, takes no responsibility, shows no sympathy, and even blames Medea for her plight (605). He simply cannot empathize with Medea's anger and pain, or comprehend the importance of marriage to her (569-573). He himself feels no pain, certainly not until he loses everything of value to him at the end of the play. Having portrayed Jason in this way, it is certainly appropriate that Euripides also makes him the spokesperson for the typical misogynic view of the time ("Jason: For mortals ought to beget children from some other source, and female race should not exist. Thus there would not be any evil among humans," 573-575). Pitted against such an adversary, Medea's cause seems to be understandable, if not justified ("chorus: I do not wonder that you grieve over your fortunes" 268; "Aegeus: It is understandable that you are hurt" 703). Jason's deceitfulness toward his *philoi* in his verbal *agon* only meets with condemnation by the chorus:

May he perish, any ungrateful man for whom it is not possible to open up the doors of a pure mind  
and show honor to his friends. *To me* such a man will never be a friend (659-662).

In reply to Jason's shameless and duplicitous "apology" (defense), Medea predicts only punishment for him ("For to me, any unjust man who is naturally clever at speaking incurs the greatest retribution," 580-581). This point of view is later shared by the messenger who relates the death of Creon and his daughter ("I would not fear to say that those mortals who seem to be wise and careful of words incur the greatest punishment," 1225-1227). As Cowherd (1983:134) concludes, "Jason is punished because he broke his oaths, and he broke his oaths because he valued only his own advantage and skill with words".

It is even implied in the play that Jason, because of his betrayal, is ultimately responsible for the destruction of lives at the hands of Medea. The chorus makes such lamentations after Jason has left with the children carrying the deadly gifts to his new wife:

But you, oh miserable man, oh ill-wedded in royal marriage, unknowing, you bring  
destruction to the life of your children and hateful death to your wife (989 -994).

Medea herself blames Jason for the children's fate at her hands:

εὐδαιμονοῖτον, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖ τὰ δ' ἐνθάδε πατὴρ ἀφείλετ' 1073-1074

May you be happy, but elsewhere. Your father took away this (your chance of happiness) here.

She also argues that although it is her hand that *killed* the children, it is the shameful action of their father that *caused* their death:

**Ια.** ὦ τέκνα, μητρὸς ὡς κακῆς ἐκύρσατε. 1363

**Μη.** ὦ παῖδες, ὡς ὤλεσθε πατρώα νόσῳ. 1364

**Ια.** οὗτοι νυν ἡμῇ δεξιά σφ' ἀπώλεσεν. 1365

**Μη.** ἀλλ' ὕβρις, οἷ τε σοὶ νεοδμῆτες γάμοι. 1366

Jason: O children, what a wicked mother you met with!

Medea: O boys, how you were destroyed by the sickness/madness of your father!

Jason---Surely it was *not my right hand* at any rate that destroyed them!

Medea---But rather your insult (to me) and your newly consummated marriage!

Medea also seems to be convinced that the gods know that Jason is ultimately responsible for the destruction and they will not listen to the prayers of an oath-breaker:

Jason---These ones do live, alas, as avengers of blood-guilt upon your head! 1371

Medea---The gods know who started the calamity! 1372

Jason---Well, may the Furies of the children and bloody Dike blast you! 1389

Medea---But which god or spirit listens to you, an oath-breaker and a guest-deceiver? 1391-1392

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

In *Medea*, Euripides has shown profound understanding of the psyche and emotions of women and their precarious position in a society where the only place for a woman is within the confines of a household and where the only happiness and security a woman gets is from her husband and her marriage. Euripides, more than any other author of Greek literature, observes and brings to the forefront the one central fact which defines women's lives, namely that love, husband, and marriage are all that they have and mean everything to them ("my husband in whom is my all"/ἐν ᾧ γὰρ ἦν μοι πάντα 228, 244-247, 569-573, 1367-1368)<sup>10</sup>. The fact that losing love, husband, and marriage means losing all for a woman is further illustrated by the extravagance of Medea's revenge. The powerful outcry that "of all the creatures we women are the most unfortunate" (230-231) can only come from a playwright who has unquestionable sympathy and in-depth understanding of the isolated and marginalized lives of women in that society. The choral song that legend will change direction to sing the good fame and honor of women (410-430) may signify that Euripides' play itself is "the change of direction" (Knox 1968:292). Euripides himself may well be the muse to sing the counter-song for women against men through the composition of this very play (424-430).

Euripides not only portrays Medea mostly as a positive and sympathetic figure, he also portrays women in general with great dignity and moral superiority in his other plays. As Storey

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<sup>10</sup> Menelaus expresses similar sentiments in defense of his daughter Hermione in *Andromache* (370-374): "I have become the fixed ally of my daughter, for I think it is a serious matter to be deprived of marriage-bed. Any other misfortunes a woman may suffer are secondary, but if she loses her husband she loses her life"

(2005:143) points out, “the women that we see in the surviving plays are for the most part sympathetic rather than villains.” From devoted wife Euadne following her husband to death (*Suppliants*), the loving mother Iocaste trying to prevent fratricide (*Phoenissae*), to self-sacrificing Iphigenia and Alcestis (“the noblest woman”/ “γυναιῖκ’ ἀρίστην”, *Alc.* 442), Euripides generally depicts positive female figures and sets many of them in sharp contrast to their less heroic male counterparts. Most notably, in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Euripides makes Clytaemnestra say that Agamemnon killed her first husband, killed her baby by hurling him to the ground, and raped her (1149-1151). This criminalizing accusation of Agamemnon is probably invented by Euripides. Thus, one of the iconic “bad women” portrayed by Aeschylus in his *Agamemnon* has been rendered much more sympathetic by Euripides. Again in his *Helen*, Helen, the woman who is blamed for causing the Trojan war in myths, is portrayed as an innocent and chaste wife who was not involved with Paris and has been in Egypt all those years while the Greeks fight for the phantom image of her at Troy!

Seidensticker (1995:167) sums it up well:

Euripides, who from Aristophanes to our own days has often been totally misunderstood as a misogynist, is in fact the most eloquent and insistent advocate of women’s cause.

#### **4.0            ENGLISH AND CHINESE TRANSLATIONS OF *MEDEA***

##### **4.1        ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *MEDEA***

**Nurse---**(1-6) Would that the ship of Argo had never flown through dark Symplagades to the land of the Colchians, and would that the pine tree had never been cut and fallen in the glens of Pelion, and would that it had not furnished with oars the hands of the best men, who sought the golden fleece for Pelias. (6-8) For my mistress Medea would not have sailed to the towers of the land of Iolkos, having been struck in her heart with love for Jason. (9-15) And she would not have persuaded the daughters of Pelias to kill their father and settled in this Corinthian land with her husband and her children, pleasing in her exile the citizens whose land she reached, and she herself, complying with Jason in all respect. (She proves to be the greatest source of security, whenever a wife never stands apart against her husband. (16-19) But now everything is hostile and the dearest relationship is diseased. For having betrayed his own children and my mistress, Jason is bedded in a royal marriage, having married the daughter of Creon, who rules the land. (20-23) And Medea, the wretched one, being dishonored, cries “oath”, and calls up the greatest pledge of the right hand, and calls on the gods to witness what sort of compensation she gets from Jason. (24-28) She lies without food, submitting her body to

pain, having wasted away all this time in tears, ever since she knew that she had been wronged by her husband, neither raising her eyes nor moving her face from earth. (28-33) Though being advised by her friends, she listens to them like a stone or a sea wave, except sometimes when, turning her white neck, she herself wailed loudly to herself her dear father, her land and her home, which having betrayed she came with her husband who now dishonors her. (34-37) And the wretched woman has realized by misfortune what it is not to be parted from one's fatherland. She hates her children and she doesn't rejoice in seeing them. And I am afraid that she may be planning something new. (38-43) [Her temperament is grievous and she will not bear to suffer badly. I know her, and I fear that she may walk into the house silently, where the bed is laid, and thrust a deadly sword through her liver, or even that she may kill the king and the bridegroom (the one getting married) and then may cause some greater disaster.] (44-48) For she is formidable. Certainly not easily indeed will someone, having joined battle with her, carry the prize of victory. Well, here come the children, having stopped from running and thinking nothing of their mother's troubles. For the young mind is not wont to grieve.

**Tutor---**(49-52) Old servant of my mistress's house, why are you standing alone like this (keeping this solitude) at the gates, bewailing your sorrows to yourself? How come Medea wants to be left alone without you?

**Nurse---** (53-58) Old attendant of the children of Jason, the affairs of masters, when falling out badly, are a misfortune to good slaves and their hearts are affected (they touch their hearts). I have come to such a degree of grief that a longing came over me to come here and speak of my mistress's misfortunes to the earth and sky.

(59-66)

**Tutor**--- Why, has not the wretched one ceased from her laments yet?

**Nurse** ---I envy you (for your ignorance). Her sorrows are on their onset and have not reached the middle yet.

**Tutor** ---O the foolish one, if one must call one's mistress like this. She knows nothing of her more recent troubles.

**Nurse** ---What is it, O old man? Don' be grudging in telling.

**Tutor** --- Nothing. I regretted even the things said before.

**Nurse** --- Don't, I entreat you by your beard, hide this from your fellow-slave. For I will keep silence about these things if I must.

**Tutor**--- (67-73) I came to the draught place, where the old people sit, around the holy water of Peirene, and heard, not seeming to listen, someone saying that Creon, the ruler of this land, intends to exile from the land of Corinth these children with their mother. However, I don't know whether this rumor is true. I would wish this is not true.

(74-79)

**Nurse**---Will Jason allow his children to suffer these, even though he has a quarrel with their mother?

**Tutor**---The old marriage is abandoned by the new marriage, and that man is no friend to this house.

**Nurse**---We are destroyed then, if we will add the new trouble to the old, before having endured this old one to the end.

(80-84)

**Tutor---** But you keep quiet and keep the word secret, for it is not the right time for our mistress to know this.

**Nurse---** O children, do you hear what kind of person your father is as regards you? May he die...but no! For he is my master. Yet he clearly stands convicted of being bad to his dear ones.

**Tutor---**(85-88) What mortal is not so? Are you only recently realizing (this) that everyone loves himself more than his neighbor, [some justifiably, others even for the sake of gain,] seeing that their father doesn't love them because of his bed?

**Nurse---** (89-95) Come inside the house, children, for all will be well. As far as possible keep these children alone and don't bring them near their mother in her bad mood. For just now I saw her, in respect to her eyes, mad like a bull toward them, as if she meant to do something (to them). And she will not stop her wrath, I know clearly, before striking down on somebody (like thunder). However, may she do something against her enemies, not her friends.

**Medea---** (96-97) (from within) Oh, wretched me and miserable in my sufferings, Oh, woe is me, I wish I could die!

**Nurse---** (98-104) Just as I said, dear children. Your mother stirs her heart, stirs her wrath. Hurry quickly into the house and don't approach near her sight and don't go to her, but guard against her wild character and the hateful nature of her willful mind. (105-110) Go now, withdraw inside as soon as possible. It is clear that she will soon kindle the cloud of her lamentation, rising from its beginning, with greater passion. What on earth will her soul do, high-spirited, hard to check and stung by injuries?

**Medea---** (111-114) Aiai, I, miserable one, suffered, suffered things worthy of great lamentations. O may you accursed children of a hateful mother die with your father, and may the whole house perish!

**Nurse---** (115-121) Woe is me, oh miserable woman! Why do the children share their father's fault in your eyes? Why do you hate them? Alas, children, how exceedingly I suffer painful anxiety lest you suffer anything. The tempers of princes are terrible, and perhaps being ruled seldom, being in control often, they change their moods violently. (122-130) For becoming accustomed to live on equal terms (with others) is better. May it happen to me anyway to grow old securely in circumstances that are not great (in moderate circumstances.) For first, the name of moderation is superior to speak (for first of all the mere name of what is moderate wins first prize in the speaking of it), and to practice it is by far the best for mortals. Excess is able to bring no due measure (profit) to mortals, and whenever a god is made angry with the house, it pays back greater ruins.

**Chorus---** (131-138) I heard the voice, I heard the cry of the wretched woman from Colchis. Is she not yet calm? Well, old lady, tell me. For I heard her laments inside the double-gated hall and I don't rejoice, woman, at the sorrows of the house, since it has become a friend to me.

**Nurse---** (139-143) The house is no more. Those things are already gone. For the royal marriage bed keeps him (my master), while my mistress wastes away her life in her bedchamber, not comforted at all by the words of her friends in her heart.

**Medea**—(144-147) Aiai, may the flame of heaven (i.e. lightning) strike my head! What profit is there for me to live any longer? Alas, alas! May I take my rest in death, leaving (this) hateful life!

**Chorus**--- (148-154) O Zeus and Earth and Light, do you hear what a wail the wretched girl sings out? What on earth is this love of yours for the terrible bed (of rest i.e. death), o foolish woman? Will you hasten the end that is death? Do not pray for that. (155-159) If your husband devotes himself to his new wife, do not be cut with anger at him for that. Zeus will be your advocate here. Do not waste yourself away too much by lamenting over your husband.

**Medea**--- (160-167) O great Themis and Lady Artemis, do you see what I suffer, though I bound my accursed husband with great oaths? May I one day see him and his bride violently destroyed, house and all, what kind of injustice they have dared (they dare) to commit against me unprovoked? O father, o city, how shamefully I left you, after having killed my brother.

**Nurse**---(168-172) Do you hear what she says, and how she calls upon Themis, invoked by prayers, and Zeus, who is considered among mortals the guardian of oaths? There is no way that my mistress will put an end to her wrath with some small endeavor.

173-183

**Chorus**--- (173—179) Would that she come into our sight and accept the sound of spoken words, <to see> if somehow she might let go of her heavy-spirited/indignant/sullen wrath and strong passion/temper of her mind! Let my eager goodwill not be absent from my loved ones. (180-183) Well, go <to her> and bring her here out of the house. Tell her that

our concerns too are friendly <in addition to yours>. Hurry before she harms those inside in some way. For this grief of hers rushes forth/surges mightily.

**Nurse---** (184-189) I will do these things. Nevertheless I am afraid I will not persuade my mistress. Still I will give you this favor of toil <in addition to my previous toils>. Yet she casts savage glances (like a bull) , like a lioness with newborn cubs, at her servants whenever any of them comes near to say something. (190-194) But you would not be wrong in saying that the men of earlier times were stupid and not at all wise who invented hymns for festivities, banquets and dinner-parties as hearings delightful to our lives. (195-200) But no one has discovered how to stop, with music and many-toned songs, hateful sorrows out of which death and dreadful misfortunes topple the house. And indeed it would be a gain for mortals to heal these sorrows with songs. (200-203) But why do they strain their voice in vain where there are well-feasted feasts? For the fullness of feasts at hand holds delight from itself for mortals.

**Chorus---** (205-213) I heard the mournful (much-sighing) sound of her laments, and she shouts out her shrill distressing cries of woe (grief) <about> that traitor to her bed, her ill-married husband. Suffering wrongs, she calls upon Themis, daughter of Zeus, goddess of oaths, who brought her to Greece on the opposite shore over the dark (nightly) brine to the salty strait of the impassable Hellespont.

**Medea ----** (214-218) Corinthian women, I have come out of the house in case you find fault with me in some respect. For I know that many mortals are arrogant, some when in public, others when out of sight. And others, for the quiet of their life, acquire a bad reputation, and a reputation for idleness. (219-224) For there is no sound judgment in the

eyes of [many] mortals, [such as] one who, before learning clearly the inner character of a man, hates him after having taken one look, though having been wronged in no way. And a foreigner especially must very much make concessions to the city. And I don't approve of any fellow townsman who, being willful, is bitter to the citizens because of his discourtesy. (225-229) But this affair falling upon me unexpectedly has destroyed my life. I am undone and I want to give up the pleasure of life and die, my friends. For in the man, in whom was my all, I know that well, has turned out to be the worst of men, my husband! (229-236) And of all the things which have life and mind, we women are the most unfortunate creatures, who must first, at an extravagant price, buy a husband, and take a master for our body. For this [following] evil is by far more painful than [that] evil. And in this matter lies the direst risk---whether we catch either a bad or a good husband. (236-240) For divorces bring no good reputation to women, nor is it possible for her to say no to her husband. But when she arrives among new mores and customs, she's got to be a prophet, unless she has learned from home how best she will manage her bedmate. (241- 246) And if our husband lives with us, bearing the yoke not unwillingly, while we work through these tasks well, life is enviable. But if not, it is better to die. And a husband, whenever he is tired of living with those inside his house, goes out and puts a stop to the distress of his heart [turning either to a friend or to a companion of his age].(247-252) But it is compulsory for us to look to only one soul. And they say we live a life free of danger at home, and they do battle with spears. Idiots! I would rather stand three times beside a shield than give birth once! But this general description doesn't bear upon you and me in the same fashion.

(253- 258) For you there are this city, the houses of your father, and joy of life and the company of dear ones, but I, all alone, without a city, am insulted by my husband, after having been carried off as booty from a barbarian land. No mother, no brother, or blood kin do I have to whom I can [go] changing anchorage from this misfortune. (259-267) Therefore I will want to obtain this much from you: if some means or scheme is discovered to exact vengeance for these wrongs on my husband, [and on the one giving him his daughter and her whom he married,] keep silent! For a woman, in everything else, is full of fear and cowardly when beholding a fight or a weapon. But whenever she happens to be wronged in her marriage bed, there is not another mind more murderous!

**Chorus---** (267-270) I will do these things. For you will justly exact vengeance from your husband, Medea. I do not wonder that you grieve over your fortunes. I see Creon, the ruler of this land, coming as a messenger of new plans.

**Creon---**( 271-276) You, sullen-faced and angry at your husband, Medea, I proclaim that you go out of this land as an exile, taking your two children with you and there should not be any delay. Since I am the enforcer of this order, I will not go back home before I cast you outside the boundaries of <this> land.

**Medea---** (277-281) Aiai! Wretched me, I am utterly ruined! For my enemies let out every brailing rope, and there is no easily reachable haven from ruin. But even suffering terribly I will ask nevertheless: why do you send me from this land, Creon?

**Creon---**(282---286) I am afraid of you---there is no need to cloak my words---that you may do some incurable harm to my child. Many reasons contribute to this fear. You are clever and skilled in many evils, and you are hurt for having been deprived of the bed of your

husband. (287-291) I heard that you are making threats, as they report to me, that you will do something to the one marrying his daughter and the man marrying her and the girl being married. So I will guard for myself before suffering these things. And it is better for me to be hated by you now, woman, than, being remiss, groan in regret later for having been softened.

**Medea---** (292-295) Alas, alas! Not now for the first time but often, Creon, my reputation has harmed me and done great damage. Any man, who is by nature sensible, should never have his children taught to be exceptionally clever. (296-301) Apart from the other disadvantage, namely, idleness, they incur hostile envy from their fellow-citizens. For by bringing/presenting wise things which are new to stupid people, you will seem to be foolish/useless and not at all clever. On the other hand, if you are considered superior to those who seem to know something intricate, you will seem offensive in the city. (302-305) I myself also have a share of this fortune. Being clever, I am an object of jealousy for some, [a quiet soul to others, and of another nature to others] , and again a hostile person to others. But I am not excessively clever. (306-311) But then you fear me. What wrongful/outrageous thing you fear you may suffer <at my hands>? It is not my way--- don't fear me, Creon---to do wrong against a king. For how have you wronged me? You gave your daughter to the man to whom your heart led you. It is my husband that I hate. And you, I think, did these things sensibly. (312-315) Now I do not bear a grudge that your affairs go well. Marry! May you do well. But allow me to live in this land. For though having been wronged, I will keep quiet since I have been subdued by those who are more powerful.

**Creon---** (315-320) You say words soft to hear, but I shudder that you may be plotting something evil in your heart. And I am persuaded by you (I trust you) by so much less than before. A woman who is quick-tempered---as a man who is so---is easier to guard against than a silent, clever one. (321-323) But get out (of here) as soon as possible, do not keep on talking. My resolve is so fixed and you have no device by which you will stay with us since you bear ill-will towards me.

**Medea---** (324) Do not, I beseech you by your knees and your newly-wed daughter.

**Creon---** (325) You are wasting your words. For you will never persuade me.

(326-330)

**Medea---**But will you drive me out and show no respect for my prayers?

**Creon---**Yes, for I do not love you more than my family.

**Medea---**O fatherland, how very much remembrance I have of you now!

**Creon---** (Fatherland) by far dearest to me apart from my children.

**Medea---**Alas, alas, what a great evil love is for mortals!

(331-335)

**Creon---** (It depends on), I suppose, how events (fortunes) in fact stand by one.

**Medea---**Zeus, do not let the man guilty of these evils escape your vigilance!

**Creon---**Off with you, O foolish woman, and relieve me of my toils.

**Medea---**I toil and I lack no toils.

**Creon---**You will soon be pushed away forcibly by the hands of my attendants.

(336-339)

**Medea---**Surely do not do this, but I beseech you, Creon...

**Creon**---You will cause a disturbance, as you seem, woman.

**Medea**---I will go into exile. It is not this that I entreat to obtain from you.

**Creon**---But why do you in turn persist forcibly and not let go of your hands?

**Medea**--- (340-347) Allow me to stay this one day and figure out how we will go into exile and a refuge for my children, since their father prefers to work out nothing for his children. Take pity on them. You too are a father of children. It is likely for you to have good-will for them. For I have no thought for my own person, if we will go into exile, but I weep for them suffering ill-fortune.

**Creon**--- (348-351) I am by nature least tyrannical in respect to my temperament, and by showing mercy I indeed have caused many destructions. And now too I see that I am making a mistake, woman, but nevertheless you will obtain this. (351-356) But I announce to you, if the sun god's light tomorrow will see you and your children within the borders of this land, you will die. This word has been spoken truthfully. [But now, if it is necessary for you to stay, stay for one day. For you will not do any of the terrible things which I fear.]

**Chorus**--- (357-363) Alas, alas, unfortunate woman, wretched in your pains, whither ever will you turn? To what guest-friendship or to what home or land providing safety from your troubles? For the god has brought you, Medea, to an insurmountable sea of woes.

**Medea**--- (364—367) The situation is bad in every respect. Who will deny it? But by no means are things in this way, don't assume that yet. There are still struggles for the newly-weds and no small troubles for him who tied the knot for them. (368-370) Do you think that I would ever have fawned on this man if I were not trying to gain something or contriving

something? I would not even have addressed him nor touched him with my hands. (371-375) But he has reached such depths of stupidity that, though it was possible for him to ruin my plans by throwing me out of this land, he has allowed me to stay for this one day, on which I will make three of my enemies corpses, the father, the daughter and my husband. (376-380) Having many ways of death for them, I don't know in which way I should undertake it first. I will either set fire to the bridal house or, having gone silently into the house where their bed is laid, I will thrust a sharpened sword through their liver. (381-385) But one thing is irksome (serving as a hindrance) to me. If I am caught transgressing into the house and plotting, I shall be killed and bring laughter to my enemies. It is best to go along the straight path, in which we are especially skilled by nature, to destroy them with poison. (386-391) Well then. Suppose they are dead. What city will receive me? What host will provide me a land of refuge and a home of safety and protect my person? There is none. Staying then for a little longer, (to see) if some secure tower comes to light for me, I shall pursue this murder cunningly and in silence. (392-398) But if misfortune, beyond remedy, drives me out, I shall myself take a sword, even if I am going to die, and I shall kill them, and I shall go to the brutal daring. For never, I swear by the mistress whom I revere above all gods and have chosen as my co-worker, Hecate, dwelling in a recess of my hearth, will any of them grieve my heart with impunity. (399-406) Bitter and mournful I shall make their marriage for them, bitter their union and my exile from the land. But come, spare none of your expertise, Medea, as you plot and scheme. March to the danger/Go to the horror of your deed. Now comes the contest of your courage. Do you see what you are suffering? You must not incur laughter

through this marriage of Jason with the Sisyphids, you sprung from a noble father and Helios. (407-409) And you know how. Besides, we are women, most awkward when it comes to good deeds, but cleverest contrivers of all evils.

**Chorus ----** (410-415) Upwards waters of sacred rivers flow, both justice and all things are reversed. Men have treacherous counsels, and trust in god no longer stands firm. The legends will turn my life so that it has good fame.

(416-430) Honor comes to the female race. No longer will the ill-sounding talk hold fast to women. The muses of ancient poets will stop singing of my faithlessness. For Phoebus, lord of songs, didn't grant divine song of the lyre in my understanding, otherwise I would have sung a song in answer to the race of males. And long years of life have much to tell about both our fate and the fate of men.

(431-438) And you sailed away from your father's house with a maddened heart, passing between the two-fold rocks of the sea. And you live in the foreign land, having lost the bed of your marriage-bed (so that it is) husbandless, wretched one, and an exile, without rights, you are driven out of this land.

(439-445) The respect for oaths has gone and Reverence no longer stays in great Hellas, but has flown up to heaven. And for you there is no longer your father's house, wretched one, to change anchorage from your toils, and another princess, having more power over your bed, is in charge of the house.

**Jason---** (446-450) Not now for the first time, but often have I perceived how harsh anger is an evil without remedy. For it being possible for you to have this land and home, if you had borne with light heart the decisions of people who are stronger than you, because of foolish words, you will be banished from the land. (451-456) It is a matter of no

consequence to me. Don't ever stop saying that Jason is the worst man (husband). But as to the things which you have said against the royal family, consider it entirely a gain that you are being punished [merely] by exile. I always tried to diminish the tempers of the angered royalties and I wished for you to stay. (457-464) But you didn't cease from your folly, always speaking badly of the royalties. So you will be banished from the land. But nevertheless, even in these circumstances, having not failed my dear ones I come, looking out for your interest, woman, so that you will not be banished with children either without money or in want of anything. Exile drags many evils in its train. Even if you hate me, I would never be able to be ill-disposed toward you.

**Medea**— (465-468) O utter villain, for this is the worst abuse which my tongue can speak against your unmanliness (literally, for this is worst abuse which I can speak with my tongue against your unmanliness). Have you come to us, have you come who are most hateful [both to gods and to me and to the whole human race] ? (469-474) Certainly this is neither boldness nor courage, for one who has done ill to his dear ones, to look at them in the face, but the greatest of all human sicknesses, shamelessness. But you did well by coming. For I will relieve my heart by denouncing you and you will be grieved in hearing. (475-482) I shall first begin to speak at the beginning. I saved you, as all those Greeks who embarked together [with you] on that same vessel, the Argo, know, when you were sent to master the fire-breathing bulls with yoke loop and to sow the deadly field, I killed the dragon, which, unsleeping, tried to safeguard the all golden fleece by surrounding it with its much-tangled coils, and held up for you the beacon of safety. (483-487) But I, of my own accord, betraying my father and my home, arrived at Iolcus

under Mount Pelicon with you, more zealous than wise. I killed Pelias, in the most grievous manner possible, at the hands of his own children/daughters, and I destroyed his entire house.

(488-495) Having reaped these benefits from me, O vilest of men, you have betrayed us and procured a new marriage, although children have been born. For if you were still childless, it would be pardonable for you to desire this marriage. But the faith in oaths is gone and I cannot understand whether you think that the gods of then no longer rule or new laws are laid down for mortals now, since you are indeed conscious of being not true to your oaths toward me. (496-501) Alas, my right hand, which you grasped many times, and these knees, how vainly we have been touched in supplication by the evil man, and [how] we failed of our hope. Come on, for I shall take counsel with you as if you were a friend (not that I am expecting that I will fare well in your hands! But nevertheless, for having been questioned, you will appear more shameful). (502-504) Now where am I to turn? To my father's house, which for you I betrayed along with my fatherland when I came [here] ? Or to the wretched daughters of Pelias? Surely they would warmly receive me into their house whose father I slew! (506-510) For this is how it is. I have become hateful to those dear ones from home; and on the other hand, by doing you a favor, I have made enemies of those whom I should not have harmed. So in the eyes of many Greek women you made me blessed in return for these things. (510-515) A wonderful husband I have in you, and a trustworthy one, wretched that I am, if I will flee this land having been banished, bereft of friends, alone with my children alone. A fine reproach indeed to the new bridegroom, that as beggars we roam about, your children and

I who saved you! (516-519) O Zeus, why indeed of gold which is counterfeit did you grant clear signs to humans, but of men no stamp has been imprinted on their bodies by which one should distinguish a bad man!

**Chorus---** (520-521) The anger is quite terrible and hard to cure, whenever dear ones join strife against dear ones.

**Jason---** (522-525) I must, it seems, prove that I am not bad at speaking, but that I, like a careful/trusty helmsman of a ship (escaping a storm by) using the very fringes of the sail, must escape the incessant/wearisome storm of your words, O woman. (526- 531) I for my part, since you also (on your part) raise your favor (to me) to a far-too-towering height, consider Cypris to be the savior of my voyage, alone of both gods and men. As for you, you do have, to be sure, a subtle mind. But it is a story invidious to go through in detail how Eros forced you with unerring arrows to save my skin. (532-535) But I shall not count this point too exactly. For in whatever way you benefited/helped me, it is not bad. However, you have received more than you gave in return for my safety, as I shall tell/explain. (536-541) First, you live in the land of Hellas instead of a barbarian land and you come to know justice and how to use laws not with a view toward gratification of force (in a way that doesn't not give free reign to force). And all the Greeks have recognized that you are clever and you had a reputation. But if you were living in the furthest frontiers of earth, you would not have fame. (542-546) As far as I am concerned, may I have neither gold at home nor the ability to sing poetry more beautifully than Orpheus, if my fortune were not distinguished! So much I have said to you about my toils. For you have set up/proposed the contest of words. (547-550) As for the reproaches

which you have made against me in respect to my royal marriage, in this matter I shall show you first that I am clever, second that I am prudent, and third that I am a great friend to you and my children. But stay quiet! (551-557) When I moved here from the land of Iolcus, dragging with me many hopeless misfortunes, what luckier windfall/remedy could I have found than this, to marry the daughter of the king, exile that I was? It was not---the point by which you are nettled/provoked to jealousy---because I loathed your bed, or that I was struck/overwhelmed with desire for my new bride, or that I have a zeal for a competition to beget a multitude of children. (558-565) For I have enough children and I find no fault with them. But (I did this) in order that---and this is the most important reason---we might live well and not be in want, knowing that every one flees the path of a penniless friend; and that I might raise my children in a manner worthy of my house, and that, after I have fathered brothers to my children by you, I might put them into the same category (hold them in the same esteem as my sons by you) and after having knitted (joined) the clan together I might be prosperous. In your case, why do you need more children? (566-575) In my case, it is advantageous to benefit the children born/living by means of children to be born. Surely I have not planned this out badly, have I? Not even you would say so, if the bed/sex-thing were not provoking/irritating you. But you women have arrived at such a point that you think that you have everything if your marriage-bed goes well, but on the other hand if some misfortune befalls with regard to your bed, you consider the best and the most beautiful things most hostile. For mortals ought to beget children from some other source, and female race should not exist! Thus there would not be any evil among humans.

**Chorus---** (576-578) Jason, you arranged these words well. Nevertheless, to me, even if shall speak contrary to your expectation/opinion, you seem to be doing unjust things by betraying your wife.

**Medea---**(579---583) I differ from many mortals in many ways. For to me, any unjust man who is naturally clever at speaking incurs the greatest retribution. For feeling confident that with his tongue he cloaks well unjust things, he dares to do everything (stop at nothing). But he is not too clever. (584-587) This is the case with you too. Don't now put on a show of goodness towards me and be clever at speaking. For one word will lay you low. You should have, if you were not a bad man, entered this marriage after having persuaded me, but not in silence from your dear ones.

**Jason---** (588-590) You really would have supported this plan, I suppose, if I had spoken of the marriage to you, who not even now can bring yourself to let go great wrath from your heart.

**Medea---** (591-592) This was not what held you back (from telling me), but a barbarian marriage didn't turn out to be a source of glory for you for your old age.

**Jason---** (593-597) Now know this well: that I am not, on account of a woman, making a marriage with the royal family which I now have, but as I said even before, that I want to save you and to beget royal children as siblings to my children, as the bulwark for my house.

**Medea---** (598-599) May I never have a prosperous life which is painful (to my spirit) nor a happiness (bliss) which grates on my heart!

**Jason---** (600-602) Know that you will change your prayer and appear wiser. (You will pray) that the useful never appears to you to be painful and that you not think you are unfortunate when you are fortunate.

**Medea---** (603-604) Go on insulting me, since you have a refuge, but I, alone, shall flee from the land.

(605-608)

**Jason---** You yourself chose this. Blame no one else.

**Medea---** What did I do? You mean taking a wife and betraying you?

**Jason---** Imprecating unholy curses upon royal family.

**Medea---** Yes, I am a curse upon your house too!

**Jason---** (609—615) (Know well) that I will not dispute with you these things any further. But, if you want to take some aid from my resources for the children and yourself in your exile, say it. Since I am ready to give with an ungrudging hand and send tallies to guest-friends who will treat you well. And you will be foolish not to want these things, woman. If you desist from your anger, you will gain better things.

**Medea---** (616-618) We would neither make use of those guest-friends of yours, nor accept anything, do not offer us anything. For the gifts of a bad man bring no benefit/good.

**Jason---** (619-622) Well then, I call the gods to witness that I am willing to give every help to you and the children. But good offers don't please you, but you push away your friends with stubbornness. Therefore you will be grieved/suffer more.

**Medea---** (623-626) Off with you! For you are seized with longing for newly-wedded girl while spending time away from home. Marry. For perhaps---and this will be said with gods willing---you are making a marriage of such a sort that it will make you lament.

**Chorus---** (627-635) Loves that come in very great excess grant no glory or virtue to men. But if Cypris should come in moderation, no other goddess is so charming. Never, o mistress, may you shoot your inescapable arrow, after having anointed with desire, upon me from your golden bow.

(636-644) May moderation/temperance, the most beautiful gift of the gods, love me. May the dreadful Cypris never set/impose upon me disputatious/quarrelsome anger and insatiable/unceasing strife, stunning my heart with desire for another bed, but may she, showing respect for peaceful marriages, shrewdly judge/distinguish marriage-beds of women.

(645-653) O fatherland, o home, may I not become city-less, having the life of helplessness, hard to live through, the most pitiable of sorrows. By death by death may I be tamed before I complete such a day. Of toils no other is worse than to be deprived of one's fatherland.

(654-662) We have seen (this), we do not have this as a story from others to reflect upon/tell. For no city, none of your friends pities you, though you suffer most dreadful of sufferings. May he perish, any ungrateful man for whom it is not possible to open up the doors (keys) of a pure mind and show honor to his friends. To me such a man will never be a friend.

