

# **The Revival of the Ambivalent Mother Figure in Euripidean *Medea*: Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban* and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha***

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**Abstract:** Jungian mother archetype has a variety of representations including mother goddess, grandmother, witch and mother (in the simplest sense). As is seen in the examples Jungian mother archetype can manifest in different ways, both positive and negative. However, these positive and negative features may also appear in a single body, which explains Jungian mother archetype's having two opposite sides, both being a creator and a destroyer. In this context, this study analyses Euripides's *Medea*, Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban* and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha* comparatively, in relation to the idea of ambivalent mother figure based on Jung's mother archetype with its contradictory nature both as a loving and terrible mother. Although, the latter two plays have numerous similarities with Euripides's *Medea*, this study dwells on the idea of ambivalent mother figure specifically. Despite the fact that *Kurban* and *Mediha* have similar themes with *Medea*, such as the betrayal of the wife by the husband, the theme of revenge, and also a similar ending of the death of children at the hands of their mothers, the motives lying beneath the act of killing are mostly different from each other depending on different social conditions the three plays were produced in and their cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this study aims to search for the traces of these motives behind the act of killing of these three women.

**Keywords:** *Medea*, *Kurban*, *Mediha*, archetypes, Jungian mother archetype, ambivalent mother figure

## **INTRODUCTION**

JASON *batters at the doors. MEDEA appears above the roof, sitting in a chariot drawn by dragons, with the bodies of the two children beside her.*

MEDEA: Jason! Why are you battering at these doors, seeking the dead children and me who killed them? Stop! Be quiet. If you have any business

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with me, say what you wish. Touch us you cannot, In this chariot which the Sun has sent to save us from the hands of enemies. (*Medea*)

ZEHRA: Manhood has been insulted and left without example in Karacaören in such a way that my Zeynep must not be a woman.

My Murad

My Murad pitying for the ram that will be sacrificed

Must not be a man.

They must remain as two undeveloped/immature stars

In the blue bosom of God. (*Kurban*)

MEDİHA: Let him stay and lay his wedding mat on the blood of his progeny. What a great joy to the demon! [...] Did the demon bite you too? (*Cynical*) It is too late beautiful sister, too late. Do you think I am still alive? My soul, having become smoke, mixed in the air, will it be collected again? Will my honour, having become dust under the ground, heal again? Will such a woman like me be saved any longer?

(*Mediha, closing the window retreats inside. She can be heard singing a folk song like a crazy woman. The folk song continues and continues and suddenly it ceases.*) (*Mediha*)

Above are the endings of the three plays Euripides's *Medea*, and Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban* and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha* respectively, the latter two recurring the archetype of murderous mother with an ambivalent nature in the previous one. However, although there is a reincarnation of the murderous mother figure- with some slight differences- of Euripidean *Medea* in Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban* and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha*, the motives lying beneath the action of murder in each play are still questionable. These differences are mostly observed to occur due to the various social conditions of the periods these three plays were produced in.

Therefore, study mainly dwells on and discusses the two reinterpretations of Euripides's play *Medea* (431-432 BC) in modern Turkish Theatre, namely Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban* (1967) and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha* (1992), particularly in relation to the ambivalent mother figure appearing in these plays based on Jung's mother archetype. In accordance with this, the aim of the study is to dig up in Güngör Dilmen's play *Kurban* and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha* and to divide them into their layers, as an archeologist does to the soil, in order to seek the traces of Euripides's *Medea* in these two plays along with the discovery of the novelties as the construction of the two playwrights upon or their contribution to, however you name it, Euripides's mythological play *Medea*. In doing so and discovering the reasons beneath the action of murder in these three plays, we mainly

and indeed inevitably rely on the contradictory nature of Carl Gustav Jung's mother archetype along with a focus on time and setting, in other words we examine the social conditions and also culture in which these three plays came into being. However, having regarded the date of the play *Mediha*, this study also aims to focus on the influence of Dilmen's play *Kurban* on *Mediha*, thus to reveal how these two plays render such a comparative study possible and serve as windows opening up to the literature of a different world through intertextual relations.

## THE AMBIVALENT NATURE OF JUNGIAN MOTHER ARCHETYPE

An archetype as being the prototype or the first example of something, never ceases to recur in literary works or, in a way it is bound to be a source of inspiration for the authors of literary works either consciously or unconsciously, or even subconsciously. Archetypal figures or images find expression in the psyche, behaviors and in myths also. And these myths influence the writers as in the case of Euripides who writes the play *Medea* based on the Medea myth. And an archetype always has two opposing or conflicting sides just as the two sides of a medallion. This contradictory nature of archetypes can also be related to two components of Jung's model of psyche, that are the persona and the shadow appearing as the two opposite sides of the personality. While persona represents the "normal" side of personality, that exists "for reasons of adaptation and personal convenience" and it is named "the packaging of the ego" (Hopwood 2020) what is seen from the outside by other people, the shadow, as Jung himself expresses, is

The inferior part of the personality; sum of all personal and collective psychic elements which, because of their incompatibility with the chosen conscious attitude, are denied expression in life and therefore coalesce into a relatively autonomous "splinter personality" with contrary tendencies in the unconscious. The shadow behaves compensatorily to consciousness; hence its effects can be positive as well as negative. [...] The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies. (Jung 1989, 481-482)

Even more important is that "the shadow [is] that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate

ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious” (Jung 1989, 482).

