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Medea of Gaza

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Medea of Gaza

Julian Blake Gordon

Spring 2014

Research Summary

A snapshot of Medea of Gaza as of March 7, 2014

Since the Summer of 2013, I've been working on a currently untitled play inspired by the Diane Arnson Svarlien translation of Euripides' *Medea*.

The origin of the idea was my Theater and Culture class with Nancy Hoffman, taken in the Spring of 2013. For our midterm, we were assigned to pick a play we had read and set it in a new location. It was the morning of my 21st birthday, a Friday, and the day I was heading home for Spring Break. My birthday falls on a Saturday this year, but tomorrow marks the anniversary, I'd say. I had to catch a train around 7:30am. The only midterm I hadn't completed was the aforementioned Theater and Culture assignment. I got on the train with peer Leise Trueblood who happened to be on the same train *and* in my Theater and Culture class. Neither of us had started, so we decided to finish the assignment on the train. In that moment of exhaustion, frustration, and sickness (oh, yes I was getting sick) my brain latched onto the idea of setting Medea and her castmates in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Medea would be a Palestinian woman living in Israel with a Jewish husband. I emailed the paper in when I was finished, thinking I had put the idea to rest. When Nancy returned the paper to me, she said I might consider developing the idea into a capstone. I wasn't very interested— I already had plans to turn Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* into an opera, you see. As the semester wore on, the idea started nagging at me. Eventually, I wasn't thinking about Williams; I was thinking about *Medea*.

Fast forward to the summer. I've decided to tackle *Medea* as an honors thesis/capstone. I knew that if I wanted to do an even semi-respectable job, I would need to start over the summer. Going into this project, my knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was limited to things I'd

heard my dad say (and didn't remember) and the constant barrage of reports of suicide bombs in Israel, air strikes in Palestine, and lots and lots of hate, bigotry, and death.

I started in the Summit Public Library, my local resource for all academia (and movies, of course). I didn't know where to begin, but I found the section with books on the subject and examined the titles for something that looked appropriate. I believe I had one name in mind: Noam Chomsky. I was told by a friend that he might be a good read. I pulled out a few books and took them home. The first was *Jerusalem 1913*, by Amy Dockser Marcus. Luckily, it was a perfect way to begin. This book was about the origins of the conflict, starting with the advent of Zionism in the 1880s. I was introduced to some key figures, like Theodore Herzl, who's name appears in the play, even though his character doesn't. (Jacob's father/Mr. America goes by Mr. Herzl.) Until the end of World War One, the land that is now called the State of Israel was once controlled by the Ottoman Empire. Arabs and Jews alike, no matter how long they'd lived in the region, experienced inequality and oppression at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. Before Zionism took root, Muslims and Jews lived in relative peace. Some would even say they were good, friendly neighbors. Marcus writes about the failings of both Arabs and Jews when Zionism became a powerful movement. Jews who moved from Europe to the region (I'll call 'the region' Palestine pre-1947-48) were often ethnocentric and bigoted, unwilling to hire Palestinians or respect an un-European lifestyle. Both sides started to respond violently to the culture clash and the conflict grew and grew. This is an oversimplification, for sure, but the essence of the story is that two groups of people, both of whom experienced injustice, were unable to co-exist on land they both claimed to be their own. The book focuses on 1913 as the pivotal year, after which the conflict was doomed to explode. After World War One, England made the mistake of promising Palestine to both the Jews and the indigenous Palestinians. The infamous promise to the Jews was called the Balfour Declaration. Ultimately, it is the Jews who gained political control of the region with strong support from

Europe. This was cemented in 1947, after the Holocaust, when the United Nations voted to partition the land and create the State of Israel.

With basic knowledge of names, dates, and other historical figures, I was able to dive further into critical research. Why did things turn out the way they did and what is going on *today*? The question of how did we get from point 'A' to point 'B', point 'B' being the present, is the key question for me. This is where the research became most fascinating and dangerously emotional.

The subject at hand is touchy to many Americans. The Jewish population in the Tri-State area alone is remarkable. This means the number of people who might be offended by a play of this kind is high. I have friends and peers with ties to Israel and strong opinions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For me, this is exciting. If I can write a play that opens up a dialogue while thoroughly entertaining an audience, I've achieved my goal.

Research took an interesting turn when I read the work of Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé. In a book titled, *Gaza In Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against Palestinians*, I read essays by these two gentlemen. They opened my eyes, albeit with an agenda critical of Israel, to the horrors of the conflict today. I became incensed reading about the unjust treatment of Palestinians starting with their exodus-expulsion from Palestine as it turned into Israel. To me, it sounded like the founding of Israel was no cleaner than the founding of the United States of America. There were clear elements of apartheid and genocide at play. Of course, this book was shaped to make the reader feel strongly for the Palestinian people, but at the time, it was very hard for me to look past what seemed like indisputable truth. I now felt conflicted: had I been blindly supporting Israel without knowing the truth behind it's founding? Well, yes I had. But do Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé represent the only valid side of the story? Of course not. I've come to learn and relearn that there is no clear right or wrong and that both Israelis and Palestinians have committed atrocities.

What to do when it seems like the past is too convoluted to understand...well...I decided to focus my research less on history and more on what people are doing to fight for peace. Of course,

I moved to this phase after doing more and more historical research. Two books are not quite enough to cover the whole history, but you can read about the others in the annotated bibliography.

Once school began, I started to take advantage of our collection of films centered around the conflict. I found a variety of documentaries about smaller case studies. One of the most stirring documentaries I've ever watched is called *5 Broken Cameras*. The footage was shot by a Palestinian man, Emad Burnat, who lives in the West Bank village, Bil'in. Burnat films protests held by villagers against the separation barrier that has been by the Israeli government. A fence between Israel and the West Bank has been constructed to separate the territories. Unfortunately, it encroaches deeply into Palestinian land and the villagers are cut off from land that has been a part of their families for years. The tragedy goes deeper than land. The livelihood of many villagers rests on harvesting olives from trees on the land that has now been fenced off illegally. The only thing the villagers can do is protest and hope Israel eventually backs off. In the struggle, Burnat's friends are killed, his children grow up, and the protests seem futile. It's a deeply moving and unsettling documentary with an obvious agenda that is— need I say it— critical of Israel. What this documentary gave me was inside information about the lives of Palestinians living in the West Bank and an idea of the daily challenges they face because of Israeli occupation and lack of political representation.

At the same time as I continued my research, I began to write. At first, the scenes were coming across as very ideological. Characters spoke as ideas, not as people. This is something I still struggle with. I have strong ideas at play and they come out very explicitly sometimes, perhaps too much so. I began to explore what world we're in while attempting to make the plot historically plausible. My aim was to ensure that if something happened in the play, it could happen in Israel today. This was a scary thought and a lot harder than I anticipated. I noticed much later that a lot of my research was affecting dramatic liberties I would normally take. I didn't want to find any plot holes or have anything be inaccurate. When I realized this task was impossible in the time I had, I

began to shift gears. I tried writing with less judgement, but this proved difficult. So I tried to find another way into my play.

This is when I dropped the historical research for a time and began to read more plays. I wanted to see what other playwrights were doing with Greek adaptations, so I looked to Ellen McLaughlin and Chuck Mee. I found a collection of McLaughlin's adaptations called *Greek Plays*. Reading them opened a door for me stylistically. Through her work, I found a freedom to write in heightened language; to use verse. What once felt cheesy or unnatural suddenly felt like I was communicating a story more clearly and with greater intention. In Charles Mee's *The Trojan Women: a Love Story*, I saw how effectively he was able to create a world with very few words; how he could honor the Greek tragedy, but make the play feel completely new. Both of these playwrights succeed in ways I've struggled.

The rest of the Fall semester fluctuated between periods of writing and periods of research. Because of the growing specificity in the play, honed in on more detailed information. I found movies on terrorism ranging from the fictional *Paradise Now* (2005) to documentaries like *Leila Khaled Hijacker* (2006). *Paradise Now* was my first taste of the human side of suicide bombing. The film follows two young Palestinian men who are summoned to blow themselves up with 24 hours notice. We watch these two very likable young men go through a range of emotions: doubt, anger, excitement, and stoicism to name a few. It is not easy for the two to decide to become suicide bombers. I won't spoil the ending for anyone reading this, so I'll reiterate the importance of this film: it makes the 'bad guys' human. I realized that was exactly what I would be trying to accomplish. *Leila Khaled Hijacker* is a documentary about Leila Khaled, an female Arab icon who, in 1969, hijacked a plane with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, commanded the passengers out, and blew it up without injuring anyone. What's so astonishing about this documentary is the shock of seeing Leila Khaled interviewed...in her home in Israel...with her children. She went from being the first woman to hijack a plane (at 24 years of age, I might add) to

being a mother. She's had at least six surgeries to alter her appearance so she wouldn't be recognized. This woman had power and independence, not an image of Arab women that the West sees very often. Whether what she did was moral or not, I can imagine her becoming an icon or, perhaps, a role model for Medea. Powerful Arab women are important in the development of Medea.

When winter break rolled around, I had a draft completed...well almost. There were holes and I didn't have an ending. But that was *okay*, because I had winter break to write. I took the holidays off to let my mind relax and let my latest thoughts soak in. It was useful to get some distance from the project. I knew that soon after New Years I would get right back to work.

