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„Ben Power's *Medea* and Toni Morrison's and Rokia Traoré's *Desdemona* as Transcultural Adaptations"

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Table of Contents

0. Note on Adapters and Considered Performances

Both adaptations have been adapted to the stage more than once. Given this circumstance, establishing which stagings are considered in the analysis avoids misunderstandings and adds to its precision.

There is each one staging with which the respective adapations are primarily associated. Power's *Medea* premiered at the National Theatre in London in 2014 and was later adapted to the stage in Germany. However, the print text of his version refers to the premiere, lists its cast, and exhibits a photograph of this staging on the cover. *Desdemona*'s print cover also shows a photograph of a specific staging. In this case, it is not the premiere, but the staging in Nanterre. In academic sources and non-academic journals, these are the stagings predominantly referred to in combination with the print text. As a screening of these performances was not possible for the author of this thesis, the photographic information which is already apparent from the print covers suggests a consideration of these stagings as opposed to others.

While the theatrical information is limited, the photographic material provides visual information that is sufficient for the analysis of certain aspects. Additional facts and observations from reviews and academic articles support the evaluation of theatrical aspects. These aspects often intensify aspects of the literary texts or provide insights into passages only producing significant meaning in combination with performance aspects. The consideration of performances also establishes a greater connection between the two literary texts in various regards. Despite limited accessibility, it is, thus, of interest to examine both medial forms.

Another issue is the multitude of adapters whenever drama is adapted to the stage. Power's *Medea* and Morrison's and Traoré's *Desdemona* have not been directed by the literary texts' authors. Given the difficulty of ascribing the work of a performance to a director only, the respective staff that produced the performance analyzed is not mentioned by name. This procedure shall not neglect those who are involved in the process of creating. Rather, it aims at avoiding confusion and deficiencies.

Regarding the shared authorship of *Desdemona*, Morrison will be mentioned as the author of the literary text, while Traoré will be mentioned as the author of the lyrics in the play. This is in accordance with Peter Sellar's explanation of the authorship (11).

[1] all translations are the author's

1. Introduction

Medea (2014) by Ben Power and *Desdemona* (2011) by Toni Morrison and Rokia Traoré are contemporary rewritings of female figures from classical plays. The former is an adaptation of Euripides' antique Greek tragedy *Medea* (431 BC); the latter is based on William Shakespeare's *Othello* (1622). While Shakespeare' and Euripides' plays come from culturally different circumstances, the literary adaptations were published in the 21st century. The adaptations' literary texts and performances exhibit contemporary elements, which marks them as transcultural adaptations. This new cultural context has contrasting ramifications for the two plays.

A comparison between Shakespeare's Desdemona and Euripides' Medea reveals similarities. Desdemona enters a marriage which is regarded as scandalous; Medea's and Jason's marriage has been described as illegitimate. Jason commits adultery, while Othello is urged to believe that Desdemona did the same. Othello's revenge is murdering his wife, while Medea revenges Jason's abandonment with infanticide. These parallels in themes and story highlight societal disadvantages experienced by the characters: Euripides depicts the power relations in ancient Greek by emphasizing Medea's double disadvantage as a woman and a stranger, while *Othello* silences Desdemona and Barbary and relates the black-skinned Othello to stereotypes.

Gender, class, and xenophobia as reasons for marginalizing have been discussed widely regarding Shakespeare's drama and Euripides' to answer the question whether the plays merely reiterate their society's structures, or whether they deconstruct these issues. It is crucial for analyzing the adaptations to evaluate the meaning of the adapted texts within their cultural environments. Power's and the NT *Medea* adapt a figure that is uncommonly progressive for its time. Euripides' *Medea* gives „the most famous feminist statement in ancient literature" (Morwood 171). He daringly created a woman who revenges discriminations against women and strangers, although it depicted an unsolicited norm in ancient Greek, where it appeared in (Morwood xvi).

A 21st century adaptation raises expectations towards adapting a character so revolutionary. The societal issues addressed by Power's *Medea* resonate with today's issues, but the play loses ist progressivity if the story is not adjusted to an environment in which emancipation is gradually accepted. The case is similarly intricate with *Othello*. The play's stereotypical depictions of lower class, females, and black characters invite rewritings which decolonize the

[1] all translations are the author's

play, but an uncritical depiction of the structures in *Othello* would promote outdated stereotypes. The adaptation of such narratives of marginalization entails three major outcomes: humanization, legitimization, and racialization.

Humanization means the loss of dehumanizing characteristics of Medea and Desdemona. The latter is no longer a perfect reflection of female ideals. Morrison assigns to her a complex character by adding weaknesses to her. As a result, Desdemona appears normalized and less objectified. Morrison does not create a Desdemona contrasting *Othello*'s; she creates a Desdemona who develops her complexity. On the contrary, Euripides' complex Medea becomes a simple character. She loses her power as a partly divine character and is similarly normalized. As the play no longer resembles the cultural discriminations present in Euripides' play, Medea's humanization does not make her more accessible. The rewriting reduces her actions to an act of madness. She still revenges her husband's actions, but her murders can no longer be read as a revolutionary act that aims at reversing the injustice towards strangers and women.

Secondly, Desdemona and Medea are legitimized. In *Desdemona*, this transformation addresses the powerful environment which contrasts her weaknesses. She becomes significant in the adaptation, and the imprints of archaic standards are recognizable. This contributes to the imperfect Desdemona and enables a critical approach towards status issues. Medea's legitimization transforms of her illegitimate marriage in Euripides' play. The production reveals that Medea is less ostracized as a woman who is established in her society. The approach to marriage, beauty, and other issues, is not progressive – it creates a domestic, stereotypical depiction of a mother.

The implications of racialization diverges in both adaptations, too. Biological differences are not highlighted in Euripides' drama. The performance of Power's *Medea*, however, includes several roles realized by black figures. Combined with religion, music contributes to the play's racialization as it evokes derogative stereotypes of people of color. While *Desdemona*'s depiction of black characters and their history appears clichéd at first, Morrison and Traoré combine traditional aspects of Africa with contemporary African music. This fusion re-racializes the play by ascribing these tropes to the character's blackness. *Desdemona* manages to paint a decolonized, authentic contemporary image which allows previously silenced characters to raise their voices.

Humanization, legitimization, and racialization are terms describing how Shakespeare's play and Euripides' are transculturated. They each illustrate that mere cultural updating does

[1] all translations are the author's

not automatically reflect the cultural progress of contemporary times. It depends not only upon the narratives portrayed by adaptations whether archaic power structures are replicated or deconstructed. It is crucial how these narratives are portrayed.

2. Theoretical Framework

At its basis, the analysis of Morrison's and Traoré's *Desdemona* and Power's *Medea* is a comparison of adaptive transformations. As the focus is on cultural transposition, the intertextual relation to the respective source text and its narratives is central. A theory of adaptation that deals with cultural markers enables a determination of the adapted text's cultural indices.

An adaptation theory which considers forms of cultural transformations only works when the medium is considered. By stating that "the medium is the message", Marshall McLuhan has argued that meaning is always produced through the respective medium (15). Regarding drama, the message cannot be analyzed without considering medium-specific advantages, boundaries, and other aspects shaping its dimensionality. Considering literary and theatrical elements, a theory of literary drama as well as a theory of theatrical signs is needed. Here, too, one is concerned with a comparison of adaptation, namely from literary text to theatrical performance. The specificities of medial differences propose an evaluation of stage-realized aspects and literary equivalents or hints. Medial forms also draw connections to what is described as transcultural adaptation.

This theoretical basis facilitates the use of cultural theories to analyze distinct narratives depicted in the dramas. It follows that such markers inherently assume that societal norms are not determined by nature but constructed by the respective society. Adaptation, genre, and intermediality theories are indicative of this circumstance.

Adaptation Theory

A comparison of works proposes that there is at least one aspect in the respective works which can be explored in relation to each other. An evaluation of these similarities or differences can be conducted without focusing on their status as adaptations. However, as the most striking similarity is the transformation of the main figures, it becomes relevant to see how Desdemona

[1] all translations are the author's

and Medea were displayed differently in the adapted texts. Therefore, the analysis of adaptation is a comparison between source text(s) and adaptation. In *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Linda Hutcheon argues that adaptations should be considered as works in their own right rather than as copies of the adapted work (xii). Even though this viewpoint is vital for a theoretical analysis, it does not stand against a comparison but rather questions the act of judging which is better: adapted text or adaptation. Because the main argument of this paper turns towards the updated or backdated aspects, the analysis focuses on various aspects of *Othello* and Euripides' *Medea* and how these have been transformed.

An analysis of *Desdemona* and Power's *Medea* as adaptations requires a definition of what an adaptation is. Hutcheon defines it in the following way:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work (8)

Hutcheon's theory is not only suitable because it applies to both dramas. The view of adaptations as interpretations is particularly promising for the comparison because many aspects from the source texts reoccur in a way that reflects a specific interpretation of them. This relevance of interpretation is predominantly true for cultural elements appearing in reinterpreted form.

As a whole, an adaptation is in itself a reinterpretation, and so are all its elements. Hutcheon agrees with this perception as she states that "an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative" (9). Even with individual elements reappearing without any changes – such as a passage of literary text which maintained in another literary text – the adaptation is still an appropriation: The cultural contexts these two works appear in are already different. Hence, the same element will create different meanings and will be interpreted differently: "Context conditions meaning" (145), as Hutcheon states concisely.

What renders her statement as problematic (and as true, at the same time) is the vagueness of the term culture. Hutcheon refers to this issue as "The Vastness of Context", meaning that, "even without any temporal updating or any alterations to national or cultural setting, it can take very little time for context to change how a story is received" (142). This fact, in turn, influences what is perceived as a "transculturation" (Hutcheon 146), a process of adaptation focusing first and foremost on the "*Where*" (Hutcheon 145). Using the term "Transcultural Adaptation" (145), Hutcheon seemingly addresses only transformations which exhibit a consistent, definite set of cultural markers and can, thus, be ascribed to a cultural context

[1] all translations are the author's

unambiguously. For instance, she lists “Americanizations” (147) or “Japanese film adaptation” (145) as examples of “cultural transposition” (145). However, she then broadens the understanding of transculturating as she writes that, “Even within a single culture, the changes can be so great that they can in fact be considered transcultural” (147). She remarks that the “*when*” is a determining factor, too (Hutcheon 145). It follows that defining what is distinct for a specific time and place, what is distinctive of a specific culture, could be problematic. It seems vital that some degree of cultural distance is created between adapted text and adaptation. Hutcheon’s examples have in common that the source work is adapted to different cultural circumstances. She highlights that the source works, too, emerged in clearly defined contexts (145). This assertion is universally applicable to adaptations, as she implies that cultural context always influences to some degree.

The Vastness of Context as well as culture exacerbate the process of argumentation. How can specific cultures become evident through texts? Cultural markers certainly indicate them and often produce meaning through the adaptation’s medium. Hutcheon indirectly refers to the concept of narratives as she evaluates transculturations within the same society (142): it means that the narratives represented by the adaptation deviate. The analysis of narratives exhibited by the dramas requires a product approach – contrary to focusing on “Adaptation as Process” (Hutcheon 18), authorial intentions or motivations are not considered. The product view is particularly suitable when analyzing transculturations, because the meaning produced is not reduced to personal preferences or subjected to justifications. This approach enables a theoretical evaluation of societies and their norms without the process interfering as an argumentative aspect.

Euripides’ *Medea* and Shakespeare’s *Othello* have very specific historical background, and they represent corresponding societal structures. This basis suggests a transcultural reading of the adaptations, which are also associated with specific contexts. The reappearance of Medea and Desdemona in the 21st century is an instant reference to the historical circumstances giving rise to their figures. These circumstances are still noticeable. The diversity of dominant cultures is referenced by the NT *Medea* and by *Desdemona*. Multiculturalism, too, is also an aspect indicative of place and time, as “Adapting from one culture to another” (Hutcheon 145) does not presuppose a total elimination of the adapted text’s narratives. Both the new *Medea* and *Desdemona* mix cultural elements from the source texts with contemporary elements. This mixture rewrites the meanings of Shakespeare’s drama and Euripides’ by reiterating their stories in new cultural environments. Applying Hutcheon’s definition, they are

[1] all translations are the author’s

transculturations: they explicitly signal an updated context through various elements in literary text and/or performance.

As a specific form of transculturation, Hutcheon discusses "Indigenization" (148). The difference between other transcultural transformations is the dominance of the adapted culture over the new one: “In political discourse, indigenization is used within a national setting to refer to the forming of a national discourse different from the dominant […]” (Hutcheon 150). Hutcheon also sees indigenization as a way of highlighting what was “silenced” in the adapted work (149). Hutcheon examines indigenization in detail as she formulates “three dichotomous types: (1) historicizing/dehistoricizing, (2) racializing/deracializing, and (3) embodying/disembodying” (158). The first kind means a retelling of a story in a different historical context, such as a piece of work clearly reflecting the societal conventions of a specific era (159). By identifying signals of such conventions, a connection is established. This connection shows whether the adaptation historicizes the source text or whether the adapted work is freed from its historical relations, hence involves dehistoricizing.

The second type is concerned with specific identifications of racialized aspects in a work. Hutcheon refers to characters whose racial background is transformed, music which is representative of a certain group of people, or other distinct conventions. Hutcheon mentioning the presence of stereotypes as a marker of racializing/deracializing the adapted work already shows how unclear the boundaries between the types are. An adaptation reflecting stereotypes associated with a particular epoch also involves historicizing, and most likely involves the third dichotomy Hutcheon lists.

Embodying/disembodying means a process of altering a character’s personality. It concerns mostly straightforward characteristics. Examples listed are “exoticism”, “sexual liberation” or a distinct “ethnicity” (165-165). The second example is particularly reminiscent of popular stereotypes concerning women. This last dichotomy is a useful tool to theorize the adaptation of individual characters. All of them deal with cultural norms at a particular time and place: a woman embodying exoticism includes an evaluation of the historical perception of such images.

In her book, Hutcheon agrees with this evaluation at least to some extent, as the author often uses the terms “transculturation”, “indigenization” interchangeably. It makes sense to describe the alteration of cultural context with one term. Cultural adaptation is a simple term which captures the vastness of context. However, it also indicates which topics it tackles. For an in-depth examination of cultural adaptations, the three dichotomies help categorizing how the cultural changes are manifested.

[1] all translations are the author’s

Although the distinctions between the dichotomies are clear, a certain degree of overlap is not avoidable. Combining all three to analyze how source texts are transformed, noting this interrelation and mutual influence provides further inside into cultural contexts signalled. As Hutcheon's dichotomies do not directly reflect social categories of disadvantage, her theory certainly addresses stereotypical images and structures of cultural structures. These structures could be described by more than one dichotomy. For example, the racialized image of Othello is one he embodies; Desdemona embodies the ideal woman and the adaptation of this embodying includes historicization. This overlap is also present when evaluating the functions of such processes and their impact on the plays. The adaptation's humanizations, legitimizations and racializations influence each other, but also complement each other and enable a thorough evaluation of the message produced by through overall transculturation.

The layers of difference at work here essentially reflect intersectionality debates. Kimberle Crenshaw defines this approach as a cultural theory proposing that "human differences" or so-called social categories cannot be seen "in simplistic opposition to each other" but as differences working in combination (1989). Thus, intersectional feminists correctly state that black women, for example, are discriminated against in entirely different ways as white women are (Lorde 284). Issues of gender, status, and biological differences still determine marginalization in today's cultures. *Desdemona* is a transculturation directly reflecting on the relevance of these issues. Power's *Medea* and the NT performance, too, emphasize these three categories as they transculturate *Medea*. The functions of disembodying, historicizing/dehistoricizing, and racialization in the adaptations, thus, all involve these differences.

Although Hutcheon uses this terminology to describe processes of indigenization, they also describe transformations that point to dominant discourses. A work can be re-historicized to a discourse that reflects a dominant culture, and racializations can, of course, reiterate or create marginalizing elements. This analysis promotes the use of Hutcheon's dichotomies as processes that describe transculturation, not as processes immediately marking adaptations as indigenizations. Despite their complementary character, the dichotomies can be accurately used to describe results of transculturating. Humanization, Legitimization and Racialization are the results of the three dichotomous processes which transposition *Othello* and *Medea* into the 21st century. As they are regarded as transculturating dichotomies, their use is specified and adjusted to the respective transformations.

[1] all translations are the author's

Drama

When theorizing adaptation, the genre drama is a complex case. Whenever the term drama is used, it remains unclear whether performance, print text, or a combination of both is meant. Manfred Pfister's definition of drama as a "plurimedial form of representation" (24) precisely explains why adaptation theory is so important for the analysis of Power's *Medea* and *Desdemona*. Drama does not consist of one form of text, neither is it concerned with only one medium – it exists in two different sign systems.

Pfister understands the dramatic text as not only a "literary" but also as a "stage-realized text" (24). It follows that using the term text in relation to drama is ambiguous. Erika Fischer-Lichte, who focuses on the performance as a theatrical text in the third volume of *Semiotics of the Theatre* (1983), makes the same distinction between two kinds of dramatic texts. She differentiates between the "literary text of the drama" and "the theatrical text of the performance" (34). This distinction manifests drama as a form in which adaptation is implicit. An exception would be the so-called "closet drama", a "collective term for dramas which are primarily thought as reading material and not for performance" (Beck et. al 257). This is not the case for *Desdemona* and Power's *Medea*.

For an analysis of adaptation, it is, in fact, relevant which is the adapted text and which is the adaptation. Hutcheon mentions that a transformation from print to stage is the most common direction of adaptation (36). Fischer-Lichte not only agrees with this statement, but states that "the theatrical text is regarded as the performance of the literary text" (34). However, she refrains from considering this adaptation only as a "transmission of the literary text in another medium" (34). Instead, she evaluates in how far it is a "process of translation" – "from one sign system into another sign system" (34). At this point, Fischer-Lichte clarifies that the plurality of drama lies not only in the intertextual relationship between literary and theatrical text, but also in its intermediality.

Hutcheon likewise debates both aspects of plurality – intertextuality and intermediality. Because adaptations always exhibit characteristics of the adapted text, adaptation theory overlaps with a theory of intertextuality. It must be noted that a broad understanding of the term text, as discussed by Irina O. Rajewsky (52), is meant. She writes that the "text concept" determine "the respective understanding of intertextuality and, as a result, of intermediality" (52). Further clarifying the connection between adaptation theory and intertextuality, Hutcheon

[1] all translations are the author's

states that, "seen from the perspective of its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality" (8). This is a view reflected in the author's third definition of what is regarded an adaptation.

Hutcheon highlights not only the thematical connection between adapted work and adaptation, but also the medial changes – what Fischer-Lichte calls a "transformation" from one medial form to the other (34). Introducing her theory of intermediality, Hutcheon calls this transformation an adaptation "which involves a change of medium" and proposes three different "Modes of Engagement" (Hutcheon 22). She divides between the "telling", the "showing" as well as the "participatory" mode (22); the first one meaning print mediums, the second one visual media and the latter includes engaging ones such as video games (22-23).

