

MEDEA

Euripides

BACKGROUND

- Jason and the Golden Fleece
 - Medea gave up everything for Jason
- Greek attitude toward foreigners
 - If you weren't from a Greek-speaking city, you were a barbarian
- Greek attitude toward women
 - Not citizens, no voice in government, arranged marriages...

PROLOGOS

- “Her heart smitten by love for Jason” (8-9).
 - Aphrodite - remember Euripides’ view of the gods
- The tutor’s news
 - Creon “intends to drive these children from Corinthian earth with their mother” (68-70).
- The nurse can’t stop worrying about the children



PARADOS

- The Chorus enters
- In *Medea*, the Chorus is a group of older women of Corinth
- There is a great deal of sympathy for Medea here.
 - The Chorus is already trying to talk some sense into the woman, who is mad with grief



FIRST EPISODE

- “We women are the most wretched creatures...I would rather stand shield to shield three times than give birth just once” (241-262).
 - What problems does Medea’s speech underscore?
- Medea asks the Chorus for its silence
 - Does the Chorus agree?
- Creon declares that Medea must “leave this land in exile,” taking her children without delay (285-286).
 - How does Medea buy herself time? Is Creon foolish for accepting this deal?
- What do you think of Medea now?
- Note Creon’s statement, “**Besides my children**, I love my country most” (351).

FIRST STASIMON

- Sympathy for Medea
- Frustration with old hymns/ballads
- There are many which describe the shortcomings of women, but none that lament the shortcomings of men



SECOND EPISODE

- Jason's "comfort"
 - "Think it a blessing that you are punished only with exile" (479-480)
 - Translation: Sure, I ditched you to marry the princess and now you're homeless. It could be worse.
 - "After all, even if you hate me, I could never think badly of you" (491-492).
 - Translation: Here, have some cash. That will clear my conscience and I will pretend you will be fine. Never mind that you're a woman and an outsider with nowhere to go and no hope to make money on your own.
- "You live in Greece instead of a barbarian land" (568-569)
 - I know that you came all the way here because you loved me, and now I could care less, but look on the bright side. Your homeland was awful anyway. At least you got to experience Greek life for a while.

SECOND EPISODE

- Jason - a wise, restrained friend?
 - Reread lines 580-610. Is he serious?!
 - How does Medea react to his version of events?
- Jason calls the gods “to witness how [he] would do anything to help [Medea] and the children, but good things don’t please [her]” (658-660).
 - Would he really do anything to help her?
 - Wouldn’t being a loyal husband be a better alternative?
 - What do you think of Jason?

SECOND STASIMON

- Being without a happy marriage is like being without a homeland.
- Both situations are unbearable in the eyes of the Chorus.

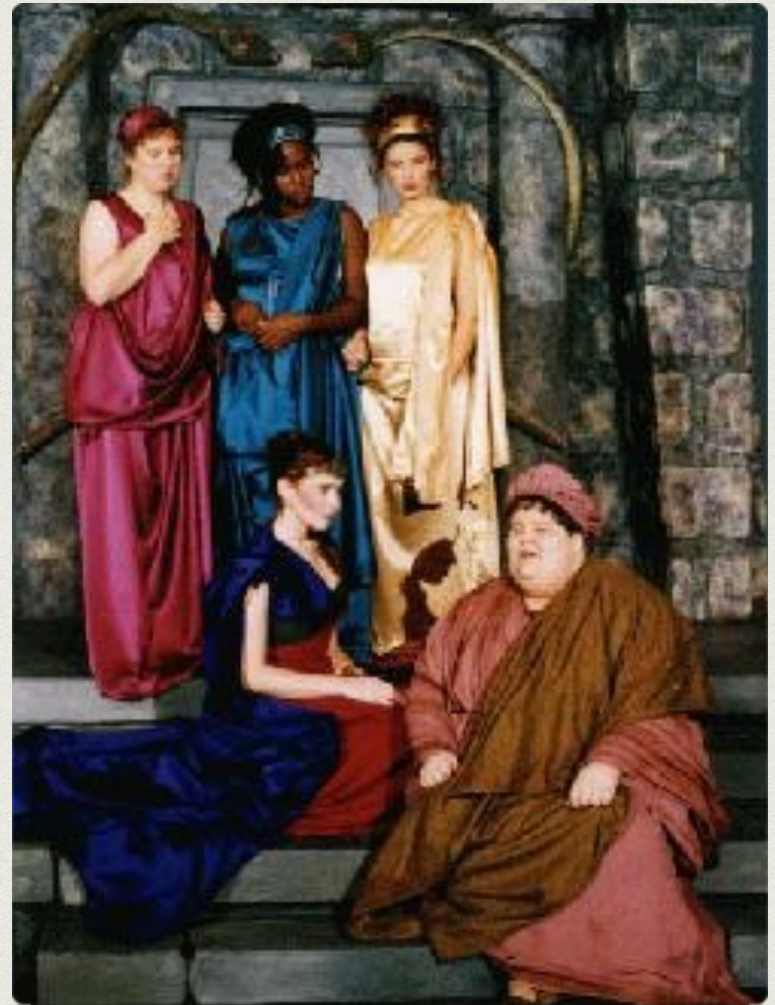


THIRD EPISODE

- Upon learning of Jason's treatment of Medea, Aegeus says, "I don't approve of that!" (736).
- How does Medea use Aegeus' sympathy to further her plan? How will he protect her?
- Medea plans to poison the princess. How will she accomplish this?
- What will she do to her sons?
- How does the Chorus react to her plans? (832-834)

THIRD STASIMON

- The Chorus begs Medea to reconsider her plans.
- They do not believe that King Aegeus will really accept Medea if she goes through with her plans.



FOURTH EPISODE

- “Jason, I ask you to forgive what I said before” (882-883).
- Medea pretends to ask for Jason’s forgiveness
- Jason is overjoyed at her change of heart. Too bad it isn’t genuine...

FOURTH STASIMON

- Why has the Chorus lost hope for Medea's sons?
- In legends of Medea prior to Euripides' play, she did not murder her sons. Why might Euripides have made this change?
 - Note: This is a very challenging question. Scholars have debated this for centuries!



FIFTH EPISODE

- The Tutor shares what he believes is good news. “The princess bride gladly took the gifts” (1023).
- Medea’s internal battle: reason vs. emotion

FIFTH STASIMON

- What is the “most heartrending pain” the gods can give to people?
(1139)



SIXTH EPISODE

- Creon and the princess have died
- “You will delight me twice as much, if they died really terribly” (1157-1158). Yikes!
- What happened to them?
- Medea shares her plans with the Chorus (1263-1279). What are they?

SIXTH STASIMON

- “O heaven-born light, hinder her, stop her, take from this home that poor, murderous fury, driven by revenge” (1288-1290).



SEVENTH EPISODE

- How does Jason react to the deaths of his sons? (1346-1348).
- Note how the gods help Medea escape
 - Medea escapes on a chariot sent from her uncle Helios
 - Deus ex machina: literally, “the god from the machine.” Greek tragedies often ended with a god appearing over the stage to sort things out and provide a neat ending. Euripides went against convention and used this machinery to help Medea escape.
 - Not a popular choice...
- Whom do you feel sympathy for?

EXODOS

- Medea's final prediction for Jason
- “Zeus dispenses many things from Olympus, and the gods bring to pass much that is unexpected. What was believed is not borne out, while God finds a way for the unforeseen. So it was in what has just passed.” (1455-1459).