**Aegeus**--- (663-4) Medea, greetings. For no one knows a better beginning than this one to address friends.

(665-670)

**Medea**---O greetings to you as well, Aegeus, son of wise Pandion. From where do you come to the soil of this land?

**Aegeus**— Leaving behind the ancient oracle of Phoebus.

**Medea**---Why did you set out to the prophetic navel of the earth?

**Aegeus**---Inquiring how there might be seed of children for me.

**Medea**---By the gods, have you really led your life all the way up till now childless?

(671-675)

**Aegeus**--- Childless we are by the stroke of some divine power.

**Medea**---Have you a wife or are you unmarried/being inexperienced in bed?

**Aegeus**— We are not unyoked by a marriage bed.

**Medea**--- What then did Phoebus say to you about children?

**Aegeus**---Words too clever for a mere human to understand.

(676-681)

**Medea**---Is it right for me to know the oracle of the god?

**Aegeus**---Certainly, since a clever mind is surely needed.

**Medea**---What oracle did he give? Tell me, if it is right for me to hear.

**Aegeus**---That I should not loosen the hanging foot of the wine skin...

**Medea**---Before you do what, or reach what land?

**Aegeus**---Before I come to my father's hearth again.

(682-687)

**Medea**---What do you want that you have sailed to this country?

**Aegeus**---There is a man Pittheus, the lord of the land of Trozen.

**Medea**--- The son, as they, of Pelops, a most reverent man.

**Aegeus**--- I want to impart the oracle of the god to him.

**Medea**---Yes, the man is wise and skilled in respect to such things.

**Aegeus**---And to me indeed he is the dearest of all my spear-companions.

(688-695)

**Medea**---Well, may you have good luck and obtain all that you desire.

**Aegeus**---But why have your eyes and your skin wasted away like this?

**Medea**---Aegeus, my husband is the worst of all men.

**Aegeus**---What are you saying? Tell me clearly your despondency.

**Medea**---Jason wrongs me though having suffered no wrong from me.

**Aegeus**---What has he done? Tell me more clearly.

**Medea**---He has a wife, in addition to me, as the lady of the house.

**Aegeus**---Surely he has not dared this most shameful deed?

(696-707)

**Medea**---Be sure of it. And we are dishonored, dear to him before.

**Aegeus**---Was he in love or hating your bed?

**Medea**--- Very much in love. He is naturally disposed to be unfaithful to his dear ones.

**Aegeus**---So let him go, if, as you say, he is a bad man.

**Medea**---He lusted to tie the knot with the royal family.

**Aegeus** ---But who gives her to him? Finish the story for me.

**Medea** --- Creon, who rules this land of Corinth.

**Aegeus**---I see, it is understandable that you are hurt, woman.

**Medea**---I am ruined. Besides I am being exiled from this land.

**Aegeus** --- By whom? Again you are telling me another new misfortune.

**Medea**---Creon banishes me as an exile from the land of Corinth.

**Aegeus**---Does Jason allow this? This too I don't approve.

**Medea**--- (708-713) No, not in word, but he is willing to endure it. But I entreat you by this beard and your knees and I become your suppliant, pity, pity me an unfortunate woman, and do not look on as I helplessly go into exile, but receive me in your country and in your house as a guest of your hearth. (714-718) So may your desire for children be brought to fulfillment by the gods and you yourself come to death a happy man! But you don't know what a godsend you have found here in me. I will stop you from being childless and I will make you sow seeds of children. Such drugs I know.

**Aegeus**--- (719-723) For many reasons, I am eager to grant you this favor, first because of the gods, then of the children whose issue you promise me. For as regards this I am totally ruined. Thus the situation stands for me. (723-730) If you come to my land, I will try to protect you as I am bound to. [This much, however, I shall declare to you in advance, woman, I will not be willing to lead you from this land. ] But depart from this land on your own. If you by yourself come to my house, you will stay safe and I will not surrender you to anyone. For I want to be guiltless to my hosts too.

**Medea---** (731-732) These things will be. But if I should have some pledge of this, I would consider everything fine with you.

**Aegeus---** (733) Surely it isn't the case that you don't trust me? Or (if not), what is it that is annoying/vexing you?

**Medea---** (734-740) I trust you. But the house of Pelias is hostile to me, so is Creon. Yoked/bound by these oaths, you would not give me up to them trying to lead me from your land. But agreeing in words and without swearing by the gods, you might become their friend and you would perhaps be persuaded by the demands of the herald. For my situation is weak, but they have wealth and a royal house.

**Aegeus---** (741-745) You showed a great deal of foresight/forethought in your words. Well, if it seems right for you, I don't shrink from doing this. It is indeed safer for me to have some excuse/pretext to offer your enemies, and your own situation will be more assured. Lead the way in naming the gods.

**Medea---** (746-747) Swear by the soil of the Ge (Earth) and by Helios (Sun) the father of my father, and by the whole race of gods, counting them all together.

**Aegeus---** (748) What to do or what not to do? Tell me.

**Medea---** (749-751) You yourself will never banish me from your land, nor, if someone else, one of my enemies, wishes to take me away, will you give me up voluntarily as long as you live.

**Aegeus---**(752-753) I swear by Ge (Earth) and Helios' bright light and all the gods to abide by the words/provisions I hear from you.

**Medea---** (754) Enough. What would you suffer if not abiding by the oaths?

**Aegeus---** (755) Such things as befall impious mortals.

**Medea---** (756-758) Fare well (go joyfully). For everything is well. I will arrive at your city as soon as possible, after having done what I intend to do and obtaining what I want.

**Chorus---** (759-763) May the son of Maia (Hermes), the lord of travel, bring you home and may you accomplish those things toward which you eagerly direct your purpose, since you seem to be a noble man, Aegeus, in my judgment.

**Medea---** (764-771) O Zeus and Dice, daughter of Zeus and light of Helios (the Sun), now I shall win a glorious victory over my enemies, my friends, and I have entered upon the path. Now there is hope that my enemies will pay a price/punishment. For this man---in the point where I was in greatest distress---has appeared as a haven for my plans. To him I shall fasten my stern-cable for going to the city and citadel of Pallas. (772-779) Now I shall tell you all my plans. Don't expect to receive my words with pleasure. I shall send one of my servants to ask Jason to come into my sight. When he comes, I shall speak soft words to him, †that I too think these things are good and that it is well† that he has made this royal marriage which he has by betraying me, and these things are expedient/advantageous and have been well thought out. (780-786) I shall ask (him to allow) my children to stay, not as if I would leave my children in a hostile land [for my enemies to insult,] but in order that I may kill the daughter of the king with plots/by trickery. For I will send them bearing gifts in their hands, [bringing them to the bride, so that they may not be exiled from this land,] a fine robe and a golden garland. (787-789) And if she takes these adornments and puts them on her skin/flesh, she will die a terrible death, as will anyone who touches the girl. With such poisons/drugs shall I anoint

the gifts. (790-796) Here I dismiss this topic. I cry out/wail aloud when I think what kind of deed I must do afterwards. I shall kill the children, my own ones. There is no one who will take them away (Nobody is going to take them away). Having destroyed the entire house of Jason I shall go out of the land, fleeing (the consequence of) the murder of my dearest children, and having dared the most unholy deed. (797-802) For it is not tolerable to be laughed by my enemies, my friends. [Let it go. What gain for me to live? I have no fatherland, no home, no escape/refuge from misfortunes.] I made a mistake at that time when I left my father's house, having been persuaded by the words of a Greek man, who with the god's help, will pay me the penalty. (803-810) For he will never see his children by me living hereafter, nor will he beget child by his newly-wedded wife, since she wretched/horrible must die a wretched/horrible death from my poison. Let no one think that I am thoughtless and feeble, and quiet, but of the opposite disposition, harsh to my enemies and kind to my friends. For the life of such people is most glorious (of good-fame).

(811-818)

**Chorus---** Since you shared these words with us, both wishing to help you and upholding the laws of mortals, I forbid you to do these things.

**Medea---** It is not possible (to me to do) otherwise. But it is excusable for you to say these things, not suffering badly, as I do.

**Chorus---** But will you bear to kill your children, woman?

**Medea---** Yes, for so my husband would be vexed most.

**Chorus---** But you would become the most miserable woman.

**Medea---** (819-823) Let it go. All the words in the interim are now superfluous. Well, away, go and bring Jason. For I employ you in all matters of trust. But say nothing of those things which have been decided by me, if you are well-disposed toward your mistress and you are by nature a woman.

**Chorus---** (824-832) Descendants of Erechtheus, blessed from a long time ago, and children of the blessed gods, sprung from a holy and unconquered land, feeding on the most glorious wisdom, always walking with easy grace through the brightest air, where they say that once the nine holy Pierian Muses created the fair-haired Harmonia.

(835-845) They celebrate how Cypris/Aphrodite, drawing water at the streams of the beautifully/fair- flowing Cephissus, breathes upon the land fair sweet-smelling breezes of the wind. And always putting upon her hair a sweet-smelling garland of roses, she sends Erotes her assistants, the co-workers of all excellent achievement, to Sofia.

(846-855) How then will the city of sacred rivers or the land which gives escort to its friends receive you, the child-murderer, the one who is not holy among others? Consider the blow on the children, consider what kind of murder you are undertaking! Don't, by your knees we all beseech you in every way, kill your children!

(856-865) Whence will you get the audacity for your heart or hand to kill †the children from you† by applying terrible ruthlessness to your heart? And how, casting your eyes upon your children, will you behold their fate of death with tearless eyes? You will not be able to, while your children fall in supplication, wet (with blood) your murderous hand with unflinching heart.

**Jason---** (866-868) I come having been commanded. For though being ill-minded, you would not fail to get this (my audience), but I will listen. What new thing do you want from me, woman?

**Medea---** (869-871) Jason, I ask you to be forgiving of the things I said. It is (only) reasonable for you to put up with my wrath, since many kind acts have been done by us two. (872-879) I had a conversation with myself and I reproached myself, “wretched woman, why am I raging and why do I bear ill-will to those deliberating well, and why have I come to be hostile to the rulers of the land and to my husband, who does for us the most advantageous things, marrying a princess and begetting brothers for my children? Shall I not be released from my wrath? What is wrong with me, while the gods are providing well (for me)? (880-883) Do I not have children and do I not know that we are going into exile from this land and we need friends?” Having pondered these things I realized I had much thoughtlessness, and I was angry for nothing. (884-888) Now accordingly I approve, and you seem to me to be sensible, having gained this marriage to help us, but I am senseless/foolish, who ought to have had a share in those plans of yours, and helped to bring them to fulfillment, and stood beside the bed and enjoyed tending the bride who is yours. (889-893) But we are what we are ---- I will not call us a bane ---- women. So you should not make yourself similar to us in evil things/faults, nor should you match folly with folly. I ask for pardon, and I admit that I think wrongly at that time, but now I have deliberated these things better.

(894-900) O children, children, come here, leave the house, come out, greet your father and talk to him with me, and be reconciled at once together with your mother from

former hostility against dear ones. For we have a truce and wrath is gone. Take his right hand. Ah me! (I say this) since I am indeed thinking about some of the bad things that are hidden. (901-905) O children, will you stretch out your dear arms, thus living for a long time? Miserable me, how I am close to tears and full of fear! But having removed at last a quarrel with your father, I filled this tender face with tears.

**Chorus---** (906-907) Even for me a pale tear flowed down from my eyes. And may the evil/trouble not go on (and become) greater than the current one.

**Jason---** (908-913) I praise, woman, this, and I find no fault with those things said before. For it is reasonable that a woman flies into a rage †at her husband, when he smuggles in (to the household) another marriage†. But your heart has changed for a better course, and you recognized, though it takes time, this superior counsel. These deeds are characteristic of a sensible woman. (914-919) But for you, my children, not thoughtlessly your father has provided great safety with the help of the gods. For I think you will be prominent in this land of Corinth with your yet unborn brothers. Well, grow up. The rest your father and the god whoever is well-disposed (will) accomplish. (920-924) And may I see you well-brought up, when you at last reach your manhood, stronger than my enemies! You there, why do you wet your eyes with pale tears, turning away your white cheek, and why don't you receive this word from me joyfully?

**Medea---** (925) Nothing, I am thinking about these children.

**Jason---** (926) Be of good courage now. For I will make things well for them.

**Medea---** (927-928) I will do these things. Certainly I will not disobey your words. But woman is by nature a weak creature and prone to tears.

**Jason**— (929) Why do you then lament too much over these children?

**Medea**--- (930-933) I gave birth to them. And when you prayed that the children should live, pity came upon me whether your prayer would be granted. Well, of those things on account of which you come into this conversation with me, some have been said, others I will mention. (934-940) Since the royal family has decided to banish me from this land, (and for me it is the best, I know well, not to stay in your way or that of the lords of the land by living here. For I appear to be an enemy to their house). We will be banished from this land in exile, but in order that the children may be brought up by your hand, bid Creon not to banish them from this land.

(941-945)

**Jason**--- I don't know whether I can persuade him, but I should try.

**Medea**--- Well, command your wife to bid her father not to banish them from this land.

**Jason**--- Certainly, and I think at least I can persuade her, if she is like the rest of her sex.

**Medea**--- (946-951) I will also help you with this undertaking. For I will send the children bringing [a delicate robe and a gold garland] to her, gifts which are considered by far the most beautiful ones of those now among mankind, I know. Well, there is a need for some servant to carry the adornments here as soon as possible. (952-955) She will not be fortunate in one thing but in countless things, both winning you the best man as her bed-fellow and acquiring the adornments which Helios, the father of my father, once gave to his descendants. (956-958) Take these bridal gifts into your hands, children, carry them and give them to the blessed royal bride. Certainly no contemptible gifts she will receive.

**Jason---** (959-963) But why, o foolish woman, are you emptying your hands of these things? Do you think that the royal palace lacks robes and gold? Keep them, don't give these things away. For if my wife deems me worthy of some regard, she will prefer me to the possessions. I know well.

**Medea---** (964—968) Don't try to dissuade me! A proverb says gifts persuade even the gods. But gold is better/more powerful than countless words to mortals. That girl has divine favor, her affairs the god is now raising high, she rules young. But I would pay for the release from exile of my children at the price of my life, not only gold. (969-975) Well, o children, go to the rich house, beg the new wife of your father, and my mistress, ask her not to banish you from the land, give her the adornments. For there is a need especially for this, that she receive these gifts in her hands. Go as quickly as possible. And be good messengers, accomplish well for your mother the things which she longs to achieve.

**Chorus---** (976) Now I no longer have hope of the life of children, no longer. For already they are going to their death. The bride will accept, wretched one, will accept the bane of the golden headband. Around her blond hair she herself with her own hands will put the adornment of Hades.

(983) The loveliness and the divine brightness of the robe and the garland wrought of gold will persuade her to put them on. But now she will dress herself as a bride for the dead below. Into such a net/snare and fate of death she will fall, wretched one. She will find no escape from the ruin.

(991) But you, o miserable man, o ill-wedded in royal marriage, unknowing, you bring destruction to the life of your children and hateful death to your wife. Wretched man,

how far you have strayed from your destiny (how thoroughly you have failed to understand what is about to happen).

(996) But I lament next over your wife, o miserable mother of children, you who will slay your children because of your marriage-bed, which your husband lawlessly abandoned to your hurt to live with another consort.

**Tutor**--- (1002—1007) Mistress, these children, I tell you, have been relieved from exile, and the royal bride gladly received your gifts into her hands. The situation there (with the royal family) is peaceful for the children. Oh! Why are you standing, distraught/confounded/troubled, when things are going well for you? [Why have you turned your cheek away? And why don't you receive this word from me joyfully?]

(1007–1016)

**Medea**---Alas!

**Tutor**--- This (reaction of yours) is out of harmony with what I have told you.

**Medea**---Alas, I say again!

**Tutor**--- Can it be that I am announcing some misfortune without knowing it, and have I been deceived in my expectation of good news?

**Medea**---You reported what you reported. I find no fault with you.

**Tutor**---But why then are your eyes downcast, and why are you shedding tears?

**Medea**---I cannot but weep (there is a strong compulsion), old man. For the gods and I, thinking wrongly, contrived these things.

**Tutor**---Be of good cheer. You will return through the influence of your children one day.

**Medea**--- I shall bring down others before (I return), I wretched one.

**Tutor---** (1017-1018) You are not the only woman who has been separated from her children. It is necessary for us, mortals we are, to bear misfortune with a light heart.

**Medea--** (1019-1023) I shall do so. But go into the house and provide the children what is necessary through the day. O children, children, you have a city and a home, in which you, leaving wretched me, will always live, deprived of your mother. (1024-1028) And I shall go to another land as an exile before benefiting from you and seeing you prosperous, before I can adorn your baths, your wife and your marriage-beds and holding up the (wedding) torches. O, wretched me for my willfulness! (1029-1035) In vain, my children, I raised you, in vain I toiled and was torn by labor, bearing the cruel pangs of childbirth. Once I, wretched one, had many hopes in you, to look after me in my old age and to shroud me duly with your hands when I died, an enviable lot for mankind. (1035-1039) But now that sweet thought is lost. Deprived of you, I shall lead a life painful and grievous for me. You will no longer look upon your mother with your loving eyes, keeping away (from me) for another state/form of life. (1040-1048) Alas, Alas! Why do you look at me like this/with your eyes, my children? Why do you smile this last smile of all? Aiai, what shall I do? My heart/resolve is gone, women, when I saw my children's bright eyes. I could not do the deed. Goodbye to my former plans. I shall take my children from the land. Why should I, as I seek to pain their father through their sufferings, win twice as much agony for myself? I will not do it. Goodbye to my plans. (1049-1055) But what is wrong with me? Do I want to incur laughter by letting my enemies go unpunished? I must dare the deed. Shame on my cowardice, to admit soft words to my heart. Go into the house, children. To him for whom it is not right to be

present at my sacrifice---that will be a concern. I will not weaken my hand. [ (1056–1061) Ah, Ah, do not, my heart, please do not do this. Let them be, wretch, spare the children! Living with us there (in Athens), they will make you happy. By the avenging fiends below in Hades, it will never come to pass that I will abandon my children to my enemies to insult. (1062-1066) At all events, they must die. And since they must, I who gave them birth shall kill them. At all events, these things have been completed and the princess will not escape. Even now the garland is on her head, in the robe the royal bride is being destroyed, I know it well. (1067-1072) Well, for I shall start on the cruelest of journeys and I shall send these children on one that is crueler still, (so) I wish to speak to them. Give your right hands, children, give them to your mother to kiss. O dearest of hands, dearest of lips to me, so noble the bearing and so noble the face. (1073-1080) May you be happy, but elsewhere. Your father took away this (your chance of happiness) here. O the sweet kiss, o soft skin and sweetest breath of my children! Away with you; go! I can no longer look upon you but I am overwhelmed by the evils. And I know what evil deeds I am about to do, but my fury/angry passion (against Jason) is stronger than my deliberations, (fury) which is responsible for the greatest harm/evils in mankind. ]

**Chorus---** (1081---1084) Often I went through /engaged in discourses/conversations of a more subtle nature and entered into intellectual struggles greater than is befitting for female race to explore.

(1085-1089) But even for us there is a muse, who converses with us as regards wisdom, not for (all of us) all the women, but small is the number of women (you might perhaps

find <one> among many) who are not uninspired/unaccomplished (not away from Muses).

(1090-1093) And I say that those mortals, who are utterly without the experience (of children) and did not beget children, surpass those who have begotten children in respect to their good fortune.

(1094-1102) Some people, childless, through their inexperience not finding out whether the children grow up to be a sweet thing or a painful thing to mortals, are free from many toils. For others who have the sweet offspring of children in their house/at home, them I see being worn out with care all the time, first how they will bring them up well and whence they will leave livelihood to their children. (1103-1106) But then besides this it is not clear/uncertain whether they are toiling for worthless children or for good ones. But now, the one evil, the last one of all evils for all mortals I shall mention.

(1107-1115) For suppose they found sufficient livelihood and the (body of) children reached manhood and they were good/useful. But if fortune should befall thus, off goes Death, carrying the children's bodies to Hades. How then is it profitable that, on top of all their other sorrows, the gods should throw upon mortals this further, most painful grief (of all) on account of their children?

**Medea**—(1116-1120) My friends, waiting for a long time for the event, I wait to find out how things in that quarter (the palace) will turn out. And indeed I see this man, one of the attendants of Jason, coming. His agitated/excited/panting breath shows that he is going to report some new evil.

**Messenger---** (1121-1123) [ O horrible deed you have done lawlessly, ] Medea, flee, flee, neglecting/ leaving behind neither carriage of ship nor chariot moving on the ground.

**Medea---** (1124) But what befalls to be worthy of this flight for me?

**Messenger—** (1125-1126) The king's daughter has just been killed---and Creon her father---by your poisons.

**Medea—** (1127-1128) Most beautiful words you spoke (most glorious news you bring), and henceforth you will be counted/regarded as one of my benefactors and my friends.

**Messenger---** (1129-1131) what are you saying? Are you really in your right mind and not crazy, woman, (you) who, having wreaked outrage upon the hearth of the rulers, rejoice to hear it and not fear such things?

**Medea---** (1132-1135) I also have something to say in reply to your words. Well, don't be hasty, my friend, but speak. How were they killed? For you would delight me twice as much, if (I hear that) they have died utterly miserably/in utter agony.

**Messenger---** ( 1136-1140 ) when your two children came with their father, and entered the bridal house, we slaves who were distressed by your troubles were delighted. And at once in our ears there was much talk/buzz that you and your husband had made up your former quarrel. (1141-1146) One of us kissed your children's hand, another their blond head. And I myself in delight/joy followed (Jason) together with your children into the women's quarters. The mistress whom we now honor instead of you, before looking at the pair of your children, fixed her eager eyes on Jason. (1147-1155) Then however, disgusted by the entrance of your children, she closed her eyes and turned away her white cheek. Your husband tried to remove the anger and wrath of the young girl by saying

these things, “Don’ be ill-disposed to (my) dear ones, but you will cease from your anger and turn back your head, regarding them dear whom your husband regards as dear, and accept the gifts and entreat your father to remit the sentence of exile from these children, as a favor to me”. (1156-1162) And she, when she saw the adornment, did not restrain herself/resist, but promised everything to her husband. Before the father and your children had gone far from the house, she took the embroidered robe and put it on, placing the golden garland around her tresses, she arranged her hair (by looking) in a shinning mirror, laughing at the lifeless image of her body. (1163-1167) And then, standing up from her chair, she went through the house, walking delicately on her all-white feet, rejoicing exceedingly in (thrilled with) her gifts, looking with her eyes many times at her straightened tendon (standing on tip-toe). After that however came a scene terrible to behold.

(1168-1175) For she changed color and staggered back sideways, her limbs trembling, and she barely managed to collapse on the chair so as not to fall on the floor. And some one of her old female attendants, perhaps thinking either the anger of Pan or of some of the gods is coming (upon her), cried out “ololuge”, before she saw white foam coming from her mouth, and the twisting of her pupils away from her eyes, and blood not inside her skin (her flesh drained of its blood). (1176-1180) Then she let out a loud wail/howl instead of “ololuge”. Immediately one of the female servants darted toward the room of the girl’s father, another toward her new husband, to tell the misfortune of the girl. And the whole house resounded with frequent/frantic running. (1181-1185) As quickly as a swift runner, going up along the six-plethron (200 yard) leg of the race course, would be

reaching the goal, so swiftly the wretched girl, groaning terribly, awakened from her silence and shut eyes (breaking her silence and opened her shut eyes). For a double pain was marching against her. (1186-1189) On the one hand, the golden garland sitting around her head sent forth a marveling stream of all-eating fire, while on the other hand, her fine robe, the gift of your children, was eating the white flesh of the unfortunate girl. (1190-1196) She, being burned, got up and fled from her chair, shaking her hair and head now this way now that way, wanting to throw away the garland. But the gold kept its hold firmly, and the fire, since she was shaking her hair, blazed twice as much more than before. And she fell to the ground overcome by calamity, very difficult to recognize except to the father. (1197-1203) For neither the form of her eyes nor her well-born/fair face was in its natural state and blood, mingled with fire, was dripping from the top of her head, and her flesh were coming off from her bones like a pine's tear/resin because of the unseen jaws of the poisons, a terrible sight. Everybody was afraid to touch the corpse. For we had what had happened as a teacher. (1204-1210) But the wretched father, in ignorance of the calamity, suddenly coming into the house, fell upon the corpse. Immediately he wailed and having thrown his hands around her, he kissed her, addressing her as follows, "o my unfortunate child, which of the gods has destroyed you so dishonorably? Who has made this old man (me) at death's door bereft of you? Woe, may I die together with you, my child!" (1211-1217) But when he ceased from his lamentation and wailing, desiring to raise his aged body, he was held fast to the fine robe like ivy to the shoots of laurel, and terrible was the wrestling. For he wished to rise to his knees, but she kept clinging to him. And if he went by force, he pulled his old flesh from his bones.

(1218-1221) And at last his strength was extinguished and the unfortunate man let go of his soul/life. For he was no longer victorious over the evil thing/catastrophe. And the corpses both the daughter and the old father lie [close, a fate (arousing longing for tears) calling for tears. ] (1222-1227) and let your affairs be away (left out) from my word/account. For you yourself will experience the visitation from the punishment. Now not for the first time I have thought mortal life is a shadow, and I would not fear to say that those mortals who seem to be wise and careful of words, these people incur the greatest punishment. (1228-1230) For no mortal is a blessed/happy man. With prosperity/wealth flowing in continuously one man might be luckier than another, but he would not be blessed/happy.

**Chorus**— (1231-1235) It seems that the god linked Jason justly with many disasters on this day.

[O wretched girl, how I pity your misfortune, daughter of Creon, who is gone into the house of Hades, because of your marriage with Jason.]

**Medea**--- (1236-1241) My friends, I have decided on this thing that, after killing my children, I should depart from this land as soon as possible, and that I should not delay and surrender my children to another more ill-minded hand to kill. By all means there is a necessity for them to die. And since it is necessary, I will kill them I who gave birth to them. (1242-1250) But come on, arm yourself, my heart. Why do I hesitate/delay doing these terrible but necessary evils? Come, o my wretched hand, take the sword, take it, go to the painful starting-point of life, and don't play the coward and don't think of the children, how very dear they are and how you bore them. But for this one brief day at least forget your

children, and then lament. For even if you will kill them, they were nevertheless dear. But I am an unfortunate woman.

**Chorus---** (1251) O Ge/Earth and all-radiant rays of Helios, look down, look at this ruined woman, before she lays upon her children her kin-killing hand. For from your golden stock she sprang, and it is a cause of fear that any blood of the god should fall/spill <on the ground> at the hands of men. But, O Zeus-born light, hold her back, stop her, drive away from the house Fury/Erinys (made) wretched and murderous by the power of avenging deities.

(1261-1270) In vain, toil for the children comes to naught, in vain you gave birth to your dear offspring, o you who left the most inhospitable strait of dark-blue Symplegades rocks (clashing-rocks). Wretched one, why does the heavy wrath fall upon you and why frenzied murder (of the children) follows on murder (of the royal family)? For harsh to mortals are the pollutions of kindred (bloodshed) over the earth, woes consonant (with the crime) fall upon the house of the kin-slayers by the will of the gods.

(1270a-1278)

<child> (from within) Oh me!

**Chorus---** Do you hear, do you hear the cry of the children? Oh wretched, o ill-fated woman!

Child<sup>a</sup> ---Alas, what shall I do? Wither am I to escape my mother's hands?

Child<sup>b</sup> ---I don't know, my dearest brother. For we are done for.

**Chorus---**Am I to enter the house? It seems right for me to ward off the murder from the children.

Child<sup>a</sup> ---Yes, by the gods, help! For we need help!

Child<sup>6</sup> ----How close already we are to the nets of the sword!

**Chorus---** (1279) Wretch, how truly you were rock or iron (after all), who will kill the crop of your children whom you bore with a doom accomplished with your own hand.

(1282-1289) I have heard that one woman of those living before laid her hands on her dear children, Ino, driven mad by the gods, when the wife of Zeus sent her out of the house in mental distraction (or in wandering). The wretched one fell into the sea because of her unholy murder of her children, having stretched her feet over the sea cliff and dying with her two children, she is destroyed. (1290-1292) What terrible deed would any longer be impossible? O much-suffering bed of women, how many evils you did already to mortals!

**Jason---** (1293-1298) Women, who are standing near this house, is Medea who has done those horrible things still in this house, or has she gone into exile? For it is necessary for her to be hidden down below the earth or raise her winged body to the height of the ether/sky, if she is not going to pay the penalty to the royal family. (1299-1305) Does she believe that, having killed the rulers of the land, she herself will escape from the house unpunished? But certainly I don't have concerns for her as for the children. Those whom she harmed will harm her, but I came to save the lives of my children, lest the kinsmen do anything (to them) to my grief, avenging the unholy murder of the mother.

**Chorus---** (1306-1307) O wretched one, you don't know to what (extreme) point of troubles you have come, Jason. For otherwise you would not have said these words.

(1308-1313)

**Jason---** But what is it? Surely she doesn't want to kill me too?

**Chorus**---The children from you have been killed by their mother's hand.

**Jason**---Alas, what do you mean to say? How you destroyed me, woman!

**Chorus**---Consider that your children no longer exist!

**Jason**---Where did she kill them? Inside or outside the house?

**Chorus**---Open the door and you will see the slaughter of your children.

**Jason**--- (1314-1316) Loose the bolts as soon as possible, servants, release the fastenings, so that

I may see a double evil/disaster, [on the one hand, those killed, on the other hand, her  
the one I will punish.]

**Medea**--- (1317-1322) Why are you shaking these doors and trying to force them open,  
searching for the corpses and for me the one who has done the killing? Stop this toil. But  
if you have need of me, say it, if you want something, but you will never reach me with  
your hand. Such a chariot Helios the father of my father gives me, a defense against the  
enemy's hand.

**Jason**--- (1323-1328) O hateful/loathsome creature, o woman to the greatest extent most hateful  
to the gods and me and the whole human race, (you) who dared to thrust a sword upon  
your children whom you bore, and you ruined me by making me childless. Having done  
these, are you looking at the sun and the earth, having dared a deed most unholy? (1329-  
1335) May you die! But now I am in my senses, being not in my senses at that time,  
when I led you from your home and from the barbarian land to a Greek house, a great  
evil, a traitor to your father and the land which reared you. But the gods hurled on me the  
avenging deity sent for you. For having killed your brother by your hearth you embarked  
on the boat of Argo with beautiful prow. (1336-1343) You started from these sorts of

deeds. Having been married to me (this man) and having given birth to children for me, on account of your bed and sex you destroyed them. There is no Greek woman who would ever have dared this, in preference to whom I deemed you worthy to marry, a marriage hostile and destructive to me, a lioness, not a woman, having a nature more savage than Scylla of Tyrrhenia. (1344- 1350) But certainly I could not sting you (even) with countless reproaches. Such audacity has been implanted in you. Away with you, worker of foul deeds and stained with your children's blood! But it is possible for me to bewail my fate, who will neither benefit from my new marriage, nor have the children, whom I begat and reared, to talk to alive, but I was ruined!

**Medea**--- (1351-1360) I would have stretched at length (a speech) against these words of yours, if father Zeus did not know what benefits you have experienced from me and what sort of things you have done. But you were not about to live out a pleasant life laughing at me after having dishonored my bed, nor was the princess, nor was Creon, the one offering you the marriage, going to cast me out of this land with impunity. So call me a lioness too, if you wish, or a Scylla who dwelled on the Tyrrhenian plain, for I have wrenched your heart in return, as I ought to.

(1361-1366)

**Jason**---You yourself too indeed are pained and you are a partner of (these) evils.

**Medea**---You know well/you are right. But it atones for the pain if you are not laughing at me.

**Jason**---O children, what a wicked mother you met with!

**Medea**---O children, how you were destroyed by the sickness/madness of your father!

**Jason**---Surely it was not my right hand at any rate that destroyed them!

**Medea**---But rather your insult (to me) and your newly consummated marriage!

(1367-1372)

**Jason**---For the sake of bed you actually deemed it right to kill them?

**Medea**---Do you think this is a small grief to a woman?

**Jason**---For a sensible one at least. But for you it is all the evil in the world.

**Medea**---These ones live no more. For this will sting you.

**Jason**---These ones do live, alas, as avengers of blood-guilt upon your head!

**Medea**---The gods know who started the calamity.

(1373-1377)

**Jason**---They know indeed your detestable heart!

**Medea**---Hate on! And I loathe the bitter snarling voice from you!

**Jason**---And I surely loathe yours. And release/parting company is easy.

**Medea** ---How then? What shall I do? For I too very much wish to.

**Jason**---Allow me to bury these dead and mourn them.

**Medea**--- (1378-1383) No, I will not, since I will bury them with this hand of mine, bringing them to the precinct of the goddess, Hera Akria, so that none of my enemies may violate them by tearing up their grave. And upon this very land of Sisyphus I will establish a revered festival and holy rites for the remainder of time in payment for this unholy murder. (1384-1388) And I myself will go to the land of Erechtheus and will live with Aegeus the son of Pandion. But you, as is appropriate, being a coward, will die a coward's death after being struck on the head with a remnant of Argo, after seeing the bitter end of my marriage.

(1389-1395)

**Jason---**Well, may the Furies of the children and bloody Dike blast you!

**Medea---**But which god or spirit listens to you, an oath-breaker and a guest-deceiver?

**Jason---**Woe, woe, foul woman and murderess of children!

**Medea---**Go to the house and bury your wife!

**Jason---**I go, having no share of two children.

(1396-1404)

**Medea---**You don't lament yet. Just wait for the old age.

**Jason---**Oh children dearest!

**Medea---**To their mother surely, but not to you!

**Jason---**And so you killed them?

**Medea---**Hurting just you!

**Jason---**Woe's me, I long to kiss the dear lips of my children, poor wretch that I am!

**Medea---**Now you talk to them, now you kiss them, then you thrust them away!

**Jason---**Grant me, by the gods, to touch the soft skin of my children!

**Medea---**No way! In vain your words have been hurled!

**Jason---** (1405-1414) Zeus, do you hear these things how I am driven away and what sort of things I suffer from this foul woman and this child-murdering lioness? But as much as it is possible in anyway and I can, in respect to these things, I lament and adjure, calling the gods as witness how you, after having killed the children, prevent me from touching them with my hands and burying the corpses. I wish I had never sired them to see them slain in your hands!

