SPECIAL EDITION

Daily Quote

OPEN CASES

FROM CULPRIT TO VICTIM?

THE VOICES OF THOSE WHO DEFEND MEDEA

FROM APOLLONIUS RHODIUS TO MODERN REINTERPRETATIONS, NO LONGER A MONSTER, BUT WOMAN OVERWHELMED BY FATE OR A VICTIM OF DECEPTION.

For centuries, Medea has been remembered above all as the ultimate child murderer, a symbol of unforgivable guilt. Yet, alongside the tradition that condemns her, there is another line of interpretation that tends to absolve her or at least downplay her responsibility. This line of interpretation began in the Hellenistic age with Apollonius Rhodius and has grown stronger over time, becoming central to the modern interpretation of the myth.

APOLLONIUS RHODIUS: MEDEA, VICTIM OF LOVE AND THE GODS

In Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica (3rd century BC), Medea appears profoundly different from Euripides' tragic figure. She is not a woman dominated by hatred, but an inexperienced, fragile young woman, overwhelmed by a

Maria Callas in Pasolini's film Medea
Image via: pasolini.net

passion she did not choose. It is Eros, sent by Hera and Aphrodite, who strikes her with an arrow, making her captive to an irresistible love for Jason. Hence, Medea does not act out of calculation or revenge, but under a divine force that nullifies her freedom.

FOR CLAUDIO ELIANO, THE REAL MURDERERS REMAIN AT LARGE

According to Claudius Aelianus (2nd-3rd century AD), an ancient account stated that, for a large sum of money, Euripides had invented infanticide at the request of the Corinthians, precisely to exonerate them from the terrible crime. Medea would thus be a scapegoat, not the terrible murderer.

capable of every gesture, as tradition has presented him to us. His thesis would also be supported by Creophylus of Samos (8th century BC? - ...), an ancient Greek poet who was part of the group of so-called cyclic poets. Author of the epic poem "The Conquest of Ecalia", he supports the guilt of the Corinthians: Creon's family kills Medea's children and then spreads the rumour that it was the mother who did it.

MEDEA AS A VICTIM OF POWER FOR C. WOLFE

According to the German writer Christa Wolf ("Medea. Voices"), Medea did not kill her children, but was turned into a monster by a patriarchal society that needed a scapegoat. The children died in Corinth in violent political and social circumstances; the Corinthians accused Medea in order to turn her into a scapegoat, eliminating an inconvenient foreigner who knew dangerous truths about power. The infanticide becomes a lie constructed by those in power to justify the exclusion and persecution of foreigners.