I had decided at the end of the Fall Semester I would come back to school two weeks early. The first week back I would write and continue research. The second week I was in rehearsal for *On The Town*. During my first week back, I churned out a new draft of the play that *gasp* had an ending. It felt like a great improvement to where I had ended the Fall semester.

Since the current semester has begun, I've resumed research while writing. My newest finds are books about terrorism, like *The Smarter Bomb: Women and Children as Suicide Bombers*, by Anat Berko. This book has been useful to me for finding a voice for Medea. Berko interviews Arab women who are in Israeli prison for anything from attacking an Israeli soldier to attempted suicide bombing. Each woman has a unique story and a completely individual reason for taking their course of action. I was particularly inspired by a young woman who had escorted a young man to Israel for his suicide mission. Together, they killed four innocent civilians and injured many others. This woman had gone to university and because of her father, had experienced certain liberties that not all Palestinian women can enjoy. Still, she decided to commit an act of terror— and she would do it again. Her voice, while not Medea's, has an element of strength, intelligence, and liberty that can be found in Medea.

My research will continue for as long as I'm working on this play. There is far too much information to gather about this subject with so little time, that I feel as though I've only scraped the

surface. Even so, I'm confident that the research I've done carries this piece to a higher plain. The rehearsal process has begun. Meeting with my cast, director, and stage manager at the same time—for the first time, was unforgettable. The openness in the rehearsal room and willingness to try what I've written is truly remarkable. There are certain things that a playwright can only learn by hearing. I've reached the point where working with others on this piece has become essential to its future vitality. It's time to keep working.

The Play:

The latest draft as of April 30, 2014

Medea of Gaza

by

Julian Gordon

CHARACTERS

MEDEA SAYEED	A mother of two, mid-twenties
JACOB HERZL	Medea's husband, father of two, mid twenties.
MR. AMERICA/MR HERZL	Jacob's father, an Israeli-American politician.
SOLDIER	An Israeli soldier
CHORUS OF WOMEN	Extensions of Medea, her psyche
CALEB AND BENJAMIN	Children of Medea and Jacob, twins. They are puppets handled by the Chorus

SETTING

The footprint of a house, rubble.

TIME

The Prologue: When the war is over.
The Play: War.

PROLOGUE: The war is over.

(The footprint of a house in Tel Aviv, now a burial ground.)

(A soldier comes running in, firing his gun into the air.)

SOLDIER

Wake up!
Wake up boys and girls!
The war is over!
Get up and smell the sweet air!
Smell that?
That's the smell of peace and quiet!
(Kinda smells like rot, actually.)

Everyone's friends now!
Let me shake your hand.
And yours.
And yours.

Oooh, that's a nasty wound.
Just wait. I can fix it.
I can suck that bullet right out of your chest,
And back into the barrel of my gun.

(He tries.)

Awwww wait now, I didn't kill you.
It won't work if I didn't kill you.
It's gotta be the man who killed you to take the bullet back.

Wake up!
Ya lazy shits.

No one?
Your loss.

(Singing.)

It's a beautiful day!
The war is over!

(Enter Medea Sayeed.)

Whoa now!
We got a live one!

(She tends to the graves.)

Hey you.
Come here.

Wanna suck me off?

Don't be shy now.
Let me get a good look at you.

I'll give you a good ride, too, if you want.
Do all that weird stuff.

(He sees her, jumps for cover, and braces himself.)

*(He braces,
waits.)*

Get outta here!
You monster!
Get outta here!
Rot in hell!

(Medea stands)

Just kill me now if you're going to.
Kill me now get it over with!
I don't care see if I care!
I've lived long enough.
And I've done my share of sinning, like you.
I've killed too!
Kill me now get it over with!

(Medea tends to the graves. She may be singing a lullaby.)

Oh, please don't sing now.
Just kill me first, before you sing.
I can't hear that anymore please don't sing.

(Medea tends to the graves.)

Hey!
You hear me?

No?

(He waves his arms at her.)

He points his gun at her.)

Hey!
I'm talking to you!

(Medea tends to the graves.)

Stop touching them!
You got no right don't touch them.
I know who you are.
I know what you did.
I was there that day, ya!
Remember?

I was with you I was nineteen you remember me?
A soldier with an order?

You gave me bread.

Stop touching them.

(He stands in her way.)

You got no right.

(Medea puts her hand to his face.)

Kill me now if you're gonna.
Just do it.
Like you did all my friends.
Like you did all these people.
These good people.

MEDEA

I'm not—

SOLDIER

Please, if you're gonna do it, do it fast.

MEDEA

I'm not going to hurt you.

SOLDIER

You— you sound the same.
You sounded like that
Seventeen years ago.

MEDEA

You're not the same at all.

(She takes her hand away.)

SOLDIER

Seventeen years of war,
 I've seen things, I've done things.
 The worst things.
 But what you did was still the worst.

The worst thing I ever saw.

MEDEA

The dead can hear you.
 They hear you talk about war
 And it makes them restless.

They deserve some peace, don't they?

SOLDIER

I deserve it more.
 They get to rest forever but I'm still alive,
 In living hell.

You could bring me peace, you know.
 Give it to a live man and not a dead one.
 You could put me to sleep.

MEDEA

If you want to sleep,
 Lie down and sleep.

SOLDIER

I sleep with my eyes open
 And kill with my eyes closed.
 You could bring me peace.

MEDEA

Why don't you kill yourself?

SOLDIER

That's not real rest.
 Besides something's eating at me.
 I can't remember what happened—
 Not the whole thing.
 I brought your kids—

MEDEA

Don't talk about my children.

SOLDIER

Sorry! Sorry, I wont!

It's just I blacked out.
 Help me remember.
 Put my memory to rest.

You can put me to bed.
 You can.

(Medea tends to the graves.)

Please?

Please please please please please please?

Just tell me the story,
 Put me to sleep,
 Tell me the story,
 And put me to bed.
 Just tell me the story,
 Put me to sleep,
 Tell me the story,
 And put me to bed.

MEDEA

Will you keep quiet?
 You don't talk in your sleep do you?

SOLDIER

How should I know?
 Shove a rag in my mouth if I do.

MEDEA

I'll tell you my story.
 I was a girl who escaped one hell
 And entered another.
 I was given everything,
 And had it all taken away.
 I was handed a grenade
 With the pin pulled out.

(The world is shifting around Medea's imagination as Medea takes us to her home in Tel Aviv.)

After a lifetime in Gaza,
 A lifetime of prayer,
 Praying to leave,
 It happened.
 A soldier, Jacob,
 Failed the soldier's test:
 Never let love come before duty.
 I failed my own unspoken rule:

Don't associate with Jews.
 I went with him.
 He snuck me into Israel
 Straight to Tel Aviv
 And I got pregnant.

SCENE ONE

(Medea's home in Tel Aviv at dawn. Enter Medea and the Chorus. Medea reads a letter.)

CHORUS

What is it?

MEDEA

A letter.

“Medea,

I can't keep pretending that the life we share is the life I want. I can't be with you anymore. Please pack your things and leave the house A.S.A.P. I'll pick the children up tonight. You need to be gone before I get home.

I'm sorry,
 Jacob”.

He left this letter for me.
 A wake-up gift.

I'm going to find him.

CHORUS

You can't!

MEDEA

This isn't Jacob talking.
 He'd never write me a letter like this—
 Out of nowhere.
 He loves me.

He's panicked
 Or scared,
 Or anxious—
 He needs me.

CHORUS

If you leave the house,
 They'll catch you!
 You'll be deported!

If you find Jacob,
The IDF will find you.

MEDEA

Let them!
I'll tell them who I am:
Jacob's wife.
I'll tell them about Caleb and Benjamin.
It's time.

CHORUS

You, a paperless Palestinian in Tel Aviv?
You'll be dragged back to Gaza,
You wailing,
.
And you'll never see Caleb or Benjamin again.

MEDEA

He'll get us out of it,
Pull some strings.
He'll get me my papers,
And I'll be legal!

(Medea begins to leave.)

I've been in Israel for six years without papers.
He'll get me my papers.

CHORUS

Stop lying to yourself.
If it were that easy,
You'd have your papers already.

If you leave,
And you're caught.
You'll never see your children again.

(Medea stops.)

MEDEA

I'll stay and wait for him.

(She bursts.)

I'm gonna kill him when he gets back.

CHORUS

What was it he said about the twins?

He'd be by to pick them up?
I wonder what Jacob plans for the children.

(There is a knocking.)

MEDEA

You know the rule.
Don't answer it.

CHORUS

It could be Jacob.

MEDEA

Jacob has a key.

CHORUS

I don't feel good about this.

(Medea looks through a window.)

MEDEA

It's a soldier. A man.

(From outside, a voice: "Israeli Defense Force!")

MEDEA

Don't open the door.

CHORUS

He'll just break the door down!

MEDEA

Caleb and Benjamin are still asleep.
Jacob picked the worst day to disappear.

CHORUS

Do you think he sent the soldier?

*(The knocking gets louder and we hear the soldier yell, "Open up!"
Pause.*

"Open up or I'll use force!"

Medea opens the door a crack.)

MEDEA

Can I help you?

SOLDIER

This is the IDF.
Open the door.

MEDEA

We can talk through here.

SOLDIER

Can I see some identification, please?

(Medea opens the door.)

MEDEA

Look, I'm alright, see?

SOLDIER

Identification.