[Chorus--- (1415-end) Zeus on Olympus the dispenser of many things, many things gods bring to fulfillment unexpectedly. Things expected are not accomplished, and for things unexpected god has found a way. Such was the end of this story. ]

## 4.2 CHINESE TRANSLATION OF *MEDEA*

### 美狄亚

保姆 ——(1-6) 但愿阿尔戈船从没飞驶过黑色的辛普勒伽得斯来到科尔克斯的土地上，  
但愿珀利翁山谷里的松树从没被砍伐倒下，但愿它从未给为珀利阿斯寻取金羊毛的  
英雄们的手备桨（6-8）那么，我的女主人美狄亚就不会被对伊阿宋的爱击中  
心房，就不会飘洋过海驶向伊俄尔科斯国的城楼。（9-15）那么，她就不会诱骗珀利  
阿斯的女儿们杀死她们的父亲，就不会和她的丈夫和孩子们流落到这科林斯的土地  
上。流放中的，既竭力取悦她投身的这方土地的公民，又在方方面面与伊阿宋夫唱  
妇随。当妻子不与丈夫作对，她就成为一个[家庭]最大的安宁保障。（16-19）但如  
今两人反目成仇，最亲爱的夫妻关系破裂。因为伊阿宋背叛了他的孩子们和我的女  
主人，娶了此地国王克瑞翁的女儿，做了皇家的乘龙快婿。（20-23）可怜的美狄  
亚，蒙此羞辱，喊着当初的海誓山盟，控诉他右手起誓做出的至高保证，唤众神作  
证她从伊阿宋手中得到了什么样的回报。（24-28）自从她得知被丈夫休辱，便一直  
卧床不起，滴水不进，苦着自己的身体，在泪水中憔悴， 既不抬起眼睛， 也不从

地上扬起脸。(28-33) 朋友们劝慰她，她就像木雕泥塑 [直译：一块石头或一波海浪] 一样听而未闻，只不过偶尔扭转雪颈，自己对自己大声哭喊着她亲爱的父亲，她的国土， 她的家——那个她为了追随丈夫而背叛了的家！不料现在却被丈夫侮辱践踏。(34-37) 经历了这不幸，这可怜的女人才认识到不离开自己父亲的国土是多么重要。她仇恨自己的孩子们，不高兴见到他们。我怕她在酝酿新祸。(38-43) [她心性刚烈，不会容忍欺辱。我了解她，我怕她会潜入铺设着新床的洞房，以致命的剑穿透新娘的肝，或者她甚至会杀死国王和新郎， 这样酿造高大的祸端。] (43-48) 她是个可怕的女人。任何与她交恶的人，绝不会轻易得胜而归。瞧，孩子们回来。他们跑完了赛跑，没有把他们母亲的苦难放在心上。因为小孩子的心不惯于伤悲。

先生—— (49-52 ) 我女主人家的老仆人，你为什么这样独自一人站在门边，自己对自己叹诉着忧烦呢？为什么美狄亚想不要你陪而一个人呆着哪？

保姆—— (53-58) 伊阿宋孩子们的老先生，对一个忠心耿耿的奴仆来说，主人们落难，也是的他的不幸，也触及他的心窝。我陷入如此的悲伤以至于渴望到这里来对天地诉说我们女主人的不幸。

(59-66)

先生—— 难道这可怜的女人还没有停止哀哭？

保姆—— 我羡慕你不知情。她的悲啼刚拉开序幕，还未及中场。

先生——啊，愚蠢的人—如果我不得不以此称呼我们的女主人。她对她的新的灾难一无所知。

保姆——啊，老人家，什么灾难？不要拒绝告诉我。

先生——没什么。我已经后悔我前面说的话。

保姆——我以你的须髯相求，不要把这对你的同主奴仆隐瞒。如果必要，我会对此守口如瓶。

先生——（67-73）我去了珀瑞尼圣水旁老人们围坐玩棋的地方，在那儿无意中听到有人说这地方的国王克瑞翁要把这两个孩子和他们的母亲一起从科林斯的国土上驱逐出境。但是这个传言是不是真的，我并不知道。我希望它不是真的。

（74-84）

保姆——伊阿宋会让他的孩子们受这个苦吗，虽说他和他们的母亲有争执？

先生——旧的婚姻被新的婚姻取代，那个人已经不是这家的亲人了。

保姆——那我们全完了，如果我们在旧的灾难还没有忍受到头的时候，又要添上新的！

先生——你呀，噤声！不要声张！现在还不是我们女主人知道这事儿的时候。

保姆——啊，孩子们，你们听见你们父亲是如何对待你们的吗？但愿他不得好死——不行！他毕竟是我的主人。但是他对自己亲人的无情无义已昭然若揭！

先生——（85-88）哪个凡人不是如此？“人人爱自己胜于爱邻人”，[一些人如此有情可元，另一些人是为了得利。]你难道在看到这两个孩子的父亲因为自己床第之欢而不爱他们后，才认识到这个道理？

保姆——（89-95）（向两个孩子）进屋去，孩子们，一切都会好的。（向先生）你尽量让这两个孩子单独呆着，不要把他们带到他们母亲身边。她情绪很坏。刚才我看见

她像疯牛一样瞪视他，好像要做什么坏事情。我知道得很清楚，她如果不像雷击般猝击中什么人是不会息怒的。但愿她打击的是敌人而不是亲人。

**美狄亚**——（96-97）（从房里）啊！不幸的我，可怜我遭此苦难，啊，真想了结此生！

**保姆**——（98-110）这不，她又来了，亲爱的孩子们。你们的母亲正怒气攻心。赶快回房去，不要到她眼前去，别挨近她，要提防她那狂暴的性格和她固执可恨的秉性。马上走，尽快退到房里去。很明显她要从头开始一场更激烈的哭诉，此时风起云，不久就会电闪雷鸣！天知道她那颗高傲难驯、又被屈辱刺痛的心会做什么事来！

**美狄亚**——（111-114）哎呀！悲惨的我，我受的苦，我受的苦足让我痛哭不止！啊，你们这两个可恨母亲生的该死的孩子，但愿你们和你们的父亲同归于尽，但愿你们全家覆灭！

**保姆**——（115-121）啊，啊，可怜的人！为什么在你看来孩子们分担他们父亲的过错呢？你为什么恨他们？哎呀，孩子们，我多么担心你们会遭不测！君王脾气暴烈。或许因为极少受制于人，而多在制人，他们喜怒无常。（122-130）一个人最好还是习惯于过与他人地位平等的生活。至少我希望我会在毫不显赫的生活中安然无恙地度过晚年。因为首先中庸之道言之有理，对世人来说行之有益；其次，越格无度不能够给世人带来任何好处，只会触怒神明，降灾家族。

**歌队**——（131-138）我听见了可怜的科尔克斯来的女人的声音，我听见了她的哭喊。她还没有平静下来？啊，老婆婆，告诉我。因为我听见了她在双扇门的房子里的悲啼。啊，妇人，这家有难，我不为此幸灾乐祸，因为它已变成我的亲人。

保姆——（139-143）这个家已不复存在。它已名存实亡了。姑爷呢，上了公主的床，而我的女主人在她的寝房里把红颜哭损，朋友的劝慰她心里一句也听不进去。

美狄亚——（144-147）哎呀，但愿我五雷轰顶！活下去对我有什么好呢？呜， 呜， 但愿我告别这可恨的人生，在死亡中安息！

歌队——（148-159）啊， 宙斯，地母，日光，你们听见这不幸的少妇唱着什么样的悲歌了吗？啊， 愚蠢的女人，你怎么爱上了那恐怖的安息之床？你将要急着赶向死亡的终点吗？快别做这样的祈祷。如果你丈夫另有新欢，不要为此对他大动肝火。宙斯会在这事上为你主持公道。不要为那个曾和你同床共枕的人哭坏了自己的身体。

美狄亚——（160-167）啊，伟大的特弥斯和威严的阿尔特弥斯女神，你们看见我受的苦吗，尽管我已用庄严的誓言将我那可恶的丈夫束缚？但愿有一天我会看见他和他的新娘还有他们全家碎尸万段！他们胆敢对我如此无端地侮辱。啊，我的父亲，啊，我的城邦，惭愧我杀了我的兄弟，惭愧我背离了你们。

保姆——（168---172）你听见她的那些话吗，你听见她呼求司誓之神特弥斯和宙斯吗？我的女主人决不会轻而易举地平息她的怒火。

歌队——（173-183）但愿她来到我们面前，聆听我们的话语，也许我们会消解她的心头的盛怒， 平息她的肝火。不要让我们的朋友领受不到我的一片好心！这样吧，你去把她从房里请到这儿来。告诉她我们也是她的朋友。快去，趁她还没有做出什么事来伤害里面的人。因为她的这份悲伤正澎湃地奔涌而出。

保姆——（184-189）我这就去。我担心我没办法说服她出来。不过我仍会帮你们这个忙。她像个刚生崽的母狮子，每当哪个仆人走近和她讲话，她就对他虎视眈眈。

（190-194）但是，如果说我们的先人很糊涂，一点也不聪明，你们没说错。他们发明了节日、盛宴或晚餐上演唱的颂歌，为了以悦耳的歌声，欢娱我们的生活。（195-200）但是还没有人发现如何用琴瑟和铿锵有致的歌曲来驱走可恶的哀伤——要知道正是哀伤孕育了死亡和可怕的厄运，使屋宇倾塌，家毁人亡。如果能用笙歌治愈哀伤，世人方会受益。（201-203）为什么人们在摆满山珍海味的宴席上声嘶力竭、白费力气地歌唱呢？其实，那眼前丰盛的宴席本身足以让世人陶醉了。

**歌队**——（205-213）我听见了她哭诉的悲切声音。她尖利哀伤地哭喊自己的痛苦，诅咒那个背叛了她的床第、新结孽缘的人。受了屈辱，她呼求宙斯的女儿，司誓之神特弥斯。正是特弥斯使她夜行海上，奔向咸湿的不可逾越的赫勒斯旁海峡，来到彼岸的希腊。

**美狄亚**——（214-218）科林斯女人，我起身来到门外，以防你们嫌我怠慢。因为我知道世上不乏傲慢无礼之人，有些人是公开如此，有些人是背后如此。而另一些人本是与世无争，却得了好逸恶劳的坏名声。（219-224）世人眼睛，看人不公：只瞟了人家一眼，还未明知此人心肠德性如何，也未受过他的害，便已心生厌恶。一个外邦人尤其需要对客居的城邦恭谦退让。对于任何一个刚愎自用、傲慢无礼、出口伤人的公民，我不赞同。（225-229）但此刻的我已被这桩从天而降的遭遇毁了性命！此生休矣！我已撒手男欢女爱，只盼一死了之，我的朋友们！在他身上，我深知我寄予了我的全部，不料他原来却是世上最坏的男人，我是说我的那个夫君！

（229-236）世上所有有声息头脑的生灵万物，数我们女人最为不幸：首先，我们必须以天价为自己买个丈夫，做我们身体的主人。比这更糟的事还在后头：最大的考验在于碰上了个好丈夫还是坏丈夫。（234-240）因为解除婚姻会毁掉一个女人的名声，而一个妻子又不能不对她的丈夫百依百顺。其次，一个女子——除非她已从娘家得到了指点——初至婆家，习俗法规两生，却要做到驭夫有道，岂不是要有未卜先知的本领！（241-246）在我们学着打点这些事情之时，如果我们的丈夫能与我们平安相守，大度地忍受婚姻的枷锁，日子还过得下去，不然还是死了的好！一个男人，无论什么时候厌倦了与家人共处，就出去找个同龄友人消遣，以解烦心。（247-252）而我们女人却不得不仰望一人！他们说我们女人安居在家，过着没有风险的生活，而他们却要持矛携盾，作战搏杀。蠢才！我情愿持矛携盾三上战场，也不愿生一次孩子！

（253-258）但你我虽然天涯同命，境遇却大不相同：你有你的这个城邦，你有你的娘家可回，你有亲人相伴，你有生的乐趣，而我孤身一人，有国难回，被我丈夫从番帮掠来现又受其羞辱。我没有娘，没有兄弟，没有宗亲收留我，做我躲避这场灾难的港湾。（259-267）所以，我希望你们能答应我这一丁点要求：如果我找到了某种方式计谋来报复我那无情无义的丈夫和他的新人还有那个把女儿许配给他的人，请为我守口如瓶！因为一个女人虽然在其他事情上胆小懦弱，瞥见刀光剑影，就会胆战心惊，但万一她在婚姻床第上蒙冤受辱，世上没有人比她更有杀心！

**歌队**——（267-270）我会照办。因为你理所应当报复你丈夫，美狄亚。我不奇怪你悲叹自己的命运。我看见我们这儿的国王克瑞翁来了，看来要宣布新的命令。

**克瑞翁**——（271-276）你这愁眉苦脸、生着你丈夫气的女人，美狄亚，我宣布你被放逐，即刻带着你的两个孩子离开此地，不得有误！我作为这个命令的执行者，不把你赶出国境，我不打道回府！

**美狄亚**——（277-280）哎呀，可怜的我，我全完了！我的敌人已经张满了风帆向我直逼而来，而我眼前却看不到可以长驱直入的港湾以躲避劫难。尽管厄难缠身，我还得问一问，你为什么把我放逐出境，克瑞翁？

**克瑞翁**——（282-286）我害怕你——我没有必要遮掩——怕你对我的女儿做出什么无法挽救的伤害。很多原因造成我对你的恐惧。你天生是个聪明的女人，而且谙熟害人的招术。此外，因为失去你丈夫的床，你万分伤心。（386-291）我还听说——我自有耳目——你威胁说你不会放过我这许婚者和新郎新娘。因此，我要防患于未然。我宁愿让你现在恨我，妇人，也不愿因为疏忽大意、心慈手软而让自己将来后悔不迭。

**美狄亚**——（292-295）呜，呜！这不是第一次，克瑞翁，而是很多次，我的名声害了我，让我吃了莫大的苦头儿。一个非常明智的人决不应该让人把自己的孩子教育成不同凡响的聪明人。（296-301）除了被人说成是无所事事，聪明人还招来其他公民不怀好意的嫉妒。一方面，对于愚笨的人来说，如果你提出睿智而新鲜的想法，你会显得大智若愚，而不是聪明；另一方面，如果你在城邦里被认为比那些学富五车的人还要高明，你会显得讨人厌。（302-305）我自己也厄运难逃。因为聪明，我成为一部分人嫉妒的对象，[另一部分人认为我与世无争，其他一部分人却不这么看，] 其他人讨厌的对象。但是我没那么聪明。（306-311）而你却害怕

我。你怕在我手里遭什么殃呢？我不是那种胆敢陷害君王的人，不要对我胆战心惊，克瑞翁。你做过什么对不起我的事？你不过是把女儿许配给了一个你中意的人。我的丈夫才是我仇恨的人。我认为你成全这门婚事合情合理。（312-315）我现在并不忌恨你们的好事。嫁你的女儿吧！祝你们万事如意！但请准许我留在这片土地上。虽然受了委屈，我也会缄默不语，因为我已被有权力的人给制服了。

**克瑞翁**——（316-320）你嘴上讲和气话给我听，但我深恐你正心怀害人的鬼胎。我越发信不敢轻信你了。因为一个脾气火爆的女人或男人并不难防，但一个不动声色诡计多端的人却让人防不胜防。（321-323）你火速离开这里，别再啰嗦。我主意铁定。你没有任何伎俩可以让我把你这个对我不怀好意的人留在我们这里。

**美狄亚**——（324）不要这样，我以你的双膝和你新婚的女儿跪下求你！

**克瑞翁**——（325）你在白费唇舌。因为你永远不会说服我。

（326-330）

**美狄亚**——你将要把我赶出国境而丝毫不理会我的祈求吗？

**克瑞翁**——我不爱你超过爱我的家人。

**美狄亚**——啊，我的祖国，我现在有多么想念你！

**克瑞翁**——是的，除了我的孩子们以外，祖国是我的最爱。

**美狄亚**——呜，呜，情爱真是人间莫大的祸害！

（331-339）

**克瑞翁**——我想，那要看每个人所处的具体情境。

**美狄亚**——宙斯，不要让那犯下这些罪孽的人逃脱你的制裁！

克瑞翁——滚开，啊，愚蠢的女人，别再缠着我，别给我麻烦！

美狄亚——我才是麻烦缠身而且接连不断。

克瑞翁——不然你马上要被我的随从用手强行推开！

美狄亚——不要如此，我求求你，克瑞翁….

克瑞翁——看来你是要存心闹事，啊，妇人。

美狄亚——我会自动流亡。我不是为这个恳求你。

克瑞翁——那你为什么还强拉硬拽，那你怎么还不松手？

美狄亚——（340-347）准许我滞留今天这一天，好让我仔细想好怎么出外流亡以及如何为我的孩子们找一个安身之处，既然他们的父亲宁愿不替这些孩子们的出路做任何打算。可怜可怜他们吧！你自己也是一个孩子的父亲。你对他们发发善心也是理所应当。因为如果我们出外流亡，我不在乎我自己如何，但是我为他们要吃苦头而落泪。

克瑞翁——（348-350）我天生就没一点儿君王脾气，因为大发慈悲我反倒害了自己不知多少回。我现在眼看着自己又在重蹈覆辙，妇人，但我还是让你如愿以偿。（351-356）不过我对你郑重宣布：如果明天太阳神的光芒照见你和你的孩子们仍然在这国境之内，你必死无疑！此话一出，绝非戏言。[现在，如果有必要，你可以滞留一天。因为你不会做出任何一件我胆战心寒的那些恐怖事情。]

歌队——（357-363）呜，呜，不幸的女人，可怜你苦啊，到哪里投身？去投奔哪个宾主故交，哪个家，哪方土地，到哪去找到你安全的避难港湾？美狄亚，神明把你带到了无边苦海，难以逃身！

美狄亚——（364-367）祸不单行，四面楚歌。谁会否认呢？但并非山穷水尽，你们先不要这样以为。对那对新婚佳侣来说真正的较量还在后头呢，而那牵了红线的人也有不小的磨难在等着他呢。（368-370）难道你认为我会奴颜婢膝地巴结他，要不是我有所企图或者有所谋划？若非如此，我根本都不屑搭他的腔更不会沾他的边儿。（371-375）但是他愚蠢到这个地步，竟然在完全可以把我的驱逐出境从而打破我的计划的情况下，让我多呆这一天——在这一天里，我会把我的三个仇人——这对父女和我的丈夫——变成三具死尸！（376-380）我有很多害死他们的方法，朋友们，我不知道我最好选哪一种来实施。我可以一把火点燃那个新房，或者是悄悄地溜进铺设新床的房子，把一方利剑插入他们的心肝。（381-385）但有一事牵掣我：如果我在潜入他们房子里准备行刺时被抓住，我将被置于死地，那么我反倒成了我的仇人们的笑柄。最好还是走捷径，用我们女人最拿手的方式——毒药——来杀死他们。（386-391）好了。就算他们已经死了。哪个城邦会收留我？哪个东道主会提供给我安全避难的土地，保险可靠的家园，会保护我的人身安全？没有人。因此，我要再静候片刻，看是否有安全的塔楼为我出现，然后我将不声不响地用诡计实施我的这个谋杀计划。（392-398）但是，如果厄运无可挽回地打乱了我的谋划，我将亲自持剑上阵，即使赔上自己的性命，我也要手刃仇敌，我也将勇往直前，以死相拼！我以众神中我最敬仰、被我选为同谋的、威居在我灶龕上的赫卡忒女神起誓，这些人中绝没有一个人会触痛我的心而不受惩罚！（399-406）我将把他们的婚礼变成凄惨的葬礼，我要让他们的结合和我的放逐同样凄惨！上阵吧！美狄亚，使出你的全部招数来策划阴谋诡计！向凶险挺进！这是一场勇气的较量！你看见你受了什

么样的侮辱吗？你，高贵父亲的女儿，太阳神的后裔，千万不要让自己因为伊阿宋与那些西西弗斯人的联姻而惹人嘲笑！（407-409）你知道如何谋划。另外，我们是女人：做英雄好事，我们无能为力；但图划任何阴谋坏事，我们却是最聪明的能工巧匠！

**歌队——**（410-415）倒流啊圣河之水，公道和万物皆被逆转。男人心术奸诈，对神的信仰不再坚定。而传说却将扭转我的人生，赋予它好的名声。

（416-430）荣誉降临女辈，恶谤将不再把女性紧随。上古诗人的缪斯们将不会吟咏我的无信。诗歌之神阿波罗没有赐予我伴歌七弦神曲之能，不然我早已对和一曲，回敬须眉。悠长人生诉不尽我们的和男人的命运。

（431-438）你登船奔离娘家，穿越海上双石，心儿疯狂。寄居异国，又失去绣床鸳衾，孤枕无夫，可怜的你，横遭流放，被逐出此地，权利剥尽。

（439-445）对誓言的崇敬已消失，知耻女神已不再停留于辽阔的希腊土地，她已飞向苍穹。你无娘家可归，不幸的你啊，再另无港湾可泊，安抚疲惫。新来的公主，权盛于你，逞威你的绣床鸳衾，入主你的夫家。

**伊阿宋——**（446-450）这不是第一次，而是很多次，我认识到火暴脾气是一个不可救药的毛病。要是你轻松地忍受了比你有权势的人的安排，你还能继续拥有这片土地和这个家园；但你却由于说了蠢话而将被放逐出境。（451-456）对我来讲，你说什么无所谓。你可以永远不停地说伊阿宋是世上最坏的男人。但是关于你说的那些不利王室的话——你得到了被放逐的惩罚，完全算是便宜！而我一直在尽力消除被惹怒了的王室的火气，我一直想让你呆下去。（457-464）但是你没有停止你愚蠢的行

为，总是在诽谤王室。因此你将被驱逐出境。但是，尽管如此，我没有对自己的亲人弃之不顾，我来是为你的利益着想，女人，以防你和孩子们出外流亡时身无分文，缺衣少穿。流亡背后卷带着无数艰辛。因为即使你恨我，我却永远做不到对你有任何坏心。

**美狄亚**——（465-468）啊，万恶不赦的恶棍——这是我的舌头所能叫出的最难听的骂你的话，骂的是你不是个大丈夫！你还有脸来见我，来见我，你这个天底下最令人憎恨的东西[不论是对神明，对我，还是对整个人类]！（469-474）一个人在坑害了自己的亲人们后却敢去面见他们，这既不是大胆，也不是勇敢，而是所有人类疾病中最坏的恶疾——厚颜无耻！但是你来的正好。因为通过痛骂你一顿，我会让自己解解气；而你听了也不会好受。（475-482）首先，我要从头说起。我救了你——正像所有和你一起登上同一个阿尔戈船的希腊人所共知的那样——当你被派来用轭环降伏口吐烈焰的公牛，来播种致命的田地；我杀死了那巨龙——那昼夜不睡，用身体一圈圈盘绕着金羊毛来守卫它的巨龙，从而为你高高擎起了安全的火炬；（483-487）我心甘情愿地背叛了我的父亲和我的家，和你来到了珀利翁山下的伊俄尔科斯，多的是狂热而少的是理智；我害死了珀利阿斯，用的是一种最为残酷的死法，使他死在自己女儿们之手，从而毁灭了他的全家。（488-495）从我手里得到了这么多的恩惠后，啊，天下最没良心的男人，你竟然背叛了我，另娶新妻，尽管我已经为你生儿育女。如果你仍尚无子嗣，你垂涎这门亲事倒有情可元。你背信弃誓。我不知道你是以为那时的神明已不再在位掌权，还是以为现在人间换了新的律条，因为你自知你背叛了对我立下的誓言。（496-501）呜，我的右手，感叹它被你

握住过无数次；还有我的双膝，感叹它们被你这个没良心的男人在求救时白白地抱住；感叹我的希望变成了失望！算了吧，因为我将要像和一个朋友那样和你计议。（不是因为我指望能从你手里得到什么好处！而是因为在质问声讨之下，你的无耻会更加暴露无遗！）

（502-504）现在我将投靠哪里？回到我的娘家？可是为了你我已经把它和我的祖国背叛而来到这里。或者去投奔悲惨的珀利阿斯的女儿们？她们无疑会敞开家门，盛情地接待我这个杀害她们父亲的凶手！（505-510）这就是我的真实处境：我变成了家里亲人们的仇敌，而为了给你效力，我把那些我本无缘由加害的人变成了我的敌人。因此，作为对这些恩德的回报，你使我在很多希腊妇女眼里显得福星高照。

（510-515）有你这样一个令人啧啧称奇的无比忠诚的丈夫，我是不胜悲惨：到头来自己就要被赶出这片土地，放逐他乡；无依无靠，举目无亲，孤零零一个人，带着更加孤零零的孩子们。这对你真是个美妙的谴责——你新婚燕尔，而你的孩子们和救过你身家性命的结发妻子却流落四方，行乞天涯！（516-519）啊，宙斯，为什么对掺假的金子，你赐予了人类明显的辨别的标志；而对于坏了良心的男人，你却没在他们身上打印上让人用以识别的印记！

**歌队**——（520-521）怒气是个非常可怕的东西而且难以治愈，尤其当亲人与亲人同室操戈。

**伊阿宋**——（522—525）看来，我必须证明我不是笨嘴拙舌，而是像一个航船上的谨慎的舵手那样，仅使用风帆的边缘，啊，女人，我就能够安然逃脱你喋喋不休摇唇鼓舌的风暴。（526-531）既然从你那边，你把你对我的功劳高高地夸上了天，从我的角

度看，我认定爱神塞浦丽丝是所有天神和凡人中唯一的我海上航行的救星。至于你，你的确有一个敏锐的头脑。但是，如果我过于露骨地描述情爱之神厄洛斯是如何用他百发百中的箭迫使你救了我这身，必会惹你反感。（532-535）在这笔帐上，我不会和你过于精打细算。但是不论你以何种方式帮了我，我很满意。作为对你救我的回报，你所得到的多于你的付出，我这就解释给你听。

（536-541）首先，你摆脱了蛮夷之地，得以住在希腊的土地上。你开始了解法制以及如何正确使用法律，即不用法律来满足暴力。其次，所有的希腊人都见识到你是一个聪明的女人。你名声在外。但如果你偏居世界的边塞尽头，哪会有关于你的传说呢。（542-546）至少对我来说，我情愿不要黄金满屋，也不要诗唱得赛过俄尔菲斯，只要声名显赫！对于我的苦劳，我就说这么多。因为是你挑起了这场唇枪舌战。（547-550）关于你对我与王室联姻的指责，在这事上，我要向你证明，首先我很精明；其次我有深谋远虑；最后，我是你和孩子们最大的恩人。肃静！

（551-557）当我拖着无数不可救药的麻烦，从伊俄尔科斯的土地上迁到这里，作为一个流亡者，我还能碰到什么比娶国王的女儿更幸运的补救办法呢？这不是因为我厌恶你的床——激怒你的恰恰是这种想法，或者是我意乱情迷恋上了这新人，更不是因为有心加入多子多孙的竞赛。（558-565）因为我的孩子足够多了而且我对他们无可挑剔。我娶了公主最主要是为了我们能生活得安适，为了我们不受贫穷——我知道对于穷朋友，人人都逃之不及。其次是为了能以不愧对我家世门风的方式把我的孩子们抚养成成人，为了给你为我生的孩子们生些弟弟，为了把他们和我们的孩子们一视同仁，为了把我的家族编织成一体，为了我能幸福昌盛。对你来说，

你干吗要更多的孩子呢？（566-575）对我来说，用将来要出生的孩子来造福已出生的孩子是有利的事情。我的打算不坏吧？即使你都会这么说，要不是床第之事惹得你恼火。但是，你们女人沦落到这个地步以至于认为如果你们的婚姻床第之事顺畅，你们就心满意足，别无他求；但是，另一方面，如果你们的婚姻出了问题，你们把世上最美好最美丽的事看成最可恨的事。人类本应该从什么其他的途径繁衍后代，女性本不应该存在。这样人间就不会有任何祸害。

**歌队**——（576-578）伊阿宋，你这番话的确说得冠冕堂皇。但是，在我看来——恕我直言不讳——你背叛妻子实是不仁不义！

**美狄亚**——（579-583）我在很多方面都与众不同。在我看来，任何一个毫无礼义廉耻但却善于狡辩的人都会招致最高惩罚。因为自信靠着三寸不烂之舌，他能颠倒黑白，混淆是非，因此他无所顾忌，无恶不作。但是他不过是自作聪明。（584-587）我说的就是你！不要现在在我面前，装模作样，花言巧语。因为我一句话就会让你哑口无言：如果你不是做贼心虚，你早会在苦口婆心说服我后去结这个婚，而不是偷偷摸摸暗渡陈仓！

**伊阿宋**——（588-590）如果我当初向你提起这门亲事，我想——看你到现在还不能做到让盛怒从你的心头冰消瓦解的样子——你那时无疑会全力支持我的提议！

**美狄亚**——（591-592）这不是你阻止你的原因，而是因为娶了胡妻最终使你觉得老来脸上无光！

伊阿宋——(593-597) 你现在听清楚：我不是为了一个女人才攀了这门皇亲，而是像我刚才说的那样，我是想救你，同时想生些王子，做我现在的孩子们的弟兄，做我家的守护堡垒。

美狄亚——(598-599) 但愿我永远不会过一种让我痛苦的幸福生活，但愿我永远不会享受让我心灵不安的富贵荣华！

伊阿宋——(600-602) 要知道你会改变你的祈祷， 你会变得精明。你会祈祷有利的事情永远不会显得让你痛苦，你会祈祷你不会在自己走好运的时候，认为自己是厄运当头！

美狄亚——(603-604) 继续侮辱我吧，因为你有一个安身之地，而我将孤单一人被从此地放逐！

(605-608)

伊阿宋——你是自作自受。不要埋怨他人。

美狄亚——我何罪之有？难道是我背叛了你，另娶新人？

伊阿宋——你恶言恶语诅咒皇家！

美狄亚——我还是你的家族的诅咒！

伊阿宋——(609-615) 我不会就这些事再跟你争下去了。但是，如果你愿意为你自己和孩子们从我的腰包里拿一些流亡所需的援助，尽管说。我愿意毫不吝啬地给，并愿意给我的有宾主故交的友人们送去半符，凭此他们会好好待你。你如果不要这些东西，就是个傻瓜，女人。如果你能息怒，你会得到更多的好处。

美狄亚——（616-618）我既不会投奔你的那些宾朋，也不会接受你的任何东西，别提给我什么！因为一个恶人的礼物不会带来任何好处。

伊阿宋——（619-622）那好，我让天神替我作证，我愿意为你和孩子们提供一切帮助。

但是，好东西不讨你的欢心，你固执地推开亲人。因此，你会吃更大的苦头。

美狄亚——（623-626）走吧！一会儿不在家你已不由自主想你那新娶的娇娃。结你的婚吧！也许——上天有眼——你所缔结的这个婚姻会让你哭之不及！

歌队——（627-635）决堤的情爱，排山倒海而来，不会给予人们任何光荣或美德。但是如果爱神塞浦丽丝来得步履轻盈，她的优雅迷人赛过任何一个别的神灵。啊，神女，但愿你永远不会搭金弓，用涂满情思的、百发百中的箭射向我身！

（636-644）但愿节制自律，神赐的最美的礼物，垂爱与我。但愿可怕的塞浦丽丝永远不会冲昏我的头脑，使我施爱他床；但愿她不会施加与我吵闹的怒火和永无休止的纷争。但愿她尊敬和平无争的婚姻，敏锐地区分女人们的婚姻。

（645-653）啊，我的祖国，啊，我的家园，但愿我不会失去我的城邦，踏上一种走投无路，艰辛难度的生活，那种悲痛最让人可怜！我宁愿命归黄泉，命归黄泉，也不愿看到这一天！人世最苦的艰难莫过于失去故土家园！

（654-662）这艰难我们亲眼所见，我们讲的故事并非从别处听来。因为没有一个人忘恩负义、不愿开启纯净的心门来示敬亲人的人。忘恩负义之徒不可交[直译：这样的人永远不会成为我的朋友]！

（663-670）

伊杰斯——美狄亚，有礼了。因为没有人知道比这更好的开场来问候朋友。

美狄亚——啊，有礼了，伊杰斯，智慧的潘迪昂之子。你从哪儿来到这片土地上？

伊杰斯——从那古老的弗波斯的神谕所。

美狄亚——你因何去了唱神之预言的地脐？

伊杰斯——去询问如何我才能生养孩子。

美狄亚——天啊，你真的活到现在一直都没有孩子？

(671-681)

伊杰斯——我没有孩子，不知道因为得罪了哪位神灵。

美狄亚——你家有妻室还是尚未婚娶？

伊杰斯——我们不是没有被婚姻结合在一起。

美狄亚——关于孩子，弗波斯对你说了什么？

伊杰斯——他言之玄妙，非一凡夫俗子所能领会。

美狄亚——我可否知道神的谕言？

伊杰斯——当然，因为你智慧的头脑正是我所需要的。

美狄亚——神到底说了什么？告诉我，如果我听来无妨。

伊杰斯——他说我不可解开酒囊支出的脚….

