The Medea of Euripides and Seneca: A Comparison

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THE MEDEA OF EURIPIDES AND SENECAS: A COMPARISON

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Loyola University

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION: SURVEY OF OPINION

It is not a new theory that Seneca used the plays of Euripides as models for his Latin tragedies, particularly his Medea, Hippolytus, Hercules Furens, Troades and the Phoenissae. Yet the most cursory comparison shows a wide gulf, not only in point of time, but also in alterations executed in plot treatment and character delineations. A point of even greater differentiation is the matter of presentation. Seneca's plays were not acted; they were recited.1 Yet in spite of the fact that the "burden was placed upon the language" and so became rhetorical declamations, Seneca, nevertheless, "followed the path along which Euripides led."2

These differences will perhaps be better understood if viewed at first historically. Both Euripides and Seneca lived in turbulent times.

1. Moulton, R. G., "The Roman Revival of Tragedy" in The Ancient Classical Drama, p. 203: "The Roman plays are clearly not intended for acting, and not arranged for the stage. . . . . Such dissociation from the stage is a disturbing force of the first magnitude."

2. Beck, Charles, Medea, a Tragedy of Seneca, p. iv: "A comparison of the principal Greek tragic poets on the one hand, and Seneca on the other, will, it is believed convince everyone that there is not so broad and deep a chasm between them as is commonly supposed--all perfection on one side, and failure on the other,--but that there is in the three tragic poets of Greece a development perceptible, succeeded by a decline of which the best tragedies of Seneca are but a continuation, and by no means a distant one."
The Athens of Euripides had passed through a political reaction. She had just performed "magnificent exploits against Persia" which had aroused anew Athenian patriotism and gave it expression in art, drama, painting, sculpture and architecture. But this impulse was not long lived. With the Peloponnesian War, decadence set in and Athens began to descend from her height of achievement. Yet she continued to be great in politics and literature; but the wound inflicted by the sudden change left its scar on men's souls and bred a definite cynicism to which Euripides often alludes in his works.

Careful as Augustus had been to respect the old customs of the Roman Republic, repeated conquests made by the Romans during the first century, tended only to "undermine the old republican form of government and substitute an imperial monarchy which became a military despotism." There was no longer the freedom of action and of speech of the Ciceronian Forum. Politics were dangerous, and the government "produced despots rather than philosophical statesmen." As in the days of Augustus, Rome continued to draw all talent to itself and literary activities converged on the practical business of life. And so we find that the stateman and the litterateur of the Neronian court realized the harmlessness of the mythological legends, even though they were warped by repeated use, and used them as a safe avenue for his philosophical tenets. The Roman mind, never as imaginative and poetical as the Greek, lacked the ability and power to unmask, and hence these legends in their hands are devoid of the
verve and immortality of their Greek predecessors.

This historical summary will perhaps suffice to point out the causes for the marked differences in the two tragedies under consideration.3

The question of authorship of Seneca's tragedies has been a much mooted one. It will not be necessary to take up this point at length since the "Senecan question" is still an open one, and the controversy stands. A number of views are held: Seneca the tragedian and Seneca the philosopher are two distinct personages; Lucan, the nephew of Seneca is the author of the plays; they are the production of several authors; and, finally, they have been written by one who assumed the name of Seneca.4 Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria gives us direct testimony on the authenticity of the Medea:

"Interrogamus... aut invidiae gratia, ut Medea apud Senecam, Quas peti terras jubes?"5

3. Chapman, John Jay, ed.: Greek Genius and other Essays, Euripides and Greek Genius, by Professor Gilbert Murray, Chapter VII, p. 126: "Consider wherein Rome differed from Greece. The life of the Romans was a patchwork, like our own. Their religion was formal, their art imported, their literature imitative; their aims were practical, their interests unimaginative. All social needs were controlled by political considerations."

4. Beck, Charles, Medea, a Tragedy of Seneca, from the Introduction: p. vi-ix: "In the course of these remarks, allusion has several times been made to the opinion, that these ten tragedies are productions of several authors. Even a moderate knowledge of the language and a superficial perusal of the plays will suggest this view, and a more careful investigation will tend to confirm it, and reduce it into a more definite shape."

Saintsbury, George, in the History of Criticism and Literary Taste, Vol. I, p. 245, "But I have never, as a critic, been able to believe Seneca wrote them."

5. "Quas peti terras jubes" occurs in the second scene, of the third act of Medea of Seneca, l. 453.
Kingery sums up the question as follows:

"The opinion now prevails that the 'Octavia' is not Lucius Seneca's and that the other nine are his, with the possible exception of the 'Agamemnon' and the 'Hercules Oetaeus'."  

Perhaps the greatest link between the two tragedies is their "common interest in speculative philosophy and in live humanity." Both were moralists and moderns; both employed similar stylistic devices; both were past masters in depicting dramatic situations; both used elaborate descriptive and declamatory passages; both plays abound in epigrams and sententious dialogues; in long rhetorical exaggeration; in bombastic speeches, frequently in the form of monologues; and in reflective philosophic diatribes used by both Chorus and characters. Seneca "not only adopted, but even enlarged upon the many innovations" in tragic art, serious departures credited to Euripides. Both received little mention

6. Kingery, Hugh Macmaster, Three Tragedies of Seneca, p. 13, continues: "Of external evidence in support of this conclusion we have the mention of Seneca as a poet by Quintilian, Pliny and Tacitus, the citation of Medea as his by Quintilian, the ascription of four other tragedies... to him by well-known writers in the early centuries... and the negative fact that we have no proof of the existence of a separate Seneca 'tragicus'. Of internal evidence we have the occasional reference to contemporary events in which Seneca was deeply interested; the close parallel in philosophical principles and general tone of thought between the tragedies and the prose works which are indisputably his; and the identity of literary style."

7. Rogers, B. B. translation of "The Frogs" Vol. IX, p. 438 in the Harvard Classics says: "The Frogs' was produced the year after the death of Euripides and laments the decay of Greek tragedy which Aristophanes attributed to Euripides. Here, as elsewhere, he stands for tradition against innovation of all kinds, whether in politics, religion or art. The hostility to Euripides, ... is a result of his attitude of conservatism."
from their contemporaries, yet both have been imitated throughout the ages. Seneca's "historical function was to be a link between the incipient modern drama and Hellenism, which could not be directly accessible, or indeed, intelligible, so long as Greek study was in its infancy."

This study then is an attempt to further establish the probability, and to lay a sounder basis for the belief, that the analogies which the Latin tragedy bears its Greek prototype cannot be considered as happening by mere chance as properties common to tragedy in general, but tend to reveal Seneca's indebtedness to his Greek predecessor.

8. Chapman, J. B., Euripides for Today in The Living Age, Vol. 313, p. 220-222 says: "Imitated by the writers in every land to which Greek culture has penetrated, the play itself still maintains its primal vigor upon the stage today, depicting as it does with unparalleled power the eternal tragedy of the woman scorned."


Hamilton, Edith, The Roman Way, p. 241 comments: "If literature is made up of the best, Seneca is unimportant for Latin literature, but the kind of drama he was the first to write has kept its popularity unimpaired down to today, and if great influence makes a great literary figure, he stands close to the first rank."
Chapter II

SIMILARITIES IN MOTIF AND SENTIMENT

Aristotle says of tragedy:

"Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events terrible and pitiful. . . . A perfect tragedy should be arranged on the simple not complicated plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation. . . . A well-constructed plot should, therefore, be single, rather than double as some maintain. The change of fortune should not be from bad to good, but, reversely, from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty. . . . They are in error who censure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily. It is, as we have said, the right ending. The best proof is that on the stage and in dramatic competition, such plays, if they are well-represented, are most tragic in their effect; and Euripides, faulty as he is in the general management of his subject, yet is felt to be the most tragic of poets."

It can by no means be inferred from this appraisal of Euripides's work that Aristotle was wholly in accord with Euripides's change of form and change of spirit. What Aristotle does mean when he refers to Euripides as "the most tragic of poets"


Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, x. 1. 68. p. 39, speaking of Euripides says: "... although admirable in every kind of emotional appeal, he is easily supreme in the power to excite pity." Loeb Classical Library, English translation by H. E. Butler.
is that the third of the tragic writers conformed to the requirements of the ending of the tragedy, since Euripides had a "preference for sad endings." "Nothing is here for tears" can no longer be applied to the last of the tragedians. Like his predecessor, the "Latin disciple" carried out to an even greater degree the injunction of Aristotle for a sad ending. But, unlike Euripides, pathos plays little or practically no part in his plays. Stoic philosophy forbids this, "for it is difficult to pity those who feel no pity for themselves." In almost every circumstance, he makes successful attempts to out-rival his precursor in scenes of horror. In both plays the two children are killed by Medea, but Seneca fails to follow the advice Horace gives in the Ars Poetica:

"ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet."

Medea mounts the height of the balcony and slays the children of Jason in the very sight of their father. In Euripides she has at least the good grace to do the blood curdling act behind the scenes. From the opening lines of Seneca's play, Medea threatens horror upon horror and the final catastrophe is the culmination of horror.\(^2\)

\(^2\) Lucas, Frank L., Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy, The Tragedies of Seneca, Chapter III, p. 57-58, says: "The reason for this change is to be sought not only in the greater natural brutality of the Roman mind; if only to make up for the unreality of this ultra-academic drama the author tries to be vivid by being lurid, to stimulate the jaded imagination of his public by screaming atrocity."
Characteristics first found in Euripides and foreign to ancient tragedy led Aristotle to add: "and Euripides, faulty as he is in the general management of his subject. . . .", and caused Aristophanes to banter and caustically criticize the youngest and last of the tragic writers:

"Your kings in tatters and rags you dressed, and brought them on, a beggarly show To move forsooth, our pity and ruth."\(^3\)

"Moreover, to prate, to harangue, to debate, is now the ambition of all in the state. Each exercise-ground is in consequence found deserted and empty; to evil repute Your lessons have brought our youngsters, and taught our sailors to challenge, discuss and refute The orders they get from their captains, and yet, when I was alive, I protest that the knaves knew nothing at all, save for rations to call and to sing 'Rhyppapae' as they pulled through the waves."\(^4\)

Seneca would have been open to the same criticism, since he, like his precursor in tragedy, sacrificed the dramatic element and made it wholly subservient to description, setting, oratory and rhetoric.

Drama, to be such, must conform to certain rules and standards, must have certain earmarks. There must be a declamatory element present for emphasis; descriptive passages for elucidation and effect; aphorisms, epigrams, and sententious remarks punctured with philosophy to fit in with the pattern of current

4. Ibid., p. 473.
debate. Both writers had all these, but in comparison there is in the one a "finesse, refinement and purity" wholly lacking in the other.

Macaulay says: "The sure sign of the general decline of an art is the frequent occurrence, not of deformity, but of misplaced beauty. In general tragedy is corrupted by eloquence."

This then is the general criticism hurled at Euripides and four hundred years later at his imitator. Both were rhetoricians and sacrificed "propriety for rhetorical display." And it is this point that will be compared from the first. This is what Aristophanes chides him for when he says:

"Hah! sayest thou so, child of the garden queen! And this to me, thou chattery-babble-collector; Thou pauper-creating rags-and-patches-stitcher? Thou shalt abye it dearly!"5

"Chattery-babble-collector" can hardly be applied to Euripides. His characters do argue like Athenian pleaders, but they do not babble. They are lifelike characters pleading their point, and it is this pleading and arguing that makes them more lifelike. "It is the true rhetoric of persuasion." Never do they lose their identity. And it is here that Seneca's rhetoric differs from Euripides's. Seneca's characters plead and argue in the same way--puppet fashion--no matter who the character is. Each speech is turned into a declamation, and weighted with mythology.

and philosophy, no matter who may be making the speech, or what
may be the situation.6

Stichomuthia, or "line-for-line repartee", another Euripidean brain child, gives Seneca opportunity to become rhetorical, and time and again these passages become epigrammatic and caustic. More so than Euripides, Seneca's repartee is, however, "polished and sharpened to thrust and parry like a rapier, to stab like a stiletto."

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<tr>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> Thou too hast grief. Thy pain is fierce as mine.</td>
<td>Nurse: The Colchians are thy foes; thy husband's vows have failed; Of all thy vast possessions not a jot is left.</td>
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<td><strong>Medea:</strong> I love the pain, so thou shalt laugh no more.</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> Yet I am left.&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>Jason:</strong> Oh, what a womb of sin my children bore!</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> Thou wouldst remove the hated wanton once thy wife.</td>
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<td><strong>Medea:</strong> Sons, did ye perish for your father's shame?</td>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> Dost thou reproach me with a guilty love?</td>
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<td><strong>Jason:</strong> How? It was not my hand that murdered them.</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> Yea, that, and murder too, and treachery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> 'Twas thy false wooings, 'twas thy trampling pride.</td>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> But name me now, If so thou canst, the crimes that I have done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> Thou hast said it! For thy lust of love they died.</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> Thy crimes whatever I have done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> And love to women a slight thing should be?</td>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> Why then, in truth, thy guilt must all be mine, if all thy crimes are mine.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> To women pure!--All thy vile life to thee!</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> Think of thy torment. They are dead, they are dead!</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong></td>
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6. Godley, A. D., Senecan Tragedy in English Literature and the Classics, ed. by G. S. Gordon, p. 234, says: "As he works on the lines of Greek tragedy, following in the main the plot laid down by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, we find him always doing the same thing--giving a situation, trying to say the most brilliant, the most erudite, the most generally striking things about it."