MEDEA

I'm not the owner of the house—

SOLDIER

Are you Medea Sayeed?

MEDEA + CHORUS

Yes.

SOLDIER

Medea Sayeed, you have fifteen minutes to pack your belongings and evacuate this house.

MEDEA + CHORUS

I live here.

SOLDIER

You have fifteen minutes to pack, and then I'm taking you home.

MEDEA

No, you don't understand—

MEDEA + CHORUS

This is my home.

I've lived here for—

SOLDIER

Medea Sayeed, you have fifteen minutes to pack and then I'm taking you back to where you came from.

MEDEA

This is a misunderstanding.

The owner of the house—

He's Israeli.
Jacob Herzl?

My husband.
This is a misunderstanding.
I live here.

SOLDIER

I'm taking you back to Gaza. Your children stay here. Pack only for yourself.

MEDEA

Jacob Herzl is my husband.
He's in the IDF with you.
If you just wait for him, you'll see this is all a big misunderstanding.

SOLDIER

My orders are to escort you out of this house and back to Gaza. That's what I intend to do.

MEDEA

I'll humor you.

(Medea starts gathering belongings.)

This will take awhile.
Why don't you come in?
Have some bread?

(Soldier doesn't move.)

I insist.

(The Chorus brings him bread and ushers him inside.)

I won't tell—
And I'll pack while you eat.

(Medea packs.)

How old are you?

(Soldier doesn't move.)

Don't be nervous, soldier.
Eat!
You asked me to pack, I'm packing.

How old are you?

Nineteen?

I don't bite.

(She approaches the soldier.)

Do you think I'm armed or something?

Search me.

(Medea moves toward the soldier.)

SOLDIER

Keep packing! You have ten minutes!

MEDEA

(Medea packs.)

Where do you get your orders?

SOLDIER

The top.

MEDEA

Oh, the top.
General Creon.

Why couldn't he come here himself?

SOLDIER

He has better things to do.

MEDEA

I think he's frightened.

SOLDIER

If I have to use force to get you out of here, I will.

MEDEA

If you touch me—
My husband won't stand for that.
He's got friends in high places.

Your general is scared.
So he sent a worker bee instead.

If anyone should be scared,
It's me.

MEDEA + CHORUS

I've been shot at in the night.
I've been beaten by soldiers
Who hold shields across their bodies.

MEDEA

But I'm not going to hurt you.

Let's start over.
I'm Medea Sayeed,
And my husband says he's leaving me.
Now you share something.

SOLDIER

What?

MEDEA

I've shared a secret with you.
My husband is leaving me.

SOLDIER

I'm not playing this game.

MEDEA

Why not?
We'll never see each other again.
Let's have some fun.

I'll go again.
I have two children.

SOLDIER

I know.

MEDEA

It's your turn.
Tell me something about yourself.

SOLDIER

I'm nineteen.

MEDEA

So, I was right!
Tell me something I don't know.
Something you feel.

SOLDIER

This isn't—
I'm on duty.

MEDEA

I'm sure you feel something.
Even on duty.

SOLDIER

I don't feel.

MEDEA

You do feel.

I understand.
A soldier's duty.
Very important.
It's all part of the job.

SOLDIER

I hate my job.

MEDEA

You don't like to be in control?

SOLDIER

I'm not—
In control.

MEDEA

You remind me of my husband.
He served in Gaza.

SOLDIER

I want to be a rabbi.

MEDEA

A man of God.

SOLDIER

Yes.

MEDEA

Maybe not so much like my husband.
My husband says he's leaving me.
Not very Godly.

I need more than fifteen minutes to pack.

SOLDIER

I don't have the authority to...

MEDEA

Please?
Just a day?

SOLDIER

You're a dangerous woman.

(She takes his arms and wraps them around her.)

MEDEA

You're far more dangerous than I am.
Give me twenty-four hours.
Then I'll leave, I swear.

SOLDIER

Alright.
But if you aren't out of here by then...

I should go.

MEDEA

So go, then.

SOLDIER

Ok.

(Soldier exits.)

SCENE 2

(Enter Medea's children, Caleb and Benjamin. They are puppets of children, twins aged five, gorgeous mosaics.)

MEDEA

Let's go to the beach today.
I'll teach you how to build a sandcastle.
Mommy and Daddy used to build them
Before you were born.

One day, we build fifty sandcastles.
The beach was our little kingdom.
You two were in here, *(indicating her womb)*
Our little princes.

The next day the kingdom had washed away.
That's what happens when you build with sand.
It washes away.

CHORUS

Tell them what's going on.

MEDEA

What would I tell them?

CHORUS

That you might never see them again.
You'll have to find a way to say goodbye.

MEDEA

When Jacob comes home we will talk.
And he'll explain to me what's going on.
And he won't let me be deported.

(There is a knocking.)

Jacob?

SCENE 3

(Enter Mr. Herzl)

MR HERZL

Medea?

MEDEA

Mr. Herzl?

MR HERZL

Medea!

MEDEA

Mr. Herzl!

Hello!

MR HERZL

Hello!

MEDEA

Wh—
Come in!

MR HERZL

I won't be here long—

(He steps in)

MEDEA

What brings you to Tel Aviv?

MR HERZL

Boring stuff.

Politics.

*You look well–

You look beautiful!

MEDEA

*Politics.

MR HERZL

Politics.

Messy stuff.

MEDEA

You must love your work very much.

To put up with the mess.

MR HERZL

I do.

MEDEA

*Well, Jacob isn't home...

MR HERZL

*I have some good news.

MEDEA

News?

MR HERZL

For you.

MEDEA

Me?

Good news for me?

MR HERZL

Well, I think so.

MEDEA

Is this about Jacob?

MR HERZL

In a way.

MEDEA

Has Jacob said anything to you?

MR HERZL

About...

MEDEA

Well, this morning I found a letter from Jacob saying he's leaving me...

MR HERZL

Yes.

He has.

MEDEA

What did he say to you?

MR HERZL

What do you mean?

MEDEA

About...

MR HERZL

Just that he's leaving you.

I mean luckily you were never *technically* married.

If we're gonna look on the bright side.

MEDEA

The bright side?

MR HERZL

No paperwork.

MEDEA

You know, I haven't talked to Jacob myself.

I'd really like to talk to Jacob before I—

I think we can work things out.

MR HERZL

He sounded resolute to me.

MEDEA

Oh.

MR HERZL

We discussed it.
Briefly.

MEDEA

When?

MR HERZL

Medea, I'm here to give you good news.
To ease your mind a bit.

I want to take you to America.

MEDEA

To America.

MR HERZL

Yes, to live.

MEDEA

Live in America?
No, I live here.
With your son and your grandchildren.

MR HERZL

Yes.
But things have changed.

MEDEA

Mr. Herzl,
I'm not leaving.

MR HERZL

Jacob is leaving you.

MEDEA

It took Jacob over a year—
I already had the twins—
To tell you that we'd been married.

But he chose me.
He chose me over you.

MR HERZL

Medea,
This isn't about me over you, you over me.
This is about what Jacob has decided—
All on his own.

MEDEA

I won't believe that until I talk to him myself.

Jacob may be afraid of you,
But I'm not.
I betrayed my family to be with him.
I'm not letting him go.

MR HERZL

Jacob is leaving you.
He's taking the kids with him.
Ordinarily, you'd be sent back home.
To Gaza.
I'm here to tell you you don't have to go.
I'm giving you a way out—
I don't have to do that.
Take it.

MEDEA

I don't plan for hypotheticals.

MR HERZL

Lose the pride.
Take my help.

MEDEA

I haven't given up.

MR HERZL

You should.

MEDEA

Jacob hates you.

MR HERZL

My son may not like me,
But he respects me.
And he listens to me.

MEDEA

He'll stay.
You'll see.

MR HERZL

I'll make you a deal.
If you convince him to stay,
I'll leave it alone.
If not, you have to come to America with me.

MEDEA

Why do you want me in America so badly?

MR HERZL

I'll be frank.

If it went public that my son married a Palestinian woman after illegally sneaking her across the border, my reputation would be sunk.

I need you to stay quiet.

Do we have a deal?

MEDEA

I want the Caleb and Benjamin.

MR HERZL

Jacob is taking them.

MEDEA

Then no deal.

I'll go back to Gaza.

And I'll take them with me.

They need their mother.

MR HERZL

Jacob will find them a new one.

MEDEA

If you want me in America,

The kids stay with me.

End of discussion.

MR HERZL

That's not possible.

In fact, it's out of my control.

Jacob gets to decide what happens to Caleb and Benjamin,

Not me.

And not you.

MEDEA

I can't talk in hypotheticals.

MR HERZL

Think about what I'm offering.

It's America alone,

Or Gaza alone.

CHORUS

Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,

Something in the air.

MR HERZL

America?

CHORUS

Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Something in the ground.

MR HERZL

Or Gaza?

CHORUS

Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Feel it on your skin.

MEDEA

Get me Jacob.
In person.
And I'll go to America with you.

CHORUS

Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Who is gonna win.

MR HERZL

Deal.

(Exit Mr. Herzl.)

SCENE 4

(A work song inside Medea's mind. Medea builds walls, laying down bricks and smothers them with cement.)

CHORUS

Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Something in the air.
Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Something in the ground.
Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Feel it on your skin.
Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Who is gonna win.

CHORUS 1

Shhhhhhhh...
Never gonna tell
Shhhhhhhh...

