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### MEDEA'S INNER VOICE

ABSTRACT. Menzilioğlu Çiğdem, *Medea's Inner Voice*.

The story of *Medea* provides a wide range of themes to be explored and passion emerges as a frequent one. This article is based on the text *Medea* by the Stoic Seneca, yet in some parts comparisons will be drawn with Euripides' tragedy of the same name as well. They treat the same theme in remarkably different ways: In the Senecan tragedy, *Medea's* long soliloquies or monologues differ from Euripides' version in that they reveal the protagonist's inner conflict between the voices of passions and reason. This tragedy particularly focuses on the passions *amor* (love), *ira* (anger), *furor* (madness, insanity) and the consequent self-division. Therefore it can be analyzed from both psychological and philosophical aspects.

Keywords: Seneca, passions, *amor* (love), *ira* (anger), *furor* (madness / insanity), inner conflict.

As frequently encountered, ancient Greek and Latin poets used common themes in their works. Their main sources were ancient legends, such as the stories of Troy or Argonauts. These stories were sometimes the subject of an epic and sometimes that of a tragedy. In this research, we focused on the story of *Medea*, written by Euripides and Seneca the Philosopher as tragedies, and in particular on *Medea's* soliloquies in the Senecan version. These soliloquies reveal the inner voice of the protagonist. In this regard, the character of *Medea* in Seneca is more inward-looking than her counterpart in Euripides. *Medea* as a tragic theme was very popular in ancient Greece and Rome; accordingly there were many lost tragedies titled *Medea* in Greek and Latin. Even though Euripides and Seneca have written about the same subject, they treated it from different perspectives; hence the profound difference between their works. In Seneca's *Medea*, psychological elements, the philosopher-poet's ethic values and the Roman spirit influence the whole play. According to Guastellea, "the central issue of Seneca's play is the problem of ending a marriage, and he addressed this problem particularly in

Roman terms”<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, in our opinion, Seneca as a Stoic-philosopher also aimed to use tragedy as a mirror through which he hoped to show people the kind of destruction that uncontrollable passions could bring. According to Herington, “the Passion-Reason scenes in the *tragedies* must have been created with conscious and deliberate reference to the doctrine so familiar to us from the prose works” and he maintains that Senecan tragedies are *representations of passion in people and in things*<sup>2</sup>. On the grounds of this account, Seneca’s main interests in the tragedies were passions and their conflict with reason. His motive is apparent in his treatise *De ira*, as he states; “*Ne irascamur praestabimus, si omnia vitia irae nobis subinde proposuerimus et illam bene aestimaverimus. Accusanda est apud nos, damnanda; perscrutanda eius mala et in medium protrahenda sunt; ut qualis sit appareat, comparanda cum pessimis est* – We shall forestall the possibility of anger if we repeatedly set before ourselves its many faults and shall rightly appraise it. Before our own hearts we must arraign it and convict it; we must search out its evils and drag them into the open; in order that it may be shown as it really is, it should be compared with all that is worst”<sup>3</sup> (Sen. *De ira* 3.5.3).

Medea’s inclination towards passions and crime is the ideal medium for demonstrating how uncontrollable passions exceed the very limit of rationality, as we are well acquainted with in the Senecan version. Passion becomes so immoderate that it supplants the present control of reason. In Seneca’s hand, the story of Medea becomes an opportunity for the portrayal of introspection in the exploration of identity.<sup>4</sup> The well-known story portrays the love, jealousy, anger and revenge of a passionate, rejected wife. In other words, it is the tragic story of love turning into hatred. At the end, passionate love and hate drive her to killing her own children. Its origins go back to the story of Golden Fleece. For the sake of her passionate love for Jason, Medea leaves her family and homeland, renounces her royal position and also commits a series of crimes, such as killing her brother Absyrtus. (Sen. *Med.* 129–136; 276–278). These are *virgo* Medea’s deeds prior to her marriage to Jason.<sup>5</sup> After her marriage, she is faced with his betrayal, which devastates her. Starting his tragedy at this point, Seneca begins with Medea’s soliloquy which, in a way, serves as a prologue that presents a précis of the whole story.<sup>6</sup> Firstly, she addresses the

<sup>1</sup>G. Guastella, “*Virgo, Coniux, Mater*”: *The Wrath of Seneca's Medea*, „Classical Antiquity” 20/2, 2001, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>J. Herington, *Senecan Tragedy*, „Arion” 5/4, 1966, pp. 455–456.