美狄亚——在做什么之前或到什么地方之前？

伊杰斯——在我再次回到我的祖屋之前。

(682-695)

美狄亚——但你航行到这片土地上，有何贵干？

伊杰斯——这儿有一士名呼匹塞俄斯，是特洛曾的王。

美狄亚——据说是珀罗普斯之子，极其敬神。

伊杰斯——我想向他请教这神谕。

美狄亚——当然。此人大智，且通神谕。

伊杰斯——他还是我所有战友中与我最亲密的一个。

美狄亚——那我祝你好运，心想事成！

伊杰斯——哦，你怎么双眼通红，形容憔悴？

美狄亚——伊杰斯，我丈夫是世上最没良心的人！

伊杰斯——此话怎讲？请清楚地告诉我你失魂落魄的原因。

美狄亚——伊阿宋做了对不起我的事，虽然我没做过对不起他的事。

伊杰斯——他做了什么？请清楚地告诉我。

美狄亚——他在我之上又娶了一个女人，做他家的女主人。

伊杰斯——他不会胆敢做这种毫无廉耻的事情吧？

(696-707)

美狄亚——确实如此。我从前是他的亲爱，现却被休辱。

伊杰斯——他是另有所爱还是厌弃你的床？

美狄亚——爱得非同小可。他生来便是个负心人[直译：天生不会对亲人忠诚]！

伊杰斯——那随他去吧，既然，如你所言，他是个坏了良心的人。

美狄亚——他爱的是能当驸马。

伊杰斯——是谁把千金许配给了他？请把话说完。

美狄亚——是克瑞翁，这科林斯土地的国王。

伊杰斯——原来如此，难怪你伤心难过，女人。

美狄亚——我全完了！此外，我还被从此地驱逐出境。

伊杰斯——被谁驱逐？这是你又一次告诉我的另一个新的灾祸。

美狄亚——克瑞翁把我从这科林斯的土地上放逐出去。

伊杰斯——伊阿宋允许吗？这事我更无法赞同。

美狄亚——（708-713）他嘴上说不允许，但实际上他巴不得容忍此事。但是我作为你脚下的哀求者，以你的须髯和你的双膝恳求你，可怜可怜我这个不幸的女人吧，不要眼睁睁地看着我无依无靠地流亡异乡，而是迎接我到你的国土和你的家做你的宾客吧。（714-718）如能这样，我祝愿神明成全你求子之心，祝愿你幸福终老！你不知道你在我这儿碰倒了多么好的天赐神方！因为我会让你不再后继无人，而是会使你播种子嗣。我懂得这样的灵丹妙药。

伊杰斯——（719-723）因为很多原因，夫人，我热切地给予你这个恩惠。首先，因为神明在上；其次，因为你许诺我生育子嗣有望。因为在这事上，我全没了指望。这就是我的处境。（723-730）如果你来到我的国土上，我会尽我主人的义务，竭力保护你。〔但是，我要事先与你讲明，夫人，我不愿将你带出此地。〕自己动身离开这个地方吧。如果你自己来到我的家，你会呆得保险无恙。我决不会把你交给任何人。因为我不想因带你出境而有愧于我这儿的东道主人们。

美狄亚——（731-732）如此甚好。但是，如果你能就这些事情给我立个誓言保证，我会觉得你我之间一切安排妥当。

伊杰斯 ——(733) 你不是不信任我吧？或者，有什么事让你不安？

美狄亚——（734-740）我信任你。但是珀利阿斯的家族和克瑞翁的家族是我的敌人。被这些誓言束缚，你就不会把我交出去给他们从你的国土上带走。但是，如果你口头上同意，而没有当着神明起誓，你也许会被他们派来的信使说服而变成他们的朋友。因为我毕竟人单力薄，而他们却是君王之家，有钱有势。

伊杰斯——(741-745) 你的话极富先见之明。那好吧，如果你认为这样好，我不会闪躲不做。因为对我来说，这样做会更保险，它使我有了一个应付你的敌人的借口；对你来说，你的处境也会更加万无一失。你起头点名神灵吧。

美狄亚——（746-747）以地神的土地，我父亲的父亲太阳神和全部的神灵加在一起起誓。

伊杰斯 ——(748) 做什么或是不做什么？ 说吧。

美狄亚——(749-751) 你本人永远不会把我从你的国土上放逐；如果别人——我的某个敌人——想把我抓走，只要你一息尚存，你也不会自愿把我交出。

伊杰斯——（752-753）我以地神、太阳神明亮的光和所有的神明起誓，我会遵守我从你这儿听到的条文。

美狄亚——(754) 足够了。你会遭受什么如果违背誓言？

伊杰斯——（755）遭受不虔敬的人所遭受的惩罚。

美狄亚——（756-748）祝你一路顺风。 此事已安排妥当。等我完成了我的计划，实现了我的愿望，我会尽快赶到你的城邦。

歌队——（759-763）但愿玛亚之子、护送旅人之神带你回家，但愿你求子之心如愿以偿，因为在我看来，伊杰斯，你是一个大义的人。

美狄亚——（764-771）啊，宙斯，宙斯的女儿正义女神，和太阳神的光芒啊，现在我要打一个漂亮的胜仗，朋友们，我已经登上了凯旋之路，现在我有了惩罚我的仇敌的希望。因为这个人在我最困难的时候出现，为我提供了实现我的计划的避风港。在他身上，我要系上我船尾的缆绳，向帕拉斯的都城和卫城开航。（772-779）现在我将要告诉你我的全部计划。不要指望听到好事。我要派一个家仆把伊阿宋叫来。他来了后，我会说柔顺的话给他听，说我也认为†这些事情都很好†，他背叛我去结的皇亲很不错，说这事情对我有好处，说他打算得很好。（780-786）我会请他让我的孩子们留下来，不是好象我要把我的孩子们扔在敌人的国土上 [任他们宰割]，而是为了用计害死国王的女儿。因为我要派他们手捧礼物——一件精美的绣袍和一顶金冠——[去见这新娘，求她不要把他们放逐出境]。（787-789）如果她接受了这些饰品并把它们穿戴在身上，她会悲惨地死去，任何一个碰她的人也难逃这个下场。用这样剧毒的药我会涂抹这些礼物。这话我讲到此为止。（790-796）我放声哭泣，想到我接下来必须做的什么样的事啊。因为我要杀死我自己的孩子。没有人会把他们带走。让伊阿宋绝后之后，在胆敢做了这最亵渎神灵的事后，我将离开这片土地，逃离我杀害我最亲爱的孩子们的罪行。（797-802）因为被我的敌人嘲笑是我无法忍受的事情，我的朋友们。[就这样吧。我活着还有什么意思？我没有祖国，没有家，没有一个躲避灾难的避风港。] 我错不该当初离开了我娘家， 错不该听信了一个希腊男人的话，上天有眼，他会为此付出代价！（803-810）因为他既永

远再不会看到我给他生的孩子继续活在世上，也不会和他新娶的新娘生孩子，因为悲惨的她必要悲惨地死在我的毒药之下！不要让任何人以为我低微无能，软弱可欺，或者逆来顺受，而是正相反，我对朋友友善，对敌人无情。因为这样的人生才千古流芳！

(811-818)

**歌队**——既然你与我们坦言相告，既希望帮助你，又为了维护人间法律，我禁止你这样做！

**美狄亚**——不这样做是不可能的。你们说这样的话我可以理解，因为你们没有像我这样遭遇不幸。

**歌队**——但你会忍心杀害自己的后代么，女人？

**美狄亚**——是的，因为这样才能最深地刺痛我的丈夫！

**歌队**——但是你会变成最可悲的女人。

**美狄亚**——（819-823）不管了。这中间说的话都是多余。〈对仆人〉走吧，去把伊阿宋领来。因为在所有需要信任的事情上，我都是派你去办。如果你的心向着你的女主人，如果你是一个女人，就不要泄漏我的计划。

**歌队**——（824-832）厄瑞克透斯的后裔，自古便受神灵保佑的人啊，快乐神仙的子孙，他们降生在从未被外族蹂躏的圣土上，吸取着举世无双的智慧风华，天天翩翩漫步在明媚无比的祥云之上。传说正是在那里九个圣洁的琵艾里亚缪斯女神制造了金发飘飘的和谐女神。

（835-845）人们歌咏说赛普丽斯曾汲水于潺潺流动的刻菲索斯溪边，说她吐气如兰，吹拂给大地香甜柔软的轻风。总是给自己的秀发戴上香气弥漫的玫瑰花环，她遣派小爱神——她的帮手，协助她成就万种风流的伙伴——去智慧之都。

（846-855）这流淌着神圣河水的城邦，这护送朋友（以礼待客）的土地，将如何接纳你——一个杀害自己孩子的凶手，一个不洁净的女人——到他们中间呢？想想那落在孩子们身上的刀刃，想想你要犯下什么样的凶杀！不要杀了你的孩子们，抱着你的膝盖我们全体向你万般恳求！

（856-865）你哪儿能有勇气，铁下心肠忍心下手屠戮自己的亲生孩子？你怎能眼睁睁看着他们惨死在你的眼前而不落泪？当你的孩子们跪倒在你的脚下求你饶命时，你不会让你握着屠刀的手粘满他们的鲜血而不心软。

**伊阿宋**——（866-868）你唤我，我就来了。因为尽管你对我心怀恶意，我不会不满足你要我来的要求，我会听你讲。你对我有什么新的请求，女人？

**美狄亚**——（869-871）伊阿宋，我请你原谅我说的那些话。你担待我的怒气也是合情合理，因为我们俩有过很多相亲相爱的时候。（872-879）但是我和自己对话并且责备我自己，“可悲的女人，为什么我狂怒不止，为什么我对给我好心忠告的人心怀敌意，为什么我变得仇视此地的王室和我的丈夫，尽管他做了对我们最有利的事——娶了公主，还将为我的孩子们添些弟兄？难道我不该停息我的怒火？我是怎么了，难道上天不是正青睐与我？（880-883）难道我不是已经有了孩子，难道我不知道我们要从此地被放逐，我们正需要朋友？”仔细想过这些事情后，我认识到我先前考虑不周，我生气没有理由。（884-888）因此，现在我赞同你的做法，我

认为你帮我们攀上了这门亲事是有远见卓识，而我却是见识短浅：我本应该分担你的计划，本应该帮你将它们实现，本应该守立床边，欢欢喜喜伺候你的新娘。

（889-893）无奈我们是我们——我倒不会说是祸水——女人。因此，你不应该和我们的女人一般见识，也不该和我们以牙还牙，以蠢话回敬我们的蠢话。我请你原谅。我承认我那时考虑不周，但现在我已经把这些事情想通了。（894-900）啊，我的孩子们，我的孩子们，到这来，离开你们的房间，出来问候你们的父亲，和我一起和他交谈，马上和你们的母亲一起与你们的父亲重归于好，放弃前嫌。因为我们已经讲和，怒火已经消逝。握住你父亲的右手。哎呀，因为我想到了一些暗藏的灾祸！（901-905）啊，我的孩子们，你们会像这样张开你们的双臂，像这样长命百岁？可怜的我，我的眼泪就要夺眶而出，我的心充满恐惧！终于和你们的父亲放释前嫌，泪水打湿了我的朱颜。

**歌队——**（906-907）我也清泪双垂。但愿眼前的灾难不会愈演愈烈！

**伊阿宋——**（908-913）我称赞你这番话，女人，对你先前的话我也不责怪。因为一个女人因为丈夫偷偷摸摸另结连理而怒不可遏也是人之常情。但你回心转意，你认识到了我决策的高明，虽然费了些周折。这是一个通情达理的女人的举动。（914-919）为你们，我的孩子们，你们的父亲在神明的帮助下精心地策划了非常安全的将来。因为我看你们会和你们还未出生的弟兄们在这科林斯的土地上飞黄腾达。哦，[快快]长大吧。其他的事你们的父亲和哪位好心的神明会妥善安排。（920-924）但愿我看到你们受到良好养育，最终长大成人，强过我的敌人！嗨，你为什么扭转雪颈，苍白的泪打湿了你的双眼，你为什么听了我的话却毫无欢颜？

(925-929)

美狄亚——没什么。我是在想这些孩子们。

伊阿宋——振作起来。因为我会为他们做妥善安排。

美狄亚—— 我会照办。我不会不听从你的话。但是女人天生弱质，容易落泪。

伊阿宋—— 你为什么为这些孩子们过分伤心？

美狄亚——（930-933）我生了他们。当你祈祷他们活下去，一股怜悯袭上我心头，不知他们是否会这样如你所愿。但就你来和我商谈的事情，一些我们讲过了，其他的我要说给你。（934-940）既然王室决定把我从这土地上放逐出去，（对我来说，这也是最好的解决方式，我心里很明白，因为这样我就不会因为继续住在这儿而妨碍你或者这方土地的王家。因为我似乎是他们家族的敌人。）我们就要被放逐出境，为了能让孩子们在你手下长大成人，请求克瑞翁不要把他们从此地放逐。

(941-945)

伊阿宋—— 我不知道我能否说服他，但我必会尽力。

美狄亚—— 至少命你的妻子去请求她的父亲不要把他们放逐出境。

伊阿宋—— 当然。我认为我至少能说服她，如果她是一个和其他女人没有什么不同的女人。

美狄亚——（946-951）我也会在这桩事上助你一臂之力。因为我会派孩子们手捧礼物给她 —— [一件精美的绣袍和一顶金冠] 我知道这是现世间最华美无比的礼物。我需要个仆人尽快把这些饰品送过去。（952-955）她的幸运不会仅体现在一件事上，而是体现在数不清的事情上——她不仅赢得了你这天下最杰出的男人来同床共

枕，而且还得到了这些很久以前我父亲的父亲太阳神送给他的子孙的饰品。(956-958) 用手擎上这些送给新娘的礼物， 我的孩子们，捧着它们，把它们送给有福气的出嫁的公主。当然她只会收到无可挑剔的礼物。

**伊阿宋**——(959-963) 你为什么，啊，愚蠢的女人，撒手这些东西？你以为王庭里还少了绫罗绸缎，你以为王庭不是金银满箱？留着这些东西，不要拱手送人。因为如果我的妻子看得起我，她看重的会是我这个人，而不是金银细软，这我知道得很清楚。

**美狄亚** ——(964-968) 请不要劝阻我。俗话说，有钱能使鬼推磨 [直译：礼物甚至能感动神明]。但是对凡人来说，黄金胜过千言万语。那少妇受神明青睐，现在神明在提携她，她青春妙龄而贵为公主。但是为了让我的孩子们免遭流放， 我不惜付出生命代价，黄金又算得了什么？(969-975) 好吧，我的孩子们，去到那富宅，把这些饰品送给你们父亲的新妇，我的女主人，哀求她不要把你们从此地放逐。千万记住，她必须亲手接过这些礼物！快快走吧。做个好信使，为你们的母亲顺利完成她的心愿。

**歌队** 976-我现在对孩子们的生存已不抱希望，不再抱希望。他们现在已经踏上了黄泉路。那不幸的新娘将要接过， 将要接过那灭顶的金冠。她将亲手将这地府的装点戴在自己的金发上。

983-那漂亮的神奇闪亮的绣袍, 和那金制的发冠会说服她将它们穿戴在身上。马上她将打扮自己做下界的新娘。不幸的人，她将坠入死亡的陷阱。她厄运难逃。

991-但是你，啊，悲惨的、 结了没有好下场的皇亲的人，你不知不觉断送了你孩子的性命，又把可恨的死亡带给了你的新娘！不幸的人，你大祸临头却不知不晓！

996-我为你的结发之妻哭泣，啊，可怜的孩子的母亲，你将杀害自己的孩子，全因为你的婚姻！那个你丈夫为另结新欢而无法无天地抛弃了的婚姻！

先生——（1002-1007）女主人，这两个孩子已被豁免流放，那新嫁的公主喜笑颜开地亲手接过了你的礼物。这两个孩子从王家那边获得了太平。哦，你怎么愣愣地僵立着，事情不是办得很好？[你为什么扭转雪颈，苍白的泪打湿了你的双眼，你为什么听了我的话却毫无欢颜？]

（1007-1100）

美狄亚—— 哎呀！

先生—— 你的反应和我的通报大相径庭。

美狄亚—— 哎呀，我又叫一声！

先生—— 难道是我通报了坏消息，而我自己还蒙在鼓里？难道是我误以为我带来了好消息？

（1011-1018）

美狄亚—— 你报你的信。我对你无可挑剔。

先生—— 那你为什么双目低垂、泪流满面？

美狄亚——我实在忍不住如此， 老人家。因为我和神明犯了糊涂而谋划了这些事。

先生—— 振作起来。你自己总有一天也会借你的孩子们之力被招回来。

美狄亚—— 在这之前可悲的我会把别人的魂召回来！

先生——和自己孩子分离的女人，不只你一个。我们作为凡人必须放宽心地忍受不幸。

美狄亚——（1019-1023）我会如此。回房去吧，给孩子们准备他们日常所需。啊，孩子们，孩子们，你们俩有一个城邦，一个家，在这儿你们会永远住下去，离开可怜的我，没有了你们的母亲。（1024-1028）而我会流亡他乡，还没有享受你们的孝敬，还没有看到你们福运宏达，还没有装饰你们婚前的沐浴，你们的新娘，你们的婚床，还没有为你们举起婚礼的火把。啊，可怜我的固执！（1029-1035）白白地，我的孩子们，我把你们养大；白白地，我辛苦一场，为生你们我忍受那剧烈的撕心裂肺的产痛。曾几何时，苦命的我对你们寄予了很多希望：照顾我的风烛残年；我临终的时候，你们将亲手将我妥善装殓，这都是令世人羡慕的事。（1035-1039）但现在那甜蜜的念头已经毁灭了。因为失去了你们俩，我的生活将是悲惨而痛苦。而你们再也不会用你们那可爱的眼睛看着你们的母亲了，因为你们将远远地离开我，去过另一种生活。（1040-1048）呜！呜！你们为什么这样望着我？你们为什么笑这最后的一笑？哎呀！我可怎么办？我的心都碎了，女人们，当我看着我的孩子们的闪亮的眼睛。我做不到啊。再见了我先前的计划。我会把我的孩子们从这儿带走。我为什么要通过伤害他们来刺痛他们的父亲，这样双倍地伤害我自己？我不会这样做。别了我的计划。

（1049-1055）我是怎么了？难道我想毫发无损地放过我的仇敌而惹他们耻笑？我必须勇敢地做这件事。可耻呀我的懦弱，竟让软话钻进我的心！进屋去吧，孩子们。对于任何一个不宜在场目睹我献祭的人，这只会是他自己的事。我不会手软。

（1056-1061）[啊，啊，不要这样，我的心，不要这样做！放过他们吧，啊，可怜

的人，饶孩子们一命！在那儿和你生活在一起，他们会给你带来快乐。我以下界地府里那些复仇之神起誓，我决不会把我的孩子们抛弃给我的敌人们蹂躏。（1062-1066）无论如何，他们必须死。既然他们必须死，给了他们生命的我将会杀死他们。无论如何，事已至此，公主在劫难逃。就是现在，新嫁的公主正头顶着金冠，身披着绣袍走向地府，我一清二楚。（1067-1072）我要走上一条最残忍的路，并要把这些孩子们送上一条更加残忍的路，我想和他们说话。给我，啊，我的孩子们，给你们母亲你们的右手来亲吻。啊，我最亲的手，我最亲的唇，我孩子们的高贵的举止，他们高贵的脸庞！（1073-1080）但愿你们幸福，但是在另一个地方。你们的父亲剥夺了你们在这儿的幸福。啊，甜蜜的吻，啊，我孩子们软嫩的皮肤和最香甜的气息！走开，走开！我无法再看着你们而不被痛苦淹没。我知道我要做什么邪恶的事情，但是导致人类最可恶的罪恶的怒火压倒了我的理智。]

**歌队** ——（1081-1084）已经不止一次了我和自己探讨相当玄妙的话题，不止一次我置身于女人不宜的唇枪舌战的辩论中。

（1085-1089）因为即使我们女流之辈也有我们自己的缪斯 —— 她与我们探讨智慧哲理 —— 当然也不是所有的女人都受到缪斯点拨，而是寥寥可数 [或许百里挑一] 的少数人。

（1090-1093）我要说那些从未生过一儿半女，也从未当过爹娘的人，比那些生儿育女为人父母的人要好命的多。

（1094-1102）这些没孩子的人，因为无缘经历孩子们长大成人后对人间是祸是福，因而免受无数忧愁烦恼。而那些家有娇儿的人，我看见正是他们天天被忧虑折磨得心力憔悴：日思夜想首先如何将儿女好好抚养成人；如何给他们留下家业。

（1103-1106）除此之外，对于自己是在为有用的孩子操劳，还是在为没用的孩子操劳，他们却是一无所知。现在，我要说到最后一个有孩子的坏处 —— 一个任何人都公认的坏处。

（1107-1115）假如说父母为孩子们找到了足够的生计，孩子们也长到壮年成为有用之人。但厄运降临，孩子们的身体被死神带走，消失在阴曹地府。你怎么能说这是件好事呢 —— 由于孩子的缘故，上天在其他不幸之上，又加难给凡人这不幸中的大不幸？

**美狄亚**——（1116-1120）我的朋友们，我等待良久，我等待听候那边战果如何。我看见一个伊阿宋的侍从疾步走来。他惊慌失措气喘吁吁的样子说明他要报告什么新的噩耗。

（1121-1131）

**信使**——[啊，你做了多么可怕的无法无天的事，] **美狄亚**，逃命吧，逃命吧，不管是乘船还是坐陆行的车。

**美狄亚**——发生了什么事情值得我这样逃之夭夭？

**信使**—— 公主和她的父亲克瑞翁刚刚被你的毒药害死！

**美狄亚**——你传报了最美妙无比的消息。从今以后，你就算作我的恩人和朋友。

信使——你说什么？你神志清楚，没有发疯吧，女人？你横尸王家，你听到这消息却兴高采烈而不战战兢兢？

美狄亚——(1132-1135) 对你的话，我也有我的回答。但是，不要匆匆忙忙，我的朋友，请细细道来。他们是怎么死的？因为如果你说他们死得万分悲惨，你会给我双倍的快乐。

信使——(1136-1140) 当你的两个孩子和他们的父亲过来走进了新房，我们这些为你的困境焦愁的奴仆们见了非常高兴。消息一下子在我们中间传开，说你和你的丈夫已经修复了你们从前的争吵。(1141-1146) 我们有的亲吻你孩子们的手，有的亲他们的金色的头发。而我自己，兴奋之下，随着你的两个孩子一起走进了女眷的房中。那取代了你的位置，现在受我们尊崇的女主人，还没有看你那对孩子一眼，一双眼睛就热切地盯在了伊阿宋身上。(1147-1155) 然后，看到孩子们的到来，她恶心地扭转雪颈，闭上了眼睛。你的丈夫说了这些话来平息这少女的恼怒和火气，“不要对我的亲人心怀敌意。你要转过头来，不再气恼。你要把你丈夫的亲人当作自己的亲人。接受这些礼物，恳求你父亲看在我的面子上让这些孩子们免遭流放”。(1156-1162) 当她看到那些饰品，她没有犹豫，而是满口答应了你丈夫的一切要求。你的两个孩子和他们的父亲还没有走远，她就拿过绣袍，穿在身上，并把金冠戴在了鬓发之上，然后对着亮闪闪的镜子，整理鬓发，笑看着镜子里自己没有生命的影像。(1163-1167) 接下来，她从椅子上站起来，轻盈地荡漾着她雪白的双足，在屋子里走来走，无数次地踮起脚来看着身后的裙摆，对自己收到的礼物喜不自禁。而这之后的景象却让人惨不忍睹。

（1168-1175）因为她变了脸色，双腿颤抖，身体左右摇摆不定，最后踉跄地退后几步，勉强坐到椅子上，终于没有摔倒在地。她身边的一个老妈子可能以为山神潘或者什么其它神灵发了怒而附体于她，所以高叫“奥劳吕给”。（1176-1180）但当她看到公主口吐白沫，眼珠翻白，面无血色，她发出了一声长嚎，而不是高叫“奥劳吕给”。那一霎那间，一个侍女冲向了那少女父亲的房间，另一个冲出去找她新婚的丈夫，以告诉他们这少女的不幸。整幢房子被这些狂奔弄得地动山摇。

（1181-1185）在一个善跑的人跑完六百尺赛跑的那么短的时间里，可怜的少女从昏迷中苏醒，她恐怖的呻吟着，睁开了紧闭的双眼。因为双重的折磨在向她开战。

（1186-1189）一方面，戴在她头上的金冠喷射出了神奇的吞噬一切的火焰；另一方面，她身上精美的绣袍、你孩子们呈送的礼物，在咬噬着这不幸少女的雪白的肌肤。（1190-1196）被烈火焚烧的她，从椅子上站起来想逃开，开始这一下，那一下地摇晃着自己的头和长发，努力想把金冠甩掉。但是金冠紧紧地箍在她的头上；而那火焰，由于她不停地甩着自己的头发，比从前烧得双倍的凶猛。她终于向苦难屈服，跌倒在了地上，除了她父亲，没有人能辨认出她。（1197-1203）因为无论是她的眼睛还是她俊俏的脸蛋都变了型，夹杂在火焰中的鲜血从她的头顶流下来，在那毒药的无形的咬噬下，她的血肉像松脂泪一样从她的骨头上一块块坠落下来，这景象令人毛骨悚然。所有的人都害怕碰她的尸体。因为经验给了我们教训。

（1204-1210）但是她的父亲，不幸的人，—— 还对这灾祸一无所知 —— 这时候突然闯进房里，一下子扑倒在尸体上。他马上开始大哭起来，一边用双手搂抱着她，亲吻着她，一边这样哭诉着，“啊， 我不幸的孩子啊，哪个神灵如此无耻地毁灭

了你？谁把你从我这个行将就木的老人身边带走？哎呀，但愿我和你死在一块，我的孩子！”（1211-1217）但当他停止了哭奠和哀号，想抬起他垂老的身躯时，他却被那精美的绣袍牢牢拴住，就像桂树的嫩枝被常春藤缠住一样，这场拉锯战惨不忍睹。因为他想站起身来，而她却紧紧地粘在他身上；如果他生拉硬拽，就会把自己的一把老肉从骨头上撕下来。（1218-1221）到最后他精疲力竭。这不幸的老人就这样撒手人寰。因为他再也斗不过这磨难了。女儿和她老父亲就这样横尸相枕[紧紧地，其惨状催人泪下]。（1222-1227）让你的事从我的嘴里省略掉。因为你自已会受到惩罚。迄今已经不止一次我认为人生不过是一个幻影。我会毫不畏缩地说那些看起来很智慧而且能说会道的人招致最高的惩罚。（1228-1230）因为没有一个人是幸福的。当财源滚滚而来时，一个人可能会比另一个人更幸运，但是他不会幸福。

**歌队**——（1231-1235）看起来神明在这一天里公正地把伊阿宋同很多灾难连在了一起。

[啊，悲惨的人，克瑞翁的女儿，我多么可怜你的不幸！你去了地府，全因为你嫁了伊阿宋。]

**美狄亚**——（1236-1241）我的朋友们，我已经下了决心做这件事：我要杀掉我的孩子们，然后尽快离开此地；我不会因拖延而导致把我的孩子们交出去给另一个充满敌意的手去杀戮。无论如何，他们必须死。既然他们必须死，给了他们生命的我将会杀死他们。（1242-1250）好啦，披挂上阵吧，我的心。为什么我还踟蹰不定，不去做这可怕但却是必须的罪恶呢？来吧，啊，我可怜的手，握上剑，握上它，踏上我余生痛苦的起点。不要做个胆小鬼，不要想着孩子们，想他们多么可爱，想你怎

样给了他们生命。至少在今天这短短的一天里，忘了你的孩子们，然后再尽情哭吊他们。因为即使你将要杀了他们，他们还是你亲爱的人。我是一个多么不幸的女人！

**歌队**——（1251-1260）啊，地母， 啊，光芒璀璨的太阳神，看看吧，看看这毁掉了的女人，趁她还没有向自己的孩子们动手，残杀血亲！因为她生自你的黄金血脉。恐怖啊，当神的鲜血在凡人的手下溅落人间。啊，宙斯生的光芒啊，快拦住她，阻止她，把她从这房里赶走——悲惨的她，在复仇之神的驱使下，充满杀机！（1261-1270）白白地，你为你的孩子们辛苦一场；白白地，你生了可爱的后代，啊，你离开了最不好客的黑色辛普勒伽得斯海口的人。可怜的人，为什么重压心头的怒火偏偏降临于你，为什么疯狂的杀戮紧接着杀戮？因为对凡人来说，杀害同族血亲的污秽重不可恕；天神降相应的灾祸于弑亲者的家族。

（1270a-1278）

〈孩子〉（从屋里）啊，我不好了！

**歌队**——（1273）你可听见， 你可听见孩子们的哭喊？啊，悲惨的女人，啊，苦命的女人！

孩子<sup>a</sup> —— 哎呀， 我可怎么办？跑到哪里才能逃脱我母亲的掌心？

孩子<sup>b</sup>—— 我不知道， 我最亲爱的兄弟。因为我们没命了。

**歌队**—— 我应该进到屋子里吗？我觉得我应该救护孩子们免遭杀害。

孩子<sup>a</sup> ——是呀，看在天神的份上，救救我们！因为我们需要救护！

孩子<sup>b</sup>——我们离利剑挥织的罗网已经越来越近！

**歌队——**（1279-1282）可悲的女人，你真是铁石人儿，你竟然要下毒手杀害自己的骨肉，自己亲生的苗！

（1282-1289）在这之前，我听说唯一、唯一只有一个女人——伊诺——对自己亲爱的孩子下了毒手。当时她被天神逼疯，在宙斯的妻子驱使下，跑出家门，狂奔四方。这可悲的女人，最终因为自己对孩子亵渎神灵的杀害，掉进了大海；在海岸岩石边上双脚滑落，与自己的两个孩子黄泉同路，殒命西归。

（1290-1292）还有什么更可怕的事是不可能的呢？啊，多灾多难的女人的婚床啊，你已经给人类制造了多少灾祸！

**伊阿宋——**（1293-1298）你们这些站在这房子旁边的女人们，那做了这些可怕的事的美狄亚还在房子里吗，或者她已经走了去流亡？因为除非她藏在地底下，或是插翅飞上了天，才会不受王家的惩罚。（1299-1305）难道她以为在杀了此地的君王之后她自己还会从这房子里毫发无损地逃之夭夭？但是我关心的当然不是她，而是我的孩子们。那些她加害的人会加害于她，而我来是为了救我的孩子们，以防王室家族为了报复他们母亲的不洁的谋杀而对他们做出什么事来。

**歌队——**（1306-1307）啊，悲惨的人，你不知道你跨进了何等不幸的深渊，伊阿宋。否则，你就不会说这些话。

（1308—1313）

**伊阿宋——**怎么回事？她不会是也想把我杀了吧？

**歌队——**你的孩子们已经死在了他们母亲的手下。

**伊阿宋——**哎呀，你在说什么？你活活杀了我，女人！

歌队——就当你的孩子们已不在人间！

伊阿宋——她在哪儿杀害了他们？在房间里面还是外面？

歌队——打开房门你就会看见被杀了的孩子们。

伊阿宋——（1314-1316）马上推开门门，我的侍从们，打断门门，以让我看见这双重的罪恶，〔那些死去的人，和那个我要惩罚的她。〕

美狄亚——（1317-1322）你为什么拼命摇门力图把门撞开？为了找到尸体和我这个凶手？别费这个力气了。如果你需要我，或者你想要什么，说话好了，但你休想碰我一个指头。这样一个高飞的车我父亲的父亲太阳神给了我，一个防御敌人之手的堡垒。

伊阿宋——（1323-1328）啊，可恶的东西，啊，最最可恨的女人，无论是对神明、对我、还是对整个人类来说！你竟敢把剑插入你亲生的孩子们的胸膛，你使我断后从而毁掉了我！在做了这样的事情后，在胆敢做了这最亵渎神灵的事之后，你还有脸面对太阳和大地？（1329-1335）但愿你不得好死！我现在头脑终于清醒，而当初是昏了头而把你——一个巨大的灾星，一个背叛你父亲和生养你的土地的人——从一个蛮夷之地的家领到了一个希腊的家。但是神明把派来惩罚你的复仇之神掷到了我的头上。因为在你的家灶之前你杀害了你的兄弟，然后登上了有美丽船头的阿尔戈船。（1336-1343）你就是从做这样的事起家的。在嫁给我并给我生了孩子之后，你因为床第之事而杀害了他们。没有一个希腊女子能做出这种事情来，而和她们相比我却觉得你才配得上和我结婚——一个对我来说充满仇恨的毁灭性的婚姻！你是一个母狮子，而不是一个女人，因为你生性比图瑞尼亚原野上的怪物希拉还要凶狠。

(1344-1350) 但我不会力图以无休止的责骂来刺痛你。这样的胆大妄为已渗入你的骨髓。滚开，你这个可耻之徒，你这个被自己孩子鲜血玷污的人！但是我还能哀叹我的命运——我既不会从我新结的婚姻中得到好处，也不能和活着的我生养的孩子讲话，我全完了！

**美狄亚**——(1351-1360) 要不是天父宙斯已经知道你从我这里得到了何等的恩惠而你又是已何等的行为回报我，我会对于你这番言词一一反驳到底。但你休想在辱没了我的婚榻之后，还能过完你的快活日子，还能继续嘲笑我，那公主也休想如此，而那个把她嫁给你的克瑞昂更不要妄想他可以把我赶出这片土地而不受惩罚！所以，如果你高兴，你还可以叫我母狮子，或者是把我叫作那住在图瑞尼亚原野上的希拉，因为我已经像我该做的那样刺痛了你的心来回敬你！

(1361-1366)

**伊阿宋**——你自己也被刺痛。你也分享这些灾难。

**美狄亚**——不错。但是只要你不能嘲笑我，我的苦痛就减轻了。

**伊阿宋**——啊，儿啊，你们摊上了一个多么邪恶的母亲！

**美狄亚**——啊，孩啊，你们父亲的无义夺去了你们的性命！

**伊阿宋**——夺去他们性命的却不是我的右手！

**美狄亚**——而是你对我的侮辱和你那新缔结的婚姻！

(1367-1372)

**伊阿宋**——就为床第之事，你真的不惜杀害他们？

**美狄亚**——你认为这对一个女人来说是一件小的痛事吗？

伊阿宋——至少对一个理智的女人是如此。但对你来说，这是万恶之恶。

美狄亚——这两个孩子已不复存在。因为这会咬噬你的心！

伊阿宋——他们还活着，哦，化作盘旋在你头上的复血仇之神！

美狄亚——天神知道谁是罪魁祸首！

(1373-1377)

伊阿宋——他们当然知道你那令人唾弃的心！

美狄亚——恨吧！我厌恶你的尖利咆哮之声！

伊阿宋——我也厌恶你的尖声。不过解脱很容易。

美狄亚——怎么办？我该做什么？因为我也太想解脱。

伊阿宋——准许我埋葬这死者，准许我哭悼他们。

美狄亚——(1378-1383) 不行！因为我要把他们带到赫拉阿卡莉娅女神的圣地，用我这双手亲自埋葬他们，以防任何一个我的仇人对他们掘墓践踏。就在这块西西弗斯的土地上，我将建立一个隆重的节日和礼仪，在来日里为这不洁的杀害赎罪。(1384-1388) 我自己将要去埃雷克塞俄斯国土和潘迪昂之子伊杰斯生活在一起。而你，活着是个胆小鬼，将会罪有应得地死得像个胆小鬼：在目睹了我的婚姻的残酷终结后，你将被掉在你头上的一块阿尔戈船上的残骸致于死地！

(1389-1395)

伊阿宋——但愿孩子们的复仇之灵和致命的正义女神将你灭除！

美狄亚——但是哪个神祇哪个仙灵会聆听你这个背信弃义、欺骗宾朋的人呢？

伊阿宋——呜，呜，你这不洁之妇，你这杀子凶手！

美狄亚——回房去，埋葬你的新妇！

伊阿宋——我走，两个孩子都没我的一份儿！

(1396-1404)

美狄亚——先别哀哭！等你衰老暮年的时候再哀哭！

伊阿宋——啊，孩子们啊！我最亲爱的人！

美狄亚——对他们的母亲来说，而不是对你来说！

伊阿宋——难道不是你杀了他们？！

美狄亚——伤害的就是你！

伊阿宋——啊呀，悲惨的我渴望亲吻我的孩子们的唇！

美狄亚——现在你和他们讲话，现在你亲吻他们，那时候你却对他们置之不理！

伊阿宋——以众神之名，求你准许我摸一摸我的孩子们的软嫩的皮肤！

美狄亚——办不到！你的话都是白说！

伊阿宋——（1405-1414）宙斯，你听见这些话了吗？你听见我是怎样被驱走的吗？你听

见我在这不洁妇人、这个弑婴的母狮子手里遭了什么样的罪吗？但是，以任何可能可行的方式我哭悼，我呼唤众神灵为我作证：你杀害了我的孩子，还不许我亲手摸一摸他们，不许我将他们的尸首安葬。我种的孩子呀，但愿我从来没有看见他们惨死在你的手中！

(1415-1419)

[歌队——高居奥林匹斯的宙斯，分配众多的命运；天神以意想不到的方式，成就众多事情。料想中的事没有发生，料想不到的事情天神却有办法成就。这个故事就如此了结。]

## 5.0 COMMENTARY

- 1-48: Nurse's Monologue:** the nurse, addressing the audience, gives very important information about Medea's status in Corinth as an exile and as Jason's abandoned wife. This information is important because it is different from the common myth about Medea: see "Chapter 2: Legend of Medea".
- 16. νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα:** it is difficult to translate very closely "the dearest relationship is diseased" into Chinese, because Chinese does not use the "disease" metaphor to describe ruined relationship. So I rendered it "the dearest relationship is broken". In Greek, *nosos* seems to be used as a metaphor to describe situations or qualities which are aberrations from "normal" or "good". For example, in their first *agon*-debate, Medea refers to shamelessness as "the greatest of all human diseases": ἀλλ' ἡ μεγίστη τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις νόσων, πασῶν, ἀναίδει' 471-472; then in their final confrontation, she attributes the children's destruction to their father's sickness or madness, referring to his abandonment and betrayal: ὦ παῖδες, ὥς ὤλεσθε πατρώα νόσῳ, 1364. In Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, Deianira refers to the excessive anger of Heracles as a sickness: ἐγὼ δὲ θυμοῦσθαι μὲν οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι, νοσοῦντι κείνῳ πολλὰ τῇδε τῇ νόσῳ, 543-544. The chorus in Sophocles' *Electra* sings that affairs in the house of the son of Atreus are diseased because of the strife of loved ones: ὅτι σφὶν ἤδη τὰ μὲν ἐκ δόμων νοσεῖ δῆ, 1070. *Nosos* is also used as

a political metaphor. Plato in the book 5 of *the Republic* (470C) describes the constant conflicts among Greek city states as a sickness: “in such a situation Greece is sick” (Girard 2004).