CHORUS 2

Never gonna tell
Shhhhhhhh...
Someone's going

MEDEA + CHORUS

Straight to hell.
Straight to hell.

Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Something in the air.
Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Something in the ground.
Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Feel it on your skin.
Hoo-rah, hoo-rah,
Who is gonna win.

(Enter Jacob.)

SCENE 5

MEDEA

You look exhausted.

JACOB

I am.

MEDEA

Why don't you sit down?

JACOB

Ok.

MEDEA

(Silence.)

So...

JACOB

Yeah.

MEDEA

I'm a little confused.

JACOB

Sorry.

I'm no good at these kinds of things.

MEDEA

I know, but we have to talk.

JACOB

Not much of a choice, I guess.

MEDEA

Can I ask...

JACOB

Yeah.

MEDEA

What's going on?

JACOB

What do you mean?

MEDEA

Did I upset you?

JACOB

No, it's nothing in particular.

MEDEA

You left me that awful letter with no explanation.

JACOB

Everything's going to be fine.

MEDEA

Don't you think we should take Caleb and Benjamin to the beach?
I want to see their faces when they see the ocean!

There was a soldier here earlier.

JACOB

I'm sorry about that.
It's protocol.

MEDEA

He's not coming back, right?

JACOB

You should really start packing.

MEDEA

They know we're married.
They know about Caleb and Benjamin.

JACOB

I think it's for the best.

MEDEA

Things have been going so well, Jacob.
This is working.

JACOB

Not for me.

MEDEA

What's happened to you?

JACOB

I'm not proud of myself anymore.

I forgot my priorities when I met you.
I threw them out the window.
Because I loved you,
It was so simple.
It was only,
Medea, Medea, Medea, Medea.

But I'm reminded every day—
When I look into the eyes of my friends
And fellow soldiers—
How I betrayed them.

It's not fair to you, I know.
I'm embarrassed.
I'm a screwup, Medea.

MEDEA

Jacob.
You aren't.
You chose to follow the most
Powerful force:
Love.
So did I.
This was my choice too.
I took a risk coming here with you.
I never imagined it would fall apart.
My head only moved—

JACOB

Forward, right?
Like you can't to anything but dream.
And the reality of our situation
We waved away—

MEDEA

Like flies.

JACOB

Exactly, like flies.

MEDEA

Jacob, look at me.

Please?

JACOB

When I see you I only see
What I failed to give you.

MEDEA

I'm patient.
I know things will get better.

JACOB

It's taken too long.

MEDEA

You're acting like you're the only one with any say here.
This is my family, too.

JACOB

I've thought about what's best for the family.

MEDEA

You never talked to me about it.

JACOB

I knew you wouldn't see it my way.

MEDEA

Forget about me.
Think about Caleb and Benjamin.

JACOB

I am.
They should stay here with me.

This isn't fair to you.
 But the children.
 Think about what's best for them.

MEDEA

What's best for them,
 Is they grow up with both of us.

JACOB

There is no 'us', Medea.

MEDEA

I'm not giving up Caleb and Benjamin.

JACOB

I'm not giving you a choice.

MEDEA

You can't tear me from my children!

JACOB

I can!

And you should be grateful for what my father is willing to do for you. He's giving you a chance to start a new life in America.

MEDEA

You don't get to decide what's right for me, Jacob.

I do.

And you are right for me.

And our children are right for me.

This life—

The one I chose,

And the one you chose with me—

This is the life I want.

It's all I have.

Six years of bearing and rearing children

With my loving husband—

This is my life.

And you think you know what's best for me?

JACOB

I'm looking at this logically.

MEDEA

This isn't about logic.

This is you getting too scared to love me.

This is you putting your career before yourself.

How can you look me in the eye and tell me you could leave me?

You can't.
You love me.
You love our children.
You love our family.

JACOB

I don't.

MEDEA

You don't what?

JACOB

Love you.
Anymore.
I don't.

MEDEA

Well, now I feel like such an idiot.
Here I go,
Spilling my soul to you.
And you don't—

When did you stop?

JACOB

I don't know.
It's complicated.

MEDEA

Are you seeing someone else?

You are.

JACOB

Yes.

MEDEA

Who?

JACOB

Rebecca.
Creon's daughter.

MEDEA

Oh my God.

JACOB

What?

MEDEA

Oh, it all makes so much sense now.
You marry the fucking general's daughter
To get promoted!

JACOB

No—

MEDEA

Yes! YES!
Don't even *try* to deny it.

JACOB

That's not true.
I love her.

MEDEA

What?

JACOB

I'm in love with her.

MEDEA

You don't love her!
You love me!
But your daddy doesn't like me,
And he's convinced you that your life will amount to nothing as long as you're married to me!
So he set you up with the General's daughter to get you promoted because he knew you'd
never be noticed otherwise.
But I love you because of the man you were.
I got through the hell of losing my family because I knew you'd come home every night.
And when we had children I thought to myself, "This is real. I'm not going back. We are a real
family. I can have a normal, happy life!"

How can I ever forgive myself for marrying a spineless, heartless, coward like you!?
I let my guard down.
I betrayed my family for you.

JACOB

I don't care what you think of me, Medea.
Today will be the last I ever see of you,

Thank God.

Caleb and Benjamin will have a new mother who will teach them to forget all about you.
And if, one day, they remember you,
I'll tell them you were the maid,
Or a bad dream.
And you'll disappear.

I love Rebecca and she loves me!
And she will love our children.
And she will bear *more* of my children.

Let me reassure you:
Rebecca knows about you and the kids.
She was reluctant at first,
To marry a man with two children,
but she understands how important they are to me.
She will accept them with open arms,
And so will general Creon.
They both promised me
They will love Caleb and Benjamin like family.

MEDEA

You're naive!
If they enter Creon's home,
They're dead!
You're killing our children!
I won't sit back and watch my children be murdered.

JACOB

This conversation is over.
Pack their things.
A soldier will be by to pick them up.

MEDEA

Do you remember how we fell in love Jacob?
Let me jog your memory.

MEDEA + CHORUS

I open the door to the face of a stranger:
He's tall and he's lanky and handsome and scary.
He looks at me quietly taking me in with confusion.
He's falling in love with a woman from Gaza.

JACOB

Say your goodbyes.

MEDEA + CHORUS

Truth be told, she's no prettier than her sisters

But he is in love and will hear nothing else but
 Medea, Medea, Medea, Medea.
 She cannot speak she is scared for her life.
 She backs up and he enters her home.
 Parents and siblings are sleeping.
 Don't wake them up, come this way.

JACOB

I know you're upset now, but this is for the best.

MEDEA + CHORUS

Please don't let your boots squeak.
 Finger to my lips.
 Please don't wake my family.
 Please don't speak.
 Take me,
 alone.

JACOB

It's the right thing to do.

MEDEA + CHORUS

You
 Loved me.
 And I you.
 I came with you.
 We snuck across the
 Border into Israel.
 All the way to Tel Aviv.
 After that, I never looked back.
 Just Jacob, Jacob, Jacob, Jacob.
 You promised me a life of love and dreams
 You promised me my life would be fulfilling.
 You promised, and lied. You promised, and lied.
 And now you're killing our children.

(Jacob leaves.)

MEDEA + CHORUS

Yer dirt.
 Dirt to the core.
 The graveyard dirt's
 All over the floor.

 Dig yerself a hole,
 And hop into the ground.
 Hope ya voice is loud,
 Or ya wont be found.

MEDEA

Yer rot.
Rot to the core.
Keep me on my toes,
After blows, after blows.

Dig yerself a hole,
And stay in it too.
I'll put dirt in yer mouth.
'Til yer face turn blue.

MEDEA + CHORUS

Yer dirt.
Dirt to the core.
The graveyard dirt's
All over the floor.

Dig yerself a hole,
And hop into the ground.
Hope ya voice is loud,
Or ya wont be found.

(Caleb and Benjamin cry.)

SCENE 6

MEDEA

Caleb! Benjamin!

(Caleb and Benjamin enter.)

Did Mommy and Daddy wake you up?

(They nod.)

I'm so sorry.

(She sits them in her lap.)

Would you like to stay here forever?

(They nod.)

Me too.
Let's do it.
Let's camp out here together and never leave.

CHORUS

What are you doing?
You need to get them ready.

MEDEA

You wont let go, will you?

(They shake their heads.)

CHORUS

You're going to scare them, Medea!

MEDEA

Just the three of us here together,
Happy, happy, happy.

CHORUS

You can't just sit around here.
Maybe just for a minute,
But you need to prepare,
And say your goodbyes.

MEDEA

I will love you two
For the rest of my life.
So don't let me go ok?

CHORUS

You're only going to make this harder.
What's left but to accept it and leave?

MEDEA

I won't watch my children be murdered,
And do nothing—
Run away!—
I won't be running away and leaving my children in the hands of a man who has betrayed
every good word he ever spoke to me.

I will decide what happens to my children.

CHORUS

There isn't anything you can do.

MEDEA

I will decide.

(She begins to write.)

"Dear Jacob,

Let me start with an apology.
 I'm sorry.
 I lost composure with you.
 In my anger;
 My jealousy.
 But it is understandable,
 I think.
 I'm only human.
 In my womanly rage
 I lost the foresight
 That I typically carry with me.
 Now that I've had time,
 To think,
 I can see—
 Not only see—
 Understand,
 Respect, even
 Admire
 Your plan
 For the children,
 For me,
 For yourself.
 The reality is
 The children
 Will be better off
 In Israel
 With you.
 I hope your new wife
 Will accept them
 With open arms.

