

Medea's significance to greek theater, euripides' innovation



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Greek theatre, portrayed in Medea, emphasizes the characters and the plot through the structure of Greek theatre as well as bringing about a new moral and social portrayal of Greece. Originated in Athens around the 5th century BC, Greek theater, was performed in open air to honour the God Dionysus, God of ecstasy and wine. In a festival called " City Dionysia" tragedies and comedies were performed in the form of competition. Tragedies were those by which the themes of love, pride, loss, abuse of power and the relationships between men and gods were established. Whereas, Greek comedies were mainly satires that derided men in power for their pride and imprudence. Euripides, writer of Greek tragedies, was in competition with two other greek tragedians Sophocles and Aeschylus; Where Sophocles and Aeschylus followed the traditional form of Greek theatre, making the chorus the centre and showing great importance of the Gods and heroes, Euripides focused on the characters and satirizes Greek heroes.

" Medea" a play in which the protagonist is Medea, is a Greek tragedy written by Euripides. Themes of Love showcased by Medea's love for Jason, pride by Medea's reputation and urge for vengeance, abuse of power is shown by the murders done by Medea. However, " Medea" can also be considered a Greek comedy due to its portrayal of Jason, where he loses, due to his desire for power, not only his newly wedded wife, but also his offsprings. Euripides in contrast to Sophocles and Aeschylus, had blasphemous plays and was therefore not seen with much importance during his time. Moreover, he mocked the Athenian society of 431 BC by portraying a different role of women, one which is not engaged by marriage. For example, when Medea speaks " we women are the most wretched [...]"

possessor of our body." reflecting upon the dowry system of ancient Greece, and in contrast to the usual perspective of obedient women and men being the possessors, the verb "bought" represents that the one who purchases shall be the owner, i. e, the women who pay exorbitant amounts should be in power, and not vice versa. The dialogue uses possessive pronoun "our" to show the collective society and that women suffer the same miseries.

Greek theatre famous for its precise structure is made of prologue which serves as an introduction to the play, done by the 'nurse' and 'tutor' in "Medea" when they create an image of Medea, a scorned lover, for the viewers. Followed by the parados, which consists of the chorus that manifests the main idea of the play. In Medea the chorus opposes the idea of women's inferiority, "For Phoebus[...]infamous than women." highlighting the fact that the women in ancient greece whose emotions were ignored, now had a voice and men were "no less famous or infamous than women". Furthermore, Euripides uses the phrase "time is old" in reference to his main idea of a modern Greek society. Then happens the first episode where the hero is first shown, this in "Medea" is when the transformation of her character takes place. Medea comes out cool and self possessed, whilst addressing the chorus "We women are the most wretched" she portrays herself not as a victim to her husband's infidelity but showing that all women are victims. Furthermore she shows herself as a strong woman who seeks "revenge on Jason", unlike the earlier helpless "poor Medea". Thereafter, is the stamison, the crime committed by the protagonist is told here. This yet again shows Medea's characterization who gets "double pleasure" from hearing of the death of Glauce and Creon from the Messenger. From a

scorned wife Medea is transformed into a dominant woman through the use of her "skills". The play ends with the exodus, the last thing said by the chorus, which concludes the play. In Medea the chorus sings "Many are the[...]of this story", this shows that though Jason was the one who was going to become powerful, with a newly wedded and his pride at peak, is finished by Medea- left in misery without a wife, and childless. Additionally, Euripides is known for using "deus ex machina", a plot device that introduces a character, mostly a God or Goddess, and abruptly that character provides a solution to the problem faced by the protagonist. For instance, in Medea Aegeus promises shelter to Medea because of which she successfully carries out her plan for revenge.

Euripides transforms Greek theatre and shows a totally different view of women in the Greek society. Alongside the Greek theatre's structuralism, Euripides adds a new level intrigue and comedy in his plays while using also the deus ex machina. With the use of chorus and other characters present in the play, Greek theatre provides many different perspectives to view the protagonist. Thereafter, indulging the audience in the lives of the characters, making emphasis on the struggles of the protagonist and how they survive. Transforming the Greek theatre Euripides is successful in portraying lucidly different characters of Medea, making sure the spotlight is on the protagonist, who "wins" the fight through revenge, leaving Jason in desolation.

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