

Euripides, *Ion*

ION

(*ΙΩΝ*)

of Euripides

Translated by

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# ION

## CAST OF CHARACTERS:

Hermes, god of messages and transitions  
Ion, temple attendant  
Creusa (*Kreousa*), daughter of Erechtheus (an early king of Athens)  
Xuthus (*Xouthos*), husband of Creusa  
Old Man (*Presbutēs*), former care giver of Erechtheus  
Male Servant of Creusa (*Therapōn*), gives the messenger speech  
Pythia, Delphic Prophetess (*Prophētis*)  
Athena, patron god of Athens, daughter of Zeus; also called Pallas  
Chorus of women, attendants (slaves) of Creusa  
Chorus Leader: speaks for the group in the episodes (dialogue portions).

SETTING: The temple precinct at Delphi. The stage building (*skēnē*) is the temple of Apollo from which the Pythia, sitting on a three-footed seat (tripod) over a chasm that exuded fumes that sent her into a trance, uttered prophecies. One *parodos* (side entrance) leads downhill and toward the road to Athens (*parodos* A); the other uphill and to other areas of the sacred precinct (*parodos* B). An altar is needed in the closing sequence and could be used in other scenes. We do not know to what extent the scene building was decorated in the original performance.

DATE OF FIRST PRODUCTION: *Ion* cannot be precisely dated, but is close to *Trojan Women* (415): that is, some time in the teens of the fifth century (between 410–420 BCE); suggested dates 415 (Diggle), 413 (Lee).

## *Hypothesis*

A plot summary or blurb (called *hypothesis* in Greek) precedes the text of *Ion* in the two surviving manuscripts on which the modern printed texts are based. The information in the narrative part is all found in Hermes' monologue. A cast of characters and identification of the setting are added.

Apollo raped Creusa, daughter of Erechtheus, in Athens and made her pregnant. She exposed the child that was born under the acropolis, making this same place a witness to the crime and the birthing. Then Hermes lifted up the infant and took him to Delphi, where the prophetess found him and brought him up.

Creusa was married to Xuthus: after assisting the Athenians in battle, he received as a reward the kingship and marriage to the woman in question. No other child was born to him. On the other hand the people of Delphi made the boy who was brought up by the prophetess a temple-keeper. In this way, without

being aware of it, he served his father.

Dramatis Personae: Hermes, Ion, Chorus of young maid-servants of Creusa, Creusa, Xuthus, Old Man, Male Servant of Creusa, Pythian Prophetess, Athena.

The setting of the drama is Delphi.

There are a few marginal notes in the manuscripts of *Ion* but not full scholia. It is not one of the plays deliberately preserved in the canon, but belongs to a group of plays that survive in two manuscripts in an incomplete collection of the plays in alphabetical order, those whose titles start with the letters epsilon, eta, iota, and kappa (which includes *Helen*, *Electra*, *Hercules*, *Heracleidae*, *Suppliants* [*Hiketides*], *Ion*, both *Iphigenias*, and *Cyclops* [*Kuklops*]).

I have used the following texts, commentaries, and notes:

A. S. Owen, *Ion*, with commentary (Oxford 1939, 1963)

Gilbert Murray, *Euripidis Fabulae*, vol 2 (Oxford, 1913)

Kevin Lee (who reproduces the Oxford Text of James Diggle, *Euripidis Fabulae* II, Oxford 1981), with commentary and translation (Bristol 1990).

John Gibert, *Text with Commentary* (Cambridge, 2019). Stellar metrical analysis and thorough scholarly introduction; full up-to-date bibliography.

Diane Arnson Svarlien's translation with introduction and notes by Matthew Wright (Hackett: Indianapolis/Cambridge 2016), is especially valuable for its easy to read introduction to the metrics and for following the Greek metrical schemes in the translation as well as the easy to read contemporary language.

Laura Swift's *Euripides: Ion* in the *Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy* (Duckworth: London, 2008) is a solid and accessible introduction to the play for students, laymen, and scholars in other fields, with insights of interest to professional classicists.

## The Three Actors

In the original productions, each play used a chorus of fifteen men, no more than three actors with speaking roles, and extras to work as attendants, etc. The three actors were masked and changed masks and costumes to perform more than one role.

### POSSIBLE DIVISIONS OF ROLES AMONG THE THREE ACTORS

1. Protagonist (First Actor): Ion
2. Deuteragonist (Second Actor): Hermes, Creusa
3. Tritagonist (Third Actor) Xuthus, Pythia, Athena

The Old Man and the Servant (Messenger) could be played by either 1 or 3

1. Protagonist: Hermes, Creusa
2. Deuteragonist: Ion
3. Tritagonist: Xuthus, Pythia, Athena

The Old Man and the Servant (Messenger) could be played by either 2 or 3

### MY PREFERENCE:

1. Protagonist (First Actor): Ion, Servant (Messenger)
2. Deuteragonist (Second Actor): Hermes, Creusa
3. Tritagonist (Third Actor) Xuthus, Old Man, Pythia, Athena

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# Euripides, *Ion*

## *Prologue (1–183)*

Hermes; Ion

1 Hermes' monologue (1-81)

*Enter Hermes.*<sup>1</sup>

HERMES

Atlas, who on his bronze<sup>2</sup> back wearily carries  
the weight of the sky, the gods' ancient home,  
fathered Maia by a goddess; she gave me birth  
by Zeus on high: I am Hermes, servant of gods.  
I have come to this land of Delphi, where 5  
Phoebus,<sup>3</sup> sitting at earth's navel,<sup>4</sup> intones  
oracles to mortals: what is and what will be.  
For a city, not unknown among the Greeks  
named for Pallas of the golden lance,<sup>5</sup> is where  
Phoebus by force joined in a union with 10  
Erechtheus' daughter, Creusa, under the rocky north face  
of Pallas' land, the Acropolis of the Athenians:  
the kings of the Attic land call it the Long Rocks.<sup>6</sup>  
Unknown to her father she carried to term the  
swelling in her belly—that's what the god wanted. 15  
When her time came Creusa gave birth to her son

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<sup>1</sup>I imagine Hermes entering on foot from the upper reaches of Delphi (along *parodos* B). He delivers his monologue in front of the temple (stage building or *skēnē*). At the end of his speech the character conceals himself behind a (real or imagined) bay tree near the temple; the actor would make an exit, perhaps around to the back of the *skēnē*.

<sup>2</sup>1: *Bronze back* indicates strength and endurance, but it is hard not to think as well of sculptural renderings of Atlas. By naming Maia (3) Hermes identifies himself, just as “son of Leto” identifies Apollo. Zeus has too many sons.

<sup>3</sup>6: *Phoebus*, “the shining one,” another name for Apollo.

<sup>4</sup>6: *Earth's navel*, Delphi was believed to be the center of the earth; the navel (an outie) was represented by a sculpture inside the temple. A later copy that was outside survives and is now in the Delphi Archaeological Museum.

<sup>5</sup>9: *Golden lance*, an anachronistic reference to Pheidias' statue of Athena on the acropolis in Athens. Pallas is another name for Athena.

<sup>6</sup>13: *Long Rocks*, in Greek just “Longs”.

in the palace and brought the infant to the same cave  
 where she had been raped by the god and exposed  
 him there to die, in a covered round wicker basket,  
 keeping the ancestral custom of the earthborn 20  
 Erichthonius,<sup>7</sup> beside whom the daughter of Zeus had placed  
 two snakes as protective guards of his life and given him  
 to the daughters of Aglaurus<sup>8</sup> to keep safe. Ever since then  
 for the descendants of Erechtheus the custom is to rear  
 children with gold-studded snakes. And so the girl put what 25  
 adornments she had with her child when she left him to die.  
 Phoebus, my brother, asked me to do this for him:  
 “My brother, go to the people of glorious Athens,  
 born of the earth—you are familiar with the goddess’ city— 30  
 and take the newborn baby from the hollow rock  
 with his hamper and whatever clothes he is wrapped in  
 and carry him to my oracle in Delphi. And lay him  
 right in front of the entrance to my temple.  
 The rest, —he is my own son, just so you know— 35  
 I will take care of.” As a favor to Loxias,<sup>9</sup>  
 my brother, the riddler, I took the woven basket,  
 carried it away and placed the baby on the top step  
 of the temple. I opened the hinged lid  
 of the contraption so the baby could be seen. 40  
 At the time of the returning cycle of the sun’s  
 chariot, the prophetess entered the god’s oracle:  
 when she caught sight of the tiny baby,  
 she was surprised that a daughter of Delphi had dared  
 to cast out her secret spawn at the god’s house 45  
 and was ready to remove him from the sacred space.

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<sup>7</sup>21: *Erichthonius*, early king of Athens, born from the earth, grandfather or great-grandfather of Creusa. In early legends Erichthonius and Erechtheus are not distinguished from each other (see Homer, *Iliad* 2. 547). Erichthonius had a son Pandion who became king of Athens, but Pandion’s name is absent from *Ion*. According to Apollodorus, Erichthonius was born from the sperm of Hephaestus when he tried to rape Athena. She wiped it to the Earth who then gave birth to Erichthonius. Athena wanted his birth kept secret.

<sup>8</sup>23: *Aglaurus*, wife of Cecrops (Kekrops), earthborn first king of Athens. Their daughters, Herse, Pandrosus, and Aglaurus were put in charge of the baby Erichthonius.

<sup>9</sup>36: Apollo is called *Loxias* (23 times in *Ion*), often in his prophetic mode. *Loxias*, perhaps < *loxos*, “oblique,” “slanting” > “of twisted speech;” “who speaks two ways at once” (Di Piero, Oxford, 1996). Apollo is more than one thing: he is “radiant” as the name *Phoebus* implies and “devious” in his role as *Loxias*, seducer and giver of questionable oracles (see Lee *ad* 36, p 164).

Pity overcame that cruel impulse and the god worked  
for his child, so he wouldn't be put out of the temple.  
She picked him up and fed him. She did not know  
Phoebus was his father, hadn't a clue who his mother was. 50  
And the boy knows nothing of his parentage.  
As a child he played, not straying far from the altars  
that sustained him. But when he blossomed into young  
manhood, the Delphians made him keeper of the god's  
gold and trusted steward of all his treasure. Here 55  
in the temple compound his life is devoted<sup>10</sup> to the god.  
Creusa, the boy's mother, was married to Xuthus  
under the following circumstances: hostilities  
broke out between Athens and the Chalcodontians  
who occupy the land of Euboea. He signed on for this 60  
conflict and with his spear led Athens to victory,  
for which he won the honor of marrying Creusa,  
though he was not native born. He is in fact an Achaean,  
son of Zeus' son Aeolus. Even after sharing the marriage  
bed for some time he is childless; so, of course, is Creusa. 65  
That is why they have come here to the oracle  
of Apollo, out of desire for children. Loxias takes  
the lead in this. He has not forgotten, as you might think.  
He will give his own son to Xuthus when he comes  
to consult the oracle and he will tell him 70  
that he is *his*, so that when he reaches his mother's  
home he will be recognized by Creusa, but Loxias'  
sexual assault will remain secret and the boy will  
enjoy what is his right. Apollo will give him the name  
*Ion*,<sup>11</sup> known throughout Hellas as founder of the Asian land. 75  
Well, now I'll move aside into this grove of laurel,  
so I can learn just what is decided concerning the boy.  
I see Loxias' son coming out here

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<sup>10</sup>56: *Devoted*: Greek *semnon* is hard to translate. In *Hippolytus* (93), the title character's slave, reproving his young king for disregarding the goddess Aphrodite, says "to hate *to semnon*" is an established law among mortals. There *to semnon* is pride, an expectation that one is different from the common run of people, and a person who is *semnos* is haughty, arrogant, or sanctimonious (see Barrett, W. S., *Euripides: Hippolytus*, Oxford, 1964 *ad loc.*). Here in *Ion*, it seems to mean "reverent" or "pious"; "holy"; "his life has been one song of purity" (W. S. DiPiero, trans. Oxford, 1996). The character Ion is not aloof, but friendly, curious, sympathetic, and outspoken to the visitors to the oracle. Only when Xuthus becomes more touchy-feely than he would expect from a visitor, does Ion become huffy.

<sup>11</sup>75: *Ion*, "going/coming" from Greek *ienai* ("to go"). The Greek cities in Asia Minor and the islands near the coast are known as *Ionian*.

to festoon the doors of the temple with  
bay branches. And I first among the gods call him 80  
*Ion*, with the name that is going to be his.

