INTRODUCTION

Medea, Meetings in Borderland

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MEDEA: just mentioning the name conjures up echoes from antiquity that reverberate into the present day. MEDEA: the infanticidal mother of Euripides' tragedy; the vengeful wife driven to a killing frenzy by her husband's infidelity; the wicked witch; the multiple murderer. However, also MEDEA: the scorned and mistreated wife; the marginalized 'Other'; the psychologically frail heroine; or MEDEA: the exotic princess; the beautiful and smitten maiden; the semi-divine female and the strong yet abused victim who achieves almost iconic status in an age of feminist consciousness. MEDEA comes to life in drama, prose and poetry; she arrests the eye in paintings, woodcuts and frescoes; and reverberates in music. Film and theatre directors have put her onto stage and screen; choreographers have given her movement; and actresses (and actors) have lent her their face, voice and skin colour. Moreover, scholars and theorists in not only the Arts but also in Legal Studies, Sociology, Medicine, Biology and Psychology have used her to develop concepts of female behaviour, motherhood, 'Otherness', national and cultural identity. Arguably, many figures from classical mythology have provided creative and intellectual challenges to thought and culture from antiquity to the twenty-first century. Compared to MEDEA, however, some appear almost monolithic: Venus may embody (sexual) love, Pandora (destructive) curiosity, Circe (potentially fatal) enchantment and Hercules superhuman strength, but each particular quality is more or less *all* they embody. MEDEA's evolution, however, has been fractured and fragmented: she has been taken up, changed — sometimes beyond recognition — and is still unfolding. The various facets of her personality may be separated and individually explored, even appropriated, yet her essential complexity remains and defies reduction to a single determining feature.

This is confirmed by Sarah Iles Johnston, who, in the introduction to *Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy and Art*, stresses: 'In seeking to understand the powerful hold that Medea has had upon our imaginations for almost three millenia [...] we must embrace her complexity and look within it for the secret of her longevity.'[1] If MEDEA's complexity indeed renders her exceptional and constitutes the driving force behind her ongoing reception, this very diversity of character can already be seen very clearly — and in its perhaps purest form — in Euripides' Medea, who brings conflicting traits to the point of collision. His Medea is the (female) victim who is also the (male) aggressor; helper maiden and destructive avenger; figure of identification and horrific example; desirable

woman and undesirable witch; human, superhuman and sub-human; (national) 'Self' and barbaric 'Other' and, crucially, the infanticidal mother. It is this intrinsic variety that led Bernard Knox to formulate his provocative statement regarding Euripides: '[T]he field is wide open for every man to make his own Euripides — the rationalist, the irrationalist, the political dramatist, the philosopher, the feminist, the radical, the reactionary, or the mere bungler.'[2] MEDEA's conflicting elements challenge our thinking and, far from being bungled, form a tense, emotionally and intellectually challenging oxymoronic structure which resists reduction to a single — and therefore safely defusable — facet. Euripides' *Medea* is a prime example for a veering between, even collision of, extremes; many of the subsequent MEDEAS addressed by this volume embody contradictions that cannot be reconciled but present a self-perpetuating intellectual challenge.

Reception of the classical Medea myth in a variety of scholarly disciplines forms the subject of the essays in this volume. Contributors are scholars of Classics, Medieval Studies, Modern Languages, Art History, Film and Theatre Studies, Law, Medicine and Genetics. Their essays bear witness to an engagement with the myth as fragmented and varied as the character herself, with topics ranging from pictorial representations in the ancient Roman house to the Chicana Medea to infanticide within the legal discourse of legislation and the courtroom and the medical discourse of Munchhausen by Proxy to Medea as the model wife and emblem of all human suffering. Despite their apparently irreconcilable diversity, these contributions are drawn together by their engagement with 'MEDEA', whose name (in small capitals) is used in this introduction not to refer to any particular approach but to propose a common denominator for the various adaptations, a 'universal' MEDEA whose multi-facetedness shapes her reception, and — as is evident from this collection of essays — necessarily allows gaps, embraces inconsistencies and admits shortcomings. Thus the title of this volume, *Unbinding Medea*, signals the very different answers to MEDEA provided by its contributors but also aims to provoke debate that transcends individual and discipline-specific approaches to the reception of her myth and to present interdisciplinary parameters of engagement. The richly complex material on MEDEA presented an editorial challenge; hence the grouping of the essays under five section titles should be regarded only as an initial tool to facilitate access: any number of permutations would have been equally valid. That all five section titles, in one way or another, indicate movement reminds us of the fluidity of MEDEA's reception but also underlines the highly arbitrary divisions and often permeable boundaries presented by each section and, indeed, each essay. Hence *Unbinding Medea* hopes to encourage the reader to cross-read the different approaches and follow the leads that fuse them in ways that transcend both their section headings and their various subject and topic boundaries.