As for Jung’s mother archetype, like all archetypes it has a contradictory nature both being a loving and annihilating mother figure. As Boyer (1996, 110) puts it, “[...] any tale or image worthy of literary expression can ultimately be linked to one or more archetypes. Eve lies behind every woman, since every woman is, by definition, a *femme fatale*; [...]” This explanation not only presents archetypes and images deriving from them and also myths as inexhaustible and continuously renewable sources of inspiration but also stresses the existence of archetype of Eve lying behind every woman and also behind the mother figure with its ambivalent nature. This ambivalent nature of mother archetype (both as a loving, compassionate and devouring figure) is reinforced by Camilla Paglia in her voluminous work entitled *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (2001), where she refers to another mythological figure, the Indian nature-goddess called Kali who is both a

creator *and* destroyer, granting boons with one set of arms while cutting throats with the other. She is the lady ringed with skulls. The moral ambivalence of the great mother goddesses has been conveniently forgotten by those American feminists who have resurrected them. We cannot grasp nature’s bare blade without shedding our own blood (Paglia 2001, 16).

Thus, it can be said that woman, as a representation of Mother Nature has always been unpredictable with its double-edged nature. “Since Rich’s book appeared, psychosociological studies have confirmed that mothers who commit infanticide typically both love and feel intense anger against their children” (Meyer et. al. 89 qtd. in Foster 2021, 86). This again confirms the ambivalent nature of Jungian mother archetype which still continues to be a subject matter of the present-day literature and drama particularly. As Raber (2000, 300) also emphasizes this ambivalent mother figure mainly based on Jung’s mother archetype with its ambiguous nature persists to arouse in many literary works in various forms. In Boyer’s words (1996, 111), “These are ancient (more properly archaic) figures - primal figures that, it seems will never cease to give birth to new versions of themselves, since the characteristic of any true literary myth is to be contagious.”

What renders Euripides's literary myth, his play *Medea* and the protagonist of it contagious as an archetype, is the inner conflict that Medea struggles with as a mother during the play. As Verna A. Forster (2021, 84) emphasizes this is "the elemental conflict between maternal love and vengeful infanticide." According to Duarte Minoso-Ruiz (1996, 771) who puts emphasis on the negative features of Medea's personality, "It is precisely the 'monstrous' nature of Medea at the level of these classic and fascinating paradoxes which explains the survival of the myth in literature to the present day." In my opinion together with this elemental conflict it is the strikingly shocking ending of the play- "a creation of Euripides" (Küçük 2017, 418) and his contribution to the original myth, a novelty that you cannot find at the end of the myth of Medea, which renders it immortal, and is still reflected in contemporary plays. "The Holy Grail, the Golden Fleece, the philosopher's stone and anti-matter are doubtless of us and within us, but they demand both that we return to the sources and that we go beyond them" (Boyer 1996, 117). That is exactly what Euripides does with the last blow at the end of his play, he both returns to the source and goes beyond it by astounding his audience in an unexpected or unimaginable way.

Having cleared up what is meant by "the ambivalent mother figure", or for some, having reminded the conflicting or double-edged nature of Jungian mother archetype, I can now proceed to exemplify the ambivalent mother figure from the plays and to trace the motives behind the ambivalent mother figure in Euripides's *Medea*, and Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban* and Yüksel Pazarkaya's *Mediha*, in other words, what cause these three women to experience maternal ambivalence and eventually to commit filicide.

THE AMBIVALENT MOTHER FIGURE IN EURIPIDES'S *MEDEA*  
Just from the beginning of the play Medea's ambivalent feelings about her children and her motherhood or "a radical incoherence in her character" as Blondell names it (2002, 156), are revealed through the nurse's words: "She hates her sons: To see them is no pleasure to her" (Euripides 2002, 18). The nurse's thought and anxiety in relation to Medea's hatred for her children are justified with Medea's own remarks: "Children, your mother is hated, and you are cursed: / Death take you, with your father, and perish his whole / house" (Euripides 2002, 20). These words revealing the monstrous mother side in Medea mean that long before Medea decides to kill her children, she wishes

for their death together with their father. And then, with nurse's warning of children, we understand that both due to the situation Medea is in- because her husband Jason abandons her and marries another woman, King Creon's daughter secretly – and partly due to her wild nature (Raber 2000, 307; Cyrino 1996, 5; also Blondell et al. 2002, 153) which Jason implies when he says “you left a barbarous land to become a resident / Of Hellas; here you have known justice;” (Euripides 2002, 33), she is in a constantly changing mood and thus might be a threat to children: “NURSE: And don't go within sight of her, / Or anywhere near her; keep a safe distance. / Her mood is cruel, her nature dangerous, / Her will fierce and intractable. / Come on, now, in with you both at once” (Euripides 2002, 20). Despite the nurse's fear for children, it is obvious that she is a loving mother and cannot hide her feelings towards them:

MEDEA: [...] [*She turns away in a sudden flood of weeping.*] Forgive me; I recalled /What pain the future hides from us. [*After embracing Jason the CHILDREN go back to Medea.*] Oh children! Will you/ All your lives long, stretch out your hands to me like this? /Oh, my tormented heart is full of tears and terrors (Euripides 2002, 44).