*Exit Hermes to bay trees (at the side of the temple).*

*Enter Ion from the temple. The silent attendants (therapes) enter along the sides.*

2 Ion's Monody (Solo) (82–183)

ION (astrophic anapestic opening)

Shining chariot drawn by four horses!  
Helios the sun sheds his light over the earth;  
the stars are put to flight by fire in the sky  
back into holy night. 85

The peaks of Parnassus, untrodden by humans,  
catching the first light, receive day's  
returning, a blessing for all mankind.  
The smoke of Phoebus' arid Arabian incense  
wafts to the rooftops. 90

The woman of Delphi<sup>12</sup> is seated on the sacred tripod,  
singing to the Hellenes whatever noises  
Apollo calls out to her.

*To the attendants.*

But, Delphians, attendants of Phoebus,  
go first to the silvery eddies of Castalia 95  
and bathe in her pure waters,  
then come back to the temple.

*The attendants begin to leave by parodos B to the stream Castalia.*

Keep a reverent silence  
and let only suitable words  
be heard from your lips 100  
by those who come to consult the oracle.

As always I toil at these tasks  
I have had since childhood, with sacred  
branches of laurel tied together, I will keep  
Phoebus' doorways clean, keep the ground 105  
moist with drops of water, and with my bow  
and arrows will turn to flight the flocks  
of birds that befoul the sacred offerings.

Since I have no mother, have no father,  
I serve these temples of Phoebus 110  
that have been both father and mother to me.

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<sup>12</sup>91: *Woman of Delphi*: the Pythia or Pythian Prophetess who sat on the tripod and uttered the noises that were interpreted by the seers.



*Strophe*

Come, fresh sprouting invention      (*to the broom*)  
of splendid laurel leaves,  
that sweep the stairways  
of Phoebus climbing to the temple,      115  
from the ever-green gardens,  
where the holy waters,  
flowing forth  
in a perpetual stream,  
water sacred myrtle boughs.      120  
With this I sweep the temple floor  
through the day by the swift wing  
of the sun:  
my service day after day.

Paeon,<sup>13</sup> O Paeon,      125  
I pray for your well-being,  
son of Leto.

*Antistrophe*

The work I perform  
at your temple is noble, Phoebus,  
in honor of the oracular seat.      130  
The toil is glorious for me  
to ply my menial hand,  
not for mortals, but for the everlasting gods.  
At such glorious labors  
I do not tire of toiling.      135  
Phoebus is a father to me, my begetter.  
I bless the one who feeds me,  
and say the name of father,  
so kind to me,  
of Phoebus, present in this temple.      140

Paeon, O Paeon,  
I pray for your well-being,  
son of Leto.

And now I will end the work  
of sweeping with the laurel,      145  
and from golden vessels will spatter  
water that springs from earth,

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<sup>13</sup>125: *Paeon*, another name for Apollo; also a hymn of praise.

that wells up from the streams of Castalia;  
 casting pure water,  
 because I am pure and untouched by love. 150  
 May I never cease to serve Phoebus  
 this way forever,  
 or else meet good fortune some other way.<sup>14</sup>  
 Hey, hey,  
 the birds are already thronging  
 and leaving their nests on Parnassus. 155  
 I tell you not to alight on the eaves  
 nor touch the golden house. Herald  
 of Zeus,<sup>15</sup> I will stop you again with my bow  
 though your beak  
 is too strong for other birds. 160  
 Now another bird is winging its way to the altars,  
 a swan. Move those red feet of yours  
 to another place!  
 Phoebus' lyre that accompanies  
 your song cannot save you from my bow. 165  
 Fly off somewhere else.  
 Go to the lake of Delos.  
 If not, your beautiful swan song  
 will end in blood.  
 Hey, hey! 170  
 What is this new bird coming?  
 Are you making a straw nest  
 for your young under the eaves!?  
 The twang of my bow will put a stop to that.  
 Better obey me. Go to the eddies  
 of Alphaeus and raise your young 175  
 or to the Isthmian glen,  
 so the offerings and temple  
 of Phoebus are not soiled . . . .  
 But I am ashamed to kill you  
 who bring the gods' words 180  
 to mortals. I will serve Phoebus  
 in whatever tasks are assigned to me  
 and will not cease tending those who feed me.

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<sup>14</sup>151–3: *This way forever*: Ion is more flexible than Hippolytus who, in his play (*Hippolytus*, 87) at the end of his homage to Artemis, prays that he reach the end of his life just as he began it. Prayers in *Hippolytus* have consequences more than they do in *Ion*.

<sup>15</sup>157–8: *Herald of Zeus*, the eagle. Birds are messengers of the gods. Ion may threaten them but he does not harm them (see also 179–81, 1196–8).

*Ion continues his tasks at the temple doors.<sup>16</sup>  
The chorus enters along Parodos A.*

***Parodos (184–237)*<sup>17</sup>**

Chorus; Ion (from 219)

CHORUS

*Strophe 1*

—It isn't only in holy Athens  
that the halls of gods 185  
are graced with fine columns  
marking worship of Apollo Agyieus, guardian of the ways,  
but also here in the home of Loxias,  
Leto's son, the light of beautiful eyes  
shines from the two façades.  
—Look over here, see 190  
the son of Zeus is killing  
the Lernaean Hydra with a golden sickle.  
Take a look, my dear.

*Antistrophe 1*

—I see it. And beside him someone else  
who is holding up a fiery torch— 195  
is this the story told  
in my weaving,  
Iolaus, the shield-bearer,  
who toiled through the labors

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<sup>16</sup>183: Or he may exit into the temple for the golden pitchers (mentioned at 146 and 434–5) and return at or before line 219.

<sup>17</sup>*PARODOS*: entrance song of the chorus. The chorus files in and takes up its place in the orchestra. In this song different members of the chorus take different parts: changes within *strophe* 1 and 2 and *antistrophe* 1 are indicated by dashes (—). In the second *antistrophe* Ion takes part to answer their questions. STROPHE and ANTISTROPHE are metrically equivalent stanzas, probably accompanied by the same dance movements. The women of the chorus are admiring various works of art they see around the temple complex: 1. Heracles dismembering the Hydra of Lerna with the help of Iolaus (190–200); 2. Bellerophon astride Pegasus killing the Chimera (201–4); 3. The battle of the Giants (206–218): Athena against Enceladus; Zeus vs. Mimas; Dionysus fighting another of the Earthborn. All seem suitable subjects for the temple's metopes and pediments. "The subjects of the scenes here are the same as those embroidered on the Panathenaic peplos offered to Pallas every fifth year, and would be familiar to these women from Athens" (Owen *ad* 190, p. 84).

he shared with the son of Zeus?<sup>18</sup> 200  
—Oh, look at this one  
mounted on a winged horse,  
a man is killing the mighty three-bodied,  
fire-breathing monster.<sup>19</sup>

*Strophe 2*

—My eyes are racing 205  
in every direction. See the battle  
of the Giants on the stone walls!  
—We see it, friends.  
—Do you see *her* swinging her shield  
with the Gorgon’s face against Enceladus? 210  
—I see Pallas, our own goddess.  
—What next? The mighty thunderbolt  
burning at both ends in the hands  
of Zeus who hurls from afar?  
—I see it. He is setting  
the wretched Mimas on fire. 215  
And Bacchus, the roarer Bromius,  
is killing another spawn of Earth  
with the ivied thyrsus, no weapon of war.

*The chorus notices Ion beside the temple gates.*

*Antistrophe 2*

CHORUS

Hello, there, I mean you by the temple.  
Is it lawful to enter the sacred hollows 220  
on women’s feet?

ION

No, it is not lawful, strangers.

CHORUS

May we  
inquire something of you?

ION

What is it you want to know?

CHORUS

Is the central navel of the earth really  
inside the temple of Phoebus?

ION

Yes, wrapped in bands of wool with Gorgons all around it.

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<sup>18</sup>194–200: *Iolaus* cauterized the wound as Heracles cut off each of the Hydra’s hundred heads. Otherwise they would have grown back.

<sup>19</sup>201–4: *The winged horse*: Pegasus, mounted by Bellerophon, and attacking Chimera (a composite, “three-bodied,” monster consisting of goat, lion, snake).

CHORUS  
That is the story we've heard too. 225

ION  
If you have sacrificed the meal offering before the temple  
and need to ask something of Phoebus, you may  
go to the altars. But without the sacrifice of sheep  
do not enter into the inner sanctum of the temple.

CHORUS  
I do understand. We do not want to trample on  
the god's law. 230  
What is outside is a pleasure to see.

ION  
Look at everything, whatever is open to all.

CHORUS  
Our masters gave us permission  
to look at the god's sacred precinct.

ION  
In whose halls are you servants?

CHORUS  
The halls that raised our kings 235  
share a roof with Pallas' temple.  
But here she is: you can ask her in person.

*Enter Creusa on parodos A.*

### ***Episode 1 (237-451)***

Ion, Creusa, Chorus; Xuthus (from 401)

ION  
Yours is a demeanor that attests  
to your nobility and character, madam.  
For usually in seeing the appearance of people  
one can tell if they are well-bred. 240  
Huh (*ea*)!  
You startled me, closing your eyes and  
letting tears wash over your noble cheeks,  
when you caught sight of Loxias' sacred oracles.  
What is this sorrow that has come over you?  
Everybody else on visiting the god's precinct 245  
feels joy, but your face is drenched with tears.

CREUSA  
Stranger, your being surprised at my tears  
shows you've been brought up to be kind-hearted.  
When I caught sight of Apollo's halls

an ancient memory coursed back through my mind. 250  
 My heart dwelt on my life at home, though I am here.  
 Women's lives are full of woe. Gods can be so ruthless.<sup>20</sup>  
 What can be done: where, how can we recover justice  
 if we are ruined by the injustice of those who rule us?  
 ION  
 Why are you so inexplicably despondent? 255  
 CREUSA  
 It's nothing. I've let fly my arrow. For the rest  
 I'll be silent. Please don't fret about it any more.  
 ION  
 Well, who are you? Where are you from? In what  
 fatherland were you born? What name should I call you?  
 CREUSA  
 My name is Creusa. I am daughter of Erechtheus. 260  
 My fatherland is the city of the Athenians.  
 ION  
 You live in a famous city and were born and raised  
 by noble fathers. You have my greatest respect, madam.  
 CREUSA  
 That's the extent of my luck, stranger, no more.  
 ION  
 By the gods is it true, as the story goes among mortals . . . 265  
 CREUSA  
 What are you asking, my friend, that you want to know?  
 ION  
 Did your father's forefather really burst forth from Earth?  
 CREUSA  
 Erichthonius? Yes. But my birth does not benefit me.  
 ION  
 And Athena lifted him up from the earth?  
 CREUSA  
 Yes she took him in her virgin hands; she was not his mother. 270  
 ION  
 But she gave him as it's depicted in paintings . . .  
 CREUSA  
 to the daughters of Cecrops to keep out of sight.  
 ION  
 I have heard that they opened the goddess' chest.  
 CREUSA  
 And for that they shed their blood on the rocky crags.

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<sup>20</sup>252: *Ruthless*: I thought of translating this line, "Women's lives are full of sorrow. Gods can be real SOB's."

ION  
 Ah, yes.  
 What about this? Is it true or a story idly told? 275

CREUSA  
 What are you asking? I have plenty of time.

ION  
 Did your father Erechtheus sacrifice your sisters?

CREUSA  
 He took it upon himself to kill the girls for his country.

ION  
 How did you survive, alone among your sisters?

CREUSA  
 I was a newborn baby in my mother's arms. 280

ION  
 Is your father actually buried in a chasm of the earth?

CREUSA  
 The blows of the sea god's trident killed him.

ION  
 The place there is called the Long Rocks?

CREUSA  
 Why are you asking about that? You've brought back a memory.

ION  
 The Pythian honors it with Pythian flashes of lightning. 285

CREUSA  
 Honors it, honors it! How I wish I had never seen it!

ION  
 Why do you hate one of the god's favorite places?

CREUSA  
 It's nothing. Something shameful happened in the caves.

ION  
 What husband did you marry from among the Athenians, lady?

CREUSA  
 He's not from the city, but a stranger from another land. 290

ION  
 Who is it? He must be a person of noble birth.

CREUSA  
 Xuthus, son of Aeolus, descendant of Zeus

ION  
 And how did a foreigner manage to marry you, a native?

CREUSA  
 There is a city, Euboea, a neighbor of Athens . . .

ION  
 Separated by water, as I hear, from the mainland. 295

CREUSA  
 He sacked this land fighting alongside the people of Cecrops.

ION  
 He came as an ally? And then got your hand in marriage?

CREUSA  
 Yes, he won me as the dowry of war and the prize of his spear.

ION  
 Have you come to the oracle with your husband or on your own?

CREUSA  
 With my husband. He turned off at the shrine of Trophonius.<sup>21</sup> 300

ION  
 As a tourist to see the sights or to visit the oracle?

CREUSA  
 He wants to hear from him and from Phoebus together.

ION  
 Did you come for a bountiful harvest or for children?