Part I is entitled **Departures** as it groups together approaches to early literary and pictorial MEDEA versions by scholars in the field of Classics. However, these early approaches to the myth do not simply represent a chronological point of departure but underline Fiona Macintosh's observation in the introduction to *Medea in Performance 1500–2000*: 'There is a very real sense that in understanding Medea in the past, we are decoding her for the present and future as well.'[3] The present volume starts with

Edith Hall's thoughts on Euripides' *Medea* of 431 BC, an approach which highlights the importance of his tragedy as a — more or less marked — reference point for all subsequent MEDEAS addressed in this collection of essays. Furthermore, Hall's reading of Euripides presents a first, powerful, case for disciplinary cross-reading since it brings together Euripides' tragedy, modern Western criminology, sociology and psychoanalysis, reflecting in particular upon the element of provocation in both Euripides and the modern criminological context. Hall's comparison leads her to question the very nature of Medea's infanticide: is it '"premeditated" first-degree murder' or '"unpremeditated" second-degree murder'? Whilst clearly emphasizing the difference in cultural contexts, her study highlights the importance of the tragedy from 431 BC in challenging seemingly 'clear-cut psychological and legal categorization' and 'raises questions about the precise definitions of moral responsibility'. Similar ambiguities regarding the legal representation of the female 'Other' are explored by Edward Phillips in the part entitled **Laws of Containment and Disruption.** As a legal professional he approaches the Medea myth as a story used by the Law to create a 'template for the Law's judgment of "conventional" feminine conduct in the roles of wife and mother', in which 'Medea is an image of deviant femininity'. In so doing he introduces actual court cases to highlight the workings and failures of a male-centric legal system when it comes to judging crimes committed by women that fall outside traditionally sanctioned roles, infanticide presenting the most extreme transgression of cultural expectations. Both essays, one written by a classical scholar, one by a legal professional, present approaches clearly informed by their individual areas of expertise and seemingly position themselves at different ends of the academic spectrum. However, in their discussion of MEDEA they arrive at essentially the same questions and raise them through the medium of a mythical figure who allows both: the reaching back in time to provide cultural and legal insights into Attic society; and the laying bare of contemporary (in this case, English) society and its legal system. Thus the **Departures** of MEDEA in 431 BC find their harbour in the modern **Laws of Containment and Disruption**; and her inherent interdisciplinarity already emerges as the motor of her reception in the two contributions by Hall and Phillips.

This interdisciplinarity is based largely on the fact that, when it comes to the child-harming mother, cultural and sociological issues have for centuries been closely intertwined with legal, psychological and medical approaches (all of which, in turn, fuel and shape aesthetic representation). The essays in **Laws of Containment and Disruption** provide the widest-ranging examples for interdisciplinarity: the contributions by Terence Stephenson, Angela J. Burns and Laurence D. Hurst bring together the fields of Medicine, Legal Studies and Genetics, whilst Hilary Emmett's essay provides links to the perhaps more familiar field of MEDEA reception in literature. In his essay on Fabricated or Induced Illness (previously known as Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy) Stephenson's medical focus contributes to a wider understanding of the psychological, cultural and sociological background to, and motivation for, the maternal infanticide central to most adaptations of the myth.[4] In addition, when read in connection with Phillips and Hall, his contribution highlights three key points: first, the interdependence of legal, social and medical

categorizations of the infanticidal mother; second, by contrast, the tension between socially constructed and naturalistic laws about appropriate motherly behaviour; third, the cultural relativity of behavioural norms, a consideration that also informs Ivar Kvistad's analysis of 'Cultural Imperialism & Infanticide in Pasolini's Medea' in Part IV, **Appropriation and Exile**. Finally, Stephenson's identification of the appropriation by the mother of her child's 'illness' and the performativity of her caring — as 'the centre of attention of [...] a vast circus involving doctors, nurses, therapists, other carers, relatives, second opinions, medical students and even the media' — echoes Phillips's point that:

> the re-construction of the factual events leading up to the crime, as told in the courtroom, is shaped by an unconscious (and in extreme cases, a conscious) selection of 'facts' to fit the narrative. [...] It is a story not just *about* her, but told *to* her. Her credibility — her very guilt or innocence — as in any staged production of Classical drama, depends not so much on what she herself might or might not say, but on the already written script that the actor/actress is called upon to perform.

