

Many have described Sophocles' Antigone as a saint, and Euripides Medea as being a devil incarnate. I do agree in part that Antigone is saintly in her actions, yet I think her personality is hardly saintly. I also partly agree that Medea is like a devil in the way she behaves, but she not without motive for all her crimes.

Antigone is a very strong woman she is willing to go against the law of the king, by burying her brother, she favors the law of the Gods (Q), this not unlike many well known christian saints such as St (Q). One cannot deny that her actions were good, in Greek society leaving a body unburied was an extreme dishonor, as well as this her subsequent martyrdom is both heroic and saintly (Q). She is able to stand up against a tyrant in favor what was right. However her personality and her total disregard of all those who are near and dear to her, makes it hard to respect or even like Antigone.

In Antigone, Creon, King of Thebes, the one that opposes Antigone, he values the law of the state over the law of the Gods (Q). It was Creon who made the law forbidding anyone from burying the body of Polynices, Antigone's brother, and when he finds out that she has gone against his word he puts her to death, yet while it is clear that Creon is in the wrong, he is not particularly the evil tyrant that Antigone makes him out to be. When he is interrogating Antigone he does give Antigone a small chance to escape her punishment (Q), which Antigone ignores, she also does everything she can to aggravate Creon, she arrogantly basks in her crime she doesn't act in a remorseful manner at all when she could have avoided harsh punishment. She is a proud and vain individual she relishes the glory that comes with her crime, it is almost as if part of her motive for burying her brother was that she wished to bask in the glory, not exactly the way one would expect a saint to behave.

Despite what Antigone might want, she is not alone in her plight for justice, many of those around her are willing to support her. Her sister Ismene was willing to help her, while in the first scene Ismene is to afraid to assist her in the actual burial (Q). Yet later in the play when Creon accuses her of being Antigone's accomplice in her crime, Ismene is willing to share in Antigone's punishment (Q). However Antigone refuses Ismene's support, it is possible to say that by refusing Ismene's support Antigone is being "saintly" as she does not want her sister to be hurt, but I personally believe that her main reason for protecting her sister is that she does not want anyone to steal her thunder, Antigone wants to be the martyr and Ismene stepping in would ruin this image for her. This theory is backed up by the fact that later on in the play when Antigone is about to be executed and is lamenting her fate (Q). In this speech Antigone completely disregarding Ismene, it is almost as if by not assisting in the burial Ismene is no longer a member of Antigone's family. The other person Antigone's disregards is her fiance Haimon, not at any point in the play does Antigone even mention Haimon or think about him, he on the other hand seems to think of little else. He clearly loves Antigone and supports her in any way he can, after Creon has sentenced Antigone to death Haimon attempts to convince him to reconsider, standing up to his own father (Q). When this does not succeed he goes to the place of the Antigone's execution, and upon learning of her suicide he kills himself. This is made all the more tragic by the fact that Antigone does not even notice Haimon's sacrifice and devotion. Antigone's complete disregard for those that care for her is hardly the way one would expect a saint to behave.

Euripides' Medea has been described as being a demonic person, and it is true that throughout the play she does behave in a way that is demonic. She is a strong woman and she is willing to do whatever is necessary to punish those that have wronged her, or wronged those that she loves. She does many wicked things in her lifetime, yet everything

she has done has been for a decent reason, despite this no one can excuse Medea's behavior, she kills her own children a completely unforgivable and evil action. However while the way she behaves is undoubtedly similar to that of a devil, yet unlike a devil she does not kill for no reason, and neither does she kill for pleasure. It is not very fair to describe Medea as a devil incarnate, if she was a devil incarnate she would just kill anyone she could and just for the fun of it.

Throughout the play, and even before the play is set, Medea commits a number of evil acts. She kills many, anyone that has caused her pain and any that she feels she may need to, in order to cause harm to those that have wronged her. While revenge was perfectly acceptable in Greek tradition Medea takes her revenge way to far committing absolutely atrocious crimes. Medea's murder of her children is the one crime that I find hardest to ignore, of everything that Medea does the murder of her children makes it possible for one to describe her as a devil. While it is possible to deny that her murder of Glauce, the woman Jason has left her for, and Creon, the man who exiles her is evil, I find that I am able to forgive her for this where it isn't possible to forgive her for the children's death. Creon is the only one who seems to be truly wary of Medea he fears what she will do if he does not exile him (Q). This fairly wise as Medea has been behaving in a fairly suspicious and manic manner and he was hoping to protect the ones he love (Q). Sadly Creon does not immediately enforce his exile, giving Medea the precious time she needs to plan out her crimes.

Jason is the reason for all of Medea's crimes, before the actions of the play Medea betrays her family, murders her younger brother and flees her homeland all out of her love for Jason. Yet despite her total and utter devotion to Jason and the children they have had together, Jason still leaves her in favor of another woman. Medea was already an unstable individual and by abandoning her Jason pushes this instability turns into dementia (Q). Jason is a cruel man for callously leaving Medea the way he did, Jason does claim that the only reason he left her is that he wished to support her and the children (Q). To be honest I am not fully convinced by this, he doesn't make this offer until after Medea has been exiled and he no longer plans to give it (Q), even if he had planned to give his support he could of told Medea before he upped and left making the blow less painful, maybe if he had done this she might not have gone so crazy. It is because of this that while I believe that Medea's actions are unforgivable, she is not in my opinion a devil just a deeply disturbed woman.

When comparing Medea and Antigone, it is possible for one to see that they are in fact quite similar, they are both very strong and independent women who reject the commonly accepted role of women in Greek society, Antigone believes that a woman's role is unimportant when her families honor is at stake, while in retrospect Ismene represents the role of women (Q). While Medea just completely disregards the role which she is expected to follow, the only time she behaves the way a Greek woman was expected to is when she is manipulating Creon and she does so in a way that is almost mocking to all the women who allow themselves to be cowed by men (Q). Both Antigone and Medea are willing to break the laws of the state in order to do what's right, yet while the law that Antigone breaks is minor when compared to Medea's mass murder; but I'm sure that if Antigone thought that murder was necessary she would have done it without thinking twice. Ignoring there many similarities they do have their differences, Antigone does a good deed yet has an infuriatingly selfish and proud personality (Q). While Medea does something truly evil, yet does not take any pride in her crimes.

In conclusion, I believe that Antigone's actions are certainly saintly, but her personality and arrogance make it hard to see her as being a saint. On the other hand Medea certainly does things which are certainly wicked, yet her motives make it hard to describe her as being a devil.