

If Looks Could Kill: Vision and Division in Euripides' *Medea*

Euripides' *Medea* contains many instances of Euripides' characters and chorus explicitly commenting on Medea's vision: they note where or at whom she looks, when, and in what manner she communicates her gaze. This paper considers those comments on Medea's vision and how that outward vision is connected Medea's inward motives. It asserts that Medea's outward vision is a direct indicator of her inward emotional or mental state. Further, it argues that this framework of outward indication of inward condition exists in duality: on the one hand, a pointed and intentional gaze from Medea communicates a decisive (and often destructive) motive or desire, while on the other hand, an instance of Medea struggling to look in a certain direction indicates a state of ambiguous (and often more tender) emotional turmoil. Further, this paper demonstrates that the other characters in the *Medea* are able to understand, anticipate, and react to Medea's future actions only to the extent that they understand this mechanism, and only when Medea's gaze communicates the decisive and destructive. In cases of Medea's gaze portraying external ambiguity, her interlocutors are left unable to interpret and react to her internal state. Finally, the paper discusses Medea's own awareness of her outward, physical vision as it relates to her internal, metaphorical "vision" for her future, and how that awareness transcends that of all the other characters. As Medea reaches the point of ultimate decisiveness at the end of the play, bent on Jason's destruction through the slaughter of her children, she expresses this destruction in terms of a limitation of sight.

The paper develops its argument by discussing two pairs of passages in which there is explicit commentary on Medea's outward vision. The first two are examples of individuals (the Nurse and Creon) correctly identifying a decisive emotional state based on a specific and intentional gaze from Medea and being able to predict and react to her future actions based on her current internal condition. The second pair of passages, in contrast, depict Jason and the Pedagogue confronted with an internally conflicted Medea and left unable to predict her future actions, which are not decisively indicated by the object and manner of her gaze. In addition, the

paper analyzes a counterexample of a misinterpretation of Medea's inward-outward vision complex by the Chorus, and how this lack of understanding ends in a failed attempt to alter Medea's internal state. Finally, the paper ends with an exploration of Medea's own conception of her inward and outward vision, how she resolves her internal ambiguity and reaches a point of ultimate decisiveness, and how the execution of her final decisiveness, the destruction of her children, is framed in terms of sight, explicitly aimed at limiting what Jason will see in the future both physically and figuratively. Thus, this paper maintains that vision, both inward and outward, is a critical component of Medea's character in the eyes of others and in her own eyes, and that an understanding of the relationship between Medea's internal and external vision is crucial to an understanding of the evolution and execution of her motives and desires throughout the play.

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