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## Feminist Literary Analysis Of Euripides's Medea

Greek playwright Euripides is known to have very complex female lead roles in many of his tragedies. Medea is one of Euripides's best-known works that demonstrates the thematic idea of the feminist viewpoint. The story follows a wife named Medea who ends up murdering her two children and her husband's mistress as revenge for him being unfaithful to her. Medea is portrayed as the tragic heroine in this play, but she ends up prevailing in the end riding off into the sunset in a dragon-pulled chariot protected from any persecution by her grandfather the Sun-God. This instance suggests she comes out to be the winner in this tragedy. An instance that shows the woman being victorious over the oppressive man. One instance of many that push the feminist narrative of this story and the literary theory of feminism.

To analyze the feminist qualities in Medea one must understand what the literary theory of feminist criticism means. Author Lois Tyson explains it simply as 'how literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women' (Tyson 83). With that being said, Medea demonstrates several instances of blatant sexism littered throughout the tragedy, as the ancient times, women were generally viewed as objects. It was the woman's responsibility to upkeep the house and have children back then. They were not allowed to vote, own property, and were bought with dowries. Women were essentially property themselves to their husbands. There was no such thing as a separation from the husband unless they wanted to be rejected by society for the rest of their lives. The idea that the men have all the power in the relationship and the fact that women are owned by men is held up significantly in Medea's point of view as she exclaims:

First, you have to pay an enormous sum to buy a husband who, to make things worse, gets to be the master of your body. And it's a gamble: you're as likely to get a bad one as a good one. Divorce means disgrace for women, and you can't say no to a husband. (Euripides 446)

Another instance suggesting the power imbalance between the wife Medea and her husband Jason is that he could completely get away with marrying another woman abandoning Medea and the children. King Creon was ready to exile Medea in fear of a revenge plot against his daughter and Jason. Despite Medea being the victim at this stage of the story, as a woman, she is completely powerless and is the one that would be punished in this scenario. Jason would not have to accept responsibility for any of his actions as his social status would be improved by marrying the king's daughter. This represents everything that is wrong with how women are viewed in ancient civilizations. A man could easily get away with adultery and improve his standing in the eyes of society by marrying royalty. Medea standing up to the injustice with her revenge plot demonstrates the femme fatale archetype her character is.

Medea's revenge can be argued to be radicalized feminism. Her approach in righting the injustice done to her was very unethical at best. It demonstrated the means she took to take the power away from the patriarch society that is shown in the story though. She knew that it would affect her greatly by killing her own two children, but she knew it would hurt her husband Jason even more so. Sure, it is not the most universal way to show women are not as powerless as they are held in light of the ancient civilizations.