As Esra Dicle (2019, 382) also stresses, the god-like features and the magical powers of Medea character in the original myth are pushed to the background and not much emphasized in Euripides's play, here she is mostly reflected as an ordinary human being, a wife and loving mother to her children (Blondell et al. 2002, 155, 167). However, at other times she is overwhelmed with rage and with the feeling of revenge and becomes a dreadful figure: “ME D EA: Mighty Themis! Dread Artemis! / Do you see how I am used / In spite of those great oaths I bound him with / By my accursed husband? / Oh, may I see Jason and his bride / Ground to pieces in their shattered palace / For the wrong they have dared to do to me, unprovoked!” (Euripides 2002, 22)

Her situation and psychology get worse as she is exiled from Corinth by King Creon and perhaps for the first time after a long time realizes that she is helpless, has nowhere and no one to take refuge in:

CREON: You there, Medea, scowling rage against your husband! / I order you out of Corinth; take your sons and go / Into exile. Waste no time; I'm here to see this order / Enforced. And I'm not going back into my palace / Until I've put you safe outside my boundaries. /

MEDEA: Oh! this is the cruel end of my accursed life! / My enemies have spread full sail; no welcoming shore / Waits to receive and save me. / Ill-treated as I am, / Creon, I ask: for what offence do you banish me? (Euripides 2002, 25)

Especially the idea of exile and her awareness that she has no place to go, which Cyrino (1996, 32) calls “the loss of natal family” and considers as one of the reasons of child murdering, and which is expressed by Medea in several parts of the play and with all its details during her speech with Jason (Euripides 2002, 32), increase her distress as is understood from her speech with Creon also and doubles her rage caused by the betrayal of her husband. Because she thinks that she is wronged for the second time now with King Creon’s plan that she must be banished from Corinth. It seems that Medea is now doubly exiled; once she was exiled from her hometown owing to her bad deeds including the slaughter of her brother, and now she is being banished from Corinth on the ground that she has magical powers that King Creon thinks she might use to harm them, Jason, Creon himself and especially his daughter (Blondell et al. 2002, 158). In fact, King Creon is quite right to worry because that is what Medea plans to do at the beginning of the play: “Today three of my enemies I shall strike dead: / Father and daughter; and *my* husband” (Euripides 2002, 28). Thus, the feeling of being cornered, or despair is one of the motives that push her to proceed with her plan and to put it into practice.

However, when she realizes a detail, Aegeus’s desire to have a child (Euripides 2002, 37) and how devastating it will be to leave her husband, a king specifically without child (Dicle 2019, 384; Küçük 2017, 418); and considers the ending waiting for her children if she kills Jason, King Creon and his daughter, her plan starts to go into a different direction. She now knows how to punish Jason in the best way and how to save her children from the wrath of the Corinthians after she has killed her enemies (Cyrino 1996, 7-8). “It is only by leaving Jason alive, deserted and tainted with crime, that Medea can repay him for the injuries he did and planned to do to her” (Cyrino 1996, 10). This is actually the moment when her plan takes its final form and she decides to kill her children after she has killed the others:

MEDEA: Friends, now my course is clear: as quickly as / possible / To kill the children and then fly from Corinth; not / Delay and so consign them to another hand / To murder with a better will. For they must die, / In any case; and since they must. then I who gave / Them birth will kill

them. Arm yourself, my heart: the thing / That you must do is fearful,  
yet inevitable (Euripides 2002, 55).

Medea does not want to leave her children at the mercy of other people after she has committed her deed and she thinks that death is the only possible way for her children in such a case. Yet, we observe that as a loving mother it won't be that much easy for her to end the lives of her children with her own hands. She is now in a great dilemma and starts to feel gnawing of conscience even before she murders her children:

MEDEA: [...] What makes me cry with pain / Is the next thing, I have to do. I will kill my sons. / No one shall take my children from me. When I have made / Jason's whole house a shambles, I will leave Corinth / A murderess, flying from my darling children's blood. / Yes, I can endure guilt, however horrible; / The laughter of my enemies I will not endure (Euripides 2002, 41).

She wants to make herself believe that she is doing it for the good of her children.

Another moment comes when looking at the faces of her children, she cannot find enough strength and courage to commit that sinful act:

MEDEA: [...] I'll speak to them. Come, children; give me your hand. dear son / Yours too. Now we must say goodbye. Oh, darling hand. And darling mouth; your noble, / childlike face and body! Dear sons, my blessing on you both -but there, not here! / All blessing here your father has destroyed. / How sweet to hold you! And children's skin is soft, and their breath pure. Go! Go away! / I can't look at you any longer; / My pain is more than I can bear. [*The CHILDREN go indoors.*] I understand the horror of what I / am going to do; but anger, the spring of all life's horror, masters my resolve (Euripides 2002, 50).

We observe that as a mother she is full of affection here, she looks at and examines every part of their body, hand, mouth, face and skin with loving eyes and even feels their breath for the last time before bidding farewell to them. And she is quite aware of the situation and how dreadful and difficult it is. Foster likewise stresses that "Medea's murder of her children cannot be excused as madness" (Foster 2021, 84) as she is very conscious of what she is doing. However, it is still as if her anger controlled her and she couldn't prevent it. This is her biggest fault perhaps, to be overcome by her anger to Jason and by the feeling of revenge at whatever price it will cost her.



At one point she even considers abandoning the country together with her children. However, this is not something expected from a woman like Medea who is very strong and full of hatred and vengeance towards these three people who ruined her life: “MEDEA: [...] Oh, my heart, don't, don't do it! Oh, miserable heart, / Let them be! Spare your children! We'll all live together / Safely in Athens; and they will make you happy.... No!” (Euripides 2002, 49-50) and thusly she does what is expected from her, all of a sudden, as if waking up from a dream, she strictly objects to the idea, and says “No!”. Again, she claims that she will do it for the good of her children (Küçük 2017, 418) and this is the only way to save them from the wrath of her enemies: “MEDEA: [...] No! No! By all the fiends of hate in hell's depths, nor / I'll not leave sons of mine to be the victims of / My enemies' rage. In any case there is no escape” (Euripides 2002, 49-50). She oscillates between these feelings of love and hatred and revenge and between the idea of killing or not killing her own children, which all indicate her nature as an ambivalent mother.