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<tr>
<th>Euripides</th>
<th>Seneca</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jason: No; quick, great God; quick</td>
<td>Medea: They are. They are all</td>
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<td>curses round thy head!</td>
<td>thine; for who by sin advantage gains,</td>
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<td>Medea: The Gods know who began this</td>
<td>Commits the sin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>work of woe.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason: Thy heart and all its loaths-</td>
<td>Jason: &quot;What wouldst thou have me do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>liness they know.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medea: Loathe on. ... But, Oh, thy voice.</td>
<td>Medea: For me? I'd have thee dare the law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It hurts me sore.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason: Aye, and thine me. Wouldst hear me</td>
<td>Jason: The royal power doth compass me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>then no more?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medea: How? Show me but the way. 'Tis this</td>
<td>Medea: A greater than the king is here;</td>
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<td>I crave.</td>
<td>Medea. Set us front to front and let us</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason: Give me the dead to weep, and make</td>
<td>strive; And of the royal strife let</td>
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<tr>
<td>their grave.&quot;8</td>
<td>Jason be the prize.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medea: &quot;There is no other way.--I pardon</td>
<td>Nurse: &quot;The king must be revered.</td>
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<td>thee thy littleness, who art not wronged</td>
<td>Medea: My father was a king.</td>
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<td>like me.</td>
<td>Nurse: Dost thou not fear?</td>
</tr>
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<td>Leader: Thou canst not kill the fruit</td>
<td>Medea: Not though the earth produced the</td>
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<td>thy body bore!</td>
<td>foe.</td>
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<td>Medea: Yes; if the man I hate pained the</td>
<td>Nurse: 'Thou'lt perish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>more.</td>
<td>Medea: So I wish it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader: And thou made miserable, most</td>
<td>Nurse: Flee!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miserable?</td>
<td>Medea: I'm done with flight. Why should</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medea: Oh, let it come! All words of</td>
<td>Medea flee?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good or ill Are wasted now.&quot;9</td>
<td>Nurse: Thy children!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medea: Whose, thou know'st.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse: And dost thou still delay?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Medea: I go but vengeance first.&quot;12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long speeches and grave sententious sayings, labelled with philosophic tags, abound in both authors:

9. Ibid., p. 47, l. 851-855.
11. Ibid., p. 98, l. 515-18.
12. Ibid., p. 87-88, l. 168-173.
Euripides

Nurse: "... little they reck of their mother's woes, for the soul of the young is no friend to sorrow." 13

Nurse: "Undone, it seems are we, if to old woes fresh ones we add, ere we have drained the former to the dregs." 14

Att.: "Old ties give way to new." 15

Nurse: "Strange are the tempers of princes, and may be because they seldom have to obey, and mostly lord it over others, change they their moods with difficulty. 'Tis better then to have been trained to live on equal terms." 16

Nurse: "Moderation wins the day first as a better word for men to use, and likewise it is far the best course for them to pursue; but greatness that doth o'erreach itself, brings no blessing to mortal men; but pays a penalty of greater ruin whenever fortune is wroth with a family." 17

Nurse: "... but no man hath found a way to allay hated grief by music." 18

Seneca

Nurse: "The man who heavy blows can bear Insolence, biding still his time with patient soul. Full oft his vengeance gains. 'Tis hidden wrath that harms; But hate proclaimed oft loses half its power to harm." 19

Medea: "But fortune fears the brave, the faint of heart o'erwhelms." 20

Nurse: "The man who hopes for naught at least has naught to fear." 21

Nurse: "'Tis well to yield to fate's decree." 22

Medea: "Though fate may strip me of all, myself am left." 23

Medea: "Unrighteous sovereignty has never long endured." 24

Medea: "Who judges and denies his ear to either side, Though right his judgment, still is himself unjust." 25

Medea: "Trust not in kingly realms, since fickle chance may strew Their treasures to the winds." 26

14. Ibid., p. 35, l. 76.
15. Ibid., p. 35, l. 78.
16. Ibid., p. 36, l. 113-117.
17. Ibid., p. 36, l. 119.
18. Ibid., p. 38, l. 190.
20. Ibid., p. 87, l. 158.
21. Ibid., p. 87, l. 163.
22. Ibid., p. 88, l. 175.
23. Ibid., p. 88, l. 176.
24. Ibid., p. 88, l. 196.
25. Ibid., p. 89, l. 200.
26. Ibid., p. 89, l. 222.
Euripides

Jason: "How unruly a pest is a harsh temper." 27

Jason: "Many an evil doth exile bring in its train with it." 28

Medea: "My love was stronger than my prudence." 29

Medea: "Whoso hath skill to fence with words in an unjust cause, incurs the heaviest penalty." 30

Jason: "Never let happiness appear in sorrow's guise, nor when thy fortune smiles pretend she frowns." 31

Medea: "A villain's gift can bring no blessing." 32

The central idea of the Medea is spoken sententiously and both Euripides and Seneca "adduce man's proneness to act on their desires in spite of all deterrents."

Medea: "Go, leave me; I cannot bear to longer look upon ye; my sorrow wins the day." 33

Medea: "How hard the task to turn the soul from wrath when once to wrath inclined." 37

Medea: "Yes, now I see the final deed of crime, and thou my soul must face it." 38

28. Ibid., p. 45, l. 466f.
29. Ibid., p. 46, l. 484f.
30. Ibid., p. 48, l. 579f.
31. Ibid., p. 49, l. 603ff.
32. Ibid., p. 49, l. 618ff.
33. Ibid., p. 62, l. 1078ff.

34. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 95, l. 428.
35. Ibid., p. 95, l. 430.
36. Ibid., p. 95, l. 433.
37. Ibid., p. 89, l. 203.
38. Ibid., p. 111, l. 923.
Descriptive passages, portraying places, objects, persons real or otherwise, abound in both Euripides and Seneca as a means for "rhetorical ornamentation."

**Euripides**

At the opening of the play the Nurse describes Medea's condition, her overwrought emotions and uncontrolled passions.39

In the First Episode, Scene One, Medea gives a preview of the state of affairs and the final outcome of her nursed passion.40

Creon, upon meeting Medea, describes her mental and physical state.41

Again, in the Third Scene of the First Episode, Medea reiterates her plan, and muses in retrospect.42

She continues musing and describes her younger self in the home of her royal parent. She makes this description in the presence of Jason.43

Jason retorts descriptively, stating minutely the advantages Medea has derived by coming to Athens.44

**Seneca**

The Nurse describes elaborately Medea's preparation for the magic rites.45

Medea describes the Moon goddess of her vision during the incantation ceremony.46

There is description of the persons, people and events during the incantation ceremony.47

Medea describes the effect her magic art produces.48

Medea's prayer and hideous offering she is making to Hecate is described at length.49

The places to which Medea contemplates flight after her final deed of vengeance is completed are minutely described.50

The mountains and rivers from which the potent drugs come are described.51

41. Ibid., p. 17, l. 267f.
42. Ibid., p. 22-24, l. 373-424.
43. Ibid., p. 27-29, l. 481-545.
44. Ibid., p. 29-31, l. 547-611.
45. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 103, l. 670-739.
46. Ibid., p. 107, l. 787-792.
47. Ibid., p. 105-108, l. 740-849.
49. Ibid., p. 108, l. 831-845.
50. Ibid., p. 96, l. 451-457.
51. Ibid., p. 105, l. 720-727.
Descriptions which are primarily emotional occur with greater frequency in Seneca. Numerous descriptions of "revolting horror" are found in Seneca, whose power for blood curdling accounts far exceed and out-rival the power of any master of tragedy who preceded him.

Multiple are the descriptions. But perhaps no one stands out more graphically and more poignantly than the Messenger's description in Euripides of the subtlety of the graded steps that led to Creusa's inhuman death, and the death of Creon: the utter destruction of the royal house.52

To the ancients, a curse "presupposes the supernatural as well as a prayer." Euripides makes dramatic use of curses, oaths and imprecations. And Seneca, writing for an audience upon whom the "supernatural element connected with imprecations had still a hold upon the popular imagination", followed closely and religiously his model, employing the oath and curse freely. Medea's proud and daring spirit is made more proud and daring and even more bold in supplication by prayers and passionate oaths and curses.

Euripides

Medea: "O Zeus! let not the author of these my troubles escape thee."53

Seneca

Medea: "Ye crime-avenging furies, come and loose your horrid locks with serpent coils

52. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 64-68, l. 1202-1313.
Euripides

Medea: "Great Themis, and husband of Themis, behold what I am suffering now, though I did bind that accursed one, my husband, by strong oaths to me."54

Aegaeus: "By earth I swear, by the sun-gods holy beam and by all the host of heaven."55

Jason: "Perish, vile sorceress, murderess of thy babes!"56

Medea: "Curse you and your father too, ye children damned."57

Jason: "Curses on thee!" 58

Jason: "On me the gods have hurled the curse that dogged thy steps."59

Jason: "The curse of our sons' avenging spirit and of Justice, that calls for blood, be on thee!"60

Nurse: "While Medea, his hapless wife, thus scorned, appeals to the oaths he swore, recalls the strong pledge his right hand gave, and bids heaven be witness."61

55. Ibid., p. 54, l. 752f.
56. Ibid., p. 70, l. 1544-45.
57. Ibid., p. 36, l. 107-108.
58. Ibid., p. 69, l. 1331.
59. Ibid., p. 69, l. 1335-36.
60. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 71, l. 1389.
61. Ibid., p. 33, l. 17ff.

Seneca

Medea: entwined, and grasp with bloody hands the smoking torch; be near as once ye stood in dread array beside my wedding couch."62

Medea: "Upon this new-made bride destruction send, and death Upon the king, and all the royal line."63

Medea: "But he, My husband, may he live to meet some heavier doom; This curse I implicate upon his head; may he through distant lands; in want, in exile wander, scorned and houseless."64

Jason: "O sacred justice, if in heaven thou dwellest, Be witness now, that for my children's sake I act."65

Medea: "Now Jove, throughout thy heavens let the thunders roll! Thy mighty arm in wrath make bare! Thy darting flames of vengeance loose, and shake the lofty firmament With rending storms! At random hurl thy vengeful bolts, Selecting neither me nor Jason with

63. Ibid., p. 83, l. 17.
64. Ibid., p. 83, l. 18.
65. Ibid., p. 95, l. 440-41.
Seneca

Medea: thy aim; That thus whoever falls may perish with the brand of guilt upon him; for thy hurtling darts can take No erring flight."68

Medea: "Now let my life-blood flow! And let my hands be used to draw the deadly sword, And learn to shed beloved blood."69

Jason: "But, witness heaven, where thou art gone no gods can be!"70

In describing feelings there is in Seneca little variety. Scenes of horror abound and apart from the general theme, references to death are multiple.

Euripides

Chorus: "Death cometh though no man pray, Ungarlanded, unadored."66

Chorus: "But all the darkness and the wrong Quick deaths and dim heartaching things Would no man ease them with a song Or music of a thousand strings."67

Chorus: "Woman, what mak'st thou here, Thou from beyond the

66. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 11, l. 155f.
67. Ibid., p. 13, l. 186f.

Seneca

Medea: "I supplicate the silent throng, and you, the gods Of death's sad rites. Of gloomy Pluto, and the black abyss of death Girt by the banks of Tartarus!"71

Chorus: "but his head down Hebrus' grieving stream was borne. The well-remembered Styx he reached, And Tartarus, whence ne'er again he would return."72

69. Ibid., p. 107, l. 807.
70. Ibid., p. 114, l. 1028.
71. Ibid., p. 105, l. 740ff.
72. Ibid., p. 102, l. 63ff.
Euripides

Chorus: gate where dim Symplegades
clash in The dark blue seas,
The shores where death doth wait?"73

Chorus: "A mother slew her babes in
days of yore, One, only one,
from dawn to Eventide, Ino,
god-maddened, whom the Queen
of Heaven set frenzied, flying to the dark."74

Figures of speech play a large part in the rhetorical plan
of Seneca's dramas. Smiley, in his article "Seneca, and the
Stoic Theory of Style" says that his use of simile, metaphor
and personification is, however, "not more frequent than Homer's
use of the same figures."

Euripides

Similes

Nurse: "She lends as deaf an ear to
his friends' warning as if
she were a rock or ocean
billow."75

Nurse: "She glares upon her servants
with the look of a lioness
with cubs, whensoe anyone draws
nigh to speak to her."76

Seneca

Chorus: "Blind is the rage of pas-
sion's fire, Will not be
governed, brooks no reins,
And scoffs at death;"77

Chorus: "When in her train of court-
ly maidens she mingles--
Like the bright sunshine
paling the starry splendor,
or the full moonlight
quenching the Pleiads' bril-
liance, So does she shine,
all peerless, of fair ones
the fairest."78

73. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 70,
l. 1347ff.
74. Ibid., p. 71, l. 1362ff.
75. Coleridge, Ed. P., op. cit., p. 34,
l. 29.
76. Ibid., p. 38, l. 184.
77. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit.,
p. 101, l. 591ff.
78. Ibid., p. 85, l. 94.
Euripides

Similes

Jason: "Needs must I now, it seems, turn orator, and, like a good helmsman on a ship with close-reefed sails weather that wearisome tongue of thine." 79

Nurse: "As some wild Bacchanal whose fury's raging fire The god inflames, now roams distraught on Pindus' snows, And now on lofty Nysa's rugged slopes; so she Now here, now there, with frenzied step is hurried on, Her face revealing every mark of stricken woe, With flushing cheek and sighs deep drawn, wild cries and tears, And laughter worse than tears." 81

Medea: "As when conflicting winds contend in stubborn strife; and waves, to stormy waves opposed, the sea invade, and to their lowest sands the briny waters boil; With such a storm my heart is tossed." 82

Jason: "Hate, like a shield She bears, and in her face is pictured all her woe." 83

Nurse: "That cry is but the herald of the gathering

Metaphors

Nurse: "Beware her savage moods, the fell temper of her reckless heart." 80

Nurse: "Thy heart all passion-tossed, I pray thee,

80. Ibid., p. 36, l. 103.
82. Ibid., p. 111, l. 939.
83. Ibid., p. 96, l. 449.
84. Ibid., p. 95, l. 427.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nurse:</th>
<th>storm-cloud whose lightning will soon flash.*85</th>
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<tr>
<td>Medea:</td>
<td>&quot;For my enemies are bearing down on me full sail, nor have I any landing-place to come at in my trouble.&quot;*86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chorus:</td>
<td>&quot;Never, O, never, lady mine, discharge at me from thy golden brow a shaft invincible, in passion's venom dipped.&quot;*87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurse: Personification</td>
<td>&quot;Perdition catch him!&quot;*88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurse: Personification</td>
<td>&quot;Greatness that doth o'er reach itself, brings no blessing to mortal man; but pays a penalty of greater ruin whenever fortune is wroth with a family.&quot;*89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason: Personification</td>
<td>&quot;Never let happiness appear in sorrow's guise, nor, when thy fortune smiles, pretend she frowns.&quot;*90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medea: Personification</td>
<td>&quot;Fortune smiles upon thy bride.&quot;*91</td>
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</table>

**Nurse: mistress, soothe, and calm thy troubled soul."*92**

**Jason: But what resistance can we make, If war with double visage rears her horrid front."*93**

**Medea: Then passion, gird thyself, Put on thy strength, and for the issue now prepare."*94**

**Nurse: No star of hope points out the way from these our woes."*95**

**Medea: Nay, nay, let fortune, when she will, my doom decree."*96**

**Nurse: When will the foaming wave of fury spend itself?"*97**

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86. Ibid., p. 40, l. 278.
87. Ibid., p. 50, l. 630.
88. Ibid., p. 35, l. 82.
89. Ibid., p. 36, l. 127.
90. Ibid., p. 49, l. 601.
91. Ibid., p. 59, l. 966.
92. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 95, l. 427.
93. Ibid., p. 98, l. 525.
94. Ibid., p. 84, l. 57.
95. Ibid., p. 87, l. 162.
96. Ibid., p. 90, l. 1242.
97. Ibid., p. 94, l. 393.
### Euripides

**Personification**

Chorus: "When in excess and past all limits Love doth come, he brings not glory or repute to men." 98

Medea: "On me may chastity, heaven's fairest gift, look with a favoring eye." 99

Medea: ". . . passion, that cause of direst woes to mortal man, hath triumphed o'er my sober thoughts." 100

### Seneca

**Personification**

Medea: "My princely gift to Greece is Orpheus, that sweet bard, Who can the trees in willing bondage draw, and melt the crag's hard heart." 102

Jason: "O heartless fate, if frowns or smiles bedeck thy brow, How often are thy cures far worse than the disease they seek to cure." 103

Medea: "O changeful fortune, thou my throne Hast reft away, and given me exile in its stead. Trust not in kingly realms, since fickle chance may strew Their treasures to the winds." 104

### Other figures of speech found in both authors follow:

**Irony**

Medea: "Zeus, why hast thou granted unto man clear signs to know the sham in gold, while on man's brow no brand is stamped whereby to gauge the villain's heart?" 101

Medea: "A glad welcome, I trow would they give me in their home.