Can I send the children
 To meet her?
 And her father?
 The sooner they meet,
 The sooner your new family
 Will grow.

As for me,
 I've decided to accept
 Your father's invitation to America.
 I've heard life is good there,
 Let's hope it's true.

Love,
 Medea”

Find a way to get this letter to Jacob.

Now.

Grab their teddy bears.

CHORUS

You have to reconsider.
Look at your children now.
Your heart is too big to hurt them.

(Caleb and Benjamin enter with their teddy bears.)

(Medea take the bears and rips open the seams in the back, pulls out some of the stuffing, and puts the bears down. She reaches into the Earth and pulls out explosives.)

(Medea places the explosives inside the teddy bears and sews them back up.)

MEDEA

If my children are doomed,
I'll at least say how they die.

You have to promise you won't turn your back on me.

CHORUS

We won't.

MEDEA

I need you to wait for the right moment.
You'll know.

They will be alone together.
That's when you detonate.

CHORUS

Ok.
I'll do it.

MEDEA

Shhhhhh.
There's someone here.

(The soldier enters.)

You're back!

SOLDIER

Your children have been summoned by General Creon.
When I've delivered them, I'll come back for you.

MEDEA

Can't I go with them?

SOLDIER

That wasn't in my order.

Hurry up.

I put this off as long as I could.

MEDEA

Let me go with them.

SOLDIER

I have orders to escort you to the airport.

You'll be flown to America.

MEDEA

Let me.

SOLDIER

This is a letter from Jacob.

MEDEA

(Reading.)

"Medea,

Thank you for the thoughtful letter.

Sometimes it's hard to remember you're human,

Because you carry yourself

Like a God.

But you are human,

And I forgive you.

I know I can be

Inaccessible,

And difficult,

But I only want what's best

For everyone.

Thank you for recognizing that.

I cannot express

How happy I am

To hear you've had a change of heart.

The children will live

Their fullest lives

With Rebecca and me

In the house of the military—

They will be safe.

Rebecca will meet the children today.
 She was hesitant at first,
 Understandably.
 But I told her to think of them
 As extensions of me,
 And to love them
 As she loves me.

Rebecca loves me, Medea.
 And the truth is,
 I've fallen for her.
 I'm sorry if this
 Breaks your heart,
 But you deserve the truth.
 I won't hide it from you.

Medea, you are
 Unlike anyone I've ever met.
 But while I respect you,
 I fear you.
 And fear doesn't mix
 With love.
 I only wish you the best.
 Please send the children
 With the soldier
 A.S.A.P.

Sincerely,
 Jacob"

This isn't the man I married.

(Medea collapses.)

The man I married was more like you, soldier.
 Would you do this to the woman you love?

(Soldier says nothing.)

I guess it's time to send the children away.

(Caleb and Benjamin enter.)

Soldier, I'll need a moment alone with them, if you don't mind.

(The soldier leaves.)

(Medea hugs Caleb and Benjamin.)

Ok, listen boys.
 A man will be here to pick you up soon.
 But don't be afraid.
 He's a nice man.
 He's going to take you to see daddy
 And when you're with daddy
 You'll get to do whatever you want:
 Eat baklava, run around, play with your bears—
 Whatever you like.
 It's going to be fun, I promise.
 And I'll meet you where daddy is.
 And the four of us will go to the beach,
 And make a castle,
 And eat ice cream,
 And get tans,
 And watch the sunset,
 And tell stories,
 And make friends,
 And nap for as *long as we want*.
 Does that sound fun?

(Caleb and Benjamin nod.)

(She hands them their teddy bears.)

Take good care of these and never let them go, ok? Promise me.

(They nod.)

I love you both very much.

(She embraces them for the last time.)

(Children leave.)

(Medea sings a lullaby.)

SCENE 7

(Medea climbs into the pile of dirt, fully submerges herself up to the neck, and closes her eyes. Jacob enters with a green plastic watering can. Medea pokes her head out of the ground and beams at the sun. Jacob pours water on Medea's face.)

MEDEA

No! Jacob. / How many times-

JACOB

I know. I'm sorry, I forgot.

MEDEA

Do I have to say it. Not on the face.

JACOB

The roots.

MEDEA

The roots. Water the roots.
Now my face is going to burn.

JACOB

I'll dry your face off.

(He removes his shirt and uses it as a towel.)

MEDEA

That's rough!

JACOB

Sorry!

(Medea stares at shirtless Jacob.)

MEDEA

It's ok.

(Pause.)

JACOB

What's it like in there?

MEDEA

It's warm.

JACOB

That sounds nice.

MEDEA

Well, it's too warm.
Like suffocating.
And it's moist.

JACOB

Oh, I guess that doesn't sound nice.

MEDEA

Can you pull me out?

JACOB

Won't you die?

MEDEA

I don't know.

JACOB

Ok.

We'll work on it together.

It'll be our project.

MEDEA

I'd like that.

JACOB

You want some chocolate?

(Jacob pulls chocolate out of his pocket.)

MEDEA

The sun is enough, but thanks.

(She stares at shirtless Jacob.)

You know I'm naked under here.

JACOB

You are?

MEDEA

Yeah. What do you think of that?

JACOB

I like that.

MEDEA

I wish I could get out of here.

Like now.

JACOB

Me too.

You're really naked?

MEDEA

Yeah.

JACOB

Whoa. That's crazy.

I'm standing right here.
And you're right there.
And you're naked.
I like that.

You're basically naked right in front of me right now.

MEDEA

So you should really get me out of here right now.

(Jacob begins to dig around Medea's neck.)

But slowly, you goof.

JACOB

How did you get down there anyway?

MEDEA

I planted myself.

JACOB

Why?

MEDEA

I took a chance.
I thought I would bloom.

JACOB

Well, you're kind of blooming.

MEDEA

I'm not.

JACOB

You are.
You're beautiful.

MEDEA

Thank you.

JACOB

This is going to take awhile.

(This is the moment Medea met Jacob. They remember simultaneously.)

MEDEA + JACOB

i should be scared to feel this much
but im not scared

im not scared either
i feel i shouldn't be thinking what im thinking

what are you thinking

im thinking about all the things i want to do with you

like what

like build a house

and

i dont want to say
well i want to but
ill scare you away

you won't
im with you now

well
build a house

yes

and
i dont know
start a family

yes

and
you can teach me how to cook your favorite foods
and
ill teach you how to cook mine
and we can live near the water
and swim together at midnight
and if it gets cold we can be cold together
and if we eat too much and get full we can be full together
and ill have some small job
that doesn't pay a lot
and that will be fine
and you'll have whatever job you want
and learn things you want to learn
and that will be perfect
and we wont need anything else
thats what i want

i should be scared
but im not

(Medea steps out of the dirt and walks with Jacob to the beach in Tel Aviv for the first time. They aren't sure if the sun is rising or setting.)

(Shadows approach. Jacob notices and sees a figure resembling Mr. America accompanied by a woman.)

Who is it, Jacob?

MR. AMERICA:
(To the woman.)

Come on out, dear.

(A young Israeli woman steps out of the shadows.)

Jacob, this is Rebecca.

(Silence.)

(Jacob ignores them.)

Jacob. Don't ignore me.

(Jacob ignores them.)

Jacob! Introduce yourself to Rebecca! Now!
Stop being a jackass.

JACOB
I'm married already.

REBECCA
She's a Palestinian so...no you aren't?

JACOB
Leave me alone.

REBECCA
Why don't you look at me first.
And *then* tell me to leave you alone.

JACOB
No.

REBECCA
Aren't you dying to know what I look like?

JACOB

No.

MR. AMERICA

Don't be a pussy.

JACOB

I'm married already.

MR. AMERICA

Jacob, just look.

(He doesn't.)

You couldn't possibly be my son. Not a pussy like you. You're grounded. Sit in your corner.
The dank one.

JACOB

You can't—

MR. AMERICA

I can whatever I want.

JACOB

You can't ground me!

MR. AMERICA

Oh, yes I can.
As long as you're a member of this family,
I can do whatever I want to you.

JACOB

I'm an adult now.

MR. AMERICA

If you didn't have me, Jacob,
You'd have nothing!
Every time you take one step forward,
Just remember who was pattin' your rear,
Greasing the gears,
Lighting the way.
It was daddy.

JACOB

I don't need you to help me with anything anymore.

MR. AMERICA

Oh, *noooooo*.
Of course not.

You make your own decisions, go ahead.
 I know you'll never do anything stupid...
 Like sneak a Palestinian into Israel,
 Or marry her,
 Or have kids with her.
 I know you'd never do anything to put your family,
 Friends,
 Or country in jeopardy.
 You wouldn't.
 And that's why I say, "ok".
 You can make your own decisions now.

(Jacob grabs Mr. America's head and shoves it into the ground. Rebecca runs, screaming.)

JACOB

I LOVE MY WIFE!

(To Medea, relaxed.)

I love you.

MEDEA

I love you too.

(He let's Mr. America go.)

MR. AMERICA

I'm going to be sick.

JACOB

Get out. Get out! GET OUT!

(The shadows retreat.)

(Silence.)

MEDEA

Really, Jacob.
 That's how it should have gone.