By using this categorization, Hutcheon successfully introduces the significance of medial changes in adaptation. Still, it is insufficient to merely determine the mode of a work when the medial form is relevant in analysis. The analysis of meaning produced is always dependent on its medial form. The telling mode and the showing mode create meaning differently. Hutcheon concludes that

> […] each mode, like each medium, has its own specificity, if not its own essence. In other words, no one mode is inherently good at doing one thing and not another; but each has at its disposal different means of expression – media and genres – and so can aim at and achieve certain things better than others. (24)

Even beyond drama's medial plurality, which is concerned with the telling and the showing mode, there are complex cases in dramatic performances. Power's *Medea* and *Desdemona* both include other media on stage. These are used as props or stage design and include newer technological devices, such as smartphones, video games, or television. It is necessary to evaluate the relation between modes so that they can be analyzed. Irina O. Rajewsky's *Intermediality* (2002) serves as a basis for this evaluation since it provides a detailed account of the various forms of medial relations – even when a medium is only mentioned. Highlighting this difference in mode is relevant for drama because it explains how significant its plurimediality is – considering both print text and performance, they must be analyzed in regard to their medial form.

Moving beyond modes, each individual medium creates meaning through a sign system. These systems consist of different codes. While performances in general consist of "linguistic-acoustic and visual codes" (Pfister 23-25), a precise theory for the analysis of theatrical signs must be applied. Fischer-Lichte's volume 3 of *Semiotics of the Theatre* (1983) is used to analyze performance aspects in the plays.

Classification

After this examination of an adaptation theory, the genre drama, and the intertextual and intermedial relations between these two, applying these theories confirms *Desdemona* and *Medea* as transcultural adaptations. Otherwise, they are considerable different in their form: they diverge in relation to the genre drama and its conventions. A theoretical classification shows how they diverge before analyzing them as works with transformed cultural meaning.

Applying Hutcheon's definition, both *Desdemona* and Power's *Medea* are adaptations. Identifying the latter as an adaptation is simple, but it is rather difficult in Morrison's play as it is a unique case in several regards. *Desdemona* is involves experimental aspects, unlike its conventional Shakespearean basis. The performance has been "Billed as a combined concert and theatrical experience" (Carney 1), a label which shows that it is not a play in its traditional sense. Regarding drama, *Desdemona* further distinguishes itself from conventions as it is not subdivided into acts. The printed work consists of 10 chapters. Interestingly, Power's *Medea* has neither chapters or acts in the print medium, but is one running literary text.

While *Desdemona* is based on the story of *Othello*, the adaptation does not mirror the plot of the adapted text but rather proceeds it. Thus, it could be argued that *Desdemona* functions as a sequel. Jo E. Carney also notices these parallels as she states that it "is both prequel and sequel to Shakespeare's play" (2), meaning that the characters give the reader/audience information about their lives before *Othello*. Given its plot and the role of *Othello*'s story, Carney's classification does make sense. Hutcheon differentiates between prequels/sequels and adaptations (9), although the two have much in common – like an adaptation, a sequel is an explicit intertextual engagement with the prior work. The major difference is that adaptation means "wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways" (Hutcheon 9). Even though the plot is not adapted, many of *Othello*'s aspects reoccur in a transformed manner in *Desdemona*. As a result, not all the Shakespearean play's elements are copied, but rather reoccur in newly interpreted ways. This conclusion is enough reason to say that *Desdemon*a is "telling the same story from a different point of view" (Hutcheon 8), which is an adequate premise to regard a work as an adaptation. While Carney clearly highlights the complexity of Morrison and Traoré's work, she calls *Desdemona* a "radical rereading of *Othello* as it pushes against aesthetic, generic, and ideological boundaries" (1) – a statement which identifies it as an adaptation, after all.

Despite *Desdemona*'s unique format, the textual and medial relation to the Shakespearean play is very clear. It is obvious that Power's *Medea* is an adaptation, even though the print version of the play uses ambiguous terms to classify itself. The print cover states "in a version by Ben Power", while Power is also called the "translator" in online sources [1] – yet translation might also refer to the understanding as transforming a text without changing its individual language. This understanding is suitable because his *Medea* is in no way a word-to-word translation but involves transformation of elements in Euripides's play. It is rather a version, and, thus, an adaptation.

The fact that it states to be a version of Euripides' *Medea* simplifies the classification as a drama and an adaptation. But the medial relationship is more complicated than in the previous case. The character Medea emanates from the myths revolving around her, and these are now influenced by Euripides' play. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "myth" in this sense as "A traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon" (1a). It does not refer to a source such as a specific publication which manifests this myth. Euripides' play adjusted this material, so any story- or plot-based changes made by Power could lead to assumptions about intermedial relations to the myth itself.

Medea's plural textual relation to Euripides' play and the Medea mythology already suggests a considerable divergence of cultural aspects. As a transculturation, the question remains whether Euripides' narratives or other mythological narratives are discernible in Power's text. However, as both sources are of ancient Greek descent, such narratives might overlap. The author suggests that he adapts Euripides' play only in that he labels *Medea* as a new translation, although this denotation is insufficient. While the sequence of events and dialogues is kept the same, expressions and wordings might mirror the exact content, but in fact suggest a completely new reading and numerous possible interpretations. Power's second labelling as a "new version" (2014) underlines this view, because virtually all aspects of the play can be interpreted in other ways under consideration of contemporary circumstances. Still, the text is held considerably close to its original.

3. Humanization

One major transformation in Power's *Medea* and *Desdemona* is the emphasis on a humane

rewriting of the two main characters. In the adapted texts, both are associated with dehumanization. In Shakespeare' drama, Desdemona embodies the female ideal of its time. It is a characterization which silences her, whereas Euripides' Medea fights such virtues enforced upon women. Medea's rebellion is often connected to her exceptional position as a partly divine, partly human character, who has been interpreted as a godly missionary demanding justice (Luschnig 65). Morrison's *Desdemona* humanizes the main character as she frees her of angelic perfection, while Power's adaptation humanizes Medea in the sense that she becomes a normalized woman as she loses superhuman characteristics.

The term humanization as applied here results from a reversal of "dehumanization", the act of "denying humanness to others" (Volpato and Andrighetto 31). Chiara Volpato and Luca Andrighetto provide a historical explanation of the term. Dehumanization combines various different forms of discrimination that all function as an "essential ingredient in the perpetration of intergroup violence and atrocities" (31). In Shakespeare's drama and Euripides', "animalization", "demonization" and "objectification" (Volpato and Andrighetto 31-32) occur in connection to the adaptations' main characters. Some categories understood as societal disadvantages are more effected by these forms than others. Objectification is a form which has and continues to be used against women and, thus, "has been widely analyzed by feminist thinking" (Volpato and Andrighetto 31).

Demonization, too, is a form associated with Medea. This example shows that forms of dehumanization interrelate and influence each other. The theme of the dehumanized Medea is analyzed extensively by James Morwood (2009), showing that animalization and demonization are forms associated with her physical brutality. The following passages reflect these forms in the use of a "simile", a "form of imagery" (Pfister 143):

> NURSE [sings]. Cruel woman, you must be stone
> or iron* - for you will kill your children,
> the fruit your womb bore
> bringing their doom on them with your own hand. […] (34)
> NURSE. […]
> Yet she darts on her servants
> The wild glance of a lioness with young* […] (6)

Morwood identifies symbols of "dehumanization" as well as "demonization" (177). Indeed, scholars have not only described Medea as inhuman. Because Medea's reasons for the infanticide are shocking and incomprehensible, she has been regarded as psychologically ill; a madwoman (Morwood xvi). In Morwood's words, she is "no longer a woman but a demon" (177). Looking closer, everything about her character is as ambivalent as a dichotomy.

Depending on interpretation, she is either the betrayer or the betrayed, the life-giver or life-taker, the divine or the humane, the strong or the weak, feminine or masculine, to name a few. In each regard, Medea might as well be both. Her ambiguous character makes it impossible to either agree or disagree with her. Many scholars reflect this view, such as Helene Foley. She even writes that "no philological argument can suppress the ambiguities in present language" (72) and focuses on the masculine vs. feminine aspects of her character (62). Of course, cultural dimensions again rise in importance.

Shakespeare's Desdemona is best described as an ideal woman. Sara M. Deats, analyzing the female roles in *Othello*, describes Desdemona as "an individual woman in a very unconditional early modern marriage" (241). Of course, this is true regarding her marriage to Othello, since interracial relationships have a long history as a societal taboo (Hooks 123). Desdemona's actions throughout the play allow for various different interpretations. As Deats puts it, this character "has sparkled considerable controversy" (241). Desdemona's behaviour might be regarded as progressive in some regards. For example, she expresses her unhappiness with Othello's rage (Deats 233), which is perceived as daring in this cultural context. Nevertheless, Desdemona continues to seek his love and stays by his side until the very end of play – she is eventually "defenceless" against his "cruelty" (233), as Deats accurately describes the complexity of the situation. Deats also displays how she "moves from articulateness to silence", which is the opposite of Emilia's development (249).

Joan O. Holmer evaluates the criticism of Desdemona's negative development towards the end of the play – Desdemona becomes more and more silent in *Othello* (157). She claims that Desdemona "may well deserve a medal of honor for courage under fire on the moral battlefield", emphasizing that her courage should be understood in a Christian sense (157). Arguing with religious morals, Desdemona might be regarded as strong. However, it is clear that she embodies the ideal woman, especially in comparison to Emilia's character. Comparing Euripides' and Shakespeare's plays, Desdemona embodies a precise historical image of a woman, which reflects objectification.

These embodyings of Desdemona and Medea in the adapted texts are reversed in the adaptations. Medea loses her complexity as she is no longer divine; Desdemona becomes complex as she is disembodied from the image of perfection. As a result, Desdemona is a more realistic portrayal of a woman, while Medea's simplicity evokes the image of a psychologically troubled woman.

Embodying/Disembodying

As Chiara Volpato and Luca Andrighetto affirm, animalizing, demonizing, and objectifying dehumanizations are always dependent on "social context" (31). Thus, types of dehumanizations are distinct for specific cultures, which relates the role of humanization to the plays as transculturations. Desdemona embodying the same ideal in a 21st century adaptation would not reflect contemporary expectations of depictions of women. Contrastingly, by changing the play's environment, Euripides' *Medea* could well be considered a progressive play if she were still as complex, and if she were still stuck as a stranger in a similar society. It follows embodied aspects are always context-dependent.

The transformation of dehumanizing aspects impacts the characters' dimensionality. Pfister distinguishes between "one-dimensional" and "multi-dimensional" figures (243-244). As Medea becomes less complex, her "multifacetedness" (Pfister 244) is diminished, while Desdemona becomes a "multi-dimensional" (Pfister 244) character. Medea is transformed into a „one-dimensional" figure who is "defined by a small amount of characteristics" (Pfister 243). In contrast, multidimensional figures are described by Pfister as follows:

> […] a multidimensionally conceptualized figure is defined by a more complex set of characteristics, which are on the most different levels and, for example, can concern their biographical background, their mental disposition, their interpersonal behaviour towards different figures, their reactions to various situations and their ideological orientation. (244)

Transculturating includes such transformations from one-dimensionality to multidimensionality or vice versa. In *Desdemona*, the main character no longer embodies the image of the Shakespearean "ideal woman" (Sellars 9), which is achieved through various transformed aspects. In the performance and the literary text, many instances can be found which confirm Sellars' interpretation that *Desdemona* gives silenced characters a voice (9). Desdemona now appears to be ambiguous. She seems aware and critical, although she is not quite independent. *Desdemona* is an embodying of a more emancipated woman who develops throughout the play and is disembodied from her Shakespearean ideal.

Power's *Medea*, however, loses her complexity. Medea's actions, as she is freed from her divine characteristics and her verbal exceptionality, is now reduced to a woman gone mad. The contemporary elements make it impossible to view her actions as rational or necessary for the women in her society. This result is only emphasized by theatrical aspects, which normalize her environment through props, costume and hairstyle. In both adaptations, humanization also

tackles the vulnerability, accessibility, and reality of the characters transculturated: Desdemona is no longer perfect, and Medea no longer revolutionary.

Props

As a theatrical feature, props reveal information about characters and cultural context. One of the 21st century props which place *Medea* into contemporary times are electronic devices, plastic pet toys and other everyday objects. *Desdemona* contrasts the use of props in Power's play, as almost no props are used (fig. 1). The inclusion or absence of props provides significant insights regarding the updating in *Medea* and *Desdemona*, which influences the characters' complexity. The prop associated with Desdemona's perfection is lacking; Power's play emphasizes ordinariness by adding contemporary items of everyday life as props.

As props signal to the audience the time and location of the play, they define the relationship between adapted text and adaptation to the stage. More often than not, adaptations appears in an updated cultural context – according to Hutcheon, this is a usual process of adapting: "Most often adaptations are not backdated but rather are updated to shorten the gap between works created earlier and contemporary audiences" (146). To create a link between an early, adapted work and a new audience, props signalling a 21st century context are integrated into the *Medea* adaptation. Props are "those objects […], with which the actor performs actions" (Fischer-Lichte 151). Fischer-Lichte understands props not only as signs but as objects to be interpreted as "signs of a sign", since „the meaningful object itself can be recognized as signs for specific practical and symbolic functions" (Fischer-Lichte 152). In short, props reveal specific information about the cultural context in which the work appears.

A significant example is the use of technological devices and other distinctly contemporary objects in the 2014 *Medea* production. Julie Ackroyd describes: **"**The play opens with in the domestic setting of a living room where two boys are lying on the floor in sleeping bags watching TV. They play with plastic dinosaurs and Transformers […]" (22). Denise J. Varney adds that „Two young boys lie on the floor eating crisps and playing a video game under the watchful gaze of the Nurse" (167). These props, particularly the engaging aspect of the boys playing video games, directly point to the 21st century. Their use creates an everyday atmosphere of a normal home, even more so since props inform about the "relations between the role figures" (Fischer-Lichte 152). Regarding Medea's sons, their props create a barrier between them and the others as the kids are the only characters using the TV, whereas Medea

herself has a smartphone (fig. 2). This barrier is only elucidated by the associations of smartphones in the contemporary world. As both parties engage in their own actions with the props, however, the sons appear disconnected.

Returning to the first function mentioned by Fischer-Lichte, props evoke cultural associations as theatrical signs. It is safe to say that these technological devices are strong signifiers. Including new medial forms in productions is seminal for contemporary times and cultures – in fact, such a device is a clear marker of contemporariness, according to Rajewsky (35). Rajewsky states that the "19th and 20th century" gave rise to technological devices as photography and films (35). She describes a "necessary incorporation of a historical dimension" whenever a specific medium is considered (35). Including new medial forms gives clear information about the setting and context of a story, as Hutcheon describes that

> […] stories do not, of course, ever take place in a vacuum. We engage in time and space, within a particular society and a general culture. The contexts of creation and reception are material, public, and economic as much as they are cultural, personal, and aesthetic. (27-28)

Apart from the meaning of props in the new context, the classification of this medial use is vital. Smartphones are „objects that carry a distinct symbolic meaning, which is constituted on the basis of a cultural code" (Fischer-Lichte 153), and there might be different approaches to examine the medial relationship between this object and the play. In this case, the use of an entirely different medium is an "intermedial reference" as defined by Rajewsky, means that there is a "reference to a product (= singular reference) or the semiotic system (= system reference) of a conventionally perceived as distinct medium with the own sources of the communicative medium; only the latter is materially present" (76). The video games, for example, are physically present in the production, but do not present any content as a medium to the audience. To the audience, the smartphone is also not a channel through which a message is received. As props, meaning is produced within the semiotic system of the theatre and can be described with theatrical codes. For this reason, labelling it as a system reference is an accurate approach to interpret such kinds of props. The smartphones and the video games produce meaning as a theatrical prop, in the context of the theatre, and in the showing mode.

Billington concludes his review by stating that the production displays Medea as "a recognisable human being who is alive with contradictions". As subjective as this judgement might be, it shows that the NT Medea can be clearly identified as a character who is rather humane than divine. Only making her appear more contemporary would not influence her divinity. This is exactly where the NT *Medea* intervened, namely by placing her in an everyday

world – in negative terms, a mundane world. The performance also incorporated banal everyday elements such Medea brushing her teeth (Billington 2014). The use of this prop gives information about the character, as Fischer-Lichte describes that a „prop can, thus, point to the general type and to the character of the role figure, respectively, on a subject level as well as to their social position, individual characteristics, feelings, mindset, values and their particular world view“ (153). It can be argued that this prop exposes the normality of Power's Medea and, yet again, creates a distance to her origin and the considerations of Euripides', where Medea's outrageous act has its reasons.

Considering *Desdemona*'s resetting, the lack of props in the play is not peculiar. Taking into account the central symbol in *Othello* which would be its important prop in performance, its elimination is significant. "Desdemona's handkerchief symbolizes true and honorable love", John A. Hodgson argues. Hodgson accurately analyses how the handkerchief is inextricably tied to the plot (1977). While love or loyalty are not inseparably connected to purity or perfection, they certainly are in *Othello*, where purity is a virtue contributing to the ideal Desdemona. The inexistence of the handkerchief entails a rewriting of her character altogether, as props create meaning in combination with the figure. Fischer-Lichte states that „[…] the second important sign function of the requisite is mentioned: it is connected to the role figure which uses it, and it can, in this sense, function as a sign for the role figure“ (152). Especially for a well-known play like Othello, the handkerchief is central. The relation between the handkerchief as a symbol and Desdemona, as the owner of it, is obvious and, therefore, enables a new characterization in *Desdemona*.

Through the incorporation of 21st century objects used as props, *Medea* is marked as a transculturation which supports her disembodying. In relation to the props, the complexity of her extraordinary character is diminished. The elimination of Desdemona's handkerchief supports her complexity as it frees her from the Shakespearean symbol of Desdemona's purity.

Costume

The theatrical signs involved with "the actor's appearance as a sign" are costume, hairstyle, and mask (Fischer-Lichte 94). In relation to other theatrical categories, the costume is especially indicative of a character's identity. It does not only give information about the role, but also reveals personality traits. In *Medea*'s and *Desdemona*'s productions, the main characters' costumes are a vital element of humanization. Even though Medea's costumes are complex,

and Desdemona's seems simple, they each signal the opposite: Medea appears as a normalized, one-dimensional character. Desdemona appears as an imperfect, multi-dimensional character.

As an identity marker, costume is especially relevant for performed adaptations, as famous characters are often recognized through costume. Fischer-Lichte explains its relevance as follows:

> Of all elements which constitute the outer appearance of an actor, the costume is, undoubtedly, the most important component. […] Normally, the audience's first identification of the role figure is also based on the costume […]. In this constellation, costume and role are related to each other in a very special way. (120)

Apart from the costume as the most straightforward indicator of a character's personality, it underlines other elements in a play because it signifies cultural environments. The relation between clothing and context is described by Fischer-Lichte, who denotes a "special relation between clothing and social role", since "all clothes are originally theatrical costumes" (Fischer-Lichte 120). Clothes indicate specific events or actions that are practically always dependent on cultural conventions. Consequently, costume as a theatrical code encompasses numerous meanings. By engaging with cultures, it can signal "age and gender", "nationality and regional belonging", "job", "social class", or even a specific historical type of character, to name a few (Fischer-Lichte 124-127). The latter is an aspect essentially concerned with the embodying/disembodying dichotomy, which discusses clear categorizations of characters. All these aspects help evaluate what Desdemona and Medea embody as adapted characters.