**28-29: ὥς δὲ πέτρος ἢ θαλάσσιος κλύδων:** In Euripides’ *Andromache*, Menelaus says he is like a rock or sea wave listening to the entreaties of Andromache’s young son (ἀλίαν πέτραι ἢ κύμα λιταῖς ὥς ἱκετεύων, 537-538). In Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Phaedra’s nurse says Phaedra is more stubborn than the sea for suffering in silence and not revealing the cause of her sickness (ἀνθαδεστέρα γίγνου θαλάσσης, 304-305). This kind of simile, comparing people impervious to advice, entreaty or suffering to rocks or sea waves, derives from Homer (Mastronarde 2002:16). For example, in the *Iliad* (16.34-35), Patroclus says to Achilles that he must have been born from the sea or the rocks since he refuses to fight while the Greeks are being slaughtered by the Trojans:

γλαυκὴ δέ σε τίκετ θάλασσα, πέτραι τ’ ἠλίβατοι, ὅτι τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής (But the grey sea and the steep rocks gave birth to you, because your heart is unbending<sup>11</sup>).

Later in *Medea* the chorus, after having heard the cry of the children from within as they are being cut down by Medea, laments that she truly is rock or iron after all for daring to kill her own children: ὥς ἄρ’ ἦσθα πέτρος ἢ σίδαρος, 1279-80). The simile comparing the heart to rock or stone appears in Homer’s *Odyssey* (23.103), where Telemachus rebukes his mother Penelope for being cold and distant upon seeing Odysseus after so many years:

σοὶ δ’ αἰεὶ κραδίη στερεωτέρη ἐστὶ λίθοιο (But your heart is ever harder than stone).

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<sup>11</sup> The English translation of Homer is mine.

Medea's angry stare is also described by the nurse as "bull" stare (92): ὄμμα...ταυρουμένην ("mad like a bull in respect to her eyes"). Aeschylus uses the same participle in his *Libation Bearers* (275) to describe Orestes (ταυρούμενον: "savage or angry like a bull"), as is pointed out by Boedeker (1997:131) and Hopman (2008:178). In conclusion, these similes are Homeric or Aeschylean in origin and are used by Euripides to portray Medea as a heroine, with no intention of demonizing her.

Chinese does not have similes comparing stubborn or grief-stricken people to rocks or the sea<sup>12</sup>; instead, they are compared to "statues made of wood or clay" (木雕泥塑) for staying still and not talking, out of fear or grief. In the famous 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese novel *The Dream of Red Chamber* (《红楼梦》), the leading character Daiyu, struck by melancholy, is described as sitting still in bed like a "statue made of wood or clay" for most of the night<sup>13</sup>. Thus the Chinese translation is rendered using the Chinese simile "like statues made of wood or clay".

**50-51: πρὸς πύλαισι...ἔστηκας:** by Greek theatrical convention, in order to present what happens inside the doors where women live, either female characters are brought outside in front of the doors of the *skene* to speak, or messengers are used to relate news from

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<sup>12</sup> Chinese does have a simile comparing a cruel and heartless person to "iron and rock", cf. commentary entry 1279-1280. Here (28) Medea is compared to rocks and the sea to convey that she is so grief-stricken that she freezes into a stationary, lifeless pose, unresponsive to words. There is no intention to show that Medea is cruel, heartless or inhuman, as later (1279-1280).

<sup>13</sup> 《红楼梦》第二十七回《滴翠亭杨妃戏彩蝶 埋香冢飞燕泣残红》：“那林黛玉倚着床栏杆，两手抱着膝，眼睛含着泪，好似木雕泥塑的一般，直坐到二更多天方才睡了”。

inside, especially on death and violence. The presence of women outside the house is often provided with some motivation. For example, the nurse later (53-58) explains that she is compelled by overwhelming grief to come outside to speak to the earth and sky about the misfortunes of her mistress. The nurse brings Phaedra out on her sickbed in order to satisfy her repeatedly expressed desire to come outside (*Hippolytus* 170-184). Euripides' *Electra* (*Electra* 54-63) comes out of the house bearing a water pitcher on her head to lament to the open sky about her sufferings. This dichotomy of outside vs. inside in theatrical space is foreign to Chinese audiences. In the Chinese theatre, the stage is generally furnished with a table and two chairs and the interior scene is thus staged. The stage can represent what happens inside the house, in the women's chambers, and in their backyard gardens.

**53-58:** Domestic slaves, such as the nurse and the tutor in this play, are often portrayed in tragedy as having an emotionally close relationship with their masters. For example, the nurse in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (747-65) gives a vivid account of how lovingly she cared for Orestes when he was a baby, e.g. getting up while he cried in the middle of the night or washing his baby clothes; the messenger in Euripides' *Helen* (711, 722-33) recounts his fond memory of Helen's wedding and confesses his loyalty to her whom he addresses as daughter. In Euripides' *Electra*, the old man, the foster-father of Agamemnon, recognizes Orestes by a scar which, he recalls, he got from a fall while chasing a fawn (574-573). It was also the old man, says the husband of Electra, who stole away the young Orestes from the murderous hands of Aegisthus (15-18) and secured his safety. In Euripides' *Ion*, there is a mutual affection shared by Creusa and her slave "the

old man". Creusa confesses that he is like a father to her, and he actually addresses Creusa as "my daughter", and cries when Creusa tells him about her secret exposure of her baby years ago. It is also the old man who advises Creusa to kill Ion. Thus slaves in tragedy are also portrayed as playing an instrumental role in influencing their masters. More examples: the pedagogue in Sophocles' *Electra*, loyal to Agamemnon's memory, urges Electra and Orestes to kill their mother to avenge their father's death; in Euripides' *Electra*, it is the old man who gives Orestes the idea of killing Aegisthus at the sacrifice (621-639); in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, it is the old slave of Clytaemnestra who reveals to her the real reason why Iphigenia is being summoned by Agamemnon to join the army ("the father who begot her is going to kill your daughter," 873); in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, it is the nurse of Phaedra who intervenes with Hippolytus on Phaedra's behalf. The odd fact that slaves are often given a "free" voice in Euripidean theatre is generally regarded by critics as not reflecting the social reality of Athens. As Hall (1997:125) concludes in her study of the sociology of Greek tragedy, "in tragedy the Athenians created a public dialogue marked by an egalitarian *form* beyond their imagination in actuality". This being said, it is very probable that the domestic slaves, due to their intimate interactions with their masters on a daily basis over the years and their entrusted responsibilities in the household, enjoyed a genuinely caring relationship with their masters and were accorded a certain respect and "freedom" in the house. In Demosthenes 47.55ff., the speaker had a nurse who took care of him when he was a child. The nurse was later freed by the speaker's father and lived with her husband until his death. The speaker then took her into his household, out of duty and affection, since

she had no one to care for her in her old age. The nurse shared meals with the family and resided with them away from the slave quarters (Cox 1998:192). Slaves might also be instrumental in their masters' or mistresses' enterprises. For example, in Lysias' speech (*On the Murder of Eratosthenes*), the slave is said to have brokered the tryst between Euphiletus' wife and her lover Eratosthenes by conveying a secret message. Examined in this light, the position of slaves in tragedy probably is "realistic" to a considerable degree.

Loyal servants and slaves are also a common feature in Beijing opera. In *the Orphan of the Zhao*s, Pu Feng (卜凤), the maid servant of Princess Zhuang Ji (庄姬), helps the princess smuggle her newborn son out of palace to safety. When interrogated under torture about the whereabouts of the baby, Pu Feng bravely refuses to reveal the truth and is killed.

- 68:** **πεσσοῦς:** πεσσός is an oval-shaped stone used in a board-game "draughts", probably the ancient form of checkers. Here its plural form refers to the place where the game is played. In Attica, *pessoi* were also made of ornamented pottery shards smoothed into circular shapes, as is revealed by archaeological findings (Kurk 1999). *Pessoi* are also called *lithoi* and *psephoi*. The word *pessoi* is mentioned once in *Odyssey* (1. 107), where the suitors are portrayed as "delighting their hearts with *pessoi*" in front of the doors in the place of Ithaca (πεσσοῖσι ... θυμὸν ἔτερπον). For *pessoi* mentioned in Euripides, see *Suppliant Women* (ἐν μὲν τόδ' ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ἐν πεσσοῖς δίδως κρεῖσσον: "you have given me *a piece* as in draughts" 409-410) and fr.360 (πόλεις πεσσῶν ὁμοίως διαφοραῖς ἐκτις μέναι: "as if moved from place to place like draughts"). Julius Pollux (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) in his *Onomasticon* 9.98 describes a game called "polis" (Kurk 1999):

The game played through many pieces is a board that has spaces disposed between lines; and the board is called “polis” and each of the pieces a “dog.” The pieces are divided in two by color and the art of the game is to capture the other-colored piece by surrounding it with two of the same color.

Thus it seems that the strategy of playing *pessoi* is to guard against being isolated and surrounded by one’s enemies. Aristotle, in arguing for “man is by nature a political animal”, compares the *apolis* man to an “isolated piece in *pessoi*” (*Pol.* 1253a7, “ἀζυξ ὄν ὥσπερ ἐν πεττοῖς”) which, cut off from the main force, will be in danger itself and a danger to others (Kurk 1999). The frequent allusions and analogies involving *pessoi* in epic and philosophical writings seem to indicate that it was a very common board game for the ancient Greeks. There are a few vase paintings depicting people playing board games. One of the most famous is an Attic black figure belly amphora painted by Exekias, ca. 540-430 BC, depicting Ajax and Achilles, in silhouette, sitting opposite each other while playing a board game. The painting, however, does not indicate the board’s appearance in any detail. According to Kurk (1999), all the pieces in *pessoi* seem to have been equal in status and thus it was more like modern checkers than chess. Certain board games also entailed the use of dice (*kuboi*) as well as pieces on a board (*pessoi*). I have simply translated *pessoi* as chess (棋) in Chinese. The Chinese audience would probably think of a traditional Chinese board game called *weiqi* (围棋), meaning “board game of surrounding”, known in the west as *Go* (from the Japanese *igo*). *Go* originated in China, where it has been played for more than 2500 years. *Go* requires two players, the board, and two bowls holding black and white stones. The players alternately place black and white stones on the vacant intersections of a grid of 19×19 lines (totaling 361

intersections). The intersections adjacent to a stone are called “liberties”. A stone or a chain of stones must have at least one liberty to remain on the board. When a stone (or a chain of stones) is surrounded by opposing stones so that it has no liberties, it is *captured* and removed from the board. The emptied intersection(s) go to the opponent. There are 181 black stones and 180 white ones. Black stone moves first on the empty board. The first stone can be placed on any intersection on the board. Once played, a stone cannot be moved to a different intersection. The stones are equal in status. The players take turns in placing one stone at a time on an intersection. The goal of the game is to surround the stones of the opposing color (i.e. “besiege” them) with one’s stones and “occupy” a larger part of the territory (a larger number of intersections) than the opponent. The strategy of the game is to place one’s stones in such a way that they cannot be captured, while mapping out territories the opponent cannot invade without being captured. Thus the Chinese *Go* and Greek *pessoi* are similar: both are “battle games” played on a flat ruled surface, with color-coded pebbles (at least originally) equal in status and with the same goal of surrounding the enemy territory. *Go*, however, relies exclusively on strategy without the use of dice.

- 79:** **ἐξηντληκέναι**: “suffer to the end” from ἀντλέω ‘bale out bilge water’. There is a similar expression in Chinese: “it rains on continuously when the roof is already leaking” (屋漏偏遭连天雨), to describe a situation where one calamity follows the heels of another calamity.
- 88.** **εὐνής**: like λέχος and λέκτρον, literally means “the marriage-bed”, or “marriage”. Marriage (or marriage-bed) is mentioned numerous times in the play. It serves to

highlight how important marriage is for women and how marriage defines women's happiness and misfortune. Jason's unfortunate failure to appreciate this fact (569-573) is the root of the dramatic conflict in the play. The intimate connection between a woman and her marriage-bed is dramatized so often in tragedy that it has become a recognizable literary *topos*. A fragment of Euripides (fr. 318) states in an authoritative tone that a married woman belongs to her marriage-bed: "when a woman has left her ancestral home she belongs not to her parents but to her marriage-bed; but male children stand always in a house to protect ancestral gods and tombs" (Collard 2008). In Aeschylus' *The Persians* (134) the chorus says "marriage-beds are filled with tears through longing for husbands" (who are fighting the Greeks). Reference to tear-drenched marriage-beds almost becomes a cover-word to stand for women in this case. In tragedy, the marriage-bed is also depicted as the place where women go to say farewell and to take their lives. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Jocasta, after having figured out the truth about the identity of Oedipus, rushes straight to her marriage-bed (τὰ νυμφικὰ λέχη 1242-1243), bewails her marriage (εὐνάς 1249), and hangs herself (1264). Deianira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae* also rushes into her bedchamber, takes a tearful farewell to her marriage-bed and bridal chamber (ὦ λέχη τε καὶ νυμφεῖ ἐμά 920), and commits suicide on the bed with a sword (911-931). In Euripides' *Alcestis* (175-179) Alcestis enters her bedchamber and starts her tearful laments, "O marriage-bed, where I yielded up my virginity to my husband, the man for whose sake I am now dying, farewell! I do not hate you, although it is you alone that cause my death". In these cases, marriage has literally become death to these women.

“The marriage-bed” cannot be translated literally into Chinese, because there is no such word in Chinese<sup>14</sup>. So I have translated the Greek words in six different ways, depending on the context:

1. εὐνή in line 88 is translated as “the pleasures of bed” (床第之欢): it does not make sense in Chinese to say just “bed” in this sentence; besides, the tutor, by using the word εὐνή, seems to be implying some sexual interest on Jason’s part in making his new marriage.
2. εὐνήν in 265 and εὐνής in 570 are translated as “marriage and bed” (婚姻床第)
3. εὐνὰς in 641 is translated as “marriage” (婚姻), and εὐνής γαμηλίου in 673 is also translated as “marriage” (婚姻).
4. λέχους in 1367 is translated as “the matters in bed” (床第之事): Jason’s rhetorical question here has a tone of condemnation and contempt for Medea for killing the children “for the matters of the bedroom”.

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<sup>14</sup> There is a Chinese word “bed of bliss” (喜床, meaning “pregnancy-bed”) which refers to the wedding bed the newly married couple spend their wedding night. Here the “bliss” refers to pregnancy. For example, if a woman says she is “having a bliss”, that means she is pregnant. Traditionally the main purpose of marriage is to produce offspring and that is why the wedding bed is essentially referred to as “pregnancy-bed”, as a way to express the wish that a wife will conceive as soon as possible. “Bed of bliss”, however, refers to the physical bed only and does not stand for marriage.

5. λέχει in line 207 is translated as “bed” (床第) to denote Jason’s literal betrayal of Medea’s bed; λεχέων in 999 is translated as “marriage” (婚姻), as befitting the style of a choral code.

6. λέκτρων in 286 is translated as monosyllable bed (床) to denote the straightforwardness of Creon who claims that he is not cloaking his words (282).

**96a:** **ιὼ:** it is difficult to translate exclamations or interjections like ιὼ into Chinese. There are fewer exclamatory words in Chinese. So both ιὼ and ὦ are translated as 啊, both αἰᾶ and οἶμοι are translated as 哎呀, and φεῦ is translated as 呜. All three Chinese exclamations can be used to express anger, grief or surprise. Exclamations are used in Chinese opera, but not as frequently as in Greek tragedy.

1. ιὼ ---- an exclamation of joy, grief or suffering, *Oh*, cf. 96, 115, 1251 etc; it is translated as 啊 (*a*) in Chinese;
2. ὦ --- an exclamation, used with nom.,voc., or gen. to express surprise, joy, pity or pain or used as a mode of address, cf. *Medea* 61, 81, 133, 160, 1290, 1306 etc.; it is translated as 啊 (*a*) in Chinese;
3. αἰᾶ--- an exclamation of grief, *ah!* cf. 111, 144, 277, 1007, 1009 etc.; it is translated as 哎呀 (*ai ya*) in Chinese;

4. οἴμοι --- an exclamation of pain, fright, pity, anger, grief, also of surprise, prop. οἴ μοι, *ah me ! woe's me !* cf. 899, 1210, 1271, 1310 etc.; it is also translated as 哎呀 (*ai ya*) in Chinese;
  5. φεῦ --- an exclamation of grief or anger, *alas!* cf. 146, 292, 330, 358, 496, 1040, 1393 etc.; it is translated as 呜 (*wu*) in Chinese.
- 96b:** ἐγὼ: In Greek, women do not use self-deprecatory addresses. In ancient Chinese, a woman usually refers to herself as “slave” (奴家), “concubine” (妾), or “lowly woman” (小女子). In Chinese translation, “I (我)” is used to retain the more self-assertive tone of the Greek women.
- 125:** τῶν γὰρ μετρίων: the Greek concept of “the golden mean” is translated as 中庸之道 (“the Middle Way” or “the Mean”). 中 (middle or central) denotes the idea of never leaning to one side or the other, never overshooting or falling short; 庸 means constancy (Gardner 2007:107). The mean (中庸), a basic Confucian ethical principle, denotes the way of centrality and harmony, and not merely the pursuit of a middle course. In *The Mean* (中庸), one of the four Confucian canonical scriptures called “the Four Books” (500-450 BC), Confucius (ca. 551-479 BC) says the superior men avoid extremes and maintain the center or equilibrium (Gardner 2007:114); Socrates likewise teaches that a man must know how to choose the mean and avoid the extremes on either side (Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* II.6). While the goal of the mean in Aristotle is to achieve happiness (*eudaimonia*, Plaks 2002), the goal of the mean in Confucius is to maintain the

hierarchical social order. The superior man, Confucius says, does what is proper to the station in which he finds himself and he has no desire to go beyond (君子素其位而行，不愿呼其外): in a position of prosperity, he does what is proper to a position of prosperity and is not overbearing (居上不骄), and in a low and subordinate position, he behaves accordingly and is not disobedient (Gardner 2007:118 & 123). Confucius further reduces human relationships within society to five cardinal relationships (五达道): between ruler (king) and minister, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend (Gardner 2007:120). Each person should conduct himself (or herself) in due accordance with his (or her) position: a ruler should be humane, a minister be loyal; a father should be kind, a son be filial; and a husband should be just, a wife be obedient, etc. One can achieve these societal ideals by practicing the mean and by cultivating one's character (修身). By cultivating oneself, one can bring order and harmony first to the family, then to the state and empire. The potential efficacy of this Confucian ethics in maintaining the status quo social order was perceived by the Han Dynasty emperors, who then successfully promoted Confucian ethics and philosophy as the only all-comprising moral code for the people.

- 131. Chorus:** Chorus will appear extremely puzzling to Chinese audiences since Chinese theatres have only actors and choruses are unheard of. I will give a brief overview of the origin and development of Greek tragedy to help Chinese readers understand the intricate relationship between tragedy and chorus.

Choruses are an integral part of Greek tragedy and existed in Greece long before drama. As is pointed out by Taplin (1978:13), for the Greeks, “a chorus was an integral

part of many communal occasions, religious and secular---festivals, weddings, funerals, victory celebrations.” One of the earliest literary descriptions of choral singing and dancing comes from Homer<sup>15</sup>.

According to Aristotle (*Poetics* 4), the tragic chorus and tragedy itself come from dithyramb. The Dithyramb was a choral song (initially spontaneous) and dance (circular) particularly associated with the worship of Dionysus. The famous dithyramb composers include Simonides (556-467 BC), Pindar (518-442 BC) and Bacchylides (active 481BC-431BC). Judging from the title of one of his now-lost dithyrambs, *Memnon*, Simonides sang of the divine and heroic myths. The fragments of Pindar’s dithyramb also seem to center on divine and heroic legend, especially pertaining to Dionysus. The divine myths and heroic legends are also the themes of Bacchylides’ work. This explains why tragedy, with a couple of exceptions, has only divine myths and heroic legends as its theme. The messenger’s speech in tragedy also harks back to epic narratives in its style and diction. This information will help Chinese readers understand why Greek tragedy generally only has gods or heroes (and heroines) as their protagonists, in sharp contrast to Chinese operas dramatizing not only legendary or historical figures but also common people.

At Athens, the dithyramb was danced and sung by a chorus of fifty men or boys (Pickard-Cambridge 1966:32). The dancers, crowned with ivy and unmasked, danced in circular formation, with the flute-player in their midst. This is the prototype of tragedy. In the beginning, *the chorus performed the whole drama*. It is very important for Chinese

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<sup>15</sup> Choral dancing is described on the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18). In *Odyssey* (8.260-269), the Phaeacians entertain Odysseus with choral dancing by a group of young boys with Demodocus singing and playing lyre in their midst.

readers to know that actors are a later addition to the chorus, not vice versa. It is said that poet and dancer Thespis<sup>16</sup> later invented a single actor called *hypocrites* (*Diog.L.* iii.56). The poet himself played that actor, to give some rest to the chorus. The second and third actors were introduced by Aeschylus and Sophocles respectively, as is widely known. The three-actor rule also differentiates Greek tragedy from Chinese operas since Chinese operas usually have a large cast and many actors and the leading roles are played by different actors. But the two vastly different theatrical traditions share one thing in common: all the actors are men who play both male and female roles. It is only in the last one hundred years that actresses start playing in Chinese operas.

A brief overview of the composition and role of Greek tragic chorus is given as follows for the benefit of Chinese readers. The chorus is a focal point of Greek tragedy. A tragic chorus usually consists of twelve singers (*choreutai*) in the plays of Aeschylus and fifteen singers in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides (Pickard-Cambridge 1968:234). The chorus marches in after the prologue. The song sung by the chorus at its first entry into the orchestra on the audience's right is called the *parodos* or entrance song. Once it has entered, the chorus almost always remains in the orchestra throughout the play. All choral songs (*stasima*) are accompanied by dances. The rest of the play is an alternation of acts (*epeisodia*) during which the chorus may join in dialogue<sup>17</sup> with the actors or make brief comments on the speeches. The singing and dancing of the choral odes between the episodes enables the actors to exit and change masks and costumes for their

<sup>16</sup> He also invented the mask. When acting, he first smeared his face with white lead, later covered it with purslane, and finally wore a mask of linen. It is very probable that the invention of the mask is necessitated by the fact that one actor has to play more than one role.

<sup>17</sup> The chorus engages in dialogue (sometimes in lyric) with characters through its leader (called *koryphaos*).

next role. The chorus also sings a processional song (*exodos*) at its exit at the end of the play.

The role of a chorus is to sing and dance<sup>18</sup> the choral odes, to listen, watch, talk and comment, but seldom to act. The choral songs, which often consist of moral or philosophical reflections, are sometimes only tenuously related to the specific dramatic action. Therefore it is worth noting that the choral ode in *Medea* (“upwards flow the waters of sacred rivers”, 410-430), “one of the most extraordinary odes in tragedy”, as noted by Gagarin (1992:365), stands out for its forceful message and appropriateness to the situation.

Since traditional Chinese operas do not have a chorus, its presence in Greek tragedy might be the oddest aspect to Chinese audiences accustomed to their traditional operas. In the adaptation of *Medea* into a type of Chinese opera called Hebei Bangzi (produced in 1989 and again in 2002), the composition and function of the chorus is somewhat altered to suit the needs of the Chinese opera. In this production, the chorus is composed of six celestial maidens (replacing the Corinthian women in Euripides’ *Medea*) who sing and dance (Tian 2006:8). Sometimes the chorus is also used as a prop, e.g. to physically represent places such as a cliff (Tian 2006:11). In another Chinese adaptation of *Medea*, *The Lady of Loulan* (楼兰女), produced in 1994 and again in 2008 by Taiwan’s Contemporary Legend Theatre (当代传奇剧场), the chorus, composed of

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<sup>18</sup> “The choral dancing was normally in formation, either rectangular or circular in basis, and while it might occasionally become wild and rapid...., it was usually rather solemn and decorous, a style sometimes called *emmeleia*” (Taplin 1978:12). But little is known about its choreography and music.

twelve men wearing black robes and white masks, is without a fixed identity. Its function is as fluid as the theatrical context requires of them. For example, it sometimes physically represents a lake or a bed, another time it functions as a group of priests or attendants.

In her insightful and critical survey and critique of three Asian productions of Greek tragedy, Diamond (1999:154) deplores the masculine and unsynchronized movement of the chorus of the Bacchantes in the Chinese *Bacchae* (performed in Mandarin and Greek in 1998), the foolishly distracting chorus of the Malay *Bakai* (performed in Malay in 1997), and the mundane and generic dances of the chorus in *The Oresteia* (performed in Mandarin in 1995). The failure of Asian producers to incorporate the chorus meaningfully into their plays seems to result not only from their lack of understanding of the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy, but also from their general lack of understanding of the Greek texts themselves and their interpretation.

- 135:** ἀμφιπύλου: cf. πύλαις διπλαῖς in *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1261; it refers to the double-leaved door in the center of the *skene*, the stage building representing a house or a temple. As is pointed out by Taplin (1978:11), “Made of wood, perhaps some 12 metres long and 4 metres high, the *skene* had a large double-leaved door.” This meta-theatrical reference to the actual door on the stage would seem to be too realistic to Chinese audiences, since traditional Chinese opera is symbolic in nature in its representation of its characters (in its singing, movements, etc.) and in its stage setup. Usually the stage setting is minimalist, with only a table and a couple of chairs. There are no stage buildings representing houses or doors. Instead, the actors pantomime, with their arms and hands, the opening and

closing of doors<sup>19</sup>. These pantomimes follow certain prescribed procedures so that they are easily recognizable to the audience. For example, to convey the opening of a double-leaved door<sup>20</sup> the actor first mimes putting his left hand on the door and pulling out its bolt with his right hand; then he opens the doors towards himself and steps out with his left foot first. More complex actions such as doing needle work or feeding chickens are also pantomimed<sup>21</sup>. In addition, actors also verbally identify what they are doing or where they are. For example, in the Yuan drama *Rescuing One of the Girls* (*Jiu Feng-chen*) by Guan Han Qing (关汉卿 ?—1300AD), the character says things like “here I am at their door”, “we are in Zheng-zhou [a city’s name] already”, or “here’s an inn. Let’s stop here”, to indicate the change of locations (Owen 1996:746, 760, 761).

Very few props<sup>22</sup> are used in Chinese opera. The generic ensemble of a table and two chairs can represent a dozen different settings. For example, a table with an incense burner can represent an altar or a temple, a table with books on it represents a study, while a table with drinking cups on it indicates a dining-room. A chair draped with a piece of silk becomes a loom, and a table and two chairs covered with a piece of fabric is transformed into a city wall. Furniture covered with yellow silk indicates an imperial

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<sup>19</sup> The discussion of the symbolic nature of Chinese operas is heavily borrowed from Huo (2005).

<sup>20</sup> “In ancient China, most doors were two-leaved with a bolt inside and lock hasp outside” (Huo 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Beijing opera *Shi Yu Zhuo* (拾玉镯).

<sup>22</sup> In Greek tragic theatre, a variety of props are used, e.g. Philoctetes’ bow, Ajax’s sword, Orestes’ lock of hair, the purple cloth which Agamemnon walks upon, the veil of Phaedra in the beginning scenes and the waxed tablet on her body in the final scenes, the statue of Artemis and Aphrodite in front of Hippolytus’ house, the wicker cradle in *Ion*, and the Bacchic paraphernalia of ivy wreath and thyrsus, and the bloody mask representing the head of Pentheus which Agave holds in *Bacchae* (Taplin 1978:78-100).

palace since golden yellow is the imperial color. And often a small object will be used to symbolize a large object<sup>23</sup>. For example, one table on top of another is used to represent a high mountain, while a table and two chairs can represent a bridge. A doll is used to represent a baby<sup>24</sup>, a horsewhip (a short bamboo or wooden stick tied with a few bands of tassels) is used to represent riding a horse<sup>25</sup>, an oar symbolizes rowing a boat, two banners bearing the design of a wheel flanking a character on both sides symbolize a carriage, and pale-blue banners suggest billowing waves. Weapons are used in battle scenes. Complex actions are represented by stylized and simplified movements. For example, a long journey is represented by the actor's circling the stage (圆场) one time, and a suicidal jump into a well is represented by jumping off a chair and going off the stage. The symbolic nature (or virtualization) of the Chinese opera enables it to stage complex stories stretched over different times and locations. For example, in the Beijing opera *The Orphan of the Zhaos*, the same stage sequentially represents the royal peach garden, the house of an official, the royal court, the chamber of the princess, the guarded gate of the royal palace, the courtroom, the royal cemetery, and again the house of an official. The story starts with the slaughter of the whole clan of the Zhao family and the survival of the orphan, and ends his revenge on his family's enemy fifteen years later. In

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<sup>23</sup> This is in tune with the Chinese aesthetics which emphasizes “presenting the big and the distant through the small and the near” (以小见大，以近通远). This principle of aesthetics is frequently seen in Chinese painting and architecture.

<sup>24</sup> For example, in Beijing opera *Si Lang Visiting His Mother* (四郎探母), the wife of Si Lang holds a doll in her arm to represent a baby.

<sup>25</sup> In the first act of *Hebei Bangzi Medea*, Jason gets on stage riding a horse represented by a whip (Tian 2006:8).

contrast, a Greek tragedy normally dramatizes one conflict occurring usually in one location<sup>26</sup> and spanning no more than a day's time. For example, in *Medea*, the story takes place in front of the house of Medea and all the dramatic actions take place in one single day. Dramatic action taking place in another location, such as the death of Creon and his daughter in the royal palace in *Medea*, is verbally described by a messenger, whereas the messenger's speech as a theatrical device is virtually absent in Chinese theatre<sup>27</sup>. The symbolic nature of Chinese opera also makes it possible to represent scenes which are not otherwise possible to represent on stage. For example, a night fight is enacted on stage in Beijing opera *Wu Song Da Dian* (武松打店). In this opera, the two leading characters fight on the bright-lit stage, while their movements are choreographed to indicate that they are fighting in the pitch darkness and cannot see each other. Thus the symbolic nature of the Chinese opera leaves ample space for imagination and artistic expression. This symbolic approach to representation is in accordance with traditional Chinese aesthetics,<sup>28</sup> which emphasizes the capture of the defining spirit of a subject rather than the meticulous reproduction of its shape or form (神似胜于形似). This aesthetics is exemplified in Chinese paintings, music and poetry (Huo 2005).

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<sup>26</sup> There are exceptions. For example, Aeschylus' *Eumenides* starts in the temple of Apollo, in Delphi, and ends in the temple of Athena, in Athens.

<sup>27</sup> In *Hebei Bangzi Medea*, the death of Creon and his daughter is briefly described by a messenger: "This language-centered method [of Greek original] does not work well with *hebei bangzi*'s acting-centered approach. Thus, in the adaptation, the Messenger is allowed only four short sentences to encapsulate the entire off-stage action" (Tian 2006:14).

<sup>28</sup> The opera aesthetics is also shown in its costumes. Even a beggar will be dressed in fine clean fabric, patched in different colors. Aeschylus' Xerxes in rags (*The Persians* 845-849) and Euripides' characters in ragged clothes (Aristophanes, *Frogs* 842) certainly would be out of place on Chinese stage.