CREUSA  
 We have no children, though we've been married a long time.

ION  
 You have never given birth, but are childless. 305

CREUSA  
 Phoebus knows the story of my childlessness.

ION  
 I'm so sorry. In other ways you are lucky, but not in this.

CREUSA  
 But who are you? How I envy your mother.

ION  
 I am called the slave of the god, lady. That's what I am.

CREUSA  
 An offering of the city or sold by someone? 310

ION  
 I only know one thing. I belong to Loxias.

CREUSA  
 For this I feel compassion for you in turn, stranger.

ION  
 Because I don't know who gave me life nor who is my father.

CREUSA  
 Do you live in this temple compound or in a house?

ION  
 The whole house of the god is mine, wherever sleep takes me. 315

CREUSA  
 Did you come to the temple as a child or a young man?

---

<sup>21</sup>300: *Trophonius*, Xuthus is conveniently absent so that Creusa has an opportunity to speak about her own mission. Trophonius, a Boeotian seer who helped build the temple at Delphi had an oracular cave about 15 miles from Delphi.



ION  
 Those who know best say I came as an infant.

CREUSA  
 And who of the Delphian women suckled you with her milk?

ION  
 I never knew a mother's breast. But she nurtured me . . .

CREUSA  
 Who, you poor man? I find in you a sickness that I share. 320

ION  
 Apollo's prophetess: I think of her as my mother.

CREUSA  
 What livelihood sustained you to manhood?

ION  
 The altars gave me enough to eat and visitors who are always here.

CREUSA  
 I'm sorry for your mother. Whoever she was.

ION  
 Perhaps I was born because of a woman's wrong. 325

CREUSA  
 You have a livelihood. You are very well-dressed.

ION  
 I am dressed in the clothes of the god I serve.

CREUSA  
 Have you never undertaken a search for your roots?

ION  
 I have not a shred of evidence to start an inquiry, lady.

CREUSA  
 Ah!  
 Another woman has suffered the same as your mother. 330

ION  
 Who is it? I would be happy if she would take up the search with me.

CREUSA  
 I have come here for her sake, before my husband arrives.

ION  
 What is it you require? I will help you, if I can, lady.

CREUSA  
 I need to learn a secret oracle from Apollo.

ION  
 Please tell me. I will manage the rest as your sponsor.<sup>22</sup> 335

CREUSA  
 Hear the story, then. But, no, I'm too ashamed.

---

<sup>22</sup>335: *Sponsor*, the *proxenos* who acted on behalf of visitors to the oracle with housing and introductions.

ION  
Then you will get nowhere. Shame is a lazy goddess.

CREUSA  
One of my friends says that she “lay with” Phoebus.

ION  
Phoebus with a woman! Don’t say it, stranger.

CREUSA  
And she bore a child to Phoebus in secret from her father. 340

ION  
No, it can’t be. She is ashamed of being wronged by a man.

CREUSA  
She claims that’s not so, and she has suffered miserably.

ION  
What did she do, if she was joined with the god?

CREUSA  
The baby she birthed, she exposed him out of doors.

ION  
Where is this exposed child? Is he alive? 345

CREUSA  
No one knows. This is what I want to ask the oracle.

ION  
If he is dead, how did he perish? Was he killed?

CREUSA  
She expects that wild animals killed the poor baby.

ION  
Is there evidence that leads her to believe this?

CREUSA  
She went back where she left him and couldn’t find him. 350

ION  
Was there any spattering of blood on the path?

CREUSA  
She says there wasn’t. And she went over and over it.

ION  
How long is it since the child was made away with?

CREUSA  
If he were alive he would be about your age.

ION  
The god wrongs her: to leave the mother in torment. 355

CREUSA  
Afterward she has not had any other children.

ION  
What if Phoebus took him and raised him in secret?

CREUSA  
Taking for himself the joy they should share is wrong.

ION  
 Ah me (*oimoi*). Her fortune is in tune with my suffering.

CREUSA  
 And you, I think your poor mother misses you. 360

ION  
 Do not draw me into a sadness I have tried to forget.

CREUSA  
 I will be silent. Carry on with what I asked you about.

ION  
 Do you know where your story especially falls short?

CREUSA  
 What is not a disaster for that melancholy woman?

ION  
 How could the god proclaim what he wants to keep hidden? 365

CREUSA  
 He could if he is sitting on the common tripod of Greece!

ION  
 The deed shames him. Don't question him about it.

CREUSA  
 Yet the woman who suffered this tragedy feels it acutely.

ION  
 There is no one who will give voice to your oracle.  
 For if Phoebus should be made to appear unjust 370  
 in his own house he would have reason to punish  
 whoever submitted the answer. Lady, give it up!  
 One cannot question the oracle in opposition to the god.  
 [This would be a very great folly on our part:  
 if we try to force the gods against their will 375  
 to utter what they do not want to say, whether  
 by slaughtering sheep on the altar or through  
 the flights of birds.]<sup>23</sup> What we strive for by force  
 against gods' will we possess as grudging goods.  
 What they give us willingly we live to enjoy. 380

CHORUS LEADER  
 Many are the misfortunes of too many mortals,  
 but they take different shapes. One rarely finds  
 one continuous good fortune in men's lives.<sup>24</sup>

CREUSA  
 Phoebus, not just then and there but here and now you wrong

---

<sup>23</sup>374–8: These lines are suspected on the grounds of relevance to the argument and the frigidity of their style.

<sup>24</sup>381–3: *Many are*: the chorus often utters a truism between speeches by the characters. We should not expect profundity, but comforting banality.

the woman who is not here, though her words are, through me.	385
You did not save your son whom you ought to have saved and though a prophet you will not speak to the mother who asks if he is dead, so he may be honored with burial, or if he's still alive, so that one day his mother might hope to see him again. Well, I must leave off, if I am prevented by the god from learning what I need to know.	390
But, look, stranger, I see my noble husband, Xuthus, coming toward us. He has left the chambers of Trophonius. Keep the words I spoke secret while he is here, so I won't be embarrassed for coming on a secret mission, and the story won't get out when I have not explained it to him.	395
Women's issues are hard for men to grasp and the good women get confused with the bad so we are all disparaged. We are born to misfortune.	400
	<i>Xuthus arrives along parodos B.</i>
XUTHUS	
First hail to the god, who receives the first fruits of my greetings, and then to you, my wife. Has my delayed return caused you any concern?	
CREUSA	
Not at all. You find us in a state of anticipation. Tell me what divine word do you bring from Trophonius about the mingling of our seed <sup>25</sup> to make children.	405
XUTHUS	
He did not want to anticipate Apollo's oracles, but he did say that I would not return home from the oracle childless and neither would you.	
CREUSA	
Revered mother of Phoebus, I pray we have come here happily, whatever our relationship with your son was in the past, may its future fall out better.	410
XUTHUS	
So it will be. But who interprets for the god?	
ION	
Outside, I do. But inside it is the job of others who sit near the tripod, stranger, prominent men of Delphi, chosen by lot.	415
XUTHUS	
Very well. I have all that I need.	

---

<sup>25</sup>406: *Seed (sperma, in Greek)* can refer to the contributions of both male and female to the formation of offspring. See Gibert's note on 406.

I will go in now. I have heard that the common  
sacrificial victim for visitors to the oracle  
has fallen before the temple. This is the day 420  
—it's my lucky day—that I want to hear the oracles.  
But you, my wife, take these sprigs around the altars  
wreathed in laurel, and pray to the gods that the oracles  
we receive from Apollo's house hold promise of children.

*Xuthus exits into the temple.*

CREUSA

Yes, I'll do it. I'll do it. If Loxias is willing now 425  
to atone for his earlier misdeeds, he would still  
not ever be altogether a friend to me, but  
whatever he wants—he is a god—I will accept it.

*Creusa exits on parodos A to decorate the altars.*

ION

What is this visitor getting at, reviling the god  
in riddles and secretive words? Either she has deep affection 430  
for the woman on whose behalf she is consulting the oracle  
or she is silent about something that must be kept secret.  
Well, what's the daughter of Erechtheus to me?  
She is no kin of mine. It's time for me to pour water  
from golden pitchers into the holy water fonts. 435  
But first I need to give Phoebus a piece of my mind.  
What is wrong with him. Does he abandon young virgins  
after raping them? Is he apathetic to the deaths of  
children born from these affairs? Don't do it!  
You have power, you should pursue virtue. 440  
Whenever mortals do wrong the gods punish them.  
How can it be right that you who write the laws  
for mortals are guilty of transgressing them?  
If—I know this won't happen, but for the sake  
of argument—if you and Poseidon and Zeus who rules 445  
the sky had to pay the penalty to humans for rape  
you would empty your temples atoning for your wrongs.  
You do wrong seeking pleasure without forethought.  
It is not right any more to speak ill of men  
if we imitate what the gods consider "fine" 450  
but for those who teach us these things it's another story.

*Ion exits to get pure water, probably along parodos B.*

## *First Stasimon (452–509)*

CHORUS

### *Strophe*

We pray to you, our patron Athena,  
unvisited by birth's goddess, Eileithuia,  
who relieves the pangs of labor,  
but birthed with the help of Prometheus 455  
from the top of Zeus' head. O happy Victory,<sup>26</sup>  
come to the Pythian home  
to its streets and passageways  
from your golden chambers,  
on the wing from Olympus, 460  
come here where Phoebus' altar  
at earth's central navel  
beside the tripod, celebrated in dance,  
fulfills its oracles,  
you and the girl child born of Leto<sup>27</sup> 465  
two virgins, two goddesses,  
solemn sisters of Phoebus:  
pray, you maidens,  
that the ancient line of Erechtheus  
with clear oracles meet at last 470  
with lasting fertility.

### *Antistrophe*

For it holds out an unshakeable source  
of surpassing happiness to mortals  
for whom children thriving in their youth  
shed a bright light in the ancestral house 475  
leaving a succession of wealth  
from fathers  
to children who will come later, 480  
protection in bad times,  
love in good times,  
in war they add a saving strength  
to the land of their fathers. 485  
For myself I pray that the caring  
for children come before wealth  
and royal halls.  
I disdain the childless life and reproach

---

<sup>26</sup>456: *Victory*, that is, as Athena Nike, goddess of victory (see also line 1528–9).

<sup>27</sup>465: *The girl child born of Leto*, Apollo's sister, Artemis, the virgin hunter.

anyone who prefers it. 490  
With modest resources  
let me spend my life blessed with children.

*Epode*

Shrines of Pan and caves  
beside the Long Rocks  
where the three daughters of Aglaurus<sup>28</sup> 495  
in the grassy space in front of Pallas'  
temples set their feet in dance  
to the panpipes,  
when you play them under the sunless cave  
where a sorrowing virgin, o Pan, 500  
gave birth to Phoebus' infant  
and exposed it, a bloody feast  
for birds and beasts, the crime 505  
of a violent rape.  
Not in my weaving nor in other tales  
have I heard that children  
born to mortals from gods have a share in the happy life.

**Episode 2 (510-675)**

Ion, Chorus, Xuthus

*Ion enters on parodos B.*

ION

Servant women, you keep watch by these steps 510  
where sacrifice is made and look out for your mistress,  
has Xuthus left the sacred tripod of the oracle yet  
or is he still in the temple inquiring about his childlessness?

CHORUS LEADER

He is in the halls, stranger, and not yet come outside.  
But he is on his way out as we can hear from the sound 515  
of the doors. Now you can see the master coming out.

*Xuthus enters from the temple. Sees Ion and tries to embrace him.*

XUTHUS

My boy, be happy: this is a fitting way for me to address you.

---

<sup>28</sup>495: *Aglaurus*: wife of Cecrops, early king of Athens (see lines 23, 267–74): Athena assigned their daughters the role of baby-sitters for Erichthonius, but told them not to open the hamper in which he had been placed. They could not resist this invitation and looked. They went mad and leapt off the acropolis to their deaths.

ION  
I'm happy, but you be discreet and we'll both be fine.

XUTHUS  
Give me your hand in greeting and let me give you a hug.

ION  
Are you OK or did some blow from the god make you mad? 520

XUTHUS  
Of course I'm OK when I long to embrace what is most precious to me.

ION  
Stop it! You don't want to break the god's fillets with your hands.

XUTHUS  
I will hold you. I'm not seizing another's property but have found my own.

ION  
Leave off before you find an arrow stuck inside your ribs.

XUTHUS  
Why do you refuse to acknowledge me, your nearest and dearest? 525

ION  
I am not used to humoring crass or deranged strangers.

XUTHUS  
Do your worst! But if you kill me you will be your father's murderer.<sup>29</sup>

ION  
How are you my father? It's so bizarre to hear such a thing?

XUTHUS  
No. A running account would make my story clear to you.

ION  
And what are you telling me?