Like all other women on stage, Desdemona wears a white dress (fig. 1). This choice suits the setting of the play as it highlights the sameness among all characters in the afterlife. But the dress also creates meaning in relation to the natural appearance of the other characters. In Shakespeare, the "fairness" of Othello's wife is continuously elucidated, as the following excerpt shows:

> OTHELLO. […] And till she come, as truly as to heaven
> I do confess the vices of my blood,
> So justly to your grave ears I'll present
> How did I thrive in this fair lady's love
> And she in mine. (1.3.123-127)

On the first sight, the main character's appearance in *Desdemona* could not reflect this label more. Hair, skin, and dress are of light color. Besides material and form, color is another category of the costume carrying meaning (Fischer-Lichte 122). Fig. 1 shows Desdemona as the only white character wearing a costume that creates a stark contrast to the black characters'

skin. Desdemona's natural features paired with the costume are foregrounding. She appears as fully illuminated as similar color of skin and costume do not conceal her, but rather create a fully illuminated figure whose presence is even more highlighted by her difference to the others:

> Besides the functions of signs which are concerned with the creating and developing a role figure's identity, the costume can also realize general symbolic functions which are not only related to the role figure, but even more on the whole performance. With the help of similarities and contrasts in color, line or ornament, the costume can suggest specific relations between the role figures or underline the meaning of a role figure: for example, the important role figures could wear vibrant colored costumes […] (Fischer-Lichte 128-129)

However, the fact that all women wear the same costume diminishes her extraordinariness. In *Othello,* Desdemona is a character who embodies divine beauty and virtuous perfection. However, the costume is in no way extraordinary but is blank, and has no ornaments (fig. 1). She does not wear "vibrant colored costumes", neither are there other "contrasts" (Fischer-Lichte 129). The costume supports Desdemona's disembodying because she is less foregrounded and more normalized. She appears as thoroughly humanized instead of idealized.

In the performance of Power's play, Medea's costume consists of three parts. One item is a white gown (fig. 2), the second one is the same gown covered in mud and blood after the infanticides (fig. 3), the third outfit consists of pants and a sleeveless top (fig. 4). Both top and bottom in earth tones (fig. 4). While these contrasting outfits signal ambiguity and might refer to Euripides' Medea full of opposites – it is necessary to evaluate the context the costumes relate to, as well as their relation to each other. As Fischer-Lichte states, costume always creates meaning "in relation to the person's identity or the role figure, respectively" (122). Thus, if both outfits produce similar meaning, they do not confirm the complexity of Medea's character.

The dress chosen for Medea might not, on its own, create a link to ancient Greco-Roman clothing, whereas the connection to the story in Euripides' context allows for such an interpretation. It must be noted that the understanding of Greek clothing is solely based on descriptions as no authentic costumes are preserved. Thus, contemporary depictions of Greek costumes are used to signal "nationality and regional belonging" (Fischer-Lichte 123). According to these depictions, the color, length and waist of her dress are aspects similar to a Greek style. There are several interpretations based on this regional connection.

One can conclude that the costume of Medea is the mirror of her personality – there are two outfits, a feminine and a masculine one, an ancient Greek and a contemporary one. However, the plot is significant in relation to the costume. White, as a color, signals innocence and hope which is later reversed as the dress is covered in blood. Medea's many deceits are

visualized on a dress which suddenly stands for hopelessness – spots which cannot be cleaned from a dress of white color.

Regarding humanization, the most relevant aspect of Medea's costume is the second one (fig. 4). The wears brown pants and a grey tank top. "Material, color and form" as aspects of costume, stand for a specific situation, social class and allows for a temporal classification (Fischer-Lichte 122). As Fischer-Lichte states, the costume as a "situation marker" (125) gives information about the occasion. Such conventions are dependent on the cultural context: "different forms of clothing are often thought for different situations" (Fischer-Lichte 125). The second outfit confirms a mundane, everyday environment in Power's play. In the third, Medea appears as an ordinary woman in ordinary, normal clothes (fig. 4).

This conclusion is eventually confirmed by the contemporary twist of the outfit. Tank tops have not always been an appropriate clothing item for women. Moreover, this particular tank top is cut in the style of masculine tank tops which are perceived acceptable everyday wear for women. In this sense, the costume "shows the era in which the respective performance is situated in" (Fischer-Lichte 127) and can be seen as a sign of the play's transculturation: everything about Medea's third outfit confirms the resetting of the play. Catherine Love describes the performance adaptation as "reactivating the play's radical potential by updating it to the 21st century and placing it within the frame of modern documentary filmmaking" (2014). This view is relevant regarding the costumes as it refers to casuality and normal everyday environments.

Fischer-Lichte speaks of costume as an indicator for a "temporary mental state of the role figure" (127). Of course, the dress underlines Medea's actions and, thus, gives information about her character. But the outfits' meanings must be evaluated in connection to each other as well as in relation to the plot. What purpose does Medea's third costume fulfil for her new role? Through this change of costume, the first one is immediately questioned. It clearly symbolizes Medea's brutal act, but the more normal costume creates a distance to this previously established persona. The normal, everyday outfit becomes Medea's identification. As discussed, it primarily shows the updating into a contemporary context. It is this cultural specification which adds even a temporal distance. Medea's casual costume labels her brutal actions as outside of her identification and usual moral code. As a result, these actions are framed as manic: Medea's casual costume labels her brutal actions as outside of the usual moral code of her environment.

The change of costume does not only increase the relevance of the second one. It also frees Medea from her power that is manifested the origin of her character. Whenever one actor/actress inhabits more than one role, a change in costume is necessary to distinguish between the roles. Fischer-Lichte connects the change of costume to cultural norms as she writes that inhabiting only one role can "be established by a single costume; neither the commedia dell'arte's nor the heroes of Greek tragedy changed their costumes. Their respective costume, which they wore during the whole progress of the performance, was a statement and proof of their role's identity" (122).

Medea's three costumes depict two different phases. The first costume seems extravagant and is the one she wears when she kills the children. This costume ascribes to her a sense of extraordinariness that is reminiscent of Greek dresses. However, these references are immediately deleted by the change of costume. She reappears in the third costume as a normalized woman, framing her former identification as invalid. Because the adaptation transforms her to a rather ordinary character, her actions cannot signal the divine power Euripides' Medea embodies. Her costume confirms her one-dimensional character. On the contrary, Desdemona appears more complex as she is less idealized in connection to the other women.

Hairstyle

Apart from costume, a character's hairstyle is another aspect of the actor's appearance as a sign. As the costumes do, the main characters' hairstyles mirror the reversal of their personalities in the source texts. Hair is insightful regarding the adaptations because of various connections to other theatrical and literary signs which produce meaning in combination. After all, the hairstyle as a theatrical sign is recognized as a multi-faceted indicator of personality, not least because its natural properties are easily transformed (Fischer-Lichte 112-113).

As Shakespeare's obedient personification of domesticity and obedience, one imagines Desdemona as a wife who embodies these characteristics. This precise persona is repeatedly scrutinized in Morrison's play:

> DESDEMONA. […] I exist in places where I can speak, at last,
> words that in life were sealed or twisted
> into the language of obedience. […] (14)

In the performance, Desdemona's hair signals the reversal of the restrictions described. Hair can signal tidiness and orderliness in the way it is styled as much as it can appear wild or unkempt. As Fischer-Lichte says, "The artificial styling according to the hierarchy of values established by cultural stereotypes, makes hair, therefore, a cultural factor, a sign, which is consciously used in processes of communication" (114). In this sense, the hairstyle can be used to confirm or disprove the previous indications of Desdemona's humanization. As fig. 1 shows, the actress wears her light blonde hair open. Although she wears light waves, it does not appear slick or arranged for a particular purpose. The following information about Barbary's nursing, while also indicating cultural practices, foregrounds her duties in the family house and, thus, the importance of an orderly, flawless appearance in Desdemona's upbringing:

> DESDEMONA. […] She tended me as though she was my birth mother:
> braided my hair, dressed me, […] (18)

What her loose hairstyle signals regarding the restrictions of her past is a sense of freedom and carelessness. Her light, natural-looking waves appear as if the actresses' braids were just loosened. Her looks achieve the freedom and autonomy seeked by Desdemona. Despite this argumentation, Desdemona exhibits two features which represent her idealization. Speaking of stereotypes in literature, Fischer-Lichte defines blonde hair in combination with white skin as a "marker of innocence" (113). While the performance is an extreme realization of the literary clues, these features also label the tragedy as an adaptation and depict Desdemona's complexity.

In the *Medea* production, the main character wears a pinned-up hairdo which neither creates an untarnished nor a sleek look (fig. 2). As a character in agitation throughout the whole drama, this style agrees with her personality. The purpose of the look is less of a statement as Desdemona's, whose freedom is underlined by her looks: Medea's hairstyle foregrounds functionality and is in line with the humane aspects of the play. The hairstyles both confirm what the analyses of other performance aspects suggest. While Desdemona is disembodied from her idealism, she becomes a complex, more accessible character. Medea's hairstyle visualizes the disembodying of divine mightiness. She appears ordinary, domestic, and normal. Both characters are humanized with contrasting implications on the plays.

Dramatic Style, Verse, and Prose

A significant way of transforming a work's cultural context is to transform the language. Power's *Medea* changes the drama's style, and *Desdemona*'s text is not versified as

Shakespeare's is. As an ever-changing phenomenon, language informs about place and time; even small transformations influence context and characters. Regarding humanization, stylistic changes add to Medea's one-dimensionality, while the artificiality of *Desdemona*'s prose text disembodies the titular character from perfection.

The wording in Power's drama is succinct. In comparison to Euripides' text, the length is severely reduced. Michael Billington praises this change in a review and states that "its short lines are like splinters". The feature addressed by Billington is best described as a change in „style", encompassing the "entirety of all linguistic means on which the uniqueness of a text or a group of texts is based " (Pfister 144). Poignancy can signal power and fierceness, and the transformation has been described as "both idiomatic and rhetorically rich" (Craven). The shortness influences a second aspect, namely the blank verse in Power's drama. Franziska Schößler writes that, "When figures speak in prose, the proximity to everyday life is normally greater than when they express themselves in verse" (Schößler 118). This quote elucidates the contradiction created by these two aspects, and the purpose of Power's verbal transformations remains unclear. While condensed text could depict the fast-moving contemporary times, verse drama theoretically signals artificiality (Schößler 118) and is less accessible. By creating distance, the formality conveyed through this choice could stand for Medea's divinity and importance as a well-known figure. This is also a theory brought forth by literary scholar Holger Syme, who concludes that the style tries to "proclaim the near-cosmic significance of the play's events". Syme accurately remarks the imbalance between the verse text and "the normal, the everyday" environment the play otherwise depicts. In the performance, too, this proximity and accessibility was apparently missing (Syme).

Creating a distance through versified speech makes Medea less accessible. Her accessibility in Euripides's play contributes greatly to her multi-facetedness as it makes her powerful and humane simultaneously. Morwood evaluates that Euripides' wrote "some of the most 'human' dialogue in ancient Greek", referring to dialogues between Medea and Jason (xvi). Combined with its poignancy, Power's text does not humanize the characters. However, it establishes the same distance as Medea's fourth costume – the story appears surreal in its everyday setting, and the textual aspects highlight this surreality. The eradication of Medea's complexity is further elucidated by the uniformity of Power's text. As Schößler writes:

> For a speech analysis, it is therefore vital whether the work is written in prose or verse and how the figure's speech relates to everyday language. Additionally, one should evaluate whether the drama leans towards a uniform expression which is used by all

> figures, or whether they are designated specific forms of speech which separate them from each other (118).

While the imbalance conveyed by style and verse rather speaks the language as an aspect supporting dehumanization, the drama's uniform composition in verse unambiguously promotes Medea's one-dimensionality.

Although Morrison's *Desdemona* is written in prose, the text does not resemble everyday language. Examining the text more closely, the highly stylized language exhibits characteristics of lyric texts. Applying conventional criteria of categorization, Desdemona's text evokes emotions, which conforms to the criterion of "emphasis on the individual perspective" which "is frequently specified as being informed or triggered by emotions" (Müller-Zettelmann and Rubik 29). While the text involves long passages of personal introspection or narration, the text is figurative and packed with meaning. This aspect matches the criterion "shortness", which also means a "compression of meaning" (24). Another trait is the deviation from "ordinary, everyday language" (25), which both adaptations have in common. In *Desdemona*, however, the "ability […] to maximally semanticize" (25) is given throughout the play. Various examples illustrate this "extra meaning" (25), such as the following passage in which Desdemona's replicas alliterate regularly:

> DESDEMONA. And what is in this world we will make?
> OTHELLO. Singing children watching men like me,
> warriors needing love, put down their swords
> to dance.
> DESDEMONA. And women?
> OTHELLO. Like you. […]
> DESDEMONA. And laughter is our teacher? (25)

This extract illustrates the resemblance to lyrical texts. Its complexity is in line with Desdemona's humanization, as Morrison's figurative language enables character development. Its emotionality feels humane and allows Desdemona to evoke sympathy not through perfection, but through imaginative language which generates memories and curiosity.

Power's *Medea* uses versified text, which signals distance and artificiality. Evaluating the verbal differences between the characters, the uniform composition of text contributes to her one-dimensionality as her text is as succinct in style as the others'. However, the distance created through the versification signals the same as her costume combination does: in regard to the others' text, Medea, too, seems ordinary, and Power's text supports the distance created to Medea's violent act. The language in *Desdemona* is artificial, but allows complexity and emotions. It contributes to the disembodying of a silenced Desdemona.

Story and Plot Elements

Through *Desdemona*'s radical resetting, the adaptation not only receives a new plot. It also rewrites *Othello*'s story by creating a significantly altered play. As *Desdemona* is an adaptation that functions similarly to a sequel, this specific intertextual relation adapts *Othello*'s themes, but enables a disembodying from the dehumanized Desdemona through its criticism. In *Medea,* one plot element is significantly transformed: by ending the performance with Medea walking off, the main character loses divine power. Both changes are indicative of the plays as transculturations.

On a superficial level, the divine origin of Medea is not too significant for the play's events. She is still an accessible character. The implications of the infanticide, however, are different than if Medea was entirely human. The moral dilemma of the play would be less present if reducing her to a madwoman was as simple. Her divinity opens the discussion whether she should be interpreted as a divine force demanding justice – as Cecilia Luschnig puts it: "Medea has become the instrument of divine vengeance" (65). Referring to her infanticide, Morwood similarly states that, "Euripides slightly ameliorates this scandal by suggesting that Medea, as granddaughter of the Sun, is not quite mortal and thus not entirely accountable to ordinary theological rules. Indeed, we never fully understand whether she is mortal or divine […]" (xvi).

Medea's degree of divinity is not only relevant for the interpretation of her character, but for the plot. The ending of Euripides' play speaks for Medea as a divine missionary, as the following "performance instruction in the secondary text" (Pfister 36) shows:

> [MEDEA flies off in her chariot. JASON goes out. (Euripides 1416)

Instead, Power exchanged it with the following performance instruction:

> *The chorus are with her. The lights fade.* (61)

Varney describes the adaptation of this instruction onto the stage: „In the final moments, Helen McCrory's white Medea exits on foot lugging the bodies of her dead sons". Apparently aware of the controversial ending of Euripides' play, Varney concludes from the adaptation's performance that, „Without the intervention of the *deus ex machina,* she heads to Athens and the sanctuary offered to her by Aegeus" (169), as is the case in Euripides' play. On the contrary, the description of the new Medea leaving the stage underlines her loss of divinity – Euripides'

ending is connected to the main character's divine origin, which the performance as well as Power's literary text eliminate.

Varney's interpretation of the ending is the common interpretation of Euripides' ending: Medea is not punished for her actions. This conclusion is linked to the chariot: "*Medea* may have failed to please because it ends with the barbarian murderess flying off to take up the offer of a safe haven in Athens that she had earlier extorted from Aegeus" (Morwood xv). Without the chariot, Medea's departure is less of an escape. The ending in Power's play rather signals that expected punishment is to come. Writer Christina Baniotopoulou regards Medea's escape as detrimental to the play's progressiveness:

> And despite the constant name association with a child murderer – resulting from a century-old patriarchy – Euripides (a male) saw her not as a perpetrator, but as a victim. She never gets a humane or a divine punishment, as is usual in Greek tragedy. Medea is allowed to flee. The writer permits her, in a wagon pulled by a dragon – the children's corpses in her arm – to ride towards heaven. (2018)

While Baniotopoulou's argumentation is sophisticated, the view that Medea's actions are revolutionary and justified in the patriarchal society relates to her divinity. This divinity once again raises attention through the play's ending, and, thus, confirms the view of Medea as a divine force who revenges misogyny and xenophobia. Sherley A. Barlow confirms the interpretation of the ending in Euripides' drama as an aspect of the dehuman Medea: "The fact that her heroic resolve triumphs only serves to underline that in suppressing an instinctual part of her nature she has lost her humanity. And the strange ending of the play with Medea's magical escape as a kind of *deus ex machina* only serves to emphasize this" (167).

In *Desdemona*, *Othello*'s story is part of the play, although it is only recognized as textual basis. The plot of *Othello* is not retold by *Desdemona* as is the case in Power's *Medea*. Consequently, *Desdemona* relies on a "knowing audience" – an audience who knows the adapted text (Hutcheon 120). Because the main adapted aspect is the character and not the plot, knowing *Othello* is even more vital than in many other cases described by Hutcheon in which this knowledge would "fill in the gaps" (121). On the contrary, Power's *Medea* for the most part adopts the plot. Under this circumstance, the change in ending has different repercussions as in Morrison's case. Hutcheon describes how changing a story's ending when adapting "is a major shift of emphasis" (12).

"Stage directions for scenery and action" (Pfister 35) are part of the dramatic text, although, according to Pfister's definition, not of its main text (36). This information still contributes to the context of the main text and is, at least in this case, significant to the reader. Power's ending

supports the humanization of Medea: Euripides' ending highlighted Medea's divine origin and added to her superhuman power – a positively dehumanizing element. On a story level, this ending shows that there is no vengeance for Medea's murder. This view certainly adds to the humanity of Power's version. His ending does not further refer to Greek mythology but emphasizes the hopelessness of the situation.