The Chinese stage is also different from that of the Greek theatre. Chinese stages traditionally are square platforms divided into two parts by an embroidered curtain. The generic stage setup includes a table with two chairs in front of the curtain. Viewers are always seated south of the stage. All characters enter from the east and exit to the west, i.e., they enter from audience left and exit from audience right (Wiles 1997:138).

**195:** *“But no one has discovered how to stop, with music and many-toned songs, hateful sorrows out of which death and dreadful misfortunes topple the house.”* There is no complex sentence with clauses in Chinese grammar. Therefore, I have to break this complex sentence into two simple sentences in Chinese translation. The first sentence translates the main clause and the second sentence translates the subordinate clause. I also have to insert “*you know*” in the Chinese translation between the two sentences to connect them in thought.

**230-251:** one of the most famous speeches in antiquity.

- A similar sentiment is expressed by Procne apparently in one fragment of Sophocles’

*Tereus:*

Now separated (from my family), I am nothing. Many a time I have observed that in this case our sex, the female sex, is nothing. When we are children, in our father’s home, our life is the most pleasant in the world; young girls grow up in thoughtless delight. But when we reach maturity and intelligence, we are expelled, bought and sold, far away from the gods of our fathers and from our parents, some to barbarians, some to houses where everything is alien, others to houses where they meet with hostility. But all this,

when one night has joined us to our husband, we must acquiesce in, and pretend that all is well<sup>29</sup> (Knox 1968:289).

- Fear of marriage, Sophocles' *Trachiniae* 1-21:

There is an ancient proverb people tell  
that none can judge the life of any man  
for good or bad until that man is dead;  
but I, for my part, though I am still living,  
know well that mine is miserable and hard.  
Even while I was living with my father  
Oeneus in Pleuron I was plagued by fear  
of marriage more than any other woman.  
My suitor was the river Achelóüs,  
who took three forms to ask me of my father:  
a rambling bull once - then a writhing snake  
of gleaming colors - then again a man  
with ox-like face: and from his beard's dark shadows  
stream upon stream of water tumbled down.  
Such was my suitor. As I waited there  
I prayed my agony might end in death  
before I ever shared my bed with him.  
But later on, to my great joy, the glorious  
child of Alcmena, son of Zeus, arrived,  
and joined in combat with the river god,  
and freed me (Easterling 2004).

- Deianira on the care-free maiden life (*Trachiniae* 144-150):

Yes, a young life grows in those sheltered regions of its own, and the Sun-god's heat  
disturbs it not, nor rain, nor any wind. Rather it takes up a toilless existence amidst

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. footnote 8.

pleasure, until such time as she is called “wife” instead of “maiden”, and takes her portion of anxious thoughts in the night, fearing for husband or for children (Easterling 2004).

- A Poem by Fu Xuan (傅玄 217-278AD), a male poet and philosopher, titled “a Woeful Fate--- to the Tune of Mount Yuzhang” (豫章行---苦相篇), laments the lowly status of women and their unhappy married lives:

How sad it is to be a woman!!  
Nothing on earth is held so cheap.  
Boys stand leaning at the door  
Like Gods fallen out of Heaven.  
Their hearts brave the Four Oceans,  
The wind and dust of a thousand miles.  
No one is glad when a girl is born:  
By *her* the family sets no store.  
When she grows up, she hides in her room  
Afraid to look at a man in the face.  
No one cries when she leaves her home --  
Sudden as clouds when the rain stops.  
She bows her head and composes her face,  
Her teeth are pressed on her red lips:  
She bows and kneels countless times.  
She must humble herself even to the servants.  
*His* love is distant as the stars in Heaven,  
Yet the sunflower bends towards the sun.  
Their hearts are more sundered than water and fire--  
A hundred evils are heaped upon her.  
Her face will follow the years changes:  
Her lord will find new pleasures.  
They that were once like the substance and shadow

Are now as far from Hu as from Ch'in [*two distant places*] Yet Hu and Ch'in shall sooner meet  
Than they whose parting is like Ts'an and Ch'en [*two stars*]( Craig 1990:217).

苦相身为女，卑陋难再陈。  
男儿当门户，堕地自生神。  
雄心志四海，万里望风尘。  
女育无欣爱，不为家所珍。  
长大逃深室，藏头羞见人。  
垂泪适他乡，忽如雨绝云。  
低头和颜色，素齿结朱唇。  
跪拜无复数，婢妾如严宾。  
情合同云汉，葵藿仰阳春。  
心乖甚水火，百恶集其身。  
玉颜随年变，丈夫多好新。  
昔为形与影，今为胡与秦。  
胡秦时相见，一绝逾参辰。(Hong 2006:224-227)

**232-234: πόσιν πρίασθαι:** refers to the Greek custom of “buying” a husband with a dowry.

- Mastronarde points out the anachronism of the dowry system: “in the heroic world, a bride’s family is won over or compensated by gifts from the successful suitor” (Mastronarde 2002:210). But it is generally true that Euripides has “transported” his heroine from the heroic age to the fifth century classical times, when the dowry system was practiced.
- The institution of the dowry is not exactly applicable to Medea’s situation, but it is not an exaggeration of contemporary Athenian practice (cf. Attic orators on expensive dowries). As is pointed out by Foxhall (1989:32), the dowry is “the property which goes with a woman when she is married. Fundamentally, it is the basis of her maintenance and livelihood”. Cox (1998:76; 120) observes that the dowry usually consists of cash, movable items (jewels, clothing, furniture and plated ware) and sometimes land and houses. It may also include slaves (Cox 1998:193). In tragedy, slaves are said to be given

to daughters as part of the dowry. For example, in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the old man, the slave of Clytaemnestra, says that he was given to her by Clytaemnestra's father as part of her dowry upon her marriage to Agamemnon (χῶτι μ' ἐν ταῖς σαῖσι φερναῖς ἔλαβεν Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ, 869). A kingdom sometimes is referred to as a princess wife's dowry in tragedy. For example, in Euripides' *Orestes*, Apollo says to Menelaus that he should go and reign over the land of Sparta, keeping it as the dowry of his wife (ἐλθὼν δ' ἄνασσε Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονός, φερνὰς ἔχων δάμαρτος, 1661-1662). A large dowry bestows a certain power and freedom on the wife in her marital home. In Euripides' *Andromache*, Hermione claims that the large dowry her father Menelaus gives her enables her to speak freely (Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα δωρεῖται πατήρ πολλοῖς σὺν ἔδνοις, ὥστ' ἐλευθεροστομεῖν, 152-153).

The purpose of the dowry is to aid in finding a suitable husband for a daughter (Cox 1998:93). Viewed from the perspective of property transmission, dowry is a form of patrimonial inheritance received at a woman's marriage (Foxhall 1989:32). As Cox (1998: 117) observes, "brothers shared equally in the paternal estate, while daughters were given a dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance". Cox (1998:117) also observes that "dowries never exceeded one-third of the estate's value and rarely exceeded one-fifth". On average the dowries for elite families are valued around 30 to 40 minae (Cox 1998:75). The largest known dowry in Athenian history amounts to twenty talents. That is the dowry given by Hipponicus, who was worth around 200 talents, to his daughter Hipparete upon her marriage to Alcibiades (Cox 1998: 118). The dowries also serve as a protection of a wife's status in her new family, since Athenian laws mandated the return

of the dowry to the woman's natal family on the dissolution of her marriage by death or divorce (Cox 1998:119). Thus divorce carries with it economic consequences for men. This is best illuminated, in an ironic way, by the unsuccessful effort of Hipparete to divorce Alcibiades, as told by Plutarch (*Alcibiades* 8. 1-4). Hipparete tried to file a divorce with the Archon because of her husband's bad behavior in bringing home prostitutes, but Alcibiades forcibly carried her home because he could not afford to lose her large dowry (Foxhall 1989:38). The dowry is sometimes viewed negatively from a male perspective. A fragment from Euripides' play (fr. 502) says that the dowry enslaves men (Collard 2008). Plato shares this opinion and proposes to abolish dowry system: "in marrying and giving in marriage, no one shall give or receive any dowry at all" (*Laws* 5.742C). He further states that the cancellation of the dowry will free husbands from being slaves to money (*Laws* 6.774C): "concerning dowries it has been stated before, and it shall be stated again, that an equal exchange consists in neither giving nor receiving any gift, for all those who belong to this State have the necessities of life provided for them; and the result of this rule will be less insolence on the part of the wives and less humiliation and servility on the part of the husband because of money" (περὶ δὲ προικὸς εἴρηται μὲν καὶ πρότερον, εἰρήσθω δὲ πάλιν ὥς ἴσα ἀντὶ ἴσων ἐστὶν τὸ μήτε λαμβάνοντι μήτ' ἐκδιδόντι διὰ χρημάτων ἀπορίαν γηράσκειν τοὺς πένητας: τὰ γὰρ ἀναγκαῖα ὑπάρχοντά ἐστι πᾶσι τῶν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ πόλει, ὕβρις δὲ ἦττον γυναιξὶ καὶ δουλεία ταπεινὴ καὶ ἀνελεύθερος, Bury 1967). One objection to the institution of dowry thus lies in the objection to women having more power.

The downside of the dowry system is that a young girl cannot get married if she has no dowry (Lacey 1968:108). An inscription from Thasos (late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC) records that the polemarchs are to give the daughters of the fallen war heroes a certain amount of money as a dowry when they are 14 years old (Dillon 2000: 412-413). Thus a dowry is a necessity for girls to get married. The concept of buying a husband would sound strange to Chinese audiences. In ancient China, the groom's family would bring betrothal gifts (聘礼) to the bride's family and the bride's family would give her a dowry (Baber 1934:135). So the gift exchange is mutual, but the dowry provided by the bride's family is not as much of a pre-requisite for marriage as the betrothal gifts provided by the groom's family. An official (任延) from Eastern (Later) Han period (25-220 AD) is said to have made the officers in the county provide from their salaries betrothal gifts for the poor men to get married (“其贫无礼聘，令长吏以下各省奉禄以赈助之”，后汉书循吏传任延).

**235-247:** *κὰν τῷδ' ἄγὼν μέγιστος, ἢ κακὸν λαβεῖν ἢ χρηστόν* 235-6, and *ἡμῖν δ' ἀνάγκη πρὸς μίαν ψυχὴν βλέπειν* 247: here Medea complains about the uncertainty of getting a good or bad husband in an arranged marriage and about having to looking up to one soul in a marriage. Interestingly, in a fragment of a lost play by Euripides (fr. 402) a male character complains about the same problem as it relates to wives:

Laws are not well made concerning wives: the prosperous man should be having as many as possible (if his house could maintain them), so he could throw the bad one out of his home and be pleased at keeping the one who actually is good. Now, however, they look to

one wife, and risk much on the throw; for people take wives into their houses like ballast,  
with no experience of their ways (Collard 2008).

Thus a more balanced picture has emerged: arranged marriages are a risky business for both men and women.

**242:** **μη βία φέρων ζυγόν:** for the metaphor of marriage as yoke, cf. 673 (“we are not unyoked by marriage bed”). More examples: ἡ γάμοις με δεῖ μητρὸς ζυγῆναι in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* 825-6; κόρην γάρ, οἶμαι δ’ οὐκέτ’, ἀλλ’ ἐξευγμένην, παρεισδέδεγμαι in Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* 536-7; τίς ταύτην ἔξευξε in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Aulis* 698; γάμοις ἔξευξ’ Ἀδράστου παῖδα in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* 1366; πρῶτος τὸ παρθένειον ἐξεύξω λέχος in Euripides’ *Trojan Women* 676; ὁ Σεμέλην ζεύξας γάμοις in Euripides’ *Bacchae* 468. The yoking of young women in marriage was perceived as similar to the yoking or taming of wild animal (Seaford 1988). The “yoke” is translated as “fetters” (枷锁), since there is no comparable metaphor of marriage as “yoke” in Chinese. But a slight problem still remains: no literary reference to marriage as “fetters” seems to exist in traditional Chinese literature or philosophy. Metaphorical use of the word “fetters” in the Chinese language, often describing the bondage of slavery or the outdated traditional “feudal” system in China, probably began a century ago when enlightened Chinese intellectuals and *literati* longed for a new China to replace the old. Thus to a Chinese audience, a reference to marriage as “fetters” by Medea would sound very modern and revolutionary, while in fact Medea only uses it in its very conventional sense within the context of Greek thought and literature. In ancient China, the common attitude adopted by women toward marriage, which is arranged, is resigned acceptance.

“If you marry a chicken, stay with the chicken; if you marry a dog, stay with the dog” is a common folk saying. In literature, however, especially in poetry, there are numerous romantic metaphors for ideal marriages and a loving union between spouses. Often these metaphors are expressed as a longing or a wish to be together forever. For example, lovers or a loving wife and husband are often compared to “birds with mutual wings” (比翼鸟), which according to folklore have only one wing and one eye each and thus cannot fly unless they are joined together, or “trees with branches twined” (连理枝), which are said in the legend to be two lovers growing together. In his famous poem *The Everlasting Sorrow*, the poet Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846 AD) exalts the love between husband and wife by writing that “would that we were two birds with mutual wings in the heaven and two trees with branches twined on earth” (在天愿作比翼鸟, 在地愿为连理枝).

**248-9: λέγουσι δ' ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀκίνδυνον βίον ζῶμεν κατ' οἴκους, οἳ δὲ μάρνανται δορί:** The stereotypic view that women sit idly at home while men toil outside is also found in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*:

Orestes: μὴ 'λεγγε τὸν πονοῦντ' ἔσω καθημένη, 919 (Do not reproach him who labored while you sat at home).

Orestes: τρέφει δέ γ' ἀνδρὸς μόχθος ἡμένας ἔσω, 921 (The husband's toil supports those who sit at home).

As is pointed out by Mastronarde, “the traditional misogynistic view associates men with the toil and risk of war, athletics, politics, and agriculture and belittles women as idle consumers sitting safe at home” (2002:213, note 248-51). In Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (200), Eteocles says that outside things are a man's concern. In one of

Euripides' fragments (fr. 521) a character states that "a wife who stays at home is certain to be a good one, and one who spends time out of doors is certain to be worthless" (Collard 2008). Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (473-474) implies that ideally a woman is expected to "sit at home modestly like a maiden, neither distressing anyone nor stirring an inch". It is thus rather ironic that men complain that women sit at home while in fact they are the ones who dictate that women have to stay inside the house. It is even more ironic that they do not acknowledge or give credit to women who perform a wide range of tasks at home: from spinning, weaving, sewing the family's clothes, taking care of the sick and the old, and raising the young, to supervising the slaves in richer households. In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (16-19) a rare glimpse of women's chores at home is given. "It's hard for women, you know, to get out of the house", says one woman, "for one of us is pottering about her husband; another is getting the slave up; a third is putting her child asleep or washing it or feeding it". Women are also the family accountants, as *Lysistrata* rightly asserts (*Lysistrata* 495), who have always administered soundly the budget of all home-expenses for men (οὐ καὶ τᾶνδον χρήματα πάντως ἡμεῖς ταμειόμεν ὑμῖν;). The chorus of women in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (819-820) claims that women keep properties better than men. The picture is clear: women are busy at home, as attentive mothers and competent household managers. More importantly, women safeguard not only the welfare of the households, but also that of the state by bearing sons and sending them to fight for the *polis* --- a double burden, as *Lysistrata* points out (*Lysistrata* 589-590). The chorus of women in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* (830-

835) argues that women who have given birth to useful citizens like taxiarch or strategus for the city should be honored with front seats at women's festivals.

Fr. 494 of Euripides' play, a rare exception to the common male misogyny, praises women's contribution both in household management and in religious roles:

<Melanippe?> In fact they [women] are better than men, as I shall demonstrate.... They manage households, and save what is brought by sea within the home, and no house deprived of a woman can be tidy and prosperous. Now as for the dealings with the gods, which I consider of prime importance, we have a very great role in them. Women proclaim Loxias' mind in Phoebus' halls, and by Dodona's holy foundations, besides the sacred oak, womankind conveys the thoughts of Zeus to those Greeks who want to know it. Those rituals, too, which are performed for the Fates and the Nameless Goddesses are not open to men, but are promoted by women entirely. That is how the rights of women stand in dealings with the gods. Why then should womankind be denigrated? Will the vain censures of men not cease and those excessively thinking if just one is found to be bad, to condemn all women alike? For my part I will make a distinction: on the one hand nothing is worse than a bad woman, but on the other nothing excels a good one in goodness. The natures of each are different (Collard 2008:595-596).

A female voice against the male misconception of women's idleness is heard from a Chinese Yu opera (豫剧) called *Hua Mu Lan* (《花木兰》<sup>30</sup>). In this opera, a fellow soldier complains to Mulan that it is unfair that men do all the hard work while women sit idly at home (为什么倒霉的事都叫咱男人来干? 女子们在家中坐享清闲。) To this Mulan makes a powerful defense on women's contribution to the war and family life:

Who says women sit idly at home? Men go to war at the frontier, women spin and weave  
at home. In the day they go and work in the field, in the evening they make cloth from

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<sup>30</sup> The story derives from *The Ballad of Mulan*, a narrative poem describing a girl Mulan who disguised herself as a man to fight in her father's place. Mulan supposedly lived during Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534AD). The script of Yu opera *Hua Mu Lan* was written in 1951, two years after the foundation of new Communist China which promotes women's equality and liberation.

cotton on the loom. Only owing to women's hard work day and night, the soldiers have food and clothes. If you do not believe me, just take a look at ourselves: the shoes and socks on our feet, and clothes and cloaks on our bodies, are sewn by women thread by thread, needle by needle. There are also many brave heroines who achieve military feat fighting for their country. Who says women are not as capable as men?<sup>31</sup>

谁说女子享清闲？男子打仗到边关，女子纺织在家园。白天去种地，夜晚来纺棉。

不分昼夜辛勤把活干，将士们才能有这吃和穿。恁要不相信哪，请往这身上看。咱

们的鞋和袜，还有衣和衫。千针万线可都是她们连哪！有许多女英雄，也把功劳

建，为国杀敌是代代出英贤，这女子们哪一点不如儿男？

**250-251: ὥς τρις ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα στῆναι θέλοιμ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ:** "I would rather stand by the shield thrice than give birth once". The pains of childbirth are often alluded to in tragedies, but the grave danger of losing one's life in childbirth is mostly left unspoken. Women's main role in ancient Greece is to bear legitimate children for men, i.e. for the *polis*. But the fact that in bringing forth lives women are risking their own is often under-appreciated by men and the *polis*. Medea's claim here is not an overstatement because the birthing chair is a battle field where women suffer unbearable pain and often die in difficult and complicated childbirth. Theophrastus in his misogynistic treatise *On Marriage*, as quoted by St. Jerome in his *Against Jovinianus*, states that a good wife is hard to find and even if a man marries a good wife, he has to "share her groans in childbirth, and suffer torments when she is in danger" (Rogers 1966:25). Although

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<sup>31</sup> Chinese translation is rendered by me. This is a very well known aria in China.

Theophrastus single-mindedly focuses on how *a man* would feel when his wife goes into labor, at least he acknowledges that childbirth is painful and dangerous for the mothers.

Birth pangs are often mentioned in tragedy and Homer in association with a mother's sufferings in childbirth. Medea, before she kills her children, laments that she raised her children in vain after having toiled and endured the "cruel pangs of birth" (στερρὰς ἐνεγκοῦς' ἐν τόκοις ἀλγηδόνας, 1031). In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the chorus sings that Semele gave birth to Dionysus in forced "pangs of labor" (ἐν ὠδίνων λοχίαις 88-89), at the stroke of Zeus' thunderbolt, and left her life behind. In a "realistic" reading, this myth may symbolize the death of a mother at childbirth. In Sophocles' *Electra*, Clytaemnestra, in her speech of self-defense to Electra, emphasizes the pain she suffered in giving birth to the daughter whom her husband killed, "for this father of yours, whom you constantly bewail, alone of all the Greeks had the heart to sacrifice your sister to the gods—he, who, when sowing his seed, felt none of the pains I did when I gave birth (ἐπεὶ πατήρ σὸς οὗτος, ὃν θρηνεῖς ἀεί, τὴν σὴν ὀμαιμον μοῦνος Ἑλλήνων ἔτλη θῦσαι θεοῖσιν, οὐκ ἴσον καμῶν ἐμοὶ λύπης, ὃς ἔσπειρ', ὥσπερ ἡ τίκτους' ἐγὼ ἐμοί, 530-533). The birth pangs are perceived as painful even by men, although with some understatement regarding the extent of the pain. In Homer's *Iliad* (11. 269-272), a battle wound suffered by Agamemnon is described as being as bad as the birth pangs suffered by women in travail.

The birth of a child is sometimes used in tragedy as a part of a plot to kill. In Euripides' *Electra*, Electra, in order to lure her mother Clytaemnestra to her house to be

killed by Orestes, pretends that she has given birth to a son and invites her mother for the tenth-day sacrifice for her son. Electra thus engineers her mother's death by faking childbirth. In comedy, fake pregnancy and childbirth are a subject for parody and laughter. In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (742-755), a woman, sex-starved while on a sex strike, fakes pregnancy by putting a helmet on her belly and pretends that delivery is imminent so that she can get away to go home to her husband. Upon being questioned why her belly is so hard, she answers that she is carrying a male child. But the reality of the unbearable pain and danger of childbirth is no laughing matter. The death of women in childbirth must have been a frequent occurrence to be so often commemorated. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1462-1467) alludes to the custom of dedicating the robes of women who died at childbirth to Iphigenia:

Athena: "you, Iphigenia, must bear the temple key for this goddess [Artemis] around the hallowed stairs of Brauron, and there you will be buried after your death, and they will dedicate adornment of robes to you, finely-woven garments which women who have died in childbirth leave in their homes" (my translation).

Scores of funerary monuments, steles and white-ground oil flasks called lekythoi are preserved which depict women after labor, believed to commemorate maternal death in childbirth (Demand 2004:122). Generally women are depicted as seated, but in a sinking or collapsing posture with loosened hair. A swaddled infant is sometimes depicted. The inscription of the late painted stele of Hediste in the Volos museum expresses the emotional impact of such loss of life:

The Fates spun on their spindles then for Hediste their painful thread, when the bride went to meet the pains of labor. Miserable one! She will not embrace her infant, or wet the lips of her baby with her breast, for one light [of day] looked down on both, and then Fortune coming to both alike carried the two away to one tomb (Demand 2004:126).

Risky as it is, childbirth is a normal part of women's lives. It is estimated that each fertile woman bore at least six children (with an average of 4.3 surviving children) in her life time, taking into account factors such as rates of infertility and infant mortality and the population replacement required due to the war (Demand 2004:21). At childbirth, women were attended by a midwife and a doctor may have been present for the difficult or complicated births (Demand 2004:19). Pain-killers were used, including the opium poppy, henbane, and the root of white mandrake, all of which have sedative and narcotic properties (Demand 2004:20). The often fatal afflictions suffered by women include puerperal infections, malaria, and tuberculosis. Judging from symptoms such as chills, fever starting a couple of days postpartum, change in lochial flow, tender belly, and pain in hips and flanks, as described in the Hippocratic *Epidemics and Diseases of Women*, Greek women did suffer and die from puerperal infections, often diagnosed as uterine inflammation or bad lochial flow by Hippocratic doctors (Demand 2004:71-80). Judging from symptoms such as fever starting before the labor, black-colored urine, and abdominal pain as described in the *Epidemics*, Greek women suffered from malaria which had a marked resurgence in fifth century Greece causing miscarriage, stillbirth and maternal death after delivery (Demand 2004:81-85). The devastation wrought by malaria on pregnant women is recorded in the *Epidemics* (1.10):

Many women were seized, but fewer than of the men, and there were fewer deaths among them. But most of them had difficult parturition, and after labor they were taken ill, and these most especially died, as, for example, the daughter of Telebolus died on the sixth day after delivery.

The barren pangs of women (τόκοισί τε ἀγόνους γυναικῶν 26) described in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* ("the barren pangs of women, with the Fever-god swooping down, is ravaging the city" 25-26) are believed to be caused by malaria (Demand 2004:84).

The absence of modern medicine and technology such as antibiotics, blood transfusion and cesarean section, coupled with the Hippocratic practices of medicine, such as the use of cathartics, succussion, and manual interference in delivery, ultimately contributed to complications and death in childbirth (Demand 2004:86). The young age of mothers (fourteen and above) is another culprit leading to the high maternal and infant mortalities. As observed by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1335a), "early childbearing produces small and weak infants and difficult and dangerous labor for the mother" (Demand 2004:18). The practice of marrying girls off young nonetheless persisted, so that "their bodies alike and their minds would be delivered to the future husband pure and undefiled", as argued by Plutarch (Rogers 1966:28).

As is to be expected from a society accustomed to ignore the contribution of its female members, the male tries to devalue the role of women in procreation. In the *Thaetetus* (150b-151a), Socrates claims to be the midwife of ideas for young men:

My art of midwifery is in general like theirs; the only difference is that my patients are men, not women, and my concern is not with the body but with the soul that is in travail of birth....The many admirable truths [my patients] bring to birth have been discovered by themselves from within. But the delivery is heaven's work and mine...those who seek my company have the same experience as a woman with child; they suffer the pains of labor and, by night and day, are full of *distress far greater than a woman's* (Demand 2004:135-136).

Here Socrates considers the “imagined” birth pain of ideas suffered by the young men greater than that of women in actual childbirth, thus enhancing his role of midwife of ideas above that of a real midwife for women. As argued by Demand (2004:139), men devalue women's role in reproduction by inventing and abrogating “true” or “higher” birthing to themselves. But Socrates seems to ignore the fact that he would be rendered superfluous if women did not give birth to those young men in the first place! Aristophanes ridicules Socrates and his being a midwife of ideas by having his disciple at his thinking-shop claim the miscarriage of an idea at the sudden knock of the door (*Clouds* 135-137; Demand 2004:136).

In Chinese, giving birth is traditionally called “passing through the ghost-guarded pass” (过鬼门关). In folklore, “the ghost-guarded pass” is believed to be a pass the dead have to pass before reaching Hades (冥府). Thus giving birth is perceived as a near-death experience.

**269-270:** ὁρῶ δὲ καὶ Κρέοντα...στείχοντα: the chorus, giving his identity, introduces Creon to the audience by saying that it sees Creon coming. The stage directions are thus written

into the dialogue, a common feature of Greek tragedy (Taplin 1978:14). The identity of characters is also revealed in dialogue. For example, after Aegeus appears unannounced and unanticipated, Medea says, “greetings to you as well, Aegeus, son of wise Pandion” (665-666). The audience is thus informed of the new character’s identity. In Beijing opera, it is a convention that any new character, even a minor one, identifies himself by full name (and sometimes with added information of age and profession) on his first entrance. The opening speech of Dionysus (“I, Dionysus, son of Zeus, have come to this land of Thebes”) in Euripides’ *Bacchae* comes close to the Chinese theatrical tradition of self-introduction.

**333-334:** πόνων in 333 is picked up in 334 in what is called “repetition of the same word” in stichomythia (line-for-line dialogue). Stichomythia, with its brevity, forcefulness and cleverness, often highlights the agonistic nature of a dialogue. Medea, by repeating the word “troubles”, clarifies that she is the victim here and is thus more justified in complaining of troubles and toils. πόνων is translated as “troubles” (麻烦) in Chinese and the verbal echoing of the word in the dialogue is reflected in the Chinese translation. A Chinese audience is no stranger to stichomythia and distichomythia in plays. The famous Beijing opera *Wu Jia Po* (武家坡) abounds in such agonistic and narrative dialogue between the two leading characters, a husband and wife who re-unite after eighteen years.

**385.** φαρμάκοις: murder by poison seems to be an expertise of women, as Medea implies here. In Greek tragedy, a poisoned robe (or just a robe) is depicted as a device used by women

to avenge their husbands' betrayal. Medea uses a poisoned robe to kill Jason's new family, Creon and his daughter. Deianira unintentionally kills her husband Heracles with a poisoned robe (Sophocles *Trachiniae*). Clytaemnestra (Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 633-635) kills Agamemnon by first enveloping him with a cunningly wrought robe (δαιδάλῳ πέπλῳ) and then cutting him down with a sword. A fragment of Euripides (fr. 464, *Cretan Women*) categorically associates wives with poisoning and plotting: "go on and get married, get married, and then die either through poison or plot from your wife!" (Collard 2008:525). Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazousae* (430) parodies this association of women with poison in tragedy by making one woman propose to get rid of Euripides "by poison or some other plot" (ἢ φαρμάκοισιν ἢ μιᾷ γέ τῳ τέχνῃ).

In Chinese operas, putting poison into food and drink to murder people is committed both by women and men. In Beijing opera *Yu Tang Chun* (玉堂春), a wife takes a lover and murders her husband by serving him poisoned noodle soup but claims that the concubine has done it; in another Beijing opera *Si Jing Shi* (四进士) a woman poisons her brother-in-law but claims that he was killed by his wife. In two other well-known Beijing operas *Wu Pen Ji* (乌盆记) and *Dou E Yuan* (窦娥冤), the murders by poison (i.e. poisoned wine and poisoned soup) are committed by men.

**502:** **πατὴρ δόμος:** "father's home" is translated as "mother's home" in Chinese. In Greek, the natal home is referred to as "father's home". In Chinese married women refer to their natal home as "mother's home" (娘家) and their marital home as "mother-in-law's

home” (婆家), although ancient China was patriarchal, patrilinear and patrilocal as was ancient Greece. This naming of homes through references to mothers is in part the result of Confucian ethics, which sanctify the absolute authority of mothers vis-à-vis their female offspring and daughters-in-law. This virtually puts the eldest female of a family at the head of half of the household, the household of women. Mothers and mothers-in-law wield tremendous power in family dynamics because Confucian filial piety demands filial respect and obedience to both fathers and mothers. A wife can be divorced for not showing enough obedience to her parents-in-law (不顺父母). Husbands sometimes repudiate their wives willingly, or unwillingly, when ordered to do so by their tyrannical mothers who dislike their daughters-in-law for no compelling reason. This practice is sanctioned by *Neize of Li Ji (Book of Rites)*, which says that a wife, though loved by her husband, can be repudiated if disliked by her in-laws, while a wife, disliked by her husband, but liked by her in-laws, cannot<sup>32</sup>.

The mother-in-law is almost invisible in ancient Greek literary sources, although Socrates is said to have listed “the garrulous tongue of the mother-in-law” as one of the drawbacks of marriages, according to Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Rogers 1966:26). The mother-in-law does have a strong presence in modern Greek village life where young married couples live with the husband’s parents and the wife is expected to be obedient to her mother-in-law (Demand 2004:15).

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<sup>32</sup> 《礼记·内则》有言：“子甚宜其妻，父母不说，出；子不宜其妻，父母曰：‘是善事我’”。

522-525: ἀλλ' ὥστε ναὸς κεδνὸν οἰακοστρόφον ἄκροισι λαίφους κρασπέδοις

ὑπεκδραμεῖν τὴν σὴν στόμαργον... γλωσσαλγίαν: “but that I, like a careful helmsman of a ship, [escaping a storm by] using the very fringes of the sail, must escape the incessant storm of your words”<sup>33</sup>. This is one of the many nautical metaphors used in the play (cf. 258, 278-279, 768-771 etc.). These are appropriate since Greeks are a sea-faring people and nautical metaphors can be readily understood by the audience. Nautical metaphor is also seen in Sophocles’ *Ajax* (351-352). After having realized what he has done in his god-sent madness, Ajax compares his situation of sudden disgrace to that of a sailor caught by a murderous storm: “see how great a wave has just now crested over and surrounded me, set on by a murderous storm!” ( μ' οἶον ἄρτι κῦμα φοινίας ὑπὸ ζάλης ἀμφίδρομον κυκλεῖται).

Such nautical metaphors may present some challenges to the majority of Chinese audiences; since the traditional mainstream economy is being land-based, Chinese literary language is not as rich in sea-faring terms and metaphors. But, on the other hand, rivers and river transportation are a common part of life and imagery, metaphors and idioms based on rivers and boats are common. For example, in the Yuan drama *Rescuing One of the Girls*, one courtesan cautions her friend about marriage, saying that if it turns out she has married a bad man, her “boat will be in the mid-river then, too late to fix the leaks”<sup>34</sup> (Owen 1996:751). In the Beijing opera *Wu Long Yuan* (《乌龙院》), a

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<sup>33</sup> In Sophocles’ *Ajax* (1148-1149), Menelaus says to Teucer that only a great storm coming from a small cloud would extinguish his raging speech.

<sup>34</sup>“船到江心补漏迟”《救风尘》。

character expresses regret for his action by saying that he made a mistake in boarding the bottomless boat (失足上了无底船). In another Beijing opera *Wen Zhao Guan* (《文昭关》), the leading character Wu Yuan (伍员), on the run from his enemies, compares himself to a rudderless boat in the waves (俺好比波浪中失舵舟船).

**573-75:** “*For mortals ought to beget children from some other source, and the female race should not exist. Thus there would not be any evil among humans*”. This is a typical misogynistic view of Athenian men of the time: women are referred to as an evil (κακὸν 575) and are perceived as a separate race from men (θῆλυ...γένος 574). The wish that the female race – referred to as “a fraudulent evil” by Hippolytus – should not exist is reiterated by Hippolytus who further proposes that men should be able to purchase offspring by depositing money in gods’ shrine (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 616-624).

Misogyny, a hostile and negative attitude toward the female sex as an undifferentiated social group, is a universal phenomenon found throughout human history in all parts of the world, from civilized pre-modern Europe and Asia to modern day “primitive” societies in New Guinea and Amazon basin (Gilmore 2001:2). Misogyny as a cultural phenomenon needs to be differentiated from “patriarchal traditionalism”. As is rightly pointed out by Gilmore (2001:13), “patriarchal traditionalism” defines “the women’s proper place and social status within a broader constellation of political beliefs”, while “misogyny, although having political ramifications, is essentially an affective or psychological phenomenon based on passion, not thought”. To put it simply, restricting women’s lives strictly inside the house is not considered misogyny here, but assuming that the female sex is evil and inferior by nature is.