MEDEA as fragmented into diverse culturally conditioned yet potentially subversive roles already moves her into the **Theatrical Entrances** of Part III and, indeed, the **Appropriation and Exile** of Part IV. MEDEA's movement across boundaries is also addressed in Burns's legal study, '"A Thoroughly Modern Medea": The Fear of Female Insubordination in Euripides' *Medea* and Contemporary Legislative Policy', which examines the use of myth in constructing values and gender norms designed to identify and thereby contain the 'insubordinate woman', herself a narrative construct based on male fears of powerlessness: Burns points to Jason's loss of his 'masculine heroic identity'. The myth of the insubordinate woman is in turn drawn upon to construct a framework for the act of infanticide, be it in dealing with real cases of murder in the courtroom or with fictional or fictionalized cases on the stage. Often such a framework, as criminologist Belinda Morrissey states, runs the risk of being restricted by stereotypes which narrow the view of the female killer in general and the infanticidal mother in particular to either 'that of mythic evil or else to the impotence of victimhood or madness'.[5] The challenge — voiced in this volume within a legal context — of viewing the child-killing mother not simply as mad, bad or a victim but as 'both violent and agentic, responsible and human' can be applied across the disciplines when considering the portrayal of Medea.[6] MEDEA as a figure who voices the need to escape identity-constricting cultural, political and economic forces and to achieve personal liberty provides a link to the fifth essay in this group. Citizenship law and its implications for the matrilineal bond are the central points of intersection presented by Emmett in an essay that reads together Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* and Euripides' *Medea*. The classical scholar introduces parallels between Periclean law of 451 BC and the American slave laws: the former denies Medea's sons legitimacy in the Attic tragedy; the latter constitute the denial of humanity to Sethe's children in the story that takes as its historical starting point the case of the twenty-two-year-old black slave Margaret Garner, who, after a failed escape, killed her young daughter in Cincinnati in 1856 rather than allow her to return to slavery. In her essay Emmett explores the parallels

between the infanticide committed by Sethe, who is modelled on Garner, and Euripides' Medea, demonstrating how both women see killing their children as their only means of asserting maternal possession and control and fulfilling their 'maternal contract'. Although *Beloved* uses historical material, recorded testimonials and photographs that can be checked in archives and linked to contemporary laws, the novel is, of course, far more than 'mere' historical testimony. Its experimental style and complex, non-linear aesthetic structure that interweaves past and present force its reader into an active position of discovery. Here, we step outside a fixed legal framework and into the realm of aesthetic representation of the MEDEA myth, in which the author, reader, viewer or listener is by no means free of the laws, experiences, expectations and fears that shape both perception and reception, just as the Law is not free from myths and stories. However, the Law is a field that provides both author and reader with a wider framework for interpretation and is explored by most contributions in the other parts of this volume.

The ease with which contributors negotiate pathways among different disciplines, the fluidity of movement allowed by MEDEA from one fragmented aspect of her character to another, infuse Richard Buxton's essay, 'How Medea Moves: Versions of a Myth in Apollonius and Elsewhere'. Indeed, the movement argued by Buxton as lying at the core of Medea's being in the *Argonautica* (third century BC) both symbolizes the early development of the myth itself — moving from its temporal, geographical and generic beginnings out into its broader reception content — and functions as a figure for the reading of this volume. MEDEA's physical and emotional restlessness contributes to and reflects the many different versions of the myth: MEDEA cannot be pinned down to a mono-directional interpretation. Moreover, in Buxton's essay we find the first examples of Medea's transition from textual into visual media (a Campanian amphora, Apulian *krater*, the Talos vase in Ruvo di Puglia); these take us in turn to Margherita Carucci's study of 'The Representation of Medea in the Roman House' and beyond that into **Visual Pathways**. However, even within **Departures** Carucci's elucidation of how the textual is translated into the visual in the murals and floor mosaics of houses in Pompeii, Antioch and Torre de Palma constitutes an example of the early reception of the Medea myth in antiquity itself, a reception that aims — as does the use of myth in the Law — to construct a cultural ideal that facilitates the containment of women to the domestic space and role of perfect wife and mother. As well as foreshadowing similar strategies in the Renaissance, analysed by Ekaterini Kepetzis in her contribution, 'Changing Perceptions: Medea as Paradigm of the Ideal Marriage', Carucci demonstrates how the tension within MEDEA between the poles of her being results in confounded expectation: infanticidal mother as model within the ideal domestic space. Moreover, this tension is staged: the male head of the household invites his friends into the *cubiculum*, rendering the space semi-public and the murals open to view; the courtroom functions as a stage; the inherent theatricality of Apollonius's Medea manifests itself in her glances, smiles, gestures. Whether textual or actual, MEDEA's visuality is one avenue into her wider reception and appropriation.

This visuality lies at the heart of Part II, **Visual Pathways**, but is also addressed in Parts III and IV, **Theatrical Entrances** and **Exile and Appropriation**. Whether