As discussed, *Othello*'s plot is not adopted but the story marks the prehistory to *Desdemona*. So, story and plot are entirely different in the adaptation. As a story, *Othello* exists in *Desdemona* not only through references. Surely, *Desdemona* is not a usual adaptation. According to Hutcheon's classification of adaptations, *Desdemona* belongs to the category of "extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work" (8). It clearly functions as a "palimpsest" insofar as Morrison transforms units of *Othello*'s story as Power did. One might argue that Morrison adapted rather the characters – which is almost self-evident. Pfister, for example, speaks of an "interdependency of plot and figure" (220) and declares the latter as a vital part of the plot:

> As the concept of the plot already indicates the concept of an acting subject, and, reversely, the concept of the person or the characters indicate that of the plot […], the depiction of a figure without the depiction of a, if only rudimentary plot, and a depiction of the plot without the depiction of an ever so reduced figure, is unthinkable also in drama. […] If one defines the plot as the alteration of a situation, and situation as the given relation of figures to each other and to a concrete or ideational context, the dialectic relatedness of the categories figure and plot becomes evident. (220)

A story is always intertwined with characters. Morrison rewrites this story and there are various examples for it. While Desdemona functions as the ideal woman in Shakespeare, Morrison reveals her Desdemona's past:

> DESDEMONA. The unseemliness of such a behaviour in a
> girl of less than one decade brought my
> mother's attention. Too old, she scolded,
> for such carelessness. To emphasize the
> point, my slippers were taken away and I
> remained barefoot for ten days. (17)

While Morrison does not delete any units in Shakespeare's story, she adds information such as this passage, changing the story's meaning. By doing so, the context in which *Desdemona* appears is, of course, transformed. As Carney states, the radical transformation of story and plot situates "Desdemona within her own historical context" (4). In the analysis of her character, Holmer reached a distinct conclusion that Desdemona is a rational character – Morrison's

changes to this story even revives the complexities in her character. Evaluating character transformation, Carney refers to Gérard Genette (1997) as she writes that:

> Gérard Genette's description of character revision as one of many intertextual strategies speaks to Morrison's purpose: 'The revaluation of a character consists in investing him or her — by way of pragmatic or psychological transformation — with a more significant and/or more 'attractive' role in the value system of the hypertext than was the case in the hypotext' (Genette 1997, 50). (3-4)

The plot element rewritten in Power's *Medea* is a prime example of humanization. The new ending disembodies her from her divine origin and makes her more humane. As an ordinary Medea, she leaves the stage by walking out. *Desdemona*, by exhibiting an unusual type of adaptation, transforms its characters significantly. *Othello*'s story is rewritten as Desdemona explains her character and adds new dimensions to the adapted story. The adaptation creates a plot that allows character development: Desdemona now has weaknesses and is more complex.

***Medea*'s Disembodying vs. *Desdemona*'s Disembodying**

The analyzed textual and theatrical aspects reverse the dehumanization in Shakespeare's play and Euripides'. Desdemona becomes a multi-dimensional character in the adaptation, Medea becomes one-dimensional. They are both disembodied from their classical figures, which is achieved through the transformation of props, costume, hairstyle, intertextual relations and stylistic textual elements. The relation of these aspects to the 21st century influences Medea's and Desdemona's disembodying: as the characters appear in a new context, they are viewed from this perspective.

The aspects of humanization in Power's *Medea* clearly locate the drama in today's society. The aspects examined involve distinct markers of contemporary culture, and the props used are particularly indicative of this transculturation. The story, however, still relates to Medea and iterates Medea's actions. In fact, adapters aspire creating "authentic" performances which do not update its cultural setting, as a documentary reports (Bart). In its original environment, Medea is a contradictory character. It is precisely this complexity, however, which includes Medea's divine origin; it relates not only to Greek mythology, but also to an ancient Greek environment in which her actions are more comprehensible than in this new context created by Power and the performance.

Syme concludes that the ordinariness of the play deletes the "transactions that bring the human and the divine or supernatural together" as well as "her existence in a kind of liminal space between humans and gods" (2014). Consequently, Medea seems much more humane and less powerful. Because Medea murders her sons, the context being a normal, everyday world, her issues in society are certainly foregrounded. Nevertheless, this context revives the view of Medea as a mentally ill woman, contrary to Euripides' *Medea*. The relevance of this play in today's context is undisputed: it is the combination of contemporary elements and adapted story that leads to a disembodying. As Syme states: "if we treat Medea like a typical (precisely not an archetypical) female killer, we reduce her to near-insignificance". For comparison, Simon Stone's adaptation of *Medea* in the Burgtheater thoroughly transposes the play into today's context. There is no reference to Medea as a divine missionary and, still, her actions reduce her to insanity. Such transculturations no longer display a moral dilemma, as is the case with the National Theatre *Medea*. Through humanization, Medea becomes a one-dimensional character, whose obsession results in murder.

The reversal of dehumanization influences Desdemona's portrayal positively. She is freed from Shakespeare's idealized version and becomes more complex. This complexity not only signals strength, but also the main character's weaknesses. As researcher Asher Warren similarly concludes: "Desdemona's goodness is effectively challenged, and her characterization becomes more complex". This disembodying is supported by Desdemona's more ordinary appearance, which directly contrasts markers of perfection in *Othello* as Morrison applies techniques of "character revision" (Carney 3). The language adds an emotional dimension to the play as it foregrounds the personal process. Her complexity relates to the emancipation of today and portrays an accessible version of Desdemona that is in accordance with the transculturated context it creates.

In sum, both characters are disembodied from their adapted versions through disembodying of humanization, which has contrasting impacts on Medea and Desdemona. Medea becomes more human, which creates a pejorative image in relation to the play, while Desdemona's emphasized humanity signals authenticity and complexity. These adaptive changes are best described through processes of disembodying, as the term alludes to themes or properties represented by respective characters. However, what is perceived as ordinary, progressive, or relevant in a specific environment, is always dependent on cultural contexts. Thus, this result invites an analysis of structural norms to show whether these reflect 21st century narratives or perpetuate overcome stereotypes.

4. Legitimization

Desdemona's and Medea's humanization adds weak characteristics to their personalities. As main characters of the adaptations, however, they still inhabit positions of power. Their status is manifested in legitimizing societal structures, but also in dramatic and theatrical aspect that establish them as superior. As is the case with humanization, legitimization depends on societal norms which are concerned with power. Although both plays involve transculturations into the 21st century, Power's Medea is legitimized through conventional structures, perpetuating stereotypical images of marriage, beauty, and more. *Desdemona*'s main character is legitimized through similar archaic narratives, employing legitimization as a technique of characterization to address her privileged status.

The term legitimization is one frequently mentioned in relation to dehumanization. Volpato and Andrighetto explain one function of dehumanizing as "the legitimization of status quo" (34), performed by "those who hold power and control over other lives" (34). This understanding shows that legitimization is structured and regimented. Euripides' and Shakespeare's dramas are prime examples of works displaying their historical contexts. Beyond Desdemona and Medea, the general power relations not only between female and male, but also between enslaved and privileged characters are discernible. These relations reveal societal images of authority, marriage, and sexuality. The adherence to such conventional norms establishes the characters as legitimized. It reveals the privilege Desdemona still has, and diminishes the illegitimacy of Medea.

To adapt Euripides' *Medea* means adapting a play that is deemed progressive for its own time. As Morwood states in relation to the Athenian society, *Medea* "must have been ethically shocking" (xvi). Medea is a figure outside the scope of what was regarded as acceptable in ancient Greek, but Euripides' Medea still meets society's standards in some regards: She is married, has children, and her household employs slaves.

While she questions domesticity, her belief in monogamic relationships is sturdy. Some scholars argue that Medea "made a drowsy marriage for love". This view of her as a naïve woman speaks for Jason, who justifies his engagement with the prospective wealth. Either way, this interpretation reaches beyond Euripides' drama as it draws on the mythological basis preceding the play's plot. However, this is where the reception diverges. Some argue that Medea, as a mighty woman, exploits her fellows by murder and deception. Others receive her as a feminist icon who challenges her society's standards. The latter is the view here supported,

as Medea's situation is eventually caused by oppressive expectations. She is left for a younger, wealthier woman, by a husband who has more rights in the Athenian society than her. All these attributes are attributes of legitimization. Medea's status does not contradict the humanizing aspects but reflects ordinary patterns of behaviour and elaborates the image portrayed by Medea's humanization. Its historicizing complements her one-dimensionality: Medea becomes less illegitimate.

In *Othello*, not only the position of Desdemona reveals societal hierarchies. The relationship to other women is particularly indicative of how privileged Desdemona is. Like Medea, Desdemona has subordinates. By re-establishing Desdemona's status, other characters directly question the structures through which privilege is achieved. This reversal results in a dehistoricizing, while Power's Medea rehistoricizes the power relations, making its main character more domestic and legitimate.

Historicizing/Dehistoricizing

In Hutcheon's adaptation theory, the transformation of legitimizing factors results either in a historicizing or in a dehistoricizing. The prior means a transculturation into different historical contexts, or the emphasis of distinct societal structures. The latter means a clearing of such aspects. Identifying such transformations eventually depends on the dramatic categories examined, as power relations are inherent in several aspects of the literary dramatic text as well as in theatrical aspects. These concern the dynamics and configurations of figural constellations, dialogic and monologic speech, and story and plot.

In *Desdemona*, there is no clear elimination of all historical aspects of the society in which *Othello* is positioned. In thematical regards, traces of archaic images of beauty, marriage, and love, are discernible. However, there is a progression towards updated norms as well as a questioning of standards. Weighing up the balance between the two contexts, *Desdemona* involves dehistoricizing.

In *Medea*, the narratives in Euripides' text are still present. The play involves dehistoricizing, as the structures are iterated in Power's drama. Contemporary elements are incorporated medially and in theatrical hindsight, but not on a basis concerned with distinct legitimizations. It becomes clear that it is not only significant whether narratives of the adapted text are present, but also what meaning these produce through transformed medial and transculturated elements.

Titular Characters

The adaptations' work titles give information about the central characters's status. Both titles represent the so-called "titular character", as the Oxford English Dictionary calls it, or "titular hero" – as Filiz Barin calls Othello (39) – of the play, which is the centre of focus. This aspect is a significant transformation in *Desdemona*, as its main character was the wife of titular character Othello. Power's *Medea* iterates the title of its source text, which is symbolic of Euripides' Medea as an already extraordinary character. In the transculturated context, however, the legitimization of Medea has different implications, and the privilege of Desdemona is already addressed by the title.

Pfister confirms the significance of titular characters as he states that "a title points to a central moment of the following text" or "to the central figure" of the drama (Pfister 69), as is the case here. However, one is not only informed about the main character's name or role. In the case of *Desdemona* and *Medea*, the titles reveal the plays as adaptations. Power kept the title as well as the character focus of Euripides' play, and Medea is the central character in both. Morrison made a significant change by redefining Desdemona as the titular character; a term more suitable than the terms "hero", as used by Barin, or "heroine". According to Beck et. al, the latter "is problematic and is now considered to be outdated, since these terms are not suitable as unbiased descriptions" (Beck et. al 23). The term titular character informs one about the name of the "protagonist" – the main character (Beck et. al 23).

The titular character aspect is adapted, but transformed. It is owed to the name that *Desdemona* is clearly an adaptation of *Othello*: In dictionaries, the name Desdemona immediately points to Shakespeare's play as a well-known work in which the Greek name occurs; even the Wikipedia article points to Shakespeare's tragedy. Medea, too, is a well-known character, also because of mythological stories.

The titles as names with meaning are not only intertextual references to earlier works. The two names also have a literal meaning. While this might not become evident from the names alone, the names themselves are thematized in the plays. Morrison engages in the etymology of the word and uses it to tell Desdemona's story:

> DESDEMONA. My name is Desdemona. The word,
> Desdemona, means misery. It means ill
> fated. It means doomed. (13)

While the literal meaning of the name Medea is not addressed in the play, it is still a source of information about the character. Regarding its etymology, the Online Etymology Dictionary's entry states:

> Famous sorceress, daughter of the king of Colchis, from Latin *Medea*, from Greek *Medeia*, literally 'cunning,' related to *medomai* 'to deliberate, estimate, contrive, decide,' *medein* "to protect, rule over," from PIE root ***med-** 'take appropriate measures.'

One can argue Desdemona's name is a "telling" name (Beck et. al 81), first and foremost because it contains the word demon. This understanding corresponds to the above quote from the adaptation. In *Desdemona*, this feature functions not as an indicator of character (Beck et. al 81). Its name is also combined with cultural associations of women (Morrison 13). Although the name Medea does not speak for itself, the character's personality conforms to the dictionary's description. Both names are particularly meaningful on their own and exhibit parallels to their personalities.

Desdemona's title immediately establishes the same-named character as significant and dehistoricizes her from the oppressive context in which her name is viewed. It is clarified from the beginning that Othello's victim has become the centre of attention: Desdemona is legitimized. Power's work, however, adapts the title without transforming it. By receiving the name Medea, the meaning of the name, which immediately refers to the mythological and Euripides' Medea, is rewritten. Medea historicizes the context, which does not legitimize her as an ordinary woman – it clarifies that Medea is a character that does have privilege.

Dramatic Role Types and Functions

A character's role influences the readers' or audience's perception of power relations. In many ways, a role is more suggestive than the quantity of a character's text simply because it gives direct information about power. Genre-typical characters are especially meaningful in classical Greek drama, as these fulfil functions like commentating or evoking sympathy. Roles are also ascribed through significant actions which initialize structural elements like exposition. *Desdemona* opens the play in the adaptation, and the commentator roles in *Medea* are reduced. These measures legitimize the main characters as Desdemona acquires a superior position, and historicizing subordinate characters in *Medea* and, thus, establishing her as superordinate.

The significance of minor characters in Euripides' *Medea* has been thoroughly discussed. The nurse, the children's tutor and the attendant are all subordinates which have considerable amount of text and fulfil important functions in the adapted text. The tutor is not only the boy's educator but also an accomplice to Medea's crimes. He informs Medea about Kreusa's reaction and encourages her to act as planned:

> TUTOR. Can it be that I am announcing some misfortune without knowing it? Am I wrong to think I have brought you good news?
> MEDEA. Your news is as it is. I find no fault with you.
> TUTOR. But why are your eyes downcast, and why do you shed these tears? […]
> TUTOR. You are not the only woman who has been separated from her children. Since we are human, we must bear our troubles lightly. (Euripides 1009-1019)

This extract signals the privacy between the two as the tutor challenges Medea's feelings about the situation. Thus, he also retrieves intimate information for the audience or reader. Despite this character's relevance in the adapted text, Power eliminated the tutor. Later in Euripides' play, the messenger from Kreusa's home functions as an informant, too. Although the messenger does not inhabit an interesting role in terms of intimacy, he opposes Medea and informs her of Kreusa's and Kreon's death (32). Instead of adapting the tutor, Power creates the "attendant". He fulfils the tutor's role as an informant:

> ATTENDANT. Jason sends me back with your boys
> And news to lift your spirits. (42)

However, the attendant is actually Power's equivalent for the messenger who later tells Medea to leave (48). Thus, the messenger in the adaptation adopts two roles. It is meaningful that one of Medea's slaves has not been adapted. This elimination could be a result of the transculturation into a contemporary tontext. The conventions of Athenian society are less present here, and the multitude of servants would not be in line with its new context.

What speaks against this interpretation is that the nurse still inhabits the same role. Moreover, other elements of status are not lowered in the play: Jason, and, thus, Medea's family at this time, is still a renowned family. Because Power keeps these elements despite normalizing others, the exclusion of the tutor rather diminishes his role in the source text. Pfister descries that the "quantitative parameter" of the personell is already "important" (226). According to this understanding, the mere appearance on stage ascribes significance to a figure. As the tutor was also responsible for the sons, the nurse's role is now intensified. The tutor was an educator, informant, and commentator of the play. The latter is a role which is likewise ascribed to the

nurse. As a result, the nurse's role becomes more stereotypical. In comparison to the tutor and his functions, her status is significantly lower. Why does this transformation legitimize Medea? The meaning produced is essentially dependent on the context. In the normalized environment, a female nurse points to archaic societal conventions. The nurse's role is different, but it still reinforces Medea's legitimization.

Taking dramatic conventions into account, the major role of *Medea*'s nurse is dispensing "information at the drama's beginning" (Pfister 124). Pfister ascribes an "informative-referential function" to the beginning which is also called "exposition" (124). This function is consummated solely by the nurse in both Euripides' and Powers' tragedy. In *Othello*, this information is not directly given by one character. The circumstances rather become evident as the play develops. The play starts medias in res with Roderigo and Iago's dialogue (1.1.1-5): it is a "successively integrated exposition", meaning that the situation is explained in subsets (Pfister 125). In Morrison's adaptation, Desdemona fulfils the function of the nurse in the *Medea*s as she dispenses the information at the drama's opening.

As the following terms can lead to confusion, Pfister divides the exposition from the "opening" as he states that the latter also fulfils "phatic functions" such as "raising the recipient's awareness" and introducing the play's atmosphere (124). Because the exposition and the opening overlap in *Desdemona* – part of the knowledge is also successively integrated – the main character clarifies her authority because she herself introduces both the prehistory as well as the play itself.

Desdemona is not only the titular character, but also fulfils an important narrative function, which establishes her as a character of power. Although the nurse in Power *Medea* also opens the play, the stereotypes evoked by her transformed role overshadow individual aspects that make her significant. Rather, the nurse legitimizes Medea.

The Support of Womanhood

Aside from individual characters, the role of collectives is also transformed. In *Desdemona*, several female characters highlight their sameness on a gender level. In the *Medea* performance, the chorus eliminates Medea's illegitimacy as sympathizes with her to a considerable degree. *Desdemona*'s depiction of womanhood resembles critical discourses of the 21st century. The women criticize the societal structures disadvantaging them. To apply this criticism, Desdemona is legitimized through her status.

When speaking of female collectives, Euripides' *Medea* is a special case as a collective appears as a character – the "Chorus of the Women of Corinth". According to Pfister's drama theory, the chorus is defined as a characteristic of antique Greek theatre (256). As a dramatic entity, Pfister describes the dramatic chorus as: "Dramatic figures which appear and act as a group; they can be included in the dramatic plot but can also – for example as commentators – fulfil epic functions" (256). Because it is not a given that the dramatic chorus is female, the adapted text already uses the chorus to focus on womanhood. The chorus in Euripides' play is not progressive because it is a female group, but because of their function. The following passage foregrounds how Power's Medea instrumentalizes the chorus as she needs their support:

> MEDEA. Look, women of Corinth,
> Your wives, sisters, daughters, mothers,
> Here I am.
> I don't expect you to console me
> (There is no consolation)
> But I do need to make sure
> That when you talk of me
> When you tell my story
> You tell the truth (9)

In his analysis of Euripides' play, Morwood confirms that the chorus contributes to the plot. Indeed, the chorus helps Medea in her inferior position. Regarding lines 260-304, Morwood states that "the chorus agrees to keep silence and thus feels that it has no choice but to stand by helplessly when Medea's scheming takes its horrific turn" (171). In other words, the chorus acts as an accomplice to her actions. Because Medea manages to convince the chorus, it does not intervene. However, there is no friendship between the chorus and Medea in Euripides' play. Medea is the outsider, while the chorus is not marginalized. There remains a distance between these two entities which is vital for the play: regarding societal structures, Medea is illegitimate. Without this aspect, her shocking actions do not have the same impact. The performance of Power's text shows that Medea's illegitimacy is decreased by the chorus' physical proximity. According to Syme's account, one can observe the chorus "accompanying Medea's off-stage infanticide". Considering, too, the chorus' aesthetic peculiarities, Syme concludes that Medea appears as a figure accepted by Greeks, since "there's an entire crowd of female strangers surrounding Medea", which "reduces her isolation in Corinth". This physical proximity can be specified by analyzing this "configuration". Configurations are concerned with "the personnel which is present on stage at a specific point in the course of the text" (Pfister

235). If the chorus accompanies Medea at relevant points and through a longer period of time, it is associated with Medea. Syme describes that, in Euripides' Medea, "the chorus' perspective is that of Corinth, not of Colchis". The performance considerably transforms this distance between them.