<sup>3</sup>In this research all translations from *De ira* belong to J. W. Basore; see Seneca, *Moral Essays*, vol. I, with an English translation by J. W. Basore, The Loeb Classical Library, London 1928.

<sup>4</sup>S.M. Braund, *Latin Literature*, London–New York 2002, p. 182.

<sup>5</sup>Haec virgo feci (Sen. *Med.* 49).

<sup>6</sup>In the play of Euripides, firstly nurse appears and tells the whole story. Afterwards Medea appears and we hear her words of self-pity. Because of her misfortune she wishes that she could die (E. *Med.* 96; 145; 227). In the beginning her anger is not as strong as Seneca’s Medea who does anything with anger and just once she desires death; when the nurse says “*Moriere* – Thou’lt die”

gods of wedlock, especially Lucina, who is the guardian of the nuptial couch, and Furies, who avenge crimes and torment criminals. Subsequently, she talks to herself and remembers her past crimes which she had committed in order to marry Jason. Now, as a woman rejected by her husband, she is in tremendous grief and anger, therefore she concentrates solely on her vengeance. She says, “*quae scelere parata est, scelere linquenda est domus* – the home which by crime was gained, by crime must be abandoned (Sen. *Med.* 55).”<sup>7</sup> Thus we can observe three different stages in her lifetime: *Medea virgo-amans* (Medea the virgin-lover), *Medea coniunx-amans-mater* (Medea the wife-lover-mother), *Medea repudiata-amans-irata-mater* (Medea the divorced-lover-angry-mother). Medea the *Virgo* is ready to do anything for Jason even if this entails committing horrible crimes such as the aforementioned fratricide. After a series of crimes, Medea the *coniunx-amans-mater* possesses Jason and gives birth to two children. Then Jason repudiates his wife and marries Creusa, the daughter of King Creon. From that day on, Medea the *repudiata-amans-irata-mater* thinks of nothing except devising a course of action for her vengeance. In her first soliloquy, she says, “*accingere ira teque in exitum para furore toto* – gird thyself with wrath, and prepare thee for deadly deeds with full force of madness” (Sen. *Med.* 50–51). As visible in the opening soliloquy of Medea, passions, particularly *amor* (love), *ira* (anger) and *furor* (madness / insanity), which is consequential to her love and anger, are the main themes of the tragedy. They dominate the whole play; furthermore, as passions never yield to reason, they engage in a conflict with the mind and eventually cause the self-division of the main character, Medea. The phenomenon of inner conflict arising from passions is generally accepted by Stoics; therefore it is rather likely that Seneca’s aim as a Stoic-philosopher was to demonstrate the contrast between passions and reason in Medea’s monologues. Consequently, these are very vivid examples for the defeat of reason by passion.

For a more thorough understanding, it is essential to examine how Romans define passion. Several definitions emerge when we seek its meaning in Latin literature. According to the general view in ancient thought, passion is a disturbance of the soul and is accepted as a disease (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.9; 3.23), especially as *insania* – unsoundness of mind (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.8). Cicero defines passion as an agitation of the soul alien to right reason, contrary to nature and bitterly hostile to peace of mind and to peaceful life, using the word *perturbatio*<sup>8</sup> for it (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.10; 4.11; 4.34) Seneca, on the other hand, in his treatises, uses *adfectus*

(Sen. *Med.* 167), she answers “*Cupio* – I wish it” (Sen. *Med.* 168). But her wish of death which is just response to the nurse is unlike the wish of Euripides’ Medea.

<sup>7</sup> In this research all translations from Seneca’s *Medea* belongs to F.J. Miller; see Seneca, *Seneca’s Tragedies. “Hercules Furens” – “Troades” – “Medea” – “Hippolytus” – “Oedipus”*, vol. I, with an English translation by F. J. Miller, The Loeb Classical Library, London 1965<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Its first meaning is confusion, disorder, revolution.