in art, film or on the stage, the visually present MEDEA serves as a vehicle for the exploration of topics ranging from the abandoned woman to nineteenth-century Aesthetics, from Pop Culture in the 1990s to the French Revolution, from British Colonialism in Ireland to infanticide to Italian Feminism. Whilst in modern times confronting and analysing MEDEA predominantly entail working with what Isabelle Torrance calls 'a preconceived mental Medea-canvas' or Campbell refers to as the 'fore-knowledge' of the outcome of her story, namely, the infanticide, adaptations exist that omit the murderous side of MEDEA altogether. Both Catherine Léglu and Ekaterini Kepetzis highlight a positive selection process that lies at the heart of the MEDEA adaptations with which they deal. Kepetzis points out with regard to pictorial representations that 'the restriction of the myth to its tragic outcome occurred during the eighteenth century' and discusses earlier images — such as those on fifteenth-century Florentine *cassoni* — that present selectively positive elements of MEDEA's character and hence her story as a paradigm of the ideal marriage. As with Carucci, what emerges are strategies for containing a potentially disruptive figure in an idealized domestic space; as with Léglu (and later Torrance), Jason features as the disloyal abandoner who fractures the family ideal. Hence Léglu draws our attention to the fact that in the Late Middle Ages the infanticide directed towards her children is less emphasized than MEDEA as the 'victim of Jason's inconstancy', the 'abandoned woman', 'betrayed wife and mother' or 'model of learning and resourcefulness'. That this particular fragment of MEDEA's personality remains active in the twentieth century is apparent in Torrance's analysis of Amenábar's film, *The Others*, whose heroine Grace is presented as a devoted mother who 'stimulates a new kind of sympathy for the Medea figure'. Torrance's essay, 'Retrospectively Medea: The Infanticidal Mother in Alejandro Amenábar's film *The Others*', also explores the humanization of Medea and infanticide as a reaction on the border between insanity and devotion, the permeability of borders allowing it to be read as both at the same time. In Léglu's argument Medea's vulnerability is manifested above all in the woodcut that accompanies Guillaume Alexis's *Le Passe temps de tout homme et de toute femme* (*c.* 1480), since it

> illustrates universal suffering in terms of a double destruction: the sons suffer at the hands of their mother, who in turn is associated with the pain of abandonment, and suicide. In this juxtaposition of text and image, Medea's action seems, startlingly, to be redefined as both natural and a part of the condition of all women's (and all men's) lives.

Medea fascinates as a visual statement well into the nineteenth century and beyond. Elizabeth Prettejohn, for example, traces the background of Sandys's painting *Medea* (1869) through social history, literature, aesthetics and nineteenth-century cultural politics. Her essay highlights a characteristic of MEDEA hitherto untouched in this introduction, namely her 'uncanniness' or 'weirdness', expressed not least in the 'magic instruments' in the foreground of the painting. As we shall see in the contributions by Amy Wygant, Heike Bartel and Yixu Lü, it is in part Medea's accessories — Phrygian cap, dress, magic instruments, so the externals of identity — that define her as 'Other', with Bartel focusing in particular on the complex interrelationship between Greek 'Self' and Oriental 'Other' expressed

through MEDEA's clothing. In Sandys these instruments, which — like the cranes and dragon in the background of the painting — derive from Egyptian, African and (Near and Far) Eastern traditions, signal that myth can open out not just within its own cultural heritage but to admit others. Medea's exoticism is fuelled by a 'strange amalgam of beauty and horror' which, as Prettejohn points out, is already present in Apollonius and Ovid and, combined with Sandys's use of a possibly Romany model, in turn fuels the fascination she exerts precisely because she is the barbarian, the witch. However, the threat posed by Medea as witch is defused by placing her at an 'aesthetic and historic distance' and, in her aesthetic 'Otherness', she ultimately embodies a debate on the ideology of progress embedded in Hegel's view of history. Sandys's *Medea*, then, represents a visual departure that, while anchored in the myth, is a 'unique experience with the past' that 'remains unfathomable'.

Tracing MEDEA's steps in the essays by John Thorburn and Isabelle Torrance, however, leads us to two apparently far-removed adaptations that, whilst invoking elements of her story, make little or no mention of her name at all: John McNaughton's *Wild Things* (introduced by Thorburn) or Amenábar's 2001 film *The Others*. Torrance's study introduces female infanticidal figures who can be identified as MEDEAS only after an intricate process of interpretation that involves fore-knowledge and the decipherment of remote clues. In addition to Amenábar's film Torrance discusses the reception of the historical figure Margaret Garner, the 'Modern Medea' of Thomas Satterwhite Noble's eponymous painting (1867) and model for Morrison's 'Medea figure' in *Beloved*. The efforts to identify such figures as, to use Torrance's term, 'retrospectively Medea' and their distance to those whom she calls '"actual" Medeas' (identified as such by their name) mirror the fact that 'the authors or artists have constructed the identity of their Medeas in conscious awareness of the loaded mythological associations that name entails'.

Torrance's essay raises awareness of the fact that in the modern and postmodern era the historical, socio-cultural and aesthetic context for the identification of MEDEA has become so 'loaded' that it facilitates readings apparently far removed from her better-known 'conventional' portrayal in literature and art. The use of M.E.D.E.A. as a term in Genetics, as outlined by Lawrence Hurst in 'The Medea Gene' in Part V, **Laws of Containment and Disruption,** furnishes a particularly striking example. Here the name of the infanticidal mother in Greek mythology performs a further function as an acronym for 'Maternal-Effect Dominant Embryonic Arrest' in the beetle Tribolium. This extreme condensation of the 'conventional' background to an acronym combined with the introduction of an 'unconventional' scientific framework carries within itself the possibility of the known mythical narrative being lost completely. MEDEA becomes a sign that is emptied of one (mythical) meaning and filled with another so removed that connections are merely associative, arbitrary or even obsolete. However, even in this furthest-removed use the power of her name still reverberates, if only as a faint echo of classical mythology in modern science. In his theoretical discussion of myth, *Arbeit am Mythos* (1979), Hans Blumenberg identifies this phenomenon as the power of classical myths still to ring a distant bell in the modern era even when the old stories have long since been forgotten. According to Blumenberg this clinging

to myth forms an important part of man's effort to understand the world, be it by naming stars, or starships, after ancient gods or — as in M.E.D.E.A — naming genes with a particular profile after a mythical infanticidal mother.