In *Desdemona*, there are several female characters legitimizing the position of the main character. As is the case in *Medea*, womanhood is directly addressed. However, their focus is not merely supporting Desdemona but providing support to womanhood as a collective by challenging Desdemona's notions. These characters are relevant as a collective because they reveal Desdemona's high status despite being a woman. Firstly, the female character Emilia, who was a subordinate to Desdemona in *Othello*, discusses the inequality between them:

> EMILIA. What's left to understand? Both of us murdered, we failed. Noble as we tried to be, we failed.
> DESDEMONA. Failed? As women? […]
> EMILIA. Life is what it is. Women try to survive, since we cannot flourish. […]
> DESDEMONA. And you, Emilia? You and I were friends […]
> EMILIA. […] That is not how you treat a friend; that's how you treat a servant. Someone beneath you, beneath your class which takes devotion for granted. (42-43)

Interestingly, they do not only directly address their hierarchy but also explicitly discuss their communality. What happened in *Othello* is always considered by the characters' identification as women. In relation to each other, what the characters do is highlighting their common social category.

The purpose of these dialogues is not to legitimize Desdemona's social status or to simply reverse the power relations. The endings of both chapters lead to this conclusion as no party wins the discussion. The dialogues rather serve to achieve clarification and autonomy:

> DESDEMONA. You are right to correct me. Instead of judging, I should have been understanding.
> EMILIA. Thank you for saying so. I am glad you never knew how desperate life is for the truly orphaned, our fear of losing our place. […] (44)

The dialogue between Othello's mother and Desdemona's leads to the same conclusion. The mere fact that it is the mothers who meet is significant, since both characters do not occur in *Othello*. Cucarella-Ramon confirms that a "focus on women" shapes Desdemona (86). Peter Erickson confirms that "Toni Morrison is closely attuned to the dynamic of female speech and silence in Shakespeare's play". This reversal speaks for 21st century emancipations. Writing of "Qualitative contrast and correspondence relations" (227), Pfister thematizes differences

between “masculine” and “feminine” differences (231). His evaluation shows that typical masculine or feminine attributes can be rewritten by associating other factors with gender categories to rewrite “stereotypicality” (231-232). The topics discussed by the women in *Desdemona* decontruct stereotypes associated with women as they thematize relevant aspects of discriminations.

Female collectives are significant in both plays. They contribute to the legitimization of Desdemona and Medea, although Desdemona’s legitimization is used to address issues of privilege. The performance of Power’s *Medea* reduces the solitude of Medea through the chorus’ company. This configuration legitimizes her, which has considerable consequences for the adaptation’s power relations.

The Significance of Manhood

The adapted texts portray stereotypical images of manhood. War is a recurring theme concerned with men in both classical dramas. Medea criticizes Jason’s focus on war, while Othello is an officer. With this theme comes the significance of male collegiality, as in Othello’s friendship to Cassio, and the association of Jason with war. Othello’s trust influences his revenge. In both adapted dramas, manhood is a priority and endangers their relationships. Changes of such images are in line with 21st century conceptions. Accordingly, *Desdemona* scrutinizes their importance, and Power’s Jason is still associated with these themes.

The analysis of manhood and its themes is interrelated with womanhood. Medea’s need for equality presupposes a focus on men in society, and Desdemona’s dominant role in the adaptation suggests a privileged status of men in *Othello*. In Morrison’s drama, Desdemona has a long dialogue with Othello, in which he thematizes his boyhood and shares war experiences. However, the transformed relationship between men is illustrated when Cassio enters the play. Cassio provides his own perspective about the past. He still prioritizes power and war:

> CASSIO. […] Now Cyprus is under my reign. I am the one who decides. Othello gone from life; Iago suffering in a prison cell. A clean sweep that allows me to rule and perhaps help Venice return to its prominence. Wars will be won, not abandoned. […] (Power 53)

Desdemona’s subsequent replica is targeted towards Othello. Both avoids an involvement with Cassio:

DESDEMONA. To think I tried to save him. I was wrong, so wrong. Was Cassio always such a fool?
OTHELLO. Always. He enrages me as much now as he did then. But I hid my fury and overlooked his fatal ignorance because I believed him loyal. […] (Power 53)

An analysis of the "relations of replicas" (Pfister 200) shows that Desdemona, while her replica relates to Cassio's, breaks with the "normal form" of "linear succession" and its relation to the previous character. By ignoring him, his text resembles a monologue, which occurs when characters speak simultaneously and, thus, do not actually speak to each other. Cassio's lengthy replicas can also be described as "striving for dominance" (Pfister 201), which supports this break with conventional conversation forms. By relating to Desdemona's text, he prioritizes her. Manhood as displayed in Othello has less significance through this discourse structure. This finding is in line with Carney's, who evaluates the focus on relationships between men in Shakespearean plays (16). She concludes that Morrison deconstructs conventional themes of manhood as she states that "Morrison highlights the contrast between homosocial bonding for men and women; particularly in a war zone, male alliances result, at least in part, from shared violence and cruelty […] What Morrison acknowledges but does not condone is that this destructive behavior often derives from a culture of war" (16). This quote explains why Cassio's account is of importance. It serves as an example of destructive virtues against Desdemona and Othello, who have evolved.

While Jason's background and war are not often mentioned in the *Medea* adaptation, Power's version of Medea's well-known speech is indicative of men's lives. The following excerpt of „the most famous feminist statement in ancient literature" (Morwood 171) is informative of the cultural situation in ancient Greek:

MEDEA. […] Men say of us that we live a life free from danger at home while they fight wars. How wrong they are! I would rather stand three times in the battle line than bear one child. (7, lines 249-252)

Power's version is similar:

MEDEA. […] Men say that we live secure and safe
While they go to war to defend us.
But is it not safer to fight
In a thousand awful battles,
Spilling blood on an enemy's sword,
Than once face the dangers of childbirth
The unknown agonies
As death and life dance together? […] (10)

This statement convinces the chorus to provide support to Medea, who uses an „implicit-figural technique of characterization“ (Pfister 257) by implicitly stating that her matter affects them, as women, personally. Her strategy works as she uses inclusive language. The fact that the chorus develops sympathy, however, indicates that Medea depicts – maybe an exaggerated – reality. In Euripides‘ tragedy, Medea is convincing as someone with a mission. Regarding the several signs of contemporary times, the similarity of Power's version of the speech contradicts the cultural updating.

Desdemona thoroughly dehistoricizes themes of manhood as they are deconstructed. Morrison creates a new context in which manhood is less significant as the focus is on demarginalizing characters. Power's *Medea* historicizes the cultural issues of Euripides‘ context and displays outdated stereotypes of men.

Marriage, Love, and Beauty

As an act of legitimization, marriage is adapted to Power's and Morrison's play. In Euripides' play, Medea is civilized through the marriage to Jason. Although the narrative of Medea as a stranger is vital, she also criticizes misgynist issues. It becomes clear that love, too, is a central topic. As Jason evaluates their background stories, his indifference towards her is expressed; In Power's version, Jason does not disconnect from her significantly. The marriage in *Othello*, however, is considered a marriage of love. *Desdemona* still engages in conventional structures. However, it involves dehistoricizing as the superficiality of their marriage is decontructed. *Medea*'s story is also dehistoricized, as their marriage is no longer a symbol of Medea's illegitimacy.

Both stories' central plot element is adultery. Othello murders Desdemona because he is convinced that Desdemona committed marital misconduct; Jason's misconduct causes Medea's revolt. Sexual betrayal is significant in both stories, which confirms marriage as an aspect of status. Love, beauty, and sexuality are used as instruments of power within such structures. For Euripides' central figure, marriage is the admission to legitimacy; to a normal life. Medea's situation is only exacerbated by the fact that she is a woman: "The position of women in the real world of Athens has itself long been a contentious issue, especially the degree of confinement to which citizen women were subject" (Morwood xxvii). These circumstances explain the relevance of marriage, since women's rights were defined in relation to males: "Women could not vote or participate in the assembly; nor could they speak for themselves in

the courts of law or normally conduct financial transactions except through the agency of […] father, husband or nearest male relative." (Morwood xxvii). As a non-Greek and foreign woman, marrying was vital for achieving legitimacy within these structures.

Examining stereotypical themes in Euripides' play, Jason depicts her as a cruel, greedy woman, denying a loving relationship between them. Some scholars have agreed in accordance with Jason insofar as Medea apparently "made a dowryless marriage for love" (Morwood 171). However, such interpretations dismiss the central issue of Euripides' play. Medea is not only outraged by the civil inequality that comes with womanhood, but also by the expectations towards the oppressive ideal of "True Womanhood" as defined by Barbara Welter: "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors [sic!], and her society could be divided into four cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity […]" (152). In Euripides' text, Medea, as a married, loyal mother, adheres to these norms until Jason betrays her. The play establishes her as illegitimate, which Power's play does not.

As Luschnig analyzes the relationship between Medea and Jason in detail, she concludes that there is "no clearer indictment of Jason's treachery" than his replica focusing on her exile, which follows right after "the actual sentence of exile passed on her" (40). Luschnig exposes the imbalance between Medea's attitude towards Jason, which is always more inclusive than his use of language: "She, however, always includes Jason, while he tries but fails to exclude her" (45). Luschnig then examines how "The past they shared is now separated into two stories" as "Each diminishes the other's part in their common legend" (46) as she references (15-16 lines 522-574). This act is indicative of their final separation. In Power's play, the mythological background story is less present and Jason's words are less harsh. For comparison, Jason's replica in Euripides' begins as follows:

> JASON. I must, it seems, be no poor speaker, but escape the wearisome storm of your words, lady, like the trusty helmsman of a ship using the topmost edges of his sail. Since you lay too great a stress on gratitude, I consider that it was Aphrodite alone of gods and men who made safely my voyaging. […] (522-529).

In Power's version, this is how Jason begins:

> JASON. I hoped not to have to trade words with you like this.
> It seems I must defend myself
> Against these charges, steer my course safely
> Through the storms your tongue whips up.
> Your sacrifices?

I've given more than you ever gave me! […] (22)

The differences between these quotes are obvious. Power's Jason is direct, but Euripides' Jason thoroughly eliminates her from his story. Mentioning their prehistory has implications: Jason denies her even the legitimacy she once sacrificed so much for. Power's version includes a reference to Jason's "Argonautical adventure" (Luschnig 94) in Greek mythology, but it is not as relevant and does not illegitimize Medea.

Considering this transformed dialogue, there are clues which might be interpreted as signs of cultural updating. The dialogue between Jason and Medea seems more balanced, which is an observation supported by the "quantitative dominance relations" (Pfister 226) in the literary text. Pfister states that the quantity of text legitimizes a character because it is "an important parameter for the central or peripheral position of a figure […], because it influences the focus and, thus, functions as an influence of perspective" (227). Jason exceeds Medea's amount of text in Euripides' drama in this dialogue by far (Euripides 13-17). In Power's version, one of Medea's replicas exceeds Jason's longest one (20-21), while the quantity is rather balanced. These relations even overthrow the gender opposition according to stereotypical notions, which Pfister visualizes (231).

However, this transformation is detrimental to central elements of the story. Examining other dialogues between them, Medea's quantity of text always dominates Jason's. Moreover, the qualitative contrast in Euripides' play is clear for most scholars. Regarding the amount of dialogues in *Medea* as opposed to constellations of three or more characters, Morwood states that "This simplicity serves to throw the dominating figure of Medea into grander relief, by stressing that in her serial bipolar encounters with men – Creon, Jason, Aegeus, Jason, the tutor, the messenger, and Jason again – she repeatedly extracts by sheer rhetorical power or by psychological manipulation whatever result she requires" (xv). This verbal power not only concerns quantitative relations, but these also impact the significance of respective characters.

The dominance established by Jason in the dialogue examined is important for one reason, namely suspense. Pfister writes that "the potential of suspense" evolves with the "magnitude of the involved risk" (144). At this point in the drama, Jason's elaborate and detailed account displays the extent to which Medea is doomed. It becomes clear at this point that Medea lost everything, which is vital for the play's continuation. The reader is aware of Medea's power, and Jason underestimates her. Pfister mentions this "future-oriented dispense of information" as a "requirement for development of suspense potential" (145). As Jason motivates her actions with his words, suspense is created. It is wrong to assume that a dialogue in which Jason

overpowers Medea diminishes her significance. Their fight emphasizes Medea's fatal situation as her legitimacy is denied. As their weakened opposition depicts them as equal on a quantitative textual level, Varney concludes that Jason and the main character „are represented as a bourgeois couple with social aspirations, who are in fact rivals" (172). The rivalry Varney addresses promotes the context of the domestic sphere.

Another issue is the emphasis on the themes love and jealousy over Medea's illegitimacy. Jason proceeds in the above replica:

> JASON. […] I married you.
> I made you happy.
> I civilized you!
> You'd never known law or justice,
> You were nothing when I found you,
> Now you talk to kings and cry to gods.
> […]
> I don't go to Kreusa out of lust or greed
> Or because I hate our old life.
> […]
> You're jealous of Kreusa
> Blind with envy […] (22)

Medea's illegitimacy is still present in the play, as this excerpt shows. However, it is significant that Jason emphasizes his relationship to Kreusa twice. This intensifies the motif of the "sexually slighted woman" (Morwood 176), which foregrounds Medea's jealousy as a motor of her actions. This jealousy is not only constructed by Jason, who frequently characterizes Medea. As a "explicit-figural technique of characterization", Pfister refers to the "external comment", in which "one figure is explicitly characterized through another" (251). In relation to this theme, Medea is frequently characterized externally. In the adaptation, however, Medea uses "self-characterization" (Pfister 251) and ascribes to herself the theme of the sexually slighted woman. One transcribed passage illustrates this in detail. Jason dehumanizes Medea harshly in this quote:

> JASON. […] The human race should produce children from some other source and a female sex should not exist. […] (Euripides 573-576)

A bit later, Medea answers reasonably:

> MEDEA. It wasn't that which stopped you, but your marriage with a barbarian was proving a source of no glory as you faced old age. (Euripides 591-593).

The divergence between the above answer and Medea's replica in Power's play is major:

MEDEA. We both know why you left!
You looked to the future
And saw yourself old
With an old wife bringing shame upon you. (Power 23)

Syme also refers to this change in the adaptation as he states that this passage shows that Medea is "thoroughly domesticated". The play is no longer about her illegitimacy as it depicts a jealous wife (Syme). Indeed, it portrays Medea not only as jealous, but also as a woman perpetuating stereotypes of sexuality, beauty, and jealousy as she highlights the importance of youth for women in society. Susan Sontag explains the combination of beauty and rights:

> That beauty applied to some things and not to others, that it was a principle of *discrimination,* was once its strength and appeal. Beauty belonged to the family of notions that establish rank, and accorded well with social order unapologetic about station, class, hierarchy, and the right to exclude. (210)

In Power's adaptation, Medea reappears as a stereotypical wife engaging in this narrative. In a Shakespearean society, the situation for women is similar as in Euripides'. Michael Neill states that, "In a strictly patriarchal society, however, the ranking of women was complicated by their general duty of obedience to men" (Neill 169-170). The obligation of women to their fathers shifts to the husband when married (170). Both Desdemona and Othello repeatedly state that they married for love. Neill states that their "marriage is a scandal of miscegenation" (41). For this reason, one can argue that *Othello* is a progressive play regarding the couple. However, the norms Desdemona adheres to and the patriarchal images Othello evokes are questioned from a contemporary viewpoint as *Desdemona* revives the prehistory to *Othello.* In the following quote, she particularizes her family's search for a husband, critically addressing arranged marriages:

DESDEMONA. […] Each one, whether a stuttering boy or an aged widower,
was eager for a chatelaine weighted with riches. […] (21)

This excerpt confirms not only the family's wish to profit from the arrangement. It also describes Desdemona's desirability as a wealthy daughter. It is not uncommon to seek wealth in relationships today – what is significant is *Desdemona*'s demand for autonomy, which is a dehistoricizing of women's submissiveness in *Othello*'s context.

On the contrary, Shakespeare's dehuman Desdemona adheres to the ideals of the True Womanhood, despite choosing Othello on her own account. Emilia deconstructs Desdemona's romantic perception of marriage:

EMILIA. […] Like you I believed marriage was my salvation. […] (43)

The word choice does not only criticize marriage; it criticizes the importance ascribed to marriage. In both play's updated environments, the virtues of the True Womanhood are archaic ideals. Emilia's statement is in line with the humanization *Desdemona* signals. The same legitimizing structrures as in *Othello* are discernible in *Desdemona*, but the latter questions these values and suggests rethinking.

Sexuality is another theme interrelated with marriage in the source texts. They contain three views which are outdated in contemporary societies. Firstly, sexuality was long seen as a taboo topic, especially for women. Secondly, that it is not a pleasurable, but a reproductive act. Lastly, that sexuality must be an act of love. Emma Goldman explains the connection between marriage and sexuality for women as follows:

> The prospective wife and mother is kept in complete ignorance of her only asset in the competitive field – sex. Thus she enters into life-long relations with a man only to find herself shocked, repelled, outraged beyond measure by the most natural and healthy instinct, sex. (452)

This description applies to Medea as she describes Jason as a typical womanizer:

> MEDEA. […] Creeping through night
> Spurred on by pathetic, mid-life lust,
> You hid your plans
> And deserted us. (Power 23)

As justified as Medea's assertion is, the image she portrays is adapted from Euripides' play. In combination with beauty, youth, and sexuality, Medea repeats archaic norms. The inability of separating love and sexuality as separate entities matches monogamous relationships and denies an open approach to sexuality. In *Desdemona*, exclusive sexuality in marriage is not directly addressed. Still, a connection to procreation as a nature-given self-evidence is established in the adaptation. The following passage shows how bearing children is significant through the opposition of female and male:

> DESDEMONA. "Girl" does not know how to be less than "boy".
> Together, they were chosen
> to give meaning to life. (15)

While *Desdemona* criticizes the gender hierarchy, it denotates heteronormative relationships as a natural part of life. The possibility of procreation is used as an argument for equality between male and female. While the third and last line are hardly progressive, the focus on equality is a

considerable transformation from the oppressive hierarchy observable in *Othello*. These hierarchies are further present in Desdemona's reference to virginity. She uses the virtue of purity as a promise of exclusive love and feeds the myth of virginity as a meaningful social contruct, although the play otherwise scrutinizes misogynist images of women:

> DESDEMONA. You are wrong! You believed a lie. You broke my hymen and thought I was unfaithful the next day? Me? (51)

One can see that Desdemona still legitimizes herself through such power structures. She uses virginity as an indicator of loyalty. Quantitative relations, too, are relevant in this dialogue. Othello's replica prior to the above contains 15 lines of prose text (Power 50-51), his following contains 18 (Power 51), indicating the hierarchy that is here historicized.

Beauty as a matter of class, privilege and kindness receives considerable attention in *Othello*, where the contrast between Othello and Desdemona is continuously thematized. Her fair hair and skin are always associated with positive attributes. Desdemona addresses this aspect early when telling the prehistory to *Othello*. She discusses beauty as an asset secondary to her status:

> DESEMONA. […] I was thought beautiful, but if I were not, even if I were a giantess, a miniature or a horse-faced shrew, suitors cruising for a bride would have sought my hand. […] (21)

Her observation shows awareness of women's objectification. As a result, her beauty is adapted by Morrison, although in critically evaluated form. In contrast, Power's literary text re-historicizes the dialogue which domesticates her significantly. The image of a young, beautiful woman as preferable to an older wife intensifies the theme of the sexually slighted woman. In a contemporary context, the perpetuation of these stereotypes is overcome and viewed critically.