**Irony**

Medea: "But gifts which sin has bought 'twere shame to take." 105

Medea: "Go now, and take these maids for wives, thou faithless one: Abandon and betray the mother of thy sons." 106

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99. Ibid., p. 50, l. 632.
100. Ibid., p. 62, l. 1075.
101. Ibid., p. 46, l. 521.
103. Ibid., p. 95, l. 1433.
104. Ibid., p. 89, l. 220.
105. Ibid., p. 98, l. 504.
106. Ibid., p. 113, l. 1007.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Irony</strong></td>
<td><strong>Irony</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> whose father's death I compassed!&quot;(^{107})</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;If now to homeless exile thou dost send me forth, give back the countless treasures which I left for thee!&quot;(^{114})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jason:</strong> &quot;Then wouldst have lent me ready aid, no doubt, in this proposal, if I had told thee of my marriage, seeing that not even now canst thou restrain thy soul's hot fury.&quot;(^{108})</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;He might at least have sought his wife with one last word of comfort.&quot;(^{115})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;May that prosperity, whose end is woe, never be mine, nor such wealth as would ever sting my heart.&quot;(^{109})</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Metonymy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Metonymy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;On all sides sorrow pens me in.&quot;(^{110})</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;Who judges and denied his ear to either side Though right his judgment, still is he himself unjust.&quot;(^{116})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nurse:</strong> &quot;... .verily the man that doth incur her hate will have no easy task to raise o'er her a song of triumph.&quot;(^{111})</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;Now lash thy soul with memory's scourge.&quot;(^{117})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;For my enemies are bearing down upon me full sail.&quot;(^{112})</td>
<td><strong>Creon:</strong> &quot;Go, speed thy flight, thou thing of evil, fell and monstrous!&quot;(^{118})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;So I will wait yet a little while in case some tower of defense rise up for me.&quot;(^{113})</td>
<td><strong>Medea:</strong> &quot;These treasures let Medea's children bear as gifts to Jason's bride.&quot;(^{119})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

108. Ibid., p. 48, l. 588.
109. Ibid., p. 49, l. 599.
110. Ibid., p. 43, l. 365.
111. Ibid., p. 34, l. 43.
112. Ibid., p. 40, l. 278.
113. Ibid., p. 44, l. 388.
114. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 97, l. 490.
115. Ibid., p. 95, l. 419.
116. Ibid., p. 89, l. 199.
117. Ibid., p. 86, l. 129.
118. Ibid., p. 88, l. 191.
119. Ibid., p. 100, l. 575.
Fond of playing on words, antithesis is never absent from the works of these writers:

**Hippocrates**

**Antithesis**

Creon: "For a cunning woman, and man likewise, is easier to guard against when quick tempered than when taciturn." 120

Medea: "Wherefore whoso is wise in his generation ought never to have his children taught to be too clever; for besides the reputation they get for idleness, they purchase bitter odium from the citizens." 121

Medea: "For if thou shouldst import new learning amongst dullards, thou will be thought a useless trifler, void of knowledge; while if thy fame in the city o'ertops that of the pretenders to cunning knowledge, thou wilt win their dislike." 122

Medea: "My love was stronger than my prudence." 123

Medea: "O'er men's minds gold holds more potent sway than countless words." 124

**Seneca**

**Antithesis**

Medea: "Lo, all the doors which I, for thee, have opened wide, I've closed upon myself." 125

Medea: "Thou bid' st me flee But show' st no way or means of flight." 126

Chorus: "Our Thessalian prince excels, In beauty of form and face, Even Bacchus, the son of the fierce flaming one, Who yokes the wild tigers in place." 127

Chorus: "Not by Alpheus' sacred stream, Nor Boeotias' musical water, Is there any fair who can compare With our lovely Corinthian daughter." 128

Medea: "But fortune fears the brave, the faint of heart O'erwhelms." 129

Medea: "The man who hopes for naught at least has naught to fear." 130

121. Ibid., p. 41, l. 294.
122. Ibid., p. 41, l. 297.
123. Ibid., p. 46, l. 484.
124. Ibid., p. 59, l. 965.
125. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 96, l. 448.
126. Ibid., p. 96, l. 460.
127. Ibid., p. 85, l. 82.
128. Ibid., p. 85, l. 78.
129. Ibid., p. 87, l. 159.
130. Ibid., p. 87, l. 163.
Euripides

Antithesis

Medea: "'Tis no proof of courage or hardihood to confront thy friends after injuring them, but that worst of all human diseases—loss of shame."131

Medea: «...to my mind, whose hath skill to fence with words in an unjust cause, incurs the heaviest penalty; for such a one, confident that he can cast a decent veil of words o'er his injustice, dares to practice it; and yet he is not so very clever after all."132

Seneca

Antithesis

Medea: "If now thou judgest, hear me; if thou reign'st, command."133

Medea: "While, poised upon her heights, the central earth shall bear The heavens up; while seasons run their endless round, And sands unnumbered lie; while days, and nights, and sun, And stars in due procession pass while round the pole The ocean-fearing bears revolve, and tumbling streams Flow downward to the sea; my grief shall never cease To seek revenge and shall forever grow. What rage of savage beast can equal mine?"134

In the use of geographical names, the Roman tragedy differs greatly. The Greek tragedians made infrequent use of geographical names for the purpose of ornamentation. It has been computed with indefatigable care and count that Seneca makes use of more than seven hundred proper names or adjectives of persons, peoples, places, countries, cities, mountains, and rivers that have mythological, historical or geographical reference. In the Medea alone there are two hundred seventy-seven. In comparison

132. Ibid., p. 48, 1. 579.
133. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 88, 1. 196.
134. Ibid., p. 94, 1. 401.
Euripides's Medea has only one hundred thirty-six such references.

One point that has become somewhat of an obsession with Euripides finds little of its counterpart in Seneca—the subject of education. Seneca merely hints at Medea's abilities and powers. However, in her incantation ceremony her knowledge of sorcery and magic bewilders us.

Euripides

Medea: "Wherefore whoso is wise in his generation ought never to have his children taught to be too clever; for besides the reputation they get for idleness, they purchase bitter odium from the citizens." 135

Medea: ". . . for a cunning woman and man likewise, is easier to guard against when quick tempered than when taciturn." 136

Medea: "Thou hast cunning; and more than this, we women, though by nature little apt for virtuous deeds, are most expert to fashion any mischief." 137

Seneca

Creon: " . . . Uniting in thy person woman's fertile wit, And man's effective strength." 138

Medea: "'Twas by my arts that they, The monsters, fell by mutual blows." 139

This turn in Euripides is an echo of the movement in the direction of woman's suffrage, and an attempt at liberation from the bondage by which woman had been held up to the time of the Peloponnesian War.

136. Ibid., p. 42, l. 320.
137. Ibid., p. 44, l. 409.
139. Ibid., p. 96, l. 470.
Commenting on Seneca's style, Tacitus observes that it "hit off the taste of his contemporaries, and epitomised the tendencies of his day." Quintilian, the critic par excellence, is undoubtedly thinking of Seneca's prose, and is making his deductions from a rhetorical point of view. But just as Seneca's stoic philosophy in his prose carries over to his philosophy in his tragedies, so does his prose style differ very little from that of his plays. Quintilian says:

"Seneca had many excellent qualities, a quick and fertile intelligence with great industry and wide knowledge, though as regards the last quality he was often led into error by those whom he had entrusted with the task of investigating certain subjects in his behalf. He dealt with almost every department of knowledge. But in philosophy he showed a lack of critical power, but was none the less quite admirable in his denunciation of vice. But his style is for the most part corrupt and exceedingly dangerous, for the very reason that its vices are so many and attractive.

"But even as it is, he deserves to be read by those whose powers have been formed and firmly moulded on the standards of severer taste, if only because he will exercise their critical faculties in distinguishing between his merits and his defects." 140

To Seneca, the lengthy periods of Cicero and the Golden Age are anathema. His redeeming feature is the short pithy sentence. But Caligula calls these "sand without lime." But then one need

140 Quintilian x. i. 125-131. The Loeb Classical Library. English translation by H. E. Butler.
not worry about Caligula's condemnation. Seneca followed the dictum of the Stoic theory of style: "to speak well is to speak the truth." He believed that anything to be "ideal, whether speech or conduct must be in harmony with nature." Eliot, in his interesting essay on "Seneca in Elizabethan Transitions", says of both Euripides's and Seneca's style:

"The beauty of a Greek phrase in Greek tragedy is the shadow of a greater beauty—the beauty of thought and emotion. In the tragedies of Seneca the center of value is shifted from what the personage says to the way in which he says it."

Eliot continues in the same strain and adds that "an essential point to make about Seneca is the consistency of his writing, its maintenance on one level, below which he seldom falls and above which he never mounts."

Apart from the rhetorical side of the development of the tragedies, it is difficult to compare our two writers as to style peculiarities since a period of four hundred years separated them. Differences do obtain particularly in the medium of language, metres, and general development. The ethical problem played the first part in the development of Euripides's plays, and this, critics maintain, "was the source of almost all his literary faults." Quintilian's criticism is again the criticism of the rhetor. Speaking of both Sophocles and Euripides he says:

"... they differ in style, but it is much disputed as to which should be awarded the supremacy. ... But this much is certain and incontrovertible, that Euripides will be found of greater service to those
who are training themselves for pleading in court. For his language... has a closer affinity to oratory, while he is full of striking reflexions, in which, indeed, in their special sphere, he rivals the philosophers themselves, and for defense and attack may be compared with any orator that has won renown in the courts."141

Both Euripides and Seneca were sophists, and their "treatment of tragedy has been said to be pathological." Both made a special study in their dramas of the passions of women, against which "the voice of reason is utterly powerless." Both put into the mouths of their characters all the questions which were surging through the minds of their fellowmen in their own days. Their naturalness brought them nearer to common every day life. Their romanticism drew them to other extremes. But for that very reason both were modern in their own way; both were realists. Neither one was in exact accord with his predecessors in drama.

Because the Latin language is less flexible than the Greek we find Seneca employing fewer metres than did his Greek masters.142 Consequently the prosody of the former is more simple.

142. Leo, Frederick, Die Composition der Chorlieder Senecas, Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Vol. 52, p. 518: "... von Horaz nimmt er die Mehrzahl der Versformen herüber, aber aus dem griechischen oder griechisch-römischen Drama seiner Zeit die Liedformen."

Critics attribute to Seneca, in the execution of the metres great power and skill, particularly the iambic portions of his verses. Ovid led the way in his Medea, and whipped into almost perfect shape the tragic iambic as he had improved the hexameter and pentameter metres.

Like most intellectuals both dramatists were ahead of their times, and were unpopular in their own day and with their contemporaries. This perhaps accounts for the posthumous fame accorded to each.

G. S. Gordon in "English Literature and the Classics" makes this statement: "Seneca suffers much from being necessarily compared with the great dramas between which he forms a link: let him at least get credit for being the link."
Chapter III

BROAD SIMILARITIES IN PLOT

The story of Medea belongs to the Argo legend and was a favorite with the Romans. It dates to an age remote in antiquity. Neophron and Ennius wrote a tragedy on the subject; Accius also wrote a Medea; Ovid himself treated the subject in the only tragedy accredited to him.¹ Seneca's nephew Lucan is the author of a Medea. Coming closer to our times, we find the subject admirably treated by Racine, Corneille, and Longpierre. No story was perhaps better known to the Romans, and none more often quoted.²

As said above, the story of Medea dates to the barbaric age and represents a savage maiden gifted with superhuman powers in magic and sorcery. A Greek prince owes his life to her and he proves false to both the princess and her children, "when duties of state and court call him." She in a fit of hate and jealousy

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¹ Ovid Amores, 2. 18. 13, p. 436, Loeb Classical Library, translation by Grant Showerman: "sceptra tamen sumpsi, curaque tragoedia nostra crevit, et huic operi quamlibet aptus eram."

² Ibid., 3. 1. 11, p. 444: "venit et ingenti violenta Tragoedia passu."

² Ibid., 3. 1. 67, p. 448: "exiguum vati concede, Tragoedia, tempus!"

That this play gained considerable reputation we learn from: Tacitus Dialogus, 12, p. 48: "nec ullus Asinii aut Messaleae liber tam illustris est quam Medea Ovidii aut Varii Thyestes;" Quintilian, op. cit., 10. 1. 98, p. 54: "Ovidii Medea videtur mihi ostendere quantum ille vir praestare potuerit, si ingenio suo imperare quam indulgere maluisset."

² Propertius writes to Cynthia 2. 24. 29, p. 132 in Loeb Classical Library, translation by H. E. Butler: "Iam tibi Iasonia nota est Medea carina, Et modo servato sola relicta viro:"

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avenges herself and her offspring. This is the story in its original text. To a semi-barbaric people this may have been feasible and even comprehensible. To Euripides and his age it was foreign conduct since man through the years had grown less brutal. In his adaptation he gives a new turn to the story. He has taken Medea out of the realm of myth into "a stream of human existence." He portrays Jason as throwing aside the higher demands of humanity "for the gratification of a selfish passion motivated by ambition." Medea the woman was wronged, and in her helplessness, mingled with jealousy and hate for the usurper, she slays her two sons to save them from further and worse wrongs. Seneca, in turn, reverts to the old story, since the position of women in Rome made the version of Euripides's Medea untenable (he presents her as a veritable monster), and Jason's character wholly unintelligible, since a Roman prince could not abandon his sons, nor could a Roman matron vindicate herself by

3. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 15, l. 218ff, brings out this point admirably well in his translation, Episode 1, Scene 1, "Oh, of all things upon earth that bleed and grow, a herb most bruised is woman."

4. Ibid., p. 16, l. 258ff: "Oh, in all things but this, I know how full of fears a woman is, And faint at need, and shrinking from the light of battle; but once spoil her of her right in man's love, and there moves, I warn thee, No bloodier spirit between heaven and hell."

5. Decharme, Paul, Euripides and the Spirit of His Dramas, translated by James Loeb, Chapter IV, p. 93, says that at the time of the Peloponnesian War women were trying to emerge from the obscurity in which they had been previously kept. "But if Euripides recognizes this new power, he does not deal with it gently....When he introduces into his dramas personal observations on contemporary life, he expresses views about women which are often of extreme severity."
the murder of her sons. Seneca, accordingly, had Medea again
the barbarian princess and sorceress of the primitive story.
The Roman mind could understand Jason's position, and so looks
upon his union with Creusa to protect his children as quite the
natural, paternal, and Roman thing to do. Seneca portrays Medea
as insane and hence irresponsible and in this manner handles the
killing of the two sons. In both plays Medea

"a wild soul spends itself recklessly for
the object of its love, beats impotently
against injustice, loses hold on sanity,
and sweet human ties, and is transformed
into an avenging fury."\(^7\)

And so the essential differences are one of spirit and are not
so much due to the authors, since in both the action follows the
ancient myth, as to the changed point of view of the audiences
for which they were written.\(^8\)

For a better understanding of the plot it will be conveni­
ent to notice the plan of each play. At first glance it will be
seen that Seneca borrowed the main outlines of his Medea from

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dea è sempre una donna, in Seneca, ha fin da principio le proporzioni di
una virago."


