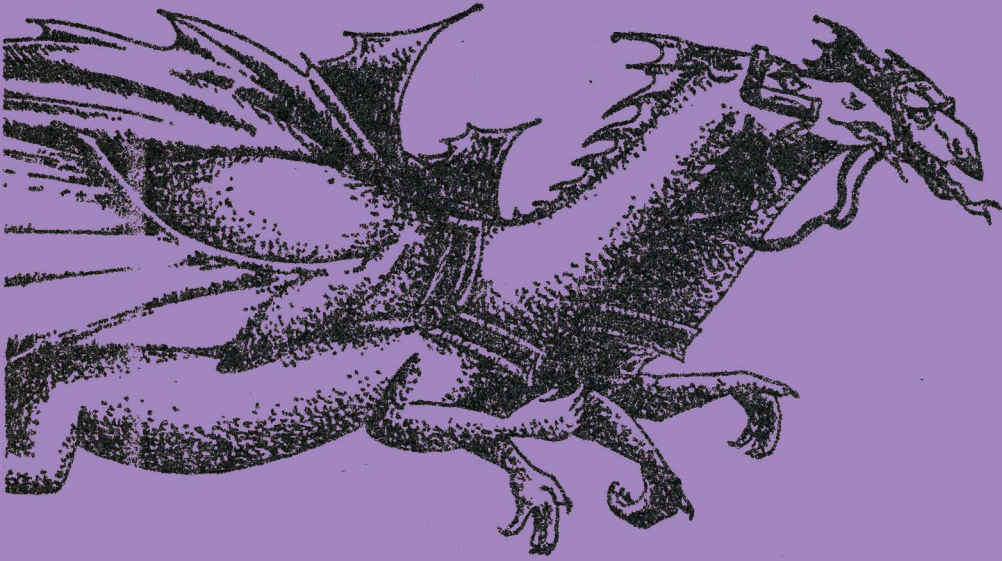


An Evening Of One-Act Drama



EURIPIDES

MEDEA

Wilson's School

MARCH 14 - 15 - 16

EURIPIDES

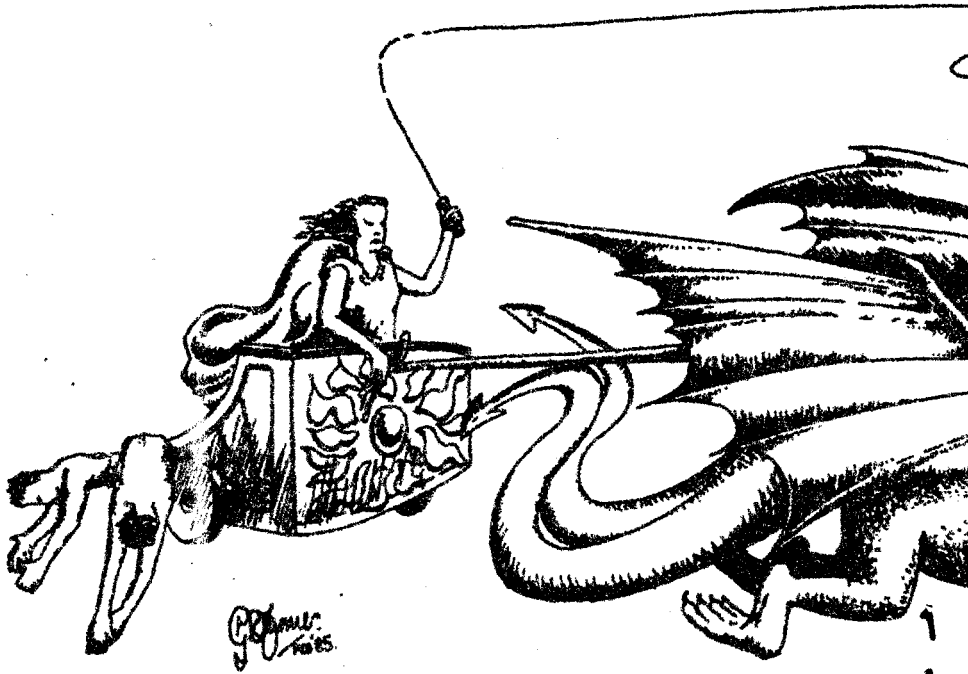
MEDEA

Translated by P. Vellacott (Penguin Classics)