XUTHUS  
I am your father and you are my son. 530

ION  
Who says so?

XUTHUS  
Loxias who brought you up, though you are mine.

ION  
You are your own witness.

XUTHUS  
Only after hearing the god's oracle.

ION  
You were tricked by a riddling response.

XUTHUS  
Then I didn't hear it right.

---

<sup>29</sup>527: *You will be your father's murderer*, it is hard not to remember another oracle relating to fathers and sons given at Delphi. Tragically, after hearing that oracle, Oedipus killed the first man he met on the road who was, as he discovered later, his father.



ION  
 What were Loxias' exact words?  
 XUTHUS  
 That the one who encountered me . . .

ION  
 What encounter was that?  
 XUTHUS  
 As I came out of the god's dwelling . . . 535

ION  
 Would meet with what outcome?  
 XUTHUS  
 Is my natural son.

ION  
 Your own child or the gift of another?  
 XUTHUS  
 A gift but still my own.

ION  
 You first fell in step with me.  
 XUTHUS  
 No one else, my boy.

ION  
 Where did this piece of luck come from?  
 XUTHUS  
 We are both wondering the same thing.

ION  
 From what mother was I born?  
 XUTHUS  
 That I cannot tell. 540

ION  
 And Phoebus didn't say?  
 XUTHUS  
 I was so overcome by this news I didn't think to ask.

ION  
 Was I born from mother earth?  
 XUTHUS  
 Soil does not give birth to children.<sup>30</sup>

ION  
 How could I be yours?  
 XUTHUS  
 I don't know, but I defer to the god.

---

<sup>30</sup>542: *Soil does not give birth*: With this simple statement, Xuthus discounts the legends of autochthony his wife and other native Athenians are so proud of.

ION  
Very well, let's grapple with another story.  
XUTHUS  
That's better, son.

ION  
You had an illicit affair.  
XUTHUS  
The improvidence of youth! 545

ION  
Before you married the daughter of Erechtheus?  
XUTHUS  
Of course. Never afterward.

ION  
And that was when you fathered me  
XUTHUS  
The time matches.

ION  
How then do I come to be here. . .  
XUTHUS  
That stymies me.

ION  
crossing all this distance?  
XUTHUS  
I'm puzzled by that too.

ION  
Have you been to the Pythian crags before?  
XUTHUS  
Yes, for the torchlight festival of Bacchus. 550

ION  
Did you stay with one of the sponsors?  
XUTHUS  
Yes, and I was introduced to Delphian girls.

ION  
In a sacred band of initiates or what?  
XUTHUS  
Yes, among the Bacchic maenads.

ION  
Sober or under the influence?  
XUTHUS  
Enjoying the pleasures of Bacchus.

ION  
That is where you fathered me.  
XUTHUS  
Fate has found you, my boy.

ION  
How did I arrive at the temple?  
XUTHUS  
Perhaps you were cast out by the girl. 555

ION  
I have escaped slavery.  
XUTHUS  
Take hold of your father, my son.

ION  
It is not right to disbelieve the god.  
XUTHUS  
Good thinking.

ION  
And what else could I wish for?  
XUTHUS  
Now you see what you ought to see.

ION  
To be born the son of Zeus' son.  
XUTHUS  
Which turns out to be your lot.

ION  
Should I touch the man who fathered me.  
XUTHUS  
Yes, in obedience to the god. 560

ION  
Greetings to you, father.  
XUTHUS  
I take that as a term of affection.

ION  
And to this day greetings. . .  
XUTHUS  
Which made me a happy man.

ION  
Dearest mother will I ever see your face? I long to see you  
now more than ever before, whoever you are. But it could be  
that you are dead and we cannot see you even in a dream. 565

CHORUS LEADER  
We, too, have a share in the family's good fortune,  
but still I would have wanted our mistress to be blessed  
with children and the house of Erechtheus to prosper.

XUTHUS  
My son, in finding you, the god has done us a service  
and joined you to me and you, in turn, have found 570  
what is dearest to you, that you did not know before.  
I too feel that same desire your mind naturally leaps to,

that you, my dear boy, will find your mother  
and I will know what sort of woman gave you birth. 575  
Maybe, if we give it time we can uncover these things.  
But leave the god's foundations and your homelessness;  
come to Athens, sharing your father's way of thinking.<sup>31</sup>

...

Are you silent? Why do you cloud your face  
with worries after your happiness of a minute ago  
and cause your father to feel renewed anxiety.

ION

The view of things seen from afar and up close 585  
is not always the same. I am happy with the way  
my luck has turned, and finding you as my father,  
but hear me out, father, what goes through my mind.  
They say the renowned city of Athens is born of the  
earth and not an alien people of immigrants to the land,<sup>32</sup> 590  
so that I will come in plagued by two drawbacks:  
I am the son of a foreign father and a bastard.  
With these disadvantages I will remain powerless  
and I will be called a nobody from nowhere.  
But if I have ambitions to the first rank of the city 595  
and strive to be somebody, I will be the enemy  
of the disenfranchised. Excess makes for bitterness.  
Those who are sensible as well as good and capable,  
and keep their peace and do not aspire to public life  
will take me for a fool and a laughing stock 600  
for not keeping my head down in a city eager to find fault.  
But if I attain a higher station than those already  
having a say in the city I will be stonewalled  
by their votes.<sup>33</sup> That's how these things go, father.  
Those who hold sway in cities and reach high office 605  
are most virulently opposed to any rivals.

---

<sup>31</sup>579–82: Probably an interpolation:

[where wealth and your father's scepter await you,  
and you will not be called disadvantaged 580  
on two counts, both ill-bred and poor at the same time,  
but well-bred and enjoying the good life.]

<sup>32</sup>590: *The immigrants* in Athens were called metics (*metoikoi*). They were often business people and artisans (including the Sophists) and had certain rights but not the rights of citizens.

<sup>33</sup>604–5: *Those who . . . reach high office*: perhaps a reference to the historical practice of ostracism.

Then I will be coming into another's home as an outsider,  
to a woman who is childless. She shared your fortunes  
with you before, but has no part in this, and by herself  
will bear this change of fortune with resentment. 610  
She will have good reason to hate me when I stand  
at your side while she still has no child of her own  
and will look with bitterness on all you love.  
And then either you will give up on me and see to your wife  
or you will honor me and turn your home into chaos. 615  
Think of the bloodbaths and deaths by lethal poison  
that women have devised for their men?  
And besides I feel pity for your wife, father,  
as she grows old without children. With her noble ancestry  
she does not deserve the curse of barrenness. 620  
The face of absolute power, so foolishly overrated,  
may look sweet, but it is bitter to live in the same space.  
Who, really, can feel happy, who can be comfortable  
if he spends his life in fear and suspicion of conspiracy?  
I would prefer to be a well-off private citizen 625  
much more than to be a tyrant who takes pleasure  
in counting criminals among his friends and hates  
honest people because he fears assassination at their hands.  
You could say that gold is more than a match for this  
and being rich is its own reward. I do not want to hear 630  
abuse for hoarding wealth and I don't want the stress.  
I hope for a life of moderation without anxiety.  
Father, let me go over the good things I've had here:  
first, what humanity treasures most: leisure,  
and then, troubles in moderation and no thug 635  
has pushed me off the street, an insufferable offence,  
to yield one's place giving way to baser people.  
And in the prayers to the gods and talk of people  
I served those in happy spirits, not the disgruntled.  
I send some on their way as other visitors arrive, 640  
so that I am always pleasant and a new face to new folks.  
And what people pray for, even if they don't want it,  
to be just, custom and nature both have made  
me that to the god. With all this going on in my head,  
I think I prefer to be here rather than there, father. 645  
Let me spend my life here. For the pleasure is the same  
to be happy with a lot as to find delight in small things.

CHORUS LEADER

That's well said. If only the ones I care for  
turn up among your successful friends.

XUTHUS

Stop this talk. Learn to accept good fortune. 650  
My boy, I want to start out here where I found you,  
with a public table participating in a feast for all,  
and to make sacrifices for your birth we did not make before.  
And now I shall take you as my guest of my home  
and treat you to a feast, and from there to the land 655  
of Athens as a sight-seer, not as my son.  
For I do not want to cause pain to my wife,  
who remains without children, though I have been blessed.  
But in time, when an opportunity can be taken I will persuade  
my wife to let you have dominion over the land.  
I'll give you the name Ion in line with what happened: 660  
when I was coming out of the god's precinct  
you first joined your step with mine.<sup>34</sup> Now gather  
all your friends and bid goodbye with a joyous  
feast since it's time for you to leave the city of Delphi. 665  
And you, servants, keep this quiet or death will be  
your reward, if you inform my wife of these events.

ION

I'm coming. One thing is missing for my happiness.  
Unless I find my mother who gave birth to me, father,  
my life isn't worth living. I make this prayer, if I may: 670  
I pray the woman who gave me life is from Athens,  
so I'll have freedom of speech on Mother's side.  
For when a foreigner chances to come to a city  
of pure stock, even if he's a citizen in name, still he has  
a slave's tongue and does not enjoy the right to speak freely. 675

*Ion and Xuthus exit along parodos B.*

### Second Stasimon (676–724)

CHORUS

*Strophe*

I see tears and grieving  
and a deluge of lamentation  
when my queen learns  
that her husband is blessed with a son  
but she is left barren and without children. 680  
Soothsaying son of Leto, what song  
did you unravel?

---

<sup>34</sup>661–3: *Ion* (“coming/going”), because he first joined his step with Xuthus *exionti* (“coming out”, 662) of the temple. Diane Arnson Svarlien (and others) translates 662 ‘because you were the very first I cast my “Eye On”’ (2016: 40).

Where did he come from, this boy sustained  
 at your temple? From what woman?  
 The oracles do not flatter me 685  
 into thinking there is no deceit in this.  
 I'm afraid of what will happen,  
 whatever it will come to.  
 The god's strange utterance  
 offers an outcome that baffles me: 690  
 the boy reared from foreign blood  
 has about him some trickery and chance.<sup>35</sup>  
 Who does not agree this is so?

*Antistrophe*

My friends, should we speak these things  
 clearly into our mistress' ear, 695  
 she who, poor soul, shared  
 with her husband all their hopes?  
 But now circumstances fail her: he is happy  
 and she slips into gray old age. Her husband 700  
 is disrespectful of his loved ones.  
 The wretch, who came as a stranger to our home  
 into great wealth, but did not share the luck equally.  
 Curse him! Curse him for deceiving my mistress, 705  
 And may he not reach the gods'  
 blessing with his offerings  
 burnt on the altar's fire.  
 He will know my views:  
 what is dear to the royal house. 710  
 Already they are close to committing villainous deeds,  
 this new son and this new father.

*Epode*

Rocky ridges of Parnassus  
 with lookouts from a station high in the sky  
 where Bacchus holds torches in both hands, 715  
 leaps with graceful feet among Bacchants who rove at night.  
 Keep this man-child from reaching my city.  
 Let death cut off his young life.  
 Our city would have a motive for  
 keeping off foreign incursion, 720  
 with our former leader, king Erechtheus,  
 marshaling the troops.

---

<sup>35</sup>Owen *ad* 692: "there is some trickery and chance about the boy".

### Episode 3 (725-1047)

Creusa, Old Man, Chorus

*Creusa and Old Man enter by parodos A.*

CREUSA

You were caretaker of my father Erechtheus of old, as long 725  
as he lived in the daylight; now you have grown old, too.

Raise yourself up to climb to the god's oracle,  
so that you can be happy with me if lord Loxias  
has uttered a prediction favoring the birth of children.  
It is sweet to do well in the company of friends. 730

Though—god forbid!—if something bad happens  
it is sweet to look into the eyes of a sympathetic friend.  
And though I'm your mistress, I care for you  
just as you did, once upon a time, for my father.

OLD MAN

My daughter, you keep the upright traditions 735  
of your upright ancestors and do not cause shame  
to your family of the ancient earthborn folk.

Give me a hand; pull me up; help me get to the temple.  
The way to the oracle's shrine is steep. Be a healing salve  
for my old age, using your strength along with my legs. 740

CREUSA

Follow in my steps. Be careful where you put your feet.

OLD MAN

Look here.  
The slowness of my feet. The quickness of my mind.

CREUSA

Lean on your staff. The path is on uneven ground.

OLD MAN

The staff too is blind, since my vision has grown dim.

CREUSA

That's true. But don't give in to fatigue or despair. 745

OLD MAN

Not if I can help it, but I have no power over what I have lost.

CREUSA

Women, faithful servants of my loom and shuttle,  
with what fortune regarding children—the reason  
we came here—has my husband left the area?  
Tell me this, if you have any sound information: 750  
you will not waste this favor on a disloyal mistress.

CHORUS LEADER

Oh god!

