

A PSYCHOANALYTICAL SKETCH OF FEMINISM AS IT FINDS EXPRESSION IN THE PLAY THE MEDEA BY EURIPIDES

Thulasi Weerasekara

*Department of Classical Languages, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
thulasiweerasekara@gmail.com*

What is it like to be a dramatist as a by-product of a particular time where discrimination, sexism, desertion, and rape were as natural and predictable as the “weaker sex”? When the reality is thus two-dimensional the chances are that one becomes automatically good/evil based on gender, sexuality or race. What one might call injustice would mean nothing more than some anecdotal evidence based on the minority of “crazy people”. Medea, a scandalous mythological figure, portrayed in Greek mythology and epic poetry as a demonic, infanticidal maniac effortlessly falls into the said category. However, in his version of *Medea*, Euripides strips the woman before us who assumes a mantle of self-assurance and destroys those very certificates that validate her existence in the civilized, political world, her wifely profile and her motherhood and throws them in the face of the patriarchy and flees. Euripides presents Medea as the counter-product of the socio-political, cultural and religious hypocrisies that is capable of taking it all down while it itself goes down rebelliously. Accordingly, though it would not be ethically justified to look at Medea’s dramatic persona as a feminist, this paper examines how the play screams out loud the need to purge the society of the bad, the shaky hybrid principles that the patriarchy has been established upon. The primary source for this study is Euripides’ play, the *Medea*. The assessing of the character is based on specific secondary sources, supported by a scholarly community of Classics and Psychology. While the Classical vase paintings and memorial tablets featuring alluring, complacent women tell a different tale, Euripides’ Medea is the expression of a painful social problem. Thematically, Euripides addresses the conflict within Medea between the authentication of her true self and the profile that has been designed for her by the patriarchy, civilization, and culture. These alone interpret her magical powers and her legendary past. Euripides uses Medea sometimes to illustrate, by contrast, the Greek ideal of moderation but more importantly she constructs a metaphor for the social order. He purges Medea of her legendary dark arts which in turn transforms her into an ordinary woman but more importantly into “every woman”