Misogynistic views are socially accepted and found in Greek myth, literature, philosophy, science and law codes. According to Hesiod, Zeus gave Pandora to mankind as a punishment for the theft of fire by Prometheus for the benefit of men (*Works and Days*, 50-59). Pandora was the first woman from whom came the race of women and female kind (ἐκ τῆς γὰρ γένος ἐστὶ γυναικῶν θηλυτεράων, *Theogony* 590). She was a work of art created by all the major Olympian gods (60-82): Hephaestus fashioned her out of earth; Athena taught her needlework and weaving and dolled her up; Aphrodite made her seductive and sexually desirable; and Hermes gave her a shameless mind, a deceitful nature and crafty words. Having been sent down to live with men as “a sheer, hopeless guile” (δόλον αἰπὺν ἀμήχανον, *Works and Days* 83), “a beautiful evil” (καλὸν κακὸν, *Theogony* 585), and “a great bane” (πῆμα μέγ’ , *Theogony* 593), Pandora was made responsible for releasing (by opening the jar she brought) a plethora of evils upon the earth which did not exist before: hard toil, sickness, and plague (*Works and Days* 90-104). Thus from their origin, women are perceived by men as “a beautiful evil”. To Hesiod, women are evil first of all because they are “freeloaders” who eat up men’s property. They are like “drones which stay at home all day” and “reap the toil of others into their own bellies” (*Theogony* 598-599). Second, women are deceitful. “Do not let a lewd woman coax, wheedle and deceive you: she is after your barn. The man who trusts womankind trusts deceivers”, advised Hesiod (*Works and Days* 373-375). But women are a necessary evil, Hesiod concedes, because a man, unwed, will end up dying alone with his property divided by his kinsmen (*Theogony* 603-607). To avoid that fate, he recommends marriage for men: “for a man wins nothing better than a good wife, and,

again, nothing worse than a bad and greedy one” (*Works and Days* 702-703). Thus, generally speaking, Hesiod’s view of women is utilitarian: women are useful in providing men with heirs for the inheritance of property. Other than that, he sees women as liabilities rather than assets, who consume men’s wealth instead of contributing to it. Hesiod’s view of women is undoubtedly shaped by his uneasy status as a practical but poverty-stricken subsistence farmer struggling to eke a living from the land.

Semonides of Amorgos, an iambic poet of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, re-iterates Hesiod’s misogynistic and utilitarian view of women in his satiric poem on women (Poem 7). Like Hesiod, he considers women a different race: “from the beginning the god made the mind of a woman a thing apart” (**Χωρὶς** γυναικὸς θεὸς ἐποίησεν νόον τὰ πρῶτα, 1-2). As is pointed out by O’Higgins (2003:78), the poem is “premised on a sense of women as profoundly alien”, with a mind different from that of men. According to Semonides, the God made women from seven animals and two elements: the hog, the fox, dog, earth, the sea, the donkey, the weasel, the mare, the monkey and the bee. They respectively represent nine types of women, each defined by a dominant negative personality trait<sup>35</sup>: the dirty, the cunning, the gossipy and talkative, the stupid, the capricious, the stubborn (and with a voracious appetite for food and sex), the repellent (and sex-crazed), the vain (who are self-absorbed in their appearance, not in work or sex), the ugly (and conniving), and the industrious. Of these nine types of women, Semonides praises only the industrious bee-type woman: she does not sit around talking about sex like other women

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<sup>35</sup> With one exception: being industrious of course is not a negative trait.

(90-91), and life flourishes and prospers under her care (θάλλει δ' ὑπ' αὐτῆς καπαέζεται βίος, 85). His blame and praise of women is again utilitarian: the bee-type woman is prized for her contribution to her husband's household. But such women are exceptional (92-3), Semonides concludes. Women in general are the greatest of all evils (μέγιστον...κακόν, γυναῖκας 96-7): "She is a source of evil, especially to her husband, even if she seems to be a help in some ways. No one manages to spend a whole day cheerfully if he has a wife." (97-100).

Such blind condemnation of the female race as evil is not found in Homer. Rather, the distinction is made between good women and "bad" women. In the *Odyssey* (24. 193-200), the ghost of Agamemnon praises the faithful and virtuous Penelope while condemning his wife Clytaemnestra for killing him, her wedded husband. While aware of the difference between the two women, Agamemnon nonetheless goes on to say that Clytemnestra will give a bad name (χαλεπήν ... φῆμιν 201) to all women, even the good ones (24. 200-202). Surprisingly, Helen, whose face launched a thousand ships (*Iliad* 3.136-7 and 156-7; *Odyssey* 11.438, etc.), is not depicted as a shamelessly destructive femme fatale in Homer's *Iliad*. Instead, as Roisman (2006:2) argues, Helen is portrayed as "a captive and possession in a world in which women are possessions", and a woman "subjected to the wishes of the gods in a world ruled by the gods". Priam exonerates her ("you are not culpable in my eyes", 3.164), and Hector blames Paris for the war (3.39).

Euripides' reputation as a misogynist seems to have started with Aristophanes' comedies<sup>36</sup>. In his *Thesmophoriazusae* (383-432), the women of Athens assemble at the festival of the Thesmophoria to pass judgment on Euripides for slandering women in his tragedies (ὅτι τὴ τραγωδοῦ καὶ κακῶς αὐτὰς λέγω, 85). The first woman who speaks at the assembly brings the following accusations against Euripides:

If I have asked to speak, may the goddesses bear me witness, it was not for sake of ostentation. But I have long been pained to see us women insulted by this Euripides, this son of the green-stuff woman, who loads us with every kind of indignity. Has he not hit us enough, calumniated us sufficiently, wherever there are spectators, tragedians, and a chorus? Does he not style us adulterous, lecherous, bibulous, treacherous, and garrulous? Does he not repeat that we are all vice, that we are the curse of our husbands? So that, directly they come back from the theatre, they look at us doubtfully and go searching every nook, fearing there may be some hidden lover. We can do nothing as we used to, so many are the false ideas which he has instilled into our husbands. Is a woman weaving a garland for herself? It's because she is in love. Does she let some vase drop while going or returning to the house? Her husband asks her in whose honour she has broken it: "It can only be for that Corinthian stranger." Is a maiden unwell? Straightway her brother says, "That is a colour that does not please me." And if a childless woman wishes to substitute one, the deceit can no longer be a secret, for the neighbours will insist on being present at her delivery. Formerly the old men married young girls, but they have been so calumniated that none think of them now, thanks to that line of his: "A woman is the tyrant of the old man who marries her." Again, it is because of Euripides that we are incessantly watched, that we are shut up behind bolts and bars, and that dogs are kept to frighten off the adulterers. Let that pass; but formerly it was we who had the care of the food, who fetched the flour from the storeroom, the oil and the wine; we can do it no more. Our husbands now carry little Spartan keys on their persons, made with three

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<sup>36</sup> In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (283), the chorus of the old men claims that women are hateful both to gods and Euripides. In another passage (368-369) it says, "there is no man wiser than the poet Euripides: no creature is as shameless as women" (οὐκ ἔστ' ἀνὴρ Εὐριπίδου σοφώτερος ποιητής: οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω θρέμμι' ἀναιδέες ἔστιν ὥς γυναῖκες).

notches and full of malice and spite. Formerly it sufficed to purchase a ring marked with the same sign for three obols, to open the most securely sealed-up door! but now this pestilent Euripides has taught men to hang seals of worm-eaten wood about their necks. My opinion, therefore, is that we should rid ourselves of our enemy by poison or by any other means, provided he dies. That is what I announce publicly; as to certain points, which I wish to keep secret, I propose to record them on the secretary's minutes (O'Neil 1938).

Euripides' reputation as a woman-hater is generally regarded by modern critics as undeserved, as is pointed out by Henderson and McManus (1985:6): "Although Euripides showed more empathy for women than any other ancient writer, many of his lines out of context sound misogynistic; only relatively modern critics have been able to rescue him from his centuries-old reputation as a woman-hater." A fragment from Euripides (fr. 493) condemns misogyny as irrational: "hatred of womankind is a most grievous thing. Those who have fallen bring disgrace on those who have not, and the bad ones share their censure with the good" (Collard 2008:595).

An interesting feature of misogyny in Greek literature, written by men of course, is that women are presented as confirming male prejudices by referring to themselves as evil. For example, Helen in *the Iliad* (6.344) refers to herself as "a dog, evil-contriving and abhorred" (κυνὸς κακομηχάνου ὀκρυοέσεως) in her conversation with Hector. Helen is undoubtedly acknowledging her shared guilt in triggering the war, but her self-deprecation as "evil-contriving" probably reflects the general stereotype of women as evil. In a similar vein, Medea also refers women as evil-doers when revealing her plan of revenge to the chorus: "Besides, we are women, most hopeless when it comes to good deeds, but cleverest contrivers of all evils (πρὸς δὲ καὶ πεφύκαμεν γυναῖκες, ἐς μὲν ἔσθλ' ἀμηχανώταται, κακῶν δὲ πάντων τέκτονες σοφώταται, 407-409). Again in her fake

reconciliation with Jason, Medea asks his magnanimous forgiveness for her anger earlier: “But we are what we are --- I will not call us a bane --- women. So you should not make yourself similar to us in evil things, nor should you match folly with folly” (ἀλλ’ ἐσμὲν οἷόν ἐσμεν, οὐκ ἐρῶ κακόν, γυναῖκες. οὐκ οὐν χρῆν σ’ ὁμοιοῦσθαι κακοῖς, οὐδ’ ἀντιτείνειν νήπι’ ἀντὶ νηπίων, 889-891). In Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*, Mnesilochus, Euripides’ father-in-law, disguises himself as a woman and says the following in defense of Euripides at the assembly of women: why should we censure Euripides, if he knows and speaks of two or three of our faults, when we have a thousand (474-475)? He then goes on to list the evil things “she” herself and other women do, such as having lovers and procuring babies to pass off as their own (476-519), concluding in the end that women do suffer no more than they deserve at Euripides’ hands. His ill-talk of women is not well-received by his female audience and ultimately blows his cover<sup>37</sup>. Such references to women as evil by female characters in the male-authored works seem to imply that the misogynistic clichés are so widespread and socially accepted that women themselves are forced to adopt them, at least in literature.

Unfavorable views of women are also found in scientific and ethical writings. Aristotle (384-322 BC) asserts and validates the biological, psychological, characteristic, and moral inferiority of female to male in his writings on biology, ethics and politics. According to Aristotle, the female is a mutilated male (*Generation of Animals*

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<sup>37</sup> The real irony, of course, is that Mnesilochus is male, and his “self-confession” about the corruptness of women turns out to be a veiled attack on women. My point, however, is that in male-authored literature, it is acceptable to present women as aware of how “evil” they are.

2.3.737a27-28). Women have smaller brains than men (*Parts of Animals* 2.7.653a28-9) and also fewer teeth (*History of Animals* 2.3.501b19-21). Women have less control over bodily appetites (*Nichomachean Ethics* 7.7.1150b19-21). Women also display more negative personality traits: “a woman is more jealous, more complaining, more scolding and more apt to fight. The female is more dispirited and more despondent than the male, more shameless and more lying, readier to deceive and possessing a better memory<sup>38</sup>” (*History of Animals* 8[9].1.608b8-13; Mayhew 2004:93). Such disparaging assertions concerning women have earned Aristotle the title of “one of the fiercest misogynist of all times” (Keuls 1993:405), and his biology is called “both misogynist and silly” by Nussbaum (1998:249). However, on closer examination, some of Aristotle’s remarks on women are not as misogynistic as they may seem at first glance. For example, when Aristotle claims that the female is a mutilated or deformed male, he means that the female does not “produce the ‘principle of soul’ (sperm), but only the material required for reproduction”, as is pointed out by Bradshaw (1991:568). Aristotle, like most scientists in ancient world, is ignorant of the role which women’s ova play in human reproduction. He regards women as merely a receptacle of men’s seeds and a provider of nourishment for the seeds. The idea that the father is the sole parent is also expressed in tragedy. In Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* Apollo states that the mother is not a child’s parent but only the nurse of the newly implanted seed (658-659). In Euripides’ *Orestes*, Orestes says: “my father begot me and your daughter gave me birth, having received the seed from another

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<sup>38</sup> By “a better memory”, Aristotle means that “females are petty and thus more likely to hold a grudge or not forget a perceived slight” (Mayhew 2004:96).

like a field; for without a father no child would ever be born. So I reasoned that I ought to stand by the author of my being rather than her who merely undertook to rear me” (552-556). Thus to Greek men, women are nothing more than incubators for their life-giving seeds. In myth, sometimes even the role of the incubator is usurped from women by men. The birth of Athena from Zeus’ head and the carrying of the fetus of Dionysus in Zeus’ thigh are good examples of this male hubris and ignorance. Regarding Aristotle’s claim that women have smaller brains than men, Mayhew points out that Aristotle makes no connection between the brain and cognitive functions (2004:71). Aristotle believes that the brain functions to regulate the temperature of the heart (*Parts of Animals* 2.7.652b17-28), while the heart does the thinking (*Parts of Animals* 2.10.656a15-35). Although Aristotle does not imply that women have inferior intelligence or are incapable of reason, he does claim that “the female lacks the authority to carry out her own deliberations” (*Pol.* 1260a; Bradshaw 570), and thus women (wives) need to be ruled by men (husbands) permanently in a political manner <sup>39</sup>(*Pol.* 1259a).

Therefore Aristotle is guilty of justifying women’s subordinate social status by their biological “deficiencies”. His denigrating remarks on the characters of women, harking back to the satire of Semonides, also sound more gender-biased than “scientific”. Aristotle is thus a misogynist not in that he accepts and repeats the popular negative beliefs about women widespread in his time, but in that he passes these beliefs as

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<sup>39</sup> This is similar to what Aristotle says earlier in the same work: “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled” (*Politics* 1254b13).

“science”. On the other hand, the fact that misogynistic views are found in scientific writings highlights how pervasive and widespread misogyny is in ancient Greece. Cicero regards Greek misogyny as caused by gynophobia, a fear of women (*Tusculanae Questiones* book 3, chapter 11). This fear of women is also reflected in Athenian law. As is pointed out by Keuls (1993:322),

Under a statute attributed to Solon and perhaps really initiated by him, virtually any legal action undertaken by a man was invalid if it could be shown to have been conceived “under the influence of a woman” or “through the persuasion of a woman”.

This is showcased by Demosthenes’ speech 46.16, where Demosthenes states that a man who makes decisions “under the influence of a woman” is legally incompetent, as are the sick, the drugged, or those diminished by old age, madness or other constraints (νοσοῦντα δὲ ἢ φαρμακῶντα ἢ γυναικὶ πειθόμενον ἢ ὑπὸ γήρωσ ἢ ὑπὸ μανιῶν ἢ ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης τινὸς καταληφθέντα ἄκυρον κελεύουσιν εἶναι οἱ νόμοι).

Like Greek misogyny, Chinese misogyny is pervasive and socially accepted. Chinese misogyny, as is pointed out by McLaren (1994:6), ultimately derives from traditional cosmology:

In very early times sexual congress was viewed as the union of opposites, the *yin* or female principle and the *yang* or male principle. The *yin* was associated with receptivity and passivity and was symbolized by such things as darkness, water, the moon, moisture and clouds. The two were conceived of as complementary, but in the course of time they came to be placed in a hierarchy in which *yin* was lower than *yang*.

Literary works, predominantly male-authored, often voice biased attitudes and opinions of women. Confucius, who rarely talks about women, has one unflattering remark on woman’s character. He says that only women and petty-minded (or lowly-

born) people are very difficult to deal with; if you are friendly with them they become obstreperous, and if you keep your distance they resent it (*Analects* 17.25<sup>40</sup>). Such subjective generalization about women as petty-minded is widely accepted. Another feature of Chinese misogyny is the negative portrayal of woman as femme fatale in literature and historiography. The femme fatale is often described as “one who ruins city and state” because her outstanding beauty captivates kings and emperors (McLaren 1994:1). This label comes from a poem by Li Yan Nian, a musician in Han period (李延年 ?- 90BC): “in the north is a lady fair, she stands alone beyond compare. One glance from her could topple a city, another glance could topple a state” (北方有佳人，绝世而独立。一顾倾人城，再顾倾人国。). The idea of a beautiful woman as a destructive force called *huoshui* (女人祸水 “female deluge”) starts with the first femme fatale, Bao Si (褒姒). According to the historian Sima Qian (145-90 BC), Bao Si was the beloved concubine of King You of the Zhou dynasty (周幽王 781-771BC). She was beautiful but rarely smiled. To make her smile, King You lit the beacon on Mount Li, which was normally only used in military emergency to call feudal lords together to defend the king. When Bao Si saw hundreds and thousands of soldiers arrive in haste at the sight of the beacon, she laughed. But when King You really came under attack later, he suffered the

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<sup>40</sup> 唯女子与小人为难养也，近之则不逊，远之则怨，出自《论语·阳货》。

fate of the boy who cries wolf once too often and was killed at Mount Li<sup>41</sup>. An ode was written alluding to Bao Si (*Shi Jing* III.3.264; 诗经·大雅·荡之什·瞻卬):

A clever man builds city walls,  
A clever woman overthrows them.  
Beautiful is the clever woman,  
But she is evil as an owl.  
A woman with a long tongue  
Is like a stepping-stone to disorder.  
Disorder is not sent down by Heaven,  
It is produced by women.

哲夫成城，哲妇倾城。懿厥哲妇，为枭为鸱。  
妇有长舌，维厉之阶。乱匪降自天，生自妇人。

Thus a beautiful (and supposedly unscrupulous) woman is often blamed for the downfall of a dynasty, because she is believed to have prevented the king from engaging in the proper duties of the state (Kinney 1999:27). Yang Guifei, the beloved concubine of the Tang emperor Minghuang (713-756AD), became such a scapegoat. During the An Lushan rebellion, by the popular demand of the soldiers, she was put to death while the life of the emperor was spared, because the populace believed that it was her fault that the emperor neglected his political duties.

By the Tang dynasty (618-907AD), the femme fatale motif was applied not only to imperial concubines but also to ladies of beauty from upper class families (McLaren 1994:8). In *The Golden Oriole* <sup>42</sup>(《莺莺传》), a short story by Yuan Zhen (元稹, 799-

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<sup>41</sup> *Shi Ji (Historical Records)*, Vol. 4.

<sup>42</sup> The famed Yuan play *the Romance of the Western Chamber* (《西厢记》) by Wang Shifu (1234-1368AD) is based on *The Golden Oriole*.

831AD), the hero abandons his lover Oriole (Cui Yingying) but defends his callous behavior with the following rationale:

[All such creatures ordained by Heaven to possess bewitching beauty will inevitably cast a curse on others if they don't do the same to themselves.] If my little Miss Cui were now to get as a husband a rich and distinguished man who cherished her lovingly, she would change her nature once again like a cloud that becomes rain or a scaly dragon that becomes horned.... In ancient times King Zhou Xin of Yin and King You of Zhou ruled over lands with a thousand times a thousand inhabitants and their power was boundless. Through a woman they both lost everything....It is only because I believe my character too is not strong enough to withstand such temptation that I have hardened my heart (Levenson 1967:100).

大凡天之所命尤物也，不妖其身，必妖于人。使崔氏子遇合富贵，乘宠娇，不为云，不为雨，为蛟为螭，吾不知其所变化矣。昔殷之辛，周之幽，据百万之国，其势甚厚，然而一女子败之。溃其众，屠其身，至今为天下僂眙笑。予之德不足以胜妖孽，是用忍情。

Here the hero not only regards his beautiful lover as the same destructive force which destroyed kings and kingdoms in history, but also he sees her as a spirit or an evil fairy (妖)<sup>43</sup> who casts evil spells on men. Oriole, through no fault of her own, has become the archetypal femme fatale in her lover's mind. Ultimately the hero abandons her not because he is out of love with her, but because he is afraid of the enormous power she has over him through her irresistible sexual allure. Feeling helpless while ensnared by his lover's powerful sexuality, he copes with the situation by repudiating her and

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<sup>43</sup> It is a common saying in Chinese to call a beautiful and seductive woman "a fox spirit" (狐狸精), which captures in essence the love-hate or fear relationship men have with women.

condemning her sexuality as destructive. Gilmore has a very insightful analysis of the psychogenic nature of this misogynistic reaction<sup>44</sup>:

Misogyny is not the result of a single-sided hatred of women or a desire to dominate, but rather of affective ambivalence among men. The data will show that most men love and hate women simultaneously and in equal measure, that most men need women desperately, and that most men reject this driving need as both unworthy and dangerous. The misogynistic denigration of women is not always an attempt to politically dominate or control women, but often a psychic attempt to diminish the importance of the object of man's inner struggle and to reduce the bifurcated object to worthlessness (Gilmore 2001:9).

By the seventeenth-century, the femme fatale motif was applied to lower-class women in more realistic settings. The femme fatale is often portrayed as sexually wanton, devoid of moral consciousness, or even downright cruel. In a story in *Xingshi Hengyan* (chapter 30, 《醒世恒言》), written by Feng Menglong (冯梦龙 1574 – 1646 AD), an evil wife ultimately causes her husband's death by persuading him to kill his benefactor. Towards the end of the story, the author cautions the readers against female criminality and cruelty in the following poem:

Sword inside the mouth of tiger,  
Sting on the tail of a snake,  
Both are deadly indeed,  
But not as venomous as a woman's heart<sup>45</sup> (Li 1994:30).

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<sup>44</sup> This love-hate relationship men have with women is also discerned by the chorus of women in Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* (788-794): "Tell me now, if we are evil, why marry us if we are truly evil? Why forbid us to go out or to be caught peeping out? But you simply want to guard this evil with great earnest. If your wife goes out somewhere and you meet her out of the house, you fly into a fury. Ought you not rather to rejoice and give thanks to the gods, if the evil has truly disappeared of its own accord, you will no longer find it at home?" (my translation)

猛虎口中剑，长蛇尾上针。两般犹未毒，最毒妇人心。

Thus Chinese misogyny, like Greek misogyny, arises to some extent from male fear of female sexuality. Female sexuality is perceived to be debilitating both to men's morals and to their physical wellbeing. As is pointed out by McLaren (1994:6), the ancient Chinese believed that "female sexuality was a threatening force which could lead to male debilitation and loss of virility". The Daoist Ge Hong (255-325AD) wrote that woman is a season of darkness and excessive contact with her produces internal fever and delusion (McLaren 1994:6).

**591: βάρβαρον λέχος:** Medea accuses Jason of being ashamed of the barbarian marriage he entered into with her. Jason replies, "Now know this well: that I am not, on account of a woman, making the marriage with the royal family which I now have, but as I said even before, I want to save you and to beget royal children as siblings to my children, as the bulwark for my house" (593-597). But after Jason finds out that Medea has killed their children, he is quick to condemn his barbarian marriage. He regrets having brought Medea to Greece from a barbarian land (1330). He claims that no Greek woman would ever have dared to do such a deed (1336-1340). Jason thus attributes Medea's violence to her barbarian ways and refuses to take any blame for the part he has played in causing the violence. He uses Medea's barbarian background to vilify her. The tactic of vilifying an

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<sup>45</sup> In Euripides' *Andromache* (269-273), Andromache denounces women as worse than snake or fire: "it is strange that some god has devised for mortals a cure against the venom of savage snakes; yet no one has discovered healing drugs for the evil woman, a thing beyond snake or fire. Such a great evil are we to men."

opponent by references to his barbarianism is also seen in other tragedies. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, Agamemnon, in his invective against Teucer, claims that he "does not understand Teucer's barbarian language" (1263). Teucer taunts back, "Pitiful creature, how can you be so blind as to argue the way you do? Are you not aware of the fact that your father's father Pelops long ago was a barbarian, a Phrygian? (1290-1292)". In Euripides' *Andromache* (173-176), Hermione discredits Andromache, a barbarian woman, by vilifying all barbarians: "That is the way all barbarians are: father lies with daughter and son with mother and brother with sister, nearest kin murder each other, and there is no law to stop any of this."

A barbarian marriage, or a marriage with a non-Athenian woman, brings no advantage in terms of citizen rights or social prestige as the fifth century Athenian audience understood well. After the law introduced by Pericles in 451BC, a person would be a full citizen only if both of his parents were Athenian citizens. Prior to this, the offspring of Athenian men who married non-Athenian women were granted citizenship. The "barbarian marriage" has both political (citizen vs. non-citizen) and social (Greeks vs. barbarians) implications for the fifth century Greek audience.

For Chinese audiences, barbarian marriage carries different implications. Chinese called all the non-Chinese people in the bordering territories barbarians, i.e. *Yi* in the east, *Rong* in the west, *Man* in the south, and *Di* in the north (东夷西戎, 南蛮北狄). The nomadic peoples in the north and northwest are also generally called *Hu* (胡). Most historically recorded, racially-mixed marriages occur between Chinese and the *Hu*. Thus "barbarian marriage" is translated as "having a *Hu* wife" in Chinese. Marriage between

Chinese and the barbarians was rare and when it did happen, it was mostly for the purpose of establishing political alliances as a way of averting attacks by the nomads, or as the result of other circumstances. Thus the implications of barbarian marriage were both social (civilized Chinese way of life vs. nomadic barbarian way of life) and political (i.e. political alliance), but citizenship was never at issue. Married couples usually lived among the barbarians. Political alliances were achieved by sending Chinese princesses to marry the barbarian chieftains and kings in northwestern regions in order to maintain border security. This so-called “appeasement by marriage alliance” policy (和亲) was practiced especially during the Han dynasty. Princess Liu Xijun (刘细君), for example, was sent to marry the Wu-sun chieftain in the northwest around 107 BC. She died three years later, not long after having given birth to a daughter. Then another royal princess, Jieyou (解忧) was sent to take her place. After more than fifty years, three Wu-sun husbands, five children and a very successful political career, Jieyou was allowed to return home at the age of seventy-two. Her predecessor Xijun wrote the following poem lamenting her life in a barbarian land with a very different culture:

My family has married me  
In this far corner of the world  
Sent me to a strange land  
To the king of Wu-sun  
A yurt is my chamber  
Felt my walls  
Flesh my only food  
*Kumiss* to drink  
My thoughts are all of my homeland  
My heart aches within  
Oh to be the yellow crane  
Winging home again! (Kinney 1999: 25)

《悲愁歌》：吾家嫁我今一方，远托异国兮乌孙王。穹庐为宝兮旃为墙，以肉为食兮酪为浆。居常土思兮心内伤，愿为黄鹄兮归故乡。

Other historically recorded marriages between Chinese and the nomadic people occur as a result of necessity. Zhang Qian (张骞), a Chinese ambassador sent by Chinese emperor Han Wu Di in 134 BC on a diplomatic mission to the barbarians called *Xiong-nu* (匈奴), ended up marrying a local *Xiong-nu* woman during the ten long years when he was held hostage by the *Xiong-nu* chieftains (Ban Gu, *Hou Han Shu*, Vol. 61). He managed to escape with his wife and return to China. He was much praised by the Chinese emperor for bringing back important military, political and cultural information about nomadic tribes.

A female poet Cai Yan (蔡琰 or 蔡文姬) was abducted during the war by *Xiong-nu* soldiers in 195 AD and was forced into marriage by a *Xiong-nu* chieftain, bearing him two sons. Twelve years later she was ransomed and returned to China alone. She described her much-lamented life among the barbarian nomads and her painful separation from her children in her narrative poem *Eighteen Songs of Hu Flute* (《胡笳十八拍》):

A barbarian of the northwest tribes took me to wife by force,  
He led on a journey to the lands at the horizon,  
Ten thousand strata of cloudy peaks, so stretched the returning road, a thousand miles of  
piercing winds, driving dust and sand.  
The people extravagantly savage, violent---like reptiles and snakes,  
They draw their bows, they wear armor, their bearing arrogant and fierce.

戎羯逼我兮为室家，将我行兮向天涯。云山万重兮归路遐，疾风千里兮扬尘沙。人多暴  
猛兮如虺蛇，控弦被甲兮为骄奢。

.....

I traveled across the land of Han and entered barbarian domains,  
My home was lost, my body violated; better never to have been born.  
The felts and furs they make into clothes are a shock to my bones and flesh,  
I cannot hide my disgust for the taste of their rank-smelling mutton.  
War drums pulse through the night until it grows light,  
The barbarian wind roars with great noise and obscures the border camps.

越汉国兮入胡城，亡家失身兮不如无生。毡裘为裳兮骨肉震惊，羯羶为味兮枉遏我情。  
鼙鼓喧兮从夜达明，胡风浩浩兮暗塞营。

.....

Not a day, not a night when I do not long for my home,  
Of all beings that live and breathe, none can be as bitter as I.  
Heaven unleashed calamity upon an empire in crisis, leaving the people without a leader,  
But only I have this miserable fate, to be lost among the barbarians.  
Their customs different, their minds unlike, how can I survive among them?  
What we like and want are not the same, with whom can I even speak?

无日无夜兮不思我乡土，禀气合生兮莫过我最苦。天灾国乱分人无主，唯我薄命兮没戎  
虏。殊俗心异兮身难处，嗜欲不同兮谁可与语！

.....

At sunset the wind is melancholy, its frontier strains rise all around,  
I do not know if there is someone to share my grieving heart.  
The border wastes are desolate, ten thousand miles of beacons,  
Their customs despise the old and weak, in favor of the young and strong.  
They wander wherever water and grass may be, and there set up camps and defenses,  
Cattle and sheep fill the land, swarming like bees or ants.  
When the grass is finished and water used up, livestock and horses all move,  
My seventh song flows with resentment--- I hate living in this place!

日暮风悲兮边声四起，不知愁心兮说向谁是！原野萧条兮烽戍万里，俗贱老弱兮少壮为  
美。逐有水草兮安家葺垒，牛羊满野兮聚如蜂蚁。草尽水竭兮羊马皆徙，七拍流恨兮恶  
居于此。

Days and months I dwelt among the nomads,  
My nomad husband was fond of me, and we had two sons.  
I nurtured them, brought them up, I can feel no shame for this.  
I felt for them, pitied them, born in this far frontier.

.....

日居月诸兮在戎垒，胡人宠我兮有二子。鞠之育之兮不羞耻，愍之念之兮生长边鄙。

The east wind responds to natural recurrences, with plenty of warm air. I know that the  
Han Son of Heaven is spreading energy and peace.  
Now the Qiang and the Hu dance the measures and sing in harmony,  
The two nations make a truce and put an end to conflict.  
Suddenly we meet an envoy from China, bearing a direct order;  
He offers a thousand pieces of gold as a ransom for me.  
I rejoice that I lived for a chance to return to greet our enlightened ruler,  
But I grieve at parting from my two young sons, with no chance of meeting again. My  
twelfth song balances sorrow and joy,  
My twin emotions---go, stay---to whom can I reveal them?  
I had never dreamed I would ever go home again;  
I caress, I embrace my nomad sons, the flowing tears soak our clothes.  
To escort me the envoy from China has sent a team of horses,

My nomad children wail till they lose their voices---alas! Who could have known that while we still lived there would come a time that would separate us like death?  
My longing for my children makes the sun lose its light, where can I find wings to carry me back to you?

东风应律兮暖气多，知是汉家天子兮布阳和。羌胡蹈舞兮共讴歌，两国交欢兮罢兵戈。

忽遇汉使兮称近诏，遗千金兮赎妾身。喜得生还兮逢星君，嗟别稚子兮会无国。十有二拍兮哀乐均，去住两情兮难具陈。

不谓残生兮却得旋归，抚抱胡儿兮注下沾衣。汉使迎我兮四牡騑騑，胡儿号兮谁得知？

与我生死兮逢此时，愁为子兮日无光辉，焉得羽翼兮将汝归。(Chang 1999:23-27)

In the poem *Xia Nv Fu Ci* (《下女夫词》) found in *Dun Huang Manuscripts* (敦煌文本), dated to the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), a girl says she would rather have hundreds and thousands of bundles of silk, not hundreds of *Hu* goblets (只要绫罗千万匹，不要胡觞数百杯). As silk is produced in China and symbolizes Chinese civilization, the poem expresses a girl's wish to marry Han husband not a *Hu* husband.

The barbarian wife is also featured in Chinese theatre. In the Beijing opera *Si Lang Visiting His Mother* (四郎探母) the Han general Si Lang is captured by his barbarian enemies in battle. He lies about his true identity and marries the princess of the barbarians (铁镜公主). In this opera, the princess is represented as an understanding and supportive wife, talking and behaving like a Han woman, except for the fact that she wears the barbarian (Manchurian) dress.

- 694:** “He has a wife, in addition to me, as the lady of the house”. In a marriage contract from Hellenistic Egypt (*P. Tebtunis* I: 104), the husband, Philiskos, agrees not to “bring home for himself another wife in addition to Apollonia nor to maintain a female concubine nor a little boyfriend nor to beget children by another woman while Apollonia is alive” (Pomeroy 1984). Patterson (1991:70) concludes that these moral obligations “can be

taken as reflecting traditional Greek norms”. The reality, however, seems to work in men’s favor. As Demosthenes said in his oration *Against Neaera* (59.122), “we have hetaerae for pleasure, concubines for the daily care of the body, and wives to bear us legitimate children and to be the trusted guardians of our household (τὰς μὲν γὰρ ἐταίρας ἡδονῆς ἕνεκ’ ἔχομεν, τὰς δὲ παλλακὰς τῆς καθ’ ἡμέραν θεραπείας τοῦ σώματος, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας τοῦ παιδοποιεῖσθαι γνησίως καὶ τῶν ἔνδον φύλακα πιστὴν ἔχειν). The co-existence of both wives and concubines seems to be a reality at least for some households. Euripides’ *Andromache* dramatizes the tension of having two wives under one roof. Menelaus, who comes to get rid of his daughter’s rival, declares to Peleus that he has good reason to intervene:

If you had given your daughter to one of your fellow-citizens and she had suffered this kind of treatment, would you sit by in silence? I do not think so. But do you, on behalf of a foreigner, shout such things at your close kin? Further, a woman groans as much as a man if she is wronged by her husband; so too a man groans when he has a wayward wife in his house. The man's strength lies in his hands, while the woman's interests are defended by her parents and kin. Am I not right then to come to the aid of my own? (668-677).

Menelaus’ defense of his daughter’s marital interest is based on the perception that for a woman to lose her mate and sex is nothing short of a catastrophe:

I have become an ally of my daughter, for I think it is a serious matter to be deprived of sex. Any other misfortunes a woman may suffer are secondary, but if she loses her husband she loses her life (370-374).

This perception finds confirmation in the speeches of Hermione and the chorus of women, who both condemn the shared bed as a source of pain and strife:

Hermione: “for it is also not right for one man to be in charge of two women. Rather, everyone who wants to live without pain is content to look to a single mate for his bed” (177-180).

The chorus agrees:

Never shall I praise doubleness of marriage among mortals nor sons with two mothers. It is strife and pain for a house. May my husband be content in marriage with a single mate and a bed undivided (465-470).