Then comes the critical moment when her inner conflict reaches its peak and Medea is observed to be torn apart between her love for her children and her desire for vengeance:

MEDEA: [...] Women, my courage is all gone. Their young, bright faces. / I can't do it. I'll think no more of it. I'll take them / Away from Corinth. Why should I hurt *them*, to make / Their father suffer, when I shall suffer twice as much / Myself? I won't do it. I won't think of it again. / What is the matter with me? Are my enemies / To laugh at me? Am I to let them off scot free? / I must steel myself to it. What a coward I am, / Even tempting my own resolution with soft talk. / Boys, go indoors (Euripides 2002, 49).

This is perhaps the most striking scene where her ambivalent nature both as a loving and monstrous mother comes to light. This soliloquy shows the struggle between her light and dark side. It is as if her persona and her shadow are at war with each other at that critical moment. However, at the end of the play Medea is overcome with the feelings of hatred and revenge towards Jason and others and kills her children, and flies away in a chariot driven by the dragons taking their dead bodies with her. The fact that she does not commit suicide after she has killed her children and consents to carrying the burden of her crime all through her life once again points out to her strong personality and also wild nature.

## THE REVIVAL OF THE AMBIVALENT MOTHER FIGURE IN GÜNGÖR DILMEN'S *KURBAN*

Although Güngör Dilmen's play *Kurban* has a strong affinity to Euripides's *Medea* thematically, especially with the theme of "the sexual desertion and then substitution by another, 'better,' woman as wife" (Cyrino 1996, 4), what Dilmen actually did, is to take the plot of Euripides's play with its main lines and adapt it to the living conditions and customs of the Anatolian society during the 1970s. Unlike Euripides's *Medea*, in *Kurban* we do not observe a very overt ambivalence in relation to the mother figure, Zehra. She does not experience such an inner conflict or dilemma as Medea does in a very obvious way. However, the playwright, Güngör Dilmen handles other techniques to adumbrate her ambivalent nature. First of all, the description of Zehra's room in the house and some part of the stage direction in the introduction of the play help the reader to feel that she has a dark side:

KARACAÖREN VILLAGE. Mahmut's house. A large room is seen in the middle. This room opens up to a dim cave-like interior room at the back. The inside of this room where Zehra's mat is laid, is seen in one or two acts- but only for a short time. [...] On the other hand, the scenery must be able to give Zehra's psychology/mood that is tightly closed to the outside (Dilmen 2008, 7).

By the use of that cave-like interior room, or we can call it the cave symbol, the darkness and the depths of her personality are shown to the reader (Şener 1970, 53; Küçük 2017, 430). This dark side of her nature is not only reflected through the use of place her words and behaviors but also emphasized by the group of women, partly functioning as the chorus in *Medea*, who know her and observe her behaviors closely. And thus, through some metaphors and symbols that women use, and the comparison between Zehra and her young rivalry Gülsüm, Zehra's personality and especially her mysterious dark side are uncovered:

WOMEN: Gülsüm, Gülsüm,  
Comes with roses and and hyacinths,  
Zehra, Zehra, the poison,  
Blossom the oleanders within you (Dilmen 2008, 45).

Here while the roses and hyacinths represent Gülsüm and her youth and beauty, Zehra is associated with the oleanders that are known to be

poisonous flowers. Despite being an Anatolian woman, and standing for the Anatolian woman's scream of despair against the patriarchal society and its customs that always take side with the men, these symbols and metaphors indicate that she has a secret dark side in her personality just like Euripides's *Medea*. Other similar symbols like a purple snake which Mirza, Gülsüm's brother uses implying Zehra and the scarlet flame also emphasize Zehra's "the other" side lying beneath the surface. Her ambivalent nature or that secret, dark side is best expressed in Sevdâ Şener's words (1970, 51-52): "Under her silence and stillness, is she as strong and dreadful as a volcano that is ready to erupt."

Although Zehra has a dark side, it is understood from her words that she loves her children very much. While her husband Mahmut and Gülsüm's brother Mirza are talking about Gülsüm, Mirza says that Gülsüm will not behave as a step mother to the children and she will love them and what Zehra gives as a reply is "Step mother behaves like a step mother. [...] No one can touch my children" (Dilmen 2008, 18). Just like *Medea* she does not want to leave her children at the hands or at the mercy of other people. Apart from that her words and behaviors towards her children are full of affection:

ZEHRA: Murad, Murad, my son.

*(Murat jumps out of his sleep and pushes his mother)*

ZEHRA: Did I scare you my baby- What happened my Murad?

MURAT: Was that you mother? I thought it was...

ZEHRA: What my dear?

*(Murat shakes his head and does not say anything. He hugs his mother)*

(Dilmen 2008, 26).

Here, what strikes attention at first glance is that the children are also disturbed with the idea of a step mother which is implied by Murat's reaction to his mother and also his unwillingness to talk about this misunderstanding. However, at the same time these lines reveal Zehra's unconditioned and deep love for her children. Especially the possessive adjective "my" she- generally- uses while addressing her children and the words such as "baby," and "dear" demonstrate her love and affection for them.

However, at a moment of crisis with Mahmut, when she says that she "won't let Gülsüm in" (the house), she adds dullishly "Think of your children" (Dilmen 2008, 39). This sentence of Zehra might be interpreted in two ways: She might be either implying the idea of step

mother that will be real with Gülsüm's arrival, which Mahmut understands in this way and promises that he will never let such a thing. Or it might mean that Zehra has a plan for children and this is a kind of implied threat to Mahmut which he does not have the least idea of. And just a few seconds after this speech between the two, Mahmut starts to sharpen a knife in order to prepare it to sacrifice the ram for the arrival of the new bride, Gülsüm, and Zehra's staring at the knife without speaking justifies my idea that she has a plan including the children.