8. Kingery, Hugh Macmaster in Three Tragedies of Seneca, p. 7: "In the Me­
dea of Euripides as well as that of Seneca time and scene are the same; in
both she protests against the injustice of her banishment and gains a res­
pite of a single day; in both she seeks a final interview with Jason and up­
braids him with his faithlessness, listening with scorn to his excuses; in
both she tries at first to recall her recreant husband to his duty, and
failing in that, dissembles her wrath but begins to plot her vengeance."
Euripides. 9 The principal scenes in Euripides have corresponding ones in Seneca, as the following outlines of the two plays show: 10

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<td>Medea suggests the situation.</td>
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<td>Sc. 2. Attendant informs the Nurse of the banishment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parodes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chorus inquire the cause of the sorrow.</td>
<td>Chorus singing the epithalamium.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1st Episode</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc. 1. Medea enlists the sympathy of the Chorus.</td>
<td>Medea considers means of revenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sc. 2. Creon's decree. Medea is given an additional day.</td>
<td>Creon's decree. Medea is given an additional day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sc. 3. Medea announces her intentions to the Chorus.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1st Stasimon</strong></td>
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<td>Man's insincerity equals that of woman's.</td>
<td>Glory of the Argonauts.</td>
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<td>Sc. 1. Jason and Medea quarrel.</td>
<td>The Nurse and Medea are in conversation--Medea's rage.</td>
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## Euripides's Medea

### 2nd Episode

**Sc. 2.**

The Chorus prays to be delivered from the pangs of immoderate love and jealousy.

### 3rd Episode

**Sc. 1.** Aegeus and Medea.

**Sc. 2.** Medea reveals her complete plan in detail to the Chorus.

### 3rd Stasimon

The Chorus sings the praises of Athens.

### 4th Episode

**Sc. 1.** Reconciliation of Jason and Medea—the gifts.

### 4th Stasimon

Delight and doom of the bride.

### 5th Episode

**Sc. 1.** Attendant announces reprieve for children.

**Sc. 2.** Medea's monologue.

**Sc. 3.** Chorus' monologue on the advantages of childlessness.

**Sc. 4.** Messenger's narrative.

**Sc. 5.** Medea's resolution.

### 5th Stasimon

Chorus prays the gods to restrain Medea's mad act.

### The Exodes

**Sc. 1.** Jason learns from the chorus the fate of his children.

**Sc. 2.** Final interview between Jason and Medea.
In comparison with the 1414 lines of the Greek Medea, Seneca's play contains only 1027 lines. He reduces the number of characters to five. The Prologue (1-55) is shorter by seventy-five lines, and is a furious monologue by Medea. It has little in common with the celebrated prologue of Medea's old nurse from which we learn all that is vital to the complete understanding of the action. We hear instead Medea wailing in grief and anger, in a rage of jealous hate calling forth malediction upon Jason for his faithlessness, destruction upon her rival and Creon, and in the same breath entreating the blessing of the various deities upon her diabolical projects and exhorting herself to surpass all her former crimes. In Seneca her "plans of reprisals are already matured," while in the Greek drama, Medea's plans do not materialize until much later in the action.

The second scene of the First Episode is the first scene common to both playwrights. The scene in Seneca is a mixture of Euripides and Ovid. Parallels occur in the section in which Medea is ordered from Creon's kingdom, and Medea's petition to remain one day is granted with a threat of dire vengeance if she is found in the kingdom after the time specified (Euripides, 266-368; Seneca, 179-300). Euripides's scene contains the formal announcement of the sentence of banishment against Medea;11

11. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 17, l. 271f. "Thou woman sullen-eyed and hot with hate against thy lord, Medea, I here command That thou and thy two children from this land Go forth to banishment."
whereas, in Seneca, the sentence is assumed as already past and
the meeting of Medea with Creon only a casual and purely acci-
dental one. In Euripides Medea's pretext for asking one more
day is to prepare for the departure of herself and her children.

"Suffer me to abide this single day and de-
vise some plan for the manner of my exile,
and means of living for my children, since
their father cares not to provide his babes
therewith." 

In Seneca, it is to give her time to take leave of her children,
since Creon is becoming their foster parent.

"I pray thee grant from flight
A respite brief, while upon my children's lips
A mother's kiss imprint, perchance the last." 

In the former they share the sentence of banishment with their
mother. The outcome, however, in each play is the same. There
is banishment in both, and one more day is granted her before
her departure from Corinth. This Episode is very essential to
the development of the story, since it makes the crime plotted
possible of execution, and also gives an account of the crimes
proposed. In Euripides there are four elements that make the
crime possible: support of the Chorus (in Seneca the Chorus is

12. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 88, l. 179f: "Medea, baleful daugh-
ter of the Colchian King, has not yet taken her hateful presence from our
realm."
never in sympathy with Medea), the additional day in Corinth, Aegeus' promise of marriage and the feigned reconciliation with Jason. In Seneca we have only the additional day in Corinth and the gesture of reconciliation. In both Euripides and Seneca there are two crimes perpetrated: death resulting to the new bride\textsuperscript{15} and her royal father from the poisoned bridal gown and crown,\textsuperscript{16} and the murder of the children. The dialogue between Jason and Medea occurs in Seneca in the Second Scene of the Second Episode. The result of the dialogue is the feigned reconciliation between Medea and Jason after much abusive and quarrelsome language. In Euripides the quarrel occurs in the Second Episode, Scene One. This scene in Euripides seems of less importance to the development of the plot than it does in the Latin play, since the reconciliation in the Greek play occurs two scenes later. In the Senecan tragedy, Medea, during this scene, conceives the idea of the death of her children as a final thrust at Jason, (549-551), who states during the conversation his inability to live without them (545-548). The reconciliation

\textsuperscript{15} The Messenger in Euripides describes the catastrophe (1202-1313). Seneca, Third Episode treats of the preparation of the gifts, and their dispatch by the children. The account of the result is given in the Exode in Seneca. Euripides makes mention of this in the Fifth Episode, Scene Five, but the deed obviously occurs during the Fifth Stasimon; In Seneca this occurs in Scene Five, Stasimon Five.

\textsuperscript{16} Seneca mentions three gifts, "the palla, the monile and the aurum, quo solent cingi comae" l. 570-574; whereas in the Greek play we read of only two "With gifts they shall be sent, Gifts to the bride to spare their banishment, Fine robings and a carcanet of gold" l. 815-817.
scene, however, in both plays is of the greatest importance. The final catastrophe depends entirely upon this feigned reconciliation, since Jason's favor was needed before a gift could be made to his new bride. In Euripides the scene opens with a cold, ambitious, uninterested, resentful and prudent Jason, "with ideals faded and every generous emotion dead." In Seneca he is full of regrets for past neglects.

Medea in the older tragedy plays the role of one contrite and sincerely grateful for the turn of events. In Seneca, she replies angrily and proceeds to recount the evil deeds she has perpetrated for Jason. It is here especially that one feels Seneca's overpowering rhetoric which has given way to the Greek "classical directness of expression." Medea is the first to speak in this scene in the Latin play. Cleasby refers to her speech thus: "Seneca has produced this scene to fill in what seems suspiciously like the leaf from the rhetorician's exercise book—Medea's self-defense." Her principal argument is that she is the one to whom belongs the credit for the survival of the Argo; that she is their Deliverer, and that the fortunes of


Again in Ovid's Heroides xii, p. 146, l. 73-75, The Loeb Classical Library, translated by Grant Showerman; "ius tibi et arbitrium nostrae fortuna salutis tradidit, inque tua est vitaque morsque manu."

Idea of Deliverer in Euripides, p. 48, l. 476f: "I saved thy life, so every Hellene knows who sailed with thee aboard the good ship Argo. . . ."
the heroes depended entirely upon her. She boasts extravagantly, thereby attempting to intimidate Jason. Jason's arguments are much more natural in the Latin play, and Medea's speeches have much more force and dignity. Altogether, the scene is very effective and has in it an element of human interest, and one of suspense. They stand "typifying the eternal struggle between the passionate heart and the arrogant brain."

In Euripides, the scene of the meeting with Aegeus takes place before the reconciliation scene. This is less effective since her changed manner is the result of the meeting. In Seneca it is the result of fast thinking, and gives one of the most powerful strokes in the tragedy of Seneca. Perhaps it is a little too fast, and not sufficiently weighed and questioned by Jason who should know Medea's malevolent mind. In Euripides there is a gradual and well-planned development: Medea begs forgiveness for her rashness, her bad moods. She then summons the children to bear witness to the reconciliation and peace. Medea asks permission to have the children remain in Corinth. Then upon Jason's answer that the King is hard to move, she begs him to ask the favor "as a boon for his daughter," and promises him help through gifts which she will send "by the boys' hands."

All this is very plausible. The children are then sent with the gifts. In Seneca they are not sent until later since Seneca gives us the whole and lengthy process of Medea's incantations and a representation of her necromancy as she prepares the fatal
poisoned robe. This scene is the only new matter in Seneca's play, and it is generally supposed it was taken from Ovid, and is considered an innovation in the Latin play. There is no proof available that Ovid did not use it in his Medea, since only two lines of his play have come down to us. The subject of Medea's poisons and power of magic was a familiar one with the

18. Ovid Heroides, Bk. VI., op. cit., p. 74-76, l. 83ff: "nec facie meritisque placet, sed carmina novit diraque cantata pabula falce metit."
Ibid., p. 76, l. 93f: "male quaeritur herbis moribus et forma conciliandus amor."

Miller, Frank Justus, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Vol. I, Bk. VII, p. 354-356, l. 179ff: "Tres aberant noctes, ut cornua tota coirent efficerentque orbem; postquam plenissima fulsit ac solida terras spectavit imagine luna, egreditur tectis vestes induta recinctas, muda pedem, nudos umeris infusa capillos, fertque vagos mediae per muta silentia noctis incomitata gradus: homines volucreisque ferasque solverat alta quies, mullo cum murmurum saepes, inmotesaque silent frondes, silet umidus aer, sidera sola micant; ad quae sua braccia tendens ter se convertit, ter sumptis flumine crimine inroravit aquis ternisque ululatibus ora solvit et in dura submisso poplite terra: 'Nex' ait 'arcanae fidissimae, quaesque diurnis aurea cum luna succedit ignibus astra, tuque, trices Hecate, quaee coepitis conscia nostris adiutrixque venis artisque magorum, quaeque magos, Tellus, pollentibus instruis herbis, aureaque et venti montesque amnesaque lacusque, dique omnes nemorum, dique omnes noctis adeste, quorum ope, cum volui, ripis mirantibus amnes in fontes rediere suos, concussaque sisto, statia concutio cantu freta, nubila pello nubilaque induco, ventos abigoque vocoque, viperas rumps et carmine fauces, vivae saxa sua convulsaque robora terra et silvas moveo iubeoque tremescere montis et mugire solum manesque exire sepulcris; te quoque, Luna, traho, quamvis Temesaeae laboris aera tuaos minuant; currus quoque carmine nostro pales avi, pales nostris Aurora venenis! vos mihi taurorum flammam hebetatis et unco inpatiens oneris collum pressisti aratro, vos serpentigenis in se fera bella dedistis custodemque rudem somni sopistis et aurum vindice decepto Graias misitis in urbes: nunc opus est sucis, per quos renovata senectus in florem reedat primosque recolligat annos et labitis. neque enim micuerunt sidera frustra, nec frustra volucrum tractus service draconum currus adest'."

Augustan poets, and may have been suggested to Seneca from various sources, and undoubtedly from Euripides himself in 1186ff and 1198ff. Seneca becomes a little tiresome in the lengthy and detailed account of the technicalities of the ceremony, and the time he consumes in the account. The omission of this scene is considered one of the greatest flaws in the Greek play. In Euripides it is either to be supposed that the garments were lying in readiness to be sent for at will, or that the poison was infused merely by some magic stroke without any intervention of her hand. But since we know that Medea is undecided as to the manner of inflicting death, and only makes a

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19. Tibullus to Delia, l. 2. 51, p. 200; "sola tenere malas Medaeae dicitur herbas."

Ibid., To Nemesis, 2. 4. 55, p. 270; "quidquid Medea Veneni." in Catullus, Tibullus, and Pervigilium Veneris, the Loeb Classical Library, ed. T. E. Page.

20. Coleridge, Ed. P., op. cit., p. 65, l. 1186; "Then to the earth she sinks, by the cruel blow overcom, past all recognition now. . . . And from her bones the flesh kept peeling off beneath the gnawing of those secret drugs, e'en as when the pine tree weeps its tears of pitch. . . . ."


Vaughan, C. E., in Types of Tragic Drama, p. 99-100; "The two passages of Medea (11. 670-738, 739-840) form one continuous scene which recites the incantations that summon the powers of darkness to aid the heroine in gathering her poisons, and paints the concoction of the venomous drugs which she smears on the fatal robe destines for her rival."

22. Coleridge, Ed. P., op. cit., p. 43, l. 377ff; "Now though I have many ways, to compass their death, I am not sure, friends, which I am to try first. Shall I set fire to the bridal mansion or plunge the whetted sword through their hearts, softly stealing into the chamber where their couch is spread?"
decision after meeting Aegeus, there seems to be a definite lack in the provision made for the poisoning of the garment. The supposition may be made that she left the stage to take care of the garment. This seems impossible, since the Choral song in the scene following is addressed to Medea. Seneca's scene is more plausible, even though it shows less skill in portraying the subtlety of Medea's character; however, in Euripides she approaches the end she has in view much more gradually and skillfully than she does in Seneca. Cleasby believes that this section of the play marks out Seneca "as a rhetorician rather than a dramatist."

The Monologue of Medea is also common to both and is considered one of the most celebrated spots in both plays, as it surpasses all other parts in intensity and interest. On it depends the final outcome of the plot.23

The Narrative scenes in both plays are in decided contrast. Euripides's is long and effective and he has devoted approximately one hundred lines or more to his narrative. It is one of the most dramatic portions of his play.24 Seneca has abridged

23. Mahaffy, Sir John Pentland, Studies in Greek Tragedy, p. 68: "Apart from modern Medeas, a popular version of the scene (1021-1080) depicting the mental conflict between the mother's affection for her children and her stern resolve to sacrifice them as a revenge upon her husband--with the opposite resolution conquering the furious mother, as might be expected in a Christian society, is to be found in Bellini's popular opera of Norma."

24. In Euripides the slave speaks with as much right as the master: Like his master his tongue is glib with moral maxims and philosophical arguments.
the part to ten or more lines and it is only a question and an-
swer procedure between the Chorus and the Messenger. Euripides
gives the whole catastrophe resulting from the poisoned gifts;
Seneca's narrative is without literary value, but is, however,
necessary to the plot, since it gives added fuel to Medea's re-
solve expressed in the soliloquy which follows the Narrative.

The closing dialogue between Medea and Jason occurs in both
plays. Seneca has greater theatrical value and is a "master-
piece of scenic effect, lacking dramatic delicacy." The chil-
dren are killed in Jason's presence, and less time remains after
the "air-car" appears and her disappearance. Jason's appearance
with an armed force goads Medea to complete her dastardly deed,
in spite of the second child's pathetic pleadings. In Euripides,
the children have been killed before he appears, and he hears
the story from the Chorus. Medea is on the balcony in both
plays, but in Euripides she remains there for some one hundred
lines bickering with Jason. This last scene tends to destroy
the artistry of the Greek play and weakens an otherwise strong
drama. The superiority of the Senecan finale in tragic intensi-
ty is obvious. It is in this scene particularly that we feel
that "Senecan cleverness has replaced Greek genius." Medea's
escape in both plays is of divine intervention and as Sturgeon
suggests:

"There is something weird in this touch of
the supernatural; but there is something
symbolic too. For Medea is a woman no
longer: with her own hand, driven by foul wrong and an untamed heart, she has cast humanity away."25

SCENES COMMON TO BOTH EURIPIDES AND SENECA

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<td>Scene 2. Creon's decree. Medea is given an additional day.</td>
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<td><strong>Third Episode,</strong></td>
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<td>Scene 2. In the final part of the scene Medea dispatches her children to Jason's bride with gifts.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Exode,</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scene 1. Messenger's narrative.</strong></td>
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    Oates, Whitney Jennings, The Complete Greek Drama, Vol. 1, p. 722: "The playwright has also been censured because he permits Medea to escape in the dragon chariot at the end. Perhaps an answer may lie in the fact that horrible though Medea's acts are, still she commands a modicum of sympathy, for Jason's injustice to her has driven her to these extremes, and by allowing her to escape the poet partially justifies her deeds."
Seneca's Medea

Scene 2. Medea's monologue.