While the ancient Greeks are “monogamous”, i.e. they are allowed to have only one legal wife, the ancient Chinese practice polygamy, i.e. one man is allowed to have one legal wife and as many concubines as he can afford (Vivante 1999:17). In traditional Chinese literature, bigamy is often romanticized and not condemned. In a seventeenth century novel *Yu Jiao Li* (*Yu-Kiao-Li*, 玉娇梨)<sup>46</sup>, the hero falls in love with two beautiful girls who happen to be cousins. The cousins love each other like sisters and are both in love with the hero. So after many mishaps, the hero finally marries both girls and the three of them live together happily ever after. Thus polygamy (or bigamy), a source of pain, discord and strife as described by Euripides, has been transformed into conjugal felicity and bliss in a Chinese novel. This kind of male-authored romance of course reflects male fantasy and does not do justice to the social reality that a woman suffers under polygamy, in which she is generally not happy at all with the sharing of her husband.

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<sup>46</sup> It is translated as *Les Deux Cousins* (*The Two Fair Cousins*) in the nineteenth century.

- 703:** μέν τ᾿ ἦν: sudden realization, translatable in Chinese in words, not by particles. It is translated as 原来如此 in Chinese, meaning “oh, that is why”.
- 964:** πείθειν δῶρα καὶ θεοὺς: “gifts can persuade even gods”. There is a similar expression in Chinese, “money can persuade Ghosts to grind the mill for you” (有钱能使鬼推磨).
- 1033-34:** This view of children as taking care of their aged parents and burying them at their death is strikingly similar to traditional Chinese expectation of children. In Chinese, people say “having children (sons) is a defense against old age” (养儿防老) or “it is the duty of children to take care of their aged parents and provide a duly burial at their death” (养老送终). A well-known Beijing opera *Fishing Golden Turtle* (《钓金龟》) centers on such a theme of filial obligation towards parents. So Medea’s lamentation of not having the children to take care of her old age and provide a burial for her will be well understood by Chinese audience.
- 1173:** ἄνωλόλυξε: here the *ololuge* is uttered to “greet or acknowledge the presence of divine power or an epiphany” (Mastronarde: 2002: 355, note 1173). The princess is initially thought to be possessed by Pan. The Greeks believe that any sudden, extraordinary or mysterious affliction is caused by a god or demon. In Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, the chorus of Trozen women think that Phaedra is sick because she is possessed by Pan or Hecate (†σύ γὰρ† ἔνθεος, ὦ κόυρα, εἴτ’ ἐκ Πανὸς εἶθ’ Ἑκάτας, 141-142).

The *ololuge* is “predominantly a cry of women addressed to the gods, the feminine counterpart of the masculine paean and other ritual forms uttered by men, such as the *alalage*”, according to McClure (1999:53). This ritual cry by women is often uttered as an expression of joyful celebration of weddings or of triumph over enemies. As

quoted by McClure (1999:52), a fragment from Sappho (fr. 44. 25-33, Voigt) describes how the older women cry out the *ololuge* and all the men call on paean at the marriage of Hector and Andromache. In his *Anabasis* (4.3.19), Xenophon writes that after an auspicious sacrifice all the soldiers chanted the paean and uttered the *analage* while all the women (hetaeras) performed the *ololuge*. *Ololuge* is also found in Homer and tragedy as a jubilant cry of triumph. In Homer's *Odyssey* (ἴθυσέν ῥ' ὀλολύξαι, 22. 408), the nurse Eurycleia is about to let out a cry of joy at the sight of slain suitors, but is stopped by Odysseus. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Clytaemnestra supposedly utters an *ololuge* at the fiery signal of the fall of Troy (ὀλολυγμὸν εὐφημοῦντα 27, ἀνωλόλυξα 587, and ὀλολυγμὸν 595). In the *Libation Bearers*, the chorus urges a shout of triumph (ἐπολολύξατ' 942 and 387) over the slaughter of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus. In Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, the chorus exhorts to raise a joyous cry (ἀνολολυξάτω 205) at the good news that Heracles is alive and will soon be coming home victorious. In Euripides' *Electra* Electra says to Orestes that the whole house will cry aloud in triumph (ὀλολύξεται πᾶν δῶμα 691) if he kills Aegisthus. In Euripides' *Orestes*, Pylades says to Orestes that killing the infamous Helen is no crime, but a cause for celebration with *ololuge* (ὀλολυγμὸς ἔσται 1137). The *ololuge* can also be uttered as lamentation, as is pointed out by McClure (1999:54). In Sophocles' *Electra*, a cry of pity is raised by the crowd (ἀνωλόλυξε 749) at the fall and death of Orestes in chariot race in the fictional report by the pedagogue to Clytaemnestra. The *ololuge* is also "uttered upon the birth of a child, as a means of facilitating a difficult labor or of protecting the vulnerable newborn

from harm” (McClure 1999:54). The female ritual cry is absent in Chinese culture or language. The Chinese rendering of the *ololuge* is by sound.

**1270-1278:** In Greek theatre, killing (murder or suicide) takes place off stage. Often the cry of the victim is heard from behind the stage while he or she is being struck. The chorus may debate among themselves whether they should intervene and stop the killing, but in fact they never do so. The body of the dead is then displayed on an *ekkyklema* (rolling platform) as a means of arousing pity and fear, although in this play *ekkyklema* is not used. Instead, the children’s corpses are displayed on the dragon chariot.

In Chinese opera, killing mostly takes place on stage. Due to the symbolic nature (虚拟性) of Chinese opera, the victim falls down to signify death and no blood<sup>47</sup> appears on the body. For example, in the Beijing Opera *Farewell My Concubine* (霸王别姬), the concubine Yuji commits suicide with a sword on stage. This is enacted by Yuji symbolically making a cut at her throat and then falling down. In the Beijing opera *Lu An Zhou* (潞安州), the wife of the general commits suicide by hanging to avoid falling into the hands of the enemy. The general then symbolically cuts the rope, lets her body down, and commits suicide himself with a sword. In another Beijing opera, *The Injustice to Dou E* (窦娥冤), three deaths take place and two of them are enacted on stage. First, the husband of Dou E is pushed into the river by the evil servant Zhang, who covets the beautiful Dou E. This is enacted on stage by Zhang pushing the victim off the exit side of

<sup>47</sup> Blood is presented in Greek theatre, if the dramatic text is faithfully enacted in performance. For example, in Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* (41-42), Orestes is described by the priestess of Apollo as dripping blood from his hands. Oedipus, after having blinded himself, must be wearing a mask “with dark eye-sockets with streams of blood running down from them” (Taplin 1978:89).

the stage. Second, in order to get Dou E, Zhang puts poison into the soup intended for Dou E's mother-in-law. But the soup is eaten by Zhang's unknowing mother and she dies of the poison on stage. This is enacted by her crying from abdominal pain and falling down on stage. After the death of his mother, Zhang demands that Dou E be given to him as his wife and threatens to sue her for poisoning his mother if she does not give in to his demand. Dou E refuses to be bullied and the two go to court. The stupid local official, the acting judge, unable to discern lies from truth, sentences Dou E to death by decapitation. Before execution, Dou E cries out that she has been wrongfully accused and wrongfully sentenced. At the order of execution, the executioner takes Dou E off stage, and drum is beaten signifying the act of killing. In another Chinese opera, *The Orphan of the Zhaos* (赵氏孤儿), a newborn (represented by a doll) is killed on stage by being thrown to the ground.

In the Cantonese version of the play *Medea* (produced by the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts in 2003), the attempted killing of the children takes place on stage. Medea makes two attempts at the children's lives. First, shortly after her argument with Jason, she swoops on her children with a dagger. Fortunately the nurse and the governess (the pedagogue has been replaced with a free-born governess in this version)<sup>48</sup> intervene and save the children's lives. The second time, after the death of Creon and his daughter, Medea runs after the children and wounds them with a dagger. Jason gets into the room just in time to see the blood of his children splattering all over.

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<sup>48</sup> The role of governess is a rather strange creation, considering that in both ancient Greece and ancient China, the formal role of educating children was performed by male teachers, whether slave or free-born.

In the end, Medea flies away in her dragon chariot by herself, while the nurse and the governess leave with the two wounded children. In *Hebei Bangzi Medea* (first produced in 1989 by the Hebei Bangzi Theatre of Hebei, China), the frenzied Medea kills her children with her magic fan on stage:

Liu [the actress playing Medea] portrays an obsessed and deranged Medea running after her children in the convention of *paoyuanchang* [running in a circles] and gives a stylized enactment of Medea's killing of her two children with her magic fan. After a few seconds of dead silence, Medea sees the bodies and bursts into a high-pitched cry. Liu runs on her knees to the bodies (in the convention of *cuobu*) and holds them in her arms while singing Medea's grief over the loss of her beloved children (Tian 2006:12).

**1279-80:** ὥς ἄρ' ἦσθα πέτρος ἢ σίδαρος; in Chinese the sentence is rendered as “you truly are made of stone and iron” (你真是铁石人儿). It is a common Chinese expression to say that a merciless or non-emotional person has “a heart and guts of stone and iron” (铁石心肠). In Beijing opera, such a person is often called “person of stone and iron”. For example, in the opera *The Orphan of the Zhaos*, Cheng Ying (程婴) sings that even a person of stone and iron will be saddened at seeing the Princess crying as she gives up her baby to be smuggled out of the palace (见公主只哭得泪如雨降，就是那铁石人也要悲伤). In another Beijing opera, *Si Lang Visiting His Mother* (四郎探母), Si Lang sings that even a person of stone and iron will cry if reunited with his brother after fourteen years (弟兄分别十五春，铁石人儿也泪淋).

**1317:** The dragon chariot is not described in the text, but the hypothesis of the play says that Medea is “riding a chariot drawn by winged serpent” (Mastronarde 2002:377). The winged serpent and the chariot drawn by a winged serpent are found in myths unrelated

to the legends of Medea. Herodotus writes that winged serpents are said to fly from Arabia to Egypt at a certain time of the year (*Histories* 2.75.3). Demeter and Triptolemus are said to ride chariots drawn by winged serpents:

For Triptolemus, the eldest of Metaniera's children, Demeter fashioned a chariot drawn by winged dragons, and she gave him wheat, which he sowed over the whole inhabited earth as he was carried through the sky (Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1. 5.2; Hard 1999:33).

In the fragments of Sophocles' play *Triptolemus*, Triptolemus' chariot is described as having "two dragons twined around the axle" (fr.596). The dragon chariot of Triptolemus, used to spread the blessings of agriculture, seems to be a benevolent thing. But generally speaking, serpents and dragons are regarded as evil, horrifying and diabolical creatures in Greek myth and western thought. For example, In Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* (527-529), Clytaemnestra has dreamt, as the chorus tells Orestes, that she gave birth to a snake which she wrapped up as a child. This foreshadows the matricide later and implicitly likens Orestes to a snake for killing his own mother.

In contrast to this western notion of the dragon as a mostly evil creature, the Chinese dragon has been regarded as an auspicious power (瑞兽) in Chinese myth, art and thought. As is pointed out by Cammann (1953:207), "dragons in China were generally---but not always----considered as benevolent, rain-bearing creatures associated with clouds and were usually represented as soaring through the clouds with their sacred flaming pearls". Cammann goes on to explain that *long* (dragon 龙), the king of the animals, is made up of outstanding features from other animals: it has horns like a stag, a forehead like a camel, eyes like a demon, a neck like a snake, a belly like a sea monster,

scales like a carp, claws like an eagle, pads like a tiger, and ears like an ox. The prototype of the dragon is believed to be a gigantic snake. It needs to be pointed out here that in Chinese the word for dragon 龙 is different from the word for snake 蛇<sup>49</sup>, while in Greek the word δράκων means both dragon and snake. Both the snake and dragon are associated with the creator goddess and the early mythological emperors (Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors 三皇五帝). In Chinese mythology, Nü Wa (女娲), the goddess who is said to have made human beings from clay, and her brother and husband, Fu Xi (伏羲), who is said to have invented fishing and Bagua (“eight symbols”, 八卦), are said to have human bodies above the waist and snake tails below. They are often depicted in art (e.g. in Han murals) with their lower bodies (i.e. snake tails) interlocked. Among the Five Emperors, Zhuan Xu is said to have toured the world riding a dragon (颛顼乘龙至四海), Emperor Ku is said to ride a dragon in spring and summer (帝喾春夏乘龙), and the Yellow Emperor is said to have risen to heaven (i.e. to immortality) riding a dragon (黄帝乘龙升天). Starting from the first historical emperor Qin Shi Huang (221-206BC), the emperors in China call themselves “the True Dragon, Son of Heaven” (真龙天子), and Chinese people also regard themselves as “the descendants of the dragon” (龙的传人). In the Song Dynasty

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<sup>49</sup> In later times, snake becomes a symbol of cruelty and baseness. For example, in a poem *to the Tune of Sailing at Night* untitled 2, Ma Zhiyuan (马致远 1251-1321 AD) writes: “Just think of those palaces of *Chin* and *Han* dynasties, now they are but grasslands for herding oxen and sheep. Good stories for fishermen and woodcutters to retrace, desolate tombs and broken stone tablets dot the place, alas, no one now can tell the noble [dragon] from the base [snake] (不辨龙蛇)”.

(960-1279AD), the dragon became the paramount symbol of the emperor. This is partly due to the fact that the dragon is considered the paramount symbol of the *yang* principle (Cammann 1953:207). Corresponding to the dragon as the *yang* symbol is the phoenix, or *feng huang* (凤凰), as symbol of the *yin* principle. The phoenix, traditionally regarded as the ruler of the birds (羽族之长, 百鸟之王), is made up of the outstanding features of other birds: it has a cock's comb, the neck of a mandarin duck, the back of a peacock, and the legs of a crane. The sighting of the phoenix is regarded as especially auspicious and considered to be an omen of good government. The phoenix also became the symbol of the empress starting from the Song Dynasty (Cammann 1953: 208). On the steps and railings of imperial palaces and tomb complexes, the dragon and the phoenix are often depicted next to each other (i.e. on the same level spatially), or else the dragon is positioned above the phoenix to reflect the supreme power of emperor. The Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧1835-1908) of the Qing Dynasty, who was the *de facto* ruler of China for many years, is famous (or infamous) for reversing this traditional order of *yin* and *yang*. In the tomb (定东陵), which she commissioned for herself, she had the decorative stepping stone (陛阶石 or 丹陛石) in front of the main burial chamber (隆恩大殿) carved with a phoenix positioned above a dragon<sup>50</sup>. This placing of the phoenix above the dragon is unprecedented in Chinese imperial history. The well-known Chinese movie *The Burning of the Yuanming Palace* (火烧圆明园), made in 1983, depicts Cixi

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<sup>50</sup> The carved stone with phoenix above dragon (龙在下, 凤在上) is well preserved today in the Eastern Qing Tombs (清东陵), 77 miles east of Beijing.

questioning the ordained male supremacy embodied by the paramount dragon. In this movie, Cixi at the age of 16, shortly before being chosen as one of the emperor's concubines, is made to question an artisan why he carves the phoenix above the dragon. She swears then that when she becomes empress she will have the phoenix carved above the dragon. The Chinese audience, bearing in mind such gender dynamics as embodied in the dragon and phoenix symbols, may be especially struck by the scene of Medea riding a dragon chariot to "paradise" (Athens), leaving Jason crushed at her feet. This scene may be perceived not only as the personal victory of Medea over the faithless Jason, but also as a general triumph of women over faithless men.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Chinese readers or audiences are likely to be confronted with certain difficulties when they encounter the dramatic text of a Greek tragedy like *Medea* or viewing its performance. These difficulties reflect both the inherent differences between the two languages, ancient Greek and Chinese, and differences between the two cultures and traditions in general. The defining features of Greek tragedy, such as the primacy of words (*agon*-debates and messenger's narrative speeches), the presence and role of the chorus, specific stage conventions (killing off-stage, the dichotomy between inside and outside, and use of mechanical devices), will present great challenges to Chinese audiences accustomed to the performance-centered and symbolically-oriented traditional operatic theater. These challenges can also become sources of inspiration and fascination, as is shown by recent adaptations of Greek tragedy for the Chinese stage. These adaptations reflect the effort of Chinese producers to bridge the gap between two vastly different theatrical traditions. All of the above-mentioned difficulties and challenges have been touched on in the commentary; the purpose of this chapter is to sum up the scattered observations and present them in a holistic, coherent and organized fashion in the hope of shedding more light on both cultures.

First of all, from the viewpoint of a translator, there are obvious difficulties and challenges in translating ancient Greek into modern Chinese. These difficulties result from the

inherent differences between the two languages and the two cultures. For one thing, ancient Greek is phonetic in its writing, inflected in its grammar, and uses particles to transmit mood and subtle mental activities, while Chinese is ideographic in writing, non-inflected in grammar, and does not use particles. For example, the *μέν τᾶρ' ἦν* construction (703) used to denote sudden realization (where Aegeus suddenly comprehends why Medea is upset) is translated as 原来如此 in Chinese, meaning “oh, that is why”. This translation is prosaic and it has lost emotional impact embedded in using particles to imply what is not said out in so many words.

The frequent use of exclamatory words or interjections (i.e. *ἰώ*, *ὦ*, *αἰαῖ* and *οἶμοι*) in Greek tragedy presents certain challenges for translation. First of all, there are fewer exclamatory words in Chinese. Thus similar words such as *ἰώ* and *ὦ* are rendered as the same in Chinese. Secondly, exclamations are not used as frequently in Chinese theater as in Greek theater, and even less frequently in literary compositions. Thus when Chinese readers encounter Greek drama in a text-only version rife with ubiquitous exclamatory cries, especially in passages of lamentation, they will be reminded that they are reading a foreign drama. The frequent use of exclamations in Greek tragedy is of course in tune with the overall purpose of tragedy to arouse feelings of pity and fear. It also reflects the fact that Greek culture allows room for outward emotional expression, as is exemplified in the frequent use of ritual cries such as *ololuge* (1174) in celebration of victory or in lamentation. Since Chinese does not have the linguistic or cultural equivalent of the *ololuge*, the word must be rendered by a sound which means nothing in Chinese and a relevant footnote provided to state its religious or ritual implications.

There are Greek expressions, similes or imagery which cannot be translated directly (or literally) into Chinese. In such cases, I have striven first to find similar expressions or cultural

equivalents in the Chinese translation. If unsuccessful, substitution has been used. For example, the Greek simile “like a rock or sea” (*Medea* 28) cannot be translated directly into Chinese since we do not have exactly the same expression. So it is rendered into an equivalent Chinese simile “like a statue made of wood or clay”. The two phrases express the same idea without using the same imagery. However, not every word, especially metaphorical words, can find its cultural equivalent. For example, the ancient Greeks frequently use the verb νοσεῖ (“is diseased”,<sup>16</sup>) in a metaphorical sense to describe an abnormal or bad relationship, condition or undesirable personal qualities. This metaphor of disease cannot be translated literally, nor can an equivalent expression be found in Chinese. So a substitution is used. “The dearest relationship is *diseased*” is translated as “the dearest relationship is *broken*”. This rendering is of course rather unsatisfactory, because it fails to transmit the sense of deviation and calamity embedded in the original language.

Some Greek words cannot be translated directly into Chinese for both linguistic and cultural reasons. For example, “marriage-bed” (εὐνή and λέχος) cannot be translated literally, because in Chinese we say “marriage” or “bed”, but not “marriage-bed”. Thus “marriage-bed” is translated as “marriage”, “bed”, or “the matters in bed” to reflect the nuances of the word in different contexts. On the cultural level, the Greek word “marriage-bed” has a strong and unabashed sexual component which gets lost in the simple Chinese translation into either “marriage” or “bed”, and gets toned down in the Chinese translation as “the matters of the bedroom” (1367). Chinese literary language avoids mentioning the sex act straightforwardly, unlike its Greek counterpart. This results in part from the overarching importance of propriety and modesty demanded by Confucian ethical principles, in part from Chinese aesthetics which

prefers poetic symbolism over the raw crudeness. For example, in traditional literature, the sex act is often referred to, in a masked and poetical fashion, as “clouds and rain”. In Greek, “marriage-bed” comes to stand for “marriage”, but in Chinese the two are separated. The Chinese word for marriage (婚姻) originally means “bride’s family and groom’s family” and is devoid of any sexual connotation. “Marriage” in Chinese thus denotes the joining of the two families. Therefore the immediate association and interchangeability of “bed” and “marriage” embedded in the Greek words is lost in Chinese translation. The Greek metaphor of comparing marriage to a yoke (242) also defies accurate translation both linguistically and culturally. In Greek, it is customary to use “yoke” to denote marital status: “yoked” means “married”, “unyoked” means “unmarried”. Marrying a girl is perceived as similar to taming a wild animal under the yoke. In a word, when a Greek person refers to marriage as a yoke, it is customary and conventional, not revolutionary. This marital metaphor cannot be directly translated into Chinese for the lack of a customary association of marriage with the agricultural term “yoke”. So I have translated the yoke as “fetters”, an equivalent which unfortunately takes on an unintended and rather revolutionary implication absent in its original language. When Medea refers to marriage as a yoke in Greek, she is not bringing in any new female perspective on marriage as an institution. But when she refers to it as “fetters” in Chinese, she certainly sounds rather revolutionary and unruly, because comparing marriage to fetters in Chinese is very modern and anti-traditional. Thus this rendering can be misleading and deserves a footnote to clarify the linguistic contexts for Chinese readers.

Other translation difficulties arise from cultural differences. For example, in Greek, the first person pronoun ἐγώ (I) is used both by men and women indiscriminately. Women do not

use any depreciating self-address. But in traditional Chinese literature, women customarily refer to themselves as “slaves”, “concubines” or “lowly women” especially when talking to men, although they may not be slaves or lowly concubines in real life. Men also make use of deprecating self-references, but they rarely use words suggesting servile status. Ancient Greek women share the same low social status as their Chinese counterparts, but they have more legal, social and economic rights and retain a certain degree of freedom in thought and in their social interactions. For example, the nurse touches the pedagogue’s beard (65) to beg him not to withhold information from her; Medea holds on to Creon’s knees and begs him not to exile her children (324), and she later supplicates Aegeus, touching his knees and beard, to let her come to Athens (710). Supplication is a Greek custom and women are not disbarred from the physical contact that it involves. The ancient Chinese do not have supplication customs and women and men are not allowed any social or physical contact, no matter how harmless (男女授受不亲). Thus supplication scenes between a man and a woman may leave a Chinese reader with the impression that Greek women are less constrained in their interactions with men. Thus *ἐγώ* is translated as 我 in Chinese, meaning “I” used both by men and women in modern Chinese without self-deprecation. This way the self-assertiveness of Greek women will be retained. Another example is the translation of “father’s home” (502). In Greek, it is customary for a married woman to refer to her natal home as “father’s home”, while in Chinese a married woman calls her natal home “mother’s home” and her marital home “mother-in-law’s home”. I have translated “father’s home” into its cultural equivalent “mother’s home” in Chinese. Although in both cultures, women share the same low status compared to men, Chinese women have socially sanctioned power over their children and their daughter-in-laws because Confucian ethics

demands filial piety and obedience to parents and parents-in-laws. Thus mothers and mother-in-laws are the absolute authority figures in women's quarters and their lives. The tyrannical or abusive mother-in-law is one of the major marital woes lamented by Chinese women in old times. Considering that Chinese society is often defined in relational terms, it is also no surprise that a married woman defines her two homes by her relationships to them: she is daughter to her old home, and daughter-in-law to her new home. Thus the power structure of relations within Chinese culture can account for the difference in the transformation of Greek "father's home" into the Chinese "mother's home".

As is to be expected, sometimes a Greek expression can be rendered directly into Chinese. For example, after the filicide the chorus in *Medea* (1279-1280) laments that Medea is truly "rock or iron" after all, since she has been able to bring herself to lay hands on her own children. In Chinese opera, a merciless or unemotional person is often called a person of "iron and rock" (铁石人儿). Sometimes, an idiom or expression can be translated into Chinese very accurately. For example, the Greek saying "gifts can persuade even gods" (964) is rendered as "money can make a ghost grind the mill for you" (有钱能使鬼推磨), an old saying expressing the same idea.

Some ideas or cultural expectations expressed in Greek can be readily understood by a Chinese reader because the similar ideas or expectations exist in China. For example, the Greek concept of the Golden Mean (125) is very similar to the Confucian ethical principle of the Mean (中庸之道), and the Greek idea that having children is important in order to have them take care of one in one's old age and provide a due burial at one's death (as expressed by Medea 1033-

1034) is the same as the Chinese idea (养儿防老, 养老送终). These two very ancient cultures do share some similarities.

A Chinese reader has to bear in mind that *Medea* is a dramatic text written to be performed. While reading the text, a reader has to imagine how the story is being enacted on stage. Thus a reader is also an audience, a spectator as the Greeks call it. The Greek tragedy with its own theatrical conventions will strike the Chinese audience as very different from traditional Chinese opera. The oddest thing probably will be the presence of the chorus on stage, since Chinese theater does not have chorus. The chorus in general (not the tragic chorus) has a long tradition in Greece and is described by Homer on various occasions. One kind of choral singing and dancing, the dithyramb, eventually evolves into tragedy. That is to say, the chorus was there before the actors were “invented”. After the actors appeared, the chorus slowly receded into the background. As tragedy matured as a genre of performance art during the fifth century BC, the chorus’ involvement in the dramatic action was getting further eroded, though it still performed choral songs and remained on stage almost as a reminder of the origin of tragedy. Chinese audiences, unaware of the non-involvement of the chorus in the dramatic action, would find it very strange that the chorus of Corinthian women, upon hearing the cries of the children from within, expresses the desire to save them but does not act on it (1273-1276). Since the Chinese operas do not have a chorus, Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy put the chorus to interesting use. In *Hebei Bangzi Medea*, the chorus of six celestial maidens is sometimes used as a prop, e.g. to physically represent places such as a cliff. In another Chinese adaption of *Medea*, *The Lady of Loulan* (楼兰女), the chorus, composed of twelve men wearing black robes and white masks, is equally fluid in their function and identity. For example, it sometimes physically represents a

lake or a bed, another time it functions as priests or attendants. The fluidity of the Chinese chorus is in tune with the symbolic nature of Chinese theater, but a far echo from its Greek original.

Another barrier to Chinese audience in their appreciation of Greek tragedy is the use of masks by both the actors and the chorus. Tragic masks come with wigs and cover the entire face and head of the actors. The use of masks enables one actor to play multiple roles (including female roles) in one play. Each mask, with its exaggerated facial expression, represents one character and allows easy visual identification of a character by the audience in the large open-air Greek theater. In contrast, traditional Chinese theaters are small and emotions are transmitted through facial expressions, gestures and singing. The elaborate make-up, head-dress, costume and high-pitched singing easily transform a male actor into a female role. The often large size of the cast enables different roles to be played by different actors. Masks are not used, but stylized face-painting is employed especially in roles of *Jing* (净), the robust male characters. Opera face-painting ultimately derives from the exorcising rites (傩) in which masks are used for gods and face-painting for ghosts (神头鬼面). The masks are used for gods because it is believed that gods' images are sacred and should not be mimicked (Zhou 2003). The face-painting of a ghost is generally ugly, monstrous and repellent and is believed to be able to drive away evil ghosts and demons. Eventually traditional operas began to adopt face-painting for their characters, ghosts or not. For example, in Beijing opera, gold face-painting represents gods and silver ghosts.

The physical aspects of the Greek theater, such as the *skene* with its double door and the use of the mechanical devices such as the *ekkyklema* and the crane (for the *deus ex machina*) would seem too realistic for Chinese audiences since traditional Chinese theater is very small and

the generic stage setup includes only a table with one chair on each side (cf. commentary 135). The use of a mechanical device is unheard of. Instead, Chinese theater relies heavily on symbolic representation with minimal use of props. When props are used, they are used economically and symbolically. For example, a doll is used to represent a baby, a horsewhip is used to represent riding a horse, an oar is used to represent rowing a boat, two banners with wheels painted on it represent a carriage and waving pale-blue banners suggests billowing sea waves. This symbolic approach to presentation is in harmony with the traditional Chinese aesthetics which emphasizes the capture of the defining spirit of a subject rather than the physical reproduction of its shape or form (神似胜于形似). This aesthetics is also exemplified in Chinese paintings, music and poetry.

The symbolic nature of representation affords endless freedom in the treatment of time and place. In contrast to the Greek stage dichotomy of inside vs. outside as separated by the double door, the same Chinese stage can represent both indoors and outdoors in one play. With the help of minimal props, the stage can represent almost any location: a table with some books on it transforms the stage into a study, the yellow-silk covered table and chairs take the audience to a royal palace, and one table piled on another represents a high mountain. An empty stage can be whatever the context needs it to be: wilderness, a backyard garden or a road. The symbolic nature of Chinese theater also allows characters to perform a variety of actions by mime. The mime follows prescribed movements so the action will be recognizable to the audience. For example, a long journey is mimed by circling the stage once, and suicide is mimed by jumping off a chair and then exiting the stage. The same stage can present actions taking place in the day or at night. For example, a night fight scene can be enacted in a brightly lit stage by actors whose

movements are so choreographed as to indicate that they cannot see each other. Along with the fluid change of locations, changes of time are also implied and understood. Some Chinese operas enact stories taking place over a period of years in their linear development. This forms a sharp contrast to Greek tragedy where dramatic actions generally have to take place within the period of one day and the stage generally represents one fixed location. The condensing of time and the focus in one place serves to effectively concentrate dramatic tension on the play's single hero or heroine with the help of fast-paced plot-developments resulting in a dramatic reversal of fortune towards the end. This structure is at odds with the Chinese theatrical structure which allows stories to take place in different times and locations. *Hebei Bangzi Medea* deals with this difference by discarding the Greek structure of *Medea* and dividing it into five episodes in the convention of Chinese opera (Tian 2006): "Qu Bao" (hunting for treasure), "Zhu Yang" (boiling ram), "Li Jia" (departing from home), "Qing Bian" (betrayal of love), and "Sha Zi" (killing the children). The adaptation thus presents the Medea legend in its linear development, with only the last two episodes coming from Euripides' *Medea* itself. The production is thus not only no longer Euripides' *Medea*, but also no longer a Greek tragedy at all. As Tian (2006:1) remarks, this adaptation of *Medea* has displaced Greek tragedy from its theatrical and artistic contexts and appropriated it as a raw material to meet the dramatic, scenic and performance prerequisites of Hebei Bangzi.

The fixation in one setting and place means that actions taking place in other locations have to be reported in long narratives by messengers, e.g. the death of Creon and his daughter in the royal palace is described by a messenger to Medea in front of her house where the play is set. Long narratives of tragic events by messengers, antithetical *agon*-speeches, and emotionally

charged monologues and lamentations (e.g. Medea's speech "Corinthian women", her monologues of self-debate and lamentation over her children before her murder) highlight the primacy of words in Greek tragedy. This contrasts sharply with the performance-centered Chinese operas where messenger speeches and long monologues are absent. Many reasons account for this difference. First of all, Chinese operas are not tragedies and their prime function is to entertain not to arouse tears or pity. Most Chinese operas are closer to melodramas and most of them have happy endings. Thus speeches with graphic and gruesome description of blood and gore or monologues of endless lamentation, both aiming at intensifying the emotional experience of its audience, are out of place in Chinese theater. Secondly, Chinese operas are performance-centered. Emotions such as worry, anger, sorrow or joy are portrayed more through facial expressions, gestures, and movements, all of which are stylized and aesthetically appealing, than through speeches. The dramatic texts and their authors are not remembered but the actors and actresses who give memorable performances are.

The speeches present challenges for Chinese adaptations of Greek tragedy. The Cantonese *Medea* (produced in Hong Kong in 2003) has a very unusual treatment of the messenger's speech. First of all, the messenger's speech is transformed into a dialogue with Medea where information is transmitted in a question and answer format. At Medea's request for details of the death of her enemies, the messenger says the servants were happy to see her children, but the princess was not pleased. At this point, his speech is interrupted. Two choruses, one of men and the other women (wearing golden crown), appear on stage. They enact the conversation between the princess and Jason. Then the female chorus enacts the torment of the princess (screaming and struggling to take off the golden crown, etc.). Thus the original verbal

description is enacted on stage by a chorus. This odd treatment reflects how uneasy the traditional Chinese theater is in dealing with long narrative speeches. Moreover, the other speeches (Medea's "Corinthian women" and her monologues) are simply cut in this adaptation, giving the impression that Medea tries to kill her children out of impulsive anger and madness rather than as a rationalized and heart-wrenching decision. This adaptation therefore fails to correctly represent Medea as Euripides characterizes and portrays her.

Another feature of Greek theater, the use of mechanical devices such as the *ekkyklema* for displaying dead bodies and the crane for *deus ex machina*, would seem unexpected and shocking to Chinese audiences. In *Medea*, the use of these two also slightly deviates from convention: the dead bodies of the children are not displayed on the *ekkyklema* as expected, but on the dragon chariot at the level of *deus ex machina*; the figure on the crane is not a deity as expected, but Medea, a mostly human figure in this play. Since Chinese theater is devoid of mechanical devices and is symbolic in its enactment and in its use of props, the sudden appearance of the dragon chariot in midair will achieve its full fantastically shocking effect on Chinese audiences. Since the dragon symbolizes the male and stands for the emperor in Chinese tradition, Medea poised on a dragon chariot with Jason crushed on her feet may symbolize for Chinese audiences an ultimate gender-role reversal and a definitive female victory over the treacherous male.

The filicide of Medea will also cause great uneasiness among Chinese audiences as among western audiences. A mother killing her own children as revenge for her husband's betrayal, while not insane, is unprecedented both in Greek theater and in Chinese theater. This uneasiness is evident in the Chinese adaptations of *Medea*. In the Cantonese *Medea* (produced in 2003), Medea makes attempts at the children's lives, but only wounds them because of

intervention by the servants. In the end, the children live though wounded. In *Hebei Bangzi Medea* (produced in 1989 and 2002), Medea, deranged, kills the children with her magic fan. After having realized what she has done, Medea bursts into high-pitched lamentation. These treatments of filicide reflect a Chinese reluctance to see children killed by their mother or by a mother who is sane.

In conclusion, *Medea* and Greek tragedy is a source of both confusion and fascination for Chinese audiences. Chinese audiences need to first understand Greek tragedy as a genre and a distinct theatrical tradition before they can truly appreciate the Greek sense of tragic and the character of Medea. In explaining the subtle linguistic and cultural differences which are either lost in translation or cannot be accurately translated, I hope the Chinese readers will gain a better understanding of the dramatic text of *Medea* and the immense power of words endowed by Euripides.

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