– which derives from the verb of *adficio*<sup>9</sup> – instead of *perturbatio*.<sup>10</sup> He defines it in one of his letters on the disease of the soul as an objectionable, sudden and vehement impulse of the spirit; in his regard, passions are the underlying cause of the disease (Sen. *Ep.* 75. 12). Significantly, despite using different terms for passion, Seneca and Cicero are in unison that passions are the diseases of the soul. Once passions obtain the mind, there is no room for right reason. On this account, passions are irrational. When reason loses its control over future actions, tragic destruction is inevitable, as Seneca expressed with the following words: “*Illud vero cuius dementiae est, credere, quarum rerum extra nostrum arbitrium posita principia sunt, earum nostri esse arbitrii terminus* – But what folly it is, when the beginnings of certain things are situated outside our control, to believe that their endings are within our control”<sup>11</sup> (Sen. *Ep.* 85.13). As for the passion of love (*amor*) in specific, Cicero regards it as the most violent one among all (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.75) and says “*perturbatio ipsa mentis in amore foeda per se est* – the disorder of the mind in love is in itself abominable”<sup>12</sup> (Cic. *Tusc.* 4.75). As regards the passion of anger (*ira*), Seneca explains it as a temporary madness (*brevem insaniam*) (Sen. *De ira* 1.1.2). These assertions are reflected in Medea’s words as well: “*incerta vaecors mente vaesane feror partes in omnes* – perplexed, witless, with mind scarce sane, I am tossed to every side” (Sen. *Med.* 123–124). This statement illustrates her psychological state rather vividly; she is completely out of mind’s control and a slave to her passions. While she is devising her means of taking revenge, she does not ever consider killing her husband, despite his betrayal. She wants him alive under all circumstances,<sup>13</sup> professing “*si potest, vivat meus, ut fuit, Iason; si minus, vivat tamen memorque nostri muneri parcat meo* – If possible, may he live, my Jason, as once he was; if not, still may he live and, mindful of me, keep unharmed the gift I gave” (Sen. *Med.* 140–142). She does not accuse him of betrayal, but rather of submitting to the King Creon’s decision.<sup>14</sup> The inner voice of love accuses Jason of subjecting

<sup>9</sup>It means to exert an influence on body or mind, so that it is brought in to such or such a state.

<sup>10</sup>Ç. Menzilioğlu, *Seneca’nın Medea ve Phaedra Tragedyalarında Tutkuların Gizemli Çatışması*, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 2011, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup>In this research all translations from Seneca’s *Epistulae* belongs to R. M. Gummere; see Seneca, *Epistles 66–92*, with an English translation by R.M. Gummere, The Loeb Classical Library, London 2001<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>12</sup>In this research all translations from Cicero’s *Tusculanae Disputationes* belong to J.E. King; see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, with an English translation by J. E. King, The Loeb Classical Library, London 2001<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>13</sup>In the play of Euripides, Medea makes a plan of killing the King Kreon, his daughter and her own husband Jason (E. *Med.* 375) but she does not kill Jason and wants Jason to pay the price of his deeds to her, therefore she decides to slaughter her own children, lest he shall never see his children alive (E. *Med.* 803–804).

<sup>14</sup>In the play of Euripides, Medea does not accuse the King Kreon, instead she talks to him very soothingly but her politeness makes him worry about the harm which she is going to be cause.

to another person's will and power (Sen. *Med.* 137–138), but not of infidelity. Instead it regards Creon, who urges Jason to marry his daughter Creusa, as the only culprit for all that has happened. As a loving but rejected wife, Medea is ready to forgive Jason if he returns to her.<sup>15</sup> This is the very nature of love and Seneca's Medea illustrates precisely the mindset of the lover where whatever the beloved does or however much anger, jealousy and hate they cause, the lover passionately desires to regain them. This is also rather correspondingly pointed out by Seneca in one of his letters with the words "*nihil enim facilius quam amor recrudescit* – for nothing grows again so easily as love"<sup>16</sup> (Sen. *Ep.* 69.3). On this account, Medea's anger in her second monologue is directed to Creon. She blames for being an unjust king, in fact a tyrant,<sup>17</sup> since for Medea, he is the only one accountable for the dissolution of her marriage:<sup>18</sup>

culpa est Creontis tota, qui sceptro impotens  
coniungia solvit quique genetricem abstrahit  
natis et arto pignore astricam fidem  
dirimit; petatur, solus hic poenas luat  
quas debet. alto cinere cumulabo domum. (Sen. *Med.* 143–147)

The fault is Creon's, all, who with unbridled sway  
dissolves marriages, tears mothers from their children,  
and breaks pledges bound by straitest oath;  
on him be may attack, let him alone pay penalties  
which he owes. I will pile his home high with ashes.