The power of the name MEDEA can also be detected in its use in advertising, where it is reduced to select associations that play on various — marketable — aspects of the myth: MEDEA: a high heeled ladies boot in black or purple embossed with a snake skin pattern; MEDEA: a nail studio offering elaborately painted (claw-like) extensions; MEDEA: a sinuous crystal vase for one flower. The marketing blurb for the 'Medea Vase' shows, however, that in this case literature and advertising are not, in fact, fundamentally different in their workings, since the essays by Léglu and Kepetzis also illustrate a positive selection process as a frame for literary and pictorial MEDEAS which is not dissimilar to the twenty-first-century advertising for the vase.[7] Here the darker sides of her character are downplayed in order to attract buyers with a superficial image of MEDEA as a woman who possesses knowledge of magical plants and whose power to enchant is transferred to the purchaser of the vase. This utilization of MEDEA to influence the (buying) public and achieve a (commercial) goal reminds us of Roland Barthes's critical approach to myths in his *Mythologies* (1957) and his analysis of their potential to legitimize political ideology and a power-orientated world order as naturally given.

These last examples underline the fact that the boundaries between 'conventional' and 'unconventional' use of myth have become permeable, just as the borders between so-called 'high' and 'low' culture have long since been crossed. It is therefore hardly surprising that MEDEA has by now her own Wikipedia entry under 'Greek mythology in popular culture'.[8] That advertisements and literature, pop and classical, often become intertwined in modern reception is indicated by the title of Thorburn's essay, 'John McNaughton's *Wild Things*: Pop Culture Echoes of Medea in the 1990s'. Indeed, Thorburn demonstrates not only the mixing of pop culture and classical mythology in McNaughton's film but also the merging of *Medea* with another Euripidean play, namely *Hippolytus* (428 BC). The openness of myth touched upon above once again allows for the absorption of 'foreign' and 'unconventional' material and further demonstrates the permeability of boundaries not just within but between myths. In *Wild Things* MEDEA's infanticide has become so marginalized that it barely features and the staging of a different type of murder for financial gain occupies the centre of the narrative. Hence a key question at the heart of Thorburn's essay is which elements of myth lend themselves to adaptation even when Medea herself does not appear. However, it is not just myth but identity itself that is open, since in *Wild Things* the Medea figure Suzie Toller crosses identities from trailer-park trash to more socially acceptable rich woman, moving in the process from the margins to the centre. Finally, Thorburn's discussion of intertextuality and the self-conscious staging of myth, its 'meta-theatricality', recalls similar preoccupations in Peter A. Campbell's essay, 'Jay Scheib's *The Medea* as Postdramatic Performance' in the third part, **Theatrical Entrances**.

The first two essays in **Theatrical Entrances** in particular show what many versions have in common, namely, the complex interrelationship between literature and historical events. To gain access to Euripides' *Medea*, for example, it is as

important to take into account the historical facts of 431 BC as far as they are known — i.e. the beginning of the Peloponnesian Wars or the role and status of men, women and outsiders in Attic society — as to understand the rhetorical and literary tools of the text — i.e. Medea's changing register or the use of (or break with) traditional theatrical gesture and costume. Thus in her discussion of the 'Revolutionary Medea' Amy Wygant explores the French Revolution (1789–95) as the background to MEDEA versions from that period and a potential tool for their interpretation — for example, MEDEA as Revolutionary France killing its own children — whilst sounding a note of caution that 'ancient texts are always warped as a function of present anxieties and concerns'. In the Medea myth the boundaries between literature and history merge. However, history merges with aesthetics and the demands of contemporary theatregoers, too, as Wygant explores the fascination with spectacle and the body as the locus of audience emotion to which Cherubini's opera *Medée* gave rise. Her essay discusses the effect of historical events on the reception of this adaptation by contrasting the call of the Revolutionary ideology for a 'politicized' theatre with what audiences wanted to see in MEDEA on the stage of the Feydeau: 'To her audience, inured by bloodshed, factionalism, upheaval and revenge, the plot, with all its infanticidal violence was of no particular interest. They wanted demons and black magic. They wanted to laugh. They wanted to love a woman, not a witch.' Wygant's research into source material shows that it was not the mythical figure of MEDEA and her possible equation with historical participants in the French Revolution that attracted the audience's interest so much as Madame Scio, the singer-actress who created the role. On the surface there appears to be 'nothing whatsoever revolutionary' about this very public interest in Scio with its particular focus on her frail body and poor health. However, Wygant argues that 'Scio's revolution is to take over the authority of the very subject itself'. The influence of historical events on the audience's demands, desires and taste fashioned a MEDEA that, in revolutionary contrast to her theatrical tradition, is so entirely humanized as singer and woman that she leads, as Wygant puts it, 'to the collapse of the character of Medea' and even creates a good Medean mother.