Then comes the second act of the play where Zehra has a dream foreshadowing what will happen to her and her family with Gülsüm's arrival to the house after her marriage with Mahmut, Zehra's husband. She dreams that Gülsüm has the authority in the house now, she is a very good housewife so admired by others and she also approaches Zehra's children with affection which makes Zehra angry and even more jealous. She does not want to share her children with Gülsüm. And eventually she dreams that they want to send her to another place due to her illness and tell her that she might get well there, which also recalls the theme of exile in Euripides's *Medea*, in a different way. When Zehra wakes up from her dream, we observe that as she cannot bear the idea of staying away from her children, and their being a happy family together with their new mother, and now decisive about putting her plan about the children into practice.

At the beginning of the third act, after her dream, she is observed to pestle something in a muller, which is a signal of her decisiveness about her scheme concerning her children particularly. "These are hits of a person's fist, trying to reinforce her decision" (Dilmen 2008, 52). Just as the dark side of her personality that is only implied and not presented overtly, she does not put her plan about her children into words evidently, unlike Medea.

In this act it is observed that she will not conform to the rules and customs of the patriarchal society and will not accept another woman's entering into her own house as the second wife of her husband. And it is again implied that she has a plan: "ZEHRA: There is another law in my heart which I will follow. [...] No matter how many examples you give, it is in vain. It is against me. Thousands are a thousand and I am the one. I share my food and my house with everyone but I do not share my husband" (Dilmen 2008, 54). However, she does not seem to be very decisive about her plan, in other words the mother ambivalence starts to be felt more strongly as the time for her plan

approaches. At first, we sense her impatience to put her plan into practice from her following words while she is waiting for her children's arrival: "ZEHRRA: (Impatiently) Where have they stayed?" (Dilmen 2008, 53), yet a few minutes later, when the children arrive, she seems to be sad to see them arrive that early: "ZEHRRA: (It is as if she was sad that they returned) How quickly did you return?" (Dilmen 2008, 56) This is perhaps the only overt example about her hesitation and thus her maternal ambivalence, which is very different from Medea's fits of anger and strong dilemma, which can be said to be result of different personalities that these two women have, Medea who has an already wild nature and strong personality and Zehra on the contrary always silent and repressed by the unwritten rules of the patriarchal society and also it is due to the fact that they come from two totally different lineages, and Medea as it is seen in the end is the granddaughter of the God of Sun, almost a half-god and on the other hand Zehra is an ordinary woman, only a villager. However, it must be actually considered as the success of the playwright, Güngör Dilmen as he aims to present this similar story in a different context and with a different social background.

Yet, no matter how much Zehra hesitates, she makes the reader feel that she will continue her plan, we understand this again from her words about the ram, it is as if she was telling a story to children, actually implying the story of their death waiting for them: "ZEHRRA: The fleece of the ram had all become golden. (With a deep voice she vocalizes the ram) Murat, Zeynep- Murat, Zeynep I came to take you away, are you ready for the festival of the God?" (Dilmen 2008, 59) These lines imply that the two children will be sacrificed instead of the ram just as in the religious story their father, Mahmut tells them about the prophet Abraham and his son Ismael at the beginning of the play. Another point that shows Zehra's weakness as a mother, contrary to Medea's unshakeable decisiveness, is that it is as if she cannot dare to kill them while they are awake, looking into her eyes and so, puts some opium into their tea and waits for them to fall asleep. Also, her talk to herself after they fall asleep still signals her hesitation and unwillingness to kill her children:

ZEHRRA: [...] (Harmonica sounds are heard in the distance. She listens for some time)

Murat, Murat, my son (silence) He's already asleep. God forbid if something

happens today... (Hoarsely) You have no business in this blasted Karacaören,  
You have no business in this petrified Karacaören. (Listens to the sounds.)  
Let them come and see (Dilmen 2008, 60).

Zehra's sentence "God forbid if something happens today..." and especially the phrase "God forbid" reveal that she does not really want to kill her children and the word "if" also implies that it is still a possibility and she is not certain about it yet. However, with her last sentence, "Let them come and see" she is still witnessed to have a threatening attitude and implies that she will proceed with her plan if they force her to do. Thus, once again Zehra's ambivalent nature as a mother is reinforced. Although not as very strong as Medea's, Zehra's ambivalence as a loving mother is underlined almost till the end of the play where she kills both her children and herself. Even the action of killing herself indicates that she is not as strong as Euripides's Medea and kills herself together with her children as she will not be able to stay alive and bear the pain of their death, especially by her own hands, and she will not be able to carry the burden of such a guilt/sin. This is another originality of Dilmen's play, to show the mercy and compassion of the Anatolian woman in every condition and the feature of self-sacrifice that lies somewhere in their nature and never changes and which we do not observe in Medea's personality although she is also a loving mother. Therefore, we can say that Medea, as well as being a strong woman carries that feeling of selfishness.

Through the end of the play when the new bride is brought to the house and Zehra-inside the house with her sleeping children- insists on not opening the door to them, she almost begs them to leave as she still does not want to kill her children, "ZEHRA: (As if groaning) Please, go away. My children are sleeping inside" (Dilmen 2008, 68). However, when Gülsüm's brother Mirza says, "Do not force us to break the door on the wedding day", desperately Zehra replies, "I will have only one thing to do when the bride steps over the threshold. [...] I will offer double sacrifices to the bride instead of the ram that we set free. Two sacrifices, so beautiful that there are no similar examples of them" (Dilmen 2008, 70-71). This is perhaps the first time that she expresses her intention almost openly. And when she realizes that unlike herself, who is tied to Mahmut only with a religious bond, Gülsüm is lawfully wedded to her husband and she is just the mother of his children and nothing more than that, she feels utterly desperate

(Küçük 2017, 428) and when she is eventually provoked by the women's sentence "When they have separated your children from you once" (Dilmen 2008, 82), she understands that there is no way out and thus, kills both her children and herself. Her last words, "God commands my heart, my arm / God commands my hand. (*Takes the knife. Startled.*) [...] God fills in me and takes me to the thing I will do" (Dilmen 2008, 85), just like Medea's words mentioned above, reveal that Zehra is also aware of the horribleness of the action that she is going to commit, but it is as if everything was out of her control and some external power, which she names as God, seized her.