CREUSA

That's not an introduction that bodes well.



CHORUS LEADER

Oh misery!

CREUSA

Well, are your masters in trouble because of the oracle? 755

CHORUS LEADER

*Aiai!* What are we to do when death is the option?

CREUSA

What refrain is this? Where is your fear coming from?

CHORUS LEADER

Should we speak or keep silent or what should we do?

CREUSA

Speak: you seem to have some disaster to tell me.

CHORUS LEADER

It will be told, even if I must die twice over. 760

My lady, there is no chance for you to hold children  
in your arms or ever clasp them to your breast.

### **Kommos (763–99)**

Creusa (singing); Chorus, Old Man (speaking in iambs)

CREUSA

Ah me! (*omoi.*) I wish I were dead.

OLD MAN

My daughter.

CREUSA

Oh my life is ruined,  
I have suffered a stunning blow; my friends  
I cannot live with such grief, my friends.  
I am lost.

OLD MAN

My child.

CREUSA

*aiai aiai* 765  
A stabbing pain has struck me  
inside my chest.

OLD MAN

Don't lament yet

CREUSA

The song in my heart is sad.

OLD MAN

. . .until we know.

CREUSA

Know what? 770

OLD MAN

Whether the master has the same misfortune

and shares this with you, or you suffer alone.

CHORUS LEADER  
Loxias gave him a child, old sir,  
and he is happy on his own without her. 775

CREUSA  
You pile up this evil on top of the other,  
more grief for me to lament.

OLD MAN  
So, is the child you mention yet to be born  
from a woman or did he say he's already alive?

CHORUS LEADER  
Loxias gave him a young man already alive 780  
and well on his way to manhood. I was there.

CREUSA  
What are you saying? I have no words! You are  
telling me something I can't bear to hear.

OLD MAN  
Me either. How was the oracle fulfilled?  
Tell me more clearly who is this child? 785

CHORUS LEADER  
Whoever it was to first meet your husband  
when he left the temple: the god gave him as his child.

CREUSA  
*otototoi!* And he declared my life childless.  
I will live in loneliness,  
in my house without a child. 790

OLD MAN  
Who then was named by the god. Who was the first to meet  
the poor woman's husband? How and where did he see him?

CHORUS LEADER  
You know him, my dear mistress: the young man  
who was sweeping the temple. That is the child. 795

CREUSA  
May I fly through the watery ether beyond the land  
of Greece to the stars in the west  
such a grief I have suffered, my friends.

OLD MAN  
What name did his father give him? 800  
Do you know or does it remain unstated?

CHORUS LEADER  
*Ion.* Since he first came into his father's path.  
From what sort of mother he comes, I cannot say.  
But he's gone. So you'll know all we know, old man,  
her husband has gone without her knowledge 805  
to a sacred ceremony to make guest and birthday offerings

for the boy. He plans a common feast for his new son.

OLD MAN

Mistress, we have been played false by your husband  
and his machinations—I feel your pain—and we are  
insulted and cast out of the house of Erechtheus. 810

I'm not saying this because of any animosity toward  
your husband, but I love you more than I care for him.  
First he immigrated to this land as a stranger;  
then he married you and took your home and inheritance;  
now he is found in secret to be producing children  
by another woman. I can explain how he managed it: 815

when he discovered you were barren, he did not desire  
to share the same ill fortune with you,  
but he took a slave woman to his bed and secretly  
fathered the child and put him in the care of one  
of the women of Delphi to bring up. The boy grew up 820

freely in the god's precinct, so he could be kept secret.  
When Xuthus realized the child would be grown up,  
he persuaded you to come here because of your childlessness.  
So the god did not lie, your husband was the one who lied,  
long ago, rearing the boy, he wove this kind of deceit. 825

He has been caught out and is trying to palm it off on the god.  
He came here desiring to fight for time, intending  
to invest the boy with the rulership of the country;  
he fabricated the new name to suit the timing,  
Ion, because the boy met his father coming to him. 830

CHORUS LEADER

*Oimoi!* How I hate evil-doing men and always will,  
men who plot out dishonest deeds and dress them up  
with clever rationalizations. I'd much prefer  
to have a friend who is humble but good  
to one whose evil is disguised by cleverness. 835

OLD MAN

And you will suffer this, the final evil of all:  
a motherless, no account, born from some slave  
woman is brought in as master of your house.  
It would be a simple evil if he had  
settled in the house a child from a noble mother, 840  
arguing your barrenness. And if this were bitter to you  
he ought to have arranged a marriage among the Aeolians.  
Therefore you must do the womanly thing:  
either taking up the sword or with some guile  
or using poisons you must kill your husband

and the boy before death comes to you from them.<sup>36</sup>

And I am willing to abet you in this. I will go 850  
to the place where the feast is prepared to murder  
the boy and thus repay my masters for my keep,  
I am ready to die or continue living in the day light.  
Only one thing brings shame to slaves: the name.  
In everything else a slave is no worse 855  
than a free man provided that he is a decent man.

CHORUS LEADER

I too, my dear mistress, am willing to share  
this disaster and either to die or live with honor.

### Creusa's Monody (859–922)

CREUSA

Oh, my life! How can I keep silent?  
And yet how can I reveal that hidden coupling 860  
and abandon my shame?  
What is there left to stop me?  
What prize for virtue am I competing for?  
Hasn't my husband turned out to be a traitor?  
I am deprived of a home, deprived of children; 865  
my hopes are dashed which I wanted to manage honorably  
but was not able,  
though I hid my union  
and hid my childbirth with all its tears.  
By the starry seat of Zeus 870  
and the goddess above my own city's peaks  
and the sacred shore of Triton's  
deep-watered lake,  
I will no longer hide the union: by unburdening  
my chest, my heart will feel lighter. 875  
My eyes are dripping with tears.  
My soul is in torment, bombarded by cruel plots  
of men and immortals,  
whom I will reveal  
as thankless betrayers of marriage vows. 880

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<sup>36</sup>847–9: These lines are deleted as an interpolation, to needlessly explain why Creusa is in danger.

[If you let this pass your life is lost.  
For when two enemies enter under the same roof  
one or the other of them must suffer ill.]

You were crooning to the tune of the seven-stringed lyre  
 which in the lifeless horns of beasts that rove the fields  
 sounds the melodious songs of the Muses,  
 I make this reproach to you, son of Leto: 885  
 that I address by the light of day.  
 You came to me, your hair gleaming with gold,  
 when I was gathering in my lap  
 saffron strands, reflecting the golden rays. 890  
 You took me by my white wrists  
 to lie on the floor of the cave,  
 as I cried aloud, "Mother, Mother"  
 you, a rapist and a god,  
 you brought me to shame 895  
 doing your part in service to love's goddess, Kupris.  
 And in my misery I bore you  
 a son whom I cast out,  
 because of a mother's fear,  
 I lay him in your bed,  
 where you harnessed me, a woman in despair, 900  
 in this tragic coupling.  
 Ah me! (*Oimoi moi!*) And now he is lost,  
 seized as a feast by carrion birds,  
 my son and yours.  
 Wretch, and on the lyre you drone on and on 905  
 singing paeans.  
*Oe*  
 I address the son of Leto  
 who allots the responses  
 at the golden steps  
 and dais at earth's center: 910  
 my voice is a herald into the light,  
*io, io* dastardly vile seducer  
 who sends home a son for my husband  
 when no favors have been given.  
 But my child and yours 915  
 is gone, preyed on by birds,  
 has lost his mother's birthday tokens.  
 Delos despises you and the shoots  
 of laurel beside the delicate fronds of palm 920  
 where Leto gave birth to you, blessed as you were then,  
 in the gardens of Zeus.

CHORUS LEADER

Ah me (*oimoi*) a vast storehouse of evils  
 opens, over which anyone would shed tears.

OLD MAN  
 My daughter, looking at your face I am filled 925  
 with pity and my mind is not thinking straight.  
 I was just draining out a surge of evils from my heart  
 when your words caused another to flood over the side.  
 In making these claims you have moved from the ills  
 of today into the evil paths of still other tragedies. 930  
 What are you saying? What charge against Loxias?  
 What child do you say you birthed? Where in the city  
 did you cast him out in a grave for beasts  
 to feed on. Go back over it for me to understand.

CREUSA  
 I'm ashamed to tell you, old man, but still I'll speak.

OLD MAN  
 Yes, do speak. I know how to grieve nobly with those I love. 935

CREUSA  
 Listen, then. You know the northern cave  
 of the Cecropian crag that we call the "Long Rocks"?

OLD MAN  
 Yes, it is near the shrine and altars of Pan.

CREUSA  
 It was there I underwent a fearful struggle.

OLD MAN  
 What happened? How my tears flow to meet your words. 940

CREUSA  
 Against my will I entered an unhappy union with Phoebus.

OLD MAN  
 Was that what I noticed back then, my daughter?

CREUSA  
 I don't know. If you tell me what it was, I'll tell you.

OLD MAN  
 When you grieved in secret from a hidden illness.

CREUSA  
 This was the sadness, as I now reveal openly. 945

OLD MAN  
 How then did you hide the coupling with Apollo.

CREUSA  
 I gave birth. Bear up when you hear this from me, old man.

OLD MAN  
 Where? Who helped with the birth? Or were you on your own?

CREUSA  
 I was alone in the cave where I was raped.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>949: *Raped*, she sarcastically uses the term "yoked in marriage."

OLD MAN  
And where is the child? You might not still be childless. 950

CREUSA  
Dead, old man, he was exposed to wild beasts.

OLD MAN  
Dead? Did Apollo, the craven, not come to his aid?

CREUSA  
He didn't help. The boy is reared in Hades now.

OLD MAN  
Who was it that exposed him? Not you, surely.

CREUSA  
I did. I wrapped him in garments in the dark of night. 955

OLD MAN  
Did anyone else know about the exposure of the child?

CREUSA  
Only the tragic story itself and its secrecy.

OLD MAN  
How did you have the heart to leave your baby in the cave?

CREUSA  
How? Crying my heart out in pitiful sobs.

OLD MAN  
*Pheu.*  
Hard-hearted in your boldness and the god was even more so. 960

CREUSA  
If you had seen the baby stretching out his hands to me.

OLD MAN  
Reaching for the breast or a mother's embrace?

CREUSA  
And when he didn't get it, he suffered from my neglect.

OLD MAN  
What thought came over you to expose the child?

CREUSA  
In the hope the god would save him, his own child. 965

OLD MAN  
Ah me (*oimoi*)! The long prosperity of your house receives a blow.

CREUSA  
Why do you cover your head and weep, old man?

OLD MAN  
It hurts to see you and your father in such distress.

CREUSA  
That's the way of the world: nothing remains the same.

OLD MAN  
Let us not still hold onto pitiful cries, my daughter . 970

CREUSA  
What must I do? Misfortune stifles the mind.

OLD MAN  
Pay back the god who first wronged you.

CREUSA  
How can I, as a mortal, outdo a god's power?

OLD MAN  
Set fire to the venerable oracle of Loxias. 975

CREUSA  
I am afraid to. Even as it is, I have enough suffering.

OLD MAN  
Then undertake what's possible: kill your husband.

CREUSA  
I have respect for our marriage, from when he was a good man.

OLD MAN  
Then the child who has turned up to replace you.

CREUSA  
How? I would be happy to do it if it's possible.

OLD MAN  
By arming your attendants with swords. 980

CREUSA  
I would go that far, but where would it be staged?

OLD MAN  
At the sacred space where he is holding a feast for his friends.

CREUSA  
Murder will out . . . and the slave's hand is weak.

OLD MAN  
Ah me! You are playing the coward. Come, you plan something.

CREUSA  
Yes, I do have something, deceptive and feasible. 985

OLD MAN  
To both of those I would be a willing accomplice.

CREUSA  
Listen. Do you know the battle of the Earthborn?

OLD MAN  
I do. In which the Giants made a stand against the gods at Phlegria.

CREUSA  
And there Earth gave birth to the Gorgon, dire monster.

OLD MAN  
In alliance with her children, trouble for the gods. 990

CREUSA  
Yes, and Zeus' daughter, the goddess Pallas, killed her.

OLD MAN  
Is this the tale that I heard so long ago?

CREUSA  
That Athena wears this monster's pelt of on her chest. 995



OLD MAN	Her aegis as it's called, Athena's breastplate.	
CREUSA	It got this name when she hurtled into the gods' battle. <sup>38</sup>	997
OLD MAN	What is the outline of the savage shape?	992
CREUSA	A breastplate armored with the coils of a viper.	993
OLD MAN	My daughter, how does this lead to your enemies' undoing?	998
CREUSA	You've heard of Erichthonius, right? Of course you have.	
OLD MAN	Your first ancestor, sent forth by the earth.	1000
CREUSA	When he was just born Pallas gave him . . .	
OLD MAN	What was it? Something you are reluctant to bring up.	
CREUSA	Two drops of the Gorgon's blood.	
OLD MAN	What power do they have on human life?	
CREUSA	One is lethal, the other an antidote to diseases.	1005
OLD MAN	What did she use to attach them to the child's body?	
CREUSA	Golden bands. He gave them to my father.	
OLD MAN	When he died they came to you?	
CREUSA	Yes, and I carry them on my wrist.	