From the beginning of the play, Medea's singular drive is taking revenge, because she is dominated by anger. Medea's psychological state whilst consumed by anger bears a remarkable likeness to the poet's portrait of anger in his treatise *De ira*, where he states:

Ceteris enim aliquid quieti placidique inest, hic totius concitatus et in impetus doloris est, armorum sanguinis suppliciorum minime humana furens cupiditate, dum alteri noceat sui neglegens, in ipsa irruens tela et ultionis secum ultorem tracturae avidus. Quidam itaque e sapientibus viris iram dixerunt brevem insaniam; atque enim impotens sui est, decoris oblita, necessitudinum immemor, in quod coepit pertinax et intent, rationi consiliisque praeclusa, vanis agitate causis, ad dispectum aequi verique inhabilis, ruinis simillima, quae super id quod oppressere franguntur. (Sen. *De ira* 1.1–2)

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He thinks that Medea who is a clever woman and skilled many evil arts keeps her own counsel (E. *Med.* 316–320).

<sup>15</sup>First Medea asks Creon to exile Jason with herself (Sen. *Med.* 275) then she tries to persuade Jason to go with herself (Sen. *Med.* 523).

<sup>16</sup>Tr. by R. M. Gummere, op. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Sen. *Med.* 194; 196; 199–200.

<sup>18</sup>In the play of Euripides, Medea does not accuse Creon of ending her marriage.

For the other emotions have in them some element of peace and calm, while this one is wholly violent and has its being in an onrush of resentment, raging with a most inhuman lust for weapons, blood, and punishment, giving no thought to itself if only it can hurt another, hurling itself upon very point of dagger, and eager for revenge though to it may drag down the avenger along with it. Certain wise men, therefore, have claimed that anger is temporary madness. For it is equally devoid self-control, forgetful decency, unmindful of ties, persistent and diligent in whatever it begins, closed to reason and counsel, excited by trifling causes, unfit to discern the right and true – the very counterpart of a ruin that is shattered in pieces where it overwhelms.

Medea's inner voice in her first two monologues reveals that the target of her planned acts of vengeance is not only Jason whom she eminently both hates and loves, but also Creon. In Jason's case, it is her desire that he grieves as much she does: "*mihi peius aliquid, quod precer sponso, manet – vivat. per urbes erret ignotas egens exul pavens invisus incerti laris, iam notus hospes limen alienum expetat, me coniugem optet...* – I have yet curse more dire to call down on my husband – may he live. Though unknown cities may he wander, in want, in exile, in fear of life, hated and homeless; may he seek hospitality at strange doors, by now a familiar applicant; may he desire me for wife..." (Sen. *Med.* 19–23). This is illustrated in another instance with her words "*unde me ulcisci queam? utinam esset illi frater! est coniunx...* – Whence can I get vengeance? I would that he had a brother! But a wife he has" (Sen. *Med.* 124–125). Henceforth, Medea's only desire is to make Jason repay her for her past and present suffering. Her statement reveals the very nature of anger which is defined by Aristotle as 'a desire to repay suffering'.<sup>19</sup> She wants Jason alive under all circumstances; on the one hand with the hope of being his wife again, as mentioned above, and on the other with an intention to take revenge on him. As a matter of fact, from Medea's perspective, Jason's death would serve as an absolution and a salvation for him. Her revenge must strike Jason at its hardest; therefore staying alive would be the most agonizing punishment. As regards Creon, since she believes that she lost her husband because of him, in her understanding it follows that she was injured by him, hence her anger towards him. This illustrates another definition of anger which is expressed by Seneca: "*iram quin species oblata iniuriae moveat non est dubium* – there can be no doubt that anger is aroused by the direct impression of an injury" (Sen. *De ira* 2.1.3); "*causa autem iracundiae opinio iniuriae est, cui non facile credendum est* – now the cause of anger is an impression of injury" (Sen. *De ira* 2.22.2). At the same time, Medea's will as a wronged wife to take revenge from Jason and Creon seems pertinent to Cicero's definition of anger as well: "*sic enim definitur iracundia, ulciscendi libido* – for the definition of wrath is lust of vengeance" (Cic. *Tusc.* 3. 11).

<sup>19</sup>"*Aristotelis finitio non mutum a nostra abest; ait enim iram esse cupiditatem doloris reponendi* – Aristotle's definition differs little from mine; for he says that anger is the desire to repay suffering" (Sen. *De ira* 1.3.3).