JACOB

I know it is.

I'm so sorry.

MEDEA

It's ok.

JACOB

Where are Caleb and Benjamin?
Sleeping?

Medea.

Where are they?

MEDEA

I don't know.

JACOB

I'm sorry, you know?
For everything?
I'm sorry.
Can I please see them?

(Medea exhumes the bodies of two puppets, Caleb and Benjamin.)

Can I touch them?
Hold them?
Can you hear me?

MEDEA

They can't.

JACOB

Can you hear me?
Oh, they're so beautiful, Medea.
Boys, you have your mothers arms.
That's why you're so strong.
And your mother's eyes.
That's why you're so keen.

MEDEA

We were bad parents, Jacob.

JACOB

You have my have teeth.
That's why you're so handsome.
You've got good teeth—

(An explosion.)

(Medea wakes up.)

(Chorus enter with a box.)

Medea pulls out toys one by one and buries them in the dirt in a mourning ritual. They could be anything: plastic dolls, planes, cars, toys for the beach, and then...small articles of clothing like hats, shorts, tee-shirts, little sunglasses.

While Medea performs the ritual, the chorus sings a kind of requiem. It's like a gospel-chant.

Blackout.)

(As Medea talks, we shift back to the world of the Prologue.)

MEDEA

Jacob had killed them
 Without knowing.
 At birth they
 Tore me apart.
 So much pain
 For so much beauty.
 It's men who never know
 A child's power,
 How they wage war
 On our bodies,
 And yet come out,
 So harmless.
 Men only see the peace.
 Oh, sure, they may fight
 With their children,
 Exchange blows,
 and sharp words.
 But those are shallow wounds.
 It's the mother who suffers.
 But we endure,
 For love.
 For love of our children
 Is our greatest love.
 Strong enough to forgive
 Childbirth.
 My children taught
 Their father what
 Pain is.
 Children who scar their mother in birth,
 And their father in death.

EPILOGUE: The war is over.

(Burial ground.)

SOLDIER

I remember now.

I took your children to Creon's house.
 They behaved well enough. Nothing suspicious.
 When we arrived, Jacob was waiting outside.
 He brought the three of us to Creon who opens his mouth wide
 And says, "Ah! Here they are! Your Arab children!"
 Jacob laughs a little. "Yes." He says.
 Creon asks if either of them want a cookie.
 "They're cute." He says.
 They were too shy to answer.
 Creon says to Jacob, "I need to have a private word with your boys."
 Jacob didn't say anything he just stared at Creon.
 "Jacob, the kids have to go." He said.
 He shut the door on us.
 Then we heard the explosion.
 The door was torn off its hinges and
 Its splinters turned me into a porcupine.
 I blacked out after that.

Blown to millions of iron vapors floating through the air
 Landing on our tongues.
 I tasted your children.
 They entered my body.
 And they stayed their.
 Your own flesh and blood in me,
 Forever.
 I felt closer to you after that, and farther away from god.

You should leave these corpses alone.
 They're not your children.

MEDEA

They're all my children.

(The soldier helps Medea tend to the corpses.)

SOLDIER

I was a soldier serving on the border of Gaza.
 At night— my buddies and me—
 Every night we're stationed in tanks along the fence.
 Commander mutters our usual order: fire on houses at will.
 We shoot at Gaza to make it behave.
 When the sun gives enough light,
 we see the houses riddled with constellations of bullets.
 The stillness.
 No movement, no animals.
 Eventually, the people come out of their holes.
 Some throw fruitless stones,
 but we shoot and they
 scatter.

MEDEA

You make it sound so simple.

SOLDIER

After a while, it became simple.
Until you.

(They tend to the corpses.)

(Blackout.)

END OF PLAY

Epilogue

A post-show reflection

It's been a little under a week since the first reading of *Medea of Gaza* was performed for an audience of Connecticut College students, faculty; friends and family. I've been having trouble deciding what to call the event: it's more than a staged reading, but less than a full production. David Jaffe, chair of the Theater Department phrased it nicely: it's an "activated staged reading". This title suggests more engagement with the material than a play reading.

Indeed, the cast has taken a journey with the script. The *Medea* they first read on the weekend of March 1st and 2nd, then titled *bastardMEDEA*, is an entirely different play from the one read on the weekend of April 25th and 26th.

On the weekend of March 1st and 2nd, we discussed the script at length as a collective brain. Maybe I wasn't part of that collective brain. Maybe everyone else in the room was the collective and I was a separate entity evaluating their reactions and then responding to their questions. It was through the guidance of my director, Molly Clifford '13, that the cast was able to respond in a constructive and informative way. This proved invaluable to me, because over Spring Break, major rewrites would be completed based on the first two intensive days of rehearsal.

In a very short time, the cast was working with a new script...and a new title. *Medea of Gaza* is a title with layers. The reference to Medea gives it a certain expectation. Euripides' *Medea* is a

well-known story about a woman who murders her children. The “*of Gaza*” portion makes it clear this is an adaptation of Euripides’ *Medea*, not an exact retelling. The reference to Gaza also gives us a context: we know this is an Arab Medea. The title also pays homage to its dramatic predecessors, mimicking the structure of the title *Helen of Troy*.

Getting to this title proved difficult. I had to decide what key information should be shared with the audience before they see the play. Revising the title of the play is something I have avoided in the past. I’ve started with the title, writing plays that, by the end, seem to have nothing to do with the words that introduce it. For this project, a nonsense title simply would not have been adequate.

During the rehearsal process, I learned a tremendous amount about how little I know. At times, it felt like someone had cored the part of my brain that I use for theater. An actor asks me a question and I’m speechless. Not only do I not have an answer, but my brain isn’t even trying to formulate one. My director asks me to clarify and I can’t. I can’t explain any better than *it’s what I felt*. When I wrote that line it’s what *felt* right at the time.

I had to start asking myself big questions. Scary, scary questions that fill me with doubt. That line— is it bad? Or has the actor not had enough time with it? How will I ever know? When I make rewrites, am I killing my instincts? Is it ruining the play?

A simple line change means so much to me because of its implications. If I change a line, does that mean I’ve fractured the holy first draft? Was there some part of my soul living in the untouched first draft? And if I edit out my soul, what happens to the soul of the play? Does the soul of the play belong to me anymore? Maybe it belongs to my director and my cast. Maybe I need to trust them.

Or maybe I need to ignore every change they give me, because they simply don’t understand my genius yet. But they will. They will push through their frustration and become enamored with my text.

This is not the truth of playwriting.

I took many, many line changes; happily. It felt good to clarify a moment that made sense in my head, but didn't crystalize in speech.

By surrendering a large part of this play to my director and cast, I felt some liberation. Caution: a side effect of Freedom is Doubt.

Doubt became a powerful enemy in the rehearsal process. It caused me to shut down, disengage, and become judgmental.

That look on an actor's face— that means they *bate* what I've written. They *loatb* speaking my words. They *know* a solution; a line change. But they won't share it because that's not their place.

Why could they see what the play could be, but I couldn't? Why couldn't they tell me how to fix it?

These questions have no answer, yet I was consumed by them. This anxiety drove me to reevaluate my position as the playwright in the rehearsal room. I discovered that my presence wasn't always ideal— for me, or the cast, or for the director. I began to leave rehearsal after hearing new material or seeing newly staged material. This gave my team an opportunity to work without my lingering eyes and it gave me a chance to recover some of my confidence.

These feelings aren't uncommon to playwrights. We all get self-conscious now and again. In the moment, the sensation can be crippling. At times, I thought I'd made a mistake taking on such a herculean task as writing an adaptation of *Medea*, a masterpiece; setting it in a modern-day political context; and writing a strong female role for the first time. I guess I like the deep end.

In the past, I've wandered into the unknown, terrified, only to find treasure somewhere along the way. I underestimated how unknown this process would be. I've worked in the theater for years now. I've watched playwrights go through this very process. I thought I could tackle a play without any major trauma. How things changed when I put the playwright's hat on. Without

thinking it was the unknown, I plopped into the water and sunk to the bottom of the ocean. It's dark down there.

When I arrived at the ocean floor, I opened my eyes and realized I would have to swim to the surface. I knew that I'd make it, I just didn't know how.

I had relinquished control of the play to my director and actors. Here was my opportunity to let my team play the play. And they did. Every performance became more nuanced. I could see my play breathing and growing in the mouths of each actor. Suddenly, without any control over the material, I became proud again. I could see it wasn't perfect, and that was a perfect feeling. The cogs behind the play became clear to me. I could see which scenes were falling flat and I could *almost* see why.

Soon enough, it was time to put this play in front of an audience. Here's what I observed: the audience responded to the Prologue with a mixture of amusement and silent concentration. It's difficult to say if the scene would ever play with laugh-out-loud moments, but there was an energy around Peter's performance. Scene One clearly set up the plot, but I felt Medea falling flat. Her interaction with the chorus struck me as false. I'm not sure what the solution is. The scene has been rewritten so many times, I need to let it stew for awhile.

Scene Two: Medea and the Soldier got some of the first real laughs. I was glad to hear the audience laugh. It gave Medea and the Soldier a real moment together, establishing a curious relationship.

I won't go scene by scene to describe the whole play, but overall, I felt the desire for further development of certain scenes. Scene Three with Mr. Herzl felt too brief, as did Scene Two. I've never been good at writing long scenes, but that's something I look forward to trying in the future.