#### THE REVIVAL OF THE AMBIVALENT MOTHER FIGURE IN YÜKSEL PAZARKAYA'S *MEDIHA*

Yüksel Pazarkaya's play *Mediha*, which is written in 1992 in prose instead of poetry form (Küçük 2017, 435) and is observed to have affinities both to Euripides's *Medea* and Dilmen's *Kurban*, starts in Anatolia again, just like Dilmen's *Kurban*, but extends to Germany thus with an addition of the theme of migration to the play. Different from Dilmen's *Kurban*, Yüksel Pazarkaya creates an overt referential link to Medea, first with the title of his play *Mediha*, reminiscent of Euripides's *Medea*, and then by scattering some parts of Euripides's *Medea* in his play (Dicle 2019, 398) in accordance with the story and the plot of the play. Despite all these thematic and formal novelties as the creation of the playwright, the theme of abandonment of the wife by the husband in favor of a new wife- although for different reasons- and thus, the ambivalent mother figure based on Jung's mother archetype remain unchanged. *Mediha*'s psychological and emotional change starts after she has come to Germany and has learned about her husband Hasan and the German woman Claudia, whom he wants to marry temporally in order to get permission to stay in Germany legally. We learn about her emotional change and alienation -just like Medea- through her words:

MEDIHA: [...] I see shapes around, incomprehensible. Children seem like a shape. [...] I do not know people. I cannot take the taste of what I eat and drink. Why did I come here? I came to my husband, but now I am much farther away from him. I am alienated from my children. [...] I was crazy about reuniting with my husband Hasan. In order to compensate for my longing I would hug my children. My day and night would be lighted with their looks. Tell me women, what happened to me like that? (Pazarkaya 1993, 17)

Here, like Medea, Mediha also feels alienated in a new country, likewise she is doubly exiled, once she left her village to escape with Hasan and to get married with him without her family's consent, and now she was brought to Germany where she feels like a total stranger and again like Medea it makes her feel helpless, without a place to take shelter in. Apart from that, the idea of exile can be related to Hasan's plan to send Mediha back to her village (Dicle 2019, 401) which is reminiscent of the scene in Zehra's nightmare. Also, her different behavior towards her children, again a feeling of alienation from them is reflected by her words. Once she was a loving mother, now she is alienated from them, they seem like strangers just as their father. It is partly due to the fact that she is in a new place and culture and partly because of her new situation with her husband, as he most probably does not behave her as close as he did in the past. Of course, Mediha does not wish to see her children dead together with their father as Medea does, but she feels drawn away from all three of them. She does not feel like that loving mother and wife that she was once. And this is the point her ambivalent feelings towards her children, as well as her husband- start to be felt although not as strong as Medea's feelings, but slightly and gradually as in Zehra's situation. Along with her gradually unfolding maternal ambivalence, her weak personality also has a stronger affinity with Zehra more than Medea who is a frightful figure even for King Creon (Dicle 2019, 399; Küçük 2017, 433). In time, Mediha, like Zehra starts to hint at her plan, starts to unfold what is there in her mind:

MEDIHA: Don't you see the approaching disaster. You do not see, but look how it is approaching with huge steps. Do not push me to that disaster with my eyes open. Do not push my children. Bad luck has already started. This bad luck has started from the moment I took off the bracelet from my wrist. (Pazarkaya 1993, 19)

Then she begs for taking her husband and children back, what she only wants now is to go back to her old, simple life with her family just like Zehra more than Medea again:

MEDIHA: My husband, my children are my virtue. I do not want to destroy my home, let it be superstitious if it is so. What do I have in this World? Just my life! The man I love, my garden; my children, my colorful flowers. [...] Give me my garden and my flowers back, and let me go back to the place that I came from... (Pazarkaya 1993, 19)



Here we witness Mediha's love for her family but especially her love for her children, whom she calls "my flowers". However, after an argument with her husband Hasan, Hasan drinks too much and then rapes her (Küçük 2017, 431). This is a critical point where Mediha realizes that she has no value for Hasan and she even begs him to send her back from Germany, with her children:

MEDIHA: (*As if groaning*) Please send me back. Send me, my children back. Right tomorrow. I will either lose my mind, or kill myself. Do not leave me in this bad place. I did not come here already. I came to you, I came to Hasan. What am I going to do in this foreign place? (Pazarkaya1993, 26)

Unlike Medea and Zehra, Mediha now consents to go back to her country even without her husband. She just wants to take her children with her, which again points out to her love for them and also her alienation in a totally foreign place, as if in exile. And her sentence, "I came to Hasan" also indicates that she cannot recognize him any longer as he has already undergone some change during the time he lived in Germany on his own, and especially after he met Claudia. She is in a way alienated from him too, that is why she wants to go back to Turkey leaving him back. And now the only thing she cares about is her children. She wants to take just her children with her, not caring for Hasan any longer. After Hasan's act of rape, Mediha comes to a realization, like Zehra, that not only does Hasan not like her, but he also does not show any respect to her even as the mother of his two children, let alone being a woman and being his wife. And although her realization is similar to Zehra's, her words about womanly pride at the beginning of her speech are reminiscent of Medea's words:

MEDIHA: [...] Mediha! This is your dignity groaning under the ruin. Your dignity is being stepped over your dignity is dying in agony. I do not mind your dying. Go to hell. However, your dignity died before you do. [...] Your womanly pride. [...] He does not even care about your maternal dignity. I wish his seeds had been spilt to the barren steppe instead of my womb! They fell into my womb as a girl, as a mother and my fertile womb gave him two sons. Is not there any maternal right left in this World? (Pazarkaya 1993, 27)

She knows that she is now nothing to her husband. After being raped by Hasan, she thinks that he does not even show respect to her maternity/motherhood. And while talking about his seeds, we also

witness her implied hatred or at least negative feelings towards her children. Because she in a way wishes that they had never been born, which indicates Mediha's ambivalent feelings as a mother.