In the play by Euripides, the chorus of the Corinthian women is not hostile to Medea. On the contrary, it understands how she feels as an abandoned woman and wants her to calm down; whereas in Seneca's version, the chorus by no means approves of Medea's behaviors and her marriage to Jason. She is completely isolated, but she does not want anybody to pity her. The only person who tries to help her and to calm her down is the nurse (Sen. *Med.* 426). As a matter of fact, the nurse emerges as the voice of Reason, however Medea, symbolizing the passions herself, is deaf to her advice. Therefore she concentrates on revenge and in this vengeful state of mind, her only desire is to be herself. When the nurse calls her "Medea", she answers "fiam – will I be" (Sen. *Med.* 171–172). With this statement, she implies her skills in evil arts along with the murders she had previously committed in the name of her passions. It is obvious that Medea wants to be nobody else but herself even when the nurse reminds her that she is now a mother as well as a lover. 'Being Medea' means to be extremely cruel whilst 'being a mother' is contrary 'being Medea'. These two cases, which are complete opposites of each other, cause a dichotomy in the heroine's personality. Medea now has two identities: Medea the passionate lover dominated by anger and Medea the protective mother. 'Being a mother' is itself a source of grief to Medea. On the one hand, by whom the children were fathered probably takes precedence over the issue of being a mother since she says to the nurse "*cui sim vides* – By whom, thou seest" (Sen. *Med.* 173–174). On the other hand, Medea is separated and alienated from her children by King Creon;<sup>20</sup> she has lost not only Jason but also her children. According to Guastella, "separated from her children, Medea tries to make herself believe that her children in fact belong to Creusa, the stepmother under whose jurisdiction the children now live".<sup>21</sup> Thus there is another dichotomy in her mother identity; she is divided between motherly duty and her delirious anger.

When she is striving to be Medea, her anger speaks and promises to destroy all things and shake the universe (Sen. *Med.* 414; 425). She can only be happy if she sees the universe overwhelmed in ruins with her (Sen. *Med.* 426–428). As a mother, she wants her children back, but the immediate response from Jason affirms that the father's love forbids this. After receiving this response and discovering his deep affinity with the children, Medea decides to slaughter her own children to avenge Jason or to regain her evil and violent identity again; in other words, in order to *be Medea*. Consequently, she says to herself "*sic natos amat? bene est, tenetur, vulneri patuit locus* – Thus does he love his sons? Tis well! I have him! The place to wound him is laid bare" (Sen. *Med.* 549–550). In her first monologue after determining the method of revenge, there

<sup>20</sup>This part of the play is completely different from the Greek version in which Medea is sent to exile with her own children.

<sup>21</sup>G. Guastella, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

is no hesitation or inner conflict regarding her ultimate crime; she is extremely self-confident and proud of herself and of all she has done. With this state of mind, she says “*fructus est scelerum tibi nullum scelus putare. vix fraudi est locus; timemur. hac aggredere, qua nemo potest quicquam timere. perge nunc, aude, incipe quidquam potest Medea, quidquid non potest* – The fruit of thy crimes is to count nothing crime. There is scant room for fraud; we are held in fear. There make attack where no one can fear aught. Haste thee now, dare, being whatever Medea can – and cannot – do” (Sen. *Med.* 563–567). Thus she proceeds step by step to ‘be Medea’. Firstly, she arranges the death of Jason’s new bride and father-in-law, yet these are less important crimes in her eyes. As the evil Medea, she prepares Medea the protective mother for the most violent of murders; those of her own children. Thus she addresses her hand which perhaps symbolizes her motherhood: “*assuesce, manus, stringere ferrum carosque pati posse cruores* – accustom thyself, my hand, to draw the sword and endure the sight of beloved blood” (Sen. *Med.* 808–810). Smell of blood pervades the whole atmosphere of the play. The sanguine tragedy of Medea is described by the Chorus as they say “*Frenare nescit iras Medea, non amores; nunc ira amorque causam iunxere; quid sequetur?* – How to curb her anger Medea knows not, nor yet her love; now that anger and love have joined cause, what will the outcome be?” (Sen. *Med.* 866–869). Through Medea as a symbol, the chorus vividly depicts the behavior of the passionate human being who concentrates solely on the passions and does anything for their sake even if this entails infanticide. Therefore, these words of the chorus can be read as a commonly accepted definition of passions.