Medea legitimizes herself through conventional power structures, which includes these standards. The weakened opposition between Jason and her contributes to her simplicity: the dialogue no longer revolves around Medea's complexity – which is here the tension between her origin and her domicile – but around her fear of being a mother abandoned for a younger, more beautiful woman. The legitimization of Power's Medea results in a re-historicization where such conventions are still established. *Desdemona*, too, reflects conventional power structures regarding marriage, beauty, and status. In comparison, Morrison's adaptation deconstructs of conventional structures to some respect. Desdemona's legitimization emphasizes the issues produced by acquiring this status. Evaluating the relations to other dramatic aspects and themes, however, sexuality may be the aspect that is citicized the least.

Medea's Historicizing vs. *Desdemona*'s Dehistoricizing

The adaptations still ascribe positions of power to Medea and Desdemona. It is the function of legitimization which delineates a difference between their forms of status. Desdemona's is used to address and deconstruct long-established standards involved with marriage, beauty, or other class issues the text directly criticizes. This is also achieved by establishing Desdemona as a significant character through aspects such as work title, which enables a critical evaluation of her position and promotes a feminist reversal of Shakespeare's silencing. Thus, *Desdemona*'s dehistoricizing confirms the play as a contemporary transculturation, while Medea's status perpetuates standards that are overcome in its new context, hence re-historicizes the play.

Morwood connects Medea's humanness to marriage as he proposes: "If Euripides' characters did indeed speak 'like human beings', then human beings undergoing marital breakdown have not changed much, after all" (xvii). However, the focus on marriage in Euripides' play misses Medea's illegitimacy as a central element of her anger. Besides marriage, the chorus and the nurse legitimate Medea as she becomes not only more ordinary, but also more accepted in Power's version and the NT performance. This contributes to her power acquired by living up to societal norms, reducing the issue of women's disadvantages and xenophobia. As Varney summarizes:

> McCrory's character's marginality is relinquished in favour of assimilation into modern bourgeois society. With that she loses some of the mitigating circumstances, such as her vulnerability as a foreigner and her low status, becoming instead a woman who takes revenge on her husband by killing their children in a 'tragic' act of family violence. (172)

This quote demonstrates the play's dehistoricization. Power's drama does not debate the structural circumstances of Euripides' historical background to the play; it repositions the story into a society with similar standards, hence „modern bourgeois society" (Varney 172). Such norms are still established today, although the image of marriage portrayed does not decontruct its negative sides. Now, Medea is neither understood as a divine missionary, nor as a stranger whose existence is at stake. From a feminist standpoint, the foregrounding of female characters conforms to 21st century expectations. This is where the adaptations diverge – Euripides' play is considerably progressive for its time, while the new *Medea* is unable to acquire the same effect, especially in connection with a failed marriage as the only reason for her anger.

Desdemona develops its female characters without displaying them as the same. The silencing of characters is always criticized in relation to status. Carney, too, evaluates how

Desdemona combines issues of gender and class (6). Although the two categories relate, the adaptation‘s dehistoricizing explores in detail the legitimizing structures which add to Desdemona’s complexity. Norms concerned with marriage, sexuality, and love, are reproduced by the play. The iteration of these narratives mirrors the development of Desdemona and others, while refocusing on emotional dimensions. That *Desdemona* does not overthrow these standards completely, reflects their ongoing relevance. The play does not deny the reality of such structures, but it also does not replicate negative stereotypes.

The role of legitimization in the adaptations is different. By dehistoricizing Euripides’ play, the adaptation transforms Medea’s status and weakens the vital image of Medea as a stranger. Desdemona is still legitimized, which contributes to the thematization of class issues while deconstructing conventional structures to a certain degree. As intersectionality debates highlights, race is another category intertwined with gender and class. *Desdemona* thoroughly transforms *Othello*’s racialization by changing the stories of Barbary and Othello. Racialization becomes an important issue in the NT Medea too, which gives further insight into its historicizing.

5. Racialization

One of the central issues in *Desdemona* is also a reoccurring theme in *Othello* as well as in Power’s *Medea* – namely skin color. In Shakespeare’s and Euripides’ plays, two dimensions of belonging are relevant. One is the geographical dimension, the other is understood as genealogical sense. As far as *Othello* is concerned, the division between black and white characters is highlighted throughout the play. The repercussions of territorial issues are not as straightforward in Euripides’ *Medea,* but Power’s text in combination with the performance introduce stereotypical images of black-skinned characters.

The role of race in *Othello* has been widely debated in the past centuries. It has even been referred to as the first play about color (Neill I). Until now, it remains ambiguous whether Shakespeare’s play is a racist depiction of a black man or not. *Othello* could also be interpreted as a play progressive for its time, given Othello’s high status as a prince and military general. As Neill states, many adapters and critics in the past seemed to interpret Shakespeare’s play mainly from a postcolonial standpoint (69). Cucarella-Ramon denies this interpretation as she evaluates the play’s historical background:

> Although British explorers did not touch African shores until the mid-16th century, blackness was already seen in a negative light in the Western mindset. This was so because church fathers, such as St. Jerome or St. Augustine, had equated the idea of blackness with something villainous through a deceptive reading of the Bible. (85)

She mentions here how religion has been (and continues to be) racialized in various regards, which is also relevant in *Othello*. In opposition to the common assumption, the term "Moor" means Turk. Filiz Barin analyzes the stereotypes of Turks in *Othello*, which "permeate the language Shakespeare employs" (39). He describes that, even though Othello's "fall is determined by the evil actions of a white Christian man, Iago", Shakespeare still reinforces the stereotypes of Turks through the titular hero (39). Even though it seems like race and religion are used like interchangeable terms here, Barin clarifies that "the idiom *turning Turk* instead of *turning Muslim* was used by the West to refer to a convert" (47). As Othello's mentions that he was baptized (2.3.342-44), the text implies that Othello was born Muslim, converted to Christianism and turned Turk again in the end (Barin 51). According to Barin, "Othello 'turns Turk' in the play because of his treachery, emotional outbreaks, vengefulness, sexual excessiveness and tendency to superstitious beliefs" (52). This quote explains that not only black skin color per se was dehumanized, but also aspects of cultural background and ethnicity associated with black people.

Othello can only be interpreted as African through the term "Moor", which could refer to different regions or religions (Neill 115). It was often connected to North Africa, but Neill argues that Shakespeare's understanding of this "flexible" term can hardly be determined (115). However, Sellars states that Shakespeare's play is "filled with references to Africa" (7). *Desdemona* adapts these references and aims at a reversal of racist associations in *Othello*. Cucarella-Ramon's above quote certainly provides reasons why Othello could be read as African; The clues in Othello which depict Barbary as a black, African woman furthermore suggests a reversal of the stereotypes associated with blackness and Africa. Serena Guarracino accurately denotes Morrison's and Traoré's play as a "postcolonial rewriting" (64). Othello tells his real story, but the voice of Desdemona's nurse Barbary, who, in *Othello*, "is associated with Africa as well" (Guarracino 65) is also restored. The adaptation focuses on the story of silenced characters, which foregrounds not only women but also black characters. Morrison involves music and religion to create an authentic portrayal of the stereotypes associated with Barbary and Othello as black Africans.

In Euripides' *Medea*, the territorial conflict has been discussed lively, if not as the most vital aspect of the tragedy. It is often examined in combination with her low status as a woman,

as Medea is "a wife who was not only not local but not even Greek" (Morwood xvii). Xenophobic issues are characteristic of ancient Athens (xvii), as is obvious in Euripides' play. A closer look reveals citizenship as an ubiquitous topic which is an issue in Jason's and Medea's marriage. In Euripides' text, Medea is the stranger who has no rights, especially without a husband. This issue is already transformed significantly by Power's legitimization of Medea. It is further reversed by the racialization that becomes obvious in the performance. Several figures reappear as black characters. Although the white Medea revenges Jason's actions, she still engages in physical violence against black figures. Considering the humanization and legitimization of the play, the negative stereotypes evoked by these racializations are further elaborated. In the adaptation and in its performance, religion and music promote these stereotypes. The performance includes contemporary aspects but combines them with pejorative images of blackness and racialized rites, perpetuating these negative portrayals. Through the reversal of power relations in Euripides' text, Medea appears as a colonizer, not as the ostracized character.

In *Desdemona,* the themes involved with blackness contribute to its transculturation into the 21st century. Cucarella-Ramon writes that „The story of the Moor of Venice serves to reflect upon blackness in the contemporary US and Canadian contexts" and argues that it is used in *Desdemona* to „reflect on the ongoing struggle" of black people (86). Although the play includes the "'primitive Africa' theme" in some regards, as Guarracino argues, it is questioned and deconstructed by its use of contemporary African music (68). On the contrary, Power's text and its performance fail to present black characters in a positive light. Its imbalance of contemporary and antique Greek aspects results in a racialization that does not apply postcolonial approach.

'Race' and 'Racializing/Deracializing'

Due to its history, the term 'race' is problematic. It has been used to ascribe negative characteristics to people of specific biological attributes, and this kind of marginalization is still a reality. Critical scholars, especially in the US, continue to use the term to thematize 'race' as a category of social disadvantage. Related terms like 'racialization' have arisen, but still require explanation. Hutcheon, too, sees it as a way of indigenizing an adapted work. As all plays thematize or question xenophobic issues, a historical evaluation of 'race' and 'racialization' is needed to establish the distinction between 'race' as an aspect exclusively concerned with

biological characteristics, ethnicity as a historical category, and culture, and to define the use of Hutcheon's dichotomy in the analysis.

When the term 'race' arose in the 17th century, "it was used primarily to refer to common features present because of shared descent" (Cashmore 333). In the 18th century, racial theories started ascribing negative and positive views towards certain alleged races. The use of "scientific racism" in the 19th century (Cashmore 333) served dominant groups as a justification of their marginalizing actions. Although Darwin's scientific findings showed that "no forms in nature were permanent" (Cashmore 333) – and, thus, racial classification was indefensible – its applications were popular far into the 20th century. However, the state of knowledge today is that race is biologically inexistent: "In contemporary conceptions, there is no race 'out there' in the domain or biology or any other part in the world; 'race' exists only as a way of understanding and interpreting difference through intelligible markers" (Cashmore 335). In his evaluation of the various concepts of 'race' that have existed, Ernest Cashmore concludes that, as a biological and national "misnomer" (334), and "as a synonym for what we usually call a nation or an ethnic group" (336), race is not only obsolete but also inconclusive as it is not "permanent" (333).

Consequently, it has been argued that the word 'race' should be avoided. Nonetheless, it has survived until today. Often specified as "social race", scientists still apply the term as an intersectional category (Cashmere 336). However, whenever there are "meanings attached to skin colour" (324), it becomes important that, "instead of uncritically focusing on race, which is an erroneous social construction, we need to incorporate ethnicity and culture as sites of struggle and discrimination" (Cashmere 324). Assuming cultural or ethnic connections because of appearance is as questionable as assuming personality traits because of appearance. 'Race', as a physical trait such as skin color or eye shape (Cashmore 333), is not meaningful per se as it has no implications that are nature-given. However, social disadvantages experienced by people of color are very real. The aim is not to deny the differences experienced because of certain biological aspects of appearance. It is not deconstructive to acknowledge such disadvantages, but only to deny and ignore them. In 1984, Audre Lorde states in regard to race as a social disadvantage: "Refusing to recognize difference makes it impossible to see the different problems and pitfalls facing us […]" (287). Her quote is still relevant, as the evaluation of the term 'racialization' shows.

Beyond Hutcheon's "deracializing/racializing" dichotomy, "racialization" is a frequently used term, although it lacks clear definition, according to Karim Murji and John Solomos (2).

The two state that they "have found the idea of racialization useful for describing the processes by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues – often treated as social problems – and with the manner in which race appears to be a, or often the, key factor in the ways they are defined or understood" (3). In this statement, it is transparent that the definition of 'race' and the "particular issues" mentioned are broad. However, their definition is meaningful insofar as they do not ascribe any meaning to physical traits themselves, but introduce racialization as a term with which the attribution of meaning to outward appearances, such character traits, and also ethnic or cultural dimensions, is described.

Hutcheon regards establishing a specific "racial identity" as racialization, as well as changes in language or ethnicity (160). Depending on the adaptation analyzed, the term 'racialization' may not always be applicable. Appearance, ethnicity, and culture are separate aspects. However, ethnicity is often racialized, and so are specific cultures. What is not transparent in Hutcheon's concept, is Murji and Solomos view of racialization as a critical term:

> […] racialization differs from race because, first, it emphasizes the social and psychological processes that puts people into racial categories; and second, it therefore entails that race is no longer seen as fixed or natural, but as the outcome of particular ways in which people are classified and seen. The concept of racialization in this view does the same work as putting 'race' in quotation marks, in showing that race does not have a biological basis but that it becomes significant through social, economic, cultural, and psychological practices. (6 after Lewis and Phoenix 2004)

While racializing concerns an emphasis the abovementioned aspects in relation to the adapted work, deracializing means an elimination or reduction of them.

In Power's *Medea*, the theatrical elements in combination with the text are racialized, as derogative meanings of 'race' are invoked by incorporating distinct stereotypes. In *Desdemona*, the confrontation between black and white and the social issues between these applied concepts is relevant. Although this precise juxtaposition is already thematized in *Othello*, *Desdemona* poposes not only a critical examination of it. The adaptation also multiplies the presence of darker-skinned actresses A renewal is included in the form of traditions, musical aspects and the setting, which are all connected to blackness. *Desdemona* not only deracializes *Othello* from its stereotypical depictions but re-racializes the characters by redefining what their blackness means to them.

Interracial Couples

The interracial couple in *Othello* is a striking aspect in a play for its time. The Shakespearean drama's racialization is manifested in the various connotations of black and white skin regularly mentioned in its literary text. *Desdemona* addresses this interraciality and forms a new approach as Desdemona and Othello discuss the social differences they experience because of appearance. Their dialogue discusses the internalization of racism and questions the power relations between them. Power's *Medea* achieves the opposite. Euripides' text does not thematize such biological differences, neither does Power's literary text. The performance reveals that Jason is played by a black actor, which perpetuates stereotypical images of black people in connection with the literary text. Both adaptations racialize Jason and Othello thoroughly, but not both apply racialization as a technique of questioning it.

In several *Medea* adaptations, the main character is transcribed as black. An anthology of published by Kevin J. Wetmore is exemplary for such adaptations. *Black Medea: Adaptations for Modern Plays* (2013) consists of six transcultural adaptations using the xenophobia Medea encounters in Euripides' text and transculturating it into environments where xenophobia is encountered by people of color. Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (1995) is another example in which Euripides' ostracized Medea was adapted to relevant contemporary contexts. Creating a black Medea makes sense: as a Colchian, Medea is the othered, marginalized, illegitimate one in the play. Morwood writes that "the international situation in 431 meant that Athens was in no mood to see any refugee from Corinth, even in myth, demanding favours or asylum" (xvi). This makes Euripides' play progressive: a real life Medea would have been ostracized, and Euripides gives her the strength to fight exactly this xenophobia – at the cost an unsuccessful premiere (Morwood xvi). Xenophobia is an issue that resonates with today's societies, as refugee debates are prevailing. There are certainly enough reasons to adapt this stranger's story in the 21st century. Betine Van Zyl Smit summarizes the reasons for critical racializations convincingly:

> Coupled with an understanding of Medea's plight as a woman, some authors have developed the themes of exploitation to include her cultural background, so that the heroine is not only of a different, inferior, culture, but of a different and despised race. Basing their interpretation of the treatment of Medea on modern attitudes to people of a different race, many dramatists depicted her not only as non-Greek, but as non-white. This is achieved by transferring the action of the play to a world where the Greeks become representatives of the first world and Medea, the barbarian, epitomizes oppressed and colonized, usually a darker-skinned race. (158)

However, the story functions differently when casting black actors for characters Medea avenges. If she is no longer the stranger, her physical brutality towards other figures reverses the power relations. In other words, the humanized Medea becomes the one who dehumanizes.

In the performance of Power's text, Jason is played by black actor Danni Sapiani (fig. 2). This change rewrites the couple as an interracial one. In combination with the text, this transformation revives the stereotypes and taboos associated with interracial relationships. This effect becomes clear when examining Power's version of the following passage:

> NURSE. […] Jason has betrayed his own children and my mistress and beds down in royal match. He has married the daughter of Creon who rules this land. (Euripides 1)

The nurse blames Jason, which Power transforms as follows:

> NURSE. Medea
> Fell horribly in love
> With the Argo's captain
> With Jason
> A demon, a he-devil. (3)

This demonization relates to dehumanization, although the abusive words in relation to Jason are particularly meaningful in racist discourses. Medea later repeats this demonization:

> MEDEA. Tell me how a man
> Who I worshipped as a god
> Can suddenly turn into a devil? (10)

Although she here expresses her anger, the use of "demon" and "devil" is relevant as he is a black character. These derogative terms have been used to dehumanize black people. James D. Hawley and Staycie L. Flint discuss the image of the black person as a demon (2016). The term devil, too, is reminiscent of certain racist images associated with dark-skinned people (Hooks 123). Through this characterization, meaning is ascribed to Jason's looks. According to Fischer-Lichte, the appearance produces signs in combination to the actor's role (26) – alongside other factors influenced by the author, such as the space occupied, or linguistic signs (26-27). In relation to Power's text, Jason's skin color becomes significant because he "acts with a specific look". The look encompasses "signs which shall be connected to the 'natural' look of X, such as his face, his body, his hair […]", which are all signs encompassed by the theatrical code Fischer-Lichte calls „mask" (26-27).

Jason's role comes close to the description of the black stereotype "Bigger Thomas (the mad and mean predatory craver of white women)", who Cornel West lists as one of many

sexualized black stereotypes (120). This stereotype applies in connection to the extracts because "irrational" behaviour, "lack of self control", and "being driven by primitive impulses" is associated with the dehumanizing form animalization (Volpato and Andrighetto 31). The Bigger Thomas is not only suitable because Jason betrays Medea, but also because of her anger towards him.

Her reaction seems natural, but revenge becomes the central theme for Medea as her fight for women's and strangers' justice is transformed through the play's humanization and legitimization. Medea evokes an image which can be compared with Hawley and Flint's view of the contemporary political situation that "depicts Black men as hypersexual, brutal menaces that White society has no choice but to control through the use of violent force, intimidation, and fear" (Hawley and Flint). This description reveals a similarity between Jason and Othello. Morrison reimagines Othello's past and elaborates on his violence. In the following passage, Othello addresses the hypersexuality and fear associated with him:

> OTHELLO. It's clear now. You never loved me. You fancied the idea of me, the exotic foreigner who kills for the state […]. What excited you was my strange story: enslaved youth ruined by war then redeemed by it, fantastic adventures, stories of freaks and miracles. […] And you thought that was all there was to me – a useful myth, a fairy tale's cut to suit a princess' hunger for real life, not the dull existence of her home. (50-51)

The image he describes is sexualized as well as racialized. His accusation is based on the belief that women are only attracted by black men through fetishization and exoticization. West describes racialized fetishization as follows:

> The myths offer distorted, dehumanized creatures whose bodies […] are already distinguished from the white norm of beauty whose fearful sexual activities are deemed disgusting, dirty or funky and considered less acceptable. Yet […] behind closed doors, the dirty, disgusting, and funky sex associated with black people is often perceived to be more intriguing and interesting […]. (120)

In terms of power distribution, this notion implies a lower status of the oversexualized party. In the course of their dialogue, Desdemona cannot fully comprehend his argumentation. Othello here denies himself Desdemona's affection and racializes himself. What may seem like a contradictory argument in a play that otherwise questions racist notions, portrays the repercussions of racist oppression. His self-characterization displays the concept of "Du Boisian Double Consciousness" (Zamir 87) which W.E.B Du Bois described as a sense of "having 'second-sight' and a sense of 'two-ness'" in connection to black people (qtd. in Zamir 89). Having this sense means that it "limited their ability to view themselves independently"

(Zamir 89), since they are severely influenced by an external view that is "internalized through racist propaganda, material deprivation and violent repression" (Shelby 62).

