

Pasolini's *Medea* and the Six (Eight) Human Sacrifices

Of the many ways to present and analyze the myth of Medea, the emphasis on her otherness and loss of identity, her subjection as an alien person to colonizing exploitation, has proved remarkably fruitful in the last century (*Medea in Performance* 2000, *Looking at Medea* 2014, Lenormand 1931, Anderson 1936, Magnuson 1971, Kennelly 1989, Butler 1990, Enoch 2006). Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Medea* (1969) has an exceeding rich and complex version of Medea, and certainly he had in mind her colonized situation (Kvistad 2010, Caminati 2016). In this paper I analyze the human sacrifices or ritualized murders that Medea performs in Pasolini's film in light of her colonized trauma. (1) The sacrifice in the context of a fertility ritual in primitive Colchis remains unproblematic in my analysis, preceding as it does the encounter with Jason when Medea succumbs to the eroticized attractions of his world and begins to participate in her own colonized exploitation. But the other sacrifices afford an interpretation strikingly different to what they usually receive. Now cooperating with Jason in order to further the colonizer's goals, (2) Medea sacrifices her brother. In the second half of the film, where Pasolini works from Euripides's play, the colonized oriental finds herself replaced by a Greek woman because Jason has contracted a politically advantageous marriage with Glauce, daughter of the Corinthian king Creon. Now Medea shuffles off her colonized identity and pursues her own anticolonial project. In the rational world of Corinth magic has lost its power, and only in a vision can she use it against the princess and king (3a and 4a). Instead Medea effects the sacrifices of (3b) Glauce and (4b) Creon by leveraging the guilt of the colonizers, who suffer historical trauma resulting from their role in oppressing just as the oppressed do because of the experience of colonization (Ieranò 2000, McCaslin and Breton 2008, Johnson 2015). Finally (5-

6) Medea sacrifices the children in the exotic guise of an elaborate ritual, but she does so for the rational purpose of frustrating Jason's ambitious political program.

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