Moreover, passions are inevitably the cause of self-division. In the case of Medea, this is explicitly apparent; she talks to her two separate selves up until the infanticide. These soliloquies illustrate the dichotomy of her personality. We sometimes hear the inner voice of anger, grief and mad frenzy, and sometimes that of motherly love and duty through the course of the inner conflict and the inner questioning between her two identities. When she is motivated by passions, she thinks exclusively of the ultimate crime she is formulating, whereas as a protective, loving mother, this ultimate crime is unthinkable for her,<sup>22</sup> the mother identity in place preventing her from ‘being Medea’. The soliloquy between the lines 893 and 977 is the most crucial one among those which are employed by Seneca to portray Medea’s inner voices. In this monologue, delivered right after committing the murders of Creusa the new bride and her father, which incidentally are insufficient for her revenge, she speaks with the voice of anger and refers to herself as a *furiose* – mad one (Sen. *Med.* 897). In this context,

<sup>22</sup> incognitum istud facinus ac dirum nefas  
a me quoque absit (Sen. *Med.* 931–932)

Far even from me, be that unheard-of deed, that accursed guilt!



*furor* means the madness of love which involves anger, hate, jealousy, revenge and a crime so horrific that human mind cannot even begin to envisage. She admits that she still loves Jason yet this does not mean that she is going to be kind to him. She desires to be as savage as she can and says “*quare poenarum genus haut usitatum iamque sic temet para: fas omne cedat, abeat expulsus pudor* – Seek thou some unaccustomed form of chastisement, and now thus prepare thyself: let all right give a way; let honour begone, defeated” (Sen. *Med.* 898–900). With this statement by Medea, Seneca aims to demonstrate a passionate human being’s loss of all human and ethical values. She recalls all her past crimes as a *pietas* – piety or *love and duty* (Sen. *Med.* 905) Whose piety is it? And towards whom? We maintain that it is bound to be Medea’s piety towards herself since she is driven by the determination to ‘be Medea’. She disdains the virgin – *virgo* – Medea’s rage –*furor* – and says “*quid puellaris furor?*– What, a girl’s rage?” (Sen. *Med.* 909). In this statement, the adjective *puellaris* does not simply denote ‘of or belonging to a girl’; it has a deeper sense which particularly denotes *the beloved of Jason*, since in the Latin love-poetry *puella* means ‘a beloved maiden, a sweetheart, mistress’. Be that as it may, she is not merely Jason’s beloved anymore, but also his wife and the mother of his two children; that is why, having transcended that state and become a wife and a mother, she disdains her past self as nothing more than a lover. As regards the *furor*, it means the madness of love in the name of which she has performed deeds such as leaving her homeland and parental palace, murdering her brother and throwing his dead body before his father, namely, the madness of her girlhood love. Her inner voice reflects her confrontation with her past deeds and her present situation. At that point, she does not have any regrets about her past crimes (Sen. *Med.* 129–136); on the contrary she is content with them (Sen. *Med.* 911–914)<sup>23</sup>. All the suffering she had experienced previously enables her to ‘be the *true* Medea’ as she says “*Medea nunc sum; crevit ingenium malis* – Now I am Medea, my wit has grown through suffering” (Sen. *Med.* 910). Throughout her inner discourse, she sometimes addresses her anger – *ira* and sometimes her grief – *dolor*, to the extent that she personalizes each one. While her anger, as mentioned above, is content with the past, her grief is stricken with the lust of new wickedness, as she says “*quare materiam, dolor; ad omne facinus non rudem dextram afferes* – seek thou fresh fields, my grief; no untrained hand wilt thou bring to any crime” (Sen. *Med.* 914–915). Then she addresses her anger once again, “*Quo te igitur, ira, mittis, aut quae perfido intendis hosti tela?* Wither, then, wrath, art tending,

<sup>23</sup> „Iuvat, iuvat rapuisse fratrum caput  
artus iuvat secuisse et arcano patrem  
spoliasse sacro, iuvat in exitum senis  
armasse natas.