Double consciousness is influenced by the power of white people that is referred to as the "mythical norm" by Audre Lorde (285). This norm views women as the oppressed part in a patriarchal society; black people as dominated by white people (Lorde 285). Applying this scheme to the adaptations, it follows that the white wives Desdemona and Medea are the dominant parts in their interracial relationships. As they are established as superior, Othello's disbelief is a reaction to the behaviour of legitimized people. Lorde explains that typical reactions to human difference are to "ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate" (285).

Considering fetishization and eroticization as mentioned above, the third possibility listed by Lorde applies to Medea's and Jason's relationship, in which Medea acts with physical violence. In the case of Desdemona and Othello, this approach explains Othello's overreaction. Bell Hooks states: "Dark skin is stereotypically coded in the racist, sexist, and/or colonized imagination as masculine" (129). This quote shows why darker colored people has been viewed as dominant regarding sexuality, resulting in a threat to the socially more dominant white part.

To make the history of racialized oppression more apparent, Morrison uses trauma narratives to illustrate the internalization of racism in black and white characters. In this regard, *Desdemona* can be compared to Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, in which a black traumatized character molests his daughter (1970). Reza Hassan Khan & Shafiqur Rahman discuss „the sadomasochist attitude of the characters in this framework of internalized racism in the African-American community of *The Bluest Eye"* (25). Several scenes in *Desdemona* suggest a similar reading, as Morrison includes aspects of sadomasochism. These are connected to inward and outward anger and the "self loathing" Othello describes (36):

> OTHELLO. […] we were potent and indifferent
> To blood, cries of pain, debasement – to life,
> Even our own. Rape was perfunctory. […] (36)

This excerpt accurately depicts that racism is not only internalized by white, but also by black people. Through this dialogue, Othello refers to Double Consciousness. Othello highlights the difference between Desdemona and him and denotes skin color as the determining factor of this difference. This disparity is also established *Medea*, although much less straightforward. The literary text and the performance clearly draw a line between her as a white mother, and Jason

and the black sons. The text suggests that Medea is uncomfortable with the sons sharing his characteristics. The following lines serve are exemplary:

> MEDEA. Come, Jason, take their hands.
> They look so like you. (37)

In this passage, Medea manages to arrange the murder of Kreusa. The use of pronouns is indicative of the separation Medea creates between herself and them. She says "our sons" (41) when deceiving them, but chooses the second person possessive pronoun when taking the opposite position. Although otherwise using harsh words, Jason's replica is gentle:

> JASON. […] In allowing me here
> In letting me help you
> In letting me see my beloved boys
> This was grace. (37)

According to reviews, Jason's soft side overshadows his hatred. Ackroyd describes that "Danni Sapiani, whilst he cuts a masculine figure in the role of Jason, never really becomes more than a convenient foil to Medea's wiles and anger" (28). Other reviewers confirm this observation (cf. Syme). Jason's weakness speaks for Medea's violence as well as for a separation between Medea and them. They, too, are weakened in Power's literary text as they no longer even beg for mercy (Euripides 34 1271-1278). A sense of community between Jason and the sons is confirmed by the performance when Medea takes a photograph of them with a smartphone (fig. 2). This action is symbolic for Medea's exclusion from the family and for Medea's murders: the ability to edit and delete smartphone photos symbolizes the murders. The photograph also symbolizes the external view of blackness via this intermedial form. They provide an external view that relates to the concept of Double Consciousness.

Only one scholar to date has mentioned Jason's blackness in the performance. In her article, Varney refers to the couple as "biracial" once (172) without analyzing this transformation. The fact that this aspect has not caught attention – including reviews in all media – might even reflect a normalization of interraciality. In "Black Beauty and Black Power: Internalized Racism" (1995), Hooks lists interracial relationships as one of "many long-standing racial taboos" of the 20th century (123). The fact that the incorporation of an interracial couple in the 2014 production has not been discussed as a statement towards society shows that this taboo might not be as present anymore. However, only in connection with transformed power relations, Medea's actions perpetuate racist images. Through its transculturation, the play's intertextual relation to mythology and Euripides' characterization of Medea is weakened, which

is why the racialization of Jason is significant: through Medea's humanization and legitimization, she becomes an ordinary woman which is empowered in relation to her husband.

Desdemona, however, re-racializes *Othello*. Othello directly relates his blackness to his experiences, seemingly portraying a pejorative image of a black man. He reinforces a racialized image of himself, which is not resolved without the adaptation's cultural environment. Othello clearly refers to the internalization of structural racism. Their conversation does not end with complete comprehension of the other's standpoint, which confirms the character's complexity and depicts the ongoing relevance of thematizing racism. Through Othello's self-characterization, *Desdemona*'s racialization of Othello rethinks stereotypes.

Enslaved Characters

Euripides' play and Shakespeare's include enslaved characters. The hierarchy between main characters and enslaved ones is not only manifested in class issues. It also involves racializations, as *Othello*'s Barbary and *Medea*'s nurse reappear as black characters in the adaptations. Through these transformations, considerable meaning is ascribed to their appearances. As transculturations, the characterizations as black, enslaved domestic workers, point to the realities in Euripides' and Shakespeare's time. Transculturated into the 21st century, the significance Barbary receives in *Desdemona* reacts to this oppression, while the racialization of the nurse in *Medea* reiterates her label as a slave in Euripides' text.

Barbary does not belong to *Othello*'s figures, nor does she belong to its personnel. She is only mentioned by Desdemona (4.3.25). From Othello's literary text alone, it is not obvious that she is black. Only references in the main text suggest it: "The name is strangely evocative in this play, however, since it recalls the 'Barbary Moors' of North Africa, and Iago's description of Othello as a 'Barbary horse' […]. Black body servants were becoming fashionable in this period, and perhaps we should think of Barbary as a black maid […]" (Neill 357 n. 24). Barbary is a silenced character because she also does not belong to the personnel, which, according to Pfister, excludes "these figures which are only verbally thematized in the replicas, but never presented in scene" (225). This definition applies to Barbary, who, thus, belongs to the "*backstage characters*" (Pfister 225-226). It is not only an interpretation that the maid is silenced, as this character type has "a status significantly different from that of other figures of the personnel" (Pfister 226). By including Barbary in *Desdemona*'s personnel, her importance is raised. As she appears in the play, she rewrites the information known from

Othello. She demands to be called by her real name Sa'ran and addresses the oppression experienced:

> DESDEMONA. Well, Sa'ran, whatever your name, you were my best friend.
> SA'RAN. I was your slave.
> DESDEMONA. What does that matter? I have known and loved you all my life.
> SA'RAN. I am black-skinned. You are white-skinned.
> […]
> SA'RAN. No, you listen. I have no rank in your world. […]
> DESDEMONA. Sa'ran. We are women. I had no more control over my life than you had. My prison was unlike yours but it was prison still. (45-46)

From this excerpt, it becomes clear that Sa'ran describes "triple oppression". Desdemona's argumentation highlights a shared social disadvantage as they are women. What Sa'ran addresses is what intersectionality debates – namely that "human differences", or so-called social categories, cannot be seen "in simplistic opposition to each other" but that they overlap (Lorde 284). Thus, intersectional feminism asserts that black women, for example, are discriminated against in entirely different ways as white women are (Lorde 284).

Examining the racialization in the excerpts above, it may seem like Desdemona's relationship to Sa'ran is not influenced by biological differences. However, herein lies the dialogue's essence. Denying such differences is not the same as supporting justice. Discrimination because of outward differences simply reflects reality. To deny this fact is denying the oppression of people who are marginalized because of aspects such as skin color. Through relating her blackness to African history, Sa'ran racializes herself in a quite stereotypical manner. Serena Guarracino agrees as she states that the "portrait of Barbary/Africa as a woman/land of communion with nature and 'primitive' freedom from social customs could not be more exoticizing". Carney agrees by saying that, "like Othello, Barbary is connected with a wild and primitive natural world". Guarracino argues that such themes are eventually "elaborated on and deconstructed" in the play (65). Cucarella-Ramon writes about an "ethnoscape" that is created by rewriting the black characters, while stating that this ethnoscape contributes to decolonization:

> The black woman crows the white woman and renames herself Sa'ran, meaning 'joy', reversing the story in a wily move that situates the colonized one step ahead of the colonizer. This ethnoscape that 'affects the politics of and between nations' (Appadurai, 1990: 297) is where Morrison breaks the chains of colonization and brings to the fore the African diasporic self that constitutes an important element in the formation of what we know today as United States. (Cucarella-Ramon 92)

While Barbary is not directly considered a slave in *Othello*, the domestic workers in Euripides' play have always been openly referred to as slaves. Morwood declares that "Slavery was fundamental to Athenian economy and society" (xxv). In Euripides' plays, slaves often have important roles. Morwood discusses that "a character in a lost play affirmed that a noble slave is not dishonoured by the title", and that slaves "are crucial to the plot" in other Euripidean plays (xxvi). The discussion of the slaves' status in his plays suggests that slavery is rather scrutinized, as is the case in *Desdemona*. Despite the nurse's opening of *Medea,* other Euripidean plays display slavery more critically. *Medea* is not overly progressive in this regard.

When adapting the nurse's action and text without significant changes, her role – especially in the 21st century – does not suggest a critical evaluation of the nurse, and neither does the normality of slavery in the antique Greek play justify the adaptation of her character. As the adaptation dismisses the nurse's importance by ascribing a more traditional household role to her, the performance enhances this stereotypical depiction. The fact that she is played by black actress Michaela Coel (fig. 5) has been denoted as a meaningful factor by Varney, who suggests that the performance's "engagement with gender, race, public speaking and embodied subjects" in regard to the "inferiors" would be insightful (174); she does not further evaluate the implications of this change herself.

Adapting an enslaved character as female, a household worker, and black, results in triple oppression. Lorde writes about this combination of disadvantages and states that "women of color are the lowest paid wage earners in America" (288). With this reference to work, Lorde already introduces the vocational field stereotypically and historically associated with black women in the US. This image is relevant in the NT production as the racialized image of domestic workers fits Michaela Coel's role: it is one that is associated with various cultures since the history of slavery in the Western world. The image particularly resonates with the mid-century US, as Susan Tucker describes in her evaluation of the relationship between "Southern Domestic Workers and Their White Employers" (2019). Tucker describes the reality of this relation "during the 1950's and 1960's", when "half of all working black women in my hometown of Mobile, Alabama, were domestic workers. Until 1968, I had never spoken to a black female who was not either a domestic herself or the daughter, niece, or granddaughter of a domestic" (7).

Medea's dominance over the nurse exists not only in the nurse's status as a slave. The hierarchy is confirmed by the lack of a "linear succession of a replica and the one following" (Pfister 200). Pfister defines "interruption" (200) of a replica by the other party as indicative of

the interrupter's "dogmatic striving for dominance" (201). In the following quote, Medea does not even interrupt the nurse. Instead, she demands silence from the nurse:

> MEDEA. […] Before you speak!
> Go into the house.
> Prepare a bath for my sons.
> Do not speak to me. (44)

Varney refers to Medea's relation to the nurse and remarks:

> In the NT *Medea*, in between the Nurse's speaking position at the beginning of the play and her additional speech at the end after Medea exits with the dead children, her non-speaking and subordinate position in the performance is on view. She is present on stage in her delimited role as servant. She watches, listens, comes forward when her Mistress calls, fetches and helps wrap the poisoned gift, brings the sons in from the garden, and takes them to the palace. (174)

Despite this treatment, the nurse sympathizes with Medea. The nurse's opening of the play is exemplary, as Medea is not on stage at this point (Power 3). Pfister mentions that a character's "trustworthiness" is increased when another character is externally characterized in non-dialogic speech (251). Thus, the nurse does not counteract Medea's treatment. Tucker explains this relationship with the fact that "Black women, too, saw themselves as the more 'instinctive mothers' – both to their own children and to the children of whites" (Tucker 9). Moreover, the "strength ascribed to these black domestics" evokes "the image of the strong black mother seems to have encouraged white girl children" (Tucker 9). The proudness that might come with this duty explains the nurse's actions. The performance even reflects the image of the strong black mother insofar as Michaela Coel's muscular body is accentuated through her costume (fig. 5). Costume gives information about the "role in society", which interrelates with one's job (Fischer-Lichte 120). Sa'ran's appearance on stage cannot confirm this role, but the image described confirms the Desdemona's attitude towards her as obviously saw a second mother in Sa'ran.

Both Medea's nurse and Desdemona's childhood maid Sa'ran are racialized. In combination with Power's *Medea*, the NT performance create a nurse which is dominated and mistreated by the white Medea. This stereotypicality is increased by Coel realizing the nurse who is, in the adapted text, a slave. The adaptation racializes this role and perpetuates the stereotype it iterates. Desdemona brings Sa'ran to life, who was only referenced in *Othello*. Rather than reuniting Desdemona and her former maid, *Desdemona* creates an environment in which Sa'ran reclaims her rights. Sa'ran is re-racialized through the ethnoscape of the play which connects her blackness to an ethnic background. As contemporary transculturations,

Desdemona rewrites the enslaved character to raise her voice, which contributes to the play's decolonization. *Medea*, however, does not address the slavery of the nurse critically, but rewrites her as a black stereotypical domestic worker.

Religion, Rites, and Music

Music is an aspect that is not adapted, but added by Morrison and the musician Traoré. It contributes to the racializing of *Desdemona* as the black musician Traoré realizes the role of Sa'ran, and otherwise appears on the stage as a musician. Her blackness is not only highlighted through the multitude of roles she inhabits. Traoré also produces the music that relates to the beliefs and linguistic aspects in the play that are presented as truly African. The setting relates to a religious belief which is addressed in the lyrics, and this belief is connected to blackness in *Desdemona*. Religion and musical rites are racialized in Power's adaptation, too. As the biracial chorus functions as a mirror of a divided black and white society, the combination of religion and music puts a stereotypically racialized spiritual rite into a contemporary context. In Power's transformed version, the chorus is not only racialized but also underlines Medea's ostracizing actions. *Desdemona* decolonizes *Othello* through its re-racialization, which portrays a positive and authentic image that relates to the play's updated context.

The most significant change in Morrison's and Traoré's adaptation of *Othello* is the setting, which enables a reimagining of *Othello*. According to Beck et. al, setting has two definitions. First and foremost, setting is understood as the "place and time of a narrative (or also dramatic) text's plot" (85). The second definition concerns atmospheric aspects:

> *Setting* can, however, mean more than the specific place and the specific time of the plot: *Setting* in literary works also concerns the social, cultural, mental and political environment of the plot which is described, or one with which the reader associates a particular description of place and time. (Beck et. al 85)

Both types of settings are connected in *Desdemona*. The afterlife is not only the play's location, but also reflects the mental and religious environment. Taking stage and space into account, the agreement of both senses of setting are apparent. According to photographs (fig. 1), the stage mostly lacks "decoration", which Fischer-Lichte defines as a category further defining "the place, where X is located" (148). Decoration also contributes to "atmosphere" and signals the play's "mood" (148). The atmosphere created through the minimalist design matches the color

scheme. Fischer-Lichte writes about cultural connotations of colors (148), stating that "dark colors" signal "negative qualities like death, mourning, warmth etc." (148). As mourning, confrontation, and clarification are themes in *Desdemona,* these connotations apply. Desdemona introduces the afterworld and implies that it enables clarification:

DESDEMONA. 'Late' has no meaning here. […] (55)

Information about distinct religious beliefs reveals the religious meaning behind the setting: "In African traditions, the dead are quite undead and very present, and for them […] the past and the future are the same" (Sellars 11). The racialization of this belief is connected to music as Sa'ran presents her own version of the willow song mentioned in *Othello* (Morrison and Traoré 49). The song's last line relates to this belief:

SA'RAN. "[…] I will never die again." (49)

Cucarella-Ramon analyses the intertextual relation to *Othello* by stating that the song "that in Shakespeare led to the foreboding of tragedy, while in Morrison epitomizes the resurrection of black subjectivity" (92). The relation of musical aspects to blackness and religion is also emphasized because "Sa'ran was performed by African composer and musician Rokia Traoré, an element that also helped to vividly bring the Africanist presence into real life" (Cucarella-Ramon 95). Without relating to Traoré's career as a musician or her real-life persona, her presence supports the racialization of music and religion. Firstly, she highlights it by playing the figure Sa'ran; secondly, she and three black background singers support the meaning conveyed by the lyrics through the musicalization of the story. Guarracino writes that "another Africa enters the stage in and through music and, in particular, in and through Rokia Traoré's performing body", giving "presence to Africa by bringing to the stage the sound of contemporary African music and language" (67).

According to Rajewsky's definition, the insertion of musical episodes is understood as a form of intermediality insofar as they involve a "musicalization of literature" (7). Sellars evaluates the relationship between music and plot by stating that, "in performance, dialogues spoken by the actress playing Desdemona are in dialogue with songs sung by Rokia Traoré as 'Barbary'" (11). Fischer-Lichte" states that "musical signs" relate to "the subject level of the role figure X" (173). Especially when music is "produced by the actions of actor A", music receives a "special sign function", as a twofold role is ascribed to the actor (173).

Because the music stands in relation to the play's story, the adaptation involves "narrativization of music" (Rajewsky 7). Music also works as an instrument highlighting the

story of characters racialized in *Othello*. As Hutcheon writes: "music offers aural 'equivalents' for characters' emotions and, in turn, provokes affective responses in the audience; sound, in general, can enhance, reinforce, or even contradict the visual and verbal aspects" (23). In *Desdemona*, music reinforces visual and verbal aspects and is tied to the history of the black characters in the play. What Hutcheon describes as another form of racialization is a change of language (163). According to Asher Warren, "Most songs are sung in her native Bambara, spoken in Mali, West Africa, with the lyrics translated and projected". Fig. 6 shows this projection in a *Desdemona* performance. As the photograph it is not an example of the Nanterre production, it displays a German translation.

