Rewriting Medea: Foreignness, Belonging, and the Politics of Exclusion from Euripides to Anouilh

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ABSTRACT

The myth of Medea constitutes one of the central narrative structures of the ancient Greek mythological tradition, dramatizing tensions between law, authority, and ethical resistance. This paper examines how the figure of Euripides' Medea (431 BCE) as a foreign subject is transformed in the rewriting of the myth in Jean Anouilh's Médée (1946). Rather than presenting a direct adaptation of the classical tragedy, Anouilh's play reinterprets the myth within the historical and political context of twentieth-century Europe. In Euripides' tragedy, Medea appears as a foreign woman who comes to Corinth as the bride of Jason; despite her outsider status, she still embodies a fragile belonging within the polis. However, Anouilh's Médée represents Medea as a radical outsider who lives on the margins of the city, detached from the social order and the protection of law. The early dramatic representation of Medea thus positions the foreign woman as a subject who, despite her marginal status, remains within the political community, whereas the modern rewriting dramatizes her transformation into a radically excluded outsider. Methodologically, the study approaches Médée as a hypertextual rewriting of Euripides' Medea in the sense proposed by Gérard Genette. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben's concepts of sovereign power, exclusion, and bare life, the paper investigates how the political position of Medea is reconfigured in modern drama. By comparing these two dramatic representations, the study argues that Euripides' Medea, as a foreign woman negotiating a fragile belonging within the polis, is transformed in Anouilh's rewriting into a figure of radical exclusion.

Keywords Medea; Rewriting; Foreignness; Belonging; Exclusion; Migration; Political Theatre

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