Just as Medea, Mediha's helplessness and her maternal ambivalence is intensified with a feeling of exile. In a similar way, she remembers the sacrifices she made for Hasan, how she deserted her fiancé and got married with Hasan without her family's consent, and thus how she lost the chance of returning back to the family house even endangering her life with the risk of blood feud:

MEDIHA: [...] Mediha, may the devil take you Mediha, Mediha, who did not listen to her mother and father and ran to that despicable man! You deserved this, lead a life of misery now. [...] To the hell with that lustful woman in you Mediha! Let that lustful woman aside, save your dignity as a mother and human being, if you can. (Stops, engrosses for some time) What if I leave here? What if I take children and leave here? The counselor woman shall send me. [...] So where shall I go with children? Can I go to the village, to the family house? Can I go whether they kill me or hug me? How can I appear in front of everyone? [...] Whatever they say, I will take my children and leave here. [...] Even the children mustn't depend on him any longer (Pazarkaya 1993, 27-28).

What we observe here again is that Mediha cares for her children and loves them so much so that -like Medea- she does not want to leave them at the mercy of her husband, such a vile and indecent man. However, similar to Medea she does not know where to go, again because of her past deeds, and what she did to her family in order to get married to that man. Despite her love for her children, this is one of the most influential motives that pushes her towards the act of killing her own children, that despair, having no place to take refuge in.

When she goes to the counselor woman to ask for help to go back to her country, again she seems to be determined about not leaving her children behind: "Please do not separate me from my children. Send me together with my children, send me to my hometown" (Pazarkaya 1993, 31).

However, after the second act of the play, which very similarly but not very successfully- as we cannot fully understand if it is a nightmare or a surrealist scene and thus it seems very artificial or unnatural in the flow of the play- recalls the act in which Zehra has a nightmare in Güngör Dilmen's *Kurban*, Mediha like Zehra seems to have undergone

a transformation. And just like Medea she seems to come to terms with Hasan and Claudia (Dicle 2019, 403; Küçük 2017, 431) and tells the translator, Hasan's friend, that she invites them to the house to talk about the situation pretending to accept to get divorced from Hasan and thus plans to kill both when she meets them, which again indicates that at first, she does not have any intention of killing her children.

MEDIHA: [...] Let them come in front of us submissively... I shall say I'll do whatever you want, let them sit meekly. Then I shall stab each of them in their chests with the huge meat knife in the kitchen, then it will be over. [...] Anyhow, I will not stay here afterwards, anyhow, they will take me out of this pen to put me into another one. [...] But what will happen to the children when they put me in a pen? [...] Why am I living if not only for my children? No, I can never leave my children all alone in this world? (Pazarkaya 1993, 59-60)

The time when this idea of not leaving her children alone in this World comes to her mind is the critical point that changes the direction of her plan as in the case of Medea. At the end of the third scene of the second act, Mediha seems to cast a spell on Hasan by using her wedding dress and a knife (Pazarkaya 1993, 61-64) which is the reminiscent of the scene in Euripides's *Medea*, where Medea sends the wedding dress to the princess, but Mediha's magic does not seem to work in the play when she gives her wedding dress to Claudia (Dicle 2019, 403). Eventually, when they decide to take the children with them, Mediha like Zehra is raged by the idea and taking the knife with her goes into the room where the children sleep and locks the door. Although as readers we expect the play to end here, as it happens in Dilmen's *Kurban*, it does not end (Dicle 2019, 404). And this is one of the points that distinguishes Yüksel Pazarkaya's play both from Euripides's *Medea* and Dilmen's *Kurban* and acts both as a kind of rising action and a kind of foreshadowing for what will happen in the end. Finally, at the end of the fourth scene, Hasan being not able to persuade Mediha to open the door, leaves the house uttering threats that he is going to divorce from her and take his children, which makes Mediha even more determined about not giving her children:

MEDIHA: Despicable man, he took everything from me. Now he wants the children. He stepped on everything that belongs to me, my maternity, my humanity. They say they will take my children... will look after them well... and they say come and serve for us... [...] My

children? I will die but not give my children to him (Pazarkaya 1993, 74-75).