In the print text, this second language is used in the songs' titles and the names of black characters. The projection, however, elucidates not only the focus on Africa. It also stands for *Desdemona*'s decolonization as the silencing of black characters is reversed in a twofold way: their words are heard and seen as they are presented via two channels: the projection functions as a subtitle to the play staged in English (Warren 2015) and is placed on top of the characters at the stage's back (fig. 6). By using this projection, it is virtually impossible to escape the text. By combining two modes, the message signified by the play is intensified. Hutcheon describes the advantages of these modes:

> In the telling mode […] our engagement begins in the realm of imagination, which is simultaneously controlled by the selected, directing words of the text and liberated – that is, unconstrained by the limits of the visual or aural […]. But with the move to the mode of showing, […] we have moved from the imagination to the realm of direct perception […]. (23)

The music accompanying the mode of showing further highlights the relevance of the voices that are, as the emotional factor contributes to the message. Guarracino states that the music "enables a different approach to Africa, which is not *represented* as much as *staged* through aural affect flows or vibes enacting the experience of an affective memory of the continent via a global musical landscape" (68-69).

In the performance of Power's *Medea*, religion and music are racialized through the biracial chorus (fig. 7). As text and performance racialize Jason and the nurse, the distinction between black and white characters is established. The mixed-race chorus reflects the struggle between these poles not only suggested through its own mix of black and white characters. The dividedness of the chorus an adapted element, as it first supports Medea, and later Jason. Considering this performance, the chorus is automatically affected by her actions, which gives its sympathy to Jason new meaning.

Through music and dance, the chorus gives information about a distinct racialized religion. The dancing of the chorus has since led to confusion, especially because of the electronig music accompanying its singing and dancing. As Ackroyd describes: "Their voices rise and fall in a measured cadence and are underscored by electronic music by Alison Goldfrapp & Will Gregory, which evokes a slightly off kilter world, where things are not quite right" (27). Electronic music points to the play's updating, but does not correspond to the chorus' dancing. The latter is peculiar insofar as it involves „No flowing curves, arabesques and pointed toes. This is an angular and jarring, almost clockwork, evocation of a chorus who are possibly powered by a greater force […]" (Ackroyd 26). From this account, it is hard to make a connection to a specific form of dance. According to a viewer's description, the dancing imitates Haitian Voodoo dance "evoking Medea's Colchis-based witchy-ness" (Haydon). Visual otherness is interpreted here as strange, establishing a parallel to the barbarian Medea. Syme agrees with this view as he describes "highly stylized, jerky dance sequences" that seem "Voodoo-inspired". This interpretation is in line with the chorus' physical proximity to Medea, which contributes to her legitimization as it eliminates the main character's solitude. The racialization of the chorus suggests that its members are even more foreign than Medea. The biracial chorus is connected to a spirituality that is itself racialized. Given the colonized background of Vodun/Voodoo as a spirituality with African roots, the performance's characterization of the chorus seems pejorative in combination with the play's dominance of Medea and its stereotypical depictions of other black characters.

Jacques Mario LaMothe discusses the racialization of Voodoo as he considers it a "Black movement" (68), one that is associated with "bodies deemed 'different' from the norm" (37). He states that Voodoo dancing is still considered an embodiment of Haitian bodies (37). LaMothe denotes that such forms never concern a homogenous group only as he states that "the ways in which Black movements and traditions in one nation rarely remain insular and typically resound in others" (68). This is especially true for Voodoo, considering its colonized history. LaMothe describes that "elite bodies tend to construct the untamed Black bodies as malicious and dangerous, thus re-circulating images and representations fabricated in colonial discourse" LaMothe (201). Kizito Chinedu Nweke describes how Christianity was brought to Africa through colonization (239) and states that „Voodoo", amongst other spiritualities, has „become very attractive to people outside Africa" (243), while ascribing Voodoo not only to Haiti but also to New Orleans (243). She then mentions the problem of authenticity when imitation or revival of such spiritualities is intended, saying that „the revival of African spiritualities is

majorly driven by a search for that authentic African“ depiction of such spiritualities (Nweke 244).

The chorus‘ dancing in the performance could be read as an attempt to display this spiritual tradition authentically. However, it has to be considered in relation to the play. As the chorus is „accompanying Medea’s off-stage infanticide“ while dancing (Syme), it evokes the stereotypes associated with Voodoo. John P. Bartkowski, who evaluates „Typifications of Voodoo as a Deviant Religion“, claims that „vodun“, or „voodoo (as it is soften called in the U.S.) has been imbued with overtly negative imagery by white Europeans and Americans for the better part of the last several centuries“ (559). Common associations are that Voodoo is „a religion based on black magic and witchcraft“, that it involves „beliefs used for deceptive purposes“ and that it is „a cult religion which sanctions human torture or sacrifice“ (Bartkowski 559). Because the chorus supports Medea’s infanticide, it is reduced to stereotypical images of this spirituality. It creates a parallel to “human sacrifice”, also because Kreusa was first part of the chorus before leaving the group, according to Ackroyd (26), for wedding preparations. Then, Kreusa is murdered by Medea.

The view that the chorus displays a negative image is confirmed by the contemporary type of music accompanying the performance. Loren Kajikawa writes about „appropriation and creative misuse” (139) of “New World African cultures” (137). She examines contemporary artists producing popular music and evaluates “appropriation of African and Caribbean religious imagery” that “comes from within black popular culture” (138). Her result is that, even when a “spiritual connection to Africa and the Caribbean” (139) is established, and even when “moments of spiritual transcendence can be found” in popular music – for example “through repetitious irregular rhythmic figures” – appropriation can hardly be avoided (143).

Thus, the electronic pop music does not portray Voodoo spirituality in positive, let alone authentic light. The fact that it is biracial has to be considered in regard to the play’s thorough racializations. As Medea inhabits a superior position, the use of religion by Medea and the chorus is particularly insightful. As everyone in the play, the chorus believes in the Hellenic pantheon:

> CHORUS. […] Phoebus, god of music,
> Give us the gift of song
> That we may sing to the open sky
> Of the wretchedness of men. […] (19)

Through the incorporation of Voodoo, the shared belief between the chorus and the other characters resembles the influence of Christianity through colonization, which also explains the

biracial aspect. Although the chorus includes white actresses, it is racialized through the use of music, the ritual dancing, and the play's actions associated with the chorus. As its sympathy shifts to Jason after the infanticide, the alliance between racialized characters is symbolic of the power relation established between Medea and the performance's black characters. Fischer-Lichte denotes the relation between aspects of music, dancing, and other characters and objects on stage: "The musical signs can refer to specific *spatial relations* and also to movements of all of its signified spatial objects and people" (175). The meaning produced by these aspects in the literary text and performance is, thus, clear.

Both performances include contemporary music and, once again, refer to the transculturated context. However relevant the dancing rituals included in Medea may be in Western societies, the plot elements associated with the chorus replicate stereotypes associated with Voodoo. As Guarracino states, the music of Traoré achieves an "undoing" of "the authenticity-as-primitivism trope associated with African people and cultures" (68). The adaptations depict an interrelation of blackness, religion, and music. This relation racializes religion and music and leads to a perpetuation of derogative stereotypes in Medea, while Desdemona connects the black characters with music and religion that stands for the play's new setting. In the afterlife, marginalized black characters receive a voice.

Medea's Racialization vs. *Desdemona*'s Racialization

Both adaptations rewrite xenophobic aspects of the adapted dramas. The focus on blackness is particularly emphasized, although this emphasis has different implications for the adaptations. *Desdemona* applies re-racialization by giving voice to silenced black characters. Religious, musical, and personal dimensions achieve a decolonization of *Othello*. On the contrary, Power's *Medea* and its NT adaptations portray various roles negatively as they are realized by black characters which are ostracized by the white Medea's actions.

The analyzed aspects of racialization exhibit markers of contemporary cultures. Traoré's music is influenced by new musical forms; the Goldfrapp duo incorporates electronic pop music into the NT adaptation. While the beliefs in *Desdemona* rather refer to the ethnoscape as defined by Cucarella-Ramon, it establishes an authentic background that rewrites primitive characterizations of Sa'ran and Othello. The Voodoo dancing in Medea, however, appropriates spiritualities with a colonized history by combining it with pop culture. This combination replicates the dehumanizing images of Voodoo as a black religion promoting murder and black

magic. This result illustrates that the mere introduction of 21st century elements does not entail a deconstruction of stereotypes associated with intertwined theatrical and literary aspects. Euripides' Medea criticized the ostracizing of the barbarian Medea. Here, Medea is already established as legitimate in the play's society, her verbal and physical violence frames her as a colonizer, while the rest is victimized by her.

Hutcheon writes that "the time is clearly right, in the United States, as elsewhere, for adaptations of works on the timely topic of race" (143). Undoubtedly, she refers to the ongoing relevance of racism which reaches new dimensions in a globalized world. The NT *Medea*, however, is exemplary of an adaptation which relates to mixed-race cultures without considering the implications of textual details and issues of appropriation. Medea is not the victimized other, but the white, brutal counterpart whose actions cannot be justified in the play's evolved contemporary context.

The topic receives considerable attention in Shakespeare's play. However, the role is significantly transformed. Through music, the inclusion of several darker-skinned figures, distinct traditions, religious elements, and stage elements, Morrison and Traoré give the silenced characters a voice and create a setting in which stereotypes regarding blackness can be addressed. The transformation in several aspects clarifies that *Othello* is transculturated to a context that reflects progressive views. In a comparison with another *Othello* adaptation, Cucarella-Ramon, too, denotes the relevance of contemporary elements which contribute to *Desdemona*'s decolonizing:

> Despite the publication of Gilroy's Against race: Imagining political culture beyond the color line (2000), which inaugurated the global construct of a post-racial era and, therefore, summoned scholars to get over theories of race disregarding the essentialist tone that related race to social construction, Sears' and Morrison's plays demonstrate how the concept of racial identity-building, when it comes to representing the identity of African Americans and African Canadians, is a strategic feature that can only be addressed properly in a globalized conception of ethnicity that builds upon the roots and routes of the Black Atlantic. (94)

The differences between *Desdemona*'s and *Medea*'s racializations are clear. By re-racializing the play, *Desdemona* rewrites black characters as significant and connects their blackness with their personal stories. Sa'ran and Othello both highlight their blackness as a factor that distinguishes them from white characters. However, they do so to reflect the relevance of pejorative racializations and deconstruct these. Power's adaptation and its performance reverse the xenophobic discourse of Eurpides' play. Jason, the nurse, and the chorus are racialized in a way that depicts archaic stereotypes that are no longer deemed acceptable in its transculturated

context.

6. *Medea* and *Desdemona* as Transculturations

The three major processes analyzed all have contrasting implications on the adaptations. *Desdemona* revives *Othello*'s issues in a 21st century context, highlighting the relevance of conventional views as a strategy to scrutinize them. The Medea adaptation reduces the adapted story to one of domestic violence. These different ramifications illustrate drastically the implications of character relations, which highly influence the meaning created through the context.

The chapters humanization, legitimization, and racialization all exhibit references to contemporary culture. *Medea*'s use of props, costumes, and music, unambiguously transculturate the classical play. The adaptation's humanizing, legitimizing and racializing transformations combine to create an entirely new Medea as they rewrite the environment in which she appears. Power's and the NT's Medea is not trapped as an illegitimate female stranger. It becomes apparent that the three processes applied to Euripides' *Medea* appear as cultural updatings on a surface level. A woman outraged at her deceiving husband might still be relevant, and the legitimizing ascribes more power to her character in societal respect. However, "context conditions meaning" (Hutcheon 145), and so do literary and theatrical aspects. These only emphasize the interrelation of the disembodying, historicizing, and racializing as Medea becomes ordinary through humanization, privileged through legitimization, and xenophobic through the play's racialization. Once more, this connection underlines the interaction of social factors determined by context. Power's and the MT *Medea* do not create a similar revolutionary play. Oher characters besides Medea are weakened in a way that stereotypically depicts people who are still structurally ostracized today.

In *Desdemona*, the three interrelated transformations lead to a critical transculturation. The performance does not exhibit straightforward markers of contemporary culture as much as *Medea*. The projection is a direct reference, but the play otherwise establishes a link to the 21st century not through mass produced objects. *Desdemona* incorporates contemporary African music and, thus, influences the dominant Western culture. As Traoré's music is described as US-African, the play challenges the notion what African means for the black characters. However, the Desdemona also includes aspects that, on the surface, portray a typically exoticized image of Africa. Religion, which promotes a traditional picture of these characters

as Africans, gives rise to an "ethnoscape" (Cucarella-Ramon 92). This picture is revealed an essentializing strategy to ascribe an authentic background to the black characters. While *Desdemona* shows the difficulties of speaking about biological differences, ethnicity, and culture without grouping people in a stereotypical manner, it addresses these issues and manages to apply a postcolonial approach that is still necessary in its transculturated context.

The adaptations are exemplary of societal disadvantages as determining factors of transculturations. Hutcheon already introduces these factors through her dichotomies. Appropriating her theory revealed that she describes processes that are as relevant to perpetuate pejorative narratives as they are to display a "discourse different from the dominant […]" (Hutcheon 150) and view this discourse form a dominant viewpoint. Power's drama and its performance are, furthermore, examples of individual adaptive processes combine. Conequently, they reverse the demarginalizing aspects of Euripides' play. *Desdemona* takes a different approach by addressing each layers of disadvantage to deconstruct pejorative images in *Othello*.

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8. Appendix

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Victor, Pascal. *Image 2 of 4*. 2011. SFGate. Web. 15 November 2019. <https://www.sfgate.com/performance/article/Toni-Morrison-adds-twist-to-Desdemona-2326767.php#photo-1835103>.

Fig. 2: Hubert Smith, Richard. *Joel McDermott as Medea's son, Danni Sapiani as Jason, Jude Pearce as Medea's son and Helen McCrory as Medea*. 2014. Photograph. Picture 4. Web. 15 November 2019. <https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/medea-helen-mccrory_35089.html#&gid=1&pid=4>.

Fig. 3: David M. Benett. *Medea - Press Night - Curtain Call & Backstage*. 2014. Photograph. Web. 15 November 2019. <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/cast-members-dominic-rowan-martin-turner-helen-mccrory-and-news-photo/452502068?adppopup=true>.

Fig. 4: Richard Hubert Smith. *Helen McCrory as Medea*. Photograph 8. Web. 2 November 2019. <https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/medea-helen-mccrory_35089.html#&gid=1&pid=8>.

Fig. 5: Hubert Smith, Richard. *Michaela Coel as Nurse*. 2014. Photograph. Web. 15 November 2019. <https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/medea-helen-mccrory_35089.html#&gid=1&pid=12>.

Fig. 6: Harrer, Corinna. 2011. Photograph. Junge Bühne. Web. 15 November 2019. <http://www.die-junge-buehne.de/blog/2011/05/17/desdemona-auf-afrikanisch-ein-monolog-der-vergangenheit-gegenwart-und-zukunft/>.

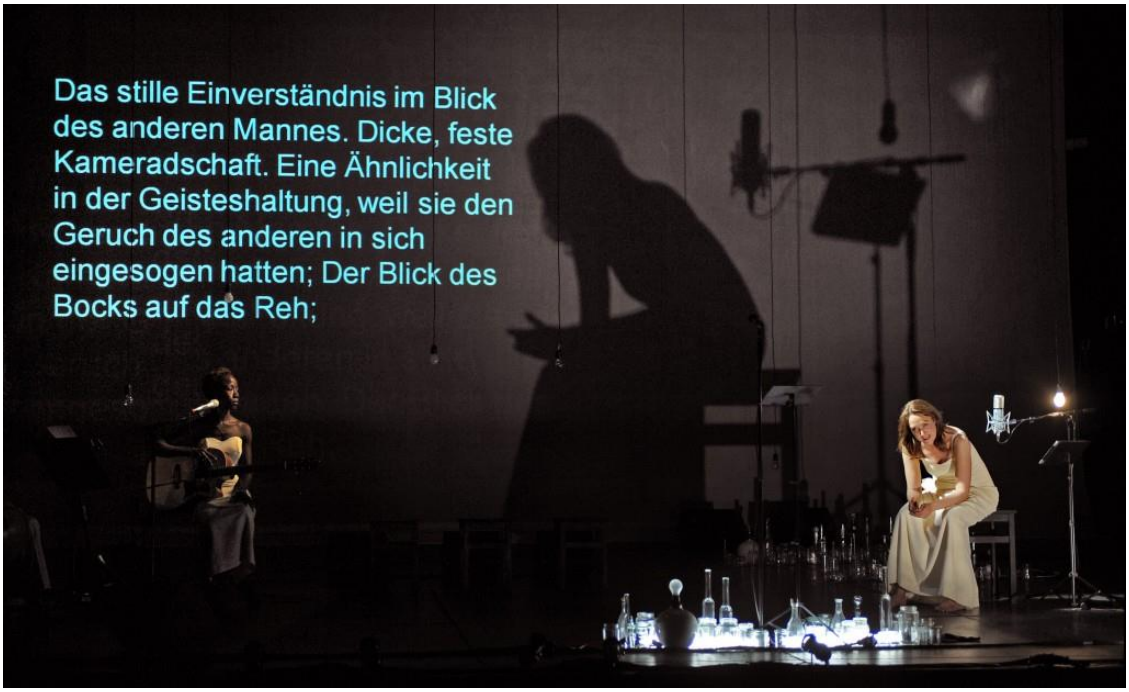

Fig. 7: Muir, Alastair. *Image 1 of 2. Helen McCrory as Medea at the Olivier Theatre*. 2014. Photograph. Telegraph. Spencer, Charles. „Medea, National Theatre, review: ‚thrilling and merciless'". Web. 2 November 2019. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/10980862/Medea-National-Theatre-review-thrilling-and-merciless.html>.

Abstracts

English Summary

Ben Power's *Medea* (2014) and Toni Morrison's and Rokia Traoré's *Desdemona* (2011) are adaptations based on figures of the classical plays *Medea* (431 v.Chr.) by Euripides and *Othello* (1622) by William Shakespeare. Both adaptations are transculturations into the 21st century, which has contrasting implications on the respective dramas. Both adaptations are characterized by Humanization, Legitimization and Racialization in various aspects. Humanization results in a reversal of the dehumanized main characters; Legitimization means their societal validations; Racialization entails a focus on the plays' black figures. Through different literary and theatrical portrayal, Power's drama and its performance at the London National Theatre lead to a perpetuation of stereotypical narrtives of gender, class, and race discourses, while text and performance of Desdemona actively deconstruct derogative narratives.

Note: This thesis contains photographies of theatre adaptations analyzed.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Ben Power's *Medea* (2014) und Toni Morrison's und Rokia Traoré's *Desdemona* (2011) sind Adaptionen, die auf gleichnamigen Figuren der klassischen Stücke *Medea* (431 v.Chr.) von Euripides und *Othello* (1622) von William Shakespeare basieren. Beide Adaptionen sind Transkulturationen ins 21. Jahrhundert, was gegenteilige Auswirkungen auf die jeweiligen Stücke hat. Beide Adaptionen sind charakterisiert durch Humanisierung, Legitimisierung und Rassifizierung in verschiedensten Aspekten. Dabei bewirkt ersteres eine Umkehr der dehumanisierten Hauptfiguren, zweiteres eine Etablierung dieser, letzteres eine Fokussierung auf schwarze Figuren in den Stücken. Durch unterschiedliche literarische und theatralische Darstellung führt Power's Drama sowie seine Aufführung am London National Theatre zu einer Perpetuierung stereotypischer Narrative von Gender-, Klassen-, und Rassendiskursen, während Text und Aufführung von *Desdemona* diese Narrative aktiv dekonstruieren.

Notiz: Diese Arbeit enthält Fotografien der analysierten Theateradaptionen.