In a further departure Lü explores the effect of changes in theatrical taste and technology on the staging and characterization of MEDEA, who shifts according to the currently fashionable literary-theatrical genre. In Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter's *Medea* (1775; with music by Jiří Antonín Benda), for example, the 'lofty pathos that permeates the text (itself a product of *Empfindsamkeit*) raises Medea's suffering to the realm of the sublime', with the result that Gotter has created a 'Medea for the literate middle classes, who had learned to value intense emotion for its own sake, the more so when it escaped the constraints of reason'. However, as well as the fashionable and the spectacular elements — spectacular in the sense of visible as well as sensational — Lü discusses the impact of 'comic sub-plots, slapstick', music and ballet on the staging and reception of the myth. Here, ballet embodies the paradox that is MEDEA: a disciplined, formal, rehearsed art form, characterized by strictly defined patterns of movement and, at court, potentially danced by the king himself. Ballet, in its rigid formality, contains the transgressive, disruptive, explosive elements embodied by MEDEA, aestheticizing them much as Sandys does in his painting.

Such containment runs counter to Medea as revolutionary (both Wygant and Lü treat the French Revolution as context for stagings of Medea). In addition, ballet opens a further paradox: it maps onto legal processes, since the court is also defined by rehearsed, formal procedures and rituals acted out according to a predetermined script or score; and it also provides a stark contrast to Jay Scheib's production of *The Medea* (2005), based in part on Heiner Müller's 'Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten' [Despoiled Shore Medeamaterial Landscape with Argonauts], which turns drama inside out, starting at the end of the story. Whilst this strategy assumes the audience's foreknowledge, it also opens the myth to being played with. In Scheib's production Medea becomes a figure of revolution and interruption; the set itself (part of which is a room only viewable though cameras) renders physical and visual the tension between containment and disruption.

Disruption of a different order is at the centre of Bartel's essay, 'Dressing the "Other", Dressing the "Self"'. Here, Medea's changing clothes in the dramas by Euripides and Franz Grillparzer are identified as the concrete rendition of her veering between the opposing poles of Greek and Barbarian. On close analysis, Medea's clothes — that are assumed to present reliable markers which confirm a conventional sociocultural and political order strictly separating 'Self' from 'Other' — reveal themselves as thin layers that in fact serve only to highlight the permeability of both concepts. Bartel links MEDEA's revolutionary potential with her radical change of dress in Euripides' tragedy and the disruption of the dress code in Grillparzer's nineteenth-century drama.

The title of the fourth part of the volume, **Appropriation and Exile**, indicates the fundamental preoccupation of five essays which explore the politicization of MEDEA as she is claimed for (post-)colonial, feminist and racial agendas. Against the background of colonization the relationship between MEDEA and Jason is used to reveal different facets of the Irish colonial context (Brian Arkins) or the subjugation of indigenous groups in the Americas (Paula Straile-Costa). Patterns and strategies of colonial appropriation per se in Pasolini's *Medea* are elucidated by Kvistad; whilst Anthony Bushell expounds the problem of Kaschnitz's MEDEA reception against the history of the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Daniela Cavallaro's analysis of feminist re-workings of the myth for the stage also deals with legal problems, recalling the discussion by both Burns and Phillips of the 'theatricality' of myth-making in the Law. Kvistad interweaves anthropology, literary analysis, film studies, literary theory and politics in his discussion of colonial appropriation in Pasolini's *Medea*, whilst the articles by Bushell, Arkins and Straile-Costa highlight (if only to question) the interaction between literature and historical events also emphasized by Wygant, Emmett and others. We have seen that *Wild Things* touches on the question of social identity at the margins and centre; identity (fractured, appropriated, denied) also lies at the heart of Straile-Costa's analysis of Cherrie Moraga's *The Hungry Woman*, a play which explores the marginalization of not just ethnic but also gender and sexual identity. At the end of Moraga's play Medea 'moves from a male-identified and broken state in an in-between borderland space of insanity to a woman-identified, forgiven, whole one and finally home'. The wholeness of Medea's identity is linked to the return of her sacrificed son Chac-Mool from the dead:

> He appears suddenly in Medea's room, shocking his already incoherent mother, saying he is going to take her home. [...] Chac-Mool shows her the full moon through the window and hands her a cup of water in which he has placed some herbs. As she loses consciousness, they assume a *pietà* position like before, but with mother lying in her son's arms.