Here we still sense her love for her children. However, her plan starts to take its final shape with Hasan's insistence and threats about taking the children away from her as in the case of Zehra. The idea that Claudia will be her children's new mother drives her mad (Dicle 2019, 403-404). Furthermore, similar to what Jason does to Medea by implying that she is from a barbarous land, Hasan insults Mediha saying that she is an illiterate villager when compared to Claudia (Er 2013, 26; Küçük 2017, 432). Like Zehra and also Medea she feels that there is no other way than death. And soon after that what is in her mind spills from her lips: "MEDİHA: I die, and I also kill, I don't give my children to him. [...] The children, I kill his children. [...] I kill the pieces of his heart." (Pazarkaya 1993, 77) Just like Medea, Mediha considers this as the best punishment for Hasan: "MEDİHA: That neither kills him nor keeps him alive. But it makes life miserable for him. Then I wish him a long life. With the pain of his children in his heart let him live a long life. [...] It is his punishment. (Pazarkaya 1993, 78) After Mediha has made her decision, Hasan comes to Mediha's house once again and this contributes to the tension between Hasan and Mediha and pushes Mediha even more towards the act of killing children as her words suggest:

MEDİHA: *(Her voice is heard from inside, harsh and very determined)*  
If you want, come and take your children! Come and take away their dead bodies. You're their father, you couldn't take them alive, at least come and take their corpses. [...] Take and dig their grave! I will not give you your seeds before killing them. I killed you inside. You killed me. Take the corpses of your seeds now, come on break down the door and come in, take your dead bodies! (Pazarkaya 1993, 81)

In the final act of the play Mediha is observed to be in a similar situation with Zehra, she does not seem to be in a normal state of mind: "*(Mediha and the children are in the room. Mediha is singing a folk song with an unusual, creepy, scary voice inside)*" (Pazarkaya 1993, 85). Unlike the previous plays, although it is not mentioned by Mediha herself, she also seems to be controlled by an external power, overwhelmed with her anger and revenge towards Hasan and Claudia and commits the act of slaughtering her own children. However, contrary to Zehra who kills herself together with her children, Mediha

chooses to live and bear the pain and carry the burden of her deed all through her life just as Medea does.

## CONCLUSION

For centuries Euripides's *Medea*, especially with its striking ending, has been a source of inspiration for numerous works including the two modern Turkish plays *Kurban* by Güngör Dilmen and *Mediha* by Yüksel Pazarkaya. Although there are several similarities among these three works, this study particularly dwells on the idea of ambivalent mother figure based on Jungian mother archetype with its contradictory nature both being a loving and devouring mother at the same time. Though these three plays end similarly with the death of the children at the hands of their own mothers, and the major motive behind the act of killing children seems to be revenge, there are still other motives -depending on different social conditions and cultures- that push these women to this end. While Euripides's *Medea* is observed to be a stronger character than Zehra and *Mediha*, coming from a royal lineage and having magical powers, she is mostly drawn as an ordinary mother and wife, only at times her outstanding features are emphasized. However, we know from her past deeds, especially the fact that she killed her own brother, that she has a wild nature which already from the beginning of the play gives us a clue about what will happen in the end. We learn that she is madly in love with Jason, and now being betrayed by him, her rage is almost equivalent. The only thing that she concentrates on is to take revenge from Jason and others, the princess and her father, King Creon. Her feeling of revenge intensified with the idea of being exiled from Corinth without her children is mainly what pushes her towards the act of killing although she loves her children very much and experiences moments of inner conflict about killing or not killing them. Apart from that she does not want to leave her children at the hands and mercy of her enemies after killing the others and leaving the country. That is why she kills them with her own hands in the end and even takes the dead bodies with herself.

Contrary to *Medea*, Zehra's ambivalent nature as a mother is not presented overtly. Zehra seems to be a calm, silent and submissive mother and wife. However, the playwright uses the women of the village, acting as chorus at times, as a mouthpiece commenting on and giving hints about the dark side of Zehra's personality. Also, the dark cave-like room in which she mostly spends time gives the reader an

idea about her ambivalent nature along with her affectionate behaviors towards her children. However, just like Medea she is betrayed by her husband Mahmut whom she loves so much. Here comes the theme of second wife as a part of Anatolian customs culturally. The idea of living with another woman in the same house which becomes even worse when she thinks that her children will be taken from her, and she will be sent to the city on the pretext of her deteriorating health, cause her feel very helpless and kill her children in the end. However, despite having the feeling of revenge and jealousy, her struggle is mostly against the customs that allow man to marry with more than one woman. And one of the motives that play a significant role in the act of her killing the children with her own hands is her unwillingness to let her children live and grow up in such a bad World. And her ambivalent nature is maintained almost until the end of the play where unlike Medea, she kills herself together with her children signaling the fact that she loves her children so much so that she won't be able to continue living without them and bear the pain of their death at her own hands. This is both a sign of her weakness and sacrifice which distinguishes Zehra from Euripides's Medea.

Mediha's internal conflict and her ambivalent nature appear to be more similar to Medea's than Zehra's. Although she bears affinities with Zehra with respect to her weak personality and being an ordinary woman grown up in a village, her story goes almost parallel to Medea's story. However, with some of its unnatural parts that do not seem to fit in the plot, Pazarkaya's story does not seem to be as strong and successful as Euripides's story. There is again the recurrence of the theme of revenge to some extent. But what causes Mediha to kill her own children is mainly her helplessness and alienation in a foreign country. The feeling of jealousy decreases as she realizes that she is nothing to her husband Hasan any longer. And she even consents to leave the country with her children and to go back to her hometown. But the idea that Hasan will send her to her country without her children drives her crazy, and the fact that she cannot go back to her family house due to her past deeds like Medea and also for fear of blood feud as a part of the customs of those times, increases her distress. And Hasan's insistence to take children from her pushes her to the act of killing her children. Because, she neither wants to leave her children and nor accepts to see them to be looked after by another woman. Understanding that there is no way out, she ends up killing her

children, however surviving herself after them and choosing to bear the burden of what she did, very similar to Medea.

To encapsulate, despite the fact that Güngör Dilmen's main character Zehra and Yüksel Pazarkaya's protagonist Mediha bear affinities with Euripides's Medea in relation to the theme of betrayal of the wife by the husband and the theme of revenge, and the idea of maternal ambivalence based on Jung's mother archetype; the motives lying beneath each woman's act of killing their own children show differences depending on different social conditions each play was written in and their different cultural backgrounds.

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