---

<sup>38</sup>997: *Aegis* is usually said to be derived from *aix, aig-* "goat" (one of Chimera's parts), but here Euripides gives its etymology from *aissein* "rush, dart, move quickly". For these lines I have followed the transposition of the lines from the order of the original manuscripts by some editors beginning with Kirchoff, 1867–8. The received text reads:

OM: What is the outline of the savage shape?	992
CR: A breast armored with the coils of a viper.	993
OM: Is this the tale that I heard so long ago?	994
CR: That Athena wears this monster's pelt of on her chest.	995
OM: Her aegis as it's called, Athena's breastplate.	996
CR: It got this name when she hurtled into the gods' battle.	997

OLD MAN  
How then is this twofold gift of the goddess put to use? 1010

CREUSA  
Blood that dropped from the hollow vein . . .

OLD MAN  
What is that used for? What power does it hold?

CREUSA  
It wards off diseases and sustains life.

OLD MAN  
And the second item you spoke of, what does it do?

CREUSA  
It kills: it's the venom from the Gorgon's snakes. 1015

OLD MAN  
Do you wear them mixed together or in separate vials?

CREUSA  
Separate. The good does not mix with the evil.

OLD MAN  
My dear, dear child, you have everything you need.

CREUSA  
This is how the boy will die. And you are the one to kill him.

OLD MAN  
Where and how? Yours to speak, mine to dare. 1020

CREUSA  
In Athens when he arrives at my house.

OLD MAN  
Not a good idea. You even rejected it earlier.

CREUSA  
How so? Do you have the same suspicion that just occurred to me?

OLD MAN  
Yes, everyone will think you killed him, even if you didn't.

CREUSA  
You're right. Everybody says stepmothers hate their stepchildren. 1025

OLD MAN  
Kill him right here where you can deny the murder.

CREUSA  
And I'll get the satisfaction all the sooner.

OLD MAN  
Plus deceive your husband as he strives to deceive you.

CREUSA  
You know what to do: take this gold, gift of Athena,  
from my hand, an ornament from the distant past. 1030  
Go where my husband is holding sacrifice in secret;  
when they finish the feasting and are about to pour  
libations to the gods, keep this hidden in your robe  
and pour it into the young man's drink, just his;

be careful to keep it separate from the others— 1035  
that young man who is on his way to being master  
of my house. And if it reaches his gullet, he will never reach  
the glorious city of Athens, but death will detain him here.

OLD MAN

You, go now inside, into the lodging for guests.  
And I will go to carry out my designated task. 1040

*Creusa exits on parodos A.*

Come, aged foot, be a boy again  
in your deeds, even though your time is long past.  
In aid of your mistress, proceed after the enemy  
and with her, murder him and remove him from the house.  
For the prosperous it is a fine thing to respect piety, 1045  
but if one wishes to do harm to one's enemies,  
there is no law or custom that stands in our way.

*Old Man exits on parodos B.*

### Third Stasimon (1048–1105)

CHORUS

*Strophe 1*

*Einodia*<sup>39</sup> of the crossroads, daughter of Demeter,  
you are queen of assaults that come at night  
and now during the daylight 1050  
guide the filling of the deadly drinking cup  
against those whom my mistress aims them  
with drops from the earthborn  
Gorgon's slit throat 1055  
against the man trying to lay siege  
to the house of the Erechthidae.  
Let no outsider come  
to take sovereignty of the city  
except one of the noble people of Erechtheus. 1060

*Antistrophe 1*

And if death and my mistress's desire  
are thwarted and the time for boldness is lost,  
she who just now saw a glimmer of hope,  
either will thrust in the sharpened sword  
or fasten a noose about her neck and 1065  
enduring suffering on top of suffering

---

<sup>39</sup>1048: *Einodia*, a goddess of crossroads, often associated with Hecate. Perhaps the reference to assaults (1049) at the crossroads picks up the Oedipus theme. Here she is called Demeter's daughter, identifying her with Kore/Persephone.

she will descend into another  
form of existence.  
As long as she lives  
in the shining rays of the sun 1070  
she will not put up with outsiders  
from foreign lands lording it in her home,  
born as she is of a line of noble ancestors.

*Strophe 2*

I'd feel shame before Bacchus,  
god of many hymns, if beside the streams of Callichorus,<sup>40</sup> 1075  
sleepless during the night *he* will look at  
the torch, witness to the festival<sup>41</sup> day celebration  
when the starry sky  
of Zeus leads the dance  
and the moon dances 1080  
and the fifty daughters  
of Nereus, who on the sea  
and in eddies of swift flowing rivers  
celebrate in dance  
the golden-crowned maiden 1085  
and her revered mother.  
This is where he hopes to be king  
taking over the toil of others,  
Phoebus' wandering hobo.

*Antistrophe 2*

All of you who walk with the Muses, 1090  
and sing inharmonious songs  
of our marriages and unions  
performed by Kupris who knows no right  
see how much we surpass in piety  
the unjust sowing of men. 1095  
Let the song be sung in reverse  
and the muse sing out of tune against men  
for their heedless couplings.  
The son of Zeus' sons shows  
his ingratitude, 1100  
not fathering children in the house  
and sharing this happy fate

---

<sup>40</sup>1075–86: *Callichorus* (“of beautiful dances”), a spring at Eleusis. The chorus is singing about the Eleusinian Mysteries, celebrated from the fifteenth to the twenty-third day of the month Boedromion (the third Attic month, roughly equivalent to second half of September to early October): the twentieth was the day of the procession from Athens to Eleusis.

<sup>41</sup>1077: *Festival*: in Greek, “twentieth.” See n. 40 above.

with our mistress. But giving pleasure  
to another Aphrodite,  
he begot a bastard.

1105

### Fourth Episode (1106–1228)

Servant, Chorus

*Servant enters on Parodos B.*

SERVANT

Tell me, women, where I can find the renowned  
daughter of Erechtheus. I have been all over the city  
looking for her and haven't been able to find her.

CHORUS LEADER

What is it, my fellow slave? Why have you come  
with such speed of foot? What tale do you have to tell?

1110

SERVANT

We are objects of a manhunt. The local authorities  
are searching for her, to put her to death by stoning.

CHORUS LEADER

Ah me (*oimoi*)! What will you tell us? Not that we  
are caught perpetrating the secret murder of the boy?

SERVANT

You got it. You will soon have a share in the punishment.

1115

CHORUS LEADER

How did the secret stratagems come into the light?

SERVANT<sup>42</sup>

The god exposed them: he wanted to avoid pollution.

CHORUS LEADER

How? I am your suppliant and beg you to tell.  
If we must die all the same, death would be easier  
when we know what happened, or if we are to live.

1120

SERVANT

When Creusa's husband left the god's oracular shrine  
with his new son, he set off to arrange the sacrificial  
feast that he was preparing for the god.

After that Xuthus would go where Bacchus' fires  
leap up,<sup>43</sup> so he could drench with sacrifices Dionysus'  
twin rocks as thank offerings for the birth of the lad.

1125

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<sup>42</sup>1117: [Injustice was defeated by justice.] This line is probably an interpolation by a teacher that made its way into the text.

<sup>43</sup>1225–6: *Bacchus' fires*: lights seen on Mount Parnassus, whether the torches of celebrating Bacchantes or natural phenomena seen at twilight.

He said to his son, “My boy, you stay here and see that  
 the workers put up well-constructed canopies. 1130  
 If I am gone a long time sacrificing to the gods  
 of birth, serve the feast to your friends who are there.”  
 He took the calves and left. The young man was intent  
 on framing the enclosure for the canopies  
 with uprights: there were no walls. He guarded well  
 against the sun’s beams, not facing towards 1135  
 the midday beams of blazing sun, nor again  
 those rays completing their life’s daily course.  
 He marked off a square the length of a hundred feet<sup>44</sup>  
 having the internal area measure of ten thousand  
 feet as experts direct, so he could invite 1140  
 the whole population of Delphi to the feast.  
 He brought sacred weavings from the treasuries  
 to use for shade, a real feast for the eyes.  
 First he cast over it a flap made of robes for a roof,  
 offerings made by Zeus’ son, which Heracles 1145  
 gave to the god, spoils he took from the Amazons.  
 Images had been designed into these weavings:  
 Uranus gathering the stars in the circle of the sky;  
 Helios driving his horses into his fiery sunset,  
 drawing along Hesperus’ gorgeous twilight.  
 Night, garbed in black, whirled her chariot with a team 1150  
 of two—no trace horses—and the stars escorted the goddess.  
 The Pleiades made their way through the middle course  
 of the sky and sword-bearing Orion; above them  
 was the Bear, turning her golden tail at the pole;  
 the circle of the full moon shot rays up as if 1155  
 at mid-month. And there were the Hyades, the clearest  
 sign to sailors, and Eos the Dawn, bringer of light  
 chased away the stars. And on the sides, for walls,  
 he put around weavings from foreign lands  
 evenly-oared ships arrayed against Greeks 1160  
 and creatures half man, half beast, and hunting for deer  
 on horseback and the pursuit of ferocious lions.  
 At the entrances, Cecrops with his daughters  
 beside him, twisting with snaky spirals: the offering

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<sup>44</sup>1137–9: *A hundred feet*: a Greek *plethron*, one sixth of a stade. The experts (*hoi sophoi*) would be like present-day wedding planners. See Owen’s note ad 1137 (p. 145): “in a booth 100 ft. square, allowing for passages and spaces, 336 people can be seated at table.”

of some Athenian.<sup>45</sup> In the middle of the dining hall 1165  
he set up golden wine bowls.<sup>46</sup> A herald in his official capacity  
went around and invited any of the residents who wished  
to attend the dinner. And when the hall was full,  
the guests, with garlands in their hair, filled their spirits  
with the fine food. After they had had enough to eat, 1170  
an old man came along and stood in the middle  
of the space. Laughter rippled through the assembly  
of feasters because of his bumptiousness. He poured out  
water from pitchers for washing hands and lit incense  
of myrrh resin; he took charge of the golden cups: 1175  
each of these tasks he assigned to himself.  
When it was time for music and the shared bowl  
of the symposium, the old man said, “We must get rid  
of the small wine cups and bring out bigger ones  
so folks can more quickly reach a pleasurable high.” 1180  
There was general commotion of people bringing  
silver and gold drinking cups. The old man picked  
one out specially, as if to favor the new master  
and gave him the full vessel of wine to which  
he had added the lethal drug they say mistress 1185  
had given him to do away with the young man.  
At the time no one knew this. While this newly identified  
son was making a libation with all the others  
one of the servants uttered an inauspicious word.  
And because he was raised in the temple among noble 1190  
seers, he took it as an omen and ordered another fresh  
bowl to be filled. He poured the earlier one on the ground  
as libation to the gods and told everyone to pour theirs out.  
A hush fell over the party as we filled  
the sacred vessels with water and Bybline wine.<sup>47</sup> 1195

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<sup>45</sup>1163–5: *Athenian*: there is no need to wonder about Ion’s extensive knowledge of Athenian history and legend: he would learn from the offerings (art treasures to us and to the ancients, as we see from poems by Theocritus, *Idyll* 15 and Herodas, *Mimiambus* 4, for example) and from the visitors themselves.

<sup>46</sup>1166: *Wine bowls* are kraters (“mixing bowls”) in which water and wine were mixed together in the ancient Greek custom.

