

GRIEVING AND MONSTROUS MOTHERS: FEMALE STEREOTYPES AND MOTHERHOOD IN THE VOLSUNG SAGA AND EURIPIDE'S HECABE

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Motherhood is a common motif in literature that depicts ideals of what a mother should be like. Women are forced into fulfilling their roles as passive and angelical mothers within a private sphere. However, there are female characters that have chosen to fight against those who have wronged them, thus, assuming “male behaviors”. The presence of women as objects in the public and private domain shows not only the submission of the feminine but also its rebellion. Euripides’ protagonist in *Hécuba* is a woman that even though she is not able to escape from her destiny as a slave and as an object, she is able to reaffirm herself by becoming a righteous avenger for her children even though she is considered monstrous for doing so. In the Volsung Saga, Gudrun is a woman whose identity is directly linked to her husband; once he is killed by her own brothers, Gudrun is forced by her kin into marriage. Gudrun rebels against his tyrant/husband and her murderous kin. In doing so, she engages in “monstrous” acts against her children and husband. In her story men around her force her to undergo many woes; Gudrun became a tool of men and women alike. The moment in which she becomes active and exerts her vengeance, she is immediately referred to as a monster. Her acts of King-slaying and rejection of her motherhood turn her into a threat. The rebellion of these women against the violence that was exercised against them and their kin links them to female monstrosity. The following work will analyze how female monstrosity consists of stereotypes that frame women into Others and how society constructs motherhood in such a way that imprisons women into stereotypes and prejudice surrounding their condition as women/mothers and objects. The present work will also focus on the role of stereotypes in the bipolarization of motherhood in terms of a good mother and a monstrous mother.

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