The scene constitutes a striking oxymoron: the portrayal, after the child-murder, of MEDEA as *Pietà*, found also in Morrison. *Pietà*, as Neil MacGregor points out, 'means both piety and pity; devotion and mercy';[9] the term describes figures of the Virgin Mary lamenting the dead Christ on her lap. These first emerged in the fifteenth century, so are roughly contemporary with the texts discussed by Léglu and the *cassoni* described by Kepetzis. The image of the *Pietà* conjures up grief and suffering on the part of the model mother, Mary, whose sacrifice is all the greater for knowing on her conception of Christ that He was born to die. The juxtaposition onto MEDEA of the *Pietà* imbues the latter with Marian qualities and redeems her as a mother, a potential reading already present in the medieval tradition: Léglu highlights the fourteenth-century *Ovide moralisé*, in which Medea's power over nature is read as an allegory of God's creation, the herbs she gathers being glossed as the virtues of the Virgin. Moraga, in fact, goes one step further: in *The Hungry Woman* it is the MEDEA figure who lies in the pose of the Crucified Christ in her son's arms, the sacrificial victim of male colonial imperialism. Finally, in her analysis of Sandys's *Medea* Prettejohn observes that the painting is a 'goldback' and continues: 'The picture type is strongly associated with religious subject matter; in this format Medea appears as a kind of occult version of the Virgin Mary.' She points further to the dichotomy between the background, which displays crucial elements of the Medea myth from classical antiquity (and borrowings from Chinese and Japanese art), and the foreground, which imports Egyptian and Oriental objects. This encourages a continuous shift of focus in which the central becomes marginal and the marginal central; a movement that exemplifies the intellectual dynamics of veering between opposing poles that constitute Medea's oxymoronic structure.

However, precisely the infanticide — often regarded, particularly in modern times, as the 'core' of MEDEA — illustrates our own boundaries as academics and the need to transcend them in search of a discourse that can accommodate, without fracturing, acts that our own society and sensibilities may condemn. Furthermore, the analyses of MEDEA's infanticide contained within this volume exemplify how the apparently core can become marginal, how the seemingly incomprehensible can become sanctioned social practice. Kvistad, in his study of Pasolini's *Medea*, suggests the narrative of this 'ultimate crime' 'can also be represented in a way that foregrounds politicized contentions of "human" subjectivity and cultural difference.' He offers a reading of the infanticide as an acceptable ritual sacrifice and part of the discourse on colonization and cultural hegemony that Pasolini's film aims to construct. Similarly, Cavallaro introduces Franca Rame's reinterpretation of the infanticide as a painful yet necessary step in the process of women's liberation from the yoke of male-dominated (family) life. The knife that literally cuts the children metaphorically cuts the mother loose from her shackles; the murder of the sons represents the birth of 'a new woman'.

Identity and its reclamation from patriarchal/colonial appropriation take us back to **Departures** and to Robert Cowan, who, in his essay 'A Stranger in a Strange Land: Medea in Roman Republican Tragedy', stresses Medea's role as the 'Other' who sheds light on the question of 'Self'. Indeed, the complex dynamics of appropriation lie inherent in the Roman MEDEA adaptations and the four other essays grouped together in **Appropriation and Exile**. The Roman appropriation of Greek culture marks, as Cowan states, an act representing conquest as well as captivation as it intertwines cultural gain and loss. By making Greek tragedy their own, a process which Cowan tellingly describes with war-metaphors, Romans literally 'occupied' the (cultural) space of the Greeks and simultaneously allowed an 'invasion' of their own space through the latter's thought and language, even performing acts of 'submission' to the more sophisticated Greek theatrical tradition. This 'complex interrelationship' between 'Other' and 'Self' becomes even more potent with regard to the reception of MEDEA, 'the ultimate Other for Greeks'. Medea 'functioned partly as Self, partly as Other, partly as neither, enabling a complex exploration of cultural identity in the interstices between'. Arkins, in his essay on 'Three Medeas from Modern Ireland', deals with a similarly intricate interrelationship when discussing appropriation of Greek tragedies by Irish writers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the case of Ireland another factor influencing this appropriation is the relationship between English, as the language and culture of the colonizer, and Irish, as the language of the colonized, albeit those who have accepted the English language as their own. Whilst Irish translations and adaptations of ancient Greek texts use English, it is the language of the 'culture', as Arkins describes it, in which the 'foreign' material is brought in to review the 'Self'. This pertains particularly to the MEDEA reception by the Irish writers Desmond Egan, Brendan Kennelly and Marina Carr, who concentrate above all on the role of women in society and the traditional dictation by men of their lives and culture. Here, appropriating the MEDEA myth means to change the perspective from 'male' to 'female' in a process of engagement with the ancient material that ranges from what Arkins calls 'straight translation' in the case of Egan to the much 'looser' adaptations of Kennelly and Carr.