I was most pleased by the audience's reaction to the dream sequence starting at Scene Seven. This absurdist departure gave the first real overt humor and established Medea's relationship to

Jacob and Jacob's relationship to the children. I think it effectively humanized the both of them. My voice as a playwright emerged on these pages. I transcended my research and responded to the story of Medea with my own artistic choices.

Ending the play with Medea and the Soldier brought the play full-circle. I felt a bit of surprise each night when we were brought back to the Prologue/Epilogue world. I hope the audience found it conclusive. I think they did. To me, watching the Soldier engage with Medea was a gratifying way to end a tragic story.

The playwriting journey is new to me. "It made me feel excited—/Well, excited and scared" – Stephen Sondheim, *Into the Woods*. A week ago, I might have said I'll never write another play. But, like mothers forgive the pain of childbirth, I might give it another go.

Annotated Bibliography

PLAYS

Akhtar, Ayad. *Disgraced*. Back Bay Books. NYC. 2013. Print.

This play won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It marks the story of a lawyer confronting his Pakistani Muslim heritage as well his relationship with his wife, a white American artist.

I found this play to be useful as an inspiration for the sensitivity but raw honesty it conveys while dealing with a current hot topic. It covers a lot of disturbing material from American perception of Muslims, inequality in the workplace, racism, love, and abuse.

While my play is of a very different style, the contents are similar and it explores related subjects. I hope to achieve as much dramatic grace as *Disgraced*.

Divine Fire: Eight Contemporary Plays Inspired by the Greeks. Edi. Caridad Svich. Back Stage Books. New York, NY. 2005. Print.

This is a collection of plays inspired by the Greeks. I read Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*. It was a useful to read Sarah Ruhl because of the bizarre but super-specific worlds she creates. Her imagination is endless. It was an inspiring read.

Euripides. *Medea*. Trans. Svarlien, Diane Arnson. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis, Indiana. 2008. Print.

This is the story of Medea. It's the first translation (and best) I've read. It was the original inspiration for the play. The story of a woman who betrays her family for love, enters a new country where she is an outsider, has two children, and is then abandoned by the man she gave up her life to be with...that's an interesting story...and that's only the exposition. Medea is a woman who makes the decision to kill her husband's new wife and then takes the lives of her own children. The severity of her action is obvious, but what's not so obvious is why she goes to such extremes. Understanding the 'why' behind Medea has become a fascination for me. She is alone and in exile, an impossible position to be in, but when she manages to find sanctuary with King Aegeus, why does she not leave with her children and start a new life? She can spare everyone's lives! But then her husband would be getting away scot-free. So she kills his wife,

preventing him from having any children by his new wife. Then, to end his bloodline, she kills their children.

I wanted to explore a Medea who is given no option in the matter. I was interested to explore this new Medea in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because I knew so little about it, because it's a current event, because I wanted to explore my own Judaism, and because I wanted to write a Medea with a new dynamic. In my play, she's a terrorist who decides she'd rather take control of her children's fate than leave it in the hands of her soldier husband and his murderous general.

This translation has given me so much inspiration, ranging from use of language, to structure. It's been a wonderful jumping-off point.

McLaughlin, Ellen. *The Greek Plays*. Theatre Communications Group, Inc. New York, NY. 2005. Print.

Ellen McLaughlin's Greek plays are faithful to the originals in intent while also playing on the Greek style, developing her own voice within the idiom, and presenting it clearly to American audiences.

Reading her plays has helped me enormously in finding elements of Greek-style playwriting. The heightened language and imagery in these plays have carried over the most into my *Medea*.

Mee, Charles L. *History Plays*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, Maryland. 1998. Print.

Like Sarah Ruhl, Charles Mee is enormously creative in his adaptations. In this collection, I read his *The Trojan Women: a Love Story*. It was useful in that it tells the story of Trojan Women while changing so many key elements. He adds characters and makes the world his own.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH and BOOKS

Berko, Anat. *The Smarter Bomb: Women and Children as Suicide Bombers*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Lanham, MD. 2012. Print.

This book is based on a long series of interviews conducted by author Anat Berko. It's a fascinating look into the minds of women who either tried to kill themselves or were involved in a suicide attack. Each woman has a unique voice and reasoning. Some would rather die than live in certain circumstances. Some women are divorcees. Some have been abused physically and mentally. Some have attended university. Some have experienced many of these things. Some tried to get arrested because life in Israeli prison, for them, might be better than life at home in Palestine.

This book was an eye-opening look at the reasons real women become terrorists or criminals. I've been able to use this book to find new elements of Medea's voice.

While this book has a lot of information, some of it must be taken with a grain of salt because it very clearly leans toward Israel.

Chomsky, Noam; Ilan Pappé. *Gaza In Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against Palestinians*. Edit: Barat, Frank. Haymarket Books. 2010. Print.

This book compiles essays by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé. It sheds light on Gaza, Israeli policy, and the history of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

Though relatively short, the essays are packed with explosive information critical of Israel. It was useful to me for getting a fuller picture of Israel's intentions since the 1880s, various key players, and the injustice Palestinians are subject to in the present.

The book is very critical of Israel and doesn't paint a totally fair picture of the conflict. It definitely has an agenda. That being said, it is a recent publication with a voice that isn't shared nearly enough in the mainstream media.

Collins, Larry; Lapierre, Dominique. *O Jerusalem*. Simon & Schuster, Inc. NYC. 1972. Print.

This novel gives voice to a multitude of narratives in Jerusalem revolving around 1947-48, two formative years for Israel and the Arab nations surrounding it. We read about the conflict from many Arab perspectives and many Jewish perspectives. While being historically accurate, it is also written as an engaging story.

This novel was a useful example in developing multiple voices in one story. It successfully takes out the need for a 'good-guy' or 'bad-guy'. The characters (all non-fiction) have their story told equally. I hope to achieve some level of balance similar to this.

While dramatized, it stays historically accurate and informative. I didn't finish it because I felt no need to read more about this specific moment in time.

Dershowitz, Alan. *The Case For Israel*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Hoboken, NJ. 2003. Print.

This book is exactly what the title suggests: a pro-Israel argument that attempts to deflect Israel's failures. It argues that Israel is being held at too high a standard when compared with humanitarian records of other countries.

I didn't find it very useful, so I didn't read very far! It read with a strong agenda for a voice I've heard all too often.

Marcus, Amy Dockser. *Jerusalem 1913: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. The Viking Press. NYC. 2007. Print.

This book is a history of the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Dockser hypothesizes that 1913 was the critical year; a point of no return for growing tensions between Arabs and Jews in the region that is now Israel. The book outlines the Zionist movement and the politics behind it, while also giving a narrative voice to Arabs in the region.

I found this book useful as a starting point. It gave me a historical context for the conflict while also introducing some key players.

Dockser is perhaps the most unbiased of any author I've read on the conflict. This book seems to be historically accurate while also adding some personal dramatization and insights into some events.

Pekar, Harvey; Waldman, JT. *Not the Israel My Parents Promised Me*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2012. Print.

This is a graphic novel about a young Jewish American with parents who were avid Zionists—even though they'd never been to Israel. Pekar, the co-author and protagonist of the story comes to realize his perception of Israel was misguided. In this graphic novel, Pekar reevaluates his identity as a Jew. He relates to us his struggle with Israel's history and how his point of view changes people's perception of him. Interspersed in Pekar's story is a quick-version history of Jews throughout time.

The usefulness of this story didn't have to do so much with the historical content as it had to do with an individual journey. Pekar is reevaluating himself much in the way I am. He is interested in justice and isn't afraid to be the unpopular voice.

This book was a well-crafted work with a strong-voiced narrator. The way Pekar questions is similar to ways the Soldier character questions the past.

Shlaim, Avi. *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations*. Verso Books. London, Brooklyn, NY. 2009. Print.

This book is openly critical of Israel. It seemed to be factual but a one-sided and unbalanced, like the Dershowitz but on the left. I didn't read much of it.

Waller, James. *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. Oxford University Press, Inc. New York, Ny. 2002. Print.

Becoming Evil is a book exploring how average, unremarkable people become capable of remarkable evil. It's an interesting read but ultimately isn't anything immediately useful for this project that I haven't gotten from other sources.

FILM/DOCUMENTARY

Ajami. Copti, Scandar; Shani, Yaron. Kino International. 2009. Film.

This is a fictional film comparable in style to *Crash* (2004). It begins with multiple narratives— Israeli and Arab— and eventually we learn how the stories are related. It's a tragic movie with a lot of death; a bleak look at the conflict as it exists within Israeli borders. The audience comes to understand the connections in the story before the characters do. This leads to a frustrating conclusion of mistaken identity, lack of communication, and misunderstanding that leads to death.

While the story is fictional, it was useful for understanding friction between Jews and Arabs living in Israel.

Budrus. Bacha, Julia. Balcony Releasing. 2009. Film

Budrus is a documentary about the town of Budrus, in the West Bank. The village was losing land to Israeli settlement construction, so Palestinians began peaceful protest. When the movie begins, Israel has built a fence shutting out Palestinians from their land. This is the story of how the village comes together and achieves success in getting the fence moved back. Notably, women prove to be the town's most effective force of protest, enduring attack by the IDF.

This documentary was extremely useful in learning what kind of woman Medea might be. She may be a woman involved in peaceful protest; someone used to fighting for what they want— someone with pride.