Scene 3. Final interview between Jason and Medea.

More than one-half the scenes in Euripides have no corresponding ones in Seneca, as ten scenes in Euripides have no parallels in Seneca and five of Seneca's differ entirely from those of the Greek.

Euripides has at times been criticized for the Aegeus-Medea scene.26 This scene is omitted in Seneca. Aegeus speaks only forty-five lines, and appears but once. To the Athenian audience his appearance, however, was a most natural one, since Athenians were frequent visitors in the city, and it gave an opportunity to one in the highest station of life to pose as a hero.27 It seems to have been the only outlet for Euripides, since the introductory scene demands some such incident.28

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26. Oates, Whitney Jennings, op. cit., p. 722: "Critics have been troubled by the dramatic function of the scene in which Aegeus appears and offers an ultimate refuge for Medea. The scene may be more integral to the play than these critics have suspected because in it the childlessness of Aegeus seems to suggest to Medea that her revenge take the form of killing her children in order that Jason may suffer in like fashion."

27. Vaughan, C. E., op. cit., p. 67 believes this may have been a diplomatic gesture on the part of Euripides woven into the story as a human interest device for the sake of gaining a more favorable hearing.

28. It is very likely that Ovid made use of this scene in his Medea. Reference to it is made in the Met. Bk. VII, p. 370, l. 394-397: "sed postquam Colchis arsit nova mupta venenis flagrantesque domum regis mare vidit utrumque sanguine natorum perfunditur inpius ensis ultaque se male mater Iasonis effugit arma."
Flickinger tells us that theatrical conditions were such that the exits and entrances of the actors were extremely difficult to motivate, especially those of the Chorus. They were so difficult that their removal from the stage was rarely attempted. Conditions then forced Medea to take the Chorus into her confidence, since the Chorus was normally left uninterruptedly upon the scene to hear and see all that was said and done. Medea bases her request for their silence upon "the bond of their common sex." In Euripides they are sympathetic and timid Corinthian women. Medea to them is nothing but a foreigner. But she engages all their sympathies because she is a woman. From the beginning to the end of the play they remain loyal to her, even though in the fifth Stasimon they apparently decide against her because of the crime she plans to perpetrate, and are in ever so small a degree in accord with Jason in regard to his marriage with Creusa, since they know Creusa's lineage, and feel that the barbarian Colchian princess should lay aside all claims in preference to the royal house of Creon. They participate in the situation and are affected by the events of the development of the plot. Even in their praise of Athens they are playing a part in trying indirectly to have Medea reconsider her plan, and continue to live on in Athens with all its advantages, even

though it would mean relinquishing her husband to another princess. The Choral Odes in Euripides are "unquestionably part of the plot and are indispensable to the tragedy and so are not irrelevant to the main incidents."30

Not as much can be said for the interlude of Seneca's tragedies. Seneca's Chorus made up of Corinthian men, having no particular character, are in sympathy with Jason; hence Medea does not take them into her confidence at any part of the play. The Chorus of Seneca has no important part in the plot development,31 except in the prothalamion.32 It's office is to sing appropriate songs, however irrelevant they may be to the progress and development of the story. One thing seems unlikely. Seneca could not have intended the Chorus to be present during the entire tragedy as was the Greek Chorus, or they would have comprehended Medea's intentions and prevented the catastrophe. Possibly all Medea's speeches in the presence of the Chorus were

30. Phoutrides, Aristides Evangelus, The Chorus of Euripides, Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, Vol. 27, p. 108-109: "We cannot prove that the genius of Euripides declined with the years either in the other parts of his dramatic art or in his tragic choral creations. . . . In Euripides we should rather find a poet who struggled against the wave of decadence and successfully endeavored to preserve for the tragic chorus a position of freshness and interest.

31. Kingery, Hugh Macmaster, op. cit., p. 5: "There is little of that direct participation in the development of the plot which is assigned the Chorus by the Greeks and especially by Aeschylus. Its part here is more formal and artificial—it is rather a set passage one some lyric theme suggested more or less directly by the context than an integral part of the whole."

32. Ovid, Her. XII, Medea Jasoni, may have suggested this to Seneca.
considered "asides" and out of hearing of the Chorus. However, bearing in mind that Seneca's drama was a rhetorical drama and not a dramatical one, the songs may have served only as a break in the recitation.33

SCENES IN EURIPIDES ONLY

prologue.
Scene 1. The Nurse explains the situation.
Scene 2. The attendant informs the nurse of the banishment.

First Episode.
Scene 1. Medea gains the sympathy of the Chorus.
Scene 3. Medea decides to wait for refuge.

Third Episode.
Scene 1. Aegeus and Medea interview.
Scene 2. Medea reveals her plan to the Chorus.

Fourth Episode.
Scene 1. Reconciliation of Jason and Medea.

Fifth Episode.
Scene 1. Attendant announces the reprieve of the children.
Scene 3. Chorus' discussion on the advantages of childlessness.

33. Leo, Frederick, op. cit., p. 511; "Der Chor hat in Senecas Tragödien hauptsächlich das Geschäft, die vier Zwischenakte mit Liedern auszufüllen. Diese Lieder knüpfen, ausdrücklich oder nur durch ihren Inhalt, an die Handlung an, aber sie werden dann meist allgemein; selten gehören sie materiell zur Handlung, wie der Hymenäus der Medea, selten zeigt der Chor in seinen Liedern menschliche Teilnahme an dem was vorgeht. Die Chöre sind in der Regel nicht charakterisiert, meist nicht einmal als männlich oder weiblich. Der Chor verschwindet nach dem letzten Zwischenakte;"
The Exode.

Scene 1. Jason learns the fate of his children.

SCENES IN SENECA ONLY

prologue.

Scene 1. Medea suggests the situation.

First Episode.

Scene 1. Medea considers means of revenge.

Second Episode.

Scene 1. Nurse and Medea are in conversation. Medea's rage.

Third Episode.

Scene 1. Nurse describes Medea's magic.
Scene 2. Medea's incantations.

While the Latin plays are in no sense versions of the Greek plays, the general results of the plots of Euripides and Seneca are the same.\(^3\)\(^4\) As was stated before the difference is chiefly

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Kingery, Hugh Macmaster, op. cit., p. 3: "In plot the author has not ventured far from his models, though here and there he has altered arrangement as well as the relative importance of certain scenes. As a rule the Latin plays are considerably shorter than their Greek prototypes. New characters are not introduced, but frequently one or another is omitted."

Eliot, T. S., Selected Essays: Seneca in Elizabethan Transition, p. 70-71: "It would be an error to imagine that they (the characters) are merely cruder and coarser versions of the Greek originals. They belong to a different race. Their crudity is that which was of the Roman as compared with the Greek, in real life."
in spirit.

The Medea of Euripides is longer, has more characters, has a greater variety of incidents and is hence "more complex in character and structure." From the comparison of the two outlines, one concludes that Seneca's play has greater unity and simplicity of structure. Euripides could not have shortened his play to the length of Seneca's, eliminated two characters without "violating the general structure and impairing the interest and variety of incident, dialogue and character." Each play has a central plot with no interwoven entanglements or plots. Both have the same results—Medea, jealous and revengeful murders Creusa, Creon and her children, and then escapes by the same medium.
Chapter IV

PARALLELS IN PHRASEOLOGY

In addition to the similarities in plot development and structure which have been discussed in Chapter III, the Latin play contains many parallels in phraseology which savor of the Greek tragedy. By way of comparison they will strengthen the general belief that the Latin poet used the Greek play freely and wove into his work not only the essential details of the myth, but also turns of phraseology and in some cases almost literal translations of his Greek predecessor.

Apart from the theme, the resemblance in phraseology in the opening of the play is not very marked, except that in both Medea enumerates all the crimes she has perpetrated for the Argonauts. Parallels in theme phraseology follow:

Euripides

Medea: *O, to see him and his bride some day brought to utter destruction, They and their house with them. . . . ."¹

Medea: * . . . but I am destitute, without a city, and therefore scorned by my husband, a captive I from a foreign shore. . . . .²

Seneca

Medea: *Upon this new-made bride destruction send, and death Upon the king and all the royal line."²

Medea: *Bereft of native land and home, and kingdom, Could he leave me here alone on foreign shores?"³

². Ibid., p. 40, l. 253ff.
³. Ibid., p. 83, l. 17.
⁴. Ibid., p. 86, l. 118ff.
The scene between Creon and Medea has much in common in both plays. Even though the Creon of Seneca is much more arrogant than his Greek prototype, he seems to have been suggested by Euripides. The following illustrate this point:

Euripides

Creon: *I fear thee,--no longer need I veil my dread 'neath words, lest thou devise against my child some cureless ill. Many things contribute to this fear of mine;*⁵

Jason: *I ever tried to check the outbursts of the angry monarch, and would have had thee stay.*⁷

Creon: *Hark thee, Medea, I bid thee take those sullen looks and angry thoughts against thy husband forth from this land in exile.*¹⁰

Creon: *Soon wilt thou be thrust out forcibly by the hand of servants.*¹²

Seneca

Creon: *On mischief is she bent. Well known her treach'rous power.*⁶

Creon: *This cursed pestilence at once would I have stayed By force of arms; but Jason's prayers prevailed.*⁸

Jason: *Though Creon in a vengeful mood would have thy life; I moved him by my tears to grant thee flight instead.*⁹

Creon: *But lo, she comes, with fierce and threatening mien, to seek an audience with us.*¹¹

Creon: *Slaves defend us from her touch And pestilential presence! Bid her silence*

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7. Ibid., p. 45, l. 455.
10. Ibid., p. 40, l. 271-356.
12. Ibid., p. 42, l. 335.

8. Ibid., p. 88, l. 183.
9. Ibid., p. 97, l. 490.
11. Ibid., p. 88, l. 187-188.
Euripides

Medea: "Yet for all my wretched plight I will ask thee, Creon, wherefore dost thou drive me from the land?" 14

Medea: "...but let me abide in this land, for though I have been wronged I will be still and yield to my superiors." 16

Creon: "Begone, thou silly woman, and free me from my toil." 18

Creon: "Thou wastest words; thou wilt never persuade me." 20

Creon: "thou art devising some mischief in thy heart," 22

Creon: "So now, if abide thou must, stay this one day only." 24

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Seneca

Creon: keep, and learn to yield obedience to the king's commands. 13

Medea: "But tell me what the crime, my lord, or what the guilt That merits exile?" 15

Medea: "Some little corner of thy Kingdom now I ask, In which to hide my grief. If I must flee again, Oh, let some nook remote within thy broad domain Be found for me!" 17

Creon: "Then go thou hence and purge our kingdom of its stain;" 19

Creon: "Why seek delay By speech? Too long thou tarriest." 21

Creon: "A time Thou seek'st for treachery." 23

Creon: "A single day I'll give thee ere my sentence holds." 25

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16. Ibid., p. 42, l. 313.
18. Ibid., p. 42, l. 332.
20. Ibid., p. 42, l. 324.
22. Ibid., p. 41, l. 317.
24. Ibid., p. 43, l. 358.
15. Ibid., p. 88, l. 192.
17. Ibid., p. 90, l. 249-251.
19. Ibid., p. 91, l. 269.
21. Ibid., p. 91, l. 282.
23. Ibid., p. 91, l. 290.
25. Ibid., p. 91, l. 295.
Creon: "but I do forewarn thee, if tomorrow's rising sun shall find thee and thy children within the borders of this land, thou diest." 26

"Thy life shall surely pay The forfeit if tomorrow's sun beholds thee still In Corinth." 27

Similarities in this scene occur at the beginning and end. No mention is made in Euripides of Pelias. Seneca, in this section, refers to him three times. The fear of Acastus, the son of Pelias, is the motivating force of Jason's betrothal to Creusas, since Acastus has sworn vengeance upon the Greek prince and his Colchian wife.

The next parallel is found in the scene between Medea and the nurse in the third act and is an echo of Euripides.

Medea: "Hadst thou not had a villain's heart, thou shouldst have gained my consent, then made this match, instead of hiding it from those who love thee." 28

"True love is proof against the fear of man. But grant He was compelled to yield, and pledged his hand in fear; He might at least have sought his wife with one last word of comfort and farewell." 29

The famous reconciliation scene follows—the scene much criticized in Seneca because of his obvious straining after rhetorical effect. It is replete with echoes of Greek repartee.

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28. Ibid., p. 48, l. 585-587.
29. Ibid., p. 95, l. 417-419.
Medea: "whither can I turn me now? to my father's house, to my own country, which I for thee deserted to come hither? to the hapless daughters of Pelias? A glad welcome, I trow, would they give me in their home, whose father's death I compassed? My case stands even thus? I am become the bitter foe to those of mine own home, and those whom I need ne'er have wronged. I have made mine enemies to pleasure thee. Wherefore to reward me for this thou hast made me doubly blest in the eyes of many a wife in Hellas; and in thee I own a peerless, trusty lord." 30

Medea: "I saved thy life, as every Hellene knows who sailed with thee aboard the good ship Argo, when thou wert sent to tame and yoke fire-breathing bulls, and to sow the deadly tilth. Yea, and I slew the dragon which guarded the golden fleece, keeping sleepless watch o'er it with many a wreath coil, and I raised for thee a beacon of deliverance. Father and home of my free will I left and came with thee to Iolcos, 'neath Pelion's hills, for my love was stronger than my prudence. Next I caused the death of Pelias by a doom

Medea: "But whither dost thou send me whom thou driv'st From out thy home? Shall I the Colchians seek again My royal father's realm, whose soil is steeped in blood My brother shed? What country dost thou bid me seek?" 31

Medea: "Or shall I hie me back to fair Thessalia's realms? Lo, all the doors, which I, for thee, have opened wide, I've closed upon myself." 32

Medea: "And let me be immured in dungeons black as night; Still will my punishment be less than my offense. O ingrate! hast thou then forgot the brazen bull, and his consuming breath? the fear that smote thee, when, Upon the field of Mars, the earth-born brood stood forth To meet thy single sword? 'Twas by my arts that they, The monsters, fell by mutual blows. Remember, too, the long-sought fleece of gold I won for thee, whose

32. Ibid., p. 96, l. 457-460.
Euripides

Medea: most grievous, even by his own children's hand, beguiling them of all their fear. All this have I done for thee, thou traitor! and thou hast cast me over, taking to thyself another wife, though children have been born to us. Hadst thou been childless still, I could have pardoned thy desire for this new union. Gone is now the trust I put in oaths. I cannot even understand whether thou thinkest that the gods of old no longer rule, or that fresh decrees are now in vogue amongst mankind, for thy conscience must tell thee thou hast not kept faith with me. Ah! poor right hand, which thou didst often grasp. These knees thou didst embrace! All in vain, I suffered a traitor to touch me! How short of my hopes I am fallen."

