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Creating Classics

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Translation Portfolio - Piece 4

The translation takes a look at Medea and her powers, and the connections I made to *The Mysterious Stranger*, by Mark Twain.



“There is No God.”



Background and Content on the Mysterious Stranger:

Imagine meeting Satan for a day. In Mark Twain's "The Mysterious Stranger," the main character Theodor and his friends do just that. Satan's incarnation, Phillip Traum, talks with Theodor and his friends and becomes their companion. They travel the world together and witness a panoply of human misery. Satan takes advantage of Theodor's innocence, destroying his faith in the good. The benighted Theodore bonds with Traum; he reacts despondently to his final departure: "Life itself is only a vision, a dream. [...] Nothing exists; all is a dream" (Twain). Satan shows reality as catastrophic evil, and argues there is no evil: just despair, then nihilism.

When you read this line, it's horrifying; I fell into the abyss. What if there really is nothing? Like the children in the story, I was traumatized by Traum.

Then I started to get the joke. As I reread the story, I realized Traum's roller-coaster is intentional. Twain's ironic story disguises Satan's traps, tempting the children and the reader to despair. Paradoxically, to believe in Satan must mean that one must believe in God; one cannot

exist without the other. Traum's dream is actually hell, and it's up to the reader to move toward that sliver of light.

Connections to Medea:

In Medea's case, her statement of "There is no god," at one point during the film details her inner conflicts from departing her homeland, and the religious acts, rituals, and beliefs that were a part of it. These were the things that made her the sorceress everyone feared, and a woman of every man's dreams. The first picture above takes place right after she asks her brother to remove the Golden Fleece from its place - to which he had to qualms or oppositions as you must obey this holy women (she exerted her power over him in this moment and it becomes clear why men and others obey and respect her). Right after this action, Medea easily kills her own brother, mercifully, if you will, and runs to Jason with the fleece (she is enamoured by him). Her state rivals that of the demon, literally Satan, in *The Mysterious Stranger*. He provided everything for the kids and was for them when they needed him, but after the turn of events and the death of their friend, they soon realize what his presence entails, and his evil spirit creates a hell for Theodor (the main character), his life, and his friends. Similarly, Medea takes on this role in her own hometown, which is why she flees, but unfortunately, to another hell, one where she is unappreciated and demeaned. When the reality she thought she created dissipates, Medea takes action into her own hands, like that of Satan, who drowns Therodor's friend, and unveils his true, deadly power.

Connections to Pasolini:

A famous Pasolini quote is, "If I then discovered a cancer in myself and died, I'd consider it a victory of that reality of things." Towards the end of *The Mysterious Stranger*, Traum (Satan) tells the kids that nothing exists, and that life itself is a dream (Twain). A mind-boggling statement for one to wrap their head around, but Pasolini's quote here echoes the same thoughts. Why suffer for long when I could control the life, that may not even be real, that

may not even hold any weight? Ultimately, the unfathomableness mixed with Pasolini's heavily realistic behavior leaves the audience to ponder his impact, and wonder if his thought process is the one to follow.