Control Room. Noujaim, Jehane. Magnolia Pictures. 2004. Film.

This is a documentary about the war in Iraq and how information is disseminated to American audiences. What is the U.S. Army telling the public versus what is happening on the ground?

While it doesn't have to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict, I watched this film to get an idea of how the media shapes how Americans view middle eastern politics. It also led me to look up Al Jazeera, a news resource with unflinching looks into Middle Eastern politics.

Defamation. Shamir, Yoav. First Run Features. 2009. Film.

This documentary explores anti-Semitism today from the perspective of an Israeli who hasn't experienced it before. Shamir follows a group of Israeli students on a trip to Europe where they will visit Nazi camps. He reveals the way anti-Semitism is drilled into the Israeli youth so they expect it...whether it's there or not. He also travels to the United States to meet with the Anti Defamation League, the problems they tackle, and how serious the anti-Semitism really is.

I found this documentary useful as a way to identify Jewish self-victimization. It puts the seriousness of the Holocaust on the table as a key factor in this attitude. The director takes us on a journey of discovery, which makes us feel like his findings are fresh. To me, they were.

I'd say this source has an agenda, but I'm having trouble saying exactly what that is. The director aims to show that Jews aren't letting go of the past and are letting it effect the way politics are conducted.

Encounter Point. Bacha, Julia; Avni, Ronit. Just Vision Films. 2006. Film.

Encounter point is a documentary about dedicated Israelis and Palestinians meeting to figure out how to achieve peace. These activists spread their peaceful message in their communities and reach out to individuals who might be hard to convince that peace is the best option.

This documentary made it clear to me how many dedicated individuals are working on both sides of the conflict. There are people who believe that peace is possible and who actively work to achieve it.

While it has an agenda, it's a peaceful one. I can't fault it for that.

5 Broken Cameras. Burnat, Emad; Davidi, Guy. Algeria Productions, Burnat Films, Guy DVD Films. Kino Lorber, 2011. Film.

5 Broken Cameras is an extraordinary documentary about a Palestinian man, Emad, who is documenting protests against the IDF when they build a wall onto Palestinian land, ruining ancient trees, destroying homes, and stealing land. We watch what seems like a futile effort to stop Israel from building. It's a matter of technology. Israel has massive construction tools and the Palestinians have their bodies. Over the course of the film, we watch his cameras get broken during the heat of protest. We watch his friends get killed and his children grow older. We watch this village never lose hope.

This may have been my first visual taste of what protests are like in the West Bank. It opened my eyes to the horrors of the situation, and gave me a new perspective to share in my work.

The documentary is very emotionally effective. It definitely has an agenda critical of Israel.

Gaza Strip. Longley, James. Arab Film Distribution. 2002. Film.

Gaza Strip follows a young man through some daily routine in the Gaza Strip. That makes it sound simple and easy, but the daily routine in Gaza is a harrowing experience. This documentary was filmed in 2002, when Israel still occupied Gaza. Frequent fights broke out that often ended in deaths of children. The young man in the film is very young but carries himself like an adult. He didn't have a childhood. We get to see the restrictions placed on Palestinians by Israel and how destitute many are.

I found this film useful for understanding what life is like in Gaza as compared to the West Bank. The resistance to Israel at this time was very different than in the West Bank. Here, it's not about land as much as it is about freedom to move freely and access to basic human

necessities. (These are also problems that plague the West Bank.) It's provided more of a social context for me to understand Medea's past.

Agenda: critical of Israel.

The 50 Years War: Israel and the Arabs. Ash, David; Richards, Dai. PBS. 1999. Film.

This is a detailed history of the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1948. It's a long piece with an enormous amount of historical accuracy.

I used this book as a history lesson; a review of names.

It's slanted toward Israel, in my opinion.

Leila Khaled Hijacker. Makboul, Lina. First Hand Films. 2006. Film.

This is a documentary about the female terrorist, Leila Khaled. She was part of a team who hijacked an airplane, asked the passengers to disembark, and then blew up the plane. She became a female icon for the Palestinian struggle. She is interviewed for the documentary. She underwent several plastic surgeries because she wanted to participate in more hijackings and didn't want to be recognized. She now lives peacefully with her husband and children in Jordan.

Leila Khaled is a influential example of a woman taking action in protest. She is a figure Medea would know by name; a kind of a role model. Was her protest good or bad?

This film is definitely sympathetic to Leila Khaled and paints her as an intelligent, independent, and brave woman.

My Terrorist. Gestrel, Yulie Cohen. Women Make Movies. New York, NY. 2008. Film.

This documentary follows Yulie, an Israeli woman who witnessed a deadly terrorist attack and was almost killed. She decides, year later, to write to her terrorist and to express sorrow for the circumstances that brought him to make such a terrible decision. This response is highly abnormal, which is why Yulie Gestrel decided to document herself as her story unfolded. She gets in contact with her terrorist and even flies to the United Kingdom (where he's doing jail time) to meet him. She tries to get other Israelis to understand why she is taking the approach she is taking.

This was useful to me as an example of how an individual comes to change her mind about a heavy and highly personal topic. Gestrel decides to break the revenge-based cycle of violence. The argument for that approach is key to understanding how difficult a decision Medea has to make.

Paradise Now. Abu-Assad, Hany. Warner Independent Pictures. 2005. Film.

This is a fictional film about two young Palestinian men who are summoned to be suicide bombers. They each go through a personal crisis about whether or not it's the right thing to do. The movie is part suspense/thriller and part an exploration of terrorism, the ideals behind it, the personal motive, the politics involved, the consequences, and sacrifice.

These men, like Medea, have to make life and death decisions in very little time. The gentlemen are given 24 hours notice and must begin preparing immediately. This drama was useful to see. It paints the ordinary 'bad guy' as a three-dimensional character. It sheds historical and social light on the Palestinian perspective.

This drama humanizes terrorists, which may seem pro-Palestinian, but really it's an exploration of the aforementioned themes.

Rachel. Bitton, Simone. *Women Make Movies*. 2009. Film.

Rachel is a documentary trying to uncover the truth behind an American protester, Rachel, who was killed while protesting in Gaza. It mainly tells the perspective of Palestinians as well as the foreign protestors. They interview many who claim to have been there when Rachel was killed. They also try to get the Israeli government to shed some light on the situation, but aren't able to get very far. The protestors claim she was killed purposefully, and Israel claims it was an accident.

This movie was useful for understanding the tone some Israeli authorities speak with when talking about Palestinian affairs. The voice is key for me in understanding some of what the Soldier and Jacob are used to saying and hearing.

This film is highly critical of Israel. It's useful tonally, but is perhaps a little too slanted.

Rashomon. Kurosawa, Akira. *The Criterion Collection*. 2012. Film.

Rashomon is a fictional film that plays with narrative. It follows a few men trying to find the truth of a story involving a criminal, a nobleman, and the nobleman's wife. Each man has a different perspective on the story. We see each version of the story played out fully. Ultimately, the film brings us to the present, where the men are struggling with their own lives.

This film successfully breaks traditional form of a film and involves multiple perspectives and unreliable narrators. These are factors I've been dealing with in *Medea*. Who is telling the story? What is their agenda? How has their life experience shaped how they view the present?

Roadmap to Apartheid. Davidson, Eron; Nogueira, Ana. *Journeyman Pictures*. 2012. Film.

This documentary compares the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to apartheid in South Africa. It does an effective job of delineating between the two and not saying they are exactly the same. It's effectively a warning, pointing out dangerous signs that in South Africa led to death and destruction because of prejudice (among other things).

It was a useful movie to watch, but didn't have much practical purpose. It's very critical of Israel.

Soraida, A Woman of Palestine. Rached, Tahani. Women Make Movies. 2004. Film.

This documentary follows Soraida, a Palestinian woman in the West Bank town, Ramallah. We spend time with her family and friends, hearing them talk about Israeli occupation and how it has shaped their lives. Soraida was an active protestors but when she became a mother, she took on the mother role. The Israeli occupation shapes their daily lives and can't be escaped.

Medea takes a page out of Soraida's book. She's a strong mother who changed her life to be a mother and would give anything to her children.

This documentary is very critical of Israel.

Tragedy in the Holy Land. Mueller, Denis. MPI Home Video. 2002. Film.

This documentary is a historical piece. It is very critical of Israel.

Waltz With Bashir. Folman, Ari. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. 2008. Film.

This is an animated movie about Israeli soldiers trying to remember the Lebanon War with particular emphasis on the Sabra and Shatila Massacre of 1982. His mind has blocked out that period of his life and the film is an attempt to recover the lost memories. Ari Folman, who plays himself, feels guilt for the massacre even though it was not him directly committing the atrocities. This film is a painful look at a dirty history and the despicable murder of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese civilians.

Folman is most similar to the Soldier, who wants to find peace with his past. Folman's is a story of discovery and reevaluation.

Woman. Hamzeh, Ziad H. Hamzeh Mystique Films. 2007. Film.

This documentary is about Bouthaina Shaaban, a Syrian politician who advocates for peace. As well receiving a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, she has taught at a university and changed the lives of many individuals she's come into contact with.

Bouthaina Shaaban is an inspiring figure for Medea. The chorus transforms into Shaaban when Medea's mind is running through the philosophical reasons to kill or save her children. My Shaaban-based chorus tries to talk sense into Medea.