Glad am I, glad, that I tore off my brother’s head, glad that I carved his limbs, that I robbed my father of his guarded treasure, glad that I armed daughters for an old man’s death.

or what weapons art thou aiming at the forsworn foe?” (Sen. *Med.* 916–917). Medea as an emotionally perverted wife seeks to summon all her power, whether in her anger or in her grief, in order to achieve her victory, which in her terms corresponds to seeing Jason’s total collapse. However, there emerges another question: Is Jason’s collapse really a victory for her? Seneca indirectly answers this question in his treatise *De ira* as “*nullus enim adfectus vindicandi cupior est quam ira et ob id ipsum ad vincandum inhabilis* – now no passion is more eager for revenge than anger, and for that very reason is unfit to take it; being unduly ardent and frenzied, as most lusts are, it blocks its own progress to the goal toward which it hastens” (Sen. *De ira*, 1.12.5). In truth, for Medea, his collapse is at the same time her own collapse, since her intention to murder her own children requires her to alienate them from herself and also to become alienated from her own mother identity herself. Consequently, she persuades herself that their mother is Creusa, not herself, and says “*quidquid ex illo tuum est, Creusa peperit* – all offspring that thou hast by him are Creusa’s brood” (Sen. *Med.* 921–922); as she is aware that she must prepare her soul for this ultimate crime (Sen. *Med.* 923–924). However, this is not as easy as she imagines, since she is a ‘mother’ besides ‘being Medea’. While her anger persuades her that the children are not hers, the mother identity does not accept it. Suddenly the anger vanishes, Medea the mother comes back. Now we hear the inner voice of the protective, loving mother; she describes how she feels with the words “*cor pepulit horror, membra torpescunt gelu pectusque tremuit* – horror has smit my heart! My limbs are numb with cold and my heart with terror flutters” (Sen. *Med.* 926–927) and asks herself “*egone ut meorum liberum ac prolis meae fundam cruorem?* Can I shed my children’s, my own offspring’s blood?” (Sen. *Med.* 929–930). At this stage, Medea has a deeper conflict between her two different selves; consequently, what she is planning for the revenge seems to her motherly self as a horrific and unacceptable punishment, hence her hesitation before becoming the executioner of her own children. In this mental conflict, Medea’s mind is divided against itself and becomes a battleground of opposite feelings. Medea’s mother-identity recognizes that Medea’s passion as a lover becomes a ‘*demens furor*’ ‘mad rage’ (Sen. *Med.* 930) and asks her ‘mad rage’ what the children’s fault is. She maintains that they are innocent and certainly do not deserve death, however her passionate identity refuses that the children are hers, begins to speak and says “*scelus est Iason genitor et maius scelus Medea mater. occidant, non sunt mei* – their sin is that Jason is their father, and, greater sin, that Medea is their mother. Let them die, they are none of mine” (Sen. *Med.* 933–934). From then on, the most important issue for Medea becomes whose children they are. She is utterly confused and in deep hesitation, which in turn is the main cause of the dichotomy that Medea experiences at that moment; at one instance the children are hers while at another they are not. Medea’s inner voice denounces the battle between her anger and her love of her children, which is, in

essence, the battle of reason against passions. When she says “*ira pietatem fugat iramque pietas. cede pietati, dolor* – anger puts love to flight, and love, anger. O wrath, yield thee to love” (Sen. *Med.* 943–944), her final wish is for *reason* to be the victor of this battle, but as Medea knows well, this is not possible in her mental state since she has once allowed the passions to capture reason. Seneca explains this evident case in his treatise *De ira*:

Primum facilius est excludere pernicioosa quam regere et non admittere quam admissa moderari; nam cum se in possessione posuerunt, potentiora rectore sunt nec recidi se minuere patiuntur. Deinde ratio ipsa, cui freni traduntur, tam diu potens est quam diu diducta est ab adfectibus; si miscuit se illis et inquinavit, non potest continere quos summovere potuisset. Commota enim semel et excussa mens ei servit quo impellitur. Quarum rerum initia in nostra potestate sunt, ulterior nos vi sua rapiunt nec regressum relinquunt. Ut in praeceptis datis corporibus nullum sui arbitrium est nec resistere morarive deiecta potuerunt, sed consilium omne et paenitentiam irrevocabilis praecipitatio abscedit et non licet eo non pervenire, quo non ire licuisset, ita animus si in iram, amorem, aliosque se proiecit adfectus, non permittitur reprimere impetum; rapiat illum oportet et ad imum agat pondus suum et vitiorum natura proclivis. (Sen. *De ira*, 1.7.2–4)