CAST in order of appearance:

NURSE.....Simon Thomas
TUTOR to Medea's sons.....Allister Simpson
MEDEA.....Mark Stone
CHORUS of Corinthian Women.....Paul Longhurst
(Leader)
Richard King
Toby Godfrey
Christopher Hall
Alistair Mattinson
Peter Murton
Daniel Seymour
Paul Deegan
CREON King of Corinth.....Benjamin Webster
JASON.....Edward Applewhite
ARGEUS King of Athens.....Peter York
MESSENGER.....Peter Morris
Medea's sons.....Glenn Hamilton
Gareth Wynne-Jones
Guards.....Andrew Cuthbert
Allister Simpson
Andrew Ryde
Barry Alston

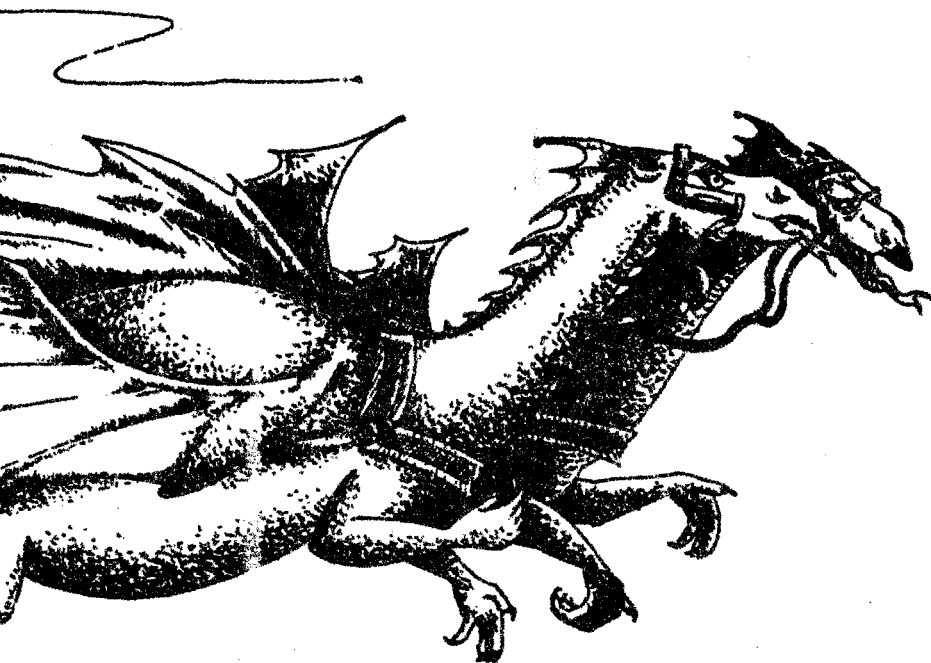
SCENE : Before Jason's House in Corinth



JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

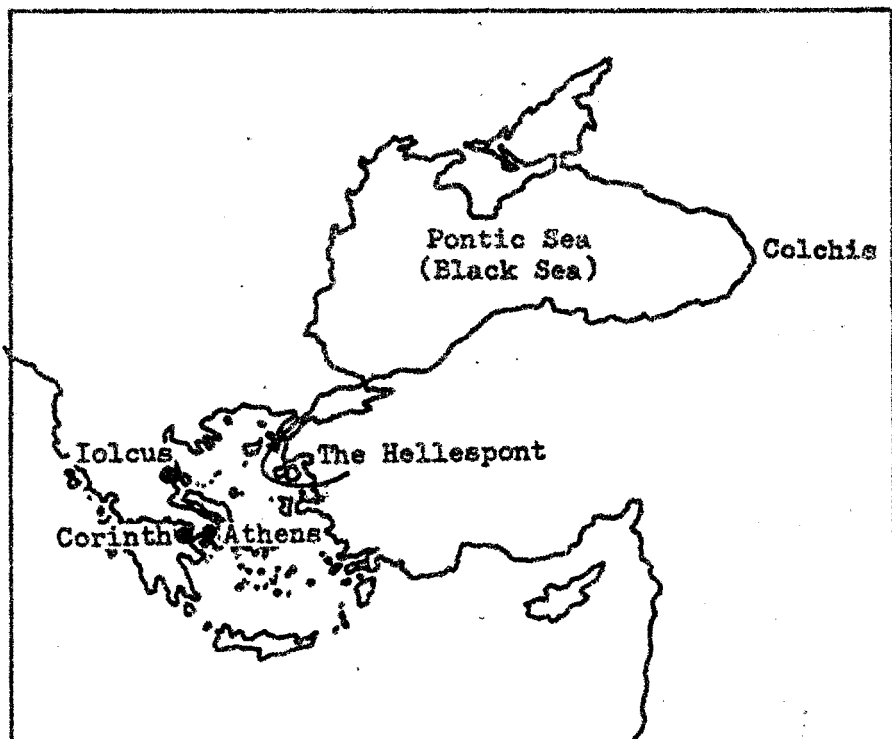
The story so far....