Seneca

Medea: guard, The dragon huge, was lulled to rest at my command; My brother slain for thee. For thee old Pelias fell, When, taken by my guile, his daughters slew their sire, Whose life could not return. All this I did for thee. In quest of thine advantage have I quite forgot Mine own. And now, by all thy fond paternal hopes, By thine established house by all the monsters slain For thee, by these my hands which I have ever held To work thy will, by all the perils past, by heaven And sea that witnessed at my wedlock, pity me! Since thou art blessed, restore me what I lost for thee: That countless treasure plundered from the swarthy tribes Of India, which filled our goodly vaults with wealth, And decked our very trees with gold. This costly store I left for thee, my native land, my brother, sire, My reputation—all; and with this dower I came. If now to homeless exile thou dost send me forth, give back the countless treasures which I left for thee."

34 Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 96-97, l. 465-489.
Euripides

Jason: "Be well assured of this; 'twas not for the woman's sake I wedded the king's daughter, my present wife; but, as I have already told thee, I wished to insure thy safety and to be the father of royal sons bound by blood to my own children—a bulwark to our house."

Medea: "My children! Them I do refuse, reject, Renounce! Shall then Creusa brothers bear to these My children?"

Jason: "But the queen can aid thy wretched sons."

Medea: "May that day never dawn, that day of shame and woe, When in one house are joined the low born and the high, The sons of that foul robber Sisyphus, and these, The sons of Phoebus."

Jason: "Yet even after all this I weary not of my good will, but am come with this much forethought, that thou mayest not be destitute nor want for aught, when, with thy sons, thou art cast out. Many an evil doth exile bring in its train with it."

Medea: "My soul doth scorn The wealth of kings."

Jason: "Know this, I will no further dispute this point with thee. But, if thou wilt of my fortune somewhat take for the children or thyself to help thy exile, say on; for I am ready to grant it with ungrudging hand, yea and to send tokens to my friends elsewhere who shall treat thee well. If thou refuse this

Seneca

Jason: "Recall thee and in calmness speak with words of peace and reason. Then if any gift From Creon's royal house can compensate thy woes, Take that as solace of thy flight."

Medea: "My soul doth scorn The wealth of kings."

37. Ibid., p. 45, l. 459-464.
38. Ibid., p. 99, l. 537-541.
Euripides

Jason: offer, thou wilt do a foolish deed, but if thou cease from anger the greater will be thy gain.

Medea: I will have naught to do with friends of thine, naught will I receive of thee, offer it not to me; a villain's gifts can bring no blessing.

Jason: At least I call the gods to witness that I am ready in all things to serve thee and thy children, but thou dost scorn my favours and thrustest thy friends stubbornly away; wherefore thy lot will be more bitter still. 39

Medea: Jason, I crave thy pardon for the words I spoke, and well thou mayest brook my burst of passion, for ere now we twain have shared much love. So now I do commend thee and think thee most wise in forming this connexion for us; but I was mad, I who should have shared in these designs, helped on thy plans, and lent my aid to bring about the match, only too pleased to wait upon thy bride. But what we are, we are, we women, evil I will not say; wherefore thou shouldst not sink to our sorry level nor with our weapons meet our childishness. I yield and do confess that I was wrong then, but now have I come to a better mind. Come hither,

Medea: At least, ere I depart, Grant me this last request; let me once more embrace My sons. E'en that small boon will comfort my sad heart. And this my latest prayers to thee; if, in my grief, My tongue was over bold, let not my words remain--To rankle in thy heart. Remember happier things Of me, and let my bitter words be straight forgot.

Jason: Not one shall linger in my soul; and curb, I pray, Thy too impetuous heart, and gently yield to fate. For resignation ever soothes the woeful soul. 40

Euripides

Medea: my children, come, leave the house, step forth, and with me greet and bid farewell to your father, be reconciled from all past bitterness unto your friends, as now your mother is for we have made a truce and anger is no more. 41

Summoning all her powers and goading herself on to outdo her former crimes she exclaims:

Euripides

Medea: Up, then, Medea, spare not the secrets of thy art in plotting and devising; on to the danger. Now comes a struggle needing courage. Dost see what thou art suffering? 'Tis not for thee to be a laughing-stock to the race of Sisyphus by reason of this wedding of Jason, sprung, as thou art, from a noble sire, and of the Sun-god's race. Thou hast cunning; and more than this, we women, though by nature little apt for virtuous deed, are most expert to fashion any mischief. 42

Seneca

Medea: 'He's gone! And can it be? And shall he thus depart, Forgetting me and all my service? Must I drop, Like some discarded toy, out of his faithless heart? It shall not be. Up then, and summon all thy strength And all thy skill And, this the fruit of former crime, Count nothing criminal that works thy will. But lo, We're hedged about; scant room is left for our designs. Now must the attack be made where least suspicion wakes. The least resistance. Now Medea, on! And do And dare thine utmost, yea, beyond thine utmost power! 43

42. Ibid., p. 44, l. 401-409.
43. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit. p. 100, l. 560-567.
Euripides

Medea: "For I will send them with gifts in their hands, carrying them unto the bride to save them from banishment, a robe of finest woof and a chaplet of gold. And if these ornaments she take and put them on, miserably shall she die, and likewise everyone who touches her; with such fell poisons will I smear my gifts." 44

Medea: "I too will aid thee in this task, for by the children's hand I will send to her gifts that far surpass in beauty, I well know, aught that now is seen 'mongst men, a robe of finest tissue and a chaplet of chased gold. But one of my attendants must haste and bring the ornaments hither. Happy shall she be not once alone but ten thousandfold, for in thee she wins the noblest soul to share her love, and gets these gifts as well which on a day my father's sire, the Sun-god, bestowed on his descendants. My children, take in your hands these wedding gifts, and bear them as an offering to the royal maid, the happy bride; for verily the gifts she shall receive are not to be scorned." 45

Seneca

Medea: "There is a robe, The glory of our Colchian realm the precious gift of Phoebus's self to king Aeetes as a proof of fatherhood; a gleaming circlet, too, all wrought with threads of gold, the yellow gold bespangled o'er with gems, a fitting crown to deck a princess' head. These treasures let Medea's children bear as gifts to Jason's bride. But first infuse them with the power of magic, and invoke the aid of Hecate; The woe-producing sacrifices then prepare And let the sacred flames through all our courts resound." 46

The results which the Priestess of Hecate hopes to reap from the poison drenched garment is told some three hundred

45. Ibid., p. 59, l. 946ff.
lines later in Euripides when the Messenger graphically relates it to Medea.

**Euripides**

Messenger: "for her eyes had lost their tranquil gaze, her face no more its natural look preserved, and from the crown of her head blood and fire in mingled stream ran down; and from her bones the flesh kept peeling off beneath the gnawing of those secret drugs, e'en as when the pine-tree weeps its tears of pitch, a fearsome sight to see. And all were afraid to touch the corpse, for we were warned by what had chanced." 47

**Seneca**

Medea: "give added force to these deadly gifts. And strictly guard the hidden seeds of flames. Let them deceive the sight, endure the touch but through her veins let burning fever run; In fervent heat consume her very bones, And let her fiercely blazing locks outshine Her marriage torches! Lo, my prayer is heard." 48

At the conclusion of this act, Medea hurries her children off to Creusa with an injunction for a speedy return. The reason for their return, however, is different in both authors.

**Euripides**

Medea: "Children, when ye are come to the rich palace pray your father's new bride, my mistress, with suppliant voice to save you from exile, offering her these ornaments the while; for it is most needful that she receive the gifts in her own hand. Now go and linger not; may ye succeed and to your mother bring back the glad tidings she fain would hear." 49

**Seneca**

Medea: "Go, go, my sons, of hapless mother born, and win with costly gifts and many prayers The favor of the queen, your father's wife. Begone, but quick your homeward way retrace, That I may fold you in a last embrace." 50

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49. Ibid., p. 59, l. 969–975.
The Chorus fearing the fury of Medea echoes its prototype.

Euripides

Chorus: "Ah! hapless one, why doth fierce anger thy soul assail? Why in its place is fell murder growing up? For grievous unto mortal men are pollutions that come of kindred blood poured on the earth, woes to suit each crime hurled from heaven on the murderer's house." 51

Seneca

Chorus: "Where hastes this Bacchic fury now, All passion-swept? what evil deed Does her unbridled rage prepare? Her features are congealed with rage, And with a queenly bearing, grand But terrible, she sets herself Against e'en Creon's royal power. An exile who would deem her now? Her cheeks anon with anger flush, And now a deadly pallor show; Each feeling quick succeeds to each, While all the passions of her heart Her changing aspect testifies. She wanders restless here and there, As a tigress, of her young bereft." 52

With the opening of Act V, the Messenger breaks the news of the catastrophe of the royal pair to the Chorus. Seneca, as has been said before reduces this scene to a mere ten or twelve lines. Euripides has the conversation between Medea and the Messenger. It is in this scene that Euripides has far surpassed his Latin imitator. The word pictures graphically depict the scenes enacted in Creusa's suite from the time the children enter to their leaving and the fatal stroke resulting in the death of the new bride and Jason's father-in-law.

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Euripides

Messenger: "The princess is dead, a moment gone, and Creon too, her sire, slain by those drugs of thine.

Medea: "Tidings most fair are thine! Henceforth shalt thou be ranked amongst my friends and benefactors.

Messenger: "Ha! What? Art sane? Art not distraught, lady, who hearest with joy the outrage to our royal house done, and art not at the horrid tale afraid?

Medea: "Somewhat have I, too, to say in answer to thy words. Be not so hasty, friend, but tell the manner of their death, for thou wouldst give me double joy, if so they perished miserably."53

Seneca

 Messenger: "Lo, all is lost! The kingdom totters from its base! The daughter and the father lie in common dust!

Chorus: "By what snare taken?

Messenger: "By gifts, the common snare of kings.

Chorus: "What harm could lurk in them?

Messenger: "In equal doubt I stand And though my eyes proclaim the dreadful deed is done, I scarce can trust their witness.

Chorus: "What the mode of death?

Messenger: "Devouring flames consume the palace at the will of her who sent them; there complete destruction reigns while men do tremble for the very city's doom.

Chorus: "Let water quench the fire.

Messenger: "Nay here is added wonder: The copious streams of water feed the deadly flames; And opposition only fans their fiery rage To whiter heat. The very bulwarks feel their power."54

The Nurse, after hearing the Messenger's story, bids Medea


leave in flight. In Euripides the Messenger urges Medea to flee:

**Euripides**

Messenger: "Fly, fly, Medea! who hast wrought an awful deed, transgressing every law; nor leave behind or sea-borne bark or car that scours the plain." 55

**Seneca**

Nurse: "Oh, haste thee, leave this land of Greece, in headlong flight!" 56

Seneca's Chorus asks of the Messenger the manner of death inflicted on Creusa. Medea pretends ignorance but really exults in the joy which the retelling in minute details will bring her.

**Euripides**

Medea: "Somewhat have I, too, to say in answer to thy words. Be not so hasty, friend, but tell the manner of their death, for thou wouldst give me double joy, if so they perished miserably." 57

**Seneca**

Chorus: "What the mode of death?" 58

Now that she has carried out this part of her plan, she proceeds upon the next step, and absorbed in her own reflections, she says:

**Euripides**

Medea: "Why do I hesitate to do the awful deed that must be done?" 55

**Seneca**

Medea: "Why dost thou falter, O my soul? 'Tis well begun; But

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56. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 110, l. 891.
57. Ibid., p. 63, l. 1133-1134.
58. Ibid., p. 109, l. 884.
Euripides

Medea: Come, take the sword, thou wretched hand of mine! Take it and advance to the post whence starts thy life of sorrow! Away with cowardice! Give not one thought to thy babes, how dear they are or how thou art their mother. This one brief day forget thy children dear, and after that lament; for though thou wilt slay them yet they were thy darlings still, and I am a lady of sorrows.\(^{59}\)

Seneca

Medea: still how small a portion of thy just revenge Is that which gives thee present joy? Not yet has love Been banished from thy maddened heart if 'tis enough That Jason widowed be. Pursue thy vengeful quest To acts as yet unknown, and steel thyself for these. Away with every thought and fear of God and man; Too lightly falls the rod that pious hands upbear. Give passion fullest sway; exhaust thy ancient powers; And let the worst thou yet hast done be innocent. Beside thy present deeds. Come, let them know how slight Were those thy crimes already done; mere training they for greater deeds. For what could hands untrained in crime Accomplish? Or what mattered maiden rage? But now, I am Medea; in the bitter school of woe My powers have ripened.\(^{60}\)

Still in the same strain she continues:

Medea: \(\text{*Ah me! ah me! why do ye look at me so, my children? why smile that last sweet smile? Ah me! what am I to do? My heart gives way when I behold my children's laughing eyes. Oh, I cannot;}\)

Medea: \(\text{*To execute my deeds. But now, by what approach Or by what weapon wilt thou threat the treacherous foe? Deep hidden in my secret heart have I conceived A purpose which I dare not}\)
Euripides

Medea: farewell to all my former schemes; I will take the children from the land, the babes I bore. Why should I wound their sire by wounding them, and get me a twofold measure of sorrow? No, no, I will not do it. Farewell my scheming! And yet what am I coming to? Can I consent to let those foes of mine escape from punishment, and incur their mockery? I must face this deed. Out upon my craven heart! to think that I should even have let the soft words escape my soul. Into the house, children! and whoso feels he must not be present at my sacrifice, must see to it himself; I will not spoil my handiwork. Ah! ah! do not, my heart, O do not do this deed! Let the children go, unhappy one, spare the babes! For if they live, they will cheer thee in our exile there. Nay, by the fiends of hell's abyss, never, never will I hand my children over to their foes to mock and flout. Die they must in any case, and since 'tis so, why I, the mother who bore them, will give the fatal blow. In any case their doom is fixed and there is no escape.  