In the first place, it is easier to exclude harmful passions than to rule them, and deny them admittance than, after they have been admitted, to control them; for when they have established themselves in possession, they are stronger than their ruler and do not permit themselves to be restrained or reduced. In the second place, Reason herself, to whom the reins of power have been entrusted, remains mistress only so long as she is kept apart from the passions; if once she mingles with them and is contaminated, she becomes unable to hold back those whom she might have cleared from her path. For when once the mind has been aroused and shaken, it becomes the slave of the disturbing agent. There are certain things which at the start are under our control, but later hurry us away by their violence and leave us no retreat. As a victim hurled from the precipice has no control of his body, and, once cast off, can neither stop nor stay, but, speeding on irrevocably, is cut off from all reconsideration and repentance and cannot now avoid arriving at the goal toward which he might once have avoided starting, so with the mind – if it plunges into anger, love or the other passions, it has no power to check its impetus; its very weight and the downward tendency of vice needs must hurry it on, and drive it to the bottom.

The rest of Medea’s soliloquy echoes Seneca’s statement. Even though she does not want to obey her anger, she cannot help following it since she is under the dominion of the passions which rule all her acts: “*rursus increscit dolor et fervet odium, repetit invitam manum antique Erinys. ira, qua ducis, sequor* – my grief grows again and my hate burns hot; Erinys, as of old, claims my unwilling hand. O wrath, where thou dost lead I follow” (Sen. *Med.* 951–953) Even if she hesitates momentarily before her last deeds, she does kill her children; one is killed in the absence of Jason and the other in front of his eyes. After the first infanticide, Medea’s disparate inner voices are heard: The motherly part repents and feels ashamed of her act while the passionate part is content with it (Sen. *Med.* 989–992). When she kills the other child, she has nothing else left; she

addresses her grief again and says “*plura non habui, dolor, quae tibi litarem* – I had no more atonement to offer thee, O grief” (Sen. *Med.* 1019–1020). Medea has thus destroyed everything including herself. As Seneca says in his philosophical treatise above, Medea has been the victim of her love, anger and pain. Her inner voices vividly represent the defeat of Medea to Medea herself, in other words, the defeat of reason to passions.

As we attempted to analyze, throughout the play, Seneca manifests the conflict between passions and reason, by means of Medea’s monologues. This is the natural effect of Seneca’s concern in his tragedies, which is the representation of passions. As a matter of fact, Medea is simply a symbol which reveals the objectionable, sudden and destructive aspects of passions in parallel with his philosophical treatise. Even if the passionate agent compels themselves to behave in a reasonable way, they cannot stand yielding to their passions. In Medea’s soliloquies we can follow respectively the disorder within the mind corrupted by uncontrollable passions, how passions could split the personality of the character and finally how they could become the supreme force to exceed the very limit of rationality. All in all, the monologues finely worked by Seneca in line with his Stoic perspective regarding passions are highly striking examples that reveal the diseased soul of passionate person.

## MEDEA’NIN İÇSEL SESİ

### Ö z e t

Medea hikâyesi özellikle tutkuların insan yaşamı üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri açısından bize oldukça zengin bir inceleme alanı sağlar. Bu çalışmada Stoacı Seneca’nın *Medea* başlıklı tragedyası temel alınmakla birlikte, Euripides’in aynı başlığı taşıyan tragedyasıyla da yer yer karşılaştırmalar yapılmıştır. Dikkat çekici olan nokta, her iki tragedya şairinin aynı konuyu birbirlerinden çok farklı bakış açısıyla ele almalarıdır. Filozof Seneca’nın tragedyasında başkahraman Medea’nın kendi kendisine yaptığı uzun konuşmalar ya da monologlar Euripides’in tragedyasından oldukça farklılaşan bir yapı sergiler. Bu monologlar başkahraman Medea’nın tutkularıyla aklı arasındaki çatışmayı en ince ayrıntılarıyla açığa vurur. Bu tragedyanın başlıca teması tutkular üzerine, özellikle *amor* (aşk), *ira* (öfke), *furor* (çılgınlık, delilik) ve tüm bunların neden olduğu kişilik bölünmesi üzerine yoğunlaşır. Bu nedenle, Seneca’nın tragedyası hem psikolojik hem de felsefi açıdan taşıdığı alt anlamlarıyla çözümlenebilir.