Bushell's essay, 'Mediation or Refraction? Marie Luise Kaschnitz's Edition and Reception of Grillparzer's *Medea*', adds a further dimension to the discussion of **Appropriation and Exile** by exploring angles of the MEDEA reception by Kaschnitz, a twentieth-century German author who undertook a scholarly edition of Grillparzer's tragedy as well as integrating the myth into her own creative writing for the radio play *Jasons letzte Nacht*. Bushell introduces a type of interrelationship between 'Self' and 'Other' which is expressed at the interface of one author's adaptation of the myth and her close work on another writer's *Medea*. Kaschnitz's painstaking editorial work on Grillparzer's tragedy already represents appropriation as it includes, necessarily, the deliberate selection of source material and selective insight into the views of Grillparzer's contemporaries. Her own adaptation of the material, on the other hand, although highly original, particularly in its focus on Jason and its use of radio rather than the stage, can be read as a continuation of Grillparzer's text in that it picks up the narrative thread where the earlier *Medea*

ends and spins it out further into 'Jason's last night'. Kaschnitz's admiration for Grillparzer's 'ability to stay faithful to a traditional story yet to speak to his and our own age' is reflected in her two-fold engagement with the myth that combines her own creative interpretation with that of the earlier writer.

As careful as one must be when summarizing the features shared by this body of complex material, one common concept emerges: that of crossing borders, negotiating boundaries and undermining rigid markers. This narrative, intellectual and emotional movement has its roots in the figure of MEDEA herself, who, in Euripides' and many subsequent versions, crosses boundaries within her self, challenging assumptions of an individual's internally consistent psychological make-up and creating the fractures and apparent contradictions out of which much of the fascination with her arises. The crossing of boundaries can also be seen in the structural combination by individual contributions of literary studies with social or legal discourse, of fine art and film with text, of science with literary and cultural studies. However, the transcendence of disciplinary and methodological boundaries is not merely a way for contributors to construct the building blocks for their articles but also a concept which infuses the content of the individual chapters. MEDEA's story, the reception of her myth throughout the centuries, individual adaptations in all their inherent variety, can be read as narratives that both discuss and negotiate boundaries and their crossings, be it as literal and metaphorical departures to new shores; pathways that lead from textual to visual representations and vice versa; new approaches to theatre that also present highly dramatic entrances of the unexpected; the dialectic movement of appropriation and exile; or the containment and disruption provoked by MEDEA as the reaction by and to an established order. Léglu points out that the apparently self-contradictory diversity of myth forms part of its very essence:

> In his *Mythologiques: Le Cru et le cuit*, Claude Lévi-Strauss stipulates that all instances of a myth should be considered equally, in terms of a process of development that he likens to a spiral: the earliest version of the myth spins outwards, producing rewritings and new versions, some of which may appear to be at odds with their source.

This very volume functions as an example for the necessary gaps and inconsistencies in MEDEA reception but also for the bridges built by scholars reaching across these divides. The value and importance of a cross-subject reading become immediately apparent within each contribution. Arguably, adaptations of classical myths rarely occupy one discipline only; and particularly the Humanities incorporate cross-disciplinary approaches, especially when it comes to myth reception. However, what the volume as a whole hopes to illustrate is how MEDEA raises issues that break down the traditional divide between the subject cultures of the Humanities and, in particular, Legal Sciences which in turn frame medical approaches. Taken as a whole, the scholarly discussion in this volume itself constitutes a further stage in the reception of the MEDEA myth, one that hopes to advance the deconstruction of these traditional barriers and will itself be equally open to cross-disciplinary scrutiny. In this respect, Buxton's highlighting of a crucial feature of MEDEA as a 'juxtaposition of opposites' that turns her into the 'unmoved mover' reflects her

status as the stable impulse at the core of this collection of essays, whose readers move through the various contributions and cross boundaries in their negotiation of different approaches and disciplines, consequently 'unbinding' MEDEA.

Notes to the Introduction

1. *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy and Art*, ed. by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 6–7.
2. Bernard M. W. Knox, *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1979), p. 330.
3. Fiona Macintosh, 'Introduction: The Performer in Performance', in *Medea in Performance, 1500–2000*, ed. by Edith Hall, Fiona Macintosh and Oliver Taplin (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), pp. 1–31 (p. 7).
4. For further insights into historical aspects of infanticide see, for example, Larry Milner, *Hardness of Heart/ Hardness of Life: The Stain of Human Infanticide* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000); and *Infanticide: Historical Perspectives on Child Murder and Concealment, 1550–2000*, ed. by Mark Jackson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).
5. Belinda Morrissey, *When Women Kill: Questions of Agency and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 167.
6. Ibid.
7. The 'Medea Vase' is advertised as follows: 'The Medea offers a sophisticated, yet convenient setting for any long stem flower. [...] The name MEDEA is derived from the well-known sorceress of Greek mythology, who used plants and flowers to cast her spells.' <http://www.crystal-fox.com/index.cfm/Swarovski-Medea_Vase_1424.htm> [accessed 8 September 2004 — page no longer available].
8. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology_in_popular_culture#Medea> [accessed 23 June 2010].
9. Neil MacGregor with Erika Langmuir, *Seeing Salvation: Images of Christ in Art* (London: BBC, 2000), p. 166.

Unbinding Medea

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Edited by Heike Bartel and Anne Simon

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