Medea: "Needs must they die in any case; and since they must,"

Medea: "Nay, Nay! they are my own sons, And with no spot of
Euripides

Medea: I will slay them—I, the mother that bore them. O heart of mine, steel thyself! Why do I hesitate to do the awful deed that must be done? Come, take the sword, thou wretched hand of mine! Take it, and advance to the post whence starts thy life of sorrow! Away with cowardice! Give not one thought to thy babes, how dear they are or how thou art their mother. This one brief day forget thy children dear, and after that lament; for though thou wilt slay them yet they were thy darlings still, and I am a lady of sorrows." 63

Medea: "O my babes, my babes, let your mother kiss your hands. Ah! hands I love so well. O lips most dear to me! O noble form and features of my children, I wish ye joy, but in that other land, for here your father robs you of your home. O the sweet embrace, the soft young cheek, the fragrant breath! my children!" 65

Medea: "Take his right hand; ah me! my sad fate! when I reflect, as now, upon the hidden future. O my children, since there awaits you even thus a long, Seneca

Medea: guilt. Full innocent they are. . . . Then come, my sons, sole comfort of my heart. Come, cling within your mother's close embrace. Unharmed your sire may keep you, while your mother holds you too. But flight and exile drive me forth! And even now My children must be torn away with tears and cries. Then let them die to Jason since they're lost to me." 64

Medea: "To love! Then come, my sons, sole comfort of my heart. Come, cling within your mother's close embrace, Unharmed your sire may keep you, while your mother holds you too." 66

Medea: "Come, cling within your mother's close embrace. Unharmed your sire may keep you, While your mother holds you too. But flight and

64. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 111, l. 934ff.
65. Ibid., p. 62, l. 1069ff.
66. Ibid., p. 111, l. 944.
Euripides

Medea: long life, stretch forth the hand to take a fond farewell. \(^{67}\)

Jason: *For she must hide beneath the earth or soar on wings towards heaven's vault, if she would avoid the vengeance of the royal house.* \(^{69}\)

Jason: *Ladies, stationed near this house, pray tell me is the author of these hideous deeds, Medea, still within, or hath she fled from hence? For she must hide beneath the earth or soar on wings towards heaven's vault, if she would avoid the vengeance of the royal house. Is she so sure she will escape herself unpunished from this house, when she hath slain the rulers of the land? But enough of this; I am forgetting her children, As for her, those whom she hath wronged will do the like by her; but I am come to save the children's life, lest the victim's kin visit their wrath on me, in vengeance for the murder foul, wrought by my children's mother.* \(^{71}\)

Jason: *Woman thou hast sealed my doom.* \(^{73}\)

Seneca

Medea: exile drive me forth! And even now My children must be torn away with tears and cries. \(^{68}\)

Medea: *But to the public eye my hand must be approved.* \(^{70}\)

Jason: *Ho, all ye loyal sons, who mourn the death of kings! Come let us seize the worker of this hideous crime. Now ply your arms and raze her palace to the ground.* \(^{72}\)

Jason: *By those devices she herself hath planned.* \(^{74}\)

69. Ibid., p. 68, l. 1293ff.
70. Ibid., p. 112, l. 978.
71. Ibid., p. 68, l. 1294-1300.
72. Ibid., p. 112, l. 979-981.
73. Ibid., p. 69, l. 1313.
74. Ibid., p. 113, l. 997f.
Medea, after the death of her children, appearing on the housetop with her two sons, says tauntingly:

**Euripides**

Medea: "Why shake those doors and attempt to loose their bolts, in quest of the dead and me their murderess? From such toil desist. If thou wouldst aught with me, say on, if so thou wilt; but never shalt thou lay hand on me, so swift the steeds the sun, my father's sire, to me doth give to save me from the hand of my foes." 

**Seneca**

Medea: "Not so. But rather build a lofty pyre for these thy sons; Their funeral rites prepare. Already for thy bride And father have I done the service due the dead; For in their ruined palace have I buried them. One son of thine has met his doom; and this shall die Before his father's face."

Seneca has a humble Jason, pleading for the life of his child. Jason's ire has reached its height in Euripides when he accuses Medea of being the only "one amongst the wives of Hellas e'er had dared this deed."

**Euripides**

Jason: "Accursed woman, by gods, by me and all mankind abhored as never woman was, who hadst the heart to stab thy babes, thou their mother, leaving me undone and childless; this hast thou done and still dost gaze upon the sun and earth after this deed most impious. Curses on thee! I now perceive what then I missed in

**Seneca**

Jason: "By all the gods, and by the perils of our flight, And by our marriage bond which I have ne'er betrayed, I pray thee spare the boy, for he is innocent. If aught of sin there be, 'tis mine. Myself I give To be the victim. Take my guilty soul for his."

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75. Coleridge, Ed. P., op. cit., p. 69, l. 1314-1319.
77. Ibid., p. 113, l. 1002-1005.
With all restraint flung to the wind, Medea scorns Jason bereft of his new love. The Latin is perhaps more biting than the Greek.

Euripides

Medea: "The grief is yet to come; wait till old age is with thee too. What god or power divine hears thee, breaker of oaths and every law of hospitality?" 79

In both plays Zeus is responsible for Medea's deliverance from Jason and Creon's kin.

Euripides

Medea: "To this thy speech I could have made a long retort, but Father Zeus knows well all I have done for thee, and the treatment thou hast given me. Yet thou wert not ordained to scorn my love and lead a life of joy in mockery of me, nor was thy royal bride nor Creon, who gave thee a second wife, to thrust me from this land and rue it not. Wherefore, if thou wilt, call me e'en a lioness, and Scylla, whose home is in the Tyrrhene land; for I in turn have wrung thy heart, as well I might." 81

Medea: "Why shake those doors and attempt to loose their bolts, in quest of the dead and me their murderess? From such toil desist. If thou wouldst aught

Seneca

Medea: "'Tis for thy prayers and tears I draw, not sheathe the sword. Go now, and take thee maids for wives, thou faithless one; Abandon and betray the mother of thy sons." 80

Medea: "Now hither lift thy tearful eyes ungrateful one. Dost recognize thy wife? 'Twas thus of old I fled. The heavens themselves provide me with a safe retreat. Twin serpents bow their necks submissive to the yoke. Now, father, take thy sons; while I, upon my car, with winged speed am borne aloft through realms of air." 82

Medea: "With winged speed am borne aloft through realms of air." 83

81. Ibid., p. 70, l. 1354.
80. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 113, l. 1006-1008.
82. Ibid., p. 114, l. 1020.
Euripides

Medea: with me, say on, if so thou
wilt; but never shalt thou
lay hand on me, so swift the
steeds the sun, my father's
sire, to me doth give to save
me from the hand of my foes."84

84. Coleridge, Ed. P., op. cit., p. 69,
l. 1321.
Chapter V

CHARACTERS AND THEIR ATTITUDE TO THE GODS

In this chapter special attention will be devoted to those characters only that appear and play prominent parts in both plays.

The Medea of Euripides

The Medea of Euripides is so skillfully drawn that we lose sight of the barbarian. "From the first appearance of Medea to the end of the play, her one figure occupies the whole space of the theater; her spirit is in the air." Even though she is fierce and lawless, her horrible and blood curdling deeds do not make the impression on the audience one would expect; rather they arouse sympathy and admiration for the woman who has been wronged by the man she saved and for whom she forsook everything.

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1. Murray, Augustus, in his translation of the Four Plays of Euripides, p. 109 says: "Medea remains a woman throughout it all and the portrayal of the conflict between the fierceness of her hate for Jason and her mother-love for her children—a conflict culminating in the inimitable scene in which she takes her last farewell of them—is one of the greatest achievements of Euripides."

2. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 27, l. 493-495: "I save thee—Let thine own Greeks be witness, every one That sailed on Argo—"

3. Ibid., p. 28, l. 502-505: "Myself, uncounselfed, Stole forth from father and from home, and fled Where dark Iolcos under Pelion lies,"
We get a graphic description of Medea and her present plight from Medea herself in her speeches, from her deeds, her uncontrolled emotions, from the Nurse, from Jason's opinion of her, from Creon's fear of her powers, and from the Chorus itself. She is less emotional and more intellectual than the Medea of Seneca, still she does not astound us in any way by intellectual feats. Her arguments do not baffle us in any manner, yet "she shows more prudent reflection" and is less precipitate.

4. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 8, l. 110: "Oh, shame and pain: O woe is me! Would I could die in my misery."

Ibid., p. 8, l. 124-127: "Have I not suffered? Doth it call no tears? . . . Ha, ye beside the wall Unfathered children, God hate you as I am hated, and him, too."

Ibid., p. 10, l. 148-152, l. 163-169: Other speeches.

Ibid., Addressed to the Chorus in Episode, Scene 1, p. 14, l. 199, p. 16, l. 261.

5. Ibid., p. 46, l. 814: "tis that I will slay by craft the King's daughter."

Ibid., p. 47, l. 852-853: "Thou canst not kill the fruit thy body bore. Yes: If the man I hate be pained the more."

6. Ibid., p. 61, l. 1146-1148: "Yea, I know to what bad things I go, but louder than all thought doth cry Anger, which maketh man's worst misery."

7. Ibid., p. 8, l. 104-107: "Yester night I saw a flame Stand in her eye, as though she hated them, And would I know not what. For sure her wrath will never turn nor slumber, till she hath . . . . . ."

Ibid., p. 4, l. 45-46: "I know that woman, aye, and dread her."

8. Ibid., p. 74, l. 1401: "Thou living hate."

Ibid., p. 74, l. 1410: "thou incarnate curse."

Ibid., p. 74, l. 1422: "Tigress, not woman, beast of wilder breath Than Scylla shrieking o'er the Tuscan sea."

9. Ibid., p. 17, l. 280-282: "I fear thee, woman--little need To cloak my reasons--lest thou work some deed of darkness on my child."

Ibid., p. 19, l. 326: "A woman quick for wrath."

Ibid., p. 21, l. 347: "Why then so wild."

10. Ibid., p. 71, l. 1360-1361: "Thou stone, thou thing of iron! Wilt verily Spill with thine hand that life, the vintage Of thine own agony?"

Ibid., p. 21, l. 369: "O woman, woman of sorrow, where wilt thou turn and flee?"
She is a king’s daughter and a descendant of the Sun-god and lived during the heroic age of Heracles, Orpheus, Theseus and Jason. She is regal in her bearing and commands respect as is seen from the actions of the chorus. It is inferred that not only her magic powers but also her physical beauty and intellectual accomplishments attracted the leader of the Argo. Her physical appearance on the day of the sentence is changed due to grief and overwrought emotions. Her Monologue presents a picture of the struggle of her emotions. Her deeds, in Euripides, however, are not the result of precipitate fury but of carefully and elaborately constructed plans. She abhors perjury, and condones child murder, in fact, all murder to win her point. She looks upon herself as partaking of the rights of

12. Ibid., p. 44, l. 780-781: "Swear by the Earth thou treadest, by the Sun, Sire of my sires, and all the gods as one. . . . ."
   Ibid., p. 18, l. 305-306: "A wise-woman I am; and for that sin To divers ill names men would pen me in;"
   Ibid., p. 30, l. 556: "thou hast both brain and wit,"
14. Ibid., p. 4, l. 28-34: "All fasting now and cold, her body yielded up to pain, Her days a waste of weeping, she hath lain, Since first she knew that he was false."
   Ibid., p. 10, l. 146-147: "and she wastes in her chamber, nor one word will hear of care or charity."
15. Ibid., p. 92: "(Medea is) keen-sighted and yet passionate. One is reminded of the deceits of half-insane persons, which are due not so much to conscious art as to the emergence of another side of the personality."
16. Ibid., p. 32, l. 624-626: "Wert thou not false, 'twas thine to tell me all, And charge me help thy marriage path, as I Did love thee; not befool me with a lie."
the gods. To show how fully she believes she has acted rightly she institutes a festival in expiation of the deed. 17

The Medea of Seneca

There are several points of difference in the Latin Medea. However, her antecedents and environment are the same as in the Greek story. 18 From the very opening lines of the Latin play Medea reveals her emotional character. 19 No better picture of her mental state could be drawn than her physical appearance displays at the approach of Creon. 20 She is haughty, arrogant

17. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 77, l. 1463-1466: "So I lay on all this shore of Corinth a high feast for evermore And rite, to purge them yearly of the stain of this poor blood."

Ibid., p. 96; Murray says: "There was a yearly festival in the precinct of Hera Acraia, near Corinth, celebrating the deaths of Medea's children. This festival, together with its ritual and 'sacred legend,' evidently forms the germ of the whole tragedy."

18. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 87, l. 169: "My father was a king."

Ibid., p. 88, l. 179-180: "Medea, baleful daughter of the Colchian king."

19. Ibid., p. 94, l. 389-390: "In her a medley strange Of every passion may be seen."

Ibid., Act. IV, p. 103-109, l. 670-877. The scene devoted to Medea's incantations gives a vivid description of her character.

20. Ibid., p. 88, l. 187-188: "But lo, she comes, with fierce and threatening mien, to seek An audience with us."

Ibid., p. 88, l. 191: "go, speed thy flight, thou thing of evil, fell, and monstrous."
and imperious.\textsuperscript{21} She displays more amazing powers in Seneca, but these are in the form of gifts.\textsuperscript{22} She is precipitate,\textsuperscript{23} hasty in retort. She offers her children in expiation for the crimes she committed against her father and against her brother.\textsuperscript{24} She is fully conscious of her guilt and refers time and again to her criminal career.\textsuperscript{25} In this she is also unlike the Medea of Euripides.

Seneca devotes a larger part of the play to the Medea speeches. In Seneca the actors speak 768 lines; of these Medea has 540 lines. In Euripides, there are a total of 1139 lines spoken; of these Medea has 577 lines.

\textsuperscript{21} Miller, Frank Justus, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 98, l. 516-517: "A greater than the king is here; Medea."


\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 89, l. 228-229: "...by my arts I saved The bulwark of the Greeks, the offering of the gods."

\textsl{Ibid.}, p. 103, l. 673-674: "I oft have seen her with the fit of inspiration in her soul, confront the gods and force the very heavens to her will."

\textsl{Ibid.}, p. 104, l. 675-679: "There in her chamber, all her stores of magic wonders are revealed; once more she views the things herself hath held in fear these many years, Unloosing one by one her ministers of ill, Occult, unspeakable, and wrapt in mystery."

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 99, l. 549-551: "Doth he thus love his sons? 'Tis well; Then is he bound, and in his armored strength this flaw Reveals the place to strike."

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 112, l. 967-969: "O brother, bid these vengeful goddesses depart and go in peace down to the lowest shades of hell. And do thou leave me to myself, and let this hand That slew thee with the sword now offer sacrifice Unto thy shade."

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 113, l. 1009-1012: "If in the blood of one my passion could be quenched, No vengeance had it sought. Though both my sons I slay, The number is all too small to satisfy My boundless grief."

\textit{Ibid.}, p. 95, l. 427-429: "My troubled soul can never know a time of rest Until it sees all things o'erwhelmed in common doom."
The Jason of Euripides

The Jason of Euripides, the ambitious\textsuperscript{26} go-getter, who sacrifices everything to make a name for himself, is a selfish, despicable wretch. He is cynical,\textsuperscript{27} ironical,\textsuperscript{28} a pretender at magnanimity.\textsuperscript{29} He claims to love his children with a disinterested love throughout the play, and only at the end when he is absolutely desolate does he feel the need of them, and forgets

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 30, l. 570-573: "Had thy days run by unseen on that last edge of the world, where then had been the story of Great Medea? Thou and I. . . . ."
\item Ibid., p. 31, l. 592-595: "But, first and greatest, that we all might dwell in a fair house and want not, knowing well That poor men have no friends, but far and near Shunning and silence."
\item Ibid., p. 31, l. 600-602: "And for me, it serves my star To link in strength the children that now are With those that shall be."
\item Ibid., p. 52, l. 970-972: "Yea, I think you, with your brethren, yet one day Shall be the mightiest voices in this land."
\item Ibid., p. ix, Murray comments on his ambition as follows: "Jason is a middle-aged man, with much glory, indeed, and some illusions; but a man entirely set upon building up a great career, to whom love and all its works, though at times he has found them convenient, are for the most part only irrational and disturbing elements in a world which he can otherwise mould to his will."
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 29-30, l. 552-556: "Since thou wilt build so wondrous high Thy deeds of service in my jeopardy, To all my crew and quest I know but one Saviour, of Gods or mortals one alone, The Cyprian."
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 30, l. 565-567: "Thou hast seen Our ordered life and justice, and the long Still grasp of law. . . . ."
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 26-27, l. 471-474: "I will not hold my hand From succouring mine own people. Here am I To help thee, woman, pondering heedfully Thy new state."
\item Ibid., p. 34, l. 646-651: "Here I stand Full-willed to succour thee with stintless hand, And send my signet to old friends that dwell On foreign shores, who will entreat thee well."
\item Ibid., p. 34-35, l. 658-659: "Now God in heaven be witness, all my heart Is willing in all ways, to do its part for thee and for thy babes."
\end{itemize}
self completely. 30

To Euripides Jason is a minor character and is used as a "prop" for Medea's character. He speaks only 202 lines, barely 100 lines more than the messenger.