<sup>47</sup>1194: *Bybline wine*, a sweet wine from Thrace. Hesiod in *Works and Days* (589–93) praises Bybline as a refreshing wine to drink on a hot day in June while sitting on a shady rock. It had a good nose (*euōdē*) at four years as if just pressed according to the host in Theocritus *Idyll* 14 (lines 15–16), who served it at his drinking party where it had the effect of loosening up the group, too much so, for it led to tears, violence, and heartbreak. In Athenaeus’

While we were doing this a throng of doves on the wing  
 descended on the structure (they live fearlessly  
 in Loxias' halls). They were thirsty and they put  
 their beaks into the puddles of spilled wine  
 and gulped it down into their feathery throats. 1200  
 For all the others the offering to the god was harmless  
 but the one that alit in the drink the new son  
 had poured out and tasted it, all at once its feathered body  
 went into a divine seizure; it let out a cry  
 no one could interpret. The entire company 1205  
 of feasters was astonished at the bird's distress.  
 She died in convulsions, turning up the claws  
 on her red legs. The son named by the oracle threw  
 his arms, bare of his cloak, up over the table  
 and shouted, "Who is it that was trying to kill me? 1210  
 Tell me, old man, for the officiousness was all yours  
 and I received the drink from your hand."  
 He seized him by his aged arm and searched him  
 so he would catch him red-handed, in possession of the poison.  
 He was found out, but only under compulsion did he tell  
 of Creusa's daring and her stratagem with the drink. 1215  
 He took along some of the feasters and ran outside—  
 Loxias' young man, delivered by the Pythian oracle.  
 He took a stand among the Pythian leaders and said,  
 "Holy Earth, the daughter of Erechtheus, 1220  
 the foreign woman,<sup>48</sup> has attempted to murder me by poison."  
 The leaders of the Delphians decided that my mistress  
 be put to death by stoning, and not by a single vote,<sup>49</sup>  
 on the charges of trying to murder the holy man in the temple  
 and polluting it with death. The whole city is hunting her, 1225  
 that woman sadly making her way on a tragic journey.  
 From Phoebus she acquired a longing for children  
 and now has lost her life and the hope of children with it.

---

*Deipnosophists*, there is the additional information about the origin of the name (alternatively spelled Bibline or Biblian) that it is named after a region or mountain range in Thrace (Athenaeus 1.56). Thanks to Owen for the references, Perseus for the texts, and A. S. Gow for a lengthy note in *Theocritus*, vol. II, 250–1, Cambridge, 1950 (reprinted 2008).

<sup>48</sup>1221: *Foreign woman*, the play may be set in Delphi, but it is performed in Athens, where Creusa is proud of being one of the autochthonous natives.

<sup>49</sup>1223: *Not by a single vote* probably just means that it was not close: "not (just) one" is litotes for "many". It is also possible that the rulers took separate votes on the two charges.



## **Astrophic Choral Interlude (in place of Fourth Stasimon) 1229–49**

CHORUS

There is no escape from death  
for me in my distress, no way, none.  
It's clear now; everything comes clear: 1230  
the offerings from Dionysus'  
clusters of grapes, mixed in murder  
with the gore of slithering snakes.  
Clear too the sacrifices to the dead below,  
the end of my life, 1235  
mutilation and death by stoning for my mistress.  
With what flight on wings  
or under the dark caverns of earth may I go  
to avoid death's destruction  
by stoning; mounting a chariot 1240  
of swift steeds  
or the stern of a ship?  
There is no way to hide unless a god  
decides to spirit one away from the scene.<sup>51</sup> 1245  
What then, unhappy mistress, awaits  
your soul to suffer? Will we, too, in our willingness  
to do harm to our neighbor ourselves  
suffer a just reward?

## **Exodos (Closing Sequence) 1250–1622**

### **1 Creusa, Chorus, Ion (1250–1319)**

*Creusa enters by parodos A.*

CREUSA

Servants, we are pursued to deadly slaughter, 1250  
defeated by the Pythians' verdict, and I am given up.

---

<sup>50</sup>After 1228: it is not obvious from the text by which parodos the Servant (messenger) exits after his speech. He comes from above (B) since he was a witness to the feast. Does he continue his search by going down along parodos A? Creusa will enter by that route after the choral ode, which might be awkward. On the other hand, the warning of the Servant and pursuit by others might be what motivates Creusa to sneak out of the lodging where she has been sheltering. Or does he exit along parodos B because the actor will soon return that way as Ion?

<sup>51</sup>1244–5: *Spirit one away*: as they sometimes do in battle scenes in epic poetry.

CHORUS LEADER

We know, poor woman, what troubles fortune has left you in.

CREUSA

Where can I run? I barely got away from the guest house  
to avoid death and reached here by stealth, escaping my enemies.

CHORUS LEADER

Where else than to the altar?

CREUSA

And how does that help me? 1255

CHORUS LEADER

It is sanctioned to kill a suppliant.

CREUSA

But it is by law that I am to be put to death.

CHORUS LEADER

Yes, once you are caught.

CREUSA

Look there. My bitter foes are upon us.

With drawn swords.

CHORUS LEADER

Hurry. Take your place at the altar. Now!

*Creusa takes her place as a suppliant at the altar.*

If you are killed there. You will infect those who put you  
to death with blood-guilt. There's no escaping one's fate. 1260

*Ion with armed men enters by parodos B.*

ION

Cephisus,<sup>52</sup> with your bullish face, look what you  
produced as a descendant in this woman: a viper,  
a serpent, her eyes flashing a blood-red flame.  
Her daring knows no bounds and she's as potent  
as the Gorgon's blood with which she meant to kill me. 1265

Take her. Let the highlands of Parnassus comb out  
the still unspoiled locks of her hair from which  
she will be hurled like a discus in a rocky plummet.  
It was a piece of good luck that I fell into  
a stepmother's clutches before arriving in Athens. 1270

Among my friends I got the measure of your mind,  
how destructive your hostility toward me was.  
If you had cornered me inside your house  
you would have dispatched me at once to Hades' halls.  
Well, the altar and house of Apollo will not  
protect you. Any pity for you belongs more to me 1275

---

<sup>52</sup>1261: *Cephisus*: Creusa's great-grandfather on her mother's side, an Attic river god taking the shape of a bull, depicted as a man sprouting horns.

and my mother. She may not be with me in person,  
but the name of Mother is never far from my heart.  
Look at the criminal mind at work: from one scheme  
she weaves another: she crouches at the god's altar  
so she will escape the just penalty for her deeds. 1280

CREUSA  
You cannot kill me. I forbid it, speaking on my own  
behalf and for the god at whose altar I stand.

ION  
What do you and Phoebus have in common?

CREUSA  
I give my body to the god as a sacred possession. 1285

ION  
And yet you tried to poison one who belonged to the god.

CREUSA  
You no longer belonged to the god, but to your father.

ION  
I had just met my father. I am speaking of my real father.

CREUSA  
You were his then. But now I am and you are not.

ION  
You are not devoted. My life then was one of devotion. 1290

CREUSA  
I wanted to kill you because you are an enemy to my house.

ION  
I didn't invade your land leading an armed force.

CREUSA  
You did! To set fire to the house of Erechtheus.

ION  
Where are the torches? Where the blazing fires?

CREUSA  
You plan to live in my home, to take what's mine by force. 1295<sup>53</sup>

ION  
You were trying to kill me in fear of my intentions? 1300

CREUSA  
So I would not die if they became more than intentions.

ION  
With no child of your own you resent my father finding me.

CREUSA  
And you were going to usurp the homes of the barren? 1303

---

<sup>53</sup>Nauck (1889) and many subsequent editors place lines 1296 after 1303.

ION	Yes. When my father gave me the land he possesses.	1296
CREUSA	What portion of Pallas' land belongs to Aeolus' progeny?	1297
ION	He rescued it with the force of arms, not words.	1298
CREUSA	As a mercenary, he could never be a landowner in the country.	1299
ION	Then was there no share in the land for me and Father?	1304
CREUSA	Whatever shield and spear possess. That is your inheritance.	1305
ION	Leave the altar and the god's holy seat.	
CREUSA	Give that advice to your mother, whoever she is.	
ION	Won't you accept the consequences of trying to kill me?	
CREUSA	Yes, if you are willing to slaughter me in this sacred space.	
ION	Do you get a thrill from dying among the god's sacred symbols?	1310
CREUSA	I will grieve someone by whom I have been grieved.	
ION	Phew ( <i>pheu</i> ) What a mess. The gods have laid down these laws badly for mortals and have not used wise planning. It is not right that the unjust can sit at the altar, but they should be driven away. It is not right for the wicked hand to touch what belongs to the gods, but only the just: those who have been wronged should sit at the holy place. The good and the evil going to the same altar ought not to have equal protection from the gods.	1315

## 2 Prophetess (*Pythia*) (1320–1368)

Prophetess and Ion, speaking; Creusa silent

*The Pythian Prophetess, carrying a wicker-work hamper, enters from the temple.*

PROPHETESS	Stop, child. For it is I, priestess of Phoebus. Leaving my prophetic post, I cross over the temple's threshold. It is I who preserve the ancient custom of Apollo's tripod, chosen for this out of all the women of Delphi.	1320
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ION  
Greetings, dear mother, though you did not give me birth.

PROPHETESS  
So I am called and the name does not offend me. 1325

ION  
You have heard this woman tried to kill me with her plots.

PROPHETESS  
I have heard, but you are wrong to be so unforgiving.

ION  
Shouldn't I pay back in kind someone who tried to kill me.

PROPHETESS  
Wives are always hostile to children from an earlier union.

ION  
Yes, and so are we to stepmothers who try to harm us. 1330

PROPHETESS  
Stop! Leave the holy shrine. It's time to go to your fatherland.

ION  
To do what, if I follow your advice?

PROPHETESS  
Go to Athens guiltless, under good omens.

ION  
Everyone is guiltless who kills his enemies.

PROPHETESS  
You would not be. Receive from me the words I have to say. 1335

ION  
Tell me then. Anything you say has my interest at heart.

PROPHETESS  
Do you see this basket I am holding in my arms?

ION  
I see an ancient hamper decorated with ribbons.

PROPHETESS  
It was in this that I picked you up back then, a new born baby.

ION  
What are you saying? A new chapter is brought into the story. 1340

PROPHETESS  
Yes, I kept them secret. Now I am bringing them to light.

ION  
Why did you hide them when you took me in, long ago?

PROPHETESS  
The god wanted to keep you as a servant in his house.

ION  
And now he doesn't want it? How can I be sure of this?

PROPHETESS  
When he named your father, he was sending you away. 1345

ION

Was it from his orders, or why did you save these things?

PROPHETESS

Loxias put the thought in my head at that time.

ION

To do what? Tell me. Fill in the details.

PROPHETESS

To keep the things I found right up to the present time.

ION

What profit or loss does it have for me?

1350

PROPHETESS

In here are the baby clothes in which you were wrapped.

ION

Are you offering these things as a way to search for my mother?

PROPHETESS

The god is in favor of this now. Earlier he was against it.

ION

These revelations make this is a happy day for me.

PROPHETESS

Take them now and search hard for your mother.

1355

*Prophetess hands the hamper to Ion.*

ION

I will go all over Asia and the borderlands of Europe.

PROPHETESS

You will discover this for yourself. For the god's sake

I reared you, my child, and hand these over to you,

which he wanted me to take, without asking,

and to keep safe. I cannot say what his purpose was.

1360

No one among mortal men knew that I had

these things; no one knew where they were hidden.

Goodbye now. Just as if I had given you birth, one last hug.<sup>54</sup>

*Exit Prophetess back into the temple.*

### 3 Ion, Creusa (1369–1552)

ION

*Pheu, pheu.* My eyes are brimming with tears

---

<sup>54</sup>1364–8: [You must begin with where to look for your mother:

first if one of the Delphian girls gave you birth

1365

and exposed you in this temple, an unmarried maiden.

Then if some Greek woman. From me you have

everything; from Phoebus too. He has a share in your fate.]

Probably an interpolation to explain what is going on, but unnecessary and vapid.

as my mind draws me there, where my mother, after 1370  
 a secret liaison, in secret bargained my life away;  
 did not give me her breast, but left me nameless  
 in the god's temple where I lived the life of a slave.  
 The god's part has been fine, but my fate is grave,  
 for the time I should have basked, cradled 1375  
 in my mother's arms, and taken a child's joy in life  
 I was deprived of my own dear mother's nurture.  
 And my mother too is wretched because she suffers  
 the same grief, deprived of her child as a source of joy.  
 Now I will take the chest and offer it to the god 1380  
 as a dedication, so I won't find anything I don't want  
 to find. If it turns out my mother is a slave  
 it would be worse to find her than to leave her to silence.  
 "Phoebus, I dedicate this to your temple . . ."  
 But wait. What's come over me? I am fighting 1385  
 the god's wish, who saved tokens of my mother for me.  
 The truth must be uncovered and whatever is,  
 whatever is to be, must be endured, I cannot escape it.  
 Sacred fillets, what is it you have kept hidden so long  
 and fastenings which guard things precious to me? 1390  
 Look at this! The covering of the rounded chest,  
 how it has not gotten old, through some divine working,  
 there is no mildew in its woven structure. But a long  
 time has passed in between for these treasured objects.

CREUSA  
 What is this apparition I see beyond my wildest dream?! 1395

ION  
 You, be quiet. You've already caused me enough harm.

CREUSA  
 There is no place here for silence. Do not advise that.  
 I see the carrier in which many years ago I placed you,  
 oh, my child, when you were still a newborn baby,  
 at the cave of Cecrops and under the ledge of the Long Rocks. 1400  
 I shall leave the sanctuary of this altar even if I must die.

