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great enterprise is at least a noble fault." I hope he can forget it.

"**B**ODY AND SOUL," at the Globe, is a swell fight picture. It's a dirty racket and nobody is ever going to do anything about it but make artistic films on the pawn in the ring, the rooks in the corners, and the white and black queens maneuvering for the pawn. James Wong Howe is my idea of a cameraman. He got on roller skates, clutched an Eimo, and shot the big fight sequence while being pushed around amid the flying leather. Mr. Howe's travels are tremendously successful. Canada Lee takes excellent advantage of an opportunity to create a full-dimensional Negro character.

"**H**EAVEN ONLY KNOWS": Guess what, they made another picture about the heavenly messenger coming down to arrest a mislaid soul. Let's see, that makes Number 17. Stay home and read Charles Erskine Scott Wood's *Heavenly Discourse*.

"**D**OWN TO EARTH": Guess what, Rita Hayworth is a heavenly messenger in this one. Stay home and read Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*.

**W**E USED to play a game of puns on *Forever Amber*. What's the electrician's book? Answer, Forever Ampere. What's the Soviet foreign trade book? Answer, Forever Amtorg. You, too, can play. What's the picture made from Miss Kathleen Winsor's book? Answer, Forever Hambo.

**T**HE Italians laughed *Life With Father* off the stage with the comment that they couldn't be bothered with plays based on the plot of whether a grown man was to be baptized or not. *Viva Italia!*

**P**ARAMOUNT ran a euphemistic congress to ballyhoo the DeMille lithograph *The Unconquered*. Everybody came and got drunk and tried to think up new superlatives for the film. My entry, "The Unconscionable," lost.

DENNIS GOBBINS.

## THEATER

**T**HE production of Euripides' *Medea*, in the eloquent adaptation by Robinson Jeffers, is the event of this theater

season. Judith Anderson gives a memorable performance, managing to be both the hieratic figure that Greek drama, as religious ritual, required, and a suffering and impassioned woman. Nor was Miss Anderson's performance disproportionate, though even John Gielgud, as Jason, was overborne by its fierce vitality and only Florence Reed, as the nurse, attained any comparable fulfillment in her role. For, like most of the Greek tragedies, the *Medea* keeps its main character constantly to the fore. Ben Edwards' setting kept the level high in that part of the production. The dourly looming portico of Medea's house gave appropriate mood as well as background to the tragedy.

Some of the elements that made Euripides' work an end as well as a culmination of the Greek drama are to be seen in the *Medea*. We must bear in mind that the Greek plays were originally presented during an ancient Holy Week, the festival of Dionysus, and were performed as a religious rite. That function of the drama is clear in Aeschylus, where ritual dignity suffuses the action. It was tempered in Sophocles by innovations in form, the addition of characters to heighten dramatic conflict, the reduction of the choruses and rhythmic variation. In Euripides the development is in content. Pressed any further Greek drama could not possibly have remained a religious function. That is probably why there was no Greek dramatist after Euripides. In the new content the traditional sense of the human being as the helpless instrument of his own fate gives way to a sense of personality and will. The individual emerges.

In this Euripides was expressing a decisive development in Greek society. By its defeat of the Persians, Greece, despite its division into separate and rival city-states, had become an international power. The Greek city, particularly Athens, had become a metropolis. The gods and the manners of the comparatively isolated and self-contained community of the past were no longer suitable to the fuller and more varied life of the cosmopolitan city into which it had grown.

Euripides echoed a general challenge to the old parochial faith, a challenge that was the essence of the teachings of the sophists. In his plays the paradoxes implicit in humanly weak gods and petty supermen were acknowledged in hardly-veiled satire. We have this skeptical new attitude in the *Medea* in the

withering portrayal of Jason—the Hero reduced to cad, as he actually was in the terms of his own myth.

Politically the new international position of the Greek states brought a rush for empire among them. The contest brought Greek society to ruin, as the similar contest among the powers, in our time, has devastated Europe. And just as the perception of this tragic error and of the curative need for human brotherhood filled the public statements and the writing of the major European writers of our time, so too in Athens.

Euripides was what we would call a humanist today. We know that he opposed the war party, that he defied the Athenian hundred-percenters, and that this stand isolated him. All surviving references to Euripides stress his loneliness. Hostility to the aged dramatist finally became so menacing that, at the age of seventy-six, he fled to Thrace.

Expressions of this humanist feeling are to be found in the *Medea*. We hear it in the contempt voiced toward the Greek racial arrogance which dismissed the rest of humanity as barbarians, and shut off culture as a Greek monopoly. And how caustically the empty bravery of the warrior is put to scorn in *Medea's* contrast of the ordeal of childbirth!

But what accounts most for the power of the *Medea*, and constitutes Euripides' most important contribution to the theater, is his psychological insight, his awareness, among other things, of the terrible force of the individual will when released from social restraints. He had seen examples of it in his own time, in the destroying and self-destructive careers of men like Alcibiades. In this respect the imperial age of Greece resembles the Renaissance in its politics and capitalism in its "free enterprise."

Euripides' *Medea* is human will in destructive individual motion. In her love affair with Jason *Medea* had cut herself off from her own community in Colchis. Rejected by the Greek community in Corinth as a barbarian, there was only the thread of Jason's love to keep her from hysterical alienation. When that was cut she reached the limits of human fury—a rejected woman's murder of her own children to deprive their father, a plunge into order to inflict it. Few works in all literature treat this theme with comparable understanding and power.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

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