Jason, the rightful heir to the throne of Iolcus, comes to claim it from the usurper Pelias. In order to destroy Jason, Pelias sends him on a perilously dangerous mission: to fetch the golden fleece from the distant and barbarous land of Colchis. Jason sails to Colchis with a band of heroes in the 'Argo', and is commanded by the king of Colchis to perform a series of impossible tasks - yoking fire-breathing bulls, fighting the earth-born



warriors - before he can take the fabulous fleece, which is guarded by an unsleeping dragon. The goddess Aphrodite ensures Jason's success by making Medea, the daughter of the king of Colchis and a sorceress, fall in love with him; she uses her magical skills to help Jason gain the fleece, and so having betrayed her father and country, she flees with him, causing the death of her own brother on the way. Back in Iolcus, she persuades the daughters of the ageing king Pelias to 'rejuvenate' their father by chopping him into pieces and boiling his dismembered body in a cauldron and having thus exacted their revenge,

Jason and Medea take refuge in Corinth, where they live happily for ten years, and have two sons. Eventually Jason tires of his barbarian wife, and (since marriage between a Greek and a foreigner was not legally recognised) marries Glauce, daughter of Creon, king of Corinth. Medea is thus completely abandoned and her love for Jason turns to hate. This is the point at which the play begins - Creon, fearful that Medea is plotting some terrible outrage, orders her banished from Corinth, but she persuades him to allow her to stay for one day. In this time she is able to work a horrifying revenge on Jason and his new family; king Aegeus offers her sanctuary in Athens, and the sun-god provides a magical dragon-drawn chariot for her to make good her escape at the end of the play.



MEDEA

This, the earliest surviving tragedy of Euripides, first produced in 431 B.C., presents at first what appears to be a straightforward picture of right and wrong; Medea is a woman whose husband has abandoned her with her children and gone off to marry another woman. The facts that he has evidently not consulted with Medea before leaving her, and that the woman he has deserted her for is a princess, present Jason in such a bad light that when he first comes on stage we are bound to be prejudiced against him and sympathetic to Medea. But her revenge so surpasses in its ferocity all the wrongs she has suffered, that we cannot help feeling sorry for Jason at the end of the play. Neither one emerges as morally unblemished; similarly both cases have some basis in justice. There are no easy answers.

The Athenian King Aegeus' offer of sanctuary to Medea was part of the original legend, and Euripides does not miss the opportunity to flatter his Athenian audience with a hymn in praise of Athens; but we may wonder whether Medea will feel any more at home there than in Corinth. Both were highly civilised Greek cities, but Medea's violent, passionate nature and magical powers mean that she can hardly become truly civilised; she represents, in a sense, the unreasoning, emotional, intuitive side of man's personality, as opposed to the cool, rational, dispassionate side which is seen in an extreme and unsympathetic form in Jason.

Medea, since earliest times, has been viewed as such a depraved character that she became a notorious example of the 'evil women' in Euripides that earned him such a reputation as a woman-hater. But Euripides was no misogynist: his sympathy for Medea is shown in the way he represents her as driven to extremity not by psychopathic compulsion but by the unfeeling, chauvinistic behaviour of the men who govern her life. Many of the playwright's most powerful scenes develop into confrontations in the eternal battle of the sexes, and give the play a universality that is perhaps most responsible for the continuing appeal of his work.