His only redeeming feature is that he has not married Medea since in the fifth century B.C. no legal marriage between a Greek and a barbarian from Colchis was possible.

The Jason of Seneca

Unlike Euripides, Seneca has his character a weakling, a coward. He who obtained the Golden Fleece by sailing through the Symplegades, 31 who killed the brazen bull, 32 and the earth-born men, 33 the monsters, 34 he is afraid of the threats of

30. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 72, l. 1378-1380: "'Tis my sons I must some way save, ere the kinsmen of the dead can win From them the payment of their mother's sin."

Ibid., p. 78, l. 1482: "Once let me kiss their lips, once twine mine arms and touch... 'Ah, woe is me!"

Oates, Whitney Jennings, op. cit., p. 721: "Euripides submits his two leading characters to a penetrating psychological analysis. Jason is portrayed as a supreme egotist, who resents being under such great obligations as he is to Medea, yet who has not been unwilling to accept the benefits which have accrued to him through Medea's crimes. Medea has but a single guiding passion, and that is her love for Jason."

31. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 95, l. 456-457: "through the threatening jaws of Pontus' strait, The blue Symplegades?"

32. Ibid., p. 96, l. 467-468: "Hast thou then forgot the brazen bull, And his consuming breath?"

33. Ibid., p. 96, l. 469-470: "Upon the field of Mars, the earth-born brood stood forth To meet thy single sword?"

34. Ibid., p. 96, l. 471: "'Twas by my arts that they, The monsters, fell by mutual blows."
Acastus.35 Because of this fear he casts aside Medea who dared all for him. Yet she sees beyond his motive when she exclaims:

"Beware,
Lest not the fear, but lust of power prevail with thee."36

He too loves his sons, with perhaps a deeper and more sincere love than the Jason of Euripides.37 It is when he expresses this deep love that Medea decides upon the fatal blow she plans to inflict on Jason.

The weakness of his character is even carried out in the number of lines he speaks through the entire play, a total of 65 in comparison with 202 of the Greek Jason.

The Two Creons

The Creon of Euripides is a noble man,38 but first of all a

35. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 95, l. 415-416: "Will Jason say He feared the power of Creon And Acastus' threats?"
Ibid., p. 98, l. 522-523: "But see, With hostile front Acastus comes, on vengeance bent..."
Ibid., p. 98, l. 525-526: "But what resistance can we make, If war With double visage rear his horrid front, If Creon and Acastus join in common cause?"
36. Ibid., p. 99, l. 529.
37. Ibid., p. 99, l. 544-548: "My heart inclines to yield to thee, but love forbids. For these my sons shall never from my arms be reft, Though Creon's self demand. My very spring of life, My sore heart's comfort, and my joy are these my sons; And sooner could I part with limbs or vital breath, Or light of life."
38. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 21, l. 357-359: "Mine is no tyrant's mood. Aye, many a time Ere this my tenderness hath marred the chime of wisest counsels."
tender and loving father, wrapped up in the welfare of his
daughter. He wishes to see her happy in marriage, and be-
lieves union with Jason, who has gained renown through physical
feats, and is a prince besides, will aid in this happiness.
Love and loyalty to country are secondary to his love of his
only daughter. His intense devotion to her is seen when he
casts away his own life to save his daughter's life.

The Creon of Seneca is Seneca's own creation, the Nero type,
the typical tyrant, bombastic, arrogant. It is surprising
that he has patience to listen to Medea while she gives the ac-
count of her valorous deeds for Jason. He speaks somewhat in
the same tenor as Cicero spoke to Catiline when he advised Cati-
line to go into exile:

"Then go thou hence and purge our kingdom of its stain;
Bear hence thy deadly poisons; free the citizens
From fear;"  

39. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 17, l. 281: "... lest thou work some
deed of darkness on my child."
40. Ibid., p. 20, l. 337: "And I mine, and my child, beyond all things."
41. Ibid., p. 67, l. 1291-1303: "But after, when he stayed from tears, and
tried To uplift his old bent frame, lo, in the folds Of those fine robes it
held, as ivy holds strangling among young laurel boughs. Oh, then a ghastly
struggle came! Again, again, Up on his knee he writhed; but that dead breast
Clung still to his: 'til wild, like one possessed, He dragged himself half
free; and lo, the live flesh parted; and he laid him down to strive No more
with death, but perish. ... And there they sleep, At last, the old proud
father and the bride, Even as his tears had craved it, side by side."
42. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 88, l. 188-190: "Slaves, defend us
from her touch And pestilential presence! Bid her silence keep, And learn
to yield obedience to the king's commands."
43. Ibid., p. 88, l. 195: "The king's command thou must abide, nor question
aught."
44. Ibid., p. 91, l. 269-271.
The fear that Creon has for Medea's magic powers is fear for his own person. He, unlike the Greek Creon, does not mention his daughter at all. He shows a father's love for Jason's children, or is it perhaps only a means of assurance to Medea, a salve to soothe her scruples with regard to her children who must be left in his kingdom.\(^45\)

Both Creons are subordinate characters. The Greek one speaks 41 lines and the Latin Creon, 47 lines.

The Messengers

Euripides's messenger is not a "supernumerary but a star." He speaks 103 lines, 99 less than Jason. His is the duty to make known to Medea the results of the fatal gift.\(^46\) He is an old family servant deeply attached to Medea's interests.

In Seneca he seems to be only a passer-by who stops for a minute or two to give the Chorus some information on the happenings at the palace. He speaks a total of 11 lines.

The Nurses

In Euripides she is a trusted servant who feels the grief

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45. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 91, l. 283-284: "Then go in peace. For I to them a father's place will fill and take them to my heart."
46. Caverno, Julia H., Classical Journal, The Messenger in Greek Tragedy, Vol. 12, 1916-17, p. 270 says: "When he ran upon the stage, as when he ran into the market place, men listened for something of importance."
and sorrow of Medea as she does her own. She speaks only at
the opening of the play and displays keen interest in the wel-
fare of Medea and her children. She evidently appears whenever
Medea is on the stage. She speaks 131 lines.

The Nurse in Seneca is a confidante. "Her function is to
serve as a foil to Medea in several dialogues thereby enabling
Medea to play on her emotions to greater effect than she would
be able to do in a monologue." She moralizes frequently and
gives the impression of much learning. She is more free with
her mistress and at times her words border on boldness.

The Children in Both Plays

The children speak in Euripides a total of 4 lines. Eu-
ripides attempted to make them more than an outline; he made
them a reality. But when Medea speaks to them one imagines them
from her treatment and words, much younger than their speeches
betray them to be. They speak very much unlike small children:

47. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 87, l. 152-154: "The man who heavy
blows can bear in silence, biding still his time with patient soul. Full oft
this vengeance gains. 'Tis hidden wrath that harms; But hate proclaimed oft
loses half its power to harm."
48. Vaughan, C. E., op. cit., p. 98, says: "His nurses have a fine literary
sense, and might have taken lessons from Congreve or Sheridan, e. g. Medea,
l. 153-176."
49. Miller, Frank Justus, op. cit., p. 87, l. 157: "Oh, cease this mad com-
plaint, My mistress; scarce can friendly silence help thee now."
Ibid., p. 87, l. 160: "Then valor be approved, if for it still there is
room."
Ibid., p. 88, l. 174-175: "Nay hold thy words, and cease thy threats, 0
foolish one. Thy temper curb; 'tis well to yield to fate's decrees."
"What shall I do? What is it? Keep me fast from mother!"

"I know nothing, brother! Oh, I think she means to kill us."

"Yes, in God's name! Help quickly ere we die!"

"She has almost caught me now. She has a sword."50

In Seneca they do not speak at all. Their silence makes a much more satisfactory impression on the reader, contrary to Cleasby's opinion, since their silence brings out the helplessness of children.

The Chorus in Both Plays

The Chorus, composed of Corinthian women in Euripides, is in sympathy with Medea and she confides to them her plan to kill, not only her children, but the new bride Jason has taken to himself. The Chorus works in harmony with Medea throughout the play, even though they shudder at her plans and attempt to dissuade her from time to time. "Their theme is closely related to the subject matter of the play."51 "Euripides's Chorus sometimes is what the poet himself is—a reasoner and a philosopher."

50. Murray, Gilbert, op. cit., p. 70-71, l. 1355, 1356, 1358, 1359.
51. Sargeant, G. M., The Substance of the Greek Tragedy in Classical Studies, p. 286, says: "In the Medea the chorus' thoughts occasionally break away and stray from the subject, this is never for more than the duration of a strophe, and they wander only for a moment to return incontinently."
They speak 275 lines in Euripides.

In Seneca, the Chorus is made up of Corinthian men who are in sympathy with Jason and never so with Medea. The themes of the lyrical portions bear little resemblance to the choruses of Euripides. To all appearances they served only as lyrical interludes. They too are closely correlated with the subject matter of the tragedy. As in Euripides, the chorus of Seneca often develops a philosophic theme. They have a total of 259 lines in Seneca. "The Choruses differ primarily in their allegiance and in the subject matter of the lyrical themes."52

Aegeus and the Paedagagus do not appear at all in the Latin tragedy. In Euripides, the former has 45 lines and the latter 36 lines.

The total number of lines spoken by all the actors in Euripides is 1139; in Seneca, 768.

Attitude to the Gods in Both Plays

Mr. Morshead says of Euripides and his religion: "His theology or anti-theology, his attitude towards legends which he dramatizes, the background of his mind, the melancholy whisper which constantly seems to sound in our ears—I think there are

52. Kingery, Hugh Macmaster, op. cit., p. 3 says: "In most cases the Senecan characters bear the same names as in the Greek originals, and in essential features are the same; though they differ in matters of detail and often are inferior in distinctness of conception and consistency of development."
no gods, but I am sure there are not wicked ones—the mixture in him, as Mr. Gilbert Murray excellently says, 'of unshrinking realism with unshrinking imaginativeness' all these mark out Euripides definitely a poet for mature readers. 53

Nivard points out that both the Greek and the Latin plays are fatalistic; however, he adds, that the fatalism of the Greek tragedy is religious; while that of Seneca is philosophic. Seneca is inclined to be sceptical, and expounds the hopeless fatalism of the Stoic school.

Even though we find Euripides's Medea saying:

"Gone is now the trust, I put in oaths. I cannot even understand whether thou thinkest that the gods of old no longer rule, or that fresh decrees are now in vogue amongst mankind, for thy conscience must tell thee thou hast not kept faith in me." 54

we must not attribute such views to the author of tragedy. Decharme says: "It will not do to attribute to Euripides without discrimination all the views which his characters maintain for frequently these views are contradictory." He does hold, however, that Euripides attacks the popular faith which Socrates respected.

Boyle agrees with Decharme and further adds that it is repeated mannerisms which show for what the author should be held

accountable.

The Medea of Euripides represents the gods as the supreme ruler of events in the following passages:

"Many a fate doth Zeus dispense, high on his Olympian throne; oft do the gods bring things to pass beyond man's expectation; that which we thought would be, is not fulfilled, while for the unlooked-for, god finds a way; and such hath been the issue of this matter."55

"O Zeus! let not the author of these my troubles escape thee."56

"O Zeus! why hast thou granted unto man clear signs to know the sham in gold, while on man's brow no brand is stamped whereby to gauge the villain's heart?"57

Euripides treats the gods with familiarity. "It is their humanity rather than their divinity which appears at short range."

"'Tis said that gifts tempt even gods."58

"'Tis not for thee to be a laughing stock to the race of Sisyphus, by reason of this wedding of Jason, sprung as thou art, from a noble sire, and of the Sun-god's race."59

56. Ibid., Medea speaks this line, p. 42, l. 33.
57. Ibid., p. 46-47, l. 427-430.
58. Ibid., p. 59, l. 965.
59. Ibid., p. 44, l. 404-407.
Medea speaks at times more as the equal of the gods than as a mortal.

"Old friend, needs must I weep; for the gods and I with fell intent devised these schemes."60

The less educated and common people endowed the gods with multiple human passions. Euripides shows repeatedly how very ridiculous this is and points out that the gods ought to be wiser than men.

"Can it be any profit to the gods to heap upon us mortal men beside our other woes this further grief for children lost, a grief surpassing all?"61

Medea's apparent irreverence for the gods is due, perhaps, to her resentment at the unkind treatment of Jason:

"O my poor child, which of the gods hath destroyed thee thus foully?"62

"The gods know, whoso of them began this troublous coil."63

Hutchins in his article, Apollo Indicted says: "The gods were for Euripides an essential part of a living language, not the result of a formulated speculation."64 And again, "What

61. Ibid., p. 63, l. 1119.
62. Ibid., p. 66, l. 1208.
63. Ibid., p. 71, l. 1370.
64. Burnet, John, Essays and Addresses, The Religious and Moral Ideas of Euripides, p. 57, says: "A very small knowledge of Greek religion will carry you through Aeschylus and Sophocles; but when you come to Euripides you find you are in the hands of a specialist and have to know details."
they lose in majesty they gain in human sympathy."65

In both plays the poets employ a "Deus ex machina" as the means of escape for Medea. In both she mounts the chariot pro­vided for her by her father the Sun-god. Mounted on this chariot she scoffs at Jason.

"If thou wouldst aught with me, say on, so swift the steeds the sun, my father's sire, to me doth give to save me from the hand of my foes."66

"'Twas thus of old I fled. The heavens themselves provide me with a safe retreat."67

In both plays Medea's antecedents are the same--she was herself sprung from the Sun-god, their blood courses through her veins; she understands their will with more than mortal ken, and this enables her "to assume toward them a very definite atti­tude."

Seneca revels in mythology and it becomes one of his "be­setting perils."68 Mythology for mythology's sake is his motto. He produces melodramatic effects by employing the supernatural; but he seldom employs the gods of Olympus, rather he breathes often and freely in the world of Pluto.

68. In Medea's opening speech in Seneca's tragedy, she invokes Lucina, Ne­ptune, Titan, the trifor­med Hecate, "the gods by whose divinity false Jason swore," "the damned ghosts," Pluto and his bride, "crime avenging furies," Phoebus--all in a breath-taking recital.
He permits Medea to speak glibly of the gods and to recite in litany effect the long list of infernal deities during her incantation ceremony. 69

She invokes the Furies too to aid her in due revenge, and, when she is goaded on to an unrelenting resolve, she is spurred on even more by the spirit of her murdered brother. 70

In matters of ceremony, Seneca's Medea shows a certain reverence for the gods, yet throughout she effects an attitude of self-sufficiency:

"But now I'll go and pray the gods and move high heaven But I shall work my will!" 71

"I oft have seen her, with the fit Of inspiration in her soul, confront the gods And force the very heavens to her will." 72

70. Ibid., p. 112, l. 965-970.
71. Ibid., p. 95, l. 425.
72. Ibid., p. 103, l. 672-674.
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The thesis, "The Medea of Euripides and Seneca: A Comparison", written by Sister Mary Enrico Frisch, S.S.N.D., has been accepted by the Graduate School with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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