*Creusa leaves the altar and rushes toward Ion.*

ION  
 Seize her. She must be maddened by the god to rush away  
 from the altar and images of the gods. Secure her arms.  
*The armed men move to restrain Creusa, but she is able to approach Ion and reach for the  
 hamper.*

CREUSA  
 Go ahead and kill me. I will take hold of this and you  
 and what is hidden inside that belongs to you. 1405

ION

Isn't this awful. I am seized as property, by trickery.

*The armed men restrain Creusa while Ion examines the hamper and goes through its contents.  
As Creusa identifies the objects Ion holds each one up.*

CREUSA

No, but you are found dear to those who love you.

ION

I dear to you? And yet you secretly tried to kill me.

CREUSA

Yes, as my child, which is the dearest thing to a parent.

ION

Stop weaving your lies. I'll catch you yet. 1410

CREUSA

I hope it comes to that. I'm all for it, my son.

ION

This chest, is it empty or does it contain various items?

CREUSA

What you were wearing when I exposed you .

ION

And will you be able to tell what they are before seeing them?

CREUSA

If I cannot, I will submit to my death. 1415

ION

Tell me then. Your audacity is disquieting to me.

CREUSA

Look for a weaving I made as a child.

ION

What was it? Examples of young girls' handiwork are common.

CREUSA

Not finished, but more like a sampler from the loom.

ION

What does it look like? I don't want to be taken in by this. 1420

CREUSA

A Gorgon in the center of the garment's fabric.

ION

O Zeus! What destiny is hunting me out?

CREUSA

It is surrounded with a fringe of snakes like the aegis.

ION

Look here!

This is the weaving! We find it a bit mysterious.

CREUSA

Ah, the girlish working of my loom so long ago. 1425

ION

Anything else? Or did you get lucky in only that one?



CREUSA  
 Two serpents glistening with solid gold jaws,  
 a gift of Athena with which she tells us to rear children  
 as an imitation of Erichthonius of olden days.

ION  
 What is it for? Tell me how the golden ornament is used. 1430

CREUSA  
 For the new-born baby to wear around his neck, my child.

ION  
 These are in here. And the third: I want to know about the third.

CREUSA  
 Back then I put around you a garland of olive  
 which Athena's rocky ground first brought forth  
 and if it's there it has never lost its fresh green color 1435  
 but still flourishes because it's from an incorruptible olive.

ION  
 My dear, dear mother, I'm so glad to find you;  
 let me bend down and press my cheek to yours.  
*Ion embraces Creusa.*

CREUSA  
 My son, light brighter than the sun to your mother  
 (I know the god will forgive me<sup>55</sup>), I have you in my arms, 1440  
 found against all expectation, whom I believed to be  
 living down below with the dead in the earth, in Persephone's hands.

ION  
 My dear mother, in your arms I seem to move  
 between the worlds of the living and the dead.

CREUSA  
*Io, io.* Bright unfolding of the shining ether, 1445  
 what sound shall I cry out? How has this  
 unexpected sweetness happened to me?  
 Where has my happiness come from?

ION  
 For me, mother, anything was likely to have  
 happened rather than this: that I am *yours!* 1450

CREUSA  
 I am still trembling in fear.

ION  
 In fear that it isn't me you hold, though you do?

CREUSA  
 Yes, I had thrown all my hopes

---

<sup>55</sup>1440: *Forgive me*: when characters compare themselves to gods they usually make a token apology.

away.  
 Ah (*io*) woman, where was it, where did you take  
 my baby into your arms?<sup>56</sup>  
 In whose hands did he come to Loxias' halls? 1455

ION  
 This was a god's doing. May we enjoy our good luck  
 in the future after our luckless past.

CREUSA  
 My child, your birth was full of tears;  
 you were parted from your mother's arms amid cries of anguish.  
 But now with my lips pressed to your cheeks, I draw breath 1460  
 feeling a most sublime pleasure.

ION  
 My own pleasure is the same as yours.

CREUSA  
 I am no longer childless;  
 our home has a hearth; the land has its kings;  
 and Erechtheus is young again. 1465  
 The home of the Earthborn no longer looks on darkness,  
 but looks up on the sun's shining rays.

ION  
 Mother, Father should be here, too, to share  
 in this gladness that I have given you both.

CREUSA  
 My son, 1470  
 what are you saying? How I am caught out!

ION  
 What do you mean?

CREUSA You were fathered somewhere else.

ION  
 Oh my (*omoi*). Your girlhood bore me as your bastard.

CREUSA  
 Not with wedding torches or dancing  
 did my marriage rite 1475  
 bear your dear person.

ION  
*Aiai*. Am I ill-born, mother? Where did I come from?

CREUSA  
 Let the Gorgon-killer know.

ION

---

<sup>56</sup>1454: *Io, woman*: as if addressing the Pythian priestess (Prophetess), though she is not there. But we in the audience already know the answers to these questions from Hermes' monologue in the prologue and that Ion is right (1456).

Why do you say that?

CREUSA

She who presides over my rocky land  
on the olive-bearing hill. 1480

ION

Your words are obscure and not at all clear.

CREUSA

By the nightingales' rockface, with Phoebus. . .

ION

Why speak of Phoebus?

CREUSA

I had a secret liaison.

ION

Tell me: what you are saying is my good fortune. 1485

CREUSA

In the tenth circle of the months  
I bore a child in secret to Phoebus.

ION

That's welcome news if what you say is true.

CREUSA

Your mother's maiden work  
I put around you as baby clothes  
the back and forth of my loom. 1490

I did not hold you to my breast for milk,  
a mother's nourishment, nor bathe you with my hands  
but in an empty cave as food to be preyed on  
by the sharp talons of birds 1495  
you were left to go to Hades.

ION

What terrible daring, mother.

CREUSA

Crippled by fear,

my child,

I threw away your life.

Against my will I meant to kill you.

ION

And by my hand

you nearly died. 1500

CREUSA

*Io, io.* We have had a terrible time of it  
and still are:  
we are twisted this way and that  
by ill fortune  
and then again by good fortune. 1505  
But the winds keep shifting.

At last let them stay put.  
The old evils were enough; now let a fair wind take us  
away from troubles, my child.

CHORUS LEADER

No one should ever think anything is beyond hope  
for mankind, in the light of what's happening now. 1510

ION

Ah, chance, you have shifted for thousands of mortals,  
now to be unhappy and then again to do well,  
to what a turning point of life we had come,  
almost to slay a mother and suffer unworthily. 1515

*Pheu.*

Is it possible to understand in the shining courses  
of the sun all these changes day after day?  
In you, mother, we have made a discovery dear to us  
and I'm sure my origin cannot be disparaged.  
But I want us to talk alone about other things. 1520  
Come here—I want to whisper words into your ear.  
and to hide them in darkness with the deeds.

*Ion and Creusa withdraw a few steps and speak quietly together.*

Look, mother, to see if in a weak moment as happens  
to young women, you stumbled into a secret liaison,  
and then laid the blame on the god and, to avoid  
any disgrace that would fall on me, you claim  
you bore me to Phoebus though I'm not the god's. 1525

CREUSA

By Athena Nike who carried her shield in her chariot  
beside Zeus against the children of the Earth,  
I swear no mortal man is your father, my son,  
but lord Loxias, the very one who raised you. 1530

ION

How is it that he gave his own child to another man  
and said that I am Xuthus' natural son?

CREUSA

Not that you are Xuthus', but he is giving you as a gift,  
though you are his own, as a friend might give his son  
to a friend to adopt as his heir and master of his house. 1535

ION

Is the god true, or are his oracles in vain?  
It troubles me in my mind, as is natural.

CREUSA

Listen, then, son, to what has come into my mind:  
Loxias has settled you in a noble home  
for your benefit. If you were called the god's  
you would not ever have a traditional inheritance 1540

nor a father's name. How could it be, when I hid  
my liaison and tried to kill you in secret?  
It is to help you that he gives you to another father. 1545

ION

I will not treat this so lightly,  
but I will go into the temple and inquire of Phoebus  
whether I am born of a mortal father or of Loxias.

*Ion moves toward the temple but hesitates..*

Whoa (*Ea*). What god is this above the halls, sweet  
with incense, revealing a face silhouetted in the sun? 1550  
Mother, let's get away, so we won't look upon  
the gods' presence unless it is favorable to us.

*Athena appears on the roof of the temple.*<sup>57</sup>

#### 4 **Deus ex Machina** (1553–1622)

Athena, Ion, Creusa, Chorus

ATHENA

Do not run off. I am not an enemy to flee from,  
but friendly to you both here and in Athens.  
I have come here, Pallas, the namesake of your 1555  
land, in all haste, from Apollo himself,  
who did not want to come into your sight,  
to avoid blame that would arise from his earlier act,  
but he sent me to pass on these words: this woman  
bore you to Apollo, who is your father, and he gave you 1560  
to whom he gave you, not because he's your father,  
but so that you might become part of a noble family.  
When the whole affair was brought into the open,  
he was afraid you would die from your mother's plot  
and she from yours. He saved you through his own devices. 1565  
Lord Apollo kept these things secret, but intended  
to make it known to you in Athens, that you were born  
from her and from himself, Phoebus, your father.  
To bring closure and extend the god's oracles:  
for this I yoked my chariot—hear me out. 1570

---

<sup>57</sup>After 1549: *Athena's entrance*: it cannot be determined whether the *mēchanē* (or machine, a crane used to fly in gods and Medea in the play that bears her name) was used. Gods can appear at stage level, on the roof of the stage-building (*theologeion* or god-dais), or in the *mēchanē*. Since Athena does not move from her position to come down and join the action, the machine is not strictly necessary. However, if a startling effect is wanted: Athena flying in and settling above the temple in her chariot and flying off in it toward Athens (like Medea in all respects) would accomplish it.

Take your son and go to the land of Cecrops,  
 and seat him on the royal throne,  
 for he is born of the line of Erechtheus  
 and it is right for him to rule my land.  
 He will be famous throughout Hellas: his children,<sup>58</sup> 1575  
 four of them born from one root, will give  
 their names to the land, to the different tribes:  
 those who dwell on my rocky ground.  
 Geleon will be the namesake of the first; second 1580  
 the Opletes, Argades, and last the Aigikores, named  
 from my aegis, will have one tribe. The children born  
 from them will in turn, at the appointed time,  
 colonize the island cities of the Cyclades  
 and continental coastlines which will increase the power  
 of my land. They will dwell on the plains 1585  
 of two continents on opposites sides of the straits,  
 Asia and Europe. After this man's name, they will  
 be called Ionians, a name everyone will know.  
 You and Xuthus will have a family together:  
 Doros for whom the city of Doris in the land 1590  
 of Pelops will be celebrated in song. The second,  
 Achaïos, who will be ruler of the land of Rhium  
 beside the sea and of the people there, who  
 will be called Achaeans after his name.  
 Apollo handled all these details very well: first 1595  
 he caused you to deliver without sickness, so your family  
 did not know; then when you gave birth to this child and  
 exposed him in these baby clothes, he instructed  
 Hermes to pick the infant up and bring him here.  
 He saw to his nurture and did not let him die. 1600  
 Now, keep it quiet that this is your child  
 so that Xuthus can keep his pleasant delusion,  
 and, you, in turn, lady, may enjoy your blessings.  
 Farewell now, from this respite from troubles,  
 I promise a happy future for you all. 1605

ION

Oh, Pallas, daughter of Zeus on high. I do not question  
 your words. I am convinced that I am the son of Loxias  
 and this woman. Even before it was not too much to believe.

CREUSA

Hear what I have to say. I commend Phoebus though I did not before

---

<sup>58</sup>1575–81: *His children . . . will give their names*: on the early tribes (*phylai*) see Owen's "Appendix on the Names of the Tribes" (194–6) and Gibert's notes on lines 1575–81.

because, though he neglected his son, he returns him to me now. 1610  
These doors and the god's oracular shrine are a welcome sight  
though I shrank from them before. But now with gladness in my heart  
I hold my hands on the knocker and greet these temple gates.

ATHENA

I commend your change of heart in blessing the god.  
Gods take their time. But in the end they are far from feckless. 1615

CREUSA

My child, let us go home.

ATHENA

Go and I will follow.

ION

Our escort is worthy.

CREUSA

And loves our city.

ATHENA

Take your seat on the ancient throne.

ION

A worthy possession for me.

*Ion and Creusa exit toward Athens on parodos A.*

*If the mēchanē is used Athene will be lifted in the same direction; otherwise she will turn as if to  
accompany them.*

CHORUS

Apollo, son of Zeus and Leto, farewell. Anyone  
whose house is beset by disasters must honor the gods 1620  
and bear up. In the end the noble meet with good results  
and the bad, as is their nature, never can fare well.

*Members of the chorus file out following their mistress on parodos A.*